

Proposal for a Santa Fe Culture of Peace Commission and a Santa Fe Truth and Reconciliation Process

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Introduction

A **Santa Fe Culture of Peace Commission** would be part of an international movement and can begin its work with a Truth and Reconciliation project, but also join a worldwide movement addressing how we relate to one another going forward. It creates a community institution that lives on past a particular project.

The following are proposals intended to further the dialogue that has arisen as we look to revise the priorities and awareness of our community in the wake of the deaths of George Floyd, Breanna Taylor and others, removal or defacing of statues or monuments and in support of the Black Lives Matter movement. The actual structure of any Commission, be it for a limited time as a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, or longer as a Culture of Peace Commission, would come through dialogue of the diverse Commission members, or a founding community group, in the months ahead.

What is a Culture of Peace?

As defined by the United Nations, the Culture of Peace is a set of values, attitudes, modes of behavior and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups and nations (UN Resolutions A/RES/52/13). This is about shifting mindset and behavior in all aspects of our societies as we move from force to reason, from conflict and violence to dialogue and peacebuilding and embrace humanity's interconnectedness and create new possibilities. Education, and specifically peace education, is an essential ingredient.

David Wick, one of the co-founders with Santa Fe Attorney Eric Sirotkin of the Ashland Oregon Culture of Peace Commission, said:

Cities are the real societal structural level where the Culture of Peace rubber meets the road. The individual person is always the bottom line in peace and peacebuilding daily choices, but it is the city that has the reach, authority, responsibility and influence to set the positive tone and direction for so many people. This can be done by beginning to use the Culture of Peace as a compass for guidance and a lens to see and understand differently.

The growing Culture of Peace is actually alive and well in many cities, but is often invisible and not identified or nourished directly. The results and benefits of embracing and living in a Culture of Peace are enormous and pervasive in health, happiness, prosperity, sustainability and a legacy for future generations!

The United Nations in a series of resolutions and programs for the 21st Century, called for a worldwide transition from the culture of war to a culture of peace. In 1999 the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (A/RES/53/243). Thousands of groups and cities have participated in it since 2000.

UNESCO created the Culture of Peace Programme, whose objectives revolve around these main themes: education for peace; human rights and democracy; the fight against isolation and poverty; the defense of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue; and conflict prevention and the consolidation of peace.

A Santa Fe Peace Commission can help address gun violence, homelessness and build bridges between our diverse cultures. The Constitution of UNESCO begins as follows: “Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed” and invited States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, the scientific, educational and cultural communities of the world, and all individuals to help construct a new vision of peace by developing a **Culture of Peace** based on the universal values of respect for life, liberty, justice, solidarity, tolerance, human rights and equality ...”

Peace is too often viewed narrowly as an absence of war, but a *culture of peace* recognizes that:

- Peace is reverence for life.
- Peace is the most precious possession of humanity.
- Peace is more than the end of armed conflict.
- Peace is a mode of behavior.
- Peace is a deep-rooted commitment to the principles of liberty, justice, equality and solidarity among all human beings.
- Peace is also a harmonious partnership of humankind with the environment.

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The strategies behind the culture of peace movement at the UN centered upon involving civil society as much as possible. The specific initiatives included the collection of some 75 million signatures worldwide in support of a culture of peace, with the Manifesto 2000 Project. Another initiative was the Culture of Peace News Network (CPNN), a worldwide network of locally-based websites reporting news in support of a culture of peace. CPNN is where readers exchange information about events, experiences, books, music, and web news that promote a culture of peace.

The Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (A/RES/53/243) gives clear and comprehensive guidelines on a new mode of governance, which calls on the entire United Nations system -- all governments and all peoples -- to work together to build a freer, fairer and more peaceful global neighborhood through “a positive, dynamic participatory process where dialogue is encouraged and conflicts are solved in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation.” Such principles can be the guiding principle for a Santa Fe Culture of Peace Commission.

Other cities around the country including New Haven Connecticut , Berkeley, California, Cambridge, Massachusetts and Ashland, Oregon have established peace commissions.

Proposed Operating Principles of a Santa Fe Culture of Peace Commission

As a teaching/learning community we engage all sectors of Santa Fe, New Mexico in activities that promote harmonious relationships with each other and the natural world. Activities include communication trainings, forums, talking circles, consultations, collaboration with others, articles and publications and holding a truth and reconciliation project. These activities encourage participants to explore the meaning of peace within themselves, build cross cultural dialogue, heal past divisions and to reach out to others with compassion.

Our work with those we serve and the community we love is rooted in the following principles:

- In all that we do we commit ourselves to justice, openness, transparency, integrity, and accountability.
- We define culture in a broad anthropological sense as a set of values, attitudes, traditions, modes of behavior and ways of life beyond the narrow popular sense of music, dance and other arts.
- We believe that all beings deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

We embrace the concept of a culture of peace presented by the United Nations Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (A/RES/53/243) which identifies eight action areas:

- Human Rights
- Economic and Social Development
- Gender Equality
- Peace Through Education
- Free Flow of Information and Knowledge
- Democratic Participation

- Understanding, Tolerance, and Solidarity
- Local and International Peace and Security

As discussed below, these goals can be achieved through the official guidance of this enterprise by the City of Santa Fe through a peace commission who can work hand in hand to achieve:

- A commitment by the Santa Fe School District to promote peace education throughout the schools, including the use of nonviolent communication, active listening, diversity training and conflict resolution at all grade levels.
- On-going, inclusive explorations of what it means to be a culture of peace, identification of ways to more completely realize that culture, and frequent publicizing of Peacebuilding work.
- The awareness by all segments of Santa Fe of how they are already building a culture of peace, and their commitment to develop further that dimension of their activities and look at them through the lens of a culture of peace.
- Widespread use of Peacebuilding tools that emphasize mutual respect, active listening and restoration of a community based upon diverse relationships.
- Hold hearings and support a Truth and Reconciliation Process.

Why a Culture of Peace Commission?

Santa Fe can incorporate its culture of peace and well-being into its institutions and government in a manner that models for the world a new definition of success and community. A Commission formalizes our efforts and allows creative conflict resolution and relationship building to be at the foundation of all our actions while our attitude toward government shifts in the process. As Oregon State Senator Jeff Golden, a former member of the Ashland Oregon Culture of Peace Commission pointed out the importance of a culture of peace commission to a community, saying:

What might not be obvious about this bold proposal is how effectively practical it could be. Imagine a city where a difficult conflict brings to the table not just the usual suspects--the public safety officials, the planning department, the city manager--but also citizens well-trained in the disciplines of listening and peaceful conflict resolution. Imagine the creativity, effectiveness and durability of the solutions they might generate. Imagine the creative citizens, normally on the sidelines because of their distaste for most civic challenges, who would step up to engage in community life. We could be the lab that develops an approach that the whole country is waiting for.

Structure of a Commission

The commission could be made up of volunteer Commissioners from various sectors of Society and with as balanced as possible of diversity of representation by race, gender, national origin and other underrepresented groups. The Sectors to be represented include:

Law/Governance/Security

Habitat/Community Development

Education

Business

Culture

Media/Communications /Media

Science/Technology

Environment

Religion/Spirituality

Wellness/Health

Youth

Liaison from Mayor Office

Drawing upon the South African Model it could be structured as follows:

- The Commission shall consist of not fewer than 11 and not more than 17 commissioners, as may be determined by the Mayor in consult with City Council.
- The commissioners shall be fit and proper persons who are impartial and who do not have a high political profile, provided that not more than two persons who are not Santa Fe residents may be appointed as commissioners.
- The President shall make the appointment of the commissioners known by proclamation in the Santa Fe New Mexican.
- The Mayor shall designate one of the commissioners as the Chairperson and another as the Vice-Chairman of the Commission.
- A commissioner appointed in terms of the Act shall hold office for the duration of the Commission (if just a TRC Commission) or if a Culture of Peace Commission for a period of three years.
- A commissioner may at any time resign as commissioner by tendering his or her resignation in writing to the Mayor.
- The Mayor may remove a commissioner from office on the grounds of misconduct, incapacity or incompetence, as determined by the joint committee of one person appointed by the Commission, one by the Mayor and one by the aggrieved Commissioner.
- If any commissioner tenders his or her resignation or is removed from office, or dies, the Mayor, in consultation with the City Council, may fill the vacancy by appointing a person for the remainder of the term of office or may allow the seat vacated to remain vacant.

Relationship to the City

The ideal setup of a Commission is that it be a Government entity. It's impact in reducing tension, changing policing, and building more harmonious relationships would pay for itself. In that it is run independent of the mayor's office, and its reports and efforts are documented it is not likely to be seen as a political tool. The Commissions can only be removed for misconduct. A staff person would be essential to coordinate meetings, publish materials and administer hearings. However, initially it could be limited to keep expenditures down. The importance of it being City sanctioned helps redefine a new focus for City government and gives Commissioners status to speak in the community and schools, to share the Santa Fe experience around the world and perform their tasks.

Another setup would be to develop it as a 501©(3) nonprofit with an executive director and funded by the Community. It could have a liaison from the Mayor and City Council participate in meetings. This avoids some bureaucracy but it also can lead to it becoming marginalized as just another non-profit in the community. It would need a full buy in from the City and its agencies to be effective.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Project

In light of our times and the divisiveness that flows from history and lingering systemic racism, there is a need for a Truth and Reconciliation process that will help heal the current and centuries old trauma of a City and enhance relationships going forward. The Commission process is aimed at building an historic bridge between the past divides within the City that have at times been characterized by injustice, strife or conflict, and a future grounded on the recognition of human rights, democracy and peaceful co-existence and development opportunities for all Santa Fe residents, irrespective of color, race, class, national origin, belief or sex.

The pursuit of unity requires reconciliation and the reconstruction of society through the creation of a culture of peace within our City. The interim Constitution in South Africa read "These can now be addressed on the basis that there is a need for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not retaliation, a need for ubuntu but not for victimization." Ubuntu is about our relationships with others. What I do to them I do to myself and a deep understanding of our interconnectedness, rather than just victim and perpetrators. Dullah Omar, the first Minister of Justice in a free South Africa, pointed out that the victims of violence and injustice cannot be ignored and that "We recognized that we could not forgive perpetrators unless we attempt also to restore the honor and dignity of the victims and give effect to reparation." Truth, he added, "cannot be suppressed or simply forgotten...but it needs to be recorded and made known." An airing of our truths, stories and history gives us "a commitment to break from the past, to heal the wounds of the past, to forgive but not to forget and to build a future based on respect for human rights." What better goal for any City.

Proposed Goals of a Santa Fe TRC (adapted from the South African TRC goals)

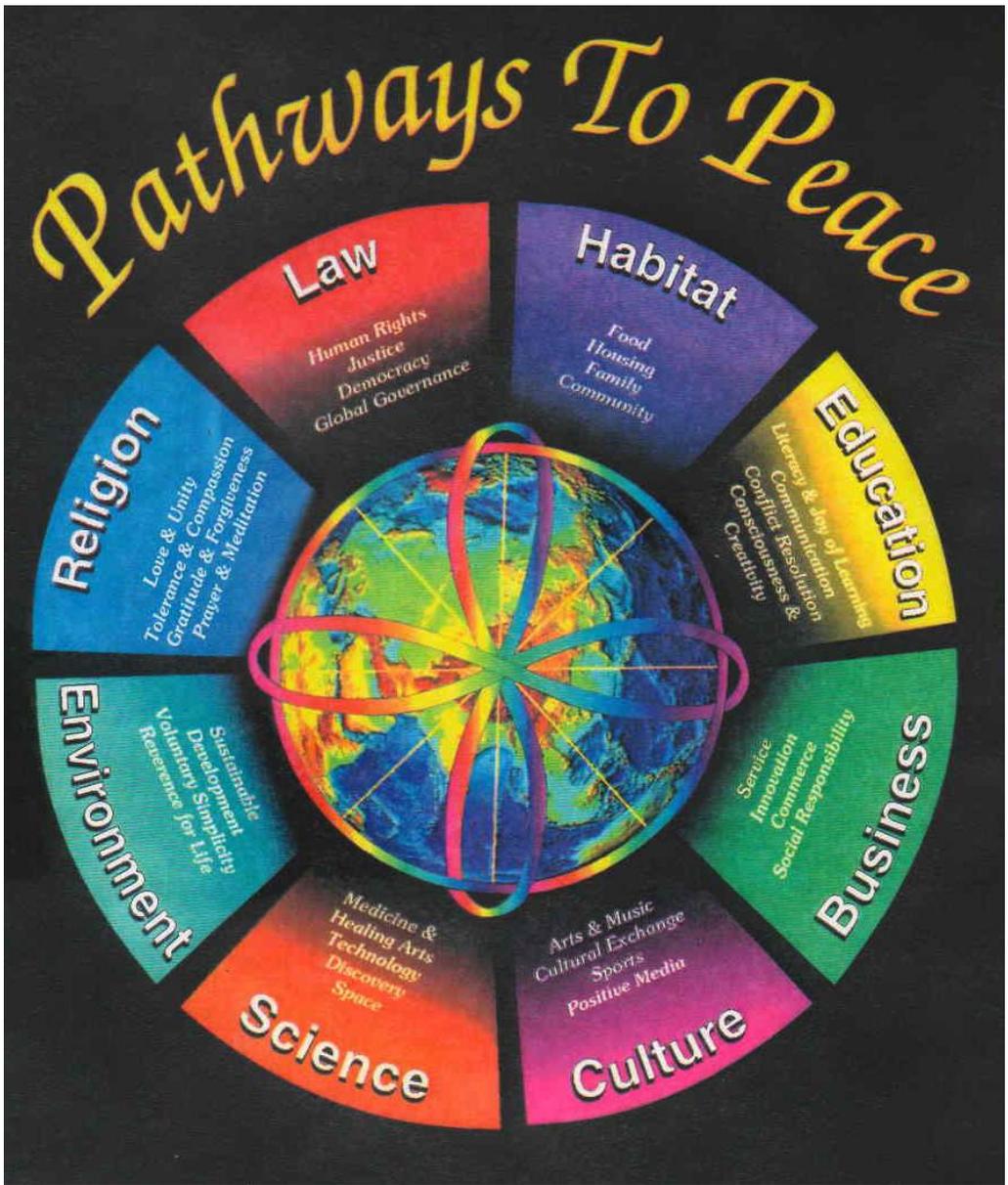
- Establishing as complete a picture as possible of the causes, nature and extent of violations of human rights which were committed including the antecedents, circumstances, factors and context of such violations, as well as the perspectives of the victims or their families

and the motives and perspectives of the persons responsible for committing such violations, by conducting investigations and holding hearings;

- Restoring the human and civil dignity of such victims by granting them an opportunity to relate their own accounts of the violations of which they or their families were victims, and recommending reparation measures in respect of them;
- Compiling a report providing as comprehensive an account as possible of the activities and findings of the Commission and containing recommendations of measures to prevent the future violations of human rights.
- Submitting interim reports or recommendations on any matter.
- Making recommendations to the Mayor and City Council with regard to:
 1. the policy which should be followed or measures which should be taken with regard to the granting of reparation to victims or their families and the taking of other measures aimed at rehabilitating and restoring the human and civil dignity of victims;
 2. the creation of institutions conducive to a stable and fair society and the institutional, administrative and legislative measures which should be taken or introduced in order to prevent the commission of human rights violations.

The TRC project should have a period of operation such as 18 months in order to be effective in this key period. During Covid-19 as much of the work as possible will be through video conferencing. Hopefully, it will be the first project of a lasting effort to expand and maintain a *culture of peace* in Santa Fe.

May we truly build a durable culture of peace.



Model of including multiple sectors in a Peace Commission prepared by Pathways to Peace.