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# Global Peace Services USA

*...an idea whose time has come*

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*This issue of the Global Peace Services newsletter features an invited article by one of the most prominent and respected academic names in the international peace movement, Michael True, Professor Emeritus of Assumption College in Worcester, Massachusetts. We are delighted to have this contribution from Professor True. The following four brief articles by GPS Board members illustrate the breadth of peace service related activities occurring around the country and the extent of Board member involvement in them.*

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## **Building the Beloved Community: Deepening the Peace Movement**

Individuals and communities have successfully increased public awareness of, and opposition to, the war on Iraq, but we have thus far failed to end that war. Although many people contribute to a nonviolent movement resisting injustice and waging peace, there is still a great need to build peace cultures in the midst of inordinate violence in our own communities and schools, as well as nationally and internationally.

Resistance to the military, industrial, university, ecclesiastical complex that sustains and tolerates a \$500 billion annual U.S. military budget is more sophisticated than ever before. It has not, however, redirected the priorities or lightened the burden of a crushing war culture that squanders resources, undermines democratic values, and corrupts our institutions.

In this struggle, our hope rests in our initiating and nurturing alternative communities of resistance and renewal, and cooperating with one another in the

multiple tasks of building the beloved community. This “construct” requires the talents of every person—teachers, accountants, community organizers, international lawyers, neighbors, and friends—fulfilling his or her unique responsibility as a peacemaker. None of us can perform all the essential tasks needed for nonviolent social change, but we can cooperate with one another and respect the choices that each of us makes on the basis of our special talents and capabilities.

Among various efforts in this regard, I want to emphasize two approaches to deepening the peace community, (1) cooperation between activists and academics in learning and teaching the essential skills of peacemaking, and (2) programs and events involving students and teachers in peace, conflict, and nonviolence education, high school through graduate school. I will also describe recent representative models for these approaches.

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The Board of Global Peace Services USA sees the GPS newsletter as a forum for a wide range of views on the many questions and concerns entailed in peace-building, peacemaking and peace service. We welcome ideas and opinions from a variety of perspectives, even if we do not necessarily concur with all the thoughts expressed. The GPS Board encourages you, our readers, to share with us your responses to the ideas and experiences presented in these pages. Please write, phone or e-mail us and let us know if you'd like us to publish your reflections in forthcoming newsletters.

Increasingly, activists and some academics recognize a basic truth about movements for social change in the United States, whether abolitionist, feminist, labor, or peacemaking: that substantive change depends upon the willingness of significant numbers of citizens to disobey laws that perpetuate unjust and cruel practices, including risking arrest. Recently five members of the U.S. Congress, including James McGovern (D-Mass), committed civil disobedience at the Sudanese Embassy in Washington, DC, in an effort to encourage intervention by the United Nations to end brutal civil strife in Darfur. In doing so, these members of Congress followed a recommendation of people in Darfur, who had told representatives from the Catholic Workers movement and others working in the region that the best way they could strengthen efforts for peace was by making their tragic plight an issue in Washington, DC.

Not surprisingly, the day after the arrest and prosecution of various citizens and lawmakers, the United Nations increased its commitment to further reconciliation and bartered an agreement among warring factions in the Sudan. Much still needs to be done to build a peace culture there, but these civil disobedients achieved a minor victory for peace. All efforts to end injustice and violence are important, but nonviolent direct action, what Taylor Branch has called “an orphan among democratic ideas,” is an essential strategy. This does not mean that everyone must go to jail, but it does mean that those who risk jail for a good cause garner support and introduce a new factor in resolving and transforming conflict.

International lawyers, including academics, are central to the effort to expose crimes of the U.S. government, including its failure to abide by treaties that protect people and the environment. The testimony and research of Richard Falk, Princeton University, and Francis Boyle, University of Illinois, Champaign/Urbana, for example, have been crucial in defending the Plowshares’ attempts to halt the making and deployment of weapons of mass destruction.

Cooperation among academics and activists provides opportunities for faculty and students to appreciate the relevance of their disciplines in the struggle for justice and peace. Together with research in peace, conflict,

and nonviolence studies, this involvement by the legal profession has helped to teach judges what is seldom acknowledged by courts in the United States: that evils such as torture and nuclear weapons are illegal under international law and are condemned by treaties that we are bound by, according to the U.S. Constitution.

Another important means of deepening the peace community is involving colleges and universities, rich in talented personnel and facilities, in providing forums for thoughtful discussions of values being affirmed and contested by activists. Knowledgeable scholars and teachers can point to research and precedents that make essential links between contemporary issues and American political, social, and literary history. Thus do we reclaim for students and the wider community, that people’s history that helped to achieve the Bill of Rights, abolition of slavery, women’s liberation, rights to decent wages and working conditions, and conscientious objection to warmaking.

What better laboratory for studying American democracy, under the watchful eye of faculty and students, than thoughtful citizens risking arrest and defending themselves in court before their peers? How better to dramatize for young people the means by which peace and justice have been won, often more successfully and meaningfully than on a bloody battlefield? What might students learn from people skilled in the methods of nonviolent action that would inform their behavior as responsible citizens of a democracy?

A concrete example of cooperation between activists and academics over several years involved students from Auburn High School in Massachusetts. There, under the guidance of an academic adviser and teacher, student members of Amnesty International have written thousands of letters to officials in countries where prisoners have been held illegally in jails.

This initiative encourages their using skills in foreign languages to call for the release of prisoners of conscience held without trial for long periods of time. In several instances, those whom students wrote for have been released. What better way to illustrate to young people the power of nonviolence and the potential power of that “majority of one,” as Thoreau called it?

By their efforts, these students give new life to Thoreau's arguments for justice-seeking in "Civil Disobedience," after he went to jail for refusing to pay taxes for the Mexican war.

Another example of cooperation among academics and activists was a New England Peace Studies Association (NEPSA) colloquium involving high school, community college, university teachers, and community organizers at Clark University in April 2006. The event combined resource-sharing of syllabi and a new NEPSA website, a book exhibit, and talking circles on peace and conflict studies and nonviolence theory and strategy. Participants' evaluations indicated just how effectively the gathering contributed to community building, as they focused on the challenges and rewards of teaching peace studies.

University teachers were often relatively unaware of excellent, pioneering work by secondary teachers offering units, courses, and workshops, even within heavily prescribed curricula. In a similar way, secondary teachers are sometimes unfamiliar with undergraduate and graduate programs in peace and conflict studies, including internships with peace organizations. And community organizers may not know about the United Nations Decade for the Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World, adopted by 169 nations of the General Assembly in 1999, or about the rich resources—pamphlets, films, and case studies—on nonviolent movements, from Gene Sharp and the Albert Einstein Institution, Boston ([www.aeinsteinstudies.org](http://www.aeinsteinstudies.org)).

NEPSA discussions at Clark University focused on peace studies programs initiated in hundreds of academic institutions and research centers around the globe since the founding of the International Peace Research Association in 1965. A valuable new resource is the 2006 revised, expanded edition of the *Global Directory of Peace and Conflict Studies*, recently published by the Peace and Justice Studies

Association (PJSA) and International Peace Research Association Foundation.

Another imaginative model of outreach was a Peace Camp, three days of lectures, workshops, films, planned in cooperation with high school students and co-sponsored by Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) and Salem (Mass.) State College Peace Center, in 2004. This intergenerational event resembled similar week-long summer retreats by the United Presbyterian Church National Office, Louisville, Kentucky, at varied locations around the United States.

These initiatives emphasize peace-building skills, engaging participants in conflict transformation exercises, nonviolence training, and techniques for intervention. Combining theory and practice, they underscore a central characteristic associated with building the beloved community: that peace does not exist apart from its being built or constructed. Although peace, as a Denise Levertov poem says "is a presence, an energy field more intense than war," it exists only in the process of our making it, among our families, neighborhoods, schools, and communities. This effort requires skills that we are not born with, new skills appropriate to specific conflicts in interpersonal relations and international negotiations.

Peacemaking is infinitely more complex and demanding than warmaking, which has involved talented strategists since the publication of Sun Tsu's sophisticated treatise, *The Art of War*, over two thousand years ago. Now is the time to deepen our knowledge and to encourage talented strategists to provide us with sophisticated treatises on *The Art of Peacemaking*.

Michael True

Michael True, former president, International Peace Research Association Foundation, is the author of *An Energy Field More Intense Than War: The Nonviolent Tradition and American Literature* (1994) and other publications on peace, conflict, and nonviolence education.

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*A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step. Lao-tzu*

## GPS USA in Annual Nobel Peace Prize Forum

John Eriksson and Harry Yeide, President and Treasurer, respectively, of GPS USA, participated in the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Nobel Peace Prize Forum sponsored by six Lutheran colleges located in the Midwest. The Forum, which rotates annually among the six colleges, took place this year at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, on March 10-11. The origins of the Forum go back to the fact that these colleges have their roots with Norwegian-American immigrants. The Nobel Peace Prize is awarded in Oslo, Norway, every year.

The 2006 Forum was built around the theme of Environment, and the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate for 2005, world-renowned environmentalist Dr. Wangari Maathai of Kenya, gave a stirring address to an audience of over 1200 students, faculty, and members of the public. Dr. Maathai's address was followed in the evening of March 10 by a thoughtful and probing presentation on the state of the U.S. environment and related public policy issues by the former Governor of New Jersey and Director of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for the first two years of the

current Bush Administration, Ms. Christine Todd Whitman.

Two rounds of about forty one-hour seminars were held on the morning of Saturday, March 11. All the seminars dealt with some aspect of the environment. They were led by a wide range of presenters including university faculty and representatives of non-governmental organizations from all over the country. The presentations were selected on a competitive basis. John and Harry led two identical discussions on global peace service and the environment. About 60 participants attended each seminar. They manifested lively interest, and several students asked for more information about GPS USA. Harry and John were impressed by the seriousness with which the participating colleges and students took the Forum and their enthusiasm for it. It was obvious that a lot of planning had gone into the event. Other noteworthy Forum activities included several impressive choral presentations in the main auditorium and a multicultural evening in one of the classroom buildings.

John Eriksson

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## People Coming Together in Peace

On Saturday, April 29, 2006, Global Peace Services USA held a workshop in Youngstown, Ohio, with the theme of *People Coming Together for Peace*. John Eriksson, Mindy Reiser and Cecil Monroe, GPS Board members, gathered in an informal setting with an intimate and diverse group at The First Presbyterian Church of Youngstown to explore problems specific to the Youngstown area, as well as other "rust belt" urban settings in the United States. Discussion of the issues plaguing these communities included economic uncertainty, loss of jobs, poorly funded educational programs, loss of a tax base, and other financial woes.

Cynthia Carter, a social worker with the Youngstown Police Department's Family Investigative Services Unit, spoke on the effects of domestic violence in the family and the dysfunctional cycle that it perpetuates within the family and the community at large. She noted the violence that children

endure when parents, particularly mothers, will not leave or prosecute their violent partners. These outcomes may be due to the victim's fear of being alone, retaliation from their partner, poverty or lack of financial security, lack of education and skills, and/or drug and alcohol addiction. Domestic violence, however, crosses all economic, racial, gender, and cultural boundaries.

Daniel Ayana, Ph. D., Associate Professor of History, Christian Onwudiwe, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice, and Rev. Victor Wan-Tatah, Th.D., Professor and Director of African Studies at Youngstown State University, presented their varied perspectives on the struggle to maintain an equilibrium and encourage new growth/development within the urban areas. Among the problems highlighted were: the effects of economic struggle; criminal activity and its relationship to the demise of a community; an increase of violence within our society

especially among youth and the young adult population; the lack of stable jobs that provide a living income; lack of consistent and affordable health care for all people; incarceration vs. education/training.

The Rev. Lonnie “Codjoe” Simon, Pastor Emeritus of New Bethel Baptist Church (Youngstown, Ohio), community activist, civil rights leader, respected community elder, and published poet, participated in the workshop. Rev. Simon reflected on his training on pacifism and nonviolent strategies that took place during the struggle for U.S. civil rights during the 1960’s. He observed that although many

things have changed for the better, many conditions have not progressed to the level that was expected. But he also expressed renewed hope for the future, thanks to organizations such as GPS and their work for world-wide peace and justice. The workshop concluded with Rev. Simon reciting one of his poems and offering a prayer.

The Youngstown Workshop was organized by Cecil and Jeanne Monroe on behalf of Global Peace Services USA.

Cecil Monroe

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## The Nonviolent Peaceforce

Global Peace Services USA is one of the 94 international member organizations belonging to the Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) — a nongovernmental organization working to apply nonviolent strategies to protect human rights, deter violence, and help create space for local peacemakers to carry out their work. The mission of NP is to build a trained, international civilian peaceforce committed to nonviolent intervention.

From June 15-18 in Berkeley, California, GPS Vice President Mindy Reiser joined with NP North American staff and representatives of NP North American member organizations to discuss Nonviolent Peaceforce current programs, future plans, and the roles of member organizations. A highlight of the gathering was the opportunity to hear from Jan Passion, former field team manager of the NP team in Sri Lanka, and Ellen Furnani, who conducted an evaluation of the NP work in Sri

Lanka. They described the work of the NP international peace teams in Sri Lanka and the challenges they face.

Meeting at International House, Berkeley, NP member organizations explored a range of contributions they could make to the work of the Nonviolent Peaceforce as it works to expand its activities to the island of Mindanao in the southern Philippines and potentially to northern Uganda and Colombia. NP is currently seeking applicants from across the world to serve on its international teams in Sri Lanka and the Philippines, as well as teams to be deployed in the future. In addition, NP is looking to develop a “reserve” of individuals interested in serving with the Peaceforce at a later time and in being deployed in emergency situations. For more information on the Nonviolent Peaceforce, go to [www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org](http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org).

Mindy Reiser

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## GPS & IPRA

The 21<sup>st</sup> Biennial Conference of the International Peace Research Association took place at the University in Calgary, Canada, this past summer, June 29-July 3. IPRA, as it is usually referred to, even on the T-shirts made available to all registrants, has existed since 1964.

The group has met in many parts of the world, but never in the United States. However, this year’s meeting drew many participants from the States and, of course,

Canada. Several conversations revealed some pain that more persons were not present from the developing nations, but many certainly were present from Asian and African countries that would fit into that category. The organizing principles and their results are complex, but the atmosphere suggests that authority is exercised gently. There are, however, about 1300 members representing about 200 peace organizations, including

GPS. In addition, there are member groups that focus on different parts of the world. There is another sort of

functional division into 19 commissions and 9 working groups.

There were quite a few persons there who have been related to GPS over the years, so I had no trouble feeling at home. Indeed, many persons that I was meeting for the first time proved very amiable, and I hope to see them soon again. Abbie Ziffren, one of the persons that stimulated my early interest in peace studies, once told me that I would enjoy going to peace studies meetings because the people are so nice; again her prophecy seemed fulfilled.

There is no way to capture the richness of all that was presented and discussed in a brief report. There were speeches presented by persons who have earned reputations as celebrities in peace circles, e.g., Johan

Galtung. But many of the best presentations were by persons of whom I had never previously heard. Many organizations were represented only by their publications and, I would assume, some member or members who brought them. Thus, two local groups distributed a multicolored, two-sided plastic sheet. On one side, over 50 peace issues were listed in a "Peace Pie" organized in relation to the World, the Community, the Family, and the Individual. On the other side, one found a list of 50 Ways to Build World Peace. Of course, one could easily make both lists longer, but it was good to have that many concrete reminders of how rich, broad, full, and challenging peacemaking is.

Harry Yeide, Jr.

### ***Global Peace Services USA***

The newsletter of Global Peace Services USA is published quarterly. GPS USA is incorporated in the District of Columbia and is tax-exempt. Current board members are: John Eriksson, Inshirah Farhoud, Cecil Monroe, Robert Muscat, Mindy Reiser, and Harry Yeide. We welcome contributions and comments. To contact us:

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