

Finding Security

The atmosphere is suffocating. It reeks of aggression, hatred, muscle-flexing, religious fervor, flag waving and too much testosterone. First the World Trade Center just across the Hudson --- explosions and sickening clouds of debris and smoke, and the killing of innocents. Now an echo to settle the score: U.S. apologists and strategists and tough-talking media; bombs dropping, villages invaded, unscrupulous allies enlisted, innocents killed; more money for more guns and bombs and war-making. More violent efforts to control our world and thereby achieve security.

Even our peace community is tempted to fight back ---- with protests, demands, angry words and demonizing. "Listen to us," we say. "There are nonviolent alternatives. Call on us! We, too, mourn the dead and condemn the terrorist attacks. We, too, want action now!" We write statements, hold vigils and marches, put notches in our belts every time we're arrested, criticize politicians and generate petitions. We are intent on finding the most effective responses. We, too, feel the situation is desperate. We, too, are deeply mired in the Culture of Violence and aggression, desperate to act and to regain a sense of control.

But we have lost control – or the illusion that we had it. Yes, it is time to act ---- yet, also time to change our script. We are poised to consider a paradigm shift. We understand the oppressive nature of our Culture of Control and Violence, which calls for building a people's movement here in the U.S. We have an opportunity to acknowledge our addiction to violence and our numbing through injections of consumerism and patriotism. We are beginning to hear the power and wisdom of feminine, as well as masculine, voices. Our search for security will NOT be satisfied by acting out the old violence and control scripts. Our search for security is essentially a spiritual challenge.

Principled, active nonviolence is a spiritual practice.

Betty Reardon¹ urged a shift in paradigm: "We must transcend the war paradigm and think in terms of peace, a peace that is dynamic, active, challenging." Our images can be ones of power and action, enabling us "to make the structural changes required for a peace system....We must change ourselves and our immediate realities and relationships if we are to change our social structures and our patterns of thought....We cannot achieve a change unless we can think it."

As a woman peacemaker, I have struggled to find my Voice, to unearth the images and concepts that can express for me power and action, and can help me speak with authenticity from my own experience and perspective. Six months ago, I discovered a rich resource in language earlier rejected. I began to talk about building a "Home."

"Home" is supposed to mean a place where everyone feels safe and secure, where there is sharing of resources with a quality of life for each person, where there is food and bed for everyone, where there is mutuality, participation and consensus. There is much to do to create a Home --- there are Homeless and Homebound whom we have neglected; we must reestablish democratic participation and Home Rule; we have failed Home Economics as evidenced by the growing divide between rich and poor.

¹ Reardon, Betty A., "Toward a Paradigm of Peace," A Peace Reader, Essential Readings on War, Justice, Non-violence and World Order, Revised Edition, edited by Fahey, Joseph J. & Armstrong, Richard, Paulist Press, New York, 1992, pp 391-403.

We need to do our Homework: prepare ourselves by deepening in principled Nonviolence, building and sustaining our support group, and committing to ongoing action for peace and justice. FOR is committed to providing resources for Nonviolence training and grassroots organizing. And the opportunities for action are plentiful: law enforcement and the criminal justice system, housing and health care and public transportation, child care and schools, jobs, military spending, conflict transformation, civil liberties and equal rights, gun sales, weapons of mass destruction, immigration, economic justice, and more.

Homeland Security will come only through creating a Home for all people, a place of safety available to everyone. The way Home is the way of nonviolence, a way Gandhi described as “the desire for, and action on behalf of, the well-being of all.”

We are all called to be Homemakers --- transformers of our Culture.

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2/6/02