

Peace Issues

Peace, tolerance and the new humanity



Peace. The stipulations and ramifications of this word all point to a rationale that is very much in itself, or at least, equate to a certain quality of a way in which to live. You don't have to be Voltaire or Mahatma Gandhi to believe in peace. The central thesis of this article is to argue that peace, as a way in which to live, must be taught in the schools if it is ever to be attainable for our global community.

First we have to expound upon the idea of the academic discipline called the humanities. It is how and what our children are taught that comes back to haunt us or to save us. Through the humanities the children can be taught to have respect and tolerance for all humanity. Working together to save the environment seems a perfectly laudable motive here, and that there is so much that unites our experiences together, I think it quitesential to place respect and tolerance at the forefront of a new agenda.

You see, only the humanities constantly alludes to see, hear, smell, touch, taste; seven or nine emotions (depending on how you pray); and one imagination (or intellect, again depending). At first glance, it may seem like an oversimplification. Though, an intense unification and simplistic presentation of the human experience, on these grounds and based on these universal faculties, will, in turn, transcend such boundries as gender and nationality. Futher, the humanities as a discipline, has brought us such unifiers as the 'transideological trope'. That is to say, a particular moral value recurring in all cultures and evident through the arts of all cultures, like music, which for example signifies a universal view of humanity.

It is along these lines that Canadian scholar Nothrop Frye

described a very 'here and now utopia' by an allegory of the western university. From *The Modern Century*: "Fraternity is perhaps the ideal that the leisure structure has to contribute to society. A society of students, scholars and artists is a society of neighbors, in the genuinely religious sense of that word. That is, our neighbour is not, or not necessarily, the person in the same national or ethical or class group with ourselves, but may be 'a good Samaritan' or person to whom we are linked by deeper bonds than nationality or racism or class solidarity can any longer provide. These are bonds of intellect and imagination as well as love and good will."

This is not to say that your neighbour will always just be in the university crowd; it is however to say that there is a more peaceable existence here than many places elsewhere. But to become a larger vision, if you will, this 'fraternity', withal liberty, would have to permeate an existing obstacle: namely, our standing educational system. I don't feel that true vision exists in our schools when the curriculam is a motley, and taught as though not interrelated.

To conclude, I will say that western universities are failing when we witness the degradation of moral values and the rise of judicial apathy in the community. The university fails that harbors a bigot; an entire educational system fails that produces a bigot. When class struggles cause bloodspill in the streets, the universities again are failing. My solution is to broaden the capacities of learning in the student by teaching her/him how simple they as humans actually are: how more alike they are than different. Teach them respect and tolerance by teaching the universal faculties. This is in the name of peace on earth.

~Geoffrey Gordon Ineson

War is

Let's face it, war is a male thing. Since it remains inconceivable for women, who as a gender choose to give birth, to plot the systematic killing of their own children or other mother's children, why have there been 207 wars in the most "modern" century of civilization where 78 million sons and daughters died?

The reason is painfully clear. Those of us with external genitalia have set up a society based on a hierarchical power pyramid where the tools of violence have maintained a power-over relationship for too long. It is a world where the dominate motivators are strength and control. A competitive system where rewards come to those who are the most aggressive in the board rooms, the football fields or in the ultimate quest for control, war.

How far do we have to delve into the macho construction of gender before we unlock the reasons we have such an obscenity as war? It will surprise only a few that some men have used violence to maintain power and control over women, children and other men in the home, office or international stage. The reasons for this go way back even beyond the Knight in shining armour getting a pat on the back for rescuing the helpless princess. The more men perform the dragon slayer/ Schwartzkopf role the harder we repress the fear of not being able to live up to those expectations. It is not surprising that so many men we know have problems expressing emotions like anger, vulnerability, or fear of inadequacy because they are the opposite of a centuries old message of how to act like a man.

Us guys have denied our fears and we have learned to think of power as our ability to dominate and control, in some form, the world, the people around us and these unruly emotions. This denial drives men to blindly trust technology, subdue the earth and conquer every frontier "because it's there". Yet for all this pathetic struggling to prove our self worth in the external world at the expense of the internal denial there is one thing that remains that men cannot truly conquer and control. Women's ability to lactate, menstruate and ovulate,

Menstruation

in short, to create life. How has this envy of women's vitality played out in history? Within the systematic oppression of women through the ages two examples reveal the patriarchal response to the envy of birth. Medicine has taken responsibility from women and war has replaced the need to control life with the absolute and brutal control of who lives or dies..

Men have tried to control birth by subverting a natural process through an increasing dependency on technology, using so called reproductive technologies to manipulate fertility so we can shop for our child's sex and of course through anti-choice legislation. Perhaps the most directly misogynist example in herstory is revealed by the riveting NFB film called "The Burning Times". It documents the women's holocaust that began in the post middle ages when men "discovered" medicine and proceeded to corner the market by killing an estimated 9 million women all healers, midwives, and witches.

Then we have war. As a man I feel despair and anger when I see another generation, my generation, of young men perform as state employed murderers to slay this years political dragon. It is also discouraging that society has been so seduced by the dominate ethic of violence and control that we make heroes out of soldiers and fund them with billions to shed more blood in death while women who create life, nurture and care for children are systematically underfunded and undervalued.

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It took generations to construct male gender identity based on fear and envy and it may take generations more before men grow out of these bonds to become fuller, richer human beings that have cast off the drive to kill for control. It is not easy, but speaking out begins to end male silence on issues of sexism and the increasing violence in society. In some ways it would be easier to lock George and Saddam in a boxing ring so they can get this thing over with. In reality men are finally becoming accountable and responsible for their own actions that includes bridging the distance in what ever relationship they are in as well as risking to be more open and honest about our real selves. If that sounds like to much to expect you can always enlist in the alternative.

Dalhousie Men For Change meets on campus to discuss issues of sexism and violence. For more info call 492-4104.

~Peter Davison

