



# peace & justice news

A PUBLICATION OF THE PEACE & JUSTICE CENTER

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Throughout a century of struggle, courageous women were imprisoned, physically attacked, beaten, or had their lives threatened for their activism. But they persevered.

#### ■ Mujeres De Maiz

They publicly support the demands of the Zapatista army, but are committed to nonviolent principles.

## Stamp Money Out of Politics

By Ilana Cramer, PJC Programming Intern

Every time you make a purchase you are voting. You are telling whoever is selling that product that you believe in and support what they are doing. The Stamp Stampede, led by Ben Cohen, co-founder of Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream, is encouraging tens of thousands of people to rubber stamp messages on currency in order to support a Constitutional Amendment that requires all federal elections to be funded exclusively through public money.

This 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment looks to overturn Citizens United(1) and states that corporations are not people and money is not speech. Currently 16 states have passed resolutions calling on Congress to propose an amendment and over 150 members of Congress support the amendment strategy.

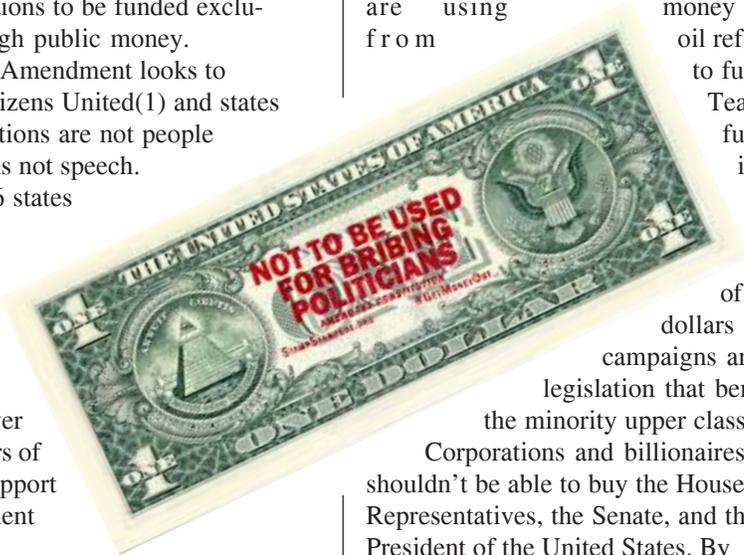
Ben Cohen states, "Our democracy needs to nurture civic engagement and robust debate, not put a price tag on it". This micro-activism movement is a petition on steroids aiming to reach people across the United States.

Today big corporations have a hand dipped in every aspect of our lives. From the food to we eat to the clothes we wear corporations are everywhere. They are profiting and gaining financial steam

and are using their influence – in the form of money – to sway politicians. Court rulings such as Citizens United and McCutcheon(2) have made it legal to spend limitedlessly on the political process therefore "deregulating American political campaigns." Corporations are not people and their funds should not trump the will of the people.

Billionaires like the Koch Brothers are using money made from oil refineries to fund the Tea Party, funneling billions of dollars into campaigns and legislation that benefit the minority upper class.

Corporations and billionaires shouldn't be able to buy the House of Representatives, the Senate, and the next President of the United States. By donating big bucks politicians are now incentivizing legislation in favor of big donor and not citizens. Our country was founded on the idea of "one man[sic], one vote," but that isn't how our system is operating now. Money should not mean more than people. This is a huge problem for the 99% that can't afford to spend billions on elections. For our country to function properly we much let



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PUBLISHED

4/year  
(See membership form  
on page 12)

CIRCULATION

1,200

The opinions expressed in the articles, including those by staff, are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the peace & justice center.

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PJC MISSION

Our mission is to create a just and peaceful world. To this end, we work on the interconnected issues of economic and racial justice, peace, and human rights through education, advocacy, training and non-violent activism, and community organizing, since 1979.



From the Director

It's a great time to be at the Peace & Justice Center. Worth highlighting are two new dynamic staff members, upcoming Racial & Economic Awareness workshops, and *The Cost of War: Focus on Drones* campaign which is picking up steam. Its purpose is to support legislative action on Town Meeting Day, 2016 in as many locations as we can. The first step is to build awareness with two educational presentations: *Drones 101* and *The Experience of Drone Pilots*. **The presentations are free. We would love to bring one to your town or city.**

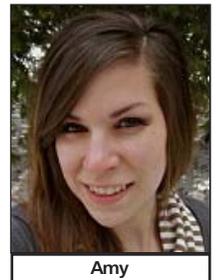
*Drones 101* presents an overview of US drone usage and the consequences thereof. It sheds light on the reality of drone weaponry and its effects on innocent civilian lives. It's filled with hard-hitting facts that can be overwhelming and is followed with a discussion to process the information and discuss action steps. *The Experience of Drone Pilots* delves deeper into the psychological consequences of drones on those who operate them. It highlights the grave and unique effects on these men and women who sit in front of a screen watching people 1000s of miles away turn from red to blue.

Spring has arrived and with it we have new arrivals: Amy Crosswhite and Kristen Connors! Amy is dedicated to helping others and has been involved in various church ministries to build strong community. Her love of social justice is fueled by a desire to help people in practical ways. That plus her experience in retail work, make her a perfect fit as our Fair Trade Program and Store Manager. Her other interests include art and music. She is married and is the mother of a goofy Doberman.



Kristen

Kristen is joining us as our Volunteer Coordinator after working with us for two years as a Fair Trade intern and a store volunteer. She is excited to start working with our current, dedicated volunteers as well as welcoming new folks. Kristen serves on one of Burlington's Restorative Justice Panels and finds this extremely rewarding. In addition, she's a certified Zumba instructor and loves sharing her passion for movement.



Amy

■ Building Empathy and Eliminating Oppression: A Deep Look at Racism and Religious Prejudice

By Andi Harrington, Facilitator and workshop designer

As we pass the 50th anniversary of the March on Selma, the struggle for peace and coexistence remains as we struggle to speak freely about oppression within our society.

This three-part workshop strives to give people the opportunity to build skills and knowledge and to engage in conversations about oppression. The first session focuses on the concept of white fragility, or the struggle for dominant communities to tolerate discussions on race without feeling shame and guilt. The second session dives into myths and stereotypes in order to identify subconscious bias. The final session gives us tools and guidelines for action in order to reaffirm our commitment to an anti-oppressive society.

I hope this series will help participants develop intentional and well-informed decision-making abilities to move toward an equal and just society.

Tuesday, May 19, 5:30-7pm; Thursday, May 21, 5:30-7pm and Saturday, May 23, 10-11:30am.  
For details, please see Calendar on page 10.

■ Privilege and Accountability: Becoming an Ally

By Francine Serwili-Ngunga M. Ed., Facilitator

My hope in leading this workshop is that participants increase their ability to act as allies to oppressed groups. There won't be a check list to answer your questions and concerns. One of the agreements of participating is to understand that experiencing discomfort is part this process, that this is a journey, with no clear destination, and there won't be any closure. We will be building the skills to live a more responsible life, and to be better members of a larger society.

While we are doing this work to help us in our interactions with others, we must not forget that more importantly, it will benefit us, the ones doing it. We will take the time to dig deep and learn about our personal and social identities and the privileges or hardships that come with them. We will leave with an understanding of what it means to honor our responsibilities as a conscious member of society. We will practice new vocabulary and develop skills to be a better ally. Hopefully by the end of the last session, participants will have an understanding that real change starts within, with one's own awakening.

Tuesday, June 2 and Thursday June 4, 6-7:30pm.  
For details, please see Calendar on page 10.

# Domestic Drones: Here, Far, Wherever You Are

By *Kenny Nguyen, PJC Intern*

When people hear about drones, many assume they are a technological weapon used for reconnaissance and warfare in distant lands. This is true. However, drones are also much closer to home than that. In the US, drones are utilized for recreational use, search and rescue, and increasingly for surveillance. As of 2011, Customs and Border Protection has eight drones in operation along the Mexican and Canadian borders. In Tom Barry's report, "America's Program Policy Report: Border Drones, a Financial and Policy Bust," he states that President Obama and Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson are committed to more drone surveillance of US borders – despite mounting evidence from the government's own investigators that the border drone program is a monumental bust. They've made claims that drones patrol the entire southwestern border; however, the report revealed that drone surveillance has been limited to small stretches of the nearly 2,000 mile border and that the cost of its flights were four times higher than drone officials had reported.

In addition, more than a dozen reports have lambasted the drone program for its absence of performance measures and its

failure to formulate operational plans and strategic directions. Even after the scathing Office of the Inspector General's report, there are no signs that the Customs and Border Protection, the Department of Homeland Security, Congress or the Whitehouse are backing away from the dysfunctional and massively expensive drone program. What will it take to change their minds and move away from drones?

Here in Vermont, the American Civil Liberties Union of Vermont (ACLU), under the guidance of Executive Director Allen Gilbert, has been working hard to get a bill passed to enhance privacy protection through regulating electronic communications, automated license plate readers, and the usage of drones, among other things.

The proposed bill, S.18, would allow law enforcement agencies to use drones under two circumstances: (1) if the drone is operated under a warrant or (2) for emergency circumstances.

If the drone is operated under a warrant obtained pursuant to Rule 41 of the Vermont Rules of Criminal Procedure, "the drone shall be operated in a manner to collect data only on the target of the surveillance and to avoid data

collection on any other person, home, or area." In the case that a drone does collect information on any property or person not pertaining to the target, the information "shall be deleted as soon as possible and in no event later than 24 hours after the data were collected."

If an emergency situation, characterized by the "imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to any person" according to section 4623 of the bill, the law enforcement agency must obtain a warrant within 48 hours of the use of the drone.

The Senate Committee on Judiciary, comprised of Senators Dick Sears, Joe Benning, Tim Ashe, Jeanette K. White, and Alice W. Nitka, will hopefully take up this bill. A great way to encourage conversations among Vermont officials and communities is to contact these individuals with your support for the bill, and regulations on drones in particular. Go to [www.legislature.vermont.gov](http://www.legislature.vermont.gov) for more information.

There is still much work that needs to be done regarding drone usage here in Vermont. We at the Peace & Justice Center would like to see towns throughout the state taking initiative and ownership over the use of drones in our backyards by starting conversations and passing legislation. There are many examples nationally of localities and states that have successfully passed legislation and resolutions regarding drones.

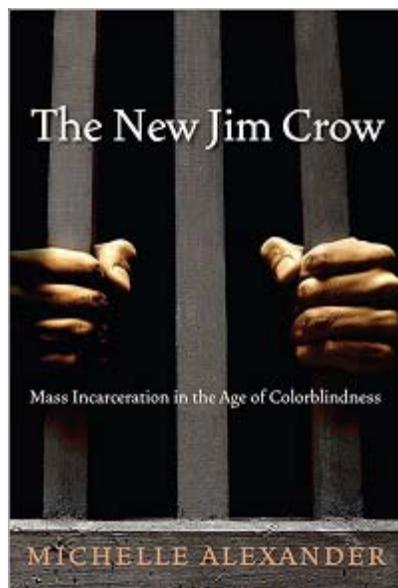
We need to join our voices together in opposition to the use of drones – both for war and surveillance – and in support of our fourth amendment right guarding against the government's capability to execute unreasonable searches and seizures. The Peace & Justice Center is happy to visit your town with an educational presentation on drones as well as offer resources and guidance on creating Town Meeting legislation. If you would like to get involved in passing a resolution in your town, contact Kyle Silliman-Smith at [program@pjcv.org](mailto:program@pjcv.org) or (802)-863-2345 x6.

## ■ New Jim Crow Book Discussion

By Infinite Culcleasure, Facilitator

I feared that reading this book would be a waste of my time as it's an issue I am so familiar with. What I learned is that this contribution by Michelle Alexander brings attention to one of America's most chronic generational social/political/economic problems, by relating it to the perfect metaphor. Legalized discrimination, political disenfranchisement, exclusion from juries, racial segregation – can all be linked to some of the greatest myths of our time. The New Jim Crow discussion group provides us with another tool to make sense of how some of these myths contribute to social problems that we all have the power to resolve.

April 12, Sunday, 3-5pm and April 14, Tuesday, 6-8pm.  
For details, please see Calendar on page 10.



# Let Cops be Cops

By J.M. Turner

When I think of Vermont, the first thought that comes to mind are the winding rivers beneath the mountains alongside Route 100 between Killington and Warren, where at any given time, a song bird or raptor can be seen perched on an overhanging limb and then lift itself gently beyond the tree line and into the thick forest. I think of the eclectic groups of people who gather throughout the year to celebrate a day just to celebrate, and am reminded of the saying, “In Vermont, we have a festival for that.” This is of course the appeal that brought me to live in this state some eight years ago after having served three deployments in the Marines between 2003 and 2007, two in Iraq as an infantryman.

I was 22 years old when I moved north, having just endured many life changing experiences throughout my time in service. Vermont was, and is to this day, a great place of solitude where in a matter of minutes, you can be at a place where the only others surrounding you are the natural beings that tourists migrate to year round to admire. It is difficult to believe that the state that has become such a large part of my life, and helps me understand the virtues of peace, is now at threat of being armed with extensive military hardware. For as long as I have lived in these green mountains, it has become clear that this tucked away gem takes pride to maintain the quintessential beauty that exists in old villages and the communities residing there.

The people of Vermont are back-to-the-landers, self-reliant within their communities to police themselves to ensure healthy relationships and to display exemplary models for rising generations. It is a wonderful feeling to walk into a country store and watch shop owners talk closely with old timers, out-of-towners and police officers who make it a ritual each morning to start their day with a cup of coffee and conversation. What sort of message do we send to our children when rather than investing money in their education, federal funds

are being spent on large pieces of machinery capable of suppressing riots and police officers, who they know by their first names, are now being donned with SWAT gear and automatic machine guns.

I ask, why is it we are choosing to take this course? To state that this gear is to protect us from terrorism I feel is inaccurate. There are plenty of Vermonters with stockpiles of weapons who would be willing to stand and protect their beloved hillsides should we be invaded, not to mention the Air National Guard and Army National Guard that can be at any place within the state quickly should they be called to do so. Who are we being protected from with the militarization of our police forces? Who then becomes the threat should they be equipped with this gear? Place yourself in the shoes of someone confronted by a large masked man, decked out in bullet proof gear – what is your first reaction? Automatic weapons and armored vehicles are not objects to confront, and with the majority of the occupants within this state being small business owners, farmers and politicians, I ask once more, who is the threat?

Each person living here, whether an implant flatlander or 6th generation farmer, have been and will continue to be, collaborative in nature, offering respect to the other knowing that there is much knowledge to be shared regardless of political perspective, 2nd Amendment rights, or religious belief. Unlike many places in this country, we see each other as being equal, truly equal, and that is yet another reason our state is so strong and capable of creating change that we believe in.

My thought is this, allow police officers to be police officers and leave the military hardware for our National Guard who are specifically trained to handle this gear. We are a small enough state that should something happen, be it an attack or some other catastrophe, that we as a people will join together and unify our years of experience and



materials to sustain our thriving communities, and support those in uniform to keep us safe from harm, whether they are dressed in camouflage or in blue. We must be willing to trust ourselves to make the right decisions should we be confronted with inappropriateness, but those within the political systems, should have faith that we will make the appropriate decisions, and continue to work to create a healthy environment for our children to grow in, without the implementation of tools designed to destroy.

We are living in an interesting period of time where our people need to assist each other in transitioning from a fear-based mentality, and move more toward a direction that instills courage to teach our children methods of non-violent communication, ways to care for others and the land that we love and appreciate, and to make the right decisions to sustain good health and happiness.

*Jon Turner is a member of the Farmer Veteran Coalition and is building an educational landscape to assist veterans with re-integration after returning home from war. He is currently working with the VA to facilitate writing workshops for those willing to look at their experience from a different perspective. Jon lives in Addison County with his family and is a student of sustainability and ecological design. ☪*

# Support and Defend the Constitution

By *Andy Schoerke, Will Miller Green Mtn Chapter, Veterans for Peace*

**W**hen I was commissioned a Naval officer, I swore “to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies foreign and domestic.” That is exactly what I was doing two years ago when I was arrested for protesting outside Hancock Air Force Base in Dewitt, NY.

On September 14, 2001, Congress authorized President George W. Bush to use “all necessary and appropriate force” against those whom he determined “planned, authorized, committed or aided” the September 11th attacks, or who harbored said persons or groups.

The strategy was simple: locate al-Qaeda terrorists and kill them. Accordingly, in October of that year, US military forces invaded Afghanistan on a mission to capture or kill the perpetrators of the 9/11 tragedies and to punish the Taliban government that harbored them.

On paper, it looked easy, but the al-Qaeda terrorists slipped across the border into Pakistan or scattered throughout the Middle East and North Africa; the Taliban regrouped into an ongoing insurgency. The simplistic military strategy became a dilemma. How was it possible to kill al-Qaeda terrorists when they were in countries that the US was not at war with? The answer lay in the self-proclaimed power of the US to kill any alleged terrorist in any nation in the world.

The first use of this unique power occurred in 2002 when those responsible for the bombing of the Navy destroyer, USS Cole, in the harbor at Aden, Yemen, were tracked down and killed by a Hellfire missile fired from a CIA Predator drone. Since then, the targeted killing of alleged terrorists by drone strikes has become the weapon of choice. By using sophisticated electronic technology that tracks cell phone use and other internet activity, US intelligence services can not only identify, locate and target a specific terrorist but can also connect that target with other alleged

terrorists. Using this information, a drone flying in the Middle East can pick up a designated target and track it using visual and/or electronic sensors. These images are instantly relayed to the drone pilot and sensor operator located at one of the dozens of Air Force bases in the United States. To date, according to the UK based Bureau of Investigative Journalism, as many as 3,902 people have been killed in Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen by US drones including as many as 959 civilians. Other reputable agencies report

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***Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the International Red Cross condemned US drone killings. Three separate investigations by the UN High Commission on Human Rights concluded that US drone strikes in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia were extra-judicial killings and the US could be held accountable for its violations of international law.***

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that for every alleged terrorist killed as many as 27 civilians die.

In October 2012, I attended a presentation at St. Michaels College by Leah Bolger, then president of the national Veterans For Peace (VFP). As a member of a delegation that had just returned from Pakistan, Leah recounted the interviews she had with villagers who had witnessed drone strikes. Accompanying her presentation were pictures showing the results of the Hellfire missiles fired from Predator drones including pictures of the dismembered bodies of children. I decided then to research the targeted killing policy of our government with the purpose of informing other members of my VFP chapter. I soon learned that world-renowned international peace and justice organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the International Committee of the Red Cross had all condemned US drone

killings. Three separate investigations by the UN High Commission on Human Rights concluded that US drone strikes in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia were extra-judicial killings and the US could be held accountable for its violations of international law.

The murder of civilians by drone strikes, the mistreatment and torture of prisoners, and the gross surveillance of our electronic correspondence constitute evidence of how the Global War On Terror is being secretly carried out in violation of domestic and international laws and covenants. One victim of this secret war has been the Constitution of the United States. Article VI of the Constitution states: “This Constitution,

and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in pursuance thereof; and all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land.”

The drone killing of a citizen in a country with which we are not at war is an egregious violation of the UN Charter which the United States ratified in 1945. Article

1 of the UN Charter states: “All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.” Further, Article 103 of the Charter states that “Obligations to the United Nations Charter [shall] prevail over all other treaty obligations.”

On April 28, 2013, I joined with thirty other Americans to protest U.S. drone killing by engaging in an act of non-violent civil resistance at the main gate to the drone base at Hancock Field, US Air Force Base, Dewitt, NY. I was arrested, charged with one misdemeanor and two violations, and issued an Order Of Protection for the base commander. I am currently waiting my trial date.

My oath to the Navy was to defend our country against “enemies foreign and domestic.” I was acting in congruence with this oath on April 28, 2013 and will continue to do so. ☪



Robin's Nest

# Speaking Truth to Power at the United Nations

By Robin Lloyd

*"...this may be the last time our voice is heard here....."*

— excerpt from Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

(WILPF) Statement to the UN's Conference on Disarmament on International

Women's Day 2015, prepared and delivered by Reaching Critical Will, a program of WILPF

The UN has become a citadel of nations, ruled over by five nuclear potentates with veto power in the Security Council. Periodically the fortress is besieged by civil society organizations knocking on the door for entry, raising their banners for peace and justice. This is most observable at the meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women during the first two weeks of March. Women flood the Church Center across the street from the UN, overflowing into the Armenian Convention Center down Second Avenue, sharing issues, strategies and concerns. Members of each women's NGO share a limited number of passes to the UN building itself.

This year, in a different UN body, on International Women's Day, something unprecedented happened. It was a David and Goliath moment. It's been a long time coming – and, though largely symbolic, it made me proud that my organization, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, took a stand in an environment that has become painfully oppressive.

More precisely we resigned from monitoring and engaging with the Conference on Disarmament.

We, who are proud of being the first NGO to be affiliated with the UN through the Economic and Social Council back when the UN was getting started in 1946; we who see – or saw – the UN as a feminist organization dedicated to saving 'succeeding generations from the scourge of war;' we who recognized it as

one of the few places where small nations could have a voice; in short, we who have tried to engage with this body that has been hijacked by corporate and nuclear powers, we said enough is enough.

Didn't read about it in the *NY Times*? OK here's the story, with a bit of background. The Conference on Disarmament

roadblocks, termed indignities, are not experienced at other disarmament forums—not, RCW said, "at the First Committee, not at meetings of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, not at meetings of the Non-Proliferation Treaty."

For the last few years, WILPF has been permitted to deliver a statement to the

Conference on Disarmament (CD) to mark International Women's Day. This is the only time of year that any voice from civil society is allowed inside the CD chamber.

Gandenberger went on to say, "This may be the last time our voice is heard here... This is a body that has firmly established that it operates in a vacuum. That it is disconnected from the outside world. That it has lost perspective of the bigger picture

of human suffering and global injustice. **Maintaining the structures that reinforce deadlock has become more important than fulfilling the objective for which it was created: negotiating disarmament treaties."**

We can no longer invest effort into such a body. Instead we will continue our work elsewhere. There is much work to be done...."

Indeed. WILPF is celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. It was founded in 1915 at a conference at The Hague dedicated to stopping WW1, by women



is the forum that has been used by its member states, currently numbering 65, to negotiate the **Biological Weapons Convention** and the **Chemical Weapons Convention**. Since 1996, it has not negotiated any treaties or even agreed on which treaty to next negotiate, and it has put roadblocks in the way of any substantive conversation with civil society.

Reaching Critical Will (RCW) is a WILPF program that monitors the UN on disarmament issues. Mia Gandenberger, staff person for RCW, delivered a statement this year that said these

who were global activists even before they had the vote. Before any super-national organizations such as the League of Nations or the UN existed, they used grassroots diplomacy to reach the men in charge: travelling from belligerent to neutral governments and knocking on the doors of power. We are still knocking on doors. Despite a UN resolution that mandates women's role at the table when peace settlements are negotiated, Syrian women (the latest example) were denied a seat at the failed talks in 2013.

Women are frustrated. We are impatient at watching wars metastasize around the planet, watching the elements of our sacred earth mined and melted into bullets and missiles.

We will be bringing our energy together at our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference *Women Stop War* from April 27-29.

We women from the USA, the largest exporter of bullets and missiles in the world, will be meeting together with women from the front lines of violence, women living in communities that have been decimated by war and rape and dislocation. We will be inspired by our

Manifesto, the result of three years of work and editing by women from the 36 country sections we have around the world, which reads:

- Militarism as a way of thought, and the militarization of societies, such that perceived –threats are likely to be met with weaponry rather than words;
- The capitalist economic system, involving the exploitation of the labor and resources of the many by the few, wantonly harming people and the environment, generating conglomerates of global reach and unaccountable power;
- The nation-state system as it is today, involving dominant states, imperialist projects, inter-state rivalry, contested borders, and inside those borders, all too often, failure of democracy, resulting in political repression and intolerance of diversity;
- Social systems of racist supremacy, cultural domination and religious hierarchy;
- Patriarchy, the subordination of women by men, in state, community and family, perpetuated by the social shaping of men and women into contrasted, unequal and limiting gender identities, favoring violent masculinities and compliant femininities.
- We understand these as intersected and mutually reinforcing systems of power, all founded on violence and together productive of war.

I encourage you to read our Manifesto (which will be made public on April 29<sup>th</sup>) at [http://www.womenstopwar.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Draft-6-edited\\_1.pdf](http://www.womenstopwar.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Draft-6-edited_1.pdf) to find our creative 100 year plan. It ends with this challenge to the next generation:

**Violence is not inevitable. It is a choice.**

**We will implement peace, which we believe to be a human right. ☪**

The Burlington Branch of WILPF meets the 2nd Thursday of the month at the PJC at 5pm.

**Money** continued from page 1

democracy triumph over this corruption. What can we do to fight this? How can our voices counteract those of multi-billion dollar corporations?

By stamping the message to get money out of politics people are speaking with their dollars. The average dollar exchanges hands 875 times. If 1,000 people stamped one dollar a day, the message would reach three million people. Stamping money is totally legal and ironically is rigging the corporate system to get out a message out of fairness and equality.

Politicians are jumping through hoops to please big donors, as citizens it is our duty to insist democracy and strive to create a more just and equal world. Now is the time to demand change to get money out of politics and restate that people are people and corporations do not deserve the same rights as people.

#GETMONEYOUT ☪



Photo stampstamped.com

The Stamp Mobile is like a Dr. Seuss invention created in a reinvented box truck. This whimsical contraption is inventive but forceful in its message that \$ and politics hurts our democracy.

### ■ Footnotes:

(1) *McCutcheon v. Federal Election Commission*, (2014), a US Supreme Court landmark case which allows for unlimited spending on candidates for federal office, political parties, and political action committees.

(2) *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, (2010), a US Supreme Court case that de-regulated of campaign spending by organizations. The PJC's "Corporations are Not People" campaign supported dozens of Vermont towns to pass Town Meeting Day resolutions opposing Citizens United.

# Mindfulness Workshops at the PJC

By Judith Yarnall

What do meditation and social justice activism have to do with each other? The one appears to be just sitting, indulging perhaps in passivity, while the other evokes visions of proudly marching behind banners, speaking out from the high porch of City Hall, perhaps even submitting to arrest at Hancock Air Force Base, where drones are kept. Last fall when PJC staff and board members were planning the series of educational workshops currently being piloted, we asked ourselves this question. We had a hunch, but not a precise sense, that the connection was important, and so we kept on with our plan to develop two workshops focusing on the skill of Mindfulness, which is very much based on meditation.

Co-presented by Judy Yarnall, Board member, and Carmen Solari, staff member, they took place on the evenings of March 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>. The first, “Mindfulness and Self-Compassion” led naturally to the second, “Mindfulness in Interpersonal and Difficult Relationships,” considering that it’s difficult to give to another what you can’t give to yourself.

Shortly after our eleven participants arrived at the first session, Carmen wrote Jon Kabat-Zinn’s definition of mindfulness on the whiteboard: “Non-judgmental awareness of the present moment that emphasizes being rather than doing, and responding rather than reacting.” Later we added words from Joanna Macy, a longtime social activist: “The most radical thing any of us can do at this time is to be fully present to what is happening in the world.”

After introductory discussion and very simple instruction, we began a ten-minute silent meditation – a short time for those already experienced, but more like an eternity for new practitioners. Afterward, we talked about how that went, and about how recent improvements in brain imaging have shown that meditation strengthens electrical activity in the prefrontal cortex (involved in making decisions and integrating thought and emotion) and weakens it in



the amygdala, the fear center deep in the midbrain. We talked about the inverse relationship between breathing deeply and fear. We ended with a short Metta (Loving Kindness) meditation, repeating silently over and over again the following phrases: “May I be safe and free from fear. May I be happy and peaceful at heart. May I find ease of being.”

Just as we ended, the band next door at Skinny Pancake began warming up.

Our second workshop, focusing on

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***“The most radical thing any of us can do at this time is to be fully present to what is happening in the world.”***

—Joanna Macy

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Mindfulness in Interpersonal and Difficult Relationships, was more substantive and also more relaxed, now that we knew each other. This time the words on the whiteboard came from Thich Nhat Hanh “We cannot make peace with someone we refuse to listen to;” and Leah Green, founder of the Listening Project which brings together Palestinians and Israelis, “At the heart of every act of violence is an unhealed wound.”

The quotes were inspiration for a Compassionate Listening exercise in which the group paired off, with each partner narrating and then listening – nonjudgmentally and without interruption – to a story about some event which had made a strong emotional impact on the Teller. This exercise worked so well

that it could have easily taken up all our remaining time. For some, it was a revelation that both the act of deep listening and of being heard are in themselves healing.

Next came some self-analysis and an exercise in empathy, during which participants wrote brief accounts of some recent incident that had troubled them, asked themselves which of their own needs had gone unmet during this time, and then tried to jump into the other person’s point of view and to imagine which of his or her needs had not been met. We discussed what we had written, though without any pressure to share.

We ended with a short Metta meditation directed towards another. This time the silent, repeated phrases were: “May you be safe and free from fear. May you be happy and peaceful at heart. May you find ease of being.”

At the end of each evening, participants filled out evaluation forms. Response was entirely positive. Here’s one from Fabiola: “I really appreciate listening and hearing stories of other people. I felt that I can relate them back to my own life. This workshop brought my attention to what I need to work on in terms of listening and finding space to meditate. This is definitely something to also bring back to my community. Yes.”

Almost all the suggestions about ways to improve the workshops echoed each other: “We would have liked more time, especially for meditation and for pair work.” Judy and Carmen agree, and when we offer Mindfulness workshops again we plan a series of three two-hour ones, each a week apart.

As for the question of what Mindfulness has to do with Activism, the presenters are now clear about that: It can strengthen activists’ basic equilibrium, help to prevent burnout, and – perhaps most importantly – go a long way towards preventing self-righteousness and Us vs. Them thinking. ☺

**There will be another set of workshops in June. If you are interested in bringing a mindfulness workshop to your community or signing up for a future event, please contact [program@pjcv.org](mailto:program@pjcv.org).**

# We Can Do It... but is there the political will?

By Suzi Wizowaty

**R**ecently a surprising, even shocking, bit of criminal justice news got national attention. Not like when journalist Bill Keller left the *New York Times* to join the Marshall Project and focus solely on criminal justice, or when California's Prop 47 transformed some felonies into misdemeanors overnight. These were greeted with the equivalent of a fist-pumping "Yes!"

The collective reaction to this more recent news was more like, "Wait. What?" The ACLU and the Sentencing Project joining the Tea Party-inspired Freedom Works, Right on Crime, and the *Charles Koch Institute*? This new Coalition for Public Safety was an unprecedented collaboration, raising suspicions on all sides. The press described it as a "sea change," a "180-degree shift," and finally, once the dust settled, simple evidence of a national consensus: We have "gone overboard" on incarceration. As a panelist in the Vera Institute webinar on March 10<sup>th</sup> said, "The country is embarrassed. We're not a nation of criminals, so why are so many people locked up?"

The Coalition for Public Safety is aptly named, because reducing the number of people in prison – which is the coalition's goal – will in fact increase public safety. The evidence for this is clear. On the other hand, bipartisan legislation may not go anywhere in the U.S. Congress, because of the opposition of Senator Grassley who replaced our own Patrick Leahy as chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee. It has been pointed out that there is a generational divide here. Some older politicians like Grassley, who came of age in the 80s when the dominant mood was "lock 'em up and throw away the key," seem to be stuck in that mindset, whereas a younger group of leaders (in addition to stalwarts like Leahy) are willing to craft legislation that reflects the current reality – that crime is at its lowest levels in 20 years, that incarceration bears virtually no relationship to crime, and that our current incarceration rate is, in fact, an



embarrassment.

But what about here in Vermont? What are we doing to end mass incarceration? We can be proud of some things – community justice centers in every county, pre-trial services being expanded statewide, few mandatory minimums, a growing awareness that people with substance abuse and mental health issues need community-based supports, not jail. But in other ways we lag behind. Vermont's own Justice Coalition, convened by Vermonters for Criminal Justice Reform (VCJR), includes nearly 30 organizations and departments of state government working for change in some way. At the same time, some of our most progressive organizations and leaders have been slow to recognize the criminal justice system's assault on poor people, the racial disparities in the system, and the way that collateral consequences of conviction virtually ensure a permanently unemployable underclass.

There is good news. Last fall VCJR developed a set of mostly quite moderate reforms that would address some of these issues and significantly reduce the prison population. It was introduced last month as H.221 by Rep. Mollie Burke (P/D-Brattleboro) and had the strong support of the Women's Legislative Caucus. In the case of theft convictions, it raises the amount that triggers a felony from \$900 to \$3,000 and eliminates theft monetary bail except for those determined to be a flight risk. It sends non-violent offenders to administrative probation (i.e. not jail) unless there's a good reason otherwise and says conditions of release can't restrict otherwise legal behavior—again, without demon-

strable necessity. It keeps juveniles charged with drug offenses in Family Court, expands parole eligibility, and removes from DOC the ability to deny housing to inmates otherwise eligible for release – and more.

Although it did not get taken up in time to make the "crossover" deadline, the bill is being taken up by the House Judiciary Committee. It is still possible that some pieces of the bill could be attached to other bills – and pass – if the legislature chooses. On the other hand, Vermont's own Chuck Grassley-type representatives and senators, longtime legislators opposed on principle to reforms that have been shown elsewhere to work, could stymie any changes. But the bill would save tax dollars, lessen human suffering, and *increase public safety*. The public in general may not have had enough exposure to the failings of the criminal justice system, but we know from our own organizing that many Vermonters care intensely about this issue. H.221 is not the only solution and it's not nearly enough, but it's a start.

You can help by calling your legislator or leaving a message for him/her with the sgt.-at-arms, 800-322-5616 to *please pass meaningful criminal justice reform this year*. Join VCJR's mailing list to get updates with links to send messages, and sign our petition to reduce the prison population and stop sending men out of state to for-profit prisons: [www.VermontersforCriminalJusticeReform.org](http://www.VermontersforCriminalJusticeReform.org).

Surely we can do as well as the national Coalition for Public Safety.

*Suzi served three terms in the Vermont Legislature. In 2013 she founded Vermonters for Criminal Justice.* 

## CALENDAR

## April-June 2015

## April 5, Sunday

- 12 noon **Vets for Peace** live call-in show on Channel 15. First Sunday each month.

## April 6 &amp; 20, Mondays

- 6:30pm **Save Open Space-Burlington** works to protect the land around Burlington College and beyond. Meets 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays at PJC.

## April 9, Thursday

- 11-12 PJC has bi-monthly **New Volunteer Orientations** every second Thursday at 11:00am and every fourth Saturday at 3:00pm for approximately 45 minutes. Potential volunteers will learn about the history and mission of the PJC as well as the roles volunteers play to sustain our retail store and support our larger goals. More info: Kristen at [volunteer@pjcvt.org](mailto:volunteer@pjcvt.org) or 802-863-2345 ext. 9.

- 5pm **Women's International League of Peace and Freedom** meeting at PJC. Also May 14 & June 11.

## April 11, Saturday

- 6pm **Green Mountain Derby Dames** (roller derby) are competing against the Rainy City Roller Girls from the UK benefiting PJC, Champlain Valley Expo, Essex Jct. More info: Ilana at [intern@pjcvt.org](mailto:intern@pjcvt.org).

## April 12 &amp; 14, Sunday &amp; Tuesday

- **The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness**. Two-part facilitated discussion group focused on Michelle Alexander's book. The program is free for PJC members and \$30 for others. A copy of the book is included in registration. No one turned away for lack of funds. Participants are expected to read the book in advance and attend both sessions. Please contact [program@pjcvt.org](mailto:program@pjcvt.org) for more info or to sign up. 3-5pm on Sunday and 6-8pm on Tuesday. Pre-registration required. At PJC. See page 3 article.

## April 13, Monday

- 6-8pm **Vermonters for a Just Peace in Palestine/Israel** meeting at PJC. More info: [vtjp@vtjp.org](mailto:vtjp@vtjp.org). Also May 11 and June 8.

## April 15, Wednesday

- **Day of Action Against Military Spending!** The PJC will be tabling on Church St, Burlington starting at 11 am, to raise awareness about how much of our income tax dollars go to the military and how little goes to other important government programs. Stop by our table and participate in our penny poll to share where you want your tax dollars to go and be entered in a raffle to win a fabulous prize!

## April 18, Saturday

- 10am **Vets for Peace** monthly meeting in Montpelier's Kellogg-Hubbard Library. Usually the third Saturday, but check with President Adrienne Knapp at [adriennej@hotmail.com](mailto:adriennej@hotmail.com). Also May 16 and June 20.

## April 25, Saturday

- 7pm **Telling Our Truths: Dance, Poetry and Music for Social Justice**. Artists from around the world host this event to benefit the PJC. Advanced tickets \$8; day of \$12. Kids free. Location TBA.

## May 7, Thursday

- 7pm **Banana Land: Blood, Bullets and Poison**. Ever wonder why a banana from Central America costs a third of what an apple from Michigan costs? This documentary attempts to answer that question by examining the supply chain between Central America and the US, and uncovering the practices that have sustained this industry for over a century. Panel includes a representative from Equal Exchange. Sponsored by City Market. Roxy Theater, Burlington. Suggested donation \$10.

## May 8, Friday

- Time TBA. **Liberty in North Korea**. Learn about life inside North Korea and what we can do to help. More info: [libertyinnorthkorea.org](http://libertyinnorthkorea.org) or contact [kyle@pjcvt.org](mailto:kyle@pjcvt.org) or (802) 863-2345 x6. By donation. At PJC.

## May 9, Saturday

- 10am-2pm **World Fair Trade Day** in City Hall Park, Burlington. Jeh Kulu Dance & Drum Theater, Fairtrade banana smoothies, multiple vendors, Fair Trade chocolate samples.

## May 9 &amp; 10, Saturday &amp; Sunday

- **Most Dangerous Women**. See article on page 11. May 9, 7 pm and May 10, 2 pm at North End Studio A, 294 N. Winooski Ave., Burlington, VT. Tickets are \$5 at the Peace & Justice Center or online at Brown Paper Tickets. [www.brownpapertickets.com/event/1364812](http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/1364812)

## May 19, 21, 23, Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday

- **Building Empathy and Eliminating Oppression: A Deep Look at Racism and Religious Prejudice** workshop at PJC. See article on p. 3 for details. Cost for workshop: \$150 for public and \$115 for current PJC members and volunteers. Contact us if cost is prohibitive – no one turned away for lack of funds. 802-863-2345 x6 or [program@pjcvt.org](mailto:program@pjcvt.org).

## June 2 &amp; 4, Tuesday &amp; Thursday

- 6-7:30pm **Privilege and Accountability: Becoming an Ally** workshop at PJC. See article on p. 2. Cost for workshop: \$150 for public and \$115 for current PJC members and volunteers. Contact us if cost is prohibitive – no one turned away for lack of funds. 802-863-2345 x6 or [program@pjcvt.org](mailto:program@pjcvt.org).

## June 6 &amp; 27, Saturdays

- 2-4pm **PJC Kids Club: Learning about Nonviolence**. Learn through games and play about needs and feelings we all have. Discover some really cool ways kids have contributed to movements for social justice. Best suited for kids ages 7-11. More info: (802) 863-2345 x6 or [program@pjcvt.org](mailto:program@pjcvt.org). Free.

# Mujeres De Maiz

By Carmen Solari

**T**he Peace & Justice Store is working with Mujeres De Maiz, a collective comprised of 70 women from seven different cooperatives across the state of Chiapas, Mexico. They weave backpacks, vests, waist packs, change purses, and pencil cases created from the wool of sheep from their own flock.

The women come from many different backgrounds, and are all of indigenous heritage. The Government has stolen land, refused to recognize languages in the region, denies inclusion in governmental infrastructure such as jobs, medical care, and education and has even carried out forced sterilizations. Among the women of Mujeres De Maiz, 90% cannot read or write, and 70% do not speak Spanish. Of all the challenges these women face, their self-prescribed biggest obstacle is: “Being able to compete with the great monster of the neoliberal market, in which the collective work doesn’t matter and which is continually fomenting individualism.”

The neoliberal market they refer to, heavily based in free-market capitalism, is one of the great oppressors of the Mexican people. There have been many creative responses from indigenous communities to protect their heritage, livelihood, and dignity. One part is tapping into fair trade markets that provide a just alternative to free trade. Another is the Zapatista movement that emerged from the growing repression perpetrated by the Mexican government.

The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) is a militant group mostly comprised of indigenous Maya who first went public with their demands for autonomy and respect on January 1, 1994, the very day that the North American Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA, came into effect. The free trade agenda is not the only problem; the indigenous people of Mexico have struggled against marginalization and oppression for over 500 years. The Zapatista movement arose from the frustration of unsuccessfully trying to improve this situation through conventional means. The government responded by sending one third of the Mexican army into Chiapas, a state about the size of South Carolina that makes up 3.7% of the land mass of Mexico, and creating alliances with local paramilitary troops. There are currently over 100 military encampments in the state.

I had a chance to witness this militarization when I visited the women of Las Abejas, one of the 7 cooperatives that comprises Mujeres De Maiz. Las Abejas publicly support the demands of the Zapatista army, but are committed to nonviolent principles. The government launched a crusade against them claiming they were aiding the Zapatistas. The violence reached a climax in December 1997 when 47 people were murdered in a church in Acteal. 17 years later, I visited the town of Acteal to meet the women and hear their testimony. Our delegation was followed by a truck of men in uniform, weapons slung over their shoulders. Their presence was a warning to the community that they are being watched and are under the control of the State. The fight for autonomy for the Zapatistas, Las Abejas, and indig-

enous communities of Mexico is still very real. The free trade agreements that we continue to draft and sign only exacerbate the struggle. 



A FEW OF THE WORLD'S "MOST DANGEROUS WOMEN"

## The World's Most Dangerous Women

This Mother's Day weekend, the Burlington Branch of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) presents *Most Dangerous Women* -- celebrating a century of the international women's peace movement. Under the direction of author Jan Maher, with music direction by Matthew LaRocca, *Most Dangerous Women* is a staged reading weaving together headlines, speeches, memoirs, poems, and plenty of songs to tell its story.

In 1915, 1500 women from a dozen countries trekked through the war zones of Europe to meet at The Hague. Some came from neutral countries, some from countries already at war with one another. They came with a common purpose: to bring that war to an end. This April, 100 years later, women from around the world will gather again at The Hague, renewing their determination and dedication to a world without war, a world in which social and environmental justice thrive.

*Most Dangerous Women* includes words from women familiar to us such as Jane Addams, founder of Hull House and first American woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize; Jeannette M. Rankin, first woman to be elected to the US Congress; and Coretta Scott King, peace activist and widow of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Others may be less familiar: Gro Harlem Brundtland, prime minister of Norway and later Director General of the World Health Organization; Toyomi Hashimoto, a young mother caught in the bombing of Nagasaki; Wangari Maathai, Nobel Peace Prize winning environmental activist of Kenya; and many more.

Vermont's own Jody Williams, whose Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech is excerpted in the play, notes, "If we want a more peaceful world, we have to teach people that such a world is possible and that it is both their right and their responsibility to take action to make it happen. *Most Dangerous Women* contributes to those efforts."

Throughout a century of struggle, these courageous women were labeled "dangerous," "foolish," "misguided," and worse. Some were imprisoned, physically attacked, beaten, or had their lives threatened for their activism. Despite this, they have persevered. They educate and inspire us.

More info: Marguerite Adelman at [madel51353@aol.com](mailto:madel51353@aol.com) or (802) 655-4606. To schedule an interview with writer/director Jan Maher email [localaccess@aol.com](mailto:localaccess@aol.com) or call 802-448-2411. 

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