Building Positive Peace

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Edited by

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INTRODUCTION

BUILDING POSITIVE PEACE

CHRISTINA CAMPBELL AND SIMON CORDERY

Building positive peace requires ideas, approaches, and projects from a multitude of perspectives. The essays in this collection propose paths to positive, sustainable peace in today's world with an eye on tomorrow. In alignment with the Earth Charter definition of peace, we begin our explorations by defining positive peace as the cultivation of right and just relationships with self, others, and the Earth.[1] Moreover, we frame peace not as the absence of war but rather as a human aspiration and a relational practice, a process not a product, a presence not a negation. Conscious and continuous decision making for sustained peace in the current social, built, and ecological environments is needed more than ever for human flourishing.

This book is the result of a concerted effort to rethink approaches to creating positive, sustainable peace. The essays originated in multiple conversations among faculty participating in a Faculty Learning Community (FLC) convened in 2019 by Iowa State University associate professor of food science and human nutrition Dr. Christina Campbell. Faculty from colleges across the university not only participated in discussions of sustainable peace, but also came together to develop and team teach an Honors course titled "The Art and Science of Peace." Further, the FLC continues to reach out to other units across the institution to generate conversations about how peace facilitates expanding our community and perspectives. Our starting point for the FLC and the essays in this book has always been the concept of positive peace. This, for us, is an aspiration and a practice for consciously and continuously envisioning the preconditions for humans to be active contributors to and self-aware members of stable micro- and macro-social and ecological contexts. Human beings, we argue, can create a world conducive to fully realizing the potential of all people. For that world to emerge, food security and political stability are keystones, along with a deliberate effort to imagine a sustainable future.

We see an urgent need to cultivate positive peace globally. This book provides insights and approaches necessary to engage in practices which will nurture and sustain a peaceful world. The ideas we offer are vital now because vast and dangerous nuclear arsenals continue to threaten our annihilation while our efforts to control nature are increasingly self-defeating in anthropomorphic climate change. Inherent in these crises are despair and hope. Our aim is to foster the latter and diminish the former, to offer ideas toward a brighter future by framing peace as networks of interconnected relationships.

Fostering peaceful human growth and blossoming requires moving beyond disciplines traditionally associated with peace studies. A variety of angles and even contradictory positions are necessary to provoke engagement and forge new collaborations. We have assembled an interdisciplinary team of experts from agriculture, architecture, business, education, engineering, history, music, nutrition and food systems, and philosophy to offer insights and ideas about how to cultivate peace for our time. Each contributor brings to the peacebuilding puzzle a particular disciplinary perspective and offers paths, some of which are partial and contingent, for continued travel. Our approach is unique as we apply our individual disciplinary expertise to the cultivation of peace instead of the traditional approach to peace studies, which has focused on content areas such as theology, conflict resolution and transformation, and international affairs. The study of peace gives us places for contemplating potential scenarios in which individual views leading to improved distribution of resources, peace-filled approaches to education, or the provision of food and nutrition security can provide baselines for a sustainable environment.

The key to a sustainable, healthy future rests, in our eyes, on seeing peace as a positive force. It should not be conceptualized—as for too long has been the case—as an absence (that is, the absence of violence) or as a negation (stop violence and peace will naturally follow). There is, to our minds, nothing particularly natural or unnatural about war and peace: both are states humans can choose to enact, or not. Humans are neither inherently violent nor innately peaceful. Humans acting as social beings create structures and elements conducive to one or the other. We have an agenda in this context: we would prefer humanity embrace peace and a healthy path to the future. The essays in this book suggest ways to begin stepping onto that path.

We ask questions prompted by our quest to build positive peace, but we are realistic enough to recognize the impossibility of answering them within the confines of this volume. What we hope to do is to spark conversations about and activism toward positive, sustainable peace. We have more

questions than answers, of course, but we also understand that failing to ask the questions risks human extinction. We recognize the fundamental need to think about and debate possible solutions to the existential unsustainability of the world we inhabit today. How, we ask, can we begin to frame questions about sustaining peace, especially given its complexity?

In their introduction to a peace-studies reader published in 1990, Paul Smoker, Ruth Davies, and Barbara Munske wrote that the central concern of Peace Studies "is the achievement of a peaceful and just world."[2] In the same collection, Johan Galtung, in "Violence and Peace," accepts as valid "[t]he statement 'peace is the absence of violence'" and claims that, like violence, peace has two sides, "absence of personal violence and absence of structural violence."[3] There is a kind of touching naiveté, almost a casual nihilism, in the notion that peace will automatically follow the abolition of violence. This formula neglects the problem of what a peace-filled society might look like and how to attain it beyond eliminating violence. That is where the book you are holding in your hands departs from orthodox approaches to establishing a peace-filled world, though to be fair to Galtung he did later champion positive peace as we conceive it.

To take one example, peace historians are seemingly unable to study peace without examining war. Surveying the state of peace history in 2010, Charles F. Howlett captured a crucial and self-debilitating tension roiling the field. Defining peace history as "the historical study of nonviolent efforts for peace and social justice," he labelled peace historians "engaged scholars involved in the study of peace and war." Citing an essay published by the Organization of American Historians in 1994, he continues by arguing that "Peace history, as part of peace studies, 'seeks to inform publics concerning the causes of war while highlighting the efforts of those whose attempts have been directed at peaceful coexistence in an interdependent global setting.'" And yet the history of war does quite nicely for itself without examining peace. True, war stories sometimes end with a peace treaty and occasionally examine its effects, especially if, as with the Versailles Treaty, it led to more warfare, but in general war is considered a sufficiently self-contained subject that its yin can survive without the yang of peace.[4]

The internal tension of peace studies derives from its modern roots as a reaction against the Vietnam War. As a product of the antiwar movement it is perhaps natural that scholars of peace would study their historical antecedents, particularly the pacifist organizations emerging after the Great War. What is less understandable is the continuing centrality of the topic of war to the field. Peace studies programs usually offer courses on warfare as a natural part of their curricula. As Howlett highlights, one of the biggest

problems is that "Students of American history have been exposed to surveys and monographs dominated by discourses on war." Take a glance at the textbooks used in the Western Civilization and World History courses offered in American institutions of higher education and it is immediately clear those discourses are not restricted to histories of the United States.

To counter this and other tendencies, this book is organized into three sections. The first section, "Connections," offers foundational studies of the topic of positive peace. In "Beyond Conflict: Building Peaceful Histories," historian Simon Cordery explains how and why historical writing tends to focus on conflict, offering the beginnings of an alternative to the approach taken by textbooks and much orthodox historical writing. Peace activist Roy Tamashiro explains how and why his search for memorial sites are "A Calling From Beyond: Pilgrimage in Search of Positive Peace." For Tamashiro, the focus on building positive peace shifts from the need to have the individual and the collective conform and fit in, to the imperative to provide social norms and ecological conditions that allow all beings, human and non-human, to flourish. He asks us to leave Western hegemonic expectations and practices behind and to embrace strategies to deconstruct and decolonize our mental outlooks. Musician Jonathan Sturm illustrates how the arts can and have contributed to the causes of peace in "From Plato's *Republic* to Bill and Ted's Utopian Future: The Presence of the Arts in Peacebuilding." The arts provide multiple paths to peace, as numerous practitioners have shown. The key, Sturm argues, is to deliberately understand and choose those paths. E.J. Bahng provides the perspective from education drawn on her experiences as a teacher in South Korea and the United States. In "Peace Spheres: Ecological Relationship of Self, Others, and the World," she traces her journey through the power of stories and of peace spheres, a paradigm for individual fulfillment and peace.

The second section, "Nourishment," considers the challenges and possibilities involved in nourishing body and soul. Food and nutrition security are crucial to establishing and maintaining peace. Access to healthy, safe, and culturally appropriate food and nutrition is a human right and should be guaranteed at the global level. But it is not, and food and nutrition insecurity contribute to malnutrition, starvation, poverty, homelessness, and inequality. Sustainable, resilient, and healthy food and water systems would be mobilized to serve as pathways to health and peace. Peace studies can contribute to food and nutrition security by generating the impulse to use resources and power to house and feed all people equitably and with dignity. Environmental engineer Rameshwar S. Kanwar, in "Drinking Water Security Will Bring Peace to Vulnerable Populations in the World," explores international dimensions in this context, showing the

large cumulative impact of small-scale projects to improve the retention and use of water in Africa and India. Moving from water to plant life, registered dietitians Christina Campbell, Gretchen Feldpausch, and Erin Bergquist consider the benefits of gardening from both an evidence-based perspective as well as a way to connect with the Earth. They argue, in "Cultivating Peace: The Science and Art of Gardening," that climate change and biodiversity loss are significant threats to all life on Earth but can be mitigated by developing sustainable, resilient, and healthy local foodways. Food engineer Kurt A. Rosentrater, in "Peace, Food, and Sustainability via the Triple Bottom Line," argues that the "Triple Bottom Line" framework can be used to buoy food supply chain sustainability by generating efficient information and identifying areas for improvement

The third and final section takes us into the realms of business, architecture, and politics. Leading off, business scholars José Antonio Rosa, Nichole Hugo, and David J. Boggs suggest, in "Attaining Positive Peace in Competitive Markets: Lessons from Ecotourism Clusters," how ecotourism can contribute to attaining positive peace directly in local areas and indirectly by providing a paradigm for intergroup cooperation. Supply chain expert Frank Montabon, in "War, Peace, and Supply Chains," applies a "wicked-problem" approach to supply chain management to suggest how businesses can foster peace by influencing the production and distribution of goods and services. In her essay "Non-Stop to the Moon? Earthships and Spaceships," Andrea Wheeler, an architect by training and a philosopher by inclination, urges us to re-imagine the function and practices of architecture. Architecture can help us meet and transcend the current climate crisis if we are willing to listen to unorthodox practitioners and to redefine our relationship to the home. Mechanical engineer Kenneth "Mark" Bryden, in "Designing a Sustainable Peace: Narrative Building and the Need for Transparency in the Public Modeling Process," argues for complete transparency not just in public affairs but in the underlying assumptions used to generate policy and the models experts employ to choose among policy alternatives. Bryden recommends allowing the public to see and critique statistical and other models to generate feedback and build trust as we move toward positive, sustainable peace.

As befits an interdisciplinary text, each author employs the methodological approach appropriate to their own discipline. All authors draw from the existing peer-reviewed literature and regional, national, and international databases. We use qualitative and quantitative data as appropriate, but we share the common aim of steering conversations about peace in the direction of positive outcomes and enduring models.

In our Faculty Learning Community conversations, many of us read and discussed *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer. The wisdom imparted in this book sparked many a discussion that further developed our understanding of positive peace. It seems only fitting to set the stage for this collection of essays by concluding with a quote that expanded our understanding of what it means to cultivate a right relationship with self, others, and the Earth: "I want to stand by the river in my finest dress. I want to sing, strong and hard, and stomp my feet with a hundred others so that the waters hum with our happiness. I want to dance for the renewal of the world."[5] And so we begin…our collection of thoughts about how we might renew the world filled with hope, reciprocity, and peace.

Notes

[1] Earth Charter, "Democracy Nonviolence & Peace - 16f." https://earthcharter.org/read-the-earth-charter/.

[2] Paul Smoker, Ruth Davies, and Barbara Munske, eds., *A Reader in Peace Studies* (Oxford, UK: Pergamon Press, 1990), x.

[3] Johan Galtung, "Violence and Peace," in Smoker et al., eds., *A Reader in Peace Studies*, 9 and 13.

[4] Charles F. Howlett, "State of the Field: American Peace History Since the Vietnam War," *AHA Perspectives* (1 December 2010) https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/december-2010/american-peace-history-since-the-vietnam-war

[5] Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teaching of Plants* (Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Editions, 2015), 251.

SECTION I.

CONNECTIONS

CHAPTER 1

BEYOND CONFLICT: BUILDING PEACEFUL HISTORIES

SIMON CORDERY

What is history? What is its value? What can historians teach us about building a peaceful world? These questions raise complex problems. At its most basic, history is storytelling. The stories historians tell are primarily concerned with how and why human societies have experienced change. For historians, change occurs in specific time-bound contexts: a year, a decade, a generation, a century, the longue durée. Regardless of duration, the best-known historical stories, those we find in textbooks and popular histories, deal with violence in one form or another. Walk the aisles of a bookstore and there, filed under history, are shelves full of books about warfare, books that some call warnography, glorifying the brutality of war while ignoring the reality of death.[1] Read a textbook and the big episodes, the important moments of grand change, are violent in one way or another. History teaches us that what is most important in our collective past is conflict.

The conflicts historians examine take many forms. We recover interpersonal disagreements, simmering antagonisms, overt abrasiveness, riotous gatherings, and criminal viciousness. Warfare, a system of highly organized collective violence mobilizing people and resources, has accompanied us since the dawn of human societies. Historians have responded by privileging war as a motor of change.[2] Conflict is useful for history writing because it is a powerful narrative device, the fulcrum around which historical action turns and big shifts are explained. Wars accelerate technological innovation and build state power; demographic swings generate social pressure and alter labor relations; imperial violence racializes cultures and remaps the world. Tension and conflict capture the historical imagination and help to explain historical change.

By focusing on conflict, however, historians are complicit in the creation of a violent world. This is bad enough, but what if historians have been neglecting a key element of the human experience by unquestioningly

taking the centrality of conflict for granted? What if conflict is not the whole story? What if human societies have been shaped as much by peace as by war? After all, somehow humanity has survived and even thrived for millennia. How are historians to explain our persistence as a species in the face of all that conflict? Part of the truth is that most humans, most of the time, do not engage in conflict. This is not to deny or minimize the pain and violence experienced by people subjected to genocide, discrimination, and officially sanctioned oppression. It *is* to argue that most people spend most of their lives in relative harmony with those around them, and that interpersonal peace governs human relationships despite all the carefully chronicled conflict.[3] Tensions exist, of course, and we do engage in disputes. After all, humans never agree on everything. But overt inter-group conflict is unusual. If this were not so, society could not function. The war of all against all, to repeat seventeenth-century political philosopher Thomas Hobbes's famous formulation, has never literally existed.

So why does conflict reign supreme as an explanatory device? Perhaps it is because historians lack the language and conceptual tools to explain how empathy, humility, respect, self-restraint, and gratitude have undergirded much human activity. Co-operation and collaboration are often downplayed or recede into the background when fighting appears.[4] Violence is easier: the drama of conflict is visible, recordable, comprehendible, attractive. Violence—indeed, conflicts of all kinds—is readily found in the types of documents historians rely on to reconstruct bits of the past. The bold, the brazen, the bullying, the loud, the brave, the sociopaths, the fighters, the pioneers, and the leaders have long demanded our attention and populated our history books. Despite calls for recovering the history of ordinary people, social history reduces us to data points in statistical charts, obscure actors in minor dramas, or dim figures in unpleasant industrial and urban landscapes. We need to counter this obsession with conflict by offering histories of the ordinary, of the routine, of everyday people performing chores and leading peace-filled lives.

Instead of conflict, perhaps historians could turn our gaze to the mutualist compact, that tacit but powerful understanding that we need to cooperate to survive. Conflict is always a latent possibility because violence rarely vanishes and hostility or anger often simmer below the surface. But let's be honest: bellicose behavior only occasionally boils over in relations between groups or nations and interpersonal acrimony rarely leads to fisticuffs.[5] Capturing the full range of human experience requires a history of humanity that does not hinge on conflict. To suggest how, the first part of this essay highlights the intellectual and conceptual power of violence and problematizes conflict as a category of analysis. Why do historians

obsess about it and what is the cost of doing so? Following that first section is an examination of the use of conflict in leading textbooks written for the introductory college courses in which most educated Americans are exposed to the complexities of studying the past. To suggest how we might move beyond conflict, the third section re-reads the history of two transatlantic mutualist groups, Freemasons and friendly societies. The essay concludes with an overview of recent writings on the idea that humanity has navigated the past despite conflict and not because of it.

Conflict as a Category of Analysis

Historians take conflict for granted.[6] This is understandable because history tells the story of the past by finding narrative patterns in chaotic, unpredictable events. Narrative cohesion and movement often require struggle, divergence, and antagonism for plot development and explication. And yet, for scholars concerned with the interplay of action and context, historians pay scant attention to theories of causality and temporality.[7] The power of conflict derives from our unquestioned assumption that violent confrontations cause change.[8] As a framework for approaching the past, the focus on conflict excludes moments of peace. Yes, conflict is certainly memorable and imprinted onto our collective development and identities, but the emphasis on violence means historians write primarily about what stains us, not what sustains us. This is a terrible loss and a tragic oversight. History can be part of the solution to our recurring and enduring existential crises but, as currently practiced, barely offers partial answers.

The focus on violence began with an account of warfare between Athens and Sparta, and historians have followed the example Thucydides set ever since. One Greek military leader and raconteur telling war stories can hardly be blamed for the course of history writing, but he did establish a model historians have found fruitful. Not all historians trod the same path, of course; the development of social history in the 1960s foregrounded topics in which violence played a muted role, such as shopping and cooking. But even in this subfield, in the hands of historians interested in promoting a revolutionary future by exposing a violent past, force and conflict remained potent forces.

Conflict on a spectrum from vitriolic speech and random punches to warfare and genocide dominates historical writing. Action turns on a war, a revolution, a riot, a regicide, a strike, a cultural shift, a family dispute, a natural disaster, or a parliamentary spat. Chronologies highlight warfare and revolution while the dates associated with lasting peace are frequently invisible. Historical accounts often conclude with a summary of the

aftershocks and ramifications of conflict instead of the creation and perpetuation of peace. Historians use conflict to convey what happened and convince readers of the accuracy of our narratives.[9] In violence is truth, or at least meaning, we seem to say. The German philosopher G. W. F. Hegel, writing in 1831, drew a distinction between "genuinely historical conflict" and "the 'common life' of the group" in which no "historical event" occurred.[10] For Hegel, most of human existence was void of historical significance; are we any different today?

We can trace the ideas that humanity is defined by conflict and that society turns on violence to the eighteenth century. Political economist Adam Smith observed in 1776 that wage levels rested on a contract between parties "whose interests are by no means the same. The workmen desire to get as much, the masters to give as little as possible. The former are disposed to combine in order to raise, the latter in order to lower the wages of labor."[11] This, for the founder of modern economics, was a natural state of affairs. Political economist Nassau Senior recorded how capitalists sought high profits by reducing wages to the detriment of labor and Charles Morrison, another disciple of Smith, framed mid-nineteenth-century hostility between British factory owners and wage laborers as the great social problem of the industrial revolution.[12] Conflict, political economists argued, was regrettably understandable, wholly natural, and unstoppably inevitable.

One of the most enduring statements on the inevitability of conflict is the famous opening sentence of the *Communist Manifesto*, published by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in 1848: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle."[13] Violent revolution was, for Marx and Engels, the gateway to progress. In other writings, Marx characterized capitalism as "a state of society founded upon the antagonism of classes" created when the payment of wages alienated workers from the product of their labor, placing them in a position "diametrically opposed" to their employers.[14] Marx and Engels found the war between the classes to be a welcome development, leading inescapably to what they predicted would be the highest stage of human history, the creation of global socialism.[15]

Marx and Engels were not alone in framing violence as a positive force. Towards the end of the nineteenth century influential Europeans agreed that a world war would be quite a good thing. Social Darwinists argued that struggle was vital for progress and the phrase "survival of the fittest," coined in 1876 by Herbert Spencer, gained currency as a justification for imperial conquest.[16] Retired German army general Friedrich von Bernhardi, who experienced martial triumph in the 1870 Franco-Prussian war, wrote in 1911 that "War is a biological necessity of the first importance, a regulative

element in the life of mankind which cannot be dispensed with."[17] For Victorian-era imperialists and class warriors, conflict became not merely an inescapable natural fact but a necessary and irresistible element in national improvement and racial progress.

When the grand war for which some Europeans hankered arrived in 1914, it proved less a positive force than a threat to the contemporary social order. The combination of two world wars, a global influenza pandemic, and an international economic depression had given conflict a bad rap by the mid-twentieth century. Following the Second World War, historians moved into the political center and lambasted extremes of left and right as unacceptably dangerous in an age of atomic weapons. These "consensus historians" helped to prosecute the Cold War by emphasizing "the enduring uniformities of American life, the stability of institutions, the persistence of a national character."[18] Consensus historians emphasized agreements among mainstream politicians and their supporters, rejecting the study of social conflict in favor of formulating a historical vision of shared ideologies and attitudes. The imperative to avoid another global conflagration required politicians and historians to accentuate amity and concord, though they defined it as the absence of war rather than positive peace.[19]

But studying conflict came back into fashion during the turbulent 1960s. A group of scholars and activists known collectively as the New Left rejected consensus history and employed Marxist approaches to show how the past had been riddled with violence and persecution. The principal object of their attention was working-class people opposing the power of their rulers, fomenting popular uprisings with an eye to destroying the status quo and ushering in the socialist revolution. One of the pioneers of this approach, E. P. Thompson, venomously ridiculed those who downplayed violence and conflict.[20] Like other Marxist historians of his generation, Thompson powerfully and influentially emphasized the role of ordinary people in shaping eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain by arguing that they were engaged in a long-running insurrectionary movement aimed at toppling bourgeois hegemony.[21] For Thompson, conflict was natural, inevitable, and, because it would bring a new revolutionary order, desirable.

Textbook History

The writings and interpretive frameworks shaped by E. P. Thompson and other conflict-oriented historians influenced scholars who wrote textbooks for college-level introductory History courses. It is therefore no surprise to find violent events—wars, revolutions, economic downturns,

and degrading environments—providing the moments around which history turns. In American higher education, the courses for which these books are intended fall into three basic categories: Western Civilization, World history, and United States history. Most of them are organized chronologically and most are split in half, arranged to fit a two-semester survey sequence. The analysis of historical change in these textbooks is primarily driven by conflict. Students learn why conflict emerged, the shape it took, how it was resolved, and its lasting effects, but rarely how people actually lived peacefully on a daily basis.

Textbooks teach lessons about conflict but not about peace. A brief overview of texts written by prominent professional historians illustrates this point. A leading work designed for Western Civilization courses, *The Making of the West*, entered its sixth edition in 2019.[22] The principal author, Lynn Hunt, is a much-decorated scholar who specializes in the history of the French Revolution and a former president of the American Historical Association, the leading organization for professional historians in the United States. Though the preface touts the book's integration of multiple approaches to the past—"from military to gender"—along with a chronological organization and a sprinkling of primary sources, Hunt and her three co-authors cannot stray too far from the orthodox approach to the course for fear of losing their clientele.[23] The narrative therefore pivots on conflict, starting with Iron Age conquests to obtain resources for making weapons.[24] New imperial states created social hierarchies preserved in burials with swords, axes, and other valuable objects, suggesting to anthropologists and historians that persistent warfare has long been the essence of the human condition.

Looking at the world after 1500, violence and antagonism are key to every major change, from Columbus introducing firearms into the Americas to our postmodern age, where, the authors maintain, improvements in material standards of living are threatened by "military mass murder, genocide, terrorism, and environmental deterioration…."[25] The violence of the French Revolution, of imperialism, of global conflicts, and of the systematic suppression of dissent along with the wholesale destruction of the environment controls the trajectory of this bleak history and explains how and why societies have changed, though not how humanity has survived it all.

In recent years a regular theme in textbooks is how the natural environment is being damaged by human action. As with *The Making of the West*, the narrative of historian John R. McNeill's world history, *The Webs of Humankind*, turns on violence.[26] McNeill, the son of pioneering world historian William McNeill, is another former president of the American

Historical Association whose books have won numerous awards and prizes. *The Webs of Humankind* characterize the post-Columbian world as one of warfare conducted primarily by Europeans searching for land and resources, with the environment as collateral damage. The first half of his book admits of a large degree of peaceful coexistence across the world, but things began to shift in the fifteenth century, symbolized by Columbus engaging in "slave trading…, bloody reprisals, and several sorts of atrocity in his eagerness for gold."[27] In between Columbus and the twenty-first century, revolution and warfare drive seismic social shifts. Our recent past is one of failed peace-keeping efforts, religious intolerance, and autocratic repression.[28] Another world-history textbook, *Origins of the Modern World* by Robert B. Marks, shares this approach. Reaching its fourth edition in 2019, this landmark text, which draws inspiration from one of John McNeill's earlier monographs, points to human interactions with the environment as key to understanding history. Marks argues that the ability of the British to exploit water and coal as sources of energy freed humanity from biological limits on economic growth. In the ensuing conflict between industrial Europe and agrarian societies there could be only one winner, with victory secured at the barrel of a gun.[29]

Turning to United States history surveys, it is impossible to ignore Eric Foner. The most decorated historian of his generation, Foner's books have earned him a Pulitzer Prize, two Bancrofts, the Parkman, and numerous other prestigious awards. He has served as president of both the AHA and the Organization of American Historians while teaching at Columbia University, one of America's most respected institutions of higher education. In his textbook *Give Me Liberty*, now in its sixth edition, Foner argues that North Americans enjoyed a relatively peaceful co-existence before European intervention destroyed their societies and cultures. For Foner, the vast array of indigenous peoples in the Americas lived in roughly egalitarian groups and rarely engaged in conflict. The one exception to this picture was the eastern seaboard of North America, where "Tribes frequently warred with one another…."[30] Even there, however, two great native American confederations emerged to bring peace and eliminate disorder.

For Foner, conflict becomes the moving force in American history when Cortes arrived. Noting in passing that the Aztecs were "violent warriors" who conquered their neighbors and engaged in ritual sacrifices which Foner compares to the burning of witches and heretics in Europe, the narrative focuses on the brutality of the European conquest of the Americas.[31] The transatlantic exchange was another episode "in a long history of using violence" to subordinate non-Europeans.[32] That "long history" found a new

home in North America as white, primarily Anglo, settlers freed themselves from royal tyranny but exerted an ever-tighter grip on the slaves and women serving them. The emphasis on conflict drives the story, accelerating at the end of the nineteenth century as the United States sought "to remake the world in the American image."[33]

The texts discussed above are representative of the traditional entry into the field: well-illustrated, multi-volume printed books offering an often overwhelming array of information and resources, the latter increasingly accessed online. But one textbook, *The American Yawp*, originated as an online production freely available on the internet. First appearing in 2014 and taking its name from an archaic word meaning a guttural cry or roar, the editors describe their virtual work as "a collaboratively built, open American history textbook…." Free to access and use, the text can be revised as instructors see fit. According to Stanford University Press, publisher of a paper edition, "The Yawp highlights the dynamism and conflict inherent in the history of the United States, while also looking for the common threads that help us make sense of the past."[34] Oddly, that sentence is omitted from the book's online self-description. The "common threads" vanish and we are told that "Europeans embarked on a debauching path of death and destructive exploitation that unleashed murder and greed and slavery" exacerbated by the alien diseases they introduced into the New World.[35] As with Foner, violence subsequently becomes an omnipresent reality of American life, from the tragedy of African slavery to the terrorism of the twentieth century.

There are alternatives to orthodox textbooks written for introductory History courses. Two possibilities are peace-history textbooks: David Cortright, *Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas*; and Antony Adolf, *Peace: A World History*. Cortright, professor emeritus at the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame, offers a history of peace movements and ideas. His book is divided into two sections: a history of social and political movements opposing war since about 1800, followed by thematic chapters exploring the intellectual and theological roots of pacificism. Cortright argues that "Positive peace means transcending the conditions that limit human potential and assuring opportunities for self-realization."[36] War, though not dominant, is far from absent, as is true of Adolf's volume, a history of world peace across the ages. Organized chronologically, Adolf's book traces people, organizations, and ideas involved in making peace from hunting-gathering groups to the present.[37] Warfare is a prominent player, even in books focused on peace, but with relatively little study of the history of daily peace and routine to draw on that should hardly surprise us.

Textbooks teach about pain, violence, aggression, and warfare. While often implicitly condemning these qualities and actions, little by way of an alternative is offered. How did people live? How did people negotiate daily life? What was their mundane reality and how did that change across time? How, despite supposedly omnipresent violence, are we still here? The mechanisms, cultures, and attitudes conducive to positive peace make few appearances in the history books, offering very little in the way of alternative approaches to conflict or lenses through which to re-imagine our own lives. But there are examples to which historians could turn to show how people have transcended violence in order to cultivate peace.

Freemasons

As we saw above, Adam Smith and his fellow political economists viewed conflict as endemic in capitalism, but some of their contemporaries disagreed. The Ancient Free and Accepted Masons, commonly called Freemasons, was an exclusive association dedicated to sociability and charity. Freemasons proposed a mutualist alternative to the competitive ethos at the heart of capitalist society. They deployed secular, cosmopolitan values to develop a vision of a harmonious society in which the concerns of all became the focus of each.[38] Despite intense secrecy and closed doors, they believed the values they espoused should be shared by all people, that their moral code was universal and timeless, and that all governments should facilitate human happiness. Masonic rhetoric echoed and amplified secular, progressive principles about political reform and social change. Masonic virtues in the misogynistic eighteenth century were defined not by the belligerence and posturing characteristic of masculine behavior but by fraternal kinship.[39] Friendship and mutual assistance signaled true masculinity for Freemasons.[40] Enlightenment thinkers and those influenced by them sought to emulate this culture of politeness, rejecting conflict in favor of decorum and refinement.[41]

Beginning around 1717, Freemasons claimed to be "school[s] of civic sociability" emphasizing tolerance. They promoted reform "through virtuous and self-disciplined leadership" and enacted rituals providing "moral, ethical, and political prescriptions" for individual behavior, social co-operation, and political conduct.[42] Masons recited texts about universal benevolence and social harmony while following, or being expected to follow, rules fostering sobriety and restraint. Crucial here was the conviction that people deserved to live harmonious and happy lives. Masonic gatherings were supposed to reflect these aspirations while lodge-room conversations were "quietly, sedately, and maturely to be discours'd

[sic.] of and transacted."[43] That Masons did not always live up to these lofty ideals is clear from rules against arguing, swearing, and excessive drinking included in Masonic handbooks, but they did provide one set of guides to creating a peaceful society.

Founded in London, Freemasonry crossed the Atlantic Ocean to the eastern seaboard of British North America in the 1730s, where it influenced the revolutionary generation. The first Masonic lodges were established in Philadelphia and spread quickly, strengthening the transatlantic economy and helping consolidate the commercial marketplace through business and interpersonal networks. Lawyers, merchants, government officials, and artisans used Masonry as a way to replicate English culture in the colonies. Masons imported and popularized a "new social code…signaled in such words as *polite*, *civil*, and *urbane*" and discernable in public and private displays of refined manners.[44] This mutualist outlook attracted and shaped colonial elites, including individuals like Benjamin Franklin and George Washington, but Masonic ideals rarely make it into the textbooks and when they do, they seldom disturb the orthodox understanding of the past.

How do the textbooks examined in the previous section interpret and position the Freemasons in their narratives? The story is, like so much of the lost mutualist past, depressingly familiar. *The American Yawp* devotes more time to anti-Masonic movements than to explicating the values of the organization or explaining why leading French and American revolutionaries would choose to be Masons.[45] The authors of *The American Yawp* note how, in the 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan recruited local elites from Masonic lodges, emphasizing racism and hatred while ignoring the cosmopolitan, foundational, and democratic charitable giving and openness of the order in its early years.[46] Indeed, the Prince Hall Masons defied the baked-in racism of American society by extending the rituals and collective values of Masonry to Black Americans. Yet, for Eric Foner the Masons were not sufficiently important to earn a place in his text, as was true for McNeill's world history. Freemasons did play a role in the creation of Enlightenment modernity for Lynn Hunt and her co-authors, either as targets of conservative animosity or by giving members "a direct experience of constitutional government," but the Masonic emphasis on peaceful co-existence and mutual understanding has no place in textbook renderings of the past.[47]

Friendly Societies

Similar in organization and outlook but profoundly different in demographic makeup were friendly societies. Members paid a weekly subscription in return for basic insurance and social gatherings in the

comfort of a public house. By the end of the nineteenth century more than one half of all British men were members of these voluntary organizations.[48] This pattern was repeated throughout the industrializing world. Friendly societies—called fraternal orders or mutual benefit societies elsewhere—could have hundreds of thousands of members, larger than any contemporary trade union.[49] Friendly society members vastly outnumbered trade unionists throughout the nineteenth century, but trade unions dominate the history books. In Britain as elsewhere in Europe, trade unions funded political parties, collected documents, promoted libraries and archives, created universities and adult-education institutions, and worked to shape the writing of their history. As a result, they became textbook mainstays and monopolized the study of organized labor and the history of working people.

Participating in politics and funding historical study gave unions a powerful influence. But friendly societies supplied an alternative, formidable current in actual daily social life. Friendly societies sought to avoid conflict but, or perhaps because of it, failed to make a dent on the historical profession. They are double outsiders: excluded from political power, they have been omitted from the textbooks. Like the Freemasons after which they were modelled, friendly societies promoted social harmony, promulgated a mutualist understanding of humanity, and attracted large numbers of members, but are completely missing from the textbooks. One reason for this can be found in the fact that historical writing on friendly societies is negligible, occupying barely half a shelf compared with a full library's worth of work on trade unions. Friendly societies promoted notions of shared interests across class lines and an acceptance of the status quo, making few waves and appearing in few accounts of their times. And yet membership was a common experience for men and women, far more so than membership in trade unions.

The imbalance is reflected in college textbooks. Though friendly societies spanned the globe and served as conduits of information and ideology, they are absent from the pages of McNeill's *Webs of Humankind* and from Marks's *Origins of the Modern World*. These omissions are understandable: friendly societies hardly fit sweeping analyses of global history rooted in violence and environmental destruction. Friendly societies promoted peaceful rituals and routines, provided members with comfort and security, and quietly reached around the world. Hunt likewise has no place for them in her history of Western society, despite their role in the origins of the modern welfare state. Eric Foner includes the Patrons of Husbandry, a fraternal order for farmers more commonly known as the Grange, in his discussion of popular discontent in Gilded Age America while *The American Yawp* finds a place for the Grange and also for Jewish mutual-aid

societies.[50] Neither text elaborates on the organizations or explains why so many people were attracted to their combination of insurance and sociability. It is difficult not to conclude that abjuring conflict and promoting peace rendered these mutualist organizations unsuitable to depictions of a world ruled by violence.

Positive Peace and Mutualist History

Friendly societies are like ambient sounds: they provide a background and a tint to the past but are rarely brought into full focus. In that sense they are, to use philosopher John Lysaker's wonderful phrase, examples of "the power of calm," part of a mutualist outlook attractive to so many people but neglected by so many historians.[51] But what if we took the mutualist past seriously? What would an ambient history of humanity look like? Problematizing conflict as a category of analysis allows us to re-read the past in order to uncover hidden, neglected, and suppressed episodes and ideals pointing to peaceful possible futures. Moving beyond conflict suggests we should explore the history of positive peace, of the changing routines and hopeful expectations informing people's desire to avoid conflict and create something settled, to reach for horizons of tranquility.

Summarizing the orthodox approach to studying human antecedents, historian Patrick Joyce notes how scholars extract "moments of conflict only" from the past and sideline other "tendencies of development."[52] The writings of nineteenth-century Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin suggest that one of those "tendencies" is seeing beyond conflict. His studies of intra-species cooperation in Siberia and subsequent observations of human activities led him to argue that co-operation explains the development of life far more persuasively than either the Darwinian struggle for survival or a focus on human aggression. For Kropotkin, "mutual-support institutions, habits and customs" are far more powerful explanations for the development of human societies than recourse to arguments about the supposedly inherent nature of conflict. Mutual aid, he argues, derives from the exigencies of the human condition and develops as informal, often invisible responses to need.[53]

Because they rejected conflict and promoted peace, voluntary organizations tended to be neglected in the teaching of history. Freemasons, friendly societies, Girl Scouts, Elks, and other voluntary associations created small waves on the surface of our collective existence, but those waves proved to be cumulative, amounting to sweeping historical forces. Some historians are recognizing the limitations of conflict-centered interpretations. British historian David Cannadine argues that history

writing is "too often dominated by an exaggerated insistence on the importance of confrontation and difference" and proposes finding areas of common experience and agreement.[54] The Dutch author Rutger Bregman sees isolation as the real cause of collective conflict and rejects the assumption that human beings are innately evil and violent.[55] Flipping the script in these ways can help us re-vision our understanding of the human past.

Another avenue out of the conflict cul-de-sac is provided by historian Antoinette Burton. Interested in the pedagogical challenges of teaching world history, Burton proposes using the concept of connectivity as a way to bring world history into focus by narrowing and sharpening the subject. Connectivity allows instructors "to follow patterns of circulation and interdependence" in shaping their courses. Connectivity, which she defines as "the dynamic (inter)action of historical spaces," helps to reveal the links across place and time between, for example, commodity chains or slave ships. While far from displacing conflict and violence, connectivity suggests a possible approach to uncovering mutual relations in the past.[56]

Mutualism has a history, and that history can help us understand how people have constructed and preserved societies despite conflict. The mutualist approach enriches our understanding of human experience and offers possible models for our collective future. Much work remains to be done. There are multiple avenues to be explored, such as the varieties of mutual aid practiced by farming families, fraternal orders, and friendly societies around the world.[57] The quest for happiness and harmony—however defined—takes different shapes at different moments in the past but has usually revolved around the desire for permanence and certainty. Impermanence is, however, built into the human condition. Stephen Aron's "alternative history" of the frontier West unearths moments of reconciliation and the acceptance of difference but reminds us they are always contingent. The past is unstable; peace and harmony vie with violence and bitterness in the panorama of our shared histories.[58]

A world without conflict is inconceivable, but a world in which violence and interpersonal friction are ubiquitous is similarly unimaginable. Conflicts explain some historical changes, but so do the quotidian flows of daily life. Resorting to violence to resolve disputes or gain advantages is not an innate human quality.[59] The history of humanity can be written without an emphasis on violence, indeed, with a focus on a positive peace encouraging all people to live self-fulfilling lives. We need to research and write a history that deliberately de-centers the conflicts which currently serve as pivots in our understanding of the past. Freemasons and friendly societies are two examples of people collectively rejecting conflict in favor of peace, collaboration, and hope. Perhaps it is time to take such ideas

seriously, to integrate these and other mutualists into the textbooks. Our survival as a species may depend upon it.

Questions for Discussion

1. How and why does history writing emphasize violence and conflict?
2. What would history look like if violence and conflict were de-emphasized?
3. What examples from the past do you know of that could contribute to a history of peace?
4. In addition to the Freemasons and friendly societies, what groups or individuals have contributed to the history of mutual relations?
5. Do you see the mutualist compact in action in your own life? In the lives of others?

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Notes

[1] For an overview of recent representatives in this "sardonically dubbed" genre, see Geoffrey Wheatcroft, *Churchill's Shadow: The Life and Afterlife of Winston Churchill* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2021), 514.

[2] See, for example, Margaret MacMillan, *War: How Conflict Shaped Us* (New York: Random House, 2020).

[3] Francis A. Beer, "The Reduction of War and the Creation of Peace," in Paul Smoker, Ruth Davies, and Barbara Munske, eds., *A Reader in Peace Studies* (Oxford, UK: Pergamon Press, 1990), 15.

[4] This move is evident in Yuval Noah Harari, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* (New York: Harper, 2015). Harari notes in passing (page 46) how "cooperation was one of the trademarks of *Homo sapiens*, and give it a crucial edge over other human species," yet instances of cooperation are rare and examples of violence commonplace in the last 360 pages of his book.

[5] See, for example, Caroline Lamwaka, "Can There Be Mutualism Among Mankind?" *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 6, no. 3 (2000): 223-224.