

July 2020

# My Life as a World Federalist

Lucy Law Webster

## A World of Thought and Travel

When I was nine, I wrote my first anti-war poem, even though I thought World War II was necessary. It was 1940, the United States hadn't entered the war yet. There were many arguments for and against fighting the Axis, and that tug of war in our country ricocheted in my young mind. Rationally we needed to fight, but emotionally I yearned for peace. After the war, when I was a little older and wiser, I knew the big mistakes that necessitated the carnage, the bloodshed, and the horrors, and why it should never have been allowed to happen.

If the United States had joined the League of Nations; If nations had blocked Hitler when he started to remilitarize the Rhineland; If there had been regenerative and not punitive support for the German people after World War I, the Nazis would never have come to power. There would have been no World War II, no 50-60 million killed in war itself, no 6 million Jews killed in the Holocaust, and perhaps no 10 or more million killed in the Gulags. All told World War II was the deadliest military conflict in history. 79-85 million people perished.

My poem, published in Parents Magazine, contained the line "where people the world's laws obey". That phrase became my life's North Star and guided me as I traveled the globe to build a federated world to stop war.

But before I could take on the world I needed to do something at home... and I was only 9 at that time. Later, a month or two into the 1948 academic year, two students from Princeton University came to my school and I gathered a group of our students to meet them and hear their suggestion that we start a Chapter of the United World Federalists.

Many scientists worked in Princeton, New Jersey, both at the university and also at the large RCA laboratory that had designed and built some of the torpedoes and missiles that won the war. Albert Einstein was also at Princeton, and he was a great warrior for peace. He knew my father who was a prominent scientist at the RCA Labs.

Einstein liked to have students stop by his house on Mercer Street to discuss science and world affairs. He and his wife hosted the Princeton Chapter of the United World Federalists and invited our school group starting the school world federalist chapter to his house. He was charismatic with his white wild hair and inspired us all in our push for peace and world government.

*"There is no salvation for civilization, or even the human race, other than the creation of a world government". Albert Einstein*

Soon Princeton Day School had a local chapter of the World Federalist Movement, an organization in which I'm still actively involved. That school and what I learned there had a big impact on me. Looking back it's clear my life's work and character came into full bloom there. The class chart lists my pet peeve as "unresponsive people," and my senior school profile ends, "Lucy is determined that when she gets out of college she is going to 'do something'."

It was that drive and passion that made me an active world federalist at sixteen. Then while at Wellesley College I was elected National Student Chairman of the United World Federalists. I spent much of my senior year leading the U.S. Student Federalists and creating a New England Student Council for

the World Federalists, with programs at some eight colleges including Harvard, MIT, Smith, Mt. Holyoake, and Wellesley.

After graduating from Wellesley<sup>↑</sup> I became the Secretary-General of the World Student Federalist office on a temporary basis, which had me traveling throughout Europe speaking to large gatherings and drumming up support for the Federalist movement. Then back in the U.S., I studied Political Science and International Relations at Columbia University while working part-time at the Institute for World Order. Being in New York near the United Nations convinced me the UN Charter was not adequate to prevent further wars. The grating asymmetry of the Security Council, with exceptional powers given the five wartime victors, made it possible for SC members to make war without regard for the criminality of their leaders or the structural violence of the related power elites.

I was also serving as secretary of the Young Adult Council for Social Welfare, which was organizing the American delegation to the World Assembly of Youth, a large international youth conference that I attended in Singapore. (Interestingly, it's since been disclosed that the CIA secretly funded the Council in an effort to balance the growth of similar programs in communist countries during the Cold War.) On my way to Singapore, I worked for the Pakistan Delegation to the UN Economic and Social Council during its 1954 summer session in Geneva and visited the World Student Federalist office in Amsterdam.

The week-long Singapore conference was followed by the main part of my round-the-world speaking tour through the rapidly changing geopolitical landscape of southeast Asia. The trip was financed by some 50 U.S. chapters of the United World Federalists, which each sent in \$35 in advance to "send Lucy Law around the world to you." Going to Singapore via Europe was the first part of the global speaking tour that took me to some

20 countries and then to 50 sponsoring cities around the U.S.

I traveled from Singapore to Kuala Lumpur with some of the other delegates. There we met with the Malaysian government to discuss their evolving democracy and how World Federalism would be relevant to them. Then, on my own, it was Saigon in the summer of 1954, just months after the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu, and I remember the capital swelling with refugees. The people I came to speak to were hoping I was bringing some kind of peace plan for South and North Vietnam. Of course, I had no such solution and I look back with great sadness on those times, my lack of answers and the heightened war that was soon to follow.

During my trip through Southeast Asia I saw and heard what had been respect for America and the idea of world government slowly evaporate as the Cold War spread its evil chill around the globe.

After my return to the US and a whirlwind tour of the cities that had sponsored me, I began dating David Webster, a British radio and TV correspondent who was on leave from the BBC working for UN Radio in New York. I had met David briefly during a visit to London and Cambridge from Amsterdam where I was in charge of the small World Student Federalist office before my trip around the world. David had been in charge of the same Amsterdam office in 1953 before he joined the BBC. Now I was in London briefly staying at the National Union of Students house for a few days. David picked me up and I rode on the back of his motor scooter to Schmidt's in Soho, the very good bargain food dining place.

We soon married, moved to England and raised two sons, Daniel and Alexander.

In London I worked in media, opinion and marketing research and was also active in Federal Union and the Association of World Federalists as well as in the international World Movement for World Federal Government.

Comments

David continued his BBC career.

From 1971 to 1975 we lived in New York and I became active in the international World Movement for World Federal Government and served as its Executive Committee Chairman for a number of years including during the world federalist congress in Tokyo in 1980.

Back in New York, I worked for UNICEF and later for the United Nations Secretariat as Special Assistant to the Secretary-General of the Second World Conference to Combat Racism, which was held in Geneva.

Unlike the First and the Third World Congresses to Combat Racism, all the delegations worked well together and signed a Final Document which had an important impact on the general goal of ending apartheid and other forms of racial discrimination, at a time when apartheid was a serious challenge to peace and development. At the same time, I obtained a Master of Science Degree in international relations.

My main work in the UN was as a Political Affairs Officer in the Department for Disarmament Affairs where I edited two UN publications, served as Secretary of the UN Disarmament Commission working groups and was the UN liaison officer for the press and NGOs at the 1990 and 1995 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review conferences.

After reaching the mandatory UN retirement age, I worked for Economists for Peace and Security as Executive Director and as Program Director, and continue as Secretary of its Board and as a contributor to its quarterly journal. Always wanting to learn, during this period I earned a second MA, this time in World Political Economy and Finance. Then I became the Executive Director of the Center for War/Peace Studies and a member of the Steering Committee of the World Federalist Institute contributing to its journal, Minerva. I've also served as Vice-Chair of the Council of the World Federalist Movement, and as President of the New York

Chapter of Citizens for Global Solutions.

In 2001, following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the United States was given a massive vote of sympathy and a green light by the UN Security Council to take action in Afghanistan. Seeing that the U.S. response was not nearly as efficient and constructive as a carefully coordinated multilateral one could have been, I wrote a statement of opposition for Economists Aligned for Arms Reduction (ECAAR), which is now known as Economists for Peace and Security (EPS). It was signed by 200-plus economists, including eight or so Nobel Laureates. I was trying to figure out a way that our automatic power structures could work for good. There's a lot of power in the way economics pushes people to do what they do, but the question is how to harness that in a creative way. Further, we need more thoughtful multi-country action so that the UN system can get the job done while also addressing the need for problems such as climate change and inequality.

In a paper I wrote - A New Deal for the World - I outlined a "How To" article on two themes: how to put an end to war, and how to make a New Deal for prosperity and dignity for all worldwide. War is a human institution; it does not arise inevitably from any natural cause.

Although we humans have spent many thousands of years in competitive relationships with frequent violent confrontations, we now know how to distinguish between healthy competition and destructive conflict. And we know how to prevent dysfunctional violence. Furthermore, the "boys will be boys" attitude toward war is one game in animal-spirits mode that has become dysfunctional with the development of modern military technology.

Also, we know how to ensure economic security and social dignity for all. The vast inequalities of the present world system are only one factor contributing to our proclivity to approach our diverse interests in a confrontational way, but reducing these inequalities would reduce

mistrust and tension. Here again, there is nothing preprogrammed into our genes that makes inequality or injustice inevitable. We are the masters of our fate, or at least we could be. However, existing economic and social structures and the history of adverse interactions do contribute to human insecurity. There are of course various kinds of deliberate fraud and extreme selfishness that undermine the implicit social compact, making necessary citizen monitoring and governmental regulation.

Poetry has always moved me and expressed something powerful beyond the hard facts of war and economics. Tennyson has to be a favorite, as he spoke of common sense and a world federation in the face of war.

Alfred Tennyson - Locksley Hall (1842)

*Till the war-drum throb'd no longer,  
[and the battle-flags were furled  
In the Parliament of man,  
[the Federation of the world.  
There the common sense of most shall hold  
[a fretful realm in awe,  
And the kindly earth shall slumber,  
[lapt in universal law.*

I've tried my own hand at poetry, no Tennyson by any measure, but the spirit and passion are there.

Lucy Webster - From Rome to Rome

*I remember, I remember,  
The flight from Rome to Rome,  
Returning from mid-ocean on 9.11.2001  
I had been to Ventotene to study war and peace  
I had learned that war does not make peace  
Peace comes from care and justice  
When all the world's laws obey  
As I had written as a child  
For the 7th of December, 1941.  
When will we ever learn.  
When will we ever learn?*

Through the years I have come to know a large

network of people including President Indira Gandhi in India and many leaders in Japan and South Korea working for peace with justice. The world federalist leadership establishing the International Criminal Court in the Hague has set a new and important precedent, as have our model assemblies in Latin America and the leading Members of Parliament with world federalist goals and ideas in Latin America.

I am not discouraged, only emboldened to try harder to "establish an international political and legal system to abolish war." Its focus is on introducing weighted voting in the UN General Assembly and strengthening its ability to support struggling democracies. I understand that change happens slowly and am willing to be patient and take the long view, although I admit to sometimes being frustrated.

My lifelong pursuit has been multilateral approaches to international crisis and improving the ability of the UN to respond quickly to dangerous situations. When Osama Bin Laden was in Afghanistan after destroying the World Trade Center, the UN should have sent in UN marshals to arrest him, maybe special forces. I'm not saying you shouldn't use force, but dropping bombs just kills ordinary people.

I've often viewed this struggle for a world government like walking up a down escalator. It's not the easiest thing to do, but it's better to walk up than just stand there!

A final thought. Think how much easier Sisyphus would have had it if we all joined

