

WORKSHOP I

WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND PEACE

Women's Peace is Peace for the World

by Aiska Hiltunen*

- Peace begins in women's minds...
- children of peace will become adults of peace...
- without inner peace you cannot create the outer...
- behind the questions of peace are questions of values...
- and future is what we build today

As an old peaceactivist and now working for developing women's education as my main job, I was very happy to get the invitation to lead this topic in our meeting. From the very beginning working for peace has been essential part of women's movement — as well the 90 year-old IAW as my own organisation in Finland, which celebrates its 100th anniversary this year.

Questions of peace —and education for peace as well— have been important in the past and further more are important at this moment, when war is reality in many countries around us. Future is what we build today — women's movement has great challenge to build world of peace. The ultimate goal of peace education is to make itself unnecessary.

My paper consists of three main themes. First I'll define peace in a very broad meaning and link it with structures and questions of power. Secondly I'll look at possibilities and results of peace education so far and especially the role of women and women's movement in it. Thirdly I'll discuss values and future seen from women's point of view.

I've been inspired by two women. Birgit Brock-Utne, Norwegian peace researcher and feminist, has written a book "Education for peace" which has given me guidance for the last 10 years. Hilikka Pietilä, former UN-secretary of Finland and my old friend from Women for Peace-movement gave me lots to think when preparing this paper. So I extend my thanks for them, other sources will be mentioned.

1. Peace and society, structures of power

Peace is not only the absence of war between states or of open physical violence between whatever parties. Peace

is a realization of social justice at all levels — or rather a process towards it. That means absence of physical and structural violence between states or parties or between individuals, citizens within states.

Peace is based on equality, justice, cooperation, interaction and conciliation between parties. The world of peace would be one without not only violence and war, but without racism, sexism and all inequality as well. Working for peace is working for greater equality between peoples and nations and decreasing structural violence.

Questions of peace are both very personal and very political, on local and global, national and international levels. For all women peace is social safety — so rape, prostitution, all domestic violence and violence in the streets and sexual harassment are violation of it. All actions which aim to improve the well-being of both sexes in our societies are projects of peace.

At the same time peace is linked with our global development and concerns about the environment. It's said about the women's movement that the more feminist it becomes the more peace and nature oriented it is. I hope so. War and militarism are the worst enemies of nature and environment, since they literally devour natural resources and destroy the environment even in times of so called peace. Mother Earth is violated and raped everywhere — and as we all know from the UN-meeting in Rio de Janeiro last June: we have to hurry in order to save it.

Lack of peace shows up also in the relationships between nation, specially so called north-south relationships. It seems that we do not live in a common, one world doing all our best in order to

save it and develop it in a democratic way. The aid for developing countries is often the first thing where rich and industrialised countries start to save when having economical problems in their own country — this is happening in my own country just now.

These different phenomena, which show the lack of peace in our societies and all around the world, derive from the same origin. They are linked with questions of power. The so called patriarchy, where we live in — most of us, if not all — is a male dominated, father-centered and hierarchial system.

All the relationships in this system are based on hierarchies, on power, power against others, ruling over others. In these hierarchies the very top consists always of a small number of men — white, heterosexual and most likely also anglo-saxon and protestant men. Women don't have much to say in this system — even in Finland and other Nordic countries, where the position of women is good compared with many others, we have to admit that power keeps escaping the places women get into.

Patriarchy forms a tight couple with militarism. By militarism I mean a system of beliefs and values, a way of thinking and acting, which is inseparable from patriarchal society and culture. Patriarchy cannot prevail without militarism and militarism would have no justification without patriarchy. Patriarchal state is either in the state of war, recovering from war or preparing for war. From women's point of view state of war is constantly prevailing within the patriarchy.

American peace researcher Betty Reardon defines militarism as "a belief system emerging from a world view

founded on the basic assumption that human beings are by nature violent, aggressive and competitive, and from the corollary assumption that social order must be maintained by force". Symptoms of militarism and also militarization of women we see in most countries all the time.

To sum up: We lack peace on many levels of this world and societies. Our first task as women and human beings interested in peace is to open up these questions and to look behind the hierarchical structures in our patriarchal culture, start melting the iceberg of militarism. But how?

2. Education - chance of change, challenge for women

It's often said that by educating men you'll get one educated individual at a time, but through women you'll influence the whole nation. Women do have great influence as mothers, kindergarten teachers, teachers — as persons they use more personal, social and interactional power than men do. The way women teach and learn — which is called women's education or feminist pedagogy — is education for peace in its deeper meaning: it makes also the hierarchies of teaching and learning visible in order to surpass them.

Peace education has been in schooling programmes in many countries since the beginning of 70's. Its idea, as stated in the Unesco, is to guide students towards active citizenship, also creating international understanding and responsibility. It's civic education, which regard students as growing young people with a right of their own to live as the subjects of their own lives, to develop and evolve their own image of the world and their own set of values.

One of the most attractive definitions of peace education for broad and realistic scope comes from Mario Borelli: "By peace education we mean the social process through which equality of rights is achieved, from which follows equal power sharing for every member of a given community".

Education for peace in our schools should naturally and in delicate ways enhance the students development as persons. At the same time it should be fun and joyful. In practice it could be:

- 1) Early education: building up basic security of the child and strengthening healthy self-confidence and identity.

- 2) Elementary grades (3-6): examining reasons of conflicts between individuals and for violence; learning about "peace" among men and societies.

- 3) Junior and senior secondary: reasons of war, mechanisms of politics, un-

derstanding how societies and power functions and learning to wield influence in society.

Peace education does have an objective-peace. The goals set by experts (Carpenter, Reardon and Stanford, beginning of 80's) for it are such as a global and comprehensive approach to cooperation, non violent conflict resolution, peaceful change and awareness of alternatives.

When we look at the women's way to organize and lead, by spinning webs instead of building hierarchical pyramids, we find the same elements. Sharing ideas, seeing diversity as richness, having common goals and aligning together to reach them are basic ideas in female leadership. Would women be more peace-oriented as such than men — would it be simply because women perceive the world as a web of relationships and work more holistic and integrated?

Celina Garcia from Costa Rica has studied the links between androgyny and peace education. Androgyny means a union between the masculine and feminine principles, or choosing the best qualities of both sexes. In peace theory this would mean the identification of modern myths that justify direct violence in male sex and indirect violence in social context.

Seen from this perspective peace education requires the fusion of research, education and action (PREA-model). According to Celina Garcia, its principles should be: a constant, methodological questioning of social values and social interactions; the development and creation of pedagogical practices promoting with other human beings and nature; research into more peaceful societies where males may exist without the use of violence (as an anthropologist I wonder which they would be?); learning about the non-violent movements, past and present and the active participation in decisions and a careful analysis of misogyny and the glorification of male violence.

Peace researcher Barbara Stanford from USA has concluded that a person with a mature perspective on matters in general does not need any special peace education. She/he is already capable of setting her/his goals to the effect of peace. Comparisons between boys and girls have been interesting — and if we think of results of current peace education, they are also rather disappointing.

Stanford found out, when evaluating the effects of peace education programme in public schools in U.S. in early 80's, that peace education didn't work for boys: even girls who had not been taught about peace in the school were significantly more successful in achiev-

ing its goals, understanding relationships in the perspective of peace for than boys who has studied it for 9 weeks. It sounds pretty sad for the boys if this is true, but even more sad it is for the current peace-education and for its methods. Maybe fun has been missing?

Norwegian Johan Galtung, professor of peace studies in many universities all over the world, went even further when speaking in Helsinki at the International Peace Bureaus 100-anniversary about month ago: in order to reduce violence, parity between genders could not be obtained by raising up girls like boys, nor by raising both to some in-between positions, but rather raising boys like girls. He saw direct violence as an essentially male phenomenon, even finding its roots from the biological and psychological differences between sexes.

No other animal but man kills its own species. It seems to be a more masculine that feminine way of behaviour among humankind. I wouldn't though suggest that all women are free of violence, competition or struggle or that all women love peace, flowers and children — or that all men are killers by birth. To think so would be rather traditional and naive. We have to pay attention to the diversity of women — and men. Instead of postulating truths how men and women are, women's studies and movements have started to look at values, to find masculine and feminine ways of positive behaviour, which — this is important — can appear and do appear in both biological sexes.

Here comes the challenge for women: how do we use all our potentials in order to get more peaceful world? How do we raise our daughters and sons? How do we raise ourselves, are we willing to change our own belief systems? What kind of model we give as women — and many of us as mothers? Does our use of power and female leadership differ from that of men? Peace-education is not just the education of raising generations but also the education of present day adults to understand, see differently and find out new ways.

A concrete example: there are two different ways of seeing the war-veterans, two ways of respecting them. First could be boasting and adoration in the style "those were the days when men were real men". Second is to wise up and to work so that it would not happen even again and these war-veterans we respect would be the last ones.

3. Values and future - what do we build and why?

The task of the women's movement is to improve the world to be better place

for living for both sexes. For me this is a synonyme for peace, it means social justice, equality between sexes, races and nations and development, which doesn't forget the environment. It's our goal and programme — it has been the same the last 100 years, changing its form but bearing the same basic idea. How shall we finally reach our goals — what kind of inheritance shall we leave to the next generations? This unending process and goal?

The old truth and basic thing in human life is that you cannot improve the world if you are feeling bad yourself. So begin with yourself. It sounds easy, but it isn't. "Personal is political" is the challenge for the 90's in its deepest meaning: reflection of your own way of working and thinking, looking the world through yourself is becoming a basic idea of feminist education and therapies as well the training for female leaders. More than ever we look the values behind our leadership, leading our actions.

I believe that aggressivity, anger, hate and even martial spirit live in all of us, both men and women. From psychological point of view I'd consider them as defences of the self. In our collective unconscious live also all the bad experiences of the nations and humankind, we carry inside us war, concentration camps, persecution, memories of all cruelty and injustice even if we belong to generations who haven't experienced them ourselves. As individuals we have the chance to face these chains, to face our own inner shadow, get to know it — and by doing so to break the chain, not carry it on.

Here in beautiful Athens, where ancient history of Greece and our western civilization begins to live, I cannot leave the greek goddesses out of my paper. Discovering common mythology and reflecting them in our work and strategies has become a popular inspiration in womens education and movement. The archetypes live in all of us: it can be very intriguing to get to know your own Pallas Athena, goddess of science and rationality or Artemis, goddess of nature and fight as well as Afrodite, who stands for love and beauty or Demeter, the goddess of growth and mothering. Knowing these ladies inside you, you can consciously build strategies to use them.

Two contrasting sets of values are battling in this world, I would call them humane and techno-economic values. To the first category I'd like to list human dignity, awareness of own identity, being subject, togetherness, solidarity, relations with others, meaningfulness of life and work, caring, creativity, process, happiness, love and peace. These are

values, which we often consider as "soft" or "female" —and don't— perhaps even ourselves as women value them as much as the "hard" ones. Or at least we believe, when somebody, (mostly the boys) say to us, that you cannot build real life on these values.

To the techno-economic values I'd list such values as objects, issues, productions, money, results, achievement, benefits, status, pay, competition, "standard of living", victory, individualism, profit, power and strength. These values lie behind most of the actions we consider as actions of war. They are values of patriarchal culture and militarism.

We need these values as well, but: we must lead them and not let them lead us. Technical and economic values must be subordinated to human values, production and economy must serve human well-being. Progress directed by anthropocentric values leads us gradually towards a more human society and peaceful world.

If the "hard" values are permitted to continue to dominate, we'll end up with an increasingly tough and competitive society: in Nordic countries the dismantling of the welfare state is one symptom of this. The trend in Finland just now seems to be that we have to fight again for those rights our grandmothers got for us.

The battle between these two sets of values appears for instance in Finland on communal level in discussions whether to support and build industry or hold on to municipal childcare, equal schooling and taking care of old people. On national level there are questions about supporting the banks and big capital or maintaining the welfare state. On international level they lie behind questions of environment and of help for developing countries.

Time may be hard and problems difficult on national and international levels, but only the opportunity we've got as women is to work and speak out, show what kind of future we want to build and do it now. If we are able and willing to cooperate, put all our strength together, empower each other, spin webs over the traditional barriers — national and political, for instance — and see our goal and task in improving the world and building the peace in its very broad and deep meaning, this world has a future.

In this work we need all the wisdom, intelligence and knowledge we have and we need all compassion, emotion and intuition we've got — we need integration of heart and head. We need it as individuals and in organizations. This trend is also natural and visible in evolution of womens movement at least here in Europe: we started from political problems,

worked very rationally in 60's and 70's, started to concentrate on more intimate and emotional matters in 80's — now we should combine and integrate these both.

Peace begins in womens minds and peace of women is peace of the world. Peace education has chance and opportunity when we ourselves are totally aware what it is and what kind of future we want to build with it. You have to have a clear vision in order to reach it. And though the old truth with all education is that you can just give an opportunity to it: you can bring people to the apple tree but they decide themselves whether they are going to pick up the apple or not and if so, whether they'll eat it.

The task is big. If I set myself an ideal and a goal which I'm trying to reach during my own biological age, I feel often desperate and lack the courage for really big goals and ideals. The World Peace is far too huge to be an individual goal. But it helps me to see myself in the chain of women's work and women's movement, to recognise that I'm carrying out with my life the ideals and goals of those ladies who 100 or 90 years ago established women's organizations. In the same way I can look at the future: my work now is my contribution to a big, common building, carried on by next generations, other women.

So: we have the chance and challenge for 90's and for the next 90 years of this organization. It is: to get to know our values and start to work according to them in order to reach a beautiful, happy and a more equal world. By doing so, I wish we all have a lot of fun and joy — otherwise we won't reach our goal.

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