As I stand on a grassy knoll overlooking the red-brown winter flatlands of Alabama, the few tall buildings of Montgomery rise in the near distance, illuminated by cold morning sun. Forming the perimeter of a square below me lies the support structure for the memorial, the canopy from which hundreds of rusty steel rectangular monuments hang, one to represent each county in the US where a lynching took place. Each hanging monument, roughly the size of a casket, lists the names of those whose lynching has been documented. Some simply list a series, “Unknown” with the same date. Visitors like me enter at one corner then walk the perimeter path among the hangings, reading names, slowly realizing the impossibility of reading each one, gradually descending below grade until within the earth, as if entombed, before rising out into the light again onto the knoll.

I feel exposed, in view. In public. In a square. I realize I’m meant to be in the public square, all eyes on me, as each of the victims remembered in the memorial below me were once in the public square, tortured and lynched. This is a requirement of terrorism, the public view. The intended victims must know what might happen, just not when or why – random, for trumped up reasons, or for no reason at all. A brutal method of control. I stand in my white skin and feel the weight in my bones.

Outside the square, duplicate steel monuments lie in rows on the ground, waiting to be claimed by the county they belong to, for a memorial on site. I see no empty spots, just row after row of reddish
Farewell Kyle

It is with big emotions that we say farewell to Kyle Silliman-Smith who has been working with the Peace & Justice Center in various capacities since she was a young child helping with newsletter mailings. Kyle was a store volunteer in 2012, then joined the board of directors briefly before rejoining the staff as the interim Store Manager, then interim Assistant Store Manager/Volunteer Coordinator and finally as the Program Manager/Director. She was hired because of her lifelong involvement with peace work and her deep commitment to justice.

Kyle set in motion and actualized many meaningful programs, practices, and events at the PJC. She helped support the organization through its time with no Executive Director. In the past few years, since we launched our educational programs, Kyle has done the bulk of the work developing new facilitators, developing the programs themselves, and making the programs run. She facilitated dozens if not 100s of workshops statewide and has impacted 1000s of people who participated in them.

Kyle’s work with the interns was deeply impactful. The PJC intern program is more than a typical “you work for us for free and we’ll give you something for your resume” type of exchange. We truly cater each internship to the individual we are working with. What I see, over and over again, because of the amount of detail and care that Kyle puts into making this work, is interns leaving with more motivation and skills to carry on our mission far beyond their time at PJC. The internship, in large part because of Kyle, is a program unto itself, and a very effective means to support youth in carrying social justice work from their formal education and into their lives.

Always thinking strategically and beyond her own role, Kyle supported my work as ED, helped the store function, improved the volunteer program, managed the database, was the mastermind of our social media presence, and so much more. She definitely worked with a big picture view in mind while remaining rooted in the reality of what we could get done well.

Kyle is a wonderful friend and was always available to give empathy, brainstorm solutions, and take on projects to support the team. She leaves behind a lasting imprint on our work for which we will always be grateful. Best of luck in all your endeavors Kyle! We’ll miss you!
Stand for Racial Justice, Stand with Kiah Pledge

As Vermonters, it is crucial that we each understand and acknowledge the generational harm that systemic racism causes on the lived experiences of people of color in this state. When a moral society shuns overt acts of racism and bigotry, communities must actively work towards becoming anti-racist in all forms from daily microaggressions and microinvalidations in the workplace or in our schools to championing legal remedies that aim to eradicate inequity.

Therefore, we are asking you to seriously consider taking this pledge.

The Pledge

Following the racist and sexist harassment that led to the resignation of Representative Kiah Morris from her seat, as well as the ongoing ways that people of color in Vermont are marginalized and harmed from both overt and subtle, as well as personal and systemic forms of racism, I am committed to doing more. I pledge to do more to promote meaningful diversity, equity, and inclusion in my life every day. I pledge to work to undo racism in myself and my community.

To put my pledge in action, I promise to learn more about the history and impacts that systemic racism has in our lives. As such, in signing this pledge, I agree to actively participate in the Peace & Justice Center’s Stand for Racial Justice/Stand with Kiah statewide reading program. As a first step, I will read at least one of the following books and join a discussion group.

Please sign and share the pledge online at our website pjcvt.org or on our social media.

The books to choose from:
- The Hate U Give by Angie Thompson
- The Fire This Time: A New Generation Speaks About Race by Jesmyn Ward
- A People’s History by Howard Zinn
- Black is the Body by Emily Bernard
- Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America by Ibram X. Kendi

How the reading program works:

Facilitated discussions will be hosted in various locations around the state and all participants will have the ability to participate via video-conference as well. There is a fee of $50 to participate but no one will be turned away for lack of funds. $5.00 from each registration will go to Kiah’s gofundme to support her family.

Wherever possible, a limited number of books will be available to those who need to borrow one at no cost. You do not have to participate in each discussion or reading, but a minimum of one book discussion is expected.

Dates and locations of the book discussions will be available online at pjcvt.org. So far, locations include Bennington, Burlington, Cabot, Grand Isle, Montpelier, and St. Albans.

After the reading group:

You will be added to an online forum for folks to continue to work in community to address racism. Ideas that might be explored include hosting racial justice educational workshops or film screenings; more book discussions; sharing resources; and joining racial justice action groups as members, donors, and/or volunteers (eg Justice for All, Migrant Justice, Black Lives Matter Greater Burlington, NAACP Windham County or Rutland Area, or the Peace & Justice Center).

The Hate U Give

Marianne Hunkin, who will be facilitating the discussion on The Hate U Give, shares her thoughts on the book and the importance of this particular discussion.

When I read The Hate U Give, I could not put the book down. I woke up thinking about it and I stayed up late to read one more chapter. The story centers sixteen-year-old Starr who moves between the poor neighborhood where she lives and a private prep school she attends. She’s constantly alternating between different versions of herself depending on her location. She does everything she can to keep these two worlds separate. That all changes when she witnesses her childhood friend Khalil fatally shot by a police officer.

It is crucial that young people participate in discussions and actions to dismantle racism. In choosing a book to discuss, we decided it is important to include a book that speaks to the experience of young people. Although the book is appropriate for adults, and we hope all will read it. This book discussion will center the voices and experiences of young people.
Trump is recklessly threatening a nuclear arms race and Vermont Is Ground Zero

By James Ehlers, CANBVT Campaign Manager

President Trump plans to spend over 1.5 trillion dollars to create new generation of nuclear weapons, and according to the Department of Defense, his newest nuclear bomber will be the F-35, based right here in Vermont.

Concerned Vermonters including notable leaders like Gaye Symington, Bill McKibben, Ben Cohen, Col. Rosanne Greco, Ali Dieng, and hundreds more have organized a group called Citizens Against Nuclear Bombers in Vermont (CANBVT.org), to rally against nuclear weapons and push our legislature to take action.

The legislature is currently considering a resolution that would oppose the basing of any nuclear weapon system in the state. The resolution categorically states that, “The Vermont Legislature and the people of Vermont direct the Governor and the members of our Congressional Delegation to inform the Department of Defense that no nuclear weapon delivery system will be allowed to be based in Vermont.”

The F-35A nuclear bomber is built and modified for the B61-12 nuclear bomb with the potential to cause more than three times the 150,000 casualties in Hiroshima. The “usable nuke,” as some military personnel call it, poses a frightful threat to human life. It’s so-called “dial-a-yield” function means the explosive force can be varied from more than 3 times the force of the Hiroshima bomb, to 0.3 times. At the lower level it increases the likelihood that this bomb will be used, giving way to an escalation of brutal and immoral acts of war.

Not only do we face the moral risk of Vermont being complicit in a calamitous nuclear war, but Vermont will become a nuclear target. Whether or not the nuclear bombers in Vermont are ever tasked with a nuclear mission, the Department of Defense has publicly stated that the F-35 will be nuclear capable and therefore a target to any enemy looking to strike the US. That’s because international nuclear weapons strategy is to target delivery vehicles (bombers, not the bombs).

These new nuclear bombers don’t just threaten Vermont, they endanger our nation. In a recent Vermont Digger article, retired Air Force colonel and CANBVT founding member, Col. Rosanne Greco voiced her concern. “Our current nuclear strategy is MAD: Mutually Assured Destruction.” She goes on to explain that, “The MAD theory holds that if any country launches a nuclear strike, the other country will retaliate in kind, which will end most life in both countries and perhaps on earth.”

Trump’s absurd display of nuclear aggression is highlighted by the president’s decision last year to withdraw the US from the 2015 Iran Nuclear Deal. Following an unpopular move that contradicted its allies, the US placed higher sanctions on the oil-rich nation instead. Despite the appalling hypocrisy of that decision, many believe it exposes the Trump administration’s potential push for regime change.

The fact of the matter remains – this administration cannot be trusted to handle even the mundane tasks of governing let alone the fate of humanity. Trump’s presidency is a reminder that no president should have the singular power to destroy the world. With some Vermonters on the frontline, we need to help lead the nation in rejecting any part of the new nuclear weapons regime.

The beginning of the end of nuclear weapons can start in Vermont. Nuclear war is immoral. Reasonable, caring people need to say no. Not in my name and not with my money. Sign the petition and find more info online at CANBVT.
Welcome Jas

By Rachel Siegel

With Kyle’s departure came a silver lining. We decided to reconfigure our staffing in order to create a Community Engagement Manager. We have hired Jas Wheeler to that position and are excited for the experience, skills, and passion that they bring. The scope of this position is potentially very wide but will include being a liaison/support person for protests that continue to happen regularly across the state and across a wide range of issues; working with legislative and other coalitions that we have often not had capacity to support; coordinating some of our larger annual events like the Peace Conference and the Youth Activist Summit; seeing where there are gaps in the needs of activists and perhaps initiating work to fill those gaps; and generally building relationships that will allow us to work more effectively and authentically in our fights for peace and justice.

We are so excited to work, learn, play, and continue to chip away at patriarchy, white supremacy, colonialism, capitalism, and militarism together with Jas.

Jas is a Pisces, originally raised up by their mother and grandmother in rural Ohio. Since moving to Vermont in 2014, Jas has worked as a rape crisis advocate, youth outreach worker, and substance abuse clinician. Their professional and community organizing work has been inspired by the strengths gathered from their lived experience as a Black Chicana trans survivor, and their ancestors that have come before. They seek to create spaces for survivors, workers, and all people on the margins within ever institutionalized and professionalized social justice movements. Jas is committed to honoring other people’s truths, and their own, as they seek to support their community at the convergence of all their identities and experiences.

They’re the co-founder of Processing Project LLC (check it out at https://www.processingproject.com/). Outside of work vibes you can find them reading, playing/watching basketball, or talking to their plants.

Why I Volunteer

By Nataleigh Noble

I started interning at the Peace & Justice Center (PJC) over a year ago, when I was a junior at Burlington High School. As a Fair Trade Intern, I learned about fair trade labels, where cocoa comes from, and safe labor practices. I helped plan events and create games. I was able to work in the store and learn about the different products we sell and who and where they come from. The PJC provided me tangible ways of making a difference. I decided to continue volunteering after my internship was complete. The longer I volunteer at PJC, the more I realize how amazing this community is.

My favorite part of volunteering here is the people I get to interact with. PJC provides a safe and comfortable space for community members to share ideas, expand their perspectives, and learn from each other. Last spring, I attended the Social Justice Symposium at Burlington High School, an event put on by PJC. The school was filled with people who wanted to teach and be taught about social justice issues. My favorite session, Generation for Social Change, was exclusively for youth. Students from different high schools and middle schools across Vermont sat in a circle and discussed the most prevalent issues we found at our schools. It was incredibly powerful to come together on our own terms and have an authentic conversation, especially in the wake of the Parkland shooting and the student activism that had taken place across the nation. We created a group chat, and still communicate from time to time. This experience helped me better apply the issues and activism I see on the news in my own community.

I volunteer at the PJC because it brings people together. From the way the organization is run, to the free discussions and presentations, to the delicious chocolate tastings, the PJC is a place where connections are born and fostered. Anyone can create change, but it definitely helps to have an entire community behind you.

Human connection is one of the most powerful tools we have, and the Burlington community would be hard pressed to find an organization that brings people together better than the PJC.

Bridget Manning and Nataleigh Noble
brown steel block monuments, cassette-like. Perhaps each will be claimed in time; the site – the National Memorial for Peace and Justice – is new. As I wander through the long stretches of Alabama counties, Louisiana, Mississippi, I find myself hurrying, looking for Vermont, breathing a sigh when there is no block monument there. As if my state is not culpable, as if my family of Northerners did not participate in the commonwealth of the country, did not benefit from slavery, all the de facto and de jure discrimination and oppression of African-Americans. As if today, I don’t benefit. As if a prominent African-American woman has not recently been a target of racial terror – in Vermont. As if racism is not woven into the fabric of my state just as surely as it is in the South.

Back again at the entrance, I gaze at the sculpture of men, women, a woman holding a child, connected together by rusty chains and collars, and think of a fellow traveler’s question: “How could people have done this to other people, to children?” I gaze at this sculpture and feel myself transported back in time, a white person gazing at human beings in rusty collars and chains, meant to see human beings as less than human. I have no answer to her question, but I think of all the ways we dehumanize, still.

I’m traveling with a group sponsored by the Peace & Justice Center, for me a step in the process of interrogating what it means to be white in America, what my whiteness means. The process, I know, will continue until I die and still be unfinished. We are a diverse traveling group across multiple identities. I’m grateful for the multiplicities of perspectives and the willingness of all to engage in complex dialogue. Nothing about our history is simple.

Across town we enter the Legacy Museum, set within a large red-brick warehouse where enslaved people were held in cells after the trip down the river or on the train, until they were sold at the nearby slave market. In the period leading up to the Civil War, Montgomery became a major hub of the domestic slave trade, the massive, forceful transference of enslaved people from the Upper South to the Lower South after Congress outlawed the transatlantic slave trade. Here again we are asked to feel, to move beyond intellectual knowledge and historical facts, although those are all effectively presented. We gaze at families brutally separated by the domestic slave trade, children crying out for their mothers, mothers searching for their children, as if even today, we need to be shown that enslaved people were fully human, made families, loved, were loved, were worthy of being loved. A wall forming a black and white timeline narrates the progressive stages of enslavement, the failure of reconstruction after the Civil War, the rise of Jim Crow and the terror of lynching, and most recently, mass incarceration – in all, the morphing strategies used to deny full humanity, citizenship and the right of self-determination to African-Americans. The evidence is clear and cannot be questioned. Black and white.

Mass incarceration. There is no arguing with the data: the US prison population increased from roughly 200,000 in the 1970s to well over 2 million today. African-Americans are more likely to get arrested than whites, more likely to get convicted if arrested, and more likely to receive harsher sentences if convicted.1 A teenager in the 1980s, I well remember the media hype over crime rates, the negative messaging about welfare mothers, the need to “crack down on crime” and “wage a war on drugs,” all designed to repudiate the positive gains made during the civil rights movement, a backlash and a modern means to dehumanize, to terrorize. But what I sit with is the black and white photo toward the end of the timeline wall, a black boy standing on a stool or crate so he can reach the counter where a full grown, tall, white police officer manipulates his hand to take his fingerprint.

What I hear, from a nearby booth, is the older black man speaking in a recording from prison, telling me how he was wrongly arrested, tried and convicted of a crime he did not commit, sentenced to life in prison without parole, then asking me “what would you do?” I believe he meant what would I do if this injustice happened to me. The question I ask myself, though: What will I do to prevent this injustice from happening to anyone.

Near the end of our visit, we meet a young man who was sentenced to life without parole when he was 14 years old for his participation in an armed robbery. The Equal Justice Initiative challenged his sentence as cruel and unusual punishment, ultimately taking the case to the Supreme Court and winning a new sentence. He spent 16 years in prison. Raised in prison. I try to imagine that experience and fail. Now, he tells us he volunteers at the museum and has traveled to give inspirational speeches. His faith and hope inspire and humble me.

Leaving the museum, we round the corner where I stop and reflect on a quote by Maya Angelou, painted in large black typeface on a white background on the outside of the building: “History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again.”

I cannot come away from these experiences without an urgency – an imperative – to imagine a truly equitable society and to join in building the community required to work together to achieve it. Bryan Stevenson, founder of the Equal Justice Initiative, the memorial, and museum, wrote in his book Just Mercy, that as a criminal defense lawyer he tells each of his clients, “Each of us is worth more than the worst thing we have ever done.” I hope collectively, we are worth more than the worst thing we have done. I hope collectively, we are worth recovering, reconciling, and repairing.

1 The Sentencing Project: https://www.sentencingproject.org/criminal-justice-facts/
Banana Land: Blood, Bullets & Poison

By Ariane Goldsmith, PJC Intern

After studying environmental justice for a few years, I have come to understand that the majority of production under capitalism is exploitative and deadly. Learning about case studies that expose environmental injustices worldwide has ingrained a "disappointed but not surprised" attitude in my mind. Still, every time I learn about another example of how capitalism and human greed has let us down, I feel even more committed to the movement toward justice.

The 2014 documentary Banana Land: Blood, Bullets and Poison exposes the atrocities committed by Chiquita Brands International, Dole Food Company and Del Monte Foods. These corporations create banana republics (countries with economies that rely on the exportation of resources for foreign corporations) in the Global South.

The film begins with the story of banana plantations in Colombia in the early 20th century and the consequent Santa Marta Massacre on December 6, 1928. On this day, banana workers were protesting their unjust working conditions when the United Fruit Company (Chiquita's predecessor), the Colombian government, and the United States embassy labeled the protesters as "communists and radicals" and justified murdering over 1000 people in the crowd. This massacre set the stage for the injustices that continue today in banana republics. Chiquita hired Las Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, recognized as a terrorist group by the US, to terrorize Colombian communities into remaining subjects of Chiquita's banana republic. Members in charge of corporate Chiquita chose murder and terrorism to maintain their money-making exploitations.

The role of the Green Revolution in environmental injustice is horrifying as well. When chemicals were left over from World War II, the factories producing war materials switched from tanks to tractors and from chemical weapons to pesticide sprayers. Subsequently, Latin America became a testing ground for industrial agriculture. It did not benefit from the chemical regulations that happened in the United States as a reaction to Rachel Carson's Silent Spring and the resulting environmental movement of the 1960's and 1970's. Even today, banana farm employees are subjected to chemicals that have been banned in the United States, like dibromochloropropane, or DBCP, a pesticide that causes male sterility. Nobody told the workers that the conditions of their job would result in their inability to have children.

This act of environmental racism is a deliberate decision of the chemical companies and the farm owners. Another horrifying example of the environmental racism in these banana farms is their presence in communities who are frequently sprayed with chemicals because of their proximity to the fields. Nobody told these communities about the coming pesticide fumigations or their serious biological effects. Now, a large percentage of the children born in these communities after industrial banana production began have been born with birth defects.

Banana Land shows once again that science, business, and agricultural practices are not neutral. Americans rely on the Global South for cheap goods and foods, not conscious of their contribution to exploitation and murder when supporting companies like Chiquita. We expect goods to be cheap because exploitative labor systems have become normalized in the global free trade system, with countries in the Global North benefiting from blood, bullets, and poison flowing freely in the Global South.

When I learned about the fair trade movement as an answer to the daily evils of free trade corporations, paying slightly more for fair trade bananas and other products became important to me. We must chip away at this broken system by shifting our need for cheap goods to a need for compassionate relationships, fair economies, and healthy communities. What we do not pay for in the price of a product, the workers producing our goods do.

April 17, Wednesday
7-9pm, Screening of Banana Land: Blood, Bullets and Poison, Davis Center, Room 422, UVM. This documentary examines the supply chain between Central America and the US, uncovering the practices that have sustained this industry for over a century.

April 27, Saturday
2-3pm, Banana Industry Presentation, PJC. PJC Learn about the oppressive banana industry. This talk is designed to educate, brainstorm solutions, and create tangible action steps that fit each participant.
Robin’s Trip to Haiti

By Robin Lloyd

As the plane entered the glide path down to the Port-au-Prince airport I looked out and saw burning tires in the major intersections. It was Monday at 2pm, February 11. I had been enticed to go to Haiti by my friend June Levinsohn. We were going to meet a few days later at the Paul Farmer hospital in Mirebalais, a town about an hour’s drive from PAP and June had arranged for a friend to pick me up. Raymond was there, with two friends and a car, but there was no way they could take me to the hotel in town past the barricades. Luckily I had a phone number of the home of Carla and Ron Bluntschi and the headquarters of their foundation.

My mission was to return the animated paintings made by some of Haiti’s foremost artists for our film Black Dawn to a museum or gallery in Haiti that would value them and display them. Why should I keep these beautiful paintings in my dark basement? Maybe it was a ritualistic act of taking creative objects back to their homeland – as Burlington artist Sally Linder carried paintings she had created of the primates who burned to death in the Philadelphia zoo, back to the forests they came from in Africa.

As all transportation on major thoroughfares were blocked, there was no possibility of visiting museums or galleries. No phones were answered. The demands by grassroots groups that the president of Haiti step down went unanswered too, and the protests continued. My mission has been put on standby as have so many other hopes for Haiti.

So I had time to get to know Ron and Carla, their unusual personal trajectory, and their organization We Will Remember. And I had time to read a troubling book: Travesty in Haiti: A true account of Christian missions, orphanages, fraud, food aid and drug trafficking.

Ron and Carla are former evangelical Christians who have lived in Haiti since 1985. Ron had visited Haiti while in the US military, and after obtaining a masters degree in agronomy, he found an opening to work with the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) on an agronomy project to ‘improve food security’ in the Artibonite valley.

In the ‘80s, the valley was the center of rice production and Haiti was producing 40% of its own food. In 1986, after the expulsion of Haitian dictator Jean Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) loaned Haiti $24.6 million in desperately needed funds. (Baby Doc had raided the treasury on the way out.) But, in order to get the IMF loan, Haiti was required to reduce tariff protections for their Haitian rice and to open up the country's markets to competition from outside countries.

Ron and Carla witnessed how neoliberalism and development led to the rice tragedy and impoverishment in Haiti.

But Ron and Carla felt a strange hope at that time. They were working with rural leaders who were energized by the Catholic progressive doctrine of liberation theology and who worked through small groups and ‘conscientization.’ Ron had first come to understand that nonviolence is bravery after seeing the Gandhi film in 1984. He was later especially moved by the writings of Walter Wing. In Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination, Wing describes

Haiti and Venezuela’s long relationship: Oil and Revolution

In 1816, Simon Bolivar, a military leader from Venezuela who sought to gain independence from Spain of the countries of Latin America, was down on his luck and fled to Haiti, the only slave-free country of the Americas. Petion, one of the leaders of Haiti at that time, offered to help Bolivar on condition that he grant freedom to the slaves in his region. He won, and granted freedom, and so began the Bolivarian revolution, that is now on the verge of crumbling due to the onslaught of US government.

Today, the people of Haiti are angry. On the one hand, they are grateful for the solidarity of the Chavez/Maduro ‘Bolivarian’ government for providing them with cheap oil since 2008 through the Petrocaribe Alliance. But they are angry at their president Jovenel Moise for biting the hand that fed them, and aligning with US government sanctions against Venezuela. They are doubly angry that the oil Alliance which was intended to provided the country with cheap credit and improved social services, was misspent, and misplaced by the governing elite imposed by the US government in 2011.

Jesus’ third way of dealing with the enemy/oppresor – neither fight nor flight but nonviolent resistance.

Meanwhile, the democracy movement was growing. In the Artibonite Valley, peasants blocked the cheap rice imports from the US (called ‘Miami rice’) in order to protect their own rice production. Ron said, “I’ve seen the Haitians work in solidarity. But the low price of rice caused them to break unity.” Many farmers had to give up and move to the city.

After that, with the influx of humanitarian aid, the people became accustomed to handouts. Living in housing provided for foreigners, Carla had a hard time turning people away. They moved to another part of the country in a house with no electricity. Carla homeschooled their two daughters and later worked a stint at the main office of the MCC in Port-au-Prince.

Ron says that work in Haiti usually does more good for the volunteers than the residents. He has sensed among some of the Haitian people he has worked with that “there is a subconscious desire to sabotage; to pretend to accept but then reject. It’s a deep complex. PTSD: Post Traumatic Slavery Syndrome. The world needs to understand…they’ve never been given time to recover from slavery.”

After the short democracy moment of the presidency of Jean Bertrand Aristide was snuffed out, the Bluntschlis provided secret sanctuary to Aristide partisans.

Two decades later, after the earthquake of 2010, they provided a home for a family of five in their guest house, for five years.

The earthquake had an enormous physical and psychological impact on everyone but especially young people. “Kids grown up since the earthquake are rootless,” Ron said. “They are being blown by the wind. They reject cultural traditions. The Christian paradigm isn’t working for many of them. Voodoo is trying to present more positive choices. I’ve come to appreciate it.”

Working in international development means that you need an office, an administrator and project money coming in all the time. “We came back to the US in 2001 to sort things out, and then came 9/11 and the repeated question that no one really wanted the answer to: Why do they hate us?” They got disgusted with the paranoia sweeping the US and returned to Haiti to build their permanent home. “I don’t want to ‘do development’ any more, but we both want to live here.”

I read Travesty in Haiti, written by an American anthropologist turned aid worker when I returned home and ordered his new very explicit post earthquake expose The Great Haiti Humanitarian Aid Swindle. There I read, writ large, with charts and graphs, the story Carla and Ron have lived through. It is the story of the disastrous effects of economic engineering by foreign governments and international aid organizations such as the World Bank and USAID and the many corporate charities that have sprung up in their service.

Haiti has devolved into a republican paradise – the federal government is disempowered: everything is privatized and deregulated, the environment be damned.

And now, with the current crisis, the elite itself is fostering unrest. Ron’s summary: “They want to bring back the US troops so they will be protected.”

The Bluntschlis have, through their foundation, turned to education dedicated to the processes of remembrance. Their goal is to “contribute to the global healing of collective wounds left by the traumatic historical encounter between the African, Amerindian, and European peoples and their descendants, through a deep remembrance of that history and the ancestral times preceding it.”

Unfortunately, while I was there, Carla received notice of the cancellation of two youth groups that were going to take part in an immersion week with the foundation this spring. For more information and to make a donation, visit their website at http://www.wewillrememberhaiti.org/.

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**PJC Facilitators**

**Tanaisha Coleman**

Being a woman of color navigating complex spaces has helped me cultivate awareness of how privilege and oppression can flex, so I want to help others with their social justice journey. Since high school, advocating for others and being a part of organizations that embrace differences has been a passion for me. Additionally, the climate of our country and world has motivated me to make proactive strives to shift norms and develop equitable practices. Thus, being a facilitator for the Peace & Justice Center is another intentional move to educate others and build adaptable inclusive communities.

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**Kiran Waqar**

I want to work with the PJC because I think the work they do is essential, especially in a state like Vermont. This work is important to me because I believe it’s important to be cognizant of the privileges each of us hold and how we can use that power to create change.
April 8, Monday
● 6-7:30pm Vermonters for Justice in Palestine (VTJP) meeting. PJC. Also May 13 and June 10.

April 9, Tuesday
● 7-9pm Seeing and Disrupting Racism, Montpelier Senior Activity Center. This program was developed for predominantly white audiences because efforts to end racism does not fall solely on those oppressed. In it the group will explore what racism is and why it is often difficult for white communities (and individuals) to see it. It will include going through the concept of white fragility and specific ways to disrupt racism. This event is being hosted as part of a series put together in collaboration with the Montpelier Senior Center, consider joining more of these curated events.

April 11, Thursday
● 5:30-7pm Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) meeting. PJC. Also May 9 and June 13.

● 7-8pm Learning Nonviolence: Lunch Counter Sit-In, Richmond Free Library. The year is 1960. An African American college student (a fictional composite character) is conducting a training session for people interested in joining a student sit-in to protest racial segregation. The student speaks about recent protests and coaches members of the audience in the philosophy and tactics of nonviolent direct action. This program is part of a partnership with the Richmond Public Library and the Vermont Humanities Council in connection with the 2019 Vermont Reads book “March: Book One” by civil rights icon John Lewis. Participants will be offered a free copy of this book upon signing up while supplies last.

April 17, Wednesday
● 12 noon-1pm Toxic Whiteness Discussion Group, 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. Free. Also May 15 and June 19.

● 7-9pm, Screening of Banana Land: Blood, Bullets and Poison, Davis Center, Room 422, UVM. 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. Raffle for homemade fair trade banana bread. This National #BananaDay. Don’t just celebrate: educate! Free.

April 18, Thursday
● 6-8pm, POC in VT Affinity Group, PJC. This is a monthly gathering for POC to share their experiences and explore their identities. You do not have had to attend previous meetings in order to come. Free. This space is also held on May 16 and June 20, the monthly topics vary.

April 27, Saturday
● 2-3pm Banana Industry Presentation, PJC. Learn about the oppressive banana industry. This talk is designed to educate, brainstorm solutions, and create tangible action steps that fit each participant. Stick around after the event to learn about volunteer opportunities at PJC.

April 29, Monday
● 5:30-6:45pm Prospective Facilitator Gathering, PJC. Join us to learn about becoming a facilitator of our educational programs. 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: nonviolence, 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. Free. To register call Kina at 863-2345 x9 or email program@pjcvt.org.

May 7, Tuesday
● 7-9pm, Learning Nonviolence: Activism 101, Richmond Free Library. Participants learn aspects of Kingian Nonviolence, build knowledge of successful nonviolent campaigns, explore how their own identities impact this work, and engage in role play. Designed to help unlock ways to work towards social justice and peace without perpetuating cycles of violence. This program is happening as part of a partnership with the Richmond Public Library and the Vermont Humanities Council in connection with the 2019 Vermont Reads book “March: Book One” by civil rights icon John Lewis. Participants will be offered a free copy of this book upon signing up while supplies last.

May 11, Saturday
● 8am-2pm World Fair Trade Day. Celebrate ethics in business! Fun kids’ activities, smoothie bike, Fair Trade chocolate samples, international vendors and more! New Location: Farmers Market, 345 Pine St, Burlington.

May 19, Sunday
● 12:30-5:00pm Rutland Social Justice Symposium and Block Party, Rutland High School. Are you looking for a way to get involved in social justice work but unsure of where to start? Come learn about groups working in the Rutland area that need more people power! The day will end with a Rutland-style block party from 4-5pm! $15 general public; free under 25. No one turned away for lack of funds. Snacks included! The PJC is working with a Planning Team that includes organizers from: Rutland Area NAACP, Rutland Free Library, Castleton Indivisible, Rutland Unitarian Universalist Church, Grace Church, Turning Point Center, and Rutland High School.
May 21, Tuesday

• 7-9pm Film Screening *The Way Home: Women Talk About Race in America*, Montpelier Senior Activity Center. 64 women representing a cross-section of cultures (Indigenous, African-American, Arab/Middle Eastern, Asian, European-American, Jewish, Latina, and Multiracial) came together to share their experience of racism in America. The women speak their hearts and minds about resistance, love, assimilation, standards of beauty, power, school experiences, and more. Their candid conversations offer rare access into multi-dimensional worlds invisible to outsiders. *The Way Home* is rich with stories and experiences that will provoke conversation. This event is being hosted as part of a series put together in collaboration with the Montpelier Senior Center. It will include a short facilitated discussion following the film.

May 25, Saturday

• 2-3pm, Cocoa Campaign, 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 each participant. People are encouraged to arrive at 1:30pm to participate in a PJC New Volunteer Orientation. Free.

June 16, Sunday

• 3-5pm Disrupting Racism Role Play Workshop, Montpelier Senior Activity Center. This session will include practicing disrupting racism. It is highly recommended that participants attend at least one of the educational offerings from the Peace & Justice Center before participating in this program.

June 22, Saturday

• 2-3pm, Fair Trade 101: Global Trade & Racism, PJC. This presentation touches on the history of global trade and how it has historically come at the expense of marginalizing native nations. 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, and provided basic human rights. Stick around after the event to learn about volunteer opportunities at PJC. Free.

Black Beauty

• This new PJC program was designed by people of African ancestry to help others of African ancestry understand the relationship between the destruction of black beauty and its connection to anti-black racism. The hope is to help people build skills to dismantle internalized oppression within themselves, the black community, and address colorism and texturism. As we go to press, the date has not been solidified. Keep checking the website: pjcvt.org.

Check out the PJC Lending Library!

*By Debbie Krug, PJC Volunteer, Member, and Avid Reader*


The book explores how Vermont’s 1777 legislative stance outlawing slavery was more complex than as a simple win for abolition. Violations of this law against adult slavery were flagrant and common, including violations by Vermont Supreme Court Judge Stephen Jacob and Levi Allen, brother of the military leader, Ethan Allen.

The constitutional provision carried no penalty or enforcement clause at all, although such a clause could have easily been added once it became known how Vermont’s powerful were still choosing to violate it. The text of the provision also states that male slaves become free at the age of 21 and females at the age of 18, which means that it is written that children may legally remain enslaved and be bought and sold across state lines before reaching the age of majority.

When Vermont joined the union in 1791, the state complied with the federal fugitive slave acts preventing the assistance of people fleeing enslavement. Culturally, Vermonters saw themselves as a free, upright, and rugged people who were taking a stance against their own “enslavement” by New York or the British, but also blamed enslaved African people for their enslavement, viewing them as unequal and feeble-minded rather than welcoming them into the struggle for freedom.

I found it to be very interesting and appreciated learning nuanced historical influences and factors that are absent even as common knowledge and pride of the constitutional provision endures. Harvey Amani Whitfield’s work is well researched, and fairly short (about 41 pages of text).

Abolish slavery in the VT Constitution

Justice For All is organizing a legislative effort to ensure clarity around the complete abolishment of slavery in the Vermont Constitution and to serve as a foundation for addressing systemic racism in our State’s laws and institutions. Contact Mark Hughes, Executive Director of Justice For All and Coordinator of Vermont Racial Justice Alliance at mark@justiceforallvt.org, 802.532.3030, or http://justiceforallvt.org/
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