



RPEC NEWS

The newsletter of the Richmond Peace Education Center

March/April 2006

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RPEC Web Page:
<http://www.rpec.org>

Profiles in Peacemaking

Christian Peacemaker Teams

Wes Hare



Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) is an international organization set up to support teams of peace workers in conflict areas around the world. CPT has its roots in the historic peace churches of North America, but today has a broad ecumenical base among many Christian denominations and works in partnership with Jewish, Muslim and secular peace organizations around the world. A large component of CPT's work is educating churches across North America about the situations in which CPTers work and advocating for a more engaged peace witness.

History

The inspiration for the group came from Ron Sider at the Mennonite World Conference in 1984. At this gathering, Sider criticized Mennonites and Brethren in Christ for reducing their peace witness to simple conscientious objection

Sider states, "Unless we Mennonites and Brethren in Christ are ready to start to die by the thousands in dramatic vigorous new exploits for peace and justice, we should sadly confess that we really never meant what we said... Unless comfortable North American and European Mennonites and Brethren in Christ are prepared to risk injury and death in nonviolent opposition to the injustice our societies foster and assist in Central America, the Philippines, and South Africa, we dare never whisper another word about pacifism to our sisters and brothers in those desperate lands... Unless we are prepared to pay the cost of peacemaking, we have no right to claim the label or preach the message."

After a series of meetings, Gene Stoltzfus was hired as the first staff person for the new organization in 1987. Over the next few years CPT trainings and conferences explored various models for international peacemaking. In 1990, just before the Gulf War, CPT sent a team of 13 to Iraq for 10 days. This delegation proved to be the first of a number of groups sent out by CPT. Delegations were also sent to Haiti and the West Bank (*Taken from Wikipedia.*)

The Richmond Connection

In 1994, my wife, Jane, and I moved to Richmond after spending 6 years in San Antonio, Texas with Mennonite Voluntary Service (MVS). I was assigned to CPT as a full time Corps member through MVS, and Jane to RPEC. This assignment began with a three-week orientation in Chicago involving sessions in self-analysis, racism, street

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Reflections from the Board Chair

Wendy Northup

Lately I've been re-reading Wendell Berry's poems; a lovely thing to do as the weather presages spring and great new birth. So here some lines from *Awake at Night* with a few thoughts.

What the world could be
Is my good dream
And my agony when, dreaming it,
I lie awake and turn
And look into the dark.

For many of us, these words might ring true. We are optimistic about what the world could be, or we might not waste our precious time worrying about violence so prevalent in our world. We believe in a better world or we might not be appalled about the energy that our city can pour into grief about two bears, very sadly killed, when the murder rate for humans is soaring and the violence in Iraq continues to rise. When our civil liberties are daily eroding, and it makes us feel "safer." When our national debt, the gift we leave our grandchildren, is rising by the day so that the wealthy can amass more wealth while our teachers and police officers, and other working people are priced out of the housing market.

But, as RPEC members, we continue to gather, to want to feel part of an organization that believes in the fact that the world could be a place where all live together justly with concern for the needs of each. I find great hope looking at the activities of RPEC so far this year—even a year of major disruption—and realize that we are an organization whose good dream is "what the world could be," and whose members continue to keep the peace center alive and working for peace in our region.

So in this glorious spring season, I wish you all renewed hope, and joyful rebirth, again in the words of Wendell Berry from his *Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front*:

. . . Be joyful
though you have considered all the facts.
So long as women do not go cheap
for power, please women more than men.

. . .
As soon as the generals and the politicians
can predict the motions of your mind,
lose it. Leave it as a sign
to mark the false trail, the way
you didn't go. Be like the fox
who makes more tracks than necessary.
Some in the wrong direction.
Practice resurrection.

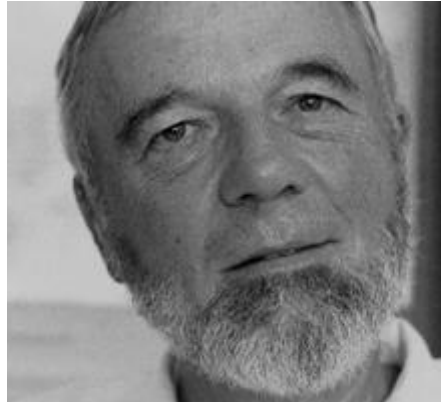
Profiles in Peacemaking

(Continued from page 1)

action efforts, review and education on CPT efforts in Haiti, Iraq, and the West Bank. The orientation concluded on MLK, Jr. Day with a trip to Wisconsin and an action of civil disobedience at the ELF (Extreme Low Frequency) Naval base located between Michigan and Wisconsin for submarine alerts. This ELF base is now closed.

My assignment in the States was one of the first for CPT, whose major emphasis had been on international trouble spots. Initially, I wrote grant proposals and coordinated an exploratory group of four to Chiapas, Mexico, which eventually led to a CPT presence there. Shortly after, I joined the DC Project on Urban Peacemaking (DCPUP) where I commuted from Richmond and worked to activate neighborhood walks with local residents in efforts to rid the area of drugs. This led eventually to the closure of a second crack house in the DC Columbia Heights area. This 2 ½ year urban peacemaking effort was through the invitation of the nearby Sojourners Neighborhood Center, supported by Sojourners Magazine where Jim Wallis, the founder lived.

Upon returning to Richmond, my work around Suburban Apartments involved neighborhood walks and organizing in the community, developing a summer recreation program for children and getting the adults involved. First Mennonite Church of Richmond and the MVS house were then located by this apartment complex. I believe that CPT still remains



"I believe the Lord hears the cries of the poor."
Wes Hare

ambivalent about the idea of local stateside efforts even though I was able to spend three more years in neighborhood work in Richmond "Getting in the Way."

Additionally, I travelled to Canada and spent several weeks in Western Ontario at the Grassy Narrows First Nation supporting their efforts to retain traditional hunting, fishing and trapping rights threatened by an international lumber company. This led to the continuing Kenora, Ontario CPT presence there.

In the years between 1995-99, CPT remained relatively the same size, with continued priority towards overseas violence reduction efforts. The program steering committee and support was largely from Mennonite, Church of the Brethren, and Friends. Now in the six years since and, I believe, coincidentally with the current increase in US aggression, CPT has grown in presence, staff, and finances. It now numbers around 190 in the Peacemaker Corp, including 48

full-timers with a three year commitment and 142 reservists with members from 29 U.S. states, 6 Canadian provinces, Colombia, the UK, and the Phillipines.

CPT has transitioned to co-director leadership--Carol Rose in the Chicago U.S. office and Doug Pritchard in Toronto, Canada. Support sources now include the Baptist and Presbyterian Peace Fellowships, among others, with a budget of \$842,000 generated from 2220 individuals and 455 churches/groups. (From the '04/'05 Annual Report).

CPT has a on-going presence in the West Bank, Colombia, Iraq, Kenora (Ontario), and the Arizona-Mexico border, and has established regional groups in the U.S. (Cleveland, Chicago, Colorado, DC, Northern Indiana, Minnesota); Canada (Manitoba, Ontario); and in the UK. Another is currently developing in Durham, NC. These regional groups provide local opportunities for CPT personnel and broaden the support base for funding, recruitment for delegations and educational opportunities.

CPT actively participates in anti-war mobilizations, Congressional lobbying efforts, and the annual trip to Ft Benning/Columbus, Ga for the SOA Watch weekend.

CPT produces a quarterly newsletter and maintains internet services. These items and further background are available from the CPT website www.cpt.org

Parts of a Christian Peacemaker Team Member

Angela Lehman-Rios

Eyes

—for witnessing acts of injustice and violence:

“At 7:30 AM on 6 January, children from At-Tuwani told CPTers ... that a grove of olive trees across bypass road 317 from At-Tuwani was destroyed sometime in the night. The CPTers went to the area to document the destruction, and found that all branches of the 102 olive trees in the grove were cut, leaving only the tree trunks.” *CPTnet Update, At-Tuwani, Palestine, January 2005*

—and for witnessing acts of love and courage:

“One day last week, a strange man came to our door ... an older gentleman with a kind face, dressed in a suit With broken English, shway (little) Arabic and lots of hand gestures, we learned that his group [Independent Activates, a Society to Defend Human Rights] had held vigils for our kidnapped colleagues and in support of CPT's work. ... One of the Activates offered to exchange his life for the release of the four.” *Michelle Naar, Iraq, February 2006*

Ears

—for hearing the same gunfire, mortars, and hateful language that oppressed people hear:

“About an hour after we arrived home, the first rocks of the day were thrown, and the first shots were fired. And they have continued throughout the day.” *Natasha Krahn, Hebron, October 2000*

—for listening to the stories of people whose voices get drowned out

by the cacophony of mainstream media:

“The family with whom we were staying asked if we could help find their uncle. ... Another elderly couple told us the Iraqi National Guard had driven them from their home in Talafar. The man proudly told us he had built their new home himself. ... Villagers spoke wistfully of a time, not so long ago, when the people of the area, Sunni and Shi'a Turkmen, lived together in peace, even intermarrying.” *Jan Benvie, Qobak, Iraq, August 2005*

Mouth

—for talking to soldiers whose voices may also get drowned out:

“One of us asked, ‘Don't you ever have questions about what you are doing?’ One [Israeli] soldier, clearly an older reservist, said quickly but quietly, ‘Of course there are questions....’ I talked at some length to this guy as we sat on the rocks not far from the village garbage dump. He is a father, and has at least two young kids.” *Mark Frey, Hebron, December 1998*

—and for sharing food in solidarity:

“During the reading commemorating death of Iraqis in 1991, several Iraqis emphasized our common desire for peace and acknowledged that such mass killings have not only taken place here, but in many other places in the world. ... Later local farmers provided the team a feast in a house made of reeds that grow in the marshes of southern Iraq.” *Peggy Gish, Iraq, August 2003*

Nose

—for smelling the stench of injustice:

“Burnt-out vehicles still lie at the side of the main roads, which are full of craters. The side streets are rutted dirt tracks with pools of sewage When the pools are absent, the sewage runs along channels at the side of the streets, outside houses. The smell is overwhelming and unmistakable, particularly in the 120-degree Fahrenheit ... summer heat. We watched children, some in bare feet, wading through the water, and others playing at the muddy edges of pools.” *Jan Benvie, Sadr City, Iraq, August 2005*

Back

—for carrying children:

“The day before [paramilitaries shot the D---- family dog], I shared breakfast with this family. I really enjoyed playing make-believe animals and cowboy and horse with the boys, ages three and six. At first I was the horse and they the cowboys. After the horse needed one too many rests, they lassoed each other and ran all over the yard.” *Tracy Hughes, La Florida, Columbia, August 2005*

Knees

—for engaging in the humble and vulnerable act of prayer:

“... [CPT] delegation members passed through back roads and trails to Bethlehem. All the shops and homes were shut tight. Hardly a sound echoed through the quiet, narrow streets. Evidence of horrific destruction littered the way - charred, bombed cars and buildings,

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Parts of a Christian Peacemaker Team Member

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broken glass, automatic rifle shells scattered over the tank-damaged stone streets. As the group made their way towards Manger Square a soldier fired into the air and ordered them to stop. Delegation members dropped to their knees in a semi-circle, lit a candle, sang and prayed." *CPT Newsletter, Spring 2002*

Feet

—for walking beside children on their way to school through hostile territory:

"Because the Israeli military had said it would no longer escort [Palestinian] children to school to protect them from settler attacks, CPTers walked to and from Khoruba to meet the children from Tuba." *CPTnet Update from At-Tuwani, Palestine, October 2005*

Heart

—for recognizing our common humanity:

"The Christian Peacemaker Team (CPT) Iraq team went through a discernment process, seeking to identify aspects of our work here in Iraq that are compelling enough to continue the project and comparing them with the costs (financial, psychological, physical) that are also aspects of the project. It was a healthy exercise, but it led me to a somewhat larger question: Why are we here? ...

"As I survey the landscape here in Iraq, dehumanization seems to be the operative means of relating to each other. U.S. forces in their quest to hunt down and kill 'terrorists' are, as a result of this dehumanizing word, not only killing 'terrorists,' but also killing innocent Iraqis: men, women and children in the various towns and villages.

"It seems as if the first step down the road to violence is taken when I dehumanize a person. That violence might stay within my thoughts or

find its way into the outer world and become expressed verbally, psychologically, structurally or physically. As soon as I rob a fellow human being of his or her humanity by sticking a dehumanizing label on them, I begin the process that can have, as an end result, torture, injury and death.

"'Why are we here?' We are here to root out all aspects of dehumanization that exist within us. We are here to stand with those being dehumanized by oppressors and stand firm against that dehumanization. We are here to stop people, including ourselves, from dehumanizing any of God's children, no matter how much they dehumanize their own souls." *Tom Fox, Baghdad, Iraq, November 2005.*

These words were taken from a reflection written the day before Tom was abducted. His body was found in Baghdad on March 10. Tom's full reflection, as well as the other reflections and reports excerpted here, are archived on the CPT website.

Big Thanks to Move Volunteers

The peace center staff expresses sincere thanks to everyone who helped with our office relocation in February, including: John Galini, Bill Gerow, Dave Roberts, Eric Tsow, Larry Williford, Sam Vanneman, John Votta, Ruth Anne Young, Cary Cheseldine, and Don Morgan and our other friends from the Berryman Center.

We'd like to single out Barbara Williford for a very special thank you. Barbara took on the task of coordinating the move. Her skilled and energetic leadership made the transition a remarkably easy one for the peace center staff and board. Barbara, we are grateful!

Newsletter readers, stop by and visit us in our new quarters at the Berryman Center. (If after 2 PM, call first to confirm that a staffer is in.) Note that our mailing address remains the same.

Peacemaker of the Year Nominations Needed

It is once again time to choose our third annual Peacemaker of the Year, an award which will be given at our Annual Dinner on October 27, 2006. We need all our members to think of someone you know who has made the world a better place by their dedication to peacemaking in its myriad forms. The nomination form is easy to fill out and can be found on our website. If you don't have access to a computer, call the office at 232-1002 and request one by mail. But please take the time to make this award the important thing it should be by nominating someone soon. The deadline for nominations is July 7, 2006.

Virginians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty

Jack Payden-Travers, Director

This past October I traveled through Texas with members of the “Journey of Hope: from violence to healing.” Journey participants include murder victims’ family members, death row exonerees, relatives of the executed, and death penalty activists. One thing I re-learned on that journey is that violent death, whether by murder or by state sanctioned execution, leaves a wide circle of victims. As the English cleric John Donne wrote centuries ago: “Each man’s death diminishes me...”

In October 2006, Virginia is hosting the Virginia Journey of Hope. We need your help to bring the Journey to the Richmond area. The 2005 Texas Journey spoke at over 165 venues to thousands of individuals. We need volunteers now to serve on the Virginia Journey of Hope committee. The tasks include arranging speaking opportunities in places of worship, schools, civic clubs, public forums; finding hosts for meals; figuring out transportation; locating lodging. Please contact the VADP office 888-567-VADP to help with the Virginia Journey.

In spite of our election of Tim Kaine, a death penalty foe, as Governor on Nov 8th, the death penalty will be continued during his administration. That is to be expected as politics frequently trumps justice in the public arena. Those of us who have lived in Virginia know that for better or worse change comes slowly in the Commonwealth. But the fact is that change is inevitable.

If one looks at the history of the death penalty in the modern era, few would deny that there is a slow but certain movement taking place towards the eventual abolition of capital punishment. Whether viewed from the standpoint of court decisions, jury sentencings, actual executions, or the increasing number of nations in the world that have abolished the practice of execution, one must conclude that the death penalty itself is in its waning years.

An additional factor leading towards this end is the increasing number of men and women whom we now know are wrongfully convicted each year and sentenced to death in these United States. Add to this the even larger number of non-capital exonerations from America’s jails and we are experiencing a crisis of trust in our overall judicial system. No one can deny that innocent people are presently incarcerated both on death rows and in the larger prison populations across this nation. Based on the 123+ exonerations from death rows since 1973, at least 4 innocent individuals are sentenced to death each year in our nation. In Virginia Earl Washington Jr. came within nine days of execution before his sentence was commuted. He was finally pardoned in 2000 after 17 years in prison. Six additional men have also had their death sentences commuted by Virginia governors due to issues of innocence and at least six other men have been exonerated from the general prison population due to DNA testing.

The question is not whether we will see the end of the death penalty but when. Two years ago 38 states allowed for capital punishment, today that number is 36. In fact only 17 states have actually carried out executions since re-instatement of capital punishment in 1976. In 2002 the U.S. Supreme Court declared the execution of those with mental retardation unconstitutional. In February 2005 the Juvenile Death Penalty was eliminated. Even lethal injection, the latest “alternative” to the electric chair, gas chamber, firing squad and hanging, is now in question as an acceptable method of execution. Executions in California, Florida and at the Federal Death House in Indiana have been stayed pending court review of the protocols and procedures involved.

As I write, Virginia’s Dexter Vinson is awaiting the issuance of a date of execution. He may be scheduled as early as the end of April of this year. Since the re-instatement of executions in 1976, 1012 men and women have been executed in the U.S., 94 of them by Virginia.

It was Seneca who wrote many centuries ago that “Time Discovers Truth.” It is time for Virginia to face the truth. It is time for Virginia to acknowledge that the death penalty is a racist, discriminatory, and cost ineffective method of punishment that has no place in a modern society where alternatives to the death penalty are already in effect.

Happenings at the Center

Recent Events

Threat of Nuclear Terrorism Movie Stirs Discussion

More than twenty people participated in a program on the threat of nuclear terrorism, sponsored by RPEC and the Richmond Friends Meeting on February 22. Participants viewed a short movie that depicted several possible scenarios for a nuclear-armed terror attack on our country. The group then discussed the issue with Edmund Rennolds of the newly formed organization, Citizens to Stop Nuclear Terror (CSNT), and professor Thad Williamson of the University of Richmond's Jepson Leadership School.

RPEC Conflict Resolution Trainers Hit the Streets

Seasoned and new RPEC conflict resolution trainers (CRT) led workshops at Mt. Pisgah United Methodist Church and St. Joseph's Villa in February and March. The children at Mt. Pisgah took to the training right away, which interwove fun activities with learning. On March 14, Jason Weller and Katina Williams, employees at St. Joseph's Villa, as well as recent graduates of the January conflict resolution training, began a six-week CRT program for 15 single moms who are participating in the Flagler Services program there. Flagler is a two-year transitional program for single moms and their children. Jason and Katina worked with

RPEC volunteers to create the agenda and will receive consultation from RPEC as they do the training. They hope to do more of these programs as they continue their work with the women.

Power of Forgiveness Presented to Richmond Youth

Team Azim, a group of concerned Metro Richmond citizens from faith-based organizations, sponsored the Violence Impact Forum (VIF) March 16-18. VIF is a powerful school-based violence prevention program for 4th-7th graders, started by Azim Khamisa of San Diego whose only son was murdered by a 14-year-old gang member. Khamisa and Ples Felix, grandfather of the boy who killed Khamisa's son, travel the country teaching youth about forgiveness, healing and restorative justice. Former gang members, also part of VIF, share the stark reality of gangs and prison life. Students from middle schools in the Greater Richmond area saw forgiveness in action – Azim and Ples sitting together on stage. For many, hearing alternatives to revenge and retaliation was a first. Visit www.tkf.org for more about VIF and the Tariq Khamisa Foundation started by Khamisa and named for his son.

Three Years of Violence in Iraq Don't Go Unnoticed

On March 19, the RPEC and Virginia Anti-War Network (VAWN) co-sponsored a rally, march and

vigil at Monroe Park, marking the third anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

Organizers estimated attendance at around 500. RPEC's Adria Scharf, and Ana Edwards of the Defenders for Freedom, Justice and Equality served as co-conveners of the rally, which featured speakers representing a wide spectrum of the Richmond community.

Untold Stories of Iraq Revealed and Discussed at Public Forum

RPEC sponsored the March 27 public forum "Iraq: Untold Stories" at the VCU Siegel Center. Speakers included Charlie Anderson of Iraq Veterans Against the War, Tia Steele of Gold Star Families Speak Out and Pat Ruble of Christian Peacemaker Teams. The program was designed as a town hall meeting, with ample opportunity for members of the audience to participate in the discussion.

The Peace Center plans to hold a second public forum in this series this summer. Look for date and location information in the next newsletter. That program—on the subject of torture—will focus on themes including: evidence of U.S. forces' use of torture and abuse in executing the "war on terror;" discussion of the new law outlawing torture; and the impact of torture and abuse on soldiers and survivors and on the United States' relationship with the world.

Happenings at the Center

Membership Committee Meets

On February 23, Mim Scalin hosted the first meeting of the new RPEC membership committee. Six people signed on and set goals for 2006 — updating the RPEC brochure, increasing RPEC visibility at festivals and events, and devising more ways to involve members in peace education activities. If you have ideas to share or would just like to join the committee, please feel free to call Mim at 804-353-0217. She would love to have you.

Upcoming Events

The Peace Center's program volunteers and staff have planned an active spring, with a number of public programs and forums.

Come to the May 4, RPEC Annual Meeting

Last year the RPEC annual meeting broke off from the annual dinner/auction and found its own spot — the RPEC office. About 50 RPEC members turned up to take a peek at our new office, find out about the work of the previous year and help set goals for 2006. At this year's meeting, our new Director, Adria Scharf, will share her ideas on where best to focus our energy in the coming years, and she wants you to share yours, too. The Annual Meeting is set for May 4, 7:00 pm..

Young People Invited to Youth Peace Summit

On April 22, the Richmond Youth Peace Project (RYPP), an ongoing initiative of the RPEC, will sponsor its second Youth Peace Summit at Fifth Baptist Church, 1415 W. Cary St., at 10 a.m. The event will feature a keynote speaker, as well as workshops, planned and co-led by Richmond youth. Young people interested in participating are encouraged to pre-register at www.RPEC.org.

Easy Being Green at 2006 Earth Day Richmond

Join us Saturday, April 22, from 10 AM to 4 PM at the south side of the Mayo Bridge for 2006 Earth Day Richmond. Earth Day is a festival for all those interested in making our city and planet a cleaner, safer and healthier place to live, learn and play. This year, you will find music, food, art, dance, exhibits, earth-friendly goods and plenty of activities! RPEC will be there — so stop by our table and say hello. And consider leaving your car at home and walking or biking to the festival. Visit www.earthdayrichmond.org for details or to find out how to volunteer.

Students to See Romeo and Juliet Before Training in Conflict Resolution

This spring, RPEC will collaborate with *Encore!* on a Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet project for 8th

graders. *Encore!* is a local theater group that produces "The Richmond Shakespeare Festival," at Agecroft Hall every summer and year-round performances and workshops for students and audiences of all ages. After *Encore!* performs Romeo and Juliet for the 8th grade audience, RPEC volunteers will present conflict resolution training.

April 17 Deadline for Peace Essay Contest – Winners Announced June 1

Get your child or teenager thinking about peace by encouraging them to enter the Peace Essay contest. The theme of the essay should center around three questions: How can peace be taught? How can it be learned? How can you bring peace into your own life and the life of your school, family and community? The winners in each age category will receive cash prizes, an invitation to the RPEC annual concert in June and an appearance on the Indy media radio show on WRIR. Check your previous newsletter for an entry form or call the RPEC office at 232-1002.

Get Inspired With Some Good Music This Summer

John McCutcheon will bring his peace and justice inspired music to Richmond on Friday, June 16, at 7:30 PM at the VCU Performing Arts Center. Mark your calendars so you can enjoy John's music at this RPEC fundraising event.

Consumers Corner

Freedom Lawns

John Gallini

Hannah Holmes, in her 2005 book “Suburban Safari” (Bloomsbury Publishing) has a chapter she titles “The Freedom Lawn”. She describes a process for lawn care and nurturing that I have subscribed to for years, and she even found this great name for it.



you can convert part of the space to an azalea garden (although that would require some nutrient addition and some water – at least for the first few years).

You can also point out that the National Park Service no longer adds chemicals to the Nation’s Lawn, the

Describing her own lawn she writes:

“Already I’ve determined that this lawn is on the cutting edge of turf management. It’s a delicately balanced mixture of whatever can grow in any particular spot and doesn’t mind getting whacked by a mower every couple of weeks. The lawn-industry term for this landscaping scheme is Freedom Lawn, capitalized by its coiners. The freedom applies both to the plants and the people, the latter of whom needn’t water, fertilize, pesticide, or otherwise interfere. Nurseries now sell Freedom Lawn seed mixtures, for lawnowners who live in parts of the world that have been shortchanged in weeds. But even before I came across the official term, I thought of my yard as a Darwin Lawn. Whatever could survive the mower and the drought was welcome to stay.”

There are, of course, several benefits for such a lawn. The first is that it is a healthier place for children, grandchildren, squirrels, chipmunks and birds, not to mention you and me. The second is that it contributes to the health of the Lower James River and the Chesapeake Bay by not adding additional nutrients to those waterways. And third, it is less expensive.

Some will object that neighbors will complain, or that there is some neighborhood covenant that requires a carpet-like lawn. But I suggest that, if you just stop adding water, fertilizer and pesticides, your lawn will evolve slowly enough that you can get away with it – as long as you cut it regularly! Actually, if you leave the lawn clippings when you mow they will provide nutrients to replace the artificial fertilizers. You can also add features to your yardscape that don’t require chemical inputs. A large stone is always interesting, or

Mall in Washington, DC. They stopped spraying back in the 1970s as the public became aware of the dangers associated with pesticides. There is even evidence that the cherry trees are doing better without the chemicals. Or you can explain that The Garden Club of America is promoting “The New American Lawn” and urging a cold-turkey approach to pesticides.

Holmes also offers some interesting thoughts on whether or not to have the blades of your lawnmower sharpened. On the one hand, it seems that lawns cut with a dull blade require less water to thrive. On the other, dull blades require more fuel. Of course, you can save fuel and water by using a person-powered mower with dull blades.

Now if someone could find a golf course with Freedom Fairways...

News You Can Use

A New Chapter in Haiti's Struggle

John Gallini

For the fourth time in 16 years, Haitians have gone to the polls to elect a President, and for the fourth time they have elected the candidate widely perceived to be the “champion of the poor”, not the candidate seen as the favorite of the US embassy – not a big surprise in the poorest country of the Western Hemisphere.

The new President, Rene Preval, was also the successful candidate in 1995 – indeed, the only President in Haitian history to serve out the term and step down. He is generally considered to be the protégé of the other person elected to the office during this period, Jean Bertrand Aristide. Aristide twice won the presidency in landslide victories and had twice been forced from office by violent coups.

But it is not clear when (or if) President Preval will be allowed to take office. The same election that brought Preval to the Presidency was to have elected members of the bicameral Haitian legislature. But most, if not all, of these seats will require a run-off election to decide the winners. That was to have taken place on March 19. But now the appointed coup regime, which has been in power since the February 2004 coup, has decided to delay the run-off elections. Since the new President is to be sworn in by the legislature, Preval cannot begin his term until after the members of the legislature are decided!

The electoral council did not set a new date for the second round of the legislative ballot, in which the two leading candidates for each of 30 senate seats and 99 lower house seats will compete. Preval's political platform called "Lespwa," or Creole for Hope, leads in the legislative election. Based on first-round results, Lespwa seems likely to gain 16 senate seats and 34 seats in the lower chamber



Haitians line up to vote in Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Letters To the Editor

February 23, 2006

Letter to the Editor:

On December 18, 2005 Congressman John Conyers of Michigan, with seven co-sponsors, introduced House Resolution 635, supported by a 182-page report containing over 1000 footnotes, asking for the formation of a select committee to investigate Bush Administration policies and behavior. This report, entitled, “The Constitution in Crisis; The Downing Street Minutes and Deceptions, Manipulations, Torture, Retribution, and Cover-ups in the Iraq War”, alleges there are substantial and overwhelming justifications for the impeachment of president Bush on the grounds of conspiracy to commit fraud, misuse of government funds, violation of the Geneva Conventions, imprisoning people without trial, employing torture, and felonious violation of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act.

Why haven't the Conyers' House Resolution and Report been the subject of widespread analysis and discussion in the national news media? Why haven't the American people been informed? It is my suspicion that people in general do not know about Conyers' Congressional action.

The Bush Administration's policies and behaviors have resulted in mass death and destruction and billions of dollars in waste contributing to record national deficits. These policies and behaviors have encouraged the growth in terrorism while tarnishing the US reputation around the world. Consideration of presidential impeachment is now necessary. Let us all read the Conyers' Resolution and Report and contact our Congressional delegations asking for action.

Sincerely,

David A. Depp
12347 Welling Hall Road
Doswell, VA 23047

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**, University of Richmond campus. Contact Ray Hilliard at 289-8289
- 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 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 til 1:00 PM at 10th and Main Streets.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Aubrey Brown Peace Forum is planning a series entitled "Holy War: The Crusade Against Tolerance and Democracy," which will begin on April 2, and continue through May 14, 2006. The Forum meets each Sunday morning at 9:30 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall of Ginter Park Presbyterian Church. Visitors are welcomed.

- April 17** **Deadline for Peace Essay Contest** — Check your previous newsletter for an entry form or call the RPEC office at 232-1002.
- April 22** **Second Youth Peace Summit** sponsored by the Richmond Youth Peace Project (RYPP) — at Fifth Baptist Church, 1415 W. Cary St., at 10 AM. Young people interested in participating are encouraged to pre-register at www.RPEC.org.
- April 22** **Earth Day Richmond** will be Saturday from 10 AM-4 PM and will be conducted at the south side of the Mayo Bridge (14th Street) along the James River and the Floodwall in Old Manchester. This year's event combines the annual Fish Festival and the Mayor's Walk and Roll Event. It will also have music, food, art, dance, exhibits, earth-friendly goods, and plenty of activities! Individuals are encouraged to walk or bike to the festival.
- April 25** **The Center for Congregational Ministry** presents "DOING UNTO OTHERS: The Golden Rule in the World's Religions" Tuesday, 6-9 PM at 1202 Wilmington Avenue, Richmond (Located in Ginter Park Baptist Church, corner of Brook Road & Laburnum Avenue) Registration \$35 Join other participants for conversation and a light supper which will be available beginning at 5:30 for an additional \$5. Registration deadline Friday, April 21
- May 4** **RPEC Annual Meeting** — 7:00 PM at the RPEC office at 400 W. 32nd Street. Adria Scharf, will share her ideas on where best to focus our energy in the coming years. Everyone is invited.

Bon Air Presbyterian Church Issues Resolutions on “A Call To Say No To Torture”

Lucretia McCulley

In the fall of 2005, the Peace Study/Action Group of Bon Air Presbyterian Church in Richmond reviewed “A Call To Say No To Torture”, issued by Rick Ufford-Chase, Moderator of the 216th General Assembly (2004) of the Presbyterian Church-USA, and Ed Brogan, Director, Presbyterian Council of Military Chaplains. This call invited all Presbyterians to join in prayer, study, discussion and action focused on the treatment of those detained by and at the request of the U.S. and its allies since September 11, 2001. Dr. Charles Grant, pastor of Bon Air Presbyterian, asked the Peace Study/Action Group to study the “call” carefully and return to the Session (governing body of the local church) with recommendations. After discussion, study, and prayer, the group decided to bring two resolutions to the Session and ask their support in passing them. In early December, both resolutions were passed unanimously.

The first resolution asks the congregation of Bon Air Presbyterian to pray, to study, and to dialogue about the issue of torture in the U.S. military services. This resolution also encourages church members to correspond with elected officials about the issue of torture and those who have been detained without being charged with any crime. The acceptance of the “Call to Torture” will also be shared with elected officials, the Presbytery of the James and the Peacemaking Office of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church – USA. The second resolution asks the Presbytery of the James (regional organization of PC-USA churches) to accept “A Call To Say No To Torture.” This resolution was discussed at the Presbytery meeting of over 300 members on March 18, and it was also passed by acclamation. If you would like further information on the resolutions, please contact Lucretia McCulley, Convener, BAPC Peace Study/Action Group at lucretiamcculley@yahoo.com.



Richmond Peace Education Center

400 W. 32nd Street, Richmond, VA 23225

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