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Building the Alternative

Imagine you're an alien looking down at the earth during the first months of 2003. You see that one country is preparing to attack another, with large movements of weapons, ships, and planes. You also see millions of people gathering in the streets all over the world. Are they protesting the war? Or are they parading in celebration?

This exercise makes us wonder: how can our antiwar efforts have a direct impact on the war machine? Nonviolent action is most successful when it does not rely solely on a message that can't be seen or touched, but directly confronts and interacts with the people and forces mobilizing for war.

But there is a type of action that seems invisible, but without which obstructive action alone will never work in the long run. It's the broad collection of alternatives to the war system that people are building as we speak, alternatives which appear in this issue of PeacePower.

Pieterneel de Bie and Amy Elmgren report on a type of peacebuilding that is essen-
tial to future generations: peace education, from critical theory to peace games. On a national level, the campaign to establish a Department of Peace, described by Carrie Brode, would invest federal money into research and institution-building for alternative ways to resolve conflict and avert war.

Marilyn Langlois, Fred Jackson, and Jerlina Love explore peacemaking efforts in violence-torn communities in Northern California. Matthew Taylor introduces us to Combatants for Peace, a group of former Israeli soldiers and Palestinian militants who work together for a two-state resolution to their conflict. Lorenzo Porta writes about "the oasis of peace," a village where Arab and Jewish people live in a cooperative community.

Gandhi had a name for this building of nonviolent structures within the shell of our militaristic society – he called it Constructive Program. Dr. Michael Nagler's article on Gandhi's birthday enumerates Gandhi's vision for alternatives to the violent systems of modern society. Anna Key's article applies ideas of constructive program to economic development in African villages in Malawi, and Chelsea Collonge brings to life an exam-
ple closer to home: student co-operative housing.

None of these efforts will ever be visible from outer space, but we hope they will build the capacity for transformations of individuals and society, or at the very least speak to your heart through this issue. Enjoy!

About PEACE POWER

What kind of power can persuade the British to leave India as friends, not ene-
mies? What kind of power can move the hearts of white Americans to recognize
the need for civil rights for African-Americans? What kind of power can persuade
an air force pilot, ordered by a dictator to quell an uprising, to turn away from his
target, unable to fire on a crowd of unarmed Filipinos? We call this Peace Power,
also known as principled nonviolence. Rather than a negation of violence, peace
power is a positive force for change and resistance. By renouncing the use of coer-
cive force, it draws on the persuasive power people have over each other's hearts,
or what Kenneth Boulding calls "integrative power." It can also be described as
"person power," the dedication of each individual when they convert a negative
drive to a positive drive. When those who have achieved this individual dedication
come together, they enact "people power." This is the power that can transform
our selves, our relationships, our conflicts, and our world.

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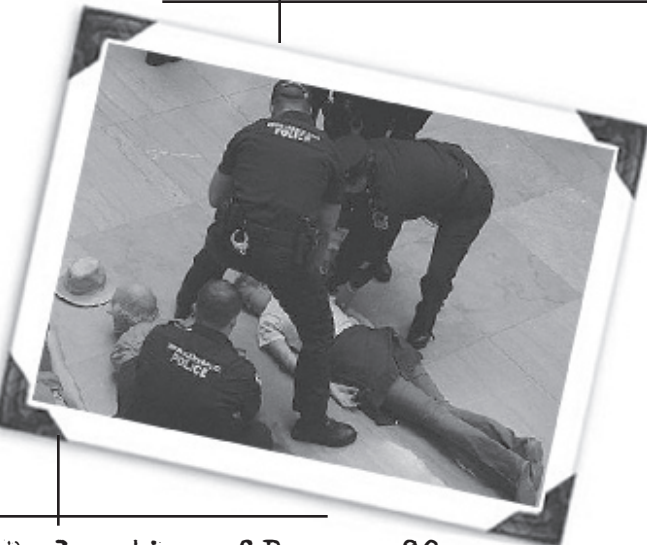
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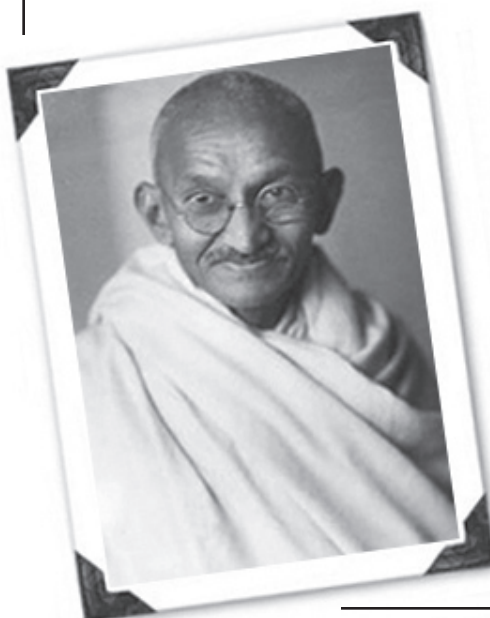
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SPINNING WHEEL BIRTHDAY:

An Alternative View of the World

BY MICHAEL NAGLER

October 2nd, 2006 marked the 137th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's birth, and this seems an appropriate time to imagine what our world would look like today if we had followed his challenging experiments.

For one thing, globalism as we know it – the centralization of worldwide marketing forces coupled with the imposition of a dominant, materialist culture – would not be happening. In its place would be the playing out of a principle called *svadeshi* or 'local orientation.' In this key Gandhian idea, one always begins with the resources (and problems) nearest at hand. When that core is secure (and only then) one's circle of influence expands into wider circles naturally. When we avoid the temptation to solve other people's problems before we've solved our own (think democracy in Iraq) and start close to home, our influence can propagate throughout the world – the way Gandhi's success with India's liberation struggle spread, among other places, to the civil rights movement in the U.S.

Svadeshi, in its economic mode, led to the rebirth of cottage industry, versions of which are today putting organic food on our tables and clothes on the backs of some of us here in the developed world. Behind it lay Gandhi's distrust of mass communication and the transport of less-than-necessary goods vast distances for purposes of profit. In the culture mode, Gandhi took *svadeshi* to the extreme of discouraging the use of English in place of India's many regional languages (one of the few areas in which he may have been mistaken, in my view).



Svadeshi is not provincialism. Narrowness of outlook and distrust of foreigners was a thing of the past, not of Gandhi's envisioned future. His fascinating concept of "heart unity" took care of that. It stated that you did not have to be like another person to want them to be happy — you did not have to deny or suppress differences to avoid conflict.

Svadeshi rests on the belief that we are not condemned by any external condition or circumstance to a life of competition. As he famously put it in economic terms, "There is enough in the world for everyone's need; there is not enough for everyone's greed." Heart unity states that there is no need for all of us to practice one religion or even hold precisely the same values if we want to live in a mutually enriching peace.

Indeed, the more natural diversity the better – provided that we cherish each other's ultimate well-being at this heart level. So it was not that your sympathy would be confined to that small circle you regard as your own, be it a family, nation, or a religious group. Rather, by serving them first, your benefit to and your knowledge and lively understanding of others would naturally expand. The balance of *svadeshi* and heart unity would mean that while the world would grow closer in many ways, exploitation would not be one of them.

Examined in this light, our search for order through uniformity and centralization – not to mention through violence – is exactly wrong. To ensure a vibrant future on this shrinking planet, we need the kind of unity-in-diversity articulated by Gandhi's great follower, Martin Luther King, Jr.: "I can't be what I ought to be until you are what



Mahatma Gandhi Foundation
India.
www.mahatmagandhi.org.in

In 1931, Gandhi visited British mill workers in Lancashire to demonstrate his concern for the quality of their lives, even as his campaign for homespun cotton in India weakened Britain's control of the clothing business. Gandhi was "received with sympathy and affection by the Lancashire cotton workers," even though they were facing unemployment.

you ought to be; and you can't be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be."

And then, the violence. Undoubtedly the sharpest contrast to the world we have now would be the security we could be enjoying if things had developed according to the Mahatma's model. It is rarely remembered that he not only opposed violence in every form, including terrorism, but that he worked out to a greater or lesser degree practical alternatives that could take its place. For example, Vinoba Bhave, widely regarded as Gandhi's foremost spiritual successor in India, walked the length and breadth of the country taking dona-

tions of land for redistribution to poor families. He also brought about the peaceful surrender of a brigand community that was terrorizing a whole district of his native Maharashtra, offering them fair treatment under the law if they renounced their weapons and their predatory lifestyle. (They took him up on it.)

One alternative that the incredibly active Mahatma himself had little time to develop has, in fact, been picked up and carried forward by activists today. This is his bold vision of a shanti sena, or 'peace army' that would head off communal conflicts through the presence of trusted nonviolent volunteers in every community – which worked very well when it was tried after the Mahatma's passing – and that had the potential to grow into a force that could defend people and even nations from aggression without provoking aggression in its turn. This dream has now inspired many forms of volunteer international conflict abatement that we call Third Party Nonviolent Intervention (TPNI). An ambitious attempt

to globalize this kind of people-based rather than nation-based, and nonviolence-based rather than threat-based way of dealing with conflict is being tested in Sri Lanka as I write (see nonviolentpeaceforce.org).

Gandhi himself wanted this anniversary to be named after the spinning wheel rather than himself. It seems an appropriate symbol for the creative potential of his far-reaching experiments that still cry out to us for development.

Prof. Michael N. Nagler is the author of [The Search for a Nonviolent Future](#) and founder of UC Berkeley's Peace and Conflict Studies program.

Letter to the Editors • Spring 2007

Dear Editor,

Our group, Save the Oaks at the Stadium (SOS!), is working to convince the University of California, Berkeley to spare a healthy grove of old oak trees beside California Memorial Stadium. UC wants to cut the trees down to build an athletic training facility. The oak woodland is an irreplaceable natural resource and is appreciated by thousands of members of the campus and the community every year. Unfortunately, the trees are completely powerless to defend themselves against chainsaws. They cannot talk, cannot move, and cannot even cry out for mercy. How does one act to protect living things like this from people who have other priorities?

We have adopted the principles of peaceful protest and nonviolent social change as a guide for our efforts. We believe this has helped us gain public support faster than would otherwise have been the case, which is crucial because there is very little time left before UC Berkeley plans to cut the trees down—most likely sometime in December or early January when the majority of students are away from campus.

Our commitment to nonviolence has encouraged several important developments. First, our willingness to look at the conflict from the perspective of the other side has led us to seek and find viable alternatives to cutting the trees. Indeed, we have located several sites that would be quite suitable for the new gym that would not require the destruction of the oak grove. Second, the sincerity of our beliefs has allowed us to approach people from many different social groups, and we are pleased that we have received support from many students, athletes, faculty members, football fans, and alumni. Third, we have pursued creative methods to get public attention: puppets, costumes, rallies, ritual offerings, street theater, funny signs (like "Official Member—Berkeley Tree Sitter's Club"), and so on.

So far, we have attained the support of the Berkeley City Council, the Sierra Club, Julia Butterfly Hill, and local luminaries like Wavy Gravy (who gave us the slogan "Don't croak the oaks") and award-winning satirist Stoney Burke. Please check our website to find out what you can do to help save the oaks:

www.saveoaks.com or email us at info@saveoaks.com.

Our event hotline is 510-841-3493.

Doug Buckwald

Write a letter to PEACEPOWER!
letters@calpeacepower.org

GANDHI'S SPIRIT ALIVE IN STUDENT COOPERS

BY CHELSEA COLLONGE

You think about a lot of things while mopping the dining room floor at midnight. Here's the scene: it's my first semester living at the Oscar Wilde House, a queer themed student co-op and part of Berkeley's University Students Cooperative Association (USCA). It's also my first semester studying non-violence through the Peace and Conflict Studies department. Leaning over our 6-gallon industrial mop bucket, I brush sweaty hair off my face and think, "So this is what Gandhi meant by the dignity of labor."

As unglamorous as this sounds, it's actually the coalescence of a lot of exciting new ideas in my life. In class I was learning about Gandhi's ashrams (cooperative farms and centers for spiritual practice) and the role they played in the South African and Indian freedom movements: at home I was seeing cooperativity put into practice. Now, three years later, I still live in a co-op, and I still consider myself a student of nonviolence. And I've kept right on thinking about how the USCA is keeping certain Gandhian principles alive in 2006, and how the co-ops are part of the same struggle to create a freer and more humane world.

Gandhi's ashrams were operated in an egalitarian fashion, and everyone was required to contribute their "bread labor." Gandhi believed strongly that meaningful hands-on work carries great dignity and is essential for a person's physical and spiritual wellbeing. In the co-ops, everyone contributes five hours of workshifts per week, meaning that together we not only own our own houses but run them and keep

them clean. Although there is nothing fun about cleaning toilets, it has more meaning when it's your toilet – and when you know you're not relying on under-paid workers who are marginalized in our society to come in and do it for you.

Indeed, Gandhi saw egalitarian, cooperative, "do it yourself" labor as not only a vehicle for personal growth, but also a means of promoting economic and ecological sanity. In colonized India it was very important for Indian people to be self-reliant in order to protect their local economies, since economic dependence is one of the backbones of imperial rule.

Like Gandhi's ashrams, the co-ops practice some level of "swadeshi," or local self-reliance, so as not to participate in a labor market that exploits people, as well as to keep our own rents down. A group called the Barrington Collective, largely composed of co-ops interested in anar-

chist philosophy and organization, takes this ethos a step further with its semesterly "Do It Yourself" festival, in which people can learn how to make their own things in order to be less dependent on corporations. The co-ops also practice conscious consumerism through buying in bulk, sharing furniture and appliances, composting, and training recycling managers to dramatically reduce house-level waste.

Another Gandhian principle embodied by the co-ops is that of "swaraj," or self rule. Gandhi believed that India would never be free until Indian people demonstrated that they could rule themselves, individually and collectively. In the United States, where direct democracy is secondary to



Co-oper Claire working with kids at the Do it Yourself Fest



representative democracy and the political system limits most people's role to that of consumer, the co-ops offer a unique opportunity to practice the democratic process on a house and central level. Each co-op makes decisions about policy and spending collectively through weekly house meetings, and the entire non-profit organization of the USCA is run by an elected student board of directors.

Each co-op also elects in-house managers, who get hands-on leadership experience. This aspect of co-op life has been empowering for me and prepared me to participate in larger opportunities for self-governance in this society, such as non-profit organizations, social movements, and community organizing. Living in an alternative institution also offers students rich opportunities (often late at night) to ponder and discuss questions of political philosophy and social organization—another preparation for citizenship and social change.

Like Gandhi's ashrams, the USCA is very much involved in society at large. The co-ops have been an effective platform for dialogue about housing and higher education issues, as well as for political organizing—demonstrated by the web of co-op based affinity groups that committed civil disobedience in San Francisco the day after the Iraq War started. Similarly, the Oscar Wilde LGBT-themed house offers a safe place for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth to socialize, and the African-American theme house has a community service requirement for its members. A number of USCA co-ops have gone on to establish their own co-ops after graduation, thereby contributing to the broader movement of cooperative living and cooperative, worker-owned businesses.

Since the Great Depression, when students founded the USCA to create affordable housing for themselves and their peers, the USCA's mission has been about creating a progressive alternative within society. This is an example of Gandhian "constructive program" (complimenting "obstructive program," or getting in the way of injustice). The USCA's mission is ever more crucial today, when high rents prohibit many low-income and minority students from accessing a university education. In a less formal way, many of the co-op houses embody another vision of how people should live together—taking in visitors, sharing our plenty, offering our space to grassroots groups like Food Not Bombs, which



Co-ops Volunteering in Oakland

salvages food and cooks healthy, vegan meals to share with hungry people.

The most important aspect of co-op life, in my opinion, is the fact that co-ops offer community and a place to live that is human-scale and less bureaucratic than university housing. Many students experience college life as alienating, though they might not use that word. Co-ops offer an intimate community where affection and a sense of place can replace that alienation. They also offer opportunities to learn and practice conflict resolution, which is an essential skill in our increasingly interdependent world. Living in close proximity to so many other people, co-ops have the chance to practice the Gandhian ideal of heart unity, which means the recognition of a larger unity in diversity. It's important for co-ops to remember this ideal when we feel tempted to scorn the Greek system. Instead of seeing fraternities as totally alien institutions, we can

see them as another kind of collective housing that meets people's human need for community, albeit with a different culture and structure.

Despite all the ways in which co-ops embody Gandhian ideals, there are important differences. Co-ops are not spiritual communities (although some co-ops are starting an Interfaith co-op outside the USCA), there are no families, and we don't grow much of our own food. It's hard to draw parallels between our raucous parties and Gandhi's communities, which required a vow of chastity of all members! But there are some important lessons to be drawn from this comparison.

Most significant is the insight that co-ops are part of a movement to revitalize society, well underway in Gandhi's time. Gandhi was against top-down, capitalistic globalism and imperialism. Many progressive students worry about these phenomena, now much further developed today: economic globalization, commercialism, and the alienation of mass society. Like the ashrams, co-ops provide an alternative as well as demonstrate what's possible when we seek to enact our principles in our daily lives. Gandhi once said, "You must be the change you wish to see in the world"—maybe I'll write that on the milk machine for the next sweaty work-shifter.

Resources:

[NASCO: www.nasco.org](http://www.nasco.org)

[USCA: www.usca.org](http://www.usca.org)

[Cooperative Roots: www.cooperativeroots.org](http://www.cooperativeroots.org)

[Vows and Observances](#) by Mahatma Gandhi:

Teachings on the practice of daily living, available through Berkeley Hills Books

STANDING UP TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

LARA DUNCAN

The number of women murdered by their intimate partners in the United States in the last 11 years is equal to the number of U.S. soldiers killed in the Vietnam War.¹ The United States expends much energy and resources for causes abroad, but there are still issues at home that need help. Just as war causes many deaths, so too does violence in the home. In addition to the sheer number of men and women involved in such abuse, domestic violence has a far-reaching impact on children, the future generation of society. Adolescents who have grown up in violent homes are at risk of perpetuating the abusive relationships of their parents/guardians. They are more likely to attempt suicide, abuse drugs and alcohol, run away from home, engage in teenage prostitution and other delinquent behavior, and commit sexual assault crimes.² In fact, "a child's exposure to the father abusing the mother is the strongest risk factor for transmitting violent behavior from one generation to the next."³

Due to its private context, domestic violence runs the risk of being overlooked, especially amidst more outwardly demanding social and political issues such as war and terrorism. However, Gandhi's concept of *swadeshi* teaches us to first work for change within ourselves, then extend outward to wider circles of influence. *Swadeshi* suggests that violence in the home must be addressed before a culture of nonviolence can be achieved.⁴ Two non-governmental organizations that propose divergent means through which to eliminate domestic violence are STAND! Against Domestic Violence and the Purple Berets. STAND! believes that we must change prevailing attitudes about violence through education, whereas the Purple Berets pursue policy change and retribution. While both education and legislation are important, STAND! embodies a more principled nonviolent approach.

By accepting the humanity of the perpetrators, STAND! focuses not only on rebuilding the lives of victims, but also on rehabilitating the perpetrators.

Founded in 1977 by a group of concerned community members, STAND! was originally known as the Battered Women's Alternative, "dedicated to serving battered women and their children through crisis counseling, support groups, and emergency shelter" in Contra Costa County.⁵ Since then BWA has changed its name and expanded its mission to reflect "the

agency's dual commitment to prevention and intervention strategies to bring an end to violence by challenging prevailing attitudes that tolerate relationship violence in homes and schools, between adults, among teens, and in the

community at large."⁶

STAND! views domestic violence as "learned and generational," asserting that violence is a behavior that can be unlearned. In order to resolve the social problem of domestic violence as they see it, STAND! mobilizes community members in local schools. Volunteers run a program for seventh graders in the Mount Diablo school district. This four-day workshop, entitled "You Never Win With Violence," promotes healthy, nonviolent relationships, and supplies campus and community resource information. Through a role-play, the volunteers and staff seek to portray the realities of domestic violence, sometimes allowing seventh graders to become more aware of their own situation at home.

In addition to youth education, STAND! provides crisis and treatment services, which focus on "rebuilding lives." After staying in emergency shelters, women who have been battered can live in "transitional housing," a term that connotes a more constructive program than the idea of escape denoted in "shelter." Rather than protecting women in shelters, transitional housing provides a proactive means to achieve independence from an abusive household.





art by Andrew Hawkes

STAND! also promotes healing through support groups and counseling. The Domestic Violence Treatment Program for the people perpetrating abuse especially reflects this frame of restorative justice: "Reconciliation seeks to heal the wounds of violence and prevent further violence by promoting justice and diffusing hatred."⁷ This method refuses to label the perpetrators as criminals, and instead works to rehabilitate them through counseling and healing.⁸ According to one volunteer that I interviewed, the organization sees the act as an illness rather than a crime.⁹ By accepting the humanity of perpetrators, STAND! focuses not only on rebuilding the lives of victims, but also on rehabilitating the perpetrators.

In contrast, the Purple Berets focus primarily on criminal justice policy. Self-described as a "grassroots, in-your-face women's rights group," the Purple Berets seek legislative justice for female victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. They believe "the biggest problem of domestic violence is that it's not treated as a crime."¹⁰ The solutions they offer include direct advocacy to help ensure women's cases move through the criminal justice system, along with political campaigning to change local policy and procedures.¹¹ The group conveys an attitude of militancy through its name, Purple Berets, which alludes to the Green Berets special services unit during the Vietnam War.

The Purple Berets define domestic violence as a patriarchal power issue and "hate crime." The Purple Berets' leader Tanya Brannan explains the organization's view on the cause of domestic violence: "Men beat because they can get away with it. That's where it all comes from."¹² Offenders perpetuate violence in the absence of stringent laws. While this may be true, the Purple Berets' approach ignores the complexity behind violent impulses and behavior. The organization's solution exemplifies a classic example of attacking the symptoms of a disease without understanding its root causes.

Unlike STAND!, the Purple Berets advocate retributive justice as both a deterrent and a way to rescue women who are "being beaten right now."¹³ They view education as an insufficient means of combating domestic violence, and although Ms. Brannan admits that, "education is a piece of it," she insists, "you can't just teach little boys in school that

domestic violence is wrong. If it was just an education problem, it would have been gone 30 years ago." The Purple Berets disregard the shelter model and counseling services employed by organizations like STAND! and instead, solely advocate law enforcement: "In the real world, once the violence has reached a certain level, law enforcement is the only institution with the power to actually stop it [...] So if, instead of women's shelters, we put our time and resources into ensuring that

domestic violence is prosecuted like any other violent crime, many of the problems victims face would disappear."¹⁴

Despite a common goal to eliminate domestic violence, the Purple Berets and STAND! differ greatly in their treatment of the issue's causes and solutions. Whereas the Purple Berets attribute domestic violence to a lack of criminal justice, STAND! addresses learned behavioral patterns. The Purple Berets' approach of punishment contrasts with STAND!'s form of restorative justice: STAND! seeks to reconcile and rehabilitate the person, without dehumanizing him as a criminal.

I believe that the major strengths of STAND!'s approach arise from its foundation in principled nonviolence. The organization carries out peace education, reconciliation and healing, and constructive program for the various parties affected by domestic violence. Through its ideas, publications, and programs, STAND! addresses domestic violence in such a way that promotes nonviolence of thought, word, and deed, as taught by Martin Luther King Jr. and Gandhi. This consistency of thinking, speaking, and acting nonviolently supports a paradigm that requires more than the negative peace, or absence of violence, that the Purple Berets stand for. Developing a culture of peace depends upon the presence of social justice, or positive peace, exemplified in STAND!'s "rebuilding of lives."

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TENT CITIES RESIST WAR ON THE POOR

BY MARILYN LANGLOIS AND FRED JACKSON

Peace in Richmond! We're in the headlines and on the internet!" exclaimed Robert Brown as he proudly welcomed incoming visitors to join the children, adults and elders already gathered around the fire at 41st and Cutting in a notoriously crime-ridden neighborhood. Brown, president of the local neighborhood council, is a co-founder of the Tent City peace camps, a homegrown, nonviolent response to the escalating homicide rate in Richmond, California. The media routinely report acts of violence in Richmond, but not this time. Those assembled affirmed the psychic shift unfolding as people found the courage to confront fear and despair with loving presence.

When there was a shooting at the funeral of a murder victim in late September, 2006, the neighbors said "Enough is enough," and a small group of people, spearheaded by Rev. Andre Shumake and Rev. Charles Newsom, began a round-the-clock vigil at 4th and Macdonald in Richmond's Iron Triangle. Their numbers grew, tents were pitched, and food was donated. A few days later, Tent City #2 was born at Kelsey and Gertrude Streets in North Richmond, a poverty-stricken enclave on the other side of the tracks, under the leadership of wheelchair-bound Garland Harper, father of Benard Harper II, killed 6 months ago at age 22 by gun violence. In a community where physical weakness is often seen as a reflection of inferiority, in a setting where he might have been derided for the mere thought of action for peace where turf battles are waged, Harper is now shown the respect reminiscent of a minister presiding over his congregation.

Within a week, the call came out to do something on Richmond's south side, and before long, Robert Brown, James Cash and others had the 41st and Cutting site up and running. At lower south side, Marina Way and Cutting, the fourth Tent City came

into being, founded by the 39-year old mother Patrice Boykin, encouraged by neighbors and family to do so. The men and women who assist Boykin with day-to-day logistics honor her as if she were an African queen.

All of the Tent City sites are in places where people used to be afraid to venture after dark. Now they have become sanctuaries for healing, reflection, and sharing stories. "Stop the violence!" is the unifying theme, fueled by a universal motivation: "We're doing this for our children." Conversations range from grieving over loved-ones lost too young to brainstorming solutions to the root causes of violence. Many Tent City regulars are former drug addicts and "OG's", or old gangsters, who have turned their lives around, and who are now determined to mentor the youth in positive directions. Participants at each site form a microcosm of the entire community, integrating those on solid footing with those floundering on the fringes, struggling to cope with day-to-day existence.

Richmond's population of around 100 thousand is a colorful bouquet of races and ethnicities. One finds both poverty



Bennie Johnson Sr. (left), whose son was shot 11 times while being robbed, talks with Kelvin Davis over the Tent City's makeshift fireplace.

Photo Courtesy of San Francisco Chronicle (Liz Hafalia)



Residents, church leaders and former gang members have erected a Tent City against violence in Richmond's Nevin Park. Photo Courtesy of San Francisco Chronicle (Liz Hafalia)

and affluence flanking a working class core. Home to a multi-billion dollar oil refinery and surrounded by the opulence of the San Francisco Bay Area, Richmond has traditionally been stigmatized by the dominant cultural narrative. Whoever takes the time to get to know the community, however, will soon find a wealth of human spirit that is engaging and infectious.

African Americans were first lured to Richmond in large numbers during WWII for employment in the shipyards and other home-front industries. Since the mid-forties, however, blacks have been pushed to the sidelines by successive waves of institutional racism and structural violence: lingering Jim Crow laws and rampant housing discrimination in the '40s and '50s, Cointelpro's crushing opposition to the blooming black liberation movements in the '60s and '70s, the successful efforts by the CIA to flood the nation's inner cities with crack cocaine to fund their various Central American military campaigns in the '80s, followed by corporate globalization's decimation of domestic jobs and local businesses from the '90s onward. While the Civil Rights movement and its aftermath saw numerous African Americans achieve middle and upper class prosperity, far too many remain plagued by unemployment and despair. That insidious by-product of racism, persistent internalized self-hatred, results all too often in black-on-black crime.

Tent City is an indigenous African American initiative, to which all people are invited. Each site has its own flavor, and all of them exude a welcoming "front porch" feel. Soul food, rhythm and blues, gospel, prayer circles and good-natured ribbing are commonplace. Activities for children include afternoon homework help, Friday night dance contests and week-

end art projects. Late one evening, Shawn Godfrey, Willie Pearl Thomas, John Wayne Fontenot, Jerry Jefferson and a dozen or so regulars at the North Richmond site were joined around the fire by four visitors of Latino, Haitian, Congolese and European-American descent. Warm welcomes, talk and hugs were exchanged, and before long it was time for "open mic": host Steffan Cowans made sure everyone present was encouraged to speak to the group and express how they felt about being there. Each person was acknowledged and applauded. Later, the Congolese visitor Jacques Depelchin noted how much the experience reminded him of a "Mbongi", a traditional African community-based problem solving process that includes everyone, and especially gives voice to those who aren't usually heard.

Are the Tent City peace vigils making a difference? It's too soon to see their effect in crime stats, but all who have been exposed to them know that they are making a difference. "For the first time in years, rival factions from south, central and North Richmond started a dialogue", said Rev. Andre Shumake. As nonviolence scholar Prof. Michael Nagler points out, nonviolence sometimes "succeeds" and always works, meaning the short-term success is uncertain, but in the long run, nonviolence always changes things for the better.

It seemed to work for the distraught young man who walked up to the fire circle at 41st and Cutting after midnight, lamenting the loss of his vehicle and all his tools to thievery. His livelihood had been snatched away and he was bent on revenge. The empathetic expressions of those present, along with Ms. Jackie Thompson's and Ms. Bernice Mulder's comforting, grandmotherly consolations, had a visibly calming effect on him. A woman stepped aside with him into the shadows and said, "It's OK. We'll talk."

Marilyn Langlois and Fred Jackson are Richmond-based community activists and members of Transcend USA.



Church leaders and former gang members are camping out in tent cities including Richmond's Iron Triangle neighborhood in an attempt to slow slayings in the city's troubled areas. Photo courtesy of S.F. Chronicle (Liz Hafalia)



OAKLAND'S NONVIOLENT FUTURE


BY JERLINA LOVE

The leaves have begun to fall across the San Francisco Bay Area marking the end of Oakland, California's first "summer of non-violence." Started in June 2006 by the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights with a series of candlelight vigils held throughout the Bay Area, 1,000 community members prayed for a summer in Oakland without violence and with the presence of constructive change. This violence, which has claimed the lives of one hundred fifty eight men, women and children between January and November of this year, is killing Oakland residents both physically and spiritually.

I attended one of these Vigils on 61st and San Pablo to demonstrate my deep concern. As we discussed our vision of an Oakland without violence, I silently doubted that such an Oakland was possible. But when I thought about the alternative, I realized that significantly decreasing violence is possible, it is necessary, and principled nonviolence could contribute to this change.

In order to clearly understand such a change, I first had to think about the prognosis of what the future might hold if the current situation continues. Remember how you felt the morning of September 12th, 2001? In some parts of Oakland, every day feels like that morbid day. My earliest memories as a child living in East Oakland are of the day after a drive-by in front of my family's apartment. The fear, confusion, denial, and outrage were hardly different than what most Americans felt the day after 9-11. The difference in my community was that an outside force did not perpetuate the violence; it was perpetuated by and against residents of the same neighborhood. Therefore, we as Oakland residents must recognize the internal nature of this problem and begin to change it from within.

If the violence and fear continue on their course without intervention, Oakland's violent crime rate will increase, more youth will be sent to suffer in the California prison system, and more people will live lives burdened by the psycho-spiritual aftereffects of violence. In the face of such a prognosis, it becomes alarmingly clear that we have to abandon our old model of living in fear and transform it into courage if we want to rebuild our city.



This transformation of violence into principled nonviolence is deeply connected to an internal transformation within the lives of Oakland's residents, as illustrated by the life of Stan Tookie Williams, a former resident of San Quentin Prison and a Nobel Peace Prize nominee. Williams co-founded the Crips, a violent youth gang, and after allegedly killing three people, Williams was sent to prison. He continued to live a life encapsulated by violence. Then in 1993, while in solitary confinement, Williams experienced an inner transformation.

Williams told Mother Jones magazine in March/April 2001, "I unchained my mind, and I did so through prayers and extensive study. I had to seriously question whether I was a human or a beast. In choosing not to be a beast, I discovered my humanity. I became autodidactic, self-educated -- a critical thinker." It was then that Williams began to work for nonviolence. This change included developing a new sense of respect for human life, including his own. It also included taking courageous actions to stop violence and encourage community building, represented by his children's books about anti-violence where he advocated for youth to courageously reject gang life.

For Williams, this internal transformation was at the core of his work. For Williams to speak about ending violence he had to end it in his heart. As Oakland hip-hop artist Ise Lyfe says, "In order to speak about freedom you have to be freedom," and in order to speak about nonviolence Williams became non-violent in mind and action. Williams' experience of positive internal transformation while living in the midst of the most violent of environments, gives hope to Oakland's residents who seek change.

Like Williams, we daughters and sons of Oakland must transform the violence in our hearts to principled nonviolence. Nonviolence is a rough translation of ahimsa, which means the lack of intention to harm and the respect for all living beings. Different from "anti-violence" -- which aims specifically to decrease violence -- principled nonviolence is a way of life and a way of contributing the world. Nonviolence is concerned with the karmic effects of our actions, and it is a means of realizing the integration of humanity. Principled nonviolence is akin to the spiritually grounded "reverence perspective" that activists including Aqueela Shirrill, Julia Butterfly-Hill and Van Jones have adopted in recent years to



respectively end gang wars in LA, to protect the environment and to challenge the youth prison system.

There are two facets to principled nonviolence: one is cooperation with good and the second is non-cooperation with evil. When someone spreads rumors about us, steps on our tennis shoes, or hits us, the nonviolent response is to maintain our respect for the other

person's humanity (cooperation with good) while taking action against the harm done (non-cooperation with evil). This takes transforming the heat of rage into disciplined construction rather than letting it explode into uncontrolled destruction.

Living our lives nonviolently and transforming Oakland into a place where residents display deep respect for their own lives and their community not only includes collective internal transformation, it also involves challenging direct and structural violence. Direct violence is exemplified by fist-fights or shootings, whereas structural violence is exemplified by poverty or hunger and is the result of exploitive and unjust social, political and economic systems.

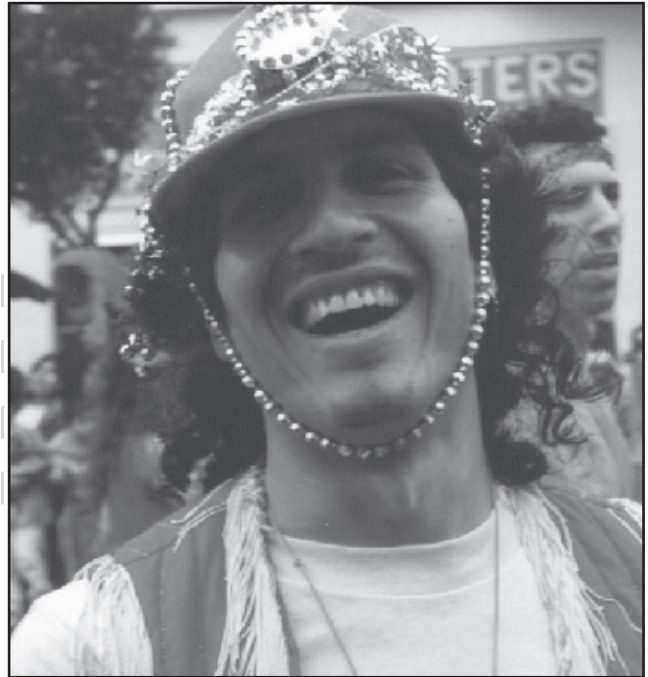
Challenging these forms of violence will include an assortment of tactics including fact finding, research, negotiation, education, agitation, legal action, non-cooperation, prayer meetings, meditation, vigils, persuasion, civil disobedience, humor, forgiveness, picket lines, demonstrations, slowdowns, strikes, and boycotts. Although many of these activities have been practiced in Oakland before, I am unaware of them happening as part of a larger, principled nonviolence campaign.

This principled nonviolence campaign would necessitate our participation in constructive programs that function as models for what we do want, while we resist that which we do not want. Many constructive programs already exist in Oakland such as community gardens like SOL (Sustaining Ourselves Locally) and OBUGS (Oakland Butterfly and Urban Gardening), independent media including Indybay.org and KPFA, and educational programs and facilities such as The Freeskool, Upward Bound, Eureka! and The Malonga Casquelord Center for the Arts. These constructive programs contribute to a cultural shift from negativity and violence to positivity and nonviolence. They also provide men, women and children with alternatives to gang life and drug abuse, both of which significantly contribute to violence in Oakland.

By transforming our self-loathing to self-respect, by challenging direct and structural violence, and by contributing

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to programs that model the peace building that we would like to see, we are planting the seeds for a nonviolent peace movement in Oakland. We cannot wait for the police to change, gangs to dissolve, or for crack to disappear before we start planting these seeds. We must begin to change our own behavior and organize amongst our friends, families, the elderly, parents, children, teachers, students, social workers, laborers, religious and spiritual communities and everyone else who is interested in participating in deep, positive, local change.



This article is in memory of my teacher Carlos Aceituno, a peace and cultural activist who taught at the Malonga Casquelord Center for the Arts and passed away September 27, 2006. Carlos provided free capoeira and dance classes to poor youth in Oakland and San Francisco's mission district and demonstrated the transformative power of love and community through his teaching and art. He encouraged his students to create positive change in their own lives through education, culture, community involvement, political protest, and heart unity.

What always comes first in a nonviolent movement are people's decisions to take individual responsibility in making change happen. The action taken once these decisions are made then fuels both inner and social transformation. In this way, nonviolence works like violence: it starts inside of our individual lives and it escalates, affecting our relationships with our communities and with society as a whole. I invite you to join us at any step along the way, in this social, spiritual and psychological experiment with courage, truth, respect, and transformation and see how these forces spiral out from your own life and into the streets of Oakland. May the falling leaves remind you that experimentation with nonviolence in Oakland has already begun.

Jerlina Love is a graduate student in African Diaspora Studies at UC Berkeley, where she studies principled nonviolence.

SEE RESOURCES AND REFERENCES ON PAGE 38.

GANDHIAN ECONOMICS

An Opportunity for African Development

BY ANNA KEY

In reference to the AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa, Peter Piot, executive director of UNAIDS, said, "We all need to begin thinking out of the box," adding that, "stopping the AIDS epidemic is going to require more than just a medical approach." AIDS in Africa is affecting more than those who contract the disease, it is having a catastrophic effect on families, cultures, and economies in dozens of struggling countries. But beyond the ravages of AIDS, the development strategies being implemented in sub-Saharan Africa by larger international agencies fail to succeed in the face of this unique economic struggle. The "top down" economic policies that have been implemented in sub-Saharan Africa by the United Nations, The World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund are not the most effective policies that are available.

It is time for a different type of development strategy. While spending last summer in Malawi, I saw a nation plagued with an infectious disease, and an economy being destroyed in part because of it. Now, more than ever, Africa needs people who are willing to "think outside the box", and economic policies that will creatively address a unique and dangerous situation. I can think of no philosophy more capable of addressing this issue than that of Mahatma Gandhi.

Gandhi's struggle for freedom in India was based on the power of the individual, which he called, "person power" or *svasakti*. Using person power, he called on individuals to restructure their own lives and their understandings of themselves in order to create a collective sense of unity. He believed adamantly in the power of the individual. One of Gandhi's major resources for the revolutionary restructuring of power from the state to the individual came from within the villages. Because at the time India's demographics were localized in a vast village population, Gandhi realized that by transforming the nature of these villages and the economic and political structures

that governed them, Indians could, in fact, change the overall structure of their country.

Gandhi wanted to transform the dominant paradigm of large-scale industrialization to include an aspect of development that was highly localized in villages. Gandhi believed in the ability of reformation to take place in India from the bottom up. If the government in Malawi resisted the dominant paradigm of "top down" economics, and instead adopted a program similar to Gandhi's village economy practices, the situation in Malawi would drastically improve.

A very different type of development is being forced on Malawi than the example seen in Gandhi's struggle in India. Instead of a system of development that stresses the importance of village revival, of the power of the individual, and the importance of sustainability discovered from within a nation, Malawi is being coerced into a model of development that embraces the exact opposite ideology. The International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and World Trade Organization, collectively known as the Bretton Woods institutions, are part of an international monetary system that manages commercial and financial relationships between countries in order to stabilize the global financial system. These institutions, along with the United Nations, have developed a plan for global development that is failing over and over again. In country after country, these institutions have

offered economic solutions that fail to address the real requirements of development. The IMF and World Bank attach contingencies to their loans that require market liberalization and other reforms that are not proven to reduce poverty nor help growth, especially in developing countries. Malawi is a case study of this type of ineffective development scheme.

Gandhi believed in a completely different strategy of economics that worked from the bottom up, developing capital and creating self-sustainability within the community, instead of injecting large amounts of aid through the government. With this type of economic development struc-



Map of the African continent with Malawi indicated



Gandhi modeled self-sufficiency and bottom-up development in his Ashrams, spiritual communities where the residents lived the philosophy of Gandhian economics.

Additionally, if a stronger relationship could be established between urban residents and villagers, the country could unite in a powerful way. The Malawian government, while practicing a loose version of democracy, is completely divorced from the general population. The primary obstacle in this marriage is in the disappointing literacy rates in small villages in Africa. Malawi has a 62% adult literacy rate, which makes it impossible for four out of ten people to even read a ballot. A village literacy program could send educated Africans to villages to teach villagers how to read. Such a program could later be expanded to include other useful skills.

This mobilization effort must be Malawian-led. The United Nations can encourage the direction of African intellectuals and politicians by providing funding that is specifically

ture, the people can create their own income, and are in charge of development that caters to the unique needs of their communities.

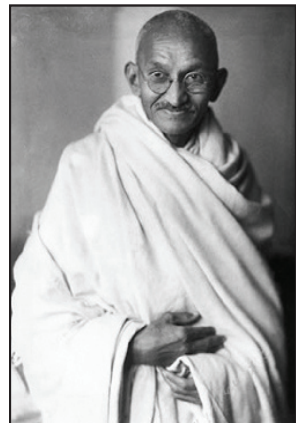
The effect that AIDS is having on Malawi's economy is a relatively new struggle among resource-limited economies. It makes no sense that a country in sub-Saharan Africa dealing with this type of adversity would be forced into a development program that is being used simultaneously in Ecuador, Haiti, or India. These countries are affected by unique regional situations and require development strategies based on their particular situations and needs. Each situation needs to be addressed differently, and the Bretton Woods institutions are not sufficient for single-handedly dealing with Third World development. A certain degree of the development activity must take place from individuals within the communities who understand each situation, and who are capable of turning it around from the inside out. It is not an issue of lack of funding, it is an issue of lack of direction.

A Gandhian structure of village economy could drastically improve the standard of living for the massive village populations in Malawi. One of Gandhi's ideas for developing village sustainability came from the Khadi campaign, a project that would enable villagers to spin their own cotton and produce their own clothing. This campaign created small-scale businesses for village communities, national unity among everyone who practiced it, and helped Indians resist foreign imports that took financial activity away from India.

A similar campaign could be developed which would facilitate economic activity that would develop into small businesses in the local markets. With this structure in place, villages could become more self-sustainable and government handouts and "Band Aid" development would be unnecessary. It would create both employment opportunities within the villages as well as a consistent means of production and trade. It is a process that requires patience, but it is highly achievable.

for programs of village sustainability and village literacy, but the revolution cannot be led from the outside. The leaders must be developed from within. The power of the Indian freedom struggle was insurmountable because of the autonomous nature of the movement. To raise oneself out of strife creates the confidence that is necessary to the establishment of a successful state.

Gandhi explained how to create positive development within a country. In recent decades, there have been very few attempts to model a national development strategy in such a manner. The top down economic development strategies have continually failed in sub-Saharan Africa. Ideologies should not trump the lives and livelihoods of people, and with thousands of Africans dying each day, this is a perfect opportunity to revive development strategies that have been overlooked in favor of the neoliberal model.



Mahatma Gandhi, 1931

Resources:

- Further Reading:
[Essays on Gandhian Economics](#) (Romesh Diwan and Mark Lutz, editors)
[Alternatives to Economic Globalization](#) (John Cavanagh and Jerry Mander, editors), published by the International Forum on Globalization:
<http://www.ifg.org/programs/alternatives.htm>



The Romany
Flag



RED WHEELS FOR NONVIOLENT ACTION: THE ROMANY STRUGGLE FOR DIGNITY AND TRUTH

BY VERONIKA SAFAROVA

For centuries, the effects of racism, stereotypes, myths, and scapegoating have shaped the state of Roma (a.k.a. Gypsies) around the world. Although the particular lifestyles and attitudes of approximately 9 million Roma in Europe and 1 million in the U.S. vary greatly between communities and individuals, one thing is for certain: as human beings, Romany people desire freedom and respect. Many texts portray the Roma as living the nomadic lifestyle because of their nature as “free spirits.” It is true that some Roma prefer the caravan to a house, but most have been forced out of their



Erika Adamova, a participant in the Roma Diplomacy Project which helps youth to bridge the gap between Roma civil society at the larger EU community. See <http://www.diplomacy.edu/Roma/> for more information

countries due to racist immigrant laws and disgraceful maltreatment since the time Romany ancestors left Northern India around 1100 C.E. The majority of Roma now prefer to live settled lifestyles, but they do not enjoy equal rights, even as citizens of their home countries. Distinguishing truths such as these from fabrications is a core aspect of principled nonviolence, and is vital in gaining equal rights for the Romany people.

TRUTH, MYTH, OR GENERALIZATION?

Many Romany families, including my own, have left behind Romany laws and rituals in order to fit into mainstream society. But some communities, particularly the Vlach Roma in Romania, are concerned that full participation in Gadjo (non-Romany) communities will destroy their culture. In these communities, it is not uncommon for Roma to perceive Gadje (non-Roma) as unclean, violent, and sexually promiscuous. This is because the private and public practices of Gadje are not in accordance with strict Romany laws, which are similar to Jewish and Hindu traditions. Ironically, stereotypes about Roma have centered around these very qualities. Common demeaning phrases include, “dirty, evil Gypsy casting curses” and “exotic, sexy Gypsy maiden.”

On numerous occasions I have heard people describe themselves as “certainly not racist,” while simultaneously wishing that every Gypsy had been gassed in the concentration camps (in fact, over one million Roma died under the Nazi regime during the Holocaust). This “unconscious” racism lays the foundation for structural violence, which includes job discrimination and a lack of equal education opportunities, often developing into deep poverty. This accompanies the more blatant variety of racism, such as Czech policemen candidly exclaiming, “at least somebody else is doing the dirty work” while observing skinheads assaulting a Romany woman.

Reproductive violence such as forced sterilization can be a result of conscious or unconscious racism. Some health practitioners actually believe that they are “helping” Roma by inhibiting them from having children. Forced sterilizations of Roma have been practiced for centuries in Europe, and in

Czechoslovakia, this practice continued through the communist era. Government laws and programs used monetary incentives to encourage sterilizations for Romany women. These programs condoned misinformation and coercion in hospitals. The government in Slovakia claims that these types of programs were rescinded after the fall of the communist political system, but research reveals that serious reproductive rights violations continue despite the official change of this law.

THE ROMA RIGHTS MOVEMENT

In order to confront serious human rights abuses, the Roma Rights Movement has been developing for 40 years through government policy changes, grassroots organizing of protests, and effective constructive programs. Leaders in each of these campaigns have emphasized the importance of a nonviolent approach to resistance against an oppressor, and defined nonviolent action as one of the key components to their campaign.

In Hamburg, Germany during the late 1980s, Romany political protest against deportation fueled a unique cooperation between Romany permanent residents and Romany refugees who were denied political asylum after the Iron Curtain closed. A national Romany consciousness emerged from these campaigns, and shattered the conventional impression that Roma never “fight back” or draw public attention to themselves. Romany families adhered to nonviolent, creative action while also getting support from groups such as radical anarchists, to Jewish Survivors of the Holocaust, to celebrities and international media. Their actions included seeking refuge at former concentration camps and in churches, organizing protest marches and hunger strikes in historic locations, and involving tourists in the resistance movement. This campaign succeeded in granting resident status to over 2,000 Roma, and served as a model for Roma Rights campaigns in other regions in Germany.

The Zero Evictions Red Wheels Movement is an active nonviolent resistance campaign in the United Kingdom, run by Roma, Irish Travelers, and other international groups. The Red Wheels Movement works to protect Roma and Irish Travelers from eviction from their own land and fights the discriminatory housing practices of the U.K. government. With the passing of the Criminal Justice Act in 1994, the government of the United Kingdom cancelled its guaranteed funding of caravan sites, and advised Roma and other travelers to buy their own land in order to avoid parking their caravans illegally. However, the travelers must also obtain “planning consent” permits in order to legally live in a caravan (or mobile home) on the land that they have purchased. And nine times out of ten, Roma and Irish Travelers are denied such permits by British councils as a result of discrimination. Thus, families must defy the law and move onto land they have purchased before a permit is issued. In an effort to get rid of these communities, the government has issued large-scale evictions—bulldozing hundreds of acres of homes and burning down trailers. City councils have also tried to claim as much as £18,000 from Romany and Irish Traveler yard-owners for these eviction operations. By demanding



Roma children at school

payment, the council is in effect bankrupting families and making it impossible for them to buy land elsewhere.

The Sheridan clan, who bought Dale Farm in Basildon, England, and transformed a junkyard into a Roma and Travelers’ community, are determined to avoid violence. Since 2004, they have set up meetings with nearby neighborhoods to sort out differences, and have filed new appeals for permits in order to build communities of caravans on their land. In partnership with the United Kingdom Association of Gypsy Women, International Alliance of Inhabitants, and a dozen other international organizations, these communities have carried out a nonviolent obstructive program that includes organizing protest marches, erecting miles of barbed wire around homes, writing letters to government, and creating petitions against the evictions. Roma have also voluntarily taken on suffering by refusing to leave their homes, standing as “human shields” to protect homes, and standing in sub-zero temperatures outside council meetings to hold candle-lit vigils. This campaign has also employed third-party nonviolent intervention via international monitoring teams such as Panjabi Human Rights/PakiTV, Jewish Human Rights, and National Travelers Action Group.

As a result of the Zero Evictions Red Wheels Movement, a full-scale review of accommodation in Somerset County, England is being carried out starting November 9th, 2006. The County Survey will include face-to-face interviews with Roma and Travelers to identify specific land requirements. “Reasonable” rents will be charged to tenants who will be able to claim full housing benefits. Roma and Traveler activists continue to campaign nonviolently in other regions of the United Kingdom where eviction plans are still waiting to be resolved.

Changing legislature to protect Romany rights is a significant step, but it is only one stage in the nonviolent campaign. Powerful human rights legislation can make racism against Roma unacceptable, but it does not necessarily change racist hearts. In “The Denial of Racism,” Dimitrina Petrova (1999) illustrates that as a society begins to denounce racism, more people also vehemently deny that they are racist; this is because racism is officially and culturally condemned. Gandhi realized that it is better to persuade than to coerce your neighbor to respect your beliefs, so that s/he might sympathize with your views. In the practice of principled

CONTINUED ON PAGE 37

THE FORCE UNTAPPED:

The Proposal for a Department of Peace

BY CARRIE BRODE

Alternative news sources report that a Department of Peace (DoP) is in the works, but the mass media seems to have missed out on this groundbreaking proposal. When a CNN reporter recently announced the idea, the patronizing tone of her voice betrayed her skepticism, and she did not seriously explore the substance of the proposal when she interviewed a guest about it. In a venture to take the next step, I've investigated what a DoP means for our society and why it is necessary.¹

Dennis Kucinich, a congressional representative from Ohio, has drawn this legislation from the dusty shelves of

A Department of Peace will work to:

Provide much-needed assistance to efforts by city, county, and state governments in coordinating existing programs, as well as develop new programs based on best practices nationally

- Teach violence prevention and mediation to America's school children
- Effectively treat and dismantle gang psychology
- Rehabilitate the prison population
- Build peace-making efforts among conflicting cultures both here and abroad
- Support our military with complementary approaches to peace-building
- Create and administer a U.S. Peace Academy, acting as a sister organization to the U.S. Military Academy

Visit The Peace Alliance Website to view the entire campaign in details www.thepeacealliance.org



American history and it echoes a voice that dates as far back as the George Washington Administration in 1783. In line with their revolutionary pursuits the architect and publisher Benjamin Banneker teamed with the physician and educator Dr. Benjamin Rush to propose a "peace office" which would serve on the same level as the "war office" in 1792.²

Today, both major parties' rhetoric espouses that democratic countries are less likely to go to war with one another. This "Democratic Peace Theory" is one of the foundations of U.S. foreign policy. According to President

Bush:

"The reason why I'm so strong on democracy is democracies don't go to war with each other. And the reason why is the people of most societies don't like war, and they understand what war means.... I've got great faith in democracies to promote peace. And that's why I'm such a strong believer that the way forward in the Middle East, the broader Middle East, is to promote democracy."³

However, the logic of using war to eradicate war doesn't seem to work in practice or in theory. From Korea to Iraq, war has shattered lives without creating the conditions for peace and rebuilding. How are we to eradicate war by using it as a strategy? It would seem wiser to call in peace specialists to provide a creative and new approach to the promotion of peace, rather than rely on war specialists. In the words of Representative Kucinich, "It is time to jettison our illusions and fears and to transform age-old challenges with new thinking. This is the idea behind my proposal to establish a DoP." Marianne Williamson, an author, activist, and founder of the Peace Alliance, the grassroots campaign supporting the DoP legislation, sees this as important





Find more about the Student Peace Alliance at
<http://www.thepeacealliance.org/content/view/186/163/>

as the struggles for women's suffrage and the abolition of slavery.

The contemporary effort towards peace faces two challenges that a DoP would help to overcome. First, the DoP (DoP) would address the misconception that peace is only an end. The Department would demonstrate that peace is also a means to achieve the goal. In the words of AJ Muste: "There is no way to Peace, Peace is the way." The second roadblock is that the amount of material and energy put into peace theory is just a fraction of that poured into militarism and strategic use of violence. A DoP would create an institutional grounding for more research into peace theory, which provides nonviolent means of solving both domestic and international problems.

In a study of power, leading peace theorist Kenneth Boulding describes three kinds: threat, exchange, and integrative power. Threat power says "Do something I want or I'll do something you don't want," whereas exchange power says, "give me something I want and I'll give you something you want." Integrative power, the least understood, says, "I will do something from my heart and have faith that we'll grow closer in the process". Integrative power leads to greater integration of the parties involved. Integrative Power is studied by peace studies programs throughout the country and has been used by Gandhi in South Africa and India, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the Civil Rights Movement and Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of a nonviolent struggle for human rights and democracy in Burma.⁴

The DoP proposes to explore the uses of Integrative Power on an institutional level. The Department will facilitate the study and application of peace theory and practices, and will create a government-sponsored Peace Academy. The Peace Academy would be modeled after the military services academies, providing a four-year training program that requires graduates to serve for five years in programs dedicated to domestic or international nonviolent conflict resolution. Such a commitment represents proactive community building by well-trained nonviolence practitioners in order to build up nonviolence within our society as a preventative measure.

The DoP overlaps with the missions of many existing government programs. However, the DoP would introduce vastly different ways of dealing with many existing problems. For example, the current justice system, based on "retributive justice," dehumanizes the perpetrator and uses a punishment-based approach--prison or capital punishment--that in the long run doesn't work to reduce crime or protect society. The DoP would begin to implement a new model called restorative justice, which focuses on rehabilitating and reintroducing delinquents back into their communities, creating healing for both the offender and the victim, and preserving the sense of humanity and respect for life.

The DoP proposal attempts to achieve the stated goal of the US Department of Defense, which is to "deter war and protect the security of our country." When Kucinich was questioned about the practicality of a DoP he responded: "What could have been more impractical than a war that did not have to be fought. That's taken over 2000 lives of American soldiers. That's taken over 16,000 American casualties . . . Peace is practical. War is NOT."⁵ The war paradigm is breaking down. The best prescription for humanity's challenges is a force with changing and unimagined tactics.

Student Peace Alliance

The Student Peace Alliance is a youth embodiment of what is at the very heart of this emerging movement, virtue and justice.

Student Peace Alliance started at Brandeis University and has now spread to 15 other campuses in California, Vermont, New Jersey, Minnesota and Massachusetts. The SPA is working to get the Department of Peace legislation implemented. Email them for more information at college@thepeacealliance.org

Resources:

The Peace Alliance: www.thepeacealliance.org

Americans for Department of Peace:
<http://www.afdop.org/>

PEACEPOD podcasting provides daily updates, news, and information for the Department of Peace movement and more.
<http://www.songserverworldwide.com/music-group-5.html>

References:

¹CNN coverage can be viewed online at:
<http://www.thepeacealliance.org/content/view/12/67/>

²"Ain't gonna study war no more", Milton Meltzer. Random House Books, July 2002

³"President and Prime Minister Blair discussed Iraq, Middle East"
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/11/20041112-5.html>

⁴Boulding, Kenneth E. Three Faces of Power. (Sage, 1989)

⁵<http://www.kucinich.us/issues/departmentpeace.php>



THE DECLARATION OF PEACE:

People Unite to End the Occupation of Iraq

BY JENNIFER KUIPER

The names of dead American soldiers and Iraqi civilians echoed up and down the seven floors of balconies that overlook the inner atrium of the Senate Hart Office Building. In the center of the atrium circled people from all across the U.S., joining hands in protest against the war and calling for a declaration of peace. Religious leaders in the garments of their denominations read scripture and called for the “beating of swords into plowshares” and “spears into pruning hooks.” Capitol Police repeatedly warned the group to disperse. Finally, as the police with fists full of plastic handcuffs encircled the protest to initiate arrests, a spontaneous die-in began with one person after another falling to the floor. Those arrested were accompanied by hundreds of on-lookers, mostly Senate office staff lining the balconies as the reading of the names of the dead continued. Hundreds more people were outside the buildings, some arrested for refusing to move from the steps of the Russell Senate Building as well as others along the path leading to the Capitol itself where protestors carried a coffin and photos of those killed in Iraq.

This demonstration at the Senate office buildings on September 26, 2006 was preceded the week before with arrests outside the White House and followed the next day with arrests outside the Rayburn House Office Building. The White House events initiated the Declaration of Peace’s Week of Action, not only in Washington, DC, but all around the country as well as solidarity actions in Australia, Italy, and Puerto Rico. Over 375 separate actions took place in nearly every state across the country, including vigils, peace concerts, teach-ins, closing down military recruiting stations, calling congressional representatives, protesting corporations profiting from the war (such as Bechtel), and risking

arrest by civil disobedience. Over 265 people were arrested in 22 cities.

The Declaration of Peace campaign is a nationally coordinated, grassroots effort that embodied this conviction: If the people lead, the leaders will follow. Some of the coalition groups include Pace E Bene, American Friends Service Committee, United for Peace and Justice, Network of Spiritual Progressives, Global Exchange, US Labor against the War, Buddhist Peace Fellowship, Baptist Peace Fellowship, Catholics for Peace and Justice, The Shalom Center, and many more. The campaign calls on the U.S. Congress to end the occupation of Iraq and begin a comprehensive plan for peace. The Week of Action resulted from the failure of the U.S. Congress to meet the Declaration of Peace deadline of September 21st, the International Day of Peace. Months before this deadline, US citizens around the country met with their Senators and House Representatives to invite them to join the campaign for peace by signing the Declaration of Peace Congressional Pledge.

The Pledge commits the Congressional leaders to support the 8 Principles of Peace including: 1) rapid withdrawal of US troops and coalition forces, with no future redeployments, 2) no permanent US military bases in Iraq, 3) support for an Iraqi led peace process, including a peace conference to shape post-occupation transition, 4) return of Iraqi control over its oil resources and the political and economic life of the nation, 5) reparations and reconstruction to address the US invasion, occupation, and 13 years of sanctions, 6) establish a “peace dividend” for social needs in the US, 7) increased support for US veterans, and 8) no so-called “preventive” war against Iran or any other nation. Eleven members of Congress have signed the Pledge, while many others have given their verbal support and point to similar resolutions they’ve signed in congress.

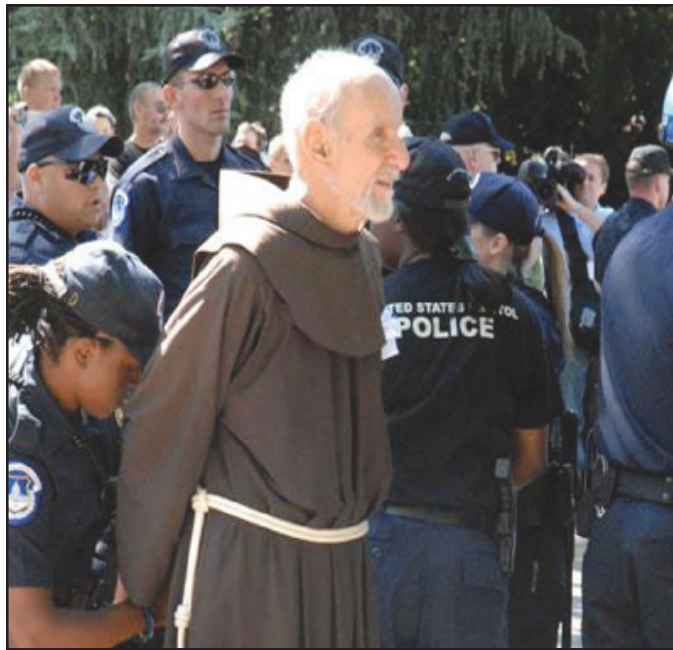
The Declaration of Peace was remarkable in three respects. First, it was an explicitly nonviolent campaign in which all participants committed themselves to Nonviolent Guidelines for any Declaration of Peace action. These guidelines included upholding an attitude of openness and respect toward all, no use of verbal or physical violence toward any person, no destruction of property, and acceptance of the consequences of our actions. Perhaps as a result of these actions, substantive and productive dialogue was possible between dissenting sides, including Congressional staff as well as arresting police and undercover intelligence officers. In these conversations, many of those who work for the government shared their internal conflict between official duties to uphold the war and personal convictions to seek peace.

A second aspect is the participation of official religious leadership, breaking the silence and declaring public support for peace. Nearly half of the Campaign's 500 endorsing organizations came from the faith-based community, including both large national organizations as well as individual congregations. Religious leadership participated in the congressional delegations prior to the September 21 deadline, spoke from the pulpit of the abiding human need for peace, and initiated the actions at the Senate office buildings with an inter-faith ceremony with leaders of Buddhist, Christian, Jewish and Islamic faiths.

A final aspect is the geographic and political inclusivity of the campaign. Supporters are from every single state, with over 16,000 people signing the Declaration of Peace pledging to take nonviolent steps in calling on Congress to act. Actions took place not only in the largest metropolitan areas, but also in small towns and communities, such as Salina, Kansas, where local organizing has included hunger fasts, parades, teach-ins, drive-by protests outside the local military base, and a song dedicated to the campaign. The Declaration of Peace has remained non-partisan with participation from all political parties, including Democrats, Republicans, and Greens. Veterans groups have joined in with endorsements from Veterans for Peace, Gold Star Families, Military Families Speak Out, and Iraq Veterans Against the War.

The Declaration of Peace campaign continues until the objective of a just and comprehensive plan for peace in Iraq is implemented. The pledge called for the plan to be established and activated by Sept. 21st, 2006 and completed by March 19th, 2007. The coalition continues to gather, plan,

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Franciscan Peace Activist Father Louis Vitale being arrested in Washington, D.C. Photo by Ted Stein.

and participate in nonviolent resistance across the country, especially gearing up for March 19th if the situation in Iraq continues. Directly following the Week of Action, groups mobilized to make the Fall national elections a referendum on the war. With the new Congress, organizers are appealing for a new beginning of an end to the U.S.-led occupation. The campaign also supports efforts to meet needs of returning Iraq war veterans, preparation for potential civil disobedience through nonviolence training, and divesting from corporate interests that have benefited from war.

Organizers are also beginning to reach out to US government leadership to support

the drafting of legislation and policy that can lead to a long-awaited for and universally supported official declaration of peace. Some members of the coalition have issued a "mandate for peace" for people to sign and send to congress. This mandate calls on congress "in its earliest days to pass legislation requiring the prompt removal of US troops from Iraq and discontinuous funding for military purposes in Iraq except for the safe withdrawal of all US troops."

"This has been an opportunity to 'declare peace' in a public way using the most powerful language we have at our disposal: our own spirited bodies."

-Ken Butigan, *Pace e Bene*

According to Ken Butigan of Pace e Bene, a national organizer for the Declaration of Peace: "Far too often, we find ourselves declaring war: with ourselves, in our families, between our communities, against other nations and against the earth. The Declaration of Peace has been an opportunity

to 'declare peace' in a public way using the most powerful language we have at our disposal: our own spirited bodies. Thousands of people across the United States took action with the Declaration of Peace to say in an unmistakable way that now is the time to support a new course on Iraq for a just and lasting peace."

Jennifer Kuiper is Executive Director of the Metta Center for Nonviolence Education in Berkeley, Calif. and a national organizer for the Declaration of Peace.

Resources:

Declaration of Peace: www.declarationofpeace.org
Pace e Bene: www.pacebene.org
Veterans for Peace: www.veteransforpeace.org
United for Peace and Justice: www.unitedforpeace.org
US Labor Against War: www.uslaw.org
American Friends Service Committee: www.afsc.org
Mandate for Peace: www.mandateforpeace.org

A LONGING FOR COURAGE: THE DECLARATION OF PEACE

A Reflection

BY ELI SASARAN MCCARTHY

Although the representatives of the U.S. citizens, i.e. the U.S. Congress, never officially “declared war” on Iraq, a broad coalition of U.S. citizens recently “declared peace.” Let us explore the sources of this longing...

When the tears keep pouring out...when the fear of the final day and the final breath chills ones bones...when the distrust of a government created by and aligned with a foreign military segregates families and communities...in this space one may begin to empathize with the daily life of most people of Iraq.

When the loneliness of being so far from family permeates one’s activity...when the suspicion and distrust of nearly everyone without an American uniform weighs even more on one’s psyche than the weight of arms...when the primary activity is intimidation, coercion, and violence; in this space one may begin to empathize with most soldiers from the U.S.

When 46.6 million (15.9% of) Americans lack access to health care¹ ...when 37 million (12.7% of) Americans are below the poverty level with the number rising each of the years between 2000-2004² ...when over 727,000 Americans are homeless³ ...in this space one may begin to empathize with people who are poor in America.

Arising from these initial tastes of empathy, shall we continue clinging to such a society, to such a becoming for human beings? What do their voices say? 85% to 90% of Iraqis,⁴ 72% of U.S. troops,⁵ and 66% of American people⁶ say ‘no’ and see another way without the U.S. troops in Iraq. The chorus is singing “turn your swords into ploughshares and your spears into pruning hooks.” In the midst of the suffocating residue of another declaration of war, the hearts and voices for lasting peace are declaring, yes, declaring peace!

This chorus represents a “freedom from” the illusion that we’re stuck between ‘lethal force’ and ‘cutting and running.’ This illusion arises

from a paradigm of violence. In contrast, the chorus declaring peace offers a “freedom for” the cultivation of empathy, especially for the people of Iraq and the U.S. soldiers. Arising from empathy, we begin to hear the voices; we begin to imagine an Iraqi-led peace process; we begin to commit to solidarity, especially with the suffering by offering reparations and reconstruction to the people of Iraq, along with increased support for traumatized U.S. veterans.

In the U.S. a coalition of over 500 peace and justice groups organized the “Declaration of Peace”⁷ and recently (Sept. 21) offered a week of focused resistance to both enter into and illuminate this suffering. A unique characteristic of this coalition is the significant number of groups oriented toward a religious way of life, which offers a fertile ground for the cultivation of empathy and a re-imagining of courage. The Declaration of Peace Pledge is a commitment to take non-violent steps for a comprehensive, concrete, and rapid plan to end the war in Iraq. (See pg. 20 for more facts about the activities and the eight-point pledge.)

If the troops begin pulling out, violence may linger or even spike in the short-term. However, the force of cooperation will have more fertile ground to grow. Distrust will diminish when we: remove our concrete ability to threaten the people

of Iraq; affirm the autonomy of Iraqis to act on conscience; generate more effective reconstruction by offering contracts to Iraqi companies; empower Iraqis to supervise the reconstruction efforts; and allow them to embrace the gifts they are as humans. In all, such a change will illuminate both their and our human dignity. The voices of Iraqis say that 61% approve of attacks on Americans in Iraq (primarily military, business persons, politicians) and 78% think the U.S. presence is fueling rather than suppressing the insurgency.⁸

As the recent elections demonstrated, the U.S. seems ready for radical change with a new party in control of Congress. A poll issued



A Declaration of Peace activist being arrested in Washington, D.C. during a die-in

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on Oct. 24th before the election indicated that 20% think we're not winning the war.⁹ Yet, even this question, this notion of 'winning or losing,' maintains our enslavement to the paradigm of violence.

We must ask 'who are we becoming?' The trauma and dehumanization of the Iraqi people (especially the poor), of American soldiers and vets, and of the poor in America is dishearteningly obvious. A moment for courage is upon us -- a courage to enter boldly into a new paradigm. We seek a courage that creates a space in Iraq and in the U.S. for conflict transformation, not merely an absence of war. We seek a courage that goes beyond 'fight or flight'/'win' or 'lose' scenarios. We seek a courage that stays involved, enters into the chaos, and creates the conditions for accountability, healing and reconciliation within Iraq, within the U.S., and between Iraq and the U.S. We seek a courage that arises to a justice known as restorative justice, similar to the impetus for truth and reconciliation commissions. Yes, we seek a courage that declares peace!

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- 3 http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2005-10-11-homeless-cover_x.htm
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- 5 Le Moyne College/Zogby International 2/06; <http://www.uslaboragainstawar.org/article.php?id=10308>
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- 7 www.declarationofpeace.org
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COMBATANTS FOR PEACE:

A New Path to Peace and Justice in Israel/Palestine

MATTHEW TAYLOR

It's one thing for combatants locked in battle to set down their guns and refuse to fight. It's a whole new reality when those refusers, from both sides, work together to untangle the mess that got them onto the battlefield in the first place.

That's exactly what Combatants for Peace (CFP) is attempting to do. The organization grew out of the Israeli *Refusnik* Movement (covered extensively in *PeacePower*, Summer 2005). Dozens of former Israeli soldiers, pilots, and reserves associated with the Israeli Defense Force, as well as Palestinians who had fought for organizations such as the Fatah al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, founded the new group. Their mission is to use exclusively non-violent means to end all forms of violence, end Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories, and establish a Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel. They seek to provide a productive alternative for young people, in place of militarism and violent strife, and work for reconciliation between the two peoples. Without reconciliation, a political, elite-driven "peace agreement" can never bring sustainable peace.

FROM SUSPICION TO TRUST

The group started tentatively with secret meetings. According to YNet, "Some members couldn't speak, they just stared at each other - the Israeli side wary it was a trap and the Palestinians suspicious that the men facing them were undercover agents from the Israeli security services. However, when they were ready to speak, they did so with complete honesty, sharing stories that ultimately led them to mutual trust."¹ Meeting and talking to 'the other side' helped everybody understand how much they share in common as human beings. The organization went public with a "liberation gathering" in East Jerusalem in April 2006, which coincided with both the Jewish Passover holiday and Palestinian Prisoners Day. CFP's members now travel around the holy land and the world to spread the group's message.

CHANGING HEARTS AND POLICY

CFP's work to engage the public is effective both on a person-to-person level and at the political level. Palestinian Osama Karsh says that he now believes the two sides "should educate the next generation for peaceful coexistence, so

as not to repeat the mistakes of past generations.”² For Karsh’s daughter, one of the meetings was the first time she’d met Israelis “other than soldiers at checkpoints, who she had learned to



Souliman al-Khatib Palestinian member, Combatants for Peace

“We dream of living together, Palestinians and Syrians and Israelis and people from all over the Middle East. I was born in 1972 – same as Yonatan. I grew up under the Israeli Occupation,

in a village between Jerusalem and Ramallah surrounded by four Israeli settlements. It was important for us to challenge the occupation, to raise the Palestinian flag inside our schools. We want to live a normal life.

We created a student group to struggle, to throw stones and Molotov cocktails, to take weapons from the Israeli soldiers. I went to jail at age 14, and spent 10 years and 5 months. I participated in a hunger strike for 10 days when I was 15 years old. It was really difficult for me. They tried to kill the spirits of the prisoners, but we became even stronger. We think our stomachs are stronger than their weapons and we feel that we are right and they are wrong. They don’t follow the Geneva Conventions regarding prisoners’ rights, and they don’t even respect Israeli law in the territories occupied in 1967.

After I was released from jail, I went on a trip to Antarctica to live with Israelis and other Palestinians in a small ship for 35 days. The organization that sponsored the trip wanted to know ‘Can they live together without fighting?’ It was not fun, but a political excursion, and it was good to talk about all the issues with an open mind. Afterwards, we established the Palestinian Center for Peace and Dialogue.

I read about Yonatan and the pilots’ refusal letter in the newspaper, and met with this new group. The initial meetings were the most difficult of my life. We met soldiers we know from the checkpoints.

The problem is not just politics – we don’t know about the needs, background, and culture of the other side. We have to find a way to share the country, there’s no other solution to the conflict.”

hate while her father was sitting out his jail sentence.”³ The Jerusalem Post reports that the Israeli refusniks had a “telling effect” on the thinking of former prime minister Ariel Sharon, and influenced his decision to withdraw settlers from Gaza in 2005.⁴ (Although many say the increased rate of settlement growth in the West Bank rendered the Gaza withdrawal of minor import).

It’s hard to say if CFP has the potential to ever achieve its goals, but the recent history of military refusal indicates it’s possible. Perhaps the most profound achievement of historical combat refusal occurred in the early 1970s, when objectors may well have ended the Vietnam War (documented by the film “Sir! No Sir!”). U.S. pilots refused to bomb the Vietnamese people, and the government pulled the plug on the operation.

OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES, ACTION

Although CFP currently consists of nearly 150 members from both sides, Israeli CFP member Yonatan Shapira speculates that number could be much larger – “dozens or hundreds of thousands” -- if they can attract the “gray refusers” to join. Gray refusers are those who privately agree with the sentiments of Israeli refusniks, but “don’t want to suffer the consequences of speaking out,” and simply find an excuse to avoid military service. Israeli philosophy professor Assa Kasher estimates that for every declared draft resister, there are 10 draft-dodgers or gray refusers.⁵

Shapira and Palestinian CFP member Souliman al-Khatib personally advocate boycotts to help end the occupation, although they make the distinction that boycotts should be targeted against Israel’s government, military, and corporations that support the occupation, not the Israeli people. In a truly nonviolent campaign, one always “separates the oppressor from their behavior.” Al-Khatib mentions the struggle for justice in South Africa for inspiration, and Shapira describes conditions in the occupied territories as “Apartheid.”

Shapira also emphasizes the importance of U.S. citizens, especially Jews, pressuring the U.S. government to change its foreign policy. He states emphatically, “Israel is like the 51st star on your flag. We get three to five billion dollars every year, much of which is military support, and we need to cut this immediately. It is harming our lives.”

Both agree that a two-state solution is necessary, with the Palestinian state consisting of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem. However, they hope that in the future, the land will someday be one state of all of its people—in the words of al-Khatib, like South Africa.

Both emphatically stated that “Dialogue alone without the commitment to struggle for change only serves the occupation, it can make you part of the occupation and the system that’s causing so much suffering to so many people.” Members of CFP have taken concrete steps by participating in Palestinian-led nonviolent direct action against Israel’s wall that confiscates Palestinian farmland (see PeacePower, Winter 2006 and Summer 2006, for more details on the anti-wall struggle in villages such as Budrus and Bil’in). Perhaps CFP could draw on the history of successful nonviolent movements to engage in other creative actions, such as organizing a massive march from one end of the West Bank

to the other, en route refusing to cooperate with any of the checkpoints that are internal to the West Bank and accepting the full consequences of the action.

A REAL ALTERNATIVE?

Shapira says, "We want to create an alternative, so that young people on both sides can join us instead of army or militia groups." Shapira's idea is both a challenge and opportunity—what will CFP do that will provide people with a comprehensive alternative to military activities?

As Tal Palter-Palman proposed in her initial report on the refusnik movement, CFP members could organize a binational "nonviolent army," modeled after Gandhi's "Shanti Sena" peace army, to protect the civilians of both sides of the conflict (with more attention to the Palestinians as the oppressed/occupied party). Recently (November 2006), Palestinian civilians managed to halt Israeli air strikes in the Gaza Strip by surrounding the targeted homes with their own bodies.⁶ If CFP members were to practice such direct nonviolent intervention, not only might it "succeed" in stopping attacks, but it also might work on a deeper level to persuade skeptical "extremists" such as Israeli settlers and militant members of Hamas and Islamic Jihad of the power and righteousness of CFP's vision.

TOWARD A NONVIOLENT FUTURE

Some members of CFP are "selective refusers" who would fight in a war under certain conditions, and others joined the group because they have concluded that violence will solve nothing. For others, their work within CFP may represent a deeper and more conscious commitment to the principles of nonviolence. Shapira says that the struggle is not only for Palestinian liberation, but also "liberation for Israelis from being occupiers." This is highly reminiscent of the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who famously said that he was struggling for freedom for both blacks and freedom for whites from oppressing blacks in the U.S.

According to Palestinian Mohamed Asayad, "God has written that this land was given to two peoples to live on it side by side."⁷ As more Palestinians and Israelis come to realize they have no choice but to live together, perhaps like Yonatan and Souliman they will even decide that they want to live together—and be willing to do the hard work and make the sacrifices for it to happen.

Resources and References:

Combatants for Peace: www.combatantsforpeace.org
Webcast video of Yonatan and Souliman (RealMedia):
Visit <http://webcast.berkeley.edu>, click "events" and search for Combatants for Peace. (Edited transcripts of their remarks appear in this article.)

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7 Ehrlic.

Yonatan Shapira Israeli member, Combatants for Peace



"In my childhood, I learned about Israel's beautiful democracy with peace, equality, justice, and freedom. But I wasn't aware that at the same time, three and one half million Palestinians were living without all these beautiful values. I eventually realized it was impossible to want peace and to continue to oppress millions of people, to put them in prison, to kill them and to stop them at checkpoints and to do all these horrible things.

Everything we (Souliman and I) do is out of love for our country, out of our connection to our Jewish and Muslim and Christian traditions. Everything I say is out of love and real concern for the Israeli and Palestinian people.

I was born on an Air Force base, my father was a squadron commander in the Yom Kippur war, and I became a pilot. But I didn't know the whole story. If you learn about the Israeli Independence Day but not about the *Naqba* [the "Catastrophe" of 1948 when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians became refugees--ed], it is biased history, it's half true, it's indoctrinating you to think in a certain way.

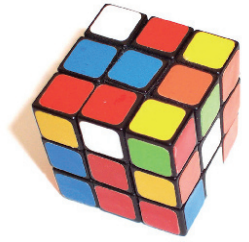
I flew Black Hawk helicopter rescue missions, to take injured civilians to hospitals. When I wasn't in uniform I protested the occupation. But eventually I realized that we are part of the occupation. During the second Intifada, the Israeli government started the policy of 'targeted assassinations,' and in one such operation they sent an F16 in the middle of the night to drop a one-ton bomb on the home of a Hamas commander in the Gaza Strip. Fourteen innocent civilians died, including nine children. These are war crimes. Dropping bombs on a densely populated area is as terrible as suicide bombings on buses.

We are facing a catastrophe. People are being killed every day. We want and need you to join our struggle. Nonviolent actions achieve nothing without the participation of the public and the international community."

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PEACE GAMES

A Constructive Program for Nonviolence Education

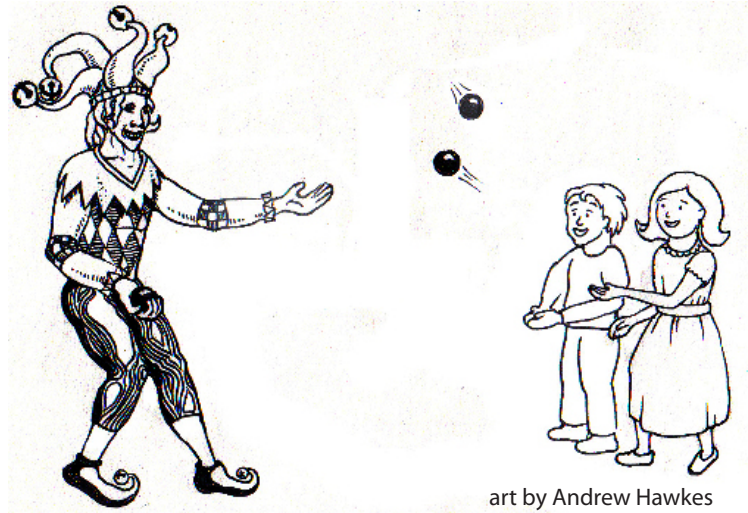


BY AMY ELMGREN

As Anita Remignanti states, "Children are potentially the light of the world and they are our hope as future peacekeepers of the world."¹ However, the violent aspects of popular culture and society today often downplay childish creativity and innocence in favor of gender stereotypes, war games, and isolating television shows and movies. In addition, children are urged more and more to compete with one another even in their earliest years of school, instead of learning the integrative value of cooperation. Everyday, our youth are victims of violence, witnesses to violence, and sometimes even perpetrators. According to statistics, 14 children each day are killed with a handgun; 315 young people are arrested daily for committing a violent crime; and a typical child witnesses an overwhelming 10,000 acts of violence on television before she or he enters school.² It is crucial, therefore, to remember that violence is a learned behavior, not an inherent one. If we want future generations to have peace of mind and healthy relationships instead of material success at the expense of all else, innovative and constructive education programs can create an alternative to the current system. One such program that works to harness children's natural cooperative and creative tendencies is called "Peace Games."

According to the program's website, "Peace Games imagines a world where every child has the skills, knowledge, supportive relationships, and opportunities to prevent violence and build safer communities. A world where individuals and institutions believe in the power of young people and that violence – in all of its forms – can be prevented. Peace Games believes that this goal is best achieved by building the capacity of schools and community groups to implement holistic, peace and justice education programs."³ This program builds upon the idea that children do not have to be society's victims of violence; rather, they have a unique capability to act as agents in creating peace.

So far, all evidence indicates that this innovative program is meeting its goals of producing knowledgeable peacemakers.



art by Andrew Hawkes

The goals of Peace Games are to empower children with the skills, knowledge, relationships, and opportunities to be peacemakers; to engage all community members (students, families, teachers, volunteers, organizations, and businesses) to support children as peacemakers; to inspire a new generation of educators and activists; and lastly, to demonstrate that youth can be influential peacemakers rather than the passive victims of a violent culture.

Guided by a unique K-8 curriculum, the children in Peace Games focus on four different areas in their education as peacemakers: knowledge, skills, relationships, and opportunities. In cultivating their knowledge, the children learn to be problem-solvers and are instructed in all of the state academic frameworks, especially language arts, literacy, social studies, health, and fine arts—areas that can be neglected in schools that focus on math and science. While they are learning practical knowledge, the children also learn to communicate effectively with one another and solve conflicts in a cooperative, nonviolent manner. This demonstrates a main principle

of conflict transformation: that instead of being an obstacle to peaceful progress, conflict can be viewed as an opportunity to improve relationships and promote mutual growth. In working through their conflicts together, the children in Peace Games partner schools are also learning to use non-violence as an active force for change.

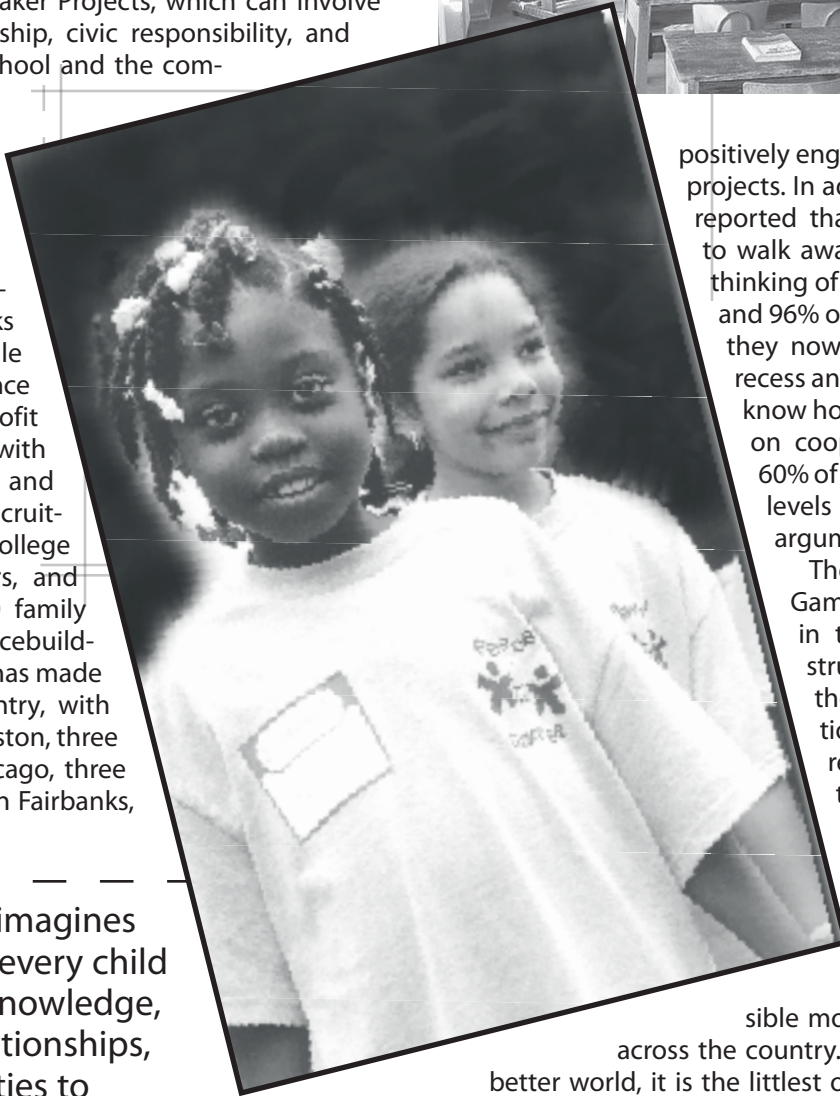
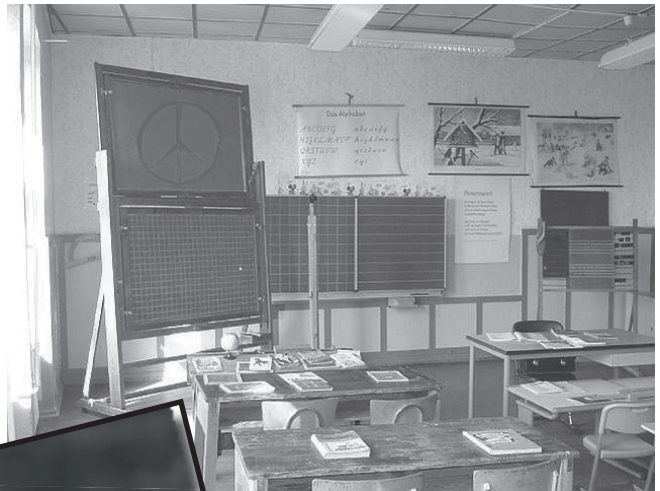
The Peace Games program fosters interpersonal relationships between teachers and students within the school and relationships between the school and the community through community service and social action. Finally, students are given the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and knowledge and build upon their relationships through individual Peacemaker Projects, which can involve student-to-student mentorship, civic responsibility, and the improvement of the school and the community.

Dr. Francelia Butler created Peace Games in 1992 as an opportunity for children to share games, laughter, communication, friendship, and conflict resolution—"the building blocks for a peaceful future"⁴—while receiving an education. Since its foundation, this non-profit organization has worked with over 20,000 elementary and middle school students, recruited and trained over 2,100 college and community volunteers, and worked with almost 9,000 family members to encourage peacebuilding at home. Peace Games has made an impact across the country, with seven partner schools in Boston, three in Los Angeles, one in Chicago, three in New York City, and two in Fairbanks, Arkansas.

"Peace Games imagines a world where every child has the skills, knowledge, supportive relationships, and opportunities to prevent violence and build safer communities."

So far, all evidence indicates that this innovative program is meeting its goals of producing knowledgeable peacemakers. According to data from a 2004 evaluation of Peace Games schools in Boston and Los Angeles, over 90% of students reported that Peace Games had helped improve their academics, empathy, and peacemaking skills (communication, cooperation, conflict resolution and engagement), become

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positively engaged in service learning projects. In addition 78% of students reported that they are more likely to walk away from a fight without thinking of themselves as cowards, and 96% of students reported that they now include peers in their recess and classroom groups and know how to work well together on cooperative teams. Finally, 60% of teachers noted reduced levels of student fights and arguments.

The development of Peace Games is an important step in the creation of a constructive culture based on the principles of cooperation and creative conflict resolution. In the years to come, this program will continue to serve as a progressive and dynamic alternative to standard education, and will hopefully serve as one possible model for other programs

across the country. After all, in building a better world, it is the littlest ones who can make the biggest difference.

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WHY PEACE EDUCATION? AND WHAT IS IT ANYWAY?

A Letter to a Friend¹

BY PIETERNEL DE BIE, ED. M.

Dear Friend,

Public debate emphasizes the negative, powerless, and passive connotations surrounding the word “peace.” Faced with an often-nonchalant rejection of our human ability to choose nonviolent strategies, I struggle under the pressure of wanting to defend this ambiguous ideal. I often feel confronted with my own incompetence to eloquently explain why I study Peace Education. It is from this struggle that I write this letter. I will share my views with you, without imposing them. I do not claim to be neutral or objective, however, as “neutrality is just being what the system asks us to be.”²

Peace is not something inert. Rather, it is an intensely active and dynamic process.³ It is both negative (the absence of violence) and positive (global justice) peace that peace educators strive for. Peace Education is not easily defined, however. The diverse cultural contexts in which it is practiced, the different understandings of the concept of peace, its various teaching approaches, and the range of sub-fields it consists of make it difficult to delineate the field.⁴ Betty Reardon provides a comprehensive definition:

*Peace education is the transmission of knowledge about requirements of, the obstacles to, and possibilities for achieving and maintaining peace, training in skills for interpreting the knowledge, and the development of reflective and participatory capacities for applying the knowledge to overcoming problems and achieving possibilities.*⁵

Challenging the belief that society and human beings are inherently violent is fundamental within the field of Peace Education. You are right, in history and all around us we see “evidence” of the violent nature of human life. We live in a world of “peacelessness.”⁶ You might say, look at history, look at the media, look at the statistics: we are a violent species. Does this tangible culture of violence imply, however, that violence is innate to our being?

Have you ever heard of the Seville Statement on Violence?⁷ It is a brief and coherent declaration, created by various scientists from all over the world, that challenges commonly held beliefs about violence. In short, the document states that war is not inevitable. Violence, rather, is learned, “essentially based on modeled behavior” of peers, families, communities, and media.⁸ And just as violence can be taught, so can peace.⁹

Reardon defines violence as follows, “intentionally inflicted harm that is avoidable and unnecessary to the achievement

of just and legitimate purposes.”¹⁰

Violence is expressed not only through our actions, but also through our speech and thoughts.¹¹ Eknath Easwaran explains, “most of what we call violence is in the form of action... But as long as our minds harbor violent thoughts, that incipient violence will find its way somehow into our speech and behavior.”¹² As the UNESCO Constitution famously states, “war begins in the minds of men.”¹³

The point is that violence is a choice. We might have aggressive tendencies, but how we act upon these is entirely up to us. Take the Native American Legend of Two Wolves:

An old Cherokee is teaching his grandson about life. “A fight is going on inside me,” he said to the boy. “It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One is evil - he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.” He continued, “The other is good - he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. The same fight is going on inside you - and inside every other person, too.” The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, “Which wolf will win?” The old Cherokee simply replied, “The one you feed.”¹⁴

Moreover, although it may seem to achieve some of its immediate goals, violence often has unintended and unwanted consequences – or “hidden costs.”¹⁵ But “violence will be used in conflicts as long as people believe it will help them win,” according to Peter Ackerman and Jack DuVall.¹⁶ They assert, “the greatest misconception about conflict is that violence is always the ultimate form of power, that no other method of advancing a just cause or defeating injustice can surpass it.”¹⁷ However, a rhetoric of power¹⁸ can also be used for a different cause, nonviolence.¹⁹ Nonviolent conflict requires far more courage and perseverance than the use of violence. I believe it is much more courageous to turn the other cheek or refuse to give up your seat in the bus for a White man.





Defying learned behavior is not so easy, however. It requires a lot of effort to unlearn the socialization we undergo, which makes us unquestioningly accept the culture of violence. Lanzo Del Vasto exhorts,

*The good news, the only eternally good thing, is that another road is open. We must not discard it as being too easy: the road to peace is not restful!...Neither must we turn away from it because we believe it to be impossible, nor say with disastrous modesty, "we are not saints." It is a question of being men, of not perishing body and soul.*²⁰

To rephrase Del Vasto, it is a question of being human. Knowing, really knowing, the injustices and inequalities in today's world, how can we do anything else but fight for a better society? Peace education, working with youth to empower them, is for me a way to act, to assert agency.²¹

But how can we uproot this idea, that conflict equals violence, that "human being" equals violent? Miles Horton and Paulo Freire explain that today it is not easy to "embolden people to act."²² Ian Harris and Mary Lee Morrison add, "for peace education to be effective, it must transform ways of thinking that have been developed over the millennia of human history."²³ Existing peace education efforts have yet to develop "a pedagogy or an educational scheme of the transformational dimension necessary to a culture of peace."²⁴ Peace calls for nothing less than "a transformation of human society and all its institutions...which in turn necessitate[s] a transformation of human consciousness."²⁵

The primary purpose of peace education should therefore be to build people's capacities to recognize, confront, and transform the culture of violence.²⁶ "Central to such a challenge is providing students with the skills, knowledge, and authority they need to inquire and act upon what it means to live in a substantive democracy...to fight deeply rooted injustices in a society and world founded on systematic economic, racial, and gendered inequalities."²⁷ Horton and Freire remind us that such social change cannot be forced upon people.²⁸ Peace education should therefore be student-centered, a process of mutual learning among students and educator.

Peace educators face many external challenges posed by society, the school environment, and students themselves. The greatest challenge for peace educators, however, is to "be the peace they preach." This cannot be just an intellectual enterprise. Teaching peace must involve a "holy war in the soul";²⁹ a searching within for the things you are trying to teach. Wouldn't it be hypocritical to teach peace without an honest attempt to achieve it yourself? As Del Vasto states, "before you can spread peace on earth, you must have brought it into your own home, and there can be no peace in your home if there is none in your heart."³⁰

This principle forces us to take personal responsibility for what is going on in the world. "Instead of reproducing the

dominant ideology, an educator can denounce it."³¹ I struggle with this ideal and in a way I feel hypocritical writing this letter. Am I the peace I preach? Definitely not, but I am working on it. And this is, I guess, my main point. You have to start making inner changes before you can ever achieve any changes outside of yourself. I believe in this very deeply and to me it is fundamental to the study of peace education. This path demands courage, persistence, and conviction. Daniel Schugurensky writes about Freire, "as a truly revolutionary humanist, he never lost faith in the capacity of human beings to build a better world together."³² I try to cultivate that same faith.

Peace,
Pieternel

Teachers College, Columbia University

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ISRAELI JEWS AND PALESTINIANS BUILD AN “OASIS OF PEACE”

Real Peace Has to be Made with Enemies

BY LORENZO PORTA

Can Jews and Palestinians live in peace? Neve Shalom~Wahat al-Salam (NS~WAS), which translates into “Oasis of Peace” in Hebrew and Arabic, shows that it’s not only possible, but it’s happening right now. NS~WAS is a co-operative village where Jews and Palestinian Arabs with Israeli citizenship live together. It has developed a community based on mutual acceptance and respect. Democratically governed and owned by its members, the community is not affiliated with any political party or movement.

Equidistant from Jerusalem and Tel Aviv/Jaffa in Israel, the village was founded in the early ‘70s by Bruno Hussar, a Jewish French man, who was born in Egypt and became a Catholic priest as an adult. He helped build a living bridge between different cultures and religions. Currently more than 50 families have settled in the village, balanced between Jewish and Palestinian ethnic backgrounds, and among people belonging to different religions (Jewish, Muslim, Christian) as well as atheists. The land is leased from the adjacent Latrun Monastery.

NS~WAS gives practical expression to its vision through various branches. The project of creating an educational framework that would express NS~WAS ideals of co-existence and equality was born together with the community’s first children. The idea took shape in the form of a bi-national nursery, quickly followed by a kindergarten and a primary school where the educational system is grounded in a complete Jewish/Palestinian bilingual program. Hebrew and Arabic languages are educational media for all the children. Both Jewish and Palestinian teachers speak exclusively in their mother tongue to all the children. Each child’s identity is nurtured by imparting knowledge of his/her culture and tradition while facilitating respect for the culture and tradition of the other people.

After several years of operation, the community’s educational institutions were opened to include children from outside the village. At present, the school and kindergarten have an enrollment of less than 200 children, 90% of which come from surrounding Arab and Jewish communities. Since 1997 the primary school obtained the status of “experimental school” and in 2000 it was fully incorporated into the national school system, as an official extra-regional school, while maintaining all the qualities that make it a unique institution.



Art by Suleiman Mansour

The Junior high school, opened since September 2003, remains independent from the state educational system. Although successful as an educational alternative for Arab students, this Junior high school has not yet attracted significant numbers of Jewish children. This perhaps demonstrates the inequalities existing in secondary education for Arab and Jewish children

in the area, but it is also important evidence of the challenging educational project exposed to the pressures of a socially and politically strained situation.

NS~WAS is not a paradise without conflicts – no place is! (Conflict can be viewed not as an obstacle to a fulfilling life, but an opportunity to grow and change.) What is special about the residents of NS~WAS is that they work to cultivate the consciousness and skills to deal with a long-term conflict and they try to manage, transform, and humanize it. Through training and practice, conflict skills become a life-long peaceful commitment. The members of the community talk about peace in a way that helps any observer empathically understand the conflict in which they live. Israeli Jews and Palestinians have suffered through many wars and the most recent war between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon has been a hard acid test for the members of the village. There has been a very frank debate among the villagers and the supporters. It is amazing that the members of the sides in



6th graders at the Rainbow Gate in Neve Shalom~Wahat al-Salam

the conflict could achieve a very high standard of reciprocal comprehension and recognition.

Rayek Rizek, the Palestinian mayor of the village, refused to take a one-sided position and Abdessalam Najjar, a longterm Palestinian resident, criticized the legitimacy of the use of Katyusha and Kassam missiles, as well as the use of warplanes and tanks in the struggle to free prisoners and hostages. The members of the village joined a demonstration in Tel Aviv during the last days of July demanding an end to the war. Zel Lurie, a prominent member of the American friends of NS~WAS, emphasized the real danger stemming from fundamentalist organizations and States (Hezbollah, Iran, Syria, Hamas) which are opposed to any recognition of Israel and support suicide bombing as a supposedly legitimate means of struggle. When confronted by the aforementioned dangers, many find it hard to conceive of any response other than a military one. Howard Shippin, a member of the NS~WAS public relations staff, replied to Lurie's concerns by emphasizing how vital is to negotiate and strengthen relations between civil society organizations in order to stop Islamic fundamentalism.

During the war crisis, the NS~WAS School for Peace (SFP) got invigorated after a period of inactivity. In the past, thousands of young people - Jews, Arabs and other people from many parts of the world - have received training in conflict management skills. They organized a week of summer holidays for refugee camp children from Tulkarem, Jenin and Yaabad in the West Bank of Palestine. The NS~WAS guest house was full of people who had escaped from the northern area of Israel targeted by Hezbollah's missiles during the war.

NS~WAS has also played host to many peacebuilding events, camps, trainings, and even a major rock concert featuring Roger Waters of Pink Floyd fame in June of 2006 before the war. Waters declared to the overflowing crowd,

www.calpeacepower.org

"Thank you so much for coming to Neve Shalom~Wahat al-Salam, the village of peace.... I may be speaking out of turn, but I believe we need this generation of Israelis to TEAR DOWN THE WALLS and make peace with their neighbours." Waters' statement referred to the wall/fence/barrier Israel recently built in the West Bank that has confiscated large tracts of Palestinian farmland in order to expand Israel's numerous illegal settlements, as well as the psychological walls and barriers that drive the conflict. (See *PeacePower*, Winter 2006 and Summer 2006, for articles on nonviolent resistance to the wall, available at www.calpeacepower.org.)

While the mainstream media usually trumpets the worst aspects of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, there is probably some reason for hope. The daily practice of coexistence and mutual recognition at

NS~WAS is both a valuable approach to grassroots education and a concrete example of peacebuilding. It could have ripple effects on the official decision makers in the Holy Land and all over the Middle East. Many other organizations have



A School for Peace youth encounter

followed this path in different ways, such as Open House in Ramle, organized by Mr. and Mrs. Landau, Hand in Hand, a network of bilingual schools for Palestinians and Jews, and the Parents Circle/Families Forum, composed of Jewish and Palestinian families who have lost loved ones in the conflict.

Are these experiences isolated exceptions or do they foreshadow a brighter future? The answer depends

in part on our support to enlarge the space for bottom-up peacebuilding. Let us unify our efforts to build a network of European and North American organizations that seek to implement the goal of effective mutual recognition. May more "oases of peace" sprout up throughout the Holy Land and all over the Middle East.

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Resources:

Neve Shalom~Wahat al-Salam: www.nswas.org

School for Peace: www.nswas.sfpeace.org

Hand in hand Organization: www.handinhand12.org

Open House: www.openhouse.org.il

Parents Circle Forum: www.parentscircle.israel.net

PARADISE NOW

*In Search of an
Alternative to
Violence*

TAL PALTER-PALMAN

Paradise Now, a Golden Globe Award winner for Best Foreign Language Film, is an outstanding motion picture presenting the dilemmas



Checkpoints and a divided land.

faced by Palestinians who wish to liberate their people and establish a Palestinian state. It is a must-see movie, whether you support or object to suicide bombing as a method to promote the Palestinian cause.

The director of "Paradise Now" presents three days in the lives of Said and Khaled, young Palestinians from Nablus, who volunteer to carry out a suicide bombing mission. The Israeli military occupation affects their lives every day. This includes humiliation at checkpoints, military raids on their city, lack of access to education, and limited economic opportunities. Seeing no positive future, Khaled and Said feel obligated to resist and die for the Palestinian cause.

On the way to carry out the mission with explosives attached to their bodies, Said and Khaled go through an emotional and psychological journey that challenges their belief system, way of life, and political views. However, the director of the film provides no easy answers to the Palestinians' dilemmas or to the question of the morality and effectiveness of suicide attacks.

In the film, Said and Khaled touch on the question of alternative methods to terrorist attacks that can be effective in achieving the Palestinian cause. However, the main alternative to terrorist acts — *nonviolent* struggle — is never mentioned in the film. Suha, a female Palestinian human rights worker, represents the segment of Palestinians who oppose suicide attacks.



Two Palestinians, in suits, sneak through Israel's fence.

Suha believes that suicide bombers do not promote Palestinian liberation, and that on the contrary, they provide Israel with the legitimacy to continue the occupation and win international public support. But will Suha be able to convince Said and Khaled to reconsider carrying out their mission?

In 1987, the Palestinians carried out an almost entirely nonviolent *Intifada* (or "shaking off"), achieving more concrete accomplishments than the Al Aqsa Intifada. Nonviolence enabled the Palestinians to prove beyond doubt that they have been the victims and that Israel is an oppressive force. Suicide attacks and terrorist organizations reversed this achievement. Nonviolence, as used by many liberation movements, is a greater and stronger force than the Israeli army or any other army for that matter. Additionally, nonviolence works in the long-term, which is never the case with violence. Gandhi once wrote, "I object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary; the evil it does is permanent." The achievements of nonviolence are positive and promote no additional pain and suffering that give birth to more violence. In the past, nonviolent followers achieved freedom and rights in their struggles... to name a few, Gandhi's Indian movement, the Anti-Apartheid Movement in South Africa, the American Civil Rights Movement, and the Serbian "Otpor" Resistance that overthrew Slobodan Milošević. Within the past few years Palestinians have begun nonviolent resistance to Israel's wall/barrier that confiscates Palestinian farmland, covered in the Winter 2006 and Summer 2006 issues of *PeacePower*.

The description of the film ends, "Paradise Now lays bare the humanity and the horror for all to see, to ponder...and perhaps to change." May this change be toward nonviolent resistance and a nonviolent and peaceful future.

Suggested Reading:

"Bridging Conflict Resolution and Human Rights: Lessons from Israel/Palestine" by Mohammed Abu-Nimer and Edy Kaufman in: *Human Rights and Conflict Resolution*. Julie Mertus and Jeff Helsing (Eds.) Washington DC: USIP April 2006

Valentine's Day Civil Disobedience:

Exposing the Lie of Homophobia

BY MATTHEW TAYLOR

South Africa recently joined Canada, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Spain in legalizing gay marriage. How could it be that a state that officially dismantled its Apartheid system a quarter century after the Civil Rights Movement is so far out in front of the U.S. on this issue?

Reflecting on what gives me hope for this struggle in the U.S., I hold a special place in my heart for the day almost three years ago when I witnessed a real-life case of nonviolent civil disobedience. On February 12th, 2004, Mayor Gavin Newsom of San Francisco took affirmative, illegal action just in time for Valentine's Day. His administration began issuing marriage licenses and performing wedding ceremonies for lesbian and gay couples who waited in long lines at city hall, despite the wishes of voters who had previously passed a proposition banning same sex marriage in California. Never had I imagined that so many smiling, even ecstatic people would have cause to congregate in a government building.

Newsom made a decision to break the law openly, based on a principled position that the law in question is immoral and abhorrent. His administration wed almost 4,000 couples, and provided momentum for a change in public policy. Since then, the California legislature approved a bill to legalize gay marriage (subsequently vetoed by the Governor). Eventually, I believe the ban will end up in the same rubbish bin as the ban on interracial marriage. A majority of US citizens age 18-29 support lesbian and gay marriage, compared to only 32% of those over age 30. As the younger generation passes on this tolerance to their children, the prejudice is likely to disappear.

The idea that all laws are somehow "right" or "moral" is, if we pause to think about it, preposterous. People have suffered under plenty of laws that were eventually exposed as oppressive and immoral, from slavery to segregation to the denial of women's rights. In many such cases, the majority of citizens were blinded by fear and prejudice, and it took a small, courageous minority to expose the truth for all to see.

So what is going on when someone decides to commit civil disobedience in open defiance of a law they consider unjust? Gandhi would call this an act of searching for or "holding fast" to truth – what he labeled Satyagraha. Usually, Satyagraha is understood to involve the acceptance of self-suffering in order to reach the heart of the oppressor. Although there are

certainly cases where it's necessary to be willing to take on such suffering (and the strict definition of civil disobedience requires "accepting the consequences of one's actions"), in this case perhaps it wasn't necessary. Newsom was able to continue his action for a month before the Governor finally threatened to shut the party down by force. Newsom's choice to back off when he did might have lessened the potential of his actions to embarrass the Governor or turn the action into a power struggle, and thus, from a principled point of view, may have been quite wise. By stepping back, Newsom created the space for the legislature and court system to weigh in on the issue.



Phyllis Lyon (left) and Del Martin, lesbian activists who have been together for 51 years, embrace after their Feb. '04 marriage ceremony in San Francisco. Photo courtesy of San Francisco Chronicle (Liz Mangelsohn)

What Newsom did took courage – none of the national leaders in his political party supported the move at the time, denouncing it as endangering their chances of winning the Presidential election. This makes the action all the more significant, as it was clear from Newsom's statements that it was a choice made out of conviction, a response to the President's anti-gay comments earlier that year.

Newsom said at the time, "California's Constitution leaves no doubts. It leaves no room for any form of discrimination... A barrier to true justice has been removed." (Disclosure: None of my comments should be taken as an endorsement of Newsom. In fact, I canvassed for one of his opponents, and would do so again.)

CONTINUED P. 38

People who are uncomfortable with gay marriage may react to this article with concerns like, "There's no biological/reproductive basis for gay marriage," or "that's not how our society is structured." The point of this article is not to debate the merits of gay marriage, but to examine the dynamics of nonviolent civil disobedience in the context of a struggle for truth and justice. Melanie Judge, program manager for OUT, a gay rights advocacy group, had this to say about South Africa's recent ruling: "What does equality really mean? What does it look like? Equality does not exist on a sliding scale."

In standing with LGBT organizations such as Marriage Equality USA and Soul Force (the latter practices "relentless nonviolent resistance"), Newsom did something concrete to represent a simple truth. He exposed the lie of homophobia in a creative, constructive, and dignified manner. It seems to me that the question about gay marriage ultimately is one about whether or not it's "okay to be gay" in the same sense that "it's okay to be straight." When pictures of the happy couples showed up on the front pages of national newspapers, how could they be viewed as anything but the beautiful human beings they are?

Resources:

Marriage Equality USA: <http://www.marriageequality.org/>
Soul Force: <http://www.soulforce.org/>
San Francisco Chronicle report: <http://tinyurl.com/vgvv3>

THE NONVIOLENT PRINCIPLES OF NATURE

BY SCOTT RILEY

The dominant human culture is currently organized around a “realist” worldview. This paradigm describes the universe as a collection of disconnected entities that share nothing intrinsically in common. This perspective has produced rampant problems. Environmental degradation, state-sponsored violence, terrorism, warfare, violence in schools, and unprecedented economic inequality are all clues that something is not in sync. Realism, both in theory and practice, does not seem to coordinate with the laws of nature. The concepts and practices of nonviolence present humankind with an alternative worldview—a worldview that considers the universe to be fundamentally interconnected. This paradigm seems to mimic nature much more accurately than realism. By examining a few of nature’s laws, we can see which perspective more wholly embodies the laws of nature.

First, let us consider the phenomenon of consciousness. Physicist Maxwell Planck eloquently states: “Consciousness, I regard, as fundamental. I regard matter as a derivative. Everything that exists postulates consciousness.” His definition of consciousness is a certain self-recognition. Thus, he implies that matter and energy arise from or in some way are undergirded by consciousness. Perhaps

...[The] physical universe is actually a sea of swirling, vibratory, and undifferentiated amorphous-ness. What we see as objects are, actually, just concentrated forms of this “quanta” that vary in density and form.

the most helpful aid in conceptualizing this insight is the science of quantum mechanics.

A key facet of quantum mechanics is wave-particle dualism, which professes that energy and matter exhibit characteristics of both waves and particles. This discovery, which was a logical assumption based on Einstein’s photoelectric effect, completely rewrote the physics books. Up until this point, matter and energy were considered to be completely separate. Matter was the car while energy was the gasoline, so to speak. Wave-particle dualism, however, blurred the line between matter and energy. Newtonian physics had no answer for this phenomenon and quickly collapsed, leaving a vacuum within the physics community. One

of the fields that emerged out of this vacuum was quantum mechanics. Quantum mechanics asserts that at the essence of all matter and energy are interconnected quanta. These quanta are said to create a sort of membrane that undulates somewhat like a bed sheet blowing wildly in the wind—the difference being that quantum motion is three-dimensional.

This field recognizes two extremely powerful concepts of reality. First is the image that the physical universe is actually a sea of swirling, vibratory, and undifferentiated amorphous-ness. What we see as objects are, actually, just concentrated forms of this “quanta” that





Consciousness, however, also denotes a sense of self-recognition. Within the animal kingdom, the pervading consciousness is an impulse to self-preserve. Sometimes this impulse is expanded to include offspring or even the species as a whole, but the fact remains that there is always an enemy that must be avoided. This accounts for how animals can both compete and cooperate.

was in college, he participated in a ceremony commemorating Gandhi's death. King studied Gandhi, visited India, and led the Civil Rights Movement. Gandhi was prescient to explain that India would become a model for other nonviolent struggles.



vary in density and form. Secondly, quantum unity suggests the idea of non-locality. Environmentalist David Lorenz calls this the butterfly effect because it implies that "the flap of a butterfly's wings in Brazil can set off a tornado in Texas." Non-locality recognizes that everything in the universe—from the smallest to the largest scale—affects everything else.

At the core of nonviolence is the idea that Gandhi called heart unity. It claims that everyone and everything is united in the deepest and most intense sense of the term. It implies that our perception of separation is a delusion and, due to this, we should treat all beings as we would like to be treated ourselves. Implicit in this perspective is that heart unity practiced somewhere is heart unity practiced everywhere. Heart unity bridges the gap between the oppressor and the oppressed; it finds a common ground where they both can stand. This concept fits very nicely with quantum mechanics and non-locality. In this sense, non-locality can explain why Gandhi, who worked only in India, affected United States history. While Martin Luther King, Jr.

Consciousness, however, also denotes a sense of self-recognition. Within the animal kingdom, the pervading consciousness is an impulse to self-preserve. Sometimes this impulse is expanded to include offspring or even the species as a whole, but the fact remains that there is always an enemy that must be avoided. This accounts for how animals can both compete and cooperate.

They are not predestined for aggression; they simply do what they can to survive. Symbiosis is an example of a biological system illustrating that nature does not suppose only aggression.

It is a relationship in which all organisms help to support each other simultaneously. It is a natural reciprocity. Humans have the unique capability of tuning into the animal consciousness as well as the inclusive, heart unity consciousness. Nonviolence encourages a movement from the former to the latter. It asks individuals to leave the old, disconnected worldview and operate instead within the natural interconnection of the universe. Violence, meanwhile, rejects the idea of heart unity, choosing to ignore the principles that quantum mechanics illustrates.



This baby hippo seems to have taken to the old turtle as a replacement mother.

Another idea of interest is that of correspondence or naturally occurring patterns. At the core of the universe is an undifferentiated unity; however, as consciousness solidifies into energy and matter, patterns emerge. There are many types and they exist regardless of scale. Fractals are one way of conceptualizing this principle. They are illustrations that take an archetypal shape and reproduce that shape on various levels. Depending upon the number of iterations, the image can be very simple or extremely complex. Nature is an unimaginably intricate fractal. It is three-dimensional, operates on a scale that includes everything from atoms to galaxies, and has numerous archetypes. In fact, this amazing complexity increases to such a convoluted extent that it evaporates all distinctions and fades into the amorphous realm of unity that we have already discussed. Nevertheless, the complexity of nature's fractal is not our concern; instead, we must pay attention to the surprising simplicity of its archetypes. All of humans' power over nature is a product of the ability to recognize these patterns.

The first and most palpable pattern is that of cyclical energy. The seasons recur year after year; the sun rises uniformly; water evaporates, and then falls again as rain. As the saying goes, history repeats itself. Cycles illustrate the continual renewal of the ongoing process. Nonviolence also assumes no final goal. As Gandhi stated, "Means are everything." This is not a rhetorical statement—it is the reality of our situation. Nonviolence presumes means are inseparable from ends, aligning itself with this pattern. Violence, meanwhile, diverges from this pattern because it assumes that there is an end that is more important than the means. A bully punches another child in order to reach a goal—whether that is lunch money or a validation of his supremacy. In terms of the war in Iraq, U.S. leaders assume that by waging war, occupation, and torture, democracy and peace will flourish. News of

death squads and civil war illustrates that it is impossible to achieve peace by violent means.

Another pattern (in the phenomenal world, at least) is that of dualism. It exemplifies the fact that the phenomenal world operates in opposites. Black implies white just as in implies the existence of out. With the recollection that unity is at the core of the universe, we also see that all paradoxes can be reconciled. Even a vacuum is a part of the whole. As Gandhi stated, "Truth alone will endure; all the rest will be swept away by the tide of time." Both non-violence and violence work within this pattern because they rely on firm, one-pointed stances. However, they differ in that nonviolence realizes that conflicts are basically superficial, while violence sees conflict as irreconcilable. Nonviolence attempts to find the part of the opponent that is genuine; it does not attempt to polarize the situation further. Nonviolence not only works with the pattern of dualism, but it also works above it. Violence, considering all conflicts

to be a winner-take-all fight, cannot see past this pattern.

The pattern of vibration is also very powerful. It embodies the recognition that everything is in motion. Our image of the quantum bed

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sheet is a way of understanding this law. If any particular subdivision of cloth is examined on the sheet, we will see that it is constantly in motion. Nothing physical is ever completely static. In accordance with this pattern, nonviolence does not fixate upon a concrete objective. Instead, it continually reexamines its methodology. Similarly, violence disagrees with this because it assumes that complete stability can be achieved. The bully believes that he can remain at the top of the food chain forever. If he did realize his essential flux, he might not go on fighting so hard.

All of these laws can also be combined. When we differentiate these patterns it is only for our own understanding. For example, the DNA molecule is a combination of all three of these patterns. If viewed from a bird's eye, the double helix appears as a circle; meanwhile, if viewed from the side, it appears as a wave. When these two patterns are combined into a three-dimensional object, the double helix is born. In nature, all these patterns are merely facets of a single, self-organizing image that perfectly embodies the whole. Realism does not fit within that whole. Perhaps, at one time, it did fit. But its faith in violence and separation has made it parasitic. Just as Newtonian science crumbled when challenged by Einstein's theories, the realist framework cannot stand against principled nonviolence. With its dedication to interconnection and flexibility, nonviolence can lay the groundwork for a new relationship between humans, the earth, animals and each other.