
Global Peace Services USA

...an idea whose time has come

Vol. 4, No. 3

September 2001

Delight in the Scheme of the Universe

by Mary Evelyn Jegen, SND

Is There No Other Way? The Search for a Nonviolent Future by Michael Nagler (Berkeley, CA, Berkeley Hills Books, 2001) could well serve as the core for a basic program in Global Peace Services studies, whether in an informal group setting or in a university. Here is a systematic study of the possibilities and challenges of a nonviolent way of life applicable to contemporary American culture. Each of the nine chapters is a masterful treatment of a facet of the search, written in such a personal style that it is easy to imagine one is listening to Nagler rather than reading a book.

Nagler brings a long career of engagement in the search. He has taught courses in nonviolent philosophy and practice to more than a thousand students over the years at the University of California, Berkeley, where he is Professor Emeritus of Classics and Comparative Literature, and founder and chairperson of the University's Peace and Conflict Studies Program. He has a profound knowledge and understanding of Gandhi's life, writings, and role in India's liberation from British colonial rule and draws liberally on this knowledge. To this he adds instructive examples of nonviolent life and practice by persons and groups closer to our own time and place. It is this narrative quality that makes the book a page-turner and a nurturer of realistic hope.

Nagler holds that nonviolence corresponds to a profound truth about human nature that has been obscured by a history of unenlightenment. This does not mean that a nonviolent alternative to ways of violence will not take strenuous work on both the individual and societal levels. Gandhi called his autobiography, written in prison, the story of his

experiments in truth that required lifelong discipline. He wrote:



It is not that I am incapable of anger. . . but I succeed on almost all occasions to keep my feelings under control. Whatever may be the result, there is always in me conscious struggle for following the law of nonviolence deliberately and ceaselessly. Such a struggle leaves one stronger for it. The more I work at this law, the more I feel the delight in my life, the delight in the scheme of the universe. It gives me a peace and a meaning of the mysteries of nature that I have no power to describe.

Nagler moves from description to brilliant analysis of the qualities of nonviolence that transcend particular instances of its practice. He presents nonviolence first and foremost as a way of personal living that is clear about the sanctity of life and not only unwilling to harm, that is, to use violence, but equally clear that nonviolent living requires service to the common good as essential for personal integrity and experience of truth. This is Gandhi's "delight in the scheme of the universe," and, we could add, Nagler's as well.

But recognition of this truth does not make one nonviolent, only practice does. Nagler insists that daily meditation to gain control of one's mind, including thoughts, feelings and desires, is indispensable to anyone serious about a life of nonviolence. His own conversion to this practice, to which he gives considerable attention in the book, came through his introduction to his Indian teacher, Eknath Easwaran, to whom he dedicates *Is There No Other Way?*

In his treatment of nonviolence as a force for social change, Nagler uses the twofold division of Gandhi's work: resistance and construction. Gandhi placed the highest priority on constructive work. Nagler explains that while it was Gandhi's campaigns of resistance, such as the Salt March, that are better known, it was the tireless campaigns of constructive work in which everyone could be directly involved that Gandhi considered more important than resistance. For Gandhi, this work was constellated about the practice of spinning cotton and making cloth as an act of liberation from British colonial destruction of an Indian domestic-led economy and culture. There were 18 different social development projects in Gandhi's constructive program, in such fields as agriculture, health, and education. All were related to his central vision of an alternative future. Everyone could be involved, united by a common vision symbolized by the spinning wheel. (A stylized version of the spinning wheel is the center of the Indian flag.)

Nagler asks a pivotal question in this book: what is **our** spinning wheel? That is, how can we liberate ourselves and our society from a culture of violence and construct a culture of peace and nonviolence

today? For Nagler, a key is in reclaiming the media from incessantly indoctrinating violence as normal, exciting, and entertaining. He insists that media violence is seriously damaging to those who think they are not affected by acquiescing in what the media dishes up as entertainment, including advertising. Nagler makes the case that time saved by regular measured refusal to view media violence can be deployed in constructive community service on the local level, thus contributing to a movement for a culture of peace and nonviolence.

This compelling book makes a strong case that nonviolence is a lifelong journey with companions, together searching for a nonviolent future, finding delight in the unfolding scheme of the universe.

If you would like to join an email or written exchange of reflections on reading *Is There No Other Way? The Search for a Nonviolent Future*, send your email address or postal address to:

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Annual Membership Meeting

The GPS annual membership meeting will be on October 27, 2:00-8:30 p.m. at Church of the Saviour, 2025 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC. The program will include a discussion of GPS activities as well as discussion of implications of the Department of Peace Bill introduced in Congress in July. At the dinner, Mary Lord will speak on "A Life in Peace Service." Members are reminded to call in reservations for dinner to Clara Doyle, 703-356-8023 or email, claradoyle@aol.com.

Harry Yeide to Speak at COPRED/PSA Meeting

Dr. Harry Yeide, professor at George Washington University and a member of the GPS board, will present a paper at the annual meeting of the Consortium on Peace Research and Education (COPRED) and the Peace Studies Association (PSA) at Evergreen College in Olympia, WA, October 4-7, 2001. His paper will discuss the possibility of converting peacebuilding into larger social enterprises, using three examples, including GPS.

Burundians Meet in Washington, DC

GPS member Molly Wallace served as a French/English facilitator in a meeting of more than 20 young people from Burundi who gathered at Africare House in Washington, DC, August 31-September 2, 2001. Participants came from cities as far as Abidjan and as close as Philadelphia. They met at the first Peace Summit under the auspices of the Burundi Youth Council, a newly-formed organization of Burundians in their 20s and 30s to work on the challenges facing their country, which has suffered ethno-political violence off and on for the past 35 years.

Molly reports that a recurrent theme in the closing plenary session was the change of spirit that occurred over the course of the dialogues through interacting with and listening to members of the other ethnic community, Hutu or Tutsi. There was a commitment on the part of many to return to their respective communities and initiate contact between the two ethnic groups there. The Burundi Youth Council is hoping to hold a similar, larger meeting a year from now.

What Would Be the Impact of a U.S. Department of Peace? Members Reply

On July 11, 2001, Congressman Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio) introduced a bill in Congress to establish a Department of Peace at the cabinet level in the U.S. Government. We have asked some of our members to consider the following questions:

How could the mission of GPS to create a professional peace service by promoting education and skills training be realized through a Department of Peace? How can GPS members actively support H.R. 2459 and the establishment of a Department of Peace?

Martin Benton, College Park, MD, wrote:

As human beings, our relationships between and among each other present the most complex set of variables that we face in our day-to-day existence. Without a systematic mechanism to order those relationships, we are like a teenager who has never driven and is asked to navigate an automobile through the streets of Manhattan without having first been given driving instructions.

The proposed Department of Peace acknowledges that peace is a discipline that requires a systematic and methodical approach. Thus, it is essential that the skills and tools to develop peaceful relationships between individuals, states, and nations be taught in a systematic and disciplined manner, as any other intellectual discipline.

The proposed legislation symbolizes a radical departure from the idea that domination and submission are the guiding principles for relationships between nations, to one of mutual dependency where the well being of each nation is the defining force of all interactions. If enacted and signed into law, this piece of legislation creates the necessary structure through which we as a nation can begin to develop the skills necessary to create the peace that we all long for as individuals, families, communities, and nations.

The enactment of this legislation will occur only when the citizens raise their collective voices on its behalf and let it be known that we, as a nation, see ourselves as one nation among equals, ready to mount a collective effort to forge lasting peaceful relationships with all peoples of our planet.

Bob Horne replied from Lithonia, GA: British prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, after meeting

with Adolph Hitler on September 30, 1938, spoke of "peace in our time." Clearly, he was shortsighted. What would the 20th century have been like had we had such a department before the two world wars? At the beginning of the 21st century, we have the opportunity to advocate for such a department in our government.

I have friends who have friends who have friends, and I will be trying to enlist them in the promotion of the Department of Peace. The readers of this piece are encouraged to speak to their friends at the grass roots level across the country in support of this initiative.

The Department of Peace will equip our government with a much greater understanding of the dynamics of potentially conflicted parts of the world, enabling the prevention of armed conflict, and for the building of the structures of peace with lasting quality. This would be an on-going process of understanding the intermingled, conflicted dynamics that result in enormous anger. Such a department would prevent uninformed and misguided mistakes and instant judgment and demonizing that has often harmed the peace process in the past.

Elayne McClanen of Sandy Spring, MD, answered: Some central Pennsylvanian friends of nonviolent active peacemaking have discovered a venue for sharing Congressman Dennis Kucinich's legislation for a cabinet level U.S. Peace Department.

A small monthly gathering of protesters at the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, PA, began highlighting the demolition of Palestinian homes by the Israeli government and military a few years ago. Gradually, vigilers began calling for a Peace College as well.

November 9-11, 2001, a group of peace activists, with Christian Peacemaker Teams sponsorship, will present their version of "the First Carlisle Peace" to be held at the First Church of the Brethren and the Friends Meeting House in Carlisle. A discussion of HR 2459, establishing a cabinet level

Peace Department, will open the event on Friday evening. The public is invited.

On Saturday, November 10, participants will include members of Global Peace Services USA, Peaceworkers, Voices in the Wilderness, former hostage Jerry Levin and Sis Levin, Christian Peacemaker Teams trainers, and a Children's Peace Camp. For information call 301-260-7447.

Raymond Woodruff, Cincinnati, OH,

responded: A Department of Peace can help our work tremendously, but only under specific conditions. Since the President will appoint the Secretary, extensive political work is essential, beginning at the lowest levels of whichever party is likely to win the presidency. Everywhere, party leaders must know that there is not only support for HR 2459 but also an overpowering demand for peace. We must do

fabulous public education. Party leaders must know that constituents won't acquiesce to military actions surreptitiously based on the perceived needs of multinational corporations (like the "need" to control sources of oil). Perhaps then we could get a President who could be persuaded to choose a Secretary who wouldn't co-opt the Department of Peace for the cause of military and commercial conquest. Perhaps we could even support a select group of potential candidates for Secretary.

Still more action is needed. The plan for a Peace Academy training people to participate in Peace Services is a stroke of genius. Can we get a Peace Service ready in time? If we can provide both well-prepared teachers for the Academy and a powerful place for graduates to serve, we can help make sure that the law proves its value.

The Global Peace Services USA newsletter is published quarterly. GPS-USA is incorporated in the District of Columbia and is tax-exempt. Current Board members are: Clara Doyle, John Eriksson, Mary Evelyn Jegen, Bill Price, Mindy Reiser, Tricia Sullivan, and Harry Yeide. We welcome contributions and comments.

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Workshop on Conflict Transformation and Reconciliation

A workshop with Johan Galtung, Professor of Peace Studies and Director of TRANSCEND, a peace and development network, will be held October 13-14, 2001, at Pace University, New York. This workshop is recommended for anyone interested in helping parties in a conflict transform them nonviolently, at the personal, group, and international levels. For information, see www.transcend.org or call 914-773-3440. Preregistration is required.

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