

The Poetics of Building Peace

By John Paul Lederach and Angela Jill Lederach

1. Open by reading aloud the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:1-12). How are making peace and making art alike? What are the objectives of each? What is the process of each?
2. Name some of the most famous works of art that come from historic injustices in the world, such as Picasso's "Guernica"; *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe; the poetry of Wilfred Owen, *Night* by Elie Wiesel, to name a few. What is the relationship between making peace and making art?
3. When we say we're moved by something, it is as if the poetry, the image, or the music is in us and comes to the surface. What is the most moving experience you can remember in your life? Where do the words come from to describe your experience?
4. Practice noticing things. Read a selection from Song of Songs or one of the miracle stories of Jesus (The woman at the well, the wedding at Cana, the healing of the man born blind). Have someone summarize the story. Then look deeper. On the second or third look, what do you notice in the stories that you didn't see the first time?
5. Jack Kerouac said, "Don't think of words when you stop, but to see picture better." John Paul Lederach said, "The Key to complexity is finding simplicity." When have words failed you? Spend a few moments in silence. If you feel inspired, name something out loud that seems more powerful as a picture in your mind than as a description on a page. Take a few moments to linger over the image in your mind before going on to another.
6. Poetry is "the historical enemy of human forgetfulness." How do storytelling, poetry, and other forms of art help you experience the lessons of slavery, genocides, the Holocaust, or cases of abuse? Besides history classes or history books, how have you personally learned about these events? How have these encounters with art formed your thinking or changed you?
7. What poems come to you out of your life experience? Write a haiku.