

THE POETIC UNFOLDING
OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT



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John Paul Lederach

Essays on Exploring a Global Dream

SPONSORED BY THE FETZER INSTITUTE

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In our attempt to welcome as many authentic voices to this conversation as possible, we remain committed to an ongoing dialogue of ideas. As this meaningful discussion unfolds, we responsibly note that the interpretations and conclusions contained in this publication represent the views of the author or authors and not necessarily those of the John E. Fetzer Institute, its trustees, or officers.

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PREFACE

IN 1999, THE FETZER INSTITUTE began the Deepening the American Dream project as an attempt to sow the seeds of a national conversation about the inner life of democracy and the nature of our society as a community in relationship with the rest of the world. We set out to assemble a diverse group of leading thinkers and authors to explore, in conversation and in writing, the American dream and the spiritual values on which it rests.

During the life of the project, Fetzer has extended this unfolding dialogue in the public domain, in partnership with Jossey-Bass, by publishing and circulating original essays as free pamphlets and by holding public forums. We have been concerned about such questions as “What constitutes the American dream now?” “In what ways does the American dream relate to the global dream?” “In what ways might each inform the other?” and “How might we imagine the essential qualities of the common man and woman—the global citizen—who seek to live with the authenticity and grace demanded by our times?”

To date, we have given away close to eighty thousand pamphlets to a wide range of leaders in various fields around the country, including members of Congress. In the fall of 2005, Jossey-Bass published the first anthology of these essays, *Deepening the American Dream: Reflections on the Inner Life and Spirit of Democracy*.

In an effort to surface the psychological and spiritual roots at the heart of the critical issues that face the world today, we are extending this inquiry by creating a parallel series focused on exploring a global dream. But what might a global dream look like, and where might we start? In his book *God Has a Dream*, Archbishop Desmond Tutu offers a beginning point as he echoes the words of Martin Luther King Jr.:

God says to you, “I have a dream. Please help Me to realize it. It is a dream of a world whose ugliness and squalor and poverty, its war and hostility, its greed and harsh competitiveness, its alienation and disharmony are changed into their glorious counterparts, when there will be more laughter, joy, and peace, where there will be justice and

goodness and compassion and love and caring and sharing. I have a dream . . . that My children will know that they are members of one family, the human family, God's family, My family.”

In both series, we continue to invite leading thinkers from around the world to bring their gifts to bear on the world we live in, searching for the common resources that might, if held together, repair the isolations and separations that divide us today. We hope that these essays and the spirit on which they are founded will spark your own questions and conversations.

ROBERT F. LEHMAN
Chair of the Board
Fetzer Institute

FOREWORD

I HAVE HAD THE PRIVILEGE of knowing John Paul Lederach for over ten years. One of John Paul's gifts is that he gives himself completely to many worlds while limiting himself to none. As a visionary peacebuilder, he has kept listening to the history of conflict and harmony throughout the ages. As a practicing peacebuilder, he has tirelessly gone headlong and heartlong into the conflicts that have called around the world. As a poetic soul, he has kept counsel with poets, living and dead, until his deep hearing has begun to weave the threads of voice, experience, and history into one nameless voice that keeps asking us to learn. As an honest and vulnerable servant of the disenfranchised, he stands as a great and humble teacher whose classroom is everywhere from Nepal to Colombia to Spain. So it is no surprise that when we asked John Paul to write an original essay for us on what it means in this day and age to explore a global dream, he would welcome in the voices of those he has met and served along the way. He has already given us a landmark and visionary view of the possible practice of peace in his book *The Moral Imagination*. What you have before you here is a very intimate weaving of the journey itself. To do this, John Paul has chosen the form of *haibun*, created by the great Japanese poet Bashō. A *haibun* is a travelogue that is a mix of prose and poetry; a narrative of the journey and a quick lifting of the essentials in the midst of that journey. More important, a *haibun* is an inner and outer travelogue woven in the heart of the traveler as they try to make meaning out of all they've encountered. What you have before you, then, is the rare travelogue of a spirit fully engaged in the world he has been born to, fully engaged in the soul he has been given, and fully engaged in the mysterious world of spirit that touches us all. John Paul's ideas are twined from threads of muscle and blood. This travelogue carries within it many touchstones that will open your heart and mind.

—MARK NEPO,
Program Officer,
Fetzer Institute



*dreams and weeds
when cut and trimmed
just drop seeds
that rise again*



THE POETIC UNFOLDING OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT

John Paul Lederach

Prologue

Months and days are the wayfarers of a hundred generations, the years too, going and coming, are wanderers. For those who drift life away on a boat, for those who meet age leading a horse by the mouth, each day is a journey, the journey itself home. Among ancients, too, many died on a journey. And so I too—for how many years—drawn by a cloud wisp wind, have been unable to stop thoughts of rambling.

—Matsuo Bashō, *Oku no hosomichi* (1689)

i

I TRAVEL TOO MUCH.

My journeys carry me to geographies of human conflict. Hard, cracked, dry-blood soils.

I

And like Bashō, cloud wisp winds call my name. Those at least are the clouds I seek, gathering on occasions with sufficient mix to wet hardened soils.

According to my calling card, I build peace. And though a word of preference in my own writing, “build” never fails to invoke doubt.

Peacebuilder?

A most unrecognized term. I never find a box to tick on immigration forms, tax returns, or credit card applications.

Profession: Unknown

Purpose of visit: Other

My vocation falls somewhere between a Hopi rainmaker and Van Gogh’s *Potato Planter*. My life’s work moves between the magic of lying under dark soils waiting for dormant seeds to sprout and begging the skies for the life-giving rains.

Bashō called us wayfarers, wanderers. On more honest days, I confess to trespasser.

THE PARASITE

I have
Traveled
Most of the
Globe

On the
The backs
Of people

Whose
Lives
Are
Held
Together

By the
Wars
They fight.¹

¹In the spirit of *haibun*, I have embedded personal poetry throughout the essay. A complete list of these poems can be found in the Acknowledgments and Permissions sections at the back of the book.

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The year 2009 offered an even more ambiguous new task: to find and express a global dream. The request seemed straightforward enough when first received. My work would take me around the globe five times that year, to Nepal, Thailand, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Colombia, El Salvador, Bolivia, the Netherlands, Spain, and the Dineh Nation. It should be easy to write.

I started and restarted this essay at least a dozen times. I felt stuck. Questions surged. A global dream? Where do we find a global dream? Is it pretentious for one person to have a global dream? How does a person dream for the whole globe, for the whole of humanity? And if I put out *my* dream, how could I claim this as global? Words on paper stopped. The task was too big. I felt too small.

My travels for 2009 ended in mid-December. Essay incomplete. Jet-lagged, half-awake but unable to sleep, I watched President Barack Obama receive his Nobel Peace Prize. The dignitaries in the majestic room were clearly enthralled with the icon before them yet reserved in their response. The president's words danced, at times profound and rising, at times skirting and ducking his core dilemma: justifying more troops and war in Afghanistan while accepting an award named for peace. Following the pattern of heads of state who preceded him, the concept he invoked emerged partially developed. While he acknowledged the nonviolent creed and lives espoused by Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi, the president chose the path more trodden.

Just war.

Enemies and evil can only be defeated with military force. "We will not eradicate violence in our lifetime," he noted. Too much of a dream for now, I guess. Let's defer. The nature of the conflict and of the enemy limits our choice. Realistic demands of the situation justify military force in an imperfect world.

Then the president circled again. In sequence, he appealed to the "moral interest," the "moral force of nonviolence," the "moral compass," and the "moral imagination"—lots of morals to be had there in the midst of justifying just wars.

"The moral imagination." These three words had formed the title of my very own book! Jet lag disappeared.

I am sure neither his speechwriters nor the president would suggest they were the first to appeal to the moral imagination. Nor was I by a long shot. In the course of my research, I tried to find the original source. Not an easy task. Dozens had employed the phrase, many on the covers of their books, dating as far back as 1864 when Edmund Burke, writing

about the French Revolution, lamented the loss of elements that would “beautify and soften private society” by way of “the wardrobe of a moral imagination, which the heart owns, and the understanding ratifies, as necessary to cover the defects of her naked shivering nature” (Burke, 1864).

After reading the many authors who used the phrase, with themes that varied from a focus on Sherlock Holmes to feminist writers in Cuba, I found that they converged on several points. The moral imagination had something to do with watching for and perceiving truth beyond what was immediately apparent or demanded, what Vigen Guroian (1998) described as the “power of perception,” which “illuminates the mystery hidden beneath a visible reality.” Second, the *imaginative* aspect required people to display innovation and resourcefulness in the form of creative acts that changed the very nature of the situation or dilemma they faced, often in surprising ways. And third, the *moral* component had little to do with rules, regulations, and limits and everything to do with a quality of transcendence capable of birthing the unexpected, transforming understanding, and opening new possibilities that broke away from narrow options and seeming dead ends. In fact, Susan Babbit (1996) gave her book the title *Impossible Dreams* to describe the very nature of this uniquely human endeavor.

My interest in the phrase began on September 12, 2001, the day after 9/11. How would we, the most powerful nation on earth, respond to the violence unleashed on civilians that had ripped into our major cities and our collective psyche mere hours earlier? For me, this was not a random concern that emerged in response to this crisis. The question went to the essence of the peacebuilding vocation, to the very heart of the dilemma faced by so many communities and places who struggle to respond to violence on a daily basis. In settings of protracted armed conflict, every day brings this challenge: *How do we transcend the cycles of violence that grip our human community while still living in them?*

Theirs was now our dilemma, the one we woke up to on September 12, 2001.

Having spent years with friends and colleagues in communities who responded to this challenge with courage but *without guns or violence*, I found four key characteristics of their extraordinary imagination.

ORGANIC INTERDEPENDENCE. These communities envisioned themselves as part of a web of relationships that included their enemies. They lived with a view that their communities, including the armed groups and others who threatened them, formed an invisible fabric, an *organic*

interdependence that had melded together their immediate and long-term futures. Bluntly stated, they understood that the well-being of their grandchildren was intimately linked to the well-being of the grandchildren of their enemies. Refusing to run or cower, they proactively pursued improbable relationships and set out to engage and transform the challenge and threat of enmity without weapons.

DYNAMIC CURIOSITY. Though confronted by powerfully polarizing dynamics of escalating conflict, time and again I found that communities who broke the historical grip of violence refused to fall into a simplistic dualism. They never framed their challenge as a choice of only two options: you are with us or against us. For these friends, life was too rich, processes too dynamic, and their own lived experiences too intriguingly messy for them to believe that the ever-evolving complexity of human conflict could possibly be reduced to two mutually exclusive choices. As Bruno Bettelheim once suggested, “Violence is the behaviour of someone incapable of imagining other solutions to the problem at hand” (Fisas, 2002). Rather than avoiding it, they plunged into the complexity, developing and sustaining a *dynamic curiosity*. Never quite content with facile views and answers, they kept searching to better understand the conflict, themselves, and “the other.”

ARTISTIC CREATIVITY. In each and every instance, these people approached their life-and-death dilemmas with surprising inventiveness. Under daily pressures of threat and violence, and often facing extreme economic hardships, they incarnated a living resourcefulness. The need to survive requires *artistic creativity* that in retrospect fostered genius. In these settings, people gave birth to the most unexpected ideas and approaches. At their very essence, they became artisans and crafters of options for peace in the midst of full-blown conflict and violence.

RISK. Inevitably, they took *risks*, even when it cost them their lives. Taking risks requires the act of letting go, of not knowing when you take a step what will happen next. It is a step into the mystery of the unknown. For people in settings of violence, these are steps of life and death. Though always watching and assessing with eyes and wisdom born from years of surviving cycles of violence, they still reached out, never knowing whether extending their hand toward those who wished them harm would be the opening to constructive change or their last act on earth.

In *The Moral Imagination* (Lederach, 2005), I suggested that when these four dynamic disciplines aligned—a vision of *organic*

interdependence, dynamic curiosity, artistic creativity, and risk—the moral imagination sprouted. In essence, this kind of imagination transforms human affairs of enmity without violence. In this endeavor, communities facing long-term violence became permanent and resilient pioneers—searching, inventing, and bouncing back to try again.

For too long, our global family of nations has believed and invested in organized violence as *the* safeguard, the ultimate pathway to provide for and protect human security. We have been slow and fearful to shift human affairs of enmity. The lives of these local communities and visionary individuals have much to teach us. They ask an intriguing question posing the singular challenge of this young century: *How will we transcend our global addiction to organized violence?*

By the time that book reached the public in 2005, the response patterns to 9/11 that defined the opening of the new century appeared increasingly clear. The United States had chosen to fight wars on two fronts with little clarity of how these armed conflicts would end or what victory would mean. We approached the affairs of enmity with the well-worn tools of past centuries and in the course of our response ensured the rise of the very thing we wished to end. Nearly a decade later, our responses have embroiled us more deeply in cycles of violence that seem to feed on themselves. The long-sought wardrobe of imagination slipped off and vanished. Though perhaps our eyes simply cannot see it, callused cataracts seem to block the ever-present but hidden potential of a different kind of response.

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We need new eyes. We need eyes that peer into the hidden mysteries below the visible realities. In recent writing (Lederach and Lederach, 2009), I have come to believe more firmly that we need the eyes of muses and mystics, poets and artisans, light-givers, key holders to the wardrobe and perhaps the global dream.

Muses and mystics? *Muse* is precisely the term chosen by the African philosopher Wole Soyinka (1999) in his short set of essays on memory, forgiveness, and reconciliation. He ends his book recounting a story about the mystical power of an aged African *balafon*—a musical instrument—that ended a war. As Soyinka wanders through the story, he speculates about the visit of the *Muse* of forgiveness, mercy, and generosity that has always been the great gift of Africa above all continents and peoples.

In Greek mythology, the Muses for the various arts were the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne who called forth the capacity to remember and

invoked creativity in the individuals they visited. According to the neural scientist and Nobel laureate Gerald Edelman, some of the Greeks may have had it right. He suggests that while most of us tend to have a “Heraclitean” view of time in that we view and talk about time as a riverlike movement from past to present to future, this represents an “illusion.” In a physical sense, “only the present exists,” what he refers to as the *remembered present*, but in the biology of the brain, “every act of perception is to some degree an act of creation, and every act of memory is to some degree an act of imagination” (Edelman, 1989). History held alive requires a creative act, and the act of imagination requires a memory. The Muse, a goddess inhabiting the *nexus of memory and the creative act*, parallels the home of peacebuilding, where the germination of new life must break through the crusted layers of numbed history in a remembered present.

And poets? Poets have cataract-peeled eyes. They notice things. They strip rough reality bare while giving us unexpected life. In the words of Carolyn Forché (1993), they rail *against forgetting*. And all of this they share with peacebuilders. An extraordinary poet once said, “Blessed are the peacemakers.” The Valencian philosopher Vicent Guzman (2008) suggests that the etymology of this New Testament invocation traces in part to *poíesis*, linked to our modern word *poetry*. *Poíesis* had meaning attached to the idea of *work*, or more specifically, the *craft* of producing something well. The term here refers to work not as in the drudgery of a job but rather as to the way we might talk about a *work* of art, an act integrating craft with beauty. In Spanish, “blessed are the peacemakers” translates literally as “on a good adventure are those who work for peace.” In both languages, the words *work* and *make* emerge from *poíesis*, guiding our attention toward the art of weaving peace. Perhaps a combined translation would catch the spirit: “On a blessed odyssey are those who poetically craft peace.” Guzman writes that creative responses to the numbing effect of violence must unfold as a poetic act. Or paraphrasing Burke’s words, we must be the heart creating the wardrobe that softens and holds our most vulnerable exposed selves.

For thirty odd years, I have parasitized for peace on the backs of communities facing violence without guns. As I listened to the words of our great orator and leader receiving his Nobel Prize, justifying higher levels of organized violence to fight an evil enemy while appealing to the moral imagination, my mind drifted to Bashō, to the wandering and wayfaring. Three hundred and twenty years since his bamboo-feathered ink landed on the pages memorializing his most recent journey, I thought of mine, the journeys of 2009. Bashō wrote in *haibun*—in few words, he took

note of people and places where his travels had led. He titled one of those traveling essays *Oku no hosomichi*. The first part of his chosen phrase translates as “the narrow road.” The second, multilayered with meanings, conveys the idea that this narrow road will take him far into the backcountry, to the source of life in the mountains, to the very soul of his country. Yet the same phrase signals an inward journey, to the very depths of his soul.

I decided to search again, for these backwoods of our global family and the interior of our souls, to listen for the muses and poets of the moral imagination I encountered in the journeys of 2009 nearly ten years after I started the book with that same title.

1. Conflicts 2009

i

In the back of an airline seat flying from Bangkok to Kathmandu I find a discarded copy of the British newspaper *The Independent*. January 10, 2009. A fortieth anniversary jumps out from the science section.

Christmas Eve, 1968. Frank Borman, Frank Lovell, and Bill Anders came around the back side of the moon for the fourth time. Out of sight and sound from our home planet, these three earth-born natives busy at work inside *Apollo 8* had not noticed the earth lighting up the sky at their backs. Then Borman turned and gasped.

“Oh, my God!” The words bubble on the flight recording as his eyes catch the blue-and-white luminescent globe against the sheer blackness of expansive space. “Look at that picture over there.” Frantically, the men grabbed cameras, swapping out the black-and-white film for color. Everything around them was black or gray.

Except the earth.

A month later, their photos of the earth’s morning rise at the edge of the moon splashed across newspapers, magazine covers, and television. I was thirteen. I remember staring at that extraordinary image on the cover of the January 1969 issue of *Life* magazine. The half-visible earth burst with color, all the more alive and vibrant compared to the gray-brown dust of the moonscape that framed the photo.

Journalists and historians claim that this photo changed our collective consciousness. Steve Connor (2009), science editor for *The Independent*, wrote on the fortieth anniversary that while only twenty-four people have “seen the whole of the earth” from space, this *Apollo 8* photo and those that followed from space would “launch a thousand environmental

movements.” A picture worth a thousand movements: we saw the *whole* of ourselves for the first time in history. The collective consciousness that emerged around what Borman called “that picture over there” provided something we intuitively know but easily forget.

We share a fragile planet.
We are one human family.
Oh my God.
Look.
Earthrise.

ii

Glancing below, the pilot tells us we are crossing parts of Burma, China, and India as we travel toward Nepal. The borders are not visible to the eye from 30,000 feet. They are, after all, a figment of the political imagination.

I can see mountains, the carpet-green of forests and jungles, and the sharp winding river that cuts through canyons, across plains, and into basins. I wonder to myself how it would be if we could see other hidden mysteries, those that influence the challenge of peace. What if we could see the earth-rivers of armed conflicts—a kind of Google-earth that with a click of a button lifted out what we have done and what we are doing to each other? What hidden flows would reveal themselves?

With a click, we could see the hot-lava zones around the globe. Peace researchers measure conflicts by battle deaths. At least twenty-five battle-related deaths in a year and we count it an armed conflict; one thousand or more, and it’s a war. As I write, our global family had more than thirty armed conflicts, dozens that count as wars. Since World War II, 236 active wars in 150 locations have shattered lives. Most of these would show red-hot in the southern hemisphere of our globe, where high levels of poverty and disease and low levels of education and life expectancy sit side by side with armed conflict.

What rivers and tributaries would we see in and outside of these lava zones?

With a click, the river and tributaries titled Weapons would appear. Dozens and dozens of them, though most trace to a core set of sources, in particular to the birthplaces of light military weapons as they made their way, snakelike, to the majority of the armed conflicts in 2009. These rivers flow from north to south, crossing borders like water converging on the regions of open war, pulled as if by gravity to the places where

cold profitable steel goes white-hot in action. But the \$1.58 billion small weapons transfers represent but a drop in the bucket of our overall commitment to guns.

As a global family, we spend a lot of time and invest precious resources making, selling, and distributing weapons. At the level of formal government expenditures, we spend \$1,464 trillion a year to protect ourselves from each other. We call it national defense.

As a family, we spend an extraordinary amount of money on things whose ultimate purpose has a single goal: to destroy and take life.

\$1,464,000,000,000.

Not an easy figure to comprehend. It took me several tries to get the number of zeros correct.

Comparisons may help. The United Nations currently has 185 member countries. If we add up the national expenditures for 140 countries—more than two-thirds of the UN—their total combined budgets do not reach \$1.426 trillion. At the same time, in 2009, the World Bank reported that half of the world's population lives on less than \$2.50 a day, 80 percent on less than \$10.00. In 2009, UNICEF reported that 200 million of our children under the age of five have stunted growth due to a lack of food and nutrients. The rivers called Food do not seem to flow very evenly. The Google-click for food flows would show fat Mississippi-like rivers of food flowing into and around rich countries and the wealthy. If we had a feature that highlighted the millions of people who do not have enough to eat, we would see how close those who suffer malnutrition and starvation live to the food river and how often the river dried up into near-empty tributaries before reaching them. In 2009, Reuters reported that 32.2 million people in the United States—approximately one in every ten Americans—received food stamps, struggling to put food on the table.

The People River, human mobility, would catch our eye with a Google-click. People move toward jobs and hope. They move away from suffering and violence. They head toward capital cities and globally toward the North. From our vantage point, we could not help but notice how many of these rivers' tributaries start from the seeming unending wells of armed conflict. On World Refugee Day in 2009, the UN's High Commission for Refugees reported these rivers constituted 42 million people. Hidden in the report and data is a small fact: 70 percent of the flows of refugees are mothers and children. Those that flee the violence and don't make the border, spreading and flowing as displaced rivers within their own countries, reached 26 million in the past ten years. Colombia alone has seen five million internally displaced people. And if we broaden our *click*

ever so slightly, we arrive at the estimate that more than 100 million members of our family live without homes, maybe as many as a billion without adequate housing.

Conflict magnets
Suck in guns and
Push out people.

iii

Over many years of working, I have noticed how rich and expansive our language for conflict has become. At times, it feels like the richness of vocabulary the Inuit have to describe snow. I am not referring here to language of policymakers and academics. I speak of the everyday. We have a lot of ways of speaking about and to the extraordinary and multi-layered daily experience of human conflict.

I became curious about this when I first started working in Central America in the 1980s. Whenever you cross borders and languages, words and phrases stand out because they are different, striking and unknown in your mother tongue. In Central America, I worked with people who faced conflicts every day, from poor people trying to occupy land so that they would have a place to live to the difficulties of unemployment, gangs, and delinquency to open wars that forced them into refugee camps or drove them collectively toward the outskirts of larger cities. But in the course of the activities and workshops we created to respond to these situations, I noticed that none of these people in their everyday language ever used the word *conflict* to describe their plight or situation. In the poor *barrios* outside Puntarenas in northern Costa Rica, where we had conducted some of our activities, I asked colleagues why they never used the word *conflict*.

“Conflict?” they responded. “We don’t have any conflicts here. Now up there in Nicaragua, they have a conflict. But here we don’t have any. We just have *clavos*, *enredos*, and occasionally *nos chupa la bruja*.” *Conflict* was a formal word reserved for open warfare. Everyday problems were not called conflicts. But “nails”? “Tangled nets”? “Bitten by a witch”? The individual words I knew and could translate, but the meaning escaped me. Each was a metaphoric reference to the experience of conflict.

I started exploring and kept finding new words and phrases. Some people collect coins or stamps. I started a collection of words in Spanish that stood for conflict. In workshops, I would ask people in small groups to identify all the words and phrases they could think of that referred to

conflict at any level in their everyday vernacular. Coming back into a shared plenary, we would write each phrase or word on a note card and place the card on the wall. Invariably, within an hour, we could easily have fifty or sixty cards, a rich linguistic reflection of everyday life and meaning.

One time in Mexico City, in less than an hour the group posted more than 150 cards. From top to bottom, they spilled off one wall and onto another. Overwhelmed by the number of cards, I did the only thing a good facilitator can do. I turned to the group and asked, “So what do you see here?”

Immediately a hand shot up. “There is one word that explains it all,” came the response. The man walked up and put his finger on the note card displaying *desmadre* (“motherless”).

We had quite a discussion that afternoon. No parallel term with significant meaning exists for a “missing father” in Spanish. Widely used for conflict that has gone bad, *desmadre* describes situations that have become chaotic, nearing a complete breakdown. As my colleagues explained, “You can be without a father, but when the mother disappears, all hell breaks loose, everything collapses.” Way leads to way, and for a couple of hours, we explored the central role of women as bridges and weavers, the webmakers who as informal mediators and peacebuilders hold extended families, local neighborhoods, and communities together.

I came to understand that each word and phrase had meanings linked to the concept of conflict and often contained a history and an image opening a worldview. To have a *clavo* (“nail”) understands conflict as embedded, driven in so deeply that it becomes difficult to remove and painful, leaving one like Christ on a cross, most likely one of the sources of the term’s usage, “to be put in a nail.” *Me chupó la bruja* (“to be bitten by a witch”) goes deep into the mystery of the unexplainable, the energy and forces of escalating conflict that operate beyond our control, creating fear that this unseen but powerful force will “take it out of us” and will “bleed us dry.” Notice that our English-based phraseology of conflict has parallels and common features, even though we may never imagine ourselves as having been bitten by a witch!

Enredo, to be “all tangled up in a mess,” figures among the most common of the Spanish synonyms for conflict. The core word around which *enredo* emerges—*red* (“net” in English)—relates literally to the fisherman’s primary tool. Here people envision conflict as a broken and completely tangled fishing net, the way it looks after coming through a particularly hard session at sea. Interestingly, the work of response and

repair requires the patience of the fisherman's hands. If you have ever watched a fisherman, having completed his early-morning foray into the sea and removed his catch, sit with his nets in a small boat, you will have the key image. Patiently, he unravels the tangles, repairs the torn areas, and makes the rope-web whole again. And once whole, thousands of knots, points of contact, and connection hold the individual strands together.

Enredo, tangled nets, understands conflict as embedded in a social network of interdependent relationships. In this view, there is little basis for calling something "interpersonal conflict," as if conflict could happen between two autonomous individuals independent of their primary group or community. The very image of the net provides a vision of how conflict arises from powerful metaphors and worldview—in this case located in an understanding of the reweaving of the human community as both the context and the goal pursued through responses to quarrels, fights, or disputes. *Enredo*-as-vision begins and concludes with a focus on the relational context and quality of the collective whole. A fisherman does not "resolve" a tangle; he restores the connections and relationships, bringing back to life the very fabric and function of community. Conflict as *enredo* imagines the social network, invokes interdependence, and forges organic connections.

My collection grew. At one point, we took all the words and with several local communities developed a small folk theory of how they understood conflict in their communities according to these everyday concepts and phrases. Here, translated, were their basic ideas: *It can start small, something as small as gossip, but soon has us entangled in a mess. The thing grows inside us and out, our blood heats up, hot as a pig's, and we feel lost inside an eleven-yard shirt then dropped into the heart of an ant-hill, picked at from all sides. Reacting, we lose control, the Virgin comes rushing out of us, we boil water for chocolate, the liver spits, and the lungs burst. We touch God with dirty hands.*

Then blood reaches the river.

Rivers of blood.

Not a pleasant image, but one that keeps showing up on the nightly images of CNN and then lays in static pools in the aftermath of noisy violence, black and white on the front pages of our morning newspapers. The question, after all, is worth noting: How many people died in armed conflict in 2009? Nobody knows for sure, although the number would surely exceed the hundreds of thousands. If only the ground could give up its daily count. In the first recorded river of this sort, with his voice silenced, Abel's blood had to cry from the ground, the terrain of the unspeakable.

iv

A FEW THINGS I HAVE NOTICED FROM CONFLICT ZONE TRAVELS

Our family is not in such good shape.
 We invest more in fear than love.
 We spend too little on safe water,
 food, housing, health, and education.
 We spend too much on guns.
 When we gather weapons, we tend to use them.
 A war is easier to start than to stop.
 Women and children suffer
 beyond proportion
 the decisions made by men
 to unleash violence in their backyards.
 Cleaning up and healing from violence takes a very long time.

2. The Messy (Un)end of Wars

i

We have seen nearly 250 wars since World War II, but we have also witnessed many peace accords. In a recent effort to compile information about the nature of signed agreements, John Darby, my colleague at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, led a team to gather the details of what we refer to as *comprehensive* peace accords. We were interested in counting signatures, the kind that end a war.

“Comprehensive” means that these peace accords involved a negotiation process that included all the major armed groups engaged in a given conflict and that the most significant issues of disagreement that initiated the war were addressed in the agreement. Between 1989 and 2009, the database identified thirty processes of negotiation that met our parameters of *comprehensive* agreements.

It is never easy to get a signed agreement. Violence unleashes a range of consequences beyond the death counts. The legacy of organized collective violence, too often our first and last recourse to address conflict, creates a living legacy, alive with energy.

Of the thirty peace accords documented in our database, the average length of armed conflict was around a decade. Many wars lasted a generation. Some places, like Colombia and Burma (Myanmar), have active armed conflicts dating back half a century or more. Ask people in any of

these settings the question, “When did this conflict begin?” Answers will vary, although invariably, sooner or later, explanations have a way of going back across decades to centuries, sometimes millennia. Memory and pain transfer generationally.

We live
by the stories
we tell
about each other.

Once guns are chosen as the way to tell our stories, the modality by which we communicate, it becomes hard to find our way back to words.

ii

o

MEDIATOR THEATER

ACT 1

Scene 1: The Interim President

(The presidential office has shelves filled with books, walls with pictures signed by visiting dignitaries, plaques of university degrees. The president enters and sits behind a large desk; his flowing national dress covers his chair. Two men in Italian suits with silk ties hang on his every word. One takes verbatim notes.)

We are glad you are here.

We have been waiting.

Talk? With *them*?

We are reasonable people in this room, but with them talk is meaningless.

Terrorists are not worthy of even a word.

Our people need your help.

They suffer.

Look out this window.

We need food.

We need guns.

The international community must respond.

Stay out of our affairs.

Scene 2: The Commander in the Bush

(Inside a village house with rough wood floors and walls, the commander sits at a dining table. Thick green vegetation surrounds the

window as rain pours down, noisily tit-tit-tatting like small rocks on the tin roof. A sparse beard covers the commander's drawn face. He is forty but looks fifty. Young, armed guards stand behind him, motionless, eyes riveted.)

Talk is cheap. Everybody talks.

But nobody listens.

This government and everyone that preceded them are the terrorists.

The so-called president is a butcher.

We have been here for years.

We are not going away.

Look how our people suffer.

We need food.

We need guns.

We speak for the people.

ACT 2

Scene 1: The Woman in the Market

(Squatted behind a dirty reed basket turned upside down with three tomatoes perched on top, a woman pulls a loose veil across her hairline. A baby sleeps in her lap; a second child, slightly older, hangs on her side.)

Please bring food.

Stop the shooting.

Look, there are more bullets on that young man's stand than tomatoes on mine.

Neither bullets nor talk has filled my child's belly.

Nothing stops his cry at night.

Please include us.

Talk with the women.

When are you coming back?

Scene 2: The Young Boy at the Roadblock

(Leaning in the driver's side window, a sixteen-year-old glances nervously, his eyes covered with expensive new Ray-Bans, AK-47 in hand, Nike tennis shoes. Behind the crisscross of bullets on his chest, the T-shirt reads "New York Yankees, World Champions." He laughs at each question.)

This gun?

It keeps me safe.

Work? This is my job.

School? No, not one day.

Talk? Guns are better than words.
 When people see it, they listen.
 Give it up? This gun is my brother.
 I have slept with him since I was ten.

Act 3: Old Men Under a Tree

(Five old men squat at the trunk of a tree. Long sticks in hand, loose cloth crosses their shoulders and drapes around their body, worn sandals on their feet. Cataract eyes follow the words floating between them.)

The answer to the problem is more talk.
 Villages know their own snakes.
 The mouse in the belly of a cat is not at peace.
 Rat's trap is not for rat alone.
 Slowly by slowly, the earthworm reaches the well.

o

iii

When exactly does a war end? The prevalent belief, if we follow the language of politicians and academics who tell stories about something they call *postconflict* settings, as if such things existed, seems to suggest that signed peace agreements not only end wars but eliminate conflict itself. Check for yourself. In 23 seconds, a Google search on the phrase “post-conflict” will turn up 24 million entries. You will find postconflict institutes, centers, units, and assessment tools. You will find that Oxford University Press published a full hardback dictionary titled *Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: A Lexicon* (Chetail, 2009). You can even pursue a specialized master's degree in postconflict studies.

But from what I have seen, the term *postconflict* is not just a misnomer; it is inaccurate. Academese. Good political fiction. Scary social science.

Peace agreements do not end conflict. At best, they may end some forms of violence by which the conflict was conducted between major armed groups. In our comprehensive peace accord database, we found that after signing a peace agreement, about 50 percent of these accords turn back to patterns of open violence before they reach the fifth year. In Nepal, for example, in the two years after the signing of a peace accord, 109 new armed groups emerged.

Wars are never easy to end. They are messy and carry a cost to the humans who fight them, the communities that suffer their consequences,

and the environment that must fuel and sustain them. The costs of war, of organized violence, in its preparation, implementation, and aftermath, if in fact the *after* gets *mathed*, go way beyond the rhetorical fictions used to justify their initiation or describe their conclusion.

iv

The African philosopher John Mbiti (1969) called this resilient living history the “past that lies before us.” In his classic *African Religions and Philosophy*, he explored the intriguing worldview differences about time and how time is experienced and envisioned. Based on the language groups he studied in Kenya, he concluded that many Africans envision time in overlapping “spherical” periods rather than as linear phenomenon. He suggested four spheres.

THE LIVING. We are these, those of you reading this line, my hand writing it just now. We are the community of the breathing and eating, talking, and walking.

THE LIVING DEAD. Those who have passed out of the “horizon of the *sasa*,” as Mbiti called the present in Swahili, who no longer breathe and eat, talk, and walk. Paradoxes abound, he noted. These beings move forward into the period *ahead* of us yet remain our *past* while still being *present* to, with, and for us. The ancestors. Mbiti suggested that the living dead remain an active presence in a community as long as someone among the living remembers them. *Remembers them*. And these ancestors remind us. They nudge and encourage. They can be unhappy and behave badly. They can be insulted and aggrieved. The author of Hebrews in the New Testament version suggested that they are the cloud of witnesses who have gone before us. They beckon. Toward them we journey in our lives. They represent *the past that lies before us*.

THE DEAD. Mbiti suggested that the sphere of the dead emerges only when no living person remembers the name of the ancestor. Forgotten. Beyond memory, no longer alive and available.

THE YET TO BE BORN. The sphere of our children’s children.

I noticed how many places I traveled where the energy and life of conflicts also inhabits these spheres. On my first visit to Northern Ireland, I saw the words of Irish Nationalist Padraig Pearse splashed on a mural: “The fools the fools, they have left our Fenian dead. While Ireland holds

these graves, Ireland unfree shall never be at peace.” From that day forward, I kept noticing how the “graves” of one group or another were not a bygone static entity. The past was alive, in fact, literally circulating in the streets each year in the parading season when violence would erupt over who had the right to remember what, in which way, on whose geography. I was surprised to discover that ancestral domain walking and talking in the streets of Belfast.

Nepal posed a similar challenge. Sitting for hours with politicians debating how to implement a comprehensive peace accord that seemed at any moment on the verge of collapse, we asked a simple pair of questions: If you sign a peace deal and it fails, how long will it take to come back to a new signing? And what happens in the intervening period?

Our peace accord matrix could not easily provide answers. No systematic research exists, but examples abound. Angola: five years, open warfare. Liberia: six years, open warfare. Sudan: two decades, open warfare. Palestine-Israel (Oslo Accords): fifteen years and counting.

It seems that violence has its own ancestors that keep showing up.

3. *Haibun* and Untold Stories

Colombia, February 2009

i

During the lunch break, a vigorous soccer game ran up and down the green yard outside Los Pinares, the convent retreat center on the edge of Bogotá. At the center of the field, shouting instructions, a young Colombia woman kept up with the best of the players, scoring a winning goal in the waning minutes of the break. Half an hour later, in the front row, “Edilia” reported the details of the game and persuaded others to join the next day. Our workshop on community transformation and peacebuilding started up again.

Forty people from sixteen mostly rural communities sat in a circle. Brought together by the experiences of armed violence and displacement from many parts of Colombia, they sought words to explain what they had experienced. Explanations never come easy for things that lie beyond rational sense. Even coming up with the right questions seemed impossible.

The great Chilean poet Pablo Neruda (2001) ended his illustrious publishing career with a small volume titled *The Book of Questions*. Linking three or four sentence-length poems per page, the book raised

unanswerable question after unanswerable question. Our workshop feels as if we have been dropped into his book.

○

How can I heal if the violence has not ended?
 But how long do I wait on violence to end before starting?
 How can I heal if it is dangerous to talk about what
 happened to me and my family?
 In what tense do we conjugate healing from collective
 violence and massacres? Past? Present? Future?

○

What do we do with two hundred orphans in one set of villages?
 How can we accept the very people who took the lives of
 their parents back into our village?
 Will even God forgive those men with the chain saws and
 laughter on their faces who took both arms off the father
 in front of his children?

○

How do we reconcile with people we never knew?
 Why did the government give money to the demobilized
 militia commander but nothing to the families he killed?
 How can we reconcile with people who never
 admitted doing anything wrong?
 How do I prove I am a victim?

○

Where are the remains of my father?
 When do we get to go home?
 Is it safe?

○

Where was God?
 Where is God?

○

ii

These were the survivors. People who had lived and continue to live in communities hardest hit in Colombia's five decades of wars. Everyone in the room had tasted the salt that runs from eye to cheek, had felt the

throat-clenching fear that sends legs running at night and the noisy heartthrob echoing in the cavity of a bottomless silence. Victims, some would call them. Hardly the name they choose for themselves. In the passing of years, often facing new rounds of violence and displacement, they struggle to find their voice, to speak words where the law of silence pervades in the land of forgetfulness.

Unspeakable.

Speaking the Unspeakable was the title the poet Robert Pinsky (2008) gave to his *New York Times* review of Katheryn Harrison's book *While They Slept* (2008). For two decades, she had followed the story of a teenager who murdered his parents and siblings in Medford, Oregon, in the mid-1980s. One sister survived. The two have not spoken a word since then.

Perhaps it takes a poet to describe what might otherwise appear in the news as a sensational anomaly and situate it in the context of a long-standing and mostly unanswerable human inquiry. Pinsky looked to mythology and the classics, the literature before and beyond what he calls the "the Freudian cure" and the "too mild and cool" notion of the "therapeutic." He brings forward the figure of Philomena, her tongue torn from her mouth, who transforms into a nightingale in order to "sing" the accusations against her rapist. He cites the narrator's lament from Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* that "it cannot speak" and is forced to look away, unable to absorb the tragedy heaped upon the destroyed yet living Oedipus: "I would speak, ponder, question if I were able."

The whole of Harrison's book deals with two survivors in a family. The forty people in our room in the Los Pinares convent have lost hundreds in their extended families and communities. Over the course of fifty years, two generations, their communities have lost thousands. None of them suffered a onetime trauma. The seesaw battles of multiple armed groups fighting for their farms and allegiance had hit time and again. And were still hitting as we met.

As they said in Spanish, we do not "recognize ourselves" in the term *postconflict*. Such a concept does not exist.

In Africa, they have a proverb: When elephants fight, the grass gets trampled. Ali Mazrui once noted that when elephants make love, the grass also gets trampled.

iii

Midweek we all leave Los Pinares to attend a public meeting in downtown Bogotá. Soon we are seated in a grand hall filled with Colombians. They are standing where seats end, on the spiral staircase in back, out the

door on the side. They have come for the launch of my book *The Moral Imagination*, just off the presses in Spanish, and to pay homage to some extraordinary leaders. On my right sits Dámaris Vargas, daughter of the assassinated *campesino* leader Josué Vargas. She watches a bit nervously as the hall fills. The event is in part a recognition of her family's sacrifice.

Life has not been easy since she lost her father. Her mother, fearing reprisals, did not want the children involved too closely and moved away from their home farm. But as Dámaris grew older, she decided to go back and continue with the movement her father had initiated, the Association of Workers and *Campesinos* of the Carare River (ATCC). She eventually became vice-president of the organization. Then in late 2008, only a few months before the book launch, heavy rains caused an unexpected flood that dragged her younger son to his death. After this, another in a long series of losses, she decided to take time off and left for the capital city. When I told her that the book was finally out and that I hoped she could come to the launch, she was uncertain, not sure if it would be too much. But she met me outside the door and agreed to sit at the speakers' table.

We begin. I start with confessions.

The book was written in a period of professional and personal crisis. The personal crisis: after a severe car accident in Spain, I was not sure I could go on. The professional crisis: after three decades of work, I had noticed that the most interesting peacebuilding emerged spontaneously and seemed to have little to do with all our peacebuilding work. Was this work worth the effort? And what, if anything, seems to be the core that holds it together?

The book seeks answers in four stories, each pregnant with response from unexpected quarters. A young man in northern Ghana who chose respect over vengeance and called his enemy accuser the paramount chief "father"; a half dozen women on the border of Somalia who refused to give up hope or succumb to violence; a Sufi poetry professor who walked unarmed into the mountains to bring down the last of the rebel commanders into the inter-Tajik peace talks; and the courageous peasants from La India, deep in the heartlands of Colombia, who started a most unusual nonviolent movement that squared off with armed groups of all stripes. Five or six of the founders of that movement are with us tonight, including one seated beside me who lost her father nearly twenty years ago.

I learned from these people. Simple things. Simple principles that when combined create movement and echo. They were visionaries. They had the capacity to envision a web of human connections that included building relationships with their enemies. They refused to accept a dualist “you are with us or against us” approach. They embraced complexity. They held a firm belief in the human capacity for creativity. In the face of violent threat, they forged ways forward that did not depend on weapons. None of them ever picked up a gun. And of course, they took the risk to step into the unknown, armed only with love and courage in the midst of hate. These four qualities add up to something very different from political realism or expediency. Reaching out to enemies, embracing complexity, creativity, and risk add up to the moral imagination in action. And their imagination put in action held the keys to breaking cycles of violence while still living under threat of the gun, vengeance, and retribution. They were artists. And my book follows the pathway of art and soul needed to find and follow this imagination.

I sat down.

Questions came.

In response to the last question of the evening, I expressed my hope that the book would, among other things, bring some stories of lived courage to the fuller awareness of the Colombian people, who did not seem to know about these extraordinary examples in their own country, the likes of Josué Vargas and the ATCC. I explained that people in that remote and hard-hit area of the country known as Magdalena Medio still remember a famous speech that Josué Vargas gave that sparked the movement more than twenty years ago. Many locals can still recite it word for word. I had found that so inspiring that I decided to memorize his words myself and had repeated them many times in other parts of the world.

“Do it now,” came the response.

I hesitated. I looked at Dámaris. She had heard those words as a young girl—most likely in person and on the spot—directly from her father’s mouth.

“Please,” she said. I stood.

“First, the context,” I started. “Imagine that we are, all of us here, among the hundreds convened by a notoriously violent captain of the Colombian army but connected to the paramilitaries. We are milling about in an open plaza when the captain arrives and climbs onto a makeshift

podium. He is accompanied by dozens of heavily armed men who slowly circle and surround us (Lederach, 2005).

“The captain starts his speech with these words: ‘I have come here today to offer you forgiveness. Your forgiveness will take the form of an amnesty if you accept these weapons.’ He turns and shows the crowd boxes of guns. ‘You are only asked to do the right thing,’ he says. ‘We want you to join the ranks of local militia, to join us and fight the communist guerrillas.’

“His offer soon becomes an ultimatum, a demand about choosing sides in the conflict. He concludes with four choices.

One, you can arm yourselves and join us; you will receive forgiveness.
Two, you can go and join the guerrillas; we will find and destroy you.
Three, you can leave your homes—run, flee, become displaced.
Or four, you can stay. But if you stay and do not join us, you will die.
These are your four choices today.

“Imagine how you would feel standing in that plaza, afraid to even look at any one of your neighbors. Stunned into silence. Wondering if yet another of a long string of massacres was about to be unleashed. Caught with no choice and no exit and hoping that nobody says a word. And then out of the midst of the crowd, a lone voice cries out.

“*Capitán, por favor.*”

“Heads jerk to see who is speaking. *Who, the fool, would dare speak? You could get us killed, you want to shout. Please don’t talk.*

“And there stands Josué Vargas, white straw hat perched on top of his lanky frame, feet solid in knee-length black rubber boots. His words came spilling out, the ones that now nearly twenty-five years later remain alive in the minds and on the lips of the people along the Carare River.

Capitán, por favor. You speak of forgiveness, but for what do you have to forgive us? You are the ones who have violated. We have killed no one. We have never gone into anyone’s house late at night and pulled them from their beds or shot them in front of their families or disappeared them, never to be seen again.

And what is it that you are offering us? You want to give us millions in weapons, in guns paid for by the state, yet you will not facilitate even the minimum credit for our farming needs. There are millions for war but nothing for peace.

Tell us, *Capitán*, how many men in arms are there in Colombia? By rough calculation, I would say at least one hundred thousand, plus the police, plus twenty thousand guerrillas, not to mention the paramilitary, the drug lords and private armies. And what has all this served? What has it fixed to have more guns and militias? Nothing. In fact, Colombia is experiencing the worst violence ever. We may be simple, but we have arrived at the conclusion that weapons have not solved a thing and that there is not one reason to arm ourselves. We need farm credits, tools, tractors, trucks to make this little agricultural effort produce better. You, as members of the national army, instead of inciting us to kill each other, should do your job according to the national constitution, that is, you should protect the Colombian people.

Look at all these people you brought here. We all know each other. I can look around this plaza, and I know each and every face. These are my neighbors. We are not strangers. And who are you, *Capitán*? We know you. You are not a stranger to us. We know that some years ago, you yourself fought on the side of the guerrillas and now you are the head of the paramilitaries. You brought people into our houses to accuse us, you lied, and you switched sides. And now you, a side-switcher, you want us to follow your violent example?

Capitán, with all due respect, we do not plan to join your side, their side, or any side.

And we are not leaving this place.

Today we have decided to think for ourselves.

“Such was the moral weight of truth of those words that the captain stepped down off the podium without a word and left the plaza. The miracle that day was that not a single person was shot or arrested. And think for themselves they did. Within a few days, that group of *campesinos* formed the ATCC and established a quota and their key principles.

Quota for entry into the organization: We do not want your money. We want a personal commitment. *We will die before we kill.*

“They had principles:

1. Faced with isolation: Solidarity. Everything in teams. Together.
2. Faced with the law of silence: Complete transparency. We will speak openly, and all are invited to our meetings.

3. Faced with fear: Sincerity and a disposition to dialogue. We will understand those who do not understand us.
4. Faced with violence: Talk and negotiate with everyone. We do not have enemies.

“And they put the principles into motion. Within weeks, they began to walk out and meet the armed groups across their region. Hand-painted signs went up along the edges of their villages: ‘What the people here say.’ ‘You are welcome.’ ‘No guns allowed in our area.’ They negotiated, and they achieved the first civilian-initiated peace zones in Colombia. All this came with a cost, and it had to be renewed again and again. But they have never given up. The people you see sitting here at this table and those scattered among you in the audience are the living voices of this movement, still alive and inventing in 2009, twenty-odd years since the speech of Josué Vargas.”

I sat down, wondering if I got it right, worried that I had parasitized on sacred words.

Later that evening, several of the friends from La India gathered around a table. “There are several things your story needs to know from that day in La India,” they say. “First, Josué knew that *capitán* personally. Eighteen months earlier, the *capitán* had had him arrested. They took him to a holding building near the airport outside Cimitarra. For weeks they tortured him. But they could not break him. He had nothing to confess. When Josué spoke those words, without remorse or vengeance, he was speaking to his torturer. That is why the words moved people and why some say the *capitán* stepped down.

“Second, you should not have such a professional crisis. You forget. Twenty-five years ago, two of us came to a big academic conference in Bogotá. When they got back to La India, they said the only thing that made sense was this one guy who canceled a meeting to sit with them for a couple of hours sharing coffee and helped them draw out ideas and approaches on paper napkins. They came back with their version of your ideas, just as we were starting the ATCC. Kind of confirmed that what we were thinking was right. You may not have met him, but your napkins reached Josué Vargas.”

In peacebuilding, sometimes it takes twenty years to notice that a seed has sprouted.

The next morning, I received a ten-word e-mail from Dámaris: “I am proud to be the daughter of Josué Vargas.”

iv

At the end of the week, our workshop closed. I ride to the airport with the ever-lively Edilia. She is excited to be headed home, back toward the

interior of the country. She laughs when we discuss the last game of football at the convent. Boggled down in Bogotá traffic, we have time to talk. Family. Work. Life. And the unexpected.

○

BACK SEAT TAXI WITH EDILIA
BOGATA FEBRUARY 21, 2009

“Where are you headed tonight?”

“Back to teaching.”

“Me too. What age do you teach?”

“Well, after university, I went back to teach the younger ones,” she said. “I like working with kids.”

“Where do you teach?”

“Little town, south quite a ways from Bucaramanga.”

“I was through there a few years back, place called San José de Miranda. Left a huge impression on me.”

“Wow, my village is just across that mountain.”

“Is Padre Rafa still there?”

“Oh, my, yes, still there.”

“San José de Miranda. I never felt more overwhelmed. Sitting with so many widows and orphans.”

“Yeah, too many of them out our way.”

“One story haunts me. This young *campesina* woman telling us how she watched her husband take bullet after bullet.

Then they used his head for soccer in front of her children . . .”

I felt my voice crack. She looked out the side window.

“That was my hometown. My father was killed that day. *Paras.*”
Silence held us like the last note of a lost lullaby.

“Father Rafa was so helpful. He pulled us through. He’s why I decided to go back.

“I love teaching.

“I love the kids.”

○

Nepal, March 2009

i

In Bakhtapur's agriculture training center, a voice sings out, competing with the monsoon rains that pummel the windows and echo across our cement-floored room. A Jackie Robinson baseball cap pulled low over his brow darkened his soft face, lit only by flashing teeth as crystal notes rise from his lungs. Phrasing repetitive words in his native Tharu, a story flows through a catchy tune.

Suddenly, his voice breaks. He chokes, words stuck somewhere deep in his throat. The singing stops. Our eyes watch his, expecting tears. Within a few seconds, his voice catches the melody, and the story reemerges through the singsong verse, only to be broken, again and again, by the chorus of guttural sobs.

The son of third-generation bonded slaves, Balluji Chaudary is twenty-three years old. At sixteen, he and his Kamaiya community were liberated from slavery. In the melodious sections, his song lifted into the long-dreamed story of freedom. And in the sobs, his voice choked out the fear and hardships of the first night of freedom and the ensuing years of homeless wandering in search of where they would live and how they would survive.

That afternoon, Balluji sang his story for a group of activists from FECOFUN, a national federation of more than fifteen thousand community forest user groups working on conservation, protection, and constructive engagement in natural resource conflicts that plague communities across Nepal. His family of landless former bonded slaves eventually settled in the district of Kailali, bordering India. Without work or land, they located in a forest to survive. But their small piece of land was registered to a forest user group. The official landholders did not want squatters in their forest and regarded the newly arrived ex-slaves as encroachers who must be chased away. Conflict erupted.

The Kamaiya gathered. How would they face this enemy that wished to expel them once again? Should they fight? Should they flee? Did they have rights to land? They decided to send Balluji. "Go," they said. "Try to talk with these people."

Nineteen years old, he set out alone to engage the leaders in the enemy camp.

A year later, Balluji became a member of the local forest user group. Little by little, the group found a place on the registered lands for the Kamaiya families. This young ex-slave spoke for his family of landless Kamaiya and

at the same time somehow developed respectful relationships with a powerful organization that viewed his community as enemy encroachers.

Balluji transformed enemies into friends.

ii

In 2009, I started a long-distance correspondence with Judy Atkinson of Aboriginal origin in Australia. I had read her extraordinary work *Trauma Trails* (2002), which documents her efforts to understand and respond to the challenge of generational trauma, or what more accurately might be called millennia trauma. Some people call them the unrightable wrongs.

When British colonizers first arrived, they referred to her ancestor's land as *terra nullius*, the land of no peoples. But according to Judy, for the Aboriginals this so-called *terra nullius* was a "story place. Land holds the stories of human survival across many generations. Land shapes people just as people shape their countries" (Atkinson, 2002, p. 27).

The aftermath of a silent war lost—never fought, really—left a legacy of banishment and displacement. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say *vanishment*: to be present but unseen, the plight of too many of the long-suffering indigenous members of our wider family.

To counter this vanishment, Judy turned to the power of stories. *Dadirri*. Listening circles: sitting in circles and listening. The Aboriginal participants committed themselves to share and to listen beyond words, what Saint Benedict would leave for his monks as their first and primary task: "To listen with the ear of the heart." Their listening journeys went back, past the recent events of a broken family, past the periods of abuse and addiction to alcohol, past the grandparents and into the ancestors' beckon and call to the place where the very vibrations of birth and earth can be felt. In *dadirri*, people story themselves back into place, groping to locate the coordinates of their immediate settings and the lost peoplehood violated in their lived history.

Healing pursues a simple goal: feeling like a person again. And feeling like a person requires the journey to "re-story" place and belonging.

The subtitle of Judy's book, *Recreating Song Lines*, brought into sharp relief the difficulty of finding place. The beauty of the Aboriginal worldview, the indigenous people's gift to the world, suggests that location is found through *sonic* engagement. Sound. Literally, for generations, the Aboriginals sang to find themselves. The very act of birth and the process to story, to document one's place in the world, came immersed in song. Aboriginals sang location into significance. Aural altars. As they walked across vast

expanses of the continent intoning song and lyrics, locations were noted, sonic roadways invisible to the naked eye but materialized in sound.

Bruce Chatwin's well-known exploration of the songlines found him asking about this geographic phrasing of songs and whether they actually function as a map. Arkady, his friend and cultural translator, responded, "Music is a memory bank for finding one's way about the world" (Chatwin, 1987, p. 108).

Balluji's song came to mind. His very sounds vibrated the heights of the feeling of freedom and to the depths of guttural sobs of having no place to live. His cries had a familiar ring. Not unlike Edilia and the millions displaced in Colombia, the Lake region of Africa, or the flow away from violence in Mindanao, Philippines.

iii

I asked Balluji one afternoon if he knew about Jackie Robinson, the name boldly emblazoned above the bill of his hat.

"No," he replied. "I saw this hat in the store. I really liked it. I guess it called to me."

He went in to inquire but left disappointed and empty-handed. He could never afford the price: 500 rupees (\$7). Later, his younger brother took a full-time job sweeping and cleaning the store. Spending the entire first month's wages, he surprised his brother with the gift.

"You see, it is a valuable hat," he smiled. "I will always wear it."

I told him of Jackie Robinson's courage, his quality of character to face the insults and hatred required to become the first black baseball player in the all-white professional leagues in the United States.

He sway-nodded his head in affirmation, words coming slow.

"The hat has gone up in value. Beyond money."

Balluji's song remembered both the elation and difficulty of liberation.

But his gift to the world, quiet and never celebrated, came through the courage to reach out and make friends of his enemies, to build a larger family with those who once were feared. No wonder a Jackie Robinson hat called to him.

iv

Listening to Balluji, I could not help but think of Hafiz, the old mystic with eyes for the invisible rivers.

Freedom is a rare thing. How we find it rarely comes by way of the forces we think create it. Hafiz put it simply (Ladinsky, 1999, p. 206):

The small man
Builds cages for everyone
He
Knows.

While the sage,
Who has to duck his head
When the moon is low,
Keeps dropping keys all night long
For the
Beautiful,
Rowdy
Prisoners.

Balluji has to duck when the moon is low. He is an ex-slave key dropper for that wardrobe of imagination Edmund Burke proposed several hundred years ago.

Sierra Leone, September 2009

i

From all corners of Freetown, poets gather in a dimly lit room of the Cultural Center. Chairs shuffle. Conversations fall silent as a voice crackles across a fuzzy microphone, the words unmistakably clear:

There will be no more postmortem.
The cause of death is genocide.
YAY tens of thousands slaughtered
In Ten Bloody Years. . . .

The conscience of nationhood is forever
Dead.

Spray formaldehyde.
Spread the purple carpet. . . .
Line the Coffins

Sound the Nell.

Let the dead bury the dead.
 Dust to Dust.
 May the seeds and roots of this gory age
 Remain forever
 Damned.

The last word from Tom Cauray's poem "Epitaph of a Nation" hung in the room. And once again, the Falui Poets' Society's voices joined together as they had throughout the eleven-year war.

Statistics speak a flatness of fact in Sierra Leone:

50,000 dead
 4,000 amputees
 10,000 children abducted
 150,000 displaced people in the capital alone

Poetry reverberates below and beyond this unspeakable history. Despite unimaginable violence, the Falui Poets' Society gathered to search for words in the midst of the sweltering war. Eventually collected in *Songs That Pour from the Heart* (Sesay and Kainwo, 2004), their penned words and spoken phrases provided small doses of resilience, bouncing back and against a decade of seeming impotence.

ii

On September 13, 2009, our family heard that Tom Cauray had died.

Alone.

In a hostel room.

A partially decomposed body discovered days after death.

The news arrived by e-mail from fellow poet Oumar Farouk Sesay. The cause of death, he wrote, is officially unknown. But we knew, especially my daughter Angie, who only the year before had met and recorded Tom's poetry in one of the Falui Poets' sponsored events. In the months that followed, Kirsten Rian (2009) compiled a new volume of their poems: *Kalashnikov in the Sun*. For the first time, Falui voices would reach much a wider audience. Including Tom's.

Details of his last minutes on earth will always remain unclear. But as we mourned and struggled to understand his passing, a story, if not clarity, emerged. Tom suffered too greatly from his losses in the war, living day to day an almost unbearable burden, carrying the guilt of survival. Lines from "Epitaph of a Nation" were prescient of his own

future: “There will be no more postmortem. / The cause of death is genocide.”

Years earlier, as a university student on scholarship in the United States, Tom faced a life decision. He felt torn. The opportunity to study was life-changing, a dream come true. He had left Sierra Leone before the war had started. Now, far off, he scanned the newspapers and watched for clips from home on the evening news. Violence and atrocities were ripping his native country apart.

Unable to bear the separation from family, he decided to drop his scholarship, leave his studies, and return. He arrived too late.

In Freetown, he learned that not one member of his family had survived the opening wave of the war’s brutality. Racked with guilt and shock, Tom grieved the irreplaceable loss alone, without a living relative. Days later, he came face to face with the violence. Captured, a gun at his head, he was stripped naked and forced to march through the streets of the capital. In the following weeks, only by chance did he escape death.

Eight years later, in 2002, politicians and commanders signed Sierra Leone’s peace agreement.

The civil war officially came to an end.

War’s relentless memory did not.

Seven years after peace arrived, the loss of family stole the will to live.

“The cause of death is genocide.”

iii

In the past ten years, 26 million people have been considered internally displaced, mostly by war.

IDPs—internally displaced people. These people have names. Edilia. Tom. Balluji.

Violence displaces people literally and figuratively. Bandied about as if everyone understands what these three letters stand for, IDP identifies people forced from their homes and communities but not their country of origin. But look closer. The three letters carry more than one level of meaning. IDP functions as an archetypal metaphor.

IDP: To be physically removed, as in forced mobility and loss of place; the experience of being obligated to flee, run, and abandon one’s home and land while remaining in one’s country of citizenship.

IDP: To be socially lost, as in not knowing one’s place, no longer fitting in, the disorienting feeling of not belonging. To search for bearings that provide a sense of location. Social homelessness.

IDP: To be lost within oneself, as in the loss of identity, the internal experience of not knowing who one is; to live without a sense of purpose.

At a higher level, belonging searches not just for a physical accommodation but, more important, for a sense of purpose. “Finding a place” symbolizes the journey to locate “bearings” or “coordinates” that permit people to “land on” and attach meaning to their lives. Belonging requires odyssey. People journey. They search for significance. IDPs pursue these eternal questions, outwardly and inwardly searching for home: Where will we live? How do we fit in? Who are we?

“Where” we are is always intimately tied up with figuring out “who” we are.

Inevitably, health and well-being find roots in the soils of *place*, in both the literal and figurative senses of the word. When we have our bearings, we know where we are and have a sense of who we are. Finding place in this deeper sense represents the lifelong journey toward health as belonging, feeling at home, and sensing purpose.

Physically, psychologically, and spiritually, the inner and outer journeys through uncharted geographies provide reflective IDP mirrors. Every day, as if struck by a forced amnesia, *desplazados* (displaced people) must wake and search. On the outer journey, they must find a home, a place to live while feeling like strangers and foreigners in their own land. On the inner journey, they search for meaning; numbed by violence, they rummage to recuperate a capacity to feel and somehow stay in touch with their sense of personhood and find meaningful purpose.

Even seven years after the signing of the peace agreement, a dozen or more after he lost his family, Tom could no longer find meaning and place.

iv

As the shocking news settled into the psyche of the Falui poets, they knew that Tom’s funeral fell to them. He had no living relatives. They raised funds and then voices to eulogize and remember their friend’s life and his contributions to this world.

One final time, they became family.

Tom found solace in poetry.

He found family in those who shared the spirit of his art.

His close friend Oumar Farouk Sesay wrote in his e-mail that the Falui Poets’ “concern and love for Tom is a manifestation of that spirit. We are indeed one big family. His voice must not be silenced by death.”

His voice must not be silenced.

As Mbiti had written so many years earlier, though persons may have passed from this world, as long as they are remembered by name, they are present and available to the living community. There is no room among the Falui poets for complacency.

Ancestral presence. Voices recalled are voices alive. Tom Cauuray: present.

“Dear friend, Though you might not have ended your journey the way you wanted, you left so much that will help others go safely through their journeys.” Epitaph on Tom Cauuray’s grave, written by his friend and drama mentor Raymond De’Souza George of the Falui Poets’ Society.

ANCESTRAL REMINDERS

Journey toward home
Remember your fragile birth
Stay in touch. Be true.

v

THE UNFOLDING

Edilia. Balluji. Tom.

Snapshots.
The state of our world
The condition of our family.

Look!

How precious and fragile
this gift we share.

Look!

How many times the blood has reached the river!
How many pools have dried!
How hard the soil crusts!

Yet Listen!

The sound of life
vibrates
breaking
up through soil.

A seed refuses to die.

Feel!

Does the ripple of birth reach you?
Can you feel the miracle?

Let the fragile beauty touch you.

*Witness the poetic unfolding of the human spirit.
Witness the courage to reach.*

4. Noticing Hidden Mysteries

i

Throughout 2009, wherever I traveled, I asked friends and colleagues about *their* global dream. When I corresponded across waters and time zones, I inquired, “What dream do you hold for the whole of our human family?” *Dadirri*. Circle listening.

I asked Apsara Chapagain, cofounder and current president of the Federation of Forest User Groups in Nepal. The federation forms local user groups from dozens to hundreds of families working together to watch over and benefit from the life-giving source of the trees. No user group can join the federation unless it has assured a steering committee of half men and half women. Their federation speaks for 8.5 million people in Nepal.

Apsara’s dream: To protect our forests and include local communities when decisions are made about their lives. And to make sure women are full participants in leadership.

I asked my colleague Jackie Smith from the University of Notre Dame. Her recent book *Social Movements for Global Democracy* (2008) studied transnational movements and the World Social Forum. The Forum gathers movements, organizations, networks, and individuals representing millions of people across the globe.

Jackie summarized the impulse of the gathered movements often expressed at the social forum: We can build a world based on principles of sharing.

I asked my friends at United Religions Initiative. Initiated less than a decade ago, they require a simple commitment to join. Start a cooperation circle. Make sure people from at least three different religious persuasions sit together in the circle. Talk with each other. Do something together. They now have more than four hundred cooperation circles around the globe, touching the lives of over a million people in seventy-two countries.

Their dream: To end religiously motivated violence and create cultures of peace, justice, and healing for the earth and all living beings (United Religions Initiative, 2006).

I asked Oumar Farouk Sesay, poet, teacher, and leader of the Falui Poets' Society. He responded by e-mail:

Remember. Every effort counts. We are all a piece of the whole, and to dampen the effort of any one of us slows the triumph of the human spirit. We must pursue our common destiny or perish as a race. When the pay time of our excesses and folly comes, in the form of global warming, for example, it will not ask for the lines we drew to keep ourselves apart. We are the same, and we are taking too long to learn this obvious truth.

I listened to Edilia's life. Her dream:

End armed groups in my hometown.
Provide safe schools. Kids need them. There we find life.
I pray every night that not one more child passes through what I suffered.

She was not alone. I met with hundreds of widows, widowers, and orphans in and around the villages in Colombia where she grew up. I heard them north to the Caribbean, west to Chacó, south to Nariño, and along the Carare River where Josué Vargas had made his home—thousands upon thousands across Colombia.

They were not alone. Voices, millions of voices over the past decades, from Latin America to Africa and Asia, expressed a single dream:

Stop the guns.
Enough violence.
We can find a better way.

I asked Balluji. He smiled his star-sparkled smile. His dream:

A small house.
 A bit land for the Kamaiya.
 Clean water.
 A decent job.
 Education for my daughter—as much as she wants.

I asked Ancestor Tom. He spoke from poetry (Rian, 2009, p. 22):

Let living beings
 And barren things
 Conform and spring
 God willed—with words.

ii

Poet Laureate Ted Kooser (2005), citing Jared Carter’s poem “Fire Burning in a Fifty-Gallon Drum,” whose opening line draws attention to the homeless, suggests that poetry helps us take notice of things, makes the common everyday “memorable.” Poetry catches you in such a way that you will notice things differently.

Notice. This first impulse of the poet draws our eyes and ears toward what Guroian (1998, p. 141) described as that kind of light that “illuminates the mystery hidden beneath a visible reality,” the imagination that notices the life in the seed below the hardened soil.

Japanese haiku poets believe that perception of beauty emerges from preparedness, an attitude of *attentive humility*. They find it most clearly by spending time in nature and taking time to notice nature. This attentive humility they call the *haiku attitude*, and it requires a constant discipline: Stay open to the presence of beauty. Notice what surrounds you. The experience of beauty noticed creates what they call the *haiku moment*. The poet and reader merge and experience an “aha” moment, the “I see what you mean” rise of resonance and connection. Kenneth Yasuda, a cultural translator who moves between the worlds of East and West, captured this haiku essence exemplified by Bashō in his *haibun* travels. “The nature of things is grasped in clear intuition,” he wrote. “The world, in the haiku moment, stands revealed for what it is” (Yasuda, 2000, p. 80).

Revealed. For what it is.

Poetry has this capacity to link beauty and truth. The Falui Poets’ Society published its members’ poems while the aftermath of war still simmered. Among the poems we find one by Omar Farouk Sesay (2007),

who penned the dilemma of writing a poem of love, to which he answered in the first lines.

No I cannot write it here
 That poem that will clean
 Hate ridden hearts with a
 Love that has no
 Color, creed, and race.
 No I cannot write it,
 But I want you to read it
 In the childhood anthology
 It is there, the poetry of love
 That brought us here.
 I can see it in that child
 Feel it in her smiles
 Sense it in her chemistry
 Hear it in her breath.

I imagine this poet, who suffered through the years of brutal war, watching as these words moved from setting to setting, from the requests of personal love to the time periods of national reconciliation where those who perpetrated the wars had signed papers of goodwill. Emerging in a volume that captured the spirit of resistance through the years of the war, the personal love poem becomes, in the words of Carolyn Forché (1993), *social memory*: “No, I cannot write the poem you want,” the poet seems to be saying. “I cannot send you words of blessing disguised for the wardrobe of your triumphant political moment. But look. Look toward the innocence of those whose lives were held in the balance of your actions. Look. You will see it. You will sense it. You will feel it. You will hear it. Love is present when we recuperate the childlike wonder that we were given by the Creator. *But I cannot write it here.*”

Oh my God.
 Look.

iii

Listening back across these *haibun*, these conversations from a year of travel and the snippets of poetic insight they held, I could not help but feel a common vibration rippling in the echoes of lives speaking. I could not help but notice this thing Burke (1864) originally called the

“wardrobe of a moral imagination” owned by the heart and so needed to cover our “naked, shivering nature.”

Our naked shivering nature.

What better words to describe Tom Cauray’s long struggle to live in the aftermath of the Sierra Leone war?

What better words to describe Josué Vargas and the *campesinos* of the River Carare who stood surrounded by weapons?

What better words to describe Edilia, who as a child watched the massacres that took her father’s life and hundreds more in her region?

What better words to describe the guttural sobs of Balluji and the Kai-maya released from bonded slavery, then driven by conflicts and the need to survive to seek land, a place to live and work with dignity?

Yet these people did not choose to defend their rights and interests with reciprocal violence. They rejected guns. They chose words, creativity, and sacrifice. They may have agreed with the realism inherent in President Obama’s statement that we will not eradicate violence in our lifetime. But they arrived at the conclusion that something new, something different, something unexpected needed birthing. They chose to shift the affairs with their enemies by refusing both the inherent logic of enmity and violence itself. They chose love and the courage to reach.

5. The Global Dream

In living *haibuns*
Mystery unveils her face
and truth-sprouting buds

i

Listening back, I notice that not one of the extraordinary people whose lives touched mine in 2009 has ever been approached, consulted, or been given the opportunity to advise the decision makers of their respective nations. And I felt a small dream begin.

I wish our national leaders would set aside an hour or two each week or month to meet directly with people in our wider family who have faced the hardest struggle: daily survival.

We see so narrowly when the lenses we use for our most important decisions are those that only bring into focus our national interests or, worse, that draw sharp lines that keep us exclusively in relationship with people like ourselves and keep at a distance those who are different. I am

tired of politicians and commanders repeating over and again, “We speak for the people,” when in fact they rarely take time to listen in any meaningful or sustained way to the lives and aspirations of everyday people.

My travels and the gift of meeting people like Balluji, Edilia, and Tom have taught me that resiliency rises from courage. And as the poet Mark Nepo (2007) has written, the word *courage* holds within it the Latin word for “heart”: *cor, cœur, corazon*. To have heart. These people had the heart to survive. And for them, survival required family and community. If they gave me a gift, it was the gift to remember who we are, to mobilize the capacity to envision the need for wider family.

I wish we had this daily imagination, this capacity to see ourselves every day as those eyes first saw in the coming-round-the-backside-of-the-moon-oh-my-God-Look! moment and remember: beyond our invented borders, we are a family that inhabits a fragile home.

I dream of the day when we see and care for the whole of our family beyond our constructed borders and barriers.

ii

Listening back, I realize that the people and close friends who touched my life in 2009 have experienced and continue to face extreme forms of direct and structural violence. Most of you reading this essay will likely never deal with this level of challenge and conflict. Yet in spite of their suffering, they chose not to use violence as their response. And I felt a small dream begin.

I wish we could find a way to break our addiction to organized violence.

We have believed for too long that we can protect ourselves from threat and enmity only through armed response. Our unending search for safety has led to inordinate investment and reliance on weapons and armed defense to protect ourselves from each other.

Many people will not like my calling national defense and military expenditures organized violence. But I have no other words to describe it. For us as a global family, it remains the single greatest investment we make, year in and year out. It not only systematically and systemically prepares us to conduct war efficiently, but it also diverts our natural resources, national products, and national budgets away from health, education, housing, and agriculture.

But our future calls. The well-being of our grandchildren beckons. What kind of family do we wish to create?

I hope for a family that responds to and transforms conflict without armed violence.

We need a new birth. We need the unexpected to shake our antiquated notions of security. We need to invest in, understand, and find new approaches to the challenges of enmity that do not rely on military response as too often the first and certainly last recourse to human conflict.

Our teachers are those who poetically craft the unexpected as everyday survival. Their notion of survival depends and draws on their creativity to transform conflict away from patterns of violence and back to family. If those who have faced this kind of real-time armed challenge on a regular basis with so few material resources and support found their way beyond revenge without weapons, why can't we? One of my early teachers, Kenneth Boulding, used to say, "If it exists, it's possible." It does exist. People have found creative ways to transform violence and the affairs of enmity without guns.

I dream of the day when their lives become an example we follow in our national budgets and global expenditures. Let us divest in guns and reinvest in human flourishing. We are capable of imagining and finding our way to security based on the quality of our relationships, not the quantity of our weapons.

iii

Listening back, I recognize that these friends chose love over fear.

In the face of armed violence, Tom chose words over revenge. Edilia returned to teach children in the villages that took her childhood when the potential for violence was still all around her. Balluji turned enemies into friends.

I wish all of us, from local communities to national leaders, had this courage to shift the ways we approach and respond to enmity, to walk into the mystery of finding our common humanity beyond the barriers we have created that keep us apart.

I dream of the day we have the courage to reach out to those we fear, to those we believe wish us harm, even to those who have done us harm. Our challenge is not the number and size of conflicts and threats we face. They are real and they will continue to come. Our challenge lies with our lack of imagination and commitment as a global family to unravel the mystery of how human conflict can be transformed without weapons or violence.

We must find our way back to humanity, to the wellspring of love that gave us all birth and has the capacity to shift the affairs of enmity.

The yet to be born await the gift of our imagination.

POSTSCRIPT

Forgetting would be an insult to one's humanity.

To heal we must remember.

We need to know what the scars are for.

Tom Cauray, July 2007



Ballu Chaudary with his Jackie Robinson hat and resilient smile. *Photo credit:* John Paul Lederach



Tom Cauray at a poetry reading in Freetown, Sierra Leone. *Photo credit:* Samuel Davies for Collective Minds, Freetown



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ABOUT JOHN PAUL LEDERACH

AS A PACIFIST FROM THE MENNONITE TRADITION, John Paul Lederach has spent much of his professional life in war zones searching for ways to help people end violence. His writing emerged primarily around the need to reflect on the difficult practice of peace when it seems remote and impossible.

Growing up in mostly rural communities in the Far West, Oregon, and Kansas, his life changed dramatically an early age when his parents, John and Naomi Lederach, moved to Winston-Salem, North Carolina, in the pursuit of education. While traversing the seventh grade, with parents refusing to participate in the segregation practices of their professional colleagues, he experienced at first hand the animosity and difficulty of changing long-standing patterns of racism and exclusion. It was the year Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. It profoundly marked the beginning of the journey to pursue and build a just peace.

As a conscientious objector, John Paul was placed in Europe for three years of alternative service between his sophomore and junior years of college. His assignment was to help run a foreign-student housing project in Brussels, Belgium. From cleaning rooms to general maintenance while providing social support for forty university students from Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe, he learned languages and came to see our human community from and through the eyes of the two-thirds world. In those years, he decided to pursue an undergraduate degree in peace studies, not an easy major to find in the 1980s but a vocation he has never left.

For more than thirty years, John Paul has dedicated himself to the study and practice of peacebuilding and conflict transformation. He currently is professor of international peacebuilding at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame. He was the founding director of the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University, where he retains the title of Distinguished Scholar. He spends roughly half of each year in the classroom and the other half dedicated to ongoing peace initiatives. He represents the best of the practitioner-scholar tradition. Such a challenging

vocational practice would not be possible without the support, participation, and patience of his wife, lifeline, and inspiration of the past thirty years, Wendy Liechty Lederach, and his children Angela Jill and Joshua Andrew, who as adults have in various ways continued the family commitment to peace and justice.

John Paul has participated as a mediator in numerous national peace processes in Central America, Africa, and Asia. He has conducted capacity-building workshops and educational programs in this field in more than twenty-five countries, the majority of the time working with local communities most affected by violence. He has written eighteen books and manuals on peacebuilding, conflict transformation, and nonviolent social change, now translated in more than a dozen languages. His two most recent are *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (Oxford University Press) and a most fulfilling writing project with his daughter Angela Jill, *When Blood and Bones Cry Out: Journeys Through the Soundscape of Healing and Reconciliation* (Queensland University Press).

The Lederachs live at an elevation of 9,000 feet in Rollinsville, Colorado, where the air may be thin but the forest and mountains keep filling everyone with awe, love, and respect.

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Anthology on Deepening the American Dream

Deepening the American Dream: Reflections on the Inner Life and Spirit of Democracy, edited by Mark Nepo. A collection of reflections on the spiritual meaning of being American in today's world from some of our most respected thinkers: Gerald May, Jacob Needleman, Elaine Pagels, Robert Inchausti, Parker Palmer, and others. The book explores the inner life of democracy and the way citizens are formed and considers the spiritual aspects of the American Dream—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

This thought-provoking volume of essays challenges us to ponder the American Dream and discuss the spiritual values that can help transform the country. The interplay between history, spirituality, and current events is what makes this volume such a soul-stirring experience. It is indeed hopeful and salutary that this cultural document puts so much emphasis on spiritual values as being crucial to the health and enduring value of democracy in the twenty-first century.

Spirituality & Health Magazine

Deepening the American Dream communicates a determined and magnanimous solidarity to a fragmented age of confusion and escalating resentments. The collection is . . . a gesture of peace and goodwill that summons us to come together. It's a powerfully uplifting book that shines light in the direction of incarnate hope. That rare happening of people actually talking to each other. I highly recommend it.

David Dark, *The Christian Century*

Essays on Deepening the American Dream

Essay #1, Winter 2003: Two Dreams of America, Jacob Needleman. The inaugural essay in the series posed an important question: “What of the American Dream?” Is it a vision or an illusion? Do we need to deepen this dream or awaken from it? Can anyone doubt the importance of this question? In one form or another, it is a question that has been gathering strength for decades, and it now stands squarely in the path not just of every American but, such is the planetary influence of America, of every man and woman in the world. What really is America? What does America mean?

Essay #2, Spring 2003: From Cruelty to Compassion: The Crucible of Personal Transformation, Gerald G. May. This essay is a compelling journey to the perennial bottom of who we are, at our best and our worst, and how to use that knowledge to live together from a place of spirit and compassion.

Essay #3, Fall 2003: Footprints of the Soul: Uniting Spirit with Action in the World, Carolyn T. Brown. This essay speaks deeply about the gifts and frictions that exist between our authentic self and the society we live in and grow in, and how returning to the well of spirit keeps forming who we are in the world.

Essay #4, Winter 2004: Created Equal: Exclusion and Inclusion in the American Dream, Elaine H. Pagels. In this essay, the renowned religious historian Elaine Pagels provides a convincing exploration of the ways we have interpreted equality as expressed in the Declaration of Independence. More than ever, she says, we need to ask, who is included in the American Dream? What do we make of this dream in a waking reality? How shall we take this vision to shape our sense of who we are—as a people, a nation, a community? She calls us to deepen our understanding of the American Dream and commit ourselves to extending it to all people worldwide who would share in its promises, blessings, and responsibilities.

Essay #5, Spring 2004: Breaking the Cultural Trance: Insight and Vision in America, Robert Inchausti. This essay is a convincing look at how we see and, just as important, how living in America has impaired our deepest seeing, and how education is the sacred medicine entrusted in each generation with restoring that deeper sight that lets us know that we are each other.

Essay #6, Fall 2004: The Grace and Power of Civility: Commitment and Tolerance in the American Experience, David M. Abshire. In a time when our country is more polarized than ever, David Abshire, a former ambassador to NATO and a historian himself, traces the history of commitment and tolerance in an effort to revitalize the respect, listening, and dialogue that constitute civility. “Which . . . is the true America?” he asks. “The America of division or the America of unity? The America of endless public and partisan warfare or the America of cooperation, civility, and common purpose? The America of many or the America of one?”

Essay #7, Winter 2005: Opening the Dream: Beyond the Limits of Otherness, Rev. Charles Gibbs. This essay explores America’s relationship with the rest of the world. As executive director of the United Religions Initiative, Rev. Gibbs proposes that “the future of America cannot be separated from the future of the rest of the world. There are no longer chasms deep enough or walls high enough to protect us or to protect others from us. So what do we do? We might begin by seeing ourselves as citizens of Earth and children of the abiding Mystery at the heart of all that is.”

Essay #8, Spring 2005: The Politics of the Broken-Hearted: On Holding the Tensions of Democracy, Parker J. Palmer. With his usual penetrating insight, Parker Palmer speaks to the conflicts and contradictions of twenty-first-century life that are breaking the American heart and threatening to compromise our democratic values.

Essay #9, Winter 2006: The Almost-Chosen People, Huston Smith and Kendra Smith. In this far-reaching essay, Huston Smith, a renowned historian of religion, and his wife, the scholar Kendra Smith, trace the American sense of liberty as a spiritual concept that has both inspired us and eluded us through a checkered history in which we have trampled many in the name of the very equality and freedom we hold so sacred. They trace the erosion of the American Dream in the twentieth century and look toward our inevitable membership in the global family of nations that is forming in the world today.

Essay #10, Spring 2006: Prophetic Religion in a Democratic Society, Robert N. Bellah. Steering between what the distinguished sociologist of religion Robert Bellah calls “Enlightenment fundamentalists” on the one hand and religious fundamentalists on the other, this essay argues against both the common secularist view that religion should be excluded from public life and the dogmatic view that would exclude all secular and

religious views except one. Instead it proposes a more moderate, nuanced, and robust role for faith and religion in the common life of America and Americans.

Essay #11, Fall 2006: The Common Cradle of Concern, Howard Zinn. In the winter of 2004, the legendary historian Howard Zinn explored the nature of being an American today with Mark Nepo through several conversations. This essay gathers the insights of those conversations, edited by both Zinn and Nepo, into a meditation on America, moral progress, and the myths of freedom.

Essay #12, Spring 2007: The American Dream and the Economic Myth, Betty Sue Flowers. This provocative essay examines the limitations and deeper opportunities of the economic myth that governs our society today. It asks how we might articulate a common good through which we might treat each other as citizens and not just consumers. We are challenged to imagine ourselves anew: “We can’t hold up a myth of community and wait for it to take hold. We have to work within our own myth, however impoverished it seems to us. To deepen the American Dream is to engage the imagination—to create better stories of who we are and who we might become.”

Essay #13, Fall 2007: The Truth Can Set Us Free: Toward a Politics of Grace and Healing, Rev. W. Douglas Tanner Jr. The founder of the Faith and Politics Institute traces his own journey, from growing up in the South to his own formation as a spiritual leader to his commitment to supporting the inner life of those called to govern our country.

Essay #14, Winter 2008: Is America Possible? A Letter to My Young Companions on the Journey of Hope, Vincent Harding. This elder of the civil rights movement suggests that the dream is never finished but endlessly unfolding. Harding suggests that America’s most important possibility for the world is not to dominate, threaten, or compete but to help each other in a search for common ground. He suggests that when we simply attempt to replicate our free-market materialism, we miss our most vital connections. From this, he opens the possibility that a new conversation may begin—one that might initiate a deeper journey concerning the possibilities of human community across all geographical lines.

Essay #15, Winter 2009: Maturing the American Dream: Archetypal American Narratives Meet the Twenty-First Century, Carol Pearson. This essay is written out of concern about the great challenges facing the

United States and the world today. Its purpose is to identify the strengths that can help us tap into what is best about us and guard against our weaknesses so that we might use our power as wisely as possible and in ways that promote the common global good.

Essay #16, Winter 2010: Opening Doors in a Closed Society, Gov. William F. Winter. In this essay, former Mississippi governor William Winter reflects on the long journey from the closed society of the South when James Meredith became the first African American student at the University of Mississippi to the election of President Barack Obama. Though progress has been made, Winter points out that there are still forces that threaten to divide us and speaks to the importance of informed and responsible participation of the public in order to fulfill the American Dream for all.

Essays on Exploring a Global Dream

Essay #1, Spring 2006: Bridges, Not Barriers: The American Dream and the Global Community, Abdul Aziz Said. As the inaugural essay in the global series, this leading peace studies educator and scholar examines both the American Dream and the emerging global community with insight into the complex state of international relations while envisioning a shift in world values that might give rise to a common world based on the spiritual conception of love and cooperation.

Essay #2, Summer 2009: The Power of Partnership: Building Healing Bridges Across Historic Divides, Ocean Robbins. The founder and director of YES! (“Helping Visionary Young Leaders Build a Better World”) and coauthor of *Choices for Our Future: A Generation Rising for Life on Earth* writes of his experiences in meeting and working with people from diverse backgrounds and countries and how, even at times of conflict, they have built bridges of friendship and understanding.

Essay #3, Winter 2010: Milestones for a Spiritual Jihad: Toward an Islam of Grace, Asra Q. Nomani. In this essay, Asra Nomani, former reporter for the *Wall Street Journal* for fifteen years and author of *Standing Alone: An American Woman’s Struggle for the Soul of Islam*, writes of her personal journey as a Muslim American journalist and single mother. Drawing on her own experience and the teachings of Islam, she calls on the universal values of Islam that carry with it grace, compassion, and love.

Essay #4, Fall 2010: The Poetic Unfolding of the Human Spirit, John Paul Lederach. John Paul Lederach, widely known for his pioneering work on conflict transformation, writes of the remarkable people he has met in his work around the world, including people who face violence and yet respond with peaceful means. This poetic travelogue carries within it many touchstones that will open your heart and mind.

Forthcoming—Essay #5: Forgiveness and the Maternal Body: An African Ethics of Interconnectedness, Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela. The author is an associate professor of psychology at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, and senior consultant for the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation in that city.

Forthcoming—Essay #6: Title to be determined. Hanmin Liu. The author is president and CEO of Wildflowers Institute, a social innovation and application laboratory rooted in ethnic, indigenous, and racial communities.