Call to Action: Pass a Drone Resolution in Your Town
By Grace Gaskill, PJC Cost of War: Focus on Drones Intern

Due to the lack of transparency about weaponized drones abroad and the lack of meaningful legislation to regulate surveillance drone use within, and along, our borders, the Peace & Justice Center is working to pass City Council and Town Hall Resolutions on drone use on Town Meeting Day, March 1, 2016. This is part of the Cost of War: Focus on Drones program that, for the past two years, has been developing and presenting educational material to people throughout Vermont.

This program acknowledges that there are innovative and useful ways that drones are able to be used. The drones themselves are not the problem. It’s the ways they might be used or misused that are of concern. Perhaps the most obvious examples are the extrajudicial use of weaponized drones overseas that cause more harm and are less accurate than they are often reported to be. Fortunately, that usage has been getting more attention and the number have strikes has decreased in 2015. Another significant area of the Focus on Drones program is the use of drones for surveillance. This is of significant concern to us because surveillance technology has been used largely to fight the failed “war on drugs” and has disproportionately affected poor communities of color. [For more information on this please read Michelle Alexander’s The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness. Also as an example of surveillance technology use, Wire Tap Report 2013 from uscourts.gov cited in its summary that “87 percent of all applications for interceptions (3,115 wiretaps) in 2013, cited illegal drugs as the most serious offense under investigation.”]

The Peace & Justice Center hopes that the passing of local resolutions and even just the continued dialogue throughout the state on a local level will prove effective in supporting a state-wide effort to regulate drone use by government entities. We are asking our members across the state to support this effort by presenting resolutions to your own city councils or select boards in an effort to protect yourselves and your neighbors from the privacy violations that drones and the lack of legislation surrounding them present.

The goal is not for every community to use one uniform resolution but instead to use the parts that are most meaningful to them. The Peace & Justice Center has a draft resolution that you can find on page 4. It has three main objectives: One, it regulates the ways in which police...
From the Director

I am happy to report that since the publication of the PJC’s Educational Program Catalog last September, we have received many inquiries from schools, business groups, faith-based organizations and individuals to bring our programs to them. It is affirming and exciting to experience this response. People are hungry for peace and social justice. It is the philosophy and practice of the PJC that these programs plant seeds to prepare people to take meaningful action when the time is right. They also help experienced activists connect with each other and strengthen all the good work happening statewide.

I know that whenever I participate in or facilitate an educational workshop, at the PJC or elsewhere, I gain so much from the knowledge gained, the human connections made, and the intention set by seeking alternatives to our mainstream culture that perpetuates violence on many levels. We can live in a different world. By building a campaign that connects all social justice and peace movements, we set in motion deep change in our culture. We create the opportunity and the possibility for a world of empathy, support, respect, love, and connection between all living things.

We will continue to offer our educational workshops to the public as well as to private settings. If you did not see our Program Catalog in the last newsletter, it is available on the PJC website (pjcvt.org) under “What We Do.” If you are a teacher, part of a community group, or someone with a group of friends interested in hosting one (or more) of our events, please email kyle@pjcvt.org for more information. We do ask a fee for these programs but are quite flexible and would rather bring you the work for free than to not bring it.

Because of the number of people interested in hosting these programs, we are in need of more facilitators. If you are interested in working with us in this capacity, please join us on Thursday, February 11, 7-8pm at the PJC for a discussion about becoming a facilitator. If you cannot come because of distance, we are happy to have you join us via phone or skype. [More information in calendar listing, page 10.]

See you on the path to a different world!

Rachel

Vintage Bernie Poster Raffle

The Peace & Justice Center is excited to announce that we’re holding a raffle to win an original Bernie for Burlington 1983 campaign poster print! This poster was donated to us to use as a fundraiser by longtime members. $5.00 a ticket, $10.00 for three tickets, and $25.00 for ten. You can buy the tickets in the store or online at www.pjcvt.org. The drawing will take place on January 31st at our volunteer appreciation and Anniversary party. It is our 37th anniversary!

Approximately 21x30”, the print is numbered 1 of 20 and is signed by both artist Francis R. Hewitt in 1983 and by then-mayoral candidate Sanders in 2008.

If you are the winner, you must PICK IT UP AT THE STORE ONLY. SHIPPING OPTION NOT AVAILABLE. (Online purchases will include sales tax at checkout. Feel free to place your order over the phone to have tax waived. (802) 863-2645 ext 2.)

OTHER ACTIVIST POSTERS

In addition to the Bernie poster, we are appreciative of the donation we received, again to be used for fundraising, of dozens of political posters from around the world. These are mostly from the 1980s and vary tremendously in character and aesthetic. Stop in the store to check them out and consider buying them. $5 for larger and $3 for smaller.

peace & justice news

EDITORS
Wendy Coe
Rachel Siegel

PUBLISHED
4/year
(See form on page 12)

CIRCULATION
1,300

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

60 Lake Street #1C
Burlington, VT 05401
802.863.2345
fax: 802.863.2532
www.pjcvt.org
info@pjcvt.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
(alphabetical order)
Linda Ayer
Corali Bisbee
Maleka Clarke
Beverly Little Thunder
Jake Schumann
David Shiman
Nathan Suter
Paij Wadley-Bailey
Jas Wheeler

STAFF
Wendy Coe
Kristen Connors
Dylan Kelley
Rachel Siegel
Kyle Silliman-Smith
Amy Crosswhite

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.
Peace & Justice Center Board of Directors

Statement Regarding Use of Drones

Passed December 1, 2015

Drones are being increasingly employed by government agencies and private actors around the world. There are many beneficial uses, such as search-and-rescue missions, scientific research, monitoring pollution and other environmental conditions, and mapping.

We must, however, speak out against those domestic uses of drones that contribute to the erosion of our constitutional and privacy rights. In particular, we are concerned about the increased usage by law enforcement agencies in efforts, such as the “war on drugs,” that disproportionately impact on the lives of people of color. We must work actively against the creation of a “surveillance society” in which government monitors, tracks, and records our every move.

Furthermore, we must speak out against our government’s international use of drones as instruments of extrajudicial killings. We have perhaps created more terrorists than we have eliminated, as a result of killing many more non-targeted, innocent people than those actually targeted.

We propose:

• Public representatives, not law enforcement agencies, should create usage policies and regulations on drones. The policies should be clear, written, and open to the public.
• There should be public oversight of drone use to guard against the violation of established policies.
• Drones can only be utilized for surveillance on private property after the issuance of a warrant.
• Drones may be deployed when there is an emergency, a threat to public safety, or a clear need to collect evidence related to a criminal act.
• Domestic drones cannot be equipped with lethal or non-lethal weapons for use against human beings.

Peace & Justice Center Anniversary

37% off Sale

We are turning 37 and you are invited to celebrate with us!
Come to our store on January 28th, our anniversary, for 37% off all full price items.

Anniversary Party

Have you been part of the volunteer legions, the board, the staff, or an intern at the PJC sometime in our 37 year history?
If so, please consider yourself invited to our Volunteer Appreciation and Anniversary Party on Sunday, January 31st in Burlington.
Please email info@pjcvt.org for location, more information and to RSVP.

Drones continued from page 1

departments are allowed to use drone technology to capture information and surveil the people of the city or town they have jurisdiction over; two, it disallows police departments from weaponizing drones with tear gas or other anti-personnel technology; and, three, it sends a message to the government of the U.S.A. to stop the illegal use of drone to bomb people overseas.

In addition to the resolutions being discussed, and hopefully passed, in communities throughout Vermont, there is also a statewide effort to regulate drone use. The American Civil Liberties Union of Vermont (ACLU), under the guidance of Executive Director Allen Gilbert, is working to pass a bill designed to enhance privacy protection through regulating electronic communications, automated license plate readers, and the usage of drones, among other things in the upcoming legislative session. This bill most recent version of the bill was introduced to the Vermont State Senate during the 2015-2016 term (S.18, Act 32) by Senator Tim Ashe and Senator Joe Benning, but the only portion that has been passed into law so far is the small section regarding license plate readers. This October, meetings about the other sections of this bill were held at the Statehouse, but decisions are forthcoming. Based on the October meetings, it seems likely that the portion of the bill relating to drone use will be very similar, if not completely the same, as the language in the 2015-2016 bill.

If you would like to host an event and/or consider sponsoring legislation in your town or city, please contact Kyle at (802) 863-2345 x6 or kyle@pjcvt.org. The educational programs available include Drones 101, The Experience of the Drone Pilot, and Drone Surveillance. We also have films that we can show in addition to or separate from the presentations. For a full description of the programs, see our Educational Program Catalog online. It is on our website under “What We Do.”

We currently have two events scheduled: Surveillance Drone Presentation in Charlotte on Wed., January 27 and in Montpelier on Thurs., March 3. Both are at the public library and from 7-8pm. See calendar on page 10 for more details.
Sample Resolution on Drone Technology: Warfare, Surveillance, and Police Use

WHEREAS, the implementation of drone (unmanned aerial system) technology in the United States compromises the privacy and constitutional rights of the United States residents, including the residents of ______________, Vermont;

WHEREAS, the federal government and the State of Vermont have failed thus far to provide reasonable legal restrictions and regulations on the usage of drones within the United States;

WHEREAS, police departments in the United States have begun to use drone technology without any regulation surrounding the appropriate use of such;

WHEREAS, surveillance technology in the United States has disproportionately been used as a tool of oppression against individuals and communities of color;

WHEREAS, the federal use of drones has turned public opinion in Yemen, Somalia, and Pakistan dramatically against the United States’ government, drone strikes have killed far more non-targeted people than those targeted, including men, women, and children charged with no crimes, and that drone pilots have suffered post-traumatic stress disorder at a higher rate than other pilots;

NOW THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED the Selectboard of ________ calls upon the United States government and the government of the State of Vermont to enact legislation 1) prohibiting the usage of drones for surveillance on private property without a warrant, 2) prohibiting information obtained via the domestic usage of drones from being introduced into federal or state court if it was obtained without a warrant, 3) prohibiting the usage of drone surveillance technology in public space as it relates to investigating/prosecuting a crime and without an immediate threat to public safety, and 4) precluding the domestic usage of drones equipped with lethal or less than lethal weapons;

and, LET IT BE RESOLVED the Town of ________ maintains that the _________ Police Department must obtain a warrant in order to use drone surveillance on private property to gather legal evidence;

and, LET IT BE RESOLVED the Town of ________ maintains that the _________ Police Department abstain from using drone surveillance technology in public space and without an immediate threat to public safety;

and, LET IT BE RESOLVED the Town of ________ maintains that the ________ Police Department may not use drones equipped with lethal or less than lethal weapons including but not limited to tear gas and rubber bullets;

and, LET IT BE RESOLVED that these protections would be in addition to those already in place surrounding police usage of helicopters for surveillance;

and, LET IT BE RESOLVED the Town of ________ calls upon the United States government to immediately end its practice of extrajudicial killing by drone. ☰

Black Lives Matter lawn/window signs are available at the Peace & Justice Store. They are weather resistant and measure 18”x24”. The signs are being offered for FREE, however they cost $6.00 each so if you’d like to cover the cost of yours or other people’s, please make a donation. ☰
Racial Justice

Building My Understanding of Nonviolence and Racial Justice

By Olivia Oldach, PJC Peacework & Racial Justice Intern

This past semester, I was lucky enough to intern for the Peace & Justice Center’s Racial Justice and Peacework Programs. I was initially interested in the PJC because they use education to inspire activism. I thought this was unique because it attacked social justice issues at the core of the problem: ignorance. When I found out I had gotten the internship I was ecstatic, and though I expected to learn a lot, I had absolutely no idea how much I would come to gain from this experience.

Unlike most internships, this one was extremely hands on. I wasn’t just copying papers and making coffee. I was able to work in the thick of things with an substantive amount of responsibilities.

In the beginning, I read in-depth about racial oppression and nonviolent activism in order to become comfortable engaging in these complex, yet necessary, conversations. I attended workshops that I had seen develop from the ground up, like Nonviolent Activism 101. It filled me with so much pride to see this workshop in action. It was empowering to see participants ask so many questions, gain knowledge, and develop an understanding about nonviolent intervention.

I was also able to table at local high schools to educate students about our mission, and inspire them to get involved. I had so much admiration for the young people who were excited about racial justice and nonviolence. Wanting to combat injustice is brave, since ignorance and inaction is an easy way to a more stress free life.

I also sat in on, took minutes for, and reflected with staff about various meetings with community members. One of these meetings called together local people who are using and/or compiling local data on racial bias in schools, in the legal system, and within the healthcare system (to name just a few). When in this first meeting, I was (but shouldn’t have been) surprised at the amount of injustices that are happening locally, and at times it was overwhelming. However, there was something so hopeful knowing that such passionate and dedicated people were all coming together to do something about it.

At our annual Activist Awards, Eugene Jarecki was honored for creating a documentary that puts a voice to the problem of mass incarceration. The many activists and members who attended this event genuinely cared and were working to alter and fix the broken legal justice system. Although centered on a heavy topic, the night ended with a lot of dancing, talking, and fun with the special people I got to work with every week.

This experience has helped me gain a much deeper understanding about nonviolence and racism both. I have learned just how interconnected these issues are, and have been inspired to use nonviolence to better address racism. I believe the PJC has not only ignited a spark in me, but in many others as well – through workshops, events, and knowledge – to fight for social justice. I am grateful to have been able to work with such dedicated and passionate people who give me, and others, hope for future change.

Ed Everts Social Justice Activist Awards

On Saturday, November 21, 75 people gathered at Main Street Landing Union Station to recognize the significant impact of both filmmaker Eugene Jarecki and the statewide organization Vermonters for Criminal Justice Reform.

Ed Everts Peace & Social Justice Awards* were presented by Allen Gilbert, Executive Director of VT ACLU. The Activist Award honored Eugene Jarecki for his film The House I Live In which is described by media critics as “a shattering case against the War on Drugs.” Since its release in 2012 the film has won the Grand Jury Prize for a Documentary at the Sundance Film Festival as well as a Peabody Award in 2014.

The Social Justice Organization Award recognized Vermonters for Criminal Justice Reform for their dedicated work to advance criminal justice reform in the Green Mountain State. In working toward a more restorative and effective criminal justice response, Vermonters for Criminal Justice Reform has highlighted racial bias in our policing and sentencing practices and has consistently called upon the State to end its use of private prisons.

“The war on drugs is a hoax and a failure. Our incarceration rate is out of control. It is fueling and fueled by corporate interests. It’s time we stand up against these systems of economic and racial injustice,” said Peace & Justice Center Executive Director Rachel Siegel. “Vermonters for Criminal Justice Reform and Eugene Jarecki are doing this,” she continued. “I’m excited that we can shine a light on their work and celebrate together.”

We celebrated with incredible food made by area restaurants and the board of directors including awesome Indian frybread made on the premises. There was an art auction of amazing works donated by many artists (that continues online). DJs Infinite and Melo Grant spun for our dance party following the ceremony and everyone who was there had a great time.

We hope to see you at next year’s Awards Ceremony and Party!

*Ed Everts was a long-time supporter of the Peace & Justice Center. Ed generously donated the entirety of his WWII Air Force pension to the PJC. While greatly missed since his passing in 2013, we carry on our work with Ed in our hearts, our spirits, and our actions.


Please email info@pjcv.org if you would like to nominate a Vermonter or a Vermont organization for next year’s awards.
Peter Schumann’s latest touring production: Underneath the Above Show No. 1: Inspired by the Forthcoming Elections in the Greatest Country in the History of the World is a larger than life puppet show featuring huge roughly painted cardboard figures — the electorate — manipulated by hard hatted performers. Their actions are coordinated by a mistress of ceremonies using a pointer and a sheet tableau to explain the elementary dissatisfaction of the population and its desire for systemic change.

The action is surreal and fast-paced. Capitalist consumerism and global warming are critiqued in cryptic phrases: “Workers pour out of the fat factory into the brutal sunlight.” And later, the ‘Dilemma Specialists’ are visited by the ‘Expert of Forthcoming Disasters’ who proclaims: “The regenerative nature of destruction is learned from history.”

History presents and repeats itself. Nietzsche. Patterns of destruction. Mr. Humpty. Collateral damage. The brain market. At the end Santa Claus makes an appearance: is it God or Bernie Sanders?

Puppeteer Alexis Smith has been with B&P for 28 years “trapped inside a garbage man.” She was one of the few seasoned performers in this production, and was impressed with the skill of the newer company members. Haley Lewis (mistress of ceremonies) and her husband Adam Cook (musician) are the superstars of the play together with Ira Karp, Peter’s 8 year old grandson who plays the drums and is a highly skilled cue master.

It takes a special person to accommodate Peter’s direction, Smith says, as he can dramatically change a show minutes before production. “Peter has total monolith control over script, staging, puppets, paintings and sculpted masks. Everything in the play is a work in progress and will continue to evolve up to its tour to Toronto. It’s raw and rough, with scratchiness.” But there is a form to the madness: what feels like confusion from the inside, is more like ballet from the outside.

For more information on Bread and Puppet, their repertoire of shows, and their online store, go to breadandpuppet.org.

This viewer saw the show in November, between the third and fourth Republican debates. Regrettably reality is more absurd than theater in these dark and dangerous days.
Bodies of Revolution: Women Rise Against the Violence of Police, States, and Empire

By Robin Lloyd

I attended a powerful conference of women sponsored by One Billion Rising and CISPS (Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies) at the Columbia Law School in Manhattan. A formidable group of activists from around the world testified as to what is happening in their countries. Frances Garrett, whose daughter Michelle Cusseaux was killed by police in 2014 in Phoenix, AZ, spoke and led a moving incantation, chanting the names of all the women who have been killed by police, starting with Eleanor Bumpers in 1984 (check out #SayHerName).

You can read some of the testimonies online here: http://www.onebillionrising.org/bodiesofrevolution/ Here are comments by Yanar Mohamed from Iraq: Yanar is the founder of the Organisation for Women’s Freedom in Iraq, which works to promote women’s rights and liberties in Iraq (OWFI). Her current project is sheltering women who escape ISIS, in addition to campaigning for the safety of women who were raped and impregnated by ISIS members— and will be wanted for honour killing by their own families and tribes, after they escaped from ISIS!

“I just arrived in NY last night and I was flipping around on the TV and it was all about how these radicalized Islamists in California killed people and why people are upset about this. Don’t they know that when the US occupation of Iraq happened that the US administration sought out every extremist in the country and turned them into an opposition and put them in prison and tortured them for 10 years, until people like Abdul Al Baghdadi became a reality…

This was such a cruel intervention. We do not deserve this…”

Comedor Project 2016

Escuela Irma Cajina

The Burlington/Puerto Cabezas Sister City program has been connecting residents of Burlington and Vermont with their counterparts in Bilwi, Nicaragua for over 30 years.

One of our partners has been the Irma Cajina School in Barrio Cocal, where the directors have reiterated the school’s need for a roofed-in space, called a comedor, that can be used as a lunch area by students and as a venue for community gatherings.

At its annual meeting, the Sister City board committed support for the Irma Cajina comedor. While Burlington will raise the cost of materials, community members in Bilwi will volunteer the labor.

We invite interested Vermonters to learn more about the project, to make a donation, or to experience directly their Sister City in Nicaragua by joining a delegation to Bilwi in February, 2016.

For further information, visit our web site www.uvm.edu/sistercity
World Powers Tangle in Syrian Quagmire

By Dylan Kelley

As Vox reporter Max Fisher said in his explanatory reporting, “Syria’s war is a mess.” The now regional conflict has ballooned from an off-shoot of the Arab Spring into a tangle of complicated micro-wars and ill-advised Western interventions that have set in motion the largest migration of refugees since the end of World War II.

Beginning in 2011, the conflict started when the Assad regime fired on peaceful Arab Spring protesters as they demanded a more democratic nation from the tightly controlled government of Bashar al-Assad. This eventually triggered a defection of some portions of the Syrian military who joined with pro-democracy forces to form the Free Syrian Army and prompting the country’s descent from a democratic uprising into open civil war.

All this was followed in 2012, by the secession of Syrian Kurds to form their own anti-Assad mini-state called Rojava, partially inspired by Burlington-based anti-capitalist/anarchist philosopher Murray Bookchin whose ideas of “social ecology” had profoundly affected the imprisoned Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan. Described as “a theory of government or a system of government in which independent communes participate in a federation”, as well as “the principles and practice of communal ownership.” Bookchin’s groundbreaking philosophy was expanded and built upon by Rojavan Kurds to create “Democratic Confederalism.” This new system and philosophy includes strict gender equality measures at all levels of the new revolutionary government and military. Around the same time as this secession, a branch of Al-Qaeda called Al-Nusra began forming in Damascus to support anti-Assad rebels but also to oppose the newly formed Kurdish state in the east.

By this time a full-on proxy war had emerged in the deepening conflict as Iran (Assad’s best regional ally) began throwing support behind the pro-Shia Assad in the form of funds and weaponry. This was countered simultaneously by fresh support of the predominantly Sunni rebels by several Gulf states (particularly Saudi Arabia) as they funneled weapons through Turkey, thus setting up a sectarian Shia-east and Sunni-west divide across Syria.

This was the deeply violent and complex situation that the United States waded into in 2013 when the Obama administration began to condemn the Assad regime for its alleged use of chemical weapons on civilians, prompting several programs to arm or otherwise support Syrian rebels by the CIA. By the end of the year, the United States had become a major player in the emerging raft of mini-conflicts and micro-wars.

2014 was the year that changed everything in the region. Stepping into the power vacuum that ultimately resulted from the U.S. invasion of Iraq, a splinter group of Al-Qaeda in Iraq began seizing large swaths of territory in Syria and northern Iraq and built power through illegal oil sales to the west through Turkey. Eventually they established a so-called “caliphate” and began calling themselves the “Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant” or what we commonly refer to now as ISIS.

This development (and textbook example of blowback from U.S. intervention in the region) further confused the conflict as ISIS began a bloody regional opposition to both Al-Qaeda backed Al-Nusra to the west as well as the Kurds to the north- all the while posting grisly execution videos on the internet and drawing militant jihadists from across the world.

A friend of mine noted the volatility of the region recently, quipping “you know things are bad when Al-Qaeda are the local moderates.” In light of this emerging situation the Obama administration has been confronted with the conundrum of attempting to defeat ISIS while simultaneously looking to depose Assad. Additionally, in opposing Assad and ISIS, the Obama administration has occasionally provided assistance to the Kurds in northeast Syria which of course angers Turkey. In response, we have seen Turkey (a U.S. ally) launch bombing campaigns against the same Kurds that have been largely successful in ousting ISIS from Kurdish territory.

Enter Russia and Vladimir Putin. If this spaghetti bowl of regional conflicts wasn’t confusing enough, Russia (a longtime supporter of Iran) begins supplying arms in 2015 to shore up the Damascus sphere of influence that has been slowly eroding since the beginning of the conflict. Despite claiming that they’re bombing ISIS, Russia launches bombing campaigns against anti-Assad rebels, thus increasing tension between Putin’s government and the Obama administration and propelling the regional conflict into a much larger struggle between major world powers and has led to a mass exodus of people from Syria and the surrounding region.

In 2015 alone, more than 4 million Syrians have filed for political asylum in the European Union and other countries across the Mediterranean according the BBC. All told, an estimated 9 million Syrians have fled their homes since the outbreak of civil war according to data collected by the European Union. Those that survive the treacherous Mediterranean crossing often end up in massive refugee camps that have sprung up across Europe.

Recently, when much of the world was concentrating on the Paris climate talks, Amy Goodman of Democracy Now! journeyed to nearby Calais to report from what is referred to by police as “The Jungle,” France’s largest refugee camp.
Amidst the squalid conditions and biting cold, Goodman spoke with a migrant from the Syrian capital of Damascus named Majd who had arrived at the camp two months before. When asked why he fled Syria, Majd spoke plainly and candidly.

“Everyone is fighting in my country,” the twenty-one year old said. “Russia and America and Iran. Everyone.” Majd’s goal of eventually reaching the safety of Britain mirrors the hopes of the hundreds of thousands of migrants moving across the European continent. “I just want to live in peace and be like any human again. Yes. to have a family, to be safe. Yes, that’s just it.”

A few moments later, Goodman asks Majd about the effectiveness of foreign intervention and bombardment. “Do you think the Russian, Syrian, French, British bombing of Syria will save it?” Majd pointedly of needing a peaceful resolution to the expanding conflict. “No, no, no, it’s not a solution. You can’t protect someone by killing someone else. You know? They can’t stop the bombs here when they bomb in Syria. Yes, it’s not a solution… The solution is not giving the weapons to everyone. They’re giving the weapons to the Free Army, to the Assad regime, to ISIS. They just give weapons and money, and just they let them fight in my country. Just stop the weapons.”

As global and regional powers wrestle for control of Syria, and forces on the ground continue to fight (and thus drive more and more civilians from the region), refugees and migrants like Majd will continue to see the effects of international posturing play out in wars and death in their neighborhoods and communities. Their story transcends ideology. When asked why he had left his home and family to travel many thousands of dangerous miles, Majd quietly rejected the complex ideological divides at play in his homeland “I don’t want to be—to die. This war is not my war… I don’t want to be dead for nothing.”

---

“His/Her No More

By Jake Schumann, PJC Board member

The use of the gender neutral pronouns they/them has recently been somewhat of a divisive issue. Divisive because would-be linguists and scholars of modern English grammar would have it that they/them cannot be used as singular pronouns. I say would-be because the fact is this assertion is downright false. They/them has been used as a singular gender-neutral pronoun (GNP) since before the establishment of this country. In fact, it was the preferable GNP until ‘his’ took dominance in the late 1800’s when the suffragist movement gained momentum.

Roughly 150 years later, we find ourselves torn between maintaining this alienating status quo or shifting toward a more accepting and more frequently used term. The zeitgeist has already accepted they/them as preferred terms over clunky and binary- and hierarchy-reinforcing terms such as ‘(s)he’ or ‘him/her’. In a world where language is viewed as fluid and the most expressive form of culture, I contend that it is time to create a culture of acceptance; a culture where the status quo is challenged and folks who don’t fit within our prescribed definitions of what they should be are empowered to change those definitions.

Here are some tips on how to create this culture of inclusion and acceptance:

1. If you make a mistake, correct yourself. Going on as if it did not happen is actually less respectful than making the correction. This also saves the person who was misidentified from having to correct them. It is polite to provide a correction, whether or not the person whose pronoun as misused is present, in order to avoid future mistakes and in order to correct the mistaken assumption that might now have been planted in the minds of any other participants in the conversation who heard the mistake.

2. If someone else makes a mistake, it may help them access the discussion more easily because they do not have to fear an embarrassing mistake. This will allow everyone in the room the chance to self-identify and to get the other’s pronouns right the first time. This may seem like a strange thing to do, but a person who often experiences being addressed incorrectly may see it as a sign of respect that you are interested in getting it right.

3. If you aren’t sure of a person’s pronoun, ask. One way to do this is by sharing your own. “I use masculine pronouns. I want to make sure to address you correctly, how do you like to be addressed?”

4. When facilitating a group discussion, ask people to identify their pronouns when they go around and do introductions. This will allow everyone in the room the chance to self-identify and to get each other’s pronouns right the first time. It will also reduce the burden on anyone whose pronoun is often misidentified and may help them access the discussion more easily because they do not have to fear an embarrassing mistake. 

---

“A respect for the rights of other people to determine their forms of government and their economy will not weaken our democracy. It will inevitably strengthen it.”

– Eleanor Roosevelt, Tomorrow Is Now (1963)
January 3, Sunday
12-1pm Vets for Peace live call-in TV show, Channel 15. Also February 7 and March 6.

January 10, Sunday
10:00am White Fragility Lecture at the United Church of Fairfax, Fletcher & River Rd, Fairfax. The Peace & Justice Center is excited to join the United Church of Fairfax for their 10am service on Sunday, January 10th. Our Program Manager, Kyle Silliman-Smith, will give a brief talk on the concept of white fragility and co-lead a discussion on how we can all, and white people in particular, strengthen our ability to notice racism in the world around us, and engage in conversations about race and racism within our communities. One of the biggest issues to consider when discussing race are strong visceral reactions to the conversation surrounding race and racial prejudice. Discussing these issues, particularly with white audiences, proves to be challenging due to the fact that the majority of white Americans have been intentionally uneducated about the complexities of racial and other social/religious injustices in our society. This lack of exposure has led discussions about race to be conflated with criticism on a person’s moral character rather than a criticism of racist policies. Strong emotional responses including cognitive dissonance or emotional incapacitation that can be expressed in anger, guilt/remorse, depression/sadness, disengagement and/or feelings of being attacked and victimized. White Fragility is a concept, developed by author and educator Dr. Robin DiAngelo.

January 11, Monday
6-8pm Vermonters for a Just Peace in Palestine/Israel meeting at PJC. Also February 8 and March 14.

January 14, Thursday
11am-12pm PJC Volunteer Orientation at the PJC. Come learn about the history of the Peace & Justice Center and our current statewide projects. We’ll talk about how each person can use their skills and interests to contribute to a movement for social justice. This event also includes a short presentation on the fair trade movement. For more information or to register contact Kristen Conners at volunteer@pjcvt.org or call 802-863-2345 x9. Also January 23, February 11, February 27, March 10, and March 26.

5:30-7pm Wil PF meeting at PJC. Also February 11 and March 10.

January 16, Saturday
10am-12pm Vets for Peace meeting in Montpelier at the Kellogg-Hubbard library. Also February 20 and March 19.

January 18, Monday
1:30-2:15pm Children in the Civil Rights Movement at the ECHO, Leahy Center for Lake Champlain in Burlington. Nonviolence education, whether for kids or adults, is an essential building block for peace building. Learn a bit more about the principles that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stood for and the strategy of the movement he was a part of. This 45 minute session will include singing a freedom song, showing video excerpts from Mighty Times: The Children’s March, and discussion of how young people can be, and have been, leaders in social justice movements. This program is being offered as part of the ECHO Center’s full day of activities relating to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the continued struggle for racial justice. ECHO’s other programming on this day will include activities from 10am to 3pm. This program is put on as part of a partnership between the Peace & Justice Center, The City of Burlington, the Will Miller Chapter of Green Mountain Veterans for Peace, and the Peace & Justice Center.

January 27, Wednesday
7-8pm Surveillance Drones Presentation at Charlotte Library in Charlotte. This presentation offers a basic overview of the history of surveillance in the U.S., how it is currently used, privacy laws, a bit about surveillance drone technology, and what to expect from the growing access to and use of this technology. This event will highlight how this technology is growing faster than the infrastructure that seeks to secure rights of people here in the United States. It will be followed by a Q&A and discussion of local actions including next steps such as passing a local resolution about police and government drone use. This event is being presented by Charlotte Library as part of their community outreach program, the Will Miller Chapter of Green Mountain Veterans for Peace, and the Peace & Justice Center.

January 28, Thursday
PJC’s 37th Anniversary. 37% off full priced items at Peace & Justice Store.

February dates TBA
How to Talk to Kids About Racism. 4 dates in February in Franklin County This series of discussions addresses the impact of racism and white privilege on our children. It is designed to train adults (and young adults) in how to discuss these issues with children in a meaningful and age appropriate way.

February 6, Saturday
3-4pm Cocoa Presentation at PJC. This presentation focuses on the issue of child slavery and human trafficking in the cocoa industry. It is designed to educate, brainstorm solutions and create tangible action steps that fit within the comfort zone of each participant. For more information contact Amy Crosswhite at store@pjcvt.org or 802-863-2345 x3.

February 11, Thursday
7-8pm Join us to learn about becoming a facilitator of our educational programs. At the Peace & Justice Center, FREE, light refreshments served. The evening will include an overview of the programs we offer, explanation of our educational philosophies, and time for you to share your experiences and interest. Next steps include participation in a workshop and then becoming
a paid facilitator. Programs include the following topics: non-violence, racial justice, fair trade and anti-war. People from around the state are needed so if you are interested but can not join us in person, we are happy to have you with us via video or phone conference. To register call Kyle at 863-2345 x6 or email kyle@pjcvt.org.

February 18 & 25, Thursdays
5:30-7:30pm Nonviolent Activism 101 location TBD. Nonviolence has been proven to be incredibly effective in addressing oppression even though our culture may not embrace or encourage this truth. Nonviolent activists employ a wide variety of strategies, such as rallies, marches, hunger strikes, boycotts, and much more. While many people participate in these actions they may not have explored all the work that leads up to them. This program focuses on the strategy of building a nonviolent movement. Participants will explore how they are affected by various systems of oppression to help unlock meaningful ways to work towards social justice and peace without perpetuating the cycles of violence that permeate throughout our culture. It is best suited for high school students and older. To register call Kyle at 863-2345 x6.

March 3, Thursday
7-8pm Surveillance Drones Presentation at Kellogg Hubbard Library, 135 Main St, Montpelier, VT 05602. This presentation offers a basic overview of the history of surveillance in the U.S., how it is currently used, privacy laws, a bit about surveillance drone technology, and what to expect from the growing access to and use of this technology. This event will highlight how this technology is growing faster than the infrastructure that seeks to secure rights of people here in the United States. It will be followed by a Q&A and discussion of local actions including next steps such as passing a local resolution about police and government drone use. This event is being presented by Kellogg Hubbard Library and the Peace & Justice Center.

March 13, Sunday
1:30-2:30pm Nonviolent Engagement in Conflict at the ECHO, Leahy Center for Lake Champlain in Burlington. Conflict is something that we are often told to avoid. It may seem that this avoidance is peace but if conflict is not addressed it will persist. This program explores the idea that addressing conflict nonviolently can be an exciting and effective way of making change and grow as individuals and even as a culture, society, and community. Participants will explore violence, types of power and practice diffusing heated interpersonal conflicts nonviolently. The program seeks to encourage participants to actively engage in conflicts as a way to build connection and lasting peace.

March 15, 22 and 29, Tuesdays
6-8pm Building Empathy and Addressing Racial Oppression: a workshop in three parts, location TBD. This program strives to give participants the opportunity to build skills and knowledge to engage in conversations about oppression. Participants are expected to attend all three parts of this workshop. The first session will focus on the concept of white fragility, the struggle for dominant communities to tolerate discussions on race without feeling shame, guilt, or victimization. The second session dives into myths and stereotypes in order to identify subconscious bias and how these bias affect our daily lives. The final session offers tools and guidelines for action in order to reaffirm our commitment to creating and supporting an anti-oppressive society. Space is limited, there is a fee but no one will be turned away for lack of funds. Register for more information at 863-2345 x6.

March 18, Friday
1-4pm Nonviolent Engagement in Conflict at Lyndon State College, 1001 College Rd, Lyndonville. Conflict is something that we are often told to avoid. It may seem that this avoidance is peace but if conflict is not addressed it will persist. This program explores the idea that addressing conflict nonviolently can be an exciting and effective way of making change and grow as individuals and even as a culture, society, and community. Participants will explore violence, types of power and practice diffusing heated interpersonal conflicts nonviolently. The program seeks to encourage participants to actively engage in conflicts as a way to build connection and lasting peace.

April 10, Sunday
1:30-2:30pm Children in Nonviolence Movements for Peace at the ECHO, Leahy Center for Lake Champlain in Burlington. Nonviolence education, whether for kids or adults, is an essential building block for peace building. Students may know a bit about Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, and Cesar Chavez but what about the strategy of the movements they were a part of? What is nonviolence in action? This program includes singing together, showing video excerpts from Mighty Times: The Children’s March, and discussing how young people can be, and have been, leaders in social justice movements. This program is being offered as part of the ECHO Center’s full day of activities relating to a Love the Earth theme. ECHO’s other programming on this day will include activities from 10:30am to 2:30pm. This program is put on as part of a partnership between the Peace & Justice Center and ECHO as part of XOXO: An Exhibit About Love and Forgiveness. All ages are welcome!
Get the News!

Yes! I/we would like to join the peace and justice community and receive a free subscription to Peace & Justice News.

I want to volunteer; please contact me.

Electronic Service Requested

Donate online at www.pjcvt.org!

For Social Change

Economic Demand

and Build

For Your Loved Ones

Gift Baskets

Come Create Custom Chocolate Sweets. No Slave Labor was Used. Rights and Guarantees that the Protection of Children’s Rat Trade Ensures

Ethically Sourced Chocolate!

Fall in Love with

Good things for good causes!