

VOICES

FOR CREATIVE NONVIOLENCE

vcnv.org

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Dear friends,

As the Chicago winter made ready to drive itself into a rut, a number of out-of-town visitors came to Argyle Street to help out and see Kathy before she turned herself in at Lexington FMC. By the time this newsletter is mailed out, Kathy will be about halfway through her 90-day sentence for entering a drone base and attempting to speak to its commander about the effects of drones on civilians.

In Afghanistan, drone strikes are ratcheting up, yet actual help for people continues to quaver. Recently, Carolyn Coe and Brian Terrell each spent two weeks with the Afghan Peace Volunteers and witnessed their innovative grassroots projects in Kabul, including the new Street Kids' school. Brian and Carolyn are available to present on these issues.

We've already said hello and goodbye to Ken Hannaford-Ricardi, who spent a month helping Kathy formulate materials for an online course, which she will begin teaching in the summer. Ceylon Mooney took the bus up from Memphis to help out with the website, social media, peace vigils, university outreach, and this newsletter. We continue to be blessed with Hina Abbasi's help keeping on top of office correspondence, while her young son Nawfal has us all jumping and my cat Lágrima reluctantly accedes to being petted by a 2-year-old's hand. We shout out to Sean, Cassandra, Bob, Jerry, Silver, Paco, and Amy for time spent to support Kathy.

Ceylon and I recently went downtown to attend a rally to support the "Reparations Ordinance," which would provide assistance for survivors of Chicago police torture. Some of the survivors were teenagers when they were arrested and went on to spend more years of their life inside of a prison than outside. Some still remain in prison today. The torture and its cover-up began to come to light in 1987.

At one point in the rally, 110 names on black banners were held up all in a row. We became a

living Chicago torture memorial wall. The man whose name I held was Melvin Jones. In 1982, he was arrested and taken to the Area 2 homicide bureau, where he was tortured by Lt. Jon Burge. The lieutenant used an improvised cigar box to administer electric shocks to the private areas of Jones' body. Although he never made a confession, two police officers committed perjury, saying he bragged about the murder. Jones spent the next 5 years in prison until his release on appeal. Over the next 3 decades, the city of Chicago would spend more than \$20 million on the legal defense of former state's attorney Richard Daley, Lt. Burge, and his accomplices. Over the same period, Melvin Jones went totally uncompensated for shattered opportunities, suffering bouts of homelessness before he died of a heart attack last year.

How can a survivor of torture receive such little support after spending 31 years locked up for a willful "mistake"? Likewise, how can survivors of the war in Afghanistan deserve so much less taxpayer assistance than the profiteers who agitate for more wars, longer wars, and in ever more places?

It seems like each news cycle reveals impacted treachery: such as how in 2003, Chicago police officer Richard Zuley was recruited to make the dubious transition from torturing people in police stations to torturing men in Guantanamo. Yet it may help to remember that upside-down policies can only persist if enough fair people fail to point it out. At VCNV, we take small actions and encourage others to do the same. We hope to gather a critical mass of "voices" with the volume to demand justice.

Pressing forward,

Buddy Bell,

with Kathy Kelly, Brian Terrell,
Ceylon Mooney, and Hina Abbasi.

Duvet Drop

by Brian Terrell

One highlight of my recent visit to Kabul, Afghanistan, was to be able to help with the distribution of duvets, thick blankets stuffed with synthetic wool, to people in need. For the last three winters, the Afghan Peace Volunteers have organized a cooperative of seamstresses who work for a decent wage producing the duvets that are then given away without cost.



Winters are bitter in Kabul; fuel for heating is expensive, and these blankets are life savers. In a taxi with some of the young volunteers, we followed a rented truck piled perilously high with the brightly colored duvets to a mosque where a crowd was already gathering to collect them. The first job was to unload the truck's vibrant cargo, throwing them over a low wall and stacking them on the porch of the mosque. Local children and elders pitched in and made quick



work of it. There is something about tossing around huge, soft, billowy bags of fluff covered with multihued fabrics that makes it nearly impossible not to laugh, regardless of serious circumstances and the scene was like a big multigenerational pillow fight!



The actual distribution, giving two duvets to each family, was a marvel of organization, and they were given with a sense of joy and respect. As the stack of duvets shrunk, however, the elation of abundance gave way to the fear of scarcity. I remembered the hope of Vincent de Paul, that the poor might forgive us for the bread we give them, as we are in reality only giving them back a small portion of what they have been deprived of and what is justly theirs.



The materials and the seamstresses' wages are paid for by donations to Voices for Creative Nonviolence in the US and the UK, money given not in charity but a small gesture toward the reparations our countries owe to the people of Afghanistan.

The Lesson

by Carolyn Coe

Farzana stands in the back of a small classroom as another instructor writes the first part of the day's lesson on the board:

من گل را خوب دارم.
I love the flower.

Eight children sit in the unheated room, only one a girl. Some wear socks; others' feet are bare. They are children who work in Kabul's streets, shining shoes, waving tins of incense beside cars stopped in Kabul's traffic. But every Friday afternoon, they attend Dari and math lessons at the Borderfree Nonviolence Center. The children's families, in turn, receive a monthly bag of rice and cooking oil.

The teacher invites each student in this more advanced Dari class to read a few lines aloud, and right hands shoot up, pointer fingers in the air. One volunteer rises to stand beside the teacher. *Bismillah Rahman Rahim*, he says, before reading lines from his thin floppy book. When the boy returns to his place on the floor, he gently parts two other students' heads to clear his passage.

A couple children decline to stand in front to recite. The instructor acknowledges their choice with a smile before moving on to another student.

One boy sits a bit separately from the rest in the back, near Farzana. When he is called on, Farzana bends over to help him sound out the troublesome words.

The first part of the lesson soon ends, and the children applaud for their instructor before

Farzana takes over. They are supportive of one another, too, clapping each time one of them writes something correctly on the whiteboard.

Farzana, who has been teaching the street children for five months, has become one of their advocates. *The basic rights of children and women are not being given any attention, certainly not by the government or by other*

segments of society, she says. Children work in the streets in Afghanistan because many of them have lost one or both parents.

The children have become victims.

Farzana lost her own father to cancer when she was in the seventh grade. Before he passed away, he fully supported

her pursuit of an education, as her mother still does today. Farzana has taken full advantage of this human right, now studying at two institutions: a private university—where she pursues a law degree—and a government-run teacher's college.

When Farzana was very young, she secretly left the house to walk to a center where she could study. It was during the Taliban's rule. She remembers both the fear in going out when girls were not allowed to attend school as well as her excitement in going to learn. From this experience, she understands how important it is to make opportunities available for Afghan children.

The child advocates at the Borderfree Nonviolence Center now work to turn the Friday afternoon lessons into a full-time school for street children.



To donate to the Street Kids Program and the new Street Kids' school, please write "street kids" in the memo line of your check or money order. It costs \$540 per family to provide rice and oil for one year.

A Mountain Man's Plea

by Kathy Kelly

Here in Lexington federal prison's Atwood Hall, about a dozen women recently gathered for an Ash Wednesday service. The celebrant, a Jesuit priest, is a tall, balding man with a long, white beard and a kindly manner. "He's the one who looks like a mountain man," one prisoner told me.

His message on Ash Wednesday was stark and simple: "our world is very sick." He asked the women before him to recall how each might feel, as a mother, if her child is sick. "Nothing else matters," said the priest. "You're focused on your child." He urged us to focus on healing an ailing world with just as much fervor. As just one example of a grievous problem in the world, the priest mentioned how little we know about or understand what motivates fighters in the Islamic State.

Later, in the *New York Times* (Feb. 17, p. 1), I read, "the Islamic State and its supporters produce as many as 90,000 tweets and other social media responses every day." I wonder how drone warfare affects this digital momentum. Do U.S. drone attacks drive upward the numbers of people ready to enlist in the Islamic State forces?

Imagine the consequences if unmanned aerial vehicles, drones, were assassinating U.S. people in their homes, along roadways, inside restaurants and at places of worship. Wouldn't there be a massive rise in the numbers of people wanting to take up arms and fight back, presumably ready to enlist in U.S. armed forces?

I felt deeply moved by "the mountain man's" humble, direct plea to us women prisoners, asking us to focus on our very sick world over

the next 40 days. Our small congregation of women prisoners may be among the most expendable people on the planet in the view of corporate forces driving war, overconsumption and environmental damage. But, the priest, the "mountain man," regarded us as vital and central to the healing he yearns for.

Recognizing our need to support one another, as though we were focused on healing a very sick child, will help all of us build affinities so necessary to unshackle ourselves from addiction to war.

Alive and Bleeding

by Robert C. Koehler

Good and evil leap from the headlines: "Egyptian planes pound ISIS in Libya in revenge for mass beheadings of Christians."

It's nonstop action for the American public. It's the history of war compressed into a dozen words. It's Fox News, but it could be just about any mainstream purveyor of current events.

Once again, I feel a cry of despair tear loose from my soul and spill into the void. Our politics are out of control. There's no sanity left — no calmness of strategic assessment, no impulse control. At least none of that stuff is allowed into the mainstream conversation about national security, which amounts to: ISIS is bad. The more of them we (or our allies of the moment) kill, the better. USA! USA!

We're in a state of perpetual war and have no intention of escaping it. Certainly we have no intention of critiquing our own actions or — don't be silly — questioning the effectiveness of war, occupation or high-tech terror (think: "shock and awe") as a means to create a stable, secure world. The interests of war have dug in for the

long haul, fortified by the cynicism of the media they own. The voices of reason cry from the margins. When a trickle of sanity finds its way into the mainstream, it's mocked until it goes away.

Thus Marie Harf, deputy State Department spokesperson, had her moment of right-wing ridicule when she said of ISIS this week, during an interview on MSNBC with Chris Matthews:

"We're killing a lot of them, and we're going to keep killing more of them. So are the Egyptians, so are the Jordanians — they're in this fight with us. But we cannot win this war by killing them. We cannot kill our way out of this war. We need in the medium to longer term to go after the root causes that lead people to join these groups, whether it's a lack of opportunity for jobs, whether . . ."

The snort of contempt began immediately, as Matthews interrupted her. It spread through the conservative media, as the Society of Media Chicken Hawks gleefully pecked her words apart, joking that she wanted to defeat ISIS with a jobs program, etc. What fun! "Can political correctness defeat terrorism?" the Wall Street Journal asked. That was it. End of discussion.

Well, no it's not. I insist on opening it back up:

"We cannot kill our way out of this war. We need . . . to go after the root causes that lead people to join these groups . . ."

Tepid and tentative as Harf's words were, the fact that they were either instantly mocked and dismissed as "politically correct," or ignored completely, indicates the extent to which a war mentality has supplanted thought in the mainstream realm of the American empire. Root causes? Come on. Only one side of any war, our own, ever has root causes.

If Harf's line of thinking were actually allowed into the discussion, before you know it, people would begin wondering what the Global War on Terror has accomplished and, indeed, the extent to which it has contributed to the root causes in question. Who is ISIS? What's their agenda? What's *our* agenda? Unavoidably, marginal

voices of dissent would start being heard, such as Glenn Greenwald's, writing this week at The Intercept:

"Since 2011, Libya has rapidly unraveled in much the way Iraq did following that invasion: swamped by militia rule, factional warfare, economic devastation, and complete lawlessness. And to their eternal shame, most self-proclaimed 'humanitarians' who advocated the Libya intervention completely ignored the country once the fun parts — the war victory dances and mocking of war opponents — were over. The feel-good 'humanitarianism' of war advocates, as usual, extended only to the cheering from a safe distance as bombs dropped. . . ."

"Into the void of Libya's predictable disintegration has stepped ISIS, among other groups."

Beyond this, the national security discussion could begin to consider the nature of war and militarism: "The barbarism we condemn is the barbarism we commit," Chris Hedges wrote recently. "The line that separates us from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria is technological, not moral. We are those we fight."

And the maw of uncertainty opens. The horror of the ISIS beheadings might become unbearably real to the public at large as people consider the nature of warfare itself and suddenly, my God, get it: We're doing the same thing, but with technology a thousand times more powerful.

The "shock and awe" bombing we inflicted on Baghdad in 2003, for instance, was an act of terrorism meant to deliver "incomprehensible levels of massive destruction" and, in the process, shatter a society's will to resist us, according to Harlan K. Ullman and James P. Wade, who described the concept in a 1996 Defense Department publication. I haven't heard anyone talk about this bombing campaign recently, but its consequences are nonetheless alive and bleeding.

"We cannot kill our way out of this war." Or the next one. It's time to stop.

Contact Robert Koehler: koehlercw@gmail.com.

Killing the Future

by Ceylon Mooney

Twenty-four years ago, Uncle Sam sent a clear message to the people of Iraq. At approximately 4:30 a.m. on February 13, 1991, two F-117 stealth fighters each dropped a 2,000 pound laser-guided bomb on the Amiriyah shelter, a neighborhood bomb shelter in Baghdad, which, that night, was housing 408 people, mostly women and children. Their all night wait to not be killed by an enemy they never met was cut abruptly short when the first “smart” bomb cut a hole several feet wide and several feet thick through the steel-reinforced concrete ceiling and detonated. Minutes later, a second bomb penetrated the facility. Some of the shelter-seekers were incinerated by the detonation itself; the boilers were hit in the bombing, cooking the rest of the victims alive.

In 2002 I met a man who worked for NBC at the time; he claims to have been on the receiving end of the satellite feed coverage. As the charred remains of women and children were being pulled out of the bombed shelter, the voice-over, a US military spokesperson of some sort, said, “We wanted to bring the terror of this war home to the Iraq

people.” This was not broadcast, and, months later, GE lawyers came in and confiscated the tapes.



Claiming the Amiriyah shelter was a military command center, Bush spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said, “We don’t know why civilians were at that location.” The location was clearly marked and monitored by satellite, which would have shown it

being used as a shelter throughout the air strikes; in addition, as noted by Human Rights Watch, the “Pentagon concedes that it knew the Amiriyah facility had been used as a civil-

defense shelter during the Iran-Iraq war, but U.S. officials gave no warning that they considered its protected status as a civilian shelter to have ended.”



Ghost image of mother and child burned into wall

Visiting the Amiriyah shelter feels creepy; it feels like a tomb. It feels like an atrocity happened here, where silent echoes of human terror scream something too big for words, too atrocious for metaphor. In a way, it reminds me of standing on the balcony where MLK was assassinated. A shot heard round the world leaves something behind, something still there—the

echoes of a gunshot killing the future. Standing there on that balcony, you can’t touch it, but you can’t avoid its touch. Likewise in the Amiriyah shelter, one so intimately feels the echo of a horror one cannot touch.

Many years ago, on the anniversary of the Amiriyah bombing, I was put in the back of a squad car after redecorating the outside of an Armed Forces Recruitment Center in Memphis. I taped up pictures I took at the Amiriyah shelter on the doors and windows and hung a posterboard display about the atrocity. The title of our display was "Operation: Desert Murder;" we charged the US government with mass murder. The recruiters came out to see, and so did the police, who couldn't figure out what to charge me with.

More than two decades ago we sent a clear message to the terror-stricken Iraqis: there is no escape. There is no safe place; there is no future. Every gunshot, every bomb blast, every buzz of a drone or roar of a jet carries the echoes of that message. This is the sound of killing the future. This isn't over yet, the shelter is no use, and your night of terror ends only one way. In 24 years, so much has changed, and, sadly, so much has not.

Write to Kathy

Kathy is doing federal time for entering a drone base and attempting to speak to its commander about the effects of drones on civilians. She will be released on April 21. She was accompanied by Georgia Walker, of Kansas City, an activist who works with people being released from jails and prisons. Georgia is gracefully serving one year of probation confined to western Missouri.

Kathleen Kelly 04971-045
FMC Lexington
Federal Medical Center
PO Box 14525
Lexington, KY 40512

Kathy was not assigned to FMC Lexington for medical reasons.

Letter to the Editor of *The Jordan Times*

Dear Sir,

Immediately following the attack on my own country by al Qaeda in September 2001, the United States was presented with a chance to change the trajectory of its future, an opportunity that occurs, when it does, no more than once in a generation. The decision on how we would answer the attack was critical. Would we allow ourselves the time needed to focus on a calm, reasoned response, or would we reply in the manner that, at least until then, had defined us - a hastily thought out use of disproportionate violence?

You know the answer. We bombed, we occupied - and we found ourselves involved in the longest war in US history. We made many enemies, and those enemies will do their best to harm us for a long time. Forgetting for a moment the morality of our response, even on a practical level - lives lost and money spent - we made a huge mistake.

The hideous murder of your fighter pilot, Moaz al-Kasasbeh, presents Jordan - a beautiful nation I have visited on several occasions - with a similar moment. How will you react?

The hastily arranged execution of two al Qaeda members, even though convicted in courts of law, was not the answer.

Like the United States after September 11th, Jordan is at a turning point in her history. The decision she makes in the hours and days ahead will help shape how she is viewed - by her own citizens and by the rest of the world community - for many years.

I hope your country does what America did not: take the time to stop, to reflect, and to reach a reasoned consensus on her answer. Mr. al-Kasasbeh's death was gruesomely horrible. Jordan's response should not be more of the same.

Sincerely,

Ken Hannaford-Ricardi
Massachusetts, USA

MARCH 2015

A short story about Afghan street kids, in the words of Zekerullah
(Translated by Dr. Hakim)

We organized an Afghan Street Kids Walk in which 80 kids walked together to the gates of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission to ask for a school for 100 street kids.



Before the walk, I felt a little fearful as, of late in Afghanistan, hardly a week passes by without a suicide bombing. I myself was once a street kid, and I felt deeply the 'pain' that street kids have, so my fear that they would have to work for a lifetime in the streets overcame the fear I had of possible explosions.

I didn't expect that there'll be any response from any Afghan government officials to our request for a school. But a week after the walk, I was in a taxi when I heard a Killid Radio program in which an Afghan Ministry of Education official was discussing with another panelist our street kids walk and the kids' request for a school to be built for 100 students. The Education Ministry official said that the government had no funds to build such a school.

I felt hopeless. The authorities pay no attention to these kids who work in the streets when kids their age should be in school.

One of our 9 year old street kids, Ismael, said, "I polish boots. I can't go to school because if I go to school, I won't be able to work and so, I won't be able to bring money home to get food and bread."

Together with our Street Kids Team (at the Borderfree Nonviolence Community Centre in Kabul), I resolved to establish a Borderfree Afghan Street Kids School