



Harness the power of the moment

by David Wick, Monday, December 30th 2019

As the year is ending, I reflect upon significant moments of inspiration and learning. The Ashland Culture of Peace Commission has had a tremendously productive year which culminated with the Ashland Global Peace Conference Sept. 21.

In attendance were speakers such as Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury, founder of the Global Movement of the Culture of Peace, former undersecretary general and high representative of the United Nations, David W. Yang, vice president for applied conflict transformation, United States Institute of Peace, Saul Arbess, director of the Canadian Peace Initiative, Oregon state legislators and many Ashland city and Rogue Valley community leaders.

During the conference, ACPC co-founder Irene Kai related that in the moment of her chance encounter with the original World Peace Flame in Wales she was emboldened to bring it to Ashland.

"At the moment you feel the impulse of inspiration, act on it, go out and do it," said Irene. This prime example of harnessing the power of the moment was reflected by others during the conference.

One example that struck me was when I listened to Finley Taylor, one of the original flame keepers from Ashland Middle School, as he spoke at the conference.

As a flame keeper, Finley early on had heard the words "be the flame" and "peace begins with me" from Irene Kai, which changed his worldview. He stated, "Peace does begin with me. But more importantly it begins with an awareness for my whole generation to recognize opportunities and activities to help promote peace. I hope to continue to raise my awareness and educate myself and those around me

through ideas, words, opportunities and actions of kindness and peace. I hope to continue to gain leadership skills and tools from those around me to be a more effective change maker. So today let's take steps to make peace not just a dream of the future, but a reality. I would like to invite each of you to come along with me and be the flame."

Jack Gibbs of Fortress Financial Advisors and treasurer of the ACPC Board of Directors related, "Let peace reign! My mantra — I'm going to make regular mantras for peace, I'm going to strive to be a better world citizen and do so with empathy, strength, cheerfulness and love. Peace is possible and undeniable. Peace wins in the end. We humans can be challenged to remember peace at all times, to be alert to the things that pull us away from the truth, forces that manipulate us, so it's important to learn to take a breath and keep perspective. Take time to think deeply about how peace brings harmony to the world."

David Zaslow, rabbi and Ashland Interfaith Clergy Circle member, stated, "I live in my own bubble of the spiritual and religious communities in Ashland. The panel inspired me to make deeper relationships to the secular and academic communities as well."

Will Wilkinson, of Thriving Leadership Academy, stated, "I am more conscious of creating my experience proactively, of slowing down, of making room for peace in every activity."

And from David Yang, "The United States Institute of Peace holds up a mirror to Ashland so we can see our local reflection in the global light. The cultures of peace inherently are a linked local and global phenomenon. The local informs the global, the global informs the local, in the never-ending virtuous circle of peace. Peace is possible. It takes action and it takes all of us. You are the flame."

In two days, we will begin our journey together in the year 2020, which promises to bring challenges, uncertainty, being stretched and possibly stressed. 2020 also brings us many opportunities to make choices at any moment. I invite you to do the same as those mentioned. At this moment, if you are inspired, act on it. Harness the power of this moment. Make your contribution to the evolving culture of peace. Be the flame.

David Wick is co-founder and executive director of the Ashland Culture of Peace Commission.