



Desert Voices

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Trinity Action: NDE Team Reclaims Test Site on Trinity Anniversary

by Eda Uca

On July 16, we at NDE and many of you across the nation mourned the 61st anniversary of the dawn of the nuclear age. The desert sun had not risen when Sr. Megan Rice, SHCJ, Chelsea Collonge and I arrived at the Nevada Test Site that morning to close it down and pray that the land would soon be under the care of the Western Shoshone people. During our witness, we invoked the memory of the hibakusha, the image of the decimated land in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the energy of the Nevada Desert—which was never barren, nor dead but is today mutated and penetrated by the scepters of death—and announced the legal and moral imperative to relinquish any sense of privilege above our Shoshone sisters and brothers. By 4:29 PDT (the precise moment that the first nuclear bomb was detonated 61 years ago) we were holding hands and singing, unarmed and disarmed and surrounded by 12 agitated security guards and police officers.

We are not alone in supporting the Western Shoshone people. In 2003, in response to the 1993 petition to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) by sisters Mary and Carrie Dann of the Crescent Valley region of the Western Shoshone Nation, the IACHR stated that the US used illegitimate means to acquire the land and that its claim to the land today is illegal and contrary to international human rights law. In 2001, two years before the IACHR came to these conclusions, and again this year, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed urgent concern about the discriminatory and destructive policies of the US Government against all indigenous peoples and in particular against the Western Shoshone people, who—due to specific provisions in the Treaty of Ruby Valley—have unique claim to their ancestral lands.



Eda Uca and Sr. Megan Rice, SHCJ wait to be arrested for crossing the line to hang a new sign at the test site entrance (see a picture of the sign on page 4).

I am neither part of the power elite nor of the Western Shoshone. Yet as I reflect on their plight and on the ministry of Jesus, I find that I am not precluded from participating in the dialogue between these forces. In one of my favorite stories about Jesus, he takes an *anawim* (a Greek word for “one without any power or prestige,” which is often erroneously translated as “child”) into his arms and tells the somewhat unteachable disciples that when they embrace the presence of the littlest among them, they embrace him. Standing with the Shoshone and understanding their narrative is not a matter of losing focus on the issue of nuclear abolition but rather of putting that struggle into context and of answering fully my call as a Christian to embrace the *anawim* of our day.

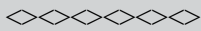
As peacemakers and as people of faith, we do not wait for the day that nuclear weapons are merely abolished. If we are to make our hope to close down the Test Site real, then we must not neglect to plan for the transformation of that place under the stewardship of our Shoshone sisters and brothers. If prophecy is to become fact then we seek not only the death of weapons but instead pray for the resurrection of this sacred land.

Eda Uca was an NDE summer intern and is currently living at Jonah House in Baltimore, Maryland.

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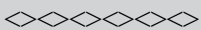
The mission of Nevada Desert Experience (NDE) is to stop nuclear weapons testing through a campaign of prayer, education, dialogue and nonviolent direct action. NDE mobilizes people of all faiths to work toward nuclear abolition and nonviolent social change. We are committed to providing support for communal and personal renewal in the desert tradition. Our immediate attention focuses on ending sub-critical tests and other war-making preparations at the Nevada Test Site and preventing the return of full scale nuclear testing.



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Staff Update

by Sr. Megan Rice, SHCJ

War Resisters League Conference

After the council meeting at San Damiano, Chelsea and Megan traveled to St. Paul, Minnesota, for the War Resisters League "Stop the Merchants of Death" Conference, held September 29th to October 2nd. The focus of the weekend was resisting war profiteering corporations, including those that produce weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). Participants were drawn from movements around the country that address the development, testing, production and sales of weapons. The main purpose of the weekend was to respond to a need we all are experiencing in these most critical days—to network, to share strengths and resources and to learn mutually from being more in community through our valuable experiences.

A team from the Fellowship of Reconciliation provided valuable training to help participants work more effectively and sensitively with others of different ages, cultural backgrounds and races. Please visit the WRL website (<http://www.warresisters.org>) for stories of non-violent resistance including the actions of Carnegie Mellon University graduate students who took on the military industrial complex, the Halliburton shareholder meeting takeovers and actions by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, among others.

Declaration of Peace and World Peace Day

While NDE staffers and council were meeting in the East Bay, Las Vegas Catholic Workers who vigil every Thursday in front of the Federal Courthouse were joined by other peacemakers who distributed fliers for the Declaration of Peace Campaign. Joining with similar gatherings in DC and around the country on September 21st, World Peace Day, Louie Vitale spoke about his participation in Code Pink's Washington, D.C. fast and his recent part in the Peace Delegation to Jordan. These reports contributed to the sense of urgency felt by the Thursday morning vigilers, whose numbers are growing in consequence of the critically mounting war casualties. We are grateful for the inspiration of Peter Ediger and Pace e Bene's work promoting this strong action for peace.

A Garage Sale

Finally, we need to make mention of a garage sale in Castro Valley that benefited NDE. It was organized by Eric and Leslie Brouillette with leftover wonders belonging to Leslie's parents, long time NDE/SOAW faithfuls Allen and Dorothy Sawyer, who had just sold their home. Thank you Leslie, Eric, Allen and Dorothy!



WRL participants create a web of solidarity.

Board and Staff Transitions

By Chelsea Collonge

NDE had a successful council meeting of staff and board members in September at San Damiano retreat center in Danville, CA. We said a sad goodbye to Gwen Watson, who is leaving the board because of her time commitment to running a shelter for homeless people. We extend our thanks to Gwen and our best wishes for her important ministry.

In happy news, God has blessed NDE with two new staff members! Sarah Harling will be working with Chelsea Collonge in Berkeley, organizing immersion trips for students and helping plan our spring programs. Sarah is a graduate of Peace and Conflict Studies at U.C. Berkeley and the director of youth ministries for St. John's Presbyterian Church in Berkeley. K. Kathleen Fairchild, also called Kamillah, will be working with Sr. Megan Rice out of our Las Vegas office. Kamillah has worked as a labor organizer and a peace and justice activist for many years. She will be coordinating our fundraising efforts and doing outreach in the Las Vegas peace community and beyond. We are delighted to welcome these two talented women to the NDE team.

Reflections on the North Korean Nuclear Test

by Chelsea Collonge

On October 7th I joined with 40 other people in front of Vandenberg Air Force Base on California's central coast. We were marking the International Keep Space for Peace Week by protesting U.S. Space Policy, which plans for the U.S. to dominate the earth from space using space weapons launched from Vandenberg. Two days later the North Korean government announced that it had tested its first nuclear weapon. What is the connection between these two events?

The connection became clear to me when North Korea tested a long-range missile, and my mom called me to share her worries about North Korea's aggression. I didn't know what to tell her until I learned that the U.S. conducted two similar tests, two weeks before and two weeks after the North Korean test, from Vandenberg. These missiles (carrying dummy warheads) targeted the Marshall Islands, whose people have borne the brunt of years of above-ground nuclear testing in the 50's along with the people of Nevada and Utah.

Learning about these missile tests put the North Korean missile test into perspective and eased some of my fear of North Korea. I could see that North Korea's interest was in gaining a deterrent to U.S. aggression, and not in attacking other countries. Unlike North Korea, when the U.S. launches these dummy ICBMs from Vandenberg, they actually have 500 real ICBMs ready to go in missile silos in the Midwest. In violation of the spirit of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the U.S. has conducted 23 subcritical nuclear tests since 1997 to get data for designing new nuclear weapons. The most recent of these tests was held on August 30th of this year.

August Desert Witness 2006

by Sarah Harling

The 61st anniversary of the United States' atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was commemorated by a series of actions held between August 6th and August 9th. Across the country thousands of people came together to resist nuclearism through nonviolent direct action, teach-ins and art to mark the solemn anniversaries of the atrocities and to commit themselves anew to opposing nuclear weapons and war. More than 70 groups gathered in 27 states in events that reached nearly all National Nuclear Security Administration sites. Bechtel, the corporation that manages many of these sites, was the focus for several events.

NDE sponsored August Desert Witness, which included a vigil outside the Testing Museum; a prayer service at the Test Site led by Fr. Jerry Zawada, after which twenty people chose to cross the line in an act of civil disobedience; a teach-in and community dinner at St. James the Apostle Church in Las Vegas; and a morning vigil at the DOE Las Vegas headquarters, where we protested NSTec, the new test site contractor that took over from Bechtel this summer.

We were privileged to have several speakers who shared moving personal experiences. Kazuo Maruta, a survivor from Nagasaki, and Sue Carpenter, a survivor who lives in San Diego, spoke at the Atomic Testing Museum, recounting the horror they

experienced. Janet Gordon, the founder of Citizen's Call and a downwinder from St. George, shared her experience of losing her brother to cancer, combining important

facts about nuclear waste with a moving testimony about the human consequences of testing. Tony Guzman, a recent Citizen Alert employee, spoke about Yucca Mountain and HEAL Utah's Vanessa Pierce spoke about "Divine" Strake. Henry Howard wrote "Words cannot express my gratitude at being able to participate in this year's test site demonstration ... When I came, I was fleeing the horror that has engulfed the world, the wrenching images flung in our faces every single morning, noon and night, the endless LIES from our government. I so needed to get away, to do something spiritual as well as political that would help me feel cleansed and recharged. ... Thank you ... for letting me walk in the sandals of St. Francis for a little while."



ADW 2006 participants vigil. L to R: Amy Schultz, Mariah Klusmire, Patrick Finn.

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Jesse Manibusan CD: Walking the Ways of Peace

With Vibrant Songs Including: Choose Life, The Inner Circle's Larger, Revive Us, O God, Song of Hope, Power of Peace, God is Bigger, Whispering Peace, For the Healing of Nations, Walking the Ways of Peace

Thanks to the generous donation of Jesse Manibusan, all proceeds from this CD go directly to NDE. Please order from www.nevadadesertexperience.org. Sliding scale \$20-15

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Upcoming Events

Please join us!

March 2-4

Pacific Life Community Gathering

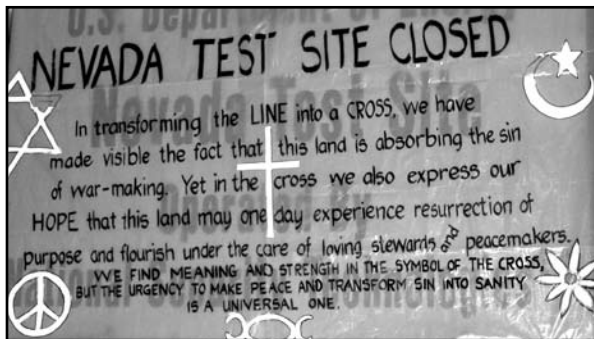
March 27-April 1

2007 Sacred Peace Walk

Activists from all over the Pacific Rim will come together to reflect on the current efforts to resist nuclear/war-making and to plan for a nuclear-free future for all.

Pacific Life Community is a network of intentional communities and organizations (rooted in the Catholic Worker movement) which are committed to ending nuclear weapons and war-making through non-violent direct action along the Pacific Rim in collaboration with the global peace movement.

For more information about PLC, please visit <http://pacificlifecommunity.wordpress.com>.



Sign from the July 16, 2006 Trinity Action

The 2007 Sacred Peace Walk will have a special interfaith focus, with ceremonies commemorating Mohammed's birthday, Palm Sunday, April Fools Day, an early celebration of Passover, Buddha's birthday and the full moon. Because of the urgency of the times we will be having an educational event in Las Vegas on Saturday that will overlap with the walk.

The walk will start Tuesday, March 27 and end on Sunday, April 1st, with an optional Monday action to reach out to the Test Site workers. An interfaith service and action will take place on Sunday at the Test Site. The following Friday (Good Friday in the Christian tradition) will be an opportunity for people to vigil in their home cities.