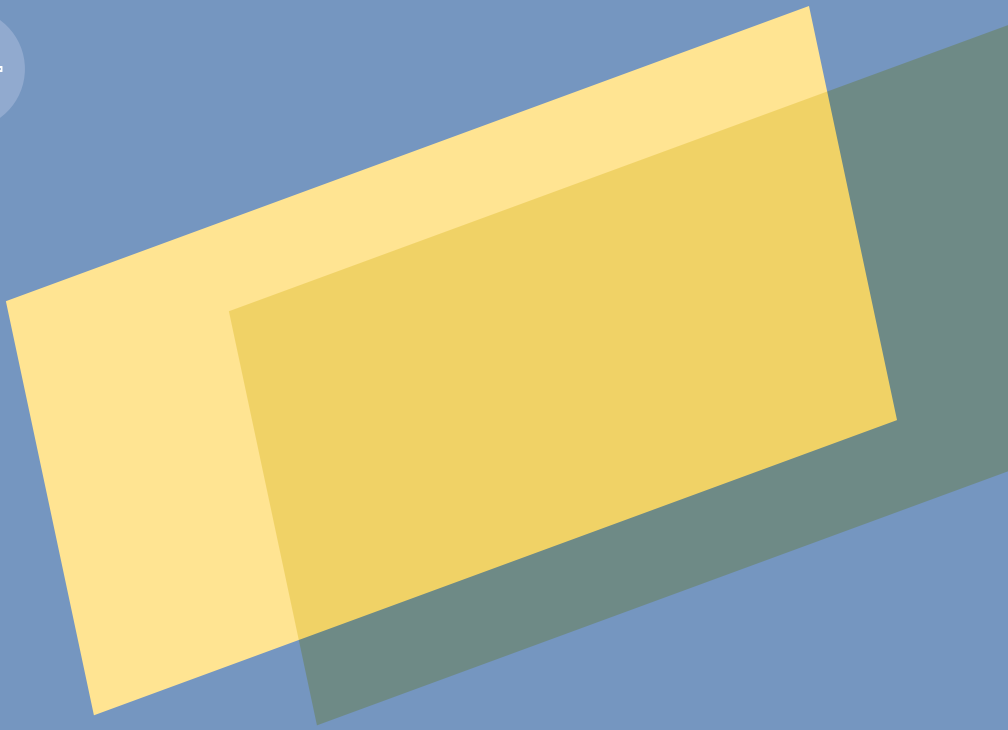


# Building Peace

## Reflections of Eminent Educators, From Personal to Political

*Edited by*
Syed Sikander Mehdi
Matt Meyer

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Syed Sikander Mehdi • Matt Meyer
Editors

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*Dedication To my Parents late Syed Sayeed Akhtar Payami and late Razia Bano,*
*and my in–Laws late Syed Saeed Anwar and late Abida Begum;*
*They Never Left Us.*
*Syed Sikander Mehdi*

*To My Children, Who Teach Me More than They Know*
*Michael Meyer-Starr and Molly Meyer-Starr;*
*They are symbols of the future world we can only imagine we are building.*
*Matt Meyer*

# Foreword: Leaders for Peace—A Testament of a Lifelong Commitment

Congratulations! *Building Peace: Reflections of Eminent Educators, from Personal to Political* showcases the achievements and commitment of each author as agents of peace. It highlights our collective role as promoters of education for peace and non-violence, and as architects of new perspectives to advance along the challenging path toward sustainable peace. The process of building peace is a continuous and ongoing task, complex and often dangerous. The work and trajectories of these authors reveal an intellectual and action-oriented journey with a global ethical projection in support of education for peace and non-violence.

*Building Peace: Reflections of Eminent Educators, from Personal to Political* features authors affiliated with universities, think tanks, and various international entities from both the Global North and South. This book is fundamental during this transitional phase of the international system. It serves as a guiding tool amid confusion and the rise of hate speech and misinformation. It is a colossal instrument to reaffirm dialogue over force. The chapters address how poverty, exclusion, and xenophobia undermine human rights and democracy while also alerting us to the growing violence.

Peace is a fundamental objective for humanity. It provides a safe and stable environment for societies and individuals to live and thrive. Peace is essential for achieving sustainable development and establishing a framework for the protection of human rights. In the absence of peace, no rights can be exercised, including the right to life. Humanity's hopes are centered on achieving peace and harmonious coexistence.

The path to peace is fraught with danger. Often, it is a narrow road filled with obstacles. In many cases, peace agents have lost their lives to terrorism or in situations of war and violence. Educating for peace and non-violence is a risky endeavor. Nevertheless, each of you has chosen to take that risk, dedicating your lives, energies, and passions to create more spaces for advancing toward peace.

Promoting and designing actions for peace today require courage. It has always demanded courage, but more so now than ever. This is even more evident in our current context, where spaces for reaching agreements are diminishing or becoming unproductive. In this transitional international system, where war prevails and peace is weakened, promoting dialogue for peace demands bravery. The collective action of humanity for stability is reflected in the decisions of the United Nations over its 80 years. Today, the United Nations is under attack. It is essential to preserve its values.

Peace is threatened worldwide. In a rules-less international system that disrespects international laws, we see the rise of various conflicts. This environment opens doors to the use of military force, violence, and terrorism. We have transitioned from a system of norms to one dominated by coercion and the law of the strongest. In this current transition, when we need to agree and decide, placing essential human values at the forefront, we encounter increasing obstacles. War looms larger, and violence spreads across the globe. Misinformation creates local and global chaos, and conflicts and disputes are on the rise. Peace shows significant weaknesses and difficulties in being established. War prevails. Hence, the intellectual efforts of each author are vital in presenting a different perspective from which to design and build a peaceful world. This is both possible and viable.

*Building Peace: Reflections of Eminent Educators, from Personal to Political* reaffirms perspectives to strengthen and recreate multilateralism. The authors' work outlines a crucial path to reposition peace at the center, inspiring humanity's actions. Each author serves as a mentor for peace and education for peace and non-violence for the current and future generations.

Therefore, *Building Peace: Reflections of Eminent Educators, from Personal to Political* is a testament to courage and conviction, as well as a collective invitation to envision alternatives in the face of the emergence of a new global system dominated by force. The authors remind us that peace is a project that is built day by day amid diverse thoughts and the collective will, and voices that resist indifference to human suffering and the

violation of basic rights, particularly the right to peace. In times of uncertainty and fragmentation, those who advocate for education for peace become beacons guiding us toward understanding and reconciliation. You illuminate the paths forward in the continuous spiral of non-violence, understanding, coexistence, compassion, and solidarity. Additionally, you develop and apply new concepts with holistic perspectives on the pathways to achieve lasting peace and greater happiness for humanity.

The contributions of each author gathered here transcend cultural boundaries and challenge us to renew our commitment to human dignity. Their reflections open avenues where there were once obstacles, demonstrating that social transformation begins in the minds of individuals. The change that occurs there, through critical thinking, will generate responsible actions. In this context, the book becomes a tool to inspire new generations of peacebuilders capable of dialoguing, listening, and proposing creative solutions to current challenges, risks, and threats.

## Major Risks and Threats

We are witnessing the persistence of old threats and the emergence of new ones, some of which put humanity in grave danger. Firstly, the atomic peril resurfaces with renewed strength, increasing the possibility and probability of the use of nuclear weapons. Nuclear proliferation is growing amid ongoing wars in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, alongside rising tensions in Asia. International law, humanitarian law, and the mandates of the International Court of Justice are being disrespected. We need to restore global peace and stability. Secondly, we are at war with the planet. Climate change is crossing a critical threshold. Disasters caused by fires, floods, and rising sea levels illustrate the severe dangers of the Anthropocene. We must establish peace with the planet and protect our only *Common Home*.

Thirdly, deep polarizations and fragmentations within the global system and various societies are becoming evident. Democracy is in retreat, and authoritarianism is on the rise. Human rights violations are increasing, and distrust is growing. Fear escalates. Violence has become a global pandemic, particularly in weak states with fragile governments. There, corruption thrives, facilitating the entry of transnational organized crime. All of this demands state policies and greater democratic governance.

These risks and threats require cooperation. Cooperation is possible in an effective multilateralism context. It needs to be renewed and restructured, especially within the Security Council and the roles of the General

Assembly. Relearning to cooperate is essential. Education for peace and non-violence acts as a beacon illuminating pathways for cooperation. Multilateral partnerships build trust, which is the foundation of stability and from which preventive policies emerge to achieve peace and harmony.

Thus, the legacy of those who have chosen to walk the difficult path of peace invites us not to give up. The 20 chapters illustrate the paths and crossroads these leaders for peace have traversed. Their works indicate, based on their experiences, how to reduce violence, promote tolerance and respect, and construct more just societies. They illustrate how to continue building and designing hopes for a world where justice, equity, and solidarity are stronger and reaffirm the values of humanity. It will be on the basis of collective effort and renewed hope that peace finds its deepest roots.

The 20 scholars featured in this work have reflected on peace, incorporating women's perspectives and proposing feminist viewpoints. Their reflections, always grounded in critical analysis and ethical perspectives, align with their colleagues' decolonial approaches. The inclusion of renewed historical perspectives and new roles for women in peace processes demonstrates a life commitment to education for peace and non-violence, enabling transformative actions for the future. These 20 professionals engage in planetary work. In this book, they reflect on their own lives and how they have developed their philosophy of peace. They have built transnational, multicultural, multinational, and transdisciplinary global networks. Their contributions have sown seeds through lectures, courses, workshops, seminars, and congresses in various regions of the world. They have produced a critical mass of knowledge on education for peace, designed curricula in universities and educational centers, built institutions, mentored thesis and doctoral dissertations, directed journals and publishing houses, and received awards for their academic work. All of this demonstrates global intellectual leadership in education for peace and non-violence.

## Shared Commitments of Leaders for Peace

*Building Peace: Reflections of Eminent Educators, from Personal to Political* allows us to understand the commonalities among these authors from different parts of the world, with diverse cultures and professional backgrounds, and the impact of their work. They share: (i) a *sustained commitment to peace, non-violence, and social justice*, expressed in their

theoretical reflections and activism for peace; (ii) an *international, intercultural, and multidisciplinary approach*, manifested in collaborative and transdisciplinary forms of working and building global networks; (iii) an *intellectual, academic, and professional leadership style* that serves as an essential reference in education for peace and non-violence. This is evident in their extensive academic, philosophical, and policy-oriented production—of great pedagogical value—expressed in books, articles, book chapters, interviews, and mentoring new generations; (iv) the *vision and development of innovative proposals*, such as the network of museums for peace or the re-examination of classical texts on peace and its leaders throughout history. All of this expresses itself in policy recommendations, training guidelines, forms of activism in social processes, and cultural advocacy, all with a perspective of peace and equity for building a better world.

Artificial Intelligence represents both a challenge—due to the great uncertainties it brings—and an opportunity to expand visions and guide tasks in the field of peace studies and conflicts, particularly in education for peace and non-violence.

## Development and Projection of the Culture of Words

Federico Mayor Zaragoza, former Director-General of UNESCO, left us a profound legacy that illuminated the path to sustainable peace through a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence, primarily achieved through *words*. He was instrumental in transforming this vision into a universal policy, culminating in the United Nations General Assembly's approval of the *Declaration and Plan of Action on a Culture of Peace* on September 13, 1999. Mayor Zaragoza emphasized that words are the first step toward reconciliation and coexistence, fostering solidarity, empathy, and compassion. He believed that education for peace and non-violence is the most powerful tool for transforming societal realities. He pointed out that our prevailing social structure, rooted in the law of the strongest, perpetuates a culture of imposition that undermines fundamental human rights. Therefore, it is imperative to transition from a culture of violence and imposition to one of understanding and peace, a new *Culture of Peace and Non-violence*—from the reason of force to the force of reason, and from bullets to dialogue.

We need to envision a different future, where stability and certainty take center stage, granting dignity to all human beings. Today, it is essential to imagine, reflect on, and design the future of sustainable peace. We need to *deploy a new narrative of peace* that transforms and repositions us, generating a new compass in this era of uncertainties. Education for peace is the path to stability, dialogue, partnership, and encounters in cooperative actions. It is the guide in reconciliation processes during post-conflict stages. These are ongoing tasks that we develop at the University for Peace (www.upeace.org).

I would like to congratulate and recognize the editors, *Syed Sikander Mehdi* from Pakistan, *Matt Meyer* from the United States, and all the authors who have contributed their insightful perspectives as educators for peace. Together, they are helping to build a new global society rooted in harmony, justice, respect, and peaceful coexistence, inspiring us all with hopes for a better world.

As the Rector of the University for Peace, established by the United Nations General Assembly 45 years ago, I commend the importance of institutionalizing the International Peace Research Association (IPRA). This organization is the largest global professional network in the field of peace research, boasting over 1300 members from around 90 countries. I would also like to recognize the contributions of current IPRA Secretary General Matt Meyer and co-editor of this book, Co-Secretary General María Teresa Muñoz, as well as former Secretary General Ursula Oswald Spring. Additionally, the Latin American Council of Peace Research (CLAIP) and the Asia-Pacific Peace Research Association—both represented here in chapters by leaders from each regional association—have played significant roles in advancing our mission.

Peace education is not only presented as a goal but as a dynamic and transformative process capable of reinventing itself in the face of contemporary challenges. It is in classrooms, in spaces of encounter, and in intercultural dialogue where the seeds of mutual understanding flourish. Every shared experience, every constructive debate, every critical analysis, every decolonial approach, and every feminist perspective contribute to building a collective memory oriented toward rejecting violence and recognizing human dignity.

The current challenges demand that we study and acknowledge these leaders who inspire our trust. They foster collective creativity and promote solidarity without borders. The experiences recounted in this work are theoretical contributions that narrate stories and invite us to reflect on the

role each of us can play as agents of change, as agents of peace. In this way, education for peace and non-violence becomes an irreplaceable action of hope.

This collective commitment urges us to remain engaged, identify opportunities for action, forge lasting alliances, and keep the flame of peace alive. The strength of our global movement lies in its diversity of voices, experiences, and paths, which together cultivate the fundamental values of coexistence, justice, harmony, and equity at all levels. The efforts of these peace leaders and their dedication to education reaffirm the essential pillars of peaceful coexistence and contribute to the achievements of stability, harmony, and sustainable peace.

We have the responsibility to take up the baton offered by these leaders for peace, their teachings, and their life stories.

If we want peace, let's work for peace!

If we want peace, let's educate for peace!

University for Peace (UPEACE) Francisco Rojas Aravena
San Jose, Costa Rica
September 2025

# Acknowledgments

We, the co-editors of this volume, feel honored and privileged to express our gratitude to a number of people and institutions who helped us prepare this study. To begin with, we are grateful to the authors who have contributed chapters to the book. They remained encouraging and inspiring throughout the journey, worked diligently on different edited versions, and responded to our queries promptly and with grace.

We are very proud of obtaining the Foreword authored by Professor Francisco Rojas Aravena (Chile/Costa Rica), the eighth Rector of the University for Peace (UPEACE/UN). He is the former Secretary General of the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLASCO) and former Director of FLASCO Chile. He is author/co-author/editor of over 80 books. His observations in the Foreword about peace and the challenges the contemporary world faces and the role of peace academics in peacebuilding are insightful, thought-provoking, and encouraging.

Both of us are also thankful to the anonymous experts who reviewed our application to the publisher Springer Nature, appreciated our proposal, and recommended the publication of the volume.

Likewise, we are thankful to Dr. Wim Laven, a peace educator and practitioner and Editor-in-Chief of *Peace Chronicle* (a magazine of Peace and Justice Studies Association) for reviewing the entire manuscript.

Two important persons who deserve our special thanks and who must be mentioned here are: (1) Ms. Sarah Roughley, Editorial Director, Palgrave Macmillan and (2) Mr. M. Ananda Kumar Mariappan, Production Editor, Springer Nature. Both of them have remained in contact with us from the very beginning of the project, offered suggestions and

guidelines, and promptly corresponded with us. Without their keen interest in the project and active involvement, the publication of the book might have been delayed by several months.

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Here the co-editor of the volume Syed Sikander Mehdi would like to express his appreciation for the keen and active involvement of co-editor Professor Matt Meyer in the project from the very beginning. He was instrumental in contacting a number of leading peace academics and persuading them to contribute chapters. In addition, Matt perused through the edited versions of the chapters and came to my rescue during some challenging phases of editing the book chapters.

Lastly, Mehdi would love to register his gratitude to his wife Nafisa Bano, Son Ali Raza Mehdi, daughter-in-law Beenish Raza, and daughter Syeda Rumana Mehdi for their love, support, and care during the period from the launch of the project to its completion.

Co-editor Matt Meyer would like to express his appreciation to Professor Syed Sikander Mehdi, for having the initial, expansive vision of the necessity of this volume, and for making the urgent call that brought us together in this work. Though a peace educator and high school history teacher long before he became a peace researcher, Meyer required the nudge from Mehdi to clear his always-too-busy schedule. Constant nudging, reminding, critiquing, supporting, and assisting one another has been a feature of the co-editing collaboration, and Meyer is indebted to Medhi for more than holding up his substantial end. Meyer would also like to thank his family—both personal and professional—many of whom make up the pages of this volume. It is such a pleasure to have colleagues who—through a mutual love of the work and a love of the students, a love of the earth and a merging love of one another—*become* extended family. That this is true for Meyer of many of the authors represented here has been a joy of this work, is a joy of his life, and presents a hope for the future more powerful than guns or tyrants.

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# Notes on Contributors

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**Ikuro Anzai** (Japan) is the Director of the Fukushima Museum for No Nukes (Dengonkan). He graduated with a PhD degree from the Department of Nuclear Engineering, University of Tokyo in 1964. After working for 17 years as an assistant lecturer in the Department of

Radiological Health at the University of Tokyo, he became a professor at the Faculty of Economics, Ritsumeikan University in 1986 and a professor at the Faculty of International Relations in 1988. He served as the Director of the Kyoto Museum for World Peace at Ritsumeikan University, which is the first university-built comprehensive peace museum in the world. After retirement, he became lifelong Honorary Director of the Kyoto Museum for World Peace. He is also Honorary General Coordinator of the International Network of Museums for Peace (INMP). He received the Human Rights Award of the No Gun Ri International Peace Foundation (South Korea) in 2011, Peace Prize of the Peace Studies Association of Japan in 2014 and the Vienna UNESCO Club Global Citizen Award in 2020. He has authored some 150 books on varieties of topics including radiation safety, nuclear disarmament, risks of nuclear power generation, peace studies, scientific literacy, museums for peace, etc.

**Liu Cheng** (China) is the pioneer in the establishment of Peace Studies as an academic discipline within Chinese universities and in the publication of original and translated peace studies texts. He is the holder of UNESCO Chair on Peace Studies, Professor of History, Director of the Institute of British and Commonwealth Studies, and Director of the Institute for Peace Studies at Nanjing University, where he teaches modern world history and peace studies. From 2001 to 2005, he was a leader of a British Council-funded programme for academic co-operation between Nanjing University and Coventry University, UK, in the field of peace studies. He organized ten international conferences on peace studies from 2005 to 2023, seven international summer training programmes on peace education between 2014 and 2022. He is an advocate and organizer of the Nanjing Peace Forum, which has been held annually from 2020. Professor Liu Cheng has published 11 monographs, 6 translations, 9 sets of books, and more than 100 papers in Chinese and foreign languages. He is the winner of Chinese University Humanities and Social Sciences Awards (Chinese government's highest award for humanities and social science research).

**Wolfgang Dietrich** (Austria) is an academic practitioner in peace and conflict transformation. He served in the fields of human rights, international development cooperation, culture(s) of peace(s), conflict transformation, intercultural communication, and curriculum development. He is a distinguished peace educator and researcher. He was academic director of the European University Center for Peace Studies from 1995 to 1998

and the Austrian Institute for Latin America from 1995 to 2007. He co-founded the MA Program in Peace, Development, Security and International Conflict Transformation at the University of Innsbruck in 2001 and served as academic director, head of the Unit, and co-director of the Research Center for Peace and Conflict until his retirement from the University of Innsbruck in 2021.In 2015, he was appointed Peace Ambassador of the Alpine Region by the Association of the Alpine States. The University of Innsbruck promoted him to Honorary Professor in the same year. In 2020 he was candidate for the Peace Nobel Price. From 2008 to 2023 he was UNESCO Chairholder for Peace Studies at the University of Innsbruck.Among his academic writings, the *Many Peaces Trilogy* (Palgrave Macmillan 2012, 2013, 2018) is the magnum opus, which has been published in many languages.

**Ela Gandhi** (South Africa) is the granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi, daughter of Gandhi's second son, Manilal. Born in the Phoenix Settlement in South Africa, she earned a B.A., B.A. (soc.sc.) Hons. and then worked as a social worker in South Africa. She was the vice president of the Natal Indian Congress and treasurer of Natal Organisation of Women (NOW). She was a member of the United Democratic Front. For her human rights work she was put under house arrest for nine years (1975–1984) by the apartheid South African regime. She was a member of the Transitional Executive Council, which was tasked to establish a non-racial democracy in the historic elections of 1994 that brought Nelson Mandela to the presidency. Ela subsequently served as a Member of the South African Parliament from 1994 to 2003, helping deconstruct apartheid. She was the Chancellor of Durban University of Technology. She is a recipient of many awards for her humanitarian work from the Indian government, international peace organizations, and Umkonto We Sizwe of African National Congress. She is a recipient of four honorary doctorates and presently serves as chairperson of Gandhi Development Trust and Phoenix Settlement Trust and Hon co-President of Religions for Peace.

**Janet C. Gerson** (USA) is Education Director of International Institute on Peace Education (IIPE) and Co-Director Emeritus of Peace Education Center, Teachers College, Columbia University, NYC. She is a political theorist, peace educator, and activist. A former choreographer, she now writes, paints, and makes mosaics. Fifty years teaching experience includes peace education, conflict processes, transformative learning, futures envisioning, Theater of the Oppressed, creativity, and dance. She received the

Lifetime Achievement Award from Human Dignity Humiliation Studies Association and Best Thesis Award from Peace and Justice Studies Association. Recent publications: co-edited three special editions of *In Factis Pax: Journal of Peace Education and Social Justice*, most recently on "IIPE Special Issue on Bridging Traditional Wisdom and Modernity: Exploring an Eco-Relational Paradigm for Peace"; and *Reclaimative Post-conflict Justice: Democratizing Justice in the World Tribunal on Iraq* (2021) with Dale Snauwaert; and "Restorative Justice & Alternative Systems" in *Encyclopedia of Nonviolence, Conflict & Peace, 3rd Ed.* (2022), (Ed.) Lester Kurtz. Current research: (1) Theoretical work on a relational perspective that weaves care through justice, peace, and democratic ethics of participation, (2) Practical dimensions explore creative thinking and artistic practice toward transformative peace processes, and (3) Ecological relational paradigm for peace recentering human conflict within more-than-human living systems.

**Magnus Haavelsrud** (Norway) is a Professor Emeritus at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. His work deals with the reproductive role of informal, formal and non-formal education and the possibilities of transcendence of this reproduction in political socialization and peace learning. He took part in the creation of the Peace Education Commission of the International Peace Research Association and served as its first Executive Secretary 1975–79. He worked with Betty Reardon in the School Program of the Institute for World Order in New York and served as the Carl-von-Ossietzky Guest Professor of the German Council for Peace and Conflict Research. He co-founded (with Betty Reardon) the Global Campaign for Peace Education and served as a member of the Campaign's Steering Committee. He is the co-founder (with Anita Wenden et al.) of the *Journal of Peace Education* and served on its Editorial Board from 2004 to 2023. Haavelsrud served as distinguished fellow of the South African Research Chair in Development Education from 2008 to 2018 at the University of South Africa under the leadership of Professor Catherine Odora Hoppers (Documentation in the National Science Archive and in www.arkivportalen.no-search term UBIT/A-0303 peace education).

**Tony Jenkins** (USA) is an assistant professor in the Program on Justice & Peace Studies at Georgetown University; Managing Director, International Institute on Peace Education; and Coordinator, Global Campaign for Peace Education. He was recently consulted on the revision

of the UNESCO *Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development* (2023) and spoke at the UN HQ on the International Day of Education contributing to a High Level Dialogue on Learning for Lasting Peace (2024). Tony has significant experience designing and developing academic programs, including the MA Programme in Peace Education at the UN mandated University for Peace. In 2019 he received the Educators' Challenge Award and People's Choice Award from the Global Challenges Foundation for his educational work supporting the abolition of war. Tony's applied research is focused on examining the effectiveness of peace education pedagogies in nurturing personal, social, and political transformation. Tony has taught graduate and undergraduate peace studies and peace education at: Teachers College Columbia University, New York and Tokyo; Jaume I, Castellon, Spain; University for Peace, Costa Rica; The University of Toledo, Ohio; and Georgetown University, George Mason University, and George Washington University, Washington, DC.

**Moses Monday John** (South Sudan) is Adjunct Assistant Professor of Public Administration at the University of Juba. He is a co-founder and former Executive Director of the Organization for Nonviolence and Development (ONAD) based in Juba. John has more than 20 years of extensive experience in managing NGOs' peacebuilding, development and humanitarian projects in Sudan and South Sudan. Over the years, he served as a Peace Educator, Activist and Researcher. Consequently, he was elected a member of the Council of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) based in Al-kamaar in the Netherlands, where he served between 2014 and 2020. He co-chairs the Pan African Nonviolence and Peacebuilding Network (PANPEN) a "network of the networks" of Peacebuilders in Africa. Through PANPEN John connects peacebuilding practitioners with researchers and provides capacity-building opportunities for learning across the region. He is skilled in designing and facilitating workshops and trainings pertaining to peacebuilding, nonviolence, conflict management, governance, gender equality, community security and leadership. He has lectured extensively on these themes in Africa, Asia, Europe and Americas. He holds a PhD in Public Administration-Peace Studies from Durban University of Technology, South Africa. He has authored and published numerous book chapters, special articles and reports.

**Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge** (South Africa) is a Quaker and social justice activist from Southern Africa. In 2021 she was the first person of colour from the global south to be appointed as QUNO Geneva Director. Prior to that, she taught a 2020 Spring Semester Course on South Africa's Peaceful Transition at Haverford College. The course provided an opportunity to reflect on the achievements and shortcomings of the negotiated settlement, thirty years into that transition. She was one of few women at the negotiations for South Africa's transition as part of CODESA, a multiparty negotiations platform that negotiated South Africa's transition from apartheid. She then worked as Managing Secretary of the Transitional Executive Council's Sub-Council on the Status of Women. In 1994 Nozizwe was sufficiently high up on the ANC (African National Congress) list to be elected to Parliament in South Africa's first non-racial, democratic elections. From 1999 to 2004, she served as a Deputy Minister of Defense (1999–2004) and then as Deputy Minister of Health from 2004 to 2007. In 2008, she was elected Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly. She co-founded Embrace Dignity with her husband, Jeremy Routledge in 2010. She is the recipient of Tanenbaum Peacemakers Award and honorary doctorates from Haverford College and University of Bradford.

**Syed Sikander Mehdi** (Pakistan), an alumnus of Dhaka University, Bangladesh, and Australian National University, Canberra, is a leading peace educator from Pakistan. He was the first person to introduce courses on peace studies in the universities in Pakistan. Besides teaching at the Department of International Relations, Karachi University, for over 30 years, he taught courses on peace and forced migration issues in the universities in Austria and Spain. He also availed visiting research fellowships at the International Peace Research Centre in Oslo; Henry Stimson Centre, Washington DC; UNHCR, Geneva; and Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto. His publications in 2024 include: (1) 'New Peace Ideas and Johan Galtung International Peace Prize'. *Revista de Cultura de Paz*, Vol. 8; (2) 'Foreword: Peter van den Dungen's World of Peace Museums' in Peter van den Dungen, *Peace Museums: Selected Essays*, Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature; (3) 'Pakistan: Food Insecurity in a National Security State', Ramesh Chandra Das, ed., *Growth, Poverty and Developmental Aspects of Agriculture*, Leeds: Emerald Publishing Limited; (4) 'Handcuffed Economy and Governance and Development Discourse in Pakistan' in

Ramesh Chandra Das. ed., *Good Governance and Economic Development: Perspectives from Global North and Global South.* Leeds: Routledge.

**Matt Meyer** (USA) is an internationally noted historian, educator, and organizer. He is Secretary General Emeritus of the International Peace Research Association: the world's leading consortium of university-based professors, scholars, students, and community leaders. Meyer is Senior Research Scholar of the University of Massachusetts/Amherst's Resistance Studies Initiative, active also with the International Fellowship of Reconciliation and the War Resisters' International. He is the author/editor of over a dozen books.South African Nobel Peace Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu, in his introduction to Meyer's first book *Guns and Gandhi in Africa* (co-authored with Pan African pacifist Bill Sutherland), noted that they "have looked beyond the short-term strategies and tactics which too often divide progressive peoples … and begun to develop a language which looks at the roots of our humanness." His recent publications include *Beyond Our Current Boundaries: Peace Studies from Africa and the Global South*, launched at the University of Oxford, UK, as part of a new Africa World Press book series on peace studies in Africa and the Global South. Meyer serves as the Senior Editor of this "Africa World Peace" Book Series.

**John S. Moolakkattu** (India) is an ICSSR Senior Fellow attached to the School of International Relations and Politics, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam. Earlier he served as Senior Professor of International Relations and Politics, Central University of Kerala; Professor and Director of Gandhian Studies at Mahatma Gandhi University; Professor of Development Studies at IIT Madras; Gandhi-Luthuli Professorial Chair in Peace Studies at the University of KwaZulu Natal, Durban. He was a Commonwealth Fellow at the Richardsons Institute for Peace Studies, Lancaster University, and a Fulbright Lecturer at the Centre for Justice and Peace Building, Eastern Mennonite University, Harissonberg. Moolakkattu has published over 100 research articles and a dozen edited/authored books. His publications have appeared in *Cooperation and Conflict*, *Public Administration and Development*, *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, *Indian Journal of Gender Studies, Social Sciences*, *Economic and Political Weekly*, *South African Journal of International Affairs, International Studies*, *India Quarterly*, *Sage Open* and *Peace Review*. The Oxford Encyclopaedia of Peace has six entries written by him. He has been serving as the Chief Editor of *Gandhi Marg* Quarterly pub-

lished by Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi from 2005 onwards and is one of the two founding editors of the South African Journal, *Ubuntu: Journal of Conflict Transformation*.

**Marite Munoz** (Argentina) is a sought-after mediator, a public negotiator and an authorized notary public. With a Master's in Parliamentary Law, she has worked in different parts of her native country Argentina as a Judge and educator and remained involved in social service work at community level. Munoz has been working as a Justice of Peace since 2010, serving a rural community near the capital city of Tucumán. Her job is to ensure that social peace is promoted in the community. Along with promoting social peace and justice in her region, Munoz also promotes peace literacy and awareness and teaches courses on the culture of peace and conflict negotiation at the University of San Pablo-Tucumán. She served as the General Secretary of the Latin American Peace Research Council (CLAIP) from 2018 till 2023, when was elected Co-Secretary General of the International Peace Research Association (IPRA). As a global leader of peace, Munoz is focusing on building-up a team of younger peace educators and researchers drawn from all over the world and connecting them to the important peace teaching and peace research centres.

**Elavie Ndura** (Burundi) is the President and Founder of Banana Tree Consulting & Coaching LLC, and Professor of Education at the University of Washington Tacoma, where she had also served as Vice Chancellor for Equity and Inclusion. She previously served as Associate Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at California Poly Humboldt (formerly Humboldt State University), and as Vice President for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at Gallaudet University, the nation's leading educational institution serving the deaf community. She spent 12 years at George Mason University as faculty in education and as a presidential fellow for diversity and inclusion. She is a recipient of multiple Fulbright fellowships, a Woodrow Wilson Center fellowship, and a peace educator of the year award from the Peace & Justice Studies Association. Dr. Ndura is an author and co-author of many books, including the two-volume *Seeds of New Hope: Pan African Peace Studies for the 21st Century* (Africa World Press, co-edited with Matt Meyer). To learn more about her role in peacebuilding in diverse communities, please visit https://bananatree.consulting/.

**Úrsula Oswald-Spring** (Mexico) is a full-time professor and researcher at the National University of Mexico, in the Regional Multidisciplinary Research Centre (CRIM) and the first MRF-Chair on Social Vulnerability at United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS). Since 1977 she has been an active member of IPRA. In 1998 she was elected IPRA President, and in 2014 she was elected IPRA Secretary General. Between 2002 and 2006 she served as General Secretary of Latin-American Council for Peace Research, and currently, she is serving as its Honorific President. She was involved in peace and conflict resolution processes in different countries of Latin America, Africa, Asia and Spain. She is the lead author of WG2 of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the Special Report on Extreme Events. In 2009, she was elected as national coordinator of water research in Mexico, and from 1992 to 1998 she served as the first Minister of Environmental Development in Morelos, Mexico. Oswald Spring has written 48 books and more than 320 scientific articles and book chapters and is co-editor of the Security Handbooks published by Springer Verlag. She co-founded the Peasant University of the South in Mexico and is adviser of women and environmental movements.

**Jenny Pearce** (UK) is a research professor at the Latin America and Caribbean Centre, London School of Economics, and prior to that, she served as Professor of Latin American Studies in the Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford. She has focused particularly on how to understand violence as the opposite of peace. Her most recent book is: *A Politics without Violence? Towards a Post Weberian Enlightenment* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020). She is committed to participatory research methods in contexts of chronic violence.

**Dale T. Snauwaert** (USA) is a professor and Director of the Doctoral Program in the Social and Philosophical Foundations of Education, the Graduate Certificate Program in the Peace and Justice Studies, and the Undergraduate Minor in Peace Studies in the Department of Educational Studies, University of Toledo, USA. He is the Founding Editor of *In Factis Pax: Online Journal of Peace Education and Social Justice*. He is the author of a number of books, including *Teaching Peace as a Matter of Justice: Toward a Pedagogy of Moral Reasoning, Exploring Betty A. Reardon's Perspective on Peace Education - Looking Back, Looking Forward*, *Reclaimative Post-Conflict Justice: Democratizing Justice in The World Tribunal on Iraq*, with Janet Gerson, *Human Rights Education beyond*

*Universalism and Relativism: A Relational Hermeneutic for Global Justice*, with Fuad Al-Daraweesh, *Betty A. Reardon: A Pioneer in Education for Peace and Human Rights*, and *Betty A. Reardon: Key Texts in Gender and Peace*, with Betty Reardon. Snauwaert's core interests are moral and political philosophy and educational theory with a particular interest in metanormative theory, theories of justice, democratic theory, peace education, democratic education, human rights education, philosophy of nonviolence and corrective justice, and teaching through a pedagogy of reflective inquiry.

**Kelli Te Maiharoa** (New Zealand) is a professor and Kaihautū: Te Kāhui Whetū | Capable Māori at Ōtago Polytechnic providing strategic leadership for Māori cohorts across Aotearoa New Zealand. She is also a mentor in the Doctoral Professional Practice Programme.Kelli is passionate about advancing Māori and indigenous development and sits on two tribal boards. Her research interests include indigenous research, cultural revitalization, and Māori educational and Indigenous peace traditions.Kelli has co-edited five collections. These are: *Māori and Pacific Models of Praxis* (2024); *Indigenous Autoethnography: Illuminating Māori Voices Handbook* (2023); *Decolonising Peace and Conflict Studies through Indigenous Research* (2022); *Our Sacred Māori Voices* (2022); and *Peacebuilding and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Experiences and Strategies for the 21st Century* (2016). She is currently working on her sole-authored book focused on Māori spirituality.

**Peter van den Dungen** (The Netherlands) was Lecturer and then Visiting Lecturer in Peace Studies at the University of Bradford (UK) for nearly four decades (1976–2015). He is also the founder of the International Network of Museums for Peace (INMP) of which he was General Coordinator for 25 years (1992–2017). He is also a co-founder of the Bertha von Suttner Peace Institute in The Hague. In addition to his many publications on peace museums, he has published widely on aspects of peace history and a culture of peace. He was a Senior Consulting Editor to the four-volume *Oxford International Encyclopedia of Peace*, Nigel J. Young, Editor-in-Chief (2010). He contributed 'Erasmus and the "Invention of Peace"' to the *Oxford Handbook of Peace History* (2023). His latest publication is *Peace Museums: Selected Essays* (Springer, 2024). In 2021 he received the Peace History Society's Lifetime Achievement Award "for outstanding scholarship and service to Peace History."

**Hakim Mohandas Amani Williams** (USA) is the inaugural Daria L. and Eric J. Wallach Professor and Director of Peace Studies at Gettysburg College; he is also an associate professor and Chair of Africana Studies, and affiliate in Educational Studies, International and Global Studies, and Public Policy. He has taught at Drexel University, the European Peace University, the University of San Francisco, and the Morton Deutsch International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution at Teachers College, Columbia University. His research centers on school/structural violence, educational inequities, youth and community empowerment, and cross-national solidarity building. He has given over 100 academic conference presentations and other talks, and was the recipient of a Fulbright Global Scholar Award and a Spencer Foundation grant for a study on globalized anti-blackness and decolonial peace and justice education in Ghana, Brazil, Jamaica, and the USA. He received his doctorate in international educational development and peace education at Teachers College, Columbia University, and is co-editor of *Disrupting Hierarchy: Students and Teachers Collaborating for Social Change* (with Teachers College Press). For more information: www.hakimwilliams.com.

**Kazuyo Yamane** (Japan) graduated from the University of Bradford, England, with PhD in Peace Studies. She served as Associate Professor of Peace Studies from 2011 to 2016 at Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, and also worked as vice director of the Kyoto Museum for World Peace, Ritsumeikan University. She also served as Visiting Researcher of Ritsumeikan University and as Expert Advisor to the Kyoto Museum for World Peace. She is a Senior Advisor to the International Network of Museums for Peace (INMP), an editorial member of INMP Newsletter and *Muse* Newsletter of the Japanese Citizens' Network of Museums for Peace. Yamane was a prolific writer. She is the author of *Grassroots Museums for Peace in Japan: Unknown Efforts for Peace and Reconciliation* and co-editor of *Museums for Peace Worldwide* Published by Lulu in 2020. She passed away on July 17, 2025.

# The Peace Educators

# Introduction

*Syed Sikander Mehdi and Matt Meyer*

Through history across culture and geography, eminent philosophers, scholars, and educators have all pondered a singular major concern: How can we diminish violence and oppression, and build just and peaceful societies? Such ponderings have often led to theories, practices, and the birth and flourishing of new ideas and perspectives, projections of new futures, and the launching of titanic movements for peace, justice, and social change. Entire disciplines have developed in search of deepening understanding: the advent of modern sociology, an orientation toward political economy, the flourishing of sub-fields and branches of philosophy and other academic disciplines. Out of these developments sprung forth the inter-disciplinary study of the causes and preventions of human conflict, what has come to be known as peace research and peace studies. Just over fifty years ago, peace education—the praxis that enable peace research to grow and breathe in everyday classrooms, language, and corner of the globe imaginable—was added to the formal and informal academic mix.

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However, the contributions of these new thought-igniters—the peace educators—have often been ignored or slighted. It is little appreciated that the movements for peace and change triumph not only because of the courageous leadership confronting ruthless opponents but also because of the life-changing and world-changing peace ideas, and promotion of new knowledge and new hopes by the peace educators and researchers. As a matter of fact, their contribution is seldom discussed, acknowledged, or celebrated.

Besides being unfair, the non-recognition and non-celebration of the role of peace educators in seeding and galvanizing movements for peace and change is politically and strategically incorrect, and it hurts the peace-building process most. Worse still, it creates a distance between the fosterers of a new global society and the potential future builders of succeeding generations. This trend is alarming; it needs to be reversed.

Keeping this in view, we planned the present volume on the role of peace educators in building a new global society. What is unique about this project is that the distinguished peace academics of our time, who have authored the chapters of this book, offer not simply their analytic perspectives but also their autobiographical reflections on understandings of contemporary peace and their struggles to build a just and peaceful global society. In other words, they contribute chapters on their life, struggle, and experience as peace teachers and scholars, offering their vision of global and local peace and how to go about building communities of peace. Thus, the interconnected notion of the personal and political has been brought about in this volume.

We may add here that this study is being brought before the world at a time when events like the protracted Russia–Ukraine war, the genocide in Gaza and proliferating inequalities, and the absolute failure of the UN system to tackle these and other grave issues are raising question marks on the relevance and implementation of peacebuilding ideas and moves. Given this state of affairs, it is vital to explain to the younger generations (in particular) that the catastrophes that global humans are facing are partly due to not listening to the peacemakers. In this context, it is also important to let the world realize that we are all moving forward despite so many challenges and man-made tragedies. However, little has been achieved so far in shifting the power-based world to a more positive, people-centered world due to neglecting the ideas, struggles, sufferings, and sacrifices of the peace educators, researchers, and activists.

Since the main objective of this study is to contribute to global discourse on building a global human society, the co-editors tried to make sure that the contributors of chapters were invited from different geographical regions with a balanced gender participation. As such, the list of authors and co-authors include writers from Argentina, Austria, Burundi, Chile, China, Columbia, India, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, South Sudan, The Netherlands, Trinidad and Tobago, Pakistan, UK, Japan, South Africa, and the USA. Furthermore, among the twenty-two-chapter authors, ten are female peace educators.

While this volume was being prepared, two eminent peace educators (both of whom were associated with this project) passed away: Dr. Betty Reardon and Dr. Kazuyo Yamane. Yamane was a well-known peace academic from Japan. She was a leading expert on museums for peace. She died on July 17, 2025. She will be missed by peace communities around the world, but her courageous and inspiring works on peace, peace education, and museums for peace, as well as her contribution to the movement against nuclear weapons, will be remembered, discussed, and celebrated for years to come. Though fighting against cancer for several months before her death, Kazuyo was able to author a very good chapter for this volume. Her chapter entitled 'Promoting Peace Education—Globally and Locally' is the last major academic work done by a very dear friend of both Mehdi and Meyer, the co-editors of this volume. In her chapter, she says that she got interested in the movement against nuclear weapons from an early age as she learnt from her father—a Hibakusha/atomic bomb survivor—about the devastating consequences of the bombing of Hiroshima. Later, she also developed interest in peace education and museums for peace and became actively involved in two very dynamic organizations focusing on museums for peace: International Network of Museums for Peace (INMP) and the Japanese Citizens' Network of Museums for Peace. In her chapter, she criticizes the trend in Japan to project its war-time experiences as a victim during WWII and not telling its citizens about the atrocities Japan committed on the neighboring countries, both before and during WWII. Her chapter clearly shows that she was a conscientious global citizen and not a prisoner of nationalism.

While Kazuyo Yamane left us almost at the last phase of the preparation of this volume, Betty Reardon passed away during the initial stage of preparation. She was very happy when co-editor Meyer told her about this project and requested her to write a chapter. She immediately agreed, but her deteriorating health didn't allow her to proceed. As such, Meyer and

the Norwegian peace scholar Magnus Haavelsrud, along with her colleague Tony Jenkins, tried to conduct an interview with her in stages. However, soon after this plan was made, our prolific peace educator, gender expert, and human rights activist breathed her last. We decided to prepare a chapter on her life and work to pay tribute to her. As a result, a chapter on her contribution to peace education, women's movements, and peace movements was co-authored by Mehdi, Meyer, Haavelsrud, Gerson, and Snauwaert. All of them had known her for a long time and some had also worked very closely with her. A section of this chapter provides details and excerpts from the historical joint paper authored by Reardon and Haavelsrud (co-founders of IPRA's (International Peace Research Association's) Peace Education Commission/PEC) about the fifty years and future of PEC and peace education as a whole. This paper was presented during the IPRA conference held in Trinidad and Tobago in 2023, on a special panel spotlighting PEC at 50. The paper, presented as part of the chapter, provides a historical background of PEC's foundation and deliberates upon its role in the future. In another section of this chapter, Meyer, Haavelsrud, Gerson and Snauwaert share the memories of their association with her.

Syed Sikander Mehdi's chapter entitled 'Peace Educators and Politics of Disowning' is essentially an account of the sinister policies that the global and local power elites adopt to discredit the peace educators and other visionaries, belittle their ideas for political and social change and avoid any discussion on the disastrous consequences of their policies for the global humans. Focusing on Russia–Ukraine war and the genocide and forced starvation in Gaza, he discusses the powerlessness of the world system before the powerful and says that all this is, to a considerable degree, due to not listening to the peace academics and not agreeing to diminish the concentration of power, all power, in the hands of those at the helm of affairs in different countries and ultimately in the hands of only a few most powerful economic and military powers. He adds that the peace educators had accomplished a lot during the last few decades, and peace awareness has spread. Pointing out that wars and violence of all kinds continue to brutalize global governance, he says that it's time for soul searching and to find out as to what went wrong. Mehdi insists that the peace educators should produce new peace thoughts to confront the challenges of these seismic times. He suggests that the peace academics should now be in the forefront of global and local movements for peace, justice, and change and make themselves more relevant to ensure that the

politics of disowning the peace educators is popularly condemned. He recommends that the peace ideas from different regions, cultures, and histories should be pooled together and the idea of many peaces acknowledged without any hesitation or reservation so that the movement for a global human society is truly globalized.

It was during the last decade of the Soviet Union and especially after the disintegration of the Soviet empire that the images of a future world under the sway of Western economic, cultural and political system were enthusiastically projected and end of history and arrival of one world, one culture and one value system was announced. The end of the cold war had really aroused unfettered hopes, and it was thought that a sort of global peace regime led by the West could be established. While such ideas exercised considerable influence on the peace constituencies in North America and Europe, it was vehemently contested by Wolfgang Dietrich, Professor of Peace Studies at the University of Innsbruck in Austria. From the 1980s on and more vigorously from early 1990s, he developed the idea of many peaces and many cultures of peaces. In numerous essays and in his books as well, he opposed the idea of imposing Western cultural imperialism in the name of promoting universal peace. In the class rooms, in guest lectures and in his writings, he unfurled the pages of peace history of different parts of the world and insisted that the West has to learn peace from non-Western societies and vice versa. Wolfgang's chapter, included in this volume, is entitled 'One Too Many Peaces'. It refers to the origin and development of the idea of many cultures and many peaces and provides details about his efforts to establish a unique Master's degree peace studies program at the University of Innsbruck with him working as Unesco Chair. This program was one of the best in the peace teaching world of academia, and it produced a number of outstanding peace researchers and educators. At a time when the demand for the decolonization of peace education is becoming increasingly vocal, Dietrich's idea of many peaces is being increasingly noticed in the peace constituencies anchored in different regions.

Likewise, the idea of building peace through peace museums has been developed and promoted by Peter van den Dungen, a Dutch Professor who is settled in the UK and who served the peace studies department at Bradford University for nearly four decades. In his chapter entitled 'Peace Education Through Peace History and Peace Museums', the author details about the impact of Vietnam War and atomic bombing on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in particular on his understanding of global

affairs and eventually leading him to concentrate in his research and teaching on peace history and peace museums. His chapter offers a historical account of the evolution of the idea of peace museums and its transformation into an international movement of museums for peace. This account is very precious in the sense that it has been offered by the founder and builder of the movement. It is also important because it has been authored by a powerful and prolific writer, regularly publishing papers on peace, peace heroes, and promotion of peace education through peace history and peace museums. Writing passionately about the importance of peace education, peace history, peace museums, and peacebuilding, he concludes his chapter by saying that it was a pleasure to have met the founders, directors and other officials of peace museums from around the world who shared the conviction that such museums were uniquely placed to educate and inspire their visitors and encourage them to become active and 'who knows, perhaps even make history themselves'.

It is, indeed, heartening to note that while van den Dungen concludes his chapter with a message of hope, Professor Matt Meyer's chapter begins with an optimistic note in these times of gloom and unhope. In fact, the very title of his chapter 'In Search of a Movement: Education and Peace in Our Time' conveys a strong sense of optimism. Meyer, who is co-editor of this volume, co-Secretary General of IPRA and a distinguished historian, peace educator, and activist, is fully aware of the issues the world faces today and builds up a strong case in his chapter in favor of launching a new peace movement in these exceptionally challenging times. As he informs, he was a keen observer of political developments taking place in his country and abroad from his school days. At an early age, he also got involved in political activism against war, violence, militarism, and injustice in his own country (the USA) and elsewhere. Small wonder that soon after completing his studies and opting for a career in teaching and research, he got connected with the movements for peace, justice, and change at local and global levels and never looked back. The first major work that he co-authored in 2000 with Bill Sutherland—a conscientious objector, human rights activist, and promoter of racial equality and Pan-Africanism—is on violence and nonviolence in Africa. The book was entitled *Guns and Gandhi in Africa*. One of his recent works was published in 2018, and its title is *White Lives Matter Most and other little "white" lies*. His chapter in this volume provides an account of his role in peacebuilding through institution—building and promoting the idea of science of activism. As a matter of fact, Meyer is a powerful advocate of both peace research and peace

action. He calls upon all those involved in peace teaching, peace research and peace action to be 'bold and courageous' and be 'true internationalists'. As a true internationalist himself, he is very critical of the brutalities inflicted on the citizens of Gaza. However, he also says that such catastrophes should be converted into opportunities to bring the people of different regions and cultures closer and mobilize them to launch a grand peace movement against the unjust and brutal world system.

Focusing on the South African struggle against apartheid, the chapter entitled '"Beyond Our Individual Identities": Peace Practice Based on Ubuntu, Ujamaa, and Friends' affirms that Meyer's emphasis on being a true internationalist and explains how important it is to get global support. It also asserts Wolfgang's assertion that there are many peaces and many cultures of peaces. Authored by Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge, political and social activist and former Deputy Minister of Defense (June 1999 to April 2004) and Deputy Minister of Health (April 2004 to August 2007) in South Africa, her chapter refers to the influence of Gandhian nonviolence on the movement against the racist regime there and discusses the challenges the movement faced. In addition, she talks about the internal and external challenges post-apartheid South Africa faced and details about her role as a political and social activist during the struggle against apartheid and after and the important role played by ordinary South African women in this struggle and their sufferings and sacrifices. In her chapter, Madlala-Routledge highlights the philosophy of Ubuntu and its impact on African life and culture. She quotes the 1984 Nobel Peace Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who wrote in his Foreword to Sutherland and Meyer book *Guns and Gandhi in Africa* that '*Ubuntu* is the essence of what is meant to be human'. The author also discusses the concept of *Ujamaa* (fraternity in Swahili) and Quaker values and suggests that peace, humanism, and justice should be taught to the peoples of Africa and beyond so that global fraternal bonding is strengthened and a human order is established globally and locally.

Hakim Mohandas Amani Williams' study represents a Pan-American, Pan-African intersection that has praxis at its very center. Growing up poor in a struggling section of Trinidad's capital city, Port of Spain, William begins with an admission that he has always been, like many of his fellow Trinidadians, 'obsessed with violence'. The chapter then charts his path as a young scholar, as a displaced student in New York City, as a queer man figuring out identity issues across class, sexual identity, and other lines: what he describes as a 'suffocatingly complicated' time. Nonetheless,

and perhaps because of these experiences, Williams emerges as a top scholar at Colombia University, as a Department Chair at Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania, as an accomplished and noted global researcher, and as a revolutionary. In some ways, Williams' chapter in this volume not only underscores the thinking of an emerging leader in the field, but also prefigures the direction in which the field is heading.

While Hakim Mohandas Amani Williams' chapter presents an inspiring story of the rise of a young and dynamic peace academic and activist, Kelli Te Maiharoa's study is another fascinating account presented by a Maori woman peace teacher and activist from Aotearoa/New Zealand. Te Maiharoa rose from a very challenging childhood and adolescence to her current status as a professor and community leader and as co-Secretary General of APPRA, the Asia-Pacific regional affiliate of IPRA. Her chapter provides salient features and historical aspects of the Maori peace culture and details about her journey to peace despite so many hurdles on the way. While being fully aware of her responsibilities to build peace at home, she has all along been involved in peacebuilding at community level and calls upon the peace educators and activists to continue to strive toward a just and equitable society. However, she asks them to be aware of the ethical concern that while some sectors of society, countries, and nations enjoy the sense of safety and protection and avail secure livelihood and opulence, there are others who remain dislocated and ravaged because of war. In this context, she refers to the painful experiences of the Maori people and observes: 'The ethical philosophies offered through multiple world religions are often focused on the principles of justice, honesty, dignity and moral compassion. But for many indigenous people, including Māori, who have been subject to colonisation, the religious colonial footprint has also enabled the transference of land, resources, wealth and power into religious organisations. For too long, Indigenous peoples have sought spiritual enlightenment through false prophets, to the detriment and well-being of their people and land. When there is an opportunity for churches and schools to return the land to the people that donated it, or it was taken from, it should be returned to the original land holders in an effort to right some of these wrongs'.

The chapter entitled 'Lifelong Struggle for a Peace Promoting Nuclear-Free Society' authored by Ikuro Anzai narrates the story of a lifelong struggle for building peace, building museums for peace, making nuclear energy safe for Japan and for abolishing all nuclear weapons. Anzai is a senior peace scholar and activist, a former Secretary General of APPRA,

former General Coordinator of the International Museums for Peace Network, and former Director of the Kyoto Museum for World Peace at Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto. His chapter provides details about the harassments he suffered after joining the University of Tokyo as a research assistant by his colleagues, by the powerful nuclear industry of Japan and the Japanese government officials associated with formulating and executing nuclear policy. His only fault was that he insisted that all possible measures should be taken by the government and the industry to ensure fullest possible safety from radiation effects that could arise due to technical faults and breakdown of atomic reactors. Having specialized in radiation protection, he was fully aware of the consequences, but he had to pay a heavy price for refusing to change his stance on the issue. Nevertheless, he resisted all pressures, experienced the boycott of the colleagues and bullying by the Head of the Department, and confronted the threats from the high officials of nuclear industry. He also didn't mind remaining a research assistant for seventeen years at University of Tokyo's Department of Medicine. Anzai's campaign against radioactive contamination and nuclear weapons proliferation continues unabated and a number of scientific studies by him project his passion to promote a peaceful and nuclear-free society. In 2011, when he was based in Kyoto and when the Fukushima atomic plant accident took place, he rushed to Fukushima to extend his expertise and assistance to the affected people there. He continued travelling to the place once a month or once in two months for several years. Equally importantly, he helped build up a museum for peace there. He is the director of the museum which has been built as a 'Monument of Nuclear Regrets and Messages for the Future about Nuclear Power'. Anzai's chapter provides an inspiring account of his involvement in the museums for peace movement, which is now a worldwide movement. He also offers precious suggestions for future peace movements.

The chapter entitled 'From Police Officer to Professor of Peace Studies: A Pioneer and Witness of Peace Studies in China' is a yet another inspiring story about a former police officer's journey to peace. The author of the chapter, Liu Cheng, is the holder of Unesco Chair for Peace, Director of the Institute of Peace Studies and Professor of History at Nanjing University in China. He had begun his career as a police officer. However, he stayed in contact with some inspiring university professors, got roped into the world of academia, and made his way to a top position at the University. He writes in his chapter that his experience as a police officer working in the crime world and later as a historian helped him understand

the political and social dynamics of the society and immensely motivated him to establish the peace studies institute at the University and bring the global and local closer by getting important studies on peace, history, culture, and international affairs translated into Chinese and publishing them in Chinese. Under his supervision, a journal of peace studies is published regularly and important works on peacebuilding in the war-torn cities of Hiroshima, Nanjing, Dresden, Coventry, and Warsaw were published recently. As a pioneering and leading academic of peace, he says: 'Each peace studies course is like sowing seeds of peace. When students become "peace volunteers" (A Piece of Peace), step out of the class room, and go across the country and around the world, peace will bloom and bear fruit everywhere'. Being a born optimist and a peace enthusiast, Cheng believes that individuals can also change the world. He mentions Gandhi to strengthen his argument.

It is, indeed, almost unthinkable that any good study on peace and nonviolence can afford to miss out Gandhi. A distinguishing feature of this edited volume is that it contains a paper authored by Gandhi's granddaughter, Ela Gandhi. Her chapter reveals how challenging and rewarding it was for her to grow as Gandhi, especially in South Africa under apartheid. On the one hand, there was the history, memory, and legacy of Ela's grandfather in the country, and, on the other, there was the built-in hostility of the racist regime against the blood relations of Gandhi in particular. Ela Gandhi discusses these challenges in detail and also talks about her own role in the struggle in South Africa against the racist regime. It was the memory and teaching of Mohandas Gandhi, she adds, that guided her and emboldened her in her journey to peace and freedom. In the chapter, the author also refers to the challenges faced by the women of South Africa in particular, during the long and dark period of apartheid rule. Her chapter, however, doesn't stop at the end of racist rule; it goes beyond and critically examines the policies of post-apartheid South African governments. In addition, it discusses the lessons that the world should learn from the recent history of that country and briefly presents her thoughts and visions of what needs to be done for the peace and justice movement of the twenty-first century. She says that the world needs to focus on two key areas: first, how to bring about attitudinal changes from individualistic materialism to a communal compassionate attitude. Secondly, she describes how peace movements can intervene in conflict situations nonviolently and bring about peace.

The chapter entitled 'Building Peace Day by Day' is a yet another inspirational story. It is based on an autobiographical account of the life, struggle, and contribution of Marite Munoz, a dynamic peace leader of our times. It has been authored by a woman activist belonging to Argentina, a country condemned to suffer more than thirty years of de facto (weak) governments, disappearances, and right-wing military governments. The country is also well known and widely respected for its resilience, heroic struggle of the mothers and grandmothers of their near and dear ones made to disappear by the state, and for its quest for democracy and more democracy. Marite Munoz belongs to this country, and she has lived dangerously as a woman and as a peace activist. It was during the early phase of her struggle for peace and democracy that she realized that peace is not only the absence of war, that violence is not limited to direct violence, and that structural and cultural violence are much more harmful. This early understanding about violence and peace directed her journey toward peace. Her chapter provides details regarding her efforts to build peace at community level and transform the justice system. Her rise to eminence as a peace teacher and activist from local to regional and now to international level is a testimony to her commitment to peace at local and international levels. Currently, she is working as a co-Secretary General of IPRA. She observes in her chapter that peace would come only if all the people can afford to eat and avail free access to quality education and fight for their rights, Munoz says that the world cannot get *Ubuntu*, the idea that each of our humanities is connected to one another, if it is not placed at the center of the working of the states and to reach that point, a long nonviolent struggle will be needed.

There seems to be a consensus among the peace academics seeking radical changes in the world system that the long struggle for meaningful changes would need to derive guidance and inspiration from the past nonviolent movements including the nonviolent Gandhian movement. However, an issue which disturbs a number of contemporary peace educators is the vanishing influence of Gandhian thoughts and practices in India itself. The challenges that peace teaching, peace research, and peace activism face, especially in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's India, has been discussed in detail by a senior peace academic from India, John S. Moolakkattu. In his chapter entitled 'Reflections on Peace Studies and Education in India: A Personal Note', the author, who is currently working as the editor of the journal *Gandhi Marg* published from New Delhi and as a Professor of Peace Studies, provides an overview of the growth of

peace studies programs in Indian universities and mushrooming of peace research centers, including the centers of Gandhian studies. As a peace educator, he is disturbed that while the institutions for peace and research centers for peace are spreading, they are not as impactful as they were expected to be. Moolakkattu mentions unavailability of adequate funds, bureaucratic hurdles, failure to integrate Peace Studies and Gandhian Studies, rise of extremism including religious extremism, and lack of passion to promote peace teaching and peace research programs as major factors for the decline of the discipline. He concludes his chapter with a pessimistic note and says that the future of Peace Studies appears to be bleak in India.

While Moolakkattu is concerned that peace education and peace research are not as impactful in India as expected, Moses Monday John is hopeful that peace teaching and peace action have been influencing the political and social culture of the country he belongs to and which is currently facing severe humanitarian crisis and suffering different kinds of violence: South Sudan. John, who teaches at the University of Juba and who is co-founder and former Executive Director of the Organization for Nonviolence and Development (ONAD), provides interesting details regarding his involvement in peace work through a NGO he had co-founded. In his chapter entitled 'My Journey in Life as a Peace Educator, Activist and Researcher', he talks about his extensive experience in managing NGO peacebuilding, development, and humanitarian projects in Sudan and South Sudan and mentions some of the challenges he faced, which include arrest for taking part in demonstrations. His chapter is commendable because it focuses on peace teaching, peace research, and peace activism through the platform of NGOs and NGO coalitions and draws a roadmap for peacebuilding by establishing and running genuine NGOs for peace, development, and humanitarian works.

The chapter entitled 'Taking Nothing for Granted: Individual and Collective Peace Education to Diverse Communities' is another important chapter which highlights the importance of peacebuilding through community-building. The author of this chapter—Elavie Ndura—is a prolific writer and a leading peace educator. She has published six books, more than thirty book chapters and professional journal articles. She was actively involved in developing, implementing, and managing intercultural education, peace, and nonviolence capacity building programs in the USA as well as in her home country: Burundi. As her chapter states, she grew up in Burundi with the awareness of inequities in the society and

developed an understanding at an early age about violence in different forms, including gender-based, ethnic-based cultural and direct violence. She also talks about her experience in the USA when she moved there for studies and later for settling down there as an educator, researcher, and community developer and says: 'As a Black African immigrant scholar in the Global North, she interrogates dominant assumptions about equity and justice, highlighting the persistent challenges of racism, xenophobia and cultural exclusion in educational institutions'. Expressing the view that building communities of peace and nonviolence is very important, she says that the peace educators and activists should break from their self-protection and self-preservation tendencies in order to align their minds with their hearts and their intentional actions. She adds: 'We live outside of our integrity when we are not aligning our minds, hearts, and actions'. Sharing her vision of peace, Ndura explains that when she speaks of building communities of peace, she envisions spaces where conflict is not suppressed but transformed, where people can name harm without fear, and where healing is prioritized alongside progress.

Born and raised in Bogota, Columbia, where her working parents struggled to raise the standard of living and provide the best possible education to their three children that they could afford, Diana Marcela Agudelo-Ortiz learnt at an early age about social and economic inequities and deprivations. Growing up in Bogota was also challenging for some other reasons as well; she grew up in a violent city and in a violent country. Particularly, the final decade of the twentieth century was deadly. Drug traffickers had almost taken over the country, car bomb explosion and kidnapping were something happening frequently, and the whole country was sinking into violence, corruption, and death. In her chapter entitled 'The Discovery of Oneself as a Path to Peace in Latin America', Agudelo-Ortiz provides details about different forms of violence in her country, which led her to think seriously about how to make things improve not only for her or her family or the citizens of her country but for the entire humankind. Her quest for knowledge and a desire to find out the purpose of her life and her role in the future took her to the academic institutions outside Columbia. Equally importantly, her study and research and her meetings with some outstanding social scientists of Latin American grounded her solidly in peace studies and peace research. Pointing out that her historical resonated with that of the Palestinians and not that with the volunteers, she explains her approach to peace by saying that she grew up on the side of the so-called vulnerable, not on the side of 'those who

help the vulnerable'. She elaborates the point by saying: 'We will no longer be someone else's vulnerable subject. But neither will we be the academics who enthusiastically see themselves as part of the academic communities of the global north, making ourselves the subject of their research and intervention. Our struggle is for life, our life, the life of humanity'.

While Agudelo-Ortiz' chapter offers an excellent account of her journey to peace in Latin America, another chapter on the region—included in this volume—focuses on the role of a distinguished peace academic in promoting and building peace in the region torn for decades because of frequent US military interventions, coups, war lords' savagery, and repressive rule. Entitled 'Peacebuilding by Women in a Convulsing Latin America: Research, Negotiation, and Meditation in Conflicts', the chapter has been authored by Ursula Oswald-Spring, an outstanding peace educator, a prolific writer, and former Secretary General of IPRA. Being exceptionally committed to peace and peacebuilding with proven leadership qualities, she got involved from the early phase of her career as a peace educator and researcher relentlessly working for peace in the Latin American region and beyond. The challenges faced by her in her peace work in the region can be gauged by the fact that as many as twelve Latin American states underwent at least one military coup between 1967 and 1991. During the same period, Haiti and Honduras suffered three military coups each, and Bolivia twelve, but Oswald-Spring was not to be daunted. Small wonder therefore that she was elected the first female Secretary General of the Latin American Council of Peace Research (CLAIP), a regional affiliate founded during the seventh international conference of IPRA held in Oaxtepec in Mexico. Her responsibilities increased substantially when she was elected as IPRA's Secretary General. As a result of her and her colleagues' efforts in CLAIP and IPRA, a number of issues like militarization in the region, inequality and poverty and discrimination and violence against women and female participation in conciliation processes were taken up for serious deliberations by different forums. In due course, environmental and feminist movements were strengthened and issues like racism, rights of ethnic minorities and repressed minorities, and democratization of the region began to be discussed more openly and boldly. In addition, and as her chapter indicates, Oswald-Spring strongly put forward the idea of structural, dissipative, and self-regulating peace system and developed the concept of Human, Gender and Environmental Peace and Security (HUGE).

The chapter entitled 'Learning to Face Up to Violence: Emotional Enlightenment and the Journey to Peace' has been authored by Jenny Pearce, a peace educator and an expert on Latin America. Currently, she is serving as Research Professor at the Latin American and Caribbean Centre, London School of Economics. However, her chapter—included in this volume—doesn't stop at the doors of the Latin American region; it wanders beyond and goes global and focuses on issues like inequality, rise of authoritarian regimes even in the Western democratic and liberal world, and proliferation of all kinds of violence in the world at large. Belonging to a working-class family and being a women, she experienced discrimination and deprivation. As such, she began to understand and resent the tyranny of the elite-centered political and social system from an early age. Lamenting that the world continues to face war and violences of multiple dimensions and expressions, she observes in her chapter that peace remains a concept that is universally valued, but it is still an empty signifier that people fill with their own meanings based on cultural, political, and personal convictions and experiences. She emphasizes the need to invest peace with meanings that may be shared across boundaries and cultures. Pearce says that rethinking relationality as an essential aspect of peacebuilding is needed to encourage people to think about the 'other' in all their human interactions from the intimate to the political to the global and adds: 'Recognising a shared humanity is a prerequisite for building shared meanings for peace'.

As the autobiographical and political accounts of most of the peace academics included in this volume suggest, small and major events taking place during the childhood and in the adolescence phase in the immediate environ and in faraway places often set the direction for the journey to future. In his chapter entitled 'My Journey in Peace Learning: Pursuing Personal and Political Change through a Critical Transformative Praxis', Tony Jenkins, a peace teacher at Georgetown University in the USA and Managing Director of International Institute on Peace Education (IIPE), discusses the influence of the pro-democracy protests staged in Tiananmen Square in the spring of 1989 on his thinking and future planning. He was immensely impressed by the image and act of unarmed resistance in front of a row of tanks and thought that it was 'real courage'. This idea of courage, Jenkins points out, 'was in stark contrast to the militarized and hyper – masculinized image of courage that had been extolled to me by relatives, schooling, and American media culture'. Jenkins goes on to narrate other events and happenings that influenced him, guided him in his

journey to peace, and contributed to his rise as a global peace influential. These happenings include his studies in the institutions of higher learning, his closeness with the mentors like Betty Reardon and others, meetings with the peace educators and researchers in international workshops and conferences, and active global networking from the platforms of IIPE and Global Campaign for Peace Education and the peace works he published in book forms, book chapters, and journal articles. Pointing out that peace education is a holistic work and transformative change requires working across, he adds that his pursuance of 'an international existence, walking the weaving path of an academic, activist, advocate, practitioner, organizer' wouldn't have been possible 'without the development of a critical, reflective, and transformative praxis and pedagogy that has become the foundation of my approach to personal and political change'.

This brief review of twenty chapters of the volume, authored by peace educators belonging to different social, cultural, political, and regional backgrounds and pursuing different paths to peace and peacebuilding, suggests that the world has little idea of how passionately peace academics have worked to build a more equal, just, and peaceful world. Our review also suggests that the world is so violent partly because the power elites don't listen to the peace academics. It is clear that, on the one hand, global issues like war, violence, inequality, racism, violence against women and children, nuclearization and militarization were not handled properly by those responsible for global and local governance. On the other hand, rethinking of the concept of peace is required. In addition, the pace of the current movement to 'decolonize' peace education must be faster for a new global peace movement to emerge. This global series of spotlights on twenty leading educators is designed to help in all of our collective rethinking. Together, these educators, along with those reading these words, should look to launching a new and genuine internationalism centered around passionate peacebuilding. The inspiring stories these peace academics tell are rays of hope in these tormenting and seismic times. Let us utilize them to help brighten the world.

# Tribute to a Legendary Peace Educator-Activist

# Life and Work of Betty A. Reardon: Reflections and Remembrances

*Syed Sikander Mehdi, Matt Meyer, Magnus Haavelsrud, Janet Gerson, and Dale Snauwaert*

## Introduction

Betty Reardon was born on June 12, 1929, and brought up in Rye, New York, where she spent most of her adult life. She did Master's in History from New York University and Doctorate in Education from Teachers College, Columbia University. She began her career as a teacher at Rye Country Day School. Later in 1963, she became the Director of Schools Program with the Institute for World Order and began her work

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in peace education. 'What intrigued and drove her', observes Global Campaign for Peace Education, which she had co-founded with Magnus Haavelsrud, 'was an interest in war, not as an isolated eruption in human affairs, but as a social system justified by particular ways of thinking'. It further says: 'She had a hunch that not only the structures of society, but the structures of consciousness as well, could, and should be, transformed through a comprehensive education for and about peace. Betty Reardon's life-long endeavor has been informed and shaped by this perspective and these formative experiences' (Global Campaign for Peace Education, In Memoriam: Betty Reardon [1929–2023]).

Reardon was a prolific writer. She published numerous articles, books, book chapters, and reports. Besides expanding the frontiers of peace studies and strengthening the resource base of the discipline, she authored pioneering works on war, militarism, and sexism and drew the attention of peace educators and researchers toward the sufferings of women and children in war, violence, climatic disaster, and forced migration. Even a cursory glance at the titles of the books she authored, co-authored, or co-edited may suggest that she generally selected themes, which were crucial to the understanding of issues concerning conflict, violence, injustice, and gross marginalization of the humans.

Moreover, Reardon was an accomplished peace educator and a global peace teacher. She held a number of prestigious visiting professorships, including the Savage Chair, Distinguished Visiting Professor of International Relations and Peace, University of Oregon; The A. Lindsay O'Conner Chair in American Institutions, Colgate University; Visiting Professor of Peace, Spark M. Matsunaga Institute for Peace, University of Hawaii at Manoa; Visiting Professor, Kanda University of International Studies, Chiba, Japan; Visiting Professor, Graduate School of International Cooperation Studies, Kobe University, Kobe, Japan; and Visiting Professor, Department of International Relations, Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, Japan. She had also received a number of prestigious awards including the Pomerance Award for contribution to disarmament efforts within the UN system; American Association of University Women (AAUW), New York State Peace Award, 1986; Book of the Year Award from the *American Journal of Nursing* for her ground-breaking study entitled *Sexism and the War System*; 1994 Peace Studies Award from the Peace and Justice Studies Association; 2000 Jane Adams Peace Activist Award; and 2010 Sean McBride Peace by International Peace Bureau. She was nominated for the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize by International Peace Bureau.

In addition, Reardon was widely esteemed and respected as a leading peace perspective builder and peace institution builder. She had, indeed, played a key role not only in the development of peace education as a substantial and respected academic discipline but also in the development of feminist peace education as a vital approach to modern conflict analysis. Moreover, she played an important role in the establishment and work of institutions directly concerned with the issues of war and peace as well as security, dignity, and well-being of women and children. She was the founder and long-time director of the Peace Education Center and Program at Teachers College at Columbia University, founder and director of the International Institute on Peace Education, general coordinator of the Feminist Scholar Activist Network on Demilitarization, coordinator of International Network of Peace Education Centre, co-founder of the Global Campaign for Peace Education, founding academic coordinator of the Hague Appeal for Peace, and associate director of Leadership and World Society.

One may add here that Reardon had played an important role in the establishment and development of International Peace Research Association's first Commission—Peace Education Commission (PEC). PEC's foundation was laid during IPRA's General Conference held in Bled, Yugoslavia, in 1971 when Saul Mendlovitz, Christopher Wulf, and Betty Reardon proposed it to the IPRA Council. The Council set up a Peace Education Committee to deliberate upon the proposal, and Christopher Wulf was made its Chairperson. When the next General Conference was held two years later in 1973 at Varanasi, India, IPRA's Peace Education Commission was officially founded.

## Reardon-Haavelsrud Joint Paper on the Foundation and Future of PEC

Being aware of the potential role of PEC in promoting peace thinking and peace literacy all over the world, Reardon remained actively associated with PEC since its very inception to the last phase of her life. Here one may refer to a paper co-authored by her and PEC's first Executive Secretary Magnus Haavelsrud on the eve of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of PEC at the 29th General Conference of IPRA held on May 17–21, 2023, in Trinidad and Tobago. Professor Matt Meyer, IPRA's Co-Secretary General, who is also the co-editor of this volume, was then already

working in concert with Haavelsrud to obtain Reardon's reflections as a peace educator in written form or through a series of interviews for this book. Keeping in view the historical importance of this joint paper entitled 'IPRA-PEC - Projecting a Next Phase: Reflections on Its Roots, Processes and Purposes' (Global Campaign for Peace Education, September 21, 2022), brief comment coupled with reproduction of major portions of the text has been initiated in this section.

At the beginning of the joint paper, the co-authors provide some details regarding the circumstances and contexts of PEC's beginning. They inform:

> From the beginning, PEC was purposeful and systematic, and more than a biennial gathering of peace educators. The young PEC was a vital learning community whose members had a strong sense of solidarity, a profound commitment to making education a significant instrument for peace, a fierce loyalty to each other and a shared vision of a transformed world that they had commonly conceived. It was focused, purposeful and intentionally organized as can be seen in "A Global Strategy for Communication and Consciousness Raising in Various Local Settings" developed in 1975 at IPRA's Summer School in Västerhaninge, near Stockholm, Sweden. (IPRA's Newsletter)

Reardon and Haavelsrud add:

> The conceptual and communal cohesion of PEC's early days were the consequence of these IPRA Summer Schools which provided, over several consecutive years, a venue for intensive exchanges and formative learning as members from all world regions grappled with the commonalities and differences of professional contexts, perspectives and problem priorities. Working through and learning from these differences and engaging in analysis of commonalities enabled PEC as a learning community to produce "A Global Strategy …," influenced by the structural analyses of peace research and the critical pedagogy, newly introduced by Paolo Freire. The document, a product of a fully participatory and open process, articulates a purpose well worth reviewing today to assess not only the relevance of its substance, but to understand the importance of process and context to determining and articulating common purposes.
>
> In those early days, following the end of the Vietnam War, in the midst of neo-colonial struggles, peace researchers and peace educators, becoming awakened to the structural violence of the world system, began to learn from each other, building a common body of learning. Those common learnings became the foundation of peace education as it developed over the

last third of the 20th century through liberation struggles, the Cold War, the rise of the anti-nuclear movement and their waning. That foundation remained relevant until the first years of the 21st century challenged it with the "War on Terror".

Highlighting the role of PEC in promoting peace knowledge, the two founding members of PEC observe in the joint paper:

Throughout its first decades, members of the PEC learning community brought this foundation to their involvement in landmark events and developments in the field, continuing to learn from all available sources, as its members provided conceptual frameworks and guiding values to the work of others in the field. Among the events and programs influenced by PEC members were: the First World Conference of the World Council for Curriculum and Instruction in 1974; UNESCO's World Conference on Disarmament Education in 1980; the founding of the first graduate program in peace education at Teachers College, Columbia University and the first International Institute on Peace Education in 1982, a UNESCO project in producing a Handbook on Disarmament Education; and The Global Campaign for Peace Education, established in 2000, among others.

They further observe:

PEC has also been a significant influence on IPRA itself, having introduced to the association gender and ecology as essential substance for peace research. Issues raised by an emerging women and peace movement were addressed within PEC until they were assumed by a separate IPRA commission. It has been the most consistently organized and purposeful of all the commissions. It is the only commission to be governed by bylaws drafted at its founding, guided by the common purpose and shared vision of global strategy, and the only one to publish its own journal.

These events and developments were parallel to on-going collaborative efforts among members that produced a body of literature on the theory and practice of the field that facilitated its worldwide development and dissemination. While specifics of the field varied from region to region and country to country, those developments in which PEC members were involved continued to be infused by the vision of the Global Strategy. In recognition of these achievements, IPRA was awarded the 1989 UNESCO Prize for peace education. All of this developmental history culminated in the founding in 2004 of the Journal of Peace Education more or less simultaneously with the emergence of the challenges of new historic context.

In all probability, this historical paper on the past and future of PEC happens to be one of the last major works on peace co-produced by Reardon. Luckily enough, the documentation of PEC activities since the beginning are available in the authors' archives on peace education (University of Toledo; The Norwegian University of Science and Technology) and would especially attract those peace educators and researchers interested in study and research on the first 50 years of PEC's activities. To highlight the importance of this document, let us go back to it again and listen carefully to the co-authors who observe:

> We have learned that peace learning supports and initiates developments towards more peace (i.e. less violence) and evidence of this may be found in all places and times, ranging from individual experiences in everyday life to movements at the global level. The cultural voice of education, we now argue, is therefore of political relevance to illuminate the need for transformation of problematic – sometimes violent – contextual conditions. When problematic circumstances prevail, pedagogic activity may respond by adapting to the status quo – or resist it with the intention of change. If such resistance is not possible within formal education, it is always possible, as historical experience has demonstrated (to varying degrees of difficulty - and danger) in informal and/or non-formal education. Clearly, PEC's founders recognized that the integrity of peace education is directly related to the moral courage of its practitioners. This we learned from our colleagues "on the ground" in non-formal programs confronting structural oppression as actually experienced. Education in developments towards nonviolent conflict transformation, liberating and democratic learning in opposition to oppressive political authorities, is a different challenge from education provided by the dominant powers of societies.

Finally, besides assessing and highlighting the work done by PEC in the evolution of the contemporary fields of peace knowledge, the authors express their belief that 'PEC's present and ongoing mission would be well served by a review of its purposes within the context of today's peace problematic', and both Reardon and Haavelsrud suggest that PEC's forthcoming sessions should reflect and discuss the contextual queries like the following:

> How do the existential planetary threats of climate catastrophe and nuclear holocaust affect our respective local contexts? Do these fundamental prob-

> lems manifest in particular forms of violence that should be addressed by peace education?
>
> How has the "War on Terror," the rise of authoritarianism and the backlash against the human rights of women and the marginalized affected the problematic of positive peace?
>
> In what ways should international standards promulgated in the last 20 years such as UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, The Paris Accords on Climate and the Treaty on the Prohibition of nuclear weapons be integrated into a statement of purpose and the actual practice of peace education?
>
> In what ways should the growing role of international civil society in confronting the existential threats and working to overcome the multiple and increasing problems of war, climate change, deprivation, oppression, displacement and the refugee crises and multiple human rights violations be addressed in defining the context of peace education and setting goals for that area of the field referred to as global citizenship education?
>
> How should changes in context affect the use and relevance of the foundations of peace education? What current realms of peace research might be useful in assessment of the relevance of the foundations?

IPRA celebrated PEC's 50th anniversary in May 2023 in Trinidad and Tobago. Unfortunately, Reardon passed away only a few months later. However, this remarkable document she authored with Haavelsrud has been preserved in the archives on PEC at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology and University of Toledo. It offers reflection of more than 50 years of their contribution to peace knowledge and presents their eagerness to prepare PEC and other peace bodies to face the new threats and challenges creatively and courageously.

## Matt Meyer's Comment on the Joint Paper

In his write-up on the joint paper entitled 'IPRA – PEC At 50: Making the Most of Maturity – a response to Magnus and Betty', IPRA's Co-Secretary General Matt Meyer offers insightful comments. He says (Meyer, April 12, 2023):

> Our elders Magnus and Betty have outlined both the means of sustaining a structure designed to meet our political-educational goals, as well as the questions we need to ponder in order to go forward and grow. My addition

here is mainly to support their suggestions, perhaps adding this commentary to help spark the new dialogues we must have.

First, some key words ring out in reading their review: the founding of PEC included a deep realization of the fact that solidarity must be a central part of whatever we build, and that fierce loyalty to one another enables us to challenge each other and grow at the same time. It is no coincidence that Paulo Freire's work on critical pedagogy, so new at time, was understood to be central when confronting the ongoing imperial goals of the US in south-east Asia. The Vietnamese resistance and early socialist nation-state provide perhaps one of the last great examples of progressive statehood writ large.

What effects, then, do the changes in national liberation and anti-colonial/neocolonial struggle mean for our peace education and peace research fields? If national liberation is less significant than before, to what degree have we or must we look at non-state experiments in sovereign self-determination and justice—from the radical feminists of Rojava to the indigenous revolutionaries of the Zapatistas and from Bolivia, Chile, Venezuela, etc.?

The word "ecology" can be found as part of the early PEC, and Betty and Magnus note that concerns about our current climate crisis must be part of our dialogues today. But what of the all-too-siloed environmental movement, with so little attention paid to climate change in the global south? A recent International Peace Bureau webinar tried to rectify that by spotlighting conflict and climate perspectives from African perspectives. IPB's recently elected African Council member, Liberian-based Tyson Smith Berry, led a workshop on the same during weeks of a Pan African peace-building process Global South. What are we as a global community doing to learn about and from these colleagues?

This harkens to early PEC documents regarding the relationships between the Centre and the Periphery, which at the time also closely referenced national liberation movements in Africa, Asia, and Latin America as focal points. What now—with different Centre imperial weaknesses, sub-imperial emergences, neo-fascist movement gains, and widely divergent opinions on the role of China as mediating super-power—of the notions of "delinking" and building new people's structures outside of oppressive, violent systemic norms?

These might be questions also considered by other IPRA Commissions, but as PEC emerged and continues as a strong space for systemic evaluations and the subsequent popular education of the same, it seems to me that PEC becomes again a leading place for these dialogues. Indeed, it seems to me that these are the very basis of the "liberating ethos" of dialogical challenges to the dominant modes of thinking which Betty and Magnus articulate.

Meyer adds:

> If PEC emerged as a space fifty years ago to help raise consciousness and concrete action to build movements based on practicalities of "a just peace," then surely the need is as great as ever to delve deep into the processes and educational products which will meet the moment of 21st century consciousness. The younger class of peace educators, which very much include IPRA 2023 Trinidad conference co-coordinator Hakim Williams, seem well suited to tackle the complexities of the moment. A mature PEC at fifty enable us to come together not simply across geographies, academic disciplines, and ideologies, but across real multi-generational knowledge bases. We will never know what inspiring directions incoming PEC Commission convener Olga from Russia would have taken us, had COVID-19 not silenced her voice at the end of 2021, shortly before her country was plunged into war. We can and must however redouble our efforts to reimagine our work from all perspectives and strategies, unable to rest on the past laurels (real or imagined).
>
> Finally, we must never give space to the idea that Peace Education, even at the earliest of grade levels, is any less essential to our overall field of peace studies and research. Research, education, and action are the indelible pillars which give our field the strength to withstand enormous changes and lose, and yet maintain relevance over the long haul. Without the wisdom gained from the inter-connections of those three, both theory and practice fall flat. Let us prepare for dialogues and debates in Trinidad, as Magnus and Betty have implored and guided us—and let us plan and prepare for a PEC Centennial which will look better than our current circumstances.

## Remembrances and Reflections

Creative debates on the ideas, teachings, and writings of a thought leader and a new path builder eventually determine the impact and relevance of a peace scholar and teacher in the short and long term. From the brief overview of Reardon's contribution to peace studies, gender studies, and human rights studies presented above, it is likely that she will continue to inspire and motivate the peace theorists and activists for a long time to come. Furthermore, and as the following pieces of remembrance suggest, she will be remembered with reverence and love as a brilliant peace and gender scholar, a team and institution builder, a peace activist, and a great human soul.

**Magnus Haavelsrud:** 'Memories of friendship and work with Betty Reardon'

Since we met in a Conference on Education in Asilomar, CA, in the late 1960s, I worked with Betty throughout. First, working in her School Program at the World Law Fund, later Institute for World Order, NYC, in 1972–1973, we became involved in the planning of the first World Conference on Education for Peace held at the University of Keele, UK, in 1974. Inspired by Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, we suggested the conference theme to be *Education for Peace: Reflection and Action*. In the proceedings from this conference, the cosmopolitan Betty reported from a *Transnational Committee for Constitutional Review* aiming at ensuring that this founding conference of the World Council for Curriculum and Instruction (WCCI) should be true to its name and contribute to fair input and participation from all regions of the world (Reardon, 1976).

In the 1970s I was doing textbook research. Knowing Betty's keen interest and creativity in designing teaching materials, I invited her to write a paper. She agreed and wrote a paper entitled 'The Knowledge Industry: Impediment to Popular Participation in Education'. Her ground-making thoughts called for the inclusion of ethical considerations and values as the main root of knowledge in which *human fulfillment* ranks above the economic growth paradigm so prevalent in development thought at that time culminating with the structural adjustment programs of the World Bank. She introduced *human development* and claimed that formal education has a mandate and responsibility to contribute (Documentation: www.arkivportalen.no UBIT/A-0303/Fb/0004-0006 and /I/0007).

Betty was in the lead in her contributions to the Unesco World Congress on Disarmament Education in 1980 and in the expert group that I led on producing a Handbook on Disarmament Education called for in the final document (Documentation: www.arkivportalen.no UBIT/A-0303/G/0034-0035 and/Fb/0007). Her seven criteria of disarmament education emphasize the importance of focusing on *how* to teach about this controversial topic, ensuring that materials prepared should be designed to exercise the inventive potential of the learners and to elicit from them alternative proposals and even designs for alternative security systems (Reardon, 1985b). In the armaments logic of today, it seems that her advice is more relevant today than ever!

When on sabbatical from my university in the 1990s, I had the opportunity to participate in her Peace Education Program at Teachers College, Columbia University. One great adventure was working with Betty in

preparing for the Hague Appeal for Peace conference in 1999 where the birth of the Global Campaign for Peace Education took place with the help of many panelists—not the least Archbishop Tutu and Professor Galtung (Recording of the Founding Panel).

It was rewarding to work with Betty in the founding of the Peace Education Commission and later the Global Campaign on Peace Education. She insisted on conceptual clarity and normative guidance in our work. It was rewarding to work with her in co-authoring the paper referred to above reflecting on our participation in the foundation of the Peace Education Commission. We concluded that paper by calling for a renewed effort today to contextualize peace education in a global perspective by taking into account the aggravating existential threats to human and planetary survival. The opportunity to work with Betty on reflecting about this beginning 50 years ago gave me a sense of fulfillment because our history pointed toward the future.

I remember fondly my meeting Betty's mother and father in Rye, NY, where she grew up—and her visiting with my family roots on a farm in Norway. She reminded me that upon our trip to the summer mountain farm—where I spent my summers as a child—we got the news on the car radio about the coup against President Allende. And when I was in New York and met Betty, social activities included the Met, theatres, Riverside Church, etc.. In work settings I remember her constant focus on making *safe spaces* for all in our discussions and activities—not only safe but joyful places to be in working on challenging issues! I shall not forget when participants in a PEC/IPRA summer schools in Västerhaninge folk high school in Sweden put me and Betty to a simulated court—set in a future date—for not having done more to secure peace in the world! Peace education with Betty was not only challenging but joyful, always with a critical and also forward-looking perspective—a product, I think, not only of her pleasant personality but also of the thought collective we were lucky to become part of in the days when we were younger.

**Matt Meyer**: 'Tribute to Betty Reardon for the Book on Peace Educators'

In the year following the passing of Betty Reardon, I had the opportunity to celebrate her life publicly as a plenary speaker at the conferences of the North American, European, and Asia-Pacific affiliates of the International Peace Research Association (IPRA), the organization I've served as Secretary-General. At tributes to Betty, some aligned also with tributes to Johan Galtung and others who have passed away in the last

period, we reflected on the legacy and impact of a life of good works. For Betty, however, like for Elise Boulding before, I asserted an additional call:

> Let us stop echoing, as an interdisciplinary peace studies field, the patriarchal half-truth that Johan Galtung is the Father of Peace Research. Let us instead, all of us—from here on out—give credit to Betty, Johan, and Elise as the Parents of Peace Studies, Research, and Education.

Betty Reardon's contributions go well beyond her extraordinary writings and visionary politics, centering 'a gendered perspective' on her profound writings on peacemaking (Reardon, 2001). Her *Sexism and the War System* (Reardon, 1985a) might well now be a classic, but it should not be read outside of her larger, institutional, and internationalist analysis of peace. Though her essays surely include cutting-edge 'feminist visions of global security', they also embrace a full and important set of thinking about peace education as a distinctive field, about educating for human dignity, about our multi-faceting responsibilities to educate with our widest 'global responsibilities' in mind (Reardon, 1993). It is more than correct to view Betty, as those now collecting and compiling her work have done, as a true 'pioneer' of the field (Reardon, 1993, 2021).

Betty Reardon was, in addition to researcher and writer, the consummate activist-intellectual. In addition to her work as an early leader of IPRA and its US cohorts, and a founder of the field of Peace Education through IPRA's Peace Education Commission and countless other bodies, Betty never stopped refining her organizing work through new formations. The International Institute on Peace Education and the Global Campaign for Peace Education may be her most recent and direct organizational contributions. But her key work in setting up the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP), an extraordinary grouping of grassroots women activists from around the world, has lasting effects every day.

As GNWP Director Mavic Cabrera Balleza of the Philippines puts it:

> From conflict prevention to conflict resolution and peacebuilding, disarmament and reconstruction, militarism and patriarchy, peace negotiation and peace agreements, human rights and humanitarian action, Betty's knowledge is vast. But her compassion, especially for the marginalized and vulnerable, is vaster. Betty did not only write or speak about the concepts and the issues. She acted on them. I recall how she worked day and night to help evacuate Afghan peacebuilders and human rights defenders after the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. I also remember how she connected members of

> Black Lives Matter with human rights activists worldwide by having them participate in discussions with policymakers in the United Nations (2025).

Betty's concrete activism included making sure that IPRA and GNWP would partner with one another whenever an issue of significance arose at the United Nations or elsewhere. She pushed for a new generation of activist-scholars to rethink and recommit to the work during the IPRA conference in Trinidad, where the 50th anniversary of her founding of Peace Education Commission was celebrated. And she pressed till her last breathes for all around her to make the necessary connections between peoples, our thoughts, and our action. She once noted, in Freirean liberatory fashion:

> We must change ourselves and our immediate realities and relationships if we are to change our social structures and our patterns of thought … We cannot achieve change unless we can think it. (November 4, 2020)

Privileged to first meet Betty in the hallways of Columbia University Teachers College, I was a graduate student in the program for International Education Development, and she was an already-embattled professor fighting with TC to keep the offices of her peace education program open and available to a wide range of us. Over many decades, as New Yorkers and campaigners for peace with justice, we had many political and personal interactions. But I will always keep at the forefront of my mind the urgent task she gave me upon my election as IPRA Secretary-General: keep a focus on the connections between peace and the environment; keep a central focus on women in leadership at all levels; and make sure that a new generation, especially of young women, is involved in taking up our work. May we all pay tribute to the great Betty Reardon by redoubling our efforts in all of these areas.

**Janet Gerson**: 'Betty A. Reardon: Rebel Feminist Peace Educator'

Betty Reardon was her work. Her best birthday ever, she proclaimed, was on June 12, 1982, when one million people joined the NYC March for Peace and Justice to support the United Nations Special Session on Disarmament, call for a freeze and reduction of all nuclear weapons and a transfer of military budgets to all human needs. Born on June 12, 1929, and the daughter of a military man, she was aware of the horrors of World War II. She saw the use of nuclear weapons as a war-changing status in which all life on earth could be destroyed. No wonder therefore that she

was in the forefront to help draft the UN Declaration of the 1980s as the Second Disarmament Decade. She worked her whole life toward the abolition of war.

In 1982, she followed up the Nuclear Weapons Freeze March by co-founding the International Institute on Peace Education (IIPE) at Teachers College, Columbia University, with other professors alarmed by nuclear weapons. IIPE was a major advancement in disseminating among educators, activists, and other interested parties an innovative pedagogy focusing on peace learning issues. Subsequently, she launched the Peace Education Program at Teachers College.

Always part of radical initiatives, Betty pursued and generated opportunities for peace-building actions. The UN, as a member-state organization, presented the opportunity for non-state people to get close, listen, and respond to state-appointed officials. The UN Convention on the Status of Women (CSW) organized four global women's forums from 1975 through 1995, and Betty, of course, attended and played a significant role in all of them. She and her colleagues coordinated to build global civil society connections which formalized global civil society networks into a web of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). My first UN-NGO participation was in the 1995 UN Fourth International Women's Forum in Beijing and Huairou, China, one at which Betty was a participant in the consensus-building writing of the Beijing Platform for Action.

In 1996, I enrolled in Teachers College to study peace education with Betty. I quickly saw how focused, committed, and brilliant she was. I began working with Betty, first as a student, then as a mentee, and finally as a colleague. I supported Betty's organization and intentions at IIPEs in El Salvador; First Nations Lakota Lodge in British Columbia; Pune, India; and Byblos, Lebanon, among other places. I taught Betty's pedagogical method of Reflective Inquiry with her at the Peace Education Program at Teachers College in both New York City and Tokyo and was honored to have her watch and participate in classes that I led.

In 1997, I joined Betty at the UN Convention on the Status of Women and for many years after. That year we also lobbied UN member-states to enact protections and end to violence against women called for in the Beijing Platform for Action. This lobbying culminated in the first ever UN Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325, initiated and materialized through NGO lobbying. Betty, no surprise, was among the group of forceful women who brought this about.

A terrific side benefit of working with Betty was the opportunity to travel with her. One example among many: in 2000 we attended the International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Crimes of Sexual Slavery in World War II. This global civil society tribunal was organized to demand apologies and reparations for the surviving women victims from over ten countries. The Tribunal further aimed to develop a case to be brought to trial at the newly formed International Criminal Court. This was an extraordinary learning experience for all involved—lawyers, activists, feminists, and educators. Betty was knowledgeable and brilliant, and I never tired of reflecting with her on all we witnessed. Furthermore, and on the lighter side, Betty loved Japan. She took me to Kabuki, we rode the subways to different neighborhoods, happily learning much about Japanese food and drink, and, sadly, observing current manifestations on the Tokyo streets of trafficking in women.

In 2001, when Betty 'retired', I became Acting Director and then Co-Director, along with Tony Jenkins, of the Peace Education Center and soon after, the IIPE Education Director with Tony as Managing Director. At the 2009 IIPE in Budapest, Betty paid us the highest compliment, saying the IIPE was now even more than she could have imagined.

Betty's ground-breaking book *Sexism and the War System* (1988) radically linked gender discrimination and military violence. Patriarchy was the underlying worldwide system that made women less than and susceptible to violence in both war and so-called peacetime. To challenge patriarchy, she continuously organized working groups. The Women's International Network on Gender and Human Security was one, a group of women to address violence against women in their various countries. We then presented our reports at the 1999 Hague Civil Society Conference to Abolish War, an amazing 10,000 person gathering spearheaded by Cora Weiss. It was here that Betty and Cora co-launched the Global Campaign for Peace Education. Another such group was FeDem, Feminist Activists and Scholars Working for Gender and Human Security, a group that resulted in *The Gender Imperative: Human Security vs State Security* (2010), the book Betty co-authored with Asha Hans.

At her 90th birthday party, Betty announced she always really wanted to be a chanteuse, and she took the mike and sang, quite well, a song or two to drive home the point. Cabaret's loss was peace education's gain. Betty was a rebel feminist. She rejected the traditional trajectory for women of her time. Starting as a history teacher, she devoted herself to educating for peace, her lifelong commitment. To that end, at her last

friends-and-family gathering, she directed us to keep fighting the patriarchy. And then, inevitably, she directed us to divide into small groups and develop our next action steps.

From 1996 until her death in 2023, Betty and I were friends and global peace activist educators together. I miss her courageous, ingenious, superintelligent presence. Besides my family, she was the best education and blessing I ever received.

**Daale Snauwaert:** 'A Note on Betty Reardon'

My association with Betty Reardon spanned over three decades. Our shared interest in exploring both the theory and practice of peace and justice studies, human rights, democracy, and peace education was the basis of a meaningful collaboration, which enriched my perspective in countless, invaluable ways (Brantmeier et al., 2024). Any number of Reardon's original lines of inquiry and foundational ideas have significantly influenced my work and the development of theory and practice of peace education globally. I've had the honor of curating her collected papers at the Canaday Center at the University of Toledo (Documentation, c6eb1af0-f6c9-4bd3-a1a1-6d0951e044f9), as well as editing two volumes of her essential works and a volume of reflections on her legacy (Reardon and Snauwaert, 2015a, 2015b; Snauwaert, 2019).

I first met Betty in the Fall of 1990 at Colgate University, which started a friendship and professional relationship that lasted for over 30 years. What was remarkable, and deeply important to me, was Betty's genuine interest in my work. She really saw me for who I was and my potential as a person, educator, and scholar, and provided me with continuous support and inspiration. Although Betty was my senior and internationally celebrated, I too recognized her. I saw her for who she was, as a gifted educator and scholar, one of far-reaching vision, but also as a loving, generous, and compassionate person. I also recognized her tenacity and fierceness, a powerful woman on a mission!

Her core ideas—universal human dignity and moral inclusion, human rights as the ethical core of peace education, violence understood as dehumanization as the core problematic, the purpose of peace education as the development of political efficacy in terms of the capacities of persons through a pedagogy of reflective inquiry, and her idea of peace and human rights learning—have significantly shaped the development of my own understanding of peace education and peace and justice studies. It was Reardon's vision that a society that recognizes and values dignity and moral inclusion through the universal actualization of human rights

secures an enduring foundation for justice. At the core of her perspective was the proposition that a reflective and empowering form of education was the key to a more just and peaceful world. Moreover, central to her work was an interest in understanding the multiple forms of violence as features or elements of social systems justified by particular ways of thinking and not as isolated events. Furthermore, she argued that not only the structures of society but the structures of consciousness as well could, and should be, transformed through an inquiry-based, reflective, and process-oriented education.

In addition, Betty had the insight that the achievement of peace and justice cannot be realized without a fundamental change 'in the distribution and locus of power in the world order and the global economic system', and that a 'democratic redistribution of power' (Snauwaert, 2019, p. 3) is a necessary condition for its realization. She identified power as the first question of justice and asked what would constitute a morally justifiable distribution of power as well as the valid source of political legitimacy. Betty asserted that a major impediment to the realization of a just peace is a profoundly unequal 'global power arrangement' linked to the war system and legitimized by patriarchy. She offered an insightful argument that the core impediment to any fairer redistribution of power, within and across societies, is the interrelated structure of patriarchy and the war system. Both structures and ideologies are grounded in a hierarchical structure of power. As she stated, 'the global patriarchal order, a power hierarchy that places all human beings on various levels of a hierarchy of human value and political power, is the essential problematic that must be addressed in assessment of and prescription for solutions to development and other world problems' (Snauwaert, 2019, p. 4). A central idea here is that the internal psychological dynamics of fear and projection as underlying elements of patriarchy and the war system could be replaced by a widespread increase in reflective capacity and self-awareness. In this regard, Betty's reflective pedagogy cultivates political efficacy within a holistic peace-learning process essential for the movement from domination to empowerment and the creation of a just peace for all.

Reardon's conceptualization of these foundational ideas of peace education has been a great influence on my work. Following Betty I believe that peace is best conceived as the *presence of justice* (Snauwaert, 2023) and is contingent upon the informed political participation of citizens, based on their capacity for political efficacy. Current citizens have a *civic duty* to provide future citizens with a political education that is devoted to

the development of their political efficacy (Snauwaert, 2020), hence, the significance of inquiry into the normative, ethical and moral, foundations of peace education (Snauwaert, 2023). In this sense, like Betty, my work is informed by, and addressed to persons who aspire to, democracy. I explore moral reasoning concerning justice as intimately linked to the sociopolitical context of democracy and democratic processes of deliberation.

## Conclusion

In the contemporary times, which are so challenging, anarchic, and heart-wrenching, Professor Betty A. Reardon is missed terribly. Being a justice seeker for all, a courageous peace academic and scholar and human rights and women rights activist, she wouldn't have remained silent on the brutal issues of war and violence being faced by the peoples of the world today. But she is not there. However, her students, colleagues, and friends all over the world are there to tell her story to the younger generations everywhere and keep the hope alive for peace, justice, and change. Ms. Ingeborg Breines, who held important positions in Unesco, who had worked closely with Reardon in Unesco's women and culture of peace program in particular, and who served as President of the International Peace Bureau from 2009 to 2016, echoed the sentiments of all those who knew Dr. Betty Reardon when she said (Breines):

> The world has lost a major pillar of peace education, a great teacher and a feminist anti-war scholar and activist. We, who had the huge privilege of being her long-term friend, have lost a loving and caring friend, an inspirational and knowledgeable discussion partner and a wonderful person for joyful interaction. Betty Reardon was an exceptionally inspiring person, through her writing and teaching, as well as through her personality. She was courageous and consistent and had a huge capacity for friendship and care. She managed to bridge the personal and the political, the analytical and the practical.

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# Peace Ideas, Peace Education and Peace Movements

# Peace Educators and Politics of Disowning

*Syed Sikander Mehdi*

## Introduction

Hopes and dreams are like the sparkling stars. They brighten human imagination and perspective, and provide a reason for living and struggling. However, both dreams and hopes are being systematically extinguished in the world today. On the one hand, the very structure of international governance, aspired to be based on international law and cooperation, fraternalization, and peaceful resolution of conflicts, is crumbling down; and on the other, international institutions including the UN System, regional inter-governmental bodies and international civil society organizations are powerless before the powerful. Worse still, the images of a better future for all, painted by the peace educators, researchers and other visionaries, are fast fading. But how can the world move forward with extinguished dreams and hopes?; and how can the dreams and hopes sparkle once again?

This essay attempts to explore answer to these and several other related questions. It is broadly divided into three parts: the first reviews the state of global affairs with a focus on the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war and the genocide in Gaza; the second discusses the causes and consequences of disowning the peace philosophers, educators and researchers; and the

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third suggests steps to own the peace educators and strengthen the rule-based global and local societies in these seismic times.

## Challenge of the Seismic Times

It is likely that the global humans will still exist at the end of this century and later, and hopefully the state won't—at least not in its present cruel form. However, and in these seismic times in particular, it is important to understand that the humans would enjoy the blessings and bounties of life only when popular dissent and human agency would triumph over the savage state and convert it into an agency for common good (Bleiker, 2000). At the moment, the future looks very bleak. The grass in the Jurassic Park is being trampled by the wild dinosaurs. The lofty ideas of freedom, equal rights and justice for all and the declarations, pledges and promises to resolve conflicts through peaceful means are being torn into pieces. These are dark times. The powerful hold sway and show no respect for human values, humanistic traditions, and sanctity of life and relationship. They hound around without any fear of being caught and punished.

The world had doubtless suffered the savageness of the powerful even in the modern times. However, hope was always there that the condition of global humans would improve with the spread of peace ideas, development of international law and international humanitarian law, establishment of strong international institutions to regulate international affairs and facilitate equitable distribution of resources and windfall of development. It was also hoped that the spread of awareness would make the policy makers and other decision makers realize that wars must not be waged on any pretext, violence should be contained, genocides banished and human rights including women's rights respected. It was also hoped that the pioneering peace ideas would subsequently be owned and put into practice by all the stake holders. A number of peace ideas bloomed during the last 50 years or so. Some of these are: (a) human interest and not national interest should guide governance and statecraft (Johansen, 1980) (b) a more just, equal and peaceful world order is possible and peace and justice is possible in the Middle East as well (Richard Falk, 1983, 1992, 1995, 2016, 2017); (c) the condition of peace would improve when the human situation would improve; (d) a nonkilling world is not only desirable, it is possible (Paige, 2002); and (e) poverty, inequality, racism, extremism, nuclearism and militarism can be diminished through powerful transformative nonviolent movements (Sharp, 2005; Ackerman

& Duvall, 2000; Ackerman & Kruegler, 1994; Bleiker, 2000; Sharp, 1973; Zunes et al., 1999).

However, the recent events unfolding in quick succession have proved all those wrong who had thought that an alternate reality and an alternate future were arriving. Such a future isn't arriving. Wearing fanciful costumes and promising new futures, it is the savage pasts that have kept on arriving. Same is true of the contemporary times as well, but this time the savage past has returned in its old blood stained costume and with a religious zeal for vengeance.

As a result, all those have become stronger today, who had always maintained that the writ of the powerful had always prevailed and what is happening now affirms the universal and historical truth that power and exercise of power matter most and nothing else. However, the contemporary era is somewhat different from previous eras. The awareness is widespread today that wars, violence and subjugation of the weak are destructive and unlawful, and freedoms, rights, justice, participatory politics and rule-based governance are essential for the progress of societies and advancement of civilizations. Nevertheless and despite such awareness, the gruesome events of the recent years affirm that even now the more powerful a state is, the more privileged it would be to carry out its plans without any fear. Such events include the US invasion and occupation of Afghanistan after 9/11, US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003, and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war and genocide in Gaza. Again, the future looks more precarious because of American President Donald Trump's readiness for economic bloodbath and issuance of declarations like Canada should be the 51st state of the US, Greenland and the Panama Canal should either be acquired or bought by the US, the Gulf of Mexico should be renamed the Gulf of America, and the Middle Eastern regional order should be redesigned not by the peoples of the region but by the US and other powerful collaborators.

Way back in 2014, the American political scientist and former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger published a book on world order. He devoted a full chapter on the Middle East. Entitling it 'Islamism and the Middle East: A World in Disorder', he observed in this chapter that 'the world awaits the distillation of a new regional order by America and other countries in a position to take a global view' (145). The world didn't have to wait for long. In less than a decade after the publication of the book, both Israel and the US are in action to dismantle the remnant of the old regional order in the Middle East and build a new order through forced

regime changes, intimidation and reward. Meanwhile, two short wars were fought recently— one between India and Pakistan and the other between Israel plus US and Iran.

These and several other developments indicate the gravity of the situation. It is likely that some other states would also be tempted to settle their territorial disputes through war and military intervention. Similarly, tension is bound to mount in Africa and Asia in particular for the acquisition of mineral and other resources by external powers through military and other coercive means. The sudden outbreak of a border war between the two Southeast Asian countries—Thailand and Cambodia—only a few weeks ago in July 2025 indicates which way the wind is blowing.

Aren't these gruesome events a kind of an indication that power alone would ride the future as it had done in the past? Or would the peace educators and other futurist visionaries be listened to and similar man-made catastrophes prevented and a new history of future written? The following section on Russia-Ukraine war and Gaza genocide may help find an answer.

## Russia-Ukraine War and Its Beneficiaries?

Russia is a permanent member of the UN Security Council and a leading stake holder in global affairs. After its dismemberment in 1991, the American and European influence increased in its former European and Asian territories. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, a US-led military organization, established in 1949 with 12 members to contain and control communism in Europe, was not disbanded after the fall of the Soviet Empire. It was expanded. Now it has 32 members. A number of new members from Russia's near and distant neighborhood have joined it. The new members are: the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland (1999), Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia (2004), Albania and Croatia (2009), Montenegro (2017), North Macedonia (2020), Finland (2023) and Sweden (2024). There were rumors that Ukraine would also be roped into NATO. Russia struck back on February 24, 2022 and invaded Ukraine in the name of national security and with the resolve that Ukraine wouldn't be allowed to join NATO and Moscow would protect the Ukrainian citizens of ethnic Russians in Ukraine, constituting a little over 17 percent of Ukraine's population. How would have the United States reacted if Russia had revived its Warsaw Pact and attempted to bring in the European and Latin American countries into this military alliance?

The Russia-Ukraine war has gone on since February 24, 2022. Neither the US, nor China, nor the UN, nor the European states have been able to stop it, because every actor has its own axe to grind. For instance, the United States—the most powerful state of the world—has been busy adding fuel to fire and helping the war linger on by stirring up the European states to rise to the occasion, militarize themselves to their fullest capacity and jointly challenge the Russian military might, weaken Russia economically and isolate it diplomatically. To achieve its objectives, the US government provided $66.9 billion in military assistance to Ukraine since the beginning of the war in 2022 (US Department of State, March 12, 2025). It has also imposed a broad sweep of sanctions. According to a study of the US-based Council on Foreign Relations, these are in addition to plenty of sanctions imposed earlier, after the Russian annexation of the Ukrainian region of Crimea in 2014. The report informs that a fresh action began in 2022 with the freezing of $5 billion of the Russian central bank's assets in the US. All together the sanctions restricted dealings with 80 percent of Russian banking sector assets. The report further informs that Russia's energy sector was also targeted. A year before the war, the report informs, Russia had recorded more than $240 billion in energy export, half of it coming from the sale of oil. In March 2022, the US banned the import of Russian crude oil, liquefied natural gas, and coal, and restricted US investments in most Russian energy companies. In December 2022, the US and the Group of Seven (G-7) members implemented rules aiming at capping the price that other importing countries like China and India were to pay for importing crude oil from Russia. Along with these, a number of other sanctions were also imposed to cripple the Russia economy. In due course, the European Union and some other governments followed the US and imposed sanctions targeting the Russian financial channels and military technology (CFR Editors, July 14, 2025).According to BBC, two years after the start of the war, 500 new sanctions were announced by the American government of President Joe Biden (February 23, 2024), and President Donald Trump threatened India on August 4, 2025 to hike US tariffs on goods coming from India for India's purchase of Russia oil.

Ending the war doesn't seem to be the first or preferred option of the parties involved in the war. Within four months after the start of the war, on June 16, 2022, John J. Mearsheimer, R. Wendell Harrison Distinguished Service Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago, delivered a lecture at the Robert Schuman Centre of the European University Institute in Florence, Italy and said that 'the United States is principally

responsible for causing the Ukraine crisis'. He explained that he wasn't denying that Putin started the war, and added that the United States pushed forward policies toward Ukraine that Putin and his colleagues saw as an existential threat to their country. Mearsheimer said: 'The United States is not seriously interested in finding a diplomatic solution to the war, which means the war is likely to drag on for months, if not years. In the process, Ukraine, which has already suffered grievously, is going to experience even greater harm. In essence, the United States and its allies are helping lead Ukraine down the primrose path' (Mearsheimer, n.d.).

The war thus goes on and the beneficiaries reap the harvest. For instance, for Vladimir Putin, the longest serving Russian President in his country, the war is an opportunity to consolidate his position within his country, enhance Russian influence in the Asian and European neighborhood, strengthen its ties with China in particular, and diminish American domination over Europe. Similarly, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the 6th President of Ukraine in power since May 20, 2019, seems to be struggling to stay on the saddle by whipping up nationalistic and patriotic sentiments and obtain maximum economic and military support from the US and the European states. Likewise, the war is seen to be helping the US to rehabilitate itself in Europe, club together the reluctant European states under its command against Russia and China and arrest the pace of increasing China–Europe cooperation. Again, the war provides a justification or pretext especially to the European military establishments to spend more on defense and military preparedness. Equally, perhaps more importantly, the war offers fabulous bounties and windfalls to the weapon-manufacturing and selling corporations and countries—major beneficiaries of any war. They are the invisible dinosaurs trampling the grass of the Jurassic Park most.

Meanwhile, it is the common people of Russia, Ukraine, the US, the European states and rest of the world who are suffering the consequences of Russia-Ukraine war, a war which has now entered its fourth year. As a report says, 12.7 million people are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance, 'in what has become the largest and fastest displacement crisis in Europe since World War II'. Over 6 million have reportedly fled the country and millions more have been displaced within the country (International Rescue Committee, n.d.).Furthermore, more than 42,000 Ukrainian civilians have been wounded or killed in the war, including 2500 children, and 2.5 million homes have been damaged or destroyed across Ukraine. The number of Russians killed or wounded in the war is estimated to be

in hundreds of thousands and several online sources claim that the number has crossed one million. It is clear that it is in the interest of the beneficiaries of Russia-Ukraine war that the war is prevented from ending soon. As such, the need to disown the peace visionaries and educators, who vehemently oppose war, any war, anywhere, and recommend the settlement of disputes through peaceful means. True that the Russia-Ukraine war would end one day as all wars end, but who will pay most for the deadly war which lingers on partly due to the disowning of the peace educators by different players. What about the continuing genocide in Gaza?

## Genocide in Gaza and the Handcuffed Humanity

Humankilling is not something new. It is an old practice. It was carried on in the primitive times and in the later periods as well. World history is flooded with details of genocides and wars waged in different periods. These include the barbarism of the European conquerors and settlers inflicted on the indigenous populations and black slaves of Americas in particular (Grimshaw, 1999, pp. 53–74). Large-scale humankillings and genocides continued to occur during the European colonial era and in the post-colonial era (Fanon, 1963). The genocides planned and surgically executed since the beginning of the twentieth century include the Armenian, Holocaust, Cambodian, Bosnian and Herzegovinian and Rwandan genocides, and the ongoing Rohingya and Gaza genocides.

Among these and several others, the Holocaust is one of the most barbaric recorded in the modern human history. It was a systematic and state-sponsored persecution, causing the murder of six million European Jews by the German Nazis between 1933 and 1945. This tragic event is also one of the most well-researched, well-documented and well-recorded tragedies of modern times and the details have been provided through memoirs, eyewitness accounts, hundreds of historical studies, government reports, novels, paintings, photographs, and movies (Gilbert, 1985; Hilberg, 2003; Wiesel, 1960). Moreover, the memories have also been preserved by a number of Holocaust museums. In addition, a number of universities offer academic programs on Holocaust and Genocide Studies.

Again, the Holocaust commemorations are held on a regular basis. Highlighting the objectives of commemorating Holocaust, the online site of a Holocaust Museum says: ‘The US Holocaust Memorial Museum

teaches that the Holocaust was preventable and that by heeding warning signs and taking early action, individuals and governments can save lives. With this knowledge the Simon–Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide works to do for the victims of genocide today what the world failed to do for the Jews of Europe in the 1930s and 1940s'. It adds: 'The mandate of the Simon–Skjodt is to alert the United States' national conscience, influence policy makers, and simulate worldwide action to prevent and work to halt acts of genocide or related crimes against humanity, and advance justice and accountability' (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, n.d.).

However, neither remembrance nor commemoration of the Holocaust could prevent or halt the acts of barbarism in Gaza. Likewise, scores of well-researched books on mass-scale humankillings because of wars, violence and atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki authored by peace scholars and others (Paige, 2002; Gerson, 2007; Schell, 1982; Beres, 1980) and a number of peace studies programs offered by the universities and colleges around the world couldn't prevent and stop the genocide in Gaza. It is now nearing two years. As such, with some justification one may ask if there is any benefit of teaching Peace Studies and Holocaust and Genocide Studies if wars and genocides can't be prevented (Mehdi, 2024a, pp. 382–385). A review of the human situation in Gaza may indicate how pertinent this question is.

To begin with, on October 7, 2023, the Islamic Resistance Movement, abbreviated Hamas, launched an assault on Israel from Gaza Strip and killed 1200 people, mostly Israeli citizens, making it the deadliest day for the country since its creation as a state in Palestine in 1948. Another 250 were abducted. The next day, Israel declared itself in a state of war. Soon after, hell was let loose on the humans of Gaza. The horrendous details of barbarism are being continuously reported by the UN bodies, Amnesty International and international media. For instance, a series of articles and reports was published on Gaza recently by *The New York Times International Edition* (Bartov July 19–20, 2025; Bashi August 1, 2025; Wall August 4, 2025; French August 5, 2025; Stephens August 7, 2025). Among these, the one authored by Bartov and entitled 'I'm a genocide scholar. I know it when I see it' is being referred here especially because of the author's background, career and expertise. As he informs, he grew up in a Zionist home, lived the first half of his life in Israel, served in the Israeli Defense Forces (I.D.F.), spent most of his career researching and

writing on war crimes and the Holocaust. He is now working as a Professor of Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Brown University in the US.

Bartov says that 'the systematic destruction in Gaza not only of housing but also of other infrastructure – government buildings, hospitals, universities, schools, mosques, cultural heritage sites, water treatment plants, agricultural areas, and parks – reflects a policy aimed at making the revival of Palestinian life in the territory highly unlikely'. He adds:

> According to a recent investigation by Haaretz, an estimated 174,000 buildings have been destroyed or damaged, accounting for up to 70 percent of all structures in the Strip. So far, more than 58,000 people have been killed, according to Gazan health authorities, including more than 17,000 children who make up nearly a third of the total fatality count. More than 870 of those children were less than a year old. More than 2,000 families have been wiped out, the health authorities said. In addition, 5,600 families now count only one survivor. At least 10,000 people are believed to still be buried under the ruins of their homes. More than 138,000 have been wounded and maimed. Gaza now has the grim distinction of having the highest number of amputee children per capita in the world. (July 19–20, 2025)

On July 17, 2025, a couple of days before the publication of Bartov's article, the UN released a report on Gaza. It was prepared by Reem Alsalem, UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences. Alsalem, one may add, has a Master's degree in Human Rights Law from Oxford University, UK and she has vast experience of working as an independent consultant on humanitarian issues for various UN departments, think tanks and academia. In addition, she has worked with the UNHCR in 13 countries. In her report, she informs that 'Israel was deliberately killing Palestinian women and girls with the intent to destroy them and the continuity of the Palestinian people'. Calling it a 'femi-genocide', she pointed out that the women and children constitute the majority of the Palestinians killed by July 9, 2025. She added: 'The horrors that Palestinian mothers, in particular, continue to endure – watching their children slowly starved, killed, maimed, and buried alive – is killing them repeatedly in a single day'. Adding that the 'psychological trauma they, and all Palestinians in Gaza, are suffering knows no bounds and a number of women, including mothers, have also been killed while seeking food and water for their families' Alsalem calls for immediate global action to halt the unfolding 'femi-genocide' and laments: 'The

violence and atrocities that Palestinian women are subjected to have become so normalized that they are now the new accepted reality, even in other conflicts. No one seems to bat an eyelid anymore when hearing about the terror women are experiencing' (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, July 17, 2025).

It is tragic that Gaza's population of more than 2 million is facing a devastating man-made and preventable humanitarian crisis. However, more tragic is the fact the world is very reluctant to come to their rescue. Mohammad Mansour, a senior nutrition manager with the International Rescue Committee, one of the few organizations that is able to deliver aid in Gaza, says that 'nearly half a million Gazans now face catastrophic levels of food insecurity, one of the worst hunger crises in the world today'. He further says that 'roughly 100,000 children and women are facing severe acute malnutrition' and adds that after 'the Israeli government imposed a blockade on humanitarian aid entering in March, I saw a sharp rise in hunger especially among infants and toddlers, that has not abated'. Besides starvation, aerial bombing from time to time causes humankilling and infrastructural destruction routinely and forces displacement of families several times' (*The New York Times International Edition,* July 25, 2025*)*.

Meanwhile, the world watches all this helplessly. More than 190 independent, sovereign states—all members of the United Nations—haven't been able to restrain Israel and halt the genocide so far. True that this genocide will also end one day as all other previous genocides ended, but this man-made calamity could have been avoided if peaceful solutions offered by the peace educators for the region were given due importance and attention by all the parties involved in the protracted conflict.

## Peace Educators and Peace Teaching

But who are these peace educators this essay is talking about? Clearly not the scholars and policy makers who use the term peace in their works and statements only to abuse the term and defend the brutalities and criminalities committed within and abroad in the name of national interest, national security and also peace. Despite their exclusion, the list of 'peace educators' would still be long enough if it included all those who seek peace, nurture peace, teach peace and ignite peace. To be fair, any idea, person, forum, institution, memorial or event showcasing peace and justice can be called a peace teacher. As such, the anti-war novels like George Orwell's dystopian novel *1984*, Harriet Beecher Stowe's anti-slavery novel *Uncle*

*Tom's Cabin,* George Bernard Shaw's anti-militarist play *Arms and the Man*, Charlie Chaplin's anti-authoritarian stage play *The Dictator* (Mehdi, 2022, pp. 193–194), Stanley Kubrick's anti-war movie *Paths to Glory*, Japanese poet Sankichi Toge's famous anti-atomic bombing poem 'Give back my father, give back my mother', Pablo Picasso' painting entitled *Guernica, 1937* (Dubin, 1999, pp. 637–638) and the paintings of Vasily Vereshchagin—'Greatest Painter of the Horrors of War That Ever Lived' (van den Dungen 2024, pp. 291–297) can be called peace teachers. In addition, all those peace heroes are peace educators, who belong to Ukraine, Gaza, West Bank and scores of prison houses, also called nation states. Again, thousands of those can be called peace educators who have been rising up against the tyrannies and unfreedoms in their own homelands and also those who raise their voice against the atrocities committed by their own governments on other countries. Of course, the list of peace teachers cannot be complete if it misses out scores of nonviolent leaders, like Mahatma Gandhi, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela and the peace historians who wrote about their inspiring lives, struggles, sacrifices and achievements (Gandhi, 2005; Cortright, 2009; Sutherland & Meyer, 2000; Khan, 2004; Easwaran, 2011; Korejo, 1994; Carson, 2001; King Jr., 1964; Mandela, 1994; Sampson, 1999).

Viewed in this perspective, even wars and violent events can be called peace teachers. The Kalinga War, for example, was one of the bloodiest wars fought in ancient India. It was waged by King Ashoka of the powerful Magadha kingdom in 261 BC against the Kingdom of Kalinga. This war resulted in the captivity of 150,000 persons, massacre of 100,000, and death of many times more due to war-related diseases and other causes. This war taught peace to the warrior king and transformed him into a glorious king of peace (National School of Journalism, September 8, 2022). In the modern times, both Hiroshima and Nagasaki can be called peace teachers because of their role in enhancing nuclear literacy and empowering several anti-nuclear movements including the abolition movement. Likewise, the protest marches on the streets of the world cities against the war in Vietnam and apartheid in South Africa, women's movements for their rights including the brave movement of women against the disappearance of their loved ones in Chile and in other countries (Kristof & WuDunn, 2009), and the protest marches and demonstrations in different parts of the world against the US invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, Russian invasion of Ukraine, and Israeli genocide in Gaza can be called peace teachers. In the same way, the protest marches against economic,

cultural and military slaveries and destruction of ecosystem can be called peace teachers. Finally, most of the women of the world can be called peace teachers, because they build peace in their homes.

However, this essay focuses on only one category of peace educators, a category which is least celebrated: the peace academics. Unlike the social and political activists, who are usually visibilized, dignified and glorified in their lifetime, peace academics—weavers of brilliant peace thoughts and galvanizers of peace movements—are not. They are seldom glorified in their lifetime and even after their death. These are the people who produce highly commendable and innovative ideas to promote peace and human wellness. In addition, they offer creative approaches and strategies to weaken the age old violent structures of governance and considerably diminish the power, domination and influence of the powerful over the vast majority of poor, powerless and vulnerable communities and nations. They call upon all the constituencies benefiting from the prevalent power system to do away with the savage practices of the past, including the use of military and other violent means to settle disputes between and among the countries and peoples and insist on building rule-based and justice-based global and local human societies. Through their lectures, research and published works, they present themselves as natural partners of the victims and targets of the powerful—be they Christians, Jews, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists or followers of other faiths or whatever. They are also natural partners of all those suffering because of the prevailing power system and belonging to different countries, regions, cultures and historical background. More importantly, they insist that the world can be made a better place to live for all and it should be. They also present solutions and show the way how the world can be transformed. Moreover, though little noticed and discussed, their lectures, research and published works significantly strengthen and galvanize international movements against war, violence, nuclear and conventional weapons, exploitation, injustice and unfreedom.

Take, for example, war itself. The contemporary world is more aware of the devastating consequences of war than ever before. It understands that war is neither inevitable nor unavoidable, and peace is possible. As a result, war is not glamorized any more. It is resented worldwide. That's why inter-state war is more infrequent now than ever it was. This noticeable advancement is considerably due to the spread of peace thoughts of visionaries like Erasmus of Rotterdam and hundreds of other peace thinkers before him and after (van den Dungen, 2024, pp. 433–454). In the recent

times, hundreds of peace educators' constituencies have been actively working to disseminate peace thoughts and build a culture of peace around the world. These include the International Peace Research Association (IPRA), International Network of Museums for Peace (INMP), Centre for Global Nonkilling, World Beyond War, International Peace Research Institute (PRIO), Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame, Department of Peace Studies and Development at Bradford University, Department of Peace and Conflict Research in Uppsala University, UN University for Peace in Costa Rica, Kyoto Museum for World Peace at Ritsumeikan University and The Transcend Peace University. Similarly, several other peace teaching and research centers like the Gandhian centers, women study centers and human rights centers have been teaching courses and producing ground-breaking studies on governance, development and human security issues.

As a result, peace as an idea and movement is in the forefront today. It challenges the traditional concepts of security, development and governance, emphasizes the responsibility of the states toward building a more peaceful, just and equitable world, and calls to place the happiness, wellness and security of the humans at the center of global and local governance. By any count or criterion, the promotion of peace thoughts by the peace educators and researchers, especially since the 1960s, is spectacular. A number of peace educators of this period have played a pioneering role in enhancing the frontiers of the concepts of peace, development, governance, human rights and women rights. Among them, Professor Johan Galtung was doubtless a titanic figure. Through his pioneering writings on direct, indirect, structural and cultural violence and on war, militarism, peace journalism, science and peace, power-based world order and regional order and on conflict resolution through peaceful means, he helped peace studies take root and transform itself into an applied human and social science. He was also the founder of Transcend University—world's first online peace university (Mehdi, 2024a, pp. 380–399; 2024b, pp. 55–70; Gledistch, 2022, pp. 493–500; Galtung & Fischer, 2013). Likewise, Professor Kenneth Boulding, an economist, peace educator and activist and an interdisciplinary philosopher, emphasized the importance of economic justice for establishing stable peace in any society and in the world at large (Boulding, 1978). His wife Elise Boulding, a sociologist and peace academic, is widely renowned for her pioneering studies on family as a foundation for peace, peace societies and peace cultures (Boulding, 1988).

A number of women peace educators and scholars including Professor Betty Reardon—a distinguished peace educator and activist—may also be referred here for their pioneering works on the plight of women and children in war and war-like situations, showing the hidden aspects of the ugliness of war (Reardon, 1996). Similarly, a number of peace educators and leaders of the museums for peace movement deserve mention for highlighting the importance of preserving, memorializing and celebrating memory and history through the museums for peace (Anzai, 2008, pp. 109–122; van den Dungen, 2024; Baker & Mutisya, 2024, pp. 66–95; Joyce Apsel, 2015; Yamane & Barrett, 2024, pp. 49–65; Tamashoro, 2024, pp. 183–208). Again, Professor Wolfgang Dietrich should be mentioned here for rejecting the pretentious and patronizing idea of a single world culture and presenting the idea of many cultures and many peaces (Dietrich, 2011, pp. 3–23). In addition, a number of peace educators floated the idea that peace, progress and security are connected to the wellness of all the peoples of the world. Several peace educators advocated the application of gain-gain theory to promote mutually beneficial bilateral and multilateral relations and projected the idea of common security, cooperative security, civilian-based security, human security, and the peacebuilding role of confidence-building measures in national and international affairs, and initiation of dialogue among civilizations. In the same way, the annual release of global indexes on the state and status of the humans in different countries, including the Global Peace Index, present a strong case in favor of peace and peacebuilding everywhere.

In the light of the above, it is clear that a solid theoretical foundation for peacemaking and peacebuilding has been laid by the peace educators, but their peace ideas are not taken seriously by those who manage global, national and local governance.

## Disowning the Peace Educators

In a way, it would be wrong to say that the peace educators are not taken seriously by the policy makers, power elites and other beneficiaries of the power system. There are evidences that they are taken seriously in the corridors of power, because they are considered a threat to the system built with ruthless calculation to serve diverse categories of beneficiary power constituencies and groups. After all, it is not without reason that especially the bold and creative peace thinkers, educators and researchers remain vulnerable throughout their life and career. They face multiple challenges

including the risk of losing job and livelihood, harassment by the government, assault by the extremists, and assassination or assassination attempts or exile. Many face difficulty in publishing their articles on peace and conflict in the mainstream newspapers and magazines and they are rarely invited by the leading television channels to express their views in the programs. Likewise, not all publishing houses come forward to publish their research works and fewer pay them well. Furthermore, their published works are rarely celebrated. Usually the academia, research centers and media show little keenness to discuss their works and the book shelves of the university and college libraries are usually stuffed with studies highlighting the importance of acquiring more power to survive in the anarchic world. Worse still, the military establishments all over the world look at the peace educators as daydreamers, unrealistic and unpatriotic people. Similarly, the heartless corporate world including the weapon manufacturing and selling corporations and countries as well as the exploitative private sector world regard the peace educators as a bunch of disgruntled people bent on to destroy their businesses and power. Consequently a number of power groups join hands and work to discredit the peace educators and destroy their credibility. Those who agree to go with the wave and agree to serve the interests of powerful bodies including the deep states are often brought into limelight and showcased as celebrities. In contrast, all those who take principled stand on human issues are usually driven into obscurity, poverty and solitary living. In short, the peace educators are largely disowned. They are also ridiculed.

As a matter of fact, ridiculing the new thought weavers is in practice since the ancient times. The Greek comedy play *The Clouds*, written by Aristophanes, brutally caricatures Socrates, one of the greatest philosophers of all times. A recent example is that of Bertha Von Suttner. She was one of the most influential peace leaders of her time. She had co-founded the Austrian Society of the Friends of Peace in 1891, helped the founding of the German Peace Society next year, and actively participated in the then male-dominated peace meetings and congresses. She received the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1905—the first woman to receive this prize. She is also remembered for authoring one of the most influential books of the nineteenth century—a novel titled *Die Waffen nieder* (*Lay Down Your Arms*). In this novel, she wrote about the brutalities of war at a time when war was glorified, warriorism celebrated, and nationalism revered. However, a woman of such stature and vision was often ridiculed in the circles of social and power elites. The practice of ridiculing peace

visionaries and educators continues even today. Eminent Peace educator Professor David Cortright deplores this practice and observes in a study: 'Jesus said that peacemakers are to be blessed as children of God, but in the real world they are often dismissed as utopian dreamers or sores, quaking defeatists who live in denial of reality' (Cortright, 2008, p. 1).

Ironically enough, the peace academics are also marginalized by denying Nobel Peace Prize to them. This prize is rarely awarded to them. In contrast, the recipients of the Nobel Prize in other fields, often including literature, usually comprise university professors and researchers. It is the Norwegian Nobel Committee, consisting of five members appointed by the Storting (the Norwegian Parliament), which selects the future peace laureates every year and awards the Nobel Peace Prize. However, it seems that the Committee is fond of awarding this prize to individuals holding high governmental positions like Presidents, Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers, diplomats, elitist international organizations like the UN and its specialized agencies, social workers, high profile leaders of nonviolence, human rights activists, media personalities and women and environment activists.

A survey of the Nobel Peace Prizes, awarded since 1901, would strongly suggest that the Norwegian Nobel Committee isn't very fond of awarding the prize to peace academics—to those who seed peace, nurture peace, and give birth to or midwife peace movements. Ignoring peace academics for the Prize is not only disowning the peace academics but also hurting the cause of global, regional and local peace, because the Nobel Peace Prize is not an ordinary peace prize. It is the most prestigious and most popular peace prize. The moment an announcement is made in early October every year about the recipient or recipients receiving this award, the life, struggle and peace role of the recipient begin to be discussed by the mainstream media, academia, civil service organizations and government circles all over the world. In an instant, a peace laureate becomes globally influential. By denying this award to deserving peace academics, the world runs the risk of being deprived of the wisdom and inspiration carried by their peace ideas. However precious and important the life, struggle and thoughts of such a peace academic be, the world, especially the developing world, is likely to remain less informed about their life and works, but the same academic would receive instant worldwide recognition and attention if awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Especially the youth of the world would be dazzled. The youngsters would begin to study their works and start thinking that a better world is possible. What a pity that

though the knowledge world is expanding and the importance of new knowledge is increasingly being recognized, the Norwegian Nobel Committee continues to disown the peace academics and deny the opportunity to the youngsters in particular to understand that power has its own limitations, peace and wellness of the humans are interlinked, rule-based and justice-based global and local societies can be established, and the institution of war can be abolished, violence reduced and genocides prevented—forever (Heffermehl, 2023, pp. 43–272). On the other hand, if the peace academics and other futurebuilding visionaries continue to be disowned, man-made calamities like Russia-Ukraine war and genocide in Gaza would continue to erupt, and the whole world would continue to bear the cost and consequences.

## The Changing Times

By any count or criterion, the consequences of the politics and practice of disowning the peace educators are devastating: (a) it delays the arrival of a new future; (b) it tends to extinguish popular dreams and hopes for the future; (c) it tempts the powerful to freeze and perpetuate the moment when they think that they are unchallengeable and their power is undiminishable; and (d) it tells the handcuffed humanity that it is their unchangeable reality and destiny. However, so many other things are also happening and another world is rising. This other world refuses to accept that certain tragic happenings had happened because these had to happen. These include the Russia-Ukraine war and genocide in Gaza, forced regime changes in the Middle East and elsewhere, disappearing freedom everywhere, gradual imposition of economic colonialism and colossal waste of human resources on the manufacture and purchase of deadly weapons. Though generally unreported or under-reported, the world public opinion is rising against the wholesale destruction of Gaza and the failure of the world to halt the genocide and bring the perpetrators of violence to justice. Protest marches and demonstrations are regularly taking place on the streets of major European cities in particular. Similarly, the attempts to harass the youngsters studying in American colleges and universities for raising voice in support of Gaza are being increasingly condemned within the US and outside.

On November 21, 2024, the International Criminal Court(ICC), based in the Hague, issued arrest warrants against the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, former Israeli Defense Minister Yaof

Gallant and Commander-in-Chief of Hamas' military wing, the Qassam Brigade's Muhammed Diab Ibrahim al-Masri. According to a news release of the Human Rights Watch, the judges 'concluded that there were reasonable grounds to believe that Netanyahu and Gallant are responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Gaza Strip from at least October 8, 2023, including the starvation of civilians, intentionally directing attacks against a civilian population, murder and persecution' (November 21, 2024). A number of countries are reportedly planning to recognize the Palestinian state. Recently Mairead Corrigan Maguire, who was awarded Nobel Peace Prize in 1976, published an article in the Transcend Media Service Weekly Digest and stated: 'Israel is carrying out an ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people in Gaza, a cruel and diabolical genocide, and the world sends money, weapons and political cover to Israel, enabling its madness and illegality to continue'. Pointing out that 'Israel has betrayed the memory of the Jewish holocaust and its victims whose lives were sacred, precious and loved' and adding that the 'Palestinian lives are sacred too, each one precious, and Palestinians love their children too', she says that the atrocities 'could be stopped by a mass mobilization of Israelis demanding an end to the atrocities and that their government open all crossings into Gaza allowing the United Nations to distribute aid and food to the people' (August 04–10, 2025). A number of prominent Jews, including those who lost their near and dear ones during the Holocaust and prominent Jew educators and scientists have openly condemned the Gaza genocide and a distinguished peace educator Professor Richard Falk is chairing 'a peoples or civil society tribunal on persisting genocidal assault on the entrapped and blockaded Palestinian civilian population' (December 23, 2024).

Admittedly, the Russia-Ukraine war and the genocide in Gaza and the powerlessness of the entire world constitute a dominant part of international discourse on governance these days, but a host of other important issues are also being addressed with increasing concern. These include the issue of the prevailing exploitative system, which allows the developed and richer countries and corporations to pillage the precious mineral and other resources of the developing countries through intimidation, blackmail and military interventions. Focused discussion is also going on to explore ways and means to empower international law, international humanitarian law and the UN System to reign in the power hungry, territory hungry and resource hungry states. Similarly voices are being raised to drastically curtail the interference of international and national military establishments

as well as the weapon manufacturing and selling corporations and countries in global, regional and local governance. Is a new world order emerging?

## Conclusion

The pied pipers are in action once again. The images of a new world order are being projected and a new future is being promised. However, a future with only cosmetic changes shouldn't be accepted this time as accepted before Gaza. After all, the new orders, established after World War II, couldn't prevent wars and military intervention imposed by the powerful states on weaker and vulnerable states. Neither could these world orders prevent the recurrence of genocide after the Holocaust, nor succeed in widely implementing the agreements reached to extensively diminish poverty, illiteracy, state terrorism and extremism. It is important therefore that the promise of something similar to the past-Gaza world order should be rejected and a worldwide demand raised to build a global human society with the peoples of the world as main actors and beneficiaries of the new system.

In order to bring about structural and fundamental changes in governance at all levels and establish rule-based and democratically managed human societies, the peace educators would be required to produce new peace ideas and prepare the world to confront the challenges of the contemporary times. Among these, a few are listed here in the form of questions: (a) how can an international human society be established and empowered?; (b) how can a powerful state be forced to accept a rule-based global human society?; (c) how can the weapon manufacturing and selling corporations and countries and the international and national military establishments be reined in ?; (d) how can the wellness of the peoples of the world be ensured?; (e) how can the freedoms and rights of the humans protected and the continued glittering and blazing of dreams and hopes assured?; and (f) how can the peace educators establish their credibility, indispensability and worthiness in a world which disowns them?

The peace educators and other visionaries, philosophers and alternate future builders would be required to find answer to these and several other related questions. While looking for the way out and the way ahead, the European and North American centered peace education and peace research will have to go global in the real sense of the term. True that a movement has been launched to decolonize knowledge, but it has to be

ensured that the decolonization of knowledge is not followed by its recolonization by the native elites as the decolonization of the states was followed by their recolonization by the native elites. Again, the peace educators would be required to aggressively confront the politics of disowning by the power elites. For this, they need to be much more visibilized, and their ideas and works should reach everywhere. Perhaps a constellation of organizers of peace teaching programs in the colleges and universities, peace research centers and museums for peace be established to pool resources and establish a peace publishing house with branches in the developed and developing world and make the published works readily available to all at minimum price. Again, the Transcend University, world's first online peace university, should take a lead in teaching peace and peace history especially to the citizens of the Western world by arranging specifically designed courses and publishing books and monographs on the crimes committed by the West against the peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Likewise, peace journalism should be promoted with zeal and daily international peace newspapers and international weekly peace magazine should be published from major international cities. Again, a new peace prize, a prestigious and high profile international peace prize, should be instituted and it should be awarded every year to the peace academics to enhance their visibility and project their peace ideas.

Again, to build a global human society, the vulgar and destructive power ideas would need to be more aggressively contested. Such ideas include the idea of national interest, national security, national sovereignty, peace through power, security through weapons, geopolitical compulsions, profit-based and not people-based economics and new knowledge only for the elites and beneficiaries of the power system. Equally importantly, the peace academics should cease to be classroom teachers only or producers of peace works on trifle issues only. They would be required to build themselves as credible public intellectuals, always willing to be in the forefront of the movements for peace, justice and change. Finally, peace studies should be saved from becoming a traditional social science discipline taught for degrees by those holding higher degrees. Peace studies deserves much more. It can be immensely enriched by so many amazing thinkers, especially from the Global South. They may not be having higher degrees or may not be having an academic degree at all, but these teachers, story tellers, singers, painters, poets, theater and movie people, and non-elite political workers and teachers may bring the world together by expressing their own ideas about peace, sharing pages from their life and

experience and discuss as to how to deal with the challenges ahead. The participation of such peace builders can be assured by organizing residential workshops and summer programs in different regions of the world.

One should remember that the Cambridge, Harvard, MIT and scores of other prestigious educational institutions could not prevent the two world wars, atomic bombing on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Vietnam War and Russia-Ukraine war, apartheid in South Africa, military intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq and the genocides including the genocide in Gaza. Neither could the precious works of peace academics prevent these man-made calamities. Worse still, the powerful are now more powerful. As such, merely teaching peace in the classrooms and publishing books on peace won't be enough. In order to build a rule-based global human society, the peace academics would need to extend their reach by emerging as political and social mobilizers in all parts of the world. They should, moreover, liberate themselves from historical, cultural, religious, racial and nationalistic biases and fixations and go global in letter and spirit. Again, they should be directly involved in building and galvanizing movements against the powerful and their unjust power-based global and local governance. In these seismic times, the historical role of game changers and world changers is waiting quietly. It is up to the peace educators to rise to the occasion or opt to remain invisibilized and disowned.

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# One Too Many Peaces

*Wolfgang Dietrich*

*Down the street the dogs are barkin'*
*And the day is a-gettin' dark*
*As the night comes in a-fallin'*
*The dogs'll lose their bark.*
*And the silent night will shatter*
*From the sounds inside my mind.*
*Yes, I'm one too many mornings*
*And a thousand miles behind.*
*(Dylan, 1964 A4)*

## Introduction

In my understanding of academic writing, it is indispensable that a text begins by unveiling the author's perspective. Whatever method we chose, whatever discipline we ascribe ourselves to, how unbiased our attempt might be, how fact-oriented and well-grounded our statements: the personality of the author as knowing subject and therefore the coming into existence as academic person defines the research interest, the applied method, the reviewed and finally chosen literature and hence the

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conclusion. The author as the knowing subject is always in the text, whether an objectifying writing style tries to hide that or the text opens with the presentation of the topically relevant milestones of the author's biography and position.

This does not imply rejecting objectivity as a commandment of scientific work. However, what is objectivity in peace studies, or more generally, in human, social and cultural sciences? In Karl Popper's (1959, p. 59) critical rationalism, the objectivity of scientific sentences is grounded in their falsifiability and hence, intersubjective communicability. Since the progress of academic knowledge develops through communication, which is, per definition, interpersonal, we have to unveil the perspective from where our statements come in order to allow others to review, interpret and eventually try to falsify our findings. Therefore, through the decades of my academic life I have repeated the exercise of defining my personal perspective over and again (Dietrich, 2011, pp. 3–23; 2012, pp. 1–15; Pearce & Dietrich, 2019, pp. 268–282).

The editors of this volume invited me to tell another, new story of the same life from today's perspective. Superficially spoken, the task here seems to be an author's perspective only, apparently without any further topic, method or envisioned conclusion. However, does perspective exist without the perceived and therefore a conclusion? Could I ever claim the position and perspective of a peace researcher without research interest? The academic discipline of peace studies, the whole scope of its research, its methods, the treasure of its already elaborated knowledge and its everlasting quest for human peace-ability is the precondition for my perspective. The research creates me, the knowing subject. I am because it is.

If we agree with the existentialist wisdom that it is not *we who make experiences* but *experiences make us*—or as Richard Rorty (1979, p. 94) once quoted Martin Heidegger: not *we speak the language*, but *the language speaks us*—it follows that none of the contributors to this volume made peace research and peace studies, but the very discipline made every single one of us. In this sense, even Johan Galtung, the often-quoted father of peace studies, is rather peace studies' first son. We emanate from peace research, not the inverse. The principal question here is not the vain one, how and what Ego contributed to global peace, but rather how peace research created and called for this Ego.

My earlier biographic attempts date some years back. The last, let us say, three decades, more than any previous period of my life were filled with academic research and writing, applying, teaching, and founding,

enhancing and managing programs in many places. I could limit myself to those years, but I guess I have to start again from the scratch, from the person who entered peace research in order to be created, shaped, framed and forged by experience, and who became the peace researcher I am today.

## The Early Years

Being born into a family of refugees has always been the starting point of my autobiographic attempts. From early childhood, I saw my parents struggling for roots and respect in the remote, rural, conservative and catholic village, which was at first a shelter and only gradually a new home. I remember those early years as sort of bi-cultural reality. Inside our garden-fence dominated a secular, non-violent and intellectual atmosphere. Outside waited the Austrian West with farming, forestry, football, fame, fights, fatal flaws, framed facts and vernacularized fairytales.

As the only son of my parents, I identified strongly with the struggle of my urban-socialized father. Belonging has been a key topic in this rural community for as long as I can remember. This tension may have made me sensitive and curious regarding the open and hidden rules of communication and interaction. Moreover, for the values and codes, the lies and secrets that make such a community. The diary of those days became the script of my life.

Our family lived a relatively affluent life in my childhood years. My own sons would have never heard their grandparents calling themselves refugees. World War II displaced my ancestors. They were among the millions of dispossessed, whose fate caused the *UN Refugee Convention* of 1951, though they could not benefit from it. It came too late for them. Due to the treatment they have suffered as stateless, disenfranchised, sick and highly dependent people, they considered *refugee* a term of abuse that they did not want to hear applied to themselves. Thus, they avoided this word carefully. Moreover, they found their place in the end, left misery behind and reached a decent life during the so-called economic miracle period, precisely when I was born. However, they never stopped telling me where we come from and encouraging me to appreciate what we have achieved.

Thus, I am a so-called *boomer*. I never experienced serious poverty myself. I did not suffer hunger. Doctors were available when I was injured or sick. I enjoyed a modest educational system, which even gave me free access to university.

The indigenous boys with whom I, the formidable migrant misfit, came to blows in our early gang fights are my closest friends today. It is likely that we will end together as inmates of the same seniors' residence and later as bone-to-bone neighbors on our local graveyard. I cannot complain. Still I claim that the transgenerational craving for belonging that I inherited from my refugee ancestors makes the difference, carved a peace researcher out of the migrants' son, while the others became artisan and artist, barber and plumber, carpenter and clerk, doctor and teacher, engineer and enterpriser.

In the mid-seventies, after finishing college and military service, I began to study social history, German studies and law at the University of Innsbruck. These disciplines corresponded with the big questions that I had. They gave my questioning mind a principal academic grounding. My primordial interest in social and humanitarian topics increased further.

Karl Rahner (1904–1984), one of the twentieth century's most influential Roman Catholic theologians, spent almost all his academic life at Innsbruck University. His work was groundbreaking for the development of the Catholic Church in general, for some of his students, who became later worldwide known theologians of liberation, and for myself, who was promoted to Doctor of Law in 1984, the year of Rahner's death. At that time, I defined myself as a human rights researcher and activist. I began to work in this field academically and practically.

Central America was not yet a headliner in the news and hence not too popular in Tyrol when I was a young student. Due to a number of Spaniards and Latin Americans, who had come to study with Rahner there existed small support groups for the revolutionary movements in Chile, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala with whom I got into contact. I remember that the heralds of the *Sandinistas*, especially Ernesto Cardenal (1925–2020), found a very fertile ground in our highly idealist, somewhat romantic and reform-minded circles. They attracted me more and more. When finally, a close friend crossed the Atlantic and joined the *Sandinistas*, I followed.

I became one of those *internacionalistas* who were in love with the revolution (Schönherr, 1986). In those first years, the atmosphere in Nicaragua was breathtaking. What the *Sandinistas* did politically made so much sense in my youthful enthusiastic understanding of creating and running a socially fair state on the debris of a bloody autocratic

dictatorship. It took me quite a time to understand the ambivalence of my double identity as a professional human rights field researcher and a worshiper of the revolution. Especially the violent conflict between the *Sandinistas* and the Miskito indigenous people on the Atlantic coast left me confused and frustrated.

## Discovering Many Peaces

More and more disenchanted with the development in Nicaragua I expanded my activities in the region and found for some time a second home in Guatemala. This was a period of extreme violence and dictatorship. Decades of civil wars had shaken and shattered the country by then.

I found there access to some leaders of the so-called *movimiento indígena*, which was rather different with the leftist orientation of the *movimiento popular*, whether its guerrilla or its civilian branch. The indigenous movement considered themselves twice repressed, once by the brutal military dictatorship, but also by the guerrilla of the leftist popular movement that fought the government. The one side (or party) disregarded the values, needs and wishes of the Maya indigenous majority in the country as much as the others did. They told me that they did neither want to be subject of the fascist military dictatorship nor of what in the terminology of the Cold War was considered a communist alternative.

They taught me what they call *Utziläj k'aslen* in Maya-Kaqchikel. The term refers to mental and material well-being and the one-ness of society, nature and the universe. Maintaining this unity requires respect toward each other and all existence. In the Maya's view, nature is not environment. They understand themselves as beings made of maize. Humans cannot objectivize and functionalize nature because they are nature, material and spiritual expression of the whole. This cosmology is *immanent*, therefore very different from the Christian or modern but still *transcendent* principles that had guided my coming of age (Dietrich, 2021, pp. 7–36).

I met the Mexican writer Gustavo Esteva (1936–2022), who became a fountain of inspiration and fatherly friend of a lifetime. He descended partly from a Zapotec family and enlarged my perspective on Native American cultures enormously. I learned from him that you do not find synonyms for Spanish *paz* or English *peace* in their languages. Zapotec *guelaguetza* (sp.: *compartencia*; en.: compersion) and *chh'ia* (reciprocity), for example, hardly translate as *peace* into English (Esteva & Guerrero, 2011, pp. 352–373).

However, what Spanish or English word would you choose if you have to make a representative of a modernizing dictatorship or a dogmatic leftist understand that you seek respect for the unity of individuals, community, nature and the universe? How do you explain that you want the atrocities to end, but that the stopping of bombing does not yet equal *utziläj k'aslen*? Moreover, that 'unpeace' prevails when *utziläj k'aslen* is disturbed, the harmony of the elements is lost. Thus, in the cosmology of the Maya 'unpeace' begins long before shelling, shrapnel, shotguns, soldiers, slavery and sanctimony do their destructive business.

Learning those lessons changed my life. The focus of my attention shifted from the normative understanding of human rights to the philosophical interpretations of peace. I learned that the notions of words that derive etymologically from Nordic *priya*, like *Friede* in my German mother tongue, from Greek *eirene*, Roman *pax* or Slavic *mir* are limited (Dietrich, 2012, pp. 16–115; Dietrich et al., 2011).

This fascinated me more than anything I learned during my university studies. I wanted to dive deeper into it. I read authors like Richard Rorty (1979) and reflected on the notorious problem of difference, the problems of grammar, language and the possible translation of notions. I came across Jean Francois Lyotard (1924–1998). His *Postmodern Condition* (Lyotard, 1984) became another signpost in my career as a peace researcher. It convinced me that the very idea of the One World-Peace is but a nightmare for cultures and peoples. The modern European languages, I found, colonize the whole world with their clumsy and violent grammar. They presume that you can express *peace* with one globally accepted *singulare tantum*. Moreover, since they do not say what peace actually is but rather define it by the absence of its unpleasant opposite, they dictate a meta-physical notion that is not even an essence by itself but just a big absence—of war or violence.

I witnessed the 1993 *UN World Conference on Human Rights* in Vienna. I perceived it as a showdown between the dogma of ethical universalism and cultural relativism. In the pretext, cultural anthropologists like Clifford Geertz (1926–2006), philosophers like Richard Rorty (1931–2007) or Jean-Francois Lyotard called for a rebellion of particularities against universal claims. To them

- the very idea of one universal truth was hostile to life and science;
- the imagination of an existence dominating essence was an error;

– the deconstruction of the rational and autonomous subject was necessary;
– the rules of grammar were tools of power.

All of this philosophy and theory corresponded perfectly with my observations and experiences in the Central American reality and I hoped enthusiastically for serious debates in the context of the conference. However, the UN feared a diminution of its 1948 *Universal Declaration on Human Rights* due to a crafty call for cultural relativism from several undemocratic governments. The conference opted for a consensus-oriented conservation of the earlier achieved, universalistic standards and marginalized the debate on cultural relativism. *Amnesty International*, my institutional home until then, joined the universalistic mainstream without reproach.

Deeply disappointed I left the organization and decided to reinvent myself. I had had occasional contact with parts of the German peace movement before, without considering myself one of them. They appeared too dogmatic, ideological, protestant or idealistic to me. Their stance did not fit well with the pragmatism I had adopted in the field. However, I received an increasing number of invitations to panels on peace and conflict, because I was one of the rare field-experienced and German-speaking experts on Central America, the popular headliner in the news of those years. Thus, I learned about peace studies as an academic discipline that was at that time already well established in Scandinavia and the Anglo-Saxon world, but still struggled for acceptance in Germany, Switzerland and Austria.

After being promoted to Associate Professor for Political Science with a thesis on *Contadora*, the peace initiative for Central America (Dietrich, 1990) and after the Vienna conference in 1993, I considered jumping from International Law and Political Science to Peace Studies a realistic option for my further way. Indeed, in 1995 I was invited to pioneer as academic director of the then emerging *European University Center for Peace Studies* (EPU) in Stadtschlaining/Austria. This was the chance to systematize the lessons learned from both, my field experience and the academic research. I accepted the position, and with it, the label of a peace researcher.

## Stadtschlaining to Castellón

When I went to Stadtschlaining I already had the concept of *many peaces* in my mind. I hoped to discuss it further with experienced colleagues. Indeed, I met many of the founding generation of peace studies in person there. They came frequently for various occasions. However, the *European University Center for Peace Studies* was not what the name could promise to an unsuspecting mind. Legally, it was not a university but an association that sought to establish a Master program of so-called *university character*.

At that time, before the *Bologna Process for the European Higher Education Area*, there were no private universities in Austria. The then effective law, the *Universitäts-Studiengesetz* 1997 (Bundesgesetzblatt für die Republik Österreich, Jahrgang 1997, Teil I, 4. Abschnitt §§ 27 and 28) rendered possible that companies or associations run those academic programs of *university character*. By certifying those programs, the Federal Ministry of Higher Education guaranteed an academic quality equal to similar programs offered by the universities. The diploma should have the same value in the labor market.

The EPU did not hold this certificate then. They hired me because I had earlier developed the curriculum for a *Master in Latin American Studies* (of university character) for the *Austrian Institute for Latin America (*LAI) in Vienna. Like the EPU, the LAI as a carrier of the respective Master was an association. EPU wanted me to do the same for them and for peace studies by incorporating examples from abroad like Johan Galtung's so-called Hawaii-curriculum from the 1980s. I did, and my draft was enacted in 1997. The EPU program began to run on this legal base in the same year.

I spent my time in Stadtschlaining mainly with legal, administrative, curricular and didactic work for the development of this Master. There were rare opportunities for sophisticated debate on *many peaces.* I guess the only one seriously interested in this concept was the young translator Wolfgang Sützl. Together we published *A Call for Many Peaces* (Dietrich & Sützl, 1997) in a working paper of the EPU.

This essay is grounded in ideas that I brought from Central America and project work elsewhere (Dietrich, 1998a), and in Sützl's interest. We based mainly on Esteva and his mentor Ivan Illich (1926–2002), along with Geertz and Lyotard. We embraced the cultural-relativist idea that *small is beautiful* of the Austrian economist Leopold Kohr (1909–1994) and later edited additionally a book on his philosophy (EPU, 1998).

Briefly, our essay stated for the first time that 'peace' has to be a plural word, since the notion of whatsoever peace strictly depends on the perspective of the knowing subject and its cultural context. Peace must be contextual, relational and homeostatic. Peace is a process, never a status. I simultaneously wrote a German version of this thesis (Dietrich, 1998b, pp. 39–60). It took almost ten years until this found broader attention. In the end, it was often translated and republished.

Neither EPU nor its 1982-founded sister association, the *Austrian Study Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution* (ASPR), located at the same place, was a research institution or think tank. Founded by technocrats of the Social-Democratic Party, they were tacitly embedded in the neo-Kantian, idealistic worldview. Beyond that, they were not interested in further academic profiles or trademarks. They rather understood themselves as organizers of conferences, gatherers, transformers and applicants of knowledge of others, as a library, carrier of projects and training, later of teaching and even 'exhibiting peace' in a museum. They did not systematically elaborate their own knowledge but bought external expertise for their projects, which resulted in a constant flying in–flying out of those big names. Every single one deposed the individual expertise and left.

In this frame, my skills were useful for a time, especially for the curricular development of the EPU. Nevertheless, my aspiration of philosophically dwelling on the ground of *many peaces* and making this plurality the distinctive mark was not welcome. Soon I had to understand that the concept of the place was not what I had expected. I left in 1998.

Among the countless visitors to Stadtschlaining in those years was Vicent Martínez Guzmán (1949–2018) who founded precisely then the *International Master Program in Peace, Conflict and Development Studies* at the *Universitat Jaume I.* of Castellón de la Plana/Spain. Unlike most of the other visitors, this trained philosopher who had studied before with Karl-Otto Apel (1922–2017) resonated immediately with the idea of *many peaces.* When he invited me to support his endeavor in Spain, I accepted delightedly.

Vicent Martínez and I were a great match in many ways. Enthusiastically we embarked together on the philosophical adventure of the *many peaces.* Coming from very different social, academic and professional backgrounds and having very different personalities allowed us to mirror, double-check and correct each other in the friendliest fruitful way. This resulted in Vicent's *Filosofía para hacer las paces* (Martìnez Guzmàn, 2001) and my

four *Many Peaces* books, published originally in German between 2008 and 2021.

Further, we explored innovative didactics that would make Peace Studies at *Universitat Jaume I.* special in a constructive way. This university, founded in 1991, was very young then. The campus was under construction. Peace Studies did not yet have a place. The international students lived in shared apartments at close Benicassim. The classes took place first in a villa, then in a bank building. Those circumstances materialized in the academic educational frame of what Frederick Perls had imagined as a Gestalt-community, where people would learn, live, share and care together in a three-month structured and guided process (Walker, 2004, p. 148). Peace students built an intercultural learning community at a relatively isolated place. The principle that international peace students not only study in classrooms what the academic curriculum prescribes but also learn from each other in daily informal interaction was both, a pragmatic solution and a didactic requisite. This lasted until 2002, when the campus in Castellón was completed and Peace Studies moved there.

Those pioneer conditions invited to explore the didactic possibilities within the frame of a conventional curriculum. What methods and structures beyond lecture and seminar style can you apply in an academic, international, intercultural, interdisciplinary, interreligious, multilinguistic, praxis-oriented Master program of peace and conflict? Enthusiastically we tried to find that out. I read everything I could find on peace education and made myself familiar with various branches of humanistic psychology and its use in group settings. Mediation, communication and negotiation became as relevant as phenomenological and existentialist philosophy, theater, music, yoga, martial arts and so much more.

Vicent Martínez invited experts from many of those fields to Castellón. Praxis, styles, networks, experience and insights increased at a breathtaking speed in spite of all the errors that we may have committed. The Master flourished impressively and gained international reputation already before it moved to the main campus. With that, the pioneer phase ended and the program gradually moved mainstream. Vicent's health deteriorated, which forced him to retire early. My dear friend passed away in 2018 (Dietrich, 2019b, pp. 199–219).

For the *many peaces* approach Castellón was a Dorado, because there were students from all over the world. I developed a didactic format, which I called the *seven magic questions.* These questions asked systematically for each student's personal, linguistic, cultural, religious, political and

legal perspective and interpretation of peace at the beginning of the studies, reflection of contradictions and the change of perspective as a result of learning. As years went by, I received a treasure of definitions from those students and, more importantly, the systematic evidence that the word peace makes only peaceful denotation as a beautifully multifaceted positive plural.

I began to group this myriad of collected peace definitions. The attempt resulted in the fivefold structure that later emerged as the *energetic, moral, modern, postmodern* and *transrational* 'families' of peace interpretation (Dietrich, 2012). The layers of *Transrational Peace Philosophy* (Dietrich, 2013), *Elicitive Conflict Mapping* (Dietrich, 2018) and the *Strategic Capacity and Relationship Building* of the *elicitive* approach (Lederach, 1995, pp. 63–70) were sketched in those early *magic questions.*

## Innsbruck School of Peace Studies

One day during this exciting Spanish adventure, I received a call from a departmental head in the Tyrolean provincial government. To make the long story short, due to the political development of the time, the government wanted to send a sustainable message of peace into the world, which resulted in creating a Master program in Peace Studies at the University of Innsbruck. The above-described pretext given, they invited me to draft a proper curriculum and implement the program under the direction of the then Dean of the Social Sciences department.

The migrant's son took this as a once-in-a-lifetime offer of the homeland, accepted it enthusiastically and wrote the curriculum, which was derivative of the former ones, now in the light of the Spanish experience but tailor-made for the Tyrolean environment and strictly in the frame of the then new Bologna rules. The curriculum of the Master in *Peace, Development, Security and International Conflict Transformation*, enacted in September 2001 (University of Innsbruck, 2001), was not of *university character*, but located in the *university continuing education program*, first according to the *Universitäts-Studiengesetz* 1997 (Bundesgesetzblatt für die Republik Österreich, Jahrgang 1997, II. Teil, 4. Abschnitt, §§ 23–26) and then to the *Universitätsgesetz* 2002 (Bundesgesetzblatt für die Republik Österreich, Jahrgang 2002, II. Teil, 2. Abschnitt, §§56, 58.1). In the summer of 2002, we opened the pilot semester with a speech by Johan Galtung. Many big names of the first generation followed. From 2004, we taught the Master regularly.

The innovative aspect of the Innsbruck curriculum 2001, updated in 2004 and 2012, was the high number of excursions and practical workshops in a modular system. This was grounded in Paulo Freire's (1970, p. 89) advice that consciousness implies the impossibility of perceiving the untested feasibility that lies beyond the limits of one's experience. Consequently, the *Strategic Capacity and Relationship Building* we offered provided a frame that allowed students to explore the limits and boundaries of their academic, physical and emotional potential. Group dynamics became a key element. We aimed to prepare academic peace workers who are deployable for real peace operations. Concisely, this required a *student-centered* didactic approach, which was inspired by chapter 9 of Carl Rogers' (1951) *Client-centered Psychotherapy.*

For the faculty, this *student-centered* principle meant facilitating intense group processes, the highest responsibility, creativity, empathy, closeness, presence, intercultural communication and an attitude that went beyond the usual teaching at universities. It was experiential, and as little competitive as possible. I was lucky enough to find highly qualified colleagues who were ready and able to carry this *student-centered* responsibility over many years.

The *seven magic questions* gradually became an online preparation seminar for each semester, developed in detail by Josefina Echavarria and Daniela Ingruber. This allowed the students to explore whether the didactic approach was right for them, while the program could check the students' suitability for the challenge of the present phase before they would travel to Innsbruck. Further, we developed a specific form of *cross reading*, that is, a peer-oriented method for the introduction seminar. The didactic principle was horizontal and cooperative to get the best possible result *for* the group rather than finding the best student *in* the group. For this purpose, we integrated aspects of Virginia Satir's systemic approach to family therapy (Satir et al., 1991), many Gestalt insights on group dynamics (Perls, 1973; Walker, 2004, pp. 115–152) and communication principles from Ruth Cohn's *Theme-centered Interaction* (Cohn, 2004).

We concentrated the 375 classroom hours required of a semester into two months, during which students from all over the world would spend their time in our comfortable home base, the *Grillhof Seminar Center*. Following Perl's vision of Gestalt communities and building on the pioneering experiences at Castellón, each semester in Innsbruck, 30 to 40 students learned and lived in conviviality 24/7. The contents and learning steps of this student-centered approach were strictly built on each other

across all courses and modules within the didactic sequence of those eight weeks per semester.

The practical trainings were conducted with cooperating institutions ranging from the Red Cross and the Fire Fighters to the Native Spirit Wilderness School to the Water and Cave Rescue Teams and the Austrian Armed Forces. These partnerships blessed us with excellent facilitators, who made the Innsbruck School of Peace Studies a unique project in the international field (Dietrich, 2019a, pp. 252–273). The administration of the Master was strenuous and not always easy. The progress required profound research and publication to achieve a proper identity and distinguishable profile. I built on the *many peaces* approach I had carried for years, amplified it systematically, and published it as *Transrational Peace Philosophy* in the *Many Peaces Trilogy* (Dietrich, 2012, 2013, 2018, 2021).

My mentor Gustavo Esteva proposed a *many peaces* encyclopedia inviting outstanding peace-philosophers from as many cultural backgrounds as possible to describe the deeper meaning of peace in their own worldviews, cultures, religions, philosophies. This resulted in a never-expected effort of years for our 'core faculty' Josefina Echavarría, Daniela Ingruber, Norbert Koppensteiner and myself. However, in 2011 we published *The Palgrave International Handbook of Peace Studies: A Cultural Perspective* with Gustavo Esteva, which comprised more than 30 contributions from all continents.

Those publications and many more gave the *Innsbruck School of Peace Studies* a solid theoretical grounding, completed by integrating the *elicitive* approach to practical conflict work. *Elicitive Conflict Transformation* was the seminal proposal of John Paul Lederach (1995) for applied peace work. His practitioner's conclusions and methodological elaborations are still absolutely convincing to me today. Thus, we did not reinvent the wheel after his path-breaking writings but rather integrated them into our theoretical framework. By doing so, we discovered Lederach's mentor, Adam Curle (1916–2006) and transferred some of Curles' legendary Bradford approach (Lederach & Woodhouse, 2016) to Innsbruck.

Based on those principles, contents, methods and didactics, the *Innsbruck School* gained a startling reputation of being incomparable with others. We integrated rapidly into the global network of peace studies, went to many places as visiting faculty, supported curriculum development and participated in international projects.

In 2008, UNESCO awarded us with the establishment of a UNESCO Chair for Peace Studies. The then rector appointed me chair holder and

his successor decorated me with the title *professor ad honorem* in 2015. The university created a separate Unit for Peace and Conflict in 2017 and a cross-disciplinary Research Center in 2018.

Shortly before I retired, I found myself surprisingly listed among the 211 individual candidates for the 2020 *Nobel Peace Prize*. Since peace researchers never get awarded this prize I consider the mere nomination by a consortium of distinguished academics to be a paramount honor.

## Mainstreaming Peace Studies

It is said that those who dance are thought insane by those who cannot hear the music. At the beginning our Master was marginalized within the university structure. However, success transformed it into a topic of interest. The consequence was its gradual integration into the regular administrative structure. This culminated in 2020 when the board of rectors concluded the transfer of the pioneered Master from the *continuing education program* to a *regular course of study* in the frame of the *Universitätsgesetz 2002* (Bundesgesetzblatt für die Republik Österreich, Jahrgang 2002, II. Teil, 2. Abschnitt, §54). They advised me to draft a *regular study* curriculum, which would conserve the attractive particularities of the program while adjusting it to the *regular study* requirements. I bequeathed a draft of such curriculum when I retired in 2021.

It took another year until the original Master of the *continuing education program* expired exactly 20 years after its implementation (University of Innsbruck, 2022/56). The university enacted the new Master in the *regular course of study* (University of Innsbruck, 2022/55). It was the first transition of such kind in the history of Austrian universities.

This sounds like an accolade. However, *regular courses of study* follow a strict curricular, didactic, economic and administrative regulative, which fairly impedes the application of freely developed didactic formats, measures and tools. At first glance, the difference between the old and the new curricula is not impressive. Design, structure and some experience of the former (University of Innsbruck, 2012/34) are reflected in the younger. On a closer inspection, however, one notes that the face-to-face hours per semester decreased from 375 to 190.

My successors canceled the previous curriculum's particularities such as the *student-centered approach*, the sequential semester didactics, the intense interaction and conviviality at the *Grillhof Seminar Center*. The classes are now conducted in the university seminar rooms. Further, the

new curriculum replaced *transrationality* with currently trendy topics like post-colonialism, gender and diversity studies, ecology and the like. The *seven magic questions* as didactic tool were beaurocratically replaced by admission-tests (University of Innsbruck, 2023/19). That is, the main transition was from incomparable to competitive.

According to the *Mental-Health-Barometer* (Studo, 2023), more than half of the current students in Austria and Germany are psychologically distressed. The attitude of the so-called Generation Z has been discussed for years now and indicates a dramatic shift of the Zeitgeist, the political atmosphere and intellectual mood at universities. The emphasis on the sensitivity of individuals (Flaßpöhler, 2021; Charim, 2022) in the academic debate impedes student-centered methods that would focus on resilience, responsibility and conviviality and therefore calculate with a stable and self-responsible audience. While in the best of all worlds, sensitivity and resilience are didactic siblings, this expectation may not respond to the needs of the contemporary cohorts of students, the disposition of the current faculty and this Zeitgeist. Therefore, from the university's perspective, the transition might be an accurate and comfortable response.

However, crises like those currently in Gaza or Ukraine call for academically and personally well-trained and resilient academic peace workers and I wonder where they will get their professional foundation if not in universities.

The *Innsbruck School*'s student-oriented *capacity and relationship training* had its wonderful heyday, but in the shed of the upcoming developments in academia, it might be out of time. Anyway, the pioneering *Innsbruck School of Peace Studies* definitely ended in 2022, while peace studies continues to exist as a mainstream discipline at this university.

### *Brahmacharya*

Due to my multi-disciplinary education in humanities, social and cultural sciences, I did not feel like a radical thinker when I discovered and proposed the concept of *many peaces*. I perceived migrating across disciplines and paradigms as a natural thing. Proposing *transrational peace philosophy* as a consequence of applied fieldwork made the once auspicious human rights researcher a formidable misfit, coming to blows with the presumptions of idealism that still seem to dominate humanities, cultural and social sciences and practical politics.

I did not hear the warning bell of the 1993 *UN World Conference on Human Rights*. I did not identify the problem in my time at EPU. Twenty years at the *Innsbruck School of Peace Studies* were an unusual window of opportunity that we could use to the benefit of almost 500 students from 85 countries. Many of them graduated later from PhD programs and achieved noteworthy positions in academia and practical peace work. It was the privilege and the pleasure of my life to head the team of beautiful people who served those students with all that we could give—together!

When I reached the age of retirement, I was not tired. Still I was ready to quit because I wanted to begin *Brahmacharya* as long as my energy, health, age and curiosity would allow exploring something new.

Based on my intercultural experience of decades I started the academic inquiry into language and grammar as preconditions for human peace-ability. More than anything, I am now fascinated by the question of how (colonial) European languages and certainties would change if peace was neither expressed as a *singulare tantum*, nor, as proposed earlier, as a plural word but as a verb—*it peaces*, respectively *es friedet* in my German mother tongue (Dietrich, 2021).

How do we peace? How do grammars condition our perception and interpretation of social systems? How would a linguistic shift possibly contribute to our peace-ability? This turned out to be the fascinating, tailor-made question at the dusk of this academic practitioner's career. *Es friedet, it peaces* is therefore the title of my *Brahmacharya* project, which I plan to realize beyond the frustrating limitations of universities and conventional academic life (www.esfriedet.at)

I continue a bit as an independent consultant, occasionally giving speeches, workshops and classes. I surprise myself with the multitude of publications that I have written in this period that others call retirement. Still, I decided to withdraw completely from public life in 2024.

Peace researchers do not batter barking dogs, for as the night comes falling, those dogs lose their bark. The silent night shatters from the sounds inside this eremitic emeritus. All his ancestors are with him now. They make him watch and listen peacefully. Formidable misfits result from the love of generations. And I am one too many peaces and a thousand miles behind.

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# Peace Education Through Peace History and Peace Museums

*Peter van den Dungen*

## Introduction

In the late 1960s I was in the last of a four-year course in applied economics at an university in Antwerp, Belgium when my interest was increasingly drawn to international politics and, more specifically, to peace research. The American war in Vietnam appalled me and retained my attention. Ten years earlier (1959), the Peace Research Institute in Oslo (PRIO) and the Center for Research on Conflict Resolution at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor had been created. Already in 1957, the *Journal of Conflict Resolution: A Quarterly for Research Related to War and Peace* was published and in 1964 PRIO started publishing the *Journal of Peace Research*. In 1965, the inaugural conference of the International Peace Research Association (IPRA) took place at the University of Groningen, Netherlands; its proceedings were published the following year. The same Dutch publisher had also started a series of *Polemological Studies*, edited at the Polemological Institute of the University of Groningen. The Institute had been founded in 1961 by Professor Bert (B. V. A.) Röling who became

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the first Secretary-General of IPRA (1965–1971) and was also a co-founder (1966) of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).[1] Because the word peace was suspect during the Cold War owing to communist propaganda, he decided to make use of the terminology first introduced by the French sociologist Gaston Bouthoul, author of a substantial *Traité de Polémologie*, and founder, in 1945 in Paris, of the *Institut Français de Polémologie* 'for the scientific study of wars, peace and conflicts'. Its motto, 'If you want peace, understand war' was a fitting replacement of the classical and increasingly contested, 'If you want peace, prepare for war'.

## Discovering Peace Research

All of this might very well have passed me by were it not for the efforts of Röling to promote peace research, starting in the Low Countries (Belgium & the Netherlands), through public lectures, articles in newspapers and broadcasts on radio and television. He argued that the problem of war was the most serious and urgent problem humanity was faced with now that it had entered the atomic age. Nothing less than the survival of humanity was at stake and polemology was the 'science of survival' (Röling, 1968).[2] I read newspaper articles by him and listened to him when he gave a lecture in Antwerp and was wholly convinced; more than half a century later, his claim still stands and has received additional poignancy through the dangers represented by climate change and artificial intelligence. Since January 2025, the Doomsday Clock of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* stands at 89 seconds to midnight, the closest to global catastrophe it has ever been.

Röling was the youngest judge on the Tokyo International Military Tribunal and has been called 'perhaps the most subtle of the judges on the tribunal' and 'the judge who tended to obtain the greatest respect of the judges on the tribunal for independent-mindedness and objectivity, as well as a respect for cultural difference' (Boister & Cryer, 2008, p. 283).

[1] In an obituary for Elise Boulding, Johan Galtung wrote that she was 'a superb Secretary-General [and] another pioneer' (Galtung, 2010). He elaborated on this in a beautiful address during a memorial service in Groningen in May 1985 (Galtung, 1985). The booklet contains a bibliography of *Röling*'s publications, pp. 27–56.

[2] About Röling, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bert_R%C3%B6ling. See also a most informative and appreciative 'In memoriam: Prof. Bert V. A. Röling' at https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/S0165070X00010597

Following his return from Japan, and as a direct result of his experience on the Tribunal, he fully devoted himself to peace research and international law, and the need to modernise it for a world undergoing fundamental changes, not only because of the presence of nuclear weapons but also because of the changing nature of international society following decolonisation and the independence of many countries in the 1960s. He addressed the latter issue in a slim but profound book, greatly admired not least by readers in the South, *International Law in an Expanded World* (Röling, 1960).[3] It is sobering to reflect that what excited and stimulated me half a century ago to want to become a peace researcher is now forgotten in his native country where few are familiar with his name, or with the name of the cause to which he passionately dedicated his life—'polemology'. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bert_R%C3%B6ling; https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/S0165070X00010597, 1985). His public lectures and writings influenced me like no other and were decisive in my desire to study it.[4]

I was able to explore this, for me, rather new, exciting and promising subject when studying for a year in Italy at the Bologna Center of the School of Advanced International Studies of Johns Hopkins University. Among its resident professorial staff was Ekkehart Krippendorff, a pioneer of peace research in Germany and editor of a key anthology on the subject, *Friedensforschung* (Krippendorff, 1970).[5] I undertook a private reading course with him, and also took his class on American foreign policy (https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ekkehart_Krippendorff; https://www1.wdr.de/radio/wdr5/sendungen/erlebtegeschichten/ekkehart-krippendorff100.html). Becoming acquainted with the so-called revisionist school was an eye-opener, not least regarding the decision to use atomic weapons in Japan. I was highly impressed, and dismayed, by the findings

[3] The book appeared in a new series, 'Contributions to the Progressive Development of International Law' of which Röling was co-editor with Radhabinod Pal (Calcutta). Judge Pal was 'the most important dissentient' of the Tokyo Judges 'and is probably the most written upon members of the bench'. Boister and Cryer, p. 285.

[4] I still treasure several letters from Röling, including one in reply to my request for information about joining IPRA. One of my first publications was a review of his book, *Inleiding tot de wetenschap van oorlog en vrede* (Introduction to the science of war and peace, 2nd ed., 1970) (van den Dungen, 1971).

[5] See his biography at https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ekkehart_Krippendorff and also a fascinating interview on the occasion of his 80th birthday at https://www1.wdr.de/radio/wdr5/sendungen/erlebtegeschichten/ekkehartkrippendorff100.html (both in German).

of Gar Alperovitz in *Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam. The Use of the Atomic Bomb and the American Confrontation with Soviet Power* (Alperovitz, 1965). The inability and unwillingness of mainstream American society to accept a 'revisionist' perspective on the matter was shown 30 years later when, on the 50th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (1995), a large exhibition in the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum in Washington D.C. was cancelled because of the pressure by Congress and the military (Harwit, 1996; History and the Public, 1995). The continued sensitivity of the issue was demonstrated by the fact that it was only in 2016 that Barack Obama became the first sitting U.S. president to visit Hiroshima (without, however, offering an apology; https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/05/27/remarks-president-obama-and-prime-minister-abe-japan-hiroshima-peace). He briefly visited the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and wrote in the guestbook that we should find 'the courage, together, to spread peace, and pursue a world without nuclear weapons'.[6] In my view, a great help in that pursuit would be the construction of Hiroshima-type anti-atomic bomb museums outside Japan, especially in the capital or main cities of countries with nuclear weapons, starting with the western democracies (van den Dungen, 2016).

Given my background in economics, it was only natural that initially I was interested in economic aspects of the question of war and peace. Subjects such as the arms trade, the military-industrial complex, arms conversion, imperialism, and authors such as Kenneth E. Boulding, John K. Galbraith, Seymour Melman and (from an earlier age), Joseph Schumpeter featured on my reading list in Bologna. Regarding the past, I was particularly pleased to discover two excellent studies by Edmund Silberner, viz., *The Problem of War in Nineteenth Century Economic Thought* (Silberner, 1946) and *La Guerre dans la Pensée Economique du XVIe au XVIIIe Siècle* (War in economic thought of the sixteenth to eighteenth century, Silberner, 1939). They were to provide the inspiration for my doctoral thesis—*Industrial Society and the End of War: The History of an Idea* (van den Dungen, 1976). Röling called the thesis 'fascinating' and 'brilliant' in some of his publications (Röling, 1982/83; Röling, 1981)—winning the Nobel peace prize could not have pleased me more. It was a privilege, thanks to a generous three-year scholarship from the Ford Foundation, to spend virtually every day pursuing research in the

[6] Cf. https://hiroshimaforpeace.com/en/obama/

round reading room of the British Museum which then still incorporated the unrivalled library. Here I discovered that peace research/polemology was not without its own history—largely ignored, however, by its contemporary pioneers. I traced the history of the expression of a 'science of peace', in several languages (van den Dungen, 1977).

## Peace Has a History: Bart de Ligt, Jan Bloch, Bertha von Suttner

An embryonic, multi-disciplinary Peace Academy had been created by the Dutch anti-militarist Bart de Ligt (1883–1938). For its inaugural summer school session that was held in 1938 near Paris he had written an *Introduction to the Science of Peace* (de Ligt, 1939a, b). Seriously ill, he was unable to read the lecture himself. Among his many publications was a learned and highly original two-volume global history of direct action against war, *Vrede als Daad* (Peace as action. De Ligt, 1931–33). It was partly translated into French as *La Paix Créatrice* but remained untranslated into English (de Ligt, 1934). His best-known work in English is *The Conquest of Violence*, with a foreword by Aldous Huxley. I provided biographical information in a new introduction for a reprint (de Ligt, 1937, 1989). A scholar, writer, editor, activist, organiser—de Ligt was a towering figure in the radical national and international peace movement of the interwar period. De Ligt was an admirer of Gandhi yet also critical of his inconsistencies and contradictions. De Ligt was re-discovered in the late 1970s and 1980s and inspired a new generation of activists as well as theorists of nonviolent direct action. Much earlier, a reading of *La Paix Créatrice* had inspired Canadian historian Peter Brock (1920–2006) to follow in de Ligt's footsteps; he became 'the world's leading historian of worldwide pacifism' in the second half of the twentieth century (Dyck, 1996). To a *Festschrift* for Peter Brock on his 75th birthday I contributed a chapter on 'Jacob ter Meulen and Bart de Ligt as Pioneers of Peace History' (van den Dungen, 1996). I was in awe of his scholarship and productivity and grateful for his friendship.

Greatly inspired by the life and work of Bart de Ligt, in the late 1970s I met several of his now ageing fellow Dutch peace campaigners whose admiration for him remained undiminished. I also undertook a pilgrimage to Geneva where he and his family had moved in 1925—not because it was the seat of the League of Nations; he was no great supporter of this

club dominated by white, western, capitalist-imperialist-militarist, colonial powers, but because of his poor health. I also visited Nuenen, the village near Eindhoven in Brabant (the Netherlands) where de Ligt, before leaving the church, had been pastor in the same small Reformed Church where, a generation or so earlier, Vincent van Gogh's father had been his predecessor. Van Gogh stayed with his parents in the parsonage in 1884–5 and made many paintings, including of the church and vicarage. De Ligt's notorious anti-militarist sermon there in 1915 resulted in his banishment from the area by the military. This was commemorated one hundred years later (2015) by the installation of a plaque and bust of de Ligt. Several decades earlier I had written to the local council with the suggestion that the village should also honour de Ligt, as it had honoured van Gogh, by naming a street after him. The two streets now cross each other. In an effort to make students realise de Ligt's charisma and enduring significance, I often drew the following comparison: imagine that van Gogh had not become a painter but a peace activist—that would have been de Ligt, and vice versa. With their all-consuming passion, love of humanity (especially the downtrodden), boundless energy, astounding productivity and creation of exquisite, unforgettable images—in pictures by van Gogh, in words by de Ligt—the two had much in common. Both died prematurely, in France.

While still working on my thesis, I had made another 'peace pilgrimage' to Switzerland, this time to Lucerne. I had become fascinated by the person who, more than anyone else, foresaw the nature of a future Great War, 20 years before it started, and who, like no one else, moved heaven and earth to try to prevent it. The Polish/Russian railroad entrepreneur Jan Bloch (Jean de Bloch, I. S. Bloch, 1836–1902) wrote a six-volume study on The Future of War/The War of the Future (1898) of which only a one-volume summary edition was published in English. It inspired Tsar Nicholas II to call a peace conference which was held the following year in The Hague. Bloch was there as a private lobbyist; the four illustrated public lectures he gave in the margins of the conference impressed many delegates. In order to reach a large public, he organised his own exhibition at the World Exposition in Paris in 1900. Two years later, the International Museum of War and Peace that he had conceived and also largely financed opened in Lucerne; exhausted by his ceaseless labours, the museum's founder and benefactor had died early in 1902. Until the start of the war in 1914, the museum attracted many visitors and tourists during the summer months but financial difficulties as a result of the war forced its closure

in 1919. Like no other place in the world, Bloch's museum provided education, both about the nature of a future great war and about the need to avoid it at all costs.

Yet, the world's first peace and anti-war museum (and its founder) were quickly forgotten, and there were hardly any reminders in Lucerne of its existence. In contrast, World War I resulted worldwide in the creation of many war museums, hundreds of thousands of war memorials, and countless war graves. Is there a better example of the 'invisibility' of peace and peacemakers, and of the need for peace history (and peace museums) for a more balanced, truthful and hopeful (re)presentation of reality? In 1910 the museum had moved into a purpose-built facility which today is the home of a teacher training college. In 2002, on the 100th anniversary of the opening of the museum (and following my suggestion, made two years before), the city affixed a memorial plaque on the later building; the original building was a provisional one and has not survived. In 2010, on the 100th anniversary of the museum's move to new premises, a substantial and illustrated book on Jan Bloch and his museum, edited by three Lucerne-based historians, was published (Troxler et al., 2010). Thirty years earlier, the Swiss history journal had published my article on the history of the museum, the first on the subject. It has recently been reprinted, with an update (van den Dungen, 1981, 2024).

Jan Bloch and his museum were forgotten not only in Lucerne but also in his native Poland. This gradually changed after the foundation in Warsaw in 1987 of the Jean de Bloch Society/Towarzystwo Jana Blocha. The initiative was taken by Dr. Andrzej Werner (1933–2007), a former Polish diplomat and then dissident who, through lectures, publications, a newsletter and conferences, greatly promoted the memory of Jan Bloch. He was not familiar with his fellow countryman when we first met in the early 1980s at a conference in Korea but quickly made up for it and became Bloch's greatest promoter in Poland. Not long after our first meeting he was my guide to various sites associated with Bloch-the-entrepreneur and introduced me to several Polish experts on Bloch such as his first biographer, economic historian Ryszard Kolodziejczyk, military historian Julian Bugajski (both in Warsaw), and local historian J. Ewa Lesniewska (Lublin & Leczna) whose massive, 600-page biography was finally published in 2020, so far in Polish language only (Lesniewska, 2020). Also Kolodziejczyk's 1983 biography, which focused on Bloch as 'king of Polish railways', remains untranslated; the author later published an article titled 'Jan Bloch – Outstanding Polish Pacifist' (Kolodziejczyk, 1989).

Werner also discovered and with others arranged for the restoration of the Bloch family burial chapel at Warsaw's foremost cemetery, Powazki, where many illustrious Poles are buried. Whereas around the world the graves of millions of soldiers who died in World War I are lovingly tended, the grave of the man who did more than anyone to try to prevent their slaughter fell into disrepair.

Following the issuing of the Tsar's rescript in St. Petersburg (1898) calling for a halt in the ruinous arms race, Jan Bloch became known there as the 'spiritual father' of the first Hague peace conference (1899) that resulted from the Tsar's appeal. As mentioned, he was a notable, private lobbyist during the conference. To a large extent, the Dutch city's reputation today as the 'world capital of peace and justice' goes back to that conference and the second one that was held in 1907, giving rise to 'the work of The Hague' and the construction of the Peace Palace (since 1946 home of the UN's International Court of Justice). Yet, also in The Hague Bloch has been forgotten and still today there is no bust of him in the Peace Palace or other memorial to honour and remember this outstanding peace researcher and peace educator. While the city has named streets or squares after Andrew Carnegie (the financier of the Peace Palace, opened in 1913) and Tobias Asser (the country's only Nobel peace laureate, 1911), and in 2017 named a public path next to the Peace Palace after Benjamin Ferencz (1920–2023), honouring the last living prosecutor of the Nuremberg Trials, Bloch still waits for recognition by the city which owes so much to him. At least the Polish embassy has hosted several events commemorating their great patriot and for which I sometimes took the initiative. For instance, a seminar celebrating Bloch's legacy in the city was organised on the occasion of the publication of the first biography of him in English (Zor, 2015). This was a translation of the Polish edition, with two supplementary chapters I had suggested. The initiative for both editions came from the Jan Bloch Foundation established in 2005 in Warsaw by Krzysztof Szwarc (see http://bloch.org.pl/en/foundation).

Among other great figures from the history of peace whom I wrote about in my thesis and who have continued to inspire me (and, increasingly, many others as well), and who have not received the recognition due, is the Austrian baroness Bertha von Suttner (1843–1914). Next to her friends Jan Bloch and William T. Stead, she was the most important lobbyist at the 1899 Hague Peace Conference and the only woman who was invited to attend the opening ceremony. I still remember my excitement when learning, through a review in the *Times Literary Supplement*

(TLS), of the publication of Beatrix Kempf's biography, *Suffragette for Peace: The Life of Bertha von Suttner* (Kempf, 1964, 1972, 1973). This was of course a time when there was no Internet, and even in the rich surroundings of the British Museum Reading Room I experienced sometimes a hunger for information which could not be immediately satisfied. Later, I had the pleasure of meeting the author on several occasions in her apartment in Vienna. She was the first biographer to make use of the extensive papers of Bertha von Suttner in the archives of the League of Nations in Geneva. The Baroness's anti-war novel, *Die Waffen nieder!* (von Suttner, 1889), translated as *Lay Down Your Arms* (von Suttner, 1892) was an international bestseller with translations in more than a dozen languages. Its success launched the author on a 25-year career as leader of the international peace movement. Because of her aristocratic background, she felt at home in the high society of diplomats, officials and parliamentarians, many of whom valued her views and efforts to bring about a more intelligent international politics. Like Bloch, she warned her contemporaries that another great war would be an unmitigated catastrophe and that war should be replaced by arbitration, international law, European federation. She pointed out the dangers of an arms race that was spiralling out of control, and of *The Barbarization of the Sky*—the title of an essay published in 1912 after the invention of the airplane and its use in warfare (von Suttner, 1912). Following my suggestion, the essay was fully translated into English for the first time in 2016, and into Japanese in 2013 (von Suttner, 2013, 2016). What she had feared, reached its nadir in the skies above Japan in 1945.

The English translation of *The Memoirs of Bertha von Suttner* was rightly subtitled, *The Records of an Eventful Life* (von Suttner, 1910, 1972). She was founder and president of the Austrian Peace Society (1891) and co-founder of the German Peace Society (1892). Many joined after reading her powerful anti-war novel or hearing her speak. Her friendship with Alfred Nobel, from their first meeting in Paris in 1875 until his death in 1896, resulted in his financial support which helped her defray the costs associated with her leadership role in the international peace movement and which involved, e.g., attending its annual conferences which took place in various European cities. Nobel answered her plea for his continued support 'even from beyond the grave' through the creation of the annual peace prize for which he made provision in his last will and testament (1895). First awarded in 1901, she became the first woman laureate of the peace prize in 1905. Its centenary in 2005 was celebrated by a large

'International Bertha von Suttner Symposium: Peace, Progress, and Women' that was held under the auspices of the International Bertha von Suttner Association with seat at the castle in Harmannsdorf, near Vienna, the former summer residence of the von Suttner family. The papers, in several languages, were subsequently published (Internationaler Bertha-von-Suttner Verein, 2007). As programme director, I was able to invite leading experts from around the world. Among them was a dear friend, Irwin Abrams, the foremost historian of the Nobel peace prize who was the first to document, in a key article in 1962, her influence on Nobel's decision to leave a financial legacy to honour and encourage, in his words, 'champions of peace'. In his many publications and vivid lectures on the laureates, Abrams brought their heroic struggles for a world without war and injustice alive—thereby providing new generations with inspiration and encouragement to follow in their footsteps.[7] In my own teaching I also experienced how students would become captivated by her life story. Three Japanese students on the MA course in Peace Studies at the University of Bradford (UK) found that the novel had not been translated into Japanese and resolved to do it together. This resulted eventually in a beautifully produced two-volume edition (like the original) that was published in Tokyo in 2011. The occasion was used to mount the first exhibition about her in Japan, in the Kyoto Museum for World Peace at Ritsumeikan University, together with a symposium.

Bertha von Suttner died in June 1914, not long before Europe unleashed a war upon itself and the world which she had struggled hard to prevent—and which, as she predicted, changed the world forever, and at enormous cost in death and destruction. Her close collaborator, the writer and activist Alfred H. Fried wanted to preserve her apartment in Vienna as a museum dedicated to her courageous and inspiring life that had been devoted to a noble cause. However, the War hindered his campaign for financial support for such a memorial and he died, disillusioned, in 1921. A Nobel peace laureate himself (1911), Fried was forgotten and even repressed until the twenty-first century when the first biographies were published of this outstanding pioneer of peace journalism.[8] In 2010 I

[7] For a 'Forum on Irwin Abrams', on the occasion of his 90th anniversary, I contributed, 'Irwin Abrams – Historian and Champion of the Nobel Peace Prize' (van den Dungen, 2005).

[8] I assisted Petra Schönemann-Behrens in finding a publisher for her excellent doctoral thesis on Fried and contributed an epilogue (Schönemann-Behrens, 2011). An English translation was published ten years later (Schönemann-Behrens, 2021).

proposed the creation of a Bertha von Suttner Peace Museum in Vienna, to be inaugurated in 2014 on the centenary of her death. It would have been a fitting, and long overdue, living monument to one of the greatest women campaigners in the struggle for world peace. At the same time, such a museum would also put before visitors, especially girls and women, an inspiring role model (van den Dungen, 2010).[9]

## Bringing Peace History Alive: Peace Trails, Peace Tourism, Peace Museums

I have always regretted, indeed resented, the fact that society remembers wars and honours soldiers but forgets, and sometimes even represses, those who have opposed war and struggled to prevent war and work for a world without wars, warriors and weapons. Peace has its heroes, no less than war, but this is not widely recognised—not in history books, films, the media, monuments or museums. Public memory remains overwhelmingly dominated by a culture of war and violence; peace and nonviolence are often dismissed as being other-worldly and their advocates as dreamers and utopians. Making peace history come alive, and visible—thus bringing about a much-needed alternative perspective that can also inspire and encourage especially young people today—has been a main motivating force in my peace education work. Besides the promotion of peace museums, I have also taken a great interest in the development of city peace walks or trails and, more generally, of peace tourism. This is a rather recent concept, unlike that of war and battlefield tourism. The last decade has seen a growth in the number of cities which have produced peace trails, with or without municipal support. My wish to see such a trail for Vienna inspired a friend and colleague there, Dr. Susanne Jalka, to produce an entire 200-page illustrated, fascinating book, *Discovering Peace in Vienna*, which could serve as a model for other cities (Jalka, 2011). She also succeeded in obtaining a substantial grant from the European Commission to fund the production and publication of peace trails for seven European cities. Published in 2014 in seven handy booklets, in the vernacular as well as English, they filled an important gap in each city's biography and heritage, and offered something new to explore, for local inhabitants (not least, pupils and students) as well as visitors.[10] These peace trails were also

[9] It was recently reprinted, with an update, in *Peace Museums* (van den Dungen, 2024).
[10] They can be seen online at https://discoverpeace.eu/en/

meant to provide a counter-narrative and alternative perspective to the untold number of commemorations (as well as battlefield tours), in Europe and much of the rest of the world, of the 100th anniversary of World War I (2014–2018).

Partly in connection with my research on Jan Bloch—who had been nominated for the inaugural Nobel peace prize (1901)—I first visited the Norwegian Nobel Institute in Oslo in the mid-1970s. At that time, and until the beginnings of the twenty-first century, 'peace tourists' in Oslo could only visit the Institute's library and, when lucky, also the committee room where the official portraits of the laureates are displayed along the walls. After 75 years, was it not time to present their often remarkable, courageous and inspiring lives in a unique and uplifting museum that showed the challenges and achievements of many of the twentieth century's greatest peacemakers? Later, it appeared that such a museum might open in 2001 on the 100th anniversary of the first award. Instead, it was in 2005, when Norway celebrated the 100th anniversary of its peaceful separation from Sweden, that the Nobel Peace Center was opened in the heart of the city. However, despite the large investment and financial support from the government, the Center—it was decided not to make a museum, and no artefacts would be acquired or displayed—was a great disappointment to many visitors. Especially the presentation of the laureates (individuals and organisations) in one central room through touch screens, proved misconceived and anything but inspiring.

Nothing could be less informative, let alone inspiring, than these miserable screens (which, moreover, were often defective). This so-called Nobel Field is at the heart of the Nobel Peace Center but does scant justice to Nobel's 'champions of peace'. However, the large, temporary display about the current laureate(s) cannot be faulted. During the first five months of 2000 I was fortunate to be invited as a visiting fellow at the Norwegian Nobel Institute. I gave Geir Lundestad, then its Director (as well as Secretary of the Norwegian Nobel Committee and who was to play a leading role in the creation of the Nobel Peace Center), a copy of the guide *Peace Museums Worldwide* (1998) published by the United Nations in Geneva and in the production of which I had been much involved.[11] I was then the (honorary) General Coordinator of the International

[11] Geir Lundestad (1945–2023) served as director of the Institute and Secretary of the Committee for 25 years (1990–2014). I reviewed his last book, *The Inside Story of the Nobel Peace Prize* (van den Dungen, 2021).

Network of Museums for Peace (INMP). I was rather taken aback when he returned the booklet soon afterwards with the comment that there was nothing to be learnt from it.

While the history and heritage of war is ubiquitous, that of peace, anti-war and nonviolence is still largely hidden. Why is it that the thoughts, efforts, sacrifices, sufferings and achievements of the peace thinkers, peacemakers, and peace educators of the past (and the campaigns, movements and organisations they have created) are not remembered and valued? A major breakthrough in this regard occurred in the U.S. in the 1960s and 1970s when a small group of concerned historians established the Conference on Peace Research in History (CPRH), later renamed the Peace History Society (PHS).[12] Among its fruits was the publication in the early 1970s of the impressive *Garland Library of War and Peace*. It consists of reprints of '360 titles bound in 328 volumes' of important books on war, peace and nonviolence selected from a wealth of publications from the past five hundred years. Each volume contains a specially commissioned introduction with information about the author, the significance of the book and the reason for reprinting it. In his introduction to the 130-page illustrated catalogue of this collection (which can also serve as a peace studies primer), Merle E. Curti wrote: 'It remains to be seen the extent to which the history of pacifism establishes useful modern guidelines, but clearly the search for an end to war cannot afford to ignore precedents' (Cook et al., 1971, pp. 9–10). The American historian was part of a small international group of peace history pioneers who, in the interwar period, came together to promote peace history (and safeguard relevant archives). Dr. Jacob ter Meulen, the long-serving director of the library of the Peace Palace in The Hague (1924–1952) played a leading role. One outcome was his compilation of an extensive bibliography, comprising 5000 titles, of the historical peace movement covering a period of four centuries (ca. 1500–1900). World War II interrupted the project, and the bibliography was never properly printed. Since it remains the most extensive available, I took the initiative to have it published under the title, *From Erasmus to Tolstoy. The Peace Literature of Four Centuries; Jacob ter Meulen's Bibliographies of the Peace Movement before 1899* (van den Dungen, 1990).

In 1930 ter Meulen had written: 'The crusade for peace is a history of pioneers, full of beautiful examples, of sacrifices and of struggles. One

[12] It is fitting that the editors of *The Oxford Handbook of Peace History* (Howlett et al., 2023) dedicated the volume to 'the founding committee of the Peace History Society'.

finds strong heads such as [David Low] Dodge, practical spirits such as [Henry] Richard, sages such as [Noah] Worcester, martyrs such as [William] Ladd, prophets such as [Elihu] Burritt. They were all heroes. Today, it is not easy to be a pacifist and still less so to remain one in time of war. But in the past it was even more difficult to be a crusader for peace. However, we are convinced that the day will come when in school-textbooks the pacifists of the past will be mentioned side by side with the great heroes of war' (quoted in *From Erasmus to Tolstoy*, p. 5). That day has not yet arrived; the heroes of peace are still largely absent, not only in school textbooks but also in monuments and museums. However, the notion of the 'peace hero' has made some headway, partly because of the Nobel peace prize and the courageous and heroic peacemakers it has honoured. There were no Nobel peace laureates before the twentieth century but had such a prize existed in the nineteenth century there would have been no shortage of worthy candidates. Their concise biographies can be found in the *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Peace Leaders* (Josephson, 1985). The following year saw the publication of *Peace Heroes in Twentieth-Century America* (DeBenedetti, 1986). The 1100-page *Dictionary* was dedicated to 'Merle Curti and the pioneer historians in peace research' and was another fruit of the CPRH. Recognising the need for such a basic reference work in peace history, I readily accepted an invitation to contribute to the *Dictionary* and was tasked with selecting and co-ordinating the entries for Belgium and the Netherlands. I wholeheartedly share the views expressed by a modern hero of mine, Professor Glenn D. Paige (1929–2017), founder of the Center for Global Nonkilling in Honolulu, Hawai'i, who wrote to me in 2009: 'I am in my second round of reading through the articles cover-to-cover, about three a day. The lives and works recorded there bring profound respect for their struggles for peace and a reminder of all the ways that have been tried to abolish war. Would that every entering university student in the world could read the entire dictionary before they start classes to broaden their peace and meaningful life horizons no matter what subjects or vocations they eventually choose'.[13]

It is not only students but the population as a whole that should be given the opportunity to learn about the history of peace as well as about

[13] Email of 28 March 2009. He wrote in the subject line, 'Louis Raemaekers remembered, thanks to you' and in his mail, 'It was a joy today to rediscover another of your several fine articles in the Josephson *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Peace Leaders* [...] this important record of the legacy of leaders of peace'.

contemporary peacemaking and peacemakers. Peace museums are ideal instruments to provide this kind of education for a large public—which otherwise, in the absence of such museums, remains largely uninformed or ill-informed, apathetic, disheartened, defeatist, or sceptical that peace is possible. Yet, as Kenneth Boulding has argued, 'the most important thing a [person] can do is to believe that peace is possible; and the second is to say to other people that this is so' (Boulding & Mayer, 1967, p. 24).[14] This crucial insight can be more widely disseminated through peace museums—where the available evidence can be attractively presented and visualised—and will be more readily accepted, and also acted upon, because visitors will be both enlightened and empowered. It is really astonishing that the world has tens of thousands of museums but very few which are about an idea(l) and striving that are as old as humanity and the realisation of which has become a condition of survival. The world is in need of peace philanthropists (following in the footsteps, a hundred and more years ago, of such pioneers as Jan Bloch, Andrew Carnegie, Edwin Ginn, Alfred Nobel, Priscilla Peckover, Albert K. Smiley) to finance the creation of many new peace museums throughout the world as well as to support existing peace museums so as to safeguard their future and enable them to be more effective. As part of the centenary celebrations of the Peace Palace in The Hague in 2013, I organised an international symposium titled 'Celebrating Peace Philanthropy and Furthering Peace Education – In the Footsteps of Andrew Carnegie', in cooperation with the (Dutch) Carnegie Foundation which owns and manages the Peace Palace (Van Hoogstraten, 2014). I also initiated and co-organised an accompanying exhibition (https://www.concordepaix.fr/e-book-peace-philanthropy-then-and-now) titled 'Peace Philanthropy – Then and Now: An Exhibition to Celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the Peace Palace (1913-2013) – The Gift of Andrew Carnegie'.[15]

[14] From a rich literature, see also, e.g., Heffermehl, 2000; Cortright, 1993.

[15] A pdf of the exhibition is at https://www.concordepaix.fr/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Peace-Philanthropy-Then-and-Now.pdf. I am grateful to Petra Keppler and Jos Verhoeff for this e-book publication.

## Conclusion

As mentioned at the beginning, war stimulated my interest in peace and wish to become involved in peace research. The realisation that peace (including peace research itself) had a history which was little known and poorly documented, yet fascinating and not without contemporary relevance—and that history as generally taught in schools, presented in museums and represented through monuments, is one-sided and distorted—increasingly led me to focus my teaching and research on peace history. The notions of history and museum are intimately connected; the visualisation of peace and its history in peace museums has been a passion for many years. In the early 1980s I was thrilled to learn of the Chicago Peace Museum (sadly defunct) and visited its exhilarating exhibition 'Give Peace a Chance' on musicians protesting the American war in Vietnam. The profusely illustrated catalogue remains most valuable (Philbin, 1983). The Museum was well represented at the first international conference of peace and anti-war museums that was convened, following my suggestion, by the 'Give Peace a Chance' Trust at the Department of Peace Studies of the University of Bradford (UK) in 1992 (*Bringing Peace to People*, 1993). Since then, it has been a great pleasure to meet so many founders, directors, curators and other staff and volunteers of peace museums from around the world who share the conviction that such museums are uniquely placed to educate and inspire their visitors and encourage them to become active and, who knows, perhaps even make history themselves.

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# Promoting Peace Education—Locally and Globally

*Kazuyo Yamane*

## Introduction

First of all, let me introduce my personal background to explain why I got involved in peace studies, peace movements, and peace education. It would also help explain my thoughts and visions regarding what is needed for the peace and justice movements of the twenty-first century. It would further help highlight the importance of peace education and explain why it should be promoted locally and globally. Likewise, concrete recommendations for peacebuilding in the future can be presented with a context. In order to explain how important it is to promote education for peace, human rights, and reconciliation locally and globally, concrete examples will be offered by introducing the International Network of Museums for Peace (INMP) and the Japanese Citizens' Network of Museums for Peace.

I have the experience of teaching Peace Studies and also working for museums for peace such as the Grassroots House in Kochi City and Kyoto Museum for World Peace, Ritsumeikan University. I have also been involved in working for the INMP and the Japanese Citizens' Network of

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Museums for Peace. Such experiences made it clear that the museums for peace are good and effective means to promote peace education for peace-building—locally and globally.

## Involvement in Peace Studies, Peace Education, and Peace Movements

Japan is the only country where atomic bombs were dropped during World War II. The background of my involvement with peace studies, peace movements, and peace education is deeply related to my father's experience as an atomic bomb survivor. His arm had a keloid scar which was caused by severe burns due to the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. He was a 23-year-old soldier, who was hospitalized because of an illness. He was getting better by the end of July. The hospital was located approximately three kilometers from the hypocenter of the atomic bombing. It belonged to the army. As my father was getting better by the end of July, he was assigned the task of taking care of the rabbits that were kept at the hospital. There was no alarm for the air raid of the US bombers in the morning of August 6, 1945 and he was mowing grass for the rabbits with two other soldiers. When he heard the roar of a bomber, he thought that the sound was strange because there was no siren for warning an air raid. When he looked at the sky, he saw something flashing high up in the sky. Pointing at it, he said, "There it is!", and that very moment he was blown by the blast into a rice field, crying without knowing what had happened to him. He asked the two comrades how they were and stood up to find the wooden hospital completely destroyed. He saw a fire leaping through the Hiroshima City. He had heard the explosion and thought that some kind of bomb was dropped and decided to escape to a nearby mountain. It started raining heavily. When the rain stopped, they went back into what used to be a hospital. He saw the nurses and comrades, themselves wounded and bleeding and still helping the injured people. My father also started helping them and carried badly injured people on stretcher to the nearby mountain.

By this time, bloodstained people in rags and tatters had started to escape from the Hiroshima City to the countryside. Some people fell down and said, "Soldiers, please give us some water" and "Help!" Others died without drinking water that my father brought. He remained busy rescuing injured comrades and people until sunset. When he was going to

sleep on a blanket under a pine tree, he found his arms and insteps blistering. A nurse said that he had got burnt and gave the blister a prick with a pin. He began to have high temperature and could not walk. The nape of his neck was burnt and he had to lie on his back all the time. He began to learn about the sights of misery by listening to his comrades' talk. "It was just like hell, or I don't know what to say…" "it was a terribly cruel sight that is hard to imagine", he heard. His burnt arms and legs were maturated and it was very painful when gauze was exchanged. There were injured people without gauze and the burnt parts were crawling with maggots. His temperature was as high as 40 degrees Celsius (104.0 °F) and it lasted for a week. Some comrades started to pass away and even those who had been to Hiroshima City and talked about the situation suddenly passed away, which made my father think that he would die soon. He thought that he could survive because he was in the hospital and the nurses took good care of him.

My father seldom talked about his experience when I was a child. I wanted to know what really happened to him and asked him to write an article on his experience. Finally, he agreed in 1977, 32 years after the atomic bombing on Hiroshima and Nagasaki to write about his experience. At that time, I was teaching in a high school in Hiroshima. He then wrote an article "To Kazuyo from Father", and published it in a book entitled *Record of Teachers as Atomic Bomb Survivors in Hiroshima for Children*. Unfortunately I am unable to trace this book and that's why I can't exactly quote from his article, but I can recollect and write a little bit about it. I fully realize now that his experience was so painful that he didn't want to disturb his children by talking about it. In his article, he observed that the war had left many scars which were inestimable, and by reading the records one couldn't imagine as to what had really happened. I also remember the advice he gave to me in his article and I am grateful to him. He asked me to help every child understand how important peace is so that the same mistake wouldn't be repeated in the future.

It may be added here that atomic bomb survivors and their children had fear for health and wellbeing, but there were other kinds of fear as well such as discrimination in marriage and employment. Proposals of some atomic bomb survivors for marriage were rejected, because they were exposed to radiation and they could produce malformed babies. Even if they got married, some women were told not to give birth to a baby. Thus, not only atomic bomb survivors but also their children (the second generation) had to continue to live with some kind of fear. *Hibakusha*

(atomic bomb survivors) sincerely hoped that nuclear weapons would never be used again in the future, and the best way to live in peace would be to abolish nuclear weapons. How is it possible to do so? Atomic bomb survivors are now getting older and older and it would be hard for them to convey their experiences to the children and young people directly. In such a situation, peace museums/peace centers/art museums, and so forth (they are generally called "museums for peace") could play an important role in providing peace education. Often exhibitions on the danger of nuclear weapons are arranged at the museums and it is possible for the visitors to think about what they can do for peace.

According to *Museums for Peace Worldwide,* co-authored by Kazuyo Yamane with Ikuro Anzai, there are over 300 museums for peace in the world and over 80 museums for peace exist in Japan (2020). They contribute to promoting peace education not only at schools but also in communities. I was in charge of the International Exchange Section—as a volunteer—at a peace museum called Grassroots House in Kochi in the southwestern part of Japan. I also worked as Vice Director at the Kyoto Museum for World Peace, Ritsumeikan University. After my retirement, I am an Advisor there. I have long experience of watching visitors and conversing with them and witnessing a curiosity among them to know the past as it was and about which they didn't know much. Peace thinking begins to flow from this curiosity.

In the same way, peace museums projecting anti-nuclear movements help raise people's awareness of nuclear danger. I got involved with the 6.9 movement when I was a college student in the 1970s. Belonging to Japan—the only country where the atomic bombs were dropped and being the daughter of an atomic sufferer, it was but natural that my interest in anti-nuclear events and movements would grow over time. Such events included the signature campaign for the abolition of nuclear weapons which was promoted on 6th and 9th of every month. Again, Japan's campaign against atomic and hydrogen bombs was born in the wake of the Daigo Fukuryu Maru (the 5th Lucky Dragon Boat) disaster caused by a US hydrogen bomb test in Marshall Islands on March 1, 1954 (Daigo Fukurkyo—Maru Exhibition Hall). In August 1955, the first World Conference Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs was held in Hiroshima, and the following year, in 1956, the second World Conference Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs was held in Nagasaki. The World Conference Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs in 2022 was held from August 4 to 9 at the two atomic-bombed cities for the first time in three years because

of Covid-19 pandemic. Its theme was "Together with *Hibakushas*, for a Peaceful and Just World without Nuclear Weapons - for the Future of Mankind and the Earth". An online platform was used to connect the entire country and the world. I attended the conference in person and online.

Another factor that influenced my life deeply was the historical fact that the Japanese-Americans were put into ten concentration camps in the United States during World War II and it was not known in Japan in the 1970s. My grandparents had immigrated to the United States. My mother was born in there. She grew up there until she was 13. Japan became US enemy during World War II and it was not possible for my mother living in Japan at that time to learn about her family put into a concentration camp during the war. Such a dark event of American history was not reported in Japan, and it was shocking for me to learn the history of Japanese-Americans when I went to the United States to study. I was interested in American literature and had studied literature—mainly Anglo-Americans history—at the college in Japan. I began to study Afro-American and Native American literature at an American University. One day my cousin asked me to translate a Japanese poem written by my grandmother into English. This made me realize that Japanese-American Literature existed though it was not known at that time.

In due course, I learned that the literature produced by the three generations of Japanese-Americans revolved around three different themes. The Issei, the first generation, wrote poetry in Japanese and the theme was nostalgia. They had planned to earn money in the United States and then return to Japan, but it was impossible. The Nisei, the second generation, wrote literary works in English and the theme was the search for identity: "Am I Japanese or American?" The Nisei were given American citizenship because they were born in the United States. However, they were put into concentration camps after Japan's attacks on Pearl Harbor. The Sansei, the third generation, wrote poetry and novels in English, and the theme was their self-assertion as Japanese-Americans. They were influenced by the civil rights movement of the Afro-Americans.

Such parents' background made me think about why the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and why the Japanese-Americans were put into concentration camps during World War II. This also increased my interest in Peace Studies.

When the 14th General Conference of the International Peace Research Association (IPRA) was held at Ritsumeikan University in 1992, I made a

presentation on a poem written by an atomic bomb survivor—Sadako Kurihara. It was about a baby who was born in a dark basement with the help of a seriously injured midwife who passed away after the birth of the baby. The poem is based on a fact and it is so powerful that it would make people learn the horror of nuclear weapons and the preciousness of life. The IPRA conference was hosted by the Peace Studies Association of Japan (PSAJ), which was established in 1973 for the purpose of encouraging and developing peace research in Japan. In this conference, I learned about the existence of IPRA's Peace Education Commission (PEC) and became its member to promote peace education.

I often wondered what I could do for peace and became a member of a peace museum called Grassroots House (*Kusa no Iye*) when it was founded in 1989 in Kochi City in the Kochi Prefecture. I was asked by the founder and director of this museum, Shigeo Nishimori to participate in the first international conference of peace museums held at the University of Bradford in England in 1992. My participation in this conference changed my life completely because I began to get involved with peace museums in Japan and in the world since then.

## Building Peace and Justice Movements in the Twenty-First Century

Peace Studies / Research is very important and it is also important to disseminate the results of peace research among people. This is why peace education is important in Peace Studies. I have the experience of teaching Peace Studies at Kochi University in Kochi, Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto, and the University of Jaume I in Spain. Both Peace Studies and museums for peace have been playing important roles to create the peace and justice movements in the twenty-first century. This section focuses on the roles of Peace Studies and Museums for Peace in education.

Peace Studies tends to change perspectives of issues related to peace and justice. The purpose of Peace Studies is to focus on conflicts, to carry out scientific research on the causes of any resultant strives and conditions for peace, and to contribute to academic progress in the related fields of study. Here let me point out that it is natural that there are various opinions on nuclear issues among the students in Japan and abroad. For example, the students in my Peace Studies course searched for information on the nuclear accident in Fukushima on March 11, 2011. There were

students who still supported the government policy to reoperate nuclear power plants after the nuclear accident. This is because the mass media tends to report government's policy without criticizing it.

However, such students' concepts of nuclear energy changed when a guest speaker gave a lecture on her experiences in Fukushima. She escaped from her home for her birthplace with her baby believing that it would be safer. However, the reality was opposite and her parents' place was more contaminated with radiation. If true information were provided by the media, she wouldn't have left for refuge to a more dangerous place. Later she escaped from Fukushima to Tokyo, but she found that Tokyo was also dangerous to live and moved to Osaka with her baby. Such people have not been compensated by the TEPCO (Tokyo Electric Power Company). Students learned how dangerous nuclear power plants are. Many students changed their views regarding the nuclear power plant and stopped supporting the government's policy for nuclear energy. They even began criticizing it. Once they learned about the reality and the truth of the nuclear accident, they became critical of the government's policy and the media reports. Here, it became evident that such a testimony was very powerful.

Another example from the Peace Studies class relates to the conflicting territorial issue being faced by China, Taiwan, and Japan. The Islands (called Senkaku in Japan, Diaoyu in China, and Tiaoyutai in Taiwan) are a group of islands in the southwestern part of the East China Sea. China, Taiwan, and Japan are at odds over their territorial claims. Marine surveys conducted by the United Nations in 1969 and 1970 on the continental shelf of the East China Sea reported the potential for large oil reserves, estimated at 109.5 billion barrels and comparable to the reserves of Iraq. When it became almost certain that there were abundant natural resources in the surrounding waters, the conflict between the three countries intensified. Three students from China, Taiwan, and Japan made a presentation on this issue, and it was found that each student claimed that the islands belonged to their countries respectively. The three students were surprised to know about the different historical contents being presented in each country. When all the students in the class discussed the issue, a number of questions were raised. Some of these were: "Should the islands belong to a certain country?"; "Should the oil be used in the future by the three countries?"; and "Should oil be kept as they are considering the problem of global warming?". Fortunately, there were students from other countries. As such, it became possible to discuss the issue objectively. Such

discussions made the students think of not only territorial issues but also environmental issues.

Nuclear issues such as nuclear weapons and nuclear energy are important topics of Peace Studies course. The issue of Japanese-American history also became an important topic as an issue of war / peace and human rights. Lots of true information on nuclear issues and true history tend to remain untouched by school textbooks and the media. Under such circumstances, the role of Peace Studies becomes all the more important to develop an understanding of such issues fairly and comprehensively. Nowadays, conflicts tend to be solved by using force such as the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, but peaceful means like diplomacy and negotiation should be used to solve such problems.

In this context, let me refer to Article 9 in Chapter II (Renunciation of War) of the Japanese Constitution. This constitution was promulgated on November 3, 1946 and it came into effect on May 3, 1947. Article 9 says: "Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized" (Prime Minister's Office of Japan). Though there are gaps between the Constitution and the reality, it is important to note that Article 9 should be respected, and conflicts should be solved nonviolently and peacefully not only in Japan but also in the whole world.

## Education Through Museums for Peace

Education through Museums for Peace tends to change perspectives of issues related to peace and justice. It becomes clear when the students tend to learn much about the causes and horror of war, efforts for peace and reconciliation, and how can visits to museums for peace promote an understanding for peace and reconciliation and their need. However, in the context of Japanese history textbooks and teaching, a number of challenges have often been pointed out.

The problem in history education in Japan is that an emphasis has been put on Japan's victim side of World War II (such as the atomic bombing and US air raids on Japanese cities). On the other hand, Japan's aggression against other countries in the war hasn't been covered much by history

textbooks. Again, the media also refrained from comprehensive reporting regarding Japan's dark history. As a result, many students and citizens simply don't know about Japan's aggression against other countries and people's suffering in the invaded countries during World War II. When I was teaching at a high school in Hiroshima, I was already involved in promoting peace education, but it became clear that an emphasis was put on atomic bombing and the history of Japan's aggression against other countries was not emphasized much.

Such a tendency changed in the 1980s and 1990s, when Japan's aggression against other countries began to be dealt with in school textbooks and in the exhibitions of museums for peace. However, there was a backlash by the nationalists to such a trend and many public museums for peace began to delete the exhibition of Japan's aggression against other countries because of the nationalists' pressure.

Here let me refer to an interesting learning experience for me and others. To begin with, from 2011 to 2015, I took students from Japan, the United States, and other countries to Hiroshima and Nagasaki with the cooperation of Professor Atsushi Fujioka of Ritsumeikan University and Professor Peter Kuznick of the American University in Washington D.C. The first round required the students to study history related to atomic bombing comprehensively at the Kyoto Museum for World Peace, Ritsumeikan University. One of the characteristics of this peace museum is that it exhibits not only Japan's victim side of World War II but also Japan's perpetrator's side and people's suffering in China, Korea, and other countries. The nationalists couldn't criticize the content of the exhibition because it was based on peace research of history at the peace museum. Then the students visited the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and the Atomic Bomb Museum in Nagasaki. It was not easy for the American students to visit these places, because they were taught that the atomic bombing ended World War II. It was also hard for the students from China and the Republic of Korea to learn about the result of the atomic bombing and *hibakusha's* suffering. Many of them from China and Korea had learned that the atomic bombing had ended World War II and the sufferings of the people caused by Japan's aggression and Japanese colonial rule. On the other hand, the Japanese students had learned about the horrible result of the atomic bombing while they had not learned about Japan's aggression against China and other countries. Therefore, they were shocked to learn about the Chinese people's sufferings because of Japan's aggression as projected by the Nagasaki Museum for Human

Rights and Peace. The study trip lasted about ten days and the students discussed history from different perspectives. Such peace trips to museums for peace changed their historical perspective and their impression of other countries, and the best result of the study tour was that they became very good friends in the end. Such a case made it clear that the museums for peace are good means to promote peace education among students having different perspectives of history

It is clear from above that peace thinking and peace perspective can be developed through different initiatives. Similarly understanding about peace and conflict can be enhanced through peace education as covered by different Peace Studies courses at the universities in particular. Likewise, peace institutes and programs including Peace Education Commission in IPRA and the various presentations made during the events organized by them do contribute to the efforts to spread peace literacy. In the same way, a number of journals and periodicals focusing on peace and conflict issues are rendering their service. Among these, one may mention *The Journal of Peace Education*. It publishes articles that "promote discussions on theories, research, and practices in peace education in varied educational and cultural settings"; "It is transdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and intercultural. It aims to link theory and research to educational practice and is committed to furthering original research on peace education, theory, curriculum, and pedagogy"; and the *Journal of Peace Education* understands peace education as education for the achievement of non-violent, ecologically sustainable, just, and participatory societies; and it "addresses a wide range of interests among scholars, researchers, activists, educators, policy-makers, and practitioners in peace education" (*Journal of Peace Education*). I am one of the editorial members of the journal and I believe that I am contributing to the process for peace promotion and peacebuilding through my active association with this important Journal.

As a matter of fact, there are so many initiatives to promote peace through peace education and peace action and there is a need to learn more about such initiatives. All these are very significant initiatives, and they promote peace education around the world. Consequently peace education inspires people and especially the students and young people to involve in the peacebuilding process to build a better future for all. Here let me refer to the contributions to peace promotion and peacebuilding made by international conferences and networks and international organizations like the International Network of Museums for Peace (INMP) and the Japanese Citizens' Network of Museums for Peace.

## Peace Education Through International Conferences and Newsletters

My involvement in peace museum started in 1989 when a peace museum called Grassroots House was founded in Kochi City in Kochi Prefecture. It was founded and opened for public on November 11, 1989. A major purpose of this peace museum is to educate the public about war and peace, and especially about Japan's role during the Asia-Pacific War in order to create peace through research, studies, exhibitions and other activities and to build peace and reconciliation especially with the neighboring countries, which had suffered due to imperial Japan's military actions. Subsequently, it organized several trips for ordinary Japanese citizens, who were members of the Grassroots House, and the young students to visit China in groups to investigate the excesses committed by Japan, learn about the violent side of Japanese history and help the healing of the historical Chinese wounds. Accordingly, a number of peace trips into China were organized in the 1990s and five reports in the form of booklets were published. All these were edited by the Founder and Director of the Grassroots House—Mr. Shigeo Nishimori (1991, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1999). I participated in the peace trip in 1999 and I was shocked to discover the suffering of the Chinese people due to the germ war (Yamane, 2014, p. 119).

As stated earlier, the reason why I became a member of the Grassroots House was that I thought that it would be possible for me to work for peace as a citizen, and I never regretted this decision of mine. My association with this organization paved the way for my active participation in different international peace initiatives. For example, it was late Mr Nishimori, who asked me to attend the first international conference of peace museums held at the University of Bradford in 1992 because I could communicate with others in English. I introduced the activities of the Grassroots House at the conference. Likewise, I talked about the deliberations of the 1st International Conference at Bradford to the members of Grassroots House in Japanese language. Such activities of exchanging ideas and information among peace museums made it possible for the members of the international network of peace museums to learn from one another.

The 3rd International Conference of peace museums was held in Osaka and Kyoto in 1998. One of the outcomes of this conference was the creation of the "Japanese Citizens' Network of Museums for Peace". Since

July 1999, the Japanese Citizens Network has been publishing a newsletter called "*Muse*". It used to be published twice a year in both English and Japanese. Now it is published four times a year. I have been associated with this newsletter as an editorial member since its inception.

Three years before the launch of the newsletter *Muse,* an important initiative was taken when a directory of peace museums of the world was edited and published by Peter van den Dungen, General Coordinator of International Network of Peace Museums and a peace museums expert (1995). This guidebook, published in association with the Department of Peace Studies, Bradford University, was first of its kind and very useful to learn about the peace museums in the world. An updated version, edited by van den Dungen was published in 1998. Ten years later in 2008, when the 6th International Conference of Peace Museums was held in Kyoto and Hiroshima, a comprehensive volume entitled *Museums for Peace Worldwide* was published by this author (Yamane, 2008). Its Japanese version was edited by M. Masahiko Yamabe and the author, Kazuyo Yamane.

To me, a good conference was never an event only for the presentation of papers or participation in discussion or meeting old friends and establishing contacts with some new colleagues. These were important, but more important was the inspiration offered by such conferences. They usually motivated me to think of doing much more for peace promotion and promotion of the idea of museums for peace. Believing that research is a major component of peacebuilding, I often got myself involved in research and publication activities after the end of major conferences. For instance, after the 8th International Conference of Museums for Peace held at the No Gun Ri Peace Memorial in the Republic of Korea in 2014, I co-edited a 450-page study along with Emeritus Professor Roy Tamashiro. Professor Tamashiro also helped the preservation of the records of International Conferences held in Belfast in 2017 and in Kyoto in 2020 and the records are available on the INMP website (inmp website). It is now possible for those who are interested in the INMP to learn about peace education through museums for peace by reaching out to the books published on related themes and by visiting the INMP website.

The 10th INMP Conference was an online conference. It was held in Kyoto and I was actively involved in organizing it with the then INMP Coordinator Prof. Ikuro Anzai at the INMP Office in Kyoto. It was held online because of Covid-19 pandemic. An updated version of *Museums for Peace Worldwide* was published in English on this occasion (Yamane & Anzai, eds., 2020). It was also published in Japanese. One may add here

that the *INMP Newsletter* is being published in English and Japanese and now also in Spanish (*INMP Newsletter*). The author has been an editorial member and one of the translators of the Japanese version.

As mentioned elsewhere in this essay, the *Muse Newsletter* of the Japanese Citizens' Network of Museums for Peace is published in English and Japanese, and this author has been its editorial member and one of the translators since 1999. So far as the role of this Newsletter is concerned, overseas peace museum members can learn a lot from it about the peace museums in Japan and their activities. During the period when international network's newsletters were not published from 2003 to 2010, the *Muse Newsletter* was published regularly and information and activities relating to museums for peace in Japan and elsewhere were covered by it. It is possible to read the English version of *Muse Newsletter* from the first issue published in 1999 to the latest issue at its website (*Muse Newsletter*).

## Roles of INMP

Roles of the INMP are very important to promote peace education through museums for peace in the world. Take, for example, the exchange exhibits "Atomic Bomb and Humanity". A collection of photographs of atomic bomb survivors was sent by the Grassroots House to Swords into Ploughshares Peace Center & Gallery in Detroit in 1995. The background of such an exchange is that the National Air and Space Museum in Washington D.C. had canceled its original Enola Gay (a bomber) exhibition in January 1995, and the Smithsonian Institution forfeited an opportunity to educate people about the terrible result of the atomic bombing, including people's sufferings and the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. While the exhibition projecting the terrible consequences of atomic bombing was kept hidden from the American public by public institutions, it is encouraging that there were such exchanges of the forbidden exhibits at the grassroots level. The International Network of Peace Museums played a role in making the exhibit possible in the United States. Let me add here that I became acquainted with James W Bristah, then Executive Director of the Swords into Ploughshare Peace Center and Gallery, at the first international peace museums conference held in Bradford University in 1992.

Another example of raising awareness about the tormenting times and action through exhibition can be given here by referring to the one prepared by Erik Somers, historian and senior researcher at the Netherlands

Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies. The exhibition entitled "Memories of the Japanese Occupation of Indonesia: Dutch, Japanese, and Indonesian Perspectives" was organized in Kyoto, Usuki City of Oita Prefecture, Mizumaki Town of Fukuoka Prefecture, Nagasaki, Fukuoka City, Tokyo, and Kochi City in 2000. It showed different memories of World War II among the Japanese, Dutch, and Indonesians. There were various opinions on the exhibit, but it seems that many Japanese people learned about the unknown and important parts of history of the three countries through the exhibit. Earlier in 2016, Somers spoke on "How to transmit the memory of war to the next generation: the role of photography" at the Kyoto Museum for World Peace. It is, indeed, important for peace museum personnel to learn from one another.

Here one may also refer to the exchanges of ideas among the volunteer guides in Kyoto. In 2014, five young people from Tehran Peace Museum visited the Kyoto Museum for World Peace. At that time, I was Vice-Director of the Kyoto Museum for World Peace. The volunteers belonging to both the peace museums exchanged ideas and the event was reported by Mainichi Newspaper on September 28. A Japanese student of Peace Studies was so inspired by the Tehran Peace Museum that she actually visited the Museum in Tehran and made more friends. Such exchanges of ideas among the young people are encouraging because it is the young people who can create a better future.

## Some Japanese Museums for Peace with Unique Features

The problem that the Japanese public peace museums frequently face is that the imperial Japan's aggression against other countries is not exhibited much and an emphasis is usually put on Japan's experience as a victim during World War II. Hence, they project the sufferings caused by atomic bombing and the US air raids on Japanese cities. However, there are small private peace museums where true history is exhibited honestly, and efforts are made for peace and reconciliation. These include the Grassroots House in Kochi, Chukiren Peace Museum in Saitama, Women's Active Museum on War and Peace (WAM) in Tokyo, and Nagasaki Museum for Human Rights and Peace.

Thinking that researching and writing on the museums for peace in Japan including those with very unique features is important for

promoting peace education and strengthening the movements for peace and for the museums for peace movement in Japan, in the neighboring countries and in the world at large, I wrote extensively about the museums in Japan in particular. I believe that some knowledge about their activities and peace promoting role can inspire others and the peace process from local to global can be expanded and strengthened. The point may be elaborated by referring to the Chukiren Peace Museum in Kawagoe in Saitama prefecture. "Chukiren" is an abbreviation for Chugoku Kikansha Renrakuka—"Laison Association for Returnees from China". It was established in 2006 by a group of former Japanese military personnel, captured and tried by China, who on their return to Japan in 1956 and 1957, self-identified as war criminals. From then on, they personally testified to Japan's invasion of China and got involved in peace and anti-war activities based on their experience. The museum they established houses copies of confession statements written by around one thousand war criminals (Yamane & Barret, 2023).

Likewise, learning about the focus and activities of the Women's Active Museum on War and Peace (WAM) can be very impactful. It was established in 2005 as a sort of a follow-up of the proceeding of the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery. On the eve of the launch of the museum, WAM declared that it would serve 'as a place where the reality of war crimes is recorded and kept for posterity' and where the historical facts of comfort women would be told so that such crimes are not committed again anywhere in the world. It also stated that the WAM would be guided by five principles. These are: (a) Focus on wartime violence with the objective of upholding that justice free from any gender bias shall be universally applied; (b) Gather and exhibit data of individual victims, clarifying who is to take responsibility for such victimization; (c) Create a pro-active people's network to enable a world free of all forms of violence; (d) Consolidate such network that would not depend on any state power; and (e) Take action to enable cross-border solidarity (Women's Active Museum on War and Peace Website).

Nagasaki Museum for Human Rights and Peace is another museum which deserves mention here. It was founded in 1995. It was earlier called 'Oka Masaharu Memorial Nagasaki Peace Museum', but its name was changed in April 2024. This museum was established by the citizens who had inherited the last wishes of the late Masaharu, who had devoted his life to awareness raising regarding the responsibility of the Japanese military based on the truth in history. People in the peace museum truly wish that

each visitor would learn about the aggression of the Japanese military, imagine the pains of victims, and work toward the realization of postwar compensation and the oath of non-war as soon as possible. The museum clearly has significant peacebuilding and reconciliation-building objectives, because even after the end of the Second World several decades ago, foreign victims of the Japanese imperial war were not compensated. Such issues didn't get attention before, because the military assaults were kept hidden from history. With no apologies and compensation, the Japanese state's irresponsible responses to foreign victims never built real trust in the world (Oka Masaharu Memorial Nagasaki Peace Museum website).

Besides the Nagasaki Museum for Peace and Human Rights, the Grassroots House in Kochi may be mentioned again for its contribution to building peace and reconciliation between Japan and China. Here it may be noted that the Grassroots Museum had signed a cooperation agreement for academic research, investigation, and friendship in 2016 with the Exhibition Hall of Evidence of Crime Committed by Unit 731 of the Japanese Imperial Army, which was established in the Harbin city in Heilongjiang in China.

The first Unit 731 exhibition, one may point out here, was organized in Kochi in 1994, where a local member of the 53rd Division of the Japanese Imperial Army delivered a controversial testimony. Later that year, Han Xiao, Director of the 731 Exhibition Hall and Jing Fuqiu, a family member of a plague victim of Japan's germ warfare program, were invited to Kochi. During his visit, Han Xiao said that recognizing the true history, learning the lessons, and passing them on to the next generations are the keys to the friendship between China and Japan, and the way to prevent war. Since such a fact is not well known abroad, a book entitled *Grassroots Museums for Peace in Japan: Unknown Efforts for Peace and Reconciliation* was published in Germany by this author (Yamane, 2009).

## Conclusion

Undoubtedly my personal background that my father was an atomic bomb survivor in Hiroshima influenced me to get involved with peace studies, peace movements, and peace education. It didn't take me long to understand that in Peace Studies, it is necessary to educate students to develop their imagination to see problems as their own, their creativity to think of ways to solve problems peacefully, and their ability to take action to actually solve problems and create peace (Okubo, 2022, p. 139). Clearly peace

education is very important and necessary for the peace and justice movements of the twenty-first century and it should be promoted locally and globally.

Let me add here that these observations are based on my experiences of teaching Peace Studies and also working for museums for peace like the Grassroots House in Kochi City and Kyoto Museum for World Peace at Ritsumeikan University. Furthermore, I have also worked very closely as a volunteer with the International Network of Museums for Peace and the Japanese Citizens' Network of Museums for Peace. I may therefore say with confidence that museums for peace are good and effective means to promote peace education locally and globally and for peacebuilding in the future.

I should also emphasize that the International Peace Networks such as IPRA, INMP and IPB (International Peace Bureau) have been playing important roles in promoting peace research, peace education, and peace movement. The information regarding IPRA conferences and other activities it organizes are regularly announced and these provide interesting and valuable information to peace researchers and peace educators (IPRA Website). Likewise, the INMP keeps the peace educators and researchers informed about its activities and initiatives (INMP Website). It is hoped that these websites will be used for peace education and peacebuilding in the future. In addition, active networking also helps a lot and one comes to know about very inspiring people and their work. It is, indeed, very encouraging for me to have made many good friends not only in Japan but also in various countries to promote peace together. Such friendship and solidarity with other like-minded people has been one of the precious treasures in life.

Last but not the least, I would like to express my deep gratitude to Dr. Peter van den Dungen, the INMP founder and its first Coordinator and Professor Ikuro Anzai, the second INMP Coordinator, who guided me in the INMP-related activities not only academically but also practically. I would like to thank my family, who always supported my peace research, peace education, and peace activities for more than 30 years. Various studies that I produced and numerous activities for peace in which I got involved would not have been possible without their understanding and support.

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# In Search of a Movement: Education and Peace in Our Time

*Matt Meyer*

## Introduction

When Peace Education was systematized as a burgeoning but formal disciple, I was a precocious but largely inactive ten-year-old from a predominately apolitical New York City family. As I helped to convene the International Peace Research Association (IPRA) conference celebrating the 60th anniversary of the discipline in my position as IPRA's Secretary-General, I like to think that I made up for lost time in part due to my upbringing by parents and grandmothers who I've termed "natural born pacifists." The US war in Southeast Asia—what the people of Vietnam call the American War and so many in the USA call the Vietnam War, despite the devastating losses throughout Laos, Cambodia, and the entire region—was brought into our homes in living color on the evening news every night. And though we did not go to any demonstrations or belong to any organization, there was an undeniable sense that the Vietnam War, and war in general, was wrong. I joined the active peace movement at age 17 when I became part of the War Resisters League and the coalition Mobilization for Survival (Bennett, 2003). My parents and especially my

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mom followed me into those organizations to act in solidarity with their anti-war son.

In high school, I entered my senior year as acting editor of the school newspaper, and when President Jimmy Carter called for a return of registration for the draft we decided to survey the entire student population regarding the call for boys turning 18 to make known their availability to be conscripted into the US Armed Services. Carter wanted to show the Soviet Union that their recent invasion of Afghanistan would not go unchallenged, and an increase in US militarism from this generally dovish head of state seemed like an easy way to go. The opposition to registration, however, was more than Carter or the US Selective Service System had ever imagined. Well over 100,000 young men turning 18 between 1980 and 1981 did not comply with the federal law, an offense punishable by a fine of $10,000 and/or five-year jail term. The vast majority of that group did so silently—simply not filling out the forms or filling them with missing or incorrect information (Hasbrouck, 2025). A few of us, however, myself included, decided to become "public non-registrants," and as one of the most public spokespeople in one of the most spotlighted US cities, I fully expected to suffer the consequences. But I was committed to staying true to my newly developed principles and consciousness.

Some of that commitment came from direct activity between my secondary school graduation and my first year of undergraduate college life (at which time I would myself have to register on my 18th birthday). It was an election year in the USA, and the Democratic National Convention was being held in my own home town, at Madison Square Garden. Working with the democratic socialists, I helped obtain signatures from Democratic Party convention delegates to have a speaker at the convention (a "four-star" mother whose husband and son had been killed in Vietnam) read a short statement on the convention floor against the President's misguided policy (Simon, 1980). We were successful, the statement was read, and as a reward I and a few others were given "journalists passes" to get inside the Garden on the last night of the Convention when President Carter would be speaking to the assembled crowd accepting his Party's nomination to run for a second term. Thus, along with a small group sitting in the far-away seats at the top of the Garden, we watched as the sitting President of the United States entered the large stadium room. Then, as he got to the point in his speech mentioning draft registration, we shouted a loud "BOO" along with other anti-war

attendees. After just one week or so of being an activist, I booed the US President on national television!!!

Some months later, a photo of me in front of the US Armed Forces Recruitment Station in Times Square appeared along with an article about public registration resistance in the popular magazine *Rolling Stone* (Jaffe, 1981). I was quoted significantly in the article and Rolling Stone wanted to capture a photo that would harken back to the Vietnam-era draft resisters who burned their draft cards at the same location. For me, the wonder of it all was in part wrapped up in the fact that before my political awakenings at the end of my teenage years, my life revolved totally around music. To be a first-year college student with only a few months of work behind me and then be profiled in *Rolling Stones*—just weeks after the Madison Square Garden incident—seemed almost magical and very hard to process. If this is what could take place after less than six months in "the peace movement," it seemed logical to see what another six months would bring!!

## Building a "Science of Activism"

Preparing to write this essay for an unusual collection—co-edited by senior peace educators from the USA and Pakistan, a potentially unlikely alliance just a few years ago—I have just completed a talk at one of the most prestigious universities in the southeastern region of my country. North Carolina, in some ways the northernmost point of the "deep South," was central to many modern social justice, peace, and human rights movements, organizations, publications, and people. Over just the past 60 years, the same period of the birth and development of the International Peace Research Association (International Peace Research Association, 2025), the group I now serve as Secretary-General), North Carolina saw the birth of the so-called "civil rights lunch counter movement," when a leading part of the Black-led Southern-based US freedom movement of the 1960s was based on integrating previously all-white cafeterias which were located in popular, center-city department stores which were open to all to shop in and spend money. North Carolina has long known on some intrinsic level the indelible US connections between race and class. North Carolina was home to one of the most extreme battles against the white supremacist and truly terrorizing organization the Ku Klux Klan, formed just after the abolition of slavery to ensure that the folks of African descent would never know actual liberation or more than just the occasional personal legal rights.

In 1978, four militant anti-Klan demonstrators were killed by members of the KKK in collusion with local police in one of the most graphic examples that, even after the US Civil War and the campaigns of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr and Fannie Lou Hamer and Rosa Parks and others, not much had really changed. The "78 Greensboro Massacre," however, did also lead to one of the only serious US-based "truth and reconciliation" and reparations initiatives, where a people's tribunal effectively forced the city and state to provide resources for the communities most negatively affected by the KKK, including those murdered by the Klan. North Carolina was central to some of the most vigorous electoral work against the rising right-wing movements overtaking the US Congress, and it was a place where the evils of militarism, patriarchy, and homophobia, and for the freedom of LGBTQ peoples, found consistent sustenance, locally and regionally. Alliances (sometimes cautious and uneasy ones) between radical lesbian feminists, Native American organizers from the Lumbee and other Indigenous Nations, hard-core pacifists and "Negroes with Guns" pioneer Robert Franklin Williams all found a home (Williams, 1962).

Therefore, it was a special visit for me, late in 2023, to take part in a dialogue at Duke University, at a special exhibit entitled "the Science of Activism" (Carter, 2023). For many in peace education or even peace research and study, we have youthful examples of activist work followed by long careers in the academy. So while we may technically serve as bridges between "the gown and the town," our strongest foundations are very much in the professional disciplines in which degree-granting institutions take their place. Not that there is anything wrong with this; it is simply something to remain mindful and take note of when we profess too loudly that we are both academic and activist. On the opposite side of the spectrum, it is true that many organizers do in fact read a lot, and even more are part of oral history traditions, where we learn from the experiences, successes, and failures of what had gone before; we are life-long students of our own movements for social change who rarely however take the time to systematize our findings or attempt to gain perspectives from other than highly subjective sources. There is little wrong with that either—we are, after all, preparing for timely action! This becomes a problem, of course, when activists get stuck in a repetition of cyclical, ineffective, narrowing of tactics or strategies so little or no actual change takes place. There is a logical need for peace educators, academics, and activists to be in constant, reflective, critical dialogues.

Thinking about building a "science of activism" might put our collective perspectives on an entirely new level. We can be open to understanding that there are "senior" organizers among us who have employed a dialectical analysis leading to a praxis, where fluid thinking about social change creates a pragmatic dynamism which makes lasting change more likely. These senior organizers certainly do not have all the answers to every situation, nor are they often useful to proscribing techniques applicable to situations beyond their localized region or conflict. Like professional historians, they and we can only hope to understand and reflect an "experiment with and of the truth"—not a definitive and comprehensive retelling of any complete even singular moment of historical "fact." Thus, these scientists of activism, these *griots and shaman*, become our truest professors of a different type: they are professors of the street. Their lessons on the resistance of everyday life are what I was going to North Carolina to talk about, especially as our colleagues at Duke had curated an exhibition spotlighting one of the most profound of these professors, a dear old friend named Mandy Carter.

Mandy Carter of Durham, North Carolina was a founder of the National Black Justice Coalition, Southerners on New Ground (SONG) and countless peace and human rights campaigns and projects; she co-edited with me and Chicana historian Elizabeth Betita Martinez the influential *We Have Not Been Moved: Resisting Racism and Militarism in 21st Century America* (Elizabeth "Betita" Martinez, 2018). Though she never met the man, Mandy considers her chief mentor to be Bayard Rustin—another extraordinary scientist of activism. It is now widely understood in the USA—by the powerless as well as the most powerful—that the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, in which Dr. King delivered his historic "I Have a Dream" speech, could never have happened without the coordination and organizing skills of Rustin. His much-lesser-known but equally extraordinary post-March New York City schools boycott shut down the largest public education system in the USA in protest of the still-discriminatory policies and practices against Black folks, even in the liberal north. Originally ostracized because he was gay, Rustin is now heralded as one of the main architects of what we know as the modern US "civil rights" movement. Former President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama co-produced a recent film on Rustin whom they had posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom when serving in the White House (Perez, 2013).

Along with Bayard's widower and executor of his Estate Walter Neagle, Mandy and I led a discussion at Duke University on what we might glean from "Professors of the Street" on how a Science of Activism might be developed so that, as was proclaimed by many in the World Social Forum, a better world would "not only be possible": we'd have some ideas on how to construct and use the building blocks for such a world. That discussion and this work is part and parcel of what peace education must lead us to become in the years ahead. A praxis between theory and pragmatic practice—between effective strategic conflict-resolving activities and the principled commitment to justice for all which is the basis of all peace—is required from us in this more mature moment in the development of our field.

Thus my 2023 remarks at Duke University bear repeating. They provide a roadmap of my own path and suggest some possible paths for us all. I began by noting that-

In 1931, celebrated radical Emma Goldman famously did not actually say: "If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution!". What she actually said, while recounting in her autobiographical *Living My Life* that she was criticized for the gaiety and intensity with which she quite emphatically danced, that her reply was equally emphatic:

> I did not believe that a Cause which stood for a beautiful ideal," Emma wrote "for anarchism, for release, and freedom from convention and prejudice, should demand the denial of life and joy. I insisted that our Cause could not expect me to become a nun and that the movement would not be turned into a cloister. If it meant that, I did not want it. (Goldman, 1931)

And so, some 50 years later in the early 1980s, as I was in my late teens and searching for what had become of The Cause and who was involved in what ways, I chanced upon the War Resisters League in my home town of New York, and at one of the earliest meetings met this woman—a serious, intense and emphatic woman—who nonetheless asked as the day's work came to a close: "So, when and where is the dancing going to be?"

That woman was Mandy Carter, Scientist of Activism, and she was then and still is most surely why that strange group called the War Resisters League (WRL), now 100 years old (Hedemann, 2023), still calls me back.

Fast forward a few years, and it is the mid-1980s…the movement for a Free South Africa is gaining some steam as massive direct actions are mounted for universities, companies, and even governments to divest

from the racist apartheid regime. Within the WRI, there are some whispers among the older staff that a dear friend who had drifted away politically was interested in making contact again. And so Ralph DiGia, who maintained friendships with everyone and never burned bridges, let me know—as the main liaison to the budding group of white South African resisters building a mass End Conscription Campaign (ECC) in their country (Meyer, 2009), invited me to come along on a visit to the old friend who was interested in funding these young South African anti-militarist, anti-apartheid activists. I met Bayard Rustin in his office as director of the A. Philip Randolph Institute and later spent time with Bayard and Walter and the South African ECC activists at the War Resisters International Triennial held in India in 1986.

These days, as some get nervous about using words like apartheid, or revolution—and as we commemorate the 100th anniversary of WRL, the 60th anniversary of the March on Washington which Bayard coordinated—I think it is vital to find some courage in our glorious histories. Thus in 1965, long before Black Power and the Black Panthers and times in the "Sixties" when it seemed like revolution was in the air in the USA, some of us have been quoting Bayard Ruston, who noted upon receiving the WRL Peace Award that year:

> I could go on all night telling you how the League has enriched me. And then I should really be doing something dramatic for the League if I were able to… All that I can pledge is that I believe firmly in nonviolence. I believe firmly that no basic change can come without social, economic and political, and psychological revolution. (Rustin, 1965)

Emma and Bayard and Mandy and all of us are, after all, about the building of the beloved community, or to pluralize it as the Zapatista and Indigenous Latin American movements today would, "a community where many beloved communities can fit" (Global Social Theory, 2025). And that task, indeed, perhaps in this day and age more than ever, is a revolutionary task, a largely nonviolent and definitively revolutionary task.

## Toward a Nonviolent and Revolutionary Task

So let us be bold and courageous like them, true internationalists as well. Because 2023 was not only a year of celebrations. In September 2023, some of us were reflecting on Chile and the 50th anniversary of the

coming to power of that model of neoliberalism and authoritarianism, Augusto Pinochet—who took power over his country despite the fact that the form of socialism practiced there was wholly democratic, elected by the people and for the people.

On the fiftieth anniversary, former Duke University professor (and former worker for Salvador Allende's democratic socialist Ministry of Culture) Ariel Dorfman wrote the following:

> The wounds of Chile are deep, but regardless of how Chileans decide to deal with our trauma and conflicts, Allende's legacy might have some bearing beyond the borders of his country.
>
> With new variants of Pinochet troubling so many lands, Allende's insistence throughout his life that for our dreams to bear fruit we need more democracy and never less—always, always more democracy—is more relevant than ever. He calls out to us that there can be no solution to the dilemmas plaguing the planet—war, inequality, mass migration, the twin threats of climate change and nuclear annihilation—without the active participation of vast majorities of fearless and enthusiastic men and women marching past the balconies of the future.
>
> The need for radical change through nonviolence that this unique statesman posed—and did not achieve half a century ago—has again become the crucial issue of our era. (Dorfman, 2013)

As October followed September, so too must we follow the news from Gaza and reflect also on the revolution going on in Palestine post-October 7, 2023, when it seemed that the "Middle East" region caught on fire anew with the Hamas attacks on Israeli settlements and Israel's genocidal reaction. The radical Islamist faction of Palestinian leadership is not as clearly democratic in all parts, and clearly not nonviolent, as some of the words so far quoted suggest. But it is also not the place of outsiders, in the context of self-determination and the basic humility of stepping away from "father knows best" attitudes, to preach to the Palestinians—who are not themselves a monolithic force—to do more or less of this strategy or tactic. This is especially true when crimes against humanity, genocidal war crimes by international law, are being committed with the funding from and in the name of the US government (which claims to be, with ever deteriorating evidence, a government "of the people" and people of Jewish descent) (a group which, at least socially and culturally as a person of Semitic descent, if not theologically, I remain a part). Our job is clear, and it is not as complicated or as tragic as one might think. For peace

educators and peacemakers in general, this job became the necessary focus of our work since October 2023. Looking at that history as professors of the street, however, provides some very practical lessons on what might get the world out of the current quagmire. Here, my own experiences played a direct role in understanding and articulating those historic lessons.

In the mid-1980s, most of us expected that South African apartheid might not end in our lifetimes, and that the end—even of something as basic as political apartheid—would not take place without a massive bloodbath. Most of us were wrong. Because, taking the leadership from diverse strategies and tactics within the global South African movements-in-exile, the international anti-apartheid movement successfully utilized the strategies and tactics which Emma and Bayard and Mandy have taught us: mass mobilizations and civil disobedience, the use of strategic electoral work alongside of economic boycotts and pressure campaigns. Together in 1994 (with an anniversary coming up among others), we saw apartheid fall and Nelson Mandela elected president of a free South Africa. It was and is not a perfect South Africa without grave problems. But progress was made.

Palestine today deserves and warrants nothing less. The movement for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions has an opportunity now to grow wider and deeper than ever before (Meyer, What Strategic Solidarity with Palestine Looks Like in War Time, 2023). With a new generation of young Jews declaring "not in our name" and calling for a ceasefire and end of genocidal practices, we are living in a moment ripe for organizing and seizing the opportunities we sometimes have to make for ourselves.

There IS a science of activism, so carefully and well-framed by that exhibition at Duke. It may seem a bit like what my grandmother used to call "common sense," but it is extremely uncommon in the left and progressive sectors of the USA today. It is, however, centered on the empowerment of the "common" people. Charismatic speakers and self-proclaimed saints, great intellects and researchers, might be part of the movements we must build and even help guide us at times. But history shows that they will not and cannot be the leaders of this new period of work.

## Gaze of the Sankofa Bird

The gaze of the Sankofa bird—that West African Akan symbol which teaches us to look back in order to look forward and plot a more successful future—requires that we traverse some old periods to explain the

imperatives of the new one we're in. By my undergraduate days in the early 1980s, the exuberant 1960s were definitively over and replaced by the backlash of the Reagon era. "Never again" for radical social change makers in the USA meant that the US government had learned lessons to disrupt, repress, criminalize, coopt, and kill any anti-war, anti-imperialist, or anti-authoritarian movement which would challenge the economic, political, or military preeminence of the USA in the world. The state would never "allow" movements on the scale of the Black liberation, anti-Vietnam War, feminist and other uprisings to take hold again. Revisionist history would write that the USA didn't lose or wasn't on the wrong side of the conflicts in Southeast Asia; we were correct to be fighting the communists in that region we just didn't provide enough consistent supply of guns, tanks, fighter planes, and soldiers to win against "the bad guys." That the USA was not just "on" the wrong side but, in the words of Pentagon Papers whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg WAS the wrong side would be well covered up from 1980s onward (Davis, 1974). This was the context of my young entry into peace circles.

Feminist author Grace Paley, who emceed the press conference when I "came out" as a draft resister, joined the leaders of the Black Veterans for Social Justice (mainly Vietnam vets who had gotten the worse treatment abroad and back in the USA) in pressing hard on my resister colleagues and me. "Do NOT repeat the mistakes of your Sixties-era counterparts," they admonished. "Do not make these acts of resistance all about you personally and neglect, forget, invisibilize, or displace the many women and young black and brown-skinned men who are on the front lines against war and injustice but who are disempowered from becoming peace leaders." Their message was clear enough to me, and in my case two mentors were at the ready.

Mawina Koyate Sowa was the founding chair of the All-African Women's Revolutionary Union, a Central Committee member of the All-African People's Revolutionary Party (AAPRP), and a staff person for the Mobilization for Survival offices just blocks away from my classes at New York University. The AAPRP was the Pan-African unifying vision of Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, widely recognized as "the Gandhi of Africa" in the 1950s as he led the first successful anti-colonial revolt on his continent, riding "the Gold Coast" (Ghana's name before independence) from British rule in 1957–58 (Bill Sutherland, 2000). Nkrumah's "positive action" campaigns were modeled in part on the previous decade's successes in India, and his vision of a United States of Africa continues to be

considered an important potential way forward for justice and peace, as the Organization of African Unity and the current African Union attest. But AAPRP was and is a grassroots people's organization, not a collection of heads of state, and after a CIA-led coup d'etat against Nkrumah in 1966 and Nkrumah's subsequent unprecedented invitation to become co-President of the neighboring Francophone country Guinea (along with fellow Pan-Africanist Ahmed Sekou Toure), the development of the AAPRP set off on a distinctive path (Meyer, Beyond Our Current Boundaries, 2025).

One of the leading organizers of the US Black Student Movement, Stokely Carmichael of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and later the Black Panthers, was a mentee and protégé of both Nkrumah and Toure, changing his name to Kwame Toure and taking up the mantle of operationalizing the AAPRP. And two of his right-hand comrades, Mawina Sowa and fellow SNCC and Panther confidant Bob Brown, positioned themselves in New York just as I was coming of age politically. In town to build the anti-nuclear June 12, 1982 March on the United Nations Special Session on Disarmament, what became the largest peace demonstration in US history up to that point, Mawina and Bob (and later Stokely/Kwame directly) were invaluable early mentors to be as I tried to figure out the connections between peace, international relations, student organizing politics, and the world around me. And it turned out that my next mentor, Pan African pacifist and people's ambassador Bill Sutherland, was someone they all considered an elder. Having given up on the USA and moved to the Gold Coast in 1953 after serving time for conscientious objection during WWII, Sutherland (from a middle-class African American family with Christian peace roots) became a key bridge between the burgeoning anti-colonial and liberation movements across the continent and the solidarity movements growing in the USA and Europe. Mawina and Bill especially taught how to be an internationalist, a Pan-Africanist, a peacebuilder, an organizer, an anti-racist/anti-imperialist solidarity activist, and a good man—all at the same time. In many ways what they taught me was that I could not be one thing without being part of all the others.

In those years, the 1980s and 90s as the anti-apartheid, Central American solidarity movement, and anti-neoliberal movements were coming to the fore, my involvement with historic peace organizations, especially the War Resisters League (WRL), was also key to my life. Vocationally, however, I went into teaching following the footsteps of my well-respected

father who spent over 30 years teaching English language and literature at a Brooklyn high school and helping to build the union, United Federation of Teachers. The daily mix of teaching social studies in various NYC high schools, working with Bill Sutherland on a project which would become my first book (our co-authored work *Guns and Gandhi in Africa*), and working with the WRL led me almost effortlessly to a central connection with peace education. Bill's connections with the WRL hadn't diminished since his WWII days (when he and Bayard Rustin were two of the few African American objectors and many of their white friends and allies went on to lead WRL and other peace groups after the war), and another C.O., Igal Roodenko, told me about a group he wanted me to get involved with. The Consortium on Peace Research, Education, and Development (COPRED) was founded in 1970 by the pioneers of peace research and peace studies as a field: Kenneth and Elise Boulding, Ted Herman, Bernice Carroll, and Clint Fink and others who wanted a US base to work locally with their recently formed International Peace Research Association (International Peace Research Association, 2022). "Look Matt," Igal pushed me, "you're interested in academic work, and I've been on this COPRED board of directors for years as the token activist! I'm tired and ready to get off the Board, why don't you get on it in my place!!"

## Peace and Justice Studies Association

Never one to take things lightly, my path from COPRED Board member to COPRED Board Chair was fairly quick and, after several years, I found myself in a unique position to do some pushing of my own. A second US-based peace studies professional association had emerged, simply and appropriately called the Peace Studies Association, and the members of both groups were clamoring about the costs and irrationality of having two groups doing essentially the same thing. So, quite carefully and in close communication and collaboration with the leadership bodies of both COPRED and PSA, we made an historic move contrasting the usual splitting and divisiveness of much of the left: we merged our two organizations into one bigger and better joint group, the Peace and Justice Studies Association (which continues to thrive to the day). PJSA is a truly binational group, representing as the main North American regional affiliate of IPRA many universities, colleges, and colleagues from Canada as well as the USA. It was a proud moment when PJSA was officially launched in

2001 to serve as its Founding Chairperson (Peace and Justice Studies Association, 2024).

Leading PJSA as the twenty-first century unfolded always meant, for me, a merger of the ideas and ideals which made up all aspects of my educational and experiential upbringings. The dialectic between academia and activism would always be respected, emphasized, and illuminated as much as possible since no significant social change came about without a studied analysis of the material conditions of a given place and time, and study without struggle is but an armchair "let's pretend to make progress" idealism totally divorced from the realities of actual peacemaking. My work at Columbia University in Comparative and International Education Development intensified my internationalism, driving the work of PJSA to be rooted in the US collegiate programs we were connecting with, but never in a US- or Euro-centric manner. Thus, work with PJSA Founding Executive Director Simona Sharoni, a noted Israeli-born anti-Zionist and leading feminist, meant connecting with a global critique of patriarchy and heteropatriarchy which always included Palestine, Northern Ireland, Latin American, and Afro-Asian perspectives (Sharoni, 2025). We successfully developed PJSA into an organization which would depend upon and derive knowledge from our Canadian colleagues, always with a particular emphasis on the Indigenous and Native Canadian movements which were on the rise throughout the north at that time (Peace and Justice Studies Association, 2019). PJSA became a bi-national network, also conscious of our Mexican comrades who had appropriately decided decades earlier to affiliate with IPRA's South American regional association rather than relate mainly to the North American work. Instilled with a sense from my grandmothers that "common sense" was a not altogether common but very important humanitarian commodity, we worked to insure that diverse ideological and practical perspectives felt at home and safe in our Association, while never overly compromising on the basic principles which underscored our radical peace work: that without economic, racial, political, cultural, gender-based, environmental, and all forms of social justice and liberation there could be no peace.

Fast forward two decades and one can note these trends still central to PJSA, IPRA, and the entire field of peace education and peace studies. A theme of "decolonizing peace studies" has centered the work of the 2020s, with specific solidarity given to work in conjunction with the Resistance Studies Initiate and our support for the Occupied Peoples Forum (OPF). Bringing together civil resistance leaders from West Papua,

Western Sahara, Palestine, Puerto Rico, Kashmir, Kurdistan/Rojava, Tibet and Ambazonia/Cameroons, the OPF recognizes that while neocolonialism and direct sovereignty issues exist in many places, these still-occupied and directly colonized peoples represent the forefront of the struggle to "free the land" in our times (Occupied People's Forum, 2022). An earlier generation's reliance on national liberation struggle strategies may well have been historically necessary in that period, but the role of the nation-state alongside of growing corporate hegemony and power necessitates strategy reevaluation in this one. The 2023 IPRA conference held in Trinidad and Tobago was centered in a Maroon sensibility: that an Ecosocialist, grassroots fusion of ancient knowledge and cutting-edge contemporary research would best lead us to effective paths of self-liberation (Jaramoji, 2025).

## Luis Nieves Falcon's Story

My final significant mentor epitomized the bridges and borders in need of crossing and building—between disciplines, peoples, and work areas. Dr. Luis Nieves Falcon was a highly regarded public intellectual: the author of numerous important studies as well as popular children's books. A sociologist by training, he founded the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies at the University of Puerto Rico, and served as a leader on many Boards, including the Council on Inter-Racial Books for Children and the International PEN Club. As a founder of the Puerto Rican Campaign for Human Rights, he became intimately involved in the plight of Puerto Rico's US-held political prisoners and decided in typical intense fashion to give up his tenured faculty position and comfortable life to put himself through Law School. He was determined to provide through his own direct efforts the best operational and legal defense possible to the patriots who had given their lives to Puerto Rican independence. Nieves Falcon became both the chief lawyer for these prisoners as well as the chief strategist of the international campaigns for their release (Falcon, 2008).

Luis Nieves Falcon's story is important here not only because it exemplifies sacrifice, commitment, and a fusion between theory and practice, and academia and activism. His vision and legacy suggest the ways in which twenty-first-century peacemaking requires a practice equally rooted in a cross-continental understanding of the causes of conflict and a pragmatic and creative response to those conflicts. The significance of education, very much including early childhood and secondary school education,

cannot be underrated; peace education curriculum was part of every facet of the freedom campaigns. In that sense, contemporary US campaigns, such as the Spirit of Mandela (SoM) coalition, very much carry on the work which Nieves set forth. A Black-led campaign with strong ties to South Africa, Cuba and Venezuela, the Caribbean, and European solidarity movements, the first major success of SoM was in building an independent International Tribunal in 2021 which collected testimony of ongoing US human rights abuses against Black, Brown, and Indigenous Peoples. Ultimately finding the US Guilty on five counts of human rights abuses adding up to continuing Genocidal policies, the SoM now seeks to build a bottom-up People's Senate to bring together people from all walks of life within the US Empire to challenge the increasingly militaristic and authoritarian settler-state (Jihad Abdulmumit, 2025). Peace research pioneer Johan Galtung, in noting the inevitable fall of the US Empire back in 2009, raised the question of whether a post-imperial US would take a turn toward fascism, or the beloved communities embodied by the Southern freedom movement of the 1950s and 60s (Galtung, 2009). The Spirit of Mandela coalition seeks to answer that question based squarely on love and a love for the people which makes freedom and peace a realistic dream.

Alternative institutions, like IPRA and PJSA, SoM and the old nonviolence internationals are being joined by newer entities such as the International Institute for Peace Education and the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders: both founded, not coincidentally by Betty Reardon (Betty A Reardon, 2014). Together, they envision a field no longer dominated by people who look like me: apparently "white" in modern US terms, apparently "male" in a binary gendered system, apparently "rich" (though certainly not part of any class of owners anywhere near the 1%). My own choice, to entwine my own life with those of the most oppressed—to accept leadership from peoples of the Global South and African descent, from women and youth—is really the only possible conclusion if one accepts the idea of Ubuntu, the connectedness of our humanities. None of this contradicts but rather enhances a dialectical materialist analysis which proves that history matters, that the systems of capitalism and white supremacy and heteropatriarchy cannot co-exist with the ideals of lasting peace.

## Conclusion

None of our institutions can perfectly embody the peaceful world we need to build. More and more, however, I see in these institutions and their related projects and campaigns, a way forward toward a progress that makes possible some of these dreams borne out of our current nightmares.

If there is anything to be learned from the historic anniversaries of the 2020s, anything from glorious exhibits about the science of activism or challenging critiques of our shortcomings, it is that our leadership must come from the local, grassroots organizers of those most affected by the injustices and violences of our societies. Strong, disciplined organization is more necessary than ever. Affirming the organizers who build our survival structures in the shell of the dying societies around us must be valued and recognized as much as any PhD, EdD, MD, or lawyer. It is in the person-by-person, door-knock by door-knock, email by glorious TikTok Insta-posting, that new organizations might lead us to lasting peace.

With this in mind, our educational and academic work can contribute to creating a world where many worlds safely and harmoniously fit. These are the social change movements that our futures depend on. With it, Palestine can and will be free, all colonized peoples and the prisoners who represent them will be free. With it, so may we all be free.

As Edward Said profoundly noted: "Survival, in fact, is about the connection between things" (Said, 1994).

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# ‘Beyond Our Individual Identities’—Peace Based on Ubuntu, Ujamaa, and Friends

*Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge*

## Introduction

I was 13 in my first year of high school at a girls’ boarding school for black girls at Inanda, South Africa—just outside of Durban—when I heard Dr H. F. Verwoerd,[1] South Africa’s Prime Minister had died. I did not know then who he was and why the senior girls had clapped when hearing the news of his assassination. Although I was living in a racially segregated

[1] **Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd** served as Prime Minister of South Africa and is commonly regarded as the architect of apartheid.[1] Verwoerd played a significant role in socially engineering apartheid, the country’s system of institutionalised racial segregation and white supremacy, and implementing its policies, as Minister of Native Affairs (1950–1958) and then as prime minister (1958–1966). Furthermore, Verwoerd played a vital role in helping the far-right National Party come to power in 1948, serving as their political strategist and propagandist, becoming party leader upon his premiership. He was the Union of South Africa’s last prime minister, from 1958 to 1961, when he proclaimed the founding of the Republic of South Africa, remaining its prime minister until his assassination in 1966.

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country, I did not know then that it was a socially engineered system. I came from a small village where the only news was on Radio Bantu, itself an instrument of apartheid propaganda, broadcast in all South Africa's black languages.

That our matron, a stern African matriarch, had scolded the girls for celebrating the news of Verwoerd's assassination is an example of the widespread propaganda. She had asked: 'What if it was your own father that had been killed.' At school, I soon learned about apartheid's social engineering in my history class. I was taught about how we were governed by a whites-only parliament. Blacks were not allowed to vote and were assigned to the Bantustans (the poorest land in the black-majority country) where they would govern themselves in a system of 'good neighbourliness' (as Verwoerd explained).

I soon realised that apartheid laws governed every aspect of my life—where I was born, lived, and died; where I would go to school, work, and even who I could marry. Thinking back, I now remember songs from my childhood I did not know were freedom songs. The one about Verwoerd was warning him about the power of the black man. The African National Congress (ANC)—one of the leading anti-apartheid organisations—was banned, and its leaders jailed or exiled. These songs were suppressed.

## The Values That Shaped My Activism

Despite all of this, I was raised on the African values of Ubuntu—that a person is a person through others. In the book *Guns and Gandhi in Africa* by Bill Sutherland and Matt Meyer, Archbishop Desmond Tutu wrote in the Foreword that Ubuntu is the essence of what it means to be human. This, he taught, must be a source for compassion and the idea that my humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be truly human together (xi). This, for me, is the fundamental principle for nonviolent struggle.

The value of Ubuntu aligns also with the Quaker value of seeing that of God in the 'other'. When Africans were converted to Christianity, some of these values were lost, together with a whole lot of other precious attributes that defined what it means to be an African. Despite this, great African leaders like Tanzania's Julius Nyerere developed education for their newly independent countries based on philosophy as represented by Ujamaa (Swahili for familyhood). As I grew and eventually fell in love with a leading South African Quaker activist—becoming in time a member of the local 'Friends Meeting' and practitioner myself—these connections

between Ubuntu, Ujamaa, and the connections between ones we might otherwise think of as 'others' became clearer and clearer.

Education in this wider context must be designed to make all citizens of Africa, and indeed all peoples, self-reliant. Self-reliance is portrayed in economics, politics, and social cultures. A self-reliant person does not exploit other people and at the same time they are not exploitable. Ujamaa is about African socialism, a belief in sharing economic resources in a traditional African way, as distinct from classical socialism.

The Black Consciousness (BC) Movement slogan 'People Shall Share' was an attempt to entrench and promote African Socialism while also addressing internalised racism and restoring a positive image of what it means to be black. I was introduced to Black Consciousness as a student when I attended a Youth Camp organised by Steve Biko and others, held at the Phoenix Settlement which was founded by M.K. Gandhi just outside Durban. Almost two decades later, I would meet and work with Gandhi's grand-daughter Ela Gandhi, in the Natal Organisation of Women (NOW).

Biko and the BC leaders had chosen one of Gandhi's ashrams for raising the awareness of young people like me about the importance of social justice and nonviolence. Gandhi developed the philosophy of Satyagraha, which influenced the national liberation struggle in South Africa, India, and beyond. During the Camp, we visited the local village to conduct a community survey and learn about people's living conditions and basic needs. These Black Consciousness ideas of self-reliance are deeply connected to the Gandhian philosophy of Satyagraha or 'soul force'.

I was later to return to the Mahatma Gandhi Settlement in the mid-eighties to witness and to mediate violent state-sponsored conflict that had broken out in the community, which was taking lives. I spoke out against the violence and in a meeting of representatives of the warring factions, I had appealed for calm, asking the people in the meeting to reach out to one another by considering what each had lost and how to rebuild a sense of community. A leader of one of the factions remarked and said: 'What this woman has said makes sense'. It was pleasing to see the men from opposing sides sitting together during a shared lunch and reminding one another that they were actually neighbours, first and foremost, and had missed the friendship they had with one another before the violent outbreak.

The thread which ties spiritual and social liberation together as inseparable forces is tightly and colourfully woven through Ubuntu and Ujamaa,

from Black Consciousness to Satyagraha, and beyond. British Quaker Ada Salter, an environmentalist and one of the first women councillors of London, is another of those who understood this universal humanism, that we are all rooted in a certain togetherness beyond our individual identities. I was pleased to learn about Quaker socialism as I was preparing for the Salter Lecture I gave in 2021, as part of Britain Yearly Meeting.

Growing up as a child in an African village, I was taught to greet everyone, including strangers. In isiZulu, when two people meet, they stop and say 'Sanibona' meaning 'We see you!' This is often followed by 'Ninjani?'—'How are you?'. Greetings are in plural form to indicate that we are not meeting as individuals but as representatives of our families and communities. My family greets your family; my community greets your community.

I saw a re-awakening of this tradition in Philadelphia during the COVID-19 lockdown, when strangers started to greet one another. Previously I had seen people walking past, wearing headphones, and not bothering to greet each other. A senior citizen in the community where I grew up often reminds me, with a broad smile, of how much she appreciated the gesture when I used to take her tea, when she was tilling her fields in the village. I am sure this would have been on instruction from my grandmother. We probably got paid back in kindness and madumbes (yams). And as the cry that 'Black Lives Matter' went up around the USA and the world following the police murder of George Floyd, the echoes brought me back to Sanibona: we can be certain that our lives matter when we are able to truly see one another.

Raised as a Christian, I realised I made my grandmother uncomfortable when I asked why she had abandoned African spiritual beliefs. I now know that she too was struggling with these questions, even though she was grateful for the education she had received from the missionaries. In my adulthood, I am grateful to my grandmother, my mother, my teachers, the women in NOW and fellow activists in the struggle for freedom, who taught me resilience and the values of Ubuntu—we are human because of others. It was in the women's movement that I learned about shared leadership, and leader as servant. What this practically meant was that we flattened the organisational structure so that members could hold their leaders accountable. We built trust in the potential for each member to lead and to be led.

## Resisting Apartheid

The 1980s saw escalating state repression and mass detentions in response to a growing people's resistance to apartheid. The government declared a series of states of emergency from 1985 to 1987, which gave it unrestricted power to detain anti-apartheid activists without trial. South Africa had in effect become a police state. State violence had become prevalent.

As a student, I had joined the South African Students Organisation (SASO) led by Steve Biko and others. It was my formative years as a social justice activist. This paved the way for my political activism, which I pursued as part of the African National Congress (ANC) underground. As part of this work, I was assigned the duty of organising women into the struggle. I loved working with women and learning about the heroic struggles of the rural women of Natal. Someone had given me a copy of Hilda Bernstein's book *For Their Triumphs and for Their Tears,* which has the profiles of women leaders who fought for our freedom (May 1, 1978).

It was inevitable that I would also be drawn to the South African Communist Party (SACP), which I joined and led underground. I was made leader of a small underground cell, reporting to Jeff Radebe who was in exile, based in Lesotho. It was on one of the visits to Lesotho that I met the then SACP general secretary, Moses Mabhida. I later met Chris Hani in Botswana and travelled with him to Cuba a year before he was assassinated. Chris Hani was a wonderful leader who encouraged me to work on peace and women's issues. When the SACP was unbanned in 1990, I was elected Chairperson of the Natal Regional Committee. It was in this role that I was chosen as a delegate to CODESA (the Convention for a Democratic South Africa).

I was detained several times, each time the period of detention growing longer. When I was in solitary confinement as a young woman fighting against the apartheid system, I often had vivid dreams of my grandmother who had died a few months earlier. I believe her spirit was present in my mind at that difficult time. I drew immense strength from the power of struggle songs. Often sung in rallies and protest marches, they had the power to instil amazing courage and fearlessness. Even though I was alone, I felt a sense of being connected to my comrades through singing struggle songs.

I was attracted to Quakers through my interaction with a small Quaker community in Durban in the early eighties. In 1983, I had been part of establishing NOW, which joined the United Democratic Front (UDF).

The UDF was formed as a broad coalition of civic organisations established in August 1983 to oppose the whites-only referendum for a new constitution that created a tri-cameral parliament for Whites, Indians and Coloureds, while excluding the Black African majority.

The main aim of NOW was to organise women into the national liberation movement, under the banner, 'a nation is not free if women are not free'. NOW campaigned for better living conditions, affordable housing, access to health, reproductive rights, and free child care. We organised peaceful protests against the political violence of forced removals, the rising cost of living and lack of social services and infrastructure in the black communities. We organised workshops to train women in leadership and other organisational skills. We took up women's practical needs and transformed them into strategic demands.

NOW was built on the freedom struggles led by ordinary women who had resisted land dispossession and the extension of pass laws to women. We were inspired by the historic women's march of 1956, which had brought twenty thousand women from all parts of South Africa to the Union Buildings, the seat of government in Pretoria. Women had gathered in solidarity across colour and class divides to protest against the extension of pass laws to African women. Their slogan Strydom (the then Prime Minister), you have struck women, you have struck a rock. You will be crushed. The huge crowd of women had stood in absolute silence for a full half hour before singing '*Nkosi sikelel' iAfrika*—God bless Africa.

The establishment of NOW was a major factor in the increased role of women in political and civic organisations and in the establishment of the rights of women in the struggle and all spheres of society.

NOW worked closely with the youth and we were concerned that the youth were getting militarised in their response to state violence. Our own strategy was to organise marches, peaceful protests, and night vigils. During one of our night vigils we invited Richard Steele, a Quaker and Conscientious Objector, to address a night vigil as part of promoting non-violent forms of resistance. When he had been called up on July 4, 1979 to serve in the whites-only South African Defence Force, Steele had written a letter explaining that he would be unable to report for duty due to being a pacifist. When he was called again the following year, he refused to serve, and was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment.

While in prison, Steele began to question his long-time congregation, the Baptists. He read about Mohandas Gandhi and came to respect his teachings. After his release, Steele travelled the world, learning and

seeking a more integrated spirituality. On his return, he served as caretaker of the Gandhi Centre in Durban ((including Phoenix House) and became a Quaker. He, his wife Anita Kromberg, Quaker Peace Centre director Jeremy Routledge, and others, were active in the End Conscription Campaign and the Conscientious Objector Support Group, which were central to organising South Africa's white population against both apartheid as well as the increasing militarism taking place within the country and region.

Jeremy Routledge was also an active member of the National Education Union of South Africa (NEUSA)—a non-racial teachers' union which was to include people of all races and ethnicities. He, Richard, Anita, and other young whites had joined the struggle to end apartheid, mobilising against militarism, and in solidarity with the oppressed black majority. As Quakers, they actively participated in campaigns in support of detainees and exposing and opposing state sponsored 'black on black' violence. Jeremy was also active in the Detainees Support Group.

Jeremy Routledge and I found love across the colour line, following our detention without trial. Jeremy was detained for a month during the national state of emergency in 1986. I was detained for just under a year in 1987, under the Internal Security Act which gave the apartheid state powers to detain activists indefinitely without trial. We were married in January 1989 in a blended African traditional, Christian, and Quaker ceremony—attended by friends, relatives, comrades, and the local community!

The wedding took place in the rural village where I was born, and the African traditional part of the ceremony included ilobolo, an exchange of gifts that united our two families and our peoples. To this day, Jeremy is loved and regarded as umkhwenyana or son-in-law by the whole village. Our children are their children.

The backdrop to this was that the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, which prohibited marriage or a sexual relationship between white people and people of other race groups had been repealed (1985) while the Group Areas Act was still in place. Therefore, while we were technically allowed by state law to get married, we were not allowed to live under one roof in a white designated area. Such was the madness of apartheid laws.

Despite our different racial backgrounds, Jeremy and I had found we had much in common. We both had a parent who was a teacher, and we had both studied Science. We had grown up in rural KwaZulu Natal and we shared a concern to end racial injustice. We had become activists, mobilising our communities and reaching across the artificial boundaries

created by apartheid. Quakers believe we should let our work speak for us. These Friends, who were mostly white, connected their spiritual lives with political action, their connection to humanity and God in all people, with their opposition to violence in the form of racist policy and militarised defence. They recognised that for them to be free, they needed to give up white privilege and join the struggle for a non-racial, democratic, and equal society. All these actions connected with the African Values at the heart of my upbringing.

## On Nonviolence and Armed Struggle

The question of whether to support the ANC in the struggle to end apartheid caused intense debate among Quakers globally. Since the adoption of armed struggle in December 1961, the ANC's strategy had moved from a totally nonviolent struggle to one that incorporated violence, particularly under pressure from its youth wing, of which Nelson Mandela was a leading part.

The 1960s marked an important watershed in South Africa's struggle against apartheid. The context was centred in the aftermath of the Sharpeville Massacre in March 1960, in which a police firing squad shot into a densely populated section of an unarmed demonstration for approximately two minutes—leaving 69 unarmed protesters dead and, according to the official inquest, 180 people seriously wounded. This killing of peaceful protestors signalled the beginning of a far more brutal and intensive phase of state repression, designed to crush all internal resistance to apartheid in the space of a few years.

South African Quakers had challenged the abuse of race and power. However, the question of support for the ANC, especially in the 1960s and beyond, caused debate among Friends. I became aware of these debates during a Southern Africa Yearly Meeting I attended in 1988 in Botswana. A representative of the US-based American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) challenged Friends about their ambivalence, and this raised a heated debate in the Meeting, whose main objection was the ANC's association with the South African Communist Party and its embrace of armed struggle (Schuler, August 2, 1999).

Hendrik van der Merwe was a South African Quaker, academic and peacemaker who grew up in a conservative rural, Calvinist Afrikaner community in the Western Cape. He was actively involved as a mediator in South Africa, meeting with leaders from the ruling National Party and

homelands, the exiled and imprisoned leaders of the banned African National Congress (ANC), and the internal resistance led by United Democratic Front. In aligning with the oppressed, HW gained their trust while continuing to put pressure on the powerful. HW explained that when forced to choose a side in a conflict, he would choose the side of the powerless or the oppressed. This explained to me that Quakers can be pragmatic yet principled when faced with complex decisions.

I had not begun to challenge the ANC's adoption of armed struggle, as one of the four pillars of the anti-apartheid struggle. I felt the ANC had made this decision as a last resort, in response to a massive onslaught on an unarmed resistance, as illustrated by the Sharpeville massacre of 1960. A way to think about this is that, firstly, my support for the people engaged in the armed struggle was informed by a belief that the system of apartheid was cruel and unjust, and that we were fighting an illegitimate regime. I had not begun to question whether or not the means justify the end.

Secondly, the armed struggle was only a tiny part of the pillars of the liberation struggle. The defeat of apartheid was due largely to the other pillars: underground organisation, mass mobilisation, and international solidarity. Archie Gumede, a stalwart of the liberation struggle and former chairperson of the UDF used to say that the armed struggle did have some effect in showing that people could resist oppression. It boosted morale.

My position regarding means and ends began to shift after engaging with Quakers in my small meeting in Durban. However, violence had broken out in our townships. It was led by armed Zulu warriors recruited by and aligned to Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party. During one of the attacks, someone had fired a gun into the air, which caused the warriors to disperse. This caused debate among us about whether the use of violence to counter violence was ever justified. There was reason to think that if the police were not protecting us, we would have to protect ourselves, especially following the advent of state-sponsored 'black on black' violent attacks.

I now fully embrace nonviolence as a method of struggle, as both the means and the end. Today, as a Quaker, I support the peace testimony in full as I look at the aftermath of apartheid and colonial violence in South Africa. The deep-seated culture of violence is proving difficult to uproot, confirming the adage that violence breeds violence and that we should continue to oppose all wars and preparation for war. However, while always anti-military, our nonviolence must be ever more militant,

supporting revolutionary change in the face of oppression, through unarmed mass civil resistance and non-military means.

## A Quaker and Deputy Minister of Defence!?

My appointment as Deputy Minister of Defence in 1999 came as a total surprise and I wrestled with this issue, which questioned my pacifist beliefs and caused debate among Quakers and the media. The Christian Science Monitor commented that it was either 'a stroke of brilliance or a monumental gaffe' (Schuler, August 2, 1999).

When I got the call from the Secretary General of the ANC, on behalf of President Mbeki, I told him he had called the wrong number. When he insisted that he had the right number, I told him I would need time to think about it. He gave me half an hour! I was alone in the house and the first thing I did was go on my knees to pray for guidance.

People have asked me why I chose politics as a career. My answer is that I did not choose politics, politics chose me. By that I mean, it was impossible to ignore the injustice around me and not be involved. My entry into politics was through the national liberation struggle. Growing up in rural apartheid South Africa, I did not even begin to dream of becoming a Member of Parliament. In any case, this was not even possible at the time. Blacks were not allowed to vote, let alone to be voted into positions of power.

There were good reasons for feeling that it would be right to accept the challenge as South Africa's first female Deputy Minister of Defence (not to mention perhaps the only pacifist Minister of Defence in world history!):

- I found support among Quakers who debated the issue at our Yearly Meeting in 2000. We adopted a Statement on Peace in Africa, an outcome and testimony to the Quaker process of consensus building.
- South Africa and the world had witnessed a miracle in the relatively peaceful end of political apartheid, something I had never dreamed would happen in my lifetime.
- We had seen Nelson Mandela walking out of prison and start negotiations to end apartheid.
- South Africa had installed our first democratically elected non-racial, non-sexist parliament with Mandela as our President, and I had served as part of the negotiating team which led to those elections.

- As a newly elected Member of Parliament, I had sat across from my former enemies in the Parliamentary Chamber and had witnessed a military fly past in the colours of our new flag and salute Mandela at the inauguration, where I had seen global leaders who came to witness this amazing change.
- Our country had been welcomed back into the global community as an important player in the effort to achieve global peace.
- This was a time of change and optimism both locally and globally.

Under the new Constitution, the policy and defence posture began to undergo radical transformation from state security to an all-encompassing condition, in which individual citizens:

- live in freedom, peace, and safety.
- participate fully in the process of governance.
- enjoy the protection of fundamental rights; have access to resources and the necessities of life.
- and an environment which is not detrimental to their health and well-being.

I have a signed copy of the Human Security Now Report (May 1, 2003) that our former Speaker of the National Assembly, Dr Frene Ginwala gave me. She was democratic South Africa's first woman Speaker and was one of the 12-person Commission on Human Security that produced the UN Report in 2003.

The report describes the concept of human security as freedom from want and freedom from fear. This is the concept of security South Africa had embraced, and which made it easy for me to relate to my role in the Ministry of Defence. We had argued that it was important to increase the participation of women in all the Peace and Security structures and processes, and at all levels of decision making.

We stressed the importance of their presence in sufficient numbers to form a critical mass—at least a third—to make a difference. As MPs and as part of the women's movement, we had established strong connections with feminists outside of Parliament, who helped shape national policy and legislation. I could therefore draw on a large pool of activists who were more than willing to help me develop programmes aimed at transforming the role of the military in a democracy.

I became aware of the work of Sydney Bailey at the United Nations when his widow sent me a copy of his book, *Peace Is a Process*, published by the Quaker Home Service and Woodbrooke College (1993).This assured me of the important role Quakers can play in influencing high-level diplomacy. Bailey was a conscientious objector during World War II, spending several years in the Friends Ambulance Service.

Through the opportunities afforded me in the new South Africa we had fought for, the core beliefs which always guided me, and my new experiences from leading fellow Parliamentarians, UN experts, and Quaker-informed diplomacy, my work as a Deputy Minister of Defence while attending Quaker meeting opened a world not of conflict or contradiction but of challenging questions about creative nation-building.

## Speaking Truth to Power

In time, I moved from the Ministry of Defence to an appointment as Deputy Minister of Health during the HIV and AIDS crisis in South Africa. I drew strength from the call to speak truth to power. I was saddened to see people dying needlessly from AIDS when they were refused treatment in our public health facilities. I could not understand the refusal by my own, now-democratic government to deny HIV-positive pregnant women access to Nevirapine and other treatments to prevent transmission of HIV from mother to child.

When I heard about babies dying at Frere Hospital in the Eastern Cape, I went on an unannounced visit to investigate the cause. This angered the Minister of Health, Dr Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, who was promoting the use of foodstuff only (olive oil, African potato and garlic) and traditional remedies instead of the scientific approach to the treatment of people with AIDS. I took the decision to speak publicly in support of science-based interventions, which seemed like an ethical, moral, and political necessity to me—in addition to being good science-based health practice. This act, however, led to my dismissal as Deputy Minister by President Mbeki, after several warnings for me to say only what the Minister of Health was saying.

In speaking truth to power my aim was not to embarrass the President but to take a principled stand on the side of the powerless, the people who were dying needlessly because they were being denied life-prolonging medicines by their own government. Though I was famously fired from the position as Deputy Minister of Health, in an act which still casts more

criticism on the President who fired me than on my own forthright acts, my Quaker orientation helped make it clear on what side of the principled/pragmatic poll I should fall.

Friends have never been diffident about offering advice to rulers about how to achieve peace. I am inspired by the Quaker Mission to Czar Nicholas in 1854 in the hope to avert the Crimean War. A panel from the Quaker Tapestry by Mary Mason and family illustrates this Quaker effort to prevent war (Phillpott, 1854, pp. 78–96).

Looking at the compromise in diplomatic work, Sidney Bailey answers the question of how we can distinguish between a concession of marginal importance, a sacrifice of vital national interest, and a violation of personal conscience. Bailey wrote about the 'enhancement of the moral element in international decision making' as well as the importance of recognising that for 'the harassed foreign minister or ambassador, the distinction between the pragmatic and the ethical is often blurred'. He stressed that 'our commitment to peace and justice should be infectious, so that we inspire others to share in the process' (Bailey, 1993, p. 110).

I was inspired by Audre Lorde, an African American writer from the USA who dedicated her life's work to confronting and addressing injustices of racism, sexism, classism, capitalism, heterosexism, and homophobia. Her words continue to serve as inspiration: 'And I began to recognise a source of power within myself that comes from the knowledge that while it is most desirable not to be afraid learning to put fear into a perspective gave me strength' (Lorde, 1978, p. 41).

## Freedom Is a Constant Struggle—A Lifetime of Activities

I have learned that freedom is a constant struggle and that every generation must play their part in defending the gains made by those before it. Recently, I was thinking about my role as an activist and Psalms 121, which I had learned to recite as a child, came to me. I thought of an activist as someone who stands up for others, who is willing to sacrifice his or her own freedom to help others gain theirs. I thought of Mandela, who repeated the idea we are not free until all are free.

So, when I left formal governmental politics in 2009 after serving for 15 years in South Africa's Parliament, I had not abandoned my role as a catalyst for change. I feel strongly that wide-ranging basic rights in the

Constitution MUST be given expression in people's lives, which includes mobilising them to become active citizens, participating in elections and in between elections, through public participation.

Jeremy and I established Embrace Dignity, a non-profit abolitionist feminist organisation that seeks to challenge gendered power inequalities that continue to oppress women, girls, and other marginalised people through the system of prostitution, sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, and patriarchy. We are campaigning for the abolitionist Equality Model Law pioneered in Sweden and adopted by a growing number of countries. Our aim is to restore the rights of women and girls to equality, life, dignity, human security, and psychological integrity—rights our Constitution has promised to all South Africans.

## The Struggle for Justice Continues

I continue to reflect on what are the most pressing issues facing us and the world today. I ponder how Quakers and all peace-loving peoples should respond to these issues in apparently dark times? How do we ensure social, economic, and climate justice for all? How do we respond to the call for reparations for colonisation, slavery, and apartheid—as well as the inter-generational trauma that these systems of oppression have caused? How do we ensure an end to all forms of continuing genocide, colonialism and neocolonialism, and horrific warfare?

In August 2024, the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) organised its first in-person world gathering since COVID in Johannesburg, South Africa. The theme of the gathering was: 'Living the Spirit of Ubuntu: Responding with Hope to God's Call to Cherish Creation and One Another'. Ubuntu is a Zulu word that speaks to the power and ceaseless work of the Holy Spirit between us, enabling us to go beyond our individual selves and grasp that 'I am because we are'. The gathering adopted a groundbreaking Minute known as the Tapestry Document, which calls for urgent action. The Document reads: 'We grieve with God for the exponential impact of historical and ongoing injustice. This includes the impact of colonization, forced displacement, slavery, economic exploitation and racism. We are called to disrupt patterns of oppression and division, to acknowledge offenses, to challenge false notions of white supremacy, to repudiate doctrines of discovery, to make amends and to work for reparative and retrospective justice' (https://

fwcc.world/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/WPM-2024-tapestry-and-prayer_KiSwahili-Espanol-English.pdf).

In 2021 a leading Quaker Charity, the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, issued a public apology, acknowledging that 'the roots of the Trusts' wealth stems from slavery, colonialism and white supremacy'. In the statement the Trust stated that 'the Rowntree Company purchased cocoa and other goods produced by enslaved people while the company itself benefitted from the system of colonial indenture'. The statement notes that 'Wilson Rowntree, the South African subsidiary of the Rowntree Company, was also responsible for highly oppressive and exploitative practices during the apartheid era' (Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, April 21, 2021).

Inspired by the work of Dr Hal Weaver, junior, a leading Quaker scholar who founded the BlackQuaker Project, I began to work on retrospective justice for addressing historic and ongoing injustices like slavery, colonialism, economic exploitation, and racism. In an interview following my appointment as Director of the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) Geneva, Weaver had asked me what I would be doing to support the work on justice for people of African descent. I took on this challenge and incorporated it into the Sustainable and Just Economic Systems programme at QUNO.

The BlackQuaker Project defines Retrospective Justice drawing on the trail-blazing 2006 Brown University report, *Slavery and Justice* (2006) as 'an attempt to administer justice years after the commission of a severe injustice or series of injustices against persons, communities, or racial and ethnic groups' (April, 2023). Retrospective Justice constitutes three steps: Acknowledging an Offence; Commit to truth telling, and Make amends in the present.

Correcting the injustices of direct and structural violence would entail reconciliation through social, economic, psychological, cultural, educational, and political rehabilitation, healing, and compensation.

In partnership with the BlackQuaker Project, we were invited to make a presentation to the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT) in support of their work focusing on the origins of long-standing racial injustices in our society. Our presentation covered practical steps the JRCT could take to give the former Wilson Rowntree workers a voice, using the Retrospective justice framework.

The Wilson Rowntree struggle was a major event in the history of South Africa. It was so much more than an industrial dispute. It became part of the struggle to end apartheid and establish democracy. It electrified

and inspired the nation. It awakened people's conscience about standing in solidarity with those who suffered. It created heroes—as well as victims. Those who led the struggle suffered while selflessly contributing not only to protecting rights of workers but also building the new South Africa. It would only be fair for the former workers of Wilson Rowntree and their families to get justice while they are alive.

## Conclusion

The struggle for social justice in South Africa helped me understand that to achieve true and lasting peace, we must go beyond our individual identities and embrace the spirit of Ubuntu. It taught me about the centrality of justice as a prerequisite for peace. It taught me that our struggles are global and that we must reach out to one another across the divides of class, race, ethnicity, gender, and geography.

In this context and so many others, how do we respond to the #Black Lives Matter and the #MeToo campaigns? How do we ensure a just peace in Palestine, Ethiopia, and Myanmar, to name but a few places of violent conflict? As the saying goes, 'We Do Not Inherit the Earth from Our Ancestors; We Borrow It from Our Children'. How do we contribute to righting the wrongs of the past?

My own life's work and practice has led me on a course to help reflect upon these questions, but not necessarily answer them. A certain pragmatism rooted in peace principles, an understanding of how we as individuals and communities are deeply connected to one another, has shaped my thinking over many years among many diverse peoples. In that way, I look forward to justice and peace education dialogues where we continue to learn and teach these questions and answers to one another together across time.

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# An Activist Teacher and Researcher Walking the Decolonial Peace Education Path

*Hakim Mohandas Amani Williams*

## Introduction

Everybody violent!!
(Youth Participant from my dissertation research in Trinidad, 2010).

I am obsessed with violence. I grew up with it all around me. I study and research it. I search for tools to mitigate or reduce it. And because violence causes so much harm and trauma, I am driven by a need for catharsis, for healing. All that I do in and through peace education is ultimately animated by that deep desire for healing, for myself and others. My purpose on this blessed Earth is to transform the ways in which I relate to others and the planet, and to offer that as a healing model for social change. I do believe that part of transforming relationalities will necessitate uprooting structural violences (and vice versa).

During my doctoral dissertation research in Trinidad, I conversed with youth about their views on school violence and a host of related topics. An incredibly succinct but potent macro-structural critique by a young

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participant has stayed with me throughout these years; he matter-of-factly opined that *"Everybody violent"*. Regardless of his intended meaning, his response implicates us all in the entangled web of violences, and because of our complicity in the perpetuation of varied violences, I believe that it is the work of us all to engage indefatigably in projects of peacebuilding and co-liberation.

The book in your hands, edited by Mehdi and Meyer, features an array of peace educators, and asks what our visions of peace are, how they are actualized/attained, and what our contributions to peace studies and peacebuilding are. Exploring answers to these and other related questions is intimately bound up with my own upbringing in Trinidad and Tobago (TT), revealing an unsurprisingly direct connection between that and what I study and research, how I teach, and how I aspire to be a model for decolonial relationality. In this reflection, I foreground details of my early life which scaffold my eventual foray into peace education.

## Early Life and Family Sacrifices

My students often ask me how I ended up being a professor and how and why I 'chose' the fields of education and peace and conflict studies; implicit in their question is what were my intentions and how did I chart my pathway to this current point. Spoiler alert: growing up I had never heard of the field of peace education, therefore there was no coherent plan to become a peace educator. But I do believe that the contours of my early life fed an interest in understanding some of life's imbalances and potential remedies; as a kid, I was intellectually curious, ambitious, persistent, and uncomfortable with the social inequalities that framed my childhood. As a result, I have long been interested in (and now quite committed to) shaking up the world just a little bit, and co-learning with students about the ways in which we can co-craft more just and sustainable futures.

The place that birthed me is called Laventille: a vast area that sits on the hills in and around Port of Spain, the capital of TT. According to Neundorf and Smets (2015), early life experiences, including many factors such as education, parents' socio-economic status, social media, and peers (among others) influence our political socialization (i.e. part of the foundation of our political values, identities, engagement, and behaviors). Laventille absolutely informs the basis of my political values and identities.

When slavery was abolished in 1834 in TT, many of the formerly enslaved settled in the forested hills of Laventille (*The Trinidad & Tobago*

*Guardian*, 2019). In the subsequent years, many immigrants from other Caribbean islands (including my family from St. Vincent) also took up residence in Laventille. Laventille, one may add here, is known for creativity and resistance (i.e. involvement in the creation/evolution of the steelpan, our national instrument), as well as poverty, crime, and drugs (Morgan, 2017). Celebrated Caribbean writer, poet and Nobel Laureate in Literature Derek Walcott (1965) wrote of Laventille: "where the inheritors of the middle passage stewed, five to a room, still clamped below their hatch…The middle passage never guessed its end. This is the height of poverty for the desperate and black…".

These lines remind me of my family (four of us) huddled on one bed for many years in Laventille. Our lives and those of our predecessors were shaped (not deterministically but indelibly) by Caribbean colonialism and slavery. I therefore take pride in speaking about Laventille and the crucible it provided for shaping who I am today. (As an aside, I admit that I do take a special delight to see the slight wince when I tell fellow Trinbagonians—the colloquial term that combines Trinidadian and Tobagonian—that I am from Laventille, exposing their assumptions and biases.)

My mom got pregnant at the age of 16 and had me when she was 17. She had dropped out of high school and therefore could not attain her high school diploma. Prior to my mother's own birth, her biological mother had experienced acute mental unwellness, so the woman I would come to affectionately know as granny adopted my mother. We rented three very small rooms (a bedroom, living room, and adjoining kitchen), in a large, moderately dilapidated house, in which several other families resided; the outdoor toilet and bath were communal.

In our space, were granny, mom, my little brother, and me. We survived off granny's pension, and whatever odds and ends mom could cobble together. My young mother was necessarily a hustler, but in the 1980s—with international financial crises, and without a high school diploma—it became more difficult for her to support us all. With her back up against a wall, she went to the US Embassy, and despite the seeming capricious nature of visa approvals and without a proper penny to her name really, she secured a visa. In a few days thereafter, she had booked her flight from Trinidad, leaving my brother and me in the care of our ailing granny.

I remember standing with granny at the airport, watching mom's plane disappear into the Caribbean skies, wondering about what would come next. Then and there, something sank in my stomach, because it was

dawning on me how much my world would be changing. I was nine years old and my brother almost two. I sort of became the 'man of the house'. I would plait my granny's hair and iron her clothes to take her to the community clinic; she had severe asthma, and she had a pretty pronounced belly, which we found out years later, might have been a massive tumor (perhaps missed by our threadbare healthcare system).

About three years later my brother and I were living with a different caretaker because granny's son was experiencing drug addiction, and his frequent visits had imperiled our own safety. However, every morning, I would still pass by to and/from my way to school to check in on granny. One morning during October of 1992 (I was 13 at this point), I encountered granny sitting at the edge of the bed, her head hung low, and blood was running down her legs. She was taken to the hospital that day, but she never left. Granny's death represented less light in my world. My mom also couldn't attend the funeral, because she was close to sorting out her US residency documentation. She had two options: return to bury her mother and most likely end our dreams of going to the USA or stay and continue laying a foundation for her children. It was a devastatingly unenviable choice, one from which I don't think she ever recovered fully. She ended up not coming for the funeral. That December however (a mere two months later), she was able to visit Trinidad; it was our first time seeing her in four years. I don't think any of us have ever fully processed the weight of the different losses we each bore.

Life felt suffocatingly complicated, especially when I factored in my queerness. It was a very religiously conservative country, and I didn't have the vocabulary and understanding of my nascent sexual identity, or in fact, anyone with whom I could openly and honestly discuss questions about it. There was significant verbal bullying from kids and adults about my perceived queerness, and I felt like the closet was stifling me to death. As a dark skinned, queer, poor Black kid, I felt as if education was my main route to accrue capital to navigate out of this web of poverty and confusion about my identity.

## Awareness of Injustices Comes into Focus

From ages 14 to 18, I attended a school in Trinidad called Queen's Royal College, and it is at that school that I met a wide cross-section of people, in terms of socio-economic status. I was genuinely stunned to see other Black people of significant means, and that contrast with my life I think

sharpened my keen awareness of inequality. This school and similar others (most of which are religiously affiliated) were built in the colonial era and maintained their hegemony into the modern era; the top performing students (at the age of about 11 or 12) on the national exam, gaining entrance to (and thus socio-cultural capital from) these types of schools. I have argued elsewhere (Williams, 2013; Williams, 2016a) that this bifurcated educational system partially maintains TT's class stratified society. Not surprisingly (in retrospect) I ended up studying the structural violence of this educational system for my doctoral dissertation.

It would take a total of ten years before mom finally secured her US citizenship and was able to save enough money to send for us. By this time, she had had another son. I was accepted to Morehouse College and received a scholarship to study there. As I left Trinidad, I swore to myself that I would never return; there was just too much trauma associated with that place.

As the first-born son, I was very close to my mother; yet (and quite understandably why) she did not share the struggles she was enduring in the USA; we would discover these much later when she figured that we could handle hearing about them. But while in Trinidad, I would write letters to her. I understood that she was trying to make a better life for us, so I buried my own anxieties, traumas, and fears, and focused on school and nurturing the hope that we would see her again. All of this was against the backdrop of my quiet concern that we could have been possibly abandoned by her; we would occasionally hear stories of other parents who had done this.

I haven't talked about my father yet, but his absence also played a key role in my own development. For as long as I could remember as a child, my father lived close by with another family. But he was never an anchoring part of my life. He would often promise "I'm gonna bring money for your school books", but I don't think he ever did. I think he was disappointed in me as well because I didn't fulfill the stereotypical dictates of hegemonic masculinity. The last time I remember seeing my father (I was about preteen/early teens), he said something rather derogatory to me in front of a woman who was accompanying him: "I hear you're wearing bras and panties now?!" (a reference to my supposed queerness). Aside from not knowing how exactly to respond to this, I felt utterly diminished. It took me many years to process this wounding. He would eventually pass away from AIDS-related complications. Years later, and as part of my own

trauma processing, I presumed that he must have had his own unprocessed trauma.

All of this just cemented my desire to escape Trinidad and never return. I arrived giddily, but nervously, at Morehouse (an almost all Black and male institution, where Dr. MLK Jr. had attended) to study psychology because I wanted to be a therapist (I suspect as a compensatory conduit to better comprehend my own trauma). While growing up in TT, I internalized the constant (colonial) obsession with what was perceived to be the triad of worthwhile careers: doctors, engineers, and lawyers. I thus initially had become transfixed on becoming a medical doctor; I had excelled in biology but physics and chemistry were a challenge for me (in addition to my repulsion at blood and gore). I therefore abandoned that pursuit of medicine, and pivoted to psychology. Psychology felt like a perfect fit; with my arrival to the USA, the future looked very promising.

## Adapting and Discovering New Selves in the USA: Peace Finds Me

I spent one semester (Fall 1998) at Morehouse, then transferred to St. Francis College in Brooklyn, New York (primarily due to financial issues, and frankly, unbearable homophobia). At this point, mom was still living in Delaware, so I had to live with one of her friends (Kathleen, who kindly took me in to her two-bedroom apartment with her five daughters and two grandchildren; they treated me like a brother; that full embrace and deep love, I will never forget). Because of the Hollywood/Disney exported images of a 'gilded' USA, I had thought that by coming to the USA that my family's material conditions would improve, but this quickly proved to be not the case. E.g. mom, who was a nurse's aide in Delaware, tried to find work in NYC to be closer to me, but finding full-time employment was difficult. She returned to being a part-time live-in nanny (during the week days) for a family in New Jersey. She would return to us in Brooklyn during weekends, awaiting a call on Sundays from the family inviting her to return for work on Monday. Without solid income, we could only rent a room in a three-bedroom apartment we shared with a man who also was contending with drug addiction and mental health issues. We slept on a mattress on the floor in this room, hoping for a positive turn in our fortunes. Throughout all this, I maintained two part-time jobs, went to college full time, and ensured that my brothers got to and from school and

did their homework. One could say, that, with the usual gusto of an immigrant hustler, I became dead-focused on the putative American dream.

I don't think transferring to St. Francis was by accident. This notion of Franciscanism (and learning about St. Francis as a bridge-builder) inspired an interest in peace. Growing up as a child living with different caretakers, I had learned to walk on eggshells; it was stressful but I believe it is there that I gleaned the ability to pay close attention to people. It was a survival mechanism but out of that trauma emerged this heightened sense of being able to 'read' others (which I thought would serve me well as a therapist or psychologist).

I enjoyed studying psychology; it equipped me with myriad theorizations about the human condition. I was still grappling with my sexuality (as it came into clearer focus in undergrad) but I was also beginning to understand the ways in which racism was structured in the USA. I grew up in a country where our leaders looked like me, and here I was now living in a different country, where my blackness was minoritized. I also had to navigate Caribbean people making a pejorative distinction between ourselves and African Americans (e.g. that African Americans were wasting their opportunities for education and social mobility). Something troubled me about that, but I didn't have the analytical tools to interrogate this crabs-in-a-barrel drivel.

I had some wonderful professors at St. Francis but what I received was the conventional canon of psychology and not so much of the other critical aspects. The conventional canon felt incomplete so I started to search further afield. The tale of St. Francis giving up a life of riches, speaking to animals, and reaching out to other faith communities, spoke to me, rather strongly. I began reading more about Nelson Mandela, Mohandas Gandhi and the like, which culminated in a literal online search with the words 'education' and 'peace', stumbling upon the peace education program at Teachers College, Columbia University. I devoured the program's description and instantaneously knew that this was for me. I applied and completed two master's degrees there, and after four attempts, eventually secured admission to the doctoral program. It was via my time at Teachers College that I met Monisha Bajaj, Lesley Bartlett, Peter Coleman, Morton Deutstch, Tony Jenkins, and Betty Reardon; Bajaj, Bartlett, and Coleman were especially instrumental in shaping my critical consciousness. Their own research, writing, teaching, and advocacy have inspired me in some form or fashion.

It was in the peace education program that I encountered *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, a text that opened my eyes to understanding the structural violence in which I grew up (and the globalized nature of oppression). I extrapolated from the text to critique the (neo)colonial education and bifurcated educational system that was damaging the prospects (and self-esteem) of thousands and thousands of children in TT. While major sectors of Trinbagonian society were asking "Why do we have a gang problem? Why are so many kids being recruited into gangs? Why are so many kids dropping out of school? Why are the boys performing so poorly on national exams?", and despite my promise that I would never return, I realized that I couldn't pursue peace and peace studies anywhere unless I started with 'home'. People were concerned with physical violence among the youth, which perturbed me as well, since I had many memories of growing up in a fairly violent community. But now, I was also curious in peeling back the discursive veil to lay bare the historical and socio-cultural environment in which varied types of violences were incubating.

My seven-month dissertation study (de)centered a discursive violence that suppressed contemporary critique of and significant action against the structural violence of the TT educational system, by highlighting the ways in which people narrowly defined violence; narrow constructions of violence beckoned narrow interventions, most of which were (unsurprisingly) not working. For example, some teachers called youth in their classes 'stupid' if they weren't able to follow along the lesson plans or do well on exams, but few persons considered this to be a form of violence. I argued that the system was telegraphing a message of 'disposability' to the youth, which, when internalized, ruptured a sense of belonging in the youth, eventually leading to high dropout rates. When you systemically cluster many youth from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds into perennially under-resourced schools, you create fertile ground for dysfunction and disempowerment.

Conducting this work in TT was simultaneously re-traumatizing and cathartic, and it served as my comprehensive foray into peace education. As I was finishing at Teachers College, I applied for a job in Caribbean studies at Gettysburg College. I have now been at Gettysburg College for 14 years, teaching Caribbean Studies (within the Africana Studies program) and directing the College's Peace and Justice Studies Program. It is from this intersection of Caribbean/Black studies and critical education that I challenge the Western hegemonic iterations of peace education as a field with decolonial interpolations. I return to TT often to conduct more

research and offer workshops to students, parents, teachers and community leaders (often in Laventille or similar communities) on conflict resolution, restorative circles, leadership and development; I encourage them to share what they learn with others so that these tools might be customized and perhaps take root. This is my small way of giving back to a country that gave me so much.

## My Vision and Work for Peace: Embodying the Theorization

My vision of and work for peace can be traced directly to my life in and inheritance from Laventille. Because I grew up witnessing so many violences in Laventille (and the wider society) I am quite sensitive to how people's dreams, ambitions, and basic needs are curtailed by structural violence. I cannot therefore conceive of peace *without* justice because justice is key to healing (Ginwright, 2022; Huskić et al., 2024). Ginwright writes that "…eliminating things that harm us is not the same as creating things that heal us" (2022, p. 7). If peace, in my estimation, is about the dismantling of all types of violences, and the co-creation of environments where all entities on Earth can thrive, then it means that healing and justice must be central.

Justice is about reparations to historically disenfranchised and minoritized groups *and* to the Earth (for our incredible abuse and neglect). Peace, to me, is of course part destinational (i.e. securing certain ends) but more vitally, it is ever processual (i.e. means, attitudes, dispositions etc.): we are forever striving to widen conceptions of rights, entitlements, and deep care for all entities on Earth. The constant striving is consonant with Freire's (1970) notion of praxis: the feedback loop created by critical reflection plus critical action. We are called to be constantly vigilant about the ways in which hegemonic powers strive to coopt, erase and suppress; as a counterhegemonic but also generative tool, praxis becomes a cornerstone of sustainable peace. Peace therefore is at once outcome, way of being, and practice. There are multiple modalities for co-constructing peace: policy, advocacy, education, research, intrapersonal work, music and art, international diplomacy, and as seemingly simple as taking up space in heretofore forbidden spaces (e.g. queer representation in media, or people of color serving on boards of influential institutions).

My work for peace and justice is primarily through teaching, research, and the way I try to live my life. I deem all three spheres as forms of peace activism. As a queer, Black, immigrant man from a working-class background living and working in a politically conservative and historic part of the USA called Gettysburg, that in itself is a small act of resistance. To teach mostly White students in that space with these positionalities constitutes what I call decolonial micro-revolutions (Williams, 2025). When I teach, I bring all of my selves into the classroom. I speak openly about mental health struggles, internalized colonialism and homophobia, and racial microaggressions; this is a micro-revolutionary invitation to students to do the same because I ardently believe that deeper and more resonant co-learning occurs when we dare to live lives that are not compartmentalized. I lean boldly into a pedagogy of vulnerability (Brantmeier & McKenna, 2020)—pedagogical risk taking, self-disclosures about oppression and privileges, etc.—which humanizes me to my students, and disrupts the toxic hierarchies that divide students and teachers that keep us from co-building necessary coalitions to tackle intractable hindrances to peace and justice and co-birthing more just and sustainable tomorrows.

Within peace education, I have intentionally contributed to the decolonial turn with my research, interventions in communities similar to Laventille, and consultancies (on restorative practices in Guyana, Ghana, and elsewhere). I research and write in peace education with the spirit of the ancestors, those who endured colonialism, slavery, and indentureship. My pan-Caribbean socio-cultural inheritances are the foundation for my decolonial work: I am the product of the Caribbean forged through and impacted by mercantilist and capitalist experimentation; occupations/interventions; structural adjustment programs; diverse fragmentations (political, linguistic etc.); natural disasters and disproportionate effects of climate change; but also by profound syncretisms (ethnic, religious etc.) (Benitez-Rojo, 1997), such as Vodou, Santería and Obeah; by the Haitian Revolution and maroonage (the history and legacy of enslaved persons who escaped from plantations and created free communities in forests, mountains, and swamplands) on other islands; by roti and callaloo (Trinbagonian foods shaped by those descended from East Indian indentured laborers and African enslaved persons on other islands); by the intellectual inheritances from Eric Williams (see Capitalism and Slavery, Williams, 1994), ANR Robinson, V.S. Naipaul, Sir Arthur Lewis, Derek Walcott, Sylvia Wynter, Peter Minshall, George Padmore, and CLR James; and by the tetrad of cultural art forms spawned through resistance and

innovation: the steelpan, mas, calypso, and limbo (see Best, 2001 for an interesting take on these).

As for my research and writing, specifically, I have co-/theorized on: peace education as a field (Hantzopoulos & Williams, 2017); justice grounded leadership (Huskić et al., 2024), disrupting hierarchies in education (Williams et al., 2024a); education for revolutionary nonviolence (Williams et al., 2024b); Caribbean immigrant faculty experiences in the US academy (Louis et al., 2017); critically assessing forms of resistance in music education (Talbot & Williams, 2019); pluriversal rights education (Williams & Bermeo, 2020a, 2020b); decolonial praxes of care in schools (Williams, 2017); neocolonial warps in education (Williams, 2016a); resurgent hyper positivism in education (Williams, 2015a); neocolonial hegemonic masculinity (Williams, 2014); prefigurative maroonage (Williams, 2022); lingering colonialities (Williams, 2016b); and peaceableness as raison d'être, process and evaluation (Williams, 2015b).

As some of the aforementioned illustrates, I try to also introduce peace education postulates into other fields as well (such as critical music education); these interdisciplinary conversations are vital if we are to more fully tackle the polycrisis (of climate change, political polarization, and economic disruption from AI) facing the planet. However, I am not pessimistic about these crises, because my spiritual inheritances (from Laventille and all the way through my lineage) fortify my belief in living peace education, and not just teaching about it; part of this living of peace education involves helping others unlock their potential so that they too can heal and bloom. I use peace education as a conduit for healing, in communities, in my classroom, in relationships.

## Carrying the Baton Together: Revolutionary Peace Education

I cannot predict where the field of peace education is heading, but I do sense in my spirit that I am on the trajectory that I am supposed to be on. The Global Campaign for Peace Education has been engaging in a project to map peace education globally; a partial impetus of this has been a concern with the porosity around defining and operationalizing the field. Personally, I do not share that concern (although, I am pleased that someone has taken up that task).

My intervention into peace education practice however is centered on youth work. The planet is on fire, and we are handing it as such to the next generation. In what I am calling a revolutionary peace education, I think it irresponsible to simply pass the baton of activism and advocacy to the next generation; I want to carry the baton *with* youth, so that there is intergenerational co-learning and changemaking. As such, I have been co-creating projects and opportunities with youth so that they can convene and organize, equipping them with skills necessary to transform this world.

A few examples include: (1) co-editing a book with students/former students, (2) co-creating and co-leading the first iteration of the Peace and Justice Transformative Leaders Fellowship, and (3) attempting to co-build a national consortium of undergraduate student peace programs, (4) including students in the core planning of an international peace research conference.

1) For a number of years, I have taught an undergraduate course called Education for Social Change. The central text is Pedagogy of the Oppressed, accompanied by a set of readings on critical pedagogy. In the course, we co-investigate the varied violences of educational systems and discuss ways to mitigate and transform them. I had concocted an idea for an edited book that would feature examples of students and their teachers working on social change projects. For this book they would have to co-write the chapter documenting the work they did together. However, I did not want to edit such a book by myself because that would not be in alignment with the ethos of the project. A student, Hana Huskić, and a former student, Christina Noto (both of whom took this course) agreed to co-edit this book with me, which was eventually published in 2024, entitled, *Disrupting Hierarchies in Education: Students and Teachers Collaborating for Social Change*. This project (an enactment of the belief that teachers are also students and students are also teachers, Freire, 1970) took three years because power sharing with undergraduates requires intentionality, vulnerability, patience, and multidirectional mentorship.
2) In 2021, I co-created and co-led the first iteration of the Peace and Justice Transformative Leaders Fellowship with Daniel Jones (who was then a current student of mine). Approximately 80 undergraduate students from across North America applied to this program, and we selected 11, who were offered an all-expenses-paid trip to

Gettysburg College for a week-long intensive workshop such as building and sustaining social movements; grant writing; conflict resolution etc. Then the fellows were tasked with conducting a social change project back on their respective campuses. Daniel and I wanted to model intergenerational leadership development.

3) In 2020, a team of students and myself were expecting about 100 undergraduate students from across North America to attend the inaugural CONAPP Conference at Gettysburg College. At this conference, CONAPP would have been officially launched (Consortium of North American Peace Programs). However, the COVID pandemic had greater ambitions; the conference was canceled. We had raised $30,000 to cover some of the attendees' costs related to registration, accommodation, and meals; we did not want finances to preclude students from attending. The presentation model for this conference would have intentionally reflected the Freirean notion of praxis: reflection and action. Presentations would have been half-critical reflections on the students' ideas/research etc., and half discussion on how to operationalize some of those reflections. We had hoped to create a North American network of students advancing critical peace leadership. Although this didn't entirely come to fruition, the successful fundraising and the organizing we did seeded skill sets and ideas among those who were involved.
4) From 2021 to 2023, I was co-chair (along with IPRA's Secretary General Matt Meyer) of the planning committee for the 2023 International Peace Research Association (IPRA) conference. From the very start I involved undergraduate students at the very core of this organizing; they had a front row seat to conceptualizing the call for papers, fundraising for scholarships for students and junior scholars from the Global South, and creating the program, etc. In the end, their imprint was threaded throughout the entire conference.

These are the small ways in which I enact a revolutionary peace education: working alongside youth to activate their brilliant visions for this world.

One of the next steps I wish to focus on is the intersection of peace studies, peace education and the role of artificial intelligence, data justice and ethics. I think many are spooked by artificial intelligence; some colleagues are quietly concerned that AI might one day even replace them. I

am working on not feeding these fears. Human beings are constantly evolving, and just as we encourage students to constantly sharpen the tools in their toolkit, the same goes for the professors/teachers. I think we also have to be widening our skill sets as a way of modeling to our students (we actually should not be asking anything of students that we are not first willing to attempt ourselves). I want to look forward, not with fear, but with possibility. While I make no claims to being fearless (because I do possess my fair share of fears and anxieties), it is the possibilities of dreaming *and* enacting the world anew *with* students that invigorate me (and in fact sustain me through my journey with suicidal ideation).

## Full Circle: An Ode to Laventille, My First Revolutionary Peace Educator

My work with students has blessed me with purpose. As a child growing up in Laventille, I could not have predicted how my life has unfolded. Of my birthplace, many have said "nothing good comes from Laventille". With this in mind, Granny would tell me "you might own one school uniform, but you wash and iron them and walk with your head held high". Despite being supremely under-resourced (materially), Granny and Mom taught me the meaning and internal locus of dignity. Laventille has a history of resistance, and still today, it resists being 'tamed' as governable and docile (see Foucault, 1995 for an explication of governmentality). Laventille's fighting spirit infuses my focus on decolonization; in essence, Laventille made me into a radical peace educator long before I ever encountered the term. And while I believe that decolonization is an important endeavor, it must not be the only project to which the (neo) colonized must tend.

At an event in January 2024, "Lacouray in Lakou Wi: Conversations on TT Carnival", coordinated by Attilah and Dara Springer, Performing Artist and Adjunct Lecturer Omari Ashby challenged the audience to stop focusing on decolonization because it means that we remain in a position of reacting, but to instead channel our energies on celebrating and amplifying our ancestral and extant wisdoms and strengths. In that moment, I was reminded of my own email signature that ends with "Stand tall in your beauteous skin!" As a revolutionary peace educator, I bring to bear remarkable ancestral power as I freedom-dream (Kelley, 2003) alongside my fellow 'wretched of the Earth' (Fanon, 2005).

To/From/With My Unsung Educator, Laventille

for the gods of cement, so much spilled time (the wrong libation),
wrestling against my geminian self,
to resolve polarities: respectable or jammette,
raucous joy, that heals through its giddying light or
ensnaring depression, that can heal through its anchoring shadow.
but i am blossoming into the truth, that my life-force
is emergent from the pull and tug of these polarities.
Laventille, constantly escaping from neat binaries and hierarchies,
I sense you more fully now as my mind-body-spirit is unlearning how to flinch…
(by hmaw)

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# Kia Hora Te Marino | May Peace Be Widespread

*Kelli Te Maihāroa*

## Introduction

| | |
|---|---|
| Kia ora te marino | May peace be widespread |
| Kia whakapapa pounamu te moana | May the sea glisten like the greenstone |
| Kia tere te kārohirohi i mua i tō huarahi guide you on your way | And may the shimmer of light |

This Māori proverb evokes a feeling of spiritual calmness for people seeking clarity and future protection. It resonates with me at a vibrational level, as I rest upon my ancestral homelands of Te Wāhi Pounamu, the South Island of Aotearoa New Zealand. Te Wāhi Pounamu is the sacred island of our treasured pounamu, also known as greenstone or jade, highly valued for its beauty, strength and a symbol of enduring peace for Māori. Enduring peace comes from a place of knowing that peace resides within us and emanates beyond us. The calling to a place of internal peace and harmony is contrasted with the energy of life's challenges and chaos. My

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life has not always been easy, but after living a full life on this earth, I am grateful for both the treasures and rocks that I continue to navigate to the best of my ability, a journey that may resonate with others. As a nanny, the feeling of peace is deeply rooted in my very being, expressed through how I care for those nearest and dearest to me, extended to all beings with peace and love in their hearts, and my reverence for our sacred Papatūānuku Mother Earth.

## Kia ora te marino | May the calm be widespread

I descend from the First Nations People of Waitaha, who arrived on the shores of Te Wāhi Pounamu around 850 AD. Our founding ancestor, Rākaihautū, left behind him the ways of war in Te Patu Nui o Aio, also known within our whānau as the island of Kauaii'. For almost 1200 years, the Waitaha people have followed and upheld the deity of Rokomaraeroa, the God of Peace. Our peaceful ways of knowing and being are remembered in our histories, handed down through story to our grandchildren. As a direct descendant of Rākaihautū and his wife, our ancestress Waiariki o Aio, my family continues to uphold this peace covenant, both as a philosophy and as a way of living. My ancestor Te Maihāroa (1800–1886) was the last Māori prophet of this southern island and led a passive resistance movement called Te Heke (the Migration, 1877–1879) in protest against the perils of colonisation (Mikaere, 1988). As a matriarchal society, our Waitaha grandmothers remind us to search for peaceful resolutions when faced with difficulties and to do the right thing by our ancestors and for our grandchildren. Being peaceful is our natural state of being, ingrained in our DNA as our guiding light on how to live life in harmony with all whom we share this planet with. The invitation to reflect on my own personal life journey to date aims to share some of the highs and lows I experienced, to disclose how life presents opportunities to experience both the height of joy and depths of sorrows, to guide us back towards the balance of our natural state of love and peace.

## Early Years

As a grandchild of the peace prophet Te Maihāroa, I am the eldest of four daughters, a big sister, a mother of five adult sons, an equity advocate and peace educator. I was born to an unwed, rural Māori mother, where my landing into this world was not so soft. She was initially raised within her

culture, surrounded by her loving relatives, but when she was a teenager her parents separated, disrupting her family relationships for several decades. She craved for connection and longed for a child of her own to help her fill those gaps in her heart. Perhaps it was because she was still only a teenager when she gave birth to me that she had made the decision to give me a better life and place me for adoption. I don't think that she was even allowed to see her baby at birth, just in case she changed her mind. But after two weeks of enforced postnatal rest, as she left the hospital, she turned to say goodbye to her baby girl and changed our lives forever—a choice that I am forever grateful for, to be raised within my maternal family. Returning to her mother's home, without any preparation for a baby, my teenage māmā pulled out her top drawer and exchanged her delicates for her baby. She was a beautiful, caring, graceful mother who did her best to love and care for me.

As it is for any single working parent, the first several years were challenging, torn between the need to work and find childcare. Māmā placed me with local people who were supposed to look after and care for me. My grandmother and māmā never talked about what happened. My Aunties tell a different story. Of a baby girl that was so badly neglected and distressed, that at the age of one, I was hospitalised, overwhelmed and in extreme distress. These babysitters treated me like an unwanted, uncared for animal, tethering me to chairs, tables and beds. Although I was only an infant and rely on my Aunties' recollections of exactly how dreadful these critical incidents were, my body retained the memories of being a distressed, anxious child, saddened and wounded when separated from the loving care of my mother. These experiences haunted me in my dreams, through frequent nightmares, a sign of unconscious distress. Nightmares, disassociation, separation anxiety and overwhelming emotional distress are all signs of toxic childhood stress.

In a bid to seek healing and positive pathways forward, I trained as a counsellor, qualified as a primary school teacher and attained a postgraduate diploma in child and youth advocacy. As a child, I had to learn early how to self-soothe myself, to detach and disassociate from my mind and emotions from my body. As a coping mechanism and survival tool, mentally leaving my body as a child took me to places where I found a sense of escapism and emotional relief. Professionals today talk about the recovery processes, but 50 years ago, there was very little help, especially for rural Māori families, and the silence of ignoring the problem was often the answer of this era. When you know what you don't want, you reach for

what you do want. I learnt from these growing and learning experiences the psychological benefits of meditation, a daily strategy that I practice to this day. I use daily meditation to help me to rebalance my energy, realign with my greater non-physical self and reconnect with a greater sense of purpose and energy source.

The remembrance of my spiritual side developed early as I searched for a sense of belonging and connection. One of my earliest memories is when I was around five years old, and I vividly recall floating near the ceiling of our new house and looking down at my body still in bed. I loved leaving my body behind, floating away with a feeling of moving towards benevolent energy. My bedroom was my happy place, where I could shut myself off from this physical world and create a safe space for myself. The feeling of freedom and autonomy from this early age never left me and most probably propelled me to seek similar experiences of peace and a sense of homecoming. The flip side to a rocky start in life is that I am incredibly independent, sovereign and dance to my own beat. Spirit provides us with opportunities to experience both positive and negative aspects of our evolving self, to help us reflect on the lessons at hand, to consider alternatives, and to help keep us balanced and well. A sense of individual peace can be achieved through self-empowerment and realisation of the importance of being the navigator of your own life, with the help of your ancestors and God.

## Welcoming New Lives

The upside to these foundational lessons spurred me on to be self-reliant and fiercely independent. It was not surprising that I too became a young mother, blessed with five beautiful boys. Everything changes once you become a parent, and the birth of my first born propelled me to provide a better foundational life for us. I had come home for the summer to visit my unwell grandmother and met a funny, loving, highly energetic man. Our children are the manifestation of all of our dreams, and a full circle of my māmā's dream was to have children to love and care for. In an effort to provide a better life for my newborn, I started university to become a teacher. It is a career that I have enjoyed for several decades, culminating in a Doctor of Philosophy in Indigenous Peace and Conflict Studies and promotion to the role of Professor. My first-born son remains my first love. He is gifted with a fun-loving, caring nature, which he shares with the little people that he cares for as an early childhood teacher.

Our second son was a child who lived life to the fullest, who developed a passion for people, travel and adventure alongside an insatiable drive for social justice. We almost lost him when he was only 16 to an ice skating accident, which broke his femur and left him with two blood clots in his lungs. This experience seemed to catapult him into the world to soak up all the goodness that the world has to offer. He knows that he is an intergalactic being, and he travels extensively to meet his soul's thirst for new adventures. Our third son is our zen angel child, who was born to remind us of the gift of thoughtfulness, balance and autonomy through his sassy wit and a clever mind. He reminds me that energy is a gift, and he chooses carefully whom he shares his life and love with—thankfully, I have a gold card within his inner circle of trust.

Life was very busy with three young sons and two parents struggling to find fulltime work in our tourist home town. The breakdown of my first marriage was definitely a challenge for me to find a suitable home for the three boys and myself with only part-time work to support us. For example, my first three weeks' rent cheque bounced three times in a row. Money was tight and I was struggling to provide food on the table and a roof over our heads. There were lots of quirky and funny stories that the boys and I share over these times of struggle. Nothing could take away the fond memories that this time holds for me, their beautiful personalities beaming out of their darling little souls.

Five months later, I met a man who shaped my life in another direction. He was a property developer, and I left teaching to set up a business with him. These years were very prosperous for us financially, and we had two more children. Living on a rural farm with five busy little boys was a bit of a dream, and we seemed to have it all at our finger tips. From this second marriage, I bought into this world a purapura whetū, star seed, who is wise and knowing beyond his years. A talented athlete who had his sights set for a professional rugby career. But after several injuries, he has reshaped his trajectory as a promising athlete to the role of a coach and policeman. He has taught me the lesson of tenacity, of never giving up on your dreams and steamrolling over any obstacles in your way.

My four sons tease me that my youngest son is my favourite, even though I constantly tell them that they are all my favourites! But I have been in the right place at the right time with my youngest. As a rising rugby star who at the age of 15 required a minor knee meniscus trim, he developed septiscemia and they had to operate on him to save his life and/or limb. After two months of continuous antibiotics, he was diagnosed at

the end of this horrendous year with Type One Diabetes and coeliac disease. As a young man, he has worked hard to overcome these health obstacles, becoming a Junior All Black in 2022 and now a professional rugby player.

## Growing Pains

Although co-parenting was a challenging time, in hindsight, working through these stresses and triumphs of raising and sharing care of our five young boys has been overall successful. The hurdles of financial and home instability, disagreements and custody court cases were grey clouds for many years. It is important not to gloss over these times, as they were bruising and incredibly unsettling at the time, for us as parents, but also for our boys. It was difficult to put aside our own personal egos, to prioritise the wellbeing and care plans for our sons, when sharing means that half of your heart beats are physically away from you. But as co-parents we had equal opportunities to raise our children and maintain close relationships between the two families. Although we had separate homes, they were full of love, with a vision focused on our children's flourishing futures.

I am blessed beyond my wildest imagination. The celebratory times of my children's baptisms, their early days of pre-school and school, watching their sports activities to an international level, opening our home and dinner table to their many friends and our family, and celebrating their achievements of completing high school and university qualifications for my first three sons. The glistening times also include supporting them through their challenging times, watching them grow in awe as they sprouted into their beautiful handsome bodies, witnessing the holiness of their sparkling personalities and watching them glow as they treat others and their darlings with kindness, tenderness, love and respect.

Although money was often stretched, love was the currency in our home. It wasn't easy being a single working parent, but my qualifications and hard work provided ongoing security for myself and the boys. Our five boys are the highlight of our collective lives, and although there have been many rocky times, we have been able to share our love, affection and time with each of our sons, to raise them to be fine young men, who have carved out prosperous lives for themselves and their partners. I am eternally grateful for them choosing us to be their parents. We could not be more proud of them all. Each connection and stage of your life adds to the richness of experiences, including the bumps along the way, sent to test

your faith in a higher source. These have been the best years of my life, and I would do it all over again in a heartbeat if I could.

Kia whakapapa pounamu te moana | Let the sea glisten like the greenstone

## Pathway Towards Enlightenment

It felt as if I had arrived in my 50th year with a feeling of peace, calmness and excitement. My adult sons created a space for me to consider how I wanted to shape my personal and work life, wide open for future opportunities. When I moved north to support my youngest son to achieve his sporting dreams, I met a person who turned my life upside down. This was a time in my life when I needed to regroup and create a sense of stability. It was at this time that I met a dynamic Māori man, the embodiment of the divine masculine; men wanted to be like him and women wanted to be with him. Although my life was relatively straight forward by this time, his life was complicated and early in this lifetime journey together, he suddenly passed away. He patu tōku ngākau me wairua, a wound to my heart and soul. There was nothing that I could do to change what had happened, nowhere to hide the pain and then the suffering of what felt like being left behind on the planet.

I lost my sparkle for life and a vision of my life moving forward. I knew that all I needed was for time to pass by, to help me rebalance my heart and soul. But through this sudden separation, I have come to realise and understand that the souls continuum remains through the transition from a physical body into non-physical energy. The beauty of learning to live in the now, to saviour the shared times and to make a contribution towards making the world a better place. After working through the longing for things to be different, the grief, the anger, the sadness and the loss of a beautiful soul from this planet, I have found a sense of personal peace again. This homecoming has bloomed, overflowing with the joy of family holidays together, graduations, marriages and grandchildren. We have been able to reconnect with our wider tribal families and cultural events, and we are making plans to return as a family to live on our ancestral lands.

As star seeds of Waitaha, our families are committed to carrying the seeds of future hope, peace and prosperity. The ripples of connections have grown much wider throughout our islands and across the globe. Through a collective effort to illuminate the peace histories of Waitaha, to strengthen our tribal links with northern Māori tribes, and to spread the

Waitaha message of peace and passive resistance globally. Our spiritualist priest, Te Maihāroa, knew and prophesied that a higher spiritual road leads towards enlightenment. Te Maihāroa stated: Mahia te taha wairua, mama noa te taha kiko | Take care of the spiritual side of life and the material will take care of itself. Now, more than ever before, there is a need to make explicit peace and social justice movements that celebrate and advance human consciousness towards more highly evolved ways of living sustainably on Mother Earth.

Kia tere te karohirohi i mua i tō hurrah | Let the shimmer of light guide you on your way

As I reflect on half a century of life experiences, I now turn my attention towards what may be needed for the peace and justice movements of the twenty-first century and my vision for future peacebuilding. As communities, we must continue to strive towards a just and equitable society where access to the basic necessities of life—food, shelter, safety and protection—is a minimal human right for all. This raises an ethical concern around how some sectors of society, countries and nations enjoy the sense of safety and protection, of secure livelihoods and opulence, in contrast to homeless and dislocated people who are starving and ravaged by war. The ethical philosophies offered through multiple world religions are often focused on the principles of justice, honesty, dignity and moral compassion. But for many indigenous people, including Māori, who have been subject to colonisation, the religious colonial footprint has also enabled the transference of land, resources, wealth and power into religious organisations. For too long, indigenous peoples have sought spiritual enlightenment through false prophets, to the detriment and wellbeing of their people and land. When there is an opportunity for churches and schools to return the land to the people that donated it, or it was taken from, it should be returned to the original land holders in an effort to right some of these wrongs.

Turning around this one-way stream includes reducing barriers that allow the status quo to remain, where money is perceived to be more powerful than our ability to live in harmony with each other and all life that our earth sustains. Capitalism can no longer be prioritised for our future as it is killing our mind, body, spirit and planet. Money itself is not evil, but it is the forces of greed that have resulted in the destruction of our planet. If we continue to go down the pathway of consumerism that we are currently on, we will be forced to have to deal with catastrophic consequences. The present chaos all around the world mirrors the diminishing frequencies of humanity as we struggle to see the light.

As a grandchild of a peace prophet, my small contribution towards peace education is to showcase the history and peaceful ways of the Waitaha people as guardians of our ecosystems (Te Maihāroa, K., 2020). This is work grounded within both a decolonial lens and opportunities to affirm indigenous approaches. Being a champion for mana Māori, the prestige of Māori people, is a legacy handed down to my family from our prophet Te Maihāroa. Our family continues to support our Tumuaki, head of Waitaha, our 90-year-old Aunty Anne Te Maihāroa Dodds (Te Maihāroa, K., 2017a) whose relentless pursuit of peace was an important part of my doctoral thesis work (Te Maihāroa, K, 2019). Further to this, in 2012 and 2016, our Te Maihāroa family retraced the passive resistance footsteps of Te Maihāroa and his people on Te Heke (1877–1879), a tribal migration into the unsold hinterlands to protect traditional Māori lifeways (ODT, 2 January 2013; MacLean, 16 January 2016b; Te Maihāroa, K, 2017, 2023).

Sitting with our elders to record their herstories and histories is one way to memorialise their lifetime of peace work. When our prophet Te Maihāroa wrote to the Queen and government officials on 17 September 1878, he too sought a peaceful solution to Māori Crown land issues: there are no surviving promises of the land dealers, the commissioners, the Government, the judges, the lawyers, the assessors and the controllers of this island. The agreements have all fallen over. Just one agreement survives, the sectioning off the island, the actual part that was paid for by the Government which you, the Government, retain. The farther side of the territory is the part that no Māori has yet been paid for so both the Pākehā and the Māori of both islands should understand that each should be on his own part. Enlightenment should shine on both the Pākehā and the Māori of both islands. The sun will be the guardian between the two people, Pākehā and Māori of both islands (Te Maihāroa, 1878).

Waitaha continue to remind the Crown of their systemic breaches to Waitaha identity, language, culture, lands and waterways. Waitaha signed a Relationship Agreement with the local Waitaki District Council, which recognised Waitaha (Bruce, 20 April 2011), and nine years later a renewed agreement to 'making sure we are doing the right thing' (Patterson, 25 July 2020). Setting the record straight is important for all parties, but especially for colonial governments who have historically misused and abused treaties with indigenous people who sought peaceful solutions to totally foreign concepts.

We have to learn to live together harmoniously, to coexist peacefully, which includes acknowledging Waitaha as the First Nations People of the South Island. A recent example of the ongoing struggle for recognition and self-determination is the Waitaha Ancient Treasures exhibition. Te Maihāroa family descend directly from the ancient tool makers who created these treasures one thousand years ago and our family have been kaitiaki, guardians of the artefacts, since they were unearthed on a North Otago farm in 1953. These artefacts, currently on display at the North Otago Museum, hold deep cultural and spiritual significance to our people and as a historical record of the Waitaha culture (MacLean, 14 June 2016a; Gilles, 27 May 2017).

When this largest and oldest collection of artefacts in Aotearoa New Zealand was about to be exhibited, Waitaha were surprised to find that the Waitaha name was at risk of being removed from this collection, which effectively threatened to cut our cultural and spiritual ties (Ashby-Coventry, 10 December 2020b, 5 December 2020c). After some initial lobbying, this nationally significant exhibition of ancient artefacts now has the shared name of Waitaha Taoka | Stewart Willett's Family Collection, connecting the tribal name of the Waitaha artisans together with the Willett family, who found and carefully looked after these precious artefacts (Ashby-Coventry, 18 December 2020a). Of historical and international significance for the indigenous peacekeeping traditions, there have been no weapons found among any of the artefacts discovered for the period of Waitaha occupation, unlike other Māori tribes.

As a way to inject energy into a positive project, I co-curated a Waitaha art exhibition entitled Waitaha: the Art of Peace (Forrester Gallery, June 2022), in an effort to illuminate our ancient histories and tribal ways of knowing and being peaceful. This art exhibition was opened by government officials and well received by the community. It provided a historical context to who Waitaha are, educating visitors about our peaceful histories, and what it means to carry the commitment to peace and nonviolence. Our family are often invited to speak on behalf of Papatūānuku Earth Mother, a community voice for ecological rebalance and harmony against the destruction of our natural environment. This has seen our Waitaha elders leading environmental court cases in their 70s, and continue to be advocates into their 90s. After living peacefully on our ancestral lands for over a millennium, we strive to uphold the mana, power and prestige of our people, to live in peace, harmony and for our people, and for all people to flourish and prosper. The legacy of our pacifist ancestors

walk alongside us, as a reminder for us to be a voice for peace, justice and our environment.

## May Peace Be with You

A solution for global stability is a call for individuals to move towards a state of inner peace. Peace can only be established in the world when it is first established within individuals. One person in prayer, sending healing light and love, is more powerful than oppression and violence. When a person is at peace with their holistic self, then they are at peace with their partner, their children, their parents, their neighbourhood and their community. Being at peace within ourselves begins with a sacred respect and reverence for the ira tangata, the divine life force within all of us. Once achieved, this deep sense of self-love filters through your very being and resonates unconditional love that is available to all. Love is our universal currency, it is what we yearn and live for. We may feel small as an individual person, but we are lovingly interconnected energetically to everything on this planet, and our thoughts, actions and behaviours ripple throughout the universe. We are all light carriers of peace, love and courage, where passing on these energies may not only light another's flame, but increases the intensity of our collective brightness.

As science gathers momentum, quantum physics is now opening up the possibilities of how connected every atom on the earth is, contributing to the collective cosmic whole. As people become aware of the intersectionality of science, spirituality and indigenous ways of life in harmony with the natural world, the more enlightened we become as human beings. This awareness makes a contribution towards the global whole, increasing and widening the circle of interconnected, peaceful communities as the natural way to live - a return to the golden era. As each individual becomes more peaceful, so does each country become more peaceful. It sounds easy, and in its simplest form, it calls for all of us to re-shape our thinking towards bringing a peaceful balance back into the world. We are all a part of each other, including everything that makes this planet our home.

Ko au ko koe, ko koe ko au | I am a part of you and you are a part of me.

As with many Indigenous First Nations Peoples, Waitaha continues to hold the love for our land, rivers, sea, our planet Mother Earth. Indigenous people carry forward this ancient knowledge, gained through the trials and tribulations over a millennium, often overlooked and ignored in the contemporary world. Waitaha understood the importance of how each living

and non-living being and object nourished and contributed to the entire ecosystem. The spiritualist priests throughout the world, understand that humans operate as a physical vessel, with karmic lessons sprinkled into every facet of one's life, to experience the full range of emotions, trials and tribulations which make us human. The sweet spot is when we connect with our inner selves and enter into the dream state which opens up the realm of potential to manifest and be brought through into the physical world. The realisation that we have a part to play in the positive and negative parts of our life, is the delicate dance with our consciousness, the harmony and balance which sustains human life and the universe. Indigenous ways of knowing and being offer an insight into what peace and balance may bring. The planet's oceans, land, waterways, people and all living beings depend on this.

Although life challenges have thrown many unexpected lessons, the seeds of hope for love and peace prevail. When you know what you don't want, you move towards what you do want. Although my early years were challenging, it provided a challenge for me to overcome these obstacles and learn to manage a continuum of emotional states and competing energies. I know that we can choose to be peaceful or not; to move in grace, or not; and to reach for our highest potential, or not. There is power in choice, to reclaim that power and harness it for enlightenment. It is important to look for the rays of sunshine as we weave, dance and navigate through our daily lives. There were definitely times when all I could feel was darkness around me, as I struggled to see the light. All I had was my faith, my family and the collateral beauty that is life.

Kia tau te rakimārie, ki ruka i kā iwi o te ao | Let peace reign over all the people of the world.

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# Peace Educators and Peacebuilders

# Lifelong Struggle for a Peace Promoting Nuclear-Free Society

*Ikuro Anzai*

## Introduction

In 1960 I entered the University of Tokyo's Science Department. At the University of Tokyo, students spend their first two years in the College of Liberal Arts, and in the fall of their sophomore year, they choose a field of specialization to begin their junior year. I had planned to go on to the Department of Applied Physics in the Faculty of Technology, but then I found out that the Department of Nuclear Engineering—newly established in the Faculty of Technology—was looking for students to admit into its inaugural program in 1960. I applied for admission there and subsequently became one of the first students of the Department of Nuclear Engineering at the University of Tokyo. Along with the nine department-specific and nuclear-related courses, the students were required to take up three other courses offered in cooperation with related faculties, i.e., nuclear physics course in the Faculty of Science, a radiation genetics course in the Faculty of Agriculture, and a radiological health science course in the School of Medicine. Since the purpose of the Department of Nuclear Engineering was to produce high-level engineers to support

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Japan's nuclear power business, the students were expected to pursue one of the nine courses offered by the Department itself, but I chose the radiological health science course, a cooperative course also offered by the School of Medicine.

One of the factors that influenced my decision to enter the Department of Nuclear Engineering was a *US* nuclear reactor exhibit I saw at an international trade fair in Harumi, Tokyo, in 1959, one year before I entered the University of Tokyo. It had not been long since Japan's Nuclear Reactor Regulation Law was enacted, and since it was a trade fair organized by the US—Japan's "ally"—there wasn't any strong entry restriction placed on it in the central part of Tokyo. Small wonder therefore that a genuine nuclear reactor with an output of only 0.1 watts, which would cause nuclear fission chain reactions, was displayed in the middle of Tokyo, and it was opened to the public. Emperor Hirohito visited this trade fair and looked into the reactor core, and newspapers reported on the possible health effects. There was also an exhibit on radioactivity, including an interesting display of the results of a "tracer experiment" in which chickens were fed with a small amount of radioactive calcium mixed with their food, and how many days later the radioactivity was detected in the eggshells. At that time, for someone like me who knew almost nothing about nuclear radiation, the exhibit left a lasting impression as an interesting display of the cutting edge of science.

My lecture notes from my student days in the Department of Nuclear Engineering, which are on display at the Fukushima Museum for No Nukes, show that I was quite a serious student. What I realized after studying at the Department of Radiological Health was my intuition that I could not commit myself to this path unless I better understood the issue of radiation effects on the human body with more conviction. Eventually, awakened to the discrepancy between nuclear engineering and the reality of Japan's nuclear development policy, I threw myself into criticizing the nuclear power plant policy of the central government.

## Becoming a Nuclear Researcher with a Social Perspective

The theme of my graduation thesis submitted in 1964 in the Department of Nuclear Engineering was: "A Research on the Prevention of Disasters at Nuclear Reactor Facilities." I interviewed Mr. Yoshihiko Kawasaki, the

mayor of Tokaimura Village, home to the Calder Hall type nuclear power plant imported from England by the Japan Atomic Power Company, which was to achieve criticality in 1965. Facilities of the Japan Atomic Energy Research Institute and the Japan Atomic Fuel Corporation were also located in this village. I also interviewed Mr. Tetsuro Itakura of the Japan Atomic Power Company, who later became managing director of the company. With the encouragement of Professor Haruo Katsunuma, Head Professor of the Department of Radiological Health, my graduation thesis was published twice in the *Japanese Journal of Public Health.*

Before long, as Japan's nuclear power development policy took shape, I began to seriously consider the appropriateness of the central government's nuclear power policy as an issue in my field of expertise, rather than merely from a third-party perspective. In 1965, the Japan Scientists Association (JSA) was established as a cross-sectional organization of scientists seeking the independent, democratic, and comprehensive development of science in Japan. I was invited to join its endeavors. In particular, among the few scientists who specialized in nuclear engineering, I was given the important role of examining the government's nuclear policy and gradually leaned toward policy criticism.

At that time, radioactive contamination of seawater and seabed soil at the ports of call of US nuclear submarines attracted public attention, and prominent scientists in the field of radiation research including Yasuo Miyake, Yoshio Hiyama, and Katsuko Saruhashi began to engage in heated debates at the Science Council of Japan. Witnessing the fire-breathing debates between experts who were thoroughly committed to their own academic claims and would not budge an inch, I was moved by the seriousness of scientific researchers as professionals, which had no small influence on my recognition of the importance of paying attention to social issues as a nuclear expert.

My research theme in the Master's Program was "Analysis of Urinary Uranium Concentration by the Sodium Fluoride Pellet Method," for which I received Master's degree in Engineering in 1966. My paper was published in the *Journal of the Atomic Energy Society of Japan*. I continued my doctoral studies and received my Ph.D. degree in Engineering in 1969 and prepared a study on "An Information Theoretic Study on the Uncertainty of External and Internal Radiation Dosimetry." My dissertation was published in *Health Physics*, a peer-reviewed journal in the field of radiation protection. In graduate school, I acquired various experimental techniques related to biology, chemistry, and physics, and broadened and

deepened my knowledge of mathematics, statistics, information theory, radiation physics, radiochemistry, and radiation effects. At the urging of Chief Professor Yasuo Yoshizawa, I decided to remain at the university as a research assistant in the Department of Radiological Health, School of Medicine.

Around that time, I was the Executive Secretary of the Japan Scientists Association and I was responsible for criticizing Japan's nuclear energy policy. As a radiation protection specialist, I was also learning about the damage caused by the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The 1970s were a time of brutal pursuit of nuclear power policy in Japan. The craze started with the lighting of the opening ceremony of the 1970 Osaka Expo with power from the Tsuruga Nuclear Power Plant's No. 1 reactor, and plans for the construction of nuclear power plants were promoted throughout the country.

During early 1970s, the Japan Scientists Association, led by its Research Committee on Nuclear Energy Issues, of which I was the Chair, held national symposia to discuss the plans for the Hamaoka Nuclear Power Plant in Shizuoka Prefecture and the Iwanai Nuclear Power Plant in Hokkaido, all of which made me increasingly critical of the government's nuclear power policies. As a specialist in nuclear engineering, particularly radiation protection, I had many opportunities to talk with the residents of the proposed nuclear power plant sites and was rigorously trained as a scientist with a social perspective through numerous dialogues with the residents in the areas of the planned sites. From the point of view of the local residents, the introduction of a nuclear power plant into local communities was not only a safety issue but also a comprehensive problem impacting all areas of local politics, economy, and culture. I was an expert in radiation protection, but the locals did not seem to care about that and just bombarded me with all sorts of questions. At a symposium in Iwanai Town, Hokkaido, for example, Mr. F from the fishing cooperative, Mr. S from a bedding shop, and others asked me questions that were beyond my scope of expertise such as "What about the impact on scallop farming in Iwanai?", "Wouldn't the price of melons in neighboring Kyowa Town drop due to rumors?", and so on. Naturally, I was required to study all aspects of nuclear energy, covering all aspects of politics, economics, and culture.

## Proposal of Six Criteria on Nuclear Policy

In December 1972, the Science Council of Japan held the Symposium on "Nuclear Energy Issues—Safety of Nuclear Power Generation" for the first time in its history, and I was invited as the keynote speaker although I was only 32 years old. The Science Council of Japan at that time was a very democratic organization, dividing science into 7 fields and electing 30 members in each field by a direct vote by approximately 300,000 scientists. Voter scientists were able to vote with complete free will among the candidates who ran for national and regional offices. The Science Council of Japan is a Japanese academy based on the Science Council of Japan Act with the mission of contributing to the peaceful reconstruction of Japan, the welfare of human society, and contributing to the progress of science in partnership with the world's academia. It is an organization that performs its duties independently under the jurisdiction of the Prime Minister. The democratically elected members were not bound by the national policy on nuclear power plants and were able to work freely, which made it possible to hold the first symposium on nuclear issues and to have a young scientist like me delivering a keynote address.

I proposed six comprehensive criteria to check the soundness of Japan's nuclear power policy and branded the Japanese government's efforts as a failure. The six criteria were: (1) Is Japan's independence in nuclear research being maintained, or its nuclear development is being dependent on the US? (2) Does the development system emphasize economic efficiency and neglect safety? (3) Are there sufficient guarantees to prevent risks of military use? (4) Does the introduction of nuclear power plants hinder regional development plans based on the natural and social conditions of the area? (5) Is the safety of workers and local residents scientifically guaranteed? and (6) Has the nuclear power administration proven itself to be democratic? These criteria formed the basis of the anti-nuclear movement in Japan in the 1970s. It was from then on that I came to be regarded as an anti-national ideologue by raising these criteria and was subjected to terrible academic harassment at the Department of Radiological Health at the University of Tokyo.

## Public Hearing on Nuclear Power the Lawsuit

In 1973, I served as one of ten experts in the House of Representatives' Special Committee on Science and Technology Promotion Measures, where I also criticized Japan's nuclear power policy. At the time, I was a state employee working for the University of Tokyo, who criticized the national policy in the Diet, the highest organ of state power, when the government was strongly promoting nuclear power development as a national policy throughout the country. Inevitably, I came to be seen more and more as an anti-national ideologue.

On September 18 and 19, 1973, a public hearing was held at Fukushima City concerning the approval of the installation of the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO)'s Fukushima No. 2 Nuclear Power Plant. It was hailed as being "the first ever public hearing with residents' participation," but it was nothing more than a farce. Pre-registration was required for both opinion speakers and observers, but the proponents submitted a large number of letter press-printed application forms, and as a result, it was used as an opportunity for the overwhelming majority of proponent speakers to give a speech in favor of the nuclear power plant's importance in front of the overwhelming majority of proponent observers. It was very clear that this was not a "public hearing" at all, but a farce, a collaboration between the government and the electric power company. As a result of the promoters' randomly extracting the names and addresses of residents from the resident registry for application without their consent, the fraud was exposed when notices of winning were sent to residents who had not even applied for the event. This was nothing short of mismanagement, anti-democratic, and fraudulent. In the end, the government used the public hearing as an alibi to claim that it had heard the residents' voices and gave TEPCO permission to install the Fukushima No. 2 Nuclear Power Plant. Local residents, dismayed by such an administrative situation, filed a lawsuit in 1975 to revoke the approval for the establishment of the Fukushima No. 2 Nuclear Power Plant, and I fully cooperated with the residents and the lawyers in drafting the complaint.

During the hearing of the first trial, I appeared as a witness on the side of the plaintiff residents and redid all the calculations in the paper submitted by pro-nuclear Professor Masatoshi Sakka of Tohoku University School of Medicine on the relationship between natural radiation and carcinogenesis, pointing out the errors and establishing that the actual conclusion was the reverse of what was claimed. People from nine Japanese

electric power companies were present in the audience. At that time, I must have been seen as an "unmanageable scholar" who was extremely troublesome for the Japanese electric power companies.

The trial continued for 12 years at the Fukushima District Court, the Sendai High Court, and the Supreme Court. I was surprised to find the following explanation in the Fukushima District Court decision of July 23, 1984. The ruling stated that while it was not impossible to envision a case in which the Emergency Core Cooling System (ECCS) does not function as the plaintiffs claimed, such a scenario would render virtually all nuclear power plants inoperable. This ruling was widely and wrongly interpreted as a declaration that an event that would make the operation of a nuclear power plant inoperative could never occur. In other words, all future safety reviews on all the nuclear power plants were not to assume that certain events could render a plant inoperable. In the Fukushima nuclear accident of 2011, the ECCS stopped working precisely because of a huge tsunami that the power companies had not anticipated. It produced the most devastating nuclear disaster in human history.

## Radioactivity Data Fabrication Case

In 1974, I was involved in an important incident related to nuclear energy which took place due to the fabrication of radioactivity data by the Japan Institute of Analytical Chemistry. This issue concerned a science fraud case at the Japan Institute of Analytical Chemistry, which was commissioned to check the radioactive contamination of seawater and seabed soil at ports where US nuclear submarines had visited or berthed for a length of time. The institute copied a number of graphs of the measurement result of one sample at a different scale and reported them as the measurement data of many other samples that were not actually measured. This science fraud case was challenged by the Japan Scientists Association's Research Committee on Nuclear Issues, of which I was Chairman, and details of the irregularities were thoroughly elucidated. Again, since the data of the port of Okinawa was also fabricated, I also flew to White Beach, Okinawa, for investigation and met the Okinawa Governor Chobyo Yara to discuss the issue of data fabrication. This meeting was mediated by Dr. Yoshiaki Ito, who played a leading role in the campaign to exterminate the noxious melon fly in Okinawa using radiation sterile worms. I also appeared as a witness before the Diet's Special Committee on Science and Technology Promotion Measures, where I harshly denounced administrative

mismanagement. As a result, the US nuclear submarines could not call at Japanese ports for six months.

## Academic Harassment at the University of Tokyo

By this time, I had published several books on nuclear power generation and severely criticized Japan's nuclear policy. These include *Nuclear Power Generation in Japan - Aiming for Safe Development*. It was co-authored by Tokunosuke Nakajima, Deputy Principal Researcher of the Japan Atomic Energy Research Institute (1974). Another critical study was published in 1975, and it was entitled *Nuclear Power and Environment* (Anzai). As a result, I came to be seen as an influential ideologue criticizing Japan's nuclear power policy and was shunned by the Science and Technology Agency and the electric power industry.

My Head Professor was originally not an anti-human type. He was a medical doctor, and in his youth he was a socially minded medical student, who was also interested in the medical care of the poor. However, after he became a professor at the University of Tokyo and was appointed as a member of the National Radiation Council, he had more opportunities to come into contact with people involved in the Science and Technology Agency and electric power companies promoting nuclear power. It seems that he was criticized for having a nuclear opponent like me in his laboratory and advised to keep me in his laboratory and incapacitate me socially rather than firing me and throwing me out into society like releasing a wild beast free. However, in the end, I stayed at the University of Tokyo's School of Medicine for 17 years as a research assistant, during which time I personally experienced many anti-human rights incidents.

For instance, for some time in the 1970s, I was removed from all teaching duties in the Department of Radiological Health and was no longer allowed to present my research work at academic conferences without the permission of the Head Professor; nearly every day, I was called into the office of the Chief Professor and berated, hurting my self-esteem and forcing me to change my perceptions and beliefs about nuclear power; the Chief Professor gave instructions to the laboratory staff not to speak to me. As such, I often had no opportunity to speak to anyone throughout the day; if any newspaper or journal published my discourse on radiation health, nuclear safety, etc., and I was openly insulted by the Chief Professor during the weekly literature review meeting.

Worse still, a spy was sent by TEPCO to sit next to me in the laboratory, and the contents of my phone conversations during the day were reported to the TEPCO head office in the evening. The spy was a medical doctor employed by TEPCO to provide health care to the workers, and he was attending my laboratory as a research student and also playing as TEPCO's sentry in charge of Anzai. Again, if I applied for a position at other universities and colleges, various hurdles were created, including the dispatch of a feature article from a weekly magazine to the personnel committee, which reported that I was a leader of a campaign opposing nuclear power in Japan. Moreover, if I went as a lecturer to public talk meetings in nuclear power plant areas in Japan, the TEPCO watchdog used to follow me. Even under these circumstances, if there were postgraduate students who wanted to discuss academic matters and listen to my advice on research-related issues, they had to meet me at nearby inns or sushi restaurants as I could not teach and guide them at the university. Such harassments continued till the serious accident at the Three Mile Island Nuclear Power Plant in the US that took place on March 28, 1979. It was then that the Chief Professor said to me, "I want to be a good debater with you for life," and in this way I achieved a sort of citizenship in the laboratory. In other words, the Chief Professor might have realized then that Anzai's daily warnings to society about the safety of nuclear power plants were not necessarily lies or exaggerations.

Let me add here that the harassments at my work place and by the nuclear power industry in Japan failed to break my resolve. Believing that it was the inherent right of researchers to publish the results of their research, I continued to express my ideas at academic conferences without the permission of my Chief Professor. I was repeatedly elected as the youngest member of the Board of Directors of the Japanese Society of Health Physics, a professional society in the field of radiation protection, and in the late 1970s I served as General Director and Secretary General of the society. The name "Health Physics" was a kind of cloak used by the US in the Manhattan Project to avoid raising alarms in the outside world. When I proposed to change the name of the society to Japanese Society of Radiation Protection, the electric power company officials opposed it on the grounds that the term "radiation protection" might give an impression that radiation is so dangerous that it must be stringently protected. At that time, I was Secretary General and Society's President was Yoshiyasu Kurokawa, Director of the Safety Management Office of the Power Reactor and Nuclear Fuel Development Corporation. A nuclear industry

magazine named *Genshiryoku Kogyo* (Nuclear Industry) wrote an editorial postscript that asked: "Is it acceptable if the President is a proponent and the Secretary General is an opponent?" (1975).

One day, there was a board meeting of the Japanese Society of Health Physics, and I was invited to dinner by the Vice-President Mr. H, who was from TEPCO. At a restaurant in downtown Tokyo, he proposed that I should study in the US for three years, and TEPCO would take care of pay all the expenses. Needless to say, I thanked the gentleman and politely declined his offer.

Here let me refer to an episode that may indicate how hostile the Science and Technology Agency was toward me.

During those days, a TV program called "The Afternoon Show" used to be hosted by popular TV personality Keizo Kawasaki. It planned to arrange a dialogue between Kinji Moriyama, Director-General of the Science and Technology Agency, with the local residents of the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear power plant in Niigata Prefecture (hometown of former Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka who had created the subsidy system under the Three Laws for Power Development). The director of the program asked me to represent the residents in the program. However, the day before the show, the director of the program called me and begged me to withdraw from the show because Moriyama had said that he won't participate in the show if Anzai was invited.

When I look back now, I realize that I could withstand the environment of harassment because (a) my philosophy of life was that I should live the way I wanted to live; (b) though I was almost isolated at my work place at the University of Tokyo, I had many colleagues from the Japan Scientists Association, who were very supportive and encouraging; (c) my expertise in radiation dosimetry was widely recognized in my professional society, and I was usually appreciated by the members, especially because I was the youngest member of the board; and my spouse continued to fully support me despite having two young children and accepted her fate to live with "a researcher having no promotion prospects."

The problem of those days was that there wasn't much demand for radiation protection scientists, and only a few universities had a department of nuclear engineering or a department of radiological health science. Worse still, even when I applied occasionally for a position in the universities or elsewhere, I had to be prepared for interference like concocted and damaging reports reaching the members of selection committees about me. I therefore applied in 1986 for a position as a faculty

member in charge of "Introduction to Natural Sciences" in the Department of Economics at Ritsumeikan University. As a professional in radiation protection, I was a bit sad for changing my field, but as a researcher ever ready to expand the frontiers of my knowledge and areas of research interests, I was already on my way to acquire deep knowledge about nuclear power, nuclear weapons, and peace. As such, I was very hopeful that the new place would enable me to freely construct my research and teaching life. When it was appointed as a professor at Ritsumeikan University, the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper wrote an article entitled "Another Famous Perennial Assistant Researcher Leaves University of Tokyo." At that time, a number of researchers at the University of Tokyo, including Jun Ui—an eminent scholar famous for his masterpiece entitled "Principles of Pollution"—who were regarded as dissidents were kept dumped as assistant researchers. It was around that time that an assistant researcher at the Faculty of Engineering, Hiroshima University, had murdered the Dean. He was very frustrated as he had remained assistant researcher for 17 years.

## An Occult Critic and an Anti-nuclear Scientist

When I joined Ritsumeikan University in the Kansai area, I heard a rumor that TEPCO officials were pleased and Kansai Electric Power Company (KEPCO) officials were disappointed. In reality, I became much busier at Ritsumeikan, preparing my courses, developing the concept and feasibility report of establishing an international peace museums at Ritsumeikan University and dealing with the occult boom that eventually swept Japan. I therefore couldn't devote as much time on nuclear issues as I used to when I was in Tokyo University.

During the first year or two, when I was busy preparing for the courses and developing them at Ritsumeikan, I was saddened to note that the reaction of the students was not very positive. I was more sad when I turned my attention to society and note at that time (around 1990) that there was an abundance of cults, such as the Aum Shinrikyo led by its infamous founder Shoko Asahara, the Ho-no-hana Sanpo-gyo led by Hogen Fukunaga, and various self-help seminars using mind control techniques. Charismatics, both large and small, appeared in Japan at a time when the bubble economy was collapsing and people were looking for something to rely on. The gurus were dazzling people with their dubious preaching and "psychic" techniques such as "levitation" and creating "cult clusters" all over Japan. In the case of Aum Shinrikyo, for example, many

young people who had graduated from prestigious universities such as the University of Tokyo, Kyoto University, Waseda University, and Keio University were attracted to Shoko Asahara and led a cult-centric life, isolated from society and attacking opponents with sarin and VX gas in extremely anti-social and increasingly dangerous manners.

I reorganized the course of "Introduction to Natural Sciences" with slightly "dangerous" themes such as the occult, psychic powers, fortune-telling and prophecy, and emphasized on "scientific ways of thinking." As expected, my lectures were well-received, and I was featured in the mass media many times. My lectures on "Introduction to Natural Science" and "Scientific Views and Ways of Thinking" soon became popular, and I published a number of critical books on the so-called supernatural power making me known as an "occult critic" rather than an "anti-nuclear scientist."

However, personally, I was always disturbed by the issues related to nuclear energy and health, and the proliferation of nuclear weapons. I had spent a decade from 1977 to 1987 and served as Chairman of the Drafting Committee for the World Conference Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs, held annually in Japan. My task was not easy. I had to propose drafts and carry the Committee members with me to agree to a single draft and the discussion sometimes lasted until dawn. Such deliberations developed my negotiation skills and boosted my democratic spirit, but equally importantly, I built up my contacts within Japan and outside with the leaders of anti-nuclear movements and with the concerned anti-nuclear scholars around the world. I didn't lose contact with many of these contacts and also remained involved in the struggle against the bombs even when I had shifted from Tokyo University to Ritsumeikan University.

In 2009, I had an interesting experience related to the nuclear power plant issue. A citizen volunteer group based at the Kyoto Museum for World Peace at Ritsumeikan University named "Friends for Peace" organized a peace tour to visit a nuclear power plant owned by Kansai Electric Power Co. (KEPCO). The tours of the plant required pre-registration and approval from KEPCO. The tour group obtained clearance formalities quickly, but then they were suddenly informed by KEPCO that they would not be allowed to visit the plant. The reason was that the tour group was led by Professor Ikuro Anzai, who had been a fierce critic of nuclear power plants for many years. The Friends for Peace reasoned with the company and protested vehemently. Finally, it succeeded in persuading KEPCO to change its stance and send its officials to apologize. I was pleased to know that my past efforts as a critic of nuclear power still had

some social influence, and though relatively more known as a cult critic, KEPCO still remembered me as a "critic of nuclear powers."

## Kyoto Museum for Word Peace and Nagasaki A-Bomb Museum

I had joined the Faculty of Economics at Ritsumeikan University in 1986. "Peace and Democracy" was this university's philosophy of education and research. Two years later, I moved to the newly established Faculty of International Relations, and I was asked to be involved in preparation for the establishment of a comprehensive university-based peace museum, the first of its kind in the world. It was to be established in collaboration with the citizens working on "Kyoto War Exhibition for Peace Movement." This museum was opened in May 1992 as planned, and a well-known nuclear critic and then a visiting professor at Ritsumeikan—Professor Shuichi Kato—was appointed the first director of the museum and I was appointed its acting director.

Soon after its opening, citizens who were involved in the campaign of Kyoto War Exhibition for Peace consulted the Kyoto Museum for World Peace for using the museum as a base for peace activities. A group "Friends for Peace" was formed with me as an advisor. They were highly motivated to learn and held frequent study sessions while working as guides for visitors to Kyoto Museum for World Peace and eventually began to organize "Peace Tours" under my guidance. In 2013, we visited Fukushima to deepen our awareness of the nuclear accident in 2011, and we had the opportunity to listen to experience of the Principal and Vice Principal of my old elementary school in Nihonmatsu City talk regarding the nuclear accident.

In 1994, two years after the establishment of the Kyoto Museum for World Peace, I was asked by the Nagasaki A-bomb Museum to carry out comprehensive supervision of the Museum together with Professor Shuichi Kato, Director of the Kyoto Museum for World Peace. We planned and directed the museum to project the disastrous consequences of atomic bombing and also helped prepare a historical timeline of why Nagasaki A-bombed and also put on display the 1937 Nanjing Massacre by the Japanese military in a chronologically. Then there were protests from a right-wing revisionist group, who claimed that there was no Nanjing Massacre, and the City of Nagasaki, which had commissioned us to

supervise the project, was sued. I gave my opinion as a witness at the Nagasaki District Court, and eventually, the City of Nagasaki won the case and the situation was settled once and for all.

However, more recently, two years ahead of the museum's renovation, right-wing groups demanding again to remove the Nanjing exhibit. In late August 2023, the citizens of Nagasaki, who opposed the revision of history, formed the "Association of Nagasaki Citizens Seeking an Atomic Bomb Exhibition Passed Down to the World" and invited renowned historian Kazuki Iguchi (former president of Kyoto Prefectural University) to give a lecture. In his lecture, Iguchi said that the content of the display at the Nagasaki A-bomb Museum about the Nanjing Massacre was merely what is written in the junior high school textbooks and ignorance of historical events like Nanjing Massacre would hinder empathy for the damage and suffering of others.

Administrative intervention in the peace museum exhibition took a more explicit form in 2015 at the Osaka International Peace Center (Peace Osaka). It was established in 1991 as a joint project of Osaka Prefecture and Osaka City, after the Liberal Democratic Party, the Communist Party, and various citizens' groups with different political positions called for the construction of a memorial facility and archive to pray for lasting peace. Besides the damage caused by air raids in Osaka in 1945, the museum's exhibition also showed that there was a history of perpetration, including indiscriminate bombing on Chongqing by the former Japanese Army during the initial war period. However, when the innovative Ryoichi Kuroda, the governor of Osaka Prefecture was replaced by the conservative governor Toru Hashimoto, all exhibits related to Japan's brutal excesses were removed from the Peace Osaka exhibition. After being refused the release of administrative records documenting the debate over the removal of the display of atrocities committed by the Japanese military, a member of the Liaison Group on "The Crisis of Peace Osaka" then filed a lawsuit against the Osaka Prefectural Government and the City of Osaka. He took the case to court on the grounds that his constitutionally guaranteed "right to know" had been violated, and the Osaka High Court ruled in 2017 that it was illegal for the prefectural government and the city of Osaka to decide not to release the documents, stating,

In 2019, the Supreme Court upheld this decision, confirming the defeat of both the Prefecture and the City on the issue.

## International Network of Museums for Peace (INMP)

My involvement with peace museums grew wider and deeper with the passage of time. In 1994, I worked closely with Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum to form the Japanese Association of Museums for Peace, and in 1995 I availed the opportunity to take part in the Second International Peace Museums Conference held in Stadt Schleining, Austria. Three years later, I organized the Third International Peace Museums Conference in Japan in collaboration with the Osaka International Peace Center (Peace Osaka. During the conference, "The Japanese Citizens' Network of Museums for Peace" was established. This network has continued to develop to the present day, under the initiative of Kazuyo Yamane, former Deputy Director of the Kyoto Museum for World Peace. With the help of volunteer translators, the bilingual newsletter of the organization—*Muse*—has continued to be published and distributed.

In 2008, in collaboration with Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and Kyoto University of Art and Design (now Kyoto University of the Arts), the sixth International Conference of Museums for Peace was organized. It received international acclaim. At the General Assembly of the conference, the International Network of Peace Museums (INPM) adopted a constitution for itself for the first time. It was re-named "The International Network of Museums for Peace (INMP)" and resolved to expand the network with more museums, including art museums and historical archives, working for peace creation, and being based on a mutual understanding that peace is not the "absence of war" but "absence of violence in all its forms." Since then, as a director of INMP, I have collaborated with the General Coordinator Dr. Peter van den Dungen (Bradford University, UK) and my colleague Dr. Kazuyo Yamane on editing *INMP Newsletter*.

Incidentally, I also served as General Coordinator of INMP from 2017 to 2020, and I worked with officers from around the world to rebuild the network's organization and finances. INMP made preparation to hold the tenth International Conference of Museums for Peace in Kyoto in 2020, but due to the spread of Covid-19, the proceedings had to be held online. The conference was a great success largely due to the financial support of Ritsumeikan University, efforts of Director Shin-ichi Ago, former Deputy Directors Kazuyo Yamane and Atsushi Fujioka of the Kyoto Museum for

World Peace, and significant cooperation extended by Professor Emeritus Roy Tamashiro of Webster University, the US.

## Combining Nuclear Issues and Peace Museums

In 2005, six years before the occurrence of Fukushima nuclear accident, local residents of Fukushima petitioned TEPCO and warned that if a Chilean earthquake-level tsunami of 1960 were to occur in Japan, the emergency power supply and other facilities at TEPCO's Fukushima nuclear power plant would be submerged and the plant would be in grave danger. However, despite repeated requests, TEPCO took no protective measures, and the tsunami that accompanied the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011, caused the nuclear power plant to suffer serious consequences as was feared, resulting in the most devastating nuclear disaster that humanity had ever experienced. Admittedly, environmental radiation levels are falling, tremendous levels of highly radioactive magma called "fuel debris" have accumulated at the bottom of the reactor containment vessels. As yet, no technically based roadmap has been presented for extracting it and proceeding with essential and highly difficult decommissioning measures.

More than 150,000 local residents had to leave their hometowns to avoid radiation exposure, but even more than 12 years after the accident, over 30,000 residents had not returned yet. Of course, some of the younger evacuees have started new professional lives not in areas from where they were evacuated but in new areas of settlement, and they don't seem to have any intention of returning. Conversely, even if the number of elderly people increases in the affected areas and the burden of medical services increases, the young people who are responsible for productive activities and who are the main source of tax revenue will not return. It means that the prospects for a successful reconstruction of the affected areas cannot be drawn. Main reasons for the young people not returning are that even if they do return, they won't be able to find a job, their children won't be able to receive normal education, and the damaged nuclear reactor facilities with high levels of radiation continue to exist.

Immediately after the accident, I contacted Rev. Tokuo Hayakawa, the 30th Chief Priest of Hokyoji Temple in Naraha Town, with whom I had been involved in the anti-nuclear power movement for almost 40 years. Hokyoji Temple is located approximately 15 km from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant consisting of six nuclear power reactors,

where the accident occurred in 2011, and 5 km from the Fukushima Daini Nuclear Power Plant consisting of four nuclear power reactors. Rev. Hayakawa and I agreed on a plan to measure radioactivity in the Hamadori region, which had suffered from radioactive contamination from the nuclear power plant. On April 16, 2011, five weeks after the accident, we drove north from Iwaki City to Namie Town in a car driven by Rev. Hayakawa and measured the radiation levels. Along our way, we found that radiation levels increased markedly as we travelled closer to the plant. Two years later, in May 2013, I launched the "Fukushima Project" together with volunteer scientists and engineers and visited the affected areas more than 100 times since then to support the victims of the nuclear accident by conducting radiation surveys, decontamination works, and consultation activities. Rev. Hayakawa was forced out of his hometown Narahamachi for six years following the nuclear accident and had to live in a flat in Iwaki City, an hour's drive away. Besides devoting much of his time working as priest, he had also farmed in the fields. In addition, he ran an institution for the mentally disabled in his hometown. However, he had to give up farming and running the home after the nuclear accident.

In August 2019, as a comrade who had collaborated in the campaign against the Fukushima nuclear power plant since the early 1970s, I sent the following poem to Rev. Hayakawa

> Nuclear Regrets and Messages to the Future about Nuclear Power
> Resisting the tyrannies of the nuclear industry and government for 40 years,
> We failed to prevent a nuclear disaster from happening.
> Nuclear power has revealed its extremely dangerous nature,
> and has robbed our homeland of its past, present, and future.
> We want to let people know how important it is to sharpen our senses,
> apply our wisdom, and join forces
> to show courage in the face of irrational schemes
> with the power of science and a boundless love for life.

Rev. Hayakawa expressed his wish to have this poem fixed in the precincts of the temple as a "Monument of Nuclear Regrets and Messages for the Future about Nuclear Power," along with his strong desire to build a peace museum to be named the Hiroshima-Nagasaki-Bikini-Fukushima Museum for No Nuke *(Dengonkan)* adjacent to the monument to pass on the facts of nuclear accident to future generations. These two initiatives

were realized soon after and celebrated during a ceremony held in the precinct on March 11, 2021, the tenth anniversary of the nuclear reactors destruction. Although the museum is housed in the precinct of a local mountain temple in Fukushima, it attracts visitors from all over the country and sometimes even from abroad.

Unfortunately, Rev. Hayakawa passed away in December 2022, and now I am the Director of the museum. As a peace museum that is also a member of the Japanese Citizens' Network of Museums for Peace and the INMP, we hope to continue to actively disseminate information and research results about the Fukushima nuclear accident and after; be involved in the rehabilitation, resettlement, and health-related works; and provide scientific guidance to the stake holders and affectees. For instance, the *Dengonkan* released a statement in April 2021 on the issue of the release of tritium contaminated water from the Fukushima nuclear power plant into the ocean, the *Dengonkan* issued a statement in April 2021 and severely criticized the government's way of imposing conclusions unilaterally without listening to the voices of the people. It is our firm resolve that the *Dengonkan* will continue to closely monitor TEPCO and the Government, and act like a watchdog to scientifically scrutinize the measures for decommissioning the plant and disseminating information on the effects of this nuclear disaster to the world.

## Views on the War in Ukraine

I firmly believe that a peace educator and researcher should take a clear cut positions on major local, national, and international issues all the time and express their views boldly in their writings, publications, and lectures. This is the best way to educate and serve the society both at local and international level, strengthen the credibility of peace educators' constituency, communicate to the authorities that a viewpoint different from the official viewpoint is possible, and serve the cause of peace everywhere. That's why I often issued statements on local and international happenings even when I was serving as Director of Kyoto Museum for World Peace at Ritsumeikan University. I was therefore very uncomfortable with the trend of public opinion as reflected in the media and official statements in Japan regarding the conflict in Ukraine. The conflict had broken out on February 24, 2022.

There were two distinguishing features of Japanese public opinion: first, the war was a war of aggression by Russia, and this view was shared by even those involved in the peace movement; and second, the fake news

coming from the West was widely believed. I wrote a number of essays on the issue in 2022, and in April 2023, I published a summary of my views on the issue in a 108-page, full-color, self-published book in Japanese (Anzai). There was an unexpected response to this publication, and more than 10,000 copies have so far been disseminated in response to orders addressed to the author's email address.

In this 57-page booklet, which is mainly in Japanese and partly in English, I traced the history of NATO since 1990, when then US Secretary of State James Baker had stated, that NATO won't expand eastward by an inch and examined in detail the US policy toward Ukraine since the Obama administration took office in 2009. I referred to the US Government's responsibility for the outbreak of this war. I also described the ethnic cleansing-like military repression of the Donbass population by neo-Nazis, such as the Azov Battalion, which was incorporated into the regular army under Poroshenko's regime. In addition, I thoroughly examined the facts of the Bucha massacre, the Kramatorsk train station bombing, the shelling of the Kremenchuk shopping center, and other incidents that influenced the formation of people's mental images of this war. I emphasized the importance of passing information through the filter of a healthy skepticism, rather than simply believing the information given to us by the mass media.

This publication was accepted by the people like water seeping into dry sand. One of the readers of this booklet sent me an email saying, "I would like to spread this booklet that appeals scientifically, empirically, and objectively with evidence." Another reader said, "My perspective on this war has changed 180 degrees. I was uncomfortable with the media's reasoning that Russians are barbaric and Putin is a madman, but after reading this book, I think I was able to clear many of my doubts. I was once again reminded of the importance of questioning everything."

A key feature of this booklet is that it does not give priority to my interpretation of the facts and describes the facts based on as much objective information as possible. Of course, my view of history and values are reflected by the facts I covered and the facts I didn't cover. Nevertheless, I remained focused on the facts then available and not on propaganda stuff. It gave credibility to my study and exposed the peril of uncritical reliance on information fed by the mass media. The outbreak of the Pacific War is another occasion which can be referred here. It was the time when the Japanese people were deprived of their right and freedom of criticism, and the common people were led to believe the announcements of the

Imperial Headquarters and support the war policies. It's true that criticism is not as suppressed in modern Japan as it was in the war years, but it is sad to see people losing their critical faculties and being dragged away by the Japanese-biased media.

I had a serious sense of urgency to do something immediately as the public opinion of Japan was being pushed to accept the pro-Ukrainian and anti-Russian policy, I wrote the booklet. The fact that my booklet was disseminated more quickly than expected gave me some relief to know that the people were apparently confused by the flood of misinformation and looked for credible reports to assess the situation. I am now keenly aware that there are ways in which an old peace researcher like myself can still contribute to society by providing objective information on emerging critical national and international happenings.

I have remained actively involved, for more than 50 years of my life, in the campaign against nuclear power and nuclear armament and in the peace museum movement. Moreover, I have continued to make every possible effort to achieve peace in the broadest sense. In the process, there were times when I was named an anti-national ideologue and I was mercilessly oppressed, but I have no regrets about my life. I have experienced conflicts of opinion between activists who were supposed to share the same position on building a non-nuclear and peaceful society and voice against the danger of public opinion being misled because of distortion of facts and perception concerning international conflict. However, the very fact that the people showed much more interest in my booklet on Ukrainian war than what I had expected convinces me that the peace educators and researchers can find ways and means to counter the dominant and official viewpoint on emerging crises.

## Conclusion

Based on my lifelong involvement in peace teaching, research, and action, I would say that a peacemaking movement should take note of the following in order to obtain its goals:

First, it is important to have a fair idea of what is happening in the world and therefore to analyze information from multiple perspectives and not to rely on information only from the mass media or specific advocates.

Second, we must be ambitious about the peace goals we want to achieve. It is important to clearly identify short-term goals within a couple of

months, medium-term goals within a couple of years, and long-term goals within a couple of decades. Vague goal setting weakens the power of movement.

Third, especially in the case of peace activities promoted by individual initiatives, the leaders engaged in the activities must be physically, mentally, and spiritually healthy. It is the driving force that keeps the movement going and keeps it from falling into self-righteousness.

Fourth, it is important for as many people as possible to share the ideals and goals set by the movement promoters and cooperate with each other by offering their own capabilities.

Fifth, in order to ensure that our activities be effective and sustainable, we must make sure that we have the necessary financial resources. These days, crowdfunding techniques are often being used to pool resources, and these techniques should be learnt and applied.

Sixth, we must remember the importance of practicing: *Think Globally, Act locally*, and *Think Locally, Act Globally.*

Let me conclude this peace-focused autobiographical essay by giving an example of one particular peaceful practice in which I was deeply involved.

I live in Uji City in Kyoto Prefecture. With the cooperation of the people of Uji, I got erected a monument to on the banks of the Uji River, which flows through the city. It was built to celebrate the memory of the Korean poet Yun Dong-ju, who is a national hero of Korea. He was born in 1917 on the North Jiandao Island in former Manchuria, at the base of Korean peninsula. From an early age, he wrote poetry and grew up as a young man aspiring to become a literary scholar. He went to Yonhi College (current Yonsei University) in Gyeongseong (now Seoul), South Korea, during the colonial rule of Imperial Japan. Immediately after the outbreak of the Pacific War, he came to Japan to study at Rikkyo University in Tokyo in April 1942. In October that year, he got transferred to Doshisha University in Kyoto.

Next year, in July 1943, he was arrested for violating the Peace Preservation Law, a notorious law for suppressing anti-government social movements, after being discovered that he was conversing with his cousin in Korean. The Korean language was then a prohibited language. His conversation was interpreted as a plot for the Korean independence movements, and he was sentenced two-year imprisonment. Since the enactment of the Peace Preservation Law in 1925 till its abolition in 1945, several hundred thousand people were arrested and 75,000 were sent for

prosecution. Out of these 75,000 detainees, about 2000 were tortured to death or they died in prison. Yun Dong-ju was sent to Fukuoka Prison in Kyushu Island. He died a suspicious death there on February 16, 1945, at the age of 27. During his student days at the university in Kyoto, he once hiked the Uji River with his friends. A group photo was taken on this occasion, which ended up being the last photo of his life. In July 1943, shortly after this picture was taken, he was arrested. He never returned.

When we, the citizens of Uji City, learnt about his hiking the Uji River, the group photo taken there and his arrest and death, we came up with the idea of building a monument on the banks of the Uji River and approached people living in Uji City and outside. After 12 years of hard work, we achieved our goal. The Monument of Memory and Reconciliation for the Poet Yun-Dong Ju was finally there in 2017. It has been visited by the people of Japan and Korea, and now it is an important monument to foster a spirit of jointly looking at the past and working together for future peace.

I am convinced that this monument is a true implementation of the spirit of *Think Globally,* Act *Locally* and *Think Locally, Act Globally.*

* * *

I am thankful to Professor Syed Sikander Mehdi for his significant initiative to publish this unique book and Professor Robert Kowalczyk for assisting me to write this chapter.

# From Police Officer to Professor of World History: A Pioneer and Witness of Peace Studies in China

*Liu Cheng*

## Introduction

Prior to working at Nanjing University in China, I worked at the Nanjing Municipal Public Security Bureau for 13 years, serving successively as a forensic technician (graduating in 1986 from the Criminal Investigation Department of the Jiangsu Police Institute with a major in forensic examination), a criminal investigator, and a foreign affairs police officer. While working as a foreign affairs police officer during 1994–1997, I obtained master's degree in History. After resigning in 1999, I became a full-time PhD student in British History at Nanjing University. Professor Qian Chengdan was my supervisor. I received PhD degree in History in December 2001. In 2002, I started working in the Department of History at Nanjing University. I was appointed an associate professor in 2005 and became a full professor in 2011. In 2003, I went to the Centre for Peace and Reconciliation Studies at Coventry University in the United Kingdom

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to study for master's degree in Peace Studies. Therefore, I have had professional study experience in three disciplines: Forensic Science, History (World History), and Peace Studies.

## From Police Officer to a Student of History

One morning in 1993, I received a call at the Foreign Affairs Office of the Nanjing Municipal Public Security Bureau. It was Professor Gao Hua from the History Department of Nanjing University. He shared some life-changing news with me: the History Department was launching a master's programme in World History with a specialisation in 'International Affairs and Cross-Cultural Exchange', and he encouraged me to apply, believing it would be beneficial for my career. Professor Gao was also teaching at Johns Hopkins University-Nanjing University Center for Chinese and American Studies (HNC). At the time, I was responsible for managing foreign nationals residing in Nanjing, which brought me into contact with faculty and students at HNC. Since we were both from Nanjing, we quickly became acquainted.

At his home, he gave me a 'special academic lecture', the content of which later became the renowned book that caused him significant trouble. Professor Gao utterly captivating. Although I was a science student with limited historical knowledge, but the lecture impressed me as it was well-founded, clearly organised, and inspiring. A number of such 'special sessions' followed, each starting in the morning and continuing till noon, when his son came home back and the three of us would have a quick lunch. Once the child returned to school, Professor Gao would continue his lecture, occasionally smoking Red Plum cigarettes. Professor Gao stimulated my interest in history, and the lectures he arranged for only one person—for me—at his home could be considered the pathway that took me to the corridors of history. Gao was still a lecturer at that time, but in my opinion, he was already a great historian and a sincere and trustworthy person. So I followed his advice and got enrolled in the master's degree programme in World History. The curriculum included basic courses in World History, European History, American History, and certain special courses as well as the history of Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao. Senior faculty members in the World History Department gave us lectures, with even the eminent Professor Wang Juefei delivering a lecture. When it came to MA thesis, Professor Gao said that Professor Qian Chengdan was very knowledgeable and recommended him as my supervisor. I chose China-US

relations as the topic for my thesis, and Professor Qian advised me to consult Professor Ren Donglai.

Ren Donglai was the first PhD in American History trained by the new Chinese government and also taught at HNC. At the time, Cai Jiahe and Ren Donglai shared the same office, and they suggested that the thesis topic be set as 'The Causes of the Evolution of U.S. Policy Toward China before and after the Founding of the People's Republic of China'. Professor Cai provided me with a detailed explanation of the main contours of US policy towards China during this period. Professor Ren took me to the library of HNC, introduced me to relevant academic works and journals, compiled a reading list for me, including monographs by scholars such as Zi Zhongyun and Tao Wenzhao, and gifted me Shi Yinhong's newly published work *The Origins of Hostility and Conflict*, urging me to read it carefully for reference. He also assisted me in drafting the outline of my thesis. I frequently visited the library at HNC to research materials, and sometimes wrote my thesis there, which made it convenient for me to consult Professor Ren, though this did take up a significant amount of his time. Professor Ren was always willing to help, and his demeanour was warm and approachable, with no airs or graces. The HNC housed a collection of *The Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS), which was a rare and valuable archive resource in the mid-1990s. Professor Ren taught me how to interpret such archival documents, including the formatting of annotations for English-language sources, explaining everything clearly and thoroughly. Ren Donglai was a pure intellectual with profound knowledge, noble character, integrity, kindness, and a love for life. In my eyes, he was an outstanding example of Chinese intellectuals. At the time, Professor Ren had not yet taken on any graduate students, and I was his first graduate student.

After my thesis was completed, he insisted that his name not be listed as my supervisor. When I submitted the draft of my thesis to my supervisor, Professor Qian Chengdan, he read the preface and said, 'Donglai (his academic achievements) are truly remarkable!' Later, an abridged version of this master's thesis was published in the *Journal of Nanjing University*. Donglai was only three years older than me, and our children were also of similar age. Our families often went out together for trips, and we frequently spent the New Year together. Since we followed a split-bill system for expenses, it was even easier for us to engage in activities together. Thus, Donglai and I developed a relationship that was both teacher and friend, with deep affection. On his deathbed, Donglai said, 'The

relationship between our two families is the best!' Donglai was like family to us, and his voice, appearance, and demeanour still vividly come to mind. I will forever cherish Donglai!

During my master's programme, Professor Chen Xiaolü was our head teacher. Professor Chen was kind, approachable, and caring towards students, making it easy for us to seek his guidance when needed. The strong relationship I built with Professor Chen during my master's studies continued into my doctoral application process. When I felt unsure about applying for a PhD, Professor Chen consistently encouraged me and advised me to pursue a doctoral degree under Professor Qian's supervision. After I was admitted to the PhD programme in World History at Nanjing University, Professor Chen treated me like his own student, caring for and guiding me. He allowed me to audit his undergraduate World History course as a supplementary course.

Even after Professor Chen began supervising PhD students, his other students noticed how kindly he treated me and felt a bit jealous. To this day, I always completed any tasks he assigned to me with diligence and care. Professor Chen is the director of the EU Centre at Nanjing University. A major EU project required Nanjing University to cover the initial costs upfront, with 80% of the total funding to be disbursed after the project was completed and approved by the EU. The project was extremely challenging to conclude. Although I was not a staff member of the EU Centre, Professor Chen specifically assigned me to take charge of the project, stating that only I could complete it. I worked tirelessly for 40 days and successfully completed the task as instructed by Professor Chen, who often says that 'Liu Cheng is like my half-student'.

Gao Hua gave me a crossover opportunity to go from a police officer to a scholar. Chen Xiaolü and Ren Donglai are the two scholars who have had the greatest academic influence and provided the most assistance to me, aside from my mentor Qian Chengdan.

## A Teacher of History

Professor Qian Chengdan discovered my potential for historical research and guided me into the academia of British history. After my master's thesis defence, Professor Qian said, 'Liu Cheng has the potential to pursue academic research.' Before I applied for a PhD programme, Professor Qian added, 'If you pursue a PhD full-time, I will help you align with international standards and provide you with a vision for your academic

career.' Without Professor Qian's encouragement and support, I would never have had the courage to resign my job and pursue a PhD in British history, nor would I have undergone the major career transformation from police officer to professor. Professor Qian possesses extraordinary wisdom, diligence, perseverance, and a strong sense of responsibility. British scholars praised him as the 'encyclopaedia of British history'. He is the scholar I most admire and respect. His academic contributions to the study of British history in China and the modernisation of the world are unparalleled.

I recall that after I was admitted to the PhD programme, Professor Qian had his first formal discussion with me. He said, 'There are two key qualities for doing history well: first, you must be able to sit still and focus; second, you must have a sharp mind. You excel in the latter, but the former is crucial. As for how to write a dissertation, I will give you a copy of my own.' Professor Qian taught a specialised seminar on British history for his PhD students. Each class focused on a specific theme, with three to four books assigned for each theme, and classes were held once a week. The pressure of reading such a large volume of English-language literature was immense. During class, Professor Qian would have us present first, then ask questions. With only a few students in the class, each of us had to present individually, making it impossible to 'slide by'. This course presented challenges I had never encountered before. After one class, I told Professor Qian that British history was too difficult for me, and I might not meet his expectations. I decided not to stay at Nanjing University after graduation. After listening, Professor Qian remained silent for a moment before saying firmly, 'You must stay at Nanjing University. You need to grit your teeth and persevere.' I remembered Professor Qian's words.

This semester of coursework was deeply engraved in my memory. It was the most challenging yet most rewarding course I had ever taken in my life. To be precise, my academic journey in British history began with this course. Through this dialogue-based discussion method, Professor Qian gradually guided me into the academia of British history. All of Professor Qian's PhD students had gone through this most challenging yet most rewarding learning experience, and I believe their feelings would be the same. The second course I took with Professor Qian was the dissertation presentation class, where we reported our doubts and insights from reading, thinking, and writing to Professor Qian, and received timely guidance from our mentor in class. I remember once in class, I presented the content of the final chapter of my dissertation. After listening, Mr. Qian

suggested submitting it to *Historical Research* and even helped me mail it personally. Although it was not accepted, Professor Qian's recognition meant the most to me and felt the most fair. In Professor Qian's class, we often lost track of time. In winter, Nanjing was very cold, and Room 508 of the World History Department was even colder. The conditions were harsh, with no air conditioning or heating in the room. We discussed academic matters, disregarding the cold. Professor Qian did not drink water or eat, and neither did we.

It was through this process that we learned how to read and research, how to think critically, and how to write academic papers. Every time I recall those days, it brings a warm and happy memory—we had such a special 'golden age'. Professor Qian's sharp and profound thinking, meticulous and thorough academic research, and accurate and objective use of historical materials had all set an example for our future academic careers. Professor Qian is a true scholar, and we all feel deeply honoured to have had such a mentor.

When I finished my second year of doctoral studies, I submitted the first draft of my dissertation to Professor Qian. A few weeks later, he called me and said, 'Bring the 20-plus books I mentioned below to my home.' I hurriedly packed the English materials and rode my bike to Professor Qian's house. Upon entering, he brewed a cup of black tea for me, then began comparing my dissertation with the English materials. I sat beside him, saying nothing and not drinking the tea. This went on for over an hour. Then he said, 'I hope you start your academic career on the right path.' Then, Professor Qian took out a piece of paper with seven questions listed on it and asked me to revise my dissertation according to those questions. I spent over half a year revising it. After submitting the second draft, Professor Qian said, 'It's good; it's acceptable.' Professor Qian did not change a single word of my dissertation, but his targeted guidance had benefited me for life. My current studies, research, and supervision of students are all conducted according to Mr. Qian's teachings and methods. After graduation, under Mr. Qian's guidance, I completed *Britain: From World Dominance to Return to Europe*, *The Process of World Modernisation: General Overview*, and *Glorious Years: Nineteenth-Century Britain*. During the writing of these three books, Professor Qian was already working at Peking University, yet he insisted on meeting with me face-to-face in Nanjing or Beijing on multiple occasions to discuss issues, share his perspectives, and offer guidance. Being with Professor Qian was all about academic discourse and learning.

Additionally, there is a tradition among Professor Qian's disciples to hold regular academic gatherings, which last two days, with each participant presenting a paper. We all felt that attending Professor Qian's academic meetings were the most rigorous, where we dared not be complacent, and where we gained the most. Professor Qian always listened attentively to us from start to finish, then he would speak, just like when he taught us in our student days. The most recent academic gathering was held in Nanjing. After the meeting, Professor Qian wrote to me saying: 'This conference was very successful. Everyone was very happy, and the academic exchange was also very fruitful. Thank you for your meticulous arrangements and planning, and thank you to your team for their hard work.' Receiving Professor Qian's praise made everyone happier than anything else.

Shortly after I was admitted to Nanjing University to pursue a PhD in British history (in the summer of 1999), the China British History Association (CBHA) held its annual academic conference at Liaoning University. Professor Qian instructed me to attend. At the time, I was still a novice in British history, and it was my first time meeting so many renowned experts and scholars. I felt both excited and nervous as we gathered to discuss and exchange ideas. During the conference, I listened intently but struggled to understand much, feeling anxious inside. I also gave a presentation at the conference, feeling utterly speechless and ashamed beyond words. This was my first-ever participation in a British history academic conference. If a profession requires a community or 'circle' where individuals can develop a sense of identity, then my academic career in British history began with this conference. The Association serves as an academic community for scholars of British history in China, and by joining it, I became a member of the British history academia.

At this conference, I met the editor of the *World History*, though I didn't get to speak with them. However, this experience ignited my passion to publish good papers and reduced the psychological distance I felt from being 'at the top'. In my second year of doctoral studies, I revised the first chapter of my dissertation and submitted it to the *World History*. A week later, I received a notification from the editor inviting me to revise the paper according to the journal's citation guidelines, but no changes were requested to the main text. This was the first paper from my dissertation to be accepted for publication, and it was published in a leading journal in the field of world history. For someone like me, a novice in British history who had switched fields mid-career, this was of immense

significance and greatly boosted my confidence. At this conference, which marked the beginning of my academic career in British history, I learned what constitutes good academic research and what makes a good professional journal; I also realised that pursuing academic research as a career is no easy task and that one must strive to achieve the same level of professionalism as the professors at the conference and publish high-quality articles in professional journals. I had worked as police officer for many years, far away from the academic world, and my understanding of academic norms was superficial at best.

After the conference, I became the secretary of the CBHA, whose secretariat was located at Nanjing University. From the second half of 1999 until Professor Qian moved to Peking University, I handled most of the secretariat's administrative tasks, such as annual reviews and financial matters. I approached all the tasks assigned by Professor Qian with diligence and care, never making any mistakes. One year, the Ministry of Civil Affairs issued new regulations stipulating that academic societies must have independent bank accounts, otherwise they would be in violation of the rules. To open a society account, one first had to register and obtain approval from the People's Bank of China and then go to a specialised bank to open the account. At the time, the legal representative, Professor Wang Zhanghui, was in Beijing, and the relevant documents had to be sent from Beijing. Bank services were not as convenient as they are today, and the entire process took a significant amount of time. Once the account was established, CBHA obtained its own cash cheques and invoices. However, not a single cheque was ever issued until the account was closed. For an organisation like ours, having an independent bank account was not particularly significant. Nevertheless, I always kept the financial documents, including the official seal, in a safe place, fearing they might be lost.

During my doctoral studies and after I remained at the university, Professor Qian also entrusted me with various administrative tasks for the department, including the renovation of the world history department's offices. The department faculty jokingly referred to me as the 'Exchequer', but these administrative tasks were thankless and time-consuming, and honestly, I didn't want to do them. However, since they were tasks assigned by my supervisor, I had to complete them without complaint. Later, I would tell my graduate students that while these 'menial tasks' take up time, the skills gained from doing them can also help in academic research. A person with strong practical skills generally also has strong research abilities. During my PhD, I handled numerous such mundane

tasks. Hereafter, when responsible for organising academic conferences, managing finances for international cooperation projects, coordinating collaborations with domestic and international organisations, and preparing academic summary reports, I always handled these tasks with ease and developed a habit of ensuring that nothing slipped through the cracks. Professor Chen Xiaolü recently praised me publicly, saying, 'Liu Cheng is meticulous in his work; he has never let us down over the years.'

## A Historian on the Stage

Another conference that left a lasting impression on me was the annual meeting held in Zhangjiajie in the summer of 2001. As Professor Qian was in the United States, he asked me to attend the conference and assist with some organisational tasks. This was my second time attending the conference, and by then, my dissertation had been finalised and was awaiting viva. All chapters had been submitted to relevant historical journals for publication. For this purpose, I synthesised the content of my dissertation chapters, distilled a central theme, and wrote a conference paper to submit to the annual meeting. By this point, I had made significant progress in my research on British history, and I no longer felt the anxiety I had experienced during my first conference.

To my surprise, the night before the conference began, Professor Yan Zhaoxiang knocked on my door and asked me to deliver the keynote speech at the plenary session the following morning. I immediately felt nervous again and hurriedly compressed the paper according to the specified speaking time, reading it through multiple times from start to finish, adjusting to keep it within 20 minutes. I didn't sleep well that night, constantly thinking about the keynote speech the next day. During the conference presentation the next day, I was very nervous and simply read through the script without daring to look at the teachers in the audience. Professor Yan was the moderator, and the two of us sat on the podium. After I finished reading my paper, Professor Yan glanced at his watch and said, 'Exactly 20 minutes.' I was dissatisfied with my presentation, but since it was my first time delivering a keynote speech on British history at a conference, I still felt a bit proud. Because I presented my paper at the conference, it caught the attention of an editor from *History Teaching*, who approached me to request a manuscript. My paper was subsequently published as the lead article. Professor Qian praised me, saying, 'Well done, front-page headline.' Twenty years later, when I mentioned this to

Professor Yan, he said he didn't remember, but I will never forget that conference presentation or Professor Yan's mentorship of a junior colleague. Following this experience, I gained a more direct understanding of the importance of participating in academic conferences and gradually became more at ease when delivering presentations at such events.

Writing my dissertation marked the beginning of my journey into British history. My dissertation, 'Ideal and Reality: The British Labour Party and Public Ownership', was nominated for the 2004 National Outstanding Doctoral Dissertation Award. Among the two entries selected for the award (one each from Chinese history and world history), mine was one of them. However, it was later discovered that both were from the History Department of Nanjing University, so my dissertation was downgraded to a nomination award. Professor Li Jianming from Nankai University was one of the reviewers for the National Outstanding Doctoral Dissertation Award. After reading my dissertation, Professor Li suggested that I transfer to Nankai University with attractive offer. Years later, he expressed regret that I had not fully dedicated myself to British history research. In 2008, due to the same dissertation, Fudan University approached me, hoping that I would transfer to the History Department at Fudan University, with the promise of a full professorship.

Therefore, I often tell my doctoral students that a doctoral dissertation is the cornerstone of one's academic career. A person who cannot write a good doctoral dissertation is unlikely to become an outstanding scholar. One must first excel in the doctoral dissertation and then consider publishing articles based on it. In 2003, my doctoral dissertation was included in the 'Contemporary Capitalism Studies Series' edited by Professor Qian. At that time, I was reluctant to publish it and wanted to wait until after being promoted to associate professor. Professor Qian said that I could write another one later. Thus, the dissertation was published in its original form. Later, the book won the Third Prize for Outstanding Achievements in Humanities and Social Sciences from the Ministry of Education. At the time, the number of awards was limited, and the award was highly regarded in the academic community. When I applied for the award, I was not even an associate professor. Professor Qian had a broad perspective and foresight. Without the publication of this book, I would not have received this award. It can be said that this doctoral dissertation marked my emergence in the field of Chinese world history.

Afterwards, I published five more monographs on British history, including the six-volume *A History of England* edited by Professor Qian,

where I served as the convener for the fifth volume (the nineteenth-century volume). This was the first multi-volume British general history in China and won the First Prize for Outstanding Achievements in Humanities and Social Sciences from the Ministry of Education. Applying for and leading research grants are mandatory tasks for university faculty members. Since I had already exceeded the age limit for applying for youth grants when I stayed on at the university, I was only eligible to apply after becoming an associate professor. Starting in 2006, I applied for and led six research grants on British history, including two Ministry of Education Social Sciences Fund grants and four National Social Sciences Fund grants, one of which was a major National Social Sciences Fund grant titled 'The History of the British Labour Party (multi-volume)'. Additionally, the Himalaya Audio Sharing Platform invited me to lecture on British history for the public in its 'World History Masterclass' series. The course achieved millions of views, and I became a popular instructor for the course. The audio recordings were transcribed and published in book form by Peking University Press in August 2024.

## Into the Terrain of Peace Studies

Peace Studies is my third major. Peace Studies is a new interdisciplinary field that emerged after World War II, encompassing three main components: peace research, peace education, and peace activities. It explores non-violent solutions for preventing, reducing, and resolving conflicts, analyses the structural mechanisms of conflicts, and builds a knowledge and practice framework for achieving peace. Peace Studies serves as the 'doctor' of human society, addressing the suffering caused by various forms of violence (direct violence, structural violence, cultural violence, and ecological violence). It 'diagnoses' the state of violence, 'predicts' its evolution, and through 'treatment', reduces violence (negative peace) while improving the environment (positive peace).

In 2003, I enrolled in the master's programme in Peace Studies at the Centre for Peace and Reconciliation Studies at Coventry University. Professors Andrew Rigby, Alan Hunter, and Dr. Carol Rank were my mentors in Peace Studies. My experience studying peace studies at Coventry University sparked a profound reevaluation of peace issues and the meaning of life. Many concepts were entirely new to me, challenging and transforming some of my previously held beliefs. Through subsequent training programmes, international and domestic conferences, and my

own reading and practical work in the field of peace studies, my understanding and appreciation of the discipline have continued to grow and deepen. As a university professor, in addition to teaching and supervising students, I believe it is my duty to care about human survival and social justice, and to take responsibility for the progress of the world.

However, for me, opening up a 'second front' in peace studies was not easy. My specialisation is British history, and my commitment to peace studies meant that I had to maintain my dedication to British history while also devoting half of my time and energy to research, teaching, and promoting peace studies. My academic mentor kindly advised me to focus on my well-established research in British history. After careful consideration, I ultimately chose a career path that balances British history and peace studies, striving to achieve a balance between professional academic excellence and social responsibility. In 2017, the UNESCO Chair on Peace Studies was established at Nanjing University, and I serve as the Chairholder, taking on greater responsibilities and tasks in promoting peace studies. As peace studies develops in China, its importance is increasingly recognised domestically, and colleagues from universities, government agencies, and enterprises are beginning to embrace the field.

The development of peace studies in China demonstrates that a spark can ignite a prairie fire. The first translation of a peace studies text in China was published in 2003, titled *Justice and Reconciliation*, which was also the first book I translated (Rigby, 2003). In 2006, I revised and expanded the lecture notes from the peace studies course I taught at Nanjing University, publishing the first Chinese university textbook on peace studies, titled 'Peace Studies' (C. Liu, 2006). In 2009, I edited China's first series of peace education textbooks, *The Peace Growth Series*, which includes *Love and Peace* (Primary School Edition) (Wang & Duan, 2009), *Cognition and Peace* (Middle School Edition) (W. Liu & Xia, 2009), and *Responsibility and Peace* (High School Edition) (He, 2009). This series was selected as one of the 100 outstanding books recommended for young people nationwide by the General Administration of Press and Publication in 2010. Subsequently, I published *The Peace Studies Translation Series* (Zhu & C. Liu, 2015), *The International Cities of Peace Series* (ten volumes) (C. Liu, 2022a), *Peace Education for Secondary Schools* (C. Liu et al., 2023), *Peace Education for Primary Schools* (C. Liu et al., 2024), and *Peace Education Translation Series* (6 volumes) (C. Liu, 2024), among others. In September 2015, I co-authored *Peace Building in a Globalized World: An Illustrated Introduction to Peace Studies* (Chinese-English

bilingual edition) with Professor Egon Speigel of Germany (C. Liu & Spiegel, 2015). Professor John Galtung, the father of peace studies, wrote in the foreword to this book: 'This extraordinary book is global peace studies!' Since 2022, we have edited and published *Peace Studies* (Collected Papers), the first professional journal on peace studies in China, with five issues published to date (C. Liu, 2022b, 2022c, 2023a, 2023b, 2024b.

Over the past two decades, we have consistently organised diverse peace-related activities, including international conferences on peace studies, China-Japan Peace Dialogue Meetings, summer courses on peace education, lectures on peace studies, and the UNESCO peace education programme. We have established a peace studies website, a WeChat public account for peace studies, and maintained regular academic exchanges with major international peace research institutions. I have been elected as a council member of the International Peace Research Association (IPRA) and the Asia-Pacific Peace Research Association (APPRA), as well as the Asian regional liaison for the International Cities of Peace. I had delivered keynote speeches at international peace conferences on multiple occasions, promoting China's peace philosophy. Since 2020, I have focused my efforts on peace education, achieving full coverage of peace education courses from kindergarten to higher education. Nanjing Ninghai High School (Senior High School Division), Nanjing No. 29 Middle School (junior high school division), Nanjing Foreign Language School, Nanjing Jinling High School (senior high school division), Nanjing No. 1 High School, Nanjing Jinling Huiwen High School, Nanjing Suojin Village No. 1 Primary School, Jiangsu Provincial Military Region No. 1 Kindergarten, Nanjing Fengshang Kindergarten, and Dongmenkou Primary School in Zhijiang Dong Autonomous County, Huaihua City, Hunan Province, and Guangwen Middle School in Weifang City, Shandong Province, have successively become peace education base schools under the Chair on Peace Studies.

Cross-cultural understanding and international awareness are key features of peace education. Peace education upholds the concept of a community with a shared future for humanity, teaching us to transcend community boundaries and recognise the importance of human interconnectedness. Peace education encourages us to confront history and ourselves, to see the world and ourselves through others' eyes, and to contribute to lasting peace. The hope of peace education is that children will grow up respecting peace and understanding how to implement it.

The goal of peace education is to cultivate 'peaceful individuals' for a peaceful society.

In 2019, Nanjing was selected as an 'International City of Peace', marking a significant milestone in the development of peace studies in China. As a native of Nanjing, my father survived the Nanjing Massacre. Preserving this historical memory is a major historical and practical issue that all cities devastated by war must confront. A city that had suffered such tragedies must confront its own wounds and share its pain with others. A peace city actively works to create peace, and others come to you to ask about your wounds. I have repeatedly emphasised that history must be remembered, and creating peace is the best way to commemorate and heal the wounds of a painful past. At my suggestion, the Institute of Peace Studies at Nanjing University and the Nanjing Massacre History and International Peace Research Institute jointly submitted an application to the International Cities of Peace Association. On 4 September 2017, the Association announced globally that Nanjing had become the 169th International City of Peace. Subsequently, I assisted Weifang, ZhiJiang, and Dengfeng in becoming International Cities of Peace.

Since 2020, the Chair on Peace Studies has assisted Nanjing in collaborating with UNESCO to host the 'Nanjing Peace Forum'. Through online and offline exchanges with representatives of international organisations, experts from various fields, and outstanding young representatives, we discussed peace concepts; explored trauma healing, ecological well-being, and other positive peace-building issues; and sent China's voice of peace to the world. The China-Japan Peace Dialogue mechanism was established in 2015 and is held every two years. This was agreed upon during my visit to Tokyo with the head of the Peace Studies Association of Japan, with the aim of promoting the creation of 'shared memory' through people-to-people dialogue and contributing to peace in East Asia and the world.

The primary duty of a university professor is to educate and nurture students. I teach nine courses annually, including five for undergraduates, two for master's students, and two for doctoral students, with a total teaching load of over 200 hours. In my classes, I integrate peace studies with world history, not only teaching the basic theories of peace studies but also incorporating historical examples to stimulate reflection on current issues. Many students have fundamentally altered their previous concepts of peace and violence, recognising the possibility of resolving conflicts at all levels of human society through non-violent methods.

University education should consciously help students break down professional barriers rather than confine them to their own fields. An excellent university must be open, so be an excellent classroom. I often invite people from different fields to interact with my students, using the classroom as a window of knowledge to guide students in interdisciplinary thinking and learning, helping them find more possibilities for learning, discover their potential, and cultivate it. This is the teaching philosophy I have always adhered to. I have also visited nearly 30 countries and regions, including the United Kingdom, Germany, the United States, Japan, South Korea, and Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan in China, to engage in academic exchanges and cooperation activities, shaping and expanding myself.

I have supervised over 50 postgraduate students, including more than 30 master's students and 20 doctoral students. Among them, some have become professors or associate professors, and one has even been appointed as the 'Chief Expert' of a major grant funded by the National Social Science Fund. The most recent doctoral graduate had joined the World History team at Nanjing University, having studied British history with me for 11 years. In addition to regular research and academic work, I encourage them to participate in peace-related practices to develop their social work skills. As Gandhi said, 'Small is beautiful.' I believe that individual power can also change the world. Each peace studies course is like sowing seeds of peace. When students become 'peace volunteers' (A Piece of Peace), step out of the classroom, and go across the country and around the world, peace will bloom and bear fruit everywhere. Peace education has also changed the preconceived notions of foreign students. After a peace summer programme, a Japanese student from the University of Tokyo told me that people in Nanjing are not as the Japanese imagined, and she planned to encourage her Japanese classmates to visit Nanjing upon her return. A German student studying in Australia contacted me, choosing Chinese peace studies as the topic for master's thesis, and later returned to Germany to pursue a PhD in peace studies.

Peace studies has professional academic journals, an active community of scholars, mature course content, immersive learning methods, and a complete teaching and research system that includes internships and international exchanges. In August 2014, Nanjing University and the Northeast Asia Peace Education Institute (NARPI) jointly organised a summer training programme, which was the first time we had collaborated with an international non-governmental organisation to hold a summer programme in China. Participants included over 60 university faculty

members, students, and NGO representatives from China, the United States, Canada, Japan, South Korea, Mongolia, the Philippines, and other countries and regions. The successful organisation of this programme overcame numerous unforeseen challenges and provided valuable experience for future international peace summer programmes. Since then, we have collaborated annually with various peace studies institutions or universities, such as the Netherlands Institute for War, Holocaust, and Genocide Studies (NIOD) and the Centre for Trust, Peace, and Social Relations at Coventry University in the United Kingdom, to offer peace studies summer training camps for students from around the world and China's C9 universities.

Some people both nationally and internationally regarded me as the 'First Person of Peace Studies in China' or the 'Father of Peace Studies in China'. I believe these titles are unimportant. What matters is that in a country that loves peace like China, there must be persons who advocate and practise peace studies. The work of 'bottom-up' efforts is always arduous and challenging, but by persisting, it can eventually transition to 'top-down' initiatives, driving fundamental social progress. I often tell my students to persist in doing what they believe is right, to adhere to principles without yielding to pressure, to control their work rather than letting work control them, and to act without seeking fame or gain, as results should come naturally.

I have worked at Nanjing University for 23 years, and all four of my contract evaluations have been rated 'Excellent'. By 2025, I have published 11 monographs, translated 6 works, edited 35 books, contributed to 6 books, published over 100 papers, and led 4 National Social Science Fund grants, 2 Ministry of Education Social Science Fund grants, and over 10 other projects. My research achievements have been awarded the Third Prize, Second Prize, and First Prize of the Ministry of Education's Humanities and Social Sciences Awards. In addition to my previous police work, I have dedicated 36 years to serving the public in Nanjing, advancing British history studies in China, and promoting global peace. In summary, I have focused on three key areas: being a good police officer for the people, being a diligent student of Professor Qian, and advocating for the development of peace studies in China. I have made every effort to fulfil these responsibilities to the best of my ability.

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# Growing Up Gandhi in South Africa: From My Grandfather's Teachings to the Struggle Against Apartheid to Building Lasting Peace Today

*Ela Gandhi*

## Introduction

At the very outset, let me admit that I am a peace practitioner or an activist, I do education when invited but not as a practice and I am not a qualified educator. I am a qualified social worker and work with communities where we impart personal skills and knowledge on how to deal with situations.

Furthermore, to understand what has brought me to become an activist, one needs to know a little about South Africa, the country I live in and the issues that confronted us and are confronting our people at present, and a little about the influential persons in my life.

South Africa has many problems that have not been addressed even after over 30 years since liberation. Our work is different now from the

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work we did as political activists in the 1970s and 1980s. While people do face very big challenges, and the present government is not always responsive, it is nevertheless a democratically elected government. We have a Bill of Rights entrenched in our constitution, and we have many instruments to challenge the government if our rights are infringed.

The apartheid government which governed this country was oppressive. It subjugated and exploited the majority of the people of our country. It suppressed all opposition to the regime with a brutality that was uncontrolled and savage.

The prejudiced, social, political and economic discrimination leading to extreme disparities among the different race groups with no visible end to the vicious system needed a very well-thought-out process towards change. We had to carefully strategise and work towards firstly trying to bring some relief to the serious problems faced by the people on the ground through empowerment and creating access to some basic needs. Secondly, we tried to impart as much education on the causes of the plight of the people and point out the defects in the system. Thirdly, we pointed out how communities themselves could organise to overcome some of the problems one by one ultimately to unite with others suffering similar problems in order to confront the system as a whole. We pointed out the consequences of such action and therefore the need to strategise, work together and not act rashly.

But at the same time we needed two important support systems. One was a responsive, supportive *media* to help expose some of the atrocities committed by the apartheid government; and two, a strong *anti-apartheid lobby* that could apply economic and social pressure on apartheid government to encourage it to come to the table and seek a negotiated settlement to the issues in our country.

Today we have our own government and there is no fear of repression. But the challenge that we face is that within government there is an opposition that does not want the government to succeed and opportunists within the ruling party who want to enrich themselves. Between these two streams the poor are crushed and so we have major problems of access to basic needs due to moneys syphoned off by corrupt practices while poverty, inequality and unemployment continue to plague a large section of our community. These are some of the circumstances which drove me to become a community activist.

## Gandhiji's Influence on My Life and Thinking

From my early childhood I was taught about the ideas of my grandfather, Mahatma Gandhi, and throughout my life I have been reading about his life and works. As my study of his ideas grew, I realised the importance of these ideas in our contemporary times. It was after the Train Incidence in Pietermaritzburg in 1893 that Gandhiji began to grapple about what he should do and the three options that were available to him: (a) to immediately abandon the case he had come to assist with and return to India where he would not have to suffer such humiliation as he did when being thrown off the train because a white person objected to sharing a compartment with a non-white person. But he thought that running away from a problem is a coward's way out of a situation; (b) to stay in South Africa and accept that this was a regular thing in the country and one had to accept it. But he thought that to accept was to condone it; and (c) to stay in South Africa and protest against the system. He thought that this was the right thing to do. He picked up the most challenging option and stayed in South Africa for almost 21 years—from 1893 to 1914—with a few trips back to India. During this time, he changed his life style, developed a new philosophy of life and began to use *Satyagraha* against the unjust system.

This story was etched into my mind. It provided tremendous motivation for my political nonviolent activism because it instilled in my mind that to accept an injustice without doing anything about it is to condone it.

However, an awareness grew in me with the passage of time that Gandhiji's idea of *Satyagraha* or nonviolent resistance is widely discussed, but somewhat less discussed is the fact that he had spent many years of his life on a constructive programme trying to empower the community to govern itself and in this way to overthrow the economic oppression perpetrated by the colonisers. He started the movement to manufacture and use home products, e.g. growing, cotton, processing, spinning, weaving and sewing garments, instead of buying imported garments. Similarly, he encouraged growing of food gardens. He also protested against the Tax on Salt and the prohibition on manufacture of salt by the Indians. This massive Salt demonstration was actually the turning point in British colonial rule over India and paved the way to India's liberation from colonialism.

Gandhiji started his constructive programme in a small way at the Phoenix Settlement in 1904 and at the Tolstoy Farm in 1910. Here he encouraged the development of food gardens, taking care of natural

resources such as the earth, sources of water, recycling of waste, sewing of their own garments, making shoes, and leading a life of simplicity with no wastage and with greater self-sufficiency. These lessons are so important today when the world is experiencing the adverse effects of our over consumption, poor waste management, pollution, inequality and diminishing resources such as water and food and their effects on the environment, leading to climate change and the disasters we have been experiencing in the recent times.

Take, for instance, Gandhi's emphasis on cleanliness of the surrounding where one lives. What is more important is the fact that he not only talked about cleanliness but also showed how cleanliness at homes and in the surrounding can be achieved. He involved the communities in achieving this. Small wonder therefore that in spite of the large number of settlers, one could not find refuse or dirt anywhere on the Farm. All rubbish was buried in trenches sunk for the purpose (waste management). No water was permitted to be thrown on the roads. All waste water was collected in buckets and used to water the trees (*conservation of water*). Leavings of food and vegetable refuse were utilised as manure (*making of compost*). A square pit—one foot and a half deep—was sunk near the house to receive the night soil, which was fully covered with the excavated earth and which therefore did not give out any smell (*eco-friendly hygienic sanitation*). There were no flies, and no one would imagine that night soil was buried there (Gandhi, 1968).

All these important lessons were propagated in all his ashrams starting from 1904. They signify not only a life style that can transform our very existence but also a life style that can bring meaning to our liberation from oppression.

## My Understanding of Peace

As such, for me peace is not just about absence of war but of creating conditions of peace. This means access to basic necessities of life and sustainable livelihoods for all. This I believe can only be achieved if we all become more conscious of what is expected from each one of us and how we can contribute towards a sustainable universe. This is similar to the idea of economy of solidarity preached by Pope Francis. In this process nonviolence is a central theme. Again, nonviolence, according to Gandhiji, is not coercion but conversion. He always worked through persuasion. But can nonviolence persuade the oppressor to give up the oppressive practices

which apparently seem to protect and further strengthen his control on the oppressed.

Here let me refer to a question people have often asked me. The question is this: how do we convince the people—who exploit and oppress us—to stop the exploitation and oppression? The great Mahatma was very clear about it. He often told his disciples and followers that there was no escape from the impending doom save through a bold and unconditional acceptance of the nonviolent method with all its glorious implications. The roadmap drawn by him was fearlessly followed by the Indian people, and India's freedom was achieved through a historic nonviolent struggle. For me the truth of this statement is affirmed every day.

Today, nearing 156 years since the birth of Gandhiji, we see so many countries possessing deadly weapons such as nuclear and chemical weapons. Production and use of these weapons and other more sophisticated weapons of war cause so much damage to our environment and have the potential of destroying the world. We are being warned all the time that if we do not change our ways and do not care for the atmosphere, a disaster will be knocking at our doors. How true this statement is can be seen in the arriving climate change and natural disasters that have affected millions of people around the world in the past few years. Yet we hesitate to make changes. Likewise, we know that thousands of people around the world are being killed daily in different forms of warfare and violence, and our weapons and our methods of war have become more sophisticated and deadly. We notice the evidence of this especially in the areas experiencing instability, crime and war, and witness with anguish that this has become a daily reality in many regions. What can be done then?

In these circumstances I see peace education as key to bring about change. Peace education needs to be geared towards prevention of conflict, and it needs to be geared towards bringing about a peaceful resolution of conflict situations. We need to develop a more compassionate society. Peace education teaches love for it is within a loving environment that we can bring about changes and not in a hateful, vindictive environment.

Indeed, the time has come for us to realise that change can never occur through violence as violence only increases hatred and anger. This results in us having to continue to live in fear of war and violence. A war economy, stockpiling of weapons, recruiting of large armies, training people to kill and living with the spectre of war at our doorsteps are a reality all over

the world. To alter this reality we need to preach nonviolence in unity and in unison. Therefore, peace activism and peace education is so important

## My Life and Struggle as an Activist

The South African society is a society where there were so many structural injustices based on racial prejudice; so much of human rights abuses against black people with unequal wages, unequal allocation of resources and violation of people's right to freedom of movement, freedom of expression, and suppression of protest action and untold violence against detractors from this system. All this influenced my thinking against this system. These violent clamping down on people's basic rights was unbearable and something had to be done.

Within these discriminatory practices was the oppression of women. Women faced untold hardships and continue to face hardships despite the many laws in our country that help to protect women's rights. It is clear that laws alone cannot change the situation. Society needs to change. Women and men need to be empowered to effectively bring about a situation where women are safe from male brute force and domination and where men and women can live together as equals, cherish each other and care for each other.

Women in the past—living mainly in rural areas and in most instances as single parents—had to travel long distances, often forced to walk long distances before they could get to a properly constructed road and public transport in order to travel to work, to obtain medical care, to obtain any other essential services. Women had to suffer deprivations such as lack of access to child and maternal health care, water supply and energy. Women thus remained in the traditional roles of care givers and home makers, with no regard for their personal needs.

In addition, women suffered patriarchal oppression. They largely remained in rural areas trying to bring up their children on meagre incomes while the men went to the cities to seek employment. Often the men would suffer from the discriminatory and brutal practices of the apartheid system, and their meagre incomes were largely expended in the city. They were therefore not reliable bread winners for the women and children they had left behind.

Worse still, women had to rely on the soil and grow their food gardens in the most difficult conditions with no water, poor soil conditions, no access to sophisticated equipment and no men to help them. This made

gardening a nightmare for women. Raising children, growing food, keeping animals and maintaining a home became a daunting task. Children had no access to proper schools and whatever education could be imparted was of poor quality.

Under the apartheid rule, the condition of the prisoners was worse. They were often sent to farms to work for the white farmers and in some cases in the homes of the prison authorities. This was sheer exploitation of labour. It was, in fact, another form of slavery. People were harassed and arrested for not having their passes (like a birth certificate but in which the employer of the person had to sign on weekly and sometimes monthly basis to show that the individual was employed and so had a right to be in an urban area). If there is no signature or if a black individual forgets to carry the pass, they could be subjected to immediate arrest and then be sent off to farms, etc., to work for the white employers. On the farms they suffered major indignities and were forced to live in terrible conditions and packed in large rooms and locked up. Some were subjected to severe beatings even for some minor offences.

In protest these farm atrocities were widely publicised by activist journalists in our own newspapers. We informed and mobilised the community against these practices. Individual stories of suffering were written after extensive research, and these convinced the people and prompted them to do something. Raising of awareness led to a widespread boycott of potatoes which the implicated farmers grew, and this economic pressure helped to change the situation a little. But the problems of passes and forced prison labour continued for many years. Some of the key elements in this protest were the conscientisation of the community as preached by Paulo Freire. Communities then decided to embark on actions such as getting signatures on petitions, boycotts, marches, placard demonstrations and protest meetings.

Opposing these injustices actively was the driving force behind my activism both at social work level in our community and at political level through the political organisations which I had joined. As I was schooled to regard nonviolence as the key to any action, the organisations I joined were promoting a nonviolent struggle. It is however important to qualify this as there were people among us who did engage in other forms of protest through sabotage and through joining the liberation army. We had no hostilities against those who pursued other means of struggle. In fact, where necessary we offered shelter and other forms of nonviolent help to them.

Our Freedom Charter, which was drawn up in 1955, had drawn the roadmap for the future. It clearly stated some of the basic needs of the people which were to be met by a new democratic government. There were ten points in the Charter which offered promises to ensure access to housing, work, health care, education, nonracialism and participatory democracy. It further promised that land and wealth from the land would be shared, all would be equal before law and everyone's human rights would be protected. But even 30 years after the end of apartheid in South Africa and emergence of the democratic state, we see that many of these promises of the Freedom Charter still remain unmet.

Looking at the present situation, one realises the importance of Gandhian teaching that freedom is not just the absence of oppression. One has to continually work to attain and retain freedom. The community has to strengthen itself to ensure that those they place in powerful positions carry out their mandate. There is also much that the communities need to be able to do themselves.

Moreover, to experience real freedom, people need to have skills and empowerment to be able to build and maintain sustainable infrastructure. Both peace and liberation are compromised when people's basic needs are not met. Gandhiji had rightly said that one cannot talk of peace to a person who is starving and transfer of power does not necessarily mean a little change in the economic and social living of the masses. One has to empower people so that they themselves can change their own conditions by decreasing dependency and at the same time committing to work for social, economic and political change so that the people's rights are ensured. Such teaching had profoundly influenced my political and social thinking and gave a meaning, depth and direction to my struggle for the freedom and rights of the common people during the apartheid period and especially since the emergence of a democratic South African state.

## Change Through Constructive Programmes

I was always impressed by Gandhiji's assertion that a constructive programme, while engaging in the freedom struggle, was key to real freedom, and I remembered his bold assertion: 'My plan to impart primary education through the medium of village industry is to spearhead a silent social revolution fraught with the most far reaching consequences' (Gandhi, 1937, 1947).

As I was growing up with Gandhiji's teaching, I naturally tried to look at this kind of a constructive programme through my social work in the community, trying to conscientise the community, enable them to mobilise themselves and take action both to improve their conditions by ensuring food sufficiency and working towards change through political action.

Peaceful action was the key. As such, before embarking on any campaign we would train our marshals to ensure that peace is maintained while we demonstrate through placard demonstrations, marches or defiance of unjust laws. Trained marshals are very important as we found that often there were attempts to instigate violence by the authorities who would infiltrate our movement. A trained marshal can quickly intervene and quell the situation before it attracts attention from the authorities. Both Martin Luther King Jr. and Gandhiji emphasised the need for the training of the activists. In short, Gandhiji's teachings and our social, economic and political conditions were basic factors that influenced my life and calling as a peace activist.

## Peace and Justice Movements of Twenty-First Century

Here let me add that I am often asked in the conferences, seminars, lectures and in community circles and by the social and political activists in South Africa and abroad as to what are my thoughts and visions of what is needed for the peace and justice movements of the twenty-first century and what possibly would be my concrete recommendations for peacebuilding in the coming years, decades and centuries. This is an important question. I keep on thinking about it and keep on searching for an answer which may convince me and convince others. It is as if it were chasing me and my thoughts all the time. However, it is possible to assemble the wandering thoughts and develop a futuristic perspective. A contextualised version is as under.

To begin with, I see that there are many problems of the twenty-first century, which call for serious, concerted and sustained efforts at all levels to deal with them. The problems include increase in violence, growing inequality, wanton materialism and individualism around the world and the devastating effects of environmental degradation leading to climate change and natural disasters. In my view, there are two key areas we need to focus on. The first I would suggest is attitudinal changes from

individualistic materialism to a communal compassionate attitude; and the second relates to how can peace movements intervene in conflict situations nonviolently and bring about peace.

Looking at the first aspect of attitudinal change, Gandhiji's words echo in my mind as I try to reflect on this issue. He said that 'the golden rule … is resolutely to refuse to have what millions cannot. This ability to refuse will not descend upon us all of a sudden. The first thing is to cultivate the mental attitude that will not have possession or facilities denied to millions, and the next immediate thing is to rearrange our lives as fast as possible in accordance with that mentality' (Gandhi, Young India, 1926). It was this thinking that induced Gandhiji to leave his home in the centre of the city with all amenities and to live in *Inanda* where Phoenix Settlement is situated among the poorest of the poor, viz. the Shembe Settlement, the Dube Settlement and the indentured workers as his immediate neighbours. All his settlements thereafter were thus situated in the midst of poor communities and away from affluent areas.

We need to build that commitment within our consciousness and we shouldn't be obsessed with self-aggrandisement. Instead, we should channel our energies to the betterment of community. This means that we give up some of the luxurious comforts that wealth brings, that we school ourselves to live a simple life and that we devote our energies to the greater good. This is far from an ascetic life style. As a matter of fact, Gandhiji enjoyed life and encouraged others to enjoy life, but enjoyment does not have to require money. There are many activities that one can engage in without having to spend a lot of money, e.g. a picnic where we cook our own meals, walking, playing games and so on. His contention, however, was that we should not get obsessed with social and other activities and engage in recreation and neglect essential tasks.

Our work must be towards building strong cohesive communities which can stand up for themselves, articulate their own needs and have the necessary skills to meet the needs. We need to tackle structural issues as well as societal issues to ensure that our community makes the shift towards greater equity. This can only happen through education and training geared towards transformation of self and community.

## Education and Peacebuilding

In 1971, the Austrian philosopher and priest Ivan Illich (1926–2002) published his best-known and most influential book. It was titled *De-schooling Society*. In this study, he articulates his highly radical ideas about schooling and education. In the very first paragraph of the first chapter of his book, Illich offers a very powerful assessment of schooling and education. He says:

> Many students, especially those who are poor, intuitively know what the schools do for them. They school them to confuse process and substance. Once these become blurred, a new logic is assumed: the more treatment there is, the better are the results; or, escalation leads to success. The pupil is thereby "schooled" to confuse teaching with learning, grade advancement with education, a diploma with competence, and fluency with the ability to say something new. His imagination is "schooled" to accept service in place of value. Medical treatment is mistaken for healthcare … police protection for safety…the rat race for productive work.

He adds elsewhere in his study: 'Equal educational opportunity is, indeed, both a desirable and a feasible goal, but to equate this with schooling is to confuse salvation with the Church' (Illich, 1971).

Education is doubtless important, but it is even more important to be aware of the type of education we impart and what its effect can be on the learners. The present system is geared towards maintaining the status quo—survival of the fittest and self-centred development. We need to consciously move away from this system to a system where community excellence in service delivery, creating condition of good health and prevention of conflict become key features of our personal development. It is in this context that peace and nonviolence education becomes very important, because it may enhance the understanding of the learners about war, conflict, oppression and exploitation. It is, moreover, in this context that numerous quotes of Gandhiji have made me aware of looking at the challenges of our times in new light and directed my peace journey towards peace goals and inspired me to plunge into peace action with courage and confidence. Gandhiji, for instance, said: 'Shall we have not the vision to see that in suppressing a sixth (or whatever the number) of ourselves, we have depressed ourselves? No man takes another down a pit without descending into it himself and sinning in the bargain. It is not the suppressed that sin. It is the suppressor who has to answer for his crime against

those whom he suppresses' (https://www.mkgandhi.org/mohanmala/apr.php).

This was the understanding that made Gandhiji stay on in South Africa and do something about the oppression he experienced in the country. He did not impose his leadership on any other groups without being invited to do so; as a result, he assisted both the Indians and Chinese who sought his help to lead them and guide them in nonviolently resisting the many injustices they were experiencing. Again, he was never shy of sharing his ideas with others and learning from others. He was, for instance, fond of sharing his ideas with John Langalibalele Dube (a South African essayist, philosopher, educator, politician, editor and publisher) and Isaiah Shembe (founder of the IBandla lamaNazaretha, the largest African-initiated church in Africa during his life time) and enabling them to benefit from his ideas. In the same way, he also learnt from the ideas of these friends in particular.

These three visionaries—Gandhiji, Dube and Shembe—were icons of South Africa. They shared a common belief that all religions were paths to the same end and that spiritual sharing was important for personal development. They also shared the belief that self-sufficiency was the path to true liberation. Their ideas on education were also similar, and they recommended early learning of essential skills in order to empower children as they grow and begin to attend to their own essential needs. Booker T. Washington's and Dube's ideas of the importance of training in manual skills were taken further and refined by Gandhiji in his system of *Nai Talim - New Curriculum*. All of them believed in finding peaceful solutions and emphasised the need for the restoration of human rights and social justice.

Gandhiji also believed that no culture can live if it attempts to be exclusive. At Phoenix, everyone did everything together, there was no hierarchy of jobs. This was an important principle at the Phoenix Settlement and residents had to live by those rules and ideas. Learning this way of life helps to eliminate some of the root causes of conflict. It eliminates caste, class, gender and other barriers and establishes a system whereby an egalitarian, respectful society develops and causes of conflicts are thus minimised. I feel myself very lucky to be brought up in a liberal environment and immensely benefitted from the liberating ideas of Gandhiji and some of his close contemporaries on religion and developing human relations irrespective of persons belonging to different religions and cultures.

So I believe that if we are to look at the future, we need to focus on ways and means for environmental protection and dedicate our energies to bring to an end the exploitation of person by person and shameless pillage of the resources of the earth. Moreover, we need to move away from wanton materialism and grow like a compassionate people who respect all. We should break down barriers of caste, class, gender, race, religion, ethnicity, language, etc., which divide us. We must cultivate these values in all individuals in order to build a nonviolent society at peace with itself.

While preparing this chapter for the book being prepared and edited by Mehdi and Meyer, I happened to participate in a webinar where they spoke about economic peace and how it can be possible to change the attitudes of corporates and encourage them to take up a more humane approach instead of the materialistic approach. It is, indeed, a noble goal, and theorising in this regard can be appreciated. However, it also reminded me of what Gandhiji had said about nonviolent action. According to him, nonviolence is not about conquering nor about the victor and the vanquished. It is all about transforming people and systems to work for the greater interest of the community as a whole—both at local and international levels. So nonviolence is about creating a new world order based on principles of equity, respect, compassion, a humane attitude and justice. For this to be successful, it is important to also work on changing the attitudes of the corporates.

It is equally important to emphasise here that we in the peace movement cannot overlook the devastating effects of climate change and natural disasters on the people through our neglect of the environment. There must be discussion on how each one of us can address the issue of environmental degradation and how we can make industries become more responsible in this respect. We need to understand and effect the changes needed in order to better utilise the natural resources of the earth such as water, energy, land and vegetation and forests.

Another key factor to keep in focus is restorative justice. Through this process, people can take their rightful place in society, lead a dignified life and be treated with respect, and those who have strayed can be brought back. The present system of punishment helps offenders to grow into hardened offenders and not reformed citizens.

Finally, the focus of peace education must ultimately be to transform society into a society that will be built on humane principles, where every individual is treated with dignity and care, and where we place environmental issues above profit-making and technological advancement. I

believe that these elements are needed for the peace and justice movements of the twenty-first century, and these can do wonders when woven together with collective resolve.

## Nonviolent Intervention and Peacebuilding

There are many ways in which nonviolent action can be used. Depending on the circumstances people have used peaceful placard demonstrations, peaceful marches, sit-ins, defiance of unjust laws and courting imprisonment, and many other innovative ideas have been used by various movements over the years. An important aspect of these movements is to be focused on one issue at a time and to mobilise widely and train people. A group of trained marshals at hand to quell any possible instigation of violence is also a necessary precaution. Support structures are also an essential feature. For instance, we had 'Detainees Support Committees' that helped families of detainees, kept a vigilant eye on those in detention and tried to gain access to them by taking food and clothing for them and arranging legal and medical assistance for them where necessary.

A number of studies on nonviolence cover numerous nonviolent actions and strategies adopted. These include David Cortright's book on the relevance of Gandhian nonviolence for the post-colonial age (Cortright, 2009), Gene Sharp's study of Gandhi as a political strategist (Sharp, 1979) and Richard B. Gregg's on *The Power of Nonviolence* (Gregg, 1934), and several other books discussing numerous nonviolent actions and strategies. In his book Gregg points out how success has been achieved in several regions through nonviolent action, illustrating the power of nonviolent resistance. He also highlights the importance of modern psychology in enabling us to understand the emotional, mental and moral mechanisms involved. This can help us understand and decide on the most appropriate method that can assist us in attaining our goal through nonviolent means.

These are important factors which need to be kept in mind to understand what kind of training peace makers need to have in order to be able to deal with their fear and anger and abuse that could be hurled at them while in the field. In today's world, we see that at the slightest provocation people get angry and anger leads to violence. Suitable mediation strategies therefore have to be applied in such circumstances.

## Major Challenges I Faced as a Peace Activist

Belonging to Gandhi family, continuously learning from his nonviolent actions and teachings, and growing up in the midst of his admirers and followers are, indeed, a highly privileged status I have been blessed with, but all this also puts huge responsibility on my shoulders. That's why I usually avoid talking about myself and my struggle for peace. However, I am invariably asked to talk about the major challenges I faced in my life and career because of my peace teaching, research, action and passion. Clearly, my struggle and my sufferings and sacrifices are nothing when compared to the sufferings, sacrifices and struggles of the Mahatma. However, I do realise now that it is important that the peace educators and peace activists do talk about their sufferings, sacrifices and struggles for peace so that tomorrow's peace people draw lessons from the past, get inspiration from their senior peace builders and be more well-prepared to face the challenges in the future.

Let me therefore admit that I faced many challenges while growing up in South Africa, when the might of the apartheid regime never failed to strike during our protest actions, when we were treated roughly and imprisoned and when our children were also similarly maltreated. I was banned and house arrested, which was painful because it did not only affect me but had a direct effect on my children and my family life. Often the effect of these incarcerations and various measures taken by the governments against protesters affected their families and particularly growing children. Society does not pay sufficient attention to these factors, but they do affect part of the personal lives of activists. Nevertheless, we suffer them in silence because we remain committed to the cause.

Another challenge was the dilemma one faces between peaceful protests against aggressive and ruthless government and when a question begins looming larger: should or shouldn't one tip the scale and opt for some non-peaceful means to make the necessary impact or even to defend peaceful protesters? For instance, we had a major education crisis in our country in the 1980s when education crises committees were formed all over the country to deal with the problem of the system of education imposed on our children. A national meeting of the committees was called up, but there were those opposed to this move, and they tried to disrupt our meetings by staging violent attacks on our vehicles and were threatening attacks on our delegates. They had to be stopped and could only be stopped by the use of violent methods but causing least casualties.

Such dilemmas are constantly faced by protesters, especially when they have instigated groups within the community who disrupt and cause major violent confrontations. We faced these in South Africa. Even Gandhiji was faced with a similar dilemma, although he stuck rigidly to nonviolent action. But there were others who engaged in some form of violence, such as sabotage, joining a liberation army and engaging in looting, burning and destroying both public and private properties. Once Gandhiji was asked by a reader of his newspaper if violence can be permissible sometimes, he had said: 'In life it is impossible to eschew violence completely. The question arises where is one to draw the line? … To allow crops to be eaten up by animals in the name of ahimsa while there is famine in the land is certainly a sin. Evil and good are relative terms. What is good under certain conditions can become vile or a sin under a different set of conditions' (Gandhi, 2021).

## Conclusion

We in South Africa were supported by the anti-apartheid movements all over the world. Their support and encouragement helped us continue with our work. The power of harnessing media attention and international support together with nonviolent action is of paramount importance. Again, we were aware of the people involved in other forms of struggle, but we did not shun such people. As a matter of fact, they had our tacit support.

Finally, I believe that when the governments or militaries or private entities try to enforce peace at all costs, without addressing the issue of justice and without seeking a possible mutually agreed settlement, such initiatives usually end up as failed attempts and no lasting peace is established. For any agreement to be a lasting, agreement has to address the injustices suffered by the oppressed party. So I cannot sufficiently emphasise the need for just and fair settlements. These settlements should include instruments such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

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# Building Peace Day by Day

*Marité Muñoz*

## Introduction

The life and growth of a peace activist and advocate from Argentina over the past half-century is understandably marked with conflicting memories—as memory itself has been a point of contention in the context of dictatorship, return to civilian rule, impunity, and the complications of building new societies. Submerging myself in this history and my own story has given me a chance to review these situations lived, some intensely—where pain, sadness, and heartbreak as well as joy, moments of happiness, and merriment coexisted within the living spaces surrounding my work for peace.

Migration from Formosa (in the far north of Argentina) to the capital of Buenos Aires was the beginning of a long journey of negotiation with myself and with life. The idea of "building positive peace" (Horowitz, 2015) didn't always come easily. After many years, as part of an experienced adulthood, I was led to work for Culture of Peace, living and researching in a country with more than 30 years of de facto (weak) governments, disappearances, and right-wing military regimes. These

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perspectives led to an understanding that peace is not only the absence of war and that violence is not limited to direct violence. Structural and cultural violence is much more harmful. They justify such direct violence (Galtung, 1969), which countries like Argentina and many other throughout Latin America provide ample evidence for.

Based on these concepts, ideas, and questions, I came across *La Paz Transformadora* (Ramos Muslera, 2015), a theory and practice that I develop in my daily work and in conversations and interactions with those in the Latin American Peace Research Council (CLAIP), which I led for many years. Simply put, *La Paz Transformadora* is an analysis and practice developed by my Argentine colleague Esteban Ramos Muslera which theorized "transformative and participatory peace." Beyond theoretical notions, Ramos Muslera laid out a "socio-practical" methodology for treating conflict and resolution as active and interconnected processes. These processes which are inevitable to the human species who produce them can be transformed from current "violent coexistence" models to "synergistic" ones, replacing the paradigms of violence with system that meet human needs.

Muslera and I served as co-General Secretaries of the Latin American Council for Peace Research and as new generations of CLAIP leaders build for a "new normalcy" in a post-COVID world, we hold on to the ideas that Muslera put forth: we build peace between everyone.

I still remember with great pride an afternoon in mid-2020 when Esteban called me and told me what he had been talking about online with his students at the Autonomous University of Honduras. During the scary beginning of the COVID pandemic, as all contacts seemed to be happening virtually, he pushed for conversations that would extend to other young people from other Latin American countries and to other members of CLAIP. Together, we began to wonder about a phrase that people in general around the world were repeating, with some sadness and fear. "When," they asked, "will we return to a life more normal?"

Within CLAIP, the question that my dear young thinkers, colleagues, and friends were asking was a different one. From various parts of Honduras, Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, Argentine, Chile, and beyond, we were instead asking: "What normality do we really want to return to!?!" Esteban Ramos Muslera began to reflect and articulate what became much of our perspective and work since that time: returning to the old normality we had become used to might in fact be more dangerous than the virus itself! However, in order to have an idea of my role in peace promotion

and peacebuilding in the recent years, especially during the pandemic years and after, it is important to go further into my past when my romance with peace and peacebuilding began and blossomed.

## When Journey to Peace Began

Thinking back about when my work, research, and actions for peace began, I find it difficult to find that memory when I started living for peace. When I was asked to write this chapter for this book, I felt honored, considering the human greatness of the collected work of the authors. Thinking about my life and my decisions immersed me in my story, gave me a look back at situations lived and elapsed. At a very young age, my family and I moved from Clorinda in the province of Formosa to the capitol city, Buenos Aires. Growing up in a city like Buenos Aires, in a family with a small-town mentality, created a permanent negotiation between myself and the society that surrounded me.

From my very first memories and all through my life, my country has gone from one coup d'etat to another, with de facto governments, military rule, and an incipient guerrilla movement that grew in the 1970s as the military governments began to "disappear" people. It didn't matter if people were actual guerrilla fighters, supporters of the guerilla movement, or simply thought differently than the government thought they should. People were "disappeared" in all cases. It didn't matter who you worked for or what your work was, what you studied, or whether you were an academic, a researcher, an industrial worker, or someone working as an officer in a government or private organization. Expressing ones ideas and opinions was living at risk.

To survive, conversations had to be superfluous, trivial. Until I was 12 years old, I was convinced that to be President in my country you had to be in the military. This denotes the education that we received, all centered on a militaristic mentality. This is how my adolescence passed. And when I say "it passed," it indicates how life passed in a country whose social life moved in the midst of deep, direct, structural and cultural violence. I grew up and became an adult without realizing that the violence that surrounded me was not a "normal" thing. Normalizing it was part of my everyday experience until some friends began to disappear.

And so, I began to open my eyes, my mind, and my heart. Sadness, despair, and fear were the new feelings and emotions that filled my young adult life and began to paint the images of new pasts and futures. Shortly

after finishing high school, I decided to study law, with the romantic idea of changing the world or at least the society in which I lived. While I was studying, I met the man who would become my first husband—Mario. With him, I shared my desire to change the world that was so filled with violence. Together, we began to visualize, study, and develop our own idea of peace and how could we contribute to peacebuilding in our own country as well as elsewhere.

## Eastern-Influenced Lifestyles and "Oriental" Philosophies

Living and learning from Mario was very enriching for my development, not only as a human being but as a woman. As he became interested in eastern cultures, particularly the Indian and Nepalese cultures, his passion for mountaineering that he had practiced from a very young age noticeably deepened. He climbed from Aconcagua (in the province of Mendoza, Argentina) to almost all the highest peaks in South America. At the age of 23, he participated in a joyful expedition with a group of Argentines, looking to reach the highest summits in the world. His greatest satisfaction on that trip was getting to know the twin cultures of India and Nepal, which moved him to the depths of his soul. Years later and once married with me, he prepared a new expedition to the Himalayas, this time to Mount Dhaulagiri. On this trip, however, he failed to reach the summit. The expedition ended with his death.

Only five years after we were married, Mario died in that mountain accident in the Himalayas. I was left alone, accompanied by our little son Facundo. Widowed with a six-month-old baby, I began a process of resilience, facing and coping with life in a still-violent society, with the disappearances of friends, with the Falklands war against England to recover the Malvinas Islands, and alone with many thoughts and too much work.

When they asked me if I wanted to organize a rescue of the body and bring it back to Argentina, my answer was quick and spontaneous: "Mario would have wanted to be locked up at the foot of one of the mountains that he had already climbed." What better tomb and monument then to let him rest in peace on that mountain in the Himalayas, the last one he climbed? There is absolutely no exaggeration in putting forward such a suggestion. He was, after all, so much fascinated by India and Nepal that many of our conversations revolved around going to live in India and in

Nepal. Meanwhile, living together in Argentine, we were often saddened and in pain to see what was happening in our country. It was then that he taught me the practice of yoga, meditation, and judo.

Remembering all this in the middle of my work for peace fills me with nostalgia even today. Even after so many decades, I remember and also miss our long conversations about life, culture, spirit, and peace. I don't know if all my memories of Mario satisfy me or not, but I do know that recently, at 66 years of age and now serving as Secretary General of IPRA, I felt something special when I travelled to India and later to Sri Lanka in 2024, where I attended the international conference of one of IPRA's regional affiliates—Asia Pacific Peace Research Association (APPRA). Being there with my Co-Secretary General and friend Matt Meyer gave me the opportunity for an audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Traveling to the Himalayas, in Dharamsala where the Tibetan government and movement live in exile from across their land now occupied by China, I was filled with many emotions bridging the past, present, and future. The plane had barely landed at the Dharamsala airport when I started to walk toward the door of the plane and looked through the nearby window glass. Without expecting it or realizing it, I found myself facing the snow-capped mountains I had only heard and dreamed of. At the foot of one of them was the man of my life. I felt as if these mountains were joyful and whispering: "finally you came here, and Mario is here too."

This was the man who taught me and trained me to do what is now my passion and where I am anchored today: a student and worker and an advocate and mediator for peace. My story as a peace educator took a mountain-size climb!

While I still cannot describe all the emotions that overwhelmed me at that moment in 2024, it surely pushed me to prepare another trip that I wish to make with my son Facundo, with the son of Mario. By paying homage to our dear Mario, we will also see how Facundo finds his own story, with his father's past and his own future. Meanwhile, my journey to peace took many turns.

## My Journey to Peace

Let me go back to my story when I was a young woman. Here it is important to point out that though the Falklands-Malvinas war lasted only a few months, it had left deep marks on the entire Argentine society. That war added more violence to the senseless militarized conditions of daily life in

our society after the war. When Argentina finally recovered democracy in 1983, hope was aroused that a thinking and peaceful society would emerge and decades of suppressed dreams would now blossom. It was like we were recovering from a long and painful ailment. But Argentine's sufferings were not to be diminished and the military government played havoc with the people of Argentine and the destiny of the cursed land.

We grew up with sadness and pain as years of military dictatorship ruined the Argentine society. But it was also an era of heroic popular resistance. As a result and by 1983, some sort of democracy returned. Because of the pressure exerted on the military dictators by the people and popular and powerful movement for peace and freedom. With the passage of time, almost the entire world came to know about the nonviolent movement led by the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo and the 1980 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to one of their leaders—Adolfo Perez Esquivel. The Mothers had got together for the first time on April 30, 1977. They were 14 women whose children had disappeared after being kidnapped by the military security and paramilitary forces. For a considerable period, these mothers had been visiting hospitals, police stations, courts, and state agencies of various kinds individually and separately, but they were not provided authentic and verifiable information about their near and dear ones who were abducted and disappeared by the security forces of the state. Gradually these grieving mothers came into contact with one another. They also began to get to know one another and learn about their sons' and daughters' stories of suffering confinement, torture, and humiliation.

As a result of getting close to one another, reinforcing one another and slowly but surely liberating themselves from fear, the Mothers movement gained momentum. They decided to get together, share information, and build up a defiant nonviolent movement. A critical issue was to decide when and where they would meet to raise their voice against the tyranny of the military and chart out an action plan to draw a roadmap for freedom and return of the disappeared. One of them, Azucena Villa Flor, who was later kidnapped, suggested regular meeting at an appointed time in the Plaza de Mayo. It was a historic square in the city of Buenos Aires. It was surrounded by the Casa Rosada—the office of the executive branch of Argentine, the Cathedral and the historic Cabildo building where the first government of Argentina was established. There, they got together and sat like a group of friends who met to knit and talk.

They were 14 desperate women, but the state of siege was in full swing. That is why the situation and scene was so prevalent. After a short time,

the police became suspicious (what were these women doing or going to do) and they were told to leave. The order they received was to move on, move on. So, these mothers began to walk around a monument in the square, walking counter-clockwise in a never-ending circle. This marching vigil is how we and much of the world began to find out about the disappearances *en masse*. Those marches of those so-called crazy mothers, who were looking for people that were nowhere to be found, became the precise vehicle for spotlighting the cases of their lost children!

These marches continue to this day. At that time, they faced a lot of institutional violence. The ups and downs of Argentine history did not prevent the mothers from continuing their marches, and now the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo continue to find grandchildren who were disappeared. They have even created a DNA bank to compare the people who come to ask about their origin. My admiration for them enthuses me to continue working for peace. For the mothers and for me, peace means continuing with peaceful resistance, not allowing a perverse state to exist and strike—a state in which we find ourselves. Our lives are marked by iniquity, corruption, hunger, poverty, and lack of respect for nature. But there is still peaceful resistance that demands change, a transformation in favor of human beings.

Perhaps the events of 1983 simply allowed those of us who were lethargic and fearful to begin to get up and become sentient human beings again. People began again to get together for deep conversations, where we saw that violence was not only showcased by all the disappearances but by the many acts of mistreatment, disenfranchisement, and oppression which surrounded us all. The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, and the Grandmother's groups beating pots and pans, all understood the deep roots of that structural and cultural violence. These ingrained violences, and the resistance which was emerging to fight back against structural violence, are precisely what caused those disappearances and their "collateral damage" in the first place!

The return to democracy in 1983 did not mean a great change for the ruling classes as they maintained all their privileges, nor for the vulnerable, despite the efforts of some governments that tried to lead this part of the population to a dignified life—an arduous task since it is difficult to be accepted by the privileged classes.

Of course, even after the return to democracy and civilian rule, structural and cultural violence continued and continues to exist. Unfortunately, we still have that today and in many ways face a new wave of injustices in

a different form. For me in those days, working as a lawyer and a notary public, I decided to move back to my province of origin, Formosa, with my son who was nine when we moved. Once back North, I began to work for provincial government. I was the in-charge of everything involving interprovincial and international relations of the Province. One of the assigned tasks was to work for the development of projects that had the objective of improving the quality of life of the Formoseños. It was a task that fascinated me, because I was passionate about being able to achieve successes and improvements in people's lives through negotiation processes. By any count or criterion, it was a totally peaceful, relational framework.

## The Awakening

Some time passed and my work required traveling within the country and neighboring countries, asking me to combine the projects of different provinces and encouraging all to work together. On one of those trips, I met Goyo, the man who would be my second husband and the father of my other two children: Félix and Victoria. And so, Facundo and I moved to live in the Province of Tucumán, in the northwest of Argentina. In these times and in this new context, my work still followed the path that had begun in Formosa. At first I worked alongside my husband, who at that time was Mayor of a city in Tucumán called Banda del Río Salí. Although heavily populated, it hosts a poor population, lacking the fulfillment of many basic human needs. Little by little, as democracy was consolidated, we thought and hoped that these needs would eventually be satisfied.

Thus, collaborating with Goyo, I began to immerse myself in the experiences and sufferings of the population of Banda. There were many situations in which pain and sadness were companions of our journeys. It was not easy, trying to find solutions to the hardships that both adults, young people, and children were going through. In the midst of this, the "other" violence—those that nobody talked about and that we did not want to see—became an issue of vital and immediate concern. Several of the situations did improve as the term of office of Goyo as Mayor of Banda ended. Now with three children beginning to grow up at bit, I managed to work in the Executive branch of the Province.

Although the job at the Executive was related to my profession as a lawyer, it was what I needed to be doing at that time. My desire to be

supportive to the people in need was missing. The part where I could change the world a bit was what I wanted most to focus upon. Without realizing it, the strong idea that "living in a violent world is good" was flooding me. And suddenly, I was offered work as a consultant for social projects in a rural commune called Raco. As this was happening, I began to study Conflict Mediation and Negotiation. I was excited about being able to work developing projects and gradually inserting them into that small community in a peaceful way. Together we were able to negotiate changes among local commune members and bring the work to the community as a whole. Through community mediation, we tried to resolve all conflicts peacefully and faced only a few situations of violence. The concepts of Peace, Conflict, and Violence were not yet defined or consistent in my life. I was just doing what seemed right and what I was recently being taught. Through that, however, the possibility of being appointed Justice of the Peace in another locality arose. I was eventually appointed Justice of the Peace in the Rural Commune of Delfín Gallo.

Assuming the position of Justice of the Peace (including being a Judge expected to make concrete judgements) began with few expectations regarding the mediation tasks to be carried out. General society did not and does not show much interest in such work. I started on a path, thinking that the job would only cover tasks related to the Civil Registry, such as faced by a notary public. As time passed, we built functions that would help carry out work that promoted cultures of peace. We brought our understanding of the importance of connecting my relationship as a Justice of the Peace to my studies in Peace Education and the like.

Working with people face to face, listening to people talk about their needs, hearing people's anxieties and problems were all parts of my daily life. Whether I could help a lot or a little, it was and is still satisfying to be a Judge who could give back to the community. Despite these small satisfactions in my daily life, however, I wanted to do more. As I delved into an analysis of the roots of the people's needs and their probable solutions, other questions arose. I worked to investigate the concepts that stood out over and over again in the work I was facing: the connections between Peace, Conflict, Violence, and Social Justice.

## Finally, a Yes!

It was March 2014, and a friend invited me to the Congress of the Latin American Peace Research Council (CLAIP), which was being held in Buenos Aires. I had no idea what it was! As a simple participant, I was impressed by the presentations I was lucky enough to listen to. And as soon as the Congress ended, I was invited to participate as a member of the Assembly, and at the Assembly I was asked to join the CLAIP Council. That was a week of many emotions as I began to be included in many meetings with prominent peace researchers and workers such as Úrsula Oswald Spring, Erendira Serrano, Diana De La Rua Eugenio, Laura Balbuena, and others. I began to integrate into this wonderful world of educators and peacemakers.

In the same year, I was lucky enough to attend the International Peace Research Association conference in Istanbul, Turkey. After that meeting, my life as a peace worker became more defined, more part of my daily work which I could and can do from the Court, day by day. I became more of a determined academic researcher. Later, there were several CLAIP and IPRA conference that added to my knowledge. It was a process of constant learning as I had first-hand teachings of great thinkers like Johan Galtung and others. I began to understand more fully that peace is not only about not having wars, and violence is not limited to direct violence. My existing understandings were reinforced that structural and cultural violence is much more harmful than the direct violence of war, and it is often used to justify war itself.

Today, it is clear that working on the resolution of conflicts is important, although and most probably it is much more important to find a solution for extreme poverty, for the degradation of the ecosystem, for corruption, for injustice. I began to study these deeper themes, and I try to apply them in the day-to-day life of the court. Together with my colleagues, we try to help the local people at Delfín Gallo, but also to analyze, study, and develop ideas and incentives for Justices of Peace to contribute to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

These Goals, after the COVID pandemic, were much delayed. During this period, from 2018 to April 2023, I served as CLAIP General Secretary together with Co-Secretary Esteban Ramos Muslera. We organized three CLAIP Congresses throughout the South American region, working and watching as our Latin American organization grew. We built academic, practical, and artistic work, focusing on the young members who brought

us their ideas, their realities, and their hopes of rebuilding this *Abyayala*. Abyayala, the Indigenous word for Our Land, signifies the riches we have in natural resources, in humanity, in our history which is likely to be reborn. Unfortunately, even today our people are marked by injustices, poverty, corruption, and transnational organized crime. The hope that our young researchers would reveal through their work and actions the dreams kept away from sight and collective consciousness fill me with pride. These new generations are set to fulfill those old dreams of the founders of CLAIP, allowing me to rest a little and not worry so much about the future of my grandchildren and our town.

Now, with the 2023 elections of Javier Milei, a far-right politician from the Libertarian Party who recently became Argentina's President, it is hard not to worry again. Milei's election sent shock waves throughout the country and throughout Latin America in 2023. Many of us feared that his radical reshaping of the country would throw millions of people into even greater poverty. Over the past year, these fears became reality when he devalued the peso and removed government subsidies for public transportation, which most working-class citizens rely upon. Now, we have a society that has been struck by a profound division. It seems that between the people who voted for him and the other 44 percent, the country has been ripped apart.

For example, in the 44 percent of the society that I belong to, we know that we study and we are not a people without education. We are university students; we are professionals. Many of us work for people who need protection—the vulnerable people of society. The other 56 percent, they have it all; they're rich people who want to live better, and they don't care about others. They're more anti-Peronistas—labor and left-leaning followers of the late Juan Peron—than lovers or followers of Milei. Many of those 56 percent people voted against the old government and not necessarily to vote Milei in power, who was then not prepared to be president. He was the creation of news media. And when push came to shove, he needed the ultra-right wing of our country to help him reach the presidency.

All of the people he put in different ministries were already government ministers in other departments—and all of them were disasters. What is worse is that it's not only the economic problem that is shaking the country, it's the abhorrence of rulers for human rights. They don't believe in social justice. Milei said that these things do not exist. It's insane because this idea of social justice has existed since the middle of the nineteenth

century. It was developed by a priest in Italy and affirmed by the Catholic Church.

So many people, many of my friends—not only Peronistas but other people (all those who do not belong to the ultra-right wing)—are very sad. We cannot support such things. The Leftist and progressive groups are thinking the same way as the rest of us, but they are a very small group. Even though we have many Peronistas around us, we are all thinking the same thing.

## What Can We Do?

To be fair, things are very difficult. I have a good job, but the fluctuations in the value of the peso have made things difficult for everyone: before the drop in the value of peso, I earned $3000 a month. Now I earn less than $1000. Prices of groceries, gas for the car, and many other things are going up. And our salaries are going down, down, down. For example, about 20 percent of the salary of my son goes to meet transportation expenses. However, I plan to continue working just as I do now. We do not have to start again. We have to continue speaking and working for peace and justice. While a number of sessions the Congress was held recently to prevent some of Milei's measures through the cast of votes, but the number of votes needed to fully reject his policies is still short enough. As such, we have to continue to work hard to attain the goal of regime change through peaceful political efforts and continuously work for peace, justice, and progress.

We are, however, clear that Peace is going to come only if all the people can afford to eat. It will come if people are free to study and obtain free education. Furthermore, peace will be present when all the people have access to adequate public health care. Since the mid-twentieth century, we have had a university system that is public. As such, so our children were not required to pay. Now Milei is threatening to do away with system. We are therefore preparing ourselves to protest against such anti-people steps and fight for our rights and for peace.

Along with these preoccupations and responsibilities at home and involvement in Latin American peace activities, I also keep in touch with new friends from other continents. I've met so many talented peace workers in Istanbul and in India, in Sri Lanka and through virtual meetings on-line. As a result, I have a clear idea that along with the problems that the Latin Americans share, we have so much in common with the people

living in other territories and continents as well. To be involved more directly and more actively in the issues being faced by the peoples of the world was one factor that induced me to accept the office of Co-Secretary General of IPRA when the IPRA family offered it to me during the IPRA conference held in Trinidad in 2023. It is a great job, but a lot of responsibility has been put on my shoulders. My emotions were strong: I was filled with appreciation and the idea of being elected to that position overflowed my heart and soul with joy. It's a moment that I still have difficultly describing. What moved me the most was not the position specifically, but the trust that all the members of the IPRA placed in me.

Hope, as I said before, rests with the bunch of young researchers, academics, and peace workers who now gather at our meetings and at special "peace camps" we have developed to support the students and a new generation of peacemakers. An Advisory Council with youth representing all the continents is a flowing dream and project, and I look forward to collaborating with my IPRA Co-Secretary General Matt Meyer.

Surely our work will be harder, more intelligent, and profound, and we will have many issues to resolve and many projects to develop. For example, much work has been done throughout history—especially since the Second World War—looking for peaceful resolution of conflicts. We have international treaties and declarations on the capacity of human beings to be peaceful (Seville Declaration), on access to justice for all human beings—especially the vulnerable (Universal Declaration of Human Rights), on care for the environment, and more (UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030). Yet we continue to find ourselves immersed in heartbreaking violence.

We cannot get *Ubuntu*—the idea that each of our humanities is connected to one another—to be central to the states that govern us. We remain stuck in "otherness" and it seems difficult to get beyond that and achieve unity and community. How to change this position in one part of the society with respect to the other part? How can it be that 20 percent of the world's population has all the wealth, when it could be shared among the 70 percent that suffers from misery? How can it be that we have 800,000,000 people without clean water? There are so many questions that cry for answer. These are based on the sad realities that our humanity suffers. Yet, I still believe that the objective that remains for us is to be able to encourage new generations and hope that they will have greater energy and creativity to work for peace.

I hope these new and upcoming people will join IPRA and its regional associations—not only to investigate but also to work for the inclusion and conservation of the ecosystem, for equal opportunities, for effective access to justice, for zero poverty, for quality education for all, for free health care. We need to focus on so many issues but along with these, we also need to work together to realize the ideal that no people in the world would live with unsatisfied basic needs. If this could be achieved, it would surely lead us to a stage where life will be fully live in lasting peace.

True enough that there is so much to do, but if we work hard with a sense of justice and if we work together, we can build a different kind of world, a world where sustainable peace will blossom in all seasons.

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# Reflections on Peace Studies and Education in India: A Personal Note

*John S. Moolakkattu*

## Introduction

Although India is the birthplace of Mahatma Gandhi, the apostle of non-violence and nonviolent action, Peace Studies in the country did not have a straightforward trajectory. Peace Studies was started in the aftermath of the Second World War, especially in the West, with the US and Northern Europe accounting for most of the study and research centres. In many instances, these centres were supported by foundations and churches. While the concept of peace and its nuances engrossed the attention of Northern Europe, the ways and means by which conflicts could be resolved through rational communication were the primary concern in the US. In India, many educationists were enamoured with Gandhian Studies, within which Peace Studies was subsumed.

In this chapter, I will attempt to reflect upon Peace Studies in India, drawing on my interpretation of disciplinary developments and personal experiences as one of the early exponents of the field. I understand Peace Studies as a discipline that engages in understanding the causes of violence and the conditions of peace. Peace education, although similar to Peace

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Studies, provides the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for living harmoniously with others. It is taught at the undergraduate and graduate levels in higher education institutions. It is also imparted at school levels, with the nature of content changing with the level of learning.

## Early Days of Peace Studies

The first institution I know that was created to focus on peace was the Gandhi Peace Foundation. It was set up in 1959, during the height of Cold War intransigence and the impending nuclear threat. The Foundation was established to conduct studies and research, communicate the results, and engage in actions for creating a more peaceful world drawing on the experience of Gandhi's nonviolent struggle and ideas. An institution known as the Gandhian Institute of Studies with a similar focus was founded in Varanasi by Jayaprakash Narayan in 1961. Sugata Dasgupta, the Joint Director of the institute, assisted him in this endeavour. It was a pure research institution that received recognition and funding from the Indian Council of Social Science Research in later years. Kumar (1968) tells us that peace research in India was intimately linked with International Relations, and the former could make progress only if the latter had achieved some progress in research. For him, peace research "is inconceivable outside the context of international relations" (9). Such a view was valid in the context of the developed world during the Cold War era, but not so for developing countries. However, one cannot but agree with the contention of Kumar that there is a lot of sentimentalism about Gandhi, which makes people look at Gandhi's ideas uncritically:

> Gandhians consider it their duty to defend and eulogise whatever Gandhi might have said and have consequently earned for themselves the charge of insincerity and religiosity. In India, the present state of knowledge about Gandhi, therefore, is full of sentimentalism which has no scientific basis and thus cannot be helpful in the furtherance of peace research. (Kumar, 1968, p. 36)

Gandhi Bhavans were established in 1961 at the University of Delhi and Allahabad University. *The Journal of Gandhian Studies*, a quarterly, was started in 1971 under the aegis of the Allahabad Gandhi Bhavan headed by J.S. Mathur. The Peace Research Centre was founded in the Gujarat Vidyapith (University established by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920),

Ahmedabad (Gujarat), in 1971. The present Institute of Gandhian Thought and Peace Studies of Allahabad University was launched in 1976. The Centre for Studies in Peace and Non-violence was set up the same year at Sree Venkateswara University, Tirupathi. Early contributions to the field of Peace Studies in India can be found in the writings of Indian and foreign scholars through the columns of *Gandhi Marg*. In the early 1960s, there was a widespread debate on unilateral disarmament in the journal. Sugata Dasgupta was one of the early figures who wrote on peacelessness and maldevelopment, terms that came to mean structural violence. He said:

> The sufferings and privations here termed as peacelessness, are a product of hunger, poverty, disease, and squalor. This state of peacelessness, obviously, is not always a direct product of war or international tensions, but it is naturally the main concern of the developing nations and, therefore, of its social scientists. The area of social science research which deals with the field of development-social, economic or political-and whose objective is to end the state of peacelessness, can, therefore, be conceived as the area of Peace Research in the developing nations… The field of Peace Research in India, as in any other emerging nation, therefore, has not only to be development-oriented, but must also reckon with this painful phenomenon of maldevelopment. (Dasgupta, 1970, p. 206)

The journal *International Studies* was started in 1959 by the Indian School of International Studies. It was established in 1955 with affiliation to the University of Delhi and subsequently became a deemed University. It eventually merged with the newly established JNU in June 1970. The early issues of the journal had very little to do with peace. The first article of sorts was by Mahendra Kumar on Disarmament (1961). The following year, he published another one, this time on Non-violence in International Relations (Kumar, 1962). There were articles by Narasimha Murthy on the Japanese Left and the Anti-nuclear Movement (1963) and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on UN Peace-Keeping (Khan, 1964). There was another piece on the Peace-Keeping Operations of the United Nations (Wright, 1965). Others included Poulose (1979) on India and Disarmament and Rana (1979) on Regionalism as an Approach to International Order. From the 1980s, there was widespread interest in nonalignment among Indian scholars. Upadhyaya (1992) wrote about the Colombo Peace Mediation. Rana (1996) wrote on Understanding

International Conflict in the Third World. Cortright (1997) analysed Gandhi's Influence on the US Peace Movement, and Väyrynen (1998) discussed Environmental Security and Conflicts.

A Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution Studies (CPCRS) was established in 2003 at the University of Madras as a collaborative faculty forum with a history of shared interests in peace and conflict. They were drawn from Anthropology, International Law, Christian Studies, Islamic Studies, Politics, and Public Administration. The university's administration gave it verbal support, but there was no official funding or institutional backing, and nothing was heard of that centre after that. The Henry Martin Institute in Hyderabad has a team focusing on conflict transformation and reconciliation. Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace (WISCOMP), an initiative of the Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, established in 1999 with the Nobel Peace Prize money, also conducts workshops and discusses peace-related themes with a focus on women, and brings out publications.

Peace Studies is now taught in a good number of institutions. The Indira Gandhi National Open University offers, under the Swayam portal, a course on Indian Perspectives on Peace and Conflict for students across the country. It is mainly like a general social science course rather than unravelling the intricacies of peace and conflict in the Indian tradition. Other academic institutions where the subject is taught include universities like Allahabad, Punjab, Jammu, Bhagalpur, Calcutta, Mumbai, Jain University in Ladnun, Manipal, Sikkim, Central University of Gujarat, Mahatma Gandhi Central University in Motihari, Tata Institute for Social Sciences, Jamia Millia, Benares Hindu University, Bangalore, Mysore, Madurai, Gandhigram, Mahatma Gandhi University, Madras, Mumbai, IGNOU, Lady Sriram College, Sikkim, Gujarat Vidyapith, Ladakh University, International Hindi University, and Jamia Hamdard, among others. An international semester-long full-time course (30 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) credits) in Peace and Conflict Studies is offered in Nepal by the Faculty of Education and International Studies at Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences (OAUC) and Kulturstudier (Cultural Studies). The course was initially based in Pondicherry, India, and began around 2010. Perhaps the organizers thought Kathmandu was a more resourceful place than Pondicherry. The conflict in Nepal contributed to the development of Peace Studies in that country. Several conflicts in India have not led to the

proportionate flourishing of the subject as in Nepal. The Nelson Mandela Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution, established in 2004 under Jamia Millia, remains the only full-fledged department in India with seven sanctioned posts. They offer an MA in Conflict Analysis and Peacebuilding. All the other centres are clubbed with either Gandhian Studies or International Relations, except for the Malavia Centre for Peace Research, founded in 1997. It hosts one of the three UNESCO Chairs for Peace, with the other two being MIT University, Pune, and Manipal University. The centre offers an MA in Conflict Management and Development. The title conflict management is more common in most of these programmes, and resolution is rarely used, and the term transformation is the least used. Manipal University has introduced a novel programme that aims to link aesthetics, art, and Peace Studies from a philosophical standpoint. It offers a BA in Aesthetics and Peace Studies and an MA in Art and Peace Studies. The National Institute for Advanced Studies in Bangalore offers Peace and Conflict Studies at the doctoral level. Except for a few cases, political science and international relations faculty seem to dominate the field (Moolakkattu, 2025).

## My Journey

I came to the field of Peace Studies with a background in Political Science and International Relations in the late 1980s after a five-year stint as a lecturer in politics. Peace Studies was then taught as a minor subject at the School of Gandhian Thought and Development Studies. My joining the School was quite accidental. An earlier application to the School of International Relations was not successful. A friend suggested that I apply when the positions were advertised in Gandhian Studies, since the interdisciplinary nature of the subject would necessitate the School to recruit a person with a background in political science. At that time, the nomenclature of the department was the School of Gandhian Studies and Peace Science. I taught two courses in Peace Studies—Introduction to Peace Studies and Main Currents in Armament and Disarmament.

In some ways, it was also my interest in Gandhi and the experience of having studied an insurgency in Manipur valley among the Meiteis in 1982–1983 as part of my MPhil dissertation (submitted to the University of Hyderabad in 1983) that led me to Peace Studies. Another topic for research I toyed with then was the rise of political violence in Thalassery, Kerala. When I was in the Northeast teaching at a Catholic primary school

in my late teens, an elderly Naga told me that if Gandhi had been alive, the Naga problem would have been addressed differently and amicably without violence. He was a member of the Naga delegation that met Gandhi in 1947 to discuss the Naga issue. It lingered in my mind. After cutting short a doctoral programme at the Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore, I joined a well-known Catholic college in Calicut as a lecturer in politics. The teaching job was not challenging, with only ancillary courses to teach. The nearly five years I spent were not very rewarding. There was not much in the library related to the subject. But I found the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi. I searched the volumes and discovered the passage describing Gandhi's interaction with the Nagas. The outcome was the article in *Gandhi Marg* titled "Gandhi and National Integration" (John, 1987).

I also read the article by sociologist A.K. Sharan, who attributed the primary goal of Gandhian Studies to reaching a state of metanoia. Gandhi's worldview is very radical, and he was sceptical of introducing Gandhian Studies as a programme of study. He said, "A sure, smooth, and 'nonviolent' way to kill the spirit of Gandhian thinking is to introduce it into University syllabi." He added, "Once Gandhian thinking becomes part of University teaching and research, it is sure to wither away: the mighty, indomitable force of co-option and suction will slowly and steadily undermine and maim the spirit, the meaning and the potential elan of the Gandhian way" (Sharan, 1979, p. 366). He neither supported the introduction of Gandhian Studies as part of the existing syllabi of conventional social science subjects nor as a separate discipline with a separate department. Instead, he was in favour of doing research in Gandhian Studies voluntarily without any incentives and fellowships, or the university should identify people with potential or interest in the area and provide them with funds.

Because of my interest in peace, I took up the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, seen from a theoretical perspective, for my PhD. The degree was awarded in International Relations. I saw the regional integration theories, such as David Mitrany's functionalism, Ernst Haas's neo-functionalism, Karl Deutsch's communication theory, and so on, as studded with peace-intensive notions. The conclusion of my thesis also had a definitive Gandhian twist, which some people who read the thesis found out of place. Unfortunately, much of the Gandhian academic community in India has not taken Gandhi seriously. More substantial contributions instead have come from people from other disciplines.

Galtung noticed the dilemma of not using Gandhi properly. He wrote:

> On the one hand there is the mechanical listing of the various forms of action as a set of techniques (hartal, non-cooperation, active and passive civil disobedience, etc.) to be imitated, with insufficient regard for the totality in Gandhi's approach, and with equally insufficient regard for the need for imagination to extend the list with techniques that express the same ethos, yet are better suited to other circumstances in time and space. And then there is, on the other hand, the over-spiritualization of Gandhi that insists on a total faith, a complete immersion of one's own self in a form of life and a total outlook on life. From this end of the spectrum the techniques disappear, being only ephemeral manifestations, as much as the significance of the metaphysical basis disappears when Gandhi is approached from the other angle. (Galtung, 1971, p. 285)

He further wrote:

> India, with her enormous manpower resources and her rich tradition in this field, as indicated above, should from the very start aim at a very pluralistic conception of peace research as well as a very diversified approach to its institutionalization. There is nothing called the approach to peace research. There is a definite need for an international institute located in India, perhaps with a more humanist ethical approach, not as opposed to, but in addition to the natural science approach found in Stockholm (SIPRI) or the social science approach found in Oslo (PRIO). (Galtung, 1971, p. 287)

## Early Literature

The first book I read about peace was *The Human Dimension in International Relations* by Otto Klineberg (1964), a social psychologist who directed the Tensions Project under UNESCO in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In 1949, the Indian government requested that UNESCO conduct a comprehensive study on social tensions in India as part of the Tensions Project. A national study of social tensions was supposed to promote comparative viewpoints and a better comprehension of peace in postcolonial societies. Gardner Murphy, a well-known American psychologist who had established a reputation in social psychology and the study of human personality development, organized several field trips between 1951 and 1953 with funding from the Indian government. According to one commentator, "Studying the way to peace in India was not exactly a

peaceful and calm endeavor" due to the post-partition conflict and inter-community mistrust (Six, 2023).

Two of the three main approaches to peace research in the late 1940s and early 1950s were thus centrally combined in the Tensions Project: sociopsychological analyses of conflict and peace, which were mainly supported by UNESCO, concentrated on the role of individual and collective prejudices, hatred, aggression, and stereotypes, as well as cooperative forms of behaviour; and sociological conceptualizations of conflict, which placed a greater emphasis on the structures and dynamics between conflicting parties and the effects of their strategic assessments. To promote understanding and peace, a third perspective proposed analysing the semantic content of communication, viewing conflicts as the consequence of poor communication (Six, 2023).

The first definitive work on peace I read was *Making Peace* by Adam Curle (1971). I had procured it from the Calicut University library, which I frequented. In that book, Curle defined peace in positive terms as intimately connected to restoring relationships to the point where differences are addressed nonviolently. Peacemaking was defined as "making changes to relationships so that they may be brought to a point where development can occur" (p. 15). On conflict, Curle said: "Our chief fault is failure to recognize that conflict is often largely in the mind and to that extent must be dealt with on that level; and that even when it is less so, as in the case of political oppression or economic exploitation, emotional factors exacerbate what is already serious" (p. 15). I found a Gandhian streak in his thinking, representing a relational worldview and a deep faith in human nature. At that time, Curle had not joined Bradford University. The chapter *Peace Research: The Infant Discipline* by Elise Boulding and Raimo Väyrynen (1979) provided a general field survey. I felt that one author whose work many did not see as falling within the field of Peace Studies was Rajni Kothari. He was one of the founding members of the World Order Models Project and was instrumental in launching *Alternatives*, a quarterly journal. Kothari (1974) presented an alternative world order model in *Footsteps into the Future*, emphasizing the need for global integration and the values of solidarity in the face of cultural plurality and global economic redistribution, autonomy, and non-dominance. He argued for a fair and compassionate global order by examining the connections between peace, development, and human dignity. He was a strong believer in the ability of grassroots movements and civil society to oppose authoritarian systems and advance democratic principles.

A book entitled *Contemporary Peace Research*, edited by Ghanashyam Paradesi (1982), and a few articles from different journals allowed me to teach the subject initially. The book edited by Paradesi brought all the debates and controversies centred around the organizing concept of peace to the Indian audience. I felt I should better understand the discipline and its dimensions. So, when the first opportunity came, I applied for a Commonwealth Academic Staff scholarship. I mentioned Bradford, thinking that Professor Adam Curle would be there. Initially, I contemplated applying for a PhD. However, sensing that the university would not relieve me, I opted for the one-year MA programme.

Getting enough material to teach the subject was one problem that I experienced. I relied primarily on research articles in journals like *Gandhi Marg* and *Alternatives*. Whenever I visited Delhi, I made it a point to visit the libraries to scout for relevant teaching material. Prasad (1984) published a book on peace education, linking peace with an alternative form of development. The same year, a special issue of *Gandhi Marg* devoted to peace education was published, drawing scholars worldwide. In 1991, Thomas Weber published *Conflict Resolution and Gandhian Ethics*. They were both published by the Gandhi Peace Foundation. K. Sivadasan Pillai edited the book *Relevance of Peace Education* (Pillai, 1991). It is also important to note that the third volume of the *International Educator*, edited by Pillai in 1995, contained a special section on peace education. I also contributed a paper titled "Elements of a Critical Pedagogy of Peace." In that paper, I argued, drawing on Paulo Freire, that working for peace and engaging in peace education is a political act sensitive to all forms of structural violence while hopeful of changing such structures through human agency (John, 1995).

## Bradford Days and After

In Bradford, we had courses on development, conflict resolution, peace history, concepts, and social alternatives. The class was quite diverse, and many were doing the course not for a career but to gain additional insights into their existing professions. The Commonweal Library of the University, with its excellent collection of materials, allowed me to spend hours there. Early issues of *Gandhi Marg* were available in the library. The library especially had books and pamphlets dealing with nonviolent movements and social change. Adam Curle had left his full-time assignment at the department. By the time I enrolled, the department had seemingly transformed

into an International Relations and Security Studies department, with most invited speakers being people from war studies or the military. We were introduced to conflict resolution skills, drawing on the insights of Katz and Lawyer (1985). Some faculty had left the department, and some were planning to leave. During that transition period, the department saw the recruitment of new faculty members and eventually became the most prominent Peace Studies department.

On my return from Bradford, I introduced new courses at MA and MPhil levels and wrote articles relating to peace and peace education, which were subsequently published. The Bradford faculty told me about Vithal Rajan, who had been associated with the department during the early days as one of the founding faculty members. Following the suspension of civil liberties in India during Mrs. Indira Gandhi's period, Rajan returned to India and based himself in Hyderabad. I also met Ramlal Parikh, Chancellor of Gujarat Vidyapith, who visited the department. While walking with him to the Bradford city centre, I told him my misgivings, and he said peace is social peace, while war is the primary concern in the West. I wrote an extensively researched essay on the concepts and approaches to peace in *Gandhi Marg*. This and an earlier essay on peace education were primarily meant for potential students experiencing a shortage of learning materials. There was one omission in that article. I had not factored in cultural violence since the article in which Galtung (1990) discussed the theme did not come to my attention when the manuscript was prepared. Around this time, I had prepared a proposal for a peace museum to be submitted to the UGC for grants. It was expected to be 20% operational within 5 years and fully operational in 20 years. Its main purpose was peace education using digital technology. It was simply shot down when the experts came since they thought that Gandhi-related artefacts would be displayed in such museums. I drew inspiration from Peter Van den Dungen, my tutor in Bradford and a renowned peace historian, who has been active in establishing peace museums. I often found the so-called experts who came as not having the kind of interdisciplinary training needed to understand the project's significance.

I received a UGC research award in 1998. I proposed community mediation practised by elected members of the local governments known as Panchayats as the research topic, allowing me to spend the next three years on the research project. I realized that not much was written about conflict solution practices in India. A volume edited by Jandt and Pedersen (1996) on Asia-Pacific conflict management cases had no chapter on

India. But four chapters dealt with Bangladesh, two each on Nepal and Sri Lanka, respectively. This period was quite productive, and an article was published in the *Journal of Rural Development* based on the study. The study allowed me to examine how non-Western societies have traditionally been coping with conflicts. Unlike Western societies, which are known as low-context societies where the individual interest of the person involved in the conflict is what matters, in non-Western high-context societies, issues of face and honour are considered much more crucial. The study concluded that the elected members engage in an active third-party intervention that combines mediation with non-binding arbitration (Moolakkattu, 2006).

## As a Visiting Fellow/Lecturer

The second time I visited the UK was on a Commonwealth fellowship. I applied first to Bradford University, which did not respond. I then contacted my old tutor to enquire why there was no response. They said my arrival would lead to more work for them, such as handling mail. Desperately, I wrote to Hugh Miall in Lancaster. He was willing but had some reservations due to the lack of office space in the department. I could compromise on this, and finally, I joined that department. During that period (2003–2004), I visited Bradford University's Peace Studies department, which had grown into a very large department. I also had the opportunity to meet Nigel Young at his ancestral home, with structures and artefacts dating back several centuries. I promised to write one or two pieces for his *Oxford Encyclopedia of Peace* and eventually wrote five instead.

With Miall, I wanted to publish. He is one of the three authors of the best-selling book *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, which has gone into several editions. He was then engaged in studies relating to peaceful change and was curious about the land reform experiment in Kerala. He surveyed the global literature, collected essential statistics, and asked me to write about the Kerala case. He consolidated it and submitted it to the *Journal of Peace Research*, which had become a primarily quantitative journal under the editorship of Gleditsch, with a concurrent rise in its status. The reviewers recommended a more thorough statistical analysis, which I could not do. Miall also had reached his limits and was thinking of consulting someone with a high level of statistical knowledge. The article was finally deposited in the Kent Academic Repository. I shortened the Kerala

part and published it in *Peace Review*. In India, I introduced a course on conflict-sensitive development as an optional paper and one on conflict resolution. However, these courses were discontinued after I left Mahatma Gandhi University.

As a Fulbright lecturer, I taught a course on South Asian Experiences in Conflict Resolution at Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) in late 2005. The Fulbright identified the institution for me since they already had a cohort arrangement with the university, funding several students from across the world to join their Master's programme in conflict transformation. John Paul Lederach, the most widely known figure associated with the department, had left for the Joan Kroc Institute. EMU was a learning experience for me. I experienced the different aspects of the shift from conflict resolution to conflict transformation. I became familiar with the work of Howard Zehr, who was then teaching a course on restorative justice.

In early 2006, I was asked by Ravindra Varma, the Chairperson of the Gandhi Peace Foundation, to serve as the editor of *Gandhi Marg* due to the illness and subsequent demise of the then editor, Professor Mahendra Kumar. There were some unpublished issues relating to the previous year. Ravindra Varma, who helped me with editing, died towards the end of the same year, with the burden of editing falling squarely on my shoulders.

## South African Sojourn

I was appointed the inaugural Gandhi-Luthuli Chair in Peace Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, established by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations in 2008, after several years of negotiations with the South African Government and the University. The position was for three years. Besides publishing papers and teaching some courses, it was decided to start BA (Hons), MA, and PhD. programmes in Conflict Transformation. I taught a Global Governance and African Political Economy course to familiarize myself with Africa. Setting up a programme was quite a difficult task. I had to put together the programme and course templates for BA Hons, MA, and PhD. programmes in Conflict Transformation. It was prepared in such a way as to sync with the African realities and needs. A journal titled *Ubuntu: Journal of Conflict Transformation* (now known as *African Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies*) was also launched. As the Chief Editor of *Gandhi Marg*, I brought out a special issue on the African Contributions to Non-violence and Conflict Transformation, teaming up

with Professor Ufo Okeke Uzodike, now the Executive Director of the African Heritage Institution in Nigeria. South Africa opened me to transitional justice, post-conflict peacebuilding and reconciliation issues, and the possibility of Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRCs). Although the assignment was for three years, I left after two years, after laying the groundwork for the launch of the Conflict Transformation Programme.

## Gandhian Studies and Peace Studies: Some Personal Impressions

India is a vast country, and what is happening in different parts of the country regarding the development of Peace Studies may not be easily known to peers. This is because Peace Studies has become an individual-centred enterprise rather than one that brings together some like-minded scholars from different disciplines, as seen in the West. This is, to some extent, true of Gandhian Studies as well. I noticed the lack of connection between peace researchers and practitioners in India, except for S.P. Udayakumar, an activist. Just as Peace Studies should learn from the peace movements, the insights from Peace Studies should allow the movements to do better. Radha Kumar, the former Director of the Nelson Mandela Centre in Jamia Millia, was involved in civil society peace initiatives and was one of the three interlocutors in the Kashmir conflict. The Neemrana Dialogue was introduced as a track-II diplomatic endeavour in 1991 to diffuse the India-Pakistan conflict. Former top diplomats, former foreign ministers, veterans from all three Services, academicians, and foreign ministers or secretaries of both the countries often participated in this track-II diplomatic meetings. But this initiative, which was revived after a long gap in 2018, is a prisoner to the inflexible positions of both the Indian and Pakistani governments. India has been suspicious of two early track initiatives, problem-solving workshops, that were organized in universities abroad. While many other conflicts witnessed the possibility of a workshop approach, the Kashmir conflict was seldom discussed in these forums.

I have not seen many people in India who are genuinely interested in Peace Studies. In my teaching career, only two individuals showed some curiosity about the subject. One did a PhD on the role of elected members of village Panchayats in dispute resolution. Another wrote her doctoral thesis on Yoga as a means of peace education. I have wondered why this is

so. Peace and conflict studies was offered as an optional subject at the Central University of Kerala, where I worked for six years. Not many took the course, even though it was open to students across the university. After I left the institution, faculty members dropped Peace Studies from the list of courses or taught it mechanically without passion. Many BEd programmes offer peace education as a course. This is indeed very fragile and uncritical. One of the important features of peace education is the hidden curriculum or the overall educational environment in which learning takes place. This is not one where democracy thrives. Instead, Indian educational structures are often very oppressive and less participatory. In India, criticizing government policies, especially concerning defence expenditures, can easily draw the attention of law enforcement authorities. It is impossible to do Peace Studies or impart critical peace education when there is too much government interference.

Most Gandhian Studies scholars have tended to ignore the Western literature on Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution, except where it deals with non-violence. Here, too, there is not much concern with the theoretical aspects of non-violence, but the focus is more on describing the Gandhian Satyagraha principles. Strategic non-violence is often more appealing, yet does not receive much attention. The general perception is that Peace Studies is part of Gandhian Studies and not vice versa, which amounts to a sort of ethnocentrism. Part of the reason Peace Studies and conflict resolution could not take off is due to the demands of the discipline to engage in interdisciplinary research, which has yet to gain popularity in India.

Narayan wrote:

> Since India became independent, there have been several external aggressions, continued tensions on the frontiers, and internal violence of diverse kinds. Even the ancient science of inner personal peace has survived more as something to boast about than as a guide to practical life. So there is today neither internal nor external peace in our country. In this situation, it is a matter of much regret that social science research in this country has so far nearly completely neglected the field of peace research. (Narayan, Foreword, 1968)

Kumar (1968) talked about a kind of Gandhian sentimentalism working in the way of progress in Peace Studies in India. Further, Gandhian Studies scholars have not actively published in peace education journals

nor used a combination of both disciplinary frameworks to advance their scholarship. The peace educators see Gandhian Studies as a faint localized version of peace education. However, they rarely discuss how the two fields can complement each other (Bajaj, 2010).

Kerala has made some progress in teaching Peace Studies. It introduced Gandhian Studies as one of the subjects at the higher secondary level. Around 50 schools teach the subject. No other state in India has done so. It was introduced due to the personal intervention by the then-education minister P.J. Joseph, a known admirer of Gandhi. I was a consultant for textbook preparation. Peace studies was introduced as part of the Gandhian Studies curriculum (SCERT, 2015). The NCERT also has a text on peace education. I noticed no mention of Paulo Freire in the position paper on National Focus on Education for Peace, which was brought out in 2006 (NCERT, 2006). While the name Okamoto (1984) is cited, all the 20 other authors in the special volume of *Gandhi Marg* on peace education in which the article appeared did not find a mention. They included such prominent figures as Betty Reardon, Robert Aspeslagh, Magnus Haavelsrud, Manfred Peters, and Lennert Vriens. However, the experts who brought it out seem to have relied on A.S. Balasooriya's methods of peace education in Sri Lanka. While developing internal peace may be helpful, it amounts to pacifying the individual rather than qualifying as critical peace education. One can expect only conformist education from the governmental mode of doing peace.

The Indian Council of Social Science Research has also not shown much interest in Peace Studies or even Gandhian Studies. The AN Sinha Institute in Patna and the Omeo Kumar Das Institute in Assam had evinced some interest. However, it is not known whether they still have the same enthusiasm, although the latter has a small division on peace and conflict with a Northeast India focus. The Calcutta Research Group (CRG) has undoubtedly made an impression. The founding of CRG took place at the Third Joint Conference of the Pakistan-India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy (1996), a historic 4-day public gathering of 400 peace activists across the subcontinent in Calcutta. Professors, journalists, attorneys, trade unionists, feminist activists, and researchers served as the organization's founders. This was a discussion and analysis platform for public policy about democracy, human rights, justice, and peace. The goal is to create a team of academic activists to work on policy studies, particularly about the east and north-east of India and the subcontinent, on issues of justice, dignity, democratic forms of conflict resolution, peace, and

human rights, as well as diaspora, refugee studies, internal displacement, borders, partitions, and the general topic of forced migration (https://mcrg.in/about-mcrg/). Calcutta University also introduced the subject at the MPhil level in the Department of History with a Peace Studies focus. Riaz Punjabi established the *Journal of Peace Studies* in 1994. He published it under the aegis of the NGO he founded, the International Centre for Peace Studies. The journal is still in print, although Riaz died in early 2021 due to COVID-19 complications. There is also an Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies in New Delhi, an NGO with some staff, often headed by security professionals. The neglect of Peace Studies by the University Grants Commission in India is also quite glaring. As a subject, it is clubbed with Buddhism, Jainism, and Gandhian Thought, with Peace Studies constituting just one-tenth of the total study area. Further, clubbing the subject with two religions deprives it of its essential social science orientation.

I was also slightly puzzled at how authors sometimes produce books on Peace Studies as introductory texts. One such text under the South Asian Peace Studies series was edited by Ranabir Samaddar of the Calcutta Research Group, with many well-known authors contributing to the volume (Samaddar, 2004). I received a complimentary copy. The first section on defining peace claims that the rational approach to conflict resolution does not adequately address the question of justice in Peace Studies. That was one dominant approach, but the discipline had moved away from it in the early 1990s. I looked at the references and was surprised that the articles in that section did not consult many vital sources. By 2004, a critical tradition of Peace Studies was already available with the works of Patamoki, Vivienne Jabri, Oliver Richmond, Roger Mac Ginty, Johan Galtung, and John Paul Lederach, who did not find mention in the text. It was described as the first in a series, and three other volumes were published. There was a claim in the book that the UGC would pump crores of rupees for the Peace Studies expansion project, which never happened. It appeared as a text on how not to do Peace Studies, although the articles were well-researched and relevant otherwise. Samaddar and Reifeld (2001) edited another book on South Asia's peace and reconciliation processes earlier.

I always felt that South Asia is not amenable to ideas like truth-telling, apology, and forgiveness. Such ideas never appeared in the past, such as during the partition riots or when atrocities were committed. There was no demand for such initiatives, even by the victims. Gandhi was aware of

the power of forgiveness, and two professors from Coventry University wrote an article on Gandhi and the Virtue of Forgiveness in *Gandhi Marg* (Hunter & Rigby, 2009). I also edited a special journal issue on Identity Formation and Peace Building in Northeast India.

One milestone in peace education was the UNESCO institute in Gandhi's name in New Delhi. According to one commentator at the institute, a focus on "effectiveness," "future-readiness," and the transformative potential of digital technology and neuroscience in the form of individually tailored "learning" interventions has overtaken discussions of curriculum content or ethical issues about peace, sustainability, and global citizenship. Gandhi believed advocating for "rewiring of the brain" or behavioural readjustment through neurological manipulation would threaten to oppress rather than free people, implying a mechanical disregard for human agency and dignity. He constantly emphasized the importance of dialogue, compromise, persuasion, and political involvement. However, Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP) has diverged significantly from Gandhi's vision because of its institutional and political history and the inclinations of its leadership (Vickers, 2022, p. 795).

## Conclusion: Future of Peace Studies in India

With Gandhian Studies on the retreat, with most publicly funded centres closed down, Peace Studies, which thrived along with Gandhian Studies, is also on the retreat. This is not the case with the new Peace and Conflict Studies programmes, which have a more flexible Gandhian connection and still tend to attract students. At a time when Manipur is boiling, India lacks the necessary social science knowledge and skills to intervene in the conflict. No institution like the Gandhian Santi Sena is in place. Nobody talks about post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation. Nobody talks about reconciliation or even thinks that it is possible. This is evident from the situation in Manipur, where neither the government nor the civil society actors can do anything to manage the conflict, not to speak of reconciliation. Such prospects do not offer much space for Peace Studies in India. Yet, Peace Studies in some fashion will continue to be taught and researched in India. One area where India could have done this was by developing case histories of dispute resolution at the grassroots.

India does not have a Ministry of Peace like some countries.

The idea of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (the world is but one family), the Vedic philosophy of Kshma (forbearance) and the tenet of *Sarva Dharma Sambhava* (equal respect for all religions) seem to suggest a strong peace resonance. This, however, does not discount the existence of opposing viewpoints that, in certain Hindu traditions, would justify violent acts frequently carried out in the name of non-violence (Upadhyaya, 2009). Beyond the usual platitudes on India's nonalignment and notions of *Vasudhaiva Kudumbakom*, there is little substance in the evolution of an indigenous approach to peace. Hinduism is a highly pluralistic religion, unlike the Abrahamic religions. But recent events suggest that the type of Hinduism represented by its modern proponents, known as Hindutva, imitates the same Abrahamic religions. This is in contrast to the Hinduism that Gandhi advocated. Gandhi created a view of religion that is fundamentally pluralistic by construing Hinduism as a single tradition distinguished by its diversity of approaches. Gandhi's Hinduism incorporates mechanisms for collaboration and reconciliation, mutual understanding, and respect into its structure by admitting that people may travel various paths to the same destination (Soni, 2010). The future of Peace Studies in India, therefore, appears bleak. One would have expected the civil society actors to be the principal intermediaries in India's several internal conflicts. The Sri Lankans described the final war with the LTTE as a contribution to the field of conflict resolution. In India, the scrapping of Article 370 and the numerous efforts to achieve homogeneity are also touted as cases of establishing peace.

The absence of a dedicated Peace Studies association in India is also disconcerting, making the efforts of individual scholars look more like autistic exercises. Peace Studies in India is tied up with Gandhian Studies. Yet, it has failed to use the Gandhi label to bring in new perspectives and distinct contributions. Instead, the Gandhi connection has stood in the way of developing serious Peace Studies of a critical kind. India's declining position in the Global Peace Index is a testimony to the sort of environment the country is in. Nonetheless, a few private universities have shown interest in Gandhian Studies and Peace Studies. Mention may be made of the O.P. Jindal University, which has a Mahatma Gandhi Centre for Peace Studies located within its law school, Manipal University, and Gitam University.

One serious lacuna with Peace Studies and peace education programmes in India is the absence of a critical perspective. What constitutes peace is often what serves the establishment. This tends to develop a conformist

attitude among the recipients, which is antithetical to the concerns of Peace Studies. While we should search for indigenous forms of peacemaking and peacebuilding, we should also be self-reflexive enough to evaluate our own resources through a critical lens. This is a challenge for the discipline in India.

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# My Journey in Life as a Peace Educator, Activist, and Researcher

*Moses Monday John*

## Introduction

I had always thought of writing my biography, but the opportunity finally came when Professor Sikander Mehdi from Karachi University and Professor Matt Meyer, Secretary General of International Peace Research Association (IPRA), invited me to contribute a chapter to the volume on peace educators they were then planning to edit to publish. However, writing about oneself is not easy for anyone. It proved to be somewhat tougher for a person like me, who values the Christian family tradition and who has strong belief that whatever we do we should do for the glory of God and not for seeking attention and praise for ourselves. However, I also understand the importance of sharing the story of one's struggle for promoting and building peace with wider audiences and communities. Furthermore, I endorse Ekiyor's viewpoint that the members of African civil society are not good at reflecting on and documenting their stories, successes and challenges and learning from one another (2008).

This chapter, which employs personal story-telling approach and benefits from the reference and analysis of relevant literature produced by the

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S. S. Mehdi, M. Meyer (eds.), *Building Peace*,
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peace promoting organizations and peace scholars, begins with a focus on family, early childhood and formal education and a discussion on the role of faith and its synergies in peace activism. Subsequently, it moves on to discuss as to how voluntary grassroots, national and international peace movements help nurture and strengthen our ability to educate, organize and mobilize others to transform our societies from crisis-ridden and violent communities to beloved communities. In addition, this chapter evaluates the role of peace research initiatives as crucial tool to unpack causes of violence, explore and develop nonviolent conflict resolution strategies and methods for joint actions to realize a lasting peace. However, and by and large, it is my story which is being told here for the first time and which revolves around all discussions about peace, peace initiatives and challenges to peace being faced by the peoples of the world.

## Family Life and Basic Education

I was born on 1st January 1973 in Mundri, a tiny town in the present-day Mundri West County of Western Equatoria State (WES) in South Sudan. I was named 'Monday', because I was born on Monday morning. I later got baptized with the biblical personality name of 'Moses'. I could have changed this English name (Moses) to a typical Moru traditional name like 'Mesegbe' or 'Gbatala' when I grew up, but I then realized that I had more critical issues to tackle than to decolonize my name. Besides, the name serves as a reminder for historical mistakes committed by the Christian Missionaries. This politics of changing names, one may add here, continued after Sudan got independence from the British in January 1956. The Arabs of Northern Sudan continued the game and at some point changed my father's name Rev. John Abangwa Abba. Abba was changed to Abbas. My father comes from Kamoyo clan of Moru Agyi of Karika Boma of Kotobi Payam, Mundri West County (WES). However, part of my family was relocated and settled in an area called 'Agyi' at Mutala Boma of Lakamadi Payam of Mundri East County since early 1900s. To this day, my family members live in both Mundri West and Mundri East Counties of WES.

In 1973, my family moved from Mundri (about 93 miles) to Juba, the capital of the then government of Southern Region. This was because my father got employed to work as a driver with the Ministry of Roads and Transport. My father was a freedom fighter and liberator who had participated in the Torit Mutiny of 18th August 1955 and actively participated

in the subsequent resistance movement that followed. He later resigned from the police service, became an Evangelist and later ordained as a Deacon and Pastor in the then Episcopal Church of Sudan (ECS), now Episcopal Church of the South Sudan, Anglican Communion where he served until his death on 16th September 1997. He was a peaceful, courageous and God-fearing man!

The Moru ethnic group of Mundri are known for being religious and peaceful people in Sudan and South Sudan. For example, on 6 December 1971, an enemy plane with Arab military officers was forced to land in Dumule, one of the Garrisons of Anyan-nya 1 Liberation Movement of Group 'D' Battalion under the command of Major General Repent Sunday Gideon Burugyä, in Mundri Area, but the crew's lives were spared. Commander Sunday Burugyä, being a kind-hearted rebel commander of the Anyanya, the Movement in the area, ordered the common people and his force to serve the survived military Arab officers with food and not to kill them. He argued that the Moru culture required the people to treat their enemies as guests when they are dependent on the community. He added that 'we can still fight them when we meet in the battlefield. God knows that we are peaceful people and that is why He allowed the plane to mildly crash in our region to ensure their safety and security'. The enemies enjoyed the hospitality and they were peacefully escorted to Rokon, the nearest Khartoum-based enemy garrison, and were taken to Juba and flown back to Khartoum to their relatives (as narrated by an elder in 2017).

My mother Kezia Gonga Juba who hails from Biti (Megu clan) of Lakamadi Payam mentored me to always respect God, our decent culture and traditions. My community's culture was compatible with the nonviolence and Geneva human rights principles and biblical teaching pertaining to 'love of the enemy, their protection during war and leading by example'. Thus, the murder of enemies in cold blood is not allowed in Moru as it is considered to be a result of evil spirits and therefore is against the teachings of Bible, the Moru culture and the African philosophy of Ubuntu. The philosophy acknowledges that 'I am because we are meaning, i.e. I can only be a person through other human beings' (Hove, 2016). Unfortunately, due to deliberate and consistent abuse of peaceful nature of Moru people over the years, such peaceful attitude and behaviour are fading particularly among the youth who have learned to violently fight back.

People facing the wages and consequences of social, economic and political emancipation can use a variety of means ranging from violent to

nonviolent means or a combination of the two to defend themselves. Thus, a resistance can be violent or nonviolent, depending on the means being used. A nonviolent resistance or campaign does not involve physical violence against human beings, their properties and the environment. Individuals or groups take actions in pursuit of social, economic, and political objectives without violence. A nonviolent campaign, as the name implies, refers to a series of organized and observable tactics that are repetitively directed to prevent, transform or address a specific injustice in the community or country to achieve the desired goal. A campaign is not an event but a series of actions employed to put pressure on the opponent to achieve specific results (Mandikwaza, 2016).

I started my primary school in 1980 at the Atlabara West Primary School in Juba. During those years, we enjoyed our school days as we had food to eat, and our school had extra-curricular activities such as sports, drama and singing which I like! On the other hand, there were cases of bullying as well, particularly from big boys and girls in the school. I hate name calling, making jokes at ones' expenses, pinching, seizing and eating another person's food by force, etc. Sometimes the pupils fight each other over minor disagreement, and older pupils forcefully grab and eat breakfast of younger ones. I remember having tolerated such attitude and behaviour from a colleague until we fought in broad day light. The case was then reported to the school administration. My offender was punished for his action and warned never to bully me again. I was also canned for fighting back violently instead of reporting the case to the school administration. From that incident, I learned that in a school, being a Dad's good boy may not be helpful all the time. One needed to defend oneself from aggression to survive. In the schools, children interact with each other, their environment, resources and people around them without the intervention of parents. Pupils decide for themselves how and when to respond to and manage their disputes. To limit future intimidation, I decided to befriend elderly pupils instead, build allies with teachers and support staff including my aunt who was working in the same school as a support staff so that they may help me in case of bullying, intimidation and dispute.

In 1986, I successfully passed my primary school leaving certificate examinations and was admitted to Al-Sadaka Intermediate School in Juba. There, I met many old friends including James Chol (not a real name), a colleague with whom I had fought in the primary school. When he saw me, he came to me, this time with a friendly and apologetic attitude. He

greeted me and said: 'how are you Monday? Good to meet you again at Intermediate School. I am really sorry for what happened between us in Atlabara Primary School. I was wrong. Please, forgive me'. He stood before me as we shook hands. I paused for a while and questioned myself: was he really sincere or he was looking for another chance to exploit me? Anyway, I decided to forgive him. He promised to be a good friend instead. Since 1987, my old enemy and I became intimate friends not only during the Intermediate School years (3 years), but we remained good friends in secondary schools to-date. As Bishop Desmond Tutu once said, 'If you want peace, you talk to your enemies, you don't talk to your friends' (Suderman, 2022). He was my enemy who had turned into a very good friend.

In 1990, I was admitted to Supiri Secondary School. The first challenge I faced was change of official teaching language from Arabic to English. This was due to a change in government of Southern Sudan education policy. When president Omer El-Beshir took power in 1989 through a coup, he introduced a policy of 'Islamization and Arabization'. Thus, he imposed Arabic language again as an official language in the whole of Sudan. Consequently, in 1992, the Government in Khartoum declared Arabic language as a compulsory subject in the Sudan school certificate examination. More Arabic and Islamic fundamentalist teachers were deployed all over the Southern Sudan region where resistance was expected. Some of these teachers came to our school in military uniform. That was not well received in Southern Sudan where English was the main official language. We met as student leaders and resolved to resist that move. That time, I was the leader of the Young Christian Students (YCS) in Supiri Secondary School, and I was elected as one of the seven student leaders (from different secondary schools in Juba) to resist the new education policy.

One day our Mathematics teacher came to the school in military uniform. When he finished the lesson, he asked if everything was okay? I raised my hand and said I did not understand the lesson. He asked which part of lesson was not clear and why? I responded, I did not understand the entire lesson because you (Teacher) wore a military uniform that reminded me of my relatives who were killed in cold blood during the Juba massacre in 1992 by those who wore such uniforms. So, my thoughts were divided. He replied, sorry for what happened and tried to explain that since he was coming directly from work to School, he couldn't change his dress. The teacher later reported the case to the School Headmaster. I

was later summoned and tried by a disciplinary committee for raising a political question and challenging a teacher. The disciplinary committee resolved to debar me from attending Mathematics class as a punishment. However, since the decision was politically motivated to please the Mujahid or Islamist Teacher, my Headmaster secretly arranged for me to attend mathematics class at Juba Commercial Secondary School (just about 4 minutes walking distance from my School) until the teacher was transferred back to Khartoum.

As the government in Khartoum insisted on the imposition of Arabic language as a compulsory subject for the Sudan school certificate examination, we had no options than to organize mass protests which broke out in Juba. It was led by the Coalition of Secondary School Student Leaders. This led to the closure of all schools in Juba and other parts of Southern Sudan. To calm down the situation, the Khartoum regime responded by partially exempting Southern Sudanese students from taking up classical Arabic (the most difficult subject). The Southern students were given a special concession to sit for a simple Arabic language subject meant for the beginners. This compromised solution was later accepted by the students, but resistance against Arabicization and Islamization continued. The Southern Sudanese resisted the imposition of Arabic language by deforming the classical Arabic with its own version of a pidgin or jargon Arabic (not understood by the Northern Sudanese). It was commonly known as Arabi-Juba or 'Juba Arabic', which has remained in use to this day. This was a sort of peaceful resistance. To be honest, during those years, I did not know that I was already involved in nonviolent political activism and in the struggle for peace, justice and change. I only knew that I was a student leader of the Young Christian Students.

## Community Engagements and Formation of SONAD

Though the story of my involvement in peace and justicebuilding had begun at an early age, it received a direction and boost when I joined cofounders of what is known today as ONAD, a civil society peacebuilding organization with very strong grassroots, national, regional and international connections. In December 1994, Light Wilson, a student leader from the University of Juba who later became my mentor, colleague and friend, came to visit me. We talked about students' life in Sudanese universities and the situation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in and around Khartoum, Sudan. Being a student leader from Wad Medani Ahlia College

in Gezira, I also updated him about the situation of the Southern Sudanese students in Medani, Gezira state. That day, we agreed to coordinate efforts and work together for peace and justice in Sudan. Light invited me to attend the second meeting of what became known as the Concerned Youth (CY) meeting. The meeting was held on the 26th December 1994 at James Nyari's residency in Fitihab Block five in Omdurman. In that meeting, I met Mr Kenneth Korayi (late), Light Wilson, George Tokporo, Kaka Meseka, Lillian Hebert, Sebit Bullen and James Nyari (late).

The friends I met in that meeting were not new to me, what was new was the agenda of the meeting and what became the foundation of my peace journey. I also discovered that I was a younger member of the group. Since that day, those I met became my friends and comrades in peace-building work. After this meeting, a series of follow-up conversations and discussions were held rotationally in Khartoum and Wad Medani town of Gezira state. These meetings culminated in the formation of the Concerned Youth (CY) as an informal grassroots students' organization to promote peace and justice in Sudan. We chose this name because we felt concerned for the marginalized youth, women and disadvantaged communities in the Sudan.

In 1995, the Dioceses of Lui in Sudan and Lund in Sweden entered into partnership. It was then that the Diocese of Lund funded a five-day training for the transformation of the displaced communities of the Lui Diocese in Khartoum. The training which was organized in November 1996 was facilitated by the 'Grassroots'—a British charity organization based in Luton. Fortunately, Kennet Korayi attended the training on behalf of Bishop Ephraim Natana as his special representative, while Light Wilson represented the Mayo Parish in Khartoum. The aims of the training were to reflect on what it implies to be a Christian today in a local and international context, and how to grow together in the Christian faith. It was during this time that a long-term vision for the displaced Diocese of Lui in Khartoum was developed. I missed the training because I was about 100 miles away from Khartoum and didn't had enough money to buy the bus ticket. Since the participants were required to share their acquired knowledge with the constituencies to which they belonged, the details of the training reached many of those who couldn't attend the event. This training thus served as a sort of a key roadmap and nucleus for the Concerned Youth to reflect on their visions envisaged during their university life.

In exactly one year, more than 12 community outreach workshops were conducted by the members of the CY using available local resources. I participated in some of these workshops in my capacity as a member of CY, but at that time I was more or less a learning boy. I took part in the preparation of community workshops, mobilizing the community members to register for the workshops, donate food and non-food items, and raise small money for the community workshops. I also helped in note-taking and ensuring that participants' reactions were captured on the flip charts. I am grateful to elder Abraham Bendere, former Deputy Secretary General of the Sudan Council of Churches, and my colleagues who ensured that I participate in the community workshops in Khartoum and Wad Medani. The workshops were eye opener for me. It generated a number of opportunities for me to get involved in peace work with the Diocese of Lui community in Khartoum and Wad Medani. As a result, new community and students-led associations were established. These included the Apaya Cultural Centre for the Displaced Children, later registered with the National Ministry of Information and Culture. The Mundri Council Area Youth Association (MUCAYA) was also founded under the leadership of Kenneth Korayi, who signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the youth wing in the Diocese of Lund. In 1997, members of CY infiltrated into the leadership of most community structures and initiated Mundri Students Association (MUSA) and Silvestro Meseka was elected as its first president. In 1999 Kenneth Korayi, at the request of Rev. Anna Karin—the then Secretary for External Relations in the Diocese of Lund—visited Lund and Uppsala Church House. The visit yielded an opportunity for the Concerned Youth to receive its first external funding worth 1000 USD from the Diocese of Lund, Church of Sweden. The fund was to facilitate a five-day workshop on human rights education (HRE) for the internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Khartoum (ONAD, 2014).

In February 2004, the first partners' workshop was held in Khartoum. It was attended by the Bishop of the Diocese of Lund and her delegates, Bishops from the Diocese of Lui and the representatives of Swedish Fellowship of Reconciliation (SweFOR), Swedish Mission Council (SMC), and members of the Youth for Human Rights and Democracy (YOHURIDE). I attended this workshop and learned more about 'Jesus and Nonviolence' (Wink, 2003), which was facilitated by the then Secretary General of SweFOR. That day, I realized that my vision for peace was becoming clearer. My colleagues and I got interested in

nonviolence techniques in peacebuilding. I started reading more about the teachings of the Holy Bible and the Holy Quran and started researching about nonviolence from the Holy Books and Religious Traditions and Beliefs. This workshop addressed the outstanding concerns of all the parties in the project and paved the way for a tripartite partnership agreement between SweFOR, SMC and YOHURIDE. This workshop also paved way for development of additional projects on Nonviolence and DO NO HARM. The group drafted and approved its first constitution in November 2004 and formerly registered with the national Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Khartoum, as the Sudanese Organisation for Nonviolence and Development (SONAD), with Light becoming the Executive Director and I as Finance Officer.

In 2005, I participated in the first-ever Alternative to Violence Project (AVP)[1] workshop held in Khartoum. It was co-facilitated by Mrs. Miriam Menzel and Mr Juergen Menzel from Germany. In the same year AVP became one of the SONAD's project pillars which was funded by German Development Service (DED)[2] and later by the Quaker Service Germany. As a result of that project, Mr. Juergen Menzel, DED Peace Advisor was officially attached to work with SONAD. While with SONAD, I closely worked with Juergen who proved to be instrumental in linking me with other AVP family in Africa and outside Africa. Consequently, I became a lead facilitator of AVP workshops and together with a female colleague (Medical Doctor from Northern Sudan), we were assigned to represent Sudan in the first-ever AVP International Gathering held in Good Shepherd Retreat Centre near Pretoria in South Africa. The gathering was convened in 2006. It was for the first time that I got a Sudanese passport and a visa for South Africa, and I travelled outside my country. While in South Africa, I interacted with over 300 international delegates from over 70 countries including the US, Germany and Britain. It was in this meeting that I became more aware of the role of religious groups such as Quakers, Mennonites, Protestants and Catholic, Buddhist, Bahai, Muslims, etc. in peacebuilding.

In 2006, a year after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) which brought to an end the 21-year civil war in Sudan, Light

[1] AVP was founded in the United States of America in 1975 by group of Quakers to overcome trauma and conflict.Since then, it became an international peace movement. Available: https://avp.international/.

[2] xxx.

Wilson, Assunta Nicola and I were assigned by SONAD to assess and explore the context of peace and conflict in Southern Sudan and particularly in Juba, Wau and Malakal. My involvement in that exploratory peace work enabled me to discover and learn more about the impact of the civil war on children, youth and women and causing social disconnect and mistrust among the people of same origin/region. I realized that there were critical needs for the NGOs like SONAD to address the deep-rooted culture of violence, mistrust and widespread poverty among the civilian population. By that time I had developed a clear understanding that if the marginalized people in Sudan do not begin to benefit from the peace dividends, there is a risk that the war would continue between Sudan and Southern Sudan. Unfortunately, during the struggle for liberation, people were made to believe that violence could produce results as it was through an armed struggle that the government in Khartoum could finally be forced to accept the right to self-determination for the people of Southern Sudan. There was also hatred between the people who lived in what was called Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM)/A controlled territories and people who lived in areas controlled by the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF).

We were living in a violent society and violence came in many forms. I noted with shock the spread of different forms of violence on streets, in schools, in prisons and at homes. I also realized that the violence knew no class, race, economic or geographical boundaries. The level of trauma was high among the returnees and the host communities.[3] I also knew that reintegrating war veterans, child soldiers and youth into the society to foster peace and development couldn't be realized without customized nonviolence and peacebuilding civic education. Peace education and reintegration were critical to reduce violence, organize security forces, render basic social and development services to the war-affected population in Southern Sudan. We also realized that trauma healing, confession, forgiveness and reconciliation were necessary for nation building ahead of the referendum to be held in 2011.

With support from the German Development Services (DED), my colleagues and I established SONAD's office in Juba in 2006 to contribute to the efforts for building peace and justice in South Sudan. The same year, I led the AVP team to Torit and Magwi for the first time. It was difficult to start those projects because of insecurity and logistic constraints.

[3] xxx.

We had to walk some distances carrying our luggage when our car got stuck because of heavy rain. But we were determined to reach out to Torit, Magwi and Nimule and other areas in Eastern Equatoria. It was at that time that I realized that peacebuilding was not for those who were not willing to make self-sacrifices. These stories and the peacebuilding experiences of SONAD were well documented in print and in AVP documentary films produced by Walls with Ears (Korayi & Elias, 2010).

## From Finance Officer to a Peace Educator

In 1997, I completed my three-year technical Diploma in Management Sciences, majoring in Business Administration from Wad Medani Ahlia College in Gezira. In 1998, I got employed as Assistant Inspector of Finance (grade 9) with the State Ministry of Finance and Economic Development based in Juba. I held this position till 2001. In 2005, SONAD appointed me as Financial Officer based in Khartoum, a position I held till late 2009. Although I liked my career in finance, I discovered that my heart was more in peace and peace work. So I shifted my attention from dealing with figures, balancing financial statements and reporting to working with people and grassroots communities to sort out their differences and help them live in peace. As a peace educator, working with people gave me more satisfaction. I have always been inspired by the results of my work manifested in the positive change of attitudes and behaviour towards peace often shared through testimonies of changed lives. In February 2008, I attended a four-month postgraduate qualification course in peace and conflict consultant in the Academy for Conflict Transformation in Kingswinter near Bonn in Germany. It was the second high-level professional course that I undertook after a one-month course in conflict management and peacebuilding offered by the University of Peace in Africa, Getiga-Burundi. As part of the qualification course, I served as international peace worker (intern) in Centre for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights based in Osijek, Croatia. During that period, I learned a lot about the Croatian war for independence '1991-1995'.

## As 'Mr. Africa' in Osijek, Croatia

While in Croatia, I became involved with the Roma youth and women groups. We worked on the issues of youth unemployment, sexual- and gender-based violence, and unarmed civilian protection (UCP). I enjoyed the internship and the relationship with the target groups and the Croatian society. While working on the streets of Osijek, the children called me 'Mr. Africa' due to my black colour of skin as there were few or almost no Africans living in that town at the time. I did not feel offended for being called Mr. Africa and rather accepted it as a challenge. Another challenge was the language barrier. However, I managed to establish friendship with the children and youth who lived in the same apartment where I was living. They were friendly and some of them used to wait for me at the main entrance to say hello. They talked to me in Croatian and I talked to them in Moru language (my South Sudanese mother tongue). At first, it was confusing but later, we started using sign language to complement our communication. We were able to understand each other to some great extent. A week later, the children engaged a teenager who used to study in English in an international school to be our translator and I could then express myself in English and he would then translate it into Croatian and vice versa. Those kids and youth made my days in Osijek very pleasant. They even invited their parents to come and take photos with me. That for them was a big deal! Upon successful completion of the internship in Croatia, I returned to Germany, where I was awarded the qualification certificate. As a matter of fact, in the year 2008, I became the first Sudanese to receive the qualification certificate as Peace and Conflict Consultant accredited to the Academy for Conflict Transformation of the Civil Peace Service (CPS).

## Faith in God as a Stepping Stone in Peace Activism

During an open-air evangelism service held in September 1989 and led by a Pentecostal Evangelist Benjamin Terra, also known as 'Rabuna Kuwesi'—Arabic for 'God is Good'. That day, the Evangelist led me to pray and I invite Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour and Lord. He later encouraged me to always pray, read my Bible and consider joining fellowship with other Christians where God is glorified. To cut the long story short, I am a Christian and member of the Episcopal Church of Sudan (now South Sudan), Anglican Communion. In the 1990s, I started connecting my

faith with socioeconomic and political context in Sudan. As I analysed the context, I discovered many injustices going on against God's people in Sudan and across the globe, including injustices done in the name of religion (the case of Sudan, South Africa, Northern Ireland, Somalia, etc.). I concluded that I cannot change the world nor Sudan, but I can change myself from being a passive Christian/citizen to being an active member of the society. At that time, I knew very little about the role of civil society and active citizenry in peacebuilding.

Later, I learned that a civil society constitutes a large part of pressure groups who are not trouble makers but champions for just peace, democracy and prosperity, and they work in their communities and societies to transform them. I am mindful and aware that there is much contention in scholarly circles regarding the meaning and definition of the term *civil society*. Nevertheless, I define it as organic and diverse formal and informal groups or associations of people pursuing common, interrelated or complex interests to promote societal welfare. This means that the civil society organizations encompass more than merely formally registered non-governmental organizations. They include civic, faith-based and community-based associations, as well as professional unions and networks, and they work for peace and peacebuilding. But what is peacebuilding?

In my opinion, peacebuilding is any activity that aims to resist, tackle and contain different forms of violence, injustice and unbalanced power relationship in a given society that prevent people from enjoying their rights, livelihoods and achieving their full potential. Meaningful peacebuilding empowers individuals, groups and their constituencies with the knowledge and skills to undertake nonviolent actions to balance power relationships to reinforce dialogue and meaningful negotiation to realize mutually acceptable solutions that satisfy the interests of the parties in a conflict. In 2004, I participated in the first-ever basic nonviolence workshop in Khartoum. I later attended nonviolence training of trainers, school of democracy, human rights education and gender equality training. These workshops and trainings not only changed my world view but empowered and inspired me to be an active citizen. I also learned that I cannot succeed in bringing peace alone, I need the support of other people.

On 6 November 2008, I got married to Manal Matta, a daughter of Pastor Rev. Matta Alkwas from the Sudanese Church of Christ. Manal is beautiful, God-fearing, humble and dedicated peace worker as well. She is a skilled conflict manager and peace educator. With her, I felt strong and

encouraged as she too shares my vision of working with the civil society and ordinary people to build a nonviolent, peaceful and prosperous country, where every person would have access to basic rights and they would live in dignity. Both of us believe in serving God and humanity in good and difficult times. I feel very comfortable when I use my faith to recharge my energy when it is low, particularly during tempting, difficult and painful times like the time of civil society campaign 'GurushWen?'—in Arabic 'Where IS THE MONEY?', which led to my arrest in South Sudan. That day, I reconnected with God in silent prayer and I felt empowered. I considered the campaign to be 'the right thing to do' and 'a good fight for a common good'. To me faith in God is a source of inspiration and a coping mechanism for my peacebuilding journey.

## 'He for She' and the Dream for Gender Equality

From my childhood to youth and adulthood experience, I have always observed that girls and women suffer the most in our African and South Sudanese context. Gender equality was and is still a big elephant in the room to be dealt with. Gender equality means that girls and women, boys and men, regardless of their biological sex, gender and age differences, have equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities in life. This means that they should enjoy equal access to education, healthcare, employment, political participation, etc. For those who know me, they can attest that I have always been a strong ally and supporter of gender equality, and I promote the role of women in peace and security globally. In April 2020 I was invited by the leadership of the Eve Organization for Women Development (Eve) to address Young Women Alumni Conference which brought together over 100 participants in Juba. In the invitation letter, Eve nicknamed me as 'he for she'. The organization's Executive Director wrote to me and requested that my key note address should respond to their questions and I quote: 'We have noted that you are a strong supporter of Eve Organization and other women empowerment organizations. What's the connection? What motivated you to support the young women?'

My responses in the keynote address were straightforward. I was born by a woman, and most importantly, I am one of the few men who midwifed Eve Organization. I saw a potential in working with young women leaders who are passionate about peace, nonviolence and gender equality. Working with women groups such as Eve gave me the advantage of

learning from them as allies in the struggle for peace and justice in Sudan and South Sudan. My involvement with Eve co-founders started by sharing ideas and working together. The co-founders and I met under trees, moving from one shade to another as we developed the charter of the organization and later got it registered. We had dreams and we never doubted our potentials. We ate roasted groundnuts and dates (ballah in Arabic) as well as drunk tap water during our inception meetings. Today, Eve Organization for Women Development is hosting conferences of women leaders in big hotels with government officials and partners, and the organization has become an important stakeholder in addressing the challenges of women, peace and security not only in South Sudan but globally.

We had a dream to accomplish with the young ladies—a dream of a peaceful South Sudan, a better home for women, girls and men. This positive energy motivated me to interact with even their mother's right in their kitchens and talked with them and their parents about the need to invest in nurturing the vision of the young graduates. As a co-founder and the Executive Director of ONAD, I ensured that the organization deliberately targets women, girls across all our project activities. Through this policy, ONAD trained the co-founders and volunteers of Eve Organization on principles, methods and strategies of nonviolent action in peacebuilding. Consequently, some of the women leaders became nonviolence trainers and activists. My contribution towards gender equality included provision of mentorship, other technical inputs and physical space for networking when needed.

People refer to me as 'he for she' for a reason. I believe in gender equality as all human beings have been created equal by God regardless of their race, colour, economic and political status. Women go through a lot of challenges in life. I learned this from my mother, sisters and nieces as well. Therefore, women must continue to use their skills and knowledge to reaching out to grassroots, schools and university students to understand and promote the idea of gender equality and justice. As I am an ardent advocate of women's and girls' rights, I also engage other men to join the campaign. It is important that men contribute in addressing challenges like cultural and structural discriminations, including negative masculinities that exercise detrimental impact on women and girls in our society. The issues of gender-based violence and the unequal power balance as well as active participation of women in both public and political space need to be supported by men as well. As men, we need to see women as equal

partners. I have a wife, sisters, daughters, a mother, aunts and friends who are so dear to me, just like the Eve co-founders, and I would like to see them doing better in the society and using their skills effectively. I don't see myself competing with women for anything. We rather complement each other in our struggle to build a nonviolent, peaceful and democratic country. I am of the view that any society that does not value their women and girls cannot achieve its full potentials including sustainable peace and development (Eve, 2020).

Throughout my journey as peace educator and activist, I advocated and continue to advocate for other male-led organizations, donors and international organizations to prioritize their support for joint networks of women and men peacebuilders to promote gender equality. Building bridges between women's and men's organizations, as well as religious and secular peace networks, offers a unique opportunity to build a strong nonviolence movement to wield power to advance socioeconomic and political change. I always say that men cannot lose out when women are empowered. Equality benefits us all. It is therefore important to note that in my peace journey, I approach peace work from a holistic perspective, which recognizes women and men as equal partners. That's why I say that faith-based peacebuilders need to work collaboratively to fight the marginalization of women and abuse of religion to incite violence.

## Becoming Peace Educator and Activist

An important landmark in my journey to peace is my joining thousands of people on 7 December 2009, who demonstrated peacefully on the streets of Khartoum, Sudan. Organized by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), other opposition political parties and civil society activists, the demonstration was called to demand for peaceful transition to democracy and full implementation of the CPA signed between the SPLM and the National Congress Party (NCP) led government in Sudan. One of the issues at stake was the approval of the Referendum Bills for South Sudan and Abyei and the Popular Consultation Bill for South Kordofan and Blue Nile States. My humble self and other peace educators offered and trained members from the opposition parties including SPLM on principles, methods and strategies of nonviolence in peacebuilding. On the day of the peaceful demonstration, I joined with other civil society activists. We knew that some of us will be arrested, but we remained steadfast anyway as we knew that it was the best way to rescue the collapsing

peace agreement, mobilize solidarity and support regional and international community to put pressure on the Khartoum government to unconditionally pass the referendum and other related bills and pave the way for holding general elections and move towards the subsequent referendum in South Sudan, Abyei and the two regions in Sudan. As expected, many political and civic leaders and organizers were arrested that day, including the then SPLM Secretary General Comrade Pagan Amum and other National Ministers from the same party. That day the police cars and custodies were full of protesters. I was not arrested at the scene of peaceful demonstration that day due to logistical reasons (police cars were full). So together with other civic leaders, we hired a mini bus and followed the police cars to Omdurman Police Station and reported ourselves. When the Police Officer Incharge asked as to why were we there, we replied that we were not taken inside the police cars because these were already full, so we decided to report ourselves. We were then ordered to be locked in. Three hours later, we were released without charges. That experience was stressful! Fortunately, we did not wait long to see the outcome of our nonviolent action. On 13 December 2009, the National Parliament passed the Referendum Bills for Southern Sudan and Abyei and the Population Consultations Bills for Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile State all in one day (Korayi & Elias, 2010, p. 46).

By all standards, the year 2020 was a challenging year for most people around the globe. In that year, COVID-19 pandemic had become intense, causing lock-downs in South Sudan and elsewhere. But for me that was not the only challenge. On 16 June 2020, I was arrested and detained by the National Security Service for spearheading #GURUSHWEN? Civil society campaign demanded financial accountability and transparency for better service delivery in South Sudan. We had erected billboards on the streets leading to the State House in Juba and also along the Juba Airport-Judiciary Roundabout in South Sudan. The campaign was part of chapter 4 of the Revitalized Agreement on Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS). It was signed in September 2018. Although the government and political leaders had, on several occasions, publically admitted that corruption exists in the country and a Vice President had even suggested firing squatting as punishment for corrupt officials, our nonviolent campaign was not well received.

My arrest was unfortunate because the civil society, media and other whistle-blowers do have important roles to play in helping the government fight corruption and ensure that public money is spent to render

essential social and development services to the impoverished people. While some of my colleagues went into hidings and some fled the country, but a few stood their grounds asked for government's permission to visit me. As my arrest and detention made breaking news the same day, the campaign went viral on social media. Eye Radio, UN Miraya Radio, Radio Tamazuj, Voice of America and Opera News picked up the discussions as to what was really wrong with that campaign and asked if anti-corruption campaign of civil society was illegal in South Sudan?

Being detained by the National Security Service was quite a traumatizing experience for me. I was briefly interrogated by an officer and was asked to wait at the corridor. After few minutes, another officer holding many keys came to me. And asked if I was the #GurusWen guy? When I replied in affirmative, he asked me to follow him. That was how I was locked in. Inside the cell, I found some detainees. I tried to greet them, but nobody responded. When I was moved to another cell, I tried to be friendly and social with the detainees. I greeted a few detainees by saying 'good morning to you', and one person responded by saying as to what was good about that morning. That was the time when I learned to be quiet for some time. However, I felt better when one of them later called me and invited me to eat the leftover food rice with beans. This man looked friendly and miserable at the same time. The following day, I was interrogated for two hours about the campaign and the motives behind it.

My detention this time reminded me of some difficult times I had experienced in my struggle for peace and common good. I was then released without framing any charge, and I was emboldened by the welcome and support I received from the staff of my organization, my family members, friends and common people who told me that they appreciated my work. All this inspired me a lot, and I realized that I was not alone and there was so much solidarity and support. True enough that some colleagues and at least one donor distanced, but new friends, partners and donors also came in and I felt emboldened.

## Peace Research, Education and Publication

Peace research and peace education generally cover research and teaching on the causes of violence, including war, armed conflicts and the conditions of peace in a given society. These terms are sometimes used synonymously and sometimes differently. While peace researchers study the relationship between peace and conflict and its root causes, peace

educators teach both the findings and methods of peace research and also examine the values and beliefs that underlie various systems of war, peace and conflict and raise questions for peace researchers (Stephenson, 2022). According to UNESCO, 'since wars begin in the minds of men it is in the minds of men that the defense of peace must be constructed' (UNESCO, 2025). These opening lines of UNESCO's Constitution bear witness to our effort to understand and respond to the very origin of conflict. It also underscores the importance of peace education and research to transform the mindsets of men and women from war to peace. Peace research and peace education are fundamental pillars and tools for transforming societal mindset, attitude and behaviour to prevent violent conflicts and building beloved communities. Peace researchers and educators have crucial roles and responsibilities to shape societal knowledge and skills to manage conflicts and promote the use of nonviolent tools, techniques and strategies to build socially cohesive and harmonious communities.

With that in mind and in order to pursue this goal, I had to develop myself academically by undertaking peace and development studies and public administration at Master's and Doctoral levels and be relevant as a peace researcher and educator at grassroots, national, regional and international arena. This journey was long and sometimes frustrating, but I also enjoyed it. In 2015, I completed my Master of Arts in Peace and Development Studies from the Centre for Peace and Development Studies in the University of Juba. Given my long experience as a peacebuilding practitioner, educator and activist, it wasn't surprising for me to obtain exceptionally high grades, and I was offered an assignment as an associate lecturer (part-time) by the School of Public Service in the same university. In June 2016, I was invited to teach conflict management at the Graduate School of Public Service (SPS) in the University of Juba. This teaching position was not so lucrative making money as I was paid less than $100 dollar for three months, but it was very enriching and satisfying to teach peace to the youngsters and through them the society at large. The organization where I worked—ONAD—was very supportive and permitted me to teach the peace work while working full time at the organization. In 2016, I co-prepared a compendium for the conflict management course, which was approved by the university. This compendium followed a holistic approach and its high quality was widely acknowledged (Kiura & John, 2016). Two years later, in 2018, I authored and published a chapter for a book. It was entitled 'Nonviolence Tactics and Strategies of Grassroots Social Movements for Peace'. It documented the contribution of civil

society and grassroots peace actors in Africa and in South Sudan in particular (John, 2018). For example, it describes the experience of Juba residents who had peacefully marched to the Parliament, carrying two dead bodies and protesting against the deteriorating security in the capital and demanding the concerned ministries to improve the security situation (Sudan Tribune, 2013). The same year, I co-authored a special study and report entitled *Resisting violence: Growing a culture of nonviolent action in South Sudan* was also published (John, Wilmot and Zaremba 2018). This publication unveiled the past and contemporary experiences of the South Sudanese Civil Society, faith-based organizations, and contribution of women and youth towards building just peace by using nonviolent strategies and methods like submitting petitions, issuing press statements, organizing peaceful marches, building and erecting billboards, getting involved in peace negotiations and processes, etc. (Radio Tarmazuj, 2019; Ashworth et al., 2014).

Between 2012 and 2024, through ONAD and with the funding from peace partners, I established more than 42 peace clubs in 42 primary and secondary schools in Juba alone. The peace clubs' sessions aimed to transform the culture of destructive conflicts, bullying and violence to the culture of nonviolence and peace. Through this initiative, we wanted to inculcate peace culture into the personality of pupils and students right from childhood (7 years and above) to adulthood (18–25 years). The peace clubs continued to empower the pupils and students and discouraged them from bullying and committing gender-based violence and involving in destructive conflicts among the students and between students and teachers. It was reported by the students that the peace clubs helped them appreciate the value, importance and role of creative nonviolent tools in preventing or de-escalating conflicts, overcoming hate speeches and building harmony and friendship within the schools and at homes and within communities.

I was glad when requested by the administration of the Catholic University of South Sudan to review the course objectives and outlines for the Justice and Peace Institute. Together with professors from Bahri University, Ahfad University for Women and professors from other African universities, we reviewed and approved the curriculum. We agreed that peace education is more effective and meaningful when it is designed and adopted keeping in view the socioeconomic, cultural and political context and the needs of a given country, and the teaching objectives and the content of peace education curriculum haver to be enriched by the cultural

and spiritual values of the society together with the acceptable universal human values. It should also be globally relevant (UNESCO, 2001). Again, while I agree that peace education is defined differently as peace itself is defined differently, I am of the view that peace education is an attempt to respond to problems of conflict and violence on scales ranging from the global and national to the local and personal. It is about exploring ways to create more just and sustainable futures.

In my scholarly search for new knowledge and skills, I have special interest in the work of civil society organizations, grassroots peace initiatives and nonviolence approaches to peacebuilding. I have written numerous book chapters, special reports and articles and also published training manuals on civic and human rights education for peace. My current writing and its focus is on nonviolent actions and peacebuilding in the African context, and it revolves around the role of civil society, youth and women. In December 2021, I graduated with the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Management Sciences, specializing in Public Administration-Peace Studies from Durban University of Technology (DUT), South Africa. I used action research approach in my search for peace through research. I believe that research has to produce more than just thesis and it should offer tangible solutions for the socioeconomic and political problems being experienced by the communities in their daily lives.

## Regional and International Networking and Collaborations for Peace

Local community engagements of the civil society actors, including women, youth and faith based organizations, are pivotal in peacebuilding, democratization and development efforts. They play crucial roles in conflict-affected societies and in situations of extreme fragility or transition. Civil society actors are critical in promoting confidence and trust, encouraging cooperation, creating incentives for collective action and ensuring that efforts of regional and international peace partners are adapted in the local and national contexts. Their contributions range from enabling communities to influence social norms to mediating relationships between the government and local population through dialogue. When community engagements are strategically designed and implemented through integrated peace education, nonviolence, gender equality, accountable security and governance interventions, regional and

international networking and collaborations becomes very important. These collaborations in turn empower and foster community resilience, promote inclusive peace processes and support constructive dialogue between state authorities, civil society actors and local populations. This connection is sustained by strengthening local capacities, empowering communities and creating platforms for knowledge sharing and joint peace advocacy.

As Chigas and Woodrow (2018, p. 166) argues that significant progress towards just and sustainable peace can be achieved through more effective alliances, such as consortia, networks, platforms of grassroots and national peace movements that are connected, and through collaboration and networking with regional and international peace movements and organizations. Networking and collaboration are, indeed, critical for soliciting solidarity, amplifying voices and leveraging power to restore peace and stability. Thus, throughout my life, I have represented my organization and country in regional and international peace events and initiatives. For example, in 2014, I was elected Co-Chair of Pan Africa Nonviolence & Peace-building Network (PANPEN), a network of the networks of peacebuilding organizations in Africa. The vision for the network began taking shape in 2012, but the idea was firmed up in June 2014 at the side meetings of the War Resister's International (WRI) conference, held at Cape Town in South Africa. The network not only connects the African grassroots civil resisters and nonviolent activists but empowers them to take action to control and contain violence, and promote peace, democracy and nonviolent alternatives to conflicts. It comprises over 50 organizations, representing over 40 countries in the region. PANPEN enjoys rich diversity. Its members include youth and women groups and organizations, civil society actors, academia, professional institutions, and faith-based groups, using nonviolence as a peacebuilding technique. The network is being managed voluntarily by a 20-member Steering Committee representing West, East, Central, and Southern Africa as well as the Islands. Some of the members are also from the Middle East, Asia, Europe and the Americas, with strong African connections.

Earlier in 2010, I represented ONAD and later in 2022 PANPEN as a member of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) as well as a Council member of the War Resisters' International (WRI) based in Al kamaar and London, respectively. Through the regional and international network and collaborations, I have actively participated in conferences and also helped organize some of them held in Sudan, South Sudan,

Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, South Africa and a number of Asian and European countries and the Americas. My work with the civil society and national, regional and international non-governmental organizations has increased my social capital, support network and friendship. Given my long practical experience as a peace practitioner and now as a peace scholar, I feel that I am competent enough to bridge the gap between the academia, peacebuilding organizations and development agencies.

## Conclusion

There can be no peace without dedicated peace educators, researchers and most importantly frontline activists. Activists are crazy frontline warriors who believe in taking action to influence and bring about peace and justice. Peace educators are often confronted with life-challenging, life-threatening and life-changing decision-making like taking risk to lose job, experience detention, exile, torture, disappearance and even death. However, they are the visionaries and life changers and they also take risk by challenging systemic and structural violence and by presenting the images of new and peaceful futures. Their efforts inspire and encourage the peace activists to move forward.

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# Teaching Peace and Building Peace in Turbulent Times

# Taking Nothing for Granted: Individual and Collective Peace Education to Diverse Communities

*Elavie Ndura*

## Introduction

Growing up in Burundi meant making no assumptions—including that one's teachers would have the best interests of their students in mind. The overriding role of ethnicity meant that individual achievement sometimes took second place in one's identity. This meant the need to develop pathways to success which would later play a key role in developing the skills to be a successful peace educator and academic. At an exceedingly early age, I learned to negotiate pathways forward for my own and my family's survival and my own educational advances. Growing up with an awareness of inequities also meant having a keen understanding of violence in all its forms, including gender-based, ethnic-based, cultural, and direct violence. Realizing that I was what has been termed "a survivor," I committed myself early on to transform the oppressive systems that hold people back.

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I decided to study, with great intentionality, the things that could contribute to making the world a little better than we currently find it. The direct study of traditional peace education techniques was a central part of my initial academic pursuits but was quickly merged with the African experiences which together made peace practices more relevant to the world around me. Discovering that the Global North was not significantly better than where I grew up in addressing these issues was a shock, so negotiating the combination of South-North teachings about conflict and peace was essential. As a Black African immigrant studying and working in the Global North, an integrated and comprehensive approach to nonviolence, social change, and multicultural education for peace became my focus and my life's work. Peacebuilding, as I have lived and come to teach it, is not an abstract ideal. It is a practical, day-to-day commitment to healing, dialogue, and systemic transformation. When I reflect on my earliest years navigating entrenched ethnic and gender hierarchies, I realize that I was already practicing foundational skills of peace education—critical thinking, active listening, and relational accountability. This early exposure to injustice did not harden me but rather ignited in me a vision for communities grounded in fairness, dignity, and interdependence. This chapter charts the path to my current work and passion for the future: fostering unity in diverse communities by developing just and peaceful relationships, one person and one community at a time.

This chapter is not a biography of my life as a peace educator and scholar. Rather, it is a reminiscence of some of the reasons why I do what I do and the professional decisions I have made over the course of my pursuit of equity-minded leadership, inclusive excellence, unity in diversity, nonviolence, and sustainable peace in diverse contexts.

Therefore, the most meaningful place to begin this short contribution to this seminal book that aims to capture the voices and experiences of peace educators and scholars from around the globe is a place of gratitude. Gratitude for the countless individuals and organizations that supported me on my journey, a journey to finding myself, my reasons for being, and my voice as a multicultural peace educator and scholar. I am forever indebted to family members, teachers, colleagues, organizations such as the British Council and the Fulbright Program, higher education institutions like George Mason University that supported my quest to elevate my potential and magnify my contributions to social transformation and peacebuilding. Gratitude, as I reflect more deeply on it, is not simply a personal sentiment—it is a pedagogical tool. Expressing and embodying

gratitude can shift how we approach our students, colleagues, and institutions. It invites a posture of humility and interdependence that is often missing in competitive academic and organizational spaces. Gratitude reminds us of the shoulders we stand on and the responsibility we have to those coming after us.

## Becoming Who I Am and Still Becoming

I was born and raised in a country marred with inter-ethnic conflict and violence. When I immigrated to the United States, hoping for better socio-cultural relations and a better outlook on life, I was welcomed by even broader socio-cultural issues including racism, xenophobia, sexism, and more divisions that threatened my and others' quest for peace and nonviolence.

My academic trajectory, while deeply personal, is also part of a broader diasporic journey undertaken by many scholars of color. We often find ourselves both navigating and challenging systems not built for us, working tirelessly to decolonize education while simultaneously thriving within it (Dei, 2012; hooks, 1994). In this sense, I see my role not only as an educator but also as a bridge-builder—connecting African epistemologies with western frameworks, and inviting my students and colleagues into a more expansive and inclusive understanding of peace and justice.

Growing up in Burundi in central-eastern Africa, one's ethnicity, economics, geography, and gender determined in many ways what one could do, what kind of education you could get, and how far you could go in becoming educated. Within such a context dreams are stifled and challenged by the reality of a pervasive status quo and glass ceiling. From early in my life, I had to negotiate, and it was particularly important for me to learn how to negotiate well, so I could pave the pathways that I wanted to follow. When, decades later, I finally started the formal studying of conflict management, negotiation, and mediation, those early experiences helped me a lot because I learned to negotiate my pathways at an incredibly young age in order to survive and create my own educational direction. Life is a series of negotiated experiences. The greater clarity we have about the legacy that we seek to leave behind, the better negotiators we become. I have always known that I want to leave the world a little better place than I found it. The clarity of this lifelong commitment inspires and guides the decisions that I make about my work as a multicultural peace educator and scholar.

Learning the ways of peace and conflict transformation was key to my survival as an individual and to my family's survival, and ultimately, my family's progress. Ethnicity at that time in Burundi's history determined the rights that we had and the rights that we did not have, and I happened to be born into an ethnic group which at that time, although numerically in the majority in the country, was in the oppressed minority in all national sectors including educational, economic, political, and otherwise. Hence, I was born and grew up in an oppressive environment. During my entire childhood, I grew up with an awareness of inequity. This included an awareness of violence, all forms of violence, from gender violence to inter-ethnic violence, to psychological violence. I grew up in the middle of all those experiences, and that's why when I started hearing people talk about violence and considering themselves survivors, I thought "Oh, my goodness! I think I must be a survivor, too!"

My commitment from then on has been to help create a society where the community or communities where people like me live could aspire to and have a better potential in life, where they will be respected and valued for who they really are, and where their contributions would be invited, affirmed, and valued. In many ways, my awareness is a socio-cultural strength and treasure. Starting early in life, I learned to negotiate, and I committed myself to do my part in transforming those oppressive systems which were keeping people down. Many educational systems were especially oppressive, and as I grew up, my commitment began to grow into very intentional efforts to transform educational practices as well as foster more welcoming and inclusive communities.

I decided to study as much as I could, and eventually, I earned the opportunity to study in the United States. With one life still in the United States and another very much rooted in and connected to Africa, I am still becoming the kind of educator who can foster affirming community membership and equity-minded community leadership. That's the kind of educator that I am and still trying to become as my journey continues. I'm committed to helping the world become a little bit better than the way I found it. I aim to foster a legacy of hope and confidence for future generations.

Part of my own growth was discovering something about the Global North that may be shocking for some people to read about or hear. Post-colonial education in Burundi was not really post-colonial. The curricula and pedagogies to which we were exposed were steeped in western ideologies and ways of knowing. Hence, we were mis-educated to believe that an

ideal life is always western-bound and western-embedded. The United States was always portrayed as the land of milk and honey, the land where everyone aspired to be, so much so that even African Americans who are descendants of slaves were more content living in the United States than in Africa. I welcomed the opportunities to study in Europe and the United States. Yet, I quickly realized that things in the Global North were not significantly better than where I grew up. Throughout my upbringing and education in Burundi, colonial educational systems and wide-spread perceptions taught that the Global North was a better place and that those lucky to reside there were happier and more fulfilled. Hence, then and to this day, countless youth and even families aspire to leave their native land in Burundi and Africa to settle in the Global North. In other words, colonialism lingers on in the minds and dreams of countless African people.

Discovering that the Global North is challenged by crippling sociocultural issues such as racism, xenophobia, sexism, classism, homophobia and more was actually a big shock to me. I had to wrap my head around that so I could achieve the goals I had set for myself. As a Black person—a Black African, an immigrant—coming to study in the United States had been portrayed to me during my youth as a great thing, that I'd be in a much better place, a more equitable place, and a more peaceful place. What I came to learn is that these ideals were still only a dream. The reality was that violence was present, day in and day out. Equity was not guaranteed. One had to figure out one's place in this world with confidence so that one could remain standing, working forward toward one's goals. And that was not easy.

Violent racism, which you know has been glaring and continues to be glaring in the United States and in Great Britain where I studied, has also meant that Black and Brown children are treated with great inequity in the school systems. I was a teacher in Junior and High school and witnessed firsthand how Brown and Black students—children—are treated by fellow educators. The same things continued in colleges and universities. I realized that I really had a lot of work to do to make a positive difference.

First, I had to ground myself and have the kind of inner peace that would keep me grounded on my feet. It is not always about taking risks, but about doing everything I can, doing my part, to help transform these oppressive, inequitable systems. That's how I negotiate my presence and my path in the Global North, a complicated path. These groundings touch the core of who I am. People don't talk much about inner peace, but for me it comes from my commitment and faith. I have faith that this long

process is the right thing to do, and I will be all right in doing it. I work with commitment and resolve because it is my understanding that I'm here for a reason.

Secondly, for me and maybe many of us, that reason is based on the ideal that we must help another person have a better day. That's a genuine commitment that I have, and that's why I've been quite effective as an educator. Our most genuine work is to elevate the way of life, the way of being and potential of other human beings. This is also bound up in a certain humility but with great confidence as well.

I am a very humble person usually, but I'm also quite confident—something people don't always see or understand at the same time. I know that I have immense capacity to make a difference. I know that I have intellectual capacities that not everybody has, and I thank my parents for that because they kept reminding me all the time since I was incredibly young, that I have high intellectual capacities. My father's affirmation—singing my praises every time he sees me or has somebody who will listen to him—has been essential to who I've become.

Some people have to repeat to themselves "I know I can, I know I can" and I've also repeated that to myself at times. When I work as a peace educator and scholar, when I teach about nonviolence, peace, inclusive excellence, and equity-minded leadership, my faith, confidence, and honest commitment keep me grounded and credible. Regardless of the challenges at hand, I have always known what I am worth. I have always had confidence in my capacities to do good. I have always had faith that my work will make a positive difference in peoples' lives and in society.

## Where Does My Inspiration Come From?

The inspiration and partnerships that sustain my peacebuilding work have no religious boundaries. My brother is a leader in a Christian Church in Burundi, but I've also spent transformational and inspiring time with some leading Buddhists as well. I have deep faith in a higher power whatever one's path or faith community. I know that there is a higher power that looks over me. My faith transcends buildings: this church or that temple. My faith is not about dogmatic teachings because I'm also a critical thinker. As an independent, critical thinker, I don't fit very well into any dogma. Whenever dogma is exposed to me, I apply my critical thinking and my reflective practice to deepen my understanding of others, their belief systems, and why they believe in what they believe. I do not run in

the opposite direction! My faith transcends ecumenical communities, and I think that's another reason I'm very grounded. I relate to anyone across faiths, and that's also part of my peace education and peacebuilding acumen.

Initially, as a young scholar and professional, my focus was on education against genocide. This was motivated by my commitment to raise awareness about conflict in my own region of Africa. Because when people are not aware of the history and of how the past has led us to the present, they may not be motivated to work toward change for the better. For me, education was key because through my scholarship I realized that I was not the kind of activist who wanted to go out on the streets with signs protesting. In part this was because that route was not going to be safe for me or for my kids. The work for me was to infuse human rights teachings in all my educational practices, which helped me create meaningful connections between peace education and genocide prevention.

Now, years later as I've held leading administrative positions at three US universities, including serving as a Vice Chancellor, I have never wavered from my commitment to inspiring transformational change. My work has never veered away from the central quest of building and nurturing communities of peace and nonviolence. I do my work, knowing that there may be a cost to pay, because I'm not willing to settle for less.

It is in this duality—holding the pain of exclusion and the power of purpose—that I found my footing in higher education. The academy, despite all its shortcomings, can be a site of possibility. Through curriculum reform, mentorship, and institutional advocacy, we can reimagine what it means to educate for peace. We can help students move beyond performative allyship and toward a more authentic, sustained engagement with justice and equity.

## Expanding My Circle of Influence for Peace

Building communities of peace and nonviolence is a shared responsibility. Each of us in our own locations, positions, and circles of influence has a responsibility to help make our world a better place. For those of us in academia and other educational institutions, our work is to make the campus a better place and to build communities that are safer for everyone, welcoming of everyone, i.e., peaceful communities that are united in their diversity.

This work is not easy. My commitment may face pushbacks at times. When institutions and individuals push back against these ideas, then I push back too! This is my life commitment: I will not settle for less than this purpose for which I live. What's my commitment, you may ask. The purpose of inspiring and supporting everyone I encounter to do their part in creating nonviolent, peaceful communities, equitable communities, beloved communities, as Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King said, grounds me and shapes my responses to potential push backs.

I am a mentor and coach. If I discover that an institution or an individual's commitment may not be as profound as they make it appear to be, I try my best to work with them and support them to grow and open their eyes and their hearts. If they are not ready, I keep trying. I do not give up on people on their journeys to becoming the community builders and peacebuilders that they need to become. I also look for and partner with those who are willing to sacrifice, sacrifice, and sacrifice some more to support this shared quest! Effective, transformational leadership today, and always, is about the willingness to sacrifice.

In my facilitation and coaching work with educational institutions and other organizations, I have observed how unresolved interpersonal and structural conflicts inhibit growth and purpose. When spaces are not psychologically safe, innovation is stifled and communities become fragmented. Integrating mindful communication strategies—active listening, curiosity, and suspension of judgment—has helped leaders and teams move from defensiveness to generative dialogue. This is peace education in practice: transforming conflict into opportunity.

Building communities of peace and nonviolence requires commitment and active engagement from each one of us. It requires us to break from our self-protection and self-preservation tendencies in order to align our minds with the depth of our hearts and our intentional actions which will become transformative. We live outside of our own integrity when we are not aligning our minds, hearts, and actions. And this is one of our main limiting challenges nowadays. We have many bright people, many people who have authored more books than we can count the words to! Many who have made movies, or invested in banks, with more money than they themselves can count. But when these contributions run short of what we need to do to create a world anchored in human rights and peace which we want and need, it is because some of this work is not aligned. Their focus is not finding the connections to their mind, heart, and actions—to communities that can live in integrity based on justice and peace. There is

an opportunity for self-examination here, at the individual, community, and organizational levels.

I think that this is actually a difficult conversation. For instance, I've always wished we could have in our peacebuilding fields, in peace education and research, at our conferences and meetings a much greater commitment to work against racism. I remember raising this issue at a conference many years ago, in a workshop room so well-attended that we probably broke the Fire Marshall's capacity rules! At the end of that session, people came to me in droves, thanking me for my courage for bringing that topic to the conference, agreeing that we need to do more work around that. Then I approached a notable leader in the field, very influential, and I shared with them this feedback. The person's response deeply intrigued, confused, and upset me. They said, in essence, "What can we do about it? We have too many things to work on. We just can't work on all of them."

In other words, for this supposed "peacebuilding leader" at least, race and racism within the context of the United States—and its relationship to violence and peace here and around the world—was not a central issue for us! So, we have some work to do, right? We have a lot of work to do. We have lots of truths to uncover and recon with within the field of peace education and peace research.

The other day, I had the privilege of spending a whole day at a prominent high school on the US West Coast. I was the keynote speaker in front of close to two thousand people that day, and the topic was one that's in my heart and on my mind every day: how to build communities and how to foster unity in diverse communities, through one mindful conversation at a time. At the end of the speech there were workshops and small group discussions, and at the end of the day, one educator who self-identified as white came up to me and said: "I have never been asked to think about my racial identity as an educator in a diverse school." To me, it was revealing and empowering. Who was going to prompt this educator to take on this work? What was he waiting for to begin seriously thinking about these things all along? We urgently have to look around us, to our left and right, and say, who's here? We can't do everything by ourselves, but to me this story tells about how much we can and simply have to do together.

## Where Do We Begin?

Where and how do we begin these crucial conversations? We have to ask in every community, "who's missing from the conversation?" We also have to consider what questions and challenges are not being uncovered and explored. In our own field of peace education, this means reviewing once again what we mean by positive peace versus negative peace. For someone considered to be a peace leader in the United States to not understand that this country was built on racist ideas and practices, and that addressing these enduring issues is not "another too-much issue" to work on, they are clearly not looking at the whole of our peace work. Our job is to foster effective, lasting peacemaking as opposed to just ending a fight that breaks out here and there.

When we break up a single fight on a street corner, it would be foolish to just say "now we have peace in the world, all our work is done!" History shows us that this will not be a lasting peace, especially if we haven't addressed issues of justice, equity, and belonging. We have to focus on justice, equity, and belonging in each of our communities, not changing the other person, the other community, or something "over there." We've missed opportunities to begin with ourselves on this journey of peacebuilding and community-building. The future is about team opportunities, for each of us to become transformed as we work to transform the world.

It is essential to remain hopeful to further peace education and scholarship, and the wholesome quest for peace and nonviolence. Given that, in very concrete terms and especially in terms of educational work and its connection to political work, I am both terribly busy but also very hopeful. Despite everything, I think that we have to be hopeful, because if I were to somehow lose hope, I would stop my journey. I would stop trying. I would stop teaching. I would stop coaching and stop everything that I do. All the miles that I have travelled in an attempt to inspire others to do their part to build communities of peace and nonviolence would somehow end. We must find the strength to go on, struggling to make a positive difference, but never giving up. We must take nothing for granted. The time and opportunities that we have today to make a positive, lasting difference are not promised tomorrow. We have mighty knowledge and skills, nurtured by our shared commitments to foster a collective legacy of peace and nonviolence locally and globally. With these strengths, together we will help build and nurture communities of peace and nonviolence.

Participants in workshops and programs that I have facilitated in the United States and around the world provide powerful testimonies that when invited in and supported, individuals can become transformed and join the quest for peace. An alumnus of George Mason University where I served for 12 years shared: "Dr. Ndura was instrumental in my transformation as a person, student, and educator during my years as a student at George Mason University. She helped me understand how my life experiences, assumptions, and privilege impacted the relationships I had with my students, their families and my colleagues, and how I saw the world around me. As a result of the educational experiences, conversations, and reflections I had with Dr. Ndura, I was able to establish more genuine relationships with people who were, in some way, different from me. She helped me discover and appreciate the humanity in all people and the view of the world from their eyes, which I continue to use anytime I am in the position to make decisions in my classroom, school, or community" (Stan, GMU 2008 Alumnus).

After participating in my workshop on cross-cultural conversations attended by staff, faculty, and administrators at a university in Eastern United States, one participant shared the following feedback: "Dr. Ndura, Thank you! Thank you for being a driving force behind this week's Diversity workshop. I didn't know what to expect heading into it. I will be honest; I was naive at first that this would be just another diversity workshop with a few speakers and no engagement/interaction. Boy was I wrong. I was so touched and moved by everyone who took the time to share their stories and to be able to have the time to listen to them." Another workshop participant at the a university campus in Western United States shared the following unanimous feedback:

> We all have our issues and challenges at work, but it was helpful to learn there are others in the same boat. Or others facing major obstacles and we had no idea or frankly we didn't take the time to learn about their issues. I think a lot of us had to see that firsthand. I was shaken by some of the stories and even cried when asked by my partner about what I leave at the door. It was also saddening to learn of the challenges and hatred you have faced here. There is no room for that here or anywhere.
>
> I am encouraged that this is the beginning of big cultural changes for this campus. I hope these lessons will be shared with more of our faculty, staff and most importantly the students. We all play a role in making this positive change and creating brave space for all. I want to be part of this change and solution.

Such testimonials about ways in which my work inspires and supports individual transformation and commitment to join the quest for community-building, justice, equity, and peace further bolster my peacemaking and peace education leadership. Change, positive change is possible. It takes each one of us.

## Conclusion: A Call to Action

Faith and peace are not separate spheres; they are intertwined in my personal and professional life. In moments of despair, it is my faith that has reminded me of my calling. Peacebuilding, in this light, is sacred work. It invites us to recognize the divine in one another, to act with humility, and to speak truth even when it is inconvenient or risky. I believe that a peace educator must be both visionary and pragmatic—rooted in values but responsive to context.

True transformation requires more than rhetoric. It demands that we embody the principles we teach, particularly in spaces of power and privilege. As a former Vice Chancellor and executive leader, I have advocated for inclusive hiring, equitable student access, and institutional accountability. Leadership, to me, is not about titles but about responsibility—especially the responsibility to create environments where people from historically excluded communities can thrive without having to prove their worth.

When I speak of building communities of peace, I envision spaces where conflict is not suppressed but transformed, where people can name harm without fear, and where healing is prioritized alongside progress. This vision calls us to examine not only societal structures but also our interpersonal habits—how we listen, how we speak, and how we show up for one another.

In the field of peace education, we must have the courage to interrogate our own blind spots. Who is missing from our panels and publications? Whose voices are tokenized or silenced? If we fail to address racism, colonialism, and structural inequity within our own ranks, we undermine the very goals we claim to pursue. Solidarity must be more than symbolic; it must be structural.

My continued hope rests not in institutions alone but in people—students, teachers, and community leaders—who dare to reimagine the world. To them, I say: your voice matters. Your story matters. In the daily,

imperfect work of peacebuilding, each act of courage contributes to a collective legacy of justice, dignity, and hope.

One of the most challenging yet rewarding aspects of this work is inviting people to reflect on their complicity in injustice without collapsing into guilt or defensiveness. Effective peace education must offer a pathway from awareness to action, from discomfort to responsibility. I often say that courage in this work is not loud or showy—it is steady, vulnerable, and sustained over time.

We cannot talk about peace education without attending to trauma (Bar-Tal, 2002; Freire, 1970). Many learners—especially those from historically marginalized communities—bring unspoken wounds into learning spaces. Educators must be trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and attentive to healing practices. Whether through storytelling, ritual, or restorative justice practices, we can design learning that restores dignity and fosters wholeness.

Over the years, I have developed and facilitated workshops on topics ranging from intercultural communication to restorative justice practices, serving both K-12 educators and university leaders. These workshops are not one-time events; they are part of an ongoing pedagogical and institutional journey toward inclusive excellence. When I lead these sessions, I invite participants into dialogue that is brave, not just safe—spaces where difficult truths can be voiced, heard, and honored. This practice of mindful engagement has allowed individuals and institutions to move from avoidance to accountability, from conflict to collaboration.

One memorable workshop at a university brought together faculty, staff, and students from historically opposed groups. At the beginning, tension was palpable. But as we moved through exercises in mindful communication and storytelling, people began to see one another not as threats or stereotypes but as humans with layered experiences. By the end, participants committed to creating a campus coalition for equity and inclusion. This is the power of applied peace education—it creates lasting impact by nurturing authentic connection.

In recent years, I have integrated my Equity Leadership Framework into institutional transformation initiatives. This framework centers four pillars: intercultural competency, inclusive engagement, critical self-reflection, and systems accountability. When embraced fully, it enables leaders to dismantle inequitable practices and replace them with affirming, transparent, and just alternatives. It affirms the wisdom and agency of

marginalized voices while challenging dominant paradigms that perpetuate exclusion.

The relevance of peace education extends beyond classrooms and boardrooms. It is vital in civic life, in policymaking, in how we train police officers, social workers, and medical professionals. The tools of peace education—empathy, ethical reasoning, and intercultural dialogue—are urgently needed across sectors (Harris & Morrison, 2012). A more peaceful society does not arise by accident. It is built deliberately, one relationship, one institution, one courageous conversation at a time.

As I look to the future, I carry a profound hope rooted not in naivety but in lived truth. I have seen people change. I have seen institutions shift. I have seen communities rise to meet the moral demands of justice. These transformations did not happen overnight. They were the result of many people committing, recommitting, and staying in the work. They remind me that peace is not a destination but a discipline—a way of being that must be practiced daily, with humility and resolve.

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# The Discovery of Oneself as a Path to Peace in Latin America

*Diana Marcela Agudelo-Ortiz*

## Introduction

I am a social sciences professor and researcher. I studied psychology with an emphasis on social research and have been working in a private university in Bogotá for about 16 years. In my work I address the links between social structures and cultural interweaving with our subjectivity as an open, historical, situated and distributed process that gives our human experience a character of singularity. I believe that each person is a complete universe, extensive, interconnected and contained in an infinite universe and that our biographies carry keys of meaning to understand the world we inhabit. The struggle in which I am engaged consists to a large extent in encouraging a constant search for dignity, to forge lives worth telling, both with the students with whom I share my classes and with the people with whom we work together. I call this mental health. It is from my place of enunciation as a Latin American social researcher that I have been moving towards the need to direct my energy and efforts towards the construction of peace and the search for social justice from a place that

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reclaims radical hope, joy and structuring solidarity. This is one version of my story.

## Subjective Marks of the Trajectories of Social Ascent: A Family History

I was born and raised in Bogotá, Colombia. Like many other families, our history is shaped by the goal of social ascension implicit in our parents' and grandparents' mobility from the countryside to the city. My parents came to the capital looking to "make a living". This statement alone reveals important details: life for their generation ceased to exist in the countryside, it became unviable. My mother came to the capital at the age of 13 from San Pablo de Borbur, a small town in the department of Boyacá, as her older sister took on the challenge of caring for and educating two of her sisters.[1] My aunt had married a policeman, which allowed her to have a decent life in the city and to provide shelter, food and education to her sisters.

My father arrived in the capital at a very young age with his whole family, coming from the coffee region. They were day labourers, so they moved together behind the harvests in the region, dodging the violence that was spreading everywhere between liberals and conservatives. One day a coin decided between Cali and Bogotá as the next move. Thus, about ten people were accommodated in a small room with no belongings, clothes or blankets, to arrive days later, in a neighbourhood called Las Cruces in the centre of the capital city.

My parents met very young, both working for a living. The first years of their marriage were filled with hard work and effort, and thanks to this they slowly improved their economic situation. My father is what we call in Colombia "paisa" and is a faithful representative of the famous drive of the people of his region. He is tremendously skilled in business. Although he did not finish school, he learned to read and write, and his mathematical calculations are still much better than mine despite my doctoral

[1] My aunt Carmenza has passed away. As an adult I came to understand that this economic advantage came from a stormy and violent relationship in which my aunt did her best to care for her sisters and children by ensuring access to education for all of them. She ran away from home as a little child as my grandfather did not look favourably on women going to school because he thought it would eventually take them away from their "obligations" to farm work.

training and his 83 years of age. Work has been, along with humility, a fundamental value for my parents.

Even at a young age, my father won the lottery, and this dramatically changed the family situation, allowing him to partner with a very wealthy family from the city of Bucaramanga, with whom they consolidated a very prosperous egg distribution business that today continues to be the family business run by my brothers. I was born 11 years after the youngest of them, in a very different and favourable economic situation. We were now part of the upper middle class in Bogotá.

In addition to being the youngest of three siblings, I was the only female child. The challenges were manifold, because as the youngest, I also had to fit into an upper-middle-class social world in an all-girls' school run by a religious order. For my parents, higher education was always the ultimate goal for their children. At home, being a professional was synonymous with "being somebody in life", which was always ambiguous for me, as it meant at the same time undervaluing the lives of my parents and the generations before them.

I grew feeling part of an alternative current, like someone who quickly identifies herself as an "outsider". Surely American television series had already been working those subjective models with which I began to identify myself. It was the boom of cable television, it was the boom of MTV and the language of English was given so much value in private schools that helped to understand the lyrics of the songs that inserted me in the wide world of the boiling rock of the nineties.

Particularly the final decade of the twentieth century was very dark for Colombia. Drug trafficking had taken over the country, car bombs in Bogotá became a frequent practice; the guerrilla did not triumph but did not disappear either. It was the time of the "miraculous catches" so no one felt safe to leave the city to avoid being kidnapped. There was mention of economic opening but we did not leave the narrative of "third world countries"; violence tore them from their territories and put them to beg for money for their entire families in the streets of the cities. Chaos was widespread and there was a great sense of contradiction in my generation in relation to those patterns of parenting with which we grew up. Colombia, the country of the Sacred Heart, was sinking into violence, corruption and death. Being obedient and submissive simply did not make

sense anymore. "Rock al Parque"[2] was already in its third or fourth edition and it had become evident that the nonconformity on my generation was massive. The cry for life of a youth with an uncertain future emerged in the dissonance of punk, in the roar of metal and in the denunciation against racism and colonialism that came from reggae music.

My adolescence involved years of breaking with family expectations and stereotypes, and a constant search for ways to be seen and recognized. Although socioeconomic conditions were very favourable, my upbringing was probably the most challenging for my parents. Besides the demands regarding gender which I grew up with, the issue of social class became a labyrinth in which "the girl" got out of hand.

## Project Daughter

I decided to study psychology in a School of Social and Human Sciences that had only recently opened. I was fortunate to arrive at a school that was being born under the premise of training social researchers. The project had been structured and led by one of my great mentors: Lucero Zamudio. Always restless, always moving forward, always demanding greater congruence, Lucero was one of the great visionaries of social sciences for our continent. Her work, like that of many of her generation, cannot be read in texts, but must be sought in the irradiation she produced in the thinking and practices of different generations of her students and of the people who knew her.

Our programme was the product of several attempts by a generation of social scientists to break with disciplinary frameworks in order to advance in the transformation of reality from the commitment of inter- and transdisciplinary teams, with deep debates about the problems of method, the status of science and a permanent concern about the conditions of knowledge production.

Today I can see how her constant challenge made a deep impression on my way of seeing the world, of thinking about problems, of positioning myself in the face of questions. I believe that this is what being a teacher is all about, to flood the lives of others with curiosity and bridges, so that

[2] Rock al Parque is the largest free rock festival on the continent, the result of the emergence of "youth" as a subject of rights who demanded a place to express themselves through art and culture. Its first version was held in 1995 in Bogotá and has continued to this day, bringing the city closer to the most renowned artists of these genres.

they themselves can open up a path of their own. Her greatest insistence was probably to make us see that we could think for ourselves. This means not only questioning the way in which we relate to authors and their works, but also the need to position ourselves as producers of knowledge and not just consumers of texts from the brilliant minds of what we know today as the global north. Likewise, to look inward, with a critical and historical perspective to our country beyond the urban logic, and to our people, not as objects of study, but as subjects of knowledge without which our profession is meaningless.

Our training questioned the processes of hyper-specialization of knowledge, where the logic of knowledge articulation is lost, so that knowing a lot ends up being equivalent to knowing very little. To collectivize questions and research paths was a demand for openness, against the privatization of knowledge, publications and competition among brilliant minds.

Lucero belonged to the first generations of the social sciences in Colombia. She began her studies in sociology at the National University of Colombia around 1968 and, when most of her peers thought that the only possible solution to the country's problems was the armed struggle. She soon understood that she was not made for it and decided that her strategy would be knowledge production to intervene in social dynamics. Hence her insistence that Colombia needed professionals in social research who would put their objectives beyond their own disciplines, and the urgency for them to do so from the undergraduate level.

Our professors sometimes came from unexpected fields: astrophysics, medicine, biology or poetry, sometimes several of them together. The set of conversations that was seeded in us was extraordinary. One of the different fields that we inherited from Lucero's work was that of the frontier between life sciences, medical sciences and social sciences. It was in this field that I enrolled as a student to do my thesis work with ayahuasca people from Putumayo and it is in this field that I continue to work. The complexity taken to the field of health as a vital human process has been a source of deep learning, to deconstruct the processes of medicalization on life and to root the autonomies of our bodies-territory.

The presence of indigenous knowledge as a source of broadening the historical imagination has been one of the greatest riches for me. Our faculty promoted the creation of the multicultural interactions in Higher Education Programme, which opened the possibility for up to 60 students from indigenous communities to access our university. Beyond allowing them to learn, it was clear to Lucero that our indigenous colleagues had

much to teach and share with us, not only as individuals but as members of their communities. For me as a student it was an epistemic experience to be able to share my classes and forge friendships with fellow Misak, Iku, Wayuu, among others.

Respect as a basis for the dialogue of knowledge and the recognition that was opened with this space was part of the epistemological discussions in which we were being formed. With them we were learning about spirituality as a path of organization, hope and political struggle that are guidelines to face our civilizational crisis. Beyond a mystical question, spirituality began to express itself in a pragmatic sense, one linked to the way in which we choose and resolve our daily life with others, our being-being, if we can recognize where our strength, our memory, comes from.

This is not a minor issue. To situate oneself as a historical subject is also a question about the root, about the place of enunciation, about the point of view on the world. In Colombia we grew up with the narrative of mestizaje by whitening. This is a vision of miscegenation that distances us from the African and indigenous heritage, and throws us into a kind of erasure, as experienced by the generations that grow up in the cities as if their families had no roots in other territories, in other worldviews. Uprooting is thus one of the main characteristics of miscegenation.[3] And without territory, the question of the root almost loses meaning. It seems obvious if the question of the root is asked by those who belong to an ethnic group, but what sense can it have for those who are simply mestizos? I will return to this point later.

I started working at the University before I finished my undergraduate degree. I went through all possible positions from student to research professor. My first teaching experiences happened during those years when I started lecturing two courses related to cultural psychology and dialectical historical materialism in psychology. It was also during this period that I had the opportunity to make my first trips to Europe.

[3] In fact, the work of Ecuadorian Jorge Icaza (2008) reveals an interconnection between mestizaje as uprooting and a look at mestizo violence against indigenous people during the configuration of Latin American nation states in the nineteenth century. Huairapamushcas is the Quechua word for children of the wind, children of no one. This is the name given to the bastard mestizo, of European father and native mother, who progressively consolidated an "in-between" world, in which, even though many of these children were the product of forced sexual relations, the desire for recognition of the father and profound contempt for the mother reigned supreme.

Those trips deepened in me the concern for identity and encounter, for the effect of a glance made from "otherness". Having grown up in the city of Bogotá, connected through the consumption of the North American and European cultural industry, I felt part of a globalized Western society, with which I thought I shared my referents of meaning. However, in these trips, the location as a Latina put me in a place from which the differences weighed much more than whatever we could share. I even remember a comment someone made to me on my first visit to Berlin. When I answered the question about what I was doing, someone with surprise said, "wow, I didn't know there were universities in the jungle!".

A couple of years later, the issue of interculturality led me to study in Quito, Ecuador for my master's degree in Cultural Studies. At that time, the Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar, the second project that has shaped my experience, was one of the strongest centres for the development of decolonial thought in Latin America and Catherine Walsh was leading the discussions on interculturality, mainly in the field of education from that perspective.[4] At that time, the creation of the plurinational states in Ecuador and Bolivia was still recent, and the political atmosphere was very much alive with the strength of the ethnic and diversity claims from the Andean world. I was fortunate to join a programme designed to deepen the question of culture as a tool for political transformation, with a broad interest in Latin American cosmovisions, particularly the Andean and Afro world of Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia,[5] in a national context that allowed vibrant discussions on the immediate experience of our countries.

I was deeply impacted by the discussions and problematizations that emerged for the question of subjectivity and identities from cultural studies and its tensions and approaches with the social sciences within a framework of Latin American discussion in the very heart of the production of

[4] On my most recent visit to Ecuador at the end of 2023, I found a profound intervention in a good part of the more progressive programmes that UASB had when I was a student. In fact, our master's programme was completely remodelled, with a much more discreet discussion of the epistemological tensions surrounding the cosmovision of ethnic communities, but above all much less clear in the political stakes than it had been years before. Overall, the transformation that Ecuador has undergone in the last ten years is deeply regrettable in many ways.

[5] Cosmovisions traditionally overshadowed by the strong currents of academic production occurring in places such as Mexico and Argentina, and which dialogued with North American and European schools of social science, often from a place characterized by a distance between the authoritative voices of the academy and the unacknowledged voices of the historical experience of ethnic communities.

decolonial thought. The interdisciplinary openness with which I lived the undergraduate programme opened to new fields of discussion and inspiration: literature, communication, visual arts and cultural policies.

Interested in how openness to plurinational configurations manifested itself in social processes in the field of health, I decided to develop a thesis that would allow me to explore the landscape of interculturality in health in both the countries. I was fundamentally interested in understanding what happened in the transition from social struggle to the institutionalization of interculturality as a state principle. It was the time of the governments of Rafael Correa and the "Citizen's Revolution" in Ecuador and of Evo Morales in Bolivia when it was considered a sort of *pachakutik*.[6]

From my perspective, the field of health is a window to approach the social processes experienced by a society in transition with these characteristics. It was also an opportunity to fulfil part of the dream of walking through other corners of Latin America with these questions. Thus, I proposed a three-level investigation[7] that led me along a route of encounters with people linked to the field of healing, good living, the connection with the cosmovivencia of the Andean world, dignified and humanized childbirth among others (Agudelo-Ortiz, 2014).

In the discovery of this region of Latin America, two elements were essential: one of an epistemic order regarding the multiplicity of knowledge, and its concealment under the category of "shamanism". In my journey, I found a vast amount of knowledge, expertise, resources and lives dedicated to the understanding of the web of life that connects human beings with the world and the cosmos, linked by the purpose of personal, family and collective care, to which not the slightest justice is done when such reduced and flat categories as "traditional medicine" or "shamanism" are used. On the other hand, a methodological element for this research had to do with the proposal of the Colombian sociologist Alfredo Molano (1998), who affirmed that those who want to learn must do it with their feet. And although this was not a literal resource in my

[6] *Pachakutik* refers to an idea of the Andean cosmovision in which the world is turned upside down to welcome a change of cycle, the entry into a dimension of space-time that appears inverted with respect to the previous one.

[7] The three levels correspond to the production of the normative framework and public policies on intercultural health, the experiences of the intercultural health services created throughout the region, and the experiences of the different agents related to this field, from the multiplicity of traditional or ancestral medicine practitioners to workers in the recently created ministries of health and departments of intercultural health.

case, it did mean for me the need to travel along the coast, the highlands and the Amazon in search of these experiences, and to listen to the protagonists about what it was like to live these transitions towards a new recognition of national histories, of the role of the different peoples in all of this, their processes of struggle and memory. For Molano (1998), walking besides the people we work with, inscribes the researcher in the order of their lives. This is a kind of epistemic and methodological condition that allows us to be ready to listen to people's life stories, as bearers of the keys to the meaning of the historical configurations of which they are a part.

The encounter with this Latin America, overflowing with hope, with knowledge to support life, with resistance and openness to embrace a necessary paradigm shift for the planet, left an indelible mark on my way of seeing the world. Understanding that in the very knowledge of the people who heal there are keys to counter-hegemonic[8] action has been the possibility of turning around a story that had been transmitted to me until now as being lacking, as insipient, as marginal. Later on, I will take up elements of this discussion, which are central to the conception and practice of research for peace that we promote at the Latin American Council for Peace Research—CLAIP.

While I was still in the process of writing my master's thesis, I received an invitation from my mentor Lucero to join a group of graduates from our faculty to do doctoral studies at the Institute of Thought and Culture in Latin America—IPECAL. She thought that as a project, IPECAL was an obvious complement to our undergraduate training process, centred on the problem of knowledge production and anchored in the historical experience of Latin America. This marked the beginning of an enduring reflexive practice: interrogating the processes of political subjectivity by entangling them with my own lived experience, a framework that has consistently shaped my pedagogy.

Professors Hugo Zemelman and Estela Quintar ran the institute at that time under the slogan of "teaching how to think". Today, despite Hugo's death, the slogan remains firm and progress is being made in the configuration of a community of meaning that has multiple expressions in our continent. I am fortunate to gravitate in this space in which I have recognized an alternative for the future that combines both epistemic action

[8] The first time I heard this clear and powerful way of connecting different elements of ancestral knowledge with the health movement was from Vivian Camacho, Bolivian midwife, doctor and activist for hope.

and love as an ethical-political practice. Hugo and Estela coincided in Mexico as exiles from the dictatorships of the Southern Cone. He was Chilean, a recognized intellectual from Salvador Allende's close circle, a prolific writer and author of what we considered to be our epistemic matrix. She, an Argentinean, preschool teacher and anthropologist, found a way to connect the epistemic framework developed by Hugo with didactic devices.

At IPECAL we speak of the epistemology of historical consciousness and non-parametric didactics as fundamental axes of postgraduate training (Paredes, 2013; Zemelman, 2019; Hidalgo, 2020; Quintar, 2021). It is a project that takes up and updates the Latin American legacy of pedagogies, psychologies and philosophies of liberation, in which the possibility of reading one's own history is transformed from a cognitive act to a political act. In this sense, the question of knowledge production and social transformation go hand in hand, materialized in a training proposal that prioritizes the activation of knowledge processes over the transmission of information. This presupposes an understanding of knowledge as a relationship, of the relationship of the subject with his or her world, and therefore the need to approach the phenomena of subjectivity as a historical process, which accounts for the interconnection between subjective structures and social processes.

Among my companions were normalistas and educators, activists from different social movements, fellows from ethnic communities, ex-political prisoners and cultural workers, working together in understanding Latin America through our stories and faces. This pedagogical experience materializes one of Hugo Zemelman's most remembered phrases that has to do with what we recognize as the dialectic of the subject: the need to recover the world in the subject and to recover the subject in the world.

## Political Subjectivity and Teaching Practice

My teaching practice has been rooting on the question for what we call "political subjectivity". Several elements are important in this regard. The first is a strict understanding of the social origin of subjective processes, whereby the question of how the historical experience of our country impacts on our ways of being and understanding the world cannot be secondary. However, armed conflict in Colombia, the dynamics permeated by drug trafficking and parapolitics were like a backdrop, a wallpaper on the walls, which when seen every day, immovable, always present,

ceases to be perceived and becomes a decoration but not a question, or at least not for Colombian psychology.

I often found myself in the paradoxical situation of answering students' questions or complaints about why work "again" on the armed conflict in Colombia. This situation seems to me symptomatic; it is the expression of different questions intertwined in the subtext of the scene: how do generations of young university students come to consolidate for whom conflict is nothing more than a subject they are tired of talking about, even though it permeates all levels of our daily lives? Could it be a way of manifesting the impossibility of processing our own historical experience marked by the trauma of incessant violence? What characteristics do these young people have in common and why do they show themselves to be dispassionate? How do we think about the processes of political subjectivity in subjects which do not wish to interrogate reality but rather to silence it?

Our central argument of the approach to the processes of political subjectivity was defined in the classroom exercise itself with the different groups of students with whom this conversation was woven. On the one hand, political subjectivity is not granted. Being alive and being a political subject are not equivalent. This means that political subjectivity is a process that requires work, it must be produced. The question takes on a new meaning for teaching practice: what does it imply to understand and how to promote these processes? If political subjectivity is understood as a category according to which the subject is capable of locating and recognizing himself in his own reality, becoming aware of his role as an agent, of the strength of his action on the determination of himself and of history, then how to link education and classroom processes, the deepening of the return to oneself, as an active search for the keys of meaning that organize the subject's experience and the search for social justice?

These questions are not trivial in a faculty whose main purpose is to train social researchers from undergraduate level, with an emphasis on the production of knowledge and social transformation. The qualitative leap was to look at subjectivity from this perspective. The notion of "changing scales" contributes central methodological and epistemological elements in this sense: what is the role of subjectivity and the return to the self in the processes of social research, how to reveal the expulsion of the subject from these processes and their political effects, how to demonstrate the transformation of subjectivity as a commodity, what relation does all this have with counter-hegemonic struggles? The continuity of subjective

structures and social structures are here the key to tensing, from the gaze of the subject, the cultural matrices that produce it, to recognize in each life not an individual but a universe of meanings and possibilities in the world, and to intervene and transform from intersubjectivity the different scales in which violence is maintained as a possible, legitimate, habitual route. It is around these questions that our class of special research techniques in cultural psychology was transformed into a laboratory of peace education.

Delving deeper into our socio-cultural fabric and into what kind of subjects we Colombians are, confronted us with at least three major initial elements: first, the need to break with the idea of the "oldest democracy in Latin America". The contrast with the processes of dictatorship throughout the region seemed to distance us from the so-called "brilliant experience of Colombian democracy". However, the country's incessant armed violence, which we cannot even agree on when it began, provided clues for this reflective work. Second, the encounter with our most salient yet deeply contradictory characteristics: our renowned kindness and generosity, and our famous capacity for violence. The contrast of the warmth of our expressions with the overflowing forms of violence opens the window to the profound intertwining of both elements in our ways of being in the world. Finally, the need to break through the cognitive disposition behind the expression "this has always been like this". This act implies unveiling the naturalization of our contradictions and rootedness in the darkest and somehow "inevitable" violence, and the recognition that for many generations we have known no other way of living together than the one where difference is intolerable and therefore susceptible of being eliminated.

Somehow our experience converges on that spectrum of darkness and hope that exists in a complementary way and not as a binary struggle between opposites. We are the best and the worst version of ourselves. Our peoples, our ancestors, our families, as Colombians we have been through so much that if we wanted to narrate it, perhaps it would seem that we are exaggerating. We are a legless body, but we walk, pain is the engine of our hope. We are a people deeply alive, complex, but ready to live a pleasant, dignified life.

We can acknowledge the deep traces of these ambiguities within us, it is also true that we have an extraordinary resource to broaden our experience. The Colombian territory is inhabited by millenary peoples with vast knowledge, ready to fight for their survival and to build bridges towards

better ways of coexisting with mother earth. Here it is important to distance ourselves from romantic visions of ethnic communities. This means that far from conceiving them as pure, untouched, or problem-free entities, indigenous and Afro-Colombian peoples in fact face a series of difficulties and very complex social transformations, which they nonetheless resist based on knowledge and, above all, lives that are a fundamental bastion for building alternatives for the future. They have been resisting colonization and so physical and cultural extinction for centuries, so although in many cases the situation is dramatic, they are also bearers of counter-hegemonic responses, options and epistemologies.

## Subjectivity and Peacebuilding

The relationship between subjectivity and peacebuilding began for me with the question of the links between violence and subjectivity. This question became a priority for me. As a Colombian, as a psychologist, as a peace activist, how has the armed conflict affected me? What kind of subjects are we in Colombia; how does the violence affect us; how can we account for it? Some people have been victims, others have been perpetrators and others have been witnesses. But none of us could claim to be exempt or unaware of what's been happening throughout the country for decades.

Two elements profoundly marked my view in this regard. On the one hand, research on mental health in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes at a transcendental moment in the process of the "Justice and Peace" programme of the government of Álvaro Uribe Vélez, which led to the demobilization of the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC), probably the bloodiest group in our history;[9] and on the other hand, a trip to Palestine in which for several months I was able to accompany a small community organization in the West Bank city of Nablus.

The research with the Colombian Agency for Reintegration—Nowadays Known as Colombian Agency for Reincorporation and Normalisation

[9] The AUC was a paramilitary group that was organized in Colombia in the 1990s as a response from different political and economic sectors that initially joined forces to counteract the actions of guerrilla groups, and which a couple of years later would emerge as a regime of blood and fire that operated in complicity with state forces to eliminate any form of diverse thinking, leaders or community-based social organizations (CNMH, 2018).

(ARN)—presented several challenges. On the one hand, the initial proposal was to develop a mental health screening process for the population in the Reintegration Process, especially those who had been in the programme for more years, i.e., those who were close to six years in the Reintegration Route. Like many DDR programmes in the world, the route was focused on the return to civilian life of the ex-combatants mainly through employability. Due to the nature of the Justice and Peace process in 2005, most of the people who took part in ACR's programmes were former combatants of paramilitary groups who were not asked how the war had affected them.

This was very important and very clear. The type of violence centred on torture, forced disappearance, massacres and violence that beyond death itself has the purpose of eradicating any attempt at social organization, made the question of the meaning of the experience to be perceived as a sort of Pandora's box that no one wanted to open, sensing that the horrors of war would overwhelm both the institutional and professional possibilities of those who supported this process as "reintegrators". No one knew exactly or dared to ask how deep the mark of the violence was for these people. Therefore, it was not clear what could be expected at the end of this process and whether once they had gone through the reintegration route they were necessarily "ready" to return to civilian life outside the supervision of the programme. In terms of their mental health, it was considered necessary to explore the potential risk that they might be sending "ticking time bombs" to civilian life.

As researchers, we took advantage of the request to incorporate mental health screening as one of several steps in a research-intervention process with the ACR population, not only with ex-combatants but also with those who had been accompanying the process for so many years as reintegration professionals. This allowed us to incorporate a vision that exceeds the pathological expression of symptoms and structuring elements of personality, incorporating an inquiry into the axes of life trajectories and quality of life of ex-combatants. In addition, we linked the lessons learned from the experience of those professionals dedicated to accompanying these transitions from armed life to civilian life.

Finding academic peers for this work was not easy. Initially, many doors were closed since we were working precisely with those who have been the perpetrators of crimes whose violence reached a level of obscenity that we are still unveiling. Also, due to the fact that the nature of the demobilization of the paramilitaries left many doubts and had many shadows,

including a narrative dimension that considered the people who were part of these groups as "rescuers" of the country, understanding their task as a sort of "cleansing" of the actions caused by the guerrillas, to whom they wanted to attribute the responsibility for the greatest difficulties of the country for several decades. Many of our peers were working with the populations that had been victimized in the context of the conflict, and the idea of working with the perpetrators was immediately dismissed by them.

Despite this, we formed a group of three universities that advanced the process and with which we reached several key results. From the perspective of diverse and broad psychological currents, we worked in depth on the link between mental health and DDR processes. Thus, we proposed the need to understand the contexts that produce subjects for war, and how different trajectories of interpersonal vulnerability become a fundamental input for illegal armed groups. The question of how damaged are these subjects who enter and take part in the war, and the recognition that there is no "subjective predisposition" or "personality" to become involved in the war, but rather that what exists in Colombia are contexts and dynamics that produce illness, and that added to the structural deficiencies of many territories, end up being the scenario in which illegality and recidivism very easily appear as ways of "making a living". Beyond war pathologies such as post-traumatic stress disorder, mental health was revealed as a question about the quality of life and the life trajectory of people.

Personally, this work had a profound impact on my understanding of the dynamics of war. Initially, as a researcher, I was also very apprehensive about working with this population. Knowing the horrors committed by the AUC and the conflict dynamics they generated, I had developed a combination of fear, uncertainty and even anger. All of this was transformed as the work progressed and we got closer to the stories of these people. In my head only a "monster" could act with such a capacity for violence that left the action of these groups all over the country. However, I found no monsters. All I found were humans torn apart by the stories of precariousness, deprivation and structural vulnerability used by the conformation of illegal armed organizations.

The screening work (Aponte & Zapata, 2018), which was carried out with a population of about 40,000 people, showed clear indications: the cycles of violence in our country were being recycled in processes of individual suffering, accentuated by the impossibility of achieving a dignified life. Quality of life points directly to the possibility of breaking out of those

cycles. The next step in this process was the generation of a "Multimodal Strategy in Mental Health" for the entire population in the reintegration process, whose axes revolved around the consideration of bonds, autonomy, and the production of meaning, in a perspective that involves the levels of individual, family and territorial attention for the reintegration work. Thus, the DDR process has a fundamental pillar in mental health work and not only in employability (Aponte et al., 2019), as it has been conceived in many DDR processes in the world.

Around the same time, while returning from the International Peace Research Association (IPRA) Conference in Sierra Leone, I had the opportunity to visit Palestine. Thanks to the networks of friends and colleagues, I contacted an organization working to promote health services in the West Bank. After only a couple of days there, my questions about the relationship between subjectivity and violence exploded in my head in the face of a context that struck a chord with me almost immediately. I set out to find a way to return to collaborate with the organization a few months later. I soon returned to stay for about three months. Rather than seeking to understand the Middle Eastern context in such a short time, I was seeking to interrogate my own experience.

The time there was very challenging. On the one hand, the difficulty in processing the daily injustice and arbitrariness experienced by Palestinians, which I had to experience to varying degrees, led me to develop a reflection on the psychological mechanisms of the occupation. On the other hand, although I made good friendships during that time, it was difficult for me to relate to my peers coming from countries in the global north from their "volunteering" perspective.

My historical experience resonated with that of the Palestinians and not so much with that of the volunteers. I grew up on the side of the so-called "vulnerable", not on the side of "those who help the vulnerable" and this was evident in the conversations and the ways in which we approached what we experienced every day. For example, faced with any IDF member's request for their IDs or any attempt to interrupt their passage, the volunteers, mostly European citizens, would simply show their passports, and annoyingly allude to citizenship, rights and so on. Indeed, their passports had that halo of protection from which they got safely away with it. My reaction was rather cautious. I presented my passport trying to diminish any expression that would make any encounter an unnecessary incident, knowing that a submission in front of an armed force, even a legal one, can always end up worse than imagined. The discussion of justice and

citizenship is not such when we have grown up knowing that the law and the mechanisms of democracy exist at formal levels in our countries, but do not materialize in the experience of "ordinary people".[10]

Despite the cultural distances, in transit between the two sides of the wall, the chaotic order of the Arab world felt much more familiar to me than the ease of life in modern Israeli cities. Nevertheless, from the outset, I made a point of not entering into pre-judgements; I was also interested in hearing the version of the many Israelis with whom I shared space. The possibility of moving around the territory allowed me a privileged setting for observation and conversation for several reasons. Palestinians have very limited mobility because of the "unwritten policy" of the occupying forces throughout the territory, but it is also true that except for young people doing their compulsory service in the army, Israelis have no idea what life is like for Palestinians on the other side of the wall.

I want to recover two central elements from this experience. Approaching with my questions about the relationship between subjectivity and violence allowed me to give myself space to listen to, question and talk to as many people as I could from both sides. I was deeply moved by the depth of their stories, their pain, their fears. I heard in them also our stories, our pains and fears. Above all, I found in them a desire for justice, for truth, for a better future, interspersed with the manipulation of discourses about the other that do not allow us to lower our guard. There are enough reasons and arguments on both sides. I believe that both in the experience in the Middle East and in Colombia, approaching the pieces that remain on each side of our harrowing war, and not only on each side's shore, could give us clues on how to find paths towards the construction of a common future beyond the apparently irreconcilable differences.

On the other hand, after writing my reflections on the psychological mechanisms of the Israeli occupation, I was left with the feeling that I had only been able to develop half of a much more complex story. By this I mean that Palestinians are much more than victims of Israel. Even though Israel has the most sophisticated army in the world, it has economic and

[10] This is no small thing. There is a colonial view of the "vulnerable subject" that has been constructed based on our populations in the global south. Many volunteers, however well-intentioned, think that we have not built a stronger voice to claim justice or our rights, for example. In this perspective, ours would be a kind of infantile citizenship. Assuming this position hides the fact that it is by virtue of unequal relations with their own countries in the dynamics of the world system that we are constantly killed and subjugated for demanding our rights in the context of corruption and impunity.

political power and influence in its alliances with most Western countries, it cannot prevent life from germinating among Palestinians. "Resist to Exist" would be the phrase that best captures this experience. No matter how many attempts are made to wipe the Palestinians off the map, they continue to exist. They continue to have children, they continue to make lives, they continue to drink tea.

I hope to have the opportunity to return to write also that Palestinians made it out of the open genocide that is being developed against them. As I write this, several months of televised genocide have passed in Gaza. It has been months of witnessing the genocidal actions of the state of Israel, which insists on acting in self-defence. According to Erika Guevara Rosas, Senior Director for Research, Advocacy, Policy, and Campaigns at Amnesty International, "Israel has relentlessly and mercilessly turned Gaza into an inferno of death and destruction" (Amnesty International, 2025). Public demonstrations are taking place across the globe, the International Court of Justice has pronounced to "prevent" Palestinian genocide, and yet, with shame we continue to see how every day we fail as humanity to stop this barbarism which now includes a nuclear alarm with the role of the US and Iran.

In the meantime, in 2017, in Colombia we had already gone through four years of the uncertainty that accompanied every day of the peace negotiations between the national government and the oldest guerrilla group on the continent, the Revolutionary Forces of Colombia—People's Army—FARC-EP, and the first year after the signing of the long-awaited Peace Accord was underway. The combatants had not yet handed in their weapons and were concentrated in what at the time were called Transition Zones (ZVT). In these areas there were social zones where only some members of the guerrilla could meet civilians, while there was a whole other area where the combatants went about their daily lives, while the transition to the laying down of arms took place.

It was through the student movement represented in the Federation of University Students—FEU, that the first national call was made for universities and the academic community in general to form what would become a Peace Brigade throughout the country as a way of defending these agreements. I had recently returned from Palestine, with the questions and resonances of our experience more vivid than ever. Interacting, hearing first-hand the voices and perspectives of peace signatories who had not yet taken the final step of laying down their arms, was something I had not imagined as a teacher.

Moreover, we were still carrying the burden of having lost a popular consultation in the form of a plebiscite on the support of the Colombian people for these agreements. Incredibly, we had said no to stopping the war! A generational rupture was evident in the social mobilizations of the time, in which young people and students were once again the protagonists. So we took on the challenge that remains to this day of continuing to connect our classroom spaces with the discussions of how the panorama for life is advancing, transforming, and reconfiguring after the FARC's exit in the exercises we call "Field Trips".

Sharing in a village whose neighbours have almost all been guerrilla fighters was profoundly transformative. Listening to their stories, understanding their struggles, the challenges, assuming the responsibility that comes with being linked to these realities is what has raised the need to develop a particular way of looking at psychology in Colombia. Exposing ourselves to these realities as a possibility to think about the pain of the past, the paradoxes of the polarities of the present to imagine alternatives for the future. In the narrative about wars between good guys and bad guys there is no space for the deep complexity of human experience. Seen at close quarters, our reality again reflects glimpses of violated humanities channelled by war, social injustices recycled into individual suffering. But also joy, honour, loyalty, dignity.

Our historical complexity as a nation continues to reconfigure itself years after the signing of this agreement with the FARC, and we are currently facing a new challenge with the peace process with the guerrilla of the National Liberation Army—ELN. The dynamics in the territories are still in dispute, and we cannot yet claim victory. On the contrary. So many years of war no longer have to do with horizons of political dispute, but rather with a war based on the production of value from dispossession, territorial control and the enormous surplus value of illicit economies. In this equation, we Colombians are nothing more than a pawn on someone else's chessboard. The lives of our young people driven by precariousness into the bowels of armed groups and illegality are the biggest fire in this war machine that we have been grinding to a pulp. Nevertheless, the perceived movement fills us with hope and strength to keep rising against death.

## Paths of Historical Imagination

As a psychology teacher, I focus my practice on helping students understand that our work is to accompany other people so that they can live lives that are worth being told. Walking the paths of the struggle for the good life, the *sumak kawsay*, as well as the constant learning with our indigenous and Afro-descendant colleagues, and actively listening to their cosmovisions and laws of origin have broadened the horizons in the search for the world we want to live in. I have understood that interculturality holds the keys we need to unwind from this history that has made of us nothing more than commodities, partially alive, to continue feeding someone else's pockets.

We live a generalized experience of disenchantment with the world. Daily, we inhabit a world in disarray. The return of fascism and white supremacy ideas, the popular election of rulers whose contradictions are only contrasted by their popularity on social networks, the return to our obscure mechanisms of elimination of the other, incapable of reconciling conflicts through dialogue, the voracity over the life of our bodies-territory, are just some of the nuances of the life in which they want to insert us as the only reality. But in addition, instead of a collective malaise, they sell us a package of individual suffering. Those who can't keep up with the pace, well, let them stay behind.

Mexican colleague Úrsula Oswald has been developing the concept of patriacene, to reveal the nuances according to which it is not only an anthropocentric impact on the destiny of our mother earth that we are causing, but the effect of a patriarchal conception that has exercised sustained violence against the expression and vitality of the feminine to govern our form of existence. Sayak Valencia (2010), of Chicano origin, speaks to us of this gore capitalism of the border, which devours women's bodies and spits them out in pieces that which the narco inscribes in the social body, and which is no longer a restrictive phenomenon of Mexico or Colombia, but is apparently the rhythm that is being imposed even in the global north.[11]

[11] A similar narrative runs through the continent from north to south: the fear of insecurity. The fear of interaction with others. The fear of all others, the fear of television, the fear of losing everything. And for this, the only solution we have been presented with is to surrender our autonomy to the increasingly repressive systems of militarization, of hyper-surveillance by security cameras, of the business of mistrust and imprisonment.

Shards of a memory of wellbeing that appears irrevocably lost. That is what we have everywhere, and that is what we will have to build with. But also with what is not seen, with what is emerging, with what did not mature in the projects of the historical dissidences but is still the seed of our dreams. Just as the Colombian Truth Commission reflects us, we are a broken mirror that nevertheless looks to the future with hope (2022). We are an effervescent and beautiful chaos that moves to the rhythm of the sound that is played to us. We are not afraid of the margins because we have always inhabited them.

We will no longer be someone else's vulnerable subject. But neither will we be the academics who enthusiastically see themselves as part of the academic communities of the global north, making ourselves the subject of their research and intervention. Our struggle is for life, our life, the life of humanity, not the life of others whom we believe to be vulnerable from our academic privilege. More than ever, the answers lie in the exchange of radical practices between social movements and critical thinking inside and outside the academy, so that the future becomes possible again. Radicalizing our options means transversalizing care and reciprocity.

We talk about the exchange of scales between subjective and social structures as a key to social struggle, but we also need to root ourselves in the ancestral knowledge as sons and daughters of mother earth. We need subjects capable of understanding the moment of history we live in and face it with clarity. Talking about mental health requires a new meaning as a political horizon to get out of suicide by dispossession and excess. We need to end the pathologization of everyday experience when what we have is a way of life that produces suffering to profit from it.

In Colombia, for example, we speak of the "rope epidemic" to describe the phenomenon that is being increasingly and dramatically expressed among the indigenous population, particularly the youngest. Suicide in this perspective is one of the symptoms of the dispossession—of land, knowledge and especially of their identity—to which the younger generations of these ethnic groups are being subjected. According to El País (2023), data from the Colombian report "Así Vamos en Salud", while the national rate is five suicides per 100,000 inhabitants, in 2020 the department of Amazonas almost quintupled that figure with a rate of 23.6 per 100,000 inhabitants. Its counterpart in the global north is expressed among very young people, particularly those belonging to racialized groups who are constantly bombarded by discrimination and bullying. According to the *Los Angeles Times* (2023), in 2022 the suicide rate in the

US reached an all-time high. Moreover, in countries such as Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Norway, suicide has been described as a crisis of meaning among young people hand in hand with a problem of substance abuse in the population. Paradoxically, the civilizational model that appears hegemonic before our eyes kills us at both ends of the social scale.

Healing from violence is in this perspective not only a global mental health issue but needs to be linked and grounded in frameworks of radical action for regeneration, for breaking out of the trap of ableism, of the alienation of capitalism and consumerism as the only forms of fulfilment. And for all of this we need to get out of the classroom, out of our mobile phones. This is an urgent call to inhabit generosity and joy to honour our dead, our wounds, to make way for something more than the heartbreaking tragedy of our history. To collectively inhabit friendship is to brew a potion against oblivion. This process transforms private affection into a public shield against historical amnesia We must cultivate structuring solidarity as we have learned to cultivate from agroecology and permaculture, proving forcefully the value of diversity, respecting the times and needs of each species in the framework of a living network that reproduces itself.

When you encounter traditional healers, they usually ask: how is your heart? They will probably then also address other symptoms. Perhaps our world now requires a similar look. To first ask ourselves how our heart is and then progressively give way to intervene those symptoms of our civilizational model that produce discomfort. It may be that extinguishing the inner fire is one of the ways that will enlighten us towards the construction of a new normalcy (Ramos et al., 2022).

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# Peacebuilding by Women in a Convulsing Latin America: Research, Negotiation, and Mediation in Conflicts

*Úrsula Oswald-Spring*

## Introduction

As Secretary General of CLAIP, I organized and supported regional peace organizations in Latin America and in the Global South. During the commemoration of its 40th anniversary, the progress of peace in the region was evaluated (Oswald-Spring & Serrano Oswald, 2018). Almost all former elected women were present in the meeting: Laura Balbuena, Diana de la Rúa, M. Eugenia Villarreal, S. Eréndira Serrano, and Marité Muñoz.

Our peace activities were linked to bottom-up social, environmental (Oswald-Spring 1996, 2019, and feminist movements (Reardon & Jenkins, 2007; ONU Mujer, 2022; Oswald-Spring, 2020, 2022a, 2022b, 2025; Oswald Spring et al., 2009, 2014, 2015, 2019), and we supported the foundation of the Peace and the Peasant University in the South (Oswald-Spring & Salinas (2002). Young activists were trained to deal with human, gender, and environmental security and peace challenges (HUGE security; Oswald-Spring, 2008) and upcoming

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conflicts (Oswald-Spring 2025). CLAIP evolved when democratic governments were established in South America. The democratization processes, structural and environmental peace, judicial process, and violence against new approaches tried to limit the improvement of the poorest strata of societies (Oswald-Spring & Briones, 1977). Easy targets were the indigenous and peasant girls, who lacked empowerment as well as means to defend themselves from organized crime, human trafficking, and violent local authorities (Oswald-Spring, 2001). I also worked with a number of members of International Peace Research Association (IPRA) and diverse research groups and activists on issues relating to food and environmental security and developed a gender perspective during this almost five decades.

Inside IPRA, I supported diverse study groups. During the General Conference held in Durban, I was elected President of IPRA. Later in Sierra Leone, I assumed the job as Co-Secretary General of IPRA. During my term, the IPRA General Conference was organized in Ahmedabad in India. It commemorated Gandhi's nonviolent struggle for Indian independence from British colonial rule. I also participated in diverse peace activities and mediations and focused on the consolidation of the multiple study groups and regional associations. I personally participated in the peace conference in Africa organized by AFPREA, in Asia organized by APPRA, and almost all conferences organized by CLAIP in Latin America. With the advent of globalization and growing polarization of North and South and also within the countries themselves (Stiglitz, 2010), frequent eruption of disasters (IPCC, 2021) producing forced climate migrants (Serrano, 2018), and launch of hybrid wars to access cheap labor and resources of the Global South (Friedrichs, 2018), the need for new approaches for peace studies was stressed. Consequently, women from poor countries got increasingly involved in mediation and peace negotiations in different parts of the world (De la Rúa, 2010).

Within this complex socio-environmental context, I got involved in a variety of peace activities, focusing on female food security in orchards, alternative water management, gift economy, encouraging adaptation as well as resilience against extreme events, developing frameworks for reducing gender violence and initiating legal and practical actions to protect highly affected social groups and regions from violence (Oswald-Spring, 2000, 2004, 2007, 2012, 2018, 2021). At the Metropolitan and later the National Autonomous University, I tried to integrate interdisciplinary research groups to overcome the structural impediments of poverty,

undernourishment, and gender violence. During my sabbatical years, I worked on ecofeminism and trained public functionaries from ASEAN countries at the Chulalongkorn University in Thailand to prevent the eruption of extreme events, evacuation of people to safe places, and establishment of early warning procedures in the region and found a postgraduate College in Tlaxcala (COLTLAX).

Working with the interdisciplinary research groups from all over the world and passionate reflections in CLAIP and IPRA helped me to deepen and promote different theoretical conceptualizations. Consequently, alternative approaches to human, gender, and environmental peace and security or HUGE security (Oswald, 2009) widened and deepened the understanding of security and emerging development challenges. The occurrence of complex disasters and prevailing socio-environmental vulnerability forced people to migrate (Oswald-Spring, 2023). Militarized borders and climate migrants obliged the researchers to understand the history of Earth not as a neutral scientific concept of Anthropocene (Crutzen, 2002) but as a planet entrenched in thousands of years of patriarchy, a term which can better be described as Patriacene (Oswald-Spring, 2025).

## African Experience of Violence, War, and *Ujamaa*

The urge to diminish violence and war began to surge in my late adolescence when an ethnic conflict erupted in Burundi in 1965. We had to flee with a group of women and babies. For weeks we suffered during the flight from the atrocities of a civil war and cruel mechanisms of brutally killing the adversary. This experience later led me to study the mechanisms of preventing and reducing violence by peacebuilding. Living and studying for several years in the recently decolonized African countries enhanced my awareness regarding entrenched mechanisms of internal colonialism (González Casanova, 2003) put into practice by an emerging local bourgeoisie and the neocolonialism (Oswald-Spring & Brauch, 2021) of the former colonizers (Fanon, 1961). I also became aware of the global political and financial controls (Stiglitz, 2010).

The traumatic memory of Burundi caught in ethnic riots never leaves me. However, it has also induced me to continuously search for peace and peaceful resolution of conflicts (Oswald-Spring, 2003). Small wonder therefore that small steps and big steps taken anywhere for peace attract my attention and keep my hope alive in the better and happier future.

That is why I looked at the famous Arusha Declaration and the concept of *Ujamaa* with great interest though I was very young during this period. Released by the freedom fighter and later President of Tanzania—Julius Nyerere in February 1967, the Arusha Declaration was an important political statement of the African continent for a peaceful, dignified, and prosperous future and for a peaceful future-building. Likewise, the concept of *Ujamaa* looked very attractive and promising. It called for self-reliance and presented alternatives and different ways for the newly decolonized Tanzania. The Swahili word *Ujamaa* meaning fraternity entrenches social justice and equity through community and mutual respect. This African philosophy included reciprocation, responsibility, and cooperation for achieving common goods for all. Julius Nyerere often explained the concept by saying that he would welcome a guest, but after two days of care, he would give a shovel to him for working on the field. This example explained a possible way how Tanzania could achieve self-sufficiency in food and avoid dependency upon foreign countries.

Nyerere was a former teacher and his pedagogy influenced the whole African continent and his country. He trained his nation for freedom, human dignity, and democratic governance and helped the country deal effectively with the issue of colonial inequity among people and ethnic groups. His message was taken up with full earnest at official and popular levels. The viewpoint was appreciated that eliminating poverty, ignorance, and disease was possible through cooperation among people and ethnic groups and with a focus on gender equity, and the protection of collective ownership of land and resources does stimulate everybody to work for well-being, peace, and nonviolent security. His view was well-received that the African Unity should evolve without corruption or arms trade so that the organization could negotiate with all peacefully and won't be tempted to impose its will.

President Nyerere also supported other African countries in their liberation struggle and he gave me the opportunity to participate in the first *gacaca* (sitting on the grass) peace talks in Bujumbura, the capital of Burundi. Women at the catholic mission recorded my role during the flight toward a refugee camp in Tanzania. This historical remembrance created an initial confidence among the affected Tutsi women and encouraged them to sit down with the Hutu men who were responsible for the massacre and destruction of their families. The objective was to achieve a traditional, community-based peace process, a peace process alien to the Western justice system. This restorative justice was considered as a healing

process for the inflicted traumas for both the victims and the perpetrators. It was also a mechanism to release poor Hutu men from prisons, who were accused of having committed massacres and had no access to a legal process and they were living there in inhuman conditions. The prisons were totally overcrowded and unable to provide adequate food and sanitary services and assure minimum human rights to the prisoners (Oswald-Spring, 1996). On the other hand, Tutsi women faced the shortage of male labor for the hard fieldwork as their husbands and older boys were killed during the civil war. Their families were often starving due to lack of food. The experience of *gacaca* restorative justice was repeated later in Rwanda (Buckley-Zistel, 2005). Both the authors are critical of the positive outcomes, while in Burundi the effort was done with less preparation. It was based on the traditional African process of reincorporation of ethnic groups separated because of resentment, political agitation, colonial division of countries, and power interests of an ethnic community dominating the country. As a witness and observer, all these human sufferings pained me a lot and the wounds are still not fully healed.

I had observed that the Tutsi women were often married to Hutu men or vice-versa—before the war. During our escape, our survival often depended on women of Hutu ethnicity. They gave us food, water, and sometimes clothes and advised us not to move freely as their husbands and armed groups could kill us there. It was during these weeks of walking that we understood the importance of sorority, independent of race, ethnicity, or color. It was supporting women in need in their struggle for survival. Their behavior and generosity let me understand that conflicts can be managed in a different way when power interests are not in play. This was also my personal experience with the first *gacaca* in Burundi which was promoted by former President Nyerere. He was convinced that it was necessary to heal the damage done to communities and families, who were not involved in the power struggles and were often obliged to participate in the ongoing genocide.

However, restorative justice was criticized by the people presenting occidental viewpoint. They were convinced that legal rights were eroded and crimes like men's violence against women were trivialized and women's bodies were converted into a battlefield (Lamb, 2020). Other studies indicate that restorative justice failed to promote fundamental changes and prevent recidivism (Rettig, 2008). The guidelines received from Julius Nyerere conveyed the message that the occidental legal system was not targeted. His effort brought positive fruits for the personal livelihood of

affected families, widows, and violated women and families at the local level. *Gacaca* also resolved the problem of overcrowded jails with prisoners without being tried. Struggle for supremacy did not occur at the local level.

However, and as the Rwandan genocide and the ongoing conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) revealed, imperialist designs to control access to power, public funds, and natural resources continued to play havoc in the region (Oswald-Spring, 2022b). Armed groups coming out from the Hutu-Tutsi battles reportedly continue to be active because of resource conflicts about tin, tungsten, tantalum, diamonds, copper, and gold in the East of the DRC. Genocidaires from the former ethnic conflicts and victims fleeing from both Burundi and Rwanda in different times and large refugee populations inhabiting eastern DRC to this day continue to suffer as uncontrolled armed groups threaten life and livelihood (UNHCR, 2023). Moreover, transnational interests often resort to attain assured access to precious mineral resources by financing unemployed armed groups (Parens, 2022). Clearly the complexity of these intermestic or hybrid wars cannot be resolved by local restoration of justice, where the UN Security Council was also unable to reduce one of the most violent conflicts in Africa (OHCHR, 2009).

These were the times when different peace concepts were being developed globally—all of them by Western men. After World War II, negative peace concept, driven by realist thinking, led to the creation of the UN Security Council. In other words, a violent worldview was reinforced. With negotiations for agreements between France and Germany, positive peace approaches emerged with new peacebuilding structures. Furthermore, the institutional consolidation was aroused by the consolidation of the European Union. ECLAC (2021), the Economic Community for Latin American and the Caribbean analyzes systematically the socioeconomic conditions in the region, putting a special focus on gender discrimination and peacebuilding (Inmujeres, 2023). Furthermore, the unequal outcomes of Latin American societies and rising demand for poverty alleviation brought into focus the concept of structural peace, where everybody should have a right to safe food, free access to education, clean water, and a dignified livelihood as specified in the Agenda 2030 of SDG.

Extreme climate disasters, loss of ecosystem services, and pollution of air and soil brought peace researchers to focus on sustainable or ecological peace (Oswald-Spring et al., 2014). UNESCO proposed a year and later a decade of culture of peace to give voice to indigenous people, save

discriminated languages, and support inhabitants of different races and colors. None of these efforts could address fully the root causes of violence, exploitation, and discrimination until Betty Reardon (1996) linked warfare to patriarchy. Engendering or engendered peace (Serrano-Oswald, 2009) insisted on the structural differences inside any society, between the Global North and South, and among ethnic groups and alternative thinking and behaviors of critical persons (Oswald-Spring, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic (Oswald-Spring, 2022a) and increasing climate disasters focused more on prevention and resilience building, where exploitation from multinational enterprises with their extra activism was destroying the life base for all human and natural beings. As a peace educator and scholar, all these happenings disturbed me a lot and I continued searching for peaceful solutions.

Based in Latin America, it always pained me to note that the region with its diverse cultural and natural resources was always considered by the global elite as an important region for control, where wars and conflicts submitted indigenous people for appropriating their resources (Raygorodetsky, 2018). Therefore, violence was increased through conquest, which later enabled multinationals and imperialist governments to obtain cheap access to human and environmental resources (Mies, 1985).

## Founding CLAIP to Overcome Military Coups, Impeachments, and Exploitation

Violence and imposition of neoliberal economy started in Latin America with the Chilean military coup in 1973, where General Pinochet together with Friedman from the Chicago School imposed the restrictive economy of neoliberalism (Bonnano, 2017) and violently terminated the government of legally elected President Allende. Imposition of military dictatorship had started in full swing in the region in the 1960s. Between 1967 and 1991, twelve Latin American countries underwent at least one military coup, with three in Haiti and Honduras, and eight in Bolivia. US military forces invaded countries across the Latin American and Caribbean region in an effort to promote its economic, political, and strategic interests with free access to valuable natural resources. This violent, aggressive policy caused the death of tens of thousands of civilians and rise of decades-long dictatorships (Pérez-Liñán & Polga-Hecimovich, 2016). Right-wing governments were imposed to serve imperialist interests and strengthen

the fight against communism in the region. The Condor repression led by the United States, produced a massive exodus of progressive academics and killed multiple young people.

The list of such academics—mostly men—who moved to other places in South America and the Caribbean or abroad and co-founded CLAIP is fairly long. It includes Somovía, Zavaleta, Pierre-Charles, Arroyo, Bacal, Herrera, Cavalla, Chateau, Portales, Varastogether, Zapata, Varese, Bustamante, Zemelman, Tanni, Dos Santos, Wanderley, Alfonso, O'Donell, Santistévan, Eguren, Sulmont, Carrizo, Libreros, Kowarik, Balvé, Lubliner, Marconi, Witt, Portocarrero, Alberti, Mejía, Havens, Figueroa, Weiskoff, Minelli, García, Briones, Trajtnberg, Varela, López, Gómez, Manduley, Matos, Llobet, Portantiero, Roncagliolo, Cotler, Meneses, S. González, Michelena, Gieseke, Brunner, Gerchunoff, French-Davis, Bengos among Mexican academics.

A number of scholars moved to public dependencies and academic centers in Latin America or outside the region, including the National Autonomous University of Mexico, FLACSO, ILET, University of Paris, National Agrarian University, Tampere Peace Research Institute, Latin American Study Center, Economic Institute of Peru, CICSO, Latin American Research Unit, and Casa Chile. In addition, several Marxian critical academics like Gonzalez Casanova, Stavenhagen, Bonilla, Labastida, Ceceña, López Díaz, Saxe-Fernandez, Reyna, Boils, Mitchel, Oliveira, Barkin, and Oswald-Spring promoted peace and conflict resolutions from National Autonomous University of Mexico, Metropolitan Autonomous University, El Colegio de Mexico, and the Center for Economic Studies of the Third World. In 1977, during the 7th IPRA Congress in Oaxtepec, Mexico, the Latin American Council of Peace Research (CLAIP) was founded. The then Secretary General of IPRA, Raymond Värynen, and UNESCO supported the efforts to consolidate CLAIP, controlled by military regimes and political dictatorships. The Center for Economic Studies of the Third World (CEESTEM in Spanish) offered an office. The peace researchers began to address the complexity of violence in the Latin American region, where the US School of America had trained the militaries of different regional countries to fight the apparent communist threat. These specialized troops were directly involved in the massacres and disappearances of especially young students and critical women (Agudela, 2022). They imposed by military force and hybrid wars neoliberalism in Latin America (Bonnano, 2017).

CLAIP was formed by individuals and institutions committed to peace and conflict resolution. More than 150 participants from all over Latin America including a few from the Caribbean (Santo Domingo, Haiti, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Panama, and Barbados) participated in the foundation of CLAIP. Some political refugees from Mexico, Europe, and the United States also joined this regional peace initiative. Most of the scientists, who enriched knowledge in the Mexican universities and research centers, were critical intellectuals and politicians expelled from their countries by repressive military regimes. As a matter of fact, our country had become their second homeland. As multiple military coups and fierce repression in the Southern Cone were drawing a roadmap for the future of the region, it was natural for the peace scholars of the region in particular to take up militarization as a crucial issue to study, research, and challenge. Other issues included inequality and poverty in the region. The issue of discrimination and violence against women and female participation in conciliation processes were taken up more seriously in the nineties, when female Secretary Generals of CLAIP led the organization (Osald-Spring et al., 2015).

One may add here that the CLAIP also allied itself politically with the emerging environmental and feminist movements against racism, ethnic minorities, and repressed minorities (Florescano, 2000). Again, with the gradual collapse of military regimes and holding of elections in South America, a democratization process started and environment for dialogue and peacebuilding improved. Many of the expellees returned to their countries of origin. They brought new ideas of peace and reconciliation with them and began to present these ideas in their talks with the media and in their addresses in the universities and other forums, and called for alternative and critical thinking in their countries. Some assumed public positions or joined international organizations. Women were in absolute minority when CLAIP started, their research improved during the next decade (Rosas Vargas, 2021) and the fragile organization was consolidated in due course with international support (Oswald-Spring & Briones, 1977).

When the foreign support ended and the Mexican universities established different priorities, women opted not only for issue-focused research but also for peace actions (Aliaga et al., 2021). Stimulated by Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, searchers for disappeared persons in Mexico during the Dirty War, promotion and application of the Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, follow-up of decades since the World Conference on Women in Beijing, feminization of the Economic

Commission of Latin America and Caribbean (ECLAC, CEPAL in Spanish), links with global feminist movements multiplied. In addition, the conclusion of African Women's Decade noticeably increased female participation in the nonviolent peace talks of Guatemala and El Salvador in Central America (Oswald-Spring, 2019).

Soon after being elected as the first female Secretary General of CLAIP, I began discussion with the regional organizations and the existing study groups regarding the reorganization of the regional networks of CLAIP, reinforcing the national peace associations in Brazil, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Central America, and Mexico. The integration of researchers and institutions who were founders or were promoting peace and conflict resolution joined the efforts of CLAIP, enabling these groups to create or consolidate national peace associations in different countries, mostly led by women. The biannual congresses of CLAIP helped to reinforce the consolidation of the organization. Rigoberta Menchú, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate, joined in 2003 the Congress of CLAIP in Yautepec, Mexico. This Congress laid special emphases on indigenous people, where representatives from all American countries participated, including the Innu from Canada and the Mapuche from Chile.

Laura Balbuena organized the following General Congress in Peru together with the Pontifical University. That was the time when the wounds caused by the massacres of the government officials and members of the Sendero Luminoso in the Andes were fresh and acutely painful. During the meeting, gender violence, discrimination of indigenous people, and poverty alleviation were systematically analyzed. The next Congress was held in 2010 in Argentina, organized by Diana de la Rúa Eugenio, and in collaboration with several universities and the Association for Peace (ARP). She focused on communitarian mediation after severe economic crises in Latin America, rise of unemployment, and big increase in poverty (De la Rúa, 2010). The Falkland War exposed the military repression of young students, where the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo denounced the disappearance of their grandchildren, who were given in adoption to military families and the assassination of their mothers. In Argentina, the complicity of the national and international elite was crucial in destroying the livelihood and future of major groups of poor people. It is important to mention here that 65% of their DNA, according to the local peace researchers, was related to their indigenous past, a point generally forgotten by the dominant occidental financial groups (Cabezudo, 2015).

In 2015, M. Eugenia Villarreal, together with FLACSO, organized the biannual meeting in Guatemala City. She has worked for decades on organized girl trafficking for sexual exploitation and forced labor (Villarreal, 2015). Little wonder therefore that certain engendered peace perspectives emerged (Serrano-Oswald, 2009) during this meeting and Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador questioned the efficiency of imposed ombudsmen for promoting peace processes. The Brazilian participants highlighted the contribution of medical students in public health, peacebuilding, and rights activism. Again, regional and global perspectives interlinked local peace efforts and a critical view of global peace activities was developed.

At the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of CLAIP, organized by UNAM in Mexico City, S. Eréndira Serrano as Secretary General and this author as President of the Commemorative Congress were able to bring most of the past Secretary Generals to the event (Oswald-Spring & Serrano Oswald, 2018a, b). Distinguished founder members such as Pablo González Casanova, former Rector of UNAM (González Casanova, 2003) and the Rector of the University of Peace in Costa Rica, Francisco Rojas gave keynote speeches during the celebration of four decades of peace research in Latin America (Rojas, 2018). The next Congress of CLAIP was organized in Brazil and special support was given to young researchers and activists. The youngsters, in particular, discussed, danced, and sang new peace songs during the beach camp event and introduced art and culture as a new force to struggle against poverty, discrimination, exploitation, and war. Special emphasis was given to the emerging peace process in Colombia.

Meanwhile efforts were also made to reorganize CLAIP. As a result, the General Assembly of CLAIP decided to elect two Secretary Generals—a woman and a man—from different countries of the region. In 2021, the Judge of Peace, Marité Muñoz and the peace researcher Esteban Ramos from The University of Honduras became new Secretary Generals and developed *The Journal of Latin American Studies of Peace and Conflict* from 2020 on (ReLaPaC, 2020-2025). A virtual regional conference was held during the complex COVID pandemic period with the slogan: "A New Normality is Possible and Necessary" (Ramos et al., 2022). Furthermore, Esteban Ramos consolidated at the National Autonomous University of Honduras *The Journal of Latin American Studies of Peace and Conflict* (2020–2025). Between 2020–2025, six volumes of the journal were prepared and published with the help of ten CLAIP members reviewing critically the articles. Their systematic reflection on Latin

American conflicts and peace processes fed back to local and national organizations. They promoted new impetus in the peace processes in Colombia, a country suffering the longest ongoing war in Latin America for six decades. The cumulus of multiple efforts reinforced the critical thinking of CLAIP. Again, developments like new cultural incentives, facilities of communication with the Internet, feminization of peace research, and new peace processes in Colombia helped CLAIP to overcome the physical limits of the lockdown of COVID-19.

The following Congress was held in Santiago, Chile in 2023. Multiple institutions involved in conflict negotiations in the region participated. It also referred to the new threats including those coming from civil-judicial conflicts. Concern was expressed about *lawfare*, which was supplanting former military coups allowing the drug war in all Latin American countries to undermine democratic institutions and local authorities, and also opening the door for greater US military involvement under the pretext of controlling drug smuggling into North America. However, this policy did not mention the lack of preventive measure for drug consumption in the North, massive inflow of illegal arms into the Latin American region, and the protection of money laundering activities in the North American tax havens. Therefore, peace and conflict resolution issues have changed during almost half a century of the existence of CLAIP. New threats and risks are emerging, almost always linked to the abundant natural resources of the region, where besides direct military interventions (Bolivia, Peru), *lawfare* (Mexico, Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, etc.) are the new foreign interventions with the connivance of national elite to control the nations, the regional governments, and their human and natural resources.

Since the destruction of democracy in Chile in 1973, military coups have taken place, often with the application of *lawfare* or illegal processes for the removal of presidents and mayors of important cities. Between 1978 and 2016, 19 constitutional presidents faced impeachments or they were forced to submit early resignation or the Congress dismissed them after democratic election. These illegal practices have diminished direct military interventions and increased frequent use of US military bases in the region. Now the same goals were being achieved through other methods, where international and national multinationals were allowed to maintain economic and hegemonic power (Pérez-Liñán & Polga-Hecimovich, 2016). New political actors also emerged. Again, 60 years of economic blockade of Cuba by the United States and the confiscation of Venezuelan gold in the United Kingdom and the United States have

impoverished the people of these countries and produced massive migrations. These processes also reveal the extent of adaptation and influence of the North American Monroe Doctrine on the present geopolitical conditions and intermestic warfare.

The XIV Congress of CLAIP was organized by Diana Marcela Agudelo Ortíz from April 1 to 4, 2025, at the University of Externado, Bogota in Colombia. The key focus was put on the victims of the armed conflict, and the threats to peacebuilding activists and human rights defenders, mostly members of local grassroots community organizations. The daily threats of a country in a longstanding war and a recent peace agreement allowed local and Latin American organizations to describe their responsibilities and threats, often related to the imposed drug war, paramilitary, and guerrilla threats. The affected region, especially the indigenous and peasant villages, explained the support of the war by the United States. This country is the greatest consumer of illegal drugs, the seller of deadly arms to cartels, and launders the money in their financial system. At the same time, Latin American people were assassinated or had to flee from their homes. The most exposed social groups insisted on the collective and individual promotion of peace, defending their human rights, and participating in social and community movements. Consolidating the peace agreement was a key theme during this Congress.

More than 400 assistants participated in the Congress, and multiple of them came from local or regional conflicts. They exchanged experiences and mechanisms for how they dealt with these threats. Another theme was the ongoing economic crises, promoted by the US administration and their tariff system. Latin American countries are highly impacted. The participation strengthened multiple study groups, established personal relations beyond national borders, sustained the organizational complexity of local associations, and exposed the present socioeconomic situation in the region. The Key Note address of Ángela María Buitrago, Minister of Justice and Rights in Colombia, insisted in truth on overcoming the traumas caused by the violent war and the multiple massacres. She explained the commitment of the present government to increase peace and security in their country and in all Latin America. The diversity of participants, committed to peace, social justice, and respect for human rights, enriches the knowledge and opens space for collaboration, and interchange of successful experiences.

The discussion also addressed the covered interventions of the United States in the region. A central point emerged in the hybrid or intermestic

war against Venezuela, the country with the largest hydrocarbon reserves in the world, ample gold reserves, abundant water, and exceptional biodiversity. Further, climate change is severely affecting the region (Moreno et al., 2021). Especially the countries located between the two warming-up oceans together with the islands in the Caribbean are frequently destroyed (Bruckmann et al., 2022). More dangerous hurricanes, forest fires in Chile, Canada, and the United States, torrential rains, and tornados in all countries also have increasingly affected the cities and infrastructure in the North. A number of global threats including those related to climate disasters (Moreno et al., 2021) and global shutdown of economic activities due to COVID-19 pandemic (Oswald-Spring, 2022a) are expressions of unsustainable management of the environment that are increasingly affecting the livelihood of the people.

Along with these complex socio-natural events, the United States is pressurizing the countries of Latin America to ally their national interests on the cost of well-being and economic growth in Latina America. However, their growing collaboration for commerce and investment with China has allowed most of the countries of the region to diminish their dependence on the United States and widen their contacts with Asia for commerce and trade. Brazil belongs to the founder countries of the BRICS and different Latin American countries are opening their exportation to China (Muñoz González et al., 2024).

While these and other developments were considerably influencing the peace and conflict thinking and trends in the Latin American region and beyond, I got more and more involved in peace studies and peace action. Furthermore, my search for an alternative future for Latin America and the world at large became more and more focused and intense.

## President and Secretary General of IPRA

During almost six decades of teaching and research in peace and conflict resolution, I actively participated in IPRA's activities and peace-teaching. The works edited by me were published in English, Spanish, Chinese, Portuguese, Finnish, Turkish, and German. Such works projected global reflections on issues relating to peace, security, environment, and emerging hybrid conflicts in the Global South and also offered feminist and decolonization perspectives and background.

Being involved in multiple peace activities in Latin America and elsewhere, I availed the opportunity of actively associating myself with the

IPRA Foundation and facilitate the award of small peace grants to IPRA members and especially to the researchers from the Global South. In addition, I looked after and managed IPRA's Food Study Group along with George Kent, and later the Study Group on Environment and Peace. During IPRA's 17th General Conference in Durban, South Africa, in 1998, I was elected as President of IPRA, and subsequently invited to support peace and conflict resolution in various countries in Africa and Central America, and the follow-up of the Oslo Accord to support the resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict. I also supported the moves and initiatives for transparency in the handling of the so-called Dirty War during the seventies in Mexico, living in the most violent region of the country—the state of Guerrero—and supporting affected communities, women, and families of persons who were disappeared by the militaries and local warlords. In addition, I joined the human rights groups and denounced violence and rights violations in Mexico, often linked to the imposed dug war by North America.

During the Presidency of IPRA, the elected Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak (1999–2001) invited me to participate in the Israel-Palestine negotiation process, which was based on Oslo Agreements.[1] Working with several Israeli and Palestinian peace researchers, we encouraged mediation and negotiations between all the involved parties in this longstanding conflict and highlighted the importance of access to water and sanitation to all the parties. A day before Barak took power, we started to establish some initial contacts in Lebanon, when the bomb alarm looked at us for six hours at a shelter place. Most of the Israeli people in the refuge wanted a definitive peace in this highly violent region, and hoped that the newly elected Prime Minister would find ways to achieve it. When we left the shelter, we found the road to the Lebanon border totally destroyed by Israeli missiles, an aggression committed by the then-Netanyahu government during his last day in office.

During these several weeks when I was in the Middle East, multiple peace meetings and academic seminars were organized. In Palestine, the Arab Peace Tent was a central place for formal and informal peace talks.

[1] As former Director of the Military Intelligence Service, Head of the Central Army Command, Chief of the Israeli General Staff, and General-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Ehud Barak was elected as President of Israel. He understood that the Oslo Accords could pave the way for new peace dynamics between the Israeli and Palestinian leadership. He also backed the idea of the withdrawal of Israeli army from Gaza and Jericho. Today, the possibility of a peaceful solution is far away.

Different committed groups met, prayed in their own languages, and discussed possible ways for a longstanding peace accord, hinting at a two-country solution. Oslo Accord was always the reference point, whenever interest groups inside and outside Israel tried to derail the real progress for a peaceful solution. The peace process between the Israelis and Palestinians was gradually blocked by occidental interests. Spreading misinformation about the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, the United States invaded the country in 2003. In 2026, Israel sent militaries into southern Lebanon. Worse still, the Arab Spring failed to eradicate autocratic governance in the Middle East and promote hope for democracy there. In the recent times, the oil-rich Gulf States have been initiating new processes of peace in the region, and Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, and Jordan have earned high ranking in the Global Peace Index of 2023.

The Sub-Saharan Africa is another region, which finds itself caught in multiple conflicts and desperately looks for a way out. Being aware of the peace and conflict dynamics in the region, IPRA organized a General Conference in 2016 in Sierra Leone to reinforce peace-building processes with an important participation of women. At the conference in Sierra Leone, I was elected as Secretary General of IPRA along with Katsuya Kodama from Japan for 2016–2020 period to support peace efforts everywhere. At the conference in Sierra Leone, the delegates were told about the destruction of the economies of Sierra Leone and several other African countries because of civil war, child armies, Ebola, extreme poverty, and widespread food insecurity. A group of enthusiastic youth formed the Sierra Leone peace section and got involved in the African Peace Research and Education Association (AFPREA), the regional association of IPRA in the African continent.

During this Conference, special attention was paid to the emerging conflicts in the continent devastated by arbitrary colonial borders, loot and plunder of abundant natural resources, ethnic oppressed groups, transnational interests, intervention of foreign governments, and former colonial powers, conflicts over land, undernourishment of children, poverty, and widespread corruption. Decolonization was another important theme, which was mainly brought in the conference by the African researchers (Oswald-Spring & Brauch, 2021). In addition, multiple local, national, and regional initiatives for conflict resolutions were discussed. The plight of the countries with abundant natural resources and threatened by intermestic and hybrid wars (Friedrichs, 2018) was also deliberated, and the researchers exposed the monopolist control of the valuable

national assets by transnational enterprises. However, what almost nobody ever mentioned was the fact that in some countries 90% of food was produced by women on small plots of lands.

In 2023, during the General Conference of IPRA in Trinidad and Tobago, Marite Muñoz from Argentina was elected Secretary General of IPRA together with Matt Meyer from the United States. She is trained as a lawyer and negotiator and she has been working as Judge of Peace at her hometown Tucuman. She was the former Secretary General of CLAIP and she is the Director of the Centro de Estudios e Investigación para la Paz (CEIP) at the University of San Pablo in Tucumán. She co-organized the conference of CLAIP with the hosts in Santiago, Chile in April 2023. The motto of the conference was: "From South to North, Building Good Living".

## Some Theoretical Reflections on Related Themes

As a peace researcher and founder member of CLAIP, I discussed the idea of structural, dissipative, and self-regulating peace systems with the students, and also women's new perspectives on peacebuilding, education, and conflict resolutions. Within this framework of internal dynamics and external structural changes, I was able to debate within CLAIP and IPRA several new concepts for understanding better the underlying processes of mediation, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding. I was awarded at the CLAIP Congress in Bogota for these 48 years of promoting peace, security, conflict conciliation, and environment with a gender approach.

Without any doubt, during the formative phase of the United Nations, World War II had influenced the realist and androgenic conceptualization of peace and security, and impacted the establishment of the Security Council. The five winner nations awarded themselves the veto right to impede any future resolutions that could affect their national interests. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union (URSS), and the emergence of 15 independent sovereign republics, North America's position as the sole economic and military superpower was affirmed and projected, and the hope for world peace after the end of the cold war began to diminish.

The expansion of NATO toward the countries formerly belonging to URSS provided an excuse to Russia to invade Ukraine. This war has been affecting the whole world as inflation in energy and food prices are producing crises and hunger in the poor African countries in particular. Worse still, the threat of nuclear war has increased. The Russian measures to

block the export of Ukrainian grains to the Global South and the sanctions from Occident against Russia to hurt its military, financial, and energy capacities are indirectly also affecting China—an emerging financial and commercial power challenging the US dominance (Kammer et al., 2023). While the people in Europe are suffering because of high inflation and cuts in social investments, the income of Rheinmetall—Germany's biggest weapon manufacturer—has increased by over 300 million euros between January 1, 2022 to August 10, 2023. The military budget rose worldwide by 3.7% during 2022, increasing to 2.2 trillion dollars and continues to increase.

War and violence are clearly crucial economic issues. However, negotiated solutions of disputes between and among the states are not in sight. It is still little realized that the destruction of environment due to the Ukrainian war has increased global warming in 2023. and severe climate disasters have caused the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. Moreover, this war has also killed soldiers and civilians in large number and displaced millions of civilian population—mostly women and children. The military multinationals are the main beneficiaries. The genocide in Gaza has destroyed the living conditions of millions of Gazans and mortgaged the future of the coming generations.

*Environmental Security:* Confronting the continuing conflicts and regional wars, the peace scholars developed multiple new peace concepts during the consolidation period of IPRA and its regional affiliates. It was at the IPRA General Conference in Groningen, where 25 years of IPRA's peace research was celebrated and where I introduced the concept of Environmental Security in my keynote lecture. Together with Dalby et al. (2009), we identified four stages of this security and wrote about them. During the time, the projection of the issue as a national security issue had begun and the securitization process of environment started. All this reflected the traditional approach to war and violence. However, complex interactions with conflicts prompted several researchers to realize that there can be a link between lack of natural resources (e.g. water and land) or its abundance (new irrigation projects with the displacement of traditional farmers) and the emerging conflicts. Subsequently, international study groups including IPCC, GECHS and GLASS affirmed that violence in the Global South was mostly related to resource conflicts, pollution, scarcity, and disasters, often forcing people to leave their homeland and migrate.

*Gender Security:* The UNDP (1994) developed the concept of human security during the last three decades. Subsequently, six major pillars were identified to achieve human security in any society: freedom from fear, freedom from want, freedom from hazard impacts, living with dignity in a state of law, living within cultural diversity, and living with liberty and ethnic, race, color, and sexual diversity. Gender security was criticized by some realists and even some feminists understood it as something limiting the space and power of patriarchy. Later, four phases of critical feminist analyses emerged, where feminist empiricism unveiled through concrete studies the underlying interests of patriarchal dominance. Feminist epistemology criticized the androgenic mainstreaming in science where an extreme masculine approach to logic eliminated emotions and limited the understanding of multiple interactions of human behavior. Postmodernism rejected any gender category opposing potential coalitions to overcome the patriarchal mindset. In contrast, the feminist viewpoint explained that the women and other oppressed groups are better trained and sensitive enough to deconstruct exclusion, domination, violence, and submission. These four mainstreams were further expanded by bringing in the social and humanitarian elements, by considerably widening peace discussions.

Gender security based its analysis on identity and social representations, and highlighted their insecurities due to exclusion and discrimination. Vaughan (1997) deconstructed postmodern feminism, especially in the context of women's free labor for childrearing, caring, and unpaid domestic work. Ecofeminism added the dual understanding of exploitation against weaker human beings and natural resources. Feminists from the beginning of their hard struggle for equal voting rights had linked themselves with environmental, social, urban, and peace movements. The slogan "another world is possible" emerged from the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre and it was opposed to the World Economic Forum, where the financial and transnational elite negotiate how to increase their profits at the cost of rest of the society and nature. Again, it was during the COVID-19 period when ECLAC (2021) launched the concept of economy of care to empower women and girls during the lockdown, when they were exposed to intrafamilial violence.

*HUGE: Human, Gender and Environmental Peace and Security:* Keeping in view the emerging threats especially toward women and children, I proposed an integrated HUGE (Human, Gender, and Environmental) peace and security concept (Oswald-Spring, 2020). It focuses on the structural discrimination process developed by the

economic elites, governmental policies and institutions, process of social representation and traditional role and assignments linked to submission to patriarchy for thousands of years. The HUGE concept also pointed at the multiplying vulnerability of women and girls during climate disasters. Living in dangerous places (river beds, steep deforested mountains, polluted areas) and shelter areas without arrangement to protect women, who were let without any training for swimming, running, or climbing a tree. Even when they are pregnant and their resilience is reduced, they are called upon to care for small children and elderlies and be at the forefront when climate disasters occur. Often their priority to protect their near and dear ones especially during extreme climatic emergencies doesn't give them time to think about their own gender vulnerability and sometimes they pay with their life a very heavy price for this neglect.

*Engendered-Sustainable Peace and Security:* To overcome these structural and cultural disadvantages, I proposed that the peace negotiations should ensure an engendered-sustainable peace and security so that the women are empowered and the gender gap among social groups is lessened. In this context, I argued that intrafamilial violence by men against women must first overcome the structural factors related to long-term patriarchal violence, which are often embedded and sometimes accepted in daily life. I hold the view that engendered peace refers to women, girls, and discriminated people with less access to empowerment at global and local levels, where the values at risk are the established androgenic gender relations, which are deeply rooted in the dominant social representations of roles (Serrano-Oswald, 2009). These identity processes are frequently manipulated by transnational elites to their advantage and are reinforced by the churches and imperialist governments. While schools are institutions of early socialization, where values at risk such as equity, equality, justice, and human rights are transmitted but sometimes the same principles are omitted. The sources of threats are related to thousands of years of patriarchal rule, often totalitarian in nature. The situation is further aggravated because the humankind and nature are being affected today by miserable salaries, pollution, scarcity of basic resources, wasteful consumption of junk food, lack of clean air and water, and a precarious livelihood. The Agenda 2030 of the Sustainable Development Goals is trying to overcome these structural and historical interlinked processes of unequal societies and the destruction of the existing free environmental services from nature. Global transnational and imperialist interests are permanently manipulating these efforts and therefore limiting the advance of these global efforts.

*Patriacene:* Being involved in peace teaching, peace research and peace action for decades in the Global South, and developing my own views on the complexity of structural, cultural, and identity processes of social representations, I have covered a long distance and I propose an alternative concept to Crutzen's Anthropocene (2002) and Moore's Capitalocene (2017) of the planet Earth's history. By reviewing the evolution of human development in anthropological terms and examining the changes that occurred during the last 6000 years by the patriarchate, I name this change in Earth's history as *Patriacene*. By settling in small communities, let me point out here, the society was first organized in matriarchal clans with segregation of women and men. Women established two taboos to care about small children: vegetarian food and sex to limit cannibalism and incest (Reed, 1975). Boys were nourished by mothers. They were released during their adolescence from the matriarchal clan, and handed over to men's organizations or fraternities. Processes of male couvade and bride prices allowed progressively the organization of families, where the children were also looked after by slaves and weaker men. The evolution of agriculture and livestock produced surpluses, division of labor, private propriety, and a dominant male leadership inside the family.

As a result, women were successively eliminated from their traditional role of social control of food, economy, and sex. Both women and slaves worked inside their houses as domestic labor and children raiser (Fortune, 1963). Over several millennia, patriarchy evolved as a complex human process and transited from matriarchal clans to a patriarchal family, later god-cities, monarchies, and empires by resorting to war, conquest, domination, and exploitation (Reardon, 1996). All this contributed to the emergence of the present capitalist productive system (Mies, 1985).

Historically, during the last 6000 years, patriarchy evolved from a matriarchal clan to the dominant *pater familia*, later developed into greater social organizations in villages, cities, and kingdoms, always based on violence. Confronted with the increasing destruction of Earth, limited political discourse about sustainability (Brundtland Commission, 1987), and the aggravation of hydrometeorological events (IPCC, 2021), a climate paradox (Bradfield & Vigaud, 2017) emerged. Industrialized countries continue to release 75% of the GHG globally, while the Global South suffers from more dangerous climate disasters, forced migration, and lack of food and clean water, bringing the Earth toward potential tipping points (Steffen et al., 2018). I call this evolution Patriacene (Oswald-Spring, 2025).

## Conclusion

Peace research, mediation in conflict, and peacebuilding depend on transformations of deeply embedded schemes, functions, and operations in culturally diverse societies. While epistemology has advanced in hard sciences, conflict resolution as a daily process indicates limited progress. Without a doubt, the conceptualization of negative, positive, structural, realist, cosmopolitical, and cultural peace indicates advances, whenever the structures of deepening and widening understanding and transformation were blocked by androgenic Western interests. Women brought inside the discussions new concepts and established the links between patriarchy and war (Reardon, 1996) as central key domination, which changed the prevailing understanding of violence by limiting sustainable processes of peacebuilding. This androgenic scientific progress also limited the traditional meritocracy of women in peacebuilding and caring for life (Powell, 2016). In terms of Piagetian assimilation and accommodation (Piaget, 1952), women not only analyzed the structures and transformation of the concepts of war and violence, but established relations between structures at various levels of exploitation, discrimination, and lack of visibility. This epistemological failure impeded processes of profound transformation toward a more peaceful and sustainable society.

The blockage of peace processes over thousands of years was also limited by the lack of understanding of the structural processes of adaptation to overcome war, violence, and exploitation of humans and nature. Functional invariants of the dominant patriarchal system have impeded the past accommodations, promoting either an a priori empiricism within the existing occidental structures of accumulation or producing interchangeable peace concepts with limited potential of transformation. When Vaughan (1997) talked about gift-giving outside the capitalist economy and ECLAT (2021) spoke about an economy of care, the genesis of the structure of the present system was linked with the interactions of different moments of structural changes that had occurred in history. Precisely the evolution of matriarchal clans, fraternal tribes, *couvades*, patriarchy, private propriety, patriarchal family, slavery, conquest, god-cities, empires, capitalism, and neoliberalism produced *Patriacene*. The dominance of the patriarchal mindset in these later processes reinforced the mindset of war exploitation, and violence. It avoided an accommodation of alternative processes of understanding of living together, and therefore acting in favor of peacebuilding and peaceful coexistence. Instead of a progressively

better adapted global system and more efficient exchanges between society, vulnerable groups, economy, and environment—promoted by Brundtland's (1987) sustainability concept— gift-giving and care economy transform the structure of exploitation and establish an alternative value system, based on the well-being of all human beings, and environment.

Conceived ideas, values, and practices are accommodated, assimilated, and transformed at all levels of society—from the individual, family, village, and region to the global world. By putting care as gift-giving at the center and enabling everybody to survive—from the newborn baby to the multinational enterprises—violence can be radically eradicated, and the well-being of the human beings and ecosystem can be put at the center of individual and global actions. Goods, services, and interchanges can be given without any expectation of remuneration but on a real reciprocity or *quid pro quo*. In short, it represents a system of deep cultural change, where services and products are interchanged for values of care. Individual property rights and accumulation of wealth are abolished, non-commodified labor established, violence eradicated, and goods are interchanged to grant health and well-being to everybody. On the environmental side, free ecosystem services would be restored, extraction of minerals abolished, and pollution prevented by reusing, recycling, and composting. Gift economy among both humans and nature would allow a positive reinforcement of comfort, happiness, safety, and peaceful living together with happiness in a healthy environment.

If we go back to the origin of patriarchy and the beginning of violence and war, we can note that the maternal clans had established a variety of cultural and historical forms of exchange, which was based on two crucial tasks: protect everybody and care about the most vulnerable (Reed, 1975). Propriety was converted into relations and not things, where historically a variety of cultural forms of exchange had existed and no universal practices were predominant. Again, cultural diversity avoided accumulation in the past (Graeber & Wengrow, 2022). In contrast, in the present system, there exists the capitalist practice of copyrights and patents, which should be abolished, and scientific inventions should serve to improve the health and life quality of the entire humankind and nature. Likewise, money without any accumulation can facilitate the interchange of gifts in some cultures, while in others alternative mechanisms of gift-giving can be developed.

Confronted with the present Patriacene characterized by the destruction of nature, widespread poverty and discrimination among the vast majority of humans, together with a governance based on war, violence and pillage, an alternative paradigm of gift-giving promises, an engendered-sustainable or HUGE peace and security can be built up. Remembering that only 5% of indigenous people take care of about 80% of the remaining biodiversity (Raygorodetsky, 2018), an alternative worldview seems possible, necessary, and urgent to avoid the destruction of the beauty of life and environment. Based on gift-giving, joy and harmony within culturally diverse societies, this alternative offers a cognitive polyphasia of peaceful living and assures the survival of every human and Mother Earth.

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# Learning to Face Up to Violence: Emotional Enlightenment and the Journey to Peace

*Jenny Pearce*

## Introduction

In the third decade of the twenty-first century, the world continues to face war and violences of multiple dimensions and expressions. A minimum shared consensus of the meaning of peace and how to build it still eludes humanity. Peace remains a concept that is universally valued but is still an empty signifier that people fill with their own meanings based on cultural, political, and personal convictions and experiences.[1] Humanity cannot afford to lose this one shared value. However, building *shared meanings* is

[1] Others have reached this conclusion, e.g. Echavarria, Ingruber and Koppensteiner (2011, p. 597) in their co-edited volume with Wolfgang Dietrich (who himself developed the idea of 'Many Peaces' e.g. Dietrich, 2013) argue 'Peace is plural (authors' emphasis)….From the Peruvian Andes of Grimaldo Renfigo's essay all the way to the Indogenic traditions rendered by Swami Veda Bharati, the contributions in this book give testimony to a multiplicity of cultural, linguistic, legal, spiritual and religious ways of defining, living and thinking peace'.

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a major task. And this historical moment reminds us of the costs of not fulfilling that task and how we can fail to learn from history and endlessly reproduce violences, and not only the organised violence of war. This chapter is a modest contribution from the author's own journey towards investing peace with meanings that we might grow to share.

First, a brief reflection on this historical moment, as the lens of the present, impacts on how one interprets the past and the possibilities for the future. Politically, the democratic turn hailed at the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s, has given way to a new wave of authoritarian politics. A liberal economic and democratic west no longer looks like the dominant geopolitical force. Politicians even in liberal democracy's assumed heartland of the US invoke hatred and/or violence against an 'enemy' (notably migrants and advocates for diversity), as the mobilising tool most likely to appeal to voters. And the liberal values which underpinned US representative democracy are being more actively questioned by the second Trump government which won the 2024 election. This illustrated how democratic tools can be used against democracy unlike previous historic moments of dictatorial imposition, and not only in the US. Authoritarian politicians have gained power through elections in many parts of the world,[2] and their strategy of 'identifying the enemy' is an uncanny echo of

[2] According to Freedom House's Report (2022): Global Expansion of Authoritarian Rule, there have been 16 years of consecutive decline in global freedom, involving erosion on checks on abuse of power and human rights violations. Clearly there is debate on what is 'authoritarianism', and abuse of power and human rights violation are part of the picture. However, the appeal to 'authoritarian citizenship' (Pearce, 2017a), when citizens are encouraged to deny the rights of others in the name of their own 'security', draws attention to the political potency amongst populations in certain contexts of particular policies of 'order'. There have been authoritarian government's that have held power for many years and continue to be re-elected, e.g. Victor Orban (Prime Minister since 2010, previously 1998–2002) re-elected in Hungary in April 2022, and Recep Tayyip Erdogan's (President since 2014) re-election in May 2023. There have been 'new authoritarians' such as Nayib Bukele, first elected in 2019 in El Salvador and then unconstitutionally for a second term in 2024, and authoritarianism that has arisen out of complex political turns, such as Ortega in Nicaragua who won re-election in 2021 after opposition candidates and former allies were arrested. There are authoritarian oppositions who have grown in several countries and continue to be serious contenders for power, such as Javier Milei in Argentina (elected President in November 2023) and Jose Antonio Kast in Chile. In South Asia, Indian PM Narendra Modi continues to pursue his Hindu majoritarian agenda, while democratic politics are in a 'state of disruptive churn' (Carothers, 2023) in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. In Africa, military coups or unconstitutional transfers of power multiplied 2021–2023 embracing Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Mali and Sudan; attempts from 2011 to bring in the rule of law and

some key ideas of a century ago, notably from the sophisticated twentieth-century thinker in the fields of culture, law and politics—and committed Nazi—Carl Schmitt.

Literally, a century ago from the writing of the first draft of this chapter, Schmitt published 'The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy' (Schmitt, 1923 [1988]); two years later he published 'Constitutional Theory' (Schmitt, 1928 [2008]); four years later 'The Concept of the Political' (1929 [1996]); and nine years later 'Legality and Legitimacy' (1932 [2004]). These influential writings published between 1923 and 1932, as the Weimar republic entered into crisis and the Nazis began their rise (Schmitt joined the National Socialist German Workers' Party on 1 May 1933, Teschke, 2019, p. 375), highlight how a century can pass since the ground was prepared for some of the cruellest violences of humankind during the Second World War, and yet violences and war persist.

I begin this chapter with Carl Schmitt because not only did he continue to attract intellectual interest well after the end of the Second World War and up until his death in 1985 but precisely because his categories—perhaps without awareness of their intellectual origin for some—persist.[3] Amongst these are the search to conserve the soul and substance of the State, 'to eradicate ambiguity' (Meierhenrich & Simons, 2019, p. 44), an ambiguity it was claimed, opened up by liberal modernity. The State reflects a homogenous unity which it is entitled to defend. And it was Schmitt who argued that the State becomes political when it identifies the enemy (Pearce, 2020, pp. 25–29). The ongoing potency of Schmitt's

accountability in Tunisia were halted in 2021 when presidential measures suspended the parliament, dismissed the government and cracked down on dissent. In 2021 the military overthrew Aung San Suu Kyi. In Israel in 2023 before the outbreak of war following Hamas's massacre of Israeli citizens in the South of the country, there was pressure on its commitment to democracy as the government of Benjamin Netanyahu sought to undercut the independent judiciary. And China and Russia continue on their different authoritarian paths, alongside other long-standing autocracies such as Iran and Saudi Arabia. Carothers (2023) rightly draws attention to democratic openings such as the defeat of Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil in 2022, and in 2023 the defeat in Poland of the Law and Justice Party (in power since 2015). The democratising candidate won the 2023 election in Guatemala, but amidst anti-democrat attacks and disputed 'legal' threats. However, the persistence if not growth and consolidation of a substantial authoritarian sector in many parts of the world, points to serious troubles for liberal democracies in the third decade of the 21st century.

[3] Cf. with his dedication to semantic and concrete 'order': 'the sovereignty of many of Schmitt's textual beginnings continues to be order-producing to this day' (Meierhenrich & Simons, 2019, p. 21).

thinking is apparent in the relationship between understandings of 'legitimate' state action in defence of its sovereignty and the multiple violences that persist and mutate in the twenty-first century, in organised and collective (war) form and many others. The failure of states to see their task as *reducing* violences reflects humanity's ongoing reluctance to 'face up to violence' as Etienne Balibar (2015) expressed it. Rather, we select the violences that 'matter'. The relationship of states to non-state armed actors (e.g. militias, paramilitary) has also become a complex theme through which violence diffusion not monopolisation is promoted in many parts of the world. The crisis in the way we think about violence, politics/the political and the State persists as thousands have died following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Hamas slaughtered Israeli citizens in the south of that country, while Israel responded with a 'defensive/offensive' violence to destroy Hamas but which has cost the lives of thousands of Palestinian civilians to the point that many consider it a genocide. The very idea of humanitarian aid and international law for the conduct of war has been seriously eroded. Ongoing violences and wars in Africa, such as Sudan, gain very little attention. The fact that the overwhelming number of perpetrators and victims are male (although there are many female and child victims as well), leads us also to a discussion, not on men but on *masculinities* and the reproduction of violences.[4] The issue of a growing authoritarianism in global politics will make the emergence of a shared peace consciousness within society to reduce violence and thus enhance democratic participation increasingly difficult. And the journey to peace, it is argued in this chapter, is also a journey to a more participatory and inclusive democratic politics, with no place for coercion, manipulation, fear or trauma.

What happened between Nazi rule, the end of the Second World War and the following decades that explains the failure to build peace in the world at a moment when war and violence had almost brought it to destruction? An important part of the period, more or less, coincides with this author's lifetime.[5] Thus, a personal and philosophical reflection is about the author's own journey to peace from a moment of post-world war hope to a period of renewed interstate, intrastate, non-war and

[4] According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 90% of all homicides recorded worldwide are committed by male perpetrators and men make up almost 80% of all homicide victims worldwide (UNODC, 2019).

[5] The author was born in 1952.

everyday violences of the twenty-first century. Rather than emphasise the chronology and personal journey as such, however, the chapter will explore four themes, which have emerged over these decades through the interaction of personal experiences, research and academic practice and engagement in debates on theory, practice and action around violences, participation and peace.

The first theme is that of *Inequality and Contingent Opportunity*, as a source for understanding the importance of and limitations to strengthening Human Agency for Peace. The second theme is the interrelated issues of *War and Violence/Politics and Non-violence*, and the significance of Latin America to the author's journey towards peace. The third theme is the discussion of *Epistemologies, Pedagogies and Peace Consciousness* or the relationship between knowledges (experiential, scientific and theoretical), educational approaches and how they can enable us to recognise that violence is a phenomenon which limits our capacity to act on the conditions that generate it. This, literally 'vicious' circle, is our challenge to rupture—non-violently—and through social action. Social action on violence has indeed been one of the positive aspects of this same historical period under discussion. And this leads to the conclusion of this chapter. An *Age of Emotional Enlightenment* is needed for us to recognise the factors which keep this vicious circle turning. While violence is not the only component of peace, it is, I argue, its opposite. In other words, violence in all its expressions, individual acts and actions over time as well as collective violence organised as war, are unequivocally what peace is not. By putting violence reduction in the centre of our tasks in the journey towards peace, we enhance the possibilities for deeper, wider and inclusive human participation to act on the conditions that generate violence and thus build more peaceful societies and ultimately shared meanings to 'peace'.

## Inequality and Contingent Opportunity: The Importance of Human Agency for Peace

The end of the Second World War ushered in processes of change on a global scale that potentially offered a new horizon to the possibilities of social and political progress towards ending violence between and within states, if not all violences. Amongst the notable shifts was that in class and former colonial relationships, a shift made possible by the war itself, as well as more profound debates at a global level on how to build a new world order. The theme of global economic cooperation gained traction.

Forty-four countries agreed in 1944 in Bretton Woods to the regulation and promotion of international trade, providing currency stabilisation through pegging currency to the US dollar, in turn pegged to the price of gold. The agreement also gave birth to the IMF and World Bank, which did not come into being till a little later but outlasted the currency agreement. These organisations were charged with managing deficit economies and keeping trade flowing. The Marshall Plan of 1948 was a massive investment by the US in the reconstruction of European economies, with the added intent of keeping the capitalist economy from falling under the influence of the Soviet model. Only a year earlier, in 1947, India and Pakistan had become independent and signalled the beginning of the end of colonial rule, if not the ongoing disadvantages facing countries of the 'Third World' as it was then known, and the 'Global South' as it became known later.

In addition to these and other economic and political changes, it was the new approach to issues of inequality which gave even greater significance to the epoch. This has been well documented and highlighted by Thomas Picketty (2019). What emerges in a rigorously detailed study, is, firstly, how the roots of the social-democratic redistributive coalitions that arose in the mid-twentieth century in Europe and the US, lay in intellectual and ideological ideas. For Picketty: 'historical change takes place when evolving ideas confront the logic of events: neither has much effect without the other' (Picketty, 2019, p. 31). In terms of addressing inequality in income and wealth, Picketty documents how a new vision of the state's role and rejection of the injustices in the system of private property and free market began to emerge from the late nineteenth century and were deepened through the crises of 1914–1970, i.e. two world wars, the 1917 Russian revolution and the Great Depression of 1929. He then highlights the key period of 1950–1980 as:

> *the golden age of social democracy, income equality settled at a level noticeably lower than in previous decades in the United States and United Kingdom, France and Germany, Sweden, and Japan, and nearly every European and non-European country for which adequate data are available. This reduced inequality was due in part to destruction occasioned by war, which hurt those who owned a great deal much more than those who owned nothing. But a much more important reason for the reduction of inequality was a set of fiscal and social policies that made societies not only more egalitarian but also more pros-*

> *perous than they had ever been before. To all of those societies we may therefore apply the label "social democratic".* (Picketty, 2019, p. 487)

It was in those decades that I grew up and accessed higher education, along with my brothers. All of us were from a working-class family, children of a printer and trade unionist, who like many returning soldiers from the Second World War believed he had the right after so much sacrifice to a dignified life. However, this contingent opportunity and egalitarian shift lasted only three decades. The reason why this chapter begins with the issues of inequality and agency for peace, is because the autobiographical journey that leads to a philosophical commitment to peace, precisely is rooted in this brief historical moment when ideas of equal opportunity and fairness captured the imagination of citizens, particularly the younger generation born after the war. It did not last long because in Picketty's analysis, social-democratic parties were unable or unwilling, to find sustainable responses to the rampant inequalities that began to develop. Notably, they failed to institute new forms of power sharing and social ownership of firms, except in Germany and Sweden; they did not have a policy commitment to continue to ensure equal access to education and knowledge, particularly higher education; nor did they commit to progressive taxation of wealth and 'new transnational federal forms of shared sovereignty or social and fiscal justice' (ibid., p. 486).

Living as I did the brief decades of opportunity for working-class people, meant experiencing how inequality is not just a material question of access to resources, but it also creates a state of mind and feelings. This is particularly well captured by Sennett and Cobb's book of the early 1970s entitled: *The Hidden Injuries of Class* (1973). Inequalities impact in multiple ways according to stratifications and hierarchies around race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, etc. Learning from life what it feels like to be one of the first working-class women to go to university, enabled me to experience the sense of 'not belonging' or even doubting the right to belong to the new world I entered. And, as life experiences became coupled with academic research, the relationship between inequalities and the topic which would come eventually to occupy a central focus of my research, i.e. violence, became apparent. Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) explored this relationship and concluded:

> *the association between inequality and violence is strong and consistent; it's been demonstrated in many time periods and settings. Recent evidence of the*

> *close correlation between ups and downs in inequality and violence show that if inequality is lessened, levels of violence also decline. And the evolutionary importance of shame and humiliation provides a plausible explanation of why more unequal societies suffer more violence.* (ibid., p. 144)

The subjective experiences of feeling 'lesser' have had multiple impacts on why violence continues to be an effective route to subjectively feeling 'greater'. This is particularly so for some males who, according to prevailing norms of masculinity in many parts of the world, are expected to compete and feel dominant in their social groupings.

Another violence and peace theme which arises with the discussion of inequality and during these decades of social-democratic post-war egalitarian progress, is the impact it had on who participates in public life and who wants to participate. An experience of growing up in these decades made possible an interconnection between educational opportunity and increasingly critical approaches to history and politics, and a generalised anti-authority mentality which enabled out of the box thinking that challenged prevailing assumptions about what is 'normal'. The zeitgeist encouraged creativity in arts, music, literature and cinema, as well as political philosophies. It awoke a generation to the importance of political participation. This did not necessarily mean a rejection of violence, as some groups sought to radicalise the social-democratic project into an anti-capitalist one, which could justify revolutionary violence. However, it did greatly enhance the awareness of injustices of many kinds. Enhanced sensibility to injustice is a highly significant aspect of these years. It generated action and participation with impacts also on understanding the logics of war, global power relationships and the importance of human rights.

The 1960s sowed the seeds also of new consciousness about gender, race and sexuality injustices that signalled major challenges to inequalities in these fields, with partial but meaningful successes. The idea that citizens could and should struggle for change was part of a generational movement, although there was little agreement on how to struggle and with what ultimate goals. The Cold War intensified during that decade and following the Cuban Revolution of 1959. This raised new questions about political possibilities in the 'Third World'. The movement against the Vietnam War was another catalyst for change and played its role in fuelling the civil rights movement in the US. The issue of nuclear weapons emerged as a major threat to humanity. The question of participation for change amidst intense debates about the means and nature of that change took on

new dimensions, including the birth of an anti-nuclear peace movement in some parts of the world. There was notable and much greater than ever before participation in these big public debates amongst citizens, particularly the younger generation.

The other critical issue in my journey to peace was born in this experience, i.e. that conscious action for change (agency) is a precondition for peace building. However, such conscious action requires ideas that confront the logic of events as Picketty argued. Sensibility to injustice created receptivity to a deeper understanding of the harm of inequality in our human relationships. For a 'peace consciousness' to emerge from this historical process, i.e. that social justice *and* non-violence catch the societal imagination, requires deeper connections and mutual recognition between heterogeneous citizens, their varied and unequal lived experiences, diverse cultural roots, distinct epistemologies as well as their fears and frustrated dreams.

## War and Violence/Politics and Non-violence

The awakening to the importance of participation for change in the egalitarian interregnum was not, as already pointed out, necessarily non-violent. Marxism in various guises articulated but also disarticulated my generation of activists. A strategic, state-focussed Communism clashed with the Maoist, Trotskyist and Anarchist revolutionary visions, some of which were prepared to accept and justify the means of violence. I do not regret my experience in the Trotskyist left and my generational ambivalence towards the violence that might be necessary for a revolutionary transformation against the capitalist logics that generated their own inequalities and state use of violence to protect them. I learnt so much about the relationship between ideas, political organisation, power and change. At the end of the day, I abandoned this route to change, as I felt it involved giving up independent critical thinking and accepting a 'dogma' for change in what often was a top-down and minority-driven political environment. This opened my journey to recognising that violence cannot be a means for change. This meant we would need to think through enhanced and conscious political participation not only without the use of violence but with the conscious aims of reducing it. Such a goal requires new methods, even a new kind of politics, a longer-term vision and critical self-reflection on our social relationships.

Revolutionary organisations began to lose momentum in the 1970s, at varied pace as new ideas on the left emerged before and after the end of the Cold War.[6] Post-structuralist thinking and social movement activism gave new ideas for progressive change that would have increased influence in the 1980s and 1990s as the Cold War ended. Meanwhile, Latin America became a source for creative, contentious, violent and non-violent struggles for social and political change. The injustices in the global as well as national order had been exposed during the 1960s. In Latin America, these injustices were very deep and State responses to opposition were savage. US backed dictatorships came to power in the Southern Cone countries of Brazil, Uruguay, Chile and Argentina during the 1970s (the Brazil coup took place in 1964). Arrest, torture and disappearances were the tools used mostly against a generation of young idealists, some of whom saw no alternative but armed struggle while others yearned for access to basic resources and opportunities and rejected authoritarian cruelty and control. My academic trajectory, beginning with doctoral research in 1975, took me to these countries and gave me new dimensions for understanding violence, war, politics and over time, the meaning of peace and the kind of participation necessary to build it.

After the Southern Cone dictatorships, I came to experience directly the wars of Central America (Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala) and Colombia, the everyday violences in all these countries and the non-war violences of Mexico (Pearce & Perea, 2019). Many research visits (which continue to this day) contributed to rethinking my understanding of violence and the importance and limitations of formal and formalised approaches to peace. These field experiences convinced me further of the vital role of participatory processes and building a politics capable of reducing rather than reproducing violence in all its expressions.

The state violences of the Southern Cone dictatorships, supported by the US and the US's support for state violence in the Central American civil wars, raised the question of the relationship between the State and violence. It highlighted the risks of the emphasis on violence monopolisation by the State, albeit underpinned by rules and legitimated by citizens' belief in and acceptance of those rules, i.e. the classic Weberian definition (Weber, 1919, p. 91), also of around a century ago, by a liberal thinker.

[6] Erica Chenoweth (2020) for example has shown through her work on nonviolent civil resistance, statistically documented, how violent insurgencies declined since the 1970s, and nonviolent resistance campaigns became more common.

The systematic use of torture by state actors and the disappearance of citizens by state (and other actors), often following torture and murder, highlights the way violence was and continues to be justified in the name of 'state monopoly' and 'defence' of a homogenous sovereignty. This is even when, as happened a great deal in Latin America, the State sometimes depended on non-state death squads and paramilitary groups to carry out counter-insurgency tasks.

The idea of 'justifications' of violence can, of course, be used by but also against the State. The idea of a 'just' violence emerges in varied contexts of violence and is heard frequently in parties to war, from Russia's intervention in Ukraine to Hamas's attacks on the Israeli population and Israel's violent response in Gaza, increasingly acknowledged as genocide. Such ideas draw indirectly on Schmitt's commitment to legitimacy over legality and the sovereign State's right to act. Just War theory found itself lacking in these violent conflicts of the early 2020s, as the discussion over *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*[7] became extremely contentious in terms of Israel's right to bomb Gaza, including hospitals, and its killing of thousands of Palestinian children and limiting humanitarian aid to the area, for instance. Walter Benjamin in his 1921 essay 'Critique of Violence' (Benjamin, 1921 [2007]) discussed whether there is a possibility of a 'just violence' to end violence. This takes us into the role of violence in the making, justification and preservation of orders and the law. As well as exploring and critiquing the relation between law and violence and the impossibility of justice when it is violence that becomes law, Benjamin makes a case for 'nonviolent revolutionary violence' that ends violence and unjust orders. He is writing at the time of the collapse of the social-democratic project in Germany in the course of the 1920s and signs of the rise of the far right, including killings of left activists. However, it could be argued, he does not show a way to re-found the law and a State which does not reproduce a new unjust order and 'end' violence through legality (cf. Pearce, 2020, p. 256). This is another debate—this time from a Marxist, although not when he wrote the essay—of a century ago that remains relevant. How do politics and the law become violence reducing?

Latin America generated deep insights into state violences, as well as the debate on: can violence be justified against the State? It also evidenced

[7] These refers to the distinction between the conditions under which states may resort to war or the use of armed force (jus ad bello) and the set of rules that should be followed during an armed conflict (jus in bello).

what can happen if the State is reluctant to make violence *reduction* a priority and in addition uses violence to defend its political structure and social inequalities and exclusions. And if it does not build a rule of law which is accessible and equitable or a system of security to protect citizens in all fields of human life, including the right to participate. Violence in Latin America has in many countries of the region become 'chronic' (Pearce, 2007), reproducing over time in lethal and non-lethal expressions and through all the spaces of socialisation, from the intimate to the street, to the school, to the prison and elsewhere. The idea of space as relational (Massey, 2005) was an important insight into the idea of relationality and peace. This theme was previously highlighted by Adam Curle, the founding Professor of Peace Studies, Bradford University, where I taught from 1991 to 2015. Curle argued that rather than peace or its opposite being about hostilities between nations, groups, or individuals, and the ways in which they may be curbed or prevented, he took:

> *the view of Galtung, who maintains that violence (though I would term it unpeacefulness) exists whenever an individual's potential development, mental or physical, is held back by the conditions of a relationship. It may seem peculiar* to *suggest that emotional, social or educational deprivation, or a low level of health, should be regarded as symptoms of 'unpeace' if conditions are otherwise 'peaceful' and if the people concerned are satisfied with their lot.* (Curle, 2016, pp. 42–43)

This relational approach I find more helpful than Galtung's (cf Galtung, 1969) important and influential idea of 'structural violence'. The latter's way of bringing home the physical impacts that embedded inequalities generate on populations, resonates greatly. There are physical and mental harms created through inequality, as was previously discussed. However, experiences in Latin America convinced me that we cannot conflate inequality and violence. There is more to what is 'relational' than the segregations, hierarchies and subjugations of our societies, extremely important as these are. The varied spaces where we socialise can generate violence due to complex relational dynamics, that can be exacerbated by inequality but have and gain their own dynamics. It was in Latin America that the terms 'femicide' and 'feminicide' were first coined, to distinguish the murder of a woman from murder *because* she is a woman. Childhood experiences of abuse can generate trauma with long-term relational consequences and attachment ruptures in the expectations of affection that human

beings rely on from birth (cf. Bowlby, 1969). These in turn—albeit not in linear predictable form—can have impacts on willingness to use violence, particularly amongst young men. Perversely, this can serve the state when building armies or non-state armed groups, as well as reproduce violence in the intimate relational space and elsewhere as well as over time, contributing to the intergenerational reproduction of violence.

Having lived the violence of the State and the violence of war in Latin America, it is the opening up/facing up to the multiple expressions of violence and how these continue to constitute politics that led me to understand that ending wars was only one aspect of a journey to peace and is not sufficient to end violences. This is what happened after the Peace processes in El Salvador (1992) and Guatemala (1996). Rather, violences mutated. For instance, as young men forced to flee El Salvador in the war ended up in Los Angeles as refugees, they joined local gangs. They were often caught and imprisoned and later deported back to El Salvador, where with no possibilities of employment they used their gang experience learnt in Los Angeles to set up their own gangs. The violent and punitive state responses have generated more violence than in the war years. President Bukele (2019–2024; 2024–) won great popularity amongst citizens who live multiple insecurities and was re-elected in a constitutionally controversial election in 2024. He focused their fears on the gangs and incarcerated gang members or young men who just happened to have tattoos, in conditions that amount to daily torture. While the 1996 peace process in Guatemala opened up some space for indigenous women, for instance, to win recognition of the sexual violences they had been subjected to, it by no means ended violences or the power of corrupt armed forces. The Colombian Peace Accord of 2016 did not end violence either, but it allowed innovative approaches for addressing transitional justice rather than punitive approaches which would not have enabled the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) insurgent group to agree to peace and through which the Colombian army had to recognise its own human rights violations. In the process, new discussions on the multiple expressions of violence in the country have become possible, although they remain difficult. Under President Petro (2022–2026) even bolder approaches to peace with armed actors and groups involved in illegal trafficking began. These initiatives have raised the question of the interruption of intergenerational cycles of violence by addressing victims' need for justice in new ways, through hearing the truth from the perpetrator and alternative reparations to long prison sentences.

These experiences have led me to explore what violence 'is' more deeply. The only way to do this was through interdisciplinary conversations with the natural sciences, social sciences and humanities, which led me to see the difference between aggression which is natural, and violence which is social. The idea of the '*social* body', which is also a vulnerable body (Berghoffen, 2003), once more emphasises the relational aspects of how aggression can turn into violence. I came to view violence as a phenomenon with its own distinctions and multiple expressions. I grasped why 'revenge' and 'punishment' are so emotionally potent, although there is much evidence that they lead to more violence. To capture this potency and building on the phenomenological philosophy that emphasises our sense and meaning making through our embodied life experiences, I reached a 'working tool' (not a definition) for thinking about violence:

> *violence is meaning laden and generating acts or actions of somatic harm which potentially constitute, normalize and/or destroy social orders.* (Pearce, 2020, p. 151)

The ideas of the vulnerable, social body and the way violence communicates and generates meaning through harming it, bring us back to the relational aspects of violence reproduction. It also brings our human potential for agency back into the discussion. It is possible, I have concluded, to learn about and act on our own emotional experiences of trauma and pain without reproducing more violence. This is what I learn from Latin America. Amid so many expressions of violence, victims have often come together and formed movements to visibilise and protest the violences that they and their families have experienced. They have shown how social action *on* violence is possible and can question acceptance of violences that are not recognised as such. Naming 'disappearance' as violence, for instance, began with families of disappeared people from Argentina under the military dictatorship, continued in El Salvador in its revolutionary war and persists in Mexico today. And it is not only in Latin America. Social action *on* violence (Pearce, 2017a) in recent decades has exposed rape in war, child abuse within institutions such as the Church, bullying and worse in the UK Parliament, and ongoing sexual and other abuses within the home and beyond. We cannot begin to build peace without recognising that all violences matter.

This is the point where the ongoing impact of violence on our politics cannot be underestimated. The extent may differ. In Mexico, 152

politicians were killed in the lead up to the 2018 election (International Crisis Group, 2021), and a total of 220 mayors and local councillors were murdered between 2006 and 2022 (International Crisis Group, 2023). In the UK two politicians have been killed since 2016. However, it is not a question of numbers. Even in the UK, somatic harm of varied kinds, overshadows politics and language itself can be a means of harming the body of the other, something that has grown greatly with social media, with what has come to be called cyberbullying against politicians as well as between them at times. Yet politics is also a means by which disagreements and conflicts can be resolved. Without a vibrant but non-violent and democratic political arena, we have few means to talk about potential shared understandings and means of building peace. This is why, I have concluded along with Balibar that we must 'face up to violence' and seek all means to reduce it, so that more people can participate with freedom and security to act on the conditions that reproduce it.

## Epistemologies, Pedagogies and Peace Consciousness

Rethinking relationality as an essential aspect for peacebuilding offers a range of opportunities. It encourages us to think about the 'other' in all our human interactions from the intimate to the political to the global. Recognising a shared humanity is a prerequisite for building shared meanings for peace. History demonstrates only too violently how difficult that is and how potent the incentives to send messages through somatic harm on that 'other' are, with stratifications, subjugations, apartheid and indifference being additional tools in the repertoires of hate and division. Humanising our relationships is a process that requires a prior willingness to think about the personal, social, cultural and historical experiences different from our own and the alternative knowledge systems they generate. And when we do not share those experiences and have pre-existing assumptions about others, we are only left with empathy and sympathy, emotions which can be easily eroded. Occasionally, we see examples that highlight these latent emotional capacities. While thousands of migrants have died in the Mediterranean, one Syrian small boy (Alan Kurdi) washed up dead on a beach in Turkey in 2015 did awake the humanity of European citizens. However, it did not last. Many thousands of migrants have since drowned in that sea or in the English Channel, while many politicians implicitly, if not explicitly, reflect and fuel a mindset that the message of somatic harm through drowning is one that deters other migrants. A

shared recognition that most human beings would seek survival faced with poverty, war, violences and climate change through a perilous journey to some 'other world', as humans have done throughout their prehistory and history, is vital to avoiding further violent and avoidable deaths.

Mutual understanding of different mindsets, epistemologies and philosophies of peoples round the world is a way of engaging with our shared humanity. Not all will contribute to non-violence or peace thinking. However, feeling respected and listened to is a minimum for respecting and listening to others. This is partly about understanding existing philosophies and epistemologies of peace but also about recognising the somatic trauma of experiences of violence and the impact of inequalities' hidden injuries on our confidence in ourselves and our capacity to embrace and build meaningful peace. Peace consciousness can emerge through such dialogues and recognition of everyone's capacity to learn and teach, given the opportunity to open our minds to ideas and contribute our own.

Latin America has taught me how you need to have confidence in your own knowledge in order to open up to that of others and be prepared to rethink assumptions and what is considered 'normal' and 'acceptable'. It is in that sense that Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1968 [2017]) offered a particularly potent form of liberating illiterate peasants in Brazil from the impacts of being told they 'know nothing' and therefore could not act on a world that excluded them from a dignified life. Popular education in Latin America generated some of the most active, politically conscious and non-violent movements for change in the world. In the case of Chalatenango, El Salvador, where I did an oral history of the peasant movement in the war (Pearce, 1985, 2017b), the peasants did support the armed insurgency because they were left with no alternative after government-backed death squads began to assassinate the leaders of their peasant union. The union was a response to the great concentration of landed wealth and difficulties of access to the means to life for the majority. When Chalatenango came under guerrilla control, though never free from army invasion, the peasants began to develop their own form of self-government. They suffered hugely in the war, and what I lived was a moment of transition from their logic of revolution to the logic of war, when the guerrilla movement put their efforts into militarising the struggle rather than the political strengthening and organising of the popular movement. This experience illustrates why I tend to talk of 'violence reduction' as part of the journey to peace. The end of violence will take processual time. The peasants I lived with, used their struggle to develop

their sense of agency, which included commitment to participation and ending violence. They gained a 'peace consciousness', with an ethical approach to social justice and political participation. This agency was not recognised, however, in the Peace Accord of 1992 and meant that the underlying contributions to violence of the socio-economic order were not addressed, and inequality persisted and intensified albeit under new forms of economic accumulation.

Since that experience, the importance of pedagogies for peace and epistemological dialogues to engage with different worldviews while exploring the possibilities of liberation from traditional, dominant and extractive epistemologies, has become very central to my journey to peace. The knowledge systems we end up with can prevent us from dialogue with others, including between those with whom we share such systems. In Bradford, England, there was a riot in 2001, and working with diverse communities from South Asian, poor white and wealthier groups and the police, the importance grew of non-extractive research to both better understand the origins of conflict and co-develop through exchange of knowledges (e.g. between experiential and academic knowledges) and pedagogies for peace. These proved vital for preventing further conflict when a Far Right group returned in 2010 to provoke more tension (Bujra & Pearce, 2011). We then experimented with a Community University, which built on learning from the Global South, in particular Popular Education (Pearce, 2017c). It sought to recognise the intelligences that remain untapped in society due to knowledge systems that prioritise the needs of the economy. Amongst these intelligences are the emotional intelligences that are not considered of prime importance, and yet in my journey to peace are vital to our finding our shared meanings in the value of peace.

## Conclusion: Emotional Enlightenment and the Journey to Peace

The eighteenth-century European Enlightenment is often referred to as inaugurating an 'Age of Reason'. This was linked to the questioning of authority, particularly religious authority, and the wars and brutality in its name. It also, argues Anthony Pagden (2013, p. 350), aimed to encourage openness to humanity and the wider world, something captured in

Immanuel Kant's cosmopolitanism in his 1795 book 'Towards Perpetual Peace'.

However, such an attempt to emphasise commonalities in humanity was also linked to economic ideas which liberated individuals and the idea of market driven change which over time divided peoples through the inequalities that resulted and led to extractive approaches to nature that today threaten all humanity and the planet. In addition, the emphasis on 'reason' was often a highly masculinised construction which banished all 'feelings' to a feminine private sphere which could not be trusted in the public sphere. Yet, emotions are ever present in our reasoning in ways which some social scientists have begun to explore. Ian Burkitt (2014, p. 156), for instance, has argued that:

> *emotions are not necessarily irrational forces but have a reason to them that is not purely mental; instead, it is a reason that follows a relational pattern. However, those relations are also power relations, and we cannot, in my view, separate people's emotional responses and judgements of value from the power relations in which they are located.*

The relational aspects of peace once more enter the discussion in this quote, when we take into account the emotional aspects of our relationships that also generate reasoning. The binary of emotion and reason is not a sharp distinction. An Age of Emotional Enlightenment would involve recognising the influence of the one on the other, not rejecting either. In the process, we would start to acknowledge how our emotional selves are impacted by traumas of all kinds and by the power relations that divide and exclude. We could recognise how natural aggression as an emotion which enables us to react to threats, can turn into the anger, desire for vengeance and other feelings that can potentially translate into violence as a repertoire of socially not naturally rooted acts and actions. Such violence can be reproduced intergenerationally and across all our spaces of socialisation, with state and non-state actors making use of a greater readiness to use violence, particularly through dominant constructions of 'successful masculinities'.

In the twenty-first century, alongside the ongoing violences, wars and authoritarian politics which encourage us to identify the 'enemy', there have also been movements to de-sanction violence in all its expressions and to draw attention to making mental health and well-being central to the possibilities of peace. There have also been challenges to gender, racial,

sexual and other norms that encourage homogenising identity constructions. An Age of Emotional Enlightenment would build on these movements and the interdisciplinary conversations that have enabled us to know so much about what generates violence. These conversations and pedagogies that exchange knowledges between victims, perpetrators and bystanders as well as academics, politicians and peace activists, are the basis for new shared meanings about peace and how to build it. Prioritising violence and its multiple expressions directs our minds towards something emotionally and rationally suppressed by the vast majority. At the same time, it opens up new conversations about the factors that reproduce it and the way the meanings of peace can be collectively endowed with practical as well as philosophically shared content.

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# My Journey in Peacelearning: Pursuing Personal and Political Change Through a Critical Transformative Praxis

*Tony Jenkins*

## Introduction

> What we are about, on a day-to-day basis, is actually how we change paradigms. We must change ourselves and our immediate realities and relationships if we are to change our social structures and our patterns of thought. (Reardon, 2015)

What are we about? From a philosophical perspective, we ask such ontological and epistemic questions to determine our place in the world. It is also a political inquiry, orienting us toward the nature of social relationships and dynamics that we seek to manifest. Further, it is a future-oriented question rooted in moral reasoning, inviting us to contemplate who we wish to become and how we intend to get there. Thus, the question, when

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approached holistically, elicits a range of both theoretical and pragmatic responses. In seeing myself as an agent of change working through peace education, I strive, on a day-to-day basis, to manifest integrity between *what I am about* and *how I got about it*. This is the foundation of my personal praxis, which also informs my approach to transformative peace pedagogy. This chapter, comprised of reflections upon reflections, is an exploration of my peacelearning journey to date and a meditation on how my peace praxis came to be.

## Finding My Way

I came from a home in which politics were rarely discussed. I suspect this was due, in part, to the fact that my mother came from a very political household, in which my grandfather enthusiastically expressed his conservative leaning politics, offering little space for debate. As a veteran of WWII and the Korean War, he was vehement about American hegemony. It wasn't until my adulthood that I became fully aware of my parents' political leanings. Perhaps this pedagogy emerged as a strategy of avoidance, but the end result was that it prepared me to thoughtfully consider my political opinions.

As a teen, my peers seemed to have fully formed political identities, while I mostly navigated the political world with trepidation, inquiry, and a bit of intuition. I recall, on multiple occasions, being called out by peers for not having opinions on political questions they thought were absolute. While they expressed resolute opinions, I mostly navigated my intuitions, struggling to interpret them and to form the questions essential for moral and ethical reasoning.

During these formative years, there were a few political developments that captured my moral imagination. The pro-democracy protesters in Tiananmen Square in 1989, and their subsequent massacre by the government, gave me a glimpse of politics as a form of people power. The iconic image and act of resistance of a lone, unarmed man standing in front a row of tanks seemed to me to be what authentic courage should look like. This courage was in stark contrast to the militarized and hyper-masculinized image of courage that had been extolled to me by relatives, schooling, and American media culture. About a year later, as I was beginning to find my own courage to express my political identity, I purchased with my meager dishwasher earnings a "tank man" t-shirt from the National Public Radio holiday catalog. I didn't fully understand then what was happening in

China, but my intuition told me the courage expressed by the protestors was part of who I should become.

In high school I served as the Opinion Editor of the student newspaper, the *Reflector News*. My featured monthly column, "Destination Unknown," gave me a political megaphone that I used mainly for voicing ethical and moral concerns related to school affairs. On one occasion I chastised the student body for jeering Miss Michigan, the beauty contestant winner, when she came to speak to us at an assembly. My volunteered opinion was not an endorsement of beauty contests but rather a critique of student behavior and the failure to encounter others with dignity, even when our social and political views differ drastically. For issuing this opinion I received a rare letter of gratitude from my high school principal. This respect was short-lived, as a few months later, in preparation for graduation, I became persona non grata. During a rather long pre-graduation academic awards ceremony I removed my shoes while awaiting my turn to take the stage. When my name was called, I walked barefoot to receive my awards. As I crossed the stage my principal failed to acknowledge me with a handshake and instead gestured with a slashing signal across his throat. It was two days later before I learned the heinous nature of my crime. During the final walkthrough for graduation, for which I was late, I was called out in front of the student body for egregiously violating the student code of conduct. Apparently walking barefoot during an awards ceremony was on par with such offenses as striking a teacher, and therefore, I would not be allowed to walk during our formal graduation ceremony. Students were told that anyone who attempted such hijinks during graduation would be arrested. While sitting in the principal's office waiting room for nearly two hours, preparing to defend myself, several students, many whom I never met during my four years of high school, came to offer their support and solidarity. If I was unable to walk for graduation they wouldn't walk either. It may have been this impromptu moment of civil resistance that prompted the administration to reconsider their opinion and let me walk. This was a formative lesson in the failures of our systems of justice and also of the potent potential of people power. On graduation day I still managed to make a subtle and deviant political statement: I wore mini-padlocks on my dress shoes. I think many parents were confused when I received an unusually loud applause from my fellow graduates as I walked across the stage. This set the wheels in motion for what was yet to come.

College afforded me the opportunity to begin exploring my intuitions more deeply. I attended the Residential College at the University of Michigan, a living-learning, radical, liberal arts college within the university where one could design their own major. I drew upon my dissatisfaction with my formal learning to that point and chose to pursue a degree in the social sciences focused on education reform. I attended the University of Michigan in part because of its legacy of student activism. My tenure as a student in the early 1990s was defined by an era of economic prosperity. This momentary flourishing was shaped by the rise in tech and President Clinton's free trade and financial deregulation policies that would later lead to dramatic income inequality, industry deregulation, a decline in workers' rights, and a weakening of environmental protections. We were proverbial frogs in a pot of boiling water, living with an abundance of apathy toward the future we were about to inherit.

Dismayed by what I perceived to be a lack of social justice activism within the student body, I chose to write about a fictional student protest group for my final essay in an introduction to sociology course. I launched the resultant fictional student protest group "CSCAS: Christian Students Against Coffee Shops" in the Spring of 1993. With a friend, we posted signs across campus for a rally to take place on the main campus square—a rally we never intended to hold. The planned day of this facetious event coincided with perfect Spring weather, and hundreds of students took to sunbathing and other activities on the lawn. We surveyed the busy scene and chose to commit ourselves to hosting a rally. An hour of research into the history of coffee revealed that our fiction was a reality. The coffee industry was steeped in a history of economic and ecological exploitation. This discovery came prior to the now ubiquitous movements for free and fair trade and sustainable coffee. We stood on a bench and gave our speech to an audience of a few dozen mostly graduate students who, for the most part, warmly embraced our freshly discovered platform. We would later go on to give endorsements to local coffee shops that embraced fair wages and sustainability. We were voted second best student group on campus, losing out narrowly to NORML, the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws. This moment produced a momentary high as well as some hope that student apathy was not as bad as I perceived.

The real turning point of my undergraduate experience also involved my first foray into teaching. As a junior I was enrolled in a course exploring literature and social change. This course, taught by William "Buzz" Alexander, introduced me to the critical pedagogy and literacy work of

Paulo Freire and the Theatre of the Oppressed work of Augusto Boal. The course also included an applied learning dimension, where we worked in teams to apply what we were learning in programs serving marginalized or adjudicated youth. I was assigned to a school in Detroit where I taught an after-school program on social justice through photography. It was an exhilarating and challenging introduction to teaching. My co-facilitator and I connected closely with the students who were motivated by exploring their social reality. One evening, near the end of our semester, I received an unexpected call from one of our students. Their classmate, Asia Orlando, had been shot and killed in the cross-fire of gang violence. She was socializing with friends at a roller-skating rink and was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. Asia was a young mother, further compounding the tragedy. Students came to us asking to make meaning of the experience. Why did this happen? How do we channel our grief? I had the same questions, and coming from a comparatively privileged background this was a new experience for me. Following Asia's memorial service, we were invited by her grandparents to a reception where they shared that participation in our photography class motivated Asia to consider the possibility of attending college. This is something she had never previously considered possible.

This tragic experience opened my eyes to the potentially transformative role that education could play and to the role and responsibility of education in shaping society. While I could grasp these aspects of my experience, I was still grappling with the violence. Fortunately, Buzz, seeing my struggles, invited me to participate in an experience that dramatically transformed my worldview. He encouraged me to join the Prison Creative Arts Project (P-CAP) that he and his partner were forming at that time. This was a program that placed teachers and students in prisons to facilitate education for social justice experiences through drama and art. The P-CAP experience allowed me to dialogue with perpetrators of violence and helped illuminate the systemic and institutionalized nature of violence through direct narratives. It was a dramatic turning point in how I perceived the world.

Learning and reflecting through this experience with my students helped me to theorize and envision what I perceive to be the true purpose of education: learning is a transformative process of making meaning, and meaning-making is an ongoing endeavor in the perpetual process of becoming fully human. This formative experience has guided me in my lifelong learning journey as a peace educator, seeking to understand the

nature of violence and to develop and sustain those conditions and capacities essential for peace and justice to flourish. Furthermore, the experience shaped several converging inquiries and motivations that I still pursue to this day. First, what is the nature of systems and cultures violence, and what are the possible pathways toward violence transformation? Second, what is the role and potential of education in preparing learners for political engagement toward nurturing preferred futures? Third, how might we institutionalize meaningful, transformative, and socially just education into the core of our curricula? And fourth, how do we, as educators, prefigure peace into our teaching and classrooms?

## Academic and Practitioner Foundations: Establishing My Footing, But Not Standing Alone

After a handful of years engaging in educational experimentation with vulnerable youth populations, I began to seek out opportunities for further study to deepen my praxis. I moved to New York City to apply to several graduate school programs in educational philosophy. After being rejected from my preferred PhD program, I sought advice from friends and colleagues on alternative paths. During this time, I sustained myself working in various non-profits. Fortuitously, I was hired by the Bahá'í International Community's United Nations Office to help organize the Millennium Forum at UN Headquarters. The Forum, a UN-sponsored NGO gathering, was held from 22 to 26 May 2000, as a precursor to the Millennium Assembly. The forum was called for by the Secretary General to assure the future of the UN would "benefit from the imagination and engage the support of the world's people" (United Nations Secretariat, 2000). The event was my first extensive exposure to the power of global civil society in working for peace and sustainable development.

Coincidentally, a colleague at the Bahá'í office was a doctoral student and adjunct professor in educational technology at Teachers College, Columbia University. He heard that I had been rejected from admission to several PhD programs and encouraged me to meet with his mentor in the Department of Mathematics, Science & Technology. While I couldn't imagine how this meeting could be fruitful, I was pleasantly surprised by the guidance I received. The professor listened to my motivations and suggested that my interests would be better served by studying peace education within the Program on International Educational Development.

He had collaborated in the early 1980s with a professor there who brought together faculty from various disciplines to consider the role of education in addressing nuclear proliferation. That professor turned out to be Dr. Betty Reardon, who soon thereafter became my mentor, colleague, and dear friend. Shortly thereafter, I began pursuing an MA in peace education and was exposed to a field of study and practice that I had been looking for all the preceding years. In fall 2001, an opportunity was presented to work as an assistant to Betty Reardon in the Peace Education Center (TCPEC). My first day on the job was scheduled for September 12. The months that followed provided an eye-opening experience to the challenges of educating and advocating for peace in the midst of war.

Working and learning with Betty was inspiring and transformative. Through the TCPEC we helped to maintain the academic program and also launched graduate certificate programs in peace education in New York and at TC's satellite campus in Tokyo. Certificate courses were almost always co-taught by peers or mentor/mentee pairs. It was through these arrangements that I began co-teaching several courses with Betty, a lifelong learner and master pedagogue. She embraced a transformative teaching philosophy rooted in her concept of the "edu-learner":

> An edu-learner is "a practitioner/theorist whose primary activity is learning while trying to help other people learn … The most fundamental aspect of the edu-learning process is the role of the teacher as learner and the view of learning as a lifelong process of experience reflected upon and integrated into new learning in an organic, cyclical mode, a mode that is conscious of the relations between the inner experience and the outer realities." (Reardon, 1988)

This prefigurative pedagogy (Kester et al., 2023) modelled those external social and political relationships we sought to nurture in the space of learning. This co-teaching practice is intentionally reflective and "is a particularly democratic mode of transformative learning that supports and fosters communal pedagogical reflection (among the educators) and models communal reflective learning for and among the students" (Jenkins, 2019).

Furthermore:

> ...this dialogical, communal approach to reflective inquiry invites internal worldview deliberation that is less likely to happen in isolated reflection.

> Co-teaching with Betty is an authentic, dialogical experience. It begins with a collaborative, deliberative, intentional and reflective process of co-planning that includes 1) identifying the social purposes the learning is intended to contribute to that are rooted in reality of the learning community, the institutions in which the learning takes place, and society at large; 2) discerning the educational goals and focused learning objectives to be pursued; and 3) designating the contents and modes of learning most relevant to the goals and objectives. These 'best laid plans' are not meant to be prescriptive, but rather assure intentional reflection in curricular planning. (Jenkins, 2019)

This pedagogical intentionality also demonstrates the valence of synchrony between internal meaning-making and external political action. Or more succinctly, it makes clear the connection between the personal and the political in pursuing personal and social change and transformation. Further, it blurs the contours between the roles of educator, activist, and advocate and infers questions about the thin line between authentic learning and indoctrination.

I've often reflected on how these co-teaching experiences shaped my own pedagogical praxis. Betty was a pre-eminent scholar, and thus, these experiences were at first intimidating. My lifelong educational indoctrination led me to hold certain worldview assumptions about power dynamics in teaching and learning relationships. However, Betty always found ways to acknowledge the value of my inputs. I felt heard and appreciated. Years later, in writing a chapter in a tribute volume dedicated to Betty, I came to some new conclusions on these experiences:

> How we acknowledge our students' responses to our inquiries can easily lead to existential anxiety. Students trained in a hierarchal knowledge paradigm are tacitly aware that any response they provide to an inquiry from an academic authority is a reflection on their self as rooted in their experience of the world. If the authority responds in the negative, it can be invalidating of existence and can turn-off a student's desire to learn. Betty's responses were more than validating; they were the beginning of a dialogue between co-learners. It became quickly evident that her reflections upon my reflections led to new learnings for us both. (Jenkins, 2019)

When we co-taught together she treated my reflections, and my thinking, as important as her own. Whether engaging her as a friend, a student, or a professional colleague, it was always a mutual, reciprocal encounter shaped by curiosity and learning.

## Learning with and in Community Becoming an Edu-Learning Community Builder

Over the years, as our relationship and collaborations deepened, I inherited the leadership of two of Betty's legacy projects, the International Institute on Peace Education (IIPE) and the Global Campaign for Peace Education (GCPE). The IIPE was founded by Dr. Reardon and colleagues Willard Jacobson and Douglas Sloan in 1982 at Teachers College, Columbia University. The first IIPE experience was structured as a seminar, examining the practical and theoretical contributions of education to world order and nuclear and general and complete disarmament. From this founding, the Institute evolved into a more holistic forum, addressing the many intersecting concerns of peace. In its basic form, the IIPE is a weeklong residential experience for educators, researchers, advocates, and academics. It is biennially hosted in a different country, facilitating exchanges of theory and practical experiences in teaching peace education toward growing the field. I like to think of it as an "applied peace education laboratory that provides a space for pedagogical experimentation; cooperative, deep inquiry into shared issues; and advancing theoretical, practical and pedagogical applications" (International Institute on Peace Education, n.d.-a). At the time of this publication, the IIPE has been convened 45 times in 20 different countries.

The themes and objectives of each institute reflect the needs and concerns of the co-sponsoring host partner and world region. While the emphasis during the week is on learning through community, the IIPE also pursues political goals. It seeks to (1) aid in the development of the substance of peace education through exploration of new and challenging themes to contribute to the on-going development of the field, (2) build strategic international institutional alliances among NGOs, universities, and agencies involved in peace education, and (3) encourage regional cooperation (International Institute on Peace Education, n.d.-a).

I began organizing the IIPE in 2001 in the Philippines and have since organized Institutes in South Korea, Turkey, Greece, Costa Rica, Spain, Israel, Hungary, Colombia, Japan, Puerto Rico, the USA, Austria, Cyprus, Mexico, and Nepal. The IIPE has become my community of practice and community of support in navigating the challenges of our times.

The IIPE design, while ever evolving, has at its heart Reardon's vision of a "dialogical, communal approach to reflective inquiry" (Jenkins, 2019). Most recent experiences, especially IIPE 2022 Mexico and IIPE

2024 Nepal, have provided opportunities for experimenting and strengthening the dynamics of intentional, reflective, learning communities of praxis. Grounded in a communal process co-creation, the IIPE experience provides a safe space for engaging in prefigurative pedagogies and community building. IIPE Mexico, in particular, drew upon holistic Latin American prefigurative pedagogical insights, encouraging experimentation in "transformative practices for fostering constructive interconnectedness and interdependence that engage the balance of thinking-feeling, cognitive-emotional, 'sentipensar' (Escobar, 2020) processes" (International Institute on Peace Education, 2022).

While the IIPE has had profound individual impacts and has fostered several sustained ripples through focused initiatives, further experimentation in scaling up the prefigurative, communal, mostly table-oriented processes in support of political impact is much needed. Members of the IIPE community came together in 2006 to explore practical solutions to this challenge. Their effort resulted in the creation of Community-based Institutes on Peace Education (CIPE). CIPEs were envisioned as "sustainable and recurring learning opportunit[ies]," enabling "formal and non-formal educators in local communities to learn with and from each other" (International Institute on Peace Education, n.d.-b). Several successful CIPE learning communities were established by IIPE participants in Colombia, the Philippines, India, Peru, Ukraine, and Tanzania. Colombia's CIPE experimentation was particularly impactful, providing non-formal teacher-training and community-building opportunities in the midst of conflict, and eventually scaling up into a national network of CIPE communities. Remnants of these efforts remain but are now flown under other banners (Croxen-John et al., 2024). Unfortunately, we were unable to sustain leadership support of the CIPE experimentation due to financial constraints. However, the promise and potential of the CIPE experiment remains an inspiration for future action.

## Advocacy in Search of Political Impact

In 2007 I also took on the coordination of the Global Campaign for Peace Education (GCPE), a global movement of individual peace educators and education NGOs committed to fostering cultures of peace through peace education. The GCPE was called for by participants of the Hague Appeal for Peace Civil Society Conference in May 1999 with this founding vision:

> A culture of peace will be achieved when citizens of the world understand global problems; have the skills to resolve conflict constructively; know and live by international standards of human rights, gender and racial equality; appreciate cultural diversity; and respect the integrity of the Earth. Such learning cannot be achieved without intentional, sustained and systematic education for peace. (Global Campaign for Peace Education, n.d.)

The GCPE seeks to foster a culture of peace in communities around the world. It has two goals:

> To build public awareness and political support for the introduction of peace education into all spheres of education, including non-formal education, in all schools throughout the world, and to promote the education of all teachers to teach for peace. (Global Campaign for Peace Education, n.d.)

The GCPE experimented with different approaches to achieve these goals over the years, including the development of teacher training manuals, curricula, partnerships with ministries of education and the United Nations, knowledge sharing, conferences, and global community building (Wintersteiner, 2013). Such efforts, while integral to the GCPE, have been limited in their effectiveness toward galvanizing global cooperation for political change. While we can observe an abundance of formal and non-formal peace education efforts in every corner of the globe (Jenkins & Segal de la Garza, 2024), few ministries of education, schools, and universities have mandated or integrated peace education into their curricula or culture.

In recent years the GCPE has adopted an approach of *massively parallel peacebuilding* (Burgess & Burgess, 2020), "an approach to change at a large scale premised upon finding ways of getting many groups of people working together – in a loosely organized alliance – each working on various specialized components of the peacebuilding task – all working toward addressing common problems" (Global Campaign for Peace Education, n.d.). Efforts to orchestrate a singular, global response are ineffective. Such approaches fail to recognize that the "social and cultural systems that we seek to transform are complex and that they are more likely to evolve organically over time through complex, evolutionary processes" (Global Campaign for Peace Education, n.d.). Additionally, inviting and sustaining participation in scalable political action is a luxury for many in the network who are already overburdened with sustaining localized peace

education efforts. This massively parallel approach, while still an experiment, situates local efforts within a global, actionable framework and allows GCPE members to participate from their area of need and strength rooted in their own prefigurative experiments.

The political advocacy work of the GCPE involves inherent risks and opportunities for prefigurating political engagement. We can't overlook that in many contexts peace education represents a threat to traditional political agendas. Members of the GCPE network have had their existence threatened by speaking up for peace. Throughout history, and even today, education has been utilized to foster xenophobic attitudes toward perceived outsiders and/or enemies, and in conflict contexts, it often imbues values of militarism, which is seen as necessary to maintaining war efforts. When educational agendas are guided by these values, it contributes to the normalization of violence.

There are no simple fixes to these big picture political obstacles. Sometimes education must confront the status quo. However, we have a choice in how we approach this task. In personal conversations with Betty Reardon, she often argued that we needed to learn how to *engage in politics in a learning mode*, rather than an adversarial mode. So, we might be better off approaching the task of transforming institutions as teachers, and not as politicians. "Institutions learn in similar ways to humans: they are more likely to transform when the learning is elicited from within, rather than imposed from above. Generating transformative institutional agency is a process of learning as much as it is a process of politics" (Jenkins, 2022).

When I think about this challenge, I'm reminded of an experience I had in Colombia in the early 2000s. A network of educators, led by the Bogota based NGO Fundacion Escuelas de Paz, invited me to a meeting with representatives from the ministry of education to discuss a deeper integration of peace education into the national curricula. Rather than beginning by requesting specific reforms, the meeting facilitators invited the officials to participate in some of the many learning exercises they conducted with youth, including contemplatively coloring mandalas together and leading them in trust walks. This was the most politically efficacious political meeting I have ever been a part of.

## Conclusion: Future Vision and Transformative Agency

Like many in the field of peace education, my work supporting peace and change has been multi-dimensional. Some of my work has been at the most intimate levels—aiding individuals to understand and heal from personal and collective traumas brought on by direct, structural, or cultural violence. Some of my work has been oriented toward supporting social processes—developing those skills and capacities necessary for transforming conflict and injustices and fostering peaceful relationships. A lot of my work has been at the political level—working to foster change through resisting, envisioning, and building more just and transformative institutions and ways of relating and being with one another. And of course, I also work at the cultural level—seeking to raise consciousness and support the liberation of members of the human community from unjust and immoral cultural practices and nurture cultures of peace. Peace education is holistic work, and transformative change requires us to be working across and through these dimensions to foster sustainable peace.

I'm fortunate thus far to have had the opportunity to pursue an intersectional existence, walking the weaving path of an academic, activist, advocate, practitioner, and organizer. None of this would be possible without the development of a critical, reflective, and transformative praxis and pedagogy that has become the foundation of my approach to personal and political change. Much of my disposition is owed to the friendship and learning mentorship of Betty Reardon. At her memorial service in early 2024 I had the opportunity to share a few reflections on our relationship:

I was blessed to work and learn closely with Betty for most of my adult life. Over this time our working relationship developed some great dynamics. Whenever we encountered someone new, we had a little dance we would play to introduce ourselves. I would introduce myself and then turn to Betty saying "and this is my boss." She in turn would introduce herself, and with a big beautiful Betty grin she would correct me, saying "and Tony is my boss." This little ritual captured a bit of Betty's humor and her essential character. This towering figure, this feminist icon, this mother of peace education, she treated everyone as an equal.

Now some of us affectionately called her "the boss." Ok—this was a bit of a joke—but we were serious about it. She was "the boss" because we believed she was one of the few humans deserving to be in charge of just

about anything. She was strong, assertive, reflective, critical, discerning, insightful, and kind. And she treated everyone with dignity—even those she disagreed with. When addressing problems, she had a unique ability to separate the wheat from the chaff—to discern the essential nature of an issue—and to interpret and explain that essence with clarity in a way only a master peace educator could do.

While working with her at Teachers College, a few rogue members of our peace education team created a series of "Betty for President" campaign posters and hung them around the office. Can you imagine? I sure can. Betty argued that our political culture fails to produce change because of its adversarial focus on winning. What if, she proffered, we engaged in politics in a learning mode instead? Can you imagine? I sure can.

It's easy to imagine a more peaceful world when we have examples and models before us. Kenneth Boulding's first law explains this presciently: "If something exists, then it must be possible" (Boulding, 1978). Through prefigurative peace pedagogies rooted in critical, transformative praxes and by nurturing prefigurate peacelearning communities, we may just be able to see and build a more peaceful future.

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