A Manifesto for the Emerging Culture Of Peace

A new peace movement is rising out of the hardened soil of our long planetary winter. It is evidenced by the Arab Spring and the emergence of the Occupy movement. It is reflected in the blossoming initiatives of peacebuilders everywhere to create a world without war or weapons of mass destruction. It is showing up in a myriad of conflict situations where activists are bringing parties to violence into honest dialogue. The real promise in this flowering, writes author James O’Dea in his newest book, is in the emergence of a planetary culture of peace rooted in a holistic understanding of the problem of violence. Doing this work requires a “practice of peace” in the broadest framework possible, argues O’Dea in his acclaimed new work, Cultivating Peace: Becoming a 21st-Century Peace Ambassador (Shift Books, June 15, 2012).

No longer is the peace movement framed solely by its opposition to war and human rights violations, he declares; it has moved on to the systemic work of creating nonviolent cultures and just and sustainable societies from the ground up. “The concept of peace is now much larger and more encompassing because it brings together both inner security and global security,” writes O’Dea, who worked for a decade as the director of the Washington office of Amnesty International.

The mission of O’Dea’s current work and newest book, therefore, is to train peacebuilders to better understand the art and science of peace work while also practicing the ways of peace within themselves—that is, to “be the change” they seek. Toward the latter goal he provides special coaching and reflection segments at the end of each chapter.

Going “Deeper In” and “Further Out” for the Sake of Peace

It is for these reasons that—in the coming century—peacebuilders will find that disciplines such as psychology, spirituality, science, and systems theory are now at the table along with law, political science, and diplomacy. For these future ambassadors of peace, the elements of this new dynamic will include:

• Integral development: inner transformation matched with a capacity to reach measurable social goals and to master daunting political challenges.

• Cultural transformation: changing beliefs that provide the structural underpinnings of violence, including toxic beliefs about others inherited from the “wounds” of past generations.
• **Systemic change**: a whole-systems orientation that frames the problem far more widely than the former practice of merely opposing those who instigate wars or hatred.

• **Awareness of complexity**: a greater mastery of subtlety and complexity, including a deeper understanding of the science of human consciousness, which O’Dea himself gathered in his role as the president of the Institute of Noetic Sciences over many years.

### A Brief Overview of Cultivating Peace

The book’s first chapter, “Peace Is the Real Game Changer,” reminds us that a world without good cheer, conviviality and laughter would not be a safe or peaceful world. Chapter I also considers how our evolutionary story is being changed by emerging worldviews and more adaptive beliefs.

Chapter 2, “Peace and Freedom from the Inside Out,” explores worldview formation more deeply, specifically the all-important process of identification in the structuring of belief. This chapter also explores how the emerging peace ambassador learns to synchronize the inner and outer.

Chapter 3, “Expanding Your Comfort Zone,” explores the delicate balance between stretching to be more inclusive and finding comfort in your value system. Readers will also discover why peacemakers should be comfortable with conflict.

At this juncture, *Cultivating Peace* provides three chapters on peaceful communication because “we must learn how to skillfully engage the other.” Chapter 4, “Ending the Transmission of Wounds,” shows how to interrupt the transmission of wounds from generation to generation. When the inherited trauma of history is submerged in a collective wound, it rises again and again to subvert peace. Chapter 5, “Peaceful Communication: Engaged Listening,” offers a detailed review of types of listening. Chapter 6, “Peaceful Communication: Facts, Experience, and Truth,” is central to understanding how we can move from purely legalistic frameworks of truth recovery to constructs that validate the truth of people’s experience, notably the example of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Chapter 7, “Peaceful Communication and Energy Mastery,” describes how we can learn to process energy for peaceful encounters with each other, including bullies of all types.

Chapter 8, “Achieving Peace through Creativity and Dialogue,” deals with the opportunities available to peace activists through different modes of dialogue, inquiry, and structured conversation. Against all odds we must learn to dialogue, or die. In a whole-systems framework we are all connected; we are all implicated.

Chapter 9, “Peace Work and Whole-Systems Shift,” shows that peacebuilding requires addressing complex systems and exploring wholeness. “To be an ambassador of peace, you cannot be a partisan of the part; you are called to be a representative of holistic thinking and emotional and social intelligence.”

The final chapter, Chapter 10, “The 21st-Century Peace Ambassador as Evolutionary Leader,” covers a detailed list of the strengths and capacities of an evolved peace leader.

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**James O’Dea** is a renowned figure in international social healing who has conducted healing and reconciliation dialogues for twenty years and was director of Amnesty International’s Washington, DC, office for over ten years. As co-director of the Social Healing Project, his work led him to Rwanda, Israel/Palestine, and Northern Ireland. The lead faculty of the popular “Peace Ambassador Training” hosted by the Shift Network, James is also on the extended faculty of the Institute of Noetic Sciences and is its immediate past president. He was recently recognized as *Champion of Peace, Reconciliation, and Forgiveness* by the Worldwide Forgiveness Alliance. He is also a member of the Advisory Board for the Peace Alliance.

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