

Alternatives to War: Increasing Our Peacemaking Abilities

Saturday, May 31, 2003
9 am to 12 Noon
Christ Church Parish Hall
254 East Putnam Avenue Greenwich Ct.

“Global Nonviolence since 1980”

a slide presentation

by Michael True

Board Member of the International Peace Research Association
and recipient of 2002 Gandhi Award

and
respondent panelists

Yael Martin, Executive Director, Promoting Enduring Peace
Michael Hovey, Executive Director, Hague Appeal for Peace,
T. Haywood, co-chair, Alternatives to Violence Project, New York

followed by small group discussions to
encourage new initiatives for peace education
facilitated by Randy Nelson, Parenting for Peace

cosponsored by

Peace Action of Connecticut www.peaceaction.org

Promoting Enduring Peace www.pepeace.org

Greenwich Forum

Conscience and Peace Tax International www.cpti.ws

Session transcribed with editing by Rosa Packard, moderator

For further information: rpackard@optonline.net

Alternatives to War: Increasing Our Peacemaking Abilities

ROSA PACKARD

Peace is a group effort!

Thank you all for coming.

I'm Rosa Packard, I'm with Conscience and Peace Tax International, which is one of the sponsors of today's event : "Alternatives to War: Increasing our Peace Making Skills."

The other sponsors are

Peace Action (please raise your hands)

The Greenwich Forum (please raise your hands)

and Promoting Enduring Peace (please raise your hands)

Some of you raised your hands three times! That is good networking. Peacemaking includes networking and that is part of what we are here today to do. We will have an opportunity to hear from you about the peace work you are doing when we get to our small group discussions later.

Our guest speaker, Michael True, is going to be giving a slide show on Global Nonviolence since 1980 and then we will hear from our panelists. Michael Hovey has been doing work with peace studies through the United Nations. Yael Martin has been working with Promoting Enduring Peace. Some members of the audience will speak briefly of their work so we can get a picture of peacemaking being a mosaic of many actions.

Now its my great pleasure to introduce Michael True. Michael True gave a presentation on Thursday to about two hundred Greenwich High School students. Kalan Ross and Laura James here in the audience are interning with me and they helped organize that. He engaged them in a lot of energetic dialogue afterwards and I am hoping that will happen here. Michael is from Worchester Mass. He is professor emeritus with Assumption College there. He has served in many roles with the International Peace Research Association. His doctorate is in American Literature from Duke University some years ago. And he is the author of many books and articles, one of which is called "An Energy Field More Intense Than War." Another book that he coedited with Chaiwat Satha-Anand is called "Frontiers of Non Violence". I read Michael True's essay in that book last night. He summarizes many of his important thoughts in it. Copies of both books are on the literature table. Michael has taught at twenty colleges and universities in this country and around the world, including Nanjing University in the Peoples Republic of China, Columbia University, University of Hawaii, and Colorado

Alternatives to War: Increasing Our Peacemaking Abilities

College He has lectured on every continent. His awards include a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship, the Peace Studies Lifetime Achievement Award and the Gandhi Award. He has recently received a second Fulbright grant for work in India with five universities who are developing peace studies programs. Now you can welcome Michael True.

MICHAEL TRUE

It is a pleasure to be with you. Thursday was a real eye opener in many ways. It is extremely encouraging, to learn about the courses being offered to freshman students on nation building; imperialism, human rights and other central issues at Greenwich High School and to encounter the awareness of some of these students - I don't mean just their knowledge but their humanity, the concern they have not only for what is happening but for other people, even those who disagree with them.

I have been working quite a lot recently among high school students. In Brattleboro Vermont, Auburn High School and in Worcester where young seventeen year old students organized what was probably the best teach-in I have ever participated in. It was held at the Congregational Church and it reached out to students all over the city. Worcester is a city of about 170 thousand. We have four big high schools and so that was no small achievement. There were a variety of programs - on the history of Iraq - on meditation - my own work tends to center on the importance of language as an entree into our understanding of what real peacemaking is. So it was exciting to see some of the work being done here.

As Rosa knows, you won't get out of here without hearing a poem - As I stood up - this poem ran through my mind - I think it conveys the feeling I have much of the time in this present moment in our history. It's a feeling of great confusion, and anger, and uncertainty about what to do. I was talking with some of you who work at the United Nations and with the International Solidarity Movement and I was reminded how critical the times are, how frightening and discouraging. At the same time - It's spring. It's such a glorious time of year. Those tensions are part of my feelings. Denise Levertov has a beautiful poem called "Concurrence"- about what is going on at the same time.

"Each day's terror
Almost a kind of boredom
Madmen at the wheel
And stepping on the gas
And the brakes
No good
And each day
Morning glories
One sometimes two

Alternatives to War: Increasing Our Peacemaking Abilities

Bloom
Flecked with magenta
Each opening within
For the first summer."

What I would like to talk about today is, "What do we do with those feelings? How do we reconcile those opposites? How can we bring our sense of glory and beauty and the joy of the world to our work to reconstruct the social order?" Each of us has something to contribute and all that work is important.

People in the peace movement sometimes say if everyone could just get their act together and all move in the same direction then you would have some effect. I feel that's not the way things work.

Yes, we hope we are all cooperating and we understand one another and we are sensitive and support others in what ever work they are doing.

But its really important that we are all doing different things, because you can't construct a culture of peace unless people are making efforts at building peace at every level, from the family to the international order. Its really a spectrum and often the skills in solving conflict in the family are actually the kinds of skills that we need at the international level.

We know that, now, after Rivera's book on the psychology of foreign policy. We know that sometimes even at international meetings, the most difficult things to decide can be who will sit at what table and in what order. There are small things sometimes that can have a very large effect on the way in which we resolve or don't resolve conflict. That is what peace studies is all about. That is the contribution of this new discipline which since 1965 has for the first time really looked at the meaning of conflict.

Conflict is inevitable. Conflict is good. Sometimes my colleagues say, "Oh you're trying to get rid of conflict?" No. We will always have conflict. Oftentimes out of conflict come exciting things:
new dimensions, new relationships. What we don't have a lot of the time, are the skills, the strategies for resolving conflict. Because of that we must go on with great dedication and inordinate effectiveness.

We are here to talk about those different aspects of peacemaking.

Locally, for example: I hope that, here, the YMCA has its very interesting program, called "A Week Without Violence." We have an active one is Worchester. People have worked together: the police department, the schools and the medical school - all meeting together to think about how we can build a peace culture in our own city.

Alternatives to War: Increasing Our Peacemaking Abilities

The work that Yael Martin is doing in Promoting Enduring Peace: that's making a connection between the local community and the international community. Promoting Enduring Peace, you know, has been involved in citizen diplomacy for well over fifty years and has taken people most recently to Cuba and to Vietnam, building those bridges so that we don't think of people in those other countries as different from us but we look at the similarities. It's a wonderful way of achieving that kind of concreteness that a Polish poet named very well when he wrote about citizens of the world:

"We are bound to each other
by unknown threads
a stitch of red corpuscles
sewing up the globe,"

So very concrete. I'm sure you've experienced that when you've been in various parts of the world.

And of course there is Peace Action's work in community education.
And there is The Alternatives to Violence Project - what an important initiative that is - taking nonviolence training into the prisons for about the past forty years.

And of course Rosa Packard has been deeply involved in that as well as the Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund - working for conscientious objection to paying military taxes - like conscientious objection to the draft.

All these initiatives are important. My own work at the local level includes being on the board of Disnus House. Disnus was one of the prisoners that were crucified with Jesus. So, in Tennessee, they started houses where prisoners on their release can live together, and get help with their jobs. It's a model. We need thousands of these all over the country. Working for this has dramatized for me the importance of peacemaking at the local level as our prison population increases, and increases.

I have been working for sometime with the International Peace Research Association Foundation. IPRA was founded in 1965 by Kenneth and Elise Boulding and Herbert Kellman who works at Harvard and by many other peacemakers from all over the world who realized that neither the US or the Soviet Union were creating peace - just power plays for dominance. So they began to look at how you really construct peace. So the IPRA Foundation gives small grants for initiatives in peace research and peace education and to projects in such places as Uganda, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh. That is some of my own work that I bring to these remarks.

We are here to celebrate our different groups and to recommit ourselves to the work of nonviolent peacemaking. I would like to seize that word, "peacemaking" as the central

Alternatives to War: Increasing Our Peacemaking Abilities

word. Peace has to be made. It has to be constructed. It has to be built. That is a new insight. We used to think that peace was something that happened between wars but now we know differently. The kind of sophistications, the kind of resources, the number of people that will be essential to build a real peace movement --in this instance we have to imitate what is done by those who make war--. There are millions of them. They are very sophisticated and very smart and have enormous resources. Its kind of overwhelming . We have to develop the same kind of sophisticated skills to make peace that have been used to make war and have gotten us into the problems that we are in.

Its frustrating that when people say, "We are working for world peace." It sounds so incredibly vague, especially when associated with a picture of a dove. It's one of the most unfortunate symbols of peace. It must have been thought of by somebody in the Pentagon. The dove is the one that came out after all the destruction - in the Bible - when everything is torn apart - the flood and all that - and then the dove comes out. I don't want to wait on the dove.

I want to do use what the UN Decade for Peace and Nonviolence suggests as a symbol - displayed here in front of you. I think its wonderful. David Adams had to sort through thousands of applications for the symbol (most of them doves) to get this symbol. Its all about power. It's an exchange of energy: when you feel a connection, a real communication. It has to be an exchange. One of us has to listen. Both of us have to listen. I have to listen more. In the quiet sometimes, attending to what the other is saying,- we begin to clarify. We had a wonderful discussion like that last night. We all parted friends despite "O you are completely wrong about that." I love that! I grew up in a household where there was a lot of that kind of discussion among people who loved one another so I find it very nourishing. As Auden used to say: "How do I know what I think till I see what I said." I think that's true. We are trying to think our way through these very complex things.

I wanted to speak about the UN Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence which I think is an extremely useful document. It comes out of experience. It is taken from history. They give us six things that are essential to building a culture of peace and they cite specific instances. It took nine months to get it through the UN. It took a hundred meetings to get 169 nations to agree on the principal components of what a culture of peace would look like. .

This visualization talks about the energy described in a line from a poem by Denise Levertov:

"Peace a presence, an energy field more intense than war."

Energy is power and where does that power come from? It comes from us: in six general ways that the UN Decade says are essential for a culture of peace:

Alternatives to War: Increasing Our Peacemaking Abilities

A first essential is that power be defined not in terms of violence but by active nonviolence as represented by proven successes in bringing about social change. You'll see some slides of these - for example: the overthrow of Marcos in the Philippines or the democratic uprising in China. I happened to be in China in '89. I taught there on several previous occasions. It was one of the most extraordinary experiences you can imagine. These students learned nonviolence on their feet. China doesn't have a tradition of nonviolence unlike the US. We have a very rich tradition which a lot of times is buried, but it is there.

A second essential is that people can be mobilized for justice not to defeat somebody else but to build understanding and tolerance and solidarity. Peacemaking is about altering relationships. Which is what the International Solidarity Movement is about. Altering relationships between Israelis and Palestinians is very, very hard work. But we've seen it work, if you know about the incredible work being done by various peace groups in Israel between Israelis and Palestinians.

One of my favorite examples of liberation from the oppressor is the elimination of apartheid in South Africa. This says something amazing about that particular culture - I don't think the US knows enough about the Justice and Reconciliation Commissions. I know there are a lot of problems still but to even have the imagination to think about that possibility, as Bishop Tutu and others have done, is remarkable.

A third essential is that we have to do away with the hierarchical authority that characterizes the culture of war and emphasize a democratic process that engages people in decision making at all levels and empowers them. That's what nonviolence is about - its about empowerment. Of course we saw such extraordinary examples of that in Solidarity in Poland which began as a small labor movement and then ultimately became a force in the fall of the Berlin Wall and the liberation of those under Soviet dominance. And of course the civil rights movement in our own country. I had the good fortune to teach in an all black college by accident in 1961 and learned about nonviolence from students on the streets of Durham, North Carolina where blacks would sit in movie theaters to desegregate them. It was one of the formative experiences of my life.

A fourth essential is that secrecy and control of information by the powerful be replaced by participatory democracy. What we have seen in this country is the centralization of information and the use of secrecy and lying to destabilize us and to project these lies through Fox news and others of the main media. Of course we have to find out what lies they are telling us but our source of information must be alternative sources such as the internet and or such publications as Peacework, the monthly magazine of the American Friends Service Committee, an astonishing achievement that's been going since 1972. I saw the power of sharing information in China. I had been there in 1981 when there wasn't even a student newspaper at Nanjing University which is one of the five major universities in China. Everything had to be done on the bulletin board and they used the

Alternatives to War: Increasing Our Peacemaking Abilities

bulletin board well. During the democratic uprising there were loud speakers blasting out over the whole Nanjing campus from Beijing University and other major universities all through China. And of course they used the internet and faxes. So these students, many of whom had gone to high school together, were in touch with one another. They were building a movement by the free association of ideas - by ending secrecy. One of the strongest speeches I heard in opposition to the government at that time was by a member of the Congress Party on the campus of Nanjing University. So, the end of secrecy!

A fifth essential is that the male dominated culture be transformed into a culture acknowledging and building upon the special skills that women bring to the peace building process, with women at the center of the institutions emerging from that. I know about the history of nonviolence and women have been absolutely central since the abolitionist and women's movement from the 19th century. This simply acknowledges something that has already happened. - power sharing rather than a male dominated society.

Finally the last and sixth essential is to overcome the exploitation that characterizes the culture of war. For instance, the centralization of wealth: one percent of our population in the US owns forty percent of the wealth and that's further centralized through the war industry because you have the millions, that could be spent on housing, health care and all these other things, spent and earned and centered in a few people who make enormous amounts of money by making weapons of mass destruction. That's what happens in a culture of war . It includes things like slavery and colonialism and all kinds of exploitation. This of course has been addressed by the Global Action Network , the Spirit of Seattle, the forgiveness of debts and so on.

So those are the six requirements of a culture of peace, well defined and not just vague statements but based on historical incidents that provide us with examples. I hope you know Elise Boulding's book "Cultures of Peace." She is one of the cofounders of IPRA, an astonishing figure who has given us some of the language for this vision. She says " We must think of it as a continuous process of nonviolent problem solving and the creation of institutions that meet the needs of all people. Isn't that great! Simple but precise! "Peace is the way", as A J Muste said. Its a process of redoing and rethinking and realigning ourselves as community.

Let me conclude with a few slides. Each slide suggests a book - I have a bibliography on the literature table that will provide you with references.

This is a slide of a massive demonstration against nuclear weapons, Remember a million people gathered in New York in 1982. This is a community of nonviolence. We need to dispel misconceptions. Nonviolence is a philosophy but it is most of all a strategy - a method of resisting injustice and humiliation of resolving

Alternatives to War: Increasing Our Peacemaking Abilities

conflict and of bringing about social change without killing. It requires tremendous skill. If you haven't had nonviolence training I recommend it.

If you look back to 1980 at the modest little beginning of those women in Greenham Common who gathered at the installation where the US was sending nuclear weapons to England which of course would be for use on Europe. Everybody knew that. They just gathered around and put their hands up and circled. They stayed there and they didn't leave. What did it achieve? Well! It led to a mass movement. Millions of people demonstrated in Paris and London and Amsterdam. I was in the Netherlands when seven hundred thousand people demonstrated against nuclear weapons in 1983. We did get an agreement between Gorbachev and Reagan. Who would have thought it! We need to remember our victories.

Solidarity in Poland began very modestly and enlisted all kinds of interesting allies. The fact that they happened to have a Polish Pope turned out to be a great advantage because every time he went to visit there would be thousands of people and this was organizing for Solidarity. As Gandhi said, if you initiate something, its amazing the people that will pop up and come and support what you are doing.

The Fall of the Berlin Wall. Many of you are almost as old as I am. What do you think would have happened if you had walked up to someone in 1972 and said "The dominance of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe is all going to change nonviolently? " If you had said that in 1972, people would have thought you were absolutely out of your mind. And yet there it is: The Fall of the Berlin Wall. Now this didn't happen accidentally. There were people working in Eastern Germany for thirty years to help something like this happen. So the work is there. Sometimes it's not visible.

The liberation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. There is a brilliant essay by one of Gene Sharp's students on the liberation of Lithuania and the ridding of that country of Soviet troops. Again people going into the streets. I hope you all know Gene Sharp. He is one of the great geniuses of nonviolence. I have his new pamphlet called "There Are Realistic Alternatives" where he lists 198 methods of nonviolent action.

In Asia - I have been talking so far about Europe - but you can spin the globe and put your finger down almost anywhere on it and find an important nonviolent movement.

Here is the Philippines and the movement that overthrew Marcos and threw out the American bases - a movement that was initiated with strong support from the Catholic Church where much of the training in nonviolence was done.

In Korea - I don't have time to tell the full story - This mother's husband is in jail. She takes her children and places herself in front of the troops which are protecting the

Alternatives to War: Increasing Our Peacemaking Abilities

government which has just taken away all the rights of the workers. There was a massive nonviolent movement and the rights were all restored.

We hear a lot about Tiananmen Square. We did not hear that there were over three hundred cities involved in the democratic uprising.

I love this slide because you see the students holding hands. These were people who did not know about nonviolence and they learned it in about five minutes on their feet. They are holding hands so people would not come in and disrupt them and resort to violence. In the meantime they were pouring into the factories and leafleting because there is a lot tension between the

three percent of the population in China that are educated in university and the rest of the people. So there is not a natural alliance between students and the rest of the people.

They had to build that. And they did it. This slide shows the dean of foreign languages. This man was in exile for six years during the cultural revolution. These were people who had suffered inordinately.

This was a liturgy of celebration. They tried to repress it and many people were killed, workers especially, but it was still a high moment and it changed China fundamentally.

The democratic resistance in Burma.

South Africa.: Steven Biko - the whole weight of the anti apartheid movement falls on his shoulders when Nelson Mandela went to jail,

Eventually Mandela is released from prison and becomes head of the country and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission experiments with rebuilding the country.

Latin America:

- Les Madres poured into the main plaza in Buenos Aires and would not leave and eventually the government had to respond;
- In Brazil, Don Camera in the eighties.
- The Mayan people in Chiapas.
- The communities of peace in Columbia.

Even in the United States:

- Millions protested nuclear bombs.
- Eighty instances of Plowshares actions disarming nuclear weapons since 1980.

Alternatives to War: Increasing Our Peacemaking Abilities

- Five thousand manuals were distributed in Seattle as part of training in nonviolence for the demonstration against the World Trade Organization.
- Kathy Kelly of Voices of the Wilderness taking medical supplies to Iraq.
- Nonviolent actions at The School of Americas where we train the militaries of Latin America in torture.

So here is what People Power looks like. We need to think of ourselves working in own community building a culture of peace but also as part of the international movement. I hope this gives you a brief suggestion of how rich the tradition is. As the poem I mentioned said:

"We are bound to each other by an unknown thread, a stitch of red corpuscles sewing up the globe".

Arundati Roy spoke at Riverside Church and at the end of it she was talking about imperialism and democracy. She said to the people of the United States. "You have a rich tradition of resistance and of peacemaking. If you don't know that you need to read Howard Zinn's "People's History of the United States." Its a great achievement of the peace movement that there is such resistance to the ultra-patriotic climate that is prevailing in the US today and we have much to build on as we develop initiatives to restore this country and redirect our priorities. She contradicts the President of the United States, as she says "United States is not a great nation but you are potentially a great people and history offers each person a chance to be constructors of peace. Carpe Diem. Seize the Day."

ROSA PACKARD

Thank you Michael - you managed to get a great deal said in a short time. We want to continue that model of saying the important things in a short time. Each of our panelists is going to have ten minutes to respond to some of the things Michael has said.

Our third panelist has not been able to join us and I will call on some others who are here to fill that gap. After we hear from the panelists we will have time for announcements and then Randy Nelson is going to help us have small group discussions at our tables about how we ourselves want to increase our peacemaking skills. I am hoping we can stimulate each other in that regard.

Yael Martin has been Executive Director of Promoting Enduring Peace, Her degree in International Relations is from the University of California, Berkeley. She speaks English, French and Hebrew. She lived with the Muzena .

Alternatives to War: Increasing Our Peacemaking Abilities

Yael Martin

Michael True just spoke of Arundati Roy's talk at Riverside Church. I would like to say that the whole text of her talk is on the Promoting Enduring Peace webpage at www.pepeace.org.

Following along on Michael's talk on nonviolence, I would like to tell you about another aspect of peacemaking which I am just learning about. It is called compassionate listening. We peace people are usually talking to each other or to the press and it is usually easy when we agree on issues to listen to each other and there are some of us in the peace making community who are trying this new approach which I think is very challenging and interesting and crucial to our efforts on just about every level.

There have been people in history who can listen compassionately naturally but they usually have to have the character of a saint and I am sure not one of them. Most of us aren't. I think a lot of us grew up in households where whoever shouted the loudest won the argument. I think we would agree that this isn't the best way to win the hearts and minds of other people or persuade them of anything and if it doesn't work with our families and friends then it sure doesn't work with our adversaries.

So we have to try something else. What we have to do is listen to our perceived enemies. What we are looking for is reconciliation and it is hard because it means that two or more parties who have been part of a conflict have to reestablish their relationship with one another. As we have seen in so many conflicts whether national, religious or even personal, the hatred mistrust, stereotyping and demonization of the other side of the conflict is very hard to overcome. It makes it almost impossible to reinstate a friendly relationship.

But what we have to recognize is that all sides of the conflict have at least part of the truth. And all sides have some sort of underlying emotional fear or wound that is beneath their anger and their violence. And if we accept that these two ideas are true, then we can be open to listening more compassionately even to our enemies.

So what is compassionate listening exactly? Carol Roschinski, a wonderful woman who conducted a seminar I attended recently, is the author of "Listening With The Heart". She defines compassionate listening as "the quality of listening which creates a safe container for people to be free to express themselves and to go to the level of their deep concerns. It simply and profoundly means empathizing with condition and feelings of people who have been affected by events and circumstances sometimes of their own doing and sometimes beyond their control. It has everything to do with caring for the state of another human being. It is a dynamic process for this specific purpose.

Alternatives to War: Increasing Our Peacemaking Abilities

The purpose is to resolve conflict in a peaceful way. This requires what is called in Jewish tradition "intention": what we will do is only as good as our intention in doing it. So here we are searching for a way to bring conflicting sides together, to promote dialogue where their shared humanity and feelings can become evident. Thomas Merton says, The deepest level of communication is not communication but communion. This is the peace that we seek. So compassionate listening means to listen to someone's story and gently move into the essence, the deepest needs of the speaker, seeing past the words that he or she speaks, or shouts, in some cases, and looking into the heart of the person.

Sometimes it is easy to discern a person's feelings. Sometimes it takes more time, more patient listening, to get to the heart of it. The break through, or the relief, comes when the speaker realizes that the listener hears what's being said. Compassionate listening is completely nonjudgmental. That's the hard part. It has nothing to do with laying blame on anyone. It's not about fixing it or him or her. It's about giving the person a safe speaking space where the listener is fully present with them and is focused on what the speaker is saying.

One of the first things that a compassionate listener in training needs to do is to take note of his or her inner conflicts. We all have them: negative habits or notions, something we need to overcome. It is important to look at these things because if we can identify them then we can put them aside when we are trying to engage in compassionate listening. For example I know that when someone tells me their problems I want to leap in with an instant solution. Oh, I know how to solve that. You could do this. It's very hard to listen without doing that. Part of it is I just want to help but it's partly our "can do" problem solving culture. But it doesn't help the person who is trying to just get it out. This compassionate listening is more disciplined than that. Carol points out that when we notice our inner conflicts, it disarms them of their power over us and it also helps us to be more compassionate when we notice them in other people.

It's important to be sure that the listener understands what the speaker is trying to say, what they mean. Making assumptions can sabotage an ultimate understanding. Sometimes it's helpful to ask questions like "Can you say more about that?" or "Can you help me understand that a little bit better." Questions are not for satisfying the listener's curiosity or for showing off how much the listener knows. Less is more, in this case.

And it's important to interrupt as little as possible. By the way, being quiet and listening to someone else hold forth doesn't mean that you agree with them, necessarily. It just means that whatever position you have, you decide to put it aside and give them the floor, give them time to empty their hearts. Carol notes that in searching for clarity at the deepest levels we are listening to the grievances of both sides of the conflict and we can communicate these grievances to the other including the feelings of suffering. Suffering is a common denominator in any conflict. Both sides are suffering. When all parties recognize their own suffering and can acknowledge that fact that they have afflicted it on

Alternatives to War: Increasing Our Peacemaking Abilities

the other side and then the process of reconciliation can proceed. This is not an easy process and it takes a significant amount of inner strength to acknowledge that one person or one group may have afflicted pain on someone else.

The compassionate listener can also use a technique which is called reflective listening. It enhances understanding and empathy with the speaker. It means restating what the speaker has said and playing it back to make sure that the listener has gotten it just right. It pulls together the important ideas and facts and helps the speaker evaluate his or her own feeling by hearing them said in someone else's words. It's like the quote Michael brought us:

"How do I know what I think until I see what I say?" That's what we are trying to help them do here. It also emphasizes to the speaker, once again, that the listener really appreciates the speaker's attempt to share his or her feelings and views. So using gentle, leading questions and reflective questions can get the conversation a long way.

But there are certainly challenges. One is working with or around anger. It can be off putting or even frightening. But anger is simply emotional energy that all of us experience at sometime and means that something is wrong. We need to listen to it and to know that we don't have to act on it. We can recognize that the denial of angry feelings that leads to violence. Most importantly, as Wolchinsky points out, when we have uncovered this energy of violence and see it for what it is, we find that it is a mask for fear. And that takes us back to getting back to the heart of the matter, or rather the heart of the speaker. Recognizing and empathizing with their fear goes a long way towards disarming, calming and healing.

I was happy to know there a lot of these compassionate listening projects going on in many parts of the world . One of them is Alaskans Listening to Alaskans because there are conflicts between the native peoples and the fishing industry. There is a Daughter Sister project. There is a whaling project. There is a Southern Voice for Poverty listening project. There is a Jewish/ Palestine living room dialogue group.

But probably the best known compassionate listening project is the one that has been going to Israel / Palestine since about 1990 and it is headed up by Lila Green. She describes the project as being dedicated to fostering conflict transformation and reconciliation through the cultivation and practice of deep listening skills. They have made impressive inroads in extremely difficult territory. Not only have they been able to bring Israelis and Palestinians together to practice dialogue with each other, they have established a network of Palestinians and Israelis who continue teaching in their own communities and who find ways to bring both communities together. Lia notes that The Compassionate Listening project is respected among both Palestinians and Israelis because the delegates are there to listen and not to give advice. That's the big complaint about everybody else that comes in. They want to tell us what to do. But when people come in and just listen, it's done a lot of good. The Compassionate Listening Project

Alternatives to War: Increasing Our Peacemaking Abilities

meets with people across the political and religious spectrum. Often they will be asked what others are like and really think. So even before they get together the Compassionate Listeners have started building bridges for them and making a significant contribution to their dialogue.

They also train people, hold workshops and make materials. It works on every level from the family to the nation state. This world is tense and dangerous so it is important to do this on every level and aspect of building peace. It's sort of like changing the world one person at a time. If the prize is peace and understanding and a positive atmosphere, I think it is worth the effort. Thank you.

ROSA PACKARD

Unfortunately we don't have T. Haywood here today. He is co-chair of the Alternatives To Violence Project in the New York State area.

I want to tell you a little about his work and then call some people here who work with AVP and see if they will add to that so you will have an understanding of another project available to us for increasing our peacemaking skills. T. Woodward has a Masters in Social Work from New York Theological Seminary that he got when he was in prison. He was in prison for twenty five years. While he was there he became part of the Alternatives to Violence Project, a nonviolence training for prisoners. Outside trained volunteers and inside trained prisoners for teams to facilitate the workshops. He became exceptionally skilled at this work.

T. Haywood works with the Episcopal Church's Social Services Agency in New York, providing educational support for released prisoners in a transitional program, similar in many ways to the one Michael True mentioned. T. Haywood has also used the AVP approach in group homes for youth, both boys and girls, and has taught these skills to staff as well as young people. I hope you can hear this charismatic speaker another time.

I had the opportunity of working with the Alternatives to Violence Project in the seventies in its early years. Quakers in New York State were asked by life prisoners in Greenhaven Prison to help with some workshops for youth at risk. Quakers had been doing some work to address racial tensions in New York City at the time and called upon Bernard Lafayette to join them in responding. Bernard Lafayette was working with the Martin Luther King Institute. He was and is one of the great civil rights leaders and of course that was exciting for the folks at Greenhaven, many of whom were African American. They developed a good program.

I got involved a few years later when they were extending it. Before I ask John Perry and ... the Cypers - Isn't that who that is over there? Yes! - to add to this introduction, I want to say that I am aware that AVP is all over the world now. Its a volunteer program with people teaching people who teach people. Current AVP international work that I am most aware of is in Rwanda where there has been terrible suffering from genocide.

Alternatives to War: Increasing Our Peacemaking Abilities

Working with an American Friends Service Committee grant for expenses, through Friends Peace Teams, AVP volunteers are training released prisoners accused at the lower level of involvement in genocide. The higher level, the leaders are being tried for war crimes by the international court. These others, thousands of them, have been languishing in prisons for five, six, seven years without trial. The judges assigned will be local elders, a revival of the traditional justice system. AVP is training both judges and prisoners - an experiment in restorative justice.

I would like to add that affirmation another important peacemaking skill. Michael True demonstrated this to us. He affirmed all of us, our groups, our particularities, the high school. He is gifted at affirmation. Affirmation is one of the first steps in AVP training: holding up those things which are good and are true. A second step is compassionate listening - that Yael Martin has described so well. Then comes trust building, cooperation and problem solving - all in a series of AVP workshops.

John Perry would you like to come up now and tell us what is going on in AVP -and then Rudy Cypser- take about three minutes each. Wing it if you would.

This is John Perry who has come from a long way. He used to be a member of Wilton Friends Meeting and now lives in upstate Connecticut.

JOHN PERRY

I really should devote all of my time to letting Rudy Cypser talk - his experience is vast.

What's going on in Connecticut? The Connecticut Department of Correction finds the Alternatives to Violence Project a challenge. See one of things we do is try to empower the inside facilitators to run their own show. We train them. They train each other. They do the job. Things go better. This is challenging to the Department of Correction because they aren't in control. Imagine you are in a group now. You've come together because you want to take AVP. You think it will look good on your parole record and perhaps benefit you a bit. You've heard good things. You come in and you look at your neighbor like this

(models defensive, suspicious and withdrawn posture.)

“I see you in the hallway. You don't speak to me. I saw you in the rec yard. I don't like your face.”

That's what this is saying.

Alternatives to War: Increasing Our Peacemaking Abilities

You know what? It's in your high schools too, isn't it? You know what? It's in your families, too. What about those cousins of yours who aren't really gracious at the family gathering at Thanksgiving.

Right? And what do they want when there is an argument? They want to be right. Know how to defend your self? I'm right. I know I'm right. There is an exercise in AVP called "I messages" so you own your own problem. And so you don't say, "You're wrong. You did it. Mom, he hit me first." There is an exercise that deals with that.

There is another exercise that Rosa referred to: compassionate listening and that Yael talked about. I want you to turn to your neighbor and in a couple of seconds tell them one or two things that your neighbor can repeat. Publicly if necessary. It really takes three minutes but we don't have that amount of time. So just pick your neighbor, decide who your neighbor is and who is "one" and who is "two". I will say "ones" tell "twos" - 30 seconds, something about themselves- and then I'll say "twos" tell "ones". This going to take one minute. The person who is speaking speaks and the other person does not speak. The other person listens intently so they can repeat if necessary.

Ready? One's to twos. Go.

Stop! Change. Twos talk to Ones. Thirty seconds. One thing about yourself.

Stop! Twos speak to Ones and tell what you heard.

Stop! Ones talk to Twos and tell them what you heard.

What do you think is the average reaction of a man in prison, or a woman in prison, or a boy in high school or a girl in high school, or a family in a community workshop when they have done this exercise and listened to each other for three minutes and then played back.

What do you think is the reaction?

AUDIENCE:

creates trust; surprise; feeling affirmed; wanting to hear more; depends on what is said; connection.

JOHN PERRY :

Let me tell you what is the most common reaction and I think it is really sad.

"This is the first time I have really been listened to. "

If you don't think that's true, go into prison, take a basic workshop and see what is happening all around you. These people feel empowered because they are being listened

Alternatives to War: Increasing Our Peacemaking Abilities

to. It is overwhelming. There is another exercise that follows on where they listen to each other. Then there are two more exercises about listening. Its very important but only one aspect of the program.

The AVP program is in the maximum security facility north of Hartford. It has been in the Department of Corrections at Somers. Due to the energy of two or three people, it has just opened up in the women's facility in Niantic and it is changing peoples minds. I have been New Haven where we did a community workshop. They have learned to give workshops but there is nothing for prisoners when they get out. There is a program in New York for released prisoners called Landing strip. We need such resources to take it further so they can continue their training on the outside.

RUDY CYPSEK

That was an excellent glimpse of AVP.

It was twenty years ago that my wife Betty and I took our first AVP training. Rosa was the trainer for our group. I have watched her over the years. I take great joy in that.

I would like to add another exercise to those that John described. We arrange them in circles so they have opportunity to talk with one another and we give them very explicit instructions. You must have eye contact. We don't want you to talk. We want your facial expression and body language to communicate your intense concern for the person that is speaking. So the ability to convey respect for the other person is woven into the preparation we give them.

So we have this exercise with two people talking to one another.

Then they are shifted to form another pair. So step by step they form six or seven different pairs. So they are meeting different personalities, some personalities that they had literally feared or hated. The early relationship was terrible. And at the end in the conversation we hear, " I thought he was an SOB but he says I'm mean. " They realize their commonalty. They begin warming and opening up. Its a process. Its like a flower. You see the flower gradually opening up. You see them taking pride in themselves and being respectful to other people.

These exercises have been developed over many years by the communication committee of AVP. They are really remarkable. I'll tell you a couple of the other exercises. They all encourage listening, compassion and empathy. In the empathy exercise, we gather a group of five or six people. Everybody has a problem that they need to share with somebody. So they write down their problem but do not sign their names. They fold it up and put it in the center. Each person picks somebody else's problem. Then says this is my problem. I am now walking in the shoes of that person. Here is what I will have to do to solve that problem. Then others in the group chime in. So there is a sharing of that

Alternatives to War: Increasing Our Peacemaking Abilities

problem. Then they go around and each person has that experience of having their problem is shared by others. This is a unique experience for many people.

Another exercise I like very much is when groups of five people are given pieces of a puzzle. The ground rules are different than usual. No talking. You may not take pieces. You may not ask for pieces. You have to wait for someone to help you who realizes that you need a piece. Nobody wins until we all win. Everybody becomes concerned about the needs of every other person. It works through until every body has the right pieces to solve the puzzle.

So these exercises are designed to be challenging, to encourage them to participate and then to realize what happened. We always get them in a circle and ask "What happened." The lights begin to go on. They begin to feel like a really different person.

It has been a wonderful experience for those of us who volunteer. You can imagine the differences that John mentioned. Betty and I are of course white and middle class. Of the twenty people, in the workshop eighteen are usually African American or Hispanic and the attitudes are of distrust, of deep seated anger. Many people have tremendous burdens. Betty and I do a lot of work in the women's prison in Taconic. The data shows that sixty or seventy percent have been severely abused. Much of it is sexual abuse and a lot is physical abuse. Many have dysfunctional families, or have been living on the street. Their family members have been using alcohol or drugs. They have lived in this environment most of their lives. We provide a safe environment where they can become themselves. They realize they are somebody worthwhile. Affirmation, listening, compassion, empathy are things they have to experience and they do experience them in one exercise after another over three days.

ROSA PACKARD

Rudy, one of the nicer things about being a teacher is to know your student has surpassed you. Thank you for all you do.

Michael Hovey is next. He has taught peace studies at Iona College. He has recently served as the executive director of the Hague Appeal for Peace. Now he is planning work with the Coalition for the International Criminal Court in order to connect its efforts with the work of peace studies programs around the world. He has a few other irons in the fire both past and present. He represents Pax Christi at the United Nations particularly on issues of conscientious objection. His dissertation for Syracuse University is on that subject and Michael True and I are here to ask him to please finish that soon so we can read it. He has served on the board of the Center on Conscience and War in Washington. When Michael is finished I want to give Jim Hamilton time to follow up on that theme because he is doing Connecticut work with the G.I. Rights Hotline.

Alternatives to War: Increasing Our Peacemaking Abilities

MICHAEL HOVEY

If I were sitting where you are sitting right now, I would be thinking "Oh God I hope he's short." I made my notes on the back of a business card so it will be brief. Just a word about the two organizations that Rosa mentioned. Hague Appeal for Peace is an international peace and justice organization based at the UN.

We are hearing this morning a whole variety of ways to work for peace. One of the major programs the Hague Appeal has begun in the past year is a pilot program in four countries: Peru, Cambodia, Niger and Albania - representing four of the major continents. In cooperation with the United Nations. We are going into communities which have been disarmed of small arms (pistols, rifles, machine guns, hand held weapons) by the United Nations. We follow up with programs of nonviolent conflict resolution. In other words when people get rid of their weapons, what do they do instead to resolve their conflicts. We identified peace educators and trained them. They then identify local peace educators and train them. We are hoping this will be a model for the UN and other groups to continue. We keep hearing the word alternative. As Mike said, we will always have conflicts, what are the alternatives to violence in dealing with them.

The Coalition for the International Criminal Court is a group of non governmental organizations that were responsible for pressing for the creation of the International Criminal Court. Because the United States government has been adamantly opposed to the creation of this court you may not have heard a lot about it. Basically what was created last July 1st is a permanent Nuremberg war crimes tribunal. Since W.W.II when we had the Nuremberg Court and the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal and recently several ad hoc tribunals to try war criminals, there has been an effort to create a permanent court to try people who commit war crimes, crimes against peace and crimes against humanity. That court was established last July against the virulent opposition of the US government which is afraid that our own soldiers will be brought before the court or our political leaders will be brought before the court. The fact is over 90 countries have ratified the Rome treaty. The court exists. The eighteen judges were elected three months ago. The chief prosecutor was elected last month. The court is up an running and as of July 1st 2003 any crime of that nature committed can be brought before it.

(Audience applause.)

My remarks are based around two stories.

As Rosa mentioned - I have been at Iona College in New Rochelle for about eight years. Until last year I was the coordinator for peace and justice education. About two years ago there was an open house for new full time students and their families and I was

Alternatives to War: Increasing Our Peacemaking Abilities

staffing my table for peace and justice studies. I had my very nice name tag on that Iona makes for everybody with the school seal that said “Coordinator of Peace and Justice Studies.”

A mother came up with her daughter. She was about eye level with my name tag. She looked at it and she said, “Peace and Justice Studies, what is that?”

“Well,” I said, “its the study of peace. We study peace here. ”

She said, “Coordinator, what does that mean?”

“It means I am in charge of peace and justice.”

“Well, you are certainly not doing a very good job.”

(Laughter)

That was before the war.

I believe that peace education is key. I am a Navy veteran and I served in the Navy during the Vietnam War - not in Vietnam but in the war. I was trained with our tax money by the US Government how to kill people. Literally. I spent a morning learning how to fire an M1 rifle and a 45 caliber pistol and I did quite well at it. That experience and a later experience visiting Nagasaki when I was stationed in Japan brought me to the point of becoming a conscientious objector. Upon my honorable discharge from the United States Navy as a conscientious objector in 1975, I came up with what I thought was a brilliantly unique idea of studying peace. Of course it turns out people had been doing that for quite some time and I joined that movement.

Since that time when I meet with people and explain that I am a peace educator -I usually get rolled eyes. “Oh my God, what a totally ridiculous quest you are involved in. Don’t you realize there will never be peace there will always be war. How can you study peace?” Peace, some people believe, is what happens when we don’t have war. I like to compare the study of peace to two other academic endeavors. First of all, I point out, we do have institutions that study war. One of them isn’t too far from here at West Point. We purposely and systematically study how to prosecute war. What works. What doesn’t work. What were failures? What were successes? This recent Gulf War will be the subject of a number of courses at these academies in the next few years.

My question is why not study peace? Why not study the factors that make for a peaceful world? What are the things we have to learn about it? I didn’t know how to kill until I was trained. We have to learn these things. And so the first thing is if we study war, we should study peace.

Alternatives to War: Increasing Our Peacemaking Abilities

The second thing I compare it to is the study of medicine. Just because there will always be disease and death doesn't mean we don't study medicine and discover effective methods of healing.

The second of my stories occurred in the same year as the first.

I went out to Notre Dame for an educational program and met with one of my high school friends whom I hadn't seen in many years. John had become a clinical psychologist in private practice and also taught at Notre Dame. We went out for beer together and he said, "Well, Hovey, we're both fifty years old and we've both been doing our work for about twenty-five years.

I have been a clinical psychologist for all that time and you know I have to tell you, at this point in my life, I look back at my work and

I don't think I have really ever helped anyone. I feel like I've wasted my life." He was almost crying in his beer. And he looked at me and he said, "And you, working for peace, you must really feel bad."

(laughter)

And I said, "No, I don't."

I said, "As a matter of fact, I am quite hopeful about things. I draw my sustenance for that from a quote from Pope John Paul the Second. In 1982, John Paul visited Coventry, England and the half rebuilt cathedral that was partially destroyed in World War II. He said, "Like a Cathedral, peace must be built patiently and with unshakable faith."

I love the image of building cathedrals. Cathedrals take a long time to build; hundreds of years, which means several generations. The first generation lays a foundation that is pretty ugly. Its just cinder blocks and mortar. Nothing fancy. But without the foundation nothing else gets built. And if people went up to the foundation builders and said, "You guys are wasting you time, you'll never see the finished product. All you are seeing is this ugly foundation." I think, at least in their better moments, the foundation builders would say, "No, this is wonderful because without the foundation there won't be any beautiful walls, there will be no stained glass windows, no buttresses, no bell tower. But what we are doing will be absolutely stunning when it is finished. It will give glory not only to the human beings that contributed to it but to God." I think that is what we are about when we are peace making, and peace building. And my work connected to the UN keeps me aware of that every day.

I am now coming up on fifty two years old, Working across from the UN every day reminds me that the UN was founded in 1945, six years before I was born. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was ratified three years before I was born. The International Criminal Court was created in my fiftieth year. All these new building blocks for world peace are practically contemporaneous with my life time.

Alternatives to War: Increasing Our Peacemaking Abilities

All of us in this room are at the foundation stages of building peace. Peace studies was created after World War II. That is where I draw my hope. That we are at an important foundation building stage and we shouldn't worry too much what the finished product is going to be because we have confidence that we are building the right foundation.

Thank you for your attention.

ROSA PACKARD Now for some additional announcements about building blocks for peace.

JIM HAMILTON

Over the last few months I have been organizing a small group of people in the New York metropolitan area to help with the GI Rights Hotline which is a nationwide 800 number which has been around since 1995. Its a group of trained counselors who respond to calls from soldiers, sailors, airmen on military bases or even overseas who are seeking discharges from the military or need help with a variety of problems. This includes help for those, like Michael Hovey, who seek an honorable discharge from the military as a conscientious objector.

This Hotline is a network of nonprofit organizations and groups of volunteers around the country that have been answering calls for some time. They include the War Resisters League, in New York, the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors in Oakland and Philadelphia, the American Friends Service Committee in Boston area, the Center on Conscience and War in Washington and several others. The need in the New York City area is that call are only received on one week night and so we are hoping to increase the coverage. We expect the number of calls to increase. At the beginning of the war there were 3 to 4 thousand in one month.

The other work that is becoming more critical is counter recruitment in high schools and community colleges. The military presence in the schools has been growing since the No Child Left Behind Act was passed - which is also becoming known as the No Child Left Unrecruited Act. I understand American Friends Service Committee is sponsoring a conference in Philadelphia in June on counter recruitment. Its easier to stay out than to get out. I want to recommend a book by Chris Hedges, called War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning. It talks about the reality of war that many people don't understand.

PATRICK CONNORS

I live in Greenwich, as a matter of fact I am Rosa's neighbor. I have been volunteering for a group called the International Solidarity Movement. There are a lot of groups working nonviolently in the West Bank, Gaza and Israel. I.S.M. is one of them. I'd be glad to talk with you about them.

Alternatives to War: Increasing Our Peacemaking Abilities

ROZANNE GATES

There will be an all towns meeting Sunday, June 22nd at Bedford Middle School in Westport from three to six. It will be a panel discussion on the Patriot Act I and II with an open mike. We expect Attorney General Richard Blumenthal to be there. Theresa Younger of the Connecticut Civil Liberties Union will be on the panel as well as Bill Collins, former mayor of Norwalk and Robin Morris an attorney from Weston. This is sponsored by Promoting Enduring Peace and Peace Action of Connecticut. We hope to pass a resolution in the State of Connecticut against the Patriot Act.

POLLY MENNOHER

A public forum with Dennis Kucinich will be our guest speaker on Sunday will take place at Sacred Heart University. He is a Congressman from Ohio, and a Presidential candidate. He will be speaking on the Department of Peace and has introduced a bill in Congress to establish it.

PAULINE CANTWELL

I live here in Greenwich and represent Peace Action at the UN and convene the Peace Caucus there on a regular basis. We have a new website through the UN's Department of Public Information. Today's program has been on its calendar and we will give a summary about it with photos. Web links are an important way to connect nongovernmental organizations around the world. The land mine ban treaty was organized through the internet as well as all the marches around the world this past February 15th.

<http://iswi.tu-ilmenau.de/pwb-net.org/focus.php>

CAROL SCHWARTZ

I am with our local Peace Action group. Please look at our literature table which has flyers with Peace Action's mission statement and a letter to the editor, "Reasons for Protest" by our member Ann Harris, and a list of alternative news sources developed by one of our member.

ROSA PACKARD

Now we are going to ask you to gather at discussion tables and I will introduce Randy Nelson, who does work with positive parenting - another good way to work for peace. She will facilitate a process for you to talk with each other about some of the ideas you have heard today and some of the work you yourselves are doing. We are asking the members of the panel to circulate among the tables as resource people so you will have an opportunity to talk with them as well. Randy, thank you so much for doing this work with us.

RANDY NELSON

Alternatives to War: Increasing Our Peacemaking Abilities

My pleasure. What a feast of ideas! of how a little can grow into a bigger thing. So many of us are frustrated. Things are happening in the news that don't fit our ideas of right and wrong. Move so there are at least four or five at each table. The next task is for one of you at each table to volunteer as a scribe. Okay. Do you have paper. Scribes please raise your hands. Does every table have one?

The discussions proceeded for about one half hour with some comments about the experience reported to the whole group and following that participants and panel were thanked, pictures were taken by a member, Suzanne Sheridan who is a professional photographer and everyone mingled for refreshments. Pauline Cantwell invited those who came from out of town to her home for luncheon.