



Michigan Peace Team

Nonviolence works! ... pursuing peace through active nonviolence in places of conflict

MPT VISION:

To pursue peace through active nonviolence in places of conflict

MPT seeks a peaceful, just, sustainable Earth Community grounded in nonviolence and respect for the sacred interconnectedness of all life.

MPT MISSION:

Provide training in active nonviolence designed for the specific needs of participants.

Recruit and mentor individuals seeking experience with violence reduction teams.

Place violence reduction teams in domestic and international conflicts.

Convene, support and participate with local peace action groups.

Educate the public to the vision and practice of nonviolence.

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Insert— Join Us for An Evening with Michael Moore on May 2, 2009

A Power That Works by Peter Dougherty

Most mothers, if their little child's life is threatened, will boldly jump right in to protect the child, at great personal risk. Mothers are that way. In fact, ordinary people do extraordinary things like that all the time.

In rural Africa, a woman told Alain Richard, a great nonviolent peacemaker, that her husband used to beat her a lot. On one occasion, she said, something snapped inside her, and instead of trying to protect herself she stood up and looked him in the eye and said, "Why don't you just kill me and get it over with!" He never struck her again.

When Nelson Mandela was taken to the infamous Robben Island, where he was to spend several years, guards herded the new prisoners like cattle. Mandela and a friend refused to hurry and kept on walking calmly. The guards shouted "Do you want me to kill you?" One referred to Mandela as "boy." Mandela said to him "Look

here, I must warn you. I'll take you to the highest authority and you will be poor as a dormouse by the time I finish with you!" That guard never challenged him again.

When we deepen our belief that nonviolence IS power, we increasingly use that power. OUR ATTITUDE AND ACTION IN SITUATIONS IN FACT, CREATES THE ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE. From the viewpoint of violence, nonviolence is disarming – it doesn't follow the rules of either violently attacking the enemy or backing off in fear. This is true whether we are dealing with a one-on-one situation of violence, or with a group involved in nonviolent social change.

In Nazi Germany, the one time we know of that German citizens confronted the military, Hitler backed down. One weekend in February 1943 the Gestapo in Berlin rounded up the remaining Jews, mostly men, who were Jews "of Aryan kin," i.e., married to



non-Jewish wives. As these wives learned that their husbands were held in a building on Rosenstrasse, they converged there, demanding that their loved ones be released. They continually defied orders to leave the street. Their numbers swelled to about six thousand as they clamored for release. The women would not back down. They created a dilemma for the regime, and by Sunday their Jewish spouses were free.

Some of us from MPT were part of the Mir Sada – Peace Now – effort to help end the war in Bosnia in 1993.

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A Power That Works continued



Lyttle, a non-violence strategist from Chicago, said that we should have had perhaps 50 peace-

the procession to pass through. Our bold unexpected action would have opened the way to enter Sarajevo, which some believe would have had an impact on the war.

“The world needs us to grow in our belief that nonviolence is power, and needs us to exercise this power.”

Peace Team to Bosnia

Our peace caravan of several thousand was heading for Sarajevo. When it reached the town of Gornj Vakuf, Croatian and Serbian militias there were fighting each other. Coordinators of our peace caravan said we couldn't move on, and they called off the effort to reach Sarajevo. Brad

makers walk in front of the lead bus, waving the rainbow colored peace flags, and explain by loudspeaker in Serb/Croatian that we were unarmed, nonviolent peacemakers, marching to Sarajevo.

I am convinced, like Brad, that the fighting units would have stopped and waited for

The world needs us to grow in our belief that Nonviolence is power, and needs us to exercise this power. MPT encourages everyone to participate in an MPT nonviolence training, and join in our peacemaking mission, to help us become the nonviolent change we all desire.



“Grief, I think, is an integral part of peacemaking with great transformational possibilities that we too often overlook.”



Peacemaking from the Heart by Kim Redigan

It was spring 2005. I had just returned from three weeks with MPT in the West Bank and my feelings were raw as a result of what I had witnessed there. Shortly after returning home, I felt like I had been kicked in the stomach when the archdiocese abruptly announced that it was closing the small, inner-city high school where I had taught for the past decade. Before I knew what had hit me, the indignities of checkpoints conflated with the injustices of the Church and I found myself seething with a red-hot rage, the severity of which caught me completely off guard. Gandhi, be damned! I was hauling around a sack of resentments heavier than a day in Hebron. Bishops, Bush, and border guards. Settlers and suburban parishes. As I was quick to remind anyone unfortunate enough to cross my path that spring, the arc of injustice spanned from the Knesset to the Chancery and woe to any who would deny me my righteous outrage.

By summer, I was ready to cry and plant my garden. Ready to sit with a broken heart.

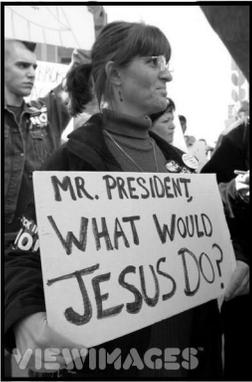
Grief, I think, is an integral part of peacemaking with great transformational possibilities that we too often overlook.



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Peacemaking from the Heart continued

We walk – with eyes open – in a world that is radically broken. How do we respond? Do we defensively harden our hearts, erecting walls as high and impenetrable as those in the West Bank, as a way of protecting ourselves from pain? Do we deny the pain in our hearts by engaging in compulsive behaviors in order to ward off the grief that we fear will overwhelm us? Do we succumb to cynicism, despair, rage, paralysis? Or do we summon the courage to simply sit with our grief and allow it to transform us so that we can work for peace from a place of humility and compassion?



Some carry their grief with grace. Some of us get there only after a fair amount of kicking and screaming and shaking our fists at the heavens. But get there we must if our work is to bear fruit. In this respect we have much to learn from those whom we meet in the field. How else to explain the steadfastness, the dignity, the warmth of people who have suffered and lost so much? Working for peace with justice, literally, gets to “the heart of the matter” when it is authentic. When I recall the prodigious hospitality shown me by the families living in caves in the Hebron Hills, my heart breaks

in a way I do not understand and cannot explain.

Who can understand the movements of the heart? It is a paradox, but it seems that the more we allow our hearts to break, the more they are able to hold. In fact, I think this is the place where the seeds of real peacemaking are sown. William Blake wrote that “we are on this earth a little space, that we may learn to bear the beams of love.” These piercing “beams of love” break open our hearts, and while it may really hurt, it’s the only way to let in the light.

When we allow ourselves to sit with grief, we come face to face - in a profound way - with our own powerlessness and pretentiousness. This frees us from attachments to predetermined outcomes and the need to define and achieve success in terms that are more a product of our egos than authentic peacemaking. This also frees us from an over-reliance on the intellect and the arrogant belief that we know what is best for the world. While we engage our heads and hands in this work, our greatest gift to the world is a heart that is open to the pain of our sisters and brothers. Ironically, the sheer joy that is peacemaking is in exact proportion to the grief that we are willing to carry. This is the great mystery of peacemaking.

From the time I was a child, I have had a very low tolerance for injustice, whether it involved bullies in the school house or bullies in the White House. The outrage I felt in the spring of 2005 was the same hot anger I felt as a little kid when I saw classmates being picked on and friends’ older brothers coming home in wooden boxes from a war halfway around the world. Some of us, I think, are hardwired in such a way that a desire for justice burns in our bones, and this can be both a blessing and a curse. Anger has its place, but, ultimately, we must learn to sit with the grief so that something creative and transformative can take root. Once we learn to do this, peacemaking becomes irresistibly joyful. This is the heart of peacemaking.



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Healing-Voice-Power-Peace by Sheri Wander

Note: This is my personal story. I do not presume that my feelings are universal or that the path I took toward healing is what is right for everyone. Each of us who have been victimized by sexualized violence needs to find the path toward healing that works for us. There is no one "right way"



"It clicked. I cried. I got angry."

"I began healing. Still, something was not quite right. I had started to find my voice, but not my power."



A woman at a nonviolence training once told me that as a rape survivor she could only embrace nonviolence when she knew she could defend herself physically – even violently – if necessary. As a survivor of sexualized violence I "get that" – I understand it and respect it.

For me, however, it was the opposite, or at least very different.

I was 17 years old when I was raped. Spending the weekend babysitting, a friend's boyfriend had come over to "talk about how to best remain friends with her after they broke up." He was flirty and flattering, and "in need of my help." I was insecure, needy and thought my only worth was in "fixing

things" for others.

At the time I didn't define it as rape. I felt awful, and knew something awful had happened. Yet, in spite of the fact that he had held me down and forced me while I cried and repeated "No", I somehow thought it must be my fault. After all, I had invited him over. I had initially enjoyed the flirting, and had been flattered by the attention. Besides, "C" was "a friend". I told no one. Not for years.

A few years later I was volunteering for a crisis hotline. At the training we were told the legal definition of rape, several survivors came and shared their stories with us. It clicked. I cried. I got angry. And I started to find my voice. I began to tell my own story – at trainings, at "Take back the Night" rallies, in classrooms.

I began healing. Still, something was not quite right. I had started to find my voice, but not my power.

I needed to separate "responsibility" from "blame," and take responsibility for my deci-

sions and actions without blaming myself for the choices "C" made, and for the violence I experienced. I needed a way to differentiate being victimized with being a victim. I needed a way to be able to say to myself, "that was a dumb decision" AND to say "that decision did not give someone else the right to hurt me."

I also struggled because everyone around me seemed to think I should hate "C." I didn't hate him and did not wish him ill. It all just seemed so confusing, so muddy.

Friends suggested I take a self defense class. I tried, but it didn't feel right, and it didn't seem to help me.

Then I started studying nonviolence. It embraced muddy. As I read Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Gene Sharp I started to appreciate muddy. Barbara Deming especially rocked my world. Yes, we could hate patriarchy and the violence against women that is a part of that system without hating all men.



I began to see how we are all victimized by such a system of violence and oppression. "C." was victimized by this system also.

This knowledge left space for me to hate what he did, without hating him as a person; to hate his actions without feeling guilty for not hating him as a person. It created the space for me to feel okay with two contradictory things: remembering the good times we had together, without diminishing my feeling violated, and pained and enraged by his actions.

As I started trying to live my life by principles of nonviolence I began to understand a difference between being victimized and being a victim. I started to see power differently – as something we have WITH someone, not only as something we have over someone. That – power with – was something I wanted to cultivate, to claim.

I find, it is easy to forget I am powerful, that we are powerful. It is easy to forget that muddy is okay.

To me – nonviolence is empowering and a reminder we have more power and more choices in how we react than we might first think.

Fast Forward several years:

In November of 2001, I traveled to Columbus, Georgia, as I had for several previous years to take part in the annual demonstration at the gates of Ft. Benning, calling for the closing of the US Army School of Americas/ Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation.

I helped with the nonviolence training and for a variety of reasons finished early. Some friends were supposed to meet me after the training, but since I finished so early I decided to walk over and meet them. I walked a little way before realizing the streets were dark and fairly deserted

As I continued to walk, two men approached me. They looked to be in their early 20s, and of average height. Since I am 4'11" I was scared..

They stepped in front of me, making it impossible to pass them without pushing them out of the way, and they started talking to each other about me:

"Oh, here is one of those people who come to town to tell us what bad Americans we are." "No, actually she's probably here to tell us how bad America is." "Let's show

her what happens to people like that in our town." Then they poked me in the shoulder and said, "stupid woman" and "anti-American b_",

I was wondering how I was going to get out of the situation when I heard myself saying... "Oh thank God you guys are here. I grew up with a lot of people who joined the military and they all think my politics are screwed. They are always teasing me about it – just like you are now! I also said, "My friends are expecting me any minute and I just realized how stupid it was for me to walk over to meet them, alone, on these dark streets. I hate to play into all the stereotypes you have about women being helpless, and needing men... but ... I'm wondering if you might be willing to escort me to meet my friends."

After a few glances over my head, suddenly things changed. They replied, "Of course ma'am, we'd be happy to help you. We wouldn't want anything to happen to you while you are here in our town."

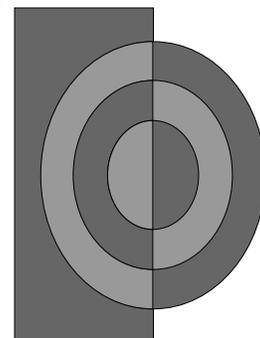
They then escorted me, "chatting" with me the whole time.

Somehow, it felt like a circle had come 'round!

"I started to see power differently – as something we have WITH someone, not only as something we have over someone. That – power with – was something I wanted to cultivate, to claim."

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"... it felt like a circle had come 'round!'"





Peace Teams and Empowerment

by Walt Niewiadomski

The conflict between Israel and Palestine has been a debilitating period of history for two peoples that have lived peacefully together for centuries. Mohammed recognized a bond between people of the book. Jews, Muslims and Christians all share the same religious heritage, and Mohammed called for special consideration of the Jews and Christians in the pursuit of their daily lives. However today tensions have heightened to the point where violent conflict is now the way of life in Israel and Palestine. Jewish Israeli occupation of Palestine has created a divide between the Jews and their Muslim-Christian Arab brothers and sisters.



“Israelis want peace. Palestinians want peace. The world and its many diverse peoples would like peace to return to Israel and Palestine.”

The Michigan Peace Teams visit Palestine and Israel with one overriding objective – peace with justice through non-violent methods. They many times become intertwined with the emotions and reactions of the conflicted peoples. On the one hand our Muslim - Christian brothers and sisters have lost many freedoms that we in the USA take for granted. However our Jewish brothers and sisters in Israel fear for their safety. With the tensions and dynamics, it is often tempting to react emotionally and ignore all our underlying Jewish, Muslim and Christian foundations that revere truth, justice, respect for others and peace. A world without our core beliefs reverts to a stone-age savagery empowered by modern weaponry.

Palestinians are surrounded by violence in one form or another. The occupation itself is violence heightened by the impact of a multitude of checkpoints, home demolitions, Israeli settler violence, displacement from farms occupied for generations by families, no compensation for land taken by Israel and arbitrary arrests without charges. The Israeli occupation has caused unemployment of 30% to 40%. Poverty has reached the point where children must help support their families by scavenging in dumps. No wonder a few Palestinians react with violence, but the overwhelming majority maintain a peaceful resistance through demonstrations often accompanied by prayer. Family, religion and community still remain sacred values to 95% of the Palestinians. The USA should be so lucky to have such a citizenry.



One of a number of Israelis who join Palestinians during End the Occupation protests.

The Michigan Peace Team in the Holy Land is the anchor that constantly strives to remind us all of this foundation in peace and non-violence. It is an empowerment of the peoples in conflict. The failure of Israeli occupation, reaction and retaliation with weaponry that leaves all devastated is a reversion to our base, primitive beings. However a constant refreshing of thought to remember the great accomplishments of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King can bring relief and a return to intelligent problem solution.

Israelis want peace. Palestinians want peace. The world and its many diverse peoples would like peace to return to Israel and Palestine. It is the Michigan Peace Team's commitment to further this objective and empower the Palestinians to continue their quest for peace with justice. In this circle of violence, the MPT provides a presence and an empowerment of the Palestinians to express their peaceful resistance to an illegal occupation. An international presence in Palestine further empowers the many Israelis that join in the Palestinian demonstrations and endorse a unity in striving for a free Palestine and an Israel freed of fear.



Peace, Environmental Justice, Food

by Kati Garrison

The quest to achieve peace is inextricably intertwined with the pursuit of environmental justice. Activist Paul Hawken flawlessly encapsulates this notion as he writes, "The way we harm the earth affects all people, and how we treat one another is reflected in how we treat the earth." Accordingly, environmental issues frequently fuel conflicts, significantly impacting war and peace.

Fortunately, human beings currently possess the opportunity to join in one of the most diverse, nonviolent, and grass-roots movements the world has ever seen – transitioning to a vegetarian lifestyle.

Converting to a vegetarian diet remains one of the most effective ways to "go green" for a number of reasons. Primarily, the production of animal products demands more land, water, fossil fuels, and natural resources as opposed to the production of edible crops. It also contributes to the most serious contemporary environmental problems including deforestation, global warming, pollution, loss of natural habitats, and a shortage of fresh water. For example, producing one pound of meat requires

5,000 gallons of water, whereas cultivating one pound of wheat only demands 25 gallons. Shockingly, an individual possesses the ability to conserve more water by the simple act of refraining from eating one pound of beef as opposed to refraining from showering for an entire year!

Contrary to popular belief, adopting a vegetarian diet does not equate to sacrificing tasty food or require more time in the kitchen. Today it is easier than ever to adopt a vegetarian diet. In fact, an abundance of vegetarian options exist at the local supermarket. If a completely vegetarian diet seems impossible, why not attempt to reduce consumption of animal products? Try substituting one of the following in a meal this week:

Black beans – Excellent source of fiber, iron, potassium, B vitamins, and protein (when paired with corn or a whole grain). Try substituting these legumes for the meat in nachos or burritos.

Hummus – Dip made from chickpeas. High in fiber, iron, and vitamin C. Pair it with warm pita bread for a mid-afternoon snack or use as a sandwich spread.

Meat Alternatives – Experiment with meat alternatives such as vegetarian deli meats, soy nuggets (chicken nuggets), sausage, bacon, and veggie burgers.

Nuts – Great energy-packed snacks. Terrific source of heart-healthy fats. Try pumpkin seeds, walnuts, almonds, or almond butter.

Quinoa – Fast-cooking, protein-packed whole grain. Steamed, it makes a perfect partner for legumes and may be used in place of rice in any recipe.

Soy or Rice milk – Beverages often fortified with calcium and vitamins A and D. Start slow with flavored soymilk such as chocolate or vanilla.

Tempeh – Heartier (meatier) soybean alternative. Packed with protein, iron, and B vitamins. Like a steak, it can be marinated and thrown on the grill or added to a vegetable stir-fry.

Tofu – A high-protein soybean product full of essential vitamins and minerals. Takes on the flavor of the food it is cooked with. Throw diced firm tofu into a stir-fry, or blend silken tofu into a fruit smoothie for a protein boost.



**"Be the change you wish to see in the world."
-Gandhi**

"The quest to achieve peace is inextricably intertwined with the pursuit of environmental justice."

Michigan Peace Team

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We are grateful for your continued support of the mission of Michigan Peace Team!

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Exploring Name Change-Join the Contest!

MICHIGAN PEACE TEAM is an INTERNATIONAL organization, and we need to change our name to reflect that. Our hope is to retain the initials MPT. Have any ideas? We invite you to go to the MPT Web site and enter "Exploring Name Change" contest!

MPT SUSTAINER'S CIRCLE:

You can make a tax deductible contribution to MPT on a monthly basis through your credit card. Even \$10 a month or more would help us continue the mission. Just let us know how much you would like to donate each month, and send us your information below. We will deduct the specified amount from your credit card each month and you will receive a monthly notice. It's a wonderful way to keep MPT going, with little hassle for you.

Yes! I wish to join the MPT Sustainer's Circle and make an ongoing contribution of \$ _____ each month to be charged to my credit card.

____ Visa; ____ Master Card ; ____ American Express: ____ Discover

Card Number _____; Expiration Date _____

Name as it appears on the card _____

Signature _____

If you prefer to sign up electronically, go to michiganpeaceteam.org, click Network For Good, and select one time or regular.

If You have a preference, please let us know ...

For the future:

- Send MPT Newsletter electronically, via my email; or,
 Continuing sending my MPT Newsletter via postal services



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