

PEACE EDUCATION THROUGH LITERATURE

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Summary

The first part is Peace, Education and Literature. Nowadays situation, all over the world and especially in Latin America and Argentina, of peace and education, deserves an exhaustive treatment in the first part of this article. Reality does not allow us to provide beautiful theoretical schemes that will not be plausible once confronted to reality. We are not talking about roses into a garden; we are talking about roses into a desert.

Into this part, we advance in the concepts of peace education and peace literature, trying to provide a panoramic point of view on the problem of generalized violence, its causes and possible solution through peace education and peace literature.

The second part is about morality in childhood, adolescence and even adulthood. And the strategies that are useful in family, systematic and non systematic education to reach peace oriented personalities.

The third part is about books as a necessary resource to peace education, characteristics of these books and literary techniques for prose and poetry, able to develop a peace oriented personality in the reader at any age.

1. Introduction

A KIND WORLD THANKS TO A KIND WORD by María Cristina Azcona

*A kind word
sometimes makes world
become a kind world.*

*A nice thought
on somebody else
makes the edge
of sorrow seem to be near,
miles away from us.*

*A beautiful smile,
An invaluable “love you”
A tear, a river, an ocean ...
and Peace will come.*

Today the world is arriving to the abysses of times.

Its emptiness is made of the lack of values and virtues. In its face, a horrible hollow is the mask of selfishness, of idolatry of money and frenetic consumism. Man is adoring himself as God. His obscene ignorance conducts him to be obsessed from hatred to vile pornography. His basic error has sent him to an apocalyptic ending from where he will not be safe without the help of those who still believe in the existence of transcendental meanings like Goodness, Beauty, Justice, Solidarity, Sense of Life and True.

The enormous effort of those who still believe in the power of words as generators of ideas about positive social changes, has given this first fruit: Peace Education through Literature, which understanding and researches are inspired, encouraged and developed by the authorities of IFLAC, the International Forum for a Literature and a Culture of Peace, the living proof of the new literary movement towards Peace among the different nationalities and races. Also another organisations all over the world are starting to cooperate one with the other for the first time, ever.

The philosophical level is a characteristic in the content of peace literature. In a prose full of meanings and valuable messages, and a poetry constructed under rules of rhythm and cadences combined with the gracious theme of worldwide peace. Moreover, it includes an invocation that moves the heart and the will of the reader, making him or her burst in tears for the elation of their moral feelings and ethical emotions. Soon will be necessary to describe and classify peace feelings and peace emotions through which humanity will probably reach the dream of unity.

This wonderfully inspired effort is the result of the best intention: To join hands for the future of Humanity, to avoid discrimination and over any difference of cultural costumes or even faith, make it real The new World.

Writers in all languages are trying to be a remarkable paradigm for the global community.

The process of peace is being initiated in these conversations, in these interactivity where nothing is so important as the building of respect. A similar love to all in the world, a similar love to literature, an equal passion in the sacrifice. And the results are born in this nest where the child is Peace. Literature is Beauty in words and Peace Literature is an ode to Beauty because incarnates it in a new reality: Completed with a full content of deep values, and not an empty bottle, without fragrance.

Poetry is what it ought to be: A speedy vehicle between the coldest Pole of Ignorance and the Warm Pole of Awareness. A fast vehicle that is not using the fuel of hate or the blood of innocence but the Art in its most sophisticated expression: Literature.

Education is the key to social changes because it is dedicated specially to the new generations. But, it has failed its noble mission and the result is catastrophic. There is a necessity of a profound review of the content and techniques that have brought humanity to this breaking point.

There is a need of concretisation on a change of route. A twist in the direction and in the vehicle of communication, adapting it to nowadays problems. Education in the

traditional mood will not be rapid enough to avoid ugly consequences of millenniums of mistakes.

We must work all united, and quickly. Educators, philosophers, writers, poets, medical doctors, lawyers, politicians, scientists and common people. Literature offers the transportation of this revolutionary concept in communications.

Because it is education of the new generations and also the contemporary ones. Its transversal and longitudinal action permits a continuous education of the public, reaching all the globe in seconds, thanks to modern technologies like the Internet.

We, researchers of these matters, literary critics, editors, publishers and specialists have a responsibility and ought not to avoid it. We are called to be the bridge towards a new teaching and, first and foremost, a new acculturation of the citizens of the world.: The acculturation for Peace.

Why through Literature? Because it looks after beauty as a value and has the height in its point of view enough to bring a panoramic view of reality to the reader, a synthesis not separated, in the better cases, from a moral message. It has a power: to modify the mind in immediate moment and not in decades, like traditional and even systematic education.

Of course, Literature, from this perspective, is not trying to be in opposition to it, but to be a complement, an advanced possibility.

Books have been used to teach at every epoch, but nowadays we are trying to construct a theory and a method, to organize a scientific discipline that will be studied by every school teacher in all levels of Education.

Man must awake and start the travel towards the centre of the soul, where the key factor of Happiness resides: Love in Earth, Authentic Justice, Universal Understanding and Global Peace.

2. Peace, Education and Literature

2.1. Peace

We can define Peace as a dynamic energy that is born in social life characterized by harmony and concord, where the resolution of conflicts are based in mutual respect on differences of race, color, religion, nationality, IQ and genre. Peace is a value because it is an accomplishment, for individuals, families and social groups that are capable of living in peace after a process of maturation.

Peace is a human right; because any person has the right to live in peace and to see his or her children grow in a peaceful environment. Peace is a duty because all of us have the responsibility to take care of it at every place and at every moment. Peace is a condition of human life and of the growth of any society or culture. .

2.1.1 Peace has a positive and a negative definition

According to the first one, peace is harmony. Peace related to humanity, is a harmonic equilibrium among human beings and social cultures, where human life is able to grow in a climate of love and solidarity.

According to the second one, peace is the opposite of violence: tranquility, calmness, and serenity.

The first definition is the better, because peace is much more than simple lack of something. We need to develop strategies to reach a global state of harmony among nations, and a generalized equilibrium among citizens and organizations.

2.1.2. Violence

In strict sense, violence is the use of physical strength to resolve a conflict or to obtain a benefit. Violence is normal in wild life, because animals cannot use any other strategy to keep themselves alive or satisfy their needs. In contrary, human beings are capable of reasoning and have willpower to manage their instincts, so they don't need to use physical strength to solve troubles, although sometimes they use it in self-defense.

Violence is one of the most general consequences of drugs consume, alcoholism and ignorance. In a social sense, violence is produced by dehumanization of behavior when people are joined in multitudes. Anger is aroused by leaders who follows political objectives and uses the multitude to aggressively impose their will against government. In postmodern society, aggressive behavior is common in sub developed countries against official indifference towards their necessities. Population feels that violence against government is a self-defense case of aggression.

In consequence, the control of corruption in the official staff is the most complex causer of social violence, in Argentina, but mostly in all Latin American countries.

2.1.3. War

There are thousands of people, most of them children, starving to death in distant countries. Each time two seconds go away, a person loses his life for this reason in the world. Even so, many people depart this life because of war.

Causes of war are always very complex and is not effortless to make logic interpretations while the volcano is ready to explode.

To many governments it seems unviable other response to a direct aggression against a nation, than military action or even a secret support to terrorism. Others are ready to use invasion as a way to extend their economic resources, a typical imperialistic attitude, from Rome to nowadays hegemonic countries. Post-modernity is full of new monsters of economy, enterprises and monopolies that have more power than even nations. They are only motivated by business and give economic help to military forces, pursuing only abominable monetary objectives. Human life is worthless for this kind of cold-minded

coalitions. But, how may we find an end to the peril of a nuclear conflagration if the world is dominated by money?

However, thinkers, educators and philosophers must revise the fact of war from a higher point of view, to consider not merely alternative attempts but also strategies of prevention, to save human lives and make Peace a real meaning. Moreover, their wisdom creates for them an obligation and a compromise with entire society towards a dreamt worldwide joyfulness.

Many times, we disbelieve if really our funds are used in the protection of the victims of international conflicts. Nevertheless, what is the perfect way to help in a real, effective mood?

One of the wisest thinkers on education, Jean Piaget, said, “human intelligence is the ability to find alternative solutions to dilemmas”. Consequently, the enforcement of human cleverness must help society to avoid the terrible circumstance that is generated by war. We must remember and re-read Aristotle’s definition of cleverness as “the light of soul” and inseparable from goodness seeking.

Education, as the principal way to develop clever individuals, can be the entrance door into a new society, free of the peril of self-destruction and mainly, far away from the specter of atomic ending. If we were capable of this kind of delicate perception of human necessity of integrity, perhaps we could discover “the end of the thread”.

The last portion of an interminable puzzle.

Certainly is our duty, as a civilized society, to do something towards the prevention of war, the sorrowful conclusion of this conflictive state of affairs.

2.1.4. Peace needs a state of righteousness

However, peace is not only the lack of a violent society. Violence is sometimes the consequence of the lack of legality in the government itself. When legal power is corrupted, the civilians will probably reject to continue their lives in peace. They will try to use street manifestations and even destruction as a media to obtain satisfaction to their just demands.

That’s why peace needs, in accord with the first definition, a state of righteousness characterized by the following items:

- A democratic state where power is in rotation of political groups and population opinions are represented in the official government.
- Assurance of individual respect towards others, based in updated and just laws and the sanctions in front of its default.
- Assurance of the transparence in official decisions and activities, far from corruption. We can define official corruption as the negligence in the governmental obligations to the community, motivated for the possibility of a secret payment.

Peace is not possible in a country where:

- Part of the police forces receive continuous payments for not controlling prostitution, commercialization of drugs, etc.
- Part of the inspectors receive payments for not controlling the adequate conditions of commercial edifices. (Conditions that prevent accidents or tragedies) leaving multitudes of citizens totally unprotected while visiting a cinema, a disco, a music recital, etc.)
- Part of the legislators receives payments for not signing laws that are an obstacle to many enterprises and their obscure businesses.
- Part of the judges receives money to save powerful personalities from jail.

2.1.5. Republic of Cro-Magnon (an Argentinean case)

In December 30th 2004 in Buenos Aires Capital, Argentina, more than three thousand adolescents, (the place was authorized only to accept a thousand people) were assisting to a music show by a rock group. The place where the recital was given was a disco called “ Republic of Cro-Magnon”. Almost the same public had assisted to other shows by the same group “The Street Walkers”. They had a huge group of fanatics who always carried Bengali lights (fire plays) to express their enthusiasm, and usually there had been several accidents produced by fire from the contact between the fire plays and the ceiling. (The ceiling was made of extremely inflammable material, which is not authorized by Argentinean laws).

So, on May 1st and also in December 24th there had been several accidents by fire in the middle of the show.

Official controls were not enough, and the group continues giving those shows to multitudes, enclosed in that dangerous edifice with Bengali lights and combustible ceiling.

The law says that those kinds of places must renew their permission on time to time. Argentineans believe that the owner of Cro-Magnon probably paid an economic retribution to the inspectors for not controlling the edifice This is not yet proved. Fact is that accidentally somebody started the inferno throwing the fire play Bengali lights to an extremely combustible ceiling in an overcrowded recital with all the exit doors closed. Light to the ceiling. Immediately it burned in flames and the plastic material started to produce a black smoke. Everybody panicked and went directly to the exit doors. But sorrowfully the doors were locked with chains. There was only a small door open and when almost everybody went out, two hundred youngsters died and seven hundred resulted severely intoxicated.

Many of the victims were babies who had been carried by their young mothers. They wanted to see the fire plays and finally they died intoxicated because of fire. And because of the lack of responsibility of the owners of the establishment and many inspectors.

The case is in trial and the responsible will pass a time in jail, but nobody is able to return the life of the dead children and adolescents to the families.

The families claim for justice. They say that the government of the city is guilty of negligence. Their rage is becoming anger, and their anger is becoming violence.

But we ask ourselves the following questions:

Were there drugs among the public?

Was the poetry into the songs of the rock group instigation to collective suicide?

Why the mothers went with babies to a middle night show?

Why the public returned to a place where there had been several identical accidents in the same year?

Why the parents of the adolescents did not forbid their sons and daughters to assist there?

All the controls failed?

Why the bombers did not close that place after several fire accidents?

Why the owner closed the exit doors? Why the owner let three times the limit of public enter the place?

The answer is: Argentina has a problem to resolve:

The mortal equation is a drink made of:

Ignorance + adolescent mothers + depressed and unoccupied parents + official corruption + unscrupulous businessmen + alcohol + drugs.

The result is: Death.

2.1.6. Drugs and Violence

There is an extraordinary lack of control in Latin American countries among this matter. Also there are proofs that official functionaries are making business with the commercialization and exportation of drugs. When drugs are offered to the adolescents in discos and music recitals, many of them become violent or brainless and have car accidents, where hundreds die each year. Nobody talks of these matters. Is necessary to keep the population stupid to manipulate them more easily? We want an educated population to reach peace, but...is it enough to work from the ONG s or it is imperative to promote a radical change of attitude from the authorities?

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Biographical Sketch

María Cristina Azcona (LCP, LPC) is an internationally published novelist and poetess. She is a bilingual writer and editor. She has received two university degrees in: Educational Psychology and Family Counselling, one in Argentina and the other in Spain. Since then, she works as a Psychotherapist in Buenos Aires.

She was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1952. She obtained her title as a Teacher in 1968, in English and Spanish.

She received her university degree (LCP) as Educational Psychologist in 1975.

In 1977 she married Ernesto Castellano and had two children. Her daughter is nowadays a lawyer and bilingual writer. Her son is a Computing Systems expert, and is still studying at the University.

In 1998 she won First Prize in poetry at one of the most important contests of her country, organized by the Argentine Centre for Development of New Authors, (C.A.D.D.A.N.). Since that moment she has had published four printed books in Argentina, and has participated in many international anthologies around the world, especially at USA, India, Jordan and Spain. Her work is also known in Algeria, Pakistan and Chile.

In 1999 she obtained her second university degree in Family Counseling (LPC) in University of Navarra, Spain.

María Cristina Azcona is permanently consulted about Education and Literature for Peace . Recently she became Director in Argentina for IFLAC, International Forum for Literature and Culture of Peace.

During the last five years she has been gaining increasing recognition and international awards, not only because of her social poetry and peace poetry, written originally in English and Spanish by the author, but also because of her fulltime dedication to the promotion and diffusion of the work by international personalities for peace, through her non profit bilingual websites.-