

RPEC NEWS

The newsletter of the Richmond Peace Education Center

July-August 2006

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[http://www.
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Profiles in Peacemaking

Healing and Restorative Justice

Annette Khan

If your child were murdered...

How would you respond?

Your response would affect your family and community.

Can you imagine how it would also affect the world?

The amazing story of Azim Khamisa and Ples Felix began in San Diego, California on the tragic evening of January 21, 1995 when 20-year-old San Diego State University (SDSU) student Tariq Khamisa was shot and killed while delivering pizzas. His assailant, 14-year-old gang recruit Tony Hicks, fired the fatal bullet on orders from an 18-year-old gang leader.

The immediate response of Azim Khamisa, upon learning of his son's murder, was not the usual one of demanding revenge and retribution. Instead, he saw two of America's sons lost—one forever and one to the state prison system: "From the onset, I saw victims on both ends of the gun. I will mourn Tariq's death for the rest of my life. Now, however, my grief has been transformed into a powerful commitment to change. Change is urgently needed in a society where children kill children." He reached out to Ples Felix, grandfather of Tony Hicks, and the two men began a journey of restorative healing that has taken them beyond their own personal sorrow.

The Journey Comes to Richmond

Last year Richmond, Virginia was named the nation's third most dangerous city with a population between 100,000 and 499,999, according to an annual ranking based on crime statistics. The first week of 2006 was a grim and heartbreaking reminder of how youth violence escalates as offenders age.

To apply proven strategies to reduce youth gang violence in metropolitan Richmond, the Office of Virginia's Attorney General has partnered with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, which listed our city in 2004 as one of four targeted sites in the nation where the reduction of youth violence is of utmost priority. In order for Richmond to thrive as a productive and vibrant home base, we must activate remarkable and innovative solutions to prevent youth violence and to turn violent offenders into productive citizens.



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Reflections from the Director

Adria Scharf

It has never been more obvious that war does not bring peace and that unilateral U.S. military power cannot secure a just global order. Indeed, the growing chaos in Iraq and recent acts of defiance by Iran and North Korea betray the utter failure of a U.S. foreign policy based on unilateralism and force.

It's time to demand that our country's leaders abandon the doctrine of global military domination and preemptive war that has led to catastrophe in Iraq. It's past time to adopt a national security strategy that will actually provide security—one based on international cooperation, ending poverty, and protecting human rights at home and abroad.

Here are a few specific ways to get informed and take action locally in support of peace in the next two months:

- Attend the weekly vigil to end war in Iraq (Fridays at noon at the federal courthouse).
- Participate in the Family Peace Festival (September 17, St. Joseph's Villa, 12:00 - 5:00 PM and the International Day of Peace (September 20 and 21).
- Come to RPEC's public forum "Torture and the War on Terror" (September 27 at 7:00 PM at VCU's Commons Theater);
- Support "Camp Democracy" (www.campdemocracy.org) starting Sept. 5, when Cindy Sheehan and others plan to move Camp Casey from Crawford, Texas, to the National Mall in Washington, D.C.;
- Get involved in RPEC's programs committee (contact rpec@rpec.org for more information).

What we do as a peace movement here in Richmond matters for the city and the world.



100th Weekly Vigil At the Courthouse



Profiles in Peacemaking

(Continued from page 1)

Team Azim, a group of concerned metropolitan Richmond citizens representing a number of faith-based and business organizations, brought to the area a program that has proven successful in San Diego, California. Azim Khamisa and Ples Felix were invited by "Team Azim" for a three-day Violence Impact Forum about healing and restorative justice on March 16-18, 2006. At the conclusion of their visit, Azim remarked that he had "never had a 'Team Azim' before!"

The Violence Impact Forum included presentations by Azim Khamisa and Ples Felix to middle school students in Henrico and Chesterfield Counties and Richmond City. The students at these schools were visibly moved after hearing the story of forgiveness and seeing the father whose son was killed and the grandfather of the boy who killed him embrace as brothers.

Team Azim members Harry Simmons and Dr. Pat Churchill were instrumental in organizing the presentations for the schools. As a result of this, a grant proposal is in the works to bring the Forgiveness Model into teacher training, and the Forgiveness Model will be translated into Spanish.

The major public event was the "I Make A Difference" Public Forum arranged by the Interfaith Council of Greater Richmond and held at the Allix B. James Chapel at Virginia Union University. The evening program began with performances by Drums No Guns and the Richmond Boys Choir. When Ples Felix and Azim Khamisa spoke, the audience was spellbound. At the end, it rose in oneness, giving Azim and Ples a rousing standing ovation!

A Government/Legal Forum was held at the Richmond Police Academy where Azim Khamisa and Ples Felix shared innovative, leading-edge solutions for preventing youth violence and for converting our penal institutions into reformatories that turn violent criminals into productive citizens.



Ples Felix & Azim Khamisa

Continuing the Work

As a result of the Violence Impact Forum in March 2006, a new team has been formed to continue this important work in our community. The Azim Richmond Team, or "ART," is working to bring Violence Impact Forums, school programs and forgiveness workshops to the metropolitan Richmond area.

Also in the works is CANEI (Constant and Never Ending Improvement), an innovative program for adolescents with histories of aggressive, defiant or violent behavior served by the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. ART is making an effort to place the CANEI restorative justice program initially in the metropolitan Richmond area, with the ultimate goal of having the CANEI program implemented on a statewide level in the juvenile justice system which will include the juvenile detention centers and juvenile probation. For more information about CANEI, see www.canei.org. Donna Fuller is the contact for the Azim Richmond Team at donna.fuller@gmail.com.

THE TARIQ KHAMISA FOUNDATION STORY

[reprinted with permission from www.tkf.org]



To honor his son Tariq's life and find meaning in his death, Azim established the Tariq Khamisa Foundation (TKF) in October 1995. Remarkably, Azim Khamisa, an international businessman, reached out in forgiveness to Ples Felix, the grandfather and guardian of Tony Hicks, his son's assailant. Ples, a manager for the City of San Diego, joined with Azim in dedicating their lives to ending the plague of youth violence in our country. Together, Azim and Ples have spoken to tens of thousands of school chil-

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Profiles in Peacemaking

dren through TKF's Violence Impact Forum (VIF) program about the "power of forgiveness" to break the cycle of violence.

Tony Hicks pled guilty to first-degree murder in April 1996 and accepted a 25-years-to-life sentence in an adult prison. He was the first juvenile in the state of California to be tried as an adult (the new law went into effect just three weeks before his crime). At his sentencing, Tony delivered a very emotional and remorseful speech in which he accepted responsibility for his actions and prayed for Mr. Khamisa's forgiveness. At age 16, Tony was sent to New Folsom, California State Prison in Sacramento. He won't be eligible for parole until 2017.

TKF's Formation Was Inspired By Ismaili Muslim Teachings

In the Ismaili Muslim faith, special prayers are recited for the departed soul of a loved one at the funeral; then 10 days, 40 days, 3 months, 6 months, and a year later; and every year thereafter. During the 40-day prayers for Tariq in Vancouver, Canada, one of Azim's spiritual teachers spoke the following life-changing words. *"After passing from this world, the soul remains in close proximity to the family and loved ones during the 40 days of grieving. After 40 days, the soul moves to a new level of consciousness. Grieving past this time impedes the soul's journey."*

The spiritual teacher also told Azim *"it is human to grieve. But I recommend you break the paralysis of grief and find a good deed to do in Tariq's name. Compassionate acts undertaken in the name of the departed are 'spiritual currency' that will transfer to Tariq's soul and help speed his journey."* Good deeds as spiritual currency. This wisdom rang true for Azim. Perhaps this tragic accident could be made into a force for good, finding ways to protect other children from the same fate. It could provide high-octane jet fuel for his son's bardo. Tariq had completed his assignment here on earth, but Azim came to understand that his was just beginning.

Building a New Culture of Peacemakers and Creating a World Free From Youth Violence

TKF is dedicated to making a substantial impact in the incidence of youth violence and gang recruitment first in San Diego County, and then across the state and the nation.

TKF is currently creating, testing, and refining a multi-faceted, "cutting edge" violence prevention program model that can be easily replicated in elementary and middle schools. Once fully developed, we believe that every 4th - 8th grade student in America will greatly benefit from TKF's inspiring program to create a new culture of "peacemakers."

An Overview of TKF's School-Based Violence Prevention Education Program

The Tariq Khamisa Foundation (TKF) provides a unique and powerful program – the Violence Impact Forum (VIF) - for students in the 4th – 8th grades. The VIF is a high-impact, interactive student assembly that tells the TKF story about the devastation and consequences of violence and the realities of gangs and prison life. Students are inspired to say "no" to gangs, guns and violence.

Get Involved / Learn More

TKF (Tariq Khamisa Foundation) is dedicated to "stopping children from killing children" and breaking the cycle of youth violence by inspiring nonviolent choices through our powerful school-based educational programs. Together, with the support of an ever-expanding family of supporters who are joining with us to create a more peaceful world for our children, TKF is "planting seeds of hope" and "building a new culture of peacemakers" among America's youth.

Contact Information: Tariq Khamisa Foundation, 7490 Opportunity Road, San Diego, CA 92111;
Phone: (858) 565-0800; Fax: (858) 565-0818; Email: info@tkf.org

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Profiles in Peacemaking

PLES FELIX'S STORY

Reprinted with permission from: <http://soulcircle.co.za/specialevents/forgive-azim.htm>.

Tony is my daughter's only child. He grew up on the violent streets of south L.A., and at eight years old witnessed the murder of his cousin. Seeing that he was becoming increasingly exposed to gang life, my daughter proposed that he come and live with me. I welcomed the opportunity to bring up Tony in San Diego as my own son. He had been living with me for five years before the tragedy occurred.

Things had started off okay, but by seventh grade Tony was hanging out with much older kids who were leading him astray. The night before the shooting I told him he wouldn't be able to go out that weekend if he didn't do his homework. The next day I found a note saying, "I've run away, love Tony." My shotgun was also missing. Having reported Tony a runaway, I sat and watched a news report about a pizza delivery man who'd been shot and killed in North Park.

Two days later I traced Tony and alerted the police. That afternoon I got a call from a homicide detective saying, "Mr. Felix, your grandson is no longer considered a runaway. He is now the prime suspect in a murder inquiry." All the emotions hit me. I felt anger, shame and tremendous loss. I also felt guilt because I was Tony's guardian and responsible for his behavior.

Tony was angry; angry about abuse and abandonment, about living with a strict grandfather. He had tried to medicate this anger with drugs and drink. Later he told me that on that fateful night he'd been hanging around with older gang members. When a pizza delivery man turned up and refused to hand over a pizza without payment, one of the older kids shouted, "Bust him, Bone," and Tony pulled the trigger.

From the moment he was taken into custody to the day before he appeared for sentencing, Tony maintained a false bravado. But when he met with his attorney he was warned that, in light of the evidence, there'd be serious consequences if he pleaded 'not guilty.'

It was then that I urged Tony to take responsibility for his actions; to minimize the pain and harm he'd done to the Khamisa family. He broke down and cried. "I'm so sorry, Daddy," he sobbed. I held him and tried to console him. The next day everyone was expecting a plea of 'not guilty,' but Tony gave a very remorseful and emotional speech in which he pleaded guilty and asked for Mr. Khamisa's forgiveness.

When the three of us met in prison it was probably hardest for Azim. At the end, after Azim had left, Tony said, "That is a very special man. I shot and killed his one and only son and yet he can sit with me, encourage me, and then offer me a job."

Shout It From the Rooftops

Jack Payden-Travers
Director, Virginians for Alternatives to the
Death Penalty

Having lived in Virginia since 1984 I recently compiled a few statistics on capital punishment: one execution in the Commonwealth every 12 weeks for the last 24 years. At 95 and counting upwards, Virginia is second only to Texas in the number of human beings executed. We are first in the nation in the speed with which those sentenced to death are killed: on average a little over 6.1 years.

Between 1973 and 2006, 123 men and women have been exonerated of the murders for which they were wrongfully convicted. That is 4 innocent people sentenced to death each year in the USA for the last 29 years. On average it takes 9.2 years for a death row inmate to prove his or her innocence.

Regardless of one's position on capital punishment, these statistics should give both opponents and supporters cause for concern. Given the speed with which executions are carried out in the Commonwealth one could be killed on a gurney at Jarratt three years before your innocence was proven.

Virginian Earl Washington Jr. was exonerated in 2000. His was one of the 14 DNA based exonerations out of the 123 noted above. In May, 2006 a Charlottesville jury awarded Mr. Washington 2.25 million dollars in compensation for his wrongful conviction based on a false confession that was fabricated by a Virginia State Police investigator.

Much of my work includes the keeping of lists: lists of the executed, lists of those on death row, lists of victims. Most are not happy tasks. In February I got to enter the name of the latest exoneree from death row and that is always a joyous occasion. However, the newest list I am maintaining, possible exonerations post-execution, is a mixed blessing. Four active cases are now being studied and hopefully one will provide the innocent corpse that U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia claimed recently doesn't exist. I had had Roger Coleman on that list but in January removed his name when posthumous DNA testing ordered by Virginia Governor Warner disproved his claims of innocence. But a precedent was es-

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Consumers Corner

Consumer Choices – A Perspective

John Gallini and Alisha Gallini

In the May-June issue of rpecNEWS we provided one perspective on making consumer choices, i.e. how our food consumption affects the environment. It is one factor that is especially important to us, but not the only one. In this article we would like to broaden our approach to consumer choices.

Most (or maybe all) of us live our lives largely by habit. We develop certain ways to do things and then we repeat those habitual patterns day after day, year after year. That is as true about our consumption choices as it is for the rest of our lives. For example, we tend to shop at the same one or two grocery stores, and we buy the same brands of food. We do it often without much thought. Indeed, it seems that habitual behavior is a good and necessary way of getting through the day. So we don't propose that we stop our habitual patterns – but we do propose that we examine each of them from a broad value perspective.

What are the values that inform our consumer choices? Here are some that seem important to us.

- Worker Justice – We prefer to buy items and services that are produced (or grown/ harvested/ distributed) via processes whereby the workers who contribute to the production are compensated justly – that is, that each is able to provide adequately for those who are dependants.
- Ecological Justice – We prefer items and services that are produced, transported, used, recycled, and disposed of in ways that minimize damage to our earth home. Product packaging is an important aspect of this value as is shipping distance. In the long term our consumption must be sustainable.
- Compassion/Solidarity – We prefer items and services that provide benefits directly to those of our world who have the least or to organizations (including national governments) that are working for the improvement of the same.
- Frugality – We prefer items and services with minimum long-term financial cost so that we can allocate our limited resources to more effectively match our values.
- Quality – We prefer goods and services that express artistic qualities consistent with our values. We prefer items that last versus items that are disposed of quickly.

Putting all this together as we make consumer choices can often be complicated, especially since we usually work with incomplete information. So we rely on individuals and groups who share at least some of these values and who develop recommendations concerning consumer choices. These would include:

- Coop America
- Union of Concerned Scientists
- Alternatives
- Council on Economic Priorities
- Consumer Reports

In coming issues we will go back to applying this approach to specific consumer choices. We will look at a selection of items found at local grocery stores and evaluate them on the above criteria. For example, when buying milk, what are the options at Kroger, Ukrops, Food Lion, Good Foods Grocery? How do these options compare in price, environmental impact of production, environmental impact of packaging, and worker/producer compensation? Other factors we will consider when the data is available are nutritional value differences, chemical additives, and pesticide use. We will give you the information we have gathered which should be considered a head start for your own research into shopping in a way that reflects your values.

John Gallini has been writing Consumers Corner articles for several years. Alisha is John's daughter-in-law who has two school-age children and a commitment to seeing that they grow up in good health and with sound values.

News You Can Use

Allowing Congo to Bleed

Jamie Henkel

Since 1998, the Democratic Republic of Congo has been occupied by as many as eight of its African neighbors, including Rwanda and Uganda. According to the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the conflict in Congo has been described as Africa's "first world war." After nearly 4 million deaths, it is the world's deadliest recorded conflict since World War II.

In the 3 years since peace negotiations began, a standing army has been formed and the first democratic elections in 40 years have been planned for July 30, 2006. But according to first-hand accounts quoted in *Time Magazine*, in many eastern villages war and peace look very much alike. There are reports of rebel armies committing atrocities that sound eerily similar to the events in Darfur. Every day refugees flee their villages, and report rapes, murder, and needless destruction.



Time states that, "According to the IRC, which has conducted a series of detailed mortality surveys over the past six years, 1,250 Congolese still die every day because of war-related causes—the vast majority

succumbing to diseases and malnutrition that wouldn't exist in peaceful times."

Anneke Van Woudenberg, a senior researcher for Human Rights Watch, told *Time*, "Fixing Congo is essential to fixing Africa. If you want peace in Africa, then you need to deal with the biggest country right at its heart." Yet many in the West simply choose to ignore conditions in Congo. The United Nations has developed a peacekeeping mission, but the program is understaffed and under-funded. "In February the U.N. and aid groups working in Congo asked for \$682 million in humanitarian funds. So far, they have received just \$94 million—or \$9.40 for every person in need."

Public Housing In New Orleans

Jamie Henkel

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) plans to destroy as many as 5,000 public housing units in New Orleans. Since Katrina, approximately 1,000 public housing units have been repaired, and HUD only plans to repair 1,000 more. HUD claims that the buildings are too badly damaged, and that residents would benefit more from the creation of new mixed income neighborhoods. In recent months the plan to destroy public housing units has caused great controversy.

In early June, following a city council meeting in which residents yet again received no information about the progress of reconstruction, many took to the streets and began occupying and repairing their own homes in previously fenced off public housing developments. Tent cities sprung up around these projects.

Many activists argue that the actions of HUD are proof that government officials have no interest in bringing the poor back to the city. According to an article written by Bill Quigley for the Gulf Coast Reconstruction Watch, nearly 85 percent of the public housing in New Orleans has been destroyed in the past decade. New Orleans activist Mike Howells goes so far as



to claim that the actions of the HUD in barring individuals from their homes is "paramount to ethnic cleansing."

Those who once lived in these housing developments

plan to fight for their homes. On June 17th, a march was staged in one of the most upscale neighborhoods, located on St. Charles Avenue in New Orleans, where marchers demonstrated peacefully and demanded access to their homes. For more information, see <www.reconstructionwatch.org>

Happenings at the Center

Recent and Ongoing Events

John McCutcheon shines again

Folk singer and storyteller John McCutcheon has been performing at concerts to benefit RPEC since the late 70's. And while some in the audience have attended most of those shows, John always finds a way to make each song seem new, like *Christmas in the Trenches*, one of John's standards. The story he told to go with it this year gave new meaning to its powerful anti-war message.

John is currently working to dedicate, in 2014, a memorial in Flanders Field to mark the 100th anniversary of the famous World War I event.

This year's audience was the largest in recent years. At intermission, six of the Peace Essay Contest winners were introduced, and Cory Brumagin, a first grader at Collegiate School, read his essay. What a delight to hear someone so young talk about peace with such poise! (See Cory's essay on p. 12 of this issue).

The concert was also a financial success, as the net proceeds exceeded our budget goal. That success is the result of both those who came to the concert and the business supporters who bought ads for the program booklet (see the box on this page). Heartfelt thanks to all of those supporters, especially LaDifference, for their generous support, both this year and years past.

Proud sponsors of the 2006 RPEC Spring Concert

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 Pax Christi Richmond
 Prevention Opportunities
 Richmond Piano
 Sandy Fowler-Jones
 Ten Thousand Villages
 UPAL, United Parents Against Lead National, Inc

Let's show our support for ending the "war" in Iraq

Garrie Rouse,
 Virginia Antiwar Network

Join Larry Syverson at his Friday "Bring the Troops Home Now and End the War in Iraq" vigils. The vigils are being held at lunchtime in front of the Federal Court Building on Main Street, near the intersection of 10th and Main. Larry has two sons who have served in Iraq. His son, Bryce, has been redeployed to Iraq. Bryce is currently on the Kuwaiti border awaiting orders to join his unit, which is now engaged in an offensive in Ramadi. Bryce spent a month at Walter Reed hospital last year for depression and post-traumatic stress disorder after returning from combat in Iraq during his last tour of duty there. To add insult to injury, he has already completed his time with the military, but is being redeployed under "stop loss" orders.

The Virginia Antiwar Network supports Larry in his ongoing vigil by coming out to stand along side of him on the last Friday of every month. Use your lunch break to stand with us in front of the Federal courthouse to show our opposition to this immoral and illegal war.

Upcoming Events

Remember Hiroshima

On Sunday, August 6, Pax Christi Richmond and RPEC will hold an event to mark the 61st anni-

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Happenings at the Center

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versary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We will gather at the Fountain Lake area in Byrd Park at 5:00 PM; provide peace-related activities for children; share a potluck picnic supper; and offer some reflections on the violence of war and alternatives to that violence. All are welcome. For additional information, call John Gallini at 272-8141.

Space available for Aug. 23 Youth Conflict Resolution Training

Area youth can still reserve a seat for the RPEC's one-day training in conflict resolution skills on Wednesday, August 23. This free program, part of the Richmond Youth Peace Project (RYPP), lasts from 10 AM to 4:30 PM.

The workshop will be held at the RPEC office in the Berryman Center at 400 W. 32nd St. Lunch will be provided.

The workshop, open to high school and college age youth, will offer an introduction to skills and techniques that can help teens settle disputes nonviolently. Students who take part in the August program will also be eligible for a more in-depth workshop later this fall.

The second program will prepare students to serve with experienced adults as conflict resolution trainers. The RYPP trainers will then offer conflict resolution workshops to schools, community centers, congregations and other interested youth organizations in the greater Richmond area. Visit www.rpec.org for a registration forms or call the RPEC

office at 232-1002. You can also email rypp@rpec.org if you prefer. Funding for this project is provided by a grant from the Bon Secours Community Partnerships Initiative.

Take part in the Family Peace Festival on Sept. 17

Come support peace and diversity in Richmond: participate in the Third Annual Family Peace Festival.

The Richmond Peace Education Center, in cooperation with many local faith-based organizations, will sponsor this intercultural community-building event. With the theme "Peace Begins at Home," this year's Family Peace Festival will include exciting musical performances by Drums No Guns, Richmond Jazz, and Ululating Mummies; interactive children's crafts and games; youth performances; a variety of terrific ethnic foods; many exhibitors from the greater Richmond area; as well as educational presentations about peace and conflict resolution for youth and families.

The festival will also include an interfaith worship service, in which representatives from the Bahai, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh communities will participate and share.

The Family Peace Festival finds its roots in the cooperative efforts of Bon Air United Methodist Church and the Islamic Center of Virginia.

In 2004 these two faith communities encouraged other faith-based organizations to sponsor an event that would foster peace in the Richmond area. Since that initial partnership, the Richmond Peace Education Center, the Interfaith Council of

Greater Richmond, the Spiritual Mind Center, the Asian American Business Assistance Center, New Canaan Baptist Church, Bon Air Presbyterian Church, The Resource Center, Unity of Richmond, and several other faith-based organizations have joined their efforts to make this exciting event possible.

This year's festival will take place on September 17, 2006, from 12:00-5:00 PM at St. Joseph's Villa. For more information about the festival and how you and your organization can get involved, please visit the website:

www.familypeacefestival.org.

Join others to pray for peace at the International Day of Peace Service

Join Pax Christi of Richmond and the Peace Study/Action Group of Bon Air Presbyterian Church for an International Day of Peace worship service. The service will be held on Wednesday, Sept. 20 at 7:00 PM at the Bon Air Presbyterian Church, 9201 W. Huguenot Road. The United Nations General Assembly has set aside September 21 of each year as the International Day of Peace — a day of global ceasefire and non-violence when all nations and people are encouraged to honor a cessation of hostilities. The World Council of Churches invites congregations worldwide to pray during 2006 for peace at their local churches.

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Happenings at the Center

Torture and the “War on Terror:” A discussion of U.S. Policy

Community members are encouraged to come to a major public forum on the use of torture in the “war on terrorism.” The event begins at 7:00 pm, on Wednesday, September 27, at the VCU Commons Theater (in the Student Commons at 907 Floyd Avenue).

The forum is being sponsored by the Richmond Peace Education Center and the mid-Atlantic regional office of Amnesty International.

Speakers include Jumana Musa, Amnesty International's Advocacy Director for Domestic Human Rights and International Justice; Tony Lagouranis, former U. S. Army Interrogator in Iraq; and Jameel Jaffer, ACLU staff attorney and witness at the Guantanamo military tribunals.

Audience questions are encouraged. For more information, contact the Richmond Peace Education Center at 232-1002 or rpec@rpec.org.

Donate your talents to the RPEC annual auction

The Auction Committee continues to look for items for the October 27, 2006 Annual Auction. The gala event will return to St. Paul's Episcopal Church. Jim Bennett and his jazz combo will once again provide live music, and Karen Murphy will return as auctioneer-par-excellence.

This year we are counting on your talents, RPEC members, to bring fun and funds to our event. In the last issue we highlighted Mim Scalin's Mail Art workshop. Another great example is Garrie Rouse's offer to lead an environmental canoe trip. Others have offered to provide homemade food items. If you have a skill that you think might be appreciated by other RPEC members, please contact Barbara Williford at 329-4719 or balawilliford@aol.com

Shout It From the Rooftops

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established by Mark Warner in ordering the testing of existent DNA in a case where questions of innocence had persisted over a decade past the execution.

At least one should give Justice Scalia credit for being willing to admit that “one cannot have a system of criminal punishment without accepting the possibility that someone will be punished mistakenly.” He went on however to add that “with regard to the punishment of death in the current American system, that possibility has been reduced to an insignificant minimum.”

Discredited forensic science, recantations by prosecution witnesses, mistaken eyewitness identification and prosecutorial concern about a wrongful conviction all play a part in my new list. As with all but 14 of the 123 documented exonerations pre-execution, DNA evidence may no longer be avail-

able in most of these newly re-examined cases but they still need to be looked at and questions of guilt or innocence determined. Carlos DeLuna executed in 1989, Ruben Cantu in 1993, Larry Griffin in 1995, and Cameron Todd Willingham in 2004 are the latest additions to my list. A 1992 study by Michael Radelet listed over 400 20th century cases in which innocent defendants were convicted of homicide. In a recent article, Professor Radelet asks “...how many equally innocent defendants were not so lucky and instead were wrongfully put to death. Does not this increasing recognition that the death penalty will occasionally claim the lives of innocent inmates suggest that the penalty offends evolving moral standards?”

Perhaps we need to take a cue from Justice Scalia who, in his recent concurrence with the majority in the case of *Kansas v. Marsh* in which the US Supreme Court upheld the death penalty in Kansas by a vote of 5 to 4,

wrote that the decision was justified because, in recent American history, there has not been “a single case -- not one -- in which it is clear that a person was executed for a crime he did not commit. If such an event had occurred in recent years, we would not have to hunt for it; the innocent's name would be shouted from the rooftops.” In fact we are hunting for it. In Virginia because of the destruction of evidence following an execution, we have to hunt especially hard for it but we should shout it from the rooftops that the hunt is on.

Sr. Helen Prejean, as part of the Virginia Journey of Hope, Oct 13-29, 2006, is scheduled to speak in Richmond on Oct. 21st. Her latest book, **The Death of Innocents**, features the case of Joseph O'Dell executed by Virginia in 1997. We need volunteers to organize that evening and other events during the upcoming journey. Contact VADP or RPEC to help out as we travel around Virginia for 17 days and shout “it from the rooftops.”

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 Last Friday | Protest the War on Iraq - Noon til 1:00 PM at 10th and Main Streets. |

UPCOMING EVENTS

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| August 6 | Pax Christi Richmond and RPEC will hold an event to mark the 61st anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We will gather at the Fountain Lake area in Byrd Park at 5:00 PM. All are welcome. For additional information, call John Gallini at 272-8141. |
| August 23 | Free One-Day Youth Conflict Resolution Training. This program, part of the Richmond Youth Peace Project (RYPP), lasts from 10 AM to 4:30 PM. The workshop will be held at the RPEC office in the Berryman Center at 400 W. 32nd St. Lunch will be provided. Visit www.rpec.org for a registration forms or call the RPEC office at 232-1002. You can also email rypp@rpec.org if you prefer. |
| Sept. 17 | Third Annual Family Peace Festival — This year's festival will take place on September 17, 2006, from 12:00-5:00 PM at St. Joseph's Villa. For more information about the festival and how you and your organization can get involved, please visit the website: www.familypeacefestival.org . |
| Sept. 20 | International Day of Peace worship service. Sponsored by Pax Christi of Richmond and the Peace Study/Action Group of Bon Air Presbyterian Church The service will be held at 7:00 PM at the Bon Air Presbyterian Church, 9201 W. Huguenot Road. |
| Sept. 27 | RPEC's public forum "Torture and the War on Terror" - 7:00 PM at VCU's Commons Theater. |

2006 Peace Essay Contest Primary School Winning Entry — First Place

Cory Brumagin, Collegiate School, Richmond, Grade. 1

When I think of peace I think of having love for one another and being nice. I think about compromising when you don't agree with someone. I think about not being mean even though sometimes you might be very mad. When I think of peace, I think about being quiet and not loud.

It's kind of hard to describe teaching peace because it is sometimes hard to learn. It seems hard to learn because people are sometimes mean for no reason. Also it might be hard to learn peace if you don't have someone to help you learn peace. The best way to learn peace is by watching others be peaceful. If I was going to teach someone to be peaceful I would show them with a friend how to be nice and how to get along with others. Sometimes you have to get along with people you don't really like, but the important thing is to still be nice.

Another way for a kid to learn about peace is to ask someone older like your parents. You might ask your parents for some help if you have a problem getting along with someone. The main thing to remember about learning peace is being kind.

I can bring peace into my own life by being kind because if I treat others nice, they will treat me nice most of the time. At school, I can treat others nice, and also help them when they need help. For example, if they were drawing and all their crayons and markers fell off their desk, I would help them clean it up. Another example is if I saw someone that was hurt, sad, or alone in a game, I would try to cheer them up and see if they needed something.

All kids should learn how to be peaceful. That way, when they are grown up, they will be really good at it and they will help others to learn peace too. A community is people who live together, and the more people that live together that know how to be peaceful, the more peaceful the community would be. If the parents don't know how to be nice, then the children probably won't be nice either. So we should all try and learn to be nice so that we have a peaceful community.



Richmond Peace Education Center

400 W. 32nd Street, Richmond, VA 23225

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