

My Commitment to Peace through the Practice of Non-Violence
Lisa Schaus December 2007

My earliest memories of life on my family's farm in Upstate New York are idyllic vignettes of apple orchard tree houses, riding my horse through fresh alfalfa fields in my nightgown at dawn, and the holiness of solitude in our woods. Towering beach trees and white pines provided days of peaceful play and wonder I never imagined would turn to a Nirvana only for remembering.

I was imbued with peace and the fortune of being far removed from violence and distress that most people seem so familiar with.

Our Indian friends fascinated me: their stunning saris, and rich complexions.....but most importantly their intelligence and grace.

In the early sixties my father was working with the Indian industrial designers through his office at General Electric. I feel this was a time when the teachings of MK Gandhi were having a great impact on world consciousness.

I was only a child, yet very aware of my gifts from the earth. I absorbed much more than I knew during those years. My parents and dear friends spoke of life in creative ways. There were organic gardens.....fields of crops , haying gatherings, delicious meals, art, and folk music which we all played together.

Once I reached my early teen years we moved closer to Schenectady. I began to see a marked difference in the energy of my surroundings. The attitudes in my middle school were not uncommon for young people, but I began to learn violence in the form of agitation from jealousy, rejection from peers, and predatory behavior from adult males. My world began to shift from a deep trust in peace and gentleness to one of doubt and sadness. I missed the farm, but most of all I began to learn the deep, true source of violence and the meaning it has for all of us. No matter how subtle a decision we make our thoughts and actions affect everyone we encounter.

Through four decades and many trials I have arrived "home" again. I am at a similar point to the time when I was age 15. I sensed at that age that somehow we had an innate ability to control how peaceful our lives would or would not be.

It has taken many years to journey through love's loss or gain, joy, depression, success and failure.

I now feel that by dedicating my life and creativity to the same principles by which Mahatma Gandhi lived and changed the world, I will give back the gift I was given as a child. That gift was to be a child in bliss, loved, at peace, and unaware of violence. I have seen a way to joy and serenity through being a teacher of art.

It is my wish that the Gandhi School will be an example of the power we have to shape our lives through education and choosing non-violent behavior, kindness, compassion and thus peaceful growth for all communities.

<http://www.kauaikeepsakes.com/artists4peace/>