

Creating a New Narrative of Peace

Written by Philip Hellmich

“Sanskrit has 108 words for love.

Islam has 99 names for God.

Japanese has 14 words for beauty.

We’ve got one word for Peace....

We don’t have enough words to accurately describe all the different types of peace.

I think it was Socrates who once said if you don’t have a word to describe something,

then how can you think about it?”

— Steve Killelea (Co-Founder of the Global Peace Index)

As news of the latest crisis in Syria reaches the world, we are reminded of the need to strengthen our capacity for outer and inner peace. It’s time to create a new story about peace. We need a narrative that speaks to the human complexity of the inner spirit, to international relations, to dialogues across multiple sectors of society—including healing humanity’s relationship with the Earth. We need an understanding of peace broad enough to embrace the deep inner spiritual realms, along with the grounded, and at times even hard-nosed, practical actions that can transform difficult situations locally and globally.

The [Summer of Peace](#) was created to shine a light on the vast array of peacebuilding efforts quietly emerging around the world today. Far from an academic exercise, this new peace narrative is intended to speak to the hearts, minds, and souls of people—and in so doing, inspire broad action.

Battle Between Hope and Despair

Peacebuilding requires us to confront the tension between hope and despair. The future of humanity hinges on people embracing hope and taking practical action guided by wisdom to create a more sustainable and peaceful world. We start at home, with ourselves, families, friends, neighbors, schools and communities. While seemingly simple, this grand effort can have a huge impact on the world when it reaches a critical mass.

It’s easy to hold a despairing, complacent, cynical view of the world. Beyond the crisis in Syria, the daily news is filled with stories of violence across the planet. The global economy is teetering on the brink of

collapse, the environment shows significant signs of strain from the massive onslaught of consumerism, and the world's inner cities are rife with poverty and violence. All of these problems can seem overwhelming and cause us to think: "What's the use? What can I do?"

I know this inner struggle between hope and despair all too well. I lived in small remote bush villages in Sierra Leone for four years, serving with the Peace Corps. These villages were later sacked during a bloody chaotic war fueled in part by the global economy. I went back to Sierra Leone on peacebuilding missions and saw firsthand the impact of deadly violence on loved ones. Some friends had been killed, some raped, and many beaten.

Having witnessed the aftermath of these heartbreaking atrocities, my life was forever changed, internally and externally. I dove deeper into my meditation practice, seeking peace and meaning, and I began working on concrete peacebuilding projects with Search for Common Ground, one of the world's leading conflict transformation organizations.

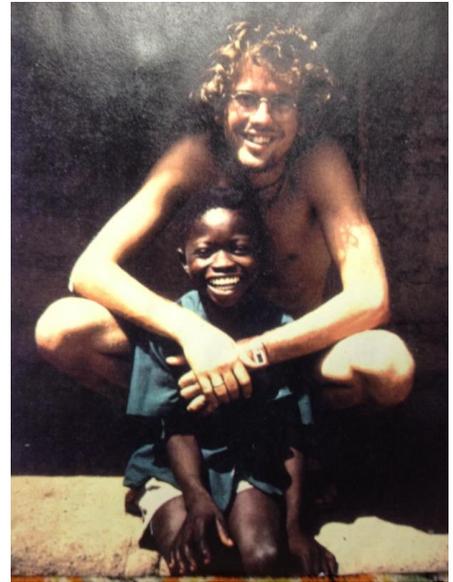
I met courageous and even joyful peacebuilders in Sierra Leone and all across Sub-Saharan Africa and later Macedonia, Nepal, India, China, and the United States. These peacebuilders were my teachers and inspiration, convincing me that it is possible to face the most difficult expressions of humanity while responding with practical and even fierce compassion in action.

Through these experiences, I began to see the parallels between inner and outer peace. There was no separation between the meditation pillow and worldly action. In fact, the most powerful peacebuilding initiatives were those implemented by people with a deep sense of inner awareness and Unity, by which their outward actions and efforts were inspired and sustained.

Mapping Peace: From the Inner to the International

The [Summer of Peace](#) began as a vision of Stephen Dinan, the founder and CEO of the Shift Network. The idea was simple: what we appreciate, appreciates. So let's appreciate peace by informing, inspiring, and involving people around the world.

I joined Stephen in the Leadership Team that also included Emily Hine¹, one of the chief architects behind Seattle's Seeds of Compassion event. Other members of the Leadership Team included David Nicol (the Gaiafield Project), Matthew Albracht (The Peace Alliance), Fred Arment (International Cities of Peace), Avon Mattison (Pathways to Peace), Stephen Fantl (PeaceDay TV), Marilyn King (former Olympian), Lora O'Connor (consultant), and others.



¹ Emily Hine has since left the Shift Network and is writing about a miraculous healing journey – www.holysit.com

The Summer of Peace became a vehicle to map peace efforts globally, from the inner sanctum to the international community. In two years, the Shift Network and partner organizations co-created a free telesummit that has featured over 180 peacebuilders from more than 15 sectors of society, including spirituality, nonviolence, forgiveness, education, youth, communication, science, arts and culture, justice, healing cultural wounds, sports, military, business and economics, and politics.



SUMMER of PEACE
Join a global movement to cultivate inner harmony and create a culture of peace!

Learn from spiritual leaders, scientists, social change pioneers and the world's greatest peacebuilders how to transform conflict at all levels. Take actions that shift our world.

FREE Media Library with **Arun Gandhi, Marianne Williamson, James O'Dea, Ambassador Chowdhury, Pete Carroll** + many more peace leaders & pioneers [Learn More](#)

The banner features a globe icon, a row of international flags, and five individual portraits of speakers. The word 'Peace' is written vertically on the left, and 'Hasiti' and 'Baris' are written vertically on the right. The word 'Mip' is written vertically in the center.

There is much to celebrate in the exponential growth of worldwide peace-related initiatives. For instance, the number of colleges and universities with peace and conflict resolution programs grew from a handful in 1984 to hundreds today. Community mediation and alternative dispute resolution programs are common in many parts of the United States and other countries. Nonviolent Communication has spread around the world. Meanwhile, yoga, meditation, and other forms of personal peace practices have become mainstream. In fact, yoga has replaced golf as the number one form of relaxation for lawyers in the United States. Dena Merriam, the founder of the Global Peace Initiative of Women, reported after a gathering in Egypt that many of the young people involved in Arab Spring were meditation practitioners.

Meanwhile, in my 14 years with Search for Common Ground, I was able to see firsthand the rapid evolution of innovative ways of dealing with deadly conflict across Sub-Saharan Africa and other parts of the world. "Search" was one of the first organizations to use radio and television to transform conflict, helping people go from adversarial relationships to cooperative problem solving. Within a year of the genocide in Rwanda, Search had Hutu and Tutsi journalists co-producing radio programs in neighboring Burundi. Lessons learned in Burundi were applied in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Nigeria, Congo, Nepal, Indonesia, and several other countries. It was exhilarating to be working with people on the forefront of creating practical means of transforming conflict on societal levels.

The peace movement today is quite different from the anti-war protests of the 60s. We've made tremendous strides in developing new methodologies to transform conflict. Search for Common Ground approaches conflict as neither positive nor negative, but rather as a natural part of life. But how we deal with conflict determines whether it becomes destructive or a source of growth and transformation. Many more organizations and individuals are focused on creating something new to transform or replace what's not working—as seen in the restorative justice movement. And, more people are looking

at how to bridge the inner and the outer manifestations of peace—to embody peace while working for peace, building upon the work of peacebuilders like Gandhi and King.

Common Themes

One of the benefits of conducting so many interviews with Summer of Peace has been to see common perspectives and themes expressed by diverse people. For instance, Michael Nagler and Stephanie Van Hook from the Metta Center for Nonviolence hosted a dialogue with Metta World Peace, then a professional basketball player with the Los Angeles Lakers. Metta World Peace spoke about his efforts to manage his anger and create inner and interpersonal peace. One of his techniques, focusing on the breath, was similar to that shared a few days later by the Christian mystic Cynthia Bourgeault.

Other common perspectives emerged from a series called *Reunion of the Condor and the Eagle* (created by Hereditary Chief Phil Lane Jr), an interview with Colonel Mark (Puck) Mykleby (a retired U.S. Marine), and with mystics Andrew Harvey and Chloe Goodchild. In separate interviews, each of these guests spoke about the various global crises being a result of viewing ourselves as separate from one another and the environment. From these interviews, we learned that cultures focused on satisfying self interests are unsustainable in an inter-dependent and interconnected world.

Several interviews addressed how selfishness impacts the environment. Chief Phil Lane Jr. talked about how our negative actions have harmed the sacred nature of Mother Earth, and yet the Earth knows how to cleanse Herself. Col. Mykleby put it like a marine: "Mother Nature gets pissed off and she kicks you to the curb and she doesn't really care." Andrew Harvey said it like a true mystic, "the Divine Mother has a dark ferocious side and she is furious with us."

Chief Phil Lane Jr. and his indigenous brothers and sisters noted that this time has been long prophesied—when indigenous wisdom will be needed to help people of all colors and traditions to come back into a sacred relationship with the Earth, one another, and all of life. Col. Mykleby's approach was to write a ground-breaking report while on assignment at the Pentagon: "[*A National Strategic Narrative*](#)" calling for sustainability as a national security priority. He said the U.S. must invest more in renewable energies and education and its foreign policies should focus on credibility instead of threat and response. Andrew Harvey writes about and teaches Sacred Activism. Chloe Goodchild teaches how to use the voice to express one's Soul Essence and has performed at peacebuilding events including a gathering bridging divides in Northern Ireland. In essence, they're all talking about peace as "the science

the  network present:

SUMMER OF PEACE

Special Reunion of the Condor and the Eagle Summit
Tuesday, July 2nd



with Chief Phil Lane Jr, Chief Arvol Looking Horse, Grandmother Mona Polacca, Lee Brown Ph. D., Dave Courchene, Faith Spotted Eagle, Paloma Flores, Chief Darrell Bob, Sun Dance Chief Rueben George, Deloria Many Grey Horses, Ta'Kaiya Blaney, Xiuhtezcatl Martinez and more!

Register FREE: summit.summerofpeace.net
Recordings available free after summit

of right human relationships,” a concept introduced in a later interview by Dot Maver from the River Phoenix Center for Peacebuilding in Gainesville, Florida.

When we step back and look at the big picture, the creativity and range of peacebuilding efforts is impressive. And it’s easy to imagine how Spirit/God/Consciousness (whatever word works for you) is manifesting a larger story by weaving together our individual unique callings and gifts. From this perspective, it’s easier to find hope and thus surrender to the “guiding intelligence.” The key is to have the courage to do the inner work that enables us to act from a place guided by wisdom.

Shattering of the Heart

Many Summer of Peace interviews feature people who responded to atrocities and crisis by going through a dark night of the soul, seeking meaning and then striving to help other people to avoid similar situations. The classic story is Azim Khamisa, who lost his only son to senseless gang violence—killed by a 14-year old boy because of “a lousy pizza.” Azim’s heart was shattered by his son’s death. Azim, who had meditated for decades, grieved for 40 days. His spiritual teacher then told him to begin working to promote peace in his son’s name. Thus, Azim created the [Tariq Khamisa Foundation](#), named after his son.

Azim reached out to Ples Felix, the grandfather of Tony, the boy who killed his son. Together, they created programs that are now reaching thousands of young people, helping them to avoid a path of violence. Azim also met with Tony in prison and told him there was a job waiting for him when he was released. Azim’s compassion motivated Tony to continue his education and to make himself worthy of Azim’s forgiveness. Azim says, “Tony will be able to help many young people with his story.”

Azim is now a world-recognized speaker and teacher on forgiveness. His life experience and that of many other people are downright gritty and uplifting at the same time. There is nothing Pollyanna about Azim and other peacebuilders with such stories. They are applying universal spiritual principles to address horrible situations. When viewed collectively, it’s clear that the emergence of a new narrative of peace is arising from the hearts, minds, and souls of people in the face of tremendous challenges.



Collaborative Effort

The [Summer of Peace](#) is guided by a [Wisdom Council](#) of twelve highly accomplished peacebuilders, including Ambassador Chowdhury from the United Nations, Susan Collin Marks from Search for Common Ground, and James O’Dea, former President of the Institute of Noetic Sciences and former Director of Amnesty International in Washington, DC.

One of the most enjoyable parts of creating the Summer of Peace telesummit has been the partnerships that have emerged. For example:

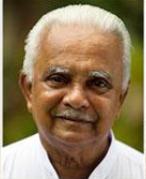
- Cassandra Vieten, President of the Institute of Noetic Sciences, created “the science of peace week,” in which she interviewed leading scientists who are proving humans are actually hard-wired for compassion, collaboration, and love.
- Molly Rowan Leach created a Restorative Justice on the Rise series, showcasing how communities are seeking reconciliation between victims and perpetrators. Restorative justice has roots in indigenous practices and is a cost-effective and viable option compared to the punitive model that fills prisons. Molly serves from a place of deep passion and soul purpose—her mother has been in prison for over 15 years.
- Chip Hauss from the Alliance for Peacebuilding was a conscientious objector during the Vietnam War. As a long-time professor and peacebuilder, Chip now works closely with military professionals. He believes that some of the most forward thinking policy on climate change and peacebuilding is coming from the military. Chip hosted a week of interviews with military professionals and organized a day-long conference at the U.S. Institute of Peace called “Peace and the Military.”
- Matthew Albracht from The Peace Alliance has created and hosted several sessions on peace and politics, sharing the practical ways of changing public policies for peacebuilding. Some of these sessions have featured staff from the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL). Founded in 1943, FCNL is the oldest peace lobby organization in the United States. FCNL “connects historic Quaker testimonies on peace, equality, simplicity, and truth with peace and social justice issues.” Some of the successes of FCNL and partner organizations include a 50% reduction in nuclear weapons in the world.
- Chief Phil Lane Junior has worked with indigenous peoples on four continents for over 45 years. He took the lead in organizing the *Reunion of the Condor and the Eagle* series and modeled it after indigenous principles of balance – masculine and feminine, elders and youth, head and heart.

Spirituality & Peace:

Harnessing the power of collective meditation and prayer for peace

Join weekly global virtual events, featuring spiritual leaders from around the world.
Starting Sunday, July 1, 2012

Including:







A.T. Ariyaratne Anette Carlstrom Grandmother Flordemayo Thomas Huebl Sister Jenna

A special series of the Summer of Peace Summit
[Click for More Info](#)

- Jon Ramer has worked closely with Karen Armstrong, author of the [Charter for Compassion](#). Jon created a special telesummit series called *Compassion in Action*, which included Mayor Greg Fischer from Louisville, Kentucky and James Doty from the Stanford University Center for the Study of Compassion and Altruism Research and Education. Jon and his team are now organizing the [Compassion Games – Survival of the Kindest](#). This month cities and organizations around the world will take part in “co-opetitions” to see which is the most compassionate.

- David Nicol did his PhD research on “subtle activism” – the use of prayer and meditation to affect change in individuals and society. David co-produced a Sunday *Spirituality and Peace* series. Each week different spiritual teachers/leaders share their perspectives on subtle activism and then lead global meditations. The *Spirituality and Peace* series is contributing to the understanding of subtle activism as an emerging science with ancient roots. The series is also strengthening a network of organizations around the world that organize synchronized meditations aimed at promoting peace.

- This network of subtle activists co-created [BeThePeace](#) – synchronized global meditations on September 21, the [International Day of Peace](#). Last year people in 248 cities participated. This year it is anticipated that meditations groups in over 500 cities will take part, making it one of the largest synchronized global meditation events in history.

- This same network of subtle activists was also mobilized for a [Call to Prayer for Syria](#) in response to the Syria crisis. In a special telesummit call, prayers were shared by James O’Dea, Zainab Al-Suwaij (American Islamic Congress), Grandmother Flordemayo (13 Indigenous Grandmothers), Sister Jenna (Brahma Kumaris), and Stephen Dinan. People from around the world participated and many shared their prayers too. The intention was to support His Holiness Pope Francis’s call for prayer and fasting, thereby leveraging our collective spiritual powers for peace.

- Meanwhile, Ambassador Chowdhury played a central role in his capacity at the United Nations to create the first United Nations High Level Forum on the Culture of Peace, held in 2012. This event and this year’s follow-up event dramatically brought attention to a wide-range of peacebuilding initiatives around the world. The Summer of Peace was able to play a small role by sharing its experience of the emerging story. [Click here for a video](#).

Only the Beginning

The Summer of Peace and its partner organizations have just begun to highlight and share the new narrative of peace. There's much more to be done to map peace from the inner spiritual level to the evolving international mechanisms needed to respond to crises such as Syria. There also is a rich opportunity to explore the common themes, values and spiritual principles that are manifesting across different sectors.

Another step will be to share the insights in concise and innovative ways that reach wider audiences. One anonymous advisor to the Pentagon said it this way: "I love what you are doing with the Summer of Peace. We must look at what is working to inspire people to take action to deal with conflicts peacefully. However, we need to reach more people. The problems are too large and we are running out of time." The Summer of Peace telesummit is an offering from the Shift Network and partner organizations—another contribution to the emerging new narrative of peace. All sessions are recorded and available free online in the media library: <http://summit.summerofpeace.net>

The crisis in Syria is a reminder of the need for a deeper understanding of peace. As Velcrow Ripper, producer of the film *Occupy Love*, said in a Summer of Peace interview, "The world is getting better and better, worse and worse, faster and faster." In this global context of rapid change, interconnectedness, and interdependence, a new narrative of peace is being born.



Philip M. Hellmich is Director of Peace at [The Shift Network](#), an international social enterprise mobilizing educational tools and cultivating alliances worldwide. He is director of [The Summer of Peace](#), a collaborative global celebration of and call to action for inner and outer Peace. Philip has dedicated most of his life to global and local peacebuilding initiatives, including 14 years with Search for Common Ground. He also served for four years as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Sierra Leone where he lived and worked in small remote bush villages. A published writer, Philip is author

of *God and Conflict: A Search for Peace in a Time of Crisis* with a Foreword by Lama Surya Das. He serves as adviser to The Global Peace Initiative of Women.

Philip's passion is exploring peace along the **Peace Continuum, from inner to international levels**, and his framing purpose coincides with the key questions: ***How is inner peace a global responsibility, and how does the world affect inner peace?*** A long-time meditation practitioner, Philip enjoys studying and teaching about the parallels between inner and outer peace.

September is Peace Month

September is Peace Month. There are numerous ways to participate in global celebrations of peace, including:

[United Nations High Level Forum on a Culture of Peace](#), September 6, 2013

[Compassion Games: Survival of the Kindest](#), September 11–21, 2013 – dozens of cities in “co-opetition” to see which is the most compassionate. New press release – [click here](#)

[11 Days of Global Unity](#), September 11–21, 2013 – events in over 700 cities around the world.

[International Day of Peace](#), September 21, 2013 – 31st anniversary, almost every country in the world hosts celebrations.

[BeThePeace](#), September 20–21, 2013 - Synchronized Global Meditations in over 500 cities.

[PeaceDayTV Global Broadcast](#), September 20–22, 2013 –broadcast of peace celebrations happening around the world.

[Peace One Day](#), September 21, 2013 -- Global events featuring Jeremy Gilley, Jude Law, Elton John and others celebrating the International Day of Peace.

[PeaceDay Live](#), September 21, 2013 - Celebrating the International Day of Peace with music, movies and meditation.

[EarthDance](#), September 20-23, 2013, Global synchronized music and dance events, over 600 locations, 80 countries

[Playing for Change Day](#), September 21, 2013, Benefit concerts around the world

[Peacelink Live](#)

September 21, 2013, Hollywood produced broadcast

[Peace Codes Blessing](#)

A Peace Meditation Video from BeThePeace/Gaiafield Project members