

NEWSLETTER FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACEBUILDING
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A NEW YEAR FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACEBUILDING

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In these newsletters we invite contributions and ideas, suggestions, and possibilities for our efforts to educate others about addressing the pressing issues of the day with intelligence, compassion, and a commitment to the greater good of humanity and the earth, i.e., nonviolent conflict resolution, improved communication and cooperation, successful negotiation and mediation. We also want to encourage the critical and creative thinking that can help individuals and communities move through obstacles and difficulties in more sustainable ways, i.e., with the interconnected health of all peoples, their economies, and their environments.

IN PERSON IN FORT COLLINS

Sustainable Peacebuilding Fellowship

Wed. Jan. 4 from 1:15-2:15 MT

Lincoln Center, 417 W. Magnolia Street, Fort Collins, CO 80521

A NEW YEAR FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACEBUILDING

John Kefalas

Former Peace Corps Volunteer

Recently re-elected as Larimer County Commissioner for Colorado

All are invited. Please share this newsletter with a friend or colleague.

**FOR THE NEW YEAR...EMBRACE COMPLEXITY
WHILE CONNECTING SYSTEMS, VALUES, AND SUSTAINABILITY**

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In my 2019 book, *Learning Life's Lessons*, I wrote that the northern hemisphere, the cold of winter and the dawning of a new year can—and should—inspire new thinking and initiatives once the basics are understood. As we prepare for classes or presentations read through what history can teach us about the challenges of the past, just where there are significant points of light to remember, and how the ideas that emerge can help us connect to what we can do in the classroom or with other audiences. So reflect on those tough issues you face and consider new possibilities

that would energize you and carry over to others.

For example, on January first of 1863, mired in a divisive, bloody and exhausting U.S. civil war, we saw a courageous President Abraham Lincoln issue a proclamation that freed slaves in the rebellious Southern states and inspire deep change. In January of 1925 in that traditional bastion of rugged male cowboy mentality, Wyoming inaugurated the first female governor in the U.S. Less than forty years later, Senator John Kennedy announced his intention to run for president on January 2nd 1960 and bring his youthful energy to that office. After many years of a tense and seemingly intractable stand-off during the Cold War when many feared a holocaust should a conflict escalate between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., these superpowers announced a treaty in January of 1993 eliminating about two-thirds of each country's long-range nuclear weapons.

Embrace complexity while connecting systems, values and sustainability

Thinking about sustainability and the threats of climate change means embracing complexity and drawing on inspiration from various sources for ways forward. In January 1964, the U.S. Surgeon General released a report indicating that smoking was a definite health hazard. Over many years it eventually became public how aggressive the tobacco industry had been in attempting to conceal this connection and refute the medical evidence. A commitment to sustainability means asking hard questions and interrogating the responses that we get, including questions about the systems that operate our economies, our societies, and our politics and that inspire our values. The following "tip" is adapted from my other book, *147 Practical Tips for Teaching Sustainability*.

Examine how capitalist and democratic ideals and sustainable practices interact with each other. Richard Fox, then with the non-profit organization, Trees, Water, and People, reminds us that democracy is not something we made *once*. He insists that it is an ongoing evolving experiment in working collectively and that *we* are the ones on the cutting edge of that powerful force.

As an example, Fox points to the fundamental question of water and asks if clean and sufficient water is a human right that government should provide or a commodity that can be sold to the highest bidder? In the U.S., Fox insists that we face our own version of water privatization but that it comes in the form of bottled water. He notes that if you look at any convenience store, you will see that we have somehow accepted the marketed premise that we should pay more for a gallon of water than we do for gasoline. Think about that!

Worse yet, as people turn to bottled water as the solution for a perceived failure of our public water systems, we have less money to improve those very public water systems under question. Instead, we are now faced with a huge new form of trash (i.e., mountains of plastic bottles). The truth is that we don't adequately fund our water systems." Just think about the tragic events in Flint Michigan in 2015 when dangerously high levels of lead surfaced when the city's source for water was changed.

However, the real irony is that many tests are showing that some of the bottled water is no better than the water we get from the tap or, in some cases, it is tap water but sold with a fancy label." For insight into the international debate, read *Blue Gold: The Fight to Stop Corporate Theft of the World's Water* by Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke, or view the film "Thirst."

Ask yourself and your students or audience members: In what other ways do the current economic and political systems undermine sustainability? What would be inspiring?

WHY WE TELL THE TRUTH ...OR NOT

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Most Rotarians are familiar with “The Four-Way Test.” In 1932, it was created by Herbert J. Taylor when he was asked to become the CEO of a company that was facing bankruptcy. It has now become one of the most widely quoted statements of business ethics. It reads:

THE FOUR-WAY TEST of the things we think, say or do

first

Is it the TRUTH?

second

Is it FAIR to all concerned?

third

Will it build GOOD WILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS?

fourth

Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?

Clearly, Taylor was aware of the value of telling the truth. What are some of the personal benefits of always telling the truth? What are some of the negative impacts of lying to others and to ourselves? Gandhi once said, “*You must become the change you want to see in the world.*” So, in this year of 2023, it might benefit all “peace-builders” to familiarize themselves with some answers to these questions.

William Faulkner wrote, “*Never be afraid to raise your voice for honesty and truth and compassion against injustice and lying and greed. If people all over the world...would do this, it would change the earth.*”

When children learn to avoid the feared consequences of telling the truth, they learn to lie. When adults lie, they are defending themselves from what they think will happen to them if they told the truth. Fearful people lie when they believe their lies will protect them from experiencing the consequences of truth-telling. Such “protection” rarely lasts very long. Then, they lie about their lies, thereby filling their thoughts, choices, and actions with insanity (one clinical definition of insanity is “being out of touch with, and unaware of, actual reality”). Plato realized this when he wrote, *False words are not only evil in themselves, but they infect the soul with evil.*”

Recently, a team of researchers at University College London and Duke University set out to find out what exactly goes on in the brain when we tell a lie. In particular, they wanted to know whether the brain becomes desensitized to dishonesty over time, making it easier to tell a lie when we do so over and over again. From the results of their experimentation, they concluded, “*This new study provides empirical proof for an idea that is as old as the Bible: ‘Whosoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much’ (Luke: 16:10—at least is the basic sense that small lies tend to lead inexorably to larger lies. So, when you observe even small lapses in a person’s integrity, it stands to reason that they may do more gravely unethical things in the future, particularly if they*

never receive pushback or punishment that would help them change course.” [“*What Dishonesty Does to Your Brain*” by Bret Beasley and Christopher Adkins]

Besides eroding one’s integrity (wholeness) when lying, additional damages that could occur when telling lies can include:

- *Loss of reputation. ...*
- *A dishonest person may end up disgracing himself/herself. ...*
- *A dishonest person may be imprisoned.*
- *Loss of customers. ...*
- *Dishonesty can lead to other vices such as lying, cheating and stealing.*
- *A dishonest person can become unreliable*
- *Curses may be laid on a dishonest person.*

A final quotation: Soren Kierkegaard wrote, *“There are two ways to be fooled. One is to believe what isn’t true; the other is to refuse to believe what is true.”*

What are some of the personal benefits to be derived from always telling the truth?

For one thing, Mark Twain said, *“If you tell the truth, you don’t have to remember anything.”* Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote, *“I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final words in reality. That is why right, temporarily defeated, is stronger than evil triumphant.”* Rotary is a “service organization” and its motto is: *“Service above Self.”* As active members, *“When you want to help people, you tell them the truth. When you want to help yourself, you tell them what they want to hear.”* (Thomas Sowell). Let’s be encouraged to always tell the truth by the words of others:

George Orwell: *“In a time of universal deceit – telling the truth is a revolutionary act.”*

Arthur Schopenhauer: *“All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident.”*

Winston Churchill: *“The truth is incontrovertible. Malice may attack it, ignorance may deride it, but in the end, there it is.”*

Abraham Lincoln: *“I am a firm believer in the people. If given the truth, they can be depended upon to meet any national crisis. The great point is to bring them the real facts.”*

Spencer Johnson: *“Integrity is telling myself the truth. And honesty is telling the truth to other people.”*

GRIT YOUR TEETH, LISTEN FIRST ... SPEAK LATER

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"Tolerance has never provoked a civil war; intolerance has covered the Earth in carnage." ...

Voltaire (1763) Treatise on Tolerance¹

"What is tolerance? It is the consequence of humanity. We are all formed of frailty and error; let us pardon reciprocally each other's folly--that is the first law of nature."...

Voltaire (1764) The Philosophical Dictionary²

Many today bemoan that people with different opinions are not even conversing together. Toleration of other opinions seem to again be at a low point whether the issue is politics, education, sexual preference, religion, or even sports. This is not a new dilemma; people have often refused to discuss or even consider different opinions for centuries!

Nonetheless, America has had a long if inconsistent commitment to tolerance. For example, early definitions of tolerance assumed that the government would accept the "burden" of the presence of minority religions and opinions, but it was always conditional and could be revoked. Modern toleration does not see the act as a burden, but the acceptance of a wide variety of viewpoints and beliefs, without trying to establish a system of domination, is a strength of our society. Sharing of diverse opinions often results in better and more creative solutions.³

One of the first proposals for toleration was made by John Locke in England in "*A Letter Concerning Toleration*" in 1689 that argued some toleration of the Catholic religion by the established Church of England would be worthwhile.^{4,5} However, even Locke's concept of toleration was limited and nuanced. He promoted toleration for Catholics and other protestant denominations as long as they supported trinitarianism and loyalty to the King. Locke argued against atheists: "*Lastly, those are not at all to be tolerated who deny the being of a God. Promises, covenants, and oaths, which are the bonds of human society, can have no hold upon an atheist.*" Such a "limited" toleration provided a foundation for the creation of the United States. Limited toleration is not likely to help resolve all modern differences, but it was a start.

Another example of early attempts to encourage toleration was the Maryland Toleration Act of 1649 promoted by Cecil Calvert, proprietor of the Maryland Colony.⁶ It was among the first public documents to refer to a "free exercise" of religion. The Act allowed freedom of worship for all Trinitarian Christians in Maryland but sentenced to death anyone who denied the divinity of Jesus. It was revoked in 1654 by William Claiborne, a Virginian who had been appointed as a commissioner by Oliver Cromwell; he was an Anglican, a Puritan sympathizer, and strongly hostile

¹ Voltaire was the nom de plume of Francois-Marie Arouet (1694-1778) a French Enlightenment writer, historian, and philosopher. He was a major advocate of freedom of speech.

² Voltaire, *The Philosophical Dictionary* <https://history.hanover.edu/texts/voltaire/voltoler.html>

³ C. Patrick (2021), *What is Creative Thinking*, Hassell Street Press, New York, 238 pp.

⁴ Most Americans recognize John Locke (1632-1704) as a principal thinker during The Enlightenment. Locke pioneered the ideas of natural law, social contract, religious toleration, and the right to revolution that Thomas Jefferson used in writing the Declaration of Independence. Locke wrote that all individuals are equal in the sense that they are born with certain "inalienable" natural rights. That is, rights that are God-given and can never be taken or even given away. Among these fundamental natural rights, Locke said, are "life, liberty, and property." See "John Locke and Toleration", pp. 293-296 in Robert Lacey, 2007, *Great Tales from English History*, Back Bay Books, 523 pp

⁵ John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, 1689. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Letter_Concerning_Toleration

⁶ Maryland Toleration Act, 1659. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maryland_Toleration_Act

to the Catholic Religion. When the Calverts regained control of Maryland, the Act was reinstated, before being repealed permanently in 1692 following the events of the Glorious Revolution in 1688. A somewhat better act of toleration was promoted in Rhode Island in 1636, which prohibited religious persecution including against non-Trinitarians, and it was the first colony to establish true separation of church and state in the Americas.

Today, we also aspire to “multicultural tolerance.” As argued by Denis Lacorne, author of the book *The Limits of Tolerance*. This tolerance permits the privilege of the group over the individual and values the preservation of traditions and rituals associated with the identity of the group.⁷ Such tolerance permits the happy and unthreatened existence of Native American groups, Hispanic traditions, religious minorities, and even LGBT+ associations.

Yet Lacorne argues that tolerance is in essence a political act. Originally it required tolerance by rulers, but with the rise of constitutional democracies, tolerance implies the defense of new rights and principles, the equality of all citizens, neutrality of state authorities, and as Tom Paine said a “universal right of conscience”.

To a certain extent toleration today even involves the “intolerant” and **toleration of the right to be intolerant**.⁸ There are limits to free speech and behavior that are often determined by each country. In the United States this includes tolerance of speech that can be perceived as offensive or racist or which stigmatizes a person because of his/her race, religion, or gender. The only US limit on free speech is when it causes a person or group to fear for their safety or imminent and intentional violence. Even hate speech or insults aimed at specific individuals or groups are permitted under the First Amendment and cannot be penalized in the courts as long as they do not constitute unlawful incitement to violence, true threats, intimidation, or discriminatory harassment. Legal vs illegal hate speech has varied over time as the community and courts change their viewpoints.

Political toleration or intolerance is not unique to any one party, and acceptance of different opinions seems to depend on extreme orientation subgroups in each party. Strangely, both conservative Democrats and Republicans have similar levels of intolerance, and both liberal and moderate Democrats and Republicans have similar more tolerant natures.⁹ There is even evidence that excluding those addicted to hate speech, American tolerance has increased by eight percentage points between 1996 to 2018 from 29% to 37%. Tolerance of people that use hate speech has however decreased.¹⁰

The best advice, perhaps, for those anxious to maintain dialogues over difficult issues is to communicate with respect and tolerance. Do not interrupt others, even if you find yourself holding a strong difference of opinion. Allow the full completion of the presentation of the other side’s issue of contention. Then, take a breath, relax, avoid loaded and biased language, and present your side with calmness and dignity. Or in other words: **Grit Your Teeth, Listen First.... Speak Later.**

⁷ Denis Lacorne (2019), *The Limits of Tolerance: Enlightenment Values and Religious Fanaticism*, Columbia University Press, 296 pp. <https://www.sciencespo.fr/ceri/en/content/tolerance-political-interview-denis-lacorne>

⁸ K. Rogeeswaran, L. Adelan, M. Verkuyten (2021), *The U.S. Needs Tolerance More Than Unity*, Scientific American, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-u-s-needs-tolerance-more-than-unity/#>

⁹ John Anderer, December 2022, Far-Right or far-left? Political tolerance depends on political orientation, not party affiliation, Study Finds, <https://studyfinds.org/far-right-left-political-tolerance/>

¹⁰ Anna Boch , 2020, *Increasing American Political Tolerance: A Framework Excluding Hate Speech*, Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2378023120903959>

Postscript: *Unfortunately, the English language does not clearly differentiate between tolerance of opinion and acceptance or toleration of the intolerable. So, I add this caveat. This essay in no way endorses or suggests we tolerate acts of brutality, slavery of any kind, child mistreatment, bullying, harassment, victimization, discrimination, malicious gossip, insulting behavior, stalking, and coercion. RNM*

MY ROTARIAN WAY TO A FLOURISHING WORLD PEACE

My Rotarian Way to a Flourishing World Peace

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“Trust opens up new and unimagined possibilities.” ~ Robert C. Solomon

When addressing conflicts, *My Rotarian Way* builds in the Rotary values and principles to create and sustain the trust needed in the approaches for peacebuilding – in the world, in our communities, and in ourselves.

The Rotary values and principles are constants and ever present. The approaches will vary to fit the situation and circumstances. Here is an outline of My Rotarian Way for peacebuilding and a flourishing world peace.

Why Trust and Flourishing World Peace?

“Trust is in short supply,” United Nations Security General Antonio Guterres said to the Security Council, August 2022, on matters of peace and a world free of nuclear weapons.

Without trust, there can be no real and flourishing peace.

Trust is the antidote to fear, uncertainty, violence, and wars.

Why Rotary and Flourishing World Peace?

Peace is the cornerstone of our mission. With the Rotary values and principles, we can create the trust needed for a flourishing peace – across the globe, in our community, and in ourselves.

The goal is to ensure everyone’s right to safety, prosperity, and quality of life, the consensus values of peace and the benefits of peaceful societies.

The Rotary Way – Values and Principles

We begin with the Rotarian Code of Conduct and The Four-Way to advance understanding, goodwill, and peace in creating and sustaining trust.

Rotarian Code of Conduct ... as a Rotarian, I will

- * Act with integrity and high ethical standards in my personal and professional life.
- * Deal fairly with others and treat them and the occupations with respect.
- * Use my personal and professional skills to: mentor young people, help those with special needs, and improve people’s quality of life in our community and in the world.
- * Avoid behavior that reflects adversely on Rotary or other Rotarians.

The Four-Way Test ... of the things we think, say, or do ...

- * Will it be beneficial to all concerned?
- * Will it build goodwill and better friendships?
- * Is it fair to all concerned?
- * Is it the truth?

The Rotary Way – Approaches

Our approach to peace and trust includes applying the UN Culture of Peace, the Eight Pillars of Positive Peace, and the Rotary area of focus for Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention.

* Culture of Peace is a set of values, attitudes, modes of behavior and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation by individuals, groups, and nations.

* Positive Peace is the attitudes, institutions, and structures to create and sustain peace. The Eight Pillars are: 1) acceptance of the rights of others, 2) equitable distribution of resources, 3) free flow of information, 4) good relations with neighbors, 5) high levels of human capital, 6) low levels of corruption, 7) sound business environment, 8) well-functioning government.

* Rotary Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention area of focus. Take Action to pursue policies that address the underlying causes of conflict including poverty, inequality, ethnic tensions, lack of access to education, and unequal distribution of resources.

My Rotarian Way – Rotary Values, Principles and Approaches

My Rotarian Way states upfront and throughout the process our Rotary values and principles in our mission to advance understanding, goodwill, and peace. This approach offers the flexibility and adaptability to fit most situations and sees conflicts as a catalyst for constructive change.

Every Rotarian is a peacebuilder by our values and principles.

Peace is Trust – Invitation

I invite you to consider joining me on this path for world peace.

Why not make the Rotarian Way your way for peacebuilding and conflict transformation?

Together we could create and maintain the trust needed for a flourishing world peace beneficial to all.

Thank You for your service.

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PRIORITIES OF THE ROTARY FOUNDATION

See the RI website: <https://my.rotary.org/en/learning-reference/about-rotary/our-priorities..>