

NonKilling Arts RC Letter: November 2015

Dear friends,

Thank you for your contributions and suggestions for inclusion in this month's letter. These deal with the issue of our cultural conditioning of violence and killings and exploration of how arts through its creative processes can help to alleviate that. It was Tolstoy who once noted: "Art must suppress violence, and only art can do so." Overcoming such conditioning requires rising above from our nation/tradition bound narrow definitions of love, peace, and citizenship to one's fundamental right to life and human dignity. The contributions below strive to do that.

1. Theatre and Nonkilling:

Striking Distance: The Violence We See, and Don't See, Onstage

by Russell Vandembroucke

This article talks about violence in plays from the Greeks to the recent Pulitzer-winning 'DISGRACED' by Ayad Akhtar, the most produced play in the USA this season. Disgraced is described as a "bouillabaisse of contemporary issues boiling around one another: ethnic profiling and immigration; terrorism and Islamofascism; race and identity stereotyping of Jews, African Americans, and Muslims. But after much smart and engaging talk among the (New York's) Upper East Siders, emotion and alcohol gives way to direct violence. This explosive and provocative moment is a vivid example of a shift in the representation of domestic violence; it also provides an opportunity to identify other forms of violence that are indirect, impersonal, and at least as pernicious."

Russell concludes: "In his 1977 essay "On Violence," (playwright) Edward Bond writes: "The causes of human violence can be easily summed up. It occurs in situations of injustice. It is caused not only by physical threats, but even more significantly by threats to human dignity. . . .Whenever there is serious and constant violence, that is a sign of the presence of some major social injustice." The playwrights cited above appear to agree with Bond on the root of violence as reflected in the structural and cultural violence evident within these plays. Gays, women, or people of color wrote them all.

Threats to human dignity," of course, have been reflected onstage long before Galtung's coinages: *The Oresteia* ends with a system of justice replacing the endless cycle of violence perpetuated by honor killings. Two thousand years later, Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession* uses sexual slavery as a locus for his Fabian critique of capitalism.

The purpose of playing, as Hamlet instructs the players, "was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature." Only four bodies litter the stage of Denmark's rotting state as the curtain falls on Elsinore, but far more suffer from structural and cultural violence that is easily overlooked when it is covert and indirect. As Bond writes, "Like most people, I am a pessimist by experience but an optimist by nature, and I have no doubt that I shall go on being true to my nature." In relation to violence, we can align the two: Violence in

all its forms—direct, structural, and cultural—is committed by people and by institutions that act on our behalf. And the people and institutions that make violence can also unmake it."

For complete article, click on: <https://www.transcend.org/tms/2015/10/striking-distance-the-violence-we-see-and-dont-see-onstage/>

Russell Vandenbroucke is a professor of theatre arts, and director of the Peace, Justice & Transformation Program, at the University of Louisville. He previously served as artistic director of [Northlight Theatre](#) in Skokie, Ill.

Thank you, Antonio.

2. Poetry and Nonkilling:

Last month, I received three reflections on the meaning of poetry. Regardless of their diverse cultural origins, they all point out that the essence of poetry is not dejection and hopelessness but its opposite, even when solutions remain unclear. The three views below are by Ashok Vajpeyi, Mark Frutkin and Ada Aharoni.

(a) Eminent Indian poet Ashok Vajpeyi recently returned his highest national literary award to the Indian government protesting its silence on the killings of 3 authors and muffling of dissent in India. He believes that the poetry is born out from the need to look for alternative vision and change. Poetry demands one to get in act of finding 'truth', especially the other half of missing multifaceted truth. For more on Ashok Vajpeyi, see his 11 minute video lecture, click on:

Ashok Vajpeyi - lecture on poetry 2013 : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4f3STru5PQ> .
More on his Wikipedia page.

(The interview sourced from internet)

(b) Canadian poet and novelist Mark Frutkin, a NKARC colleague in introduction to his new poetry collection, 'Hermit Thrush', describes purpose of poetry among other things as "the revelation of a secret that is suddenly familiar". He writes:

"There is music in the poem but the poem is not music. There may be meaning in the poem but the poem is not simply its meaning. There may be a cascade of language in the poem but the poem is not simply language. The poem is all of these and none of these. The poem is a window thrown open, clouds parting, a shooting star. The poem is a minor spasm in a quiet corner of the heart, a peeling back at the edge of the universe, the revelation of a secret that looks suddenly familiar." (from Hermit Thrush, Quattro Books, copyright 2015, Mark Frutkin)

The Emperor's Poem

by Mark Frutkin

The iron mountain towers above us
robed in mist, its crags

reach through the clouds into heaven,
 a single white waterfall seems
 to thread down from the sky
 in steps and fragments
 and, like the trail behind us,
 disappears the way we have come.
 I see my lieutenant up ahead
 alone on his horse.
 He reminds me of myself.
 Though I am the greatest emperor
 the world has ever known,
 the mountain towering above
 was here before I came,
 will remain when I have gone.
 The first heavy rain will obliterate
 our footprints and any sign of our passing.
 In ten springs, a hundred, a thousand,
 this path will remain the signature
 of a traveler unknown, and the mist
 will continue to swirl and dissipate
 like poems breathed on air.
 (from Iron Mountain, Beach Holme Press, copyright 2001, Mark Frutkin)

Web site: www.markfrutkin.com
 Blog: www.markfrutkin.blogspot.com
 Thank you Mark.

(c) NKARC colleague Israeli poet Ada Aharoni in her recent interview with Solveig Hansen talks about writing of peace poems. In Solveig's interview, IFLAC's founder Ada comments: "The whole point of IFLAC - International Forum for the Literature and Culture of Peace - is not to praise or blame the one side or the other of a Conflict, through our poetry, but like Wilfred Owen to show the horror of war to both sides, and to banish war from our earth and create a world beyond war, terror and violence."

The interview points to the complexity of writing a "peace poem" amidst a long drawn political conflict where issues of asymmetrical power and colonial history persist and differently interpreted by each side. How does one in such a political and cultural divide define an "aggressor"? See attached Solveig Hansen's interview with Ada Aharoni and Ada's three poems as well as Palestinian Mahinour's poem which led to Solveig's interview.

Thank you Solveig and Ada.

(d) On Sumeet Grover's Global Poetry website just came across on its Nonkilling Poetry page a poem entitled MALALA by NKARC colleague Steve Sunderland. For the text, click on:

<http://www.globalpoetry.org/blog/2012/11/05/malala/#.VjOOWtKrSIE>

Thanks Steve and Sumeet.

3. Cinema and Nonkilling:

Stuart Cryer's empowering doc. is about community building, it encapsulates the life experienced and lessons learned in the 3 plus decades Stuart lived in Sudbury, Canada. "This is a story of the people who live in the Flour Mill - Donovan community, near the nickel mines of Sudbury, who collaborate to create a work of art to grace their neighbourhood park. There is a mountain in the Flour Mill - Donovan that the people want to protect and their Hands become central to their project. "

A Show of Hands, alternatively A Better Beginnings Sudbury project:

<https://vimeo.com/142085916>

Thank you, Steve.

4. Art, Healing and Nonkilling:

NKARC colleague Paul Heidebrecht sent my way information about an unusual art exhibit by Shannon Moroney being shown at the Conrad Grebel University College, University of Waterloo. It explores Resiliency as a precious human value and how it can contribute to peace. Since 2008, Shannon has been addressing audiences around the world on this theme. She tells the story of her husband's arrest, trial, sentencing, and the insights she gained about justice and healing as she struggled to triumph over tragedy. Reading selected pieces from her book and using photos and artwork to illustrate her journey, Shannon deals with the principles of restorative justice and forgiveness and how they can be applied in circumstances of crime and conflict in our most desperate moments.

For more on the exhibit, click on:

<https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-peace-advancement/news/exploring-resilience-through-artwork-shannon-moroney>

You can listen to a documentary by Shannon on the subject for CBC's The Current at:

<http://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-september-9-2015-1.3220458/shannon-moroney-examines-how-crime-hurts-families-of-perpetrators-1.3220460>

Thank you, Paul

5. Journalism and Nonkilling:

NKARC friend Robert Koehler in his op-ed piece entitled '**An International Conscience**', writes: "If we valued human life, we would never go to war. Everybody knows this. It's the biggest open secret out there, buried under endless public relations blather ..."

For Bob's full op-ed, click on:

<http://commonwonders.com/world/an-international-conscience/>

There is an interesting **Nonkilling response to the killings in Afghanistan** from local nonviolent peace movement founded by Dr. Hakim Young and Kathy Kelly which may provide us an opportunity to learn from and build nonkilling relationships. See below the email from Afghan Nonviolent Peace Volunteers and url to five tiny videos. Last three

lines of the email requesting us to forward of the videos to friends are important: "Tell them not to fear what they'll see and hear. It is our hope that the images and sounds will humanize all of us, and help us to feel again." That's Nonkilling spirit.

From: Our Journey To Smile [mailto:journeytosmile@gmail.com]
 Sent: Saturday, October 03, 2015 10:23 AM
 To: Undisclosed recipients
 Subject: After U.S. fatal airstrikes on Kunduz MSF Hospital, #Enough!
 Inviting you to see Afghans differently

Dear friends,

After 14 long years of assuming that the war in Afghanistan is necessary, each day for the *next five short days, we offer you five tiny video snippets which invite you to see Afghans differently

<<https://youtu.be/OnO5ITUoBjY>> : <https://youtu.be/OnO5ITUoBjY>

To the Afghan Peace Volunteers in Kabul, acquiring new insights is essential, if we are all to survive the growing, multidirectional violence, from the Taliban on the ground or from U.S./NATO airstrikes like the fatal airstrike on the MSF (Doctors Without Borders) Hospital in Kunduz. Please share these video clips with your friends. Tell them not to fear what they'll see and hear. It is our hope that the images and sounds will humanize all of us, and help us to feel again.

*from the 3rd till the 7th of October, the 'anniversary' of the beginning of the U.S./NATO military presence in Afghanistan.

Hakim with the Afghan Peace Volunteers

Follow each of the five videos at

<http://enough.ourjourneytosmile.com/wordpress/enough-inviting-you-to-see-afghans-differently/>

www.facebook.com/wesayenough

Thank you Bob, thank you Glenn for Dr. Hakim's email.

6. Last word by Francisco Cardoso Gomes de Matos:

To help guide us from our cultural conditioning of violence to Nonkilling, colleague Prof. Francisco cardoso gomes de matos has put together a comprehensive checklist of how to incorporate Nonkilling in our social and family life. See the attached for this transformational document for putting up in our homes, classrooms and workplaces-- Family poster: A Nonkilling Checklist for Family Use.

Thank you Francisco.

My profound gratitude to all who contributed or pointed to the material for this letter.

Looking forward to your contributions and comments as always.

Nonkilling Regards,

Bill

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"Nonkilling art explores the spirit and practice of how to prevent, respond to, and to improve individual, social, and global well-being beyond killing." - Glenn D. Paige

== Nonkilling is THE measure of Human progress==