

# SPEAK YOUR PEACE

NEW YORK PEACE INSTITUTE NEWSLETTER  
SPRING 2026

## Spring Brings New Opportunities for Peace

Dear Friends,

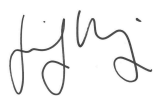
Spring is such a welcome relief after this long and, at times, very difficult winter. As the days get longer, warmth returns, and growth begins again, I am reminded that reconnection and healing are possible.

In a moment when polarization can feel especially sharp and conversations across divides may be intimidating, NYPI remains committed to supporting our neighbors and fellow New Yorkers as they navigate and build bridges across very real differences. We believe deeply that connection and healing happen when we choose compassion, curiosity, and courage in how we listen and engage. This belief is at the heart of everything we do.

We invite you to join us this spring to lean into deeper listening, confront divides with care, and strengthen the resilience of our communities. Whether it's starting a long-avoided conversation, listening more openly to someone with a different lived experience, or simply noticing where connection might begin to take root, every small step matters... and we hope you'll contact NYPI if we can help!

Thank you for being part of this community and for believing in what's possible when we choose connection. I look forward to continued collaboration in the months ahead!

With gratitude,



Jennifer Magida

## Empowering Students to be Peacemakers

This year, **NYPI's Peer Mediation Program** has been busy building leadership, empathy, and problem-solving skills in NYC schools. Through 12–18 hours of interactive training and ongoing support, students learn how to listen deeply, ask thoughtful questions, and guide their peers through conflict in a respectful and restorative way. The goal is simple but powerful: Give students the tools and trust to help strengthen their own school communities.

We're currently partnering with two schools. At the **New York City Charter School of the Arts**, 21 middle school students have completed their full training and are already mediating real cases, continuing the work they began last year. Our peer mediators led a creative school-wide presentation—acting out a mock conflict and showing how mediation can help—to encourage classmates to seek peaceful solutions. At **New Dawn Charter High School**, an over-age high school, 11 students have begun training, with more sessions planned for this spring.

Restorative Justice team members, **Sophia Nappa** and **Katie Plummer**, oversee the work in these schools, fueled by their passion for helping young people build community.

And, as Katie says, the impact of peer mediation is a benefit not just for the students, but for the larger school community.

*“It is important for staff to see how inspired students are to have a voice in their school community. Allowing students to help mediate peer issues fosters a stronger, more connected school environment, where collaboration between students and teachers is encouraged and students are trusted with meaningful responsibilities that reinforce their value as community members.”*

One of the most inspiring moments this year came when a student mediator shared a lesson from training during an actual mediation, explaining how emotions affect the brain and decision-making. Watching students confidently apply these skills—both in and out of mediation sessions—reminds us why this work matters. By centering student voice and restorative practices, peer mediation is helping schools create safer, more connected, and more compassionate communities. As Sophia says:

*“Building trust and community within our peer mediation group is such a fun and rewarding space to be a part of. I love working with our peer mediators because they are so excited to use the skills they have learned and can't wait to start mediating. Building up this skill set for students*

*is so important because they will be able to use these skills for the rest of their lives.”*

To learn more about NYPI’s Peer Mediation program, contact [rj@nypeace.org](mailto:rj@nypeace.org).

## Combating Hate in our Communities

The **New York State Hate and Bias Prevention Unit (HBPU)**, part of the Division of Human Rights, is dedicated to helping communities prevent and respond to hate and bias across New York State. A key part of this work is the statewide network of **Regional Hate and Bias Prevention Councils**, which bring together community-based organizations, faith leaders, government agencies, law enforcement, and other partners. These councils create space for dialogue, share information on local trends, and collaborate on education, events, and initiatives that promote understanding and resilience.

Since 2022, **NYPI** has partnered with the Division of Human Rights and, since 2023, has served as the lead facilitator for the **New York City Regional Council**. Our role has focused on supporting and strengthening the Council through collaborative planning and community-building efforts. We’ve also helped facilitate dialogue and healing in response to hate, bias, and tensions in the city. For example, in the aftermath of the October 7, 2023, attacks in Southern Israel, NYPI implemented restorative interventions and facilitated a number of dialogues among community organizations. As **Ayanna Behin**, Director of Training, says about the importance of this work:

*“HBPU offers a crucial link between local community efforts and statewide interventions. For NYPI it has meant so much to support the vital work our Regional Council is doing to strengthen relationships across the diverse communities in our City, and to provide services and support to people who are targets of hate and bias.”*

Together with the NYC Regional Council, NYPI has also supported the **No Hate New York State** campaign, connecting with New Yorkers at farmers’ markets, street fairs, and community events to raise awareness about reporting hate and bias incidents and accessing support for healing.

Looking ahead, we’re excited to continue this work by bringing in trained circle keepers to lead community-building conversations with Council members and community leaders, deepening relationships and strengthening our shared commitment to preventing hate and bias.

## Working Through Conflict Together

Conflict is a normal part of working with others, but it doesn’t have to derail teams or relationships. That’s where NYPI’s **Organizational Conflict Consulting** work comes in. We support teams, organizations, and groups as they navigate challenging dynamics and build more resilient, collaborative cultures.

Our work generally falls into two connected areas. First, we **address conflict directly** through mediation, restorative processes, and conflict coaching, helping people repair harm, reset relationships, and find a way forward when things feel stuck. We also **facilitate vital conversations**, supporting high-stakes meetings, strategic planning, and group dialogues on everything from team culture to organizational change.

### Conflict Resolution Services



Just as importantly, we focus on **building skills and capacity**. Through trainings and workshops on communication, conflict management, and restorative practices, teams develop shared tools and confidence for working through disagreement before it escalates.

### Skills-Building Services



**Lucas Paulson**, the Manager of our Organizational Conflict Consulting programs, never loses sight of the tremendous leap of faith that people have to take when reaching out to NYPI for help:

*“It is a brave and vulnerable thing to trust a stranger with your own conflict. I am inspired every day by the people who invite us into their teams and organizations—and by the courage they show in communicating and learning through conflict. I’m honored to be a part of that process and*

*feel so grateful to be doing this work with such big-hearted and skilled colleagues.”*

NYPI's teams have mediated between teachers struggling with different working styles, between co-directors navigating different visions for their organizational strategy, and between colleagues struggling to have conversations about race and identity. They have also supported more organizational-wide initiatives that include mediating interpersonal conflict and facilitating all-staff workshops to rebuild trust, align on shared goals, and practice communication skills.

**With decades of experience in conflict resolution, we know how hard—and how powerful—this work can be.** Whether we are mediating a fall-out between co-workers or training a close-knit team in communication skills, the goal is the same: Helping people have the hard conversations that make healthier, more effective collaboration possible.

To learn about how NYPI's OCC programs could benefit your organization, reach out to Lucas at [LPaulson@nypeace.org](mailto:LPaulson@nypeace.org).

## Find Your Peace

	April 21-22	May 4-6	May 18-22
<b>Upcoming Events</b>	Advanced Mediation Training	Tier 1 Circle Training	Initial Mediation Training
	Register <a href="#">here</a>	Register <a href="#">here</a>	Register <a href="#">here</a>

### Thank you for being part of our NYPI community!

Support our work this spring – [Make a donation](#) today!



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