

Tikkun Rally at the White House

John Dear | Jun. 22, 2010 On the Road to Peace

Like many of you, I long for peace but feel stuck in our warlike culture, like a Gulf pelican mired in BP's oil spill. A timely image that touched a nerve when I said it last weekend in Washington, D.C. It was at the conference for the Network for Spiritual Progressives sponsored by my friend Rabbi Michael Lerner of *Tikkun Magazine*. We are all of us pelicans gummed up and weighed down in the oil, I said, all of us victims of our culture of violence, greed and war.

But not purely victims, but also complicit. Our cultural addictions to oil, money and war are buried deep in our own hearts -- so we all need to do more than bemoan our plight. We need to take responsibility, change our lives, and start down a new road of simplicity, nonviolence and stewardship.

The conference brought together like-minded friends from every religious background, and being among them heartened me. Together we reflected on the political moment and our global crises. No small matter. And leading us were Congressman Keith Ellison, Robert Thurman, Marianne Williamson, Sr. Joan Chittister, Bill McKibben and Rev. James Forbes.

Under the banner of "The Caring Society: Care for the Earth, Care for Each Other," Rabbi Lerner and his colleagues offered a succinct platform for the four day gathering (see: www.spiritualprogressives.org or www.tikkun.org).

The earth is crying out to us: stop destroying the environment that nurtures all life! The people of planet earth are crying out to us: stop wars, stop squandering your wealth on military spending, and stop imposing economic policies that only benefit the rich but ignore the suffering of the 3 billion people on the planet who live in extreme poverty! Build a global humanity community based on love, generosity, true caring for each other, mutual forgiveness and compassion -- and allow yourself time to connect with your own inner spiritual being and time to experience awe, wonder and radical amazement at the grandeur and mystery of the universe, the on-going miracle of your own consciousness, and the beauty and fragility of life itself.

These are the moral imperatives of the 21st century. They can only be achieved if we publicly affirm these values as the core of what we believe in, and if we are willing to move attention beyond our personal lives with all their many demands on our time and energy -- and join together with others in a movement to heal and transform the world.

The conference opened on Friday and continued on Sunday in Lafayette Park across the street from the White House. Several hundred of us gathered there for a public rally and to seize the opportunity to speak out for justice and peace. The speeches and songs over, we entered into prayer for the beleaguered of Gaza.

It was a hot and muggy on Sunday -- a typical summer day in D.C. -- and President Obama was at home, just some 60 yards away. My turn to speak arrived and I was glad to add my two cents. Here below are my remarks. I offer them as a prayer in the hope that we'll keep toiling for the world's poor, the world's creature, for the

groaning world itself.

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Dear friends, we gather in the name of the God of peace, in the name of Peace itself, to call for an end to our evil wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan, to say they are not moral, justified, or blessed; they do not make us safer or more secure; they sow the seeds for future terrorist attacks and spread the plague of violence even farther; they are not the will or way of God; and so, with love, we say the days of war are over, we want a new world without war, a new disarmed world of peace with justice!

In the name of the God of peace, in the name of Peace itself, we call for an end to the U.S. funding of the occupation of Palestine, an end to the siege of Gaza, and an end to Israeli apartheid. We want the Jewish vision of shalom and human rights for Palestinian children!

President Obama said the future is a nuclear free world, but he has spent more for new nuclear weapons more than anyone since Ronald Reagan. As we commemorate the 65th anniversary of Hiroshima, he's building a new state-of-the-art plutonium bomb factory at Los Alamos, the birthplace of the bomb. So we say, in the name of the God of peace, in the name of Peace itself, we don't want a new nuclear bomb factory. We don't want these nuclear weapons. They don't make us safe or secure, they don't protect us, they poison the earth, they're bad for our health, they bankrupt our economy, they threaten the whole planet, they destroy our souls, and they mock the Creator.

After 65 years, we say: Retire the bomb! Abolish nuclear weapons! Give us a nuclear free world now, and use those billions in a new Global Marshall plan to feed and heal the starving masses of the world!

As members of the Network for Spiritual Progressives, we stand with our ancestors from the Abolitionists to the Suffragists to the Civil Rights activists, with Mahatma Gandhi, Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Rosa Parks, and we say the time has come to move our country from a land of war and empire to a land of peace and nonviolence; that we can create a nonviolent society; that we can resolve international conflict nonviolently; that we can reach out across borders to love and serve every human being as a global citizen, as a sister and brother; that the time has come to throw away the old paradigm of war and imperial domination and welcome a new future of nonviolence.

Today, in the name of the God of peace, in the name of Peace itself, like the Abolitionists of old who announced the abolition of slavery and the vision of a new world of equality, we announce what the whole human race longs for: the abolition of war itself, and poverty and greed and executions and nuclear weapons and environmental destruction. We announce the coming of a new world of nonviolence, so we call upon the Obama administration for authentic change, not the same old violence, but nonviolent change for a new society, a new culture, a new world of nonviolence -- the Reign of God in our midst. May the God of peace bless us all.

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To contribute to Catholic Relief Services? Fr. John Dear Haiti Fund, go to:
<http://donate.crs.org/goto/fatherjohn>. John will speak this weekend on "Gandhi, King and Day," at Loyola in Chicago, June 25-26 (see: www.asrenewal.org), and teach a weeklong course, "Gandhi, King, Day and Merton," Aug. 2-6, at Ghost Ranch Center, Abiquiu, NM, (see www.ghostranch.org.) John's latest book, *Daniel Berrigan: Essential Writings* (Orbis), along with other recent books, *A Persistent Peace* and *Put Down Your Sword*, as well as Patricia Normile's *John Dear On Peace*, are available from www.amazon.com. For further information, or to schedule a lecture, go to www.johndear.org.

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