

PRESS RELEASE: John Marks is an Original

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John Marks is an original. The founder and president of Search for Common Ground, a non-profit organization based in Washington, DC that focuses on international conflict management programming, he is presenting an illustrated public lecture at 6pm on Thursday, November 17th in Room H-110, sponsored by Concordia's Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies (MIGS). His topic? "Building Peace, One Soap Opera at a Time."

Marks is a world leading pioneer of radio and TV soap operas building peace around the world. "The Team," a 26-part TV serial drama about seven young Kenyan soccer players from different tribes who must overcome their mutual distrust so that their team has a chance to win an international tournament, ranked among the Top Ten most popular TV programs in Kenya. Introduced in the wake of Kenya's post-election violence which killed more than 800 people in 2008, "The Team" dramatizes cooperative ways of handling ethnic and socioeconomic divisions and the desire of Kenyans to live together in harmony. Cooperation, respect and tolerance are the values it promotes, but it insinuates that message of reconciliation into entertaining stories that have captured an audience estimated at 3.5 million Kenyans. Week after week, the multi-ethnic members of "The Team" confront real issues that Kenyans address daily, including poverty, corruption, rape, mob justice, and drug use. Outreach initiatives emerging from "The Team" include peace groups in major towns and the organization of sports and peace events by young Kenyans. Mobile screenings throughout rural Kenya generate discussions led by trained facilitators and members of the program's cast.

The positive results demonstrated through careful studies of "The Team"'s impact inspired Search for Common Ground to launch local versions of "The Team" in several other countries, including Ivory Coast, Morocco, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Nepal, Palestine and Zimbabwe. "What I love about 'The Team', says Dr. Liz Odera, Chairperson, Sports for Social Change Network, is that it's getting Kenyans to think again. It's an opportunity to rebrand Kenya for all Kenyans. It's an initiative that is galvanizing young people into action. It's about attitude change and it's in your face." To learn more about John Marks' inspiring work, don't miss his free public lecture in H-110 on 17 November at 6 pm.

The inimitable John Marks is also presenting a MIGS Workshop on "Common Ground's Societal Approach to Violence Prevention" at 10:30 am on Friday, November 18th, in the History Department's Seminar Room, LB-1014. The public is welcome at both events.

Some Concordia faculty and students also know John Marks as the author of the 1974 whistle blowing book, *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*. Others remember him for his

exposé of the CIA's mind-control and chemical interrogation projects in *The Search for the Manchurian Candidate* (1979), a study which highlighted the role in behavior modification and mind-control experiments of Dr. Ewen Cameron at McGill University's Allan Memorial Institute as part of the CIA's Project MKULTRA of the 1950s. In an earlier incarnation, John Marks served as executive assistant to U.S. Senator Clifford Case (Republican-New Jersey) and was responsible for passage of the Case-Church amendment which eventually cut off funding for the Vietnam War. A graduate of Cornell University, Marks is a fellow of Harvard's Institute of Politics and a Visiting Scholar at Harvard Law School. His numerous awards include an honorary doctorate from the UN's University for Peace.

To contact John Marks directly for pre-lecture interviews:

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<http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/cgp/the-team.html>

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