

Mother's Day Proclamation

“Arise then, women of this day! Arise, all women who have hearts, whether your baptism be that of water or tears! Say firmly: ‘We will not have great questions decided by irrelevant agencies. Our husbands shall not come to us, reeking with carnage, for caresses and applause. Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn all that we have taught them of charity, mercy and patience. We women of one country will be too tender of those of another to allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs.’”

“From the bosom of the devastated earth, a voice goes up with our own. It says, ‘Disarm, disarm!’ The sword of murder is not the balance of justice. Blood does not wipe out dishonor, nor violence indicate possession. As men have often forsaken the plow and the anvil at the summons of war, let women now leave all that may be left of home for a great and earnest day of counsel. Let them meet first, as women, to bewail and commemorate the dead. Let them solemnly take counsel with each other as to the means whereby the great human family can live in peace, each bearing after his own time the sacred impress, not of Caesar but of God.”

“In the name of womanhood and of humanity, I earnestly ask that a general congress of women without limit of nationality may be appointed and held at some place deemed most convenient and at the earliest period consistent with its objects, to promote the alliance of the different nationalities, the amicable settlement of international questions, the great and general interests of peace.”

Julia Ward Howe, 1870

Mother's Day: A Day of Peace, Nonviolence & Reconciliation

Take a moment to contemplate the real origins of Mother's Day: the belief that women can create peace and justice through nonviolent love and community rooted in humanity rather than in geographical gangs.

The movement to set aside a day for women's peacemaking began with two women: Anna Jarvis and Julia Ward Howe. Jarvis, a West Virginia mother of 11, worked to improve rural sanitation and healthcare before and during the Civil War. When the war ended, she worked to reconcile Union and Confederate families in her state.

Meanwhile, Julia Ward Howe, the author of *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, was touring as a lecturer and witnessed the atrocities committed by both sides during the Civil War. Working with war widows and orphans, Howe was appalled, not only by the fatal casualties of violence, but by the other effects of war: economic devastation in both the North and the South, disease, and physical and mental disability. She devoted herself to building an international community of women creating peaceful resolution to conflicts.

Although neither woman was successful during her lifetime in creating a permanent holiday, both worked tirelessly for the issues of peace and justice among and between people. In 1914, while women were picketing the White House and Congress for the right to vote, Woodrow Wilson declared a national Mother's Day, with pedestalizing sentimental rhetoric that assured mothers a gift, but not a vote or a voice in society's affairs. So today Mother's Day is an \$11 billion dollar gift-day, utterly unrelated to its original purpose—which purpose humanity is more than ever in need of mothers pursuing and accomplishing, since no other grouping of human beings, whether religious or secular, seems to have the will or motivation to pursue it.