

PEACE ARTICLES

GIVE PEACE A CHANCE

Kader Asmal

Just over a decade ago, South Africa drew back from the abyss of self-destruction to establish a democratic society, freed of the evils of apartheid and racism. The world—which had done so much to express its opposition to this crime against humanity—watched with wonder and respect as parties which had waged war against each other negotiated with each other to bring about a peaceful settlement. South Africa showed us that there is no issue, however intractable it may appear, which cannot be solved if there is goodwill, a capacity to compromise, and a will and desire for peace.

With peace, we set out to ensure that human rights were entrenched, that all impermissible forms of discrimination based on race, gender, disability, and sexual orientation were combated, and recognizing that poverty was incompatible with respect for human rights, that conditions were created to deal with the appalling poverty which we inherited.

The lesson we learned was that without peace in our country, on our continent, and throughout the world, there would not be effective development, human security or respect for the environment. Violence, which exists in nearly every society in different forms, would not be countered by greater violence by the state, so we set about to reform our police, abolish capital punishment, and remove the callousness of corporal punishment in our prisons and our schools.

As Minister of Education, I recognized that we had to begin early with our students to instill respect for each other, to celebrate our rich diversity of language, culture and religion in a country where such distinctions were used previously as instruments of oppression. Bigotry, callousness and lack of respect for human rights violate the basic ethical and moral assumptions of a democratic society.

To assist teachers in their difficult role as guides and mentors, we therefore identified core values based on our Constitution—freedom, dignity, equality, justice, tolerance, solidarity, reconciliation, peace—values which are fundamental to a revised school curriculum. These values in education had to permeate the whole school system. Neutrality on fundamental issues could not be an option.

I commend the work of the Hague Appeal for Peace and its Global Campaign for Peace Education as worthy of the greatest support. The present volume on peace lessons for teachers aims at integrating these lessons into the national curriculum of schools. It also tries to ensure that young p world. The dead hand of conformity stifles reflection and enquiry about matters of life and death, pestilence and disease, war and violence, and about how we deal with natural disasters, crime, poverty and the violation of fundamental human rights.

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http://www.haguepeace.org/resources/PEACE_LESSONS_FINAL.pdf