

A Culture of Peace: The time is now

By Rev. Deborah Moldow

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Why is the term “culture of peace” so important right now? When I first heard it, I must admit it was rather a shock. It made me realize that the entire history of the world as we know it has been built on violence and warfare. Virtually every member state of the United Nations was forged in bloodshed through revolution or conquest. The vanquished learned the language and ways of those who overpowered them. We have been getting to know one another through a long and painful journey.

But that journey is over. The planet has been entirely mapped out by the human community — we know who our neighbors are. The technological advances in transportation and communications have now given us jet planes and the worldwide web, so that we can know beyond the shadow of a doubt that we are one human family regardless of any apparent differences of color, language or customs.

I know – it does not always appear that way. But the underlying consciousness is changing. From tribal times through the rise of nation states, war was associated with glory. War creates not only utter destruction, but also future enemies. We revere the principles of nonviolence taught by Jesus, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., although their wisdom is still not often quoted when a crisis erupts.

We have also begun to realize that war is not an effective way to solve problems. In the darkness of the chrysalis of becoming, the new tools of peace consciousness have not yet fully emerged, but they are on their way. They are incubating in conflict areas, diplomatic circles and academia as conflict resolution technologies, non-violent communication, peer mediation, deep dialogue, restorative justice and other win-win modalities.

Countries across Europe that experienced centuries of brutal warfare are now bound to one another in the European Union, which has held together in spite of massive immigration, economic and social turmoil, and the Brexit vote. No matter how pressing the issue, New York will never declare war on New Jersey. Slowly but surely, war is becoming obsolete.

And that is certainly a pre-requisite for a culture of peace, but there is oh, so much more. It is a caring, thriving civilization where every individual is free to creatively pursue the fulfillment of his or her human purpose as it serves the greater good.

The shift in consciousness that will take us there is no less than a spiritual transformation, requiring us to break out of our individual shells of ego gratification and dedicate ourselves to a larger cause.

Where would we find people ready to take on such a commitment? Well, one place is the vast membership of a wide array of civil society organizations, NGOs all over the world that are taking action to address climate change, poverty, hunger, ecology, human rights, equality, and many more urgent issues. Paul Hawken, author of “Blessed Unrest,” called this “the largest movement the world has ever seen.”

Another place to find dedicated peacemakers has always been among members of the world’s religions. The interfaith movement that came to life in the last century has moved into the mainstream, greatly increasing mutual understanding and even sharing of practices such as prayer, meditation, ceremonies and sacred music.

I founded the Garden of Light (www.gardenoflight.org) to make visible a global spirituality coalescing among many people across the globe, both religious and secular. This emergent spirituality senses that all scripture and faith traditions contain wisdom but that none has the whole picture. Many people now believe that we co-create our reality with every thought, feeling, word and action, and that love is both the path and the goal. Listening, forgiveness and gratitude are seen as the keys to positive relationships, and almost everyone agrees that some version of the Golden Rule is common to all religions.

When we join together in mutual respect to appreciate one another's gifts so that we may join in service to the common good, we are truly living a culture of peace.

And it is happening now. When before have the citizens of Planet Earth ever had the occasion to face a crisis of planetary proportions such as our current climate change as one humanity? The spiritual impulse that is leading us to a culture of peace is calling us to birth a new global civilization fueled by good will in a spirit of unity among all peoples and harmony with the Earth. If we are looking backward to our history, we will not succeed. But if we dedicate our lives to bringing forth the Divine within us, and to deepening our spiritual connection to one another and to the web of life on this planet, then we will each have our own unique role to play in attaining a level of human consciousness that has never been before.

So, blessings to all who are part of this great transformation — of yourself, your family, your community, our world. You are the living future of humankind, the new culture of peace.

May peace prevail on Earth.

—The Rev. Deborah Moldow, an interfaith minister, is the founder of the Garden of Light and represented The World Peace Prayer Society at the United Nations for more than 20 years. The ACPC website is _____; like the commission on Facebook at

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