

SJSU
Phyllis F. Simpkins International House
Newsletter
Fall 2010



Peace

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Leann Cherkasky Makhni

Peace is a daily, a weekly, a monthly process, gradually changing opinions, slowly eroding old barriers, quietly building new structures. And however undramatic the pursuit of peace, the pursuit must go on.

Author: John Fitzgerald Kennedy

This quote expresses to me the epitome of the role played by SJSU International House in the world. Each semester, we bring together people from 30 countries on almost every continent and give residents an opportunity to change opinions, erode barriers and build new relationships to bring home with them and expand on over the years to come. The pursuit of peace comes with the daily, weekly, and monthly interactions our residents have when they live under the same roof for days, months and years at a time.

As we hear from alumni of long-time friendships, visits to countries different from one's own, intercultural marriages, and long distance correspondences, we know that those who have lived at I-House play an active role in the undramatic pursuit of peace.



Leann Cherkasky Makhni,
USA
Director, SJSU International
House

Lauren Mc Kenna

Gaeilge

Go raibh tú daibhir i mí,
 Saibhir i mbeannachtaí
 Mall ag déanamh namhaid,
 Agus luath a déanamh carad.
 Ach saibhir nó daibhir, go mall nó go
 luath,
 Bealtaine fhios agat ach áthas
 Ón lá seo amach

English

May you be poor in misfortune,
 Rich in blessings,
 Slow to make enemies,
 And quick to make friends.
 But rich or poor, quick or slow,
 May you know nothing but happiness
 From this day forward

This proverb promotes peace because it encourages everyone to make the most of what they've got. In other words, people should appreciate the value of blessings, and consider what they have instead of trying to get more, especially because this ungratefulness leads to conflict. As well as that, people should understand how misfortune can in fact help you realize your blessings.

The proverb also promotes friendship, and discourages making enemies. Furthermore, people should make friends regardless of their fortune or abilities. Also, the proverb is advocating harmony and peace through this friendship. Moreover, the proverb suggests that harmony and peace will in turn provide happiness.

-Lauren Mc Kenna, Ireland

Shania Xing

忍一时风平浪静 退一步海阔天空

It means if you could control your feelings (like anger, complaints) for a moment, the wind will die out and the storm will disappear; if you could make one step backward when you have conflicts with others, the sea will be wider and the sky will be brighter.

-Shania Xing, China

Isselmou Ghaly

As a matter of fact, the Mauritanian culture is extremely foreign to this part of the world! However, those who had the chance to know Mauritians closely would definitely be surprised at the extent to which these people are very calm and peaceful. It is even truism to assert that the reason why Mauritania is not “well-known” is its peacefulness, in the sense that it hardly makes the news! There has always been this deeply-rooted tranquility in the country, even amid states of *coup d'état*!

Often time, diplomats, tourists, and other foreigners would ask Mauritians why there have never been civil wars and catastrophes in the country, as opposed to other countries in the Continent. When asked such a question, Mauritians are usually unable to put into words why they are as cool as cucumber! Yet, if we take a look at the culture, particularly sayings and proverbs, we will definitely notice how huge is the emphasis placed on peace.

A Mauritanian proverb goes ‘Peace invests, war destructs’. This unequivocally suggests that peace is beneficial, easier to make, and has no alternative – other than war. The latter is undoubtedly costly, harder to make, and absolutely atrocious. Another proverb reads ‘Your camel must not kneel, unless where there is peace’. What this signifies is that people must always act like ‘peace agents’ and do all they can achieve reconciliation, if needed.

Working hard to achieve reconciliation between adversaries is regarded as an enormously huge virtue. It definitely needs neutrality and fairness from the mediator, but also the readiness to forgive, from any opposing parties. Hence, conflicting parties need to *let bygones be bygones*. This is the reason why another Mauritanian proverb goes ‘In reconciliation, you need to bury, not dig up!’ This refers to the necessity of flipping out all the pages of hatred, and turning on a new leaf in the relationship between any antagonists. This is because the only alternative to not forgiving is retaliation and revenge. The latter are regarded as extremely appalling vices. According to the Mauritanian proverb ‘Regret is the ultimate outcome of retaliation!’

To sum up, it can be fairly said that the Mauritanian culture is vastly pro-peace. This endorsement of peace is best expressed in the country’s folktales and proverbs. In cultural expressions, peace and reconciliation are being portrayed as of a paramount importance; whereas, war and revenge are viewed as downright immoral and evil.
-Isselmou Ghaly, Mauritania



Photo by Jinyi Deng

Obinna Okoye

O Di Mma K'odiwa Dite Ihe A Good Relationship between Two People
Is Beneficial To Both

This is common among the Igbo people in the country of Nigeria. Igbo is one of the dominant dialects among over 50 dialects in Nigeria. Many a time, people do not realize how much peace and harmony with others can go a long way in affecting their lives both positively and negatively in the present or in the future. Being at peace and harmony with others at the workplace, school environment or even at places of social gatherings like weddings, birthday parties and so on, is really important. Building good relationships with people takes time but it is good because many times it benefits both parties at a point in their lives. No one knows where they will find themselves tomorrow, so why don't we make a better use of our present by building more peaceful, long lasting relationships with others because we live in this very small world where, who knows we will bump into these old time friends from your past that will change your life forever

-Obinna Okoye, Nigeria

Guilhem Glaunes

Les petites choses n'ont l'air de rien, mais elles donnent la paix” -
Georges Bernanos, extract from *Journal d'un curé de campagne*

Little things seem to be nothing, but they give peace

The “little things” people do, from a simple “hello” to taking out part of one's time to help a friend or classmate, matter a lot. This can go on to build long-lasting relationships with people that will benefit us after in life. This goes on to bring about peace of mind within ourselves as well as with the people around us.

-Guilhem Glaunès, France

Sarah Black

Más maith leat síocháin,
cairdeas, 's moladh, — éist,
feic, agus fan balbh

If you want peace, friendship
and praise, then listen, see, and
stay silent

This seanfhocal is very significant when applied to Ireland. To achieve an Irish peace, the north and south must learn to listen to one another and compromise. Peace is represented on the country's flag which is green, white and gold. In general, the green represents the south, the gold the north and the white peace between the two. Peace has always been a major concern in Ireland. The troubles in the North are not restricted to those six counties. The struggle for peace there has leaked its way into the South and for some years caused an unstable peace. With the existence of terrorist groups such as the IRA, peace has always been at risk. The goal is to one day live in harmony in a peaceful society; we work hard for this goal and major progress has already been achieved.

-Sarah Black, Ireland

Brittany Balzer

One little person, giving all her time to peace, makes news.
Many people, giving some of their time, can make history.
-Author of the Peace Pilgrim

How can people achieve peace?

Through.....

Pristine Progress
Excellent Elation
Attainable Agreement
Conceivable Courage
Exponential Energy

-Brittany Balzer, United States



Photo courtesy of peacesymbol.org

Scheherbano Khan

ن لکیروں کو زمیں ہی پر رہنے دو دلوں پے مت اتارنا

In lakeeron ko zameen hi par rehney do, dilon pay mat utarna

Let these lines dividing us remain on the ground and never on the heart

-Faiz

From the time I was a child I have seen the world in conflict and my country in specific at daggers with India. We may be different from each other, we may not even believe in the same God but are we so small as humans that we cannot even accept each other as they are? Does humanity not mean anything anymore? These are the questions I asked myself many times.

Once, I was asked to represent my school at a global youth leadership conference in Lahore, Pakistan and I asked the keynote speaker, Imran Khan, the same question. To my query he replied “In lakeeron ko zameen hi par rehney do, dilon pay mat utarna”, a famous quote by Faiz Ahmed Faiz. This quote left such a deep impression on me, that from that day forward I learnt that people of a country cannot be stereotyped according to what is seen in the news or read in the paper. People should rather be judged according to the content of their character.

-Schehrbano Khan, Pakistan



Schehrbano Khan 10

Photo by Schehrbano Khan

Josh Levy

I'm tempted to believe world peace generally only occurs during the Olympics and Federation International Football Association (FIFA) World Cup. Places as 'I-House' are seeds for World Peace ...

“God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference ... (Reinhold Niebuhr, Theologian).”

My wish is for every individual to be upright and strong; to shine in righteous self-esteem; to know the magnificence of their ability and potential; and to act in accordance with community. May humans and humanity learn to adore and admire the glory of innovation and communal maturation.

-Josh Levy, United States

Nadine Rüegg

Dä Gschider git na, dä Esel blibt sta

The wiser head gives in

This wonderful proverb comes from one of the most beautiful countries in the world – Switzerland. Switzerland is famous for watches, mountains, chocolate, cheese, and Swiss bank accounts. Besides that, Switzerland is also famous for their neutrality. This infamous neutrality partly comes from the pacifying mentality of the indigenous people. Their underlying driving force during negotiations may be found in the above proverb: this proverb implies that physical aggression or any unilateral aggression of any kind is not the best solution to further advance one's agenda or world peace. Therefore, in order to further advance society as a whole, one needs to know when to take a step back, see the bigger picture, and realize if the current dispute is worth pursuing or if giving in to the other party, while not being the best solution for one's own party, is advantageous towards the greater good.

-Nadine Rüegg, Switzerland

Tuan Phuoc Minh-Nguyen

Không có gì quý hơn độc lập, tự do -Hồ Chí Minh

Nothing is more precious than independence and freedom

This sentence was said by president Ho Chi Minh in 1964. At this time, Vietnam and United States were being in war. However, I just want to say that my country was not easy to be independent and free. Besides that, if a country is in war or political violence, it's economy cannot develop and people's life cannot be improved. Thus, I know how important peace is and why all the people all over the world always want world peace.

-Tuan Phuoc Minh Nguyen, Vietnam

Vilok Bhatia

Peace

Why do we fight, over lines in the sand?
Why can't we be one, and stand hand in hand.
Why do we have war, why do we fight ?
For once, Why can't both sides be right ?

Why can't we coexist, in peace ?
Why can't all this fighting cease ?
Why does this enmity still persist, among different people ?
Why Is it that a mosque, doesn't have a steeple ?

Why do we behave unusually, with people different from us ?
Why do of little things, we make a fuss ?
Of these rivalries, why can't we rise above ?
Why does push have to come to shove ?

Are we all so different, from each other ?
Why can't each man, be the other's brother ?
Why do love we underrate ?
And fill the empty spaces with hate ?

-Vilok Bhatia, India

Nicole Kimlat

Paz sin fin, paz verdadera.
Paz que al alba se levante
y a la noche no se muera.
Rafael Alberti

When I first read this poem, the question of what is real peace came to my mind: there are so many different ways to define peace. For some individuals, true peace may mean to be in a calm and quiet place where they can rest and forget about their problems. For others, peace may signify having a stable job that allows them to live without financial worries. Alternatively, having a stable and caring family that fills their hearts with the love they desire is the hallmark of peace. Peace can also signify a deep understanding of oneself- a state of nirvana if you will. And then there is your definition of peace...

Peace is something we all desire, even if we conceptualize the term differently. Languages and cultures may help to shape our understanding of the term, but there is something beautiful about this deceptively simple, yet tragically difficult to realize, goal: it binds together all of humanity. Perhaps it is because our varying backgrounds color our conception of the term that we struggle to figure out how to attain it.

One of the beauties of a place like the I-House, or a country defined by term "melting pot," or a university as diverse as the one at which we study, is that we gain exposure to those who have grown to recognize a different conception of peace, or love, or freedom, or any other word that the cynic could label as meaningless. People attach their hopes and their dreams to these terms, and while we may differ in our understanding of them, the pursuit of these dreams is unequivocally universal.

I believe that part of what makes us human is the universal desire for peace, and that places like the I-House, or the university, or a country that promotes tolerance, help foster our understanding of the term. The desire for some type of peace, as Alberti notes, will keep us company in the morning and will not leave us alone at night. The pursuit of this goal has haunted humanity for millennia.

The French Philosopher Baron Pierre de Coubertin, whose forthcoming words have been immortalized in the International Olympic Committee's creed, noted that "the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle;" we should remember that in our struggles for peace.

-Nicole Kimlat, Uruguay



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