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## Book Review

**Peace education from the grassroots**, edited by Ian M. Harris. A volume in the series: Peace Education, editors Laura Finley & Robin Cooper, Information Age Publishing, 2013, 322pp., US \$45.99 (paperback), US \$85.99 (hardcover), ISBN 978-1-62396-349-1

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**Editors note:** This review is one in a series co-published by the Global Campaign for Peace Education and In Factis Pax: Journal of Peace Education and Social Justice toward promoting peace education scholarship. These reviews are of Information Age Publishing's Peace Education series. Established in 2006 by Founding Editors Ian Harris and Edward Brantmeier, IAP's peace education series offers diverse perspectives on peace education theory, research, curriculum development and practice. It is the only series focused on peace education offered by any major publisher. Click here to learn more about this important series.

Bringing together fourteen accounts of peace education case studies from around the world, editor and contributor Ian Harris uses *Peace education from the grassroots* (2013) to build a compendium of the work of educators, activists, and academics in peace education. The book offers a collection of firsthand stories, qualitative and quantitative research, and contextual analysis for peace education efforts and the challenges facing educators, activists, and academics working to build a more sustainably peaceful world.

From various institutions around the world, *Peace education from the grassroots* offers a relative diversity of contributors. Research is included from Jamaica, Mexico, the

Philippines, El Salvador, Belgium, Uganda, the United States, Canada, South Korea, India, Spain, Germany, Japan, and a chapter about the work of the International Red Cross. Harris reached out to his networks for “stories about how citizens at the grassroots level developed peace education initiatives to inform fellow citizens about the dangers of violence and promise of peace” (xi), though no word is given to Harris’ criteria for article selection, nor is it clear if through his process any submissions were withheld. *Peace education from the grassroots*’ collaborative nature offers a framework for continued growth within the field of peace education.

From primary school-based conflict management programs, to university-level peace education, to reflections on museums as centers for learning about peace, the book’s chapters detail a variety of methods for teaching and learning about peace and through peace, as well as some of the obstacles to peace education efforts globally. The chapters offer insight into the best practices for managing challenges that may arise when building successful peace education programs from the grassroots.

The thread that ties each article together is the concept of each program or example of peace education in the book being “grassroots”. Detracting from this idealized bond is the vagueness by which Harris defines grassroots. Inspired by his friend Antonio Poleo, Harris’ most explicit definition of grassroots peace education is:

Groups of people meeting informally...using peace education tactics to advance their peace agendas. Some were sponsoring conferences; some were teaching courses to adults; others were writing newsletters, staging rallies, promoting multiculturalism and anti-imperialism, challenging racism, and/or infusing peace concepts into their lessons (Harris 2013, x).

By this definition, very little peace education work would not be considered grassroots, and a great deal of general grassroots activism would be considered peace education work. Several of the case studies included in this collection reflect state-sponsored programs or heavily institutionalized non-governmental organizations, and very few chapters reflect the work defined by Harris in the above quote. Harris better clarifies his perception of grassroots work, perhaps unintentionally, when he describes “people all over the world are using educational tools to liberate themselves from human suffering caused by direct and structural violence” (Harris 2013, x). Even by this definition, Harris measures success of a grassroots peace education movement by its ability to influence a state actor or government, which leads to some confusion about the relevance of “grassroots” to this collection, when focusing on the centrality of peace education broadly would have served just as well to tie the chapters together.

Additionally, despite its caliber in breadth and content, there remain some inconsistencies in quality of writing and design between chapters. However, these criticisms do not detract from the main objective of *Peace education from the grassroots*,

which is to uplift and provide case studies for examination and inspiration for future programming.

This book is ideal for introductory peace education courses at the undergraduate or graduate level, and individual chapters could be pulled for course readings as needed. It serves veteran peace educators as a reminder of the work being done by peace compatriots around the world. In both the introduction and his collaborative chapter, Harris returns to the interdependent relationship between peace activists, peace researchers, and peace educators (Harris & Howlett, 2013). This theme resurfaces throughout the book, with each chapter epitomizing the intersection of these educator-as-activist, educator-as-researcher identities. This text provides value in sharing helpful ideas for peace educators in community-based organizations working for social justice and peace through education, and also for those academics seeking to identify and articulate the strengths and challenges facing peace educators. Given that peace remains a constant struggle in vast and diverse communities, it is comforting to have resonating program ideas, activist stories, and reminders that peace educators continue to do impressive work globally. *Peace education from the grassroots* not only offers lessons from around the world on overcoming the challenges of implementing grassroots peace education programs, it also provides a blueprint for documenting and compiling diverse experiences for future generations of peace education leaders and innovators.