



Merrimack Valley People For Peace

Serving the communities of the Merrimack Valley

Merrimack Valley People for Peace, Inc. works for a sustainable future for all life on our planet. Our members commit themselves to the interrelated activities of education for peace and justice, the prevention of war, an end to arms sales, the abolition of nuclear weapons, and protection of the environment.

January -- November 2011

In Solidarity with the Celebrating Egyptians, Wisconsin resisters, and the Occupy movement!

GOOD NEWS

The Occupy Wall Street Movement. It is a movement, it is a dynamic process, it has become a way of life for thousands of people. It hasn't stopped to surprise us since September 17th when a little group of people started an ongoing demonstration in New York City's Zucotti Park in the Wall Street financial district. As we all know, the protests spread around the United States and the world with overwhelming rapidity. By October 10, Occupy protests had taken place or were ongoing in over 600 communities in the US and in over 90 cities across 82 countries. As of November 4 the Meetup page "occupytogether.org/" is listing Occupy communities in 2,464 towns and cities worldwide.

Who are the "occupiers", what do they stand for, what do they want? The mainstream media, of course, did its best first to ignore them, and when this was no more possible, to marginalize and misrepresent them. In the words of author and political analyst Michael Parenti: "The occupiers were falsely described as hippie holdovers and mindless youthful activists. In fact, there was a wide range of ages, socio-ethnic backgrounds, and lifestyles, from homeless to well-paid professionals, along with substantial numbers of labor union members. Far from being a jumble of confused loudmouths prone to violence, they held general assemblies, organized themselves into committees, and systematically took care of encampment questions, food, security and sanitation." (Michael Parenti: Occupy America. Published on November 9, 2011 by [commondreams.org.](http://commondreams.org/))

In its own words appearing on top of the occupywallst.org web site, the movement describes itself as a "leaderless resistance movement with people of many colors, genders and political persuasions. The one thing we all have in common is that We Are The 99% that will no longer tolerate the greed and corruption of the 1%. We are using the revolutionary Arab Spring tactic to achieve our ends and encourage the use of nonviolence to maximize the safety of all participants."

On October 17, the General Assembly of the NYC occupation accepted the following declaration:

"As we gather together in solidarity to express a feeling of mass injustice, we must not lose sight of what brought us together. We write so that all people who feel wronged by the corporate forces of the world can know that we are your allies.

As one people, united, we acknowledge the reality: that the future of the human race requires the cooperation of its members; that our system must protect our rights, and upon corruption of that system, it is up to the individuals to protect their own rights, and those of their neighbors; that a democratic government derives its just power from the people, but corporations do not seek consent to extract wealth from the people and the Earth; and that no true democracy is attainable when the process is determined by economic power. We come to you at a time when corporations, which place profit over people, self-

interest over justice, and oppression over equality, run our governments. We have peaceably assembled here, as is our right, to let these facts be known.

- They have taken our houses through an illegal foreclosure process, despite not having the original mortgage.
- They have taken bailouts from taxpayers with impunity, and continue to give Executives exorbitant bonuses.
- They have perpetuated inequality and discrimination in the workplace based on age, the color of one's skin, sex, gender identity and sexual orientation.
- They have poisoned the food supply through negligence, and undermined the farming system through monopolization.
- They have profited off of the torture, confinement, and cruel treatment of countless animals, and actively hide these practices.
- They have continuously sought to strip employees of the right to negotiate for better pay and safer working conditions.
- They have held students hostage with tens of thousands of dollars of debt on education, which is itself a human right.
- They have consistently outsourced labor and used that outsourcing as leverage to cut workers' healthcare and pay.
- They have influenced the courts to achieve the same rights as people, with none of the culpability or responsibility.

MVPP Meeting – Stone Soup supper November 22, 6:30 PM North Parish Church, Unitarian, N Andover

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- They have spent millions of dollars on legal teams that look for ways to get them out of contracts in regards to health insurance.
- They have sold our privacy as a commodity.
- They have used the military and police force to prevent freedom of the press.
- They have deliberately declined to recall faulty products endangering lives in pursuit of profit.
- They determine economic policy, despite the catastrophic failures their policies have produced and continue to produce.
- They have donated large sums of money to politicians, who are responsible for regulating them.
- They continue to block alternate forms of energy to keep us dependent on oil.
- They continue to block generic forms of medicine that could save people's lives or provide relief in order to protect investments that have already turned a substantial profit.
- They have purposely covered up oil spills, accidents, faulty bookkeeping, and inactive ingredients in pursuit of profit.
- They purposefully keep people misinformed and fearful through their control of the media.
- They have accepted private contracts to murder prisoners even when presented with serious doubts about their guilt.
- They have perpetuated colonialism at home and abroad.
- They have participated in the torture and murder of innocent civilians overseas.
- They continue to create weapons of mass destruction in order to receive government contracts.

To the people of the world,

We, the New York City General Assembly occupying Wall Street in Liberty Square, urge you to assert your power.

Exercise your right to peaceably assemble, occupy public space, create a process to address the problems we face, and generate solutions accessible to everyone.

To all communities that take action and form groups in the spirit of direct democracy, we offer support, documentation, and all of the resources at our disposal.

Join us and make your voices heard!"

In two short months, the Occupy Movement has initiated and inspired countless demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience in the U.S. and around the world. The protesters are not afraid to speak loudly about the humanitarian and environmental abuses perpetrated by giant corporations, about the endless wars, about all the multiple ways in which the 1% manipulates and exploits the 99%. The protests have helped to shift the national dialog from the deficit to the economic problems and major issues of social inequality that ordinary people face.

Some of the activists in the movement get involved in direct action with immediate practical results. For example, the Occupy Homes movement is a coalition of activists who recently succeeded in staving off foreclosure evictions by occupying homes, when homeowners enlisted their support. In a number of cases, the bank called off the eviction and agreed to renegotiate the homeowner's mortgage.

Arrests and crackdowns on encampments have been a "normal" part of the life of the movement since the beginning, many times

with display of unprovoked police brutality. In the last days there has been a massive wave of evictions of occupiers. On November 12-13, the encampments in Portland, OR and Oakland, CA were closed down by the police. As we write this, in the early hours of November 15, the original Occupy Wall Street camp in Zucotti Park in New York is surrounded by hundreds of police and the "temporary" (or so they say) eviction of the protesters is in progress. There will be more of this, and with the winter months coming, protesters may have to change their tactics. Having witnessed and been part of the energy, dedication and creativity of the last two months, we strongly hope that even if the tents get folded down, the movement is not going away any time soon.

The Occupy Boston camp at Dewey Square by South Station has a unique inhabitant: the statue of Mahatma Gandhi, on loan from the Peace Abbey in Sherborn. Gandhi is standing right at the entrance to the camp. Before the snowstorm on October 30, the campers put a thick white wool scarf around his neck. It looks good on him. Behind him is the Spirituality tent. In the front corner near to the street Carlos Arredondo has built up Camp Alex - a beautiful shrine to his son Alex Arredondo, killed in Iraq. Carlos spends a lot of time at the camp among people his son's age. Further down is the tent of Food Not Bombs, where a staff of volunteers feeds the hungry while another couple of volunteers are washing dishes. There is a medical tent, a legal tent, a media tent and a big army tent housing the Audre Lorde to Howard Zinn (A-Z) Library. And there are over 60 tents whose bright-eyed population is predominantly under 30 years old. There is a rich program of events announced for every day: teach-ins, meditation, group meetings, and lectures. Right now a central concern is the "winterization" of the camp. For more information see occupyboston.org. Or better, visit - the time spent there is always inspiring!

U.S. troops coming home from Iraq. On October 21, the Obama administration announced plans to withdraw nearly all U.S. troops from Iraq by the end of the year after failing to reach an agreement with the Iraqi government. The United States had discussed keeping thousands of troops in Iraq, but had insisted their immunity be extended as a precondition. After the Iraqi government refused, the administration said it would withdraw all its forces except for 150 troops to guard U.S. sites. "I can report that, as promised, the rest of our troops in Iraq will come home by the end of the year," said President Obama. "After nearly nine years, America's war in Iraq will be over. Over the next two months, our troops in Iraq, tens of thousands of them, will pack up their gear and board convoys for the journey home."

Decision on the Keystone XL tar sands oil postponed until 2013. In a victory for environmental activists, on November 10, the Obama administration announced that it will postpone any decision on approving the Keystone XL tar sands oil pipeline until 2013. The White House said it needed more time to review the route of the controversial 1,700 mile, \$7 billion pipeline and its environmental impact on the Sand Hills region of Nebraska. The project was sent back to the State Department for a thorough re-review, which most analysts are saying will effectively put a stop to it. The pipeline proposed by developer TransCanada Corp. would transport oil derived from tar sands in Alberta, Canada, to refineries in Texas. It would run 1,700 miles through six states. Opponents say that the tar sands are the dirtiest source of oil, that it requires huge amounts of energy to extract, and a spill could cause an ecological disaster.

Weekly Vigils

Andover: Sunday, noon-1 pm; Shawsheen Square, Junction of Routes 133 and 28; Lawrence Friends Meeting/ Shawsheen Peace Witness; Allan Sifferlen, asifferlen@sbra.com.

Andover: Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 7-8 pm; Saturday, 10:45 am-noon (in good weather, 10-noon); Old Town Hall, 20 Main St.; Merrimack Valley People for Peace; Lou Bernieri, lbernieri@andover.edu.

Andover: Tuesday, 6:30-7:30 am; in front of Raytheon plant near Routes 133 and 93; Raytheon Peacemakers; Arthur Brien, 978-686-4418.

Gloucester: Saturday, noon-1 pm; Grant Circle.

Marblehead: Tuesday, 6:30-7:19pm in front of the high school and Community Center at the lights at the intersection of Humphrey-Pleasant and Lafayette Sts.; Tom Gale, 781-631-1218.

Nashua, NH in front of Nashua City Hall from 11 to Noon every Sat. www.nashuapeace.org

Newburyport: Sunday, noon-1 pm; Market Square; Niki Rosen, 978-463-3208.

Reading: 2nd Saturday/each month, 11 am-noon; Reading Square; Reading People for Peace; Bob Connor, bobconnor1@yahoo.com.

Rockport: Wednesday, noon-1 pm; First Congregational Church (silent for peace).

Salem, MA: Saturday, 11-noon; Riley Plaza (by the Post Office).

The announcement was made just days after more than 10,000 people circled the White House on November 6. calling on President Obama to reject the project. This was the second major action in the relentless campaign organized by Bill McKibben's 350.org and Tar Sands Action. In the last six months, hundreds of thousands of people sent in petitions to the White House and the State Department; 1,254 were arrested protesting in front of the White House in August; and an unprecedented coalition of ranchers, indigenous groups, environmental organizations, labor unions and concerned citizens have united to stop this dangerous pipeline.

While celebrating the victory, the activists are aware that the decision might just be politics as usual and the pipeline might be approved after the 2012 elections. They are bracing themselves for a long fight and taking a pledge to stand up to Keystone and other tar sands projects as they are taking this movement forward.

Wendell Berry is the recipient of the 2011 Howard Zinn "People Speak" award. Poet, philosopher, farmer and environmental activist Wendell Berry was honored with PEN New England's annual Howard Zinn "People Speak" award on October 20, 2011, at The First Parish Church in Cambridge. The church was overcrowded with enthusiastic audience gathered to celebrate Berry's literary work and his lifelong dedication to fighting environmental degradation and destruction of rural communities. After receiving the award, giving his address and reading from his poetry, Wendell Berry was joined by environmental activist Bill McKibben in a discussion on civil disobedience and writing in defense of the environment. Both spoke about their recent arrests: McKibben protesting the Keystone XL tar sands oil pipeline, and Berry protesting the Kentucky mountain top removal. At the end of the evening, the Reverend Fred Small led the audience in the "Three-Five-O!" song he wrote for 350.org, the environmental activist organization founded by Bill McKibben.

Bank of America dropped its planned debit card fee after massive public outcry. On November 1st, the bank withdrew its plan to begin charging customers \$5 a month for using their debit cards for purchases. This decision was taken after over 20,000 people pledged to close their Bank of America checking accounts. Some 300,000 people also signed a petition on Change.org against the planned fee. Wells Fargo, Chase, Regions and Sun Trust also canceled similar fees. "This is a victory for consumers who are voting with their feet," said Ed Mierzwinski, head of the consumer program at the U.S. Public

Interest Research Group (PIRG). "For the first time, a bank fee has bitten the bank."

November 5th - Bank Transfer Day. Protests were held across the country on November 5th to mark Bank Transfer Day, a campaign to move accounts from big banks into community banks or credit unions. Credit unions attracted more than 40,000 new account holders, reporting about \$80 million in new savings. The campaign was initiated by 27-year old gallery owner Kristen Christian (not by Occupy Wall Street, as many of us first thought, although it did benefit from their support.) Her Facebook post urging friends to abandon big banks and support local credit unions unwittingly snowballed into a national campaign. CUNA (Credit Union National Association) reported that some 650,000 new credit union members joined before November 5th, and another 40,000 on Bank Transfer Day, meaning nearly 700,000 customers shifted funds from corporate, for-profit banking institutions to local credit unions.

Election Day 2011 brings some remarkable wins for progressive politics. In Ohio, voters defeated Gov. John Kasich's (R) controversial limits on the collective bargaining rights of state employees. The issue was put on the ballot after Kasich's law was passed this spring, after which activists gathered 1.3 million signatures to oppose the measure. The law was repealed by 61 percent of voters.

In Arizona, Russel Pearce, the architect of the state's anti-immigration law, lost his state senate seat in an unprecedented recall vote. Pearce is the first Arizona legislator ever to lose a recall election. He will be required to step down immediately.

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\$10.00 Student/Senior
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MVPP is registered with the IRS as a 501(c)(3) organization. Contributions to MVPP are tax deductible. Last year, approximately one-third of our members joined/renewed at higher than the basic rate. **Check here if you prefer to receive your newsletter via e-mail.**



MVPP Events in 2011

MVPP has had a busy and productive time during the past year. The following is a summary of activities for the year 2011 to this date:

After the Arab Spring started in Tunisia and Egypt, Wisconsin had similar activities in cold weather. MVPP people went to Boston to stand in solidarity with Labor at the State House in February.

March 20 **We joined with the “Alternative St. Patrick’s Day”** parade in South Boston. Crowds cheered the Veterans for Peace, Labor, and Gay Rights marchers. An Iraqi family participated.

March 22 **We had a conversation with Susan Lees, of United Justice with Peace, Massachusetts.** She targeted the U.S. military budget, an issue that has gained ground since the present economic downfall. Funding should move to schools, libraries, senior centers, infrastructure etc. She promoted a grass roots

approach, involving more than peace people. The New Priorities Network offers long-term goals which can help people organize speak-outs, introduce resolutions in communities, help with trainings and support, and keep pressure on Congress. Congressman Barney Frank, with others, led the initial 25% campaign, opposing 1) militarism, 2) economic injustice, 3) racism.

How to organize: have coffees, attend meetings, talk to as many people as possible, and attend school committee and selectmen meetings. Be patient. Start locally. Attend town budget hearings, push for progressive tax reform plus longer term solutions to try to reduce the military budget. Tax day is a prime time for visibility actions. A number of Mayors have endorsed the 25% plan. Susan Lees suggests we look at the Northampton, MA document, a Resolution calling on its elected Representatives in Congress to "End the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and Bring Our Troops and Tax Dollars Home." See www.newprioritiesnetwork.org/resources/northampton-resolution-21311.

April 2 **Many MVPP members attended a “Secure Communities Act”** hearing at Lawrence High School. Governor Patrick’s office held a series of hearings to learn public reaction to administrative changes. The Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE) said the fingerprints of everyone arrested and booked are not only checked against FBI criminal history records, but they are also checked against Department of Homeland Security (DHS) immigration records. If fingerprints match DHS records, ICE determines if immigration enforcement action is required, considering the immigration status of the alien, the severity of the crime and the alien’s criminal history. However, statistics from ICE show that of the 41,929 individuals deported through this program between October 2009 and August 2010, over 26% had no criminal convictions. On June 6 Governor Patrick refused to sign on to the program.

May 30 **Veterans for Peace, Memorial Day for Peace, Boston.** Pat Scanlon, a VFP and MVPP member was instrumental in making this day so successful, with many MVPP members participating in the ceremony.

June 17-19. One very important event was our cosponsorship of **“The Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space Conference: Raytheon, Missile Offense, & Endless War: Working Together to Demilitarize and Create a Sustainable Future in N. Andover and Andover.”** It began with a Friday afternoon vigil at the entrance into the Raytheon plant in Andover as the workers were leaving. That night, at a supper at the Unitarian Church in Andover, John Schuchardt, representing North Shore Coalition for Peace & Justice, and MVPP member Arthur Brien spoke, followed by peace songs led by MVPP member Mary Kate Small. Global Network’s board member

Loring Wirbel presented more information about Raytheon's efforts to place the arms race into space. MVPP members hosted delegates.

Saturday was a day of plenary sessions and workshops led by experts from Sweden, Germany, England, Japan, India, Canada and the United States with themes ranging from NATO's expansion and the surrounding of Russia and China with "missile defense" systems, the stealthy militarization of society, loss of human rights, economic crises throughout the world, cyber warfare, drones and missile offense expansion. We heard the latest information about the Fukushima disaster. A workshop was given on the "Bring Our War \$ Home" effort in the U.S.

A concert after the Saturday dinner featured our own Pat Scanlon and friends playing and singing anti-war songs, a young, talented Andrew McGarrah singing a Sadaki song, and the well known Japanese folk singer, Tetsu Kitagawa, who kept us spellbound with his unique voice, singing about human problems in our world.

The conference was an illuminating, thought-provoking weekend organized by Bruce Gagnon, head of Global Network, with over 100 people from around the world attending. See:

http://www.space4peace.org/reports/gn_conference_11.htm

Starting July 16 **Pilgrimage for a Nuclear Free Future. NO MORE FUKUSHIMA – NO MORE HIROSHIMA.** The walkers began their journey in Maine, bringing a message of concern about the relicensing of nuclear power plants in Maine, Massachusetts, Vermont and New York. Even with much community concern, safety risks and ongoing structural issues with these plants, (which range in age from 26-46 years old) the energy corporations continue to fight to extend licenses up to 2032. Many of the reactors in these states are similar to the ones in Japan that have been affected by the recent tsunami and earthquake. Contamination of the ground, water and air are an ongoing occurrence at all of these plants. In NH and MA there are over 100,000 people living within the deadly 10 mile radius of these plants. The unifying message: to search for alternative energy sources and question our mass consumption of energy. A number of MVPP members joined the walkers in Boston and Newburyport.

July 27. MVPP co-sponsored, with the Rolling Ridge Retreat and Conference Center, **an evening with Archbishop Elias Chacour**, Leader of the Melkite Catholic Church of Akko, Haifa, Nazareth, and All Galilee. The Archbishop is an Arab, Palestinian, Christian, citizen of Israel. He is a three-time nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize, and winner of the World Methodist Peace Award, the Niwano Peace Prize, and was Rotary's Man of the Year in Israel in 2000. He has written 2 books available in English, *Blood Brothers* and *We Belong to the Land: the Story of a Palestinian Israeli who Lives for Peace and Reconciliation*. Archbishop Chacour has worked tirelessly for reconciliation and peace in the Middle East, especially by building high-quality schools-preschool through college-in the Galilean village of Ibilin, where the students and faculty include Christians, Muslims, Jews, and Druze.

July 30 **The Lowell Folk Festival** was a success with many MVPP members helping at our MVPP table.

August 6 MVPP held it's annual special vigil to commemorate **Hiroshima/Nagasaki day.**

August 21 MVPP members joined the **demonstration/vigil/picnic at Seabrook Nuclear Plant**, the second one this month. Besides old-time activists, a contingent of young people seem ready to take on nuclear plant issues.

September 5 MVPP had our table at the annual Labor Day **Bread & Roses** event.

September 9 **Voices for Creative Nonviolence** co-coordinators, Kathy Kelly and David Smith-Ferri spoke in St. Michael Parish Hall, North Andover. The noted peace activists gave eyewitness reports of Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan. Kathy explained the geopolitical situation and shared stories of people they met, including the Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers. David Smith-Ferri spoke of those who inspired him and then read some of the poignant poems from his latest book: *With Children Like Your Own* published by Haley's of Athol, MA.

Co-sponsors included the American Friends Service Committee, Arlington United for Justice and Peace, Campus Ministry at Merrimack College, Code Pink of Greater Boston, First United Methodist Church, Massachusetts Peace Action, Military Families Speak Out, North Shore Coalition for Peace and Justice, Reading People for Peace, Rolling Ridge Retreat and Conference Center, Seacoast Peace Response, The House of Peace, Veterans For Peace: Chapter 9 Smedley Butler Brigade and Samantha Smith Chapters.

September 14 Evening with **James Carroll** at Merrimack College Author of *Jerusalem, Jerusalem: How the Ancient City Ignited Our Modern World*. Attended by many MVPP members.

October 1 **Anti-War Conference** at Suffolk University It included a march to Senator Kerry's Beacon Hill home and a depositing of postcards in his mail slot. Several MVPP members attended.

October 3 **vigil at Raytheon**: At least ten people participated, making a noticeable presence. There were many positive responses from Raytheon workers entering work and especially from those driving by the site, with honks, waving, and V signs. There were a few negative comments.

October 6-8 **Occupy DC**: Pat Scanlon was the stage manager at Freedom Plaza during the first three days of Occupy DC. Boryana also participated in this and reported on the positive energy around it, with almost 200 people having slept in the street, Boryana included. There was an anti-drone rally and a rally on the anniversary of the start of the war in Afghanistan.

October 10 Pat was among the 141 arrested at **Occupy Boston**, along with several other veterans from the Smedley Butler Brigade, while forming a chain standing between the police and the campers. Many of us have visited and contributed to Occupy Boston.

October 15 **March and Rally to stop the wars at home and abroad.** We joined over 1500 marching from the Boston Common to the Occupy Boston encampment.

October 17 **S. Brian Willson book tour** MVPP co-sponsored and Barbara and Jane represented us at the pre-speech dinner with Brian at the House of Peace, Ipswich. A large group, from various peace organizations, was present. Later, all moved to the First Universalist Church in Essex, where Brian spoke of his life's journey. His memoir is available: *Blood on the Tracks: The*

Life and Times of S. Brian Willson - Introduction by Daniel Ellsberg. Brian was the man who lost his legs trying to stop a weapons train in a 1987 protest.

Our collaboration with the **Iraqi families** who have sought refuge in Lowell, and now Lawrence, has flourished thanks to Mary and Jim Todd's continuous guidance and leadership. The Todds are our unsung, very special heroes. They, with other MVPP volunteers have provided donations of household items, clothing, furniture. They have given driving lessons, helped find jobs, and been present for advice and support.

We should mention the increasing interconnectedness between **the three main peace organizations in the Merrimack valley and Ipswich area:** MVPP, North Shore Coalition for Peace & Justice, and the Amesbury Friends Peace Center. Each organization has provided the area with stimulating events and has cosponsored most of the events mentioned in this summary.

Coming Events

Stone Soup Supper November 22, 2011. at the First Parish Church UU. Bring a simple ingredient and your checkbook. We will donate to Oxfam. Also bring well thought out topics to present and discuss.

November 16 - 20 **School of Americas Watch** Is anyone going this year?

Potluck invitational meeting January 13 at the North Parish Church, North Andover

January 27 - 29, 2012 **People's Music Network** in Lawrence again this year. location tbd.

Meeting Summaries

Jan 25, 2011 Meeting

Iraqi Friends:

- There are now 35 families, with one new one that recently arrived.
- Bobbie is working with one boy who has health problems.
- Lawrence has its first Iraqi family.
- Publicity: the Eagle Tribune is writing a story about MVPP's work with the Iraqi families with an online slide show. The Lowell Sun is writing an article about three Iraqi families and will mention Pat Scanlon's and Mary Todd's involvement with them. Some Emerson College students are making a documentary about the Iraqis.
- A friend of Bobbie's is doing research and helping with the bed bug problem. MVPP has funded part of the money from the Iraqi fund for this research with a pilot family.
- MVPP is grateful for a substantial donation to the Iraqi fund from the North Parish Unitarian Church from their Christmas offering.

Treasurer's report: We agreed to send \$100 to the Overseas Burmese Christian Fellowship to aid the recent refugees to Lowell.

At Arthur's suggestion, we agreed to have the financial books audited. Bobbie will ask Bob Connor, who is not a member of MVPP.

Planning:

Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space is sponsoring a conference- "Raytheon, Missile Offense, and Endless War.", June 17-19. MVPP and the North Shore Coalition are the principal local sponsors and are helping Bruce Gagnon, Global Network founder, with the logistics and planning of this conference, with an expected several hundred participants from all over the world.

St. Patrick's Day Parade March 20, Boston. Pat Scanlon, Veteran for Peace and MVPP member, is a central figure in this year's VFP request to be included in the parade. Other years these veterans have been forced to march behind the parade if allowed at all. They urge everyone to join them in respecting the rule of "no signs except VFP banners."

Pat also reported that charges against him were dropped - after he paid \$100- from when he was arrested in Washington D.C. March 28, 2010 at the IVAW (Iraq Vets Against War) demonstration).

Announcements

Noam Chomsky and Phyllis Bennis in Conversation, Feb. 10, Pleasant St. Congregational Church, Arlington: "Examining the Economic Crisis, Unending War, and Rightwing Resurgence". We voted not to sponsor this event.

Jane noted that **Kathy Kelly and others will be sentenced** January 27 for protesting (at Creech Air Force Base, Nevada April 2009) the remote piloting of armed killer drones, used in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. N. B. They were found guilty and sentenced to time served.

The passing of Don Booth, age 94, in earlier years an essential force at MVPP. Both he and his wife Lois are remembered for their total dedication to peace. Kathie will send a note of condolence. A memorial service will be held at 11:00 AM Saturday, February 5 at the UU Church, 274 Pleasant St, Concord, NH.

February 22, 2011 Meeting

Iraqi Friends

- Mary reported that the Lawrence Eagle Tribune and Lowell Sun newspapers had front page articles about two Iraqi families. Emerson College plans to make a film about Iraqi families.
- St. Michael's church in N.Andover will host Iraqi teens from Lawrence in April.
- We decided to use \$300 for bed bug remediation from the \$2,375 donated by the North Parish Church.
- Both Arthur and Jim have had success with giving driving lessons. Jim has helped with green cards and introducing NECC to a senior. Bobbie and Mary have been monitoring a 3 year old and his medical care.

- Bedford church had a panel of Iraqi women who spoke of their adjustment to life in the U.S.
- A partner to an Iraqi family nominated a son for the A+ award on Channel 5.

Treasurer's report. A letter of thanks was sent to the North Parish Church for their gift. There is a question about rental fee to the church for our monthly meetings. Bob Connor will audit the books.

Announcements

March 6, 13 and 20. **Jane Bernhardt's Hibakusha Peace Project Exhibit** will be at the Amesbury Friends Peace Center. Jane has interviewed and painted survivors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombing.

March 8-9. **The Center for the Study of Jewish/Christian/Muslim Relations** will meet at the Rogers Center, Merrimack College. Title: *Inside Islam: What a Billion Muslims Really Think* - a documentary film.

Decisions

MVPP agreed to donate \$100 for Tom Jackson's film "At Any Cost," a film about the fossil fuel industry against climate change legislation.

A proposal was made to have a joint MVPP/NSC (North Shore Coalition) meeting with Senator Scott Brown. Mary, Peter, and Arthur are among those interested in attending the meeting to discuss: how to reduce the military budget by 25%, end wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, close Guantanamo and give prisoners due process.

Susan Lees will be at the March meeting to discuss the 25% Solution.

March 22, 2011 Meeting

Iraqi Friends

- Wrote a letter of support to organizer of UU Bedford church who applied for funds to continue/ enhance their involvement with the Iraqi refugees.
- The mother of one of the families that has been here for two years arrived in February.
- Have a request from a Roger Williams College, Rhode Island faculty member who is researching the resettlement of Iraqi refugees in New England. She would like to talk with some of the Iraqi families.
- One of the Iraqis needs to bring his niece here who needs immediate surgery for medical treatment.

Treasurer's report: was approved. The financial books were audited by an outside auditor and approved.

Arthur will find out how much MVPP owes the North Parish Church for monthly rental use.

Program

Susan Lees and the 25% Solution: Susan outlined the background and goals of the statewide move for national legislation for the 25% Solution. She encouraged us to ally with other local groups.

Reports

MVPP signed onto Women's Actions for New Directions (WAND) March 8 letter to Congress calling for sensible budget priorities that restrain excessive military support.

Planning

Saturday, April 2. Governor Patrick's office will send people to Lawrence to learn what people think of the proposed "Secure Communities" changes. The meeting will be in the Lawrence High School. A test program in Boston has revealed practical, moral, and legal flaws. We urge many to attend, and to challenge the proposal. See www.miracoalition.org/en/roknav-media-center-releases/215-patrick-administration-to-discuss-qsecure-communitiesq-with-immigrants

Announcements

Hattie Nestel wants to present a 40 minute power point presentation: "The Dangers of Nuclear Power" to as many groups as possible within the area of the nuclear plant facilities of Seabrook, Pilgrim, Vermont Yankee power plants, and will go anywhere in the country to meet with people regarding their local nuclear power plants. She will present her program April 3, 2:30 PM to the Cambridge Friends Meeting. She can be reached at Hattieshalom@verizon.net

Andrew Bacevich, prof. of International Studies at Boston University and author of several books, to speak at Merrimack College April 7 at 7:30 PM, Cascia Hall. Title of his talk: "*Middle Eastern Peace Plausible?*"

Saturday, April 10, 2:30 PM **John Schuchardt**, of House of Peace, Ipswich, MA, will speak at the Amesbury Peace Center: "**Eyewitness Tehran-the Iran Civilian Diplomacy Initiative.**" John was part of a ten-member delegation organized by Fellowship of Reconciliation. He learned about lives of ordinary Iranians, visited important cities. He is alarmed about a possible pre-emptive US attack on Iran.

July 25 **Archbishop Elias Chacour**, Israel, nominated for Nobel Peace Prize, is slated to speak at a local venue, to be announced. MVPP has agreed to cosponsor the event once more details are known.

April 26, 2011 Meeting

The Iraqi Friends:

- Several Iraqi families would like to have another get-together
- New baby girl- Mariam, born April 12
- Need of a truck for transportation
- Several of the men now have jobs sorting mail
- Iraqi teen did a program at St. Michael's on Sunni/Shia and served homeless at Paulist Center
- Bikes are needed-- two adult and one 9 year old
- Plastic encasements for mattresses are needed

Planning

June 24 **Annual MVPP meeting** is at our regular meeting place, North Parish Unitarian Universalist Church, North Andover, starting with a pot-luck at 6:30, followed by a movie and the meeting. Boryana and Dee will contact Pat Scanlon and the N.A. UU church to invite the groups to the meeting. Barbara will invite North Shore Coalition.

The nominating committee for officers and board members consists of Barbara, Arthur, and Bobbie.

Annual dues. Brian and Boryana agreed to put a colored slip of paper in the next newsletter to remind everyone to pay dues.

25% Solution. MVPP members who live in Lawrence will contact Ralph Galen and others for organizational purposes.

Boryana succeeded in obtaining an application to **set up the table in Andover** next weekend, and will apply for permission to do so every six weeks.

July 30 **Lowell Folk Festival.** We have bags full of Counter Recruitment buttons which will be available for free during the folk festival.

Announcements

July 27 **Archbishop Elias Chacour** of Israel, nominated for Nobel Peace Prize, will be coming to Rolling Ridge, Andover, MVPP is sending a check to help cover this event as cosponsor.

May 24, 2011 Meeting

Iraqi Friends

- Since May of 2009, over 60 people have donated items worth a total of \$44,301.25
- Ballet at LHS- four little Iraqi girls and their mothers saw it
- Presentation by Mary at Community Giving Tree, Boxford
- New Iraq man seeking asylum and needing translation services. His family is in Syria
- New family of 4 arrived from Syria 5/18/11
- Discussed family with new baby-apartment building foreclosed. Asked to leave
- Request to assist new family in Lawrence from Saudi Arabia. More and more families asking for help. Mary will follow up
- Bedford UU church to make plans for Iraqi family get-together some time this summer
- Babylon restaurant with Iraqi family as owner has opened on Merrimack St., Lowell
- New partner family
- Chelmsford family and Board of Health request
- Meeting at Mary's of partner families - 14 people attended. Ph.D. researcher participated, doing research on resettlement of Iraqis in MA
- Lowell HS senior recognized as A+ student on Channel 5

Planning

Global Network Annual Space Organizing Conference, June 17-19 We still need more beds. Both Barbara and Jim volunteered

their vans to help with transportation. Bruce has a van to transport to and from the airport.

MVPP annual meeting June 24. We have invited the following groups to share in fellowship a potluck supper and a movie: UU congregations of Andover and North Andover, North Shore Coalition for Peace and Justice, Amesbury Friends Peace Center.

Annual payment to the North Parish Church, Unitarian. The church is charging us \$300 a year for 10 meetings at \$30 each, the fiscal year starting in June.

25% Solution. This movement is still in its formative stage locally (Lawrence), but Brian, Arthur and Ralph Galen have met and Barbara will attend a 25% Solution in Boston.

Laptop for an Iraqi. Pat McCarron requested a donation from MVPP. We decided to donate individually. Send a check payable to Mary Todd who will gather the money to help pay for the laptop.

Announcements

May 30. **Veterans for Peace, Memorial Day for Peace** at 1:00 pm at the Christopher Columbus Park. Sponsored as well by Military Families Speak Out, AFSC and UJP.

August 6 **Hiroshima/Nagasaki day.** MVPP will hold a vigil. Mary and Jim will organize the event.

September 5, Labor Day **Bread & Roses** As treasurer, Arthur will pay the \$35 application fee for the MVPP booth.

note: MVPP will not have a business meeting in July. (We did have a July meeting) There will be a meeting held August 23. At this time, a subcommittee will be formed to decide what money MVPP will donate to organizations and will report back at the September meeting. (We did have a July meeting)

ANNUAL MEETING Friday June 24, 2011

(Replaced June meeting)

Veterans for Peace thanked Brian Quirk for his piping at the Memorial day events presenting him with a plaque.

Kathy Robinson reported that MVPP received recognition from the Global Network Against weapons and Nuclear Power in Space. The plaque was then re-presented to Arthur Brien for his faithful vigil at Raytheon every Tuesday.

A slate of officers was elected, as follows:

President; Brian Quirk
Vice-President: Boryana Tacconi
Clerk: Barbara Haack (Dee Halzack, alternate)
Corresponding secretary: Kathy Robinson
Treasurer: Arthur Brien

President, Kathy Robinson made some brief remarks, recognized Brian Quirk for his work on the website and the newsletter, Arthur Brien for staying on top of a difficult job, as treasurer, Mary Todd for her inspiring work with the Iraqi refugees, which increases the stature and recognition of MVPP, Boryana Tacconi for putting together the Global Network conference, and Pat Scanlon for his work with Veterans for Peace and all he has done for MVPP. We should be proud of what we do.

We ended the business part of the meeting with a standing ovation for Kathy Robinson for her service as president and presenting her with a gift.

Then we watched the DVD "*Inside Islam*."

July 26, 2010 Meeting

Iraqi Friends

- Iraqi-American Community Center, 9 Central Street, Lowell, open house July 15. Plan to hold classes, baby-sit etc.
- Two students graduated from high school, several students working.
- A few more men have part time or temporary work and women are working as tutors at Middlesex Community College and the restaurant.
- Babylon Restaurant, 25 Merrimack St., Lowell, is going well.
- One family moving-staying in Lowell-needs more furniture.
- Possible house in Methuen for rent to Iraqi family.
- ACs desperately needed.
- Jim and Mary spoke at North Reading church--donations to Iraqi fund.
- Wedding of two young women -one July 5 and another September 5.

Treasurer's report was approved. Reminder: annual dues are due. We will discuss in January whether to raise dues.

Planning:

25% solution and the People's Budget meeting. Brian reported that the group is working on a nonbinding state referendum for next year. The next meeting will be September 17.

We discussed meeting with Representative Tsongas about various issues. Dee will contact MVPP members within Tsongas' district to organize a meeting with her.

Pilgrimage for a Nuclear Free Future. Boryana attended the opening ceremony and festival at Copley Square, Boston. Barbara described the part of the walk from Ipswich to Amesbury which took place on the hottest days of July.

August 6 a vigil in Andover in memory of the **Hiroshima/Nagasaki** atomic bomb attacks. Kathie will write a press release.

September 5 Bread and Roses

September 9 MVPP along with other peace organizations will host an **evening with Kathy Kelly and David Smith-Ferri** of Voices for Creative Nonviolence at St. Michael's Parish Hall, North Andover.

Next MVPP meeting will be August 23, 7:30 pm to continue planning for the Kathy Kelly event, September 9.

October 1-8. Global Network's International Week of Protest **to stop the militarization of Space** Brian urged us to write letters to the editor. We will have a vigil at Raytheon October 3, 7-8 am.

October 9 Pat Scanlon reported that there will be a **Stop the War Coalition** gathering at Lafayette Square, Washington D.C.

Pat also reported that "The Music Project" is gaining visitors on the website.

August 23, 2011 Meeting

Planning:

Meeting with Representative Tsongas. Dee is still trying to schedule a meeting with her and MVPP members.

August 25 a **vigil at Merrimack College in support of janitors** about to lose their jobs and contracts.

September 5, **Bread & Roses Festival**, Lawrence. Be there at 11am to help set up. A telephone tree is set up in case of inclement weather.

September 9, 7 pm, St. Michael Parish Hall, 196 Main St. North Andover. **"Witness from War Zones," Kathy Kelly & David Smith-Ferri.** Kathy Kelly, three-time Nobel Peace Prize nominee, founding member and co-coordinator of Voices for Creative Nonviolence, traveled to Iraq and Afghanistan many times, arrested more than sixty times, on the ship "Audacity of Hope" as part of the latest Gaza flotilla, has worked with war victims for over 20 years. David Smith-Ferri has traveled with Voices for Creative Nonviolence to Iraq, Jordan and Afghanistan since 1999. A poet, his latest book is "With Children Like Your Own." Sponsored by MVPP and many other organizations.

Press releases should have been sent by now. Donations of finger food at the event are welcome. Boryana will set up the MVPP table. MVPP members will make phone calls to members ahead of event

September 14, 7:30-9pm, Rogers Center for the Arts at Merrimack College, North Andover. A lecture by **James Carroll, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem: How the Ancient City Ignited Our Modern World."**

October 3, Monday, 7-8am, a **vigil at Raytheon entrance**, Andover, in coordination with Keep Space for Peace week.

Kathie suggested we reorganize the MVPP **subcommittees.** Please think of suggestions and what committee are most relevant. Are there other committees? What are the issues we should work on?

The Giving Committee, will meet Tues. September 20 at 7pm.

Recent events:

Niki related the FBI phone calls to her regarding her involvement with the Peace Walk "Pilgrimage for a Nuclear Free Future" last month. FBI wanted names and more, but Niki of course refused to cooperate. The dialogue is repeated in this newsletter.

The Boston Globe gave a good review of the new Iraqi, "Babylon" restaurant in Lowell, run by our Iraqi friends.

Lou described the successful work in Lawrence with kids and poetry slams. Poetry based on social justice and Finding Your Voice.

September 27, 2011

Iraqi Friends:

- A new family of four arrived.
- Four families moved to better apartments.
- Habitat house a possibility for one family.
- Many people have found work but at low wages and at part time. A new Iraqi restaurant is opening in October.
- Mary and Boryana spent September 11 with an Iraqi woman at Salisbury beach.
- Lots of teens are seniors this year and two Iraqi women are tutors at the high school.
- **Kids need graphing calculators for their math classes - let Mary know if you would like to donate one. **
- Baghdad is very bad-no jobs, no food, everything expensive, dangerous.

Planning

The Senate Super Committee and how to deal with Senator Kerry and his role. Much discussion about how to reach people to sign either the post card campaign or the petition. Arthur and Brian will lead, starting in Lawrence.

Palestine/Israel conflict. Jane discussed the North Shore Coalition (NSC) letter to Tierney, written by Susan Nicholson and sent by NSC members, expressing dismay for his signing the Hoyer letter instead of supporting Palestine. She suggests that we contact Rep. Tierney as well. "

Dee will call Tsongas' office to try again to set an appointment for an MVPP meeting with her.

Tom Jackson and Skip Schiel have produced a new film- Eye Witness Gaza. See trailer at www.eyewitnessgaza.net. We decided to approach Church social action committees to see if they would be interested in sponsoring the film.

Tom Gale and the Mosquito Coast Nicaragua project. We urge him to seek churches for this venture since it is more faith oriented.

The Giving Committee. We agreed to its suggestions for contributions to the following organizations:

- Lawrence Eagle Tribune Santa Fund
- Citizens Awareness Network (nuclear power)
- Military Families Speak Out
- Fifty Lanterns (technology for 3rd World)
- Oxfam (Stone Soup Supper proceeds)
- Veterans for Peace
- Islamic Relief USA
- Peace Action Massachusetts
- September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows
- Voices for Creative Nonviolence
- United for Justice and Peace, UJP MA
- Beyond Nuclear
- Amnesty International

Coming Events

October 1 all day anti war conference at Suffolk University. Noam Chomsky, Kathy Kelly, Ann Wright among the speakers.

October 3, Monday, 7-8 am. As part of Keep Space for Peace week, a special vigil at Raytheon, Andover.

October 9. Speaker Jamie Eldrige on Corporate Funding of Elections, at Ethical Society of Boston, 10:30, at Cambridge Center for Adult Education.

October 15. March and Rally to Stop the Wars at Home and Abroad, 1pm Park St. Station at Boston Common.

October 17. Welcome dinner for Brian Willson and Becky Leuning, coming by Amtrack from Portland, Oregon. Please look at website bloodonthe tracks.info to understand the courage, leadership, and sacrifice of this Viet Nam combat veteran, who is a recognized champion of peace with justice.

October 25, 2011 Meeting

Iraqi Friends:

- Merrimack Valley Magazine is doing an article on the Iraqi refugees.
- there is a new family of four
- A second Iraqi restaurant has opened which includes a halal meat market and a crafts shop
- a few more Iraqi women are pregnant
- There have been reports of encounters with anti-immigrant sentiment
- Reports from Iraq are that conditions in Baghdad are not very good: electricity almost not available (except with generators), security is very bad, food is expensive. Nevertheless, we need to be out of Iraq: the offense for which one Iraqi was forced to emigrate was that he shook the hand of guests on his TV show that others deemed unacceptable because of connections to the US.

Progress and Planning

Occupy Boston: Well organized and positive. No-drug, no-alcohol policy. Maintain their own security.

Petitions and post cards: Arthur, Brian, Peter, Barbara, and Michael all sent in petitions. Peter reported that Mass Peace Action acknowledged receiving 1,365 signatures (273 pages). 95 of those pages came from MVPP.

Niki Tsongas: Brian and Peter were able to attend Niki's "Congress on your Corner" on October 18, in spite of very short notice. Niki defended her voting record when Brian said he wished she'd voted more on the side of peace. She also spoke of the difficulty of cutting defense spending, since much of federal dollars spent in Massachusetts go to defense spending. Peter suggested she vote to close the 260 bases in Germany, which would save money without hurting Massachusetts.

A number of us received a letter saying basically that though she'd voted against war, she could not in good conscience deny funding to troops already in the war zones and so did not vote against continued funding of the wars.

Dee now has the name of a contact (June Black) in Niki's Lawrence office (currently in DC) that has been cooperative and

helpful in the past. Dee will follow up with June to try to establish regular meetings with MVPP.

We need to reorganize our committees.

Committees

We have too many committees and many are no longer active. We will address this at a later meeting. We have the following committees currently on our records:

- 25% Solution
- Iraqi families
- DU
- Palestine/Israel
- End the War
- Education for Peace and Justice
- Counter Recruitment
- Events Coordination
- Membership and Outreach
- Newsletter

Planning

November 22 **Stone Soup**, We decided not to have any special program, which means we would not be inviting Tom Jackson. It is not a good time for a special program, because of the holiday. Also if we have Tom, we need to do advance publicity to attract people outside MVPP. The Corresponding Secretary will notify Tom of our decision.

We agreed that, besides bringing something to put in the pot, each person would bring something of interest to discuss.

We will have our regular business meeting.

We voted to **not hold a December meeting.**

January 6 (first Friday) **pot luck** (Later changed to January 13) Kathy reminded us that traditionally we invite a community group we would like to get to know better; they talk about their work; we talk about ours and we explore how we might complement each other's efforts or work together.

Arthur suggested the Merrimack Valley Project, whose current project is helping the foreclosed and about-to-be-foreclosed. He will pursue this.

January 27, **People's Music Network, Lawrence** Mary Kate wanted people to know about this. We don't know the venue yet.

Amesbury Peace Center Barbara reported to us on their current excellent program on understanding Islam:

- Discussion of Karen Armstrong's book *Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time.* (2007)
- Day Trip to Roxbury Mosque and Cultural Center.
- Introduction to Islam. Several speakers spoke about the basic tenets of the Islamic religion and some of its history.

Their final event will be held Sunday, Nov. 20 at 2 p.m: Muslims in America Today. It will consist of a panel discussion about the history of Muslims in America, the growth of fundamentalism in Islam, and the treatment of Muslims in our country both before and since 9/11

Telephone Tree Brian said he would update the tree.

Letters

Since it has been 3/4 of a year since our last newsletter, these letters summarize members' responses to many of the issues of 2011.

Responses by Michael Bleiweiss

Lawrence Eagle-Tribune February 2011

... if she doesn't want to pay taxes for abortions, then I don't want to pay them to make weapons that kill many times more babies.

Both the Obama administration and the Republicans are coming out with their lists for drastic budget cuts. Interestingly, they are both focusing on slashing programs that help the poor, elderly, and working people. Meanwhile, they are ignoring the opportunities for the largest savings by leaving the military, corporate welfare, farm price supports (which make our food more expensive), and tax cuts for the rich completely untouched. It shows whose interests they really represent and it is not ours.

Note that the much attacked Medicare and Social Security are already paid for via their own payroll taxes.

A continuing culture of death

The NewburyportDaily News February 10, 2011,

To the editor:

It would seem that we have no government. That is, We the People have no government. When 1 percent of the population controls 99 percent of the nation's wealth, it is clear that democracy began to slip away a few decades ago. The public's interests are routinely ignored by government in favor of a wealthy power elite and the minions who serve them.

It is hard to accept the depravity that operates in the centers of power of one's own country: the arch swindlers of Wall Street, the Pentagon's culture of death, spread over the entire earth to profit giant banks and corporations that care nothing for America or its people or any other population.

Taxpayers may as well give billions of dollars directly to the arms industry, instead of sending it to Egypt so that the Egyptian military can turn around and buy billions of dollars worth of arms from American corporations, after Mubarak and his entourage take their cut. Apparently that's what "aid" in American foreign policy means. The Egyptian government can then bludgeon and gas its own people to keep a stranglehold on power and serve the interests of foreign benefactors. You would think that it would bother the Egyptian military that they kill (and torture) for countries other than their own, but apparently it doesn't.

This is a very grim picture but hardly complete. The policy of perpetual war for profit is a culture of death. How long before it eats out the heart of America? The toll it has already taken around the world is beyond horrifying.

D. Philip
Newburyport

Our Possible Economic Futures

Submitted April 2011 to the *Lawrence Eagle-Tribune*
by Michael Bleiweiss

I believe that the current economic crisis presages a fundamental shift in how the American (and possibly the world) economy operates. Since World War II, the American economy has been based on massive over-consumption by the public. This, in turn, led to matching overproduction of goods and a consequent depletion of natural resources.

Now, this paradigm is coming to an end. Ever since the implementation of "trickle-down" economic policy in the 1980s, there has been a continuous erosion of real wages for ordinary working people as employers pushed down compensation relative to the cost of living. Consumers compensated for this by living beyond their means by accumulating massive debt.

The unsustainability of this life style was finally driven home by the bursting of the housing bubble and the resulting massive drop in stock prices, causing working people to feel much less wealthy. When combined with the large domestic job losses due to corporations exporting jobs to low-wage countries, this led to people feeling insecure about their future. This, in turn, led to consumers retrenching and drastically reducing spending. Layered on top of this is added a long-delayed spread of environmental awareness, leading people to try to live a more sustainable lifestyle.

This has now created a positive (that is, unrestrained, self-reinforcing) feedback loop: less spending leads to less production of goods and services, which leads to fewer jobs, leading to more insecurity, which leads to less spending, etc.

At the same time, there has been an increasing concentration of wealth into fewer and fewer hands. Corporate executives have given themselves bigger and bigger paychecks until they now get about 400 times as much as the average worker in their companies (compared to about 40 times in 1980). In many cases, this even drives an otherwise profitable company into having a loss (which requires them to lay off more workers). Wall Street executives get multi-million dollar bonuses, even when they destroy other peoples' investments with speculative derivatives.

All of this brings us to a crossroads. We have two major choices of where our long-term economy can go.

In the first scenario, we continue the current corporate capitalist system where a company's only obligation is to make as much profit for its investors as possible. This has led to the current situation where huge multi-national corporations and their executives grab as much as they can, control our government, and roll over everything in their path. This will lead to our becoming a third-world country with 1% of the population controlling all of the wealth and 99% struggling to get by. We will see a permanent 50% real unemployment rate with barely subsistence wages for most of the rest.

In the second scenario, people wise up and force a drastic revision in our economic system to a more regulated capitalism where social and environmental sustainability are built into corporate charters and they are required to serve the public good (as they were before the Civil War). Anti-trust laws are actually enforced, leading to the break-up of behemoth corporations that are "too big to fail" into manageable pieces (remember that most true innovation comes from small companies). Executives

receive fair compensation. And, the employment standards are revised to ensure full employment at living wages. This might take the form of a shorter work week or manageable workloads so that more people need to be employed. Universal health care can be implemented to remove the burden from employers (everyone would pay premiums into this, but they would be lower because everyone is covered).

At the same time, a rising environmental awareness, combined with increased opportunities for community participation would help people realize that they can be happy with far fewer material goods.

The entrenched powers will argue that I am advocating "spreading the wealth." This is absolutely true -- those who create the wealth through work should be fairly compensated for their labor. Also, study after study has shown that the healthiest societies are those where the difference between the richest and poorest is least. The economically healthiest time in our history was between 1945 and 1980, when an average family could live comfortably on one income and the wealthiest Americans were not obscenely so.

Now is our opportunity to effect real social change into a truly sustainable and fair economic system. We need to agitate for the change we voted for in 2008 that favors people who work for a living instead of the same old system designed for the rich and large corporations.

Corporate persons' vs. ordinary people

Newburyport Daily News April 14, 2011

To the editor:

The multibillion-dollar corporate entity GE, deemed a "person" by the current Supreme Court, pays no taxes, just as many other giant corporate "persons" pay few or no taxes, just as the multi-billionaire top 1 percent of our population enjoy deep tax cuts,

It costs one million dollars a year to keep each soldier in Afghanistan and trillions of dollars to support worldwide military operations serving the war industry and those various corporate "persons" with "interests" in vulnerable foreign countries.

Clearly these corporate "persons" have no allegiance to "one nation, indivisible, with freedom and justice for all." These corporate "persons" have allegiance only to the bottom line, to profit gained by any means, including greedily outsourcing American jobs.

How much freedom and justice is there for people made jobless, homeless and hungry by the corporate power elite?

Meanwhile, newly elected governors in numerous states are stripping workers of bargaining rights, lowering wages, cutting benefits and putting workers out on the street. The newly elected Congress is working hard to cut or destroy programs that benefit the real "persons" of this nation, targeting workers, children, the elderly, women, the disabled and disadvantaged. They seek cuts in Medicare and Medicaid, unemployment benefits and any and all safety nets put in place to shield us when the economy fails real people.

They wouldn't dare think of requiring the uber-rich to pay a fair share of the wealth extracted from real people and an exhausted planet. Once again, ordinary people are being required to pay for

the excesses and criminality of the incomparably wealthy, just as they were required to do so in the Wall Street bailouts.

To keep people ignorant and distracted from reality, various smokescreens are created. Minority groups are attacked and scapegoated, the media focuses on marketing and trivia, button-pushing propaganda abounds. The hope is that real people will not be fooled again.

D. Philip
Newburyport

Society's issues just waiting for our action

The Gloucester Times April 20, 2011

To the editor:

I can hear it now: A collective groan along streets and alleyways, followed by "How can she offer us such off the charts, untrue gobbledegook? Doesn't she realize we're in deep economic trouble with no exit possible?"

Is this really so?

It's true that you're confronted with major issues such as being caught up in un-winnable wars that are robbing you of valuable monetary assets and many human lives.

Adherents of Wall Street make out like robber barons while Main Street is caught in an economic backwash. Empty storefronts, sinkholes on streets, skyrocketing property taxes while citizens look woebegone are more than noticeable. They are cautionary.

How to respond? Really look at all that's happening. Check out the experiences of participants in trying to keep some desperate victims afloat. Search the increasingly circumspect media for truth. Shy away from vitriolic exchanges and turn to rational discussions in the style of our president who mediates more than he puts his foot down.

Measured groupthink can yield solutions when none seem within reach. Analysis, intensive forums that are participatory, conclusions based on people being heard and a winnowing of input will produce reasoned outcomes. Take them and put them to work in everyone's behalf.

One issue that causes consternation and possible feelings of annoyance is coming up with required tax payments. Take note of the news that 12 multinational corporations are avoiding such payments altogether. Then, insist on a system of progressive taxation that would make the Bush tax cuts for the rich a moot point.

Abolish offshore tax havens. Examine and exert control over unregulated free market policies that produced economic mayhem by 2008. There's a lot of work to be done.

Keep in mind that fairness has to come first. Taxes are the cost of a civilized way of living and large corporations and its CEOs need to act in civilized style along with the rest of society. The formation of community with its advantages ensues when people trust and support each other.

Huge bonuses for the heads of companies, including not-for-profit health care venues, are granted even when they are falter-

ing and failing. On the other hand, take the measure of Mom and Pop stores where hours worked and effort expended are beyond belief and yet they are barely hanging on in this economy. Do common sense or fairness figure in here?

Protests are underway. You don't hear much about them. The Tea Party gets attention instead.

Television programs have let us down for the most part when it comes to being truthful and trustworthy in balanced ways. Luckily, you can turn to Rachel Maddow for help with this. PBS, Global Post and Link TV do their jobs, too.

Your money flowing to the Pentagon exceeds \$1.2 trillion overall in the context of an overall budget of \$3 trillion with both parties agreeing to a spending increase of \$516 billion over last year's. How can you rein in such spending? One approach is to present such figures to the public, unadorned with talk of "making you safe".

Over 800 U.S. military bases exist throughout the world. Our country simply can't police every nook and cranny everywhere. The expense of this can't be borne.

Multinational cooperation is called for along with mutually agreed upon ways to communicate and effect changes that benefit more and more people. Terrorists would fade away as they lose a reason for being.

Health care for all has to be a goal, too. Look up the expense of that in Sweden, a country where the populace is deemed the most contented of all the nations. The population here really wouldn't be coddled by universal health care.

They wouldn't be the victims either of a government that interferes with their freedom and ability to come up with creative solutions to seemingly intractable problems. Consider the fact that the military-industrial-congressional complex have stymied many efforts at cutting the budget and will resist any effort to bring about change to the health of our bodies and contents of our wallets.

Break free of this and proclaim the fundamental right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Being alive is primary and being alive in the best possible ways contributes to the strength and vigor of society.

You should all be part of that so the need to guarantee a chance at good health along with supporting one another in the pursuit of every issue brought up here is paramount.

The issues are waiting to be picked up and acted upon.

Cynthia Fisk
Gloucester

Law Offers Hope for Earth's Survival

Newburyport Daily News May 11, 2011

To the editor:

Breathe deeply; the air you breathe, and breathe you must, allows you to participate in the living atmosphere of planet Earth, whether or not you are forced to inhale nuclear fallout, smoke from giant incinerators, pesticides, insecticides, depleted uranium from exploding missiles or any of the thousands of tox-

ins spewed daily into the atmosphere and circulated around the globe.

Through infinitely complex processes, Mother Earth provides oxygen for the breath of life to all her organisms. We are such organisms, totally dependent on the rhythms and harmonies of Earth's intricate ecosystems, heretofore resilient and abundant, to survive, to exist at all. As members of the tree of life, our well-being depends on the well-being of planet Earth. The molecules that constitute our bodies have commonalities with all living beings.

The water you drink, and drink we must, can contain a great array of deadly pollution from industrial wastes, agricultural wastes, mining, fracking, weaponry and more. We are a reckless species that dissociates itself from its origins, perpetually sacking nature for shortsighted and dubious aims.

Shannon Biggs of AlterNet asks, "What if nature had rights and the Gulf Coast could bring BP to court for the disastrous oil spill that gutted the Gulf one year ago?" The current tally: in addition to 11 men killed outright, people living on the Gulf Coast are sick and dying from exposure to toxins released by the BP disaster. The Center for Biological Diversity reports that tens of thousands of birds (102 species), thousands of turtles and tens of thousands of marine mammals, including dolphins and whales, innumerable fish (500 species) and lobsters, clams, crabs and oysters have died from the spill. Stillborn baby dolphins have washed ashore. Grave questions about the reproductive cycles of Gulf flora and fauna remain.

If we were to adopt Bolivia's Law of Mother Earth (established law in Bolivia and recently introduced to the U.N.), there might be hope for the survival of life on Earth. The law's objective is the recognition of rights for planet Earth through the implementation of obligations and duties of governments and societies toward the Earth. The provisions of the law include respect for and defense of Mother Earth, the promotion of harmony between human communities and natural living systems, practices to ensure the sustainable use of Earth's components, and the adoption of production and consumption practices in harmony with Mother Earth, plus the creation of an ombudsman. The Earth is sacred. As Black Elk put it, the holy land is everywhere.

To adhere to this law would require remarkable changes in our lives, but the bleak alternative has already brought rapidly occurring changes, calling for serious awareness and the willingness to change how we view and interact with the planet.

D. Philip
Newburyport

Pebble Mine too dangerous to develop

Newburyport Daily News May 19, 2011
To the editor:

Bristol Bay in Alaska is home to the world's largest wild salmon fishery. This fishery is being threatened by a proposal to build an open pit gold and copper mine.

The building of this mine, Pebble Mine, will destroy miles and miles of Alaskan wilderness. But even more alarming is the fact that the waste from the extraction of the ore is lethal to wildlife. When exposed to air and water, the waste becomes sulfuric acid, a poisonous chemical by-product.

The impoundments that must be built to contain this waste, called acid mine drainage, will, according to the developers, be safe and monitored for leaks. But as we saw this winter with the human waste discs escaping from the water treatment plant in New Hampshire, mistakes happen. Mistakes like that cannot ever, ever happen in the case of these impoundments. There is no allowance for leakage of the drainage. Human nature being what it is and taking into account natural disasters, it is unrealistic to expect the impoundments to be safe from leaks. Any leakage or seepage of the acid drainage into the water system will destroy a beautiful and bountiful and irreplaceable ecosystem.

I believe the chance of a leak from the impoundments is too a great a risk for the environment of Alaska. Short-term gain does not warrant long-term destruction of the Bristol Bay watershed, which year after year provides a healthy living to people and animals alike.

Please join me in preventing the development of Pebble Mine. Read the December issue of *National Geographic* for more information and then please write to your congressmen and women. The EPA is voting on the safety of this project in October.

Susan Manning
Amesbury

People for Peace denounce halting of ships

Andover Townsman, July 7, 2011

The Merrimack Valley People for Peace denounces the halting of the ships of Freedom Flotilla II that were scheduled to sail this week on a humanitarian mission from Greece to Gaza in defiance of the Israeli blockade.

The Audacity of Hope, flying the US flag and carrying 36 American citizens, nine members of the media and a crew of four, left the dock and managed to sail for 20 minutes on July 1 before being turned back by the Greek Coast Guard. The boat's cargo contains no weapons. It consists of thousands of letters of love and support for the men, women and children of Gaza.

MVPP members were deeply disappointed by the statements of the White House and the State Department earlier this week. They warned those who planned to sail to Gaza that they could be stopped by Israelis, arrested and deported. No reassurance of protection, to which they were entitled as US citizens, was made.

High praise is given by MVPP to members of Congress who asked the Secretary of State to work with the Israeli government to ensure the safety of the US citizens aboard the Audacity of Hope.

Among those on board are several friends of MVPP: Ridgely Fuller, social worker of Waltham, MA; Kathy Kelly, Coordinator of Voices for Creative Nonviolence, Chicago, Ill.; Paki Wieland, retired social worker, North Hampton, Mass. and Ann Wright, retired U.S. Army Colonel and a former US diplomat, Honolulu, HI.

The 2010 Free Gaza Flotilla was attacked by Israelis while in international waters. Nine passengers were killed and dozens wounded. Seven Israelis were also wounded. The Israelis announced that they would not touch the boats of this 2011 flotilla. Instead, they flooded the news with false claims that these

activists are supporting terrorists, that their ships are not seaworthy, and that they are carrying weapons. They admit that they convinced Greece to cooperate with them in forbidding the boats to leave the Greek port. Someone has sabotaged two boats at the dock.

MVPP suggests that the Greek Embassy in Washington, D.C. needs to hear that maintaining this policy means being complicit in the siege of Gaza, which has been called by the UN and by human rights organizations "a collective punishment and a crime against humanity."

This MVPP press release was written by Jane Cadarette and modified with feedback by many in the group. The Andover Townsman accepted to print it as a Letter to the Editor from Andover resident, Boryana Tacconi.

To Secretary of State re. Flotilla

To: The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton July 21, 2011
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
Washington DC 20520

Re: Your failure to protect US citizens aboard the Audacity of Hope

Dear Secretary Clinton:

On behalf of the North Shore Coalition for Peace and Justice, I am writing to express strong disapproval of your failure to take the appropriate steps to protect the United States citizens aboard the US boat to Gaza, the Audacity of Hope. As two of the boat's passengers have worked with Coalition members on a variety of peace and justice issues, the Coalition has a personal concern with this issue.

To begin with, we were dismayed at the serious misunderstandings evident in your remarks at a press conference on June 23 regarding the flotilla:

QUESTIONER: And also, Madame Secretary, there's reports that another flotilla may be headed to Gaza within the next couple days. What is your message to the organizers and participants in that?

CLINTON: ... Well, we do not believe that the flotilla is a necessary or useful effort to try to assist the people of Gaza. Just this week, the Israeli Government approved a significant commitment to housing in Gaza. There will be construction materials entering Gaza and we think that it's not helpful for there to be flotillas that try to provoke action by entering into Israeli waters and creating a situation in which the Israelis have the right to defend themselves. (emphasis added)

We find disingenuous your suggestion that the flotilla was unnecessary because "just last week" the Israeli government had made a significant commitment to housing in Gaza. Did it not occur to you - as it did to us - that Israel's commitment at that time was prompted by the flotilla? You will recall that Israel "eased" its siege in June 2010 because of the first flotilla that sailed at the end of May 2010.

We were also dismayed by your statement that the flotilla would be "entering into Israeli waters." As you surely know, Gaza's coastal waters do not belong to Israel. The planned route of the flotilla was entirely in international waters until reaching the

coastal waters of Gaza, and thus at no point (unless diverted by Israel) would it have entered into "Israeli waters".

In addition, we found less than credible your suggestion that Israelis have the "right to defend themselves" against the 3,000-some open letters of human friendship from the ordinary citizens of the US to the ordinary citizens of Gaza, which was the sole cargo of the US boat. As was widely publicized, the unarmed passengers aboard the US boat were committed to non-violence. At the time of your press conference, they were training in Greece - along with the passengers on the other flotilla boats - to remain totally non-violent in the face of Israeli gunship helicopters, masked commandos with M16 rifles, Taser stun guns, physical blows and dogs. Hence your suggestion that these same people would be "creating a situation in which the Israelis have the right to defend themselves" is without credibility.

We regret to say that these uninformed and irresponsible remarks could easily have been interpreted by Israel as a green light from the US to inflict bodily harm on unarmed, peaceful US citizens, which is unacceptable.

To the extent that you did take action, it appears that you acted to pressure Greece to prevent the flotilla from sailing, rather than to restrain the Israeli government, the only party that threatened violence.

May we suggest that Irish Foreign Minister Eamon Gilmore acted appropriately to protect the citizens of his country when he warned Israel that if it intercepted the ships, it should do so peacefully. As the Secretary of State of the United States, you had a duty to do no less.

Sincerely,

Susan T. Nicholson
for the North Shore Coalition for Peace and Justice
5 Rowley Shore
Gloucester, MA 01930

CD: Representative John Tierney
Senator John Kerry
Senator Scott Brown

Responses by Michael Bleiweiss

Lawrence Eagle-Tribune August 2011,

not published

... the massive deficits we are experiencing are still mostly the ongoing legacy of the Bush administration. Five trillion dollars carry-over from the Bush era (largely tax cuts and the two wars) versus \$1.44 trillion in new spending since Obama was elected.

Published 8/25/2011:

I just lost my job last week along with 11 other people. Why? Because the corporate parent wants to sell our division because it isn't profitable enough for them. They think that by gutting the intellectual assets of the company to raise short term earnings, it will be more attractive to a potential buyer. Of course, they will be acquiring a crippled business.

Last year, their CEO received \$26 million -- 36 times the combined salaries of the people laid off. That is the problem with

American business -- unrestrained greed devoid of ethics or long term vision.

My initial letter: 8/27/11:

The Republican candidates are scrambling to out-Christian each other. However, when you look under the surface you see that they promote extremely unchristian values: intolerance for those who are different from the mainstream (e.g, homosexuals), expanded rights for large corporations to pollute God's earth and trample over their workers, and the accelerated siphoning of wealth from poor and middle-class working people to their rich donors while at the same time dismantling those programs that help the disadvantaged.

My Response to a response to the 8/27/11 letter, sent 9/1/11:

"Democrat's Values" criticizes my initial Sound Off comment ("Unchristian Values") by pushing the standard Christian fundamentalist myth that religion is excluded from government. I wish that it were so. Our government is awash in religion. Elected officials are sworn in with their hand on a Bible and asserting "so help me God," as are jurors and witnesses in our courts. Most government bodies, such as Congress and city councils, open their meetings with a (Judeo-Christian) prayer. This is in blatant disregard of the Constitution, the First Amendment, and our founders' intent. And Democrats commit this offense just as much as Republicans do.

Regarding "wealth redistribution," the Republican policy of aiding wealth redistribution upwards by assisting the rich in accumulating and keeping ever more while driving down wages and benefits for those doing the work that creates their wealth is definitely not consistent with what Jesus taught. I believe that he would have advocated the more fortunate giving back to their community and working people getting a fair share of the wealth.

As far as schools go, they have no business pushing a particular brand of religion on impressionable young children. Let their parents inculcate them into the family belief system.

Finally, their opposition to gay marriage is firmly rooted in using a cherry picked religious doctrine (while conveniently ignoring almost all of the rest of Old Testament law) to justify their antiquated homophobia. Besides, I cannot see how allowing the formation of more family units destroys them.

Sincerely,
Michael Bleiweiss

Missile testing on International Day of Peace

To: The White House September 2, 2011

I am writing to express my outrage at the latest thumb at the nose of the rest of the international community by my country. I don't think bullying and offending people is the best way to get on in the world.

In 1981, the United Nations General Assembly created an annual International Day of Peace to take place on the opening

day of the regular sessions of the General Assembly. The purpose of the day is for "commemorating and strengthening the ideals of peace both within and among all nations and peoples."

What have we chosen to do? We have announced that the next test of a Minuteman III will occur on September 21, 2011. Rather than considering how we might participate and bring awareness to the International Day of Peace, the United States will be testing one of its nuclear-capable intercontinental ballistic missiles that, 20 years after the end of the Cold War, continue to be kept on high-alert in readiness to be fired on a few moments notice.

However much you believe that missile readiness is still needed, scheduling a test on the very day dedicated to peace by the international community will be taken by many as a snub, if not an insult.

I love my country. I hate to see it behave as a boorish self-centered bully in the international community. I don't think it's in our long-term interests. It's that kind of behavior, after all, that contributed to the hatred that led to 9/11. Not creating hatred is as important to our national security as military might, if not more so.

Dee Halzack
North Billerica

Responses by Michael Bleiweiss

to sound off in the *Lawrence Eagle Tribune* by Michael Bleiweiss.

Submitted 10/5/11

We tried having a minimalist government for 120 years and we got water you couldn't drink, air you couldn't breathe, food that was unsafe to eat, and a super-wealthy industrialist owner class who made the majority of the population work 80 hours per week in dirty, dangerous factories for sub-subsistence wages. And, if you lost your job or got sick -- tough. A weak government might work for the disbursed agrarian society of the 1700s, but does not suffice for a modern capitalist, industrial one. Now, with the wealthy class again controlling our government, the Republicans want to return us to those "good old days."

Submitted 10/12/11

To "Dems Fail", when the Democrats controlled both houses of Congress and the presidency, the Senate Republicans filibustered almost every initiative the Democrats introduced. Overcoming this requires 60 votes, which they didn't have. The Republican leadership made it clear from even before President Obama took office that their agenda was to make him fail.

Submitted 10/13/11

Ted Tripp refers to the Tea Party as a grass roots movement. In reality it is Astroturf -- funded by the billionaire industrialist Koch brothers, organized by the Republican hatchet man Dick Arney, and hyped by the Fox News army of right-wing pundits for just one purpose: to promote policies that will allow them to

amass and keep as much wealth as possible at the expense of everyone else, including the very members of the Tea Party.

Submitted 10/14/11

There are many entrepreneurs whose ingenuity has created new products and companies that employ millions of people. They fully deserve to be rich, but also owe society for providing the infrastructure and institutions that allowed them to realize their achievements.

However, the vast majority of the wealthiest Americans did not get there by job creating innovation. Rather, they are the top corporate executives who pay themselves obscene bonuses while driving down wages and benefits for those whose work actually creates their companies' profits. Then they destroy jobs by laying off workers or sending their jobs overseas to increase profits even more. There are also the stock traders who destroyed trillions of dollars in wealth through bad investments, but still get multi-million dollar bonuses. Those people deserve no special consideration from the rest of us.

Submitted 10/26/11

Travis Blais and Taylor Armerding claim that the participants in the Occupy movement do not understand the reality of job creation. They might not, but neither do the people in power. And, the Occupy participants certainly understand job destruction and the dangers from the concentration of wealth and power.

They understand that:

- 1% of the population controls 50% of the wealth in this country.
- Since the 1980s, CEO compensation in large corporations has risen from 40 times that of the average employee to over 400 times.
- While giving themselves such excess pay, they lay off thousands of workers, offshore jobs, and drive down salaries and benefits.
- Forty years of Republican-driven tax cuts that allow them to keep more of this "stolen" wealth have not created one single documented job.
- Trade treaties are written to favor the welfare of multinational corporations over those of workers, local business, and the environment.
- Combined with provisions in our tax laws, these treaties encourage corporations to ship our jobs to other countries.
- Deregulation of the banking and investment industries allowed them to gamble with risky investments that they do not fully understand. When these gambles failed, crashing our economy, these corporations were bailed out with our tax money.
- These same companies continued to give their top executives obscene bonuses.
- Not even one person was ever been subject to a criminal investigation.

Their point is that this concentrated wealth has allowed those at the very top and their corporations to lobby and bribe elected officials to tilt the playing field ever more in their favor at the expense of those who actually do the work. It is because of this gross unfairness that people are protesting. Many of the protest-

ers are people who are unable to find work. Others have jobs and go to the encampments after hours or on weekends.

The movement is striving to create a society and economic system that is fair for everyone -- not just the wealthiest few.

Sincerely,
Michael Bleiweiss

Troop withdrawal from Iraq met with a sour taste

Boston Globe November 9, 2011

To the editor:

The announcement that all troops will return from Iraq at the end of the year should be a reason to rejoice. But for many military families and veterans, it has a taste of ashes in the mouth. Yes, we are glad they are coming home, but it is too late for so many who will never return. And homecoming is only the beginning for those who have come back.

After eight years of combat, where is the public discussion of what we have done? As a nation we are sunk in debt and unemployment. We praise our troops, but don't want to hire them, or take care of them. Our decision to invade and occupy Iraq for eight long years is relegated to some part of our history that we don't want to discuss, our shadow self.

For those of us who have a loved one who was deployed once or multiple times to this misadventure, we can only ask: What happens to unspoken shame and injustice on a national scale?

What part will we play to bind the wounds of our veterans, their families, and the Iraqi people? These questions will not be discussed on news programs. Just as military families and veterans have been on the front lines to end this war, we will have to be the ones to shine light upon the aftermath of what has been done.

Sarah Fuhro
Natick, Military Families Speak Out
(not MVPP - but so well said)

A Peacenik's Adventure

We asked Niki Rosen to write down her conversations and inspirations in July.

Ring, Ring, Ring!

"Hello?"

"Is this Niki Rosen" (male voice)

"Yes, and no friend of mine calls me at 8:30 AM!!"

"I am inspector 'Much Ado (about nothing) from the FBI and I want to ask you a few questions."

"I'm still asleep! Call me back in 45 minutes.

Ring, Ring, Ring!

"Hello?"

"This is much Ado again. I just want to ask you a few questions. Your name and number were in the paper as a contact person for a potluck for 'Pilgrimage for a Nuclear Free Future.' Can we meet at a Dunkin Donuts? "

"No. If you must meet with me you can come here to my Senior Housing building and we will meet in the Community Room, with our property manager present."

"I just want a few names and phone numbers. Was there a woman there named __?"

"I don't know!"

We Walk For Life

we also walk in funeral procession in the desert
With white crosses
names of the dead on them
who died crossing in that desert
Y también cruces con el nombre DESCONOCIDO
y cambiaba yo ese día con un@ UNKNOWN
that day we were walking in silence
On the black pavement.
In that stretch of road I volunteered to carry strings of
Tied tobacco pouches, red string tied red cloth
Pouches, each red pouch one dead adult
That year alone
That one sector of Arizona, hundreds
and those only the dead who were known to us
All red, the Dead
except the white pouches that were tied
were dead children, at least a dozen
So I carried them, consecrated at the beginning of the camino
and my cross.
I marched behind Steve
Who that day
 Wore a t-shirt
 with the names of the Dead
 from another year
 And I read those names off his back in my silence
walking
And in one moment, just like that, they were all there
I don't know how many
 Just there. Right there.
Grieving and asking, supporting the walking
Of miles and miles and miles
Miles they had walked and not survived
And I was so brokenhearted
 & grateful
But I never spoke of it
because though it was real to me
It didn't seem as if anyone else had noticed

Oscar Romero said
That when they killed him
he would live on in the people
& they killed him
& he still lives on
This, I am reminded, is the resurrection
The Public Resurrection
a dangerous resurrection
The resurrection of resistance
Dangerous to forces of power
 to the state
Who would prefer we do not remember
 Much less know
 Speak to
 Be advised by
 Our people
 The Dead
They Who "Threaten Us with Resurrection."
Julia Esquivel wrote about the resurrected
Who threaten us with the same
In a poem I read a long time ago
Only now understanding
 Peoples whose bodies
 Souls
 Strength
 Spirit
 Death

Hope
Suffering
Perseverance
Life

Cannot be taken away from those of us
Who go on living this earthly way
And teach us
Que ya no hay "que tener miedo a la muerte"
who threaten us to live as the resurrected who do not fear death

So let us remember the Dead today
but not merely as dead
or victims
but those to whom we are accountable
Those who enliven our action
Those who strengthen our
"NO's" and
"Never again!"s
Those who threaten our complacency
with their sacrifices
Those who rise in our witness
Rise in our protest
Rise in our resistance
that we may Rise
 against those who would continue to destroy
As we remember the dead
May They Live
And let us Rise
Again &
Again.

Dues

If the date on your mailing label is is 2011 or earlier, please use
the yellow slip enclosed in the newsletter to pay your dues.

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North Andover, MA 01845-0573

<http://www.merrimackvalleypeopleforpeace.org/>

PEACE IS
PATRIOTIC



The MVPP Newsletter is printed periodically and has a current distribution of 100. We are grateful for suggestions, comments, and help with publication. (Unless **2010** appears on your label, your dues have expired. Please remember to renew.)

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CALL AND WRITE YOUR REPRESENTATIVES & SENATORS TO MAKE YOUR VIEWS KNOWN

Every legislator knows one letter is worth a thousand votes.

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Washington, DC 20500
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Contact: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/>

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A link to all in US legislature:

<http://thomas.loc.gov/home/legbranch/legbranch.html>

How Senators and Representatives voted:

Senate: http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/legislative/a_three_sections_with_teasers/votes.htm
House: <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2004/index.asp>

State Voting Information: Look up who you vote for at
<http://www.wheredoivotema.com/bal/myelectioninfo.php>