

# Peace



By Sue Mayfield-Geiger

"I THINK THAT PEOPLE WANT PEACE SO MUCH THAT ONE OF THESE DAYS GOVERNMENT HAD BETTER GET OUT OF THEIR WAY AND LET THEM HAVE IT."  
- DWIGHT EISENHOWER

Throughout history, the majority of the world has sought lasting peace.

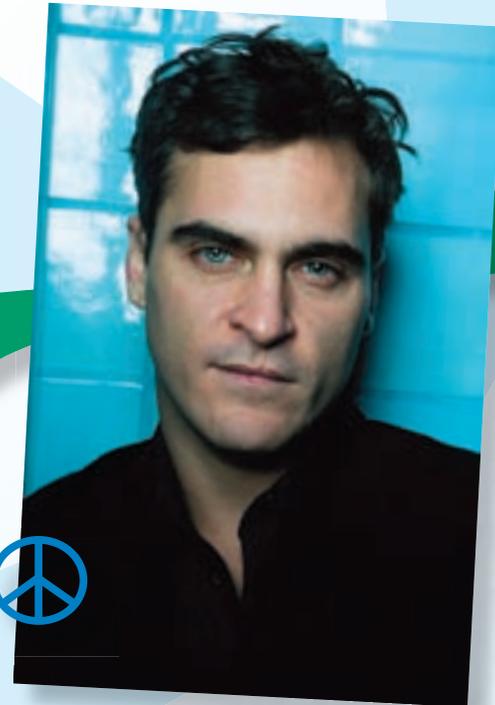
From Ancient Greece to the Middle Ages, World War I and II, to present day Iraq, many attempts have been



made to assure lasting peace among all nations. From diplomacy to international organizations (United Nations) to arms control, collective security (NATO), to international

communication and trade, efforts continue. But are they working?

According to **Dr. Christine Rack, Sociology Professor at the University of New Mexico**, we are living in a time when our use of natural resources is unsustainable. We are currently spending \$400 billion on defense - a 65% increase from the year 2000. We are spending that much again in occupation costs in Iraq, where the second largest oil reserves are located. Furthermore, the consequences of burning fossil fuels on our planetary climate are becoming painfully apparent to people the world over. How did we get into this situation and how might we think



Joaquin Phoenix

of transforming this crisis?

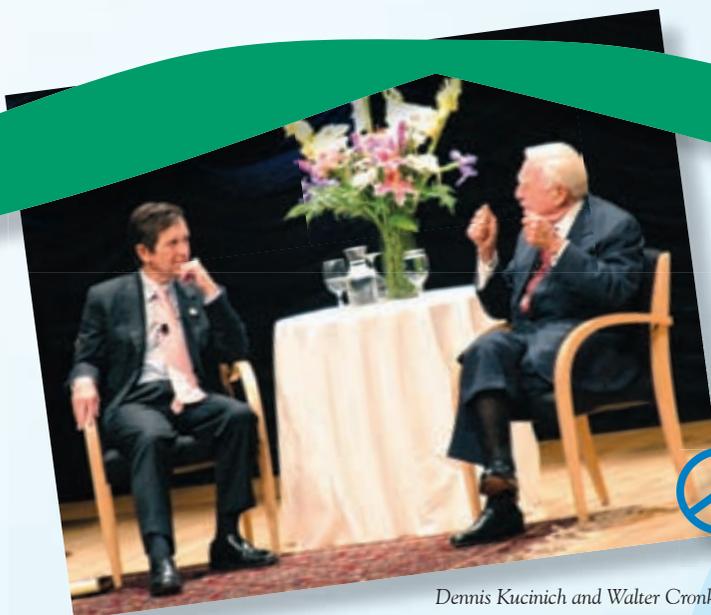
In Dr. Rack's "Peace & Conflict" course, she explores these issues with her students as well as focusing on non-violent alternatives to resolving conflict. Dr. Rack contends that most, if not all, wars and weapon transfers over the past century have been carried out in the name of peace and security. On the face of it, however, military investment doesn't seem to be working since we are neither secure nor peaceful.

"We need to build a culture of peace," says Dr. Rack, "because people don't recognize that we have such a culture of violence. We are so drenched in it that people think you are crazy when you say, 'there's a different way.' There are other ways to do this, so we need to develop more of an 'in-between' discourse. We have mediation programs, work in the prisons, a lot of little groups all over the country and world who are doing this work, but they do not get attention because we are so addicted to negative news wherein we have started to associate violence with excitement. We need to create an environment in which the heroism of peacemaking is visible and is an option for how one can be in the world."

Without doubt, the youth of today are our leaders of tomorrow. The fact that hundreds of colleges and universities are offering Peace

# for a change

Judy Collins



Dennis Kucinich and Walter Cronkite

job," says Mary. "I believe that learning and action must go hand in hand in order to effect change in our communities, our world, and in ourselves. I resonate with the contributions of educational theorist/activist Paulo Freire who believes change rests on a liberating education which empowers learners in the on-going practice of reflection and action."

The number of organizations and associations determined to stand for peace is astonishing. **Creativity for Peace** brings adolescent girls from Palestine and Israel out of the violence and conflict of their communities and into the safe and beautiful New Mexico countryside for a summer program that teaches leadership skills, understanding, trust, reconciliation, and peaceful co-existence. Through a professionally guided process of compassionate dialogue and hands-on art experience they learn the tools to transform themselves and their ideas about the so-called "enemy." During each two-week program the young women participate in a structured course that allows them to understand,

Judy Collins received the First Amendment Center/AMA "Spirit of Americana Free Speech" Award last September at the Fourth Annual Americana Music Association Honors & Awards in Nashville. AMA Exec. Dir. Jeff Green said, "Alongside her stellar recording career, Judy Collins has worked for decades advocating and directly supporting a variety of important social and political causes." The award was presented by First Amendment Center Founder John Seigenthaler and Exec. Dir. Gene Policinski. Policinski noted, "Part of the First Amendment Center's mission is to remind Americans of the value of exercising their right of free expression. This award recognizes artists like Judy Collins who have used their creativity and freedom of speech to make a difference." Previous recipients include Steve Earle (2004), Kris Kristofferson (2003) and Johnny Cash (2002).

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Studies curriculum is an indicator that those future leaders are looking for a better way to resolve conflict.

Take, for instance, the **Plowshares Project**, a collaboration between Earlham, Goshen, and Manchester colleges (Indiana) where students come together at the **Peace House** for a one-semester off campus conflict resolution experience (students from all colleges and universities are welcome). Students live communally as a family with common living rooms, dining room, kitchen and bathrooms. An intensive three-day orientation acquaints arriving students to the idea of "community," conflict resolution and transformation, the neighborhood, and the city. Students take at least two peace-related courses whose faculty and syllabi are approved by the Provosts of the Plowshares Colleges. They are involved in an extensive internship, and may also take independent studies, where they are exposed to speakers from the not-for-profit sector who informally discuss topics such as homelessness, fair trade, war and peace, journalism, and others.

**Mary Lind** of Portland, Oregon, was recently appointed Associate Director of the Peace House. With her experience in selecting and accompanying American students to Zimbabwe, her former post as an adjunct professor in the School of Conflict Resolution at Portland State University, and her passion for action in a world of haves and have-nots, she was a perfect fit for Peace House. "When I came across the Peace House Associate Director opening, I felt I was reading about my ideal

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Dr. Christine Rack

process, and release their fear, anger, and misconceptions. They learn the leadership and communication skills that enable them to bring their experiences

back to their communities and share this new perspective with others, integrating it into their lives at home.

One of the most important coalitions of the peace movement today is the **Peace Alliance Foundation**, a dedicated group of community leaders, politicians, celebrities and concerned citizens rallying and lobbying for a **U.S. Department of Peace & Nonviolence**. The primary function of a Department of Peace will be to research, articulate and facilitate nonviolent solutions to domestic and international conflict. There are currently 62 congressional co-sponsors and that number is growing. Organizational and individual endorsements are growing as well. The Department of Peace will facilitate the most cutting edge ways to wage peace. From nonviolent communication skills, to conflict resolution techniques and cultural relationship building, the Department of Peace will employ proven and effective strategies for diminishing violence in our country and in our world. As a member of the President's cabinet, the Secretary of Peace will provide the President, the State Department, the Departments of Defense, Education and Justice with greatly expanded problem solving options. The Department of Peace will also provide support for state and local government to address issues of domestic violence.

Some of the people involved in and working hard for a Department of Peace include: **Walter Cronkite**, **Congressman Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio)**, author **Marianne Williamson**, singer **Judy Collins**, **Congressman James McGovern, (D-MA)**, actor **Joaquin Phoenix and his mother, Heart Phoenix**, **Patch Adams**, and hundreds more. Executive Director of the Peace Alliance Foundation, **Dot Maver**, served as the National Campaign Manager for Dennis Kucinich for President in 2004. She is also the founder of the Vermont Peace Institute. Dot, along with other supporters attended the Department of Peace Conference held in Washington D.C. last September, saying it



Marianne Williamson



was a huge success. "All of the great movements do not happen from the top down," explained Dot, "they happen from the bottom up."

**Heart Phoenix** is on the Board of Directors of the Peace Alliance Foundation and has been a peace activist for 35 years. She became involved about six years ago after hearing Marianne Williamson speak. Saying that the Department of Peace legislation sums up everything she has always believed in, she is excited about it possibly coming to fruition. "Peace Alliance is so much about the oneness of all of us," says Heart. "It is ultimately what we all want and deserve. More and more I am seeing that although we may be at war, we are preparing for peace. Every time that we talk to a person or every time we continue our campaign toward creating a new culture, we are looking at a new possibility; a new thought that just because it's always been one way does not mean it can't be another.

"I think it will be wonderful and beautiful for this legislation to pass to spotlight our dedication as a country - to spotlight that our dedication is to create a non-violent society and therefore a non-violent world and to participate in it and to be the forerunner of it; I figure it will be amazing to have a Secretary of Peace who would share with the President and the Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense all the different ways that we could obliterate the problems. We are on the path and we are creating it. I feel like the condition of the world is more ripe than it has ever been for this to take hold."

**Senator Dennis Kucinich** believes that a Department of Peace will reflect a different type of awareness or consciousness, that the world is interdependent; the world is interconnected; and that we are not only our brother's keeper, which is essentially a statement of interdependence, but we *are* our brother and sister, which is a statement of interconnection. "There is an awareness in our society of the fact that we have to do more," he says, "we have to do better. And I think that's what probably brought so many people to the conference from around the country; to say that it's time for a new beginning, it's time to refresh



Heart Phoenix

of the cultures is that non-violence and cooperation in the spirit of peace become a way of life on this planet. It's time. It's time."

To learn more about the benefits of a domestic and international Department of Peace, the proposed U.S. Peace Academy, and major organizations that are endorsing a Department of Peace, and how you can become a team leader for the Department of Peace in your District, see [www.dopcampaign.org](http://www.dopcampaign.org).



this democracy.

"We have in our bones, in our blood, a sense of freedom; that was our birthright. And we sense it's being lost with this drawing of us into war. And in a sense, the quest we have for a Department of Peace is also an understanding that we are charged with the responsibility to save this country by transforming it from one dedicated to war to one that really works for peace in all aspects of our society, both domestic and abroad. That's what's really at stake, here."



Mary Lind

*(Ed. Note: Sincere thanks to Kathy Kidd for her assistance in providing the contact information needed for this article. See her personal story on pg. 46)*

Perhaps **Walter Cronkite** put it best: "What is quite clear - and would become clear as you go along with this campaign - is that you are trying, and I consider myself with you on this in every way, to create not only a massive but a basic change in our culture, in our entire approach to our relationships with other human beings...It's not a matter of simply getting another Department of government. You're speaking of an entire philosophical revolution."

**Judy Collins** states that she loves the idea of a Department of Peace and that it is an idea whose time has come. "The peace activists from the early days of the peace movement could unite around such an idea and help bring it into form in our government at a time when the government was struggling to make a needed change in how we dealt with conflict," declared Ms. Collins. "I appreciate how many people are speaking out for peace and nonviolence in the world at this critical time." One of Judy's quotes she lives by is: Change yourself, and you change the world.

According to Dot Maver, unity is not uniformity. "Unity really calls for each one of us to stand up and be counted," she says. "We must share this responsibility to help create this shift and to help anchor what I perceive could be the most historic legislation certainly in my lifetime to really have an expansion of a shift in consciousness so that what happens in the U.S. and what happens in cooperation among world leaders and among the people of the world and throughout all



Dot Maver



### Why we need a Department of Peace:

- \* To reduce domestic and international violence
- \* To gather and coordinate information and recommendations from America's peace community
- \* To teach violence prevention and mediation to America's school children
- \* To effectively treat and dismantle gang psychology
- \* To rehabilitate the prison population
- \* To build peace-making efforts among conflicting cultures both here and abroad
- \* To support our military with complementary approaches to ending violence