


Working Towards Mutuality

governments and NGOs to make up for the omission.

To put this positively, let us pursue our dreams of a rainbow where each color is important, where the absence of colour is drab and dull.

We dream of a world where every female being has a

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place in the sun, where no one is marginalized and down-trodden, where full human rights are enjoyed by all.

We dream of a world of genuine development that benefits everyone, especially women and girls, an uplifting development of our humanity.

We dream of a world of lasting peace with no nuclear threats to survival, a new era, a solar age.

This is our rainbow of the Third Millennium. Join us in making our dream come true."

Working towards mutuality

Those of us who are familiar with the schema of Antonio Gramsci know that the hold of dominating powers on the economic base is supported by an ideological and political apparatus. Here we are concerned with the ideological apparatus that justifies aggression and greed.

Culture is the handmaid of this ideological apparatus. It embraces education, religion, media, arts, literature, etc. The prevailing culture for the past centuries has upheld competition, getting ahead of others, climbing the ladder of success, sitting on the pinnacle of power by hook or by crook, individually and collectively, with tribes fighting tribes, or nations against nations.

Basically it has been a culture of domination, practised by nation states and empires, religious groups and churches, transnational corporations, and business enterprises. It is a hierarchical view of the world, a two-tiered vision of reality that favours the elite and subordinates the under-dog. It finds its expression in the ruling class and the ruled, the conquering nation and the colonized, the church leader and the follower, the ordained and the laity, the tycoon and the consumer, the manager and the worker. The same dichotomy is extended to all sorts of divisions of the privileged and the subservient.

Peace and harmony in this kind of society would mean the preservation of the status quo so that those on top remain on top, in control, in command.

Peace, to be meaningful, rests on an egalitarian vision of society. What kind of a world do we want? Do we wish to perpetuate this existing hierarchical dualism that puts man over man, man over woman, the human being over nature? Can there be genuine peace in the cut-throat competition and rat race of the business world? What kind of a peace is there if present structures oppress, manipulate, abuse women, the poor, people of colour? How tenuous would peace be if in the name of human needs, the earth is raped, nature devastated, forests plundered, the ozone layer ripped off—a veritable ecocide!

What is our vision of society? Have we reached a point where we can unite in a common dream of a transformed world? Do we, researchers, educators, and social activists, have a transformational mode of leadership or is it mainly transactional resolving conflict, keeping peace, maintaining the status quo which makes no difference in the status of the oppressed and the exploited?

Let us for a moment envision the kind of transformation that would make us work with passion and enthusiasm. May I propose a view of a world where there is fullness of life for every one, where mutuality replaces domination, where intrinsic value is given to every being, respecting and protecting the right to exist and come to fullness of being? Surely there are those of you who would resonate with a world of interconnectedness, of relationships that enhance one another, of a life-giving cycle of liberating compassion.

Our dream of the earth, as Thomas Berry put it, has an omnicentric view that does not stratify into the superior or inferior categories but that reconciles in relationships of mutuality. Perhaps we should explain further what this "mutuality" means. Elizabeth A. Johnson in her book, *Women, Earth, and Creator-Spirit*, writes:

Mutuality is a form of relation marked by equivalence between persons. It involves a concomitant valuing of each other, a give and take according to each one's strengths and weaknesses, and a common regard marked by trust, affection, and respect for differences—all this in contrast to competition, domination, or assertions of superiority. It is a relationship patterned like friendship, an experience often used to characterize the freedom-connection dialectic at the heart of all mature caring. (27)

How do we bring this about? First, we expect that basic assumptions be agreed upon. One basic assumption is our

acceptance of the wisdom of feminist thinking. We assume the validity of women's experience that bears out the possibility of reconciling all dichotomous elements: self and other, matter and spirit, passions and mind, embodiedness and self-transcendence, women and men, humanity and the earth. As Elizabeth Johnson points out:

The intuition of interconnection in women's experience deconstructs the pyramid of hierarchical dualism and constructs in its place a circle of mutual, unfettered interconnectedness. (28)

alert to omissions and silences, what is ignored and bypassed, the culture of silence that makes the marginalized invisible and voiceless. A case in point would be the failure to mention the role of ecofeminism in the promotion of ecological security.

In institutional restructuring, we would like the principle of mutuality exercised. Individual leadership for a common mission and the working towards genuine peace is a responsibility to be shared by all regardless of age, sex, class, creed, colour, capacity. Every one's contribution counts. No one is superior to the other.



Front row, on the left, Angela Miles and Sister Sol Perpignan with friends, nao Forum in Huairou, 1995.

We propose to explore new paradigms of understanding reality. There is need to delve deeper into the kinship of all beings in the cosmos. Building peace would necessarily mean recognizing the mutual interrelatedness of all beings. Security would then be all-embracing; it would be comprehensive security for all.

We should tackle head on the prevailing culture of dominance and relate it to the existence of injustices and conflict, personal and institutional violence, uprisings, and war.

Working hand in hand with social activists, who are experts in organizing campaigns, would be a good strategy for advocates who wish to engage in transformative action.

The ideal would be to involve as many people as possible as participants in the research as well as consumers of the research findings. One form that we would like to see practised is a conscientizing inquiry that involves communities in the entire research with new knowledge and the technical skills needed to effect change. The process should put into practice all that we seek to propagate. Sensitivity to gender concerns and the feminist perspective should be reflected in conferences, papers, and publications. A test would be the use of an all inclusive language, the avoidance of sexism in any form. We should also be

We hope that our bonding with one another will be a foretaste of that broader kinship with the cosmos and all humanity.

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