

# Fellowship

a magazine of peacemaking published by the Fellowship of Reconciliation

Volume 87, No. 1 Winter 2025

**PACIFISM** *and*  
**NONVIOLENCE**  
*Yesterday and Today*

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# Fellowship

Volume 87, No. 1 Winter 2025

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On the cover: *Protester, one of hundreds outside Senator Pelosi's office at the Federal Building in San Francisco, October 23, 2023. Photo: Peg Hunter, Flickr, cc*

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Through the publication of analytical insights, spiritual visions, and personal journeys, *Fellowship* magazine helps people of faith commit themselves more deeply to a nonviolent world of justice, peace, and freedom. The articles published in *Fellowship*, in print and online, represent the views of the authors, have been collected for their interest to a diverse readership, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the publisher or of the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

# An Act of the *Heart*

It's been an exhausting and traumatic year, and as we go to press, the predominant feeling in the circles I travel in is dread. As kleptocracy rises to dizzying heights in the U.S., it's hard even to register the astonishing fact that kleptocracy has just fallen with a crash in Syria, suddenly, after 50 years of unspeakable misery inflicted on millions of people. Though nobody knows what the immediate future may bring, it's worth taking a moment to remember that even the worst dictators do eventually fall, to offer a prayer of thanksgiving, and to take heart. God, as the Qur'an states dozens of times, does not love tyrants. And if we can't find a way to trust God (by whatever name) while we are working for social change, then we are probably in the wrong business.

The arc of the moral universe is notoriously long, though, and human beings are created impatient. But as FOR members are well aware, one of the best things we can do with our impatience is to find ways to stick some spokes — even little ones — into the turning wheel of the cycle of violence. That is why, during the coming year, *Fellowship* will be inviting us back to basics, to the contemplation of what pacifism and nonviolence are really all about.

The articles in this special double issue are divided into two sections: "Pacifism and Nonviolence Today" and "Pacifism and Nonviolence Yesterday." Our "Today" section is devoted entirely to the struggle over Palestine and Israel, arguably the most morally central and emotionally inflamed agony of violence of all the many agonies now tearing at the fabric of the world. It is here that contemporary nonviolence has been most consistently thwarted and stymied, where it finds itself most challenged, where it is called to the deepest self-interrogation, and where it has the most to do. We are offering you Jewish, Christian, and Muslim voices, Palestinians, Israelis, and Americans, whose views differ in some respects but are in overwhelming unity in others.

Our "Yesterday" section aims to summon back into consciousness the life-testimony



Street mural, Butte Street Junction, Los Angeles, California.

of a few towering champions of justice and compassion whose voices have dwindled into the background hum of the near-discarded past. This is very likely because they all represent different forms of Christian faith that, while not exactly extinct, have vanished almost entirely from the public square. Why this might be is a topic of profound concern, worthy of its own extended examination. Perhaps one factor might be that broadminded Christians' reckoning with the legitimacy of other religions (and with their own religion's sins) has interfered with their spiritual confidence — or at least made them more hesitant to assert it. But this Muslim would love to encounter more Christians with the kind of conviction that makes it possible to live lives like the ones we honor here.

One thread that draws together both "Today" and "Yesterday" in the nonviolent quest for a better world is the quality that our Palestinian writers call *sumud*, and that Latin American activists halfway around the planet from Palestine have called *firmeza permanente*: relentless persistence. Whether we face unbearable tragedy or merely disappointment and disillusion, nothing else permits us to go on. *Sumud* will carry us even through despair. If victory is to be had, it is *sumud* that will get us there.

*Sumud* comes from *samad*, a divine quality used in a single central place in the Qur'an as part of the core definition of God. Where we find *sumud*, therefore, whether in ourselves or in others, we may recognize a special act of God. *Sumud* is not a heroic human virtue. It is a divine presence. Nobody can take any credit for it — we can only invite it, and honor it when it comes. Michael Sells, a gifted translator of the Qur'an into English, rendered the divine name *al-Samad* "God the Rock." It is the rock upon which life itself is built. Nothing in the universe is stronger.

Yet from another perspective, *sumud* is an act of the heart. It is *sumud*, rather than any particular structure of belief, that is the key component of faith. There is a tiny affirmation that breaks through in the middle of defeat, when negation is all around — an impossible small summons to which the heart, sooner or later, can decide to say yes. It declares of the good we long for: not yesterday, nor, alas, today either. But perhaps tomorrow, when you least expect it. And in the eternal, good is always now. Take another little step, and then another, and then another. Throw one more small spoke into the wheel. Go forward. 🌱

—*Rabia Terri Harris*

## F.O.R. Statement in Response to the Election

*November 6, 2024 – Today, we rise in love.*

Tuesday's election results have left us in a wilderness of anxiety and fear. Trump is sure to fill his cabinet with apocalyptic far-right Christian nationalists. He has promised to use the military to mass-arrest and deport millions of immigrants, threatened to criminalize protest, especially the Palestinian rights movement, and regularly stokes anti-queer and anti-trans hate. He trades in fear, hatred, smallness, misogyny, and unabashed bigotry. But we will not be moved.

We will protect each other. We will not leave anyone out in the cold. We come

from long lines of ancestors who lived for millennia under oppressive regimes. In the midst of slavery, expulsion, segregation, and degradation, our ancestors found ways to protect and care for each other and resist. We will carry our ancestors with us into the incoming administration and lean into the teachings of our FOR predecessors — Bayard Rustin, Jane Addams, Rev. James Lawson. We will continue to build our Beloved Community undeterred.

The story of “*mir veln zey iberlebn*” comes from the Polish city of Lublin. During WWII, a group of Hasidic Jews were lined

up against a barbed wire fence and ordered to sing and dance for their executioners. Someone began to improvise: “*Mir veln zey iberlebn*” (“we will outlive them!”) they sang over and over again. Quickly, the entire group was dancing and singing “*mir veln zey iberlebn*” even as the Nazi officers opened fire. The SS soldiers thought they had killed them all, but someone survived to tell the tale.

Despite authoritarianism, division, and fascism having won on Tuesday, November 5, we rise today in love and continue through prayer and protest to declare “*mir veln zey iberlebn.*” 🕊️

## Pilgrimage for PEACE

Following the Emergency Summit for Gaza (see Winter 2024 *Fellowship*, p. 4), we took to the streets, literally, as Pilgrimages for Peace took place across the world. Moved by our conscience and firm in our conviction that responding to violence with violence births more violence, in the tradition of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, FOR-USA, Faith for Black Lives, the National Council of Churches USA, Rabbis for Ceasefire, Hindus for Human Rights, and others prayed with our legs all the way from Philadelphia to Washington, D.C., as well as around the UN, and to the gates of weapons manufacturer Lockheed Martin.

The Philadelphia to D.C. pilgrimage started at the historic Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church in Philadelphia. “We are here today as ordinary citizens, people of faith,” said Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie of the National Council of the Churches of Christ. “It’s not a march,” said Rev. Stephen A. Green, chairman of Faith for Black Lives. “This is a pilgrimage. This is a sacred journey,” he continued. “War, violence, and death is an abomination in the eyes of God,” said FOR’s Ariel Gold. 🕊️



# F.O.R.-U.S.A. 2024 Summit: Guns, Race, and America's Love Affair with Killing

On October 5, 2024, **FOR-USA** organized and hosted a national Summit on Guns, Race, and America's Love Affair with Killing in Washington, D.C., at the historic Metropolitan AME Church (<https://forsummit.org/>). The hybrid summit was also made available virtually, with over 250 participants joining online and in-person.

The Summit was endorsed by local and national organizations, including Alliance of Concerned Men; Beating Guns; Blacks in Law Enforcement of America; Bible Over Guns; Center for Racial Equity and Justice; Common Hymnal; Council of Churches of Greater Washington; Death Penalty Action; Faith Leaders Ending Gun Violence; Faith Strategies LLC; Fellowship Baptist DC; Guns Down Friday; National Center for Juvenile Justice Reform; Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ; Red Letter Christians; The T.R.I.G.G.E.R. Project; and Vote Common Good.

The event featured keynote addresses from U.S. Representative Jonathan Jackson, from Illinois' First Congressional District, in conversation with Dr. James Zogby; Rev. William Lamar, IV, Pastor of Metropolitan AME Church; Patricia Oliver, Cofounder of Change the Ref, in conversation with Rania Batrice; and Shane Claiborne, author and cofounder of Red Letter Christians.

We heard from families devastated by the loss of loved ones locally (in D.C.) and nationally (in Parkland, Florida). We heard from faith, community, and civic leaders. We heard from a panel of former law enforcement and

community policing advocates who talked about the complexities of policing and how a better job could be done. Presenters shared profound insights, helping us gain a deeper understanding of the problems, devastation, and pain that loved ones and communities face as a result of America's love affair with guns and killing.

The Summit intentionally took seriously the many entities that have been working on the ground to confront gun and community violence in Washington, D.C. by inviting leaders of those various groups to address participants and lead dialogue. We heard from a panel of presenters whose lives were directly affected by gun violence. They shared heart-wrenching stories of losing loved ones to violence. Presenters also challenged FOR-USA to build and grow the work of the Summit by convening future summits in other cities and by organizing other local partners to address the epidemic of gun and community violence in America.

As a result of this challenge, FOR-USA is meeting with organizers in various cities across the country where we have chapters and core members, in order to grow this work and host additional gatherings. Consistent with our Summit in D.C., FOR-USA will continue to honor and center the work that is taking place in local settings where grassroots change agents are healing the hurt and speaking with compassion to broken people surrounded by broken systems and government. In this way, we will do our part to support and mobilize the movement for peace and justice nationally.



Shane Claiborne, Red Letter Christians

"If we are to lessen the violence and hurt in our communities, we need to support and affirm the dignity and leadership of these local grassroots change agents. This is why continuing the work of the Summit on Guns, Race, and America's Love Affair with Killing is so important," said **Rev. Graylan Hagler**, FOR-USA senior advisor and Founder, Director, and Chief Visionary of Faith Strategies LLC.

FOR-USA Executive Director **Ariel Gold** added, "Building on the success of the Summit, and in light of the 2024 election, it is more important than ever to come together and organize in other cities and locales, in partnership with funders and faith leaders, activists and allies, to work to transform our gun culture, a culture of death, into a culture of life that cultivates community, connection, and healing."

"I also want to express our heartfelt appreciation and gratitude for all of our members and friends who made our Summit possible," shared **Anthony Nicotera**, FOR-USA's director of advancement. "It would not have been possible without the foundational support of former Utah State Senator and CEO of AlSCO, Inc., Robert Steiner. He and other generous donors who are committed to confronting the crisis of gun violence in our communities enabled us to initiate this work."

As we move forward to deepen and grow this work in other communities, FOR-USA member and ally support will be critically important. 🙌



Mr. Ronald Hampton of Blacks in Law Enforcement of America.

# ARRESTED AT LOCKHEED MARTIN

FOR members and friends finished walking 20 miles (about the length of Gaza) from the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia to Lockheed Martin. Gathered with families and children too young to yet comprehend the horrors of war, 25 of them crossed onto the property of the largest weapons manufacturer in the world.

Some lay down, holding a list of the over 13,000 children who at that point had been killed since October 7, 2023. Others held a banner reading, “Lockheed Martin, you have blood on your hands.”

**Ariel Gold** was the first to be taken into police custody. Her Christian allies soon joined her in calling for ceasefire: Rev. Dwayne Bishop, Executive Director of Interfaith POWER; Shane Claiborne, who leads Red Letter Christians; Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon, Executive Director of Churches for Middle East Peace; **Diana Oestreich**, FOR Wink Fellow and former U.S. Army medic in Iraq; Lisa Sharon Harper, author of *The Very Good Gospel*; and so many more people of deep faith and conscience. Prayers were said and hopes shared that people in Gaza, especially Palestinian Christians observing Good Friday along with our Christian participants, would see our action and know they are not alone.



Since the 1970s, Lockheed Martin’s F-16 has been the Israeli Air Force’s “most important fighter jet,” taking part in all of Israel’s major military assaults on Gaza. The newer Lockheed Martin F-35 is the most advanced warplane used by the Israeli Air Force. Over the previous six months, Lockheed Martin’s fighter jets had been the instruments of death, dropping bomb after bomb on Palestinian children, women, and men. Shane Claiborne and Lisa Sharon Harper of Red Letter Christians, who helped organize the Holy Week pilgrimage along with FOR said: “As many fellow Christians bless the bombs falling on Gaza, bombs made at Lockheed Martin... we say NO, not in our name, and not in the name of our Savior. As many Christians try to defend the violence of Israel being done in planes

made by Lockheed Martin, we are calling for a ceasefire and an end to the violence in the name of Christ, the Prince of Peace.”

As Ariel said at the rally before she was arrested, “A central teaching in Judaism is that ‘to save a life is to save the world entire,’ and this is because all of us, whether Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Palestinian, Israeli, or American, are created in the image of G-d. And so, when we say ‘Never Again,’ we mean never again for anyone anywhere, EVER — and right now that is Gaza.” 🕊️



FOR-USA executive director Ariel Gold, Wink Fellow Diana Oestreich, and Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon, Executive Director of Churches for Middle East Peace.

## F.O.R.-U.S.A. Co-Sponsors New York/New Jersey Tour of Reverend Munther Isaac

In 1967, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. addressed The Riverside Church with his seminal speech, “Beyond Vietnam – A Time to Break Silence.” In his address, he urged America to confront its wrongs against the people of Vietnam, seek atonement, and strive for peace. On August 14, 2024, 57 years later, Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac of the Lutheran Christian Church in Bethlehem addressed packed pews at the Riverside Church, this time urging Americans – and the Christian Church in particular -- to end its silence and confront our complicity in the occupation and genocide of the Palestinian people.

In his speech, Rev. Isaac aptly described Gaza as the moral compass of the world. “The plight of Gaza represents a test of our collective humanity and the integrity of our moral witness,” he said. “If we witness a genocide in real time and choose to remain passive or fail to hold those responsible accountable, we cannot expect the suffering to end.” He quoted Martin Niemöller, Lutheran theologian and public foe of Nazism, who famously wrote: “First they came for the socialists, and I did



Rev. Isaac and Ariel Gold

not speak out – because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out – because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out – because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me – and there was no one left to speak for me.”

Rev. Isaac implored the audience to think of the life and teachings of Jesus as encapsulated by two simple principles: Love God, and love your neighbor as yourself. He stated that God will judge us by how we treated “the least of these, those in the greatest need” who are the Palestinians under the rubble and being slaughtered in The Holy Land.

**FOR-USA** was honored to partner with Friends of Sabeel North America - New Jersey Chapter, and in particular Rev. Katherine Cunningham of the Presbyterian Mission Agency and Kathy O’Leary of Pax Christi, to bring Rev. Munther to New York and New Jersey. During his three-day speaking tour, he met with Palestinian Christian and Muslim faith leaders, including Imam Mohammad Qatanani of the Islamic Center of Passaic County, who lost 16 members of his family when Israel bunker-bombed their home in October 2023. 🕊️

## IFTARs FOR CEASEFIRE



FOR-USA director of operations Susan H. Smith

During the Ramadan and Lenten seasons and Taanit Esther (a Jewish fast day), **FOR-USA** joined its partners in hosting Iftars for Ceasefire across the country. We nourished our intentional interfaith community through breaking our fast together; sharing prayer and ritual; and gathering to strengthen our shared call for ceasefire, justice, and freedom for Palestinians and us all.

In New Jersey, representing the Iftars for Ceasefire coalition, we were invited by the Mayor of Paterson to the city’s official iftar.

In the Hudson Valley, long-time home of FOR-USA, we hosted an Iftar for Ceasefire at the Senior Center in Nyack, New York. The event was truly heartwarming, with over a hundred individuals coming together to share in the spirit of community and solidarity. It was a joy to witness people of diverse backgrounds and faiths gather to break bread and foster meaningful connections. 🕊️

# Countering C.U.F.I.

In the largest multifaith effort yet to disrupt the influence of Christian Zionism on U.S. policy, 700 interfaith religious leaders and activists, part of Interfaith Action for Palestine, mobilized at the end of July, 2024 in the Washington D.C. area to disrupt the annual summit of Christians United for Israel (CUFI). Jonathan Brennan, a Palestinian Christian and national leader with Christians for a Free Palestine (who helped organize and participated in the CUFI bus blockade — see below) said:

As people of faith, we are sickened that our elected leaders, lobbied by CUFI, are fulfilling the genocidal goals of a far-Right, Christian nationalist organization — an organization whose chief spokesperson has a long history of making anti-Muslim and antisemitic statements. We refuse to turn a blind eye to our government's unconditional



Ariel Gold and Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon.



arming of Israel and to the miseducation CUFI provides to its audience that prevents all people in Palestine/Israel from being able to live in peace, safety, and dignity.

The opening of the CUFI summit, hosted at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center on National Harbor, was delayed by an interfaith chorus of over a hundred people singing songs in solidarity with Palestinians. During CUFI founder John Hagee's opening speech at the CUFI Summit on Monday, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim activists, including FOR's **Susan Smith**, disrupted Hagee shouting phrases like "Alto al Genocidio" (Stop the Genocide), "God loves Gaza" and "This theology kills."

At an interfaith service in front of the Gaylord Convention Center, **Rev. Graylan Scott Hagler**, senior advisor to FOR-USA, pointed out that the National Harbor area itself had displaced a Black community. "My sisters and brothers, that's an undercount," he said, speaking of the report released in the well-respected journal *Lancet* naming the true death toll in Gaza to be more than 186,000 at that point — given the number of people buried under the rubble,

shortages of food, water, and shelter from the war, and the destruction of most of Gaza's infrastructure by Israel. "So your witness here is a witness of light and life and for justice," Hagler added.

On Monday night, "kayakactivists" raised Palestinian flags and chanted while lifting the words "CUFI Kills" in National Harbor.

The following morning, members of the coalition launched a human blockade to close the road for an hour in front of CUFI's participant buses. While blocking the buses, holding banners reading "Let Gaza Live," "Stop Arming Israel," and "G-d Loves Gaza," the group appealed to the consciences of CUFI participants to embrace dignity, freedom, justice, and equality for all. 🙏



Susan H. Smith, Ariel Gold, and Diana Oestreich

## Screening of *The Berrigans: Devout and Dangerous*

The 2021 film follows the lives of brothers, Catholic priests, dedicated peace activists, and FOR supporters Daniel and Philip Berrigan,

who spent the majority of their adult lives resisting social inequality and the military-industrial machine. Following the film was a conversation session with Frida Berrigan

(Philip Berrigan's daughter) and FOR's own **Saoirse De Mott Grady**, who grew up with the Berrigans. 🙏



## Global Solidarity for Peace in Palestine Coalition

### *Calls Upon U.N. General Assembly to Uphold the Rule of Law Where the Security Council has Failed*

Global Solidarity for Peace in Palestine (GSPP) is a coalition of international peace organizations, activists, human rights advocates, and experts from around the world committed to defending the rights and liberation of the Palestinian people and ending the occupation. IFOR and FOR-USA are honored to be part of this Palestinian-led movement built on the principles of justice, human dignity, and respect for international law as it exists on the books — grossly unimplemented in the case of Palestine.

On October 19th, November 3rd, and December 10, 2024, GSPP convened three emergency conferences calling upon the United Nations General Assembly to step in where the UN Security Council has failed by urging its Member States to implement UNGA “Uniting for Peace” Resolution 377 (1951) by adhering to the terms of UN General Assembly Resolution A/ES-



10/L.31/Rev.1, which was overwhelmingly and decisively adopted on September 17, 2024. In these conferences, World BEYOND War shared a Roots Action Education Fund petition which has sent more than 500,000 emails to heads of state and Permanent Representatives to the UN Missions in New York.

In addition, letters were delivered by members of the GSPP Coalition to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and President of the UN General Assembly Philemon Yang of Cameroon, urging them to call upon UN Member States to take responsibility

for adhering to UNGA Res. A/ES-10/L.31/Rev.1 by: 1) Demanding an immediate and permanent ceasefire; 2) Establishing and securing humanitarian aid corridors; 3) Ensuring the complete withdrawal of Israel from the Occupied Palestinian Territory; 4) Reviving the UN Committee Against Apartheid to address systemic violations of international law and human rights in the OPT; 5) Considering targeted boycotts, sanctions, and divestments, particularly against illegal operations in the OPT; 6) Establishing an arms embargo on Israel; 7) Exploring suspending Israel from the General Assembly until it complies with international law; 8) Establishing of an unarmed UN peacekeeping mission in the OPT under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to ensure the safety and dignity of all civilians; and 9) Establishing an unarmed UN peacekeeping mission in the OPT under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. 🌍

## F.O.R.-U.S.A. Calls for Solidarity with the Haitian-American Community

In September, 2024, FOR condemned in the strongest of terms possible the dangerous, bigoted conspiracy theories against Haitian immigrants. The blatantly false claims by President Donald Trump and his running mate, JD Vance, that Haitian Americans were eating household pets in Springfield, Ohio resulted in families keeping their children home from school due to safety concerns, vandalism, bomb threats, and evacuations of schools and City Hall.

Trump’s repulsive and untrue remarks follow his reference in 2018 to Haiti as a “shithole country.” They perpetuate the historical racist false narrative of Black people being dangerous and “other” while spreading hateful anti-immigrant sentiment. “Jews know well the dangers of spreading false conspiracy theories,” said FOR-USA Executive Director **Ariel Gold**. “The Tree of Life Synagogue massacre followed incitement by Trump that a caravan of ‘gang members’ and ‘very bad

people’ were coming to invade the country. We cannot allow Trump and Vance to continue to endanger the lives of people for political gain.”

“The claims by Trump are not only baseless but are calculated and racist, designed to stir up his base with irrational fears and paranoia that always has resulted in the murders of Black people,” said FOR Senior Advisor **Rev. Graylan Scott Hagler**. “Trump and Vance’s pushing of a false narrative has the same intentions and earmarks of the false claims offered in Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1921 that resulted in the destruction of the prominent Black community in that city, or his continued claims against youth in the Central Park jogger case that was entirely debunked. The intention is to galvanize power based upon the panic of white people at the image of being taken over, overrun, and dispossessed by a constant and growing wave of Black and Brown people.”

The Fellowship of Reconciliation, resolute in the knowledge that all people, regardless of skin color, ethnicity, religion, or nationality, are created equally in the image of G-d, calls on houses of worship and people of faith and conscience to gather around Haitian families in their communities in expressions of support, solidarity, and protection.

The United States has a long history of Anti-Black racism being directed at Haitians, from U.S. asylum laws being changed during the rise in Haitian immigration in the 1970s and 1980s as Haitians fled the US-backed Duvalier dictatorship.

Rather than scapegoating Haitians or other immigrants, we should be celebrating the contributions they bring, from a unique and delicious Afro-Caribbean cuisine to a history that includes historical revolts against enslavement. 🌍

# GATHERING *Voices*

## REV. FAHED ABUAKEL

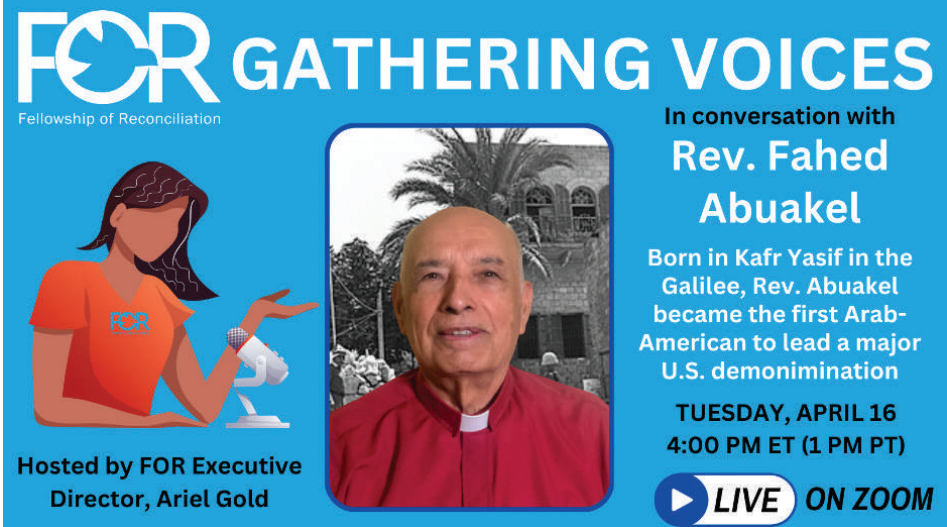
Rev. Abuakel, a prominent Palestinian Christian leader, shared his decades of experience in interfaith peacebuilding and advocacy for justice in the Middle East. Born in the Galilee, he has held numerous leadership roles within the Presbyterian Church, including becoming the first Arab-American to lead a major U.S. denomination. In this event, Rev. Abuakel spoke about his extensive work in mission trips and peacemaking, underscoring the role of faith in fostering peace and reconciliation between communities in Israel and Palestine.

## EMERGENCY FORUM WITH ISRAELI CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR YUVAL DAG

Dag shared his personal journey from a nationalist upbringing to his decision to refuse military service, offering a critical perspective on privilege and resistance within Israeli society. His story shed light on the complexities of Israeli identity and the struggles faced by those who resist participation in the Israeli military occupation of Palestine. Yuval now advocates for change through the Israeli Refusers Solidarity Network.

## JUDAISM AND NONVIOLENCE CONVERSATION WITH ELLIOT RATZMAN

Dr. Elliot Ratzman, an academic and activist, explored the ethical foundations of Jewish



**FOR** GATHERING VOICES  
Fellowship of Reconciliation

In conversation with  
**Rev. Fahed Abuakel**

Born in Kafr Yasif in the Galilee, Rev. Abuakel became the first Arab-American to lead a major U.S. denomination

**TUESDAY, APRIL 16**  
**4:00 PM ET (1 PM PT)**

**LIVE ON ZOOM**

Hosted by FOR Executive Director, Ariel Gold

anti-racism and pacifism, focusing on the history of American Jewish pacifism and its role in the pursuit of justice. In his talk, he reflected on how Jewish tradition intersects with movements for peace and justice, including his own research and writing on these topics, particularly in the context of the Middle East.

## ACTIVE DUTY U.S. G.I.'s, ISRAELI SOLDIERS, AND PALESTINIAN FIGHTERS DECLARE: "WE'RE DONE WITH WAR"

Veterans For Peace, Center on Conscience and War, Red Letter Christians, and FOR brought together a group of conscientious objectors including former fighters from Palestine and Israel, plus active duty U.S.

G.I.s, as they urged U.S. soldiers, sailors, and airmen to tell Congress to stop funding Israel's genocide in Gaza, calling for nothing short of an immediate ceasefire.

## ERIC WARD ON THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ANTISEMITISM AND WHITE NATIONALISM

Racial justice activist Ward examined the link between antisemitism and white nationalism, arguing that antisemitism is a foundational aspect of white supremacist ideology. Ward discussed how combating antisemitism is central to achieving racial justice and highlighted the importance of dismantling white nationalist movements in the fight for inclusive democracy. His insights were grounded in his extensive work on authoritarianism, hate violence, and social justice.

## ISRAELI PEACE ACTIVIST YONATAN ZEIGEN, SON OF VIVIAN SILVER

Yonatan Zeigen, the son of Vivian Silver (a peace activist killed on October 7, 2023), shared his personal and professional journey as a peace advocate. This issue of *Fellowship* includes an edited transcript of that interview (pp. 30-34) as well as a Memorial honoring Silver (p. 62). 🕊️

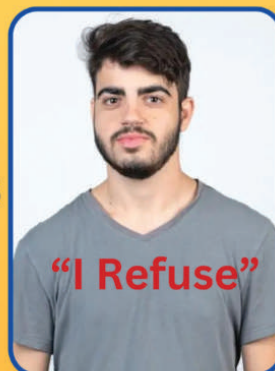
## EMERGENCY FORUM WITH ISRAELI CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR YUVAL DAG



**THURSDAY, MAY 23**  
**1:00 PM ET**



Hosted by Ariel Gold and Diana Oestrich



**LIVE ON ZOOM**

## Introducing our 2024-2026 Walter and June Keener Wink Fellows

### DIANA OESTREICH:

As a combat medic in the Army National Guard, Diana Oestreich's journey is one of extraordinary courage and profound moral challenge. Enlisting with a sense of duty and honor inspired by her parents, Diana's service in Iraq confronted her with a harrowing command: to run over an Iraqi child to keep her convoy moving and protect her fellow soldiers. This heart-wrenching moment put her at a crossroads between her faith's call to love her enemies and her country's command to kill. In a powerful act of defiance, Diana chose to wage peace in the midst of war, embracing her role as a peacemaker and forming a transformative bond with an Iraqi family. Her story is a testament to the strength of the human spirit and the possibility of peace even in the most challenging circumstances. Diana contributed "Is It the Guns?" to the Winter 2024 issue of *Fellowship* (p. 28).

## JUNE 2024 GATHERING VOICES

A CONVERSATION WITH THE WINK FELLOWS  
DIANA OESTREICH & ISKANDER ABBASI



### ISKANDER ABBASI:

A scholar of race, religion, and resistance, Iskander Abbasi brings a rich perspective to our discussions. His work spans Islamic Liberation Theology, Decolonial Theory, Islamophobia Studies, and Environmental Justice and Ethics. For the past fifteen years

he has been actively involved in interfaith Palestine solidarity movements in the USA and South Africa. Iskander's insights deepen our understanding of the intersections among faith, justice, and resistance in contemporary struggles for peace and equity.

## Introducing Saoirse De Mott Grady



Fellowship of Reconciliation is pleased to welcome Saoirse De Mott Grady as an administrative assistant and assistant archivist for our team. Saoirse is a recent graduate of Sarah Lawrence College, where she earned a bachelor of arts degree specializing in economics and social sciences. As a member of a large, multigenerational activist family, Saoirse's passion for social justice has been lifelong.

Saoirse grew up attending protests against U.S. imperialism in the Middle East, as well as anti-nuclear protests and demonstrations against the detainment practices used at

Guantanamo Bay, among many other issues. As a high school student, Saoirse interned at the Tompkins County Workers' Center, helping to support local efforts for labor organizing. Her interest in working-class solidarity also led her to work at the Mary Mitchell Family and Youth Center in the Bronx, where she worked on food justice initiatives alongside members of this neighborhood community center.

Saoirse's new role at FOR represents yet another opportunity for her to engage in issues of peace and justice for all people, and she is excited to join in all of our work. 🙌

## Feeding the Students

Thanks to generous donations from our members, FOR staffers carrying trays of falafels and shawarmas from local Arab-owned restaurants (like Al-Basha in Paterson, New Jersey) visited Rutgers University, Columbia, the New School in Manhattan, University of Delaware, University of Pennsylvania, George Washington University, Case Western Reserve

University in Cleveland, Emory University in Atlanta, and even the University of Barcelona, Spain to feed the students camping out for divestment from weapons companies and others involved in Israel's oppression of Palestinians. 🙌



# CHAPTER NEWS

## FIRE MOUNTAIN

FOR's Fire Mountain Chapter is named after the nearby active volcano, Mount St. Helens, and covers the Centralia-Chehalis region of Western Washington. The chapter's small but dedicated group of peace activists, along with local Veterans For Peace, has now entered its 23rd year of weekly peace vigils. —Larry Kerschner



Hope on 19th year of peace vigil  
as I return week after week  
hoping that some driver speeding by  
will give some thought to the sign I hold  
hoping their mind is not sealed to possibilities  
hoping they can maybe shed tears  
for the pain of people they don't know  
hoping they can open their minds and hearts  
abandoning any fear of strangers  
I can only hope that it is not rude  
to put my ideas in someone else's head  
over time passing citizens have stopped  
giving us the single digit half of a peace sign  
we continue knowing that imagining peace  
is like the blind trying to describe color  
difficult but what still needs to be done  
as I return week after week

## WESTERN WASHINGTON

For decades WWFOR has served as a regional organization helping to coordinate Chapter activities and facilitate communications with our members and friends in Chapters and those individuals not affiliated with a Chapter in our region (and beyond). The Mike Yarrow Peace Fellowship program of WWFOR is a training and mentorship program for youth aged 14 to 23 which currently has 16 fellows with individual projects. We organize two gatherings yearly. In 2024, our Spring Assembly theme was "Supporting Movements for a Just and Peaceful World" and featured keynote speaker Kathy Kelly with a presentation "Ring the Bells that Still Can Ring: Movements, Worldwide, to End the Scourge of War." Our Fall Conference with the theme "Maintaining Hope in the Face of Trauma" featured keynoters Cindy and Craig Corrie on "Working for Justice, Searching for Peace: Israeli and Palestinian Peacemakers." We support or work in coalition with several statewide or national organizations including Poor Peoples Campaign, United for Peace and Justice, Washington Fair Trade Coalition, and Washington Against Nuclear Weapons. Our near-weekly emails to our list of 1,000 include suggested actions and events by FOR and like-minded organizations. Many of the events are virtual and we are happy to add others to our list upon request to [wwfor@wwfor.org](mailto:wwfor@wwfor.org). We can also be reached at 206-789-5565. —Jean Buskin

Please join  
Western Washington Fellowship of Reconciliation's  
**SPRING ASSEMBLY**  
Saturday May 18, 2024  
8:45 am – 12:45 pm Pacific time, by Zoom  
**Keynote Speaker Kathy Kelly**  
"Ring the Bells that Still Can Ring:  
Movements, Worldwide, to End the Scourge of War"

Kathy Kelly is board president of World BEYOND War and a co-coordinator of the Marchants of Death War Crimes Tribunal. Since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, she has collaborated with an international network to assist young people harmed to flee from Afghanistan.

Kathy has been incarcerated in federal prisons for nonviolently resisting militarism and war. As a war tax resister, she successfully avoided payment of federal income taxes for the past four decades.

With Voices in the Wilderness companions, she broke economic sanctions against Iraq 27 times. The Iraq Peace Team then returned to Iraq highlighting the shock and awe bombing and the initial weeks of the invasion. Having lived alongside ordinary people during wars in Iraq, Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Afghanistan and Nicaragua, she believes women and children enduring such carnage have been the finest teachers.

**Q&A,**  
**Discussion Groups, Music,**  
**Reports from Youth Activists**  
Suggested donation \$0 to \$20  
Registration <https://wwfor2024a.brownpapertickets.com/>  
See website below for other registration options  
Information <https://wwfor.org/spring-assembly-2024/>  
or 206-789-5565 or [wwfor@wwfor.org](mailto:wwfor@wwfor.org)

Keynoter Kathy Kelly



Keynoters  
Craig & Cindy Corrie

**Maintaining Hope in the Face of Trauma**  
Western Washington Fellowship of Reconciliation's  
**2024 FALL CONFERENCE\***  
Saturday November 23, 8:45 am to 12:45 pm Pacific time, Zoom

**Keynote Speakers**  
Cindy and Craig Corrie will present "Working for Justice, Searching for Peace: Israeli and Palestinian Peacemakers." The Corries are leaders in the Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace and Justice, named after their daughter who was killed while trying to prevent the demolition of a Palestinian home. They are based in Olympia where the foundation partners with a wide variety of justice organizations including the Olympia Chapter of WWFOR.

**Youth Activists**  
We will have presentations by current and former members of WWFOR's Mike Yarrow Peace Fellowship program. Mike was the staff person who initiated the Peace Activist Trainee program, the precursor to the MYFF program. He is shown below with an early P&T robot.

**Music & Discussion**  
Song to lift our spirits, time to connect with one another. We want to hear from everybody, and all are encouraged to listen deeply.

**MORE INFO** <https://wwfor.org/2024-wwfor-fall-conference/>  
**INQUIRIES TO WWFOR** at 206-789-5565 or [wwfor@wwfor.org](mailto:wwfor@wwfor.org)  
Suggested registration donation \$0 to \$20  
**REGISTRATION:** <https://wwfor2024fr.brownpapertickets.com/>  
**EVERYONE IS WELCOME** regardless of ability to pay!  
\*Event a.s.a. Fall Retreat

## SCIOTO PEACE AND JUSTICE



Since January 2024, members of Scioto Peace and Justice FOR Chapter have gathered every Thursday afternoon to peacefully protest the U.S.'s support of Israel's bombing of Gaza. We are few in number, but our passionate objection to this genocide is great.

Our local group has also taken on the maintenance of the Human Rights Garden in Portsmouth, Ohio. The Human Rights Garden is a small park which was established by high school students and staff. It highlights champions of worldwide human rights for our local community. Due to the efforts of one of our members who worked diligently throughout the hot summer, this small park has been restored to its original beauty. Our efforts are ongoing.

In October, two of our members traveled to Washington D.C. to attend FOR's

national Summit on Race, Guns, and America's Love Affair With Killing. This trip was supported by donations from members of our local group.

Members have also been involved in efforts of groups which protest the contamination of our local area and support clean-up of the uranium enrichment plant located in Piketon, Ohio. We object to the activity of this local facility because of its contribution to military buildup and the serious and deadly contamination of soil and water in our local environment. — *Gwendolyn Mason*

## OLYMPIA

Olympia FOR was founded by Glen Anderson in 1976 and has been a pillar of peace activism in Thurston County ever since then. Glen died this year, along with three of our beloved Raging Grannies. In celebrating their lives, we have brought together many Olympia activists, who work on multiple aspects of the search for peace and justice — working against war, nuclear weapons, climate disruption, poverty, sexism, and racism. Since 1990, Olympia FOR has held vigil at Percival Landing, the corner of 4th Avenue and Water Street, every Friday from 4:30 to 6:00 pm. This peace vigil has become a gathering place for Olympia area activists and peace groups, young and old. We work with more and more Thurston County organizations:

Veterans For Peace, the Rachel Corrie Foundation, Learning Right Relations, the League of Women Voters, TCAT (Thurston County Action Team), Women in Black, and OCANW (Olympia Coalition to Abolish Nuclear Weapons). With more and more events happening on Zoom, we can work closely with WWFOR events and the peace groups they support. Because Olympia is the state capital, we have the advantage of visibility when we have in-person



demonstrations, marches and lobbying events. And we have in-person fellowship events several times a year, especially in the summer when we can meet outside.

— *Jean Gant Delastrada*

## SEATTLE

Since the pandemic, the Seattle Chapter switched to meetings by Zoom, and subsequently we entered a program rotation with WWFOR's Tacoma and Olympia chapters — one chapter planning, all three chapters co-sponsoring, and everyone everywhere welcome to join in. In March, Seattle organized a program with Kathy Railsback on "Trauma Education with South Sudanese Refugees in East Africa." Our July program included organizers with the Golden Rule project of Veterans For

Peace, whose sailboat travels to educate and oppose nuclear weapons. The recordings of these programs are linked from the WWFOR homepage [see item above. -Ed.]. The Golden Rule peace sailing ship was in the Seattle area in the summer, and we

attended and helped publicize public events. In August we co-sponsored and provided many volunteers for the annual Hiroshima Day commemoration, "From Hiroshima to Hope." This event includes a traditional and beautiful *Toro Nagashi* lantern floating ceremony. The Seattle Chapter belongs to the Seattle AntiWar Coalition, is a mobilizing partner of the Poor People's Campaign, and an active participant in Washington Against Nuclear Weapons. — *Jean Buskin*



# CHAPTER NEWS

## MID-MISSOURI

Since October 2023, the Mid-Missouri FOR has co-coordinated a weekly demonstration/march with University of Missouri students and other groups. It calls for a permanent Gaza ceasefire, halt of U.S. weapons to Israel, and for Israel to allow, unhindered, into Gaza desperately needed humanitarian aid. We've also overseen peacekeeping for the actions, which were attended by 35 to 300 people. In January 2024 we co-hosted citizen opposition to state bills declaring support for Israel in the midst of its genocidal war on Palestinians. As we have done for 35 years, FOR leaders resumed monthly tabling at the three Columbia public high schools, offering students pacifist alternative perspectives to



the visiting military recruiters. We worked in concert with Missourians to Abolish the Death Penalty to protest the executions of three people in Missouri earlier this year, co-

hosting "Vigils for Life" in Columbia and Jefferson City, along with a public program at the University's law school, informing more than 100 attendees about Marcellus Khaliifah Williams, who besides being a man with a human right to life, was likely wrongly convicted. His September 24, 2024 execution made him the 100th person killed in our state since 1989. Missouri executed another fellow human, Christopher Collings, on December 3, 2024. He most certainly committed a horrible crime but should not have forfeited his right to live. We will nonviolently persist in urging our state to cease its serial killing.

— Jeff Stack

## METRO WASHINGTON D.C.

This year, the Metro Washington D.C. Chapter has been doing a lot of work to confront and undo increasing repression, hatred, bigotry, violence, and other aspects of white Christian nationalism manifesting in the nation's capital.

The highlight of the D.C. Chapter was helping host FOR's national "Summit on Guns, Race and America's Love Affair with Killing" on October 5th. [See "News of the Fellowship" p. 5.] The Summit lifted up the voices of local faith, community, and civic leaders focusing on gun violence from the context of the nation's capital. Presenters shared profound insights, helping us gain a deeper understanding of the problems. We are grateful to FOR's senior advisor Rev. Graylan S. Hagler, along with Rev. Patti Fears and Rev. George Gilbert, for their leadership in organizing the Summit.

Earlier this year, on February 20th, Rev. Hagler hosted an evening at Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. More than a hundred people gathered to discuss and develop strategies to expose and challenge the oppression and genocide that is taking

place in Gaza. The event featured speakers from Plymouth's Board of Social Action, the D.C. Coalition for a Ceasefire Now, The Palestine Youth Movement, Harriet's Wildest Dream, To Heal DC, and of course FOR. In addition, we heard words of inspiration from Philip Farah, Rev. Patricia Fears, and Rev. Dr. Lewis Tait, Jr. Ayanna Gregory performed the "Ceasefire" song, and Luci Murphy offered music that elevated the power and the spirit of our mission. The evening concluded with specific action plans to stop the genocide in Gaza, and the next day a meeting of the D.C. Chapter was convened and attended by 45 people.

Here in the nation's capital, coalition meetings and public demonstrations in front of the White House and Capitol Building are perpetual as we continue to raise our voices against Israel's continuing onslaught against Gaza. For example, in November we met with Democrats for



Human Rights, which denounced the Biden Administration's inaction. DHR elected to take nonviolent direct action by blocking a White House entry gate for several hours. Attendees at a White House event were shepherded through a roundabout route to reach the event and nine were arrested by the Secret Service for the blocking action. FOR provided jail support for those arrested, who were charged and released later that night.

The D.C. Chapter has many opportunities to stand up and be a voice of conscience, nonviolence, and peace, especially as a new administration takes office promising all manner of mayhem at the expense of the country's most vulnerable. We look forward to being a public witness for justice and peace here in this critical time for our society.

— Paul Magno

## OREGON



The year 2024 was quiet for OFOR, however in May of 2023 the chapter organized a forum on the subject of Christian nationalism.

Professor Seth Cotlar of Willamette University was the main speaker.

— Angie Walker

## LOUISVILLE

Here's a list of 2024 activities that Louisville FOR has done/is doing:

- Participated in vigils, protests against U.S.-sponsored genocide in Gaza
- Worked with Metro Council toward a ceasefire resolution
- Lobbied Representative Morgan McGarvey to co-sponsor a ceasefire resolution

- Held our monthly Third Thursday speaker series to address current justice issues
- Distributed counter-recruitment flyers at the Louisville Showcase of Schools (addressing local high school students and their parents)
- Distributed on Tax Day the War Resisters League flyer on the federal budget and military spending.

— Pat Geier

## CHAPTER NEWS

### INLAND COMMUNITIES

The Inland Communities Fellowship of Reconciliation (ICFOR) was established in the Inland Empire (Central California) in 2004 by social activists who opposed the war in Iraq. ICFOR promotes FOR's vision of people living in harmony with the earth, nurtured by diverse spiritual traditions that foster solidarity and compassion. We hope to build coalitions and engage in nonviolent and compassionate actions with other community activists. Celebrating peacebuilding and active nonviolent education are key components of our outreach.

The year 2024 was busy! In April, ICFOR partnered with University of California Riverside to convene a Community Engagement Fair. We spoke to students

about the opportunities for leadership in community service and career options in peace advocacy. In August, ICFOR hosted a 20th Anniversary Celebration at which we honored the six founding ICFOR members. In September, we held our annual United Nations International Peace Day event. This year's theme was "Actions for Peace," and we collaborated with the Human Migration Institute (HMI) to lift up the cause of migrant justice. This organization welcomes refugees and provides resources in the community. In November, ICFOR collaborated with Claremont Graduate University in offering a webinar: "Models



of Conflict Transformation and Grassroots Peacebuilding."

In December, we held our annual Alternative Gift Fair hosted at the First United Methodist Church, where Fair Trade products were available for free and for purchase.

We are happy to report that our membership is increasing particularly with young adults, and that we continue to archive FOR's work in the Inland Communities. — *Rose Monge*

### METRO NEW YORK/NEW JERSEY

The Metro New York/NJ Chapter is going strong. This year I was honored, along with Marah Helalat, to be chosen as a chapter head. We hosted events at the FOR national headquarters, which is now located in a house on the unceded land of the Ramapough Munsee Lunaape nation, at the Stony Point Center property owned by the Presbyterian Church-USA. The



FOR office serves the dual purpose of being national HQ and also the gathering place for local chapter organizing and events. In 2024, we hosted an Iftar for Ceasefire in Nyack [see *News of the Fellowship* above, p. 7] and also a lunch in the Sukkah during Sukkot at the office. The chapter has been doing a lot of Palestine solidarity work with allies in the area, including Jewish Voice for Peace -Westchester, Jewish Voice for Peace - Northern New Jersey, Jewish Voice for Peace - NYC, Jewish Voice for Peace - Hudson Valley, Westchester People's Action Coalition (WESPAC), Friends of Sabeel New Jersey, Pax Christi New Jersey, Rockland for a Ceasefire, Rockland for Palestine, Rockland for Ceasefire, and others. Lots of folks reminisce fondly about FOR's days at the Shadowcliff mansion in



Nyack, where it was located from 1957 to 2018 after moving from Manhattan. Now we are building memories and making good trouble at the new more humble and cost-efficient office. — *Vincent Artis*

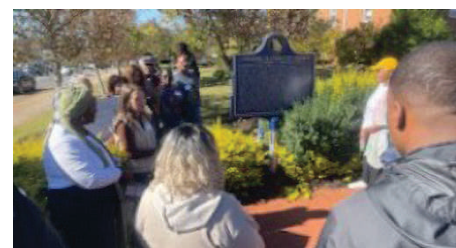
### ATLANTA/GEORGIA

In 2024, members of the Atlanta/Georgia Chapter have been involved in many efforts including:

- a Theater of War production in Savannah as a way to prompt a public discussion of issues such as renaming Calhoun Square
- petitioning the city of Savannah to rename the square after Susie King Taylor
- defending the renaming of the square against a court challenge, currently pending before the Georgia Supreme Court, seeking to reverse the renaming
- celebrating Tunis Campbell and

the Original 33 Black legislators in Georgia and mourning the massacre of 14 of them, which set off the lynching era in Georgia

- organizing a gathering and celebration of the resilience of the descendants of those who were forcibly removed from Forsyth County, one of the severest atrocities in Georgia during the Jim Crow era
- organizing a gathering of descendants of captives on The Wanderer, the last slave ship to reach Georgia
- work on a UN Democracy Fund grant application for nonviolence workshops



- work on a UNESCO Participation Programme grant application for a test launch, by the International Fellowship of Reconciliation Africa Programme, of an effort to address political violence at the time of elections. — *Max Hess*

# DON'T SIT ON THE FENCE, CUT IT

**Disclaimer:** The articles published in this series do not reflect the current views of the Fellowship of Reconciliation-USA and are the sole opinions of the authors expressed at the original time of their publication. Sometimes challenging in their expression and assumptions, they should be understood as unedited historical sources.



Diana Francis in later life.

**DIANA FRANCIS, President of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation**, was one of ten people from the Bath area in England who, on January 18, [1986] cut a single strand of a wire fence outside Corsham Special Site, an underground government headquarters that has been prepared for use in the event of nuclear war. The action was one of a series linked in the “Snowball Campaign” that began in Britain in August 1984. At roughly three-month intervals, people in increasing numbers commit a symbolic act of civil disobedience—making a single cut in a fence surrounding a military installation. The cutters then present themselves to the police, together with the hacksaw blade used, and a personal statement explaining the reasons for their action. Everything is open, the campaign organizers stress; there is no attempt to maximize damage, to enter the site, or to evade arrest. The statement given to the police by Diana Francis follows.

Photo: Simon Boedecker, dianafancis.info





Women of the famous Greenham Common protest in 1982.

**M**y name is Diana Francis. I am 41 years old and a member of the Religious Society of Friends. I live in Bathford with my husband and three children. In addition to my work in the home, I do some printmaking, sculpture, and gardening; but the greatest part of my time is given to the peace movement and I am currently President of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, an organization for the promotion of active nonviolence as a way of life and as the means for achieving peace with justice.

Today I am cutting one strand of wire of the fence at the Corsham Special Site. Many times recently I have asked myself, “What could I have wished the German people had done when Hitler was preparing his atrocities?” and the answer is always “Resist.” Now I see the people of this country, and of several others, in a position similar to that in which the German people found themselves then — in a country where genocide is being prepared — and I see us behaving similarly; not acknowledging what is happening,

hiding the ugly truth in acceptable words, pretending nothing will ever really happen. And yet this very bunker at Corsham and the elaborate and ludicrous preparation for the continuation of government during and after a nuclear war, is a clear statement of our Government’s resolve, in certain circumstances, to commit the atrocities it is constantly threatening: acts of destruction of a scale and cruelty beyond our imagining, which would be carried out in our name.

I cannot, as a responsible citizen, just allow these preparations to continue. I cannot, as a mother, be party to a threat to incinerate the children of others. I cannot, as a Christian committed to the way of love, acquiesce in such acts of hate. I cannot, as a sensible person, accept as “defense” a system which threatens not only this country and those against which it is directed, but also the whole world.

The requests made to our government in this Snowball campaign are modest, reasonable and easily possible: 1) That Britain starts

voting in favor of multilateral disarmament proposals at the United Nations — regardless of how the USA votes, and supports the call for a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty; 2) That Britain publicly supports the Nuclear Freeze proposals; 3) That Britain takes some unilateral step towards a Freeze or reduction in arms such as the abandonment of Trident or Cruise [missiles] or the public rejection of the forthcoming storage proposal of U.S. chemical weapons.

These are requests which would be supported by a large majority of the people of this country. To accede to any one of them would be a step in the direction of peace and humanity and away from the nuclear abyss. We have wasted enough years and resources on the machinery of death, while millions live and die in squalor. Now we must choose life. My small act of civil disobedience is one way in which I can demonstrate my choice. 🐼

*Originally published in the March 1986 issue of Fellowship.*

## Israel's Conscientious Objectors STAND ON THE SHOULDERS OF

# GIANTS

by Ariel Gold

According to legend, the Fellowship of Reconciliation was founded in August 1914 when a British Quaker and a German Lutheran shook hands at a railway station in Cologne. With England on the cusp of joining World War I, they pledged, “We are one in Christ and can never be at war.”

After Germany sunk the Lusitania in May 1915, American public support for joining the war swelled. But not everyone got on board.



Tal Mitnick

Political activist and theologian A.J. Muste responded to his country's gearing up for war by becoming a pacifist. His views resulted in him being forced out of his pastoral position. *[You can read more about Muste on p. 42 — Ed.]* Likewise, pacifist and social reformer Jane Addams (who later went on to win the Nobel Peace Prize) was viciously criticized for calling the war “an insane outburst.”

Despite the pro-war hysteria that countries use to justify their military endeavors, conscientious objection remains a courageous option for those committed to peace. As the ongoing genocide of Palestinians unfolds in front of the eyes of the world, a few young Israelis are choosing this brave, though unpopular, path.

“Slaughter cannot solve slaughter,” 18-year-old Israeli-American Tal Mitnick said in December 2023 before receiving his first 30-day prison sentence for refusing to join Israel's military.

The same week that Tal refused for the third time and received a third term in prison, he was joined by fellow teenager Sofia Orr. “I reject participating in the violent policies of oppression and apartheid that Israel has imposed on the Palestinian people, especially now during the war,” she said. On April 1, 2024, Ben Arad, inspired by Tal and Sofia, reported to jail as well. “Since the war began, I understood that I have an obligation to make my voice heard and to call for an end to the cycle of violence,” Ben said.

It's not the sentences Tal, Sofia, and Ben have endured that make their actions exceptional: it's their choice. They had other options. In fact, 12% of conscripted Israelis get out of service through notoriously easy-to-obtain mental health exemptions. And instead of the ten-year terms that Russian draft evaders face, even when Israelis are sentenced for refusing, they receive consecutive sentences with breaks in between to see if they have changed their minds. Plus Tal, Sofia, and Ben are not being held indefinitely in overcrowded,

Photo: 972 Magazine

abusive, deadly prison facilities, like incarcerated Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank.

But, what Tal, Sophia, and Ben are doing is nonetheless heroic and places them within a legacy of great peacemakers.

The earliest recorded act of conscientious objection occurred in 295 CE when Maximilianus refused his conscription into the Roman Army. He was beheaded for refusing to kill. Later, he was canonized as a saint.

Like Maximilianus, Austrian farmer Franz Jägerstätter was arrested and executed for refusing conscription by the Nazis. He wrote, “I find that [my hands being in chains is] much better than if my will were in chains. Neither prison nor chains nor sentence of death can rob a man of the Faith and his free will.”

When, in 1944, devout Quaker Bayard Rustin was sentenced to three years for refusing to serve in WWII, he devoted his prison time to racial justice work. A disciple of Gandhian nonviolence, he organized his fellow prisoners to resist segregation in the prison. He was so successful that the head of the prison described him as “an



Sofia Orr

extremely capable agitator.” Upon release, he traveled the country organizing communities, including the first Freedom Ride in 1947.

James Lawson, also a student of Gandhi, spent 13 months in prison between 1951 and 1952 for refusing to serve during the Korean war. Lawson went on to become, along with Rustin, an essential advisor to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King. [*You can read a rare report he submitted from the civil rights frontlines on p. 49 - Ed.*]

Since its campaigns were broadcast on TV across the U.S., the civil rights movement challenged the public, especially American youth, to choose between justice and segregation — between equality and oppression. At the same time, there was a surge of draft evaders and conscientious objectors to the Vietnam war, including prominent leaders like “good troublemaker” John Lewis.

Refusing and avoiding conscription became so popular during the Vietnam war that President Nixon’s commission reported that the movement was “expanding at an alarming rate,” leaving the government “almost powerless to apprehend and prosecute them.”

With the majority of Israelis opposing an end to the war in Gaza and 72% of them supporting no humanitarian aid, Tal and Sofia are not part of a growing popular movement, like what took place during the Vietnam war. But their contributions to peace are no less important.

Tal, Sofia, and Ben were originally part of a group of 200 Jewish Israeli 12th graders who pledged in August 2023 to refuse military service in protest of the government’s effort to redesign Israel’s judicial system. And whether or not other young Israelis join them in jail, what Tal, Sofia, and Ben have done places profound marks on the pages of history. FOR-USA is proud to have raised money for an ad in an Israeli newspaper lifting up some of the most important conscientious objectors of our time. 🕊️



Ben Arad

Photo: 972 Magazine; Photo: courtesy FOR

# Nonviolence Is Only Effective When We Are SEEN

by Graylan Scott Hagler

If a tree falls in the forest and nobody hears it, does it make a sound? This is an old philosophical question that most of us have heard in one form or another. For many the question seems to be a preposterous one for the immediate response is “Certainly, because the tree will crash in a cacophony of sounds whether anyone is around or not!” But this is not what the question asks. The question is raising the issue of perception. Sounds are a matter of perceiving and receiving vibrations and disturbances in the atmosphere. We receive and interpret the disturbance, paying attention to the movement and commotion and assigning to the sounds definition and meaning. As vibrations and disturbances are perceived and received they are inputted into the brain so that the brain can make association and assignment. This, in general, is how we hear. This is how we perceive occurrences in our environment. So if there are no ears to interpret the vibrations and transmit them to the brain for interpretation and assignment, and therefore no perception, does sound actually occur? The underlying question is whether sound requires a witness. If there are no witnesses to the tree falling and sending vibrations throughout the atmosphere, does it really make a sound, or is sound only a matter of perception, reception, and interpretation?

There is pitched warfare over how **we perceive things**, what we see and hear, and what is not seen or heard.

I find myself asking this same question, but in this case regarding political nonviolent action as a change agent. I want to distinguish here nonviolence as a political tool and agent, versus its being a lifestyle and spirituality.

Historically, nonviolence has been used by oppressed people to break loose from the chains of oppression in the face of an overwhelming

specter of violence, weaponry, and usually the power of the state. As a political tactic, nonviolence is utilized to expose and embarrass the brutality, inhumanity, and depravity of oppressive power. It has been historically used in an environment where the oppressor possesses carte blanche powers coupled with tools of violence to enforce rules and the interpretations and implementation of laws. On the other side of this equation are those oppressed by those systems of laws who are met, when aggrieved, with a cavalier and dismissive attitude.

When political nonviolence is employed, even in a context where there are few to no guardrails to the brutality, there is a tacit appeal to the larger community to see, empathize, and express moral outrage against what they see. But this requires that people have some empathetic affinity with people who are brutalized, so that they are morally and ethically outraged by what they learn. The tree falls in the forest and there are ears to hear and brains able to interpret and transmit what is heard.

Yet there is also another component required for the political tool of nonviolence to be effective. It is necessary that those who express empathy to the cause of the oppressed represent a segment of the oppressive/dominant culture. They are thus in a position for their moral outrage to register and challenge the exercise of power. But if no empathy or identification is cultivated and present between a morally attuned segment of the dominant culture and those who are oppressed, then political nonviolence as a transformative tool is weakened or completely emptied of any value as a tactic.

Gandhi’s campaigns, the heroic resistance in Tiananmen Square, the Great March of Return from Gaza, Cesar Chavez’s United Farm Workers, and Rev. King’s work were all nonviolent movements standing against an obscene array of weaponry and power wielded by people who had a history of using those powers to maintain the status quo. Some of these movements succeeded in airing their grievances and having their demands met. But others failed, either spectacularly or with little notice. The various outcomes point to differences in the awareness or apathy of potential allies in the dominant culture. It is a matter of how the movement or cause is perceived, received, and defined.

Gandhi, King, and Chavez, for example, were successful in communicating the moral and ethical weight of their cause to a significant and receptive segment of the dominant culture. This segment of the dominant culture eventually joined in voices and bodies to question and confront the dominant position.



In Tiananmen Square, though images were telegraphed around the world demonstrating lopsided resistance, yet there was not enough receptivity or motivation to ignite a significant segment of the internal Chinese society to press the case and make change.

The Great March of Return from Gaza was a nonviolent movement met with extreme brutality by the Israeli regime. The nonviolence of the movement resulted in at least 217 people being killed, and some 36,000 injured. Yet there was no significant outrage from within Israeli society, or from the larger world community. Throughout the years, carefully orchestrated and characterized, the Palestinian struggle has been mislabeled as dangerous to the security of Israel, and summarized as violent, unreasonable, and savage. The result is that the brutal response of the Israeli government tends to be viewed as justified, and the deaths of Palestinians, though unfortunate, are categorized as reasonable and unavoidable. For Palestinians their tree keeps falling in the forest, but no one seems to be around to hear.

The battle over books in the libraries and classrooms, what history is taught in school, and how subjects like LGBTQIA rights, Black rights, or women's rights are told has impact on what people see and whether they are outraged by injustice or not. The maligning of the "Woke" agenda is an attack upon people daring to see wrongs and to respond to those wrongs with voices and bodies. There is pitched warfare over how we perceive things, what we see and hear, and what is not seen or heard.

When people are aware of histories, issues, long-pressed struggles, and years of oppression imposed on other people, then there is hope that people will hear, see, and respond against the wrong with a right spirit in their hearts. When people are "Woke," the hope is that they will respond in just and empathetic ways. So the educational battle in the U.S. is over whether histories are to be filtered; whether the stories offered are only to be of America's exceptionalism, its triumphs, and never of its blemishes.

When our narratives are limited, our ears become limited in what we can hear. When there are glaring omissions of people and their struggles, our moral and ethical compass will fail in meeting the magnetic coordinates of right and wrong. We will no longer see or understand the course of empathy and compassion.

When people and their struggles are seen, heard, and embraced by a segment of the dominant culture, then political nonviolence is an effective tool of change. But when people do not see, do not hear, do not know the histories, and when the oppressed are continuously relegated to a place of invisibility, then nonviolence as a tool is ineffective and is simply an act of suicide. 🐼

**Rev. Graylan Scott Hagler** is senior advisor to the Fellowship of Reconciliation-USA and Director and Chief Visionary of Faith Strategies, LLC..

A young woman with brown hair pulled back and blue eyes looks directly at the camera with a serious, somber expression. She is wearing a dark blue jacket over a black, textured top. Her hands are held up in front of her chest, palms facing forward. The word "STOP" is written in red on her left palm, and "WAR" is written in red on her right palm. The background is a blurred, desolate scene of rubble and debris, suggesting a war-torn area. A semi-transparent white banner with teal and maroon text is overlaid across the middle of the image.

**Pacifism and Nonviolence Today:  
PALESTINE / ISRAEL**

# OF CIVIL RESISTANCE AND JOINT STRUGGLE

by Mazin Qumsiyeh

## ANOTHER INNOCENT LOST

Something unusual happened in the weekly peaceful demonstration with prayers in the village of Beita held Friday September 6, 2024.

The Israeli army and colonial settlers have been encroaching on the land of this ancient village for years. The illegal (by international law) colonial settlements of Itamar and Evyatar have been expanding onto the two hills near Beita (Jabal El 'Urma and Jabal Sabih respectively). In every weekly demonstration, after Friday prayers, people march demanding an end to land confiscation and settlement expansion. Sometimes they are joined by Israeli and/or international peace activists. On that fateful Friday, September 6, 2024, one of the internationals, Ayşenur Eygi, was shot in the head by an Israeli sniper and died instantly. Ayşenur was among many internationals who come to support Palestinians in peaceful acts of resistance or simply to witness and document the brutality of the Israeli colonizers. Ayşenur was a dual Turkish and U.S. citizen.

Fellow International Solidarity Movement (ISM) volunteer Mariam Dag (a pseudonym) was on the scene, and witnessed the fatal injury of her comrade. She reported:

We were peacefully demonstrating alongside Palestinians against the colonization of their land and the illegal settlement of Evyatar. The situation escalated when the Israeli army began to fire tear gas and live ammunition, forcing us to retreat. We were standing on the road, about 200 meters from the soldiers, with a sniper clearly visible on the roof. Our fellow volunteer was standing a bit further back, near an olive tree with some other activists. Despite this, the army intentionally shot her in the head. This is just another example of the decades of impunity granted to the Israeli government and army, bolstered by the support of the U.S. and European governments, who are complicit in enabling genocide in Gaza. Palestinians have suffered far too long under the weight of colonization. We will continue to stand in solidarity and honor the martyrs until Palestine is free.

A friend also reported:

I don't know how to say this. There's no easy way. I wish I could [say] something eloquent, but I can't through my sobbing tears.... my friend, comrade, and travel partner to Palestine, was just shot in the head and murdered by the Israeli Occupation Forces. May she rest in power. She is now one of many martyrs in this struggle.

Seventeen Palestinians had been killed in Beita before this latest murder. And at the time of her

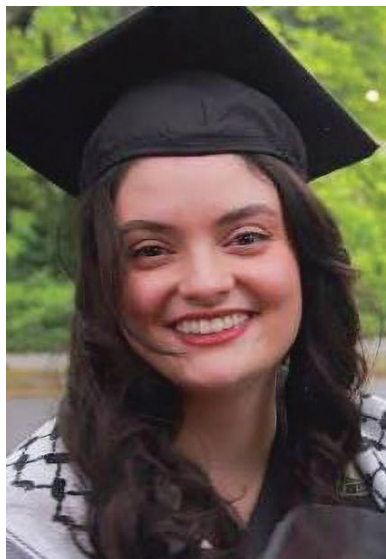
murder, a total of over 250,000 Palestinians have been killed since 1948 in this troubled land. A statement from the family, available at [palsolidarity.org](http://palsolidarity.org), has demanded an independent investigation. Yet Ayşenur was not the first international or U.S. citizen murdered by the occupation army. For decades Israel has acted with impunity, investigating itself and finding itself not liable. There was Rachel Corrie, intentionally killed by a military bulldozer in 2003, whose killers were actually promoted. There were Tom Hurndall and Shirin AbuAqleh.

## SUPPORTING POPULAR RESISTANCE

There is of course a long history of civil or popular resistance to Zionism and colonialism in Palestine that goes back to the late 19th century and has involved hundreds of forms of non-armed resistance, which is what we call *muqawama sha'abiya* (popular resistance). The challenge in popular resistance is that when it faces ruthless colonizers it can have difficulty succeeding on its own.

In all situations of decolonization struggle, we note, there is always a mix of forms of resistance. Different people resist by different methods depending on their background. But this is not a matter of discrete categories of resistance (armed versus unarmed, et cetera). Instead there is a spectrum, in which sometimes one form blends into another. For example, is throwing a stone at a tank a nonviolent form of resistance? Are forms of economic sabotage considered violence? Is applying psychological or other pressure on the occupiers a form of mental violence? Different people give different answers to these and other questions. Yet anti-colonial resistance is indeed of many forms (hundreds) which merge and meld into each other, producing a bell-shaped curve whose bulk — perhaps 98% of it — is definitively not armed.

Both armed and popular (unarmed) resistance can enlist segments of the international community, as happened in the case of other anti-colonial struggles, such as during South African apartheid. This is because in such cases (Algeria, Palestine, and South Africa), the governments of the Western world ignored basic human rights violations and supported the colonial regime. When governments don't act, local people act and enlist other people, internationals, to help. Since the majority of the world community and the local people do not engage in armed resistance (either because of logistics or on moral or other grounds), the likelihood of their engaging in popular resistance increases. Many forms are available for international participation. For example, there is the pursuit of boycotts, divestment,



Ayşenur Eygi

and sanctions against Israel (bdsmovement.net), an initiative structured in the same way as the one against apartheid South Africa in the 1980s.

### THE INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT

The International Solidarity Movement (ISM) was born during the uprising of 1987-1991, out of the necessity of engaging ordinary people when governments don't act. The Palestinian Centre for Rapprochement between People (PCR) was founded in April 1988, during the first intifada, by a group from my town of Beit Sahour (the Shepherds' Field) precisely to address this need. Beit Sahour was then a leading village in acts of civil disobedience (refusing to pay taxes, handing back military-issued IDs, raising cows against the military order forbidding us from owning cows, et cetera). The goal of PCR was to "bridge the gap between Palestinians and peoples from all around the world, informing the public about the reality in Palestine, and empowering the community with non-violent direct actions for peace with justice." The founders were involved in neighborhood committees which mobilized to cope with life under siege and engaged directly in popular resistance through community organizing efforts under Israeli occupation. PCR took a leading role in the peaceful resistance and erected a peace camp to protest against the construction of Har Homa settlement in the Jabal Abu-Ghneim

area in 1994-97. One peace camp, which housed Palestinians and internationals, remained on the hill for four months, 24 hours a day. Though this action ultimately did not stop the settlement, PCR mobilized in other areas and coordinated dozens of events, including solidarity visits and demonstrations, and pioneered attempts to stop the bulldozers physically with human bodies.

In the spring of 2001 PCR organized many other demonstrations involving internationals, and the ISM was formalized as a section of PCR. ISM defined itself as "a Palestinian-led movement committed to resisting the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land using non-violent, direct-action methods and principles;" it "aims to support and strengthen the Palestinian popular resistance by providing the Palestinian people with two resources, international protection and a voice with which to non-violently resist an overwhelming military occupation force." The ISM offices, then housed at the PCR in Beit Sahour, were raided on May 9, 2003 by the Israeli occupying forces. All computers, data disks, and papers were seized, and two volunteers and one visitor were taken into custody. For safety ISM was then separated from the PCR (which as a registered NGO with a fixed address, can be targeted).

ISM quickly grew and brought in thousands of people between 2001 and 2005. That was the time that some internationals were

West Bank protest.





also harmed, especially during the media focus on the Iraq war in 2003. In 2002, ISM members helped end the siege and violent attack on the Church of the Nativity by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). In one report, they wrote:

At 17:40 this afternoon [May 2, 2002] a group of international peace activists of the International Solidarity Movement (ISM) successfully evaded

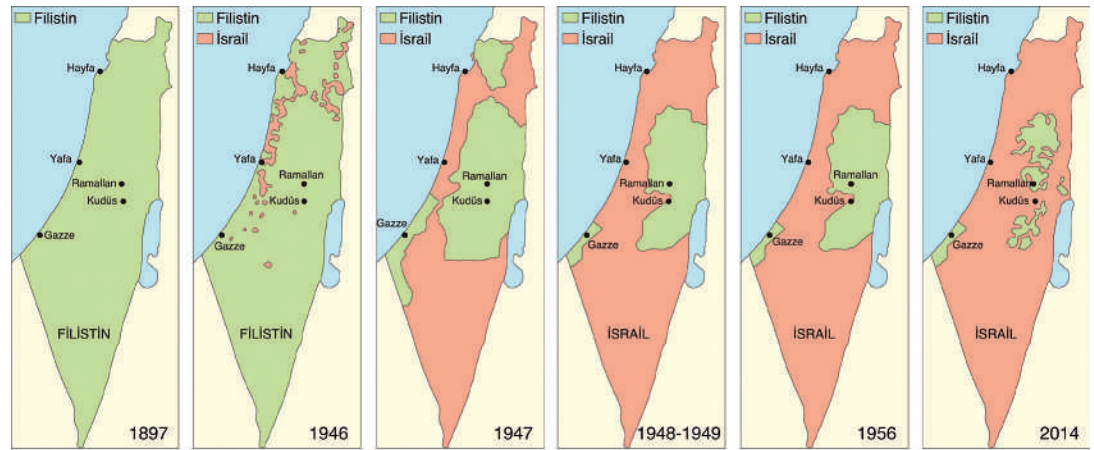
Israeli military patrols and entered the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. This was the second time in four days that the ISM attempted to breach the Israeli military siege of the church to bring sorely needed food supplies to the 100+ people taking refuge in this holiest of Christian shrines ... On this second penetration of the military cordon around the church, a primary purpose was to put international peace activists in the structure to underscore to the international community the severity of the conditions there and the illegality of the Israeli military occupation of the city of Bethlehem.

It would be hard to know how much more killing and damage would have occurred had these Palestinians and internationals not engaged in such brave actions.

## RESISTING TOGETHER

Persuading people to become active in popular resistance begins by convincing them that activists do make a difference. History is full of instances of unjust practices giving way to grassroots efforts. The use of strikes is a very successful example of nonviolent resistance that spread across Europe during the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century and is still practiced today. Nonviolence historically has been the dominant force employed by both individuals and societies, but unfortunately most people are unaware of the extent of its use or what it has achieved. Even at the private level, from birth to death, we see the use of nonviolent methods — from a baby crying for attention and food to adults complaining, pleading, or requesting change to redress small injustices in rights or privileges. We also find ancient examples of political resistance, such as when the citizens of Rome left the city in 494 BC and stayed in the mountains until the nobles and senators agreed to negotiate their just demands. Or we can cite the example of Jesus (the first Palestinian martyr of popular resistance) and his followers.

We must not forget that resistance is also via what we call *sumud* (persistence/resilience/resistance) which means staying on our land and in Palestine against all odds. Thus going to school, getting married, having children, planting an olive tree, harvesting a crop, dancing traditional dabka, and many others all become forms of resistance. I and a few volunteers established the Palestine Institute for Biodiversity and Sustainability at Bethlehem University (PIBS, [palestinature.org](http://palestinature.org)) also as act of *sumud*. PIBS has a vision of



Dissolution of Palestine, 1897- 2014.

Note the tiny green section of Gaza to the left of the final image; this fragment is being dissolved now.

sustainable human and natural communities and works daily with people of all backgrounds to achieve this vision.

We as Palestinians have a deep-rooted history in this land going back thousands of years. We resisted previous invasions of our country and we will continue to do so, just as other indigenous people have resisted European colonization. We are lucky that we now live in an interconnected world where social media exposes ongoing atrocities. And I would like to point out that our collective work now goes beyond solidarity to become “joint struggle,” because struggles are no longer localized as they were in centuries past. My struggle is your struggle in a connected world. This is easily evident in the case of Palestine where the ongoing Western-supported genocide in Gaza is leading to a regional war and may also lead to a global war. All would be affected.

The interconnected world ensures the spread of damaging ideas (e.g. the impact of the Zionist lobby on U.S. elections, where both leading candidates pledged allegiance to the continuation of genocide). But this interconnected world also ensures that we have a limitless supply of committed, decent people like Ayşenur Eysi and Rachel Corrie, who acted based on their conscience. Their self-sacrifice provides a moral lesson to all of us to act on our conscience in the same way. This example, together with the sacrifice of millions of us native people, is precisely why we are confident when we say “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.” What we mean by that is that we will end racism and colonization and we will live in one country for all its citizens regardless of their religion and background. That is the vision driving millions of people onto the streets and in universities around the world. We aspire and work for a better future for all. 🌍



**Mazin Qumsiyeh** is professor, founder, and (volunteer) director of the Palestine Institute for Biodiversity and Sustainability at Bethlehem University ([palestinature.org](http://palestinature.org)) which welcomes volunteers from around the world. Among his many writings are *Sharing the Land of Canaan*, Pluto Press, 2004, and *Popular Resistance in Palestine: A History of Hope and Empowerment*, Pluto Press, 2012. The research for both of those books has enriched this article.

# Peaceful Resistance in PALESTINE

by Ruqyah Sweidan

In the American public sphere, “Palestine” and “Palestinian” are often associated with violence because the people and culture of Palestine remain unknown, understudied, and underrepresented in popular outlets. Instead, it is the Palestinians’ political entities or acts of physical resistance, as well as non-Palestinian interpretations of those acts, that appear more frequently in the mainstream news. This article will therefore be shedding light on the historically peaceful existence and resistance of Palestinians in the land and the diaspora.

At the heart of Palestinian culture, firstly, are ideals of kindness and generosity. Despite what the economic or societal circumstances of a Palestinian family may be, they would be ashamed to turn away visitors, travelers, or people in need. Throughout its history, Palestine has been controlled by numerous empires. It has been held by the Assyrians, the Persians, the Romans, the British. Now it is occupied by the Zionists. Even when confronted with those who seek to dispossess them, ordinary Palestinians do not forgo the values passed down to them through generations. Historically they have lived in harmony with neighbors of different religions and ethnic backgrounds. Yet the dominant narrative today describes Palestinians as an unreasonable, unintelligent people who have never accepted any peace proposal and want all Jews removed from Palestine. Consequently, Palestinians’ long-term, ongoing peaceful resistance to oppression urgently needs to be lifted up, even among people of other backgrounds who are devoted to peace.

## ART AND POETRY

Palestinians use art to express their frustrations and their rejection of the Israeli Occupation. One might first notice this by looking at the massive separation wall erected by the Israelis through the Palestinian territories. What would you find on the Palestinian side? Paintings of children, doves flying free, messages of peace, and profiles of Palestinian resistance icons sprawl across the towering slabs of concrete. One such figure that is repeated several times is known as Handala. This is the black-and-white caricature of a boy whose back is turned, wearing tattered clothes and no shoes, with



Palestinian boys with Handala.

disheveled hair. He was created by the highly admired cartoonist/activist Naji al-Ali, who declared that this boy would not age until the Palestinians are allowed to return to their homes. Palestinian art is created by many fine artists as well, such as Sliman Mansour, whose stunning paintings portray the *sumud*, or resilience, of the Palestinian people. Most of his works feature Palestinians lovingly toiling in their land or expressing the deep desire of those in the

## An excerpt from Fadwa Touqan’s “The Deluge and The Tree”

When the hurricane swirled and spread its deluge of dark evil  
onto the good green land  
'they' gloated. The western skies  
reverberated with joyous accounts:  
"The Tree has fallen!  
The great trunk is smashed!  
The hurricane leaves no life in the Tree!"  
Had the Tree really fallen?  
Never! Not with our red streams flowing forever,  
not while the wine of our thorn limbs

fed the thirsty roots,  
Arab roots alive  
tunneling deep, deep, into the land!  
When the Tree rises up, the branches  
shall flourish green and fresh in the sun  
the laughter of the Tree shall leaf  
beneath the sun  
and birds shall return  
Undoubtedly, the birds shall return.  
The birds shall return.

diaspora to return home. Dana Barqawi combines various media into artistic creations that portray the experiences and pains of the real world, mainly inspiring political and social engagement.

In addition, Palestine is home to many highly revered poets. Poetry is a powerful tool, as words never die. And the way that Palestinian poets emotionally, rhythmically compose their words to describe their suffering, as well as their aspirations, makes them literary giants. Their poetry has made a momentous contribution to the resistance by humanizing the image of Palestinians to readers all over the world who would otherwise solely have been influenced by callous and negative portrayals of Palestinian people. Mahmoud Darweesh, the national poet of Palestine, even during his lifetime was highly popular across the Arab world. He would write about his family's displacement and the series of catastrophic events that followed in the region, including Israel's devastating invasion of Lebanon in 1982. One of the Israeli bombings brought down a 12-story building on August 6th of that year. In response, Darweesh wrote: "*On this day, on the anniversary of the Hiroshima bomb, they are trying out the vacuum bomb on our flesh and the experiment is successful.*" Prior to this, in the 1960s, Darweesh was placed under house arrest when his poem "Identity Card" became a popular protest song. He is joined in the Palestine Poets' Hall of Fame by Fadwa Touqan, Sameeh al-Qassem, Tawfiq Zayyad, Yusif Hamdan, and countless others.

## JOURNALISM

Journalism is a vital outlet for communication in society, through which people express their feelings, reactions, and experiences. It aspires to give ordinary people access and representation at many political levels, from government decisions to global events. Palestine is home to countless talented, well-educated journalists, whether they be independent pioneers working with limited equipment or correspondents with major news corporations. Scores of Palestinians begin pursuing this profession from a young age. Yet journalism is a deadly endeavor in Palestine.



T-shirt memorializing revered al-Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, killed by Israeli forces while clearly identified as press, Jenin refugee camp, West Bank, May 2022.

In May 2022, Israeli forces shot dead Shireen Abu Akleh, an Al Jazeera journalist who was widely known and respected in Palestine, across the Arab world, and globally. Abu Akleh traveled throughout Palestine, interviewing people and sharing the stories of their lives under the Occupation. She became known for empowering those who would otherwise have no voice in the media. Abu Akleh was shot while doing her daily duty, covering Israeli army raids in the city of Jenin. This killing sent shock waves around the world. Protests followed, along with strong calls for an independent investigation into Abu Akleh's killing. The U.S. and Israeli governments were pressured by this activism. Although the soldiers who committed this crime did not face trial, the quest for justice for Shireen translated into an international message for peace through the fundamental right of protection for journalists.

Nonetheless, since the start of the war on Gaza, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) estimates that at least 128 journalists and media workers have been killed (as of October 4, 2024), making this past year the deadliest for journalists anywhere in the world since



Memorial observance for Zakariya Ahed Subhi Baker, age 10, Ahed Atef Ahed Baker, age 9, Ismail Mohammad Subhi Baker, age 9, and Mohammad Ramez Ezzat Baker, age 11, killed by Israeli strikes as they played soccer on July 16, 2014, in Gaza, Palestine.

CPJ began gathering data in 1992. Given that foreign journalists have not been allowed to enter Gaza since the war began (except in a few cases with Israeli army escorts), Palestinian journalists are providing a fundamental service by keeping the world — including Israelis — informed on the rapid developments in Gaza.

In May of 2024, Israel's cabinet voted to shut down Al Jazeera. As a result, its broadcasts are no longer available in Israel, crew accreditations have been withdrawn, and its website is inaccessible. This is not the first time Israel has censored journalism on Palestine or by Palestinians. These orders have been enacted in reaction to an increasing awareness of the situation in Palestine, thanks to Palestinian/Arab journalism. This threat must be contained by Israel. Yet Palestinian journalists persist in transmitting their stories to the world.

## BOYCOTT, DIVESTMENT, SANCTIONS

Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) is perhaps the most targeted and misunderstood platform led by Palestinians. These three letters stand for three calls to action until three conditions are fulfilled. First, BDS activists call for the end of Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories (West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem); of the Syrian Golan Heights; and of parts of the border with southern Lebanon. This call also requires the removal of the Separation Wall — sometimes known as the “Apartheid Wall” — which runs through Palestinian land in the West Bank, separating families, heavily restricting their movement, and cutting them off from resources. The second BDS call demands that Palestinian citizens of Israel be granted rights equal to those of Jewish citizens of Israel. The final call demands that Palestinian refugees be allowed to return to their homes and properties, as stipulated by UN Resolution 194.

People who are against BDS condemn this movement as antisemitic because it targets “the Jewish State” and political acts undertaken by Jewish people. However, boycott movements have been instituted historically for various reasons and against a variety of political actors.

Weekly protest in Gaza across from International Red Cross headquarters held by families of Israeli detainees, February 2012.



After the U.S. invasion of Iraq, for example, a number of groups of people around the world participated in boycotts against American products. In Germany, websites were developed to inform people of the top American firms from which to stop purchasing products. Coca-Cola, Budweiser, and Marlboro were not sold in several German restaurants, nor were American Express cards accepted. In France, there were instances of protests at American chain restaurants, such as a McDonald's in Paris.

It is well known that during the terrible tenure of the apartheid government in South Africa, a huge wave of international solidarity came from ordinary people, who boycotted South African products in grocery stores or other areas. Countries soon followed with sanctions, and the apartheid regime fell.

A few decades prior, the Arab members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) imposed an embargo on oil exports to the United States and other Western countries, causing an energy crisis. This action was a response to the U.S. decision to resupply the Israeli military during the 1973 war. Given that oil is a precious, critical resource, withholding it gave great leverage to the Arab states over the imperial powers. The world paid attention to the conflict, and the great powers were pressured into reconsidering their support for Israel. Currently, the most prominent group in Yemen, the Houthis, are carrying out similar disruptions of trade, mainly targeting oil tankers or the ships of major companies profiting from business with Israel.

There is a list of companies for consumers to boycott on the BDS main website. Given that our governments refuse to withhold funds or support from Israel until it complies with all international laws and conventions, consumers must do that instead, taking action against the major companies that help to enable Israel's ongoing impunity.

Boycott movements are a legitimate, peaceful response to injustice. This action is also a symbol of our own agency, our right to express a view on the actions we see as oppressive around the world and how we wish to respond to them.

## LAND ACTION/ LABOR STRIKES

Palestinians deeply cherish their land as if it were a member of every family, a person with a beating heart and a living soul. Of course, this area is considered a holy place in all of the Abrahamic religions. Tourists often cite the deep spiritual aura that emanates from the old roads, historic monuments, and sacred sites. Moreover, as part of the Fertile Crescent, a strip of land known for being the base of early civilization thanks to its fertile soil, Palestine is a vastly wealthy agricultural hub. Olive trees are a bountiful crop in Palestine and hold deep significance to Palestinians. Olive oil is a central base to the national cuisine and is also used in commercial products, such as soap. Along with the production of countless



Sumud.

other fruits and vegetables, an olive harvest is critical to a Palestinian family's income.

Sadly, the decades-long occupation imposed on the Palestinians by Israel means that their land is constantly under threat. Israel has rapidly expanded its settlements in Jerusalem and the West Bank. Land is confiscated from families, and their homes are demolished. At the same time, Palestinians spend years in court fighting for permits to build or rebuild these homes. Such cases are a losing battle, given the systemic prejudice ingrained in the Israeli legal system which favors Israeli settlers over indigenous Palestinians. These Israeli settlers, who come from all over the world, move onto Palestinian land and enjoy its vast resources. Stolen resources.

Palestinians have regularly protested these land grabs by marching in demonstrations. Historically, a particular demonstration stands out among the rest. It is known as *Yawm al-Ard*, or Land Day. The first Land Day took place on March 30, 1976, when Palestinians organized a large strike to protest Israel's relentless confiscation of Palestinian land in the Galilee; six unarmed Palestinians were killed and more than one hundred were injured. Land Day protests have been honored ever since, carried out by the old and young, every year on the 30th of March.

Moreover, labor strikes are a long-time tradition of Palestinian resistance. Strikes are detrimental to the Israeli economy as it relies on Palestinian labor. During the spring and summer of 2021, the world's eyes were on Palestine while Israel violently attempted to remove Palestinian residents of Jerusalem, specifically in the historic neighborhoods of Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan, from their homes. There were protests in Jerusalem and across the globe. At that time Israelis also led violent raids on the Al Aqsa Mosque, violating its sacred status and assaulting worshippers. Fighting ensued between Israeli forces and armed resistance groups in Gaza, which of course, led to disproportionate death of civilians in Gaza. On May 18, 2021, Palestinians (in the Occupied Territories and Israel proper) launched a general strike. Protests in solidarity with the Palestinians took place all over the world. The culmination of this strike and supporting actions became known as the "Unity Intifada." On August 2, 2021, the Israeli High Court of Justice made a ruling on the matter, specifically regarding the homes of four Sheikh Jarrah

families: if they recognized the "legitimate" Israeli ownership of their properties, they would not be evicted. The Palestinian families rejected this unjust compromise. The effort to dispossess the Palestinian residents of this community remains ongoing.

Much earlier, in 1936, during the British mandate of Palestine, the indigenous population also held a strike to protest the impending British plans for Palestine — the selling of Palestinian lands to European Jewish immigrants and the subjugation of the Palestinian people. In short, labor strikes have occurred numerous times throughout Palestinian history, against whatever oppressor is present on their land, and will continue until their freedom is won.

In conclusion, the Palestinians are an intelligent people who invite the world to share in their rich culture and stand beside them in their struggle. Palestine could be a multiethnic, multireligious homeland, a true symbol of peace, a pillar for humanity on this Earth. Our long-established and abundant methods of peaceful resistance pave the path toward that goal. 🕊️

An excerpt from Sameeh Al-Qassem's

## "Travel Tickets"

On the day you kill me  
You'll find in my pocket

Travel tickets

To peace,

To the fields and the rain,

To people's conscience.

Don't waste the tickets.



**Ruqyah Sweidan** graduated from the University of Northern Colorado (UNC) with a Bachelor's degree in Anthropology. She is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in International Relations at the University of Leicester. A student of the social sciences, Ruqyah is passionate about cultural understanding, perspective sharing, and investigative research, and applying those methods to the enhancement of international relations. While at UNC, her research focused on the experiences of Arabs

in the diaspora of America and across the Middle East. She also worked closely with peers, visitors, and department heads at UNC as a student staff member. She is active in peace-oriented approaches in her graduate program. Moreover, Ruqyah has interned with cultural research, entrepreneurial, and communications firms and worked at The Jerusalem Fund/Palestine Center for three years.

# Interview with Israeli Peace Activist YONATAN ZEIGEN

*Tel Aviv-based peace activist Yonatan Zeigen grew up in Kibbutz Be'eri on the Gaza border. He holds a bachelor's degree in law and a master's degree in clinical social work. Himself a father to school-age children, he has a unique blend of personal and professional experience with the Palestine/Israel crisis: he tragically lost his mother, also an activist, on October 7, 2023. He was interviewed by FOR-USA executive director Ariel Gold for FOR's Gathering Voices webinar series on September 12, 2024. The transcript has been edited for clarity and concision.*

**ARIEL GOLD:** Welcome, Yonatan. Thank you so much for joining us. Let me start by giving my deepest condolences on the loss of your mother. If you could begin by telling us about her: her work, and who she was as a person.

**YONATAN ZEIGEN:** Well, she was born and raised in Winnipeg, Canada, in a pretty traditional Jewish North American family. When she was in college she had the opportunity to come to Israel for a year to study. Then she realized that her connection to Judaism was not by religion, but by culture and national affiliation, and that her future was going to be in Israel. So she went back to Canada, she finished school, she joined Habonim, a youth movement. And together with a group of young idealists, she came to Israel in '74, at a time where for her — and I think for a lot of her generation — Zionism and the term *tikkun olam* ["repair of the world"] didn't seem contradictory.



Vivan Silver



Yonatan Zeigen

She immediately became involved in feminism and feminist activism. She was one of the first women to head a kibbutz in the country, and she established the gender equality department in the kibbutz movement. She also got involved in the field of shared society, fostering relationships with the neighbors in Ramla [Palestine] and sitting on boards in other organizations. And in 1990 [we moved to Kibbutz Be'eri which is right on the border with Gaza. But those were the hopeful Nineties, and she was able to continue her work from a standpoint of hope.

For us, for her two sons, she was always just a wonderful, loving mother. We didn't know her as an activist. We knew her as a caring mother that read stories to us and was completely interested in everything we went through in life. And as a person, I think she had these interesting dualities of, on the one hand, being very sensitive and soft, sometimes fragile; and on the other hand, very assertive, always in a position of leadership, and very straightforward with her ideals. I thought it was interesting. And charming. I think that everything she did in her life was based in interpersonal relationships. And that's what led her work, all the time.

**ARIEL:** One of the things I find that is really not known in the United States is the composition of Southern Israel — I hear it referred to as the "Gaza envelope" — who lived there, and what that population was, and is.

**YONATAN:** The Gaza envelope is a stretch of land, in what is referred to as "Israel proper," which is the Israeli side of the Gaza border. It's mainly composed of small kibbutzim, which are communities with a pretty specific lifestyle. Most of them were Labor Zionists, what they call the Zionist Left in Israel. I myself don't define myself as part of that camp. But that was the majority of the people: they voted for the Labor Party. They are mostly agricultural communities.

**ARIEL:** I understand that your mother and many others in the kibbutzes had relationships with the Palestinians in Gaza, especially around medical care. If you could talk a bit about your mother's involvement that way.

**YONATAN:** Well, as I said, after we moved there in the Nineties she became familiar with people in Gaza. Back then it wasn't sealed. Gaza wasn't in closure like it has been for so many years. And at some

point she became CEO of an organization called the Negev Institute for Strategies of Peace and Development. They had projects together with the Palestinians in Gaza for civil society training and leadership training and economic projects, joint projects; and encounter groups and things like that.

I myself remember going there on a visit, which was highly unusual. None of my peers got the chance to visit Gaza. I did that in 2000, just before the second Intifada broke, going and visiting friends of hers and colleagues of hers. After the second Intifada the closures became more — what's the word for it? — more “effective” in terms of closing a place down. And it slowly became what we started to relate to as the biggest open-air prison in the world.

And then in 2007 when Hamas got into power, it was totally differentiated from — I mean, her colleagues remained in Gaza up until 2007, and then they fled because they weren't on the right side of the political map, of the Palestinian political map in Gaza. But she continued, working with the Bedouin community in Israel and also in a lot of organizations that tried to continue cross-border work and peacebuilding between Israelis and Gazans. In 2014 she retired from running the organization and became very much involved in Women Wage Peace, and in Road to Recovery, which was volunteering to drive Palestinian patients from Gaza to Israeli hospitals — patients that couldn't receive sufficient healthcare in Gaza because they had more complex illnesses.

**ARIEL:** So I have family in Israel. I assume they likely voted or continue to vote Labor, but they definitely consider themselves within that camp. And I remember a year of visiting them before I was later deported and banned from Israel. I was talking with them, trying to broach politics with them. And I brought up Gaza, and children in Gaza. Their position — and, like I said, they considered themselves liberal — their position, the opinion that they communicated to me, was that there are no moderates in Gaza, that even children there can't be trusted to want

peace, and so shouldn't be.... You know the conversation didn't go on too long. But I'm wondering how your mother dealt with that kind of position, not from the Far Right, but from the more moderate people.

**YONATAN:** Yeah, this tragic misconception in Israel is pretty much across the political spectrum. And it relates to what I said before about how, in the past, people could identify themselves as Zionist and still believe in peace and in justice. But it's changed during the years when the Israeli government, and then public opinion, went far to the Right. You know, when the mainstream moves to the Right, then what you once considered Left becomes more Right as well.

My mother paid a price in her own community because she stayed in her position. She didn't shift away. And she knew for a fact what kind of people live in Gaza, because she had colleagues and friends there, and people who cooperated with her in trying to create a new reality in Israel and Palestine. So she always stayed centered and proud of her convictions. But she paid a price for it in her community and also as a citizen. But when people are proud, when they stand their ground, they usually have an impact on others. So in Be'eri whatever she got involved in, you could see after a while a group of people joining. Which was nice — but it represented, you know, the general statistics. So you had a very small group of people involved in peace initiatives, and the majority indifferent. And a lot of people opposed and hostile.

**ARIEL:** If you could talk about October 7th from your own experience, how it happened for you.

**YONATAN:** It was the holiday, and I was supposed to be there with my family, and we arbitrarily decided not to go. You know, it was one of the first times we decided not to spend the holiday in the kibbutz. So I woke up in my house really early in the morning, around 6:30 or 7:00, to the sound of alarms. And I didn't pay it much attention. We're accustomed to alarms in Israel, so I tried to continue sleeping, but every few minutes it became clearer and clearer that this was really

Photo: Roman Yanushevsky



Aftermath of attack at Kibbutz Be'eri, October, 7, 2023.

something unusual. An incursion like that never happened, you know. It did happen 50 years ago in the Yom Kippur war, but I didn't have the context for it. I started communicating with Vivian, and I was with her on the phone and in texts through the morning.

It's something that you experience without really internalizing what's happening because it's so unimaginable. And it was unimaginable because for one, you grow up in Israel with the notion that there's a strong army. And on October 7th, they just weren't there. So when we communicated, I thought, you know, okay, something really unusual is happening, but it's going to be over in a minute. In another minute. In another minute. And it wasn't over. The kibbutz was overrun by Hamas fighters. They held on for three days in the kibbutz, but for my mother it was pretty short because she was killed at 11:00 AM on Saturday, on October 7th.

So in the beginning we stayed pretty...you know, we tried to stay cool. We continued joking around. And just trying to collect information, because she was in a house hiding, and she couldn't really understand the scope of the attack. Nobody could. But at some point I talked to her on the phone, and I heard over the line — I heard really loud gunshots and yelling in Arabic outside of a window, and then I realized that it's not going anywhere. It's not resolving itself. And we said goodbye. We parted. I asked her, "What do you want, to continue speaking till the end, or should we...?" So I told her...you know, we parted. "You had a full life. You can go with a feeling of fulfillment, and I love you." And we said goodbye, and after a few minutes she wrote me that they're inside the house. And that was that for her.

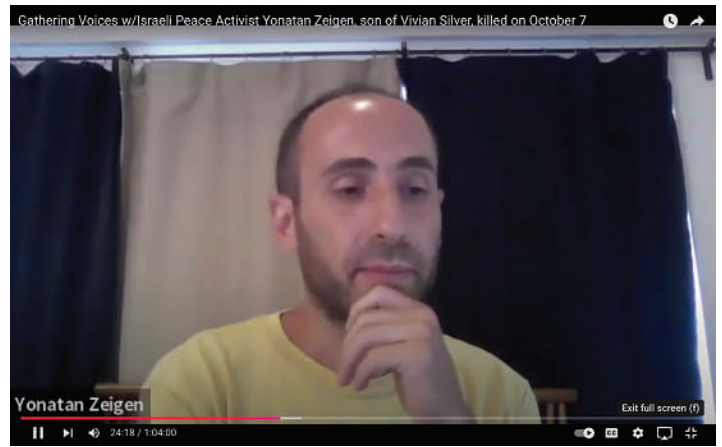
At first I was sure that she was killed. But after awhile, hearing about others that I knew for sure were dead, and not hearing anything formal about her, and understanding that people were being taken into Gaza.... So we started to believe that she was a hostage. And she was considered by the Government as a hostage for 38 days, until they were able to find her remains in her house. Just after 38 days, because it was completely burnt down. Yeah.

**ARIEL:** We'll just take a moment to take that in.

Okay. I'm so sorry. What was it like in the aftermath of October 7th — and at this time you were one of the hostage families, believing that she was.... What was it like to witness the resulting war, the actions of Israel in response? And what were your thoughts in those immediate days or weeks?

**YONATAN:** For me, I had the wishful thinking that this event of October 7th would be a turning point: Israel would realize that no use of force will bring us security, that no wall is high enough and no weapon is sophisticated enough. And that we would, you know, gain control on the border, and then just stop, and immediately start to diplomatically reach a deal for the hostages. Go to the Palestinian Authority, go to Saudi Arabia, go to the United States and say, okay, we understood. We get it now. And that's what we're willing to do in order for the Palestinians to be liberated, and that's what we're willing to do in order for the conflict and the Occupation to end. And then they could have asked — you know, they could have asked for Hamas not to step out of the picture, and I'm pretty sure they would have gotten there. So those were my sentiments right on October 8th. But, as I said, it was wishful thinking.

And we entered just an atrocious war that doesn't end. It's been a year. And we're not gaining anything out of it in terms of our ability



to grow, and we are just a wiping out any remains of morality that we had as a people. And we're just feeding more fundamentalism in the region and just prolonging this catastrophic way of life, what Israelis always call living on the sword. And yeah, that will make feelings towards the world.

**ARIEL:** So I know that you have made a work transition since the passing of your mother, to taking on your mother's legacy and her work. If you could talk about that decision.

**YONATAN:** I was a social worker, and I always had...you know, October 7th didn't change my mind in terms of my political views or the way I analyze the world. But it made me feel the urgency and the responsibility to be invested in change, because being a social worker, which is very meaningful, and did a lot of good for specific people... But in Israel and Palestine, it doesn't matter how much I helped one family or one person when the system itself is broken and where life itself isn't sustainable... It was a before-and-after effect. I couldn't get myself back to just living life and not trying to impact or shape our future here, in order for life to be able to flourish here. Because it can't. As long as the conflict continues, it can't. It can't develop, really.

And so I quit my job. And at first, during the days when she was considered a hostage, I spoke a lot and I started to feel that there's a power in expressing your voice. And after she was identified, I felt a responsibility in utilizing this new sad status of bereavement that sadly grants people a kind of moral authority to speak about our reality here because of the prices we pay. So I felt responsibility in utilizing that. And I became invested and active in peace initiatives: in the Parents' Circle Bereaved Families Forum, which is a joint Israeli-Palestinian organization of bereaved families. And lobbying in the international community for pressuring them to pressure us, because you have such a crucial role. You had a crucial role in the status quo, and now you have a crucial role in changing it. And cooperating with other activists and other organizations in trying to mobilize and re-energize the Left in Israel, and the Peace Camp. Because there's a sense now, there's a feeling, that although we are pretty small in number, we got a surge of energy. There's a stronger energy, a more — I don't know, a more assertive attitude toward change.

**AG:** I've been watching what's been happening in Israel since the execution of the six hostages. And so, the protests that are taking place for a hostage deal: are they only concerned with their own hostages, or is there concern for the tens of thousands of Palestinian lives lost as well? And if you want to, could you talk about what the experience of finding out about that execution was like for you personally.



**YONATAN:** Sadly... I think that we can't generalize, but the majority of the protesters in Israel don't see a clear link between dehumanizing the Palestinians and the fact that there are atrocities being committed on both sides. And yeah, I find myself... It's hard for me to join. I do go to the streets, but it's hard for me to join most of the protests, because they aren't calling enough for the end of the war and for the end of the Occupation and the conflict, and also for bringing the hostages home. And the hostages would have come back if we had ended the war. So when the protests are relating only to the Israeli side of the situation, they are not...they're not morally correct.

And they're not effective, in my mind. And you know it's hard for me to say it, because there's a very strong energy when hundreds of thousands of people are in the streets. But as long as we don't treat the actual problem — which is the Occupation and the conflict — and we treat the symptoms — that are security, that are the hostages — we treat that as the problem; then we can't solve anything. Because you can't solve a symptom without relating to the problem itself.

**ARIEL:** Are you hopeful that a deal may be reached to release the hostages? The remaining, I believe, 101.

**YONATAN:** It depends how you define hope. Because do I think it's possible? Yes. It was possible from the beginning. It was possible to not start the war and receive most of the hostages back, and start instead a new holistic diplomatic process. Do I think that if we make the international community more assertive, then we can see a deal and a change? Yes. But if I'm looking at just our reality in Israel, where our leadership (which is not really the right term for them, because they're only politicians, they're not leaders) but as long as our politicians are driven by self-interest and from their longing for chaos and their dominance, then no, we won't see a deal. The minute we say that the war is over and we are willing to promise this and that to Hamas in order for the hostages to return, then they will return. But I'm more hopeful for the future, for change in the future in our lifetimes, in terms of our ability to reach peace, than I am for the hostages to return alive.

**ARIEL:** That might make you more hopeful than me. So I want to ask you to expand on that. What gives you that hope? And I'll say that sometimes, since October 7th and the war, I think: how will we ever find reconciliation? So please, what gives you hope?

**YONATAN:** When something seems possible, when it's realistic, then you can build hope on it. And I think that it's very, very simple to end the conflict. What we're missing is the will: we just don't want to. But

when something is technically simple and what's missing is just the will to do it, then you can say, okay, I can change a few blocks in this building in order for it to stand. And that makes me hopeful, because I think it's simple and possible.

Another thing is history. You know these kinds of catastrophes create movement in nations, in peoples, in status quos. And so there is movement now. We don't know where it will land, but in the hopes it won't lead to extermination, it will lead to a more positive outcome than there was before... You see it all the time: there are conflicts in the world, and there are resolutions of conflicts in the world. Who would imagine, you know, France and Germany, and in general Europe, being this confederation? Or South Africa, Northern Ireland, Rwanda? People resolve conflicts as much as they go into conflicts.

So we are kind of exhausted. I think we we're in the phase of exhaustion in our conflict. And the next phase will be to resolve it.

**ARIEL:** From your mouth to God's ears, and to the politicians' actions!

**YONATAN:** I mean, that's a necessity. The necessity is the international community's intervention, because we have a blind spot in Israel. As I said before, we don't see the actual problem. In Israel we treat security as the problem, where it is just a symptom. And we can't do an internal process of change if nobody is signaling to us that there is a problem that needs to be fixed — and signaling means conditioning aid. It means sanctions, it means incentives when you do the right things. It means creating a new anchor in the political sphere, of political imagination with prospects for the future — listen, if we just do that, this is what it will look like — and that can give Israeli and Palestinian political actors something to hold on to and to give to their electorates and say, listen, there's a package. Here's the package. This is what we'll gain if we do that. And this is what we'll lose if we continue this.

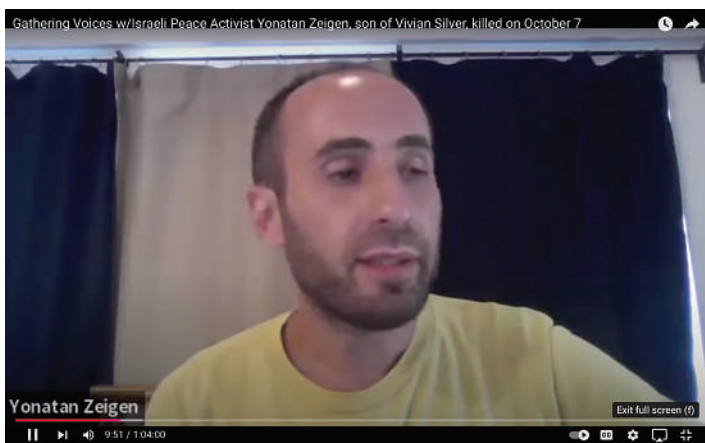
And you know it's not just stopping being passive, a bystander. The international community is actively supporting the conflict by not conditioning aid, by not investing in peacebuilding, by continuing diplomatic relations with no repercussions. That is actively enabling the conflict, and that has to stop in order for us to be able to start an internal process in each of our societies, and together for a shared future.

**ARIEL:** If you've been following the protests and the movements in the United States — specifically, I'm going to limit this to the United States, because in the United States we are so involved in maintaining the conflict — what are your thoughts on what you see happening in the U.S.? And any advice for us here in the U.S. on how we can be most effective?

**YONATAN:** I'm not sure I have advice. I have a request.

**ARIEL:** Please.

**YONATAN:** When we here on the ground look outside to the world, to North America — and when I say we, I mean myself as Israeli Jewish and my Palestinian colleagues — when we look at the rhetoric and the demonstrations, and this polarization into pro-Palestine or pro-Israel, we feel that it's just not constructive. It's unproductive. There needs to be an interfaith effort to rally for peace. Because it doesn't matter how strong you make an argument for Palestinian victimhood. You will be right! But Palestinians will only be liberated if we achieve peace, if we achieve an agreement.



There won't be a mass decolonization of Israel where no Jews are left here. And talking to Jews, there will not be a massive deportation or displacement of Palestinians. You know, there's seven million Palestinians. There's seven million Jews. We are not going anywhere. Our only ability for Israel to be secure and for Palestinians to be liberated is for everybody between the river and the sea to have equal rights of self-determination, human rights: the basic human rights that Palestinians don't enjoy. The only way to achieve that is by working together for a shared future.

And in the end it will entail compensation. It will entail acknowledgment of the power dynamic. But in order to get to that point, we need to be able to work together, to envision a shared future where the two peoples share this land.

So when I look at North America, I get the feeling that they are importing our conflict instead of exporting solutions to us. And when you see young people, ideological people, who are not paying the price, who are not living here and understanding what it means to continue a violent resistance or to continue oppression... I'm talking about both sides. And for them to call on us, on each side, to continue being strong (for the Israelis), or to continue to resist with a violent resistance (for the Palestinians), instead of marching together in a rally for peace with both flags... it's terrible in my mind.

**ARIEL:** Thank you. You articulated so well what I have said so often after this particular war broke out: it's like a football team. People choose a side, and then they're cheering for their team. And this isn't a football game! It's life and death.

And so one of the things that has taken place here in the United States is the framing of the word "Zionist." I'm very critical of Zionism, and I think it's very important to have conversations and analysis and debate and discussion and critique. But it has become a word that's used as a slur. So that if somebody identifies as Zionist, rather than discovering what that means for them... Because I would argue that to be a Zionist is far more complex than it was to, say, be a Confederate in the civil war era here. It's far different from, far more complex than, just declaring it racism.

People ask, isn't it contradictory to be a Zionist and to be pro-peace? Could you talk about that? It's a challenging topic for us these days.

**YONATAN:** I think we can say theoretically now that it is a contradiction. But Zionism as a way of life developed over more than a hundred years. And in the beginning, for Europeans — for European Jews who were horrendously persecuted in Europe — for them to create the Zionist movement, it was a freedom movement. Shortly after, it became a displacement enterprise, but at the base of it, it came to answer an existential threat to an entire nation, an entire people.

I wish they would have gone somewhere else. I wish they would have been welcomed somewhere else. Since I was a teenager I haven't defined myself as Zionist, because I don't believe in the right of the Jewish people to settle specifically in the land of Israel because of the Promised Land. There were people here!

But we need to remember that Zionism wasn't a consensus. It was a movement, and it had streams in it. So there were a lot of people — and they were strong, impactful, sects of Zionism — who thought we would

come to Israel and we would get a piece, we would get something of our own in order to escape persecution. They didn't prevail, and it became a displacement project. It became creating a state, a nation-state for a certain people instead of a different people, instead of the native people who were here. That's an original sin.

And we see that all over the world. Americans originated from the original sin of the Native American genocide. They actually have two, you know — slavery as well. We have colonialism, that changed the face of the planet and created shifts in nations and peoples. So yes, it happened, and it was an original sin.

Do you ask me if we could have gone a different way? If Zionism could have stayed humble... After establishing the state of Israel in '48, it could have behaved like a good winner and turned to equity and turned to justice and created, allowed, enabled, a viable Palestinian state alongside it. Then our original sin would be a stain of the past. It would be a skull. But now it's a bleeding wound, and we are not doing anything in order to heal that wound. It's the opposite for many, many years — since '67. Absolutely, before that, it was a question. But we are deepening the wound. We are expanding the atrocities we have. And so it becomes contradictory to be a Zionist and to seek peace.

**ARIEL:** I will say that it was some FOR members who inspired and taught me to be less black-and-white in thinking about that, and instead to think about how we build a larger tent rather than shutting people out.

**YONATAN:** People who identify themselves as Zionist are not necessarily thinking in the way that I just constructed. Some of them that you meet in North America, they are not bad people. They are holding in their minds the old version, their wishful thinking. So if you create a dialogue instead of canceling someone only because of the word itself, then you can investigate if this is a person who believes in Jewish supremacy or if this is a person who, when he says Zionism, he means something that you can live with, and it's just a misunderstanding of terms. So it's dangerous. I think that's a problem in American discourse in general for a long time now: the inability to stay in complexity, to talk to someone and mutually investigate what we mean when we talk, and what we actually stand for as opposed to what we raise our banners for.

**ARIEL:** So as we come to a close, I want to thank Combatants for Peace, who co-sponsored this conversation, and also Americans for Peace Now and IfNotNow for helping to promote it. We are encouraging donations for a prize in honor and memory of Vivian Silver at [viviansilver.com](http://viviansilver.com).

**YONATAN:** The prize fund is established in order to offer grants to two women winners every year, a Jewish woman and a Palestinian woman who work in the fields of shared society, cross-border peacebuilding, and the promotion of women to leadership positions. So each year there will be a ceremony, and \$15,000 to each winner. And we hope to develop an alumnae network, and to see where it goes.

**ARIEL:** Yonatan, I want to thank you for joining us and for giving me, and I imagine many of us, real hope in a time when it's so needed. Many blessings on your work. And may your mother's memory be for a blessing and for a revolution for peace!

**YONATAN:** Thank you very much. 🙏

# Is Reconciliation Possible?

by Philip J. Bentley

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As it has been for so many others, this time of war between Israel and Hamas has been one of terrible emotional pain for me. That is because my approach to conflict is to want to find a way to peace, and I believe that taking a side is always the wrong way to do that. I cannot take a side because I've always considered myself a Zionist and I have, for over half a century, been a very public advocate for the rights of the Palestinian people, including statehood.

The pursuit of justice usually requires taking a side. The pursuit of peace requires not taking a side. This article is about the pursuit of peace. I want to be clear about that.

My Zionism is that of the secular socialist Founders of Israel. They envisioned the creation of a new kind of post-colonial nation, a model for others as the age of colonialism was ending. A lot went right and a lot went wrong, but that is not our subject here. I am also a lifelong pursuer of justice and peace and have been a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) since 1966. I make no exceptions for any people or nation where it comes to human rights. I want you, dear reader, to know that.

In 1967, when Israel won that war and occupied those territories, some of us activists argued about whether Israel could be a beneficent occupier. My opinion, then and now, is that it is never going to work if a nation governs a people who reject their governance. There has never been such a thing. I believed then and have since seen that governing those territories would poison Israel.

I know there are both Israelis and Palestinians who have sought common cause and reconciliation since before the founding of the state. I feel certain that, despite the insanity taking place, everyone hopes for a life in which we sit under vine and fig tree with none to make us afraid (Micah 4:4). That is what almost everyone everywhere wants, no matter how bad the reality around them is.



Jewish protester at the Israeli embassy in London bearing witness to crimes committed against Palestinians, May 11, 2018.

Others can focus on the rights and wrongs of Israel and Hamas. My interest is in how to have everyone involved win the peace. What happens when the war is over. Eventually it has to end. I also worry about how to heal the terrible divisions among caring people who have taken sides here and created deep animosities.

Our organization calls itself Fellowship of Reconciliation. That suggests to me that this is the work we could do best as activists who are people of faith. How to approach that is the subject of what follows.

It has been pointed out to me that a disparity of power has created this war and will get in the way of reconciliation. That is true. Whether seeking peace or justice, contending sides must meet as equals no matter that there are very real power differentials. It has to be an "as if" frame of mind leading to a real feeling of being peers despite any factors of economics, technology, or military or social power.

In Jewish tradition we see Moses going up a mountain to meet with the Divine Presence. That also means God descended to meet Moses there. In making that covenant with Israel, God set aside omnipotence and submitted to the conditions of a covenant. A covenant is an agreement that binds both parties to an agreement. God agreed to be bound by a covenant "as if" anything could bind an infinitely omnipotent being.

In order for peace to be won, any power differential that exists in fact cannot be brought to bear on any reconciliation or peace covenant. Between Israel and the Palestinian people that is the first real hurdle in making a lasting peace and a lasting just solution to the conflict.

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We are called Children of Abraham because, at the beginning of all three narratives, there is Abraham. Here are three lessons Abraham teaches us in stories from the Torah. Here are three stories from Genesis in which Abraham teaches by example some lessons on warfare.

When Abram, as he was then called, left his family in Syria to settle in Canaan to the south, he was the leader of a camp that engaged in raising sheep. Traveling with him was his nephew Lot, who also owned sheep. Sheep need to graze for their food, but, after some time passed, there were too many sheep and not enough grazing in one place. Here is the account from the Torah of how Abram dealt with this problem

13:5 Now Lot, who was moving about with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. 6 But the land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together. 7 And quarreling arose between Abram's herders and Lot's. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time.

8 So Abram said to Lot, "Let's not have any quarreling between you and

me, or between your herders and mine, for we are close relatives. 9 Is not the whole land before you? Let's part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left." (Genesis 13:5-9)

The first time a dispute over the land arose, Abram, despite being the elder and chief of the camp, decided that the land could be shared. He even gave Lot first choice as to which part of the land. We might think of this as the first partition of the land.

Unfortunately, Lot chose the cities of the plain, which then had rich grazing land and prosperous cities. Lot settled with his wife and daughters in Sodom. The law of Sodom was hostile to strangers and the poor. Ezekiel commented on this almost a millennium and a half later.

49 Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. 50 They were haughty and did detestable things before me. Therefore, I did away with them as you have seen." (Ezekiel 16:49-50)

Abraham, as he was now known, regarded Sodom and the other cities there as evil. He had established a tradition of hospitality, including to the poor and the stranger, in his life. He had no reason to do those cities any good. But then God told Abraham that those cities were about to be utterly destroyed and all of their people killed. Here is Abraham's reaction.

"Far be it from You to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from You! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25)

Such chutzpah! Abraham rebukes God. Then the two of them negotiate what number of righteous people in Sodom would justify saving the city. They got all the way down to ten, but there were not even that many. The cities of the plain were utterly destroyed and that valley become barren, as it is today.

This story reminds me of Jonah, who went to Nineveh to demand atonement for that city's evils. The king ordered a citywide act of repentance and the city was saved. Jonah, since he was a prophet, knew that later Nineveh, the capitol of the Assyrian Empire, would destroy the kingdom of Israel and disperse its ten tribes. He wanted to see Nineveh destroyed before that could happen. When he saw the city was not destroyed, he was very angry and God rebuked him.

"So should I not care about the great city of Nineveh, which has more than 120,000 people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well?" (Jonah 4:11)

Somewhat later Abraham was establishing himself as part of the local society and economy. He had to deal with the local leaders. One of these was Abimelek, king of Gerar. Abraham had made an

agreement with him. Abimelek told Abraham, "The land is before you. Live wherever you like." (Genesis 20:15)

Later Abimelek approached Abraham to make a treaty because he saw this stranger was doing very well on his land.

22 At that time Abimelek and Phicol the commander of his forces said to Abraham, "God is with you in everything you do. 23 Now swear to me here before God that you will not deal falsely with me or my children or my descendants. Show to me and the country where you now reside as a foreigner the same kindness I have shown to you."

24 Abraham said, "I swear it."

25 Then Abraham complained to Abimelek about a well of water that Abimelek's servants had seized. 26 But Abimelek said, "I don't know who has done this. You did not tell me, and I heard about it only today."

27 So Abraham brought sheep and cattle and gave them to Abimelek, and the two men made a treaty. (Genesis 21:22-27)

It seems unlikely that Abimelek did not actually know about the destroyed well. Water, to put it mildly, is a basic resource and wells were often the only source. With Abimelek's denial Abraham just let the matter go.

Here are the three lessons I see in these three stories.

I feel certain that,  
despite the insanity  
taking place,  
everyone hopes  
for a life in which  
we sit under  
vine and fig tree  
with none to  
make us afraid.

1. One way to reconciliation and peace is to find what both sides in a conflict want or need, and then find a way for both to have enough for there to be no reason for further conflict.
2. Those with the power to destroy must consider the humanity on the other side. Many people "do not know their right hand from their left," but that does not mean they deserve to suffer the horrors of war and destruction. Even those in places regarded as evil are human beings and that should be remembered. The laws of warfare in the Abrahamic faiths forbid making war on noncombatants.
3. Better a peace based on lies than a war based on truths. I do not remember where I saw this, but here is a passage from rabbinic literature that explains it.

Rabbi Simeon said: In the hour when God was about to create Adam, the angels were divided into different groups.... Love said, "Let him be created, and he will do loving deeds." But Truth said, "Let him not be created because he will be all deceit." Righteousness said, "Let him be created because he will do righteous deeds." Peace said, "Let him not be created because he will be all quarrelsomeness and discord." What did God do? He seized hold of Truth and cast it to the earth. (Genesis Rabbah Bereishit 8:5)

It should be noted that there is a disparity of power in each of these stories. Abram sets that aside for Lot. God sets it aside to bargain with Abraham. Abimelek sets it aside for the sake of making a treaty. One who is truly strong can do this.

### 32

How does one follow a path to reconciliation? There are many examples to serve as models, even in times like these. In this section I will propose two possible programs for the Fellowship of Reconciliation based on these models. The first is about engaging with Israel and the Palestinians. The second is about seeking reconciliation among those who have taken sides here and engendered bitter conflict.

The very best model was Interns for Peace, created and led by Rabbi Bruce Cohen, an American rabbi, and Farhat Agbaria, an Israeli Arab. I am proud to have served on their board. Their work began bringing together Jews and Arabs in neighboring villages in Israel for communal projects and social events. The programs were run by paid interns who had to be fluent in both Hebrew and Arabic and who were both Jews and Arabs. This was not like our Peace Corps with Americans going to poor places to provide help: this was projects run by equals. Eventually Interns for Peace had a chapter in the West Bank and did work in Gaza. They developed programs funded by the Israeli government.

There are many organizations among Palestinians and Israelis that meet and work as equals seeking reconciliation. This suggests something that FOR could do over there that would potentially make steps toward reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians. The International FOR (IFOR) has a presence there and its current President is Zoughbi al Zoughbi, a Bethlehem Christian who has been doing this work for decades. He could provide ways for FOR-USA to support those organizations and projects.

Zoughbi created a project based on Arab traditions of reconciliation called Wi'am: The Palestinian Conflict Transformation Center. Part of their work is a mediation program called Sulha. This is based on a mediation practice that goes back to the beginnings of Islam. According to Wi'am's literature:

Arab tradition holds "Nobody can carry blood, it is so heavy. Even the earth cannot absorb [it]... It will remain a stain" (Jabour, 1966). Conflicts leave a "stain" on the community. Once a wrong is committed, that conflict must be resolved in order for the community to continue to thrive. Therefore, in order to prevent acts of revenge and disastrous feuds, Wi'am employs Sulha as a means of reconciling conflicts.

Sulha is employed on every level from individual disputes to communal. On a national level it might be like the Truth and Reconciliation hearings in South Africa. Of course, we are a long way from such a thing actually happening in Israel/Palestine. But we can hope.

FOR could also do something I have not seen anyone else doing. There is so much bitterness among those who have taken sides on the issues of this war in Israel, Gaza, and now (as I write this) in Lebanon. What I see is people who want the war to end. They are horrified by it, but they place blame and they place responsibility on one side or the other. Those who want peace should also think about peace among those of us who value peace. There is little we can



Handala, cartoon symbol of Palestinians, and Srulik, cartoon symbol of Israelis, on a wall in Tel Aviv.

actually achieve where it comes to the war itself, but we should not be tearing ourselves apart here like this.

There are several projects and organizations that FOR could use as models or work with to create programs on campus, in houses of worship, in community organizations, and more. They involve active listening, which is a discipline most of us do not practice easily; it means listening without judgment. That is a way of finding common ground. There will not be agreement on all things, but the presence of all the various opinions represents a community of concern. Models for such programs include Braver Angels and Compassionate Listening. The practice is also used in business, and there are many programs to provide training in these skills. FOR could take up this approach in many of its projects, because so many are about conflicts. I recommend exploring the idea of adopting such a program to be applied to controversy within the peace movement, but also to the great work FOR has always engaged in.

"God gave us two ears and only one mouth, so we can listen twice as much as we speak." 🐦



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London protester against Israeli violence, May 11, 2018.

Photo: Alisdair Hickson, Flickr cc

# Nonviolence FOR ISRAEL

by Jonathan Kuttab

It is common in progressive circles to urge Palestinians to use nonviolence to pursue their national aims of liberation, freedom, and self-determination. Commentators ask, “Where is the Palestinian Gandhi? Why don’t Palestinians follow the teachings of Martin Luther King, Jr. and seek freedom through nonviolent means?”

I myself am a firm believer in nonviolence, and have advocated its use by my fellow Palestinians. But in fact, it can be argued that most of the Palestinian struggle has been marked by nonviolence all along — from strikes, protests, appeals to the United Nations and the international community, organizing alternative structures, self-reliance, boycotts, calls for divestment and international sanctions, and the ongoing attempts to obtain international recognition and acceptance.

In this article, however, I would like to address the Israeli side of the equation, and argue that Israelis also should seriously consider nonviolence as a national strategy. They should cease their reliance on force to achieve their political goals and to obtain the security they are convinced can only come through overwhelming military superiority and deterrence.

This argument is rarely heard, because the state of Israel from its very inception has believed in violence and overwhelming power as its sole means of acceptance and survival. And it may well be true that the Zionist movement’s idea of creating a Jewish state on land that was already fully populated by a large majority of Arabs could not have been achieved without force and violence. The indigenous residents had to be displaced in 1948 through the Nakba, their villages erased, and their right of return denied as an existential threat to the very existence of a Jewish state. Israel’s continued existence as a Jewish-dominated state may well require the subjugation and continued displacement of Palestinians, which can only be achieved through violence. This line of reasoning, of course, challenges the very legitimacy of Israel and of the Zionist movement, and suggests that like slavery, apartheid, and colonialism, such a nation can only exist through violence and perpetual oppression. After all, violence is to be found not only in instruments of war and of killing, but also in structures, arrangements, doctrines, and organizations that perpetuate injustice and inequality.

That is not my intention in this article.

Whatever the history or ideology that led to the current situation, it is clear that today, through force of arms, the state of Israel controls the entire area of historic Palestine and endeavors to rule it on behalf of Jews, and in their interest. Within those borders today, over seven million non-Jews (Palestinians) exist and struggle for their freedom. It is also true that seven million Jewish Israelis now live in the same land and depend for security on their Jewish state. The majority think that this can only be achieved through military power

and violence — by forcing Palestinians to accept the loss of their homeland and the reality that they can only live there, if at all, at the mercy and behest of the Jewish population who control all the levers of power in the state.

To achieve their goal of a state as Jewish as France is French, and to withstand and defeat Palestinian and Arab resistance, Israel has developed one of the most militarized societies in the world. It has developed nuclear weapons not subject to international inspection or controls, weapons of mass destruction, and a robust military industry that produces and also exports military equipment and is on the cutting edge of military technology in such fields as precision weapons, drones, cyber-technology, and the like. It is reputed to be sixth in the world in military exports, and it seems to have unfettered access to the technology of the United States, which it uses both in its own defense industry and in its weapons sales. Furthermore, it uses its relationship with the United States, and the West in general, to obtain effective exemption from the requirements of international law and principles in its dealings with the Palestinians under its control.

Its latest and most sophisticated weaponry was the 3-D wall it had constructed around the Palestinians living in the Gaza strip, two-thirds of whom are refugees to begin with. This wall comes complete with underground sensors as well as above-ground and aerial detection and surveillance systems, together with a highly innovative complex of automatic machine guns called Roe-Yoreh (“to see, to shoot”) that has kept Gazans locked into a tight siege for over 16 years, leading Gaza to be labeled the world’s largest open-air prison. This system of controls also included, in addition to the wall, a suffocating blockade whereby all persons and materials entering the Gaza strip and leaving it are subjected to a regime of intense scrutiny, and a growing list of “prohibited materials” included glass, chocolates, pencils, pasta (only one form was allowed) and on and on. Israel controlled the entry of fuel and food. Its control over the lives of Gazans was total. Gazans depended on Israel for work permits; travel permits; currency; fuel for electricity, water desalination, and sewage treatment; communications; and all contacts with the outside world. Israel used this power to regulate, control, and dominate the lives of Palestinians in Gaza in a much more severe fashion than it does in the West Bank and Israel itself.

The events of October 7, 2023 totally shattered this conception of security, and this worldview. Palestinian resistance fighters, with basic, homemade, hand-held weapons, massively attacked the surrounding wall and breached its defenses in over 40 points simultaneously. They attacked and captured a number of army bases, including the command headquarters of Israel’s Gaza Brigade, killing over 340 soldiers and capturing over 40 others to be traded for Palestinian prisoners. They also committed crimes by attacking civilian villages and kibbutzim and a music festival, killing over 800

civilians and taking another 150 civilian hostages. I do not want to glorify this military accomplishment, or to excuse the killing or taking hostage of civilians in any way. My point is that with every possible advantage on its side, and with massive and sophisticated restrictions at every level, Israel could not permanently control the Palestinian population, or prevent their rising in rebellion and turning their lives into hell.

Unfortunately, this lesson of October 7 — that military might alone is not sufficient — has not been learned. Instead, most Israelis, with tacit or explicit support from the Western world, have doubled down on their reliance on violence and weapons, and set out on a horrendous campaign of vengeance and destruction, vowing to crush and eliminate Hamas, and indeed to destroy all of Gaza. They started by blocking water, fuel, and food, and using enormous amounts of bombing and destruction, which caused the International Court of Justice to call their response a “plausible genocide” and the International Criminal Court to issue warrants to arrest Israeli leaders as war criminals. More bombs have been dropped on one tiny territory than were dropped in all of WWII.

Yet even after many months of relentless bombing, the physical destruction of 85% of all buildings in Gaza, and the killing of tens of thousands of Palestinians, most of whom are women and children, the resistance somehow continues to fight, and the leaders of the army are saying now that it is impossible for them to destroy Hamas or retrieve their hostages by force alone. The citizens of Israel are losing confidence in their army and are not certain they can ever feel safe and secure again; they are wondering if they can ever be sure that October 7 will not occur again. Similarly, in the North, Israeli communities are afraid that Hizbullah may attack them and have evacuated large parts of the Galilee, waiting for the army to complete another massive war there to push Hizbullah away from the border so that they can have security.

This tragic situation creates an opportunity for Israelis to reconsider whether war, violence, and an ever stronger and more sophisticated army can ever provide them with peace and security, or whether seeking peace and the path of nonviolence can perhaps offer them a better alternative.

I think it is time for the peace community not only to call for a ceasefire and an end to the horrendous bloodshed in Gaza, but also to call on all sides, including Israel, to consider alternatives to war and violence. Violence is simply not the answer, and will never bring Israelis the peace or security they desire.

If Israelis ever seriously abandon their reliance on weapons and begin to consider the possibilities of peace and nonviolence, they may well ask us, what would this look like? And how can nonviolence give them the security they cannot get with weapons?

The answer would be to start negotiating seriously with Palestinians, not on the basis of trying to dictate their terms by force, but of truly considering the interests of both sides, thereby removing the cause of enmity and hatred.

This would mean, for starters, reexamining their own goals, ideology, and policies, and making the necessary changes to eliminate those aspects that are based on violence, superiority, domination, and discrimination.

Some of my friends think that this would mean the end of Zionism

and of the Jewish state. I tell them that if their Zionism requires the subjugation of Palestinians and denying them their national rights, then that is true. If, however, they can imagine a solution that allows them to live their Jewish lives, build up their culture and religion, without dominating or excluding Palestinians, then that would be the best solution.

One compromise, the two-state solution, has been preempted by Israel’s settlement policies and the racist laws that have been enacted to assure the “Jewishness” of the state. The present government has made it clear that they will never allow a Palestinian state in any case. That leaves only the option of a one-state solution. The question is whether that solution would be based on equality or Jewish domination — which means apartheid.

I myself have tried to envision a solution that would allow both Zionism and Palestinian Nationalism to exist in a single state that provides each community with everything it wants, except for exclusivity (the book is *Beyond the Two State Solution*). This is not the only option available, but it shows that once each side is willing to understand and accept the Other within its own vision of the future, it is possible to imagine a joint future for both groups. It also requires tweaking our ideologies to include, and not exclude, the other group.

Once the interest of the Other is taken into consideration, there is no need to fight anymore, and therefore no need for violence. Security then comes not from overwhelming superior power, but from the acceptance and legitimization given by the other side, and joint interests.

Of course there will be problems to resolve, but once we give up the idea of exclusivity, solutions can be found, and peaceful methods for resolving differences can be worked out.

There are enough people on both sides who think only of killing and destroying and denying the other side. Those people necessarily will seek violent and military solutions (even if they hide them under the heading of “defense”). We need to say it loud and clear: *violence is not the answer*, and it will never give us what it promises. Neither security nor liberation can be achieved by violence. Nonviolence is the only path.

But this is something that must apply to both sides, not only to the weaker side. Israelis need to hear this message, and it is a hopeful message. Especially now when the events of October 7, and the subsequent and ongoing fighting, have clearly shown that violence does not and cannot work, and that it only provides for more suffering, more hatred, and worse violence down the line. 🙏



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Installation, painting, and photo: Thierry Ehrmann, Flickr, cc

# Pacifism and Nonviolence Yesterday: WITNESSES FROM THE PAST

Painted portrait of Martin Luther King at the Abode of Chaos, Saint-Romain-au-Mont-d'Or, France.

# A.J. MUSTE'S

## *Ethics for Change*

by Peter Muste

**A**braham Johannes (A.J.) Muste was born in 1885 in Zierikzee, the Netherlands, and died in 1967 in New York City. He had three children and eight grandchildren, of whom I am one. He was a seminal figure in the labor, peace, and civil rights movements of the 20th century, and was Executive Secretary of the Fellowship of Reconciliation from 1940 to 1953. Yet very few, outside of a small circle, have ever heard of him, even within FOR. Why is that? And, more importantly, why should we care?

The reasons for his current anonymity are many, but most of them are the result of a deliberate de-emphasizing of his own role in the work he was doing. He discouraged any wider recognition during his own lifetime. He, and many others who were committed to economic justice and nonviolence in his time, were leery of the “cult of personality” that grew up around Marx and his followers, and saw the pitfalls of the moral superiority some laid claim to. They wanted to avoid the kind of exceptionalist thinking that many “good” people working for various causes used to justify morally questionable actions, relying instead on constant reflection, their own consciences, and trying desperately to practice what they preached.



A.J. Muste

After his death, a group of friends and co-workers founded an organization in his name, the A.J. Muste Memorial Institute, now the A.J. Muste Foundation for Peace and Justice. It is primarily through my participation on the board of that organization that I became familiar with his work and legacy; to me, as a child, he was my grandfather, not a public figure. He died when I was an adolescent and only beginning to become aware of his work. I mention this, more than anything, as evidence of the eschewing of celebrity that was very much part of his personality. (My father grew up surrounded by people who called A.J. a saint, but the family, including A.J., wanted our relationship to him to be relatively free from that overlay.) So in discussing A.J., I'm much more a student than an expert.

My purpose here is not to resurrect A.J.'s image or legacy. However because of his avoidance of personal celebrity, some of his thinking and philosophy that I believe can be useful in today's world may not be present in the predominant discourse on the Left. I would like to explore some of those ideas and how they could have positive impact in the moment, both for myself as a person and for others who identify with the causes of peace, social and economic justice, and human rights.

A.J. considered himself a Christian and a Gandhian. He described his position more eloquently than I could, but I don't think he'd argue with that description. He was raised in the Dutch Reformed church, and eventually joined the Society of Friends. To him, being a Christian meant trying to follow the teachings of Jesus as honestly and fully as possible. He was inspired by Gandhi's use of nonviolent direct action and his ability to use moral argument in practical ways. This mix of high moral standards and hard-headed pragmatism was a hallmark of A.J.'s approach to the work. While A.J.'s organizational affiliations and the causes he focused on shifted over the course of his life, he always recognized that there could be no meaningful peace without economic and social justice, and that achieving economic gains through violent means could not reconcile the actual causes of the disparity being addressed. This guided him to the Gandhian approach of working to “aggressively expose the villainy of their foes” while being able to “confront with love those who deserve to be hated” in the course of vigorously pursuing social and economic justice.

There's a lot to unpack in that apparent dichotomy, but I think it's a valuable combination of ideas, and the apparent tension between them shaped how he approached his work. To me, it means actively engaging with and disrupting the systems and policies of war and injustice while treating the individuals we engage with — both those we work with and those who oppose us — as fully human, not as “monsters,” “fools,” or “other.” Perhaps the most telling example of

Jim Forrest, Flickr, CC

this from his life is when he famously stood up during a Friends' meeting in 1940 and said, "If I can't love Hitler, I can't love at all." At the time, many of his opponents took this as a sign of his treachery, but that completely misreads his sentiment. I believe he was meditating on the idea of the worst human being he could think of, and demanding that he apply the idea of Christian love to that person. To many of us, this kind of absolutism feels at best uncomfortable and perhaps impractical. But that is what he demanded of himself, and what I think he would ask of us. Otherwise, he believed, he would be guilty of hypocrisy.

Which brings me to another important point: walking our talk, both as individuals and as organizations. In his essay "Sketches for an Autobiography," A.J. wrote: "I was brought up... to abhor the sham that allows a man to preach what he does not try desperately to practice." This has long been a reminder to me to try to align my behavior to what I'm asking of others, no matter how difficult. So, for example, when I think about the "worst" people in the world today, who are responsible for so much suffering, violence, and inequality, it means that I have to try to treat their followers with the same respect and humanity as I would my own family.

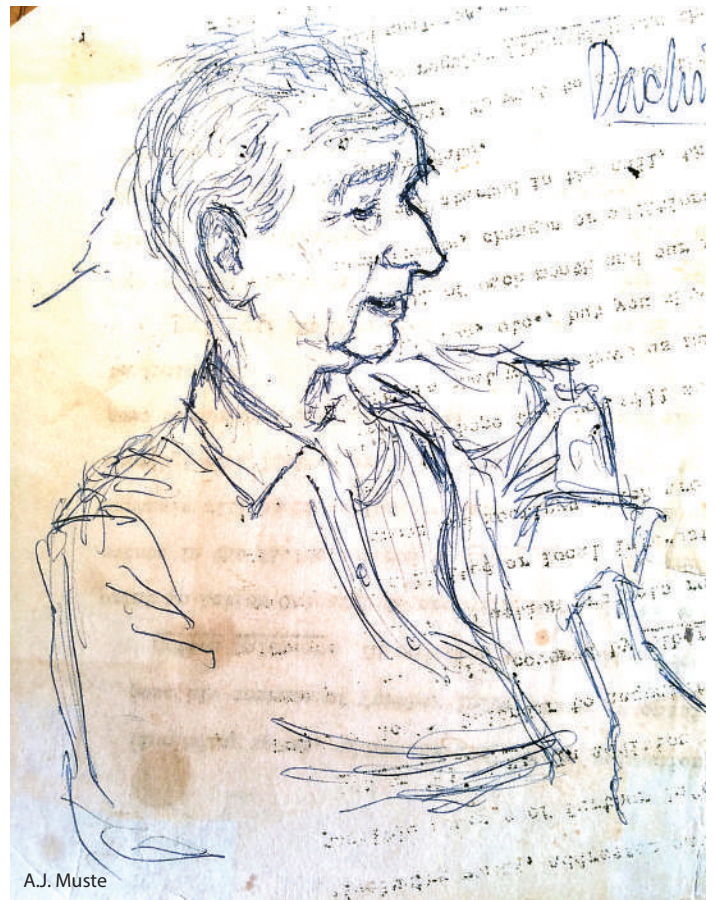
Is this easy? Of course not. Is it always possible? Not for me. But without that effort, and vigilant reflection on it, no dialogue is possible. And without dialogue there can be no hope of real change; there is only endless conflict. As A.J. put it in "What the Bible Teaches About Freedom":

We cannot have it both ways. Either there is a fundamental kinship among all people...or there is not. If there is not, and we are not all fundamentally the same breed, then there can never be any real understanding among people...if people are not members of one family...then the pattern of human society will always be that of domination-subordination. There will always be some top dogs and many underdogs.

A.J. applied that in a specifically Christian context, but I believe it relates to almost any moral or religious code in practice today. A high moral standard, indeed.

That said, high moral standards can give rise to the dangers of moral smugness and exceptionalist thinking. A wide range of excuses get used by individuals, organizations, corporations, and governments to justify actions that may be morally questionable or worse. The argument that "we're in the right, so whatever we do to achieve those goals is ultimately okay" didn't fly with A.J. Not only does the end never justify the means, it is foolish to pretend that the means used don't directly impact the actual outcomes of our actions. Many, if not all, of the worst atrocities in recorded history have been the result of people creating repressive or genocidal conditions in response to their own perceived oppression that they are addressing through brutal means, justified by the villainy of their opponents.

I believe that A.J. would have us reflect on our own actions — both as individuals and as organizations working toward peace and justice — using that lens. If, for example, we depict Christian nationalists as ignorant fools (as I've seen in many instances), we're not changing minds or encouraging dialogue, we're only encouraging contempt and justifying their critique of stupid "woke" folks. But beyond that, when we refuse to work toward specific goals with others whose



personal or organizational agenda doesn't align perfectly with ours, we lose the opportunity to have meaningful impact. Insistence on orthodoxy builds barriers, not effective coalitions.

And here is another key point: the paramount importance of building coalitions. This is something that A.J. was famous for, and was the result of his willingness to genuinely listen to the concerns and positions of others. He looked for ways to collaborate with them rather than simply critique their positions or priorities. It seems to me that the Left tends to struggle with that today, and I think this can be seen clearly in the disconnect between the rhetoric of much of today's Left and the working class, which is well documented. It's worth noting that A.J. first came to public attention for his work with the labor movement, during the Lawrence, Massachusetts textile workers strike of 1918-19. Many other leaders of nonviolent peace and social justice movements also began their public careers with economic and labor issues, including such notables as Gandhi and Dr. King. This is no accident. The kind of scale and success that we associate with those people almost always involves marrying social and cultural issues to economic ones. To put it bluntly, there is no real political power without economic power. I would go further, and suggest that success in making broad policy change in cultural or political issues is nearly always tied to shared economic concerns.

Tying cultural and social issues to economic ones, and aligning with the concerns of the working class is, to me, one of the most important challenges that those doing peace and social justice work today face, and it's something A.J. excelled at. As I read accounts of success stories among labor, climate justice, peace, or other groups, I find common threads that bring me back to A.J.'s "Gandhian"

approach, and the importance of applying the adage “think globally, act locally.” Those include the ability of organizations to make room for each other’s concerns, collaborating around where their interests overlap while maintaining their individual identities. The specific tactics that are chosen vary widely, and are often creative and tied to local and/or demographic realities. They also tend to focus on very specific demands, whether geographically local or aligned around an industry (think UAW or Starbucks organizing) or a narrow issue, like the efforts to get constitutional amendments regarding abortion rights on the ballot in “red” states.

While A.J. worked against armed conflict and its causes throughout most of his adult life, the organizations and campaigns he associated with tended to be focused on specific policies or situations while remaining connected to broader movements. And while none of them would reference A.J. directly, all of those success stories I mentioned feature tactics that are inherently nonviolent.

“But the stakes are so high! We can’t afford to lose!” Variations on that objection have been around since before nonviolent action was introduced into political conflict. I believe that A.J.’s response to that would be that, once we choose violence, we’ve already lost. The adage (probably mistakenly) attributed to Gandhi, “An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind” comes to mind; we can’t realistically expect to end violence through violence. But beyond that, I think A.J. would suggest that the mindset that allows that kind of thinking ultimately denies the humanity of our opponents. To continue the quotation from A.J. above:

And then Hitler and all the imperialists and all the exploiters and exponents of racism are right, and the idea of a democratic society is bunk, as they say it is.

There is a tension here that I think is real, and that requires constant reflection and navigation. A.J. was all for disrupting the systems and structures of oppression, inequality, and war. But he refused to do that in ways that brought physical danger or trauma to those he opposed. The power of direct nonviolence, economic leverage, and large numbers of people united around a shared objective were the basic tools, and he encouraged experimentation and creativity in how to apply them. But doing that is often tricky in practice. Where are the lines? What exactly is “violence”? Many early pacifists felt that A.J.’s tactics crossed that line. These, and many other questions, face those who are working for peace and justice, and don’t go away.

Ultimately the individual conscience has to make those decisions. A.J. believed that fervently, and practiced it in ways that are well documented. In exploring ways to think about that tension, there is a passage that I found revealing in David Brooks’ book *The Road to Character*, citing David Chappell’s *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow*. He discusses Chappell’s description of the differences between the “Northern” and “Southern” components

We cannot  
have it both ways.  
Either there is a  
fundamental kinship  
among all people...  
or there is not.

of the civil rights movement, and his characterization of the “Southern” approach (attributed to MLK, A. Philip Randolph, and Bayard Rustin, among others) struck me as relating to A.J. He describes it as a “prophetic, biblical” tradition that took a relatively pessimistic view of humanity, “a more austere view of their struggle... If there was to be any progress, it was necessary not just to be engaged, one had to surrender utterly to the movement at the

cost of one’s own happiness and fulfillment, and possibly one’s life.”

Now, I’m not suggesting that A.J. lived the life of a monastic, or didn’t seek personal fulfillment along with political and economic change. But he and others in that camp spoke and wrote repeatedly about the “sacrifice” that was required by nonviolent action. And I think part of what one needs to “sacrifice” is the sense of exceptionalism or moral superiority that allows us to ignore our own ethical principles in pursuit of a noble goal. If something is acceptable for you or an organization to do, then it must be acceptable for everyone, including those who oppose you in a conflict. I think, sometimes, that we forget this. It is a difficult thing to reflect on, and even more difficult to live. But I think it’s one of the lessons that A.J. would remind us of today. And I also believe it’s something that can truly help those who are fighting for peace, justice of all kinds, and a better world as they think about their work, how to go about it, and what can actually achieve the ends that we desire.

But this gets tricky for me. I tend to buy into the adage that unasked-for advice is always criticism, so I need to position that as advice to myself. If it resonates with you, that’s great, although I’m well aware that everyone’s circumstances are different. But to me, if I give in to exceptionalist rationalization on a personal or organizational level, I’ve already lost in the most important ways.

I’ve tried here to suggest ways that A.J.’s thinking and approach might be of use in today’s world, which is different from his in many ways, and not so different in others. If you’re interested in knowing more about his life and work, I’d suggest either of the excellent biographies *Abraham Went Out* by Jo Ann Ooiman Robinson or *American Gandhi* by Leilah Danielson. There is also a collection of his essays edited by Nat Hentoff. Numerous online archives of his writing are available. 🐦



**Peter Muste** is one of A.J. Muste’s eight grandchildren. He is a former board chair of the A.J. Muste Foundation for Peace and Justice (originally the A.J. Muste Memorial Institute) and currently serves on the organization’s advisory committee. He lives with his family in New York’s Hudson Valley, and teaches at a large urban public high school as well as with the Bard College Prison Initiative.

# ANDRÉ TROCMÉ: Waging War with the Weapons of the Spirit

by Patrick Henry & Mary Anne O'Neil

Greatly influenced by the Quakers and the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), André Trocmé fought the Nazis nonviolently for four and a half years during the German Occupation of France (1940-1944). He succeeded beyond all possible expectations as the prime mover of a rescue mission that saved the lives of no fewer than 2,000 Jewish people, mostly children. He then went on to serve for ten years in Versailles as the European Secretary of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR).

How this bashful, unassured young man, born into a conservative, nationalistic, and militaristic family, managed to free himself from his stifling bourgeois roots is a story worth telling.

André was 13 years old when World War I began. He considered himself a “young patriot,” given over to “uncomplicated nationalism.” (All references in this article are to our forthcoming translation, from Plough Books, of André Trocmé’s *Mémoires* — see note below.) But the war was waged in his backyard. The Germans occupied his city, Saint-Quentin, and German soldiers lived in the family mansion. The sounds of battle could be heard in the background. André witnessed the treatment of starving Russian prisoners of war, and during the Battle of the Somme, viewed the mutilated bodies of living German soldiers returning from the front.

One day, one of the German soldiers living in his home told him that he didn’t carry a gun because he was a Christian and God had revealed that “A Christian must not kill, ever.” André found himself “face to face with what [he] would later call a ‘conscientious objector.’ All at once, [his] nationalism and militarism collapsed.”

After the war, Trocmé began theological studies in Paris. FOR had recently been founded (1914) and Trocmé met Oliver Dryer, then the Secretary General of the International FOR. Dryer told him that “Many of us have gone to prison rather than kill in the war.” While most of his classmates in theology “heartily condemned conscientious objection,” Trocmé “had been born again. I was on my way. The clear principles [of FOR] based on the Gospels satisfied my desire for an absolute.”



André and Magda Trocmé

But many of our paths are indirect. André, who claimed to be a “Christian pacifist” but not yet a “social Christian,” decided to give up his military deferment and do two years of service “to gain knowledge of human nature.” He refused promotion to corporal, however, telling his colonel: “I have sworn never to kill. Thus, I can’t teach others to kill.” When his colonel chastised him for not stating these views when he entered the army, Trocmé, “a bit cowardly,” accepted the promotion, but soon got himself transferred out of the infantry into the Geographic Service. He went on to serve 18 months in Morocco, but he left his rifle in the company’s arms depot in Rabat, making it impossible for him to kill anyone when the men went out into unsubdued back country.

After his studies were completed, Trocmé began his pastoral ministry as a social Christian pastor working with miners in the north of France in Maubeuge and Sin-le-Noble. He believed that the role of the church was “to fight for social justice.” Since he spoke German, he also preached about pacifism and conscientious objection in Germany in 1932, with Nazi youth in the audiences. When, in 1934, he decided to look for another parish (because his children were always sick in these mining areas), he ran into trouble because of being a conscientious objector. It cost him two positions, one in France and one in Switzerland.

A pastor in the Reformed Church at that time could be a conscientious objector, but had to submit a commitment in writing “not to campaign for conscientious objection.” Such a pastor was forbidden “to communicate his pacifist convictions to anyone, especially young people.” André was unwilling “to silence [his] conviction that war and homicide are contrary to the will of God.” This was at a time in France when conscientious objectors were subject to renewable prison sentences for refusing military service. André’s pastor friends Philippe Vernier, Pierre Vernier, Jacques Martin, and Henri Roser would all serve such sentences.

André was nonetheless accepted in Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, a backwater parish on the Plateau Vivarais-Lignon in south-central France, where he and his wife Magda became leaders in the mission to save Jewish people. He tried unsuccessfully to become

an ambulance driver for the International Red Cross. Since he was still eligible to be drafted by his country, the Red Cross could not accept him. Because he had four children, however, he was never called up for further military duty. André and Magda spent 17 years in Le Chambon-sur-Lignon where, despite the most challenging events, they were steadfast in their commitment to pacifism and conscientious objection. André spoke out against the war with Germany and later against collaboration with the Germans.

On June 23, 1940, the day after the Franco-German Armistice was signed, in what was more than likely the first public protest against collaboration with the Germans, André Trocmé delivered the now-famous pronouncement, authored with his co-pastor, Edouard Theis, in their small church in Le Chambon-sur-Lignon. In it, he asserted: “We will resist whenever our adversaries demand that we act in ways opposed to Gospel teaching...But, as Christians, it is our duty to arm ourselves with the weapons of the Spirit.”

Trocmé’s nonviolent resistance began when he went to the south of France and offered himself as a worker in one of the internment camps where foreign Jews were being held. He met with Quaker representative Burns Chalmers and FOR leaders John Nevin Sayre and A.J. Muste. They convinced him that the best thing he could do was to shelter the children they could get out of the camps in his parish’s rural countryside. A miraculous mission was born, and it would be financed by the Quakers and FOR. So many people were involved in the rescue operation that Yad Vashem, The World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem, named the village itself “Righteous” — along with Nieuwlande in Holland, one of only two places in the world so honored. Trocmé claimed that those in the area who were part of the rescue mission “refused to obey for reasons of conscience” and were “no less conscientious objectors than those who preferred prison to murder.” As Trocmé explains in his memoirs, “We found a way of resisting Nazism without killing human beings in daily obedience to the Gospel of Peace.”

The Vichy police and the Gestapo were on Trocmé’s trail. They were aware of his clandestine efforts to shelter Jews. He was eventually arrested and sent to a prison camp. Fortunately, he was released just before all the other inmates were deported to the death camps. Soon after his release, he learned that there was a price on his head. Church leaders persuaded him to go into hiding, where he remained from July 1943 until June 1944, when the liberation of France began.

After the war, André and Magda stayed in Le Chambon-sur-Lignon. Nevin Sayre and Muste arranged talks abroad for André, so that he could raise funds to support the École Nouvelle Cévenole that he and Edouard Theis had founded in 1938. This school was an international, coeducational Christian school based on pacifism and nonviolence; it continued teaching until 2014. In the spring of 1946, Trocmé participated in the first international meeting of the FOR in Stockholm. In 1947, he became half-time pastor in Le Chambon-sur-Lignon and part-time European Secretary of IFOR.

In 1950, André and Magda left Le Chambon-sur-Lignon and established FOR’s “House of Reconciliation” in Versailles. They managed that facility for the next ten years. There they welcomed large groups (as large as 40-45 people) and many similarly sized youth groups who were offered food and lodging and informal discussions on peace, nonviolence, and conscientious objection. Their work here brought many new members to the growing FOR.

During those ten years André and Magda became globetrotters, spreading FOR’s gospel of peace, nonviolence, and conscientious objection. In 1957, with the help of the Mennonites, they founded The Association of Eirene, an international Christian service for peace, in Morocco. In 1958, they attended the Hiroshima and Nagasaki Conference to speak out against the development of the H-Bomb. They vociferously opposed the war in Algeria and campaigned for Algerian independence. André was proposed twice for the Nobel Peace Prize, in 1950 and 1955.

André retired from FOR in 1959 and served as pastor of Saint-Gervais Church in Geneva from 1960-1969. He was personally named Righteous Among the Nations by the Holocaust Center in Jerusalem shortly before his death in 1971.

André Trocmé had always praised FOR. But three years before his death, he returned to his long-abandoned memoirs to inform his family (the intended audience for this manuscript) of how deep the connection was. “There’s a certain practical aspect to my ministry,” he writes, “That’s why I have treasured my contacts with the FOR. There I discovered the only spring of living waters in this world that satisfied my thirst.”

What had he learned by “pitching [his] tent” with FOR?

That we must completely revise religious education. We must teach people that conformity and fear are the most serious sins... That non-conformity for reasons of conscience is the first duty of Christ’s followers... That the next most serious sins are complicity with injustice, exploitation, humiliation of others, [and] silence in the face of shameful actions by our society... That when human beings liberate themselves from the “what will others say about me” syndrome to champion the rights of those without voices, they will be ready to practice the other Christian virtues of purity, goodness, patience, and forgiveness [and will experience] the Gospel’s liberating power.

Trocmé lifts up a number of FOR members in his memoirs. “They became my models,” he said. “They were my brothers and sisters.” Then he asked, “What do they have in common?” His response: “Faith in the possibility of goodness on earth.”



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**Mary Anne O’Neil** is professor emerita of French at Whitman College. She is the author of *From Babel to Pentecost: the Poetry of Pierre Emmanuel* and *Three Centuries of Girls’ Education: Regulations of the Ursuline Nuns of the Congregation of Paris*. Most recently, she has translated, with her husband Patrick Henry, the memoirs of the French pacifist minister, André Trocmé.

All quotations in this article are from the authors’ translation of André Trocmé *Memoires* (Geneva: Labor & Fides, 2020) which will appear as *The Memoirs of André Trocmé: The Man Who Couldn’t Help Saving Jews*. It will be published by Plough Books in the fall of 2025.

# The Man who Escaped the Cross

by James M. Lawson, Jr.

*In deference to contemporary sensitivities, a racial slur once in all-too-common use has been redacted here. — Editor*

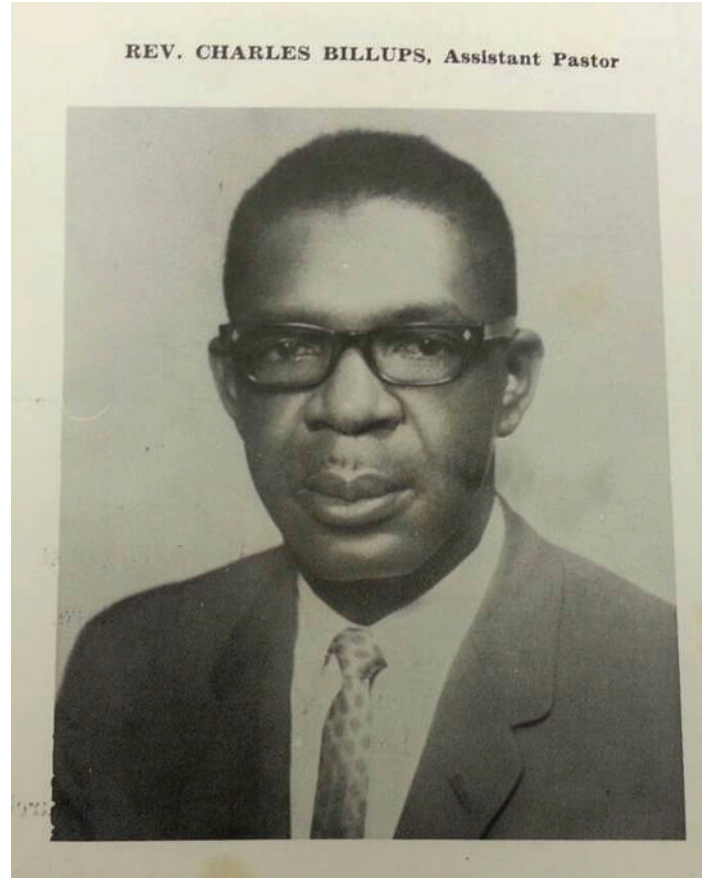
**H**is escape was quite accidental, even as the experience of the cross was swiftly, without warning, thrust upon him; so the escape occurred again not by his own choosing but because he accepted the cross which God chose not to complete.

Charles Billups is a tall, slender, brown-skinned man. He spent seven and a half years in the navy in both WWII and the Korean war as a gunner's mate. He carries the scars of his many battles: a steel plate in his head; plastic surgery to repair the damage done to his face; long, criss-cross scars along his abdomen and pelvic areas. At one time both his legs were broken in combat.

But he has also been a quiet, unassuming warrior for equal rights. He is one of the charter members of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, which is led by Fred Shuttlesworth. He was in both parties of people who tested bus segregation there, thus courting arrest. When the police commissioner of Birmingham first began to send plainclothesmen to the mass meetings, it was Billups, a Baptist minister, who refused entrance to them and was the next day arrested for interfering with officers. He has been and is one of the most committed and active warriors of nonviolence in Birmingham. Perhaps this is to be expected, since he has known the futility of violence.

On April 10, 1959, Billups, along with two working companions, was returning home in Birmingham from his work at the Hayes Aircraft Company.

At 1:00 a.m. the KKK stopped the pickup truck. Their strategy worked perfectly. As the truck picked its way through the narrow streets of a white housing project, a car ahead barricaded their passage. Hooded men came from all directions to accost the three workers and drag them from the seat. They came, knowing who they wanted. For finding that they had Billups, they immediately indicated that the other two Negroes were rather unimportant. But all three were



blindfolded and shoved into separate vehicles. As the captives were prodded towards the automobiles one of the hoods remarked, "It looks as though we got a good catch tonight."

Blindfolded and roughly held on the back seat floor of a car, being taken to an unknown rendezvous, Billups recalls a period of fearful wrestling with God. He did not want to be hurt or killed. Thoughts of his young family flooded him with a desire to protect them from pain and see the three children grow to maturity. The floorboards became a Gethsemane as Billups prayed and surrendered himself wholly to the will of God. He felt afresh the impact of faith in God's knowledge about what was best. He was more than convinced that God had the power to deliver him, if that was God's will. He was also quite convinced that if his death was imminent, God knew best how to bring good purposes out of even that — "God won't make a mistake." He recollected the many times in the past when under duress and suffering, he knew the love and power of God. By the time the auto reached its destination Billups was literally overwhelmed by that love and power. He was more than ready to live, but he was likewise more than ready to die. He knew that no matter what, all things would work for good. With a voluntary, "Thy will be done," he left everything in the hands of God.



Kneeling Ministers, Kelly Ingram Park, Birmingham, Alabama.

Top photo: courtesy New Pilgrim Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama via Facebook; Bottom photo: courtesy Kelly Ingram Park



National Memorial for Peace and Justice, Montgomery, Alabama.

## THE TEST OF FAITH

The blindfold was stripped off in a forest area. He then saw that the Klan had also brought along his two companions. But they were all kept apart, for he was after all the special guest. Guarded by knives and guns he was stumbled to a tree, and tied with his face rubbing the bark and his wrists bound about the tree. Shortly the “prosecutor” arrived and with henchmen gathered about their victim. The prosecutor did all the talking directly to Billups: “We want information about the movement and other information. When you lie, we’ll beat you.”

As one accoster ripped the clothes from the captive, the long period of beating and interrogation began. The first question concerned the parks the Alabama Christian movement planned to integrate.

“I don’t know. Guess they’ll sue all the parks of Alabama.”

“This is a smart n\*. Give him five licks.”

He was next asked about n\* Gwen (the treasurer of the Movement), about the secret meetings held in Gwen’s home. Each time, Billups said, “Mr. Gwen,” they furiously strapped him, saying, “It’s not Mr. Gwen, but n\* Gwen.” Accustomed to saying Mr. Gwen, the captive suffered the psychotic rage of his tormentors.

There were many questions and much beating with what seemed to be a thick leather strap ... for they thought he lied often ... the questions were really unimportant.

Eventually Billups remarked, “You ought to be ashamed for beating a minister of God.”

Prosecutor: “Give him ten licks. Go get something to beat this n\* with.”

So they brought a chain. By this time Billups was completely numb from the pain — his back and limbs were dead — so he mercifully hardly felt the chain, but could feel the warm blood running about his body.

Prosecutor: “You a minister of what?” Billups: “A minister of God.”

Prosecutor: “Go get something to beat this n\* with.”

Thus to the chain was added the touch of thorn bushes which left their thorns embedded in the chain wounds. Different Klansmen competed to see who could slam Billups the hardest.

Prosecutor: “A minister of who?” Billups: “A minister of God.”

The chaining with the thorns added continued.

Up to this time, Billups had constrained himself from crying out. Now he decided to cry out... the heavy beatings stopped.

Prosecutor: “A minister of who?” Billups: “A minister of Jesus.”

Prosecutor: “Oh, you’re a minister of Jesus.” And he moved to another question. (Billups wondered if they even knew the relationship between Jesus and God.)

This became the pattern of the torture. He was interrogated about the Movement, Fred Shuttlesworth, and Nelson Smith (vice-president of the Movement). Since they found an Abraham Lincoln Republican Club membership card in his wallet, he was asked if this was a communist group. His negative reply brought further reprisals.

On and on it went:

“Why did you go to school?”

“Why did you ride the bus integrated?”

“Why not ride with the colored?”

Again Billups, still conscious, though numb, decided to begin to groan. The beatings seemed to let up somewhat.

Tiring of their sport, the prosecutors began to say: “Let’s kill n\* Billups. Let’s vote.” The vote was 6-3 in favor of death.

“N\* do you want to pray?”

“Yes. Lord, forgive these men, bless them, bless their families, bless...”

“N\*, stop that praying.” And the chain began to swing again.

But now dissension arose. For some conscience protested, “A man has the right to pray in his own way.” And the prosecutor intervened to instruct Billups what he should pray.

With the noose about his neck, he was asked by the prosecutor: “What can you tell us to save your life?”

Billups: “What do you mean ... tell you?”

Prosecutor: “If we let you go, will you get out of town?”

Billups: “Yes.”



Prosecutor: "Will you get out of town by 2:00 p.m.?"

Billups: "Yes."

The prosecutor walked through the trees to the other two captives. Deciding that they were only the victims of circumstance, he spared them. It was Billups they wanted and it was Billups they punished for the anguish and hatred of their own sin.

During this lull, Billups, still bound to the tree, had a shotgun in the small of his back and a Bowie knife at his throat. One of the men kept picking at the open wounds with a sharp point. They kept talking wildly, "Don't move, n\*. Don't you run. Believe me, I'll kill you." Billups had to smile at the ignorance and terror revealed. In spite of the beating, the bloody body, he sensed no anger toward these men.

When the prosecutor returned, the men were still talking about killing the n\* since the vote was taken. But the prosecutor untied him. He was pushed to the wet ground, eventually driven out on a highway and dumped.

Only on one occasion did Billups become wholly indignant at man's narrow-mindedness. Shortly after reaching the highway, dirty, bloody, numb, beginning to feel the shock and pain done to his body, he was picked up by a patrol car. After wrangling with them about his need for medical attention, he was driven to a hospital (where later the doctor refused to treat him). As Billups got out of the police car, the driver came around, exclaiming, "Wait a minute, change that story about white men beating you like that. No white men would beat you like that." Billups flared and replied, "Look here, I know who beat me."

There is one further unusual incident which Birmingham ponders over. The doctors of another hospital not only admitted him, but carefully took out all the dirt and thorns. They also thoroughly x-rayed his body to find a fractured vertebra which required surgical attention. He was rested for a day in preparation for the surgery. Again Billups experienced an intense period of relatedness to a loving Father. His response was again to submit to that all-knowing Will. When the

next x-rays were taken, anticipating surgery, the fracture was not to be found. He further bewildered the doctors by requiring no shots for what was supposed to be intense pain.

### THE ARMOR OF GOD

Throughout this experience, Billups recalls only one stage of fright. Returning from the hospital, friends of the Movement set nightly guards about his home. The first night he was unable to sleep. He was filled with terror. He knew that he had taken himself out of the hands of God to place himself in the hands of men who were not able to keep him. This was a denial of faith in God. So the next night when the guards returned he asked them to go home, that he would trust God to take care of him.

Weeks after recuperating, with the marks of the chains added to his body, Billups still sensed no hostility towards these men of the Klan. In speaking to members of the Movement, he reaffirmed his belief that only through Christian nonviolence could lasting peace be achieved. He told his fellow Negroes that in fighting wrong they profess a belief in God, but keep their .45s in their back pockets — so that they actually believed in the .45 and not in God. Only if the Negro is strong enough to love and forgive, while pressing on for a new society, will the end to segregation and racial hatred arrive.

And then as if to clinch his concern, Charles Billups became a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. A member whose encounter with the Cross illuminates the power of nonviolence. 🙏



*Rev. James M. Lawson, Jr. was one of the greatest figures of the civil rights movement and a long-time member of FOR. His Memorial will be featured in our next issue. This firsthand account of the forgotten hero Charles Billups was originally published in the November 1, 1959 issue of Fellowship.*

## CHARLES BILLUPS: *An Overlooked Civil Rights Icon*

by Shane Burns

Charles Billups was a pastor at New Pilgrim Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama and one of the founders of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR), a faith-based organization addressing civil rights from 1956-1969. Members of ACMHR would meet every Monday night to coordinate boycotts and lawsuits relating to segregation. Billups was a friend of fellow ACMHR member and civil rights icon Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and was the first person on the scene after Shuttlesworth's house was bombed. Shuttlesworth would also be the one to drive Billups to the hospital after he was beaten by members of the Ku Klux Klan.

With the civil rights movement facing discouragement nationwide, Billups was chosen by the ACMHR to lead the 1963 Children's Crusade in Birmingham because he attended all their strategy sessions. During the demonstration, local law enforcement warned demonstrators that if they were to not back down, they would turn the dogs and fire hoses loose. Matching their physical force with the soulful force of civil rights activism, Billups taunted these threats and, as fate would have it, firefighters refused to spray the demonstrators. As a result, the Children's Crusade, and the larger Birmingham Campaign, become a model for nonviolent direct-

action protest and overall success for the civil rights movement.

As a result, this moment had arguably turned the tide for the civil rights movement, grabbing national attention from *The New York Times* and galvanizing organizers nationwide. The next year, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which put a legal halt to racial discrimination in educational, employment, and public institutions. Years later, per Martin Luther King, Jr.'s request, Billups would move to Chicago, only to be murdered by an unknown gunman in November 1968; according to his daughter, Renee Billups Baker, the police didn't investigate her father's murder.

Her account can be found in her book, *My Life with Charles Billups and Martin Luther King: Trauma and the Civil Rights Movement* (Peacock Proud Press, 2019). 🙏

**Shane Burns PhD, MPH** is a researcher at the University of Michigan who studies disability and advocates for the rights of people with disabilities worldwide.

*Adapted from a post on the University of Alabama at Birmingham Institute for Human Rights Blog, March 4, 2019.*



# 25,000 MILES FOR PEACE

by Genevieve Walther

A gray-haired woman in neat blue slacks is walking down the highways of America. On the front of her long-sleeved tunic are the words “Peace Pilgrim,” and on the back, “I am walking 25,000 miles for peace.” Curious passersby approach her and quickly learn that here is a highly intelligent and charming woman, radiating friendliness. They leave, thinking more deeply about what is involved in the attainment of peace, both within themselves and in the world.

It was six years ago that Peace Pilgrim set out on her unique mission. Since then she has counted over 11,000 miles of walking, through 48 states, ten Canadian provinces and part of Mexico. She carries no money and does not ask for food or shelter but accepts the hospitality of those who offer her a meal or a place to sleep. Sometimes she has walked all night to keep warm, but she had never missed more than four consecutive meals.

How is it possible for someone of her slight build to endure walking an average of 25 miles a day? Peace Pilgrim says that, having attained a state of inner harmony after years of consecrated effort, she receives a bountiful supply of energy. “Learn how to live,” she challenges, “and you can draw on it too.”

In her youth, Peace Pilgrim had no religious training. She grew up completely outside the church — and yet religion has had a profound impact on her life. “In my student days,” she says, “I thought that the way to live was to make a lot of money — to get ahead of the other fellow. I found that making money was easy for me, and soon I had more of it than I needed. But I found that the things I could buy with it did not bring happiness. Though I did not then understand the Fatherhood of God, I felt a great deal about the Brotherhood of Man, and as I looked about the world, so much of it impoverished, I

became increasingly uncomfortable about having so much while my brothers were starving.

“Finally I had to find another way. The turning point came when, in desperation, I walked all night, struggling to find a more meaningful life. At dawn I came to a clearing. I looked up into the heavens and cried out, ‘Use me for higher purposes. Show me the way and I’ll follow.’ I never meant anything more in my life. And almost immediately, a great peace fell upon me.

“I found that once one has thus dedicated one’s life, one has passed over the first spiritual hump — the point of no return. One has given oneself completely to a cause, and can never return to self-centered living. With many, this dedication is long and drawn-out, but fortunately for me it came at once. My first blessing, I soon learned, was perfect health. From that day, twenty years ago, I have never experienced even a cold or a headache.

“In the midst of the continuing struggle between my lower and my higher selves, I caught glimpses of harmony. Many years passed, however, before I found myself slipping into harmony, almost never to leave it. To attain it one must pass over the second spiritual hump — the actual giving of one’s life, not just one’s possessions. When one at last gives one’s life — brings into alignment one’s beliefs and the way one lives — then, and only then, can one begin to find real inner peace.”

It was when she had reached that point that Peace Pilgrim vowed to go on her pilgrimage of walking, to become a wanderer until mankind has learned the way of peace. Often, at the end of a day’s walking, she gives a public lecture in which she outlines the way in which our lives can come into harmony with a power higher than ourselves.

Photo by @grandstockphoto

## TWELVE STEPS TO PEACE

There are four preparatory steps.

- First, we must get beneath the surface of our lives. “Never wish for a life without problems,” says Peace Pilgrim, “for only our problems give opportunities for spiritual growth.” We must learn to face life squarely in all its depth, not run from it. Our collective problems, too, must be faced in this way. “We must approach them prayerfully and think them through, talk them over and find solutions.”
- Second, we must resolve to live what we believe.
- Third, each of us must find his own place in God’s plan; this we can know only within ourselves, seeking it in receptive silence. Only as we fulfill both of these points can we accomplish what we feel motivated to do and thus begin to understand its meaning as part of the totality of life. And only with the discovery of this meaning can we find happiness.
- Fourth, we must simplify our lives. Instead of piling up possessions, we must begin to recognize the unmet needs of others around us. We should also learn to say no to the demands of others to perform tasks they should be doing themselves.

Four purifications are required.

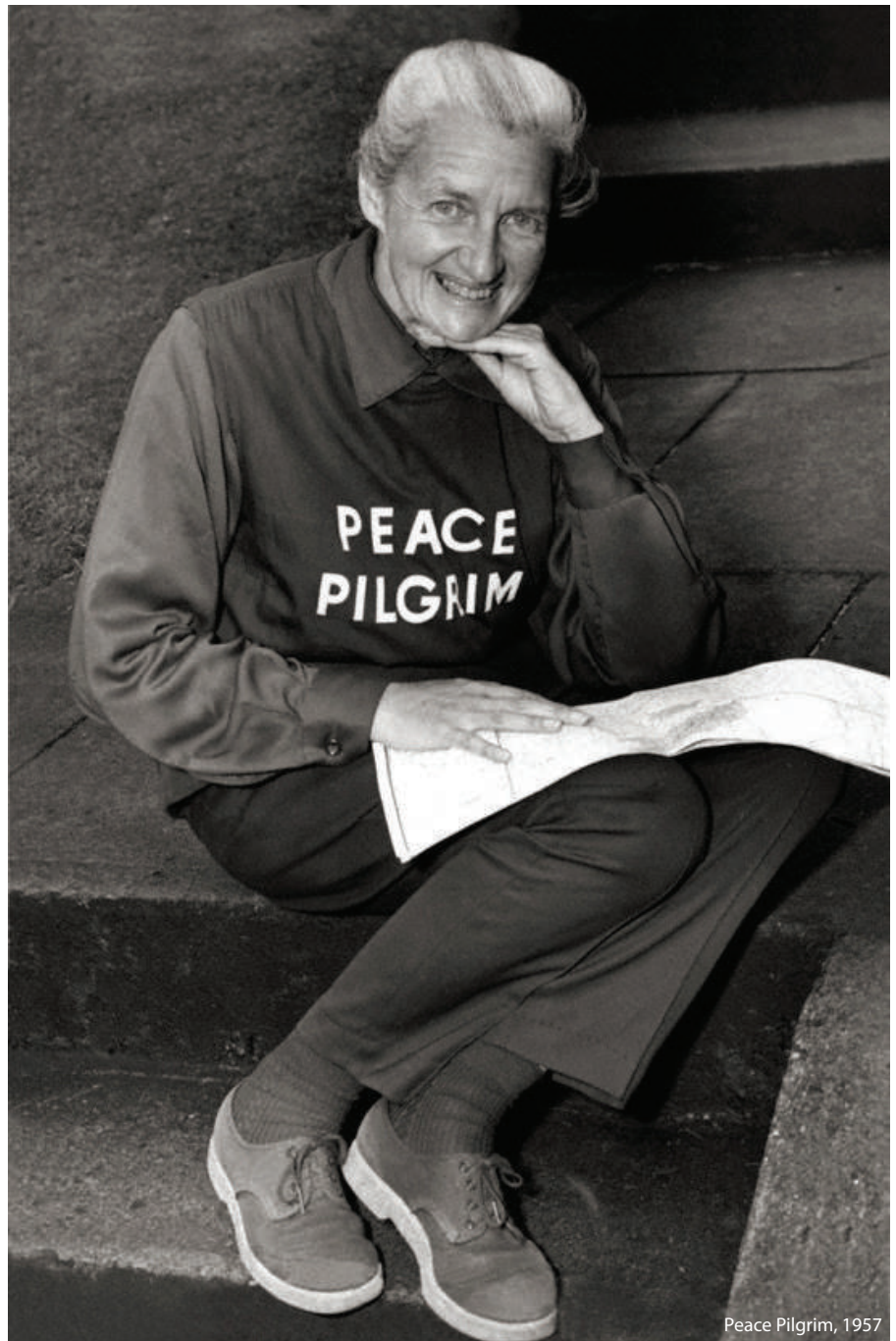
- First, we must emphasize the positive side in our thinking. Peace Pilgrim asserts that this can be a powerful influence for good, while negative thoughts can even make us physically ill.
- Second, we must purify our bodies through correct eating habits, sufficient exercise and rest.
- Third, we must strive for purity of will, to unify our desires with what God wants of us.
- Fourth, we must purify our motives, taking as our model the motive of service. We do so many things with mixed motives or with the surface motive of striving to attain inner peace. When we learn to give, not to seek to get, we experience a joy of service that makes it impossible to go back to self-centered living.

Finally there are four relinquishments.

- First, we must let go of our self-will, which means finding one’s true spiritual center — God’s will in us — and embracing this rather than our spontaneous selfish impulses. When we feel like saying something mean about someone, for instance, we should find something good to say instead.
- Closely related to this is the second point, the relinquishment of separateness. We must see ourselves as individual cells of spirit in the spiritual organism of humanity.

If we pit one cell against all other cells, we cause disease, but if we act from our true spiritual center, we work in harmony with the basic oneness of mankind.

- Third, we must let go of our hold on human beings. When we try to run the lives of others, try to possess them, cling to them, we find disharmony. Each must be free to find his own spiritual center. We must bear in mind that we do not own anyone, no matter how near and dear; only when we free each of our dear ones in this way can we live in harmony with them.
- Fourth, we must let go of our worries. Worry is a sign of lack of faith. The spiritual law is invariable, says Peace Pilgrim: as long as we cling to our problems, God will leave them right in our hands. The only alternative is to leave our worries in God’s hands.



Peace Pilgrim, 1957

Peace Pilgrim looks upon every difficulty as an opportunity for growth. Once she was asked if she ever had trouble with vagrancy laws. “Oh, yes,” she smiled. “I’ve been jailed twice. Once overnight for protective custody. The other time they locked me up for 24 hours, though at the time I hadn’t the slightest idea how long they would keep me. I’m glad for these experiences, for they taught me that one can be imprisoned and yet remain free. And I know now that I can face prison.

“I am thankful, too,” she went on, “for an experience which taught me that I can face death. That happened on a lonely spot of road, miles from anything. Darkness had come with incredible speed, and with it a snowstorm that obliterated everything, even the road. I could not see a light in any direction. Cars had long since quit passing. There was nothing to do but go on, hoping that I could stay on the road.”

She dragged herself forward on icy feet, not knowing where she was going. But despite the cold, her inner self was suffused with a feeling of warmth. “I knew,” she said, “that all was wonderfully well with me, no matter where my journey might end.”

Suddenly her foot touched something — the railing of a bridge she could not see. Groping her way underneath, she discovered a large packing box full of heavy, dry paper. “Even in the snowstorm there was shelter for me!” she exulted. She curled up in the box and pulled the paper over her, and soon her body became warm like her inner self. She slept until morning, waking to a world of fresh beauty.

When one at last  
gives one’s life  
– brings into  
alignment one’s  
beliefs and  
the way one lives –  
then, and only then,  
can one begin to  
find **real inner peace.**

Peace Pilgrim’s most wonderful experience, as she told one group of listeners, occurred one night as she was crossing the desert. In the heart of an isolated stretch, she passed a parked car. The driver called to her to come in and get warm. “The minute I got in,” she said, “I could tell that he was what most people would call a rough-looking man. But that didn’t bother me, since I know there is that of good in everyone. Touch that and they cannot harm you, for the good in them will not let them harm you.”

After talking awhile, the man suggested that she get some sleep before moving on. Peace Pilgrim curled up and went to sleep in the car. “I don’t know how long I slept,” she said, “but finally I awakened and we talked again. It was then that he said that when he called me in, his intention had not been good. ‘But

you know,’ he said, ‘when you curled up so trustingly and went to sleep, I could not touch you.’

“Of course he couldn’t,” Peace Pilgrim said. “The good in him wouldn’t let him.” As she started down the highway again, she looked back and saw the man, standing beside the car, looking up at the stars. “I wondered,” she said, “if for the first time in his life he had found God.”

#### “AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME”

Thousands of people have written to Peace Pilgrim to say that they have felt inspired by her to get into action for the cause of peace. “Peace is ‘an idea whose time has come,’ “ says Peace Pilgrim. “People everywhere are beginning to realize that God’s laws work for good just as soon as we obey them. Peace within and without is for each of us as soon as we are willing to reach out and take it.

“In every crisis period,” she tells her listeners, “someone is called to awaken people from their lethargy, to rouse them into action. So I was called to begin my pilgrimage. The contest is between the old ideology that we must overcome evil with force, and the less-old ideology that evil can only be overcome by good, falsehood by truth and hatred by love.”

Her name? She has divested herself of her former identity to become the symbol that she is: a humble Peace Pilgrim. One day you may see her radiant face as she walks through your town, asking nothing but a hearing and giving all she has, to bring a tattered world to peace. 🕊️

**Genevieve Walther** was a former high school social science teacher. During WWII she worked for the Pacific Research Bureau, preparing studies on conscientious objectors. Out of her work with the Hopi and Papago nations she wrote “There is That In Every Man” in Fellowship, March 1955.

*This article was originally published in the November 1959 issue of Fellowship.*

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# BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by Ethan Vesely-Flad

## Conscription, Conscientious Objection, and Draft Resistance in American History

By Jerry Elmer

Brill, 2023, 389 pages (cloth), \$136.00

Reviewed by Doug Hostetter

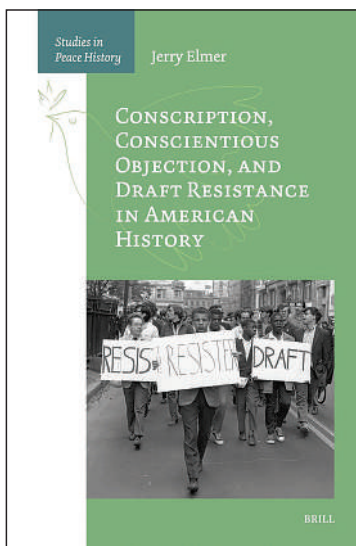
This carefully researched and well-documented book should be required reading for politicians considering reinstating the military draft as well as for anti-militarism activists who want to steer our nation away from conscription and war.

The author, Jerry Elmer, is a Harvard-educated lawyer. In his earlier book, *Felon for Peace: A Memoir of a Vietnam-Era Draft Resister*, he described his unique experience prior to becoming one. He wrote, "During my first 18 months after I graduated from high school, I burglarized 14 draft boards in three cities on the East Coast, destroying the files of men eligible to be drafted... I went on to work full-time in the nonviolent peace movement for almost 20 years." Elmer is candid that his perspective in writing this book was not "neutral" but the product of his history in the 1960s and '70s peace movement as well as his training as a lawyer.

*Conscription, Conscientious Objection, and Draft Resistance in American History* is a definitive history of conscription in the United States. Although many of the Vietnam generation assumed that we were the first to seriously challenge the draft, this book provides clear documentation of the rich history of conscientious objection and draft resistance during the revolutionary war, the civil war (both Union and Confederacy), WWI, WWII, and the Korean war, as well as Vietnam.

The chapters devoted to each war are broken down into: (1) provisions of the draft law; (2) opposition to conscription in that war, including public and covert, legal and illegal, religious and secular, violent and nonviolent; and (3) discussion of major court cases related to conscription and opposition to conscription. The book is dense with useful historical information and colorful anecdotes on the development of conscription, of conscientious objection, and of the creative ways people have resisted the draft, evaded conscription, or disrupted the system designed to channel citizens into the military.

It is full of nuggets. For instance, before the establishment of the United States, several



state constitutions recognized the right to conscientious objection, and several had state constitutions that used the identical phrase: "As standing armies in time of peace are dangerous to liberty, they ought not to be kept up." There was no draft for the revolutionary war. "The Continental Army was created and fought the War of Independence made up entirely of seconded state militias from the thirteen colonies." The U.S. Constitution gives power "to raise and support Armies, but no Appropriation of Money to that Use shall be for a longer term than two years." The Constitution, however, gives Congress the power to "secund the state militias into federal service but only for three specifically stated reasons: to enforce federal laws, suppress insurrections and repel invasions."

Elmer points out that there is no explicit constitutional right to conscript Americans into military service, but he is pessimistic than a constitutional challenge to conscription would be successful in U.S. courts.

Elmer uses archival research, government documents, and census data to correct many of the lower estimates of government agencies and historians as to the extent of non-registration and other forms of active and passive evasion of draft laws. There is an examination of the eventual government understanding that laws on conscription and deferments could be used

to shape the wider national economy, assuring that critical sectors of the economy are filled by competent workers, while also assuring that the appropriate number of the "right" men are available to the military.

There is an excellent history of the changing legal definition of conscientious objection from its origin as being available only to members of Peace Churches, to court rulings that expanded conscientious objection to include any religious conviction that prohibited participation in any war, to finally the courts recognizing that ethical convictions, unrelated to religious belief, must also be recognized as grounds for conscientious objection. The courts, however, have never recognized the right to conscientious objection to a specific war, if the applicant might not be opposed to participation in other wars.

There is documentation on the way that imprisoned WWII draft resisters contributed to the desegregation of federal prisons, and how C.O.s, appalled by the conditions in psychiatric hospitals in which they served, led to national mental health reform. There is a thoughtful discussion of the issue of resistance verses conscientious objection. Elmer makes clear his preference for resistance, as it obstructs the system that channels men into war; conscientious objection and alternative service, while enabling the C.O. to not participate in war and perhaps even make a positive contribution to society, does not disrupt the war-making machine.

As one could expect, the Fellowship of Reconciliation and FOR luminaries surface frequently. Fellowship readers will gain new insights into FOR's 100-year struggle against conscription and war. If the high price from its academic publisher is too steep for your personal collection, ask your library to add this book to its collection so that you and many others can access this invaluable new resource.

*Doug Hostetter* is U.N. representative for Pax Christi International. He previously served as FOR-USA executive director (1987-93) and U.N. representative for the Mennonite Central Committee.

# Lifting as They Climb: Black Women Buddhists & Collective Liberation

By Toni Pressley-Sanon

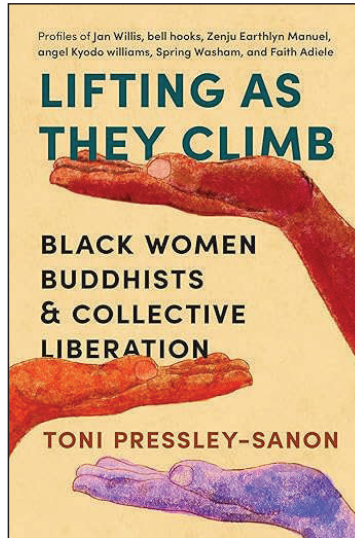
Shambhala Publications, 2024, 328 pages (paper), \$24.95

Reviewed by Rima Vesely-Flad

Toni Pressley-Sanon describes *Lifting as They Climb* as “a love letter,” and indeed it is. The book details the biographies and spiritual teachings of six Black women Buddhist writers who claim, variously, Tibetan Tantra, Soto Zen, Theravada-based Insight, and “Buddhist-Christian” lineages. Using published works and in some cases interviews, Pressley-Sanon illuminates the distinctive life stories and practices of Jan Willis, Zenju Earthlyn Manuel, angel Kyodo Williams, Spring Washam, and Faith Adiele.

Pressley-Sanon states in her introduction that this extensive love letter is a response to her sense of isolation in predominantly white or all-white Buddhist communities in the United States. The six Black women teachers directly confront the meaning of Black embodiment in a highly racialized context, and also elaborate their upbringings (often in the Black Christian church) as central to their Buddhist practice. As Pressley-Sanon describes, these Buddhist teachers are articulating a distinctive form of Buddhism, specific to Black people, that is coherent across different lineages and Buddhist practices.

Pressley-Sanon weaves in her own story and responses in part to articulate the resonance of these women’s life stories — and also to demonstrate the magnitude



of what it takes to heal intergenerational trauma. Each Black Buddhist writer’s story addresses the injuries of systemic racism, including microaggressions and state violence; each narrative furthermore points to how such harm manifests within the intimacy of families as well as majority-Black communities.

Pressley-Sanon relates to the details of these dimensions of systemic and interpersonal suffering by recounting her own experiences, including the experiences of sexual abuse and loneliness. She is forthright about her training as an academic and the distinct departure she makes from her training in putting her own story into the book.

“America’s anti-Black racism made it more than apparent to me that I wasn’t meant to feel like I belong in the wider U.S. But, like Willis, neither did I feel I quite fit into my own community,” Pressley-Sanon

writes in Part One. She continues, “Born in Queens, New York, I experienced a deep sense of alienation from those around me and, like her, this was in part due to being born with lighter skin. In my neighborhood, Black was the thing to be, and my early years were characterized by huge afros, Black-power signs, dashikis, and bean pies.” The theme of alienation is a resounding message throughout the book.

The result is a manuscript that is both surprisingly personal and rigorously researched. Indeed, one of the strengths of *Lifting as They Climb* is the interweaving of a broad range of analytical voices, ranging from James Baldwin to Cornel West, as Pressley-Sanon illuminates the contexts to which each Black woman Buddhist author is responding.

Pressley-Sanon is clear from the beginning that her goal in writing the book is to bridge the isolation that so many would-be Black Buddhists feel in “American Buddhism.” In telling her own story alongside the teachers who have served as inspiration, she exhibits a willingness to serve as a facilitator and bridge, to teach not only as a professor but also as a practitioner. Her vulnerability mirrors the vulnerability exhibited by the women she profiles.

She also brings in a critical voice when she fails to connect with a text. In this way, she both upholds the visionary leadership of each Black Buddhist writer and also acknowledges her varying responses. Pressley-Sanon honors a radical honesty that is consistent with her commitment to turning towards difficulty and developing the capacity to acknowledge it fully as well as honoring the teachers upon whose shoulders she stands.

*Rima Vesely-Flad, Ph.D., is author of Black Buddhists and the Black Radical Tradition: The Practice of Stillness in the Movement for Liberation.*



# Feminism, Violence and Nonviolence: An Anthology

By Selina Gallo-Cruz

Edinburgh University Press, 2024, 296 pages (paper), \$39.95

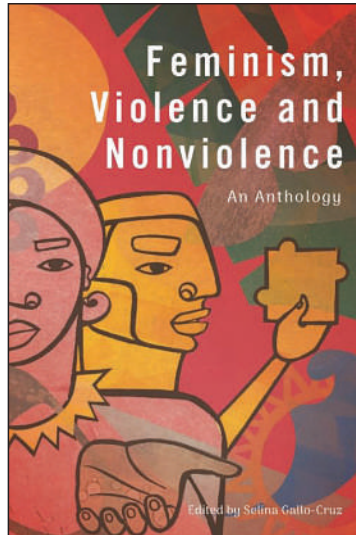
Reviewed by Linda Alvarado-Arce

In her book's opening sentence, Selina Gallo-Cruz invokes peace activist Barbara Deming's idea that "in a world transformed by feminism and nonviolence, no one would be 'the other.'" This statement encapsulates what Gallo-Cruz argues every feminist thinks (or should think) about as possible, and dream of seeing happen. Deming's vision, formed in the '70s, still holds value today. This book reminds us that "the root of all violence" is "objectification, through which someone else becomes an 'other' to be opposed, attacked, and eliminated." That ideology is at the core of this beautifully compiled anthology, featuring every feminist author/theorist I have ever read in less than 300 pages.

*Feminism, Violence and Nonviolence* is, however, much more than just a collection of essays, flyers, newsletters, manifestos, and training manuals. It is a book about how nonviolence can be used to realize women's liberation and how explicitly nonviolence can and should be incorporated into feminist theory. As Deming stated, feminism can broaden "systemic thinking about how best to take on violence as a cultural and political form of domination."

Gallo-Cruz, moreover, captivatingly incorporates the necessity to empower womyn to become leaders and even gives tips on how to lead a pacifist, feminist organization. As Charlotte Bunch stated in "Women Power" (1980), "[W]hat makes someone a leader is the functions she performs and her ability to move others to action, not her public visibility." This book addresses the "how" that is at the "intersection of feminist and nonviolent responses to violence as a fundamental human problem."

Countless questions are asked and answered by both theorists and practitioners to explore those intersections and tensions. Gallo-Cruz engages the root causes of violence against women; the reasons for patriarchy and sexism, institutionally and interpersonally; the nature of power; racism, capitalism, militarism, and other -isms; how women particularly relate to and benefit from nonviolence; and much more. Ultimately, the focus is on transforming the world



from a radical perspective of "feminist and nonviolent thinking about the nature of power in hierarchical systems and how the feminist movement holds the potential to transform these unequal systems into reciprocal communities rooted in new values and practices of respect and equality."

"The personal is political" has been a mantra in the feminist movement for decades, and the phrase appears several times throughout the text. It has meaning here when coupled with a key tenet of nonviolence philosophy known as "means and ends," especially as a culture of misogyny is documented as being "embedded in the nonviolence movement."

Indeed, the question is posed: "Are Pacifists Willing to be Angry?" Or as Jane Meyerding asks in a 1982 essay, and as I often have asked myself – especially after joining the Fellowship of Reconciliation – "Is a commitment to radical feminism incompatible with nonviolence?" Because "anger," she argues, is the main reason feminists are not prominently involved in the pacifist movement.

As a feminist and pacifist, this book confirmed for me it is okay to be angry! Feminism and pacifism may seem to be incompatible, but they aren't. I won't let myself feel bad for the position I have been cast and born into. I have a voice and will use it.

This book reminded me that my history, our collective history of colonization, discriminations, biases, and all the -isms,

had given me reasons to be angry: at my oppression, the oppression of all womyn, and my/our oppressors; at the fact that more than 50 years after the launch of the modern feminist movement, WE (WOMYN) are still considered less than men, much less than white MEN. We still don't have equal rights or equal pay! And I have every reason to be angry about living in this power-driven, patriarchal, white male, misogynistic society that holds power over my head and MY BODY because I am a BROWN, historically marginalized WOMYN!

This book is a must-read if you are serious about making this a safer and more peaceful world for everyone. As Meyerding shares, "Violence can be an effective method for reform, but it cannot effect radical change." That change, according to Kathy Watson ("Neither Victim Nor Assassin," 1978), "Must happen not only out there in society and its institutions, but also in us the people who make it."

This means "confronting not only authoritarian structures such as the family, the school, the capitalist economic system, but also the attitudes behind them and the ideology which justifies them." Because "this ideology is based on the power of some over others and sanctions violence, explicitly or otherwise, as the means of maintaining that power."

This book advocates that "If the peace movement is to be successful in putting an end to war, it must work to eliminate the sex-role system which is killing us all by rewarding dominating aggressive behavior in men."

If women are not ever free, peace will always be denied. Therefore, according to Betty Reardon, although "God may be masculine, the ultimate creator," nevertheless, "the life force and source of nurture is feminine: Mother Nature." As Sojourner Truth, formerly enslaved, said in 1867, "When woman gets her rights, man will be right."

*Linda Alvarado-Arce is the owner of the People Called Women Independent Bookstore in Toledo, Ohio, and co-chair of FOR-USA's National Council.*

# War Resisters League: 100 Years of Resistance to War and the Causes of War

*Edited by Ruth Benn and Ed Hedemann*

War Resisters League, 2023, 84 pages (paper), \$10.00

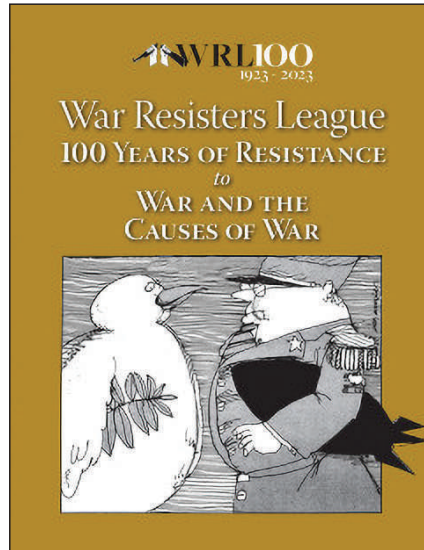
*Reviewed by Ethan Vesely-Flad*

What a history! What a legacy. What a continuing inspiration to peacemakers and justice-doers.

In commemoration of its 2023 centennial, the War Resisters League (WRL) developed a traveling exhibit to highlight its remarkable 100-year history of creative, “militant” pacifism from generation to generation. To supplement and help promote the multimedia exhibit, and in recognition of its century-long history of artistic print resources of all kinds, WRL published an accompanying book. Less than a hundred pages, this collection is nevertheless a treasure trove of images (more than 150), words, and links to accessing more detailed information online. I found myself astonished at the amount of research and editing done to compile this unique publication.

It is a testimony to the deep commitment of WRL’s centennial history committee that such a concise publication nevertheless includes representation of the broad width and depth of WRL’s peace work through the past century. Ruth Benn and Ed Hedemann have been involved in WRL for decades, and their intimate knowledge of its work is obvious here. Hedemann’s striking photos from protests, direct actions, and other notable events – alongside multiple entries from WRL/FOR member David McReynolds, Jim Haber, Dorothy Marder, Grace Hedemann, and others – are indeed worth a thousand words apiece.

The fairly sparse text is also enhanced by WRL’s inspired usage of scannable QR codes throughout the book, which lead the reader out from these pages to websites, videos, and other media resources that invite us to learn more about the rich history of antiwar activism throughout the past century. Once I got my “smart”



phone’s camera to successfully engage with those codes, I found myself clicking away to online information about past and present movements. I especially appreciated accessing the links to the Golden Rule Project, the “Decades of Nuclear Terror” exhibit, and the shared legacy of Wally and Juanita Nelson.

The U.S. Fellowship of Reconciliation was formed eight years before WRL’s launch in 1923, and the two organizations have been consistently associated with one another ever since (as have our global expressions, the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, or IFOR, and War Resisters International, or WRI).

FOR is meaningfully cited in a number of sections of the book. Admittedly and unsurprisingly – in the way that one might look for one’s name or image in a school yearbook – I found myself yearning for even more references, particularly about what some have described as an intimate partnership between the “sister” movements in the first several decades of their existence.

For instance, the 1938 launch of the “United Pacifist Committee” in New York City, which included WRL, FOR, and Quakers, is one hint — especially given the chairing role of A.J. Muste, who led both WRL and FOR at various points. It is also fascinating that although WRL was founded as a “secular” organization, there have been notable faith-based individuals involved since its inception; indeed, its first chairperson was Rev. John Haynes Holmes, minister of the Community Church in New York and a committed FOR member.

Due to the book’s brevity, a deep look into WRL’s methodologies, tactics, and decisions isn’t included. The short overview to the section on “Militant Pacifism and Revolutionary Nonviolence” whets the appetite regarding those organizing goals and strategies. Certainly, WRL’s commitment to direct action, provocative protest, and disruption is powerfully presented as a consistent force throughout the book’s chronology. And as noted above, we are also treated to compelling graphics – of magazines, flyers, posters, teaching guides, and more – that showcase its steadfast commitment to popular education and the role of communications in organizing work. Still, I would have loved one or two essays offering a “behind the scenes” perspective to learn more about the why, how, and who of those critical decisions through the decades.

*100 Years of Resistance* is nevertheless impressive, and it inspires the reader to do additional research about WRL’s under-recognized activism through its first century. As we prepare for the days ahead, these stories and lessons will be sure to help us in the collective struggle to end war, militarism, and exploitation.

*Ethan Vesely-Flad is book reviews editor for Fellowship.*



# Decolonizing Palestine: The Land, the People, the Bible

By Mitri Raheb

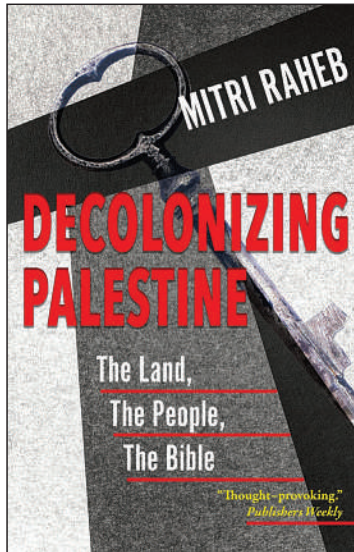
Orbis Books, 2023, 166 pages (paper), \$24.00

Reviewed by John Backe

As a child, everything I knew about Israel, I learned in Sunday School. I was thrilled by the great dramatic stories of the Hebrew people and their heroic leaders. Noah building the ark, Moses leading the Exodus, David slaying Goliath, and so much more. These stories demonstrated how God had “chosen His people” and they would finally be able to “occupy the promised land.” Who could argue with that, besides possibly, the people already living there? But it was in the Bible, so it must be true.

For many people, those Sunday School lessons have remained the basis of what they believe and understand about Israel as adults. The Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb, a Lutheran pastor who has lived his entire life in Bethlehem, seeks to provide adults, especially Western Christians, with a more contemporary and factual understanding. To this end, he writes, “In their naivete, Christian theologians continue to use language and theological ideas that support current Israeli settler colonialism, causing great harm to the people of Palestine... It is time to rupture the theological software that enables Israeli oppression of the people of Palestine.”

In his previous work, *Faith in the Face of Empire: The Bible Through Palestinian Eyes* (Orbis, 2014), the author helped build the framework for a “Palestinian liberation theology,” expanding significantly upon prophetic scholarship of other Palestinian Christian writers, notably the Rev. Naim Ateek, published during the previous



quarter-century. Within this framework, Raheb now examines four aspects of the current situation in Palestine. Written prior to the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack and subsequent Israeli military response, the analysis is both challenging and enlightening.

*Decolonizing Palestine* comprises four chapters. The first analyses the past 100 years of the history of Palestine through the lens of settler colonialism. With that background, the author attempts to provide a new definition of Christian Zionism, with special attention to “liberal Christian Zionism.” The remaining chapters explore the issues of “the land” and “election.”

For many Western Christians, this book will require some degree of “unlearning” of

what we were taught when we were younger and of the continuing, lingering influence of those teachings as we seek to understand the reality of contemporary Palestine. For example, the author states the need for this change as he declares, “Christian theologians have failed to see that the promised land is confiscated land.”

“The issue of chosenness is much more problematic than people or even theologians might think” is the introduction to *Decolonizing Palestine’s* final chapter. To explore the idea of chosenness, or election “poses the fundamental question of Biblical hermeneutics: how to understand the biblical story and how to translate it into our period of time.”

The epilogue includes brief essays applying the previous analysis to a series of issues or concerns that often arise when discussing Palestine/Israel: the ecumenical deal, the two-state solution, antisemitism, apartheid, and more.

The author concludes with these compelling words: “This book is an urgent call to decolonize Christian theology regarding the Palestinian land and its people, to understand through a new paradigm of settler colonialism, and to contribute to the struggle for liberation, human dignity, and justice.” Urgent indeed!

**Rev. John F. Backe** is past executive director of the Lutheran Peace Fellowship and a former member of FOR-USA’s National Council.

## Children's Picture Book Reviews

Reviewed by Meredith Krashes Nicolich



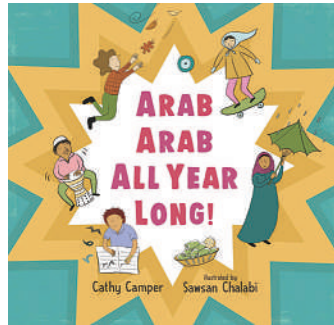
### My Lost Freedom: A Japanese American World War II Story

By George Takei, illustrated by Michelle Lee  
Crown Books for Young Readers, 2024,  
48 pages (cloth), \$19.99

*My Lost Freedom* tells the story of George Takei – *Star Trek* actor, author, and activist – who was incarcerated at the age of five, with his family, in Japanese-American concentration camps following the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Michelle Lee's beautiful and realistic illustrations help tell George's story from his child's perspective as his family was shuffled through three different camps during four years. His parents worked hard to make the best of the situations they were forced into, with his father becoming a community leader and his mother always making their difficult living quarters as cozy as possible while keeping their children loved, unified, and protected.

While *My Lost Freedom* is designed as a children's picture book, it is actually a biography appropriate for elementary-age children and older. Here George shares family photos and his family's difficulties starting over in post-war Los Angeles with no home or possessions, along with his eventual testimony before a Congressional committee about his camp experiences. That helped lead President Reagan to sign the Civil Liberties Act, officially apologize for the internment, and pay redress.

*My Lost Freedom* is an important personal story, beautifully told, that will make a strong, memorable impression on children and adults alike. There is a preview available at [RHCbooks.com](http://RHCbooks.com). Enter "George Takei" in the search field for a synopsis and book excerpts, along with a wonderful teacher's guide and extension activities.



### Arab Arab All Year Long!

By Cathy Camper, Illustrated by Sawsan Chalabi  
Candlewick Press, 2022, 36 pages  
(cloth), \$18.99

*Arab Arab All Year Long!* is a joyous celebration of the rich culture of the Arab diaspora, aimed at PreK-aged children and up. With words and lovely upbeat illustrations, we learn about both traditional and modern treasured practices that happen throughout the year.

In January, this includes looking at the sky at midnight on New Year's Eve for stars with Arabic names and to make a New Year's wish. In February, the author mentions FOR's comic book, *Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story*, and that its translation into Arabic and Farsi may have inspired some to protest in the Egyptian revolution during the "Arab Spring" movement. The narrator adds they will make their own comic book to spark change and teach classmates about Muslims and Ramadan. Other months' activities include learning to write in Arabic, drumming on the doumbek, finding hijab fashion websites, wearing a keffiyeh, throwing a henna slumber party, and preparing and eating beloved foods.

The author includes a helpful glossary of terms and a note that makes clear that "There is no universal definition of who is Arab"; that Arabs live in the Middle East, Northern Africa, and around the world; and "there are many variations in language, culture, and ethnicity," as well as religion. In other words, Arabs and non-Arabs alike will enjoy this book as a celebration of Arab culture, while understanding that there are many variations not mentioned here as well.



### Peace

By Baptiste Paul and Miranda Paul,  
Illustrated by Estelí Meza  
NorthSouth Books, Inc., 2021, 36 pages  
(paper), \$10.95

*Peace* is a beautifully illustrated picture book aimed at children of PreK age, with the message that peace comes from simple actions between us, like saying hello, smiling, giving a hug, pronouncing your friend's name correctly, and more.

While the words at first seem simple, they actually invite deeper thought and discussion. For example, one page reads:

*Peace comes from giving  
far more than you take.  
It's something we work toward,  
it's something we make.*

Another page reads:

*Peace is on purpose.  
Peace is a choice.  
Peace lets the smallest of us  
Have a voice.*

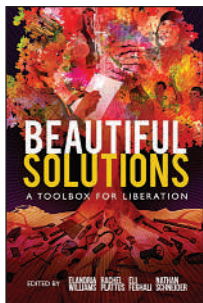
Estelí Meza's gorgeous illustrations are full of rich deep colors, showing children, adults, animals, and nature, all living in harmony. In their author's note, the authors point out the importance of peace is not only for humans. They mention growing up in Mozambique during war, and that the country lost 90% of its wildlife. The recovery afterward offered hope, with many animal populations now restored and living in their biggest national park.

Newly issued in paperback format, the book's last paragraph summarizes their thoughtful message perfectly:

"Peace can begin with a small step that you choose. A smile might spark a friendship. A friendship fosters empathy. Empathy leads to helpful actions. And helpful actions, over time, bring justice and peace."

# RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Edited by Ethan Vesely-Flad



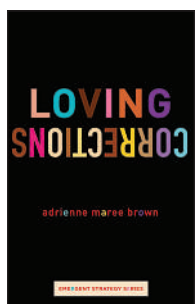
## Beautiful Solutions: A Toolbox for Liberation

Edited by Elandria Williams, Rachel Plattus, Eli Feghali, and Nathan Schneider

OR Books, 2024, 357 pages (paper), \$24.95

As the 21st century began, economic globalization was drastically changing social and political structures. Meanwhile, new grassroots movements emerged with a resistance mantra: “Another World Is Possible.”

These vibrant civil society networks sought to nonviolently disrupt the World Trade Organization, Davos economic forum, and other hyper-capitalist powers. The respected activists who edited this volume (second in a series) are eager to share lessons learned during an era of perpetual struggle. We especially honor the pre-publication contributions of Williams, a former FOR intern and later director of PeoplesHub, who tragically died in 2020.



## Loving Corrections

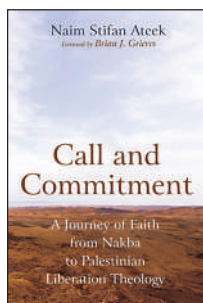
By adrienne maree brown

AK Press, 2024, 200 pages (paper), \$18.00

adrienne maree brown's 2017 book *Emergent Strategy* became a touchstone in progressive circles, including FOR, for its embrace of “generative conflict,” experimentation instead of regimentation, and a relationship-based vision of organizing for transformational change.

Launched the same year, adrienne and her sister

Autumn's podcast “How to Survive the End of the World” has further explored radical concepts and practices of healing justice and uprooting white supremacy. *Loving Corrections* shows brown continues to be on the forefront of facilitating these conversations with invaluable new contributions, including frameworks for navigating critique and maintaining accountability within our social movements.



## Call and Commitment: A Journey of Faith from Nakba to Palestinian Liberation Theology

By Naim Ateek and Brian Grieves

Cascade Books, 2023, 228 pages (paper), \$30.00

Thirty-five years ago, Orbis Books published the groundbreaking *Justice and Only Justice* by Naim Ateek, a Palestinian Anglican priest. Together with Sabeel, an ecumenical

liberation theology center led by Ateek and based in East Jerusalem, the book helped spark a new level of Palestinian Christian activism in resistance to Israeli occupation. *In Call and Commitment*, Ateek provides a honed analysis of Palestinian self-determination from the perspective of a follower of Jesus. Given the dramatic diminishment of the indigenous Christian community in Palestine – caused by apartheid and the targeted oppression tactics of the Israeli state – since the issuance of his original text, Ateek's life story makes a particularly a powerful read.



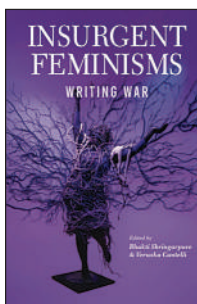
## The New Saints: From Broken Hearts to Spiritual Warriors

By Lama Rod Owens

Sounds True, 2023, 288 pages (paper), \$20.99

We often think of “saints” as those who have departed the living world, but Lama Rod Owens reminds us that we can claim saintliness by healing one another in this moment, right now. A practitioner and teacher of Tibetan Buddhist lineage who founded

the Bhumiparsha community, Owens opens up ancient dharma teachings with intimate stories. “There's nothing like crisis to wake us up and force us to get serious about change,” he proclaims. In a time of profound individual pain and collective trauma, Owens encourages us to engage deeply and directly with our suffering and brokenness in pursuit of collective liberation.



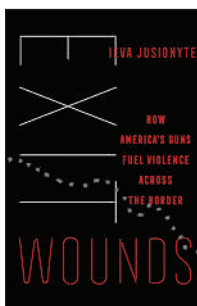
## Insurgent Feminisms: Writing War

Edited by Bhakti Shringarpure and Veruska Cantelli

Daraja Press, 2024, 554 pages (paper), \$35.00

Over a decade ago I came across “Warscapes” – an online publication featuring Global South perspectives on violence, politics, and power. Its diverse voices served as a counterpoint to mainstream media outlets in analyzing systemic injustice worldwide. Warscapes later

merged into the Radical Books Collective, and its former editor, Bhakti Shringarpure, has drawn on that diasporic network in co-organizing this impressive volume focusing on the manifold ways that war targets female bodies. More than five dozen feminist and queer contributors discuss how “insurgency emerges in the raw and meticulous language of witnessing” in the midst of war.



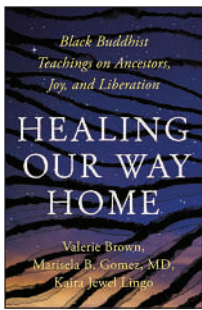
## Exit Wounds: How America's Guns Fuel Violence across the Border

By Ieva Jusionyte

University of California Press, 2024, 348 pages (paper), \$27.95

More than 200,000 guns found in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico since 2015 have been traced back to the U.S., according to the ATF. Tens of thousands of gun-related murders and disappearances during the same

decade show that para-state violence in Latin America is dependent on U.S.-manufactured arms. Jusionyte spent five years researching this book in the company of gun dealers, illegal traffickers, medical workers, and state officials. While the public debate about the border has focused on humans going north, *Exit Wounds* shows that the southward movement of firearms is the cause of immense suffering throughout the hemisphere.

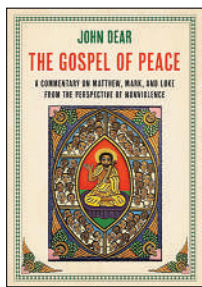


**Healing Our Way Home: Black Buddhist Teachings on Ancestors, Joy, and Liberation**

By Valerie Brown, Marisela Gomez, and Kaira Jewel Lingo

Parallax Press, 2024, 256 pages (paper), \$18.95

For peoples of African descent living through our modern era of environmental disaster, political unrest, and genocide, a vision of collective liberation can seem a mirage. Nevertheless, Black Buddhists pursue healing and even joy by drawing on ancestral worship and other traditional African practices. Three followers of Zen Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh have gathered their deep wisdom on achieving internal and communal peace. As Black women, the collaborators – including Valerie Brown, who contributed to *Fellowship’s* 2022 tribute issue to Nhat Hanh – describe their rich vision of not just surviving but thriving in this moment.

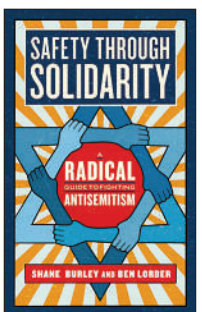


**The Gospel of Peace: A Commentary on Matthew, Mark, and Luke from the Perspective of Nonviolence**

By John Dear

Orbis Books, 2023, 440 pages (paper), \$27.99

Renowned as a leading practitioner and teacher of spiritually-rooted nonviolence, John Dear – who served as FOR’s executive director at the turn of the millennium, and is now founding director of the Beatitudes Center for the Nonviolent Jesus – digs even deeper into his decades-long exploration of the synoptic Gospels’ essential meaning for us today. Dear compellingly compares Jesus’ radical acts to those of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., identifying all of these prophets as “revolutionary disruptors” who nonviolently deployed their followers in mass campaigns of civil disobedience – and were subsequently murdered for doing so.

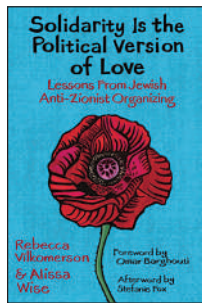


**Safety Through Solidarity: A Radical Guide to Fighting Antisemitism**

By Shane Burley and Ben Lorber

Melville House, 2024, 288 pages (paper), \$18.99

In September 2024, the FBI reported that anti-Jewish hate crimes in the U.S. had reached their highest-ever number (since 1991, when data began to be collected), and had spiked 63% in the previous year. Only two percent of the U.S. population, Jews were the targets of 68% of religiously-motivated hate crimes in 2023, according to statistics. Nevertheless, in their timely new book, authors Burley and Lorber push back against the notion of an exclusivist focus on anti-Jewish hatred, contextualizing the struggle against antisemitism as interwoven within a broader intersectional movement to end oppression.



**Solidarity Is the Political Version of Love: Lessons from Jewish Anti-Zionist Organizing**

By Rebecca Vilkomerson and Alissa Wise

AK Press, 2024, 344 pages (paper), \$22.95

Jewish Voice for Peace has received expansive attention for its radical efforts to challenge U.S. support for the Israeli state. As it grew, JVP distinguished itself from other liberal-to-progressive Jewish American education and advocacy groups – a wide spectrum including J Street, New Israel Fund, Tikkun, Rabbis for Human Rights, Bend the Arc, and more – by staking its position on a Judaism free from Zionism. Two past organizational leaders (one a rabbi), describe the ups and downs of Jewish-rooted Palestine solidarity organizing during this time of dramatic conflict, both in the Middle East and within American Judaism.

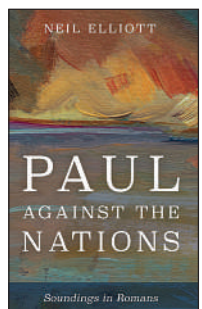


**Beneath the Mountain: An Anti-Prison Reader**

Edited by Mumia Abu-Jamal and Jennifer Black

City Lights Publishers, 2024, 240 pages (paper), \$18.95

The U.S. prison abolitionist movement waxes and wanes; in 2020, increased critiques of policing and prisons led some to believe that a mass project of decommissioning carceral institutions might be possible. While this proved misguided, the process of uprooting our societal addiction to systemic punishment continues. Black and Abu-Jamal, the nation’s most famous living political prisoner, have assembled an extraordinary collection of prison writings from U.S. dissidents through history – including Nat Turner, John Brown, Frederick Douglass, Geronimo, Ethel & Julius Rosenberg, Eugene Debs, Mother Jones, Dr. King, Angela Davis, and many more.



**Paul against the Nations: Soundings in Romans**

By Neil Elliott

Cascade Books, 2024, 364 pages (paper), \$43.00

Given the dramatic ascendancy of White Christian Nationalism, we must interrogate the theological justifications that have made this neo-political movement possible. A longtime scholar of the Pauline texts in the New Testament, Neil Elliott deepens his exegetical work here by taking on “supersessionism” – typically described as the belief that Christianity is the fulfillment of biblical Judaism. In an era when the vitriolic chant “Jews Will Not Replace Us” has characterized the rise of anti-Jewish hatred that fuels right-wing movements, Elliott pushes back against so-called “replacement theology” that some had seen as central to the Christian formation story.



# MEMORIALS

GLEN ANDERSON



Olympia activist Glen Anderson died July 12, 2024. Glen was one of the founders of the Olympia chapter of Fellowship of Reconciliation in 1976, and for many years his activism in Olympia FOR was like an unpaid full-time job, even when Glen was still working in his actual full-time paid job. In the past few years, Glen spent much of his activist time producing his monthly TV show, but he still nurtured and attended Olympia FOR's twice-weekly peace vigils. Glen was also a stalwart of Western Washington FOR, and served in many capacities including secretary, membership and chapter development, fundraising, and conference organizing. Glen served on the National Council of FOR-USA. He excelled in drawing people into FOR; every vigil was an opportunity to introduce new people to the organization. Glen was also a founder in 2016 of the Olympia Coalition to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, OCANW, in which Olympia FOR joined with other organizations creating a strong coalition of peace activists. Glen often offered free courses to the community on grassroots organizing, nonviolence, and nuclear weapons. We remember Glen for his enduring belief that people could make a difference, his prodigious work, his sense of humor, and his kindness.

Glen Anderson, Present!

— *Olympia (Washington) FOR*

MARC ELLIS



Marc passed Saturday morning, June 8, 2024, at the age of 71. Some have told us he was quite young to have passed away. Yet he lived an extraordinarily full life, connecting with and engaging people from all over the world, on every continent and from all backgrounds. As a liberation theologian, he pursued justice with fierceness and grace, and with the utmost care and concern. His career-long commitment to Palestinian freedom, self-determination, and an end to the Israeli occupation, in many ways defined his life. Since 1986 he has insisted: Jews and the Jewish future are intertwined with Palestinians and the Palestinian future. There is no Jewish liberation without Palestinian liberation. With this as a foundation, he opposed oppression of all kinds, and sought to center the voices and cries for justice from those who are most oppressed, all across the world.

We want to remember and celebrate his lifelong commitment to the Jewish prophetic and his belief that there's only one reason to be Jewish — to draw near, embrace, and embody the prophetic. For him, life is a continuing discussion and a series of encounters. He valued those encounters that have extended until his last months. We — his family — are grateful for the intimate encounters during his final days. He

wrote voluminously, and traveled and spoke tirelessly, and, later in life, photographed and painted copiously. He was also a devoted father, playful, caring, and a great cut-up who never tired of embarrassing his children by breaking into dance and song in public. He loved the New York Yankees, Bob Dylan, and Neil Young. He was thoughtful, generous, and silly, and he remained full of wit and joviality even as his illnesses progressed. We miss him dearly, and were grateful to be with him during his final days. We are grateful that he passed peacefully, without pain, and not alone.

— *From Marc's family — Isaiah, Aaron, and Co*

JOHAN GALTUNG



Groundbreaking peace researcher Johan Galtung passed away on February 17, 2024 at the age of 93 in Oslo, Norway, of an undiagnosed pneumonia. Prof. Galtung was a principal founder of the discipline of peace studies. He was the first academic to name and investigate the concepts of structural violence, negative versus positive peace, and the triad of peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding — terms that are now in circulation throughout the world. He was the main founder of the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) in 1959 and served as its first director until 1970. He also founded the International Peace Research Association

## MEMORIALS

and co-founded TRANSCEND: A Peace Development Environment Network, including Transcend Media Service and Transcend Peace University.

In 1964, Galtung led PRIO to establish the first academic journal devoted to peace studies, the *Journal of Peace Research*. In 1969, he left PRIO for a position at the University of Oslo, where he held the world's first chair in peace and conflict studies, a position he occupied until 1978. He held visiting positions at many other universities, including Santiago, Chile, the United Nations University in Geneva, Witten/Herdecke University in Germany, and at Columbia, Princeton, and the University of Hawaii in the U.S. In 2014, he was appointed the first Tun Mahathir Professor of Global Peace at the International Islamic University Malaysia.

A member of the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters and recipient of countless honors, in 1987 Galtung was given the Right Livelihood Award, an international prize sometimes referred to as the "Alternative Nobel Prize." He is survived by his wife, an ex-wife, and four children, as well as untold influence in the world of ideas.

### THOMAS GUMBLETON



Bishop Thomas "Tom" Gumbleton was a beacon of hope to so many around the world. Born on January 26, 1930, Tom leaves a legacy of love and service. He passed away on April 4, 2024.

Son of the late Helen and Vincent Gumbleton, and brother to Sr. Irene Gumbleton, IHM, Tom was a cherished sibling in a vibrant extended family. He

studied theology at St. John Major Seminary and was ordained a priest on June 2, 1956. He received his Doctorate in Canon Law from the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome, Italy. This foundation of education prepared him for his nearly 70 years of ministry. In 1968, he became the youngest bishop in the United States, at age 38.

In addition to parish ministry and service as an Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Detroit, Tom travelled throughout the world responding to requests to accompany people in crisis, especially in situations calling for human rights advocacy, nonviolence, and justice. His passion for justice led him to serve as a co-founder, board member or advisory committee member of over 50 organizations in Detroit, the U.S. and abroad.

It was in his pastoral role, however, that he is best remembered. Tom inspired those around him to recognize their own call to love one another as God has first loved us. He challenged each person to build a world where all will feel at home.

His legacy is not merely a list of accomplishments or positions held, but rather the countless hearts he touched and the minds he encouraged to think deeply about faith, justice, and love.

— *bishopgumbleton.com*

### VIVIAN SILVER



Vivian Silver, tireless advocate for peace and women's rights, was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada on February 2, 1949, and died in the Kibbutz Be'eri massacre in Israel on October 7, 2023. In 1973 she and Shifra Bronznick organized the first National

Congress of Jewish Women, and in 1974 she emigrated to Israel, where she quickly became involved in feminist activism, founding the United Kibbutz Movement's Department to Advance Gender Equality in 1981. In 1990, together with her husband and two sons, she moved to Kibbutz Be'eri near the Gaza border. There she first became acquainted with the situation of Palestinians. In 1998 she became executive director of The Negev Institute for Strategies of Peace and Development (NISPED) and began to organize kibbutz programs to support and advocate for Gazans. In 1999, she and Amal Elsana Alh'jooj co-founded the Arab-Jewish Center for Equality, Empowerment and Cooperation under the auspices of NISPED. In 2010, Silver and Alh'jooj received the Victor J. Goldberg Prize for Peace in the Middle East, an annual prize given by the Institute of International Education to pairs of Arab and Israeli activists working towards peace.

Silver founded or co-founded numerous programs and organizations dedicated to this cause. Even after her official retirement in 2014, and the 2014 Gaza war, she co-founded Women Wage Peace, an interfaith grassroots movement. Silver also played a pivotal role in providing medical aid to Gazans, demonstrating an unwavering commitment to humanitarian efforts and cross-border solidarity. Silver helped organize a peace rally in Jerusalem, which drew 1,500 Israeli and Palestinian women, on October 4, 2023.

Silver's remains were not identified until five weeks after the October 7 attack. She was declared dead on November 13, 2023 and buried at Be'eri. In August 2024, a community kitchen in the Zomi displaced persons camp in the al-Mawasi humanitarian zone in southern Gaza was named after Silver, following the approval of her son Yonatan, who has also established the Vivian Silver Impact Award in her honor.



AFTERIMAGE

"If I Love you,  
I have to  
make you  
Conscious of  
the things that  
you do not  
See." - James  
Baldwin

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