

VOICES

FOR CREATIVE NONVIOLENCE

July, 2014

vcnv.org

Dear Friends,

A long, hot summer of rising anxiety has begun in various war zones around the world. In the U.S., the Pentagon continually promotes a clear message: Never walk away from war.

As we write this letter, Bowe Bergdahl, a young U.S. soldier who walked away from his platoon in Afghanistan and then became a prisoner of war for five years, is adjusting to life in the U.S., where he awaits a court martial.

Bergdahl's experiences in Afghanistan suggested that his platoon was as ready to massacre the local population as to serve it. His military superiors knew that he was troubled, that his platoon was barely functional, and that he needed to find a way out. They could have found compassion for him. They could try, now, to understand what happens when a soldier experiences a crisis of conscience. Instead, the Pentagon and U.S. foreign policy demand unwavering support for ongoing war.

U.S. military and political elites impatiently await a final signature to the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) which Afghanistan's President Karzai refused to sign. Both of the candidates in a contested run-off for the next presidency of Afghanistan have promised to sign the BSA. The agreement assures ongoing U.S. military presence in Afghanistan for at least the next decade.

Bases in Afghanistan will be part of the "Asia Pivot" strategy which the Pentagon steadily develops. Aiming to build a network of military alliances and bases throughout the entire continent, the policy provokes military competition with China and Russia, fostering newer weapon systems and an ongoing cold war. As preferential business interests are increasingly allowed to wield U.S. military power in order to dominate over popular will, we may begin to see a repeat of what is happening now at the U.S. - Mexico border, where the number of unaccompanied minors who chance the long migration and crossing has skyrocketed, along with the overall numbers of migrants being arrested and deported. The United States continues to refuse responsibility for the consequences of its wars of choice in Central America or anywhere else. On the contrary, it can't seem to derail itself from destroying Iraqi people yet again, opening the country to drone strikes.

On June 19, 2014, a close friend living near Baghdad, someone who never worked for any political party in Iraq, replied to Cathy Breen's question about what U.S. people could do to alleviate suffering in Iraq. "The best thing they can do," he says, "is to take back all of the Iraqi government cabinet members who were living in the U.S. before the 2003 U.S. invasion." He laments corruption and sectarianism fostered by these leaders. "Please don't send weapons," he continues. "We have more weapons than food in Iraq."

"Dear Friends," continued on page 7



"Peace Mama" leads walkers on the final mile, Covering Ground to Ground the Drones, from Chicago to new drone base in Battle Creek, Michigan.

Photo by Maya Evans

From Jeju and Afghanistan an Asia Peace Pivot

By Hakim

“Don’t you touch me!” declared Mi Ryang.

South Korean police were clamping down on a villager who was resisting the construction of a Korean/U.S. naval base at her village. Mi Ryang managed to turn the police away by taking off her blouse and, clad in her bra, walking toward them with her clear warning. Hands off! Mi Ryang is fondly referred to as “Gangjeong’s daughter” by villagers who highly regard her as the feisty descendant of legendary women sea divers. Her mother and grandmother were Haenyo divers who supported their families every day by diving for shellfish.

Since 2007, every day without fail, Mi Ryang has stood up to militarists destroying her land.

In doing so, she confronts giants: the Korean military, Korean police authority, the U.S. military, and huge corporations, such as Samsung, allied with these armed forces.

Mi Ryang and her fellow protesters rely on love and on relationships which help them to continue seeking self-determination, freedom and dignity.

Jeju Island is the first place in the world to receive all three UNESCO natural science designations (Biosphere Reserve in 2002, World Natural Heritage in 2007 and Global Geopark in 2010). The military industrial complex, having no interest in securing the Island’s natural wonders, instead serves the U.S. government’s national interest in countering China’s rising economic influence.

The U.S. doesn’t want to be number two. The consequences of the U.S. government’s blueprint for ‘total spectrum dominance,’ globally, are violent, and frightening.

I recently attended a conference held at Jeju University, where young Korean men told participants about why they chose prison instead of enlisting for the two-year compulsory Korean military service. “I admire these conscientious objectors for their brave and responsible decisions,” I said, “and I confess that I’m worried. I fear that Jeju Island will become like Afghanistan, where I have worked as a humanitarian and social enterprise worker for the past 10 years.”

“Jeju Island will be a pawn harboring a U.S. naval base, just as Afghanistan will be a pad for at least nine U.S.

military bases when the next Afghan President signs the U.S./Afghanistan Bilateral Security Agreement.”

When the Korean authorities collaborated with the U.S. military in 1947, at least 30,000 Jeju Islanders were massacred.

How many more ordinary people and soldiers will suffer, be utilized or be killed due to U.S. geopolitical interests to pivot against China?

As many as 20% of all tourists to Jeju Island are Chinese nationals. Clearly, ordinary Jeju citizens and ordinary Chinese can get along, just like ordinary Afghans and citizens from the U.S./NATO countries can get along. But when U.S. military bases are built outside the U.S., the next

Osama Bin Ladens will have excuses to plan other September 11th s!

A few nights ago, I spoke with Dr Song, a Korean activist who used to swim every day to Gureombi Rock, a sacred, volcanic rock formation along Gangjeong’s coastline which was destroyed by the naval base construction. At one point, coast guard officials jailed him for trying to reach Gureombi by swimming. Dr. Song just returned from Okinawa, where he met with Japanese who have resisted the U.S. military base in



Mi Ryang, standing with Gangjeong Village Association members and Gangjeong’s mayor, outside the Jeju Courts, to refuse paying fines for protests against the U.S. naval base construction. (Courtesy of the author)

Okinawa for decades.

The Okinawan and Korean activists understand the global challenge we face. The 99% must link to form a strong, united 99%. By acting together, we can build a better world, instead of burning out as tiny communities of change. The 1% is way too wealthy and well-resourced in an entrenched system to be stopped by any one village or group.

‘We are many, they are few’ applies more effectively when we stand together. Socially and emotionally, we need one another more than ever, as our existence is threatened by human-engineered climate change, nuclear annihilation and gross socioeconomic inequalities.

The governments of South Korea, the Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan, Japan and even my home country Singapore, have dangerously partnered with the U.S. against China, in Obama’s Asia pivot, dividing human beings by using the threat of armed force, for profit.

The non-violent examples of the people of Gangjeong Village should lead people worldwide to make friendships,

create conversations, build alternative education systems, promote communally beneficial, sustainable economies, and create peace parks where people can celebrate their art, music, and dancing. Visit Gangjeong Village and you'll see how residents have created joyful ways to turn the Asia War Pivot into an Asia Peace Pivot, as you can watch in this video.

Alternatively, people can choose the "helpless bystander" role and become passive spectators as oppressive global militarism and corporate greed destroy us. People can stand still and watch destruction of beautiful coral reefs and marine life in Jeju, Australia and other seas; watch livelihoods, like those of Gangjeong and Gaza fishermen, disappear; and watch, mutely, as fellow human beings like Americans, Afghans, Syrians, Libyans, Egyptians, Palestinians, Israelis, Ukrainians, Nigerians, Malians, Mexicans, indigenous peoples and many others are killed.

Or, we can be Like Mi Ryang. As free and equal human beings we can lay aside our individual concerns and lobbies to unite, cooperatively, making our struggles more attractive and less lonely. Together, we're more than capable of persuading the world to seek genuine security and liberation.

The Afghan Peace Volunteers have begun playing their tiny part in promoting non-violence and serving fellow Afghans in Kabul. As they connect the dots of inequality, global warming and wars, they long to build relationships across all borders, under the same blue sky, in order to save themselves, the earth and humanity.

Through their Borderfree effort to build socioeconomic equality, take care of our blue planet, and abolish war, they wear their Borderfree Blue Scarves and say, together with Mi Ryang and the resilient villagers of Gangjeong Village, "Don't touch me!"

Navigating Toward "Borderfree" Peace

By Kathy Kelly

Conversations over a delicious meal at the Gangjeong community kitchen were a delightful daily event during my recent visit to Jeju Island. On my first day there, during lunch time, I met Emily and Dongwon, a young couple, recently married, who met each other while campaigning for



Kathy Kelly joins the people of Gangjeong village in resisting the construction of a massive naval base on Korea's Jeju Island.

Photo by Jungjoo

demilitarization of Jeju Island. Emily, who is Taiwanese, recalled that when her parents came to meet Dongwon for the first time, before the two had wed, they had to visit him in prison. Dongwon, who grew up in a rural area of South Korea, had visited Gangjeong and gotten to know a small community living on the Gureombi Rock. Drawn by their tenacity and commitment, he decided to join them. When a barge crane was set up in preparation to begin blasting the rock, Dongwon climbed toward its tip and nonviolently defied police who ordered him to come down. Police arrested him. On February 18, 2013, a judge sentenced him to one year in prison for having climbed the barge crane.

Emily laughs happily as she recalls how muscular she became when she was learning to become a sailor. She wanted practical experience so that she could travel, by boat, between islands affected by militarization, such as Taiwan, Okinawa, and Jeju Island. Emily

recently traveled to Okinawa for an international meeting with islanders who dream of building solidarity and designing ocean activities to defend peace in their seas.

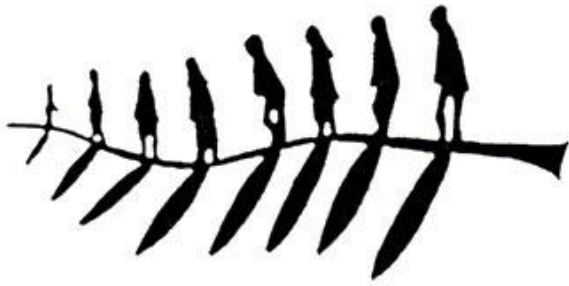
Meanwhile, Dongwon was arranging a conference, at Jeju University, to explore conscientious objection to war. He and his friend Mark do not want to be conscripted into military service, but failure to comply with the Republic of Korea's mandatory service could result in severe punishment. They are well aware that 90 per cent of the people, worldwide, who are incarcerated for conscientious objection to military service are serving time in South Korean prisons.

Encounters with dissenters in Gangjeong who resist militarization led Dongwon, Emily, and Mark to ask what they could do to follow their beliefs. What steps would they be willing to take and how could they encourage other young people to consider living their lives in accord with their deepest beliefs?

It's a privilege and a challenge to confer with new, young friends in places like Jeju Island and Kabul, Afghanistan.

Punishing people who refuse to participate in war frustrates efforts, worldwide, to chart paths toward negotiation and diplomacy as the basis for international foreign policies. It's far safer and wiser to be guided by young people, like those whom I met in Gangjeong's community kitchen, who hunger for justice and work for peace.

On the Road to Ground the Drones



On June 3, folks from Voices for Creative Nonviolence and some of their friends began walking about 165 miles from the Boeing corporate headquarters in Chicago (where the manufacture of drones and conventional war planes are managed and designed) to the Michigan Air National Guard Facility at the Battle Creek Airport, planned site of a new drone command center. By the time we arrived in Battle Creek on June 14, we had crossed three state's borders and seen dramatic environmental, economic, social and geographic contrasts. A strong sense of community and purpose grew among us as we walked and with the peace groups, churches and friends who welcomed us. We expect to return to Western Michigan (perhaps by train or bus, next time) to join with the growing community of resistance there.

Three walkers, Francis Pauc, Alice Gerard and Olga Bonfiglio share some of their reflections and meditations.

From Francis Pauc

We started the walk in downtown Chicago at the Boeing office. Once the rally was done, we marched to the lakefront and headed south. On the left was Lake Michigan,



deep blue and calm. On our right was a mountain range of glass and steel. We walked a narrow path between serenity and ceaseless activity. The first day was full of glaring contrasts, and so were the days that followed.

Each day showed us unexpected worlds. Gary, Indiana was a city of poverty that also had the most helpful police that I

have ever met in my life. We slept at a campground in the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore that was only a couple miles from the steel mills of Arcelor Mittal. We passed by wealthy neighborhoods that hugged the shores of Lake Michigan. We hiked through aging industrial towns with boarded up houses and businesses. In almost all cases, despite differences in economic status or ethnicity, people were friendly to us. Rarely did we experience hostility of any kind.



For me, the strangest day of the walk was when we wound our way through East Chicago in the rain. Most of the city screamed environmental disaster. Piles of rusting metal. A huge BP refinery that belched flames into the sky. Pools of oily water. Streets where there had not been even the thought of sidewalks.



From Olga Bonfiglio

Jessica Clark, 23, of Kalamazoo who made the entire 165-mile walk, called for a culture that is simpler, less focused on convenience and more focused on living close to the earth. Such a change can heal deep wounds made to ourselves and to our world especially when issues like climate change and immigration are ignored, and budgets committed to the military take precedence over human needs.

She called for the dismantling of the military industrial

complex in favor of creating a culture of consent, dignity for all, and providing healthy food and water to citizens. "This is peace and justice."

She said the walk was slow, steady, and thoughtful and wishes that this approach were used for international politics instead of the urgency to respond to violence with violence. Recently, this has led the United States to two wars and now drone warfare.

"This is not acceptable and certainly not in our names. There are enough terror and bombs in that area of the world."



It had taken those who started at the Boeing Company headquarters in Chicago 12 days and 165 miles to get there. Through mostly sunny, moderate days as well as one very rainy day, they walked an average of 15 miles per day. Each day they were greeted by supporters who wanted to see an end to drone warfare, they were fed by donations to the cause, they were given a thumbs up along the rural highways, and they were shunned by a few, a very few.

16 walkers made up the core group and stood firm every day, walking one foot in front of the other, and not stopping except for a 15-minute break by the side of the road and lunch. Others joined the march for a time at various places.



Together they talked, meditated, nibbled on snacks, chugged water. They told some stories about their lives, and they discussed their triumphs and frustrations with peace activism, or rather, the lack of the government's desire for peace in the world.

From Alice Gerard

(June 12th) We arrived in Kalamazoo after we walked forever (or almost forever). We found yellow flowers and tiny butterflies and almost-ripe wild berries. At lunch, Kathy told us that thirteen persons were killed in a drone strike in Pakistan. Who were these people? I was horrified. Life needs to be about butterflies, not bombs. Everyone deserves the opportunity to chase butterflies, not run in terror from the pilotless planes that carry death and devastation in their bellies.

I wondered: why do I walk until my feet hurt? If I can't stop the drones from flying, what good am I doing?

But then, I thought, why not me? I will persevere... because everyone has the right to peaceful lives with wild flowers, butterflies, and almost-ripe berries.

"We are not made to do this. We can't keep doing this," Brian said about drone attacks. So far, 4,000 civilians have been killed in drone attacks.

There was a second drone strike today.

(June 13th) Another day for walking. We sang and the wind kicked up and the birds chirped. We walked out of Kalamazoo on a beautiful bike path. We saw the Kalamazoo River. It's all good.



(June 14th) It was a beautiful, joyous last day. We created, in not quite two weeks, a supportive community, for which I am grateful. I'm grateful that I have strong legs and feet that will accept that sort of pounding. I am grateful that I have maintained my sense of wonder and the spirit of adventure. I am grateful for my sensitive soul, which, sometimes, I wish that I didn't have.

At the bus terminal in Detroit, I saw a man with an Army Ranger insignia on his shirt. He seemed young but very disabled. He walked slowly with a cane, and one of his legs wouldn't bend. Too many casualties of war, everywhere.

Photos, left to right: The walk begins at Boeing HQ in downtown Chicago, photo by Maya Evans. Two photos, Senji, a Buddhist monk from Seattle, leads the walk through BP refineries, by Maya. Ruth Cole from Minnesota and Jessica Clark of Kalamazoo, photo by Maya. Ceylon Mooney of Memphis, Maya Evans of VCNV-UK and Ruth rest on the way, photo by Olga Bonfiglio. The walk swelled to one hundred souls as we reached the base on June 14, photo by Olga.

Why Do We Have To Wait Until Iraq Is “Disintegrating” Before We Get News?

By Cathy Breen

Why do we have to wait until Iraq is “disintegrating” before we get news?

It was heartbreaking, this morning to hear Mohammed Al Dulaimy, an Iraqi reporter for McClatchy news, speak on Democracy Now. As Mosul, a city of two million, falls to ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), while Iraqi soldiers drop their arms and flee, we hear that the “militants” are now heading toward Baghdad. “Sunni Islamic rebels” have seized Tikrit and Iraqi Kurds have taken Kirkuk.

A dear Iraqi woman friend called me just two days ago, her voice frantic. She was lamenting the lack of media coverage on Iraq here in the United States. She has relatives in Mosul, relatives who are fleeing the bombs of the Iraqi government forces. Over 500,000 have fled Mosul, many in the last days having to escape in just minutes. “You can’t fight bombs with a kitchen knife!” my friend cried over the phone. Herself a recent refugee to the U.S., we met in Jordan some years ago when I was following the situation of Iraqi refugees in Jordan and Syria. As my friend described the desperate situation in Mosel, she told me how helpless she feels. A part of her wants “to go home even if it means dying there.”

I am scheduled to do a radio interview in a couple of days, and after speaking with the producer over the phone the other night, I felt dismayed and unable to give an accurate assessment of where the violence is coming from. Not an analyst, I need to stick with what I know, what Iraqis I know tell me they are experiencing. .

For years I have kept account of the number of dead and wounded in Iraq. I have only to open my “Month at a Glance” calendar and read the number of Iraq dead I have noted on any given day. In June of this year: 85, 122, 166, 122... In March of this year 1,886 killed, in May 2,219 killed. But we don’t get this news. Whenever I am asked, I try and speak about the 2003 U.S. led war on Iraq and its consequences.

As part of Voices for Creative Nonviolence, I was able to return to central and southern Iraq in the fall of 2012. I went again in 2013 and in Jan./Feb. of 2014. During this latest trip, we felt it unwise to travel to Baghdad, not to

mention Fallujah, Ramadi, Mosul or Dyala, fearing not only for our own safety, but for that of our drivers, translators and host families. These trips are an attempt to bear witness to this war, so that we don’t have another.

“Your country brought the war on terrorism to our country” is something I heard more than once in Iraq. “My staying in Iraq is a form of resistance against the dirty war” another said. “You could have taken Saddam out at a parade,” he continued. “This war was planned.” A fifth year University student told me “You have destroyed our ancient civilization, our country....You have destroyed something inside of us.” And yet another student “You don’t bomb us and then send teams to investigate what was in the bombs. Thirty percent of our children in Fallujah are born with birth defects! And a final damning indictment: “We will not forget. It is not written in our hearts, it is carved into our hearts.”

Iraq never had a suicide bomb before the 2003 U.S.-led war against Iraq.

I am beholden to WBAI and Democracy Now for their, as always, excellent reporting. I am beholden to Mohammed Al Dulaimy for his courage to speak and be seen this morning. They are my heroes as well as the countless people in Iraq holding out on the front lines, so to speak, in times of unspeakable terror and suffering. Mohammed spoke of how we see the failing of the whole system of the U.S. and its allies, the failing of the democratic experiment. We see, he said, the consequences in the lack of trust and in the corruption in the leadership, which has given way for radicals to arise, for a descent to a



Woodcut by Kathe Kollwitz- “Every war already carries within it the war that will answer it.”

Syrian-like civil war.

“ISIS is not alone in this fight” Mohammed said. We have to pause and understand what is happening, he said. We see the use of hellfire missiles by the Iraqi army targeting a hospital in Fallujah. ISIS is using the anger, building on it. We see weapons falling into the hands of USIS, going across to Syria

Amy Goodman asked Mohammed why he was taking such a risk in showing his face? “In my country we have lost so many people....it is time to think about what is happening....He spoke of heart-breaking images from Fallujah, his city, from Ramadi and now Mosul. Of a father watching his children killed, all of which leads to a “huge sense of anger” toward the Iraqi military. ISIS will seize this moment as “all are afraid of the random shelling and of the Iraqi government.”

Israel Threw Me Out

By: Ceylon Mooney

My typical Christmas vacation for most of the past decade has been a month in the West Bank standing beside my Palestinian brothers and sisters in their non-violent struggle against the U.S.-supported Israeli occupation. It's a fight I picked. I choose to put myself in the middle of an occupation, and I've chosen to go where Israel has forbidden me to go.

I've stood with the savages against the brutality of Western civilization; I've used my white privilege and my nationality to move more freely within Palestine than the Palestinians, and I've been used as a human shield by the Israeli military. I've attended demonstrations, lobbied U.S. officials, written op-eds, published a number of other articles, and toured the U.S. a number of times to bring this witness home. And, for all this, I've finally suffered the consequences: Israel sent my ass home.

I arrived at Ben Gurion Airport and made it to immigration. There, the immigration official asked me the same questions they've asked for years: "What is the purpose of your visit? How long will you stay in Israel? Do you plan to go to the West Bank? Do you know anyone in the West Bank? Do you know any Israelis? Have you been to any demonstrations?"

I gave them the same answers I've given for years. I assert that I am a tourist, that I do not keep in touch with anyone I meet in the West Bank, and I have many Israeli friends. After 10 hours of waiting and answering the same questions, an Israeli official told me, "I do not believe you are here as tourist. I believe you are here for other purposes," and she set down on her desk in front of me a stack of papers about my peace activities in the U.S., Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine. An hour later, I was escorted to a Turkish Airlines gate and flown back to Chicago.

As it becomes more commonplace to openly criticize Israeli apartheid and occupation, Israel has continued to look more closely at people entering the country. Suspected peace activists, human rights workers, and even people who have publicly criticized the state of Israel are deemed a security risk, deported and banned from entering Israel for 10 years. The same week I was deported, an Irish activist was detained

and deported. A few days later, two other international activists were taken into police custody, detained, and deported.

Activists who've stood on the ground as witness to the occupation for years are now being turned away at the airport or being forced to sign statements that they will not enter the West Bank. The myth of a peace process is eroding.

These escalations in deportations and detentions cannot stop the flow of truth from behind the apartheid wall. The foundations of this occupation - silence, demonizing the occupied, the consent and unconditional support of the U.S., the cavalier labeling of critics as anti-Semitic - are eroding. The occupation cannot stand to bear the load indefinitely.

Dear Friends,

(continued from page 1)

Campaigning for an end to U.S. usage of weaponized drones in places like Afghanistan and Iraq, Voices activists walked from Chicago to Battle Creek, MI, the planned site for yet another Air National Guard base to become a base for participating in drone warfare.

The "On the Ground to Ground the Drones" walk came on the heels of Voices participation in Kansas City's Trifecta Missouri protest, part of which involved a rally and civil disobedience at the Whiteman AFB where drones are being operated. Kathy Kelly and Georgia Walker carried bread across the line, at the base, seeking a dialogue with the base commander. They await trial for trespass charges which will likely follow a pattern similar to experiences

of Brian Terrell, Mark Kenney and Ron Faust who crossed the same line two years ago. Brian served six months in federal prison for his witness.

We're grateful for every opportunity we have to walk away from war. Generous support from recipients of this newsletter enables our continued effort. Please let us know if we could be of any support to activities in your area, and please be assured of abiding solidarity as we link our efforts to build a better world.

Yours sincerely,

Buddy Bell, Nichole Heiden, Kathy Kelly, Tom Heuser and Brian Terrell



Ceylon Mooney has walked many miles with Voices for Creative Nonviolence. Photo by Maya Evans

VOICES

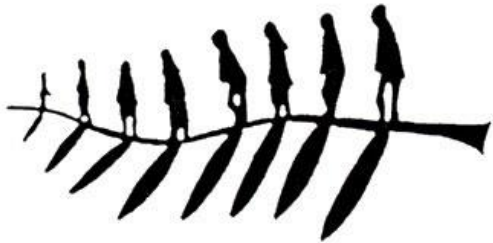
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July 2014 NEWSLETTER

"Today, families in Detroit, living under an emergency manager imposed by a governor committed to privatizing every inch of the state, are having their water shut off. A few days ago, the United Nations, at the behest of local activists, issued a statement on the shutoffs."

Why Do We Hate the Poor?

by Kim Redigan

The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates that only about 23 percent of households in Afghanistan have access to drinking water, 43 percent in urban areas and 18 percent in rural.