

VOICES

FOR CREATIVE NONVIOLENCE

NOVEMBER 2012

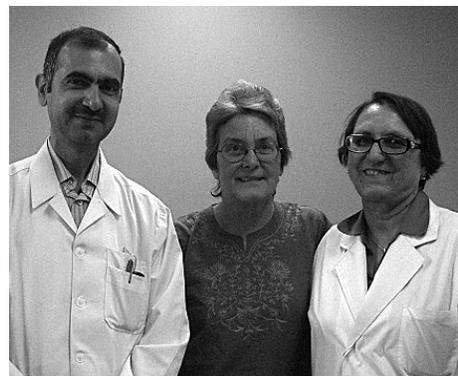
Dear Friends,

As we write, Israeli attacks against Gaza are escalating. Following a terrifyingly familiar pattern, the world's fourth largest military is once again brutally assaulting one of the world's most densely-packed civilian populations, who are left with no means of taking cover from punishing, sustained aerial bombardment. As we fearfully await news, our office is a-bustle with last-minute preparations; on Thursday, three of us, (Josh Brolier, Johnny Barber and Kathy Kelly), are joining the team of international activists headed to Cairo with an intent to enter Gaza in solidarity with those suffering there. Please urge legislators and the Obama administration to pressure the Israeli government to end these war crimes before there is even one more casualty, Palestinian or Israeli.

Last week was kinder. On Sunday we enjoyed a meal with peace studies teachers from around the region, teachers who had each graciously invited us into their classrooms, encouraging their students to volunteer with us. The following evening we'd hosted another simple supper to help celebrate the publication of Rosalie Riegle's book "Doing Time for Peace," and also to say farewell to Voices Co-coordinator Brian Terrell, who turns himself in on November 30th to Yankton Federal Prison in South Dakota, where he will serve six months for helping expose the criminality of drone warfare conducted from Missouri's Whiteman Air Force Base.

And the night after that, Buddy Bell had returned from Kabul, Afghanistan, where he'd been living with our friends the Afghan Peace Volunteers, helping them to launch "the duvet project," and to build outreach for the "2 Million Friends" campaign.

In our last newsletter, we wrote of our efforts to bring two Afghan Peace Volunteers, Abdulhai and Ali, to the U.S. as participants in the U.S.- Mexico "Caravan of Peace" tour. Despite a fine outpouring of support from our friends across the nation and worldwide, the



Cathy Breen in Baghdad with Dr. Salmat and Dr. Mazin U.S. Embassy refused their request. Nonetheless the Caravan's cross country tour successfully reached thousands of people, some through our own campaign.

Participants raised crucial issues about the foolhardy war on drugs which has exacerbated violence and impoverishment in the U.S., Mexico, and Afghanistan. Mexican spokesperson Javier Sicilia remembered the 1933 repeal of Prohibition, in delivering the following demand in numerous cities along

the route: "We ask the citizens of the United States and the government of Barack Obama to remember President Roosevelt and like him, in a gesture of defending democracy and its freedoms, decree, along with the Mexican government and governments of the world, the end to the war on drugs. So that together we put a stop to the banks that launder money and reduce the real crime: corruption, human trafficking and extortion and to seek together in compassion, justice for the suffering families of the victims, the orphans, widows and those who have lost our children in this absurd war."

Although genuinely disappointed when the U.S. refused to issue visas for Abdulhai and Ali, the APVs graciously decided to invite solidarity activists to be their guests on December 10, 2012, International Human Rights Day. A dozen internationals will join them in Kabul as they team up with Afghan human rights groups to seek justice for people throughout Afghanistan. Dr. Sima Samar and the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission will join the APVs to call for UN leadership in negotiating a ceasefire among all of the warring parties. Together they will launch the 2 Million Friends campaign.

December 10 will also mark the beginning of a weeklong fast which includes a public witness across from the UN building in New York City, from December 11 – 17, 2012, between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. The fast is undertaken in a spirit of yearning for a world wherein people demand an end to the

futile wastefulness of war. The United States economy is dangerously propped up by Pentagon spending on wars. These wars don't increase jobs and benefits for people in the U.S., and warfare assuredly doesn't protect the basic human rights of people in Afghanistan. The U.N., founded with the mission to end the scourge of warfare, should call upon all of the warring parties to abide by a cease fire and negotiate an end to war in Afghanistan.

During the past month, Cathy Breen has written regular reports about her experiences in Iraq where she is visiting families and communities, learning more about how military and economic war have affected people who've endured the longest war in U.S. history, longer even than the war in Afghanistan because it encompasses the terrible years of economic sanctions.

In the coming year, we're concerned that the U.S. will continue to wage economic warfare and threaten direct military attacks against the Iranian people. We believe that one way to prevent a "next war" is to continue to tell the truth about the wars the U.S. has waged and is waging. This newsletter brings reports from Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as some of Brian Terrell's writings about drone warfare and reflections from the Afghan Peace Volunteers.

The exquisite poetry of David Smith-Ferri, who recently returned from another Kabul visit in October, helps us to understand the bitter taste of U.S. war making. He also shows earnest appreciation for opportunities to live, work, play and struggle with communities bearing the brunt of war, attempting to build a better world.

Please let us know if we can be of any assistance to your community, as speakers or through promotion of the organizing projects mentioned in this newsletter. We remain grateful for your kindly encouragement and the support that enables us to savor so much goodness even as we all continue to hunger for peace.

Kathy Kelly, Joshua Broilier, Buddy Bell, Sean Reynolds, Brian Terrell and Gerald Paoli

Love letters from Kabul: on a fairer education

A fairer life for all

Dear friends and fellow human beings,
16th November, 2012
(Gregorian calendar)
27th, Aqrab, 1391
(Afghan calendar)

From Abdulhai



It's not that important to be first in class. I think it doesn't make us better people.

I mean, just because I get an education doesn't mean I can solve the problems in my life or in this country, or be kind to others.

Those who flew the planes on September 11th were educated, but I sense that they didn't understand what to do with their anger. Also, those who

'remote control' today's drones are educated but don't seem to understand the anger they cause. I prefer humbler folk, like mothers, shepherds and laborers.

I think too much? Well, I'm just 'moody' at times. I'm in Grade 9, and I failed some subjects last term. I don't enjoy the way we have to memorize our answers. Our schools have many problems...the teachers are not well trained, there's cheating, and bribery, and yet everyone pretends that we're learning or teaching something...

Most of my school subjects would have been 'useless' for my father and my grandfather who were farmers. I haven't decided what I want to be, maybe a photographer or a businessman or something.

I miss my mother and family in Bamiyan quite a lot while studying in Kabul. I agree with Hakim that the missing of people we love is itself an education.

From Samia

I want to be able to read and write,
and dream of being a teacher someday.



Samia hopes to read and write.

Some people give us the look when
my siblings and I say we've stopped
schooling and that we're illiterate.

I like coming to the back-to-school
program run by the Afghan Peace
Volunteers, mainly because I like the
teachers, and the teachers care for us.
I mean, the way life is in Afghanistan,
people don't really seem to care...

I don't know if I'll be able to re-start
school again next year...my mother
may need me to help at home.

Hakim, did you like the leek pancakes
we made for you and the volunteers
during Eid?

From Hakim

I thought I was educated.

Though my 72 year old mum and 73
year old dad had family circumstances
that prevented them from completing
their studies, they are deep, and think-
ing, and caring individuals. Their lives
show me that they are educated.

So was Najib, a 12 year old Pashtun or-
phan boy. He didn't do the Math which
I plain forgot right after the Cambridge
'A' level exams, from irrelevance and
disuse. Najib didn't even know how to
write his own name in his own lan-
guage. But he was educated because he
fended for his and his grandmother's
life by collecting and selling trash in
the rough Quetta streets of Pakistan,
and he offered his hand of friendship
to other street kids. He also befriended
me.

Najib belongs to the ethnic group of
Pashtuns. Pashtuns are portrayed by
mainstream narratives as fierce fighters
and potential 'terrorists' who form the

ranks of the Taliban, and the 'educat-
ed' world believes these narratives.

But Najib would swing by just to say
'salam' (peace) after a hard day's
work. Najib, like other Pashtun friends
of mine, had the human genes of a
friend. He did not have the human
genes of a 'terrorist'.

After a while, I wanted to know if he
had been okay, if he was barefoot that
day, or how much 'profitable trash' he
had accumulated in his sack. One day,
I invited him and his elderly grandma
to share some juicy, sweet Pakistani
mangoes. After I had scrubbed off
'Layer One' of his soiled hands before
having the mangoes, I asked Najib
to smile for a photo with me. His
grandma got angry and taught me
philosophy with her one-liner, "Why
are you asking Najib to smile? He has
no reason to smile at all." Its accusa-
tion and challenge set the tone for my
work in the years ahead.



Work and Warmth in a Kabul Winter

by Kathy Kelly

November 21, 2012

January of 2012 was a deadly month, in Afghanistan. The United Nations notes that, in camps around Kabul, as many as 35,000 refugees from the fighting had only tents and mud huts to protect them from the cold. In those camps alone, 26 Afghan children froze to death.

Temperatures are now dropping again.

In October, 2012, I was with the Afghan Peace Volunteers in Kabul, listening to Afghan seamstresses pour out their thoughts about the impending winter and what they and their families will require in order to cope with it. Blankets to cover doorways; warm clothing; large, heavy coverlets called duvets. “Every woman in Afghanistan knows how to make these items,” one woman, Faribah, assured me. “But it’s expensive.”

It was a meeting of the seamstress collective that the Afghan Peace Volunteers are working to set up in Kabul, helping struggling women earn a living outside the control of exploitative middlemen. The Volunteers’ Dr. Hakim and I suggested that the seamstresses could sidestep the markets and instead invite donors from abroad to help put a desperately needed warm coverlet, a duvet, into an impoverished family’s dwelling. Together we estimated that it would cost \$20 to make each coverlet and also afford the seamstresses a modest income, \$2 per duvet, \$4 per day in return for their labor.

The women’s responses were both eager and practical. Over the next several days, a steady buzz of voices accompanied the whirr of hand-operated sewing machines: “The Duvet Project” was taking shape.

The day before I left Kabul, the

women met to finalize plans. They agreed that the materials for making the duvets will be stored at the Afghan Peace Volunteer home. Each morning, women can pick up wool and cloth there and spend the day making two duvets in their home. The next day, they return with the finished duvets, receive payment, and pick up their next allotment of supplies. The Afghan Peace Volunteers will store the finished duvets and distribute them, as gifts, to needy people.

From past experience of displace-

by the events that led them to flee.” They face “unrelenting misery,” the report states, living in close, unhygienic quarters, sleeping without bedding under torn plastic sheeting, and having scarce access to water. With an estimated 400 Afghan people displaced every day by a U.S.-initiated war, the desire for warm blankets and warm clothing will certainly be greater than the supply.

Faribah tried to help us understand the barriers that she and other women seamstresses face in fend-

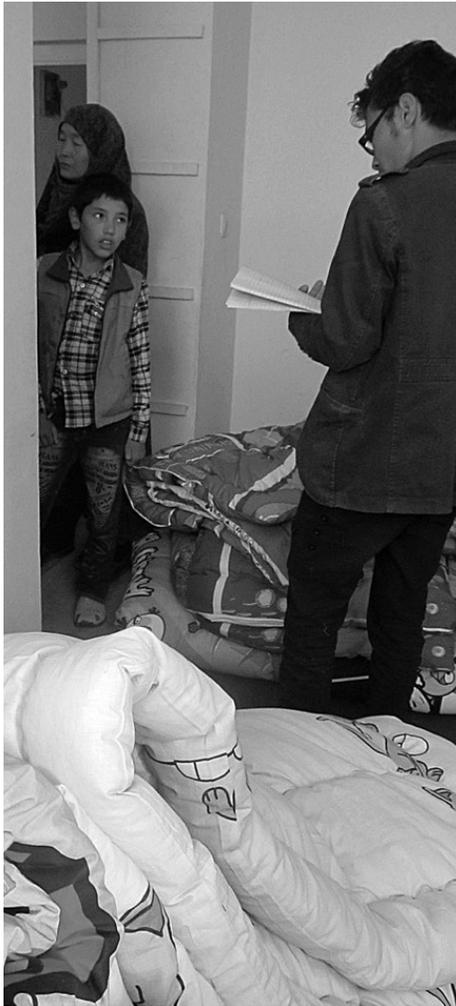


ment, several of the women understand the misery and hardship faced by families living in abandoned lots and constructing makeshift dwellings from mud, poles, plywood, plastic sheeting and cardboard.

These tents and shacks offer little protection from the bitter cold winter weather. Amnesty International’s 2012 report, “Fleeing War, Finding Misery,” describes the plight of displaced families that have fled their homes or villages because of conflict. “Those who are displaced must deal with the daunting challenges of finding new homes and providing for themselves and their families at the same time that they are struggling to cope with trauma induced

ing for their families. Like most of the women sitting in a circle on the floor, Faribah had not been allowed to leave her house before she began coming to the seamstress workshop. “Kathy, I know that in your country it is very different,” Faribah said. “People have freedom of movement and it is not difficult to move in the streets. We have feelings and sentiments and we all want to be free, to have dignity, whether male or female, but our society does not permit us to be free not only because of social traditions but also because of war. Kabul has become a frightening place. It’s natural for our families not to trust that we can go out. There are strangers in the city,

including foreigners from neighboring countries. We cannot trust anyone, even our own people, who are poor and we need money and will do anything to get money, - and ladies especially have been confined to their homes, partially to protect them from harm outside. That makes it difficult for us because we do want to provide for our families.” Faribah and 25 other seamstresses have now created more than 350 duvets. They are eagerly helping their families and others to live with warmth and dignity.



We Drink Deeply

by David Smith-Ferri
After-School Class

Every day the children come,
in threes and fours,
holding hands
linked like drops of water moving downhill
and pooling in the makeshift classroom
on the ground floor of this house
in western Kabul.
The children of war
some of them defying gravity
and flowing up the stairs
to pulse and pool around Abdulai,
pulling at him
trying to carry him off.
They climb Boqir like a tree
and nest in his arms, on his shoulders,
sample the fruit of his smiles, his laughter.
They sprout like flowers at Hakim's feet,
gather themselves into bouquets for Firhas and Faiz.

Every day they come like a late-afternoon rain
to this desert
and we drink,
like rainfall in the dark when there is no other sound,
and we listen.

Like oxygen-rich air to this mountain city,
and we fill our lungs.

Like a sea breeze across this land-locked country,
and suddenly we stand on shore
looking out over great distances of salt water,
we see a distant horizon
and take its measure.

Revisiting Dust-Covered Dreams

By **Cathy Breen**

November 11, 2012

Najaf—I returned from Baghdad last night. Over coffee this morning, I filled the father of my host family in on my trip. I told him it was wonderful to see everyone, but I only heard sad stories. A few minutes ago a fierce wind rose, blowing the trees and dust and everything in its path. We hurried to close the windows, but there was no way to prevent the fine powdery dirt from entering. It covers everything. The weather seems to fit my mood somehow. There are forces beyond our control.

Yesterday in Baghdad I was able to visit with two families who both have grown children in the U.S. The parents of a third family, whom we know from Syria, met with me briefly on a quickly decided location, one of the roads that exits through the concrete walls encompassing their neighborhood. I wanted to give them a package from the states, and they were hesitant to have me come to their neighborhood, an area which has seen much violence and conflict over the last years.

It was an emotional moment as the mother and I exited our respective car and taxi and embraced. She wept. I hope I will be able to see their seven children before I leave Iraq, but for now I am grateful for the five minutes I had with them. Thank God for the driver who is able to negotiate all these encounters. Somehow, between his little English and my little Arabic, we have been able to manage. In the other two families we visited, someone spoke English well enough to serve as a translator. Of course both families have contact with their relatives in the U.S. by internet and phone, but somehow my presence connects them physically, like a bridge.

My first task this morning is to review and resize some of the photos taken

yesterday, so that I can send them off with an account to the sons and daughters in the U.S. As I look at the faces before me, I imagine how emotional it will be for those opening the attachments when they catch the wistful longing in the eyes of their family members, see how they have aged, or behold the youngest members of the family whom they have not yet gotten to meet personally.

This is what war does, no? It separates families; it destroys the fiber and lifeblood of a society. I remember as a young adult, and not so young adult, being separated by oceans for years at a time from my own family. There were moments when I would become so choked up to hear their voices over the phone that I was unable to speak.

My visit was anticipated, and as is the beautiful custom here each family welcomed me warmly and served me. We were able to visit unhurriedly, and I had brought a few photos of their loved ones to show them. After assuring them that their family members were working hard but doing alright in the U.S., I asked them what stories they had to tell me! One family told of having to move to another area because there were a lot of explosions where they lived, and any young man in the vicinity of an attack was randomly rounded up. This family feared for their young sons. One mother, a teacher, spoke of the crowded classrooms, and of how fatigued teachers felt upon arriving at school after being held up at checkpoint after checkpoint in unendurable heat. “One can wait over half an hour just to go through one checkpoint.” This was exactly our experience that same morning as we made our way through Baghdad to their neighborhood.

“The children all want to be cops, and to carry guns.” The teacher spoke

of the many orphans in her class and of the widowed teachers. “Everyone is exhausted from the situation. We don’t know what will happen tomorrow. Sometimes there are 10-15 explosions, other days there are none. With the situation in Syria we are all tense and feel insecure.” This family fled to Syria for some years and then returned to Iraq. “I don’t think any of my dreams will come true,” said one of the sons, a bright handsome 17 year old with an easy smile. “There is nothing to do but stay home.” The parents felt that since the era of sanctions things have only gone backwards, not forward. “Young people don’t have any hope for a job here, except driving a taxi. Only if they go to another country will it be better. . . Most of our traditions have been lost, it is all about money now. You can’t do anything without bribes.” In the other family I visited, the grandmother has bad asthma. There is an increase in asthma due to pollution, to lack of factory and vehicle emission controls, to the frequent use of generators for electricity. Even the benzene still has lead. One family member, a doctor, commented, “Nine years and no electrical system. Where is the big investment money? It is all about political decisions. The U.S. brought terrorists to our country, they came from all over the world, to fight terrorism in our country and destroy our country. I am sorry to tell you this, but it is the truth.” I told him that I didn’t disagree. We all sat together. “We are helpless and hopeless,” he said. After a long pause he added “but we are adapting.” Two little children were playing gleefully in our midst on the carpet.

What is there left to say?

A Message From Brian Terrell as He Enters Federal Prison

My work with Voices for Creative Nonviolence continues, too, with much time and effort devoted to resistance of drone warfare. I returned to Jefferson City, Missouri, on September 10 for trial. Codefendant Ron Faust and I with help from attorneys Ruth O'Neill and Henry Stoeber, proved our innocence of the crime of 'trespass' beyond any reasonable doubt, but our innocence was no match for a federal judge's shameless bias and abhorrence of civil liberties, and so we were found guilty.

For our small crime, Ron will be on probation for five years, and I am going to prison on November 30 for a six month term. Friend Mark Kenney who pled guilty and did not go to trial with us will be released from his four month sentence soon.

A character in a play by Ignazio Silone says, "If your soul is at peace and without remorse, prison can even be a pleasant place for a rest. Fear of prison is a trick invented by the authorities to demoralize good Christians. Many acts of cowardice, in fact, are excused by the fear of ending in prison." I am grateful for support here at home and for solidarity and prayers of friends near and far as I accept this judicially awarded sabbatical.

Love to all, Brian

I am to report to by 2 PM on November 30 is the prison camp at Yankton, South Dakota. [It] is one of the closest federal prisons to our home in Iowa and [Yankton is] home to Emmaus CW House, a Benedictine Monastery and many good friends. My address from November 30 until the end of May, 2013, will be:

BRIAN TERRELL 06125-026
FPC YANKTON
FEDERAL PRISON CAMP
P.O. BOX 700
YANKTON, SD 57078



Letters are welcome, but I may be limited in out-going mail. Paperback books and magazines may be sent with the notation "CONTENTS AUTHORIZED PUBLICATIONS" on the package. Hard cover books must come from a publisher or business like Amazon.

Pray for me!

Commissary donations are welcome. Please send checks to Betsy at Strangers and Guests CW Farm, 108 Hillcrest Drive, Maloy, Iowa 50836.

CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARD THE ONGOING LIFE OF THE S&G FARM ARE ALSO NEEDED!

VOICES

FOR CREATIVE NONVIOLENCE

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What You Can Do...

- **Support the Afghan Peace Volunteers as they launch 2 Million Friends to End the Afghan War.** The Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers (AYPV) call on the world community to join the people of Afghanistan in commemorating International Human Rights Day, on December 10, 2012, symbolizing our collective grief for the 2 million victims of war in Afghanistan. Please send a note to UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon asking the UN to negotiate a cease-fire between all the warring parties. Join Kathy Kelly and other Voices activists who will deliver petitions to the UN offices in NY City as part of a 7 day fast, Dec. 11 - 17 which includes a daily public witness, across from the UN, in Ralph Bunche park from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. For a sample letter, or if you plan to host an event in your area, contact info@vcnv.org or call 773-878-3815.
- **Learn about The Duvet Project**, an initiative in collaboration with the Afghan Peace Volunteers and an Afghan seamstress' cooperative to make and distribute duvets, Afghan comforters, to families in need during Kabul's harsh winter. To read about or donate to the project, visit <http://vcnv.org/the-duvet-project>.
- **Get involved in a nationwide post-election "Jobs Not Wars" campaign.** Contact: Michael Eisenscher the National Coordinator for U.S. Labor Against the War at (510) 263-5303 or nationalcoordinator@uslaboragainstar.org.
- **Organize a group to participate in the next Skype-conversation with the Afghan Peace Volunteers.** Calls are held on the 21st of each month. To participate in a call, visit <http://globaldaysoflistening.org> Additional information about calls can be found at ThePeoplesJourney.org.
- **Organize a group of people to view Afghan Peace Volunteer videos** which can be accessed at these sites: The OurJourneyToSmile page of all the APV videos posted at YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/ourjourneytosmile>. For further information, visit ourjourneytosmile.com. View videos and talk about impressions of Afghan youths and their friends.