

# Remembering Peter Seeger, 1919–2014

## *Participation*... from Susan Hopkins

Whether it was participating in music... or teaching... or storytelling, Pete Seeger always brought out the best in us as we sang along with the songs we all knew, as we learned from his wisdom, and as we cherished his stories. Because Pete promoted participation, we grew and learned from his inspiration.

I knew Pete from The Children's Music Network where he used to join with us... never to perform, but come together to share the music. Pete participated, he inspired, he led by encouraging others. As our cover quote says, "Participation. That's what is going to save the human race."

Speaking of saving the human race... a passion of Pete's... here's another quote that accompanied a picture of a peace quilt on one of the Syracuse Cultural Workers calendars which reads: "The patchwork quilt is really a symbol of the world which must come: one new design made out of many old designs. We will stitch this world together yet. Don't give up."

Notice the word "we," always the "we," always including everyone. Music wasn't as much fun for Pete if he didn't get us to participate! And, notice also the optimism!!!

When it came to participating as citizens, he told the stories that would inspire, that would unsettle, that would bring people together to make change. "The key to the future of the world," he said in 1994, "is finding the optimistic stories and letting them be known."

We, as teachers, parents and grandparents can use the lessons Pete taught us to make our parts of the world better places for children and families. The role we can all play is to promote participation... to bring about inclusion of all. We can make Pete proud!

## **Craig Simpson remembers:**

There are many things to be said about the life and commitment of Pete Seeger, but one thing I admired about his genius was the way he reacted to one of his darkest hours. In the 1950s he was blacklisted by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and not allowed to appear on television. He turned to singing and teaching young children the joy of singing. Small or large audience, he was always enthusiastic about children's future. He wrote songs and books for children, for example *Abiyoyo*.

## **From Karen Kosko**

In 2006 I took a week-long seminar on the "History of the Hudson River."

Each day we had a chance to meet at key places north of NYC, Yonkers, Tarrytown, Beacon and Hyde Park. Pete Seeger met with our group of teachers for an entire day to talk about the present and future of the River. There were lots of discussions on the state of the pollution and he gave us the history of his work on his boat the Clearwater. <http://www.clearwaterfestival.org/>



He led us in songs about the environment and told several anecdotes about his work with civil rights. Pete Seeger was a generous spirit who answered all our questions and posed even better questions about teaching the children the history of our shared past so they can lead us into the future.

## **Book Review**

Karen Kosko has brought a video of Pete Seeger reading and singing *Abiyoyo* to our attention. Find it on YouTube at *Abiyoyo from Reading Rainbow, 1986, Pete Seeger*. He tells how he came to write the adaptation from a South African folktale and a lullaby for his children 1956.

## ***Abiyoyo Returns*,**

Pete Seeger, Paul Dubois Jacobs, and the original illustrator, Michael Hays 2004

Karen reviews this sequel to *Abiyoyo*. The same town 30 years later, needs a dam before it gets washed away. Sitting right where the dam should be is a boulder too large to be moved by anyone except *Abiyoyo*.

Father still has his courage. Grandfather still has his magic wand, and his granddaughter knows he can bring *Abiyoyo* back, then make him disappear.

Is *Abiyoyo* still dangerous? People believe the giant will eat them.

Will food & songs keep *Abiyoyo* happy long enough to move the boulder & once again leave the town in peace? The story dramatizes transformation is possible.