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Rosemarie Howard | University Advancement | 16 May 2007



As a student at BYU-Hawaii, Chad Ford first heard President McKay's prophecy when President Shumway was inaugurated. "I remember sitting in that audience," he said, "and really feeling the Spirit and being overpowered by all of this—the first time I'd heard it forcefully talked about that way. My first reaction was to look around the auditorium. I knew a lot of cool students from a lot of cool places—people I thought were going to go back and be prime ministers and CEOs. I wondered which of these people President McKay

was talking about."

"Over the next year," Ford went on, "what really started to hit me is that maybe President McKay wasn't talking about a select few individuals. Maybe it was a prophetic charge as much as a prophecy—that maybe he was talking about all of us."

Ford decided he needed to understand why we don't have peace. After graduating in history with minors in political science and sociology from BYU-Hawaii, that quest led him to study international law at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. After watching lawyers at work he, "started to wonder if lawyers weren't actually part of the problem, not part of the solution."

Influenced by the ideas of Dennis Ross, who at the time was part of the United States government group negotiating Middle East peace, he went on to attend graduate school at George Mason University in Virginia where he received a master's degree in conflict analysis and resolution—eventually also finishing his law degree at Georgetown.

While attending George Mason, Ford served a summer internship in Derry, North Ireland with INCORE, a United Nations initiative on ethnic conflict resolution. "I got first-hand experience on both the challenges and the opportunities in resolving conflict," said Ford.

As he studied religious and ethnic conflict, he spent a lot of time in the Protestant and Catholic churches looking at how they contributed to the peace process at the time through sermons. He also visited a large LDS chapel one Sunday and found it almost empty. The branch president talked with him about the challenges they faced because of the conflict. "He said something that really stuck to me," said Ford. "He said until the Irish are at peace with themselves, I don't think the church can grow here."

After returning to the U.S., he worked in some inner city schools in Washington, D.C., teaching classes in alternatives to violence.

Ford said that he has gained two pieces of knowledge have come from these experiences: one, you can't make peace unless you're at peace with yourself; and two, you have to have tools to effectively resolve conflict.

In 2000 he began a dialogue with Keith Roberts, Jeff Burroughs, and BYU-Hawaii president, Eric Shumway, about his desire to return to his alma mater and assist the university in developing and providing tools for effective conflict resolution.

In 2005 he left a successful career as a full-time sports writer for ESPN, covering the NBA and the NBA Draft for ESPN Insider. Instead of traveling the globe reporting on the international sports scene, he opted to come to BYU-Hawaii as the new director of the McKay Center for Intercultural Understanding.

Since leaving ESPN and beginning his work with the BYU-Hawaii McKay Center for Intercultural Understanding, he has researched and reported on programs such as "Playing for Peace," an international basketball program for teens, to determine how successful they are.

In the past year, Ford has been teaching Intercultural Communication, a class developed by BYU-Hawaii professor, Chad Compton. The class "tries to raise awareness about the fact that we all see the world through our own lenses, and think that way of seeing is the right way."

He also teaches a class on group dynamics, one on conflict in culture, and another on mediation. The current mediation class provides a three-hour, one night a week opportunity for 13 students from Asia, Polynesia, and America to role play all sorts of mediations—to think about what their role, as a third party, is in helping other people resolve conflict.

"What's amazing to me is having students come in and say, 'I've always known this is what I want to do,' said Ford. "I don't doubt that the Lord has prepared many of our students to be here."



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