

MEDITATIONS • VEGAN RECIPES • INTERVIEWS • LOVE • HAPPINESS • WISDOM • THE UNIVERSE

MEDITATION

THE **PEACE** ISSUE

108
PAGES OF
PEACE,
LOVE &
MEDITATION

FIND INNER PEACE

AT THE NEXT
STRESS-IS-GONE
RETREAT
(SEE BACK COVER)

US \$7.99
CAN \$9.99
UK £6.99
AUS \$16.50
NZ \$17.60



FEATURING
HH THE DALAI LAMA,
GURUDEV SRI SRI RAVI
SHANKAR & MORE!

DEEP TALKS
WITH ISRAELIS
& PALESTINIANS

12 TIPS
FOR PEACE
ACTIVISTS

HOW TO
BRING
PEACE
IN THIS
WORLD

**"Peaceful
resistance
prevails"**

HH The Dalai Lama

MEDITATION

THE **PEACE** ISSUE

108
PAGES OF
PEACE,
LOVE &
MEDITATION

FIND INNER PEACE

AT THE NEXT
STRESS-IS-
GONE
RETREAT
(SEE BACK
COVER)

US \$7.99
CAN \$9.99
UK £6.99
AUS \$16.50
NZ \$17.60

FEATURING

HH THE DALAI LAMA,
GURUDEV SRI SRI RAVI
SHANKAR & MORE!

DEEP TALKS

WITH ISRAELIS
& PALESTINIANS

12 TIPS

FOR PEACE
ACTIVISTS

HOW TO

BRING
PEACE
IN THIS
WORLD

**"Take
the side
of *peace*"**

Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar





Deep within you,
PEACE
is your very nature.

Take the Authentic Self-Paced OJAYA
Armor Meditation Mastery Course

OJAYA is the first and only
method that I can actually feel
the effects of when I meditate.
— Zoe Gordon, Hoover, Alabama
★★★★★

EMPOWER yourself with an **ARMOR**
of Clear, Calm *energy* ➡ in just 10-20 minutes.

HIDDEN and closely guarded over
centuries, the adept secrets of the
OJAYA Armor Meditation technique are
now yours with our exquisite online videos.
Far more potent and vastly more blissful
than guided meditations, mindfulness, or
“watching your breath,” the ancient **OJAYA**
technique pulls you gently **deep within** ... to
develop an everyday “Armor” of clear, calm
energy and **core inner strength**. It’s effortless
and ultra-deep. You won’t sit for hours ...

... just 10-20 minutes **attacks** and **dissolves**
the stubborn roots of anxiety, lethargy and
stress. Brain fog evaporates as your vital
energies get recharged in mere minutes —
the perfect antidote to the fatigue and frenzy
of life in the real world , , , and an essential
beauty secret for **youthful aging**.
OJAYA awakens your heart and makes you
strong from **inside** ... the firm foundation you
need to spread love and compassion — and
to do something truly great for the world ...

Sponsored by friends of the not-for-profit School of:



The word is out . . .

“OJAYA is the deepest, most *blissful* meditation on the planet.”
(What people tell us all the time.)

OJAYA came when I was
about to give up on
meditation in general. If you
are thinking to meditate, look
no further. — Josh Woolfolk,
Hemet, California ★★★★★

MANY TIMES throughout the
course tears came to my
eyes. WOW! — Rick Blanda, US
Air Force TSgt, retired, Warner
Robins, Georgia ★★★★★

MEDITATION used to be a
chore. Now it’s deeply
relaxing and healing. I’ve tried
many other practices, but nothing
compares. The technique
pulls you deeper than I had
ever imagined. I’ve never
experienced results like this
in such a short time.
— Nick Bobay, Fort Wayne,
Indiana ★★★★★

IHAVE LONG felt that the
commonly taught tech-
niques do not take students
into true meditation. I am
happy to have found your
OJAYA course.
— Virginia Graham, Toronto,
Canada ★★★★★

SOOTHING is exactly how
it feels. I’m absolutely
amazed how powerful this
meditation is. OJAYA is the
most beneficial meditation
I’ve ever experienced.
— Britt Burns, Monterey Park,
California ★★★★★

IM 65, and OJAYA is the best
thing I have done for myself
in my whole life. So relaxing, so
deeply restful. I’ve never felt so
alive, ever. — Richard Bosworth,
Bellevue, Wash. ★★★★★

IHAVE EXPERIENCED more peace
in the last couple of months than
I ever have in my whole life. I’m
starting to shine from the inside
out and others are noticing. — April
Rolfe, Wareham, Mass. ★★★★★

LEARN OJAYA with exquisite videos
from our rainforest classroom.

YOU ARE DEEP

You’ll experience how the ancient
OJAYA “Armor” Meditation
technique pulls you gently inwards
to the blissful depths of your own Self.

OJAYA
takes you far
deeper than
any practice
you’ve ever
experienced.

Depth of Consciousness

Your Calm, Blissful Depths

THANK YOU for this
wonderful experience
and the mastery which
you teach these ancient
secrets. I’m one who found
what they were looking for.
— Raia Vicolov, Tulcea,
Romania ★★★★★

OJAYA holds the secret
people have sought
but haven’t found. It’s sim-
ple, effortless and powerful.
The myths that prevented
me from enjoying meditation are
now debunked. Hermes Banguid,
N. Liberty, Iowa ★★★★★

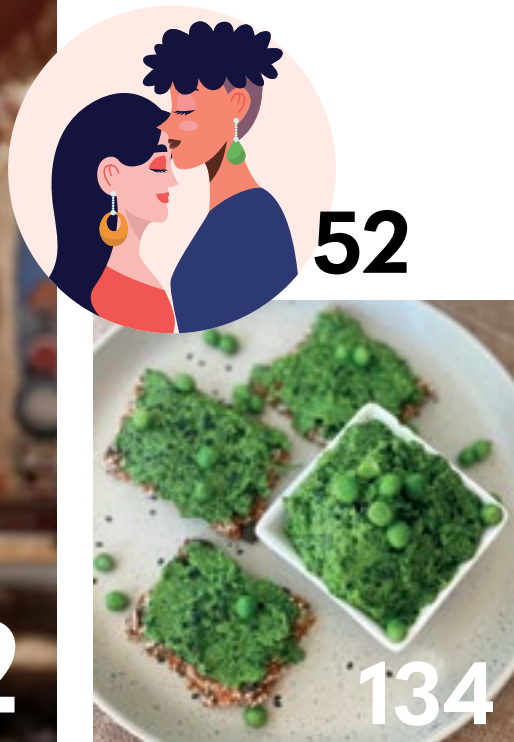
Experience for yourself the rare power & deep serenity of
OJAYA ARMOR Meditation — learn now online:
— **OJAYA.COM** —



The not-for-profit School of OJAYA Deep Meditation / USA Tel. 641-472-3300



102



52

134

The Peace Issue

INTRO

6 Editor's Letter

MEDITATIONS

12 Meditations for Peace

28 The Many Colors of Peace:
Mindful Coloring

CONTEMPLATIONS

32 Amma, HH The Dalai Lama and
Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar on How
To Help Bring World Peace

46 Peace Begins With Me

51 A Peaceful Poem

52 Peace Begins At Home

58 Beneath The Narratives,
Our Shared Humanity

60 Transcending Propaganda

62 12 Tips For The True Peace Activist

64 World of War: Ongoing crises

66 Peace in Africa

76 Peace in Latin America

84 Peace in Ukraine

96 Peace in Kashmir

102 Peace in The Middle East

122 Who Are You, Really?

124 Peace Begins With Me

SOUL FOOD

134 Peace Begins With Pea

CONCLUSION

139 How to be Part of The Solution

Contact Us

If you have questions, comments, suggestions, or just want to connect, DM us on
Insta or Facebook, or email us at hello@meditationmag.com.

CONNECT WITH US! @THEMEDITATIONMAGAZINE @MEDITATIONMAG @MEDITATIONMAG

All rights are reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of Meditation Magazine. For permission requests, contact hello@meditationmag.com. This magazine is intended for entertainment purposes only and should not be construed as medical advice. Ideas and opinions conveyed in this magazine are those of the authors and are not necessarily shared by the publishers.

Thank you to the donors who helped support the The Peace Summit & Awakening Summit

These beautiful souls helped support our
Peace Summit (and also our Awakening
Summit) with their donations. We would
like to express our sincere gratitude to
each and every one

Irena Januleviciene, Manisha Phondekar,
Joseph Michael, Ronnie Newman,
Haimabati Dey, Amit Paryani,
Ganna Alshoofi, Manjula Khanna,
Richard Haskin, Michele Richards,
Naomi Nt, Sujatha Makkena, Sri Mirle,
Ginnie Gill, Summer Rogowski, Lisa Cash,
David Burke, Vivek Nambiar, Akancha
Pandey, Shelly Sharma, Jenny Adams, Lori
Davidson Segal, Audra Morelock, Maureen
Law, Bob Tenbarga, Kiara Adame, Kevin
Ellerton, Pamela Bryson-Weaver, Leeann

Rohde, Beth Hamilton, Brie Carriveau,
Nadia Nakib, Maurice Owens, Deborah
Grimm, Dallas Koerperich, Irma
Hernandez, Ami Patel, Bobbie Jackson,
Pamela Vincent, Barbara Rust, Carrie
Gamache, Victor Holst, Lisa Roark, Tracy
Boen, Kaihao Chang, Erica Darmstadt,
Adria Hadlock, Jennifer Moar, Nicole
Helmus, Ashley Atkinson, Tiffany Dira,
Veronica Stephens, Susanne Lee, Melanie
Cerdan, Lindsay Mills, Lunabird Yoga
And Meditation, Wendi Stark, Guinne
Gee, Sherri Carter, Jean Jones, Michelle
Garrido, Terry Greywolf, Jennifer Roberts,
Jennifer Troutman, Carol Lopacinski,
Rebekah Seavey, Anna Marie Alosi, Dena
Amtman, Randy Rudloff.

If you're interested in supporting one of
our future summits and being included
in a future issue of Meditation Magazine,
please email hello@meditationmag.com to
let us know

Yes, We Are Still Printing!

In 2018, we printed our first issue. In 2019, our
second. In 2020, our third. In 2021 we printed
two issues, and in 2022 we printed four!

We grew too fast. Magazine industry
economics changed. Our systems broke
down. By printing four issues per year, we
ran out of money, and fell deep into debt.
We spent all our time chasing capital. We
barely had time to sleep, let alone create four
new issues per year. We had to take money
from loan sharks with personal guarantees
in order to keep up with our printing bills. In
2023, we succeeded in printing one issue. In
2024, it will be one issue as well.

During this time, we created
Meditation University, a powerful online
school full of life-changing meditation
courses and programs that can help
you live a happier, healthier, and more
peaceful life. Everyone who subscribed
to Meditation Magazine before 2024 now
has complimentary access to many of the
courses at Meditation University!

Many of our subscribers feared that
we were "going out of print," as many
magazines have over the past few years.

But we are not planning to stop printing
anytime soon. We will continue to print at
the pace that we are able, for as long as we
possibly can. As an "annual publication"
(one issue per year) we can keep printing
for many more years – hopefully decades.
I hope to run Meditation Magazine for as
long as I am alive and able to write words
that people want to read.

If you're a subscriber and you're
interested in learning more about your
complementary Meditation University
membership, or want to discuss your
subscription, our upcoming printing
schedule, etc, please email
hello@meditationmag.com with the
subject line "I read the letter."

I want to thank you from the bottom of
my heart for being a Meditation Magazine
reader. It means the world to me, and I
sincerely hope that you enjoy this, and our
past and future issues as well.

Without further ado, I give you
The Peace Issue of Meditation Magazine



– Kevin Ellerton

MEDITATION

ISSUE 11 | 2024 | THE PEACE ISSUE



ON THE COVER

HH The Dalai Lama photo by Olivier Adam
Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar photo via Art of Living Foundation

FOUNDER & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

KEVIN ELLERTON
HELLO@MEDITATIONMAG.COM

SENIOR EDITOR

JOVANNA BENAVENTE

ART DIRECTOR

MARY WATSON

CUSTOMER SERVICE

MARY GRACE JAVIER

ADVERTISER OUTREACH

JOVANNA BENAVENTE

WEB DEVELOPMENT

CHRIS PETREVSKY

INTERVIEWS

PHIL ROSSNER, JOVANNA BENAVENTE,
KEVIN ELLERTON, FORREST NEAL

ART, GRAPHICS & DESIGN

ROSSINA MENDEZ, MEIRA FRONDA

INVESTORS/PARTNERS

KYLE HUNTER, JOSH RAHMANI,
EBI KHALILI, BRADLEY CURTIS POWELL,
RONN MCLANE

PUBLISHED BY

MEDITATION MAGAZINE LLC
99 MACDOUGAL STREET
NEW YORK, NY 10012

PRINTED BY

LANE PRESS, 87 MEADOWLAND DRIVE,
SOUTH BURLINGTON, VT 05403, USA

SUBSCRIBE

MEDITATION MAGAZINE IS
PUBLISHED ONCE PER YEAR

To subscribe or send a subscription as a gift,
please visit meditationmag.com/subscribe.
To order past issues, or this issue in print,
please visit meditationmag.com/store

PRINT SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$29.97 PER YEAR,
PLUS APPLICABLE TAXES. PRICES & POSTAGE
SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE.

ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY PRINTING BY LANE PRESS



Please recycle this mag
by gifting it to a friend!



What Is Peace?

Inner Peace and World Peace may seem like two different things, but in truth they are the same phenomenon, manifesting on different scales.

Peace — whether within the individual or within the home, whether between neighbors or between nations — always refers to the same thing:

A state of tranquility, quietude, calmness, relaxation, freedom, contentedness, warmheartedness, goodwill, amity, and happiness.

When there is peace within individuals, there is peace between individuals. When there is peace within nations, there is peace between nations. If there is suffering, war, unrest, disease, or unhappiness within one, it spills out toward others, creating conflicts and confrontations. Thus, our own peace is only as complete as the peace of those around us.

“Unless every member of our global family is peaceful, our peace is incomplete.”
— Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

This is why the great spiritual masters all taught that peace begins with ourselves. Famous quotes like “peace begins with me” and “be the change you wish to see” communicate a self-evident truth: by cultivating peace within ourselves, we directly increase the level of peace in our families, our communities, and on Planet Earth as a whole.

Firstly, by becoming peaceful humans ourselves, we increase the number of peaceful humans, and decrease the number of unpeaceful humans. If all humans on Earth were peaceful, Peace On Earth would no longer be a dream. We can’t force other humans to cultivate inner peace, but we can certainly begin with ourselves.

Secondly, our own inner peace naturally makes the people around us more peaceful as well. When we smile instead of scowling, when we laugh

together instead of fighting, we make a noticeable impact on the moods and energies of everyone around us.

The peace in our own hearts radiates to the beings around us, and from their hearts to the beings around them... it spreads into our communities and our nations, and literally to the entire world.

This doesn’t mean that 100% of humans on Earth will magically become 100% peaceful. We aim for improvement rather than perfection. Every small increase in the level of Peace On Earth — every individual cultivating inner peace, every fractured household healed by peace and reconciliation, every life saved due to a reduction in ethnic hatred and violence — is a massive victory in itself.

Peace Is More Than Just The Absence Of War.

In late 2023, it became clear to me that this issue of Meditation Magazine needed to be The Peace Issue. With horrific violence, wars and genocides in places like Ukraine, Israel, Palestine, Myanmar, Iraq, Sudan, Yemen and Syria... the world needs peace, now more than ever.

When I began posting for peace in October 2023, it wasn’t controversial at all. The world shouted in agreement: “Yes, we need more peace!”

But as we moved into 2024, I began to see meditators, spiritual teachers and peace activists attacked on social media, simply for promoting peace and understanding.

I began seeing comments along the lines of:

“There will be peace when there is justice!”

“The enemy must be destroyed!”

“Armed resistance is the only way!”

At first I was taken aback. I was confused. I asked questions like: Is “peace” a bad thing in your mind? Do you truly want more war, for more children to die?

Over time, by having these conversations, I began to understand that

sometimes when people hear the word “peace,” they think it means “everyone put down your weapons, give up the struggle to secure your needs and aspirations, and just go back to the status quo.”

But to me, peace is more than just the absence of war. True peace is a situation of respect, dignity, justice, and freedom for all.

Making peace means stopping physical violence, AND dismantling systems of structural violence, discrimination, and oppression as well.

When the sounds of gunshots and explosions fade, there may be “quiet,” but not necessarily “peace.” If there is still systemic injustice, hatred and oppression, it is not truly peace. War is still simmering in the hearts and minds of the oppressed, ready to explode at the next provocation.

Peace cannot be enjoyed by one group at the expense of another. True peace must include everyone. True peace must be shared by all.

True and lasting peace comes from listening to each other, working together, and finding win-win solutions that reduce suffering and secure the safety and aspirations of everyone involved. To create true peace, we must listen to each other and care for one another just as intently as we do for ourselves.

I hope that this Peace Issue helps you to cultivate peace within yourself, and in so doing, cultivate Peace On Earth as well.

I will do my best to get this magazine into the hands of as many humans as possible, to increase the level of Peace On Earth as much as I can. I hope that you will do the same, by sharing this magazine with friends and family. The more peace we cultivate together, the more peace we will all enjoy in our lifetimes.

May all beings be happy and free ❤️

Kevin Ellerton
Editor in Chief
Meditation Magazine

**UNLESS
EVERY
MEMBER
OF OUR
GLOBAL
FAMILY IS
PEACEFUL,
OUR PEACE IS
INCOMPLETE.**

**Gurudev
Sri Sri
Ravi Shankar**





RANKED #1 MTT-200 on youaligned.com

BECOME A PROFESSIONAL MEDITATION TEACHER

THROUGH *MEDITATION* MAGAZINE!

CERTIFIED MEDITATION TEACHER

THIS CERTIFICATE IS HEREBY PRESENTED TO:

Your Name Here

★ CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR RECENT GRADS! ★

Kate Rylander, Audra Morelock, Katelyn Albelli, Devlin Jordan,
Melissa Frederick, Elsie Johnson, Michala Kay, Rachel Wood, Jakub
Bystricky, and Jason McCann!

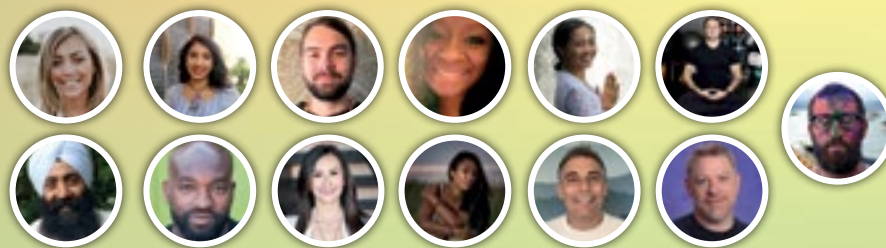
SCAN THIS QR CODE
TO LEARN MORE ABOUT
OUR PROGRAM!



KE
KEVIN ELLERTON
MTT-200 DIRECTOR

Please email hello@meditationuniversity.us for enrollment or financial aid requests.

PRACTICE WITH **13**
WORLD-CLASS MENTORS
SPECIALIZED IN DIFFERENT
FIELDS WITHIN MEDITATION!



DEEPEN YOUR PRESENCE. LEAD FROM YOUR HEART. BUILD YOUR CAREER.
[MEDITATIONUNIVERSITY.US/MTT](https://meditationuniversity.us/MTT) | [HELLO@MEDITATIONUNIVERSITY.US](mailto:hello@meditationuniversity.us)

ILLUSTRATION: FREEPIK

CONGRATULATIONS

to all the recent graduates from our MTT-200
(200-Hour Meditation Teacher Training) program

Josh Harvey, Rebecca Hopp, Therese Hept, Damaris Otero,
Bobbie Merecki, Lorna Hammond, Marie-Laurence Martin,
Miriam Ohman, Lauren Hunt, Kathryn Guyot, Kevin Patterson,
Kimberly Morgan, Alhaji Sankoh, Travia Kennedy, Lori Ramsey,
Scott Schmidt, Jennifer Kane, Kara McWest, Liza Colpa,
Shelley Cormier, Amy Williams, Rachel Blake, Keisha Ming,
Julie Jacobsen, Sharon Bronner, Jennifer Browning, Kahari Brown,
Valerie Sowinski, Berti Peeters, Kseniya Bobro, Kody Swaney,
Keristan Ruddell / Rhoades, Mick Heys, Laura Metzдорff-Rivera,
Maureen Jones, Jennifer White, Tenaya Garrett, Christina Royster,
Carin Klinger, Elizabeth Weldin, Maureen Law, Lori Davidson Segal,
Martyn Jones, Emma Arnold, Marie-Pierre Gibeault, Lee Brown,
Nuno Paiva, Maha / Najah Qureshi, Tara Nerurkar, Bruce Philie,
Tamarah Schmidt, Kim Gear, Carol McBride, Erin Campbell,
Ntathu Allen, Sue Legard, Nicole Karni, Sabrina Allmendinger,
Tracy Moore, Marcus Brimage, Jessica Popp, Paige Scroger,
Willa Cook, Jalha Montgomery, Mikey Heffernan,
Rebecca Bryan, Valeska Hall, Kellie McClelland,
Michelle Purvis, Wakiza Thomas, Kara Nill,
Lisa Andrews, and Zoe Tzanetis

If you want personalized
guidance for your meditation
practice (or to overcome mental
or emotional difficulties) with a highly
trained meditation instructor,
or if you'd like to become
an instructor yourself, please email
hello@meditationuniversity.us,
and we can arrange a complementary
assessment and strategy call



LIVE & MEDITATE
in this
Peaceful Paradise



Phil N. Rossner
Meditation Mag Contributor



DOWNLOAD FREE
PDF PREVIEW HERE



Want to experience Deeper Authentic Connections & Inner Fulfillment. Grow as a Meditation Teacher or Transform your Life?

Nhi Nhi Le is one of Meditation Magazine's Teacher Trainers. She is a Certified Meditation, Mindfulness & Manifestation Teacher, Bhakti Yogi, Advanced Theta Healing Practitioner, Speaker and iConscious Coach. Nhi offers Private Sessions, Mentorship Programs and unique Retreat experiences to help you achieve your intentions and experience inner fulfillment, peace and happiness.

Are you curious or yearning to have someone walk alongside you to support you through your current life challenges, or you are wishing to have a Meditation Guide to help you elevate your growth and manifest your hearts deepest desire?

 WWW.NHINHILE.COM

Contact Nhi for a free 15 minute discovery call, bookings or more info.



MEDITATION UNIVERSITY

WORK WITH US



Meditation Magazine & Meditation University are growing.

While the print industry has been difficult, our digital distribution has grown by 10x, and Meditation University is thriving.

We intend to buy parcels of land (like the one pictured at left) to open meditation centers with geodesic domes over the coming years.

If you are of spiritual heart and want to join us on our mission to make the world a happier & more peaceful place, email hello@meditationmag.com! We would love to talk with you.

WE ARE SEEKING:
INVESTORS & DONORS
FOR LAND AND DOMES
PARTNERS & VOLUNTEERS
WHO GET THINGS DONE



MEDITATIONS

Guided tutorials to cultivate inner peace

Peace begins with you.

Every human who cultivates inner peace increases the level of Peace On Earth.
We hope you enjoy these meditations!

Meditations for peace

with Kevin Ellerton

The great Zen Master, Thích Nhat Hanh (aka “Thay” or “Teacher”), wrote many books about peace. I tried to read them all before starting work on this issue.

I was searching for answers on how to interact with war & injustice.

Thay was one of the world’s greatest experts in bringing peace in times of war. He pioneered the peace movement in Vietnam, as bombs fell and friends perished around him. He held retreats for Israelis and Palestinians to meditate together, communicate mindfully with each other, and discover their shared humanity. He was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by MLK Jr, for encouraging people to come together instead of taking sides.

So I was surprised to find that Thay’s books on World Peace were mostly just filled with meditations, mindfulness techniques, dharma talks, nature parables, practices for dealing with difficult emotions, mindful walking, mindful family life. Rather than being focused on “World Peace,” these books were very similar to all the other meditation books that I had read in the past.

I thought books with titles like *True Peace Work* and *Creating True Peace* would be about how to mindfully protest governments and use nonviolence to resolve national conflicts... but with every chapter focused on sitting, breathing, and

loving, I found myself furrowing my brow, wondering where the “world peace” parts were.

I flipped through the books, diving eagerly into the tidbits and anecdotes about wars and conflicts... and felt slightly disappointed when Thay’s words kept flowing back into mindfulness exercises for individuals and families.

I felt that Thay was missing the point of writing books on Peace... shouldn’t he be focusing on activism, rather than just meditation?

After reading four such books from Thích Nhat Hanh — *Being Peace*, *Peace Is Every Step*, *Creating True Peace*, and *True Peace Work* — I began to realize:

These books were not missing the point at all. They were hitting the nail on the head.

These books, on mindfulness and meditation, were the Zen Master’s ingenious way of directly cultivating Peace On Earth.

All the humans who read those books and implement the practices in their own lives cultivate peace within themselves, and bring peace into their families and local communities.

Through these books on mindfulness & meditation, Thích Nhat Hanh is literally creating peaceful people, thus contributing, directly and continuously, to

Peace on Earth.

If we want the people of Earth to be peaceful, we must realize, first and foremost, that we ARE the people of Earth.

The following meditations are my ode to Thích Nhat Hanh. Thay inspired these meditations, and will continue to inspire Peace On Earth for generations to come.

Peaceful Walking Meditation

Take a moment to go outside, and walk barefoot upon the Earth.

You can walk in your backyard, or in a park, or in a beautiful natural place nearby.

Thích Nhat Hanh used to say, “Walk as if you are kissing the Earth with your feet.”

Do not worry about where you are going. You are already here. You are arriving in the beautiful here & now with every step.

Don’t rush; walk slowly. Simply enjoy the moment, and the activity of walking.

As you are walking, allow Planet Earth to tickle and massage the soles of your feet.

Focus your attention on the sensations of the feet, and the feelings of the whole body as it moves, while also observing the breath flowing in and out of your body.

Allow your body to relax, and don’t forget to smile with every step.

Maintain awareness of the breath, body, and feet as you enjoy this peaceful walking meditation.



Smiling With Difficult Emotions

Take a moment just to observe the breath, as it flows in and out of your body.

- Flowing in,
- Flowing out.
- Flowing in,
- Flowing out.

Now, as you continue to watch the breath flowing in and out, take a moment to notice the emotions and thoughts arising in your body and mind.

Whether they feel pleasant or unpleasant, whether they seem positive or negative, take a moment to welcome every thought and emotion, warmly, to this moment.

Thoughts and emotions evolved for a reason. They are trying to help us. We are trying to help ourselves.

Let go of the tendency to judge thoughts & emotions as “good” or “bad” in this moment. Instead, practice greeting them with unconditional love.

As each thought and emotion arises,

give it an inner-hug.

Smile at each thought and emotion as it arises.

Greet your thoughts and emotions with unconditional love, as they arise.

Take a few minutes to watch your thoughts & emotions in this way, as the breath flows in and out.

If you want to take this meditation to the next level...

Take a moment to remember something that tends to bring up strong, “negative” emotions, like fear, grief, anger, or hatred for you.

Perhaps it is a particular war on the world stage, or a conflict with someone in your own life.

As you contemplate this difficult situation, continue to observe the breath, as it flows in and out.

Continue to welcome each emotion warmly, with unconditional love.

Continue to smile at each thought and emotion as it arises.

Breathing in, I am aware of fear arising.
Breathing out, I smile to the fear, with warmth and love.

Breathing in, I am aware of grief arising.

Breathing out, I smile to the grief, with warmth and love.

Breathing in, I am aware of anger arising.

Breathing out, I smile to the anger, with warmth and love.

Breathing in, I am aware of hatred arising.

Breathing out, I smile to the hatred, with warmth and love.

In this way, we not only accept, befriend, and welcome our thoughts and emotions... we actually transform them into friendliness, kindness, and unconditional love.

When we transform our emotions in this way, we ourselves are transformed. We become the peaceful humans of Planet Earth.



A Peace Meditation

with Nhi Nhi Le

Adapted from Nhi Nhi Le’s meditation at Meditation Magazine’s Peace Summit.

Get Comfortable

I invite you to just settle into your space.

Make yourself nice and comfortable, and just gently close your eyes.

Focus on Breathing

Bringing your awareness to your breath, just notice the quality of air moving in through your nose and exhaling out through your mouth.

Allowing each breath to soften you, to ground you, and to relax you.

Bring Peace Into Your Heart

Now, just bringing your awareness to your heart space and just feel the pulsating rhythm of your heart.

Now, bring peace into your heart. Just notice: how does peace feel in your heart? How does peace feel in your body?

Meditate on Each Question For A Few Breaths:

What does peace mean to you?

How would you like to see peace unfolding all around the planet?

How can you share this feeling of peace with others in your life?

What actions can you take to spread more peace into this world?

Most importantly, how can you cultivate and nurture peace within yourself? Because it always begins with us.

Inhaling Love, Exhaling Peace

Let’s take three deep breaths together.

Breathing in love, breathing out peace. Inhaling love, exhaling peace. Feel it spread far and wide.

One more time: breathing in love, exhaling peace.

Closing Prayer

Let’s bring our hands to our hearts in Namaste. May all beings be happy, free, and at peace.

May peace prevail on Earth.

A Meditation for Visualizing and Manifesting Peace On Earth

with Liza Colpa

Adapted from Meditation University graduate Liza Colpa's meditation at Meditation Magazine's Peace Summit.

The world is waking up.

There was a time when people normalized and celebrated war, genocide, dictatorship, racism, and the conquering of Earth.

For the first time, it is becoming harder and harder for world leaders to justify those ways of thinking.

The cynicism, criticism, and frustration we feel and see around us are painful yet beautiful symptoms that we are becoming more awake and aware of what is going on in our world. Our growing angst is a byproduct of waking up, and our frustration is a symbol of that awakening.

As we continue to awaken, we can move forward towards the inevitable dream of Peace On Earth. We can become an instrument of peace that will birth more hope, more dreams, and that realization of world peace.

It will always evolve and it will always change, and there will always be more storms to face. But the important thing is that we're facing, we're growing, we're birthing new realities.

Come as you are

So with that, let's come into a comfortable position, whatever that is for you today. You could be sitting, lying down, standing, or moving in any way that feels good. Come just as you are.

Dive into the breath

And I invite you in this moment to take a nice, big, deep inhale into your body, breathing in, filling the belly, the lungs, the chest with air. Inhale and exhale, sighing out, letting go.

Let's take a moment to just dive on into the breath.

Experience the inner world

From this place, recognize how you're feeling at this moment.

Truly and honestly and authentically: how are you feeling at this present moment?

Release any judgment or criticism.

Just be aware of this internal world.

Visualize peace in the inner world

And what does this internal world look like, fully peaceful, in your mind and your body?

What does internal peace look like to you?

Notice how the body, the breath, the mind presents itself in this state. Where do you feel it in your body? How does your breath respond to this feeling of being at peace?

Can you visualize or remember a time when peace was one with your being?

Breathe into that vision, and exhale, letting the rest go.

Visualize Peace On Earth

And from this space of internal peace, can you begin to visualize an "outer" world that is peaceful?

What does that peaceful world look like to you?

Inhale into the vision.

Exhale, let everything else go.

Take a few minutes just to breathe in this way.

Allow your vision to manifest

Know that this vision is a seed. It needs to be nurtured from the inside out. It needs light, sun, moments of rest, and moments of growth.

This vision will take some work and discipline to nurture. But how beautiful

that you can nurture it! How beautiful that there is work to be done.

And this vision keeps us going. For what's the other choice?

Breathe into this vision, this peace within you, peace within the world. And exhale, soften, let go.

Set an intention

I invite you to set an intention for yourself and for the world.

Let this intention be a manifestation of you being an instrument of peace. No intention or drop is too small when we're all doing this together.

Take one last big inhale into your body. Exhale.

Om, shanti, shanti, shanti

Let's close this meditation with one om, and three shanti's, for peace.

"Om" is the peaceful sound at the center of the Universe, and "shanti" is literally translated as "peace."

Let us take a nice big deep inhale for om.

Om.

Shanti.

Shanti.

Shanti.

Let this meditation be a practice, not something to achieve, but something to nurture, just like this journey towards world peace.

LIZA COLPA IS A GRADUATE OF MEDITATION UNIVERSITY'S MTT-200 PROGRAM. SHE HAS MADE A NAME FOR HERSELF AS ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR YOUNG MEDITATION TEACHERS ON THE INSIGHT TIMER APP. SCAN THIS QR CODE TO FOLLOW ALONG WITH HER AS SHE GUIDES THIS BEAUTIFUL MEDITATION AT MEDITATION MAGAZINE'S PEACE SUMMIT.



A Meditation for Peace and Equanimity

with Bob Tenbarge, Meditation University Graduate

Equanimity (non-judgmental, peaceful awareness) is an important practice that helps us live in peace, with ourselves and with the world around us.

Equanimity regards all beings as equal, rather than distinguishing between friends, enemies, and strangers. When we regard people as enemies, how can we ever live in peace?

Practicing equanimity is an unselfish, positive action of unconditional love that keeps us from engaging in negative actions toward others.

Equanimity is a clear-minded, tranquil state of consciousness, free from the influence of delusions and propaganda.

The opposite of equanimity is anxiety, worry, and paranoia... often caused by dividing people and ethnic groups we don't understand into 'good' and 'bad' categories.

The near enemy of equanimity is indifference. Not caring is a form of egotism. The result we want to avoid is apathy, not caring about the welfare of others at all.

We can develop true, all-encompassing equanimity by practicing this loving-kindness meditation.

Meditation for Equanimity Through Loving-Kindness

Repeat these mantras out loud or in your mind:

Visualize yourself, smiling and happy, and say your own name.

- May I be balanced and at peace.
- May I learn to see the arising and passing of all nature with equanimity and balance.
- May I have true equanimity.
- May I be open to other cultures and practice peace.

Now, visualize a loved one and say their name.

- May [name] be balanced and at peace.
- May [name] learn to see the arising and passing of all nature with equanimity and balance.
- May [name] have true equanimity.
- May [name] be open to other cultures and practice peace.

Now, visualize a neutral person in your life – maybe someone you see occasionally who doesn't evoke strong positive or negative feelings in you – and say their name.

- May [name] be balanced and at peace.
- May [name] learn to see the arising and passing of all nature with equanimity and balance.

- May [name] have true equanimity.
- May [name] be open to other cultures and practice peace.

Now, visualize a challenging person in your life – someone who usually creates negative feelings in you – and say their name.

- May [name] be balanced and at peace.
- May [name] learn to see the arising and passing of all nature with equanimity and balance.
- May [name] have true equanimity.
- May [name] be open to other cultures and practice peace.

Now, expand your loving-kindness to all beings.

- May all beings have a balanced and peaceful life.
- May all beings learn to see the arising and passing of nature with equanimity and balance.
- May all beings experience and receive true equanimity.
- May all beings be open to other cultures and practice peace.

As we raise consciousness through meditation and yoga, change will happen.
Shanti, Shanti, Shanti.
Peace, Peace, Peace.



A Meditation for Radiating Peace

with Devlin Jordon,
Meditation University MTT-200 Graduate

Find a comfortable position, either sitting upright or lying down. Close your eyes gently, or soften your gaze if keeping them open feels more comfortable. Take a few deep breaths, inhaling slowly and deeply through your nose, feeling your belly rise. Exhale completely, releasing any tension with a soft sigh.

Bring your attention to your breath. Feel the air entering your nostrils and the release of any tension with each exhale. Whenever your mind wanders, don't judge yourself for these wandering thoughts – simply acknowledge them and gently guide your focus back to your breath.

As you breathe, visualize peace as a radiant light emanating from your heart center. Feel it starting as a warm glow, spreading outwards to fill your entire body. See this light dissolving any tension or worry within you, leaving behind a sense of serenity.

With each inhale, draw in more peace from the world around you. With each exhale, feel this peaceful light expanding outwards, like ripples on a calm pond. See it reaching beyond your body, enveloping

the space you occupy.

Imagine this light extending further, reaching out to your loved ones, friends, and even strangers. See it filling your community, your city, then rippling outwards across the globe. Inhale peace, exhale peace, radiating it to all beings everywhere.

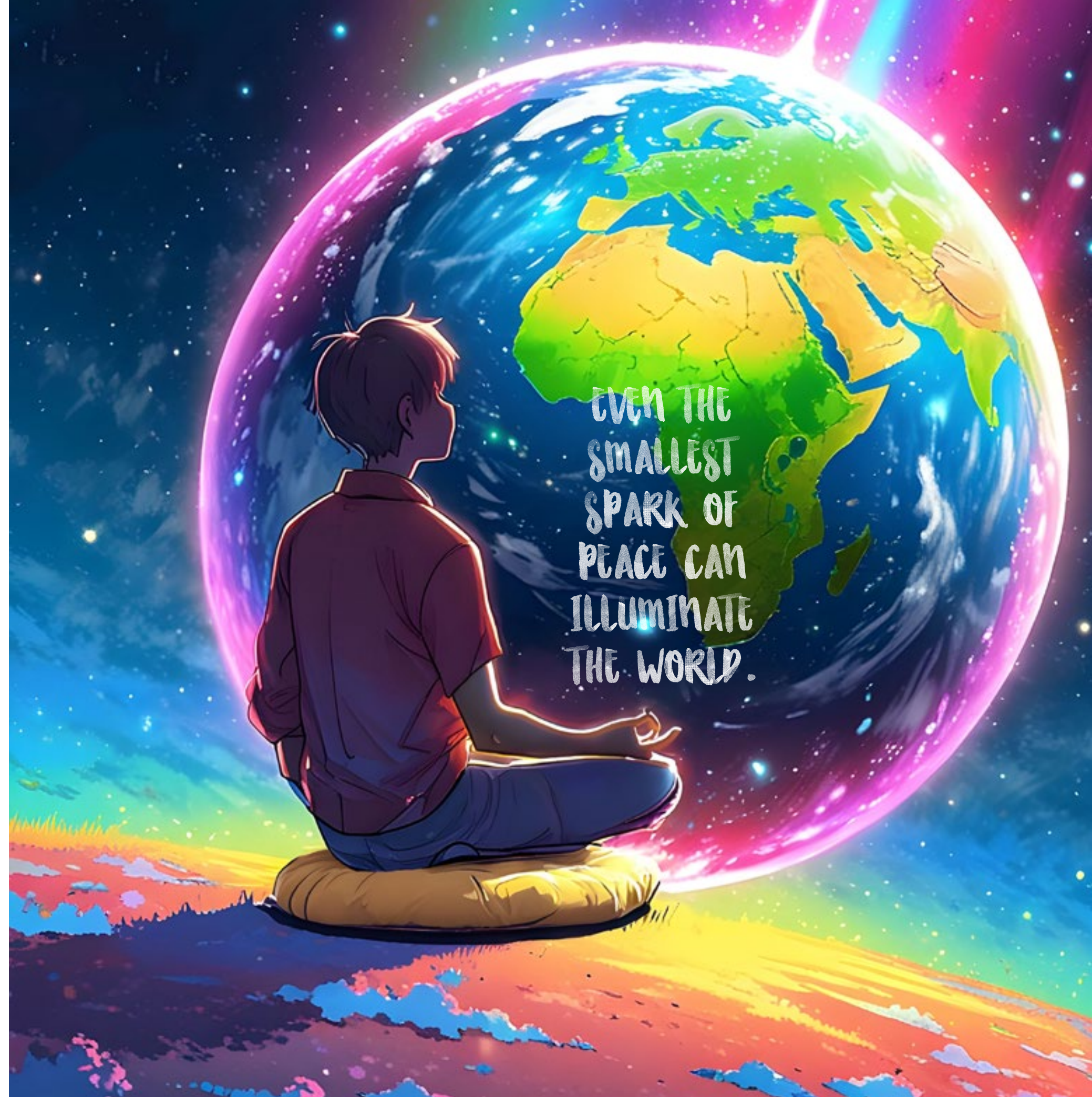
For a few moments, simply bask in this feeling of radiating peace.

You are a source of calm and serenity, contributing to the collective well-being of the world. If thoughts or worries arise, observe them without judgment and let them go, like clouds passing before the sun.

When you feel ready to return, slowly bring your awareness back to your body. Wiggle your fingers and toes, noticing any physical sensations. Take a few deep breaths, inhaling peace and exhaling any lingering tension.

Gently open your eyes, or refocus your gaze, carrying this intention of radiating peace with you throughout your day.

Remember, even the smallest spark of peace can illuminate the world.



An Inner Peace Meditation

with Tara Culbertson

Adapted from Tara Culbertson’s presentation at Meditation Magazine’s Peace Summit.

Find A Comfortable Position

Come into a comfortable, steady seat, whether you’re on the floor or sitting in a chair. The important part is that you’re comfortable, with a tall spine, upright but not rigid.

Place one hand to your heart, one hand to your belly, close your eyes, and just take a moment here to connect with your heart center.

And let’s take a moment to connect with our global community here in Meditation Magazine. Connecting as a whole synergizes and elevates the frequency.

Coherence Breathing

Let’s take a few rounds of coherence breath.

Coherence breath is a breathing pattern (inhale for a count of four, exhale for a count of six, all through the nose) that has been heavily researched by the HeartMath Institute, and has been shown to help bring our heart, mind, and emotions into a state of coherence.

When we breathe in coherence, we inhale for a count of four through the nose, and we exhale for six, also through the nose.

This is a really powerful practice you can do before you meditate. It helps you to calm your nervous system, lowers the blood pressure, heart rate and heart rate variability, and helps you come into a balanced, peaceful state before you meditate.

So we’re going to inhale for four together, and exhale for six.

Inhale for four, and the belly expands.

Exhale for six, belly comes back into the spine.

Repeat this on your own for a few minutes.

When you feel ready, return to normal breathing.

Connect With Yourself

You can bring your hands to your lap, palms facing up, and take a moment to connect with yourself.

See if you can feel if you’ve released any tension, if you feel a little lighter, more present after the coherence breath.

Breathe, and be fully present behind your eyes.

See if you can connect to the energy of the Earth. Earth energy is both stabilizing and grounding.

Let Go Of Emotional Baggage

Now, I want you to imagine you’re walking along a path toward the beach, and right next to the path is a backpack.

Pick up the backpack and put it on. Inside that backpack, you can place all of your worries, fears, limiting beliefs, anything that you’re ready to let go of, anything that you’re ready to release to create more space for inner peace.

Where the path meets the beach, step down into the sand, but take off the backpack and leave it on the path.

I want you to look into yourself and see if you’ve freed up any space. Do you feel lighter? Do you feel more peaceful? Do you feel more present?

Meditate On Interconnectedness

We’re going to step out onto the beach, sand warm on our toes.

As we walk toward the ocean, we look at the waves crashing along the shore, connecting to those waves, feeling a connection with everyone around us, seeing each of those individual waves and ripples folding back into the ocean together as one.

When we change, the whole changes. When we change ourselves, we inspire change around us.

Closing Chant For Enlightenment

Coming back to the space you’re in, let’s close with a chant for enlightenment.

Om, asatoma sadgamaya.

Tamaso ma jyotir gamaya.

Mrityor ma amritam gamaya.

Om shanti shanti shanti.

Lead us from untruths to the eternal truth.

Lead us from darkness to light.

Lead us from mortality to immortality.

Om peace, peace, peace.

Metta Prayer

If you would like to join me in the metta prayer, you can bring your hands out in front of you, palms facing forward, and we will collectively send love, light, and peace out into the world. If you are in need of some healing today, please receive these blessings of peace, love, and light.

May all beings be peaceful.

May all beings be happy.

May all beings be safe.

May all beings awaken to the light of their true nature.

May all beings be free.

Final Gratitude

If you’d like, bring your palms together at your heart center, the anahata chakra, and take a moment of gratitude for your practice today.

TARA CULBERTSON, A MEDITATION UNIVERSITY MTT-200 PROGRAM GRADUATE, FINDS JOY IN UNRAVELING THE MYSTERIES OF WELLNESS. EXPLORE TARA’S WELLNESS GARDEN ON INSTAGRAM, FACEBOOK, AND HER WEBSITE AT TARASWELLNESSGARDEN.COM FOR MORE INSIGHTS.



A Meditation to Release Tension & Breathe Unconditional Love

with Brett Cotter

Adapted from Brett Cotter's meditation at Meditation Magazine's Peace Summit.

Get Comfy

I invite you to get really comfortable, ideally lying down on your back.

Place one hand on your heart and your other hand on your belly button.

Focus your mind on following the airflow, as you breathe deep and slow.

Release Tension

Notice any areas of tension in your body...

Embracing the tension, and breathing right into it...

Allowing the airflow to move through the tension...

Allowing the tension to gently begin to unlock and release.

Unwinding, unfolding, breathing freely, right through where the tension was in your body.

Opening softly, allowing the airflow to soak in a little deeper as you breathe even slower.

Embracing your emotions with the life force that's in every breath.

Allowing your cells to saturate with life force, breathing and receiving directly from source.

Allowing the connection to expand throughout your body, releasing old tension that you absorbed from your family.

Breathing deep and slow, allowing that old tension to gently let go.

Embracing the pain and the old emotions, with the infinite life force in your breath right now.

Release That Which Does Not Serve You

Breathing deep and slow, allowing the airflow to soak in even further.

Releasing the roles and the emotional imprint from the household you grew up in.

Breathing and receiving warm waves of the eternal breath.

Cutting all the cords, breaking all the chains, rewriting your agreements, to best serve living your highest path and the greatest good for all beings.

Breathe & Receive Unconditional Love

Breathing and receiving beautiful, warm waves of unconditional love.

Anchoring in the energy and sweetness you are made of.

Always remembering: "I am free to be me. My life is my reality. I give myself permission to awaken my destiny.

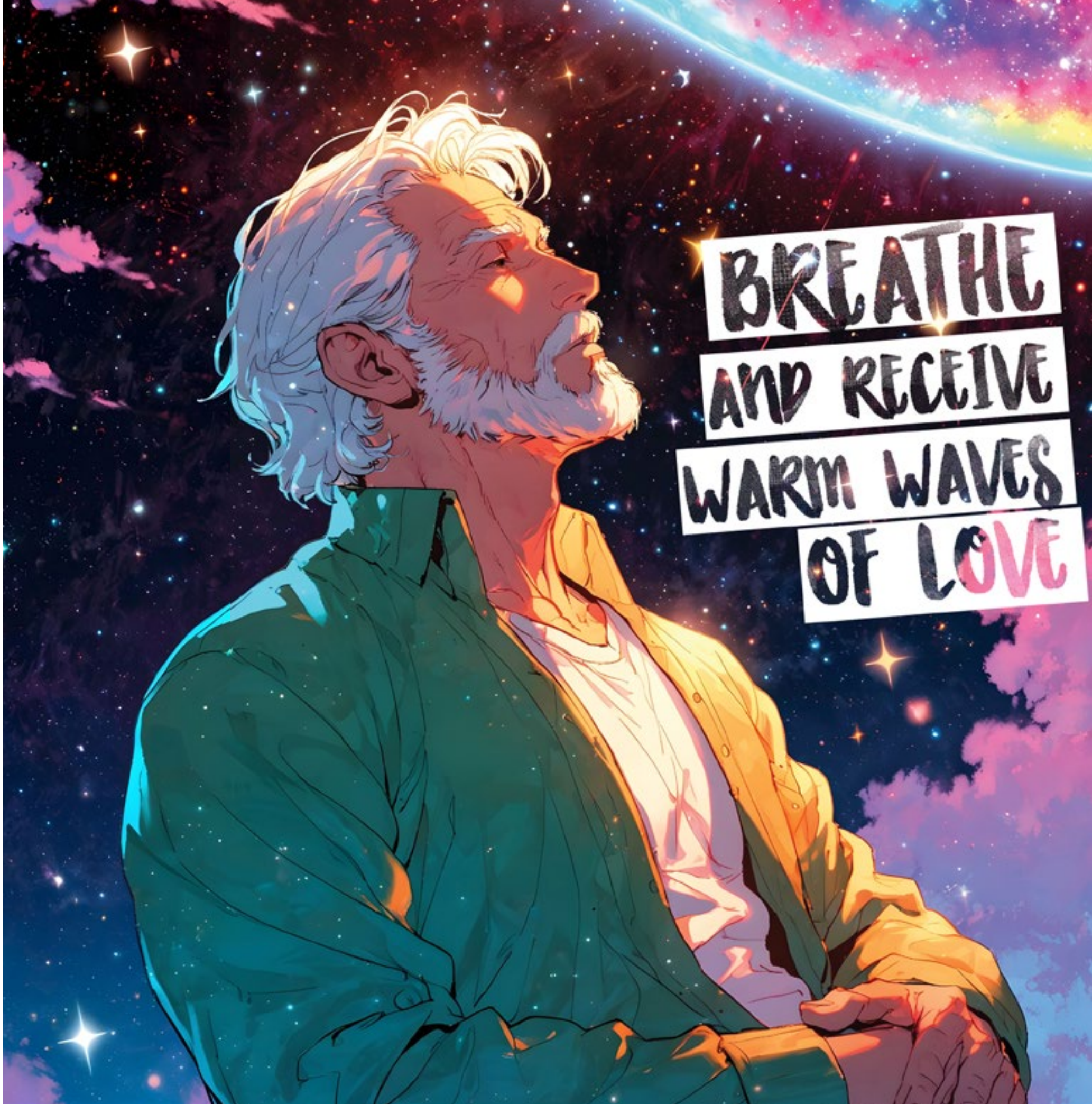
I awaken the new matrix of love, peace, and sweetness in and all around me.

I breathe and receive for eternity."

Return To Awareness

You can start wiggling your fingers and your toes, your ankles and your wrists, your knees and your elbows, your shoulders and your neck. Open up your eyes when you're ready.

BRETT COTTER, FOUNDER OF STRESSISGONE.COM, HAS BEEN HELPING PEOPLE OVERCOME TRAUMA AND STRESS FOR OVER TWENTY-FIVE YEARS. HE RUNS WORKSHOPS AT OMEGA INSTITUTE AND DEVELOPED THE TRAUMA SECTION OF MEDITATION UNIVERSITY'S MTT-200 PROGRAM AS WELL.



A Heart Coherence Meditation

with Kimberly Snyder

Adapted from Kimberly Snyder's presentation at Meditation Magazine's Peace Summit.

This is a very powerful meditation that can be done in as little as five to eight minutes. This meditation will help you to turn inward and access the incredible potential within your own heart, to expand out, to see win-win solutions. The more of us who come into the power of the heart, the more of us will start to feel this deepening of peace and unity within ourselves, and start to create more of that peace and unity on the planet. It starts with us. One heart at a time.

Shake Off The Tension

Lift your spine, and notice if there's any tension.

You can give your shoulders a little shake, just naturally aligning your body. I like to do a few shoulder rolls.

You can tense your whole body and then release. You can tighten your hands into fists and then release them.

Focus On Your Heart

Once you feel settled in, shift your focus to your heart.

It can be right in the center of your chest.

You can even take your hands and place them one over the other on top of your heart, or you can simply shift your awareness to your physical and your energetic spiritual heart.

This shift alone was shown in research published in the American Journal of Cardiology to help you start rewiring your nervous system, which will change your thoughts and create more peaceful perceptions.

Generate Feelings Of Appreciation

Keeping your focus on your heart, recall someone or something that makes you feel appreciation. It can be a person – your friend, your mom, your sibling – or even something like a beautiful sunset.

The energy of appreciation is a blend of gratitude, approval, thankfulness and awe. It feels expansive.

These heart-based emotions have been shown to help create coherence and inner harmony.

Appreciation can be easier to access than going straight to peace or love. So right now, we're going into appreciation.

Dive Into The Feeling Of Appreciation

This is not a visualization exercise. This is just bringing to mind someone or something that can help you harness that feeling, that energy, and feel it in your heart, in this moment.

Once you can recall someone or something that makes you feel appreciation, focus on the feeling right in the center of your heart, and drop the visualization of that person.

If it drops, just recall that someone or something, whatever it is – and then just focus on the feeling itself, in your heart.

Keep sustaining it. This is actually shifting your coherence right here, right now.

Breathe Through The Heart

As you breathe deeply and slowly, imagine that you're taking deep breaths in and out of your heart, slowing everything down, and staying in this state of appreciation.

Thank Your Heart

Now, you can bring your hands into anjali mudra or prayer pose in front of your heart.

Take a moment to thank your amazing, all-powerful, intelligent heart for teaching you the ways of love, of peace, of unity... and for always being there for you.

Gently float your eyes open when you're ready.

FOLLOW ALONG WITH KIMBERLY AS SHE LEADS THIS MEDITATION, ALONG WITH SOME POWERFUL INFORMATION ABOUT HEART COHERENCE, AT MEDITATION MAGAZINE'S PEACE SUMMIT!



Color For Peace

Grab some colorful pens or markers and enjoy this coloring-book meditation!



Mindful art — enjoying the process, rather than worrying about the results — is a meditation that can cultivate peace and love within yourself.

Please enjoy these coloring book pages. They are part of the “meditations” section of this book; please

use the activity of coloring as a meditation.

If you have kids, consider coloring these pages together, as a mindful bonding activity. And if you post photos on social, tag us @meditationmag so we can share on our page!



The Path To Cosmic Consciousness

♦
All-Day Workshops
with Swami Premodaya
promote awareness,
self-exploration, true clarity,
and expanded consciousness

♦
2 September 2024 2pm - 7pm
(Pacific Time) \$175

♦
i-coda.org/calendar/all-day-workshop



International Centers
of Divine Awakening

10%
discount with
medmag10



Open up to well-being.



eOmega.org/mindfulness
Rhinebeck, New York | 800.944.1001

Workshops
Retreats
Conferences
Online Learning
Membership

Exceptional programs. World-class teachers. In person & online.

OMEGA

Many print. Such retro. Much yaaas. meditationmag.com



CONTEMPLATIONS

Articles and interviews that help bring peace



How can we bring peace?

When we are at peace, we bring peace into the world. But how should we resolve conflicts with friends, family, neighbors, and nations?

PHOTO: ADOBE STOCK

We asked three of the world's greatest living peace advocates how we can help resolve the horrific wars and conflicts in the world. How can we help the world move toward peace?



Should we “fight back” against violence, oppression and injustice with violence? Or should we always use non-violent means of resistance? Should we “choose a side” in conflicts? Or should we take “the side of peace?” Here are their profound responses.



Dalai Lama

His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, is a Nobel Peace Prize laureate. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 for leading his people in non-violent resistance against the Chinese occupation of Tibet. He has dedicated his life to promoting compassion, tolerance, and interfaith dialogue, bringing peace and understanding to millions of people around the world. The Dalai Lama's teachings emphasize the importance of inner peace, communication, compassion, and ethical conduct, making him a symbol of non-violent resistance and human rights advocacy around the world. Below is His Holiness The Dalai Lama's response to our questions regarding bringing peace on earth and ending the current wars around the world.

Dalai Lama: "I belong to the twentieth century, a time when many people thought violence was the way to solve our problems. This method, the use of force, was wrong, because invariably violence creates more

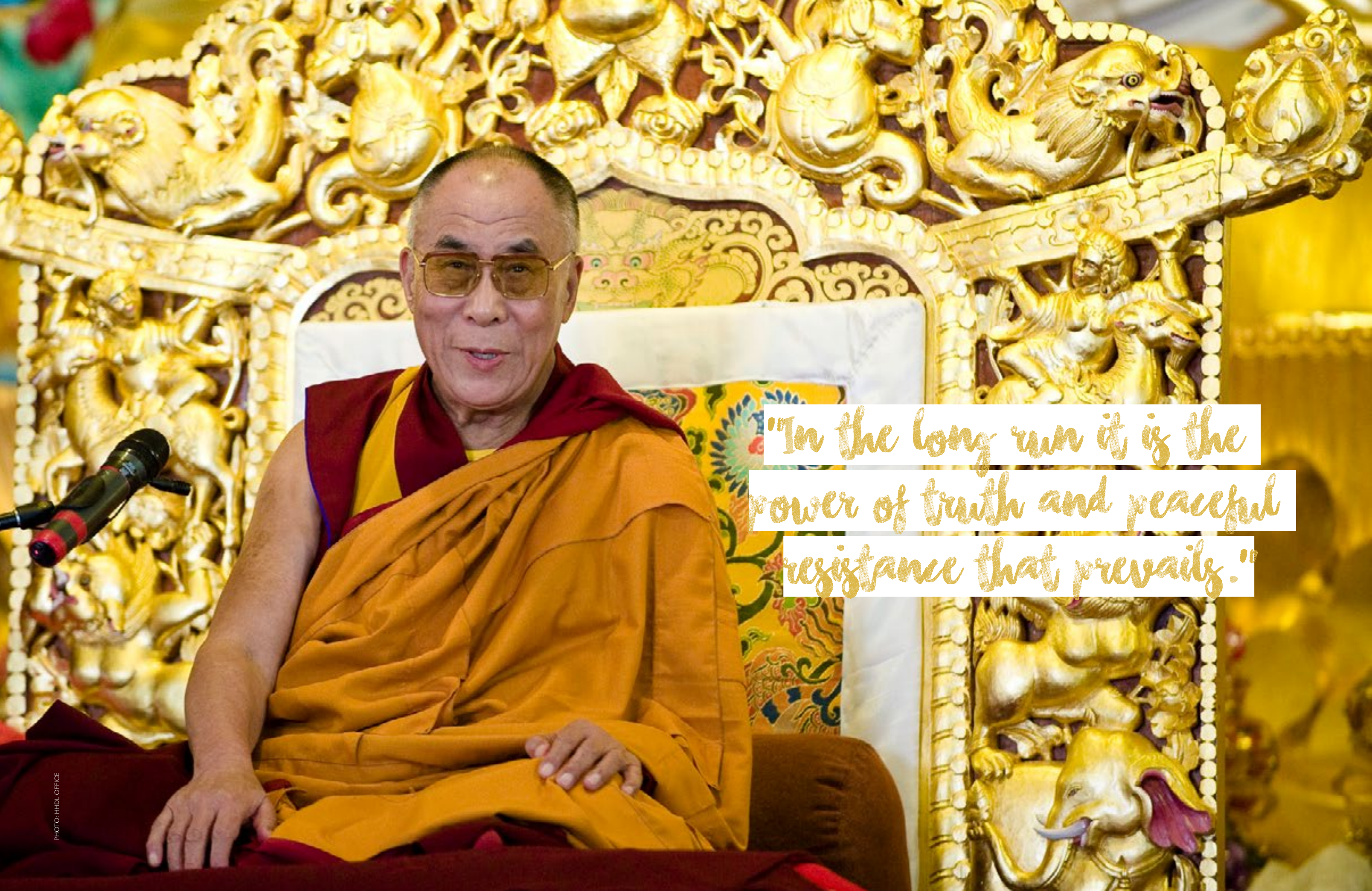
problems than it solves. In the long run it is the power of truth and peaceful resistance that prevails.

The Tibetan struggle has remained committed to non-violence. Our cause is just and the source of our resilience has been not in taking up arms, but in preserving our cultural, religious, and national identity by peaceful means. Despite Communist China's more than seventy years repressive occupation of Tibet, the Tibetan spirit is stronger than ever. We are convinced that violence is never the answer. Because violence leads to nothing but destruction and human tragedy, our struggle must remain nonviolent and free of hatred.

In the past, people lived in smaller, isolated communities; today, we are all interdependent. Therefore, to harm others is ultimately to harm ourselves. Instead, we need compassion for those who would hurt us. Some think compassion indicates weakness—I consider it to be a sign of strength. This is especially important at a time when we must take the whole of humanity into account." →

*"The Tibetan struggle
has remained committed
to non-violence"*

HHDL PHOTOS: OLIVIER ADAM



"In the long run it is the power of truth and peaceful resistance that prevails."

Amma

Amma, also known as Mata Amritanandamayi or “The Hugging Saint,” is most well-known for having given life-changing hugs to tens of millions of people (she is most certainly the world-record-holder for number of people hugged by an individual human). During this time, Amma has also spearheaded massive humanitarian efforts, which include the establishment of major hospitals, educational institutions, and disaster relief programs that have relieved the suffering of millions of people. Through her charitable organization, Embracing the World, Amma has allocated billions of dollars to ease the suffering of those in need. Amma’s philosophy of universal oneness and compassion has manifested in her work, and in her role as a world leader in global peace and humanitarianism. Kevin and Jovanna met Amma at her ashram in Amritapuri, India in 2017, and have been in contact with her disciples ever since. Kevin sent the following questions, and Amma replied with the following answers.

Kevin: What is the essential core of your philosophy on violence and nonviolence?

Amma: The essential teaching of Sanātana Dharma is the inherent oneness of all beings—that behind all names and forms is the one and the same True Self. Just as if we place 1,000 pots of water out under the Sun, we will see 1,000 different suns reflected in those pots, so too it is but the one Self reflecting diversely in all beings. When one understands this, they will treat all people, animals and plants—all of nature—with the same love, compassion and forgiveness with which they would want for themselves. It is just as when the left hand is injured, the right hand naturally comes to its aid, soothes it and applies medicine. This compassion is because of the knowledge of their essential oneness. Following the same principle, when we accidentally bite our tongue, we don’t knock

out all of our teeth. When we truly understand and experience our universal oneness, the only response can be patience and compassion. This is the reason why one of the Upanishads declares: *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*. In essence, “It is the small-minded who say, ‘This is mine; that is his.’ The wise believe, ‘The entire world is one big family.’”

Kevin: When we are unjustly attacked, as individuals or nations, and innocents have been hurt or killed, is responding with violence always wrong? Should we always choose nonviolence?

Amma: The concept of dharma [righteous duty] is intricate and subtle. Dharma, in its ultimate sense, is the attainment of liberation from all worldly bondages. However, while discharging one’s responsibilities in the world, one may have to respond to certain situations that are threatening his life or his nation’s security. Nevertheless, the way one reacts should still be just and based in dharma [righteousness].

Just because nonviolence is an important value in Sanātana Dharma, that doesn’t mean that we can ignore adharma [unrighteousness]. In fact, to ignore adharma itself is adharma. For example, if a woman is being harassed on a bus, one cannot sit idle saying, “Nonviolence is the highest virtue.” No, we have to stand up. That said, responding with violence should come only when all other options have been exhausted.

Kevin: What should we do (as individuals and nations), when our best attempts at nonviolence fail?

Amma: In this world, each of us has our duties and responsibilities. Therefore, it is not always easy for everyone to follow nonviolence or other such spiritual ideals completely—particularly if they come face →

PHOTO: MATA AMRITANANDAMAYI MATH

"Behind all names and forms is the one and the same True Self"

Below: Amma, “The Hugging Saint,”. Known for having given life-changing hugs to tens of millions of people



to face with adversaries striving to strip them of their right to simply exist. In such a scenario, Lord Krishna can be a good role-model. We should understand that Lord Krishna—who served as Arjuna’s charioteer in the Mahābhārata War—was not a warmonger. Prior to the war, all diplomacy had been exhausted. It was only when the opposing Kaurava Army said they would not even give the Pāndavas a pinhead of land to live on that the war was waged. So, three other options were tried before resulting to danda—physical force. Those were: sāma, dāna and bheda. First, we should try to pacify the aggressive party through words—sāma. Then try giving them a gift to appease them—dāna. Then try leaving the place where they are—bheda. Only if none of this works can one “take up the stick”—danda.

Kevin: As individuals feeling powerless in the face of global conflicts, what practical steps can we take to contribute to peace and reduce violence in our world?

Amma: It’s true, when we look around at the world today and see the cruelty and violence—the conflicts between groups, between nations, between religions, between political parties—it can be hard to bear. And it is easy to feel overwhelmed. Add to this the possibility of terrorist attacks and weapons of mass destruction, one can start to feel totally powerless. However, the most dangerous explosive of all is the hatred and desire for vengeance found in the human mind. In theory, war is never necessary, but war and violence will never be eradicated from the external world as long as conflict remains in the human mind.

Again, if we feel we see adharma [unrighteousness], it is our duty to stand up and point that out. But at the same time, we also need to look within and take steps to purify our own heart. In today’s world, everyone wants others to change first. It is hard to find people who sincerely feel that they themselves have to undergo a change. Instead of thinking others should change first, each individual should strive to change themselves. Unless a transformation takes place in the inner world, things will be more or less the same in the outer world. But if we change ourselves, we often find a change comes in the outer world as well.

The world’s current population stands at 8.1 billion. It’s unrealistic to expect all of them to be compassionate or practice nonviolence. However, just imagine the positive impact if at least three percent of us lived lives of compassion.

PHOTO: MATTA AMRITANANDAMAYI MATH

Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar is a world-renowned peace advocate and founder of the Art of Living Foundation. Gurudev’s accomplishments in conflict resolution include mediating the Colombian peace process, contributing to a ceasefire that ended a 52-year conflict; helping to resolve the centuries-old Ayodhya Ram Temple conflict, and providing trauma relief to millions of individuals through meditation and forgiveness exercises. Gurudev’s initiatives have transformed the lives of countless people, emphasizing the power of inner peace and non-violence in the cultivation of Peace On Earth. He was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006. Kevin interviewed Gurudev for The Peace Summit in the Spring of 2024. Below are some powerful excerpts from the interview.

Kevin: What is the core of your philosophy of resolving conflicts using nonviolence?

Gurudev: The cause for violence is misunderstanding, stress, and threat perception from the other. Nobody will be violent towards someone whom they don’t feel threatened by, right? So, you need to change the perception. Second, we need to bring down the stress level. Third, trust building is essential. Then, you see, nonviolence will be natural to us.

Kevin: Is there a spiritual component to your philosophy of nonviolence as well?

Gurudev: Oh yeah, oh yeah yeah yeah yeah. You know, if you have any type of rage or anger or violence in you, you can’t progress in the spiritual path. Meditation is impossible, our higher states of consciousness are not possible, unless and until we take these steps of compassion, forgiveness, nonviolence. In the yoga philosophy, nonviolence is the first step one has to take in order to go into yoga.

Kevin: What did you bring to the conversation in Colombia that helped to resolve conflict there?

Gurudev: We had been working with the internally displaced refugees in Colombia. There was a lot of trauma, and meditation relieves people of their past traumas. We had taken care of a couple of million people there. So, for that, the Colombian government decided to give us their highest civilian award.

At the time, we had a conversation with the president. It was supposed to be just a handshake, but then it lasted for about an hour or so. The president was very worried. He said, “We are left with only the military option, because the FARC is not amicable to any solutions.”

Every day, there used to be bomb blasts. They would bring down the telephone towers and television towers, and the water supply was disrupted.

So I asked the president, “How about I go and talk to them?” He said, “Any help is welcome, but I don’t think there is much hope. You know, 52 years is too much. We have had a lot of suffering.” →

So I took a flight to Cuba, and they were there, 14 of them, the [FARC] commandos. Ivan Marquez and all of them.

Initially, they were arm's distance from me. They said, "No, we don't want to meet anyone spiritual or religious. Our bible is Das Kapital. We follow the communist principle. So we're not interested."

But then, that evening, when I gave a talk at the University of Havana, they sent their feelers. Afterwards, they requested a meeting. So, I welcomed them in the hotel where I was staying.

The talk went on. Initially, their intention was to convince me to talk to the Colombian government to stop atrocities against them. I told them, "I understand, you are all victims as well, and I know you have a lot of heartburn, a lot of issues. I am also for social justice. But if you eschew the path of violence and come to the mainstream to place your demands, together we can all improve the situation."

Initially, they were not willing. But then... they all meditated with me!

After meditation, they said, "This is something we were lacking in our movement."

Then they followed me to the Indian Embassy. We had three days of deliberation and meditations with them. They took a three-day silence program also. Afterwards, they were all like children. They were so genuine, they were good people.

Then we did a forgiveness exercise. We flew in the

victims of their violence from Colombia. They sat with them, they asked for forgiveness. "Will we be forgiven for our sins?" It was such a moving moment, Kevin. There was not one dry eye. Everybody had tears in their eyes. They embraced each other. Meditation has a big impact on the psyche of people.

I'm glad you are taking meditation as the theme of your magazine. This is the language of the wise. When you have silence, when you practice meditation, you can give that. It happens from your presence.

Like someone who is angry can trigger anger in everybody around them, when you have peace, you can influence that peace in others through your own vibration. You don't even do it. It happens.

Kevin: Thank you, Gurudev. It's amazing to hear that it was meditation and forgiveness exercises that really helped to bring peace in Colombia! It's an amazing thing that a personal practice within ourselves can make such a huge impact in the world.

I think we all agree that nonviolence is the ideal. But the response that I often get when I advocate for pure nonviolence is: "Oh, if the United States had been nonviolent in World War II, then we'd all be speaking German right now." People often justify the use of violence by saying that nuclear bombs ended World War II. Do you believe that violence is always wrong, and we should always choose nonviolence? Or do you feel that sometimes violence is needed or justified?" →

"A bridge will have to have
a foot on both sides of the
shore. It cannot be a bridge if
it is only on one side"

PHOTO: ART OF LIVING FOUNDATION

Gurudev: See, there is a difference between self-defense and violence.

Violence is an action which comes out of rage, anger, and hatred. But self-defense is much different from violence. [When you act in self-defense], you are making sense.

For example, a police officer: when he is keeping law and order, or keeping the calm of a city, and to keep that he has to take some action against some crazy people, you don't call it violence. Unless the police are prejudiced... if the police have prejudice, then their action becomes violence. But their acting to keep law and order, to keep things safe, is not called violence.

Similarly, the soldiers who defend a nation's freedom, you don't call them "engaged in violent activity." You say they are there to protect nonviolence. They are the protector of compassion, the protector of peace from those elements who are disturbing the peace of others.

There is a difference between having a fence to protect a garden, and someone who is destroying the garden, right? In this sense, I wouldn't call that violence, but an action which would prevent violence from affecting the whole community.

Kevin: Right now, Israel is trying to "defend itself," and they've gone very far in that response. They have killed many, many innocent people. Where do you draw the line in terms of self-defense?

Gurudev: WAR, I would say: "Worst Act of Reason."

Whenever someone starts war, they will give you all the reasons, all the judgments. It will appear to you that they are doing the just thing, what is right.

But to me, these are generated in the minds of people. If people who are in positions of responsibility meditate, I tell you, and if they tap the intuitive ability that they have, it will be a completely different story. Same with Ukraine and Russia.

I would say you need better mediators here. Usually, mediators sit with problems. I would say, ask each party what the solution they have is, and you sit with the solution. You can find something.

We did this for this 500-year-old conflict in India, the Ayodhya Ram Temple issue. Seventy-two wars have been fought on this one thing. But sitting across the table, sitting with people who are neutral or who have credibility can make a whole difference.

The whole thing got resolved. Five acres was given to Muslims in another place. Actually, they [had only been] in possession of two and a half acres. Double

the land was given. And this birthplace of Rama was given to the Hindus.

In this one case, I would tell you, there was so much bloodshed that has happened. So many governments have fallen on this one particular issue in India.

Nobody asked for five acres of land. It was my initiative. I said, "Look, if not now, 100 years later, 200 years later, someone will come and say 'Our land has been taken away.'" That can be a cause of terrorism, or it can create a spark of hatred. So, nip the bud of hatred. Nip it at the bud. If you see there is a flame of hatred that might start in the future, nip it at the very beginning. That's what we did by giving five acres and making the parties understand.

With Israel and Palestine, I tell you, it's not a very different situation from what India faced in 26/11.

[Editor's note: On November 26th, 2008, there were major terror attacks in India. Hundreds of innocent civilians were killed. The 26/11 attacks are remembered in India in a similar way to how the 9/11 attacks are remembered in the United States.]

India could have gone to war with Pakistan on this one issue. There were international people that were being shot down. So many Indian businessmen were shot down. But India was very wise [in how it acted] on that.

[Editor's note: India's response to 26/11 was relatively non-violent compared to the ways in which western nations have tended to respond to major terror attacks. During the attacks, police went into action, killing and arresting the terrorists. After the attacks, India strengthened its security protocols and used diplomatic means to work with the international community to put pressure on Pakistan to crack down on the terrorist networks within its borders. This approach appears to have worked well for India, with minimal violence, and minimal "collateral damage." Perhaps this mindful approach can be used as an example for western nations that have tended to be more violent, militaristic, and heavy-handed in their responses to terrorism, waging wars and occupations that have often wrought disastrous results for everyone involved.]

What is needed is proper communication. Tit for tat will not work. Two wrongs cannot make one thing right. So, you have to really have patience and deal with it.

In the year 2008, I tell you, Kevin, India faced such terrible terror attacks, one every month the whole year. So, people were angry, no doubt. But you have to restrain your anger and see what makes sense and then go and act on it.

I'm not saying show the other cheek and get slapped from the other party and be compassionate. No, I'm saying you must take action. But make sure in your action you are not creating more adversities than you [already have].

Kevin: As a magazine publisher, I have generally chosen to take the side of peace over war, rather than choosing sides among the warring parties. Many of our readers appreciate this approach. But some people push back and say, "We can't just take the side of humanity and peace. We must take a side in the conflict, and call out the aggressor..."

Gurudev: I would say they are partially correct. You cannot just sit and say, "Okay, I'll meditate and send only positive vibrations." You have to take some steps. But whatever actions you take should be well thought about. That intuitive action or intuitive decision can only come through meditation.

When you meditate, you get the right thought, you get the right intuition, because you are not impulsive. You are not coming out of rage to do an action which you end up regretting. Your keenness of awareness makes a difference.

Also, Kevin, I'd like to tell you, we all emit vibrations. The whole universe is just vibrations. When we have positive vibrations, it impacts the whole atmosphere.

For example, what was happening in Washington DC in September and October. The government was going to shut down, and there was a lot of chaos. The media was saying "This is going to happen for sure, the government is going to shut down."

But we had a program there. We had 1.1 million people sit in silence and meditate for 20 minutes.

The three days we had the program, the government did not shut down. They came into some understanding, they signed the bill, because we created such positive vibes.

The police department said, "We have never seen a gathering which had no violence, no issues, no tiffs, no conflict there."

Another interesting thing: the survey says there was no homicide that whole week in Washington DC. Every day there has been a homicide in DC, but that week, when people had assembled to meditate... no homicide. It's not surprising for me, but for those who do not believe in meditation, it's surprising.

I have seen the same thing with hundreds and thousands of Naxalites, the guerrilla movement in India. When they took to meditation, their whole

attitude changed. Where there used to be massacres every year in the state of Bihar, you will not hear of them anymore. Because we approached them, talked to them, made sure that they knew we understood them.

We did the same thing in Denmark. Six thousand gang members, when they took to meditation, their lives totally changed. These people, who moved around with guns, are now doing social work. They're helping people out.

We also started a program called Cities for Peace in the United States, in several cities, including Los Angeles and Chicago. We brought together the police and the inner-city gang members, to sit together, breathe together, meditate together. The atmosphere, I tell you, is so beautiful, so different.

Meditation has the power not only to change an individual, but also the vibrations. Everybody's mind also works on the vibrations.

Kevin: Thank you. Is it possible for me to just clarify my last question? When I say we need to find peace and understanding between both sides of conflicts, people say, "No, we need to take one side or the other." For example, some people say we should take Israel's side. Some people say we should take Palestine's side. Some people say we should take Ukraine's side. I don't hear so much about that for Russia. Is it important to choose a side in the way that people are suggesting? Or do you think it's better to try to support all sides in peace and understanding?

Gurudev: You take the side of peace. You take the side of humanity.

Don't label yourself. The moment you label yourself, you'll be useless to bring peace. You'll be useless to help people to come together.

People who take the side of peace, the side of humanity, will say that everybody belongs to their side.

If Israel is acting in a certain way, we understand why Israel is acting. If Palestine is acting, we understand what was their issue.

You need to bridge the gap.

A bridge will have to have a foot on both sides of the shore. It cannot be a bridge if it is only on one side. ●



TO WATCH KEVIN'S FULL INTERVIEW WITH GURUDEV, SRI SRI RAVI SHANKAR, SCAN THIS QR CODE, OR WATCH THE REPLAY OF THE PEACE SUMMIT AT MEDITATIONMAG.COM/PEACE.

Peace Begins With Me

Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh, or Thay, was one of the world’s foremost peacemakers, and father of *Engaged Buddhism*. In this article, Phil describes meeting Thay and discusses his most important insights.

Words and Photography by Phil Rossner

“Although attempting to bring about world peace through the internal transformation of individuals is difficult, it is the only way. “Love, compassion, and altruism are the fundamental basis for peace. Once these qualities are developed within an individual, he or she is then able to create an atmosphere of peace and harmony. “This atmosphere can be expanded and extended from the individual to his family, from the family to the community, and eventually to the whole world.” - HH The Dalai Lama

The Greatest Peace-Worker I Ever Met

“Peace in Oneself... Peace In The World” - Thich Nhat Hanh

In the late 1980s, I began following the teachings of Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh (known as Thay, or Teacher, by his students). I was immediately drawn in by his humility, compassion, and innate gentle approach.

In the spring of 1993, I traveled to California to attend a five-day retreat with Thay, which was held at a Jewish boys’ camp in a beautiful natural setting in the hills near Sacramento.

I arrived early and helped move furnishings into the small hut that would be Thay’s residence during the retreat. Shortly thereafter, Thay arrived with his small entourage of monks and nuns, including his long-time colleague Sister Chân Không.

During the retreat, about 400 attendees practiced sitting and walking meditation and shared meals in silence. Both Thay and Sister Chân Không gave teachings in the camp’s modest hall.

On the second-to-last day, I had the opportunity to meet Thay personally and to share ‘hugging meditation’ with him — a gentle, mindful way of sharing a hug, which Thay had developed for his Western students.

Maintaining Peace Within, For The Benefit Of All

I recall being amazed at Thay’s ability to so profoundly embody peace within himself — even after having witnessed the atrocities of war in his home country of Vietnam. He had seen the violent deaths of his fellow monks and nuns, the slaughter of children and elderly people, and the charred human remains after a napalm bombing. But he was still able to walk through the world, radiating true peace, true compassion, and true love.

Throughout his life, Thay’s approach to dealing with war and violence was rooted in the practice of looking deeply within oneself to cultivate a state of calm, grounded awareness.

Thay likened the world to a small boat in a vast sea, where panic can lead to disaster. “However,” he would say, “if even one person can maintain their composure, they can guide others to safety,” poignantly illustrating the necessity of individual mindfulness in guiding our society out of its collective fear and uncertainty.

With his deep understanding and personal experience, Thay showed us how inner peace ripples out into the world. As his calm and friendly smiles warmed the hearts of everyone around him, ripples of peace spread through each of us and out into the entire world. →



Thich Nhat Hanh at the California retreat in 1993 (above)

Israelis And Palestinians, Finding Peace Together

In 2003, Thay and his mindfulness community hosted a group of Israelis and Palestinians in a retreat at Plum Village, to provide them with a peaceful space in which to discuss ways in which both sides could help foster peaceful coexistence.

Thay helped the participants to find the peace within their own hearts. The real peace process comes from ourselves first and then ripples out into the larger community.

He cautioned that “We should not continue to blame ‘the other side’ for not practicing peace. We have to practice peace ourselves, in order to help the other side to make peace.”

After the seeds of peace began to sprout within each of the Palestinians and Israelis, Thay recommended that they could now proceed to organize a ‘people’s peace conference’ where peace activists from the international community could come, listen, and provide encouragement as they worked through the process of finding peace with one another.

From his own experience, Thay advised the participants not to wait for either of their governments to initiate a peace process. Instead, he invited them to take the initiative by formulating a grassroots peace process, collectively and cooperatively.

Thay showed the participants that if they could listen mindfully to one another with all their compassion, they would have the opportunity to experience true understanding, which would help open their hearts, thereby allowing them to respond from a place of loving-kindness.

When we are able to see both ‘sides’ as victims of suffering, the nectar of compassion can flow in our hearts, and suffering can be reduced or even eliminated.

When we suffer less, Thay explained, we are much more likely to help ‘our enemies’ to suffer less. Any peace agreement made with this kind of mutual compassionate understanding will undoubtedly be recognized as a real and lasting solution.

“Thich Nhat Hanh is like a cross between a cloud, a snail, and a piece of heavy machinery.” - Roshi Richard Baker, American Soto Zen Master

Silence Is Not Always A Virtue

Perhaps the greatest downfall in our society is that the vast majority of human beings are often unwilling to speak up and take action against bigotry, oppression, and violence initiated against their fellow brothers and sisters.

This phenomenon was encapsulated by Martin Luther King, Jr., when he said: “In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.”

My dear friend Mustafa, who was born in Senegal, studied in Paris during his youth. One day he sat down to have a cup of coffee at a Parisian sidewalk cafe, when he began receiving abusive slurs regarding his ethnicity from a group of young men at an adjacent table.

When Mustafa asked them why they were speaking to him in this way, they attacked him. He regained consciousness two days later in a hospital. His jaw had been seriously fractured, and he had many other injuries. The police report noted that there were 29 other people in the cafe who had witnessed the attack, but none of them had intervened on his behalf.

“The world will not be destroyed by those who do evil, but by those who watch them without doing anything.” — Albert Einstein

Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel wrote, “The opposite of love is not hate, it’s indifference.” We have a moral responsibility to speak up and act in an appropriate and compassionate way in the face of suffering and injustice.

Standing Against Violence, Not Against Human Beings

Thay taught us to stand up and speak out against harmful behaviors while maintaining love and compassion toward the human beings who perpetrate them.

Thay warned that generating, cultivating, and directing anger toward our fellow human beings — even those whose evil, violent, and oppressive actions cause horrific suffering — only adds to, amplifies, and perpetuates the energy of hatred in the world. Instead, we must endeavor to help all beings who are suffering; even (and sometimes especially) those who behave in harmful ways.

Hatred is like an illness that infects the hearts of human beings. A doctor can eliminate an illness by killing her patient, but this is obviously not the goal. The goal of the doctor is to heal the patient by curing the disease.

In 1967, MLK Jr. quoted Thay in his speech, Beyond Vietnam: “Men are not our enemy. Our enemy is hatred, discrimination, fanaticism, and violence.”

Decades later, in his essay Man Is Not Our Enemy, Thay wrote: “I used to say our enemy is ambition, hatred, discrimination, and violence. But for the past twenty years or more, I have no longer wanted to call these negative mental formations ‘enemies’ which need to be destroyed. I have seen that they



Thich Nhat Hanh leading a walking meditation (above).

can be transformed into positive energies, such as understanding and love, just like a gardener can transform rubbish into green manure which can be used to grow flowers and vegetables.”

Toward the end of the essay, Thay concluded:

“I no longer see anyone as my enemy, and in my heart is a feeling of lightness and immense space. I do not even feel hatred towards people who have made me or my people suffer, because I know how to look at them with the eyes of understanding and love. You may ask: ‘Then are you going to give that band of mad, cruel, fanatical thieves and murderers freedom to continue to destroy and make misery without doing anything to stop them?’ No! We have to do everything we can to stop them! We cannot allow them to continue to kill, plunder, oppress, and destroy. But our actions will never be motivated by hatred. We have to stop them, not allowing them to cause misery. If necessary we can bind them, put them in prison, but this action has to be directed by our bodhisattva’s heart. And while we act like this, we continue to maintain our loving-kindness, wanting them to be able to have a chance to wake up and change.”

The Futility Of The Blame Game

Thay used to say: when lettuce doesn’t grow well, you don’t blame the lettuce. Instead, you try to determine the reasons why it’s not growing. It may need fertilizer, more water, less sun, but you never blame the lettuce!

Yet when we have problems with friends, family, neighbors, or ‘enemies,’ we have a tendency to blame the other person. But just like with the lettuce, if we know how to take care of them, they will grow well. Pointing fingers has no positive effect, nor does trying to persuade the ‘other’ using reason and argument. “That,” said Thay, “is my experience.”

No blame... no reasoning... no argument... just understanding. If you understand, and you show your understanding in a compassionate and respectful way, you open the situation to the power of love. Then the situation will change.

Blame, on the other hand, sows the seeds of defensiveness and resentment, which can erode trust and damage relationships. When people feel blamed, they are less likely to be open and honest, leading to a breakdown in communication and collaboration. →

Us Versus Them: The Psychology Of Conflict

In a wide variety of conflict situations, humans have a tendency to ‘take sides’ – a trait which has been found to be deeply rooted in psychological and social mechanisms.

For instance, cognitive dissonance is the feeling of discomfort that arises when people encounter ideas or information that contradict their currently-held belief systems. As such, people will often unconsciously align themselves with one side of a conflict or another in order to avoid this discomfort.

While uncomfortable, allowing ourselves to experience cognitive dissonance with mindfulness and equanimity can lead to self-reflection and personal growth. By sitting with ideas that contradict our own, we have the opportunity to re-evaluate our belief systems and make meaningful changes to achieve greater consistency and harmony in our thoughts and actions.

Another psychological mechanism that leads people to take sides in conflicts is called social identity theory. Individuals derive a large part of their self-concept from being members of particular social groups. When a conflict arises, individuals are inclined to identify with ‘their’ group. In this way, humans have a tendency to categorize those they identify with as ‘us,’ and those they are at odds with as ‘them.’ Group membership provides individuals with a sense of camaraderie, security, and stability, especially in uncertain or ambiguous situations.

Humans are social animals, so it is not surprising that we are often influenced by the opinions and attitudes of those around us, which can lead to biases and predispositions towards taking sides in conflicts.

This is particularly evident in regard to media (and especially social media). Despite the self-evident fact that information (and even videos!) disseminated through these sources may be altered, fabricated, or presented out-of-context, many humans blindly believe whatever they are fed through these sources.

But let us not judge ourselves harshly, for these tendencies are part of human nature. When everyone around us believes the same thing – especially when people express anger toward those who don’t believe it – it becomes very difficult to resist acquiescing to the social pressure and accepting the belief as our own.

It is therefore natural to slip into mob-mentality and ‘take sides,’ whether between siblings, political parties, religious affiliations, or countries. This

tendency to take sides leads us to act in unkind ways, ranging from shrugs and eye-rolls to out-and-out bloody violence.

And yet, while we all have inclinations toward division and one-sidedness, the human psyche contains multitudes. Humans around the world have developed systems of unity as well. Ubuntu, for example, is a beautiful African cultural concept that refers to acting in ways that directly benefit the community. It is the belief in a universal, compassionate bond of sharing that connects all of humanity.

It All Comes Back To Us

For 17 years, Tibetan monk Ribur Rinpoche was imprisoned by the Chinese occupying forces in Tibet. He was interrogated, tortured, and humiliated. But despite being treated so abominably, Rinpoche managed to retain, and even deepen, his sense of compassion, peace, and loving-kindness.

By enduring such horrors during his imprisonment, Rinpoche found that he could more deeply empathize with the suffering of others. He even felt profound empathy and compassion for those who were abusing him, as he saw, in their eyes and in their actions, the hellish state of delusion and ignorance in which they lived.

Rinpoche’s ability to remain calm, composed, and compassionate, even in the face of imminent danger and death, is an inspiring demonstration of true inner strength.

After being freed from his captivity, Rinpoche explained:

“All goodness and happiness arises from wishing for others to be happy.

“Everything that runs smoothly and well in our lives comes from cherishing others.

“When we cherish others, we are generous and we don’t get angry with others — we practice patience, morality, and non-harming.

“It is entirely up to us. If we don’t want to suffer, we have to cherish others.”

It all comes back to us. We must love ourselves and others, despite the obstacles and roadblocks that our minds and societies may place in our way.

Once the power of love inhabits the deepest recesses of our hearts and minds, we radiate nourishing ripples of loving-kindness out into the world, and beyond. ●

A Peaceful Poem

I wrote this poem for The Peace Issue.
I hope it speaks to you.

Words by K.C. Nesbitt

Elements of Peace

peace is the little universe
that breathes within living beings
cell membranes—electrical impulses
that regulate heart rate
countless permutations—proteins shapeshift
to project perceiving senses
energy that manifests and unfolds
into everyday existence

peace is feeling warmth
holding hands and feet in unison
despite the lost ones, angered ones,
ones who harm for greed and forsake their humanity

peace is a flowing essence of intention
bells and incantations—sounds and silence
listened to, even alongside plumes
of deconstructed forms

peace is stillness and action
planting flowers in softened soil, singing
and bearing witness to the droughts and rain
as their unfurling faces
burst through cultivated spaces
declaring their presence
and embodying persistence

peace is a springboard
of woven red petals and leaves ●

K.C. Nesbitt is a graduate of Meditation University’s MTT-200 program. Her poetry book “A Way Through: poems of nonlinear heartbreak and healing” is available on Amazon and Barnes & Noble in paperback and eBook formats.

Peace Begins At Home

7

Tips For Cultivating
Harmonious Relationships

During Meditation Magazine’s Peace Summit, Sarah Ezrin (author of *The Yoga Of Parenting*), spoke with Nhi Nhi Le (spiritual teacher at Meditation University) about cultivating peaceful relationships with our families and friends. Here are my seven top takeaways from that conversation.

Words by Jovanna Benavente



1

Sleep Your Way To Peace

The sage influencers of Instagram and TikTok often advise new parents: wake up before your kids, to do the things you want/need to do.

Frustrated at the lack of “me time” in your day-to-day life? Just sacrifice more of the poor-quality, limited and interrupted sleep that you are already getting!

That’s a no from me, personally. I tried it. The extra exhaustion did not help me with my goals of being a kind and loving parent, partner, or person in general.

I harbored so much guilt, wondering: why can’t I be one of those parents who gets 5-6 hours of broken sleep, and still treats everyone around them with love, kindness and compassion?

So when Sarah Ezrin, the author of *The Yoga Of Parenting* (the only parenting book that I currently have on my bedside table), remarked during the Peace Summit that, like Yoga Nidra, “sleep is meditation too,” it felt like a lightbulb moment.

It’s amazing what such a simple shift

of perspective can do. Sarah’s honesty gave me the permission I needed to shake myself out of the mom-guilt haze. When we don’t get enough sleep, it is harder for us to treat the people around us with the kindness and love that they deserve.

If you function well with little sleep, and you have morning practices, that’s great! I’m proud (and honestly a little jealous) of you. But if your body and mind are yearning for the extra rest, don’t be afraid to sleep in every so often. Your loved ones will be happier for it. →

ILLUSTRATIONS: FREEPIK



2 Check In To Increase Understanding

In the spring of 2024, Nhi Nhi Le invited us to visit her home in the mountains south of Barcelona. I was nervous to see how our two-year-old daughter Sky would behave after a long day of travel, and how Nhi, and her partner Julian, would react if Sky threw a tantrum or had a meltdown.

From our AirBnB near Barceloneta Beach, Kevin and I walked to Estació de França with Sky in the stroller. We rode the train across the city, disembarked in a small mountain village, and took a taxi up a winding road into the beautiful mountains. As Sky grew dizzier and crankier with every switchback, and my car-sickness neared a point-of-no-return, we stopped on a small dirt road outside of Nhi's house.

When the gate swung open, Sky's expression shifted from cranky and impatient to relaxed and excited. The moment Nhi walked out and said hello, Sky did something she had never done with a stranger before: she ran up and hugged Nhi around the knees, like an old friend who'd been away for too long.

Nhi and Julian's home radiates the peace that they have cultivated within themselves. Witnessing them preparing dinner together was a breath of fresh air. They showed up in every moment as teammates. They checked in with one another to see if they could help each other throughout the evening. They always spoke highly of each other. I simply couldn't imagine them being anything other than equanimous and in tune with one another.

But in her frank and vulnerable conversation at The Peace Summit, Nhi shared that neither she nor Julian are immune from tension and conflict.

"There have been so many times that my partner has come home, and he's not feeling his best, and we really feel the energy.

"It's like: you're peaceful the whole day, and then boom, your partner comes home, or your kids throw a tantrum, and you're like, whoa, okay, this is alarming.

"But what's so important, I find, is to not take things personally. Because once you make it about you, and the lower mind starts to pick a fight, that's when things start spiraling."

The key, Nhi continued, is to try to understand how the other person is feeling; to ask, "How are you?" and to actually, truly, deeply, listen.

"Communication is such an important aspect of a peaceful and harmonious relationship, because, at the end of the day, we're not mind readers. Perhaps the biggest medicine that we can provide for one another is just spaciousness, and the capacity to just be there, and to listen, and

to truly hold space."

I have observed this many times in my own life as well. When Sky throws a tantrum and flings her toys across the room, or even tries to hit someone, there are two paths to take. I can raise my voice in harsh, stern, or angry tones... or I can look her in the eyes and calmly ask, "Are you feeling angry right now? Would you like a hug?" and then proceed to have a peaceful, age-appropriate conversation about what is and isn't OK when it comes to expressing emotions like anger.

I have done both. It is amazing what happens when you are able to stay equanimous even in heightened moments, and just check in with your child instead of commanding or yelling. Gauge where the child is emotionally, get to the root, and move back into peace and love.



3 Create Connection Through Ceremony

As a householder, it's easy to get lost in the tasks of everyday life and become disconnected from yourSelf and your loved ones.

One way to ensure that you and your loved ones have the opportunity to be present with one another on a regular basis is to create "ceremony" in your life.

"Something that I love to do with my partner is creating a kind of a ceremonial space," Nhi explained at The Peace Summit. "A space where you can truly just be there with one another without any distractions. Perhaps sharing about the week, sharing about the things we're grateful for, sharing about what's been coming up for us in our own personal journey, sharing about what we've learned recently and perhaps things that we can apply to our life. Talking about our dreams and our goals, and really doing that check-in, is so, so important from time to time."

Ceremony can look different for everyone, but it doesn't have to be complicated or fancy. Lighting a candle or some incense at the same time each week, and considering those moments to be sacred space and sacred time for being deeply present with your loved ones, can help create a sense of ritual, connection, and communication.

"Communication is such an important aspect of having a peaceful and harmonious relationship," Nhi continued, "We're not mind readers. We're not here to fix each other. Perhaps the biggest medicine that we can provide for one another is just spaciousness, and the capacity to just be there, and to listen, and to truly hold space."

4 Engage With Electronics Mindfully & Inclusively

I remember the first time I was phubbed — I was eighteen years old, at a restaurant with three of my closest friends. Two of my friends were on their phones for literally the entire lunch, while my other friend and I shared looks that said: "Is this really how we're going to spend our time together?" I remember feeling very hurt and disrespected.

This phenomenon — ignoring the people around you while paying attention to your phone — is so common today that a new word has been added to the English language (and even the Cambridge Dictionary) to describe it. It's called "phubbing."

I have to admit, it is easy to fall into the trap of mindless scrolling. In 2014, Kevin and I took a road trip from Miami to California. When Kevin was driving us across the beautiful expanses of Utah, and I was absentmindedly scrolling on my phone, Kevin gently inquired what I was doing. When I shared that I was "just scrolling," he encouraged me to ask myself, "Why?" Why was I distracting myself from the awe-inspiring views of the open road, in order to scroll mindlessly on my phone? Kevin shared that he felt sad to feel alone, and to miss those beautiful moments of togetherness, while I was sitting right next to him.

In her conversation at The Peace Summit, Nhi recalled a young couple at a restaurant, both partners engrossed in their phones, scrolling away, hardly making eye contact. Sometimes they would stop scrolling for a moment to take photos of their food.

"With me and my partner," Nhi continued, "when we're with each other, we're really with each other. We're not sitting next to each other and scrolling on our phones. If we [need to use electronics], then we communicate that. We're like, 'Hey my love, just letting you know that I'm on my phone because I'm just checking this thing out,' so your partner actually knows. If not, then

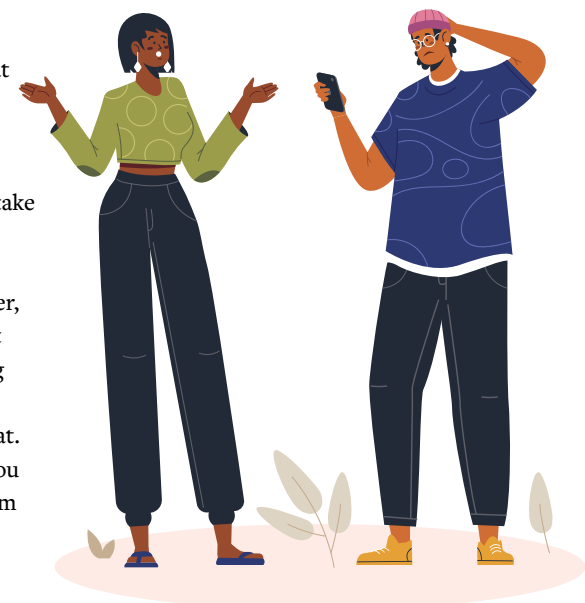
they're probably wondering, 'What are you doing when I'm actually here? I want to connect with you.'"

When we engage with screens mindfully, and inclusively, we can communicate to the people around us: I'm present, I'm here. I care about being here, with you, in this precious moment.

"P.S.," Sarah added, "This is the advice for parents when you're using screens around your children. Especially for little children. As they're looking up and they're seeing the back of the phone, they don't know who we're texting. They don't know what we're doing. There is a way that you can have these conversations and explain, 'Oh, I'm texting Dada! I'm sending him a message! We have to tell him we're going to be a few minutes late. Is there anything you want to add in?' There is this participatory element to it."

Recently I've been practicing this in my own life as well. When I'm shopping for groceries on my phone, I say to Sky, "I'm ordering apples and bananas from the grocery store! What other yummy foods should we get?"

Participation and inclusivity are truly the key to engaging with electronics without missing the beautiful moments of connection with the people around us. →



5

Making Peace With Our Parents

I was sixteen years old when I realized my parents were not just my parents, but complicated human beings who are capable of making big mistakes.

I had lived a very sheltered life until that age, when my parents lost literally everything they'd spent their adult lives building together. It was then that the emotional sh*t hit the fan and I realized: these are not all-knowing beings capable of solving every problem. These are just people who happen to be my parents, and right now they are dealing with a situation that they don't know how to accept or navigate.

I know my parents did their best, and I'm very grateful for them. The complexities and hardships of parenthood

were so much greater than I ever imagined. Only when I became a parent myself was I truly able to cultivate enough compassion to make amends with my parents and share an unconditional connection with the human beings that raised me.

As we grow older, our relationships with our parents evolve. Sometimes we find ourselves developing new spiritual wisdom and perspectives of our own, which can contrast with the wisdom and perspectives within the hearts and minds of our parents.

"Being able to emanate your loving energy, and your awareness, and your lessons, and your wisdom," Nhi said, "not

forcing it, but just being your authentic self... is just so healing for the entire family."

"We're not always going to see eye to eye with everybody, especially with our parents a lot of the time, because they come from a different generation."

"I used to get so frustrated by how much I wished they could just understand... but now, in the past few years, I realized the best thing that I can personally do, as a daughter, is just to love them. No matter how discomforting some of their views may be, and the words that come out of their mouth, I just see their inner child. I see that there's a part of them that just wants to be heard, that wants to be loved, that wants to be seen."



6

Saying "I'm Sorry" As A Spiritual Practice

You don't need to be a perfect saint or Buddha to be a good partner or parent. Nobody is perfect. No relationship will ever be free from conflict. Oftentimes, my own practice has been in restoring the peace after a difficult moment where I was responsible for creating disharmony.

When Kevin and I began our relationship back in 2012, I did not know how to apologize. It was not something I ever saw growing up, and it was not something I was taught to ever do in any real way aside from, "Say sorry for hitting your brother!" But let's face it, little sisters are never truly sorry for hitting their big brothers.

I remember telling Kevin after a moment of unkindness, "I know I should apologize, but I feel choked by the words. The shame is so overwhelming that my vocal cords shut down."

When I know I have to say I'm sorry, I feel like that means I'm a bad person, who is not deserving of love.

But that is certainly not true. To say "I'm sorry" is an act of humility, strength, and love.

According to world-renowned relationship therapist John Gottman, when children witness their parents or grandparents fighting in front of them, the fighting pair should also "repair" the conflict in front of the family unit. It is essential for children to see that while loved ones may fight, they "repair" the conflict by taking responsibility and apologizing for hurtful words and behaviors.

It is important for children to witness the art of gracefully accepting an apology. By doing so, we demonstrate that our loved ones are more than their problematic behavior... rather than equating them with it.

Whether you are apologizing to a child, or your romantic partner, or even an enemy... know that doing so is an act of love that will only strengthen your spirit and your connections with the people around you.

During the Peace Begins At Home panel at The Peace Summit, Bex, a student in Meditation University's MTT-200 program, reflected upon a pattern that she struggles with, as a single mother of three children "who are all being oppressed on a daily basis by our childist school system and who all have massive levels of anxiety."

"I'm very good at staying calm and patient," Bex continued, "but now and again, my inner resources are so depleted that I snap. We just had a cuddle, some tears, apologies and healing. Maybe sometimes there's emotional healing that can only happen through those kinds of eruptions."

"What I'm hearing from this comment," Sarah replied, "is there is depletion on every single level. You're dealing with the school system, which is exhausting. The kids are dealing with the school system and all of that oppression that's happening there. They're exhausted. Everybody's exhausted and anxious. You know what? Our resources are depleted, and it is okay. We are going to snap. But there was something at the end here: they had a cuddle, some tears, apologies, and healing. That's the practice. That's where we are learning to be in community, and to be together, and to relationally reconnect. That's where the juice is really going to come from the relationship."



7

Peaceful Home = Peaceful World

I hope that this article can help you to cultivate more peace in your own relationships.

When we foster peace in our homes, our loved ones bring that peace into the world around them, and into their own homes as well.

Peaceful people make people peaceful, and peace ripples out to every corner of the Universe.

Can you imagine how different the world would be if we all understood that peace in the world begins in the home, with the ordinary interactions we have every day with our partners and children?

The potential for peace is in every moment, every interaction. All we have to do is take responsibility for how we show up in the world. ●

Beneath The Narratives, Our Shared Humanity

It's easy to get caught up in narratives of victimhood and enmity. In this article, Tamar shows us the way out, by diving beneath the narratives to discover our shared humanity.

Words by Tamar Ellerton

"We all want peace and we all want love. I think about a positive vision, a faith we can all share, that we might build a future together in hope. A future where we can be safe with each other. But... It's not that easy or simple. Because people are still hurting and they are still angry. We can't ignore that, or pretend it will go away. Somehow, we have to hold it all in our hearts at the same time. We have to acknowledge the weight of the pain and loss, but open up our eyes and allow ourselves to hope, and maybe forgive and love again. We have to give today's children a chance to inherit a future filled with peace."

– King Ezran in Netflix's *The Dragon Prince*

We all want peace and we all want love: a wish so simple, yet so difficult to achieve.

This desire, a yearning deep and essential to our being, drives so much of what we do, with or without our knowing. In this holding of love and peace, we can come together in unity upholding these ideals, or in the fear and hurt of pain and loss react and become part of the cycle of violence ourselves.

Humanity is hurting. There has been so much violence for so long that to even try to figure out where it started would be impossible. Once the cycle starts, the

wheel turns. Violence gets passed on, leaving suffering in its wake, as horrific as it is tragic. After millennia of conflicts, wars, and abuses of different kinds, no one is untouched; even those of us born into a corner of the world that is 'safe.' The shadows and ripples of fear and violence affect us all.

Yet there is a shared essence of humanity that, no matter what we have faced and how twisted things become, stays true. Certain values and traits are universal. Focusing on our shared human values can help us understand each other, heal our pains, and forgive our enemies, so that maybe, just maybe, we can start to make fewer weapons instead of more.

Researchers such as those at The Common Cause Foundation work to look at what is below the surface – values that are cross-cultural – and try to understand what makes us similar, rather than what makes us different.

All humans value safety and security. We all want to live free and with respect. We all hope to achieve and create something in this world. We all have a need to belong. Mapped on top of all of our shared humanity, we have our individual stories, each with our own traditions, politics, religions, lands that we love, cultures, beliefs, and languages.

In the narratives that spread around social media, our conversations, and our

news, we tend to focus on the differences, the stories that tell us that we are separate, and the details of who is 'right and wrong.' Often in the process, we forget the humanity that is underneath it all... the part beneath the narrative.

When we forget our shared humanity, it is easy to hate, to fall into the trap of lashing out from our own hurt, not seeing that those who hurt are hurt themselves. Violence can spread like wildfire, like a burning tree that burns the next.

In order to address violence, sometimes we need to come with defense and protection. To stand up and yell "STOP!" so that violence does not spread. It is in the 'how' – the way we engage – that determines whether our actions become part of the cycle of violence or not. To hold accountability without becoming a part of the violence is a challenge.

The process of stopping violence is uncomfortable. To stand up for ourselves and others, to uncover the roots of our traumas and release them, is hard to bear. It's difficult even to figure out where to start. It requires us to feel our own pain and sit with it, and instead of pointing fingers of shame and blame, work to understand and empathize with those who we consider 'the enemy' or 'the problem,' so that we can prevent the cycle from continuing. If we come at a conflict with hate, we will likely exacerbate, rather than

soothe, the situation. This requires us to work to understand each other.

Different humans have different ways of interacting with the cycle of violence. Either we repeat the violence ourselves, we identify with being attacked, or we try to stop the situation and the attacks from happening. In *The Drama Triangle*, psychologist Stephen Karpman describes these archetypes as The Perpetrator, The Victim, and The Rescuer.

In this understanding of conflict, the three actors all operate within the paradigm of guilt or shame, pointing fingers instead of getting to the roots of the problems that need to be addressed. Even The Rescuers are placing blame on The Perpetrators and taking away the power of The Victims to address their own needs. These roles tend to shift, and people move from role to role and back, or hold multiple corners of *The Drama Triangle* at the same time.

Someone hurt attacks back and hurts someone else, giving reason to the family of that new victim to use violence next.

In the name of love, peace, justice, and protection, The Victim or The Rescuer can become the next Perpetrator. But there has to be another way.

Instead of falling into roles and identifying as part of this cycle, we can also choose to witness each other in our pain and our humanity, seeing the values we all hold, asking where and why did violence come in, so that we can find compassion.

Compassion doesn't come from forgiving people who have done hurtful things, but from understanding that we could have done the same if we had lived their lives. Every person ends up where they are because of a plethora of circumstances. From education and parenting, to abuse or trauma, nurture, care, cultural paradigms and religious beliefs; so many things shape us. If you were born in someone else's shoes, you would probably walk their path too.

And who are the perpetrators and the victims anyway? They are us. Humans. They are mothers, fathers, sisters,

brothers, daughters, and sons. Each with a unique story that only they know, each with the same essence of life that desires love and peace.

We cry, we laugh, we sing, we dance, we fall in love, we get sick, we heal, we hurt, we play. We move and we create, think, act, attack and embrace. We have choice and we have trauma.

Each of us holds a part of the collective story, of what has happened to us, to our ancestors, or our neighbors, and how we act moving forward, how we show up in each moment.

While there have been moments of peace throughout the millennia, our modern era is not the first to go through bouts of war. If we zoom out and look across times and cultures, our species has been involved in so many rounds of violence that you might give up hope that we can ever have a peaceful world. But I don't want to give up hope, because if I do, if we all do, then we surrender to a story that does not end well. Not for ourselves, for our children, or the future generations.

As we try to navigate all the hate and hurt in our world, can we remember the interconnectedness that binds us all together? The love and peace we all desire? Can we cultivate a deep sense of empathy and understanding for the myriad stories that comprise the human experience, and dive beneath the narrative to see our shared humanity?

We as individuals might not be able to change the trajectory of the massive conflicts we see in the world today... but let us still ask ourselves: what story do we want to tell along the way? For myself, I want to be a part of the story that stands for peace. I want to tell the story of courage and willingness to heal, not just for ourselves, but for all of humanity, in our shared experience as human beings on Planet Earth. Whether we like it or not, we are all in this together.

As Rumi said, "Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing, there is a field. I'll meet you there." ●



ILLUSTRATION: FREEPIK

Transcending Propaganda

Here are 5 clues to help you identify propaganda, and 4 tips to help you find the truth.

Propaganda [prop•a•gan•da]

noun

information, ideas, opinions, or images that give one part of an argument, which are broadcast, published, etc. in order to influence people's opinions*

How to Identify Propaganda

1

One-Sided Narratives

While some conflicts are clear-cut cases of one-sided aggression (like the Holocaust, the Cambodian Genocide, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the ongoing Yazidi Genocide), most conflicts include victims and perpetrators on both sides.

Be wary of narratives that present a single perspective without acknowledging other viewpoints. Balanced reporting tends to include multiple perspectives.

2

Humanizing One Side and Dehumanizing the Other

Propaganda often involves portraying one side as entirely good and the other as evil or subhuman. Be aware of this tactic, and seek more balanced sources of information.

3

Selective Reporting

Look out for media that only highlights one side's contributions or victimhood while ignoring the actions and suffering of others. Comprehensive coverage includes all sides of a conflict.

4

Omission of Key Details

Propaganda often omits facts and context that might inconveniently justify the behavior of those deemed "the enemy." Well-rounded sources include contextual details.

5

Emotional Manipulation

Be cautious of emotionally-charged reporting designed to provoke strong emotions like fear, anger, or hatred. Look out for dismissive eye-rolls, raised voices, derisive laughter, or fearmongering, or insinuations that you should be upset or angry about what is being reported. Don't let propagandists tell you how to feel. Propaganda often uses these types of emotional tactics to influence opinions and actions.



3

Break out of your media bubble.

Many people are stuck in media bubbles (social, mainstream, and otherwise) where they only hear one side, or only believe one side. This causes people to become polarized, and radicalized toward both extremes. It causes people to form in-group and out-group, us vs them perspectives, which leads to anger, hatred, and violence.

Social media platforms compound the problem, as they are incentivized to show us things that we "like," to keep us on their platforms for longer. To fix this problem, spend more time reading & watching "the other side's" propaganda, with an open mind and an open heart.

Try to understand what people are saying, what they are thinking, and what they are feeling. Dig into primary sources, and try to find which points are true and false on both sides. When leaving comments, be respectful, and inquire from a place of genuine curiosity.

4

Approach your research with realistic assumptions and positive intentions.

Approach your study with the basic assumptions that (1) all humans are humans, (2) the vast majority of humans want to be happy and to live in peace, and (3) all groups contain outliers who take violent actions and disturb the peace.

Approach your study with the intention to be an agent of peace rather than a perpetuator of conflict, and you will find that your research will lead you on a path of peace, fulfillment, wisdom and understanding. ●

How To See The Truth

1

Explore a wide variety of sources.

There are two sides to every story. This fundamental truth is often obscured, as propaganda on both sides tends to portray conflicts as one-sided. To free your mind and see the bigger picture, it is important to earnestly explore a wide variety of sources, including historical documents, third-party accounts, and propaganda from both sides as well. Take all information with a grain of salt, noting potential biases in each source. Research with critical thinking and open-mindedness, to broaden your perspective and to learn something new.

2

Investigate with the intention to challenge your beliefs, rather than to confirm them.

When you encounter someone, or something, that challenges your belief system, pay attention. Instead of turning away, or dismissing people as "wrong" or "stupid" – first, notice how you feel.

You may feel disbelief, or even revulsion or disgust. You may automatically "scroll past it" and ignore the information, dismissing it, consciously or unconsciously, as "not worth my time."

These feelings are natural symptoms of "cognitive dissonance" – the discomfort that arises from holding two contradictory ideas at the same time. This discomfort is natural... but don't allow it to cause you to ignore challenging perspectives. Listening, with open-minded curiosity, to perspectives that challenge our own is often the place where we can grow the most. Feel the discomfort, brace yourself, and push through.

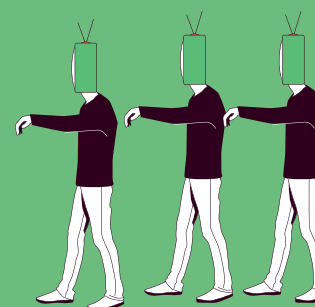


ILLUSTRATION: FREEPIK



Tips For The True Peace Activist

We all want peace, but well-meaning activists often act in ways that add fuel to the fires of war. Here are 12 tips from Thay (Thích Nhat Hanh) and other spiritual masters, for peace activists who truly want to help move our world toward lasting peace.

1

Cultivate inner peace

Anger begets anger, hate begets hate, calm begets calm and love begets love. We must embody peace in order to bring peace to the people around us. It is only from a place of peace within ourselves that we can begin to bring peace in the world around us.

“Any real peace process has to begin with ourselves... We have to practice peace to help the other side make peace.” – Thay

2

Remember who you are

Remember that we are all one Universe. To harm another is to harm oneself. This understanding automatically reduces our tendency to hate, to take sides, and to create dualities of us-vs-them.

“When we see the underlying oneness in everything, compassion will arise in our hearts.” – Amma

3

Seek truth, not propaganda

When we hear only one side of a story, we may feel anger or hatred toward a person or group of people. Mindful of the harmful effects of propaganda, we seek to understand all humans, on both “sides.” Instead of focusing on things that reinforce our beliefs and intensify our hatred, we seek out information that helps us understand “the other side,” to reduce our biases, to experience empathy and compassion for all beings, and to understand how we can move toward peace.

“To understand both sides in a conflict, and to see what to do and what not to do, we must withstand the influence of public opinion and propaganda.” – Thay

4

See with the eyes of compassion

Can you see the terrorist through his mother’s eyes

as she cradles her baby in her arms? Can you see the grief in his heart as he digs desperately to find her in the rubble of his childhood home? When you can see the heart of a human being, you can finally begin to understand why they do what they do. Only then can you see the path toward peace.

“To develop understanding, you have to practice looking at all living beings with the eyes of compassion. When you understand, you cannot help but love. And when you love, you naturally act in a way that can relieve the suffering of people.” – Thay

5

Listen with empathy

When we listen to the thoughts and feelings of others, we understand where they are coming from... and finally begin to heal.

“You listen deeply for only one purpose – to allow the other person to empty his or her heart. This is already an act of relieving

suffering. To stop any suffering, no matter how small, is a great action of peace.” – Thay

6

Speak with kindness

This tip was originally entitled “Militancy is misguided,” but I changed it to “Speak with kindness,” a kinder, gentler and more positive way of conveying the same idea. How do your emotions react when you read each of these phrases?

When I interviewed Tara Brach for our Powerful Women in Meditation issue, she told me that when she started out as an activist, her voice was filled with anger... but over time, she found that kindness was much more effective.

“There is no way to peace. Peace is the way.” – A. J. Muste

7

Fight hatred, not humans

We can attack and dismantle systems of violence and oppression, without directing anger or hatred toward our fellow conscious beings. When we attack our brothers and sisters, they become defensive and resist anything we say. This causes more fighting, and is counterproductive to creating peace.

“Our enemy is never another person; our enemy is the wrong perceptions and suffering within him, within her. When a doctor sees a person who is suffering, he tries to identify the sickness within the patient, to remove it. He does not try to kill his patient. The role of the doctor is not to kill people but to cure the illness within them.” – Thay

8

Practice nonviolence

Violence begets violence. Killing one “enemy” creates many more, as waves of grief, anger, hatred and rage spread through the hearts of his loved ones.

Some speakers at The Peace Summit (like Satish Kumar) argued for absolute nonviolence, while others expressed more moderate approaches.

Researchers Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan found that nonviolent movements were twice as successful as violent campaigns in achieving political goals, and countries where pure nonviolent resistance was used were 10x more likely to transition to democracies!

“Suffering, unhappiness, violence and war escalate when we are overcome with anger and try to punish and inflict suffering on the other side. We act this way because we believe that as a result we will suffer less, but of course this action only leads to the other side desiring revenge. This is the surest course of destruction.” – Thay

9

Use force heartfully

After The Peace Summit, Russian rebel leader Ilya

Ponomarev argued that targeted strikes against Putin may be needed in order to end the large-scale violence in Ukraine.

At a Q&A in 2011, a participant asked Thích Nhat Hanh whether violence is sometimes appropriate – for example, to stop Hitler. Thay replied:

“Nonviolent action is not a technique, it is a way. When you have understanding and compassion in your heart, everything you do will be nonviolent. Suppose someone is killing, and you arrest him. If you lock him up, and you do it because of understanding and compassion, then that is nonviolent action. If you don’t do anything, and you allow people to kill and to destroy, although you don’t do anything, that is also violence. Violence can be action or non-action. The outer appearance might be violent, but if you do it with a mind of understanding and compassion, it is not truly violence. Whether the action is violent or nonviolent, it depends on your heart.” – Thay

10

Build bridges, not bombs

In our interviews with Nonviolent Peaceforce, Huibert Oldenuis explained that the key to deep and lasting peace is to build “security with” – rather than “security from” – one another.

Instead of taking sides, build bridges. Understand both sides, and help them understand each other.

“We need people who can understand the suffering of all sides. If a number of people... could go to each side and understand their suffering, and communicate that to the other sides, that would be very helpful. We need links. We need communication.” – Thay

11

Seek reconciliation, not “victory”

“Victory creates hatred. Defeat creates suffering. The wise ones desire neither victory nor defeat.” – Buddha

Victory is a zero-sum game. One human’s win is the other’s loss. Instead, seek peace and reconciliation – a true and lasting victory for everyone involved.

Holistic social justice is restorative rather than punitive, effecting systemic change that resolves the underlying problem. Break the cycle of hatred and suffering by focusing on healing and transformation.

12

Don’t forget to smile

Peace work can be very heavy. To avoid burning out, we must find a way to enjoy the process. In some moments there is nothing but grief. In others, there is transcendent beauty. Do not hesitate to receive nourishment and strength from the moments of happiness amidst the suffering. Allow your soul to be restored by the smiles between the tears.

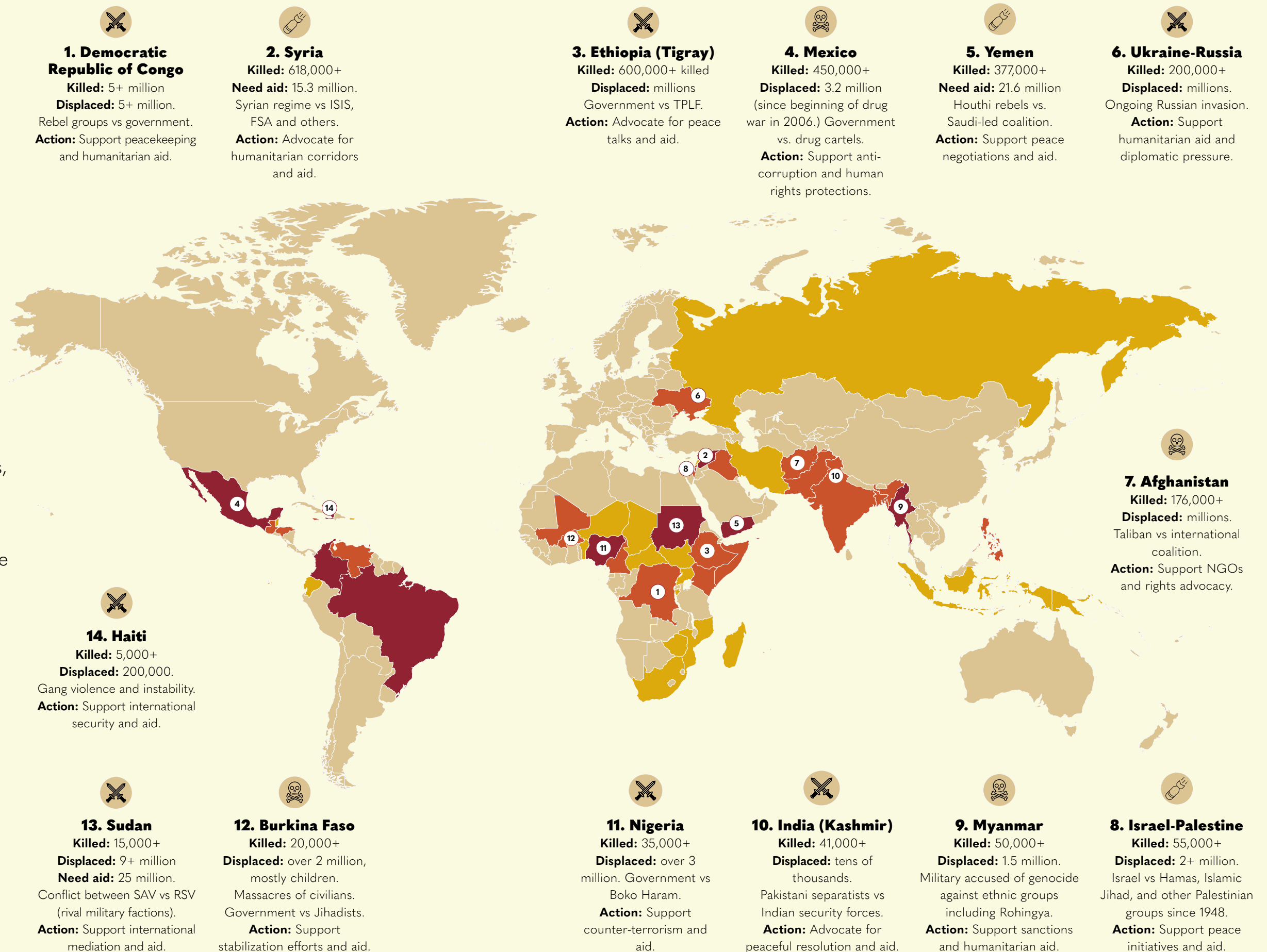
“Life is filled with suffering, but it is also filled with many wonders, like the blue sky, the sunshine, the eyes of a baby. To suffer is not enough. We must also be in touch with the wonders of life. If we are not happy, if we are not peaceful, we cannot share peace and happiness with others. If we are peaceful, if we are happy, we can smile and blossom like a flower, and everyone in our family, our entire society, will benefit from our peace.” – Thay. ●

Wide World Of War

As of June, 2024, the ACLED Conflict Index lists fifty countries experiencing elevated levels of violence due to ongoing conflicts, wars, and genocides. Here we highlight the conflicts with the highest loss of life. Things are changing every day. These are the most precise numbers we could find as of the date of publishing.

Right now, Israel & Palestine are getting all the media attention, so we wanted to focus on Congo, Syria, Myanmar, and others. We reached out to peace activists around the world, but the majority of interviewees ended up being in Israel-Palestine, Sudan and Ukraine. To bring balance, we will continue to reach out to peace activists around the world, and feature them on our Peace Talks podcast.

- Violence Level: Extreme
- Violence Level: High
- Violence Level: Turbulent
- ☒ Aerial bombardment
- ✖ Violence between combatants
- ☠ Violence targeting civilians



Peace in Africa

Africa is the second largest continent on Earth, and the birthplace of humankind. There are massive conflicts there that are often ignored by the global community. Millions of people need our help.

Africa. The second-largest continent on Planet Earth. From the rolling sand dunes of the Sahara, the largest desert on Earth... to the vast rainforests of the Congo... to the peak of Kilimanjaro, the highest freestanding mountain in the world, with epic views of the Serengeti and the endless grasslands and savannas of Tanzania, home to some of the most awe-inspiring animals on our planet... Africa is a land of legendary, almost otherworldly beauty.

And underneath its rugged facade, Africa hides some of the greatest earthly treasures the world has ever seen. Gold. Diamonds. Platinum. And so much more. But Africa's treasures have come at a cost, for they attracted European colonial powers, who came and conquered and drew lines on maps, pitting tribes of humans against each other, leaving psychological and geographic scars upon the continent that are still bleeding to this day.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, a brutal struggle for control over minerals has unleashed waves of violence. Armed groups terrorize the eastern provinces. Over 5 million people have died, with another 5 million displaced, in a conflict that seems to have no end.

In the Sahel region, spanning from Senegal to Chad, Jihadist groups leave trails of blood across multiple nations. Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger are ensnared in a relentless insurgency fueled by Islamist militants. This turmoil has spilled over borders, displacing over 5 million people and claiming thousands of lives. Villages burn, families scatter, and fields lie fallow, leaving

millions in need of humanitarian aid.

In Nigeria, the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast has killed tens of thousands and uprooted millions. The militant group's atrocities spill into neighboring Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, destabilizing the entire region. In the northwest, communal clashes compound the chaos, adding to the misery of a nation on edge.

Ethiopia, once a symbol of hope, is now a battlefield. The conflict in Tigray has spiraled into a humanitarian catastrophe, with reports of genocide, starvation, and sexual violence. Millions are displaced, and the specter of famine looms as aid struggles to reach those in need.

South Sudan, the world's newest nation, is mired in a vicious cycle of ethnic violence and political instability. The dream of independence has given way to a nightmare of war, displacing millions and leaving the country in ruins.

Across Africa, the sheer scale of these conflicts is staggering. Over 30 million humans are displaced, and countless lives are torn apart by violence and hunger. Africa's vast potential for peace, love, happiness and beauty is overshadowed by the constant struggle for survival. But amid the despair, we hear stories of hope, transcendence and reconciliation – a testament to the resilient spirit of Africa's humans in the face of relentless adversity.

At The Peace Summit, we spoke with activists in Sudan, South Sudan, and Uganda, who are working to bring people together, reduce violence, and help bring peace to the ancestral homeland of the human species. →

PHOTOS: ADOBE STOCK

This image: A priest gazes over monastery Debre Damo in Tigray, Ethiopia, where over 600,000 Tigrayan civilians were killed in the recent genocide. Below: Elephants cross the road in Tanzania. Right: Woman meditates in Lagos, Nigeria, where Boko Haram Jihadists have killed tens of thousands and displaced millions.



WOMAN: FPD IMAGES ON PEXELS. ELEPHANTS: NEIL & ZULMA SCOTT ON UNSPLASH. PRIEST: ADOBE STOCK

Peace In Sudan

Nic Pyatt, Head of Mission for Nonviolent Peaceforce in Sudan, joined us at The Peace Summit shortly after having been evacuated from Sudan due to rapidly deteriorating conditions on the ground.

But first, a little background...

In April 2019, Sudan experienced a major political upheaval when long-time President Omar al-Bashir was ousted from power after months of mass protests demanding democratic reforms. Al-Bashir, who ruled for 30 years, was widely condemned for his authoritarian regime and human rights abuses, including the Darfur genocide in the early 2000s, where his government and allied militias, including the Janjaweed, committed mass atrocities against non-Arab populations.

Following his ouster, a power-sharing agreement was established between the Sudanese military and civilian leaders, known as the Transitional Military Council (TMC) and the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC), respectively, with plans to transition to a civilian government by 2021. However, tensions persisted between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), led by a man called Hemedti. Hemedti, a ruthless and ambitious leader, gained power as the head of the RSF, which evolved from the Janjaweed militias.

The SAF, led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, had a different vision for Sudan's future, motivated by a desire to maintain control over the country's resources and power. In October 2021, al-Burhan led a military coup that disrupted the planned transition to civilian rule, sparking renewed conflict between the SAF and the RSF. This power struggle has severely undermined efforts to stabilize the country, which is quickly devolving into one of the worst humanitarian catastrophes in the world today.

What's happening in Sudan now?



Nic Pyatt: Sudan is now the biggest displacement crisis in the world," Nic explained.

"More than eight million people have been forced to leave their homes to find places of better safety. In addition to this, there are now approximately 12 million people who are severely food insecure. Sudan is on the doorstep of a famine.

All of the systems behind food production and supply chains have been destroyed. People have felt too unsafe to be able to plant or to harvest crops. So this is now a situation that will recur for years and years, even if a ceasefire was to magically happen tomorrow.

[Millions of Sudanese civilians] have had to run from their homes. They've lost their properties, they've lost their homes, some have lost family and friends in the process. There is very little humanitarian assistance because of challenges in getting supplies and personnel to those areas, because of security issues.

So for your average family, on a daily basis, they are having to make decisions such as: 'Do we feed ourselves? Or do we feed our children?'

"You have parents who are terrified that their teenagers are going to be mobilized into armed groups, and they may not see them again. You have parents who are trying to access medical help for their children and they're unable to do so. They're watching their children get increasingly sick and lose a lot of weight as the food situation continues.

"You also have many, many women who are on a daily basis absolutely terrified for their own safety because rape and sexual violence has been used as a weapon of war since the very beginning.

"The numbers can be incredibly overwhelming, but I think it's very important to really focus on what [this

crisis] means for individuals, because that's how you make it possible to find ways to support and protect civilians."

How does Nonviolent Peaceforce protect civilians and help reduce violence in Sudan?

Nic Pyatt: "It's very much going from the individual level, from the community level, and going upwards. Even if we're helping a few individuals to keep themselves safer, it provides hope and motivation for everybody.

"We do this in a number of ways. One thing that we're very proud of is that we've set up what we call Womens' Protection Teams (WPT). This is not rocket science, and it's not expensive, but it is incredibly effective. We coordinate groups of women within an IDP (Internally Displaced Persons) camp to come together, and we teach them about strategies to improve their safety.

"In one of these women's groups, they outlined that, for them, one of the riskiest situations was to go and collect firewood, or to go and collect water, because they're very vulnerable, and this was where they were frequently attacked and raped. They came together with the support of our team, and they came up with this strategy whereby whenever there are tasks like this to be done, they will organize themselves to go together, to make sure that individual women are not vulnerable to being attacked.

"This has been working incredibly well, and as of this year, the medical agencies working in that camp have said that the number of rapes has dropped dramatically. And that is even in the context of conflict, even in the context where we have more and more displaced persons coming into that camp every day. This is a wonderful example, because it's something that the community identified, and came up with solutions for themselves, and enacted →



themselves. We're there to support, but we're not there to necessarily 'do.'

"In other situations, we are there to 'do.' We are there to provide direct protection. And where there are areas that are particularly risky, that the community have said is a real area of concern for safety of them, our team goes there and provides a visible presence, and acts as a deterrent for individuals who would like to engage in violence.

"We also provide a lot of support for people trying to access humanitarian services. For example, a woman who is seeking specialist care after having been raped... we will work to ensure she receives the support that she needs. This is very hard at the moment because there is so little healthcare available.

"Another [strategy that we use] is shuttle dialogue, shuttle diplomacy, where we encourage groups to develop a conversation, develop trust, and understand each other, in order to reduce the violent manifestation of conflict. This takes a lot of time. It takes working at the pace of building trust – it's not an immediate quick fix. When communities have distrusted and disliked each other for many, many decades, it can be very hard to reverse. But it is something that we find is particularly effective, because you then have community leaders and community members who have been trained, and have relationships with the other community, to de-escalate when a conflict is arising.

"Another [activity] is where we work with duty bearers. Particularly with the local authorities and humanitarian actors, we do a lot of work to ensure that everybody within a community can safely access humanitarian assistance. So this can be supporting at a distribution to make sure the most vulnerable people can come to support them to actually come to the distribution site, be it physically or safely. Or it could be working with the humanitarian actors to ensure that they have a full overview of the population and that their assistance is going to be reaching everybody.

"Another activity that we do is training of armed actors, particularly

in international humanitarian law, in civilian protection and women in conflict. This is to increase their awareness and understanding of: What is a civilian? How should a civilian be treated in the context of war? This helps to improve the safety of the civilians that they engage with. So for example, it can improve the safety of people passing through a checkpoint as they're trying to get water or go to the market.

"The third broad category of the activities we engage in is advocacy. Particularly with Sudan at the moment, this has been a real point at which we've put in a lot of effort because there needs to be advocacy at all levels.

"Obviously, the push for a ceasefire is essential, that has to happen, and that requires advocacy at the highest of political levels.

"There's also advocacy we do on

particular incidents. My team, at the moment, is in North Darfur, and North Darfur is gearing up for a huge battle between the conflict parties, so there has been very targeted advocacy at the political level, with various governments, to try and de-escalate this before it happens.

"The other levels of advocacy we do as well is very much at the community level. We recognize that while a big ceasefire for the country is needed, that will take time. And actually, the context in Sudan demands more than a one-size-fits-all. It's a very different country from state to state. The dynamics, the people, they're all very different. And so as NP, what we look for is to find a patchwork of local civilian protection solutions or peace solutions that can then be scaled out. And if they scale far enough, with any luck, that will influence the wider national context as well."

"In one of these women's groups, they outlined that, for them, one of the riskiest situations was to go and collect firewood, or to go and collect water, because they're very vulnerable"



Peace In South Sudan

To understand what's happening in South Sudan, we spoke with Thiik Machol, a South Sudanese refugee and peace ambassador, currently living in Uganda, as well as Nonviolent Peaceforce representatives who have been bringing tribes together to resolve intercommunal conflicts.

What is the cause of the violence in South Sudan? South Sudan gained independence from Sudan on July 9, 2011, after decades of civil war that resulted in a 2005 peace agreement. But "the world's youngest nation" quickly descended into violence in December 2013, when a power struggle between President Salva Kiir and his former deputy, Riek Machar, ignited a brutal civil war. This conflict, driven by ethnic violence – primarily between Kiir's Dinka and Machar's Nuer ethnic groups – has resulted in widespread atrocities, including massacres, sexual violence, and the recruitment of child soldiers.

The ongoing violence has caused severe humanitarian crises, including

food insecurity, displacement, and the collapse of essential services. Millions of South Sudanese have been forced to flee their homes, seeking refuge in neighboring countries like Uganda, where they hope to find safety and basic necessities.



Thiik Machol, South Sudanese refugee and peace ambassador currently living in Uganda,

identified the cause of the violence as something that exists at the heart of the human condition: "The problem is all about tribalism, lack of trust, misunderstanding, and lack of communication. Because when you see your tribe as more important than the other tribe, then there is no trust. These are the main problems that we have in South Sudan currently."

Thiik told his story of fleeing from South Sudan into Uganda. Thiik arrived at the refugee camp with only a small bag and the clothes on his back, and found that there was no place for him to sleep.

Another South Sudanese refugee – a man from a rival tribe that had been in conflict with Thiik's – offered to share his bed. Thiik thought it was a trick, but he had no choice, so he accepted the man's offer.

"I spent a whole night without sleeping, thinking that the guy would wake up anytime to attack me or to kill me when I'm sleeping. Until in the morning when I woke up and found nothing happened to me. The following day, again, it repeated itself. I spent three sleepless nights, and on the fourth day, I gave up, saying, 'If this guy wants to kill me, let him kill me, because I'm now tired.' Three days without sleeping... let me just try to sleep. We shall all die [someday, anyway]. So, I slept. I woke up, and nothing happened to me. So I spent one week and a half sharing the bed with this guy."

When Thiik ran into his own tribemates at the refugee camp, "they were like, 'No, you can't stay with these people. Come and stay with us.' But because of the way I stayed with this guy, I was like, 'No, he's better than some of you guys,"



so I can't just leave him and go and stay with you people just because I found you now.' I stayed with this guy until we were relocated from the reception to the settlement.

"This made me believe that in every society, there are good people and bad people. The only message I can tell my own tribe mates and other people around the world is... give them the chance to prove themselves, and you will find good people. Most people are ready to open their hands and help us, but we don't give them a chance. So I gave this guy a chance, though I was scared. But the chance that I gave him created an opportunity for me to have a very strong relationship with this tribe, up to today. I work with them [to bring peace in South Sudan]."

How can we get to peace?
Thiik explained that to get to peace: "It is based on us, the young people of South Sudan, Sudan, and Africa at large. It is our responsibility to realize that we are just being used as a tool of fighting rather than being used as a tool of solution. And the only way we can be used as a tool of solution is to say no to guns, say no to violence. When we say no to guns, when we say no to violence, then we shall not be able to kill our own young people. We shall not be able to kill other people that will generate hatred towards us.

"When we say no to fighting, as young people, then these old people will go nowhere. Because to us, it is still very early in the morning. And to them, it is just in the evening. And they want to spoil our whole day.

"So to stop the conflict in Africa, is for us to realize that we are young people, and we have a long way to go, and we should not spoil our journey. We have a great journey that we should achieve together.

"I can't start a journey of building Africa-without-violence alone. I have to do it with others. I have to start with my neighbor. We cannot achieve peace within the region or within Africa when we don't love our neighbors. Let's put the love ahead of us. Let's reconcile. Let's forgive each other. If we learn how to forgive each

other, all the [violence] will go. So the only thing people should do in Sudan is just to forgive each other, and learn how to work together. Because if you learn how to work with your neighbor, then you will achieve a lot of things together, and you will develop the love among yourselves."

How Nonviolent Peaceforce helps reduce violence and resolve conflicts by bringing people together in South Sudan



Huibert Oldenhuis, Global Head of Programming for Nonviolent Peaceforce, explained NP's strategic

approach as follows: "We're challenging how people think about safety and security, from a nonviolent angle. That's where the philosophy of nonviolence comes to fruition. We're really thinking about interdependence.

"I'm not trying to be safe from you, by eliminating you, or isolating you, which is a traditional paradigm of false protection – I either eliminate you so that you're not a threat to me, or I isolate you or myself so that we are far from each other, and in that sense, I am safe from you. It's a limited strategy.

"What we're looking at, and working towards, is being safe with each other, by getting closer to you, even though you are scary, and maybe you've done terrible things to me. Getting to know you, and you getting to know me.

"And me going in there without carrying any weapons, and saying, 'I am no threat to you. I am the one who's disarming first.' When I come to you with a sense of vulnerability, then there may be a chance that I can be safe with you. Of course, that is not so easy to do, but that's ultimately the direction we're heading in when talking about the philosophy of nonviolence."

Huibert gave an example of how this type of community-based conflict resolution works, not as a quick fix, but to bring lasting peace over long periods of time:

"There were instances in South Sudan of violence that was going on for a long time.

Cyclical revenge killings, and so forth. "There have been quite a few examples of our teams bringing communities together. We do preparatory conversations with both sides. And when the sort of 'mediation event' takes place, we may be there. [But instead of taking a center-stage role at the mediation event], we're holding a visible presence in that space, and saying, 'Okay, we're not here to solve the issue. We're not here to lead the conversation, or do the actual mediation. We're here to hold the space.'

"But then there's an agreement – maybe – being formed between the two groups or the two communities. Then our role is, 'Okay, how can we follow that up? How can we monitor the implementation of that? How are we going to make sure that this holds?'

"I remember an incident in South Sudan... a month [after the peace agreement was made], there were two youths who killed someone and stole some cattle, and the whole conflict was back together.

"So over a period of nine months, there were maybe 20 times where we had to bring the communities back together before the cycle [of violence] kind of stopped.

"Sometimes, in very personal disputes, the cycle stops sooner, but in these intercommunal issues, it is quite time-intensive. Sometimes, years later, it may erupt again. So we're working, in that sense, from a perspective of safety and security, towards longer-term resolution."



Tiffany Easthom, Executive Director of Nonviolent Peaceforce, told a beautiful,

heartbreaking and inspiring story of her own experience in bringing people together in South Sudan:

"There had been an ongoing conflict between two groups of cattle keepers – young men who keep cattle. They are armed, and cattle are the representation of wealth. It's their ability to marry, that's how you pay dowry, it's how you're able to buy property, and so on. It's literally your representation of your social status, your bank account.

"When there is a large cohort of young men seeking to marry, they work to increase the size of their cattle herds. Now that they all have automatic weapons, it's far more dangerous than it used to be when people did those fights with sticks.

"There had been an ongoing fight between two groups around a city called Rumbek in South Sudan, and it had really shut down a part of the city. Because there had been so much fighting, kids were no longer going to school.

"The governor had gone in and told them to stop fighting. They would stop for a little bit and then start again.

"The Women's Protection Team (WPT) that we had been working with and supporting there said, 'We need to try [to stop the men from fighting].' So we loaded up in the back of these Land Cruisers... 13, 14, 15 of us in each of the Land Cruisers... and the women start singing.

"They were singing in their local language, in Dinka. I could hear my name, I could hear [the word] 'nonviolence' in their songs. I asked them what they were doing, and they said singing gave them courage, and so they were making up songs about preparing themselves. This is like their version of preparing to go to war; they were preparing to go to peace, and really building each other up.

"So we arrive, we all spill out into what looks to me like an abandoned village. I'm wondering, 'What the heck are we doing out here?' They say, 'Okay, let's go, we're going to sit down.' So we sit down under a large mango tree, which is what you do when it's very hot and you're seeking shade. There are a few people around—some older folks going around, some kids, dogs, chickens, the whole bit. We sit there for 10 minutes, 20 minutes, half an hour. I keep asking, 'Are you sure we're in the right place?' A very North American approach: 'Efficiency is key; we've got a schedule to keep.' They keep assuring me, 'Just be. Just be quiet. Just be calm.'

"Maybe 10 or 15 more minutes go by, and then we start to see some movement in the bush behind us. Out of that bush, very slowly, we start to see some young men come forward. These young men are



Dinka tribe, South Sudan

"They said singing gave them courage, and so they were making up songs about preparing themselves. This is like their version of preparing to go to war; they were preparing to go to peace"

skinny, skinny, skinny. Their clothes are torn and dirty. They have AK-47s on their shoulders, they're all armed. The women had known all along that they were there, and they were watching to see if they could come out – if it was a trustworthy group – or if they should stay hidden.

"So they finally come out, and they come forward. Their leader comes forward and speaks to the woman from the WPT, who was clearly the elder of the group, and said, 'My sister, what are you doing here?' The woman said, 'We want to talk to you about what's going on.' So the men said, 'Fine.' They sat down and were just quiet for a little while. Then the women started speaking as they felt. It was not rehearsed, there was no speech, nothing written on a piece of paper, but really speaking from their hearts.

"They self-identified as mothers, wives, sisters, family members, community members, and said how much it was hurting them to see these boys killing each other. They said they didn't even understand why they would continue to have babies if this is what they're going to grow up to do. This group of young men, who were very hardened, very tough, and

very nervous, started to soften. "Then at one point, this young man, the leader, who had not one, not two, but three AK-47s on his shoulders, he just let his guns drop, and he had a tear running down his cheek. He said, 'I don't know what we're doing here. I just want to go home.'

"That was the thing that broke the ice, the thing that broke the moment. Through that, they then spent the next couple of hours sharing their stories, talking to each other, letting those boys know that they could come home. It was okay, they could come home and stop fighting.

"That agreement they negotiated that day held in a way that the army had not been able to hold, the police had not been able to hold, and the governors had not been able to hold. This was really inclusivity, grassroots, nonviolent action, with those most impacted by the violence speaking on their own behalf, elevating their own voices." ●

TO WATCH THE FULL INTERVIEWS WITH THIIK MACHOL AND NONVIOLENT PEACEFORCE AT THE PEACE SUMMIT, SCAN THE QR CODE!



PHOTO BY RANDY FATH ON UNSPLASH

Peace in Latin America

In this article, peace activist Josh Saltzman details the situation in Latin America, and his experiences with the Zapatistas in southern Mexico.

Words by Josh Saltzman

Latin America – spanning much of North, Central, and South America – is a land of spectacular landscapes, friendly humans, and vibrant cultures. Tragically, Latin America’s natural beauty has often been marred by violence.

Since 2006, the Mexican drug war has claimed over 450,000 lives – 70-80% of them innocent bystanders and civilians – with cartel violence deeply embedding itself in communities.

In 2024, Haiti is engulfed in gang-related violence, with kidnappings and murders becoming daily occurrences. Political instability and economic hardship have worsened the situation, leaving Haiti in a state of crisis. Colombia and Venezuela continue to grapple with armed conflicts and political turmoil, resulting in thousands of deaths and displacements.

Amidst these vast conflicts and crises, the Indigenous Mayan Zapatista movement in Chiapas (Mexico’s southernmost state, bordering Guatemala), offers a glimmer of hope. Their creative use of nonviolent tactics helped them reclaim their homeland, setting a powerful precedent and demonstrating a path that other Indigenous groups can choose to walk in similar ways.

Indigenous Mayan resistance to colonization

When the Spanish conquistadors landed in the Americas in 1492, they initiated a period of intense colonization that led to the widespread massacre, displacement, marginalization, and enslavement of large populations of Indigenous Mayans. This colonization was not a one-time event; the persecution of native peoples has continued to this day.

The conquest of Chiapas began around 1524, marked by brutal warfare and the massacre of many Mayan inhabitants, who were fiercely independent and resistant to foreign domination. Survivors were often enslaved and forced into labor under the *encomienda* system, which facilitated severe exploitation. Indigenous lands were seized, and traditional ways of life were disrupted as the Spanish imposed their own social and political structures.

Catholic missionaries played a key role in suppressing Indigenous cultures, converting the populace to Christianity and attempting to erase traditional cultural identities. Even now, centuries later, Indigenous communities in Chiapas and beyond continue to face marginalization, land dispossession, and violence; the enduring legacy of Spanish colonialism.

In the early 1990s, in response to

the Mexican government and military’s continuous and systematic eviction of Indigenous communities from their lands, Mayan resistance groups formed the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN).

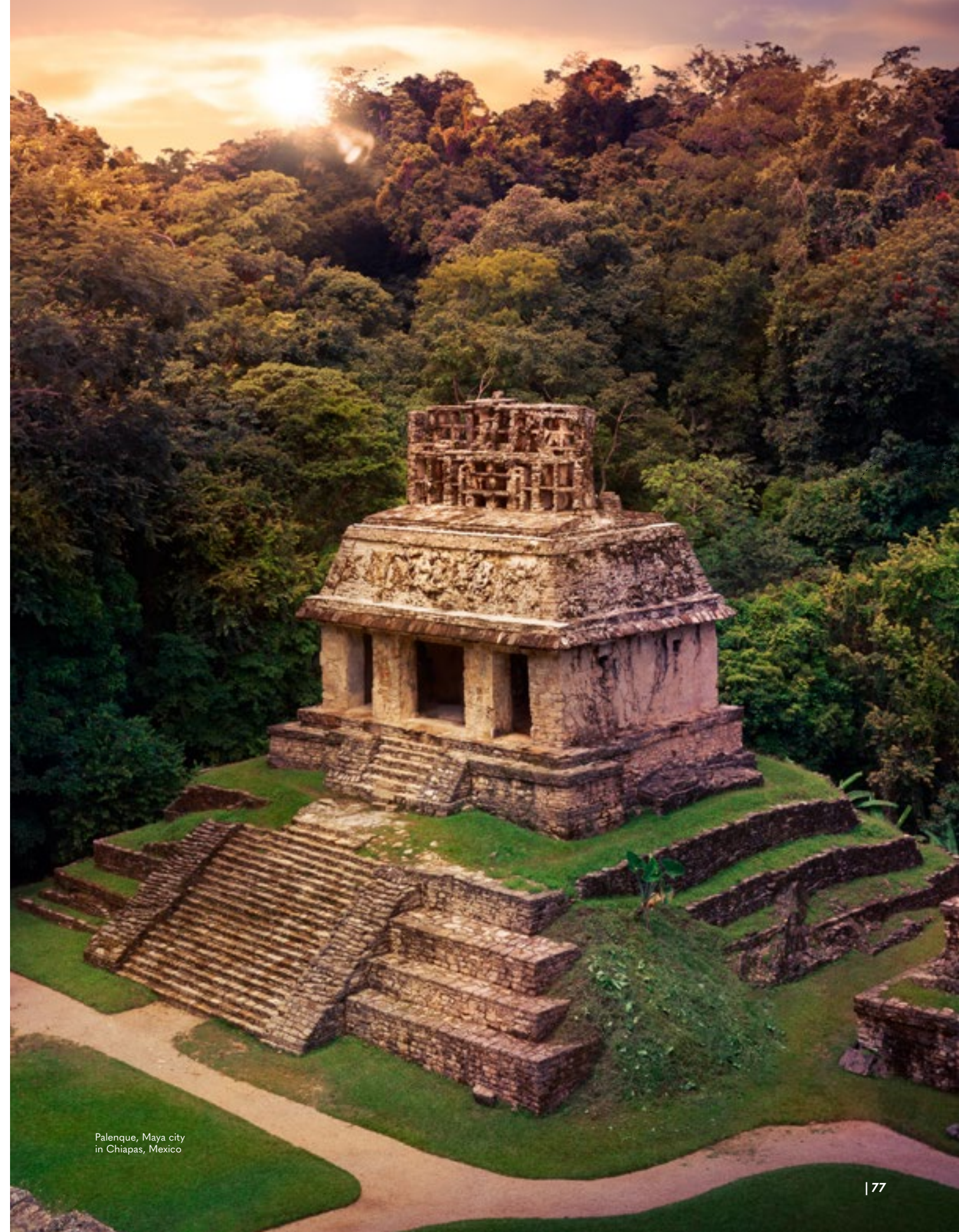
Initially, the Zapatistas resisted the Mexican military with guns and knives. However, the army responded with overwhelming force. Thousands of Indigenous Mayans were killed, and displaced, and the Zapatistas were painted by Mexican and international media as violent separatists.

On December 22, 1997, a group of Mexican paramilitaries called *Máscara Roja* entered the Indigenous town of Acteal and massacred 45 Indigenous Tzotzil men, women and children who were suspected of supporting the Zapatista movement. Many were children under the age of 5. The youngest victim, Juana Vazquez Luna, was only eight months old.

Despite this horrific aggression, the Zapatistas made the decision to shift from violent to nonviolent resistance. They released a communique that read:

“We have a very important weapon which the government does not have. That weapon is called dignity. With this weapon, no one and nothing can defeat us. They can kill us or jail us, but they will never defeat us.” →

PHOTOS: ADOBE STOCK & AUTHORS OWN



Palenque, Maya city in Chiapas, Mexico



This page: authors photos during visit to San Cristóbal de las Casas.
Opposite page: Mural in Chiapas of a priest protecting Indigenous people

“We have a very important weapon which the government does not have. That weapon is called dignity. With this weapon, no one and nothing can defeat us. They can kill us or jail us, but they will never defeat us.”

The Zapatista Air Force (ZAF)

On January 3, 2000, the Zapatista Air Force broke the international sound barrier.

Rumors spread all over the world that the ZAF had “bombarded” the federal barracks of the Mexican Army in Amado, Hernandez, Chiapas.

In reality, the Zapatistas had “attacked” the Federal Soldiers with hundreds of paper airplanes that they threw over the barbed wire. Each paper airplane was a poetic justice missile carrying a poem for the soldiers. One of the letter bombers flew through a dormitory window, carrying a message of hope and resistance.

Folded within the paper airplane, a note had been inscribed in Spanish:

“Soldiers, we know that poverty has made you sell your lives and souls. I also am poor, as are millions. But you are worse off, for you are defending our exploiter. We do not sell our lives. We want to free our lives and those of your children, your lives, and those of your wives, your brothers and sisters, your uncles and aunts, fathers and mothers, and the lives of millions of poor exploited Mexicans.”

By 2001, the Electronic Disturbance Theater division of the ZAF had designed the flight plans for a digital Zapatista Air

Force. With this software, activists, artists, and hackers from around the world could spread the message of the Zapatistas far and wide.

“In our dreams we have seen another world, an honest world, a world decidedly more fair than the one in which we now live. We saw that in this world there was no need for armies; peace, justice and liberty were so common that no one talked about them as far-off concepts, but as things such as bread, birds, air, water.” — **Subcomandante Marcos, early leader of the Zapatista movement**

The Zapatistas’ nonviolent revolution garnered widespread international support, reduced military aggression, and achieved significant gains for Indigenous rights and autonomy. The Zapatistas established autonomous municipalities where Indigenous Mayans could live in freedom, liberating themselves from the hierarchies and power structures of the Mexican government. They set up traditional healthcare and education systems for their people, and were even able to establish their own political party in the Mexican national government.

In their successful nonviolent

revolution, Zapatistas became a powerful example for activist movements in the U.S. and around the world.

Zapatista ideology synthesizes Mayan tradition with elements of libertarian socialism, anarchism and Marxism. They oppose economic globalization. A Zapatista slogan declares “Para todos todo, para nosotros nada,” or “Everything for everyone. Nothing for us.”

Key to their lifestyle and politics is the promotion of equitable gender relations based on Women’s Revolutionary Law. Zapatistas try to live together in a flat social structure, with women taking the lead both in the EZLN indigenous leadership and the promotion of crafts and textiles inspired by the shamanic practices of their ancient Mayan Ancestors.

The Zapatistas have gained backing from the global community through communiques that continue to be sent to international solidarity movements and activists. Thus, they keep their issues ever-present, and successfully breach the Mexican government’s oppressive cordon of silence and denial.

Inspired by the nonviolent resistance of the Zapatistas, I flew down to Chiapas in 2004, to see how I could help.

My colleague Adriana and I landed in

the tiny Chiapas airport, rented a car and set off on a journey through the mountains towards the town of San Cristóbal de las Casas, at the center of Zapatista territory.

Along the steep mountain drive to San Cristobal de la Casas, we passed a restaurant that was adjacent to a beautiful river. We stopped for lunch. Famished after a long journey with several connecting flights, Adriana ordered a specialty dish of the highlands of Chiapas, and I tried the *mole*. It was my first time tasting this delicious sauce, loaded with different kinds of nuts, chilies, seeds, spices, dried fruit, and real chocolate.

After lunch, we boarded a small boat from a pier behind the restaurant. The captain abruptly stopped in the middle of our river voyage. He pointed to the cliffs that rose above the river canyon. He said in a sad voice: “Hundreds of years ago, Mayan warriors jumped from those cliffs.”

The warriors were backed up against the edge of the cliff. The Spanish invaders held up their guns, and the cannonballs blazed

in the pitch-black night. If they refused to be captured by the Spanish Conquistadors they would be shot where they stood. Instead, they chose to jump. It was a horrific view.

San Cristóbal de las Casas

We arrived at the hotel late in the afternoon, and decided to walk around. It looked like a traditional Spanish colonial town, with red tile roofs, cobblestone streets, and iron balconies with flowers.

Stands with textiles, t-shirts emblazoned with Che Guevara, and small Zapatista dolls in black revolutionary outfits filled the open markets we passed.

Old Mayan women with deep lines etched in their faces watched over children running wildly in the streets. They had to keep moving to stay warm in the freezing winter of January high in the mountains.

Wrapped in brightly-colored Indigenous-patterned blankets, the children shivered from the gusts of wind that swept the streets like robotic vacuums gone amok.

All of these people were refugees from the villages below, desperate to scratch out a living in the harsh streets of San Cristobal.

Looking at their faces, they seemed resigned to find peace amid the suffering. But when I looked into their eyes, I thought I caught a faint glimmer of hope and determination.

The local sellers encouraged us to join a gathering of Zapatistas near the town church that evening. So, as the evening shadows descended upon San Cristóbal de las Casas, we ventured over to the church square.

The church was a remnant of Colonial Spain, as was the rest of the town’s architecture. The square was packed with Indigenous Maya, wearing red scarves around their necks or bandanas wrapped around their foreheads. We were told that the red scarves meant that they were Zapatista EZLN.

We sat on a low stone wall in the church courtyard along with all the Zapatistas who now filled the small enclosure. →



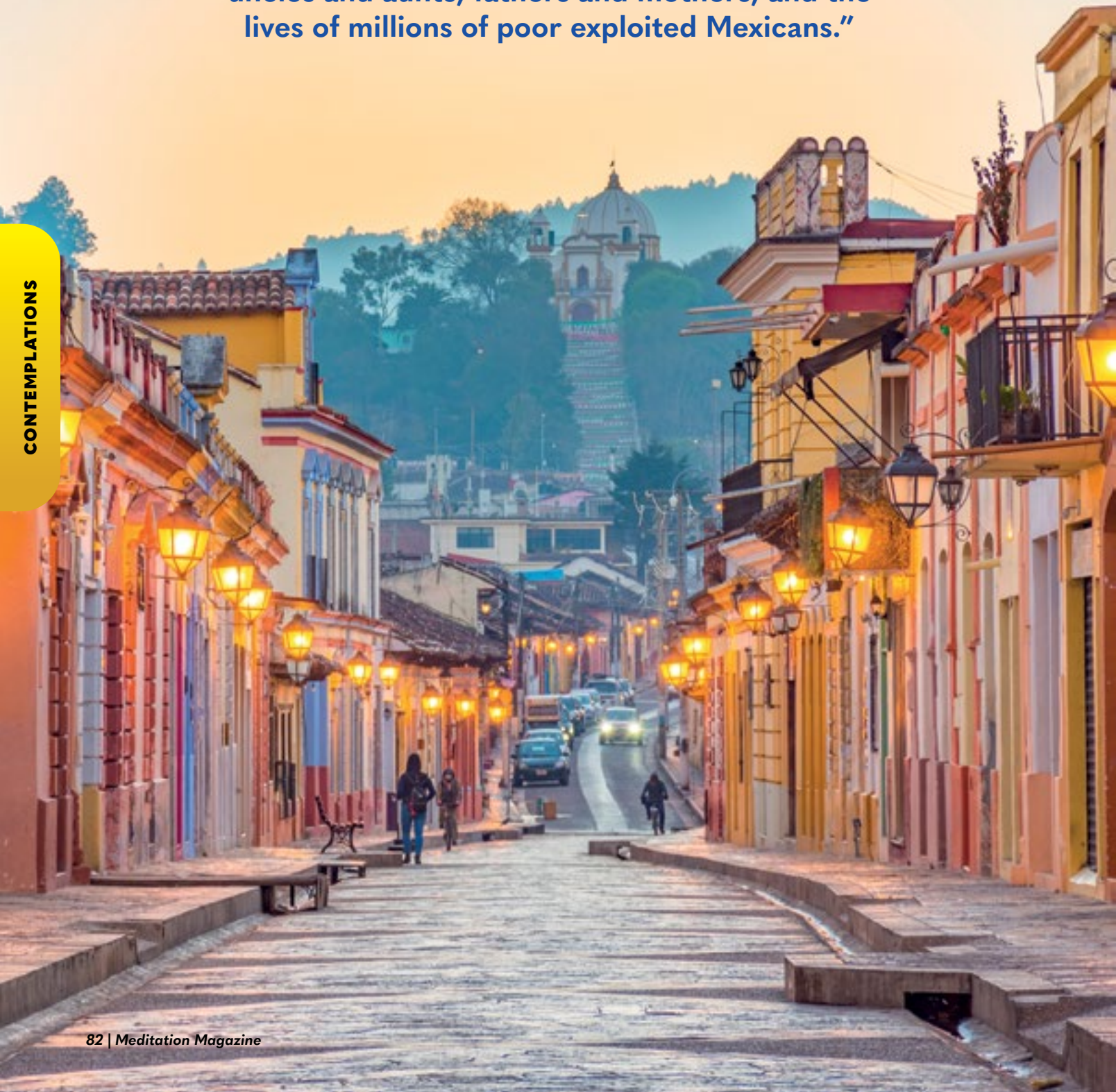


This page: a woman wearing a traditional dress in front of La Pila Fountain in Chiapas. In a example of cultural fusion, dresses combine Indigenous colors and patterns with Spanish cut, style, and dressmaking techniques. Opposite page: Montebello, Chiapas, Mexico

PHOTOS BY GILDARDO RODAS (DRESS) AND ROGER CE (LAKE) FROM PEXELS



“Soldiers, we know that poverty has made you sell your lives and souls. I also am poor, as are millions. But you are worse off, for you are defending our exploiter. We do not sell our lives. We want to free our lives and those of your children, your lives, and those of your wives, your brothers and sisters, your uncles and aunts, fathers and mothers, and the lives of millions of poor exploited Mexicans.”



One of the leaders of the Indigenous Zapatista council appeared on a platform, and raised her fist above her head. The Zapatistas proceeded to pull out their balaclavas and tied the red bandanas around the top of their black masks.

With a steady yet subdued voice, the Commandante began to brief the community on recent events and upcoming activities. It was refreshing to see such a communal, woman-led style of organization and governance.

I worked with the Zapatistas over the coming years, connecting them with volunteers and aid from charitable organizations in the U.S. We funded a healing collective of shamans, helped the Zapatistas sell their crafts on the internet, and more!

The situation in 2024

While Zapatistas have retained the land rights and autonomous zones that they won in their nonviolent revolution, they are still facing major challenges.

Mexico's drug war, and its ever-expanding cartels, are ravaging the entire region, in Mexico and beyond. More than 450,000 people have been murdered across Mexico since 2006, when the Federales began their anti-drug offensive.

According to a New York Times issue in May of this year, “the most formidable challenge that Claudia Sheinbaum, the newly elected President will face is the rising and ongoing violence in Mexico. In the past year alone, over 30,000 murders have been committed, 90 percent of them remain unsolved,” emphasizes the Times.

The Cartels in Mexico are more powerful than ever. They have evolved into “paramilitary organized crime” deeply embedded in communities across the country.

Zapatista autonomous territory, bordering Guatemala to the south, is unfortunately located in an important strategic location for the Cartels. All nine major drug-trafficking routes pass through it – five by land, two by air, and two by sea.

Those drug-trafficking routes are also used by migrants traveling to the U.S. from all over the world. The Cartels see these vulnerable human beings as

commodities to be trafficked.

Children and women are kidnapped, raped, and killed indiscriminately. If they manage to survive or they are very young, they are smuggled in stifling hot and cramped trucks, or the trunks of cars, and brought directly to the U.S. through open and legal border crossings.

Drug cartels commit violence against, and even recruit, indigenous Mayans, and the Mexican military still acts aggressively toward the Zapatistas as well.

While Adriana and I were exploring towns that were filled with Zapatistas and Indigenous Mayan drug smugglers as well, we were stopped at a roadblock by the Mexican military. The Zapatista NGO leader who was driving us told me that the military officers were going to ask for my passport, because I was a Gringo. Other white people who had come down to help the Zapatistas were being arrested as “agitators.” If I gave them my passport, they could put me in prison and not let me go back to America.

A Mexican soldier was pointing a gun at me through the window, but the Zapatistas kept telling me not to give them my passport. The commander and other soldiers came over and demanded

that I hand over my passport, pointing their guns at me as well. It was a tense situation, but I listened to the Zapatistas, and I refused to hand it over. The commander finally came back and said “I’m not going to arrest you this time, but if you come back, you’ll be put in prison and your passport will be taken.”

Zapatistas do keep weapons that they use to defend themselves when necessary, but they continue to eschew the path of violence as an offensive strategy to effect socio-political changes. Instead, they are reconstituting the Zapatista Paper Plane Air Force, with help from artists, hackers, and people around the world.

Meanwhile, the Zapatista movement continues to offer a viable example of a local alternative to global capitalism, albeit on a small scale. They are still a reference point for the Occupy Movements to this day.

Contemporary social activists, (including those involved with Engaged Buddhism) could do well to emulate how the Zapatistas have dismantled the patriarchal system in their political party and returned to autonomous Zapatista territory.

If you want to connect with and help the Zapatistas, email info@schoolsforchiapas.org. ●



This page: Authors photos during visit to San Cristóbal de las Casas.

Opposite page: Beautiful streets and colorful facades of San Cristóbal de las Casas.

Peace In Ukraine

In 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine, starting one of the worst wars of the twenty-first century, with casualties in the hundreds of thousands. In this article, we hear from three activist who are striving in different ways to get to peace: a Gandhian nonviolence advocate, a military commander trying to take down Putin, and a Meditation Magazine correspondent, finally returning to her homeland of Ukraine.



Satish Kumar: A Nonviolent Way

When Kevin asked Satish about how to end wars in general, Satish was very clear: nonviolence is the only way. Violence cannot create peace. If we want our ends to be peaceful, our means must also be peaceful. Kevin pushed back, asking whether this could really be applied in all situations. Specifically, Kevin asked about Ukraine. Below is Satish's response.



"If Ukraine wants to do nonviolent resistance, all the citizens of Ukraine can stand there, without arms, without tanks, without weapons, without aeroplanes, and say, 'We are here.' Non-violent resistance. Like Mahatma Gandhi would say, 'If you kill us, you kill us, but we are not going to kill you back.' If the Ukrainians were totally disarmed and did not fight back, Russians cannot fight. Russians cannot kill unarmed people. They will only kill if you are fighting back.

"Then I will go with the Ukrainians. I will stand there, unarmed. And I will ask Germans and French and Americans and Indians and British, we all go to Ukraine unarmed and say, 'If you want to kill us, we are prepared to die for the good cause, but we are not prepared to kill anybody, for any cause.' We are prepared to die for a good cause, but we are not prepared to kill

for a good cause. That is the non-violent resistance that we have to learn.

"That was the message of Mahatma Gandhi. Nelson Mandela was in jail for 27 years, and he, in the end, won, because apartheid came to an end. Martin Luther King, 29 times he was in jail. Václav Havel in Czechoslovakia, he was in jail. We have many, many wonderful examples of non-violent resistance. So if Russians are aggressive, we will resist, but resist nonviolently, without killing. We are prepared to die, but we are not prepared to kill for any cause. That should be the way.

"Russians and Ukrainians have to live next to each other as neighbors, and they cannot live forever as enemies. They have to live like friends.

"Nobody can win war. America is the biggest, the most powerful, and the highest amount of money spent on military, on Pentagon, and bombs, and tanks, and guns... and yet America failed to win war

in Vietnam. America failed to win war in Afghanistan. America failed to win war in Iraq and Syria. If America could not win, how could Russia win any war in Ukraine?

"Anybody who thinks that they can win a war in this modern day, they are living in a cloud cuckoo land. Nobody can win a war. War has become obsolete, out of date. War is useless. You cannot win war, and you cannot win the hearts and minds of people with weapons. You have to win the hearts and minds of people with love." →

TO WATCH SATISH'S INTERVIEW FOR THE EARTH ISSUE, IN WHICH HE SPOKE ABOUT UKRAINE, SCAN THE QR CODE ON THE LEFT. TO WATCH SATISH'S INTERVIEW FOR THE PEACE ISSUE, IN WHICH HE SPOKE AT MORE LENGTH ABOUT NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE, SCAN THE QR CODE ON THE RIGHT.



Ilya Ponomarev: Putin Must Fall

On March 20, 2014, the Russian State Duma (parliament) voted to annex and invade the Ukrainian region of Crimea. Out of 446 deputies, 445 voted in favor of this hostile action against Ukraine, and only one, Ilya Ponomarev, voted against it. Following his dissenting vote, Ponomarev was stripped of his parliamentary immunity and was exiled from Russia. He now lives in Ukraine and Washington D.C., and leads the Russian armed resistance against Putin from afar. Ilya's rebels have already blown up billions of dollars of Russian military infrastructure and are aiming to stop the war by replacing Putin's regime with a democratic government.

Kevin Ellerton: I know you believe violence is needed to end the war. Many Americans agree with you. But this is Meditation Magazine. We're like hippies (laughing). We believe in nonviolent resistance. Could that work in Ukraine?



Ilya Ponomarev: (Smiling) I totally share this idea. I am leftist myself, and I do believe in global peace. I do believe in a world without

state boundaries. My motherland is the whole humanity, and that is what I always promoted as the foundation of my political beliefs. But to establish that peace, you need to remove the fascists.

Kevin Ellerton: Have nonviolent methods been tried in Russia & Ukraine?

Ilya Ponomarev: I was personally one of the key organizers of the Bolotnaya movement in 2012. We were protesting against rigged elections, and it was purely nonviolent. There were hundreds of thousands of people on the streets of Moscow and other Russian cities who were trying to remove Putin from office with purely nonviolent methods. It was Putin who started killing us. It was not us who started to fight back. Even [during the annexation of Crimea], we still were resorting ourselves to nonviolent methods. But now, with missiles flying and many people being killed, we just don't have time for this. Every day, a thousand people die in the field of war in Ukraine. So every day when we are just talking, it's blood on our hands.

Kevin Ellerton: I interviewed Satish Kumar, a non-violence activist from India. He was saying war is never justified. I pushed back and said, should Ukrainians not fight back with weapons? He presented an interesting idea, that people from around the world could flood into Ukraine and stand non-violently, without weapons, saying, "No, we will not allow this." He thinks that would shame the soldiers into saying, "I'm not going to fire at these people from all over the world who are coming non-violently." Do you think that could possibly work in Ukraine?

Ilya Ponomarev: If by some miracle, we would see ten million people emerging at the front lines of this war, non-violently, standing between the soldiers and saying, "Here we are," I think it may work. But you can never deliver ten million people at one time standing in front of those shooting lines. And that's why you first need to achieve a ceasefire. Only then can people play the role.

We [in the Russian resistance] have several thousand armed resistance fighters who are coming to suppress the police, to suppress the security forces, to suppress people who can shoot back on the protesters. Then nonviolent protestors – millions of people – would definitely be on the streets of Moscow, and they would achieve the change of the regime. But for this million people to come to the streets of Moscow, you need to suppress the police which are loyal to Putin. They are shooting at unarmed people. We saw that already. When they see [armed] resistance, they totally vanish

immediately. Actually, I think that we will have extremely limited violence in the situation of real changes in Russia. But to be nonviolent and have no blood, you need to show armed people who are standing in front of these police forces.

Kevin Ellerton: Satish wasn't saying that there would be no blood among the nonviolent people, that they would stand ready to die but not ready to kill. I think it is possible. It does sound very idealistic, but if we can mass billions of dollars for weapons, if we can mass hundreds of thousands of soldiers, why couldn't we mass hundreds of thousands or millions of peaceful people doing the same thing, essentially like an army but just with no weapons, maybe holding flowers and singing songs or something?

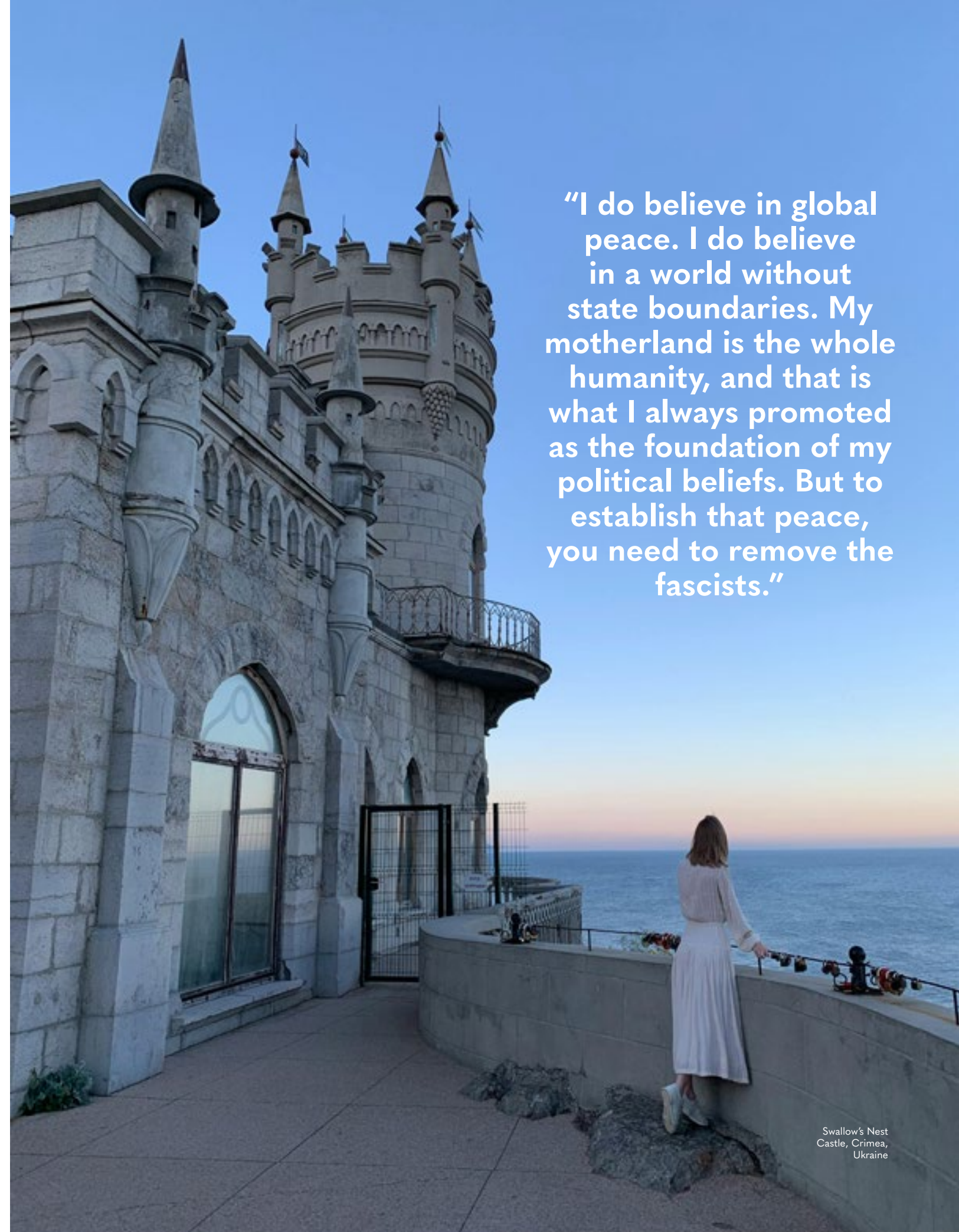
Ilya Ponomarev: Okay, if somebody is capable of mobilizing several million people coming to Ukraine, I think that we can actually even march from Kyiv to Moscow, and make a peace march, and then Putin would be gone. The question is how to get that large number of people who are – what you said is very important – ready to die. Because originally, they would be met with armed people, and you need to bravely, courageously be able to move forward. So to realistically do this, I think it's very hard.



TO WATCH ILYA'S
INTERVIEW AT THE
PEACE SUMMIT,
SCAN THIS QR
CODE.

PHOTO BY EUGENIA REMARK FROM PEXELS

"I do believe in global peace. I do believe in a world without state boundaries. My motherland is the whole humanity, and that is what I always promoted as the foundation of my political beliefs. But to establish that peace, you need to remove the fascists."



Swallow's Nest
Castle, Crimea,
Ukraine



House of Scientists,
Lviv, Ukraine

Slava Ukraini

On June 12th, 2024, Kevin reached out to Niki Chernitska to ask if she wanted to write an article about her homeland of Ukraine. As The Universe would have it, Niki was already packing her bags, preparing for her first flight back to Ukraine since before the invasion began. This is her story.

An Overnight Train To Ukraine

My train ticket says 17:38. My husband, David, was born in New York. He always seems surprised that Europe is on what he calls “military time” – a term that feels particularly apt as we approach the Ukrainian border.

We’ve been traveling for nearly twenty-four hours since we left New York. After two flights and a layover, we are running on fumes. But when Kevin asked me to write this article, I knew I needed to start writing here, on this overnight train from Warsaw, Poland to Kyiv, Ukraine. For the first time in five years, I am coming home.

The unbelievable green that I’ve only ever seen in Eastern Europe in the summer is reflecting in David’s eyes as he stares out the window. This is not how I envisioned introducing him to my homeland.

A Girl In Kyiv

I was born in the summer of 1999, in the central birthing home of Kyiv. My mother was raised in Odesa, a port city on the coast of the Black Sea. My father comes from generations of “Kyianyn” (a term used for those native to Kyiv) academics and entrepreneurs.

It has been 5 years since I’ve seen my great grandfather. 97 years old, survived World War II and the Holocaust, refuses to go downstairs to the shelter when they are bombing. I can’t wait to play chess with him. Discussions of murder and war bore him; he’d rather argue and prod about how I am playing worse than when I didn’t know how to.



Kiev, Ukraine.
Cupolas of
Pechersk Lavra
Monastery

Growing up in Kyiv, the heaviness of war was present in every household. Most kids my age had grandparents or great-grandparents who remembered. WWII veterans would come to the school every Victory Day, frail hands holding their medals, some with tattoos I shudder at the memory of to this day. They knew war intimately. They knew what it smelled and sounded like. To us back then it seemed impossible to imagine. How could it be? How could such cruelty even exist? Some of the boys I discussed this with as a child are now dead, because of a war we never thought would happen.

Black Tea and Memories

We’ve just crossed the Ukrainian border, and switched trains into the blue Ukrzaliznytsia. They’re serving black tea, in a glass cup with a metal holder, just like when I was a kid, when taking the overnight train from Kyiv to Odesa felt like a life-changing adventure.

As I drink, the nostalgia comes in waves. I feel a sorrow so deep when I think

about how magical my childhood was. The fresh smell of the earth after every rain, the petrichor so strong and specific that I have been chasing it ever since. Linden trees blooming and making the city smell like sweetness, chestnuts covering Kyiv top to bottom. The first warm morning, dew on the newly bloomed apple trees evaporating with the rising sun. Hills and treetops and church spires and city streets covered with the brightest white snow, tree branches crystal and glossy in the winter.

Rain Clouds

It’s raining as we arrive in Kyiv. Some people might feel grumpy, but the whole night, with my face turned toward the open window in our train car, I felt like I couldn’t breathe the air fast enough.

I can’t wait to hug my dad and grandpa, who are waiting for us at the station right now. I know my grandma is waiting at home with some cucumbers (so crunchy and fresh) and tomatoes and eggplant “caviar,” her specialty.

PHOTO BY ALINA RUDZYNSKA FROM PEXELS



“Protests began in Kyiv’s Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square).”

As soon as we step out of the train, one of the first things that I see is a building that had been hit by a drone strike. A woman who was six-months pregnant had been killed in that attack.

The station platform is filled with kiosks, third-wave coffee shops and flower stores. I look around and see many tearful reunions, but there is a cloud of despair. No one speaks too loudly, no one smiles too wide. No joy feels pure. Everything is colored with the shared consciousness of consistent terror and evil from not too far away.

How did it come to this?

To understand the conflict between Ukraine and ruszia (I will no longer dignify it with a capital letter), you’d need to learn about the Soviet Union, and the brutal rule of the USSR in Ukraine. You’d need to read about The Holodomor, a man-made famine deliberately engineered by Joseph Stalin to break the Ukrainian independence movement in the 1930s. The Holodomor killed millions of Ukrainians, and has been internationally recognized as a genocide. The full history is too much to write in this article. Let’s just say there is little warmth between the nations.

When I was fourteen years old, in November 2013, Ukraine was preparing to join the European Union. Most Ukrainians were excited to join “the free world,” but Putin offered Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych a \$15bn bailout package if he pulled out of the agreement. Yanukovych accepted Putin’s offer. Ukrainians were outraged.

Protests began in Kyiv’s Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square). Riot police chased off the initial group of protesters, injuring dozens and escalating the protests. The police brutality yielded the opposite of Yanukovych’s desired outcome; thousands more joined the protest in outrage. In December 2013, over 800,000 gathered for a mass protest, demanding the resignation of President Yanukovych and his government. Between February 18th and 22nd, 2014, more than a hundred unarmed protestors were killed by snipers. My parents were there.

My mother does not talk about what

happened at Maidan. She is a Kundalini Yogi, a vegetarian, meditates daily. She lives a very different life, far from Kyiv. But when I asked her to talk about her experiences for this article, she made an exception, and agreed to tell me a little bit about what it felt like for her.

“I remember seeing these boys, their helmets painted baby blue with children’s gouache, because they wanted peace. I remember seeing in a group chat in February that they needed help, any cloth to tie the injuries, anyone with even the most rudimentary knowledge of medicine. There was fighting, and there was blood, and I was just running... running to the Hotel Ukraine, where they made a make-shift field hospital... running between St. Sophia’s Cathedral and the Hotel. Bodies covered in sheets, the blood still warm and sticky on my shoes.

“I felt so much pain, so much anger and despair, that if we had anything more than wooden shields, at least some weapons - I would have gone on to kill. What peace, when you’re carrying bodies of teenagers? There was this one moment when I was running with the saline solution, and I was too late. On my knees, this 17-year-old kid, and I was too goddamn late. A policeman ripping his epaulets off in fury because they just killed his son. Burned fingers sticking out of the sheets, blood still dripping.”

By most English language accounts the conflicts were seen as simple “protests,” but as a fourteen-year-old who went to school six minutes away from Maidan, it felt slightly different. I remember sitting in my world history class in February of 2014, twirling my hair and wondering whether or not my crush would recognize that I twirled it differently when we heard gunfire.

I remember running to grab my best friend and my eight-year-old sister, and falling into my dad’s car. Squished into the passenger seats, the three of us were looking through the window, seeing the bodies on the ground, the militia with their rifles, and hearing on the radio that President Yanukovich was deemed unfit to execute his duties as president, and fled

the country by helicopter.

“There was a moment there,” my mom continued, “when he [Yanukovich] left, when we felt like winners, like we defeated the evil. A week later, ruszia began the invasion of Crimea.”

Here, Now

Today is June 17th, 2024. I have been in Kyiv for a little over 48 hours.

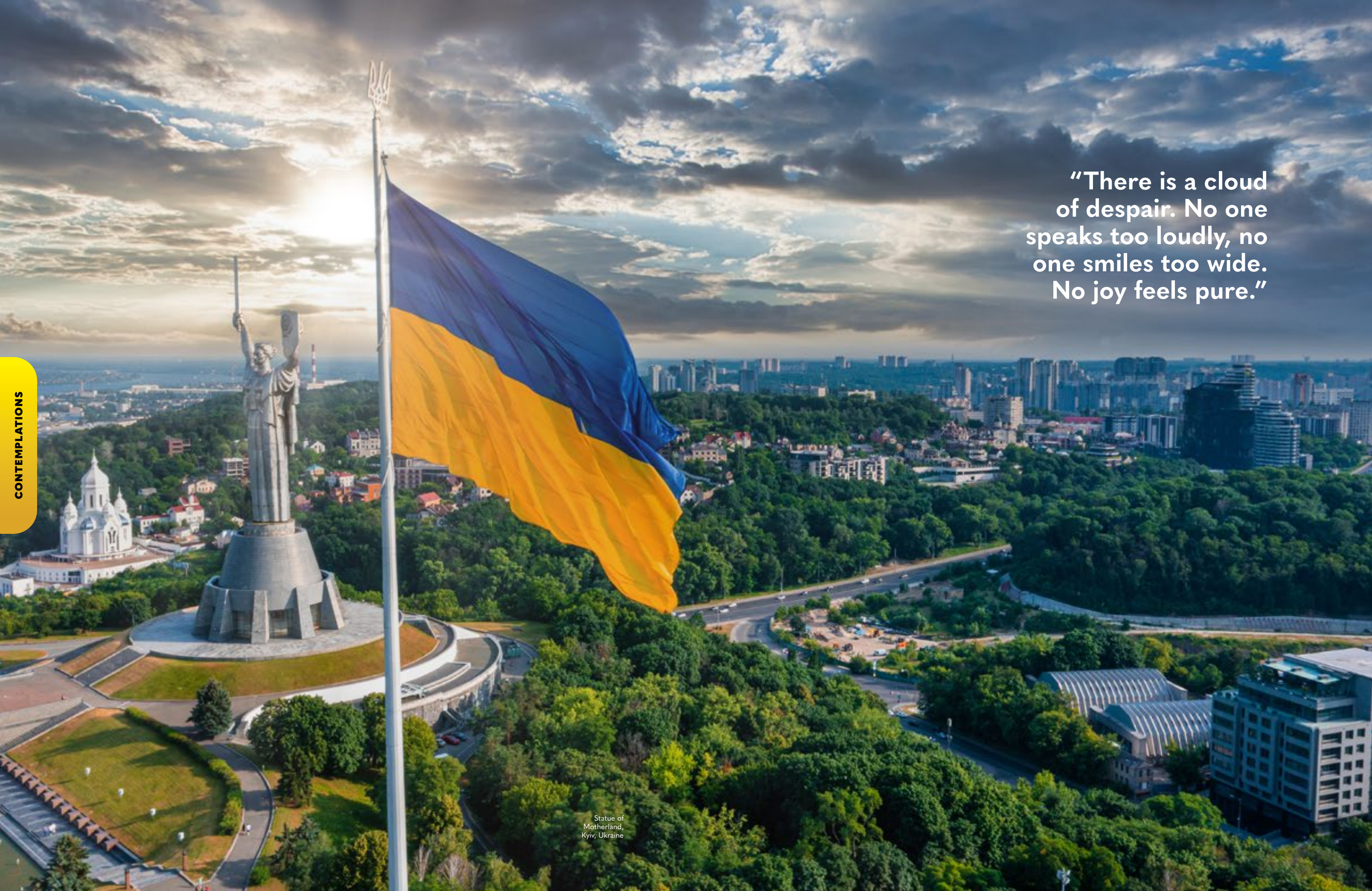
Within these first two days, there have been many air raid alerts, several in the middle of the night. My childhood friend’s son is three years old. He barely knows how to talk, but he knows how to crouch in the doorway and protect his head, because that’s where he has the best chance of surviving in case the building collapses.

It is day 844 of the war. It is day 3,862 since the first protests in 2014. There is no electricity in the district where I’m staying, so I am writing this by candlelight and my phone’s flashlight. This sounds very dramatic, but I am flying back to New York in a few days, so I consider myself to be very lucky.

The resourcefulness and resilience of the Ukrainian people is a light in the darkness of war. Trying to imagine any neighborhood of New York trying to survive for days on end without water and electricity seems impossible. But my friends here in Ukraine are falling in love, getting married, giving birth to beautiful children, building their lives, and holding each other through every moment of this horror.

For Ukrainians who have the opportunity to leave the country, there is a catch-22. If you leave and come back when the war is over, how will you look into the eyes of the mothers who lost their children? How will you look into the eyes of widows and orphans, and those paralyzed and harmed in line of action? And if you stay, how can you forgive those who left?

How can I come, having left 10 years ago, and share meals with people whose loved ones are dead? I have a hard time crying in front of anyone, but I have spent every night crying myself to sleep. →



**"There is a cloud
of despair. No one
speaks too loudly, no
one smiles too wide.
No joy feels pure."**

Statue of
Motherland,
Kyiv, Ukraine

Drinks With Dasha

As she is walking up to our table, I notice that she is wearing a Vyshyvanka (traditional Ukrainian embroidered dress). We sip freshly squeezed juice, and I feel awkward and slightly uncomfortable.

Dasha Astafieva is a Ukrainian pop star, the lead singer of the legendary duo, *Nikita*. She was on the cover of Playboy’s 55th anniversary edition. She has spent the last 845 days peeling potatoes, singing to the injured, and serving soldiers. And I am here. A visitor.

Survivor’s guilt so strong it is choking me. Astafieva agreed to a brief interview, but I am at a loss – how do I even begin? I find myself asking what the war tastes and smells and sounds like. Astafieva answers clearly, without hesitation. Her eyes are bright and she is giving me her undivided attention.

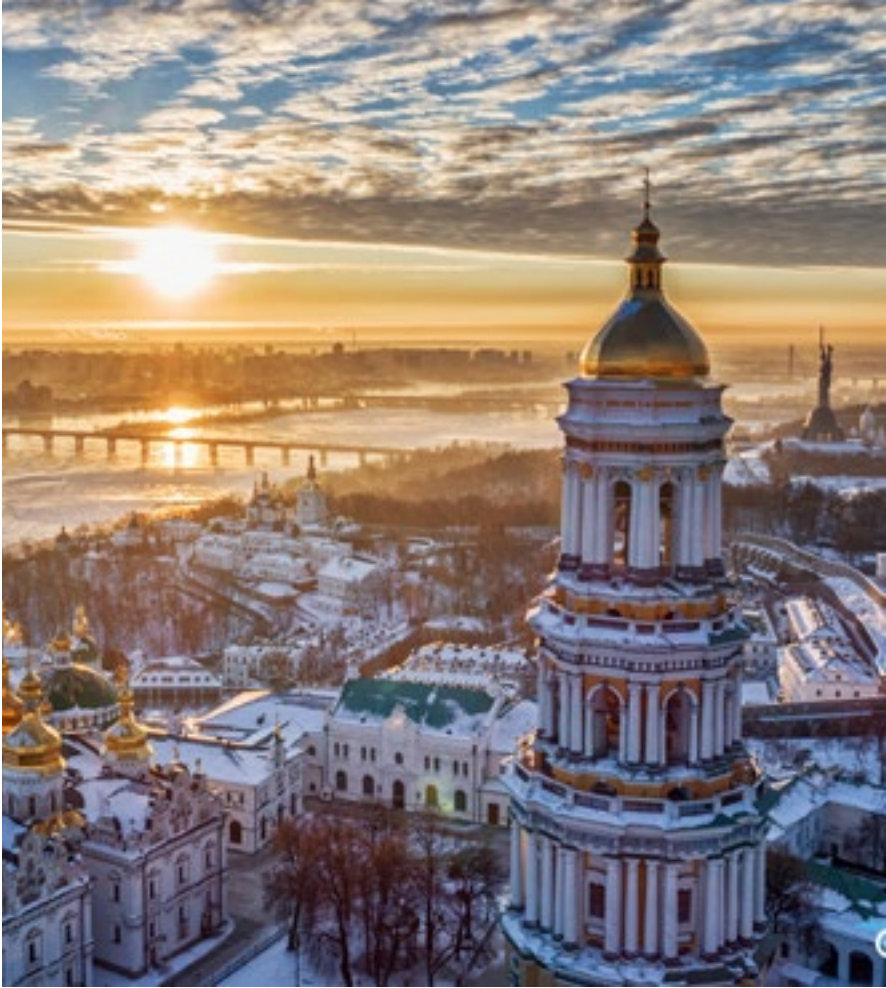
“We just want quiet,” Astafieva said. “The way that it used to be once. Just quiet. Everyone wants peaceful quiet, not one stuffed with fear.

“Everyone here will live out the rest of their lives knowing that our – [clears throat] – neighbors are not getting further away from us.

“We often talk about how unbelievable the idea of planes in the skies feels... I was recently in the Carpathian mountains, and we saw the planes flying behind the mountaintops. I started sobbing.”

When I asked her what peace might look like, and how this war will come to an end, Astafieva took a moment to reflect.

“You know, when the war first started, a lot of public-facing people were being asked, ‘What will peace look like?’



“What we used to say at the beginning of the war – we imagined how we won,” Astafieva continued with a mocking tone, “how we defeated ruszia, the invaders, the injustice, the barbarity.

“I used to say that we were all going to wear our dress Vyshyvankas. We will all meet and celebrate, hugging, crying, celebrating our victory. You know, now, I understand that victory is not just defeating ruszia. It is the victory of life. It is a victory against the monstrosities that traumatized soldiers were forced to see. This is such a confrontation for our generation; so many have allowed themselves to engage in horrors.

“Victory will be against the fears that, like a shadow, have replaced our light.

“It is impossible to imagine peace and victory in one day. Unlike the war, which started one day, and to the very last second no one could believe it [would happen]. Well, peace will not be in one day. It will be a process, for which everyone should be ready. And to begin from yourself, from the inside.”

Back at the apartment, I hold that thought and that feeling in my heart like

a flame. A small one, a weak one (right now), but I feel it warming me.

With every person who hugs me a second too long, with every cent being donated to a million different causes, with every weekend market filled with sour cherries and lilacs and peonies and cucumbers and baby potatoes, with every human who stops to help someone cross the street, who carries the stroller up eighteen flights of stairs for no other reason than to help... Ukrainian people have persevered through aggression and persecution for centuries. They have tried to erase our language, our culture, our heritage, our faith. They will never win.

Now, dear reader: please don’t forget about Ukraine. I know how overwhelming and distant it must feel. But peace will come when love wins, and it can only win if we have you by our side. Slava Ukraini i Geroyam Slava!

With love, Niki Chernitska. ●

If you’d like to donate to help Ukrainians in these dark times, you can do so at the Ukrainian government’s official website, u24.gov.ua.



This photo: The author (Niki, left) in Kiev with Dasha (right). Left: Sunset over Kiev. Bottom-left: Maidan Square with flags in memory of soldiers

**“PEACE
WILL NOT BE
IN ONE DAY.
IT WILL BE A PROCESS,
FOR WHICH EVERYONE SHOULD
BE READY. AND TO BEGIN FROM
YOURSELF, FROM THE INSIDE.**

Peace in Kashmir

In this article, Meditation University admin Sristi Priya discusses the situation in Kashmir with peace activist Javed Beigh.

This page: Green Betaab Valley in Kashmir, India
Opposite page: Javed Beigh outside the United Nations Human Rights Council building

Kashmir, India: a beautiful region in the Himalayan mountains on the border of Pakistan, with a rich spiritual history and culture. In the late 1980s, Islamic separatists supported by Pakistan attacked Kashmir's Hindu minority, the Kashmiri Pandits, in a Jihadist campaign of terrorism against civilians. The Pandits responded nonviolently, but were ultimately forced to flee their homes. At Meditation Magazine's Peace Summit, Sristi Priya spoke with Javed Beigh, a Kashmiri Muslim peace activist, who shared his insights and hopes for a peaceful future.

The Exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits

The Kashmiri Pandits tried to fight violence with peace, but the situation offered no hope of resolution. The terror that swept through their homeland was relentless, leaving them with no other option but to flee. Uprooted from their homes, history, and identity, they scattered across India, trying to piece together the remnants of their lives. They were doctors, teachers, artists, mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers, suddenly homeless and displaced. Their departure left a void in Kashmir, a void still felt today.

As a Hindu living in the eastern part of India, I remember hearing stories of Kashmir since my childhood, but they seemed like tales from another world. It was through my conversation with Javed Beigh at Meditation Magazine's Peace Summit that these stories became painfully real.

Conversations with Javed Beigh

Javed Beigh is a Kashmiri Muslim peace activist who has represented India at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). Embracing Kashmir's mix of Hindu, Buddhist, and Sufi cultures, Javed has dedicated his life to promoting peace and inclusivity. He has worked tirelessly for 15 years to de-radicalize Kashmiri youth and fight ideologies of hatred through his articles, conclaves, and webinars.



“As a Kashmiri, as an Indian, as an advocate of the idea of India, I will always support an inclusive society.”

In our conversation at The Peace Summit, we discussed the causes of the conflict.

“Pakistan was going through a phase of Islamization, and different interpretations of Jihad through those ideologies. That [interpretation of Jihad] was institutionalized through madrasas, seminaries, and even public schools. It is very unfortunate when young minds are hypnotized with hatred towards others,” Javed said. “I always pray that peace should return to that beautiful land and people should start living together [in peace].”

While Kashmiri Pandits are still in exile, Javed pointed to India's spiritual philosophies of compassion and inclusivity as a source of hope for the future:

“People oppressed in Myanmar, the Rohingyas, came to India, and most are

living in Jammu and Kashmir. This is the India I believe in,” Javed said passionately. “I will be the last person to support violence. As a Kashmiri, as an Indian, as an advocate of the idea of India, I will always support an inclusive society.”

As I reflect on our conversation, Javed's words on karma and universal love and compassion echo in my mind:

“I believe in karma,” Javed said, referring to Pakistan's incitement of the terrorism in Kashmir. “Now, the same things are happening in our neighboring country [of Pakistan], which we, as Indians, are very worried about. I sincerely pray that peace should return to our neighboring country also. They should also live in peace and prosperity. This is our social value system.”

The Path to Peace

The road to peace in Kashmir feels like scaling a mountain in a blizzard. It is long and hazardous, but it's the only path that leads us away from violence and revenge. We must protect Kashmir's vibrant culture, with its diversity of faiths and traditions. We cannot allow the forces of hate to determine our destiny.

The stories of the Pandits – their resilience, their yearning to go back home – remind us that peace is not only a dream but a desperate need. It is the only way to honor the memories of those who lost everything, the only way to build a future where every child in Kashmir can sleep soundly under a sky free from fear.

A Hopeful Future

As I write this, my heart is heavy with these stories, but it is also filled with hope. Hope that one day, the Kashmir that was lost can be found again. Hope that the voices advocating for peace will grow louder and stronger. Hope that the world will recognize the importance of understanding, compassion, and unity. And above all, hope that we, as a society, will learn from the past and build a future where peace prevails. It is a future India dreams of, a future where the echoes of gunfire are replaced by the laughter of children playing on the streets. ●

PHOTO: SYED QAARIF ANDRABI



Dal Lake in
Kashmir, India



Woman walks through
grass in Kashmir, India

Peace in the Middle East

Understanding The Humans
Of Israel and Palestine



Growing up in a Jewish family, Kevin learned only one side of a complex story. In this article, Kevin discusses his journey from ignorance to understanding, as he digs through archives of historical documents and interviews Palestinian & Israeli peace activists to discover the truth and the elusive path of peace.

ILLUSTRATION AND PHOTOS: ADOBE STOCK



My grandmother was a young girl when she was sent to the concentration camps. She escaped into the forest during a death

march to Auschwitz, and survived by eating grass, leaves, and anything else she could find. Her brothers and sisters were killed, along with her parents, cousins, uncles, aunts, and nearly everyone else she had ever known.

After the war, she took a boat to New York, married a nice man, raised two kids, and lived an idyllic suburban life into her 90s. She never recovered.

Her name was Bella.

The trauma that Bella experienced nearly a century ago is still here, now, trickling down through the generations.

As a child I wondered, how could the world have let this happen? The Rabbis at school answered: “Evil triumphs when good men do nothing.” We were taught to speak up and speak out against evil and oppression in all its forms.

On October 7th, 2023...

I was visiting my parents for the Jewish holiday of Sukkot – a time for families to sit and eat together in bamboo huts, to be present with one another, and to remember our ancient heritage as Jewish people.

In the midst of these sacred moments, rumors began to spread that something horrific was happening in Israel. I checked my phone, and saw the brief, urgent WhatsApp messages from my friend “Dave” in Tel Aviv.

*“I’ve been called up.
I’m going into war now.
We are being invaded.
They’re raping women.
Killed old ladies and children.
We need to get the hostages.
And revenge for what they did.
Have your thoughts with me Kevin.”*

I knew right away that this was going in a dark direction. Violence always begets more violence. I tried to help Dave see more clearly, but he was overcome by hatred and desire for revenge. These are the emotions that Dave carried with him as he stormed, alongside hundreds of thousands of his brothers and sisters, into Gaza.

Speaking Out For Peace

I tried to get in touch with the peace at the center of the Universe, but something was blocking the way.

I breathed deep and slow to calm my emotions. I breathed deep and fast to bring them up again.

With my eyes closed, I saw the faces of parents and children, the unbearable suffering as their lives came to an end in horrific moments of unspeakable violence that no conscious being should ever be made to endure.

The emotions burst forth in shuddering sobs, flowing tears. I screamed into a pillow so that nobody would hear.

On October 10th, 2023, I published an Open Letter To Both “Sides” – at meditationmag.com/blog/open-letter – calling for peace, empathy, compassion, wisdom and understanding.

I saw many other peace activists posting for peace in similar ways, inspired by nonviolent leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and MLK Jr... and was appalled to see them attacked on social media, by mobs of partisans who demanded they conform to militant “Pro-Israel” or “Pro-Palestine” narratives, positions and beliefs.

While I still believe that building bridges is the only way to move toward peace, I also wanted to understand the perspectives of those who believe in militancy and taking sides.

So I dived into a months-long rabbit hole of research, and my eyes began to open as I learned things that I had never known about the true history (and the parallel universes) of Israel and Palestine. →

The Parallel Universes of Israel and Palestine

Growing Up In The Jewish Experience

Growing up in a Jewish family, I thought I knew all about the history of Israel. I attended three different schools, between New York and Jerusalem. The history I heard, and experienced, in each and every place was the same:

DISCLAIMER: I am not claiming that the historical narrative below is 'The Truth.' I am simply describing my own lived experience of growing up in a Jewish family in New York and Israel.

Thousands of years ago, our ancestors lived in Israel. They were exiled by the Romans, doomed to wander the Earth as a people without a homeland, persecuted for millennia by anti-Semitic groups in their host countries.

After the pogroms and the Holocaust, the nations of the world saw the suffering of the Jews, and finally allowed them to return to their homeland... a sparsely-populated desert that had fallen into ruin in the absence of its rightful owners.

Mark Twain traveled to The Holy Land in the late 1800s and described it as: "a desolate country... a silent, mournful expanse." Israel was "a land without a people, for a people without a land." And as the Jews returned home, the desert began to bloom.

Arabs began attacking Jewish refugee families in the 1880s. In the 1920s, Arab mobs went from home to home in places like Hebron and Safed, raping, beheading, and massacring men, women & children. After the massacres, the Jews formed self-defense groups that later became the IDF.

In 1948, the UN proposed a two-state solution. The Jews accepted it, and the State of Israel was born. Israel was immediately attacked by surrounding Arab countries, but, in the greatest miracle of the modern age, the Jews fought

off the invaders, and celebrated their independence in the wake of the war.

Arab states kept attacking for decades, but time and again, Israel repelled the invaders. Israel captured massive areas of land during these defensive wars, but gave it back to their neighbors in exchange for peace (as they did with Egypt in 1979).

Israel took the high road at every turn, but an Arab extremist group called "Palestinians" kept hijacking airplanes and blowing up innocent Israeli men, women, children and babies in buses and pizzerias, while shouting "Allahu Akbar" ("God is the greatest") in a horrific Jihadist campaign of terror, to recapture the land for Islam and the glory of Allah.

Everyone I knew had a story of a friend or family member who was killed, injured, or traumatized in a terror attack. But Israelis rose above their desire for revenge, elected left-wing "peaceniks" like Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres, and tried with all their might to make peace with the Palestinians.

At The Oslo Accords in the 1990s, Rabin and Peres offered to give the Palestinians more than 90% of the land that they wanted... but shockingly, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat refused. When Arafat walked away from the negotiations in Oslo, U.S. President Bill Clinton told him, "You are leading your people, and the region, to a catastrophe." Since then, there have been hundreds of terrorist attacks and multiple intifadas (uprisings), in which Palestinians kill innocent Israeli civilians.

Even in the face of horrific terrorism, Israel continues to strive for peace. Israel ended the occupation of Gaza in 2005, dragging Israeli families out of their homes in order to return Gaza to the Palestinians. Instead of responding in kind, Gazans elected Hamas – a terrorist organization officially committed to the annihilation of the State of Israel – which swept through

Gaza, murdered their political rivals, as well as any peace activists and "gay" people they could find, destroyed all the greenhouses and infrastructure that the Jews had built to produce food in Gaza, and have been oppressing the people of Gaza under an authoritarian klepto-theocratic reign of terror ever since.

Hamas trains children to use guns, grenades, and knives, starting from the age of five or six, teaching them that killing Jews is their highest calling in life. Still, the international community (including Israel!) sends huge amounts of humanitarian aid to help the civilians of Gaza... but the money is stolen by Hamas's leaders – Ismail Haniyeh, Moussa Abu Marzouk, and Khaled Mashaal – who have become billionaires, living in luxury in Qatar while children live in poverty in Gaza. The money they do allow to trickle into Gaza goes to buying weapons and building tunnels for terrorists, instead of aid and infrastructure for civilians. Terrorist groups in Gaza, like Hamas and Islamic Jihad, constantly shoot rockets at Israel, call for cease-fires (and then break them), and kill men, women and children in terror attacks.

The October 7th massacre was the largest in a long line of terrorist attacks that goes back over a century. Israel needs to take action to protect itself, but, as always, will continue to use the world's most extensive measures to protect innocent civilians.

This was the history of Israel that I heard, from everyone, all around me, as a child, as I was growing up, in every school I went to, and in the ancient streets of Jerusalem.

Of course, I had never spoken with a Palestinian about any of this.

In the Jewish circles in which I was raised, the word "Palestinian" was rarely spoken, and when it was, it carried an energy of distrust, suspicion and fear. Palestinians were dangerous terrorists. How could I possibly speak with one?

So when Dr. Gabor Maté, a respected figure in the meditation community, a holocaust survivor and former-Zionist, said that he had discovered a darker history that he had not heard as a child, I started digging.

I listened to Palestinians describe their experiences in Gaza and the West Bank. I read history books that I had never heard of before. I spoke with as many Palestinians as I could, in order to understand more about their experiences. Some of those conversations are excerpted in the following pages.

Discovering A Parallel Universe: The Palestinian Experience

DISCLAIMER: I am not claiming that the historical narrative below is 'The Truth.' I am just summarizing what I have heard from Palestinians about their own historical understandings and lived experiences. I recommend reading and watching their first-hand accounts, in the following pages and on our YouTube.

For centuries, Muslims, Christians, and Jews lived together in peace in the land of Palestine. There were always people moving in and out in small numbers, and everything was fine.

In the early 1900s, Jewish refugees began flooding into Palestine, driven by persecution in Europe. At first, Palestinians welcomed Jewish immigrants with open arms. But in 1917, British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour sent a letter to a wealthy British Zionist named Lord Rothschild,

expressing support for "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people." This letter became known as The Balfour Declaration, and precipitated a massive influx of European Jews who came with the settler-colonial Zionist ideology of establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

The British had promised Palestinians independence in their own land, so they naturally objected, but their peaceful protests were ignored and overruled by the Jewish-Zionist government that the British were establishing in Palestine.

In 1948, more than 750,000 Palestinians were forced from their homes, and those who did not leave were violently killed. Israelis massacred thousands of Palestinian men, women, and children, ethnically cleansed 500+ towns, stole Palestinians' homes and lands, and did not allow the homeowners to return. To Palestinians, this event was known as The Nakba, or The Catastrophe. Most residents of Gaza and The West Bank are descended from Palestinians who fled their homes in 1948. Many families retain the keys to their homes in the hope that they may one day return. They are still considered refugees, internally displaced in their own land.

Palestinians tried to engage in peace talks, but the Israelis never made reasonable offers. When negotiations were finally looking hopeful, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by a right-wing Israeli extremist. Rabin's peace agreements were never fulfilled by subsequent administrations.

Since the early 1900s, Palestinians have been marginalized and violently oppressed, more and more, by Zionism and the Jewish-Nationalist Israeli society.

In The West Bank, Israeli "settlers" illegally steal Palestinians' homes and lands and kill innocent Palestinians. The IDF allows this to happen, and often even

helps the settlers. Settlers are allowed to move freely and act with impunity within The West Bank, but Palestinians – to whom The West Bank rightfully belongs – are required to submit to oppressive Israeli security checkpoints when simply trying to move around in their own lands. Palestinian areas of The West Bank are shrinking into fragmented enclaves, separated from one another by Israeli-occupied areas, leading many around the world to describe the situation as occupation and apartheid. The IDF raids families' homes at random to keep Palestinians in a state of fear and submission. The IDF bulldozes Palestinian homes, and when the owners apply for permits to rebuild, they are left waiting forever, while settlers' building permits are granted immediately. Palestinians of all ages (even children and teenagers) are thrown into Israeli prisons without being charged and kept in prison for years. Some are stripped, abused and raped. These are just a few of the injustices endured by Palestinians in The West Bank at the hands of the Israelis.

The situation in Gaza is even worse. Under siege for decades, Gazans are unable to import the goods that they need, or travel internationally. Many Gazans, and observers around the world, describe Gaza as the world's largest open-air prison, or concentration camp. When Gazans try to protest peacefully, they are killed by IDF snipers, as in The Great March of Return in 2018.

Since its inception, Israel has been committing a systematic genocide of Palestinians – a genocide that is now moving into the "extermination phase." As of June 2024, Israel has dropped 70,000 tons of bombs on Gaza, killing over 37,000 Palestinians – mostly women and children. At this point, many young Palestinians feel that they have no choice aside from violent revolution. →

Two Narratives...
One Truth?

Clearly, Palestinians and Israelis tell very different stories about the history of the conflict, and are experiencing it in very different ways. Humans on both sides see themselves as “righteous victims” of violence and injustice, which they believe has been perpetrated, wholly and completely, by “the other side.”

Is one side lying, and the other telling the truth? Are there grains of truth (and falsehood) on both sides?

While today’s “commentators” on CNN, FOX, and yes, even, TikTok, often portray history according to their own agendas, narratives and beliefs... historical documents provide a clearer glimpse into actual events, as they happened.

So I dove into congressional speeches, police reports, newspaper articles, and more, from the late 1800s and early 1900s. These investigations opened my eyes to the bigger picture: the chaotic Reality beneath the carefully curated narratives. To understand the history, explore the treasure trove of historical documents at meditationmag.com/blog/palestine-documents.

While many historical details have been debated and obscured for over a century, and many facts are impossible to verify, there are two big-picture truths that must be understood and acknowledged by both sides – and by peace activists abroad – in order to move toward reconciliation and peace in Israel and Palestine:

- 1. Humans on both sides have suffered tremendously, and humans on both sides have caused tremendous suffering.

This is not to say that blame and suffering are equal on both sides – only that humans on both sides have valid concerns that must be addressed in order to move toward a true and lasting peace.

- 2. The Israeli and Palestinian narratives are two sides of the same coin – two experiences of the same Reality.

Jews – in Israel and around the world – learn Israeli history from a Jewish-Israeli

point of view. Palestinians, in Palestine and around the world, learn Palestinian history from an Arab-Palestinian point of view.

Both sides cherry-pick the facts they include in their history lessons, to highlight the parts of the story that make themselves look good and their enemies look evil. Both sides leave out important parts that can help explain the “enemy’s” experiences, perspectives and behaviors.

This selective-story-telling has led to the development of “parallel narratives,” where each group only learns part of the full story. Both narratives include truths, half-truths, and outright lies.

These one-sided narratives lead both groups to develop anger and hatred toward one another. They feel righteous indignation at the horror and suffering that has been inflicted upon their people... without realizing or understanding the horror and suffering that their people has inflicted upon the other.

Unfortunately, Israelis and Palestinians rarely speak to each other about the conflict in a way that leads to mutual understanding of the experiences of the other. They never really learn each other’s history in a way that allows them to view each other as “human.”

Both sides view themselves as morally virtuous victims, instead of understanding the roles that both peoples have played in the conflict.

This willful ignorance and avoidance of listening to “the other side” is precisely what allows the dehumanization, and the conflict itself, to continue.

Communication → Understanding
→ Reconciliation → Peace

In order to truly understand each others’ experiences, and awaken to our shared pain, suffering, and humanity, we need to communicate, together, with open minds and open hearts — without blaming, or dismissing, or “arguing to win.”

Thích Nhat Hanh (Thay) brought together Israelis and Palestinians in meditation retreats at his Plum Village monastery in France. First they meditated. Then they walked around in meditation. Then, only once they had calmed their emotions and connected with the peace

“The Israeli and Palestinian narratives are two sides of the same coin – two experiences of the same Reality.”

at the center of The Universe, they sat down to talk — and, as Thay emphasized, to listen. They practiced mindful speaking and compassionate listening.

Through these meditation retreats, Palestinians and Israelis became friends, understanding each other in their common humanity, and their shared connection to the same homeland. These groups of friends came back to Israel and Palestine and spread ripples of peace throughout the region, forming and inspiring bi-national groups of Israelis and Palestinians who are now working together toward a shared vision of nonviolence and reconciliation

amongst their peoples.
During Meditation Magazine’s Peace Summit in May 2024, I spoke with members of some of those bi-national groups, moderated conversations between Palestinians and Israelis, and interviewed peace activists from around the world.
The conversations between these courageous individuals has, to a large extent, restored my faith in the peace process, and showed me the seeds, the roots, and the sprouts, from whence a true, lasting peace will eventually bloom.
Here are some excerpts from those conversations. →

Security wall near
Pisgat zeev, Israel

Ali & Einat

Ali Abu Awwad is a prominent Palestinian proponent of peace. He is the founder of the Palestinian National Nonviolence Movement Taghyeer, which means “change” in Arabic. Einat Gerlitz is a conscientious objector (“refusenik”) who was jailed for refusing to join the Israeli Army, and now works toward ending the occupation and oppression of Palestinians as a nonviolent activist with the Israeli Mesarvot network.



Ali Abu Awwad
I was born as a refugee in the West Bank, after my family was thrown out of our town, which is in

Israel today. My mother used to be one of the leaders of the PLO, the Palestinian Liberation Organization. I participated in the first intifada. Not because of politics, [but because] I saw the humiliation of my mother in front of my eyes when I was a child. She was arrested several times by

the Israeli army and security forces. It didn’t take me a minute to participate. In 1987, I started throwing stones at Israeli soldiers. I was arrested with my mother. I faced very hard torture and humiliation by the security officers, as well as my mother. They gave me ten years as a matter of revenge because I refused to give evidence against my mother. I was just 17 years old.

I was totally broken. I lost everything: my future, my dignified conditions, and the meaning of my existence. I lost it by being in prison. And I lost my opportunity to study. I had an insane Palestinian dream at that time to become a pilot. But Palestinians couldn’t be pilots. We had no passport, no recognition, and we were even considered terrorists or dangerous by many countries around the world.

I went to prison with my broken heart and dreams... and found out that Palestinian political prisoners turned the prison into one of the best universities you can imagine. You have to study. People will exam you. You have to read books, learn languages. Month after month, I

became so busy with the system that when I told my friends outside I was busy, they couldn’t understand what I was talking about.

Month after month, I wanted to visit my mother in her other prison... which Israel always refused, which was illegal even by Israeli law. We decided to go on a hunger strike to see each other; 17 days of starvation. By the end of it, we managed to get Israel to agree that we would meet. I met her for 45 minutes, and all of this pain disappeared.

Then I came back to my prison very confused, very conflicted. Because I thought that what had been taken by force should be achieved back by force. Until that minute, I realized that with all of my right cause and right beliefs of my legal rights, I was blind to the rightest weapon that I had never used, which was my humanity.

In a hunger strike, you don’t harm anyone; you just harm yourself. But the goal is not to suicide. The goal and the deepest message is that you are telling your oppressor, “Whatever you are going

to do, I’m going to embarrass you among your own humanity, because I’m not going to do the same as what you do to me.” You become the reflection of him; you become a mirror of his humanity. So, I started learning nonviolence in prison.

I was released by the Oslo peace initiative. This [peace] process failed for many reasons. We could see the occupation going on and on with no hope. When the second intifada started in 2000, I decided not to take part.

One day, I was badly wounded by an Israeli settler near Hebron. I was evacuated to Saudi Arabia for medical treatment and learned that my brother, Yousef – 31 years old – was trying to come back home, was stopped by a group of Israeli soldiers, and violently murdered for no reason.

At that minute, I faced the biggest exam of my life. Am I truthful to my beliefs of nonviolence, or can I just give up everything and take revenge?

I was struggling between these values of life, humanity, and revenge. Until one day, my mother hosted a group of Israeli

bereaved families... people who have lost someone in the conflict. For me, that was the first time I saw a Jewish person cry.

I couldn’t imagine that Jews have tears, fears, or feelings, until that moment. Then all of what I had been struggling with – because I wanted to feed this monster inside me by labeling the other as not being human beings – but that minute, this bereavement brought us together to the level that I realized we are sharing the same humanity.

Kevin Ellerton: What is your philosophy regarding nonviolence?

Ali Abu Awwad: Nonviolence, for me, is the celebration of my existence and my people’s existence.

Being a nonviolent person is to identify with our humanity more than anything else, which is the highest value of our existence on this planet and in this short life.

I could be the prisoner of my victimizer... or I can be the free soul that will achieve my goal in my life. Even if I

don’t achieve this goal – of independence, freedom, and security for all the people of this land – it’s the way I choose to spend it.

Kevin Ellerton: Do you believe that nonviolence is more effective than violence in resolving conflicts?

Ali Abu Awwad: Definitely. Especially in our conflict. Considering the complexity, and the background, and the narrative of both sides... you realize [that peace can only come through] nonviolence.

We are so intertwined, both people with different identities, in this Only Land where we both belong, and no one is going to go anywhere.

Many conflicts can be solved by violence and militant actions, but there will be nothing to live for. The destruction and the damage that can be created will need tens if not hundreds of years to heal. What is winning here?

I don’t want my freedom to be built on hundreds of Jewish graves. And I don’t want Jewish security to be built on my dignity and freedom.



Panoramic view of Hebron, West Bank, Palestine



This photo: Tel Aviv Skyline at night. Above: Ali Abu Awwad



Kevin Ellerton: How can we get to peace?



Einat Gerlitz:

I think that the only way to move toward a solution is for all of us to start seeing where we're at fault, to

take responsibility, and to see the other side's pain.

That's one of the biggest problems here. We grow up very separated. We don't know enough about each other's history, and what we do know is very manipulated. We're just not able, when we grow up, to know each other's true culture and history and pain.

Israelis and Palestinians, many people feel as if they're the only victims and the other side is completely to blame. It makes people very close-minded because that's what they grew up on.

I think the biggest courage is to be open to hear different stories, and to hear about the complicated reality that maybe we were not told about when we were younger. The real courage, I think, is to look those stories in the eye and to be open to hear them, and then to look for all the colors of what happened and what is happening to all the people in this land.

That's the first step to move on to something better.

Ali Abu Awwad: People say there is no peace without justice. I believe in justice as a value, but I don't think there is a just solution for this conflict. There is a fair solution.

What I will add to what Einat said is: There is no peace without truth. We have to be truthful to ourselves and to the other.

Kevin Ellerton: What specific actions should we take right now to get to peace?

Ali Abu Awwad: [First] we need a ceasefire – a ceasefire that will be under an international political umbrella that will allow a cease-conflict as well. That's number one.

Immediately, we need aid for everyone.

We need a process to start releasing innocent people, prisoners, hostages on both sides. This approach will guarantee and fuel hope. We need to fuel hope by practical actions on the ground.

We need a guarantor — an international guarantor and an Arab guarantor — to get engaged directly in this approach, and give three to five years that will end by a recognition of two states by every party around the world. When you do it in a guarantor way, so that it will end not with more settlements like Oslo, and not with more suicide bombers, people will get back their hope. This is the only approach that I see.

We need to get rid of the recent political leadership. Both of them are horrible. Both of them are corrupted. We don't have leaders; we have politicians. Politicians are managers of reality, fueled by fear, anger, and hate. Leaders are managers of the future, fueled by hope, responsibility, and humanity. This is the difference [between politicians and leaders].

And the most important thing: we need massive pressure on political leadership on both sides, to sit at the table and take hard decisions.

Einat Gerlitz: We need the activists abroad to pressure their governments to put the people first. Put the Palestinian people and the Israeli people in front of their eyes – not the violence, and not the Zionism. We need them to look for the people, to take care of aid, to take care of the hostages. To pressure and move toward a real, true political agreement, a sustainable one that's in the interest of the people and not the politicians.

We need you guys to go out and demand your decision-makers, wherever you are, to stop this war, to let in aid, to bring back the hostages, and most importantly, pressure them for leading a political agreement. Otherwise, we're going to see another war like this in the close future if we don't have a real agreement. A dry ceasefire is not going to be enough.

Kevin Ellerton: Should people in the

international community be Pro-Israel or Pro-Palestine?

Einat Gerlitz: One of the biggest problems right now is that people abroad are choosing to see the reality very black and white, and that's very dangerous. We need people on the Pro-Human-Rights side.

Looking at both sides is not necessarily seeing them as equal, and it doesn't erase all the blame and the responsibility. Looking at both sides means seeing where each side is at fault, what are the problems, seeing the bigger picture of what led to this point.

I think that's where people should be—on the pro-human rights side, and amplifying the nonviolent voices. That's what we need right now.

Ali Abu Awwad: I just came back from the Geneva Human Rights Film Festival. My message was so clear and dire: Be Pro-Solution. It's easy to be Pro-Israel or Pro-Palestine, but be Pro-Solution.

We activists on the ground need to make [our message to the international community] very clear: "We are not ready to pay more prices of our identity, existence, or security because of the gap that people in the diaspora are creating by taking sides."

We need the international community's commitment to a solution. Especially, Jews and Muslims around the world: "Not in our name. Hate is not in our name. Divide is not in our name."

Just imagine, in Washington DC, a million Jews and Muslims marching the streets, to put pressure on Biden, to be pro-solution more than being pro-this or pro-that. This can work. Because when Jews stand up for Palestinians, the State Department will listen. When Muslims stand up for Jews, they will listen much better than when we speak for ourselves. →

ALI AND EINAT WENT ON TO TALK ABOUT THE ROOT CAUSES OF THE VIOLENCE, AND WHETHER THEY BELIEVE WE CAN GET TO PEACE IN OUR LIFETIMES. SCAN THIS QR CODE TO WATCH THE WHOLE CONVERSATION!



Parents Circle

The Parents Circle Families Forum is a group of Palestinian and Israeli families who have lost loved ones in the conflict. Founded in 1995, the PCFF believes that true peace can only come through communication, understanding, and reconciliation.

Our conversation at Meditation Magazine’s Peace Summit included Robi Damelin, an Israeli mother whose son David was killed by a Palestinian sniper, and Layla Alsheikh, a Palestinian mother whose six-month-old son, Qussay, died when she was prevented by Israeli soldiers from bringing him to the hospital.



Layla Alsheikh

I was born and raised in Jordan, and for me, it was a dream to come back to Palestine to live. I was so

happy when I came here. After two years, we had two children and we became much happier because we started to have our own family. But the second Intifada started and the situation was so hard for me because that was the first time I lived in a situation like that.

On the 11th of April 2002, my son woke up in very critical condition because, that night, the Israeli soldiers came to our village and threw tear gas. Because of that, he became sick. When we tried to take him to a hospital, they prevented us for more than four hours. Because of the lack of treatment... he died.

I became very angry, very sad. I felt hatred and anger against all of Israel because, for me, all of them were responsible for his death.

After 16 years, I met one of my friends, and he started to talk to me about the Parents Circle. I said to him, “Are you crazy? I’m the last person you could talk to about this. You know what happened to me.”

He said, “Why haven’t you told your other children who came after Qussay about his story?”

I said, “Because I don’t want them to be part of this cycle of violence. I didn’t want

to lose them. Because maybe they would seek revenge, and I’m not ready to lose another one.”

He said to me, “Maybe if you join the Parents Circle, you can protect your children, and other families [as well].”

He invited me to a conference for the Parents Circle in Bethlehem. That was the first time I listened to Israelis who spoke about their stories and how they lost their beloved ones. I was really shocked. For the first time, I looked at them as humans like me. For the first time, I felt that we share the same pain. We share the same tears. Even if we had different circumstances, we’re still human. Nothing is worse than losing a child.

So from that day, I decided to participate in one of the Parents’ Circle projects, called the “Narrative Project,” which gives a chance for both sides to sit, to talk, to share, and to learn from each other. We had two professors from both sides, Israeli and Palestinian, who spoke about the history of the two nations. We went to Yad Vashem Museum to learn more about the Holocaust. We even went to visit a Palestinian village that existed before 1948.

It’s not about comparing the pain, it’s not about who’s right and who’s wrong. It’s about understanding each other, understanding where everyone came from, and learning from each other.

[During this project] was the first time I spoke about what happened to my son. Even between me and my husband, we didn’t speak about him after his death. That was so hard for me. After 16 years, it was like opening the wound again, bringing the memories back, the pain, the anger, everything. I couldn’t complete the story. In the middle of it, I started to cry. Then an Israeli woman, Luisa, came and started to apologize. She said, “I didn’t hurt you, but the people who hurt you were my own people. I’m a mother too, I understand your pain, I understand the words you can’t even say.” She came and hugged me and both of us started to cry.

She didn’t know that day, but her simple words changed my whole life. She brought me back to my beliefs as a Muslim mother. I believe in the Quran. I believe in

the scriptures. And there’s a scripture that says you can’t judge all people because of the mistake of one person. I know it, I believe in it, but I didn’t work with it because I felt hatred and anger.

From that day, I decided to be a member in the Parents Circle, to start giving lectures inside Israel and Palestine, to travel around the world to spread the message of peace and reconciliation.

I thought I had become a great person, doing everything right, and that was it, everything was going well. But a year ago, we were in Jerusalem with Robi and people from other organizations. After we spoke about our stories, an Israeli man stood up and started to talk about his personal story. He mentioned that he was a high officer and he served in my area. He mentioned that he prevented a Palestinian car, which had sick children, from going to a hospital.

Then it became hard for me. That was the real test if I meant every word I say, if I meant everything I did. At the beginning, I didn’t know what to say or do. I started to cry.

Then Robi asked both of us to go outside and start to talk. He said to me, “This is so important for me to tell you. I know it’s hard, but I really want to let you know.” He said, “After some time, my son became sick, and when I tried to take him to a hospital, the guard stopped me because he wanted to ask a few questions. I was in a hurry. Then I understood what I did to the Palestinian [mother].”

He quit the army and was jailed because he refused to serve again. He established another organization called “Combatants for Peace.”

I looked at him and said, “This is so hard for me to listen to you, but at the same time, I want to thank you because if I knew that part of your story was there and you didn’t tell me, I would never forgive you. But because you have that honesty and that courage to speak in front of me, I could forgive you. Because I know what you try to do on the ground to end this situation, to end this conflict, I could now forgive you.”

Then I realized: this is the real reconciliation. It’s so easy to speak about



love and peace and all these words, but sometimes you will ask yourself if you really meant that or not. On that day, I realized I meant everything I did. That gave me the power to continue, even in these dark times.



Robi Damelin

I have been thinking a lot about what happened on October the 7th, and what happened with the man who

killed my son David... and how I could understand, why.

It’s not about condoning violence. It’s about, when you understand why, it’s a beginning, maybe, of a discussion.

When I think about how children grow

up in Gaza with constant war every two years, their mothers not having shelter, running away, not being free, not having freedom of movement, what kind of adult comes out of that? Then I look at the children who live on the kibbutzim on the border of Gaza. October the 7th changed everything for them. What kind of adults are they going to be?

Our work is very much cut out for us. I think that in many ways, I reacted to October the 7th almost the same way that I reacted when I heard that David was killed. It was this immediate need to change the world overnight... and maybe not really being in touch with the grief.

The Parents Circle found me after I spoke at a demonstration to end the occupation. I said in that same statement that we could not do this alone. We had to

have a Palestinian partner. So, they invited me to come to a weekend in East Jerusalem.

I remember sitting around this table and looking into the eyes of the Palestinian mothers and realizing that we actually shared the same pain and that the tears that fell into anybody’s grave are the same color.

We could be this remarkable force if we could stand on a stage together, and talk in the same voice for reconciliation, for nonviolence, and for ending the occupation. How extraordinary would that be? →

VIEWS ASKED ROBI AND LAYLA ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY PROTESTS, THE USE OF THE WORD GENOCIDE, HOW THEY ARE ABLE TO FORGIVE AFTER SUCH PROFOUND LOSS, AND MORE. SCAN THIS QR CODE TO WATCH THE FULL CONVERSATION.



Jerusalem at sunset. The Dome of The Rock and The Western Wall; two of the the holiest sites in the world for Muslims and Jews respectively.

Combatants For Peace

Founded in 2006, during the second intifada, Combatants For Peace is a group of former Israeli & Palestinian combatants who have chosen the path of nonviolence. In our conversation at The Peace Summit, we met with Ahmed Helou (ex-Hamas) and Moran Zamir (ex-IDF) to talk about their personal stories, the paths of violence vs. nonviolence, and how we can get to peace.



Ahmed Helou

I grew up with my grandparents’ story, and my parents’ story, about the Nakba – how they ran away from Be’er Sheva to Jericho, and from Jericho to Jordan, and came back by foot – how many people were killed in front of them, how many bodies they buried.

All these stories made me angry and hate the Jews themselves, because when they told me the stories, they said, “The Jew did that. The Jew occupied. The Jew killed.” So the hate grew in my heart and my mind against the Jews themselves. I said, “I must take revenge, and I must be a strong fighter to avenge my people.”

When the first Intifada started I was 15 years old. I started to participate with the youth. I was a little bit of a religious guy, and I became a Hamas member. I started to throw stones against the Israeli military, to make Palestinian flags, to make graphics asking people to join the Intifada to make strikes against the occupation, till the Israeli army came to my home and arrested me.

I stayed seven months in the Israeli jail. At that time, the Oslo agreements started, and my parents came to visit me. My father told me about the agreements, and that the Palestinian flag became legal, and that Jericho was full of Palestinian flags, and the people... they were raising the flags everywhere. That made me cry. Because before this agreement, the Palestinian flags were illegal, and if the Israeli army caught any Palestinian with the flag, they would put him in jail for six or seven months. Now it is legal – by talking, by negotiation, by

this agreement. And this was also making me think about another way [of achieving Palestinian rights].

We use violence, we don’t succeed... but in the negotiation and peace agreement, we succeed to make the Palestinian flag legal, and we start talking about the Palestinian state! All this that happened – I took it and put it somewhere in my mind, and I went forward in my life.

When I got out from jail, I joined the ambulance service.

In September 1996, Netanyahu became the Prime Minister of Israel. He decided to open a tunnel under Al-Aqsa, and the Palestinians became angry and went to the street again to protest against this decision. Many violence happened in Jericho. There was a settlement inside Jericho, and the Palestinians started throwing stones against it. I took my uniform and the ambulance car, and I went to this demonstration to see if I can help.

I see a guy fall down. I run to him to check. I found he’s a friend of mine, Faiz, 21 years old. He got shot. I carry him with my hands to take him to the ambulance. But after a few steps, I fell down.

I asked myself directly, “Why I fell down? I’m strong enough to carry him and to run a few kilometers, not just a few steps.” The people close to us, they start shouting, “Injured! Injured!” and they carry me too. I started feeling numb in my back, and they put me in the ambulance.

I woke up in Ramallah Hospital after three days. I asked about my friend, but no one knew what happened to him. The Israeli army closed the cities, and they put checkpoints everywhere. But my family succeed to escape from Jericho through the mountains, through the valley. At last, they arrived in Ramallah. They came to visit me in the hospital, and I asked them about my friend Faiz. They told me he passed away. It hurt me a lot.

After that, in 2004, my friend asked me to participate in a workshop with Israelis. I felt angry: how could she ask me to participate with the Israelis? But she succeed to convince me, and take me to this workshop. This workshop made a big shift in my mind, because I met people, Israelis, that support the Palestinian

“We use violence, we don’t succeed... but in the negotiation and peace agreement, we succeed to make the Palestinian flag legal, and we start talking about the Palestinian state!”

rights. They were against the occupation. They support two-state.

The Israelis I met before were settlers or soldiers; they were completely against Palestinian rights. But these people were completely different. So I became interested to know more about these people, and started to look for workshops to participate with them. During my research, during my workshops, I became a believer.

I hope to continue to prove that we can live in this land in peace, as equals, and in safety together.



PHOTO BY VALDEMARAS D. ON UNSPLASH



Moran Zamir

I grew up in a family in a kibbutz in the south.

The narrative that I grew up with basically says that we [Jews] came [to Palestine] in order to live in peace with the Palestinians, but for some reason, they don’t want to live in peace with us. Therefore, there is violence, and therefore, we have to protect ourselves.

But it’s not because of us... we want peace. It’s just something with the Palestinians. Maybe their culture, their religion, we don’t know why; they don’t want to live in peace. That basically was the narrative.

My grandfather came as a Holocaust survivor from Hungary. They all came with a very strong ideology that we came to our land, to our place, as a Jewish people.

When I was six years old, the Oslo peace agreement was signed. It was a very optimistic time in history, and my early childhood was colored by this optimism, that that’s the end of the conflict.

It all completely blew up in the year 2000, when the second Intifada started. What we experienced as young teenagers was a crazy wave of violence coming from nowhere. Suddenly, this dream of peace blew up to pieces. There was a lot of fear, a lot of terror attacks all over the country. Next to where I live, people were killed. It became scary to drive on the road because you might get shot.

What happened to me mentally – and I think for many people in my generation, Israeli and Palestinian – was fear transformed to hate very easily. We started to hate as young teenagers. I remember singing racist songs about Palestinians. But it came out of fear.

It’s not something that we grew up on. It’s a way to deal with those fears – to describe those people who want to kill us as monsters,

“What happened to me mentally – and I think for many people in my generation, Israeli and Palestinian – was fear transformed to hate very easily.”

not humans. Another reaction was a deep lack of trust. (It was very difficult for me to start trusting Palestinians, even after I became an activist. It took me a lot of years.)

With this attitude, I joined the IDF when I was 19, and served in a combat unit in Gaza.

My time in the army opened up a lot of doubt. I started asking questions about the narrative that we are just defending ourselves and that the Palestinians are the reason for the violence. It didn’t fit the reality I experienced as a soldier in Gaza.

We entered with very heavy arms to a Palestinian town, and arrested all the men to find one guy from Hamas. We didn’t know who exactly, so we arrested everyone. We demolished houses because they were in the way, and if we didn’t demolish them, maybe someone would hide and shoot at us. We demolished the whole neighborhood.

I started asking myself: is it worth it? Maybe we arrest this person, but on the way, we cause such a huge trauma to the people, especially the children, in those communities. I was sure that if I was in their place, I would start hating Israelis and want to take revenge. It was very clear to me that that’s their reaction to what we’re doing.

I ended my combat service with a lot of doubt, very confused. For many years I was kind of hiding those doubts. I escaped, like many young Israelis, to India, doing a lot of meditation, but not really facing those questions. At some point, it became clear to me that in order to keep myself, my soul, I had to face these questions.

By luck, I found myself at the [Parents Circle & Combatants For Peace] Alternative Memorial Day event in 2013. It was so powerful to see two brave fathers who lost their daughters in the conflict. One, a Palestinian, lost his daughter Abir, who was 11 years old, shot by an Israeli sniper at the entrance of her school. The second was Rami, who lost his daughter Smadar, who was 14 years old, killed in a Palestinian suicide bombing.

They both said the same thing: they didn’t care anymore who started the violence or whose fault it was, they just wanted it to stop. That was very moving and powerful for me.

I asked who organized this event, and they told me it was Combatants for Peace. I said, “Sign me up, I want to be part of it.”

Kevin Ellerton: After your experiences in Gaza, do you now believe that violence from

the Palestinian side is caused solely by Israeli oppression, rather than by Jihadist Islamic fundamentalism?

Moran Zamir: All kinds of ideologies exist. The question we need to ask ourselves is: “What are the conditions that allow a specific ideology to rise, to grow?”

I think the ideology that you mentioned, Jihad – it’s not just Muslim. There is Jewish Jihad [as well]. We sacrifice our lives in order to get this big religious or national goal.

But I think this kind of ideology, the soil that allows them to grow, is a soil of fear. As a teenager, those ideologies grew up in me because I experienced such a fear.

People are exposed to a lot of different ideologies. The question is, what makes them choose to go with the most radical, the most extremist? I think we need to ask: what is the condition that they live in?

Peace Talks

Before and after The Peace Summit, I’ve continued having as many difficult conversations about Israel & Palestine as I possibly can.

I interviewed Corey and Muhammad from The ASK Project. You may have seen Corey Gil-Schuster on YouTube, walking the streets of Israel and The West Bank, asking thousands of Palestinians and Israelis about their own experiences, perspectives and beliefs, and publishing all their answers on YouTube. If you want to understand the hearts and minds of the humans involved in the conflict, watch Corey’s videos, and my interview with Corey & Muhammad, on YouTube.

I’ve also been interviewing partisan Pro-Palestinian and Pro-Israel activists. While The Peace Summit focused mainly on peace activists (who do not take sides), I believe it is important to include partisan protestors in the conversation as well.

Over the past few weeks, I’ve had deep, heart-to-heart conversations with Pro-Palestinian activists like Alysia Fehrman and Merrick Soleil, and I feel that we have all benefited from understanding each other better through these discussions.

I will continue to have these types of conversations, with peace activists, and with Pro-Palestinian and Pro-Israel activists as well, to see how we can all work together to help get to Peace In The Middle East.

Peace, Safety, And Freedom For All Our Brothers & Sisters In Israel And Palestine

Israelis and Palestinians, Jews and Arabs, have been living in – and fighting over – the same homeland for millennia.

Both peoples have ancient roots, intertwined in the arid soil, family trees converging back, ultimately, to shared ancestors, deep in the unknowable mists of prehistoric civilization.

Does this three-thousand-year-old story have a happy ending?

It’s up to us, the humans of Planet Earth.

Do we perpetuate conflict by attacking and harming, dehumanizing and vilifying, and spend our lives fighting one another?

Or do we try to understand the minds and hearts of all the humans in Israel and Palestine, to help guide the situation toward reconciliation and peace?

Do we continue to rehash the atrocities on both sides, pointing fingers, pretending that we have unilateral answers to the multilateral question of “who is to blame?”

Or do we listen to one another, with open ears and open hearts, sharing our experiences, our fears, and our tears, and find our way toward a historic situation of understanding, empathy, brotherhood and reconciliation?

Do we cause more harm and suffering to men, women, and children by taking sides and encouraging violence? Or do we move forward together, toward a shared vision of a happy holy land, with peace, freedom, and equality for all?

Can you imagine a truly free Palestine, where Israelis and Palestinians can live, together, in peace? I can.

Tears stream down my cheeks as I write these words. I hope you can see what I am seeing.

After thousands of years of fighting, Jews and Arabs remember that they are cousins, living together in the shared homeland of their semitic ancestors.

A beautiful ending for one of the most epic stories ever told. The story is still unfolding, and the future is not yet written. It is up to us, the humans of Earth, to write the ending, together.

TO READ A LONGER, MORE IMPACTFUL, AND MORE COMPREHENSIVE VERSION OF THIS FEATURE -- INCLUDING THE FULL INTERVIEWS WITH THE INTERVIEWEES MENTIONED HERE -- SCAN THE QR CODE!



If you disagree with anything in this article, and you would like to have an honest conversation about it, either on Peace Talks or just on the phone, I want to talk to you! I want to understand your perspective. Please email hello@meditationmag.com if interested.
-- Kevin Ellerton

Old town and port of Jaffa, Tel Aviv City, Israel





3

Takeaways From The Peace Summit

1. Tears are more powerful than bombs.

Many interviewees, including Ali Abu Awwad, Robi Damelin, and Layla Alsheikh, all shared the same life-changing experience that led them to pursue the path of nonviolence and reconciliation: seeing the tears of someone on “the other side.”

We’ve all seen this in our relationships as well. Even when we are arguing or fighting, if someone starts crying real tears, suddenly compassion arises. Suddenly love is there.

Many people perceive crying as a sign of weakness, but in truth, it is a superpower. Tears are the most powerful weapons in the world. Tears can turn enemies into friends, transform anger into love, and bring peace to conflicts spanning thousands of years.

2. Violence may arise from ideologies, but ideologies are determined by experiences.

Ideologies are like seeds blowing in the wind. When the soil of our hearts is enriched with peace and love, flowers of peace and love can bloom. When the soil of our hearts is dry and cracked with fear and hatred, thorny weeds of separation and violence spread amongst the crevices.

A human growing up in conditions of fear, grief, violence and oppression is far more likely to resonate with extremist ideologies than a human growing up in a comfortable metropolitan lifestyle.

If life conditions can be improved for everyone, on both sides of the conflict, then the soil of our hearts and minds can be enriched, to allow the seeds of peace, love, and reconciliation to thrive.

3. Understanding promotes peace; dehumanizing fuels war.

Nearly all of the peace activists we interviewed asserted forcefully and clearly: taking one side and vilifying or dehumanizing the other is a manifestation of the “us-vs-them” tribalism that fuels conflicts. In order to get to peace, we need to understand the needs of all parties, and take care of the humans on both “sides,” while simultaneously acknowledging, criticizing and reforming the problematic systems and behaviors to resolve the underlying conflicts. ●

Who Are You, Really?

If you were born at exactly the same moment — to a different mother, a different community, a different religion — would you still be who you currently are?

Words by Jay Fenello

Many people believe that genetics (as inherited through our family tree) determines our race, color, and gender. They believe that our life experiences, as shared with family and community, paint unique stories of our lives that define who we are.

But what if we are more than this? More and more people are realizing that we are more than just our physical body, and more than just the stories we tell ourselves about our past.

And more and more people are

realizing that you are too. When you can see your enemy as another divine being sharing a human experience, you can suddenly understand how life circumstances could have brought them to this point in their life. Just as your life circumstances have brought you to yours.

“There but by the grace of God go I.” The true path to harmony lies not in replacing one narrative with another. The true path lies in removing the narratives altogether.

The true path is in coming to know who you really are. ●

NEXT STEPS...

Want to take action to bring peace, but don't know where to start?
Here are three ways to get more involved.

Watch The Peace Summit



Many of the interviews in this issue were livestreamed at our *Peace Summit* in May of 2024, accompanied by commentary and discussions with Meditation University instructors, and Chandra Lacombe's beautiful *Song For Peace*. To help spread Peace on Earth, watch, comment, and share the vids! meditationmag.com/peace



Listen To Peace Talks



Our ongoing interview series, with partisans and peacemakers, meditators and gurus, is now on spotify! spotify.com/pod/show/medmag
To increase the impact, listen, follow and share with friends. We hope you enjoy the episodes!



COME DEMONSTRATE WITH US!

Let's show the world what *PEACE* looks like.

Silent meditation speaks louder than screams,
promoting peace rather than rooting for "teams."
Together, we are changing the world.

meditationmag.com/peace





Peace Begins With Meat✕

In this article, Phil calls our attention to the largest system of violence and oppression on Planet Earth, and suggests ways that we, as individuals, can help bring peace for all conscious beings.

Words by Phil N. Rossner. Illustration by Chantal Poulin Durocher.

The ‘Disconnect’

Last week, I was listening to a podcast in which social-justice activist and filmmaker Michael Moore was speaking out, urgently and vociferously, about the horrific situation in Gaza.

While I wholeheartedly agree with Moore’s appeal to stop the killing of our fellow human beings, my jaw dropped when he took a break from the podcast to promote one of his long-time sponsors: a meat production company.

I was so bewildered that I had to take off my headphones. In the same breath as (rightfully) decrying the bombing of our brothers and sisters in Gaza, Moore was light-heartedly promoting the oppression and slaughter of billions of our animal cousins, simply for having been born into the wrong species.

I’m not writing this article to “call out” Michael Moore, but to call attention to an insidious form of unconsciousness that blinds us to what is right in front of our eyes – on commercials, in supermarkets, and even on our plates – that allows the single largest system of violence, oppression, and suffering on Planet Earth to continue to butcher over sixty billion living, breathing, loving beings every year.

By recognizing the roles that we unconsciously play in this enormous system of violence and suffering, we can begin to make more conscious choices.

By awakening to the roots of human indifference toward the horror and heartache of our animal relatives, we can begin to see a path toward a more peaceful future for all conscious beings.

Animals Are People Too

While many humans objectify farm animals as unthinking, unfeeling commodities to be raised for food (and are therefore unworthy of our empathy, compassion and respect), a growing body of evidence has demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt that “livestock” animals like cows, chickens, and pigs are fully conscious and sentient. They even experience complex emotions like compassion, love, and empathy.

Cows exhibit a wide range of emotions and social behaviors that indicate a level of sentience comparable to that of humans. Cows express excitement when solving problems, such as opening a gate to access food, and demonstrate deep familial bonds, often walking miles to reunite with their calves. They also prefer to sleep close to their family members and form friendships within their herds, showing affection through grooming and licking. They have the ability to recognize familiar faces, both bovine and human, and display emotions such as pleasure, frustration, excitement, stress, and grief.

Chickens display a sophisticated →

This page and
opposite: mothers
love their babies



“When we look at the world through another animal’s eyes, we see that inside we’re all the same—and that we all deserve to live free from suffering.”

- Joaquin Phoenix



level of social cognition and emotional depth, often underestimated in casual observations. They can recognize over a hundred individual faces, not only of their chicken friends, but also of humans. Chickens maintain complex social structures known as pecking orders, and communicate with a wide array of vocalizations, each signifying different emotions or warnings about potential threats. Mother hens show empathy for their chicks, becoming visibly stressed and calling out to them when they perceive danger.

Pigs are well known for their cognitive abilities and intelligence. You may have heard the recently publicized story of Johnny the pig, who acted as a loyal companion and protector to Hope, a disabled pig, ensuring her safety and access to food. Pigs also exhibit anxiety and fear, something I witnessed as a child during a primary school trip to a meat processing plant in Vancouver, BC. Almost 60 years later, I can still vividly recall the urgent, terrified screams of the pigs as they were being led to the gas chamber.

Sheep have shown remarkable social recognition abilities as well. They are able to remember and recognize up to fifty other sheep’s faces, for as long as two years! This suggests not only a strong memory, but also a social awareness of their friends and loved ones. Like all the other animals mentioned in this article, sheep experience REM sleep. One can only wonder what sheep dream about when they lie down to sleep at night.

Even rats have been observed showing

empathy through their actions when seeing the pain of their fellow beings. In one study, rats were given the choice to free a trapped cage-mate or access a food reward. Many rats chose to free their cage-mate first, indicating a level of concern for the well-being of others.

Recognizing and acknowledging the sentience of farm animals is an important step in treating them with the dignity and respect they deserve. It challenges our ancestors’ view of animals as mere commodities, and encourages a shift towards more compassionate and ethical treatment of our fellow conscious beings.

The Scale Of The Problem, And A Path Toward Solution

The scale of the suffering is hard to even imagine. When we see large numbers, we tend to think about statistics, rather than the individuals themselves. That’s why it’s so important for us to remember that every conscious being’s life is precious, to itself and to its loved ones. While cows and chickens may not use English words like “me” or “I,” every animal experiences existence through its own eyes and ears, as a subject, rather than an object. Every animal is The Universe, experiencing Itself. Every animal that is violently slaughtered is a Universe destroyed. Every parent, sibling, and child killed is a traumatizing memory of love and horror for the loved ones who are left behind.

Seeing Our Participation & Responsibility As Humans

As of 2024, less than 8% of the world’s human population identifies as vegetarian, while less than 1% identify as vegan. The remaining ~91% of humans continue to consume the flesh of our animal cousins.

Despite these disheartening figures, it is encouraging to see that there are some countries where veganism and vegetarianism are becoming much more mainstream.

Given its famous reverence for cows, it is no surprise that *India* has the highest percentage of vegetarians in the world, estimated at around 30% of the population. This is also due to the fact that three of India’s major religions — Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism — all emphasize ahimsa, non-violence towards all beings.

Considering recent events, it may come as a surprise to many that *Israel* has the highest percentage of vegans out of any country in the world. 5% of the Israeli population eat a completely plant-based diet – more than five times the global average. This appears to be due, in part, to Jewish ethical teachings and laws that promote empathy & compassion toward animals, as well as widespread secular attitudes, movements, and campaigns that support and promote animal-rights.

By cultivating empathy and compassion toward animals within ourselves and our societies, along with the cultural ethics of ahimsa and non-harming, humans are

beginning to awaken to the horror of the meat industry, and arise out of millions of years of unconscious participation in the slaughter of our fellow sentient beings.

Challenges & Obstacles To Ending The Violence Against Animals

Nearly all humans on Earth have been raised from childhood in families and cultures that partake in the slaughter and consumption of our fellow animals. Most of us have childhood memories of our parents cooking and serving us omnivorous meals. They encouraged us to “eat your meat,” with the true love of a mother feeding her child.

The animal-rights perspective espoused by many vegans can sometimes be seen by non-vegans as challenging to the cultural and social norms they have known all their lives. This can make people feel as though their dietary choices are being criticized. This perception may lead to feelings of defensiveness, resistance, and even anger towards veganism and vegans.

While the need to address animal suffering is urgent and dire, we must remember that a gentle, constructive, non-violent approach can often be more effective than an angry and combative one.

I think this wisdom was conveyed perfectly by the Grammy-nominated musical artist Moby, when he said: “There are a lot of people in the animal-rights movement who can be very passionate and

aggressive, and I applaud people’s passion. But when people are judgmental and aggressive, all you end up doing is getting other people to turn away in irritation. To change people’s minds, you have to respect the people you’re talking to.”

The Path Forward & How We Can Help Right Now

Through the awakening of our species to spirituality, love, unity and compassion, we have a historic opportunity to reduce the suffering of the beings around us, and to move forward into a more peaceful future.

By understanding the ways in which we have been conditioned into harmful habits by our parents, cultures, societies and peers, we are rising out of unconsciousness and ignorance.

You don’t need to join PETA, engage in intensive activism, or shame your relatives at Thanksgiving Dinner in order to make a difference.

Even just one person refraining from eating animals for one day per week (on “meatless Mondays,” for example), or for one meal per day, can save hundreds of animals over the course of her lifetime.*

Each of us can play a part in reducing the suffering of innocent beings and bringing peace in this world. By becoming aware of the choices we make on a daily basis – of what to eat, and what not to eat – we can move forward into a brighter future, to a place of peace and harmony within the natural world. ●

The sad facts.

Keeping in mind the absolute tragedy of each and every individual, let’s put the scale of this suffering in perspective:

60 billion

animals are slaughtered for human consumption every year

8 billion

animals (equivalent to the entire human population of Planet Earth) are killed for meat every 47 days

340 million

animals (more than the entire human population of the United States) are killed every 48 hours

170 million

animals are slaughtered – more than the entire human populations of Israel, Palestine, Ukraine, Sudan, Yemen, and Syria combined, every day.

9 billion

chickens and

32 million

cows are slaughtered every year to feed the American meat-eating population.

*P.S. Adding plant-based foods to your diet doesn’t need to be a difficult or uncomfortable task; there are many delicious plant-based foods available in grocery stores. See the Peace Begins With Pea section of this magazine for some delicious pea-based recipes!

Satsang Fellowship

Monthly
online
spiritual
gatherings



Promoting Self-
knowledge,
transformation,
and true clarity

Sign
up for
free!

Sign up here:
i-coda.org/calendar/satsang

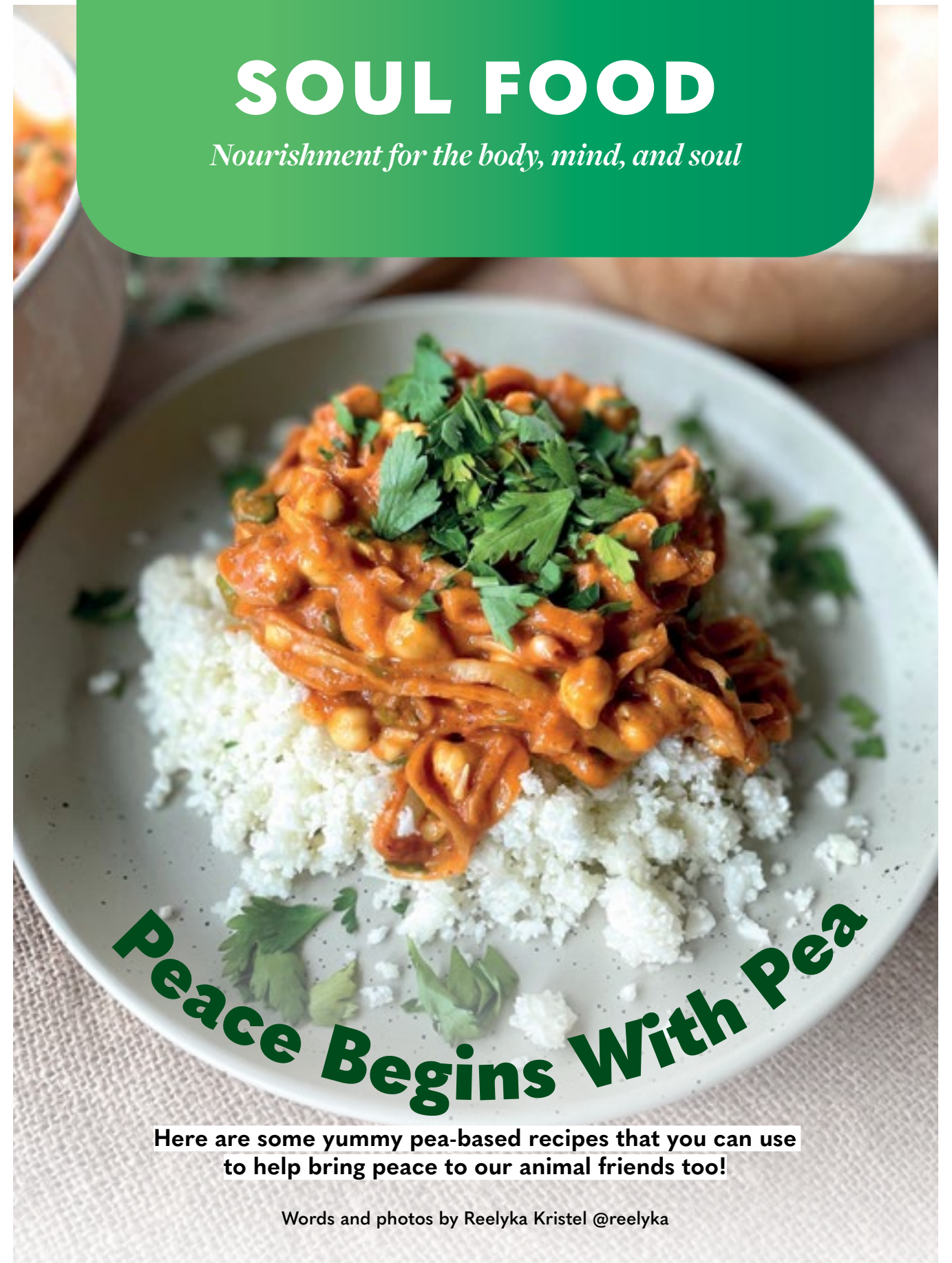


International Centers
of Divine Awakening

ILLUSTRATION: FREEPIK

SOUL FOOD

Nourishment for the body, mind, and soul



Peace Begins With Pea

Here are some yummy pea-based recipes that you can use
to help bring peace to our animal friends too!

Words and photos by Reelyka Kristel @reelyka





Raw Chickpea Curry

Omg! Can you believe this is raw? And it tastes soo familiar, like you're actually eating a traditional chickpea curry. My perfect comfort meal, but also super healthy, full of vitamins and LIFE. Try it out

Ingredients

- 200g of sprouted chickpeas
- 1 onion (you can use a salad onion or spring onions for a milder taste)
- meat from 2 young coconuts
- 250g sweet tomatoes
- 2 cloves of garlic
- 1 tbsp fresh ginger
- 5-7 medium dates
- 7 soaked sundried tomatoes
- 2 tbsp curry powder
- 2 tbsp date or maple syrup
- 2 tbsp apple cider vinegar or lemon juice
- 200g of cauliflower
- Fresh coriander/parsley

Method

1. You get the perfect chickpeas by sprouting them and then freezing them for 24 hours or more, and then defrosting them under hot water. They'll get softer and become really similar to cooked chickpeas, but not exactly.
2. Cut the onion into super thin slices.
3. Marinate the onion with some date syrup and apple cider vinegar. Dehydrate for about 2 hours.
4. Make the creamy curry sauce by adding the fresh coconut meat, tomatoes, garlic, ginger, dates, sun dried tomatoes and curry powder in the blender and blend until you have a super creamy and curry-like mixture.
5. If it's too thick then you can add more water, or the liquid from the soaked sundried tomatoes.
6. Take a huge bowl and put your sprouted chickpeas and dehydrated onion in there. On top, put the curry sauce. Mix it all together.
7. If you like, add freshly chopped coriander or parsley – they both suit well with this dish. :)
8. For the cauliflower rice, just add cauliflower pieces in the food processor and process until you get a rice-like mixture.
9. Serve this curry with some cauli rice and enjoy. It's soo satisfying, you won't regret it.



Green Pea Noodles

This is a very simple dish, but the green peas add an amazing sweetness to it. It's perfect to make in the summer when you can get fresh sweet green peas.

Ingredients

Noodles

- 2-3 zucchinis
- 100g of green peas
- 2-3 spring onions, finely chopped

Sauce

- half avocado - 50g
- 200g green peas
- 1 clove of garlic
- 50g of pumpkin seeds
- you can add different herbs: parsley, coriander, dill, onion, etc.
- splash of water

Method

1. Make your noodles out of zucchinis with a julienne peeler or vegetable spiralizer machine.
2. Add green peas and cut some spring onion.
3. Mix the salad together.
4. Make the sauce with avocado, green peas, garlic, pumpkin seeds and herbs.
5. Blend it all together and add a tiny bit of water to help it mix. For a thicker sauce, just add a splash of water. But if you want a creamy/runny sauce, add up to a full cup of water.
6. Pour the sauce over your noodles and enjoy.

Ingredients

- 200g raw green peas
- 1 tbsp raw agave syrup
- 1 tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 bunch basil

Method

1. Blend the ingredients together in a food processor or blender until you have a smooth, spread-like texture. Enjoy with some raw bread or crackers.
2. You can always add some more seasoning to it like lemon juice, tahini, or whatever you'd like.



Green Pea Spread

If you want a delicious low-fat spread then this is it!

ASTROLOGYNOW PODCAST

Discover yourself through Jyotish, the Science of Light.

AstrologyNow Podcast is devoted to sharing the magic of Vedic astrology, spiritual insights, and philosophy to support you in navigating the weekly cosmic waters.

Learn how the cosmos will influence you and the world around by tuning in weekly to AstrologyNow - available on all major platforms.

Want to go deeper? Schedule an astrology reading at innerknowing.yoga

Understanding your natal birth chart will give insight into your "karmic blueprint" and path of life. An astrology reading will support you with:

- gaining insight into personality traits
- uncovering karmic patterns
- understanding phases of life from a karmic or astrological perspective
- partnership and intimacy
- career and vocation
- emotional / mental barriers or strengths
- personal gifts and limitations
- our spiritual life or suggested remedial measures



Christine Rodriguez has a masters in Social Work and is a certified Vedic astrologer, Vedic counselor, yoga teacher, and kundalini teacher.



Together, we can bring peace

Let us renounce, together, the path of division, hatred, violence, vengeance, and oppression. Let us embrace, together, the path of unity, love, nonviolence, social justice, reconciliation, and freedom for all conscious beings.

Conflict is inevitable; violence is not. Violence does not resolve conflicts. Even in its greatest victory, violence can only impose the will of one party upon another. The only way to truly resolve conflicts and create lasting peace is together, through dialogue and negotiation, by speaking assertively and listening compassionately, honoring and fulfilling the human needs and aspirations of our "adversaries" with as much urgency as our own. By caring for our "enemies" as we do for ourselves, we can finally begin to dissolve the suffering, dismantle systems of violence and oppression, bring justice for all, and create true and lasting peace. This is the way.

Scientific studies have concluded that nonviolent action is more than 2x as effective as violence in achieving political goals, and more than 10x as effective in bringing true democratic reforms and lasting peace. When we understand how conflicts are truly resolved, the results of these studies come as no surprise at all.

In moments when all else fails and self-defense is needed, let us act wisely to protect ourselves and others – including

those we see as "enemies." We must do so with mindfulness instead of rage, with love instead of hate, with compassion instead of cruelty, with respect for all life, and with Bodhicitta, the awakened heart.

When we remember that the suffering of our "enemies" can manifest as hatred and violence toward ourselves and our loved ones, and that by helping our "enemies" be happy, we convert them into friends... we naturally treat them with kindness and love. Not because we are saints or martyrs, but because we know that this is the only way to resolve the conflict, and for us to enjoy peace, tranquility, and happiness as well.

Let us sow the seeds of peace

In the face of conflict and injustice, many humans believe that getting angry, hating each other, quarreling with and hurting one another will bring about the peace and justice that they desire. This idea is so self-contradictory that it is almost comical, yet many people still believe it.

It should go without saying that anger, hatred, and fighting are seeds of war, not peace... but many humans inadvertently add fuel to fires that they are, with the best intentions, attempting to extinguish.

Hate does not extinguish hate; only love can do that. War cannot end war; only peace can do that. Trying to stop violence with violence is like trying to heal a bruise with a hammer.

We can create peace in this world... but only if we do so peacefully.

"There is no way to peace. Peace is the way." – A.J. Muste

When we are at peace with ourselves, we live in peace with our families, our friends, our colleagues, our acquaintances... the peace in our hearts spills out into the world around us. The people around us become more peaceful in turn, which affects the people around them, and the people around them...

Every individual who evolves – from hatred to love, from violence to nonviolence, from war to peace – contributes to the evolution of our world as a whole. Every peaceful action you take, every peaceful word you say, contributes directly to Peace On Earth.

When we, the readers and authors of Meditation Magazine, raise our voices for peace, as a spiritual community, and spread the message of Oneness, unity, love, reconciliation, freedom and justice for all, we help other human beings, far and wide, around the world, to evolve as well. The energy of peace and love spreads, from you and me... into peaceful homes and into war zones... improving conditions for humans, and all conscious beings, throughout the world. ●

With love 
– Kevin Ellerton

**WORLD PEACE
MUST DEVELOP
FROM INNER PEACE.
PEACE IS NOT
MERE ABSENCE
OF VIOLENCE.
PEACE IS THE
MANIFESTATION
OF HUMAN
COMPASSION.**

His Holiness The Dalai Lama

His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, also known as Tenzin Gyatso, with his younger sister, Jetsun Pema.



Mindful Healing

Befriend painful emotions.
Break free from stubborn habits.
Live a happier life.

Meditation For Difficult Emotions is an online course from Meditation Magazine author and Meditation University instructor Mark Van Buren. Normally \$97, this course is free for Meditation Magazine readers for a limited time. Scan this QR code to **access for free!**



**MEDITATION
UNIVERSITY**



ILLUSTRATION: FREEPIK

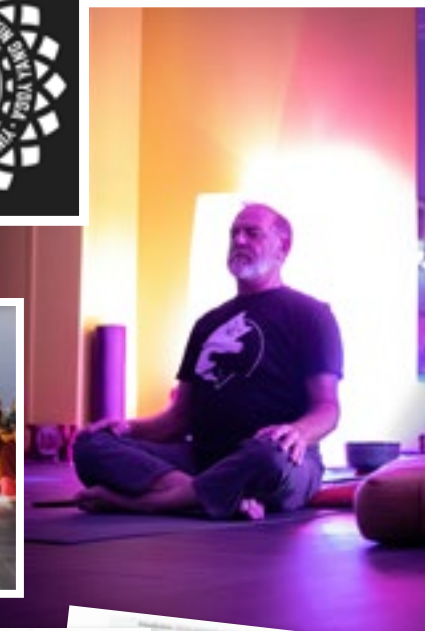
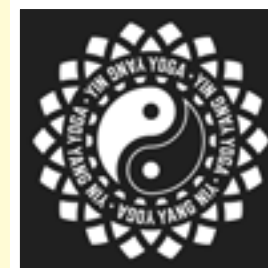
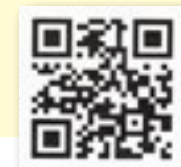
Help us bring yoga & meditation to those who need it most!

Yin Yang Yoga for You is a non-profit studio in Indiana whose mission is to bring the benefits of meditation and yoga to people who may never have the chance to discover them.

Donating to our studio is fully tax deductible and will help us bring the practice of meditation and yoga to people who are **incarcerated, in addiction treatment, and to those who cannot afford** a teacher or training.

Donate today and help us bring change to the world. Thank you.

yinyangyoga4you.com



STRESS IS GONE

Retreats

Life-Changing Emotional Relief & Trauma Recovery
at World-Class Wellness Destinations

Overwhelmed with emotional pain or anxiety?

Immerse yourself in a sanctuary of healing energy. Release old wounds and feel completely free. Experience intuitive coaching, music, movement, and meditation to heal the source of your stress. Enjoy 6-months of aftercare and vibe with your new tribe.

OMEGA

July 5-7 & Aug 13-18, 2024

Rhinebeck, NY

Kripalu
Center for Yoga & Health

Oct 14-18, 2024

Berkshires, MA

SIVANANDA

Jan 3-6, 2025

Paradise Island, Bahamas



Brett Cotter, Author-Founder-Trauma Recovery Expert, has 25 years experience helping people recover from the most traumatic events of their lives. His compassionate approach helps people feel safe and release the source of their stress.

“The release of long held trauma, pain, and beliefs was truly amazing. I feel lighter and calmer. It was a life-changing experience.” - Sarah Stanczewski

ROOMS SELL OUT - SAVE YOUR SPOT TODAY!

