



Gloria Floren and Joseph Chirra

A Sign for Peace

A few years ago, **Joseph Chirra '68 political science** wrote the book *A Life of Riches*, a volume of advice for goal setting and achieving success in life, business, and relationships. He stands behind his advice; one

of his goals as a proud Penn Stater was to help out his alma mater and at the same time have that help further some of the ideals he held dear. He has accomplished both goals.

The Joseph Chirra and Gloria Floren Endowment for Peace will provide an endowment of over \$500,000 to fund academic work in the College that explores the issue of war and conflict and peace-building as a way to enrich the understanding of the importance of peace in today's society.

Joe and Gloria's innovative gift will support three purposes. Primarily, it will provide funds to endow a humanities faculty position related to peace studies. It will also provide scholarship funds for undergraduate students whose work considers studies in peace and conflict, as well as funds to support curricular enhancements required by those students.

One important distinction of their gift, however, is its focus on a humanities-based inquiry and promotion of peace. As Joe says, "There are ways to study peace that involve mathematics and statistical models, predictions and trends, and those methods are very useful. There is a place for them. However, it seems important to us to find ways to communicate and understand peace through the arts."

Both Joe and Gloria were in college during the turbulent years of the mid-sixties, and they were both very involved in helping the civil rights movement and in protest of military policy. At the time, they say they experienced the power that music and other art forms can have to communicate messages and the need for change. "A lot of peace studies programs at other universities do not consider the arts in their work. We feel they are overlooking an important influence."

It is an influence that has acted on both of them all of their lives. After he graduated, Joe worked in advertising in New York for a few years before moving to California in 1971. He earned his J.D. at the University of San Diego and has actively practiced law since. These days, though, he spends most of his time teaching political science and criminal evidence classes at MiraCosta College in Oceanside, California.

Gloria Floren, a professor of English and film at MiraCosta since 1975, talks to students about the effect of the arts on people's experience and understanding of themselves and the world around them. According to Gloria, the humanities and arts provide the means by which people of different cultural backgrounds and ideologies can realize their common humanity, and come into harmony. The theme of her online English class this semester is "Peace, Love, and the Pursuit of Happiness," and several lessons are dedicated to helping students explore the idea of peace across cultural differences. It was Gloria's idea to support an arts and humanities-based peace studies program with the money she and Joe wanted to give to Penn State.

Gloria and Joe are committed to the idea that the arts and humanities are powerful tools in the understanding of peace. Through their generous endowment, the ideals that forged great change in our nation will be preserved, discussed, and perhaps even acted upon by tomorrow's students.

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