

Peace Be With You – August 14, 2016

By Addae Ama Kraba on August 14, 2016

When Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson conceived the organization named “A World of Women for World Peace,” she did so in a belief that the end of human conflict is not only necessary, but that it’s possible. Saying that in her heart she knew women, who bring life into the world, could reform the societies in which we live. The world has always had wars. All over the world, conflicts are raging between nations, tribes, families, and individuals. No area of the world is exempt from the cycle of violence. In the 1980s, Latin America was caught in an acute period of it. In the 1990s, it was the Balkans. Fifty years before that, most of the planet was engulfed. Islam vs. Orthodox Christianity. Hindus confront Muslims, the divide between Sunni and Shiite. Not so long ago in Northern Ireland it was Catholics against Protestants. The cycle appears to be most pronounced where populations have surged, resources are scarce, and bleak prospects are faced. Such as African countries and in the Middle East today. Realists believe the cycle of violence is just the way of the world. Idealists believe if we can just stop the fighting, a natural state of peace will return. After all, no one is against peace. I believe that at our basic human level, we all desire constructive, fruitful growth, and dislike destruction, and wish to be peaceful. Moreover, Peacebuilding embraces both the realist and idealist positions. In 1981 the United Nations General Assembly established an international day of peace. On that day, people around the globe were requested to acknowledge the need for a world without war, and to study issues related to peace such as ending hunger, providing educational opportunities for children and empowering those who are powerless. However, peace is not just the absence of war, it requires hard work and constant attention, peace builders have to work on creating jobs because young men without jobs and too much time on their hands are easily coaxed into fighting. In the book *Peace is the Way*, Deepak Chopra informs that to end war, it’s not enough to think of ending one conflict or even thirty conflicts, what we have to end is the idea of war, and the habit of war, which has turned in to the constancy of war. Like any habit, war has worn a groove in our consciousness, so that when we become very afraid, or very angry, the response of war comes naturally. Now most of you here may be immune to the appeal of war, but each one of us has benefited from the gifts of war in some measure. War provides an outlet for vengeance, an avenue for getting what you want by force, power to the victor, and it allegedly provides security for the homeland. None of us are innocent bystanders, because we depend on it politically, socially and economically. However, if enough people decide that one more day of war is one too many and shift the consciousness to that of the way of peace, that’s all it takes. Rather than wishing that others will stop killing, you can become a force for peace, and in doing so make the ultimate contribution. Just imagine the world we would live in if a global shift in consciousness occurred, we would all return to the center of our true being recognizing our interconnectedness, and peace would reign. Deepak Chopra suggests that people are ready to follow the way of peace, if only they can learn what it is. He continues saying that the idea of peace is based on the same thing that ushered in the age of science. A shift in consciousness. When people witnessed demonstrations of steam engines, vaccines, and electric lights, they adapted to them based on the level of their own awareness. The idea of being human we could no longer be content with reading by candlelight, travelling by horse, suffering by high rates of death in childbirth, short life spans, and the ravages of disease. Because a leap in collective consciousness took place. The barriers of ignorance and superstition

existed before every new age came into being. New worlds were born because of shared beliefs in religion and technology, because the skills to break free have always existed within us. Despite everything that we have been conditioned to believe, war isn't necessary. It was Eleanor Roosevelt, one of the most progressive first ladies to ever live in the White House, who said, "If our civilization is to survive, our people must turn to love not as a doctrine, but as a way of living." I asked a close friend what he thinks of when the word peace is mentioned, and he responded with words like harmony and balance, and being centered. I agree with my friend's adjective's regarding peace, however, peace is a process, not a thing, a journey, or a destination. It's a flow and the interrelationship of complex forces produces harmony and balance. Thich Nhat Hahn informs in his book *Peace Is Every Step*, that the way to becoming a peaceful society is being mindful of what we say and do, so as to recognize the negative internal formations before they begin to manifest. That applies to feelings of anger, resentment and fear. I think that fear of things real or imagined is one of the most damaging emotions, because if we live in the mode of fear, we are outside of the emotion of love. The Buddhist teacher Pema Chodron informs that violence and wars that are flaring all over the world is the reason so many of us feel vulnerable and utterly helpless. However, she says and I agree, the origins of aggression, hatred, and war, lays nowhere but within our own hearts and minds. That is made abundantly clear in contemporary society, with relationships we have through social media, and instant news reels. We are made privy on a daily basis to the interior of hate filled hearts and minds that're laid bare on the national stage. Chodron goes on to explain that the way in which we as individuals respond to challenges in our everyday lives can either perpetuate a culture of violence or create a new culture of compassion, because war and peace begin in the hearts of individuals, and it's never too late to look within and discover a new way of living and transform not only our personal lives but our whole world. She continues saying, if we want to make peace with ourselves and with the world at large, we have to look closely at the source of all of our personal wars. And if we are truly serious about working toward peace, we have to be peace. Each of us must begin within, to inner disarmament. We must reduce our personal emotions of suspicion, hostility and hatred. The divisions of duality run incredibly deep. However, the way of peace calls for abolishing the way of us versus them. It's the only way to fulfilling our sixth principle of building a fair and peaceful world. We must stop dehumanizing the other, as a way of disconnecting. The rhetoric of *"they hate us and probably always will, and they're crazy, we have to destroy them or they will destroy us"* must stop. Some of you have heard the old adage, an eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth, will render a blind, toothless society. How easy it is to project onto the other, that which dwells within. The way of peace means that no one is the enemy. The way of peace leads beyond duality. There is no other road to take for someone who wants to end war and violence. Peace is a vision, who knows anyone of you here may have been reflecting on forming a peace movement, not an anti-war movement, I personally believe that anti- is not the way to go, but a discussion group to raise consciousness. An open forum where people get to express their desire for peace. I think interfaith dialogs are fabulous beginning to sharing and consciousness raising, because ultimately we come to the center as a result of the discussion. What about interfaith dinners, with neighboring faith communities? Or what better way to be an example of a peaceful coalition than an interfaith Thanksgiving dinner with a neighboring faith community with the intention of rotating hosts annually. Every successful movement in society began with a grass roots desire and action to change. Our own founding mother Olympia Brown reminds us that we can never make this world safe by fighting. Every nation must learn that the people of all nations

are children of holy, and must share the world's wealth. She continues saying that this is the work we are appointed to do. Sometime, somehow, somewhere, we must teach this great lesson.

What and where will we do collectively to teach this lesson, to do the work that we are appointed to do? The vision of peace may begin with a spark, but sparks can turn into flames. May the spark of Peace be in you and with you. From my heart to yours, may it be so.

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