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**Freedom
and
Limitation**

The Bridging Tree

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Open Hearts Imprisoned

By John Beck

There is the exceptional security: the whole isolated area, fenced, guarded. The long process, lines, paperwork, metal detectors. The institutional architecture, unaesthetic. The bulletin boards' warnings about contraband.

Prison is not the place most of us would go looking for an experience of "humanity." Yet those drawn into this world do find a remarkable place inside, the visiting room, where a very human something takes place, intensively.

As visitors are almost all of color, Black or Latino, the older white male like myself is exceedingly rare. Some young men come in twos and threes. Mostly it's women, hurrying to the lavatories on arrival upstate, freshening and changing after the all night ride. Finally we pass through heavy, motor-driven doors into a large room.

Mostly there are rows of small tables with two to four sturdy plastic chairs apiece. Secure places have enclosed piers surrounded with heavy caging, with chairs inside and outside, and the inmates chained hand and foot. Usually vending machines and microwave ovens cover one wall.

That's the form, but the content builds as the room fills to a roar of conversation like a rough surf, though this sound is excited, intense, with many happy sounds in it. Newly arrived visitors are sitting, waiting again, until another steel door slides open and son, brother, father, boy-friend saunters in, faux-nonchalant. Then hugs, exclamations, and holding the babies – did I forget to mention the children of all ages, from tiny to teenaged? The room

is a sea of color, men all on one side of tables, women and children on the other.

A prison visiting room feels the way a Thanksgiving dinner table should: there is a long drought of faces and voices to be drunk in gratefully for these few minutes. Here and there the words may run out too soon, the weight of the situation overcoming the mood. The men may shift their interest to other inmates, the friend who was moved, the enemy who will be fought, the fellow gang members who will cover your back. They'll check out each other's visitors for comment later. But it comes back again at the end to a simple murmur of caring.

A visit at its best – whether at Downstate or Southport, Riker's or "the Tombs", Ossining or Gowanda – finds you with a lightness of spirit that lets you play with your friend, cousin, son, brother, lover, husband, father. You remember the jokes of the last month and tell them well, the stupid things on TV, old incidents of amusement, and many moments of free days; and you lift a spirit and are lifted by his relaxation and softened face, and by the light that comes into his eyes.

I could stop here, but won't, shouldn't. This surge of humanity is like that which filled us New Yorkers in those couple of weeks between 9/11 and the start of the Afghanistan bombing. This openness in the visitors' room is similarly sandwiched between dreadful errors, hard beliefs, human weaknesses and misunderstandings.

I understand, for instance, that the

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AMA sees drug addiction as a medical problem. But my 36-year-old friend and cousin is starting another term of perhaps three-and-a-half to seven years for possession of small amounts of drugs both in prison earlier and in Manhattan last September. Addiction an illness, possession a crime?

I have found an association that deals with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorders in adults. This spring, when he was "out" for seven months, I realized that my friend (his name is Eric) has got **all** the symptoms: a real blindness to risky behavior and consequences, trouble sticking with tedious things like waiting rooms for doctors or welfare, "impulsivity" (something much more than impulsiveness), and of course drug use. With family and a fully-engaged lawyer in the courtroom, Eric would have seen a mandatory treatment program long ago.

I know also that sentences for having cocaine are vastly higher if you smoke "crack" than if you sniff "coke," and white folks mostly sniff and Blacks and Latinos smoke. I recall the fearsome stories of "crack cocaine" twenty years ago in the media, smoked by people of color; and I know how white ingenuity has, generation after generation, found ways to un-even the "level playing field." My Eric, raised "German" in a home with unprocessed pain and parental alcohol abuse, learned at 14 that he, the oldest son, was adopted, Puerto Rican and Italian, and would "never be any good." He hit the streets and has identified Latin/Black ever since, and was caught with crack.

And I struggle with the calculus of Eric's being more sociable than I am, skilled in many employable ways, more quick to help someone with a problem, more open hearted, and spending half of his life since 19 behind bars, all of his bids drug-related. I realizing that adult ADD and family stuff are not simply the fault of the legislature, courts, or corrections department. But I know prison is offering him nothing on his path forward, while prisons in so many counties offer good and secure jobs to many.

How I wish that every legislator and judge could spend as much time as I have in the visiting rooms of our New York prisons, and in the homes of poor people around the city who have loved the Erics and mothered their children and of course suffered intensely from their untreated problems.

Ten years ago, in the big room of "the Tombs," the Manhattan Detention Center for Men, at the start of another "bid," Eric looked around the room and pointed out to me the other men he had helped already in the few weeks he had been back inside. Wrote letters for that one; gave a bar of soap to him; let a third use phone time; shared commissary with a fourth. And then, still looking away, "E" said to me, "You don't open your heart to me."

It was a visionary moment. I saw that my heart was open, but that I also held up a shield, because I couldn't or didn't want to share the pain.

I have learned since to share much more of the pain. Recently he described me as "always standing there," and we've started on "Dad" and "son." But I still don't know how to carry that human sound of the visitors room – the heart, I think, of any prison, – out where it might be heard. And I ask myself, does Eric in some sense go through all this for me – so that my heart can finally be open and undefended?

John Beck is general manager of the NY Open Center and a former executive in public radio. He is active in the Global Network for Social Threefolding (GN3) on emerging social issues.

"Our sacred land is under occupation and we are now all prisoners, not just me."

— Leonard Peltier, from Prison Writings.

The Bridging Tree

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Freedom and Limitation

Barbara L. Valocore

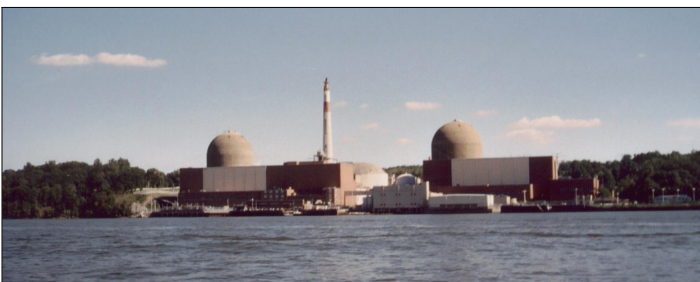
2004 is the UN year to Commemorate the Struggle against Slavery and its Abolition, yet many versions of slavery still exist as a shameful reminder of humanity's blindness, cruelty and overall inertia. The millions of unfortunate people who find themselves literally imprisoned in sweatshops, as sex slaves or simply caught in the cycle of poverty, have little or no opportunity to walk about freely, to vote or to live decent lives with family and friends. Their lives are limited to say the least.

In January 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt gave a speech to Congress in which he outlined his now famous "Four Freedoms": freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want and freedom from fear. In all cases, he emphasized that these ideas should apply to the whole world, and in the case of fear, he clarified his meaning, "...a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor—anywhere in the world." Rather than reducing these massive weapons systems, we have increased their numbers dramatically in the last 60 years. With over one billion people hungry and wanting, couldn't we find a better way to spend our money?

Historically, there have been many notable struggles for freedom, some more successful than others, but all important in the context of humanity's search for the true expression of "freewill", our God given right. The testimonials included here are from people who have found inner freedom amidst some of the most restricting limitations. Their stories stand as beacons of hope and promise to the rest of us; those of us blessed with homes, families and some security.

But what *is* security really? Are the 20 million people of the New York City area secure with an old and unguarded nuclear power plant only 25 miles away? Is anyone really safe when a person is willing to commit suicide in order to murder others?

Perhaps true freedom exists only in the mind, or beyond. Perhaps we can only know true freedom through the experience of limitation. Was it love or the truth that "shall set us free"? Either way, we could start there.



Indian Point nuclear power plant, Westchester County, New York



Margaret Lloyd, Inner Peace Ambassador

Epidemic of Inner Peace

Be on the lookout for symptoms of Inner Peace. The hearts of a great many have already been exposed to Inner Peace and it is possible that people everywhere could come down with it in epidemic proportions. This could pose a serious threat to what has been, up to now, a fairly stable condition of conflict in the world.

Some signs and symptoms:

- A tendency to think and act spontaneously rather than on fears based on past experience.
- An unmistakable ability to enjoy each moment.
- A loss of interest in judging other people.
- A loss of interest in interpreting the actions of others.
- A loss of interest in conflict.
- A loss of the ability to worry (This is a very serious symptom)
- Frequent, overwhelming episodes of appreciation.
- Contented feelings of connectedness with others and nature.
- Frequent attacks of smiling.
- An increasing tendency to let things happen rather than make them happen.
- An increasing susceptibility to the love extended by others as well as the uncontrollable urge to extend it.

WARNING! IF you have some of the above symptoms, please be advised that your condition of inner peace may be so far advanced as not to be curable. If you are exposed to anyone exhibiting any of these symptoms, remain exposed only at your own risk.

— Anonymous

Prison Thoughts

David Smith

Criminal justice in the US is based on an antiquated ethical system called retributive morality. Even the most cursory glance at the historical outcomes of this retributive approach shows little if any effect on stopping crime. Changes in annual incarceration rates reflect our country's population demographics more than our "tough on crime" approach.

Until we as a society embrace prevention rather than punishment as the criminal justice ideal, we will continue to spend more on incarceration than on education and we will continue to increase the number of crime victims.

If we punish an individual for committing a crime we are actually increasing the number of victims. Primarily, there is the victim of the crime. Secondary victims include family members of both the perpetrator and victim. Society is also a victim, losing self supporting, tax paying, voting members.

If we prevent a crime, there are no victims. Correctional Facilities would not be revolving doors for our poorly educated, those with poor employment prospects and troubled pasts.

Societies have always been judged by how they treat their disenfranchised; their homeless, their mentally ill. Government, rather than providing resources for prevention and opportunity, has become entrenched in regressive social policies that do little to help the disenfranchised move up the ladder of the American dream.

David Smith is employed as a Psychologist at Fishkill Correctional Facility by The Bureau of Forensic Services of the New York State Office of Mental Health. The views expressed are his personal opinions and do not necessarily represent the views or opinions of NYS OMH.

Spiritual Freedom

Katrina Brunwen

Humanity is learning the difficult lessons and responsibilities of freedom. The incoming Aquarian age will be characterized by a true expression of freedom but that is still, as yet, awhile off. Until that time, freedom is often misinterpreted and used as a license to act irresponsibly and selfishly, disregarding spiritual law.

All things within the universe are governed by laws—some made by human beings, which are subject to change, and others that are spiritual, binding and eternal in nature. We see at this time an "arising of lawlessness on all sides", as stated in *The Bhagavad Gita*, and perhaps this is why there is such a clamor for spiritual truths and universal justice. Humanity has to learn again the lessons of law and only then can true freedom be found. Unlike laws that govern the material world, spiritual laws are never imposed, for that would constitute an infringement of human free will. But the breaking of spiritual law carries its own penalties just as surely as does the breaking of man-made laws. It results in limitation, in the soul's inability to express itself freely and to eventual crisis. The pain persists until the individual begins to change by giving over authority to the soul and its dictates.

Freedom involves responsibility, but many people today have consciously rejected all links to their soul and consequently, rebel against any and all limits to their individual sense of freedom. Perhaps a new spiritual teaching will help humanity to again find its spiritual center and realize that true freedom can only be realized within the confines of spiritual living.

Katrina Brunwen is a student of spiritual philosophy.



Freedom In Prison

Bill Groom

All prisoners are killers—killers of time. As a young man I served three years in prison. Time was my enemy because it crawled by so slowly. I hated time and did everything I could to speed it up—to kill it.

Now I'm an old man, and I cherish time. I look back on my wasted years behind bars and wish I had known then what I know now. I could have changed my dreary prison time into a time of personal growth.

Although governments control the bodies of prisoners, they have no control over their minds. Like all of us, prisoners have the power to choose how they respond to their environment, whether in prison or the free-world.

There's a catch, however. It's not easy. Our behavior—our emotions, thoughts, and actions—is only the tip of the iceberg. Hidden below the surface are the core decisions that determine our values and attitudes which largely determine our behavior.

Very early in life we began deciding who we were and how to make it in life. Some of those decisions have been forgotten, but they still shape our behavior. Some may no longer serve us. And our behavior has become so habitual it seems to be the only way we can think and feel and act.

Many of us made these two fateful decisions:

As children, our parents helped us adapt to our culture by telling us we mustn't "eat, act, dress, or talk" like we naturally wanted to. Our young mind decided, **"Since I'm not welcome the way I am, there may be something wrong with me."**

When we made mistakes we were frequently rejected with, "Hey, what's wrong with you dummy?" or some other form of telling us we were wrong. Rejection by our fellow humans is painful and seems to confirm that our fear is valid—there *is* something wrong with us! To avoid that pain and defend our self-worth, we began laying blame or justifying our mistakes. We decided, **"Mistakes are not OK, so avoid being responsible at any price."**

The price we pay, however, is exorbitant. Humans are designed to learn by trial and error, but only if we're responsible for our errors. Blaming and justifying blocks our learning. Even worse, since we can't feel remorse for something we're not responsible for, avoiding responsibility prevents us from being sorry for the harm we've caused. It obstructs our ability to feel compassion.

As long as we're unaware of these decisions, we can't change them. We're prisoners of our own mental prisons.

Our only escape is to expand our awareness sufficiently to be aware of our core beliefs. That level of awareness requires intention, persistence, and support. Then we can understand that we *have* behavior but we are not our behavior. Then we can

know that our behavior and beliefs may be wrong, but we are not wrong. Then it's safe for us to be responsible and accountable for any harm we may do, and learn from our mistakes.

With such expanded awareness, prisoners can be free—mentally free. They will not have to "kill" time; they too can cherish it. They can know that whoever or whatever their "Self" is, its worth does not need defending for it is far, far beyond the level of their ever-changing behavior. That is the purpose of our work.

Bill Groom is the Executive Director of the Cynergetics Institute, a Lifebridge Foundation grantee. (PO Box 6130, Colorado Springs, CO 80934, (719) 444-8644, Cynerget@aol.com, www.Cynergetics.com)

"In the midst of retreat, I found that I had the authentic place I had searched for my whole life within myself. There I was in prison, and I was experiencing direct reality and levels of freedom, bliss, and vividness in a world where there was no support for it." — An interview with Fleet Maull, reprinted from Parabola, Summer 2003.



Grantee Section: *New Grants*

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Bija Vidyapeeth, the International College for Sustainable Living, offers courses in Education for Earth Citizenship through the Research Foundation for Science Technology and Ecology (RFSTE), India, in collaboration with Schumacher College, UK and Navdanya, India. RFSTE has been researching and developing new insights into ecological agriculture for over two decades, and is a leader in agricultural biodiversity conservation and community seed banks in India.

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The Conservation Foundation's Parish Pump Programme and its national workshops initiative seek to enable those of any faith and no faith to meet one another and environmental experts in order to consider the issues of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in the context of local communities throughout the United Kingdom.

Democracy Now!
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Democracy Now! is a national, independent, award-winning news program airing on over 140 stations in North America. Pioneering the largest public media collaboration in the U.S., Democracy Now! is broadcast on Pacifica, community, and National Public Radio stations, public access cable television stations, satellite television, shortwave radio and the internet.

Five Points Media
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"Commune: the Black Bear Experiment" is a documentary about a wilderness community and their experiments in creating a new way to live. Spanning from 1968 through today, the film suggests the value in trying to change the world and the pitfalls of going over the edge, ending as a plea for continued responsible social activism.

Fundacion Pacificar
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Fundacion Pacificar's TIK program promotes the development of information and communication technology within civil society organizations in Argentina, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Uruguay.

The Institute for Sacred Cinema
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Documentary filmmaker Kevin Peer coined the term "sacred cinema" to represent the intent of using film for the benefit of earth and humans. "In Search of the Tree of Life" will be a feature-length documentary chronicling humanity's ancient and abiding relationship with trees. The goal of the film is to explore and celebrate our deep kinship and interdependence with trees and forests through the lenses of mythology, religion, cultural history and even quantum physics.



**NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security
c/o Women's International League for Peace and Freedom****777 UN Plaza, 6th Floor****New York, NY 10017****Tel: 212-682-1265 / Fax: 212-286-8211****Email: info@peacewomen.org****Web: www.peacewomen.org**

The NGO Working Group was formed in May 2000 to advocate for a United Nations Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security. Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security was unanimously adopted in October 2000. The focus of the group since then has been monitoring and supporting the implementation of the Resolution. The group currently includes six advocacy focused organizations: the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Hague Appeal for Peace, International Alert, the International Women's Tribune Center, the Women's Caucus for Gender Justice, and the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children.

Nicu's Spoon, Inc.**Stephanie Barton-Farcas, Artistic Director****PO Box 2058****New York, NY 10163****Tel: 718-340-1651****Email: Stephanie@spoontheater.org****Web: www.spoontheater.org**

Nicu's Spoon produces socially reflective works and targets marginalized populations – believing we are all one global family. Their 2004 season will be about American youth and exploration of those 'lost' to their families, to society and to themselves. For Spring 2004 they present "Suburbia" by Eric Bogosian and for Fall "Ordinary People" based on the book by Judith Guest.

The Nonviolent Peaceforce**Mel Duncan, Executive Director****801 Front Avenue****St. Paul, MN 55103****Tel: 651-487-0800 / Fax: 651-489-1335****Email: info@nonviolentpeaceforce.org****Web: www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org**

The Nonviolent Peaceforce is forming the world's first large-scale, nonpartisan international "peace army" composed of paid, trained civilians. They launched their first pilot project in 2003. For 3 years they will provide international peacekeepers to work and live at the grassroots level in Sri Lanka.

Ocean Arks International**Michael Shaw, Executive Director****176 Battery Street****Burlington, VT 05401****Tel: 802-860-0011 / Fax: 802-860-0022****Email: info@oceanarks.org****Web: www.oceanarks.org**

Ocean Arks International (OAI) has been a leader for over twenty years in the development of ecologically engineered technologies for wastewater treatment and reuse. In 2003, OAI launched the Water Stewards Network (WSN) -- a water advocacy group working to network activists on an international basis.

Old Dog Documentaries, Inc.**John Ankele, Anne Macksoud****5 W 19th Street****New York, NY 10011****Tel: 212-929-9557****Fax: 212-627-4761****Email: Johnankele@aol.com****Web: www.olddogdocumentaries.com**

John Ankele and Anne Macksoud are "two old dogs who are very worried about the state of the world and are saddened by the damage being done and the suffering being caused by our government's policies." Their films are meant to wake people up to the impact of these policies. "Missing Peace" is about six women, Jews, Muslims and Christians who, against the backdrop of the Bush administration's use of religion to justify war making, look more deeply into their traditions for the path to peace and reconciliation.

PEACE X PEACE**Patricia Smith Melton, Executive Director****2086 Hunters Crest Way****Vienna, VA 22181****Tel: 703-391-7247****Fax: 703-391-2651****Email: patricia@peacepeace.org****Web: www.peacepeace.org**

"PEACE BY PEACE: Women on the Frontlines" was filmed over one year in five countries with an all-female crew. Captured through ten "ordinary" women, the work women are doing around the world to build peace in their communities – from the grassroots to the highest levels of governments – is intimately revealed. It premiered at the United Nations on October 30, 2003 as the centerpiece for their anniversary celebration of UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

Point of Attack**Producer/Director: Kathleen Foster****Brooklyn, NY****Email: Kara@erols.com**

The video documentary, "Point of Attack", produced and directed by Kathleen Foster, chronicles the post-9/11 racial profiling, large-scale round-ups, detentions and mass deportations of Arab, Muslim, and South Asian men as part of the government's "War on Terrorism." The film frames the plight of these immigrant communities within the broader context of the US government's "other war" against civil liberties that is being waged via the US Patriot Act.



**Program on Corporations, Law & Democracy
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The Program on Corporations, Law & Democracy consists of 13 experienced academics, union organizers, writers, organization leaders and activists who instigate democratic conversation and actions that contest the authority of corporations to define our culture, govern nations and plunder the Earth. They also work with issue-oriented and civic groups and with elected officials to challenge corporate claims to constitutional rights and to put legal authority to govern in the hands of "we the people."

The Progressive Media Project

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The Progressive Media Project, an affiliate of Progressive, Inc., works to bring about a more just and equitable society, establish a fair international economic order, preserve the natural environment, democratize the media, end discrimination, and promote peace and human rights. They bolster the work of grassroots activists and nonprofit groups by expanding the capacity to better communicate their views on the "op-ed," or commentary pages of our nation's newspapers.

Project Vote

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Project Vote is a non-partisan, nonprofit organization that registers, educates, and mobilizes low-income and minority citizens to vote. Project Vote's mission is uniquely focused on building voter registration, education and mobilization networks. Project Vote mobilizes new and infrequent voters around issues that are important to their families and communities, thus giving previous non-voters a reason to vote.

Riverkeeper

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Riverkeeper is calling for the immediate closure of the Indian Point nuclear power plant in Westchester County, NY. Twenty million people live within a 50 mile radius of Indian Point's reactors. A large radioactive release triggered by a terrorist attack or accident at the facility could have devastating health and economic consequences, rendering much of the Hudson River Valley, including New York City, uninhabitable.

Robert Muller Center for Living Ethics

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The Robert Muller Center for Living Ethics is a school and adult learning center, which focuses on holistic, global learning. They are co-creating a community of mentors, teachers and learners who live the four harmonies of the world. These four harmonies are: 1) Our Planetary Home and Place in the Universe; 2) The Human Family; 3) The Miracle of Individual Human Life; and 4) Our Place in Time.

Solar Electric Light Fund (SELF)

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With a vision of *Powering a Brighter 21st Century*, The Solar Electric Light Fund (SELF) leverages solar electricity to solve some of the most pressing problems facing rural villages in the developing world. SELF's projects, in fifteen developing nations, seek to improve health care, education, economic opportunities, and general quality of life through the catalytic tool of electricity.

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Sacred Earth Network's East-West Indigenous Exchange unites native Siberian and Native American elders, leaders, and medicine people who share their wisdom with one another and the general public.

Schools With Spirit
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The Schools with Spirit Project seeks to build the infrastructure needed to explore the possibilities and practicalities of creating a movement to reclaim our public schools as soulful communities of learning where children's inner lives are welcomed and nurtured, and their teachers and administrators have the ability and courage to evoke that change. A cornerstone of this program is widely disseminating the book, "Schools With Spirit: Nurturing the Inner Lives of Children and Teachers," edited by Linda Lantieri, as a tool to encourage public dialogue about the role of spirituality and education.

Vallecitos Mountain Refuge
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The Vallecitos Mountain Refuge is a wilderness ranch and contemplative retreat center dedicated to strengthening and supporting leaders and organizations working on social justice issues. They recognize that personal growth, spiritual wisdom and the contemplative life all contribute to effective, informed and resourceful leadership in the nonprofit sector. Using an innovative contemplative process, combined with a deep wilderness experience in nature, their retreats are designed to deepen the connection between the inner life of wisdom and spirit and the outer life of action and service.

Traps are everywhere – in your newspapers, on television, on the radio; in the eyes and words of your friends; in your wishes, desires, plans, and actions. It is not easy to be free, but the reward of freedom is the ability to penetrate into the next higher dimension of life. Every progressive move is taken after an increase in freedom. But our civilization found the best means of slavery: it organized a life of freedom to trap people in slavery. False freedom is the most dangerous trap ever set on your path. One must be free from all those hindrances which prevent [one's] unfoldment and blooming.

— From *Challenge for Discipleship* by Torkom Saraydarian

The Lifebridge Foundation pre-selects all of its grantees.

Brief letters of introduction are accepted throughout the year and are kept on file, but generally invitations to submit full-proposals are extended during the second half of the year.

2nd and 3rd time grants are usually considered during the first half of the year.

2003 Re-Grants

Art for Indigenous Survival
www.aisurvival.org
Blue Apple Players
www.blueappleplayers.org
CANHELP
www.canhelp.nu
Center for Visionary Leadership
www.visionarylead.org
Earth Celebrations
www.earthcelebrations.com
Institute for Frontier Science
www.concentric.net/~Explore
Lucis Trust
www.LucisTrust.org

Lydia Project
www.LydiaProject.org
Media Arts Foundation
MediaAnd@aol.com
Minuteman Media
www.MinuteManMedia.org
Aimee Morgana
www.sheldrake.org/nkisi
Omega Institute / Resurgence
Conference www.eomega.org/
www.resurgence.org.uk
Pathways To Peace
www.PathwaysToPeace.org
Peace Tax Foundation
www.PeaceTaxFund.org

The Pearl Theatre
www.PearlTheatre.org
Positive Futures Network
www.FutureNet.org
Rainbow Ark Foundation
www.RainbowArk.org
Reverend Billy Project
www.revbbilly.com
Dr. Rupert Sheldrake
www.sheldrake.org
We The World
www.WeTheWorld.org
Women's International
League For Peace & Freedom
www.wilpfnymetro.org

Grantee News



Our grantees have been working hard to improve the lives of the populations they serve.

Bridges to Community and the **Green Belt Movement** are sponsoring a trip to Kenya this coming June offering environmental education, cultural exchange and community service, and in Tanzania, the **Jifunze Project** has opened its doors to educate 1,200 members age 7-21 after 2 ½ years of on-site development and preparation. **The Lydia**

Project recently brought together diverse women from Romania whose work is to help meet the needs of deprived children and hopeless adolescents while **Joey Lozano** was busy training indigenous peoples in Mindanao in the use of digital cameras to document abuses committed against them. The video, *Seeing is Believing* featuring his life and work, received the grand prize at the Hamptons Film Festival, 2002. **Operation Peace through Unity** is publicizing the Roerich Banner of Peace to promote "actively, consistently and in every way possible the creation of a culture of peace built on the foundation of right human relations and the realization of the basic oneness of all life" and **The Rainbow Ark Foundation** held its most recent Global Wisdom Council to bring forth the values of compassion, interconnectedness and unity.

Reverend Billy continues to encourage people through satire and old-time preaching to Stop Shopping! while **Co-op America** has succeeded in convincing Proctor and Gamble to offer a line of fair trade coffee. **BALLE** (Business Alliance for Local Living Economies) is strengthening local economies by encouraging people to "buy local" and the **True Majority Campaign**, a project of **Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities** was instrumental in saving funding for Head Start through its technique of internet organizing which sent 2.5 million communications to Congress in 2003.

Andrea Sadler's film, *The Sacred Run*, about a 4,000 km run across Japan organized by North American Native people, has been broadcast by Hallmark and is getting more exposure, while the **Institute for Sacred Cinema** is filming stories of "tree sitters" in California for the film, *In Search of the Tree of Life*. **Trees for Life** is developing a unique educational program entitled, Global Circle of Knowledge which will help people all over the world

unleash their potential through shared knowledge and **Heron Dance** offers beautiful water colors and poems through their weekly emails with tips on living a life of meaning and connection to the natural world.

The energy of youth is well harnessed through the work of **Global Kids**, which has reached more youth than ever, educating them about the importance of civic participation and becoming global citizens. Their 2004 conference is on the theme of Global Unity and **TakingIT Global**, a youth led group, was instrumental in playing a major role at the World Summit on the Information Society in facilitating the Youth Caucus. Their research seeks to demonstrate that young people today have more power to create change than any previous generation and last fall's YES! Jam of **Youth for Environmental Sanity** provided a transformative environment for deepening the root system of the youth movement working for positive change. The **Interfaith Youth Core** continues to nurture a movement of interfaith youth work focusing on how faith inspires social justice and **Pioneers of Change's** Summer School brought together 50 young change agents from 25 countries to create a learning community which brought a commitment from the group to transform politics to be more inclusive and participatory.

Joan Lester's biography of Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, *Fire in my Soul*, is just out in paperback and *Mourning Has Broken* by Carmella B'Hahn offers a holistic blueprint for resurrection from grief using the combined wisdom of 23 people who have broken through, rather than broken down after facing all kinds of adversity. **Earthlight** sponsored an 11 day program called "Exploring a New Cosmology", **Minuteman Media** continues to offer enlightened opinion to small town newspaper editorial pages and **Witness** doggedly continues to train its local human rights partners worldwide to use video and communications technology to fight for human rights.

Science's cutting edge researchers are exploring new fields of human awareness through such projects as **The Global Consciousness Project**, **The Scientific and Medical Network**, **Rupert Sheldrake's** many telepathy experiments, and work in the emerging new field of "Archaeoacoustics" currently being mapped by Earth energies explorer and author, **Paul Devereux**. **N'Kisi**, the telepathic parrot, recently received much attention from the BBC through a radio interview with researcher and trainer, Aimee Morgana, and he is now a global "superstar"!

The Chapel of Sacred Mirrors has been given a five year lease at Spirit New York for gallery space open to the public, **Earth Celebrations** is currently in production for its celebratory Spring Garden Pageant which works to preserve community gardens

in Manhattan through fun and festivity, and also in New York, **Nicu's Spoon Theatre Company** is in pre-production for its Spring show, **Suburbia** dealing with lost youth and racial hatred. **The Interfaith Center of New York** works to make the world safe for religious difference by increasing respect, mutual understanding and fellowship among citizens of diverse faiths and **POCLAD** has designed a three day intensive program for activists, community leaders and municipal officials seeking to assert their right of self governance.

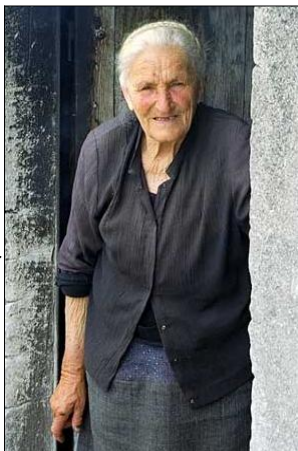
The new video, **Peace By Peace: Women on the Frontlines**, celebrates the work of women peace builders around the world, **The Global Peoples Assembly Network** is creating a world Parliament which aims to reform global governance, and the 84 Peace Poles that were installed in Salt Lake City for the 2002 Winter Olympics were recently given a permanent home in the International Peace Gardens there thanks to the untiring work of **The World Peace Prayer Society**.

Nancy Seifer's book, **Russian Odyssey: Trials and Triumphs of an Aquarian Seeker**, elicited the comment, "It had the intimacy and insight of a personal memoir while also being an historical and prophetic document." This summer, **Gabriella Oldham** produced a demo CD of her play, **As Flowers Grow**, based on children's war diaries and **Art for Indigenous Survival** continues to offer Soft Sculpture workshops for Native people. **Diane Reed's Media Arts Project** recently focused on a conference on human rights in Los Angeles and is planning a new documentary entitled, **The New Slavery: Child Slavery and trafficking in Persons: the Saddest Victims of the World Polarization of Wealth**.

Finally, in 2003, **Parabola Magazine** provided 4,000 free copies to individual prisoners, State Prison libraries, Federal prison chaplains and outreach programs of a spiritual, cultural, artistic, educational and social welfare nature while **Cynergetics** launched a neighborhood restorative justice program in Colorado Springs for juvenile offenses. **The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society** is receiving much support for its work to encourage contemplative practice in many diverse fields and disciplines.

We thank you all and salute your transformative vision!

For more details about all of these activities, including contact information, please visit *The Lifebridge Foundation's* website at: www.lifebridge.org



Book Review

Barbara L. Valocore

Tom Atlee's recent book, *The Tao of Democracy*, is a coherent and compelling look at the undeniable fact of humanity's interdependence, diversity and innate desire for connection, mutual respect and inclusive governance. He has made a deep and thorough study of what wise self governance can really look like, how any group of citizens can create a new and more effective democratic process and how humanity can build a system based on "what intelligence would look like if we took wholeness, interconnectedness, and co-creativity seriously".

Atlee's favorite definition of co-intelligence is, "the ability to generate or evoke creative responses and initiatives that integrate the diverse gifts of all for the benefit of all." This might sound complicated, until one examines his thesis which rests on the idea that diversity within a group generates a tension which can be harnessed into a creative force to be used to everyone's advantage. He describes many types of tools and techniques in practice for many years, such as citizen juries, stakeholder dialogues, dynamic facilitation, citizen deliberative councils, open space technology, listening and study circles and more.

He encourages us to harness our collective wisdom to solve the social and environmental problems of our own making and argues that there are multiple ways of knowing that translate into collective rather than collected intelligence. The reader soon becomes painfully aware that the current system of democracy in the United States excludes many voices and polarizes the issues thereby disenfranchising many valuable opinions.

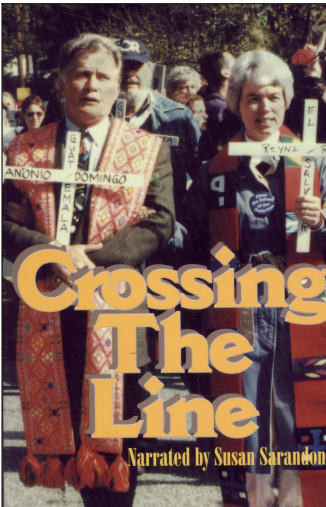
Utilizing a comprehensive bibliography, Atlee draws from years of global community experimentation and process-oriented approaches, and includes steps highlighting how we can move from "power politics" to co-operative and holistic politics.

Readable and accessible, *The Tao of Democracy* is full of meaningful and informative stories and anecdotes demonstrating the magic of this newer approach to public debate and dialogue. Organized as a research tool, it is rich with helpful and relevant websites and resources for expanding our knowledge and understanding of this issue. Whatever your political affiliation, the book demonstrates how a deeper interconnectedness can transform our polarized political systems into more inclusive and participatory approaches.

For more information about Tom Atlee's work, visit these websites: www.co-intelligence.org; www.wisedemocracy.org; www.healthydemocracy.org; www.democracyinnovations.org

Prisoners of Conscience

Robert Richter



Some people are in prison in the United States because of deeply held spiritual beliefs. Among these prisoners of conscience are 167 women and men who since 1990 have collectively served over 70 years behind bars. They are military veterans, college students, mothers and daughters, grandparents, priests and nuns. These people of many faiths are participants in SOA Watch, a grassroots movement calling for

closing the U.S. Army School of the Americas (SOA). Today, no other U.S. non-violent movement has more of its members in prison.

The SOA (recently renamed Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation) is a combat school located at Fort Benning, Georgia which trains soldiers from Latin America in commando tactics, military intelligence, psychological warfare and counter-insurgency — all paid for by U.S. taxpayers. During its 57-year history, over 60,000 SOA trained soldiers have returned to their countries to wage war against their own people. Tens of thousands have been massacred, assassinated, tortured, raped and “disappeared” by SOA graduates.

Among the better-known victims are Archbishop Oscar Romero, four U.S. church women, six Jesuit priests and their two women co-workers. Union organizers, health care workers and human rights advocates have also been targets of those trained at the “School of Assassins,” as SOA is known in Latin America.

In 1990, SOA Watch was established by Father Roy Bourgeois in a small apartment just outside Fort Benning’s main entrance. From its inception, the movement drew on the non-violent direct action and wisdom of Gandhi, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., Dorothy Day and Cesar Chavez.

For many peace activists, it has become an annual November tradition to gather at the Fort’s main gate to keep alive the memory of those killed by SOA graduates. A handful of demonstrators were present the first year, the following year 100 were present, then 300, followed by 500 and then 1,000. This past November 10,000 gathered; young and old from all walks of life from around this country, Latin America, Europe and Japan.

The weekend “celebration of hope” ends with a solemn symbolic funeral procession in which participants carry coffins, photographs of SOA victims, small crosses, Stars of David and other religious symbols with the names and ages of SOA victims. As an expression of their solidarity with SOA victims, many “cross the line” marking the boundary of the Fort’s land. From age 18 to 88, they have been arrested, charged with trespassing, brought to trial and sent to prison, with sentences ranging up to 18 months and fines up to \$10,000.

Richter Productions is producing a new short documentary to inform the public about who some of these prisoners are, why they took the actions that led to their imprisonment, and why they and thousands of others continue to press for shutting the SOA. The documentary pays homage to these activists. Even more importantly and central to its purpose, the film is aimed at educating viewers, inspiring them to learn more about the issues and become aware of the campaign to shut the SOA.

This documentary hopes to rekindle the SOA Watch movement by reaching out to hundreds of thousands of new potential participants and will be distributed to churches, synagogues, solidarity, labor and veterans groups, high schools, colleges and libraries and legislators and their key staff.

Previously, the several other SOA Watch documentaries produced by Richter Productions were cited by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences as being “among the best” and were considered to be valuable educational and organizing tools. One was an Oscar nominee for best documentary short.

For more information on this important topic please see www.RichterVideos.com. Tax-deductible donations to support this work can be sent to Public Media, Inc., a 501c3 not for profit, at 330 West 42nd Street/Suite 2410, New York NY 10036.

Robert Richter is an Academy Award nominated documentary filmmaker. He received a grant from The Lifebridge Foundation for his documentary, Five Days To Change The World about the 1999 Hague Appeal for Peace.





UN REPORT

2004: International Year to Commemorate the Struggle against Slavery and its Abolition

The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the year 2004 as the **International Year to Commemorate the Struggle against Slavery and its Abolition** in honor of the bicentenary of the establishment of Haiti — the first black republic in the Western Hemisphere.

The Haitian Revolution symbolizes the struggle and resistance of slaves, and the triumph of the principles of liberty, equality, dignity and the rights of the individual. This historic milestone set the stage that would lead to the freedom of the slaves in the Caribbean and Latin America.

This UN International Year commemoration (Resolution 57/195) also seeks to help unite the peoples of Africa, the Americas, the Caribbean and Europe. It aims to increase awareness around the world about the struggles that enslaved peoples endured in their pursuit of freedom, and the consequences of slavery and its abolition.

The UN hopes that the international community, the academic world and civil society will use this focus to help promote a culture of peace. By understanding and redressing the consequences that slavery caused around the world, new forms of slavery might be prevented.

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization) is the UN agency spearheading the activities around this theme. It seeks to involve many different institutions, disciplines and sectors of society in the year's commemoration. One of UNESCO's focuses for the year is the "Slave Route" project which revolves around historic truth, memory, intercultural dialogue, development and peace. It hopes to provide not only a better understanding of the historical perspective of slavery, but also will give a clear view of the present, and offer lasting prospects of intercultural dialogue in the future. The intention is to sound the alarm about all forms of contemporary racism, discrimination and intolerance, and thus to set the stage for a greater awareness of the need to respect all human beings.

For additional information about UNESCO's program for the 2004 commemoration, please visit their website: www.unesco.org/culture/unysa

INTOLERABLE AND UNACCEPTABLE PRACTICE OF SLAVERY HAS YET TO BE ERADICATED

Following is the message of Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the occasion of the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, 2 December:

Slavery has been outlawed by national legislation and prohibited by numerous international instruments. Yet nearly every day, there are shocking reports of men, women and children who are exploited, denied their basic rights and their dignity and deprived of a better future, through both ancient and modern forms of slavery.

Slavery and trafficking, and related practices such as debt bondage, forced prostitution and forced labour, are violations of the most fundamental human rights: the right to life; the right to dignity and security; the right to just and favourable conditions of work; the right to health; and the right to equality. These are rights that we all possess -- irrespective of our sex, our nationality, our social status, our occupation or any other characteristic.

The United Nations, which is based on a reaffirmation of faith in fundamental human rights and in the dignity and worth of the human person, has a special responsibility in the fight to eliminate all contemporary forms of slavery and all slavery-like practices. To advance in this fight, we must ensure that root causes are addressed -- poverty, social exclusion, illiteracy, ignorance and discrimination in all its forms.

We must also strengthen our legal framework. I appeal to States to ratify and implement the two optional protocols to the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime: the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Air and Sea.

I also urge States to make use of the "Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking" prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. These provide practical tools to ensure that human rights are at the centre of anti-trafficking strategies at national, regional and international levels.

And I encourage States to contribute to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, which provides assistance to victims of slavery and slavery-like practices.

Slavery has yet to be eradicated. On this International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, let us reaffirm our commitment to end this intolerable and unacceptable practice, and our determination to take action to ensure that we do.



UN CALENDAR

International Years

2004	International Year to Commemorate the Struggle against Slavery and Its Abolition
2004	International Year of Rice
2005	International Year of Microcredit

March – September 2004: Special Days and Weeks

08	March	United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace
21	March	International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
21-27	March	Week of Solidarity with the Peoples struggling against Racism and Racial Discrimination
22	March	World Day for Water
23	March	World Meteorological Day
7	April	World Health Day
23	April	World Book and Copyright Day
3	May	World Press Freedom Day
15	May	International Day of Families
17	May	World Telecommunication Day
21	May	World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development
22	May	International Day for Biological Diversity
25	May-31	Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories
29	May	International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers
31	May	World No-Tobacco Day
4	June	International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression
5	June	World Environment Day
17	June	World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought
20	June	World Refugee Day
23	June	United Nations Public Service Day
26	June	International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking
26	June	International Day in Support of Victims of Torture
5	July	International Day of Cooperatives (first Saturday in July)
11	July	World Population Day
9	August	International Day of the World's Indigenous People
12	August	International Youth Day
23	August	International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and Its Abolition
8	Sept.	International Literacy Day
16	Sept.	International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer
21	Sept.	International Day of Peace
22-30	Sept.	World Maritime Day

International Decades

1994-2004	International Decade of the World's Indigenous People
1995-2004	United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education
1997-2006	United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty
2001-2010	International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World
2001-2010	Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries
2003-2012	United Nations Literacy Decade: Literacy for All

UN Days & Years Meditation Initiative

PO Box 58, Paekakariki, New Zealand

Garden Flat, Willey Old Hall, Willey, Broseley, Shropshire, TF12 5JJ, UK.

1400 Jack's Canyon Rd, Sedona, AZ, 86351, USA

www.UNmeditation.org / info@UNmeditation.org

Calendar also available on the UN website at: www.un.org/events/ref42.htm

Board Movements

We take this opportunity to honor the work of two of our original Board members, Larry Auld and Jane Southall, both of whom left the Board of The Lifebridge Foundation at the end of 2003.

Larry Auld served as Secretary of the Board and Program Director since the founding of Lifebridge in 1992 and was the original editor of the Bridging Tree beginning in 1997. After eleven years of dedicated and inspired work on the Board and Staff, he has decided to turn his talents to many of the other pursuits that capture his passion. He is responsible for much of the shape and character of Lifebridge's work in the world, and is known by all of our grantees over the years as someone with a sympathetic ear, an honest opinion and a helping hand.

Jane Southall was our first independent Board member and served as Vice President since Lifebridge's founding. Her valuable contributions and practical wisdom made our Board meetings fun and productive and at these, she will be missed.

Both Larry and Jane are long term friends and colleagues and our association will happily continue into the future in other forms. We extend our deep gratitude and appreciation to both Larry and Jane for their many years of unforgettable service and companionship in The Lifebridge Foundation.



We are very pleased to welcome **Dr. Nancy B. Roof Ph.D.**, as the new Secretary of the Board. She is the Founding Director of Spirituality & Global Affairs Associates and the founding editor of *Spirituality & Reality: The SGA Journal on Our Global Future*. She has represented

the Center for Psychology & Social Change in consultative status with the UN for 15 years working on the global agenda. During this time she co-founded the UN Values Caucus, is a co-founding Convener of the UN Spiritual Caucus and Advisor to Spiritual Dimensions in Global Public Policy lecture series in New York and Geneva. Author of *The Impact of War on Service Providers*, she designed and directed the first training programs on secondary traumatic stress in a war zone during the Bosnian War. She speaks internationally on Spirituality for a Global Age, Integral Approaches to Global Affairs and the Emerging Global Civilization.

For more information: www.global-spirituality.org

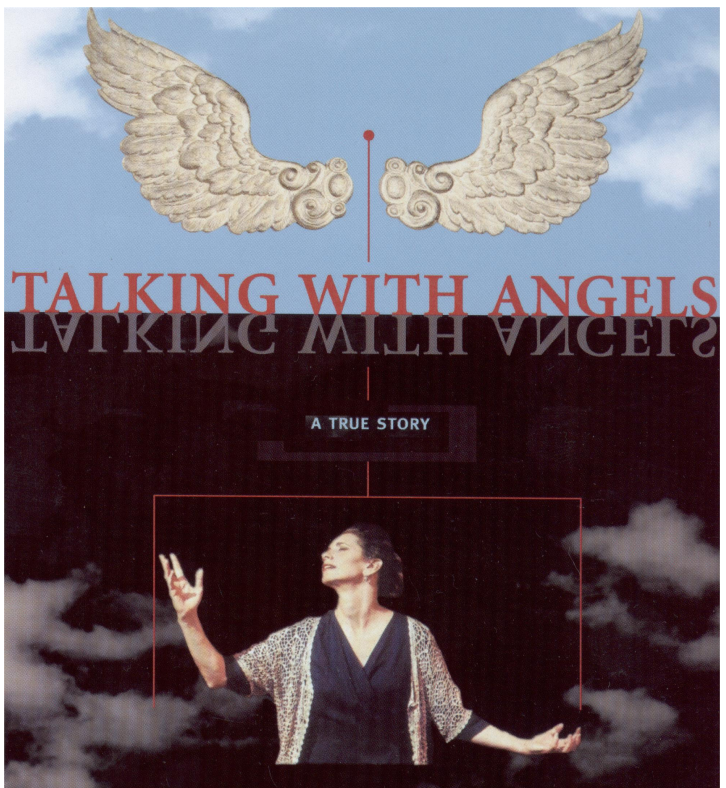
Help Us Help

If you are inspired by the kinds of vital, transformative projects The Lifebridge Foundation supports, please *help us help*. You can participate directly as an investor in the highest ideals of humanity by giving generously to our general fund or directly to a group of your choice. Your money carries the energy of hope and is a tangible expression of your own compassion.

We accept checks or credit cards. To contribute by credit card, visit www.lifebridge.org and click "Donate Now through the Network for Good". If a substantial gift is within your means, call us at 212-757-9711. All contributions are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

"I am doing well, I am in peace, I am free for the first time in my life. I didn't know that I was a prisoner in my mind and body before I came to prison. Just think, I came to prison and got free!"

Statement by George Davenport, prisoner, Pleasant Valley State Prison, California



If you would like to respond or comment on any of the material in this issue, we'd love to hear from you.



The Lifebridge Foundation



***“Promoting the
oneness of humanity
and the
interconnectedness
of all life...”***

The Lifebridge Foundation, Inc. was established in 1992 for the purpose of supporting organizations and individuals who, through cultural, educational, and/or scientific means, are dedicated to creating bridges of under-

standing among all people by bringing to realization the concepts of one humanity and the interconnectedness of all life.

***“Bridging the chasm
between the spiritual
and the so-called
mundane...”***

We support groups and individuals whose innovative

projects reflect these concepts; whose work exemplifies a global vision, demonstrates a spirit of inclusiveness, and fosters transformative action in a changing world.

***“Facilitating the
integration of an
emerging holistic
consciousness
into daily action...”***

The Lifebridge Foundation is associated with the Department of Public Information of the United Nations

The Bridging Tree

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