



Building a Culture of Peace
Hilton Hotel, Santa Fe, New Mexico
May 16-17, 2007
www.worldpeaceconference.org

This working conference will call together up to 500 local, national, and global peace leaders for inquiry and strategic thinking on the question:

“What would it take to transform the current culture of violence in our societies to a true culture of peace?”

The Program

Prominent peace leaders who will address us in plenary session are:

- **Rigoberta Menchu Tum**, 1992 Nobel Peace Laureate for her work in indigenous human rights
- **Jody Williams**, 1997 Nobel Peace Laureate for the International Campaign to Ban Landmines)
- **Arun Gandhi**, Director of the Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence and grandson of Mahatma Gandhi
- **H.H. the Dalai Lama**, 1989 Nobel Peace Laureate, spiritual leader of Tibet and international speaker on nonviolence and compassion – by video

The rest of our time will be structured around five Peace Councils:

- **Our Youth, Our Promise** (where we examine issues of violence and peace in the lives of our young people, and what we can do to grow a generation of peacemakers)
- **Demilitarization and a Peace Economy** (where we examine issues related to the militarization of our economy and of our consciousness, and how we can grow an economy based on peace that supports peace-related perspectives and activities)
- **Knowing the Other as Ourselves** (where we examine what it takes to awaken a true sense of our oneness and reach across the many divides that cause us pain for healing and reconciliation)
- **The Living Spirit of Peace** (where we examine the role of inner peace, the spiritual elements of peace work, and our relation to the living earth)
- **The Politics of Peace** (where we examine the role of governments and global organizations in human rights, peacemaking, and peace promotion, and the role and influence of activism and social movements for peace)

Using an Open Space technology that allows for all participants to come together to consider the issues they are passionate about, each Council will spend two days exploring the leading edge questions related to their Council and our overall topic. They will be encouraged to lift up best practices, share information and resources, generate new ideas, build alliances and coalitions, and explore (and commit to) strategic action steps. (Scroll down below to see more about these Peace Councils and about Open Space technology.)

The output from the conference – the plenary talks, data from the Councils, interviews, videos, etc. – will be collected and made globally available online.

Participate!

Take a stand, at the Peace Fair

You and your organization are invited to reserve a table to display your peace work in the New Mexico *Building a Culture of Peace* Peace Fair.

This is an opportunity to show conference participants the vital, imaginative and courageous work being done by grassroots organizations locally and nationally to create a culture of peace -- the work that educates us for the practice of peace in our lives and communities; transforms the nuclear threat; promotes nonviolent solutions to conflict; and explores a thriving, sustainable peace economy and healthy environment for our state, our country, and our planet.

The Peace Fair will be open during break times and lunch, so that the people manning the tables can participate in the conference. Organizations wishing to participate in the Peace Fair may reserve a full table (\$29 for two days) or a half-table (\$15 for two days); table and chairs are provided. If you are selling any products, there will be an additional fee of 10% of any sales. Tables are allotted on a first-come, first-served basis, and pre-registration is required through the reservation form at worldpeaceconference.org

One unmanned table is available for the placement of literature – brochures, fliers, etc. – at no cost. Any proceeds above costs will go to the New Mexico Community Foundation's new Peace Fund, to provide resources to New Mexico peace organizations and projects.

Who Should Attend?

- If you care about the future of our world
- If you believe peace, justice, and nonviolence should be the underlying principles that shape our lives together
- If you have experience in a peace-related field and/or want to learn more
- If you wish to actively participate in a global movement for a culture of peace
- If you want to be part of strategically growing that movement

Please join us.

A Special Invitation to Youth – *You are our hope for the future, and the light of our present.* We need your insights, your passion, and your perspective. One of the Peace Councils (Our Youth, Our Promise) is especially designed to deal with issues facing youth in our society today. All of the other Peace Councils will consider the role of youth as well. Your voice is needed in all the Peace Councils. There will be a room set aside where you can connect with each other when not in Council sessions. Please come – you are the heartbeat of our inquiry.

Accommodation

Some rooms are available at the conference headquarters, Hilton Santa Fe at a special conference rate of \$139 (plus taxes). When you register at www.worldpeaceconference.org we will send more details on how to get that rate.

We have also secured a special rate at the Sage Inn (www.sageinnsantafe.com) Call 866-433-0335 for the World Peace Conference price of \$59 (plus tax), including breakfast.

Accommodation is also available at the Santa Fe International Youth Hostel (<http://tinyurl.com/y7sa5y>)

For full information on Santa Fe's many interesting hotels, motels, and inns contact the Santa Fe Convention & Visitors Bureau at 800-777-2489 or 505-955-6200 (www.santafe.org)

Stay up to date with the Conference by visiting the official blog at www.worldpeaceconference.org

Our Youth, Our Promise

The culture of violence in our society is so deeply rooted that it will take time to change. Our first job is to insure our children are not socialized into that culture, but are raised with a peace consciousness and all the life skills that support it. In this way, the culture shift we are aiming for happens in part through a turnover of generations.

To that end we need to be inquiring deeply into the question, ***What would it take to raise a new generation of youth who are conscious and committed peacebuilders?*** To explore that, we also need to ask such things as: How do we create a new, peace-oriented, story for living in the world, and share that with our youth in ways that capture their attention and imagination? How do we awaken them to the interdependence with each other and the natural world that is at the heart of peace consciousness, and give them the tools to live peacefully and sustain-ably? How do we establish our schools and our families as communities for learning and living a culture of peace?

We know about change that we must always start with where we are. The youth of today, unfortunately, are already swimming in a popular culture where violence permeates their social environment. Although the youngest of our children are exposed early to the gentle ways of Barney and Sesame Street, by the time they reach upper elementary grades violent video games, music, movies, and television shows are part of their daily fare. (One study showed that by the time the average American child reaches 18, he or she will have watched 200,000 acts of violence on television, not counting news shows, 75% of which go unpunished.) They may also, by then, be exposed to bullying, mean cliques, gangs, drugs, alcohol, school or street violence, and internet pornography. If they are poor, or if they are people of color, they may also experience the violence of poverty and/or discrimination. And if they should happen to pay attention to the news, crime and war dominate the scene. What are they to think of their world, given the constant presence of violence in and around their lives?

Our first imperative, then, is not only to start out our children with the assumptions, values, and skills of peace, but to also help them as they grow older to deal effectively with the violence in the world around them. This means a re-education of parents, teachers, and other adults in their lives, for children learn most from watching the grown-ups in their lives, and these too are caught in the current culture of violence.

So our inquiry into building a culture of peace in the area of **Our Youth, Our Promise** will take us deeply into the worlds of parenting, schools, popular youth culture, and the way our children make sense of the world around them. It will require us to listen empathically to the voices of young people, and engage them in leading the process for social change. It will require that we consciously co-create with our youth leaders a new set of educational tools, behavioral skills, values and norms – indeed a whole new popular culture – that will define a path of peace that our children are so excited to follow that a critical mass shift can occur in our youth culture. For the hope of a world at peace in the future, this is job one.

Demilitarization and a Peace Economy

The culture of violence in our society is most graphically expressed through the militarization that permeates our lives. The military-industrial-political complex completely dominates our economy, our national discourse and priorities, and our place in the world. Our defense spending equals more than that of all the other countries in the world combined. War is seen as a natural and inevitable instrument of foreign policy, while dialogue with our 'enemies' (i.e., the way of peace) is considered weak. Force, aggression, competition, the imposition of our values on others, and the assumption of our superiority, are accepted as appropriate, even desired, ways to behave, among ourselves and with other nations.

In addition, the glorification of violence through the manufacture of war-related toys; of violent video games, music, movies, and television shows insures that our citizens, and especially our youth, experience violence as entertainment. Our massive and punitive prison system and adherence to the death penalty, and a media that considers crime front-page news and top-notch subjects for hit television series, insures that we are kept in a state of fear and loathing of (and also fascination with) the 'criminals' among us.

The implicit assumptions underlying these violence industries are so deeply rooted in our national consciousness that we don't even realize how militarized our minds and daily lives have become. When we seek to build a culture of peace, then, we must first confront this massive accumulation of energy (money, images, products, values) supporting and supported by violence that permeates our lives so profoundly and insidiously that most of us simply take for granted that 'that's just how things are.'

Buckminster Fuller famously said, "*You can never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.*" Therefore we must consider how we can build an alternative peace economy, supported by a demilitarized mindset, that can gradually shift us into a new way of being and of structuring our society.

While this may feel daunting, given the size and power of the war machine, we do have some models of success. In just 30-40 years, for instance, the whole subject of environmental sustainability has gone from a fringe movement to a mainstream topic that not only engages our political discourse globally but is supported by a growing economic sector of goods and services, technologies and infrastructure.

So our inquiry into building a culture of peace in the area of **Demilitarization and a Peace Economy** will lead us to explore how we can create a peace economy. To this end we must ask, ***What would it take to transform our lives so that we are supporting and supported by peace rather than war and violence?*** What are the elements of a peace economy? How can we insure that peace work is financially viable for those who undertake it? What products, services, technologies, jobs and institutions can we create that serve peace and are economically valuable? How can we withdraw energy from the production and proliferation of weapons and violence as entertainment, and channel or

convert that energy for peace? And how can we demilitarize our hearts and minds so that this becomes a priority?

How can we transform our understanding of and approach to poverty so that meeting the needs of all people becomes the very foundation of a peace economy? These questions take us to the very edge of our human experience, and spur us on to create a whole new way of being together in this world.

Knowing the Other as Ourselves

The culture of violence in our society is graphically demonstrated in the polarization that permeates our political discourse, the adversarial nature of our interactions, and the antagonism that infuses our inter-group relations. We separate ourselves into factions based on a variety of categories, and see our own group as better-than, more worthy than, the ‘other.’ In its extreme, this syndrome posits the ‘other’ as the evil enemy.

Once in this separation mindset, we dehumanize the ‘other.’ We exist in a world of ‘them and us,’ ‘right versus wrong,’ ‘either for us or against us.’ Once we see each other as separate, we assume our differences mean that one is entitled to dominate the other. We then exist in a world where force and ‘power over’ become acceptable modes of operating, with oppression, the suppression of human rights, and ultimately war or genocide not far behind.

Our nation is foundationally wounded by the ways this mindset played out historically. The European conquest of the Native peoples of this land, the institution of slavery, and the cycles of hatred and discrimination toward various immigrant groups have left scars and chasms that linger in today’s society and cry out for healing. At home, our red/blue, left/right/ conservative/liberal political conversation is increasingly contentious, and occasionally violent. On a global scale, some of the same splits are triggers for political, ethnic and religious unrest, clashes, and sometimes wars or terrorist actions.

Our task then, in exploring a culture of peace, becomes one of asking, ***How can we move from a separation mindset to one of interdependence and unity?*** How can we heal the existing historical wounds? Reach across the beliefs and experiences that divide us to find common ground? Re-humanize the ‘other’ so we can recognize and build on our shared humanity? Realizing that what hurts one hurts all, how can we develop appreciation for those who are different, compassion for their suffering, and skillful means of apology and forgiveness to bring reconciliation? How can we displace the negative images and prejudices we carry about the ‘other,’ and learn to truly celebrate our diversity? How can we learn to use the power of co-creativity (power with, power for, and power to rather than power over) to assure the basic needs of all are satisfied?

So our inquiry into a culture of peace by **Knowing the Other as Ourselves** takes us into the territory of inter-personal and inter-group relations. We must explore the methods of dialogue and the process of reconciliation. We must examine how we can develop compassion, appreciation, and empathy so that we see and feel and care about the

experience of others. And we must consider how to break the cycle of violence and revenge, to create allies and partners out of enemies and seek joint solutions to shared problems. And, of course, we must explore how we can inculcate these skills and values in our youth, so this new way of relating becomes normative.

Ultimately, this journey takes us into the realm of relationship, and the love, respect, appreciation, and caring that lie at the heart of healthy relating. For relationship is the natural expression of our unity and interdependence, and our oneness is the central principle of peace, upon which all else is built.

The Living Spirit of Peace

In the culture of violence that permeates our society, violence is seen as normative, and peace or nonviolence as at worst an aberration, at best, the idealistic dream of a few. People are seen as hotwired for violence and competition. Yet people are hotwired for peace as well – it is embedded in our spiritual DNA, waiting to be enlivened by our choice. If that were not so, all of our major religions would not hold peace as one of the highest spiritual ideals for humanity.

“Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me’ could well be the theme song for a culture of peace movement. Our task is to recognize that peace does begin within each and every one of us, and radiates out, both as an energy wave and through our words and actions. We realize that the responsibility for peace on earth starts with self, not with the ‘bad guys’ out there. Yoga, meditation, and other practices teach us how to find that place of inner peace deep within, and how to move in the world from that center and with that vibration.

We have many inspirational figures who have shown us the living spirit of peace in action – Mother Theresa, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Mahatma Gandhi, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Nelson Mandela, to name a few. They have tapped into that spiritual wellspring to work nonviolently, with love and compassion, for the larger good, and we honor them because we recognize that potential in ourselves and all humanity.

The living spirit of peace also resides in the earth herself. The Gaia principle, that the earth is a living being; that there is only one web of life on this planet and indeed in the universe, is a critical foundation for a culture of peace, for by recognizing our inter-connectedness we understand that what hurts one, hurts all. Indigenous peoples understand this, and those of us who have come far from our indigenous roots need to remember this core truth. Our scientists are also coming to this realization, with perhaps a different languaging of it, but with the same realization that we share one energy field, and so every thought and action resonates through that field to touch all others.

So our inquiry into **The Living Spirit of Peace** brings us to ask, ***How can we awaken the seed of peace that lies within us all, and translate it into action that serves the whole family of life?*** This exploration will take us to regions of the spirit, so we can find that place of harmony, serenity, and clarity within. It will activate our commitments

to work with our own inner battles, so we can radiate peace from the inside out. It will carry us into the indigenous world of respect for Mother Earth and all our relations, which has great implications for our relationship to the environment, nature, and all that earth provides – what we call our natural resources. It asks us to re-examine our faith traditions, to study and practice their peace teachings.

It explores nonviolence and compassion as methods of social change as well as patterns for living. And it invites us to consider who and what most inspires us to peace, and how we can become more like our role models, and translate that inspiration and aspiration into peace-full action to serve the whole of life.

The Politics of Peace

The culture of violence in our society is most graphically visible on the screen of our political life. Indeed, our two-party political system has become the epitome of an adversarial model of ‘us against them.’ We have a Defense Department with a budget of trillions, four military academies, and several other war-related institutions. We have a State Department, charged with insuring peace, whose senior members are not even necessarily trained in negotiation skills. Currently we have a national leader who prides himself on being a self-designated ‘War President.’ And indeed, our political ideologies have taken us into many wars of invasion and dominion over the years, and have led us to arm and support warring factions in several others.

Globally, we have institutions for peace such as the United Nations and its various agencies and programs, including a new Human Rights Commission; the International Criminal Court; various Truth and Reconciliation projects, and others. Yet these too are easily politicized by those with power and powerful ideologies they seek to impose or secure.

Meanwhile, our civil liberties at home are threatened in the name of war and security. Regimes around the world routinely oppress their citizens and commit atrocious acts of human rights abuse; the sex trade flourishes; the gap between rich and poor widens; women are treated as property or worse; and injustices of all sorts flourish.

As long as the assumption about power that has fueled these ills, as well as centuries of imperialism, colonialism, racism and gender discrimination (i.e., that one group has the right to impose its will on and dominate another), that assumption will translate into the halls of governance and politics, where it is enacted in its various forms. The critical question for this part of the inquiry, then, is ***How do we shift our understanding of power, from domination (power over) to partnership, equality, and co-creation (power with, to, and for)?***

So our inquiry into a culture of peace by way of **The Politics of Peace** will take us into a consideration of power – what it is, really; how we use and abuse it. It will require us to delve into the workings of our national and global institutions, to see how we can improve them and build new systems to support a peace perspective.

It will encourage us to look carefully at the grassroots activist response to issues of war and peace, justice and oppression, violence and nonviolence. It will take us into an exploration of the U.S. political system, and how it can be influenced toward a culture of peace.

This inquiry is deeply challenging, as it takes us into that place in humanity where the worst in human nature dwells. It asks us to confront a seemingly unassailable, monolithic worldview that does great harm to both those who impose suffering on others and those on whom suffering is imposed. And it asks us to be infinitely creative in building revolutionary partnerships, new institutions, and new avenues of influence to insure that a culture of peace becomes the driving force and underlying basis for our political life.

What is Open Space Technology?

Open Space technology is a method of large group work that allows the group to organize itself organically around the issues that are most relevant to the participants. For more than 20 years this process has been used globally with organizations and groups of all sizes to constructively bring forward the most important ideas, solutions, and interests of the individuals and the system.

Here's how it works:

In each of the five Peace Councils the people who are most interested in that subject will gather. Trained facilitators will invite anyone who has a critical question, issue, or idea to explore to step forward and state their topic. By stepping forward, that person agrees to convene and lead a group on that subject. When all the conveners have stated their topics, the rest of the people in the Council 'vote with their feet' and join the group that most interests them. In other words, the Council self-organizes to meet its own needs.

Each small group will select a note-taker and someone to record data on a flipchart, and the convener will lead the discussion. Participants may choose to plan a session ahead of time, to offer to the Council, or may simply raise a topic in the moment. The group will meet for a scheduled amount of time, yet can continue beyond that time (or even beyond the conference) for as long as they have 'juice.' They will be encouraged to be in dialogue and learning mode together, to share wisdom and experience, identify best practices, generate new ideas, form networks and alliances, and consider individual and collective action plans. At any time, participants may continue to 'vote with their feet' and move to another small group within their Council, or even to another Council.

Periodically the facilitators will call the whole Council together to check on progress and see if there are new topics that anyone wants to pose.

The notes will be collected at the end of the session, edited and compiled, and shared with the rest of the conference. There will also be a chance for participants to view a 'gallery' of data from all the Councils.

