A Center and a Circumference for Peace

David Bantz, Board President

The formation of the Alaska Peace Center 30 months ago was an act of faith. We had no certainty that our community would welcome a visible presence of peace-making or that people would attend the activities celebrating peace that we intended to organize, or even that donors would enable us to pay the rent.

We deliberately named our organization a Peace CENTER because we envisioned it as a meeting place at the intersection of many interests such as anti-war vigils, non-violent action, inner peace and religious pacifism, direct assistance to those men and women in the military, alternatives to military service, non-violent conflict resolution.

Now that we have, mirabile dictu, operated for over two years, have sustained a place for peace makers, have sponsored dozens of public events, have brought distinguished peace activists to Fairbanks, have sponsored seminars and workshops, and have become a focal point for support of GIs, I have begun to turn my attention from the center to the circumference. I mean, I have been reflecting on just how wide a circle of concern is really encompassed by our stated goal of peace building.

To foster peaceful international conflict resolution, we have sought to understand how our nation lurched into the current invasion and occupation of countries that were no threat to our security. We find roots of those horrific acts in an agenda of world domination, exploitation, and control of resources, especially fossil energy – an agenda that masquerades as progress and economic freedom. So we find that our concerns must include not merely opposition to invasion and occupation, and exposing the deceptions used to “justify” this war. We find that we must articulate how this agenda has systematically misled our nation to violate the principles and rights of all people celebrated in its founding documents. Our concerns must include restoration of these principles of government as an instrument to protect and promote freedom.

The consequences of this agenda of domination and misdirection of resources is to enrich and empower the few at terrible cost for the people of other nations. So we realize our concern for peace must encompass economic justice and non-violent action for social change. Non-violent action for social change is so foreign to the dominant paradigm of enforced domination that we find we have to study and learn and practice this way of enriching the world. The Peace Center has hosted an extended seminar on non-violent action.

When we ask what sustains domination backed by violence, either as a general paradigm or in the context of the current war, it seems clear that our nation’s leaders act as though happiness and prosperity depend upon consuming a disproportionate share of the world’s resources. The current struggle is over dwindling reserves of fossil energy, but we can discern even more cataclysmic struggle over fresh water. So we find our concern must also encompass the development of sustainable human communities and recognition of the importance of global ecology. These are truly hopeful alternatives to the grim competitive model of human community based on maximum consumption.

When we ask how it is that so much of what the “developed” world does seems grounded in a self-limiting and violence-prone model of domination and zero-sum competition, we find our culture relies on embedded myths and metaphors that reinforce such thinking and make it appear “natural.” So our concern has to encompass a respect for and celebration of the stories and myths and ways of life of many peoples, all of whom have something to...
teach us. It has to encompass an acknowledgement that we do not have a single best or right answer for every problem. We need to leave room for a bit of wonder and mystery in our lives.

If you even partially follow this line of thought to encompass so much more than the absence of war in our vision of peace, it might seem as though there is too much to do, too many obstacles. But I am coming to see it differently. From the circumference, each of these concerns – each of these alternatives for human community – reinforces and supports each of the others. What lies before us is a historic transformation in the way we live, that is, as part of a global community rather than as warring tribes, as collaborators rather than competitors in a zero-sum game, creating value rather than taking it.

Our experience over the last 30 months gives me hope that our Alaska Peace Center will have a role in that great transformation. But to make it happen we need you. We need you to expand your role in the Alaska Peace Center; we need your time to staff open hours for people looking for alternatives to promote peace and justice; we need your time to help distribute literature and speak with the hundreds of people who visit our booths at events such as the Midnight Sun Festival and the Tanana Valley State Fair; we need you to volunteer for training and to speak with GIs who call our hotline for support. And yes, we need you to renew your pledge to donate to the APC; we need your donations to keep the phone line open, to pay the rent, to print materials, and to bring prominent peace activists to Fairbanks. Each of us has a unique role to play to foster this great liberating transformation.

What is yours?

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**REPORTS ON PROGRAM & ACTIVITIES**

**GI Rights Hotline – Alaska**

By Alison Carter

The GI Rights Hotline, Alaska continues to be a primary program of the Alaska Peace Center. Volunteer counselors have been taking calls from distressed service members from around the country and Iraq for one year now. Our call volume is up as word is spreading that reliable information and help from outside the military is available.

We recently received these messages from currently deployed soldiers:

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........ A soldier gave me the movie “Why We Fight” and all soldiers here believe we were and are being lied to about this war.

Another wrote:

........ I feel that we are not doing anything right to be helping the people here which is what I thought this war was all about. Basically my quick view here is I enlisted in the Army half way through my college career to serve my country and help these people and now that I’m here and see what it is really about and that we are doing more damage than good in many respects, I can’t possibly find the heart to keep fighting in this. All in all, I want to separate from the Military and return to college, I just don’t know what to do or what options even exist for someone in my position. I wish I could just return home knowing that I made a huge mistake 2 years ago, but that would mean throwing away the rest of my life since the government technically owns me now.
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One of our conscientious objectors writes:

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........ I am thankful everyday to the Lord and to you guys for helping me stand up for my beliefs. Each day it is made clear to me what I am doing is right. My old fellow team members are all having trouble sleeping and most are having to take sleeping pills given to them by combat stress. I sleep like a baby with a clear conscience. They seem emotionless and depressed, while I keep my spirits up because I believe in my stance. I just want to get out of this nightmare and home to my family.

Thanks for all you do and have done for me.
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These excerpts were reprinted here with permission from the soldiers. The GI Rights Hotline needs your continued support. Your donations are used to pay the phone bills, advertising and outreach materials, and a part of the rent for our office space where volunteer counselors do their work. The other programs of the Peace Center are also reaching more service members. Despite illegal
orders and intimidation from their commands, some local soldiers have been attending the recent films and lectures organized by APC.

**Engage: Exploring Nonviolent Living**

*By Bryson Dean and Marjorie Cole*

For the past 12 weeks at the Alaska Peace Center, a group of 8 to 14 people have met once a week to make their way through the “Engage” Curriculum, which is an exploration of nonviolent living and nonviolent action. This program for learning, practicing and experimenting with the power of creative nonviolence to make changes in society was developed by the Franciscan group, Peace Bene, with the help of authors and activists Ken Butigan, Veronica Pelicaric, Ken Preston-Pile and Laura Slattery.

We have looked at stereotypes of the non-violent, and the lack of imagination that can lead to thinking that violence is the only alternative to settle a difficult situation. We have explored a Franciscan model of resisting that which is unjust while appreciating that each person has some of the truth and untruth. “Engage” demonstrates the need to be creative in engaging with injustice, and to insist upon engagement, while maintaining respect and honor for the other person’s humanity. The program has opened our eyes to the structural violence around us—which may be unbloody, but still works through domination of others.

“Engage” provides exercises, reading, and discussions to stimulate thinking about inner attitudes, as well as the larger social picture. This is not an academic program nor a program in building utopias. Students are finding immediate local ways of putting it into practice. We are studying and living the program at the same time.

“Engage” is currently being offered around the country, with the help of volunteers, nonprofits, and churches. The four student-facilitators in Fairbanks are all connected with the Alaska Peace Center: Bryson Dean of Grandmothers for Peace, Rob Mulford of North Star Veterans for Peace and The Occupation Project, and Marjorie Cole and Jackie Debevec of Call to Action Alaska. We are planning to offer the program again. Please call Jackie at 457-1556 to put your name on a list of interested persons for the next session.

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**ARTICLE**

Rob Mulford is facing criminal charges for civil disobedience actions he took during the occupation project. Below is a text he wrote which lays the case of why the court should allow him to use a necessity defense. Rob has kindly accepted that we reproduce one of his text in our Newsletter.

**What Can We as Citizens Do?**

*By Rob Mulford*

‘What can we as citizens do when...........

........we become aware that pernicious officials in our government and powerful moneymed corporations have exploited the pain that our nation suffered on 9/11/2001, by sowing seeds of fear and hate to advance their own nefarious agenda?

........we become aware that these same officials have: through a deliberate campaign of deceit; with intelligence and facts fixed around the policy; “planned, prepared, initiated and waged a war of aggression” in violation of international treaties, agreements and assurances (Nuremberg Principles) against Iraq, a sovereign nation that was no credible threat to the U.S?

........we become aware that these same officials, in the “planning, preparation, and waging of their war of aggression and occupation” have passed laws to protect themselves from answering to violations of International Humanitarian Law (War Crimes)?

........we become aware that these same officials, in the “planning, preparation, and waging of their war of aggression and occupation” are responsible for the commission of documented egregious violations of International Humanitarian Law (War Crimes) as codified in the Geneva Conventions and Hague Regulations?

........we become aware that these same officials have *wilfully failed * “to take all steps [...] to re-establish and insure, as far as possible, public order and safety, while respecting, unless absolutely prevented, the laws in force in the country” as per U.N. Resolution 1483, establishing the occupational authority, as well as international law as codified in the Geneva Conventions, the Hague Regulations (Article 43) and the U.S. Army’s Law of Land Warfare?
we become aware that these same officials, in the “planning, preparation, and waging of their war of aggression and occupation,” have and are reaping profit from the execution of war?

we become aware that in the “planning, preparation, and waging of their war of aggression and occupation,” their ultimate goal was then, as it is now, the acquisition of Iraq’s vast oil wealth?

we become aware that these same officials, in the “planning, preparation, and waging of their war of aggression and occupation,” are responsible for the death of over 3,300 American Servicemen and Women?

we become aware that these same officials, in the “planning, preparation, and waging of their war of aggression and occupation,” are responsible for the death of hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqi Citizens?

we become aware that these same officials, in the “planning, preparation, and waging of their war of aggression and occupation,” are responsible for the life altering injuries of over 50,000 American Servicemen and Women?

we become aware that these same officials, in the “planning, preparation, and waging of their war of aggression and occupation,” are responsible for the horror of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, which is destroying the lives of heroes and wrecking families?

we become aware that these same officials, in the “planning, preparation, and waging of their war of aggression and occupation,” are responsible for the insanity of Sectarian Violence?

we become aware that, because of their “planning, preparation, and waging of their war of aggression and occupation,” we are not safer and that freedom is increasingly more threatened by our own government than by some outside “enemy”?

we become aware that *much of the world that once considered the U.S. a bastion of human rights and democracy now sees us as an imperialistic threat to world security?

As citizens of the United States of America we are subject to its sovereignty. As a democratic republic the state is an extension of our moral authority and will. Having become aware that high crimes are being committed by the government of our country in our name *should we sit idly;* *just complain,* or *trust the Democrats to remedy?*

Four years of studying these miscarriages of justice has shown little remedy in the official channels of so-called democratic governance. The last election was largely influenced by the grassroots efforts of the peace movement and the public’s natural tiring of war but the resulting Democratic Party majority in Congress has proven to be nearly impotent with regard to these matters. The party’s leadership disingenuously talks as if they will end the war at the same time they are funding it. They make nonbinding resolutions. Arrogantly, they insist that Iraq satisfy their benchmarks as if the poor, beaten, and forsaken people of that country want or do not care about the violence that has been forced on them by the policies of the United States Government. They play “politics with human lives”!

Because our corporate media are owned by or affiliated with those same moneyminded interests afore mentioned, they have been complicit and/or absent from any serious coverage or discussion on the subject of the legitimacy of the war.

The Constitution of the United States of America states in *Article 6, Section 2:*

> “This Constitution, and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in Pursuance thereof; and all *Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land*; and the Judges in every State shall be bound thereby, any Thing in the Constitution or Laws of any State to the Contrary notwithstanding.”

Will we get anywhere if we try to press charges on President Bush, Vice President Cheney, and Secretary Rice? Where can we go to have justice served?

What recourse do we have when we become aware that our government and some of the most powerful members of our country are guilty of and/or complicit in the commission of the highest of crimes?
There have been times throughout history when the practice of Nonviolent Resistance as practiced by Mohandas Gandhi or Dr. King has proven to be the catalyst for social, political, and economic justice. We believe that such a catalyst is needed now. This is the basis of our defense.

Please help! Be that catalyst!

ANNOUNCEMENT

Senator Ted Stevens would support a Department of Peace
A note from Heather Koponen

The time to establish a Department of Peace may be at hand. Although Ohio Rep. Dennis Kucinich and others have been championing this cause for some time now, with the support of our powerful Republican Senator Ted Stevens, we may be able to help this happen. The following is an excerpt of a letter he sent to peace activist Heather Koponen last month:

“(…) Regarding your support for legislation which would establish a new Department of Peace, the House version of this legislation, HR.808, is pending before the House Committees on Government Reform, Foreign Affairs, Judiciary, and Education and the Workforce. I have some concerns about the various committees that have jurisdiction over this legislation. I will, however, cosponsor legislation creating a Department of Peace should it be introduced in the Senate, and will help it through the process in any way that I can.”

If you are interested in learning more about a future department of Peace go to the following websites:
http://www.thepeacealliance.org
http://kucinich.us/issues/departmentpeace.php

Alaskan Peace Makers in other states, Martin Freed and Ruta Vaskys in Albuquerque, March 2007
of the United States” (Anchorage performance at the Out North theater) became available online at http://www.archive.org/details/WarCrimesTrialGWBushPuppet

- **12/17:** Pre-action meeting of the Occupation Project (organizer Rob Mulford)
- **12/18:** First action of the occupation Project: A Campaign of Sustained Nonviolent Resistance to end the Iraq War. The group presents Senators Murkowski and Stevens and Representative Young with a list of requests (organizer: Rob Mulford)
- **12/19:** APC Monthly Potluck, showing of Why we fight followed by Northern Lights, organizers (Heather Koponen and Rob Mulford)
- **12/22:** First meeting of Engage: Exploring Nonviolent Living (see Bryson Dean’s article in the present Newsletter). Engage met weekly on Mondays at 7:00pm from January 22 to May 07, 2007 (moderators Bryson Dean and Marjorie Cole).
- **12/27:** Peace Walk around the box stores in downtown Fairbanks to protest the war in Iraq as part of a National action organized by FCPJ, Veterans for Peace, GI Rights Hotline, Grandmother for Peace, APC

**February 2007**

- **02/05:** 2nd action of the occupation project at the Fairbanks Federal Building, occupation of Senator L. Murkowski’s office (organizer: R. Mulford)
- **02/14–02/18:** GI Rights Hotline training at APC, Gaffney Rd, with trainer Jackie Thomason (Organizer Alison Carter)
- **02/16:** APC Monthly Potluck with Jackie Thomason, GI Rights Hotline trainer (Organizer: Alison Carter)
- **02/20:** 3rd action of the occupation project at the Fairbanks Federal Building, occupation of Senator T. Stevens’s office (organizer: R. Mulford)

**March 2007**

- **03/04 & 03/05:** APC members take the Red Cross training on International Human Rights Law given by Kelly Hurd at the Hospital and at the Red Cross chapter office (Contact: David Koester).
- **03/08 & 03/09:** Uncensored – A Report from the Middle East. Public presentations by Dahr Jamail, independent journalist, at Pioneer Park Civil Center

- **03/13:** 4th action of the occupation project at the Fairbanks Federal Building, occupation of Representative D. Young’s office (organizer: R. Mulford)
- **03/17:** Rally at the corner of Geist and University on the 4th anniversary of the start of the Iraq Invasion (organizers: FCPJ, VP, Grandmothers for Peace and other local Peace groups)
- **03/19:** APC members participated in a Candle Light Vigil to commemorate the 4th anniversary of the Iraq invasion (organizer: Moveon Member Gianna D.)
- **03/24:** Saturday Potluck with Antonia Juhasz at 507 Gaffney Road (Organizer: APC board)

- **03/25:** The Economic Invasion of Iraq: Why We Fight a War for Oil. Public presentation by Antonia Juhasz at UAF Schaible Auditorium, followed by a book signing (~ 100 people) (Organizer: APC board)

**April 2007**

- **04/20:** APC Monthly potluck – A Nurse in the Middle East presentation by Erda Fuller who talked about her experiences as a Nurse in Pakistan and other countries of the region. (Organizer: H. Koponen)
- **04/28:** Impeach Cheney and Bush rally and march from Airport and University to Geist and University (Organizer: A28 grassroots)

**May 2007**

- **05/13:** Stand for peace on Mother’s day. sponsored by Grandmothers for Peace International, Fairbanks Chapter, and in conjunction with www.standintheparkforpeace.org
UPCOMING EVENTS

Summer 2007

Three festivals and one exhibit are being planned in the near future. A committee is being created for coordination of volunteers. If you want to participate, contact David Bantz, Heather Koponen or Ericka Payton

May 2007

- 05/19: Clucking blossom Festival; APC will have a table. Positive Opportunity will perform a skit and GI Rights Hotline will also have a strong presence. If you want to participate contact Heather at posopps@yahoo.com

June 2007

- Saturday 06/02: Declare Peace. Students from the Engage Course in Nonviolent Living invite you to Griffin Park, Fairbanks. Gather at 1 p.m. to walk a loop through Fairbanks in support of the Declaration of Peace and nonviolent efforts to raise awareness of the true cost of this war.
- 06/21: Midnight Sun Festival: APC will have a booth. Volunteers are needed to staff the booth. If you want to help, contact Ericka at ericka_payton@hotmail.com

August 2007

- 08/03 to 08/11: Tanana Valley State Fair in Fairbanks. Like last year, APC will have a booth at the fair... volunteers will also be needed to staff the booth during the time of the Fair. If you want to help contact Heather or Ericka at posopps@yahoo.com or ericka_payton@hotmail.com

***EYES WIDE OPEN EXHIBITION IS COMING TO FAIRBANKS***

Eyes Wide Open: the American Friends Service Committee’s widely-acclaimed exhibition on the human cost of the Iraq War will be in Fairbanks in the next few months, possibly in August. Eyes wide open features a pair of boots honoring each U.S. military casualty, a field of shoes and a Wall of Remembrance to memorialize the Iraqis killed in the conflict, and a multimedia display exploring the history, cost and consequences of the war.

Alaska Peace Center
Pledge form

Today’s date ____________________

Name: ____________________________

Address: __________________________

City/State/Zip: ____________________

Email: ______________________; Phone: _________

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

**Board Members and Officers:**
Don Ross, David Bantze, Alison Carter, Ann Mallard, Pete Bowers, Dick Heacock, David Koester, Stan Read, Claire Alix, Heather Koponen, Marianne Eininger

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