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25 Lessons From History

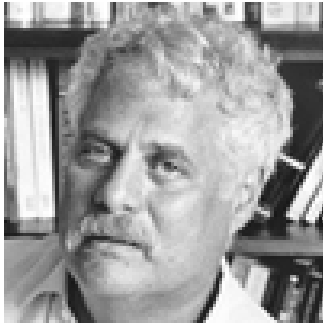
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25 Lessons From History

09.17.2008 | Students, Culture and Society

Incoming University of Dayton students were given homework before they even arrived on campus. Over the summer, nearly 2,000 first-year students were encouraged to read Mark Kurlansky's book, *Non-Violence: The History of a Dangerous Idea*. This month, they'll share their thoughts about the book with the author. Kurlansky, who won the 2007 Dayton Literary Peace Prize for nonfiction, will visit campus Sept. 25-27 for a public lecture and a series of smaller "lecture and learn" forums.

Kurlansky will trace the history of the nonviolence movement and offer 25 lessons he believes can change a war-torn world in a 7:30 p.m. talk on Thursday, Sept. 25, in the Thomas J. Frericks Convocation Center. A question-and-answer session will follow his talk, which is free and open to the public.

On Sunday, Sept. 29, Kurlansky will present the 2008 Dayton Literary Peace Prize for nonfiction in an annual ceremony at the Schuster Center in downtown Dayton. Launched in 2006, the Dayton Literary Peace Prize honors writers whose work uses the power of literature to foster peace, social justice and global understanding.

What message does Kurlansky want to leave with college students, who've come of age after 9/11?

"I want them to take a second look at history," he said. "I want them to understand that nonviolence is an option that works, and violence is an option that doesn't work. I don't have a moral message. I always tell students that they can change the world. It's theirs. They're inheriting it, and they can do with it what they want."

A journalist and author of primarily nonfiction books, Kurlansky points to the U.S. civil rights movement, Mohandas Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence and the Eastern Europeans' resistance to the Soviets as examples of where peaceful tactics work.

In this controversial book, the New York author questions whether war can ever be just and contends that nonviolence can be used against even the most evil regimes in history. Among his 25 lessons are No. 8 — "People who go to war start to resemble their enemies" — and No. 18 — "People motivated by fear do not act well."

The *Los Angeles Times Book Review* said, "Kurlansky draws on humanity's most fundamental ethical traditions to emphasize the preciousness of human life." The Dalai Lama said, "It is my hope and prayer that this book should not only attract attention, but have a profound effect on those who read it."

Kurlansky, who's opposed war for four decades, said that those who advocate nonviolence are looked upon as dangerous people, even though the philosophy of nonviolence is typically marginalized.

"It has been marginalized because it is one of the rare truly revolutionary ideas, an idea that seeks to completely change the nature of society, a threat to the established order."

Kurlansky is known for his books on eclectic topics, such as cod or salt. His 1997 book *Cod: A Biography of the Fish That Changed the World* was an international bestseller translated into more than 15 languages. While on campus, he will also discuss his book *1968: The Year That Rocked the World* at a reception and book signing in the Roesch Library Gallery at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 26.

UD is part of a growing number of universities requiring incoming students to read a common book over the summer. Popular reading choices at other universities and colleges this summer focused on the environment, public service, poverty and social justice issues — from Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma* to Luis Alberto Urrea's *The Devil's Highway: A True Story*.

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