

# Countering Nuclear Power with a Chain Reaction of Goodwill

*Phyllis Creighton offers compelling evidence countering the commonly held assertion that war is an inevitable result of the human proclivity for violence.*

MARTIN C. WINER

Phyllis Creighton came to our attention as being an activist for nuclear disarmament, but her life's work can hardly be summarized as only such. A search on Google reveals reams of pages and a lifetime's work participating in and supporting so many causes that it is only possible to paint the picture in broad strokes. She is an environmentalist, bioethicist, active Anglican, and outspoken advocate for peace. The common thread to her interests is a deep reverence for human life, spirit, and the earth that supports both.

In 1945, Phyllis was 15



*Phyllis Creighton outside the Anglican Church  
of the Holy Trinity*

*Photo courtesy Magnus Isaccson*

years old and observed in horror the jubilation of some adults at the quick end the atom bomb brought to the war. She was revolted by the sheer human suffering that could now be inflicted in an instant. She recalls the description of the “blinding flash” of the bomb and while it concluded the war in a politically expedient flash, “it forever blinded us from our humanity.” She contends that nuclear weapons are the final outcome of the “momentum in the search for ultimate power.” She fears that the “seeds of the next war are sown by the previous war” and that the “Mutually Assured Destruction” nuclear weapons offer as a tool for “peace” will only result in assured destruction so long as we refuse to examine the core human failings from which violence sprouts.

Phyllis challenges the commonly held assertion that war is an inevitable result of the human proclivity for violence. As a realist, she admits that violence is a player in a spectrum of human drives, but it should not be given center stage billing. She reminds us that the human drive to reproduce reveals other more primary and altruistic drives. Rearing a child, she says, “is an act of creation and an act of self sacrifice which

speaks to a human need to give in love and cooperate.”

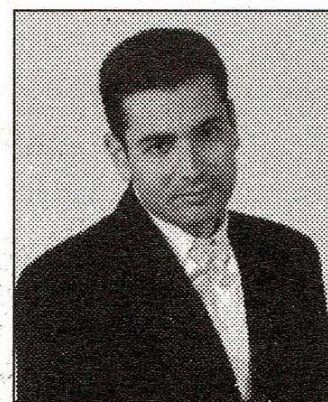
Phyllis was “dancing in the street” recently when science provided evidence that peaceful instincts could be traced back to our oldest ancestors. Recently scientists unearthed a proto-human fossil called “Ardi,” predating the previous record holder by one million years. Of notable interest to Phyllis, the incisor (canine) teeth of Ardi were stubby, much like modern humans, suggesting that Ardi was an omnivorous member of a hunter-gatherer society. Long before civilization as we know it, proto-humans lived hand to mouth in a web of social dependence where cooperation and comradery were not only laudable traits but key survival instincts.

When asked her thoughts on the most recent nuclear proliferation crisis in Iran, she echoes the sentiments of Hans Blix and recommends the construction of a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East. She sternly reminds the existing nuclear powers that their call for the creation of such a zone is extremely contradictory and weak so long as they refuse to live up to their agreements to disarm themselves.

Phyllis is a force to be reckoned with. In addition to her leg-

acy of activism, she is a mother of four and a grandmother to six. She willingly lends her voice — written, spoken, or singing — to many causes of interest. As a member of the “Raging Grannies” — an eclectic singing group of activists whose only membership requirements are “senior citizen, female, and audacious” — for twenty years now, she is often seen, heard, and quoted worldwide.

Ironically, Phyllis Creighton possesses many of the same attributes as the nuclear science she hopes to rid the world of. Her power is hard to explain simply, and yet the effects are obvious. She has ability to unleash power in others which will hopefully soon reach a critical mass, unleashing a wave of positive energy which will reshape our world for the better.



*Martin C. Winer is a freelance writer in Toronto. He enjoys writing articles about social action. More details can be found on his blog: [mwiner.wordpress.com](http://mwiner.wordpress.com)*