

Editorial—

Aging Gracefully

When a writer cannot think of what to write, we call it “writer’s block.” So, when an author has too many things to say, I suppose we would call it “writer’s jumble.” So I confess up front that in introducing this volume of JITP I’m nearly overwhelmed by writer’s jumble. Even with all the rambling ideas, the one statement that wins out over all the rest is this: “This world we live in just gets better and better.”

Although these are my words, I’m rather shocked to write them. First, my orientation as the “researcher/scholar” is always more than a bit skeptical, particularly when claims are made that an improvement over the past has been found. Second, it is rather obvious to any observer that our world is embroiled in turmoil. The face of Africa is pocked with in episodic pustules of genocide. The Arab world boils with a fury of violence, seasoned with seething hatred, served with ample misery and the suffering of the innocent. Korea, divided for fifty years by mutual distrust, still “done in” from just a few years of righteous warfare in the 50’s, threatens to awake from its nap of uneasy piece into a nightmare of confused hatred and retribution. The United States, home for many of our readers, struggles with itself as it toys with curtailing its long-cherished freedoms to protect those very freedoms from threat of violence. The customary pursuit of happiness is interrupted by cries of wretchedness and despair unresolved by humankind and time. And the pursuit of greed, graft, and general dishonesty by leaders in business and industry is sickening in a scale hereto unthinkable.

How can this add up to a conclusion that we live in a world that's getting better and better? In one way, it doesn't. I cannot defend one single act of hate, one cry of a single hungry child, or the witness of the subservience of even one person so that the haughty greed of others can be satisfied. Let's face it though, the world has never known a time free of injustice. Our turn at making history is not so different in some ways, but there are a few significant points: There is less suffering now than in any time in history. War is increasingly an unacceptable alternative. Might doesn't make right with the same voracity of the past. Attempts at genocide bring international condemnation. People dream of peace with a grim reality of how difficult that goal will be to achieve.

True, our tools for justice, decency, kindness, integrity, and peace are woefully inadequate for the demands of the times. True, our skills in the arts of war exceed our efforts in the arts of peace. True, our commitment to the ideals of freedom and justice *for all* wavers frequently. True, the world does not share a commitment to usher in an epoch of profound goodness and an unbridled determination for all of the world's people to share our universal human rights.

But we are working on it.

We can see a time where we recognize hate for what it really is and recognize what it really does. Never has there been a time where so many have taken peace so seriously as today. Our perceptual tradition can play tricks on us as we look only toward our destination without looking back to our point of departure. A hundred years ago, my own country, the United States, was officially pursuing the North American aborigines, herding them into reservations, and slaughtering those that refused, all in the name of manifest destiny . . . the nation's leaders and its teeming immigrating population had a calling and felt they were ultimately

ordained by God to rule from ocean to ocean...and beyond. Americans, acting “independently” of their government, deposed the queen of Hawaii and requested annexation to the United States. The United States debated the annexation of Cuba and the Philippines going so far as to fight battles in both countries to gain an advantage in negotiations. Americans were participating in economic occupation of China, actually fought to protect the economic partitioning of China, yet ended up standing beside China to prevent its desolution.

One hundred years ago our nation’s meatpacking plants were selling beef, with liberal amounts of ground up rats, to an unsuspecting public. Standard Oil was eliminating the vestiges of free enterprise in the emerging petroleum industry while practicing “free enterprise.” Ten year old children worked 14 hour days in the nation’s factories, usually at great physical risk of harm and under unforgiving conditions. Jim Crow had a legal hold on society although de facto segregation was already a social fixture of American life. Oh yes, women were struggling to get to vote. It seems that many of our nation’s decision-makers distrusted the feminine influence on our nation’s policies. Not to leave out our international readers, the whole world was in a “subjugate or be subjugated paradigm.” Justice, as we understand it today, was certainly a vision for only the wild-eyed radicals and crazy folks. I hope JITP readers are among today’s wild-eyed radicals and crazy folks...at least crazy enough to focus their attention on what our world will look like one hundred years hence. . .if the invitation is extended and accepted. Our visions today will determine the status of the world one hundred years hence.

As a world community we are increasingly recognizing that the security of one depends on the sanctity of all. Our steps at peace are certainly unsure; but certainly there are more of them. Just as we watch with excitement our toddlers’ first stuttering steps to bipedal mobility, we are thrilled with the progress. . .even though

there are falls and crashes, our toddler gains balance and walks boldly into a world filled with sudden risks and constant dangers. Our world society is taking its first faltering steps toward international caring, albeit, our society may be a slow learner considering the urgency the task. Some of those first steps toward a universal goodness are found in this edition of JITP. Tiny steps surely, but steps that accumulate, enlighten, and will ultimately improve our collective condition on this planet.

The first article is not baby step, but a powerful theoretical piece on the role of the helper and where the line, the “net,” of respect and self-determination resides in the counselor-client relationship. Bill Stafford, an invitational education founder and “long marcher” examines the issues involved in “respecting the net” and how to help while respecting and nurturing the dignity of those who troubles impair their judgment. Regardless of your answer to that nagging issue, I think you’ll find his analysis will launch hours of contemplation about what a helper does and does not do for others.

Our second piece comes from “down under” out of the glistening green islands of New Zealand. While we are ending summer, New Zealanders are experiencing the cold of midwinter and the warmth of the suggestions in this article is well timed. Patsy Paxton examines how our electronic communication, which permitted Patsy and I to communicate several times a day (for free, even), can be made more inviting and the “cold impersonal electrons” can be warmed a bit and trained to be considerably more inviting. My own university students, who receive a good bit of instruction from electronic media, liked Patsy’s ideas and we are using them even though we are primarily a face-to-face endeavor. I think that is adequate testimony to the value of her contribution. Enjoy.

Our third piece is from your JITP editor, Phil Riner, and examines the prominent data in effective classroom management and how it

correlates with basic premises of invitational education. I tried to examine some of the misconceptions that researchers have regarding invitational education as it relates to self-concept theory and connect invitational theory to the empirical findings of effective management. Good management supports efforts to give expression to the untapped potential in our students. By using Kathleen Cotton's widely referenced summary of research that supports learning, I examine the widely developed and replicated empirical support for invitational education premises, how the research forms a "version" of the inviting "vision," and how these ideas can be employed readily in today's classrooms.

Our final two pieces are empirical investigations into the inner workings of invitational theory and how invitational theory manifests itself in daily life. Phillip Rice publishes his first research with an examination of a state university system's willingness to assist schools in locating university graduates for teaching positions. One increasingly important aspect of the university is using its reputation to assist marketing graduates as they search for jobs. This activity, an inviting expression for both graduates and the community the state university is to serve, may be taken for granted. However, Phillip finds that inviting ideas have not reached all corners of the university. There is work to be done.

Richard Egley presents an investigation of the relationship between the professionally and personally inviting behaviors of high school principals in the state with teacher job satisfaction, perceived principal effectiveness, the principal's Invitational Quotient, and a measure of school quality used by state agencies. To wit, in a complex work environment, would inviting characteristics of a principal be related to outcomes valued by state decision makers and others. Richard is providing the type of examination needed to convince skeptics that inviting behavior is not just an appropriate psychological stance to help children grow

morally healthy, but how to build an effective school and school curriculum.

I hope this edition will prove to be enjoyable and thoughtful reading.

Phil Riner
Editor