

## The Secret Peace: Exposing the Positive Trend of World Events

**Jesse Richards**

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The world as we know it is ending: Terrorist attacks are on the rise, our natural resources are nearly depleted, and the financial institutions protecting our money have been revealed as little better than incompetent. But according to Jesse Richards, this world will end not in an apocalypse, but by ascending to a better society. In *The Secret Peace*, Richards uses well-researched examples to reassure the optimist inside each of us. The world is not a terrible place; in fact, we are closer to peace than ever before.

Our media-saturated society's prevailing pessimism is countered by facts that highlight the positive trends shaping both America and the world. The democratizing effects of wide-spread Internet coverage, growing environmental awareness, and steps taken towards equal rights for women and minorities are just some of Richards' supporting proofs. As he takes on the many sources of anxiety, Richards provides a much-needed breath of fresh air and reveals a calmer picture of the world than is often found in a society that gauges the threat of terrorist attack using a color-coded graph.

There are few surprises in store for readers once the premise is revealed, and many of Richards' proofs are obvious: the formation of the European Union, Mahatma Gandhi's movement for non-violent resistance, and the triumphs of the civil rights era in America are all fairly apparent positive trends.

The author writes in an engaging and conversational tone that is both informative and entertaining. At times, though, his penchant for including timely evidence would be better left unindulged; too much information slows the book's pace. Although his comparison of modern-day accounting professor Tom Robinson to a long-lost ancestor, Genghis Kahn, is entertaining ("I haven't done any conquering, per se," Robinson sheepishly admits) it may distract from the author's argument. We shouldn't need to compare ourselves to ancient civilizations to boost our collective ego, especially when Richards has more immediate examples at the ready. When Richards writes that the recent increase in terrorism is a good trend, for example, readers will naturally be repulsed. But acts of terrorism are preferable, he explains, when we consider the costs of the large-scale wars of the past as an alternative. When he challenges readers this way, using patient, articulate reasoning to dispel what is considered common knowledge, Richards' book really shines.

Richards may be an optimist, but his book is argued from a realist's point of view, and offers not a revelation but a reaffirmation. Over the course of *The Secret Peace*, using statistics and anecdotal evidence from a wide range of sources, Richards provides an antidote to the twenty-four-hour news cycle by revealing a truth so ubiquitous it is easily overlooked: We are moving forward, step-by-step, everyday, towards a better world.

MICHAEL BEEMAN (July 1, 2010)

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