

# **Gender and Disarmament: Imperatives for Peace Education and Essentials of a Culture of Peace**

**Based on acceptance remarks by Betty Reardon  
at the awarding of the MacBride Peace Prize  
November 14, 2009**

## **Acceptance on Behalf of the Global Community of Peace Educators**

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I am honored and humbled to accept the Sean MacBride Peace Prize from the International Peace Bureau with thanks and considerable gratitude for what I take to be the meaning of the award.

My thanks to Cora Weiss - my friend and fellow peace activists for many decades and colleague in the Global Campaign for Peace Education for this past decade - for her gracious and affirming words of presentation; to Tomas Magnusson and Colin Archer for the appreciative tone of the announcement of the 2009 MacBride Prize that indicated a significant understanding of the struggle that has marked the history of the development of contemporary peace education. And, of course, my profound thanks to the Board of the International Peace Bureau for having selected me to be the recipient of this significant and meaningful award. It is significant because its presenter is the most prestigious and long lived citizen's peace organization with a distinguished history of commitment to the responsibility and belief in the capacity of civil society to take action for international peace. It is especially meaningful at this moment because of the statement it makes about the field of peace education, in essence, recognizing the truth of slogan of the Global Campaign for Peace Education, "No peace without peace education." The launching of the campaign at the Hague Appeal for Peace Civil Society Conference (1999) was the first public recognition on the part of the international community of peace activists that peace education was a constituent component of the peace movement, essential and necessary to the achievement of all the strategies enumerated in "The Hague Agenda for Peace and Justice in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century."\* I take the awarding of this prize to a peace educator to be an affirmation of that recognition.

I am profoundly grateful for that affirmation and deeply humbled to be the educator to whom it is presented. Those who know my work, know that most of the educational development and dissemination in which I have participated has been undertaken cooperatively with - probably hundreds of - peace educators around the world. I accept the prize on behalf of all these multiple colleagues and of the thousand more who work in international anonymity, but who are well known and appreciated by the learners in whom the kindle hope, develop skills and impart knowledge of the possibilities for peacemaking. These educators - even while some work in lonely, courageous isolation - are sustained in their striving to educate for peace by the shared vision of peace held by the international community of peace educators. The vision that has sustained so many of us through decades of struggle in interactive peace learning has been enlivened by the essential quality of peace learning and peace politics, participatory partnership.

In the spirit of that partnership, I want all so to extend my appreciation to some of the networks through which I have experienced participatory partnership: the Peace Education Commission of the International Peace Research Association,\* the Peace and Justice Studies Association\*, the Feminist Scholar Activist Network on Demilitarization (FeDem), the students and Peace Education Center team with whom I worked during my years at Teachers College and, of course, the International Institute on Peace Education\* (IIPE) and the Global Campaign for Peace Education\* (GCPE). I believe that they, as I do, interpret this prize as affirmation of what has been accomplished and an encouragement to continue striving toward the goal that all world citizens be educated in the ways of peacemaking.

### **Pragmatic Utopianism Inspires a Vision of a Culture of Peace Informed by Gender Justice and Disarmament**

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When I first learned of this award, I thought, of course, of Sean MacBride whom I knew as a fellow activist for disarmament, and Bertha von Sutner, the visionary woman whose activism was foundational to the 20<sup>th</sup> century movement for disarmament for peace, an inspirational figure in the history of women in civil society. I reflected on the essential role each played in the visionary initiatives and efforts of the International Peace Bureau (IPB) to illuminate and move toward a warless world, what UNESCO has defined as a culture of peace. In all three, MacBride, von Sutner and IPB, I find the “Pragmatic Utopianism” that is integral to the philosophy and practice of the global peace education movement. It informs the pedagogy currently favored by the ever expanding network of peace educators, a representative few of whom gather annually in some part of the world in the International Institute on Peace Education to share their experience of struggle, to learn from and energize each other for continuation of the struggle. This pedagogy is to be consolidated as the basis for the continued development of peace education to meet ever changing challenges by the newly established National Peace Academy.\*

Pragmatic utopianism is a way of thinking about the problematic of global violence which envisions nonviolent alternatives to the present war system, explores multiple possible policy changes and various practical strategies to achieve them. Pragmatic utopianism brings serious consideration to the question of how to make the possible probable. It takes fully into account the many obstacles that stand in the way of the change required to realize the possible and challenges with reasoned and evidence-based analysis the greatest obstacle of all, the prevailing political realism that refuses to see the positive possibilities for peace that could free us from the thrall of the armed conflict that continues to pour out our blood and treasure to feed the power lust that garbs itself as world leadership. While in years past, few but the most visionary and responsible have spoken this truth, peace education seeks to bring it to the consideration of the wider citizenry; not to preach it, not to attempt to inculcate it, but to open it to the probing inquiry and serious reflection of original thought of the kind essential to revealing and ultimately to designing positive political possibilities.

Peace educators, embracing such pragmatic utopianism, comprehend as MacBride and von Sutner did that only a profound social and structural transformation could bring the positive possibilities into political reality; not only the limited violent realities recognized by political realism, but the full and vibrant reality that comprehends both the multiple forms of violence and the various means to overcome them, so as to substitute more constructive modes of achieving

public purposes that human ingenuity has and continues to conceptualize and construct. It faces the worst without letting the worst blind it to the best. It is as pragmatic as it is utopian, fulfilling the standards of educational and civic responsibility, insisting and ethical consistency to which the global network of peace educators associated with the IPE and the GCPE ascribe.

I see a strong element of pragmatic utopianism in the awarding of the Nobel Prize to von Sutner, MacBride and IPB. Theirs and other Noble Prizes - as I believe to be the case with the contested 2009 prize to President Obama - not only honor accomplishments, but perhaps even more significantly, intend to keep the vision of the possible vibrant and visible, it rewards those who articulate glimpses of the vision, indicating how it can inform practical politics. While many lamented that the President has in many instances been more of the pragmatist than the utopian, shattering that delicate balance between the hoped for and the happening, we can remember that it was the electorate more than the laureate who took hold of a vision of a better world. In so doing, they called our attention to the third quality of pragmatic utopianism, broad public participation in pursuit of the dream – that essential quality of peace education, participatory partnership joining leadership and citizenry. In the case of the American electorate and some of the global peace movement, they accepted the prize of the election with joy and then rested on their laurels, seeming to have substituted “Yes, he can” for “Yes, we can.”

Of course, we can, if we intentionally learn the ways, if we educate, for instance, so as to learn how to achieve the 50 possibilities for a just peace put forth in the “Hague Agenda for Peace and Justice in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”. In the case of the Agenda as with the McCloy – Zorin agreement\* between to the US and the Soviet Union (1962) that general and complete disarmament was the ultimate goal of all arms negotiations, the drafters knew the possibilities to be achievable, given the public will and active support of positive leadership. Yet both these examples, except where they are kept alive in the curricula of peace education and peace studies have never been grasped and pursued by a public informed of the possibilities and educated with the political skills to achieve them.

MacBride, von Sutner and IPB never dropped their grasp on the vision, the latter continuing to recast it in the light of present needs and possibilities, remains visionary while pursuing the practical. All three represent leadership in movements that have gained broader public support in what continues to be the core pursuits of the realization of our common humanity; the repudiation of violence and the realization of universal human dignity, the convergence of the human rights and peace movements, manifested as gender equality and general and complete disarmament, respectively the social and structural transformations from which can emerge the practical possibilities for a culture of peace, the common aspiration of pragmatic utopians. Indeed, pragmatic utopianism has been the spirit and energy of social and structural transformations so long as human beings have striven toward better ways of living together on this planet or just some small patch of it.

**Bertha von Sutner (1843 – 1914, Nobel laureate, 1905)**  
**Declared the Fundamental Necessity of Disarmament to Peace**

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Although not identified as a feminist, the Baroness von Sutner broke the bounds of the gender expectations of her times and class to relentlessly seek to influence thinking and policy making

toward a less war prone world. She lived by principles that came to inform 20<sup>th</sup> century feminism and women's peace initiatives such as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and Women's Strike for Peace. She married out of her class into a partnership marriage with an Austrian husband who worked with her in her peace endeavors throughout their lives together.

Her major call to peace, *Lay Down Your Arms\**, is a peace education lesson that instructs on disarmament as the fundamental, essential condition of peace. She declared this truth in the manner of women through generations of civil society's struggle to move governments toward peace, boldly, simply and continuously.

Once a "patriotic" supporter of war, her life reflects learning toward understanding the futility of the institution and the essential requirements of peace that peace education seeks to cultivate through critical inquiry into the problematic of war and the multiple forms of violence that will continue so long as it is accepted as a legitimate tool of interstate politics.

She, like Jane Adams is a model of all peace women such as the 1,000 who were nominated for a joint Nobel Peace Prize and an example of women's peace actions and perspectives that Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (October 2000) recognizes as essential to world peace and security. Their endeavors provide material for the lesson that peace education seeks to convey about the need for full democratic representation and participation in any peace process. Von Sutner's pleas and campaigns – one of which was to persuade Alfred Nobel to establish the peace prize – clearly demonstrate the essential need for women's perspectives and participation on grounds of the added value various view points bring to the consideration of all public issues, as well as on the grounds of fundamental justice and democratic representation of all citizens. That struggle for equality affirming the need for diversity to sustain democracy informs much of the curricula of critical, comprehensive peace education.

**Sean MacBride (1904 -1988, Nobel laureate, 1974)**

### **Linked Women's Activism and Empowerment to the Achievement of General and Complete Disarmament**

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Sean MacBride was the son of revolutionaries whose early political life was devoted to achieving the goals of freedom and justice that inspired the struggles that cost the life of his father, executed for participating in the Easter Rebellion, those of many other Irish resisters along with some of the British colonizers who occupied Ireland for five century. A peace learner like von Sutner, he became a world citizen devoted to the conjoined causes of universal human rights and peace. He realized the relationship of armed power to the imposition of oppression - such as in his own country and in South Africa and Namibia, having served the United Nations in guiding the latter to independence - and to the perpetuation of humanly costly warfare.

While MacBride's name does not appear on the list of advocates and practitioners of non-violence, he was an active and articulate advocate of the right of conscientious objection that he articulated as "the right to refuse to kill." This is a human rights issue with significant gender implications in that the legal obligation to kill in the name of the state is still largely imposed only on men. It is also conceptually consistent with and integral to the concept of general and complete disarmament which in essence would divest states of their right to kill in the name of

the national interest. Surely these are concepts that should form the basis of critical peace education inquiry.

At the International Women's Year Conference in Mexico in 1975 where he was one of the speakers on the single peace panel the UN member states permitted at the event, he declared that there could be no peace without General and Complete Disarmament. In spite of the statesmen claiming that, contrary to the themes of the year, "equality, development and peace", peace was not a women's issue, MacBride argued vigorously that it was most likely the women of the world peace movement who would carry forth the movement for general and complete disarmament, urging them never to cease insisting on attending constantly to the politics of achieving it. He reflected what some feminists had argued since their opposition to World War I, that achievement of women's equality was integral and essential to the achievement of peace and that general and complete disarmament is the structural change that will open the full political possibilities for gender justice and other forms of human equality. Feminists are among those who hold that general and complete disarmament is achievable, but not within the present patriarchal state system that is arms dependent for "security and order" which we read as the continuation of the present power system.

MacBride's call for women's action for general and complete disarmament is interpreted by feminists as removing the lethal tools that maintain gender inequality from those who control the larger power hierarchy that sustains neocolonialism and corporate capitalism. These concepts of international system change have been associated with the transformation of a global gender order as defined by masculinities studies in the pedagogy and practice of critical peace education inquiry.

MacBride demonstrated a form of participatory partnership in contributing funds from his Nobel Prize to the cause of educating wider audiences about the issues and possibilities of achieving disarmament. This contribution exemplifies the active commitment to fulfill the responsibilities of world citizenship upon which rest the future and viability of the peace movement.

### **International Peace Bureau (Founded 1891, Nobel laureate 1910)**

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IPB's predecessor organization was founded in an era that began to give consideration to the institutional requirements of world peace. In those waning years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and dawning years of the 20<sup>th</sup>, there was an emerging belief that the peace hoped for over centuries is possible, and could be achievable if human beings seriously and systematically confronted the task of developing suitable institutional designs for and a practical politics of peace such as those initiatives that ultimately produced the International Court of Justice and more recently the International Criminal Court.

IPB whose formation and history was influenced by both von Sutner and MacBride, (and many in this audience) currently encounters the opportunity to make a unique contribution to the peace education movement, toward the attitudinal evolution, modes of thinking and civil public discourse that peace education seeks to model as an alternative to the antagonistic, adversarial dialogue spawned by political realism.

Throughout the years IPB has championed many of the proposals and discussions that ultimately comprised the Hague Agenda for Peace and Justice in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. As a lead organization among the international NGO's that convened the 1999 conference, it modeled the participatory partnership methodology that I have noted characterizes so much of contemporary critical peace education.

Its present program initiatives on Sustainable Disarmament for Sustainable Development focus on an interrelationship integral to peace education's whole systems approach to global problems. Further, as peace research both distinguishes and integrates behavioral/physical violence and social/structural violence, this program holds the possibility for broader publics to come to understand some of the complexities that have been obscured by the dominant discourse of the policy elites. While many peace education and peace studies practitioners do address the topic of sustainable development and some analyze and assess military expenditures, few - even the advocates of non-violence studies - give serious attention to the institutional requirements and practical policy approaches to general and complete disarmament. IPB and the educators associated with it could develop an inquiry and approaches which would make it possible for citizens and students to learn the meaning and peace potential of general and complete disarmament. The concept needs to be presented as the center of an essential change in the international system, not as a surrender to sentimental pacifism, but as the institutional framework for a global change designed to achieve genuine human security in the place of the continued perpetuation of the security of the state defended at the expense of the human security of the citizens. IPB could lead the public discussion of what might be the institutional foundation for achieving and maintaining human security within the context of a culture of peace. These two comprehensive concepts of disarmament and a culture of peace, integral to comprehensive peace education are the most fruitful conceptual foundations for a learning inquiry into the preferred human future that has informed the thinking and strategies of pragmatic utopians throughout the many years of my involvement in peace education.

### **Conclusions, Suggestions and Sources of Hope**

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Having inquired of IPB what points I might make in these remarks that would contribute to the present priorities of the Bureau, it was suggested that I might address its role in peace education and its initiatives in sustainable disarmament for sustainable development. In the spirit of clarifying and specifying what I had asserted here to be the imperatives of gender and disarmament to peace education, I offer the following clarifications and suggestions by way of a conclusion that looks to the potential contribution of IPB to the ongoing development of peace education.

First, the theme concepts, if I suggest that these concepts are imperatives that might inform the peace education initiatives of IPB, I should define them and provide suggestions on means by which they - particularly gender might inform education about sustainable disarmament and development. I will begin these suggestions with the notion of sustainability which I take to mean capable of continuation without unduly negative consequences. For that is pretty much how sustainable development has been interpreted, so let me suggest that we re-conceptualize sustainability, so as to recognize the need to repay debts - what is owed to the earth and to the peoples of the "developing" world, particularly women, who have paid a large measure of the

costs of the high standards of living of the “developed” nations. We must recognize that restoration and replenishment is necessary for the survival of a viable planet and for just relationships among the world’s peoples. I would sum up this notion of replenishing and restorative development in the concepts of diversity and distribution, two more “d’s” to add to disarmament and development that could deepen the more positive connotations of sustainability.

Diversity and distribution inform the concept of gender which I bring to the discussion of a more just distribution of wealth and power in a disarmed world. We know that women comprise the larger percentage of the world’s poor, so in the more common and simple sense of calling attention to the inequality between men and women, gender has relevance to the problematic of development. However, a close look at the world gender order indicates that sex is but one of multiple differentials that determine access to wealth and power. Gender, is a useful concept in viewing the global power order when we acknowledge that gender is an indicator and purveyor of privilege that places some above others in the global hierarchy, men over women, heterosexual over other sexual identities, women of the North over women and men of the South, gendered class differences, indeed, the whole range of human inequalities can be subsumed into the notion of gender, that arises from the first demarcation to distinguish those worthy of power from those not worthy, men from women. In this manner, a concept of comprehensive gender justice serves as the antidote to the injustice of the complex web of human inequality that originates in patriarchy.

To grasp the meaning of general and complete disarmament, we need an equally broad and complex conceptual scope. General and complete disarmament under international law means far more than reducing national arms to a level incapable of engaging in international armed combat. It means creating the institutions to substitute non-violent means of conflict resolution for armed combat such as legal procedures, mediation and negotiation; establishing some forms of policing to assure that the norms of nonviolence and universal human rights will be observed. But, more importantly, it means changes in the structural and personal human relationships that provoke conflict and violence. In short, it calls us to incorporate a commitment to bring forth a culture of peace that is the expression of universal respect for human dignity of the sort implied by the value of diversity as a human as well an environmental value that demands just distribution as a means to achieve the diversity, an equal chance at survival and fulfillment by all Earth’s people and all the living elements of the biosphere. It means placing a higher value on life than on power, the highest value of our current highly armed global gender order.

As these conceptual guidelines might inform IPB’s peace education efforts, so to they might imbue its approaches to learning in the context of a truly civil discourse that many of us expect should distinguish the inquiries and public discussions of civil society seeking to exercise democratic world citizenship, such as that exemplified by Sean MacBride and the clear and reasoned truth telling of Bertha von Sutner from those of states that discourse mainly in the language of power.

Kenneth Boulding, one of the revered founders of peace research asserted that anything that exists is possible. All that I suggest here, all that I have recounted about the legacy of the founders and leaders of IPB exists some where in the world of peace education. I am hopeful

because of what I know is being attempted and achieved, so I know that a peaceful future is possible. My thanks to IPB for what I have seen in their history, foresee in their future and for their validation of peace education as a powerful tool for the building of a peaceful future.

**\* For further inquiry into the topics and arguments addressed in these remarks, the following websites may be consulted.**

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- The Hague Agenda for Peace and Justice in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century  
<http://www.haguepeace.org/resources/HagueAgendaPeace+Justice4The21stCentury.pdf>
- Peace Education Commission of the International Peace Research Association  
<http://soc.kuleuven.be/pol/ipra/about/commissions/pec.html>
- The Peace and Justice Association (PJSA)  
[www.peacejusticestudies.org](http://www.peacejusticestudies.org)
- International Institute on Peace Education (IIPE)  
[www.i-i-p-e.org](http://www.i-i-p-e.org)
- Global Campaign for Peace Education (GCPE)  
[www.peace-ed-campaign.org](http://www.peace-ed-campaign.org)
- National Peace Academy  
[www.nationalpeaceacademy.us](http://www.nationalpeaceacademy.us)
- McCloy - Zorin Accords  
<http://www.nucleardarkness.org/solutions/mccloyzorinaccordstext/>
- “Lay Down Your Arms” by Bertha von Sutner  
<http://www.archive.org/details/laydownyourarmsa00suttuoft>