

NK Arts RC September 2014 Letter

Dear friends,

What a tumultuous summer! With so much turmoil, it seems there is little room left for any intellectual complacency.

This month's SGI Quarterly on "The Necessity of Imagination" made me think about how little attention we pay to it. Imagination provides us capacity to dream, takes us into the secret world of hope, unshackles the Spirit, can help in our work of peace and education.

In the SGI Quarterly's lead article, Dr. Vincent Harding, a close associate of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who pursues an intergenerational nonviolent approach to justice remarks: "In the Civil Rights Movement, what was absolutely necessary was for people to imagine that the condition they were living in was not the only condition possible, and that it was possible to create something better, something better, something more humane." He adds: "There isn't any possibility of building any kind of movement for significant change unless there is involved in the experience of imagination, of hope, of seeing that which does not yet exist."

This is a profound comment for those of us who strive for Nonkilling artistic endeavours. That creativity and imagination is not limited to just artists and educators but can come from all kinds of people one would never expect. Prof. Harding notes: "We are at our best when all of the people are encouraged to know that they have great possibilities, and one of their possibilities is to dream. And if they can be encouraged to know that, it is just amazing and beyond our imagination to know what they can imagine."

CGNK is result of such imagination and creativity of Prof. Glenn D. Paige's diligent work. An important step taken last month was CGNK's recognition as a NGO by the UN ECOSOC. In its first statement before the UN Human Rights Council, the CGNK made an appeal on August 29 stating that: "The Center for Global Nonkilling appeals to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to call for the incorporation of the right not to be killed and the right not to kill, in the form of goals for the prevention and reduction of lethal and other forms of violence as part of the post-2015 development agenda... At the Center for Global Nonkilling, a participant of the WHO Violence Prevention Alliance as well as an NGO in special consultative status, we are confident that the inclusion of the prevention and reduction of killing as a measurable component of the post-2015 development agenda will help bring about the necessary social, political and institutional momentum to expand and put our existing knowledge and evidence-backed violence prevention policies, programs and strategies into practice, opening an opportunity for building safe killing-free communities around the world."

From what I received in my inbox last month I note insightful reflections about understanding of nonkilling peace, in response to Israel-Gaza warfare, atomic bombings commemoration Ukraine, Ferguson USA racial killings, Bosnia-Sarajevo war etc. These

are reflections of novelist, playwright, poets, philosopher, filmmaker, and a peace journalist. It showed their longing to find an expression of their pain, anger and hope. Am including here reflections received mainly from NK Arts RC colleagues.

A very persuasive article came from NKARC colleague Nikki Shaffeeullah. She is the editor of alternative theatre periodical alt.theatre. The journal's founding company Teesri Duniya Theatre has been responsible for staging such challenging plays in Montreal as "My Name is Rachel Corrie" and "Seven Jewish Children: A Play for Gaza".

Nikki's editorial asserts that artists in the West, and particularly in North America, do not often talk about the occupation of Palestine. She writes: "For a community that by its very nature envisions itself as agents of discourse and change, the general silence from artists about Palestine is pervasive...We must do (talk about) so because the occupation of Palestine, among other things, an artistic issue". Read the pdf attachment of her insightful editorial which intersects artistic craft of story telling with censoring of expression, colonization, taking away of human dignity, lack of concern for killings of the innocents...Artists do not create in isolation, they are part of a global community artists. She concludes: "The occupation of Palestine is an artistic issue because imagination is a vital tool shared by artists and the oppressed... As artists, the most powerful weapon we have is our ability to play, dream and imagine."

NKARC colleague Richard Preston who is an anthropologist having specialised in the power of myths wrote an op-ed entitled "Peace deserves to get our attention" in the Hamilton Spectator. He believes that peace does not get our attention because the word sounds dreamy or abstract, not tangible. He writes: "We need more kinds of tangibility for peace-building to seem real enough to get the kind of attention that violence gets." Does focus from peace to nonkilling takes us toward that sort of tangibility? For more on Dick's op-ed, click on the link:

<http://www.thespec.com/opinion-story/4690843-peace-deserves-to-get-our-attention/>

NKARC colleague peace journalist Bob Koehler, in his two recent op-eds make a poignant comment on Ferguson USA race profiling and killing. An African-American boy dies for walking in the street — for yet one more insanely small transgression. Protesters cry for justice. The legal bureaucracy hunkers down, defends itself, does what it can to paint the deceased 18-year-old, Michael Brown, as a bad guy. Once more it's us vs. them. Nobody talks about making things right; nobody talks about healing. In his recent op ed, Bob writes:

"Ferguson, Ferguson. A community — and a nation — erupted in agony at the hellish absurdity of Michael Brown's killing. One of the deeper, darker questions concealed in the maelstrom of rage and grief of Ferguson is this one: What if Officer Darren Wilson had not been armed when he told the two teenagers to get out of the street? What if the police force that employed him knew of, and practiced, effective, nonlethal forms of keeping order in the community (and did not regard the people it was "protecting" as the enemy)? This is not a simple question, but it has a simple answer. Michael Brown would be alive and Darren Wilson would not be in hiding.

But no one is asking it because the popular imagination doesn't even entertain the possibility that such methods exist — or can be created.” For Koehler’s full op-ed, click on: <http://commonwonders.com/ourselves/the-courage-to-disarm/>

Robert Koehler is an award-winning, Chicago-based journalist and nationally syndicated writer. Visit his website at commonwonders.com <<http://commonwonders.com>>.

Nonkilling Poetry:

The following reflection from David Krieger reminds me that Nonkilling poetry is essentially about finding one's soul -- as an individual, people, country, and humanity. David writes:

TO WRITE POETRY

“To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric.”
~Theodor Adorno

Adorno has it wrong.

After Auschwitz, poetry is needed more than ever, but no longer has the luxury of being trivial. It must face the ugliness of our human brutality. It must express the heart's longing for peace and its grief at its separation from our decency. It must uncover the truth of who we are behind our masks and who we could become.

After Auschwitz, it is not poetry or art that is barbaric. It is genocide and war and violence of every kind that are barbaric. It is each of us, each a part of the whole, that is barbaric.

To write poetry after Auschwitz is to hold up a mirror to our shame and sorrow, and to provide a path for our promise. It is to probe a way forward, to forgive without forgetting and to find new ways of keeping hope alive, even in the face the tragic reality of our shared history. Poetry can uncover truths that can reconnect us with ourselves and with our lost humanity.

A country that does not appreciate poetry is a country without a way of finding its soul.”

David Krieger

August 2014

David Krieger is President of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation.

A poem was received from colleague Rifet Bahtijaragić who last week organized a pioneering Nonkilling Balkans Forum in Sarajevo. Rifet is a poet and novelist who in his

works describe experiences of Bosnian wars. The killings taking place around made him write the following poem:

W A R

How could you say people deserve war!
Where did you get such a grotesque idea?!

Even when it is "holy",
War destroys;
Humanity's everlasting wound.
The truths about enemy
Are being invented.
War follows a cholera in the mind.
Wrapped in the deceiving cloak of profit.
Human hands crush
The blossoming scents of spring.

In glasses of filthy rapture
The ashes become laurels,
Bloodstained badges
The symbols
In carriage of doubtful pride.

Spring birds arrive on the wings of hope.
Instead of nests
Ashes
And moaning streams.
A frozen mystery at the root.

If winners write history,
The truth is not true.

In war,
Happiness is the unhappiness
of all humans.

Rifet Bahtijaragić

Ada Aharoni's poem NO TALKING (August letter) has become a CGNK mantra: "Stop Killing, Start Talking, Better Yet Prevent Killing in the First Place!" Glenn wrote this recently in his response to violence and killings in the Middle East. Ada's two new poems are written in the same vein:

Happiness is A Nonkilling World

One golden day I asked you

"What is happiness"?
With a twinkle in your eye,
you promptly responded,
"Happiness is being married
to your best friend
and living in a Nonkilling World!"

I laughed and hugged you
my best friend.

Now that you have passed away,
I admire your spirit that fights my sorrow,
that sings, "Be happy in spite of all -
and go on creating a Nonkilling World -
for this is my legacy!"

Ada Aharoni

Poem 2 by Ada: "A Nonkilling Message To A Suicide Bomber".

A NONKILLING MESSAGE

TO A SUICIDE BOMBER

Deluded, brainwashed suicide bomber
they lied to you
when they manipulated your cells
with sleek murderous words
in their stupendous "Shahid Hero" washing machines
where they wash young brains like yours
with bomb-flamed slogans
and rat poison soap-suds

They lied to you when they told you -
you will go to heaven to 72 ravishing young virgins
waiting for you,
when you courageously blow yourself up
and kill as many innocent people as you can -

They always lied to you

And you did not even have the courage
to ask them: "if so,
why don't you go?"

They always lied to you and hid from
you the ultimate Nonkilling Message:

THOU SHALL'T NOT KILL!

Ada Aharoni

Nonkilling Cinema

It is encouraging to see that a ceasefire has occurred in Israel-Gaza. There are many in Israel & Palestine, especially those that have lost their love ones, sons, daughters, parents, spouses who work for peace looking forward to the day that an agreement will be reached. I received the following link to a film which shows that there may be lessons for the two sides to learn from what happened in South Africa after peace. A lesson in w Truth and Reconciliation. The film is entitled: **One Day After Peace**

The following is a short report on the film by film makers.

“Can the means used to resolve the conflict in South Africa be applied to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict? As someone who experienced both conflicts firsthand, Robi Damelin wonders about this.

Born in South Africa during the apartheid era, she later lost her son, who was serving with the Israeli Army reserves in the Occupied Territories. At first she attempted to initiate a dialogue with the Palestinian who killed her son. When her overtures were rejected, she embarked on a journey to South Africa to learn more about the country's Truth and Reconciliation Committee's(TRC) work in overcoming years of enmity. Robi's thought-provoking journey leads from a place of deep personal pain to a belief that a better future is possible and to the film, "One Day after Peace".

Miri Laufer, a co-director of the film, explains that in making the film, they did not want to reduce the focus of the movie to center only on the question on how the South-African model of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) could work in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. She explained that, they wanted to elevate the level of discourse to the vision of the founders of the TRC, which included delving into breaking

the cycle of violence and revenge. She added that during her research for the movie, she was amazed by the testimonies and horrifying details narrated by the perpetrators. "I thought to myself, what might these revelations do to both sides of the conflict? Would taking responsibility for their actions pave the way for the perpetrators healing, and the healing of their victims? Can the process that South-Africa went through give inspiration to Palestinians and Israelis as individuals and as nations?"

Erez Laufer, also a co-director, says, "I always supported peace and fought against injustice, still I thought that there were just causes that might justify violence and resistance. Instances such as fighting the apartheid regime and the Israeli occupation where such just causes. Going through the process of making this film and understanding the philosophy of the TRC changed my view. It is clear to me that there is no difference between just causes and wrong causes in seeking reconciliation. I acknowledged that in order to get reconciliation we must put aside the concept of just causes.

Taking human lives is the same everywhere, there is no difference between bereaved mothers, whether they are Israeli, Palestinian, black or white. So now I can say, that I support non-violence and am totally against any sort of violence conducted by state or individuals for any reason."

For more, click on the links below:

<http://docsforeducation.com/One_Day_After_Peace.php>
http://docsforeducation.com/One_Day_After_Peace.php

<<http://www.onedayafterpeace.com/index.php>>
<http://www.onedayafterpeace.com/index.php>

Reminds me of another piece from the recent alt.theatre about reconciliation between indigenous and settlers in Canada entitled, Entering into the Journey of Reconciliation by Will Weigler. An interesting quote from the article

Unless we who are non-Indigenous undertake to turn over the rocks in our colonial garden, we will never achieve what we claim to want so badly—to transform and reconcile our relationship with Indigenous people. Rather we will remain benevolent peacemakers, colonizer-perpetrators bearing the false gift of a cheap and meaningless reconciliation that costs us so little and Indigenous people so much. But what if we were to offer the gift of humility as we come to the work of truth telling and reconciliation? Bearing this gift would entail working through our own discomfort and vulnerability, opening ourselves to the kind of experiential learning that engages our whole being—our heads, our hearts, our spirits.
- Paulette Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within*

See pdf attachment for the full article.

Atomic Bombings Commemorations

Last month (August 4 and 9) were Hiroshima and Nagasaki Atomic Bombing commemoration days! Two reports below show the creativity in reporting:

TV entertainer John Oliver's tragic-comic description of absurdity of nuclear weaponization shows that a gentler way of getting the complex message could be more impactful. Report forwarded by Science for Peace colleague Metta Spencer. Click on to watch Oliver educating his audience. Enjoy.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Y1ya-yF35g&feature=share>

NKARC colleague Koozma Tarasoff wrote a moving report on Hiroshima commemoration in Ottawa, entitled: **“69th Anniversary of Atomic Bombings Cries out for Peace”**. The report makes an insightful observation on the deaths of two innocent victims from the same war: Sodeko and Anne Frank. For further click on:

<http://spirit-wrestlers.blogspot.ca/2014/08/69th-anniversary-of-atomic-bombings.html>

The Great Peacemakers

For an informative peace site which combines art, music and poetry of peace champions of past, click on: <http://www.thegreatpeacemakers.com/>

Nonkilling Books

CGNK has published an outstanding book - The Principle of Nonviolence: A Philosophical Path. It is translation of *Le principe de non-violence* (1995) by French Philosopher-writer-activist. A most valuable book for those who want to understand philosophical concept of nonviolence. As its author cites: "Nonviolence is philosophy's starting point, as well as its final goal." Something to think about. You can buy it from Amazon etc. but it is available for free download at www.nonkilling.org

Our NKARC colleague Doctor Bernard's has brought out the 2nd edition of his book on Barack Obama. He writes: "It has been awhile and after much effort, I have worked out the kinks to get BARACK published online. It's available on Amazon books:

http://www.amazon.com/Barack-Challenges-Achievements-Americas-President/dp/0991272099/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1407867693&sr=8-2&keywords=bernard+aquina+doctor

In response to the August letter a colleague asked to explain about "Nonkilling is more than peace" comment; yes, it is – it is about Life with Dignity: where everyone has the right not be killed, and the right not to kill. With every issue of the NKARC letter, we keep coming across new insights into the definition and understanding of this “tangible” paradigm.

As I mentioned in our first letter more than a year ago, unlike violence nonkilling creativity and imagination has infinite possibilities showing us new paths, processes, and means for a decent life-saving world.

Let me conclude with the following rhymed reflection from our Nonkilling poet colleague Francisco Gomes de Matos:

LET'S WAVE THE NONKILLING FLAG: A GLOBAL PLEA*

Rhymed reflections by Francisco Gomes de Matos, Recife, Brazil

“When the Nonkilling Flag we wave

we show our community how to be brave

In doing so, all forms of killing we will fight

and to the citizens where we live we`ll bring a new light

If people everywhere the flag of sustainable nonkilling life decide to wave

They will see that preventively thousands /millions of precious lives they
can save

In every community East and West a Nonkilling Flag there should be

So their Ultimate Nonkilling Peace responsibility all citizens will see”

Francisco

In deep appreciation to Nikki Shaffeeulah, Ada Aharoni, Dick Preston, Bob Koehler, Erez Laufer, Will Weigler, Rifet Bahtijaragic, Koozma Tarasoff, Francisco Gomes de Matos, Bernard Doctor, Metta Spencer, Glenn Paige, Joam Evans Pim and SGI Quarterly.

Let's keep our imagination on go for new works of nonkilling peace and art.

Nonkilling regards,

Bill

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“Nonkilling is THE measure of human progress”