

Nonkilling Arts Research Committee June 2014 Letter

Dear Friends,

Afro-American poetess and activist Maya Angelou passed away last week (May 28). An indomitable literary spirit she wrote about human dignity, tolerance, peace, and equality. Her writings will continue to inspire us about love and hope. Maya Angelou RIP.

Below is an excerpt from her poem, 'A Brave and Startling Truth' which she wrote in honour of the United Nations 50th anniversary in 1995.

“...When we come to it
 We, this people, on this minuscule and kithless globe
 Who reach daily for the bomb, the blade and the dagger
 Yet who petition in the dark for tokens of peace
 We, this people on this mote of matter
 In whose mouths abide cankerous words
 Which challenge our very existence
 Yet out of those same mouths
 Come songs of such exquisite sweetness
 That the heart falters in its labor
 And the body is quieted into awe

We, this people, on this small and drifting planet
 Whose hands can strike with such abandon
 That in a twinkling, life is sapped from the living
 Yet those same hands can touch with such healing, irresistible tenderness
 That the haughty neck is happy to bow
 And the proud back is glad to bend
 Out of such chaos, of such contradiction
 We learn that we are neither devils nor divines

When we come to it
 We, this people, on this wayward, floating body
 Created on this earth, of this earth
 Have the power to fashion for this earth
 A climate where every man and every woman
 Can live freely without sanctimonious piety
 Without crippling fear

When we come to it
 We must confess that we are the possible
 We are the miraculous, the true wonder of this world

That is when, and only when
We come to it.

For full text of the poem, click on:

<http://www.sru.edu/PublicRelations/Pages/abraveandstartlingtruth.aspx>

The contributions to this month's NKARC letter come from varied sources and cover many themes of Maya Angelou's poems. These deal with use of nonkilling creativity to manifest our common humanity through telling stories of children exploited as prime target of violence and aggression. The nonkilling artist demands for their rights, seeks prevention of child bullying, exposes their abuse as child soldiers. Other themes covered include: Japanese 'Manga' style comic strip design unravelling human costs of Fukushima nuclear plant disaster; importance of humour in conflict; a powerful poem about military-industrial complex and the imminent need for dismantling it; progress report on a Human Rights Museum about five genocides from the previous century; and finally a review of an Indian music concert connecting our deeper self and everything around us.

1. Nonkilling Theatre: Interview with French Canadian playwright Suzane Lebeau

In the recent issue of the alt. Theatre (v.10, No.4), Christine Comeau interviews French-Canadian playwright Suzanne Lebeau. Her interview, "Breaking the Chain of Violence" (p.10-15) provides a review of Lebeau's important work over past 4 decades. A piece that gives us insights into children and adults (especially women) on their experience and understanding of violence. On tight-knit connections between art, education, culture and history, Lebeau's states: "Art is an obligatory part of education, on par with conventional school subjects. Art teaches subjectivity, the right to have an opinion, and the right to dissent." Her 2009 play "Le bruit des os qui craquent" (The sound of cracking bones) addresses the reality of child soldiers. While writing the play she says: "I've had to distance myself from traditional didactic relationships, where children are considered inferior to an adult who holds all the knowledge and who can give simple and precise answers to an issue. Instead, I try to see the world from a child's perspective, while at the same time opening up that world to different layers of interpretation and meaning. And I like to reflect their questions back to them so that they will find a unique answer. It's always a temporary answer. It will satisfy them for some time, at this point in their lives, but six months later they will have to find a new explanation, and so on. Because the only questions that are truly important and interesting are existential questions."

On the subject of hope in her plays, she states that adults might see the play and think “What have we done? While teenagers ask themselves, “What will we do?” As she explains to her interviewer: “The only thing I could never write for children is a play without hope. Here, I think each member of the audience has to forge their own hope. Personally, I wasn’t able to find it. I think the only hope, in the end, is in the fact that these things are being said out loud. There is such a culture of silence for all minorities, for all those who are oppressed. There’s hope in knowing that we can say what we know instead of feeling completely helpless and unhappy with how the world works.”

For more on this playwright, see the pdf attachment on alt.theatre.

2. Nonkilling Poetry:

Child-bullying prevention: A dignifying intervention

by Francisco Gomes de Matos, a peace-dignity linguist, president of the Board, ABA Global Education, Recife, Brazil .

When younger/weaker children are bullied at school
What can be implemented as a bullying-prevention tool?

Educating older/stronger children to treat their schoolmates well
For being deeply educated is a challenge: learning as DIGNIFIERS to excel

Why does the shameful act of child-bullying at school seem globally to take place?

Because students are not taught to put on and sustain a relationally-dignifying face

To help prevent child-bullying what could educators and parents cooperatively do?

Help children see and live life as a dignifying coresponsibility in which priority is

daily given to "I CARE FOR/ABOUT YOU "

Francisco Gomes de Matos continues with this theme in an important poster-poem, “The Children’s Rights”, see the pdf attachment.

WAR MACHINES AND PEACE, a powerful poem by peace activist Rana Ehtisham Rabbani. It is about the ever growing military industrial complex and its global over reach. See the pdf attachment. An excerpt below from Rana's poem:

"...Suggestions for non-killings
 Stop business of war tools...Greed
 Find another merchandise,
 Overcome the barrier,
 Gender, race, religion and faith
 Encourage and support humanity
 In growth of parity..."

3. Nonkilling Humour (from Transcend):

(i) Humor but Not Humiliation: Finding the Sweet Spot in Nonviolent Conflict Resolution by Michael Nagler and Karen Ridd

The authors in this article look at the relationship of peace and humour. As they write:

"Humor is a time-honored strategy in the repertoire of nonviolence, but we must learn to use it properly. Poke fun at the problem not the person...."

For the full article click on:

<https://www.transcend.org/tms/2014/05/humor-but-not-humiliation-finding-the-sweet-spot-in-nonviolent-conflict-resolution/>

[Source: Transcend]

(ii) Manga comic design about Fukushima nuclear cleanup operation becomes hit in Japan.

See three related stories on the Manga design received from colleague Gordon Edwards.

Justin McCurry, The Guardian, May 22, 2014

<http://tinyurl.com/oef2tht>

Kazuto Tatsuta, who worked on cleanup at nuclear plant, hopes his work 'tells people about things that the media never see'

Gourmet manga stirs up storm after linking Fukushima to nosebleeds

Outcry over storyline blaming radiation exposure for nosebleeds moves Prime Minister Abe to respond, and publisher to suspend Oishinbo series

Justin McCurry, The Guardian, May 22, 2014

<http://tinyurl.com/nnm7gpe>

4. Human Rights Museum

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights will open in Winnipeg in September 2014, and, according to the museum's leadership, will "provide a place for Canadians, and the world, to explore the subject of human rights and to encourage human rights action." The CMHR is the first Canadian national museum to be established in more than 40 years, and the only national museum to be located outside the National Capital Region. The museum will house 47,000 square feet of exhibition space and employ 250 people. Visitors move between galleries on inclined ramps taking them upward. Elevators also provide access to all the exhibits. The Tower of Hope, at the top of the building, is one of four main sections which include the cloud, the roots and the mountain. The cloud, with more than 5,000 square metres of windows, symbolizes the wings of a dove, a symbol of peace.

Four large roots at the museum's base ground the building to the land on which it sits at The Forks in downtown Winnipeg, a meeting place for Aboriginal people dating back 6,000 years and is on a parcel of Treaty One land. The first gallery will provide an introduction to human rights with a floor to ceiling timeline of 100 events and people going back 1,000 years.

A gallery of Canadian human rights history will feature 90 different stories making it a "museum within a museum" said tour leader Lindsay Weedon, the museum's Partnerships and Government Relations Advisor

Each story will be depicted inside eight metre cubes that visitors will walk in to, to learn about topics such as the internment of Japanese Canadian in World War II, Indian Residential Schools and Canadians who became leaders in human rights. **A gallery called Breaking the Silence examines the five genocides recognized by Canada; the Holodomor (Ukrainian famine), Rwanda, Srebrenica, the Holocaust and the Armenian genocide.**

These will be presented not as memorials, Weedon said, but from the aspect of human rights and how a society perpetrates genocide.

The visitor's journey ends at the Garden of Contemplation, inspired by the Giant's Causeway on the northeast coast of Northern Ireland, offering a space for quiet thought.

The museum has received its share of criticism, being called a waste of taxpayers' money, an eyesore and misguided in how it will present certain human rights issues, particularly genocides.

But as Weedon said, one of the museum's intentions is to get people thinking about human rights and taking action, "and the discussion has already started."

Contributed by James Buchok

5. Peace Music Concert: Review by Sumeet Grover

Sumeet writes:

"I wrote a review of a classical music concert by the Grammy-nominated Indian musician, Anoushka Shankar. At some rare times we come across music, which connects us to our deeper self, rebuilds our sense of connectedness to everything around us, has roots in spiritual traditions, but is also contemporary. That was Anoushka Shankar's concert. Amongst other things, in my review, I also talk about the music of nonviolent resistance, and how the Algerian politics can re-think the arts from one of Shankar's compositions. Algerian art is predominantly political because in other spheres, people are not allowed to freely question government policies. But in turn, free expression in the arts is also controlled." For the link to his full review, click on: http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/sumeet-grover/concert-review-anoushka-shankar-at-the-royal-festival-hall_b_5383152.html

In gratitude to Nikki Shaffeeullah and Christine Comeau, Francisco Gomes de Matos, Rana Ehtisham Rabbani, Michael Nagler and Karen Ridd, Justin McCurry, James Buchok, and Sumeet Grover for their contributions to the content of this letter.

Nonkilling Regards,
Bill

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"Nonkilling is THE measure of human progress"

