

Newsletter



Alaska Peace Center

Issue 7

Winter 2009-2010

2009 Events Review

November 15

Presentation by Dahr Jamail, independent non-imbedded journalist and peace activist

October 3

*Israel-Palestine: How to Bring Peace
Potluck and discussion with Alison Weir*

August 15

APC Booth at Tanana Valley State Fair

May 13

*Can Obama Really Change U.S. Foreign Policy?
Presentation by Ann Wright, retired army colonel and U.S. diplomat*

May 1

*Media Censorship & the Destruction of Iraq
Presentation by Peter Phillips, Director of Project Censored
Raed Jarrar, Iraqi architect and political analyst*

April 10

Global Candle Light Vigil for the IRAQ Museum.

March 27

*DEW Line Passage: Legacies of Arctic Militarization
Presentation by Stacey Fritz and Ryan Tinsley*

March 18

Local soldiers and their families: Soldiers do have RIGHTS.

March 16

APC opposes Alaska death penalty.

January 19

APC Hosts Civic Service/Celebration of MLK Day.

APC Member in Palestine

Rob Mulford, a local activist for Peace & Justice and Creative Nonviolence, a founding member of North Star Veterans for Peace, and a regular contributor of time and energy to the Alaska Peace Center, is currently in Palestine on a networking trip sponsored by the Industrial Workers of the World. In addition to that valuable work, he is making use of this great opportunity to do some traveling in the area, observing, learning and witnessing for peace. Below are some excerpts from his travels so far:

-compiled by Heather Koponen

Peaceful Friends,

It is lovely here. At the Mount of Olives the local Mosque broadcast its evening prayer...I met fellow Wobblies as well as folks from all parts of the world. All the anxiety I had been feeling is gone. The fear mongering we hear about Palestinians is such nonsense. I have never met a people as beautiful, generous, kind, and friendly.

I visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre where Jesus was buried and looked into the manger where Jesus was born at the Church of the Nativity. Next-door is The Bethlehem Peace Center.

Thursday, November 26, 2009
Palestine, her people and her struggles warm, lift and break the heart all at the same time. Despite 40% unemployment (75% in Gaza), 60% below poverty level,

and constant humiliations of military occupation, people on the street say "Welcome!" Although poor, they still want to feed and give you drink, the best they have. I have been hugged and told I love you by people who are demonized in my country. It nearly brings me to tears.

I have met with labor, youth, political, & social groups. All ask the same thing "Please help us remove this military occupation, its apartheid wall, and checkpoints that are starving us by keeping us from getting to work and stopping us from importing or exporting the things necessary for economy." Communities are isolated from each other by over 700 military checkpoints. I have been through a few of them myself...



Continued on page 2

Palestine, continued

A young man, Hamid, and his lovely 3 yr old daughter Merriam suffered Israel's attack on Gaza only to have to escape Gaza to avoid violence from Hamas. He is Fata. Merriam has cancer and needs to get to a hospital for treatment. I gave him a little money to get to Jordan. Israelis stopped him from crossing the border checkpoint. I wish there was some way I could help...

Lots of sheep, olive trees, grape vines. Near Hebron-over 3,000 yrs ancient-we saw camels. At a checkpoint, one soldier is from the Black Sea in Russia; another, New York. One seemed agitated. I said Shalom. He smiled in return.

I went to Jericho, the oldest city in the world, and the Temptation Monastery, where Jesus fasted 40 days & nights. I felt spiritually energized. At the Dead Sea I waded in water so salty that salt cannot melt in it.

Sunday morning, November 29 I visited East Jerusalem today and witnessed families living on the street in tents who had been evicted from their homes of 60+ years by Israeli settlers. I met an 87 year-old woman who was evicted two days ago. She refused to leave her home and was forced to the ground by soldiers...and got a concussion. The Court, who gave the green light to the settlers to throw her out, was supposed to decide today if she or the settlers had rights to the home in which she has lived since 1957. An observer organization told me that

the Israeli State has plans to demolish as many as 20,000 homes in East Jerusalem to make way for Jewish settlements.

I met members of the International Solidarity Committee as well as members of EAPPI (Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel, a program of the World Council of Churches). They have been very active in the effort to protect Palestinians from attacks and evictions by the settlers. Their web address is www.eappi.org.

In Bi'lin...the resistance movement [including] people from Australia, Italy, France, England, [U.S.] and Israeli Jews marched to the [apartheid] wall. I started hearing gunfire. As we got closer to the fence blocking the road the soldiers fired tear gas canisters via grenade launchers at us...burning sinuses and eyes...The Israelis addressed the soldiers in Hebrew asking them to stop the oppression and violence and accept the Palestinian people as equals. They continued to fire tear gas...My lungs still hurt some. I plan on attending Quaker meeting this Sunday...and re-center myself.

Rob

Rob will give a presentation of his travels on Sunday, January 10. See www.alaskapeace.org for details.



APC To Partner With Juneau Peace Group

Recently APC and Juneau People for Peace and Justice began exploring ways to collaborate and create a state-wide network of peace organizations. The following is an introduction to JPPJ.

-by Rich Moniak



On September 10, 2002, about 40 people met at Juneau's Northern Light United Church to discuss concerns about the Bush administration's escalating rhetoric for a war with Iraq. It marked the formal birth of the Juneau People for Peace and Justice. As an organizer of demonstrations, silent vigils, petition drives, and lectures, JPPJ has been an anchor for the community's conversation on matters of world peace and social justice for the past seven years.

The peace crane that adorns JPPJ's website and letterhead has origins which precede that first formal meeting. In 2002, long time community activist Judy Maier led a 60 person contingent carrying large origami cranes in the annual Fourth of July parade. Along the route they would be joined by 250 spectators and become the largest entry in the parade. Since then it has become the mainstay of the group's public image. Every year JPPJ marches with the local chapter of Veterans for Peace and the cranes help us grow into the largest entry in the parade.

Maier, along with Elaine Schroeder, Amy Paige, Larry Hurlock, Don Gotschall, and KJ and Peggy Metcalf, form the heart of JPPJ's history. In October 2002 they helped mobilize 350 people for the first march in opposition to the winds of war blowing across the nation. A month later they ran an ad in the Juneau Empire singed by more than 1,200 people who opposed military action in Iraq. And they helped deliver one of the largest per capita turnouts for the worldwide February 15, 2003 protests against the impending war. An estimated 1,500 people, five percent of Juneau's entire population, marched across the Juneau Douglas Bridge in the world's last hope to convince the Bush war machine to cease and desist.

But of course the war began a month later. As the bombs began to fall on Baghdad, the group congregated at a candlelight vigil at the Dimond Courthouse. Paige was one of four members who stayed throughout the entire night braving the below freezing temperatures.

A month later, the Juneau Assembly joined Fairbanks, North Pole and Gustavus by passing a resolution that pushed back against the Patriot Act. The original resolution was drafted by a subcommittee of JPPJ who had worked hard to organized support from a diverse network of political affiliations.

As Bush's popularity skyrocketed following his "Mission Accomplished" stunt 30 miles off the coast of California that May,

JPPJ began to see smaller attendance at their weekly meetings. But Maier, Schroeder, Paige, Hurlock, Gotschall and the Metcalfs never wavered in their commitment to support each other and serve as Juneau's voice of reason. Along with the Veterans for Peace, JPPJ has continued to plan and organize a wide variety of events and actions intended to keep the horror of war from fading into the background of everyday life in Juneau.

JPPJ has also carried the word of peace to Alaska's congressional delegation on several notable occasions. In December 2005 they participated in a teleconference with a staffer from Rep. Don Young's office and delivered the first of three letters challenging the US military construction of permanent bases in Iraq. The third letter was a joint effort led by JPPJ that was signed by peace activist groups from seven Alaskan communities, including the Alaska Peace center of Fairbanks.

In February 2006, Maier, Paige, Hurlock, Rich Moniak and Paul DeSloover attended a video conference with Sen. Lisa Murkowski. They were the first citizens in Juneau to be invited to use the new equipment in the delegation's Juneau office. That meeting was the springboard for a town meeting with Sen. Murkowski called 'Juneau Speaks on Iraq' in May. Passionate testimony opposing the war in Iraq was presented by 35 of the 36 individuals who spoke that evening. Afterwards, Sen. Murkowski told the audience that the event was as much a display of

patriotism as the Memorial Day ceremony she attended in Kenai the day before.

JPPJ has sponsored several internationally recognized speakers in Juneau each year. The list includes Global Exchange and Code Pink founder Medea Benjamin; retired Colonel and US diplomat Ann Wright; authors Dahr Jamail and Antonia Juhasz; Iraqi blogger and American Friends Service Committee political analyst Raed Jarrar; and Al Jazeera journalista and producers Ramzy Baroud and Laila Al Arian. Over the years Victor Makari, Judith Kolokoff, Paul Beran and Hillary Rantisi, and Skip Schiels have about spoken about Israeli-and Palestinian conflict. Victoria Sampson gave a talk about Missile Defense. Last spring Father Louie Vitali came to Juneau immediately after his peace delegation visited Iran. And most recently, Dr. Nazif Shahrani, an American scholar who has done extensive research in Afghanistan, gave a lecture titled 'Security and Governance in 'post-Taliban' Afghanistan: What went wrong and why?'

Now, as President Obama contemplates the value of sending more troops to Afghanistan, JPPJ has organized a petition drive supporting humanitarian aid in lieu of continued military force there and in Iraq. The petitions will be sent to President Obama, Sen. Murkowski, Sen. Begich, and Rep. Young.

This December, JPPJ plans to join dozens of cities across the country in a peace vigil as a sign of

solidarity with Palestinian citizens who will march to the Gaza-Israeli border with hundreds of international activists in a non violent protest of the siege of Gaza. And Maier and Schroeder have begun exploring the possibility of creating a Peace Studies Program at the University of Alaska Southeast. The goal is to create certificate program based on an interdisciplinary curricula in psychology, English, history, and political science.

JPPJ knows the work on behalf of peace is a life long commitment. Most of the core group who stood together in the fall of 2002 has already given years of service in the cause for peace. But they also await with open arms people of all ages and backgrounds to join their efforts in these troubling times.

As we move into a new year that will sadly see the continuance of armed conflict involving American troops and weapons sold by our government, JPPJ looks forward to forming a meaningful alliance with the Alaska Peace Center. It promises to bring a broader message for peace and justice to each of our communities and we hope it will also serve to strengthen our voice across all of Alaska. *

Riding for Peace, 1 Mile at a Time

Excerpts taken from Don Ross's blog "Ride for the Planet"

-by Jill Maynard

Alaska Peace Center board member Don Ross is on a mission. On October 3rd, Don peddled out of Lulu's parking lot in Fairbanks and headed south along the Alcan highway—on his bicycle.

Don's mission is to ride his bicycle from his hometown of Fairbanks, Alaska to Washington D.C. to spread an environmental and peace message: he wants all people to reduce their carbon dioxide emissions to a certain point that scientists say the planet can handle. "I wanted to start out to try and build some momentum so nations can adopt a worldwide standard on CO₂ emissions, which scientists tell us at 350 parts per million is a safe level for the planet. It's over that level now and continues to rise," he explained.

Don nicknamed himself "Peace Rider," which represents his intention for everyone to hear his message of peace and love, both for others and for the environment. On his travels, Don hauls behind him a tent, a collapsible wood-burning stove and various supplies. He wears his motto emblazoned on his windbreaker, "Burn Fat not Oil." Don states that, "a peace rider's message, mine at least, is the same as that of many spiritual teachers

like Jesus of old or Peace Pilgrim in the modern era. The Way of Peace is the Way of love. My ride is modeled after what she did, walk for peace with a simple message, overcome evil with good, hatred with love and falsehood with truth. To create a new earth it may take tough love. Non-violent civil disobedience in word



Peace Rider: Don Ross

and action may be necessary when peaceful protests are ignored. If we are to peacefully end the fossil fuel burning era it is like-minded souls coming together that will make it happen. It won't be political leaders that save us. It will be ordinary citizens coming together that will save some of our leaders from themselves. That's why I ride, to bring people together, to ride for a new earth, to end the insanity."

Don says that one of the greatest things about his trip so far has been the people he has met. "People have stopped out of interest, but mostly out of kindness. Sometimes people stop and give me food, which I see as a gift of kindness and of joy and blessing for the trip."

As of December 1st, Don Ross was in Valemount, British Columbia. To learn more about Don's journey, see his website:

www.ridefortheplanet.blogspot.com

The New GI Resistance

by Anna Godduhn

Author Dahr Jamail returned for his 6th visit to Fairbanks as an independent journalist to share his new book: The Will to Resist: Soldiers Who Refuse to Fight in Iraq and Afghanistan (Haymarket Press). His talk and book-signing at UAF's Schaible Auditorium was well attended and deeply moving.

Since 2003, when Jamail went to Iraq in search of truth about the war, his well-evidenced reporting of military crimes and corporate profiteering have earned him much respect in the anti-war community. His own battles with PTSD gave him a deep empathy both for the civilians suffering the war and, eventually, for the GIs perpetrating it. As he reported on the realities of war, more and more GIs approached him and thanked him for his work. Indeed, Jamail became connected to the GI Resistance through his work of exposing the realities of the war and occupation for the Iraqi people.

As the wars carry on into their seventh and ninth years, GIs continue to face situations where they have no choice but to shoot first and ask questions later, violating the rules of



engagement. Soldiers are trained for the painful realities of combat, but many enlisted men and women have concluded that regularly threatening or killing civilians is immoral and creating a deeper insurgency. Many of these soldiers are also frustrated by the lack of reconstruction and

the rampant corruption among contractors soaking up US taxpayer dollars.

Jamail gave a talk that was both personal and loaded with disturbing statistics – about

undiagnosed PTSD, the difficulties GIs face in getting VA care, and rates of suicide among veterans. He spoke of staggering rates of sexual harassment, and the deployment of soldiers with no business on a battlefield. He spoke of Ft Hood, and the desperate need for better psychiatric care for troops. He referred to his book often, reading long articulate quotes from veterans about how they were transformed by the war zone; how they came to know that they could no longer participate in what they came to see as criminal behavior; and how they were treated by their units when they refused to fight. Jamail also talked about more subtle methods of subverting the war and protecting themselves – methods that have apparently been widely employed for years.

Variations of “Search and Avoid” missions have been reported to him from soldiers in various units from many areas of Iraq; these are missions where, for instance, the unit goes out to a field – calling in every hour to let command know they haven’t found any weapons. Ideally a couple of trees provide shade for smoking cigarettes and listening to music.

While Jamail seems to have lost some of his conviction that the wars can be stopped, he continues to believe in the power of soldiers laying down arms. He ended his talk by showing a short film about the Combat Paper Project called “Iraq Paper Scissors.” Combat Paper is made of uniforms – including the blood, sweat, and tears of combat – by soldiers wanting to transform their experiences into powerful testimony against war.

You can learn more about the Combat Paper Project at: www.combatpaper.org. For an excerpt of the film, see: www.youtube.com/watch?v=m0qgNhee_Ec.

To sign up for Dahr Jamail’s email dispatches, see: www.dahrjamailiraq.com. Special thanks to the Gene Sharp Fund! Jamail’s visit to all three Alaskan cities was sponsored by the UA Foundation’s Gene Sharp Lectureship on Non-Violent Action. His Fairbanks visit was hosted by the UAF Coalition for Peace and Justice, the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Fairbanks, the Alaska Peace Center, and North Star Veterans for Peace.

If War is Not the Answer...What Is?

by David Bantz

Peaceful Prevention of Deadly Conflict is a paradigm for addressing regional and ethnic conflicts before they erupt as warfare. It is an alternative to relying on military response once armed conflict erupts or the doctrine of "preemptive war" that originated as a response to the failure of the international community to prevent genocide in Rwanda in the 1990s. Aspects of prevention summarized in a 2008 report to Congress (1) include:

- civilian diplomacy and conflict management including civilian response teams able to deploy to regions where violent conflicts threaten to erupt,
- increased development assistance to address root causes of conflict de-coupled from military presence, and
- supporting the UN peace building efforts and regional peacekeeping efforts such as the African Union.

Bridget Moix, who lobbies Congress on PPDC for Friends Committee on National Legislation, describes her efforts as "shifting the mindset" of legislators and policy-makers on dealing with conflicts. When she first advocated these ideas, she encountered uncomprehending questions that presupposed the only possible response to conflicts was military force: "If no armed conflict has broken out, why

would the U.S. be involved? And if armed conflict has erupted, then surely the appropriate intervention is a military force!" She notes some recent successes, however, indicating that policies for early conflict resolution and prevention of war are becoming part of U.S. (or at least State Department) planning:

- President Obama has explicitly endorsed conflict prevention, chairing a session of the UN Security Council, introducing a resolution on disarmament, and stating that the US "will strengthen our support for effective peacekeeping, while energizing our efforts to prevent conflicts before they take hold." (2)
- Arrears in our dues to the United Nations for decades, Congress this past June allocated funds that pays off the entire uncontested US debt to the UN (approximately \$1Billion).
- Secretary of State Clinton initiated the first ever long term planning process for building civilian tools for integrated diplomacy, development, and international cooperation. (3)
- A Civilian Response Corps has been created in the State Department to support reconstruction and stabilization operations, able to deploy overseas in a matter of days. Sometime Fairbanksan Harry Bader was recently the first person to complete training and be certified as a member of this

new Corps. (4)

As I write this, President Obama has announced as expected an escalation of US military forces in Afghanistan. As we oppose this counter-productive deadly adventure, we must also continue to work for the positive alternatives to such military responses. *As peace builders, we should not ourselves commit the error of being merely reactive to conflict.* We can and must build non-military capabilities to prevent and address conflicts, devote resources to addressing the underlying causes of conflict, promote and celebrate accomplishments small and large in that effort. Our local efforts to build awareness of peaceful alternatives to conflict resolution, and public advocacy for these alternatives are important components in the long-term promotion of a world free from war and the threat of war.

(1) Paraphrased from Peaceful Prevention of Deadly Conflict, <http://tinyurl.com/FCNLPPDC> and The Responsibility to Prevent, <http://tinyurl.com/FCNL RTP>

(2) Full text and video of President Obama's speech to the United Nations, 2009-09-29, <http://tinyurl.com/OUNSept>

(3) Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, <http://tinyurl.com/USQDDR>

(4) Introduction to the Civilian Response Corps, <http://tinyurl.com/USCRC> ; Fairbanks News-Miner article 2009-12-01, <http://tinyurl.com/CRCHarry>

APC Ongoing Activities

-NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION

An intermediate-level group continues to meet bi-monthly, and a new beginning group is starting up

-COLLABORATION WITH JUNEAU PEOPLE FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE

At the urging of JPPJ, we have begun working on shifting APC to be a state-wide umbrella group with local chapters (living up our name!)

-LENDING LIBRARY

The APC library continues to grow, and occasionally new people come to our twice-monthly meetings and borrow books or videos. However, we have not been able to recruit enough volunteers to maintain open hours

-SEEKING NEW BOARD MEMBERS

We are actively seeking additional board members to fill recent vacancies from members who have left the area

G.I. Rights Hotline – Alaska

The Alaska branch of the G.I. Rights Hotline, which is sponsored by the Alaska Peace Center, receives calls from military service members, their families and friends calling from Alaska and Hawaii area codes. The purpose of the Hotline is to inform callers of the rights of service members under the regulations of their particular branch of service and Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). Most of the callers to the Hotline are seeking assistance with getting out the military for any number of reasons. Some of the stressors for which there are discharges allowed under the regulations relate to conscientious objection, family hardship or dependency, medical illness or injury, psychological illness or injury, pregnancy, sole parenthood and more.

Military regulations are vast and complex and few enlisted people are aware that a legitimate discharge exists for their situation. Hotline counselors provide reliable and nondirective information that is often withheld by the service members' chain of command. Hotline counselors have civilian legal and medical resources to refer callers to when needed.

Alaska is a member of the national G.I. Rights Network Inc., which provides a connection to experienced counselors at 22 other Hotline branches and other resources nationwide. An annual conference and training is held in the lower 48 and the Alaska Peace Center tries to send as many of the five Alaska counselors as we can afford to send. We receive approximately 100 calls per year.

Your financial contributions to the Alaska Peace Center directly support the work of G.I. Rights Hotline counselors as they provide a caring, human connection to Alaskans serving in the military and those serving at Alaska and Hawaii installations. *



ALASKA PEACE CENTER PLEDGE FORM

Name:.....

Address:.....

City/State/ZIP:.....

Phone:.....

e-mail:.....

May we add this email address to the APC's email list? Yes No

I am interested in volunteering two hours a month to staff APC open hours Yes No

My check for \$1000 \$250 \$100 \$25 \$_____ is enclosed.

Record my donation as a monthly quarterly annual pledge of support.

ALASKA PEACE CENTER
507 GAFFNEY RD
FAIRBANKS, AK 99701

The Alaska Peace Center is committed to nonviolent conflict resolution and to working for peace within ourselves, our community, and our world. APC opened in 2005. It is a non profit organization with 501 (c)(3) status. APC meets on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of each month.

Board Members and Officers:

David Bantz, Alison Carter, Dick Heacock, Heather Koponen, Jesse Buckwalter, Jill Maynard, Darwin Cameron

Newsletter published by the Alaska Peace Center: 507 Gaffney Rd. Fairbanks, AK, 99701 - 4913
(907) 374-2822; email: info@alaskapeace.org
Website: www.alaskapeace.org

