Educating for Nonviolent Futures

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"We cannot work for what we cannot imagine. So we have to be able to imagine, play, and daydream about the peace culture... that we are trying to build. What exists is possible. Because there are peace cultures — and we have all experienced islands of peace culture — it is possible." Elise Boulding

When you think about the future what comes to mind? Do you find yourself grimacing with images of environmental degradation, war, hunger, injustice, inequality, and all sorts of violence? Or do you find your mind filled with pleasant images of green places, communities at peace, cooperation, fairness, and a global community in which violence is unacceptable? I will go even one step further and ask if you feel that you have any stake or responsibility in creating the future?

Many people feel powerless and disconnected from the societies in which they live. When they think about their world and the violence that is all around them they experience a sense of anxiety, hopelessness, despair and paralysis! Many have lost confidence in themselves, in their governments and politicians and in their ability to direct their destinies. But I want to tell you that a better future is possible and more than that, I want to tell you that you have the power to make it so! And it is not necessarily such a grim task!
Violence IS the problem

_The choice is no longer between violence and nonviolence. It is between nonviolence and nonexistence._ Martin Luther King, Jr.

We have recently witnessed the close of the most violent century in human history and the new century into which we have been thrust is promising ever increasing violence unless we DO something and do it NOW!

All kinds of violence must be addressed. We need only turn on the nightly news to see reports and attention paid to the physical violence that is all around us. We need also to give attention to “emotional violence”: put downs; labeling; threats; political, economic, cultural, and social exclusion; denial of basic human rights, and injustice. These behaviors hurt in more subtle ways but the hurt is deep nonetheless. More often than not, these behaviors lead to physical violence. This kind of violence is not only aimed towards individuals but often targets entire groups or classes of people within a society where these behaviors, values, or attitudes become institutionalized, that is, an inherent part of the society’s structure (Galtung, 1969, 1985), and accepted as “normal” or traditional. These societies bring “violence upon human rights and dignity when it forcibly stunts the optimum development of each human being, whether because of race, religion, sex, sexual preference, age, or whatever.” (Barash, 1991, p. 8). Barash (1991) urges us to consider that structural violence is another way of identifying oppression and that “structural violence, including misery, hunger, repression, and alienation, works slowly, eroding human values and eventually, human lives” (p. 9).

Violence is now considered to be a serious threat to public health (WHO, 2002). In the recently released World Health Organization’s report on violence, Nelson Mandela stressed that all forms of violence are damaging to our social
fabric and pose as much of an obstacle to creating a “culture of peace” as does armed conflict. He states so eloquently the following:

Less visible, but even more widespread, is the legacy of day-to-day, individual suffering. It is the pain of children who are abused by people who should protect them, women injured or humiliated by violent partners, elderly persons maltreated by their caregivers, youths who are bullied by other youths, and people of all ages who inflict violence on themselves. This suffering — and there are many more examples that I could give — is a legacy that reproduces itself; as new generations learn from the violence of generations past, as victims learn from victimizers, and as the social conditions that nurture violence are allowed to continue. No country, no city, no community is immune. But neither are we powerless against it. Violence thrives in the absence of democracy, respect for human rights and good governance (p. ix).

We cannot allow the patterns of the past to dictate our future. Those whose lives are surrounded with violence day in and day out see it as an inevitable part of the human condition. This is not necessarily true. We often talk about how a “culture of violence” can take root. It is urgent that we refocus our energies on creating and nurturing a “culture of peace”.

We must begin with the young

“If we are to reach real peace in this world and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children.”

Mohandas Gandhi
In order to transform the culture of violence to a culture of peace, we must begin with our youth. We are living in a time in which we face very serious social, political, and ecological problems. Solving these problems demands cooperative decision-making and urgent action from our global community. We cannot allow our children to be educated in a way in which they emerge less informed socially, less interested in local and global public affairs, and less inclined to participate and take action due to feelings of apathy, disconnection, and powerlessness (Berman, 1997, p. 5). Democracy is defined as government by the people. What has been lost however, is the realization that “a healthy democracy means social community as well as self-government” (Likona & Paradise, 1980). Relinquishing power to those in government positions is a dangerous and undemocratic way to live. It is becoming ever more clear that our very survival on earth depends on our “capacity for cooperation, interdependence, conservation, and respect for a diversity of people and nations” (Gibbs, p. 37).

The caring community has assured both personal and cultural survival throughout history. This has involved people within the community offering support to one another, showing respect and celebrating the richness that difference (diversity) brings to the community, and sincere cooperation to achieve shared visions and goals (Gibbs, p. 37). We need to empower our youth, to open their eyes to the problems at hand, to help them connect and develop a sense of community, and to teach them the skills that they need to determine the future that they will inherit.

This kind of teaching is not being done on a global scale. I am dismayed by this. Ministries of Education, teachers, and administrators cry that there isn’t enough time to teach this in the curriculum. I argue that there isn’t time not to teach it!! The way that we nurture and educate our young determines who they become as adults. We must place strong emphasis on the moral, social, and
emotional development of people. This is a lifelong process but needs to begin with the very young. In the USA George W. Bush is calling for more stringent standardized testing in schools. In Japan where I teach, the education system relies very heavily on test results. There are many more examples worldwide. My question IS, if we are teaching for the test score, what are we neglecting to teach?

Caring

*We must meet hate with creative love.*

*Martin Luther King, Jr.*

What must be done? Where do we begin? At first you might think that it is all too overwhelming. When we look at the TV news, listen to the radio, read the daily headlines, it is all bad news! How often do we read about the successes, the good news?

As a peace educator, I am totally convinced that nonviolence doesn’t just happen. Building the human capacity to care and to relate must be done proactively. We need to engage young people’s hearts early on beginning in pre-school and kindergarten. We not only need to teach our young the academic basics but we need also to include the social basics: Relatedness, Respect, and Responsibility or what Gibbs (1994, p. 39) calls the “3 social R’s”. She stresses that these basic habits of the heart (Bellah, 1985) are desperately needed throughout the global community in our schools, families, local communities, nation, and workplace.

Nel Noddings (1992) emphasizes that the main aim of education should be to produce competent, caring, loving, and lovable people - emotionally intelligent
people (Goleman, 1996). Noddings suggests that we need to engage our young in a general education that is organized around themes of caring for self; intimate others; global others; plants, animals, and the environment; the human-made world, and ideas.

Caring requires creativity. It is not something that can be accomplished by formula or mandate. By creating classrooms and schools that are functioning, caring communities, and modeling for our youth peaceful, caring behavior, we give a very powerful message. The organization Educators for Social Responsibility calls this “The Peaceable Classroom”. The themes emphasized include: cooperation, caring and effective communication, respect, the appreciation for diversity, the appropriate expression of feelings, responsible decision making, conflict resolution, and social responsibility (Kreidler, 1984, 1990, 1995, 1997a, 1997b; Lantieri & Patti, 1996; Levin, 1994; Miller-Lieber, 1994, 1998). Working together in this vibrant, productive “community” helps to develop the capacity to care and instills in our learners hope for their future. Reardon (1994) so beautifully points out that

*Caring is an active investment and kind of twin to hope. Both elements are essential to the abilities to be socially responsible, to act toward the effectuation of change, to move against injustice, to protest against and intervene in the degradation of the environment. We hope to help learners develop those abilities. We hope to help learners become responsible, having the capacity to respond actively and effectively, to live out a commitment to the common future (p. 40).*

It is our responsibility as peace educators to awaken our young to the possibilities for a nonviolent future. It is also our responsibility to teach in a way that avoids the development of cynicism and the sense of hopelessness in our young.
Educating for nonviolence and nonviolent conflict resolution

*Nonviolence is not a garment to be put on and off at will. Its seat is in the heart, and it must be an inseparable part of our being.* — Ghandi

Very few of us have been actively taught skills to manage and resolve conflict in nonviolent ways. Most often, the ways that we end up managing our conflicts and relationships depend upon patterns of behavior that we observed in our families and immediate social groups while growing up. Needless to say, this “hit or miss” kind of “learning” is not sufficient for the challenges that we face in our everyday lives. Very often the “skills” that are “learned” are very destructive indeed. Yet we continue to use them because that is what we know!

With the recently released WHO Report on Violence (October 3, 2002), comes the understanding that violence is a serious public health issue which cannot be ignored. Societies everywhere have tried to control violence primarily by punishing the perpetrators — in other words, fighting violence with violence. This approach has not and is not working. The public health approach suggests that we concentrate instead on prevention rather than treatment — “pro-action” rather than reaction. It is obvious that schools must become intimately involved in these prevention efforts. In partnership with a range of violence prevention experts, schools must actively take a role in promoting non-violence, reducing the perpetration of violence, and changing the circumstances and conditions that give rise to violence in the first place. “Although schools alone will not be able to create a peaceable society, there is little possibility that we will succeed in reducing violence without educating our young people in the ways of peace” (Lantieri & Patti, p. 12).
Research has identified numerous risk factors in youth that serve as accurate predictors of later violent and antisocial behavior including "alienation and a lack of bonding to family, school, and community" (Hawkins & Catalano, 1992 in Lantieri & Patti, p. 13). But not every child falls prey to the effects of these high-risk environments and is able to develop pro-social skills and to thrive even in the midst of severe difficulty. The fascinating research on human resiliency (Benard, 1991) identifies the protective factors that create competency, wellness, and the capacity to overcome stress. Benard (1991) summarizes those protective factors into three categories: caring and support; positive expectations; and active participation. Schools, families, and communities must provide for our young the positive, health enhancing "protective factors" necessary for them to develop resiliency. Resilient children possess the following attributes (Gibbs, p. 44)

- **Social competence**: pro-social behaviors such as responsiveness, empathy, caring, communication skills, a sense of humor
- **Problem-solving skills**: abstract and reflective thinking, flexibility
- **Autonomy**: an internal locus of control, a strong sense of independence, power, self-esteem, self-discipline, and control of impulses.
- **A sense of purpose and future**: healthy expectancies, goal directedness, orientation to the future, motivation to achieve, persistence, hopefulness, hardiness, belief in a bright and compelling future, a sense of anticipation, and a sense of coherence.

Schools must be structured in a way that the children in them develop these attributes. As Boulding (1997, p. 38) stresses, we are talking about raising our children, about helping them to grow into good and kind people.
...the full development of human beings - growing humans into humans — is the most important thing that any society does. But essentially this issue is bypassed. We talk about testing, about good curricula, and so on; but the full moral, social, emotional development of the child doesn’t get the kind of attention it should. I think what has really happened is that the issue of economic development has swallowed everything else up and so we’ve lost the sense of what human and social development means... it is the way that we raise children that determines how grownups will handle conflict (Boulding 1998, p. 38).

How did it come to be that so much of our energy has been focused on raising test scores? The time for redirecting our energy is long overdue. Reforms in schools must have an effect on the day-to-day lives of the children in our schools. Wood (1992, p. 254) says that we shouldn’t be surprised that legislated reform has little effect or impact on children and their classrooms since most of the legislated-excellence reforms have more to do with adults than with children! He also urges that to begin with we need to assure that all schools are genuine communities, with a clear and common image of the kind of human being a young person will be when he/she graduates (p. 254). He stresses that “these communities should engender the habits of heart and mind that are required of democratic citizens, habits of compassion, careful reflection, tolerance, mutuality, service, and commitment that are only learned through experience, not exhortation”. Young people must have experience and practice living this way in order for these habits of heart and mind to take hold within each and every one of them! Wood claims that this is not utopian to strive for schools that benefit our youth, communities, and ourselves. Teachers and learners need to have time together to engage in real learning and doing that cuts across artificial parameters of subject matter area. Noddings (1992, p. xii) stresses that this continuity of place, people, purpose, and curriculum is ignored in schools at
present. With the relentless focus on academic excellence we are neglecting to encourage the development of caring in our students. It is urgent that we take the time to create people who think critically and creatively, know how to learn and reason, can make responsible decisions, and who can visualize and imagine as we confront and solve the problems that we face in our global community. We must give our young people the chance “to make a difference in their communities today, not in some never-arriving future” (Wood, 1992, p. 255). By giving them this chance in the nurturing safety of our schools and communities to practice active global citizenship, we truly have taken a step towards creating a culture of peace.

We need also to prepare our young for the challenges and possible failures they may encounter when living this way. How do we help them to deal with disappointments along the way? We can’t delude them into thinking that cultural transformation is effortless and that everyone in their world will agree with them and their ideals. We need to assure that they have the courage of their convictions so that they don’t fall apart or despair when challenged by others who think differently or when they are criticized for the path that they have chosen. Making peace is not a trend that one engages in for a few weeks or years when one decides to take this route! Transforming culture is a process that will take many years and generations to accomplish. How do we prepare our young people to meet the challenges and have the courage and patience to act?

Educating for Social Responsibility and Action

*Become the change you hope to see in the world. Ghandi*

What are the roots of activism? What are the qualities that give a person the courage to act against injustice? And what forms does social action take? How
do we create healthy, peaceful societies?

I have previously spoken of the need to engage young peoples hearts but we must also engage their minds and hands. Summy (1999) emphasizes that peace and conflict education is unashamedly value-oriented. Clearly, the goal is to advance the prospects of peace-restoring, peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding. By focusing attention on the topic of peacefully resolving conflict and creating peace, peace educators and their students are clearly stating that there are alternatives to violence and to violent resolution of conflict. Summy stresses that while “the impetus may come from the heart, the method by which the goal is pursued must be intellectually critical and analytically rigorous”. He quotes the principal founder of modern peace research, Johan Galtung, as being fond of saying: “The two words of peace studies represent its separate but integrated components. ‘Peace’ stands for the heart, and ‘studies’ stands for the mind. In the operation of peace research they become indivisible.” To these two indivisible components of mind and heart Summy adds a third, “the hand, representing the action and labor for peace and performed innate community in order to forge responsible public policy.” When we raise young peoples awareness of the many forms of violence and perverse injustice, it is our hope that they will be sufficiently provoked to take action towards change. We want them to take the necessary steps toward creating peace culture. The goal therefore of teaching this way IS to “make students angry — not serene, and certainly not complacent” (Summy, 1999)!! The greater their indignation and outrage in the face of violence and injustice, the greater is the likelihood that they will DO something about it!

In order to create a culture of peace, we need to engage vigorously in educating our young to become socially responsible people. Berman (1990) defines Social Responsibility as “the personal investment in the well-being of others and the planet.” A socially responsible individual “cares for and about
others; possesses ethical standards and uses these standards when making
judgements; is open to the viewpoints of others; is responsive to the needs of
others; is altruistic; is politically conscious, informed, and involved; is concerned
about the welfare of the community as a whole; and acts with integrity”
(Berman, 1997, p. 12).

In other words, the focus of social responsibility is on the nature of a person’s
relationship with others and with the larger social and political world. The
components of social responsibility encompass: social and political consciousness;
a sense of connectedness; acting on ethical considerations; prosocial behavior;
integrity of action; and active participation. These components are in each
person as is the potential for their enhancement. How do we enhance these
components? As educators and caregivers, how do we encourage action against
injustice?

Teaching social responsibility then involves the nurturing of social skills,
essential processes that support the development of social responsibility: prosocial
modeling by parents, teachers, and significant individuals; cooperative and
nurturant relationships with others; perspective-taking dialogue; and learning to
manage conflicts effectively. Young people must learn “how to combine crucial
knowledge with the power to act vigorously on the basis of common values,
universal human rights, cooperation, and harmony with nature” (E. Nordland in
Reardon & Nordland, 1994, p. 19). We need to help the younger generation
understand that their world is intimately interrelated and interdependent and
that living in this world requires responsibility, care, concern, and participation.
They must take part in the process of relations building and cooperation building
with peoples of other nations. Most crucial to understand is that these new
relations and new ways of working together cooperatively must enhance not only
the progress and prosperity of their own nation but at the same time benefit the
entire global community (V. Mitina in Reardon & Nordland, 1994, p. 49). “In one way or another, everything that happens is everybody’s concern and everybody’s responsibility” (p. 50). Boulding (1998, p. 36) defines Peace Culture as “a mosaic of identities, attitudes, values, beliefs, and patterns that lead people to live nurturantly with one another itself without the aid of structured power differentials — to deal creatively with their differences and share their resources. In other words, it includes economic, social, and political structures and processes, and relationships with the environment.”

Imagine if we had an entire world full of people who have been educated for this depth of consciousness and connection!

**Challenges to teaching this way**

*Think about the kind of world you want to live and work in. What do you need to know to build that world? Demand that your teachers teach you that. Kropotkin*

As educators, we must face head-on the challenges and risks to teaching this way. And we must also decide whether or not we want to take this step. The most crucial question that we face is whether or not we are content with our current social system and what changes if any we would like to see. Certainly, raising issues of social responsibility opens up areas of consideration that pose a direct challenge to existing relationships of power and accepted belief systems. This means “juxtaposing our political, social, and economic system against a set of ethical standards and against a vision of our collective potential” (Berman, 1997, p. 182). Giroux (1983, 1988) argues that many teachers are not willing to risk exposing themselves to the criticism (or worse) that this kind of open, serious ethical examination of the issues of inequality, power, and ideology might
incur!

When a government calls for education reform, we need to ask "Is real reform what they are calling for?". I think not! The inequitable distribution of power and wealth remains unchallenged. Real reform would insist that we raise these basic questions of equality and power. Real reform would insist that we create democracies that truly live by ethical standards. Real reform would challenge our mistreatment of others and insist that we learn and teach how to live in ways where there is respect and fairness for all. Real reform would ask how power and wealth should be shared and what economic, social, and political protections should be guaranteed to each and every one of us by each and every one of us. Real reform would insist that we do away with structural violence and change our social structures in order to make our societies better places for everyone in which to live. Real reform would also urge us to behave personally according to those same ethical and visionary standards and to act with integrity, responsibility, and care. Real reform would encourage young people to question and propose changes in our political system, our social beliefs, and our international relationships! Berman (1997, p. 182-183) remarks that the current system is perpetuated so that these questions are not asked!

As teachers, we must deal with our own philosophical identities and belief systems. Many in our midst are content with the system and the world "as is". Those of us who are not content need to locate our centers of strength and commitment in order to accomplish what we determine we must, in order to truly educate our young people. We also need to seek out like-minded colleagues who can offer one another support and inspiration as we embark upon this difficult path.
Conclusion

The means are the seeds that bud into flower and come to fruition.
The fruit will always be of the nature of the seed planted.

19th century American pacifist

More questions have been raised here than have been answered! One thing is certain however, we need to take a holistic approach to the education of our young people. The full development of nonviolent, peaceful, committed human beings must be our priority —

Peace culture isn’t created solely in the family; it isn’t created solely in peace studies programs, or in professional and activist peace NGO’s or in the faith communities, or the civil society zones of peace initiatives, or in the U.N. and UNESCO culture of peace projects. Every peace effort is interdependent with every other effort. Knowing more about that interdependence can make each of us contributors toward the further evolution of peace culture in our world (Boulding, 1998, p. 81).

It is urgent that we empower our youth with peace building skills. We must actively and systematically teach our young people to care for the well-being of others and to live nonviolently with themselves, intimate others, global others, and the environment. We need to explore with them all the complexities and challenges that they will face when living this way. We need to place a strong emphasis as well on nurturing and developing critical and creative thinking in order to strengthen the peaceful problem-solving capabilities of the society of which they are a part. We need to prepare them for the “opposition” (the daily assault of violence that they witness in the media and in their daily lives) and help them to develop the skills that they need to maintain and deepen their own
commitment to living nonviolently. We also need to stress that creating a nonviolent civil society requires self-reflection, bravery, commitment, and a heck of a lot of discomfort. Those who commit themselves to nonviolence must have confidence in the right and strength of his/her cause, in his/her principles, and in his/her technique (Sharp, 1973, p. 456).

In addition to behavioral violence, we need also to open young peoples' eyes to the perversity of structural violence and the connection between the two. They need to examine the social, economic, and political structures that distribute the merchandise, resources, and opportunities of a society in such a way that there is perverse injustice (Boulding, 1998, p. 37). Again, this kind of teaching can begin with the very young. Young children are very eager to point out unfairness and injustice in their lives and surroundings. We need to nurture and develop in them a positive and empowered relationship with society, “not in the sense of approving of current social arrangements or being accepted within those social arrangements”, but in the sense of young people having the courage to confront inequity, challenge injustice, and oppose oppression in order to eradicate those arrangements (Berman, 1997, p. 194).

As educators, we need to offer both challenge and support. This presents enormous implications for teacher training. Teachers must be taught to teach for active nonviolence and to act as mentors. For those learners who come to us later on in high school or university with disjointed ideas, it is our responsibility to help them put it all together and formulate their “plan for action”. We desperately need young peoples energy! As we encourage them to take action against injustice we must continually stress that action can take many forms. It can be as simple as helping a classmate who is being bullied or mistreated, teaching others about an issue or an injustice, volunteering for an NGO, fundraising activities and donating to an NGO, or working in their future profession, in a way that is non-violent, peaceful, loving and kind. As a parent or teacher they can teach their children to become caring, active global citizens.
The old saying that the longest journey begins with a single step applies here. We, teachers, parents, and all adults who come into contact with young people need to help them “reconnect” and to feel confident and empowered in doing so. It is very difficult to engage in violence and other destructive behaviors when you feel “connected” with yourself and others. Through our teaching, modeling, and encouragement, we give our youth experience and practice in caring; in the classroom; with family and friends; and with global others. At the same time we are learning and engaging actively in and contributing to the process of social transformation. It involves vigilance and an acute awareness of our behaviors, our attitudes, and daily actions. It is a lifelong and challenging process for learner and practitioner alike.

NOTE from author (Donna J. McInnis) on Moral Integrity and Human Rights

When we talk about moral integrity, I anticipate a bit of a problem when thinking about this on a global scale and applying this kind of teaching in classrooms around the world. Whose morals are we talking about? How do we find common ground in our “moral thinking” on a global scale? How can we as a global culture come to an agreement on what is considered moral or immoral, acceptable or unacceptable behavior? This is where I believe that the study of Universal Human Rights comes into play. I am convinced that the Universal Bill of Human Rights, which includes the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICCPR), and its optional Protocol, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESR) together with the Universal Declaration (UDHR) can act as a common starting point for discussion. Although I understand that the universality of human rights is a much disputed issue, codes drawn up from diverse perspectives, such as the Islamic Declaration of Human Rights, suggest that beneath the cultural
differences there is certainly a common foundation of shared values. The most notable point that I would like to stress is that international human rights discussion is NOT static. Articulation of human rights and human rights standards is ongoing as we strive to “directly confront the values issues raised by human rights problems in the context of global interrelationships” (See Reardon, 1995).

ADDENDUM

A short list for consideration. This is far from complete and not in any order of priority.

**Educating for a Nonviolent Future**

Need to teach for...
- The rejection of violence
- Action against violence
- Peaceful, nonviolent, healthy communication
- Nonviolent resolution of conflict
- Parenting for nonviolence, peace, and justice
- Creative and critical thinking (our problems are very complex... our young people need to invent their future)
- Truth and the courage to speak truth to power
- The sharing of power between men and women (cooperation)
- Caring, nurturing love for our environment
- The celebration of diversity
- Other ideas...
Need to teach that...

- Conflict is a normal and natural part of life... that violence is the problem
- The gap between our laws and practice must be eliminated (and that people MUST demand that laws are enforced)
- Parents cannot abuse their children physically, psychologically, or verbally
- Husbands cannot abuse their wives physically, psychologically, or verbally
- Children can't bully other children
- People can't abuse other people physically, psychologically, or verbally
- Violence is unacceptable
- Other ideas...

Need to teach against...

- The human tendency towards dominance and control, so that the hierarchy seeking impulses don't get socialized and ingrained and viewed as normal behavior!!
- APATHY
- Social pressures against transformation towards nonviolent "being"
- Other ideas...

Need to teach and train...

- Diplomats, politicians, state department people, state workers, and representatives nonviolent communication skills, nonviolent conflict resolution skills, active listening skills...
- Other ideas...
References and Suggested Reading


Social Responsibility.
Orders@Xlibris.com
World Health Organization (WHO).


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