

# Journal 17

August 2010

## In This Issue

**In The Place of Loving Me** — page 1  
—Christine lone

**I Never Thought Killing Could  
Be Such Fun** — page 2  
—Bud Hayes

**Ritual, Death, Reverence –  
“Departures”, a Japanese film** — page 3

**Reactions to Avatar, The Movie**  
—interview by Jeff Olson — pages 4 & 5

**Mary Lou Jenk’s Reflections  
On the Muslim-Christian Study Circles**  
—Interviewed by Wayne Vanek — page 6

**My Journey Into Freedom— a prayer**  
— Jeff Olson — pages 7

## In The Place of Loving Me

Cockeyed limbs  
Lanky awkward dangly  
Don't feel lovable  
Out of sorts – pressure building  
No place to go, out of alignment  
Climbing the walls of  
Inner torment

Finding my way  
Climbing back into myself  
Into my heart  
Turning my own gentle gaze  
Onto myself  
Soothing, comforting  
Giving me joy and delight  
Slipping back into alignment  
As all of me lights back up  
In lines of light through my inner body  
And I am filled with  
Grace, once more  
In the place of loving me  
And I realize the answer to all is  
In the place of loving me.

*Christine lone*

## Editor's Note: In This Issue

The variety of entries in this issue is an indication, I believe, of the expanding range of interests, deepening sophistication and widening participation in the writing of this Journal. We have three articles on films, two of them interviews with a number of people who have seen the same film together. Films have great influence on both the glamorization of violence and the depiction of credible alternatives to violence. These will not be the last reviews to appear on these pages, I am sure.

Christine lone is making a first contribution to the Journal. Her poem speaks to me of the wonderful way in which the self can return from inner turmoil to inner peace and affirmation. I can feel the calm descend as I read and reread her poem. Mary Lou Jenks is also contributing for the first time. She shares with us some things she has learned about the Muslim faith and ignites in us a desire to learn more. In reading Jeff Olson's prayer, I am reminded of Mary Lou's observation that prayer in the Muslim tradition has more to do with praise than petition. Jeff writes about how Spirit of Life accompanies him in his movement from bondage to freedom in a great variety of ways. These articles talk to one another without even knowing they are doing it, another sign of how the Spirit is present in our work together.

—Bud Hayes

**I Never Thought Killing Could be Such Fun**

Admittedly a sarcastic and cynical title for an article against that very thing. Here's how I have come to it. I am concerned, deeply concerned, about the violence in our culture. I think that many of us, myself definitely included, do not realize how violent we have become even though the signs of it are everywhere. The film industry is one of the barometers for how high our tolerance for violence has risen and how much our taste for violence has grown.

Recently I read some of the reviews of "Kick-Ass" which began showing in theaters in April. The reviews brought out that the film breaks new ground in two ways. In an industry where films depicting violence are almost as numerous as grains of sand on the seashore, this film takes violence to an even greater extreme. I will spare you the details. It also invades childhood in a way that may be without precedent. The chief purveyor of violence is played by Chloe Moretz in the role of Hit Girl. She was 11 years old at the time the film was made. She and her father, Big Daddy, played by the always interesting Nicholas Cage, are a vigilante team who have taken on the forces of urban darkness. Hit Girl does the killing with sensational acrobatics and expert handling and reloading of weapons. While doing this, she spews profanity never before heard in any commercial Hollywood film from a child that young. I will again spare you the details.

Having read the movie reviews, I was primed to begin my comments but decided that it might be a good idea if I went to see the film myself so that I would have first hand knowledge of it. I was surprised by how much I liked it. This deepened rather than relieved my concern about the implications of the film. Here is the ultimate seduction—extreme violence and the violation of yet one more cultural taboo—the depiction of a foul-mouthed, killer-diller little girl who is made attractive in her role.

To their credit, the reviews that I read did reflect concern about the issues here. More than one of the reviewers asked whether getting a girl that young to play the part of Hit Girl was not in itself a form of child abuse. Both the part depicted and the recruiting of a child to play that part are problematic. The reviewers pointed out that the film is cartoon-like and based on a cartoon series. The violence flashes and then is gone as in moving from box to box in reading a cartoon. This distances us somewhat from the human impact of the violence though the parts are still played by human beings. The argument in one review was that the violence is so far-fetched that the effect is comic rather than sadistic. My reaction is that the cartoon-like quality of the violence masks its toxicity and, like any other addiction, feeds our craving for more.

This leads to one more concern not mentioned in other reviews and here full disclosure is in order: I love movies where the good guys get the bad guys, westerns, gangster films, action films what-have-you. There is something deep within me which wants to see injustice and wrongdoing avenged and is tempted to see violence on the part of the "good guys" as the answer. What bothers me about these film genres, and this becomes more acute the longer I am exposed to peacemaking and training in nonviolence, is that so often the "bad guys" are demonized. They are made to seem so bad, so evil, so one-dimensional that the human impact of the killing is softened or removed altogether. There is no tragedy, no irony, just stark evil pitted against pure good. The more total the evil is thought to be, the more any form or degree of violence is justified.

This genre contains a kind of pseudo-redemption. Reality is distorted so that we can both enjoy the violence and have the satisfaction that good has prevailed. Walter Wink calls this the belief in "redemptive violence." It is one of the great false gods of our time. I don't mean to spoil your night at the cinema or the viewing of your favorite network dramas which may contain violence. I think it is important, however, that we think about the implications of what we are seeing.

*continued on back page*

**Ritual, Death, Reverence – “Departures”,  
a Japanese film**

“Departures” is an Academy Award winning Japanese film about a young cellist, Daigo, who loses his job and by a mistake ends up in a job preparing deceased bodies for burial.

Eight of us got together to watch: Kathy Fricks, Bud Hayes, Anita OHara, Cristina Fernandez, Phyllis Milano, Jeff Olson, David Kelm, and Mary Erkins. Excerpts from the conversation afterwards will give you a sense of the movie...

*—This is the 4th time I’ve seen it. The first time I was struck by the silence. How colorful the silence was. No sound. No music. No dialog. Unbelievably quiet.*

*—The first thing I noticed in seeing the movie was the reverence that was shown in caring for the deceased. Just letting the family being present during the preparing of the body was huge. To involve them in what’s happening in the process that is equivalent to embalming. To go through the process and the emotions rather than suppress...*

*—The process and the reverence clearly brought peace to family members, even to those families that were feuding and blaming each other.*

*—When his wife asked, “What’s your job?” He answered simply, “Ceremonies.” ..an insight into how many ceremonies and rituals there are there in Japan.*

*—I never felt that our culture was rich in rituals. We don’t even share evening meals as families anymore.*

*—You didn’t miss the 5:00pm meal in my family. We have a ritual with lighting the candle to begin our Saturday morning meetings [of InnerPeace/WorldPeace]. And I do my whole prayer ritual when I get up and Frank has his own ritual.*

*—I do think that we are disconnected with death. There have been about 10 deaths in my family. Each time the body is removed from the home and then you don’t see them until the wake. That whole in between time is lost.*

*—I remember when wakes were held in the home. “My grandfather’s was.”*

*—I just attended a Japanese tea ceremony. The whole ritual was just like they would cleanse the bowls, there was an elegance, everything had symbolism, meaning and reverence. The flowers would be arranged according to what the host wanted to communicate. It taught harmony and patience and serenity. It was the same attitude as in the movie. They taught what was important in life.*

*—I can remember working as a nurses aide in St. Mary’s hospital. There was a Japanese nurse who always seemed to be there when someone expired. She was always so gentle when we cleaned the body, and she would even talk to them. I remember how carefully she would even position the pillow.*

*—When Daigo observed his boss in the beginning, he had a calmness, a precision and a gentle affection. Where Sue is going this weekend, at the Dao center, she will see a lot more of this attention to detail. When I volunteered there, I noticed that even when no one is looking, the staff still do everything with the same reverence as during the ceremonies themselves.*

This movie is about reverence and transformation...and how life moves and extends. It is a deep affirmation of the connectedness of all things.



**Reactions to Avatar, The Movie**

— Jeff Olson

I tape recorded a few people from our Saturday morning group in separate conversations about the movie Avatar. Here are some of the excerpts:

**Anita Ohara*****What stood out in the movie for you?***

— At first what came to mind with the movie, was how it was about what the Native Americans went through in our country's history. But the more I thought about it, the more I saw it as an allegory of the exploitation that is going on right now on our earth. The corporations, as seen in the oil spill are doing the same thing. James Cameron, the director of Avatar, has seen more exploitation by developers trying to put in a dam in the Amazon that will destroy native peoples' lives.

The part of the movie that stood out for me most was how it presented our interdependence with all people, with the land, with the animals, the whole web of life. The mysticism, our connection to all living things was well portrayed.

The movie was also a warning against the "anything goes" attitude by corporations, highlighting the need for having regulations to protect the earth. What caught my attention most was the peaceful way of life, the reverence, the acknowledged interdependence, the culture of the Na'vi people. There is so much mysticism that we normally don't experience, but its there for us if we choose to look at it.

**Mary Erkins*****How did the movie make you feel?***

— I felt opposing emotions. The beginning scenes were loud and fast and violent, a way of captivating the young people right from the start, perhaps. It certainly exhibited the skill of the cinematographers much the way an aria in an opera is meant to showcase the vocal gifts of a coloratura, but I felt it went on too long.

The special effects transported me into another dimension which was extremely pleasurable, however. I loved the gorgeous creatures, the extravagant designs and electrifying colors. I loved sitting there and being surrounded by the floating jellyfish

The interconnectedness of all life was beautifully illustrated by the special effects. The thread of light going through all living things, from the roots of the trees all the way out to every species. It conveyed a sacredness that we in the western world rarely acknowledge.

But I was disappointed in the ending. I was actually sad. I thought it was a missed opportunity.

Being in the peace group has helped me look at film differently. In the movie, the only way to deal with the military commander, who embodied evil, was to kill him and to kill him violently. I would rather have seen some sort of transformation. I would rather that they had found a way to transform "the evil one" rather than resorting to the same violence that he was exhibiting. Is that expecting too much?

Violence seems to be a pre-requisite in our culture to getting a big box office return. Our appetite for violence has grown. I find myself asking, "Why? Is the escalating violence an indication of how unhappy and dissatisfied we are with our own lives? How angry we are about our unanswered needs? Is this violence a means of unburdening ourselves of the pent-up anger we feel because our

quality of life is diminishing? As President Obama has stated, we are “working more and earning less,”.... that is if we have a job at all. That along with the bail-outs, no healthcare for all, and let’s not forget Enron and all the hard-working Americans who were robbed of their retirement.

Maybe I’m answering my own question here. Maybe I WAS expecting too much to have the “bad guy” in Avatar be transformed in the end. But isn’t that what we try to do in our peace group? Don’t we try to transform our ordinary, daily angers and frustrations into something less violent? Something more life-giving? More peaceful? So that, having achieved some degree of inner peace in our personal lives, we can believe in world peace?

Avatar, according to Webster, is “an embodiment of a principle.” I find myself asking, “Which principle? That all of life is connected? That the only way to deal with an entity that we perceive as evil is to kill it? That all life is sacred except for the lives of the “bad guys?”

### **Wendy Chojnowski**

... the movie had another level to it, a level of spirituality and religion—religion really, because the movie really used the Bible story from Genesis to Revelation. There was a lot of symbolism around that, and I found it very beautiful.

#### ***Can you say more about how you see the movie as connected to the Bible?***

—How the society evolves from the Tree of Life... The tree in the movie was the source of life. It went back to the idea that we all come from one source, one God. It made me think of “When God spoke the word, we became flesh.” From the Garden of Eden and the suggested nudity... And then the final battle in the movie made me think of Armageddon in the book of Revelation.

The soldier in the movie was the “Savior” who willingly offered to sacrifice himself to save these people. He felt their pain. He had become one of them much like Christ did - he became man, son of man as well as son of God. He was able to understand and walk in both worlds which is something no one will truly be able to do— to be truly God and truly man at the same time. Walking in both worlds was clearly the role that the soldier was taking. It was the Biblical story in a modern context.

#### ***I can understand that some Christian conservatives were disturbed with the idea that someone else would play the role of Jesus, of the Savior.***

Aren’t we all called to be Jesus? Aren’t we all called to be Christ? Isn’t that the true meaning of what a Christian is — someone who seeks to live like Jesus? For me the movie was uplifting and hopeful.

#### ***I heard you earlier comment on the role of women in the movie.***

—The women were seen in the movie as being very powerful, having a deep sense of who they were, and what their purpose was. They walked alongside alongside the men in the movie, not behind them. That may have been disturbing to some of the male viewers. The idea that a woman could be equal to a man, or that she could lead and that a man could be alongside her. The head spiritual leader in the community was a woman. That’s a new paradigm for our society.



## **Mary Lou Jenk's Reflections On the Muslim-Christian Study Circles**

—Interviewed by Wayne Vanek

Mary Lou was a co-leader in the St. Giles Muslim-Christian study circles during January and February of 2010. She is also a new participant in the Saturday morning InnerPeace/WorldPeace group. There were two groups in January and, because of the demand, two more groups in February. In total about 40 persons participated in reading and discussing the book of Islam Is by Sister Mary Margaret Funk. In March, April and May some of the participants visited three Mosques.

### ***Mary Lou, what led you to get involved with the Muslim- Christian studycircles?***

Last summer I attended the French Institute at Dominican University. During the course we studied French-African literature. The teacher said, that in order to understand this literature, we must have some knowledge of the Muslim religion. He presented the Five Pillars of Islam and spoke about the Sufi mystics. This pricked my interest. There was an added allurements caused by his statement: "The mystics of all religions have much in common because they deal with the core of religion, the experience of God, rather than the externals." When the opportunity presented itself, I was ready to learn more about Islam and Sufism.

### ***What are the main two or three things that impressed you about Islam?***

What impressed me the most is the difference in prayer. I learned that the main goal or theme of Islamic prayer is praise of Allah. My usual way of praying has been one of petition. The emphasis of Islamic prayer seems to be who God is, God's greatness. Even the posture during the prayer, bowing the head to the ground, stresses this. Even though I know in my head that we pray to change ourselves, not God, the prayer of my heart has been petition in my tradition, Catholic, the praise of God usually takes place in communal worship.

I also was impressed to learn that Islam means surrender, and that jihad refers to an internal struggle to surrender to Allah, not an external warfare. I learned that Muslims have a deep reverence for Jesus. They honor him as a great prophet. In fact, his name is mentioned more times than Muhammad's name in the Qur'an. However, they do not believe that Jesus died, but that he was taken up into heaven before he died. So much of what I believe about Jesus is connected with his death and resurrection.

### ***What do you think of the role of women in Islam?***

— In the time of Muhammad, women experienced an advancement. The Islamic law allowed women to divorce their husbands. Women could also own property in their own name. These rights were not allowed among the Arabs or Europeans at that time. But today things seem very confused. In some Muslim countries women seem so oppressed. Yet in other Muslim countries women are politicians and leaders of State. I want to learn more.

### ***How has the study of Islam and the visit to the mosques changed you?***

— Mainly it has changed my way of praying. I am more often consciously praying with an attitude of thanksgiving and praise. I pray often the prayer, "Glory be to the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit..." I am a member/teacher of a French Club. I have wanted to present the topic of immigration in France for discussion, since this has mostly to do with Muslims there.



## **My Journey Into Freedom – A Prayer**

Returning from a trip to Florida, I had two and half hours on the plane. I didn't want to escape. I wanted to connect with myself and God and feel something deeply. I pulled out a book of prayers and started reading from the world's religions, but nothing grabbed me. I didn't want a "Help me, God..." prayer. That felt weak and unsatisfying. I wanted to make a statement, a declaration of my path, an affirmation of who I am becoming. With that realization, I began to write.

Spirit of Life, who moves in me and through me, hear my prayer.  
Be present with me now in my journey into freedom.

I walk from skepticism regarding what is possible to openness., to willingness., to eagerness., to experience all of life.

I walk from my fear of exposing my foolishness to embrace this moment, to embrace the lost exuberance of the little boy in me.

I walk from my reserved intellectualism to being open to beauty, to playfulness, to richness of feeling.

I walk from my anxiety about limited abilities to acknowledge my gifts and nurture their growth.

I walk from the pit of unworthiness to claim my power, to honor my needs, to hold my boundaries.

I walk from relentless self-criticism to acceptance and peace, for myself and others.

I walk from hiding my truth, to honoring my desires and values, even in the face of opposition and resistance.

I walk from false humility to celebrate my joy.

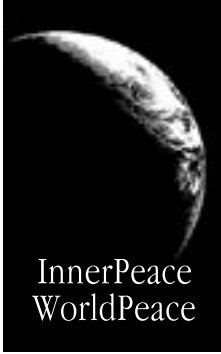
I walk from my fear of not being seen and not being appreciated and open myself to see and appreciate the magnificence of all, including myself.

Thank you, God, for your presence, for your care. Let me walk through the door of your love, that I may become a door for others.

This I confirm with my entire being.

Amen.

— Jeff Olson



**FYi**

**I Never Thought Killing Could be Such Fun—** *continued from page 2*

I believe that the relentless depiction of violence in our film industry is as toxic as the pollutants in our atmosphere. We are not without alternatives. In another article in this issue of the journal you will read about a recent Japanese film, "Departures," which is refreshingly free of violence and which shows how simple acts that acknowledge human dignity, even after death, can transform lives.

Bud Hayes

**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.

**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.

**Editorial Group**

Mary Erkins  
Bud Hayes, Co-editor  
Cindy Palombi, *Production*  
Emory Mead, *Design*  
Jeff Olson  
Wayne Vanek

budhayes@innerpeaceworldpeace.org

**Be the change  
you want to see  
in the world** — Gandhi

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

RETURN REQUESTED