

WITH EYES TO SEE



PEACE AND JUSTICE CONCEPT: PEACE

ideas for
teachers

who want
to
integrate
social
justice
concepts

into what
and how
they teach

Fall
Part I
2001

"The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it... Through violence you may murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. In fact, violence merely increases hate... Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

- Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The enormous tragedy of September 11 has taken our breath away, bruised our spirits, and left us as a human community wounded beyond imagination. We are more sorrowful than we thought possible, more fearful than we want to admit. Our future is less clear, less bright. We are wary, anxious about the next news report. We are searching our hearts and souls for reasons why. We are looking deep inside for measured, rational, appropriate, just ways to think of how our world can move forward in the direction of peace.

As many have said, our world will never be the same. There are levels of meaning within that phrase. We most certainly will never forget the disturbing images that have flashed before our eyes on TV screens or in print media.

We will never know the depth of sadness, the immense pain of those who lost loved ones in such an intentional act of destruction. We at Concern America extend our deepest sympathies to them and we pray that some form of healing and comfort will one day displace at least some of that deep pain.

In many ways we as a human, global community are being offered a unique opportunity at this critical moment in history: the opportunity to recognize that we have the responsibility to take this precious time to create new, appropriate, just, and peaceful ways of being present to and interacting with each other. We are, however, at the writing of this newsletter, at war once again. Current polls state that at least 90% of respondents in this country are in favor of our actions, indicating that most of us believe that violence will create more security in this country. While it is likely that more violence will be unleashed, many in our world will choose ways to move our world in the direction of real and lasting peace. That task will be as difficult as it is necessary.

In its work both in this country and abroad, Concern America utilizes a methodology developed by the great Brazilian educator Paulo Freire in which people are challenged to critically look at the world in a "dialogical" encounter with others. Working together in a "problem-posing" manner, we strive to name the world, understand the root causes of the problems we face, and work to change the oppressive realities that surround us, creating a new, more just society. This edition of *With Eyes to See*, dedicated to the struggle for peace in this uncertain time, utilizes this "problem-posing" approach, challenging our students and ourselves to deal critically with our current realities. Part II of the newsletter, arriving at the beginning of December, will continue to focus on this necessary struggle.

IDEAS FOR PEACE

4-12

WHAT WOULD THEY (I) SAY?

We study history not only to learn of our past, but to learn from the events and the people who have come before us. We study current events, people, and places for the same reasons. The quote by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on page one of this newsletter, for example, may help remind us about the consequences of violence, encouraging us to look for ways to feel safe again, ways that don't escalate hate and violence in our world. We turn to people like Dr. King, elders, religious and political leaders, friends, partners, etc., looking for support and guidance in times like these, and often their insights help us make sense of what has happened and guide us in our future actions. In this spirit, the following exercise calls upon the wisdom of peacemakers throughout history to help us and our students move ahead from September 11, in a spirit of peace.

"Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend."

-Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"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."
-Mahatma Gandhi

(1) Brainstorm with students a list of peacemakers. Lists will probably include people like Dr. King, Gandhi, Sojourner Truth, Rosa Parks, Cesar Chavez, etc. Depending on the age of the group, lists will vary, and it would help to have prepared a list of more peacemakers to suggest, e.g. Rigoberta Menchu of Guatemala, Bishop Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela of South Africa, Dalai Lama of Tibet, Aung San Suu Kyi of Myanmar (formerly Burma), Jane Addams, Albert Schweitzer, and many, many others (visit www.salsa.net/peace to find a link for a list of peacemakers and brief bios). Our religious traditions can also provide us with examples of inspirational peacemakers.

(2) Form small groups, and have each group choose a different peacemaker to study. The groups should develop a profile of their person, learning about their lives, deeds, words, and the context in which they live/lived.

(3) Bring in editorials from newspapers, not necessarily about the tragedy. Talk with the students about what editorials are, who writes them, and what purpose they serve.

(4) Have each group write an editorial about the tragedy, and what should be done about it, in the voice of their peacemaker.

(5) After creating a classroom editorial page with all of the pieces, have each student write her/his own editorial. This opportunity can be used to do peer editing (for writing, not content), and the editorials, including those of the peacemakers, can be sent to local newspapers.

PEACE, WAR, MEDIA

6-12

Have the students watch news reports for a week and record the stories they see. As they watch, ask them to keep in mind the following questions as a guide: Do the stories emphasize the pointlessness and brutality of war, or do they glorify it? How many stories are about peaceful solutions to the conflict? Violent solutions? For a wonderful example of the difference between "WAR JOURNALISM" and "PEACE JOURNALISM," visit the following website: www.mediachannel.org/originals/warand-peace.shtml. There you will find two stories on the same event, one from a war perspective and the other peace, written side by side for a striking comparison.

As a related activity, have the students choose articles on the recent conflict, or others in their community or around the world, and rewrite them from a "Peace Journalism" standpoint. (Adapted from *Learning Peace*, Abrams, Grace C., Schmidt, Fran. The Jane Addams Peace Association. Philadelphia. 1974. 26-27. Available at the Concern America library)

1-8

Pledge for Peace

A "Pledge for Peace" was created for the "Decade for the Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World 2000-2010" which each student can sign (it can be printed from the web at www.salsa.net/peace/pledge.pdf, and/or students can go to the UNESCO web site and sign it there at www.unesco.org/manifesto2000). In summary it states: "I pledge in my daily life, in my family, my work, my community, my country and my region, to: . . . Respect Life, Reject Violence, Share with Others, Listen to Understand, Preserve the Planet, and Rediscover Solidarity."

3-8

Once students have read and understood the Pledge, bring in recent copies of newspapers and find events from around the world and close to home in which the Pledge is being broken and others in which the Pledge is being kept. Students can cut out articles and post them, and/or discuss what they have found. Throughout the year you can refer back to the Pledge when issues of violence and/or peace come up.

4-12

OUR RESPONSES TO CONFLICT

In theory, with a democracy, our government should reflect who we are: we vote for those people who most closely mirror our convictions and hopes. The central response of our government to the recent attacks has been military action, and polls show approximately 90% of respondents are in favor of this action. Does the government reflect the views of our children? How do they themselves respond to conflict? Use the following questions to guide a discussion and reflection on the use of violence/nonviolence in the lives of your students:

- How are disputes settled between you and your friends?
- How are disputes settled in your neighborhood?
- How are disputes settled between you and a person of authority?
- Can you remember an incident which made you so angry you used violence? Could that dispute have been settled any other way?
- Are there kinds of disputes that can only be settled by violence?
- Did you ever act as a peacemaker? What happened?
- How is the U.S. government addressing the threat of terrorism in this country? Are there other ways this problem could be addressed?

(Adapted from *Learning Peace*. 2.)

K-12

TIBETAN "PEACE" FLAGS

Prayer flags are a common sight in Tibet. Made of pieces of white, blue, green, red or gold cloth, they are decorated with religious symbols and framed by words of a prayer. They are then attached to a cord and left outside until they disintegrate, returning to the earth. Every time a flag is waved by the wind, the prayer is sent.

In this same way, students can make Tibetan "Peace" Flags. Using a piece of cloth, each student can decorate her/his flag with symbols of peace, and then write a message around the border of their flag. In this way, the students' messages are carried to the world by the wind, and bring witness to the need for peace in our violent times.

"The cause of violence in not ignorance. It is self-interest. . . Only reverence can restrain violence - reverence for human life and the environment."
-Rev. William Sloan Coffin, Jr.

"It is easier to fight for one's principles than to live up to them."
-Alfred Adler

RECOMMENDED

"Don't ever let them pull you down so low as to hate them."
-Booker T. Washington

"The good we secure for ourselves is precarious and uncertain... until it is secured for all of us and incorporated into our common life."
-Jane Addams

RESOURCES

There are numerous resources available for teaching peace, from lesson plans, books, magazines, and games to movies, websites, and music. The following is a short list (there are many others) of websites dedicated to peace and nonviolence that we have found helpful in looking at the events of September 11 and beyond through various lenses. Most contain information and links to articles on current events from a peace/nonviolence perspective, classroom activities, other peace sites, information on various resources, etc.:

- www.salsa.net/peace
- www.tolerance.org (includes sections for kids, teachers and parents)
- www.wagingpeace.org
- www.afsc.org (America Friends Service Committee)
- www.forusa.org (The Fellowship of Reconciliation)
- www.fourthfreedom.org (The Fourth Freedom Forum: Exploring Options for the Nonviolent Resolution of International Conflict)

CONCERN AMERICA

is an international development and refugee aid organization that sends doctors, nurses, engineers, educators, and nutritionists as volunteers to train and empower the materially poor in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Bolivia, Brazil, Guinea and Mozambique.

In support of these projects, Concern America offers educational services in Orange County which include:

- * the St. Nicholas Project
- * Walk Out of Poverty
- * Infusion Method Workshops for teachers
- * "Training for Transformation" Workshops for adults
- * school and parish consulting for the implementation of the Bishops' Pastoral: "Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions" (June, 1998)
- * Lending library for resources of peace and social justice

Information on any of these projects can be obtained by contacting:

Education Coordinator
Concern America
P.O. Box 1790
Santa Ana, CA 92702
(714) 953-8575

WHERE TO TURN LOCALLY? There are various groups working locally in the spirit peace, nonviolence, and understanding in response to recent events. For more information, contact the Interfaith Coalition in Los Angeles, your local Parish Peace and Justice group (or similar group in your house of worship), or the Concern America office (see above).

STAY INFORMED! There can be a multitude of perspectives on every event that occurs, yet the mainstream media often reports on only a few of the possible angles of a story. A great way to stay well informed and be challenged is to seek out alternative news sources, and many exist on the internet. Try a few: thenation.org, utne.com, motherjones.com, zmag.org, alternet.org, mediachannel.org, and many others)