

Nonkilling Arts Research Committee May 2014 Letter

Dear friends,

As the spring is in the air and dirty snow accumulated on the ground over the long winter has melted, there has been hope and clearing of what was buried underneath. Sorry for these metaphors, they come naturally to a Canadian. The pieces of nonkilling creative arts that you shared with me reflect some of this whether we are talking about an art installation, a poem, an essay, or a film.

1. Earth Day and Stewardship:

Commemorating the Earth Day (April 22), let me begin with a very thoughtful op-ed from NKARC colleague Bob Koehler. It is entitled, "In Partnership with Earth". Koehler writes a weekly column on peace and justice issues for the Chicago Tribune. On our non-stop exploitation of Earth, he deliberates in his column on how semantics impact our attitudes towards the state of our planet:

"Change one word. Last week, I quoted that Bible verse in a column about the increasing velocity of climate change: "And God said . . . let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air," etc. Dominion! Nature belongs to us, to suck dry and toss away. And thus we moved out of the circle of life and became its conquerors, an attitude at the core of the Agricultural Revolution and the rise of civilization... One has to wonder what would have ensued had the translation said 'stewardship' rather than 'dominion'? Almost incomprehensible that our future and the future of so many and so much may have hinged on that one word." For more on this insightful piece, click on:

<http://commonwonders.com/eco/in-partnership-with-mother-earth/>

2. Nonkilling Art Installation:

This had to come. A creative response from peace witnesses about drone killings of the innocents in Pakistan, it is a giant poster of a child looking up at drone operators. The poster, measuring 90 by 60 feet and made of vinyl, was unrolled with the help of locals last month in a village in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region in northwest Pakistan, where residents say attacks by the pilotless aircraft are a part of daily life.

The massive portrait of the girl facing up from a field is an attempt to put a face on civilian victims of U.S. drone strikes raising challenging questions in the minds of not only killing drone operators but any observer about the ethics of such deployments. "Although there is awareness for drone attacks, it's rarely humanized," a representative for the artist collective wrote in an email to Yahoo News. "This installation is our attempt at showing that." The installation is a bold and courageous creative nonkilling response and an appeal to who use such killing technology for warfare for No More Killing.

As many as 900 civilians may have been killed and 600 seriously injured, including children, in more than 330 strikes since 2004, according to an Amnesty International [report on the U.S. drone program in Pakistan released last fall](#). On the ground, that's created a culture of fear.

For viewing the installation click on:

: <http://news.yahoo.com/girl-pakistan-drone-installation-not-a-bug-splat-140003715.html>

Poem:

The drone killings installation reminds me of our young NKARC peace poet from Pakistan, Rumana Mehdi who has already written two poetry collections. With similar courageous spirit as Malala Yusafzai, Rumana - a social and peace activist has published a number of articles on nonkilling peace, giving, volunteering, and women and children issues. Her second booklet of peace and resistance poems is entitled, 'Lilies, Gun Powder and Dreams'. Her poem below, The Walls is from that collection.

The Walls

The walls that surround me today are mighty,
The chains on my hands and feet are causing anxiety,

Why am I in pain; I've myself built these walls,
I've always been deaf to others' pleads and calls,

I've constructed the wall of illiteracy,
I've robbed the masses of the right to know about their country's glorious legacy,

Then why does it bother me when the Taliban target female education?
Why am I upset when the callous version of the so-called Shariah threatens to replace proper law and legislation?

I've built the wall of intolerance,
I've encouraged the use of slang language and rude graffiti over eloquence and coherence,

Then why do I protest when my religion is ridiculed?
Why do I become agitated when religious animosity is fueled?

Why am I to be blamed for the miserable state of my homeland?
How am I the culprit when the drone attacks crumble everything into dust and sand?

We are all to be blamed for we have erected the wall of silence,
We have never openly expressed our displeasure for religious extremism, intolerance and violence,

Speak now; the time is ripe,

Speak now for your humanitarian right,

Speak now to tear down these suffocating walls and to break away the chains,
Speak now for the immediate withdrawal of Taliban from Pakistani cities, streets and lanes!

Kudos, Rumana.

3. Nonkilling Cinema:

NKARC colleague Vishnu Vasu is a documentary film maker. His forthcoming documentary entitled, *Butterfly* is about recruitment of child soldiers by Tamil Tigers in the 30 year long Sri Lankan civil war and how that destroyed the lives of those children forever. He describes the journeys of his seven young characters as a portrait of the gruesome war which demands effort for imminent work on reconciliation between the Sinhalese majority and Tamil minority. I met Vishnu at the First Nonkilling Leadership Conference in Honolulu in 2007 when he accompanied his Sarvodaya founder father Dr. Ariyaratne at the conference. For the 2 min trailer of the film click, >
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=psFdvYEX71s>

Vasu's last doc film, "Gandhi's Children" which focussed on India's marginalized and oppressed (and his other work) can be viewed on youtube for free at:
<http://www.youtube.com/user/villagemonk>

Vasu's work reminds me of another Sinhalese feature film, "With you, Without you" by Sri Lankan cine auteur Prasanna Vithanage on the topic of Sri Lankan civil war. The film enhanced my understanding of complex Sinhalese-Tamil dynamic and how violent conflicts scar us for ever and how arduous is forgiveness and reconciliation in the aftermath of such conflicts. Vithanage has noted: " We live in a society which still has unhealed wounds from a war that lasted about 26 years, killing over tens of thousands of people. Confrontation of a Sinhalese man and a Tamil woman became the dramatic premise of my script. Their struggle with their own past for me was a metaphor for the struggles of the nation as a whole."

Vasu and Vithanage are creating films which should make difference providing platform for public conversation in Sri Lanka on value of life, human dignity and reconciliation.

Vasu's film about child soldiers reminds me of an article on how child soldier recruiting is done in the west. See below link to Ann Jones' piece entitled, "America's Child Soldiers: JRTOC and the militarizing of America" in TomDispatch. Click on:
<http://www.nationofchange.org/america-s-child-soldiers-1387206423>

Two Reviews:

Two related perceptive reviews from NKARC colleague Sumeet Grover were published in the recent Huffington Post UK: One is the review of a film called *Silent Grace*, about an untold episode of the nonviolent Hunger Strikes in Northern Ireland in 1980, carried

out by female republican prisoners in Armagh to get political status.

Sumeet writes:

“As an overview, beyond the republican identity, the film's narrative achieves a profound friendship and trust between a unionist female prisoner and fellow republican prisoners. What unfolds from that point is a shared recognition that in this long-running conflict, both sides have lost their loved ones, when no one deserved to die. The film ends with the message that *"all life is sacred."* This film won the Soka Arts Award in 2004.”

Here's the full article on the film from the Huffington Post:

http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/sumeet-grover/silent-grace-a-film-review_b_4929046.html

Second contribution is an art review entitled, *Bristol Museum: Remembering the British Empire in India*.

On a particular painting in this exhibit, Sumeet writes: “It was quite upsetting to see that the Bristol Museum had a painting, *celebrating* the inauguration of the "Emperor and Empress of India" in 1903. It was upsetting, because the inherent premise of the painting was to *legitimise* the power of one empire over another country, something that doesn't hold a place in our current times. In my article, I have therefore urged the Bristol Museum to decommission the painting, or put it in an unbiased context.” For his full review, click:

http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/sumeet-grover/bristol-museum-rememberin_b_5218573.html

4. Peace Marches and Walks:

With the summer approaching, starts a season for walks and runs in North America. Most of these are focussed on fundraising for health problems than for peace and justice issues as disarmament, stop the war, or universal human values

A Nonkilling couple colleague, Alberto Agraso and Mony Dojeiji who walked 5000 km from Rome to Jerusalem a decade ago wanting Jerusalem to become a true City of Peace, they left with me a small booklet about the pioneering American peace walker who goes by the name of Peace Pilgrim. It made me realise that inner and outer peace are interconnected.

[From Wikipedia] Peace Pilgrim born Mildred Lisette Norman (July 18, 1908 - July 7, 1981). The Peace Pilgrim as she is widely known was an American non-denominational spiritual teacher,[1] mystic,[2] pacifist,[3] vegetarian activist[4] and peace activist.[5] In 1952, she became the first woman to walk the entire length of the Appalachian Trail in one season. She also walked across the United States at least eight times, and likely more than 20 times.[6] Starting on January 1, 1953, in Pasadena, California, she

adopted the name "Peace Pilgrim" and walked across the United States for 28 years, covering over 25,000 miles.

Though this Peace Pilgrim asks peace workers to have inner peace first, she does recognize that for collective problems we need collective approaches for their solutions.

She writes:

"What people really suffer from is immaturity. Among mature people war would not be a problem - it would be impossible. In their immaturity people want, at the same time, peace and the things which make war. However, people can mature just as children grow up. Yes, our institutions and our leaders reflect our immaturity, but as we mature we will elect better leaders and set up better institutions. It always comes back to the things so many of us wish to avoid -- working to improve ourselves!"

For her booklet, "Steps Toward Inner Peace" available on the internet. Click on:

<http://www.peacepilgrim.com/steps1.htm>

Nonkilling peace marches as an individual or as a group require solidarity from those believing in the causes of peace and social justice. I share below the message received from Japanese anti-nuclear activists a few weeks ago for one on the oldest annual peace marches. The National Peace March against A and H Bombs has been going on for past 56 years. You may want to participate in it or send a message of solidarity to its organizers: "Gensuikyo" <antiatom@topaz.plala.or.jp> .

The letter from the Japanese anti- nuclear march organizers reads:

Begin forwarded message:

Date: April 17, 2014 3:02:06 AM EDT

Dear friends,

The 2014 National Peace March against A and H Bombs will start from Yumenoshima, Tokyo on May 6, 2014, heading for Hiroshima toward August.

Spreading the wish of the people for "No More Hiroshimas and No More Nagasakis", the march will proceed toward Hiroshima or Nagasaki from various points across Japan. It started 56 years ago and is carried out every year. This year too, it will be conducted in 11 major courses including other networked routes, and a total of some 100,000 people are expected to participate in it. The March is our unique form of action in which anyone can take part anytime and anywhere.

In order to further build up public support for a total ban on nuclear weapons toward 2015 NPT Review Conference and the 70th anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic-bombings, we will try the International Youth Relay in this year's march. Young peace marchers from both overseas and Japan will relay the march and walk for 3 months from Tokyo through Hiroshima.

This challenge was proposed by Ms. Malaya Fabros of the Philippines, who participated in the march from Tokyo to Kyoto last year. Six marchers from overseas and Japan have already decided to walk in one or two prefectures to relay the march. They are:

Mr. Magiting Fabros (Philippines) Tokyo & Kanagawa (May 6 to 19)

Mr. Arthur Taimanglo Jr. (Guam) Shizuoka & Aichi (May 19 to June 11)

Gifu (June 11 to 16) , TBC

Ms. Chihiro Nishida (Japan) Shiga (June 16 to 21)

Kyoto (June 21 to 26), TBC

Ms. Malaya Fabros (Philippines) Nara (June 26 to 30)

Mr. Nino Malacaste Desierto (Mindanao, Philippines) Osaka & Hyogo (June 30 to July 16)

Ms. Manisha Gaur (India) Okayama and Hiroshima (July 16 to August 4)

Ms. Sofia Wolman (USA) Hiroshima (July 26 to August 4)

We are looking for marchers in Gifu or/and Kyoto. If you are interested in joining the march, please contact us.

We will keep you updated about what is happening in the Peace March in our blogs and news. In the march, marchers will collect signatures in support of "Appeal for a Total Ban on Nuclear Weapons" and call for participation in the World Conference against A and H Bombs.

Please send your message of support and solidarity to the Peace March. Your messages will be translated into Japanese and introduced throughout Japan in the peace march and rallies. They will be a great encouragement for the Japanese peace and anti-nuclear movement.

Let us work together toward 2015 to open up the way leading to a nuclear weapon-free world.

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5. Education Diplomacy: Rhymed reflection:

A Rhymed reflection on Education Diplomacy from our colleague Francisco Gomes de Matos, a peace linguist-educator and author of: "Dignity. A Multidimensional View" (Dignity Press,2013) :

Diplomacy let`s keep admiring:
it will always be most inspiring

Now, Education and Diplomacy are juxtaposed
A globally transformative approach is proposed

How can Diplomacy educationally impact
By showing new positive ways to interact

Education Diplomacy educational diplomats together will bring
and songs of interdependence global school children will sing

The above rhymed reflection brought the following comment from a former U.S. Ambassador, Chas Freeman:

"As a retired diplomat, I think you capture the essence of the concept of "education diplomacy." I am frankly concerned about citizen illiteracy about statecraft and diplomacy that facilitates militaristic zero-sum thinking rather than the win-win equations of diplomacy. As I said in a talk in London last Wednesday. "... this is an age in which diplomacy, not the use of force, is the last resort." (<http://chasfreeman.net/aboutsyria/>)

In gratitude to Francisco, Alberto, Mony, Vishnu, Sumeet, Rumana, and Bob for their contribution to the content of this letter.

Nonkilling regards,
Bill

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"Nonkilling is THE measure of human progress"