



Mid-South Peace & Justice Center

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

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

MSPCJ Wins A Ford Foundation Grant

By George Grider

Recently the MSPJC was awarded a \$15,000 grant from the Ford Foundation, to be funded this fall. The grant was solicited and won by MSPJC board member Amy Livingston, a philosophy major at University of Memphis. How did she do it, was a question heard around the office and across the phone lines.

Last fall a fellow student activist who knew Amy from her work with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), the Florida farm worker union, contacted Amy. The CIW cohort told Amy that the Ford Foundation was looking for student activists for a project, and wondered if she'd be interested in attending a conference to be held in New York City. Amy said yes, and said she would be representing the Mid-South Peace and Justice Center.

The conference lasted three days, and was made up of about 35 invitees, most working on labor and environmental issues.

"We sat at a round table and it soon became clear I was one of the only ones from the South," Amy recalls. "Most were from progressive communities. I had a totally different story. People were shocked at what I said about the police trying to shut us down on campus, and about the general hostility we faced."

No definite plans were made, but in February, -b5 2004 Amy was invited to return to New York. This time the group had been cut to 15 participants. Again they discussed ways they would like to continue their activism. They were each invited to submit a one-page proposal.

In May the phone call came from her New York contact. Based on the proposal Amy wrote with co-activists Allan Lummus and Felicia Elam, MSPJC was selected as one of four submitters to receive the grant. The grant will be split evenly for the Center's work on voter registration, living wage, and peace education.

Amy confesses her attachment to America's most international city. She spent spring break there visiting her friends, and hopes one day to make New York her home. "I've fallen in love completely," she says.

Until that time comes, Amy plans to continue with her Southern style of activism. As she puts it, "doing the good work we do at the Peace and Justice Center.



Amy Livingston MSPJC
Board member

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Notes from the Chair

The center is entering an exciting stage. We have received the promise of the first major grant in a long while. We are reestablishing our relationship with Community Shares the progressive United Way like organization. Our interns and volunteers have developed a grant application template that will allow us to apply for multiple funding sources with great ease.

Our monthly community potlucks have become a great way for volunteers can get together and share food and fellowship every second Friday night. We have filled the board with fine dedicated people from diverse backgrounds and beliefs.

In our Peace and Global Justice Committee, we have instituted a monthly peace and justice forum series. We plan to visit the Y12 plant in Oak Ridge and participate in a weekend of nonviolence training and action (see page 3). Through the Committee we have supported public protests in collaboration with other community groups reminding us all of the importance of the anniversary of the Iraq war, gay rights, and of Israel's occupation of Palestine.

In the Living Wage Coalition, we have worked in collaboration with dozens of religious, community and labor organizations to create a local living wage ordinance that will lift many of our community out of economic dependency to financial independence.

Our voter registration initiative has grown into full-fledged program under the direction of Josh Low. Not only are they registering many low wage workers in Memphis, they have identified a *major* flaw in Tennessee's registration program: no Spanish language forms.



Congratulations
Janice Vanderhaar!

Janice was selected as one of the
"50 Women Who Make A Difference"
by Memphis Woman Magazine.

Josh initiated a process that is creating Spanish language forms for TN (with the assistance of Highlander Center and Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition). I think this is an invaluable service to our community that needs to be highlighted. Thank you, Josh, for making this happen!

We have more plans for the coming months. One is a new P&J logo that Michael Schmidt of the University of Memphis is creating. Another is a series of house parties, as a method of community building and fundraising. People will invite their friends over for food, fun, information about the Center's activities, and raise some money. You can help in one of three ways:

1. Organize these events
2. Host a party at your house
3. Invite friends to a house in your neighborhood.

This will be an exciting year. Join the P&J community in making Memphis the kind of place we all want it to be.

Shalom.

- Allan Lummus

Collaborators—Theirs and Ours

No doubt Saddam Hussein was a cruel and ruthless dictator. But no one, however cruel, can rule a country for decades without the assistance of a large number of people. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis collaborated to keep millions of other Iraqis under control. Some did it because they liked to share in the power. Others wanted a piece of the profit. A few took sadistic pleasure in creating suffering. Many of these collaborators, no doubt, assisted the process of tyranny because they feared what would happen if they didn't.

There is no doubt, anymore, that the U.S. war against Iraq is a huge, tragic, murderous mistake. And yet, as rationale after rationale falls away, millions of Americans continue to support the war. Some sincerely believe in an American Empire on which the sun never sets. Others, more cynically, are in it for the profit to be made in rebuilding Iraq. A few take pleasure in causing others to suffer, like the American guard at Abu Graib prison who said, "I love to make a grown man [humiliate] himself." Many of our own collaborators, no doubt, are so deeply involved in the war process that they fear the consequences if they don't go along with it.

A war, like a dictatorship, relies on a critical mass of support. Whatever the past, the only decent, humane course now is to withdraw that support.

Lawson to Keynote Gandhi Conference

Rev. James Lawson is coming to Memphis to give the keynote address at the First Annual Gandhian Nonviolence Conference, to be held October 8-9, 2004. The Conference, around the theme "Teaching to Practice Nonviolence: Perspectives from Academics and Activists," is being presented by the National Civil Rights Museum, the National Conference for Community and Justice, and the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence, and hosted by Christian Brothers University and Rhodes College. The Mid-South Peace and Justice Center is a conference co-sponsor. Rev. Lawson is a long-time peace activist, advisor to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a former Memphis pastor, and an internationally known nonviolence advocate. Conference registration fees are low, especially for students and seniors. For information, contact the Gandhi Institute at 452-2824, or e-mail gandhiconference@yahoo.com.

-G.V.

Preparing for Oak Ridge

Our Peace and Global Justice Committee is supporting the demonstrations that will bring hundreds to Oak Ridge, Tennessee, from all over the country on August 6-8 in a "Stop the Bombs" campaign. At the Y-12 plant in Oak Ridge the government is rebuilding the U.S. nuclear arsenal one warhead at a time. These new nuclear weapons will be certified reliable for the next 120 years. The U.S. has unilaterally withdrawn from the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty, a forty-year-old safeguard against nuclear proliferation. Peace people feel that with these genocidal weapons enough is already way too much. Rev. Ralph Hutchison, Director of the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance (OREPA), and two other staff people presented these and other chilling facts at the forum the Peace and Justice Center co-sponsored with Pax Christi on May 6. For information about the August 6-8 action, contact OREPA at www.stopthebombs.org.

-G.V.

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midsouthpeace.org/blogspot.com



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

June Forum “Globalization: Facts and Fantasies”

On June 4, Tom Cordaro, author and educator from the Chicago area, was the principal speaker at our forum at the union hall of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. He described how globalization has expanded connections around the world in ways never before possible to the human race and can be a force for understanding and harmony. But in its economic form, globalization has fostered a plundering of the earth's resources and destruction of the environment to increase profits, especially for transnational corporations, resulting in increased disparity of wealth between the rich and the poor. The Peace and Justice Center co-sponsored this forum with the Memphis chapter of Pax Christi.

- G.V.

Prisoner of Conscience Seeks Visitors

Michael Poulin, from Washington State, is serving a 27 month sentence at the Federal Correctional Institute in Memphis for an act of protest against U.S. imperialism and consumerism. Last fall Michael, a energetic 62-year-old, loosened some bolts on electrical towers in Washington, Oregon and California. His purpose was not to bring the towers down, but to call attention to our need to live very differently and to stop our government's quest for Empire, which he called “obscene.” His was a pure act of civil disobedience, for which he is now in Memphis' federal prison 2,500 miles from his home. Michael knows no one here, but would like to connect with peace and justice folks. Writing to him to get on his visitors' list is the first step: [Michael Poulin 14793-097 Shelby-B P.O. Box 34550 Memphis, TN 38184-0550](mailto:Michael.Poulin@fci-memphis.com). Driving out I-40 and taking the Sycamore View exit to FCI Memphis is next. Visiting the federal lock-up here is a worthwhile experience. So is supporting a conscientious objector to imperialism.

- G.V.

Memphis Votes

Memphis Votes, the new name for the voter registration efforts, is up and running. We have made contact with the League of Women Voters, the NAACP, the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition (TIRRC), and several churches about getting involved in Memphis Votes. Valery Krieg and I have worked hard getting materials together for the drive.

Voter registration is vital to empowering our citizens. Despite the importance of political participation and the so-called Motor Voter Law, at least 52,000 people in Shelby County are not registered to vote. The state of Tennessee also does not have a Spanish language voter registration form. TIRRC and the MSPJC are working to translate instructions into Spanish to encourage Latino voter registration.

We are already registering people. Memphis Votes is tabling at the National HIV Testing Day events in Memphis. Valery is registering people at Rhodes College. Memphis Votes is also working on other events. If you would like to register people to vote, please contact the Center at 901-725-4990 or email us at center@midsouthpeace.org

-Joshua Low

Financial Independence

The Living Wage Coalition's Mothers Day Rally attracted over 150 people and coverage by three television news stations. Unions, Church groups and low wage workers affected by our Living Wage ordinance were in attendance. Presently the city attorney is reviewing the ordinance. We think that the ordinance will be ready for its first reading by the end of summer or very early fall. Keep up to date by joining our email lists and website: midsouthpeace.org.

Action: In honor of Independence Day, we are asking all P&J supporters to write and call your city council representatives in July. Demand financial independence for all city workers, workers for companies that receive contracts or tax abatements from the city. Go to our website, to find out who are your representatives and how to contact them.
midsouthpeace.org/living.html

-A.L.

Thank you, all our recent financial supporters.

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If you find the cause of the P&J center worthy, send your financial support to the center. Your financial assistance will sustain programs like Memphis Votes, Living Wage, Peace and Global Justice. You can also visit our website to donate to the center



Open Letter To 2004 Graduates:

When I graduated from high school four years ago, a recruiter would call my home every few weeks, to ask me to join the military. I was looking at Army ROTC for a way to pay for college. I even applied to the military academies. I had been the nearly perfect JROTC cadet for four years. I had been on the Rifle Team, the Raider Team, Orienteering, and the Drill Team. My JROTC battalion was ranked in the top five percent of all JROTC battalions on our annual inspection. However, I would not say the Pledge of Allegiance outside of the JROTC classroom, and I was probably thought to be a socialist.

You graduates probably are getting those same phone calls that I got four years ago. Recruiters may be visiting your home, your school, taking you out to dinner, or even throwing concerts. Why do they want to recruit you? Can you really be an "Army of One"?

It seems that the military is the country's largest job training and college funding program. You may very well learn to be a truck mechanic, but do you want to be a truck mechanic with people shooting at you? The reality of the military is that you will be sent anywhere in the world they want to send you. You may be asked where you want to go, but somehow I think there is a difference between Germany and Iraq.

If you join, you will most likely head to either Iraq or Afghanistan. Are you ready for that? Are you ready for people trying to kill you? Are you ready to have to kill other people? If you see prisoner abuse or other abuses of people, are you going to be able to stop them? You are only a private, maybe a PFC...

The United States is bombing houses and mosques. Are you going to serve? Are you going to let your friends serve?

-Joshua Low

Mid-South Peace and Justice Center
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Peace and Justice Calendar

Every Wed	Women in Black
Every Sat	Gay Rights Demo
Jul 9	Community Potluck
Jul 22	MSPJC Board Meeting
Aug 5	Peace Committee
Aug 6-8	Oak Ridge Nuclear Protest
Aug 13	Community Potluck
Aug 17	Nuclear Forum
Aug 22	Yard Sale
Aug 26	MSPJC Board Meeting
Sept TBA	Sept 11 th War on Terror Forum
Oct TBA	Debt, AIDS, Trade & Africa Forum

Demand Justice, Now!

Has your **contact info changed**? Send your new address, email, or phone number to the center in the enclosed envelope.