

Journal 11

January 2007

The Journal is published four times a year by

InnerPeace/WorldPeace
319 South Harvey Avenue
Oak Park, Illinois 60302

In this issue

Entry Points, Not Issues
—Wayne Vanek

Checking Out A Check-in
—Bud Hayes
—Tom Ard
—Cindy Palombi
—Bob Haisman
—Jeff Olson

Of Peace, Postcards, and Good Citizenship
—Sue Pihl

innerpeaceworldpeace.org

A JOURNAL OF INNERPEACE/WORLDPEACE

ENTRY POINTS, NOT ISSUES —Wayne Vanek

It was such a beautiful day—a cloudless blue sky with temperatures in the mid 60's. I was sitting on the soft ground letting my eyes scan the fence, or rather the third layer of fencing, with its razor wire cap. These fences protect Fort Benning in Columbus, Georgia, from the participants in the annual solemn vigil procession honoring thousands of Central American persons who have disappeared, been tortured, or massacred by graduates of the School of the Americas housed on this army base. My eye rested on a picture of the earth with the words: "PEACE because good planets are hard to find." My initial thought was that it was interesting that someone involved in the environmental movement was also at the School of the Americas vigil. (see page 7)

As I studied the poster, I remembered an article introduced to me at the Saturday morning Inner Peace/World Peace group in which Frances Moore Lappé told of a group of women standing in the rain in front of the Kennedy White House protesting above-ground nuclear testing. Journalist Rebecca Solnit overheard one of the women saying how "foolish and futile" she felt standing sign in hand in the pouring rain. Many years later Ms. Solnit heard Dr. Benjamin Spock say that the turning-to-action point for him was seeing a small group of women protesting at the White House in the rain. Spock decided that if they were so passionately committed, he should give the issue more consideration himself and went on to become one of the country's highest profile opponents of nuclear testing.

Ms. Lappé stated that "we all fear our own insignificance. This fear pushes us to take action, but it can also be debilitating. We feel we are only a drop in the bucket. To flip our fear of insignificance into surging power, we must be able to perceive that bucket to be the wider pattern of positive change that our efforts help bring to life.

That bucket is an awakening, a new understanding of power. It's no longer a top-down, command-and-control world. It is a highly interconnected net-world with changes rippling up and through billions of "nodes." There are two million citizen organizations in the U.S. alone.

The quote of Albert-Laszlo Barabasi, a physics professor at Notre Dame, in his book *Linked* helps us to see the wider pattern of change. "We have come to see that we live in a small world where everything is linked to everything else.....We despair over our individual powerlessness only if we remain trapped in our own skins and blind to the intricate net sewing us all together. In a net every one of us is a 'node' whose actions can ripple through all the links."

At the Fort Benning fence the poster made me see these issues—environment, military repression, and peace, coming together. And during the weekend there were many persons advocating other causes or issues—human rights, women's rights, health care, gay rights, indigenous rights, water scarcity, militarization of our culture.

Ms. Lappé's most important point is: "...there are no issues, distinct and finite. There are only entry points into the net of life. If we think of our actions as entry points, each affecting a node in the pattern, then we see we are actually shifting the whole pattern when we act with clear intention. The ripples through the net are potentially infinite. What a sense of power!"

During the three-hour vigil procession, we answered, "Presente," as the names of the victims were read out, and I sensed solidarity growing within me. Solidarity with the martyred persons; solidarity with my fellow marchers. But most of all solidarity with myself. I feel I can trust myself to take more risks. I sense the truth of Ms. Lappé's statement, "We can believe the world can change only as we experience ourselves changing. Ultimately, it's our own direct experience that's the most convincing." I understand that whenever the School of the Americas is finally shut down, the most important change will be the one that took place in each of the 20,000 marchers—in each one an "entry point into the net of life."

I want to end with Ms. Lappé's conclusion: "As we proceed on our walk with fear, we become more convincing to ourselves, and we can look out to the rest of the world able to see possibilities once hidden from view. Others see our courage growing, too; and we can never guess the impact. One thing is certain. Your change does not stop with you."

My heart leaps with
joy as I encounter
all these others
who are striving
to light a candle
rather than curse
the darkness.

—Tom Ard

CHECKING OUT A CHECK-IN —Bud Hayes, *Editor*

American parlance, in its tireless search for linguistic short cuts, has done some interesting things with the words “check-in” and “checking-out.” Both terms are off-hand, somewhat flippant ways of referring to things that are neither. A death can be reported by saying that someone “checked-out.” We keep it light that way and can maintain a safe distance from a threatening reality. The regulating of emotional distance by jargon can work the other way as well. In our Saturday morning InnerPeace/WorldPeace group we use what we call a “check-in.” When the leader for the day or anyone present calls for a “check-in,” it’s a way of easing ourselves into a process that can become quite personal, intense, and powerful.

We usually sit in a circle at the meetings. A “check-in” is an opportunity for each person in the circle to speak on a given issue or report on how they are doing at that particular moment in their lives. It’s a simple enough technique, a standard procedure I would imagine in any garden variety group process manual. The benefits, however, are out of proportion to the simplicity of the technique. These are several:

First, it builds group cohesiveness. Not everyone has to speak. They can pass if they wish, but most people do not. Many in our group have been surprised, including those usually reluctant to speak in group settings, at how much a part of the group they have come to feel over time, in large part by virtue of this process. We follow the procedure faithfully. We have never had a situation where we get halfway around the circle, drift off on some topic and not come back. There is the security of knowing that each person will have his or her time if they want it. Bonding begins to occur. The participants begin to feel like members of a family that is both organized and spontaneous, a functional family if you will.

Second, the level of exchange on a personal level deepens. People feel freer to express what they are feeling. There is an affective synergy in the room. When one person expresses feelings, others are moved to do so. The process invites, and encourages risk and makes it safe to take risks.

Third, there is an infectious, germinal quality about the process. Participants are moved to experiment, put out ideas or make disclosures that they might have kept in reserve or not even thought of in a more conventional social setting. Group participants carry the process with them. The group becomes a point of reference. People think about things during the week they want to say in the group. Thoughts and feelings germinate at a subliminal level.

That’s the formula. In summary this is how it looks:

- ◆ **Group cohesiveness**
- ◆ **Affective depth**
- ◆ **Openness**

Now let’s see what it can produce. I want to begin with **Tom Ard**, because something he did in the group several weeks ago initiated the chain of events that I am going to describe that illustrate what can come out of the “check-in” process. Tom and his wife are both retired school teachers and long-time community activists. Tom is a scholarly person, well read in the areas of economics, politics and theology with a special interest in workers cooperatives and other alternatives to traditional capitalism. He has facilitated many book discussions in his home with an even-handed style of leadership designed to give everyone an opportunity to say what is on their minds. But his life had been one of prose until he awakened one morning recently and these words came to him:

My heart leaps with joy as I encounter all these others who are striving
To light a candle rather than to curse the darkness.
My soul feels pain for those beautiful souls who sometimes
Become mired for a time in cursing the darkness,
So that they are unable to see the light of the candle.
May they find peace.

continued on next page>

Do you know
that feeling
Of concern you
get for a friend
or family...
As they pass
through a
difficult time?

—Cindy Palombi

Meet **Cindy Palombi**, long time Montessori school teacher currently involved in Dances for Universal Peace. In the group she takes her turn regularly with opening and closing meditations and registers her opinions in the “check-ins” with a quiet authority. On the Saturday morning after the November elections she spoke in a very moving and beautiful way about how she had been carrying in her thoughts and prayers a concern about another member of the group who had been deeply invested in helping to turn out the vote but was very worried about the outcome. We thought we knew her until this moment. I don’t think I exaggerate when I say that our reaction was one of holy astonishment. Like Tom, she chose poetry as the vehicle for her words.

Do you know that feeling
Of concern you get for a friend or family person or even a stranger
When they struggle with fear and dread?

Do you know that feeling
Of holding them tenderly in your thoughts
As they pass through a difficult time?

Do you know that feeling
Of visualizing
A new and radiant smile on their face?

Do you know that feeling
Of peace and gratitude
That rises up in you like a mist after a storm?

Do you know that feeling
Of awe
When you realize what you are seeking is what you will find?

Do you know that feeling
Of abundance
When your emotions so fill you that your eyes overflow?

Feel the comfort
That comes from being with others
Who feel.

Bob Haisman is also a retired school teacher and administrator. He and his wife have a long history of activism around a broad range of social and political issues. He is passionate about wanting his church to speak out against the war in Iraq. On the weekend before the election he participated in a peace march in Washington D.C. It is not poetry but I like the offhand, somewhat ironic but also deeply committed way in which he writes. There is poetry in that. Here is what he emailed from D.C. on election day:

Hi, Friends of Peace.

I think I wrote you about the “Peace Gathering” this week in the park across from the White House. Well I made the trip!

I’m glad I went. I had a moving day yesterday. I “did my thing,” standing with Cindy Sheehan—a Gold Star Mom—in protest of the war.

There aren’t nearly as many people here as the “Gold Star Families for Peace” had hoped for. I don’t think it will make the news anywhere.

This kind of event always collects some “crazies.” For a while yesterday I thought it was going to be the “crazies,” a few homeless guys and me, in the park by the White House.

But people drifted in all day. One of the things the “Peace Movement” ought to do is hire one of the fresh faced young Republican operatives to organize itself. Ha! Ha!

continued on next page>

They talked about
the children they
had lost in Iraq...
what kind of kids
they were...I cried.

—Bob Haisman

Bob Haisman—*continues*>

There was music. There is always music at a peace rally, ...wonderful, emotional, authentic, home-made music. One of the refrains that will play in my mind all week is, "If they want this war so bad...why don't they send *their* sons and daughters to die?"

There was outlandish and loud speechifying. There always is. There were signs and marching. But this was no "professionally produced event" like when my Teachers Union had put on protest marches. This was homespun, spontaneous. Folks bent down in front of the White House and made hand-lettered signs for peace. Cindy Sheehan was using a marker making signs on poster board for folks. The "professional" organizers would scorn this effort, but there was real grass-roots charm in it

The most important part of the day was when Cindy Sheehan, using a hand held microphone, recognized the Gold Star Families there. Most were women, about a third with their spouses. It dawned on me then that these were the women and men I had seen all day, some obviously feeling uncomfortable, many with sad eyes. They had lost a child in Iraq.

Cindy invited any who wanted to speak to speak. Slowly, reluctantly, parents drifted to the portable microphone. Some were loud, angry, strident. Some were so soft you couldn't quite hear. They talked about the children they had lost in Iraq...what kind of kids they were, how they had played football or performed in the band, how they loved their country, how they died. I cried. As many of you know, I cry easily, but I'm telling you, there was not a dry eye in Lafayette Park.

We traveled to the Viet Nam memorial last night and held candles of remembrance.

I'm glad I came to Washington and stood for peace with Cindy in the park.

God, I hope America votes for peace today.

Jeff Olson, the convener of our Saturday group, has been breaking into poetry for some time now, but it is still a rather new experience for him as well and has come out of his involvement in peacemaking. Here is his latest contribution.

Every part of my life—my church life, my work life, my peacework, my personal life, my family life—is richer, is more empowering, is alive with the lightness of freedom when I focus on what I want rather than on what I don't want. Lately this lesson has been appearing for me everywhere.

When I am clear about what I want to be, do or have, I feel an energy, an excitement and inspiration. At times in earlier years, when I focused on the shortcomings and unfairness of my boss and employer, work was too often deadening and little changed. But when at one point I began to envision a company that I could create, the business came to life almost effortlessly.

Politically now I hear many decrying injustice, failed policies in Iraq, endless human tragedies of suffering, and greed in government. But after a while I become numb at hearing or railing against the problems of the world. I want to be inspired, not motivated. Inspired by the possibilities, not motivated by the fear of how bad it is or can get.

There is so much I'd like to think about, to write about, to create in peacework that some days I can hardly bring myself to go to my day job. In our relationship to Iraq, I believe this is a time of opportunity for new direction as there is wide-spread recognition that existing U.S. action has not worked. I want to see our country bring a new attitude of humility, of forgiveness, of apology to the Iraqi people—which would guide and improve all our specific political and military decisions.

I also want to build our community and help others build their communities of support, gratitude, reflection and action. I want to be with my family in loving

continued on next page>

So join we now
our prayer and
passions great,
To steer the world
at last toward some
other fate.

—Bud Hayes

ways that I have previously been unable to do. I want to follow through with support for efforts in reconciliation and healing among Palestinians and Israelis. I spent over twelve hours this weekend in planning two adult education workshop series for my church on “The Christian response to Iraq” and “Forgiveness and Reconciliation” and I enjoyed myself so much the time just flew by.

I am grateful for the reminder in Tom Ard’s beautiful poem to “light a candle rather than curse the darkness.” I will read that often. I am grateful to Paul Ferrini (www.paulferrini.com) who in a workshop this year helped me get past a logjam of personal/family complaints by little more than asking me “What do you want?” I am grateful for the book *Ask and It Is Given—Learning to Manifest Your Desires* by Esther and Jerry Hicks and to my sister for recommending it.

Bud Hayes—I don’t mean to suggest that InnerPeace/WorldPeace is turning into a poetry group. What I make of all this is that poetic modes of expression are particularly effective in fusing thought and feeling in a powerful way. I think that’s what’s happening to more and more of us in the group. It also happened again to me. I say “happened” because I didn’t decide to do this. I was thinking about the opening lines of Robert Frost’s poem “Fire and Ice” and then I found lines of my own:

*Some say the world will end in fire; Some say ice.
Others think that such an end is way too nice.
Mushroom clouds with lunar landscapes in their wake,
The heart of the world is there for us to break.*

But surely such a course is not set in stone,
And we do not have to bear such dire fate alone.
This fragile planet is bequeathed to us as gift,
Its survival a product of our soul’s uplift.

So join we now our prayers and passions great,
To steer the world at last toward some other fate,
Than windswept plains devoid of life and hope,
Surely there is something better in our scope.

There lies, within vision’s grasp, a fertile land,
Where no one wants, the quality of life quite grand.
To be reached not by plunder or by spoils,
But by joining for the common good all our earthly toils.

So when the story of this long earthly life is done,
The highlights will not be which peoples conquered, battles won,
But where hearts were joined and common cause was made,
And that the march towards peace was our last and glorious parade.



OF PEACE, POSTCARDS, AND GOOD CITIZENSHIP — Susan Piha

Having spent most of the last 25 years in government jobs, I have fielded a number of letters and calls from citizens. Sometimes they are constructive; sometimes they are angry and accusing; sometimes it's clear that people don't understand the issue they are writing about.

At various times, I've been accused of being in cahoots with business, being in cahoots with labor, letting someone get away with murder, and even, rather memorably, of being a tree murderer. People seem to feel free to speak about and to government officials in ways they might not speak to others. Whenever this occurs, I try to focus on the issue and address the constituent's concerns. I hope that by doing so, the interaction will promote the interdependent relationship of government and citizen.

As a citizen, when I contact government officials and ask for something, I keep in mind what it feels like to be on the receiving end of such a message. I know that a calm and informed communication has a better chance of being heard.

Unfortunately, I recently found myself being the kind of uninformed constituent I sometimes encounter. It started at the peace fair in Oak Park this summer. The *Inner Peace/World Peace* table offered postcards to visitors, encouraging them to write to their members of Congress about peace. I dutifully sat down, wrote that I had just toured a peace fair, was most impressed with the information I had obtained at the US Department of Peace (USDP) booth, and encouraged my legislators to work toward the creation of a USDP. In case you don't know, the USDP proposal is for Congress to create an independent, nonpartisan, cabinet-level federal agency to promote peacemaking. I left the fair, dropped the postcards into a mailbox, and felt I had done a good thing.

A couple months later, while online, I came across a reference to a US Institute of Peace (USIP). Curious, I followed the link. I was surprised to learn that the USIP—an independent, nonpartisan, federal peace organization—has existed since 1986. How could this be?

I remembered that I had first heard the idea of a USDP when Dennis Kucinich was running for president in 2001, so I went to his web site. It contains his proposal for a USDP, but not one word regarding the history of peace efforts or even the existence of the USIP. The reader could easily have the impression that Kucinich thought of the idea himself.

I then went to the web site for the Peace Alliance, which seems to be the main coordinator of the USDP effort. Its web site contains no mention of past efforts or the USIP, either.

Searching further, I cringed when I came across an article in *The Guardian*, a British newspaper, criticizing a Bush appointment to the USIP. To me, this reinforces the stereotype that Americans are ignorant of public affairs, while Europeans know more about our country than we do. The more vocal American peace advocates aren't even mentioning the USIP; they certainly aren't participating in its work or analyzing its operations.

Any discussion on public policy should put things in context, which, in this case, requires at least the mention of an existing government agency. The goals of the real-life Institute and the proposed Department are much the same; the main difference is that the Department would be in the cabinet, while the Institute is not. To insure its independence, Congress chartered the USIP as a nonprofit corporation.

Had I known of the existence of the USIP, I would have never written those postcards: I think the USIP's independent status is actually preferable to a cabinet-level agency. I felt angry that the USDP information was so incomplete as to be misleading, and embarrassed that I had relied on it.

I took this as an opportunity to practice the four-step *Nonviolent Communication* (NVC) technique, developed by Marshall Rosenberg, which we have been working with during the Saturday morning meetings. The four steps are:

MISSION STATEMENT

InnerPeace/WorldPeace advocates for nonviolence by means of spiritual disciplines, group meetings, education and activism.

We believe there is a necessary connection between inner transformation and finding effective alternatives to violence in the world. We welcome dialogue with others.

Did you know?

The idea of a peace office goes back to 1792.

- ◆ Hundreds of proposals have been floated in Congress since the 1930s.
- ◆ President Carter created a study commission in the 1970s, which conducted public hearings.
- ◆ A bipartisan bill to create the US Institute of Peace was signed into law in 1984.
- ◆ The first USIP staffers were hired in 1986.
- ◆ The USIP has granted over \$50 million in 1,500 grants for projects in 76 countries.
- ◆ Congress has assigned a section of the National Mall near the Vietnam Veterans Memorial for a new USIP building.
- ◆ The bipartisan Iraq Study Group is coordinated by the USIP.
- ◆ Over 70 specialists are now on staff, with expertise in arms control, civil society, conflict management, human rights, international law, rule of law, war crimes, etc.
- ◆ USIP staffers have written over 100 books and published articles on a variety of subjects in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Boston Globe*, etc.
- ◆ You can learn more at www.usip.org.

Of Peace—continued>

1. Make an observation, without judgment, of a concrete action.
2. Say how you feel in relation to what you have observed.
3. Cite the needs or values that are creating your feelings.
4. Request a concrete action.

So I sent emails to Rep. Kucinich and the Peace Alliance, 1) observing that they are advocating a USDP without mentioning or analyzing the existing governmental efforts towards peace, and 2-3) stating I find it hard to trust what they are saying when their information contains such a large omission, and 4) asking them to provide a fuller context when they speak on the USDP idea, to try to work with the USIP now, and to keep us posted on those efforts. I had to struggle with the language a bit, and my messages weren't textbook *Nonviolent Communication*, but I think they were workable. For good measure, I also emailed the USIP, asking them to try to work with the USDP advocates.

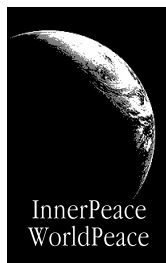
In this second attempt, I believe I communicated in such a way that there is a better chance of getting a positive response. Failing that, I can feel a sense of peace that I have made a reasonable, good faith effort.

I hope this experience will serve to show that, like any relationship, the bond between government and citizens requires open and honest communications, respect, and due diligence. If we do our part, then whatever the response, we will promote peacemaking and grow in our own citizenship skills.



"My eye rested on a picture of the earth with the words: "PEACE because good planets are hard to find." My initial thought was that it was interesting that someone involved in the environmental movement was also at the School of the Americas vigil.

—Wayne Vanek



FYi

Journal Sign-up

Sign up at our *website*:
www.innerpeaceworldpeace.org,
or phone: 312-720-1171 or write to:

InnerPeace/WorldPeace
319 South Harvey Avenue
Oak Park, Illinois 60302

Use of Our Material

You are welcome to reproduce articles or make copies of this journal. If you do quote from this journal, please credit the source and let us know how you used it.

From Our Readers

We would like to hear from you. This journal is about conversation and dialogue about the things that matter most. All responses will be acknowledged. Some, with your permission, will be included in our journal as space allows.

Editorial Group

Mary Erkins
Bud Hayes, *Editor*
Emory Mead, *Design*
Jeff Olson
Amy Abbott Pappageorge
Demetrios Pappageorge
Wayne Vanek

budhayes@innerpeaceworldpeace.org



"This fragile planet is bequeathed to us as gift."

—Bud Hayes

Resurrection Trees II
© Emory Mead

InnerPeace/WorldPeace
319 South Harvey Avenue
Oak Park, Illinois 60302

RETURN REQUESTED

