



## ACPC Profiles Ashland at the UN... and Looks Ahead

By [Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury](#), March 25, 2019

Last Friday, the 63<sup>rd</sup> session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the largest annual gathering on women's rights, equality and empowerment popularly known by its acronym CSW, ended its two-week-long intense deliberations attracting hundreds of participants from all parts of the world. The leadership of the Ashland Culture of Peace Commission (ACPC) joined the bigger delegation of the Pathways To Peace (PTP) in undertaking a major initiative to introduce ACPC to CSW participants and connecting with the activists on the culture of peace at the United Nations, particularly those from the Global Movement for the Culture of Peace (GMCoP).

ACPC leaders David Wick and Irene Kai joined by Tezikiah Gabriel from PTP had an exclusive brainstorming session with me to brief on their activities in collaboration with Ashland community as well as to lay out ACPC's vision in the coming years, particularly as the UN is observing the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration and Programme of Action on Culture of Peace by the UN General Assembly on 13 September 1999. Last December, UNGA adopted a resolution to observe the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of this historic document in "an appropriate and befitting manner" on 13 September 2019, the exact date of adoption twenty years ago through the UN High Level Forum on The Culture of Peace to be convened by the President of the General Assembly.

It was very encouraging to know firsthand from ACPC's leaders about their determined and committed collaboration, since its inception in 2015 as local-global initiative, to co-create an on-the-ground, practical, and evolving local Culture of Peace. I was impressed by their work in developing Ashland as a City of Peace, thereby evolving and inspiring at the same time a practical and workable model that other cities and civil society entities can learn from. I along with GMCoP encourage and support this brilliant endeavor by ACPC. My co-activists at the United Nations who interacted with ACPC leaders have particularly welcomed it.

ACPC has shown its creative "local-globalism" by installing the iconic symbol of peace - the World Peace Flame Monument - in Ashland which is inspiring the younger generation to inculcate the culture of peace in each one of them - both individually and collectively. Its "Keep The Flame Lit" campaign would be a constant reminder to the children and their guardians to do that.

I want to underscore one particular aspect in this context. In the culture of peace movement, we are focusing more attention on children as that contributes in a major way to the sustainable and long-lasting impact on our societies. A child's tendency toward either violent aggressiveness or nonviolence begins to take shape as early as age four or five. Never has it been more important for the next generation to learn about the world and understand its diversity. The early childhood development and the task of educating children and young people to find non-aggressive means to relate with one another are of primary importance.

In November 2017 in my opinion-piece which was the first in a series of writings to focus on the broader local-global perspectives on the Culture of Peace initiated by ACPC in collaboration with the Ashland Daily Tidings and the southern Oregon community, I asserted that "When we see what is happening around us, we realise the urgent need for promoting the culture of peace - peace through dialogue - peace through non-violence... In today's insecure and uncertain world, more so, it should be seen as the essence of a new humanity, a new global civilization based on inner oneness and outer diversity...The culture of peace begins with each one of us - unless we are ready to integrate peace and non-violence as part of our daily existence, we cannot expect our communities, our nations, our world to be peaceful. We should be prepared and confident in resolving the challenges of our lives in a non-aggressive way."

It is in this context that I value immensely the on-going work and vision of ACPC. I believe very strongly that to realize its vision, in the coming years ACPC should plan on introducing the culture of peace at junior school levels in collaboration with the teachers interested in creating an opportunity for children in the community to grow up with a positive, non-violent mindset. This does not have to mean necessarily a change in the formal educational setup. It would mean that while acquiring their knowledge through regular education, students should understand the value of having a peaceful and non-violent attitude in every aspect of their lives as they grow up. In this scenario where family plays a major role, ACPC can provide an opportunity for parents and teachers to support each other in this effort.

Another area of opportunity for ACPC leadership is the creation of the energy for the formal affirmation of Ashland as International City of Peace and thereby opening the path for an inclusive community where no one is left behind. Success in this regard would encourage other cities to begin with those in the neighbourhood and thereafter in other parts of the United States. ACPC's work with the UN will provide the needed experience-sharing opportunity.

I extend my whole-hearted encouragement to ACPC in its efforts in creating this local-to-global and global-to-local pathway for advancing the culture of peace.

*Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury is the Founder of the Global Movement for The Culture of Peace and Former Under-Secretary-General and High Representative of the United Nations*