The Contemporary U. S. Peace Movement
by Laura L. Toussaint
(New York: Routledge, 2009), 171 pages.
Reviewed by Emily Regan Wills
New School for Social Research

The Contemporary US Peace Movement is a timely work for scholars of contemporary social movements, particularly those organized against current American foreign policy and in support of peace and nonviolence. Through a survey of members of peace organizations with branches or headquarters in Washington, DC, Toussaint aims to explore how members of the contemporary peace movement frame the movement, including an examination of the uses of identity, the post 9/11 context, and future challenges and opportunities for the movement. She aims to speak both to scholars of social movements and to participants in peace movements, and identifies as someone co-located both within the movement and as an academic.

The data for the study is drawn from a written survey with 251 members of 43 different organizations, and then follow-up tele-phone interviews with 33 of those respondents. The organizations (and subsequently the respondents) were divided into two categories: ‘primarily peace,’ which emphasizes the absence of violence, and ‘peace with justice,’ which includes an analysis of other social justice questions into their understanding of peace (A list of organizations is not provided, nor are the criteria on which they were sorted made clear, or any examples of ‘peace’ versus ‘peace with justice’ framing given; this information would have been useful to both contemporary and future scholars). Toussaint collects demographic data for partici-pants, which shows her participants to be largely white, highly educat-ed but low in personal income, and over 60% Christian. In an interest-ing finding, members of the ‘peace with justice’ category were more likely to be Christian, Democrats, and liberals than members of the ‘primarily peace’ group, though Christians, Democrats, and liberals

made up a majority or plurality in both groups.
Toussaint's major findings are that multiple identity frame-works, and the intersections between them, are crucial for peace-activist mobilization; that, among committed peace activists, the post-9/11 security environment was actually
productive, rather than inhibiting; and that the peace movement is inherently multi-issue, rather than being centered on a single policy goal. In addition, she addresses questions of movement diversity, arguing that, while the peace movement has diversified, it still has progress to make, and suggests that most of the conditions of the contemporary movement, such as a lack of clear movement leadership and a broad range of priorities and goals, are both obstacles and opportunities for the movement. Two of her smaller findings are particularly intriguing. First, for her respondents, Christian identity is central to movement participation; Christian ethics motivate activists, churches and religious organizations serve as central institutional linkages to the movement. At the same time, the contemporary alignment of Christianity with right-wing and belligerent politics drives Christians in the movement to be particularly outspoken in their identification. Also interesting is the gap she finds between what activists believe the goals of the movement should be, and what they currently are; overwhelming majorities of all respondents believe social justice issues should be incorporated into the peace movement, but less than half believe they are incorporated, while respondents agreed anti-war activities were the primary focus of the movement, but disagreed that they should be central. Both of these suggest a contemporary peace movement that is formed in complex reaction to broader questions of American politics, and which struggles with both reactive and proactive approaches to issue framing and movement form. There are two major limitations to this study, the first of which Toussaint acknowledges: the overwhelming whiteness of her survey respondents, as well as their general homogeneity. In addition to race, the ages of her participants are skewed; over half of her phone interviewees, and just short of half of her survey respondents are over 50 years old, and many have been involved in peace movements for more than 20 years, which suggests that she is largely measuring the opinions of participants in the 1970s anti-Vietnam and 1980s anti-nuclear peace movements on the contemporary peace movement context. While this is an important segment to examine, it provides a snapshot of only part of the contemporary peace movement. There is also a critical thinness to the study overall. For instance, although there are some differences in responses between ‘primarily peace’ and ‘peace with justice’ group members, Toussaint makes no attempt to explain how these responses might be related to the different goals of the groups, or try to understand the groups better through these differences. Given that 77% of the ‘primarily peace’ sample believe that social justice issues should be incorporated into the movement, the division between the two categories is less than clear. Although under 10% of her survey respondents self-identify as people of color (and even fewer in the phone interviews), she accepts their views of racial diversity in the movement uncritically, although previous research shows that the views of whites and of people of color on what constitutes adequate diversity are rarely in agreement. There is also little contextualization of the survey results in the context of the empirical actions of the various peace groups of which the respondents are members. This book will be of interest to many different sorts of scholars of social movements. First, for anyone working on contemporary peace and anti-war movements, it provides a well-documented data point with plenty of information on activist preferences and perspectives. For those interested in the work identity does in social movements, it provides a new set of information about intersectionality and multiple identities as movement mobilization factors. While it has demographic limitations, it serves as a good resource for understanding the sector of the movement it profiles. While the lack of critical edge about the movement does detract from its value, movement members, and scholars interested in supporting peace movements, will find it an interesting read, and are likely to come away from it with new ideas about how to transform their peace movements, and how to locate movement priorities in the future.

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C.F. Howlett u.a.: History of the American Peace Movement

‘A History of the American Peace Movement from Colonial Times to the Present’ is a remarkable achievement, surveying the entire history of pacifist organizations and leaders in the United States from the beginning of its history to 2006. Moving chronologically from the original peacemakers of the country (Native Americans) through the religious pacifists of the colonial period to the religious and secular non-violent activists for peace and justice in the nineteenth century, to the myriad of peace and justice initiatives of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Howlett and Lieberman provide us with a comprehensive textbook history of the most important people, organizations, and ideas of American peace history. It should be required reading for any student interested in researching any aspect of peace history in the U.S., as it will place any specific peace worker or institution within its broader historical perspective. Indeed, it should be required reading for any specialist in American history because it fills in gaps usually left by history textbooks which focus primarily on wars and violent events, and usually pay little attention to peace movements. It effectively demonstrates how peace movements have always existed in American history, always opposed militarists and those who advocate violence, and effectively pressured for peace and justice at home and abroad. It also clearly shows the important role that non-violent activists for peace and justice have played throughout American history, not only in ending wars and offering peaceful resolutions to conflict, but also in supporting justice movements, such as the women’s rights, workers’ rights, and African-American civil rights movements.

In addition to providing a necessary corrective to most surveys of American history and documenting the achievements of peace activists, Howlett and Lieberman provide readers with a number of helpful devices. Their glossary of peace terminology is a brief, but useful explanation of key terms used in the text, and their extensive list of notable peacemakers in American history, along with brief descriptions of their contributions, clearly and concisely conveys this important information. The introductory chapter provides a historiographical review and discussion of peace activism in general. More important for peace history researchers is the thorough and well-written bibliographic essay at the end of the book. The hundreds of works on American peace history are organized chronologically and thematically, and provide an excellent starting point for anyone interested in researching any topic in this broad field. The authors additionally provide extensive endnotes for each chapter. While most of these are secondary sources, as is expected of most textbooks, many primary sources are also included, indicating the depth of the research involved in completing a work of this magnitude. In addition to these helpful supplements, the authors consistently write in easy-to-read prose, well-suited to a wide audience.

While all of these features make this textbook a welcome addition to the literature on American history, more advanced peace history researchers may be a bit disappointed in the survey approach to the topic. Like most historical surveys, there is little room for thorough and critical discussions of the material. With over 600 pages of brief discussions of pacifist leaders and organizations, a history of this scope must stick to “just the facts.” Indeed, the authors do this very well, providing readers with an overview that not only provides general information, but also specifics which reveal the diversity of ideas and personalities behind the American peace movement. This overview approach, which is uncritically laudatory of peace activists, however, leaves us wanting more analysis, more discussion of the mistakes as well as the successes, and more coverage of the local groups and lesser-known activists. Even readers who are new to peace studies may find this overview of facts less than satisfying, as they do with many textbooks. Overviews often overwhelm readers with facts, and little else to keep their attention. Some textbooks try to overcome this with interesting visuals, fonts, and formatting, but Howlett and Lieberman have formatted their textbook like a no-frills monograph, with only a few black and white visuals in the middle of the book.
Despite these minor flaws, ‘A History of the American Peace Movement’ does provide even the experienced peace researcher with a wealth of information. Every chapter is packed with discussions of the many individuals and organizations which have made up the American peace movement. We learn, for example, of the Quakers’ important role in non-violent activism throughout the centuries, the complexities of opposition to the War of 1812, the roles of national peace organizations such as the American Peace Society, opposition to the draft, conscientious objectors in all of the wars, opposition to racial and economic injustice, feminist pacifists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the movement against the Vietnam War and nuclear weapons of the second half of the twentieth century, and the largest antiwar demonstrations of all time which occurred at the beginning of the twenty-first century in opposition to the Iraq War. Little-known facts and arguments about the peace movement are interwoven within the broader framework of U.S. history, effectively integrating peace history within its wider context. This is indeed a welcome and essential contribution to the writing of American history.

For The People: A Documentary History of The Struggle for Peace and Justice in the United States

by Charles Howlett & Robbie Lieberman

For The People: A Documentary History of The Struggle for Peace and Justice in the United States by Charles Howlett, Molloy College and Robbie Lieberman, Southern Illinois University For the People is a historical docutext that examines the evolution of the struggle for peace and justice in America's past, from pre-colonial times to the present. Each chapter begins with a brief historical introduction followed by a series of primary source documents and questions to encourage student comprehension. Sample photographs illustrate the range of peace activists' concerns, while the list of references, focused on the most important works in the field of U.S. peace history, points students toward opportunities for further research. This is the only historical docutext specifically devoted to peace issues. The interpretive analysis of American peace history provided by the editors makes this more than just an anthology of collected documents. As such, the docutext is an extension and a complement to the editors' recently published popular scholarly survey, A History of the American Peace Movement from Colonial Times to the Present. A central idea in this work is that peace is more than just the absence of war. The documents, and the analysis that accompanies them, offer fresh perspectives on the ways in which the peace movement became transformed from one simply opposing war to one proclaiming the importance of social, political, and economic equality. The editors' premise is that the peace movement historically has been a collective attempt by numerous well-intentioned people to improve American society. The book illuminates the ways in which peace activists were often connected to larger reform movements in American history, including those that fought for the rights of working people, for women's equality, and for the abolition of slavery, to name just a few. With a focus on those who spoke out for peace, this docutext is designed to call to students' attention one of the least discussed classroom subjects in American education today. Students in secondary school Social Studies and American history classes as well as those taking college level courses in U.S. history, American Studies, or Peace Studies will find this work an excellent supplementary reader

Rev. Peace and Change (July 2012) by Amy Schneidhorst
Barry Miles’s new book, *Peace: 50 Years of Protest*, is a fascinating look at the history of the peace sign. On the surface the idea of an entire book about the peace sign sounds crazy and maybe a bit boring, but this book is anything but boring. It is a well-researched, thought-provoking work about one of the most recognized symbols of our time.

Author Barry Miles was chairman of the Youth Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in the early 1960s, and his ensuing passion for peace is evident throughout the book. He begins his look at the peace movement with the events that sparked worldwide fear—the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan at the end of World War II. The bombings ushered in the atomic age and newfound fears of impending nuclear war. The photos from the bombings are striking and frightening. Miles includes graphic eyewitness accounts and disturbing photographs of the survivors. As the rest of the world rushed to develop other weapons of mass destruction, groups of people around the world began to worry about the future. The looming threat of nuclear war inspired people to band together to protest the development of nuclear weapons.

One of the leading groups in the new wave of protestors was Great Britain’s Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). CND led a massive protest march on Easter Sunday 1958. The march went from London to the nuclear arms plant at Aldermaston. In preparation for the march, CND tapped one of its volunteers, a graphic artist named Gerald Holtom, to create a symbol that could be easily recreated for signs, banners, etc. Holtom’s design is what we now know as the peace sign. His creation was a carefully-designed symbol influenced by British semaphore, medieval symbolism, and ancient runes. The symbol was not designed to represent peace; its focus was the threat posed by nuclear weapons. Holtom explained some of the design in this way: “First the semaphore initials for N and D. Second, the broken cross meant the death of man, the circle the unborn child. It represent the threat of nuclear weapons to all mankind, and because this was new, the threat to the unborn child.”

The CND symbol was never copyrighted, and it became the official symbol of only two groups—CND and the Greek Committee of 100. Yet the symbol quickly spread throughout North America as a symbol of disarmament in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Holtom’s design became known as the peace sign in the late 1960s when hippies used it in their protests against the Vietnam War. The peace sign was adopted by many groups over the years. It has been used worldwide in protests against nuclear weapons, war, civil rights, women’s rights, and various other causes. In recent years, many protestors have used the peace sign in their protests against the war in Iraq.

*Peace: 50 Years of Protest* is a visually stunning book. It features incredible photographs of both major movements and smaller grassroots efforts. Each chapter features either a biography of an
important activist or a look at how pop culture influenced public opinion at the time. These additional bits of information help the reader see the big picture. Miles has also sprinkled inspiring quotations about peace throughout the book. These quotations are set against the striking photography, and the effect is intense.

*Peace: 50 Years of Protest* is definitely worthwhile reading for anyone interested in the idea of world peace. It may even inspire some of the cynics out there who dismiss the concept as just a sentimental ideal. The overall effect is bittersweet. After fifty years of protest, there is still a need for Holtom’s symbol and everything it represents.


**Meet the Authors**

Stephen Zunes is an assistant professor of politics and chair of the Peace & Justice Studies Program at the University of San Francisco. His articles have appeared in *Middle East Policy*, *Current History*, *Arab Studies Quarterly*, *Third World Quarterly*, *New Political Science*, *International Journal*, and other scholarly publications. He is an editor of *Peace Review* and writes and researches extensively in the area of social movements and peace studies.


Sarah Beth Asher is an independent researcher and has lived and worked in the Middle East, India, China, and Europe, where she served in the US Army Medical Corps. She has been involved in research on violence as a public health issue.

**Table of Contents**

Introduction.

**PART I. PERSPECTIVES ON NONVIOLENT MOVEMENTS.**


**PART II. THE MIDDLE EAST.**

Introduction.


**PART III. EUROPE.**
Introduction.

5. The Grassroots Movement in Germany, 1972-1985 (Matthew Lyons).

6. "We Have Bare Hands": Nonviolent Social Movements in the Soviet Bloc (Lee Smithey and Lester R. Kurtz).

PART IV. ASIA.


PART V. AFRICA.

10. The Ogoni Struggle for Human Rights and a Civil Society in Nigeria (Joshua Cooper).

11. The Role of Nonviolence in the Downfall of Apartheid (Stephen Zunes).

PART VI. LATIN AMERICA.


PART VII. NORTH AMERICA.


Conclusion (Stephen Zunes and Lester R. Kurtz).

Index.

Peace: A World History by Antony Adolf

Reviewed by Scott Bowen

Polity Press, 2009
Antony Adolf, an independent scholar with a background as varied as history’s many points of view, opens *Peace: A World History* with the following citation by Ivan Bloch: “...from the year 1496 BC to 1861 of our era, that is, in a cycle of 3357 years, there were but 227 years of peace and 3130 years of war...”

Such an inauspicious beginning to a work focused on the study of peace seems as daunting and antithetical as peace itself. In light of these figures, the idea of peace appears to be more of a quietly cooling ember of hope than a bastion of light for humanity. Adolf’s scholarship however, objects. With history as his backdrop, he reminds us that even in humanity’s infancy we developed a biological need for peace, and thus violence in general and war specifically became evolutionary mutations during the development of the human condition.

Given the absence of developed reasoning and language skills in primates—with whom we otherwise share 99 percent of our genetic makeup—their capacity for peaceful coexistence most likely has a biological basis, reinforced by environmental adaptation and enculturation processes necessary to pass on peace instincts from one generation to the next.

Adolf goes on to make hypotheses that synchronize our physical evolution with our humanistic development of war and peace respectively. “Walking upright, made possible by locking knees and a specific spinal structure, may arguably be the earliest origins of organized warfare as we know it...” By making such an argument, Adolf embraces an apparent dichotomy between evolution’s genetic chemistry for humanity’s communal benevolence and an anatomical design in preparation for conflict.

And as for peace, Adolf believes that:

...[P]rimates are mostly nomadic and use their larger teeth for protection and as safeguards against changing food sources. *Homo habilis*’ smaller molars are ineffective ways to threaten and masticate food from unpredictable sources. Such a pronounced adaptation implies that social relations and food sources had become and/or were made more stable and secure.

As Adolf locks humanity in place with these bio-genetic foundations, he moves us forward through time, beginning with the early agricultural and proto-superpower civilizations of Mesopotamia, to the dawn of international state craft with the rise of Egypt and her Western neighbors, the Greeks and Romans. With stark neutrality, he unfolds the development of religions and as they evolve from personal and/or clan effigies of early man’s mysterious surroundings to a pervading impetus to war.

Through this historical narrative, mankind also reaches a new level of peace-making. The evidence lies in historical phenomena such as the Age of Reason, Jesus, the Buddha, and Mahatma Gandhi’s (among others) non-violent movements, and other philosophies that engendered conquest by words rather than by the sword. In the last century, Winston Churchill summed up this ideal through the observation that “…the empires of the future are the empires of the mind.” Adolf continues,

Replacing armed conflict with debate, preventing violence by compromise, and expediting reconciliation through agreement, Sophistic abilities fetched a high price in turbulent Athens. But the open, critical dialog Protagoras practiced has proved invaluable to peace and conflict resolution throughout history.

Spanning millennia, Antony Adolf explores—from the Fertile Crescent, to the Pax Romana, the One Hundred School in China’s dynastic period, to our present, global society—mankind’s pulse rate between times of war and a seemingly elusive peace, oppressive or otherwise. Coincidentally, it seems the proportion of scholarly material dedicated to the history of warfare and the history of peace is as equally distributed as Ivan Bloch’s static of 227 years of peace and 3130 of war. With *Peace: A World History*, Adolf seeks to tip the scale.

In an unbiased historical context and accessible discourse, Adolf’s analysis steadily makes a case not only for peace being an imperative for mankind’s survival, but one achievable through dedication and a now well-lit precedent.

Visit Polity Press on the web at [http://www.polity.co.uk/](http://www.polity.co.uk/)

Scott Bowen currently resides in eastern North Carolina. He occupies his time writing both novel-length and short fiction concerning a prophet of his own design, playing house husband, and taking a stab at Native American crafts. He is currently working on his B.A. degree in English at East Carolina University.

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Description
In *The Human Potential for Peace: An Anthropological Challenge to Assumptions about War and Violence*, renowned anthropologist Douglas P. Fry shows how anthropology—with its expansive time frame and comparative orientation—can provide unique insights into the nature of war and the potential for peace. Challenging the traditional view that humans are by nature primarily violent and warlike, Professor Fry argues that along with the capacity for aggression humans also possess a strong ability to prevent, limit, and resolve conflicts without violence. Raising philosophy of science issues, the author shows that cultural beliefs asserting the inevitability of violence and war can bias our interpretations, affect our views of ourselves, and may even blind us to the possibility of achieving security without war. Fry draws on data from cultural anthropology, archaeology, and sociology as well as from behavioral ecology and evolutionary biology to construct a biosocial argument that challenges a host of commonly held assumptions.

*The Human Potential for Peace* includes ethnographic examples from around the globe, findings from Fry's research among the Zapotec of Mexico, and results of cross-cultural studies on warfare. In showing that conflict resolution exists across cultures and by documenting the existence of numerous peaceful societies, it demonstrates that dealing with conflict without violence is not merely a utopian dream. The book also explores several highly publicized and interesting controversies, including Freeman's critique of Margaret Mead's writings on Samoan warfare; Napoleon Chagnon's claims about the Yanomamö; and ongoing evolutionary debates about whether "hunter-gatherers" are peaceful or warlike. *The Human Potential for Peace* is ideal for undergraduate courses in political and legal anthropology, the anthropology of peace and conflict, peace studies, political sociology, and the sociology of war and violence. Written in an informal style with numerous entertaining examples, the book is also readily accessible to general readers.

Reviews
"*The Human Potential for Peace* is a real achievement, the first systematic book of its kind, and a welcome part of the anthropological literature. I especially liked the sweep of the book, which broadly covers both the history of aggression as well as the ethnographic record, moving forward to contemporary society and applied implications."—Thomas A. Gregor, Professor of Anthropology, *Vanderbilt University*

"This is an important book, and a serious one, although it is enlivened with a number of anecdotes and personal reminiscences. The book has great strengths, including breadth of scholarship in different areas, as well as a critical depth in tackling some common assumptions and cited conclusions."—Peter K. Smith, Department of Psychology, *University College London*  
[Read the full review here.](#)"

"Amongst the various anthropological texts that have emerged over the last decade, this is clearly one of the most important. At a time when practitioners in the social sciences continue to haggle over the relative merits of interdisciplinary approaches, of paradigm shifts, and of the role of war and peace in human endeavors, this book strikes a relevant chord. Douglas Fry reminds us that in the human experience it is neither solely nature nor nurture, neither aggression nor camaraderie, rather it is a complex synthesis of human endeavors resulting in a clear and resounding potential for peace."—Agustín Fuentes, Department of Anthropology, *University of Notre Dame*  
[Read the full review here.](#)

Douglas P. Fry, *Docent and Professor of Anthropology, Abo Akademi University; Adjunct Research Scientist, Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology, University of Arizona, Finland*