



NEA **N** World Congress Delegate's Newsletter

NEA is 3 million members working to provide great public schools

July 2019



Saving democracy

■ Immigrants and refugees supported—

The World Congress unanimously urged governments around the world to address the human rights abuses faced by immigrant and refugee children. NEA delegate Gladys Marquez from Illinois focused squarely on the southern border of the U.S. The daughter of Mexican immigrant parents, Marquez rattled off statistics to make her point. The U.S. has over 100 for-profit detention centers that house over 15,000 children. The largest is in Homestead, Florida, and has grown from 1,300 children in March to 4,000 today. The camp operators make \$775 per night, per child and are on track to make over \$1 billion in profit this year. “Congress, it is our responsibility to unite and lift our collective voices against these kind of injustices and fight for these children.”

NEA vice president Becky Pringle said she is outraged about how children are being treated on the U.S. southern border. “Delegates, we need you to stand in solidarity with us and demand our babies are treated as the humans they are,” she said.

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Articles by Tim Parker, NEA-Alaska president, and Tara Jeane, California director, based on information gathered at Education International's July 21-26 World Congress in Bangkok, Thailand

Educators address 'international crisis' at World Congress

Educators from 172 countries gathered in Bangkok, Thailand, in late July for Education International's 8th World Congress, and in the face of the political chaos rocking many countries, the nearly 1,500 delegates pulled together around one message: Educators must lead the world back towards democracy.

“It's a complex moment, and it's a dark moment, but it is a moment where there is a leadership vacuum,” said Education International's general secretary David Edwards. He encouraged educators to fill that void by teaching the next generation about what democracy means and why it must triumph over authoritarianism.

“The time for nativists and demagogues must be brought to a close,” Edwards said. “We are much more than knowledge workers. We are organized wisdom workers. We defend the truth, and we seek a collectively bargained better path for society.”

Nobel Peace Prize winner Kailash Satyarthi spoke to the delegates and echoed the theme.

“Our children are in danger in the world, our teachers are in danger, our democracies are in danger, our planet is in danger,” Satyarthi said. “If you don't take charge now, who will do it? Who will take the charge if not the teachers?”

NEA vice president Becky Pringle headed the 50-member NEA delegation, while president Lily Eskelsen Garcia sat on stage as an Education International vice president for North America. For five days, the



Angela Stewart photo

NEA vice president Becky Pringle, bottom right, sits at the front of the NEA delegation at the Education International World Congress on July 24 in Bangkok, Thailand. Voting is done by raising cards, and the delegation votes with Becky.

What is Education International?

An organization of more than 400 education unions from 172 countries worldwide with a membership of over 32 million. The World Congress takes place every four years and brings together about 1,500 voting delegates over five days to debate and vote on proposals to improve education. NEA sent 50 delegates and 43 observers to Bangkok, Thailand, for the 8th World Congress. In 2015, the group met in Canada. Education International formed in 1993 in Stockholm, Sweden.

delegates representing over 400 education unions voted on resolutions to guide the international organization. The World Congress, which includes over 30 million educators from pre-K through university, only meets once every four years.

“Whether we want to be or not, we are an interconnected world that is becoming more global,” Pringle said. “When we stand in solidarity, it matters. People hear us, and lives are saved.”

Education International president Susan Hopgood sees a need for edu-

cators to fight for the truth.

“Racism and bigotry are becoming normalized, but truth matters,” Hopgood said as she opened the World Congress. “Every child needs to be an enthusiastic learner and a seeker of truth.”

Hopgood praised students for taking the lead on the climate change issue. “Their determination and commitment is exactly what we need at this moment,” she said. Too many governments are not keeping up their promises, both in the area of climate change and profiteering.



Top 10 words at the World Congress

Language proved to be one of the most interesting aspects of the World Congress. Not only was every word translated into eight different languages (English, French, Spanish, German, Chinese, Dutch, Arabic, and Portuguese), but certain words kept coming up over and over again. Some were serious, some topical, and some silly. Here's a few of the unusual ones heard during debate on the 46 proposals:

1. Neoliberals—People who believe that market-based solutions can solve problems, especially in education. Bashing “neoliberalism” got lots of applause at the World Congress.

2. Xenophobia—Too many authoritarian leaders around the world exclude immigrants and refugees. This “xenophobic” approach—especially when it comes to children—was extremely unpopular at the World Congress.

3. Free Lula—The Brazilian delegates passed out red signs with “Free Lula” or “Lula Libre” in white letters. Lula de Silva, the former president of Brazil, has been imprisoned on corruption charges. The delegates from Brazil believe he has been wrongly convicted.

4. SDGs—This acronym was used more than any other at the World Congress. The acronym stands for Sustainable Development Goals. The United Nations passed 17 SDGs in 2015. SDG number 4 calls for “Quality Education,” a topic that was of very high interest in Bangkok.

5. Commercialization—Similar to neoliberal, this word refers to taking education initiatives and turning them into money-making opportunities—a practice especially used by companies that exploit students.

6. Indigenous—Referring to the original or Native people of a country, this term was used most often to refer to the inequity in quality education for world’s indigenous children.

7. Griffier and Teller—Two British terms used to help the World Congress operate. Griffier means “clerk of the court.” At the World Congress, before you can speak at the microphone, you must get on the griffier’s list of speakers. The teller is the person who tallies the votes.

8. Decolonization—Many delegates made reference to decolonization in referring to the way that colonizing nations have prevented indigenous people from expressing their cultural and language differences and the need to decolonize curriculum by teaching multiple perspectives, including indigenous people’s history, values, and culture in their own language.

9. Plenary—When all the nearly 1,500 delegates gathered together in one room to consider the 46 resolutions, it was referred to as a plenary session. There were nine at the World Congress.

10. Solidarity—A call for unity that was heard throughout the World Congress. In reality, the amount of unity at this Congress was even higher than usual as educators around the world realized that democracy was under threat, and they need to unite to defend it.

#RedforEd gaining momentum overseas

The World Congress got a taste of #RedforEd on July 23 in Bangkok when two members of NEA’s executive committee gave a EdTalk-style presentation on what the movement means in America.

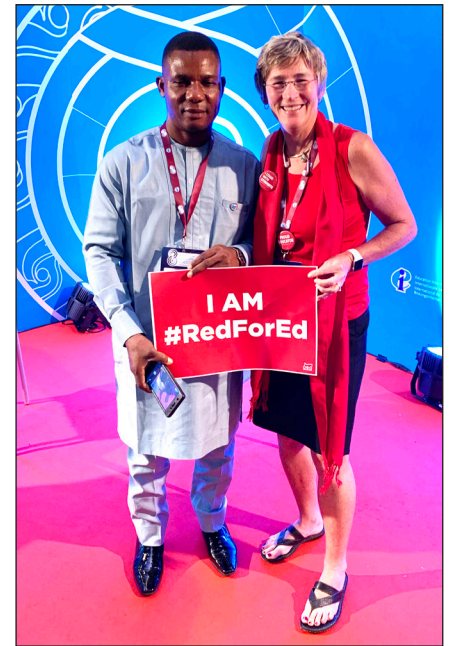
But it didn’t take long for delegates from the rest of the world to identify similar movements in their own countries. Members from the Netherlands and various African countries spoke up with questions and comments about the rise of movements using social media like Facebook.

NEA’s Hanna Vandering and George Sheridan fielded a host of questions.

Asked whether members who became active on Facebook eventually joined, Vandering said, “What we learned in Arizona was that president Joe Thomas lifted up those leaders who started on Facebook. With grassroots support, NEA was able to assist with pushing the movement forward.”

Sheridan said that the movement has both grassroots and organizing actions contributing to its success — “two apparently dissimilar things” according to Sheridan. The EdTalk had the largest attendance and both presenters were sought out for continued conversation, revealing the similar struggles faced in multiple countries.

Sheridan said that social media is the spark that can lead to a brief outburst, but it takes real organizing and personal relationships to get the change that unions want. He



NEA Executive Committee member Hanna Vandering poses for a picture with a delegate from Africa after she and Executive Committee member George Sheridan presented on the #RedforEd topic at the World Congress.

talked about the work done in Los Angeles over the past two years that led to a strike in January. “UTLA organized the community and spent months communicating with families,” he said.

Resolution condemns Trump

The two largest educator unions in the U.S. combined to submit an “urgent” resolution condemning President Donald Trump because of his recent tweets against four Congressional women of color.

Fiery speeches by NEA president Lily Eskelsen Garcia and AFT president Randi Weingarten easily convinced the World Congress to unanimously support the resolution.

Garcia said, “Donald Trump is dangerous. We don’t want his hate speech or his hate crimes. This congress, you in this room, are asking all the international body to take up this call to support the victims of his attacks because this congress is made up of a family where every human being is worthy of respect, every nation, every race, every color. ... Be the first international body to speak the truth to Donald Trump.”

NEA vice president Becky Pringle said: “What happens in the US happens in the world and what happens in the world happens in the US.”

Carolyn Grice, an NEA delegate from Nebraska, said, “Freedom as we know it is being threatened.”

Cheryl Mattern, an NEA delegate wrote her response on Facebook, “I cannot stay silent. Sitting in a forum of educators from all over the world today, I was overwhelmed by humiliation and grief. The current administration of the United States is failing the people, all of the people, in our country, especially our children. Donald Trump is a liar and a racist among so many other horrible qualities.”

She continued, “My heart is broken. But, I refuse to give up. I will find strength in the solidarity of others who choose love over hate and who choose what is right over what is convenient or self-serving. We must DO better. We must BE better. Our children are watching.”

Democracy book launched at World Congress

Education International elects female majority

In a historic move, Education International's 8th World Congress carried a resolution modifying the constitution that greatly promotes gender balance in terms of representation within their own global union. As a result, open seats for election have increased to 10 from 9 - with 50 percent of those seats designated for women. This means the Executive Board seats will increase to 27 from 26. Also in elections, President Susan Hopgood and General Secretary David Edwards were re-elected, and Lily Eskelsen Garcia, NEA president will remain the vice president for North America and the Caribbean.

Decolonization discussed at Indigenous caucus

About 200 participants at the Indigenous Peoples' Caucus discussed the many impacts of colonialism as it relates to education and exchanged ways in which to move forward in securing their full rights. Whether it's Australia, the Philippines, Central America, South America or North America, the patterns of colonialism are all too similar for Indigenous peoples. Participants heard how colonialism has affected many aspects of Aboriginal life, including health, traditional roles, culture, socio-economic conditions, access to services, and equity among others. One topic of great concern is the violence and racism manifested towards Indigenous peoples which are driving students away from school because of the fear for their well-being. Teachers are also not immune to appalling acts of violence. For example, in one of the sessions, participants heard about an Indigenous principal who was driven away from her small community school in Australia (and consequently from her profession), after racist citizens left a disemboweled kangaroo at her doorstep.

Women's issues, gender equity top EI agenda

The World Congress focused on the importance of gender equity—from women's caucus panels, to resolutions, to discussion on SDGs, to changes to the executive committee structure. In her opening speech at Women's Caucus, president Susan Hopgood emphasized the importance of social justice work. "We need to position equity and inclusiveness front and center of our vision and practice as leaders for social justice." Delegate conversations at panels included the need for unions to take a deeper look at their own practices. NEA executive board member Shelly Krajacic advocated for women in leadership and discussed the unintended systemic structures that prevent women from pursuing leadership. She said, "Every day, tell at least one woman something great about the content of her character." The World Congress also passed six Resolutions specifically regarding experiences of women and girls around the world. The topics included: the gendered impact of poverty, the impact of war and armed conflict on women and girls, the enslavement of women and girls, and the increase in gender-based violence, discrimination, and structural power imbalances.

Satyarthi: 'I'm so proud to fight alongside you'

The Education International World Congress heard from 2014 Nobel Laureate Kailash Satyarthi on July 22 in Bangkok, Thailand. Satyarthi, who has dedicated his life to ending illegal child labor, was awarded the Nobel the same year as Malala Yousafzai.

Satyarthi produced a movie, "The Price of Free," to chronicle the work he and others have done to end all types of abuse of children, including sex trafficking.

As a former college professor, Satyarthi knows firsthand the power that educators have to both improve the lives of children and their communities.

"Children have never been responsible for creating walls and barriers," he said. "Those who are creating boundaries for children are working against the wishes of God."

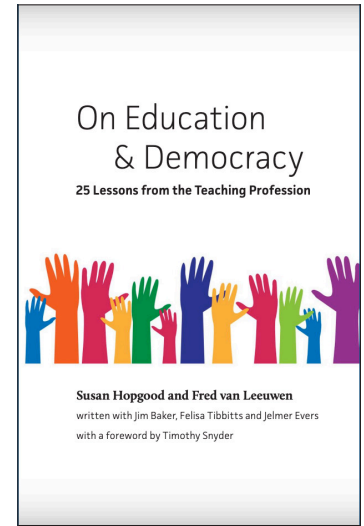
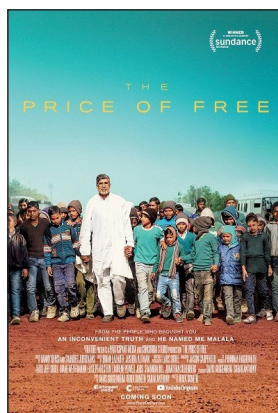
Satyarthi told delegates about visiting an immigrant child in Germany at a hospital. The child who was from Syria had lost both legs. "You are safe here and can get an education," Satyarthi told the boy. "What do you want to

do in the future? The boy said, 'I want to go back to my village in Syria to rebuild my country.'" Satyarthi said this brought him to tears. "The boy still has the dream."

Satyarthi encouraged the delegates to use their collective power to be the force for positive change in the world. "Unions have been fighting, and I'm so proud to fight alongside you," he said. "As a home grown Nobel Laureate, I stand by everything that you do."

Satyarthi told delegates the classic story of the lion and the hummingbird. A fire raged in the forest, and the hummingbird charged into the woods. The lion asked the bird why it wasn't running away, and it said, "Look at my beak. I am carrying a drop of water."

Satyarthi said educators can learn from this lesson. "I am here to awake that hummingbird inside of you. You can extinguish the fire of fear and hatred and bring light to the lives of every person on this earth. Save the people, save the planet, save the peace."



Philippine journalist fights for democracy

The World Congress heard from a journalist from the Philippines named Maria Ressa who was one of Time Magazine's 2018 Persons of the Year.

Ressa has dedicated her career to fighting fake news. She has been arrested eight times in the past six months by the government of Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte. Critics say the arrests are politically motivated.

Ressa had a simple message for educators: We must work together to promote the truth.

"Journalists write the first page of history and teachers cement it into stone," Ressa said. "We have adopted social media, and now it has taken over the gatekeeping powers of truth. If you can make people believe lies are facts, then you can control them."

Ressa is the founder of a social media outlet in the Philippines called Rappler. Her site has dedicated itself to reporting the truth in the Philippines and exposing the creep of fake news on social media and the lies that are purposefully spread by politicians.

She says the formula followed by Duterte in the Philippines was inspired from Trump and America. "Step 1 you lie. Step 2 you say journalists lie, and step 3 everyone says there is no truth," Ressa said. "If you have no facts, you can have no truth. Without truth, you can't have trust. This is an existential moment, not just for journalists, but for democracy."

Ressa detailed the work done by the Duterte government to silence her. In 2017, when Trump and Duterte met, her site published a full transcript of the conversation. This is when the Philippine government's social media campaign against her started. She traced the first tweets and the gradual escalation that was used to extinguish the truth and promote lies.

"I worry about our values," Ressa said. "A lie told a million times becomes a fact."

Rappler fought back by publishing the specific posts and the data that showed precisely who was posting and re-posting the lies. The



A group of NEA delegates to the World Congress pose for a picture with Maria Ressa, center in gray suit jacket. Ressa is a journalist from the Philippines who has been exposing fake news by the country's president. From left are: Tim Parker, Julian Vasquez Heilig, Christine Sampson-Clark, Carol Bauer, Ressa, Scott Ellingson, Shelly Krajacic, Ken Tang, Tracy Hartman-Bradley, and Gladys Marquez.

reporting wasn't too hard because Facebook is the primary social media site in the Philippines.

On Rappler, they removed most of the curse words and checked the following attack words: bias, presstitute, unfollowrappler, unlikeraappler, crabble, dilawan, yellowtard, bayaran, palitbise, lenileaks, and lenilugaw. What emerged was a clear trend of increasing untruths used to push a pro-government agenda. Some of the threads generated over 1 million comments.

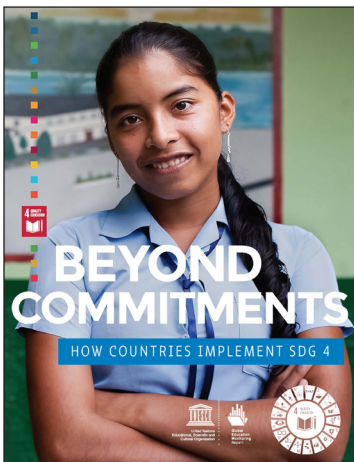
Rappler then went on to list specific web accounts on Facebook and trace how many lies they were reposting, along with the number of shares. What emerged was a web of interconnected posts stemming from three primary sources, all linked to the Duterte government.

Ressa described the tactics used as historical

revisionism. "They astroturf the comments by repeating them so often that they become like they are real," she said. "We're being manipulated," Ressa said. "It is insidious."

The spate of recent arrests has not stopped Ressa, and she has vowed to continue to publish, despite the personal jeopardy that she is facing. She has been targeted using hash tags like #ArrestMariaRessa, and she has had death threats and disgusting sexual allegations leveled at her on social media.

"It's a lot of stuff to dump on you today," she said. "Local is global and global is local. What happened in the Philippines was made possible because of what happened in America. Journalists are under attack, but we're not giving up. We are fighting back."



UN focuses on quality education

A report from UNESCO says that the world is not making enough progress to reach the UN's goals for a quality education for every child by 2030.

Jordan Naidoo, the director for UNESCO's Education 2030 Support and Coordination office, said, "We are not delivering on the promise and not on track for all 17 goals, including 4."

Sustainable Development Goal number 4 calls on every UN country to take steps to improve the quality of their public education system.

Be careful when critics say that the world has a "learning crisis," Naidoo warned. "This is a means to point fingers. I would say we have an 'education

crisis' created by the lack of commitment in the investment to education. There is a lack of attention to addressing the root causes of inequality."

The UN reviewed all the sustainable development goals in early July. "The threat we face is from reactionary right-wing governments, and that is why it is so important to challenge those who would take us back," Naidoo said.

By 2030, the world will not achieve goal 4, Naidoo said. Currently there are 220 million worldwide who are not in school, and one in three children will not complete their schooling. The UN goal has a much higher bar.