

RPECnews

The newsletter of the Richmond Peace Education Center

July-August 2012

The Making of Gun-Control Activists

Editor's Note: Lori Haas and Andy Goddard are the RPEC Peacemakers of the Year for 2012, in recognition of their work to limit the spread of guns and gun violence. They were honored at the RPEC membership dinner on May 24.

By Judy Bennett

What is it that distinguishes an activist from an ordinary citizen? Are they born that way -- or influenced by parental modeling? Or does a life-changing event suddenly focus their attention in a new direction? Psychologists suggest that activists choose to take up causes for a wide variety of reasons, but the common thread among them is a combination of personal connection to the

issue and a strong sense of community. To know what drew Lori Haas and Andy Goddard into gun-control advocacy and then led them to combine forces in energetic and passionate teamwork, one needs only two words: Virginia Tech.

The mass shooting on that campus five years ago, the deadliest shooting incident by a single gun-

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John McCutcheon To Sing for RPEC

Folksinger John McCutcheon will perform a concert to benefit the Richmond Peace Education Center on Friday, August 3. The show will be held at 7 p.m., at the VCU Singleton Center for the Performing Arts, 922 Park Ave.

McCutcheon's performance will feature songs from his recent all-Woody Guthrie recording, *This Land: Woody Guthrie's America*. This new recording includes beautiful versions of Guthrie songs, both classic and unknown.

A long-time activist for peace and social justice, McCutcheon has helped support RPEC many times over the years. He is an extraordinary musician, accompanying himself on guitar, banjo, piano, auto-

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Marii Kyogoku Hasegawa — 1918-2012

With sadness and deepest respect, RPEC notes the passing of a great soul. Marii Hasegawa, who died on July 1, was at the very center of Richmond's peace and justice community--including RPEC--for many years, as well as an internationally known activist through her work with the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Marii was gentle, quiet, soft-spoken, and a powerful and dedicated leader in the quest for peace and social justice.

An obituary appears on Page 8. An obituary in the Richmond Times-Dispatch can be read on that paper's website.

On Sunday, Sept. 9, at 12:45 p.m., the Richmond Friends Meeting and RPEC will host a showing of the film, "Marii Hasegawa: Gentle



Woman of a Dangerous Kind, at the Richmond Friends Meeting House, 4500 Kensington Avenue. Friends will be invited to share their thoughts and memories of Marii. Their thoughts will be recorded by film-maker Janet Scagnelli for archives of Marii and for her family.

— Paul Fleisher

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Reflection

Adria Scharf

Director, Richmond Peace Education Center

Cut Pentagon's Budget? Yes!

Do you hear it? That buzz in your ear? It's the growing din of fear mon-
gering over possible cuts to our country's military budget.

Defense contractor CEOs testified before the House Armed Services
Committee recently, warning, predictably, that any cuts would cause
harm to the defense industry. They warned that contractors are already
scaling back hiring in anticipation of funding cuts.

In Congress, meanwhile, Representatives are speaking out about the
"devastating" proposed cuts. Governor McDonnell has warned of the im-
pact on our state's economy. As we enter the fall, the din will likely only
grow louder.

The backdrop to all this? On January 2, 2013, in the absence of a budget
deal, cuts will indeed be applied to the defense budget for the first time in
many years, as part of the \$1.2 trillion across-the-board reductions that
were agreed to when bipartisan debt talks failed last year. The defense
portion of those overall cuts amounts to about \$600 billion over 10 years,
with about \$55 billion in reductions to the defense budget in 2013.

The funny thing is, those reductions over 10 years would only bring Pen-
tagon spending back to what it was in 2006 — to its bloated level at the
height of the Iraq War. U.S. military spending has nearly doubled in the
past decade, so the "cuts" just bend back the tail of the enormous growth
curve. The annual defense budget would continue to represent about half
of federal spending. We'd still spend more on our military than China,
Russia, Britain, France, Japan, and Germany combined.

I recognize that the jobs argument against cuts to military spending is a
powerful one in Virginia, where there is a large presence of military and
defense sector jobs. But we as a state would be better served by non-
military government spending, which produces far more job-creating
"bang for the buck" than military spending.

This summer and fall present an opportunity: the January deadline, for the
first time in a decade, puts U.S. military spending "on the table." In lead-
up to the budget debate there will be ample opportunities to make our
opinions known. Defense contractors are lobbying Congress every day to
increase Pentagon spending. It's important that we the people — the peo-
ple whose children's teachers are being laid off, whose friends and fami-
lies are suffering from lack of work, whose neighbors are being foreclosed
on — all make clear that we believe our country needs a fundamental reor-
dering of its spending priorities.

See Just Foreign Policy (www.justforeignpolicy.org) or FCNL
(<http://fcn.org>) for electronic petitions urging re-prioritizing defense
spending that you can easily send to your congressperson.

RPEC Iran Forum Asserts Primacy Of Nonviolence

By Patrice Schwermer

After the highly energized annual membership meeting on May 25th at Ginter Park Presbyterian Church, the Richmond Peace Education Center demonstrated its long tradition and commitment to peace education, nonviolence and action on global peace issues. Over one hundred people attended an informative and provocative forum on Iran. Dr. Majid Amini, Professor of Philosophy at Virginia State University; Dr. Michael Fischbach, Professor of History at Randolph-Macon College in Ashland, Va., and David Swanson, a nationally recognized author and peace activist, made up the well informed panel moderated by Adria Scharf, Executive Director of RPEC.

David Swanson's talk, titled "War is not even the question," described the tenor of the forum. Panel members focused their comments beyond the simplistic mainstream media message of war to explore the historical and present forces, motivations and reasons Israel and the U.S. are talking about the need for a military attack on Iran.

Swanson remarked that the mainstream media's message is clear, simple and direct: The United States has the mission to work with the "good" countries of the world to protect and keep peace.

We are led to believe that the only interested parties in the current situation are Israel and the U.S. as its strategic partner.

Dr. Fischbach situated the forum in a clear understanding of how present tensions have not simply developed within a vacuum. Seeds of intervention in Iranian affairs sown



Forum panelists (from left) Dr. Michael Fischbach, Dr. Majid Amini, and David Swanson.

(Photo by Anne-Marie McCartan)

throughout history are reaping entangling consequences.

Modern ideas of economics, politics and society originated in the West and spread throughout the world in a disruptive manner through imperialism. The world was incorporated into a global system of unequal power where the U.S. and West continued to grow economically and politically at the expense of a large part of the rest of the world.

Dr. Amini filled out the picture with some not-so-obvious interests and consequences of military intervention. The arms industry stands to gain significantly if we attack Iran. Saudi Arabia and Turkey have ambitions for hegemony that they might gain from a sidelined Iran. Russia and China might be pushed to become involved if there is an attack on Iran.

We hear that a nuclear-armed Iran and cannot be tolerated because it is an irrational country; it would likely use the nuclear weapons if in its possession; and a nuclear Iran will destabilize the Middle East. Public fear is heightened by these media messages.

What we do not hear is that Iran has signed and abided by the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). Even the Department of Defense has said Iran is not a nuclear threat. Israel, in contrast, has not signed the

NPT and there has been no effort by the U.S. to reduce its nuclear stockpile. Iran is surrounded by highly militarized countries with Israel, India and Pakistan having nuclear weapons and many of its border countries occupied with U.S. military bases. Who should feel threatened?

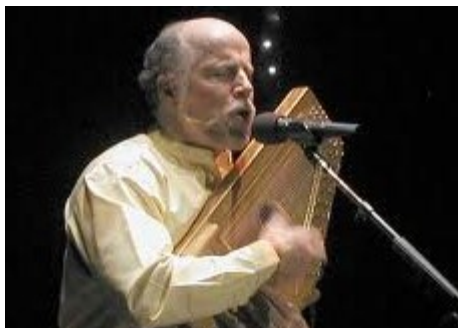
Dr. Amini reminds us of several past incidents that lead to mistrust of the West on the part of Iran.

Soon after Iran helped the U.S. gain access to Afghanistan it was dubbed part of the "axis of evil." Between 2003 and 2006 Iran completely halted its nuclear program with no reciprocity on the part of the West. And most recently, even with the offer to allow more inspections than it is legally entitled to, the West refused to reciprocate by agreeing to Iran's request to lift sanctions. Who should feel threatened?

Iran has not threatened an attack on another country in the past 180 years, according to Dr. Amini. But it has been on the receiving end of invasion and continued foreign intervention. Furthermore, Iran has seen its neighbor Iraq being preemptively attacked by the U.S. for having weapons of mass destruction which never materialized.

Swanson makes the point that threats or an actual attack on Iran will not help meet any of the stated objectives of the U.S or Israel. He sums

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John McCutcheon

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harp, fiddle and even the nyckel-harpa, a Swedish hurdy-gurdy, and the hammered dulcimer.

McCutcheon has recorded 35 albums and been nominated for six Grammy awards. He is also the author of children's books and essays.

Concert tickets cost \$25 for adults; \$10 for students. For tickets or reservations, visit www.rpec.org, email tickets@rpec.org, or call the RPEC office at 804-232-1002.

For more information on John McCutcheon, and downloadable images and MP3s, visit these sites: www.folkmusic.com.

For McCutcheon biography: <http://tiny.cc/johnmccutcheon>

For McCutcheon sample songs: <http://tiny.cc/johnmccutcheonon>

McCutcheon videos: <http://tiny.cc/johnmccutcheonvideo>

Combined Campaigns

The Combined Campaigns kick off their annual drive in September, giving employees of state and local governments and schools the opportunity to contribute to non-profits through payroll deductions.

RPEC's campaign codes are:

Local Government and Schools (LG&S): #140

Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign (CVC): #3751

United Way: # 3181

The Combined Campaigns are administered by the United Way.

RPEC Iran Forum

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up the absurdity and incongruity of the current situation with a simple rhetorical question: "If someone threatened to bomb you, would it calm your nerves? If attacked, would Iran be likely to respond with friendship and cooperation? Would military intervention lead to a more safe and secure Middle East?"

In questioning from the audience, alternative actions and new ways of looking at the situation surfaced.

Swanson explained that the U.S. feels beholden to support Israel as a "strategic alliance." But if we do not agree with Israel we do not have to support it, Swanson said. We hold weighty bargaining chips including the significant amount of financial assistance and the veto power we hold in the U.N. We do not have to support a military attack by Israel on Iran.

Action to change the present track toward military action is imperative. We can speak to legislators, write letters to the editor and participate in civil disobedience. To assist its members and the community, RPEC has begun a list of resources as well as possible actions to take. To access this list go to www.rpec.org.

David Swanson sums up the evening with the reminder: "There there is no such thing as a good war. There is no such thing as a just war. There is no such thing as a humanitarian war. There is no such thing as trying too hard for peace. There is no such thing as a wasted effort to achieve peace."

If Iran Is Attacked. . .

In the event of a military action against Iran from the U.S. or Israel, RPEC will sponsor with other community partners a gathering at the Federal Courthouse downtown at 5 p.m. the day after any military strike.

Members Review RPEC's efforts, present and future

Over one hundred people gathered for RPEC's Annual Membership Appreciation Dinner held at Ginter Park Presbyterian Church on May 24. Accompanied by good food and a festive atmosphere, members were able to reconnect with old friends and listen to a brief report of the past year's activities.

This year's gathering included a change in format. The Peacemaker of the Year Award was presented on this evening for the first time instead of the November Auction venue. This change enabled greater focus on this very important event in the RPEC calendar and enabled the winners, Lori Haas and Andrew Goddard, to share about their work in the legislature for gun control.

Long time newsletter editor, Bill

Gerow, was recognized for his dedication to the continuing development and move into the digital age of the RPEC newsletter. Bill retired in the fall of 2011 after eleven years as editor. Adria Scharf, RPEC Executive Director, recognized Bill's dedication to RPEC and his unwavering adherence to deadlines and getting the job done.

The Board of Directors and staff were recognized for their continuing work toward building a more just and peaceful community. Members were invited to consider increased participation in all RPEC activities, especially the upcoming John McCutcheon Concert on August 3 and the Annual Auction on November 10.

— Ellie Meleski

Auction and Dinner Saturday, Nov. 10

The Richmond Peace Education Center will hold its annual fundraising auction and dinner on Saturday, November 10, beginning at 6 p.m. This year's event will again be held atop the Troutman Sanders Building, 1001 Haxall Point, overlooking the James River. Items available for bid in the live and silent auctions include vacation getaways; ethnic dinners for four; gift certificates from local businesses; arts and crafts; clothing and jewelry; books by local authors; home-made treats and much more.

Tickets to the event are \$30 in advance; \$40 at the door. Reservations for children 5-12 are available for \$15. Children under 5 are free. Reservations are available by calling the Peace Center at 232-1002, emailing tickets@rpec.org, or clicking the [Donate](#) button at www.rpec.org and indicating "auction" on the donation form.

Conflict Resolution Teams Give Trainings

In the past several weeks we have completed a three-week series with youth from Resource Information Help for the Disadvantaged, RIHD led by Valarye Mitchell along with youth trainers Kashawn Rogers and India Holmes and a HROC introductory session at the AVP National Conference in Baltimore. We also completed a Conflict Resolution Training for Trainers.

Our upcoming workshops are a HROC Basic training for the community, Camp Diva, a two-track four-week workshop series with The Mayor's Youth Academy, the Waldorf School faculty, and the Emporia Boys and Girls Club.

Youth Peace Project Offers Teen Workshop

Richmond-Area teens, from 8th Grade to age 20:

Do you want to learn to settle conflicts nonviolently? Develop your leadership skills? Work with a team of young people and adult mentors to reduce violence in your school and community? Help make the Richmond region more just and peaceful?

The Richmond Peace Education Center will hold its seventh annual two-day conflict resolution workshop for teens, Saturday and Sunday, September 29-30, from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day, at the Fan Free Clinic, 1010 N. Thompson St.

The program will introduce you to a variety of conflict resolution techniques to use in your own life, and to share with other young people. You will receive practice in planning and presenting workshops for school and youth groups. You will also receive a training manual.

The training is free. Lunch and snacks will be provided. Participants

will earn community service credit by participating.

Young people who successfully complete this workshop will be invited to serve as RPEC youth conflict resolution trainers. With guidance and supervision from experienced adult trainers, you will promote, plan and present conflict resolution workshops for children and teens during the coming year.

RPEC trainers will be expected to attend at least one additional training during the year, and to agree to present workshops to other groups of young people, when opportunities become available and as their schedules allow.

Space in this program is limited. For information on the program and to apply, contact RPEC at 804-232-1002, or www.rpec.org. Those accepted to participate will be notified in early September. Those not accepted will be wait-listed.

Armstrong Students Trained as Leaders

A grant from a generous supporter enabled the Richmond Peace Education Center to work closely this year with Armstrong high school students.

RPEC led a sequence of training programs with student participants in the Armstrong Leadership Program. The programs began in October and concluded this spring. About 20 Armstrong students participated. They learned new skills to communicate, listen, manage anger, and make healthy decisions about conflict.

Several of the students, those who completed the entire program, have been certified by RPEC to co-

lead programs in the community as RPEC Youth Conflict Resolution Facilitators. They were presented certificates of completion at their end of the school year ceremony.

Three of these Armstrong students have led programs for RPEC already this spring and the others plan to do so later this year. We look forward to continuing to work with these youth, as they co-lead conflict resolution programs in their neighborhood, with other teens and younger children, in the future.

This project has enabled a core group of Armstrong students to become educators for nonviolence in their own communities and beyond.

Making Activists

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man in U.S. history, was what got their attention. Thirty-two persons lost their lives that day, and among the 17 injured were Lori's daughter, Emily, and Andy's son, Colin. Asked to describe their journey that began on April 16, 2007, their words come tumbling out; they laugh at the way they have become like "an old married couple," talking over each other and finishing each other's sentences. They quickly agree on one thing: what propelled them forward into legislative advocacy was the excruciating pain they witnessed among families whose children did not survive. And they both reached the same conclusion: *this pain was preventable*. This pain, they said, was not like the pain of cancer, or an earthquake or tsunami; the pain of Virginia Tech could have been prevented.

Forever Changed

Prior to that day Lori had been like many other women of her generation; she had worked in real estate, then devoted her life to raising children and serving as a volunteer in a number of community organizations. Although spending hours at the State Capitol, and traveling the state and the country, were not on her radar screen, she does clearly remember a dinner-table conversation several years ago. The news was on, she said, and they were listening to the latest death toll from gun violence in Richmond, and she wondered aloud, "Would it help reduce the violence if guns weren't so easy to get?"

Andy, on the other hand, has spent his life doing "good works" and attributes that in part to his upbringing. An engineer, he has spent much of his life doing development work -- building roads, irrigation systems and other forms of infrastructure in South Africa and elsewhere. He met his wife, Anne Lynam Goddard, while both were engaged in family relief work; she is the current executive of Richmond-based Child Fund International.

We Are the Mainstream

Andy and Lori agree that if it was the Virginia Tech shooting and its aftermath that initially got their attention, what propelled them into active advocacy was what they saw next. "We went to the Capitol, the seat of our legislature," said Lori, "to see what was happening there to

address this tragedy." What they found, she continued, was inaction, and committee deliberations that were "completely lacking in common sense." They also found, as they began to speak up, that they were quickly labeled "extremists" who were out to ban all private ownership of guns.

This year's session of the General Assembly was one that provoked outrage from New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, among others, when it repealed Virginia's "one gun a month" law. Asked how they felt about the 2012 session, Andy and Lori agreed: it could have been worse -- a lot worse. "We started out with thirty bad bills and, with the help of the State Police, we got it down to eight!" Lori is pleased to note that a recent poll shows that 90 percent of gun owners in Southwest Virginia want background checks done but "that message isn't getting out." The session demonstrated that a small group of

people can make a large noise and infect an entire society with irrational fear, especially if not enough voices speak out. "Andy and I are not the extremists," she insisted, "We are the mainstream."

Looking Ahead

Given the certainty of many more "bad bills" to come, what are the priorities that will be the focus of their attention in coming months? One will be strengthening and closing

the loopholes and gaps in enforcement of laws requiring background checks for would-be gun buyers. The law lays out clear categories of persons deemed unsafe to purchase firearms; it is simply not consistently enforced. "In a modern society like ours," Lori commented, "this is not rocket science -- we should be able to do it." Background checks at the point of sale happen only 60 percent of the time. For the remaining 40 percent, a variety of loopholes come into play; for instance, "long guns," originally understood in the law as hunting rifles, is now interpreted as including semi-automatic military rifles.

In Andy's view, what lies ahead is a major educational effort. "We've got to get the word out that military-grade weapons are designed for one reason -- only one reason -- and that's to kill people, as many as possible as fast as possible." They are not even typically used on the front-lines of war, he added, because they waste too much ammunition. Why do we need them in our homes, our streets, our churches? It's time to be realistic about these

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Making Activists

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weapons, he is convinced, and to stand up to marketing techniques that cater to those eager to wrap themselves in the Rambo-image.

The “Castle Doctrine,” much in the news in recent days, they describe as a “Christmas Tree bill” which, once passed, can be hung with a wide range of “ornaments” or expansions. One such expansion, which will become priority for the Haas-Goddard team, is the effort to add “Stand Your Ground” to the original law. Twenty-two states have already quietly adopted “Stand Your Ground” and, despite the fact that no one has ever been prosecuted under the Castle Doctrine in Virginia, there is intent to add Stand Your Ground.

“If you are able to retreat,” Lori points out, “it is your public duty to do so,” but Stand Your Ground justifies murder as a solution to even minor annoyances.” Looking intently at this writer taking notes during the interview, Andy offered an example: “That pen you’re holding. I could suddenly perceive it as a threat to me. You might come at me and stab me with it, and because of my perception, under Stand Your Ground I could shoot you.”

It’s A Dangerous World

The gun lobby tells us we all need to be armed these days, but Lori asks, “how many successful self-defense stories have you heard in the last month?” The problem is, she continued, “even if you have a gun in your possession, the ability to use it in time to do yourself any good is just not there.” Police train for hundreds of hours to develop “muscle memory,” to be able to shoot quickly and accurately without collateral damage or injury. The rest of us don’t have that skill. Andy scoffs at NRA strategy to arm women against rapists: “To arm a woman is to provide a gun for the rapist to use against her.” The NRA, Lori added, “wants us to be an armed society but I, for one, don’t want to go back to the Wild West.”

Returning to the need for education, for accurate and complete information, Lori expressed great sympathy for our legislators. “They need better information, they deserve to know the truth, and they don’t always get it. They can’t be experts on everything and they need to rely on each other to be informed and to speak the truth, but misinformation is rampant and the gun lobby is strong and wealthy.” Once the NRA was all about gun rights, Lori recalls, “but now they get their funding from the gun industry so they’re all about gun sales, marketing them, and the worst thing is the militarization of weaponry.” They have rewritten history, she believes, and distorted the intent of the founding fathers who wanted people to have

access to weapons to overthrow a monarch, in a time when it took a full minute to reload a gun. Now a single person can shoot thirty rounds in a minute; one person can do what once required a platoon.

Slippery Slopes

Andy and Lori affirm that there are legitimate reasons for people to own guns, mostly for hunting or target-shooting, but turning gun ownership into an all-day-everywhere proposition is “simply wrong” in their view. The gun lobby sees any law that restricts gun ownership in any way as “a slippery slope” leading to taking away all guns. However, they point out, the gun lobby uses laws they like in the same way -- as a slippery slope -- “by adding exemption after exemption so that one day they can say ‘everybody out there already owns a gun, so we don’t need these laws any more!’”

The task to which Andy and Lori believe they are called is “to change the way society sees this problem, just as we did with drunk driving.” Did we ban booze? Did we ban bad people? No. Gun violence, they reason, “is a combination of guns and bad people. We’ll never be able to get rid of bad people, but we can certainly limit their access to guns.”

The Measure of Their Success

For Andy and Lori, their journey into activism has brought new responsibilities that consume their energy and shape their days. Lori now serves as Virginia Organizer for a national organization, the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence; she and Andy both serve on the Board of Directors of the Virginia Center for Public Safety. In all they do, whether in Richmond, Washington, D.C., or across the country, they can count on the gun industry and the NRA to keep their lives interesting. As they see it, the problem for the gun industry is twofold -- the market is saturated and guns last a long time. If profits are to continue to grow, the industry must come up with ever more plausible uses for guns, adding more and more places where guns are needed, even to schools and churches. What Lori and Andy want to see “is that Virginia, and this country, don’t go backwards, as our legislature did this year.” Preventing that, they say, “will be the measure of our success.”

What keeps them going? For Andy it’s meeting with the VA Tech families. “Their stories re-energize me. It would be criminal if I went on with my life and acted as if it didn’t change me.” For Lori, it’s her determination to prevent the pain she has seen from ever happening again. “My faith and my upbringing compel me to do the right thing; I believe in my heart that better laws will save lives. I really can’t think of my life having meaning right now without doing this work.”

Marii Kyogoku Hasegawa

September 17, 1918 to July 1, 2012

Marii was born in the tiny seaside village of Tada-no-umi near Hiroshima to Itsuzo and Kiyō Kyogoku. Her father, a Buddhist priest in the Kyogoku family temple, came to Los Angeles, California in 1919 to minister to the Japanese community. Marii and her sisters grew up and were educated in California. She graduated from the University of California at Berkeley in 1938 with a degree in home economics.

After the start of World War II, when 110,000 Japanese Americans living on the West Coast were relocated, Marii and her parents were interned at the Topaz Relocation Center in Utah. There she worked as a social worker and wrote for the literary quarterly, *Trek*. Because she had skills needed outside of the camp, she was released and moved to Cleveland where she worked as a dietician at a hospital. Two of her college roommates were in Philadelphia where she moved to take a job with the Food, Tobacco and Agricultural Workers Union.

In Philadelphia she met Ichiro Hasegawa, originally from Seattle, Washington, who had come east from the Heart Mountain Relocation Center in Wyoming. They were married in 1946 and lived in Mt. Laurel, New Jersey and Richmond, Virginia until his death in 1999. She moved to the Loomis Village Retirement Center in South Hadley, Massachusetts in 2001.

Marii was a life-long champion of peace and justice, working with a number of organizations but particularly with the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom where she was a national board member and served as President from 1971 to 1975. In 1973 she travelled to Hanoi with an international delegation of women using her Japanese passport, as it was illegal at that time for Americans to travel to North Vietnam.

In 1996 she traveled to Tokyo to accept the Niwano Peace Prize which is awarded annually by the Buddhist Niwano Foundation to persons who have contributed to inter-religious cooperation furthering the cause of world peace. A documentary film of her life, *Marii Hasegawa: Gentle Woman of a Dangerous Kind*, was released in April 2012.

Marii had many other interests. She was a Girl Scout leader and a PTA president. She travelled extensively with her husband and family. Marii loved following tennis and college basketball. Most recently she enjoyed watching Rafael Nadal win the 2012 French Open. She was an excellent cook, a skill she taught her daughters. She was an avid reader and in her last years particularly loved good mystery stories. At Loomis Village, she was active in current affairs discussions, book groups, and the chorus. She wrote poetry and attended concerts regularly.

She is survived by her daughters and sons-in-law, Kimi Hasegawa and Steven John of Marlboro, Vermont; and Maya Hasegawa and Robert Wyckoff of Roxbury, Massachusetts; and grandson, Korin Hasegawa-John of Arlington, Virginia.

At her request, there will be no memorial service. Contributions can be made in her memory to the Jane Addams Peace Association (77 United Nations Plaza, 6th Floor, New York City 01117) or the American Friends Service Committee (1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia PA 19102)

The fight for social justice — reports in print and film

Book and film reviews by Jennifer Garvin-Sanchez

Winner-Take-All Politics:

How Washington Made the Rich Richer — and Turned Its Back on the Middle Class

by Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson (2011)

If you are looking for a book that explains some of the origins of inequality in this country, *Winner-Take-All Politics* provides a convincing argument that a good majority of the blame for our inequality lies in the political arena.

This is both good news and bad news. It is bad news in that our political system has become a tool of the super-rich (the top 1%) as a means to keep their wealth, but it is also good news, the authors argue, because if our current mess is a result of the political system and our policy decisions, we can change those decisions and fix our economy.

Using research by economists like Picketty and Saez on the growth in U.S. inequality, Hacker and Pierson explain the increased inequality in the U.S. in terms easily accessible to the layperson. Economists have tended to ignore the effects of political decision-making on the economy, believing that politics can have little real influence on the economy. Hacker and Pierson argue that this is not the case – that political decision-making has influenced our incomes significantly, and they demonstrate this through numerous examples of political decisions that favor the rich, i.e., tax breaks for the super-rich vs. the tax breaks given to the middle class.

Another significant way that policy decisions affect our economy is what the authors call “drift”: political inability or will to act in an effective manner in response to new economic trends. For example, the Clinton administration failed to regulate the new market of derivatives – there was simply no legislation produced, due to the influence of key economic institutions upon the political process.

The argument is that we have to look not only at which policy decisions were made, but also at which decisions were *not* made, and who benefits from these decisions.

The book is based on a simple common-sense argument: the rich have the resources and organizational strength to influence public policy, while the poor and the middle class do not. We all know this; what we don’t often have are the statistics to back up our intuitions. The strength of the book is that it backs up this argument with hard statistics.

One political scientist (Henry J. Farrell) called the book a “transformative book” that should “transform American public arguments about politics and policymaking” if it gets the attention it deserves.

The weakness of the book is that it cannot go into detail about all of the policy decisions that affect our economy.

Perhaps comparing European economic policies with American policies would be a step in the right direction.

I am a fan of *Borgen* (winner of the 2012 BAFTA award for the best International TV show, winning over *Modern Family*), a drama about Danish politics, and am amazed at the political differences between our countries and how that plays out in policy decisions. The Danish moderate party, for example, is *for* and *proud of* the “welfare state,” a state that’s primarily concerned for the welfare of its citizens, making sure that education, health care, and pensions are top priorities for the government. If these were our top priorities, it is obvious that inequalities would be diminished. So if you need some hard data to back up the obvious, *Winner-Take-All Politics* is a good resource.

Even the Rain,

También la lluvia (original title), 2010

Dedicated to Howard Zinn who collaborated with screenwriter Paul Laverty to write the screenplay, *Even the Rain*, weaves together the stories of 15th and 21st century imperialism. Set during the real life 2000 water wars in Cochabamba, Bolivia, screenwriter/director Sebastian (Gael Garcia Bernal) sets out to make a film of the first contact between Christopher Columbus and the Tainos, from the perspective of the Tainos. As we watch the film being made about Columbus, we see the story of 21st century imperialism unfold through the eyes of the natives of Cochabamba who are literally in a fight for “life”, for water.

As we see the exploitation of the natives by Columbus, we see the natives in present day Bolivia defend their water rights against the new imperialism of globalization. The Bolivian government sold the water rights to Bechtel Corporation, a multi-national company, and made it illegal for Bolivians to even collect rainwater, as this would be in violation of the agreement with Bechtel.

The director Sebastian casts Daniel (Juan Carlos Aduviri) as Hatuey, the first Native American to literally be crucified by the Spaniards, because he is a “troublemaker”. He soon finds out that Daniel is more than he bargained for, a leader in the water wars. The producer Costa does not understand the significance of the water wars for the Bolivian peasants, and how blind he has been, until the daughter of Daniel gets injured in a demonstration and he has to brave the incendiary streets in a Hollywood style scene to rescue her from the police and the riots.

The movie within a movie helps to explain the exploitation of present day Native Americans through the story of Columbus. The acting is superb, and the secondary story (the movie within the movie) would be a great film on its own if it were really made.

Consumers Corner

Chocolate

John Gallini and Alisha Gallini

Number 8 in the *Better World Shopping Guide's* list of Top Ten Things to Change is chocolate. Chocolate is one of the relatively few food items that are readily available as Fair Trade items.

Let's start first with the Better World Shopper (BSW) ratings:

- <http://betterworldshopper.com/r-chocolate.html>

It should be no surprise that the top ranked chocolate companies all produce fair trade products. And happily, one can find fair trade chocolate products at stores throughout the Richmond area.

Below we list some of the brands rated by the Better World Shopping Guide and available locally – along with their prices.

CHOCOLATE AVAILABILITY AND PRICES

Brand	Equal Exchange	Endangered Species	Green & Black's	Lindt	Valor
BWSG Rating	A+	A+	A-	C+	C
Fair Trade?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Notes	On-line Includes shipping for quantities >\$75	On-line via Amazon Includes shipping for 12-bar quantities		On-line Includes shipping for multi-bar quantities	
<u>Source/Price (\$/3 oz)</u>					
On-line	\$3.60	\$2.65		\$3.10	\$ 2.80+
10,000 Villages	\$3.20				
Ellwood-Thompson	\$3.40		\$3.65		
Good Foods Groc.		\$2.50	\$2.60		
Whole Foods Groc.		\$3.00	\$3.15	\$3.00	
Kroger				\$1.70	
Martin's		\$2.30		\$2.80	\$3.00