

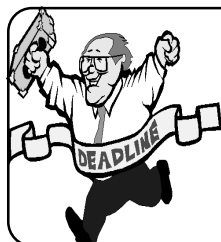
# RPEC NEWS

The newsletter of the Richmond Peace Education Center

November/December 2007

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

## Profiles in Peacemaking



Ram Bhagat , center, with Drums No Guns

### Teacher, Artist, Peacemaker Ram Bhagat

A man of science and art, Ram Bhagat is at his core a man of peace. He teaches chemistry, human anatomy, and yoga at Richmond's academically demanding Open High. In 2006, he was awarded the American Chemical Society's Distinguished Teacher Award for High School Chemistry in Virginia. But many in Richmond and around the country know him best as the co-founder of Drums No Guns, an organization that that uses drumming, dance, spoken word, and other performing arts as a vehicle for engaging young people and empowering them to work for peace in their communities. Ram is also a member of the Richmond Peace Education Center Board and plays a central role in many of the programs

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# Reflections

Adria Scharf, Executive Director

Last week I met a Marine commander who had served in Iraq. He said that based on his observations on the ground, he expected the conflict there to continue for decades. He warned that the children, and possibly the grandchildren, of today's active duty military would still be fighting there in a generation.

For those of us in the peace movement who opposed this war from the beginning, and who foresaw the human disaster that would result, there is grief and regret in hearing this, and in really facing this possibility--grief that our country was taken so easily down the path to a senseless and brutal war, and regret that the voices of peace were so easily dismissed by the powers that be in the months leading up to the invasion. There is also determination. We as a peace movement must continue to build up our people power, and our credibility, until we have the power to stop wars before they start--and to bring this conflict to an end.

With no end, yet, in sight to the war in Iraq--and continuing violence and inequities in our own community at home--there is much more to be done in 2008. Contact [rpec@rpec.org](mailto:rpec@rpec.org) or call 232-1002 to get involved in organizing Richmond events to commemorate the anniversary of the invasion of Iraq in March, or to help RPEC co-coordinate the Eyes Wide Open-Virginia, an exhibit of combat boots designed to promote dialogue about the costs of war.



Eyes Wide Open Display 2007

# Profiles in Peacemaking

*(Continued from page 1)*

associated with RPEC. For those in the Richmond area, he is someone important to know.

Having grown up in New Haven, Connecticut, Ram moved to this area in 1974 to attend Virginia State University in Petersburg, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in Microbiology. While in Petersburg, he also began to study yoga. He also studied Afro-Caribbean hand drumming, which has become one of the tools that he uses in promoting peace.

Tragedy struck when Ram was 24; his younger brother was killed by a gun. This painful loss became a catalyst for his deep, ongoing commitment to addressing gun violence. After his brother's death, he returned to New Haven, and there he helped form Children of the Sun, a group that addressed social issues through the arts, including drumming and poetry.

In 1982, Ram returned to the Richmond area, where he studied the healing arts of yoga and massage, eventually becoming a certified Integral Yoga instructor. Also, deciding he wanted to teach high school science, he entered a program in Science Education at Virginia Commonwealth University, earning a second bachelor's degree in 1984. He has become an award-winning science instructor with 23 years of teaching experience in area high schools. As former students attest, his teaching style is to build their self-confidence and help them to

develop creative skills for problem solving. As a teacher, Ram has blended science with drumming, dance, and drama into an educational program, "The Rhythm of Chemical Bonding" that interprets abstract scientific concepts. In 2003, he was awarded the R.E.B. Award for Teaching Excellence by Richmond's Community Foundation.

Ram's initial teaching position was at Hermitage High in Henrico County. He moved to Community High in Richmond, where he became part of faculty using cutting-edge teaching methods to engage the gifted student body. While at Community High, Ram started a program with African-American young men through which members developed skills in world leadership development and holistic health, as well as learning about their African heritage. Ram taught next at the Maggie L. Walker Governor's School, which shared a building with Thomas Jefferson High School. There he developed a joint performing arts group, incorporating students from both schools. Participants used drumming, dance, spoken word and other forms to express the realities of their lives and concerns. He went on to teach at John Marshall High, where in 1997, he introduced what has become the widely known intergenerational percussion and dance ensemble, Drums No Guns. In 2000, Ram moved to his current teaching position at Richmond's Open High.

## Drums No Guns

When Ram moved to Open High, Drums No Guns expanded to include other youth and adults in the Richmond area. Through the use of African and Caribbean percussion and dance, Drums No Guns provides young people a means of expressing themselves and a forum through which they can explore alternatives to violence. Once started, Drums No Guns rapidly became widely known, performing throughout the area, and in 2000 it led the Million Mom March against gun violence in Washington, D.C. In addition to its periodic performances in the Richmond area, it has performed in other states, especially Connecticut. Over its first 10 years, hundreds of young people have been involved in Drums No Guns, and some of those who were part of the original group are still involved.

Significantly, Drums No Guns provides opportunities for youth in the community to explore how to transform violence into positive social change, and through their participation and their words to manifest this change. When asked why he uses drumming as a medium for engaging young people, Ram noted that it is a universal language. He said that people in drum cultures grow up learning the meanings of different rhythms of life, so in our society drumming can be a way for youth to explore alternatives to the violence that pervades our contemporary culture.

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# Happenings at the Center

## RECENT EVENTS

### **Tyla Matteson and Phil Wilayto Report on Visit to Iran**

On October 24, Tyla Matteson and Phil Wilayto, by way of slides and discussion, presented their recent eleven day trip to Iran. Tyla and Phil were part of a small peace delegation that traveled to Iran this past summer. The delegation traveled to several different cities, including Tehran, Isfahan, and Qom. They met with many citizens, as well as members of the Revolutionary Guard and one of Iran's vice presidents. After the presentation, Tyla and Phil took questions from the audience and discussed the potential for armed conflict between Iran and the United States.

The program was hosted and co-sponsored by the Richmond Friends Meeting Peace and Social Concerns committee. Phil and Tyla would welcome other opportunities to speak about their Iranian experience. Interested organizations can contact them through the Peace Center.

### **Racial Justice Discussion**

A diverse group of 27 activists and community members convened for the RPEC Racial Justice Discussion Series in October and November. The four-part discussion series focused on definitions of racial justice, race and power in Richmond, racism and violence, and "how to take action." The discussion culminated in an action step for racial justice. This effort was undertaken

by the peace center as a step toward building greater multiracial collaboration among community members who want to make Richmond a more peaceful, and just, place. More details on the action step will be reported in the next RPEC Newsletter.

### **Conflict Resolution Programs Going Strong**

RYPP youth conflict resolution trainers, working under the guidance of experienced RPEC trainers Santa Sorenson, Shirletta Highsmith, Ram Bhagat and Iman Shabazz, have presented more than a dozen workshops this fall. RYPP workshops are scheduled or have been offered at various locations as listed below. These workshops are made possible through a grant from the Presbytery of the James. Organizations interested in scheduling youth-led CR workshops should contact rypp@rpec.org or call 232-1002

In October and November, RPEC conflict resolution facilitators have conducted workshops for a wide range of groups serving youth, including:

- Winchester Greens
- Humphrey Calder Parks & Recreation Community Center
- John B. Cary School elementary school
- William Byrd Community House
- Richmond Hill Armstrong Leadership Program
- Albert Hill Middle School
- Fifth Baptist Church .

In the coming weeks, we are

planning additional conflict resolution workshops (some aimed at youth and some at adults) with:

- Inter-faith youth from Unity, First Unitarian Universalist Church, The Islamic Center of Virginia, and Richmond Friends Meeting
- Mothers and Others
- Inmates in the Virginia Correctional Center for Women (with an Advanced Alternatives to Violence Project workshop)
- Community members who participated in AVP-Basic last spring (with an Advanced Alternatives to Violence Project workshop)

Contact [rpec@rpec.org](mailto:rpec@rpec.org) for information about RPEC's conflict resolution workshop services. We serve both youth and adults.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **Eyes Wide Open-Virginia**

Beginning in 2008, RPEC will serve as statewide co-coordinators of Eyes Wide Open-Virginia, together with Midlothian Friends Meeting and the Richmond Friends Meeting Peace & Social Concerns Committee.

Eyes Wide Open-Virginia is a display memorializing the Virginia soldiers who have been killed in the war in Iraq. The display includes combat boots representing soldiers from Virginia who have died, shoes symbolizing Iraq's civilian casualties, and signs with additional information about the costs of the war. This powerful

*(Continued on page 5)*



# Happenings at the Center

(Continued from page 4)

and solemn exhibit is available to faith and community groups across the state who are interested in hosting it in their own communities.

The exhibit is available beginning in 2008, and can be scheduled for any time throughout the year. It may be set up indoors or outdoors. For more information, go to the American Friends Service Committee website at <[www.afsc.org/eyes](http://www.afsc.org/eyes)>. To schedule the exhibit, contact [rpec@rpec.org](mailto:rpec@rpec.org) or 232-1002.

## **RYPP News: Richmond Youth Peace Project Prepares for January 24 Edu-Concert; Youth Offer Fall Workshops**

RYPP, the Peace Center's youth conflict resolution program, has begun rehearsals for the third annual Edu-concert--part of the Living the Dream commemoration of the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King. This year's event is scheduled for Thursday, January 24, 7 p.m., at the VCU Performing Arts Center, 922 Park Avenue. Don't miss it! Drums No Guns, NAACP at VCU and several other VCU organizations are co-sponsoring the event. There are still opportunities for young people or theater-savvy adults to help with the program. Email [rypp@rpec.org](mailto:rypp@rpec.org), or call the RPEC office.

## **SUPPORT**

### **Annual Dinner and Auction Success!**

On Saturday, November 10, at our Annual Dinner and Auction, RPEC honored the three founders of *Not With These Hands*: Heidi Abbott, Carter Carpin, and Kristin Hott, as our Peacemakers of the Year. Following a shared tragedy, they launched *Not With These Hands* in order "to increase dialogue and civic engagement around issues of violence and to link people to violence prevention resources in the Greater Richmond Community." To learn more about them, see the "Profiles in Peacemaking" article in our September/October issue.

In addition to honoring our Peacemakers of the Year, everyone enjoyed a fabulous dinner catered

by Kathy Herrell, Karen Murphy, and Sandy Walker. We had silent and live auction items including professional services, health and beauty items, restaurant and entertainment gift certificates, fine art and craft pieces, gourmet food items, a week at the beach, and much, much more! There was something for everyone and in every price range. Karen Murphy, a professional auctioneer, again volunteered to lead the bidding for our live auction with her characteristic sense of fun and good humor. Tom Wolf graciously served as our Master of Ceremonies. Beautiful music was provided by the talented Rickey Denton and RPS harp students. And *Not With These Hands* brought their quilt project with them, so RPEC members could add to this growing visual state-

(Continued on page 6)



Peacemakers of the Year  
Heidi Abbott, Carter Carpin, and Kristin Hott.

## Happenings at the Center

(Continued from page 5)

ment of Nonviolence. (See the September/October issue to learn more about the quilt project.)

This year we had the pleasure of being in the Troutman Sanders Conference Center on Browns Island with its beautiful view of the City and the James River. Many thanks go to Troutman Sanders for donating the use of this wonderful space, and especially to Steve Northup who made those arrangements and put in a 12-hour day on the day of the auction to ensure that everything went smoothly. We are very grateful for the generosity of everyone mentioned above as well as the Auction Planning Committee: Paul Fleisher, John Gallini, Marianne McKee, Wendy Northup, Paula Powdermaker, Libby Reid, Liz Rupp, and Mim Scalini, as well as all the other volunteers, donors and bidders who made the evening such a success. Preliminary results indicate that proceeds from the event will exceed our budgeted goal of \$9,000 net income. **THANK YOU!!**

### Help RPEC Meet This Challenge!

The Richmond Peace Education Center has been offered a one-time challenge grant by a longtime Richmond resident who believes in our work. This individual has issued us, and you, a challenge. He's challenging us to bring in new contributions from people who have not donated in the past two years, and from people who have given in amounts less than \$30.

If you have been meaning to send a check and it's slipped your mind, now is the perfect time to act. We will only obtain the matching dollars if we actually receive donations.

This is what your gift would help to cover. Combined with the match, your

- \$50 will pay for 6 hours of mentorship for city teenagers in our youth program
- \$150 will cover an intensive conflict resolution intervention in an after-school program or community center in need
- \$200 will cover office rent and phone service for one month.

If you contribute now, RPEC will obtain matching funds, making your gift go twice as far in support of our youth violence-prevention

program, racial justice initiative, and public forums on peace.

You can donate either by sending a check or by clicking the "donate" button on our website, [www.rpec.org](http://www.rpec.org). Thank you!

### Thrifty Quaker

September was RPEC Month at The Thrifty Quaker, a thrift store in the Village of Midlothian.

Thrifty Quaker is a program of Midlothian Friends Meeting in which proceeds from one month's sales at the store are donated to a local non-profit. They have been providing substantial support to RPEC for over 5 years. This year "RPEC month" raised \$3,340.

Thanks, Midlothian Friends Meeting!

### Donor Offers Matching Grant for Planned Giving Program

Thinking about leaving a bequest for the Peace Center in your will, or purchasing a charitable gift annuity with the Peace Center as the beneficiary? Now there's one more good reason. An anonymous donor has pledged a \$250 contribution for each of the next two contributions to the Peace Center's planned giving program.

With a charitable gift annuity, a donor transfers cash or securities to the Richmond Peace Education Center. In return, RPEC makes fixed quarterly payments for the life of the annuitant. The donor also receives a substantial tax advantage. RPEC's program is administered by Praxis MMA—a socially-responsible mutual fund.

To make a bequest, donors simply specify an amount or percentage of their estate in an addendum to their will. Members should notify the Peace Center of this action by sending a copy for the Center's files.

With either option, donors may change beneficiaries, or designate a successor beneficiary at any time.

For more information or assistance with gift annuities or bequests, contact the Peace Center staff.

# Profiles in Peacemaking

*(Continued from page 3)*

## **Richmond Youth Peace Project**

Looking for a way to respond to the tragic events of September 11, 2001, Ram joined the RPEC Board in 2002. Noah Scalin, who chaired the Board when Ram joined, noted that at that point RPEC had recently celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the membership, which was graying a bit, was anxious to involve more youth. Indeed, Ram has helped RPEC build bridges to engage Richmond's youth. As Noah observed, Ram is a terrific role model for young people who live peacefully and has a great effect on those around him.

From the beginning of his tenure on the RPEC Board, Ram expressed strong interest in strengthening RPEC's role in training youth and adults in the Richmond area in conflict resolution methods. He took the necessary courses to become a certified instructor. Responding to two youth homicides in early 2004, RPEC and Drums No Guns collaborated to establish the Richmond Youth Peace Project (RYPP), with Ram as one of the prime movers. RYPP was a direct response to requests of friends of one of the dead students who wanted a way to channel their pain and frustration toward preventing such violence. Its goal is to help reduce youth violence by enabling young people to learn and apply nonviolent conflict resolution methods. With multiple components, RYPP provides young people with opportunities to express

their ideas and concerns positively.

Ram helps ensure that RYPP activities are planned and carried out by youth, rather than simply for them. Integral to its approach is empowering young people through involving them actively throughout the development and presentation of RYPP events. The first major RYPP Event was a Youth Peace Summit, in 2005. These have become annual events, with three having been held so far, involving over 300 youth. Each features a keynote speaker and a variety of workshop opportunities for young people to learn skills relevant to building peace, for themselves and the community. These have included conflict resolution, yoga, dance, drumming, poetry and other knowledge and skill areas that RYPP members have identified as of interest and value.

Edu-concerts have become another annual RYPP event, and Ram has helped plan and performed at each. On January 25th of this year, the second RYPP Edu-concert was held at the VCU Performing Arts Center as part of the "Living the Dream" commemoration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s civil rights heritage. It included musical and spoken performances by about three dozen young people and professional adult musicians. Through music and spoken word, the Edu-concerts enable young people to critique the violence that they see around them and its causes, and to express their views about how these can be addressed. Ram is

working with youth and RPEC staff and volunteers to prepare for the third this coming January 24, 2008.

Ram has been a leader in developing RPEC's active role in conflict resolution training. Over the last two years more than 1,000 youth who have learned methods for peacefully resolving conflicts, and 30 young people have become certified conflict resolution trainers. These sessions, ranging in length from an hour to a week-end or longer, help participants develop an understanding of conflict and the skills needed to resolve disputes in a peaceful, nonviolent way. They offer experiential learning in the theory, skills, and techniques of conflict resolution, and they emphasize five themes: affirmation, bias awareness, communication, cooperation, and problem solving.

With Ram's leadership as a crucial element, RYPP has become a dynamic initiative that is growing and evolving. Through its various components, it helps young people learn to settle conflicts nonviolently, and gives them opportunities to express their ideas and concerns positively, through the arts, including spoken word, writing and music.

Paul Fleisher, RPEC Assistant Director, put it well when he said of Ram, "He has a gentle spirit. He has a calm quiet strength about him that serves as a terrific role model for both young people and

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## *Profiles in Peacemaking*

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adults." Paul said that Ram is genuine in his relationships with kids and that they respect him and can connect with him on a deeper level. Paul went on to say that Ram has helped RPEC to increase significantly its connections with Richmond's African American community, its arts communities, as well as its youth.

When asked about his philosophy for building peace, Ram responded, "Education is the catalyst for changing a society that proliferates violence into one that promotes peace. We must teach our children to love themselves and respect others. The principles of conflict resolution should be integrated into the K-12 curriculum in order to enhance the emotional intelligence of our youth. All children everywhere should be taught how to connect the rhythm of their heartbeat with the universal rhythm."

### **Represent RYPP and RPEC at Community Events**

We need youth volunteers to help spread the word about RYPP and the Richmond Peace Education Center at festivals and other events. If you would like to volunteer to staff a table for a few hours, let us know.

If you want to participate in conflict resolution training, staff a table or help plan future RYPP events, please let us know. It's also a great way to earn community service hours that your school may require.

Send us your name, address, telephone number and email address. Email that information to [rypp@rpec.org](mailto:rypp@rpec.org), or call the Richmond Peace Education Center at 232-1002.

## **2007 Richmond Peace Education Center Peace Essay Contest**

**Upper Elementary School  
1st Place Winner  
Sean Sequeira,  
Three Chopt Elementary School**

### **Peace**

Have you ever made a truce between friends? Have you ever stopped an argument between your brother/sister? An eye for an eye and a tooth for tooth makes the whole world blind and toothless. What do these questions and sayings mean? If people are violent it will be very difficult to achieve peace.

Peace is something that should be shared with everyone. It can also bring so many glorious and fantastic things. If everyone was peaceful there wouldn't be so much lives and limbs lost. If there was world peace all the countries would cooperate with each other to help one other to grow and progress in many ways. Closer to home, wouldn't you just like to stop fighting with your brother or sister? If we all use this great way of life, many obstacles in are life will be blown away.

Many of the leaders of the world have used peace in numerous ways. Let us take Abraham Lincoln for example. Once Abraham Lincoln was walking on a bridge and then he saw a man holding on to one of the wooden planks. Without another breath Honest Abe was at the man's side to help him and he later was saved. Now you might ask, "But Abraham Lincoln waged a war!" That is true, but he only did it because he had no other choice.

Also Martin Luther King Jr. showed many qualities of peace throughout his life. As you know he never ever picked up a gun to fight segregation. He led powerful marches and gave incredible speeches, but was never was physically violent. He showed that anyone can win something with only using words as he got what he wanted: no segregation.

The most brilliant and incredible leader of the world was Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi was very peaceful. When Gandhi was thrown off a train he did not fight back physically, but in the strength of marches and speeches. When Gandhi was beaten very severely in South Africa for throwing his passes in the fire he did not beat them back. He never picked up one gun in his life, but he marched and never gave up.

Peace is very important in everyday lives. It is just the little hard work of getting along with everyone. One day in the future everyone maybe peaceful and everyone will succeed in numerous ways.



# Reflections on the Virginia Tech Shootings

Gordon Davies

Last Spring – on April 16, to be exact – a student at Virginia Tech shot and killed 33 people, including himself, in two separate but related incidents. Not counting the two hours between the incidents, when the shooter blended in with the rest of the students and waited, the killings themselves took about 15 minutes.

A lot went wrong that morning and, indeed, a lot went wrong in how Tech dealt with a student whose behavior became increasingly troublesome from the fall of 2005 until the day he killed so many people. But if we concentrate just on Tech, just on the killings and the events leading up to them, we miss at least two larger issues: the inadequacy of our mental health systems and the pervasiveness of violence in our society.

Almost 18 months before the killings, Seung Hui Cho, a loner who as a child had been diagnosed as having “selective mutism,” began to behave in ways that alarmed his teachers, roommates, and others. He was removed from a class in which his presence was disruptive and given private tutoring; several other faculty members reported serious problems with his writings and behavior in class; he was reprimanded for taking photos of women students with his cell phone during class; three women students complained that he was stalking or harassing them; after emailing a roommate that “I might as well kill myself,” he was determined by a mental health professional to pose a risk to himself or others; he was held overnight in a mental health facility

on a temporary detention order issued by the courts; and he was ordered to seek outpatient treatment at Tech’s Cook Counseling Center, but failed to keep his appointment.

Not only was Cho never treated for his mental illness; it never was adequately diagnosed. No one called his parents to alert them and to ask for records of his childhood counseling and treatment. Severe shortages of funding and professional staff at mental health facilities meant that Cho was processed and released with less than an hour’s evaluation.

There were red flags signaling “DANGER!” everywhere. The threat was clear but Tech lacked an effective threat assessment procedure and the mental health facilities lacked the money and the staff to do their work.

But the details of what happened at Virginia Tech can obscure the generally pervasive violence in our society. Not just violence in schools, colleges, and universities, which have experienced a number of shootings since the Tech killings, but the violence all around us. And not just nationally or in our misguided war against terrorism, but here in Virginia and here in the greater Richmond region.

Guns can be bought, even by persons with criminal records or histories of mental illness. A gun dealer has to check a purchaser against a federal register of persons to whom guns may not be sold, but private individuals can sell guns at gun

shows without checking at all. (Maryland requires that all purchases go through the federal register check.) Semi-automatic weapons can be purchased on the same terms as shotguns and other hunting guns. High-capacity ammunition clips are readily available.

We equip people to settle conflicts violently and profess shock when they do. We salute “non-violent conflict resolution,” but many of our laws and values encourage quite different behavior.

There are red flags everywhere signaling “DANGER!” There are robberies and shootings on dark or brightly lighted streets, and in convenience stores and gasoline stations; shootings in schools and colleges; drug and gang war battles, one of which even put a bullet through a school bus carrying small children. Everywhere. The threat is clear but we will not respond effectively until we adequately fund mental health services, change gun acquisition laws, and own up to our own complicity in tolerating a culture of violence.

*Gordon Davies is a member of the RPEC board. He was appointed by Governor Tim Kaine to the panel charged with investigating the shootings at Virginia Tech last spring.*

## Four Reasons to Celebrate and A Call for Concern about Conditions on Virginia's Death Row

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

### UN General Assembly to vote on worldwide call for a Moratorium on Executions

On Nov 15 a draft resolution on a moratorium on the use of the death penalty (UN document A/C.3/62/L.29) was approved by the United Nations General Assembly's human rights committee by a recorded vote of 99 in favor to 52 opposed and 33 abstentions. The resolution will now go before the 192-member general assembly. Although this is a non-binding resolution on member states of the UN and would have no direct legal impact on the death penalty in the United States, it would according to Dick Dieter of the Death Penalty Information Center, "no doubt be cited in U.S. court decisions and the U.S. will feel its impact in the various international forums in which it participates." Co-sponsored by EU states and 60 other countries, the resolution calls on those countries that have capital punishment to introduce a moratorium on executions and eventually abolish capital punishment.

*Baze V Rees*, a case challenging Missouri's lethal injection protocol (which is similar to Virginia's) as "cruel and unusual" and thus in violation of the Eighth Amendment to the US Constitution was accepted by the US Supreme Court in the fall of 2007 and thus **a de facto moratorium on executions is now in effect in the United States** until that case is decided. Oral arguments are to be heard in January 2008 with a decision not expected until March 2008 at the earliest. Unfortunately this case is not about ending the death penalty. It is about "how" we can legally kill people, not whether we should be killing them! However, it has already prevented numerous executions from taking place this year and next.

### 2007 was the third year since 1982 when Virginia resumed state killings in which NO EXECUTIONS were carried out in the Commonwealth!

Nationwide the total killed in 2007 was 42 which is the lowest number of US executions since 1994. The total killed in this country since resumption of executions in 1977 is 1099. Virginia is second only to Texas in the number of persons executed in the "modern" era of the death penalty with 98. VADP is assisting Amnesty International's Mid-Atlantic Region in the development of an Organizing Guide for the 100<sup>th</sup> Virginia Execution.

**124 men and women have been exonerated as of November 2007.** This means that comparing the number of persons convicted and executed to the number of persons wrongfully convicted and sentenced to death and later proven innocent before execution, the ratio is roughly 9 executions to 1 exonerated. Would you buy a car that failed to start one out of ten tries?

### Take Action: Conditions on Virginia's Death Row

In early November VADP learned that **Percy Walton** whose execution was stayed by Gov. Kaine in June 2007 and who is supposed to be under observation to decide if he is mentally competent to execute in July of 2008 was left in his cell with a non-functioning toilet for at least five days. When the stench got so bad that the guards could no longer take it, he was removed from his cell. Although reportedly covered in feces, instead of being taken to shower, he was placed directly in another cell. The other men on death row are calling for an investigation of why the mentally incompetent Mr. Walton to whom the guards

deliver food three times each day was left in this inhuman situation for days and then not properly cleaned up before being placed in a new cell. He reportedly was "cleaned up" days later before a scheduled meeting with one of his attorneys.

VADP's Director, Jack Payden-Travers, spoke with Gov Tim Kaine about this situation on WVTF Public Radio's *Evening Edition* Program on Nov. 13<sup>th</sup>. The governor promised to look into it. Why not send Gov. Kaine a Christmas card and ask him what he did in response to alleviate this horrendous situation? To learn more about this situation read the blog postings of death row inmate William Van Poyck at [www.deathrowdiary.blogspot.com](http://www.deathrowdiary.blogspot.com) or call VADP at 888-567-VADP (8237).

In addition new rules recently enacted for the men on death row have virtually eliminated contact visits with family members. Until earlier this year families could have a contact visit with their loved one in the presence of guards once every two months. Now they have been eliminated and no rational has been given to the men or their families. It is unclear what effect this situation may have on Theresa Lewis, the only female on VA's death row who is housed at the Fluvanna Correctional Center. In addition VADP learned the morning this article was written that non-contact visits which used to last for ninety minutes have now been reduced to 60 minutes.

**Please consider sending holiday cards to the men and women on our death row.** See our website for details: <http://vadp.org/write-inmates-on-the-row.html>.

# 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. Every Thursday** **Amnesty International**, University of Richmond campus. Contact Ray Hilliard at 289-8289
- Every 3rd Saturday** **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 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.
- 1st & 3rd Weds.** **The Hanover County Umbrella of Peace group** - 10:00 AM In the Parish House of Immanuel Episcopal Church, 3263 Old Church Road, Mechanicsville, VA, 23111. For more information, contact 804-781-1602.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- December 3 **Religious and Progressive: The Changing Role of Faith and Politics. With Mara Vanderslice and Rev. Alane Cameron Miles. 7:00 PM in the VCU Student Commons Commonwealth Ballroom.** Free. Sponsored by the Network for Spiritual Progressives. Adria Scharf Director Richmond Peace Education Center (804) 232-1002, [www.rpec.org](http://www.rpec.org)
- January 24 **RYPP, the Peace Center's youth conflict resolution program will present the third annual "Edu-concert" youth performance in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr., with poetry, drumming, speeches, dance, and more. Free and open to the public at 7:00 PM at the VCU Performing Arts Center, 922 Park Avenue. For information Email rypp@rpec.org, or call the RPEC office at (804) 232-1002**
- April 9 **RPEC Annual Members Meeting - Wednesday, , 7:00 PM, at Richmond Friends Meeting, RPEC Annual Members' Meeting.** Discuss program priorities and meet other peace center members!

The Virginia Center And the Brady Campaign united with The Million Mom March invite you to Join Us for

**Advocacy Day, for Sensible Gun Laws and to close the Gun Show Loophole.  
Monday, January 21, 2008**

**YWCA, 6 North 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Richmond, VA**

**9.00 am meet at YWCA for light refreshment and briefing.  
Walk to the General Assembly building In groups and meet with legislators.  
Followed by events at the Bell Tower on the Capitol grounds.**

**For more information, contact Andrew Goddard, (804) 527-4385  
[goddardsinrichmond@yahoo.com](mailto:goddardsinrichmond@yahoo.com)  
or online at [VACPS.ORG](http://VACPS.ORG)**

# Wassup?

## **The RPEC email listserv**

will keep you up-to-date on peace and justice events in the greater Richmond region. This is a moderated list, and we are very careful to limit the number of messages we send to our subscribers' mailboxes. If you would like to receive notices about RPEC events and other local and regional happenings, it's easy to subscribe:

### **Subscribing:**

To subscribe to a list, simply send a blank email to  
[rpec-subscribe@lists.riseup.net](mailto:rpec-subscribe@lists.riseup.net).

### **Unsubscribing:**

To unsubscribe from a list, send a blank email to  
[rpec-unsubscribe@lists.riseup.net](mailto:rpec-unsubscribe@lists.riseup.net).

If you need further help with this, email us at  
**[rpec@rpec.org](mailto:rpec@rpec.org) or call 232-1002.**



## **Richmond Peace Education Center**

400 W. 32nd Street, Richmond, VA 23225

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