

ROTARY DISTRICT 5440 PEACEBUILDER NEWSLETTER
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UNARMED PEACEMAKERS

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In these newsletters of the Rotary District Peacebuilders, we want to invite readers for contributions and ideas, suggestions and possibilities for our efforts to promote the foundational skills for promoting peace, i.e., nonviolent conflict resolution, improved communication and cooperation, successful negotiation and mediation as well as the critical and creative thinking that can help communities move through obstacles and difficulties. **The Rotary Foundation has six priority areas: (1) Promoting peace; (2) Fighting disease; (3) Providing clean water; (4) Saving mothers and children; (5) Supporting education; and (6) Growing local economies. It has been argued by staff at Rotary International (RI) that long with promoting peace, “sustainability” is another cross-cutting priority that connects with all the others.** RI has directed efforts in these six areas to enhance local and global impact and staff indicate that their most successful and sustainable projects and activities tend to fall within these areas: See the RI website: <https://my.rotary.org/en/learning-reference/about-rotary/our-priorities>

If you would you like to respond to one of the pieces in this newsletter, check out our blog www.rotarypeacebuilder.com and join the conversation! If you would like to contribute to a future newsletter, visit www.rotarypeacebuilder.com/submit/. The topic for next month's newsletter is on “Unarmed Peacemakers.” Future issues are looking at the following: **June:** Innovations in Peacemaking—What has Worked? **July:** Are Humans Inherently Aggressive of Violent? **August:** Preemptive War and its Impact on Peacebuilding.

Robert N. Meroney

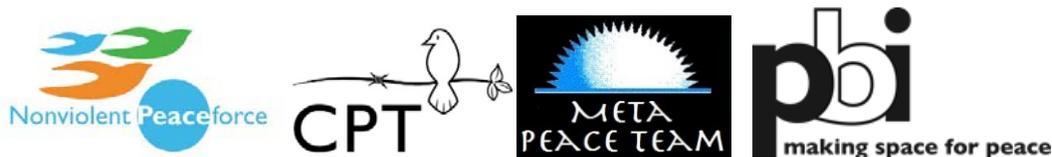
NOTE: Bob Meroney is an Emeritus Professor of Fluid Mechanics and Wind Engineering with a long career at Colorado State University. He has been an active member of the Fort Collins Rotary Club and regularly researches a range of topics on modern life, issues and politics that serve to spark deeper conversations among friends and colleagues. If you have questions or ideas, you can contact Bob: Robert.Meroney@ColoState.EDU.

AN ABSURD SUGGESTION: PEACEKEEPERS WITH EMPTY HANDS

When you think of "peacekeeping" one often thinks of Armed Military Peacekeepers (AMP), blue-helmeted UN soldiers carrying weapons in different world hot spots. It is probably because it looks like common sense that you need armed military forces for violence prevention, and the only thing able to stop violence is violence (or the threat of violence.) The unofficial moto of the United Nations soldier suggested by former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold has been “*Peacekeeping is not a soldier’s job, but only a soldier can do it.*” But there is now evidence that suggests that Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping (UCP) is far more successful in limiting further violence than is generally understood.

Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping are civilian personnel that carry out non-violent, non-interventionist and impartial tactics in order to protect civilians in conflict zones from violence and encourage other efforts to build a lasting peace. Techniques used by these groups include accompaniment, presence, rumor control, community security meetings, arranging safe passage, and monitoring. Like armed peacekeepers they use inter-positioning and accompaniment to separate armed groups and deter violence.

The first writer to use the term UCP was Lisa Schirch (1995) on behalf of the Swedish Life and Peace Institute who called for “civilian peacekeeping”.¹ The concept is not new, and during the 17th-century England Quakers offered their services as mediators before or during conflicts. Then the first modern-day proponent was probably Mahatma Gandhi and his philosophy of “Satyagraha” (holding firmly to the truth).² Gandhi founded Sabarmati Ashram schools to teach nonviolence, truth, fearlessness, and equal rights, so that his intervenors would be disciplined, and formed a Peace Army (Shanti Sena) in the period between the World Wars to intervene in violent situations. Other NGO type UCP groups include the World Peace Brigade, 1962; Peace Brigades International, 1981; Christian and Muslim Peacemaker Teams, 1984, 2005; Meta Peace Team, 1993; and Nonviolent Peaceforce, 2002.³



The first reaction of many people to the proposal of UCP intervention is one of unabashed amusement, scorn, and ridicule. They point out that one reason armies and war have been around so long is that they have been a successful instruments of handling conflict – “otherwise it (war) would have died out long ago.” They note military intervention provides a defense against the evil neighbor, though they usually do not admit a nation’s own aggressive intentions has been the primary legitimization for armament and war for thousands of years.⁴ Most critics would argue that unarmed intervenors would themselves be brushed aside by weapon carriers and likely themselves become victims of violence. Yet the reality has been that UCP intervenors do not represent an immediate existential threat to weapon holders, and injuries and fatalities are significantly lower than for traditional military peacekeeping AMP groups.⁵ The fatality rate for UN peacekeeping mission staff as shown in the table below is more than twelve times as high as UCP front line staff.

	Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping		United Nations Peacekeeping **	
	Total	Fatality Rate	Total	Fatality Rate
Fatalities	6	0.2%*	3747	2.8%
Injuries	20	-----	-----	-----

¹ Lisa Schirch (2006) *Civilian Peacekeeping: preventing violence and making space for democracy*, Life & Peace Institute, Uppsala, Sweden, 118 pp.

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satyagraha> and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shanti_Sena

³ Rachel Julian and Christine Schweitzer (2015) The Origins and Development of Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping, *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice*, Vol. 27, 1-8.

⁴ Christine Schweitzer (Ed.) (2010) Civilian peacekeeping: a barely tapped resource, SSOAR open access repository, www.ssoar.info/ssoar/handle/document/33222 , 77 pp.

⁵ Janzen, R. (2014) Shifting Practices of Peace: What is the current state of Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping? *Peace Studies Journal*, Vol. 7, Issue 3, <http://peaceconsortium.org/peace-studies-journal-vol-7-issue-3-2014>

*Likely overestimate since data is from 13 of 50 UCP organizations, one of UCP deaths was from an auto accident, and five of the UCP deaths occurred in UCP groups defined as partisan. Also four of the fatalities and eighteen of the injuries occurred in Palestine, which might suggest UCP works less effectively in certain social or political contexts.

**Source: United Nations, 2014 and 2018, Includes all data since 1990.

The ability to accurately measure the success of violence prevention activities remains unmet, as the goal is essentially attempting to measure something (violence) that ostensibly was prevented and thus is nonexistent (i.e. hard to prove a negative). Nonetheless, UCP groups can provide testimonials from regions around the world where conflict was avoided, tensions were reduced, and accommodation between antagonists were achieved (at least for a time).⁶

I find the Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping approach hopeful, brave, and exciting. It correlates with the tradition of unarmed police in England, Scotland, Wales, Republic of Ireland, Norway, Iceland and New Zealand who have successfully maintained order without carrying guns. The presence of guns on all sides always seems to reinforce fear and escalate violence.⁷

Del Benson

NOTE: Del Benson is a Professor and wildlife specialist for Extension at Colorado State University. His work is with wildlife and recreation enterprises on private land, conservation education, hunter attitudes and behavior, public input to resource management decision making and campus environmental management. He had conducted research on land management for wildlife and recreation in Colorado, Morocco and Honduras. His 1999 book Wildlife Stewardship and Recreation on Private Lands received The Wildlife Award for Conservation Education. Another book of his, Living With Nature and Wildlife: Doing Our Part, is a primer for students and teachers to learn, in simple terms, how the environment works and how people can do their part to manage it.

IS THAT PARK RANGER CARRYING A GUN? HAS PROTECTING NATURE CHANGED?

Are rangers hired to talk to the animals, inform park visitors at interpretive centers, enforce laws about not feeding the animals, keeping speeding down, or to protect the park, people, and its resources? Is there a role for armed rangers? The answer is complicated and might depend on the times and the jobs.

Did you grow up with Ranger Rick Magazine reading vicariously about nature? Cartoon character Yogi Bear and his pal Boo Boo lived in Jellystone Park and constantly stole pic-a-nic baskets behind the back of a slightly bumbling and unarmed Ranger Smith. When Yellowstone Park was created in 1872, armed US Cavalry were summonsed to protect the national treasures of nature from over hunting, taking timber from the forest, and extracting souvenirs from the geyser basins. Colonial activities in Africa and elsewhere also used this model to set important lands aside for nature conservation. Critics called this exclusionary, or fortress conservation,

⁶ Case Studies of Unarmed Civilian Protection, July 2015, 22 slides

https://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/images/publications/UCP_Case_Studies_vFinal_8-4-15.pdf

⁷ In the United Kingdom: The vast majority of officers are issued with other items for personal defense, such as speed-cuffs, extendable "ASP" batons, and incapacitant sprays such as PAVA or CS spray. Since 2004, police forces have also been issued Tasers to Authorized Firearms Officers for use against armed assailants which are considered by the authorities to be a less-lethal alternative to conventional firearms.

because persons around the parks and who traditionally used them were forcibly excluded to protect the area from being overexploited for personal gains.

I was recently the outside reviewer for a Ph.D. thesis from Africa that evaluated how “militarization” with a park in Zimbabwe affected park management, biodiversity, and the peoples adjacent to the park who had historically used the area. Initially, colonials excluded locals, heavily enforced new rules, and fenced the park to protect natural resources for national interests. Procedures also protected the neighbors from wildlife leaving the park and causing depredations and other problems. Traditional uses of the area for grazing, collecting plants and bush meat were limited. Nature flourished.

After independence, protections were not enforced well, the fences were breached, and nature was negatively impacted even by the standards of neighbors who were interviewed for the study. Illegal poaching of elephants and rhinoceros for commercial sales of tusks and horns respectively prompted a new era of “militarization” as the Ph.D. student author described it. The bad guys had guns and so did the good guys who were taught to use them.

Parks have become an international symbol for thoughtful decisions to protect natural resources for their merits and for people to enjoy. Rangers protect the environment from people, people from the environment, and people from each other. The impact on locals, although controversial, was a cost of doing what was deemed a greater good for society.

As parks became a more accepted norm in the US, park rangers are asked to fill a variety of roles beyond enforcement of managed spaces and laws. They became friendly hosts and interpreters, with Smoky the Bear Hats who rescue the lost, fight fires, and save wildlife. Rangers with guns were common until After World War II when “Mission 66” prompted the softer line of enforcement and educational work. Guns were in the glove box until the Yosemite Riots in 1970 prompting new roles of law enforcement, training, and actions turned more forceful again.

Not all park visitors are sweet grandparents and young grandchildren seeking peace and solitude. People sometimes use parks for new enjoyment: listen to loud music, form into groups, use alcohol and drugs, tempers flare, and behaviors are not civil toward property, people, wildlife, nature, or themselves. Rangers with guns might be safer and better deterrents than being without guns. Wildlife law enforcement officers work with hunters who carry guns openly when they hunt. Adding alcohol and drugs to that scene also is reason for officers to be well trained and to protect themselves.

Drugs are grown on properties managed by Forest Rangers who must be cautious about encounters with illegal activities. Fugitives hide on public lands and enforcement personnel have experienced lethal encounters since the days of mining claim disputes, bootlegged whiskey stills, Great Depression survivalists, and modern poachers of animals and other products of nature.

New concerns about personal security, national security, food security, and environmental security, were prompted by events of 9/11 when terrorist activities invaded relatively peaceful spaces. Some employees of parks, wildlife agencies, and public lands have little need to be armed, especially when their jobs do not relate to illicit activities and dangerous people. Those

who face jeopardy, benefit from exceptional training, proper equipment for the situations, and public support.

“Is that Gun for the Bears?” was the title of a related article by Kelly Pennaz AB, reviewing “The National Park Service Ranger as a Historically Contradictory Figure” in Conservation and Society 2017 [cited 2019 Apr 4];15:243-54. Available from:

<http://www.conservationandsociety.org/text.asp?2017/15/3/243/215824>.

Use my thoughts, the author cited, and others on your journey to make up your own mind about the gun you see on belt of the next ranger that you encounter.

William M. Timpson

NOTE: Bill Timpson has been on the faculty at Colorado State University in its School of Education for many years and a member of the Fort Collins Rotary Club where his focus on sustainable peacebuilding in Burundi, East Africa, has been supported by two Global Grants. What follows is adapted from his 2009 book, 147 Tips for Teaching Peace and Reconciliation, co-authored with an international group of peace scholars that included Ed Brantmeier, Nat Kees, Tom Cavanagh, Claire McGlynn and Elavie Ndura (Madison, WI: Atwood). If you have questions or ideas, contact Bill: william.timpson@colostate.edu

LOSS, HEALING AND HOPE

In 2006 I talked to three survivors of what people in Northern Ireland refer to as the “Troubles,” that period of “sectarian” conflict and violence from the 1960’s through the 1990’s that cost some 3,500 lives. “Molly’s” husband was seriously wounded; “Fiona” was too close to an assassination attempt and still carries a bullet lodged near her heart that surgeons cannot remove; and “Barbara” had to deal with a father who joined the paramilitaries and left her mother with nine kids to raise on very little while he was on the run, in and out of jail, and the family’s reputation “smeared.” While stories like these are quite common in a small nation where nearly everyone was touched by these “Troubles,” these women found that their pain began to heal through a program of neighbor-to-neighbor, facilitated story-telling.

In a program titled *Toward Understanding and Healing*, a small group of Derry residents come together for a 3-day residential to tell their stories, listen, accept and support each other. This may seem simple but it’s not when you recognize the cultures of avoidance, silence and fear that have developed here. You just “didn’t want to know” and you “didn’t ask.” Developed by Maureen Hetherington, the Director of *The Junction, Toward Understanding and Healing* has demonstrated the value of skilled facilitators and the power of community-based listening, acceptance and support.



The program begins with a pre-conference. The residential groups are always mixed with representation from all sides of this deeply divided society but connected by some kind of connection to the “Troubles” either as victim/survivor or perpetrator of violence including paramilitaries, state security and military personnel. Their “Contract” has only one requirement, “No judgment.” An icebreaker gets them started. The twelve participants and a few facilitators are then divided into groups of three to four where the focus is on stories, initially without interruption.

After the residential, facilitators organize one follow-up session. After that, the program’s resources are refocused on a new group. As simple as this may seem, Barbara insists that “it always works. New friends are formed.” Most stay in contact, especially through the ease of email. While the “Troubles” drove groups apart, Barbara remains “cautiously optimistic” that this program can really help pull the community back together.



Fiona insists that there was “absolutely nothing available” in 1973 when she was shot and little else still today. Initially she found value in journaling. Now, she sees these storytelling sessions as basic but so valuable, helping her heal and lead “a normal life under abnormal conditions.” Neighbors helping neighbors, crossing that deep divide without judgment, healing old wounds and building new relationships on acceptance and open, honest communication.

When Maureen Hetherington first told her own story of loss, she quickly got some healing insights for herself which then led to a job as a community relations officer with links to a victim’s group. In time and with an infusion of European Union funds for peace and reconciliation work, Maureen established *The Junction* which sponsors *Toward Understanding and Healing*. The challenge now, however, is to sustain this kind of programs in a city with old wounds as new problems vie for scant local resources.

While the wounds in America may not be so raw or as recent as they are in Northern Ireland, there would clearly be a place for this kind of neighbor-to-neighbor initiative. At *The Junction*, staff members understand that they are not doing therapy; it’s something more basic. What a wonderful way to bring people together in deeply meaningful connections, the real glue of a healthy community. The courage to put the weapons, fear and learned hatreds to the side and begin with building an inclusive and peaceful future on basic human relationships.

Lloyd Thomas

NOTE: Lloyd Thomas, Ph.D. is a longstanding member of the Fort Collins Rotary Club, a licensed psychologist and a life coach. In the essay that follows, he extends the example of "Tom" from Northern Ireland and the issues of "blame, accountability and responsibility." Contact him if you would like to receive his newsletters. He can be reached through email:

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FEAR, WEAPONS AND COURAGE

The fear response is a naturally occurring physiological event. It provides the body instant energy to "flee, fight or freeze." It occurs when one is confronted by a perceived (or actual) threat. When used to accurately address a genuine threat, it can save your life. When it occurs when there is no actual threat or when it lasts too long, it can cause physical and emotional breakdown.

Overcoming the fear response when there is no *perceived* threat requires what is usually known as "courage." Napoleon Hill wrote, "Fears are nothing more than a state of mind." Precisely *how* you overcome your fears is a skill that requires managing your mental activity (mind) that creates your perceptions, conclusions and decisions in a way that reduces unnecessary fear.

Historically, fearful people usually conclude that they need to increase their physical strength in order to diminish their fear responses. Whether they be fists, sticks, stones, swords, bows and arrows, guns, bombs or powerful aggression...weapons are used to "fight" a fear-driven perceived threat. For centuries, people have used their fear to strengthen their "fight" response. Decisions to use war to diminish their fears is the most violent method for lessening one's fears.

In today's modern world, most people rarely think that violence or war is good. But they often believe it to be necessary for: defending or gaining territory; economic gain; spreading religious beliefs; strengthening "nationalism"; taking revenge; dismantling an "unjust" government; resolving disputes/conflicts; freeing oneself from fear (creating "security"). They believe that these goals can be attained only by using weapons in violent aggression.

Today's weapons however, are so powerful that they are usually self-defeating. That means they are rarely successful in attaining *and* maintaining their desired outcomes (above). There are however, other ways of accomplishing those same goals. Such ways require taking risks and those actions require courage. Examples include:

Violence invites retaliatory violence. Killing the enemy creates more enemies. Fearful domination creates passive resistance or active rebellion. In like manner, being heard invites understanding. Cooperation invites teamwork. Addressing physical and psychological needs invites mutual, peaceful activity. Look what happened with the Japanese and western Germany *after* world war two. Peacekeepers need to attempt these risky behaviors *prior to engaging in violence or going to war.*

Unarmed peacekeepers are only effective if their presence is determined by their known reason for being there is NOT to engage in violence and killing. It is most effective when it is known that they are there to listen, work *together* with "the enemy" to address and create mutually desired outcomes. That takes great courage.

Nelson Mandela wrote: "I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear." Perhaps developing courage is the best way to triumph over any fears. Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, 'I have lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along.' You must do the thing you think you cannot do."

Taking risks can also be the most "moral thing to do." President John F. Kennedy spoke these words: "The courage of life is often a less dramatic spectacle than the courage of the final moment; but it is no less a magnificent mixture of triumph and tragedy. A man does what he must-in spite of personal consequences; in spite of obstacles and dangers and pressures-and that is the basis of all morality."

The common results of courageously taking the necessary risks to engage in non-violent actions is best described in the following poem written by that famous unknown author, Anonymous.

RISKS

*"To laugh is to risk appearing the fool.
To weep is to risk appearing sentimental.
To reach out for another is to risk involvement.
To expose feelings is to risk exposing your true self.
To place your ideas, your dreams, before a crowd is to risk their loss.
To love is to risk not being loved in return.
To live is to risk dying.
To hope is to risk despair.
To try is to risk failure.
But risks must be taken, because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing.
They may avoid suffering and sorrow, but they cannot learn, feel, change, grow, love, live.
Chained by their attitudes, they are a slave, they have forfeited their freedom.
Only a person who risks is free.*

Lindsey Pointer

NOTE: Lindsey Pointer has been working on the use of restorative principles in the criminal justice system. She is a restorative practices facilitator, trainer and researcher and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Restorative Justice at Victoria University in New Zealand with support from a Rotary Global Grant Scholarship and the Fulbright Program from the U.S. State Department. If you have questions or ideas, contact Lindsey: lindseycpointer@gmail.com

A RESTORATIVE RESPONSE TO GUN VIOLENCE IN NEW ZEALAND

It has been both a heartbreaking and an inspiring time to be in New Zealand in the wake of the March 15th attacks on two Christchurch mosques. A common response to the horror of these mass shootings in the United States is to argue for more guns to protect people. The response in New Zealand, and particularly by Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, has had a very different tone, a notably restorative tone. It has been incredibly moving and inspiring to watch unfold.

For this month's newsletter, I would like to share a reflection by my PhD supervisor, Professor Chris Marshall, on the restorative power of the response we have seen.

[Restorative Politics and the Christchurch Massacre](#)

By Professor Chris Marshall, Diana Unwin Chair in Restorative Justice, Victoria University of Wellington

Originally posted at <http://www.restorativecommunity.org.nz/blog/restorative-politics-and-the-christchurch-massacre>

The unspeakable horror perpetrated at two Christchurch mosques on 15 March, and the overwhelming response of grief and solidarity with the Muslim community expressed throughout the nation, has generated a huge amount of media coverage over recent weeks, both locally and internationally.

I have been particularly struck by the weight of commentary devoted to the extraordinary moral leadership displayed by our Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern. Many have described her response as “pitch perfect”, and noted the way she is being hailed around the world as a beacon of hope for a new kind of political leadership.

It is hard for New Zealanders not to feel a sense of pride in her performance – and a pride also that our small country, notwithstanding its own entrenched injustices, has spawned a female leader of such caliber, courage and compassion.

In an international arena increasingly dominated by thugs, bullies and strongmen, Jacinda Ardern has provided a masterclass in what I call “compassionate justice”. Talk of a Nobel Peace prize nomination does not seem far-fetched, given that some are saying her response has probably helped forestall copycat or revenge attacks occurring elsewhere in the world.

But to think of Jacinda's response as “pitch perfect” or as a “performance” is potentially misleading. For its significance lies precisely in the fact that it was not a carefully calibrated political performance.

She herself has said that she never really thought about how she should conduct herself at the time. She followed her instincts, she listened to her heart, she was guided by empathy and by the humane values and virtues she has probably cultivated all her life.

In one interview, she batted away any suggestion that she had shown great leadership, saying instead she had simply shown humanity.

One of the more perceptive accounts of her response has come from Dr Ghassen Hage, Professor of Anthropology and Social Theory at the University of Melbourne, in a short piece entitled, “You Can't Copy Love: Why Other Politicians Fall Short of Jacinda Adern”. Although he makes no reference to restorative justice or restorative practice, Hage offers two compelling observations that are pertinent to those of us working in the restorative justice field.

First, he speaks of his admiration for the “multidimensional restorative potential” of Jacinda's style of politics. Hage describes white nationalist racism, like all ethno-nationalist racism, as a “shattering force”. It is not only physically violent, it is also psychically and spiritually violent as well.

It shatters communities, ruptures relationships, and fragments and disperses identities. Racism is not only a “weapon of economic dispossession, but also a weapon of mass psychosocial destruction and communal disintegration”.

Given its splintering impact, the only remedy is “a fundamental and sustained politics of restoration that unleashes all the possible economic, practical and affective centrifugal forces to counter the corrosive effects of the disintegrative politics that has prevailed so long”.

What a powerful image this is! Systemic racism is like a destructive tornado whose centripetal forces fracture communities and alienate people from sources of identity, value and belonging. To counteract this trajectory of dissolution and dispersal, a restorative politics is needed that releases centrifugal forces of integration and connection.

This requires more than policy efforts to close the inequality gap between minority and majority communities. It also requires a more fundamental, grass roots commitment to resist all the social and ideological forces that separate and alienate and subordinate communities of difference, while nurturing efforts to build just relationships and forge affective connections between citizens.

This need to create both just relationships and empathetic connections between people is exactly what restorative practices aspire to do. Which means that any serious attempt to advance “restorative politics” on a societal scale can only benefit by drawing heavily on the democratic values and discursive practices of restorative philosophy. Restorative practices, in other words, have the potential to build the social capital needed if restorative politics is to strike at the root of systemic racism.

The second observation Hage makes about Jacinda’s response is the way it exemplified a “special kind of love”, or what he calls the “difficult love” that crosses cultural boundaries and embraces multiplicity and difference. “While love on its own leads us nowhere, a restorative politics is not complete without it being permeated by a deeply felt love, a love that can cross rather than erect cultural boundaries and that can heal rather than entrench divisions. It is in this regard that Jacinda Ardern’s restorative politics is so crucial...it provides a glimmer of hope that a politics that heals the shattering effects of white ethno-nationalist racism is possible”.

Once again, this description of a putative restorative politics echoes the nature of restorative justice on an interpersonal level. Restorative dialogue also seeks to transcend barriers of hostility and alienation, and to heal rather than entrench division. And its transformative potential lies in the fact that such a way of responding to harm and hostility manifests the inherent power of love, albeit a difficult kind of love.

Tellingly, Hage suggests that it was Jacinda’s display of authentic love that makes her example so difficult for other politicians to emulate. For it is not just what Jacinda did but how she did it that was crucial. The gift of support she gave to those traumatized by the massacre was imbued with the spirit in which she offered it, and without that spirit – without that sincerely felt love – her gift would not have had its restorative power.

None of this is to imply that Jacinda is a saint or super human. Quite the opposite. The reason why she has had such an astonishing impact on millions of people, here and around the world, devastated by the massacre is because she responded in such a genuinely human way, a way that allowed compassion rather than political calculation to guide her actions.

As another recent commentator, Nesrine Mailk, has put it, the Prime Minister displayed “a normal human reaction, not robotic or platitudinous, not scripted or insincere.” What is so depressing about her example of “compassionate poise”, this columnist suggests, is that such a normal human response is now so unfamiliar, so rare, among political leaders. “What should be the norm is elevated to exceptional.”

While that may be true in the political sphere, it is not so true elsewhere. In fact, the capacity of ordinary people to rise above self-protection and reach out in shared humanity and understanding to others is surprisingly commonplace, as everyone working in our field knows.

It was also powerfully demonstrated at the National Service of Remembrance on 29 March by the moving words of forgiveness and understanding of Farid Ahmed, whose wife, Husna Ahmed, was killed at Al Noor Mosque. Such displays of compassionate justice show that restorative politics is not only desirable and essential in our brutally fractious world, it is actually possible, if only we have the courage to do what Jacinda did.

PEACE LITERACY PLANNED FOR FORT COLLINS

Paul K. Chappell is an international peace educator and serves as the Peace Literacy Director of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation. He graduated from West Point, was deployed to Iraq, and left active duty as a Captain. He is the author of the seven-book Road to Peace series about ending war, waging peace, the art of living, and our shared humanity. The first six published books in this series are *Will War Ever End?*, *The End of War*, *Peaceful Revolution*, *The Art of Waging Peace*, *The Cosmic Ocean*, and *Soldiers of Peace*. Lecturing across the United States and internationally, he also teaches courses and workshops on Peace Leadership and Peace Literacy. Chappell grew up in Alabama, the son of a half-black and half-white father who fought in the Korean and Vietnam wars, and a Korean mother. Having grown up in a violent household, Chappell has forged a new understanding of war and peace, rage and trauma, and vision, purpose, and hope. He will return to Fort Collins from June 11-13 to lead a series of workshops for school counselors, teachers, parents and community. Emerging from a century of almost continuous warfare combined with the Rotary Foundation’s commitment to promoting peace and this current year’s focus on literacy, this topic of peace literacy is especially compelling for U.S. citizens, in particular. His website is www.peacefulrevolution.com.