

Culture of Peace: Working for peace in turbulent times

By Dot Maver National Peace Academy USA

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Third in a series focusing on the national and international view of a Culture of Peace as it relates to Ashland.

Ashland, Oregon, has found the secret! This community demonstrates ageless wisdom for turbulent times: it is coming together around shared values and intentions. It is taking action to manifest a culture of peace. Ashland understands that we (humans) create our own reality and will get more of what we focus on in life.

How is this happening in Ashland? The community formalized the Ashland Culture of Peace Commission — a group that has steadfastly brought citizens together to determine priorities and action steps. This proactive process for living in harmonious relationship with self, others and all life, based on peace education, research, policy and practice, is leading to a demonstration model for all of us to consider. Throughout society we are finding our voices as we take stands against violence in its many forms. Doing so is messy and painful while at the same time necessary and hopeful. In Ashland a proactive solutions-oriented approach is working.

..... (Daily Tidings, Nov. 6), Ambassador Anwarul Chowdhury, former Under-Secretary-General and High Representative of the United Nations, stated, “Peace is integral to human existence — in everything we do, in everything we say and in every thought we have, there is a place for peace. Absence of peace makes our challenges, our struggles, much more difficult.” Peace in its true sense is a state of consciousness. It moves outward from a deep source of our being. Peace urges the building of new structures and modes of expression. The vision of the oneness and the interdependence of all life inspire peace. Peace is a dynamic, progressive state of awareness that manifests in an

“environment of sustainability.” This environment provides the living substance from which we may create a new world, a new culture — one that empowers each person to reach their potential and serves every form of life.

Ashland has begun to focus on implementing eight action areas from the U.N. Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (A/RES/53/243 B) at a local level in the USA:

- Actions to foster a culture of peace through education. Education, both formal and informal, shapes society. Over the past few decades, universities around the world have initiated peace education and peace studies programs. Furthermore, educating ourselves in areas such as nonviolent communication, mindfulness and taking personal responsibility provides building blocks for a culture of peace.
- Actions to promote sustainable economic and social development. This action step challenges communities local to global. To see how humanity is seeking to move through this challenging period to a time of economic and social well being for all, take a look at sharing.org or the federal law in Bolivia that states that Earth is a sentient being with attendant rights.
- Actions to promote respect for all human rights. Until basic human rights for all beings is a way of life, a culture of peace eludes us. The U.N. is asking the question, “Is Peace a Human Right?”
- Actions to ensure equality between women and men. Dr. Betty Reardon, a leading peace scholar and proponent of UN Resolution 1325, names gender equity as critical in defining and attaining human security. She further identifies structural relationships between gender equity and the war system, and provides scholarly thought regarding a shift from national security to human security. That shift depends upon gender equity.
- Actions to foster democratic participation. In the United States, this is a critical issue right now as we struggle to determine the future of our republic. We as citizens are called upon to share responsibility for determining the structures, institutions, policies and cultural norms that yield either direct violence or peace.
- Actions to advance understanding, tolerance and solidarity. Around the world, we are gaining in recognition of the need for loving understanding and the realization that we are all in this together. In the USA, many communities are

shifting to restorative justice policy and trauma resilience practices in recognition of the need for helping one another and standing together as one community.

- Actions to support participatory communication and the free flow of information and knowledge. Transparency is critical in democracy. Every voice and every vote must count. Every individual has the need and basic right of access to information and knowledge.
- Actions to promote international (local) peace and security. Were every community to employ this action step, with the understanding that a culture of peace is human security, the world would transform virtually overnight.

All best wishes, Ashland, as you design and demonstrate a culture of peace. Your success is our success! Keep on keeping on.

— *Dorothy J Maver, Ph.D., is an educator and peace builder who inspires cooperation on behalf of the common good. She is a co-founder of the **National Peace Academy USA** and the **Global Alliance for Ministries and Infrastructures for Peace**. The Ashland Culture of Peace Commission website is www.ashlandcpc.org; like the commission on Facebook at www.facebook.com/AshlandCultureofPeaceCommission; follow twitter.com/AshlandPeace on Twitter. All are welcome to join the ACPC's Talking Circle at 11 a.m. each Tuesday and Community Meeting at 4 p.m. each Wednesday, both at the ACPC office, 33 First St., Suite 1, diagonally across Lithia Way from the Ashland Post Office.*



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