

VOICES FOR CREATIVE NONVIOLENCE

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Dear Friends,

Temperatures are dropping, here in Chicago, giving us a reality check on a project we'll initiate in 2009, on New Years Day, when a coalition of social justice organizations will begin gathering near the Obama residence to launch "Camp Hope: Countdown to Change." During the 19-day outdoor Camp Hope campaign, we'll identify, temporarily, with millions of Iraqis who will endure harsh elements without adequate shelter this winter. We'll also show support for steps the Obama administration could take toward a complete military withdrawal from Iraq and toward finding nonviolent solutions to social and economic problems in the U.S. And, we'll identify with those in our country who lose their homes to foreclosures, their jobs, and their health care as the U.S. enters what are arguably the initial months of a depression.

The U.S. should ultimately initiate massive nonmilitary aid programs to help Iraqis rebuild their neighborhoods, their infrastructure and their lives and to assist especially those who have been displaced by war. However, Camp Hope seeks a "starter" step that President-elect Obama could immediately undertake:

[direct] "...the U.S. military to reduce the overall levels of U.S. military personnel deployed in Iraq by no fewer than 6,000 military personnel per month and to immediately cease offensive combat operations, with the ultimate objective of removing all military personnel from Iraq....and the complete cessation of hostilities within Iraq."

The 6,000 troops per month roughly equates to the 1 combat brigade per month that Obama promised to withdraw from Iraq as well as the support troops that are deployed in Iraq with these combat brigades.

President-elect Obama's response to this request would help clarify whether or not his administration is serious about promises that were made during the campaign. If the new administration won't commit to reductions of 6,000 troops per month, then we have much more work to do in clamoring for troop withdrawals. If the administration does fulfill this

campaign pledge, much more work remains to be done regarding reconstruction in Iraq and assistance for people bearing the brunt of the humanitarian catastrophe caused by the war.

During this time of financial woes, it will be difficult to persuade the U.S. public to pay for reparations and reconstruction in Iraq as well as necessary reconstruction in the U.S. (health care, full employment, housing, etc.). Where would the funds come from? We must constantly remind people that the Defense Department now accounts for half of the government's total discretionary spending. The baseline military budget has grown from \$316 billion in 2001 to \$488 billion for 2009, an astounding 55 percent increase in spending (and UPI reports that the Pentagon will seek \$524 in baseline military spending in FY 2010). That does not include spending on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Politico.com reports that the Pentagon is preparing a request for an additional \$82 billion in Iraq – Afghanistan war spending (which will bring total war spending to \$152 billion in 2009). The Pentagon also is reportedly preparing a request for \$57 billion in war spending for 2010, as a "down payment" on war costs for that year.

Camp Hope begins on Emancipation Proclamation Day, January 1, the day on which President Lincoln issued the second emancipation order that identified those parts of the U.S. in which slaves would be freed by the Emancipation Proclamation—those parts being those sections of the U.S. still in open rebellion against the U.S. The Emancipation Proclamation was a necessary first step towards the elimination of slavery. But it permitted slavery to continue in the border states that were not in open rebellion. Additional steps would be taken, including the ratification of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution banning slavery.

Camp Hope will end on Martin Luther King's birthday, January 19th, as we remind ourselves of how vigorously Dr. King opposed the "demonic suction cup" of military spending. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King urged us to extend neighborliness beyond our families, tribes, clans and nations. If we have hostilities, he said, let us direct them toward

opposing poverty, racism, and militarism. Toward the end of his life, Dr. King worked hard to draw direct connections between unjust domestic policies and unjust international policies.

We warmly welcome you to join us in urging the Obama administration, "Don't leave us out in the cold." You can learn more about Camp Hope in this newsletter and also by visiting www.camphope2009.org for a sample flier and additional resources.

In Solidarity,
Kathy Kelly, Brynn Byrne, Gerald Paoli, Dan Pearson,
Joel Gullledge, Bob Abplanalp, John Volkening, Joshua Broliier



CAMP HOPE 2009: COUNTDOWN TO CHANGE

In January, 2009, Barack Obama will be inaugurated as President of the United States. We earnestly hope his presidency will signal the dawning of long-needed progressive change in the United States. To help build popular momentum behind the progressive goals of President Obama's campaign, we invite you to join us in maintaining a 20-day presence, from January 1 – January 19, 2009, in Hyde Park, Chicago: "Camp Hope: Countdown Toward Change."

Every day from New Years' to Dr. Martin Luther King Day, whatever winter has in store for us, we will set up at the intersection of E. Hyde Park Blvd. and 5100 S. Drexel Ave to congratulate Senator Obama as our new President-elect and recommit ourselves to progressive actions he promoted on his campaign trail. We are urging President-elect Obama to take eight actions immediately upon being sworn into office, and reminding ourselves that these are only eight early steps to more profound policy changes.

Camp Hope asks President Obama to:

1) As Commander-in-Chief, issue an order directing the U.S. military to reduce the overall levels of U.S. military personnel deployed in Iraq by no fewer than 6,000 military personnel per month and to immediately cease offensive combat operations, with the ultimate objective of removing all military personnel from Iraq (other than those required for normal embassy missions) and the complete cessation of hostilities within Iraq.

Additionally, in that same spirit we ask President-Elect Obama to implement his commitment to the

primacy of diplomacy over the use of force by announcing a new diplomatic initiative to bring peace to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

2) Establish a commission to explore and develop policy proposals for full employment, living wage jobs and job training

i - in light of the impact of unemployment, especially amongst Black, Latino and other young adults; and,
ii - recognizing that unemployment and the prison-industrial complex are intrinsically race-based and connected in that the U.S. elects to imprison people of color rather than create living wage employment opportunities.

3) Cease and desist in the execution of all raids and immediately suspend deportations until comprehensive immigration reform is completed. Support comprehensive immigration reform which promotes the reunification of families and provides legal status with a path to citizenship for the millions of persons who are currently undocumented; suspend all of the Bush administration's policies regarding border patrol until comprehensive immigration reform is completed.

4) Take all nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert and begin negotiations with other leaders of nuclear weapon states to reduce and eliminate all nuclear weapons.

5) Close Guantanamo; eliminate military tribunals and accord, to detainees being held at Guantanamo and other U.S. detention facilities, access to the U.S. court system. We ask that the President-elect reverse the Bush administration's advisory opinions regarding the permissibility of torture in extracting information from detainees and forbid all forms of torture by any and all US agencies and personnel.

6) Establish a commission to explore policy proposals which would provide universal health coverage and make recommendations that would cover all pre-existing conditions, provide no less coverage than what the Congressional health care plan provides, and provide health care to the greatest number of people.

7) Establish a 90-day moratorium on all housing foreclosures.

8) Submit the Kyoto Protocol to Congress for ratification, making a commitment to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming.



My Journey with Voices:

I'm surprised by how readily I remember the first time I called the Voices office in Chicago. I wanted to know if Kathy Kelly could participate in a program I was organizing for International Women's Day. I had heard her speak about life in Iraq during sanctions, and was very impressed. But I was more than a little nervous about that phone call. I'm not exactly sure what I was afraid of, but with a lump in my throat and sweaty palms I dialed the number. Kathy answered it herself, she immediately put me at ease and my relationship with Voices began. The more I got to know Voices crew members, the more drawn I felt to join this prophetic work.

I began volunteering at the office, organizing events for speakers and eventually joining in on some actions, risking arrest with the Voices crew several times. Then my partner (John Volkening) and I took another step and began to live in community with the Voices household. It feels very good to be on the path to simple living. We know we have a long way to go before our lives have less negative impact on other people in the world, but we are trying.

My community members' actions emboldened me to get more involved with Voices campaigns, while keeping my "day job."

I knew I wanted to stop working at a job where I was selling out and give my life to working for peace. Yet I was reluctant to leave the false security and comfort a conventional job brings. But then the time came, and I took the leap. I finally said yes to the invitation to work with Voices full time. The gratitude I feel for this opportunity is something that I can never adequately express. Living under the taxable level, so I don't have to pay war taxes, is something that I thought I could never do. But I learned that I could do this by choosing to live in community and by eschewing commercialism.

Now I continue to explore nonviolent direct action as a way of life, not just something I do in my spare time. To think that this is now my life's work gives me real purpose and meaning.

Before working at Voices my time and talents, on the job, were sometimes used to further projects of death and war making. The company I worked for occasionally signed contracts with the U.S. military or with major defense contractors. Now I have the luxury of planning and participating in nonviolent direct actions and campaigns that work toward bringing some relief to this war torn world. I now use my design skill to make campaign materials that allow themes to be recognized at a glance. Corporations use advertising to sell people

things they don't need. I enjoy subverting the goals of advertising by using similar tactics to promote projects of life and peacemaking.

One such action I recently participated in was a line crossing at the municipal airport in Salina Kansas. This action was planned in response to Hawgsmoke "a biennial worldwide A-10 bombing, missile, and tactical gunnery competition. Hosted by the winners of the previous competition, Hawgsmoke is an intense competition and an opportunity to share in the camaraderie and fellowship of the world's premier Close Air Support fighter, as well as the legacy of its pilots and support crews." www.hawgsmoke.com

When we learned that Salina People for Peace were responding to this celebration of the "art" and tools of destruction" with a conference, The Heartland Speaks: a gathering for learning and dialogue about alternatives to violence, culminating in a nonviolent direct action, I knew I wanted to participate. Jeff Leys felt the same way. So we traveled to Kansas to join with Salina People for Peace. Many veteran peace activist from across the nation gave presentations covering topics such as the deadly effects of depleted uranium and the use of outer space in war making.

8 of us chose to risk arrest, reading this statement of conviction, before crossing the line onto airport property:

"We are here today to say yes to life, yes to hope, yes to the earth and yes to a future for our children. We say no to weapons of death and all the ways our society is a culture of death and uses our name to prepare for killing. We ask everyone to join us and train and prepare for a world where peace and justice prevail."

I was sentenced to 20 hours of community service, which I plan to fulfill through working with Iraqi refugees in Chicago.

I was motivated to use my time in this type of service because a part of my work here at Voices has been doing research about the humanitarian crisis in Iraq, the surrounding countries, and stateside. I have been shocked to find out how long ago the US government was warned that a crisis situation would develop if they went ahead with the unilateral decision to invade Iraq. For example, a meticulously investigated Human Rights Watch briefing paper entitled "Iraqi Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Displaced Persons," distributed a month before the U.S. began the Shock and Awe bombing, (February 2003), clearly addresses 5 great concerns: "the potential within Iraq for a humanitarian disaster, the plight of internally displaced Iraqis, the prospects for "safe areas" within Iraq should there be a war, the situation for Iraqi refugees in neighboring countries,

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including Iran and Turkey, and the situation for Iraqi refugees outside the region."

It goes on to say "Should the United States go to war with Iraq and establish military control and authority over Iraqi territory, it will have responsibilities under international law to meet humanitarian needs of the inhabitants, including people displaced by the fighting. Human Rights Watch is particularly concerned that Iraqi civilians be protected from forced displacement inconsistent with international humanitarian law, but be allowed to flee voluntarily to safety should conditions so dictate. An occupying power must ensure the security of the civilian population or allow civilians to voluntarily move out of harm's way, both within and outside the State's borders."

Now in 2008 we know that, by conservative estimates, more than 2 million Iraqis are internally displaced. Most of them are living in deplorable conditions, suffering from outbreaks of cholera, constant exposure to the elements, hunger, and shame. And at least another 2 million are trying to survive in neighboring countries. This population is also suffering innumerable extreme hardships.

So the very least I could do after learning about the situation of the Iraqi people and the responsibility I bear as a United States citizen for this humanitarian crisis was to join, in a small way, Dan Pearson, Kathy Kelly and Cathy Breen in their work aiding Iraqi refugees.

I have shared my story not to call attention to myself but rather to hold myself accountable on this journey into simple living and community. I want to emphasize that the story of the plight of Iraqi refugees and internally displaced persons is also my story, our story. I invite everyone who reads this to explore other life options that allow you to consume less and give more. We can only work to correct the great injustices in the world if we live and work in community. Don't only think of community in the traditional sense of people living together under the same roof, but creatively and, with intention, form relationships that are focused outside of our own need for individuality, so together we can look more closely at ways to work together to make things right.

Respectfully Submitted by
Gerald Paoli