

Journal 14

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A JOURNAL OF INNERPEACE/WORLDPEACE

In It For The Long Haul

—Bud Hayes, Co-Editor

It's been a while since you have heard from us. The demands of living contend with our best intentions, but we have been far from idle. We continue our witness from the steps of First United Church in Oak Park from 7 to 8 pm on Friday nights. We also still meet on Saturday mornings for reflection, support and learning. There are spin-off groups of one sort or another doing things related to our InnerPeace/WorldPeace mission. Something interesting is beginning to emerge in this which is the focus of this issue.

One of the signs that something has gone in and become a part of us is when it shows itself at unexpected times and places. For many of us nonviolence is no longer just a head thing or a nice idea. It is part of who we are, of how we think and feel, and how we react in spontaneous as well as intentional ways.

You will see this aspect of our work reflected particularly in the stories by Jeff Olson and Kathy Fricks. I am deeply moved by how Jeff found a way to be a gentle and affirming presence in a volatile situation. This was not something he could have planned for, but I believe that all he has exposed himself to in the last several years and what he has learned about himself prepared him for that moment. There was not a dry eye in the room when Jeff first told his story at one of our Saturday morning meetings.

I am also touched in several ways by Kathy's story. It shows how the humanity of people can come out in unexpected ways. It also reveals Kathy's honesty, her sense of humor and her ability to recognize how grace is mediated through ordinary people: cabbies, police officers and members of her own family. She had us in stitches when she told her story.

The article by Jean Ellzey has to do, not with a single incident, but with a personal journey over a longer period of time. This journey has found a hospitable place in our InnerPeace/WorldPeace meetings. Jean has talked frequently in our group about her struggles, her triumphs and defeats, and how she has gradually come to a vision of the world that works for her.

Diana Conrad Malon also speaks of her personal journey which has taken her from the monastery into the world via contemplation. For her the contemplative life has been deepened by her engagement with the world. She is affiliated with the *West Suburban Faith-Based Peace Coalition*, a sister organization in the western suburbs of Chicago which, like InnerPeace/WorldPeace, believes that seeking to change the world is organically linked with seeking to change one's self. We welcome her to our pages.

Fight on the Oak Park “EL” Train Stop

By Jeff Olson

It was one of those days when my heart and mind were open and I was at peace with myself. I had been feeling good ever since the InnerPeace/WorldPeace meeting that Saturday morning where I had shared more of myself than I usually do.

Headed downtown for weekend work, I entered the Oak Park train station to wait for the next “EL.” The train platform was crowded with tourists leaving after the Wright Plus house walk. I said “Hi” to “Marie” and her adult daughter from New York, who sat next to me on the bench while we waited, and we had a short friendly talk. When the train came, we went our separate ways and ended up on opposite ends of the El car.

While comfortably seated, I heard some commotion outside farther down the platform. A man from our car went out to check and then reported back, “There's a fight!” and then “It's two women.” Through the window I watched a crowd quickly gather, although it was far enough away that I could see very little. I thought to myself that I wanted to help, but I couldn't imagine anything I could do that would be helpful, and I didn't feel any pull to actually get up.

Suddenly the fight spilled into the next El car with loud cursing and screaming. Something banged against the door, and Marie and several others got up to leave. Marie came towards me and asked me if I was afraid. Actually, I felt completely safe,

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...“EL” Train Stop... *continued from page 1*>

as if I knew that it would all turn out just fine. Both Marie and her daughter were visibly shaken, so I invited them to sit next to me, and we just talked while the fight apparently had moved farther away again. It felt good to be a support to them, and I thought to myself that this was why I didn't go to the fight. This was my role. This was where I belonged.

A bit later, though, the fight got louder again, and the “reporter man” came in to announce, “She's got a knife,” and then “She's stabbing her.” I checked in with myself for a moment to ask if I wanted to enter the conflict, but I still didn't feel called to do anything more than to stay with my New York friends. But then two heavysset women raced in full chase by my El car window down the platform and back. As they ran back, a big wide-bodied man pushed one of the women into my El car. She stumbled inside cursing and screaming. The “reporter man” yelled, “She's the one with the knife!” Everybody including my new friends fled as fast as they could out the other door.

So there I was alone in the El car with this screaming woman. The wide-bodied man was crouching low, blocking the El door with his hands gripping the side railings to fend off the woman's attempts to get out. Two men outside were now struggling to hold back the bleeding woman outside who was shouting and lunging to get into my El car. Both women were fighting to get at each other, each one inciting the other with escalating, screaming insults.

I smiled to myself at this turn of events, knowing it was now my turn to join in. Waiting for an opportunity, I saw one when the woman inside paused for a moment from her screaming to adjust the shreds of her blouse. I quickly approached and asked quietly, “May I sit near you?” She looked at me for a long moment like she was trying to figure me out, and then motioned for me to sit on the side seat near the door. Then she sat down next to me on the cross seat about a foot and a half away. We just looked at each other straight in the eyes, and I said something that felt right at the time, maybe, “I know it's been hard for you.” Both of us started tearing up and we sat together alone in silence until the police came.

Eventually I reconnected with Marie for the trip downtown and had a good evening of work, but when I finally got home that night, I started shaking and couldn't stop. The foreignness of this experience scared me so much that it took a long, long time before I could take it all in. I did, however, feel a calming presence for that woman while she was in such a volatile state. I'm grateful for the experience.

“She's the one with the knife!”
Everybody including my new
friends fled as fast as they
could out the other door.
—Jeff Olson

“And yet passers-by
celebrate our witness,
As they do no other.”
—Bud Hayes

Thoughts at a Friday Night Peace Vigil

Because what we seek is unachieved,
And likely to remain so,
We must resort to poetry and song,
Lofty sentiments and noble aspirations,
Risking irrelevance,
Choosing what may well be a path of futility,
And yet passers-by celebrate our witness,
As they do no other.
There is a depth of satisfaction in what we do
That makes all skeptics take another look
All naysayers at least acknowledge we are here.
And the faithful too, so charged with anger still,
Persuaded of the necessity of violence,
Privy to the merits of aggression,
Believing in the righteousness of war.
They also must look at us and wonder.

—Bud Hayes

You Just Might Get What You Need

—Kathy Fricks

“Last January
the universe,
with all of its
awesome wisdom
and relentless mercy,
stepped in
to give me a ‘lesson.’”

—Kathy Fricks

It has been said that we can't always get what we want, but we might, if we're lucky, get what we need. The universe brings individually tailored life lessons right to our door step if we're open to receiving them. For example, my habits are to: move very quickly, cut corners, procrastinate, excessively scrimp with money and hardly ever stop to smell the roses. Last January the universe, with all of its awesome wisdom and relentless mercy, stepped in to give me a "lesson."

Having scheduled too many things after work, I rushed downtown to pick up my daughter and get back to Oak Park in order to have a consultation with a banker for something very important, and, to get gas ASAP in Oak Park where the prices are cheaper. Oh, yes, my car insurance had expired two days earlier, but I knew I would take care of it before the grace period. I could do all of this because, well, I'm used to chaos.

The short version of what happened is: I rear-ended a taxi downtown, was towed to a horrible holding location, went to the police station with expired insurance, missed the banker appointment, called my sister to come to the police station to pick me up and bring gasoline, went to my smashed car, couldn't get it to run, left the car to be towed in the morning to a very expensive car pound. Sounds pretty awful, right? Maybe.

Joseph the taxi driver was a young Bulgarian. This was his first day on the job. When I hit him my car was smashed and not drivable, but he had no visible damage. Joseph volunteered to follow the tow truck to see that I was OK and drive me to the police station.

The City of Chicago tow truck came quickly. Anthony, a burly black city worker was the driver. I sat quietly beside him, helpless, all my plans halted. I was stunned. I had pushed my luck too far. Anthony questioned my silence. It tearfully spilled out that this accident happened on my way to deliver my daughter to a 12 step meeting. She is in a recovery program and I had let her down. Amazingly, Anthony confessed that he had been a heroin addict for 25 years, had stolen his mother's jewelry, her only possession of value, pawned it, lied, broken promises to the only person who always loved him, gone to jail for a felony conviction and lost everything. I apparently reminded him of his long-suffering mother. He told me that God helped him and he wanted to pass that on to me. He gave me his phone number. If I couldn't get my car started, once I had gas, he said for me to call him and his friend with a towing company would tow my car back home as a favor to Anthony. He told me not to worry about money, just to focus on my daughter. He said he understood my struggle and that everything would be all right. I felt I was in the presence of an angel.

We delivered my car to a hidden dungeon on Lower Randolph. Joseph the taxi driver asked whether I was OK and did I need to use his cell phone. Mechanically I replied, "No, but I would appreciate your driving me to the police station." On the way he reassured me that he did not think the car had damage, but that the owner of the cab, Uri, would be upset because this happened on Joseph's first day on the job.

The police station at State and 26th is large, open, cold and all marble with a long, elevated personnel desk raised up presumably to intimidate the public. Joseph and I stood and looked at the desk officer. I was still numb and deserved a verbal trashing from the Chicago Police Department, but poor Joseph was terrified and tried very hard, with his broken English, to comply with the curt voice of authority. I watched like an out-of-body observer as he pulled papers from his pockets and struggled to communicate.

Finally, when it was my turn, I explained the truth and prepared to be thrown in jail for having expired car insurance. Amazingly, in possibly his one and only act of mercy ever, the officer dismissed me with instructions to make sure that I renewed the insurance immediately. After we each received a copy of the report—no ticket issued—we were free to go. At the station's exit I said good bye to Joseph, wanting to be alone so that I could fall apart privately. This very nice young man, who had just been through such a terrible ordeal because of me, not to mention the loss of three hours of pay, looked at me and, I believe, summoned all the good manners his mother had taught him and

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What You Need... *continued from page 3*

asked, "Is there anything I can do for you?" "No," I replied, "I'm very sorry this happened."

After calling my sister, sobbing, I waited alone. Time passed. No sister. More time passed. No sister. I was not anxious about time. At this point I had access to a bathroom and was hidden. What more could I want? Eventually my sister Phyllis came. She had gotten lost. Mom was with her and they bought gas. "Where is the car?" Phyl asked. Lower Randolph was where it was taken seemingly twenty hours before. We couldn't find it. In the darkness we checked out Lower Wacker. We drove all around as if we were in some kind of Twilight Zone.

At long last we did the unthinkable and asked for directions from two patrol officers leaving a Dunkin Donuts. We followed them around for a while, but they really had no idea where to look either. Finally they radioed headquarters which directed us all to the spot. In this foreign part of Chicago's underbelly, with broken glass, graffiti, noises coming from unseen things and very ugly smells, they were reluctant to leave us. We waved our gas can to show them that we would be able to leave shortly and they left.

We filled the gas tank but the car would not start. It was now about 9 pm. There was no way to get my car home. I was feeling defeated. In my pocket was the phone number Anthony had given me. Was he serious? Do strangers really come through for people? I called him. "Hello, Anthony? Do you remember me? This is Kathy, the person you towed earlier this evening. I finally got gas into the car but it won't start."

"OK," he said, "Give me your address, and I'm gonna call my friend. It's too late now but I'll call him early in the morning 'cause they'll tow it to the pound at 8 am. No, you don't need to be there. He'll find your house and leave it in the front. No, no money. I'm a felon with a city job. I got a lot to be thankful for. Take care of your daughter. By the way, if you don't have a church, you're welcome to come to mine. It's the Freedom Temple Church of God in Christ at 1459 W. 74th St., Bishop Cody Marshall."

"Thank you Anthony, very much. I just might show up there some day. 'Bye.'" And that's the end of my story. My dad called me at work the next morning and said my car was out front. Anthony came through.

Eventually I took care of my banking. The car insurance was reinstated with no lapse of coverage. The Uri cab owner called me to say there was no damage on the cab. I drive more slowly now and try to cut fewer corners. If I need gas I get it right away no matter what the price. I'm still working on procrastination. I'm different now. I know that sometimes perfect strangers want to help. People are generous. I learned, really learned, not to judge people by their color, job or nationality.

That night I didn't get any of the things I wanted, but maybe I got what I needed, and that was enough.

"In this foreign part of Chicago's underbelly, with broken glass, graffiti...and very ugly smells, they were reluctant to leave us."

—Kathy Fricks

"Do strangers really come through for people?"
I called him.

"Hello, Anthony.
Do you remember me?"

—Kathy Fricks

Vow of Nonviolence

Recognizing the violence in my own heart, yet trusting in the goodness and mercy of God, I vow for one year to practice the nonviolence of Jesus.

Before God the Creator and the Sanctifying Spirit, I vow to carry out in my life the love and example of Jesus.

- by striving for peace in my daily life;
- by accepting suffering rather than inflicting it;
- by refusing to retaliate in the face of provocation and violence;
- by persevering in nonviolence of tongue and heart;
- by living conscientiously and simply so that I do not deprive others of a means to live;
- by actively resisting evil and working nonviolently to abolish war and the causes of war from my own heart and from the face of the earth.

God, I trust in Your sustaining love and believe that just as You gave me the grace and desire to offer this, so You will also bestow abundant grace to fulfill it.

—Anonymous

A Journey of Discovery*By Jean Ellzey*

“I learned at a very
young age to be
a quiet ‘good little girl,’
and not risk disapproval
by saying what I wanted,
thought or felt.”

—Jean Ellzey

“When I sing and make up my
own tunes, it is very satisfying
and feels wholesome and
expressive of ME.”

—Jean Ellzey

In the Saturday morning group I belong to, *InnerPeace/WorldPeace*, we’ve been studying a book by Marshall Rosenberg called *NonViolent Communication: A Language of Compassion*. We believe that compassionate dialogue and non-violence can contribute to world peace. The Rosenberg method has taught us that expression of feelings and needs, rather than antagonistic expression, can open the way to honest dialogue in which both parties are heard. My issue for most of my life, however, has been finding the courage and freedom to express myself at all, and I want to tell you about that.

I learned at a very young age to be a quiet “good little girl,” and not risk disapproval by saying what I wanted, thought or felt. I know my parents loved me and cared for me, doing the best parenting they knew how to do. My mother, however, was a “busybody,” doing for others all the time, and my father was a quiet, good man. There was little discussion or expression of affection, and I grew up afraid to speak up, and feeling invisible in groups, except when I was in a leader position.

In my mid-thirties, when my children were three, five and seven years of age, our family moved from Amarillo, Texas to Evanston, Illinois. It was a different culture, climate and way of life. I had my hands full making changes to accommodate the family. I functioned okay as a homemaker and mother during those years, but I became depressed and sought psychological help in a mental health center. I had “stuffed” my feelings all my life in order to be a “good little girl” and not take the risk of disapproval so, understandably, I was withdrawn and “down.”

At the Center I was tested and interviewed and finally had an appointment with Dr. Giffin, a wonderful psychiatrist who, I think, was way ahead of her time in what she told me. In essence she said, “I do not want you to have Talking Therapy. I want you to find some means of creative self-expression in order to concretize who you are. You are emotionally undeveloped! This will help you integrate your intellectual ability with your emotional parts, which can be developed with more self-expression. I can’t tell you what to do. You have to discover it for yourself. It might be art, music, movement or other outlets.”

I first tried singing in a community chorus and quickly discovered that just singing the written notes was not the kind of creative self-expression I needed. When I sing and make up my own tunes—it is very satisfying and feels wholesome and expressive of ME.

Another discovery was when I became a member of a group of seminary faculty wives who had very stimulating conversations. I was by far the quiet one, but when I forced myself to share from my own experience, it felt really good to me. I had found another good reason to practice the “self-expression” as recommended by Dr. Giffin.

I also gradually discovered that there were several women who needed and wanted to share their feelings with someone, and I became that person. In an effort to help them feel understood and “heard,” I began to be reflective and empathic. In so doing I was actually uncovering my storage of feelings and experiences from earlier years. Listening and talking with them became my own “creative self-expression.” I soon discovered what my new career choice at the age of 44 would be: Counseling Psychology. I went back to school for a graduate degree and thoroughly enjoyed working as a counselor for 15 years.

So my journey has come all the way from being a very quiet, unexpressive person, to being a depressed mother/homemaker, to finding how I could happily express my own Self in all aspects of my life. My journey has been one of several discoveries.

These days, when I express myself, I feel much more at peace inside. I don’t feel invisible as often. What’s more, I have fun sharing my opinions and being more a part of the small groups I am in. Learning to express myself, thanks to Dr. Giffin, has been a major development in my adult life. It has brought me inner peace and helped me to feel that I can contribute to the lives of others.

My Contemplative Way to Peace

—Diana Conrad Malon

“...it was an unspoken knowing so powerful that I could not argue with it.”

—Diana Conrad Malon

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.

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I am a contemplative, a contemplative who left the monastery to return to the world. When I entered the Carmelite Monastery, the very last thought that I had was that I would never leave. Mine was a lifetime commitment. Yet, one evening during recreation, the message came loud and clear. It was hard to describe: it was a unspoken knowing, so powerful that I could not argue with it. It was as though God said within me, in no uncertain terms, that I was to leave and I was to do so immediately. The next morning, my parents came for me, and I returned home, confident I was following God's will, but, oh, so confused and unknowing about how my life would unfold.

I relate all of this, because it is important background on who I am. I am now nearly sixty, and it has taken me all these years to embrace the knowledge given that night, and to realize its meaning for my life.

My life has taken many twists and turns since my monastery days. I have been married now for thirty years, have a son, and in the last few years have broadened religiously. I am an active member of two faith communities — St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church in Naperville, and the Religious Society of Friends (Quaker) in Downers Grove. This dual membership is an incredible privilege. It is said that it is best to stick to one's own tradition and really know it, rather than dabble in this group and that. But “I know through experience,” as Quakers would say, that religions enrich one another. A special friend of mine from the monastery who has mentored me in contemplation helped me learn Zen meditation, and I have become acquainted with Sufism through the poetry of Rumi, Hafiz, and the writings of so many others. The more I learn of other traditions, the more I feel I know of God. It has become a love affair for me, a hunger to learn all I can of the Beloved through the eyes of all lovers.

With the horrific plane crashes into the Twin Towers, I became deeply concerned about how our nation and how our world could ever heal. I viewed the unspeakable event simultaneously as both a disastrous warning and a compelling opportunity to put into practice love and forgiveness, greater understanding and compassion. I saw it as a message to wake up, pay attention, to “love one another as I have loved you.” It was a long-awaited imperative for world communities to come together and finally deal with the problems that confront all of us. When the event took place, I was on my way to DuPage County Jail, where I was going to help the ladies with their meditation. I wondered how I could possibly lead them in meditation at such a time. Then the thought came that this is precisely the reason we meditate! In meditation, we learn to “non-attach” from distractions, we learn how we are all connected, are one, how we can live in the present. What a powerful lesson it was to bring all this together for my dear inmates! What better way was there to illustrate the relevance of meditation?

In the months and years that have followed, I tried to become more active in my opposition to war. I protested, I joined an activist group, I tried to bring the message of peace to others, I wrote letters. But I became more and more uncomfortable as a “persuader.” I have deepest respect and gratitude for all of those activists who are out there pricking people's consciences, and bringing energy to what they themselves know so deeply in their hearts. How earnestly we need their voices! But in a way similar to the way I had known I must leave the monastery, I felt in my heart that I was being called to go in another direction. This was not easy. I have come to know and believe that there is a place for every individual and every individual gift—and each individual does have a special gift. It's a bit like being the drummer boy, I suppose. What can I contribute?

For me, contemplation is not an escape. It is who I am. Contemplation also helps me appreciate who you are. Through my personal lived experience, I know that I am a daughter of God who sees that you, too, are God's own. We are one family. My way to peace is keeping my heart linked to yours. Within my own religions, and in relating with other religions, I try to build bridges.

Contemplation involves openness, a belief that we are guided, and a determination to go where we are led. I believe that this light is desperately needed in our world. We sometimes take up good causes without being guided. These causes often

become “ours” instead of “God’s.” The two, of course, need not be mutually exclusive. But it is so easy to get lost in the fervor. The contemplative consistently listens to that of God within and lives and acts from within that Center. Further, the contemplative delves deep to discover commonalities and oneness, to realize that all differences are superficial at worst, and enriching at best. The contemplative witnesses to that of God in you. I believe this is a worthy way of making peace.

As I mature in my faith, I realize more and more what an incredible mystery it all is, what an incredible Mystery this Reality we call God is. I am content with not knowing all the answers. I know that there is Something much bigger than I, that includes all of us. I will go on loving that Mystery and will endeavor to love every single person—we are all embraced by that Mystery.

Perhaps the biggest way that I, as a contemplative, can contribute to the cause of peace is to become peace myself, to remind others of that Presence that accompanies and is within each one of us, to echo those words so often spoken in Holy Scripture, “Fear not!” If we can bring love to our neighbors instead of fear, if we can see each individual difficulty as a difficulty for all, each individual gift as a gift for all, then no problem is too big, no blessing too small.

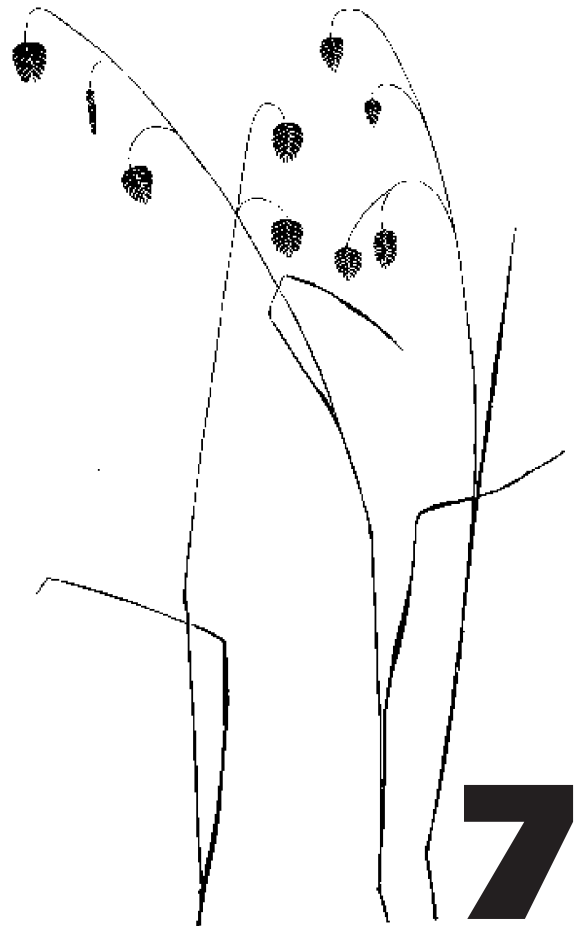
“We are one family.
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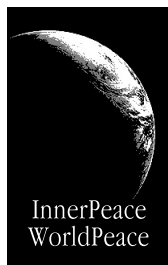
—Diana Conrad Malon

A year or so ago, I penned the following lines. They ring true for me still.

*There is something in me
that needs smallness,
that needs to look up
from within
and point the way home
from home.
I am a seed
in fertile land:
a presence,
a prayer,
a promise,
complete and tiny,
whole and fragile,
always all ways
reaching.*

—Diana Conrad Malon





Journal Sign-up

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To 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.

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Say 'NO' to Peace

*Say 'No' to peace,
if what they mean by peace
is the quiet misery of hunger,
the frozen stillness of fear,
the silence of broken spirits,
the unborn hopes of the oppressed.*

*Tell them that peace
is the shouting of children at play,
the babble of tongues set free,
the thunder of dancing feet,
and a father's voice singing.*

*Say 'No' to peace,
if what they mean by peace
is a rampart of gleaming missiles,
the arming of distant wars,
money at ease in its castle,
and grateful poor at the gate.*

*Tell them that peace
is the hauling down of flags,
the forging of guns into ploughs,
the giving of fields to the landless,
and hunger a fading dream.*

—Brian Wren, *In The Way of Peace*, ed.Hanna Ward and Jennifer Wild

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