

Resolutions for Peace
Sunday, May 29, 2022
Tri-County Unitarian Universalists
Summerfield, FL

Sometimes people including Julia Ward Howe seem to think that if only women ran the world, we would have peace. She declared, "In the name of womanhood and of humanity, I earnestly ask that a general congress of women, without limit of nationality, may be appointed and held at some place deemed most convenient, and at the earliest period consistent with its objects, to promote the alliance of the different nationalities, the amicable settlement of international questions, the great and general interests of peace." As the Unitarian and Universalist Dictionary of Biographies notes she could not pull it off. Even if she had, at this point in world history, we have had enough women running governments to know that having women in power has not meant peace in our time.

With the recent mass shootings in our own country, the recognition of the second anniversary of George Floyd's killing by police, and today's special fifth Sunday collection for the Domestic Abuse/Rape Crisis Center in Ocala I was reminded of a text from the Tao te Ching.

"If there is to be peace in the world,
There must be peace in the nations.
If there is to be peace in the nations,
There must be peace in the cities.
If there is to be peace in the cities,
There must be peace between neighbors.
If there is to be peace between neighbors,
There must be peace in the home.
If there is to be peace in the home,
There must be peace in the heart."

Julia Ward Howe may have wanted women to gather and work together for world peace, but she had trouble finding peace in her own home. According to Joan Goodwin's entry in the Unitarian and Universalist Dictionary of Biographies, "In 1848 Julia had poems published in two anthologies, much to her husband's (Samuel Gridley Howe, founding director of the Perkins School for the Blind and a military hero in the Greek War of Independence) displeasure and her own despair at his refusal to accept her writing....

"A collection of Julia's poems, *Passion Flowers*, was published anonymously in 1854, and the author's identity quickly became an open secret. In the *New York Tribune* George Ripley called the poems 'a product wrung with tears and prayer from the deepest soul of the writer. . . . They form an entirely unique class in the whole range of female literature.' Ednah Dow Cheney wrote that 'it really is a grave thing, and, in this country, a rare thing, to publish such a book as this.' Hawthorne wrote to publisher George Ticknor that the book seemed 'to let out a whole history of domestic unhappiness. . . . What does her husband think of it?'

"'Chev was very angry about the book,' Julia wrote to her sister, 'and I really thought at one time that he would have driven me to insanity, so horribly did he behave.' In her journal she wrote: 'I have been married twenty years today. In the course of that time I have never known my husband to approve of

any act of mine which I myself valued. Books—poems—essays—everything has been contemptible in his eyes because not his way of doing things. . . . I am much grieved and disconcerted.’

“They considered divorce, but Samuel's demand to keep two of the children ended the matter for Julia. She wrote to her sister that ‘his dream was to marry again—some young girl who would love him supremely. . . . I thought it my real duty to give up every thing that was dear and sacred to me, rather than be forced to leave two of my children. . . . I made the greatest sacrifice I can ever be called upon to make.’

“Adjustments were gradually made on both sides of the troubled marriage, though a lingering problem was Howe's management of Julia's Ward inheritance. ‘His tyrannical instincts,’ she wrote, ‘more than any direct purpose, have made him illiberal with me in money matters, and if he can possibly place this so I cannot easily use it, he will, only because money is power, and a man never wishes a woman to have any which she does not derive from him.’”

So, as far as we know, Howe was not beating Julia, but it sounds as though he was emotionally abusive and controlling which hardly made for a peaceful home.

A girl who lived down the street from me when I was a child and who would occasionally come to my home to play was shot and killed by her boyfriend a good number of years ago now. Fewer years back a great aunt called a family meeting to tell a long-kept family secret of domestic abuse by my great-great grandfather and his suicide. My great aunt had a news clipping from May 1914 that included this paragraph, “For several days (name of my great-great grandfather) had made all kinds of threats against his family and Mrs. ___ afraid of the consequences had sworn out a warrant before Squire Himmelberger for her husband's arrest charging surety of the peace. Policeman Alexander Harnish was given the warrant to serve and when he approached the house was warned by (my great-great grandfather) not to come near as he would shoot and shoot to kill.” That story ended in suicide although the story was that he has bought enough bullets for the whole family. Probably about the same number of years ago I made some comment to my daughter as we were coming back from the grocery store after 9 at night about a woman out walking with three very young children across the street from us as we waited at the light. My daughter, who always seemed to know more about our neighbors than I did, said that the woman and children were probably out walking that late because the father was home. Home wasn't safe when he was there.

If there is to be peace in the home,
There must be peace in the heart.”

What can we do to help troubled hearts prone to violence against their own families find peace? What can we do for those terrorized or oppressed in their own homes to help them find peace?

Many of you probably have seen the family violence wheel drawing. At the center is a hub marked “Power and control.” Its spokes include using economic abuse (think Howe's withholding Julia's inheritance from her use); using coercion and threats; using intimidation; using emotional abuse; using isolation; minimizing, denying, and blaming; using children (Howe's stipulation that two of the children must remain with him) ; and for male abusers, using male privilege. I would suggest that until abusers feel that they have some power and control over their own lives, peace in the heart, they will exercise what power they do have at home to control others. And those who have their power and control over

their own lives taken from them I expect will not find peace in their hearts until they find some way to regain power and control over their own lives without resorting to violence themselves.

Today's sermon is called resolutions for peace. I believe that to help myself and others find peace I need to concentrate on issues of power and control. Do you have power and control over yourself? Are you taking power and control away from another? I resolve to claim my own power nonviolently and to help others claim their own power nonviolently. I resolve to nonviolently speak up when someone is taking power and control from another. I do believe all issues of violence are centered in issues of power and control.

We have heard too often in the last weeks of those who take their violence beyond their own homes. What leads someone to shoot up a grocery store because its customers are black or LatinX? What leads someone to shoot up a church, a mosque, a synagogue, a gurdwara because of the nationality, ethnicity, or religion of those gathered there? To shoot up a nightclub because of the clubgoers sexual orientation?

Sure, most of these people are lone gunners but their crazy screeds are echoing things that television commentators on major news channels and politicians currently in office are promoting. Fewer than should be doing so are holding these leaders to task. The New York Times on May 16 highlighted one person who was speaking out. The Times said,

“Representative Liz Cheney, Republican of Wyoming and a former member of G.O.P. leadership in the House, on Monday called out her party's leaders for enabling the spread of white nationalism after a gunman who believed racist ideology killed 10 people at a Buffalo supermarket.

“The House GOP leadership has enabled white nationalism, white supremacy, and anti-semitism,’ Ms. Cheney [wrote on Twitter](#). “History has taught us that what begins with words ends in far worse. @GOP leaders must renounce and reject these views and those who hold them.”

“Her statement came as Republicans in Congress were angrily pushing back against accusations that their language and actions have perpetuated the kind of racism and xenophobia that were apparently behind the massacre.

“Yet as of Monday morning, none of them had spoken out against the racist “white replacement theory” that motivated the killings or the white nationalism undergirding it,” [Cheney Says House Republican Leaders Have ‘Enabled’ White Supremacy - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#).

In a recent poll it was found that “Three-quarters of Black Americans are worried that they or someone they love will be attacked because of their race,” [.Post-Ipsos poll: Strong majority of Black Americans fear attack like Buffalo supermarket shooting - The Washington Post.](#) As I was reminded that this was the second anniversary of George Floyd's killing by police, I remembered the Maryland African American mother who refused to allow her high school senior son to drive to Kings Dominion amusement park in Virginia with friends. She said she knew her son and his friends were good kids, but she did not think a road trip by a group of teenage black boys was a safe thing to do in America. That mother was not afraid of some random shooter. She was afraid of societally sanctioned violence by police.

Colbert King in a column in the Washington Post wrote, ““This is not who we are,” Biden has said many times. Oh, no?

Lest we forget:

Colfax, La., where in 1873 more than 60 Black men were killed trying to vote.

Aug. 14 to 16, 1908, when a mob of 5,000 descended upon Black people in Springfield, Ill.

July 29 and 30, 1910, and the massacre in the small, predominantly Black town of Slocum, Tex.

July 19, 1919, when White mobs here in D.C. attacked Black soldiers returning from World War I. “Not who we are”?

How about the Elaine Massacre of Black farmers in Arkansas on Sept. 30 and Oct. 1, 1919? The Nov. 2, 1920, Ocoee Massacre of Blacks going to vote in Florida?

Remember the May 31 and June 1, 1921, Tulsa Massacre that destroyed a thriving Black community in Oklahoma?

Are we to forget the 1923 Rosewood Massacre, the 1968 Orangeburg Massacre, the 1979 Greensboro Massacre, the 2012 Sikh Temple of Wisconsin Massacre, the deadly hate crimes against Blacks in Kentucky and Jews in Pittsburgh in October 2018? [Opinion | Sorry, Mr. Biden, killing Black people is an American tradition - The Washington Post](#). There is more than enough reason that three-quarters of Black Americans are worried that they or someone they love will be attacked because of their race.

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“If there is to be peace in the cities,
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We must all speak out against racism, antisemitism, homophobia, transphobia, Islamophobia, etc in our homes, neighborhoods and nation.

Remember that family violence wheel with power and control as the hub? While Julia Ward Howe did not get women to bring in world peace and while not all perpetrators of family violence or mass shooters are male, there is a reason that our society has coined the phrase toxic masculinity. We too often raise boys to think that power and control are their destiny and if they don't have them, they need to find some way, any way, to get them. That is not healthy for men or women or the nonbinary.

Tuesday's school shooter was male as most school shooters have been. Most seem to have expected that they would be killed. Is their killing of others in their own suicide some terrible last gesture of claiming power and control? I don't know the answer to that, but that most were bullied in school seems to make it a plausible idea. Our society's heroes are often those who go out with guns blazing. I am all for gun control and better mental health care. I am also for changing what society expects of men.

In a recent Braver/Wiser email column Rev. Susan Maginn, a U.S. Navy chaplain currently serving the Marines in California wrote of a situation where she was able to change a trajectory and perhaps save some lives by challenging a “real man” scenario. She wrote, “I drove my government-issued truck into the desert to visit a Marines unit, the familiar cammie netting assuring me: Your people are here. A high-ranking enlisted leader had requested to talk to a chaplain. We found a rare patch of shade, sat in the dirt, and laughed a little as we called it my office.

“The Marine said he was going through a tough time and needed to vent to a chaplain's confidential ear. But I heard a story that was beyond “tough.” He told me what he had witnessed and done to protect others—tasks no Marine would ever wish upon another—things that still haunt him. He told me that sleep deprivation was catching up; how many Marines count on him; how he needs a break but can't

ever take one.

“I took in both the nobility of this man and how the weight of that nobility could soon break him, putting himself and his Marines at risk. I assured him that if he just wanted to trust me with his secrets, I would take them to my grave. However, I recommended something very different: to talk to his leadership about sending him home to get help. We talked about how this would look weak to the Marines he supervises, but how he could also set an example of what it means to ask for help.

“He asked me to be with him as we asked his chain of command for their support.

An hour later, a senior-level command team member called me: he disagreed with me, and assured me the Marine would not come home.

“I told him that it’s his job to make that call, and my job as a chaplain is to inform him when I think the command is assuming an excessive level of risk. As long as you make informed decisions about the risk, I told him, then my job is done. He said he would think about it.

“The next morning I was informed that the Marine was flown home.”

Chaplain Susan Maginn was able to help others reimagine what power and control look like and, I like to think, she may have saved some lives in the process. Sometimes what power and control look like is not being tough, being “a man” as our society has toxically defined it but asking for help. Being a real man, a real soldier could be and was here redefined.

Skewed ideas about manhood and womanhood harm us all. Issues of power and control create blind spots in some and oppress others. Another military example:

In an oped in the Washington Post, Allison Gill a U.S. Navy veteran, author and podcast-host wrote this, “Overturning Roe v. Wade could have disastrous consequences for the U.S. armed forces, and here’s how I know: When I was 21, I was drugged and raped violently while serving in the military, a crime that resulted in pregnancy.

“Had I not had access to [abortion](#), the assault would have ended my career and derailed my life. Should Roe be overturned and access to abortion restricted for female service members across the United States, military readiness would be directly affected.

“Women make up [14.4 percent](#) of our active-duty military and about 18 percent of our reserve and National Guard. Rape in the military is prevalent: In 2018, the Defense Department reported that [roughly 20,500 service members experienced sexual assault](#), up from 14,900 two years before.

“Many states have trigger laws banning or criminalizing abortion that will go into effect as soon as Roe is overturned — a probable outcome considering the Supreme Court draft opinion that [leaked earlier this month](#). This will immediately affect active-duty service members, who don’t exactly get to choose what state they serve in, and who don’t have the freedom to travel to other states without a leave “chit” approved up the chain of command — a command that is notoriously bad at dealing with the aftermath of sexual assault. Of the 20,500 service members sexually assaulted in 2018, only one-third reported the assault, and 43 percent of those who did said it was a negative experience.

“Military leaders are often averse to having sexual assault associated with their command — not to mention the rapist is often in the chain of command. This leads to situations in which it’s unsafe to report rape. And if there’s no safe space to report rape, there’s certainly no safe space to request leave to travel for abortion care. Potential workarounds such as mail-order abortion medication would most likely be unfeasible. When I served, mail went through the chain of command, and there were inspections to prevent the receipt of contraband. Although I don’t know whether abortion pills received through the mail today would be confiscated, I do know I never would have ordered them, for fear of being caught and disciplined.

“When I tried to report my rapist, I was asked the same questions so many victims have heard before: What were you wearing? Were you flirting? Are you in a fight with your boyfriend? A higher-ranking officer told me I could lose my prestigious nuclear position. He said I’d be dishonorably discharged for filing a false report and court-martialed for adultery because my rapist was married. ‘Let’s just chalk this up to what it was,’ he said. ‘Bad judgment on your part,’” [Opinion | Overturning ‘Roe’ would be disastrous for the U.S. military - The Washington Post](#).

When the men in power in our institutions such as our military and our churches blame women for men’s violence it is no wonder that that blaming trickles down into our homes. This is not the way to peace.

We remember this weekend the millions killed in the wars of our human history. My sister’s honor guard unit is on duty this week. They have one funeral they know will be larger than most. It is the funeral of Harold Billow, age 99, WWII veteran and one of the few survivors of the December 17, 1944 Malmedy massacre where German soldiers captured his unit, marched them into a field and opened fire on them. He was one of the few to survive. And what have we learned? As the Ukrainians retook Bucha it was reported that they found men with hands tied behind their backs shot in the back of the head, [‘Hands tied, they were shot to the back of the head’: Ukraine accuses Russia of war crimes \(msn.com\)](#).

I say again, at the hub of the wheel of violence; family violence, community violence, institutional violence, national violence, international violence; are issues of power and control. In order to make resolutions for peace we must address the issues of inequitable power and control. Tell your own story. Listen to the stories of others. Those are the first steps. Yes to gun control. Yes to affordable, accessible mental health care. No to bullying. No to racism. No to misogyny. If we are to truly address the issues of violence we must remake ourselves and our society. We must use our power and our control to forge not violence but peace.

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