

APOCALYPSE DOES NOT MEAN WAR

By: George Wolfe

Welcome to 2012, the year of the apocalypse, or so it is for those who interpret the Mayan calendar to mean that December 21 will bring on the end of the world. This prophecy is nothing new. Since the year 1800, there have been well over 100 predictions of Judgment Day. The difference is that since the 1970's, politicians and religious leaders have increasingly used apocalyptic language, invoking images of Armageddon to stir up public support for a hard-line, militant political agenda as we move forward into the new millennium. Such rhetoric greatly increases risk that the violent interpretation of apocalypse will become a self-fulfilling prophecy, even to the point of believing a nuclear exchange is inevitable. It is a belief rooted in an antiquated worldview that ignores reason and the discoveries of science.

Ironically, the linguistic derivation of the term *apocalypse* does not denote calamity or human-inflicted mass destruction; rather, "apocalypse" comes from the Greek word *apokalyptein* which means, "to uncover," as if one were removing a veil. The prophet Isaiah uses the metaphors of veil and covering when he writes, "And the Lord will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations." (Isaiah 25:7). The apostle Paul also applies the veil metaphor when he describes the veil that lies over the minds of those who are bound by the Law of Moses (2nd Corinthians 3:14, 15). In addition, the veil metaphor is also found in the writings of the Sufi poet Rumi, and in Hinduism where it is associated with the concept of Maya or illusion (lit. "that which is not"). Maya is depicted as a veil that shrouds the soul.

The root meaning of apocalypse signals not war and catastrophe but a sudden

collective awakening, symbolized in the Gospel of Matthew by the "lightning" that "comes from the east and shines as far as the west" (Matt. 24:27). It is more akin to what in philosophy is called a paradigm shift, which is a significant and relatively sudden change in the way Humanity defines itself and its relationship with the universe.

Such a paradigm shift actually began early in the Twentieth Century. Einstein's theory of relativity, Hubble's discovery that the universe is expanding, quantum field theory, and DNA evidence demonstrating that humans evolved from a common ancestor, are all discoveries that are forcing us to redefine ourselves as a human race.

We can also redefine how we deal with international conflict. Armageddon need not be our fate or our destiny. Exploitation and the depletion of our natural resources can be replaced with sustainability. God may have provided individual salvation, but our survival as a human species is up to us. Let us make 2012 a year of interfaith cooperation and understanding rather than a year of religious and cultural conflict.

This article was published in The Star Press, Muncie, Indiana, on Jan. 9, 2012

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SCHEDULE OF EVENTS— ON CAMPUS

Thursday, January 26

- *Social Justice League Meeting*

5:00PM at the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies (310 N. McKinley Ave.) For more Information, contact sjl@bsu.edu.

Monday, January 30

- *OXFAM America Meeting*

6:00PM in WB 139. For more information, contact oxfambsu@gmail.com.

Tuesday, January 31

- *Free the Slaves Meeting*

9:00PM in Bracken Library 404. For more information, contact freetheslaves@gmail.com.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS— OFF CAMPUS

Friday, January 27

[Muncie] Muncie Chinese New Year Celebration: Dinner starts at 6:00pm, Show starts at 7:30pm. Location: Westminster Church 2801 West Riverside Avenue, Muncie, IN 47304. Admission is \$10. Everyone is invited. Wonderful Chinese gourmet and experience Chinese tradition - making dumplings - in the most important Chinese Spring Festival season. The Celebration will bring in various performances and joys of Chinese New Year of Dragon.

[Indianapolis] The weekly vigil protesting warfare will take place, 4:30-5:30 pm, in front of the Federal Building, North and Pennsylvania, sponsored by the Indianapolis Peace and Justice Center. Bring an appropriate sign or have one provided. For more info, phone Gilbert Kuhn at 926-3068 or email Ron Haldeman at ronjane@igc.org

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS— OFF CAMPUS (CONT)

Saturday, January 28

[Indianapolis] C.U.R.E. (Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants) will hold a monthly meeting, 10-12 am, at North United Methodist Church, W. 38 & Meridian. For more info, phone Marilyn Reed at 352-0358 or Lela Ewers at 831-0765.

[Nashville] There will be a Peace Vigil on the theme "War Is Not The Answer!" at 6 pm at Brown County Courthouse, Main and Van Buren Streets sponsored by Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (Brown County branch). For more info, contact Tom Hougham at 878-4210 or annntom@hotmail.com

Sunday, January 29

[Indianapolis] Indy Choruses will host an "It Gets Better" Film Premier and Benefit at 6 pm at Indiana Landmarks Center, 1202 Central Ave. There will be a Cocktail Hour and Social Hour, heavy appetizers, Cash Bar and Silent Auction plus live musical performances by Debra Mullins, Steven Stolen, Lori Ecker, Sean Baker, and the Men's and Women's Choruses. For more info and tickets, visit indychoruses.org or email info@indychoruses.org or phone 855-8706.

A NEW VIEW

The Interns at the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies (Kelly, Dennis, Rachael & Mary) will be sharing their experiences throughout the semester on a blog. They invite you to follow along with them as they write about what they are doing, books they are reading, and their overall experience this semester interning at the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies. The link for the blog is:

bsupeacecenter.wordpress.com

FEATURED BLOG

Showcased below is a blog from the Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies class [ID 301]. This course provides students with an overview of the Peace and Conflict Studies discipline, including key concepts and related theories. The course is designed to familiarize students with the historical background of various peace movements, to analyze principles used to resolve conflict, and to provide a view of how peace and conflict resolution are being pursued today. A blog from this class will be featured each week in the newsletter. This week's blog is written by **Katrina Pieri**.

Building Negative Peace

Mahatma Gandhi once said that "Victory attained by violence is tantamount to a defeat, for it is momentary." Despite such wisdom as displayed in this quote, violence is used repeatedly in the modern world as a means of achieving goals. The supposed victories obtained through war are never lasting, and yet wars continue to occur. In chapter two of *Approaches to Peace: A Reader in Peace Studies* by David Barash, a new strategy of approaching peace, referred to as the building of negative peace, is discussed. The various selections included in this chapter discuss ways of building negative peace, which is essentially the absence of war, from multiple perspectives. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to explore how the world can go about, or has already gone about, achieving peace *through* peace.

The first selection, written by William James and titled "The Moral Equivalent of War," describes the natural aggressive and competitive tendencies humans display that are currently channeled through war. Humans inherently cling to martial values and seek to express their competitiveness. James argues, however, that while these martial values may be inevitable, war itself is not. James describes a detailed plan to harness the innate tendencies of the young and channel them in a far more productive manner. He would essentially have the younger members of society perform various forms of manual labor for a specified number of years, so that they could contribute to society in an efficient manner while also expressing their innate tendencies productively. The plan presented by James seems reasonable, and it would certainly fall into the broad category of building negative peace. Such a plan would provide alternatives to war, so it would lead to peace through peace, as opposed to peace as the result of war.

Although the plan suggested by James may come to fruition in the future, it is currently a ways off from being applicable to modern society. The strategy for gaining peace through peace explained in "Getting To Yes" by Roger Fisher, William Ury, and Bruce Patton, however, is entirely feasible and has already been implemented. This strategy essentially involves negotiation. To be more specific, the authors suggest a new form of negotiation, called principled negotiation, which should be used by parties seeking to reach agreements. As opposed to other forms of negotiation that involve parties arguing over their particular positions and attempting to come out victorious, principled negotiation focuses more exclusively on the issues at hand. I thoroughly enjoyed reading this selection due to my experience as a peer mediator in elementary school. As a kind of negotiator, it was my duty to roam the playground at recess with my fellow peer mediators and attempt to help other children solve disputes peacefully. I saw very little action on the playground, and, truthfully, I only helped solve one dispute, but I learned the basics of negotiation. I learned that each person deserves an equal amount of time to talk, that mutual respect is of the utmost importance, and that the satisfaction of all involved is necessary in order for the worked out agreement to last. Indeed, my time as a peer mediator was not only gratifying but useful. It led me to form some of the core values I have today.

Negotiation is a helpful and necessary strategy for building negative peace, but it involves more than disputing

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parties reaching agreements over resources, rights, or other such things. The more pressing challenge involves the disarmament of the nuclear weapons that are being produced, have already been produced, or will soon be produced around the world. In "Disarmament Demands GRIT," Charles Osgood proposes a strategy of "Graduated and Reciprocated Initiatives in Tension-reduction," otherwise known as GRIT, that would serve as a form of negotiation and smooth the path of disarmament. It is, however, inevitable that many would view such a strategy with suspicion. In a world where countries fear nuclear attacks from their enemies and therefore race to build up a defense of the same kind, there are many misconceptions involving nuclear weapons. The most prominent of these are addressed in "Ten Nuclear Myths" by David Krieger and Angela McCrackien. These myths involve such concepts as the supposed but false necessity of nuclear weapons, the supposed but false safety they bring to a country, and more. The following selection, "A World Free of Nuclear Weapons," was written by four pro-military men who had prominent positions in the government: George Shultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger, and Sam Nunn. In this selection, these men advise the United States to lead the way in the elimination of nuclear weapons through a series of stages. The fact that pro-military men endorse a world free of nuclear weapons seems almost remarkable, but they expose the unimaginable dangers of a world armed with such destructive technology. In the following selection, "A Powerful Peace" by Jonathan Schell, another strategy is outlined that would allow the United States to lead the way in the disarmament of nuclear weapons. Eliminating nuclear weapons from the world's arsenal of weapons would prove to be a great leap forward in building negative peace. Instead of seeking peace after parts of the world are destroyed by the use of nuclear weapons, the ultimate prevention of their use would lead to peace through peace.

The use of nuclear weapons in the future would be inconceivably devastating. Apart from the obvious and horrific loss of human life that would result, there would also be extensive damage done to the infrastructure of society and the environment. The economic repercussions would be enormous. Lloyd Dumas addresses the current state of the economy concerning military expenditures in "Finding the Future: The Role of Economic Conversion in Shaping the Twenty-First Century." Dumas suggests policies for successfully converting the United States economy from one with an emphasis on military spending to one with its primary focus on the civilian aspect of society. Many of the strategies for building negative peace discussed in chapter two up to this point, with perhaps the exception of the negotiation strategy, do not seem especially applicable to the average citizen. The average citizen cannot go about restructuring society so that the youth perform labor instead of going to war later on, the disarmament of nuclear weapons occurs, and the economy experiences a fantastic conversion. However, it is important to keep in mind that the average citizen can do that which is in his or her *own* power to build negative peace. To encourage anyone reading this to do that which is in their own power, I will explain the experiences of myself and my parents in attempting to build negative peace:

Before my mother and father had any knowledge that the other existed, and therefore far before my birth in 1993, they volunteered in the Brethren Volunteer Service overseas. My father was stationed in Rome, Italy at an ecumenical peace center known as Cipax, and my mother was stationed in Belfast, Ireland, working at a conflict mediation afterschool program. My father dealt with the logistical side of peace work, my mother with actual negotiation between Catholic and Protestant teenagers who were in constant conflict with one another. Although their work towards building negative peace may seem too extreme for many to imitate in any way, they also participated in smaller acts that attempted to build negative peace. In February of 2003 I attended a peaceful demonstration in the town neighboring mine with my parents and siblings. We protested the impending war in Iraq. In the summer of 2008 I traveled with my church youth group to Germany to do mission work, and I traveled to Tennessee in the summer of 2010 to do something similar. Building negative peace involves the efforts of many individuals, not just the prominent leaders of the world. Like the community concept of Leopold's "The Land Ethic," discussed in the last blog post, we are all part of something larger. In fact, a global community of individuals exists, working towards negative peace. In David Barash's

“International Law,” the advantages and disadvantages of the world’s current system of international law are discussed. In Linda Fasulo’s “An Insider’s Guide to the UN,” the benefits and drawbacks of the world’s peacekeeping team are also discussed. There are global systems in place working towards negative peace, but it is also the responsibility of each individual do his or her own part to achieve peace through peace. Again, Mahatma Gandhi once said that “Victory attained by violence is tantamount to a defeat, for it is momentary.” It is the job of every individual to ensure that true victory, the victory of peace, is achieved.

If you would like for your events to be included in this newsletter, please contact Mary Conley meconley@bsu.edu.

DISCLAIMER: The events described in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies.