

RPECnews

The newsletter of the Richmond Peace Education Center

January-February 2007

Profiles in Peacemaking

They Did Go Home Again

John Williamson

The people of Sierra Leone suffered a horrific civil war 1991 – 2001, and children were both among the principal victims and perpetrators of violence. The conflict was characterized by extreme brutality, including insurgents hacking off limbs to terrorize the population. Probably a majority of the largest insurgent group were children who had been abducted and given the choice – join us or die. Both boys and girls were abducted by the thousands and forced to become child soldiers. Some fought, and others played support roles. Many of the girls were given as “wives” to rebel commanders.

The future of these abducted children seemed hopeless when I visited Sierra Leone in 1998 for the Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF) of the US Agency for International Development (USAID). Peace seemed a distant dream, and the communities from which child fighters had been abducted, where many had been forced to kill family members or neighbors, never wanted to see them again. DCOF became the main funder for children’s demobilization and reintegration in Sierra Leone. In 2002, when I made another visit to



Sixteen-year-old "G.A.C." was reunified with his family in Samora Machel village. His mother holds a photograph of her daughter who was still missing at the time that this photo was taken.

the country, Sierra Leone had achieved a fragile peace and, remarkably, the vast majority of former child soldiers had gone home and begun to reintegrate into their communities. UNICEF reported that 98% of the demobilized child soldiers were reunited with parents, siblings, or relatives.

This article reviews how this return was possible. No single peacemaker is profiled here – rather my aim is to recognize and honor the Sierra Leonean personnel of child protection organizations who made this return possible.

The recruitment of children into governmental armed forces or other armed groups is illegal under international law. Children were demobilized as possible during various stages of the war in Sierra Leone, but most made the transition at the end of the conflict. Over 6,800 children were eventually demobilized.

As soon as children were demobilized, they were physically separated from adult soldiers. Some children who had been recruited into militia to fight the insurgents were able to return directly to their home. Others, including children from the insurgent groups, were taken to one of several Interim Care

Centers (ICCs), each managed by a child protection nongovernmental organization (NGO). Physically separating child soldiers from commanders and adult members of their group was essential to breaking the links of control. These centers were run by Sierra Leonean personnel.

The reintegration work was supported by USAID and other donors; coordinated, monitored, and facilitated by UNICEF, and implemented by national and international NGOs. But the real heroes of

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Reflections from the Director

Adria Scharf

I'm sometimes asked what ideas the peace movement has for ending the war in Iraq in a way that, in addition to bringing our troops home quickly, does not neglect our moral responsibility to the Iraqi people, whose country has been decimated by the U.S. occupation. In fact, there *are* plans for ending the occupation that present an alternative to the troop-surge-with-no-exit-plan proposal put forward by the administration, and that go beyond simply calling for "troops out now." These plans have not received wide-spread attention, and some are more detailed than others, but they deserve a careful look. Here are a few:

- Former Senator George McGovern and foreign policy specialist William Polk (*Out of Iraq: A Practical Plan for Withdrawal Now*) propose pairing troop withdrawal with funding to support reconstruction and reconciliation. Specifically, they propose paying for: a Muslim international force, training and equipment for a new Iraqi police force, repairing damaged and destroyed property, restoring archaeological sites, monetary compensation to civilians killed, badly wounded, or tortured, and more. All of this they estimate would amount to about \$22 billion, or the cost of just three months of occupation.
- Longtime activist and former California state congressman Tom Hayden calls for combining ending the U.S. occupation with a United Nations-appointed international consortium to work with the Iraqis on security, reconciliation, and economic development.
- Others stress the importance of securing a negotiated peace settlement in which the organized insurgency in Iraq would agree to surrender in return for U.S. withdrawal and political concessions to the Sunnis.

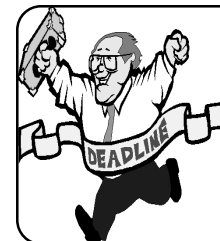
With more than 3,000 American soldiers killed in Iraq to date, and a veritable massacre of Iraqi civilians (34,000 killed just last year, according to the United Nations), the cost of *not* considering serious plans for bringing this horror to a close is simply too great.

Stay Connected to RPEC

Did you know that RPEC had a list.serve that provides up-to-date e-mail reminders of local events related to our work? All you have to do is sign up. To subscribe send an blank e-mail to: rpec-subscribe@lists.riseup.net.

***Donate a Vehicle.
Support the Richmond
Peace Education Center***

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Profiles in Peacemaking

the process, the ones who were on the front line and made it work, were the Sierra Leonean staff, community leaders, grassroots volunteers, and resilient children.

Despite the successful reunification and reintegration of the demobilized children, a serious failing of the formal process in Sierra Leone was that a large number of girls who had been associated with the fighting forces were left out. UNICEF recorded 8466 cases of 'missing' (and presumably abducted) children between 1991 and 2002 and estimated that at least half of them were girls. Of the children eventually demobilized, 92% were boys and only 8% were girls. Some girls were excluded by flaws in the process. Some were kept out by the insurgent commanders, and still others kept themselves out, taking the first opportunity to leave the group on their own. After it was recognized how many girls had been left out of the demobilization process, DCOF provided funds to UNICEF and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) to continue their activities for former child soldiers, with a particular focus on the girls who had been left behind.

Nine Critical Elements of Reintegration

Nine areas of intervention contributed to successful family and community reintegration.

1. Community sensitization

Before it was possible to reintegrate children who had been with insurgent groups, careful sensitization work was needed. As possible during the ebb and flow of the conflict,

NGO personnel discussed the situation of the former child soldiers with leaders in communities that they could access. The process that national IRC personnel used included a participatory, two-day workshop on peace building and conflict resolution with leaders and influential individuals. Community participants were asked to identify local causes and traditional ways of resolving conflict. They discussed forgiveness and acceptance, and then were asked to develop a role-play of rebels attacking a town, abducting children, giving them drugs, and forcing them to fight. During the debriefing following the role-play, participants were asked what they had seen and experienced in real life. Typically, this was the point in the workshops when attitudes visibly began to change. At the end of the workshop, a local Child Protection Committee was formed. In turn, these village-level committees helped organize and conduct similar workshops and extend the sensitization process.

2. Formal disarmament and demobilization

At the end of the conflict, former combatants gathered at designated sites for disarmament and demobilization. Sierra Leonean social workers of child protection NGOs interviewed all children. Going through a formal process marking their transition back to civilian life was a significant step toward reintegration for those associated with fighting forces, and in particular, for children.

3. A period of transition within an Interim Care Center (ICC)

The time spent in an ICC provided a crucial opportunity for children to rest - physically, emotionally, psychologically, socially, and spiritually - and reflect on their lives. Most children were gradually able to let down their guard and think about how to rebuild relationships that had been broken, to review the positive things they learned during the separation from families, and reflect on what kind of life they would like to have in the future.

4. Family tracing, mediation, and reunification

Tracing and family reunification had been carried out as was possible during the war. With the demobilization, the need for rapid tracing to locate family members increased dramatically.

Return to the family is probably the single most important aspect of the healing process for former child soldiers, and agencies attempted to do this as quickly as possible then continued to make follow-up visits to monitor and assist with reintegration. Parents and relatives were not necessarily willing to allow children to return immediately. Family mediation was necessary, in many cases. The focus was to help returned children to adjust to life in the community and to play normal social roles. Much of the effectiveness of reunification and reintegration has been due to the identification, monitoring, and protection roles of grassroots Child Protection Committees.

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Profiles in Peacemaking

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The small percentage of children who could not be reunited were placed in foster families.

5. Traditional cleansing and healing ceremonies

Traditional cleansing ceremonies proved to be critically important to the successful family and community reintegration of many children. Families and communities arranged these rituals themselves, but in some cases, child protection NGOs helped communities to obtain the items needed. Such ceremonies appear to have increased community acceptance of the children as well as enabling the children to feel acceptable.

6. School or skills training

With support and guidance from UNICEF, educational programs were initiated that enabled former child soldiers to return to school. This included rehabilitating and building new structures, providing material inputs, teacher training, and establishing school management committees.

Demobilized child soldiers who were 15 years of age and over had the option to choose skills training or agricultural assistance packages instead of going to school. Skills training was often preferred by those who felt too old to return to school. Apprenticeships were the primary method used to provide skills training.

7. Ongoing access to health care, particularly for war-related conditions

Health services were an obvious priority in the ICCs, with some demobilized child soldiers having lived for years in the bush, been wounded, or subjected to repeated sexual abuse and exploitation. Some demobilized girls, themselves, had young children who often had acute health problems and needed health care.

8. Individual supportive counseling, encouragement, and facilitation

Supportive counselling was important during the difficult transition in the ICCs, when making good choices about what skill training to select, when facing hostility within the community, or when struggling to generate income with the skills learned.

9. An effective collaborative approach

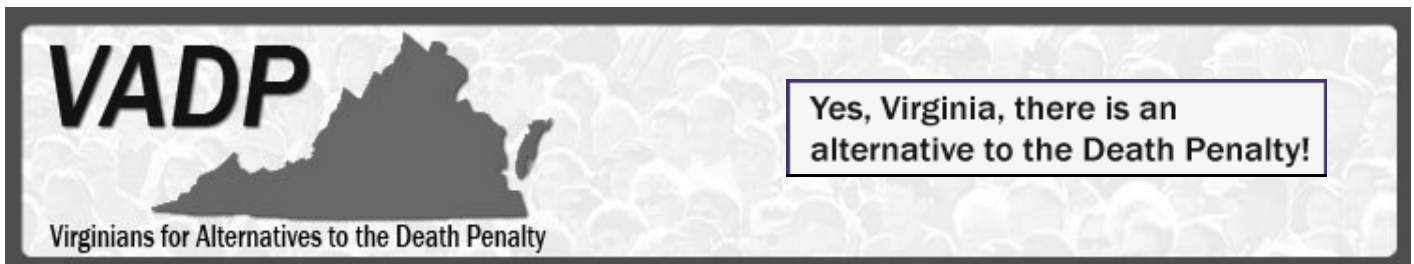
The groundwork for the effective demobilization, reunification, and reintegration work done in Sierra Leone was laid over a period of years, with UNICEF providing critically important leadership. It helped the Government to play its roles more effectively and to develop coordination and standards of good practice among the many local, national, and international NGOs involved working with children. It played a central role in the formation and operation of a national Child Protection Network.

Given the horrendous experiences of child soldiers and the hostility they faced, prior to demobilization it would have been easy to assume that their childhood had

been lost forever and that reintegration into their families and communities would be impossible. However, a more hopeful story unfolded. Most children who were demobilized seem to be doing as well as other children in their community. Most were able to return to school, or learn a trade. Some young people did leave again for the city streets, economic opportunities, or simply to get away from residual stigma. However, even these children have re-established links to their families. Seen from the perspective that prevailed during the war, it is remarkable that the great majority of former child soldiers in Sierra Leone have been reintegrated back into their families and communities.

This article is a condensation of "The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers: social and psychological transformation in Sierra Leone," which was published in *Intervention, The International Journal of Mental Health, Psychosocial Work and Counseling in Areas of Armed Conflict*, vol. 4, no. 3 (2006). The full article is available at: http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/the_funds/pubs/war_affected_kids.html

John Williamson is on the board of RPEC, and he works as senior technical advisor for the Displaced Children and Orphans Fund of the U.S. Agency for International Development, concerning children affected by armed conflict, on the street, in institutional care, or affected by AIDS.



Imagine the End of the Death penalty

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

By the time this article reaches you the 2007 session of the Virginia General Assembly will only have a few days to run. Feb 24th is Sine Die, the day the GA adjourns. The question this year is not whether Virginia will pass an abolition bill as New Jersey is expected to do, nor whether Gov. Kaine or the legislature will enact a moratorium on executions as are presently in effect in California, Florida, Illinois, Missouri and New Jersey. No the question is whether the Virginia legislature will expand its use of capital punishment!

2007 is the 400th anniversary of the founding Jamestown. It is also the 400th anniversary of the first execution which took place in the colony of Virginia. Can you imagine a better way to celebrate Jamestown than for Virginia to bring a close to 400 years of executions and lend its voice towards the abolition of capital punishment?

There is little doubt that the death penalty itself is a dying institution both in our nation and worldwide. In the U.S. executions are down and the number of new capital sentences is falling each year as juries opt for life without parole over execution In the last several years

governors or legislatures in Maryland, Illinois, New Jersey and North Carolina initiated studies to evaluate capital punishment. On January 2, 2007 the New Jersey Death Penalty Study Commission Report was sent to Gov. Jon Corzine. It recommended "That the death penalty in New Jersey be abolished and replaced with life imprisonment... cost savings resulting... be used for benefits and services for survivors of victims of homicide." It documented that the death penalty costs taxpayers more than paying for life sentences. The governor stated: "As someone who has long opposed the death penalty, I look forward to working with the Legislature to implement the recommendations outlined in this report."

Florida, California and Missouri have halted executions due to the continuing controversy over lethal injections. And yet in Virginia a judge dismissed the latest lethal injection appeal. We are presently awaiting the court ruling in that case.

During the recent Journey of Hope here in Virginia one of the most frequently asked questions was "Where is Gov. Kaine? We thought he was opposed to the death pen-

alty." Four men were executed in the death house at Greensville in 2006, additional executions may occur in 2007. It is time for all Virginians to ask the governor to appoint a commission to study capital punishment in Virginia. If the death penalty expansion bills introduced into the 2007 General Assembly are passed, Gov. Kaine should be asked to veto any attempts to increase the use of capital punishment. Given Tim Kaine's stated opposition to capital punishment he should not be expected to sign any such legislation.

Let us imagine that Virginia commemorates the 400th anniversary of the founding of Jamestown by abolishing the death penalty. *HB 1960: Abolition of Capital Punishment* patroned by Del Frank Hargrove would do just that. Now let us work together to create that reality.

For how to make this dream a reality contact RPEC or VADP.
Jack@VADP.org
VADP
PO Box 4804
Charlottesville, VA 22905
888-567-VADP (8237)

News You Can Use

Joshua Epperson

Maher Arar's Struggle Continues



In late 2002, Maher Arar, a Canadian citizen born in Syria, fell victim to the Bush Administration's policy of "extraordinary rendition." Extraordinary rendition is the extralegal transfer of an individual to another country for the purpose of interrogation. Arar was detained during a layover at J.F.K. Airport on his way home to his family in Canada.

After holding him in solitary confinement, with no access to a lawyer, on suspicions of ties to al Qaeda, the United States secretly sent Arar to Syria, where he was brutally tortured for nearly a year.

Last February, Arar filed suit against the U.S. government, but the suit was dismissed for national security reasons. Since that ruling, Arar was found not guilty of any terrorist activity, or any other offense, by a Canadian federal inquiry.

Why haven't U.S. officials acknowledged the injustice done to Arar? U.S. officials have been reluctant to provide answers. "Tellingly, the Americans have never provided the Canadian authorities with any information of their own about Mr. Arar that would have supported the removal order to send him to Syria...it seems likely that, if they had such information, they would have supplied it to the Canadians," said the Canadian Commission's report. Arar is still listed on the U.S. government watch list, although he has been repeatedly cleared of any wrongful activity.

Arar is asking for \$37 million for the pain caused to him and his family, and is demanding he be taken off the watch list. The Center for Constitutional Rights is continuing the struggle in the courts, and on December 12, 2006, CCR attorneys filed an appeal in the Second Circuit on behalf of Mr. Arar. Mr. Arar is but one of many individuals "rendered" to countries known to torture. For more information, see the Center for Constitutional Rights (www.ccr-ny.org).

Democratic Success in Unlikely Setting



Thousands of Egyptian Workers Stage Sit-in

In a historic protest, the first seen in nearly 20 years, more than 20,000 Egyptian textile workers experienced a rare victory against a plan to privatize their company. Workers from the al-Mahala textile company protested for five consecutive days. Nearly a quarter of the demonstrators were women, as reported by Emad Mekay on www.zmag.org.

"We carried the strike-in because we couldn't take it any longer. We produce a lot but get back very little. Our salaries have become so low we cannot even buy the clothes we manufacture," said Sameh Hassan, one textile worker who participated in the protest interviewed by Mekay. The protest concluded in late December. Workers received their bonuses, and were promised that all their grievances would be heard in order. This represents a small but significant success for workers in a region that has seen few such successes.

Consumers Corner

Eating Local Foods in the Winter

John Gallini and Alisha Gallini

As we have written in past articles, we would prefer to buy food that is grown locally. In the summertime that is fairly easy. But in winter, the Farmers Market closes as do roadside vegetable stands. So how does one “eat local” in the winter?

Two hundred years ago, that was no problem – our ancestors always “ate local”. They had root cellars in which to store vegetables such as potatoes, carrots, beets, onions, garlic, winter squash, etc. They also canned vegetables that did not store well. And meat, and to a lesser extent, eggs were available all year. But homes today no longer have root cellars, and the art of “putting food by” has, by and large, been lost.

For the most part, grocery stores do not carry local foods in the winter. But there are some exceptions. Ellwood-Thompson had a green salad mix from Amy’s farm, local broccoli-rabe, and local eggs from Double “A” Farms. Ukrops has recently started selling “Free Farmed” chicken raised by Springer Mountain Farms in Western Virginia. Good Foods Grocery has eggs from Brookview Farm.

We put the question to Cindy Conner, who teaches classes in organic gardening at the Goochland Campus of J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College and raises the food for her family in their biointensive garden. Here is part of her reply:

“Brookview Farm in Goochland is open each Saturday from 9-1. They have grass-fed beef, eggs from free-

range chickens, and honey from their farm. Also, they grind local organic wheat fresh each Saturday for whole-wheat flour. They sometimes carry some other products from local farmers and have their own produce in season. You can email BVIEW-FARM@aol.com to get on their email list. Most weeks they send out a notice of what's available for that Saturday. They are located on Dover Rd. (RT.642) 1/2 mile north of Rt. 6.

The best thing is to frequent the farmers markets during the growing season, establish a relationship with the growers, and encourage them to have some winter produce for regular customers... The Williamsburg Farmers Market is open once a month through the winter I believe. That is held on Saturday mornings. (Winter dates are 2/10, 3/10 and 4/14/07.)

When the markets were open, consumers had every opportunity to purchase potatoes, sweet potatoes, butternut squash, onions, and garlic enough to supply themselves for the winter. If stored properly, all of these can just sit and wait to be used with no canning or freezing.

You might suggest that people take my class coming up in January--HRT.130 Introduction to Biointensive Mini-farming. People with a small space could grow a small garden to supplement what they can't get at the farmers markets. In May I will be teaching a 2-day short-course called Organic Vegetable Gardening and in June the 2-day short-course

will be on season extension. People can email me for more information.” Cindy’s e-mail is: sunfieldva@aol.com

Frankly, we had hoped to find more choices – and we would be happy to pass along other sources and ideas. But it seems that for now we will have to be satisfied with California produce. Next year we can follow Cindy’s advice and buy enough produce from the Farmers market to prepare for winter.

On a separate note, **people in the Richmond area can now choose a supplier of electric power that is produced by wind or other renewable sources.**

Electric power from Pepco Energy Services is now available in our area. The basic idea is that as people sign up for “green energy”, Pepco contracts with suppliers actually producing the energy via wind etc. to allocate that amount of energy to them. Then, as the producer’s capacity is reached, they build new wind turbines or solar panels. It is an indirect way to provide demand for green energy sources. It is also significantly more expensive \$0.10 vs. \$0.06 per KWH for the supply part of the bill. (My December bill was \$48 higher than it would have been with Dominion providing the power). But if you believe that global warming is a serious threat to civilization, as we know it, it seems worth the cost. To learn more, go to www.powerchoice.com, or send me a note (gallinjb@aol.com).

Happenings at the Center

Recent Events

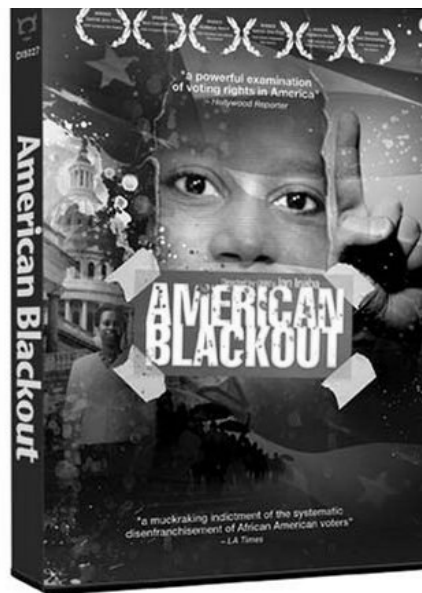
Alternatives to Military Service: Tabling at George Wythe High School

On Tuesday, October 10th, RPEC members Emily Kimball and Betsy Brinson tabled at George Wythe High School Parents Night. The purpose was to provide students and parents more complete information than they might otherwise have about alternatives to military service. Literature was spread out on two long tables with the Richmond Peace Center banner behind them. The parents, as well as many students, were gathered around tables in the cafeteria. Emily and Betsy were introduced and encouraged to say a few words. Emily asked the audience how many people knew they could “opt out” of military recruiter lists. She pointed out the letter informing them of their right to do this, which had been sent out by the school. A little known provision of the “No Child Left Behind” act required public schools to provide lists of students, and their contact information, to military recruiters. However, it also gave parents and students the right to “opt out” of those lists.

Some school districts have done a better job than others of informing their students of this right. The RPEC table saw some traffic and people took literature. Those who did were mostly interested in financial aid and a few were interested in Americorps. Some also took information about the mili-

tary. This tabling effort was part of an RPEC initiative, in which we were joined by members of different faith communities, to counter military recruiter myths and to provide young people with more complete information about alternatives to military service, as well as their rights, while educating the larger public about these issues. To join in this effort, contact Adria Scharf at 232-1002.

Film Screening: American Blackout



RPEC board member Duron Chavis organized a screening of the powerful documentary film “American Blackout” November 29. The Sundance prize-winning documentary chronicled the recurring patterns of voting irregularities in the last two presidential elections, which resulted in the systematic suppression of the African American vote.

The film also told the story of

Georgia Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney, who took an active role in investigating these voting irregularities only to find herself in the middle of an election rife after publicly questioning the Bush Administration about the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The screening was co-sponsored by RPEC and the Universal Negro Improvement Association - African Communities League. More than 20 people attended. Duron Chavis plans to organize more film showings on other important social and political topics. Stay tuned.

The film trailer for American Blackout can be viewed at <http://www.americanblackout.com>.

Welcome to the Team, New AVP Trainers!

Linda Heacock

On December 2-3, 2006, RPEC sponsored Training for Trainers for the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP). The following people received AVP certificates: Ram Bhagat, Susan Buniva, Duron Chavis, Iman Shabazz, and Santa Sorenson. I am delighted with the high level of skill, experience and enthusiasm that these individuals bring to the Center's AVP program. They will join an AVP team of at least six existing trainers, all of whom are committed to bringing AVP back to the women at the Virginia Correctional Center for Women (VCCW). Our first AVP Basic workshop at VCCW is tentatively set for February, 2007 (dates to be announced). We plan to hold at least 4 work-

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Happenings at the Center

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shops a year.

RPEC members continue facilitate AVP workshops at the Powhatan Correctional Center, a men's facility.

Teen Conflict Resolution Team Development Continues

The Richmond Youth Peace Project (RYPP) teen conflict resolution team continued its training and preparation with a three-hour workshop on December 9. Participants tried a couple of new activities from their training manual and received additional practice in using "I-messages" as a way to express concern about an interpersonal conflict. The workshop was led by RPEC board members Ram Bhaghat and Iman Shabazz, and staff member Paul Fleisher. Our youth trainers have several workshops scheduled for the winter and spring months. The teens will plan and lead conflict resolution activities for groups of young people under the supervision of one RPEC adult trainers. The Teen CR team took part in the RYPP Educoncert on January 25 and will lead workshops at the upcoming Youth Peace Summit on May 5.

If you would like our teen trainers to work with a group of young people at your school, congregation or community center, please contact Adria Scharf at 232-1002.

Upcoming Events

Jim Bennett Concert to Benefit RPEC

Jim Bennett has been contributing his piano artistry as background music at our Annual Dinner and Auction for a number of years, and this year he also contributed a number of CD's of his piano music to RPEC that are available for sale. Now Jim has offered to present a benefit performance for RPEC on March 11, at 7:00 PM, at First Unitarian Church., 1000 Blanton Ave., Richmond. We are suggesting a donation to RPEC of \$10 per person.

Outsourcing Torture

The peace center, along with ACLU of Virginia, will co-sponsor a follow-up event on torture in the early spring, focusing on the United States practice of extraordinary rendition, or the unlawful transfer of suspects to other countries for detention and torture.

The event will include a showing of the film "Outlawed: Extraordinary Rendition, Torture and Disappearances in the 'War on Terror'," which tells the stories of Khaled El-Masri and Binyam Mohamed, two men who have survived secret detention and torture by the U.S. government while working with various other governments worldwide. The event will be Wed., March 7, at 7 PM in the VCU Commons Theater.

Support the Peace Center

Ukrop's and Benevolink



Ukrop's has been providing financial support to area non-profits for a number of years through their Golden Gift program. In 2006 they replaced this with a similar program through Benevolink. In the new program, a Ukrop's customer can register on-line with Benevolink and designate RPEC (or other non-profit) as the recipient of a small percent of their purchase of Ukrop brand items. RPEC has been receiving an average of \$135 per year from the Golden Gift program, so we were pleasantly surprised to find that we have received \$420 for the last three quarters of 2006 from the new, Benevolink, program.

We would like to encourage all of our supporters who shop at Ukrop's to take a few minutes to register with Benevolink and then designate RPEC as a recipient of a portion of the Ukrop's donation. Here are the steps:

- Go online to: <https://www.benevolink.com/>
- Click on the word "register" at the top of the screen
- Fill in your username and password, and the other information on the page (name, address etc.). If you do not want to receive e-

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Happenings at the Center

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mails from Benevolink, click in the boxes that are checked. Check the box that says you agree to their terms and click "submit"

- Next click on "Search Charities" (in the box on the left side of the screen)
- Type in "Richmond Peace Education Center" and 23225 for zip code
- Then click on +add
- Next click on "Cards & Accounts" (in the box on the left side of the screen)
- Click on "Loyalty Cards" from option 1.
- Choose "Ukrop's UVC Card" for the loyalty card box (near the bottom of the screen)
- Type in the number from the back of your Ukrop's card.
- Click on "Add this Card"

At this point, you are registered. But you still have to go to your account once a quarter to tell them to contribute your accumulated funds to RPEC. So bookmark (or add to favorites) the Benevolink web address. <https://www.benevolink.com>. When you get to the site, login (at the top) with your user name and password and you can then designate your donation.

Their donation based on my shopping (family of 2) for the past 9 months was almost \$30 – so it is a painless way to support RPEC.

Thrifty Quaker and Ten Thousand Villages

Ten Thousand Villages, the Mennonite sponsored, Fair Trade store in Carytown, began a program whereby they stay open several evenings during the holiday shopping season and donate a part of the proceeds from those evenings to local non-profits. This year RPEC was the beneficiary of the sales on December 7. About 30 members of RPEC showed up to shop – which was great – and RPEC received a contribution of \$550 from Ten Thousand Villages. Thanks to the staff at the store and to our members who participated.

The Thrifty Quaker is a thrift store in Midlothian operated by Midlothian Friends Meeting. They donate the profit from store sales to local charities, and RPEC has been a beneficiary for one month of sales in three of the past 5 years. In both 2004 and 2005 the contribution from the Thrifty Quaker has been over \$3,000, making the Midlothian Friends Meeting our most generous supporter. This year we received the proceeds from the month of November – a total of \$6,582!!! Thank you Midlothian Friends Meeting, and thanks to you, our members, who took your "time-to-recycle-goods" to Thrifty Quaker and did some of your own shopping there.

We encourage you to continue to patronize The Thrifty Quaker and Ten Thousand Villages.

RPEC Finishes the Year in Improved Financial Situation

Last year, 2006, turned out to be a stronger year for RPEC finances than we have seen in some time. We ended the year above budget, despite higher rent and insurance costs.

Our total staff expense for 2006 was pretty close to our budgeted figure. As Adria finished her PhD, she worked fewer than the 40 hours per week we had put in our budget. Paul Fleisher filled in those hours, making it a great combination.

On the income side, individual contributions were higher than last year, although below budget. Contributions from churches were significantly above budget, bolstered by the extraordinary proceeds from the Thrifty Quaker, and extra gifts from St. Edward and St. Mary Catholic churches, in addition to our many regular faith community contributors. Net fundraising event proceeds were close to budget and net program income was above budget. So, on balance, RPEC ended the year more than \$ 7,500 above where we started the year. One of the consequences of this strong performance is that we will be able to continue to have the part-time services of Paul Fleisher (at 8-10 hours per week), even as Adria works full-time. We thank you for your support last year. Only with your continued support will we be able to maintain and expand our programs and educational efforts for peace in 2007!

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

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| March 7 | Outsourcing Torture — Wednesday at 7:00 PM in the VCU Commons Theater. Sponsored by the Peace Center along with ACLU of Virginia. The event will include a showing of the film "Outlawed: Extraordinary Rendition, Torture and Disappearances in the 'War on Terror.'" |
| March 11 | A benefit performance for RPEC will be given by Jim Bennett at 7:00 PM, Sunday, at First Unitarian Church, 1000 Blanton Ave. |
| March 17 | March on the Pentagon — sponsored by A.N.S.W.E.R.— "Stop the War and end Racism" - go to AnswerCoalition.org for information. |
| April 28-29 | RPEC Conflict Resolution Training for Trainers — Pre-register by calling 232-1002 or emailing rpec@rpec.org. |
| May 5 | Youth Peace Summit for Greater Richmond Teenagers — to be held at Fifth Baptist Church at 1415 W. Cary Street. Fifteen workshops focused on violence prevention and positive creative expression. Pre-register by emailing rypp@rpec.org. |

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

**The Richmond Peace Education Center presents:
The 2007 Peace Essay Contest**

Theme: Not With These Hands

What is your vision for nonviolence in our community and our world?

Richmond organizations are asking citizens of all ages to pledge not to commit acts of violence. How would making a promise to act nonviolently affect you and the world around you? What can we do to help this pledge have a positive effect on our community?

**First Prize -- \$150, Second prize -- \$50 , Third prize -- \$25, Five Honorable mentions -- \$20
Prizes awarded in 4 different age divisions**

- Open to any elementary, middle, or high school student in Virginia.
- Prizes awarded at each school level: K-3, 4-5, middle (6-8), and high school.
- Entries judged on content, composition, style and grammar.
- Deadline for entries: April 9, 2007. Submit three copies of each entry, along with an entry form. (One of those copies will be submitted to the Not With These Hands Pledge of Nonviolence project.)
- Each entry must be the original work of the student author.
- Winners will be notified on or before June 1, 2007. Winners will also be invited to attend the Richmond Peace Education Center's annual concert.
- Visit www.notwiththesehands.org for further information and ideas.

Mail entries to: **Essay Contest, RPEC, 400 W. 32nd St., Richmond VA 23225**



**Richmond Peace
Education Center**

400 W. 32nd Street, Richmond, VA 23225

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