



SATYA

Truthful in Thought, Word, and Actions

YES! WE CAN PEACEBUILDERS December 2023

"When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love have always won. There have been tyrants and murderers, and for a time, they can seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall. Think of it - always." - MK Gandhi

Yes We Can Peacebuilders yearns for the end to war -- all wars, all conflicts EVERYWHERE and for true peace to descend upon us this Season of Joy!



THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

by
Ruth Ann Angus

Sunday, December 10th was the 75th anniversary of the United Nations establishment of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Human rights are based on the principles of respect for the individual. The story of human rights is a drama of persistent struggle and steady advance, often against heavy odds. With human rights comes peace and the means to true freedom. This is a tradition that stretches back more than 2,500 years beginning in 539 BC with the Cyrus Cylinder, a clay tablet that is recognized as the world's first charter of human rights and made by Cyrus the Great, the first king of ancient Persia.

After the end of the Second World War the United Nations was founded in 1945 consisting of a Charter of six principal bodies, one of which is the United Nations Human Rights Commission. At that time this commission was under the chairmanship of Eleanor Roosevelt and she and the Commission drafted the document that became the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948. Eleanor Roosevelt, credited with its inspiration, called it the Magna Carter for all humankind.

There are 30 Articles of Human Rights and the Member States of the United Nations pledged to work together to promote these thirty articles. Many of these same rights are today part of constitutional laws of democratic nations.

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”

We all know well that in many places in the world today, human rights are being taken away. It is essential if we as human beings recognize this inherent dignity that we study, promote, and keep sacred all 30 Articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Ruth Ann Angus is Director of Yes! We Can Peacebuilders www.yeswecanpeacebuilders.org
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INTERNATIONAL
HUMAN RIGHTS



Peace Prevails with the Del Mar Elementary School Sunshine Spreaders

By Ruth Ann Angus

Ten 4th graders at the Del Mar Elementary School of Morro Bay, CA welcomed me on November 2nd to tell me about their new club the “Sunshine Spreaders.” Wearing lanyards inscribed with the words Del Mar Peacekeepers they told me they have the desire to “change the world.” After seeing the Peace Picket that I brought along with me as a gift to the group, they decided they would like to construct more of them to sell as a Holiday Project. With help from the Rotary Club of Morro I ordered in all the supplies for them to make up 24 Peace Pickets and they got busy!

Susan Stephens, their faculty coordinator said the kids had a blast doing this and it is evident from the results of the brightly painted and decorated pickets. Sales have been brisk since they set up a table in the lobby of the school and now plans are to keep this peace project going even after the holiday season. Hopes are to blanket Morro Bay (and maybe other towns too) with a Peace Picket in every yard.





Pieces of the Truth

Journaling on Nonviolence Principles

by
Rivera Sun

We all have a piece of the truth. No one has the whole truth. –

Gandhi

My colleague and I recently facilitated a role playing exercise called *Pieces of the Truth* from Pace e Bene's [Engaging Nonviolence Study Guide](#). In it, four people take turns embodying different perspectives on a direct action (in this case, to halt a fossil fuel pipeline). Each person speaks as for 30 seconds in their role, bringing the viewpoint of the activist, police officer, newsperson, and pipeline construction worker to life. Then, they switch roles and repeat, until everyone has had a chance to do each part.

We hear concerns about job security, the future (short term and long term) of children, the need for law and order, the sense of injustice embedded in the law, the role of reporting, insecurities about each action taken, and much more. Ultimately, we start to see the conflict in multiple dimensions. And, while we might still believe that we would lock ourselves to a bulldozer to stop the climate crisis, we emerge from this activity with a more nuanced understanding of people in conflict.

There are rarely evil monsters here.

Over the next week, the phrase *piece of the truth* echoed in my ears as I read headlines, joined protests, wrote op-eds on current issues, scrolled through social media, and more. Everyone had a piece of the truth. No one had the whole truth.

When I think about doing a direct action or joining a protest, one of the first things I do is research. Indeed, this is the first step in the Six Steps of Kingian Nonviolence. Studying, learning, checking the facts (and one's assumptions, too), understanding the conflict, analyzing the social injustice ... these are essential to having the confidence to take risks in pursuit of justice. No one wants to get arrested, beat-up, or worse taking a stand on the wrong thing.

This is exponentially applicable to war. Upon what information are we dropping bombs, pulling a trigger, or funding weapons sales? Do we have the whole truth?

It seems to me that wars swiftly compel us to cherry-pick truths. We cling to the convenient ones that fuel our sense of right and wrong. We ignore the truths that give us pause or make us question. Then we line up on opposite sides and charge in a lethal football match. Every death is justified by the one before and is used in turn to justify the next.

Once the bullets start flying and bombs explode, do people have time to think about truth anymore? Maybe it just reduces down to: *shoot first, explain later*.

If it takes time to search for the truth, we should hold off on spilling blood. If the whole truth is too complex to allow us to easily pick a side, maybe we shouldn't drop bombs.

I wish our news reporters would pick up the many *pieces of the truth* to create more nuanced pictures of conflicts. People rely on the news to assess the situation and take action. If they get wrong information, their actions will be misguided and potentially harmful.

I wish our politicians would stop behaving like football players and think about the *pieces of the truth* more carefully. Perhaps they would find a way to help resolve conflicts rather than aggravating them further. Maybe they'd be able to speak to more than one group's trauma and

pain without making false equivalencies. Or they'd be able to address more than one, oversimplified piece of the truth. And hopefully, they'd stop feeling the righteous certainty that justifies funding war, supplying weapons, and bombing people.

How certain are you that you know the truth? Would you stake your life on it? Would you risk someone else's? Are you so sure you know what's going on that you'd risk the deaths of children?

If not, we need to keep listening to the *pieces of the truth*.

Rivera Sun is the Advancing Nonviolence Coordinator with Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service - She wrote this for the Writing Nonviolence Affinity Group.

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Buried Humanity

by
Shawnee Baldwin

Where exactly do you put 12,000 bodies in a space that looks like a postage stamp from outer space? How do you even begin to count the bodies under the rubble created by human powered missiles and drones that didn't see or care about the humans they were killing? How do we stop our obsession with war as a solution to anything? How does one fight the feeling of despair that the world is going to hell in a handbasket?... whatever that means.

This latest war has shaken me to the core. It brings up all the historical brutal taking of life in civil wars, ethnic cleansings, holocausts, "manifest destiny" genocides, and other justifications for the general disregard for life. We have forgotten our connections as a human race. Joy Harjo, in a recent This Nonviolent Life quote, suggested that the world was once perfect and we took it for granted. But discontent and doubt opened the gates to demons who destroyed this perfect world. Yet the simple sharing of a blanket, a spark of kindness, a flicker of light in the darkness was enough to begin to reverse the damage. Everyday I struggle to reignite hope and optimism but the small flames keep getting doused.

I won't give up. I can't give up. But I do have to keep the images far away from my soul's eye to maintain some sanity. I won't look at the children's numbed faces or the anguish of a parent over a dead child. I quickly delete this stuff from my Facebook feed. But my eye is quicker than my delete finger and a quick peek registers and invades my best intentions. I have to find a balance between a head-in-the-sand approach to world events and doom scrolling heartache and suffering.

Russell Means (Ogala) said that "if all human beings were taken away, life on the earth would flourish. That is how insignificant we are." Humans aren't going anywhere soon but we continue to impact the environment in significant ways. Rather than getting consumed by eco or climate anxiety, despair and helplessness, I try to focus on my for real postage stamp area of influence; raising awareness among our young people on all these intersecting issues.

Where can we plant seeds of love and compassion? Perhaps we can broaden our comfort zones and develop empathy for both sides of a conflict instead of taking sides and cutting off further discussion. Real change begins with an open heart, when we retract that pointer finger of blame at others and concentrate on the three fingers that point back to our bias, pre-judgments, assumptions, stereotypes, and conditioned propagandist responses.

Dr Yehezkel Landau on a recent webinar facilitated by Sharing Sacred Spaces told us to ask ourselves: is this -whatever the issue- a fact (backed up by evidence), an opinion (based on an experience but can't be proven) or a narrative (a retelling of an experience that may or may not be based in fact)? Have you clarified any volatile words (colonialism, Zionism, apartheid, occupation) that you drop in a discussion? Do you come as an "imported expert" with all the answers rather than following the lead of the people most embroiled in a conflict? These questions seem to echo MLK's six principles of Nonviolence.

(Principals of Nonviolence added by newsletter editor)

"Principle one: Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people. It is active nonviolent resistance to evil. It is aggressive spiritually, mentally and emotionally.

Principle two: Nonviolence seeks to win friendship and understanding. The result of nonviolence is redemption and reconciliation. The purpose of nonviolence is the creation of the Beloved Community.

Principle three: Nonviolence seeks to defeat injustice, not people. Nonviolence recognizes that evildoers are also victims and are not evil people. The nonviolent resister seeks to defeat evil, not people.

Principle four: Nonviolence holds that suffering can educate and transform. Nonviolence accepts suffering without retaliation. Unearned suffering is redemptive and has tremendous educational and transforming possibilities.

Principle five: Nonviolence chooses love instead of hate. Nonviolence resists violence of the spirit as well as the body. Nonviolent love is spontaneous, unmotivated, unselfish and creative.

Principle six: Nonviolence believes that the universe is on the side of justice. The nonviolent resist."

Perhaps we could bury our hate and greed and ignorance. Then we wouldn't have to wonder and worry about where to bury our brothers and sisters caught in yet another conflict.

Shawnee Baldwin is a writer with the Writing Nonviolence Affinity Group of Pace e Bene

LINKS

Paul Long from **Our Walk Together** has a Christmas podcast that explores the true meaning of Christmas, the significance of the holiday in the Catholic faith, the rich traditions of the Franciscans, and the various ways in which Christmas is celebrated around the world. It also delves into the symbolism of the Christmas tree and offers suggestions on how to make the holiday more meaningful through the acts of kindness and charity. There is a video also.

<https://our-walk-together.simplecast.com/episodes/christmas-2023>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inUGO6ikkfk>

Jane Thornton of **New Thought Musicians Showcase** offers a link to her New Thought Musicians Holiday Playlist: <https://youtu.be/Bb2MyUkSmY8>

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