



# Pax Scotia

## Issue 36

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## Peace, War - and Education

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community education  
lecturer at the University of  
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board member of Peace  
Education Scotland.  
The cat is Luci...*



As a board member of Peace Education Scotland\* I never fail to be shocked at how small a profile and how few resources the organisation has. It makes me wonder what kind of country I live in, whether that is understood as Scotland or within the context of an increasingly dis-United Kingdom that invests so little in education orientated towards peace. The fact that I live in a 'Kingdom' at all I find hugely problematic and for me the lines of connection to be drawn between hereditary injustice, perpetual war and the wider causes of the war being waged against nature seem all too clear.

I was a child growing up in Scotland during the Vietnam War and I remember vividly the picture of children fleeing the napalm bombing by the US Forces. I now wonder how children in this country either fleeing war themselves or seeing it reported on the news or social media, process the continued madness of armed conflict that remains so profitable for some and so ruinous for so many.

Having recently become a lecturer in community education and hailing from a family of educators, I find I am in almost constant dialogue with myself trying to make sense of the world in which I live and how to find some solid ground in an ever more torrid sea of conflict and confusion. Some might find faith provides such a foundation but for me the horrors of the world have never made me consider that a benign spirit exists beyond our understanding. What gives me faith is the knowledge that although the history of our world is steeped in indescribable pain and violence it is also a history of sacrifice and indomitable love.

This brings me to the focus of these words and back to the discussion of the role of education in the promotion and production of peace within and between communities. The fact that despite the Scottish Government refresh of the Learning for Sustainability Action Plan (the umbrella term where Peace Education is nominally situated under the title of the document "Target 2030"), 'A movement for people, planet and prosperity' tells you all you need to know. 'Prosperity' not 'peace' is still understood as a key driver of education policy.

***This appalling short sightedness and ignorance of the existential dangers of the times in which we live risk condemning young people in school to at least another decade of market orientated 'learnification'.***

As an example of a hugely more comprehensive, coherent and relevant conception of the nature of transformative thinking required by educators at all levels and across the world, I would recommend UNESCO's Futures of Education Report\*\* It is clear that our national education policy is not safe in the hands of our current political and bureaucratic leadership, therefore it is up to civic society to play a more active and effective role in highlighting the current deficiencies and offer potential positive alternative policy approaches. Watch this space.

Mark Langdon

\* <https://www.peaceeducationscotland.org/>

\*\* <https://www.unesco.org/en/futures-education>

*Back in January 2017 Pope Francis's message for the celebration of the 50th World Day Of Peace was entitled 'Nonviolence: a Style of Politics for Peace'. He wrote 'When victims of violence are able to resist the temptation to retaliate, they become the most credible promoters of nonviolent peacemaking. In the most local and ordinary situations and in the international order, may nonviolence become the hallmark of our decisions, our relationships and our actions, and indeed of political life in all its forms.' Can that work in Ukraine? Eli McCarthy says yes...*



# One Human Family

*Eli S. McCarthy PhD teaches in the Peace Studies programme at George Washington University. He has authored many publications on peace and nonviolence, and participates in national religious advocacy coalitions mobilising community leaders, and working to enhance U.S. policy in emerging peacebuilding practices and vision. Eli has worked in Haiti with the poor, with the homeless in Boston and Washington DC & has monitored Palestinian Elections with the Nonviolent Peaceforce. Here he writes about his Ukrainian nonviolence experience.*

I recently participated in a Ukrainian course on rethinking peacebuilding to learn with those in the throes of war. Together we acknowledged the deep, generational trauma of ongoing violence and war. We acknowledged the intense suffering of the Ukrainians.

We heard a Ukrainian professor, Dr. Pavlo Smytsnyuk explain the critical significance and challenge during war to lean away from de-humanisation of the adversary or enemy. In other words, how do we re-humanise and act in accord with human dignity during hostile conflict and violence?

This is a mutually critical and transformative process. As far as we **de**-humanise the other, we also de-humanise ourselves. As far as we **re**-humanise others, we also re-humanise ourselves. The former leans us away from just peace, and the latter draws us into just peace.

For example, a Russian named Konstantin fled to Uzbekistan during the war. He noticed many other Russians suffering from fleeing the war, so he invited them to breakfast. He also noticed Ukrainian refugees nearby and invited *them* to breakfast. In these encounters of breaking bread and discussion, these communities

re-humanised each other and lived the way of just peace. Another Russian named Evengii fled to Georgia. He began collecting medical supplies and goods for Ukrainian refugees. His group built a coalition of 150 Russian organisations against the war. Andre lives in Kyiv and has family members still in Russia. He has gathered Russian diaspora members in the region to participate in an anti-war communication initiative to impact key sectors of Russian civil society. Andre argues that there are tens of millions in Russia against the war.

Part of the re-humanisation process in this war is recognition of the extent to which Russians have participated in numerous anti-war protests, and at least 19,000 have been arrested. Journalists have interrupted and resigned from state TV. Nearly 100,000 Russians from a variety of sectors have signed petitions to end the war. Russians from all parts of society have spoken out against the war — from members of the military, the foreign ministry community, and local government to members of the Russian oil industry and billionaires, as well as nearly 300 Russian Orthodox clerics. Meanwhile, early on over 500 Russian soldiers refused to take part and those numbers continue to grow into the thousands. Over 1300 people immediately risked arrest in September 2022 while another 370,000 left the

*Dr Eli S. McCarthy has worked with Pax Christi International to further nonviolent action in Ukraine.*



country when the Russian government announced a partial military mobilisation.

This process of re-humanisation also arises through many of the nonviolent actions by courageous Ukrainians. A research report came out in early October 2022 recording over 235 nonviolent actions through the first five months of the war in 2022. These were only the tip of the iceberg. They found that nonviolent resistance hindered some of the long-term military and political goals of the Russian authorities, such as the institutionalisation of the military occupation and repression in the occupied territories. Nonviolent action has protected many civilians, undermined the Russian narrative, built community resilience, and strengthened local governance. During a trip to Ukraine in August 2022, one of the Ukrainian conflict monitors we met in Kharkiv said that in the occupied areas where nonviolent resistance was the primary method, this approach lowered the Russian repression. In the regions primarily using violent resistance, this approach led to more repression.

Smytsnyuk explains that avoiding de-humanisation entails recognising that the enemy is also a human being. We might also consider that re-humanisation is a recognition of the other as a fellow child of God and that we are one human family, i.e., one Body of Christ. Smytsnyuk's call to re-humanisation seems to be a critical praxis during war to help break the dynamics of violence and cultivate a just peace.

*Eli S. McCarthy*

**\*See links P4**



# Colour Concious?

## Can we do it for peace?

*June Graham (a Pax Christi member) is a writer and early years officer. She was awarded a Gaelic New Writers Award in 2019 by the Gaelic Books Council and Scottish Books Trust. She also writes a bilingual blog on books, particularly Gaelic ones at [JuneGraham.wordpress.com](http://JuneGraham.wordpress.com). Her current research for her biography of Black writer Vincent O Carter took her to the United States, where she found that the racism that dogged Carter decades ago is still rampant, still threatening peace.*

Recently I spent two weeks in Kansas City researching for a biography of the African American writer Vincent O. Carter who was born there in 1924. It took a trip to the U.S. for me to begin to understand the extent of the racism which the Carter family faced when he was young as well as the degree to which historic racism still affects American society.

Ron Walton, president of the Lincoln High alumni association, showed me around the school which Carter attended. It was opened in 1936 after a long campaign by the black community to get better school facilities and was one of only two high schools open to Black students in Kansas City. Most of the Blacks lived in an area close to the two high schools as other parts of the city were off limits. Although this had many disadvantages, such as over-crowding, it also resulted in a vibrant black community which is vividly depicted in Carter's novel 'Such Sweet Thunder.' Ron shared a memory of his mother tightly clutching his hand if they left their own community to attend to business in the segregated downtown area of the city.

One highlight for me was taking the dividing lines driving tour of Kansas City. We started in the leafy and predominantly white suburb of Mission Hills where the median household income is one of the highest in America. From there, we passed through rundown, predominantly Black neighbourhoods where house prices had been depressed by government red zoning and by estate agents encouraging white residents to move out as soon as a Black family moved into the street. Highways were often ploughed through Black communities dividing them from the rest of the city.

I also met Alvin Brooks, a 91-year-old community leader, who talked about being frequently stopped and searched by police when he was a young man. When he was young, Blacks were expected to work in service jobs and although he became a police officer he was given no opportunities for promotion.



Right:  
**June  
Graham**  
Left:  
**Vincent  
O Carter**



*Alvin gave me a message to take back to Scotland.*

He said that since minorities will never have enough voting power to effect change by themselves, it is up to the white community to find out who makes up their community and ask minorities what they need. He asks us to practice colour **consciousness** rather than colour blindness. This could seem challenging or even overwhelming, but Alvin recommends faith as the foundation for change. In his memoir 'Binding us together' it is clear that faith has enabled him to make changes in his own community, such as founding the Ad-hoc group against crime.

At the end of my trip I visited Lincoln University in Pennsylvania where Carter studied. The librarian showed me a letter he wrote to the dean in 1949 saying he hoped to write plays. He expressed a similar wish after completing 'Such Sweet Thunder' in 1963. This was a poignant moment for me, knowing as I did, that when he could not find a publisher for his novel, he became discouraged and eventually gave up writing. 'Such Sweet Thunder' was not published until 2003, 20 years after Carter's death. The librarian, a young Black woman, said, "This still happens all the time; people are prevented from meeting their potential."

*June Graham*

## Our website

Blogs, podcasts, past and future events – these are all on our Pax Christi Scotland website. All newsletters are archived there. You can pay your annual membership fee on the Membership page and make donations. Please explore and share:

<https://www.paxchristiscotland.org>

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## YouTube Channel

You can find recordings of all our events at:

[https://www.youtube.com/](https://www.youtube.com/@paxchristiscotland)

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# Peace Events: August - The Bomb September 7: Holy Land

August is a month when we remember the indescribable devastation caused by the US bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki - bombings which may have been a ploy to prevent the Russians moving into Japan (see Marian Pallister's article in the latest edition of *Open House*).

There are mixed opinions about the new film, *Oppenheimer*, the story of the man who is called 'the father of the atomic bomb'. It is certainly informative, but *Oppenheimer* can never be seen as a hero by those of us who work for peace.

There are commemorative events in August around Scotland and online:

Pax Christi Scotland member Rev David Mumford says there will be a short vigil service at **12.15 on Sunday August 6th** at the peace pole in the grounds of **St. Anne's church, Westgate, Dunbar**. This marks the 78th anniversary of the dropping of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

The women's peace group, Horties, is celebrating 40 years of its existence with an event from midday on **Saturday 5th August** at the **Womens' Library, 23 Landressy St, Bridgeton, Glasgow G40 1BP**. At 1.30pm there will be a Nonviolent Direct Action (NVDA) Workshop. Book at <https://womenslibrary.org.uk/event/horties-at-forty-herstories-of-campaigning-for-peace/>.

Scottish CND have an online event on Tuesday August 8 at 7.30pm. <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86512319089?pwd=TUZnV0NKcDIOMmY2N2t5aDVHdi84QT09> (Meeting ID: 865 1231 9089, Passcode: 545975). Linda Pentz Gunter will argue that it was racism that fundamentally underpinned the decision to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki - another interesting theory.

## Pax Christi Scotland:

### The way forward to peace in the Holy Land

We will follow up our online event The Holy Land: Seeking a nonviolent future (recording now on the website) with a presentation on Thursday, September 7 (7pm UK time) by a member of the organisation Breaking the Silence, which aims to bring an end to the occupation. We will hear the personal experience of a former Israeli soldier who served in the occupied territories. Register at: [https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0ocO2tqD8pHdQOFj2\\_D\\_k10Xm4J9TtOe\\_](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0ocO2tqD8pHdQOFj2_D_k10Xm4J9TtOe_)

### Some background information from Dr Eli S. McCarthy:

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Uliana Pavlova, "Russian soldiers sent to prison for refusing to fight in Ukraine," *CNN*, May 10, 2023, [https://www.cnn.com/europe/live-news/russia-ukraine-war-news-05-10-23/h\\_1faeb1f03b8ee153cb638dc819f4f05](https://www.cnn.com/europe/live-news/russia-ukraine-war-news-05-10-23/h_1faeb1f03b8ee153cb638dc819f4f05).

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Felip Daza, "Ukrainian Nonviolence Civil Resistance in the Face of War," Oct. 2022, <https://www.icip.cat/ca/un-informe-de-licip-i-novact-documenta-235-experiencies-de-resistencia-noviolenta-a-ucraina/>

E. McCarthy, "Looking past war with a just peace framework," in *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*, Oct. 11, 2022, <https://conversationsmagazine.org/looking-past-war-using-a-just-peace-framework-19e26c30b376>. E. McCarthy, "War in Ukraine: Christian Accompaniment and Turning to Diplomacy," in *Templeton Foundation blog*, Mar. 16, 2023, <https://williamtemplefoundation.org.uk/war-in-ukraine/>. Catholic Nonviolence Initiative resources on Ukraine, <https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/2022/06/16/ukraine/>.

[williamtemplefoundation.org.uk/war-in-ukraine/](https://williamtemplefoundation.org.uk/war-in-ukraine/). Catholic Nonviolence Initiative resources on Ukraine, <https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/2022/06/16/ukraine/>