

Hello, Everyone!

I am so happy to be here with all of you, and especially with Judge Walter Rice and Dr. Irwin Abrams, both of whom I love dearly! I am delighted that they, and also Sister Dorothy Stang, are associated with the Dayton International Peace Museum. Dr. Abrams is an Honorary Trustee and friend of the Museum, Judge Rice is a helpful, thoughtful member of our Board of Directors, and we have a beautiful exhibit about Sister Dorothy in the Museum's Dayton Room.

These three have all been involved in peacemaking but in different ways. I hope you all read the three wonderful articles by Mary McCarty about Sister Dorothy. Her weapons were her courage and her Bible, which she was quoting while being martyred.

Judge Rice is making peace through justice by his exceptionally wise, balanced, and humane court decisions. He is highly respected for his careful interpretation of the U.S. Constitution and his wide community work. When he once told me he might never retire, I rejoiced.

Dr. Abrams is a scholar of history who publicizes those super-outstanding peace-builders who are Nobel Peace Laureates. His stories show how ordinary people can develop into great people when they care deeply about others. We are so fortunate to have the world authority on the Nobel Peace Prize right in our area!

These three wonderful inductees join three earlier Dayton Walk of Famers notable for their peacemaking. You all know of actor Martin Sheen, whose passion for peace increased when he played the American journalist in the movie, "Gandhi." Another is Jeanne Comer, a mother of 8 who founded the Dayton chapter of the Friendship Force, whose motto is "A world of friends is a world of peace." The Friendship Force of Dayton is a model for the other chapters in about 100 countries. She herself is the only recipient of the Rosalynn Carter Award. The third is Phil Donahue, who with Russian journalist Vladimir Posner, held several Space-Bridges during the Cold War. Average Americans and Russians could see and talk with each other via TV—a real innovation at that time.

It seems that all inductees into the Walk of Fame have had a huge dose of focus, passion, and effort as their modus operandi. But I propose that they also had a deep and generous love of humanity and a desire to improve the lives of others.

I was asked to speak on "Peace" today, and I immediately thought of the slogan from the Civil Rights years: "Keep your eyes on the prize." And the prize is Peace. This poor old world needs peace desperately. Our towering peace hero, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said, "It is not enough to say we must not wage war; it is necessary to love peace. We must fix our vision not only on the negative expulsion of war but on the positive affirmation of peace."

And to quote Dr. Abrams, “Peace scholars distinguish between two kinds of peacemaking, negative and positive. Negative peacemaking, though very valuable, includes efforts to prevent a war and to bring one to an end. To me,” he says, “the most significant peacemaking, what I call ‘fundamental peacemaking,’ is the generation of that spirit which gives life to the structures of positive peace.” (unquote) In other words, creating a culture of peace.

I don’t need to tell you that we live in a culture of violence—daily killings, rapes, and torture in the news; violence in TV shows, movies, videogames, and toys. Is this the milieu we want for our children? Of course not. We want them to learn positive peace, brotherhood, and alternatives to violence.

We must make changes in another area, too. Scientists are warning us that unless we do, we or our grandchildren will become victims of global warming or perhaps a nuclear war. As for nuclear weapons, the secret is out of the box now, and it can spread anywhere.

So, what shall we do about the sorry state of our world? It is not enough to live in fear and just bemoan the horrible things that happen daily. Shall we just continue to live our business-as-usual lives? Or shall we each do our part—large or small—to move our culture of violence toward a culture of peace? It’s truly up to us now. I hope we choose to be proactive for peace, to keep hope in our sights, to learn the ways of nonviolence and reconciliation, and---to be in touch with the peace that is already in each one of us.

I keep thinking of the mustard seed that Jesus talked about. He said that the mustard seed, the tiniest of seeds, can grow into the largest tree. That gives me hope. Also, I know there are thousands of little groups all over the world who are working for peace, justice, and reconciliation. There are big stories of successful nonviolence, too, such as the King of Denmark wearing the star of David and having his citizens do the same thing when the Nazis came in, the bloodless overturning of the corrupt Philippine government, and in our own country the amazing stories of Wm. Penn, who was in this country for only 4 years and totally changed the relationship between colonists and Indians, and Benjamin Rush, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, who declared that we should have a Dept. of Peace. These true stories and the hundreds of others, large and small, should become common knowledge in our culture.

Right now, there are people praying for peace, working for racial and economic justice, standing nonviolently on street corners with homemade signs expressing their opinions, planting trees, educating themselves by listening to such programs as C-Span or Bill Moyers, conserving water, buying a Prius, volunteering for children and the poor in our cities, recycling, writing their Congresspersons, and supporting for the Dayton Peace Museum. There are a million ways to work for peace. We can choose what fits for us. Just this morning I received an email that said that 140 American church leaders from all major Christian denominations, including Catholic, met yesterday with President Ahmadinejad for an event titled “East-West Dialogue and Prayerful Reflection Among the Children of Abraham.” One clergyman said, “This spoke clearly to our understanding that it is God’s desire for his creation to live together peacefully.”

What do you think of these words: bridge-building, loving our opponents, educating ourselves on other cultures and religions, reaching out, developing empathy, planting seeds of peace, smiling at others, friendliness, dialogue, understanding, finding common ground, walking in the shoes of the other, hospitality, and kindness. Have you heard what the Dalai Lama's religion is? He says his religion is kindness. No matter how busy we are, we can do our best to be truly kind to all we touch. If we did only that, what a wonderful world this would be!

I believe that the critical mass is building—that there is a movement toward peace. In 1993 there were 3 US medical schools that had a course on spirituality and healing. Only 14 years later there are hundreds. There are also hundreds of University Peace Studies Departments; Peace Museums are increasing; there are more and more Cities of Peace and Mayors for Peace. The nearly 2000 mayors for peace from 122 countries are an active group who are working to ban nuclear weapons by the year 2020. Our Mayor Rhine McLin has joined Mayors for Peace. Also, there is now a bill in the hopper for a Department of Peace, with two emphases, one on reducing crime locally and the other to learn and use methods of true diplomacy internationally. It's an excellent bill.

This all sounds great, but there are problems. Even though peace is central to all religions and has been longed for over the centuries, particularly in those countries where they have experienced war, some people seem to have doubts about it. Maybe they think that we are defenseless unless we use force. Gandhi showed that Soulforce was more powerful than physical force. The Peace Museum believes in dialogue with those of different opinions. One of our present exhibits was created by an arm of the Air Force, showing the humanitarian work it does. There can be common ground if we work for it.

Another problem is that the way of nonviolence, peace, and reconciliation is thought to take longer than war. Sometimes the wars actually last longer, with the result being much hatred, death, and destruction. Think of our last few wars and their results. Violence begets violence, as many wise people have warned. My husband, Ralph, says it's like a waterbed—if you push down in one spot, it comes up in another.

Another difficulty is that violence and war are very seductive. Our adrenaline rises and we get a rush. We feel patriotic. We flex our muscles. It is true that there is a justified sense of pride for those who go into combat, because they truly are offering up their lives; but we yearn to save them from death or injury and let them live out their lives. War correspondent Chris Hedges, whom we heard speak in Sarajevo 11 years ago, wrote a book called, "War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning," and many people are caught up in that rush. How sad that war gives us meaning!

So, how can we make peace exciting? I believe our world needs a change in consciousness. Wise people have said that our technology is ahead of our morality. Both peace and war begin in the heart. So let us observe our hearts and our thought habits. When Ralph and I went to Iraq 2 months after the war started, we talked with people of

all classes, and one of the things we heard was, “We need to be respected.” Personal humility and national humility could bring much progress in peacemaking.

There are many ways to raise our consciousness. One easy one is to live in a spirit of gratitude. It brings fullness to life. Another is to really listen to the other person—everyone wants to be heard. Listening is nearly a lost art, especially listening with an open heart. Gratitude and listening are good places to start.

One of our Board members is convinced that the world won't be at peace till we have reconciliation among the religions. The weird thing is—all the main world religions agree on the basics—the Golden Rule, peace, and forgiveness. We can learn from each other and perhaps even adopt some of each others' practices. Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, the most solemn of Jewish holy days, started last Friday at sundown, coincidentally on the UN International Day of Peace. At this time there is repentance for sins against both God and fellow humans. Jews often go to others and either ask for forgiveness or give it. What a good thing for us all to do. And wouldn't it be great if we prayed or remembered God 5 times a day and gave approximately 2 and 1/2 % of our income to the poor, as Muslims do? The Marshall Plan after WWII had wonderful results. If we would lead the developed countries in forgiving the impossible debt of the developing countries and would give 2 and 1/2 % of our nation's income to those same countries, with no controlling strings attached, that would be huge toward making peace in the world and making the U.S. a beloved country.

Which brings me to my favorite concept of Dr. King—the Beloved Community. The last book he wrote was called “Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?” and the last chapter in that book is called “The World House.” In it he wrote, “We have inherited a large house, a great ‘world house’ in which we have to live together—black and white, Easterner and Westerner, Gentile and Jew, Catholic and Protestant, Moslem and Hindu—a family unduly separated in ideas, culture and interest, who, because we can never again live apart, must learn somehow to live with each other in peace.” (unquote)

This may sound strange, but I felt a part of a mini Beloved Community when Ralph and I used the Greyhound tickets that Marianna Thomas (yes, Mrs. Lowell Thomas) gave us to travel to NYC to see some friends. It's a long trip by bus (18 hours), but on the way back to Dayton, there was great diversity on that bus, and I felt a spirit of love and even joy from the riders. There were many languages I'd never heard before, people helped each other with their luggage, gave up their seats so couples and friends could sit together, and one man in his 80s sang a welcoming song to the rest of us before he sat down. We can find peace in the most unexpected places! Let's all do our part by having hope, for believing it can happen, despite the setbacks, and by keeping our eyes on that prize—Peace!

