
Global Peace Services USA

...an idea whose time has come

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Greetings from John Eriksson, President, GPS USA

Welcome to this issue of the Newsletter of Global Peace Services USA. The theme of this issue is "Peace and the Arts," including music and the visual arts. Thoughtful, moving, and provocative articles have been written by Lucia Cucinotta, a recent graduate of George Washington University in Washington, DC, and by three GPS Board Members: Drs. Robert Muscat, Mindy Reiser, and Harry Yeide, Jr. As demonstrated by the articles, the arts can be an instrument for social evil in the hands of evil leaders. But more importantly, they can be, and have been, powerful instruments for peace. Since our last issue, about 30 members of GPS USA and The Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) met on March 9, at a home in Washington DC, for the first joint meeting of GPS and NP. Informative presentations were made by both groups, which were followed by a lively discussion.

Stay tuned for future Newsletter issues that will describe progress toward a GPS-supported pioneering program mentored by GPS Board Member Inshirah Farhoud at Alverno College, on peace and healing in nursing education (reflections on the course by two Alverno nursing students are included in this newsletter). Forthcoming Newsletters will also address new GPS initiatives focusing on youth leadership for resolving youth violence in Milwaukee, WI, guided by Inshirah Farhoud, and a youth program with similar goals, mentored by Board Member Cecil Monroe in Youngstown, OH.

PEACEMAKING AND THE ARTS

Many of the movies that we watch feature cruel power-mad artists that seem rather violent and these movies are not entirely beside the point. We should never forget that Adolf Hitler can plausibly be seen as a frustrated artist who intended to replace destroyed cities with his aesthetically better ones. Nonetheless, we tend to regard as less violent those who wield brushes, pen poetry, make beautiful music or pursue the arts in some other way, when we compare them with soldiers or criminals with guns. Also, while there are works of art that condone or encourage violence – but less often “do” violence – many artists become advocates of peace through their work. Thus, it has been argued that many of those working on sculpture for the medieval cathedrals felt that they were unjustly treated by their bosses – the bishops usually – and invented a kind of artistic “nonviolent protest” by sculpting their statues with less polite parts of the anatomy pointing to the bishop’s palace.

In many cities of the world, we now have organizations that call themselves “poets for peace.” They are successors of the English poets who wrote such numbing descriptions of their experiences in World War I. Certainly many of the paintings that we celebrate by hanging them in cathedral-scale buildings are there because they bring peace to us. I recall a fellow graduate student who once confessed that when his world became too raw for him to tolerate, he would closet himself and listen to some Beethoven music. And because of

my professional interest in the religions of the world, I am very much impressed with the religious use of the arts to create places where one may practice the piety of peace.

It may well be the case that currently, we most readily think of Iraq as the most violent part of the world. By coincidence, I recently attended a choir concert by an upper Midwest college group conducted by a man who had recently been to Poland. There, he met a refugee from Iraq who suggested to him that we would all feel better about our world if, instead of sending soldiers with guns, we sent groups of artists that could prompt dialogue rather than destruction. While I am sure that he was thinking of musicians, I believe that the insight could be applied to many art forms.

We have many theories regarding the arts taken together, and for each of the arts considered one at a time. And, no doubt, we will need more than one to help us understand the world of the arts. Such theories are not confined to those who turn to the arts for religious reasons. Great paintings, writings and music are not only sensory experiences, but seem to touch inner, deeper senses of which we remain unaware much of the time. Friedrich Schleiermacher even wondered if it was always a mistake to put words with music; he felt that this tempted us to miss the depth of the music, per se. And it can sneak up on us. One of the most famous paintings of Casper David Friedrich shows only the

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.

back of a man looking out of a window, but many report learning about human inquisitiveness and adventure into the unknown, in a new way and with a new depth, after viewing that painting.

But we also tell one another that one picture is worth a thousand words, that it renders our world more concrete, that it exercises more influence than “mere” words ever will. Clearly, those who are experts in advertising operate on the principle. But it is not only those who are crassly commercial that display this insight. Sometimes it is artistic writing that will “draw” a picture for us. Anyone who has read *The Red Badge of Courage* probably finds it impossible to perceive the Civil War as she or he had previously – a reminder that in the hands of the artist, even words can become “pictures.” It is not only in advertising that we encounter the power of the picture. As one of my more famous professors once confessed to us, it was only after he

viewed Picasso’s *Guernica* that he finally understood the reality of war, despite his having participated in the First World War.

It is especially true that younger persons live and learn from pictures. There have been periods of Western history in which reading was not a universal skill, and most of what we would classify as education was done by pictures. One of the other essays in the Newsletter will talk about the extraordinary witness to peace found in pictures created by younger minds. In part, this is because younger minds respond to concreteness more than to abstraction, but it has led many to the suspicion that a special kind of wisdom seems at work here, one that adults may lose.

Having said that, it is time to move in the direction of more concreteness in the other essays and pictures that will be part of this Newsletter.

Harry Yeide, Jr.

ART AS WITNESS

Before the popular Annie Leibovitz exhibit was displayed at the Corcoran Museum, I had the opportunity to see it at the Brooklyn Museum of Arts. Annie Leibovitz is famous for her celebrity pictures in “Rolling Stone” and “Vanity Fair”; however, her art exhibit displayed a large collection of more personal photos and of photos from her time as a wartime photographer in Rwanda and Sarajevo. The celebrity photos, personal photos and wartime images were mixed together in the exhibit playing off the concept of reality and fiction. The most powerful and moving pictures in her exhibit were those from Rwanda and Sarajevo. Her photographs were powerful and moving images of the death and destruction associated with genocide and war. Despite being surrounded by beautiful pictures of celebrities, Annie Leibovitz’s wartime photos took your breath away with the heavy reality of the pain and death caused by genocide and war.

I was a senior at the George Washington University (GW) at the time of my visit and was in the process of completing my Peace Studies minor. To complete the minor, I had to complete the Peace Studies Project class. I had been throwing ideas around all year, and when I saw this exhibit I knew exactly what I wanted to do. I decided that I wanted to hold my own art exhibit at the George Washington University with art from places of conflict. I felt that even though I was an International Affairs major and had been studying conflicts and genocide for four years, the reality of these conflicts had never really hit me. I learned about wars

and genocides through books and discussions, but I had never been in a war or seen the extreme poverty and violence that I was learning about in my classes. Annie Leibovitz’s photograph of a yellow wall stained with bloody hand and footprints of Rwandan genocide victims trying to escape a massacre was a heavy reminder of the unnecessary conflicts that occur today. The image put a face to what I was studying and gave me a sense of purpose. I wanted to bring that experience to my fellow GW students. I wanted to show them that the conflicts they were studying were more than just pages in textbook, but real events that involved real people who died as a result of these conflicts, and that they could change the course of events.

I decided to have two different art exhibits. The first exhibit would be of art submitted by students that represented conflict in their own lives. The second exhibit would be of art by students from both Palestine and Israel. I figured that the conflict between two strangers that are forced to live together is similar to many international conflicts. I decided to relate the conflict between roommates to the Palestinian Israeli conflict. A big stretch, I know. However, I hoped that by comparing a conflict as complicated as the Israeli Palestinian conflict to a conflict as simple as two strangers trying to get along would help students to understand the Israeli Palestinian conflict more personally. My goal was to move the students to act (whether by writing a paper, joining a student organization, or deciding to work for a non-profit dedicated to conflict resolution). To this end, I decided to

work with the GW Center for Conflict Resolution to mount the Palestinian/Israeli student art exhibit at the GW Hillel.

However, I soon discovered that the goals I had for my project were a little too big for one or even two people to accomplish. I was also forced to compromise on aspects of my project because of certain time constraints and semester realities. So, I settled for a photo contest that asked for pictures that represented a student's life in GW's residential housing. I also wanted to hold an art exhibit for the photos. Financial, space and time constraints necessitated posting the photos on the GW Housing Web site, rather than displaying them at an art exhibit. While a sizeable number of students participated in the photo contest, I was disappointed with the outcome because in the end I never knew how many people viewed the photos or what they thought of the contest. I also had no way of connecting the local and Middle Eastern projects.

In developing the Israeli Palestinian art exhibit, I worked with my classmate, Noureen. She had artwork from the organization Seeking Common Ground, sponsor of a camp that brings Israeli and Palestinian students together during the summer and weekends to participate in cultural understanding workshops. Their goal is that through these workshops the students can begin to see that people they might have thought were their enemies are really like them. One of the exercises they do early on is draw, write, or paint on a piece of cloth something that represents their feelings either about the camp or their lives in Israel/Palestine. All the cloths, then, are sewed together to create a tapestry. We decided to hang the art at the GW Hillel. We invited all the

Muslim and Jewish student organizations on our campus to participate as well as posted announcements at the Elliott School of International Affairs, the GW student center and sent out a Facebook electronic invitation (evite).

The opening night turned out much better than we expected. About 20 to 25 students came throughout the night and they all really enjoyed the art. I was also aware of some students who went to the exhibit at the Hillel during the week with Noureen. Students also posted positive comments on the Facebook evite that I sent out. I was very grateful to the GW Hillel for keeping the artwork up for an entire week so people could come and visit the exhibit whenever they wanted to.

Overall, I felt that the two events were a success. While I had difficulty relating the two projects, a good number of students participated in the photo contest and attended the art exhibit. I also received positive feedback from both students and professors regarding the projects.

Organizing an art exhibit is a great way to make a statement on campus about a certain issue or topic that you are interested in. However, I would recommend that you not do it alone but with a student organization on campus. A student organization has the resources necessary to plan such a large undertaking and I would be really interested to see what kind of art exhibit a university student organization would be interested in planning and mounting.

Lucia Cucinotta

Music and Peace

Music is universal. As Oliver Sacks wrote, in his recent book *Musicophilia*, "People sing and dance together in every culture, and one can imagine them having done so around the first fires, a hundred thousand years ago." Today, music is also commonly experienced communally, in concerts, celebrations, and religious services. With the advent of recording, listening to music has also become an individual experience for people all over the world.

That people can be profoundly affected by music has long been known. The Greek philosopher Plato thought that since music could have such unsettling and asocial effects, it should be subject to controls. There have been legendary concerts at which people literally rioted in the concert hall when hearing radically new music for the first time -- Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring" in 1905, for example.

Music is the least representational of the arts, but it can evoke the widest range of associations and emotional responses. We associate different music with love, weddings, sounds in nature, death, and funerals. Liturgical music can be spiritually exalting. Music can be a powerful instrument for social mobilization or protest, most often when combined with stirring poetry and in settings where the music is one part of a group experience. Needless to say, such mobilization may be for violent or nonviolent purposes.

In contrast, much music is abstract, yet powerfully moving, like the contrapuntal music of Bach, and the evocative classical Indian music performed on the sitar and drums.

Music also has associations with martial emotions and warfare. Military march music, under most circumstances, is stirring but not really employed to lure people into violence.

Some music, like Tchaikovsky's famous "1812 Overture," commemorate actual military events. But music also has been used to arouse people to enter into conflict. Think of the martial songs from great conflicts, such as the songs of different military units that fought in World War II, or the use of drums, bagpipes, and other instruments when battles were fought by confrontations of massed foot soldiers. War music and dances have long traditions in many cultures. The first four notes of Beethoven's fifth symphony spell out "V" in Morse code, famously used by Winston Churchill as a sign for the pursuit of victory of the Allies in World War II. Certainly, the darkest use of music in all history was the Nazi practice of forcing musicians to play in Auschwitz while prisoners were being taken to the gas chambers.

What about music for peace? Again we have Beethoven, whose ninth symphony has become a paean to peace, played to celebrate the fall of the Berlin wall, and to commemorate the annual United Nations Day. Famous popular culture performers have held huge concerts to collect funds for humanitarian relief in war-afflicted zones and to raise public outcry against these conflicts. The Internet provides much information on musicians and performances around the world that are geared to calling for peace generally, or that bring together performers and audiences, that include people from opposite sides in situations of conflict.

The inspiration behind these more benign efforts is the belief that music can serve as a bridge. This was recently illustrated by a new radio station (broadcasting simultaneously from Jerusalem and Ramallah) that plays music "as a universal language that can cross borders and reach all people, all nations and all religions." Although music is the most abstract of the arts, and in that sense "universal," its very different idioms are easily recognized for their different cultural origins. Enjoyment of the music of a different culture can serve as a "bridging" experience, a reminder of common humanity and a shared impulse for artistic expression that is found everywhere.

Music's power to affect "real" issues in conflict should not be exaggerated, however. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, for example, is not likely to be moved toward resolution because Palestinians and Israelis can now share musical experience. Music's emotional and healing contribution is probably more palpable as a part of post-conflict reconciliation, of sustaining a peace already achieved. Music might be especially effective for the younger generation, bringing them together in pedagogy and performance in schools with children from different communities, for example.

One of music's greatest powers is as a source of inner peace for the individual person. This is an experience one can enjoy as a respite from the tensions and anxieties of life, whether stemming from conflict or not. One illustration worth quoting does relate to one of the primary experiences of conflict in recent American history, 9/11. We get this from author Oliver Sacks:

"On the recent fifth anniversary of September 11, on my morning bike ride to Battery Park, I heard music as I approached the tip of Manhattan, and then saw and joined a silent crowd who sat gazing out to sea and listening to a young man playing Bach's Chaconne in D on his violin. When the music ended and the crowd quietly dispersed, it was clear that the music had brought them some profound consolation, in a way that no words could ever have done."

Much has been written about music's peculiar power to give humans a sense of inner peace and consolation. The great humanitarian and organist, Albert Schweitzer, beautifully summarized this power in his biography of J. S. Bach:

"We can only repeat again and again – take them and play them and penetrate into this world for yourself...What so fascinates us in the work is not the form or the build of the piece, but the world-view that is mirrored in it. It is not so much that we enjoy the Well-tempered Clavichord as that we are edified by it. Joy, sorrow, tears, lamentation, laughter – to all these it gives voice, but in such a way that we are transported from the world of unrest to the world of peace, and see reality in a new way, as if we were sitting by a mountain lake and contemplating hills and woods and clouds in the tranquil and fathomless water."

Nowhere so well as in the Well-tempered Clavichord are we made to realise that art was Bach's religion...Whoever has once felt this wonderful tranquility has comprehended the mysterious spirit that has here expressed all it knew and felt of life in the secret language of tone, and will render Bach the thanks we render only to the great souls to whom it is given to reconcile men with life and bring them peace."

It is unfortunate, in today's culture of frenetic pop music, that the ability to appreciate the inner-peace gift of Bach (and other composers) is not more widely taught in music appreciation in the nation's schools.

Robert Muscat

PENDANTS FOR PEACE AND BEYOND

Laurie Siegel, artist and teacher, wanted her elementary school students to develop both their creative skills and their understanding of the predicament of children living in conflict zones. In 2007, she married these two objectives in the Pendants for Peace: Children Helping Children project at Watkins Elementary School in Washington, DC.

During the school year, Watkins students learned about the conflict engulfing Sudan's Darfur region and the impact of the violence on children's lives. Watkins students wrote stories about the conflict and in Siegel's art classes drew and painted pictures based on what they had learned. And then came the Pendants for Peace.

Nearly all the 500 students in Watkins Elementary School worked with Siegel to create the pendants – fused glass necklaces – which they individually designed using nuggets, sticks and chips of colored glass glued on rectangular glass which was fired in a kiln. The students then strung the cooled glass on black cords.

The pendants were an artistic success and attracted the interest of school staff and parents. Students proudly wore their pendants, visible reminders of the carnage in Darfur. The pendants also contributed to reconstruction efforts in the region. Through sales of their one-of-a-kind pendants to parents, school staff and neighborhood residents on Capitol Hill, the students were able to contribute \$2,000 to Save the Children's school rebuilding program in Darfur.

Building on the success of the 2007 project, in May 2008, Siegel and her students joined forces to create fused glass "Fragile Hopes for Peace Bowls." Each bowl, created by a team of students, has messages of peace as an integral part of its design. These words, phrases or poems are the products of student "brainstorming" explorations of the ideas of peace, social justice, discrimination and tolerance.

Proceeds from the sale of the Peace Bowls and newly minted Pendants for Peace will be donated to the Malnutrition Fund of Doctors Without Borders. In preparing for the Peace Bowl project, students learned about the effects of malnutrition on children, how malnutrition is clinically assessed and how it is treated.

The Peace Bowl project was part of a larger Watkins Elementary School focus on Peace and Conflict Resolution in the Art Room and Around the World. Other initiatives included Pinwheels for Peace – with student visual statements about peace, war, harmony and cooperation – planted in the school's garden. Another project, aided by American University graduate students, trained the school's fourth grade students to explore their lives through the lens of a camera. Their photos were then paired with photos taken by Palestinian youth – with the 12 best pairings of photos featured as photos for a calendar. The calendars were later sold to raise funds for creative art projects for youth in both Washington, DC and the West Bank.

Mindy Reiser

ON NURSES AS HEALERS AND PEACEMAKERS

A major Global Peace Services USA initiative in 2008 has been the development and launching of the course Nurses as Healers and Peacemakers in the School of Nursing at Alverno College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Some 26 Alverno Nursing School juniors and seniors enrolled in the course co-taught during the spring 2008 semester by GPS Board member Inshirah Farhoud, RN and Judeen Schulte, Ph.D, R.N., Professor and Dean of the School of Nursing. An important dimension of the course, which combined both analytical and experiential components, has been student journal writing through which students reflected on assigned readings, class presentations and their hands-on nursing experiences over the course of the week.

In a forthcoming GPS Newsletter, we will explore in greater depth the Nurses as Healers and Peacemakers course. We

now would like to share with you some thoughts on the course from the journals of two Alverno students.

Laura Wulf observed:

In the hustle and bustle of all the studying we do, trying to make it through school, it is easy to forget the reason we are here. I agreed with what Elizabeth said in her closing statement that the challenge will be in not letting it end here. The challenge will be to keep practicing peace everyday and bring it into all of my actions. It will be to keep myself inspired especially outside of this class. There is such a powerful energy of motivation created in this class which is hard to regenerate when by myself.

...In this world, I feel there are many people who believe in the act of peace but are unsure of how to create it...Peacekeeping has to start with us and....there is a great

need for education concerning non-violent approaches. The lack of education, resources and time, limit the knowledge that peace is something that can be achieved. We are capable of abolishing violent conflict; it just needs to be known to the rest of the world.

Leigh Ann Winter commented:

I think that each time I expose myself to the readings or group discussion, I gain insight that challenges my old idea of peace, as well as continues to build up on this new life philosophy of how to integrate peace into my daily life. I have learned that peace is not static, but dynamic and

always changing (much like my idea of peace). I have learned that peace is not passive. To want peace in all your life, you can not wait for it to come to you, rather, you need to go out and get it for yourself. By going to get your own "peace" you are making changes that impact more than yourself.

Mindy Reiser

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