



# Journal 18 March 2011

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## Editor's Note: In This Issue

I am pleased to announce that we have three first time contributors in this issue. **John Cabral** has lived in Oak Park since 1993. Born in Brazil, he spent many years in Latin America including seven years in Mexico. In the U.S he has worked in community revitalization in Black and Hispanic central-city neighborhoods. He has often participated in social change activism including efforts to avoid or stop U.S. wars around the world. In his article he describes a somewhat harrowing situation in which he was put to the test while meeting with a group of savvy, street-smart people who work to prevent violence in the streets.

**Mark Latus** is a British citizen who frequently visits friends in the Chicago area. He has attended and participated in a number of Saturday morning InnerPeace/WorldPeace meetings. He has a broad interest in nonviolent strategies. In his first contribution to this journal he wonders about what might have been an appropriate nonviolent response to a situation he experienced.

**Sandy Jefferson** has often been at the Friday night Peace Vigil over the years. He has a magnificent voice and always leads us in singing at the end when he is there. In his first article in this journal he writes about a recent experience at the vigil which brings out an international dimension to our witness.

**Wayne Vanek**, on our editorial board and a regular at the Saturday morning meetings, returns to these pages with a timely reflection about his struggle to keep a positive focus when he is tempted to react in negative ways to the political scene. This is a frequent topic in our meetings.

**Walt Ziegenhals** was one of the stalwarts in the early years of the Friday night Peace Vigil, which is now in its ninth year. He always brought a written reflection having to do in an amazing variety of ways with the futility and enormous human costs of war. He and his wife, Harriet, moved out of the area a couple years ago, but he continues to send reflections which are read at the vigil. One of them, a particularly personal and probing reflection, is included in this issue. Note how he ends his reflection by saying "May peace fill our hearts." Whoever reads at the vigil ends by saying that. We all then say "Shalom (Peace) for all." I invite the reader to do the same.

—Bud Hayes

## Courageous Mediators Roam Chicago's West Side

—John Cabral

I run my bike up to the platform and grab a Green Line "El" train to the Pulaski station, get off and ride north on a small residential street, St. Louis Avenue, to make it up to Chicago Avenue. What a lovely, sunny mid-afternoon and what a relief that there are no groups of young men on any of the corners yelling "crack and blow" (cocaine and heroin).

And soon I am in the offices of CeaseFire West, located inside a small two-flat standing rather alone on a desolate stretch of this old broken-down commercial corridor. I have been invited by Marilyn Pitchford, the organization's local supervisor, to visit and give a short talk as part of their weekly staff meeting. I had told her I was a mediator. She had said her workers might be interested in hearing a presentation on the field of mediation. What I was looking for was to get a look at these famous CeaseFire people and understand how they work.

*continued on next page*

“...a woman on the porch with a rifle, and as you get out you hear her clicking the action...”



### Courageous Mediators Roam Chicago's West Side — continued from front page

Eight or nine men took seats in a circle, occupying the bulk of the little office. “John Lofton, mediator, Violence Interrupter.” “Jimmy Lee, Mediator, Violence Interrupter.” “Derrick House, Outreach Worker.” Most of these men have spent time in the penitentiary. Now they’re here, one of them tells me later, because they want to change and make amends for some of the things they did, and because the Chicago Project for Violence Prevention finds grant money to pay them to be out on the streets all week.

I start my twenty-minute presentation. Someone asks me why I got into conflict resolution. I begin explaining my training in Nonviolent Communication, and am interrupted immediately.

“That’s hard here! Our mamas taught us all we had to fight back. Boy, don’t you be comin’ back here without putting up a fight, you hear? That’s what we heard, growing up!”

It’s the law of retaliation: if you don’t respond to disrespectful behavior quickly and forcefully, every would-be “tough” in the neighborhood will start pushing you around.

Derrick is excited for me to understand something. “Wait a minute! Say you and me are in a car pulling up and a woman on the porch got a rifle, and as you get out you hear her clicking the action and loading. There be a van nearby full of kids. They some older folks on the porch next door. What do you do? Come on! What do you do?! You’re taking too long—you gotta act fast!”

I ask, “So, is she pointing the weapon at us?”

“Yep! And when you say, ‘Wait, I’m a CeaseFire worker, I’m tryin’ to stop the violence’ the woman say, ‘I don’t give a damn who you are. Just get your fat behind out of here or I’ll blow you away.’ So are you gonna get back in your car and drive away?”

Suddenly, I’m made aware that the role play I’m in corresponds closely to reality. Others tell me this actually happened not long ago to Derrick exactly the way he’s describing it.

This role play I’m suddenly in, corresponds closely to reality. Others tell this happened not long ago to Derrick exactly the way he’s describing it.

Now all the men in the circle are paying very close attention. All eyes are on me and no one’s moving. Derrick is looking at me, challenging me to give the answer he wants, waiting. I feel a little hot and the perspiration starts popping out around my lips.

I look at Derrick with great concentration and ask in an urgent voice: “Ma’am, are you OK?!?”

Derrick quickly eases up, nodding, and everybody in the circle shifts in their chairs, relaxing again.

Some mediators are trained to sit the closest to the door so the mediator can run out if things get violent! This is not a luxury the mediators I am meeting with can afford.

One of these men was shot and wounded (accidentally) during an intervention not too long ago. No matter. Wherever the dispute, you have to interrupt the violence. And you have to keep your credibility in the neighborhood!

The men explain that here, when two people who are planning to kill each other meet in mediation, they agree to do so out of respect and consideration for the mediator.

Then the regular staff meeting begins. One after another, the men give their reports: the latest shooting, who died, whose girlfriend got insulted, who’s planning to retaliate, and what battle was averted due to a timely intervention.

The meeting is over. Derrick smiles as he shakes hands and says goodbye. I’m on a Chicago Transit Authority bus, my bicycle attached to the front bike rack, headed toward Michigan Avenue’s “Magnificent mile” only four miles east, but a world away.

“...bloody useless,”  
 “Are you blind!” ...  
 ”Are stupid or what?”

...should I have  
 intervened?

“Through this process,  
 Rosenberg suggests,  
 we establish a flow of  
 communication, until  
 compassion manifests  
 naturally”

## ‘Boundary Disputes’

—Mark Latus

I live in a quiet, residential road of bungalows in a small English village. However, over the last three weeks, the construction of a new driveway alongside our neighbour’s bungalow and the erection of a new fence between the two properties have proved disruptive on several levels. It is the psychological impact upon me that I would like to share with you here.

First came down the magnolia and fir trees leaving bare stumps and clouds of pine-scented particles, then began the excavations (apparently resurfacing driveways requires deep level mining,) next the tree stumps and extensive root systems were extracted like old teeth which had long lost their enamel and function. Tons of earth came out, similar amounts of non-descript material took its place.

The operation was undertaken by a father and son team aided by all manner of heavy machinery. Work began on the fence, two metres high, eighteen metres in length, which soon firmly divided the two properties.

So, what are my objections, and why am I left with such negative feelings toward the work which is now all but complete?

I was dismayed to witness the destruction of the fir trees, which had previously marked the boundary. I was saddened to see the waste of so much natural material in the building work. I was disappointed that our neighbours felt the need for a barrier. I was perturbed at the lack of communication between the builders and myself. The distance in social class I perceived between us reinforced my hatred of our class-based society. Most of all I was distressed to witness, day after day, the belittling and abusive tone the father used when communicating with his late-teenage son, “...bloody useless,” “Are you blind?” “You couldn’t even...”, “Are you stupid or what?” Distressing to hear, but more than this: should I have intervened?

As a teacher I would certainly have felt it my duty to act, and I’d have felt confident to do so in the case of a student. But this was a very different context, and I had no role or authority with which to fortify my position. Of all the irritations, this last will remain with me as it connects with a deep concern for young people whose self-esteem never gets a chance to develop and flourish when trampled upon by ‘those who should know better.’ It raises the issue of how we deal with situations that we know to be wrong, in a safe and constructive way. The whole episode left me with feelings of anger, frustration, guilt and powerlessness. Could it have been trod to Rosenberg’s ideas of nonviolent communication at IPWP meetings some years ago. I decided to return to these two thinkers and see if it might have been possible to better manage this situation.

Nonviolent Communication (NVC) proposes we follow a four-element process on finding ourselves in a situation of tension, conflict or hurt: **observe** what is happening in a non-judgmental way; identify how we **feel** about what is happening; focus on our **needs** in relation to these feelings; and **act** on what we have observed, felt and recognised as our needs. Action we take is aimed at obtaining what it is that will enrich our lives and crucially, we seek to “*discover what would enrich the lives of others.*” Through this process, Rosenberg suggests, “*we establish a flow of communication, until compassion manifests naturally.*”

So might I have assessed the situation in a less moralising, less “*life-alienating*” way? Following this, might I have tried to identify my **needs** — to draw the father’s attention to the way he was speaking to his son, and our neighbour to the environmental impact and the needlessness of the fence? Then might I have **acted** in a more authentic and appropriate manner — expressing my thoughts and feelings with the neighbour before the building began and perhaps making a friendly and positive attempt to make a connection with the builders and initiate positive communication?

## Our 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.

Martin Buber offers less detailed guidance on dealing with such difficult encounters, but he does offer a philosophy or existential perspective, which may be instructive. Buber is most well-known for coining the terms, *I-It* and *I-Thou* and asserts that we have a choice in situations of confrontation; we can place ourselves alongside and engage with the 'other' as *'Thou'* or we can remain apart and view the 'other' as *'It.'*

Buber (1878 to 1965) believed that modern society was increasingly characterised by I-It and this was evidenced in the distancing of people from each other and of people from their true selves and from God. He observed that meaningful and truly relational encounters were becoming less common.

Buber also wrote and worked with issues of differences between social groups, mainly divisions around race and faith, and perhaps this relates to my observation and disgust with the 'class' barriers I felt lay between the builders and me.

*What is called for is not neutrality but solidarity, a living answering for one another – and mutuality, living reciprocity; not effacing the boundaries between the groups, circles, and parties, but communal recognition of the common reality and communal testing of the common responsibility.*  
(Buber 1957)

My experience of IPWP is of a search, even yearning, to understand, but also, and critically, to furnish ourselves with authentic and effective strategies with which to meet a world at times violent and forbidding. For me, both Rosenberg and Buber contribute to these.

Buber, M (1957) *Pointing the Way* Schocken Books  
Rosenberg, M (1990) *Non-violent Communication* Puddle Dancer Press

## The Prayer Vigil For Peace

—Sandy Jefferson

After the shootings in Tucson, feeling the need for something positive, I decided to go to the Friday night Prayer Vigil which is held on the steps of First United Church in Oak Park from 7 to 8 p.m. I attend frequently, but this was my first time in the new year. This is a small but faithful group which has been coming for years. It is not unusual for passers-by to greet us or even stop and talk.

On this particular evening it was a young man who stopped and asked whether he could take our picture. We had one of those "War Is Not The Answer" signs. After he photographed us, he asked if there was one statement that we wanted to make to the world about peace. Someone pointed to the sign and said, "That's it. War is not the answer." Someone else said, "Peace is noble." The young man said, "I am a student from Saudi Arabia. Sometimes when I try talking with people about peace they say, 'We don't want to talk to you. You are Muslim.' I think we should all coexist in peace." Everyone agreed.

Then he said, "That is great. When I go back to Saudi Arabia I will tell everyone I meet that I was in America, and I saw these people standing on the steps of a church and they said we should all live together in peace." It was near the end of the hour. We exchanged a few pleasantries and then sang as we always do at the end. This time we sang the verse from "We Shall Overcome" that says "We Shall Live in Peace."



**Election Practice**

—Wayne Vanek

A few weeks ago *Newsweek* had a feature article on President Obama. The point of it was that his enemies have painted him as an alien threat. The author asks and explores the question whether Obama can “fight the flight from facts.” The article quotes statistics from a recent poll that showed that 34% of Americans think Obama is not a Christian, 24% think he is Muslim, and 31% think he favors Muslim-Americans over Americans of other faiths.

When I face facts like these and also the mid-term elections, I know there will be less facts flying around and more “flight from facts” (lies). I almost automatically get into an election dynamic of labeling and vilifying my perceived opponents/enemies that I think deliberately distort and lie. I have these long narratives that resonate in my head in which I demolish the enemy to the applause of a “Greek Chorus.”

When I look at this dynamic, I can see that it is fueled by anger and fear. I am angry that these persons get away with lying and am fearful that they will gain more power over our institutions.

I recently brought my problem to a Saturday meeting of InnerPeace/WorldPeace. I received some wise and healthy ideas to help me cope. “Act out of faith rather than fear.” That is, keep focused on the positive and thus lessen the negative energy of anger and fear. I thought about this and realized that what I want positively for my country is that the gap between the very rich and the poor and middle class be narrowed. I have read international studies that state that the greater the gap, the unhealthier (on many levels) a country is.

So I need to focus my energies on this positive goal. But I was also warned that the world has always been imperfect and not to get caught in thinking that it can be made perfect, even in one area. In fact, another person spoke elegantly about working with dedication, but letting go of the results. I have seen the living of that tenet bring peace and dedication to a number of AA participants. What this truth is implying is that my efforts are mainly to make me a more giving person rather than somehow changing the world. If I don’t act out of positive energy, can I really better the world? It would be like my driving to a conference on ecology with black smoke belching out of my tailpipe.

So now I ask myself how do I go about following these sage ideas? I am reading *The Naked Now* by Richard Rohr. I have found a statement which would help me not jump to judgment and vilification. “This ability to stand back and calmly observe my inner dramas, without rushing to judgment, is foundational for spiritual seeing. It is the primary form of ‘dying to the self’ that Jesus lived personally and the Buddha taught experientially.”

Rohr states that this “standing back” has many names. “Most writers in the early Christian era called this radical perceptual shift away from judging and separate self Contemplation.

“Buddhists called it meditation, sitting or practicing. Hesychiastic Orthodoxy called it prayer of the heart. Sufi Islam called it ecstasy. Hasidic Judaism called it living from ‘the divine spark within.’ Vedantic Hinduism spoke of it as non-dual knowing or simply breathing. Native religions found it in communion with nature itself or the Great Spirit through dance, ritual and sexuality.”

Whatever it is called, it starts with being in the NOW, instead of hiding in the past or worrying about the future. So this election season can call me to do a regular practice: to catch myself hiding from what needs to be faced next; to be aware when I’m judging or blaming others; to be in the NOW, i.e. to be present to whom or whatever is happening, and to notice the sense of aliveness in my body when I’m in the NOW.

Will this be enough to make the world perfect, even in one small area? No, but don’t underestimate what a few persons can do. There is the hope that Jesus of Nazareth was correct when he so lovingly used the metaphor of leaven (yeast) to help us understand about being transformed and transformation. “What is the kingdom of God? It reminds me of a handful of leaven which the housewife puts in three measures of flour, to work there till the whole mass has risen.”

(Luke 13:21)

“This ability to stand back and calmly observe my inner dramas, without rushing to judgment, is foundational for spiritual seeing.”

—Richard Rohr

Today, instead of leaven, we talk of the tipping point. Malcolm Gladwell speaks of how a small number of persons can advance a great cause. Mother Teresa answered, when asked how helping a relatively small number of dying persons in Calcutta would solve poverty in India, "I am not called to be successful, I am called to be faithful." Look what she has done by being faithful. If enough of us are faithful, maybe we will be leaven and a part of the tip.

### **Ernie the Butcher and "Marquette"**

*"We can enrich our common heritage with a very simple discovery that is within our reach, namely that war is the most barbarous and least effective way of resolving conflicts."*

—Pope John Paul II

Dear Friends of Peace:

On a late May visit to Oak Park, Il., a friend drove Harriet and me west on Lake Street. past the now closed Community Market en route to catch a plane at O'Hare. It was a sad moment. For more than 25 years the Ziegenhals family did most of our grocery shopping at the Community Market.\* Harry, the Manager, and many of the employees were like friends. Now the Market was empty, the victim, I suppose, of larger, newer and more upscale stores – like Trader Joe's and Whole Foods.

For as far back as I can remember, Ernie, the butcher, had been a mainstay in the Community Market meat department. A big man in his late fifties with a beefy face, Ernie was man of strong opinions. I remember him well. I liked him. He was an "unforgettable character."

One summer morning, probably in 2005, while waiting for him to process my order, I could not help but overhear a heated argument between Ernie and a part time employee, a recent graduate of Marquette University. The row began when the Marquette grad noted that all men, ages 18-25, are required by law to fill out a registration form for use by the government in the event of a draft. "Marquette," as I called him, was uneasy. "I don't want to register," he said. "I don't want to enlist or be drafted into the armed services." "Marquette" read the papers. He knew that the war in Iraq was no picnic, that American troops were coming home in body bags and on stretchers. He wanted nothing to do with killing or being killed. He wanted nothing to do with U.S. involvement in the Middle East.

Ernie lit into him! At first I thought he was teasing - having a little fun on a slow day. But Ernie was serious. "Marquette" should be proud to "defend his country like everybody else," like Ernie said he did, "in the '60s." He should be willing to "defend our freedoms, our way of life." "The Chinese are forced to work all day for pennies," Ernie exclaimed! "Do you want to live the way they live?" "Marquette" should "grow up; be a man!" Did he expect his mother to be around forever to "wipe his ass?" "Join the Army," Ernie demanded. "They'll make a man out of ya!"

Normally, I don't hear that kind of talk. Most people I know and associate with at this stage in my life are college educated, attend church and go out of their way to be polite, reasonable and understanding. Few, like Ernie, are so earthy, blunt and opinionated.

But it wasn't always that way - not for me, not in the 1930s. I was brought up in a working class family. My father, a German immigrant, supported the four of us by pounding rivets at the Trailmobile Plant in Cincinnati. My mother, also a German immigrant, took in laundry and worked as a seamstress. I sold newspapers, jerked sodas, cut grass in a cemetery and ushered in the Forest Theatre during high school years. To get through college I sweated out summers hoisting bales in the Fox Paper Mill and sanding chassis in the Midwest Radio Factory. The point being that I grew up in neighborhoods and worked in settings where there were a lot of people like Ernie, foul mouthed and opinionated. Like Ernie, they thought in terms of black and white, of good and bad, of patriots and traitors.

"Join the army,"  
Ernie demanded,  
"They'll make a man  
out of ya!"

“Being Christian calls for a fundamental critique of the conformity of the modern militarized world.”

—John Howard Yoder

There were no college graduates; few attended church. They accepted what they read -“all the news that’s fit to print”- in the *Cincinnati Times Star*. They believed what FDR told us about domestic events and world affairs in his “Fireside Chats.”

The Ernies of Oak Park are unlikely to stand at a peace vigil on a Friday night. They’re most probably the characters that shout angrily, make obscene gestures and screech tires as they speed by. They’re among the “patriots” who supported Bush’s war in Iraq, who rallied round Obama’s call for yet another “surge” in Afghanistan and massive military spending, who will support any future wars with Iran, Yemen, North Korea, China – wherever or with whomever.

I have often wondered what might explain the differences in attitude between Ernie and “Marquette.” Certainly, age was a factor. Ernie had completed his stint in the military during the war in Vietnam. He would no longer have to shoot anybody or be shot at. “Marquette,” on the other hand, might be putting his life on the line somewhere in the Middle East. For him, the hazards of war were an ugly reality. Education may also have been a factor. Ernie, a working class guy, most of whose vocational life had been spent behind a meat counter, did not I assume, have the benefit of a college education with hours spent reflecting on the politics of Arab regimes and the influence of European, Chinese and American oil companies in the Middle East.

Finally, religion may have played a part. At least I hope that it did. “Marquette” was a recent graduate of Marquette University, a Jesuit Catholic College whose mission is to “seek the truth about God and the world.” It was not unusual, of course, for college students to oppose the war in Iraq. “Marquette” may have been taught by Daniel C. Maguire, Professor of Ethics, who believes that “war is dumb;” that war is the business of socialized slaughter.” (1) Possibly, he was influenced by the prominent pacifist theologian Stanley Hauerwas, formerly of Notre Dame and now at Duke, who believes that all men were created to be at peace with one another and God; that “through the forgiveness made possible by Jesus’ cross we are no longer condemned to kill.”...“(2) It’s no surprise, therefore, that differences in age, education and religion all helped account for the disparate attitudes of these two men toward war, especially wars in the Middle East.

Seven years at college and seminary, followed by four years of active duty in the Navy (one of which was in the Middle East) and, in recent years, the writings of pacifist theologians, all are serving to reshape my thinking about matters of war and peace. Consider, for example, the following words of the brilliant Mennonite theologian, John Howard Yoder:

Jesus sought to gather a “new kind of people. He did not gather a guerilla unit to bring down the Romans, nor a house of contemplation, nor a theological faculty, but a people: a structured community best described by the name “assembly” of Christians (ecclesia). The body Jesus gathered “had new ways of dealing with the offender, by forgiveness instead of vengeance. (3) Being a Christian, Yoder argued, “calls for a fundamental critique of the conformity of the churches to the modern militarized world.” (4)

I doubt that Ernie will ever understand Yoder’s point of view. Marquette might. I’m hoping to understand them more fully in my remaining years.

Let Peace Fill Our Hearts; Shalom for All

—Walt Ziegenhals, December 20, 2010

(1) Maguire, Daniel C., *The Horrors We Bless*, Fortress Press, p.6

(2) Hauerwas, Stanley, “Sacrificing the Sacrifices of War,” Duke University Divinity School, p.28

(3) Yoder, John Howard, *Nonviolence: A Brief History*, p.90

(4) *Ibid.*, p.119

*\*Names and places have been changed to protect privacy*



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

### The River

You know a dream is like a river,  
ever changing as it flows  
And the dreamer's just a vessel  
that must follow where it goes  
Trying to learn from what's behind you  
Never knowing what's in store  
Makes each day a constant battle  
Just to stay between the shores

Too many times we stand beside  
Let the water slip away  
Till what we put off till tomorrow  
has now become today  
so don't you sit upon the shoreline  
and say you're satisfied  
Choose to chance the rapids  
Dare to dance the tide

—Garth Brooks

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