



PEACE Psychology

Newsletter of the Society for the Study of Peace, Conflict, and Violence:
Peace Psychology Division of the American Psychological Association

Volume 15, Number 2 • FALL/WINTER 2006



“As psychologists we know that peace isn’t just about global issues but is fundamental to our personal lives. Peace is family, safe homes, meaningful employment, stable communities, and recovery from trauma....”

Linda Woolf

President, Division 48

SURVIVORS OF HURRICANES KATRINA AND RITA created colorful banners, such as the one above, as part of hurricane wellness workshops designed and led by Darylne Nemeth. The banners, which reflect pride, resilience, fortitude and hope, are now in the permanent archives of the Louisiana State Museum. Reproductions, auctioned off by Division 48, raised money toward ongoing recovery efforts. See complete story on page six.

Message from the President

Petrified Wood and Peace



Linda M. Woolf

ONE SUMMER, during my grade school years, my family embarked on a much-anticipated camping trip “out west.” One of my most vivid memories from the trip is of a brochure handed to visitors upon entering the Petrified Forest National Park. Unfortunately, I remember little of the park, but I do remember the brochure! There was a strict admonishment not to remove any of the petrified wood from the park accompanied by a bit of artwork. The cartoon consisted of a group of people who appeared to be running out of the park with a large log on their shoulders. The caption reminded visitors that if everyone takes a rock, a small “souvenir,” these rocks add up to significant park losses over time.

Oddly enough, I have found myself musing on that brochure frequently these days. On the one hand, I see the creeping erosion of civil and human rights in the United States. On the other hand, I see the work of so many individuals as they endeavor to build more peaceful communities, both locally and globally. I am frightened by the former and inspired by the latter. Nonetheless, each represents an example of small, disparate changes that alone seem minor but collectively are extremely significant.

The attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001 prompted many individuals to question their place in the world and fomented deep concern within many for the safety of family, friends, and community. These are natural responses to unanticipated and indeed, horrific events. Unfortunately, one cannot legislate either a return to equilibrium or an internal sense of safety. In fact, every attempt to eliminate one source of potential threat usually leads to an awareness of new and different threats. Moreover, while individuals, after any trauma, may want “things to be the way they were,” we are permanently changed by our life experiences.

Life represents a challenging, and at times, dangerous encounter with the world. Recently while hiking, I narrowly missed stepping on a grouchy, hissing copperhead on a forest path; a neighbor walking home was attacked and beaten by two high school girls in what appeared to be teen initiation; a friend was distressed to find that a local hate group had blanketed her neighborhood with what she described as a “six-page anti-Semitic/Holocaust denying screed”; and a dear friend died following a battle with lung cancer. Life can be very sobering and is always tenuous.

Since September 11, 2001, many small, seemingly innocuous decisions have been made locally and nationally, to help “preserve our way of life.” Each step has been presented as simply a small sacrifice necessary to ensure our safety. Unfortunately, like the small bits of petrified wood taken over time, the sacrifices increase in number and escalate. What if six years ago, I had argued that in 2006:

- The U.S. will be at war IN, but NOT WITH, two countries as part of a “global war”;
- The U.S. will operate detention centers where prisoners are secretly detained, held without legal representation, and denied the writ of habeas corpus;
- Torture and extreme abuse will be sanctioned methods of interrogations;
- Work will be under way to build a mammoth fence along the U.S. border;
- The U.S. government will be able to secretly wiretap communications without a court order;
- A single individual can name you, as a U.S. citizen, an “unlawful enemy combatant” outside of any war zone and you can be imprisoned without charge, indefinitely; and

- Men and women entering a football stadium will be routinely separated, physically frisked, and have their possessions searched.

What would people think? Chances are, if I had made those assertions six years ago, I would have been viewed as spouting some sort of sci-fi or post-apocalyptic fantasy. Yet today, for many individuals, these changes are “okay” as long as they are done with an eye towards “preserving our way of life.” I worry what other small steps might be taken over the next six years, and history is not encouraging.

Many of you may have recognized several of the provisions listed above as those contained in the Military Commissions Act of 2006 passed recently by both the House and the Senate. While these provisions have been functionally in place for years, the Military Commissions Act is also designed to make these practices legal, both currently and retroactively. It is noteworthy that the APA Public Policy Advocacy Network issued a Call for Action urging the membership to contact their senators and representatives asking them to vote against the Military Commissions Act. The Call for Action stated that the bill “in its current form, violates the most fundamental American values of due process and humane treatment of prisoners and detainees.” This is an example where psychologists, particularly peace psychologists, can inform public policy and shape dialogue grounded in research related to human rights and peace.

These are times where it might seem easy, and perhaps even appropriate, to throw up one’s hands in despair. And yet, I remain hopeful.

This is my last column as President of the Society for the Study of Peace, Conflict, and Violence (Division 48). Over the past

(continued on p. 4)

year, I have been witness to the efforts of so many both within and outside of the Society in the pursuit of peace, social justice, and global human rights. I am in awe at the power of what a small group of individuals can accomplish when they work collaboratively to bring about change.

Over the past year, the Society has been active in addressing many issues. For example, we drafted and worked collaboratively with many others to pass the 2006 APA Resolution Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Our council representatives Corann Okorodudu and Judy Van Hoorn worked diligently to make this resolution a reality. The resolution is discussed elsewhere in this newsletter but its importance cannot be understated considering the passage of the Military Commissions Act of 2006.

At the convention, the Society also hosted a fundraiser to support Hurricane Wellness Workshops. The auction raised \$850, donated to the Louisiana Family Recovery Corps, to support further workshops specifically for children. Membership chair Joan Gildemeister and our media advisor Judy Kuriansky were instrumental in making this fundraiser a success. Their work and the generosity of all involved will make a significant difference in the lives of children displaced by Katrina.

Also this past year, our Diversity Task Force was awarded a competitive Interdivisional Grant. Past-president Eileen Borris and Y. Evie Garcia chair this task force and grant. Based on APA's Task Force on Enhancing Diversity's May 2005 findings, the Society Task Force identified that there is a need at every level of APA to develop a more welcoming environment for marginalized minorities and develop processes aimed at reconciliation when inevitable differences arise between diverse groups. The end goal is a handbook for divisions designed to operationalize the APA Task Force on Diversity's Resolutions on Enhancing Diversity in APA and to provide guidance to divisions concerning effective conflict resolution models and productive forms of reconciliation.



Linda Wolf gives presentation to APA.

I am sure those of you who were able to attend the Convention walked away enlightened and energized after attending any of our array of impressive programs. We had the opportunity to learn from so many individuals making significant efforts for peace through research, activism, teaching, service, and other professional activities. Thanks to program co-chairs Michael Hulsizer and Gloria Grenwald for their exemplary work in organizing this year's convention divisional programming and to member-at-large Julie Levitt, secretary Kathleen Dockett, and PsySR coordinator Anne Anderson who each always go the extra mile endeavoring to see that the Society's Convention and Hospitality Suite programming runs smoothly.

Our *Peace Psychology* newsletter and *Peace & Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* both continue the Society's long tradition of publication excellence keeping us up-to-date on the latest in peace psychology research and practice. Thanks go to newsletter editor JW Heuchert and journal editor Richard Wagner. Indeed my thanks go to entire leadership and Executive Committee of the Society—treasurer John Gruszkos, members-at-large Donna Read and John Paul Szura, Student and Early Career chair Eric Green, all of our committee and working group chairs, and last but certainly not least, incoming President Dan Mayton. The Society is very fortunate to have such an exemplary and welcoming group of individuals at the helm during these turbulent times. I

have deeply appreciated everyone's commitment, efforts, care, and good humor through this past year!

These are just a sample of the Society's recent activities but they highlight the power of a few individuals working together to foster productive change and to positively impact the lives of so many. Bear in mind that the membership of the Society represents less than one percent of the membership of the APA (yes, encourage your colleagues to join and get involved in our endeavors!) and yet, through hard work and collaboration with a diverse range of groups such as the Divisions for Social Justice, the Ethics Committee, PsySR and a host of others, we have been able to further our goals in the pursuit of peace, social justice, and fundamental human rights. And our work continues!

While organizational efforts are important, equally vital are individual efforts. It may seem at times that the endeavors of a single person or a simple small action cannot bring about change. However, it is important to remember that these efforts are much like collected bits of petrified wood—they add up. Whether it is contacting your legislators about an issue of importance to you, writing a letter to the editor, providing care to victims of violence, working in a food pantry, or teaching your children nonviolent means of constructive conflict resolution, you are making a difference.

Unfortunately, we do live in a time marked by war, ethnopolitical conflict, genocide, torture, and widespread human rights violations. School violence, structural forms of violence, and interpersonal violence all seem to be on the rise. The impact of such violence, both current and past, reverberates throughout communities around the globe. As peace psychologists, we certainly have much work to do, and it would be easy to despair. Nonetheless, having met so many of you this year and knowing of your good work, I am stirred by a determined hope for the future.

Good night, and good luck...

