

North Country Peace Builder

Minnesota Fellowship of Reconciliation

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Another Perspective on the Immigration Issue

By Don Irish

Whether it be the Great Wall of China, the Berlin Wall, the Israeli-Palestine Wall, or the “US- Rio-Grande” Wall, now to be extended – walls separate peoples. Yet, none of these barriers has resolved, or will ever settle, the basic problems involved. Their erections are responses to symptoms, not directed to the causes of the perceived problems. In contrast, bridges (physical or psychological) foster relations between peoples in dealing with their shared concerns. Historically, colonial powers have intentionally adopted borders that separated peoples (divide and conquer) using rivers and mountains. For example, the Rio Coco was used to put Miskito Indians into both Nicaragua and Honduras; the Rio Grande was used after the U.S. absorbed half of its neighbor’s land, following the U.S.-Mexican war. How different Mexico might be now if the Mexicans had retained their full resources after 1848?

Immigration control. Our official involvements with the World Bank, NAFTA and the World Trade Organization have great relevance to current ‘problems’ of illegal immigration, primarily from Mexico, Central American, Columbia, and other Latin American countries with similar conditions. The WTO is a non-transparent, non-elected organization of governmental and corporate officials whose principal interest is to aid the profitability of multinational corporations. Rhetorically, they say they wish to end world poverty, something of great value to the whole world in the long run.

But it is not in the short-term interest of these companies, who prefer to exploit the natural resources and cheap labor of other countries without restrictions (related to environment or labor aspects) and with great profit. As the most powerful member, the U.S. could insist on incorporating favorable regulations, per natural resources and working conditions, into WTO policies. If the WTO will not do that for the world, the U.S. can still work with Mexico, with the American union movement, to press for the right to organize independent unions, to organize workers collectively to enhance their working conditions, wages, security, and so on. Thus, they themselves can minimize the pressures to “move north”, enhancing the quality of living at home where they would prefer to be with their families and culture.

Using the physical metaphor of osmosis, when the pressure on one side of a “permeable membrane” greatly exceeds the resistance on the other side, a fluid will pass through to minimize the differential. President Bush recognized this economic reality, saying that the attraction of America for poor Mexican workers “creates enormous pressure that walls and patrols alone will not stop.” (New York Times, 5/16/06) Of historical relevance is that Mexico welcomed fugitive slaves and African-American job seekers for most of the 19th C. “U.S. seizure of more than half of Mexico’s territory in (con’t on page 3)



The Fellowship of Reconciliation envisions a world of justice, peace, and freedom. It is a revolutionary vision of a beloved community where differences are respected, conflicts addressed nonviolently, oppressive structures dismantled, and where people live in harmony with the earth, nurtured by diverse spiritual traditions that foster compassion, solidarity, and reconciliation.

REMEMBERING SHARON BISHOP

The Minnesota Fellowship of Reconciliation mourns and celebrates the life of Sharon Bishop who passed away on April 12, 2006. Sharon was a long-time member of the FOR and served many years as a member and chair of the Minnesota FOR.

“She was a rebel all her life”, reflected Sharon’s husband, Dan, “but she never raised her voice. The truth is, she couldn’t. Her vocal cords were damaged in the second of two surgeries for throat cancer. The neighbor kids loved to come to our home”, chuckled Dan; “it was known as the place where children were never yelled at.”

Raised on a farm near Lake Benton, Minnesota, Sharon graduated from the Hamline University nursing program in 1960. She worked for the Minneapolis Public Schools for 26 years, and for fourteen of those years she was a school nurse at Minneapolis South High School.

Sharon’s vocation in public health, her love for young people and her passion for justice led her to be a pioneer in the formation of GLTB support groups in the public schools of Minnesota. She is probably the person most responsible for the formation of the first GLBT support group in Minnesota for youth, at South High School. As a member of the Governor’s Commission on Gay, Lesbian and Bi-Sexual Rights, Sharon traveled the state helping people start support groups for GLBT youth. Always the savvy activist, Sharon deftly overcame opposition to such groups by sheltering them under the stewardship of school nurses and sex education programs. Dan shared with me photos of Sharon playing with her three granddaughters, and the necklace that was Sharon’s favorite, bearing the quote: “War is not healthy for children and other living things.”

As I departed Dan and Sharon’s home, Dan straightened the sign that Sharon had placed in the front window in the early 1980s, which reads, “This house has no fallout shelter. Peace is our only security.” We will miss Sharon Bishop, soft-spoken rebel for peace and advocate for justice for children. A scholarship has been established in Sharon’s name for gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender students in the public schools.

In love and respect,

Don Christensen



Peace Jam: Nobel Laureates Inspire a New Generation

by Joyce Bonafield

In 1996 the Peace Jam Foundation was founded in Denver Colorado to help inspire a new generation of peacemakers. Global demographics show a 21st century world where almost half of the population is under the age of 20, yet young people are plagued with overwhelming feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness. These feelings are found to be universal and transcend racial, political and economic boundaries. Young people need a way to feel empowered to make a difference. Peace Jam, with the help of 14 Nobel Laureates, is committed to make this happen.

The University of St. Thomas is one of 11 college affiliates of the Peace Jam, and now holds an annual conference that involves about 500 high school students, college students, and faculty members. This year's conference, held at St. Thomas on March 11-12, hosted keynote speaker Wangari Maathai, 2004 Nobel Laureate from Kenya. The event included African dancing and drumming, and participants learned a bit of both. The Nobel Laureates involved in the program not only give speeches at these conferences, but work personally with youth to pass on the spirit, skills, and wisdom they embody. This year's conference also held 12 interesting workshops that helped turn peace-building into useful skill sets for those attending.

Typically, six students from one school will come as a group, after studying the Nobel Laureate who will anchor the conference. These students also create a local community plan of action, and plan a project to implement in their home community, after the conference.

The Peace Jam attendees then meet again in the first week of November to report back about the progress on their projects. Church groups have also sent small groups of youth to the conference. A very special event is coming this September: the fourteen Nobel Laureates who participate with Peace Jam will all converge in Denver for a National Peace Jam, September 14 to 17, 2006.

The 2007 Peace Jam will be held next March at University of St. Thomas, and the planning committee is already in action. Think Peace Jam is not making a difference? Think again. . . over 250,000 young people have participated in Peace Jam, worldwide. If you'd like to learn more about Peace Jam you can contact Mike Klein at St. Thomas (651-962-5378) or check out the Peace Jam web site:

A Blessing from the Franciscan Tradition

May you be blessed with a restless discomfort about easy answers, half-truths and superficial relationships, so that you may seek truth boldly and love deeply within your heart.

May you be blessed with holy anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that you may tirelessly work for justice, freedom, and peace among all people.

May you be blessed with the gift of tears to shed with those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation, or the loss of all that they cherish, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and transform their pain into joy.

May you be blessed with enough foolishness to believe that you CAN make a difference in this world, so that you are able to do what others claim cannot be done.

(Immigration, con't from page 1)

1848 netted Washington more than 80% of Mexico's fertile land. . . (it) otherwise would have sufficient economic infrastructure to employ all of her people." (Insight News, 5/23/06). Furthermore, the U.S. needs to eliminate the dumping of subsidized corn and other commodities on the Mexican markets. This undercuts the capacity of the campesinos to compete, and forces them off their lands, which are often taken over by U.S. agri-businesses. We need to help elevate the living standards in Mexico in non-intrusive, legal, rational ways and minimize the economic differentials. Otherwise the major problem of immigration is not resolved, only barricaded. Adding 6,000 troops along our border not only militarizes a traditionally civilian function, but would be a totally inadequate and inappropriate response to illegal immigration. Some people will find ways around, under, over walls or other exits. The money spent for constructing a lengthy, tall wall of hundreds of miles plus maintenance, surveillance and troops would be better invested in addressing the real, basic problems of wealth next to poverty. Of course, meanwhile, walls will assist us in not seeing the desperation, poverty and family hardships on the other side of the Rio Grande!

Creating a Culture of Peace: Minnesota FOR Hosts National Training

by Susan Moore

Nonviolence and community activists from mid-western and eastern states left their homes in early June and formed a beloved community for three days of facilitator training at Hospitality House in Circle Pines, Minnesota. The CCP curriculum is soundly based in the philosophy of public education, which affirms the ability of individuals to come together as their own experts to assess, analyze and act on shared challenges and resources.

Training was led by Janet Chisholm, developer and promoter of FOR's Creating a Culture of Peace (CCP) program, and Don Christenson of the Minnesota FOR. Participants experienced the passion and commitment of the trainers to the work of truly creating a new culture of peace. Ms. Chisholm generously responded to questions about the use and intention of training exercises. She emphasized the critical importance of "mixed media" in presenting information and experiences. "You can't expect people to sit and listen to you or to one another, for extended periods of time. We respect all of the learning styles that are present when a group comes together."

One training exercise, "hassle line" is intended to provide skills in communicating with the "other" by looking beyond the current, highly charged situation of a demonstration or other action. It also encourages the ability to step back and intentionally bring a nonviolent and restorative tone to the discussion among individuals who appear to disagree intensely about an issue.

Deepening understanding of the "other" is promoted throughout the CCP and the train-the-trainer curriculum, as is creating space that is sacred and apart from daily life, using language that includes all faiths or non-faiths, and supporting respectful communication without timidity.

The CCP curriculum addresses violence, nonviolence, social change movements and community building and is available to any community in Minnesota and beyond! The local train-the-trainer event resulted in a team of ten Minnesota-based trainers who will be collaborating to bring CCP nonviolence training to communities

interested and willing to promote a training event. Contact the MN FOR for further information.

Nonviolence Training in Niger

by Duane Cady

Katie Dick, a recent Hamline University graduate and current peace corps field worker teaching in Niger, is doing a nonviolence training for Zinder College and High School student leaders in that country. She has organized several of her Peace Corps colleagues to donate their time to plan and host a weekend workshop, above and beyond their regular assignment.

Student strikes and protests are common in Niger, often brought on by limited resources for schools away from the capital city, Niamey. The "cartoons of Mohammed" incident was a catalyst for local issues to be raised, in protests throughout the Muslim world, including Zinder.

Katie's goal in holding the workshop is to train student leaders in nonviolent organizing and nonviolent direct action, teach nonviolent conflict resolution strategies, and provide models of effective and constructive means of expression, for student frustrations and concerns. The workshop will also provide an opportunity for student leaders and local law officers to meet and discuss nonviolent student organizing and action.

I learned about this project via email from Katie and offered to help raise funds to offset costs. Costs include fees for local nonviolence trainers, transportation, rental of workshop space, nonviolence manuals, notebooks, pens, food for lunch and breaks, and certificates for successful trainees. I managed to raise nearly \$400 at Hamline, and I'm grateful that the MN FOR has contributed an additional \$200. This brings the fund close to Katie's budget of \$800. She was looking into a grant possibility to help with funding.

Anyone interested in Katie Dick's work and experience in Niger can check out her blog at <http://www.katherinehdick.blogspot.com>. Watch the next issue of **North Country Peace Builder** for a report from Katie about her Niger nonviolence workshop.

How We Build Peace

by Caitlin Vaughan

Gandhi said, “You must *be* the change you wish to see in the world”. This phrase has been quoted to me on numerous occasions and, each time, I have wondered, “How?” How am I supposed to be the change that I wish to see in the world? This question has led me to do a large senior-capstone project at my high school, The Avalon School. I spent this year, my senior year of high school, studying nonviolence and trying to figure out how I ought to be the change I wish to see in the world.



During the year, I did significant research on the theory and practice of nonviolence through extensive reading, interviews, and participating in several nonviolent protests. Following this, I continued my work on a more active level by creating a peace studies curriculum which I taught to students at my school, and making a handbook about nonviolence.

Through this work, I began to think about how best to be the change that I wish to see in the world and how to manifest peace. In my studies, I keep coming back to the concept of justice. Justice is the practical application of peace, for without justice, we will never have peace. So, for me, the question becomes not how we build peace, but how we build justice peacefully.

Finding justice is crucial if we ever want to come to a place of sustainability. Peace is not just the absence of war and fighting—it is the absence of injustice and oppression, and the presence of systems and ideals to build peaceful and just relationships on personal, local, and global levels.

We cannot hope for peace if we don’t work to create places where justice can occur. Peace will not happen unless people feel like they have been listened to—it will never happen unless people feel that they are being treated justly and fairly.

This has happened and it is called restorative justice. Restorative justice has the tremendous capacity to heal and to create peace.

When people can listen to each other and come to a place of reconciliation, peace is possible. In restorative justice situations participants are asked to suspend judgment and recognize each person’s inherent worth and value. This action has tremendous potential to create sustainable, peaceful, and just relationships on a variety of levels.

Peace is not something that will magically manifest itself. But, peace is also not just some unattainable ideal. Violence and injustice are not inevitable. Peace is attainable, but only if we work to build it and only if we work to find justice for all people. This can happen in large, international conflict like the Apartheid situation in South Africa, but it also can happen in personal relationships. This, I think, is the most important way to start to build peace and justice, and how I will start trying to be the change that I wish to see in the world. I will try to treat every person and every interaction with inherent worth and dignity. This, truly, is a building ground for peace and justice.

North Country Peace Builder is produced quarterly by the board of the Minnesota Fellowship of Reconciliation. It is also available online at www.osb.org/ for. Please email articles, photos, letters and comments to minnesota-for@gmail.com or to sjmoore@smig.net; or write to Minnesota FOR, Attention: NCPB, PO Box 14792, Minneapolis, MN 55414-0792

Sticks and Stones May Break My Bones

by Don Irish

. . . *But words will never hurt me.* This children's ditty conveys a very naïve perception of the power of words. In fact -- words carry "baggage." Many persons recover well from physical injuries, while the burden of some categorizations and personal labels may be carried hurtfully for a lifetime. Insensitive or unkind words can lower the recipient's self-esteem, make them fearful, demonize them, or foster violence. In casual conversations, careless generalizations are usually inaccurate, incomplete and often harmful.

Political necessities. Conclusive words like "have to," "have no choice," "it is necessary to" (e.g., bomb Fallujah, attack Iran) are used by officials to eliminate debate and avoid questioning of decisions. In fact, there are virtually always choices, often unexplored. In a democracy, "(i)t is better to debate a question without settling it than to settle it without debating it." (Joseph Joubert).

Euphemistic avoidances. Military recruitment folders use messages like "become a leader," "become your best self," and "there's a different man/woman in you." In fact, the basic, unique function of military training is to learn to kill those defined as "enemies." To kill efficiently, to kill often, and to kill as many as possible. Becoming a pilot, photographer, interpreter, or any other occupation can be learned less expensively, and practiced while a civilian -- without the moral and other burdens of military service.

Military euphemisms. Military staff coin names like "Operation Comfort" (for whom?) for the devastation of a target. "Taking out" an opponent by assassination is *not* accompanying a friend on a date! "Collateral damage" obfuscates the killing of civilians and other destructive consequences. "Mission accomplished" is a nice way to state that sufficient damage has been done for a given endeavor.

Either-or-polarization. Many Americans are led to think in black-and-white terms, fostered by the media, some aspects of religion, and the two-party political system. In foreign policies, nations are defined as "for" or "against" us. Panels and interviews on TV present only two sides to every issue, and usually opposing views. Yet, any complicated social problem has many facets, nuances! Simple dichotomies tend to

polarize the thought patterns of individuals, families, communities, and the world of nations.

Philosophical ranges. Commonly, during election periods, our citizens refer to other individuals as having a particular place on an ideological spectrum: reactionary, conservative, liberal, or radical, among other labels. However, personalities are complex. A person may have qualities that fit more than one spot on the scale, maybe across the full spectrum! If we categorize persons we meet based on only one aspect of self, we may rule them out as not worth our time to know, to befriend, to learn from, even to love! We have then narrowed our visions and opportunities.

Demonizing opponents. Perhaps the most venomous uses of words relate to those designated as enemies by our national leaders. Enemies are defined, labeled and dehumanized. Then, "anything goes," - currently evident in attacks on Iraqis, in the treatment of those held prisoner, and in the lack of empathy for the suffering of civilians in warfare.

Current demonization. The current demonization is now related to terrorists. Killing persons labeled as terrorists will not end terrorism, unless the despair which recruits them is addressed. Terrorists do not arise in a vacuum! There are reasons for their existence. They have personal hopes, dreams, and talents which are unfulfilled. They do not become suicide bombers willy-nilly, not caring for life. They have families whom they love and are loved by. If they don't have tanks, helicopters, bombers, and so on for physical opposition, they use what they have -- rocks, or homemade bombs, or their bodies. Ultimately, the dominant group must deal with the real problems rather than the terrorism, which is a symptom.

A safer world. We would be much safer if we would use our Homeland Security funds, and the billions spent for warfare, to wholeheartedly join the world community, adhere to international laws, use our resources for combating AIDS in Africa, build schools and operate clinics in the poverty-stricken countries. There are peaceful, rational, feasible, legal ways to resolve our problems—with WORDS! And not with bloodshed. Most people *say* they believe in peace. One problem is that empires want "too big a piece!"



Playing with Peace

by Jo Clare Hartsig



The Imagination Fair happens in February at my children’s school. It is a time for all the kids to display their hobbies and special creations. Every year there are amazing Lego constructions, model horse or insect or stamp or doll collections, and an array of baking soda and vinegar volcanoes. Reid and Jack Madden decided to create a game they had been talking about for a long time. One of my favorite moments was the intensely argued discussion they had, to determine if Gandhi or Dr. King would get the prime position traditionally allotted “Boardwalk.” Here are their words from the display they made for their “PEACE-OPOLY” game.



We love MONOPOLY at our house! We have different sets – Star Wars, Major League Baseball, America, Denver, and even one in Russian language! I had the idea to make a Peace version because the war in Iraq is sad.



I used my own allowance to buy a kit that my brother and I used to make up this set.



We decided instead of charging rent on each space it would be museum admission to learn more about each peacemaker. -Jack Madden, Grade 3



To make our MONOPOLY set we used the CD that came with the kit. Because I am in the 5th grade I have a laptop all the time and I learned all about “cut, copy, paste, and select,” I can make things happen on a computer! I got ideas from books about peacemakers and the Internet. I downloaded pictures of peacemakers with smiles because peacemaking is happy.



So, roll the dice!



Become a peacemaker! -Reid Madden, Grade 5



Restorative Justice

The Minnesota Restorative Services Coalition (MRSC) and the Restorative Justice unit of the Minnesota Department of Corrections are collaborating to enhance restorative justice activities in Minnesota through victim-offender dialogues, victim-offender-community circles, an apology letter bank, and increased outreach to communities. Contact the MRSC to learn about training to become a restorative justice volunteer at (651) 603-0154.

National FOR Endeavors

During 2005, the FOR sent nonviolence trainers to Palestine, and a 50th anniversary commemoration delegation to Japan, and launched the “I Will Not Kill” anti-militarism campaign among youth. Accompanists continued to live in the Peace Community of San Jose de Apartado, Columbia; and CCP and Peacemaker Training institutes were conducted. In December, FOR sent a civilian diplomacy mission to the people of Iran, and a second delegation returned home from Tehran in May, 2006

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MINNESOTA FOR SUMMER PICNIC

Sunday, August 6, 2006

Lake Harriet Picnic Area (north of band shell)

3:30 - 5:30 p.m.

We invite you to picnic with the FOR and to attend these events of the
Hiroshima Nagasaki Commemoration:

2:30 p.m. - Family Event with songs, dance and stories, *in the Peace Garden*

5:30 pm. - Peace Concert *at Lake Harriet Band Shell*

*Beverages, ice, plates, cutlery, napkins provided. Bring a dish to share, and
food and charcoal if you want to grill.*

Questions? Contact Don: chris385@umn.edu, (651)690-2609