**WHY A DEPARTMENT OF PEACEBUILDING**

**2020 TALKING/RELEVANCE POINTS**

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*We, of the Peace Alliance National Department of Peacebuilding Committee, are convinced that* ***laws, law enforcement, and armies cannot bring peace*** *to our families, communities, nation or the world* ***without addressing the fundamental root causes of unrest and violence within ourselves and our institutions****.*

**Investments in War and Peace**

*“A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.”*

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

**The U.S. has been at war 226 of the 244 years since 1776.**  The human, economic, and environmental costs of these wars have considerable repercussions and effects that we will continue to reap for generations.

**There are 15 military colleges in the U.S. plus ROTC** programs at many high schools and colleges.  **There are no federal peace colleges**, though the U.S. Institute of Peace offers courses for peacebuilding practitioners.

**The enacted budget for fiscal year 2020 totaled $4.829 trillion**. **The Defense Department was allocated $721.5 billion**. However, studies that seek to define the “national security” budget – which includes the military, and also veterans’ affairs, homeland security, and similar expenses – can easily arrive at estimates approaching or exceeding $1.25 trillion per year or 25.9 percent of the entire U.S. budget and 23 percent of our U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

- *Project On Government Oversight (POGO), National Priorities Project, World Bank*

**The Department of State and US Agency for International Development** (**AID) was allocated $52.5 billion** or about 11 percentof the entire budget and includes funds for:

\* diplomacy \* international peacekeeping

\* the Peace Corps \* the interagency Global Fragility

\* U.S. Institute for Peace \* the Complex Crises Fund

\* the Stabilization and Prevention Fund

The Department of State, which some say acts as the U.S. Peace Department, also includes funds for:

\* international military education and training \* foreign military financing

\* international narcotics control and law enforcement.

– *The State Department*

*We support the peacebuilding efforts of the State Department but say that funding of foreign militaries and diplomacy that involves arms trading is not peacebuilding. Also, the State Department does not deal with domestic peacebuilding.*

*“We wouldn’t kick a car to make it go. If something were wrong with it, we would figure out which system wasn’t working and why: How is it not working? Does it turn on a little? Are the wheels spinning in mud? Does the battery need recharging? Are gas and air getting through? Like kicking the car, an approach to conflict that relies on military solutions does not figure things out: It does not distinguish between the causes of violence and does not address aggressive and defensive motivations*.”

* Kristin Christman, in *Paradigm for Peace*

**The Good News about Peace Education**

*The U.S. Department of Peacebuilding Act (HR 1111) provides for development of a peace education curriculum that includes studies of the patriarchal structure of society and the inherent violence of such structure in the shaping of relationships and institutions.*

**Restorative justice practices showed a marked improvement** in student behavior, discipline, attendance, school climate and safety, and academic outcomes in U.S. schools across the nation in sixteen (16) of eighteen (18) research studies.

*- 2019 updated research review by the WestEd Justice & Prevention Research Center*

The **rate** **of violence at one school dropped 70%** when Kingian Nonviolence training was instituted for teachers and students at North Lawndale College Preparatory High in gang territory on Chicago's West Side.  That was against the backdrop of a continued high rate of violence in the city and documented in an article entitled Chicago's Peace Warriors by Kazu Haga in the Chicago Tribune.

**Classes in peace and conflict studies are offered at 293 U.S. colleges and universities**. The first undergraduate degree program at an American university was established in 1948. Nearly all other programs began in the 1970s or later.

- [*www.PeaceColleges.com*](http://www.PeaceColleges.com)

**Personal Peacebuilding Momentum**

**Awareness of Interdependence** among most Americans is increasing during this pandemic as we see the effects on our own lives from the actions of others here and around the globe. Our definition of essential workers has grown to include farmworkers, truck drivers, trash collectors and more. Neighbors helping neighbors are being celebrated as heroes. This growing awareness is, itself, contagious.

*“As health and society are so closely related, learning about society tells us about health, and learning about health tells us about society.”*

-social epidemiologist and health scientist Professor Richard Wilkinson

**Understanding of systemic violence is increasing** as a result of reading books, listening to podcasts, participating in zoom classes, and sharing on social media what we are learning about racism and other societal and person forms of discrimination. On the New York Times Best Seller’s List are *Caste, Just Mercy* and *How to Be an Antiracist.* Among the most popular books requested at U.S. libraries are *How to Be an Antiracist*and *Talking to Strangers*.  Among the most popular books sold on Amazon are *White Fragility, How to Be an Antiracist, Becoming,* and *Just Mercy.*

 *– Several best seller lists*

"In a young effort to create peace, society often invests in violence prevention strategies, mistaking the two as the same …. We must invest in peace creation.  We have to teach people the skills necessary to create peace in their lives and in their communities.”

*-*Kazu Haga, Kingian nonviolence trainer

**Meditation and Yoga practice is increasing among U.S. adults.** The use of yoga increased from 9.5 percent to 14.3 percent, while the use of meditation increased more than threefold from 4.1 percent in 2012 to 14.2 percent in 2017.

– *CDC Center for Health Statistics*

**Community Peacebuilding Momentum**

**The Black Lives Matter protests** are estimated to be the largest political campaign in U.S. history, with [10 percent](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/03/us/george-floyd-protests-crowd-size.html) of the population attending across all 50 states. Recent [polls show](https://www.monmouth.edu/polling-institute/reports/monmouthpoll_us_060220/) that 76 percent of Americans now consider racism and discrimination a “big problem.”

- *8/16/20 article by Sarah Souli in Politico*

"All war is unmetabolized grief."  -Martin Prechtel

**Majorities of Americans do believe these (social media) sites are** very or somewhat **important** for accomplishing a range of political goals, such as getting politicians to pay attention to issues (69% of Americans feel these platforms are important for this purpose) or creating sustained movements for social change (67%).

 – *Pew Research Center*

**Americans are demanding change, transformational cultural change - - the very change supported by a U.S. Department of Peacebuilding** as embodied in HR 1111 by Representative Barbara Lee. Across the country and globe, people have been writing letters to editors, posting signs, sharing stories, taking part in nonviolent protests and learning about sexism, racism, discrimination, restorative justice, equity and equality.  This cabinet-level Department of Peacebuilding would propose, promote, and facilitate field-tested solutions to problems of domestic and international conflict.

*Positive peace is filled with positive content such as restoration of relationships, the creation of social systems that serve the needs of the whole population and the constructive resolution of conflict, a*ccording to the founder of peace studies, Johan Galtung.

**Among Many Congressional Peacebuilding Actions**

**The Global Fragility Interagency** was enacted in December of 2019. The new agency within the Department of State will create the first-ever comprehensive U.S. government strategy to tackle and prevent spiraling global conflict.

A proposed **Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Commission** would have a broad advisory goal, asking the United States to address a legacy of oppression beginning 400 years ago with slavery. It would then offer recommendations to catalyze progress in education, health care, employment, Social Security and veteran benefits, land ownership, financial assistance, food security, wages, voting rights, the justice system, and many other tenets of American life distorted by the lasting impacts of racism.

– *H.Res. 990, H.Con.Res.100*

**Environmental Peacebuilding**

**The United Nations is working together on 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) to transform our world:** Ending poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, Industry/Innovation/Infrastructure, reduced inequality, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, climate action, healthy life below water, healthy life on land, peace and justice strong institutions, and partnerships to achieve these goals.

 – *United Nations*

**Many businesses and organizations are implementing sustainability measures** today for a number of reasons, including making a positive impact on their communities, as well as improving profits and reputations, and retaining employees.

*-* [*U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*](https://www.bls.gov/green/sustainability/sustainability.htm)

**Successful low tech environmental strategies are being created** around the world: BioSand Filters (BSFs) made of wood are a water purification solutionthat use sand, gravel, and natural biological processes to filter out contaminants in water, making it safe for drinking. Solar-powered tools provided a reliable alternative, supplying lighting, refrigeration, home cooling and cellular recharging. People are working together to plant millions of trees and changing their environment. U.S. hardware stores and NBC News are telling people to filter smoky air in their homes by attaching a HEPA filter to a fan.

 – [*www.ohorizons.org*](http://www.ohorizons.org)*, Bay Area NBC News*

**People who spent two hours a week in green space reported feeling better**. In a [study](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-019-44097-3) of 20,000 people, people who spend two hours a week in local parks or other natural environments, either all at once or spaced over several visits — were substantially more likely to report good health and psychological well-being than those who don’t.

 – Matthew White of the European Centre for Environment & Human Health at the University of Exeter

**Globally Speaking**

**The global economic impact of violence** was $14.5 trillion PPP in 2019, equivalent to 10.6 percent of global GDP or $1,909 per person**.** The U.S. ranks 121 on 23 peace indicators among 163 nations, according to Vision of Humanity's 2020 Global Peace Index.

**Nonviolent resistance was twice as successful as armed resistance and resulted in more stable democracies** with less chance of reverting to civil and international violence. In short, nonviolence works better than war.

*– researcher and Harvard Professor, Erica Chenowith*

**2020 World Happiness Report** is based on the year 2019, in which the scores are based on individuals’ own assessments of their lives on a survey by positioning themselves on a ladder from 0 to 10 in response to questions, with the top representing the best possible and the bottom the worst possible life for themselves.  **The U.S. is in 18th place**, one spot higher than last year, although still well below its 11th place ranking seven years ago (based on 2012) in the first *World Happiness Report.*

**48 countries have benefitted from Truth and Reconciliation Commissions.**

**Over 250 Cities of Peace** have been established in 57 countries on 6 continents.

 - [*www.InternationalCitiesofPeace.org/*](http://www.InternationalCitiesofPeace.org/)

**Almost half of the respondents across 14 tracking countries considered themselves more as global citizens than citizens of their country** in a 2016 survey.

*-* [*http://globescan.com/news-and-analysis/press-releases/press-releases2016/103-press-*releases-2016/383-global-citizenship-a-growing-sentiment-among-citizens-ofemergingeconomies-global-poll.html](http://globescan.com/news-and-analysis/press-releases/press-releases2016/103-press-releases-2016/383-global-citizenship-a-growing-sentiment-among-citizens-ofemergingeconomies-global-poll.html)

**The 2016 Happy Planet Index** **rated the U.S. 108 among 140 nations** based on how satisfied the residents of each country say they feel with life overall on a scale from zero to ten on a [Gallup World Poll](http://www.gallup.com/services/170945/world-poll.aspx), the life expectancy of its citizens, the inequalities experienced by people within a country related to how long they live and how happy they feel and the average ecological footprint that each resident of a country places on the environment.

- *www.HappyPlanetIndex.org*

**The Charter for Compassion is active in 51 countries in the world**, including the United States. These communities, both large and small, pledge to nurture compassion born of deep interdependence as being essential to human relationships and to a fulfilled humanity.

- w[*ww.CharterforCompassion.org*](http://www.CharterforCompassion.org)

The emergence of a global civil society is creating new opportunities to build a democratic and humane world. Our environmental, economic, political, social, and spiritual challenges are interconnected, and together we can forge inclusive solutions.

- from Preamble to the Earth Charter