

Heeding the Call: The Practice of Peace

I've never been a peace activist. In fact, even though living near Washington, D.C. during the 1969 October march to end the Vietnam War, I was away hiking. Yet here I was hosting a conference of 130 peace builders from 25 countries to "expand the field of possibilities for peace within organizations and communities; between nations; and within ourselves."

My involvement began two years earlier, when four random e-mails, three from strangers, arrived within days. It was one of those word-defying moments, when it was clear something important was happening...

- Harrison Owen, a friend and creator of Open Space Technology (OS), wrote of 25 Palestinians and 25 Israelis gathering in Rome;
- A story came of OS in Kashmir;
- Another OS story with Kurds; and
- A query on using OS to address violence in Colombia.

Listening to guidance from within, I connected these remarkable folks by e-mail.

Fast forward a year:

Harrison Owen offered to bring his Practice of Peace workshop to Seattle in 2003. I pictured the potential for people from different conflicts gaining insight about their situation through others. Mad as it seemed, with no background in peace activism, I invited the OS peace builders I knew, making the leap that their costs could be covered.

Then I asked for support. Bringing Arab and Jew from Israel, people from Haiti, Colombia, Bosnia&Hertzegovina, Northern Ireland, Burundi, Nigeria, U.S. urban communities, Canadian First Nations, Nepal, India, and others was no small undertaking. Colleagues jumped in to help.

So began a serious experience in manifestation. Our planning meetings opened with silence, reflecting on the higher purpose we served, giving the work meaning, and keeping spirits and commitment high. Whatever obstacle we faced, our needs were met. When donations became critical, a professional fund raiser arrived. Through many challenges, trusting each other and the universe, from marketing to music, it came together.

Participants said the conference changed them. Already beyond anger, many worked through grief. Tova Averbuch, an Israeli guest, said it well:

Gradually I realized that maybe the main point isn't for the Israeli version to be heard but rather for something within myself to move, and the movement took me by surprise. From despair and horror, grew recognition that we are only one, small place. There are better and worse situations than the Middle East. I always knew it

in my head but this time the heart understood and began translating that understanding into steps of creating strange ways to see shades of light.

Violence in Nigeria and Burundi were averted because of practices participants brought home. Plans for conferences are underway in Nigeria (for warring tribal youth), New Mexico (where conflict bubbles beneath the surface), Kashmir, and Colombia.

What made this possible? Is it repeatable?

It is repeatable and possible for anyone. Pay attention to your inner voice, listen for spirit's call; speak from passion and commitment; ask for support. That enlists others. Together we moved the practice of peace into the world, attracting remarkable people. You can do the same, whenever you are moved to act. The call for peace sounds around the world. Join us: www.practiceofpeace.com.

What calls to you?

MAD Tips:

- Listen to your inner voice and take responsibility for what you care about most deeply.
- Commit to bringing your passion to life, inviting others to join you. Passion is a remarkable attractor.
- Continually revisit and refine the purpose that guides you, individually and collectively. It keeps the spirit and energy to do the work alive.