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**Action Ideas in Educating for Human Rights
and Towards a Culture of Peace in Puerto Rico¹**

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Embracing the dream of a better world and adhering to it imply accepting the process of its creation. It is a process of struggle that must be deeply anchored in ethics. It is the process of struggle against all forms of violence – violence against the life of trees, of rivers, of fish, of mountains, of cities, against the physical marks of historical and cultural memories. It is also the process of struggle against violence toward the weak, the defenseless, the wounded minorities, violence toward those who are discriminated against The dream for a better world requires all these struggles, with only moments of rest, but without ever losing hope.³

¹ This paper is a revised and shortened version of the chapter “Pensando el quehacer de la educación en derechos humanos y para una cultura de paz en Puerto Rico” to be published in: Abraham Magendzo, ed. *Ideas fuerza de la educación en derechos humanos en Iberoamérica*. (Santiago, Chile: UNESCO y OEI, in press). It is also the paper upon which we based the workshop offered at International Peace Research Institute (IPE), (Budapest, Hungary, August 2, 2009). We wish to acknowledge the editor of the forthcoming book, Abraham Magendzo, who originated the idea of researching and reflecting about *action-ideas* in human rights education for the Iberoamerican region.

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³ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Indignation* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers 2004), 121-122.

Our Starting Point

For this paper we engaged in the task of thinking about the field of education for human rights and peace in Puerto Rico. The existing ties between human rights education, peace education, and a culture of peace were our starting point. Five *action-ideas* constitute the pillars for research and reflection in this paper: (1) **equity and diversity**, (2) **quality of life**, (3) **intergenerational equity**, (4) **self-determination**, (5) **culture of peace and human rights**.

When we speak of *action-ideas*, we refer to forms of conscience that liberate, move, and motivate towards action.⁴ These are fundamental principles that not only incorporate an extreme social force, but constitute by virtue of their intensity, ethical nature, and potential for action, an enormous energy that is dynamic and transformative. *Action-ideas* tend to establish the grounds for ordering tensions in our social imaginary and articulate ideas of diverse movements in the social and political realm.⁵

Conceptually, we understand *Human Rights Education* as a core element of *Peace Education* conducive to values for a culture of human rights. In this broad and diverse field, human rights constitute the integrating axis, and peace is considered a human right of synthesis, essential for educating towards a new **ethics of solidarity**.

Contextually, both *Human Rights Education* and the diverse approaches concerning *Peace Education*, come together in the *Movement Towards a Culture of Peace*. This vision-movement aspires to construct the framework for a new culture conducive to a just and *positive peace*. It is not aimed at educating for a *negative peace* characterized by the absence of war and direct violence. Neither, towards a utopian, everlasting, “perpetual peace”. But rather, towards an “imperfect peace”,⁶ an unfinished joint project that continuously seeks to approximate our personal and collective human right not only to live, but to live together in peace. It is a culture clearly defined by the United Nations

⁴ In our reflection we have sought to rescue the original meaning of the philosophical expression (*idées-force*), created at the end of the XIX Century by Alfred Fouillé (1832-1912), and later developed in several works, such as *Evolucionismo de las ideas-fuerza* (1880), *Psicología de las ideas-fuerza* (1893), and *Moral de las ideas-fuerza* (1908).

⁵ Antonio García-Trevijano, “Tres ideas-fuerza”. La República Constitucional-Blog de Antonio García-Trevijano, 2007, <http://antoniogarciatrevijano.com/2007/0627/tres-ideas-fuerza>; Gustavo Bueno, “Proyecto para una trituración de la idea general de solidaridad”. *Separata de El Catoblepas: Revista Crítica del Presente*, abril 2004, <http://nodulo.org/ec/2004/no26p02.htm>.

⁶ José Tuvilla Rayo, *Cultura de paz; Fundamentos y claves educativas* (Bilbao, España: Editorial Desclée De Brouer, 2004).

Education, Science and Culture Organization (UNESCO), one that is closely tied to the respect of all human rights.⁷

In this sense, as we studied the evolution of *Human Rights Education* in Puerto Rico, it became imperative for us to examine this trajectory within the conceptual framework of Peace Education and in the context of the Culture of Peace Vision-Movement. As such, we assumed the task of thinking about this field starting from the *action-ideas* we prioritized.

For this research we conducted a *systematic reflection*⁸ about the field of *Education for Human Rights and Towards a Culture of Peace* in Puerto Rico, looking at its trajectory during the past two decades. With this purpose, we studied documents and publications, carrying out a content analysis. Congresses and events that have given form to this educational effort were also identified. We held interviews with leading thinkers and activists so as to identify and clarify the central themes, tensions, and challenges of this educational endeavor. We appreciate their collaboration, since their knowledge and first hand experiences were key to the elaboration of this *reflective-systematization*.⁹ We point out that in addition to being the authors, we have also been active participants of this process, and as such, privilege from our viewpoint and experience as educators, determined school, university, and community contexts.

Action-Ideas: Evolution, Tensions and Challenges

As previously mentioned, five *action-ideas* emerge from the field of *Education for Human Rights and Towards a Culture of Peace* in Puerto Rico. We elaborate these fundamental ideas on the basis of other normative complementary principles, and deepen our analysis as we look at the contexts, movements, and educational achievements that characterize its evolution. At the same time, we address the challenges and tensions present in this educational process. Even though many of these challenges and tensions are universal, we explore from our Puerto Rican reality those that particularly respond to each one of the *action-ideas* we have identified and examined.

⁷ *From a Culture of Violence to a Culture of Peace* (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1997); ONU, *Declaración y Programa de Acción sobre una Cultura de Paz* (Resolución 53/243 de la Asamblea General, 6 de octubre de 1999); *UNESCO and a Culture of Peace* (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1995).

⁸ Oscar Jara, *Para sistematizar experiencias*. (San José, Costa Rica: Alforja, 1994).

⁹ The authors wish to acknowledge several persons for their contribution to this reflexive research. Our thanks to Ana Grimaldi Colomer, former Director of the Office of UNICEF in Puerto Rico, for an extensive interview which allowed us to reconstruct part of this history. To José Raúl Cepeda, professor and activist for human rights, for his timely input that helped us to consolidate some of the ideas expressed herein. We also thank José Santiago, student at the Faculty of Education and assistant to the UNESCO Chair for Peace Education, for his help in locating publications and materials pertinent to education for human rights and peace in Puerto Rico.

First Action-Idea: Equity and Diversity

The respect for **human dignity** and the **identities** and **subjectivities** that converge in the **otherness** of each person, constitute the necessary components to reach a commitment towards **equity** and **diversity**. This commitment is the driving force for change in diverse educational scenarios and propitiates a greater reciprocal respect for civil, social, political, and cultural human rights in Puerto Rico. Both notions imply the respect for human dignity, the reaffirmation of multiple identities, and the valuing of difference.¹⁰

In a culture that respects **equity** and **diversity**, the particularities of every human being and of every collective ethnic group or people, are legitimized.¹¹ Particularly pertinent to Puerto Rico, are the differences of origin, race, culture, language, age, values, sexual orientation, ideology, religion, and a diversity of marginalized populations such as students with special needs, migrants, indigents, elderly, homeless, and prisoners.

The *Education for Human Rights and Culture of Peace* in Puerto Rico arises from movements and organizations that seek to defend and promote human rights, or to prevent their violation. It also emerges from movements that vindicate civil rights, as for example, women's rights, or the need to attend to some group whose rights are not respected, like those of the imprisoned population.

In many cases the initiatives are part of international struggles for **equity**, like the abolition of the death penalty; struggles that take on a national and contextual character as in working against racial discrimination and in favor of gender equality, or in the recognition of the rights of the homosexual population. In this sense, **education for equity and diversity** has been carried out by nongovernmental organizations like *Amnesty International* and *Paz para la Mujer* in the non-formal sector, and governmental entities such as the *Comisión de Derechos Civiles* and the *Procuraduría de la Mujer*. These themes have also been addressed at the higher education level in various projects, courses, congresses and publications. Amongst the university study programs, we identified the *Programa de Estudios de la Mujer y el Género* at the Faculty of General Studies at the University of Puerto Rico and the *Proyecto de Estudios de las Mujeres* of the University of Puerto Rico, Cayey campus. Recently, the Universidad del Sagrado Corazón established a *Master of Arts Program in Justice Systems*, with two specialties: (a) Conflict Mediation and Transformation, (b) Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Processes.

¹⁰ Abraham Magendzo, "Alteridad y diversidad: componentes fundantes de la educación en derechos humanos" In *De miradas y mensajes de la educación en derechos humanos*, ed. Abraham Magendzo Kolstrein (Santiago, Chile: LOM Ediciones, 2004), 73-91.

¹¹ AAP, *Escuela y multiculturalidad* (Conclusiones del Congreso Internacional "Educar para la Diversidad en el Siglo XXI, 15 de noviembre, 2000).
<http://www.educaweb.com/esp/servicios/monografico/multiculturalidad/article1.asp>.

Educating for equity and diversity is inserted in our educational system by means of the professional development of teachers, the elaboration of educational materials, and the creation of study units. These deal with racial discrimination, the understanding of and relations with migrant populations, the inclusion of students with special needs, and gender equity, among other contents.

Given the increasing diversity and the struggle for equity of marginalized populations in Puerto Rico, we face the challenge of developing competencies, as well as producing curriculum and didactic materials geared towards **educating for equity and diversity**. This type of educational effort is at the same time tensioned by a series of excluding public policies, mindsets and fundamentalist attitudes prevalent in our country, which do not recognize each and everyone as a bearer of human rights.

In order to create a culture of respect of human rights we must educate for an ethical commitment towards **equity** with a **diversity** of populations traditionally discriminated against in Puerto Rico, such as the homeless, prisoners, members of the gay community, elderly persons, and migrant populations. It is indispensable to recognize the racial and ethnic prejudices that are ignored or silenced and continue to encourage exclusion, especially when these are tied to matters of class. It is important to point out the tension that is present due to our intolerance towards migrants from the Dominican Republic, particularly given the increasing student population from this country in our schools. Also, the challenge posed by the controvertible migration reform that is being discussed in the United States Congress, in terms of its impact in Puerto Rico.

The recognition of **otherness** and the respect for **diversity** constitute essential components to bring to life a culture of human rights, capable of transcending the manifestations of intolerance and prejudice that occur in Puerto Rico. In order to promote the recognition of **alterity**, we have to legitimate the face and voice of “the other” and thus establish the base for a non-discriminatory life together. In this sense, the educational experience should begin from the real life experiences of students, so that they can comprehend the prejudices that exist in our society. At the same time, openness and collaboration should characterize learning, so as to learn to work with “others” in the practice of tolerance and respect for their rights.

To educate for **equity** and **diversity** also calls for a certain rupture with our identity scheme and the commitment to coexistence with a plurality of identities.¹² As we assume these challenges and tensions, we educate to reach commitment with a Puerto Rican culture respectful of human rights.

Second Action-Idea: Quality of Life

Integral health and wellbeing, sustainable development, social justice and human rights constitute the key concepts in understanding and promoting our **quality of life**. This *action-idea* provides the foundation for educating in social, economic, political,

¹² Magendzo, “Alteridad y diversidad”, 2004.

cultural and environmental rights, particularly as they pertain to health, environmental deterioration, economic disparities, crime, and the diverse manifestations of violence. We consider this notion an *action-idea* in our formation as a people, since the concerns and contributions which result from it enable a better understanding of our reality, understanding which is necessary for social transformation.¹³

As we study the context and evolution of *Education for Human Rights and Towards a Culture of Peace*, it is important to notice the increasing presence of violence as a defining element in interpersonal and group relationships in our nation.¹⁴ The prevalence of violence is evident in the high number of murders among youth, the abuse and murder of women by their partners, the alarming rate of child abuse, and the complex problem of drug addiction and crime, as well as in acts of police brutality against citizens and other forms of governmental abuse of power.¹⁵

As the multiple manifestations of violence become an everyday problem, these give shape to, and provide content for, educational action towards a better **quality of life**. These efforts, contrary to the public policy of “*mano dura contra el crimen*” which took hold in the 1990’s and has recently been retaken, seek to minimize violent and unjust relationships as they promote respect for human rights and peaceful coexistence. Many of these initiatives stem from nongovernmental organizations, universities or research centers, like for example, *Iniciativa Comunitaria*, *Centro Agenda Puertorriqueña para la Calidad de Vida*, and the *Comisión para la Prevención de la Violencia* (COPREVI).

At the same time, education for a better **quality of life** is provided in the non-formal sector by environmental organizations such as *Casa Pueblo* in the mountain region of Adjuntas. At the university level, there are note worthy projects such as *Escuela de Asuntos Ambientales de la Universidad Metropolitana*, and the *Asociación Nacional de Derecho Ambiental*, that conduct research and generate alternatives for sustainable development.

Educating towards a better **quality of life** in Puerto Rico, requires that we assume the challenge of attaining **integral health, sustainable development, social justice, and human rights**, with **quality of education** as basis. Furthermore, we face the tension of doing so in the context of a lack of social cohesion, the existence of repressive anti-crime

¹³ García-Trevijano, “Tres ideas-fuerza”, 2007; Bueno, “Proyecto para una trituración”, 2004.

¹⁴ Virgen Cáceres & María Ríos *La violencia nuestra de cada día* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Centro de Investigaciones Sociales, Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2002); *Perfil de la violencia en Puerto Rico 1984-2004* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Centro Agenda para la Calidad de Vida, Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico, 2006); *Segundo Encuentro de Prevención de Violencia* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Comisión para la Prevención de la Violencia, 2007).

¹⁵ *La violencia, la isla y el área metro* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Tendencias/Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2005); Dora Nevares-Muñiz, *El crimen en Puerto Rico* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Instituto para el Desarrollo del Derecho, 1996); “Sistema de vigilancia epidemiológica de muertes violentas” (Cayey, Puerto Rico: COPREVI) http://www.coprevi.org/sistema_vigilancia.html.

policies, and the manifestations of violence, crime, and socioeconomic marginalization that we face on a daily basis. Given the lack of citizen participation in those matters that affect our quality of life, we also have to struggle to promote and give form to true citizenship by means of participation, dialogue and consensus based action proposals.

Educating for a better quality of life requires that we propitiate integral health and well being in a country with a high rate of mental health and addiction problems, where addicts are criminalized, and the health system is in decay. It demands that we educate for economic and social sustainable development, in contrast to the prevailing high incidence of inequality, consumerism, corruption, environmental degradation, and arms and drugs trafficking. It also implies that we educate to safeguard our national patrimony, the enjoyment of nature and the access to public spaces, where unbounded urbanization, blatant individualism, social conformism, and profit seeking are destroying our beautiful lands and shores.

Third Action-Idea: Intergenerational Equity

Fulfilling the rights of children and youth demands a commitment of solidarity with the incoming generations from the outgoing generations so as to foster their **full participation as citizens** and **intergenerational equity**. We consider the notion of **intergenerational equity** -- promoted by UNICEF as “the new ethics for the new millennium” and guaranteed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child -- a key *action-idea* in the evolution of *Education for Human Rights and Peace* in Puerto Rico. This notion has internationally transformed the collective consciousness, and Puerto Rico is no exception. During the past two decades, from diverse educational scenarios, this *action-idea* has given way to the recognition, prioritization and defense of **children’s rights** for their **full citizen participation** as an essential commitment of solidarity between generations.

The approval of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* in 1989, and the movement generated internationally for the promotion and defense of these rights, have had a noticeable effect in educating for human rights and peace in Puerto Rico. During the 1990’s, UNICEF, the *Proyecto Educando para la Libertad- Amnistía Internacional*, and the *Colegio de Abogados*, led a coalition effort for the promotion of the rights of children and youth, educating for **intergenerational equity**. This work comprised the non-formal and formal educational sectors through a wide range of activities, including congresses, children’s festivals, professional development for teachers, workshops for parents and students, and development of educational and didactic materials.¹⁶ The University of Puerto Rico’s Faculty of Education provides fundamental support, joining the university, schools, and community in this educational endeavor.

¹⁶ Isabel Freire de Matos, *Los derechos del niño* (Guaynabo, Puerto Rico: Ediciones Santillana, 1996); Andrea Husler, *Henry y su amiga especial* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Comité de Puerto Rico de UNICEF, 1994); Anaida Pascual Morán, *¡Nuestros derechos!* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Amnistía Internacional, 1993).

At the same time, the rights of children and youth serve as driving force for governmental actions, like for example the promotion of legislation.¹⁷ In the formal educational sector, curricular materials are produced and some concepts are inserted into the elementary school curriculum. The most recent significant government action is the commitment established by the city of Caguas by joining the *UNICEF Child Friendly Cities* initiative.

Educating for intergenerational justice requires that the outgoing generations take on as a priority the rights of the incoming generations, as a commitment of solidarity that promotes the optimal development of children's potentials, their autonomy, and their full participation as citizens. To educate in this direction is not an easy task in Puerto Rico, where the understanding of the rights of children and youth is lacking, while we have a high incidence of child abuse and neglect, "juvenile delinquency", "school drop-outs", and the tragic loss of talents and lives of youth involved in arms trafficking and the culture of drugs.

As we educate about and for the rights of children and youth, we face the challenge of teaching about, and complying with, the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, in a country that paradoxically lacks international juridical standing to ratify and monitor said Convention. This is further aggravated when Puerto Rican children and youth are invisibilized in international reports and legal documents.¹⁸ We must also temper our juvenile justice system to international norms as recorded in the Convention, since juveniles are treated punitively and as transgressing adults, instead of providing for prevention, mediation, and conciliation.¹⁹ Similarly, we must aim to close the existing gap between the educational and legal worlds of those who work for the rights of children and youth, so that educators participate in related legislative procedures and those who legislate are nourished by our educational efforts.

We also face the challenge of educating to surpass the existing mindsets that assign greater importance to the rights to survival, to develop to the fullest, and to protection from harmful influences, thus neglecting their rights to participate fully in family, cultural and social life. Another obstacle is provided by some ultraconservative and fundamentalist entities, which see only dangers and threats in the Convention, perceiving

¹⁷ *Carta de Derechos del Joven en Puerto Rico* (Ley Num. 167 del Estado Libre Asociado, 2003); *Carta de Derechos del Niño* (Ley Num 338 del Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico, 1998), *Declaración de Derechos y Deberes de la Persona Menor de Edad, su Padre, su Madre y del Estado*, (Ley Num. 89 del Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico, 2000).

¹⁸ Jaime Conde, "La invisibilidad de los niños, niñas y adolescentes de Puerto Rico" (Ponencia presentada en el Congreso Ciudades Amigas de la Niñez: Una estrategia para Puerto Rico y el Caribe, Caguas, Puerto Rico, 2007).

¹⁹ Alfonso Silva Sernaqué, *Derechos humanos de los niños y adolescents y la legislación internacional: Reflexiones sobre la legalidad y la realidad* (Lima, Perú: Fondo Editorial de la Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, 2005).

it as conducive to restricting and challenging “parental authority” and thus publicly oppose it.

Given these challenges, we must assume a vigilant position and evaluate the activities we develop so that they foster the authentic participation of children and youth and promote their decisions and initiatives.²⁰ With this in mind, we must engage the tension of building participatory spaces in an educational context where autonomy, dialogue and mutual trust are not generally fostered. This situation worsens when conflicts, instead of being perceived as learning opportunities, are considered to be a problem from a punitive and authoritarian view of discipline.

We also face the task of documenting and rescuing the history of two decades of initiatives and alliances in favor of the rights of children and youth, stemming from the approval of the Convention. It is important that we build on what has been constructed, not from lack of knowledge of the road already traveled.

Fourth Action Idea: Self-Determination

The **decolonization** and **demilitarization** of Puerto Rico constitute inalienable political rights in order to reaffirm our **national identity** and reach our **self-determination**. Given our colonial subordinated reality, we consider the notion of **self-determination** a key *action-idea* that is a driving force for our **decolonization** and **demilitarization** from diverse educational paths and positions of militancy. This *action-idea* is conducive to a greater *conscientization* about the violations of human rights and persecutions of a political nature. Furthermore, it drives us a nation with “emerging consciousness” that is “prevented of being”, to reinforce our inalienable right to reaffirm our own destiny, our sovereignty, and our national identity.²¹

The relationship of political subordination between Puerto Rico and the United States provides the context, and constitutes the central tension, that drives struggles for the defense of our **national identity**, **decolonization**, **demilitarization**, and **self-determination**. Historically, the actions undertaken towards decolonization and self-determination include diverse scenarios and strategies. These include nonviolent actions like the participation before the United Nations Decolonizing Committee, and the national political organization in favor of independence of Puerto Rico. At the other extreme, are armed interventions, including attempts against individuals and installations representative of the United States government. In many cases those who have headed

²⁰ Anaida Pascual & Anita Yudkin, “Educar para la convivencia escolar pacífica: Principios y pautas en torno a por qué, para qué y cómo” (Conferencia Inaugural del Primer Congreso para la Convivencia Pacífica Escolar del Sindicato Puertorriqueño de Trabajadores, Carolina, Puerto Rico, 2005) <http://unescopaz.rrp.upr.edu/act/Conferencias/Convpacificaescolar.html>.

²¹ Paulo Freire, “Pedagogía de la esperanza – Diálogo con Paulo Freire” *América Libre*, La Habana Cuba (abril-mayo, 1993); Anaida Pascual Morán, “Pedagogías del Destino Nacional” *Casabe – Revista Puertorriqueña de Teología* (1999), 51-88.

actions for decolonization and demilitarization have been criminalized and have faced political persecution, by both the United States Federal Government in Puerto Rico, and Puerto Rican governmental institutions.²²

What we have called **education for self-determination** emerges from this context and evolves in two main strands: political education to promote understanding of the colonial relationship in order to overcome it, and educational efforts in favor of those who have suffered political persecution and imprisonment. The first of these has been undertaken mainly by organizations of civil society, such as the *Comité de Puerto Rico en la ONU* (COPRONU), and the *Colegio de Abogados*, and by political entities with training initiatives. The second has been assumed, going against the current, by organizations such as the *Comité de Derechos Humanos*, that defend our right to self-determination and the freedom of Puerto Rican political prisoners as a matter of civil and human rights. This task has been conducted mainly by means of campaigns of *conscientization* using mass media like radio, television, and the Internet.

Parallel to the struggle for the political right to self-determination, and in an interrelated fashion, for the past forty years an antimilitarism movement that questions, resists, and opposes the military presence of the United States in Puerto Rico has evolved. This movement is nourished by the activities opposing the Vietnam War, in the 1960's and 1970's, and recently in Iraq, as well as the development of pacifism internationally. The leading actors in this movement include ecumenical coalitions, political parties, and student organizations.

The educational efforts towards demilitarization are mainly conducted by civil society organizations, for example *Pax Christi*, *Madres Contra la Guerra*, and *Proyecto Caribeño de Justicia y Paz*. Recently, given the increasing presence of military recruiters from the United States armed forces in our public schools, the Department of Education has authorized access and “equal time” to pacifist organizations to educate about the disadvantages of militarism and the alternative nonmilitary alternatives. The topic of demilitarization is also analyzed at the formal educational university level, mainly through symposiums, research studies, and publications.²³

When **educating for self-determination**, we face the challenge of assuming the **decolonization, demilitarization**, and affirmation of our **national identity** as inalienable political rights in a nation that paradoxically has not attained sovereignty. The notion of

²² Ramón Bosque Pérez & Javier Colón Morera, eds. *Puerto Rico Under Colonial Rule: Political Persecution and the Quest for Human Rights* (New York: SUNY Press, 2005); Ramón Bosque Pérez & Javier Colón Morera, eds. *Las carpetas: Persecución política y derechos civiles en Puerto Rico* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Centro para la Investigación y la Promoción de los Derechos Civiles, 1998); José Paralitici, *Sentencia impuesta: Cien años de encarcelamientos por la independencia de Puerto Rico* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Ediciones Puerto, 2004).

²³ Anita Yudkin Suliveres, comp., *Universidad y (anti)militarismo: historia, luchas y debates* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Universitarios por la Desmilitarización, 2005).

“national identity” immediately brings forth a series of tensions from various sectors. In the first place, an ideological sector wants to be incorporated as a state to another country with an identity dramatically different from ours, and alleges that our identity is only cultural in nature. Then, an intellectual sector questions the existence and pertinence of the “Puerto Rican nationality” as a referent in our social imaginary in a time of vanishing national boundaries. A third sector, recognizes the continually redefining “new identities scenario”, yet affirms the national identity that differentiates and gives us cohesion as nation.²⁴

Educating for decolonization requires a de-conditioning, by means of an “authentic thought” and rupture with the “culture of silence” and the “delusive voice”, which results from our colonial relationship of dependence to the United States. Furthermore, it presents us the challenge to educate for the transformation of our “ingenuous” and “oppressed” colonial conscience to a society with “emerging consciousness”.²⁵

It is not an easy task to **educate for demilitarization** in a dominated nation that is at the same time immersed in the culture of war and violence sustained by the dominating nation. Towards this aim, it is necessary to create and affirm those cultural and educational ways typical of dependent people’s struggle for autonomy.²⁶ In order to visualize a different future, it will also be necessary to “unlearn war” and “demilitarize thought” from a critical, creative and *problematizing* education.²⁷

In Puerto Rico, we also face challenges and tensions that are particular to our idiosyncrasy and to an education that has fostered docility and the devaluing of ourselves. According to the Puerto Rican educator Isabel Freire de Matos, given our colonial situation that demands “double allegiance”, we possess a “divided consciousness” – two national anthems, two flags, two languages.²⁸ This divided consciousness emerges, particularly, amidst the void faced by the lack of a national educational philosophy in harmony with the formation of a citizenship capable of forging its own destiny.²⁹

²⁴ Jorge Benítez Nazario, *Reflexiones sobre la cultura política puertorriqueña* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Insituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 2001).

²⁵ Freire, “Pedagogía de la esperanza-diálogo con Paulo Freire”1993; Pascual Morán, “Pedagogías del destino nacional”, 1999.

²⁶ Ricardo Nassif, *Teoría de la educación* (Bogotá, Colombia: Editorial Cincel, 1985); Pascual Morán, “Pedagogías del destino nacional”, 1999).

²⁷ Ana Bastida, *Desaprender la guerra* (Barcelona: Ediorial Icaria, 1994); Vincenc Fisas, *La paz es posible* (Barcelona: Intermón/Oxfam, 2002); Betty Reardon & Alicia Cabezudo, *Learning to Abolish War* (New York: Hague Appeal for Peace, 2002); *UNESCO and a Culture of Peace*, 1995.

²⁸ Isabel Freire de Matos, “La escuela elemental puertorriqueña”, *Claridad*, 17-23 de febrero, 1997).

²⁹ Pascual Morán, “Pedagogías del destino nacional”, 1999).

Ideological polarization also has led us towards fragmentation, and generated excessive political/ideological affiliations and polarization of our public school and university educational systems. Our identity is also tensioned and divided in “two shores”, since almost half of our population is in the diaspora. So it is not easy to shape a pedagogy that gives meaning to our existence. In our judgment, we must configure a national pedagogy capable of uncovering our colonial path. An authentic pedagogy that leads us to reinterpret our history and culture, in order to forge our own destiny in solidarity with other peoples and nations.³⁰

Fifth Action Idea: Culture of Peace and Human Rights

Some *action-ideas* have the potential of harmonizing worldviews and currents of thought that appear impossible to reconcile to the point of propelling radical change and laying the foundations for transforming history.³¹ In our judgment, such is the case of the notion of **culture of peace and human rights**. This conception provides a suitable paradigm to transform the diverse manifestations of **direct violence, cultural violence, and structural violence**.

The *Vision/Movement Towards a Culture of Peace*, led by UNESCO, that underlies and guides this *action-idea*, provides for the coming together of efforts from diverse ideologies and scenarios worldwide. The goal is always clear – to promote an education leading to a **holistic peace** and overcoming the prevailing culture of violence.

This *Vision/Movement*, that takes shape worldwide during the decade of 1990, has an important influence in *Education for Human Rights and Peace* in Puerto Rico. At the university level, we distinguish the work done by the *Cátedra UNESCO de Educación para la Paz-Universidad de Puerto Rico*, in the promotion of activities and publications around the action spheres of the Decade for a Culture of Peace (2001-2010), contextualizing and “Puerto-Ricanizing” the topics studied.³² For over ten years, we have educated, within and from the University, in order to surpass the relationships of violence, foster critical understanding and action for human rights and a positive peace.

Education for a culture of peace also takes place in the training of educators and other professional, as it is selected as a central theme in the professional development

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ García Tervijano, “Tres ideas-fuerza”, 2007; Bueno, “Proyecto para una trituración”, 2004.

³² Fernando Picó, *A la universidad desde la cárcel* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Cátedra UNESCO de Educación para la Paz, Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1999); Robert Rabín, Miriam Sobá & Carlos Zenón, *De Vieques a la universidad* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Cátedra UNESCO de Educación para la Paz, Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2003); Luis Rivera Pagán, *Entre el terror y la esperanza* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Cátedra UNESCO de Educación para la Paz, Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2004); Anita Yudkin & Anaida Pascual, eds. *Educando para la paz en y desde la Universidad: Antología conmemorativa de una década* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Cátedra UNESCO de Educación para la Paz, Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2008).

programs and congresses of diverse organizations, including the *Asociación Puertorriqueña para la Educación en la Niñez Temprana*, the *Asociación de Colegios Privados*, and the *Asociación Puertorriqueña de Consejería Profesional*. In addition, the public media, *TUTV-Canal 6*, and *Radio Universidad*, conduct programming around the topic of a culture of peace, and adopt it as slogan beginning in the year 2000, *International Year for a Culture of Peace*.

In recent years, departments of education in various universities create courses on education for human rights and peace, and nonviolent conflict resolution for schools. At the Río Piedras campus of the University of Puerto Rico for example, two elective courses are offered: *Peace Education*, for the undergraduate level, and *Culture of Peace and Liberating Education: Principles and Emerging Pedagogies* for graduate students. These contribute towards the goal of forming reflexive educators, committed to a culture of peace and respect for human rights.³³ The Creative Projects generated for the completion of their Master's degree by the graduate students from the School of Education at the University of Puerto Rico, deserve to be noticed for their contribution to this educational endeavor. The projects provide for research and creation of curriculum and activities that allow for the development of knowledge and attitudes conducive to a culture of peace and human rights.³⁴

At the same time, the prevalence of violence in the country is also evident in schools, where incidents of physical violence and aggression between students are on the rise, as are acts of vandalisms, and other problems that affect learning and peaceful coexistence.³⁵ For the past fifteen years, the government's response to the problems of violence, including those in schools, has followed a predominantly punitive, police, and

³³ *Marco Conceptual de los Programas Profesionales de la Facultad de Educación*, (Facultad de Educación, Recinto de Río Piedras, Universidad de Puerto Rico 2003).

³⁴ Judith Conde Pacheco, "Diario con nombre de mujer" (Proyecto de Maestría, Facultad de Educación, Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2004); Joan Figueroa Rivera, "Escuelas por una paz activa" (Proyecto de Maestría, Facultad de Educación, Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2006); Marisol Kavetsky Cora, "Alforja de semillas emocionales y espirituales" (Proyecto de Maestría, Facultad de Educación, Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2005); Carlos Muñiz Osorio, "Ecopaz" (Proyecto de Maestría, Facultad de Educación, Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2000); Luis Rivera Pastrana, "¡Cámara por favor!" (Proyecto de Maestría, Facultad de Educación, Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2006).

³⁵ Incidentes de violencia en las escuelas, (Datos provistos por la Policía de Puerto Rico y el Departamento de Educación, 2007)
http://www.tendenciapr.com/Educacion/Educacion.html#anchor_279; Margarita Moscoso, Juan Reyes, Héctor Colón & Magdalena López, "La violencia entre adolescentes puertorriqueños" (Trabajo presentado en Segundo Encuentro de Prevención de Violencia, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 2007).

militaristic approach.³⁶ On the other hand, legislation³⁷ and school programs³⁸ have been promoted that cite the promotion of a culture of peace and learning to live together in schools, as their basis and ultimate goal. Unfortunately many of these programs are short lived and are subject to change or elimination with changes of governmental administrations.

In response to the problems of violence, there are diverse nongovernmental initiatives that focus on the nonviolent resolution of conflicts. During the 1990's, several schools that share collaborative projects with the University of Puerto Rico, such as *Nueva Escuela Juan Ponce de León*, *Escuela Elemental Antonio S. Pedreira*, *Escuela Elemental Abraham Lincoln*, integrate children's rights and conflict resolution to their educational programs. During the past years, several organizations including the *Fundación Golsdtein Levis*, the *Centro para la Prevención de Violencia en Jóvenes Hispanos*, and the *Sindicato Puertorriqueño de Trabajadores*, generate initiatives for the mediation and nonviolent resolution of conflicts in public schools, thus educating for **peaceful coexistence**.³⁹

In educating towards a culture of peace and human rights, we face the challenge of educating in a society characterized by an atmosphere of polarization and intolerance and a culture of direct, cultural and structural violence. It is important to point out that there is a lack of consciousness on behalf of political and educational authorities of the legitimacy and urgency of educating in this direction, and as a consequence we lack educational policies and scarcely have programmatic initiatives aimed towards these goals. An exception is found in the renovated social studies curricular framework for the public schools.⁴⁰ It incorporates "ethics and civics" at all levels (K-12), integrating across the

³⁶ Sheila Rodríguez Madera & Beliza Torres Nárvaez, "Conociendo la violencia, (Conferencia presentada en la 9na Conferencia Anual de la Asociación de Psicólogos Escolares de Puerto Rico, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 2007); Salvador Santiago Negrón & Sheila Rodríguez Madera, "La violencia y la criminalidad en Puerto Rico", (Conferencia presentada en La Cumbre Multisectorial contra la Criminalidad, San Juan, Puerto Rico. 2007).

³⁷ *Carta de Derechos y Responsabilidades de la Comunidad Escolar para la Seguridad en las Escuelas* (Ley Num. 110 de 2006).

³⁸ "Experiencias del Programa de Convivencia Pacífica del Departamento de Educación", (Presentación realizada en el Primer Congreso Educativo Psicosocial, Universidad Interamericana, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 29 de febrero de 2008).

³⁹ Rafael Juarbe Pagán, "La mediación escolar comunitaria como proyecto de gerencia social hacia el aumento del capital social comunitario" En Anita Yudkin Suliveres y Anaida Pascual Morán, eds. *Educando para la paz en y desde la Universidad: Antología conmemorativa de una década*, (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Cátedra UNESCO de Educación para la Paz, Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2008).

⁴⁰ *Marco Curricular del Programa de Estudios Sociales*, (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Instituto Nacional para el Desarrollo Curricular, Depto. de Educación, 2003).

curriculum the concepts of civics, democratic participation, duties, rights and responsibilities, among others.

Educating for a culture of peace and human rights also faces the question of who should be responsible for this education – the State or the nongovernmental organizations and civil society. This tension is real, given that we understand that both share this responsibility of educating the incoming generations. We therefore ask ourselves about the desirability of government assuming this obligation when, in determined moments of our history, the State has violated the civil rights of certain populations, and has strong political ties to particular parties and ideologies.⁴¹ We have also had governments that assume hard-line repressive and punitive policies of “*mano dura*”, “*cero tolerancia*”, and “*castigo seguro*”, and lately justify more severe penalties on behalf of the “war against terrorism” called forth by the metropolis. Thus, if a particular government assumes this task, we must be vigilant that this process is not distorted. In other words, that we do not educate from a reductionist, complacent, trivial or “light” paradigm, but from a critical and preventive paradigm that assumes the centrality of human rights and justice in this process.

Another challenge we face, given the political polarization that is prevalent in our society, is the appropriation of the discourse of human rights and peace by “pseudo leaders” who precisely represent the opposite. This challenge is in marked contrast with the marginality that often characterizes the work for peace and human rights and the lack of recognition towards this committed endeavor. We must also face the apparent contradiction that exists in some organizations in Puerto Rico when they oppose activism and education when engaging in human rights and peace work.

When educating towards a culture of peace and human rights, we must assume these as curricular content and educational practice, within an educational system that is conventional in its subject matter and ways of teaching. To this end, we must identify programmatic, curricular, and didactic means to incorporate principles, contents, and especially values that are pertinent to our reality.

We must also contextualize, particularize, and “puertorriqueñizar” the values that underlie the *Manifiesto 2000*, as a *Puerto Rican Agenda for a Culture of Peace*.⁴² These values: *respect for all lives, rejection of violence, liberation of generosity, listening for*

⁴¹ Osvaldo Burgos Pérez, “¿Y qué cuando al violencia viene del Estado?” (Presentación para el Segundo Encuentro sobre la Violencia, Comisión para la Prevención de la Violencia, San Juan, Puerto Rico: 2007); Hiram Lozada in Abraham Magendzo, *Conversaciones y tensiones en torno a la educación en derechos humanos* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Cátedra UNESCO de Educación para la Paz, Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2006).

⁴² “Agenda Puertorriqueña para una Cultura de Paz” (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Cátedra UNESCO De Educación para la Paz, Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2000).

understanding, preserving the planet, and reinventing solidarity, provide us with an ideal platform.

In order to internalize these values it is necessary to articulate the cognitive, affective, and experiential dimensions of education. Harmonizing these dimensions requires that at the same time we prioritize perceptions, feelings, intuitions, and sensations that constitute authentic and vital experiences in any learner. We also need to create a secure educational environment and construct a learning community built on trust, respect, and support.⁴³ We must also open the educational experience to the fields of artistic, linguistic, metaphorical and corporal expressions in the construction of knowledge.⁴⁴ This is not a simple task in the context of our educational system that privileges a cognitive, disciplinary, fragmented paradigm. It is also not easy when our surroundings – from the most immediate like families, neighborhoods and cities, to the most distant war scenarios – seem to provide “socially toxic environments” of vigilance and control for our children and youth.⁴⁵

When educating towards a culture of peace and human rights, we must recognize that our schools and other educational centers clearly reflect the culture of violence that prevails in our country. Furthermore we must acknowledge that the culture of violence is intertwined in many of our educational policies and practices. This “systemic violence in education” which we must face directly, promotes a repressive and punitive climate as it assumes authoritarian pedagogies and particular teaching and evaluation methods that are antidemocratic and discriminatory.⁴⁶ Our own teachers express that it is ironic to have such a centralized, politicized, and authoritarian educational system in a society that claims to be democratic.⁴⁷

This reality claims that we reflect upon human rights, live their interdependence and indivisibility in every educational realm. We encounter the need to convert daily events that take place in schools, communities, social and global spheres into primary didactic elements.⁴⁸ This challenge demands that we organize our educational structures in a

⁴³ Xesús Jares, “Los retos de la educación para los derechos humanos” en Abraham Magendzo, ed. *De miradas y mensajes en torno a la educación en derechos humanos* (Santiago, Chile: LOM Ediciones, 2004) 285-297; Pascual & Yudkin, *Educación para la convivencia escolar pacífica*, 2005.

⁴⁴ Abraham Magendzo, Patricio Donoso, Caludia Dueñas, María T. Rodas & Luis Sime, *Para recrear la cultura escolar* (Santiago, Chile: Corporación Nacional de Reparación y Conciliación y Programa Interdisciplinario de Investigación en la Educación, 1994).

⁴⁵ James Garbarino, *Raising children in a socially toxic environment* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1995); Pascual & Yudkin, “Educar para la convivencia escolar pacífica”, 2005).

⁴⁶ Pascual & Yudkin, “Educar para la convivencia escolar pacífica”, 2005; Juanita Ross Epp & Alisa Watkinson *Systemic Violence in Education* (New York: SUNY Press, 1997).

⁴⁷ Benitez, *Reflexiones sobre la cultura política puertorriqueña*, 2001.

⁴⁸ Jares, “Los retos de la educación en derechos humanos”, 2004.

participatory fashion so as to democratize them. It also implies that we must view all educational processes as conflictive contexts, so as “to educate from and for the nonviolent resolution of conflicts”.⁴⁹ In other words, we must seek the time and space to engage all tensions and emerging contradictions, recognizing the conflictive nature of life, peace, and learning. In addition, it requires that we learn to engage conflicts by means of mediation, consensus building, and reconciliation as counterpoints to our traditional education that evades and sanctions them.⁵⁰

To educate for human rights and a culture of peace calls for a greater commitment and effort from the institutions of higher education to provide future educators the knowledge and experience to face these challenges. At the same time, we must adopt a systematic policy that promotes the lifelong learning of educators in this direction.

We must also face the challenge of adopting a theoretical framework and a *problematizing* pedagogy coherent with Educating for a Culture of Peace and Human Rights.⁵¹ This also entails articulating diverse contemporary currents of critical and liberatory pedagogies, as scaffolds, since they are ideal for transforming education in Puerto Rico and for the creation of new generations capable of appropriating and fighting for human rights and peace.

To educate in this direction also demands that we “educate from and for commitment and hope”.⁵² This entails recuperating the value of utopia, overcoming the fatalist and determinist ideology that has taken shape in the past decade in Puerto Rico and in the world. It is about courageously assuming a *pedagogy of hope*, that dreams with reflecting and acting in our world, from indignation and love, against all situations of injustice.⁵³

As we encounter the lack of coherence and articulation between initiatives of **research**, **education**, and **action** for human rights and a culture of peace in Puerto Rico, we face the task of assuming new nonviolent paradigms leading to harmonizing and making visible these three trends that share the same agenda.⁵⁴ This agenda implies building a Puerto Rican culture of reduced violence and elevated justice. It also claims that our words lead to actions, in a transition towards a research of social pertinence, and a curriculum where we learn to share and live together.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Pascual & Yudkin, “Educar para la convivencia escolar pacífica”, 2005.

⁵¹ Magendzo, “Human Rights Education as Critical Pedagogy” (Human Rights Education Listserve, June, 2002). <http://www.hrea.org/lists/hr-education/markup/msg00963.html>

⁵² Jares, “Los retos de la educación en derechos humanos”, 2004; Xesús Jares, *Educar para la verdad y la esperanza* (Madrid: Editorial Popular, 2005).

⁵³ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogía de la esperanza*, (México: Siglo XXI, 1993).

⁵⁴ Anaida Pascual Morán, *Acción civil noviolenta* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Publicaciones Puertorriqueñas, 2003).

Ethics of Solidarity in Vieques: Testimony of a Driving Idea of Synthesis

From the harmonious synthesis of several *action-ideas*, it is possible that an all-encompassing idea emerges; an idea with such an energy that is capable of reconciling oppositions, tensions, and resistances in a particular society. This is a “supreme action-idea” that drives us to act collectively in favor of a determined cause, whose fundamental ethics coincides with universal values. This is the case for example of the notion of “social solidarity”, evidenced in diverse ways through the history of humanity.⁵⁵

In our judgment, a similar *action-idea of synthesis*⁵⁶ takes shape in particular moments of our history: **the ethics of solidarity**. This ethics encompasses the *action-ideas* we have proposed and constitutes a framework for change. This “ethics of responsibility” aspires to construct a new rationality, another paradigm that guides us through a path of commitment and reciprocity characterized by the nonviolent resolution of conflicts. We wish to point out, that peace being a “human right of synthesis” of our fundamental rights and liberties, *Education for Human Rights and a Culture of Peace* is key in leading to this “action-idea of synthesis”.

Thus, we understand that our mayor challenge is to educate transversally for this “new ethics”. To this end it is important to be aware of the immense possibilities offered by the current solidarity networks in cyberspace that are committed to human rights and peace, as a primary pedagogic source for didactic materials and action.

Amongst the features of this new “ethics of care” that is profoundly humanistic and feminine, the “conscience of the responsibility for the whole” emerges. This is the expression of a “consciousness for the wellbeing of society in equality and reciprocity”, “before the values of the strongest”.⁵⁷ According to liberation theologian Leonardo Boff, it is about educating for an “ethics of responsibility”, justified by the threat to environmental balance and by the injustices faced by the majority of humanity. It is about educating for an inclusive moral duty of solidarity (*ecología integral*) that propitiates unity amidst diversity as a priority value.⁵⁸

The **ethics of solidarity** challenges us to educate for the transformation of the globalized neoliberal system that “normalizes” and fragments us. It is about building a new paradigm of a “dialogical ethics” for the common good, one that calls for the vindication of the marginalized and dispossessed and the promotion of a better quality of

⁵⁵ Bueno, “Proyecto para una trituración”, 2004).

⁵⁶ We have chosen the term *action-idea of synthesis* to name this type of *supreme action-idea*.

⁵⁷ Boff, “¿Qué ética va a prevalecer?” (Koinonia, Rebelión, Foro Mundial de Alternativas, 2008) http://www.forumdesalternativas.org/ES/readarticle.php?article_id=1740

⁵⁸ Boff, “¿Qué ética va a prevalecer?”, 2008; Vicente Romano, “Por una ética de solidaridad” (Rebelión, 2002). <http://www.rebelion.org/cultura/romano091002.html>

life. It also entails the incorporation of an “ethics of justice” of rights and duties, an “ethics of care” that rescues human sensibility, thus becoming an “ethics of the heart”.⁵⁹ In the words of the Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff, “*We must leave behind the current cultural paradigm based on power as domination, and adopt a paradigm of coexistence, cooperation, synergy, and tenderness towards everything that exists and lives*”.⁶⁰

We must urgently face this change of paradigm in the context of exclusion and asymmetrical relationships in which we live, both in Puerto Rico and in the rest of the world. It is about building a new ethical paradigm, that is sustained by the pillars of tolerance and social responsibility; to educate in order to build it based on “imaginative knowledge” and “feeling from the heart”, so as to overcome “the perverse individualism so characteristic of modernizing societies”. At the end, it is about assuming the challenge of educating for an **ethics of solidarity** that ties the educational, to the political, makes possible a feeling of belongingness and “plural coexistence”, and propitiates a democratic culture and “a life of quality”.⁶¹

Certainly, the concerted struggle for the demilitarization, reclaiming and cleanup of lands, and sustainable development for our island of Vieques provides a powerful example of the **ethics of solidarity** in our recent history. The arduous struggle for dignity and justice engaged in by the heroic people of Vieques constitutes a vivid testimony of this *action-idea of synthesis* in favor of **equity, justice, quality of life, self-determination, human rights and peace** of a subjugated people.

In April 1999, the death of the Viequense civilian guard David Sanes, due to a falling bomb used in target practice by the United States Navy, triggered an unprecedented movement in solidarity with the people of Vieques. This struggle unleashed a series of events and actions that led to the departure of the United States Navy from Vieques in May 2003, putting an end to sixty years of military occupation of the lands and sea of Vieques.

The *Comité Pro Rescate y Desarrollo de Vieques*, the *Alianza de Mujeres Viequenses*, the *Asociación de Pescadores de Vieques*, among others, were key protagonists in this process. The *Coordinadora Todo Puerto Rico con Vieques* and the *Coalición EcuMénica*

⁵⁹ Roberto Aguirre, “La ética como alternativa al modelo neoliberal” (Buenos Aires: Agencia Periodística del Mercosur, 17 de febrero de 2008) http://www.prensamerocosur.com.ar/apm/nota_completa.php?idnota=2418; Boff, “¿Qué ética va a prevalecer?”, 2008; Vicente Romano, “Por una ética de solidaridad” (Sao Paulo: Rebelión, 2002) <http://www.rebelión.org/cultura/romano091002.html>; Félix Población, “Leonardo Boff en Salamanca” (España: Diario del Aire, 2008) <http://www.piensachile.com/content/view/2617/6/>.

⁶⁰ Boff, “¿Qué ética va a prevalecer?”, 2008.

⁶¹ Victoria Camps, “En camino hacia la ética solidaria” (Mundo Filosofía / Filosofía en Femenino, 2008) <http://mundofilosofia.portalmundos.com/Victoria-camps-en-camino-hacia-la-etica-solidaria>

por la Paz de Vieques, gave unconditional and massive support to this struggle. In addition, civil disobedience camps were established in solidarity in the restricted areas utilized for target and military practice. Hundreds of those engaged in civil disobedience suffered severe prison sentences for trespassing the lands occupied by the Navy. There were diverse scenarios of nonviolent actions, being civil disobedience key in the reclaiming of land and in attaining an end to the bombing and military maneuvers.

In just four years, diverse social, political, and ecumenical sectors were main actors in this struggle of solidarity. Research and educational initiatives also flourished, amongst these, the publications generated by the *Grupo de Apoyo Técnico y Profesional de Vieques* are noteworthy.⁶² The Governor also appointed a Special Commission to investigate the effects of the military presence in Vieques. As a result of this study, and the social movement stemming from civil society, the slogan “*Ni un tiro más, ni una bomba más para Vieques*” was adopted as public policy and cry of the collective consciousness in Puerto Rico. To put an end to the practices of war, we also had the support and solidarity of key people and entities from other nations and continents who understood that the struggle for peace in Vieques, where military interventions against other peoples were rehearsed, was also the struggle for peace in a wider and broader world.⁶³

We wish to recognize the brotherhood of Puerto Ricans in the diaspora, especially the Puerto Rican elected members of the United States’ Congress – Luis Gutiérrez, Nydia Velásquez, and José Serrano – who recognized that coalitions and united fronts were needed between Puerto Ricans from “here” and “there”, as was affirmed by Congressman Gutiérrez. Furthermore, the historical juncture claimed for the purposeful reaffirmation that we are all part of” the same Puerto Rican nation” by means of “diverse acts of solidarity” with the people of Vieques.⁶⁴

Given the departure of the United States Navy from Vieques and the transformation of the military practice range into a *zone of peace*, the struggle in solidarity with the people of Vieques continues and evolves. According to the *Comité pro Rescate y Desarrollo de Vieques*, at the present time the struggle is for the environmental cleanup of the contaminated lands and seas. The catastrophic health conditions of the people of Vieques caused by the rehearsals for war must also be attended. The fight is also against the speculation of land and traditional views of economic development, in order to promote projects that are suitable to the geographic reality, respectful of cultural and archeological patrimonies, and in line with the values of holistic health, cooperation, participative democracy, and sustainability.

⁶² Grupo de Apoyo Técnico y Profesional de Vieques, *Guías para el desarrollo sustentable de Vieques* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Publicaciones Gaviota, 2002).

⁶³ Rabín, Sobá & Zenón, *De Vieques a la Universidad*, 2003).

⁶⁴ Luis Gutiérrez, *Solidaridad y Paz: Compromiso de los Congresistas Puertorriqueños* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Cátedra UNESCO de Educación para la Paz, 2006).

With **equity, diversity, and self-determination** as struggle banners, and **intergenerational equity** as an aspired legacy, we continue to forge a **culture of peace and human rights** for Vieques, so that the incoming generations of children and youth may have a better **quality of life**. In this struggle the *action-idea of synthesis*, whose energy is capable of *conscientizing* and moving us to joint action, beyond ideologies, beliefs, and frontiers, has been and continues to be, **the ethics of solidarity**.

In Vieques there is a dramatic crystallization of the interdependence and wholeness of human rights and **the ethics of solidarity**. The nonviolent resistance for the fundamental rights to development, justice and peace of our “Isla Nena”, drove Puerto Ricans from “here” and “there” to collective action and to establish alliances of solidarity with nations, entities, and people of all ideologies and beliefs. So, the struggle for peace in Vieques provides us with lifelong learning, not only to continue researching, thinking and deepening our understanding of Education for Human Rights and Peace in Puerto Rico, but also to continue building a *culture of human rights and peace*.

Epilogue....

It has been two years since we initiated the *systematic reflection* leading to this paper. These two years have brought some dramatic changes to the social fiber and consciousness of the Puerto Rican people due to several factors. Key amongst these is a change of elected government officials in an administration that holds extremely conservative views and policies regarding education and development; policies which, at the time we write this revised paper, have had a negative impact on the right to education, on human rights in general, and are thus not conducive to a culture of peace. For example, over 20,000 public employees have been fired from their government jobs, with no alternative employment available. Basic services for children with special needs, the elderly, women, poor families, and other vulnerable groups have been drastically reduced or eliminated. The University of Puerto Rico, the main public institution of higher education, has suffered budget cuts, and overall changes in its administrative officials, leading to uncertainty at a time when educational and research efforts are more necessary in order to promote **equity** and understanding of **diversity, intergenerational justice, quality of life and sustainable development**, all essential elements of a **culture of peace and human rights**. Once again we face the imperative of working together in an **ethics of solidarity** to overcome a situation that is larger and more diffuse than the physical presence of the military. Nevertheless, there is hope... People from all ideologies and walks of life in the Island, more and more are coming together in solidarity in a permanent *Asamblea de Pueblo* conducive to a demand for positive social transformation.

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