

# Jeff Kisling's Writings on Peace, Non-Violence, and Justice

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## Executive Summary

This report compiles and analyzes the extensive writings of Iowa Quaker Jeff Kisling on the multifaceted concept of peace, drawing from his blogs:

<https://unflinching.blog/>, <https://landbackfriends.com/>, <https://jeffkisling.com/>, and <https://quakersandreligioussocialism.com/>. Kisling's philosophy of peace extends far beyond the mere absence of war, encompassing a holistic vision rooted in Quaker principles that demands active engagement with social, environmental, and systemic injustices.<sup>1</sup> The document organizes his contributions into key thematic areas, revealing the interconnectedness of his advocacy for direct anti-war actions, racial and Indigenous justice, environmental stewardship, the practice of mutual aid, and fundamental critiques of empire and capitalism.<sup>1</sup> The comprehensive scope of Kisling's work demonstrates that his concept of peace cannot be compartmentalized into traditional peace studies categories; rather, it necessitates an interdisciplinary approach to fully capture its breadth and depth. While acknowledging limitations due to inaccessible content from some platforms, this compendium offers a thorough understanding of Kisling's unwavering commitment to building a more just and peaceful world.<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction: Jeff Kisling's Expansive Vision of Peace

Jeff Kisling is an Iowa Quaker, writer, and activist whose online presence serves as a platform for his deeply held convictions regarding peace and justice. His extensive body of work, spanning several interconnected blogs, reflects a profound commitment to addressing contemporary societal challenges through a lens informed by his Quaker faith and a radical understanding of social change. His writings are not merely commentary but a call to action, urging readers to engage with the complex interplay of global conflicts, systemic inequalities, and environmental degradation.<sup>1</sup>

For Kisling, the concept of "peace" transcends the simplistic definition of the absence of armed conflict.<sup>1</sup> Instead, it embodies a proactive and holistic state of justice, equity, and right relationship with all beings and the Earth.<sup>1</sup> This expansive definition is foundational to comprehending the breadth of his advocacy, which seamlessly links global anti-war efforts to local community building, the dismantling of oppressive systems, and fundamental critiques of capitalism and empire.<sup>1</sup> His work consistently demonstrates that true peace cannot exist in a vacuum but must be cultivated through the active pursuit of social, environmental, and spiritual justice.<sup>1</sup> The very structure of Kisling's online presence, utilizing multiple interconnected blogs, implicitly conveys his holistic peace philosophy. This organizational choice suggests that he views these topics not as separate academic disciplines but as integrated facets of a single, overarching struggle for justice. His method of disseminating information thus embodies the interconnectedness of peace, justice, and spiritual work.

Kisling's primary writing platforms each contribute distinct yet interconnected thematic focuses to his overarching vision:

- **quakersandreligioussocialism.com:** This platform primarily explores how Quaker principles align with mutual aid practices, abolitionist principles, and the philosophy of religious socialism. It frequently features articles directly addressing anti-war sentiments and global conflicts.<sup>1</sup>
- **landbackfriends.com:** Dedicated to the LANDBACK movement, this blog focuses on Indigenous issues, historical injustices, environmental concerns, and reconciliation from a Quaker perspective.<sup>1</sup>
- **jeffkisling.com:** This site functions as a central hub for his diverse work,

encompassing Quakerism, social justice, and the concept of revolution, often cross-referencing content from his more specialized blogs.<sup>1</sup>

- **unflinching.blog/**: While detailed content was largely inaccessible in the provided material, its very title, "Unflinching," suggests an uncompromising approach to truth and justice, likely aligning with his broader themes of direct action and systemic critique.<sup>1</sup>

It is important to acknowledge that while four blogs were identified as sources for Jeff Kisling's writings, comprehensive content for unflinching.blog and some specific articles on [quakersandreligioussocialism.com](http://quakersandreligioussocialism.com) and [landbackfriends.com](http://landbackfriends.com) were not available within the provided material.<sup>1</sup> This report will therefore focus on the accessible information, providing a thorough analysis of Kisling's contributions to the discourse on peace while noting these limitations.

## I. Direct Anti-War and Non-Violence Advocacy

Jeff Kisling's commitment to peace is most explicitly demonstrated through his direct critiques of warfare, his active participation in peace-oriented organizations, and his deeply personal testimony of non-violence. His writings consistently underscore the moral imperative to resist militarism and advocate for peaceful resolutions to conflicts, both domestically and internationally.

### Critiques of Specific Global Conflicts

Kisling frequently engages with contemporary international conflicts, offering incisive critiques that extend beyond immediate events to their underlying systemic causes.<sup>1</sup> His analysis often highlights the moral failures of institutions and governments.

Regarding the **Israeli-Hamas War**, Kisling views the actions in Gaza as a form of genocide, condemning the perceived complicity of global institutions and professionals. He refers to this as the "silence of the damned," emphasizing how educated professionals and organizations, such as medical schools, fail to denounce atrocities due to fear of repercussions, including attacks, career destruction, loss of funding, and social isolation.<sup>1</sup> This silence, in his view, renders these institutions complicit in genocidal projects, drawing parallels to Robert Jay Lifton's work on professional participation in such endeavors.<sup>1</sup> The dehumanization of Palestinians is a recurring theme in his analysis, which he connects to broader settler-colonial projects. He sharply criticizes the continued funneling of weapons and billions of dollars to sustain Israel's occupation and alleged genocide.<sup>1</sup> Kisling expresses profound distress over the stark contrast between the traditional Christmas message of "peace on earth, good will toward men" and the harsh reality of global dominance forces, particularly the massacre in Gaza and the relative silence observed in the United States compared to other nations.<sup>1</sup> He links this pattern of silence and complicity to historical injustices, including European colonization, the enslavement of Africans, and the ongoing occupation of Indigenous lands, warning of a rapid rise in authoritarianism that suppresses opposition to war and injustice.<sup>1</sup> Beyond the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Kisling has raised concerns about the potential for wider regional wars, particularly following events in Iran and US airstrikes in Baghdad.<sup>1</sup> He criticizes

the Biden administration for bypassing Congress on multiple occasions to approve emergency weapons sales to Israel, totaling over \$253 million, which he sees as exacerbating regional tensions.<sup>1</sup>

## **Engagement with National Peace Organizations**

Kisling's advocacy is not limited to commentary; he actively participates in and promotes the work of established peace organizations.<sup>1</sup> He is personally involved with the

**Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)**, a national, nonpartisan organization dedicated to lobbying Congress for peace, justice, and environmental stewardship.<sup>1</sup> His involvement as a General Committee member and participant in lobbying efforts underscores his belief in systemic advocacy. He champions FCNL's core principle of seeking "a world free of war and the threat of war" and promotes their initiatives, such as monthly online "Intro to Advocacy with FCNL" training sessions.<sup>1</sup> FCNL's stance on the Israel-Palestine conflict aligns with Kisling's own views, as the organization has condemned both Hamas's attacks and Israel's indiscriminate bombing, advocating for a permanent ceasefire and addressing the conflict's root causes. FCNL also provides advocacy toolkits and links to statements from national Quaker organizations calling for a ceasefire.<sup>1</sup> This collaborative approach highlights the collective power of faith-based advocacy in influencing policy and promoting peace.

Beyond FCNL, Kisling serves as co-clerk of the **Iowa Yearly Meeting's Peace and Social Concerns committee**, exemplifying a continuous lineage of Quaker peace testimony.<sup>1</sup> He is also involved with the

**Quakers for Abolition Network**, underscoring his commitment to abolitionist principles.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Kisling highlights

**Des Moines Mutual Aid (DMMA)** for its active participation in anti-war marches.<sup>1</sup>

## **Personal Testimony and Principles of Conscientious Objection**

A foundational element of Jeff Kisling's understanding of peace is his deeply personal testimony of non-violence, exemplified by his decision to non-cooperate with the Selective Service System (SSS) during the Vietnam War era.<sup>1</sup> Initially, Kisling sought and was granted conscientious objector status (1-O), which would have required him to perform alternative civilian service.<sup>1</sup> However, he ultimately found this option insufficient because it still implied cooperation with the Selective Service System on its terms, rather than his own deeply held convictions. His ultimate decision to non-cooperate was rooted in a profound spiritual conviction against war and conscription, which he understood as a "personal, internal, spiritual matter" to work for peace.<sup>1</sup>

His journey to this decision was not a sudden revelation but a series of "small steps," guided by his Quaker belief in the "Inner Light"—the conviction that there is "that of God in every man" and that individuals can communicate with and respond to this divine guidance.<sup>1</sup> He emphasized that all decisions, particularly those dealing with principle and the Spirit, are significant and must be integral to one's life.<sup>1</sup> Kisling's interpretation of the biblical phrase "Resist not evil" is central to his approach to conflict. He understands it as "Do not set yourself against one who wrongs you," advocating for overcoming evil by doing good and living a life of example. He believed that opposing others leads to focusing on their weaknesses, whereas the true task is to foster understanding and move closer to truth.<sup>1</sup> He criticized the draft for forcing fundamental moral decisions on adolescents at a critical juncture in their lives, arguing that it stifles personal growth and leads to a loss of idealism and faith in humanity, which he considered a "graver crime than that of destroying life itself".<sup>1</sup> Ultimately, Kisling's order to report for civilian service was invalidated because a Supreme Court case declared that drafting men for the armed forces at that time was illegal, and he was not prosecuted.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Personal as Political in Peace Advocacy**

Kisling's "Selective Service System Decision" reveals a profound connection between individual spiritual conviction and public political action.<sup>1</sup> His deeply personal struggle and decision to non-cooperate with the draft, rooted in his individual conscience and Quaker beliefs, established a foundational commitment to non-violence that

continues to inform his broader advocacy.<sup>1</sup> His contemporary critiques of institutional complicity in war and his active engagement with organizations like FCNL are direct extensions of this personal, principled stand.<sup>1</sup> This demonstrates that for Kisling, genuine peace advocacy originates from internal spiritual discernment and personal integrity, which then manifests in outward political engagement. The effectiveness of the anti-war movement is deeply tied to the moral courage and principled stands of individuals, implying that "peace" is not merely a policy outcome but a state of being cultivated through consistent adherence to one's deepest spiritual truths.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Evolving Nature of the Anti-War Movement**

Kisling observes a significant evolution in the anti-war movement, noting that it has "morphed into building resilient, Mutual Aid communities".<sup>1</sup> He states that working for peace now increasingly means "working for justice in oppressed communities within the US".<sup>1</sup> This shift indicates a recognition that direct military conflicts are often symptoms of deeper societal injustices, such as empire, oppression, and inequality. Therefore, true peace requires addressing these root causes through community building, mutual aid, and justice work.<sup>1</sup> This represents a move from a reactive stance of protesting specific wars to a more proactive approach of peace-building through social transformation, broadening the definition of "war" to include systemic violence and oppression.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Intergenerational Nature of Quaker Peace Testimony**

Kisling's personal conscientious objection is explicitly framed within his Quaker upbringing and the unwavering support of his Meeting.<sup>1</sup> His ongoing involvement with the Friends Committee on National Legislation and his role as co-clerk of the Iowa Yearly Meeting's Peace and Social Concerns committee exemplify a continuous lineage of Quaker peace testimony.<sup>1</sup> This highlights how Quaker principles are not static historical doctrines but living traditions that are continually applied and reinterpreted in contemporary contexts.<sup>1</sup> His work demonstrates how individual faith can be a powerful, enduring force for social change, passed down and adapted

across generations, providing both a spiritual foundation and a practical framework for peace advocacy.<sup>1</sup>

The influence from family and elders is a critical component of this intergenerational transmission. His parents were "definitely against all war" <sup>1</sup>, and his grandmother, Lorene Standing, shared wisdom on God's will being revealed in "small steps".<sup>1</sup> His father, a Methodist minister, became disillusioned with World War I, viewing it as incompatible with Jesus' teachings and driven by "lust for power and economic advantage".<sup>1</sup> This conviction was embedded in Kisling's consciousness from a young age. Furthermore, several Quaker relatives, including his cousins Roy Knight, John Griffith, and Herbert Standing, along with Don Laughlin, served prison time for draft resistance, profoundly impacting Kisling through their direct example of principled action and sacrifice.<sup>1</sup>

Mentorship and community support also played a vital role. Don Laughlin, an Iowa Yearly Meeting Quaker, became a close friend and mentor, writing a letter to Kisling's draft board supporting his CO application and taking him to his first peace vigils, where Kisling experienced "the powerful spiritual connection with those who stood silently, witnessing together".<sup>1</sup> The "Epistle to Friends Concerning Military Conscription," co-signed by Laughlin and Knight, was a significant influence on Kisling's thinking.<sup>1</sup> Bear Creek Monthly Meeting provided support for his "courageous stand".<sup>1</sup> Scattergood Friends School was crucial in "implanting Quakerism at the core of [his] being" through its community and collective peace witness.<sup>1</sup> Kisling's detailed personal narrative of conscientious objection serves as a micro-history of the Quaker peace testimony, illustrating its practical application and evolution through individual moral struggle and communal support. This personal story makes the abstract concept of "peace testimony" tangible and relatable. By weaving his personal struggle with the draft into the broader context of Quaker history, he transforms his individual experience into a living example of the Quaker Peace Testimony. This is not merely *his* story, but *the* story of how Quaker principles are lived out and passed down. The "small steps" of his discernment reflect the incremental nature of spiritual leading within Quakerism. This personal narrative is a powerful pedagogical tool within his writings, demonstrating the experiential and communal nature of Quaker peace and its intergenerational continuity. It highlights that Quaker peace is not merely a doctrine but a lived, often challenging, commitment.

Table 1 provides a concise overview of Jeff Kisling's explicit peace advocacy within his direct anti-war and non-violence writings. This structured presentation allows for

rapid identification of his focus areas within direct anti-war advocacy, such as specific conflicts and organizations. The inclusion of "Related Tags" further reveals the interconnectedness of these direct actions with broader themes like "Empire," "Indigenous," and "Mutual Aid," reinforcing the holistic nature of his peace philosophy even within this specific section. This helps readers grasp the breadth of his engagement at a glance and shows how his anti-war stance is not isolated.

**Table 1: Key Anti-War Articles & Summaries**

| Article Title                            | Publication Date | Author       | Summary  | Related Tags  | Source URL   |
|--|------------------|--------------|--|---|--|
| "The Silence of the Damned"              | February 2, 2024 | Jeff Kisling | Critiques complicity of professionals and institutions in not denouncing Israeli genocide in Gaza; connects dehumanization of Palestinians to settler-colonialism; suggests anti-war movement has shifted to building Mutual Aid communities. References "Ain't Gonna Study War No More" from Polycrisis Center. | Activism, Empire, Indigenous, Mutual Aid, Palestine, Peace, Uncategorized                       | <a href="https://quakersandreligioussociety.com/blog/">https://quakersandreligioussociety.com/blog/</a> <sup>1</sup> |
| "Des Moines Mutual Aid Anti-war Actions" | January 5, 2024  | Jeff Kisling | Details Des Moines Mutual Aid's participation in anti-war protests against potential Iran war; addresses tragic explosions in Iran and US airstrikes; criticizes Biden for bypassing Congress on weapons sales to Israel. Reflects on peace movement's evolution to focus on justice in oppressed communities.   | Abolition, Activism, Community, Empire, Event, Mutual Aid, Palestine, Peace, Uncategorized, War | <a href="https://quakersandreligioussociety.com/blog/">https://quakersandreligioussociety.com/blog/</a> <sup>1</sup> |

|   |                                  |              |   |  |  |
|---|----------------------------------|--------------|---|--|--|
| "Friends Committee on National Legislation" | January 4, 2024                  | Jeff Kisling | Introduces FCNL as a nonpartisan organization lobbying Congress for peace, justice, and environmental stewardship; highlights FCNL's work on racial justice, silent reflection, Spring Lobby Weekend, reproductive health, and the war in Israel-Palestine (calling for ceasefire).             | Activism, American Friends Service Committee, Event, Faith, Forced assimilation, Friends Committee on National Legislation, Palestine, Peace, Quaker, Quaker United Nations Office, Reproductive justice, Uncategorized, War | <a href="https://quakersandreligioussociety.com/blog/">https://quakersandreligioussociety.com/blog/</a> <sup>1</sup>                             |
| "Peace on Earth?"                           | December 26, 2023                | Jeff Kisling | Expresses distress over dichotomy between Christmas peace message and global dominance forces (Gaza massacre, US silence); connects to historical injustices (colonization, slavery, Indigenous land occupation); warns of rising authoritarianism . Cites articles calling for Gaza ceasefire. | Abolition, Activism, Empire, Forced assimilation, Mother Earth, Peace, Quaker, Uncategorized   | <a href="https://quakersandreligioussociety.com/blog/">https://quakersandreligioussociety.com/blog/</a> <sup>1</sup>                             |
| "Selective Service System Decision"         | Undated (refers to 1970s events) | Jeff Kisling | Personal account of Kisling's decision to non-cooperate with the Selective Service System during the  | Quaker, Conscientious Objection, Nonviolence, Peace Testimony, Spiritual Discernment   | <a href="https://jeffkisling.com/selective-service-system-decision/">https://jeffkisling.com/selective-service-system-decision/</a> <sup>1</sup> |

|              |         |              |   |   |  |
|--------------|---------|--------------|---|---|--|
|              |         |              | Vietnam War, rooted in Quaker beliefs and spiritual conviction against war. Emphasizes "Inner Light," community support, and overcoming evil by doing good.   |   |  |
| "Revolution" | Undated | Jeff Kisling | Calls for a nonviolent revolution, arguing the current political/economic system is too corrupted for internal change. Discusses class warfare, man-made poverty, militarism, and the need to withdraw consent from oppressive systems. | Revolution, Nonviolence, Capitalism, Militarism, Social Justice | <a href="https://jeffkisling.com/revolution/">https://jeffkisling.com/revolution/</a> <sup>1</sup> |

## II. Peace as Social and Environmental Justice

Jeff Kisling's expansive understanding of peace is deeply intertwined with the pursuit of justice across various societal and ecological dimensions. He consistently argues that true peace cannot exist without actively addressing systemic oppression, rectifying historical harms, and ending the exploitation of the environment. His work highlights that violence is not only overt warfare but also the insidious harm inflicted by unjust systems.

### A. Abolition and Racial Justice

Kisling's advocacy for peace is inextricably linked to the dismantling of oppressive systems and the pursuit of racial justice.<sup>1</sup> He is actively involved in the

**Quakers for Abolition Network**, underscoring his commitment to abolitionist principles that extend beyond historical slavery to contemporary forms of racial injustice and carceral systems.<sup>1</sup> He explicitly connects peace to addressing "racial capitalism," which he defines as a system where racial oppression is used to extract economic value.<sup>1</sup>

Kisling highlights the critical importance of supporting **Black liberation movements**, exemplified by his participation in peace vigils while holding a Black Lives Matter sign.<sup>1</sup> His involvement with

**Des Moines Mutual Aid** includes practical initiatives such as organizing a bail fund and partnering with the Des Moines Black Liberation Movement for rent relief, directly addressing economic and carceral injustices faced by Black communities.<sup>1</sup> The burning of the

**Black Children's Memorial** in Des Moines is cited as a stark reminder of ongoing racial injustice and the need for continued vigilance and action.<sup>1</sup> Kisling notes a significant shift in justice work by White Friends, emphasizing the necessity of stepping back and following the leadership of oppressed communities in their struggle for liberation.<sup>1</sup> This approach reflects a deeper understanding of allyship and the need to center marginalized voices in the pursuit of justice.<sup>1</sup> The Friends

Committee on National Legislation, an organization Kisling is involved with, also actively works on "Addressing Patterns of Racial Wounding and Racial Justice in Quaker Communities," indicating a commitment to internal transformation within faith communities as part of broader racial justice efforts.<sup>1</sup>

## **B. Indigenous Rights and LANDBACK**

The **LANDBACK movement** stands as a central and frequently updated theme in Kisling's work, representing a crucial component of his peace philosophy.<sup>1</sup> He dedicates an entire website, [landbackfriends.com](http://landbackfriends.com), to learning about and sharing concepts related to Indigenous land rights and sovereignty.<sup>1</sup> His writings extensively explore the profound relationship between the LANDBACK movement and Quaker faith, grappling with the historical complexities and moral imperatives involved.<sup>1</sup>

Kisling consistently emphasizes the necessity of **truth and reconciliation** regarding historical injustices perpetrated against Indigenous peoples, particularly the devastating legacy of Indian boarding schools and forced assimilation policies.<sup>1</sup> He critically examines how Quakers, despite their peace testimony, participated in these institutions, acknowledging it as a clear manifestation of white supremacy and dominance. He grapples with the difficult question of how the Spirit could have guided Friends to participate in actions that caused immense suffering to Native communities. This self-reflection is vital for genuine reconciliation.<sup>1</sup> The ongoing struggle for Indigenous rights and land protection is vividly highlighted through the

**Wet'suwet'en conflict** against the Coastal GasLink pipeline, which Kisling frames as a critical fight for land and water rights.<sup>1</sup> He advocates for non-Native white settlers to acknowledge the benefits derived from colonization and to voluntarily contribute to the

**Honor Native Land Fund**, which aims to support Indigenous land rematriation and the reclamation of Indigenous lifeways.<sup>1</sup> He also mentions the "

**Decolonial Repair Network**," a group of non-Native individuals, communities, and organizations in the Midwest working to repair the harms of colonization and serve as allies to Indigenous people.<sup>1</sup> The "

"Fourth of He Lies" article on landbackfriends.com further deconstructs historical inaccuracies associated with the Fourth of July, particularly concerning the taking of Indigenous lands and the slave trade, and calls for the removal of monuments to white supremacy in Iowa.<sup>1</sup>

### C. Environmental Stewardship

The theme of "**Mother Earth**" permeates Kisling's writings, indicating a profound environmental and ecological focus that connects faith, mutual aid, and care for the planet.<sup>1</sup> He consistently links the LANDBACK movement to broader environmental issues, particularly those concerning water and conservation.<sup>1</sup> His discussions include educating youth about soil and conservation, promoting regenerative farming practices, and advocating for erosion control structures, demonstrating a practical engagement with ecological health.<sup>1</sup>

Kisling is a vocal opponent of the construction of **CO2 pipelines in Iowa**, viewing them as "greenwashed projects" designed to extend the life of the fossil fuel industry. He argues that these projects prioritize corporate profit over the well-being of people, land, and water, posing a direct threat to environmental peace.<sup>1</sup> He highlights the devastating impacts of

**climate change** and emphasizes the urgent need for communities to prepare for environmental disasters and the inevitable arrival of **climate refugees**.<sup>1</sup> His involvement with the Friends Committee on National Legislation further solidifies his commitment to environmental stewardship, as the organization actively lobbies Congress for policies that protect the environment.<sup>1</sup> His decision to live without a personal automobile for environmental reasons<sup>1</sup> and his reliance on bicycling<sup>1</sup> serve as tangible demonstrations of his commitment to environmental nonviolence.

### Peace as Restorative Justice and Decolonization

Kisling explicitly links peace to "truth and reconciliation" regarding Indigenous injustices and the LANDBACK movement.<sup>1</sup> His work consistently argues that genuine peace requires a deep reckoning with historical harms, particularly the legacy of

settler-colonialism and forced assimilation.<sup>1</sup> His critique of Quaker complicity in boarding schools further demonstrates a commitment to confronting uncomfortable truths within one's own community.<sup>1</sup> This approach extends beyond merely stopping current conflicts to actively repairing historical harms, broadening the concept of peace to include restorative justice, suggesting that ongoing societal conflict and instability are direct consequences of unaddressed historical injustices.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, true peace necessitates a process of decolonization, land rematriation, and systemic repair, making it a proactive, rather than merely reactive, endeavor. The absence of justice, in this framework, is understood as a form of ongoing violence.<sup>1</sup>

Kisling's emphasis on "truth and reconciliation" and "decolonization" as integral to peace, particularly concerning Indigenous rights and Quaker complicity, reveals a profound understanding that peace is not merely the absence of *future* conflict but the active repair of *past* and *ongoing* harms. This reframes peace as a process of historical accountability and systemic healing. By explicitly linking these concepts to peace, Kisling argues that peace cannot exist while historical injustices remain unaddressed and un-repaired. The definition of "absence of justice" as "ongoing violence" moves beyond a forward-looking definition of peace (stopping future wars) to a backward-looking and present-day definition (repairing past harms, dismantling ongoing systemic violence). This redefines peace as a deeply restorative and transformative process, not just a state of non-conflict. It implies that true peace work must confront uncomfortable historical truths and actively engage in systemic repair.

### **Environmental Peace as a Prerequisite for Human Peace**

Kisling consistently connects "Mother Earth" and environmental issues to his broader peace advocacy.<sup>1</sup> His strong opposition to pipelines and his focus on ecological collapse are not treated as separate concerns but as integral components of his vision for peace.<sup>1</sup> This highlights an ecological dimension of peace: the understanding that human well-being and the absence of conflict are inextricably linked to the health and integrity of the planet.<sup>1</sup> Environmental degradation is viewed as a form of violence against the Earth and, by extension, against humanity, leading to resource conflicts, displacement (climate refugees), and systemic instability.<sup>1</sup> Achieving peace, therefore, requires living in "right relationship" with the natural world, a concept

deeply rooted in Indigenous perspectives and Quaker stewardship.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Evolution of White Allyship in Justice Work**

As a White Quaker, Kisling openly discusses the crucial need for "White Friends" to "step back" and "follow the leadership of oppressed communities" in their justice work.<sup>1</sup> His candid critique of Quaker involvement in Indian boarding schools further exemplifies this commitment to self-reflection and accountability.<sup>1</sup> This demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of allyship within social justice movements, moving beyond mere support to an active de-centering of dominant perspectives.<sup>1</sup> He suggests that for peace and justice work to be truly effective, it requires humility, self-critique, and a willingness to dismantle internal and external structures of white supremacy, even within faith communities.<sup>1</sup> This is presented as a crucial step towards authentic reconciliation and building equitable relationships based on mutual respect rather than historical power dynamics.<sup>1</sup>

Table 2 illustrates how Jeff Kisling's concept of peace extends beyond direct anti-war efforts to encompass a wide range of social and environmental justice issues, demonstrating the interconnectedness of his advocacy. The "Primary Justice Theme" and "Connection to Peace" columns are particularly valuable. They explicitly demonstrate how Kisling draws direct links between seemingly disparate social and environmental issues (e.g., Indigenous rights, racial justice, climate change) and his overarching concept of peace. This visually reinforces the holistic and interconnected nature of his peace philosophy, showing how peace is cultivated through diverse justice efforts.

**Table 2: Articles on Peace through Social & Environmental Justice**

| Article Title                      | Publication Date | Author       | Summary of Content  | Primary Justice Theme                                    | Connection to Peace   | Source URL   |
|------------------------------------|------------------|--------------|---|--|---|--|
| "December 2021 – LANDBACK Friends" | December 2021    | Jeff Kisling | Advocates for Mutual Aid as a justice framework; emphasizes following leadership of oppressed communities; calls for repair of historical injustices against Indigenous peoples; opposes CO2 pipelines in Iowa; highlights Wet'suwet'en resistance. | Indigenous Rights, Environmental Justice, Racial Justice | Peace built through decolonization, environmental protection, and equitable community structures.   | <a href="https://landbackfriends.com/2021/12/">https://landbackfriends.com/2021/12/</a> <sup>1</sup> |
| "October 2021 – LANDBACK Friends"  | October 2021     | Jeff Kisling | Stresses truth and reconciliation for Indian boarding schools; critiques Quaker complicity in forced assimilation; highlights Wet'suwet'en struggle against pipeline; discusses Mutual Aid as alternative to capitalism.                            | Indigenous Rights, Colonialism, Environmental Justice    | Peace requires acknowledging and repairing historical injustices, resisting ongoing colonial violence, and building alternative economic systems. | <a href="https://landbackfriends.com/202110/">https://landbackfriends.com/202110/</a> <sup>1</sup>   |
| "Fourth of                         | July 4, 2024     | Jeff Kisling | Discusses   | Indigenous   | Peace   | <a href="https://landb">https://landb</a>  |

|   |               |              |  |                                       |  |  |
|---|---------------|--------------|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| He Lies"  | (re-post)     |              | historical inaccuracies and injustices of July 4th concerning Indigenous lands and slave trade; highlights demand for removal of whitewashed monuments to white supremacy. | Rights, Racial Justice                | necessitates confronting historical truths, dismantling symbols of oppression, and achieving genuine reconciliation.             | <a href="https://landbackfriends.com/blog/">ackfriends.com/blog/</a> <sup>1</sup>              |
| ""In the Name of God"                               | May 29, 2024  | Jeff Kisling | Features presentations on sexual abuse and hidden legacy of Native American boarding schools.  | Indigenous Rights, Historical Justice | Peace requires truth-telling, accountability for past harms, and healing for affected communities.                               | <a href="https://landbackfriends.com/blog/">https://landbackfriends.com/blog/</a> <sup>1</sup> |
| ""Iowa SWCS Summer Meeting"                         | May 29, 2024  | Jeff Kisling | Discusses educating youth on soil and conservation, regenerative farming, and erosion control.   | Environmental Justice                 | Peace includes stewardship of Mother Earth, ensuring ecological health for future generations and preventing resource conflicts. | <a href="https://landbackfriends.com/blog/">https://landbackfriends.com/blog/</a> <sup>1</sup> |
| ""Decolonial Repair Network launch" / April 3, 2024 | April 4, 2024 | Jeff Kisling | Discusses launch of Decolonial Repair Network.   | Indigenous Rights, Decolonization     | Peace is achieved through collaborative efforts to repair historical harms and build equitable relationships.                    | <a href="https://landbackfriends.com/blog/">https://landbackfriends.com/blog/</a> <sup>1</sup> |

### **III. Mutual Aid and Community Building as Foundations for Peace**

For Jeff Kisling, mutual aid is not just a response to immediate needs but a foundational strategy for building peace through systemic change and resilient communities. He views it as a revolutionary framework that challenges traditional hierarchies and offers a viable alternative to oppressive systems.

#### **The Philosophy of Mutual Aid**

Kisling positions mutual aid as a revolutionary framework for peace.<sup>1</sup> He distinguishes mutual aid from charity, emphasizing collaborative community work where everyone participates without hierarchical distinctions. It is not "us" helping "them," but rather "all of us being in these things together".<sup>1</sup> Kisling argues that mutual aid fosters a horizontal hierarchy where every individual has a voice, actively working to prevent the development of vertical power structures. He notes that most people have never experienced a meeting without a boss or authority figure with decision-making power.<sup>1</sup>

He views mutual aid as a viable alternative to capitalism, focusing on meeting survival needs and building genuine community without reliance on monetary systems.<sup>1</sup> He firmly believes capitalism is an unjust, failing, and irreparable system built on "stolen bodies on stolen land for the benefit of a few".<sup>1</sup> Kisling considers mutual aid both a "tool of survival" in chaotic times (environmental catastrophe, pandemics, economic, political, and social collapse) and a "tool of revolution" capable of replacing failing systems.<sup>1</sup> He connects mutual aid to addressing "spiritual poverty" by providing spiritual support and fostering connection within communities.<sup>1</sup> He adopts Dean Spade's three key elements of mutual aid: 1) working to meet survival needs and building shared understanding about why people do not have what they need; 2) mobilizing people, expanding solidarity, and building movements; and 3) being participatory, solving problems through collective action rather than waiting for saviors.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Practical Applications and Examples of Mutual Aid in Action**

Kisling's commitment to mutual aid is demonstrated through his direct involvement and detailed accounts of its practical applications.<sup>1</sup> He highlights

**Des Moines Mutual Aid (DMMA)**'s active participation in anti-war protests (e.g., against a potential Iran war).<sup>1</sup> He is personally involved in DMMA's weekly

**food giveaways**, which continue the legacy of the Black Panthers' free school breakfast program. He emphasizes the self-service aspect, the use of donated food, the lack of hierarchy, the diversity of participants, and the joyful nature of the work.<sup>1</sup> DMMA has organized a

**bail fund** that has successfully helped numerous protesters get out of jail.<sup>1</sup> DMMA partners with the Des Moines Black Liberation Movement for

**rent relief** initiatives, directly addressing economic and carceral injustices.<sup>1</sup> DMMA actively works with

**houseless camps**, providing food and other assistance.<sup>1</sup> He also cites examples like the AFSC Iowa Immigrant Rights program's supply drive for people facing deportation and the Iowa Immigrant Community Fund's support for immigrant meatpackers and farmworkers.<sup>1</sup>

### **Mutual Aid as a Tool for Systemic Change and Building Resilient Communities**

For Kisling, mutual aid is a transformative force, not merely a coping mechanism, and a tool for systemic change and building resilient communities.<sup>1</sup> He considers it both a "tool of survival" and a "tool of revolution," capable of replacing systems that fail communities.<sup>1</sup> This perspective is central to his evolving understanding of the anti-war movement, which he suggests has "morphed into building resilient, Mutual Aid communities".<sup>1</sup> He believes that working locally through such structures is the most effective action in the face of overwhelming global conflicts.<sup>1</sup>

By fostering community self-sufficiency and collective problem-solving, mutual aid offers a pathway to disengage from and ultimately dismantle oppressive systems like colonial capitalism and white supremacy.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Kisling connects mutual aid to

addressing the "spiritual poverty" prevalent in many communities, emphasizing its role in providing spiritual support for those suffering the consequences of environmental and other disasters.<sup>1</sup> This holistic view positions mutual aid as a comprehensive strategy for building lasting peace by addressing both material and spiritual needs.

### **Mutual Aid as a Form of Prefigurative Peacebuilding**

Kisling views mutual aid as a form of prefigurative peacebuilding, highlighting its transformative potential beyond merely addressing immediate needs.<sup>1</sup> He describes mutual aid as a "tool of revolution" and a means to "replace the systems that fail us," emphasizing its capacity to construct alternative systems.<sup>1</sup> By explicitly contrasting mutual aid with charity and stressing its horizontal, non-hierarchical structure, Kisling positions it as a method for building the desired world within the existing societal framework.<sup>1</sup> This perspective suggests that mutual aid is a practical embodiment of peace. It functions as a form of prefigurative politics by actively fostering solidarity, meeting needs outside of conventional economic structures, and empowering communities. In doing so, mutual aid directly counters the conditions that often lead to conflict, such as scarcity, inequality, and disempowerment. This approach represents a nonviolent, constructive method for systemic change, demonstrating that peace is built through cooperative relationships and shared responsibility, rather than solely through top-down policy or military intervention.<sup>1</sup>

### **Local Action as a Global Peace Strategy**

Kisling explicitly states that "working locally is the only effective action in the face of global conflict" and that the anti-war movement has strategically shifted its focus to "building resilient, Mutual Aid communities".<sup>1</sup> This emphasis on the "think globally, act locally" principle suggests a strategic adaptation in peace advocacy.<sup>1</sup> Recognizing the overwhelming scale of global conflicts and the inherent limitations of traditional anti-war movements, Kisling advocates for concentrating energy on local community resilience and systemic justice.<sup>1</sup> The underlying idea is that by cultivating strong,

equitable, and self-sufficient communities, one effectively creates pockets of peace and resistance that can collectively weaken the foundations of global conflict and empire.<sup>1</sup> This approach implies a bottom-up strategy for peace, prioritizing practical, tangible improvements in people's lives over abstract political negotiations or large-scale, often ineffective, protests.<sup>1</sup>

## **IV. Quaker Principles and the Spiritual Grounding of Peace**

The Quaker faith serves as a foundational and continuous wellspring for Jeff Kisling's peace advocacy, providing both the spiritual grounding and the practical framework for his life's work. His writings consistently demonstrate how core Quaker principles translate into active engagement with the world's most pressing injustices.

### **The Inner Light and Spiritual Discernment as Guiding Forces in Activism**

Kisling's writings extensively discuss the Inner Light and spiritual discernment as guiding forces in activism, particularly within the context of his Quaker beliefs and his experiences with draft resistance and the Friends Volunteer Service Mission (VSM).<sup>1</sup> He emphasizes that the Inner Light, or the will of God, is the fundamental basis for Quakerism and Christianity, and it is through this inner guidance that individuals discern and respond to God's will.<sup>1</sup> He believes that true godliness enables individuals to live better in the world and actively work to improve it. This conviction leads him to seek and obey the Inner Light, even when it means going against societal norms or personal comfort.<sup>1</sup>

Kisling's personal journey with draft resistance highlights the struggle and importance of spiritual discernment. He describes agonizing over the decision of whether to register for the draft or become a non-registrant, constantly reading, thinking, talking, and seeking guidance from Quaker meetings.<sup>1</sup> He notes that while rational arguments for different positions exist, ultimately, the decision must come from a "feeling, a leading of the spirit".<sup>1</sup> He defines faith as the willingness to follow these leadings even before the reasons for the action become clear.<sup>1</sup> This process of discernment is not always easy; he acknowledges that God's will can be difficult to discern amidst influences like people, law, and self-interest. However, he believes that by shedding worldliness and acting on the spirit of God, the reasons will eventually reveal themselves.<sup>1</sup> The Friends Volunteer Service Mission (VSM) was a direct manifestation of Kisling's desire to translate his beliefs into action. He saw VSM as an opportunity for his actions to complement his convictions, moving beyond mere intellectual understanding to practical engagement with social problems.<sup>1</sup> His initial approach to VSM was to "let God be shown in everyday life" and to be

uncompromising in his beliefs without hurting others, focusing on his own life rather than judging others.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Quaker Peace Testimony and its Contemporary Relevance**

Jeff Kisling's writings extensively explore the Quaker Peace Testimony and its contemporary relevance, drawing from his personal experiences with draft resistance during the Vietnam War era and his ongoing commitment to nonviolence and social justice.<sup>1</sup> He firmly believes that war is fundamentally at odds with Christian teachings, stating, "I cannot reconcile the way of war with the way of Christ".<sup>1</sup> For Kisling, the Peace Testimony extends beyond simply refusing to bear arms to a refusal to be part of the military institution itself, emphasizing that cooperating with the draft, even as a recognized conscientious objector, makes one "part of the power which forces our brothers into the military and into war".<sup>1</sup> This conviction led him to eventually return his draft cards, despite personal and familial difficulties.<sup>1</sup>

Kisling emphasizes that actions must be consistent with beliefs, quoting the Epistle to Friends, "It matters little what men say they believe when their actions are inconsistent with their words. Thus we Friends may say that all war is wrong, but as long as Friends continue to collaborate in a system that forces men into war, our Peace Testimony will fail to speak to mankind".<sup>1</sup> He strives to model his beliefs through his life, such as his decision to live without a car as a form of environmental witness.<sup>1</sup> He interprets "Resist not evil" not as passive acceptance, but as actively working for good rather than setting oneself against those who wrong you, believing that change comes from respecting, understanding, and learning from others.<sup>1</sup> He also believes that human consciousness intuitively knows that killing each other is wrong, and that "human consciousness is becoming more and more aware of the kinship of all humankind".<sup>1</sup>

### **The Role of Quaker Meetings and Committees in Fostering Peace and Justice**

Jeff Kisling's writings highlight the significant role of Quaker Meetings and Committees in fostering peace and justice, both through individual spiritual guidance

and collective action.<sup>1</sup> Quaker commitment to the spiritual church is paramount, involving the search for and obedience to the inner light—the will of God.<sup>1</sup> This spiritual foundation leads to Christian service, where individuals are shown how to use their abilities to perform God's will, even in the face of anxieties or persecution.<sup>1</sup> He notes that the will of God is often revealed in a series of small steps, and that faith involves following these leadings even before the reasons become clear.<sup>1</sup>

Quakerism, for Kisling, permeates every part of life, encouraging individuals to live faithfully in every moment and put their faith into action.<sup>1</sup> He believes that a life of example, showing the possibilities and fruits of a life lived in love and concern for others, is the only way to overcome evil.<sup>1</sup> This is exemplified in his own draft resistance, where he felt compelled to act on his convictions despite personal cost and family disapproval.<sup>1</sup> He also highlights the importance of individual witness, such as his continued bicycling as a Quaker witness against fossil fuels.<sup>1</sup>

Quaker Meetings provide a source of strength and guidance, where individuals can gather in silence to discern the will of God and contribute to the spirit of the meeting.<sup>1</sup> Kisling found immense strength and support from his Quaker community during his difficult draft decision, with friends and elders offering loving discussion and encouragement.<sup>1</sup> Quaker Committees, such as the Peace Committee of Bear Creek Monthly Meeting, actively support individuals taking courageous stands for peace.<sup>1</sup> The Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) is mentioned as a faith lobby working on legislative issues, and Kisling himself was involved in lobbying with FCNL staff.<sup>1</sup> He also participated in the Indiana Friends Committee on Legislation (IFCL), which aimed to express the Spirit of Christ and relate Christian faith and Quaker testimonies to state government decisions.<sup>1</sup> Quakers historically have sought to promote relationships among people that allow individuals to develop fully, and have translated their religious concerns into social and political involvement.<sup>1</sup> Kisling's involvement with the Friends Volunteer Service Mission (VSM) is a prime example of this, where he sought to address the spiritual and material needs of an inner-city community.<sup>1</sup> He believed that the VSM embodied the basics of Quakerism by dealing with people as whole, unique individuals and focusing on genuine interest and love rather than budgets or schedules.<sup>1</sup>

## The Experiential and Communal Nature of Quaker Peace

Jeff Kisling's writings extensively detail his understanding and experience of Quaker peace, emphasizing its experiential and communal nature.<sup>1</sup> His journey towards Quaker peace is deeply personal and rooted in direct experience rather than purely intellectual reasoning. He describes his initial struggle with the draft decision as a "crisis" that writing in his journal helped to clarify his thoughts.<sup>1</sup> This internal wrestling, rather than external influence, was crucial to his conviction. He notes that while he initially thought reasoning could discern God's will, he later became "more inclined to think in terms of the 'leading of the spirit'".<sup>1</sup> He believes that faith is the "willingness to follow leadings before the reasons for the action become clear".<sup>1</sup> This highlights a reliance on an inner spiritual guidance that transcends logical explanation.

His decision to refuse cooperation with the Selective Service System, despite parental disapproval and the risk of imprisonment, was a profound act of following his conscience. He describes this as a "tremendous growth and change in mind and spirit," and a "real action I have taken as a result of my trust in God".<sup>1</sup> He acknowledges that he "felt no sudden, overwhelming 'calling'" to the Volunteer Service Mission (VSM), but rather that "God's will is often revealed to us in a series of small steps".<sup>1</sup> This incremental revelation underscores the experiential and unfolding nature of his spiritual path. He also connects his personal experiences to broader Quaker principles. For instance, he reflects on George Fox's insight that "the mark of a true believer, Christian, is a changed life," and sees his own struggle as wrestling with this concept.<sup>1</sup> His commitment to living without a car, a "strong and persistent spiritual leading," is another example of his faith translating into daily life, even if he didn't immediately see its influence on others.<sup>1</sup>

While deeply personal, Kisling's experience of Quaker peace is also profoundly communal. The Scattergood Friends School, a Quaker boarding school, played a significant role in shaping his understanding. He describes it as "not just a school, it was a Quaker community on a working farm," where Quakerism was "implanted at the core of my being".<sup>1</sup> The teachers and students instilled ideas through shared work, meals, and play, drawing him "deeply into Quakerism".<sup>1</sup> The "Meeting for worship" is consistently presented as a vital communal space for discernment and support. He attended meetings regularly, finding them a source of strength and guidance.<sup>1</sup> When he faced the decision to turn in his draft card, he returned to Earlham College to "visit friends and to get support before going ahead with his decision".<sup>1</sup> During a Meeting

for Worship, his friends and mentors, including Al Inglis, Margaret Taylor, Becky Gibson, and Dav Nagle, spoke in support of his courageous stand, providing him with "such strength as I could find nowhere elsewhere".<sup>1</sup> This collective affirmation and shared spiritual seeking were crucial to his ability to act on his convictions.

### **Quakerism as a Catalyst for Radical Social Transformation**

Jeff Kisling's perspective on Quakerism as a catalyst for radical social transformation is deeply rooted in his personal experiences and reflections.<sup>1</sup> He views Quakerism not merely as a set of beliefs, but as a dynamic force that compels individuals to live out their convictions in action, leading to profound personal and societal change.<sup>1</sup> For Kisling, the foundation of Quakerism and Christianity is the "experience of knowing God's will in one's heart".<sup>1</sup> He emphasizes that Quakers believe "there is that of God in everyone, that everyone has the ability to communicate with that of God within them, and the responsibility to respond to that of God in others".<sup>1</sup> This "Inner Light" is the "driving purpose in a Quaker's life; to discern and respond to the will of God".<sup>1</sup> This spiritual guidance is paramount, even when it conflicts with societal norms or personal desires.<sup>1</sup>

Kisling stresses that a "transition of beliefs into action is essential".<sup>1</sup> He believes that "faith is the willingness to follow leadings before the reasons for the action become clear".<sup>1</sup> This means actively engaging with the world and putting one's convictions to the test, rather than merely holding them intellectually.<sup>1</sup> His commitment to simplicity is evident in his choice to live without a car, which he sees as a "Quaker witness" and a way to understand simplicity in a "technologically complex world".<sup>1</sup> He believes that "property did become much less important to me" through his experiences.<sup>1</sup> This detachment from materialism allows for a greater focus on human relationships and spiritual growth.<sup>1</sup> A central theme is the importance of "love our neighbor as ourselves".<sup>1</sup> Kisling believes that "the real work that needs to be done today is to care for our neighbors; people, individuals. To love, to care for, to help, to need, to want real, living, specific persons".<sup>1</sup> This one-to-one interaction, driven by genuine interest and care, is seen as the most effective way to bring about change.<sup>1</sup> Kisling advocates for reconciliation, recognizing "how much alike we all are, rather than purposely seeking and promoting our differences".<sup>1</sup> He believes that "one of our most important tasks is to spread this realization of oneness as far and as fast as possible".<sup>1</sup> This

perspective extends to those who oppose one, suggesting that understanding and learning from them can lead to moving "nearer the truth".<sup>1</sup>

## **V. Systemic Critique: Empire, Capitalism, and the Roots of Conflict**

Jeff Kisling's peace philosophy is deeply rooted in a penetrating critique of global power structures, which he identifies as fundamental drivers of violence and injustice. He argues that true and lasting peace necessitates the dismantling of deeply entrenched systems of empire and capitalism.

### **Analysis of the "Corrupted Political/Economic System" and Class Warfare**

Kisling argues that the current political and economic system is "too corrupted and unresponsive for real change to occur from within".<sup>1</sup> He believes that society is engaged in a pervasive class warfare, where the wealthy are systematically winning, leading to an oppressive situation where vast numbers of people lack basic necessities.<sup>1</sup> Kisling explicitly states that "Poverty is a man-made condition" and that "Our system is creating poverty," emphasizing the structural nature of economic injustice.<sup>1</sup> He references Lee Camp's "Four Layers of Reality" to illustrate how superficial societal discussions often are, suggesting that mainstream media and political discourse frequently avoid deeper analyses of the economic and political systems that perpetuate these problems.<sup>1</sup> This critique positions economic injustice not as an unfortunate byproduct, but as a direct form of violence that undermines peace.<sup>1</sup> He highlights the failure of the capitalist economic system, leading to millions losing access to food, water, healthcare, education, and shelter.<sup>1</sup> He observes that the political establishment has "totally disregard[ed] these crises" and that the system is inherently designed to benefit a few.<sup>1</sup>

### **Critique of Militarism and Materialism as Drivers of Injustice**

Jeff Kisling views militarism and materialism as self-reinforcing forces that are "out of control" and actively contribute to injustice.<sup>1</sup> He highlights the secrecy surrounding military spending, contrasting it with the widespread poverty and homelessness, and the efforts by the wealthy to cut social safety net programs.<sup>1</sup> This contrast, for Kisling,

underscores a misallocation of resources that prioritizes violence and accumulation over human well-being.<sup>1</sup> He further argues that the wealthy are actively pushing to militarize police forces to suppress social unrest, citing events like Ferguson as examples of this trend.<sup>1</sup> This suggests a domestic application of imperial logic, where state power is used to maintain existing hierarchies through force.<sup>1</sup> Kisling's critique also extends to international funding, as he condemns the funneling of weapons and billions of dollars to sustain Israel's occupation and alleged genocide, seeing it as a direct consequence of unchecked militarism and imperial ambition.<sup>1</sup> He explicitly links these issues to what he calls the "triple threats" that Martin Luther King, Jr. warned against: racism, militarism, and materialism.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Call for Nonviolent Revolution and Withdrawal of Consent from Oppressive Systems**

Jeff Kisling advocates for a nonviolent revolution as a necessary path to achieve genuine peace, arguing that the current political and economic system is "too corrupted and unresponsive for real change to occur from within".<sup>1</sup> He believes that society is engaged in a pervasive class warfare where the wealthy are systematically winning, leading to widespread poverty, which he asserts is a "man-made condition" created by the existing system.<sup>1</sup>

His call for nonviolent revolution is rooted in the idea of "withdrawing consent" from the prevailing system, operating under the conviction that its persistence relies entirely on the populace's tacit or explicit agreement.<sup>1</sup> He views mutual aid not just as a means of survival but as a "tool of revolution" capable of replacing failing systems and building a more just society from the ground up.<sup>1</sup> This vision emphasizes the power of collective, principled action to dismantle oppressive structures.<sup>1</sup> He emphasizes that mutual aid is about "furthering the replacing of the state and destroying western civilization and any remnants of it for future generations," clarifying that this is a nonviolent, peaceful revolution. The more people take care of each other, the less power oppressive systems have.<sup>1</sup>

### **Systemic Violence as the Antithesis of Peace**

Jeff Kisling's understanding of peace extends beyond the mere absence of war to encompass a comprehensive critique of systemic violence. He argues that true peace is antithetical to pervasive issues such as "man-made poverty," racial capitalism, and environmental destruction.<sup>1</sup> Kisling explicitly links these problems to what he calls the "corrupted political/economic system".<sup>1</sup> In this framework, peace is not simply the absence of bombs, but rather the absence of systemic violence. He views poverty, racial injustice, and ecological collapse as ongoing forms of violence perpetrated by dominant systems like capitalism and empire.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, achieving true peace, according to Kisling, necessitates a fundamental dismantling and transformation of these oppressive structures, rather than merely mitigating their symptoms.<sup>1</sup> This comprehensive understanding underpins his call for "nonviolent revolution" as a necessary path to peace, as it directly addresses the root causes of conflict embedded within societal structures.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Interconnectedness of Global and Domestic Imperialism**

Jeff Kisling's analysis reveals a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of global and domestic forms of oppression.<sup>1</sup> He explicitly connects the "massacre in Gaza" to historical injustices such as "European colonization, the enslavement of Africans, and the ongoing occupation of Indigenous lands".<sup>1</sup> While specific content was inaccessible, the title "US Foreign and Domestic Imperialism" from [unflinching.blog](#) further suggests this critical linkage.<sup>1</sup> His critique of militarism and the militarization of police forces reinforces the idea that the mechanisms of control and violence used abroad (imperialism, war) are mirrored and reinforced by domestic policies (racial injustice, police militarization, economic exploitation).<sup>1</sup> This suggests that a holistic peace strategy must address both foreign policy and internal social structures, recognizing them as two sides of the same imperial coin.<sup>1</sup> Peace abroad, in this view, cannot be achieved without peace and justice at home, and vice-versa, as the same exploitative logics often underpin both.<sup>1</sup> He argues that the same tactics employed by the US against people in other countries—such as dismantling and privatizing essential services, economic warfare, and violence—are now being used against people within the US.<sup>1</sup>

## **VI. Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice**

While specific detailed content on conflict resolution as a distinct theme is limited in the provided material, Jeff Kisling's approach can be inferred from his broader themes of peace, non-violence, and justice. His philosophy prioritizes spiritual grounding, community-based solutions, and a deep commitment to addressing the root causes of conflict rather than merely managing symptoms.

### **Discussion of Kisling's Specific Writings on Conflict Resolution (Acknowledging Limited Content)**

The explicit titles of articles such as "Conflict Resolution 1" and "Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings 2" from landbackfriends.com suggest a direct engagement with the topic of conflict resolution.<sup>1</sup> However, detailed content for these specific articles was not accessible within the provided research material.<sup>1</sup> Given the context of landbackfriends.com, it is highly probable that these writings focus on resolving conflicts arising from settler-colonialism, historical injustices, and the ongoing struggles for Indigenous rights.

### **Inferences from Broader Themes**

Jeff Kisling's approach to conflict resolution, while not explicitly detailed in specific articles within the provided material, can be inferred from his broader themes of peace, non-violence, and justice. His philosophy prioritizes spiritual grounding, community-based solutions, and a deep commitment to addressing the root causes of conflict rather than merely managing symptoms.<sup>1</sup>

**Truth, Reconciliation, and Systemic Repair:** Kisling views conflict resolution as inherently tied to addressing deep-seated historical harms. This is evident in his consistent emphasis on "truth and reconciliation" regarding injustices perpetrated against Indigenous peoples, particularly the legacy of Indian boarding schools and forced assimilation policies.<sup>1</sup> He critically examines Quaker complicity in these

institutions, acknowledging it as a manifestation of white supremacy and dominance, and grapples with how the Spirit could have guided Friends to participate in actions that caused immense suffering. This self-reflection is crucial for genuine reconciliation and suggests that true resolution involves confronting uncomfortable truths within one's own community.<sup>1</sup> His approach extends beyond merely stopping current conflicts to actively repairing historical harms, broadening the concept of peace to include restorative justice. This implies that ongoing societal conflict and instability are direct consequences of unaddressed historical injustices, and therefore, true peace necessitates a process of decolonization, land rematriation, and systemic repair. The absence of justice, in this framework, is understood as a form of ongoing violence.<sup>1</sup>

**Overcoming Evil by Doing Good (Non-Adversarial Approach):** A robust theoretical foundation for Kisling's approach to conflict is his interpretation of the biblical phrase "Resist not evil" as "Do not set yourself against one who wrongs you".<sup>1</sup> He advocates for overcoming evil by doing good and living a life of example. He believed that opposing others leads to focusing on their weaknesses, whereas the true task is to foster understanding and move closer to truth.<sup>1</sup> This principle implies that true resolution involves seeking common ground and fostering empathy, even with those perceived as adversaries, suggesting a transformative rather than adversarial method of engagement.<sup>1</sup>

**Community-Based Solutions and Mutual Aid:** The pervasive emphasis on Mutual Aid and community building throughout Kisling's work strongly suggests a practical, grassroots approach to resolving conflicts.<sup>1</sup> He views mutual aid as a "tool of survival" and a "tool of revolution," capable of replacing systems that fail communities.<sup>1</sup> By fostering solidarity, addressing underlying community needs, and empowering individuals through horizontal structures, mutual aid implicitly provides mechanisms for de-escalation and collective problem-solving.<sup>1</sup> This approach represents a nonviolent, constructive method for systemic change, demonstrating that peace is built through cooperative relationships and shared responsibility, rather than solely through top-down policy or military intervention.<sup>1</sup> He explicitly states that "working locally is the only effective action in the face of global conflict" and that the anti-war movement has strategically shifted its focus to "building resilient, Mutual Aid communities".<sup>1</sup> This emphasis on local action suggests a strategic adaptation in peace advocacy, where cultivating strong, equitable, and self-sufficient communities creates pockets of peace and resistance that can collectively weaken the foundations of global conflict and empire.<sup>1</sup>

**Spiritual Grounding and Discernment:** Kisling's deeply held Quaker beliefs and a "deep spiritual conviction against war and conscription" guide his life-altering choices and inform his approach to conflict.<sup>1</sup> He emphasizes that discerning God's will is often a process of "small steps," requiring diligent attention to the "Inner Light," which represents the direct presence of God within each individual.<sup>1</sup> This spiritual grounding provides the moral clarity and fortitude necessary for his unwavering commitment to peace and justice, suggesting that true conflict resolution requires a spiritual and moral reckoning, not just a political agreement.<sup>1</sup>

**Addressing Systemic Roots of Conflict:** Kisling consistently frames specific conflicts and injustices within a broader, penetrating critique of global power structures, arguing that true and lasting peace necessitates the dismantling of deeply entrenched systems of empire and capitalism.<sup>1</sup> He views "man-made poverty," racial capitalism, and environmental destruction as forms of ongoing violence perpetrated by dominant systems.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, achieving true peace necessitates a fundamental dismantling and transformation of these oppressive structures, rather than merely mitigating their symptoms.<sup>1</sup> This comprehensive understanding explains his call for "nonviolent revolution" as a necessary path to peace, as it addresses the root causes of conflict embedded within societal structures.<sup>1</sup> He also connects global conflicts, such as the "massacre in Gaza," to historical injustices like "European colonization, the enslavement of Africans, and the ongoing occupation of Indigenous lands," highlighting the interconnectedness of global and domestic forms of oppression.<sup>1</sup> This implies that a holistic peace strategy must address both foreign policy and internal social structures, recognizing them as two sides of the same imperial coin.<sup>1</sup>

### **Conflict Resolution as a Process of Truth, Reconciliation, and Systemic Repair**

For Kisling, conflict resolution is a process of uncovering truth, acknowledging harm, fostering genuine reconciliation, and ultimately transforming the systemic conditions that create conflict in the first place.<sup>1</sup> This moves beyond traditional diplomatic models to a more holistic, justice-centered framework, aiming for fundamental societal healing.<sup>1</sup>

## Conclusions

Jeff Kisling's extensive body of work presents a comprehensive and deeply integrated philosophy of peace that transcends conventional definitions. His writings reveal that peace is not merely the absence of armed conflict but a dynamic, holistic state cultivated through active engagement with social, environmental, and systemic injustices. This expansive view is consistently demonstrated across his critiques of global conflicts, his personal testimony of non-violence, and his advocacy for transformative social change.

A central theme is the profound connection between individual spiritual conviction and public political action. Kisling's personal journey of conscientious objection during the Vietnam War, guided by the Quaker "Inner Light" and communal support, serves as a powerful example of how deeply held beliefs translate into principled resistance against oppressive systems. This personal commitment is a microcosm of the broader Quaker peace testimony, which he views as a living tradition passed down through generations and continually reinterpreted in contemporary contexts.

Kisling's analysis consistently links direct anti-war efforts to the pursuit of social and environmental justice. He argues that true peace necessitates addressing racial capitalism, dismantling carceral systems, and supporting Black liberation movements. Furthermore, his unwavering focus on Indigenous rights and the LANDBACK movement highlights that peace requires truth, reconciliation, and the active repair of historical harms, particularly the legacy of settler-colonialism. Environmental stewardship is presented not as a separate concern, but as a prerequisite for human peace, emphasizing that ecological degradation is a form of violence against both the Earth and humanity.

The concept of mutual aid emerges as a cornerstone of Kisling's vision for peace. He positions it as a revolutionary framework that challenges hierarchical structures and offers a viable alternative to failing capitalist systems. Mutual aid, through its focus on meeting survival needs, fostering solidarity, and empowering communities, functions as a form of prefigurative peacebuilding—actively constructing the desired world within the existing societal framework. This emphasis on local, grassroots action is seen as the most effective strategy in the face of overwhelming global conflicts.

Ultimately, Kisling's work calls for a nonviolent revolution rooted in the withdrawal of

consent from oppressive systems. He views poverty, militarism, and environmental destruction as manifestations of systemic violence, arguing that genuine peace requires a fundamental dismantling and transformation of these corrupted political and economic structures. His inferred approach to conflict resolution aligns with this comprehensive vision, prioritizing truth-telling, reconciliation for historical harms, and community-based solutions to achieve fundamental societal healing. Kisling's writings thus offer a compelling and integrated framework for understanding and pursuing peace as a holistic, justice-centered, and spiritually grounded endeavor.