World Beyond War Conference Welcomes Beata Tsosie-Peña

By Robin Lloyd, PJC co-founder and member

Our keynote speaker for this May’s Vermont Peace Conference 2018: Building a World Beyond War is Beata Tsosie-Peña from the Santa Clara Pueblo, near Los Alamos, New Mexico. She is a mother, performer, poet, farmer, musician, and member of the Tewa tribe. The conference planning committee generated a large list of possible presenters to send out to stakeholders and she was a top choice. In addition, Rachel Siegel had heard Beata speak at the Peace & Bene Campaign Nonviolence conference in Santa Fe, NM a few years ago and was excited for her to join this event. She was chosen with the hope of pulling in new folks to the peace movement who might be interested in her artistry as well as her intersectional activism.

Beata is also a member of Las Mujeres Hablan (The Women Speaking), a network of activists working in northern New Mexico to protect their peoples and lands from the nuclear weapons industry. Since 1943, Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) has occupied the sacred ancestral homelands of the Pueblo Peoples and displaced Hispanic homesteaders with the establishment of the Manhattan Project on the Pajarito Plateau in the Jemez Mountains. Beata’s home, in the poorest county in the state, is adjacent to the smallest yet richest county, which is the home of Los Alamos Nuclear Lab and has the highest concentration of millionaires in the country.

New Mexico has been and continues to be greatly impacted by every link of the nuclear fuel chain. The organizers of a conference in Albuquerque, NM last winter titled their symposium Dismantling the Nuclear Beast. From uranium mining and enrichment to weapons production and nuclear waste storage, we are quite literally in the belly of the beast. Many NM residents also had the misfortune to experience the explosion of the first atomic bomb, called Trinity, in Almogordo in southern NM one month before little boy and fat boy were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

I had a chance to meet Beata at the Tewa Women United office when I was visiting family in the area this spring. Seated in the comfortable meeting room of the adobe office, Beata described an awakening moment when she first heard the boom of high explosives at the LANL. In addition to designing and coordinating the making of nuclear bombs, LANL now does leading research in “energetic materials;” i.e., explosives. She turned to prayer,
The people have spoken! On Town Meeting Day in March, 55.31% of Burlington residents who voted marked YES on Ballot Item 6, which requested the cancellation of the planned F-35 basing at Burlington International Airport. The ballot item also requests a quieter and safer alternative that would be compatible with a residential area. The measure passed, because voters sought to protect their neighbors in South Burlington and Winooski, especially their children, from extreme jet noise.

In response to the passing of this advisory question, the Burlington City Council partially followed through on its duty to represent the wishes of its citizens. A resolution, written by Councilor Joan Shannon, passed at this week’s City Council meeting. It was preceded by a public hearing jam-packed with folks speaking out mostly against the basing and some in favor. Citizens cited the dangers of this basing, from a veteran coping with PTSD, to mothers trying to protect their children from suffering physical and cognitive impairments. The Chair and Vice Chair of the South Burlington City Council also showed unwavering support for the resolution, and cited 200 home demolitions near the airport, the lawsuit they joined Winooski in, and negative impacts on school children.

The resolution passed 9:3. It was a move in the right direction but lacked the force that the ballot item had and that we had organized for. Councilor Dieng tried to add an amendment that would have strengthened the resolution and mirrored the people’s statement of opposition in the ballot question, but the Council voted the amendment down.

The resolution is now in the hands of Burlington’s Mayor Miro Weinberger as he decides whether to sign or to veto it. If signed, Burlington City Council will ask the Air Force to replace the planned basing of the F35s at the Burlington airport with a mission that would not harm Vermonters. Should the Mayor veto the resolution, the council could override it but would need a ¾ majority -- 8 of the 12 councilors. We don’t know if we would get that.

It has been a long and challenging road for Save Our Skies, and the fight is not over yet, but significant progress has been made. Save Our Skies is more committed than ever to protecting the 6,600 people who would be negatively impacted by the F-35s. As citizens from all walks of life arm themselves with the facts, the courage to stand up for their neighbors, and the political will to make positive change, our goal of keeping the F-35 out of our skies gets closer every day.

Later she heard Arjun Makhijani speak about how cancer studies use as reference a white male. She explained that this does not take into consideration problems with reproductive health. “For indigenous and white women there is no safe level of exposure. Environmental violence harms our bodies.”

She works with local organizations such as the circle of Grandmothers, including her mentor Kathy Sanchez, using a spiritual approach. They do not necessarily take part in the protests at the Lab. “We all have family that have jobs there. Until they have an economic base of their own they are dependent on the nuclear industry.” We need a just solution.

But she supports her Pueblo’s vision of peace. She believes in the practice and preservation of land-based knowledge, spirituality, language, seeds, family, and the Earth. She has dedicated herself to the healing, wellness, and sustainability of her community and the Earth for future generations. Check out her poetry on YouTube. 🎧

For their neighbors, and the political will to make positive change, our goal of keeping the F-35 out of our skies gets closer every day.

[Note: While the organizers of SOS, an Allied Group of the PJC, are working on addressing the noise and crash-rate issues, which are truly valid issues, we at the Peace & Justice Center also see this nuclear-capable war machine to be an abomination, a boondoggle, a wretched waste of fossil fuels, and inappropriate for human use.]
Treaty Compliance Workshop at Peace Conference

Vicki Elson and Timmon Wallis from Northampton, MA will be leading a workshop on treaty compliance with the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty (NWBT).

Vicki is a childbirth educator, doula, and filmmaker. Timmon is a peace educator who lived many years in Scotland near where the UK Trident submarines are based. He has been international secretary of Peace Brigades Intl, and executive director of Nonviolent Peaceforce. They met while advocating for the NWBT and formed the organization NuclearBan US. They seem to have hit it off, as they will be getting married this summer!

So what is nuclear compliance? Their Facebook page states, “Our organization is committed to achieving a world free from nuclear weapons, by getting the US to sign, ratify, and implement the Nuclear Ban Treaty.”

Their mission is “To put moral, legal, economic and public relations pressure on the companies involved in the nuclear weapons industry so that they lobby the government to sign the Nuclear Ban Treaty.”

To build a popular movement across the country that demands adherence to the Nuclear Ban Treaty in every possible sphere and entity.”

Attend the workshop and find out how you can become nuclear compliant.
US Gun Violence and Our Military: A Missing Link

By Rachel Siegel

Being steeped in organizing and activist work, I am fortunate to have as much information as I do and to constantly develop and utilize a lens of interconnected issues. However, that often leads to me being disappointed and critical of what is missing not only in the world generally, but at activist events specifically. I was taken by surprise by the March for Our Lives.

I had the pleasure of not only coordinating buses to DC with Willoughby Carlo, a senior at Mount Mansfield Union High School, but riding on one of the buses and spending the day at the March for Our Lives. We left Friday night at 10pm and arrived in DC at 8am. After a full day in the city at the protest, we got back on the buses at 6pm and arrived back home in Vermont at 4am. Trying to sleep sitting up in a bus two nights in a row in a row in my 47-year old body, with my 11-year old kid half on me the whole time, pretty well wrecked me physically. But as I write this, just two days later, I feel invigorated and motivated far more than before I went.

The youth who initiated this event, were from the predominantly white and affluent city of Parkland, Florida. They addressed the fact that their community has garnered so much media attention because of their privilege, leading to tremendous monetary contributions from celebrities to support the March. I was grateful for the awareness that the kids from Florida shared regarding this. They not only spoke about how anti-violence youth organizing is often overlooked in communities of color, but also shared the stage with speakers from Chicago, LA, and other cities who talked for themselves about the type of gun violence that they live with and the organizing they do in their communities. These kids spoke from their heart about being ignored by the government and covered many overlapping issues such as:

- the violence in urban areas is a symptom of the poverty they live with
- the specific impacts on black girls and women who are too often unnamed by the media. (though I wished there was a mention of transwomen specifically)
- domestic violence and suicide (which is the gun violence that we see most in Vermont).
- police violence.

My main disappointment was not a surprise: they didn’t get into the overlapping issues of military action overseas and violence at home. I wish the connection was made between the assault on people’s lives that is perpetuated by US Military internationally and the NRA’s assault on people’s lives domestically. The connection is extreme capitalism. It is profit over human life. It is despicable and needs to be named.

Kathy Kelly, a US Activist who spends time monthly in Afghanistan, recently wrote a beautiful article called “Teen Solidarity Against the Merchants of Death” which addresses this beautifully. The crux of it is that “the outrage now directed toward the National Rifle Association should also challenge all assaults made by the US military.”

Kelly says, “People often tell me they believe the US military remains in Afghanistan because it wants to eventually control mineral wealth and other resources. But right now, weapon manufacturers like General Atomics and Boeing — which supply the US base in Kandahar with drones, missiles and bombs — are profiting from the perpetuation of war. This profit gives them common cause with arms manufacturers like Sturm Ruger and Sig Sauer earning millions from equipping US police forces as well as deranged killers in US classrooms.”

“Our goal must be to demand that every person around the world agree to stop producing and using weapons,” says Nasir, a high school student Kelly spoke to. Please read the article online http://vcnv.org/2018/03/02/teen-solidarity-against-the-merchants-of-death-kathy-kelly/ to hear from more youth voices in Afghanistan.

When I imagine all the uses for the money that goes into our military budgets (over 50% of the federal discretionary budget -- seriously, over 50%), I see that we could mitigate so many of the problems that create gun violence in urban areas. We could address educational and social service needs. We could help create safer communities. We could mitigate poverty and slow the growing wealth divide.

One of the videos that they showed at the March was of military personnel stating that civilians should not be allowed to own AR-15 assault rifles. They said they were made for killing lots of people in a short time and were therefore only appropriate for military use.

What?! We are at a rally against gun violence and the only mention of the military is that it is fine for them to mass murder people. I was left wondering the same simplistic question as I had when I was a 10 year old, “How can killing people for killing people be right?” War is still a monstrosity in my mind. It is obscene and outrageous. Just like gun violence in schools, on street corners, by police, by abusers. It is all horrific.

Fortunately, this movement that the youth are building is not going away. Many of them will be voting in the midterm elections, and they spoke clearly to the politicians who are taking money from the NRA and refusing to take meaningful action for gun safety. Throughout the rally, they repeatedly chanted “Vote Them Out!” My hope is that as we evolve in this new movement for safer gun legislation, we also address the overlapping issues of the military, the NRA, and violence in our culture as a whole.

While so many heartbreaking stories were told and I cried through parts of the rally, I left with an overall sense of hope. I read recently that “the difference between struggle and despair is hope.” With all these amazing new activists leading the struggle, I think there’s good reason for hope.
The Students Speak

The following students rode on and helped coordinate PJC buses to Washington, DC. Here are some of their initial reflections.

### Sonia John, Rice Memorial High School

I went to DC because the fight for change has been evident long before February of this year. It was important for me to take part and represent the multitude of issues that deserve representation, and of which I feel great passion. The up and coming generation of youth will become the game changers in politics, economics, technology, science, and society as a whole, so adults need to take into consideration our concerns and opinions on factors that pertain to our futures.

### Willoughby Carlo, MMU High School

I have never been inspired more than when I was addressing the politicians who take money from the NRA, chanting, with 850,000 other people, “Enough is Enough” and “Vote Them Out!” This anti-gun violence movement has gained support because of the inspiring, eloquent, and courageous students from Parkland, Florida. And it has gained momentum amongst young people because of the students’ unique connection to gun violence in schools. But it is imperative that as activists, as students, and as people we realize that gun violence is not unique to schools; it is a reality that plagues black and brown communities on a daily basis. It is an issue that has been ignored by the mainstream for too long. It is time that we hear, as Naomi Wadler said, all of “the stories don’t make the front page of every national newspaper, whose stories don’t lead on the evening news.” It is time that we fight for everyone’s life and if it is the kids that have to do it, than it is the kids that will do it.

### Nataleigh Noble, Burlington High School

I am grateful for this experience, because the march reaffirmed for me just how many people believe in this cause. I felt really unified with everyone at the march, especially the marchers who were my age, because it shows that despite what people say about the youth, we can get stuff done.

### Holly Margulius, South Burlington High School

I feel immensely grateful that I was able to attend the March For Our Lives in Washington, DC. Hearing the speakers share their stories and call out the tragic reality of gun violence in our country that is so often overlooked in society and hidden in politics was extremely powerful. The Parkland students recognized that privilege is a large part in the movement that they have been able to start. However, at the rally, it was very clear that they were taking this movement and platform and using it to call out all of gun violence issues in our country especially gun violence in communities of color. Overall, the main thing that I felt coming out of the March For Our Lives was hope. I feel like our generation came together to step up and do what we can to bring the change we know needs to happen in our country.

### Tilly Krishna, Essex High School

I went to DC because after hearing about the recent shootings on the news and specifically the Parkland shooting, I realized that this is a major problem that the government has been ignoring for too long. I wanted this to change and once the March for Our Lives Movement began, I thought that it’d be great to join in so that I could be part of that movement. I am now motivated to keep trying to make as much local change as possible. I’m going to try getting a group of students together to come up with some ideas and go from there but I am positive that I will be doing something after being present at the march.

### Zanevia Wilcox, Burlington High School

In DC I felt hopeful. Hopeful for the future, yes, but also for my own activism. As an activist, you’re often taught it is them against us or that you’re speaking for the minority. In fact I began questioning whether or not I wanted to continue doing social justice work because of that fear that the minority will never be the majority. Being in DC reminded me of why I am committed to this work. Seeing is believing and seeing the incredible amount of people who came to this march to advocate and address such a crucial issue was eye opening. I have thought of these issues before but listening to the people speak from a clear place of frustration, pain, and pass on about the fear of staring down the other side of a gun and being raised in gun/gang related environments was like hearing it for the first time.

### Cory Kuttner, Rock Point School

I went to DC because as a young person who had no say in our last election, protesting is one of the ways I can engage in democracy and get my voice heard. I felt very empowered being there, with thousands of other young people who have are fed up with this constant state of gun violence. I want to remind people who feel hopeless about issues larger than themselves that change is possible, and you do make a difference. The reason that movements are so powerful is because each individual decides that yes, this is something that I can change, rather than just giving up. 😊
Social Justice Symposium
Saturday April 14, 2018, 8:30am-3:30pm
Burlington High School

The Symposium for Social Justice is a daylong event to learn about and share the good work being done in our community. It is put on by the Peace & Justice Center in coordination with Dr. Laura Clemmons, Burlington High School, and our Community Planning Committee.

The Symposium is for community members looking to find out more about what is happening and how to get involved. It is also for community organizations and groups wanting to recruit new participants, members, and volunteers while networking and connecting with other local groups.

Presenting groups/organizations include:
- Let’s Grow Kids
- Champlain Valley Amnesty International
- HOPE Works
- American Civil Liberties Union of Vermont
- Human Trafficking Activism and Awareness Club at UVM
- 350 Vermont
- Digital Civic Underground
- Vermonters For Justice in Palestine (VTJP)
- Black Lives Matter of Greater Burlington
- Rights and Democracy
- Winooski Community Justice Center
- Generation of Social Change
- Vermont Interfaith Action
- Speak Up Roosevelt Forum
- Constitutional Council of Accountability with Law Enforcement Officials VT (CCALEOVT)
- Migrant Justice (Justicia Migrante)
- Justice For All
- Baba Tree International / Play in the Wild!
- Community College of Vermont — Conversation Partners
- Vermont Climate Union
- Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival
- Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ)
- Foster Grandparent & RSVP Programs of United Way of Northwest Vermont
- Planned Parenthood Vermont Action Fund
- Change the Story VT

New this year: Community Conversations including:
From Rebels to Wolves: What is in a Name?, Prejudice 101, Truth or Consequences: Whose History Do We Tell? and more.

Sponsors include:
Burlington High School, UVM Medical Center, Myers Bagels, Love Local Catering, City Market, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, Northfield Savings Bank, UVM Diversity Office, CEDO.

Volunteer Highlight:
Stephanie Solt

Before I retired, I hadn’t been able to volunteer. My son was the Northeast Regional Sales Manager of Ten Thousand Villages at the time. I knew the store on Church Street welcomed volunteers, so upon retirement, each Thursday, I unpacked the shipment. For five years, I enjoyed working behind the scenes in retail. The anticipation of seeing what beautiful items would emerge from each box was great fun and I became the queen of cardboard disposal. In addition, I believed in the mission of the organization to work with those who are too often exploited and subordinated by those of us in the Global North and our free trade systems. An alternative trade system and the movement to build it resonated deeply with me. Then change came to the store and I decided it was time to move on.

Following the presidential election, my husband and I attended an ACLU event at Arts Riot. Along with a handful of grassroots groups, the Peace & Justice Center talked about the work they do and how to get involved. I knew the Center had a store and thought it would be a great fit. Then national elections were held and the need to do something positive locally became even more compelling. I’ve been at the PJC for little more than a year. I help Amy Crosswhite, the Fair Trade Program and Store Manager, with administrative jobs.

I grew up in Maryland during the 50s and 60s. I remember bathrooms and drinking fountains for “colored” people, segregated schools, and my grandmother’s cleaning lady making fried chicken for her each week. In the past few years, I’ve been doing genealogical research on my father’s side of the family. They all lived in and around Baltimore and Annapolis. Some of them were southern sympathizers and owned slaves.

As a child, I was not aware of any of this. It was not discussed in my household. As I’ve spent time in the PJC office working at the computer, I’ve been listening to the talk going on around me and it’s been an education. I am a white privileged female and I am learning the implications of what that means and how to work for equity at home, not just through fair trade in the Global South. I can’t think of anything more worthwhile than giving of your time to help this nonprofit with their educational and retail programs.

My son is now the Executive Director of the Fair Trade Federation of America (proud mama). May 12 is World Fair Trade Day. On May 19th, the PJC will promote World Fair Trade at the Burling-
VERMONT

Poor People’s Campaign
A NATIONAL CALL for MORAL REVIVAL

By Rev. Earl Kooperkamp, PJC member and Tri-Chair, Poor People’s Campaign and Church of the Good Shepherd, Barre, VT

On February 5, 2018, a hundred Vermonters gathered in the Statehouse to launch Vermont’s “Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for a Moral Revival.” This launch was undertaken simultaneously with 31 other states, and now 40 states are involved in this campaign.

I am very excited about this campaign. This is a call to change the moral narrative of our nation and our local communities and then to bring action to building the just and peaceful communities I hope for. The campaign is a call for 40 days of action beginning on Mothers’ Day, May 13, 2018 and ending on June 23, 2018. Each Monday, starting on May 14, there will be non-violent Moral Fusion Direct Actions in at least 40 statehouses throughout the nation. Each week we will highlight a theme:

- Somebody is hurting our people and it has gone on far too long ‒ women, youth, the disabled, and children in poverty, and the right to education
- Connecting systemic racism and economic justice ‒ voting rights and just immigration
- Veterans, our war economy and militarism
- The right to health ‒ ecology, justice and health ‒ water, extreme extraction, climate change and health care
- Everybody’s got a right to live ‒ living wages, guaranteed income, housing and social services

The final action for the 40 day period of the campaign will take place in Washington, DC on June 23 with the theme:

- A new and unsettling force challenging our nation’s distorted moral narrative – a fusion movement rising up

These days of action will include civil disobedience, teach-ins and rallies to get out the word that a new call for moral revival is on the move.

The “Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for a Moral Revival” is based on the campaign initiated by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. fifty years ago. But this is not a commemoration of the work done fifty years ago and tragically cut short by the assassination of Dr. King in Memphis, Tennessee at the sanitation workers’ strike. The call to end poverty, racism and militarism Dr. King made fifty years ago is even more necessary in our current world. In the intervening half century, poverty, systemic racism and the war economy have gotten worse and we are also now more aware of the deadly threat of climate change, especially in its disastrous consequences for the poor.

On April 10, 2018, an audit entitled, “The Souls of Poor Folk” will be released documenting the new realities of increasing poverty in the United States. This empirical documentation demonstrates why the “Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for a Moral Revival” is needed now more than ever. At the release of the audit, specific legislative goals will be given. In Vermont we will use these national goals for a template for specific legislation goals in the next season.

In Vermont we will be participating in a National Day of Training for the campaign on April 14, from 1:00 - 4:00 pm. The training event will take place at the Old North End Community Center, 20 Allen Street, Burlington, VT. During the training, we will cover topics about the background and aims of the campaign, non-violent moral witness and support for the campaign.

Several years ago, Rev. William Barber, the President of the NAACP in North Carolina began a “Moral Mondays” campaign at the North Carolina Statehouse in Raleigh. He would show up to demand action against voter suppression, work for increasing health care and taking care of the poorest in the state. This movement grew from 17 people on the first “Moral Monday” to thousands showing up. As one of the chairs of the “Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for a Moral Revival,” Rev. Barber is urging us all to take his example to every statehouse and legislature. As Rev. Barber says, “It is at the statehouse around the country that the damage is being done.” Vermont will be a part of shining this moral spotlight to call for meeting the needs of the poor and for ending systemic racism and the destruction of our planet and stopping the war economy. I hope you will join with us!

For more information, please see:
- National: www.poorpeoplescampaign.org
- Vermont: www.poorpeoplescampaignvt.org
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/VTPPC/

By Jabari S. Jones, BLMGB spokesperson

“Black Lives Matter!”: a declaration and rallying cry that began in 2013 as a hashtag on Twitter and has grown into a decentralized nationwide and global movement. You can hear it wherever Black people, and people of color in general, are oppressed by systemic and institutionalized racism. Contrary to popular belief, white supremacy has deep and resilient roots in the rocky soil of the Green Mountain state.

From Vermont’s origins as an independent republic established by white settler colonialists who dispossessed the Abenaki and other indigenous peoples of their land, to prominent early Vermonters owning and trading enslaved Africans in contravention of the state constitution, to the eugenics movement and resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1900s, white supremacy has had an unbroken presence in the “Freedom and Unity” state. Today, racial disparities in policing and the criminal and juvenile justice system, economic opportunities and outcomes, and reactionary politics that target undocumented immigrants and refugees demand an organized response.

Beginning in 2015 with the founding of BLMVT, the 2016 election of Donald Trump and increase of white supremacist violence has brought heightened interest in racial justice education, organizing and activism in a state where nearly 7% of the population does not identify as white. A new organization, Black Lives Matter of Greater Burlington (BLMGB), began in the fall of 2017 as a gathering of Vermont racial justice activists who wanted to take a fresh approach to racial justice organizing. The result was the founding of the People of Color Caucus (POCC) in Burlington for the purpose of building a community of solidarity, healing, and collective leadership among self-identified people of color and white allies. The first POCC was founded by Shela Linton in 2016 and is an official program of the Root Social Justice Center in Brattleboro. The POCC centers the needs, vision, and leadership of Black people. White-identified people are invited to join a separate caucus that facilitates anti-racist education and action that is accountable to the POCC leadership.

Monthly Racial Justice Collective Meetings of the combined POCC and white caucuses facilitate an ongoing process of discussion, organization and action aimed at addressing systemic and institutionalized racism in the Burlington area and beyond. Building an intersectional movement is key to dismantling racism in Vermont, and BLMGB has been busy building bridges with other organizations across the state. Currently, we are a member of the Vermont Coalition for Ethnic and Social Equity in Schools, which has introduced legislation, bill H.794, which would require the Agency of Education to adopt statewide ethnic and social equity standards in studies and policy for all Vermont schools. Studies show that racism is learned at an early age, and that Vermont students of color suffer from disproportionate suspensions, expulsions, and juvenile incarceration rates. H.794 will establish a mandate for the state institution of education to go beyond celebrating diversity to eliminating bias, cultivating a culture of inclusion and enriched awareness that includes historically marginalized communities.

Outside of the statehouse, BLMGB also confronts white supremacy in the streets. When Patriot Front, a local branch of a nationwide white supremacist fascist movement that was active during the deadly confrontations in Charlottesville, announced in February that it would stage a rally in South Burlington, the POCC sent out a call for a counterdemonstration. That email found its way through local progressive networks and turned out about 200 people within 24 hours, far outnumbering the Patriot Front contingent, which avoided confrontation and appeared elsewhere the same day.

In the coming months, BLMGB will be initiating organized efforts to address racism in local policing and justice systems, outreach into Black and African American communities, and supporting student-led activism like March For Our Lives and social justice clubs that have raised Black Lives Matter flags at grade level schools as well as colleges and universities. A core part of our strategy towards nurturing a culture of equity and inclusion is building community. In March, BLMGB presented the first “Feed Your Soul Social”, a community potluck that drew about 70 people from all walks of life to mingle with each other and BLMGB organizers. Future gatherings will be specifically designed to attract people of color and provide an environment for fun and fellowship as a healing alternative to spaces that often feel alienating to non-white people. We believe that collective liberation is a process and we are in it for the long haul.

If you’d like to join us, be notified of actions and events, or support us with resources, please visit us on Facebook and our website at www.blmgb.org.
Listen Up, White People!

By Kina Thorpe, PJC Program Assistant and Facilitator

Whenever introducing myself at the start of a PJC program I always make sure to mention that I was born and raised in Vermont. I share this because it gives me some credibility. By sharing those details about my life I’m telling attendees that I’m a Vermonter just like them. Without having to say it directly I’m telling them that although we’ve lived in the same place, I’ve experienced things they probably never knew existed because I’ve grown up here as a biracial woman with brown skin.

I’ve been a part of many PJC workshops since I started working here in June, 2017. I’ve been to Seeing and Disrupting Racism, Privilege & Accountability, Talking with Kids About Racism, and many others. What I’ve found is that facilitating workshops in communities that mirror those that I grew up in is tough. What makes it so difficult is the fact that I know these people. They are my teachers, neighbors, aunts and uncles, and friends. I know they are decent people but I also know that bias has a tight hold on everyone whether you know it or not.

Their words are not unfamiliar to me, I’ve heard them a million times and I’ve given the same responses a million times.

Having a friend or family member of color does not exclude you from being racist, it isn’t alright to ask people of color where they’re “really from,” and you can be a well-meaning white person with no hate in your heart and still perpetuate and benefit from racism.

Although it’s taxing at times, I hope that it is worth it in the long run. Those who seek out our programming do so because they want to understand where they’re wrong. They want to know how they can improve themselves and their community. That is something I can appreciate because I’ve known a lot of people who could never do it. But showing up to one event is not enough. Continue to go to racial justice programs. Please, please throw your expectation of being perfect out the window because the truth is that you will never be. Support racial justice initiatives in your town. Talk to your white friends and family members about racism and stop letting the responsibility fall solely on the shoulders of people of color. Most importantly, allow yourself to be humbled by voices of color when we say that life in Vermont isn’t perfect for everyone.

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World Fair Trade Day Celebration!

City Hall Park, Burlington
Saturday, May 19, 10am-2pm.

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Toxic Whiteness Discussion Group

By Kit Reese

When I started coming to the Peace & Justice Center’s Toxic Whiteness Discussion Group, I wasn’t sure what to expect. In my head, I even scoffed at the idea of an intentionally white discussion — what good could that do us in Vermont, where most conversations center on white people anyway? It never seems appropriate to discuss white pain when people of color are facing threats ranging from constant microaggressions to physical and lethal violence.

Yet in an increasingly diverse Vermont, white allies need to ensure that we are prepared to deal with the damage racism causes us too. Ignoring how racism affects us hinders our ability to be strong, supportive allies. I didn’t allow myself to realize my own pain until I began attending this group. Not that it’s all about us of course — this group aims to provide a space where white people can discuss racism without burdening people of color so that when we are in multiracial spaces, we do not take up emotional space.

Our conversations are casual and intimate, shared between a few regular participants and new drop-ins. We usually begin by reading and discussing a short article together. People ask about each other’s experiences interacting with racism as we share personal anecdotes. The Toxic Whiteness Discussion Group has broadened my definition of toxic whiteness while inspiring me to ask hard questions: is it selfish to consider the effect of racism on me? How do I appropriately acknowledge racism to my friends of color? My questions are never answered, but articulating them with others leaves me with a better sense of the work I have left to do and the knowledge that others are fighting with me.
April 8, Sunday
3-4pm Seeing and Disrupting Racism at PJC. Developed for predominantly white audiences and led by Zymora Davinchi and Netdahe Stoddard. The program defines racism, explores the cycle of how white fragility perpetuates racism and outlines strategies to disrupt this cycle. Sign-up online. Participants are encouraged to arrive at 2:30pm to participate in a PJC New Volunteer Orientation and/or stay for the Prospective Facilitator Gathering.

4-5:30pm: Prospective Facilitator Gathering at PJC. Join us to learn about becoming a facilitator of our educational programs. The evening will include an overview of the programs we offer, an 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 cannot join us in person, we are happy to have you with us via video or phone conference. Light refreshments served. Call 863-2345 x6 or e-mail kyle@pjcvt.org to sign-up.

April 9, Monday
6:30pm Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Monthly Meeting at PJC. Also May 14 and June 11. WILPF is an Allied Group of the PJC.

April 10, Tuesday
6-8pm Nonviolent Engagement in Conflict at Mount Mansfield Union High School Library, 211 Browns Trace Rd, Jericho. Explore how addressing conflict nonviolently can be a positive and effective way to grow and change individually, deepen relationships, and support social justice in all aspects of our lives. This event is being hosted as part of a series in collaboration with MMU students, MMU’s After Dark Program, and the PJC. This is a free event thanks to a grant from the Ben & Jerry’s Foundation.

April 12, Thursday
5:30pm Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Monthly Meeting at PJC. Also May 10 and June 14. WILPF-Burlington is an Allied Group of the PJC.

April 14, Saturday
9-3:30pm Social Justice Symposium at Burlington High School. The symposium will provide community members the chance to learn about local organizations and groups that are focused on social justice and ways they can get involved. See page 6.

April 18, Wednesday
12 noon-1pm Toxic Whiteness Discussion Group at PJC. This space is held specifically to process how white supremacy culture is toxic to white people. The hope is that by joining this space, white people will be better able to allow for the emotional needs of people of color to take priority in multi-racial spaces. Also May 16 and June 20.

April 28, Saturday
10am to noon Will Miller Green Mountain Veterans For Peace monthly meeting at the Kellogg-Hubbard Library, Montpelier. Veterans and others interested are welcome. More info: Richard Czapinski (rczapinski@madriver.com). Also May 26 and June 30.

12-1pm Fair Trade 101. Trade has developed for three reasons: need, greed, or curiosity. The aim of this presentation is to give some background on the history of global trade and how trade has historically come at the expense of marginalizing people in the Global South. Capitalism is part of the many ways that exploitation is carried out. The Fair Trade Movement came about as an alternative trading system to ensure that producers in the Global South are given access to the global market, but also provided with basic human rights. The basic principles of fair trade and our role within the supply chain will be examined.

May 1, Tuesday
Worker’s Rights Day and May Day Rally. Join the Raise the Wage Coalition for an afternoon in the Vermont State House of Representatives to celebrate May Day and the long history of fighting for Worker’s Rights in the US.

May 5, Saturday
8:30am-5pm 3rd Annual Multicultural Youth Leadership Conference presented by Spectrum. At Champlain College. Multiregional conference includes youth and partner led workshops, a keynote speaker, lunch, raffle prizes, entertainment and more. This event is hosted for youth and by youth. Come be involved as a participant or volunteer. Participants must register at www.spcvt.org/MLConf. Program for the event: http://spectrumvt.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/MLC_Pamphlet.pdf

May 12, Saturday
9:30-4:30pm: Vermont Peace Conference 2018: Building a World Beyond War at Old North End Community Center (formerly St. Joseph’s School), Allen St, Burlington. Vermont-focused speakers, workshops, panels, and actions will answer the question: What will it take to build a world beyond war? Details at pjcvt.org/events. See pages 1-3.

May 13, Sunday
3pm Cocoa Campaign presentation focuses on the issue of child slavery and human trafficking in the cocoa industry. Designed to educate, brainstorm solutions and create tangible action steps. At PJC. Arrive at 2:30pm to join PJC New Volunteer Orientation.

May 19, Saturday
World Fair Trade Day: Celebrate ethics in business! Fun kids’ activities, smoothie bike, Fair Trade chocolate samples, international vendors and more! At City Hall Park, Burlington.
CALENDAR

May 26, Saturday
12 noon Fair Trade Labels 101 at PJC. This presentation breaks down the differences between FT Certifications, FT Membership Organizations, and Direct Trade to help us better understand the Fair Trade Movement. Free. Arrive at 11:30am to join the PJC New Volunteer Orientation.

June 9 & 10, Saturday & Sunday
10am-5pm (Sat) and 9am-4pm (Sun) Nonviolence Training: Building the Nonviolence Movement. Burlington area, exact location TBD. The PJC is excited to host this weekend-long program from the Institute for the Study and Practice of Nonviolence (nonviolenceinstitute.org). Dive into the principles and practices of nonviolence developed by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Led by Sal Monteiro and PJ Fox. Fees vary. Register online.

June 10, Sunday
3pm Free Trade vs. Fair Trade at PJC. Learn the basic information about globalization and how policies & practices have paved the way for huge companies to profit at the expense of people and the planet. Shows how the Fair Trade movement & principles seek to, at a minimum, counterbalance these atrocities. Free. Arrive at 2:30pm to join the PJC New Volunteer Orientation.

June 23, Saturday
12 noon Banana Industry Presentation at the PJC. Learn about this oppressive banana industry. Designed to educate, brainstorm solutions, and create tangible action steps. Arrive at 11:30am to join the New Volunteer Orientation.

Core Nonviolence Training

Introduction to the Kingian Principles and Steps of Nonviolence, June 9 & 10, 2018

As a community-based nonprofit organization, The Institute for the Study and Practice of Nonviolence teaches by word and example the principles, practices of nonviolence, and foster a community that addresses potentially violent situations with nonviolent solutions.

By learning Martin Luther King Jr.’s six principles and six steps of nonviolence, participants will come to a greater understanding of nonviolence as a tool for change. Participants will gain the skills and support to help them learn how to solve conflicts without using violence and be encouraged to think critically about the practice of nonviolence in today’s world.

We hope that you will join us for the upcoming 2 Day Core Nonviolence Training as we work together to reflect and engage in dialogue about nonviolence as a way of life. As a participant in this training, you will learn ways to start practicing Kingian nonviolence in your daily life and reflect on how we can together, create a beloved healthy community in all environments, and help us to grow and foster the nonviolence movement in the 21st century.

Consider this an invitation to further impact the movement for change.

Many programs are free. For programs with a fee, no one will be turned away for lack of funds and people under 25 are not expected to contribute financially. For the most current calendar, please check our website: pjcvt.org.

Signs from the March for Our Lives, Washington DC
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I want to volunteer; please contact me:

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$750 Mover

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$1,000 Changemaker

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