

# VOICES FOR CREATIVE NONVIOLENCE

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Dear Friends,

As this newsletter is being prepared, our “Witness Against War” walk from Chicago to St. Paul, MN sojourns through small towns along the Wisconsin side of the Mississippi River. When it reaches recipients on our list, we’ll have arrived in Saint Paul and begun our respective journeys home to continue organizing in our local communities to end the Iraq – Afghanistan war.

“Walking 500 miles?” asked a British interviewer.  
“Aren’t there trains?”

Certainly it’s unusual, in our society, to choose walking as a preferred mode of transportation. And yet, we believe lengthy peace walks demonstrate a direct way to travel toward our goal of a peaceful society. A radical change in the ways we use energy and other limited resources of our planet must be included in all of our efforts to resist war and military empire building. The Witness Against War project has given members a chance to live very simply and to at least imagine a future less reliant on consuming fossil fuels.

Walkers held aloft signs proclaiming “Health Care, Not Warfare,” “Support the Troops, End the War,” and “Rebuild Iraq, Rebuild the U.S.” Approaching Fort McCoy, in Wisconsin, (a base at which National Guard members train before deployment to tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan), many soldiers who drove past the walkers waved, gave a “thumbs up,” and flashed the peace sign. They seemed happy to see the walkers. Yet we must also acknowledge a certain sadness that was felt during many of the community forums walkers attended, as people spoke about the human cost of war. Many people voiced anxiety and exasperation, speaking about the hurdles they face trying to promote peaceful alternatives to war. Throughout the journey, walkers heard genuine concern for Iraqis displaced by war and for the numerous families coping with traumas and bereavement caused by war.

While Witness

Against War was

taking place, Joel from our office traveled to Hebron in Palestine with Christian Peacemaker Teams ([www.cpt.org](http://www.cpt.org)). CPT’s motto is “Getting in the Way” and Joel quite literally got in the way of a vicious attack against Palestinian children on their way to day camp. An Israeli settler from the local settlement (which was to have been disbanded long ago) launched stones with a slingshot at the children. As another CPT member escorted the children to safety, Joel continued to nonviolently remain in the way of the settler, who assaulted Joel, hitting him repeatedly in the head with stones. Joel is now safely home and the Palestinian children are continuing to attend day camp with the accompaniment of CPT. Nonviolently getting in the way does indeed work.

Meanwhile, Gerald Paoli and John Volkening (a CPT reservist and our housemate and Voices community member on Argyle St) departed for Colombia, also with CPT. Upon his return, Gerald will join the Voices core working group in Chicago on a full time basis. One of his first projects will be to create informational material on the Iraqi refugee crisis.

In two months, either John McCain or Barack Obama will be elected to be the next President of the United States. Regardless of who is elected, we must continue to build a social justice movement to end the Iraq – Afghanistan war and to fulfill our country’s obligations to the Iraqi people. We are in conversations with colleagues in St. Louis about an on-going vigil near to Obama’s home in Chicago should he be elected President—emphasizing that a grassroots movement must continue to be built and mobilized to bring about an end to the wars.

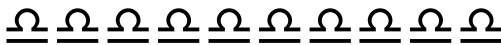
We are also in conversations with Witness Against Torture about participation in the 100 day long campaign they are organizing in Washington, D.C. to begin on January 11th. We’ll seek to raise the issue of the responsibility of the U.S. to: 1) fully fund the reconstruction of Iraq, as well as 2) fully fund assistance for Iraqi refugees living in Syria, Jordan and elsewhere and for Iraqis displaced within their

own country. We remain concerned that the broader antiwar movement will fail to address our country's responsibilities to the Iraqi people after these past 18 years of economic and military warfare.

Over the years, we've often referred to "the further invention of nonviolence" in describing efforts to oppose reliance on threat and force to solve problems. We've been grateful for the support of numerous people whose generosity has enabled our various projects. We hope recipients of this newsletter will share in the encouragement walkers experienced when welcomed by residents of small towns and cities all along the route. And we look forward to welcoming your participation as we plan the projects introduced below.

Sincerely,

Kathy Kelly, Dan Pearson, Leah Patriarco, Joel Gulledge, Lauren Cannon, Gerald Paoli, Laura Gardiner, Bob Abplanalp, John Volkening



## **DON'T LEAVE US OUT IN THE COLD: A POST ELECTION ACCOUNTABILITY CAMPAIGN**

**SAVE THE DATES:  
DECEMBER 27 TO  
JANUARY 19**

Earlier this year, colleagues and friends in St. Louis approached us about organizing a daily vigil outside, or as near as possible to, Barack Obama's home in Chicago, if he is elected President. We will meet in early September to begin earnest organizing of this effort. Details will be available on the Voices website after September 15, or you can contact us via email, [info@vcnv.org](mailto:info@vcnv.org), or phone, 773-878-3815, for more information. In the meantime, we ask you to save the dates and to consider coming to Chicago for a day or two or longer.

The original proposal we received from St. Louis suggested that the presence be focused on Obama's stated commitments to end the War in Iraq, End Torture, and establish a more just Immigration Policy. Among the specific actions he could take, by executive order, upon entering the White House, are initiatives to suspend all construction of U.S. bases in Iraq, close Guantanamo, halt military tribunals, and suspend all deportations of asylum seekers and family members. Each of these actions points to the need for a broader and more permanent change of policy.

"The Chicago location could be a way of calling his and the country's attention to his community organizing background," says the St. Louis proposal, "and also to a focus on how ending the war could return badly needed resources to communities like the one where he worked."

"A different group from a different city in the Midwest could take responsibility for a specific day. Each group could come in the night before for an orientation and be debriefed the next evening. We could use the length of the vigil and the weather as a sign of the intensity of our commitment, calling on Obama to not "leave us out in the cold".



Witness Against War core participants: Paul Melling, Kathy Kelly, Marie Kovecsi, Mary Dean, Dan Pearson, Lauren Cannon, Alice Gerard, Josh Brollier. Not pictured: Leah Patriarco, Laura Gardiner, Helene Hedberg, Bob Abplanalp, Tim Bradley, Tim Herlihey, Jim Cusack, Steve Riley. Dear friends and members of Voices joined core group for a week at a time in many cases, and innumerable new friends joined as day walkers at all points along the route.

## **WITNESS AGAINST TORTURE: THE FIRST 100 DAYS IN WASHINGTON , D.C.**

Planning is currently underway to immediately greet the next President of these United States of America with a campaign to bring about the closure of the prison camp at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba.

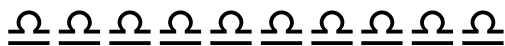
Our colleagues at Witness Against Torture are organizing a 100 day presence at the White House, slated to begin on January 11—the day on which the first prisoners were brought to Guantanamo in 2002 in the so-called “Global War on Terror”.

While details are still being developed, the Witness Against Torture action will likely include a daily presence in Lafayette Park, directly across from the White House. It will likely also include acts of civil disobedience and acts of lobbying of Congress on Capitol Hill.

Voices anticipates joining with this action—with the form of participation yet to be determined. We'll have more details available on the Voices website in the weeks ahead.

Please call, write or email us to let us know if you would like to be kept in the loop regarding the development of Voices' plans to greet the next President.

More information on Witness Against Torture is available on their website: [witness torture.org](http://witness torture.org)

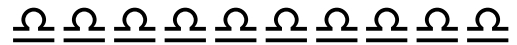


## **THE HEARTLAND SPEAKS: NONVIOLENCE RETREAT & ACTION OCTOBER 13 - 15 SALINA, KS**

Salina People for Peace is organizing a nonviolent response to Hawgsmoke, a biennial worldwide A-10 bombing, missile, and tactical gunnery competition. The A-10 Warthawg is a fighter designed for close air support in combat.

The Heartland Speaks will feature nonviolence workshops led by Bill and Genie Durland (reservists with Christian Peacemaker Teams) and nonviolent civil disobedience at the Salina Regional Airport as the A-10s fly in for Hawgsmoke.

For more information, contact: Salina People for Peace at [s4p@cox.net](mailto:s4p@cox.net) or Janie Stein or Martin Bates at (785)643-5332. Website: [www.salinapeace.org](http://www.salinapeace.org)



## **FORT MCCOY: CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE A SUCCESS? BY JOSH BROLIER**

**[Josh walked the entire distance from Chicago to St. Paul with Witness Against War and is one of the 13 arrested at Fort McCoy on August 10.]**

The press has gone out and the word has spread about our non-violent act of civil resistance at Ft McCoy, and I have been reflecting on the event and hoping that our action was an encouragement to the soldiers who are set to deploy to Iraq in 2009. We attempted to enter the base and have conversations with soldiers about their right to refuse illegal orders and to file as conscientious objectors. We also wanted to inform them that Spencer Black is going to introduce a piece of legislation that will potentially keep the 32nd Brigade Combat Team of the Wisconsin National Guard at home- this will be the second to third deployment of many members of the guard.

The thirteen of us who entered the base were eager to hear the Red Arrow's stories and struggles concerning Iraq and Afghanistan and wanted to gauge their response to upcoming legislation- opening up a dialogue for their input and involvement. Our group was denied entry to the base as was to be expected. This refusal of access was somewhat humorously set against the backdrop of the Alice Cooper concert that took place on the base the night before.

The moment was a bit surreal as we approached the line of civilian contracted base officers, but that disconnect lasted only for an instant as we came closer to the people who would seek to keep us from entering the base. I extended the invitation for the crew to join us in our venture by escorting us to the PX where we could talk with and deliver an open letter to soldiers. My offer was declined and I was outfitted with a stylish pair of zip-cuffs.

The processing was done rather quickly and we were treated with kindness and a good bit of curiosity by the base police. In fact, we were able to dialogue with the officers about the war, Ft McCoy, and the civil-disobedience itself. One of the older officials

who wrote my ticket even remarked that he thought that the action was a success! He thanked us for our co-operation and peaceful spirit. As we were being removed from base property, the driver told me that there was a "mutual respect" between us and there seemed to be a genuine connection made there.

So the question remains: was our action a success?

I am not sure what would constitute a success after the last 18 years of economic and military warfare against Iraq, but it is a healthy discipline to ask ourselves if we achieved our goals. After we regrouped, Jessica from Christian Peacemaker Teams

remarked that it would have been a success if the officers and soldiers had decided to help put an end to the war. I agree. We definitely made progress by bringing a scarcely heard voice to Ft McCoy and by the connections made between ourselves and the community. And we plan to continue with this momentum as we head to the Twin Cities.

However, I think this spirit of optimism and empowerment has to be tempered and cultivated by the harsh reality that many people are facing as a result of our country's "wars of choice." I think our ambitions must also be weighed against the long and stubborn history of U.S. militarism and then contrasted by the rich tradition of non-violent resistance that seasoned activists have been engaging in for years. In agreement with our recently incarcerated friend- Kathy Kelly, I am sure that these activists would encourage us to use every non-violent and non-destructive means at our disposal to speak truth to power and demand an end to the

violence and imperialism being waged against our brothers and sisters across the globe.

I am also energized and challenged by the determination and fearless activism of groups committed to non-violent change in Iraq (La Onf) and Zimbabwe (Women of Zimbabwe Arise). These

courageous souls are risking their lives every time they speak out and they continue to act despite the often brutal consequences. I hope that we can learn from their sacrifices by stepping up our efforts to hold ourselves, our leaders, and our corporations accountable for the destruction of life we have brought to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Tomorrow it is on to Representative Ron Kind's office- one step at a time...



Fort McCoy Action: Josh (right) joins 12 others in attempting enter the base to talk with National Guard members preparing to deploy to Iraq. All 13 were arrested on trespass charges. Kathy Kelly was held for five days on an outstanding warrant from civil disobedience that took place in 1995 at Project ELF.

## HOW CAN THE WALLS EVER COME DOWN?

BY CATHY BREEN

**[Cathy arrived in Amman, Jordan in early July and will remain there through the start of November. Read more of her reflections at <http://vcnv.org/category/writings-by-cathy-breen>]**

"How can the walls ever come down?" was the question I put to three Iraqi friends. Late yesterday afternoon I went next door to ask a neighbor if we could watch Iraqi TV news together. Would he mind translating for me? This young friend often helps me with Arabic, and I had brought my notebook along. We were joined by his brother and another Iraqi friend who will be returning to Baghdad soon. Muslims and Christians, we sat together. The walls I was referring to are the concrete barricades which have been constructed by the coalition forces

throughout all of Baghdad. These walls seal off and separate entire communities.

One evening last week, I met with two journalist friends from the U.S. who had just returned from a month-long trip to Iraq. As I listened to them, I was heartened and sickened at the same time. I was amazed at the freedom of movement they described, not only for themselves as foreigners, but for Iraqis. Of course they are seasoned reporters with long-time experience and contacts; they know how to proceed with caution and prudence. While the atmosphere remains tense and explosions continue, they reported, people have begun to feel safer in the last couple of months. They are venturing out more. The economy is a mess with high inflation, but crime is down.

Nevertheless, I was sick at heart to hear that almost all of the neighborhoods in Baghdad have been walled off, each with a single entrance and exit point. In order to enter one must negotiate with the particular militia/entity protecting that neighborhood. The Iraqi army is out in strength and better equipped and trained than they were three years ago. They now have, for example, some armed humvees.

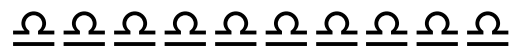
An Iraqi friend told me recently that the lack of electricity and jobs continue to fan the fires of anger and resistance. "Violence would decrease 50%" he said "if there were electricity."

Just recently I got to see the son of a family from Baghdad, a family whom we've known for years. When I lived in Baghdad their twelve year old daughter used to teach me Arabic. She is now seventeen. What a joy it was to meet with him and get an update on each member of the family. As we visited I couldn't help remembering him as a lanky 18 year old with a lopsided smile going off to fight in Saddam's army. This was right before the invasion, and he had no choice. Five years later he is working as a bodyguard in Baghdad. He was able to come to Amman because he is accompanying an Iraqi minister here for meetings. He told me that the only work available in Baghdad is as a bodyguard, a soldier or a policeman. His younger brother works as a soldier in the Iraqi army. Their dear mother is unwell; no wonder given the worry she must face at the safety of her sons. This son told us of a recent bomb attack against the minister he is paid to protect. Three of his fellow bodyguards were killed. He has survived, so far. He was able to take a handwritten letter from me back to his family, along with a picture I took of us together.

The above mentioned journalist friends said "Everyone is waiting to see how the elections will turn out." They patiently tried to walk me through the complex myriad of sectarian groupings, parties, militias, army and police. Yet despite their attempts at clarification, I was left feeling confused and overwhelmed. I liken it to a chess game where there are too many players and no rules. Elite Shi'a groups like the Dawa party and the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council, Moqtada al-Sadr with his Mahdi Army, The Awakening or al-sahwa, primarily Sunni, the list seems endless. "Everyone at the ground level wants the Americans out," they said. An uneasy balance of power, it is clear there will be no winners even after the elections in Iraq take place.

And so we sat together yesterday, Muslim and Christian Iraqis. Both from Baghdad, they met here in Amman. No one can deny that the experience of Christian Iraqis is different from that of Muslim Iraqis. The Christians in Iraq have been targeted not only as "infidels" by radical Islamic extremists, but they have been caught in the middle of sectarian violence, a fact born out by our Muslim friend. But they both share in common the unspeakable suffering unleashed by this war. They have both lost family and friends in the killing and violence. Both have lost homes and homeland. Families are separated, and their futures uncertain. As I sat and listened to their heated discussion in Arabic, I was struck by the respectful tone. How can the walls come down? I asked again.

One of the young men responded thoughtfully "It will take time....everything takes time." Another said smiling "We thought the same of Saddam Hussein's pictures. They were everywhere, even in the bathrooms!" These men give me hope that maybe some day the walls, like Saddam's pictures, will come down.



## **WITNESS AGAINST WAR: REFLECTIONS ALONG THE WAY BY ALICE GERARD**

**[Alice walked the entire distance from Chicago to St. Paul with Witness Against War and is one of the 13 arrested at Fort McCoy on August 10.]**

We left our campsites at Devil's Lake State Park early on Saturday morning. It didn't take us long to depart. We seem to have become quite proficient at

packing our luggage, the air mattresses, and the tents in a short amount of time.

We all got on the bus and returned to Baraboo. Just the previous day, we had walked from Devil's Lake State Park to Baraboo. It was a short walk but a workout, nevertheless. Half of it was uphill on winding roads. Saturday's walk was promising to be longer. Fortunately, we started early. I didn't really feel awake yet and was hoping that I would be halfway to our destination before I realized that I was tired and that my feet hurt.

We walked out of town on sidewalks. I have learned to appreciate sidewalks greatly since I began this walk. Many places are not equipped with either sidewalks or paved shoulders. Walking on the loose gravel that seems to be a staple of many country roads certainly plays havoc on many feet and shoes.

So, I enjoyed my time walking through the town that was so famous for circuses that it had a huge circus museum in its downtown section. I got to window shop and to look at windows and architecture. Before long, we were out of town. The sidewalk had ended and we were back to walking on gravel. After a while, we were stopped by a Sauk County Sheriff's Deputy. He told us that the shoulder was coming to an end and that it might be a good idea if we were to walk in the closed lane on the opposite side of the road. We thanked him and crossed the road.

From that point on, Saturday's walk had become quite easy. When we switched to another road for the rest of our trip to Reedsburg, we were able to walk on a wide shoulder. This enabled us to walk together and to chat and to hold up our signs so that passing motorists could see them and honk, wave, and flash peace signs. I walked with Cassandra, one of our day walkers. She is part of the Christian Peacemaker teams, and she is planning on spending two months in the West Bank next spring. She has already been there, so this is a return trip for her. Conditions there sound very difficult, especially for children, she told me.

While we were walking, we saw our usual share of road kill. Speeding cars and animals are a very poor combination. One of the deceased was a skunk. We could smell the deceased long before we saw it. Helene, who has a poor sense of smell, fortunately, was spared from experiencing that aroma. The most difficult sight for Alice the cat lover was an orange tabby cat that lay dead in the middle of the road.

The cat looked as if it must have been someone's beloved pet. Somehow, the cat got out of the house and lost its life in the middle of a high speed road. I wondered if the owners had put up lost cat flyers or if they had advertised in the newspaper. Most likely, they will never know what had happened to their beautiful cat.

A pet is as much a family member as a human. We grieve when the cat or dog dies, just as we grieve when a human dies.

But when a family member, animal or human, simply disappears, we don't know what to do. During the course of this walk, during our presentations, I have heard so many stories of people who have disappeared, never to be seen or heard from again. Their families are left sad and wondering, where is our son? Where is our daughter? Where is our father? Our mother?

We had to keep walking. Eventually, we found our way to Dick and Tricia's house. There we had our lunch on their deck. It was a beautiful space, and lunch was delicious. It included a cucumber salad, fruit, pasta salad, feta cheese, and iced tea.

Dick told us about the devastating floods in the area. He said that the rainfall was torrential in June. One day, 12 and 1/2 inches fell, and the next day, another five and a half inches fell. Many houses had to be condemned because of the flooding.

After lunch, we walked toward Reedsburg. I was so happy to see a horse stable. The horses were outside, running in an enclosed pasture. They looked free and happy as they ran.

At about 2:15 p.m., we arrived at Oak Park in Reedsburg. The park was full of kids and coaches. They were having a practice session: throwing, catching, and batting. Some of the people were so impressed with the Wheels of Justice bus that they pulled out cameras and started clicking right away.

Soon, we all piled onto the bus and went to St. John's Lutheran Church. It was to be our home for the night. We were greeted by Pastor Marsha Swenson and the pianist, Leta Palmer. Pastor Marsha mentioned that there would be a service at 5:15 p.m. I was very happy about that. I wrote in my journal, bathed my feet in epsom salts, and then went to the service.

The service was a good experience for me. Afterward, Helene said, "You look all happy now."

Dinner was provided to us by Barbara Hoffman, Pat Belongie, and Joanne Robson. They prepared lasagna and garlic bread. They also made a salad. They had made two versions of the main course: one for vegetarians and one for vegans. Laura and Leah were so happy with their vegan feast. We even had vegan chocolate cake. Leah told me that it had no cholesterol in it! It tasted great!



After dinner, Barbara got her guitar out and played songs. We all enjoyed singing. We also sang a good bye song to Helene and Bob, as they were leaving the walk on Sunday. We would have sung to Laura, too, but she was singing. Bob is coming back soon. Laura is unable to return, and Helene is going home to Sweden.

For the most part, it had been a happy day. I had gone to church at St. John's because that was the church that provided us hospitality. Pastor Marsha had created the warm, nurturing, meditative environment that I needed. She said everything that I needed to hear.

The world was a beautiful spot for me.

I was determined to continue walking to end the war. It seems to be the least that I can do... and the most that I can do.

Witness Against War departs Tunnel City with Lauren, Leah and Alice in the lead. Our numbers are strengthened by Christian Peacemaker Teams as we head towards Fort McCoy on August 10.

## THE FUTURE COST OF THE IRAQ WAR

In January 2008, the Congressional Budget Office estimated future costs of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. It did not provide separate breakouts for each war.

The CBO provided the following two estimates.

Reduction of U.S. troop levels in Iraq and Afghanistan to 30,000 by October 1, 2009 (something no national political leader is discussing), spending each year:

- \$118 billion in 2009
- \$50 billion in 2010
- \$34 billion in 2011
- \$34 billion a year through 2018

Reduction of U.S. troops levels in Iraq and Afghanistan to 75,000 by October 1, 2012, spending each year:

- \$161 billion in 2009
  - \$147 billion in 2010
  - \$128 billion in 2011
  - \$101 billion in 2012
  - \$79 billion in 2013
  - \$77 billion each year from 2014 to 2018
-

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## **NEW RESOURCE AVAILABLE AT VOICES FOR CREATIVE NONVIOLENCE**

### **HAMMERED BY THE IRISH BY HARRY BROWNE.**

\$17 (includes postage).

In February 2003, as the U.S. prepared to invade Iraq, five Catholic Workers scrambled across runways and broke into a hangar at Shannon Airport in Ireland. Swinging hammers and a pickaxe, they did more than \$2.5 million damage to a U.S. Navy transport plane. Participants in this Plowshares action became known as the Pitstop Ploughshares.

Three and a half years later a jury in Dublin, Ireland decided they were innocent of any crime.

This is the story of how a civilian airport in the west of Ireland became a "Pitstop of Death" and how an act of conscience touched the hearts and minds of

twelve jurors, making political and legal history, in an epic of popular nonviolent resistance to war.

### **ALSO AVAILABLE FROM VOICES**

#### **OTHER LANDS HAVE DREAMS: FROM BAGHDAD TO PEKIN PRISON BY KATHY KELLY.**

\$15 (includes postage).

#### **IN A TIME OF SIEGE BY PEACE PRODUCTIONS**

DVD documentary on the work of Voices in the Wilderness to challenge economic sanctions and on the Iraq Peace Team presence during the U.S. 2003 bombing and invasion

\$15 (includes postage)

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