

# Introduction

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Peace and justice are ancient and (nearly) universal goals. They are values for a large majority of people in most places, across time and space—excepting a nontrivial number of sociopaths in positions of power. Politicians pay regular lip service. Clergy dutifully include the values in their sermons. A few committed teachers instruct their students in the history of nonviolent campaigns against war. A small number of Americans, however, actively engage in civic struggles to realize these enduring human values. A yet smaller subset of these people gathered the past eighteen summers in Upstate New York for the Kateri Tekakwitha Peace Conference organized by John W. Amidon and Maureen Baillargeon Aumand. This book relays the personal and political voyages of seventeen of those courageous few, all of whom were keynote presenters at one or more Kateri Peace Conferences over the years.

They are courageous for a variety of reasons. To protest war or preparations for it automatically sets one up for harassment as “unpatriotic” and “un-American,” even if a combat veteran. Activists risk personal and professional relations, and can be isolated in their communities. Peace advocates have found their jobs at stake, and direct action protestors may end up in federal prison. Peace and justice campaigners can feel like strangers in their own countries once they decide to oppose dangerous weapons systems or Endless War.

Our activists share a few features in common. Given their backgrounds, these are not people one would normally expect to become professional or even part-time dissidents. They are, unsurprisingly, given the profile of

most contemporary American peace campaigners, Baby Boomers from white middle-class families. They are now middle-aged or older. They are well educated, cosmopolitan, open-minded. They came to manifest antiracist, feminist, pro-immigrant and -environment stances; most have radical politics.

This requires an explanation. What caused these otherwise “normal” citizens—seemingly destined for conventional careers and existences—to develop lives of opposition and resistance? Understand, again, that their chosen lives often subjected them to derogatory abuse, and in some cases even prison. For most, one or more catalytic events triggered critical questions and growing skepticism about the actions and priorities of their government and society. These events were in each instance eye-opening, often traumatic. For many activists, raised on myths about the beneficence of their country’s role in the world, the experience is often akin to a religious conversion in its far-reaching force and impact on their lives. The shift in outlook and attitude generally leads to deep study and discernment that confirms suspicions about the nature of Washington’s foreign and defense policy.

While from similar backgrounds, our activists came to their peace work on various paths. Some are veterans like this editor, who, raised on war movies and comic books, went into military service as teenagers with naive hopes and expectations for adventure. We believed American military superiority was the path to world peace, before learning the hard way that militarism was the problem. Others are clergy. They found that their faith traditions often fail to advance peace and justice, and modify their ministries to advance their work for peace. Some were already activists who, busy with global-justice organizing around so-called trade agreements, international financial institutions, and the World Trade Organization, returned to peace work following September 11, 2001. Others are academics who were able to transform their teaching and research into forces for peace and justice.

Most of our contributors have decades of experience on the frontlines of the struggle for a peaceful, livable planet. Their personal qualities shine through their work: resilience, bravery, persistence, creativity. They are by no means superheroes, with powers fundamentally different from the rest of us. They are, rather, hard-working, dedicated people who use their talents for diverse noble causes. Their sustained action is not dependent on its varying effectiveness or impact. It depends instead on firm belief in the righteousness of the struggle itself.

Our contributors’ causes evolved over time. Some number got their start opposing the war in Vietnam. Many were active in the Nuclear Freeze and Central American Solidarity Movements of the 1980s. They resisted the bel-

ligerence and arms racing of the Reagan administration, as well as its support for political Islamists fighting against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan (with whom Reagan met in the Oval Office). The years-long campaign to close the U.S. Army's School of the Americas—known by opponents as the School of Assassins—was especially important for a number of our contributors who worked in Latin America. Many of our activists rallied against the Gulf War in 1991. Resistance and alternatives to corporate-led globalization animated several of our authors during the nineties. Then came 9/11.

Our authors were familiar with the Project for a New American Century's plans for regime change years before al-Qaeda's attack on the Twin Towers. They knew the dangers posed by the worldviews and policies of George W. Bush's stable of neoconservatives: Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, John Bolton. Contributors to this volume immediately sensed the wrongheadedness of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, and were among the few Americans able to resist the widespread demands for revenge. They were organizers of and participants in the legendary February 15, 2003, worldwide demonstrations against the imminent U.S. invasion of Iraq. They disbelieved the lies—relayed by Colin Powell and endlessly repeated by the lapdog news media—regarding Saddam Hussein, weapons of mass destruction, and al-Qaeda, and predicted the horrors that followed.

Some of our activists hoped to prevent the invasion by directly embedding with Iraqi civilians before the war. Failing that, they worked consistently to bring public attention to Islamophobia, mass surveillance, torture, extraordinary rendition, Abu Ghraib, CIA black sites, assaults on civil liberties, and all the rest. Our contributors opposed the Surge, and labored to close Guantanamo Bay. They understand the essential role played for American defense policy by the "Empire of Bases," seek to close as many as possible, and to prevent the construction of new ones.

Today, our activists resist the use of armed drones as prosecutor, judge, jury, and executioner. They are strong proponents for a just resolution to the Israeli occupation of Palestine. They oppose U.S. intervention in Venezuela. Were it up to them, the U.S. defense budget would shrink considerably. They see international law and unwavering respect for human rights as foundations for U.S. foreign policy against anachronistic calls for "America First." They are stolid opponents of U.S. rogue state behavior, and lament Trump's withdrawal from the Paris climate accord, the Iran nuclear deal, the INF Treaty, and the move of its embassy to Jerusalem.

Persistent tactics and targets accompanied the shifting threats to peace and justice. Our contributors' action repertoire includes frequent visits to war

zones, conflict witnessing, and solidarity with refugees and the displaced. They remain focused on the evils of militarism, poverty, jingoism, American exceptionalism. They oppose renewed Cold War with Russia, and warn against the dangers of conflict between a United States in decline and a China on the rise. Fear of nuclear war grew with the development of North Korean bombs and ballistic missiles; our contributors strongly support sincere efforts for denuclearization and peace on the Korean peninsula. Activists mobilized against U.S. complicity in Saudi Arabia's war on Yemen. They oppose U.S. eagerness under Trump to sell weapons to human rights abusers. Some avoid paying federal income taxes through voluntary simplicity to protest the vast sums wasted on war and preparations for it. Above all, they understand that war is not the answer.

We editors provided some guidelines for chapter authors. We asked each of them to reflect on:

1. their own lives as activists, to examine the roots of their personal commitment to peace and justice; to examine the place faith, spiritual traditions, education, and experience played in their commitments; to share the inspiration provided by specific individuals, moments, and events in history, or on a specific illuminating moment in their lives.
2. the features of their peace work: the details over time plus particular anecdotes that illuminate it; on the challenges and imperatives that drive their work for peace, the challenges that mark it, and what it taught them.
3. the dynamics that give rise to war as well as peace and justice; on the deepest needs of humanity; on the greatest obstacles to peace and justice, and on the contours and opportunities of the current historical moment.
4. their personal visions: on how political and spiritual engagement affect their belief in a "world beyond war"; on what people need to know to enable them to engage in protracted struggle; on what core beliefs sustain their work.

The *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists'* Doomsday Clock now stands at two minutes to midnight. This dangerous state of affairs is neither inevitable nor irreversible. The answers to the problems—the roots and causes of conflicts

and how to avoid and resolve them peacefully—that have long bedeviled the planet are in the following pages. Our authors show the way forward. We hope that more will join with us to put an end to the scourge of war and to build a world upon the principles of justice. The moral arc of the universe does not bend of its own accord.