

VOICES

FOR CREATIVE NONVIOLENCE

November 2013

vcnv.org

Dear Friends,

Buddy Bell and Kathy Kelly recently returned from a 34-day tour, Chicago to New York City, sharing a glorious autumn and an anti-war, pro-reparations message with communities in the Midwest, in Canada, and New England before observing a concluding vigil, on UN Day, across from the United Nations compound.

“We had travelled,” Kathy writes, “bringing each host community two large jars and a bag of beans. After presentations, some formal and some impromptu in grocery stores, parks and University quads, we invited people to cast a vote by depositing beans in one of the two jars. One jar was marked for on-going Pentagon spending and the other for funding reparations and reconstruction in Afghanistan and in communities at home. At the end of the trip, the “Pentagon Spending” jar had about 3 dozen beans; the jar for “Reparations and Reconstruction” contained thousands of beans.



The trekkers were joined on Long Island by Luke Nephew, an accomplished spoken word poet from the Bronx who had just returned from Kabul, Afghanistan. He spun out spoken word poems and tales of

life with the Afghan Peace Volunteers (APVs) for a rapt audience combining high school students with seasoned peace activists who could remember marching with Dr. Martin Luther King.

At each stop along the way, Buddy and Kathy spoke about the likelihood that the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan will increasingly rely on a combination of Joint Special Forces teams working in coordination with drone surveillance and weaponized drones. According to the New York Times, the U.S. military plans for continued deployment of 10,000 American Special Operations troops in Afghanistan.

Matt Aikins, writing for “The Rolling Stone,” spent five months researching allegations of U.S. Special Forces involvement in the torture and murder of 10 Afghan villagers and eight other victims who lived in the Wardak province, in a district which is just a half hour ride from Kabul. Based on interviews with dozens of local witnesses and international organizations’ reports, Aikins reported that in the spring of 2013, the bodies of 10 Afghan villagers who had disappeared after being detained by U.S. Special Forces were found near the base which the A-Team had used. Aikins also reported that the U.S.-led International Security Assistance Force, or ISAF, consistently denied any wrongdoing.

As we have learned over and over again, the U.S. government is responsible for torture and murder, an environment where civilians live and die under a cloud of constant terror. It is time to stand up and insist that the war in Afghanistan be ended.

We thank you most sincerely for the many continuing ways that you work to end war, build peace and extend the warmth of loving, just community in a world grown sick of war.

Sincerely,

Kathy Kelly, Buddy Bell, Cathy Breen,
Tom Heuser, and Brian Terrell

mens innocens *Drone Activism Trials Update*

*from Chris Cole and Maya Evans of Voices UK
and Richard Norton-Taylor of the Guardian*

Oct 7-- Six protesters who broke into RAF Waddington in Lincolnshire, Britain's first unmanned drones base, were described by a judge at their trial on Monday as "dutiful people". He said it was only with a "heavy heart" that he found them guilty of criminal damage to the base.

The protesters argued that the use of unmanned drones was a breach of international law and a war crime.

Dr. Hebden, one of the defendants who represented himself, told the court: "The decision to pilot armed drones from Waddington makes RAF Waddington a war zone. If this country becomes part of a war zone it makes all of our lives less safe. Our intention was to save lives." When the prosecution objected to his argument, the Judge stated: "It's clearly a zone from which war is clearly being perpetrated."



Photo courtesy of Chris Cole
from Joy First

Oct 22—Five activists stood trial for trespassing after going to CIA headquarters in order to question officials about their commonly-known covert drone program.

At trial, Joy First took the witness stand. "I think about the children who are dying from drone strikes in Pakistan, Yemen, Afghanistan, Somalia and other places around the world. As a grandmother I don't just think of my own grandchildren, but of all the children of the world. I want to spread my arms wide around all the children of the world and keep them safe."

Under cross-examination, the prosecutor asked her if she saw the police tape that said "Do Not Cross."

She replied that she believed she was authorized to be there under the First Amendment and that she was obligated to be there under the principles that came out of Nuremberg.

The judge sentenced each of the defendants to one year unsupervised probation, arguing that although the defendants said that they did not intend to break the law, this was not a crime of intent and so their intention was irrelevant. He also said that the Bill of Rights was irrelevant, Nuremberg was irrelevant, and drone strikes were irrelevant.

from Mary Ann Grady Flores

Oct 24-- In a historic decision five Catholic Worker activists were acquitted of disorderly conduct charges for blocking the main entrance to Hancock Air Base, home of the 174th Attack Wing of the Air National Guard, Syracuse, New York.

After the verdict was announced, the D.A. objected, and the judge said to him that he hadn't found "mens rea," Latin for "guilty mind." The five defendants, with powerful eloquence, convinced the judge that their intent was to uphold, not break, the law.

New Faces Say ‘No’ to Bases *Hakim*

The people of Jeju Island and the Afghan Peace Volunteers resist the U.S. War Apparatus

On the 22nd of October, 2013, the Afghan Peace Volunteers (APVs) in Kabul, Afghanistan, had a Skype conversation with peace activists at Ganjeong Village on Jeju Island, South Korea.

They represent the ‘small people’ of the world who are respectively opposed to the establishment of nine U.S. military bases in Afghanistan through the Bilateral Security Agreement currently being negotiated and the construction of a U.S. naval base at Jeju Island. They understand that these bases will serve as launch pads in the ‘Asian pivot’, as tools in the blueprint of the Pentagon for total spectrum dominance in the world.

Both groups speak as and for ordinary folk. They care for the earth they inhabit, both Afghanistan and Jeju Island having naturally beautiful areas designated by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites.



Their conversation was a time of discovering one another, and of connecting their protests which are similar to the people protests breaking out all over the world. They shared solidarity in resisting the U.S. war apparatus in Afghanistan and South Korea.

They represent the ‘faces’ and hope of a better world!

We need urgently to dismantle abusive conventional ‘norms’ in order to survive our disconnect with nature and with one another.

Purifying the Well *Brian Terrell*



While Voices co-coordinators Kathy Kelly and Buddy Bell were on the “Cost of War” tour in the Northeastern US and Ontario, I was taking the message to Europe. My initial invitation was from the teachers’ union in Germany to speak about drone warfare to students in schools in the Ruhr river region in September. Since I was in the neighborhood, I was able to join the October week of action against drones in the United Kingdom, speaking in seven English cities in eight days, and to participate in the Afghan Peace Conference in London convened by Maya Evans of Voices for Creative Nonviolence UK. Through Catholic Worker and other connections I was invited to more communities in Germany and Wales, joining in the electrifying discussion that is embroiling the world concerning drone warfare, the “war on terror” and NSA spying. It was fascinating to hear the perspectives of European students and activists at this critical time when, in the words of UK Prime Minister David Cameron, the “well of public opinion has been well and truly poisoned” against war.

There Is No Safe Place

Cathy Breen

Dear friends,

Affectionate greetings to each of you. It has been some time since I have been in touch, and I want to update you on what we are hearing from Iraq...

Over 8,000 people have been killed in Iraq so far this year. It is hard to grasp the enormity of this figure as we don't get the news here in the states. Day after day I grieve as I try and record the number of dead: 55, 84, 88, 96, 105, 90..., just to give you an idea of some of the daily death tolls. This doesn't include the wounded which is far greater in number.

There is no safe place. We are getting reports of whole families being killed in their homes during night raids, one family recently of twenty two. No one is safe. Youth playing soccer are targeted, people on buses, in open-air markets, in cafes, ice cream parlors and restaurants, at checkpoints and mosques. A recent report read: In Baghdad, a suicide bomber attacked a park filled with women and children, where he killed 28 people and wounded at least 53 more.

I brace myself each time I open my email. What news will await me? Worse yet, will I get no news and fear friends have fallen victims to the relentless explosions throughout Iraq. Yesterday the desperation in a terse message from a trusted friend in Baghdad was palpable. "I am thinking of moving with my family to India. What do you think?" he asked me. What could I possibly answer him, I ask myself. Another friend also emailed yesterday apologizing for being out of touch. The auto repair shop of one of his brothers was bombed. "Thank God the terrorist act happened early in the morning before the start of work." He has been busy helping with repairs. I had hoped to return to Iraq this month, but am warned by friends there that it is not wise to travel at present.

Where Planes Drop Death

Luke Nephew

So 12 years into America's war in Afghanistan
I fly from New York City to Kabul

On my first morning here I wake up startled,

I hear a loud sound and sit up in the darkness

The roar of a plane gets closer and closer

I remember the stories I heard earlier that day from Raz Mohammad

Who lost friends, classmates and his brother to drone strikes in Maydan Wardak. "The drones sound different", he says, "they buzz in your ear and you can't sleep and you are afraid they will kill you."

Raz and the other young men lay sleeping on the floor of the room as I sit there in the darkness listening to the plane shake the walls of the house.

There are no drone attacks in Kabul these days and I know that so I sigh and lay back down as the plane rages on. I'm left reflecting: I am now in a country where planes drop bombs and I'm wide awake at 4 am thinking about how terrifying it must be to live in all the provinces of this country where death could fall out the sky at anytime.

It could land on your garden, or your bedroom or your mother. And to make your night's sleep even more terrifying, you never know if a band of foreign or local soldiers will break down your door at any time. It's quiet now and into the darkness over the city echo the calls to prayers.

So much to pray for. One day of war is inevitably full of all physical, social and psychological crimes. One year overflows with terrible scars and the loss of lives. You have to ask yourself how and why has the US waged these 12 years of war?

12

Years
of War

While in New York they cut Head Start to
feed our hungry children breakfast

And then spend billions as Afghan kids see
heads cut off and learn to
expect this,

I need to see a politician repent this,

hang his head and cry that this many
people have died

In 12 years of war while the people of Des
Moines, Iowa don't even know there is a
drone command center being put there that
will tear brothers and sisters to pieces with
chemicals that char the body turning
everything black and exploding the head
off the body... Raz tells me how it looks
and shudders in unbearable disgust
remembering
12 years of war,

The streets of Kabul beg in the dust,

Distrust and revenge a city, a country, a
people condemned

After 12 years of war, some estimate 78%
of Afghans have psychological disorders,
the taxi driver says its more, says we
Afghans can't think right anymore, he
shows us scars on his knees from the day
he almost died, he sighs, 'so many stories
of pain...

But who are we to say we're sane? When
we remain entrenched after 12 years of
war? I dare you to come here and still say
you want more.

Another day, another year, then leaving 9
military bases here,

America has smashed the windows of
people's sanity,

People are demanding we leave, nobody
wants to hear Obama make a pretty speech

In Kabul I've see anger rise like armies

in young men's eyes that say you have
harmed me and my family for the last time,

I wanna know what will be the last crime
committed in the name of freedom,

more marines relieving themselves on
corpses of murdered kids,

12 years of blood that did not have to get
spilled,

12 years of mothers gone mad from
mourning, what have we become?

Afghanistan is a nation of American made
guns and American made widows,

hearts crumbling like bombed out window
sill

wondering where they'll find the will to
teach their son not to kill

when inflicting death is the lesson they've
best learned from us,

12 years of dust on boots and the truth
being covered in mud,

but what will we do now...

Are we hoping a nation of 30 million will
forgive and forget, would you let it go if an
occupying army broke into your house
killed your father and didn't even say
sorry, or admit it was a mistake, how many
more years will it take Americans to wake
up and say I will not live in debt while my
government pays millions of dollars a day
to make people hate me for my passport,
want to cut my life short for my birth
country's flag, 12 years of war and not
enough body bags to hold the soldiers, not
enough words to say the funeral masses,
not enough mass
graves to hold the lives that 12 years of
wartime has taken,

and when I ask a young Afghan woman
named Zuhail, why she wants an end
to the occupation,

she says 12 years of war is too many, its
time for the soldiers to go home to their
families. They must miss them.

Campaign Nonviolence

Voices has teamed up with Pace E Bene to offer a series of one-week retreats at our Chicago office for students who are interested in learning about nonviolent activism and building relationships across borders.

Among the subjects to be discussed would be: planning vigils and walks, publicity, writing, interviewing, language study, local as well as international networking, and building a culture of nonviolence.

While this project is still in the planning stages, we intend to hold one 'spring break' session and another in early summer. Participants can be housed at our office or nearby.

Those who would like to apply to participate in this program may email us at info@vcnv.org. Voices for Creative Nonviolence and Pace E Bene hope to have you join us Mar 2-8 or Mar 22-28.

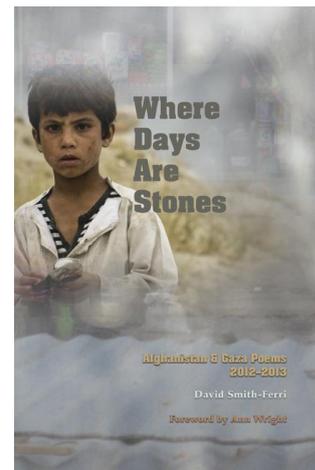
Book Reviews

*Where Days Are Stones
Afghanistan and Gaza Poems*
written by David Smith-Ferri
with a Foreword by Ann Wright

Reviewed by the author:

The opening poem in *Where Days Are Stones* presents the point of view of two young Afghans, 13-year old Samia and 17-year old Abdulhai. Not surprisingly, given the recent history of Afghanistan, their experience includes some of the worst problems afflicting their country: violence, displacement, unemployment, poverty. But listening to them, we understand they are people who haven't been broken by their experiences, whose minds are oriented toward the future, and whose teenage dreams are alive and pulsing. This is heartening, but the poem has a bigger surprise for us. Underneath their words telling us about the problems in Afghanistan is the single, clear note of their longing. Abdulhai and Samia want something from us. Not just our attention for a few moments. Not just our understanding. They offer their hearts, and they want our love in return.

Over and over again in this poignant and very personal book of poetry, Afghan and Palestinian people ask us to open our hearts. Written in the form of stories, often with direct quotes from conversations with people in Afghanistan and Gaza, the poems are accessible and powerful. And because they grow out of encounters from Voices for Creative Nonviolence delegations, they provide a unique window into the recent work of this organization.



Thanks to the generosity of the publisher, Marcia Gagliardi of Haley's Press, all money from the sale of the book goes to Voices for Creative Nonviolence.

This Way Kathy Kelly

I lived in Iraq during the 2003 Shock and Awe bombing. On April 1st, about two weeks into the aerial bombardment, a medical doctor who was one of my fellow peace team members urged me to go with her to the Al Kindi Hospital in Baghdad, where she knew she could be of some help. With no medical training, I tried to be unobtrusive, as families raced into the hospital carrying wounded loved ones. At one point, a woman sitting next to me began to weep uncontrollably. “How I tell him?” she asked, in broken English. “What I say?” She was Jamela Abbas, the aunt of a young man, named Ali. Early in the morning on March 31st, U.S. war planes had fired on her family home, while she alone of all her family was outside. Jamela wept as she searched for words to tell Ali that surgeons had amputated both of his badly damaged arms, close to his shoulders. What’s more, she would have to tell him that she was now his sole surviving relative.

I soon heard how that conversation had gone. It was reported to me that when Ali, aged 12, learned that he had lost both of his arms, he responded by asking “Will I always be this way?”

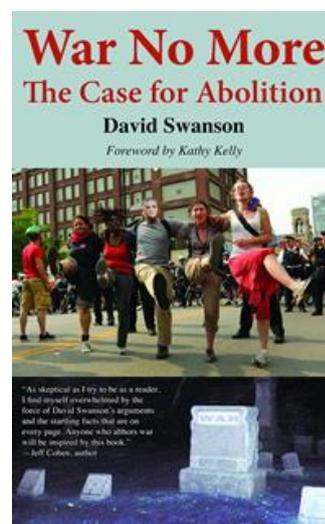
Returning to the Al Fanar hotel, I hid in my room. Furious tears flowed. I remember pounding my pillow and asking “Will we always be this way?”

David Swanson reminds me to look to humanity’s incredible achievements in resisting war, in choosing the alternatives which we have yet to show our full power to realize.

Swanson tells us in his 2011 book, *When the World Outlawed War*, there came a point in U.S. history, in 1928, when wealthy elites decided that it was in their enlightened self-interest to negotiate the Kellogg-Briand Pact, intended to avert future wars, and to prevent future U.S. governments from seeking war. Swanson

encourages us to study and build on moments in history when war was rejected, and to refuse to tell ourselves that warfare is inevitable.

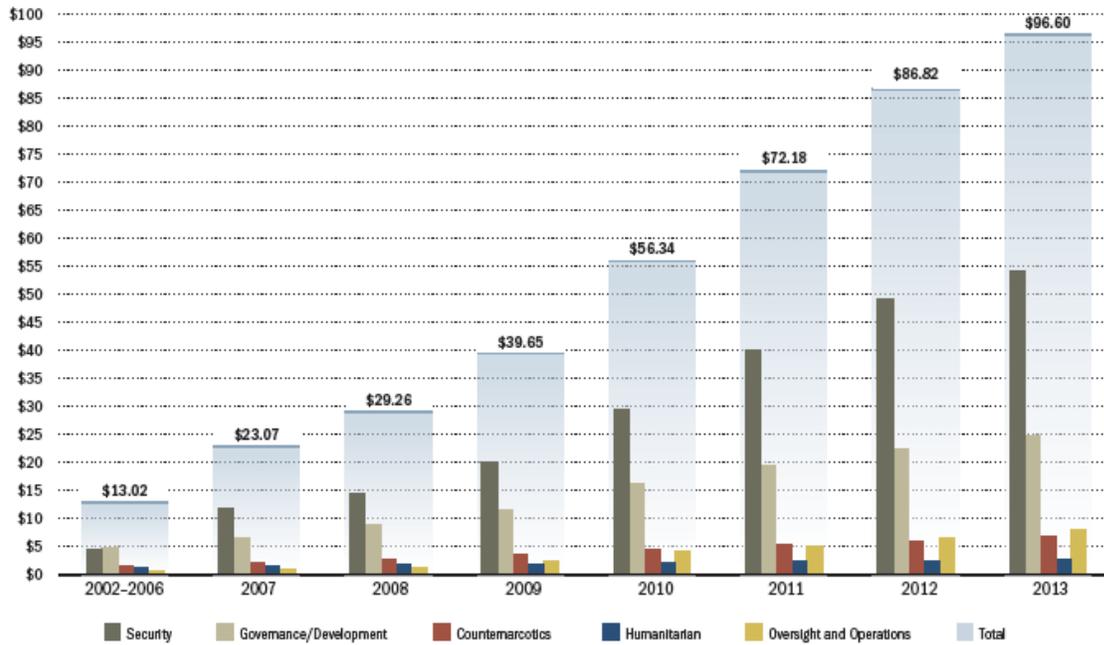
A few years ago, I heard once more about Jamela Abbas’ nephew, Ali. Now he was 16 years old, living in London where a BBC reporter had interviewed him. Ali had become an accomplished artist, using his toes to hold a paint brush. He had also learned to feed himself using his feet. “Ali,” asked the interviewer, “what would you like to be when you grow up?” In perfect English, Ali had answered, “I’m not sure. But I would like to work for peace.”



David Swanson reminds us that we will not always be this way. We will transcend in ways that we cannot yet properly imagine, through the determination to rise above our incapacities and achieve our purposes on earth. Obviously Ali’s story is not a feel-good story. Humanity has lost so much to war and what so often seems its incapacity for peace is like the most grievous of disfigurements. We don’t know the ways we will discover in which to work to rise above these disfigurements. We learn from the past, we keep our eyes on our goal, we fully grieve our losses, and we expect to be surprised by the fruits of diligent labor and a passion to keep humanity alive, and to help it create again.

This excerpt is from Kathy Kelly’s foreword to *War No More: The Case for Abolition*, the latest book by David Swanson. Call our office to order a physical copy, or go to <http://davidswanson.org> if you prefer the “eBook” version.

CUMULATIVE APPROPRIATIONS BY FUNDING CATEGORY, AS OF SEPTEMBER 30, 2013 (\$ BILLIONS)



Source: Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction Oct 30, 2013 Quarterly Report to Congress, available at www.sigar.mil

Note: This graph shows total U.S. spending on “relief and reconstruction” in Afghanistan up to a given year. It does not account for U.S. military operations, said to cost \$2 billion per week. Of the nearly \$100 billion spent on reconstruction over the duration of the war, no more than \$3 billion was used for “humanitarian” projects.

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