

# AUTOETHNOGRAPHY: MY PATH TOWARD PEACE EDUCATION

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I consider myself to be a person sentenced to optimism; I believe in people's humanity and that we must seek it beyond surfaced ideologies. I believe that peace education can help bridge community divides and advance reconciliation, trust-building, and consensus. I also believe that peace education can strengthen social cohesion, reduce tensions among communities, and contribute to peaceful coexistence. I have confidence that peace and peacebuilding can be cultivated and learned, so we can live in a culture of peace, civility, and harmony. As Nelson Mandela did, I too, believe in the power of education to change the world, eradicate hatred, transcend stereotypes and prejudices, eliminate inequality, reduce poverty, sustain the planet, and foster peace.

Where does my stubborn optimism in peace education came from? It is a valid question, considering that I come from Moldova, one of the most fragile countries in Eastern Europe. It is a waning democracy with a government that has become increasingly authoritarian, where daily attacks on the press and the political opposition have become the norm, and where the economy has become overly dependent upon imports and has been devastated by corrupt politicians since its independence in 1991. Regrettably, in these 27 years, the Republic of Moldova has not seen big changes in the social mentality, so we are still captive to the post-Soviet mindset. It is a country that has inherited a "frozen conflict" since its independence (the case of Transnistria), in which a part of the country is not actually free, being been co-opted by Russia (Stefanick, 2018). The Moldovan people's trust in the new class of well-educated politicians from across the political spectrum fell, leading to mass distrust and a fulminant migration—an exodus of people the likes of which the country had never seen before. Nevertheless, I'm optimistic because I believe in *humanness*, because I have faith in *humanity*, in the nobility of the human spirit and its wisdom and in the kind heart of people.

I also believe in human storytelling as one of the best forms of communication to present my understanding of peace and violence through my life experience, connecting different sequences to produce meaningful conclusions for curriculum. I will try to tell my story of how I came to make important life decisions, based on good reasons emerging from mine and my family members' life stories. This is my narrative of place, love, peace, community, and family that marks the way place steps in to a perception of peace-building and peace education. It is also an intersection of identity, ethnicity, culture, geography, age, gender, and education that influences how I make place of peace and peace education built on love and trust in humanity.

## LESSONS LEARNED FROM MY FATHER AND FROM MY SON

"What can you do to promote world peace? Go home and love your family."

-Mother Teresa

With the help of this quote, I want to argue that peace begins at home in a family, then flows through our neighborhood or community, whole village or town, spreading to the whole region, state, or country, finally leading to world peace or global peace. I

have noticed similar cases of domestic violence in my neighborhood or community as those that I experienced in my childhood home, so this story is not only my story. It is an interwoven story from many strands of stories and vicissitudes of beloved members of my family that I tried to engage in “complicated conversation” about curriculum (Pinar, 2012, p. i). It is not a story of violence, but a story of making sense of violence and its harmful, physical, or emotional acts and roots, and “finding peace in the chaos” (Mingé & Sterner, 2014, p. 44) of the world around us, and reflecting, understanding, and finding my role as an educator of a young generation. It is my unchained, liberated voice speaking from the periphery of the educational field that comes from a young democracy in Eastern Europe. It is also the power and privilege to use my timid and unconfident speech of a rookie scholar of curriculum studies in the Ivy League, living in these unprecedented times. I will attempt, then, to share the meaning and insights gained from those experiences and how they have influenced me as a high-school social studies teacher, a public-school vice principal, and later as an international PhD student and scholar to (re)construct my “subjective experience of the present” (Pinar, 2017, p. 1).

Why are people violent and what are the sources of human violence? I started asking myself these questions from my early childhood when I faced its very first acts. I wanted to understand the roots of violence, whether it was domestic violence at home or bullying and verbal violence (from both teachers and students) at school. Every time my father came home drunk, he was physically and psychologically violent toward us, my mom, my brother, and me. In those days, we found refuge in my mother’s parents’ house. From them, I learned what the notions of forgiveness and “man of humanity” mean. I have learned that humanity embodies many qualities, such as mercy, humility, devotion, sensitivity to the sorrows and pains of others, nobility, generosity, honesty, kindness, gentleness, charity, sacrifice, indulgence, and ... forgiveness. Peace must come from within, I concluded. My grandparents taught me how to find strength to understand and forgive my father, looking for “rational,” “logical” explanations (if there are such) for his “unhappy” behavior. My child’s mind tried to grasp how violence could be rational.

My grandparents shared their stories about the horrors of WWII and the following years of famine, sovietization, forced collectivization, and deportation. It is still difficult to digest my family stories. As many others during the war, both my father’s and mother’s families were forced to leave their homes and go into hiding in protected places with their minor children, running from the wretchedness of the world. Then, the post-war heavy times came, with drought, famine, scarcity, and cannibalism. In the fall of 1944, my father’s dad died (we do not know exactly how) while in the custody of the NKVD (the Soviet government department that had come to serve as Stalin’s secret police) at concentration camp #33 near Bălți, in the northern part of Moldova, so my father grew up as a fatherless orphan. He was forced to learn to survive from early childhood by trial and error, educating himself without having a role-model of what it means to be a “good dad.” He grew up without any spiritual education either, since all religions were prohibited, and most churches and monasteries were closed in Soviet times. He had a dramatic life that left an unforgettable imprint on his psyche, shaping his identity and personality. By telling me stories about the war, my grandparents were trying to cultivate in me a sense of compassion and pity. I guess this helped me to understand and forgive my father. But, still, I had a feeling that all of these experiences did not give him the right to unload his bitterness and frustration on others, nor should similarly negative experiences be an excuse for anyone.

Going back to the topic of human violence, I remember, as a teenager, trying to

understand the different impact that violent conflicts, such as war and its atrocities, can have on people's behavior and actions. Years of war and hunger leave a deep trace in the life of anyone who experiences them, including those in Moldova. Still, I was wondering why and how one person can move on with love of life, love of God, love of people, with hope, power, and joy, but another may fail to find those marks. My grandfather, Grigore, managed to learn through his experiences of ruthless war (as a soldier, a refugee, a prisoner of war) and a post-war life of trials that every morning is a blessing. I wished that my father would learn to live with respect toward life itself and toward people too.

We exist in what I call the transitory radical, a liminal space that moves us violently and locally from one "place" to another. The transitory radical is a liminal space that has no beginning, no clear ending, and yet is marked by radical shift in perspective of place and desire. We stand on the jagged threshold, at the mercy of healing toxins and doctors, to move us from this place into another safely, soundly, and without permanent injury. (Mingé & Sterner, 2014, p. 44-45)

Violence in our family had a cyclic process: after violent explosions, a period of calm and reconciliation usually came, giving us a sense of hope that it would not happen again, but soon after, other waves of violent behavior would follow. Over time, these acts of anger became more frequent and serious and the gentle periods briefer. We had to learn how to predict them, trying to guess his mood that day, in what disposition he would come home, what kind of strategies we should use, and how best to withdraw and find refuge. We also had to be careful to keep this secret, not letting our neighbors and co-villagers to know about it. It was a source of shame.

I wondered why my mother did not divorce. Later, I found out that she wanted to do it immediately after the first month of living together with my father, when she was already pregnant with me, intending to abort to get rid of any memory of her failed marriage. I was deeply troubled finding that it was my beloved grandpa, Grigore, who told her that this was a big shame for the entire family and the village—divorce was not in vogue those days. It was almost a taboo, and women were forced to accept their fate. My grandpa told my mom that, since she had made her decision to marry my father against his will, she must accept the consequences.

Reflecting on this phenomenon, I realized that violence is a learned behavior, and the perpetrator him/herself is the cause of domestic violence, not the consumption of alcohol. It is certainly not the victim's fault. It is the behavior that we choose. It is our conscious choice how to behave and act. There are different, healthy ways to deal with stress, problems, and conflict, but my father was not always capable of finding them (or, was not educated in how to find them). Thus, the alcohol was the easiest way for him to drown the bitterness of life.

I began to wonder if the abuse and violence was a family normality in our culture and society. I started looking around me, my relatives, my neighbors, my classmates' families, my teachers, to prove or disprove my theory. What is the real societal norm: to have a healthy, friendly, loving family, or one based on accepted, abusive, violent relationships? I was happy to find families where family members were respected, treating each other with mutual esteem. However, I also discovered that domestic violence was not a topic to be discussed in larger society. It was a taboo and a kind of accepted norm in a marriage and family. It was not a myth, but a cruel reality.

Unfortunately, these myths and prejudices about domestic violence persist in our society. They prevent us from realizing that violence is a criminal act against one or

more persons, violating their fundamental right to protection and freedom, that affects many other aspects of social life and the health and harmony of the entire society, of the entire nation.

It was around 8 years ago, well into my adult life and years into my reflections on the roots of violence, when I was introduced to the notion of “peace education” by my son, Andrei, who was working on his master’s thesis on peacebuilding. As parents, his father and I were intrigued and curious about the topic and how it could better prepare him for his future job. Narrow, essentialist thinking. As parents, we were dreaming that he would become a diplomat, which in Moldova is considered a top, elite specialty. We were dreaming that he would be the first diplomat in our family, bringing us pride and respect. Ha-ha-ha. Andrei put off our dreams about diplomacy, opening a new window/perspective for us—*peacebuilding* or *peace education*.

Slowly but confidently, Andrei began our education about *peacebuilding*. Our young, grassroots diplomat explained to us that, according to the diplomatic process of peacebuilding in the modern world, peace must be homegrown at the grassroots level, rather than in international assemblies. This means that, in order to develop proper conditions conducive to sustainable peace, we must cultivate a culture of peace among ordinary people. After the Cold War, we have witnessed continuous, complex, intra-state, civil conflicts. Therefore, we must try to reach societal and political, rather than military, solutions that will involve both diplomacy and peace-building (through education).

Andrei patiently and passionately began his job of refining and reeducating us, as parents, as grown-ups, and as trained educators with proper credentials, diplomas, and years of teaching experience. First, he said, peace is a personal/inner statement, not something imposed, but something reached. Then, he continued, the next stage comes—peace as homegrown, where local people, all groups and communities, must be involved and educated about the *art of living together*. Finally, he concluded by citing Johan Galtung’s (1969) notion that peace is more than the absence of war and open conflict. As a peacebuilder, Andrei saw it as his role to influence the political will and commitment of the main players, using collective action to pressure for peace, to persuade the leaders, and to educate society. He showed us how peace is intertwined with justice and how these concepts are mutually inclusive and must be equally propagated alongside the people’s *civic* consciousness and responsibility.

After graduation, Andrei dedicated his time, passion, and knowledge to working in different international organizations, gaining experience as a peacebuilder and youth activist and making us very proud parents. He was sharing and honing his nonviolent communication skills in many organizations and different countries: the Department of Peace Operations, PATRIR, Cluj, Romania; the Social Cohesion Research and Early Warning Division, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, France; the European Voluntary Service (EVS) DRONI Youth Association, Tbilisi, Georgia; the IFOR Secretariat (International Fellowship of Reconciliation), New York; as a Project Coordinator of Multi-lingual Education (MLE), Ukraine; Project coordinator and lead researcher in the Erasmus+ KA2 project “Youth Impact: Strengthening Organizational Capacities to Build Peace in Europe,” PATRIR, Cluj, Romania; and as a volunteer in the European Voluntary Service (EVS) Organisation: Fundacio Catalunya Voluntaria, Barcelona, Spain; and today, at the Eastern-European Foundation in Chisinau, Moldova. He also became a part of local grassroots movements and organizations: “Occupy Guguța” and “Rhythms of Resistance,” which makes me as a parent both proud and concerned about the possible unpleasant consequences that may result from his activism.

His determination and instruction about peace education impacted my thinking

about history curriculum. This challenged me to examine my own “horizontal thinking” (Pinar, 1975, p. 407) and helped me to critically analyze and come up with a creative approach for solving problems using reasoning and reflection. It was an “aha moment,” an epiphany, for me as an experienced educator! He opened my eyes to how much we need peace education, how much I need peace education! I humbly began educating myself, asking Andrei for books and resources. Looking into our school and town libraries did not help me much. Andrei provided me with the links to online, non-violent movements and to a range of writings (from M. Gandhi and M. L. King Jr. to more recent ones). He continues to provide them for me still today.

### IMAGINING PEACE EDUCATION

Andrei and I began having dialogues about the purpose of education. “The means is dialogue, the end is learning, the purpose is peace” (Dr. Jane Vella as quoted in Global Learning Partners, 2018, n.p.). An avalanche of troubling and challenging questions came at me: What can you do, mama, as a high school history teacher, and as school administrator to promote peace? What does the whole guild of history teachers do for peace? Do you really promote peace and friendship, harmony, and mutual respect through our history textbooks? How do you teach highly sensitive and emotionally conflicting issues? Is our society a past-oriented or future-oriented one?

Even more questions arose and troubled me every day: Who is responsible for ensuring that the content of school history curricula benefits all of society, including all ethnicities and groups? We, as teachers, or the Ministry of Education? Are history teachers’ voices demanded, listened to, and heard? Do teachers act in solidarity, as a united front, to fight discrimination and marginalization? Do our textbooks promote assimilation or integration of minorities? Are our textbooks promoting positive heritage of all ethnic groups, or are they focused more on wars and bloodshed? Do our textbooks teach us to reach consensus or to obey the mainstream hegemonic narrative? Do they equally present and positively depict all ethnic groups? Are they used as a means to cultivate the image of national heroes and nationalism? Do they depict us as heroic spirits or as victims, giving rise to radical nationalism in building our national identity? These questions gave me tons of food for thought and tips at the same time. They inspired me to take action for peace.

As a high school social studies teacher, I look at history and see all types of violence, including mass deportations and mass murders, while never permitting the consciousness to rise above the level of following rules and obeying orders (Nazis, the Holocaust, Stalin, Communist Party, KGB, the Cold War, nuclear war, fear of invented enemies, fear of the other, threats, mistrust, and now—the ongoing state of The Cold War II and the political and military tension between opposing geopolitical powers). There is almost no room for peace education in our curriculum. There is so little peace, hope, and trust in it. We need another type of education, another type of curriculum, which will free us from prejudices (personal and institutional), exclusion, and domination. We need a non-violent type of education that develops the quest for mutual understanding, respect, acceptance, and multiculturalism—an education that cultivates *humanity* in human beings through their conscious relationship with nature, pedagogy that nurtures morality, cooperation, communication, and negotiation of ongoing dialectical tensions situated in different contexts (Boylorn & Orbe, 2014), a curriculum that stops all forms of violence, homophobia, misogyny, sexism, xenophobia, and oppression, and a pedagogy outside of the norm that pushes for social justice and equity.

What should this pedagogy look like? What should we call it? What kind of

novelty and originality might it translate to our students? How could it gravitate toward peace, love, understanding, and peacebuilding? How might it be tailored to reach the needs of students of all age levels? What should be included in the history curriculum if we are serious about education for peace? How can we move from teaching about wars and conflicts toward cessation of wars? How can we teach our students to help them learn to transform conflict, to make peace treaties, to achieve peace in a nonviolent manner? How much of this can be done in history classrooms (2-3 classes per week)? Should we consider other school subjects such as world literature, foreign language, visual arts, music, labor movements, religion, sports, as other effective tools and vehicles for teaching topics of peace? How do we look to curricula for peace education and collaborate with various religious denominations' peace missions?

It is demonstrated scientifically that people are born with goodness, kindness, and trust (Ward, 2012). Some have a good and happy character from birth, with ideals and dreams, with potential according to which they provide permanent proof of humanity. Others learn to be human. People cannot live alone. They need each other, they work collectively, and they lead a social way of life. By going through certain situations and events and learning from the experiences that happen to them or to others, the character and behavior of people can change, making room for humanity. Humanity is the trait of the superior person. Humanity is a mandatory feature of any who strives to deserve the name, human. I use De Weiming's theory of globalization, significance of cultural traditions, and the increasingly frequent cultural exchanges to explore *humanism* as a *peace-building* resource and the relationship between humanism and peace education (De Weiming, 2004). Therefore, a peace education curriculum must prove our humanity every day in the way we interact with people, make efforts to understand them, show our empathy, help others (especially those who are weak and helpless), and listen to their problems and stories. It must demonstrate our kindness toward others, our ability to unify, sacrifice, and interact with nature and the environment. Finally, it must unveil our inner peace and our openness.

Given the power of education, peace education, especially at the middle and high school levels, is a needed and justifiable endeavor. In addition to discussing issues of global peace, it is also crucial to address issues of inner peace, as well as the peace within (inter-) personal relationships. Given that a many people experience some sort of maltreatment in their relationships, it would be especially useful for a course of peace education, non-violence, and/or conflict transformation geared towards early age groups to address topics of intimate violence.

I must recognize that peace was never and, unfortunately, is not yet a priority in both Moldovan and American history and social studies curricula. I believe that we need to conjoin our efforts as progressive educators, as history and social studies teachers. We should not be restricted to a history limited to nationalistic emotions and patriotism. We must convert militaristic patriotism to "a gentle love that will spread over our whole land" (Noddings, 2005, p. 19), or even more—toward an earthly, global, ecologic, cosmopolitan patriotism.

### EXPLORING THE CRITICAL NATURE OF PEACE EDUCATION

Modern education and modernism's ways of teaching about peace, security, education, and justice have focused mostly on images of war, human losses, atrocities, and horrors, and it has failed to turn men away from fighting, make them more humanistic, and to bring about world peace (Cremin & Brevington, 2017; Noddings, 2005). Postmodern peace educators call for critical peace education (Verma, 2017), insisting on focusing on moral questions that better influence the mental and emotional

health of students, rather than concentrating only on war and patriotism. A cultivated human spirit will never devalue another human spirit. The best lesson on peace education and patriotism that can be taught is one that encourages each of us to commit to change for the better. Therefore we, teachers, must educate and cultivate this culture among our students so that they will come by themselves to such commitments.

I believe modern teachers can and must play a central role in peacebuilding. We need to give more credence to the transformative capabilities of well-trained, supported, motivated, and last but not least, well-remunerated teachers. We need a clear recognition and understanding of the obstacles and pressures faced by teachers in classrooms today toward teaching about peace and non-violence. We need ongoing educational policy and support of positive educational initiatives to help teachers, because they hold the keys to building successful and sustainable peace, especially in post-conflict regions around the world (Sayed & Novelli, 2015).

Recent findings from a series of studies with Israeli and Palestinian students and teachers demonstrate the challenges of attaining durable and worthwhile effects through educational activities: short-term benefits may erode over time, ongoing violence and hostility may block attempts to understand the opponent's perspective, and power and status asymmetries may dictate incompatible agendas or prohibit a mutual common ground for constructive interaction. (Kupermintz & Salomon, 2005, p. 293)

So, what can I do to deepen the impact of current educational reforms centered on the strengthening the social cohesion and unity of my country? What can I do to contribute to the mitigation of the frozen and hidden interethnic tensions in my country? How can we, together, educators of all ethnicities, offer our insightful analysis and unique contributions to enhance inter-community and inter-ethnic security and collaboration, community-based dialogue, and other social cohesion mechanisms? How can we contribute to the equal and relevant representation of all ethnicities in our history textbooks, providing real access to justice? Is it better to keep our conflicts and anxieties frozen and hidden, pretending that everything is o.k. or to resolve them? Maybe decades of political negotiations, debates, and discourses are better than decades of military actions. We can blame the regimes for their ineffectiveness, meaninglessness, and corruption. We can continue to exclude others from our circles of communication and from our history textbooks, just wanting to avoid mutual accusations. We can set excessive expectations for others and obediently wait for miraculous transformations. Maybe the destination is right, but the path is wrong.

One of the Moldovan government's priorities is national unity. The Bureau of Interethnic Relations of the Republic of Moldova has developed the National Strategy for Minority Integration (NSMI), setting medium-term objectives (6 years), in line with international treaties, along with recommendations of the UN, EU, Council of Europe, and OSCE. All Moldovan governments since 2015 have specified that the NSMI should be fairly directed for all population groups, including Roma, who must enjoy the same policies and strategies as the rest of the population. Despite the efforts made by various state and non-state actors to create favorable conditions for intercultural dialogue and education in Moldova, the strategy points to there still being an insufficient level of knowledge from different societal groups about the culture, language, history, and traditions of national minorities. In schools where teachers teach in the state language (Romanian) there is no course dedicated to the culture and history of national minorities, and the number of initiatives contributing to intercultural

dialogue is low (Government of Moldova, 2015b, p. 3).

Ethnic, religious and political division are some of the conditions in which conflicts may emerge in Moldova. Because of that, we all live in conflict-affected communities. As social studies teachers of Moldova, of all ethnicities and political affiliations, we must learn to develop and cultivate effective peacebuilding strategies, such as socializing and interacting with each other and contrasting in-group and out-group characteristics, in order to better understand who we are so that we may create a peaceful and harmonious society.

### **PEACE EDUCATION IS MORAL, ETHICAL, PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION**

I cannot ignore the pain, emotional fissures, and the psychic damage caused by people who raised me. However, I understand that they tried to instill certain values in me, values they inherited from their families or that were crafted by the society at that time and in that particular context. I wish I had known back then how to reconcile my love for them, as my kin, with my disgust at their misguided, violent, de-humanizing behavior. I wish I had possessed the courage to ask them to reach the point of being peaceful and civilized. I wish...

Totalizing the fragments of my educational background, looking retrospectively to my past, I conclude that peace is the key. Peace as a dominant idea for moral education has gradually overcome its isolation in the fields of educational politics. Therefore, if the peacekeepers of today are diplomats and soldiers, then the peacebuilders of today must be the educators.

However, the peace education programs promoted today by UNESCO, UNICEF, and the UN General Assembly are far from being sufficient to position the future generations against war and violence (Jahabengloo, 2017). Education, by definition, is an ethical enterprise and the highest task of human culture and civilization. When, in a multicultural, multiethnic society, there is lack of harmony, unity, and collaboration and where, on daily basis, we can witness, suffer from, or commit hatred or mockery toward other ethnicities or people different than us, it easily leads to violence, anxieties, mistrust, and polarization. These consequences can make it hard for people, especially youth, attending the same educational institutions and living in mixed communities to communicate, collaborate, socialize, and respectfully understand and appreciate the others, as well as to focus on their own academic subjects and personal and societal successes. It also may lead to them becoming at risk of and/or suffering from posttraumatic stress disorders. I believe that addressing the sources of this miscommunication, microaggression, and violence through peace education activities and multicultural education in school can improve students' communication, behavior, and performance.

I know many will think I am an idealist or a utopian, but I am not alone. I am not a "white crow" or a "black sheep"—my thoughts are in line with many progressive, American, and well-known international educators and activists. Harris (2002) argues that,

Conflict resolution in American schools has been shown to improve test scores and cognition. Conflict resolution education consists of helping students resolve their conflicts peacefully, and most often includes peer mediation. It also includes teaching young people positive communication skills that they can use throughout their lives. Teaching students about how to achieve peace empowers them to seek alternatives to violence, so they can build a more peaceful future. It lays the foundation for a culture of peace. (n.p.)

That is why I consider engaging in the teaching of peace not as the business of “others,” but as the business and duty of all progressive, modern educators.

We must learn how to listen to others, being curious and asking ourselves, “Who is this whole person?” We must learn how to glean wisdom from our ancestors, from people like us, and from people different than us. I am wondering if we learned anything from the lessons and teachings of J. Dewey, M. L. King, M. Gandhi? If not, we are just imbeciles condemned to repeat and perpetuate the mistakes of the past, condemned to live in fear, to obey, and shut up. I refuse to believe this! We have the authority and agency. What we need is the will.

The new reform or paradigm shift in education does not require a big budget, nor huge effort, but only our benevolence, goodwill, and kindness. The first thing we all have to do is to think and try to understand who we are, where we come from, where we are going, and what our place/job on this earth may be. Even though we live in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium, we still have a hollow, patriarchal education system that does not cultivate the passions and talents of our children but is mostly based on the accumulation of knowledge and on unnecessary contests and competitions. What is happening today in Moldova, in the US, and worldwide, makes us ponder and makes us want change, and quickly. There is an urgency to move from political speeches and even acclaimed discourses in the academy to practical, transformative action.

I see the connection of peace education to environmental education too. Mankind is in a permanent identity crisis linked to the way we act on Earth. And, this is mirrored in education. Do we teach an understanding of our role as human beings? What is our understanding of the role of mankind on earth? Do we really know how to treat the earth not just as material for consumption? Are we really interested in how to maintain and preserve it? In recent centuries, since the industrial revolution, we have learned to be competitive. We fought each other to have more, better, but we failed to develop our personalities. We learned how to learn, but we did not learn to have more soul, more love, more understanding, more care. I believe this can be corrected through education if we know who we are and what is our purpose on earth.

We have a great historical rupture: we have more developed science, more technology, but we have not been developed as human beings who are interested in more than our own survival. From Neolithic times until now, we still do not know our role, and we destroy the earth. Here is the big problem. We do not yet have an education of ideals. To the contrary, we just provide our children with technical or occupational knowledge, instead of teaching wisdom. We must remember Dewey’s (1916/1980) concept of the purpose of education, where he argues that the real purpose is to develop a child as a human being, not just as a professional.

And so, I come to the central set of questions: Is change possible in education? How do I see this new pedagogy—the pedagogy of hope, change, and transformation—change that intelligently merges humanity, nature, and technology to avoid human and ecological disaster? The omnipresent and overwhelming pollution of both human relationships and of the environment is linked to education, and it comes from (lack of) education and human greed (mis-education). We think that if we have possessions we will be happy, but we do not learn how to be(come) happy. We do not learn to rejoice, to see beauty, to appreciate it, to see the beauty in diversity. Instead we learn to be critical, over-competitive, over-individualistic, to see only and emphasize the miserable, dirty, negative, traumatic things, and cultivate criticism (not critical thinking). Thus, our children grow in trauma and fear, away from nature, living in a totally artificial, virtual world that is subject to stress. We must teach children who they

are, where they come from, where they're going and what their role is. But also, we must teach these things to adults as well.

Education today must focus on forming whole, multiculturally educated personalities and not on selling diplomas and writing resumes. School must develop passions, curiosity, and creativity. Personality and intelligence are developed by cultivating these skills! The teacher should not have to write tons of papers and reports and should not be tormented and depressed by test scores. They should have as their aim to develop personalities, seeing the joy in children's eyes. This type of pedagogy is a release, a liberation, a transformation. We must transform the existing system of fear and corruption: fear of grades, fear of repetition of the year, fear of anything. We should leave our safe harbors of so-called stability and tranquility and overcome the disparities among us. For the sake of our children. For their future.

The recent Republic of Moldova Government Goals state three priorities for the next decade:

1. Preservation and consolidation of the cultural and linguistic heritage of the national minorities living in the territory of the Republic of Moldova.
2. Promotion of a coherent and multidimensional state policy in relation to national minorities.
3. Elaboration of a strategic framework for ensuring the integration of national minorities into the social-administrative, cultural-political, and economic life of the Republic of Moldova. (Government of Moldova, 2015a, p. 1)

It is in our hands and under our authority to decide to implement pedagogy for peace at the dawn of a new millennium. Through teaching the culture and philosophy of peace, we might prevent the start of new conflicts and escalation of new waves of violence. If we will make peace education a priority today, it will help us to discover our own paths to peace. It will lead to mastering and cherishing the art of living a peaceful life. It will teach how to achieve the harmony and happiness that is our dream.

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