

Journal 5

MARCH 2005

The Journal is published four times a year by

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

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From the Journal of Sherry Sword

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A JOURNAL OF INNER PEACE/WORLD PEACE

The Hope of Loving

What keeps us alive, what allows us to endure?
I think it is the hope of loving,
or being loved.

I heard a fable once about the sun going on a journey
to find its source, and how the moon wept
without her lover's
warm gaze.

We weep when the light does not reach our hearts. We wither
like fields if someone close
does not rain their
kindness
upon
us.

Meister Eckhart, From *Love Poems From God*, by Daniel Ladinsky.
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I LOVE YOU AND I BLESS YOU

It all began at my second meeting with the *InnerPeace/WorldPeace* group. Jean Ellzey, one of the members of the group, was sharing the findings of the Japanese researcher, Dr. Masaru Emoto, who found that human vibration energy affects the molecular structure of water. She mentioned that she had seen photographs of Dr. Emoto's work in the movie *What the Bleep Do We Know?! (2004—Lord of the Wind Films)* that showed how positive thoughts and sounds such as "Love and Gratitude" created beautiful crystal-like formations in the water, whereas negative thoughts such as "You make me sick!" created polluted water that resembled mud.

This brought to mind a similar experiment that doesn't cost anything, but is a great investment in our humanity. During the seventies I was attending a reading group in El Paso, Texas, and the conversation shifted to the preservation of the planet, pollution and the waste of our natural resources. We were all eager to contribute, and after a brief silence, a guest from out of town, magazine publisher who had not uttered a word during the entire evening, said to us, "You are all concerned about contamination and its effects, but there is a more potent pollutant—our mental pollution that we spread every day, every moment of our lives. Negative thoughts are being recycled, and no one is doing anything to change them or counterbalance this negativity." The guest then challenged us to experiment by using the statement "I love you and I bless you" as an antidote to help clean our thoughts. We were to convey this expression in silence to every person who crossed our path.

I started doing that to everyone I met. My intention was to be helpful in understanding and treating our mental pollution without expectation of any outcome. The next day my blessings and loving thoughts were spread to every being, and I could feel the difference as smiles returned, seats were offered on buses, doors opened, and the customs officer at the border even allowed me through with a mango. One time a man was putting money in a meter. I couldn't see his face as his back was to me.

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cont. from front page

I silently blessed him, and he turned around and said, "Thank you," as I walked by. I didn't realize what had happened until I was yards away from him.

Two great teachers say the same thing with different words. The Dalai Lama said that peace is not merely the absence of violence, but a mental attitude. We can choose to be either negative or positive. Similarly, Thich Nhat Hanh says that with a smile we are contributing to peace. He also says that there are so many angry protest letters sent by the peace movement. It would be more effective for our leaders to receive love letters focusing on the positive aspects of our human experience.

If we can change our own thoughts, we can change everything. There is a ripple effect. I saw the difference. Regardless of the outward influences, negative news media and violence, we can tune our inner peace with the statement, "I love you and I bless you."

—Cristina Fernandez

"No, you can't
have it. It is not
mine. It belongs
to my customers.
If you take it you
are stealing."

—Jan Ryk's father speaking to
German soldiers

TWO SACKS OF FLOUR

Nonviolence is still too often associated with passivity. There is the suspicion that someone is nonviolent because s/he is afraid to be any other way. Jan Ryk told a story at a meeting of the West Suburban Faith-based Peace Coalition about an incident involving his father during the second world war. His story should help lay that stereotype to rest. Here it is as told by Jan.

It was during World War II in 1943. I was fifteen years old. We lived in the Netherlands, which had been occupied by the Germans. German forces were stationed in our small town. My father was a miller. The mill was used to make flour for the bakeries in the area as well as for local families who would bake their own bread.

One day a group of five or six German soldiers came with a small truck and demanded several sacks of flour. I can still see it. I was standing on the driveway by the mill with my father. When the soldiers made their demand, my father just stood there, calmly, looking them over. With a stern voice he declared, "No, you can't have it. It is not mine. It belongs to my customers. If you take it you are stealing."

Immediately the soldiers pointed their rifles at my father. He just stood there calmly. Two of the soldiers then went into the mill, took two sacks of flour and loaded them into the truck. The other soldiers kept pointing their guns at my father. Then they left. My father continued standing there, still calm and not moving. Finally he went into the house and called the German headquarters in town. He said, "Your soldiers have just stolen two sacks of flour that belong to my customers."

About fifteen minutes later the truck with the German soldiers came back to return the flour. Again my father just stood there calm and silent, looking as if he felt sorry for them. The soldiers put the sacks of flour back where they had gotten them and left quietly. I will never forget it. This was the first time I witnessed how courageous nonviolent resistance can be.

—Jan Ryk

**NONVIOLENCE
CROSSFERTILIZATION**

I learned of InnerPeace/WorldPeace through an interview of Michael Nagler by Amy Pappageorge which was printed in the first issue of this journal. I began attending the Saturday morning sessions when the group was studying Nagler's book, *Is There No Other Way? A Search for A Nonviolent Future*. The process rekindled my interest in nonviolence. I had read writings by Gandhi and about him. I picked up where I had left off, and this time I found American connections.

In 1908, when Gandhi was at Volksrust Prison in South Africa, he wrote some reflections about the times ending with a quotation from Thoreau's famous essay civil disobedience which he had borrowed from the prison library. In a letter written in 1935 he explained the influence which the letter had on him. He said that he did not get his idea of Satyagraha from Thoreau, since resistance to authority was already well advanced in South Africa. But the essay gave him an English term that he could use to explain Satyagraha—"civil disobedience." He found this term preferable to "passive resistance," which he had been using until then.

Louis Fischer, in his biography of Gandhi, elucidates this influence: "Nevertheless, Thoreau's civil disobedience essay did influence Gandhi: he called it a 'masterly treatise, it left a deep impression on me,' he affirmed. There is a Thoreau imprint on much of what Gandhi did. Thoreau had read the Bhagavad Gita and some of the sacred Hindu Upanishads, as had Ralph Waldo Emerson, who was Thoreau's friend and frequent host. Thoreau, the New England rebel, borrowed from distant India and repaid the debt by throwing ideas into the world pool of thought; ripples reached the lawyer politician in South Africa."

Martin Luther King Jr. states that "During my student days at Morehouse College, I read Thoreau's essay on civil disobedience for the first time. Fascinated by the idea of refusing to cooperate with an evil system, I was so deeply moved that I reread the work several times. This was my first intellectual contact with the theory of

nonviolent resistance."

When Dr. King was studying at Crozer Theological Seminary in 1951, he went to Philadelphia to hear a sermon by Dr. Mordecai Johnson, president of Howard University. Before this time, he had been reading the philosophers including Marx and Nietzsche. He states "I had about despaired of the power of love in solving social problems." Dr. Johnson had just returned from a trip to India and spoke of the life and teachings of Mohandas Gandhi. Dr. King was so moved that he began studying Gandhi's works.

"The whole concept of Satyagraha (satya is truth which equals love, and agraha is force: Satyagraha, therefore, means truth-force or love-force) was profoundly significant to me...Prior to reading Gandhi, I had about concluded that the ethics of Jesus were only effective in individual relationship... Love, for Gandhi, was a potent instrument for social and collective transformation. It was in this Gandhian emphasis on love and nonviolence that I discovered the method for social reform that I had been seeking for so many months (of reading)...I came to feel that this was the only morally and practically sound method open to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom."

We speak so often now of "an idea whose time has come" that it has become a cliché. Yet the incremental force of an idea can still inspire awe. There is no better illustration of that than in the line of influence which runs from Hindu religion to Thoreau and on through Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., and from the liberation of India and the success of the civil rights movement to late 20th and early 21st century movements which effectively address oppression in nonviolent ways.

—Wayne Vanek

"For Gandhi,
love was
a potent
instrument
for social
and collective
transformation..."

—Martin Luther King, Jr

A GALAXY OF SPIN-OFFS

I do not want this to sound like an annual report. I do not want to sound like I am promoting something. I do not want to become that institutional voice that takes too much satisfaction in its own achievements. Our culture allows for this. Institutions may boast in ways that would be thought unseemly for individuals. This is true even in a culture which encourages, even expects individuals to over-represent themselves. I would like to avoid all this if I could. I probably will not be successful, but it's worth a try.

I want to describe a phenomenon. This phenomenon was born out of shock and grief. Within minutes after the planes hit the twin towers on 9/11, even before the towers began to crumble, most of us realized that our lives would never be the same. Then, much more quickly than we could have imagined, our dismay over a vulnerability we did not know we had, and our fear about what would happen next were compounded by our embarrassment, then chagrin and then, if you will, shame over the militaristic response of our government. It was as if all of us had been wrenched from that unforgettable blue sky on that terrible morning and plunged into gloom which only thickened until the darkness was complete.

Then something happened which was like a starburst. We began to rediscover our convictions and to connect with one another. Beliefs and values which we had begun to treat as mere accessories to our lives were moved to front and center. They took on a relevance and an urgency which they had perhaps never had before. I speak here not just for those involved in *InnerPeace/WorldPeace* but for something that happened across the nation and around the world. That it is time for the pursuit of nonviolence to be moved from the fringe to the center is a recognition that has been like the birth of a new universe, like another big bang with new stars being produced at every moment.

I want to turn now to the Oak Park manifestations of this wider phenomenon and, mindful of my opening remarks, talk not about corporate effort or individual achievements but about energy and spirit, about impulse and flow, about something that gathers up whatever there is by way of individual deeds and group accomplishments and works them into a far larger process. Consider the following:

- On the first Friday after our country's invasion of Afghanistan, a group of people gather in front of First United Church in Oak Park. One person has taken the lead in convening them. At first they are uncertain, awkward, not sure what to say, but as months go by, more leadership emerges, passes around. More and more step forward to witness for peace in one way or another. Signs are held high. The group is now in its fourth year. Someone has been there every Friday night. Cars honk in passing. People stop and talk.
There is Spirit here.
- In the spring of 2002 some people decide to meet for seven weeks in the basement of First United Church to discuss peace issues and learn about nonviolence. That group is still meeting. Upwards of 50 people have sat at one time or another in the circle. On any given Saturday morning the circle is almost always full. There is never enough time to get it all said. People vent their rage, weep, laugh and celebrate. Those who attend are intellectually serious, politically engaged and willing to be personal.
There is Spirit here.
- *InnerPeace/WorldPeace* networks with other peace and activist groups in Oak Park, the western suburbs, and the metropolitan area. There is attendance at area vigils, demonstrations, workshops, seminars. Some engage in Christian/Muslim dialogues.
There is Spirit here.
- Some from *InnerPeace/WorldPeace* who consider themselves "liberal" begin meeting with some individuals from one of the local churches regarded as "conservative." They tell their stories. Relationships develop between people who ordinarily would not be talking with one another at all. Doors begin to open.
There is Spirit here.

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■ Study projects are undertaken, sometimes in the Saturday morning group, sometimes in people's homes. Important contemporary texts on the theory and practice of nonviolence are read, read again, discussed. People report on how the practice of nonviolence is beginning to make a difference in their daily lives. InnerPeace/WorldPeace begins to publish a quarterly journal of reflection. *There is Spirit here.*

I report these developments in the present tense because even though they have been going on for several years, their impact is still being felt in the present. What was there at the beginning is still with us now in even greater measure. There is gathering momentum here. There is Spirit. Where will this all lead? I don't know. What will be accomplished? I don't know. None of us can see that far into the future, but we can point. There are developments out there worth watching. People are beginning to find nonviolent solutions to problems which repeatedly have been made only worse by violence. People are beginning to see the link between addressing the violence within themselves and fashioning a world without violence. The spin-offs are not just from InnerPeace/WorldPeace. This same phenomenon is happening in community after community. A galaxy is in the making.

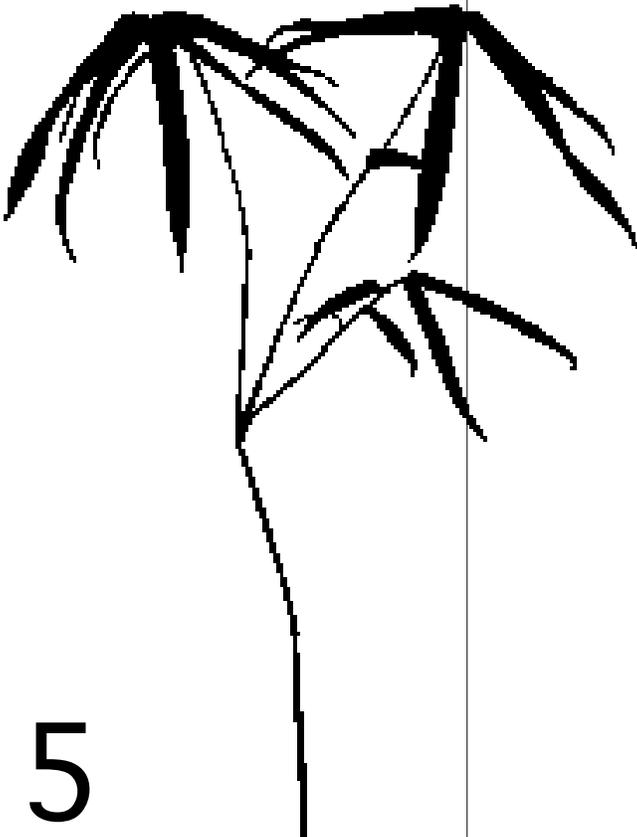
—Bud Hayes

Always from A Child's Hand

Always from the child's hand the sword
should be removed.

I think every nation is
an infant.

St. Francis of Assisi, From *Love Poems From God*,
by Daniel Ladinsky. Copyright © 2002 by Daniel Ladinsky.
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TRASH TALK ON THE JOB

The first time I remember being criticized openly at work I handled it badly, and it poisoned the atmosphere and gnawed at me for a long time. There was no inner peace and no workplace peace. Challenges, however, have a way of re-presenting themselves until we figure out how to get over them, and it happened when I moved to Ohio.

The small Ohio agency for which I worked was doing well, increasing in revenue and staff. In an atmosphere that was at times competitive—we all wanted to work on the biggest and best projects—we generally worked well together.

Melinda and I were both well respected in our agency. Usually one of us would lead our largest new accounts. Melinda was smart, spontaneous, competitive, honest, friendly with a sharp, sometimes biting wit. I liked her, but wasn't especially close to her.

One summer I developed a proposal for leveraging our experience with an existing client to expand into the sports market. It was a pet project that I threw myself into with relish. When I was ready, I passed out copies of my work and put it on the agenda for first review at an upcoming agency meeting.

At the meeting, I gave a brief summary of the proposal and invited reactions. After some discussion, Melinda jumped in, intense with emotion, "I've got to say...I've got an M.B.A. degree and this is an unprofessional, ill-advised, poorly-developed piece of work! We don't belong in that business, and this proposal doesn't have enough evidence from other possible clients!"

The group was stunned. We had not heard such trash talk among ourselves. I could feel my face flush with anger. I could have bit my tongue and suppressed my rage and hurt, or I could have "protected" myself with a sarcastic "If you are going to be an _____, you could at least make your own proposal." This time I chose differently. I paused, took a deep breath, and checked in on myself. Time slowed down. I knew on some level that this outburst was not about me or the proposal. My anger passed. Feeling

genuine calmness and warmth, I responded, "Thank you, Melinda. I think more evidence from other clients would be helpful." The group was stunned again. Finally the boss broke the silence and moved on to another item.

After that meeting, I felt free to continue the proposal development and had the satisfaction of implementing a modified version.

Melinda and I never talked about that particular incident again, but we continued working together, and worked together well. When the agency broke up some years later, Melinda and I hugged and cried.

Melinda's trash talk gave me an opportunity to experience a new way of responding to attack. I realize now that all attack is a cry for help. I realize now that in every attack, I can either choose to respond to the anger in my attacker or to the fear she is caught in. I realize now the power and exhilaration that comes with knowing that I have no need to feel defensive.

This was not a situation where I felt angry and suppressed it; after the initial moment, I did not feel angry at all, and that made all the difference. Because I didn't retaliate, it left the door open for a reconnection with Melinda, and it immediately left the door open for connection with the others, several of whom came to touch base with me afterward. By not retaliating, I avoided putting people in the awkward position of having to choose whom they were going to support.

For Melinda and for that moment I am thankful.

—Doug T.

“Because I didn’t retaliate, it left the door open for a reconnection...”

—Doug T.

Love Overcomes Violence Everywhere

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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LOVE Works

Tom Ard shared the following piece at one of our recent Saturday morning sessions. It is reproduced with permission from Bantam Books. From *Emotional Intelligence, Why it Can Matter More Than IQ*, by Daniel Goleman, 1995.

AIKIDO ON A TOKYO TRAIN

One afternoon Terry Dobson was riding home on a suburban Tokyo train when a huge, bellicose, and very drunk and begrimed laborer got on. The man, staggering, began terrorizing the passengers. Screaming curses, he took a swing at a woman holding a baby. The drunk, taking a few other swings (and in his rage, missing), grabbed the metal pole in the middle of the car with a roar and tried to tear it out of its socket.

At that point Terry, an American studying the martial art of aikido in Japan, felt called upon to intervene lest someone get seriously hurt. But he recalled the words of his teacher: "Aikido is the art of reconciliation. If you try to dominate people, you are already defeated. We study how to resolve conflict, not how to start it."

Indeed, Terry had agreed when starting his lessons to use his martial arts skills only in defense. Now, at last, he had a legitimate opportunity to test his skills in a real life situation. Terry slowly stood up, and the drunk roared "Aha! A foreigner! You need a lesson in Japanese manners!" and began gathering himself to take on Terry.

But suddenly, someone gave an earsplitting, oddly joyous shout, "Hey!"

The shout had a cheery tone of someone who has suddenly come upon a fond friend. The drunk, surprised, spun around to see a tiny Japanese man, probably in his seventies, sitting there in a kimono. The old man beamed with delight at the drunk, and beckoned him over with a light wave of his hand.

The drunk strode over with a belligerent, "Why the hell should I talk to you?"

"What'cha been drinking?" the old man asked, his eyes beaming at the drunken laborer.

"I've been drinking sake, and it's none of your business," the drunk bellowed.

"Oh, that's wonderful, absolutely wonderful," the old man replied in a warm tone. "You see, I love sake too. Every night, me and my wife (she's seventy-six you know), we warm up a little bottle of sake and take it out to the garden and sit under the persimmon tree..."

The old man continued, and the drunk's face began to soften. "Yeah....I love persimmons too..." he said.

"Yes," the old man replied in a sprightly voice, "and I'm sure you have a wonderful wife."

"No," said the laborer. "My wife died..." Sobbing, he launched into a sad tale of losing his wife, his home, his job, of being ashamed of himself.

The train came to Terry's stop, and as Terry was getting off, the drunk was sprawled along the seat, his head in the old man's lap.

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FROM THE JOURNAL OF SHERRY SWORD

There is so much violence and hatred being expressed in the world. It seems to be steadily escalating since September 11th. What can we do to stop it?

You must know you are all my children—brothers and sisters.

You must learn to share my wealth and help each other. You must simply love each other. When you learn to trust your love for each other, the way will be clear.

We've heard all that a million times, but how can we actually do it?

You think the problem is how. The only thing stopping it is your will to do it. You do not yet want to love each other. You still prefer to judge and condemn. When you learn to forgive no matter how misguided and cruel your brother's actions may be, the way will be clear.

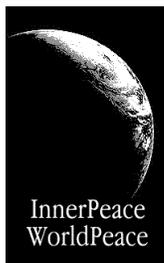
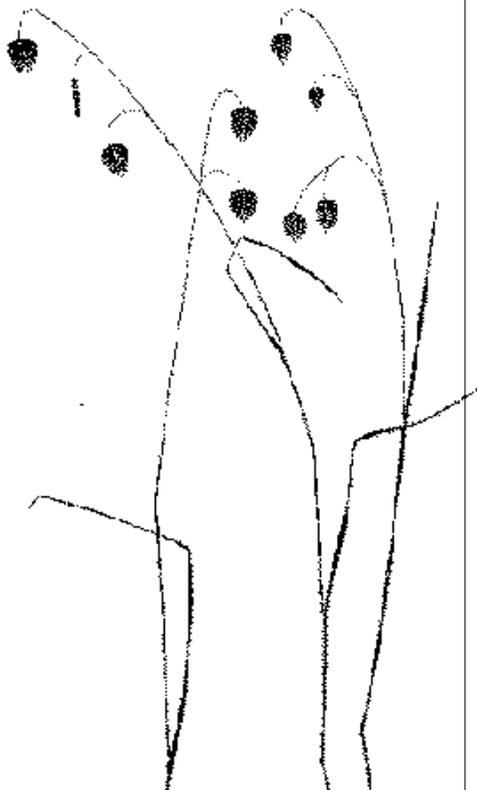
But until everyone feels that way, we have to protect ourselves, don't we?

When the most powerful among you—your leaders—are motivated by love, their actions will both protect and lead the way for others to open the door of everything. Pray for your leaders and they will hear you.

It all seems so complicated. Where do we begin?

One step at a time—always cooperating with those who join together to express love.

Sherry Sword is the author of *How to be Perfect*, which is available now in the Adobe Acrobat format and scheduled for publication. See www.sherrysword.com.



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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.

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