Chapter 3
Peace Culture?
Being the Change We Want to See in the World

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ABSTRACT

The term peace culture is used freely in Hiroshima and around the UN but remains inadequately defined and envisioned. This chapter will examine the concept in depth. It will distinguish peace culture from the dominant war culture, explain why peace and peace culture are still such anemic ideas, offer philosophical or rational reinforcements, recommend concrete peace-culture-promoting actions, and offer a realistic, feasible peace-culture world vision. The author will defend the proposition that global graduation from the current war culture to a genuine peace culture is required to prevent human extinction before the end of this century. Thus, the primary purpose of this chapter is to encourage the immediate, nonviolent overthrow of the violent status quo.

INTRODUCTION

UNESCO launched its Culture of Peace Programme in 1992. Since that time the UN has declared international years for a culture of peace, international decades related to a culture of peace, world reports on the culture of peace, and a "global movement for a culture of peace" (Adams, 2003).

The author has worked for most of his adult life, from1985 to the present, for the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation. The predecessor to the Peace Culture Foundation, the Peace Culture Center, was founded in 1967, long before the term was used in a formal, institutional framework at the UN. Although a cursory Google search indicates that the Internet believes "peace culture" originated within UNESCO, it may be that the term actually originated in Hiroshima. However, a search in Japanese for a definition of "peace culture" refers back to UNESCO, and no clear definition of the term appears on the website of the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation.

The terms "peace" and "peace culture" are used freely and frequently as if everyone knows or should know what they mean; but both terms are as vague and ill-defined as love, hate, violence, nonviolence, good, evil, and a long list of other familiar but difficult concepts.

UNESCO defines culture of peace as follows:

A culture of peace is an integral approach to preventing violence and violent conflicts, and an alternative to the culture of war and violence based on education for peace, the promotion of sustainable economic and social development, respect for human rights, equality between women and men, democratic participation, tolerance, the free flow of information and disarmament. (Adams, 2003)

This definition is notably lacking in actionable detail. Nowhere in UNESCO literature is this "integral approach" clarified or elaborated. "Education for peace" is never elaborated. "Sustainable economic and social development" is never elaborated. "Human rights" we can define based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Gender equality, democratic participation, tolerance, the free flow of information and disarmament are reasonably understandable, but subject to broad differences in interpretation and implementation. This definition does not guide us toward a concrete vision of how the world, its leaders, or its people would be different if we lived in a culture of peace.

The city of Hiroshima identifies itself as the "international peace culture city." To the author's knowledge, no city spends more time, effort or money on world peace. And yet, Hiroshima, too, appears reluctant to define either "peace" or "peace culture." City officials and the A-bomb survivors (*hibakusha*) do have a powerful message. They state clearly that the atomic bombing was a terrible tragedy and must never be repeated; that nuclear weapons are absolutely evil and must be abolished; that war is a horror, and peace is sacred, a state of being that must be defended and maintained.

However, city officials, *hibakusha*, and the Hiroshima peace community, including even the Hiroshima Peace Institute, as far as the author can discover, all fail to take the next step. If war is bad and peace is good, then how do human beings have to change in their minds, hearts, and social/political/economic systems to avoid war and promote peace?

This step is avoided because it is inevitably "political." As soon as one begins defining peace culture, one implies the need for change. As soon as one begins calling for change, one is calling for a benefit to some and a problem for others. In Japan, praising peace or calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons is widely viewed as objectively good, politically neutral, and unassailable. However, criticizing war or militarism, defending the peace constitution, demonstrating for peace, and gathering signatures for a nuclear-weapon-free world are all seen as left-wing political activities, and they brand one as a marginal player with a distinct "color." To call for peace is to generate conflict. To call for nonviolence is beyond the pale.

This chapter will be deliberately political. It will flesh out the concept of "peace culture," primarily by distinguishing it from the currently dominant war culture. It will recommend supporting certain types of politicians and opposing others. It will recommend supporting certain types of corporations and boycotting others. It will recommend activities designed to weaken and overthrow war-culture leaders, and it will recommend activities designed to promote sustainability, nonviolence, universal wellbeing, and genuine, lasting world peace.

This chapter is not an academic exercise. It is a desperate effort to advance the peace culture movement. The desperation derives from what the author perceives to be an extremely urgent need to make necessary changes. MIT linguistics professor and social activist Noam Chomsky identifies two major

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