

THE NATIONAL PEACE ACADEMY: CONTEXT AND ESSENCE

An Epochal Moment

In the USA and around the world, we are experiencing a period of change of historic magnitude. It is indeed an epochal moment, as our worldview shifts from separateness and fear to oneness and hope. Our concept of security is also shifting, from competitive dominance and win-lose violence to security through cooperative interdependence and win-win peace. It is a moment both of breakdown and breakthrough. Economic, social, political and other human systems that have been created out of a culture of violence are giving way to new systems based on a very different view of reality - a culture of peace.

On the breakdown side, we are suffering devastating and costly wars abroad, incapacitating political wars at home, collapsing housing and financial markets, unprecedented global climate change, and, in the United States, a homicide rate ten times that of other leading industrial nations and a prison population that includes 1 in every 100 citizens. Clearly what we are doing today is not working, and citizens recognize the urgent need for a serious rethink in the way this country operates, both domestically and internationally.

On the breakthrough side, we see social infrastructures, institutions, and programs bursting on the scene in civil society, business, and government around the world. According to Paul Hawken in *Blessed Unrest*, they number in the millions. A small sampling:

- Business principles and processes almost unheard of only a generation or two ago, such as triple bottom line, corporate social responsibility, social entrepreneurship, and cradle-to-cradle design.
- Hundreds of university-based peace studies programs all over the world, developing theoretical knowledge and practical tools and experiences in peacebuilding.
- Thousands of community-based programs in restorative justice, mediation, conflict resolution education, peace education, bullying and gang prevention, and so on.
- Cabinet-level ministries of peace in Solomon Islands, Nepal, and Costa Rica.
- The Global Alliance for Ministries and Departments of Peace, a civil society movement in the USA and over 40 other nations, calling for such government infrastructures and for academies of peace in all nations.

Why the National Peace Academy

As stated clearly by the EastWest Institute International Task Force on Preventive Diplomacy, "The prevention of conflicts, and the establishment of stability and peace, is a moral imperative, an economic necessity, a humanitarian must, and a political obligation for all of us." To that end, education is key, and fundamental to a sustainable ecosystem, economy, and society – local to global – is a sense of personal ethics and responsibility, supported by commitment and action in our daily lives. Structures and institutions are necessary that give voice to that commitment and make possible that action. ***The National Peace Academy is one of those institutions.***

Origins of the National Peace Academy

In the USA, the dream of a National Peace Academy dates back to our Founding Fathers. Indeed, its roots go deep, to the 12th century Great Law of Peace of the Iroquois Confederacy. There has been a consistent call, in government and civil society, for a government department or office of peace and for a peace academy. The dream was realized in March 2009 at a Global Stakeholder Design Summit, held at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, where over 170 representatives of civil society, business, and government gave birth to the National Peace Academy.

Essence of the National Peace Academy

The premise for the National Peace Academy is to educate in the sense of the etymological root in the Latin, *educere*, meaning to lead or draw forth. The National Peace Academy is an educational institution that in its design, policies, and peacelearning infrastructure “draws forth” the principles and processes of peace.

Shaped by the definition of peace contained in the Earth Charter (quoted above in the letterhead), the National Peace Academy is a principle-based, learning institution that strives to embody and reflect the principles and processes of peace as it supports, advances, and nurtures cultures of peace through peace education, peace research, peace practice, and peace policy. Its programs are directed toward development of peace systems – local to global – and of the full spectrum of the peacebuilder – inner and outer, personal and professional.

Recognizing the myriad breakthrough peacebuilding initiatives already underway, the National Peace Academy adds value to and works synergistically and collaboratively through and with existing and emerging programs and institutions – at all levels of civil society, business, and government – towards building the knowledge, skills, and capacities for right relationship and conflict resolution necessary for developing stable civil society infrastructure nationally and globally.

Goals of the National Peace Academy

With programs beginning in 2010, the National Peace Academy will:

- Continue to demonstrate a shared responsibility, shared leadership model with a focus on purpose as we strive to live the principles and processes of peace.
- Train peacebuilders to transform conflict situations before they escalate into violence.
- Develop peacebuilding as a professional career choice.
- Infuse the peace perspective into the curriculum of all disciplines, from accountants to zookeepers, and all levels of education, from early childhood through high school and beyond.
- Research positive peace in the world and how to measure it.
- Develop and analyze government and business policies and practices to support a culture and practice of peace.
- Support the development of peace systems – social, economic, and political infrastructures that reflect and support a culture of peace, of right relationship with self, others, and the world around us.
- Take its place in a network of peace academies throughout the world.
- Support safe, healthy, and sustainable communities.

Our vision encompasses peace education, nonviolent conflict resolution, dialogue, and basic skills in the art and practice of right relationship as part of the very fabric of our society.