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Another Way Is Possible

Dave Depp

Less than one hundred years ago women were not allowed to vote. Less than two hundred years ago slavery was still widely accepted. Less than four hundred years ago Galileo was heavily censored for bravely describing the truth that the earth is not at the center of the world. Women disenfranchised, people in bondage, and the earth at the center of things were all once considered normal conventions or ideas.



Is it possible we are now living in a time when another universally accepted but untenable idea is ready to give way under the weight of our collective human experience and necessity? Is it possible we are gradually being immersed in a process of learning that violence and threats of violence don't produce peace and are counter to human welfare? Is it possible that centuries of wars and violent revolutions leading to more wars and revolutions have increased our receptivity to an alternative way of problem-solving? Is the growing fear of human self-destructiveness that emerged during the advent of the atomic age in the 20th century compelling us to consider seeking another way? Are we becoming ready to accept the good news that violence and killing can be put aside like slavery, the disenfranchisement of women, and astronomical ignorance? Perhaps positive answers to all these questions are more likely if we focus on the seldom-examined successes of nonviolent civil disobedience employed throughout the 20th century.

We have all been taught a great deal about war and violent

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Message from the RPEC Board Chair

Dear Friends,

As the year draws to a close many people will be making resolutions to carry out in the New Year. I'd like to see the membership of RPEC help us do the same thing. The board has worked hard this year to steer this organization through some difficult political and financial times, but we only have a limited role. The executive director and our committees decide what RPEC should be doing on a day-to-day basis, but they can't do that without the input of the general membership. We've lasted nearly 25 years and I would like to think that we will last 25 more, but what direction should we go in? Please take a moment during the holiday season to think about what RPEC could do to be a better organization. Then send us an e-mail, write us a letter, or stop by the office and help us create a list of resolutions we can all be proud of keeping next year.

Finally if the holiday spirit moves you to give something extra here is a brief wish list:

1. Volunteers to join our committees – this is where the real work of RPEC takes place. The more we have the more we can do.
2. Increased donations to not only meet our current deficit, but to allow us to hire more full-time staff.
3. Volunteers to serve on the board, we are still not at our full capacity (applications are available in the office).

Thank you for being a part of the Richmond Peace Education Center and I hope everyone has a safe and happy time during the winter holidays.

Yours truly,
Noah Scalin, Board Chair
noah@alrdesign.com

A Refugee Success Story

Michael Peters

On the 15th of October 2003, a group of immigrants from nearly 20 countries were sworn in as American Citizens at the District Court in Richmond, VA. They were people of different ethnicities, and nationalities. It was a big day for everyone, those participating in the ceremony, and the families and friends for the soon-to-be-citizens who were there to show their support.

One special story is that of a Somah woman named Sahra Issa, who had arrived in America 10 years previously not knowing a word of

English. But she arrived with determination. She was determined to learn; and learn she did. She went to school at Adult Cultural Development Center, and took ESL classes to learn English, she studied hard and quickly developed into an excellent student. Her mentor and inspiration was her teacher Ms. EileenMarolla. Academic success was not always within her reach.

Sarha was born April 1, 1964 in Kismayo, Somalia she was the first of four children. She has one brother

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Another Way Is Possible



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revolt. We know about World War I trenches and machine guns, World War II naval strategies and dramatic bombing campaigns from Dresden to Tokyo, Korean War retreats and counterattacks, napalm and mayhem of Viet Nam, and on and on. We were also taught to live with the terror of mutually assured destruction and an ever-increasing supply and volatility of weapons spreading around the world and into outer space. We have learned to accept pictures of mass graves, burning villages, and dead and dying children. Most of us have learned to accept massive military budgets that waste our labor and natural resources while demeaning our spirits. We have been led to assume that the waste and suffering of war is the way to protect and enlarge human freedom, justice and welfare. We have been trained to accept violence, and to even celebrate violence as the normal way to respond to challenges, problems and threats. But there is another way.

We are beginning to learn and understand that the force of nonviolent civil disobedience was also a significant part of 20th century history, bringing positive change to millions of people around the world. Positive change brought about by people willing to courageously deny their consent to oppressive and tyrannical governments is the subject of Peter

Ackerman and Jack DuVall's book entitled, A Force More Powerful.¹ This book provides a detailed description of conflicts in India, Poland, Denmark, El Salvador, Russia, Argentina, Chile, United States, South Africa, Philippines, China, Eastern Europe, Mongolia, and the Middle East. These conflicts demonstrate how and why nonviolence is, "a force more powerful" than violence.

The authors analyze the myth of violence as effective and conclude that, "never in the postwar period did a military insurrection or violent coup extend freedom to the people in whose name power was taken."² On the other hand, the nonviolent movements of the 20th century achieved Indian independence, greater equality for African Americans and South Africans, democracy in Poland, and the removal of dictators in the Philippines, Chile, and other places.

The authors stress how violent means of change contain the seeds of future injustice, inhumanity and undemocratic impulses, while nonviolent means tend to embody belief in human worth and dignity and the values of justice and freedom.

They also dispel the idea that nonviolence cannot be used effectively where leaders or systems are particularly ruthless. Even the most ruthless regimes are vulnerable when confronted by masses of men and women unwilling to give their consent or to acknowledge governmental legitimacy. The authors also dispel the myth that the courage and bloody accomplishment of a violent warrior is uniquely deserving of honor and admiration. Instead, they hold in esteem the courage of the nonviolent warrior who, while

unarmed, risks loss, pain and death while protesting injustice and oppression.

Finally, the authors show that nonviolent civil disobedience is a practical and hardheaded approach to building a better world. It is not dependent on some utopian dream or some particular religious principles although it might be argued it is more grounded in the concepts of love and respect for life than are violent approaches to societal change; rather it is rooted in pragmatism. The authors clarify this point saying,

"It is often assumed that the choice of nonviolent resistance is made for moral reasons, but the historical record suggests otherwise. Most who used nonviolent action in the twentieth century did so because military or physical force was not a viable option. Some simply lacked sufficient arms to mount a violent revolt; others had recently seen a violent insurrection fail, with devastating results for life and property. But since peoples' most vital interests were at stake, and because they were determined to take down the rulers or laws that withheld their rights, they were impelled to take up other, nonviolent weapons. Those who used nonviolent action in our stories did not come to make peace. They came to fight."³

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Another Way Is Possible



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Will it be one hundred, two hundred, or four hundred years before violence and war are as rejected as slavery? Will the new understanding deepen and spread the idea that the effective exercise of power requires the consent of the governed and that this crucial consent can be withheld by determined and disciplined people to thwart dictatorship, invasion, and the denial of human rights?

I believe the book [A Force More Powerful](#) can assist in promoting this new understanding. Indeed, another way is possible and it is possible now, if we all pull together. Let us take a small step by withholding our consent to the violent and wasteful policies of our present government. Let us all refuse to pay some of our tax bill next April 15th. Let us commit civil disobedience in response to our government's chronic reliance on violence in international affairs. Henry David Thoreau, in his 1848 essay "On Civil Disobedience" called for tax refusal because the U.S. government was protecting the institution of slavery while also pursuing a deadly imperialistic war against Mexico. Let us act in the spirit of Thoreau by employing "a force more powerful"!

¹Ackerman and DuVall. *A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict*. Palgrave [formerly Macmillan Press], New

RPEC's Financial Situation

John Gallini

One of the tasks that I took on when I retired fifteen years ago was keeping the books for the Richmond Peace Education Center. During that time I have prepared draft budgets and monthly financial statements for the Board. It has always been my view that, while we needed to raise enough money to pay our staff a living wage, RPEC should not focus its energy on fundraising, but on the work of nonviolence and peace.

We have always operated on the edge of financial survival, with a budget in the range of \$50,000 per year. Over the years, individuals have occasionally made substantial, one-time contributions that have allowed us to set up a savings account with Self Help Credit Union. At its peak this account reached \$12,000, which is about right for a small nonprofit, i.e. about 3 months operating budget. But deficits from recent years had cut that safety net in half.

This year has been the most difficult in our 20+ year history, and we seem to be headed towards a deficit near \$7,000. That will eliminate our savings.

The problem is not the generosity of our members, who provide half of our budget through contributions. It appears that member contributions will be close to budget, although we never know until the end of December because so much of our income comes at the end of the year. Churches continue to provide another 25% of our budget, and most continue their important support.

This year's Annual Dinner and Auction was also close to our expectations and it appears that we will net over \$5,500 from our largest fund-raising event.

The areas where we have not been able to meet our budget are foundation grants and income from the programs we conduct – both of which seem closely tied to the downturn in the economy, although more complicated than that.

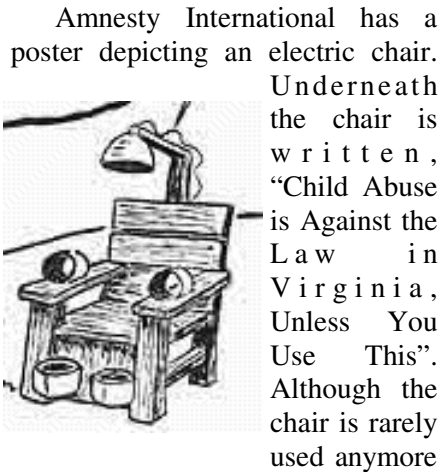
What all of this means is that our Board of Directors will face some difficult choices next year, as the present situation is clearly not sustainable.

We have rarely made finances a big issue for our members. We send out at most four appeals each year – we send only one to our major donors. But it seems now we should be sure that folks know what our situation is before

RPEC World Wide Web Address:
<http://www.rpec.org>

Virginia: Stop Killing Kids

Theresa Dunleavy, Virginians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty



Amnesty International has a poster depicting an electric chair. Underneath the chair is written, "Child Abuse is Against the Law in Virginia, Unless You Use This". Although the chair is rarely used anymore (since we opt for the more 'humane' lethal injection) the caption is still relevant. The state of Virginia kills kids.

A few facts: Since the reinstatement of the death penalty in 1976, only seven states have executed people who were juveniles at the time of their crime. Of the twenty-one juveniles executed, thirteen of them were killed in Texas. Virginia has killed three. Georgia, Louisiana, Missouri, Oklahoma, and South Carolina have each executed one person who was a juvenile at the time of their crime. One of the twenty-one was sixteen and all of the others were seventeen. 84% of the juvenile death sentences were imposed from southern states, and 67% of the juveniles on death row are African-American. Of the ten girls that have been executed in the United States, eight were African-American and one was Native American. The youngest child ever executed was fourteen year old George Stinney, an African-American, in South Carolina.

On the international front, the United States is the world leader in killing kids. Since 1990, seven countries have put thirty-three juvenile offenders to death. The Congo, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia and Yemen have each executed one. Iran has killed six and Pakistan two. The United States has killed twenty-one, more than all the other countries combined. Today, only Iran and the United States allow capital punishment for juveniles and Iran is currently drafting legislation for its' abolishment. The United States has failed to endorse the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights unconditionally in order to preserve its right to execute juveniles. In like manner, the US has failed to ratify the UN convention on the Rights of the Child. The international community overwhelmingly condemns capital punishment for persons under the age of eighteen.

In our country juveniles are not allowed to marry, vote, smoke, drink, enter into contracts or go to war because of their lack of maturity to make reasoned judgments. They lack the mental capacity of adults.

In 2002 the Supreme Court banned the execution of the mentally retarded in *Atkins v Virginia* saying that due to their diminished capacities, the mentally retarded were less culpable for their actions. According to the American Bar Association Juvenile Justice Center, the same argument applies to juveniles.

Researchers at UCLA and Harvard Medical School have been studying brain development in adolescents and have made some startling discoveries. Contrary to previous thought, the brain is not finished growing until early adulthood. Apparently the frontal and pre-frontal lobes which govern impulse control and judgment change dramatically between the ages of twelve and twenty-two. Dr. Ruben Gur, Director of Neuropsychology at the University of Pennsylvania Health center says:

"The evidence now is strong that the brain does not cease to mature until the early 20s in those relevant parts that govern impulsivity, judgment, planning for the future, foresight of consequences, and other characteristics that make people morally culpable ... Indeed, age 21 or 22 would be closer to the 'biological' age of maturity."

Additionally, the adolescent body is experiencing vast hormonal and emotional changes. The combination of these physical changes which can impair judgment and rational thought and awareness of consequences clearly shows that adolescents are not adults and should not be held to the same level of culpability as adults.

In a Gallup Poll in 2002, 69% of Americans opposed the death penalty for juveniles. Numerous religious denominations and children centered organizations such as the National Education

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Jim Wallis Responds to ‘Backward Christian Soldier’

Judith FaGalde Bennett

Lt. Gen. William G. “Jerry” Boykin, deputy undersecretary of defense for intelligence, has a history of speechmaking that sets sparks flying. A conservative Christian who regularly speaks in Southern Baptist circles, Boykin has repeatedly blurred church-state lines, offended Muslims and Jews, and led Sen. John Warner, in his capacity as chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee, to join other members of Congress to call for Boykin’s assignment to another job while the Defense Department investigates his activity.

What’s the problem with Boykin’s speeches? Earlier this year Boykin made plans to promote a Southern Baptist evangelism-training program at the military base at Fort Bragg, N. C., which Americans United for the Separation of Church and State protested as “a clear violation of the separation of church and state,” while its Executive Director Barry Lynn added that “our military has no business using its resources to aid evangelism.”¹ But it is Boykin’s remarks about Muslims and Islam, together with the theology his remarks reflect, that is of greater concern. In January, before the capture of Somali warlord Osman Atto, Boykin, told a church group that Atto “had appeared on CNN to taunt American soldiers, declaring that ‘Allah’ would protect him.”² Atto was later captured. Said Boykin: “Well, you know what? I knew that my God was bigger than his. I knew that my God was a real God and his was an idol.”³

His theology, says Wallis, “bears no resemblance to biblical teaching: “You utterly confuse the body of Christ with the American nation. The kingdom of God doesn’t endorse the principalities and powers of nation-states, armies and the ideologies of empire; but rather calls them all into question.

Other notable Boykin comments include: “Satan wants to destroy this nation, he wants to destroy us as a nation, and he wants to destroy us as a Christian army.”⁴ In what is described as “a particularly bizarre episode in June 2002, Boykin showed a congregation photos of Mogadishu, Somalia, taken from an Army helicopter in 1993 shortly after the dangerous mission depicted in *Black Hawk Down*. He had the photos enlarged and noticed what appeared to be a dark blemish over the city. “Ladies and gentlemen,” he told his audience, “this is your enemy. It is the principalities of darkness . . . it is a demonic presence in that city that God revealed to me as the enemy.”⁵

Boykin has consistently said that the war on terrorism can be won by prayer. “Bin Laden is not the enemy,” Boykin has said. “No mortal is the enemy. It’s the enemy you can’t see. It’s a war against the forces of darkness. The battle won’t be won with guns. It will be won on our knees.”⁶ Speaking at a church in Oklahoma Boykin was even clearer: “It would be a mistake to believe that Osama bin Laden, is our enemy and to make him the face of what we’re fighting . . . we are battling something much bigger

- - a spiritual enemy. We are hated because we are a nation of believers.”⁷ He often tells listeners about “numerous times when outnumbered troops under his command ‘were delivered by the hand of God.’”⁸ Indeed, it is Boykin’s conviction that America is a Christian nation with a righteous cause, together with his willingness to cast Muslims as idol-worshippers, that undermines the administration’s effort to ensure that the war on terrorism is not seen as a war against Islam and has led to the current investigation into his views.

While Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld declined to reassign Boykin, President Bush has distanced himself from Boykin’s views, saying they “didn’t reflect my opinion . . . it just doesn’t reflect what the government thinks.”⁹ The Pentagon released a statement of apology from Boykin saying that he “did not mean to insult Islam.”¹⁰ Activist Jim Wallis is not so sure. In “Backward Christian Soldier: An Open Letter to the Christian General,” Wallis notes that Boykin’s views sound like a “Christian jihad” and suggests that “the hymn ‘Onward Christian Soldiers’ must have been written just for you. I’m sure your superiors have already given you a lesson in politics and public relations. And I’ve heard you have toned down your opinions and said you didn’t mean to offend anyone. Whether you keep your job is a political question, the outcome of which we will know soon

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**Jim Wallis Responds to
'Backward Christian Soldier'**

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enough.”¹¹

However, it is a different set of issues that Wallis wants to raise with Boykin: issues of biblical theology, bad teaching and church discipline. His theology, says Wallis, “bears no resemblance to biblical teaching: “You utterly confuse the body of Christ with the American nation. The kingdom of God doesn’t endorse the principalities and powers of nation-states, armies and the ideologies of empire; but rather calls them all into question.”¹² Wallis chides Boykin by referring to the inadequate theology expressed in his views as a “legitimate issue of church discipline,” adding “When a high-ranking military officer espouses a zealous religious nationalism that claims the name ‘Christian’ for both his nation and his army, and when he invokes the name of Jesus - - not to love our enemies as he instructed, but rather to target them for destruction - - the church must discipline that errant brother and name his public statements for what they are, not mere political incorrectness, but idolatry.”¹³ He concludes, “General, you have substituted your nation and your army for God, your faith is more American than Christian, the Jesus you claim is not the Jesus of the New Testament, and his kingdom will not be ushered in by the U. S. military. Whatever happens with your job, I pray that you find a church that offers you the ministry of repentance, forgiveness and restoration to a more authentic

biblical faith.”¹⁴

¹ Allen, Bob, “Boykin Criticized Before for Mingling Church and State,” Ethics Daily, 10/24/03, accessed 10/24/03

² Tucker, Cynthia, “Put Gen. Boykin on inactive duty, The Atlanta Journal Constitution, 10/26/03, accessed online 11/14/03

³ Ibid..

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Allen, op. cit.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ “Pentagon Rejects Calls to Reassign Gen. Boykin,” NewsMax.com, 10/22/03 accessed

A Refugee Success Story

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and two sisters. Sarha loved to learn, and would often sneak away to the local school.

When she was discovered, she would be severely punished, as education for females was not the norm in her country. Even though she was punished, Sahra still snuck away to school whenever she thought she could get away with it. When she was 26 she became a refugee, as her country was in the middle of a devastating civil war. She and her husband fled to Kenya, and lived in a refugee camp there for 2 1/2 years before being granted resettlement status to come to the United States. This was Sahra’s chance to reach her goals that she had set when she was young. She both reached and exceeded them. Through hard work and determination, she has advanced beyond what she dreamed of in Kismayo, Somalia. She’s now living happily with her husband

Virginia: Stop Killing Kids

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Association and Voices for Virginia’s Children call for the abolition of the juvenile death penalty.

So, how do we get our legislature to ban this barbaric practice? We must first educate ourselves and then our elected representatives. The information presented in this article comes from some sources that are readily available. “Human Rights, Human Wrongs: Sentencing Children to Death” can be obtained from The National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty by calling 202-543-9577 or visit www.ncadp.org. Also a wealth of information is available on The American Bar Association Juvenile Justice Center web site, www.abanet.org/crimjust/juvjus and The Death Penalty Information Center, www.dpic.org.

The members of the House and Senate Courts of Justice Committees need to hear from us that we want Virginia to stop killing kids. The Senators are Stolle, Saslaw, Trumbo, Marsh, Quayle, Norment, Howell, Lucas, Edwards, Mims, Reynolds, Rerras, Blevins, and Cuccinelli. In the House the representatives are McDonnell, Albo, Griffith, Kilgore, McQuigg, Weatherholz, R. Black, Hurt, Athey, Janis, Bell, Marrs, McDougle, Reese, Louderback, Almand, Jos. Johnson, Melvin, Armstrong, Moran, Joannou and Barlow. If any of these are your representative, give them a call, or, better yet, pay them a visit and bring them the current information. Armed with the facts our legislators

The logo for 'THE DAILY NEWS' is displayed in a blue rectangular box. The word 'THE' is in a smaller, white, serif font, while 'DAILY NEWS' is in a larger, white, serif font.

A Bad Week for Journalism

Scott Morgan*

The recent events in Zimbabwe can best be described as either business as usual or a new wave of repression. October 24th was the date when a Judge in Harare decided that the *Daily News*, a branch of the Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe (ANZ), be issued a license by the State sanction Media Committee. Furthermore the judge also ordered that if the documentation was not issued by November 30th then the license is to be considered to be duly issued. However the Government does retain the right to appeal the decision.

What Happened next?

On the 25th of October the *Daily News* appeared on the Streets of Zimbabwe with banner headlines announcing "Thank God we're Back". However within hours of being published the offices of the newspaper were again raided by the police. Eighteen members of the staff were detained by the police overnight. When taken into custody the police stated that they had no knowledge of the decision granting permission to publish. The Media outlets that are controlled by the State announced that the paper was in violation of a High Court decision revoking their license. This was just the latest in an effort to control access to the media by the populace of Zimbabwe.

Reaction from the World

When news of the Police Raid broke various press freedom groups like the *International Press Institute* and *Reporters Without Borders* sent letters demanding the release of the journalists. In a never before seen move the *International Federation of Journalists* issued a call for worldwide solidarity with the staff of the *Daily News*. So far statements of support have been issued by the New Zealand branch of the Commonwealth Press Union, South African editors have issued statements of support. So far the issue of Press Freedom in Zimbabwe has been addressed by newspapers in Australia, Barbados, Britain, South Korea, Portugal, Botswana, Denmark, New Zealand, Canada and the United States. This event coincided with the release of two reports that have been critical of the ruling ZANU-PF. The first document released dealt with the use of food as a political weapon. The report stated that supporters of the ruling party used food to garner votes for ZANU-PF candidates. The second was released from the UN Security Council. This document dealt with the Blood Diamonds and Economic Exploitation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Several Members of ZANU-PF were found to have benefited from the misery of others. Also on Halloween the German Foreign Minister called upon Africa to deal with the situation so that stability and democracy can return to the region.

Upcoming Events

First, a new online media source has appeared in Zimbabwe and it is in the city of Bulawayo. The Insider is an independent media outlet that is on the Internet at www.insiderzim.com. Also, on November 13th the staff of the *Daily News* has a court hearing. Whether the charges will be dismissed or not is unknown at this time. Also the Commonwealth Heads of Governments will meet in Abuja, Nigeria the first weekend of December. The situation in Zimbabwe will most likely be the topic of some very lively discussions.

Weblinks: the Food report is at www.hrw.org

The Daily News is at www.daily-news.co.za

* Scott A. Morgan is a contributing editor to www.politicsonline.com

Consumers Corner

Another Challenging Checklist

John Gallini

The Fall, 2003 issue of Co-op America Quarterly arrived a few days ago, as I was getting ready to write this column. To celebrate their 20th anniversary the feature section described “twenty ways to use your money for a better world.” Co-op America puts it this way: “Our mission remains the same: to harness economic power – the strength of all of us in our economic roles as consumers, investors, workers, and businesses – to create a socially just and environmentally sustainable society.” What follows are my reflections on some of the items on their list, highlighting places where they might be applied to time of holiday celebrations. (Those sections in quotes are taken directly from Co-op America Quarterly.)

1. **Live Simply** – “Living sustainably means living lightly on the Earth with simple, joyful elegance. It



means reclaiming what's important to you in your personal life – relationships, meaningful work, a sense of

community, and a healthy planet.” This time of year, for those who are able, can be a time to work fewer hours, take that unused vacation, and spend time with your family. If you exchange gifts, be especially careful not to choose gifts that will make it more difficult to live simply.

2. **Get What You Need Without Money** – Often the most appreciated gifts are those that are gifts of your time and talent. An example would be a coupon book of baby sitting or lawn care services.
3. **Reduce, Reuse, Recycle** – Well, mainly reduce! Think of ways to cut down on gift exchange, such as drawing one family member to give to rather than giving to every family member. Or pick a charity to support rather than exchanging gifts.
4. **Buy Fair Trade** – Purchase gifts from Third World craft shops where the gift also provides a living to artisans in developing countries. Ten Thousand Villages and AlterNatives, both in Carytown, provide a wide selection of such crafts.

Well, you get the idea. I have written about most of this in past

articles, but I have found that this is an ongoing process and that my own family has been not only receptive to suggestions about cutting back, but very creative in finding ways to celebrate that better express our shared values. So I encourage each of you to keep at it. And let me know what has worked well for you. My e-mail is gallinjb@aol.com.

The rest of the 20 ways to use your money for a better world are:

- Buy Green
- Go Organic and Local with your Food
- Know What Your Purchases are Funding
- Stop Sweatshops and Child Labor
- Be WoodWise
- Choose Least-Toxic Products
- Commit to Green Energy
- Rethink Your Transportation
- Improve Your Community
- Invest Responsibly
- Invest in Communities
- Join Shareholder Actions
- Give Generously
- Foster Peace
- Use Your Voice
- Educate Others

Obviously, RPEC can facilitate much of this. I also encourage you to become a member of Co-op America. Send them a note at 1612 K Street NW, Washington, DC 20006 or info@coopamerica.org.

October 25th Washington Rally

Larry Syverson

Fall is one of the best times to be in our nation's capital, especially a bright sunny day surrounded by 100,000 like-minded people. October 25th was such a day. The day, however, seemed more like a family reunion than an anti-war / peace rally and march.

My organization, Military Families Speak Out (MFSO), was not one of the organizers for the event. We, nonetheless, used it as an opportunity to gather. Almost 40 members from MFSO joined the tens-of-thousands of Americans who congregated at the base of the Washington Monument to vocalize their displeasure with the events unfolding in Iraq.

This was my third time to be with several MFSO members. We greeted each other with hugs and questions about the safety of loved ones in Iraq. Throughout the event, I met other family members who had traveled from more than 10 states. In minutes we seemed as family. Bonding is easy. Only another family with a loved one in Iraq can understand the emotional roller coaster our lives have become.

We each had news to share, some good, most bad:

One mother stated that her son had arrived home in September. He had expected to be in the States for a year before being sent back to Iraq. Unfortunately, he has been informed that because of the shortage of troops, he will head back to Iraq in January. It was not the kind of news we wanted to hear.

One couple talked of the lack of body armor in their son's unit. When being deployed, by the luck of the draw, some of them patrol without the life-saving armor. The additional units won't be delivered until sometime next year. The units are available for purchase here in the States. The parents, however, could not pool enough money to buy the needed units for their sons and daughters.

I wrote earlier we shared both good and bad news. It appears I was mistaken. I can't recollect any good news that was shared.

Three of our members spoke during the rally. As support for our last speaker, all of us stood on the stage behind her. Many of us held signs with pictures of our loved ones serving in Iraq. Susan's speech ended with the phrase: "Don't deploy them. Don't extend them. Don't re-deploy them. Don't replace them. Bring them home now!" The crowd cheered.

As we family members lined up to leave the stage, the crowd spontaneously broke into the chant: "Bring Them Home!" It was heartwarming! We smiled and waved to the crowd in appreciation, soaking up their well-wishes. Just hearing the words repeated over and over made the troops' homecoming seem closer than ever.

In fact, most of the speakers rallied around the phrase "Bring The Troops Home." It was very comforting to hear our organization's concerns echoed throughout the rally.

**SUPPORT OUR TROOPS
BRING THEM HOME**

**OUR CHILDREN SAY
BRING OUR DADDIES
HOME**

**DON'T RE-DEPLOY THEM.
DON'T REPLACE THEM.
BRING THEM HOME NOW!**

CALENDAR DECEMBER 2003

Meetings of Local Groups

- Every Sunday** **Food Not Bombs, Richmond <Meal Sharing**, 4:00 P.M. in Monroe Park. Hotline # 359-4880 for details
- Every 3rd Wed.** **Amnesty International**, 7:00 PM at Friends Meeting. 4500 Kensington Ave. Call 320-9488
- Every 3rd Friday** **Sufi Dancing: Dances of Universal Peace**, 7:30-9:30 PM except Oct. Round House, Byrd Park. 353-4901
- Every Thurs.** **Richmond Organization for Sexual Minority Youth (ROSMY)**, 7:00-9:00 PM. Call support line: 353-2077 for more information; 353-1699 for the administrative line.
- Every 3rd Sat.** **Equality Virginia**, 12:00 noon at the office. A political advocacy group working towards equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender citizens of Virginia. Open to the public. Contact number is 643-4816.
- Every 4th Sat.** **Pax Christi Peace Community** - Call Paula Powdermaker for details - 355-7395
- Every 1st Mon.** **Virginia People of Faith for Alternatives to the Death Penalty**, 4:45 PM
Catholic Diocese Conference Room, Floyd and Cherry, Kathleen Kenney, 359-5661

UPCOMING EVENTS

- December 5** **World AIDS day**
- December 6** **An Evening of Sacred Stories** - 7:30 p.m. - Center for Congregational Ministry (in Virginia Hall, on the campus of Baptist Theological Seminary)
- January 27** **Nash Multicultural Collection Open House** - 1-3 p.m.- Center for Congregational Ministry (in Virginia Hall, on the campus of Baptist Theological Seminary)

Art and Essay contest

for public school students of all grade levels to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education

Topic: Horizons of Opportunities

Sponsored by the Virginia Education Association and local affiliates.

Deadline for entries: Jan. 15, 2004

Contact your local education association for details, or visit the VEA website.

RPEC Board member Paul Fleisher serves as chair of the committee organizing this event.

Committee Reports

Program Committee

The Program Committee met November 13th to begin work on our annual peace essay contest to be written by local students. We began preparations for a presentation in February on the impact of our war in Iraq. Also, we hope to offer training for individuals interested in becoming one of our Conflict Resolution facilitators. Our next meeting will be Thursday, December 4th at 3:30 p.m. at the RPEC office. Please contact Christopher Patterson at chris@ca4a.org if you are interested in getting involved with our committee or have any questions or suggestions.

Newsletter Committee

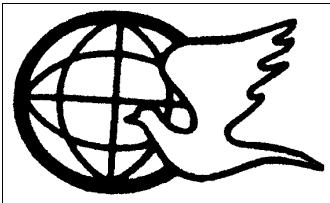
The Newsletter Committee met on October 28 to plan the December N/L. The next issue will be a combined Jan-Feb issue sent out around January 15. We meet on 12/9, 2:30 PM to plan it. Contact John Gallini (272-8141, gallinjb@aol.com) with questions or suggestions or if you would like to be included on the calendar items e-mail list.

Fundraising Committee

The F/R Committee has been focused on the Annual Dinner and Auction held on November 7, which provided a much-needed boost to our financial situation. Preliminary estimates are that we should net near to the \$6,000 budget. We are working on a date for the John McCutcheon Spring concert. First proceeds have arrived from the printer cartridge recycle program. Contact Paul Fleisher (795-5326, pfleishe@infi.net) with questions or suggestions.

Membership Committee NEWS!

The membership committee will not meet before the Dec. Newsletter. Please note that the committee will



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