

Nonkilling Arts Research Committee July 2014 Letter

Every month when I sit down to sift through the content for this letter, the main question faces me is how this contribution will fit in with the definition of Nonkilling Arts, especially when such definition is so multifaceted and evolving. To rephrase the question: how is this letter going to be different from many other peace and arts newsletters in circulation? Prof. Glenn Paige who is a friend, mentor and colleague, last week we celebrated his 85th birthday, he sent the following for us to think about. He writes:

"Will new forms of nonkilling art be created by its members or others? Do you think nonkilling art can or will be any different from customary peace art? If no, why not? If yes, is it possible to predict in what its characteristics might be?"

I would appreciate your comment to this insightful question from Glenn.

It is generally easier to have a sense of nonkilling underlying contributions with focus on themes where the work of art is about resistance to war, nuclear weapons, killings of innocents, atrocities, violation of human and economic rights etc.- the sense of injustice is clear; expressions of nonkilling can also emanate from love, selfless service, compassion, empathy etc. Artists have a great potential to be disruptive in enabling insights into hidden truths. Our ultimate criteria for a nonkilling work remains its transformative potential and impact in helping to build a Global Nonkilling Ethic.

In this spirit, I enclose the following material received this month. But first of all,

Dear Glenn, A Big Thank you and A Very Happy 85th Birthday from NKARC !!

NKARC - July 2014 Letter

WHAT IS WAR?

In response to challenging conflicts of past and present, colleague Hugh Mann sums up the War as:

"Promoting ploys with deployment, bombs with enjoyment, and boys with interment, war is a tormented, demented metaphor and euphemism for fraud, linking domestic debenture with foreign adventure. Unwanted and unwarranted, but wildly cheered by profiteers, war is a hyped-up, hopeless trope imperiled and bedeviled by deadly medleys of screams and tears with corpses and caskets."

Continuing this theme, see below an urgent call to world leaders and merchants of death from NKARC friend Ada Aharoni in the form of a poem:

BAN FIREARM SALES SNAKES TODAY NOT TOMORROW!

Governments of the world

We call on you

In all languages

To ban all firearm sales snakes

In all our global village

TODAY not tomorrow!

If firearms are sought and bought

They will not be wasted -

Without any second thought

They will be used

On innocent humans

Who will again be fused

Today and tomorrow!

You will again stand accused -

You pitiless leaders of the world

Of killing your citizens in cold blood

Instead of banning the deadly

Firearm sales snakes

In a Nonkilling world

TODAY NOT TOMORROW!

Ada Aharoni

Thank you, Ada. Ada Aharoni is founder of IFLAC (International Forum for Culture and Peace).
For more on IFLAC, click on: www.iflac.com/

Peace Quest video

This month at the meeting of Peace Quest, I saw rough cut of a 6 minute video of a recent assembly in Ottawa to honour Canadian soldiers killed in 12 year Afghan war. it is shot by veteran video maker Stuart Cryer. The video perturbed me not because honouring of the dead or the military parade with tanks and flyover, but its Parliament Hill venue. For first time in my 49 years I saw in the video a Canadian govt. wanting to display Canada's military strength (however modest it is) with tanks and flying of war planes on sacred Parliament grounds under the "Peace" Tower where a centennial flame of peace and unity has been lit since 1967. Stuart does not use any words or voiceover in his vimeo video, he lets his images speak for themselves. Click on: <http://vimeo.com/98482267>,

Thank you, Stuart. Video artist Stuart Cryer has been making videos on the subject of civil liberties, unions, and human rights over past two decades.

A colleague on Ehtisham Rana's last month's poem on nuclear weapons commented:

"Thank you for this poem depicting the challenges we face currently. Our voices are becoming louder and we are connecting more and more coherently across the globe. The war mongers and arms builders days are numbered. Your words are an inspiration to stay focused and each play our part in building sustainable and viable peace."

A Hip Hop Nonkilling play

The periodical alt. theatre keeps on coming with remarkable pieces of nonkilling insights. Its current issue has an illuminating essay by Crystal Chan entitled, "Alter Your Ego: Lessons from a Hip Hop Play". (vol. 11, no.1, Fall 2013, pp10-15). It describes the multifaceted Hip Hop art and culture and the play "Sal Capone: Lamentable Tragedy" by Omari Newton.. The writer explains that young, poor and black men first created hip hop to express their urge for justice through violence, often diffusing that urge in that stylistic process. As Newton says, it was done by turning bullet like anger of powerless victims of prejudice into hip hop beats.

Newton sees his play as aiming to prevent violence through story telling and a way of generating intergenerational dialogue. His two ideal audiences are: "one is older, mainstream – they're being introduced to youth hip hop culture the second is teen aged, familiar with hiphop culture" who are being introduced to theatre.

Thanks to alt.theatre editor Nikki Shaffeeullah for continuing to include such thought-provoking pieces in the alt journal and Crystal Chan for this contribution. See attached the alt pdf document for Crystal's essay and information about alt periodical. For more on alt.theatre click on: www.alttheatre.ca

A feature film: The Change Agents

Colleague Mony Dojeiji's reflections on "The Change Agents", a feature length movie about high school kids in Nelson B.C. who mobilise their teachers and community to stand up against

environmental degradation in their community. After watching "The Change Agents", she writes about importance of spiritualizing the outside drama we encounter.

Mony writes: "Of course this begs the question of how to focus on a solution without being dragged down by the "problem". No matter the issue of the day, this, I believe, is the greatest challenge. Raising awareness of a situation is important, but once aware, how do we "spiritualize" it? How do we elevate the conversation?" For more: <http://www.leavingthemountain.blogspot.ca/2014/06/elevating-conversation.html>

Poem PEACE

Finally, an "ecolinguistic" poem, PEACE by 8 year old Jack Wells- Benson published in the *Provincetown Banner* weekly newspaper 6/5/14, p. 27 in Provincetown MA on Cape Cod.

PEACE

Jack Wells-Benson, Grade 3

Peace is like lying on a really soft cloud

and eating a big piece of puffy cotton candy.

Peace is putting your feet

into hot summer sand.

Peace is fresh, juicy summer fruit

dripping down my chin.

Peace is flying a kite

under the hot yellow sun.

Peace is fireworks shooting up in the air on the 4th of July.

Peace is eating pineapple

In the summer time.

Peace is happiness

like a bird tweeting in a tree.

But Peace is also the whistle of the wind

And the crunch of snow in the winter time.

Peace is indeed Happiness as young Jack says. Our linguist professor colleague Francisco Gomes de Matos on this 8 year old 's wisdom comments:

"The boy's text is a fine piece of ecolinguistically peaceful poetic imagination That a human being's ecolinguistic identify can emerge at an early age is eloquently shown by the boy's poetry. Wish other children would be as ecolinguistically aware as Jack."

We need more of this ecolinguistic peaceful poetic imagination.

Wishing you a peaceful and enjoyable summer.

In gratitude to Glenn Paige, Hugh Mann, Nikki Shaffeeullah, Crystal Chan, Ada Aharoni, Stuart Cryer, Mony Dojeji, Jack Wells-Benson, and Francisco Gomes de Matos for thoughtful contributions.

Nonkilling Regards,

Bill

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"Nonkilling is THE measure of human progress"