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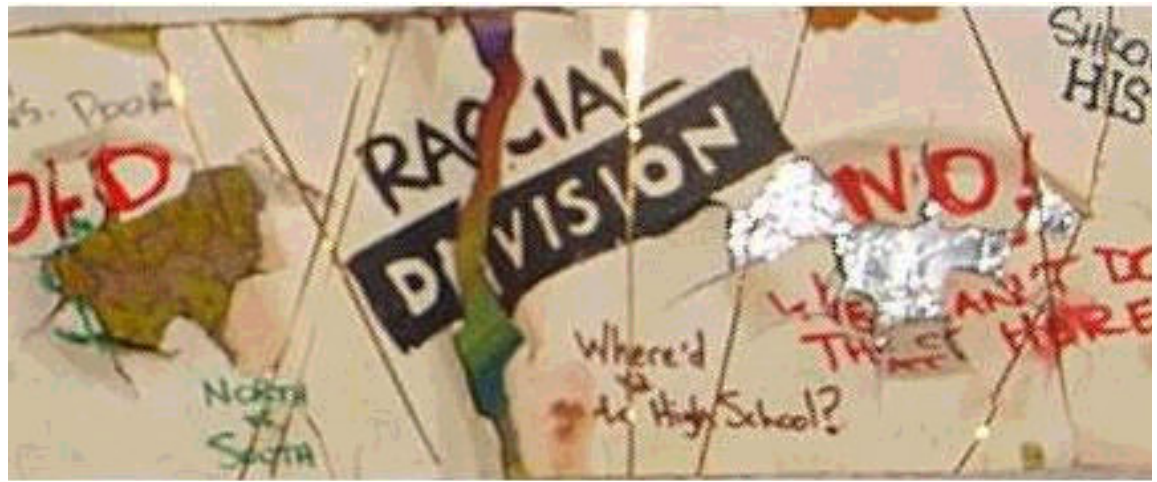
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Update on Dialogue Series

Ken Willis, RPEC Executive Director

RPEC began an interracial dialogue in November, 1999. The group met for some time on a monthly basis. This focus of the Peace Center's work in promoting diversity appreciation and building community shifted a bit to highlight the need for interfaith acceptance and understanding. This was in light of concerns held by Muslim-Americans and individuals of Arab or eastern descent who had experienced public suspicion and prejudicial treatment following the Sept. 11 attacks. This resulted in interfaith gatherings that included worship services of remembrance, healing, and unity on Sept. 24, 2001 and Sept. 11, 2002.

Recently, in an effort to raise public consciousness of the continued need to seek improvement and reconciliation in both interracial and interfaith relations, the dialogues were resumed. Prompted by recognition of this year's 50th anniversary of *Brown v Board of Education*, a well-attended public forum was held on June 1 to explore the historical facts and contemporary implications of the landmark Supreme Court decision and the Massive Resistance Movement that followed it in Virginia and across the South. General Assembly Delegate Viola Baskerville and Ken Woodley, editor of the *Farmville Herald*, served as facilitators for the event.

Attendees at the June gathering suggested themes for future consideration and in July discussion revolved around one of the suggestions: the complex issues of race, religion, and sexual identity. Because so many of those present expressed a desire to continue their dialogue, the topics will be carried over as the focus for the August meeting. The event will take place from 7 – 9 PM, Tuesday, Aug. 10, at 17.5 Ethos Café, 171/2 N. 17th Street (across from the Farmer's Market) in Richmond.

The meetings are free and open to the public. Future topics, dates, and locations will be announced as plans are finalized. For information or to offer suggestions for the series, call RPEC @ 804.358.1958.

rpec NEWS

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Message from the Board Chair

Dear Friends,

I have to thank you once again. The turnout at our benefit concert this year far surpassed our expectations! It was so terrific to see such a wide variety of people support the work of the Richmond Peace Education Center and hear the music of John McCutcheon, Devon Sproule, and Drums No Guns. I was also happy to see so many RPEC folks at the Anti-War Rally and March at Monroe Park on July 3rd. The Center had an excellent presence at the event and our table drew many folks to pick up brochures and register to vote. The ball is rolling, but we need you to help us to continue this momentum. We need volunteers to plan events, staff tables, and get the word out. We need people to join our committees. If you want to bring peace to our community and our world there's no better way than to get involved. Contributions of time are what we really need now to get our work done. Please contact one of our committee chairs today (see the committee reports in this issue for how to get in contact) and let them know what skills you can offer to the Richmond Peace Education Center. With your help, we can make this world a better place for us all.

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

Never Again? Thoughts on the Bombings of Hiroshima & Nagasaki and Ending the Production of Nuclear Weapons

Ken Willis, RPEC Executive Director

Terrorism on a grand scale! Consider: "On the morning of August 6, 1945, the American bomber *Enola Gay*, accompanied by two other aircraft, appeared over the city of Hiroshima, Japan. The Hiroshima authorities, who had at first sounded the air raid warning sirens, concluded from the small number of aircraft that *Enola Gay* was on a reconnaissance flight. They sounded the all-clear. Thus the citizens of Hiroshima had come out of their shelters and returned to their normal business when the first nuclear weapon ever used in combat detonated over their city. The intense blast and heat leveled and burned much of the city at once... Tens of thousands of people, most of them civilians, were killed outright. More died from radiation sickness. The total dead, which is still not known precisely to this day, was at least seventy-eight thousand and possibly as high as one hundred thousand or more.

Three days later U.S. planes dropped a nuclear bomb on the city of Nagasaki.¹

Today, a room at the Nagasaki Medical School holds 2,000 jars of human organs from those irradiated by the second bomb, kept in the hope that researchers may some day gain information from them about the effects of radiation damage. At the Hiroshima Peace Park, a granite coffin containing the names of all who have died from the first bomb is opened each year on August 6 and more names are added to the list. An inscription on the front of the coffin reads *Rest in peace, for the mistake shall never be*

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Never Again? Thoughts on the Bombings of Hiroshima & Nagasaki and Ending the Production of Nuclear Weapons

(Continued from page 2)
repeated.

Not usually inclined to be cynical, I find myself, none-the-less, drawn to challenge the optimism of such a statement, for I see it not as a promise but as a hope unsupported by either history or current facts. As many today question the U. S. invasion of Iraq in the light of evidence surfacing daily that there was no confirmed connection between Al-Qaida and Saddam Hussein, nor any credible threat posed by Iraq's attempts to develop weapons of mass destruction, we would do well here to ponder the real reasons behind the decision to use atomic weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Contrary to the popular belief of the time, the bombing of these two cities did not necessarily shorten the war in the Pacific. Although the Japanese government offered unconditional surrender just two days after the destruction of Nagasaki, historical research shows that by 1945 Japan was already unable to continue its war efforts and was all but defeated.

So why the use of the A-bomb? Records from U.S. government archives show clearly that "Truman and his advisors viewed the bomb as a way of [psychologically] "containing" Stalin"² and neutralizing any future threat to national security from the Soviet Union. As an act of intimidation then, the bombings certainly fit the definition of terrorist activity, hence my



reference in the opening statement for this piece. They also served as the foundation for the Cold War and its concurrent nuclear arms race, a standoff that many thought ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, the notion was short-lived because today the U.S. continues to build nuclear weapons in direct violation of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty while simultaneously demanding that other nations dismantle their arsenals.

There are troubling concerns inherent to the imbalance of powers created by these acts. If the bombs no longer serve a deterrent function, what is their purpose and what guarantee is there that they will never be used again? As long as they exist, these concerns remain legitimate, as evidenced by this quote from General Paul Tibbets, pilot of the *Enola Gay*, "I would like to believe that nuclear weapons as such will never be used again, but I'm not that naïve. I think they will be, just because we have them. The

question is, how to use them?"³ Indeed, there was considerable discussion about "usable" nuclear weapons prior to the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and, as the country continues its war on terror, it's a safe bet the discussion will be revived as future targets for "pre-emptive strikes" are considered.

Fortunately, there is a movement to end this madness and positive steps

concerned citizens can take to help end the production of nuclear weapons; from writing or calling one's elected representatives to participating in direct public actions. An excellent group to contact for more information is the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance (OREPA), P.O. Box 5743, Oak Ridge, TN 37831. (On the web @ www.stopthebombs.org.)

On August 6, and again on August 9, take a few moments in silence to remember the victims of the Hiroshima & Nagasaki attacks and pray with me that we never again subject anyone to such horror.

In Peace, Ken

¹ The Handbook of Non-Violence by Robert Seeley; Lawrence Hill & Co., Westport, Conn. and Lakeville Press, Great Neck, NY, 1986, p.185.

² *Ibid*, p.187.

³ At Work In The Fields Of The Bomb by Robert Del Tredici; Harper & Row, Publishers, New York & other cities, 1987, p. 50.

Consumers Corner

Sweatshops, Teens and Computer Recycling

John Gallini

Sweatshop Update

The Summer, 2004 issue of Co-op America Quarterly provides an update on their campaign to end sweatshops. Alisa Gravitz makes the point that “the goal is NOT to close sweatshops and put already impoverished people out on the streets. What we want is a complete turnaround – from sweatshops to responsible workplaces.”

The campaign has many facets, from stockholder actions and consumer boycotts, to public education and support for fair trade. At its core, the campaign is about shifting our purchasing habits away from products made by “sweatshop labor” towards fair trade, union made and recycled products.

Alisa describes her recent clothing purchases: a Sierra suit from Birdland Ranch, a white blouse from The Emperor’s Clothes, a casual multi-color jacket from Cheppu Himal, a camisole from Maggie’s Organics and a black traveling suit from a local thrift store. All of the purchases, except that from the thrift store, were from companies who are Co-op America Business Network members. Go to the National Green Pages to find companies that deserve our support at www.greenpages.org/

The campaign also provides some basis for choosing among national retailers, with their “Retailer Scorecard”. This looks at eight major U.S. corporations and rates them on the basis of their dealings with known sweatshop suppliers. The best of the eight,

with a grade of “C”, are Federated (which includes Bloomingdale’s, Fingerhut and Macy’s) and May’s (which includes Hecht’s and Lord & Taylor). Near the bottom, with grades of D or D-, are J.C. Penney, Sears and Kmart. And Wal-Mart is at the bottom. You can see the details at www.sweatshops.org/.

Part of the campaign is the Wal-Mart Action Campaign, which in part asks you to write to H. Lee Scott, CEO, Wal-Mart Stores, 702 SW Eighth St., Bentonville, AR 72716, asking Wal-Mart to pay workers a living wage, allow workers the right to organize and permit independent auditing of its suppliers’ factories.

The Campaign claims seven recent victories, including the state of Maine passing an anti-sweatshop law, the U.S. banning all imports from Burma, and Gap, Inc. setting new public disclosure standards.

Financial Intelligence for Teens

Tracy Fernandez Rysavy, in the May/June issue of *Real Money* offers several helpful thoughts about how to help teens learn to handle money responsibly:

Start with the Basics

Start by sitting down with your teen and answer some basic questions. Where will her income come from? Allowance? After-school job? College loans?... Which expenses will she be responsible for? Which will you pay for? These are the beginning questions for helping to develop a budget.

Debt Sucks

Of course one key to financial health is to keep spending below income. Eighty-three percent of U. S. college students have at least one credit card. Average credit card balance is over \$2,000 and one-fifth carry balances over \$3,000. Help your teen understand that they should always pay off the balance in full each month. Two other approaches that could help develop these skills are a debit card and a pre-paid card. With a debit card, purchases are deducted directly from a checking account. With a pre-paid card you set a dollar amount on the card by paying it in advance.

Set Goals and Develop a Budget

Set savings goals. Long-term goals could include a car or paying off college loans. Short-term goals could include items for her dorm room. Then create a budget together, starting with how much monthly income she will have. Then put money into savings first. Next pay bills and necessary expenses. Finally, spend only what is left!

For more information on finances and budgeting for teens, go to www.FL2010.org.

Computer Recycling

And this great opportunity from Grist Magazine: After years of pressure by enviro groups and shareholders, the world’s two biggest PC manufacturers announced Tuesday dueling free

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Consumers Corner

(Continued from page 4)

computer recycling programs. From July 18 to Sept. 6, Hewlett-Packard will recycle, free of charge, any brand computer, monitor, digital camera, fax machine, cell phone, or other gadget dropped off at any Office Depot store -- one gadget per person per day. The crafty marketing folks at Dell will make it even easier by sending a truck to your home to pick up your old machine -- if you buy a new Dell PC. HP says their limited-time program will probably be extended in some form; Dell's is open-ended. As Grist readers likely know, electronic devices are riddled with lead, arsenic, mercury, and other nasty chemicals that leach from landfills into groundwater or harm the overseas workers tasked with tearing widgets apart. So recycle 'em, would ya? For more info go to:

http://www.gristmagazine.com/cgi-bin/forward.pl?forward_id=2693

I checked with the local store, and while they are just getting started, they do accept these items. Don't miss this opportunity!

Recycle Old Cell Phones at 17.5 Ethos Cafe

Now you can recycle old cell phones at 17.5 Ethos Café in Shockoe Bottom near the farmers market. The phones will be reconditioned and refurbished if possible and disposed of properly if they're no longer usable. This recycling initiative is going on around the state, coordinated by the Virginia Organizing Project.

Test The Truth Online Petition Launched By VADP

Virginians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty has set up an online petition to gather signatures to urge Governor Warner to test the existing DNA evidence in the Wanda Fay McCoy rape and murder case which resulted in the execution of Roger Keith Coleman.

The petition can be accessed by going to: http://www.ipetitions.com/campaigns/test_the_truth/.

Please help VADP do what Mark Warner asked Jack Payden-Travers to do on the WVTF Public Radio program Evening Edition. Gov. Warner asked Jack to "keep after me on this issue." In response VADP has launched "**Test The Truth**" petition. Sign the petition and then please forward it to your friends.

In addition to the online petition, VADP has pre-printed "*Time Discovers Truth*" postcards that can be distributed and when signed are mailed back to VADP. VADP then records the numbers and forwards these cards to Gov. Warner. Call the VADP office at **888-567-VADP** to receive copies of the cards. The text of the card is viewable on the VADP web site: www.VADP.org. Click on the *Action Alert* button and then click on *Coleman DNA*. So far over 5,000 copies of the card have been distributed.

Executions Set for July 22nd and August 18th

The State of Virginia set execution dates for Mark Bailey (July 22nd) and James Hudson (August 18th). Executions are

carried out at the Greensville Correctional Center where the Death House is located.

Mark Bailey was killed in retribution for the murder of his wife, Katherine Ester Bailey and his son, Nathan Mark Bailey. Mark was a Gulf War veteran who suffered from bi-polar disorder.

James Hudson is to be killed in revenge for the murders of Walker Stanley Cole, Thomas Wesley Cole and Patsy Ayers. James' execution is a state-assisted suicide as he has refused to allow his attorney to appeal his death sentence.

Vigils will be held at the prison in Jarratt and at vigil locations in 25 communities across the Commonwealth on the night of each execution. Contact VADP at 888-567-VADP or go to www.VADP.org and click on *Vigil Information* button for the location and time of the nearest vigil.

(Editors Note: In Richmond, the vigil on 7/22 was held at St. Peter Catholic Church, while that on 8/18 will be held at Richmond Friends.

Stop the Death Penalty! Events for Abolition

**Virginians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (VADP)
Annual Conference
Saturday, Oct. 2, 2004**

The annual conference of Virginians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty will be held in Charlottesville on Saturday, Oct. 2nd. Please reserve the date and plan to attend. This year's conference will include a simulation workshop for "lobbying on the death penalty." More information will be posted on the VADP web site: www.VADP.org.

Chris and Lou Abbey Head North



After calling Richmond home for more than 20 years, Chris and Lou Abbey are turning to their roots in the Boston area. Lou's longing to be on the water again and their Boston-based extended families helped them make the painful decision to pull up those deep Richmond roots. The Abbeyes are a team, each bringing very different gifts. After years of teaching at the MCV School of Dentistry, Lou added teaching creative writing and poetry to his resume. Chris always defined herself as a "volunteer" and a "homemaker." Her broad definition of these terms included creating a multi-generation religious education program at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, promoting inclusive communities and an end to domestic violence, working for an end to the death penalty, promoting parish-based nursing, and engaging in peace demonstrations. Both have been involved in peacemaking at several levels and have been longtime supporters of RPEC.

Chris and Lou, we will miss you! Their new address is:

Chris and Lou Abbey
16 Bateman Ave,
Revere, MA 02151
(781)286-5004



This Newsletter is
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Virginia Alliance for Worker Justice



The Virginia Alliance for Worker Justice is a partnership of religious, labor, community and civil rights organizations committed to promoting the dignity and rights of all workers, with a focus on native-born and immigrant workers in Virginia and in solidarity with workers nationally and internationally.

The Alliance believes that support for workers' rights strengthens families and communities. Every worker has a right to fair employment, a livable wage, a safe workplace, affordable health care, a secure retirement and other social benefits that uphold human dignity. All workers also have the right to organize and bargain collectively to protect these rights. The Alliance understands that promoting racial and gender equality is fundamental to achieving justice for all workers. The Alliance supports the local economy and fair trade, not just free trade, to promote the dignity of workers and to protect the environment.

The next meeting of the Alliance will take place on Thursday, September 2 from noon to 2:00 PM at St. Paul's Catholic Church at the corner of Chamberlayne Ave and Rennie Ave.

If you are interested in learning more about VAWJ, contact Michael Stone of the Office of Justice and

Peace, Catholic Diocese of Richmond at (804) 359-5661, ext. 128 or <mstone@richmonddiocese.org>.

Labor Day Resources

The National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice (NICWJ) is a network of people of faith that educates and organizes the U.S. religious community on issues that concern low-wage workers. NICWJ protects worker rights, builds relationships between people of faith and labor leaders, supports low wage workers, develops resources on worker justice issues for congregations, and helps to organize local interfaith worker justice committees.

NICWJ materials such as *Why Unions Matter*, *Living Wage Resources*, *What Faith Groups Say About the Right to Organize*, and others can all be downloaded at: <http://www.nicwj.org/pages/materials.html>.

NICWJ
1020 W. Bryn Mawr Ave -
4th Floor
Chicago, IL 60660
(773) 728-8400
(773) 728-8409 (fax)
bridget@nicwj.org

Creative Response to Conflict

Two Workshops

Sponsored by RPEC

Introductory Workshop:

October 1-3

Facilitators Workshop:

October 15-17

Facilitator:

Sherry Finneran, M.S.Ed

Tuition \$135 per workshop

(Limited Scholarships available)

For details, call 358-1958

Richmond Chapter of VADP Formed

Polly Atwell

The Richmond chapter of Virginians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty was founded in November 2003 as an affiliate of the statewide VADP. Both organizations are dedicated to working, through education and advocacy, to abolish the death penalty in Virginia and throughout the United States.



VADP-R joined other established affiliates in the Hampton Roads area and in northern Virginia. Although Richmond is generally considered a more conservative community, its proximity to the General Assembly gives its mission a special urgency. In 2003, eight anti-death penalty bills were introduced by delegates only to die in committee. Just last month, Governor Warner accepted a compromised revision of the Twenty-One Day Rule that fails to address many of the abuses of the old law. It is imperative that Richmonders alive to the injustice of the current system have a forum in which to come together and work for change.

Although VADP-R is a very new organization, we are already making progress. Through letter-writing and action alerts, we support the statewide VADP in efforts including the campaign to press Governor Warner to allow the testing of Roger Coleman's DNA. Through the Death Row Support Project and attendance at Richmond-area execution vigils we affirm our respect for all victims of murder, whether the crime is committed by individuals or by the state. By including speakers, such as former Attorney General Bill Broaddus and the ACLU-Virginia's Aimee Perron, as a part of our monthly meetings, we encourage our members and the Richmond community to continue to educate themselves about the crimes carried out in our names. Our mission for the next year includes visits to local delegates, a proposed meeting with Lieutenant Governor Tim Kaine, and support for the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty's annual conference in Washington, DC.

VADP-R's next meeting will be held on August 23rd at 7:00 at St. Mark's Episcopal Church on North Boulevard. The speaker will be Margaret Eads, author of *An Innocent Man*, who will discuss recent developments in the Earl Washington case. Questions? Please contact Polly Atwell at 306-0606 or pollyatwell@yahoo.com.

Spring Concert a Great Success

John Gallini

This year's Spring Concert brought John McCutcheon back to Richmond to share his many musical talents and his commitment to peace, justice and solidarity. The enthusiastic crowd of 250 was the largest in many years. John offered a few thoughts on the current political situation with *Not in My Name* and *I Want to be in Ashcroft's Army*. And he spun a few old favorites, *Christmas in the Trenches*, *Step by Step* and *Room at the Top of the Stairs*. A highlight for many was John's artistry with the hammer dulcimer. It was, indeed, a most enjoyable evening.

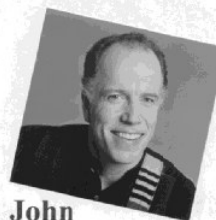
The evening was opened by Devon Sproule, a young woman vocalist, and her unique styling of original music. During intermission the lobby was filled with the drumming of *Drums No Guns*, led by Board member Ram Bhagat.

In addition to an evening of great entertainment, this year's concert raised nearly \$3,500 for RPEC, and assured that we will head into Fall in good shape. Thanks to all who participated.

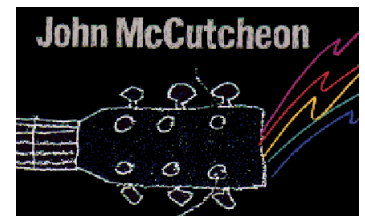
RPEC is extremely grateful to our two corporate sponsors for this year's McCutcheon concert and to all those other individuals and businesses listed below who helped to guarantee the success of the event by placing ads in our program booklet. Please honor them with your patronage.

Corporate Sponsors: **Nesbit The Complete Body Salon & LaDIFFERENCE**

Other Advertisers: Dot's Back Inn, The Sharp Edge Salon, Meant To Bee Antiques, Richmond Catholic Diocese Office of Justice & Peace, Plan 9 Music, Dave Depp, Don Ayers, Candyland Music, Baskin-Robbins Ice Cream (6940 Forest Hill Ave.), 43rd Street Gallery, Pixan (Alternatives), Sam Ash Music Stores, 10,000 Villages, Mediterranean Bakery & Deli, Terrie Pendleton - Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Journeys Inc. Travel Co., Diversity Thrift.



John McCutcheon





Resolution on the Juvenile Death Penalty

Through the following resolution, the Virginia Council of Churches calls for the abolition of the juvenile death penalty in the state of Virginia:

- Whereas, from its first recognized execution of a juvenile offender in 1642, the United States has executed at least 366 persons for crimes committed as juveniles, nearly ten percent of which have been put to death in Virginia, and as the United States has, since 1990, executed more juvenile offenders than all other countries combined;
- Whereas, today the United States stands practically alone among the nations of the world in executing persons for crimes committed as juveniles, with all countries except the United States and Iran now forbidding such executions;
- Whereas, among all the signatories to three major international human rights treaties only the United States has reserved for itself the right to kill juvenile offenders;
- Whereas, there is a growing consensus among an increasing majority of states and jurisdictions in the United States that the death penalty should not be applied to persons for crimes committed as juveniles, with 44 states, by either law or practice, not executing any juvenile offender since reinstatement of the death penalty in 1976;
- Whereas, racial disparities in the application of the death penalty are even greater among juvenile offenders than among adult offenders;
- Whereas, within the United States the juvenile death penalty is applied almost exclusively in the South, which accounts for 84 percent of the 224 death sentences imposed on juveniles since 1973, and 95 percent of the 22 executions of juvenile offenders carried out during the same period, with Virginia (3) second only to Texas (13) in the number of juvenile executions;
- Whereas, studies have found that the majority of juveniles on death row had terrible childhoods, with backgrounds of physical or sexual abuse, profound psychological disorders, low IQ, indigence, and/or intensive substance abuse;
- Whereas, society has long recognized the lesser maturity of persons below 18 years of age, has by law excluded such persons from a range of activities such as voting, serving on juries or in the military, marrying, entering into contracts, purchasing alcohol and tobacco products, and executing wills, and has held that minors should not be held accountable for their actions to the same degree as adults;
- Whereas, recent studies using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) have found that adolescent brains are far less developed than previously thought; that the brain development process continues into the early 20's; that the parts of the brain that govern judgment, reasoning and impulse control are not fully developed until the early twenties; that due to the underdevelopment of this portion of the brain teenagers rely heavily on another part of the brain responsible for gut reactions; that this reliance continues until the early twenties, and is found more among males than females;
- Whereas, the evolving standards of decency cited by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Atkins v. Virginia* (2002) for prohibiting execution of mentally retarded offenders apply also to juvenile offenders, namely, considerations such as a national consensus against the practice, lesser capacity to control their impulses, and the risk of wrongful execution due to greater vulnerability to giving false confessions and [being] less able to provide meaningful assistance to counsel.;
- Whereas, there is a growing national consensus against the juvenile death penalty, as evidenced not only by the increasing majority of states opposed to the practice, but also by strong opposition to the practice from a large number of child advocacy and educational organizations; medical and social service organizations; legal, human and civil rights groups; at least thirty-three religious and ethical organizations calling for abolition of the juvenile death penalty on the grounds of juvenile justice and regard for the sanctity of human life, and by polls indicating that two out of every three persons in the U.S. are opposed; and,
- Whereas, while juvenile offenders must be punished for wrongs committed, their lesser maturity lessens their culpability, their potential for growth provides promise for rehabilitation, the sanctity of human life calls us to never give up hope for what each child of God can become, the juvenile death penalty is at odds with the emerging consensus in the U.S. and the rest of the world, and the abolition of the juvenile death penalty in the United States is long overdue;

Now, be it therefore resolved, that the Virginia Council of Churches calls upon Governor Warner and our state legislators to quickly enact legislation abolishing the death penalty for juvenile offenders in the state of Virginia. 14 November 2003



NEWS from the National Council of Churches

NCC Releases Ecumenical Pastoral Letter on Iraq

May 11, 2004, NEW YORK CITY -- In an ecumenical pastoral letter released today (May 11), leaders of the National Council of Churches USA and its 36 Protestant and Orthodox member communions call for a change of course in Iraq. Their goal, they agree, is peace and a renunciation of violence as contrary to the will of God.

"In a sinful world, some of us may hold that there may be times when war is a necessary evil," they write. "But Christians should never identify violence against others with the will of God and should always work to prevent and end it."

Specifically, they call on the United States "to turn over the transition of authority and post-war reconstruction to the United Nations - and to recognize U.S. responsibility to contribute to this effort generously through security, economic, and humanitarian support - not only to bring international legitimacy to the effort, but also to foster any chance for lasting peace. We would ask that members of our churches, as they feel appropriate, contact their respective congressional delegations to urge the U.S. to change course in Iraq."

May 11, 2004

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Grace to you and peace from God our Creator and the Lord Jesus Christ!

We, leaders of the thirty-six member communions of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, write this joint pastoral letter at a time when the threat of violence hangs over the earth and warfare involving United States forces is increasing in Iraq. We write out of a deep love for this country, but also out of a profound concern at the direction this cycle of violence is taking us. This concern has been brought home to all Americans and indeed the world in the horrific pictures of prisoner abuse.

Two central claims of the Christian faith are crucial in our thinking: that every person, as a child of God, is of infinite worth; and that all persons, as participants in God's one creation, are related in their humanity and vulnerability. This is why the World Council of Churches has asserted that "war is contrary to the will of God" - because it destroys that which God has

made sacred.

In a sinful world, some of us may hold that there may be times when war is a necessary evil. But Christians should never identify violence against others with the will of God and should always work to prevent and end it.

We believe, with these things in mind, that the guiding principle of U.S. foreign policy must be to build up the whole, interdependent human family and to promote reconciliation whenever possible. Yes, this means standing firmly against all acts of terror, but it also means envisioning a world in which war is truly a last resort.

Current U.S. foreign policy, however, is not aligned with this principle. Many people see our policy as one based on protection of our country's economic interests narrowly defined, rather than on principles of human rights and justice that would serve our nation's interests in deep and tangible ways. We are convinced that current policy is dangerous for America and the world and will only lead to further violence.

We, therefore, call for a change of course in Iraq, and we encourage you to do the same. Specifically, we are calling upon our country to turn over the transition of authority and post-war reconstruction to the United Nations - and to recognize U.S. responsibility to contribute to this effort generously through security, economic, and humanitarian support - not only to bring international legitimacy to the effort, but also to foster any chance for lasting peace. We would ask that members of our churches, as they feel appropriate, contact their respective congressional delegations to urge the U.S. to change course in Iraq.

We certainly recognize that faithful Christians of good will may disagree with one another when it comes to questions of national policy. We trust, however, that all Christians will pray and work for peace, remembering the words, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

We also urge all of our congregations

(Continued on page 10)

Virginia Organizing Project Updates

Cathy Woodson

The Virginia Organizing Project (VOP) is expanding and growing by redefining chapters to coincide with House legislative district boundaries. Our goal is to have VOP chapters in at least 30 state House districts by the end of this year. Current chapters will transition to being geographically organized by House legislative districts and all chapters will meet a minimum standard of having 25 registered voters active in VOP activities. We will maintain the requirement that chapters be composed of people from diverse backgrounds.

In the Richmond area, we are building House districts 73 (Delegate John O'Bannon) and 66 (Delegate Kirk Cox) chapters now, with the first meetings planned for early fall. The chapters will hold four meetings per year. Chapter work will focus on VOP's statewide campaigns, racial profiling and tax reform. VOP members are available to give group presentations to both campaigns. If you know of an organization or group who would be interested in scheduling a presentation, contact VOP. VOP will continue its work with local groups on living wage and restoration of voting rights. This year, VOP will publish a voter's guide for the Presidential election. This guide will be available for statewide groups in early September.

If you are interested in learning more about a VOP chapter, please contact Cathy Woodson at 261-7497 or E-mail at cwood329@aol.com or visit the website at www.virginia-

SWORDS INTO PLOWSHARES, A Traveling Installation

Christopher Humes and Noah Scalin

Starting in May of 2004, a display of guns crafted from earth and plant seeds native to the region,



began a nine-month tour of the city of Richmond.

The number of guns on display correlates with the number of gun-murder victims in the city of Richmond this year and, as that number continues to rise, the exhibition expands accordingly.

Each month this site-specific installation appears in a new space: galleries along the First Friday Art Walk, alternative art spaces, and community centers. The first opening was at Upcast Gallery in May followed by a month at Chop Suey books and a month at 17.5 Ethos Cafe. Upcoming events include a one-day outdoor display in Battery Park and an installation at the Fulton Hill Neighborhood Resource Center.

Proceeds from the sales of the individual pieces are being donated to local organizations working on non-violence projects in the community, including Drums No Guns, Citizens Against Crime, and The Richmond Peace Education Center. Buyers are encouraged to plant the "guns" and document the process, the results of which will be exhibited on a companion website: www.PlantThePiece.org. Artist Christopher Humes describes the process, "The literal sowing of

these 'swords into plowshares' will pay respect to the lives lost and affected. The nurturing of the 'piece' to flower is both a catharsis for the individual and a gift to the community."

The exhibit, which was created to encourage discussion on solutions for an increasingly violent world, was inspired by the techniques and philosophies of Japanese radical gardener Masanobu Fukuoka. Fukuoka said, "The ultimate goal of farming is not the growing of crops, but the cultivation and perfection of human beings." Another fundamental influence is the biblical quote from the book of Isaiah, "And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift

Ecumenical Pastoral Letter on Iraq

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and parishes to pray not only for the soldiers of this nation, as we surely do, but for all people, military and civilian, caught in this and other cycles of violence. When possible, join in prayer, discussion, and action with ecumenical and interfaith neighbors. Materials to assist in this are available from many of our churches and from the National Council of Churches.

As ecumenical partners, we know that it is a scandal that the body of Christ remains so visibly divided, often by those things that divide the world. Let us, however, be united as followers of Christ in our hope for that day when swords are beaten into plowshares and mourning and crying and pain will be no more!

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

CALENDAR

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 Thursday	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 Saturday	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 Saturday	Pax Christi Peace Community - Call Paula Powdermaker for details - 355-7395
Every 1st Monday	Virginia People of Faith for Alternatives to the Death Penalty , 4:45 PM Catholic Diocese Conference Room, Floyd and Cherry, Kathleen Kenney, 359-5661
Every 3rd Sunday	The Richmond, Virginia Buddhist Peace Fellowship - holds a meditation vigil for peace in Monroe Park at 1:00 PM.
Every 2nd Saturday	Walk for Peace - 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM. Meet at the Boulevard entrance of the Virginia Museum. Wear black.
Every Friday	Protest the War on Iraq - Noon till 1:00 PM at 10th and Main Streets.
Every 3rd Thursday	Richmond Chapter VADP - 7:00 PM at St. Marks Episcopal Church.

UPCOMING EVENTS

August 6	Anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing
August 9	Anniversary of the Nagasaki bombing
August 10	Interracial Dialogue - topic: Race, Religion, & Sexual Identity - 7 - 9 PM, 17.5 Ethos Cafe, 17 1/2 N. 17th St, Richmond
August 14	The Richmond Vegetarian Festival 2004 - from noon to 5:00 PM at the Azalea Gardens of Bryan Park, rain or shine. For more information about the festival or becoming a vendor, please visit www.veggiefest.org , or contact Christopher Patterson at 262-8507 or via email at info@veggiefest.org . Bryan Park is located just north of the I 64/95 interchange off of exit 80 at Lakeside Avenue and Hermitage Road.
August 18	Execution of James Hudson - Vigil will be held at Richmond Friends Meeting, at 8:30 PM.
August 23	VADP-R's next meeting - 7:00 PM at St. Mark's Episcopal Church on North Boulevard. For information contact Polly Atwell at 306-0606 or pollyatwell@yahoo.com .
September 2	The next meeting of the Virginia Alliance for Worker Justice will take place on Thursday from noon to 2:00 PM at St. Paul's Catholic Church at the corner of Chamberlayne and Rennie Aves.
	Creative Response to Conflict Two Workshops Sponsored by RPEC
October 1-3	Introductory Workshop
October 15-17	Facilitators Workshop
	Facilitator: Sherry Finneran, M.S.Ed Tuition \$135 per workshop (Limited available) For details, call 358-1958
Scholarships	
October 2	The annual conference of Virginians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty will be held in Charlottesville. More information will be posted on the VADP web site: www.VADP.org .

Committee Reports

Programs Committee

The Programs Committee met May 20th and June 17th. The Richmond Youth Peace Project continues to highlight youth violence by securing a \$1,500 grant and through an event at Café Guttenberg on July 22nd. The committee has restarted the Interracial Dialogue Program and will be hosting presentations monthly covering various issues and how they impact race relations in Richmond. We also continue our work on our Conflict Resolution Program and Peace Essay contest. Please contact Christopher Patterson at slough@waste.org or (804) 303-2204 if you have any questions or want to get involved with this committee.

Newsletter Committee

The Newsletter Committee met on July 1 to plan the July-August N/L. We agreed that we liked the one issue every two months format, and continued to discuss how best to move toward publishing primarily via electronic media. We meet on 8/31/04 at 2:30 PM to plan the next issue. 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.

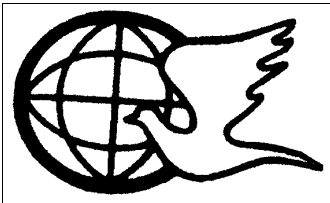
Fundraising Committee

The Fundraising Committee met on July 21 before this issue went to press. The Spring Concert was a

great success, with attendance near 250 and net proceeds over \$3,400. Our next big event is our Annual Dinner and Auction, scheduled for November 12. Contact Paul Fleisher (795-5326, pfleishe@infi.net) with questions or suggestions.

Membership Committee

The Membership Committee is currently looking for interested persons to come together to make a plan for increasing members and gathering with current members for conversation & social time. Please contact Mim Scalini at: mimscalini@peoplepc.com



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