Culture of Peace

& Culture of Life
Culture of Peace - definition

- society-wide practices and habits that promote peace
- a positive way of viewing peace as much more than the mere absence of war
The United Nations officially declared the first decade of the 21st century the International Decade for a Culture of Peace.

- Many millions world-wide have signed its pledge.
Culture of Peace – Pledge

First 2 of 6 items are:

- Respect the life and dignity of each human being without discrimination or prejudice
- Practice active nonviolence, rejecting violence in all its forms . . . in particular towards the most deprived and vulnerable such as children and adolescents.
Culture of Life - Definition

- society-wide practices and habits that promote protection of vulnerable human lives
- a positive assertion of the value of life, much more than mere opposition to abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia.
Culture of Life – Formal Declaration

- Proposed by Pope John Paul II in 1995 encyclical, “Gospel of Life”
- Used by Catholic, Protestant, and other religious groups as well as secular groups
Culture of Life – Founding Principles

- Respect the life and dignity of each human being without discrimination or prejudice

- Rejecting violence, in particular towards the most deprived and vulnerable such as children (in the womb or recently born) and people who are disabled or terminally ill.
Can we ever build one of these cultures without also building the other?
John Paul II did include opposition to the death penalty in the Culture of Life.
The Death Penalty

- Peace Issue: a use of weapons against an enemy, differing from war only in individually targeting those who presumably commit criminal homicide.

- Life Issue: euthanasia for the guilty, another example of trying to solve problems by killing individuals
“If we're trying to establish a culture of life, it's difficult to have the state sponsoring executions.”

-- conservative Republican U.S. Senator Sam Brownbeck

Link: Racism

The Culture of Peace opposes discrimination and prejudice.

Minority ethnic groups are over-represented as people targeted by death row and war.
Racism

The Culture of Life protects vulnerable humans.

Abortion clinic location shows that minority ethnic groups are targeted for abortion.
A Threat to Both Cultures: The War of Words

Dehumanizing language targets people as:

- deficient humans
- non-humans or non-persons
- parasites
- diseases
- waste products
This language has been used against:

- Ethnic or religious minority groups
- Women
- People with disabilities or illness
- People who live in poverty
- Children in the womb
- “Enemies”
The Slippery Slope

- Wars and other massive violence don’t generally start full-blown. They start with dehumanizing language and smaller violent acts, and build up.

- Justifying feticide has already led to justifying infanticide and euthanasia; past history with “life unworthy of life” (a Nazi phrase) has shown how the slippery slope can work.
Aftermath

- The Culture of Peace
- and
- The Culture of Life

Must help heal the pain that comes from the violence they are trying to prevent – and not just in the victims, but in those who participated.
Combat veterans have long shown that Posttraumatic Stress Disorder is a common aftermath of war. It seems to be worse for those who killed in battle.

Some evidence shows this for executioners and other socially-approved killing.
Abortion Aftermath

Evidence of post-trauma symptoms has also shown up in some abortion-providing staff, as well as some women who have had abortions and their families.
Both are cultures of hope!

We can care about each other and build a culture which is humane and nonviolent to everyone.
“Both the military ethic and the abortion ethic are grounded in the same belief: Life is cheap. Iraqi life. Fetal life. . . . The language of the war lobby and the abortion lobby is from the same glossary of evasions. No one likes war, say the generals. No one likes abortions, says NOW. But let's keep the killing option, just in case. And cases keep coming. If Iraqis are causing trouble, or Libyans, Grenadans or Panamanians, bomb them. If fetuses pose problems, destroy them.”
“When we allow abortion, we are punishing the women—who must abort their children because their men have run away—and we are punishing the children whose lives are terminated . . . I want us to step back a little bit and say: Why is this woman and this child threatened? Why is this woman threatening to terminate this life? What do we need to do as a society? What are we not doing right now as a society?
Questions for Discussion-Starters

○ How does partisan politics, which polarizes peace issues and life issues into different parties, impact cooperation between the culture of peace and the culture of life?

○ How do media portrayals and common stereotypes impact the culture of peace and the culture of life?
Books on Peace/Life Connections

Anthology:

*Consistently Opposing Killing: From Abortion to Assisted Suicide, the Death Penalty and War*

edited by Rachel M. MacNair & Stephen Zunes,
published by Praeger 2008
Books on Peace/Life Connections

*ProLife Feminism: Yesterday and Today*

edited by Mary Krane Derr, Linda Naranjo Huebl, & Rachel MacNair
Feminism & Nonviolence Studies Association, 2006

*Essays from Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and many others, along with contemporary voices*
Achieving Peace in the Abortion War

Rachel M. MacNair
Feminism & Nonviolence Studies Association, 2009

Applying the principles of peace psychology to current U.S. abortion practice.
Books on Peace/Life Connections

*Perpetration-Induced Traumatic Stress: The Psychological Consequences of Killing*

Rachel M. MacNair
published by Praeger 2002
Web Sites on Connections

- www.consistent-life.org
- www.fnsa.org
- www.prolifequakers.org
We are committed to the protection of life, which is threatened in today's world by war, abortion, poverty, racism, capital punishment and euthanasia. We believe that these issues are linked under a 'consistent ethic of life'. We challenge those working on all or some of these issues to maintain a cooperative spirit of peace, reconciliation, and respect in protecting the unprotected.