



SATYA

Truthful in Thought, Word, and Actions

YES! WE CAN PEACEBUILDERS *November 2023*

"The past may be a prelude to the future, but does not inevitably determine the shape of the future." Richard R. Kurrasch



WARS AND RUMORS OF WARS

by
Ruth Ann Angus

The buzz around my Rotary meeting this past week went like this: "The world has gone to hell in a handbasket." I couldn't say I didn't agree. It does seem to have done so. At the time, I was stewing over what, if anything, I could say in this newsletter about the wars. Yes, I've been asked, what is the thinking on nonviolence about wars? How does nonviolence deal with it? Well, nonviolence says we do no harm to anyone. Easy to say, isn't it? Way hard to do.

When Russia invaded Ukraine, I identified with it solely because my grandmother on my mother's side of the family was born in Ukraine. Admittedly she was born at a time when there was no Ukraine per se. Her papers say she was born into the Austrian/Hungarian Empire and not long after her birth the area belonged to the Russian Empire at the time of the Tsars. For me, it was easy to pick sides in this current conflict. For one thing, viewing Russia as the aggressor, I am right away against the action. And then there is the long-standing attitude here in the west that Russia is our enemy. I can't remember a time in my life when Russia wasn't viewed that way.

But the Palestine/Israeli conflict is impossible for me to pick a side. I can barely even form words to say what I feel about this war. And then I realize that picking a side is not the way of nonviolence. Nonviolence says, do no harm to anyone, period.

I knew I could not put together this newsletter under the banner of SATYA - Truth, without writing something about this war. But oh, how I wished to just ignore it!

Two weeks ago, I visited some schools in this area to speak to elementary kids about peace and nonviolence. As I passed one of the open doors of one of the

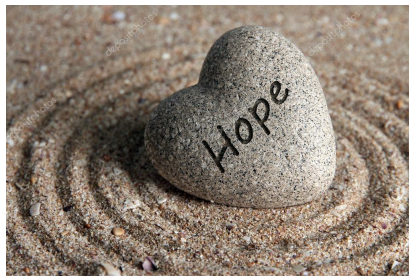
classrooms, I heard an altercation taking place. I stopped and eavesdropped and saw two boys arguing and poking at each other. Loud voices from both wafted out towards me. Just as things were getting to a fever pitch, the teacher came up to them, saying “Stop it, stop it” and grabbed both boys by an arm and pushed them over to two chairs. She moved the chairs so that the boys sat facing each other. The she pulled up a chair by them and said to them, “Okay, now talk this out nicely.” Each boy was allowed to state his case, but not both boys at the same time. If they began to get loud and accusatory, she stopped them and made them start again. It didn’t take too long for them to solve their conflict with her guidance. I stood there thinking how easy that was. Why isn’t easy for Israel and Palestine? Or Russia and Ukraine? Why does it always have to come to bombs and missiles, destruction, and death?

I often go about my business with songs playing in my head. They can be the songs my ukulele group practices every week or something I heard on the radio. The tunes play over and over. The other day I was putting together my playlist for my radio show, and I chose a song titled “Spirits” by the Strumbellas from their album “Hope.” A repetitious line in the song plays this way: “I’ve got guns in my head, and they won’t go, won’t go. I’ve got guns in my head, and they won’t go.” Yeah, I thought, I’ve got guns in my head, and they won’t go!

Then I kept hearing the words, “STOP IT! STOP IT!” I hear those words screaming in my head every time I hear an update on the wars, the new number of deaths, the resistance to a cease fire. It is all I can say.

STOP IT! STOP IT!

Ruth Ann Angus is Director of Yes! We Can Peacebuilders www.yeswecanpeacebuilders.org associated with People of Faith for Justice and The Central Coast Center for Ecological Civilization in San Luis Obispo County, California



Our Dogs Are Us

I remember the day I picked up a bag of dog food at the local feed store. I paid with a check and as I reached for my wallet to provide some identification, the lady at the cash register said that she didn’t need any ID. To my puzzled look she said, “We never get bad checks from pet owners.”



Maybe they should include a line on, say, loan applications for a description of the household's pets on the grounds that pet owners are good risks. Not that we would want to draw too large a conclusion from a mere shard of evidence, and naturally there are many valid reasons why people do not have a pet, but if we might deduce *good* character from the presence of the family pet, what does its absence suggest ...? Just saying.

We develop real relationships with our pets—and they with us. I had a dog once who did not like going to church. We tried to instill in him some appreciation for the honor and responsibility that went along with his status, First Dog, but on those occasions when the First Dog and the First Lady would walk me back to the church for an evening meeting, we would turn a certain corner and the mere sight of the building a block or so away was all it took for him to stop in his tracks and sit. Nothing would make him budge except moving in a different direction.

I raised the matter with a colleague who informed me that *this* dog loves going to *his* church, but I pointed out that *his* dog was a new convert and that with time *his* ardor would diminish.

And so it goes ... one mystery to remain ever unsolved, but perhaps it is enough to be reminded by our pets that we really are connected to—or better, that we really are interconnected with—the wider world and the whole of creation. We do not stand apart from or over the creation and its creatures and systems: the health and well being of the parts is intimately connected to the health and well being of the whole.

And if we're really fortunate, our dogs and cats and whatever else makes us better humans will nudge us in the right direction. In later days, a successor dog had a special way of reminding us that he was part of the family and expected to be treated accordingly. This did not include being left alone when his superiors would go someplace. He was happy enough to see us when we returned but the formality of the greeting having been dispensed with, he then expressed his displeasure with a protracted period of barking which could only be mollified with a piece of graham cracker (he has us well trained—or as the mistress of the house would say, he has *me* well trained).

May they so train all of us.

Richard R. Kurrasch is a retired minister of The Disciples of Christ and Congregational Churches and is a Board Member of The People of Faith for Justice in San Luis Obispo, CA.
www.peopleoffaithforjustice.org

The Nonviolent Ghost

by
Vicki Aldrich

Matthew made his way slowly on the gently rolling



deck of the ship. He was fuming as he walked surrounded by an oppressive grey fog. He pulled his coat around him against the damp wet chill of the air. The sails above him were catching the breeze and moving the ship westward. Once again, he had been chided and teased by Bully Brad (as he had nicknamed him). Brad and a couple of his buddies had approached him after he had been sewing up the sails with Crusty.

“Enjoying your needle work Mati?” he had teased while the others laughed. His mind spun with comebacks, “If I had a needle now, I would sew your mouth shut” or “I could put a patch on that annoying hole in your face.”

He slowed down as the fog seemed to close in around him and visibility was next to none. He thought he saw someone ahead or was his mind playing tricks on him. The fog parted as he approached, yes there was a woman standing at the rail. She was looking out toward the sea, dressed in Quaker gray with a bonnet on her head, she blended easily into the surrounding fog. She turned and smiled at him.

“Good morning, Friend” she said.

“I’m not your friend,” he snapped back at her. Then said, “Sorry Ma’am, I’m a bit upset this morning.”

“What’s troubling thee” she asked.

“I’m struggling to hold down my anger.”

“Whatever for?” she asked.

“But I thought Quakers were nonviolent.” He said.

“We are. We strive to be so. There is a difference between anger and violence. It’s anger that often moves us to action. Speaking up and acting on our anger is not the same as violently hurting someone. What has upset thee?”

He explained the teasing.

“Are you angry at them or at thy self?” she asked.

“I think it’s more myself. I don’t want them to get to me. I start feeling powerless.”

“I wonder if they are jealous of your skill and your relationship with Crusty.”

He looked at the fog and the water barely visible below, as he reflected on what she said. He noticed that he had calmed down. He had not thought of jealousy as a motivator for the teasing. He acknowledged to himself that he was proud of his sewing skills and knew they were essential for the success of the voyage.

“Thank you, Ma’am,” he said, “My name’s Matthew.”

“Glad to meet you, Matthew. I’m Elizabeth”

“I best get on with my morning chores”, he said, “Good morning, hope this fog lifts soon.”

“Oh, I’m enjoying it,” she said, “Goodbye.”

He walked on toward the bow. When he turned to look back, she had disappeared into the fog.

That evening after supper he found the four Quakers. He sat down with them and said, “I didn’t know there was another Friend on board.”

“There isn’t” Prudence said, “Just us four. Whom is thee speaking of?”

“I met her this morning on deck in the fog. She said her name was Elizabeth.”
Said Matthew.

“Oh!” a passerby said, “So you saw her?”

“Whom?” they all asked.

“Our ghost” he said.

“What?” Matthew asked as he felt a shiver go down his spine. “No way was I speaking with a ghost.”

“Tell us more” Quentin said to the stranger.

“I sailed on this ship once before and around this point she appeared on a foggy morning just like we had today. The story is that she’s the ghost of Elizabeth Hooten, who died in 1671 returning from Barbados to England” he said.

“I know of Elizabeth Hooten, she journeyed with George Fox to Barbados and died on the trip back.” Prudence said. “She was a courageous carrier of God’s word to the Americas”.

“But” Matthew said and fell silent. “How could I have talked with a ghost, she seemed so real.”

“For that moment and for thee she was. I’d call it a blessing.”

Vicki Aldrich is a writer with the Pace e Bene Writer's Affinity Group and a teacher of mathematics in New Mexico. She is writing a novel on the Quaker movement in the new world.

www.paceebene.org

How to Advocate for Public Parks in Your Community

by
Ed Clarke

Public parks are important places for people to gather,



relax, and play, yet they are often neglected by city officials and thus run the risk of becoming hotspots for dangerous activity. Fortunately, people can take action by advocating for funding and maintenance of public parks, making them safer for everyone who uses them and the community at large. Today, **Yes We Can Peacebuilders** explains how you can take a more active role in advocating for public parks in your neck of the woods.

Benefits of Public Parks

1. **Environmental:** National Geographic notes that **public parks provide much-needed green space** in urban areas, which can help improve air quality and offer a respite from the concrete jungle. They also afford the potential for the conservation of various species of fauna and flora that thrive in specific regions.
1. **Social:** Parks are a great place for people and pets to come together and build a close-knit community. If you do bring your dog to the park, be mindful of its safety, **particularly if it is a puppy**. Always keep your dog leashed.
1. **Health:** Studies cited on LittleTikesCommercial.com have shown that living near **green spaces can improve mental health** and increase physical activity levels. They also open the door for small fitness-based businesses to conduct outdoor classes like yoga or organizations to facilitate park runs.
1. **Economic:** Public parks are vital for the economy as they increase the **value of the properties in the vicinity** and attract businesses and visitors to an area. However, this is only the case if the parks are well-maintained and don't become a space for illicit activity.

How to Advocate for Public Parks

Public park advocates are individuals who care about their local parks and make efforts to ensure they receive the attention they need. You don't need to have a background in environmental science or landscape architecture to become an advocate for your local park, you simply need to be willing to take the necessary action to protect them. Here are a few ways to get involved.

1. Familiarize yourself with the issues facing the parks in your area. By having an in-depth knowledge of deficits, you'll be able to formulate a plan of action to combat them.
1. If your local parks are underfunded, you can **lobby your elected officials** for more money to improve their facilities. You can get others in your area involved by starting a petition or raising awareness online.
1. You can get physically involved by **participating in clean-ups or other volunteer initiatives**. Many public parks rely on volunteers to help with maintenance and upkeep.
1. Always be aware of your surroundings when you're in a park. If you see something suspicious, report it to the authorities. By being vigilant, you can

help deter crime and keep parks safe for everyone.

Start a Nonprofit

Spread the word about the importance of public parks and the efforts you're taking to protect them. You can do this by writing letters to the editor, speaking at community events, or using social media to raise awareness. If this doesn't feel like enough, you can always launch your own nonprofit dedicated to boosting public awareness for local parks. A formation company can help answer your questions, such as "[can an LLC be a non profit?](#)" They'll make the formation process easy and straightforward. Then your organization can focus on regular cleanups, finding alternate housing for the unsheltered who use the parks or even promoting park safety.

Parks are a vital part of any community, and it's important for residents to be involved in advocating for their local parks. By raising awareness about the importance of parks and sharing your vision for how they could be improved – including starting a nonprofit – you can help make sure that your community has access to safe, well-lit, and well-maintained public spaces.

"For an organization dedicated to the education of individuals and communities on the path to nonviolence so as to inspire and engage people to make nonviolent living a part of their everyday lives, visit [Yes We Can Peacebuilders](#) online today!"

Ed Clarke writes from his home in Idaho and you can see more of his work on his website [Social Health Today](#).

LINKS

Please explore the new websites to learn more about The People of Faith for Justice at [People of Faith for Justice](#) and The Central Coast Center for Ecological Civilization at [cccecociv.org](#).

Paul Long from Our Walk Together talks about Light and Darkness and the dark night of the soul on his latest podcast. You can listen here: <https://our-walk-together.simplecast.com/episodes/light-and-darkness>

Jane Thornton offers her New Thought Musicians Showcase Holiday Playlist at <https://youtu.be/Bb2MyUkSmY8>

And check out and sign up for some great Zoom sessions with Peace Activist John Dear and his guests at www.beatitudescenter.org

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