A History of Peace Education in the United States of America

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INTRODUCTION

Peace education has been studied at various times by scholars, activists, and reformers in the United States as a way to bring about greater harmony among groups of people, primarily through schools and classrooms. However, the history of peace education in America is largely hidden, and the legitimacy of the field has always been questioned in terms of its goals for research and advocacy.

While there have been many definitions of peace education, the field is generally considered multi-disciplinary and includes a focus on peace studies, social justice, economic well-being (meeting basic needs), political participation (citizenship), nonviolence, conflict resolution, disarmament, human rights and concern for the environment (Stomfay-Stitz, 1993). Peace educators at various times have engaged with additional areas of inquiry including feminism, global education, and cultural diversity.

One important rationale for American peace education has existed for decades, namely the escalation of the nuclear arms race during the second half of the twentieth century. Through research and advocacy, peace education in the United States has depended on hope rather than despair. Americans involved in peace education have long advocated for the recognition of the worth of others who may be different, who may speak other languages, and yet share the fate of this fragile planet, Earth. Through the research and advocacy of groups such as the U.S. Institute of Peace, numerous academic departments in peace studies and peace education including the International Institute for Peace Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, private organizations, and community-based Peace Centers, all have come together to create a cohort of believers, working with a collective motivation of attaining peace in the world.

An important part of this history revolves around how peace education in America has come into existence. Who were the pioneers and groups that blazed a pathway for action and recognition? It is a story of courage and perseverance that deserves to be told.

ORIGINS OF PEACE EDUCATION (1828-1899)

In the early years of this century, ministers and lawyers often became advocates for issues designed to bring about improvements in society. There were numerous experiments with utopian colonies, such as Brook Farm and Fruitlands in the 1840s. These threads of idealism and pragmatism were underlying themes in the origins of peace education. In the early decades, peace societies assumed a distinct role and served as advocates for peaceful society after a century of bloody wars. The American Peace Society was founded in Boston in 1828, and by 1850 there were fifty American peace societies in existence nationwide (Bartlett, 1944). Their official journals carried frequent messages that the perfection of the individual as well as society were possible through the realm of education. Schools and the printed word were considered logical vehicles to lay out a pathway to peace in American society.

The first evidence of the promotion of peace was in the form of simple sheets of paper known as "Olive Leaves for the Press," distributed to two hundred newspapers in New England by an early peace pioneer named Elihu Burritt. He used an early printed press format from Revolutionary days known as the "broadside." He was also the editor of the *Advocate of Peace*, a peace society journal with a special children's section that he included in order to "mold the minds of youth to oppose war" (Burritt, "Letter to George Bancroft," 1849). The first student peace society was a

natural extension, as the Bowdoin Street Young Men's Peace Society was established in Boston in 1835 with the goal "to expose the evils and sins of war" (Calumet, 2 April, 1835).

As one of the founders of the common school movement in American education, Horace Mann showed vision and insight into human nature, war, and peace. He believed and wrote that societal war and violence were flaws that could be changed through moral conscience and action. The riots, burnings, and lynchings common in his day resulted from "the vicious or defective education of children. With education this violence could be quelled" (Mann, 1835, p. 53).

By the early 1900s, these aspirations for a peaceful society free of military dominance would be wedded to practical educational plans such as curriculum guides and textbooks, true building blocks that could be moved into place by educating children first for a peaceable society and then for citizenship.

FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY (1900-1950)

In the years before World War I, the first American organization for peace education, the American School Peace League, was created by Fannie Fern Andrews. She intended her organization to be for all of America's teachers and school children. She established May 18th as Peace Day, a holiday that was celebrated annually for a decade. She also established a library and journal for world citizenship and friendship, and later expanded the group into a national organization (American School Peace League, pp. 1913-14).   Andrews was particularly concerned with the economic causes of war that grew into a new dimension of peace education that addressed issues of economic and social justice. Truly, Andrews was an early embodiment of the world citizen of the new century.

During these decades, two prominent Americans also contributed significantly to the formation of peace education principles: Jane Addams and John Dewey. Jane Addams, founder of Hull House in Chicago, has primarily been considered a social worker and activist in international peace movements. However, her writings and teachings reveal a significant contribution to peace education. The daughter of a Quaker pacifist father, as a student she was attracted to the ideal of the "brotherhood of man" that included a horror of war (Addams, 1881).

John Dewey, the noted educational leader and philosopher, envisioned the school as an agent of social change and outlined these goals in many of his writings. However, limited attention has been paid to his concern for the economic, social, and political causes of war or to his support of education for world citizenship. Studying his postwar writings reveals his evolution into a firm pacifist (Howlett, 1977).

During this era, peace educators acquired the new label of Pacifist-Socialist. The inauguration of the Communist Party of America in 1919 brought forth feelings of uneasiness and even some violent measures against radical reformers. Unfortunately, during this time a number of peace educators were unfairly categorized as communists and socialists. Accusations of lacking patriotism clouded the many accomplishments of American peace educators throughout the twentieth century. In particular, the belief that war had social and economic causes was widely misunderstood, and unfair accusations would cast a shadow on the efforts of peace educators well into the future (Stomfay-Stitz, 1993).

However, there was one bright spot for peace educators during this period: the Nye Committee hearings in 1935. This Committee studied the various concerns and companies that profited from World War I and revealed that war was profitable for a fortunate few, notably manufacturers of munitions and other war equipment. The new, lone voice of Gerald P. Nye, United States Senator

from North Dakota, expressed it well, when he made a plea to educators to give "an equal place for peace" in the curriculum (Nye, 1935).

Up to this point, judged by the impact made on American education, peace educators had met with limited success. In the 1940s, however, there was evidence of a growing awareness that education for peace could motivate educators to create innovative teaching methodologies. The noted peace researcher and economist Kenneth Boulding envisaged the role of peace studies at the postsecondary level and published a Peace Study Outline that recognized the economic roots of war (Peace Commission, 1941). A few years later, the first Peace Studies course in higher education was established by the Church of the Brethren at Manchester College in Indiana (Stomfay-Stitz, 1993).

The 1940s also marked the establishment of conflict resolution as a vital component of peace education. It is generally agreed that this concept was first developed by Theodore Lentz, the founder of the Lentz Peace Research Laboratory, in 1945. A few years later, he published a comprehensive guide for the dynamics involved in resolving conflicts peacefully (Lentz, 1955).

THE ATOMIC AGE TO THE SPACE AGE (1950-1960)

The United States participated in a series of wars from the 1950s through to the end of the twentieth century, to the extent that that educators have viewed the long process of military engagement as a state of perpetual warfare. The sheer scale of death and destruction of World War II touched millions of lives all over the globe. After the conclusion of that war came a critical turning point. A new variation of warfare emerged: the struggle for power between the United States and the Soviet Union known as the Cold War. With the consent of the Allies, dictatorships were established in Eastern Europe in areas that had been liberated by advancing Russian troops during the second World War. One result was that the evolution of peace education in the United States, until the mid-1970s, was severely retarded in its progress. Many interpreted the new dictum, "education as an instrument of national policy," to mean the end of teaching for peace and international understanding.

However, during this period there was still some evidence of programs, projects and activities that related to peace education in the United States, most of which emphasized "international friendship." These focused on "global education," a theme that expanded considerably in subsequent decades. Patricia and George Mische were pioneers in this area and founded Global Education Associates in 1973, with international networks that are still active to this day (Mische, 1977). Global education focused on the interdependence of human beings and their needs as well as the development of skills in peacemaking, conflict resolution and social justice.

PEACE EDUCATION IN A NUCLEAR AGE (1960-1979)

In the 1960s, a definite turning point in peace education could be discerned. Up to this point, peace education in the United States had been advocated as a way to prevent or eliminate war, a goal that was clearly not achieved as witnessed by the procession of American military engagements since the turn of the century. With the advent of nuclear weapons proliferation, peace educators turned instead to a future-oriented conception – the dream of a world without war, characterized by social justice. This strand was directly influenced by the political and social dissent prevalent across the United States in the 1960s. The civil rights and antiwar movements, the march on Montgomery, Alabama, boycotts, the sit-ins and student protests—all were domestic events that produced an era of agitation deeply affecting American society.

Perhaps the most prominent example of peace education in pursuit of social justice during this era was the non-violent efforts of children during the civil rights movement in Birmingham,

Alabama. Taylor Branch (1988), noted Pulitzer Prize-winner, described how over seventy-five children were crammed into Birmingham's jail cells after being drenched with water hoses in punishment for their acts of civil disobedience. Vast numbers of Americans witnessed these events on television and were horrified by the scene.

In the summer of 1964, Freedom Schools for black students were established in Mississippi, emphasizing the participatory learning philosophy of the great American educator John Dewey. During the summer, students learned through the experience of living in a classroom where democracy was the foundation (Lynd, 1969). All had to work together on a peace and social justice project, balancing idealistic dreams with the realities of deprivation and violence that marred their everyday lives. A lasting impression may have been made on the students involved in the program: Doug McAdam (1988; 1989) assessed its impact on 212 participants and demonstrated that they remained politically active throughout the 1960s, with many of them engaged in teaching and other areas of civil service.

The 1970s were marked by the development of peace-related organizations including the Consortium on Peace Research Education and Development (COPRED), a branch of the International Peace Research Association. Pioneer peace educators such as Betty Reardon (1967; 1973), the founder of the Peace Education Center at Teachers College, Columbia University, began to shape the field by expanding on its theoretical foundations. However, progress was seriously impeded by McCarthyism, which had begun in the 1950s and continued to influence the events of subsequent decades. Particularly problematic was the suppression of nearly every document or program containing the word "peace." Allegations that peace groups were Communist propagandists sowed confusion. As a result, global education and world order studies, as different types of peace education, were often renamed world affairs or international education.

In early 1968, the United States experienced an extraordinary burst of violence with the devastating Tet offensive of the Vietnam War, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., and the waves of violence that followed throughout the country in over seventy-five cities. At this point, several American educators and organizations responded with strong leadership. Publication in 1972 of a work by Maria Montessori, titled *Education and Peace* provided a philosophy and rationale for an emergent pedagogy in peace education. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) in 1973 proved to be a catalyst with a landmark publication titled *Education for Peace: Focus on Mankind*. Elise Boulding, pioneer sociologist, shaped a complimentary nonviolent philosophy and model for children's education (1974). These publications helped provide a solid frame of reference for the peaceful socialization of children.

Against the backdrop of violence and dissent in the 1960s, peace education became a legitimate, credible discipline. Several organizations played a vital role in this shift. The Peace Education Commission (PEC), a network of elementary and secondary teachers interested in promoting peace education, became a part of the International Peace Education Research Association (IPRA). This network bore a striking resemblance to the one conceived by the America School Peace League in the early 1900s. As described by Betty Reardon, the Peace Education Network (PEN) focused on "introducing and developing nonviolent conflict resolution as a central concept of American peace education" (1988).

In the face of the further development and proliferation of nuclear weaponry, peace educators introduced curriculum guides and programs that sought to create positive change. In addition, Montessori and Boulding provided models for nonviolent childrearing. During this period, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child provided a historic perspective that spoke to the hearts of all educators (Landmarks, 1965). With peace education, children's rights were recognized and instilled as an integral value.

GROWTH AND MATURITY, 1980-2000

In this decade, there were several advances in peace education in which noteworthy progress could be discerned: (1) The formation of model schools and curricula based on peace education principles (primarily in private and religious-based schools or Montessori programs) offering viable examples of successful programs that had the potential of being implemented in public schools; (2) An increase in the number of non-traditional models for carrying out education, including those outside of schools. These included the Peace Museum in Chicago (modeled after several in Europe and Asia), community-based peace centers in Richmond, Virginia; Bluffton College, Ohio; Wilmington College, Ohio; Cincinnati; Louisville; Bucks County, Pennsylvania; and the Pax EduCare Center in Hartford, among others.

Additionally, within cyberspace peace education was often integrated with the arts and humanities. There are numerous examples of American peace educators and organizations maintaining their own websites and disseminating specific information on themes within peace education through the Internet.

The spread of peace education can also be seen in postsecondary institutions, where approximately seventy peace studies programs have trained and motivated young people to carry out peace education programs in schools and organizations nationally and internationally (Peace Studies Graduate Programs, 2007).

Also important is the fact that conflict resolution programs have largely infiltrated the mainstream curriculum in most American schools and are now generally accepted to advance the safety of schools by promoting nonviolence and violence prevention (Crawford and Bodine, 1996).

These advances took place against a backdrop of the nonviolent, bloodless revolutions taking place in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, East Germany and Bulgaria in the late 1980s. These events brought an end to four decades of Communist domination with dissident activists and nations forming new political coalitions and holding free elections. The symbolic destruction of the Berlin Wall symbolized the vast changes occurring without Soviet intervention in Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

With a keen sense of déjà vu, peace activists at the birth of the nineties recognized that the tactics of nonviolent civil disobedience carried out successfully in Eastern Europe were already familiar from the peace movements of past decades. Memories of Gandhi's nonviolent tactics and Martin Luther King Jr.'s campaign for civil rights were pages from history that were successfully applied in Eastern Europe. Peace activists incorporated nonviolent tactics into their protests of the launches of the Trident submarine and Galileo satellite, symbols of the growing militarization of outer space. At the start of the decade, peace educators could point to the growth of peace education and conflict resolution as viable alternatives. On the other hand, the incredible military buildup that continued during the Reagan administration was also recognized. Alternatives to violence were officially rejected, with Americans denied the jurisdiction of the World Court. Instead there was an emphasis on violent response including the invasion of Grenada, the bombing of Lebanon, and the invasion of Panama.

Human rights education was an area of growing interest for many peace educators and was added to the agenda in the 1990s. However, in a national study Dennis Banks (2001) concluded that it was rarely included in the American curriculum.

Many fine models of peace education are being carried out in individual classrooms and schools across America. Examples include (1) Robert Muller Schools; (2) Montessori schools; and (3)

the integration of conflict resolution and peer mediation in numerous public schools nationwide. Robert Muller was a former Assistant Secretary-General to the United Nations, and his World Core Curriculum prepared students to become "cooperative planetary citizens," preparing them for life in a "global village" (Robert Muller Schools, 2002). The well-known Montessori model boasts two national associations for Montessori teachers disseminating information on their founder's original mission. These schools emphasize concern for children as the cornerstone of peace education (Montessori, 1972).

The success of conflict resolution programs in American schools can be traced back to the 1970s when such programs were first initiated. Now they are widely integrated into the curriculum. A pioneer in the teaching of conflict resolution and peacemaking in higher education, Ian Harris first proposed in the integration of conflict resolution into K-12 school programs in the 1980s (Harris, 1988). Since that time, he has held a program for middle school youth learning to resolve conflicts peacefully, with successful outcomes for those involved (Forcey & Harris, 1999).

By creating a research base for peace education and conflict resolution, the pioneering efforts of David and Roger Johnson of the University of Minnesota contributed to the effectiveness of conflict resolution, peer mediation, and peacemaking programs in schools. The program "Teaching Students to be Peacemakers" is especially noteworthy. In this program, all students serve as peer mediators after mastering the basic skills and all are trained as peacemakers. Evaluations confirmed that the program created a cooperative and peaceful school culture and also resulted in improved academic achievement (Johnson & Johnson, 1991).

In 1983, the showing of a television drama titled "The Day After" portrayed the aftermath of a nuclear explosion in a Kansas city and the efforts of survivors to re-enter a new world. Peace educators believe this show to have been the catalyst for the development of nuclear war or disarmament education (LaFarge, 1988). Betty Reardon had expressed the hope that disarmament education could become a "global banner" in order "to develop a new technology for peace" (Reardon, 1982). From the 1960s, 70s, 80s, 90s and into the new century, Reardon has become the leading proponent for peace education as well as the mission to overcome discrimination and violence against women in all parts of the globe (Reardon, 1967; 1973; 1982; 1985; 1988; 1993; 1994; 1995; 1996; 1997; 2001; 2003-2005).

HOPE FOR THE NEW CENTURY, 2000-2007

 From "Olive Leaves for Peace" in the early nineteenth century to the global village that meets online in cyberspace, peace education in the United States has been transformed again and again in new and interesting ways.   Peace educators still try out new innovations in the attempt to bring peace education to the fore in schools and related areas. To do otherwise has become unthinkable to many who have spent their careers promoting peace education.

Of greatest interest to peace educators are the improved channels for information exchange through the Internet. For example, in 2007 the first International Education for Peace Conference scheduled for November 2007 in Vancouver was highlighted on the Internet. Participants were informed that this is a chance to "consult on the challenges of conflict, violence, and peace, and together formulate realistic plans for the effective education of our children as peacemakers" (Inaugural International Education for Peace Conference, 2007).

Peace educators also now have several academic journals for the dissemination of research throughout the world. The *Journal of Peace Education* was launched in 2004, and is complemented by valuable journals from related fields including the *Journal of Peace Research,* with editorial assistance from the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo Norway (Sage Publications); *Peace and Conflict,* published by the Psychology Division of the American

Psychological Association (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates); and the *Peace Review, a Journal of Social Justice* with support from the University of San Francisco and the Jesuit Foundation (Taylor and Francis).

CONCLUSION

As peace education passed into the new century and the beginning of the new millennium, many American peace educators have been re-examining their goals and motives.

Some have found inspiration in their own schools and communities. For example, many states like Florida, Georgia, Texas, Michigan and Minnesota have embraced waves and waves of new immigrants with children that are identified as ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) students. Many of these children have been uprooted by violence and structural inequality and could be viewed as a potential new cohort of peacemakers. In one Michigan community, ESOL children in a high school took matters into their own hands and petitioned their school to have a peace education course integrated into their program. They were successful (Pryor, C.B., 2001).

Peace education has the potential to become a major motivation in the schooling and community lives of American children. The successful peace education models described above could be emulated by many schools and communities nationwide.   Through education for peace, Americans can envision goals for a more peaceful world.

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