

emergence

Nonviolence in Review

Summer 2015



Media & the New Story

relaunch issue

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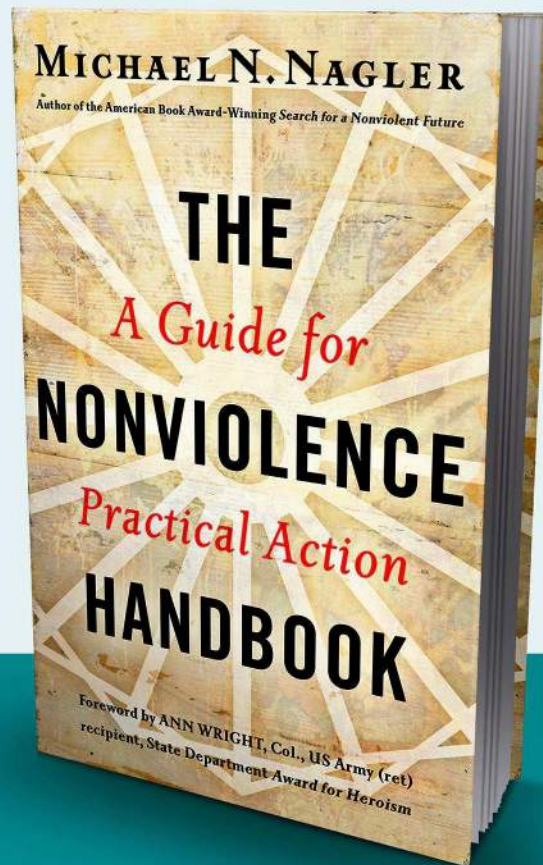
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complemented by the knowledge
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PHOTO BY AUNDRE LARROW

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PHOTO BY TODD CHENEY

“ *The sole aim of journalism should be service. ~ Gandhi*



thank you

Metta Center for Nonviolence, the publisher of *Emergence*, thanks all the volunteers who share their love and help spread the mission of creating a nonviolent future.

This issue of *Emergence* was made possible, in part, by generous support from the following people:

Burnett Britton

Todd Diehl

Mike Gadja

Kalliopeia Foundation

Anna Ikeda

Travis Mellot

Rich Meyer

Michael & Vicki Millican

Michael Nagler

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PUBLISHER

Metta Center for Nonviolence

EDITOR & CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Kimberlyn David

SUMMER 2015 CONTRIBUTORS

Copy Editor Sally Armbrecht
Proofreader Todd Diehl

Writers Maja Bengtson
Irene Hopkins
Soneile Hymn
Stephanie Knox-Cubbon
Mercedes Mack
Michael Nagler
Mica Stumpf
Rivera Sun
Stephanie Van Hook

Artist Ellie Cross

Photographer Okke Ornstein

Poets James Phoenix
People's State of the Union

HOW TO REACH US

MAIN OFFICE

Metta Center for Nonviolence
P.O. Box 98, Petaluma, CA, 94953

PHONE NUMBER

707-774-6299

WEBSITE

www.mettacenter.org

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telling a new story



PHOTO BY OKKE ORNSTEIN

Here is a bit of worthy advice from Edward R. Murrow, the famed American journalist whose reporting led to the censure of Senator McCarthy in the 1950s: "Our major obligation is not to mistake slogans for solutions."

“ The media—stenographers to power. ~ Amy Goodman

Welcome to the relaunch issue of *Emergence*, the review of nonviolence published by Metta Center for Nonviolence. Originally conceived by Bijoyeta Das, *Emergence* has evolved from a monthly PDF to a biannual magazine.

Emergence brings you insightful articles and essays, Q&As, literary pieces, art and more. We've given *Emergence* a whole new design, but our publishing mission remains the same: telling the emerging story of nonviolence culture and movements around the world.

This issue's "Media & the New Story" theme could not be more fitting: to tell the new story, we need media. In our feature Q&A, Sandra de Castro Buffington urges us not to alienate corporate media. Then there's the question of what the new story is. We turn to Michael Nagler for an explanation in "It's Not Really a New Story at All."

"The medium is the message." Coined by Marshall McLuhan, this phrase helps sum up our prevailing media reality: a system that pumps out violence, consumerism and separation. But just complaining about corporate media won't get us far. To create a nonviolent culture, we must create the nonviolent media to go with it.

This relaunch issue could not have come into being without all of the wonderful writers, artists and editorial pros who lent a creative hand. I'm so very grateful for their contributions.

KIMBERLYN DAVID
Editor & Creative Director

It's Not Really a New Story at All

Michael Nagler reflects on who we are and why we're here.



PHOTO BY STEFANUS MARTANTO SETYO HUSODO

“The deepest crises experienced by any society are those moments of change when the story becomes inadequate for meeting the survival demands of a present situation.”
~ Thomas Berry

The explosive growth of scientific thought that began in the West with the Renaissance and ultimately led to industrialism on a global scale, has brought humanity many benefits, but at a mounting cost. The problems that seem to be rising on every side, from personal to environmental, can largely be traced to an increasing lack of clarity about ourselves—who we are, why we are here and how we are to relate, ideally, to one another and the natural world.

The “story” that accompanies and made industrialism possible—the underlying narrative implicit in textbooks, newspapers and films—portrays us as material entities compelled to seek satisfaction in consuming increasingly scarce resources. If this were true, competition and violence, along with the destruction of our planet’s life-support system, would be inescapable. Yet it is not true.

“Since... transformative change is a matter of when (not if), the real question becomes whether such change will be smooth or catastrophic.”
~ Sally Goerner

A shift in emphasis across many fields of modern science, aided by remarkable breakthroughs in physics at the start of the last century, has brought to light a far more hopeful picture of our nature, along with the inspiring possibility of a meaning and destiny that was alien to the mechanistic, reductionist view of what is now called “classical science.”

In this appealing image, violence is not inherent in human nature, or in nature. Competition, alienation and greed can, in principle, be put behind us. This vivid vision is not a new one. Nor is the image of human nature being conveyed by these new findings ultimately startling or unfamiliar.

For those who are aware of the shift, its recent reemergence has felt like recovering something precious that had, due to some kind of strange inattention, nearly slipped from our grasp.

Body, Mind and Spirit

The essence of this new (or rather, recently recovered story) is that we can now confidently maintain that we are much more than disenchanting bodies,

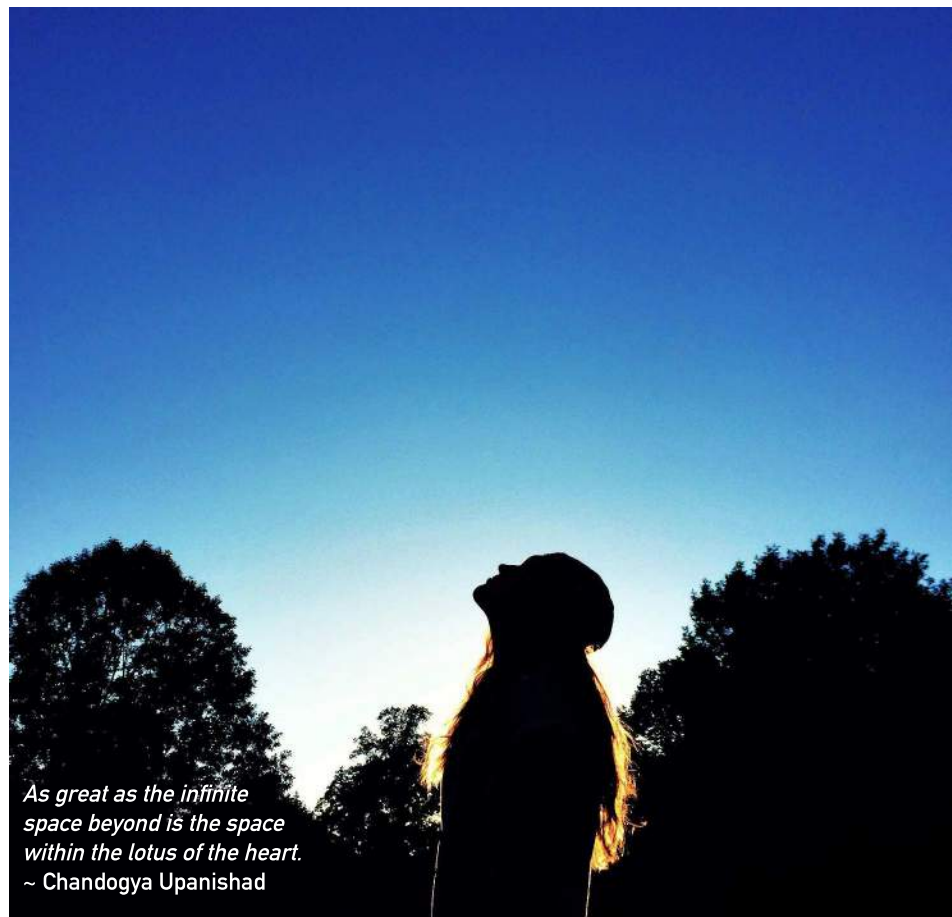
despite the unvarying clamor of the mass media on this point. We are also, and in fact primarily, spirit. “Body, mind and spirit” has been a kind of rallying cry of those welcoming the recovered vision.

For many centuries, the sages of all nations and religions have been telling us that we are not these mere bodies, marvelous as they are. Swami Ramdas, who visited the U.S. in the 1950s, gave us this inspiring picture, from the depths of his own

realization, of human nature and its destiny:

On the physical plane man [sic] is but an animal. On the intellectual plane [s]he is a rational being. On the moral plane [s]he is a power for good. On the spiritual plane [s]he is a radiant being full of divine light, love and bliss. Humanity’s ascent from one plane to another is its natural movement.

Swami Ramdas’ image brings us closer together and eventually to the realization of oneness: while our bodies are



As great as the infinite space beyond is the space within the lotus of the heart.
~ Chandogya Upanishad

PHOTO BY AUNDRE LARROW

“*‘Body, mind and spirit’ has been a kind of rallying cry of those welcoming the recovered vision.*”

separate, our minds can resonate harmonically. On what he calls the “spiritual plane,” we are pure consciousness.

And today we can bear witness to that vision with humanity’s wisdom traditions, and with a growing section of the scientific community behind us. This is no mere academic adventure. As one writer put it, “You don’t counter a myth with a pile of facts and statistics. You have to counter it with a more powerful story.”

While the prevailing industrial story is one of alienation—from one another, nature, our own deepest cry for meaning and capacity—the promise of the new story is one of belonging. Despite appearances, we are passing through a time of great possibility. Yes, problems are mounting. Yes, the institutions we might have expected to deal with them seem to be paralyzed and the people at large not yet mobilized to deal with issues of this magnitude: an overheating planet, wars and global poverty.

But the problems we face can be the occasion for a great renewal if we realize what’s ultimately wrong and how we can address it. We are passing through a spiritual crisis. We’ve forgotten who we are and what we are meant to do here on this earth.

Happily, We Are Not Alone

People from every walk of life—scientists, artists, people of faith and so on—are already looking for a “new story” of human possibilities, beyond the narrative

that has led to materialism, greed and violence. In our search, we can hear the voices of countless ancestors who saw this truth, who lived in accordance with its wisdom and left us the legacy of their perennial vision. So when we speak of the “new” story, the story of belonging, we are really speaking of a new language to express the same truths that have sustained humanity for millennia.

What is different and extremely helpful now is how science and ancient wisdom are converging. “Science” is in principle a system of understanding observable patterns not only in the physical world, which is how we have understood and practiced it now for several centuries, but also in the nonmaterial world, or inner world of our own experiences. We therefore have powerful affirmation from two inquiring systems, two dimensions of science, if you will, that have seemed to be in conflict (“Do you go with ‘faith’ or ‘reason’?”). Now these two approaches can be seen as complementary. There is an appropriate role for faith and reason in both sciences, whether we apply them to the outer world or the world within. Both are necessary. Between them they tell a compelling story:

While the human body may have reached an endpoint of its evolution, our social evolution, not to mention our mind and emotions, can still go forward. As physiologist Robert Livingston has put it, “our cognitive capacities have not begun to reach any known limitation.”

We are not ultimately determined by our genes, hormones or nervous system, but have a

considerable, often unexplored, power to determine our own destiny.

Quantum physics in its way, and the science of ecology in another, tell us that we’re interconnected with one another and the whole web of life. The wisdom tradition puts it more simply: “All life is one.” Many—if not all—modern problems can be seen to arise from violations of this unity.

We can never be fulfilled by consuming material goods; we can be fulfilled only by expanding relationships of trust and service. Cooperation is far more powerful than competition.

We can never become secure by punishing “criminals” and defeating “enemies;” we can become secure by rehabilitating those who offend and turning enemies into friends.

In this inspiring narrative, the infinite differences among us are no longer loci of separation but manifestations of the normal diversity of life. Society, like nature, should be organized along lines of “unity in diversity” rather than those of uniformity or separation. As the Koran puts it, God has “made you into tribes and peoples so that you could discover one another,” not fight against one another’s welfare.

In this new story, nonviolence is a law of existence waiting to be discovered and practiced in every walk of life. ■

Michael Nagler founded *Metta Center for Nonviolence*, and he wrote *The Nonviolence Handbook: A Practical Guide*.

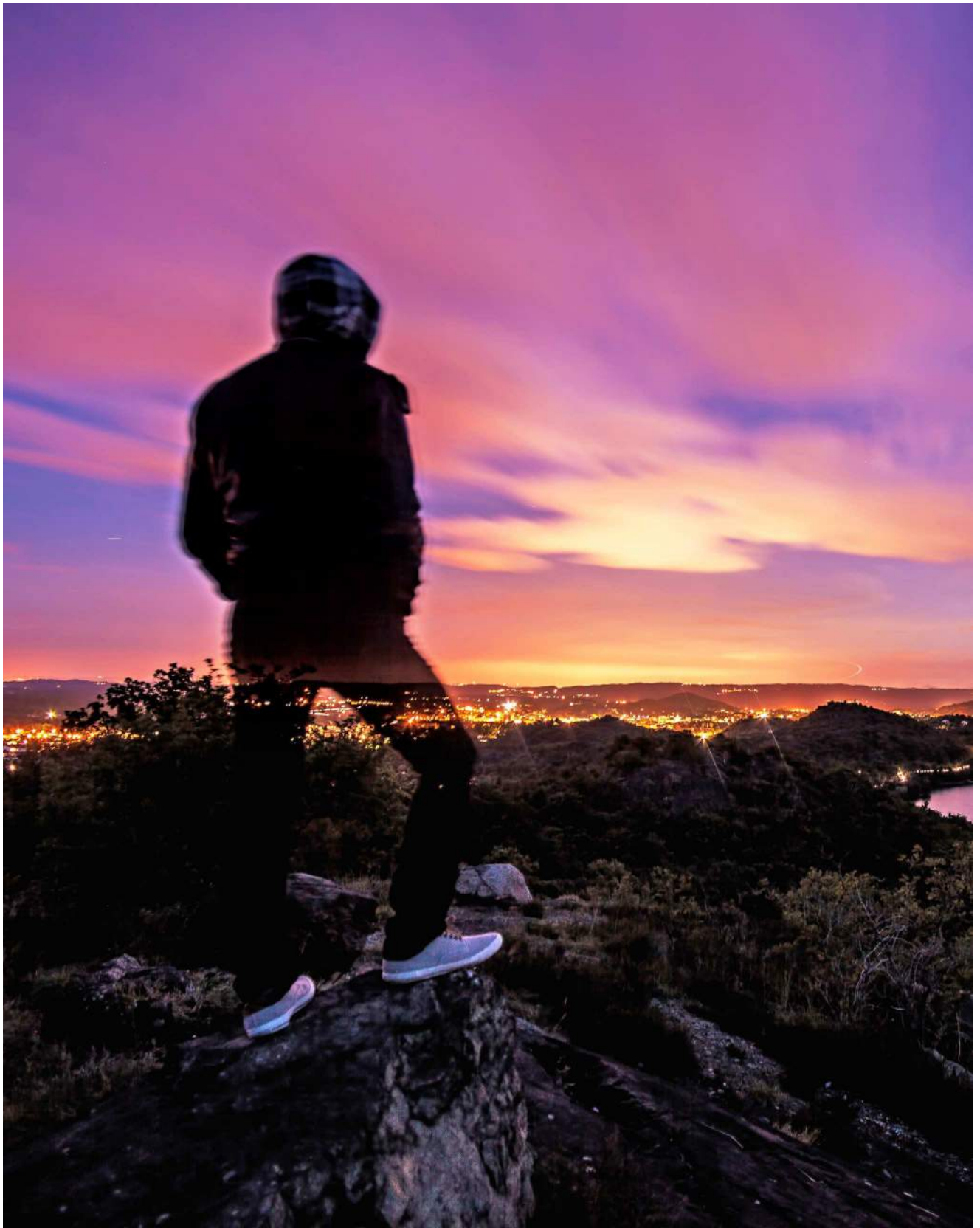


PHOTO BY SPLITSHIRE

Q&A: Sandra de Castro Buffington

Interview by Kimberlyn David



Sandra de Castro Buffington with panelists at Writers Guild of America, West

“ We live in a storytelling culture that has existed throughout human history.

PHOTO BY TODD CHENEY



Global Media Center for Social Impact Founding Director, Sandra de Castro Buffington

Could corporate mass media play a role in creating and telling the new story? *Should* such media play a role?

Questions like these sparked a conversation with Sandra de Castro Buffington, founding director of the Global Media Center for Social Impact (GMI). Based at UCLA’s Fielding School of Public Health in Los Angeles, GMI links the entertainment industry with the expertise needed by writers and producers to create authentic storylines on vital issues: health, immigration, racial justice, prison reform,

gender/LGBT equality, climate change.

Sandra founded GMI in 2013 and plans to bring the center’s model to other entertainment capitals. With this goal in focus, she has already opened offices in India’s Bollywood and in Nigeria’s Nollywood.

“There’s both a need and a demand to infuse entertainment industries around the world with stories and messages that awaken people, elevate consciousness, help people learn and move them to action,” she explained.

Q&A

US: GMI aims to better people's health and well-being through stories. How do *you* define "health and well-being"—for individuals as well as society?

SANDRA: I think about health and well-being as integrated at the physical, spiritual, emotional, mental and social levels. It also involves autonomy and self-determination so people can choose what kinds of lives they want to live. I look at the social determinants of health as much as the physical body. I look at space and place, and the way the environment has an impact on well-being. It's a constellation and intersection of conditions and practices that constitute health and well-being.

US: We encourage people to strive for

greater person power, in part, by boycotting corporate media. As we see it, such media peddle violence and consumerism. Yet your work successfully uses the very same media to raise awareness about health and social issues. Do you see potential for this media to support the new story?

SANDRA: Absolutely. We live in a storytelling culture that has existed throughout human history. Today, storytelling reaches us through entertainment media, including TV, movies, music, games and new media. Television not only reaches into living rooms around the world; it also reaches phones, computers and tablets. The most popular TV shows reach up to 20 million viewers in an

“ *Sometimes we look for heart-opening, creativity or innovation in the wrong places.* ”

hour and over 100 countries. The question is no longer whether entertainment media is good or bad. The question is how to inspire writers and producers to tell the new story in compelling ways. I work to inspire content creators to tell real stories based on real people, stories of what is working in the world, stories that elevate human consciousness.

I create immersive events, from panel discussions at the Writers Guild of America West to Story Impact Tours, in which I take writers into some

communities they might never visit on their own. I have conducted story tours on everything from climate change to gang violence; maternal and child health; food deserts as well as food swamps; what zip codes have to do with health.

When writers go out into communities to meet real people and hear their stories, they are often inspired.

So rather than alienate the entertainment industry, we invite them in and bring them close.

US: What has been your most heart-opening moment in the field thus far?

SANDRA: There have been so many, but let me tell you one story. I cry every time I tell this. I took a group of writers to South Africa. We were in a clinic setting outside Johannesburg, and we met an amazing man. Let's call him Johnno. He had been a science teacher at a public school and was considered a beloved leader in his community. He was very gregarious and very smart, and he did a lot of good work outside of the school.

One day he organized his school colleagues to get tested for HIV. He said it was really important that they be the first ones to get tested in order to inspire other community members to take the test. It took him a while to convince people because HIV was a big taboo at the time. They all went to the clinic together to get tested, and when the results came back, he was shocked to discover he was HIV-positive. He had a decision to make: Would he disclose his status, with the huge taboo that it was, or not?

He decided the right thing to do was to disclose his status to his colleagues. And he did. He had been teaching there for 12 years; these were his good friends. To his shock, when he told them he was HIV-positive, they stopped talking to him. Overnight, he became isolated and lonely. One day, he went home from work and found that his house had been burnt to the ground.

A few days after that, he was fired from his job.

With those tragic events, Johnno went into a huge health crisis and almost died. He lost so much weight he was like a skeleton, and normally he's a big man. After a year or so of medical treatment, he regained his health. But he was unemployed and destitute. He wasn't able to find work.

Finally, after another year, he found out that the clinic that had been treating him was looking to hire someone in the monitoring and evaluation department. Since Johnno had strong science and math skills, the clinic brought him in on a trial basis. At the time we met him, he was serving as the head of the monitoring and evaluation unit, with 10 other people reporting to him. He had gained back the weight and was engaged to be married to his future wife, who was HIV-negative.

Somebody in the group asked him, "Did you ever go back and confront the former friends who abandoned you and the ones who burnt your house down?" And Johnno said, "You know, I actually did go back to that community one time." But, he said, "I forgave them *years* ago. There was nothing to forgive by the time I went back. I simply went back to show them you don't have to die from HIV if you take the treatment." That was a heart-opening moment.

US: How do creatives respond when they're out in the field with you for the first time? I imagine you observe all kinds of changes?

SANDRA: I observe so many changes. We're all human. Some

people are more connected to their humanity than others. A children's program writer who traveled with me to India told me that he'd go back to the hotel at the end of each day, call his wife on Skype and sob. Two weeks after we returned, I asked the writers [who had traveled with me] to sit on a panel at the Writers Guild and speak to 100 of their peers about what they learned and what transformation had taken place. That's when I met his wife. She took me aside before the panel began and she said, "I just want to thank you, because you've opened my husband's heart." We both cried.

So, those of us who are talking about the new story can't afford to alienate the people who don't know these stories. We need to find a way to enter their hearts, to give them direct experience of the new story so that they *can* know the most transformational stories of our time.

US: How do you stay centered, connected and loving while you are touring hard-pressed areas?

SANDRA: For me the practice is being present to the people I'm with, no matter where I am, and seeing their humanity. Sometimes it's easier to do in a context that's really rough, because their humanity is in stark contrast to the environment. Sometimes we look for heart-opening, creativity or innovation in the wrong places. Often I find it's the very people who have been challenged the most, whether it's poverty or violence or other heartbreaking circumstances, who are the flowers pushing through the cement into full blossom.



PHOTO BY MICHAEL NASH

Before founding GMI, Sandra de Castro Buffington took Hollywood writers and producers to sites all over the world. Here, writer-producer Max Burnett and local colleagues meet community members at the Dharavi slum in India.



PHOTO BY TODD CHENEY

GMI hosted the LA premier of Bryonn Bain's one-man show, *Lyrics from Lockdown*, at UCLA's Schoenberg Hall. This live multimedia performance explored America's prison crisis, mass incarceration and racial profiling through the story of Bain's own wrongful imprisonment while attending Harvard Law.



US: Do any media inspire a higher image of the human for you?

SANDRA: Television shows include *Transparent*, *Touch* and *The Normal Heart*. *Documented*, the documentary by the Pulitzer Prize winner Jose Antonio Vargas, one of my collaborating partners, addresses immigration and the need for deepening dialogue in America. *Playing for Change* is a multimedia movement for bringing peace to the world through music. *Selma* and *Theory of Everything* are important movies. Last year's most important documentary (and maybe the decade's) is *Awake: The Life of Yogananda*, which is about the Hindu swami who brought yoga, meditation and enlightenment to transform the West.

We are a global entertainment culture. We simply need to ask what kinds of stories we want to tell, and be selective about those we choose to hear and see. ■

Kimberlyn David is Communications Director at Metta Center for Nonviolence and the editor of *Emergence*.

Faces of Hope

Photo essay by
Tiffany Ornelas
de Tool

“ *Refugees cross international borders to seek sanctuary, while IDPs live like refugees in their home countries.*



I spent a year in Iraq, on a contract with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

From May 2014 to this past May, I worked with refugees in the Public Information/External Relations Unit for UNHCR’s Erbil office.

Most of the refugees we served were fleeing the war in Syria and had crossed into the Kurdistan Region of Iraq between August and September 2013. UNHCR’s main mandate was to lead the assistance to Syrian refugees in all sectors: protection, education, food, health, shelter, basic needs, water and sanitation, livelihoods and camp management and coordination.

A month after I arrived, Mosul fell to ISIS, leading to a major influx of internally displaced persons, or IDPs. Refugees cross international borders to seek sanctuary, while IDPs live like refugees in their home countries. Legally, IDPs retain all of their citizenship rights and protection under both human rights and international humanitarian law.

That August, ISIS took over Sinjar, creating another mass movement of families. Iraq comprises one of the largest IDP populations in the world. At the time of this writing, 40 IDP camps were being built across Iraq, and UNHCR is building 10 of them.

I took these photographs between October and November 2014. To me, they represent what is so often missing in media accounts of these conflicts: people caring for one another and facing crises with hope and courage. ■



- 1 A Sinjar family in Zakho
- 2 Tiffany with a displaced child in the Harshm IDP camp
- 3 IDPs living in unfinished buildings
- 4 Syrian refugee children arriving at the Ibrahim Khalil border between Turkey and Iraq
- 5 IDP child in an unfinished building

Tiffany Ornelas de Tool is a board member of Metta Center for Nonviolence and Peaceworkers, USA.

A Secure Future

Mica Stumpf, a nonviolence trainer, envisions a world in which healthy relationships bolster security, community by community.



PHOTO BY AKA TMAN

Justifications for war are so rampant in our current paradigm that it can be hard to notice and prevent them from penetrating the subconscious. Mainstream culture would have us believe that war is our most effective means of security, but a new paradigm is emerging, with scientific studies that make it clear that a more humane way is indeed possible.

Not only is there another way, but it is also safer and would cost a fraction of the U.S. military budget. Here's a look at war through the lens of the new story: true security is created by refusing to dehumanize any party in a conflict, and instead raising the human image to its fullest potential. This intention is at the heart of Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping (UCP).

What is UCP?

In recent years, Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping has gained recognition as a viable alternative to armed peacekeeping. UCP works by training groups of civilians, sometimes referred to as "peace teams," in nonviolent de-escalation skills and philosophy, and then placing those people in conflict areas to help protect vulnerable populations and decrease violence.

Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping goes back as far as the Buddha, who once prevented a war

between two rival kings. As they fought over water rights, the Buddha held up a handful of water between the kings and asked, "What is more precious, blood or water?" The kings replied, "Blood is much more precious, Blessed One." The Buddha then said, "Let us not spill what is more precious for what is less."

While it can be argued that UCP has been used throughout all of human history, Mahatma Gandhi was the first to attempt to implement it at a societal level. He envisioned a nonviolent army called the *Shanti Sena*, Sanskrit for "peace army." Tragically, Gandhi was assassinated the evening before he was to attend a meeting to launch the *Shanti Sena* and so it never took full effect.



PHOTO BY JAYEL AHERAM

“ Mainstream culture would have us believe that war is our most effective means of security.

However, in 1981, a meeting convened in Canada resulted in the inception of Peace Brigades International (PBI), one of the first modern UCP organizations. From 1990 to 2014, the number of UCP organizations increased fivefold, growing from seven to 35 (while a total of 50 organizations were active throughout this period, only 35 of them were still operating in 2014). Since 1990, UCP missions have operated in 35 countries, by a total of 50

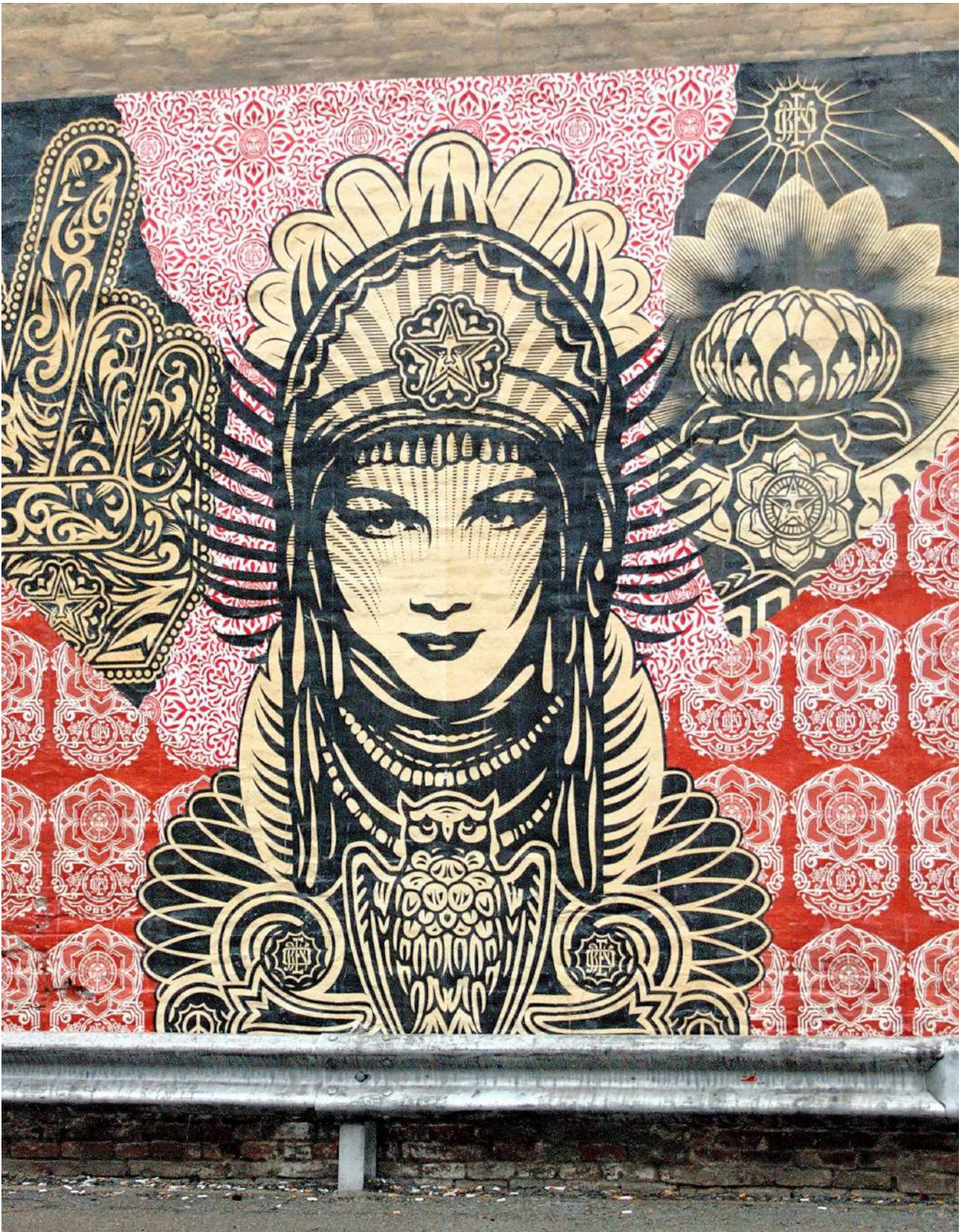


PHOTO OF SHEPHARD FAIREY'S "PEACE GODDESS" BY TAKOMABIBELLOT, FLICKR

organizations such as PBI.

What makes UCP different?

While armed peacekeeping relies on the threat of violent force to keep vulnerable populations safe, UCP operates on a different level. “There is a double mechanism of protection at work,” explained Christine Schweitzer, who has served as program director for Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP), an NGO that works globally with international civilians who are trained in unarmed peacekeeping. Unarmed, international civilian peacekeepers provide, she said, “the ‘eye and ear of the world,’ and, being outsiders, are able to talk to all sides of the conflict without being seen as partisan.”

The presence of internationals achieves two things: it gives news about a distant conflict greater media reach, and it allows the internationals to choose to be a neutral third party, thus offering them an opportunity to de-escalate any side of the conflict. Armed peacekeepers generally do not have an explicit intention of being nonpartisan or being a channel of news and information to the outside world, though this sometimes happens.

UCP re-humanizes all sides of the conflict. For violence to be possible, perpetrators must see the people they target as less than human (and therefore lose part of their own humanity). Dehumanization is woven into all military training. And though armed peacekeeping has an aim of preventing violence, it largely uses the same threat of force that

the violent faction of a conflict inflicts, but changes the direction of that threat so that the violent group also fears it. UCP adheres to an approach free from inciting fear or threat.

UCP proves effective by sending the message that the would-be victims of violence are not less than human; that their lives are so precious that people who have never met them before would give up the distanced comfort of their home countries to live among them in an effort to protect them. *Every human life is this sacred.* In sending this message, UCP actors have the opportunity to not only protect the vulnerable, but also invite the oppressor off the path of violence and back to a state of congruence, where they can reclaim their own humanity.

Many people believe that heading into conflict without weapons is more dangerous than unarmed intervention. In fact, the exact opposite is true. Since UCP has only begun to receive warranted recognition as an alternative to armed interventions, the data collected in the early decades is sparse. However, 13 of the 35 UCP organizations were able to provide an accurate count of practitioners on staff since 1990. Of the 3065 people who have been in the field, six people have died, with one death resulting from a car crash, hence it being unrelated to the UCP initiative.

In comparing the number of UCP deaths to the fatality rates of armed peacekeeping missions, the United Nations found that *armed peacekeepers are 12 times more likely to die on duty than unarmed civilian peacekeepers.*

This fascinating research can be illustrated by a story coming from the work of NP in South Sudan. On April 17, 2014, a United Nations base in Bor was attacked. Two NP peacekeepers, Andres Alejandro Gutierrez Garcia and Derek Oakley, were at a Protection of Civilians area when the attack started. They took shelter in a mud hut with five women and nine children.

Shortly after they entered the hut, gunmen stormed in. Upon seeing two international men among the Sudanese women and children, the gunmen ordered Garcia and Oakley to leave. Garcia and Oakley knew that if they left, the women and children would be shot. The peacekeepers made eye contact, a visual agreement to stay in the hut, then calmly told the gunmen that as unarmed international protection officers, they were there to protect the civilians. Twice more the gunmen ordered them to leave, and twice more they respectfully refused. Finally, the gunmen left the hut, harming no one.

This story shows with remarkable clarity what may be confusing from the statistics alone: the fact that Garcia and Oakley had been unarmed—and trained in nonviolent de-escalation skills—allowed them to save themselves and 14 others that day. That truth bears repeating: *the fact that they did not have weapons was what saved their lives.* The willingness to be vulnerable was their greatest protection.

Perhaps the gunmen were not influenced by the courage of Garcia and Oakley, but rather by other concerns. Killing internationals



PHOTO BY GEORGE THOMA

might have led to graver consequences for the gunmen and their cause than not killing them. Negative press and the possibility of intervention from foreign powers might have thwarted their efforts. However the gunmen made their decision, the peace team still accomplished its goal of protecting civilians, even if NP did not persuade violent actors to change.

The success of UCP has major implications for the rest of society. “People support war when they feel there is no viable alternative,” as Michael Nagler explains. “If we are able to build peace teams up to scale, it would make it much easier for people to renounce war.”

Further than simply renouncing war, we could replace the entire system for a fraction of the cost. According to estimates from peace researcher John Paul Lederach, it would take only 3% of the world’s military budget to build peace teams into a global institution.

Where do we go from here?

For those who may be skeptical that unarmed civilian peacekeeping can be applied in high conflict areas, it is exciting to note that the European Union has awarded Nonviolent Peaceforce a grant to bring its peacekeeping work to Syria. For the work in Syria, Nonviolent Peaceforce is partnering with Cure

Violence, a domestic peace team based in Chicago that has had remarkable success in reducing violence in one of the most dangerous cities in the United States. Together, Nonviolent Peaceforce and Cure Violence will train Syrian civilians in UCP and help establish peace teams on the ground.

Last year, my partner Peijman Kouretchian and I founded Emergency Peace Teams (EPT) to expand the reach of domestic peace teams by creating an on-call service. EPT is dedicated to training people in domestic peace team skills, with the long-term vision of creating community alternatives to the police. Our workshops focus on the theoretical and practical applications of nonviolent de-escalation and conflict transformation. Healthy and healed relationships are the key to sustainable peace, and how we engage in conflict largely influences whether we end up straining or strengthening relationships.

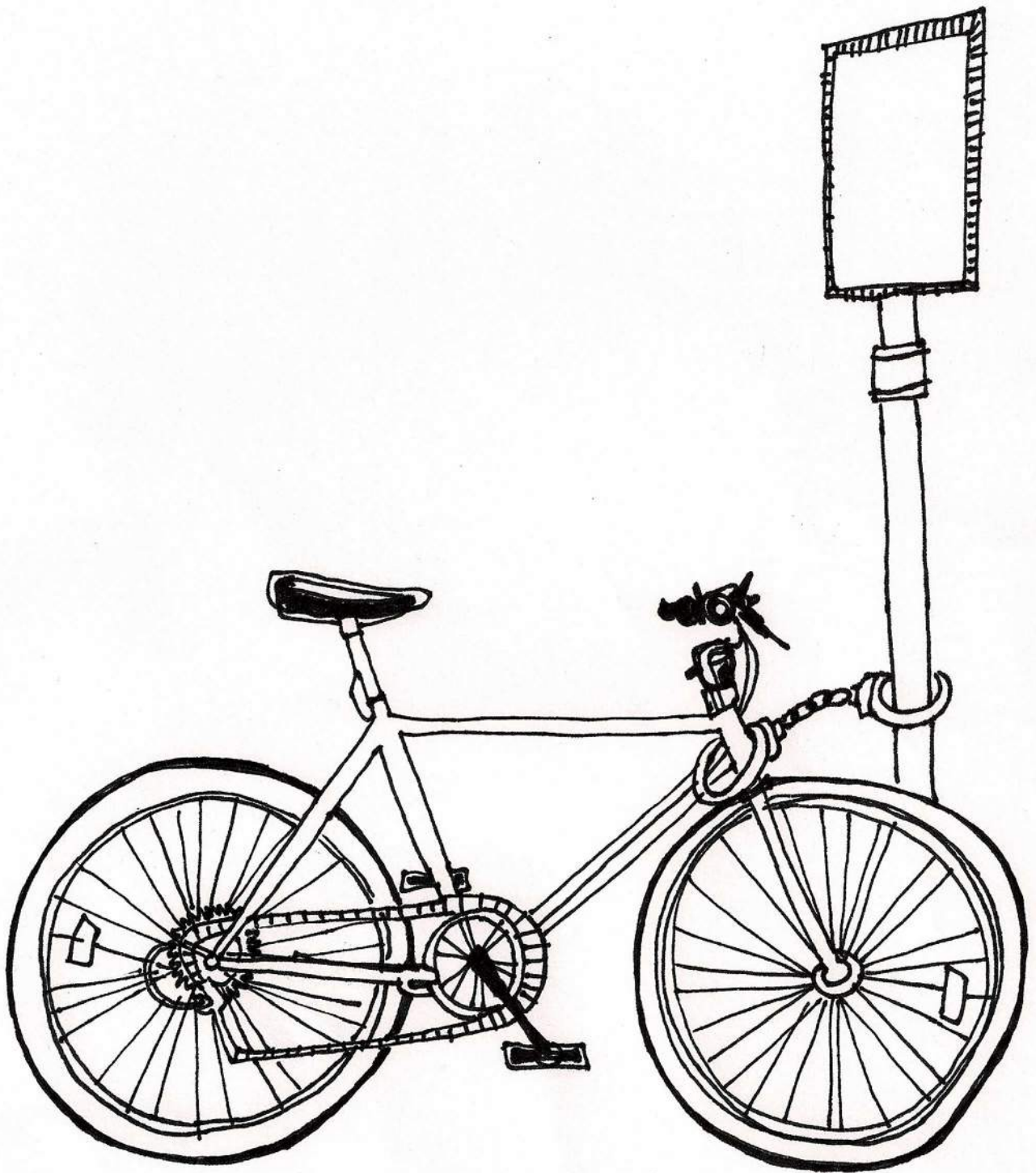
With all the inspiring success and innovation in the UCP field, we can find more hope than ever in our power to build a humane alternative to the war system. But for this alternative to replace the old paradigm, we will need much greater participation in it.

As Mel Duncan, co-founder of Nonviolent Peaceforce, recently suggested in an interview on *Peace Paradigm Radio*, one of the most important things anyone can do to promote the new paradigm in peacekeeping is to share the idea with others.

The next time you find yourself in a conversation with someone despondently insisting that we must use violent force to respond to a security threat, tell them about Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping. Tell them there is another way, one that is more effective in saving lives, as well as costs. Tell them about the brave peacekeepers carving a path back to human dignity, and that all of us can be a part of this new story.

When you hear someone beating the drums of war, invite them into the chorus of peace. ■

Mica Stumpf is a co-founder of *Emergency Peace Teams* and a nonviolence trainer.



... handcuffs will become bike locks.

ILLUSTRATION BY ELLIE CROSS



TOP PHOTO: GEORGE YANAKIEVE; BOTTOM PHOTO: JAY MANTRI

fruit of union

an unseen mesh holds us together.
of this we are aware at various times to varying degrees.
when we are: our hearts open:

mothers nursing babies; fathers lifting children;
lovers in arms; mentors with protégés;
teammates on the field; citizens proactive;
peacemakers taking on others' suffering;
nurses on the ward; cooks prepping;
novelists novelling; scientists observing;
astronauts and cosmonauts in orbit;
children playing; musicians and instruments;
actors and audiences; readers and authors;
intellectuals in study; gardeners reaping;
teachers and students; divers over a reef;
connoisseurs musing; artists before canvas palettes in hand;
birdwatchers in the blind; mountain climbers at the peak;
poets wordsmithing; skydivers in free fall;
sages being; grandparents spoiling;
meditators sitting.

on that unseen mesh (like the hands of god)
beyond molecules and physics
within the fabric of nature
on the platform of life
at the intersection of souls
love-sparks fly.

love is the fruit of union

Poem by James Phoenix

Media as Education

Stephanie Knox-Cubbon outlines strategies for critical media literacy.



When we sit down to read the morning news, we might not think of it as an education, but it is. When we talk about education, we are often thinking solely of formal education, grades pre-K through 12 and higher education. But education can also be non-formal, such as community-based programs, and informal, such as media and parenting. Informal education, especially through the media, is perhaps the most pervasive form, one that we learn from throughout our lives and which has a deep impact on the way we see the world.

If we are not careful, passive media consumption can fill us with distorted images and ideas of who we are and how the world works. The root of the word education, the Latin *educare*, means to draw out or draw forth. If media is education, what is it drawing forth from us? What is it teaching us about who we are, and who we can potentially be?

Pick up any major news source and glance at the headlines. Ask yourself: What is this news telling me about humanity and what is important in life, about the state of the world and what is possible? Perhaps most importantly: What is being left out of this news, and whose stories are not being told?

The likely thread of these news pieces is the old story, which portrays humans as separate, violent, greed-driven, competitive, materialistic. This portrayal is at times explicit and at other times dangerously implicit—the danger being that when we passively consume old-story news, we might just take the assumptions beneath it to be true, part of our human nature. Hence our need to be critical about any underlying biases of reporters and media sources.

Did you hear about the nonviolent revolution in Burkina Faso that led to the fall of dictator Blaise

Campaoré? Or the nonviolent “Dance With Me” campaign that exposed governmental corruption in Bulgaria, leading to that entire government’s resignation?

At least part of what is being left out of mainstream news is the new story—stories about nonviolence and how we human beings are collaborative, creative, compassionate. In the blog *Political Violence at a Glance* last December, Erica Chenoweth looked at five major nonviolent campaigns left uncovered by mainstream media: Burkina Faso, Bulgaria, Israel and Palestine, Ukraine and Russia, Pakistan. To get these stories, we generally need to broaden our horizons beyond the corporate media.

As a peace and nonviolence educator, I teach critical media literacy as a core component of all my courses and workshops. Let’s look at some strategies for the skillful use of media as an educational tool.

1. To become more aware of how media affects your consciousness and thinking, take a media fast.

It may seem strange to begin our list of strategies for *using* media by *not* using it at all. However, spend 24 hours media-free and notice how you feel—physically, emotionally, mentally. If a day was feasible, try going media-free for a week. Once you resume reading and watching media, pay particular attention to how you think and feel during or after consuming it. Make it a practice to notice your thoughts and feelings any time you read or watch something.

2. Diversify your news sources for a bigger picture, and consume media that promote interconnection, compassion, cooperation.

It’s not always possible, or even desirable, to eliminate media from our lives, as we want to remain informed and bear witness to the events happening in the world. But we can seek out alternative media to broaden our scope. Analyzing a story from multiple viewpoints helps us get a better understanding.

As Gandhi said, each of us has a piece of truth but none of us has the whole truth. And so it is with media sources. We can counterbalance old-story narratives by seeking out positive media that show us what’s possible when we embrace our highest potential.

3. Sharpen your media literacy skills.

We can hone our skills in critically analyzing and unpacking messages the media send us to understand the worldviews and motivations of any given media creator or news outlet. Media literacy is a vital skill for all members of a truly democratic society to have. According to the Center for Media Literacy:

Media literacy is a twenty-first century approach to education. It provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate, create and participate with messages in a variety of forms—from print to video to the internet. Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy.

Sharpen your media literacy skills with the following steps:

1. Find a current news topic covered by mainstream as well as alternative news sources.

2. Choose one corporate media article on this topic, then examine it from a critical literacy perspective, using the questions below as guideposts. We’ve borrowed the first five questions from Medialit.org.

- Who created this message, and what message is the source trying to convey?
- What techniques are used to get my attention?
- How might others interpret this message differently?
- What lifestyles, values and viewpoints are represented or omitted from this message?
- Why was this message sent?
- What are some of the underlying subtexts?

3. Follow the same critical process with an article on your chosen topic by an alternative media source.

4. Compare. What similarities or differences, if any, do you notice between these two sources? What implications for violence and nonviolence arise from these stories? How can you protect yourself from unhealthy messages? ■

Stephanie Knox-Cubbon is a peace educator and a yoga teacher. She is also Director of Education at *Metta Center for Nonviolence*.

Media Beat

With all the “If It Bleeds, It Leads” mentality in news reporting, we must be conscientious about the types of media we ingest.

Here are a few great resources we can rely on to stay informed as students of nonviolence and promoters of the higher human image we know to be true.

Curated by Mercedes Mack



CommonDreams (commondreams.org)

Launched in 1997, CommonDreams provides news and opinion for progressives. Naomi Klein, author of *The Shock Doctrine* and *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate*, calls the news site a “daily, glorious taste of what the dominant media could be if it was shaped by our common dreams of justice and peace.”

DailyGood (dailygood.org)

“News that Inspires.” DailyGood’s tagline lives up to its promise with stories promoting positivity and well-being. Topics covered include: Generosity, Everyday Heroes, Work, Mind & Body. DailyGood’s newsletters feature inspiring quotes and suggested actions.

Democracy Now! (democracynow.org)

As an independent, award-winning news program hosted by journalists Amy Goodman and Juan Gonzalez, *Democracy Now!* is funded solely through contributions from its audiences and supporting foundations. The program’s stories provide a contextual framework to current events and feature grassroots voices excluded in corporate channels.

International Center on Nonviolent Conflict (nonviolent-conflict.org)

For those with a specific interest in nonviolent movements and ongoing campaigns, the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict offers a vast trove of resources. Besides providing tools for producers and reporters, the website houses the latest in news related to nonviolent conflict around the world.

Peacenews.org

As a project of Promoting Enduring Peace, Peacenews.org curates stories of interest from mainstream news. Topics covered: disarmament, human rights and peace in the arts. Among their columnists is *Democracy Now!* host Amy Goodman.

Peace Paradigm Radio

Hosted by Stephanie Van Hook and Michael Nagler of Metta Center for Nonviolence, *Peace Paradigm Radio* (PPR) features nonviolence news and interviews with nonviolence practitioners and activists. The show airs every other Friday at 1:00 p.m. PST on community station KWMR, in California at 90.5 in Point Reyes

and at 89.9 in Bolinas. PPR can be streamed live at kwmr.org; podcasts are available at iTunes, Stitcher and AudioBoom.

Project Censored (projectcensored.org)

“We expose and oppose news censorship and we promote independent investigative journalism, media literacy and critical thinking,” reads the mission statement for Project Censored. The nonprofit has educated over 2500 students in media literacy since 1976. Every year, Project Censored publishes a book of the prior year’s 25 most censored stories. Link to media research and news sources from the website.

Solutions Journalism (solutionsjournalism.org)

For those of us employed by or interested in media, Solutions Journalism is an educational beacon. From the organization’s website, journalists can access a free, downloadable how-to guide for reporting on issues through the lens of resolving them. Solutions Journalism’s weekly newsletter recaps solutions-based news published in the major press.

Truthout (truth-out.org)

With a reputation for provocative reporting, Truthout aims to “spur the revolution in consciousness and inspire the direct action that is necessary to save the planet and humanity.” Contributing writers are usually experts in their field, and stories range from political events to science, opinion and social justice.

Waging Nonviolence (wagingnonviolence.org)

A source for original reporting and analysis on peace and social justice issues, Waging Nonviolence (WNV) launched in 2009. Contributors include nonviolence activists and scholars. “We view nonviolence as neither a fixed ideology nor merely a collection of strategies,” reads the WNV “About” page. “It is not passivity or the avoidance of conflict. Rather, ‘waging nonviolence’ is the active pursuit of a better, less violent society by means worthy of the goal and those best suited to achieving it.” ■

Mercedes Mack is currently an intern at Metta Center for Nonviolence.

Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life

Maja Bengtson explains how communication can heal divides.



PHOTO BY NIKLAS RHÖSE

“ The seeming magic of NVC comes from its potential to reconnect us to our inherent and shared humanity.

I came to Nonviolent Communication (NVC) after years of self-discovery, and while attending graduate school in Counseling Psychology. One would think that after all that inner work there would be no need for radical transformation. But after an NVC-savvy friend from Sweden spent a winter at my home in California, I found out otherwise. NVC changed my life. It reconstituted my lost sense of belonging.

I had grown up with my fair share of violence—the emotional, confidence-eroding variety—and over time had internalized the notion that there was something fundamentally wrong with me. For decades I lived from within this paradigm until NVC helped me change the self-defeating conversation I was having with myself.

NVC invited me into a view of humans where intrinsic goodness is at the core of our being, and where our behavior is motivated by universal needs. I also stopped pursuing the psychotherapy path and put NVC at the

Communicating with heart and intention connects us to the web of humanity.

center of my career.

Nonviolent Communication was developed by the late Marshall Rosenberg, beginning with his work with civil rights activists, and his mediations between rioting students and college administrators, in the 1960s. He found inspiration, on the one hand, in the nonviolence principles of Gandhi and King, and on the other, in the field of Humanistic Psychology, including Carl Rogers' client-centered approach and Abraham Maslow's theory on needs. Rosenberg traveled the world for decades, teaching his simple and transformative model for interaction in over 60 countries, to a broad spectrum of audiences. He authored four books and a dozen booklets, and he founded the Center for Nonviolent Communication.

Rosenberg made the ancient wisdom of *ahimsa* user-friendly and practical through a set of distinctions and a few simple steps of conversation.

Distinction: Universal Human Needs

The seeming magic of NVC comes from its potential to reconnect us to our inherent and shared humanity. This is not a small feat: every day, we are flooded with media telling us how we don't belong or we're not good enough, that we have to do more, buy more, be more.

NVC offers an alternative, through the notion of universal human needs. Needs are the engine of our motivations, the bottom line of our vulnerabilities, the necessities of life and what ultimately connects us all with that inescapable web of mutuality. Each one of us needs food, clothing and shelter. Each of us also needs safety and community and subtle qualities, like "to matter." Some needs are met simply by being fully acknowledged. Other needs require something more concrete, often from others.

Needing others makes us vulnerable and when we don't like that, we tend to build habits that reinforce our sense of independence and control. These are understandable strategies but they are nevertheless a "lose-lose" game when it comes to dealing with our problems or resolving conflicts collaboratively. NVC invites us to recognize and articulate our own needs, along with the needs of others.

By acknowledging our human needs, we can find joy

in contributing to mutually beneficial solutions, whatever the situation may be. The concept of needs also implies a natural benevolence of intent. Human behavior can be framed in a way that does away with labeling, prejudice and the whole idea of anyone being an "enemy."

Distinction: Making Requests

In NVC, making requests is not simply a matter of asking for what you want. Rather, the request is made in a spirit of nonviolence: I ask, and I'm open to the honesty of the other person's answer. If I receive a "no," then I trust two factors: 1. that there are other ways for me to get my need met (there are myriads of strategies to meet any one universal need) and 2. that "no" means that the other person's needs would not be met if they did what I asked for, so then I would not want them to do it. Their well-being, joy and freedom are interwoven with mine.

Distinction: Observations

NVC trains us to make clear observations of what *actually* happens rather than run with a preconceived idea or judgment about what we *think* is happening.

Distinction: Feelings

In NVC we're invited to name feelings, whereas "regular conversations" would stick to thoughts, ideas and opinions. Our embodied selves always provide sensations and emotions, which guide us directly to our needs: The intensity of a feeling says something about the urgency of unmet needs, and the emotional flavor of that sensation indicates which need is calling for attention.

Weaving It Together

To "speak" NVC, we must first be clear about our intentions. We can apply the nonviolence principle of always being for a cause and never against a person, for example. We can intend our empathic listening or self-expression to be about meeting needs—our own and those of others—and never about coercing or condemning anyone.

So what does NVC look like when put into practice? Let's use one of my recent email exchanges as a case study. The back story: A colleague who had not



responded to my emails for weeks invited me to meet up. I replied with my availability, but then I did not receive a response. After a few days, I emailed again.

I began my email with the observation: “Not getting a response back on this.” Then, I guessed what might be going on: “I’m wondering if I overwhelmed you with my schedule, or if perhaps you had in fact envisioned this meeting much further down the road?” Guesses don’t have to be accurate to create an opening, as long as some authentic care about the other person’s well-being is apparent. I went on to state what was important for me, first with a request: “I would like to meet up: Would you tell me where/how/when you’d like to do that? And if you don’t yet know, would you let me know that?” I expanded from there: “For me, spur of moment can work and planned out far ahead can work. What does not work so well is having loops open like this. It takes up mental energy that would be better spent on present tasks,” indicating, even if not actually naming, needs for predictability and focus. I closed with a connecting request: “How is this for you to hear/read?”

I got a prompt reply. We met up that same day, and weeks of confusion were cleared up in moments.

Meeting Challenge

Resolving communication issues doesn’t always go as easily as my email example above, but nonviolence teaches us that its greatest power comes forth in the greatest challenges.

One of my greatest challenges has been with the U.S. immigration system. I grew up in Sweden, where a

basic norm goes something like, “Follow the rules, and nothing bad will happen.” Despite following due procedure and protocol, I was at one point denied a visa at the U.S. embassy in Stockholm. And with that “no,” I saw the door on my return to California close. My entire life as I knew it—my home, my business, many close friends—was in the Bay Area, and suddenly I could not travel to the U.S. Giving up just wasn’t an option.

In the months following the visa denial, I used NVC in two ways. First I needed to see the consular officers as humans, not enemies or authorities who were “against me.” I had to remind myself that institutions are operated by people, and that the people who work for them have feelings and needs. I could try to understand what might have produced their shocking decision to decline my visa application. I could tease out that they had assessed that I was not to be trusted. I knew that I can be trusted, but they needed to be shown that I’m trustworthy.

I gathered evidence and courage, and then I applied for a visa again. That’s when the second use of NVC came into play: to speak one’s authenticity in ways it can be heard, even by people who are not particularly friendly towards us, even in tense situations. I had to stand my ground.

I was called in for another interview and when I finally reached the consular officer’s window, I managed to bring clarity to the unreasonableness of the situation I was in. “Does it not matter to you that I have always followed the rules, that I have never broken any immigration law?” I asked. “My only mistake here was to ask for a visa I didn’t get.” At that point, the officer’s questions and demeanor shifted, and I was granted my visa.

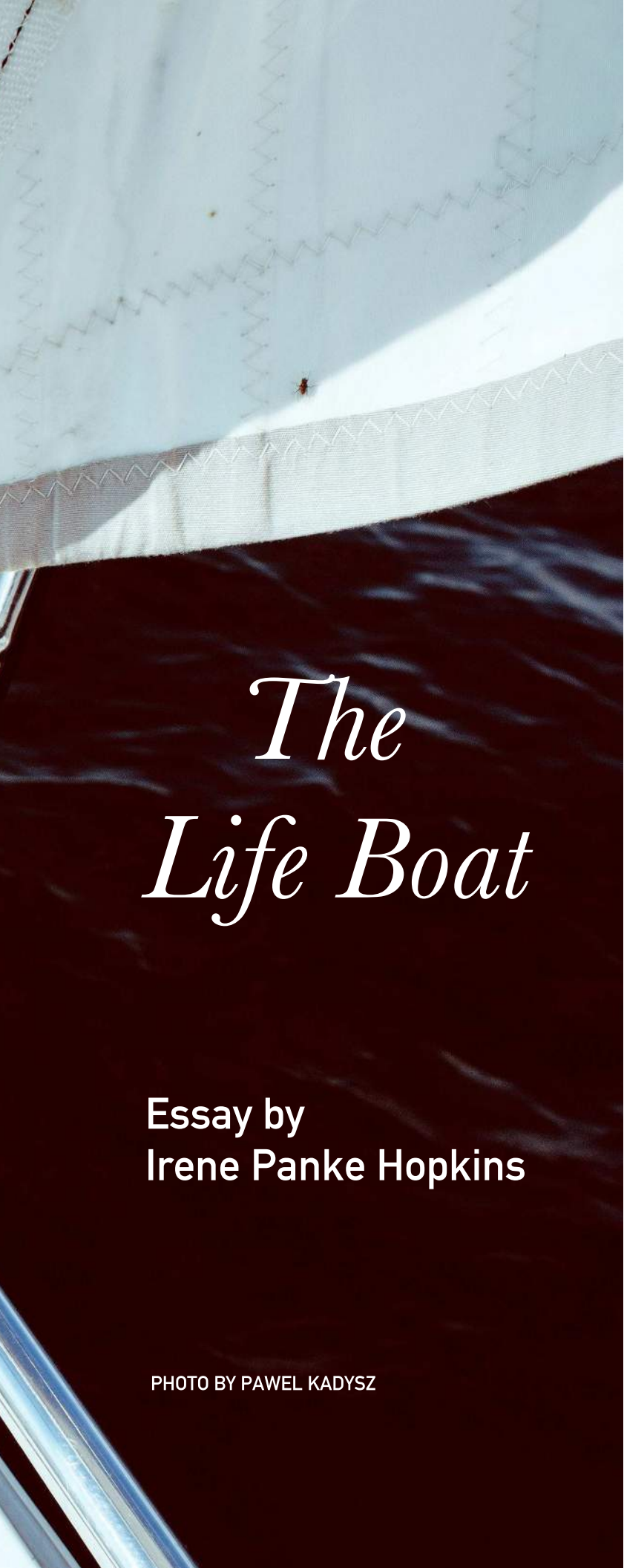
As you can see, NVC can be a great vehicle for activists or anyone who wants to practice nonviolence in daily life. It can create flow in our everyday interactions. With consistent practice, it has the power to change our story about who we are and our way of being in the world. ■

***Maja Bengtson** is a certified Integral Coach. She sits on the board at Metta Center for Nonviolence, and she is on the Dream Team for Cantical Farm in Oakland, California.*



PHOTO BY DYAA ELDIN





The Life Boat

Essay by
Irene Panke Hopkins

PHOTO BY PAWEL KADYSZ

For 20 summers, our family of four cruised the Pacific Northwest Coast, between Seattle and Prince Rupert, British Columbia. We didn't have the money for extravagant trips to Europe or Disneyland. But we had a small sailboat. And we had a skipper: my husband had been sailing and working on boats his entire life. And somewhere in my DNA was a woman of the sea.

During the four to seven weeks we spent aboard each summer, we traveled deeply into the largest temperate rainforest on the planet, and even more deeply into the uncharted territory of ourselves. My husband, Dan, felt more at home at sea than on land, and our girls discovered about themselves what they could not find in trendy clothes or fashion magazines.

We woke to mama bears and cubs breakfasting on the shore, watching through binoculars as they meticulously flipped over rocks with their huge paws and ate the delicacies hidden there. We cruised alongside pods of orca whales, so close we could hear and smell their salty, fishy spray and determine, based on the size of their dorsal fins, which were the males, which the females and which the calves. Dolphins changed course to swim playfully alongside our boat, crisscrossing over the bow and returning to the back of the line for another go. Once, while rowing our dinghy across a peaceful cove, an eagle swooped down from behind us, narrowly missing our sun hats as it hit its target, splashing the water a few feet from our stern. With a wriggling salmon in its powerful yellow talons, the eagle flew up to a nearby tree and feasted on its catch, unaware of its astonished audience below.

The magic was not, however, instant for me. It took time to find my groove in the early years. There was never enough room for everything. Cooking and changing diapers and doing dishes from a not-quite-upright position were challenging. Feeling crowded and cramped, I bordered on cranky most days. After one stormy and sleepless night, when my husband kept going out on deck in sideways rain and gusting wind to check for danger, I woke up angry. Angry because I needed a vacation. I needed a break. But this? This was work. The same amount of work I did at home—but in a smaller, less comfortable space. My tea water and I boiled together in silence. Tea cup in



PHOTO BY JON PHILLIPS

hand, I headed outside, hissing to Dan, “I want to be alone—keep the baby busy.”

On the bow, I sipped and seethed. Hot tears stung my eyes. How had I allowed this to happen? What was fun about this? And why was Dan so happy? He seemed more at home, more content here than in our house. Through blurred vision I noticed a fleeced couple and their frolicking dog on the rain-grey beach. A nearby boat’s hatch popped open and a guy stuck his head out, smiled and waved. The water made a pleasantly soothing sound as it lapped the side of the boat. Storm clouds were flying across the sky. The sun broke through and the dampness began to evaporate. I took a deep breath, smelled the salt air and felt the soft breeze on my cheeks.

And just like that—snap—I got it. My anger dissolved. I understood why Dan wanted to do this and I recognized a part of my soul that had been neglected for a very long time. This *was* a vacation—but it was more than that. This immersion in nature, free from television, phones and computers, was the best thing we could do for our children, our family, ourselves.

I climbed back into the cabin, took Sarah in my arms and kissed Dan, who looked worried.

“Everything is OK now,” I said. “So OK.” I knew that this was only the first of many boat trips to come.

During the brief period at the onset of each summer, when the girls longed for “something to do,” I helped bridge the transition by reading to them, helping them with craft projects we never had time for at home, and never saying, “Just a minute, I’m busy now.” We baked bread in an old, diesel-fired, fish-boat stove. The girls took turns mixing and kneading and then, covering the ball of dough with a towel, we waited three hours for it to rise. We went to the beach, we read, we hiked, we wrote in our journals. Three hours later the dough was pushing the towel skyward. We punched it down and readied it for its second rising. And again we waited.

I believe now that our brains were rewired as we slowly, slowly, began finding our natural rhythm. A rhythm as natural to the human brain as the tides and wind are to the sea. We grew accustomed to stillness. Our boat became a sanctuary that nurtured our family’s unique culture and gave us memories

that would become part of us. Even when life became so busy that we could barely remember what it felt like to be this free.

One summer we visited Mamalilikulla, an abandoned native village on an island off the northern coast of Vancouver Island. Leaving our dinghy on the beach, we climbed a small slope. At the village site, we carefully stepped over totem poles on the ground, their carvings still discernible. Instead of shouting, “Cool! A totem pole!” the girls, 10 and six, reverently guessed what the carvings represented. Farther on we came upon three longhouse posts, still standing strong. We imagined what the inside looked like when the walls were attached and ran our hands over the striations in the wood, painstakingly carved so long ago. A short walk to the right and away from the beach were abandoned homes. Inside them were remnants: a kitchen table; an old washing machine; glass jars on the windowsill, now filled with boll weevils. We whispered, feeling like voyeurs, trespassers in someone else’s life. This once-thriving, happy summer encampment was in ruins, but here we were, walking the same paths and, from the beach where they had fished and played, looking at the very same view. As we walked through the tall grass toward the schoolhouse that had eventually been turned into a tuberculosis hospital, our older daughter said, “It’s sad here. I want to go back to the boat.” Our six-year-old agreed. And so did we.

Had we been watching TV all summer, or scanning Facebook every day (if such a thing had existed back then), would my daughters have had the ability to tune into the energetic level of this place? To sense the history, the ghosts, the feeling that this place carried? To feel it so deeply inside of themselves?

I don’t think so. Our removal from the artificial and our slow tuning to nature’s rhythm and mystery allowed us to glimpse another level of existence.

Looking back on the summers we spent on the water, I am certain that by immersing ourselves in nature, by taking a solid break from the daily assault of advertising and media, we provided our children with an inoculation that no pediatrician had access to. Our boat trips gave them—and us—antibodies to resist the culture in which we were raising them. As adults our daughters, now in their twenties, have expressed gratitude for those years spent on the water. “Thank you for the boat trips,” they have said on more than one occasion.



PHOTO BY PAUL JARVIS

“Thank you for exposing us to an alternative, for showing us another way to be.”

Eventually, we sold our house in Seattle and we now live on our boat full time. We’re not quite as removed from city life as we were on our summer trips. But we live with less and there is therefore less pressure to buy and consume than we experienced while living in a house. There is no pressure to “keep up” with anyone. We just have to keep our boat afloat!

When any of us feels the mounting stress and pressure of the city, it is not uncommon for us to reflect back on our summer boat trips and long for the days when we could just slip the lines and head north. We need to retreat from busyness now and again to find our balance, to feed our hungry souls. To remember who we are—really. ■

Irene Panke Hopkins is an essayist and freelance writer who lives on a 42’ sailboat in Puget Sound, Washington.

Human Beings Are Not Illegal

Soneile Hymn addresses the humanness of immigration.



PHOTO BY TONY WEBSTER

Above: The border fence between the U.S. and Mexico at Imperial Beach and Border Field State Park in Southern California.

“Those who practice nonviolence know that damage to one is a damage to us all. The rifts of immigration affect everyone.”

I must have been about 15 on that warm spring day at the Trident Café in Boulder, Colorado. As I took my seat, I noticed the headline of an abandoned newspaper at a nearby table announcing the capture of “illegal aliens.” A string of absurdities passed through my mind as I did a double-take. Had the government finally come clean about the existence of aliens? Was this a hoax? I examined the paper, quietly muttering, “Aliens?” After a moment, my slightly older and more experienced friend gave an amused snort and told me the less exciting and more depressing explanation: humans find our own species to be alien.

As far as we know, immigration is fundamental to the human species. It generally occurs when we feel we can thrive elsewhere and take a leap of faith in a search for a better future. Terms like “illegal aliens,” and its shorthand version “illegals,” criminalize and dehumanize people, completely overlooking the immense contributions immigrants make in our



PHOTO BY TOMAS CASTELAZO

communities as well as our economy.

While mainstream media covers immigration in ways that tend to fan the flames of division and alienation rather than offer context and explore solutions, some small but significant schisms in the generally divisive coverage of immigration indicate signs of an emerging new story.

In June of 2011, for instance, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Jose Antonia Vargas “came out” as an undocumented immigrant. In his heartfelt essay for *New York Times Magazine*, he wrote:

We’re not always who you think we are. Some pick your strawberries or care for your children. Some are in high school or college. And some, it turns out, write news articles you might read. I grew up here. This is my home. Yet even though I think of myself as an American and consider America my country, my country doesn’t think of me as one of its own.

Vargas’ media splash was an effort to stoke the fire of a new dialogue on immigration and to advocate for the DREAM Act, legislation promising a path to citizenship for tens of thousands of undocumented youth. In addition to publicly revealing his citizenship status, Vargas created *Documented*, a moving and intimate documentary of his personal journey. He also founded the organization Define American, which became a high-profile hub of stories about American identity and diversity.

Following his self-made outing, Vargas began receiving email after email from others who wanted to go public or were already doing so. In 2012, Vargas had located and enlisted 35 other undocumented immigrants from all over the world to stand with him for the cover photo of the June 25 edition of *Time*, whose headline read: “We Are Americans (Just Not Legally).” Gian Paul Lozza, the Swiss-born photographer who took the cover photo, said in the magazine’s “Behind the Cover” story: “They’re living in America, but only in the shadows. They come from so many different countries, religions and backgrounds. We wanted to bring that diversity to light.”

Lozza photographed each person individually for the web version of the article; each striking image included a caption with an expression of hope. “I want to be a psychologist,” states one. “I want to be free so I can reach my full potential.” “I want to keep fighting until

I can see my mother again.” “I want to be the change I want to see in the world.” These unifying voices touch the humanness within the story of immigration.

Another testament to the shifting tides came in April of 2013, when the Associated Press (AP) announced it would no longer use the term “illegal immigrant” to describe people. The policy stated that the AP would only use the term “in direct quotes essential to the story,” and use “‘illegal’ only to refer to an action, not a person.” The *New York Times* also updated its policies on how it uses the phrase and encouraged its reporters and editors to “consider alternatives when appropriate to explain the specific circumstances of the person in question, or to focus on actions.”

Then, in the summer of 2014, came one of the most striking pieces of new media from the *New York Times*. “The Way North” is an incredibly rich and diverse tapestry of writing, audio, photography and video that chronicles the ambitious 38-day journey of staff photographer Todd Heisler and reporter Damien Cave, along Interstate 35. The duo examined how the American heartland is being changed by immigration. They met with local politicians and residents from the Mexican border at Laredo, Texas, to the Canadian border at Duluth, Minnesota, exploring the complex communities along the interstate, which is a major artery in the circulatory system that brings immigrants from Mexico and beyond to the United States. By the end of their trip, Cave said he felt much more hopeful about the ability of people to live together in community. “The thing that is really striking,” he said, “is the divide between how people live at the local level and the conversation in Washington. Washington feels so disconnected from the reality of what’s happening in people’s communities.”

The *Times*’ multimedia perspective of immigrant voices, along with the communities in which they live, offered a powerful alternative to the old, simplistic media of the past. It reflects a shift in the American conscience that isn’t being proportionately reflected in most other mainstream media. I hope that these stories from the heart will continue to proliferate and find their way into the mainstream.

“The Way North” also exposed a changed demographic in U.S. immigration over the past few decades. Whereby large numbers of single men used to cross the border to find work, now it is largely families



PHOTO FROM THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS



PHOTO BY TOMAS CASTELAZO

doing so, increasingly turning our system of deportation into a system of familial estrangement. Roughly 50,000 parents of U.S. citizen children are taken from their homes every year. A 2011 inquiry found that over 5000 of these children were living in foster care; according to Immigration and Customs Enforcement, an average of 17 children are placed in state custody every day.

Those who practice nonviolence know that damage to one is a damage to us all. The rifts of immigration affect everyone. A man who had lived on my street for over a decade was recently deported, and the wound is felt by the whole neighborhood. The man's wife and young son continue to live there, though the neighbors who reported him have since moved away. Our borders not only separate us from our fellow humans on the international scale; they drive wedges into families and communities.

My daughter, Ramona, is a dual citizen of the U.S. and Costa Rica. Her dad has never visited us, and not because he doesn't want to. The visa application process takes months and requires bank statements, letters from employers and about half the average monthly Costa Rican income. His chances of being granted a visa to visit are low, and having a child living here puts him in the "high risk" category to overstay a visa, which is the central factor in the determination process. Ramona and I regularly visit

Costa Rica. I apply for the visa on the airplane and its cost is included in my ticket. Though Ramona was born in the U.S., Costa Rica welcomed her as a citizen, the only requirement being a signature from her parents. I could get temporary residency almost instantly in Costa Rica as her mother, and permanent residency within months. Families are highly valued in Costa Rican policy at all levels, which is reflected in the country's immigration laws. I want to live in a world in which our priorities express belonging over alienation, love over fear.

As I write this, the courts have prevented Obama's executive legislation on immigration, at the behest of Republicans in Congress, from moving forward. The legislation would halt, at least in the short term, the deportation of undocumented youth as well as the undocumented parents of American children. It breaks my heart that our leaders still use the most vulnerable among us in their political games. The time has come to take down the walls and dream a bigger dream, together. A dream in which we are free to live with those we love, in the places we believe we can best thrive. ■

***Soneile Hymn** is the Director of Flow at Metta Center for Nonviolence. She is also an explorer and community organizer.*

Poetic Address to the Nation

Once a year, the U.S. president delivers the State of the Union address, a speech meant to highlight important national issues from the past year and suggest priorities for the coming year. It's a broadcast from one to many. But what if, once a year, we spoke and listened to one another? What if we could collectively respond not through prose and statistics, but with poetry and music?

The U.S. Department of Arts and Culture created the People's State of the Union to do just that (The U.S. Department of Arts and Culture is not a government agency, but a people-powered movement to cultivate empathy, equity and social imagination. Find out more and enlist as a Citizen Artist at www.usdac.us).

The following pages showcase an excerpt from the 2015 Poetic Address to the Nation, created by a team of 20 diverse poets and inspired by stories shared at more than 150 community events across the U.S. in late January.

Participating Poets: David Acevedo, Jennifer Bartlett, Mahogany Browne, Cyd Charisse Fulton, reg e gaines, Jessica Hagedorn, Joy Harjo, Bob Holman, Paolo Javier, E Ethebert Miller, Nikhil Melnechuk, Stephen Motika, Marilyn Nelson, Margaret Randall, Luis Rodriguez, Tahani Salah, Judith Santopietro, Ed Sanders, Tanaya Winder, Yolanda Wisher.



A shadow hangs where my country should glow.
Despite glories shaped as skyscrapers or sound.
More wars, more prisons, less safe, still low.
Massive cities teeter on shifting ground.
Glittering lights, music tracks hide the craven.
TV, movies, books so we can forget.
Countless worn out, debt-laden & slaving;
Their soul-derived destinies unmet.

Give me NASCAR, lowriders, Hip Hop, the Blues.
Give me Crooklyn, cowboys, cool jazz, cholos.
Give me libraries, gardens of the muse.
Give me songs over sidewalks, mad solos.
Big America improperly sized.
Give me your true value, realized.

I am 71 years of age and there is a sense of hope now
I am writing for returning troops, PTSD, a job situation for a kid with autism,
A kid transitioning out of high school, building community programs

In March of last year, our collective got together
A gallery, a community garden, a lot of hope, my fondest memory of the previous year.

Ah! Obama's in.
Bum rush Bush to back of bus.
LGBT's grin
represents scissors to cut
America's hanging slip.

First time's got a seat
next to pride of any lace
stitched with non-defeat.
Marry opposite sex, race;
America, stop trippin'.

JUST A MADNESS WHICH
MARINATES BRAINCELLS WHO SWELL
NOT SWEAR FOR WE MUST
CARE ABOUT ONE ANOTHER
MOTHER/BROTHER/ENEMY

Radical hardship
Of Liberation grip
On the horizon
I built Community for
they try to snatch us up



Text and photos courtesy of the U.S. Department of Arts and Culture

Dear America, my love.
If my blackness turns to fruit
do not pull it from the vine;
let it grow from earth to sky
untouched by hating hands.
So sweet my juice, my jazz,
my blues, so sad but true.
Dear America, my love.

Look beyond your prison walls.
Count the black seeds behind bars.
The cells where nothing blooms.
Can hope flower from despair?
Yes, America my love –
Resistance comes and then the rain.

STEP ON PODIUM
LIGHTS POP LIKE CORKS FROM PRICEY
CHAMPAGNE POETICS

BY MOI NOT BROOKS BROTHERS GHOST
CUZ THIS CANT BE BOUT NO FAME

I did not call 1-800 BLACKPERSPECTIVE this morning
What happened to Mike Brown was not new
Occupy taught me how to listen

I was that little Mexican kid in that whitewashed school
It wasn't a problem. Till I got it inside my head.

I haven't been out
Because of my health issues.
In 2008

Remember being
Part of a group of people?
Those people got shot.

The pastor said I love you
But I am not feeling it.

To read the entire poem and watch a video performance of the 2015 Poetic Address to the Nation, visit: www.peoplesstateoftheunion.usdac.us.

If Gandhi Used Social Media

While Gandhi enthusiasts worldwide generally agree that Gandhi would have used social media had it existed then, I wanted to consider what Gandhi's use of social media would actually look like.

Musings by Stephanie Van Hook



Question: If Gandhi had a Twitter handle, what might it be?

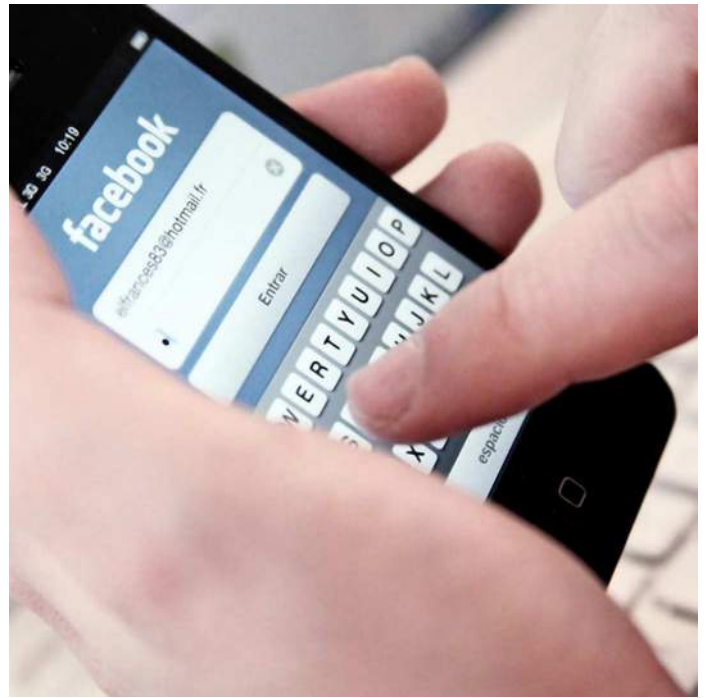
He would keep it simple, truthful and humble. I imagine he would “sign” Twitter similarly to how he signed his letters, @M.K.Gandhi. However, I also could imagine him using a handle like @SeekerofTruth, as he strove to uphold the principle of Truth in all that he did. Anything he’d post on Twitter would follow that spirit as well.

Question: Would Gandhi have a personal Facebook page, or would he create a fan page for himself?

He would most definitely have a personal Facebook page, to connect with people personally. In spite of his suggesting otherwise, others would probably create a Gandhi fan page. Of course, he would have reached the maximum number of “friends” pretty quickly, so he might also have started a group page to encourage conversations. Not to mention, he would accept friend requests from “enemies” and “opponents,” never even dreaming of blocking them. I also imagine him using Facebook events to let people know, for example, of a nationwide pray-in. The number of “likes” or RSVPs would mean little to him. He would be much more interested in *who* responded, and how deeply each person held to the principles of nonviolence.

Question: What might be some Hashtags Gandhi would use?

#DontCallMeMahatma; #QuitIndia, #karmayoga, #controlofthepalatecontrolofthemind, #nonviolentdiscipline, #ConstructiveProgram, #Satyagraha, #nonviolenceofthebrave, #removeuntouchability, #heartunity, #meansandendsareincontrovertibleterms, #Ramaramarama #nothingpassiveaboutnonviolence, #experimentsintruth, #hindumuslimunity, #boycottbritishcloth, #loveyourenemy, #civildisobedience, #showwithyourexample, #homerule, #ocular demonstration, #therevolutionwontbetweeted, #mylifeisanopenbook, #ahimsa, #civilresistance, #nonhumiliation, #unityindiversity, #soulforce, #yervadamandir, #charkhafreedom, #dayofsilence, #peacearmy, #sarvodaya, #IdidntlearnthisfromThoreau, #hungerstrike, #serviceismymiddlenamewhatsyours?



Question: Would Gandhi depend on social media for his work?

No way. The entire independence movement in India was based on the notion of breaking loose from all dependencies. To this end, he would use it as the tool that it is, but would always encourage human-to-human connection. Moreover, he would not use it for long periods at a time—maybe not longer than five to ten minutes a day. The rest of his time would be used for in-person meetings, long walks, prayer meetings, spinning and strategic reflection.

Question: Would Gandhi take a “selfie”?

I don’t imagine that Gandhi would take a selfie by himself, say at the end of his morning walks or on a boat or in interesting places his work took him, across India and the world. He *would* have taken a selfie, likely, if it was with another person, as a laugh. Gandhi had a great sense of humor. ■

Stephanie Van Hook is Executive Director at Metta Center for Nonviolence and the host of Peace Paradigm Radio.



PAINTING BY ELLIE CROSS

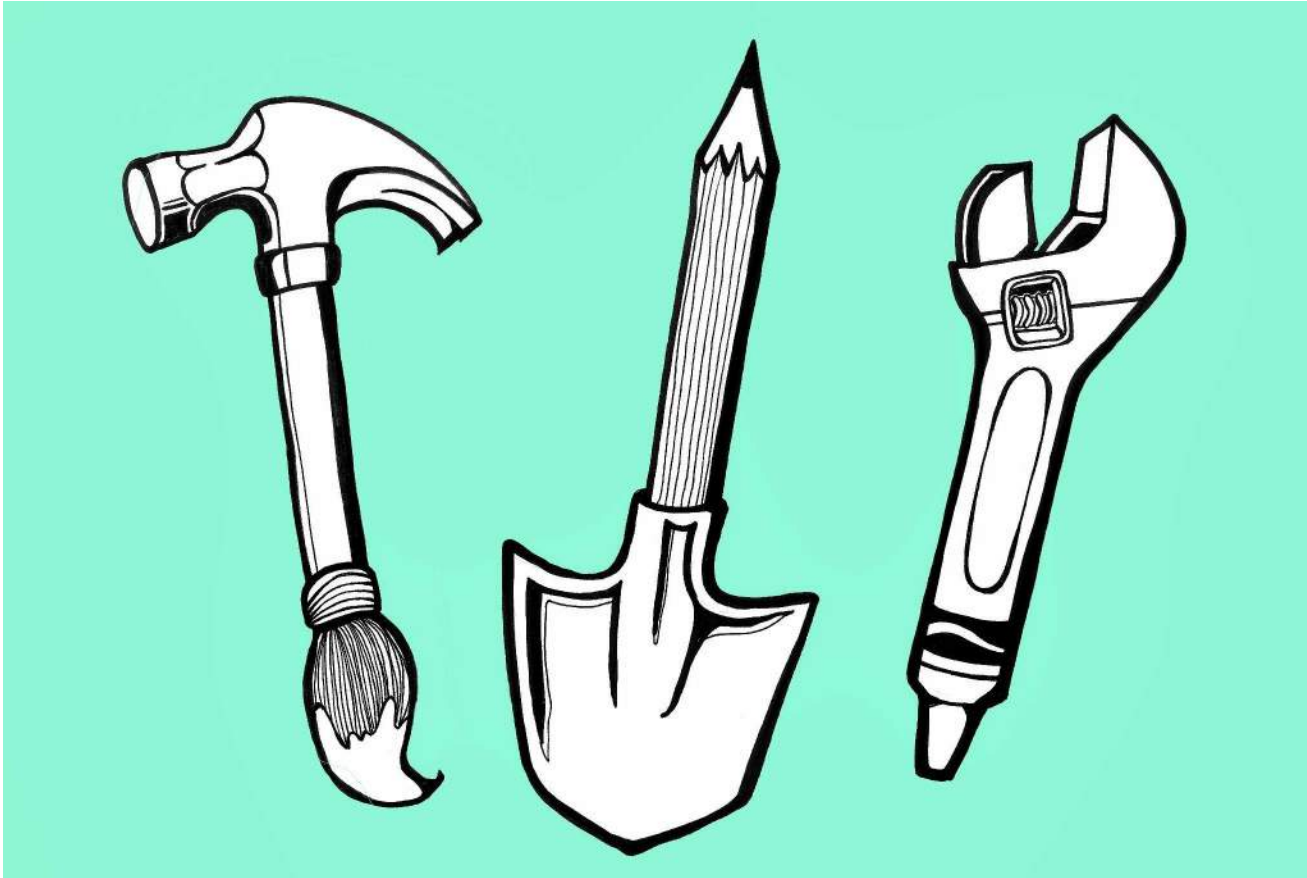


ILLUSTRATION BY ELLIE CROSS

The Dandelion Insurrection

An excerpt from Rivera Sun's novel of the same title



Zadie Byrd Gray. She stood on the cafe's threshold like a breath of fresh air. A white scarf covered her black curls. Her boots climbed her calves. Red leggings scaled her thighs. Her jean jacket hugged her like a sailor on shore leave. And that short, tight skirt, Charlie laughed to himself, was nothing but honest. She released the door. The bell tinkled. The cafe was silent. Her lips curled in a slow smile.

The past and present collided in a sudden short-circuiting of time. No one spoke. The family breathed in unison. Eyes leaped back and forth from the young man to the woman. Years of memories were stacked inside them like a set of nesting Russian Zadie-dolls, from the twelve year-old hellion dragged north by her hippie parents to the precocious adolescent strutting the halls of middle-high school like the Queen of America, to the daredevil teenager boasting about her victories in the wild west of adolescent love while young Charlie died in the

agonies of unsuspected adoration, to the gorgeous sixteen year-old who broke his heart by running away in a fit of spontaneity, stringing him on with long distance phone calls and whirlwind visits right up until today. She stood in the doorway with that sphinx's smile while Charlie's breath slipped out in a sigh. Zadie Byrd Gray. She'd rescued him and ruined him, run wild with him, revived him, released him and returned to him. He couldn't love her one iota more ... and everyone but Zadie knew it.

Smirks grew. Valier folded his gnarled hands over his cane and fixed his eyes steadily on his grandson. Be patient, he had once told the teenage boy, be patient with that girl. All these years later, Valier could see that Charlie's patience would not last another month. A lit fuse crackled in the young man;

explosion was inevitable. Charlie ran a hand through his sandy hair and swallowed hard.

“Welcome back, Zadie,” he managed.

“Thanks, Charlie.”

She flashed her lightning strike of a grin. Charlie’s heart burst into flames. A rumble of snorts and titters broke the silence. Valier rapped the floor with his cane.

“Come, belle, give an old man a proper French greeting,” he demanded imperiously.

Zadie swept through the assembly to kiss the old man on each cheek. Charlie died a thousand deaths of envy, stuck in his corner, hemmed in by shoulders and chairs. His mother, Natalie, arched an eyebrow at Zadie’s short skirt. Charlie sighed. There was no lost love between those two.

“Now,” Valier demanded, holding Zadie’s hand and shaking it a little, “tell me why my grandson is making trouble.”

“I am not making trouble,” Charlie retorted.

Valier rattled the article at him. This was making trouble. This would bring the authorities down on their heads. This was kicking a hornet’s nest, smart-mouthing your elders, setting off fireworks in church ... in short, Valier scowled, this was exactly Charlie’s brand of trouble.

Zadie pointed to the article in Valier’s hand.

“This is flying like a little bird across the country, delivering messages of courage and waking people up. Charlie’s writing is the rallying cry of the Dandelion Insurrection.”

Mouths dropped open. Half legend, half real, the stories of the Dandelion Insurrection’s spirited resistance rode the rumor-winds that swept across the country. The tales were murmured in barbershops and whispered in kitchens, passed between the church pews, and told in hushed tones late at night when husbands and wives climbed into bed. From all directions and corners of the country, the stories came, sharing a common message of hope: *the golden*

soul of humanity was rising up.

When? the hushed voices asked.

In the spring, the rumors replied, *when the dandelions bloom.*

The wind swept down the prairies with the question.

Where?

The echoing answer leapt from mountaintop to rolling hill to valley floor.

Everywhere.

The Dandelion Insurrection was as small as baking bread in the oven and as large as bringing down dictators. It was practical and metaphorical, symbolic and literal. It was real. It was legend. It spread hope. It grew kindness. It sowed the seeds of resistance in the ground of adversity. Everywhere the concrete of control paved over the goodness of the heart, the Dandelion Insurrection sprang up through the cracks.

In the cafe, an explosion of questions erupted. A barrage of sound roared out as they shouted above each other, thundering, rasping, thumping the floor with their boots, pounding the tables with their fists until Zadie threw her hands over her ears.

“QUIET!” Charlie bellowed.

A score of mouths snapped shut.

“The Dandelion Insurrection,” Charlie told them, “is the last hope that people have as our democracy is strangled in the grip of this hidden dictatorship. It is the refusal to be squeezed to death by the hand of fear and greed, but instead, to spring into action to *live!*”

For a moment, the family stared at him in disbelief. Then every throat broke out once more in a tangle of French and English. A few voices hastily shushed and silenced the others, muting the noise into a dense thicket of whispers. Curiosity strained against the stranglehold of safety. The questions broke free, rising and falling in a tumbling cacophony of sound. Charlie and Zadie stood quietly as the storm raged around them.

Hello, he mouthed silently. She smiled. Charlie’s pulse

hammered until he couldn't breathe. *Forget my earlier words*, he thought. *The Dandelion Insurrection is what happens when the heart breaks open with love!* The breaking open itself *is* the insurrection. It is what happens when our love for life and for each other rises up so powerfully within us that we can no longer keep silent, but must leap into passionate action!

This sudden understanding beat ferociously through his veins as the family argued about the hidden dictatorship and democracy's demise. Charlie waited them out. They could bicker until they were blue in the face, but the facts were clear; the police were armed like soldiers, the army swarmed like mosquitoes, the military marched up and down the streets, and what could you do? Nothing. You could not sign petitions. You could not speak out against the government. You could not rally together in the square. Grunts and growls shot around the room. Heads shook. Beards waggled. Sighs and appeals to God slipped out. Elbows leaned on tables. Mouths spat out complaints.

"Charlie?" young Matt asked, nudging his elbow. "Is it true? *The Man from the North* . . . is that you?"

The cafe silenced abruptly. Natalie's eyes bored sharply into her son. The members of her family were salt of the earth farmers and foresters, not radicals, certainly not revolutionaries! The family stared at the young man as if he had suddenly sprouted horns. Charlie shifted awkwardly.

"Well, yes," he replied.

"*Holy boys!*" Matt burst out in awe. "I never figured!"

"Well," Charlie answered, "I didn't figure anyone around here was taking those articles seriously."

"I do," Bette confessed.

"*Et moi,*" Jean Pierre admitted.

"Ah, well," Rick put in shyly, "my wife has them all hidden in her underwear drawer." He blushed beet red as the others burst into laughter. Charlie's mother pushed furiously off the cafe counter and threaded through the chairs. When she reached her father's side, she snatched the handwritten article from the old man's hand. Her eyes scanned it in disbelief.

"Charles-Valier Rider," she snapped, calling her son by his full name, "have you lost your mind?" Natalie's face was pinched with distress. There were soldiers on the street, hunting *the Man From the North!* "Who put you up to this?" she demanded.

Charlie froze as Natalie glared at Zadie and memory cut him as keenly as a sharpened blade.

"We need a voice, Charlie," Zadie had told him.

"The stories of the Dandelion Insurrection must be told. People are rising up against this oppression, but they are few in number and we need more. We need you to plant the seeds of love, creativity, and courage. We need your poetry."

"But I'm a reporter, not a poet," he protested.

"Wrong," Zadie had contradicted, "you're a poet, not a reporter. Your writing has a revolution of metaphor and beauty beating against the jail of your practicality."

Charlie stared at her.

"How did you know that?" he asked.

Zadie smiled.

"It keeps escaping. Besides," she went on, "it's not enough to report the *facts* of the Dandelion Insurrection. You'll need poetry to capture its essence. The Dandelion Insurrection slips out of its own parameters. It's as big as restoring democracy and as small as saying hello to your neighbors. Sometimes, it looks so ordinary that you don't even know it's there."

A blaze of writing had hurtled from him like a firebrand of resistance. *Be like the dandelions*, he had written, *spring up in intolerable soils, dare to stand up against violence and hatred, blossom into love*. Charlie translated the articles into French so the authorities would suspect he was Canadian. The underground presses across the border switched them back to English before sending them anywhere the seeds of resistance would take them. All winter, he had used the stories Zadie told him to ignite the dormant courage of the nation. The words couldn't fly fast enough from his fingertips. He raked the coals of frustration, stirred up the smoldering piles of despair, and tore off the smothering effects of fear. *Be like the dandelions*, he wrote, *courageous, bold defenders of the golden soul of humanity, fearless in the face of adversity*.



PHOTO BY OKKE ORNSTEIN



Zadie sent word back to him: people were listening. Charlie watched in awe as rumors of his infamy circulated. In America, they began to call him *the Man From the North*. Following the French clues, the authorities searched in Quebec, Montreal, even as far as France. The dark fist of oppression tightened. Charlie wrote despite its shadow. The fingers of the government crawled across the land. Charlie kept churning out his articles. The hot stench of infuriated tyranny fumed. Charlie held his breath . . . and kept on writing.

Two weeks ago, Zadie had left a cryptic message on his landline.

“Get ready to go.”

She didn’t say where. She didn’t hint when. She left Charlie, as always, hanging in breathless uncertainty. He eyed the border nervously. He waited for her call. He crossed his fingers, prayed in church, packed his bags, and hoped-against-hope that Zadie would reach him before the federal agents. For days, he had tiptoed nervously around his Ma, hating to lie to her, knowing that he would vanish and she would not know the reason why.

Now she knows, Charlie sighed, *but that doesn’t make it any easier.*

Natalie drew all five feet and two inches of herself up in a storm of outrage. The entire cafe hunkered down. Valier murmured in a conciliatory tone. She sliced him with the steel in her eyes.

“Charlie, you must stop writing these at once!”

Charlie clenched his jaw.

“Ma, I’m not a little boy anymore.”

“*Non*. By now, you should have better sense,” Natalie snapped.

“How many times have you said that God took away all my common sense and gave me curiosity instead?” Charlie shot back.

Old Valier sighed. That boy got his fire from his father, Scott Rider, may the man rest in peace. Even now, he could see that rebellious, motorcycle-riding

atheist in the determined lines of Charlie’s face. Stubborn. Headstrong. Insistent. Valier’s eyes flicked up to his daughter. *Ah voyons!* Who was he fooling? Look at the woman, hands on her hips, one toe tapping; still wearing tight blue jeans just like the day she had ridden off on the back of Scott Rider’s motorcycle; still poking her stubborn chin up as defiantly as when she had returned to the valley pregnant with Charlie, not yet married to Scott, unashamed and unrepentant. Valier sighed. The boy got his stubbornness from both ends.

“Charlie,” he said gently, “you are in danger, maybe we can hide you. We can make sure the police don’t know you are *the Man From the North*.”

The family nodded solemnly, but Charlie shook his head.

“No, grand-père. The time of winter and hiding is over. Haven’t you heard the river? The ice is on the move, cracking and booming, yearning to break free. It is spring. The dandelions are erupting from the soil. It’s not time for hiding. . . it’s time for action.”

He had their attention now. No one stirred.

“How long will you sit around, talking, talking, talking, but doing nothing? Already, the border is closed. Already, we risk arrest just for speaking in this way. What will it take for you to say, *enough?* We tuck our heads between our legs, trying to spare our loved ones suffering . . . but the road of complacency never leads to the end of suffering. It leads to death!”

The younger men along the walls were throwing glances at each other, agreeing with Charlie’s words. The ring of older men who had lived through hardship and bitterness wore their weary cynicism on their scowling faces. To them, Charlie made another appeal.

“What is life without freedom?” Charlie asked. “Real freedom, not just from terrorists, but from oppressive control? *Nous sommes les Acadiens*. We are Acadians. We have pride in ourselves, our families, our land, and hard work . . . but one day, we will hide our heads in shame, looking back at these times and knowing that *we did nothing*.”

“Bah,” Jean Pierre dismissed him, “you are a boy. You have never fought for anything. I have spilled blood for this country. I have lost brothers for this country. I



PHOTO BY OKKE ORNSTEIN

will not take up arms against my country!”

Charlie regarded him steadily for a moment.

“Nor I,” he agreed softly. “I will not take up arms against any man. But I will stand up for the principles this nation was founded upon; the freedom of speech and assembly, the right to a fair and speedy trial, and the equality of all human beings.”

“Huh,” Natalie snorted, folding her arms across her chest, “and you plan to do all this with your bare hands, eh?”

“Yes, if I must,” Charlie answered. “But my bare hands wield the tools of nonviolent struggle; the tools of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Jesus, Gandhi, and countless more through history. Matt knows about them. He has read my articles.”

Matt looked up red-faced.

“Yuh, and I can tell anybody what they want to know.” The young clown of the family was not laughing now. He appealed to them in earnest. “We’ve got to take a stand. *The Man From the North*—Charlie, that is—he made good points in those articles.”

Matt looked from one face to another, expecting to be rebuked by the elders, but they were grave and silent, weighing his words. “I joked about the three men in the tub, but, by god, when just three men control us all, it is not funny! *The Banker* has been foreclosing on families all over the country. How long will it be before it starts to happen here?”

Old Mathieu spoke up.

“They’re not going to get my land. We’ve worked that land for four hundred years.”

“If they can’t get you off by economics, they’ll do it by military force,” Charlie warned them. “Remember *le Grand Dérangement?*”

The faces grew stony around him. He had tapped the root of centuries old bitterness from when the British had expelled the French families from the valley.

“It didn’t work,” Jean Pierre said stiffly. “We returned.”

“It can happen again,” Charlie replied. “It is happening now. In other regions of the country, where the land rests above minerals or gas, they are pushing out the families by economics, by laws, and by force.”

Zadie spoke up softly.

“If we don’t do something now, our kids won’t even remember the freedoms or rights that our forefathers fought for. We must resist this slide into authoritarian control! My parents will help you. You joke about them being hippies, but they have a wealth of knowledge to lend. They have trained in nonviolent struggle and they are connected to Dandelion Insurrectionists all across the country.”

“And,” Matt added proudly, “we’ve got Charlie; *the Man from the North!*”

Zadie shook her head.

“The authorities are raking their talons through this valley looking for *the Man from the North*,” Zadie told them solemnly. “That’s why they closed the border. I came to take Charlie out of the country, but I got here too late.”

“It doesn’t matter, anyway,” Charlie said. “We can’t run away from what’s happening in this country. We’ve got to meet it, head on.”

Natalie stiffened as if the air had just left the room. Her heart clutched her chest. Her boy was gone, swept like a ghost from the stark reality of the present. Her son was a stranger, a man with burning determination in his eyes, sandy hair left uncut, a leanness to his angular cheeks, the heat of his youth tempered by a fierce winter of thought, now standing there, a man, yearning to give himself, his words, his breath, and his life to this troubled world. ■

Rivera Sun is an activist, poet, playwright and author. Her latest novel is *Billionaire Buddha*.

Five Questions: Velcrow Ripper

Velcrow Ripper is a writer, speaker and, to borrow from the “About” page of his website (velcrowripper.com), an “evolutionary agent.” He is also an award-winning filmmaker with a message for the times: “Nothing less than true love will get us through this era of chaos and crisis. We are all being called to step up and shine.”

Interview by Stephanie Van Hook
Photos courtesy of Velcrow Ripper



1. What was your personal path to becoming a filmmaker?

I began my path as a dream maker. When I was a child, I would choose the story of my dreams before going to sleep. One of my favorites involved a pet chipmunk that would perch in my shirt pocket as we traveled the world together. This story was one of the seeds of my creative life. Years later, when I was shooting *Scared Sacred*, I rescued a kitten that did indeed perch in my coat, peering out as we traveled the world, from Greece to Turkey, Israel, Palestine, India.

My upbringing as a Baha'i was a huge influence on my spiritual development and my later films, teaching me that: humanity is one family; all religions come from the same source; we are currently in a stormy adolescence as a species. I'm no longer a Baha'i, though I sometimes humorously describe myself as a Sufi-Buddhist-Baha'i-punk rock-raver-dad. The influence of punk rock culture in my youth during the 80s expresses the rebellious side of me, which evolved into the raver culture 90s, with its emphasis on community and ecstatic dance. In my twenties, I was a student of Pir Viliyat Khan, the wonderful Sufi teacher and son of the saint Hazrat Inayat Khan. The Sufi Order is a beautiful path of the heart, of direct connection with the divine. Buddhism is also key to me, teaching me the wisdom of non-attachment, of present abiding and the deep understanding of compassion—*may all beings be happy*. And being a father; that has deepened everything.

My activism began when I was a teenager, in high school, on the Sunshine Coast of Canada. In the late 70s we learned that our town was going to be sprayed with DDT, a deadly pesticide that is now illegal. We formed an after-school group of concerned students and hosted a community forum, bringing in experts and engaging the community in discussion. We video taped the forum and then presented the edited video to the Sunshine Coast Regional Board, which voted to ban DDT in our community. The group went on to create a local community television station, and to this day it's run by high school students.

2. What are some of key take-aways you hope people get from your films—about themselves and the world?

Each film has a core theme, and each builds on the

other. My first documentary, *Bones of the Forest*, looked at our relationship to the land and featured the voices of native elders, offering the key understandings of indigenous wisdom, of interdependence, that all of creation is sacred. *Bones of the Forest* points to the deep need to listen to and honor the wisdom of our elders, to recognize the history of colonization in North America and to decolonize our minds.

One of my favorite definitions of spirituality—and there are many—is interconnectedness. This is clearly understood today in the realm of science. For example, a forest is an intricate web of life, woven together by hundreds of miles of mycorrhiza fungi. There is no separation. When we truly realize this on a personal level, it is a spiritual breakthrough that can lead to a visceral sense of oneness with all of creation. When that awareness arrives, destroying the environment means destroying ourselves.

The Fierce Love Trilogy is a global project composed of three feature documentaries: *Scared Sacred*, *Fierce Light* and *Occupy Love*. These films take the pulse of the planet from the years 2000 to 2012. *Scared Sacred* is about my search for hope in the Ground Zeros of the world—places like Afghanistan, Hiroshima, Israel and Palestine, Bhopal, Cambodia, Bosnia and New York City during 9/11. The survivors of these great tragedies were some of the most inspiring people I have met. It is a film about unwrapping the darkness to reveal the light, teaching that every crisis contains within it the possibility of transformation. Woven throughout is the Tibetan Buddhist practice of Tonglen, breathing in suffering, transforming it on the out-breath into compassion. I would have been overwhelmed without it. It helped me stay open to whatever was present without becoming numb, or paralyzed with hopelessness. I discovered the power of what I call “indestructible vulnerability.” I learned to keep my heart open, no matter what the situation.

Fierce Light: When Spirit Meets Action explores my quest to merge the two touchstones of my life, spirituality and activism. Spiritual activism is based on what we are for, rather than what we are against. It's what Ghandi called “soul force” and what Martin Luther King called “love in action.” It's the power of nonviolence.

Compassion is one of the greatest tools in our spiritual toolkit. With compassion, every conflict brings with it the opportunity for growth and transformation, instead

of further polarization. Look into your adversary's heart, not their ego, and you will find a vulnerable human being just like yourself. This goes for riot cops too. When we approach changemaking so that our means are consistent with our ends, we cannot lose. We've already won because we're creating another world right now, not deferring it to the day we finally save this forest or that watershed. We are living the change, being the change. And the more of us who do that, the more that new world will become our shared reality.

Occupy Love explores the growing realization that the dominant system of power is failing to provide us with health, happiness or meaning. The old paradigm that concentrates wealth, founded on the greed of the few, is causing economic and ecological collapse. The resulting crisis has become the catalyst for a profound awakening: millions of people are deciding that enough is enough—the time has come to create a new world, a world that works for all life. A world based on mutual aid, on voluntary simplicity, on gift culture, interconnectedness and systems thinking.

The film connects the dots in this era of rapidly evolving social change, featuring captivating insider scenes from the Egyptian Revolution, the Indignado uprising in Spain, Occupy Wall Street in New York, indigenous activists at the Alberta tar sands, the climate justice movement and beyond. Woven throughout the action-oriented backbone of the film is a deep exploration of public love.

3. How do you see your approach to filmmaking challenging the status quo of the film industry?

The mainstream media tends to promote division, fear and a corporate agenda. My work promotes unity, love and a planetary-focused, nonviolent agenda. As changemakers, our role is to upset the apple cart, to challenge “business as usual,” to re-prioritize and re-jig the entire system—before the jig is up. Hollywood can sometimes surprise us and help wake us up—it has tremendous power.

Presenting the Oscar for best documentary to *Citizen Four*, the film about whistleblower Edward Snowden, shows that sometimes the status quo will challenge itself. On the other hand, creating distractions with



“ ***The mainstream media tends to promote division, fear and a corporate agenda. My work promotes unity, love and a planetary-focused, nonviolent agenda.*** ”

endless action films that promote violence and consumerism, presenting dark visions of apocalypse and destruction, have serious ramifications for the global psyche. Alternative media, media with a message, especially when it communicates with the deeper heart-sense that true art can do, is a powerful and important offering in this time.

4. I have a camera on my phone. How might I use it to share the new story? What inspiration might you offer me to think about when creating media, for example?

There are some core memes that need amplification: interdependence, nonviolence, voluntary simplicity, love. The web can be a tremendous distraction and waster of time—especially social media—but it can also be the place where we meet and share new stories. Short videos, photos, postcards: use your creativity and put it out there. We need you!

5. How has being a new father changed your perspective on life?

As I write this, our 3-month-old son, Phoenix, is in my arms. Being a new father has not changed so much as *deepened and expanded* my perspectives. It has expanded my realization of unconditional love and the absolute beauty of the evolution of life. It is awe-inspiring to intimately witness the emergence of a new being and to feel his absolute delight in existence, his precious vulnerability and pure love. He is being born into a remarkable time in human history, a time when we are being challenged to reinvent our relationship to life, to love and to the planet that is in a state of crisis right now.

My unconditional love for Phoenix strengthens me and inspires me to envision and help create a future where he can flourish. His name is very fitting in an era when humanity must learn to rise like the Phoenix from ecological overshoot—a metamorphosis from a life-destroying caterpillar that's consuming our very sustenance into the chrysalis, to emerge as the resilient butterfly.

Our next film, co-directed by myself and my partner, Nova Ami, is in fact called *Metamorphosis*. It investigates how humanity is transforming the planet, creating global climate change and mass species extinction. It

asks: How will humanity, in turn, be transformed?

We are all in the crucible now. What will we do with our precious journey on this rare gem of a world? What will we do for all the children who are inheriting this world? What will we say to them, one day, when they ask: What did you do, when you knew what was happening to planet Earth?

I believe we are seeing a true zeitgeist emerging from the ground up, a form of changemaking that begins in the human heart and radiates outward. Spiritual activism is not about religion, or any form of dogma. It is activism that comes from the heart, not the head. It is committed to deep transformation, because change alone is not enough. ■



Envisioning Nonviolent Media

by Kimberlyn David, Michael Nagler & Stephanie Van Hook

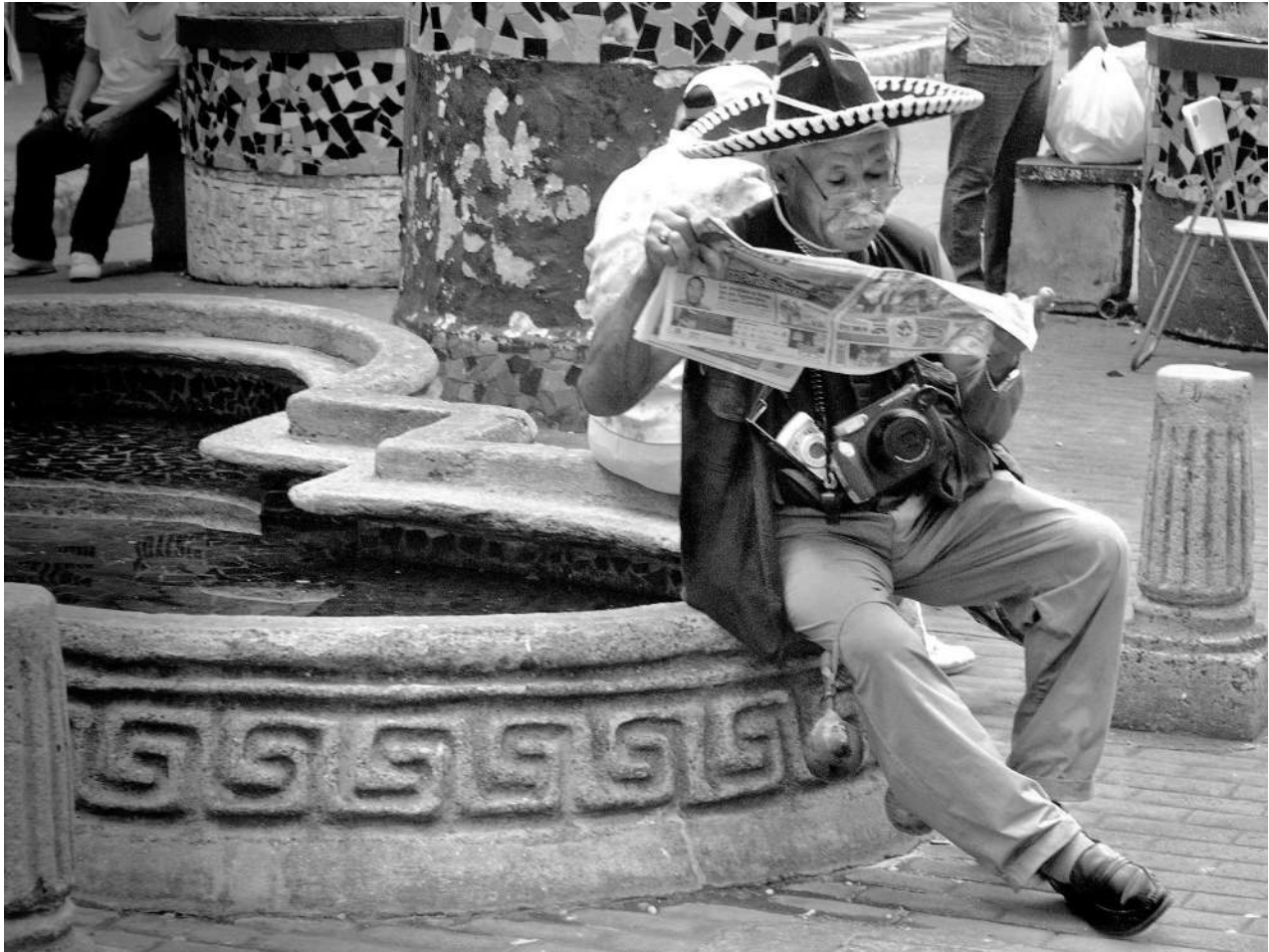


PHOTO BY OKKE ORNSTEIN

“ Nonviolent media would fortify human potential, not corporate profits. Publishers and broadcasters must serve the genuine needs of local communities rather than serve the “needs” of advertisers and investors.

It’s easy to complain about the mass media. They have no shortage of faults, particularly where serving corporate agendas and cheerleading the war machine are concerned. But as Buckminster Fuller famously said: “You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.”

What would a nonviolent media system look like? How could it make the existing corporate model obsolete?

We take up these questions recognizing that we’re just scratching the surface, but this might be the most critical call-to-action for those who want to build a new world: Let’s circle our wagons and build the nonviolent media to serve it. We propose the following guidelines.

Truth

Without truth, there could be no way to get very far in creating a nonviolent media system. Journalists and news producers in particular must vow to practice the highest standards of integrity—to tell the truth. The whole truth.

Service

Nonviolent media would fortify human potential, not corporate profits. Publishers and broadcasters must serve the genuine needs of local communities rather than serve the “needs” of advertisers and investors. Violence is not presented as inevitable, unresolvable or entertaining. “The sole aim of journalism should be service,” said Gandhi, whose own journalistic pursuits began with the newspaper *Indian Opinion* in South Africa. Service for the media means upholding the truth and acting as respectable watchdogs on behalf of public interests, which are everyone’s interests.

Inclusion

As Gloria Steinem said, “Humans are linked, not ranked.” Who is a credible authority on important issues? Whose stories must be told? Nonviolent media feature a wide range of voices, most notably those affected by policy—they are the experts in lived experiences. The changemakers serving communities and working to hold governments and businesses accountable are no longer ignored or marginalized by the press; they are deemed authorities on possibilities. TV, film, music and literature offer stories reflecting a genuine human diversity. It is prohibited to profit from political ads or exclude eligible candidates from televised debates because they represent an “outsider” opinion: truth comes from here.

Solutions

Emphasizing *solutions*, not wallowing in problems and failures, is a cornerstone in news and entertainment.

Problems are addressed as opportunities to develop and achieve peace, justice, climate protection, human connection. Conflict is seen as a doorway to greater potential, nonviolence as a purpose-infused reality. Interpretation, honestly owned, replaces “objectivity” so that media audiences see a bigger picture. We learn how violence might “work” in the short term but never work in the long run, and that nonviolence always works for a higher good somewhere down the road. Nonviolent movements, as Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan’s careful study shows (see their book *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*), can lead to greater democracy (even when they “fail”) than violent ones that seem to succeed.

Context

Nonviolence is historical—and it is making history, based on past and present struggles that are increasing in frequency and sophistication. Nonviolent media have a mature understanding that nonviolence is not by any means limited to protesting. Marches and other such highly visible actions are just the beginning—the work continues when people leave the streets. Besides, there’s an escalation curve to conflict: when addressed early on, negotiation and reason can resolve conflict. In the new-story world, media support the process of de-escalation, with no “us” vs. “them” polarization.

New Science

Positive psychology, meditation and embodiment practices are fully acknowledged for what they are: modalities to heal and self-realize, the bases of human cooperation and growth. Our media provide the information and stories that help us shift beyond ideas of separateness so we may regain our wholeness, as individuals and a society. As we are interconnected with all of life, dehumanization and exploitation are no longer accepted or tolerated as tools of profit and control. Respecting the sacredness, beauty and gift of life is the story behind any media story. ■

Join Campaign Nonviolence

Campaign Nonviolence is a long-term movement to mainstream nonviolence and to foster a culture of peace free from war, poverty, the climate crisis, and the epidemic of violence.

Campaign Nonviolence invites us to:

- Practice nonviolence toward ourselves, toward all others, and toward a world longing for peace, economic justice, environmental healing, and effective nonviolent solutions
- Explore, study, and unleash the principles and methods of nonviolence in our lives, our communities and our societies
- Connect the dots and join forces in the long-term struggle to abolish war, end poverty, reverse the climate crisis, and take a stand against all violence and for a culture of nonviolent options, and
- Discover and deepen the power of nonviolence, including the vision and tools for nonviolent change that Mohandas Gandhi, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and many other people and movements have activated for social and personal transformation.



"I fully support CAMPAIGN NONVIOLENCE and call upon friends across the U.S. to join this new movement to work for the abolition of war, poverty and environmental destruction and pursue with new vigor Dr. King's vision of a culture of peace and nonviolence. Together, we can create a new world of peace."

--Archbishop Desmond Tutu

GET INVOLVED BY:

✓ Taking Action September 20-27, 2015

In cities and towns in all 50 states, Campaign Nonviolence will march against violence and for a world of peace, justice and sustainability. During Campaign Nonviolence Week, we will connect the dots between war, poverty, climate change, and all forms of violence—and join forces to work for a culture of peace. Plan a march and other nonviolent actions such as vigils, rallies and more September 20-27, 2015. Mark your calendars for next year as well, September 18-25, 2016.

✓ Schedule a Speaker on Nonviolence

We have many thought-provoking and engaging speakers available to talk on the power of nonviolence, including Ken Butigan and John Dear. They are available for weekend workshops and lectures in your community.

✓ Hosting or Attending a CNV Skill-Building Workshop

This workshop offers participants the chance to learn about the Campaign Nonviolence vision and strategy, explore the power of nonviolence and how nonviolent change works, deepen skills for building Campaign Nonviolence locally, including organizing nonviolent actions in your area in September, and network and collaborate with others working for a better world.

✓ Using Our Many Books and other Nonviolence Resources

Pace e Bene has published numerous books to help individuals and groups study the power of nonviolent change, including *Engage: Exploring Nonviolent Living* and *The Nonviolent Life*. We've also got many helpful resources on our great website, CampaignNonviolence.org, where you'll find tools for building the campaign and suggestions on mainstreaming nonviolence. On our website you can also join our weekly email list to stay up to date on this growing movement and sign up for our daily email "This Nonviolent Life" to receive inspiring quotes and stories on living nonviolence day by day.

✓ Attending the CNV National Conference August 6-9, 2015 in New Mexico

Join us for the first national gathering of Campaign Nonviolence to energize, inspire and prepare us for the nonviolent actions across the U.S., September 20-27th, 2015 and to mark the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Learn more at CampaignNonviolence.org

LEARN MORE AT CAMPAIGNNONVIOLENCE.ORG

A JUST & SUSTAINABLE WORLD

We all want a more peaceful and equitable society.
Imagine what we can accomplish by strategically building a movement of movements together.

To facilitate that, Metta Center for Nonviolence created **Roadmap**, a set of tools to:

- **Develop strategic thinking toward the realization of campaign goals**
- **Connect with others**
- **Train in nonviolence principles**



Roadmap provides the unity, strategy and nonviolent power for an unstoppable movement.

Organizations are endorsing **Roadmap** and helping build the movement of movements. For details on how your organization, community group or even yourself can collaborate, email Metta Center for Nonviolence:

info@mettacenter.org

#PersonPower

