Spiritual Philanthropy: A Community Perspective

By Barbara L. Valocore, President

Phi-lan-thro-psy (philanthropos) loving mankind; Goodwill to fellowmen; active effort to promote human welfare.

The term "spiritual philanthropy" may seem like a paradox to some, until one examines this primary definition, which actually has nothing to do with money at all!

What would our community landscape look like I wonder, if our use of this term more accurately reflected its primary definition? Maybe people would begin to see that every loving person has something to offer someone else whether it's time, a service of some kind, or simply loving care. Perhaps people with no money to spare wouldn't feel so separated from people who have it. Or better yet, maybe folks would bring this donor perspective into daily actions and our world would begin to operate on the principles of loving-kindness rather than greedy grabbing (kind of along the idea of the recent movie, Pay it Forward).

Believe it or not, there is a rapidly growing community of foundation professionals and individual donors who are deeply committed to exploring this question of spiritual philanthropy. The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, an organizational project of Ram Dass, has been convening meetings now for several years to deepen this discussion of philanthropy and the spiritual life. Although there are widely differing perspectives held among the members of this group, the glue is a deep commitment to the idea that the use of money must and should embody a spiritual perspective. And this is just one of many such groups.

Many organizations in the world are beginning to regard money as a potent spiritual energy, a kind of non-physical substance which has the ability, if used with goodwill and spiritual purpose, to effect positive change in the social fabric of our world. One could easily argue that if this is true, the large trans-national corporations could be very spiritual indeed!! Certainly trans-national corporations have the potential to be powerful spiritual forces, if only they would use their vast wealth and resources for the common good rather than to increase corporate
profits at the expense of human welfare and health. Perhaps efforts of companies such as British Petroleum and Shell who say they are committing to the development of solar power are forerunners in this corporate community. Let's hope so.

If loving humanity is the criteria of a true philanthropist, the world now mourns the loss of one of the most generous lives of all, the beloved founder of The Temple of Understanding, Juliet Hollister. Juliet's dream was for the religious leaders of the world to get together and dialogue on the fact that "WE ARE ONE" and thereby end all conflict, armed or otherwise, based on differences of religious or spiritual belief. She felt that loving understanding was the basis of ALL religions and couldn't understand why spiritual leaders didn't seem to act from this basic premise. (See Pages13-14.) In 1960, with the serendipitous help of Eleanor Roosevelt, Juliet began her crusade for a peaceful global community and founded The Temple of Understanding, (3.) which thrives and grows to this day.

Associated with ECOSOC in the United Nations, the Temple of Understanding continues to produce educational programs, is considered to be the first real interfaith organization, and remains what Eleanor Roosevelt called "a spiritual United Nations."

Juliet will be sorely missed by thousands, and we pray her work and vision will continue to thrive and grow toward a global philanthropy.

Recently, I leaned the Hawai'ian expression me oe pu which means, "we're all in this together." While there are many types of community, the fact remains that they all provide a function, are all part of the larger whole and all can be considered philanthropic efforts. Where does your philanthropy live?

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**Juliet Hollister**
1916-2000

"Every individual matters
Every individual has a role to play
Every individual makes a difference."

Jane Goodall, *A Reason for Hope*
SPIRITUAL POLITICS:
CHANGING THE WORLD FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Corinne McLaughlin and Gordon Davidson

Many of us today are yeaming for a different type of politics, one that doesn't appeal only to our self-interest and pit one group against another. We seek a type of political discourse that speaks to our deepest values as human beings, that gives us a greater sense of community and a transcendent purpose as a nation, that offers us a higher vision of public life and service to the common good - rather than appealing only to greed and lust for power.

For the two of us, finding a more spiritual approach to politics evolved out of our personal sense of frustration as political activists, having taken part in the anti-war and anti-racism movement of the 1960s and in the early environmental movement. We found that although these movements accomplished certain things - stopping the war in Vietnam and lowering the voting age, for example - we weren't as effective in changing the world as we had hoped. This is because we didn't deal with root causes of problems - we dealt only with effects. In our dysfunctional and limited patterns of thinking, we didn't address the deeper spiritual causes in consciousness.

For the last 20 years we have been working, like many others, to change ourselves from the inside out. We have been learning to make decisions, resolve conflicts and build consensus based on an inner, spiritual process. We began working on this at the Findhorn Foundation in Scotland where we lived for several years, and continued at Sirius, an ecological village and spiritual center which we co-founded in Massachusetts in 1978.

Now we teach this approach to professionals in government, business and the non-profit community through The Center for Visionary Leadership, which we co-founded in Washington, D.C. to promote spiritual and ethical values in public life, especially in politics and business. The Center offers leadership training, courses in spiritual development and dialogues to find common ground on diverse issues like race and the environment. We feature social innovators who have found effective solutions to problems such as poverty or violence, and we sponsor lectures by nationally known visionary leaders like Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., Marianne Williamson, Hazel Henderson and Neale Donald Walsch.

In research for our book Spiritual Politics, we found that a new spiritually-based politics is beginning to emerge in many places around the world today that embodies the principles and values common to the world’s spiritual traditions. This new politics is based on five key approaches:

1. Promoting a new common ground process for decision-making and conflict resolution. Multi-stakeholder dialogues which explore common ground using a collaborative, rather than an adversarial approach, are proving to be the most effective way to develop viable policies and reduce conflict. As Einstein said, two sides disagree because they’re both wrong - and both right. He also said that we can't solve a problem on the same level of consciousness that created it - we have to go to a higher level. We must work to find a higher synthesis of the best of both sides of an issue. This is recognized in the ageless wisdom of all traditions: the Buddhists teach about the Noble Middle Path between the pairs of opposites; in the middle pillar of the Jewish Kabbalah, The Tree of Life shows the path of balance; the yin/yang polar opposites in the Taoist tradition are held in dynamic tension; and the training of initiates in the ancient mystery schools included paradoxical thinking - holding two opposite ideas at the same time. This new political approach works to find a higher synthesis of the best of both sides of an issue, such as abortion or welfare. (e.g. Search for Common Ground -Washington, DC; The Natural Step
The Bridging Tree

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help for our leaders, for public policies, and for crisis situations. A spiritual approach to politics recognizes that we do not have to struggle with our problems alone. George Washington said he was guided by an "Invisible Hand" in establishing a new nation. President Anwar Sadat of Egypt had a vision of Mohammed who told him to create peace in the Middle East and this caused him to negotiate the Camp David Accords. A major prayer vigil around the world in 1995 helped support the peace process in Bosnia at a crucial juncture. (e.g. Institute for Faith and Politics - Washington, DC; Pathways to Peace - Larkspur, CA; Sojourners - Washington, DC.)

So we can invoke spiritual help for our problems today. Many people already recognize how much our prayers, meditations and inner work are needed to help the world. The power of Spirit within us is a source of great strength and wisdom, a special gift that can uniquely contribute to making a better world. Let us empower ourselves to be effective change agents by reuniting politics and Spirit.

Corinne McLaughlin and Gordon Davidson are co-founders of The Center for Visionary Leadership in Washington, D.C, and co-authors of Spiritual Politics and Builders of the Dawn. They also co-founded Sirius, an ecological village and spiritual community in Massachusetts, and are former members and Fellows of The Findhorn Foundation. Corinne coordinated a national task force for President Clinton's Council on Sustainable Development and taught politics at American University. Gordon was formerly a director of the Environmental Allies Fund and Executive Director of the Social Investment Forum. They can be reached at The Center for Visionary Leadership, 3408 Wisconsin Ave. NW Suite 200, Washington, DC 20016; (202) 237-2800; web: www.visionarylead.org email: corinnemc@visionarylead.org.

- Stockholm, Sweden; Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy - Washington, DC.)

2. Creating best practices — positive solutions that effectively address social problems by applying spiritual principles and whole systems thinking. Non-governmental organizations, or "the civil society" represent a powerful third force beyond government and business, which have created effective "best practices" that are already solving many of our social problems. (e.g. RESULTS - Washington, DC; Human Service Alliance – Winston-Salem, NC; The National Ten Point Coalition – Dorchester, MA)

3. Working to change consciousness - for as we think, so we are. Negative patterns of thinking are the deeper cause of problems in the world. To create peace we must release inner hostility towards our perceived adversaries. (e.g. The Savodaya Movement - Sri Lanka; The Foundation for Global Community - Palo Alto, CA; The MRA - Washington, DC; Foundation for Ethics and Meaning - New York, NY).

4. Studying the collective lessons and symbolism in events and crises. This was called "Reading the Book of Life" by the Native Americans. Current events can be a rich source of collective learning if we're willing to explore the spiritual lessons being offered through shared national experiences. We can interpret events as symbolic of the inner forces at work and explore their hidden causes in consciousness. For example, the O.J. Simpson trial in the U.S. was a type of nationally televised psychotherapy on the issues of domestic violence, hero worship, racism, the power of the media, and the dysfunctional criminal justice system.

Collective disasters provide major opportunities for learning compassion for the victims, as well as for learning the karmic consequences of some of our actions. Every major religion teaches about the laws of cause and effect. The Bible says, "As you sow, so shall you reap," and the Eastern religions teach about the law of karma. When the Mississippi River flooded major portions of the U.S. several years ago, for example, sewage dumped in its tributaries backed up and returned to the towns that had dumped it. In a spiritual approach to politics, one does not look for others to blame, but rather takes responsibility for one's own thoughts and actions. (e.g. Institute for Planetary Synthesis - Geneva, Switzerland; World Goodwill - London, England; The Center for Visionary Leadership - Washington, DC).

5. Using prayer and meditation to invoke spiritual
Art For Indigenous Survival
Shirley Frey McConahay, Chair of the Board
1001 Willbea Rd.
Durham, NC 27705
Tel: 919-932-1965
Email: smcconahay@mindspring.com
Web: www.aisart.org

Art for Indigenous Survival seeks to encourage community building through the sharing of information and art between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples; to encourage and inspire indigenous people to pursue economic independence and cultural survival in ways harmonious with the environment; and to teach indigenous people to create works of art patterned after their own native animals, plants and birds in an effort to raise environmental awareness. AIS received a grant to begin a mentoring program for young indigenous artists.

The Atomic Mirror
Pamela S. Meidell, Director
PO Box 220
Port Hueneme, CA 93044
Tel: 805-985-5073 / Fax: 805-985-7563
Email: pamela@atomicmirror.org
Web: www.atomicmirror.org

The purpose of the Atomic Mirror is to create a nuclear-free world, using the arts to transform our understanding of human security from a reliance on nuclear weapons to a sustainable relationship with all life. Atomic Mirror works with activists, artists, and indigenous peoples, developing initiatives and joint activities to inspire people to take action to abolish nuclear weapons and power.

Joan Steinau Lester
1016 Middlefield Road
Berkeley, CA 94708
Tel: 510-548-1224
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Joan Lester is working on an inspirational biography about Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, whose career has been hallmarked by a strong spiritual and social understanding of the oneness of all peoples and an ability to forge close working relationships with diverse individuals and groups.
**Growing Communities for Peace**
Julie Penshorn  
Rebecca A. Janke  
Co-Founders  
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Tel: 651-257-2478  
Fax: 651-257-2095  
Email: peace@peacemaker.org  
Web: www.peacemaker.org

"Growing Communities for Peace is dedicated to expanding, propelling and celebrating peace and justice in everyday life."

GCFP co-founders, Rebecca A. Janke and Julie Penshorn develop programs, workshops and products to help teachers, parents and community leaders learn and share with children more ways to live their lives as peacemakers. Through the Peacemaker® character, Global Communities For Peace teaches children valuable lessons in conflict resolution, valuing diversity and caring for the Earth. Their new Compassionate Rebel book, CD and video aim to show that every person has the capacity to act as a compassionate rebel - one who joins the powers of love and anger together to create positive change in the world.

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**Rizal Bugarin Lozano**  
Davao City, Philippines  
Email: jlozano@mozcom.com

Rizal Lozano's film documentary helps promote understanding of the issues confronting the indigenous people and the environment in the Philippines, and hopes to generate support and heighten advocacy of that nations’ indigenous peoples’ human rights. He is a partner of the Witness Program of the Lawyers’ Committee for Human Rights, which helps promote human rights through documenting abuses on film & video.

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**Rainbow Ark Foundation**  
Heather Foxhall, Director  
402 West Ojai Ave, Suite 101-108  
Ojai, CA 93023  
Tel: 805-640-0224  
Email: hfoxhall@aol.com

The Rainbow Ark Foundation’s mission is to help create peace through culture. The production and video documentation of cross-cultural, cross-generational Global Wisdom Councils is one of the ways Rainbow Ark Foundation is participating in this enormous task.
Grupo Osanimi
John Bela, Volunteer Grant Coordinator
PO Box 1004
El Cerrito, CA 94530
Email: jb@osanimi.org
Web: www.osanimi.org

Grupo Osanimi is a rainforest and cultural heritage conservation organization composed of volunteers, activists, scientists and indigenous people working at ground level in Ecuador, Mexico and in the USA. Since 1990 they have worked to preserve traditional knowledge, to protect tropical rainforests, and to support indigenous communities in their struggle for territorial and cultural autonomy.

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Sirius, Inc offers workshops, internships, apprenticeships and demonstration projects focused on holistic education in areas including ecology, living in community, emotional and spiritual growth, alternative health modalities, sustainability, organic gardening, solar building and energy, conflict resolution and consensus decision making.

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Since 1987, Radio For Peace International (RFPI) has been transmitting a message of peace, justice and hope throughout the world. Their broadcasts are heard globally on shortwave radio and via the Internet regardless of political division and geographic isolation. RFPI’s program themes include social change, weapons elimination, environmental protection, human rights, alternative healing, spiritual growth, racial and gender equality, issues of nonviolence and promotion of a peaceful, healthful and just world. RFPI’s studios and broadcast facilities are located on the campus of the United Nations’ University for Peace in Costa Rica.
New Grantees — Interdimensional

Ancient Ways Project
Peter Gold
Chinle, AZ 86503
Email: Pgold@crystal.ncc.cc.nm.us

For over three decades, Peter Gold’s work has been characterized as Spiritual Anthropology - focusing on the interconnectedness of human cultures and their relationship to the living cosmos outside and within humanity’s diverse peoples. The Ancient Ways Project is a series of multimedia talks, workshops and experiential seminars presenting the perennial philosophies, arts and practical ways of living of the world’s ancient and indigenous cultures. Peter Gold’s books, articles, seminars and workshops are grounded in his belief that by studying the vast panorama of the world’s cultural ways, we each may realize a harmonious unity of those thoughts, expressions and acts comprising our own culture. And by appreciating cultural differences as fascinating and inspiring hues on humanity’s palette, we are enabled to take a major step toward intercultural understanding, self-awareness and peace.

New Grantees — Community Service

Lineage Project
Soren Gordhamer, Co-Director
651 N. Terrace Ave # 4J
Mt. Vernon, NY 10552
Tel: 914-699-8479
Email: Lineagepro@aol.com

The Lineage Project offers mindfulness practices to help at-risk and incarcerated youth understand and respond responsively to the underlying stress and pain that causes violent behavior. Mindfulness is the ability to see clearly the truth of one’s inner and outer experience. The use of mindfulness meditation is particularly appropriate as a stress reduction technique for this population because it offers a harmless, accessible avenue to relaxation. It allows youth to explore alternative ways of responding rather than reacting to potentially threatening or stressful situations, thus reducing the habitual reliance on violence and aggression.

Te Whanau o Rongomaiwahine Trust
Pauline E. Tangiora, Chairperson
PO Box 33
Mahia, H.B., Aotearoa, New Zealand
Tel/Fax: 64-6-8375816

The Te Whanau O Rongomaiwahine Trust has been set up to look after the local tribe’s health, education and youth concerns. A grant was awarded to assist in creating a Youth Centre at Mahia.
BRIDGES TO COMMUNITY, Chappaqua, NY
General Operating: promotes cross-cultural learning
CANHELP, Hoor, Sweden
Project: the University for Global Well Being
THE CIRCLE, Oakland, CA
Project: the 2000 Prayer Vigil for the Earth
CYNERGETICS, Colorado Springs, CO
Project: restorative justice program for juveniles.
PAUL DEVEREUX, Gloucestershire, UK
Project: Shamanic Landscapes book
UNITED FOR A FAIR ECONOMY, Boston, MA
Project: conference on Responsible Wealth
EARTHLIGHT MAGAZINE, Oakland, CA
General operating: promotes eco-spirituality.
FINDHORN FOUNDATION, Findhorn, Scotland
Project: the Eco-Village Training program.
FRIENDS HOUSE IN ROSEHILL, New York, NY
Project: residence house for people with AIDS.
GLOBAL KIDS, New York, NY
General Operating: empowers urban youth to become global citizens and community leaders.
GLOBAL YOUTH CONNECT, New York, NY
General Operating: develops youth leadership, action for human rights and social transformation.
GREENBELT MOVEMENT, Nairobi, Kenya
General Operating: promotes community development and interaction between eco-tourists and local Kenyans.
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITIES FOR THE RENEWAL OF THE EARTH, Cross River, NY
General Operating: fosters personal and institutional change based on an ecological spirituality.
INTERNATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS RESEARCH LABORATORIES, Princeton, NJ
General Operating: scientific consciousness research
INSTITUTE FOR FRONTIER SCIENCE, Oakland, CA
Project: Cell Remote Sensing – the effects of intention on white blood cells to improve immunity.
LUCIS TRUST, New York, NY
General Operating: World Goodwill
MILENIO, San Francisco, CA
Project: Series of events for peace, justice and sustainability at University for Peace in Costa Rica.
MILLENNIUM PEOPLES ASSEMBLY NETWORK, New York, NY
General Operating: creation of a permanent Global Peoples’ Assembly.
NETWORK 2012, Asheville, NC
General Operating: A global network for positive transformation and enlightenment.
NETWORKS PRODUCTIONS, Kingston, NM
Project: Builders Without Borders program
OXFORD RESEARCH GROUP, Oxford, UK
Project: Give Peace a Bank initiative.
PARABOLA MAGAZINE New York, NY
General Operating: explores the myths and art of the world’s religious and cultural traditions.
PATHWAYS TO PEACE, Larkspur, CA
General Operating: fosters cultures of peace around the world.
PEACE ACTION EDUCATION FUND, Washington DC
General Operating: promotes a nuclear-free world and an end to war as a means of resolving conflict.
THE PEARL THEATRE CO ., New York, NY
General Operating: resident theatre company in its 17th year of performing world classics.
POSITIVE FUTURES NETWORK, Bainbridge Island, WA
Project: YES! A Journal of Positive Futures encouraging positive social transformation.
RUPERT SHELDRAKE, London, England
Project: research into the consciousness of animals.
FRED STERN, Las Cruces, NM
Project: Promotes cultures of peace through creation of giant rainbow events.
JOHN STOWE, Atlanta, GA
Project: An Earth-centered guide to Authentic Living workbook and workshops.
TEMPLE OF UNDERSTANDING, New York, NY
Project: Universal Meditation Masters conference.
WILDERNESS VOLUNTEER CORPS, Seattle, WA
General Operating: Wilderness education program for disadvantaged youth.
YOUTH FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SANITY, Soquel, CA
Thank You!

Many people are involved in making the Lifebridge Gatherings work. The Board of Directors would like to thank the Lifebridge staff and the staff of the Wainwright House for the care they took with everything and everyone. Special thank-yous to Annie Wood for her antics, and to Puja A.J. Thomson, whose dulcet tones and soft touch as facilitator gave the weekend an extra glow.

The Participants

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catherine Allan</td>
<td>Twin Cities Public Television</td>
<td>St. Paul, MN</td>
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<tr>
<td>Karina Copen</td>
<td>I*EARN</td>
<td>New York, NY</td>
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<td>Ann Crutchfield &amp; Lloyd Dickerson</td>
<td>Door of Hope</td>
<td>Greensboro, NC</td>
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<td>Lauren de Boer &amp; Diana Brooks</td>
<td>EarthLight</td>
<td>Oakland, CA</td>
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<td>Fran Korten</td>
<td>Positive Futures Network</td>
<td>Bainbridge, WA</td>
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<td>Catherine Margerin</td>
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<td>Milenio</td>
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<td>San Francisco, CA</td>
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<td>Cecily Miller</td>
<td>Children's Messages to the World</td>
<td>New York, NY</td>
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<td>Robert Richter &amp; Libby Bassett</td>
<td>Richter Productions</td>
<td>New York, NY</td>
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<td>Fred Stern</td>
<td>The Rainbow Maker</td>
<td>Las Cruces, NM</td>
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<td>Charles Strozier</td>
<td>The Center on Violence and Human Survival</td>
<td>New York, NY</td>
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<td>Liz Thompson</td>
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<td>Washington, DC</td>
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<td>Ida Urso</td>
<td>Aquarian Age Community</td>
<td>Jersey City, NJ</td>
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<td>Rev. Franklin &amp; Joyce Vilas</td>
<td>Partners for Environmental Quality</td>
<td>Whippany, NJ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rob Wheeler</td>
<td>Millennium People's Assembly Network</td>
<td>New York, NY</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jonah Wittkamper</td>
<td>Global Youth Action Network</td>
<td>New York, NY</td>
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Thanks for a weekend that was both stimulating to say the least and loads of fun. I gained at least five lbs. and all sorts of insights into organizations and networks I never knew existed. I especially appreciated the opportunity to share the passion of so many committed and hardworking activists. Your generosity in bringing us all together is awesome!  -- Catherine Allan

We count ourselves privileged to have been included in the Grantee conference. Thank you for letting us come as "we were". We are convinced you are "making a difference" with your generosity. We were warmed by your graciousness. Puja was a wonderful addition!!!  -- Lloyd Dickerson and Ann Crutchfield

The retreat at Wainwright was just great - and what a wonderful group of grantees. Thanks very much for providing the space and opportunity for synergy to happen – mosquitoes and all!  -- Lauren deBoer & Diana Brooks

The weekend was absolutely exquisite. I loved every minute of it. For me it was a delightful respite from a much-too- hectic life. The retreat was a magnificent mix of serious interaction, good connections, great people, and sheer playfulness. It is only in a retreat setting that you can come to feel so closely connected with a substantial number of people in a short time. You crafted our time together to achieve that in a most delightful way.  -- Fran Korten

Thank you and all the wonderful Lifebridge team for a memorable retreat/workshop. The lovely time we had in Rye seems far away now but I had a great time there and met some fantastic people with whom I hope to keep collaborating in one way or the other.  -- Ida Urso

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Bob Richter
and Libby Bassett

Personally for me the weekend was an experience that was made special by those in attendance. I don’t think I have ever met as unconventionally spiritual group of people and it was wonderful. I really appreciated the openness that was fostered by Puja and you all, which allowed us to be ourselves.  -- Liz Thompson

We found kindred spirits, potentially useful connections in a practical networking sense, and enjoyed meeting interesting people across generations. Feedback on my work-in-progress was very helpful and much appreciated. Perhaps my best compliment is that I wish other foundations who have provided grants for my projects over the years will hold similar retreats.  -- Bob Richter and Libby Bassett

The gathering was so special! Thank you and everyone at The Lifebridge Foundation for being so nurturing and supportive. I went away strengthened and re-invigorated, as I'm sure all the other participants did as well.

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Catherine Margerin

"In Restropect – Their Own Words"
UN REPORT
Millennium World Peace Summit  by Sharon Franquemont

Many of the world’s ancient religious and spiritual traditions have prophesied that humanity’s yearning for Shamballa, The New Jerusalem, or Heaven on Earth could begin its fulfillment in the 21st century. But ironically, many of these prophecies are housed and fostered by the same religious and spiritual traditions that have historically been fertile ground for aggression, conflict, and war. It is not a surprise that consistent worldwide efforts to bring these traditions into a forum for cooperation are only a little over a hundred years old. The World Parliament of Religions, The Temple of Understanding, and various other interfaith organizations have been issuing the call for mutual understanding and respect among spiritual and religious communities throughout the 20th Century; and the final years of the last century saw the birth of The United Religions Initiative (URI) whose Charter calls for an end to religiously-motivated violence, and for the creation of "cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings."

In August of 2000, the historic United Nations’ Millennium Summit of Spiritual and Religious Leaders convened in New York and the World Peace Summit was born. I was privileged to volunteer at this event which was conceived by Ted Turner as an opportunity for religious leaders to gather at the United Nations for the first time in history and to pledge their support for UN activities and the UN Secretary General, Kofi Anan. Over two thousand delegates responded to this invitation and met for the purposes of (1) signing a Global Commitment to World Peace, (2) exploring the creation of a Spiritual and Religious Advisory Council available to the Secretary General of the United Nations, and (3) holding regional meetings which addressed specific issues such as conflict resolution, poverty, and the environment.

Photographs and television coverage have made the U-shaped General Assembly Hall a familiar sight. Imagine this room filled with the orange and cranberry robes of Tibetan monks; Sufi hats; Sikh turbans; the black robes of Muslims; the red, black and magenta garments of Catholic priests and cardinals; the hoods of the Greek Orthodox; the peaked hats of Korean shamans; and the beautiful Eagle bonnets of Native Americans. Add to this the purple robes of African priests; the large high, white bonnets of the Russian orthodox church; the
gray apparel of Japanese shinto priests; the painted attire of African shamans; and feather headdresses on those from Brazil and Central America greeting your eyes wherever you looked in the Hall. It was extraordinary.

When Kofi Annan stood up to greet this colorful, historic assembly on its first day, he himself was greeted by a standing ovation. And when Bawa Jain, Secretary-General of the Summit, asked the assembled community to "...clap if you are willing to be a supportive force for the United Nations and the creation of peace on our planet", thunderous applause burst forth again. The UN Secretary General wiped away tears as they rolled down his cheeks.

My major responsibility during the gathering was to assist Dan Login, who facilitated the attendance of the 65 Indigenous representatives, in taking care of the delegation. The Indigenous message was delivered by Traditional Leader Oren Lyons in the early evening. He began by inviting all the Indigenous delegates to stand with him. Joe Medicine Crow, an 87 year-old elder dressed in his Eagle bonnet, then sang a beautiful song welcoming the delegates to Turtle Island (North America). Oren subsequently spoke movingly about the importance of our times and was followed by an Eskimo from Greenland, Angaangaq Lyberth, who underscored Oren's words. "About 15 years ago," he said, "one of my people came back to our village and reported a strange phenomena. 'There is a trickle of water coming down the glacier. I think that the ice is melting.' Today that trickle has turned into a river of water. So I say to you, while we sit here talking, and making commitments to peace, remember the ice is melting...the ice is melting. But this ice is easy to melt compared to the ice in the human heart, so I am going to sing a song for that, a song to melt the ice of the human heart."

As he stood there in clothing made from 3 different types of seal skins and a simple leather string around his forehead, he took out a large seal skin drum and began to play a haunting and deep call to inner integrity. When he finished, he whispered once again, "Remember the ice is melting."

After a moment of stunned silence, those who had listened to this remarkable, collectively-delivered presentation broke into shattering applause once more. Later, when I walked with Oren to the bus, a monk clothed in a saffron-colored robe came up and said, "You (meaning all of the Indigenous people) have been Moses for this gathering; you have parted the seas and left us a path to a more beautiful future."

The gathering was not without its challenges however. Chief among them was the roadblock the Chinese delegation placed on the attendance of Tibet's Nobel Peace Prize winner and spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama. This was protested by faxes, letters, phone calls and emails from around the world. In the end, the Dalai Lama did send some of his high level representatives who were seated as equals along with the Chinese delegation on the General Assembly floor. In addition, the Dalai Lama's CNN message was broadcast throughout the UN. As one delegate said, "The Dalai Lama made it into the UN halls after all."

So, the human heart persists in pursuit of the "impossible dream" of a peaceful and non-violent world. Step-by-step we have the opportunity to participate in building a bridge to this desired future. The Summit can live on in our hearts and in the hearts of millions. The Commitment to Global Peace, as signed by the delegates, was published in The New York Times at the conclusion of the Summit, and will soon be available for you to read, print out, pray with, meditate on, and share with others. The collective intent of a dreaming community has the power to turn yesterday's presumed impossibilities into tomorrow's (and today's) reality.

Sharon Franquemont is Executive Director of The Circle which facilitates the annual Prayer Vigil for the Earth on the Washington D.C. mall. Her latest book, on intuition, is entitled "You Already Know What To Do".
The Year 2001: The Start of a Creative Dialogue Among Civilizations

The United Nations General Assembly has designated the Year 2001 as “the Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations”. At one level, the dialogue among civilizations resolution was an intellectual reaction to the widely quoted article of Samuel Huntington “The Clash of Civilizations” in the US journal Foreign Affairs (Vol. 72, No 3, 1993). Huntington wrote, “Differences among civilizations are basic, involving history, language, culture, tradition, and most importantly religion. Different civilizations have different views on the relations between God and Man, the citizen and the state, parents and children, liberty and authority, equality and hierarchy. These differences are the product of centuries. They will not soon disappear.”

While recognizing the truth that civilizations change slowly and that the past is always embodied in the present, we must also recognize that we are at a time of major change in history. The accelerating pace of change in the political, social, technological, economic, cultural, and spiritual arenas of human affairs has created new opportunities for dialogue as the world is inexorably being transformed into a global society. One of the central tasks of today is to develop a problem-solving, future-oriented global view which addresses the important concerns, issues, and problems of humanity as a whole. We need to identify as clear a vision as possible of a feasible and desirable world society and to outline the specific steps required to move in that direction. We need to analyze clearly the challenges and responsibilities related to the transition to a global society.

The Year 2001 should provide real opportunities for dialogue among civilizations. It is true that to an unprecedented degree people are meeting together in congresses, conferences, schools, and universities all over the globe. However, in itself such meetings are not dialogue. There is a need to reach a deeper level. Reaching such deeper levels takes patience, tolerance, and an ability to take a longer–range view.

The Year 2001 as the Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations provides a common framework in which we may analyze the past and set out visions for the future. It is an opportunity which must be seized. Yet United Nations–designated “Years” accomplish little if there is not significant action on the part of non–governmental organizations, academic bodies, and cultural societies. Often a “Year” is half over before people know that it has even started.

We must begin where we are. As Amiya Chakravarty, a literary secretary to Rabindranath Tagore has written “Each individual must strike the ‘universal concrete’ in terms of his own creative effort, in the milieu of his own cultural heritage; only by proceeding from wherever we are, geographically, spiritually or vocationally, can we make the integral effort for peace. The peace–worker belongs to the entire human family, using the language or religious associations to which he has been born, and which he transforms not necessarily by revolt but by inner trascendence.”

There has been in the recent past studies with civilizations as the center of analysis, notably Oswald Spengler and his The Decline of the West Arnold Toynbee, A Study of History, and Pitirim Sorokin’s Social and Cultural Dynamics. Some scholars conceive of civilizations as societies; others view them as cultures. Some consider civilizations as polycultures while others portray them monoculturally. Some define civilizations by criteria of interaction where others see them bound by similarities.

However, there has been less work on contact and dialogue among equal civilizations. Toynbee’s work deals largely with the growth of a particular civilization by challenges and responses followed by the decline and disintegration of the civilization. Toynbee tends to look at the contacts of the past as a central civilization and the “barbarians at the gates” rather than the situation of today which is that of a multifaceted dialogue among equal civilizations. Sorokin’s work also stressed the shifts in values and attitudes within a civilization over time.

Thus, there are possibilities for breaking new ground intellectually during 2001. We are called upon to look at the possibilities of multi–civilizational dialogue. While there has been for some time multi–religious or inter–faith discussions, a civilization goes well beyond the religious dimension. The methods for such a multi–civilizational dialogue need to be worked out. The “clash of civilizations” is relatively easy to envisage. More effort will be needed to have meaningful dialogue, but such dialogue will respond to a crucial need of our time.

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Publicizing Transformative Actions

Innovative Frontiers in Philanthropy (IF), the Marion Foundation’s grant-making initiative, supports carefully selected organizations that directly impact social, economic, and environmental challenges. In the past two years, IF has partnered with Nouvelle Planete, which preserves a precious Amazon rainforest in Peru by facilitating legal land titling and returning control of land to indigenous communities, Lionheart Foundation which implements a rehabilitation program that prepares prisoners to make positive contributions to their communities upon release, and Solar Electric Light Fund which brings ecologically sound solar electric power to remote villages in developing countries. For more information, contact Innovative Frontiers at 508-748-0816 or IF@marionfoundation.org.

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Publicizing Transformative Actions

A Call for Letters to the Editor

In our next issue we will inaugurate a space in The Bridging Tree for Letters to the Editor. Although we can’t print all the letters we receive nor print them in their entirety, we invite your insights and observations. We accept letters through email (info@lifebridge.org) and through the mail (The Lifebridge Foundation, P.O. Box 327, NY 12440.)
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The Lifebridge Foundation, Inc. was established in 1992 for the purpose of supporting organizations and individuals who, through cultural, educational, and/or scientific means, are dedicated to creating bridges of understanding among all people by bringing to realization the concepts of one humanity and the interconnectedness of all life.

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