LETTER TO MY ACADEMIC FRIENDS

August 2007

This letter is based on a series of email messages concerning the production of a handbook on the culture of peace. Because some of the themes are of general interest to those examining the culture of peace from an academic perspective, I have decided to rewrite the ideas in the form of a letter to all my academic friends.

Importance and difficulty of the issues

The issues here are important because academic researchers, writers and teachers have the potential to make a positive contribution to the historic transformation from the culture of war that has dominated human society for 5,000 years to a new culture, a culture of peace.

On the other hand, academia, as a general rule, is an integral and essential part of the dominant culture of our society, the culture of war. To promote the culture of peace within academia, it is necessary first to free oneself from its prejudices and perspectives, and second to risk one's career by speaking and writing the truth which, in the past, has destroyed the careers of some of the best progressive academicians. Failure to free oneself from these prejudices and perspectives, runs the risk of contributing to the maintenance of the culture of war, either consciously or unconsciously.

Background: The UN Formulation of the Culture of Peace

The culture of peace was formulated at UNESCO when I was there during the 1990s, first as a contribution to the peacekeeping activities of the United Nations, and later as a project requested by the United Nations General Assembly. A brief history, along with supporting documentation, is available on the Internet at http://culture-of-peace.info/history/introduction.html

To summarize, we conceived the culture of peace explicitly as an alternative to the culture of war. The original draft of the United Nations Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, that we submitted from UNESCO to the General Assembly in 1999, showed, point by point, how the characteristics of the culture of peace and non-violence can replace those of the culture of war and violence. The full document is available on the Internet at http://www.culture-of-peace.info/annexes/resA-53-370/coverpage.html :

1. "There has never been a war without an 'enemy', and to abolish war, we must transcend and supersede enemy images with understanding, tolerance and solidarity among all peoples and cultures."

2. "sustainable human development for all ... This represents a major change in the concept of economic growth which, in the past, could be considered as benefiting from

military supremacy and structural violence and achieved at the expense of the vanquished and the weak."

3. "democratic participation and governance ... the only way to replace the authoritarian structures of power which were created by and which have, in the past, sustained the culture of war and violence."

4. "equality between women and men ... can replace the historical inequality between men and women that has always characterized the culture of war and violence."

5. "participatory communication and the free flow and sharing of information and knowledge ... is needed to replace the secrecy and manipulation of information which characterize the culture of war."

6. "International peace and security, including disarmament". [We did not think it was necessary to propose an alternative use for the soldiers and weapons of the culture of war.]

7. "The elaboration and international acceptance of universal human rights, especially the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, has been one of the most important steps towards the transition from a culture of war and violence to a culture of peace and non-violence. It calls for a transformation of values, attitudes and behaviours from whose which would benefit exclusively the clan, the tribe or the nation towards those which benefit the entire human family."

8. "Education is the principle means of promoting a culture of peace ... The very concept of power needs to be transformed - from the logic of force and fear to the force of reason and love." [Although education for the culture of war and violence is not specifically mentioned here, it is inferred that it is based on force and fear, i.e. the basic qualities of terrorism.]

Although the Declaration and Programme of Action were approved by the UN General Assembly as Resolution A/53/243 on September 13, 1999, the analysis of the culture of war and violence was deleted from the final version. This is because the European Union threatened to block its passage, claiming that "there is no culture of war and violence in the world." This is despite the fact that one year earlier the General Assembly had adopted resolution A/52/13 which stated in its opening paragraph, "Recalling the preamble to the Charter of the United Nations and the purposes and principles of the United Nations, and recalling also that the creation of the United Nations system itself, based upon universally shared values and goals, has been a major act towards transformation from a culture of war and violence to a culture of peace and non-violence"

It is not surprising that diplomats from the Great Powers would not wish the culture of war to be mentioned, since it is very basis of their power. Let us be clear that we are not talking here about "war" but about "culture of war", the deep culture which

makes possible and which supports the preparation for as well as execution of war. If we could put military men and authoritarian leaders from every culture into a room (both geographically today and over the course of history), with good language interpretation, we would find that they would all share this culture of war. The culture of war is not only directed against foreign enemies, but also against internal opposition (see my article on Internal Military Interventions in the United States available at http://www.culture-of-peace.info/intervention/title-page.html) In fact, the monopolization of force has been at the very heart of state power since its beginnings. It is not just a question of overt violence. The state has also come to maintain internal power through secrecy and the control of information in the name of "national security," as well as through other aspects of the culture of war. This is no less true for "liberal democracies" than for more authoritarian regimes.

The culture of war involves more than politicians, diplomats and bureaucrats. Virtually all institutions of society are caught up in it, including the mass media, educational systems, and, yes, academia.

Establishment academia is caught up in the culture of war

It should not surprise us that the typical analysis of "mainstream" academicians accepts, explicitly or implicitly, the culture of war in which we live. For example, Joe DeRivera, in his 2004 edited volume of Peace and Conflict, quotes the following critique of the culture of war/culture of peace analysis by a mainstream political scientist. "Suedfeld (2000) objected to some basic premises. He observed that structured power differentials were pervasive and that violence was an easy means for the powerful to get whatever they wanted. He viewed the policies of the United States and other Western powers as a basis for the peace that currently exists in the world, rather than as a reflection of a culture of war. Suedfeld's (2000) perspective appears similar to many in the 'realist' school of international relations who emphasize the reality of power and dominance and see states as fundamental for the maintenance of peace."

In fact, contemporary political science is so caught up in the culture of war that it cannot imagine any alternative - much like a fish cannot imagine an alternative to water. That is why, in my opinion, that trying to please contemporary political science is a dead-end approach."

In my opinion, most of academia, like most of the commercial mass media, are so much "embedded" in the culture of war that they will interpret the culture of peace to fit comfortably within it. A good example is the thesis that liberal democracies don't make war on other liberal democracies. This thesis is supported by careful manipulation of the data. Advocates avoid calling it war when Kissinger and the US undermined Chile and Allende, another liberal democracy. Or the Contra War against Nicaragua. It reminds me of the hypocrisy in years past when one could not find "Vietnam War" in the Library of Congress headings because it was listed under "Vietnam Conflict."

The culture of war approach of academicians is reinforced by foundations and other sources of funding. I describe an example, experienced personally, in my recent

paper on terrorism that may be found on the Web at http://www.culture-of-peace.info/terrorism/summary.html : "A number of years ago I was asked by a colleague to speak at an academic conference on terrorism she was organizing. I replied that she should know the topic of my talk before inviting me, and I told her that I would speak on Hiroshima and Nagasaki as the key terrorist acts of the 20th Century, which provided the moral umbrella for all terrorist acts since then. She thought for only a moment and then disinvited me, saying that if I gave such a talk, their financial source for the conference, the Ford Foundation, would probably never fund them again."

I am sure that there are political scientists and political sociologists who have recognized and studied the culture of war and who can address the culture of peace as an alternative to it. The problem is that it is difficult to find them because they are ignored by the establishment media, academic media as well as mass media. I tried to find them a little over a decade ago when I published my analysis of internal military intervention in the United States. The Journal of Peace Research refused to publish it unless I quoted political scientists and sociologists. But search as I would, I could not find any that had studied the use of the military for internal political control in so-called "liberal democracies." The best I could find was a vague reference by Harold Lasswell who was writing in the shadow of Hitler on the eve of World War II. Even today, there are precious few references to the study that I published, indicating that there are few people working on this issue, which should be of such crucial importance. I suggested at the time, and I believe more strongly now, that the PRIMARY function of the culture of war over the course of history has been internal control, with external war being secondary, and a mask for the former.

Even when academics understand the issues, they are hindered by unwritten taboos about the topics about which they are allowed to publish. Transgression of these taboos can be punished by banishment from the profession, as described for a number of dramatic cases in the 2005 book, *Historians in Trouble: Plagiarism, Fraud, and Politics in the Ivory Tower,* by Jon Wiener.

At best, academicians may come to address an issue until long after it has been raised and only after it has been recognized by the mass media thanks to the efforts of social movements and the civil society. For example, I recently searched the Science Citation Index for references to human rights and found that during the first 4 decades following the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, human rights was referenced in academic literature only about 10 times a month. It wasn't until the 1990s that references exploded to over 100 per month, while during the present decade, they are now over 1,000 per month.

Two methodologies that are not useful

There are many methodologies to study the transition from culture of war to culture of peace, and certainly they should be multi-disciplinary in character.

However, there are some methodologies that are not suited for a culture of peace perspective. Two such methodologies, used recently, are national indicators and "human

nature" arguments. In the way that these methodologies have been used, they serve to confirm the prejudices of the person constructing the argument and to support the dominant culture, the culture of war.

National indicators of a culture of peace. The first attempt of which I am aware was done by a Korean team in 2000 and published under the title, World Culture of Peace Index 2000. On the basis of the criteria they chose, the top countries were those of Scandinavia, while the bottom countries were those of Africa and Asia. The major powers, England, France, Germany, China, USA, Canada, Australia, Japan, Korea, came out in the middle.

A subsequent article on national indicators for a culture of peace in the Journal of Peace Research by Joseph DeRivera came out with similar rankings, although fewer countries were chosen for study.   But this article went further and claimed on the basis of its failure to find a single culture of peace factor, that the culture of peace might be a "flawed concept." As stated in the summary, "the bases for the culture that is advocated rest on a liberal conception rather than empirical data. Does empirical evidence support the coherence of these bases, or are there flaws in how the culture of peace is conceived? In an attempt to answer this question, objective indicators were selected to represent each of the presumed bases for a culture of peace. These indicators were correlated with one another, and a factor analysis examined the extent to which the data cohered and could be accounted for by a single 'peacefulness' factor. The results suggest that four different peace factors need to be distinguished. These are correlated with different indices of peace and may be used to assess the relative peacefulness of different nation-states. The data, together with a consideration of the literature on peaceful cultures, suggest that a global culture of peace may require the development of an additional base that is not mentioned in the United Nations' program of action."

In my opinion, it is a kind of sophistry to analyze culture of peace as the quality of existing states, negate it by means of factor analysis, and then declare that the culture of peace concept is "simplistic." As I have argued elsewhere, "The culture of war and violence and its internal manifestations can explain why you should not expect to find measures of the culture of peace to be inter-correlated in national surveys. A culture of peace and non-violence, understood in the sense of the original UNESCO proposal as a hypothetical alternative to the culture of war and violence, does not yet exist at the level of the nation-state."

Furthermore, we should be skeptical of any national indicators that show the nations of the north as peaceful and those of the south as less peaceful. This, too, is a kind of sophistry and hypocrisy. For example, as pointed out by Member States from the South in the 1999 UNESCO debate, notes of which are available on my website at http://www.culture-of-peace.info/annexes/commissionV/summary.html , the states that cry loudest for human rights and "free" elections are at the same time the major sellers of armaments and traditional opponents of independent media in poor countries. If one looks not for peace indicators, but rather for indicators of a culture of war, I am sure that one will find their components inter-correlated at the level of the state, including both

external and internal measures. This kind of hypocrisy was criticized by African ambassadors, Nouréini Tidjani-Serpos of Benin and Bakary Tio-Touré of Cote d'Ivoire among others, when we held meetings at UNESCO with the Member States by region in March 1998. They stated that one should not look to the South for the causes of the culture of war, and they posed three questions. From where do the weapons come? From where do the violent television programmes come? And where are the terms of trade decided that impoverish the people of the South which leads to violence?"

On the other hand, it is a worthwhile enterprise to develop indicators for a culture of peace and to measure it in THOSE INSTITUTIONS that are not based on the culture of war, for example, city governments and civil society organizations. I have no difficulty with an argument (such as Elise Boulding would say) that there are many individuals, communities and civil society organizations in the United States and other countries that espouse and/or practice explicitly or implicitly the principles of a culture of peace. In fact, you will find many of them listed in the World Civil Society Report on the Culture of Peace that I edited in 2005 (see http://decade-culture-of-peace.org). In fact, these individuals, communities and civil society organizations are not responsible for the apparatus of the culture of war, the military, military industry, CIA and National Security Agency, military-industrial-congressional-media complex, etc., etc. It is the nation-state that is responsible. And that is why you will not find a culture of peace by looking at nation-states, not even the so-called "best cases" of Scandinavia, Australia, Canada, Germany, etc.

More recently, in 2007, one sees again the hypocrisy of measuring peace by nation-state indicators, as exemplified by the new "Global Peace Index" published at http://visionofhumanity.com . How convenient that Europe, Japan, Australia and Canada come out as the most peaceful, while the countries of the South come out as less peaceful! I have never been especially fond of the term "cultural imperialism", but if there was ever an argument for it, here it is!

In fact, one can prove ANYTHING in the business of indices by carefully choosing what data to measure! Say you ranked countries by the amount of money spent on secrecy? Say you ranked countries on the number of nuclear weapons? Say you ranked countries by the number of killings shown in the production of videos, films and television programs (note that I say production, not consumption!). Say you ranked countries by their military alliances with other countries that are high on these indices? Wouldn't that also be "objective?"

And one must take into consideration that the more "advanced" the country, the more its actions are hidden, either by state secrecy (I think the US has the record on this, but the EU has plenty of "national security secrets") or by the fact that actions are taken by the private sector and hence not covered by national data, for example the production of violent videos and films? In fact, a large portion of research in private enterprise is also secret.

The use of indices for a culture of peace, at any level, should not be used to "prove" that one entity (country, city or civil society organization) is better than another. Instead, indices can be useful to indicate whether one particular entity is improving from year to year, and which areas of the index are improving or regressing. The situation is comparable to stock exchange indices; they are useful not for absolute comparisons between one stock exchange and another, but rather to show trends within a particular stock exchange and within each sector of stocks in a particular exchange.

Human nature arguments. The DeRivera article in the Journal of Peace Research also invokes a "human nature" argument, and this, too, is the kind of argument that can be used to prove anything, especially the prejudices of the person making the argument.

Speaking of the culture of peace concept, DeRivera says, "Whether the concept is political or analytic, we must ask about the relationship between the concept and what is possible given what we know about human nature. The culture of peace imagined by UNESCO (1995) requires a respect for the rights of others rather than a domination of the weak by the strong, and it suggests a global identity that is based on local identities, with a global solidarity against common threats to our earth."

Further on, DeRivera continues, "When we observe the current conditions in which most of us live, we note major challenges to establishing a culture of peace. These raise questions about the malleability of human nature and may impose constraints on how peaceful cultures must be designed. For example, many people enjoy power and status, and hierarchies of power and status are so prevalent in contemporary societies that it is difficult to imagine modern culture without them. However, this need not mean that cultures of peace are impossible. If the essence of a culture of peace is that the strong do not dominate the weak, we can aim to structure societies so that positions of power and status in hierarchies are based on caring for others rather than dominating them (see Maslow, 1977). Another challenge is raised by the fact that people seem predisposed to in-group favoritism and prejudice and that people have a commitment to different belief systems that make it difficult to achieve global solidarity. However, it may well be possible to separate ethnic and state identities so that conflicts can be isolated and contained by a global state identity (see Gottlieb, 1993). Thus, although the concept may need modification, it should not be dismissed as unrealistic."

In my personal correspondence with DeRivera, he has invoked "human nature" as the reason that we need strong nation states to retain a monopoly of violence and to "control" its citizenry that cannot be trusted to follow the rules of a culture of peace.

DeRivera's appeal to "human nature" appears in his editing of a handbook for the culture of peace for which he has scheduled a chapter entitled, "Evolutionary theory: the constraints and possibilities of human nature." Since the person to whom he entrusted this chapter - so important for the basis of his approach - is someone whom I do not know, I decided to look him up via Google. What I found at http://www.mail-archive.com/friam@redfish.com/msg01597.html reinforces my concerns about this kind of approach :

"When I was likkered up at my retirement party, I agreed to write a chapter for a Peace Handbook (!) on what the "topography of human nature" had to tell us about peace making and conflict resolution, I wrote the enclosed grandiose statement which, it seems to me, has been edited to make it even MORE grandiose. So now I am stuck writing it, just when I was beginning to get into the flow of doing nothing at all.

"I am trolling for co-authors here. Hell, I am trolling for AUTHORS. Anything to actually breathe some CONTENT into this idea. If anybody has some text floating around they would like to kick in, let me know. I have to stay pretty much within the frame of the abstract below. Merle? Carl? Roger? Steve? There might be some lovely ideas here that involved gradients of ideology and the capacity of especially steep gradients to produce structures of conflict such as feuds, terrorism, wars. etc.

"Anybody who is out there who is sucker enough to touch this tarbaby, should get in touch with me. Oh me and my big mouth. Alternatively, you could tell me about any sources you might think would be helpful.

"The UN has defined 'cultures of peace' as social structures and communication systems that foster cooperation and dispel conflict. Until recently, the relevant evolutionary writing has mostly focused on a fruitless debate between those who think that violence is inherent in human nature and those who think that people are fundamentally nonviolent. The debate is futile because we already know that both forms of behavior are possible, and arguing about their "innateness" gives no purchase about how to promote the one at the cost of the other. Contemporary research has greatly extended our understanding of the environment of human evolution and the behavior of humans and similar animals living under similar conditions. These findings stress that human nature has a complex topography with knife-edged ridges that meet at the center: between self interest and ingroup interest, between ingroup interest and outgroup interest, and between outgroup interest and self interest. They also suggest social structures and communication patterns that might help us navigate the complex topography of our natures.

In my opinion, this view of human nature is no more than a projection of our dominant culture of war onto an abstract "human nature."

We tried to deal with this question in the Seville Statement on Violence which was written primarily on the base of the animal behavior research of Paul Scott and the genetics research of Benson Ginsberg, as described in the booklet on the Seville Statement prepared for UNESCO, available at http://www.culture-of-peace.info/brochure/titlepage.html. See, in particular, the following:

"Writers who claim that humans are by nature violent and selfish tend to over-emphasize the importance of aggression in the behavior of animals. At the same

time, they tend to under-emphasize the importance of cooperation. The dominance and leadership of animals who live in social groups is characterized by their ability to cooperate as well as by their aggressiveness. As reported at Seville by behavior geneticist Benson Ginsburg and psychologist Bonnie Frank Carter, studies on wolves, monkey and apes have shown this to be the case. In fact, if overly-aggressive animals are introduced into a group, the structure of the group is likely to be disrupted.

"Of course, this does not deny that aggressive behavior plays a role in both animal and human behavior. For example, it is well known that mothers are particularly aggressive in defense of their young when they are threatened. In animal species who live in social groups, aggressive behavior is selected within the context of cooperation and mutual assistance.

"In human behavior, also, aggressive behavior occurs in a context of cooperation. This has been pointed out by anthropologist and Seville signatory Richard Leakey, in his book with Roger Lewin. In fact, the cooperation shown by all human societies in food gathering and hunting strikes anthropologists as one of our most remarkable behavioral qualities. Cooperation has been especially important to the survival of our species."

In fact, as I have written to DeRivera, "there IS no human nature. It's a construct. It's like GOD. Is God a man? A woman? An animal? A spirit? It's a construction! And just because many people share the construction doesn't make it true. Human nature arguments tell us more about the person who makes the argument than about any objective 'truth.' And they tell us more about the culture in which the speaker has grown up and absorbed. As pointed out in my article on the Seville Statement in the Journal of Peace Research (also available on my website at http://www.culture-of-peace.info/ssov/title-page.html), a similar argument was made during the 19th Century to justify slavery, that human nature makes us innately prone to exploit others. To carry this argument to its logical conclusion, the question would not be whether there should be slavery, but rather shouldn't we enslave the Africans before they enslave us.

We have all grown up in a national culture of war. We have never known a national culture of peace. It is not easy for us to realize that the culture of war is not human nature, but rather our national culture in the deep sense of the term.

Some useful approaches

In my work of recent years on behalf of the Global Movement for a Culture of Peace, I have encountered a number of useful areas where academics could make very important contributions. Let me consider them in terms of teaching, applied research and basic research. Of course, this is not an exhaustive list, but rather it illustrates some (among many) useful approaches than can be taken.

Teaching a culture of peace. There are great unmet needs in this regard. For example, the survey of youth organizations undertaken in 2006 for the UN Alliance of Civilizations initiative identifies a demand for higher education programs where young people can study a culture of peace (see the report at http://decade-culture-of-peace.org). Existing programs such as the University of Peace in Costa Rica and the European Peace University in Austria can only meet a small part of the demand. We need more initiatives like the one being undertaken in Latin America by Alicia Cabezudo and her colleagues to expand the higher education facilities in this vital area. And we need to implement the Global Youth Solidarity Fund which is proposed in the Youth Report mentioned above and which would provide resources to establish new programs, expand existing ones and make available scholarship funds.

Applied research. There are many opportunities for applied research to promote a culture of peace. For example, as mentioned above, the measurement of a culture of peace, not useful at the national level, can be a useful tool at the municipal level because cities, unlike states, are not necessarily embedded in the culture of war. In fact, I am part of an initiative in this regard, the details of which may be found at the strategy section of the decade website, http://decade-culture-of-peace.org/strategy/cgi-bin/ib5/ikonboard.cgi?s=;act=ST;f=3;t=482 Another example is the work of the School of the Culture of Peace in Barcelona to produce a description of best practices for a culture of peace based on the World Civil Society Report mentioned above. Their document will soon be available at http://www.fund-culturadepaz.org

Basic research. Before going to work at the United Nations, I conducted a number of basic research studies which were very important for the development of the culture of peace concept. Already mentioned above is the study of internal military intervention in the United States. And in conjunction with work for the Seville Statement on Violence, also mentioned above, I worked on the question of why there are so few women warriors, using the methodology of comparative anthropology (the results are available on my website). In general, I strongly advocate a scientific approach to our work for a culture of peace, addressing relevant questions with methods of inquiry that can objectively measure processes and drawn causal connections.

A particularly good example of basic research on a culture of peace are two studies that show how culture of war at a national or ethnographic level causes increased violence at the family and community level. The study of national data is by Dane Archer and Rosemary Gartner: Violence and Crime in Cross-National Perspective (Yale University Press, 1984). The ethnographic cross-cultural data are by Mel and Carol Ember in the Journal of Conflict Resolution in 1994 (volume 38, pages 620-646) under the title, "War, Socialization, and Interpersonal Violence: A Cross-Cultural Study." Both studies show that there is a one-way causal relation by which violence at the national or tribal level causes an increase in violence at the family and community level. Apparently this is transmitted through learning by example, in general, and by the actual training of warriors, in particular.

I assume that the studies mentioned above will be joined by others in the future and that we will see further progress toward a scientific basis for the transition from a culture of war to a culture of peace.

This brings us back to the question at the beginning of this letter, how can we ensure that our academic work on behalf of a culture of peace is freed from the prejudices and perspectives of a culture of war that dominate mainstream academia? I don't think there is any magic formula for this, but instead it requires constant dialogue and debate, as I have tried to show here. To be effective, we need to be careful to contest ideas and not personalities, and to be ready to learn and change our minds in the face of contradictions.