

ROTARY DISTRICT 5440 PEACEBUILDER NEWSLETTER
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FAKE NEWS AND TRUST, BLAME AND RESPONSIBILITY

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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.

FACT CHECKING FAKE NEWS AND THE PEACE MOVEMENT

“Falsehood flies, and truth comes limping after it, so that when men come to be undeceived, it is too late; the jest is over, and the tale hath had its effect,” Jonathan Swift wrote in The Examiner No. XIV in 1710.

Fake or junk news is a type of propaganda that consists of deliberate disinformation or hoaxes spread via print, broadcast or online social media. Different fake news types might include: news satire, news parody, fabrication, photo manipulation, advertising, and propaganda. Sometimes fake news might include “gray” news, that is fake news can be embedded within truth and verifiable statements, or video clips can be edited, and photos cropped to give a different story than really happened. Fake news is often designed to take advantage of confirmation biases that encourage the recipient to automatically accept news items that confirm existing opinions. Unfortunately, fake news can be designed to aggravate conflict, disparage

arguments for peace, destroy faith in truthful news media, and even destroy the reputations of peace spokesmen.

Fake news designed to aggravate conflict: In the Fall 2016 the personal email account of John Podesta, Hillary Clinton's campaign manager, was hacked and his emails leaked by Wikigate. Proponents of the *Pizzagate conspiracy theory* claimed that the emails revealed that Bill and Hillary Clinton and democratic leaders were connected with a child sex trafficking ring involving the Washington D.C. restaurant Comet Ping Pong. Members of the alt-right and various Clinton opponents like Alex Jones of Infowars spread the theory on social media that led to a poll showing 46% of Trump voters believed the Pizzagate conspiracy theory. This included a gullible conservative, Edgar Welch, who shot up the Comet Ping Pong restaurant with an assault rifle and threatened customers. The case was thoroughly investigated by Snopes.com, the New York Times, FactCheck.org, Fox News, and Time magazine and declared entirely false in all details.¹

Sadly, fake news has been used to involve the United States in wars by its own leaders. Even founding father, Benjamin Franklin, used a fabricated story about how Seneca Indians were encouraged by the British to murder and scalp "defenseless, farmers, women and children" to incite colonial solidarity.² The Hearst newspaper chain promoted the Spanish American War in 1898 with the slogan "Remember the Maine" after publishing the false story that the explosion on the USS Maine in Cuba was a result of Spanish aggression.³ The Gulf of Tonkin incidents that were used to draw the United States into the Vietnam War in 1964 were twisted into fake news by the Johnson administration to justify escalating the war.^{4, 5} Fake stories about weapons of mass destruction, WMDs, in Iraq led President Bush to declare war.^{6, 7}

Fake news has been used abroad to cause violence in India, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka. In Myanmar the primary source of public news tends to be government Facebook accounts which claimed that the Rohingya are burning their own villages, showed bodies of soldiers (that were actually from other conflicts) claiming they died from Rohingya attacks, and called the Rohingya 'Bengalis' immigrants.⁸

Fake news used to disparage peace initiatives: The satirical evangelical Christian website, The Babylon Bee, published an article titled "*ISIS Lays Down Arms After Katy Perry's Impassioned Plea to 'Like, Just Co-Exist.'*" It claimed Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of the Islamic State, confirmed that ISIS would immediately be surrendering its fight to establish a caliphate after viewing an interview with pop singer Katy Perry.⁹ PunditFact rated the article, which was

¹ <https://www.factcheck.org/2018/01/no-democratic-prostitute-ring-n-j/>

² <http://www.reenactmag.com/ben-franklin-created-fake-news/>

³ <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/08/the-press-doesnt-cause-warspresidents-do/566834/>

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gulf_of_Tonkin_incident

⁵ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/howardhomonoff/2017/09/29/ken-burns-vietnam-war-echoes-of-journalists-battle-against-fake-news/#75284882a787>

⁶ <https://www.globalresearch.ca/the-lie-of-the-21st-century-how-mainstream-media-fake-news-led-to-the-u-s-invasion-of-iraq/5558813>

⁷ http://www.nbcnews.com/id/22794451/ns/world_news-mideast_n_africa/t/study-bush-led-us-war-false-pretenses/

⁸ <https://www.pri.org/stories/2017-11-01/myanmar-fake-news-spread-facebook-stokes-ethnic-violence>

⁹ <https://babylonbee.com/news/isis-lays-arms-katy-perrys-impassioned-plea-like-just-co-exist/>

accepted as truth by many conservatives and heavily mocked as politically naïve liberalism, as “Pants on Fire False.”¹⁰

Fake News used to destroy faith in the news media: In a strange twist, both US and foreign governments are declaring anything that they disagree with or deny as “fake news”; thus, often branding truth and faithful reporting as non-believable. The Syrian government used such a method to label news stories about their execution of prisoners, massacre of civilians and use of chemical weapons as fake news. The Chinese military has a website to report malicious posts about the People’s Liberation Army, and the Russian Foreign Ministry operates a webpage which slaps non-approved news with a bright red “FAKE” stamp. All this just to stamp out criticism and dismiss detractors. In the US President Trump is a major user of this methodology.¹¹

Fake News used to destroy reputations of peace spokesmen: Peace proponents and activists are often the target for malicious fake news and slander. False news about many prominent leaders is so heavily embedded in the news it has become almost impossible to even separate truth from fiction. A few examples might include:

- Abraham Lincoln saw himself as a “peacemaker”. He always preferred mediation and conciliation over adjudication, because he felt invoking the law was an “antisocial” act where everyone frequently lost.¹² In 1864 Lincoln was accused in a widely circulated pamphlet of favoring miscegenation to produce a new super-race of blacks and whites.¹³ The story followed Lincoln throughout his political career. It was picked up and spread by pro-slave newspapers throughout the United States. The pamphlet may have been “American history’s most successful fake news campaign.”
- Eleanor Roosevelt fought for women’s rights, labor rights, and civil rights. She was deemed by fake news writers a communist, a “class traitor”, and unladylike. She was heavily criticized when she resigned from the DAR when the organization refused to allow Marian Anderson to perform at Constitution Hall. The FBI claimed that “Eleanor Clubs”, which were rumored to be organized groups of African-American maids, were subversive groups and pro-communist. These club claims were later proved false.¹⁴
- Martin Luther King Jr. spoke against US war actions and for the rights of all abused groups. But he was deemed by some news media a communist, communist sympathizer, glory seeker, womanizer, plagiarizer, to have a messiah complex, and some who failed to support his own family. Again, the FBI maintained surveillance of King and his wife for un-American activities for many years.¹⁵

¹⁰ <https://www.politifact.com/punditfact/statements/2017/sep/08/babylon-bee/no-isis-didnt-lay-down-its-arms-after-katy-perry-e/>

¹¹ <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/12/trump-world-fake-news/548888/>

¹² <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/j/jala/2629860.0016.203/--lawyer-as-peacemaker-law-and-community-in-abraham-lincolns?rgn=main;view=fulltext>

¹³ <https://qz.com/842816/fake-news-almost-destroyed-abraham-lincoln/>

¹⁴ <http://fdrfoundation.org/they-hated-eleanor-too/>

¹⁵ <http://www.markedbyteachers.com/gcse/history/why-was-martin-luther-king-both-so-bitterly-criticised-and-so-deeply-mourned-by-black-citizens-of-the-usa.html>

- Nelson Mandela organized against and fought apartheid in South Africa. He admitted to sabotaging government property but consistently opposed taking life. He was eventually jailed many years for sabotage but was released and became South Africa's first black president. He was variously accused of adultery, selling out to whites, being anti-American and pro-communist (because he criticized the American involvement in the Iraq war),. He was accused of supporting terrorism, and being vain about his appearance.^{16, 17}

Sadly, given today's media technology it is possible to make extremely realistic videos of individuals using photoshopping and dubbing techniques. In April 2018 a public service video was produced of President Barack Obama by Jordan Peele, an Obama impersonator, and BuzzFeed that demonstrated that what you see may not be reality.¹⁸ "We're entering an era in which our enemies can make it look like anyone is saying anything at any point in time, even if they would never say those things," Peele-as-Obama said.

Conclusion: We all need to be more vigilant as to what we trust from the internet and use trustworthy news sources with a track record of reliability if we wish to support world peace.

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

CONTROVERSY, INTEGRITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Few people really enjoy conflict. That's one argument for peace. Yet, retreat from tough issues rarely solves a problem, especially when a topic like "fake news" has many people questioning the validity of news sources generally, especially when some leaders are so quick to challenge reports with which they disagree. Instead, there is everything to gain from knowing how to face problems, handle the attendant emotions and explore possible solutions. Long-time advocate of a culture of care, Nel Noddings (2003) encourages us to develop these abilities. "If we value critical thinking, if we commit ourselves to encouraging it, then we must allow it to be exercised on critical matters. . . If we really believe that knowledge and critical thinking contribute to living fuller public and private lives, then we must allow the study and discussion of such critical and controversial issues" (148).

Discovery learning is a well-studied approach that provides a framework for exploration, helping people identify a problem, consider various approaches, test their ideas and decide on a way forward. Everyone can do that on a particular issue, seeking out a range of reactions and interpretations, evaluating each for its authenticity, before making a final decision. Yet, success

¹⁶ <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/12/06/think-again-nelson-mandela/>

¹⁷ <https://www.thedailybeast.com/dont-sanitize-nelson-mandela-hes-honored-now-but-was-hated-then>

¹⁸ <https://variety.com/2018/digital/news/jordan-peele-obama-fake-news-video-buzzfeed-1202755517/>

with discovery also requires that we learn how to manage the time we have for this kind of assessment. We also have to discipline ourselves to do the “homework” needed to satisfy our concerns about what we can trust as well as to manage our emotions, channel our anxieties and deal any number of other challenges we may be facing. When have you faced a conflict or controversy and discovered useful insights in the midst of concerns about “fake news” and what sources you could trust? How can we help others to do the same?

In 2006 I received a Fulbright Specialist award for my work on Peace and Reconciliation Studies and returned to Northern Ireland to gather material about veterans and peace activists who are deeply committed to finding nonviolent solutions to conflicts and what I term a “deeper democracy,” where dissent is celebrated as an essential guard against excessive militarism and enforced orthodoxy. This opportunity permitted me to have six weeks at the University of Ulster’s UNESCO Centre to address education for a people whose nation is emerging from 800 years of conflict and violence over power, rights, respect, religion, opportunity, discrimination, sovereignty, and more.

In the past forty years alone, bombs, killings, beatings and intimidation have made peaceful coexistence between Catholic nationalists and Protestant loyalists here nearly impossible. Yet, this small and divided nation of 1.5 million did sign a peace accord in 1998 and is in the process of disarming the militant wings while seeing a drawdown of the occupying British military forces.

I take the train down to Derry, the walled city still celebrated by Protestant loyalists for resisting the siege of the Catholic King James in 1690, to hear a talk by Irish historian Kevin Whelan about memories, stories and their role in reconciliation. We meet at *The Junction*, a community relations resource center funded through the European Union’s Peace and Reconciliation Program. that sponsors various projects including *Toward Understanding and Healing*, an effort to address the violence of the past thirty years through storytelling and dialogue. The statue in Derry represents the hope for a meaningful reconciliation



The audience of some fifteen locals includes one man in his 50's—I'll call him "Tom"—who was at the "Bloody Sunday" civil rights demonstrations in 1972 when British soldiers fired on a large group of marchers, killing fourteen and wounding another seventeen. Many nationalists quickly concluded that this attack on unarmed civilians would be the spark that would light the fuse of armed resistance and discredit the use of nonviolence as practiced by Gandhi in India and then by Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights movement in the United States.



After Professor Whalen concluded his remarks about the malleability of memory, how each of us constructs our worlds based on our recall of what we have experienced and been told, Tom confesses. He clearly remembers the bullets flying on Bloody Sunday and the British paratroopers with their distinguishing berets at that first barricade, something that nationalists are hard pressed to forgive. To use elite combat troops against unarmed civilians was clear evidence of British brutality and the naiveté of nonviolence.

But then Tom admits that he has been wrong for all these years. At a recent meeting on reconciliation, when the discussion turned to Bloody Sunday, someone produced a photograph from 1972 of those infamous barricades. When Tom looked closely, he could clearly see that the British troops were all in helmets, not berets. Yes, there were paratroopers nearby and, yes, they did get involved and join in the shooting later, but it was a revelation for Tom to see something so different from what he distinctly remembered.

In the heat of any wild and traumatic moment, anyone can be forgiven for missing certain details. Yet Tom's memories had led him to embrace more extremist calls for reprisal. Now, some 34 years later, he needed to admit his errors, rethink his positions and commit to healing himself and others.

So the question for me is what memories will Americans need to revisit as we rethink our latest war in Iraq? For example, surveys indicate that over 70% of the U.S. troops in Iraq fully believed

that Saddam Hussein was directly involved in the attacks of September 11th. What will it take, intellectually and emotionally, for these troops to confront the facts and reexamine the connections between their participation in that war effort and their own memories? What will it take for any of us to step back from the polarized debates that have surfaced since then to see how we can discern about the published analyses we read and what is “spun” or “fake”.

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: DrLloyd@CreatingLeaders.com

BLAMING, ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

We seem to be living in a time when governments, nations and individuals are always blaming others for their mistakes, beliefs and weaknesses. It appears that blaming others has become a national habit. When we cannot identify a single person to blame, we spread the blame around to others, to fate, to Mother Nature, to God, to other nations or to anybody who isn't us.

The dynamic of blaming others is a consequence of our personal fear of our genuine inability to control or even influence events or others. It probably begins when we were children and asked to control our own behavior (like bowel and bladder control) and couldn't...leading to parental disapproval or punishment. When we are afraid of being “out of control,” we usually are fearful most of the time.

There is a psychological downside to blaming. It inadvertently gives the “blamee” unwarranted power over the blamer. After all, if it is always somebody else's fault, then the blamer has no power to modify that for which he is blaming somebody else. Blaming is always assigned to events or actions that have occurred in the past. And we are all helpless to change anything that is already history. So, blaming always increases the blamer's sense of powerlessness and helplessness. A sense of helplessness is one element in psychological depression. It is no wonder that blamers are often depressed. They also blame anybody or anything for their depression.

An alternative to blaming is “accountability.” When we are genuinely seeking accountability, we want to discover the specific cause(s) of events or actions. We ask ourselves the question: “What accounts for this event?” When we become genuinely curious about what causes events or actions, we are open to new learning. When we actually discover and understand the causes of things like disease, violence, disasters, war, and tragedies, we position ourselves to take preventative measures. If we would hold ourselves able to account for (account-able) such occurrences, we empower ourselves to do something about them now and in the future. Genuine accountability does not result in feelings of guilt. Rather, it frees us to become responsible.

Do you hold yourself accountable for the nature and quality of your life? Are you able to account for those things for which you would like to blame others? If you answered “yes” to either of these questions, you will feel much more powerful and able to respond appropriately to anything that “happens” in your life. You become response-able.

When you feel accountable for the quality of your life, and for everything that happens to you, you then become responsible for everything that impacts it. When you take on the responsibility for your mistakes, and even the mistakes of others, you learn from them. If you feel accountable and responsible for an explosion that occurred in someone else's house, you will seek to discover

the causes of the explosion (e.g. your neighbor was building rockets or creating methamphetamine), and you may learn what not to do to avoid explosions in your own house. If you observe and learn the responses to the explosion of others (e.g., firemen), you empower yourself to address any explosion you experience now and in the future. You become responsible for prevention and extinguishing future explosions.

Instead of blaming others or circumstance(s) for our life; instead of feeling helpless to do anything about it; instead of feeling guilty about the negative things that “just happen;” instead of blaming yourself or others (or fate); become accountable and responsible for everything that you experience in your life. When you stop blaming and start being accountable and responsible, you become more powerful, more aware, more capable, more confident, more knowledgeable and hopefully, more wise. Is there anyone who wouldn't like to develop these qualities? Stop blaming, and you increase your chances of creating a life of your dreams.

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.

FORT COLLINS PEACE INITIATIVE

Rotary Clubs of Fort Collins Present Notable Race Relations Advocate at Special Event
Tuesday, April 9, 6 p.m. at the Lory Student Center Ballroom, Colorado State University

The Rotary Clubs of Fort Collins are excited to present a special speech by Daryl Davis, a noteworthy author and musician best known for his incredible work on improving race relations in America. Davis will give a special presentation on race relations at CSU's Lory Student Center Grand Ballroom on Tuesday, April 9, from 6-8 p.m. All community members are invited to attend.

The presentation is part of Fort Collins Rotary Clubs' "The Peace Initiative Speaker Series." Davis's impressive resume fits this theme seamlessly. He has dived into race issues headfirst by setting up meetings with Ku Klux Klan leaders and attending rallies with the intent – and successful track record – of changing hearts and convincing members to renounce their racist beliefs. As a black man, endeavors such as these are an especially unique tactic for addressing race issues.

In addition to his direct approach of tackling racial issues, Davis is an accomplished blues, rock 'n' roll, country and jazz musician, performing regularly with his own Daryl Davis Band. He has worked extensively with musical icons, including Chuck Berry, Elvis Presley's Jordanaires, Sam Moore, among others. He has also made his mark starring in his own documentary, "Accidental Courtesy: Daryl Davis, Race & America," as well as appearing in the upcoming documentary, "American Times."

Davis's life experiences are chronicled in his book, "Klan-Destine Relationships." He has received many honors, including The American Ethical Union's Elliott-Black Award, The Washington Ethical Society's Bridge Builder, and the Search for Common Ground Award.

Community members are invited to learn more about Davis's inspiring work at his speech at CSU. Tickets may be purchased online at <https://peace.eventbrite.com> or at the door for \$10 for students and \$15 for the general public. Sponsorship opportunities are available for this event. Interested sponsors, please contact Danielle Llewellyn at Danielle.L@davincisign.com.

Learn more about Rotary Clubs of Fort Collins: rotaryfortcollins.org