

Mid-South Peace & Justice Center

An interfaith, interracial membership organization
for education, collaboration, and nonviolent action

1000 S. Cooper Memphis, TN 38111-0428 Phone: 901-725-4990 Fax: 901-725-7858

center@midsouthpeace.org <http://midsouthpeace.org>

Officers 2003-2004 Chair: Allan Lummus Secretary: Steve Tammelleo Treasurer: George Grider

The Main Crime in Iraq

By Gerry Vanderhaar

"Horror in Iraq," shouted the headline the Memphis *Commercial Appeal* the morning after an American civilian was beheaded by masked men in Baghdad. Those men said they did it to avenge abuses of Iraqi prisoners by U.S. army personnel. An eye for an eye.

The beheading was a terrible crime. So were the abuses of the Iraqi prisoners. But the far worse crime, the main crime in Iraq, is the ongoing war launched unilaterally by President Bush over a year ago.

The war started with the "shock and awe" of aerial bombardment throughout the country, and continues with attacks against civilian centers where Iraqi insurgents are fighting back against the invaders. The main crime is the more than 10,000 Iraqis and hundreds of Americans killed in this savage war. The main crime includes the many more thousands wounded and disabled for life. It includes a culture in ruins, lives shattered, people bitterly divided in this country, public officials lying, and a climate of revenge spreading throughout the world.

No doubt there will be reprisals for the beheading. No doubt there will be more revenge taken for the prisoner abuse. No doubt there will be increased uprisings against the occupation forces, and then military actions against the uprisings.

As Gandhi once said, sorrowfully, "an eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind."

It won't end with the withdrawal of the U.S. from Iraq. But it has to start with that withdrawal. Right now!

Mid-South Peace and Justice Center's Statement on Iraq

After considerable discussion the MSPJC Peace committee developed this statement on Iraq.

1. **End the occupation now.** U.S. out of Iraq now. Stop the war against the people of Iraq. Bring the troops home. We also call for an immediate end to the U.S. and British sponsored handover of Iraqi assets to corporations selected by any U.S. administration.

2. We propose that **an international presence**, acceptable to the Iraqi citizenry and committed to human rights, including women's rights, should come together with the Iraqi people **to stabilize and rebuild Iraq**. Such a presence would have to be under the leadership of Iraqis committed to human rights.

3. **We demand human rights for all** the people of Iraq, including women, ethnic and religious minorities, labor organizers and the poor. **We advocate people-to-people solidarity.** We support the many groups who are campaigning for a democratic Iraq with human rights for all. Such organizations must be allowed to develop, organize, publish, speak, assemble, and protest.

We include in our demand for human rights for all that Saddam Hussein be turned over to an international court, like the UN-sponsored Hague Tribunal, to be tried openly so that the true history of his despotic reign, including the U.S.'s role, can be made known.

End the occupation now.

P&J's Statement on Iraq

March 20 Rally

The March 20 rally at Veteran's Plaza in Overton Park was held to witness the one year anniversary of the start of the Iraqi war. One hundred sixty people came to voice their outrage, concern, and compassion. Memphis joined more than 300 cities in taking to the streets to SPEAK TRUTH and BEAR WITNESS. The turnout at all of these demonstrations far exceeded the expectations of the organizers.

Here in Memphis rain clouds approached the city, as we sang, spoke, preached, and prayed, decrying our government's atrocities in Iraq. We began with a drum circle, followed by prayers from a number of pastors from all over the city representing Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and Islam. The names of the five hundred forty men and women whose lives were sacrificed in Iraq were read aloud. Folk singers offered their versions of a better world. And a number of speakers from the Midsouth Peace and Justice Center and elsewhere added their thoughts.

A hat was passed around the area, and people were generous in their contributions.

At the end of the day, feeling cleansed, we packed up our equipment, chairs, picnic baskets, and headed for the cars just as the rain started to fall.

State of the Treasury

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters following April's fund appeal letter, we were able to complete payments of the deferred salary for a former MSPJC director. This places the center out of debt for the first time in two years!

Also in March we received a substantial refund from Bell South for a two year overcharge, thus eliminated our debts completely.

We're looking for donors who are willing to commit to the monthly automatic deduction plan. The program helps donors to manage their outflows, and the Center to plan for future projects. One major issue is the hiring of an office manager, at least on a part time basis. Contact the Center or go to the Website for a automatic deduction form.

- G. G.

Notes from the Chair

"Will 2004 see a regime change in the US?" I hear this question often. But the question did make me think about what we who are concerned about peace and justice are about and what we are trying to accomplish here in the Mid-South. I get the same feeling when talking with those so focused on the election. Yes, most of us would like someone other than Bush in the White House, but what then? The reality is that social change doesn't happen because of enlightened presidents. Change happens when large masses of people make it happen. Change is created bottom up and not top down. Examples from the U.S. are masses of women fighting for the right to vote, workers fighting for labor rights, civil rights activists fighting to end Jim Crow. What changed was masses of constituents enlightening their leaders of the necessity of change that reflected the people interests.

Yes, many will go to the polls convinced of the necessity of voting against Bush and for Kerry. The important point to remember is voting for regime change is not a positive statement for peace and justice at home and abroad. We will be in the streets after the election, no matter which party's candidate is elected. Don't get me wrong, to end this administration's stay in office would be a great step forward for all lovers of peace and justice, But as long as we have a winner take all political system, the ability to choose progressive politicians is impossible or at least extremely limited.

So let us continue what we have started in the past year. Let us build a movement that understands the interconnections between economic, social, and social justice with the military industrial complex that seeks to refashion the globe in its image. We will communicate a clear message of hope that a new society can be built on, and by, a self directed free people. People free from fear, hunger, murder, corporate greed and state oppression. People free to participate fully in creating the dream we desire and replacing the nightmare we dread.

- Allan Lummus

Bring the troops home.

P&J's Statement on Iraq

Nuclear Weapons—Global Crisis, Local Challenge

The U.S. is making more—and more deadly—nuclear weapons, full speed ahead. Taking advantage of the headlines dominated by war against Iraq, the nuclear weapons establishment is quietly and inexorably pushing ahead, increasing the possibility of awesomely mass destruction throughout the world.

- The U.S. has made a fundamental shift in nuclear policy, that non-nuclear nations will now be targeted by U.S. nuclear weapons.
- The U.S. has identified 11,000 targets around the world for our weapons.
- The U.S. has unilaterally withdrawn from the 40-year-old Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.
- Russia has threatened to revitalize its own nuclear weapons program to defend itself against new U.S. initiatives.
- Nuclear weapons refurbished at the Y-12 plant in Oak Ridge, Tennessee will be “certified reliable” for the next 120 years.

These and other disturbing facts were brought out by Rev. Ralph Hutchison of the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance (OREPA) at a forum on May 6 organized by Pax Christi and co-sponsored by the Peace and Justice Center and CBU's Religion and Philosophy Department.

Hutchison encouraged as many as possible to come to this year's Action for Peace, at Oak Ridge, near Knoxville, August 7-8, 2004. The center is sponsoring a delegation to the action. Interested? Call or email the center center@midsouthpeace.org 901-725-4990.

- G.V.

Human rights for all.
P&J's Statement on Iraq

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

The Break-In

Sometime in the early hours of April 27 the MSPJC office suffered a break-in with theft of its PC and supporting equipments. The center's video camera was also stolen. Our most valuable asset — the database of supporters — was saved, as it was backed up on several sites thanks to the conscientiousness of volunteers Joshua Low and Susan Wiley. Oddly enough, the burglars did not take our Macintosh computer.

At first we believed the intruders to be midnight entrepreneurs, trading office equipment for drugs. But further investigation raised the possibility of less remunerative motives. The window of the bicycle shop on the ground floor had been broken in, suggesting how the culprit might have gained entry into the building windows. The MSPJC office door latch had been broken by the “smashing the door down” technique.

But a later examination of the glass around the bicycle shop showed a peculiar pattern. The window had not been broken in, but broken out, smashed by someone on the inside.

From 1956-1971, the FBI ran an operation called COINTELPRO for the expressed purpose of conducting espionage on progressive groups and individuals. Secret files were maintained on many Americans, and on groups such as Princeton University, the National Lawyer's guild, and the NAACP. The FBI admitted it had burglarized political groups to gain information on their activities. And while Senate investigations held in the 1970's put a stop to these secret government intrusions, today's Patriot Act allows spying on many organizations.

The MSPJC has no solid evidence of what motivated the break-in. Whether it was carried out for profit, espionage, or simply as an act of disruption we may never find out. It does remind us that we've now entered a new era, one as dangerous if not more so to U.S. citizens than the McCarthy era. We should continue to back up our databases, use modestly priced equipment, and not leave our personal equipment in the office.

As Ghandi said, “Peacemakers have no reason to have secret books or secret funds.”

- G.G.

Globalization

Economic globalization is the new colonialism. The Peace and Justice Center and Pax Christi are co-sponsoring a Public Forum on June 4th: "Globalization, Facts and Fantasies," with featured speaker Tom Cordaro from the Chicago area. Cordaro is author of "To Wake the Nations" and "Building an Alternative to the New World Order," and is a Pax Christi USA Ambassador of Peace. He will talk about how globalization affects not only *our* lives but especially those of our sisters and brothers in developing parts of the world. He will also suggest actions we can take. Friday evening, June 4, 7:00-8:30 p.m., at the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Hall, 1870 Madison, in Memphis.

- G.V.

Living Wage Coalition

The Coalition has been busy with forums like the one in which I participated at Beth Shalom synagogue. These are important to gain support from the general population. The Coalition has met with the City Council Chair Joe Brown and has now submitted our proposal to the city attorney to make sure it complies with city law.

The council Chair did let us know that several council members were raising questions of its impact on the budget. With the city recently giving the clerks a \$1.00 an hour raise some clerks will now make a living wage (\$10.00 per hour with benefits and \$12.00 per hour without benefits).

Our May 8 Rally was a big success. We will need to build on it as we move closer to the first reading of the ordinance in later summer. Let us know if you would like someone to come talk to your group about the Living Wage. Keep up to date on the campaign by using the web:

www.midsouthpeace.org/Livingwage.htm

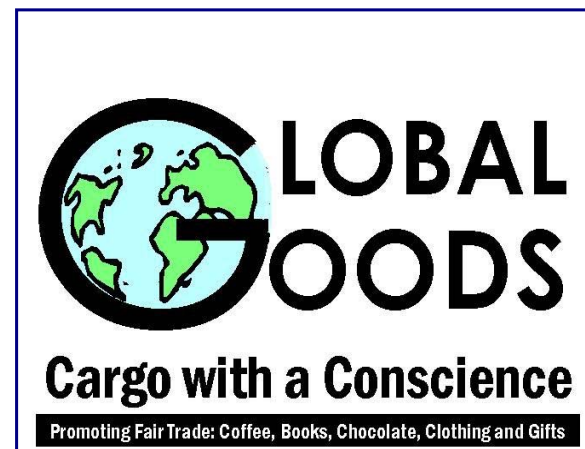
by Allan Lummus

Call to Collaboration

Peacemaking is too important to have overlapping events that compete with each other. The Peace and Justice Center, with several other concerned religious and social service organizations, has issued a Call to Collaboration. Its first purpose is to communicate peacemaking activities in a way that keeps groups from planning on top of one another. Its second purpose is to cooperate and lend support to each another whenever possible. Rev. Billy Vaughan of the Metro Office of Urban Ministries is coordinating the Call to Collaboration through e-mail. He will distribute news of upcoming peace and justice workshops, speakers, and other events. If you have such news, or if you want your organization to be part of this collaboration, contact him at moumumc@aol.com

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

P&J's Statement on Iraq



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.

“Fog of War”

This Academy Award winning documentary is highly recommended for peace people who seek to get inside the minds of government leaders as they prosecute wars. Footage of calculated planning, bombed cities and burned people are interspersed with remarks by former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, now 87, said it's the mindset that's dominant in war decisions, not rationality. That's helpful in knowing what we're up against with the present war-making administration in Washington. McNamara also said, what peace people had long known, that it's important to empathize with the enemy. It was war's fog that got into the brains of those responsible for the horrors of Vietnam and the trauma of the Cuban Missile Crisis, in both of which McNamara was a key, cold planner.

- G.V.

They're Watching

Shortly after my op-ed column on Feb. 14, the *Commercial Appeal* received a phone call from Washington. I had quoted Vice President and Mrs. Cheneys' Christmas card: "If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire could arise without His aid?" The first part of that quote is from the Bible. The second part, I had assumed, came from those in the Administration, the Vice President among them, who felt that the U.S. wars against Afghanistan and Iraq were signs of an empire rising. The Washington call was from Mrs. Cheney's press secretary. She wanted to make sure that their Christmas card verse received proper attribution—that the whole quote was from Benjamin Franklin. Thanks, Mrs. Cheney. Now we know that from the very beginning one of the Founding Fathers already considered the United States a rising imperial power!

- Gerry Vanderhaar

P&J Archives at U of M

After 22 years of struggling for a more decent, more humane world, the Peace and Justice Center's records are being preserved for history. The University of Memphis has agreed to take dozens of boxes of files that have accumulated in the Vanderhaars' garage since the Center moved from Prescott Church to First Congregational. Anyone with materials you think will be of historical interest, please call Gerry or Janice at 362-9364 for transportation information.

VOTER REGISTRATION

We are having voter registration drives at musical concerts and social events around town and are also gearing up for a community canvassing. We especially want to register voters in neighborhoods that had a low turnout last election. To join us in this project.

Contact Janelle Treibitz at 646-734-6705 or janelleboal@aol.com.

Erase One from SOA

The government of Venezuela recently announced it is going to cease all training of Venezuelan soldiers at the infamous School of the Americas (now called the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation) at Ft. Benning, Georgia. The official announcement was made by Vice President Jose' Vicente Rangel to the Venezuelan National Assembly on February 26, 2004.

Let Iraqis---with international support---stabilize and rebuild Iraq.

P&J's Statement on Iraq

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Turn over Saddam to
the International
Court.

P&J's Statement on Iraq

Listservs

mspjc-events@riseup.net

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Weblog

To access click on "weblog" from the Center's
homepage. New feature: Comment !

<http://midsouthpeace.org/blogspot.com>

Demand Justice, Now!

Yard Sale Aug 22! Bring you
unwanted stuff to the Center.
We will help you simplify your
life taking your clutter from you.
Refer to the website or call the
center for the date.

Peace and Justice Calendar

Jun 2 Women in Black (every Wed.)
Jun 3 Peace Committee
Jun 4 Globalization Forum
Jun 5 Gay Rights Demo (Every Sat)
Jun 5 Sustain Demo 10 am
Jun 11 Community Potluck (2nd Fri)
Jun 24 MSPJC Board Meeting
Jun 30 Pastors for Peace Forum
Jul 1 Peace Committee
Jul 8 Steven Smith Center Benefit
Jul 9 Community Potluck
Aug 5 Peace Committee
Aug 6-8 Oak Ridge Nuclear Protest
TBA Nonviolent Patriotism Forum
Aug 22 Yard Sale

Come hear
Stephen Smith
Thursday July 8
1st Congo
sanctuary.

Stop the war against the
people of Iraq.

P&J's S tatement on Iraq