



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.

July - November 2008

Merrimack Valley People for Peace joins the United Nations and peacemakers around the world in proclaiming the years 2001-2010 to be the "International Decade for the Culture of Peace."

GOOD NEWS

Can we mention the election? The huge turnout has to make an improvement!

7/16/08 Jane Cadarette found in an article from Breibart.com.

"Two goals of his administration would be to secure all loose nuclear material during his first term and to rid the world of nuclear weapons, Obama told an audience before a roundtable discussion at Purdue University."

State House voted down an Iran Divestment bill

8/2/08 from Bobbie Goldman from UJP

August 1, the MA Iran Divestment bill failed in the Senate after passing the House the night before. Passing this bill would have removed state investments and been provocative toward Iran.

Similar legislation failed in the US Congress later in the year.

Mission Accomplished

By Jane Cadarette, Peace Vision Project Co-founder July

Thanks to ophthalmologist Dr. Mohammad Zuraik, ocularist/optometrist Mo'ad Huzayen of Amman, Jordan and the generous Americans whose donations I carried to Amman last month on behalf of Peace Vision Project, Ahlam a blind, Iraqi woman now has ocular prosthetics. She remains blind but her "eyes" are now the lovely green they were prior to the attack. Donations allowed me to bring a new laptop computer to her as well.

Ahlam was blinded when shot a few years ago, by a man she believes was a member of the Mahdi Militia, in retaliation for working for an American company in Iraq. In spite of her blindness, all that she has suffered and her refugee status in Jordan, Ahlam is living a very purposeful life. She is as "beautiful inside and out" as Dr. Zuraik describes her; also confident, intelligent and fun loving. Ahlam is a college graduate who taught school in Iraq before the war put an end to that. With the assistance of a charitable organization that recognized her abilities and potential, she is taking courses at a university in Amman; the first blind student to attend. Ahlam is helping to educate her professors, knowing that their experiences with her will enable future blind students to have an easier time of it. Ahlam and I and my

Peace Vision Project co-founder, Stuart Leiderman, are grateful to all who contributed to make this trip possible.



Issues

Then, This Is the Year: Imagining Our Way to the Peace Economy

By Frida Berrigan

Extracted from War Resisters League flier

IMAGINATION IS KEY to the work for social and political transformation...

In the struggles against racism, sexism, and nationalism, imagination plays a critical role in inspiring and sustaining activists through tough times.

MVPP Meeting – November 25, 6:30 PM **Stone Soup Supper: West Parish Church**, 129 Reservation Road, Andover..

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

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You can view newsletters on line (where most links work) at <http://www.merrimackvalleypeopleforpeace.org/oldmins.htm>

Our forbearers imagined the end of slavery before they began to build it; they saw humanity after the Holocaust as they struggled against Nazism. Following in their footsteps, can we kindle our imagination in ways that will ignite change?

Can we turn our imagination to the cut and dry world of paying for war? Can we imagine budgets being turned upside down with the money for education and jobs training, health care and social services, roads and other infrastructure programs dwarfing what is spent on the military? Once we imagine it — can we make it happen?

Martin Espada's evocative poem, "Angels of Bread" ends with a tribute to the imagination:

*If the abolition of slave-manacles began as a vision of hands without manacles,
then this is the year;*

*If the shutdown of extermination camps began as imagination of a land without barbed wire or the crematorium,
then this is the year;*

*If every rebellion begins with the idea that conquerors on horseback are not many-legged gods,
that they too drown if plunged in the river,
then this is the year.*

So may every humiliated mouth, teeth like desecrated headstones, fill with the angels of bread.

As Espada writes in his poem "this is the year." The need is critical. We see it and feel it. Food riots rage throughout the world, and at home milk and gas are both going for a wallet-busting \$4.00 a gallon. We wish it was last year, or the year before that — in fact, we wish it was before this expensive and unnecessary war was launched. But, it did not happen then, so now, "this is the year."

What would the United States look like without a permanent war footing and the military spending to match it?

This exercise in imagining enough money for bread begins with knowing how much is set aside for bombs.

In February 2008, the Congressional Budget Office estimated that lawmakers have appropriated \$752 billion for the Iraq war and occupation, ongoing military operations in Afghanistan and other activities associated with the global war on terror since 2001. The Pentagon says that it will need another \$170 billion for fiscal 2009 (which begins in October of this year), which would push war spending since 2001 to 922 billion — close to \$1 trillion.

To help the imagination absorb this inconceivable figure, New York Times columnist Bob Herbert has a useful comparison: He begins with a stack of one thousand-dollar bills roughly six inches high. That six inch stack is worth one million dollars. Then, a \$1 billion stack would be as tall as the Washington Monument, and a \$1 trillion stack would be 95 miles high. \$922 billion over seven years is about \$2.5 billion a week to fight war.

And that is not the total amount of the money that we spend on the military...

... military spending is more than the combined totals of spending on education, environmental protection, justice administration, veteran's benefits, housing assistance, transportation, job training, agriculture, energy, and economic development...

...We have the resources to feed the hungry and house the homeless, to provide health care for all, to take care of the planet, build a 21st century national infrastructure and chart a more sustainable course for meeting energy needs...

This article was originally printed in
Off Our Backs, Sept. 2008, Vol. 38, #1
www.offourbacks.org
(Details, shown here by..., are in that article)

POSTSCRIPT (Oct. 8, 2008) The \$700 billion bailout of Wall Street, the banks and big business passed this week. But, despite the budget busting figure and the somber promises, it was not the magic healing balm that repaired all the breaches, calmed all the storms and soothed all the frantic worries of a nation on the brink. In fact, a glance at the front pages of any newspaper confirms the worst: our behemoth economy, bloated by spending on war, is in a tailspin.

In the midst of wave after wave of bad economic news — Dow at five year low, joblessness reaches new high, eight out of ten Americans very very worried — we cannot hear a single political leader questioning Bush's trillion dollar war.

Frida Berrigan is Senior Program Associate of the Arms and Security Initiative at the New America Foundation. She is a columnist/or Foreign Policy in Focus and a contributing editor of In These Times magazine. Frida serves on WRL's Administrative Coordinating Committee. WAR RESISTERS LEAGUE • 339 Lafayette St., New York, NY 10012 • www.warresisters.org

Nuclear Disarmament

Pax Christi has assembled a good summary of the current movement titled: "A New Moment for Nuclear Disarmament" in its October Newsletter. www.paxchristiusa.org/newsletters/October2008NewsletterWeb.pdf

Headings include: Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, De-Alerting Nuclear Weapons, The Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT), and The Moscow Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions; with Catholic Social Teaching, and Further Resources.

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).

Vigils

Recently a young woman approached the vigilers in Andover to thank us for what we were doing and to say she supports us and is against the war. She had just completed one tour as a helicopter mechanic in Iraq and two tours in Afghanistan. She flew on rescue missions as part of her duties, rescuing wounded soldiers and making repairs as they were needed on the mission.

She talked with us for quite some time and then returned with coffee and hot chocolate to warm us on that chilly evening. It warmed our hearts as well and strengthened our resolve to continue to make a witness.

Shortly after she left a man stopped and asked, "Where have you been? I was taking my daughter to her dance lessons earlier this week and no one was here! I missed seeing you." (Nice to know we were missed but there are days when obligations keep us from being there.) What we do does make a difference!

See you at the next vigil?

10/26/08 On a lovely afternoon, eight of us were on three corners of the intersection at our weekly Sunday vigil in Shawsheen Square in Andover. There were only three people who were negative. . . a thumbs down, an obscene gesture and a remark, "these colors don't run" -- but there were 116 counted waves, toots, peace signs and thumbs up. We like those odds!

Mary Todd

Letters

We need a peaceful revolution in America

Lawrence Eagle Tribune August 6, 2008

To the editor:

One of our country's beautiful hymns, "America the Beautiful," reads in part, "America, America, God shed His grace on thee."

Now more than ever I sense we must cry out this melodious prayer because America is losing so much of her beauty these years in so many ways.

I ask myself many questions about our beloved nation, such as: Why are you so violent in so many aspects of our lives? Why is our military budget so excessive when even our former statesmen and high level military leaders tell us that it takes more than guns to win hearts and minds?

Why are we allowing so many of youth to die in faraway lands for dubious reasons?

Why does our government "spin" facts so that the truth is not recognizable?

Why Does the U.S. rush to propose or even implement military solutions rather than sitting down with an alleged enemy to resolve a conflict?

Why does it take so long for our country to acknowledge "global warming" when the vast number of scientists give us ample proof that it is a reality?

Why keep pushing for offshore drilling instead of really supporting alternatives?

Why did our government allow the sub-prime mortgage debacle?

Why do we torture our prisoners?

Why do we strongly support such problems as the death penalty, abortion, guns, etc.?

Why are we so much against supporting the new immigrants?

Why are we determined to make space another war zone?

The listing of these whys could go on and on.

I would like to suggest a proposal that requires a new revolution in America, one of nonviolence. A revolution that would insist on truth, justice for all, dignity for all, compassion for all, forgiveness for all, even a Department of Peace in our government.

To implement this revolution would surely win hearts and minds and certainly make America, America the Beautiful! And God would surely shed His grace on thee.

J. Arthur Brien
Lawrence

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\$20.00 Individual
\$10.00 Student/Senior
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Circle One

\$50.00 Supporting
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Return to P.O. Box 573
North Andover, MA 01845

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.**

Dues

Our fiscal year ended June 30. Please pay dues soon to maintain membership. Unless 2009 appears on your label, your dues have expired.

Recent Events

At the MVPP Annual Meeting, Carlos and Melida Arredondo and The Smedley Butler Brigade of Veterans for Peace were guests and speakers. Jane Cadarette briefly described her trip to Jordan to visit Ahlam, the blinded Iraqi lady the Peace Vision Project has been helping.

We had our table at the Lowell Folk Festival again and had a great time talking to the choir and other interested people. We gave away buttons, stickers and literature, and our donations can had \$200 at the end of the day.

On the damp night of August 6, nine of us stood on the curb at Andover's Old Town Hall. Signs commemorated the tragedy of **Hiroshima**. Mary Kate led a new song.

Ralph Galen opened his new coffeehouse with two nights of David Dodson, August 8 and 9. The new venue is **The FOLK FACTORY** at 60 Island Street Lawrence (Cambridge College Building Room 404).

David Dodson is an extraordinary singer- songwriter environmentalist. He's written over 300 songs with wit and grace and humor on every subject you can imagine.

September 1, MVPP was well represented at the table at Lawrence's the **Bread and Roses Festival**.

Barbara and Arthur went door to door and made calls for **Million Doors for Peace** on Sept. 20 (and earlier).

Jim and Mary Todd held an open house to demonstrate how their new **solar electrical and hot water system** work. This was part of the American Solar Energy Society's National Solar Tour.

Peace Pilgrims visited the North Andover United Methodist church for a supper presentation and sleep over.

Peace service at Merrimack College (not an MVPP event, but some of our friends were there). More than 100 people from

local churches prayed for the people of Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, and Israel. People came from St. James Episcopal in Groveland, Christ Episcopal and St. Augustines RC of Andover, All Saints Episcopal of West Newbury, St. James of Haverhill RC, Groveland Congregational, and Second Congregational of West Boxford.

MVPP set up the **table at the October 11 rally at the Boston Common**. We had about fifteen people, of the total crowd of over a thousand on this beautiful day. You can see us in a video at www.oct11boston.org/

Tuesday November 11 **Veterans For Peace marched in Boston's Veterans' Day parade**. The City of Boston outsources running the parade to the American Legion. VFP marched behind the street sweepers. Some of the veterans in the main parade cheered us at the end of the parade. Since the American Legion decided to not have speakers and a ceremony at City Hall Plaza, Veterans for Peace and Iraq Veterans Against the War provided speakers. (Remember that in 2007 many Veterans for Peace and supporters were arrested at the ceremony, when they protested not being allowed to participate.)

HIPP workshop in Lawrence. Help Increase the Peace Program, led by Barbara Hildt, to train youth to make peace in everyday life. With youth from Methuen, Lawrence and Methuen, we had morning and afternoon workshops. We had fun and developed social skills that can prevent violence.

Coming Events

Tuesday November 25, 6:30 PM The **Stone Soup Supper** will be at **West Parish Church in Andover, 129 Reservation Road, Andover**. The "Stone Soup" supper is free and guests are invited to bring a small amount of precooked vegetables to add to the pot. A free will offering will be taken for OXFAM, a development, advocacy, and relief agency working to combat poverty and hunger worldwide. Following the meal, guests are invited to stay for a group discussion and brief business meeting.

In Memory

Jose Balbuena

Lawrence MA- Jose Balbuena, 61, died Tuesday, August 05, 2008 at the Caritas Holy Family Hospital in Methuen, surrounded by his loving family. Born in the Dominican Republic to Manuel and Maria (Fernandez), Jose moved to the United states in 1982.

Jose was very active and well known in the Lawrence community. He worked part time for UPS and owned and operated Nobel Bookstore in Lawrence where he hosted many cultural events ("Tertulias"). He was very involved in politics and helped in other peoples campaigns. He later ran for School Committee himself. He was an avid Domino player and was proud of participating in several competitions. Jose also loved to dance.

...We in MVPP met Jose in the early days of the Iraq War when he led vigils in Lawrence, then in the immigrant's movement.

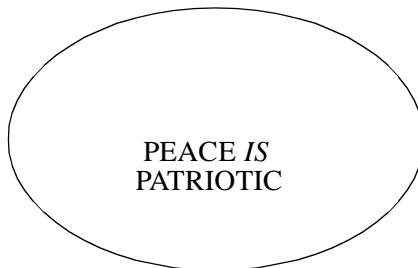


Merrimack Valley People For Peace
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<http://www.merrimackvalleypeopleforpeace.org/>

STONE SOUP SUPPER

November 25 6:30 PM **See p. 4**
West Parish Church
Andover



The MVPP Newsletter is printed monthly and has a current distribution of 200. We are grateful for suggestions, comments, and help with publication. (Unless **2009** appears on your label, your dues have expired. Please remember to renew.)
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Newsletter contributors: Arthur and Margaret Brien, Bobbie Goldman, Brian Quirk, Boryana Tacconi, and Mary Todd.

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

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White House Comment Desk: 202 456-1111
E-mail: president@whitehouse.gov

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304 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
202 224-4543 fax: 202 224-2417
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617 565-3170 fax: 617 565-3183
Form: <http://kennedy.senate.gov/contact.html>

Representative John Tierney (District 6)

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304 Russell Senate Office Building
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Form: <http://kerry.senate.gov/text/contact/email.html>

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>