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THINKING DIFFERENTLY

Sometimes, when the editorial team puts together an issue of the Journal, we pick a theme up front and try to make the articles fit. Other times, as with this issue, a theme emerges as contributors write about what interests them. We're calling it "Thinking Differently."

Demetrios Pappageorge writes about how abusive anti-war language is no longer compatible with his pursuit of peace. His thinking has changed. Wayne Vanek writes about how a thought-provoking article has led him to see investors as driven by more than the profit motive. Mary Erkins tells about how a friend reacted in a way that most of us probably would not in a situation with a potential for violence. She is now "thinking differently" about what it means to fear someone. There is a link between her article and the L.O.V.E. WORKS story for this issue which also tells about someone who reacted differently and without fear in a violent situation.

In my article, I talk about starting to think of violence as preventable, a departure from the way many of us still think. As we continue to practice nonviolent communication in our Saturday morning group, we are finding that we have to "think differently" about how we say things. In one context after another, learning the ways of nonviolence involves "thinking differently." Part of the adventure of our InnerPeacer/WorldPeace group is finding out just how extensive that rethinking process is. Enjoy the articles, and let us hear from you if they make you think of other ways to "think differently."

—Bud Hayes, Editor

TURNED A CORNER

I think I have turned a corner. At a March 19th peace rally in our village marking the second anniversary of the U.S. bombing in Iraq, there were several presentations that I would categorize as "not very peaceful." Ten years ago I would have laughed or perhaps applauded these presenters, but I realize that I have moved on to a different place.

Among the powerful speakers at the rally was a young poet who read a piece about his anger and frustration over the Bush administration's policies that unfairly target minorities and the poor. In his introduction he stated that when he spoke at this same rally last year there was mention of groups wanting to assassinate President Bush. Then he smiled and stated that he was still waiting for that to happen. I understand his frustration as he poured his heart out about the lack of a future for young men of color. I understand his anger as hundreds of billions of our tax dollars go toward paying for an unnecessary war while 350 billion are being cut from domestic programs, and soldiers and innocent Iraqis die every day. But I do not understand how his comment wishing for the assassination of a president could be perceived as anything but a call for violence. And I do not understand how this assassination fantasy belongs at a peace rally.

The second presentation to disturb me was a group of performance artists who combined drumming with poetry. The main performer masterfully used repetition of key phrases as he too lamented the policies of our current administration. The lyrics were clever, and the crowd moved to the infectious beat. And then it happened. Several phrases were repeated calling Bush and his cabinet members derogatory and indeed filthy names. They struck me like bullets, and every time I reeled back from the penetration of a slug, I noticed a young family turn their stroller and start to walk away. Parents put their hands over their children's ears and simply left the rally. When the march took place fifteen minutes later, we had lost about a quarter of the marchers due in part to the language of the performers. I could not help but ask: Will these young families now associate peace rallies with anger and hate? Did we lose them for good?

And so, I think I have turned a corner. In fact, I know I have. Ten years ago I might have actually enjoyed being part of a performance like this with its ironic

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use of hate to combat war. I might have thought it effective to shock people out of their status quo stupor and make them uncomfortable with some angry words and a few choice names. But today I need something new. I need to envision what peace looks like. I need to model that vision with my life. I need to use language that sounds like peace; create art that inspires peace; and spend at least as much energy building a peaceful community as I do fighting wars. I need to be at peace inside so that I may be peaceful in the world.

My motto is simple: InnerPeace/WorldPeace.

—Demetrios Pappageorge

“Being afraid of someone, either because of how they look or because of what we think they might do, is itself an act of violence. It dehumanizes the other. In a threatening situation, that’s what I try to keep uppermost in my mind.”

—Mary Erkin’s friend

WAITING FOR THE BUS

Years ago when I was living on the south side of Chicago, I had a friend who did not have a car. Because the Chicago transportation system was so good, she took trains and buses all over, to any part of the city. She wasn’t afraid to go anywhere.

Sometimes people would tell her that she shouldn’t do that. “Aren’t you afraid to transfer at Indiana and 47th or someplace like that?” She would always say, “No.” She just wasn’t afraid. She wasn’t foolish either, just confident.

She told me that late one night she was on the way back to her Hyde Park apartment. She took the train to 47th and had to transfer to a bus. She acknowledged that it was a rough neighborhood—stores had iron bars on the windows and prostitutes in the area were common, but there were three or four other people waiting for the bus with her.

My friend was white and this was a black neighborhood. Although she had grown up in an all-white town, she somehow felt comfortable with black people and seemed genuinely to feel not at all afraid. She could never understand why other white people were afraid of black people.

One night she was standing on the corner waiting for the bus. While looking in the direction from which the bus would be coming, she felt something strange to the right of her and turned just as a man was reaching for her purse. Without hesitation, she asked him, “Do you know what time it is?” The guy got all flustered and finally said, “Just a minute.” He turned around and walked two store fronts down to look at the big clock in the barber shop window. Then he came back, told her what time it was, and walked away.

He didn’t try to take her purse. He just walked away, and my friend got on the next bus and went home.

I asked my friend later how she was able to do that. She said, “Being afraid of someone, either because of how they look or because of what we think they might do, is itself an act of violence. It dehumanizes the other. In a threatening situation, that’s what I try to keep uppermost in my mind.” It had never occurred to me to think of my own fear as being dehumanizing. It put fear into an entirely new perspective for me.

In a situation where my friend could have reacted with fear, she did a matter of fact thing that invited her potential assailant back into civility. By treating him as human, she was appealing to that part of him that was nonviolent and still wanted to be in civilized society. To react with fear is to encourage whatever potential for violence there is in the other. You might think my friend was foolhardy and that anybody in their right mind would panic in a situation like that. I like to think my friend stayed in her “right mind” and by doing so probably prevented something that could have been violent.

—Mary Erkins

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CORPORATIONS ARE INDIVIDUALS TOO

Editors Note:

This article is an updated and edited version of one printed in our previously printed Spring edition. We apologize to Wayne Vanek for the error.

“More than 10% of all professionally managed money in the U.S. economy, \$2.2 trillion, is invested according to socially responsible guidelines.”

—Faith and Fortune:
The Quiet Revolution to Reform
American Business
by Marc Gunther

“Corporations can never solve any problems; their very essence prevents them from doing so.” At least that’s what I thought after twice seeing the movie *The Corporation* (Achbar & Abbott, 2003). At that time I was totally convinced that a corporation’s main and, it seems, only legal purpose is to enrich its investors. If it tries to do something positive about the environment, it could be accused by its investors of digressing from its purpose, which is to enrich them. The investors could fire the managers for not fulfilling their primary obligation. So from my point of view, the corporation could play at helping, but most of the efforts would be marketing ploys to make itself look good.

On New Year’s Day 2005 at a breakfast get-together of the InnerPeace/WorldPeace group, a discussion took place about how the nonviolent principles of Marshall Rosenberg could influence mammoth institutions. I found myself saying, “Corporations are made of individuals.” This insight came to me with great force. We discussed how it must be through individuals that a corporation would be changed. But then, how does one gain access to the decision-makers? We certainly do not run in those circles.

In a recent supplement to the *National Catholic Reporter* entitled “Wealth and Responsibility,” Robert Monks and Amy Domini give simple and profound answers to the question of why corporations should care about the common good. This caught my eye and changed my mind. Monks and Domini answered that corporations should care because their owners care. This was a new idea for me. I had thought that the only thing those investors cared about was getting the largest possible profit return. The supplement states that most investors, with the exception of day traders and speculators, have their money in pension funds and mutual funds with long-term goals of retirement or college tuition. Monks said, “They want to retire into a clean, civil, and safe world.” Monks and Domini both say the message to the top management should be that investors care. Domini

adds, “You can’t just consider my wallet. You’ve got to consider me. I’m not better off if I can’t breathe the air. I’m worse off. I’m not better off if my child is afraid to walk down the street. I’m worse off. My wallet is not me.”

The “Wealth and Responsibility” supplement also included an excerpt from the book *Faith and Fortune: The Quiet Revolution to Reform American Business* by Marc Gunther. It speaks about socially responsible investing—people who look beyond the financial bottom line and integrate social and environmental concerns into their investment decisions. “More than 10% of all professionally managed money in the U.S. economy, \$2.2 trillion, is invested according to socially responsible guidelines.”

Now I am questioning my preconceptions. Maybe those investors are not all rapacious, super-rich, out just for their own power and wealth—scum. They may be more like—well, like me. But the challenge is still how to use the latent power of ordinary investors to better the air, the street, the land and the poor. Marc Gunther admits that corporations will not change quickly or easily. How to achieve change is vigorously debated. But he says that institutional investors are paying more attention to how corporations govern and run themselves.

—Wayne Vanek

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

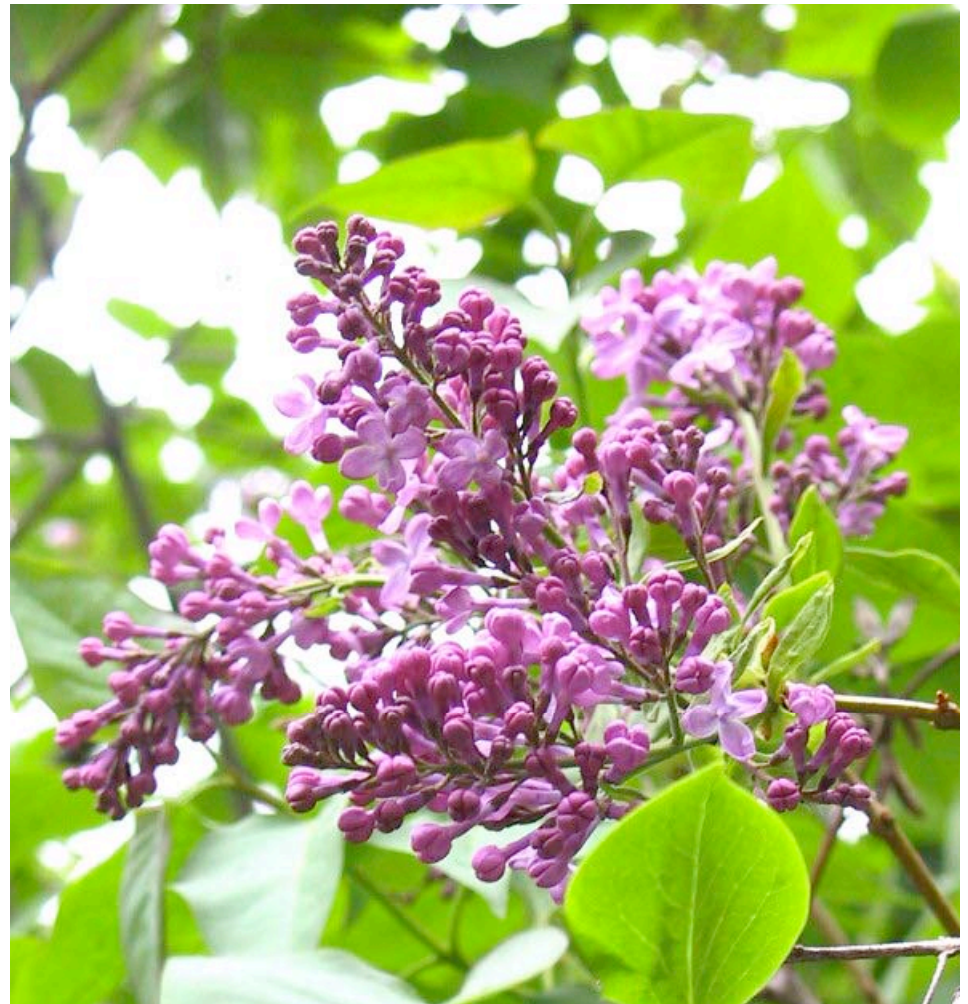
(Here is another story from the woman who called herself "Peace Pilgrim." From 1953 to 1981 she walked over 25,000 miles on a personal pilgrimage for peace. This is a story taken from the book about her life, *Peace Pilgrim: Her Life and Work in Her Own Words*.)

On one occasion I was called upon to defend a frail eight year old girl against a large man who was about to beat her. The girl was terrified. It was my most difficult test. I was staying at a ranch and the family went into town. The little girl did not want to go with them, and they asked, since I was there, would I take care of the child? I was writing a letter by the window when I saw a car arrive. A man got out of the car. The girl saw him and ran and he followed, chasing her into a barn. I went immediately into the barn. The girl was cowering in terror in the corner. He was coming at her slowly and deliberately.

You know the power of thought. You're constantly creating through thought. And you attract to you whatever you fear. So I knew her danger because of her fear. (I fear nothing and expect good—so good comes!)

I put my body immediately between the man and the girl. I just stood and looked at this poor, psychologically sick man with loving compassion. He came close. He stopped! He looked at me for quite a while. He then turned and walked away and the girl was safe. There was not a word spoken.

Now, what was the alternative? Suppose I had been so foolish as to forget the law of love by hitting back and relying upon the jungle law of tooth and claw? Undoubtedly I would have been beaten—perhaps even to death and possibly the little girl as well! Never underestimate the power of God's love—it transforms! It reaches the spark of good in the other person and the person is disarmed.



CAN VIOLENCE BE PREVENTED ?

In a program associated with a local domestic violence agency, I worked for several years with men who abused their partners. The premise of the program was that violence is a choice and can be prevented. A primary focus of the program was to help the men become aware of the sequence of warning signs leading up to violence. The program taught that violence is learned and can be unlearned.

While working in that program I began paying more attention to reports of violence in the newspaper. Hardly a day passed when there was not an incident of violence reported in the city section of any metropolitan newspaper. If the incident was sensational enough, it made it to the front page. It might have been an episode of domestic violence. It might have been an altercation between motorists. It might have been some disgruntled worker who has decided to settle grievances in a violent way in the work setting. Sadly, it was even kids in a school setting. Recently a cab driver and a passenger got into an argument over an eight-dollar fare and one of them ended up dead.

I have been particularly intrigued by what friends and relatives say about these incidents. Almost always they are surprised. Even when there has been a history of violence and threats, those who knew the person say they didn't think it would go that far. Often people said they had only known the perpetrator of whatever kind of violence as a friendly, caring person, sometimes active on behalf of worthy causes in his local community. Sometimes the perpetrator was described as quiet and keeping to himself.

I can't help think there is a lot of denial and naiveté in all of us about the potential for violence within ourselves. What puzzles me even more is that we live in a culture where, from the cradle to the grave, we are saturated with images of violence, and yet we think we are somehow immune to it. There is a kind of perverse innocence in the American character which thinks we can watch all that violence and not be affected by it, that it won't seep into us and become a part of us.

When reading about these incidents

I find myself wondering whether some of them could have been prevented. My first reaction to my own question was that it is very unlikely. Certainly our culture is not going to change. There is too much money invested in violence as entertainment, too much profit to be gained from war. The men in the abuser program were there under court order or pressured by their partners. The rest of us in the general population don't have that pressure to take violence prevention seriously.

But then I think about what's happened with smoking. We have come full circle on that issue. I can remember in the 1940's when publications to be found in just about every home in America carried endorsements by doctors of various brands of cigarettes—Camel, Lucky Strike, Pall Mall. That was in an era before filters. That would be unthinkable now. Most everyone reading this can remember when we gave no thought to second hand smoke. We figured it was something we had to live with. No more. The removal of smoking from most public places in this country and in Europe is all but inevitable.

Could something comparable ever happen with violence? Two great cultural engines drive our proclivity for violence: fear and the belief that violence solves problems. In his book, *The Powers That Be*, Walter Wink talks about the "Myth of Redemptive Violence," the belief that violence saves, that violence makes things right, that good can be brought through violence, that when all else fails, or is believed to have failed, we must resort to violence. Wink argues that this belief has the status of a religion in our culture and that it is the dominant religion. It is like an Ur-religion, there before we layer in whatever other religion we subscribe to, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, etc.

How are we ever going to change something that fundamental, that anchored in our depths? Well, not by pointing fingers at one another or bickering over who needs most to be rid of this religion. If change is to come it will need to be by means of an agreed upon,

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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.

Editorial Group

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

budhayes@innerpeaceworldpeace.org

CAN VIOLENCE BE PREVENTED ?

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largely voluntary entrance into a process of learning how to be non-violent and searching out and eliminating the demons of violence that still lurk within each of us. One place we can begin is in our imagination. Walter Wink talks about how we exempt ourselves from a commitment to nonviolence with "what if's." We think of situations where we believe there would be no alternative but violence. Here is what he says:

"Those who have not committed themselves to nonviolence in advance and under all circumstances are less likely to discover the creative nonviolent option in the desperate urgency of a crisis. They are already groping for the trigger, just when they should have been praying and improvising. It may be that only an unconditional renunciation of violence can concentrate our minds sufficiently to find a nonviolent response when the crisis comes."

(p. 154)

I have often heard myself saying and doing violent things in my imagination. I have harbored malice in my heart. I have flattered myself with unspoken fantasies about desperate situations where I might have recourse to some adroit and clever maneuver. For the first time in my life, since taking up the disciplines of InnerPeace/WorldPeace I believe that I truly begin to see another way. A new sightline has opened up for me. It is fragile, tentative, easily overwhelmed with doubt, sorely in need of nurturing. It can be pulled off course by the cheap inducements of the gods of violence—the quick fix, the heady satisfaction of having successfully put someone down, the intoxications of righteousness, vindication and revenge. I am above none of these. They are in me. But something else is in me as well, something that heeds the prompting of another God. Jesus said, "Perfect love casts out fear." For me that has become more than just a nice thought. It is a truth which lies at the very foundation of a transformed life together.

—Bud Hayes

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