



The flame of the moral universe

BY [J. FREDERICK ARMENT FOR THE TIDINGS](#) January 14, 2019

The Arc of History has been a catch phrase for progress for decades, but today the idea is more important as we face growing challenges on a local and global scale. In his victory speech in 2008, Barack Obama tapped the phrase often used by Martin Luther King Jr. in Selma, Montgomery and along the path of social progress: “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.”

Why does the arc of progress take so long? How are the citizens of Ashland bending it toward greater justice? The answer to both these questions, in my view, gives me great hope for the future.

I can say without reservation that through Ashland’s Culture of Peace initiatives, your community spirit is firing the imaginations and inclinations of peace leaders around the globe. With each action toward increasing the safety, prosperity and quality of life of ALL citizens in your community, you are issuing a clarion call to cities of peace in Uganda, Argentina, China, Mexico, Nepal and 46 other countries.

Yet sometimes it is difficult to keep our optimism in the face of setbacks. The cyclical theory of human progress, employed by historian Arthur Schlesinger almost a century ago, proposes that humanity goes through fluctuations in politics, from progress to retrenchment, back and forth like a pendulum swinging. Yet the pendulum swings through time, and true progress over human history is well documented.

To bend that pendulum’s arc through the progression of time becomes the sacred responsibility of each individual. I am blessed and humbled to have a unique perspective. The nearly 230 International Cities of Peace are now in 51 countries on six continents. Each of these communities is engaged in innovative and practical peace-building that is making a huge difference in people’s lives.

There are sustainable farms being developed, care is given to orphans and women victims of war, educational programs are initiated in areas of the Ebola outbreak, and there are many more amazing programs. The next generation of global peace leaders is being trained and inspired.

Ashland officially became the 163rd International City of Peace in June 2017. Since then, your community has sponsored a host of programs that impact not only those within Ashland but the ideas have spread to other peace cities. One stellar example is the World Peace Flame, which is beginning to fire the imagination of leaders from Somalia and Colombia to the Netherlands and China.

When we began the City of Peace movement in 2009, we did so with a practical purpose in mind. We required cities to develop a vision, mission, as well as goals and objectives. To further that pragmatic approach, we are engaging during 2019, our 10-year anniversary, in a global effort to help train peace leaders in strategic envisioning and planning. This will set in motion the type of peace building that achieves the highest impact for children and families. Ashland stands as an example of best practices for a peace city. The global nature of International Cities of Peace offers your community an opportunity to engage in the global network and make a profound impact for the benefit of people around the world.

Indeed, your community is leading the way toward a new era of peace innovation and inspiration. I commend Ashland's collaboration of teachers, artists, business professionals, government officials, environmentalists, those of faith and those committed to serving humankind. With each individual effort, each community initiative, each fearless step forward, the spirit of Ashland is stoking the Flame of the Moral Universe. Through unity, your city is bending the Arc of Human History toward the inevitable and practical choice of world peace.

J. Frederick Arment is the Founding Director of International Cities of Peace and author of "The Elements of Peace: How Nonviolence Works" and "The Economics of Peace: Freedom, the Golden Rule, and the Broadening of Prosperity". More at www.internationalcitiesofpeace.org and www.fredarment.com.

Email comments and questions to ashlandcpc@gmail.com. The ACPC 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 at the ACPC office, 33 First St., Suite 1, diagonally across Lithia Way from the Ashland Post Office.

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