

Open House
Dec 8 at 7pm MSPJC
meeting room

Bring the Troops
Home



Fall 2004 Vol 22, No 4

End the
Occupation Now

An interfaith, interracial membership organization for education, collaboration, and nonviolent action
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Post-Election Meeting Highlights Challenges

By George Grider

With only a few hours' notice from the Mid-South Peace & Justice Center, some sixty people assembled on November 4 in the Media Co-op theater at First Congregational Church to vent their frustrations over the election results and to focus on the challenges that lie ahead.

Linda Smith spoke for many when she said, "I feel panicked in my stomach." Long term MSPJC member Gerry Vanderhaar, who was born when Herbert Hoover was president, called the Bush administration as "the worst of my lifetime." Vanderhaar added, "The administration is not so much the problem, but the people who elected it." Someone pointed to the Bush candidacy as "simplistic. It's what people want."

"They're playing on the fears of Americans," another said. Congressional candidate Jim Maynard blamed Kerry for "caving in on the religion issue."

The focus turned to the apparent failure of the democratic process to protect itself against what is viewed as an attempt to subvert our democratic values. These include freedom of speech, due process, and decency toward the global community.

The voting logistics which might have given Bush added votes were questioned. Yet Janelle Treibitz, coordinator of the Center's project "Memphis Votes," reported no signs of fraud on the local polling sites. "It wasn't a stolen election," she affirmed. Shelby County in fact had gone for Kerry.

Once the complaints were aired, a mood of reflection settled over the group. The discussion turned to morals. "The Right can do horrible things because God says so," said Terry Moon, reflecting a widespread view. Jerry Bettice passed around a quote from theologian Reinhold Niebuhr: "Nothing which is true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore we must be saved by faith."

Treibitz asked: "Are we ready to say that our morals are better than theirs?" She quoted a recent letter from Alex Cooke, who challenged progressives to think more in terms of our own shortcomings rather than

those of the Bush supporters. "If we can ask ourselves, how have we failed to create a popular political determination for social justice," Cooke wrote, "then this time may be used for a great advancement."

Jacob Flowers, MSPJC Coordinator, outlined the Center's plans along this line. These include the project to boost the city's Living Wage ordinance, and to start a neighborhood garden in Orange Mound. Plans are also in the works for an anti-recruitment project to counter military recruiters in our public schools.

The meeting ended with the feeling that the group had taken the first steps toward discovery and the creation of an agenda in the near future.



Cargo with a Conscience

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Help is needed right now for the Global Goods Store. Friday evenings 6-9 p.m., Saturday mornings 10-12, and Sunday 12-3. Call the Center (725-4990) to volunteer.

Peace
&
justice

Notes from the Chair

The Place of the Center

The MSPJC is needed more now, than at any time in our history. Mid-South progressives need a supportive space to come together and think critically about what it means to be a citizen in a divided Blue versus Red America. Memphians are just as divided. No other place in Memphis is better able to bring together progressives of all backgrounds: Jews, Christians, Muslims, socialists, feminists, and anarchists. And come together in an environment that honors each for what they bring to the table. We need more than ever to learn to talk openly about our concerns for creating a just America. The Center can that provide that supportive space.

We need a common language to communicate the progressive agenda. We also need to develop the infrastructure for building a mass movement which will make our agenda real.

Many progressives have shied away from expressing their political claims in spiritual terms. I am using "spiritual" in a way that takes all coherent belief systems into account, including humanist and socialist value systems as well as traditional mainstream religions. But as I expressed in my "What Now" article on page 7, people are moved and persuaded not by ideas and 10 point programs. Instead they commit to projects that reflect their values. The Center can be a laboratory of making explicit our implicit values that lie within our public progressive agenda. This explicit act of naming why we are who we are, reclaiming the language of the spirit for our work, is the first step in winning back the public sphere.

The second major need to develop the infrastructure requires is slow, hard work. All major social changes are won by social movement mobilization. With that as a beginning place we can start to work on connecting our local groups to the larger mass movement that is developing. The Center can help connect groups across the area -- or, feminist, community groups - to the growing international peace and justice community around the country and around the world. We can be a catalyst for creating the networks that will sustain the movement over the long haul.

The Mid-South Peace and Justice Center is needed more than ever. Come join us in healing our wounds, restoring our spirits, and *Tikkun Olam* -- repairing the world.

-Allan Iummus



Reflection on the Election

Four More Unfortunate Years

Those who supported, or were taken in by, the President's campaign rhetoric now have to face the consequences, as do those who voted the other way. Over the next four years those consequences will include:

- * our country increasingly disliked around the world.
- * more terrorist acts against our people.
- * economic policies favoring corporate interests.
- * privatization of more government services.
- * lip service paid to "family values" while pushing more families into poverty and hopelessness.
- * waging an un-winnable War against Terror by failing to address its underlying causes.
- * sacrificing the lives of more young Americans in unilateral military interventions.

Had the election gone the other way, we may have been seduced into thinking that the worst is over. Now we know that the worst may well be yet to come. We in the peace and justice community have to stiffen our resolve, and keep on keeping on.

--G.V..

In Memory of

Tom Buford
Mother Teresa
Wilma Carlisle
Ten Percent Committee
Walter T. Honen
Barry King
Tom Lee
Dennis Freeland

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Bobby Bostick
George and Beverly Grider
Sandy Furrh
Bruce Furrh
Bruce Furrh
Prabha Khanna
Orange Mound Comm. Garden
Blair Cook Taylor
Gerry & Janice Vanderhaar
Gerry & Janice Vanderhaar
Catherine and Eliot Watson

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Tandy Gilliland
S. Smegelsky
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Dr. Rex J Enoch
Betsy Reeder
Mark & Maria Watson

From the Executive Director

By Jacob Flowers

It is a pleasure to write to y'all as the new Director of the Peace and Justice Center. I feel like I grew up here and it is a great honor to be here now. The office has been exciting lately. Thanks to the hard work of Josh Low, our former Interim Director, things that have been long neglected are now running smooth and we are getting down to business making Memphis and the world a more just and peaceful community.

While I know that given the recent election many of us are doing a re-assessment of where we should go from here, at the Center we have always operated on the strong belief that no matter who won the election, our work for peace and justice would carry on much the same. We feel that by working hands on to improve our community we will be positively affecting our country and our world.

First, our Community Garden in Orange Mound is growing serious roots. We are currently working with a coalition of other gardens in the Mississippi Delta to apply for a large grant from the Heifer Foundation that will provide each garden with \$10,000 in funding. This will allow us to buy the equipment and supplies to make what has already been a successful project into a resource for the whole community. Over time we hope to build a network of gardens all over Memphis, aiding people in low-income areas to green and develop their communities. These gardens will empower a future generation with the important knowledge of sustainability and our connection with the Earth and with each other.

Memphis Votes has been a huge success; we registered over 1,000 traditionally disenfranchised people and worked hard to get the vote out on Election Day. In order for true democracy to exist in our area we must work to institute many reforms in election law such as an end to felony disenfranchisement and the creation of a Spanish language voter registration form and ballot.

Our Peace Committee is planning a campaign the end the militarization of our public schools. Military recruiting efforts have been stepped up dramatically under the current administration, and are sure to get worse.

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Iraq: No Exit

By Gerry Vanderhaar

Those who have criticized the Washington Administration for not having an Iraq exit strategy miss the point. There is no exit strategy because we won't be leaving. After a protracted and increasingly brutal "pacification" of the insurgency, the U.S. military will remain in Iraq for the long term. There may be a token return of a few units with great fanfare after the so-called elections in January. But large numbers of U.S. troops will remain in Iraq. They will back up whatever internal order Iraqi security forces are able to maintain. But their broader purpose is to take over the bases formerly used by Iraq's military, and build new ones as necessary, in order for the U.S. to have a dominant presence in the Middle East for a long time to come, as Chalmers Johnson pointed out in his 2004 book *The Sorrows of Empire*.

Human rights for all.

Cont. Exec. Director

The Living Wage Campaign is heating up. We are looking to put the issue in full public view with Living Wage yard signs. We are currently designing them and will have them available soon.

The Center has also stepped up its volunteer and intern recruitment efforts, producing five interns this semester: Valery Krieg, Sarah Cheon, Elokina CaPece, Sean Crigger, and Chinita Moore. They have all been working hard on specific projects and lending a big hand to the voter registration efforts.

As always we are very grateful for all your support and would love to have your assistance on any of these projects, so give us a call.

In Peace.

**&Peace
justice**
Mid-South Peace & Justice Center

Military Invasion

By Felecia Elam

The United States military isn't just invading foreign countries; our nation's public schools are under attack, too. President Bush's "No Child Left Behind" Act, granted military recruiters the same access to high schools as college recruiters. School funding is contingent upon access to students.

Inner city schools are fertile recruiting grounds. Under funded, they lack the resources and reputation to attract college scholarships for all but their most talented students. The good students who manage to get into college struggle financially. Tuition has risen, on national average, 40% in the past five years. Inner city families are priced out.

The military offers a solution: enlistment in exchange for education. "See the world; learn a trade."

The offer appealed to 20 year-old Marco D. Ross. The Farley High School honor student enlisted in the Army one month after graduating. He wanted to pay for college and eventually open a real estate business with his parents. He died in a mortar attack in Baghdad, August 25, 2004, one month before the birth of his first child.

The military's promise of an experience of a lifetime is leaving our young people damaged for life. Landstuhl Base in Germany is the first stop for the injured from Iraq. An estimated 16,000 of American troops have been through Landstuhl. Many are blinded and maimed, by "insurgent" attacks. This aspect of military service is never highlighted in the "Army of One" commercials.

Students need the whole story before making such a serious commitment. Overworked teachers in large schools rarely have the opportunities or resources to counter the message.

The Peace and Justice Center had such an opportunity in the spring of 2004. The International Club at one of the optional high schools asked the Center to send a speaker for Peace Day. It was the culmination of Peace Week, an effort to promote diversity and tolerance amongst the student body.

The student sponsor said there was no particular topic, just peace. Since this school is one of the most racially diverse schools in the system, the P&J speaker chose international peace. The school also has a strong JROTC presence, with instructors acting as disciplinarians.

The P & J Center speaker passed out P&J printed information about aggressive recruiting tactics, students' rights, and statistics about homeless and incarceration rates for veterans.

A few minutes into the speech about those tactics and statistics, an ROTC instructor stalked from the back of the gym toward the speaker. When he got to the half-court line, the principal stepped to the podium and ended the speech. He asked the students to calm down and reflect a moment on peace.

After the assembly, the student sponsor said there was a misunderstanding. The school was concerned about gang presence and he thought the speaker would address that. A couple of guidance counselors picked up some of the center information, None of the students did.

Our young people are losing their lives and limbs in Iraq. Vital information is being withheld from them. If our children die in street violence, it's called tragic. If they die in organized military violence, it's called heroic. The military has invaded our schools and it's winning.

Memphis Living Wage Update

-Allan Lummus

The Living Wage Campaign is urging the Memphis City Council to pass an ordinance that would require businesses receiving significant city funds, as well as the City of Memphis itself, to pay their workers a living wage. The Memphis Living Wage Campaign defines a living wage as \$20,000 per year, or \$10 per hour with employer-provided health insurance. This amount is enough to lift a family of four above the poverty line, and enough to lift a family of three above the income level that qualifies for Food Stamps.

The living wage movement in Memphis has been dealt a setback on our living wage ordinance. Some on the City Council have expressed opposition to the ordinance, using as evidence an internal study done by the city. The study claims \$28 million as the cost for a living wage. In rebuttal, Professor of Economics at the University of Memphis, David Ciscel reviewed the study and has written a response to the city's claims. Dr. Ciscel estimates that the cost of implementing a living wage ordinance will cost closer to \$1.5 million for the city. The Memphis Living Wage Coalition is communicating with all of the city council members expressing our displeasure with the study, giving Dr. Ciscel's criticisms and asking the city to reanalyze the effects of the ordinance using more accurate information. Look for a call to attend the city council chambers to show your support for living wage in Memphis.

On Nov. 11 Living Wage Coalition had a call-in day to the City Council. All constituent groups (of which the Mid-South Peace and Justice center is one), were asked to mobilize their membership for this event.

Memphis Schools Adopt New Policy on Military Testing

by George Grider

Memphis City Schools administration has recently changed its policy regarding the use of the military's Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test (ASVAB) for all high school students.

The change was prompted by parents and teachers who objected to the test being administered on a compulsory basis. As a result of the policy change, a fewer number of students will likely be taking the ASVAB this year. In the past, many parents were not notified of the test being administered. The policy shift now requires parents' authorization.

The Army or Domino's Pizza

The debate on whether or not to allow military testing within the public schools has long been a hot topic across the United States. At the center of the issue is the matter of privacy. In order to take the tests, the student is required to sign a release allowing the military to use his or her home address and telephone number. This provides the military an easy means of contacting young people for recruiting purposes.

Few if any public schools would allow other organizations such as Domino Pizza or AutoZone carte blanche in the areas of testing students and gathering their names. A suspension of normal privacy rights in favor of the armed forces seems to be built into a culture that leans heavily toward violence as a means of solving problems.

The chief argument given in favor of ASVAB is that it offers students a valuable self assessment. "It lets them know their strengths and weaknesses," says Memphis Army recruiter Captain Michael Mitchell. Besides testing for English and math, Captain Mitchell reports that the test addresses additional topics such as spatial mechanics. "ASVAB is a detailed version of SAT," he says.

Many school administrators also see ASVAB as helping students practice for the more traditional SAT and ACT tests. ASVAB, of course, is provided to the schools courtesy of the taxpayers.

The Real Deal

A look behind the scenes indicates that the military is motivated by more than altruistic goals.

Let Iraqis- with international support- stabilize and rebuild Iraq

In an online lesson plan for recruiters there appears a chapter entitled "Importance of ASVAB to the recruiting mission." The plan advises, "The more students who test, and do their best, the faster recruiters will complete processing LRLs." (The recruiter's Lead Refinement List contains a listing of prospective recruits, with names, addresses and phone numbers.)

A Quiet Rebellion

Last year at Sheffield High, the ASVAB test was administered to all students, grades 9 through 12. The test was proctored over the school intercom and supervised by uniformed military personnel, one in every home room. With only a day's notice, parents were given little chance to object. Some teachers rebelled and informed their students that they didn't have to take the test. "In my room most of them spent the 3 ½ hours sitting quietly at their desks and studying their lessons, with the test booklets remaining closed," one teacher said.

Parents later complained about not being informed, as did teachers. Apparently their complaints were heard, leading to the change in policy.

At Central High., the test has long been offered strictly on a volunteer basis. According to Ms. Mini Logan, Central High's career counselor, the military was once pressuring the principal to make the test mandatory. "The pressure was not appreciated," Ms. Logan reports. "The principal said no."

Out of approximately 1200-1300 juniors and seniors, Ms. Logan estimates only 25 to 40 students have recently taken the ASVAB. As Ms. Logan summarized the problem, "We just don't have the facilities to pull every child out of class for the test." It will be interesting to see how the new policy will effect the number of students taking this year's ASVAB. According to Mrs. Debra Baker at the Education Building, in the past two school years the test was taken by 7,743 students.



Memphis Votes Update

By Janelle Tribetz

We organized rides to the polls for early voting. We got the word out to churches and schools and businesses near our pick up locations to inform communities that this service was available.

We compiled information about local candidates and took it to the soup kitchens and mental health homes where we registered people. We later telephoned all those we registered to remind them to vote.

We registered 1200 people. We visited various supermarkets, soup kitchens, mental health group homes, various street corners, parks, U of M, Rhodes, Southwest TN College, MIFA, various music concerts, IRS building, Mid-South Fair, and a homeless drop-in center. We sent out 1,000 absentee ballots to MIFA's meals on wheels clients.

We recruited around 95 volunteers, though only about 25 were active. We worked collaboratively with several organizations including: Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition (TIRRC), NAACP, Metropolitan Inter-Faith Association (MIFA), League of Women Voters, Vote Memphis, Rock the Vote, and TN Citizen Action.

On election day we stationed poll watchers at 5 polling stations. The poll watchers were critical for aiding voters who arrived at the wrong location. The official procedure was to use the phone and call the election commission. The election commission did not answer these calls. So our poll watchers made calls to the P&J office. A volunteer at the office located the appropriate location and informed the voter. This was a highly valued service by both voters and the other election officials at the sites. Other tasks included observing the process and providing transportation to a handful of voters. The process seemed largely legal at our sites. It would be nice to have this service at all polling sites in the future.

Tasks for Memphis Votes after the election are the reforming the local Shelby County Election Commission, national voter reform, and the creation and transmission of Spanish language voter registration forms. We will address the problem of felony disenfranchisement. Memphis Votes Committee monthly meeting is the first Monday of every month.

If you are interested call the Center at 725-4990.



Gandhi Nonviolence Conference

By Janice Vanderhaar

"If you build it, they will come," spoke a compelling voice in the film *Field of Dreams*. Well, we built it—the First Annual Gandhi Nonviolence Conference—and they came. They came, nearly 300 strong, from all over the country, from Maine to California, from Hawaii to Louisiana, intrigued by a conference bringing together academics and activists to probe the implications of the active nonviolence pioneered by Mohandas Gandhi in India, and taught and lived by Martin Luther King in this country.

The Conference, held October 8-9 at Christian Brothers University and Rhodes College, was presented by the M.K. Gandhi Institute, the National Civil Rights Museum and the NCCJ (National Conference of Community and Justice).

With the violence of the war against Iraq as an international background and the violence in Memphis schools and neighborhoods as a local background, participants grappled with applying Gandhian nonviolence to issues of militarism, racism, poverty, the environment, and interpersonal relationships.

The four major speakers—Jesuit priest peace activist John Dean, Global Exchange Founder Medea Benjamin, Prairie View A&M professor Michael Nojeim, and King's advisor and former Memphis pastor James Lawson—testified eloquently to the persuasive power of nonviolence as well as the inevitable suffering it brings to those who undertake it fully.

GANDHI ON NONVIOLENCE

Nonviolence is not just a tactic to change unjust laws or stop wars. It's a frame of mind Gandhi called satyagraha, "Love-force" or "Soul-force" involving, he said, changing one's opponent "by patience and sympathy." And it involves self-suffering. Nonviolence means, Gandhi said, "vindication of truth not by infliction of suffering on the opponent but on oneself."

The Mid-South Peace and Justice Center was a backbone of support throughout the weekend. Thanks to Center coordinator Jacob Flowers and Board chair Allan Lummus, the Center's fifteen volunteers helped the Conference run smoothly from registration to cleanup. Because the Center was founded as an interracial, interfaith, nonviolent organization for peace and social justice, the Gandhi Conference was a natural environment for Center members and friends. It has inspired all of us to continue our steadfast efforts.

Janice Vanderhaar is one of the founders of the Peace and Justice Center, and was Co-Chair of the First Annual Gandhi Nonviolence Conference

What Now? Let's Sing from the Same Book

By Allan Lummus

What's now for progressives, liberals and all those in the ABB (Anything But Bush) camp? How do we respond to an electoral map that is red from West Virginia and Florida to Nevada and Montana?

We pinched our collective noses and voted for a B-grade version of Bill Clinton in the hopes of unseating the present administration. And we lost. What now?

I say it is time we do what the conservatives did after the 1964 Barry Goldwater debacle. They reassessed their message and rearticulated their policies in relation to an over-arching moral vision of family.

George Lakoff, in his book "Don't Think of an Elephant: Know Your Values and Frame the Debate," called it the strict family model. Everything from market theory and family policy to foreign relations and social policy is conceptualized within a single moral vision.

Conservatives did not compromise their agenda for corporate rule and social hierarchy of all kinds. They recast their agenda as a part of an appealing message of populism and democracy.

Markets are democratic and governments are anti-democratic. The rich should be rewarded for bringing wealth to the nation and the poor should be punished for dragging the nation down. The strict father will protect the family in a dangerous world.

After constructing their message, they created the infrastructure. First was the Heritage Institute, then more than 30 other conservative think tanks were formed to preach the gospel of democratic markets and totalitarian government.

They met privately with leaders from across the conservative spectrum to find ways to work together and get their various agendas promoted. They encouraged a mass movement of people committed to ideas like anti-abortion (recast as pro life), gun rights (freedom to own), anti gay rights (marriage protection), and many more.

Conservatives have been successful not because they have convinced the majority that this or that issue is "correct." They won because of a clear moral vision.

So we need to do the same: articulate a moral vision and develop the infrastructure to make it real. We need to take our issues and rearticulate them within a common moral vision.

Our issues of women's rights, gay rights, worker rights, international peace, ethnic and religious equality are all still important and should not be comprised. But we need to communicate them within a common moral framework. Lakoff's suggestion is to use the nurturing family model.

We are strong when we take care of all our workers, our environment and our international relationships. We protect our communities from destructive corporations that undermine our environment or our economic viability. We protect the weak. We bring everyone under the tent.

The issues, the policies, and the content are still there, but the common language allows them to be heard as one message. Our past successes in the civil rights movement, the women's movement, gay rights and labor activism all happened when we developed a conceptual framework that communicated a moral vision with which people could identify.

In addition to a moral vision, our past successes were built upon an infrastructure known as the Movement. We have seen a reawakening of grassroots activism.

What is needed at this time is a longer-range view (past the next election cycle) to focus on the long term struggle. We need to remind ourselves of the old song that says "the impossible will take a little while."

Patience, movement building and moral vision are what we need right now. Our past practices have focused on the issues because we assume the values are implicitly there and agreed upon. The problem is that people do not vote on issues. They vote their values.

So when progressives/liberals incessantly harp on this issue or that issue, many people nod and say that is nice. But all they hear is noise.

Every issue has its own conceptual language: environmentalists, feminists, child welfare advocates, peace activists, workers. All have their own conceptual frames that when they speak at once, they only produce noise to the listener.

This newsletter is the collaboration of Gerry Vanderhaar, George Grider, and Allan Lummus. Printed by unionized labor at Diamond Printing Company.

Cont. What Now p. 8

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Taco Bell Protest organizer

Janice & Gerry Vanderhaar
Pax Christi

What now...p7

It is like a choir that allows every section to write its own song. What may sound beautiful individually is only noise when sung all at once. Our moral vision is the music and our issues are the lyrics. By choosing a single musical setting, we can create a powerful transformative mood that will bring the majority of the population back to our agenda.

We can all go off and add our own verses to reflect our uncompromised interests (religious and ethnic tolerance, peace, environment, women, gays, socialist). But by accepting a common public conceptual language, by clearly projecting a progressive moral vision for a more just America, then we will have the majority of Americans singing along with us.

*Commercial Appeal Guest Editorial Reprint Nov 7

Note: Dec 12 4:00 at MSPJC Allan Lummus will hold a Book Study of George Lakoff's *Don't Think of an Elephant: Know Your Values and Frame the Debate*. If you are interested buy the book, read it and come join the discussion.

We call for an immediate end of the U.S. and British sponsored handover of Iraqi assets to corporations selected by the U.S.

Demand Justice, Now!

Peace and Justice Calendar
midsouthpeace.org/calendar.html

Dec. 2: Peace Committee- **7pm**, P & J Center Community Room (1st thur)

Dec 6: Memphis Votes Committee **7pm** P&J Community Room

***Dec. 8:** P & J Center Open House and Potluck- 7pm, (2nd wed)*

Dec. 10-12: 5th Annual Southern Human Rights Organizers Conference, Holiday Inn Select, Memphis Airport.

Dec. 12 P&J Book Study **4 pm** George Lakoff (2nd sun)

Dec 16: P&J Board meeting **7 pm**

Jan 6: Peace Committee- **7pm**, P & J Center Community Room (1st thur)

Jan 10: Memphis Votes (1st Mon)

Jan 12 P & J Potluck- **7pm**, (2nd wed)

Jan 27 P&J Board meeting **7pm** (4th thur)

Every Wed.: vigil at Central & E. Parkway, **7:30 am**

Every Friday: vigil at 1300 Monroe, **4:30 pm**

Third Sunday: P&J Movie Night Media Coop Theater, **6:00 pm**

Stop the war against the people of Iraq.

Listsersvs

mspjc-events@riseup.net – what is happening? Weekly mailing.

peaceandjustice-discussion@riseup.net – I need to talk.

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