

**Proposal for “BPF Responds to Militarism”
Drafted by the External Effectiveness Committee
Presented at Board Meeting, July 7, 2005**

I. Background

The Buddhist Peace Fellowship engages in many activities throughout all of its programs that can be defined as “Peacework,” but over the past few years, there has been no explicitly stated overall mission for this work, and we haven’t communicated clearly the scope of this work to our constituents. As a result, there is confusion and lack of understanding about what BPF is actually doing to promote peace through dharma-based methods.

Additionally, at the present time, there is a great need to address the issue of rampant militarism in our society, especially as perpetrated by the U.S. government. There are potentially many ways in which BPF could offer a Buddhist perspective and support young people and others’ whose lives are directly affected by militarism.

This document is meant to better define some of these possibilities. Several next steps in this process are being defined; they include:

- Board members Chris Wilson to meet with Maia and Diana (or Mushim after Diana is on leave) to determine how the diverse activities presently offered by BPF might be presented or marketed so as to increase BPF’s visibility, new membership and membership renewal. They will clarify how the ideas proposed here would integrate with existing programs.
- Begin field-testing the ideas offered in the document by presenting them to the BPF Chapter Council and others in the BPF community. Identify which ideas have the most resonance, and which we can feasibly implement in the next 6 months--year.

For Chapter Council Regional Representatives – What we’re asking your help on:

Using the suggested guidelines in Section II of this document and through conversations with chapter leaders and others in your region, please help us to find out:

- Out of the 7 proposed projects, which generate the most excitement? If possible, rank the three most popular/compelling ideas from the list here.
- What ideas do people have to improve these proposed projects?
- What resources do people have to support any of these ideas? (e.g. time, skills, money, office space, etc.)
- How do international/Canadian chapters fit into this proposal? Do you have a unique contribution to make in the area of militarism? The U.S. has a lot to learn from other countries.

II. Suggestions for Evaluating New Program Proposals

Before you read the proposed projects, we want to offer you some guidelines we've been developing on board and staff as we think about new directions.

Guiding Questions (from Anushka, BPF Board of Directors):

WHO

Who are we trying to reach in this program? How do they self-identify? Where do they live? Who do they trust? What are their biggest needs? What characteristics can we enhance in terms of self-image? What would be a "Red Flag" in a bad way for this group if mentioned?

WHAT

What are we trying to have people do through this program? How would we know if we were successful? Are there any steps people would need to take before they were able to do what we want them to do?

WHY

Why are we doing this? How does this connect to other BPF programs? How can we integrate with chapters? Are any others already doing this? How can we collaborate with others in this area? What are we adding by starting this program?

HOW

How will the program be implemented? Who will participate in running it? How much time will it take them? What resources will they need? What will the National office provide?

MORE LATER

We can then flesh out specific goals, ideas for marketing the program and suggested time-lines.

Guidelines for Evaluating New Program Proposals developed in the BPF Office (by Maia, Diana, and Jenesha)

1. Is the proposal in alignment with our mission and purpose?

"The mission of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship (BPF), founded in 1978, is to serve as a catalyst and agent for socially engaged Buddhism. Our aim is to help beings liberate themselves from the suffering that manifests in individuals, relationships, institutions, and social systems. BPF's programs, publications, and practice groups link Buddhist teachings of wisdom and compassion with progressive social change."

2. Is the proposal in alignment with our values?

- Includes component of systemic/structural analysis and change
- Justice oriented
- Inclusive of major Buddhist traditions/communities
- Action/activist/oriented

3. Will it help to further the goal of more national/international outreach and community building?

4. Will it help to further our aspiration to build and support a diverse community of dharma activists, vis a vis ethnicity, race, class, age, gender, physical ability, etc.?
5. How does it relate to the focus of the year: “Cultivating Peace, Dismantling War”? (for 2005)
6. What would be the financial impact? What is the cost-benefit analysis? Return on investment?
7. “Gap analysis” – is this replicating something that currently exists? Who else is doing this in “the field” (Buddhist communities/spiritual activists)? Is it already being done competently by another group? Would it fill a unique need?

III. The Proposal: BPF Responds to Militarism

As one part of BPF’s Peace Program, we feel it is important to focus on the issue of militarism. According to one definition, militarism is "the predominance of the military class or prevalence of their ideals; the spirit which exalts military virtues and ideals; the policy of aggressive military preparedness." According to an article found in Wikipedia (a web-based compendium of collective knowledge),

Militarism (**military+ -ism**) is an **ideology** which claims that the military is the foundation of a **society's security**, and thereby claims to be its most important aspect. The militarization of society is defined in **relative** relation to others, and hence views the society as a **material** entity which exerts its influence and power over others.

While **pragmatism** and "preparedness" may refer to agreeable and practical matters related to self-**defense**, "militarism" connotes broader doctrinal views which claim the notion of "**peace through strength**" as supreme among the interests of society — overriding all others, including **diplomacy** and issues related to **social welfare**. (see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Militarism>)

A dharma-based analysis of militarism can make a contribution to help us understand how militarism is constructed – through both the internal workings of our mind as well as through social and economic conditions -- and consequently, how it can be de-constructed. In the process, various service-oriented and action-oriented projects can help us move toward that goal.

The menu of projects proposed below would comprise the Buddhist Peace Fellowship’s response to the growing militarism expressed in our current society, and particularly in the United States. We would invite BPF members, chapters, and others in the larger dharma community to participate in these projects. The proposed projects are:

1. GI Rights Hot Line
2. Teen Hot Line for Conscientious Objectors
3. Counter-Recruitment Movement
4. Military Out of Our Schools
5. Working With Returning Veterans
6. Establish Speakers’ Bureau and Web-Based Counseling
7. Analysis of Buddhist Peace Plan and Buddhist Social Theory

1. GI RIGHTS HOT LINE

The GI Rights Hotline is currently run by a group of non-profit organizations, including the Central Committee on Conscientious Objection and the Center on Conscience and War. Many of these organizations are available at the local area in different parts of the country.

Liability – to protect volunteers, BPF should take steps to ensure quality control in all trainings so that it is clear we are not advising or telling people what to do, but counseling and educating them in what their available options are.

Purpose

BPF has a unique contribution to make for military persons exploring conscientious objection from a non-theistic perspective. This will help position BPF within the progressive movement as having something unique to offer and increase support and membership for BPF.

Desired Outcome

A GI Rights Hotline that integrates education about co status with traditional teachings of Buddhism, such as the precepts.

Resources Needed

- Training (which groups and individual provide training?)
- Chapters
- SF Chapter will implement phone line by talking with Sandra Schwartz of AFSC.
- Publicity

Next Action – needs to be defined.

2. TEEN HOTLINE FOR CONSCIENCIOUS OBJECTORS

Purpose

To position BPF to make a unique offering among progressive groups working for peace, by creating a counseling program based on traditional Buddhist precepts that support conscientious objection. To integrate this further with BASE programs and teen retreats offered by Tempel.

Desired Outcome

A unique teen hotline that addresses their spiritual concerns from a Buddhist perspective and supports them in filing for CO status. A national ad campaign that brings this to the attention of young people across the country.

Have Spirit Rock help provide training in Buddhist aspect of conscientious objection.

Resources Needed

- Training
- collaboration with other groups such as AFSC to maintain records for potential CO candidates

- Network with other organizations (AFSC, CCW, CCCO, Spirit Rock, Veterans Groups, Chapters, Buddhist teachers)
- Staff Participation
- Budget
- Fund Raising

Next Action

Get feedback from staff

3. COUNTER-RECRUITMENT MOVEMENT

Purpose

To resist the war by checking the increased militarization of schools, and offering a unique Buddhist approach among many diverse groups presently doing this work.

Develop a First Precept Card to bring visibility and publicity to BPF. This will also help integrate this work with prison program and already existing card called “Declaration of the Preciousness of Life”, a card people carry in their wallet that says if they are murdered, they do not want the murdered to be executed.)

To increase participation of people’s of color in BPF. Counter-recruitment activities are often needed in communities of color, where BPF member do not usually live. BPF members may need support and training for stretching themselves to work in these unfamiliar communities. Perhaps chapters could become training resources to support people of color in doing this work themselves in their communities.

Desired Outcome

BPF could setup tables on college and high school campuses with BPF members providing accurate information to students, parents and teachers. They could help clarify for young people, the nature of war, and what it means to be a conscientious objector. Support programs such as the Fellowship of Reconciliation “I Will Not Kill Program” (see <http://www.iwillnotkill.org>)

A First Precept Card people carry on them that says, “I support life and will not kill”.

We should work to have this project be chapter driven, so as not to provide more pressure on our already over-stretched staff.

Resources Needed

- SF chapter take training in SF
- Identify activities already being done in this area within chapters and among BPF members
- Chapter involvement
- Networking with AFSC (AFSC has a very systematic approach working with unions and guidance counselors.)

Next Action: Set up link to AFSC’s counter-recruitment efforts on BPF web site

4. MILITARY OUT OF OUR SCHOOLS

Started by CCCO it works with local PTA/PTSA groups to get school boards to offer a parental opt-out exception to the section of the No Child Left Behind Act that requires schools to provide student information to military recruiters.

Purpose

To resist the war and draw attention to BPF, strengthen chapters and grow a stronger network of chapters. This action would give BPF more visibility among youth and parents of youth.

Desired Outcome

To support parents, school counselors and school administrators in opting-out of the No Child Left Behind Act requiring schools to provide student information to military recruiters.

Resources Needed

- National Office – staff
- Chapters
- Chapter Council (a regional approach)
- Printed Materials, BPF Banners, shirts, hats
- Budget
- Fund Raising

Next Action

SF Chapter to participate in regional convention in SF on Oct. 1-2

5. WORKING WITH RETURNING VETERANS

Veterans have actual war experiences that can help young people learn more about the realities of war. Getting Vets more involved through speaker's bureau or any chapter activities would strengthen chapters. There is also a need to counsel returning Veterans who are often isolated and confused as they try to re-integrate themselves back into civilian society.

Purpose

To support people in the military service by providing Buddhist practices to heal their suffering and integrate them back into a community (sangha, chapter) of caring, non-judgmental persons). To give BPF more exposure and increase membership; To increase veteran participation in other programs. To activate membership base around a bearing witness practice that would inspire them, hence strengthening chapter and BPF membership.

This might also be integrated with prison post-release programs.

Desired Outcome

Council Circles that provide an intentional way of speaking and listening in a group environment that is safe, healing and supportive. To give veterans contemplative Buddhist practice to help them work with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and other ailments associated with violence.

Resources Needed

- Chapters
- Veterans
- Buddhist Teachers
- BPF Members
- Council Training
- Network with Thich Nat Hanh and Community of Mindfulness
- Network with Maxine Hong Kingston who has a writing group with vets

Next Action

Gather more information on veteran’s groups. Joshin will call Claude Thomas.

6. ESTABLISH SPEAKER BUREAU and WEB SITE-BASED COUNSELING

Please refer to Mennonite Central Committee website for example effective, highly visible web-based veterans counseling program, <http://www.mcc.org/co/askavet/>

Purpose

BPF can expand and grow its chapter/membership base by bringing more attention to it’s unique way of working for peace. It can integrate this project with BASE and youth retreat offerings.

Desired Outcome

BPF will have a stronger membership base, and stronger, more active chapters. A low-cost web-based counseling program bringing increased visibility and membership. A nation-wide speakers bureau to educate, strengthen chapters and fund raise for BPF.

A re-worked web site where all peace activities are centralized in one area.

Resources Needed

- National Office – staff – for speaker’s bureau
- Budget – for speaker’s bureau
- Fund Raising – for speaker’s bureau
- Webmaster – web-based counseling
- Volunteer counselors – veterans, Buddhist teachers

Next Action

Joshin will call Claude Thomas and ask him to volunteer for web-based counseling and national speaker’s bureau.

7. ANALYSIS OF BUDDHIST PEACE PLAN AND BUDDHIST SOCIAL THEORY

Purpose

There is a need for an articulate, practice-based analysis of a Buddhist approach to peace-making that will support and integrate various BPF activities. Such an analysis will help bring clearer focus and visibility to BPF offerings and support members in their peacemaking work in the world. A social theory of Buddhism provides a long-view

helping to connect personal life-styles with external activities in the service of changing the status quo.

Desired Outcome

A clear, concise social theory of Buddhism that clarifies the way Buddhist practitioners work for peace and why it is important and unique among other groups in the progressive movement. This analysis could take a common Buddhist theme such as the three poisons and show how this connects to the world at large. (**greed** – market capitalism, globalization, environmental degradation; **anger/ill will** – violence, punitive justice system, capital punishment, war, empire building; **ig-norance** – media, denial)

Buddhism has traditionally been very clear about the root problem of suffering on an individual psychological level. This analysis would help show how suffering is systemically rooted in social structures and institutions. It would help show how working to change these social structures in a skillful, nonviolent manner can contribute to less suffering.

A completed analysis by next BPF board/staff retreat in Sept-Oct.

Resources Needed

- Three or four members of the International Advisory Board
- Invite comments but not active participation from staff, board, other international advisors and ThinkSangha

Next Action

Alan will present this paper, and supplementary request from Joshin to three or four members of the International Advisory Board.