



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 posted 10-03-2000 12:59 AM    

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*Discovered this in the bookstore area of the State of the World Forum, San Francisco, 1998.*

### **Imaging Peace**

Young children in a first grade classroom in Spokane, WA were asked the question, "What does peace look like?" They were puzzled at first, but began to talk among themselves and to draw pictures.... It's hard for children, or anyone else, to describe what's not there -- peace is almost always described as the absence of war. If we don't have the ready images or the language to say it, then perhaps we can only approach the idea of peace through the people who practice peace.

Dana Toomey, a noted sculptor and activist for children and for peace, was asking the question. She has spent much of her lifetime studying the way images lead our lives, and creating the art that may reveal new pathways. Dana is using her art to symbolize what peace looks like by creating public sculptures of real people in a project called Imaging Peace. She looked for leaders in the world who are peacemakers -- leaders who have identified new means of negotiating, persevering and achieving without ever giving up their passion for moral action, justice and human dignity. The idea of Imaging Peace is to create images that embody the essence of peace in a way that is visible.

She has a large body of sculpture to her credit, but Dana's first larger than life work of a real person was of Millicent Fenwick, the former US Congresswoman. The bronze sculpture of Mrs. Fenwick stands in the heart of her hometown of Bernardsville, NJ. As with all of Dana's work, the creation of the sculpture generated community involvement, and the sculpture became the central element of downtown beautification and renewal.

Marian Wright Edelman, Founder and President of the Children's Defense Fund, has agreed to be the subject of Dana's current work. Dana is in the beginning process of sculpting Mrs. Edelman with children. The work will be placed at the former Alex Haley Farm near Knoxville, TN, a setting where those devoted to child advocacy come together to learn, share and create new leadership initiatives.

Along with Mrs. Edelman, Hafsat Abiola, Joyce Banda and Chief Bisi Ogunleye will be sculpted by Dana in the Imaging Peace project. All of these women have expressed their leadership with integrity, vision, honor and strength. Hafsat Abiola, who founded the Kudirat Institute for Nigerian Democracy in Washington, DC, is a young woman dedicated to leading in a selfless manner. Joyce Banda, recognized for her work throughout Africa, is a leader for justice, education and economic opportunity in

Malawi. Chief Bisi Ogunleye of Nigeria is a pioneer in her work for the economic empowerment of women in Africa.

As leaders, these women have found new ways of cooperative problem solving to address our troubles. None of them would suggest that the world will ever be without conflict, but rather, that there are generous and inclusive means available to solve the world's problems -- ways that may help prevent violence and suffering.

The story that builds around each sculpture is much larger than any one individual. Each of these women knows that the sculpture is not just about her, or even her work that the sculpture will also give others their identity, that it carries the story of those who came before, and that it will preserve and honor the tradition of service for those who will come after. They know that Dana is creating monuments to the human spirit.

The beauty of art, and the magic of a symbol, is that each person who approaches it will be touched by it in different ways. Much of what happens, happens at a deep level with the power to change how we see ourselves. Perhaps these public sculptures will live in our culture, alongside the countless images of war we have inherited, as new and promising symbols for the future.

When the children in that classroom presented their drawings of what peace looked like, a six year old girl shared what may be the ultimate response to Dana's question. She said, "Everybody has a different picture. Everybody has a different idea. Maybe that's what peace is -- seeing everybody's idea."  
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Dana Toomey, Sculptor 908-722-5100, Ext. 246  
[DanaToomey@compuserve.com](mailto:DanaToomey@compuserve.com)

For information on Imaging Peace, please contact  
Karen Mose 908-722-5100 Ext. 248  
[KarenMose@compuserve.com](mailto:KarenMose@compuserve.com)

[This message has been edited by mherman (edited 10-24-2000).]

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