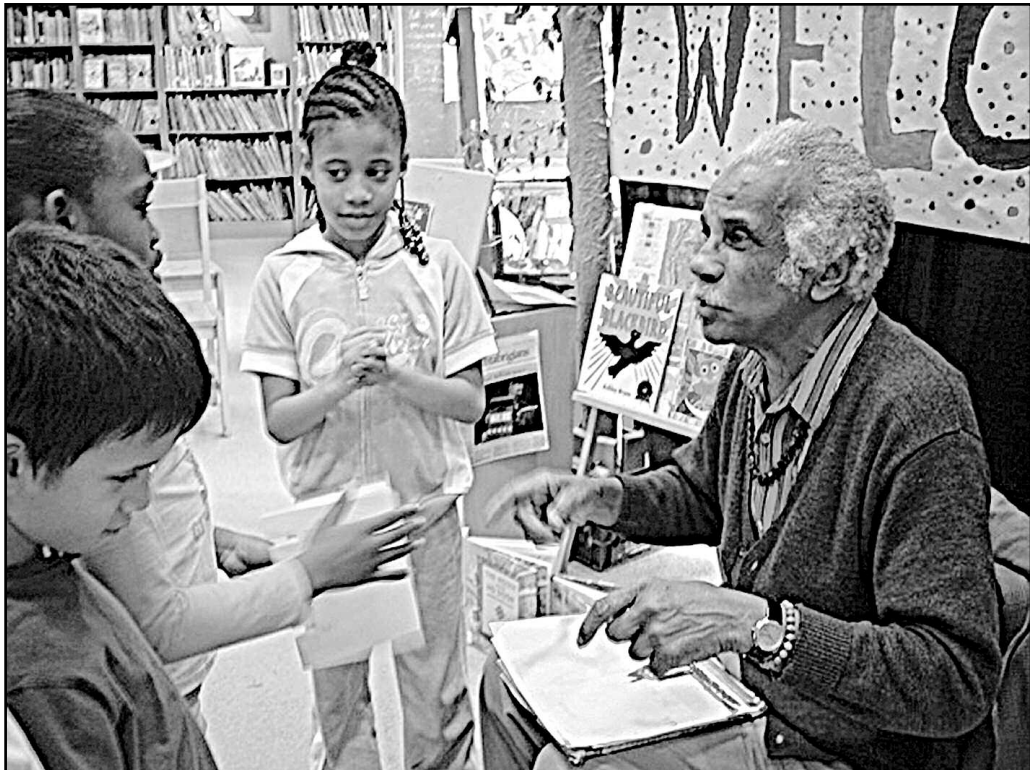

*Concerned
Educators
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Safe
Environment*



CEASE NEWS Vol. 27: No. 1, Spring 2006

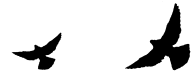
55 Frost St., Cambridge, MA 02140

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Ashley Bryan and Friends

Updates from the Network



- California AEYC/CEASE folks are busy at work, yet again, preparing to bring peace education, social justice issues, and collaborative process to early childhood educators at our state conference. There will be workshops on many topics, including media violence, bullying, sharing power with children, and overprotecting children. The Advocacy Center will be a most important focus for CEASE members. Through collaborative email discussions, the name has been changed and is now “The Center for Social Change.” The dialogue, all email, created an open and respectful forum for people to toss around ideas. When the new name came up, it was clearly the sum of many parts - pulling together the best of all the thinking. It was an energizing, creative process giving hope to finding better ways to communicate as a group.

- CEASE organized a panel, “Putting Children First: Teachers *and* Parents Want a Department of Peace” at the NAEYC conference in Washington, DC in December.

U.S. Representative Dennis Kucinich, who presented the proposal for a Department of Peace to Congress, was invited but was unable to attend the panel. He received CEASE’s annual Peace Award. Lucy Stroock also received an award from CEASE for her work to promote peace over many years.

The panel was moderated by Nancy Carlsson-Paige and included Betty Burkes, Sharon Davisson, Craig Simpson, and Irene Lipshin. Karel Kalimnik was scheduled to participate on the panel but was unable to attend. Panel members addressed many ways to create a **culture of peace** and emphasized that creating a Department of Peace validates these strategies. Some of the issues addressed included the following: promoting a commercial free childhood to resist corporate exploitation of children; teaching conflict resolution skills among children; using class meetings to create caring communities; learning about diversity in order to build bridges across children’s fear of “the other”; and continuing to train educators in methods for teaching children peace making skills. Panelists created an awareness of many paths to create a **culture of peace**.

The annual CEASE meeting followed. There was discussion about whether the NAEYC Position Statement, *Violence in the Lives of Children* (1993), should be updated. CEASE members contributed to the original position statement. There was also discussion about planning a CEASE panel for the 2006 NAEYC conference in Atlanta, Georgia. “Stealing Childhood” was identified as the topic area with many ideas about focus areas (corporate exploitation, Rights of the Child, child soldiers, military recruitment in schools, and trafficking of children)

and panel presenters. John Surr volunteered to explore the issue with members on-line.

After the conference, John and Rauna Surr welcomed us to their lovely Bethesda, Maryland home for an evening of fellowship and a delicious home cooked dinner!

- After hearing Marian Wright Edelman give closing remarks (12/10/05) for the Washington, DC NAEYC Conference on Saturday afternoon, CEASE West members were impressed and motivated by her heartfelt eloquence and description of the needs of our nation’s youth. Her “Pipeline to Prison” video was sobering. We had much information to “chew” on.

We were delighted Sunday morning when we bumped into her at the Dupont Circle Farmer’s Market. Pictured are Sharon Davisson and Susan Hopkins hearing about her Freedom Schools, a date change for Stand for Children, and the need to get “sharp” with this administration. It seems that she knew more about California’s issues than we did! She is one amazing woman who never gives up in her advocacy for children and families!



CEASE members dialoguing with Marian Wright Edelman at Dupont Circle Farmer’s Market.

Editorial

I can remember being in the hospital two days after the birth of my first child. I was sitting on the bed, nursing my newborn and marveling at his very being when a news flash about Columbine interrupted my reverie. With a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach, I watched terrified teenagers running out of their school. I wondered into what kind of world had I brought my baby. How could I keep him safe in a world where high school students went on shooting rampages against their classmates before turning the gun on themselves?

I felt this same hopelessness, almost seven years later, sitting in the theater after viewing the documentary "Why We Fight" by Eugene Jarecki. The film asks 150 average American citizens from across the country, "Why are we in Iraq?" Over 120 people answered "Freedom." The experts interviewed in the film gave a different story.

Did you know:

- At one point just after 911 the whole world was with us, crying with us and supporting us. We chose revenge.
- Weapons are a major industry in all 50 states. Congress voted for war.
- It was a leap from 911 to Iraq. One we were willing to make.
- We are not leaving Iraq. Thirteen permanent bases are being built.
- We have created a military-industrial complex. American oil companies are making record profits.

Daniel "Boone" Schirmer Devoted husband to CEASE founder Peggy Schirmer died April 21, 2006

A memorial service will be held in his honor on Saturday, June 17, 2006 from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at The Friends Meeting House in Cambridge, MA

The Family has requested in lieu of flowers donations may be made to Survival Education Fund, earmarked Boone Schirmer Research Fellowship Fund. Mail to: Survival Education Fund, 40 Oakley Rd., Watertown, MA 02472.

"What kind of world are my children growing up in? How am I going to keep them safe? How are they going to find a sense of peace?"

How can I, a mother and an educator, do something? It is easy to feel overwhelmed and powerless in this situation. Yet, remembering Ghandi's words, "We must be the change we want to see in the world," I feel hope. I look around and see that the soil for change is already being cultivated:

- Every time I help my sons talk through their disagreements rather than letting them hit each other.
- When we have neighbors reach out to one another.
- When a teacher writes a letter to the editor of a newspaper recounting her nightmare about the children in her classroom going to war.
- When a physical education teacher uses cooperative games instead of elimination games in his classes.
- When a school celebrates peace days.
- When someone picks up a toy soldier and finds the words "Bring me home" written on the bottom of it.
- When people see a movie like "Why We Fight" and share their views with their friends, neighbors and colleagues.

We can say, "no" to war and "yes" to peace.

Remembering Margaret Mead's words, "Never doubt that a small group of people can change the world, indeed it is the only thing that ever does," we can create an earth that flourishes into a garden of peace.

Heidi Smith, Burlington, VT

Continuing the Work of CEASE for Peace

Passing on the work of editing the CEASE News to Heidi Smith gives me time to reflect. Editing the News over the past ten years I have had time to meditate about the myriad efforts for a safe environment in which CEASE members are engaged. The challenges taken on by the CEASE Statement of Purpose can be overwhelming!

Initially Peggy Schirmer and the group who joined her in creating CEASE wanted to raise awareness about the nuclear threat among early childhood educators and parents. Controlling nuclear weapons would enhance safety around the world. This definition of "safe" expanded with Three Mile Island and Chernobyl to include the dangers of nuclear power and its unmanaged wastes. Thinking about environmental dangers from other sources soon joined the list.

The original concern with weaponry led to scrutiny of
continued on page 5

Protesting the Iraq War

One morning in November, I was listening to the radio and a story caught my attention. It was about a woman who thought up a way, in her Chicago neighborhood, to protest the Iraq War. She would quietly leave green plastic toy soldiers with the words "Bring me home" written on them for people to find in different places.

I thought this was such a wonderful idea; I went to Wal-Mart and bought a bag of the little plastic army men. When I got them home, I quickly thought of a way to write on the bottom of the one that had a little base: I colored the bottom with a silver permanent marker. When that was dry, I took a thin point black permanent marker and wrote the words: "Bring me home."

I had ten little men in a baggie now to pass out. The only problem - I was afraid to really pass them out. What if someone saw me and got angry? I carried them in my purse for a couple of weeks. I got the nerve to show one to a friend of mine. She thought they were a wonderful idea, so I gave her one. She said that she challenged me to put the others out. I finally was able to put one here and one there. I did give a couple to some friends at church who shared that their sons were in Iraq. They both accepted them with tears in their eyes, saying it was perfect.

I am now ready to pass out more of the little men. If anyone else is interested in learning about the Toy Soldier Protest, you can go on the National Public Radio website and hear the whole story: www.npr.org "A Toy Soldier Protest Against Iraq War" by Jason DeRose.

Karen Heflin, Sonora, CA

Letter to the Editor at the Boston Globe:

I had a dream last night. One of those awful, all too real dreams where you wake up crying.

I am a teacher in an elementary school in the Boston area. My dream involved my whole school, kids and teachers as they put on a performance for the President of the United States, the First Lady and hundreds of political dignitaries. The children, dressed in red, white and blue, sang patriotic songs. Time is then fast-forwarded and these young children are now 18 years old. They are being brought to this same spot where moments ago they were innocent, happy, carefree children. They are arriving on helicopters and, stretcher after stretcher, are brought in for medical care. They have been wounded in war and are screaming in pain as doctors and nurses scramble to help them. My students call out to me to help them. I am feeling this fear of not being in control, not being able to help my children as they squeeze my hand. The thought of their lives not lived to their full potential angers me. I then look over to see President Bush refusing to look at these children. Instead of seeing the reality of it all, he is focused on how patriotic these children were just moments ago.

Although the dream has ended and my tears have dried, I am left with the feeling of what this dream meant to me. Is it fear for what the future holds for my students in a world where leaders have perfected the art of turning a blind eye to reality? Is it a fear that as a teacher I am unable to protect my students? Or could it be that I am fearful of what our country has become with leaders who don't face the consequences of their poor leadership?

Kristen Oughstun, Cambridge, MA

School Honors Storyteller, Ashley Bryan

How do you celebrate the most amazing storyteller who happens also to be an artist and an author and an illustrator of children's books? The Haggerty School in Cambridge recently honored Ashley Bryan, who read from his book "Beautiful Blackbird." The message of Blackbird is that all living creatures are beautiful. Though different from one another, children (of all ages) should take pride in their individuality and unique beauty. Bryan also made illustrations to accompany the lyrics to the song "What a Wonderful World," which was written by Weiss and Thiele and made popular by Louis Armstrong.

The students created pictures inspired by Bryan's work and several wrote poems performed for him as a gift. Ashley Bryan Quote of the Day: "An artist is not a special kind of person, but rather every person is a special kind of artist." (See cover photo)

Karen Kosko, Cambridge, MA



Continuing the Work of CEASE

continued from page 3

our national fascination with guns and worries about the toy weapons and violent behaviors marketed and glamorized by TV and movies. A campaign against such exploitation became part of the CEASE mission.

Thoughtful consideration about war play, so frequent in preschool classrooms, led to deeper thinking about children's fears and the skills they need while confronting the inevitable conflicts of early social life. Parents, infant and toddler teachers, and all who work with young children, are struggling to find ways to support a non-violent response in the young ones they care for.

Joining the discussion about non-violence at NAEYC led CEASE members to examine the roots of violence: injustice, economic inequity, and bias in our society. Safety depends on security of food, housing, medical care, and a just society without discrimination. Building an anti-bias curriculum into early childhood training became a CEASE priority.

Cruelty to children from adults and peers continues, often sanctioned by law, habit and religious beliefs. Ending corporal punishment in schools and homes is an on-going goal which requires building a different view of discipline and adult child relationships.

Bullying as a childhood commonplace is now being challenged. The solution must be built community by community, school by school. It is everyone's job.

Finally, War! CEASE challenged NAEYC to take a position against war. As the bumper sticker asserts: "War is not the Answer" and it is terrible for children.

To walk a different path we must learn the skills of Peace: listening, respect, restraint, persistence. Individuals, communities, and nations, all need these skills. The proposal for a Department of Peace, now introduced in legislation in Congress, offers a beginning. The U.S. can give priority to building peace and a budget for peace-making instead of the hundreds of billions now devoted to war-making.

The list of our concerns goes on: the Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood, Ratification of the Convention for the Rights of the Child, and the devaluing of play in early childhood settings....

It is easy to be overwhelmed with so many places to direct our energies for peace work. I have chosen now to start with my grandchildren. Every young family needs help, however privileged. Then, I will see what else I can do without being overwhelmed....

The CEASE Statement of Purpose takes on all challenges for creating a safe environment. Each of us must do what we can, step by step, with patience, a hard virtue, but essential for the work of peace.

Lucy Stroock, Cambridge, MA

Painting with Tristan

Liz (Teacher): *Come on Tristan, let's paint together.*

Tristan (3yrs): *Paint together. Okay!*

The paint brush handles are wet with paint. Tristan stands looking at them, reluctant to touch until I clean them off. We paint together for a long time, and as we cover the canvas, we create a story of animals that come alive in our varying squiggles and then disappear into a forest of sweeping strokes. Children gather, observing for quite some time before asking Tristan if they can paint with him. "Okay! Okay!" replies the boy, now oblivious to paint on his arms and hands and face.

Fully engaged in relationship with his peers, his teacher, the materials, and the very small environment of the easel, Tristan generously shares with the onlookers. No one complains about being squished or not being able to see. Everyone finds a way to make their brush move along and around the paper layering marks upon each others' impressions without irritation. The experience grows in complexity and attention as each child contributes to the story. Animals emerge from the children's imagination and then disappear into the forest. Then the forest transforms into a cave and the animals disappear into the darkness.

The end result of this emergent learning experience might seem merely a giant blotch of papers covered in giant blobs of paint: A mess without shape or form to the passerby-eye. Yet the work of the children and the teacher was full of cooperative meaning-making and relationship-making-important skills for building a peaceable world.

Children create small group contexts for themselves when sharing materials and their imagination. Engaging in simple social activities with one's peers is meaningful for children. Developing sensitivity to and opportunity for intimate small group meaning-making is an important teaching practice.

Liz Rogers, Burlington, VT



The “New” P.E.



When people think of Physical Education class, they often think of their own experiences in “gym” class. Many adults name the stereotypical games such as dodgeball, relay races, kickball, the mile run, etc. If they were not an “athlete,” they oftentimes will express their hatred and frustration with gym class. They were humiliated in front of classmates and learned to hate exercise. It also could be seen as one of the many reasons that we have an obesity epidemic in this country – a lot of people learned to hate exercise in their “old” P.E. classes. The “new” P.E. is a much different and much more positive approach to P.E.

One of the main themes for the “new” P.E. is that P.E. is for every child. Everyone should have a lot of different ways in which they can exercise and stay healthy. In the “old” days, the athletes dominated games in P.E. The kids who needed more practice often did not get it. A great example of this is dodgeball. A traditional game of dodgeball was 11 kids versus 11 kids. A “gym” teacher might state that it is a great game for teaching throwing and catching. But if you look closely at the game, usually, the ones doing the throwing are the kids who are proficient at it already. The kids who need help throwing or catching are in the back trying to stay alive. Add elimination (if you get hit, you are out of the game), and kids practice even less! There are some other things wrong with dodgeball, mainly human targets. Can you name another type of exercise where humans are the target? We play a game called Team Handball, where everyone is doing a lot of throwing/catching and there are no human targets.

Another theme of the “new” P.E. is the idea that “IF you had FUN, you WON!” This philosophy focuses on playing the game for the fun of it, not for the score. This helps to get across the sense of just playing a game because it is fun to play that game. A lot of kids get turned off from exercise because it is too competitive and they don’t have the skills to compete with other kids. But that doesn’t mean they can’t play that game on their own as a way to exercise. A lot of our activities involve a lot of cooperation and a little competition.

The “new” P.E. also focuses on turning kids on to many different physical activities so that as they go through life, they have a lot of different choices to stay healthy and active. Traditional P.E. programs and unfortunately, many

present day P.E. programs think that the purpose of P.E. is to get kids physically fit. This is actually impossible to do unless you see kids an hour a day every day. Many kids and adults are turned off when P.E. teachers DO fitness to kids. (OK everybody run 10 laps and then do 25 push ups. BORING!) We need to teach skills to kids so that they can be physically active in a variety of ways. If they are active, physical fitness will naturally follow. At RM Central School, kids do fitness to themselves with a little help from me. Our older kids monitor their activity levels with the use of pedometers. Unlike fitness tests, they cannot compare their scores to others because everyone has different stride rates, but more importantly, they choose how they want to be active (instead of everyone doing the same test – mile run, etc.). They are also motivated to beat their scores, which in turn gets them to think about being more active. Many of our kids have purchased pedometers for home use!

Lastly, the “new” P.E. is constantly changing to stay current and to give kids different options for activity. I teach Educational Gymnastics now as opposed to Traditional/Olympic Gymnastics. In Educational Gymnastics, kids are not told that there is only one way to use a piece of gymnastic equipment. Instead of having only the athletes/gymnasts in a class show me a lot of things, now EVERYONE shows me a lot of different things on all the equipment. For Dance, we don’t do traditional dances like Line Dancing or Square Dancing. Again, in these type of dances, everyone is asked to be able to do the same moves. But if you study child development, all kids are not at the same level on any skill. I teach kids about the elements of Educational Dance/Creative Dance and they take it that much farther.

The philosophy of the “new” P.E. at Central School really gets kids going on the right path to lifelong health and activity! All kids get a lot of practice in my class. They practice skills that will help All kids be active for a lifetime! Wouldn’t it be great if all our children were active, healthy adults? It all starts with the “new” P.E.!!!

Douglas Day, Burlington, VT
Rick Marcotte Central School Physical Education

Resources

Women Writing for (a) Change has, for fifteen years, invoked, celebrated and nurtured the words of women and girls through the art of writing and practices of community. For details on its many programs and history, visit the website. www.womenwritingforachange.org

The Change Agent – Adult education for social justice: news, issues and ideas. www.nelrc.org/changeagent

Global Warming – Eye opening articles about the seriousness of global warming. www.heatisonline.org



Statement of purpose

This revised Statement of Purpose was adopted at the CEASE Annual Meeting November 21 1996.

CEASE is a network of parents, teachers and other concerned individuals who are dedicated to creating a safe world for our children. We seek to end the violence that permeates our society to an ever increasing degree and to remove the root causes of this violence by advocating for peace, justice and economic opportunity.

We are committed to:

- Raising public awareness about both the origins of violence and the disastrous effects violence and injustice have upon children, families and communities.
- Eliminating the acceptance of violence which is created by mass media conditioning.
- Ensuring the abolition of nuclear weaponry, and other weapons of mass destruction, and an end to the proliferation of conventional weapons.
- Putting a stop to the dangerous degradation of our natural environment by supporting the development and use of reusable, non-polluting resources that protect the health and safety of future generations.

Central to the solution of these problems is the redirection of national priorities and funding from the military and corporate interests to human services and environmental preservation.

We work towards these goals through the following activities:

- Providing a supportive network for teachers and parents who share our concerns.
- Educating the early childhood community through the publication of **CEASE NEWS**, creating periodical informational fliers, giving workshops and developing peace education materials.
- Advocating for a government that is committed to improving and expanding quality child care and child development programs.
- **Fostering a society that focuses on the well being of young children and their families through all our work.**

YES, I WANT TO JOIN THE CEASE NETWORK

Date _____

- Enclosed is my \$10 subscription. new subscription renewal
- Enclosed is my \$5 student subscription. Here is an additional gift to help defray expenses.
- Enclosed is a gift membership for:

Name _____ Phone number () _____

Address _____

_____ e-mail _____

Place of work _____ position _____

NAEYC Member How did you learn about CEASE? _____

For tax deductible contributions over \$50 make check payable to Survival Education Fund

Return to CEASE, c/o Lucy Stroock, 55 Frost Street, Cambridge, MA 02140

E-mail: info@peaceeducators.org

Book Review

Politics and Religion: Another View

The Left Hand of God: Taking Back Our Country from the Religious Right

By Michael Lerner (Harper San Francisco, 2006)

Michael Lerner's latest book, "The Left Hand of God: Taking Back Our Country from the Religious Right," gives us a comprehensive vision and analysis that should appeal to anyone who worries where America's going. He starts by noting that fundamentalists of a wide variety of religions (Christianity, Judaism, and even Islam) seek to ally themselves with a God that conquers evil and favors the faithful. He calls this the right hand of God, the part that dominates, controls, and protects adherents from a fearsome world. "Circling the wagons" gives fundamentalists a strong spiritual identity, even as it is used to support a repressive power structure in the family, the congregation, and the country.

Lerner points out that most of us inhabit a culture at work and in other parts of our lives that is focused narrowly on the financial bottom line. The struggle for domination, control, and the amassing of power and wealth to serve the bottom line dominates our lives. He feels that this culture feeds into the right hand of God and the testosterone-dominated political and religious institutions that see only that side of life.

He calls us to look beyond the financial bottom line to a New Bottom Line based on the left hand of God, emphasizing "the need to build a world based on love, kindness, compassion, generosity, mutual cooperation, recognition of the spirit of God in every other human being, and an awareness of our interdependence with others, responsibility to the well-being of the planet, and a powerful sense of awe and wonder at the grandeur of creation." This satisfies our spiritual yearnings that the right hand of God cannot meet. It also supports the policies and activities that serve humanity

at large, not just the wealthy and powerful. All that it requires of us is that we allow our hope and love to overcome our fear and cynicism, starting now.

Lerner calls on the Democratic Party to move beyond its timid imitations of the right wing based on public opinion polls and a very secular vision, to become forceful shapers of social and spiritual energy toward a more balanced approach to public, economic, and social life. He wants to give the Democrats a backbone in a spiritual base that will help them fight for common ideals rather than compromise them. He proposes a detailed Spiritual Covenant with America to that end. Even though one might quibble with some of the specifics of his Covenant, his call for a shift in our attention and the politicians' messages is important and timely.

We have a long way to go from the current politics of fear and cynicism. Lerner gives us some valuable advice about taking the first steps and moving on. If you share these feelings, "The Left Hand of God" is a good place to begin.

John Surr, Bethesda, MD

Please feel free to copy this newsletter and any other materials you receive from CEASE and distribute them to colleagues, parents, students.... Help us to reach out!

**Let people know about our website
www.peaceeducators.org**

CEASE welcomes contributions to the newsletter. Please write us about your work for a peaceful and safe world for children. Send us resource information you value. We will publish as space allows.

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