It’s the month of Mothers Day, and this year we’re focusing on the people who make mothers mothers: the children of the world. Children are 30% of our 7-billion population, planet-wide, and they’re 100% of our future.

Every one of those roughly 2.1 billion children encounters obstacles in the course of growing up. Fortunately, the United Nations itemized their most basic rights more than 50 years ago, and continues to press nations to nurture their children and report their progress toward common goals. My goal for this issue was to summarize the international agreements that impact children and touch lightly on a few issues that have particular salience for me, including corporal punishment and the use of child soldiers. I also wanted to profile a particular child advocate, to honor the many thousands around the world. The one I wound up choosing was a surprise to me. She may surprise you too!

Also in this issue, CEO Kim Weichel offers a poem of gratitude for her own mother and for the gift of mothering. We hope you’ll share all these posts with sisters and mothers and others you love, and add the personal comments that only you can make. (We LOVE those comments!)

We also hope you’ll honor your mother and all the mothering you’ve given and received by a generous contribution to Peace X Peace. The culture change this world so sorely needs is up to us as women. With your support, Peace X Peace can multiply the power of women’s collective sanity and love. Happy Mothers Day!

VOICES FROM THE FRONTLINES

If you’re a woman (or a man who values women and peace), you have a story to tell. Share your first-person views & experience in Voices from the Frontlines!

Visit our website for guidelines on how to submit a story: www.peacexpeace.org/raise-your-voice

Email caroline@peacexpeace.org if you have questions or to submit a story TODAY.
This month we celebrate mothers and the qualities of mothering. Being a mother is an integral and important part of who I am, and has shaped my perspective and what I value. I feel a common bond with mothers everywhere—including everyone reading this column—united by the love we have for our children, sharing in our commitment to ensure that our children are safe. The loss or pain of a child anywhere diminishes the entire world family and affects all of us.

I have met a number of women who are not biological mothers, but embody the nurturing, caring, giving, empathetic, generous qualities that are part of mothering. These are qualities of the feminine that have been undervalued in our society, yet qualities that I feel the world is crying out for and are so needed today. To care, to connect, to listen—it’s what we try to do here at Peace X Peace.

I’d like to share a poem I wrote some years ago that expresses my relationship with my mother and my son, and how the qualities of mothering have affected who I am.

**Mothering**

My mother was my friend, my teacher, my sister, my role model,  
She cared for me when I was ill  
Nourished me as I grew up  
Taught me to play music, inspired me to learn art  
Encouraged me to explore the world  
Showed me, motivated me to do what I love

I learned so much from my mother, my grandmothers, my aunts,  
Most of which I could never learn from school  
I learned how to take care of others as well as myself  
To nurture, love, be creative, experience life  
They supported me through difficult times  
And their love filled me with the confidence to find my own way

I am now a mother myself and can apply what I’ve learned  
My bond with my son is very deep and unlike anything I’ve ever experienced  
But my mothering goes beyond this relationship  
My mothering affects my work in the world, how I treat others, the environment  
It is part of the core of who I am

I say thank you to my mother and to all mothers everywhere  
It is at the same time the hardest and most fulfilling job there is  
Thank you to mothers for giving life and nourishing souls  
And thank you to Mother Earth for sustaining us all

I wish all mothers, and all those who care for others in any way, the blessings they so richly deserve.
Women and Children First?
- by Mary Liepold
Editor In Chief

Back when men were the undisputed rulers of the universe, they often compared women and people of different races to children and animals, and described children themselves as animals, to justify their treatment of such “lesser” beings. When we were compliant and their dispositions were kindly, they compared us to beasts of burden and other domesticated animals. When we were not compliant, they described us as wild animals, even as malevolent spirits or the agents of those spirits. Some kind of other-ing is essential to the domination mindset, since dominators want to think of themselves as rational, moral, and loyal to their own kind.

The culture of peace and cooperation that the dominators suppressed has grown stronger in modern times. International movements advocate with and for women, minorities, indigenous people, and other out-groups. Though no such movement has yet been entirely won, I contend that the revolution for children’s rights has the most ground still to gain.

Too many people still see children as the property of their parents; as their livestock, if you will. It’s hard enough to understand the harsh treatment that parents and others in authority have dealt out to children throughout most of history—usually in the name of education or moral formation. But how else to explain that the US, alone among nations with functioning governments, still hasn’t ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child? Or that corporal punishment is legal in public schools in 19 of our 50 US states? How else to explain the hideous persistence of child abuse in all its forms, including sexual abuse and exploitation, the killing and kidnapping of street children, or the use of child soldiers and child slaves?

I still haven’t seen the new documentary Bully; so I don’t know if it points out that bullying isn’t just a problem between kids. I hope so, though.

Growing up isn’t easy for anyone. Neither is being an adult. But children who are bullied by adults often become bullies themselves. Children whose needs are met grow into strong adults who make the world better. Children whose rights are respected can be part of that world-building process at every age. And the world community stands behind them.

The Global Community Takes a Stand
In 1959 the United Nations issued the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, grounded in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the League of Nations’ 1924 Geneva Declaration. International advocates expanded the 1959 declaration into the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was adopted by the General Assembly in 1989 and took effect in 1990. It is the most widely accepted of all human rights treaties and the first legally binding international instrument to incorporate the full range of human rights—civil, cultural, economic, political, and social. The Convention defines these rights in 54 articles and 2 Optional Protocols: On the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and On the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Pornography. Both were adopted in 2000 and entered into force in 2002. The convention spells out the basic human rights of children everywhere: the right to survive; to develop to the fullest; to be protected from abuse and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, cultural, and social life.
The Convention protects children’s rights by setting standards in health care, education, and legal, civil, and social services and providing a mechanism for accountability. Governments that ratify the Convention or one of its Optional Protocols must report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the body of 18 experts charged with monitoring implementation, two years after ratification and every five years thereafter.

As the year 2000 approached, to further energize its advocacy for the world’s children, the United Nations adopted the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and built a campaign around them, with the overarching objective to End Poverty and specific, realistic targets in each area. Taken together, they add up to the conditions that allow children to thrive. In short form, they are:

- End hunger,
- Ensure universal education,
- Attain gender equity,
- Ensure child health,
- Ensure maternal health,
- Stop HIV/AIDS,
- Secure environmental sustainability, and
- Secure global cooperation.

The eighth is the means to all the others, for none can be met without peace and concerted international effort. With two and a half years left to the target date of 2015, we have seen measurable progress on some indicators, but none are likely to be met. War and the obscene expenditures for war by rich and poor nations alike are a major impediment. So is the difficulty of securing even intra-national cooperation.
Women and Children First?

Continued...

Among UN member nations, only Somalia, which has no recognized government, and the US have not yet ratified the Convention. The country that hosts the United Nations has a conspicuously poor record of signing its conventions, largely because of the polarized politics that our winner-take-all electoral system produces. The reason being given for the current administration’s inaction is that CEDAW (the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) is its top priority.

Most mothers would find it odd indeed to imagine their rights in competition with those of children. Still, anything that advances women also advances children. We hope for rapid progress on both.

Growing Pains and Halting Progress

The Years 2001 through 2010 were named by the United Nations as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World. Sadly, the decade ended with more wars raging than when it began. 2001 was the year of the September 11 events. It was also the year of Security Council Resolution 1325 (On Women, Peace and Security), which recognizes our right to shape the solutions to conflict as well as our right to safety.

That same dual focus characterizes the earlier international agreements on children. Since women and children have been both abused and suppressed in the name of protection through the ages, I find it wonderful that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child upholds the child’s right to participate fully in family, cultural, and social life as well as the right to care, education, health, and safety. Article 12 specifies the child’s right to a voice:

“Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child ... The child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child...”

The growing use of human rights curricula in schools and informal educational settings around the world is evidence of the culture change the Convention has promoted. We know we can count on the rising generation to advocate for themselves as well as for women and the earth. The website of the India-based organization Working Child, an official nominee for the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize, offers stories of young activists like the children of Mongolia, which has the largest number of child-governed organizations participating in local and national governance anywhere in the world.
Women and Children First?

Continued...

**Does Size Matter?**
The plight of child soldiers seems to especially grip the imaginations of young and old alike. Warlord Charles Taylor’s recent conviction and the controversy over Joseph Kony 2012 have both brought the issue back into the headlines. According to Child Soldiers International, “The use of children as soldiers has been universally condemned as abhorrent and unacceptable. Yet over the last ten years hundreds of thousands of children have fought and died in conflicts around the world.” The British organization War Child sums up that universal abhorrence with a tidy tagline: “Child soldier. Some words don’t belong together.”

The United Nations estimates that 300,000 children and teens under 18 are currently engaged in warfare. That’s clearly appalling. I worry, though, that those who want to rescue child soldiers seem tacitly to accept the propriety of killing and dying on the other side of the 18th birthday.

The subtitle Kurt Vonnegut chose for Slaughterhouse Five, his slight, quirky novel about the WW II bombing of Dresden, is The Children’s Crusade. He notes that all wars are essentially children’s crusades because they send people out to kill and die before they’re fully mature. Our own US military conducts extensive recruitment in high schools. The latest brain research confirms Vonnegut’s intuition. Mature judgment isn’t in place until 25 or even 30, science now shows, and militaries everywhere exploit this.

Someone (undoubtedly a woman) once said “It’ll be a great day when schools have all the money they need and the navy has to hold a bake sale to build a battleship.” I’m dreaming even bigger than Ms. Anonymous. In a world where every nation both ratified the Convention and fully honored all 54 of its articles, we wouldn’t have battles or battleships. We’d have radically, joyously different global priorities: politics and economics as if people mattered.

Isn’t that want YOU want for Mothers Day?
Hips, Heart, and Soul: Shakira Shakes It for the Kids
- by Mary Liepold
Editor in Chief

When the scandal around President Obama’s Secret Service took over the headlines last month, it all but obscured the reason he went to Colombia: the 2012 Summit of the Americas. Pan-American relations were rocky even before the scandal broke, unfortunately. US policies on Latin America have hardly changed since the previous administration. Colombia is a safer place than it was a few years ago, but rural women and children are still squeezed between the government and its armed opponents. And according to UN statistics, Colombia is still a tough place to be a child.

- The death rate for children under age 5 is 19%—almost one in five.
- Almost one girl in four is married before age 18.
- 35 million children lack basic necessities of life.
- The country has 10,000 child soldiers, and landmines injure 15,000 children every year.

It’s no small thing, then, that during the Summit, Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos pledged to build 13 multi-purpose centers to serve thousands of needy children. Pop singer Shakira stood with Santos and Obama to announce the new $36-million public-private initiative, called Primero Lo Primero, or First Things First. And she was NOT there for decoration. It turns out the artist best known for singing and swiveling with Wyclef Jean in “Hips Don’t Lie” was a committed children’s advocate even before she became a global superstar.

According to the fan sites, she saw belly dancing for the first time in a restaurant with her Lebanese father when she was four (the same year she began writing her original lyrics), went home, and tried it herself. The primary school classmates who watched her improvised performances dubbed her “the belly dance girl.” At the age of eight, when she first saw homeless children living in a park, she made up her mind to become a famous artist and help children. Her success has been impressive on both counts.

Shakira’s debut album was released when she was 13, and by the time she was 18 she had starred in a Colombian TV series and released a third album that topped charts in eight countries. “Waka Waka (This Time for Africa … “We’re all Africa”) the song she wrote and performed for the 2010 FIFA World Cup, is the most viewed high-definition video on YouTube, and several of her videos have had over a billion views. She has established two foundations, The Barefoot Foundation, named for the title song of her first hit album, “Pies Descalzos,” which provides educational, emotional, nutritional, psychological, and medical support to child victims of violence, and ALAS, or Latin American Action in Solidarity. In addition to Wyclef Jean, her musical partners have included Carlos Santana, Annie Lennox, Mary J. Blige, Stevie Wonder, the Dixie Chicks, the late Mercedes Sosa, and Dora the Explorer.
Hips, Heart, and Soul: Shakira Shakes It for the Kids

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In 2009 she was invited to speak at the Oxford Union, joining the ranks of Albert Einstein, several US Presidents, Mother Teresa, and the Dalai Lama XIV, and the Spanish-language People magazine named her Humanitarian of the Year. President Obama has consulted with her about children’s rights, and recently appointed her to the US Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanics. She’s a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador. She has campaigned against Arizona’s anti-immigrant statute SB1070 (currently under review by the US Supreme Court) and taken part in numerous benefit concerts for children, peace, and the environment, including a concert for peace on the border of Peru, Brazil, and her native Colombia. In January 2012 she became the first Colombian to be named a Chevalier de L’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Ministry of Culture.

Some feminists surely deplore her sexy costumes, bleached hair, and slave-of-love poses, but she has maintained considerably more creative control over her work than most female artists in the pop music field. In 2010 she turned down a request from Gabriel Garcia Marquez to act in the film version of his Love in the Time of Cholera because it required nudity. (She did contribute two songs, one of which was nominated for an Academy Award.) And her lyrics are thoughtful as well as sexy.

“It has been scientifically proven,” Shakira said in one of her speeches, “that kids who receives proper stimulation and nutrition during the early years will develop all their potential in life: intellectual skills, learning abilities, social and emotional abilities.”

In her Oxford speech she described an imagined future: “This is how I want the youth of 2060 to see us: That our mission for global peace consisted of sending 30,000 educators to Afghanistan, not 30,000 soldiers. That in 2010, world education became more important than world domination.”

Shakira tells the children of Colombia, as she told the children of Haiti in her cover of the Pretenders classic, “I’ll stand by you.” I’m standing by to see what she does for an encore!
ANNOUNCEMENTS

• Who are the child advocates you most admire? What form of abuse or exploitation strikes closest to your heart? Comment, please. We’re wisest together.

• On April 26 the US Violence Against Women Act passed the Senate, the first stage of reauthorization. The House is considering it this week. Help block the weak substitute version, HR 4970.

• Tweet for peace and justice? Why not? PCDN’s Craig Zelizer explains why and how in this handy online guide. (He notes that Shakira has almost 16 million Twitter followers.)

• Our friends at Read the Spirit collaborated with MSU journalism prof Joe Grimm and his students to produce a timely new book on bullying in just one semester: 101 days. Read about it here.

• In June we’ll focus on peacebuilding men. If you know an admirable gent we might feature as a Voice from the Frontlines or offer as a peace resource, contact maryl@peacexpeace.org.

• Pakistan’s Aquila Ismail will be reading from her historical novel Of Martyrs and Marigolds at a DC house party on June 13. Please contact maryl@peacexpeace.org if you’d like to be there.

• Congratulations to Kim Weichel, our CEO! Kim will be studying peace and conflict in Bangkok from June 13 to August 31 on an international Rotary Peace Fellowship. As part of her certificate project and her continuing work with Peace X Peace, she plans to meet with both Asian women’s organizations and international organizations. Please email kim@peacexpeace.org with any contacts you suggest.

RESOURCES

UN Documents
About the Convention on the Rights of the Child • Full text of the Convention • Plain language version of the Convention
The Millennium Declaration, 2000 • The Obama Administration reviews the Convention • Convention FAQs
Optional Protocol, On the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict
The UN Decade for a Culture of Peace (2001 – 2010) • Decade for a Culture of Peace Resources (still valuable)
Youtube videos about the UN Convention - This one’s from Ireland, and here’s a video history.

On Corporal Punishment
The Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children • Country by country reports
The Center for Effective Discipline (CED) • An interview with CED founder Nadine Block

On Child Soldiers
WarChild International • Child Soldiers International, another advocacy organization
War Child video by Emmanuel Jal: war child, child advocate, and hip hop sensation

On Shakira and Colombia
The state of Colombia’s children • 2012 Summit of the Americas (on Shakira’s website)
More on the Summit (Christian Science Monitor) • Shakira’s Foundation ALAS and Primero Lo Primero

Other
Model Statute and Advocacy Toolkit for the film Bully • See WorkingChild.org for stories of child activists.