

Desert Voices

NDE Newsletter

#5 spring 1989

Nonviolence as Macho Behavior

--Mary E. Hunt

Feminist peacemakers often ask if nonviolence is a disguised form of macho behavior. As an early student of James Fowler, whose pioneering work on faith development is foundational, I came to see that Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.--his examples of the highest stage of faith development--should be joined by Sojourner Truth, Dorothy Day and other women activists if a full understanding of faith development is to emerge. Now, even though I believe that someone should write a feminist complement and critique of Fowler's work, I am not convinced that such a critique would be sufficient. There is, after all, something macho about rank ordering people and experiences.

An alternative is presented by feminist theologians in the US. Having learned from our Latin American liberation colleagues that change in power dynamics is necessary to empower people to make their own decisions, we have shifted the way in which we do theology. This "preferential option for the struggling poor" encourages those who are most deeply affected to take the lead. More so, it encourages us to pay attention to particularity, to the unique needs of women and children, in short, to pay attention to the context in which our work takes place.

Ideological nonviolence does not do this. Instead it begins with an idea, a commitment, and not a concrete person or situation in need of justice. I am suspicious of such a starting point. For example, battered women ought not be told to be nonviolent. They need not necessarily be violent, but the line is thin indeed when the fist is in the air.

Self-defense, of course, is the exceptional case in nonviolence. Yet there is finally something macho

about taking the blows, putting up with all that the aggressor will deliver. "Suffer the anger of the opponent" or "Refuse to return the assaults" could be very bad advice or strategies for people being battered. These approaches may be useful when people with power wish to witness to injustice, as in the case of the Nevada Desert Experience. But people without power simply cannot usually afford such strategies.

Even more clarity comes from womanist theology, the work of Delores Williams and other African American women after the fashion of Alice Walker. "Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender," according to Walker. Womanist approaches vary according to culture, but each takes women's survival and the survival of dependent children as the starting point for change. I trust this as a way to keep strategies on target. Macho behavior not only insults, it can kill.

Sometimes the question arises as to whether there is actually macho behavior in the US peace movement. I see it in the religious sector, where deeply internalized clericalism still holds sway. I see it, and have even engaged in it, in those sectors of the women-church movement where we have uncritically and unconsciously repeated patriarchal patterns. Patriarchy is deep in all of us. Eradicating it will not be easy, but it must be part of any agenda for peace-making lest we make peace like we have made war.

The point is not simply to blame nor to decry. The point is to see that even peace-making in a deeply patriarchal culture will be infused with macho behavior if we begin from the unexamined presupposition of even the most "politically correct" philosophy rather than with the deeply felt needs of those whose immediate survival is at stake. The time to examine our starting points is upon us if we are to eradicate macho behavior and be peaceful with one another.

LENTEN DESERT EXPERIENCE VIII

"We are an Easter people; we are a people of peace." With that affirmation, 100 NDE folk celebrated the eucharist at the gate of the Nevada Test Site on Easter. 27 were arrested as they crossed the line singing, "Go tell it in the desert ... that Jesus Christ is risen."

The joyful note of this Resurrection celebration was poignantly sounded by the 13 people who earlier entered the Test Site undetected to reconsecrate a chapel (see related story).

These events marked the culmination of LDE VIII, which began on Ash Wednesday. Bishops Buswell and Gumbleton, Archbishop Hunthausen, and Fr. Dan Berrigan called people to repent the idolatry of the bomb and be reborn in the God of love and truth. Between Ash Wednesday and Easter, more than 1600 came for prayer, reflection and action at the Test Site. 610 arrested for trespass were given citations and released. The Franciscans--who began the Desert Witness in 1981--were the largest delegation during a series of weekend events in Lent. Other communities represented included Methodists, Las Vegans, Friends-Brethren-Mennonites, Seminarians, and a group from the American Medical Students Association.

DESERT VOICES welcomes letters, articles, announcements, information, poetry, humorous pieces, and visual art. Send to: Desert Voices, Box 4487, Las Vegas, NV 89127.

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There is no ready solution nuclearism; the only way a Christian may responsibly confront the dilemma posed by the church's covenanting with the empire, the US government, is to live by the gospel spirit, which gives us a very different conception: God's grace and human life. We loosely term that nonviolence, a whole other way of being. It's a gospel that first of all critically disassociates those who would hear it from the quest for power. It's a gospel that opens those of us who would hear it to the fact that the world, the whole world, can be affirmed and loved.

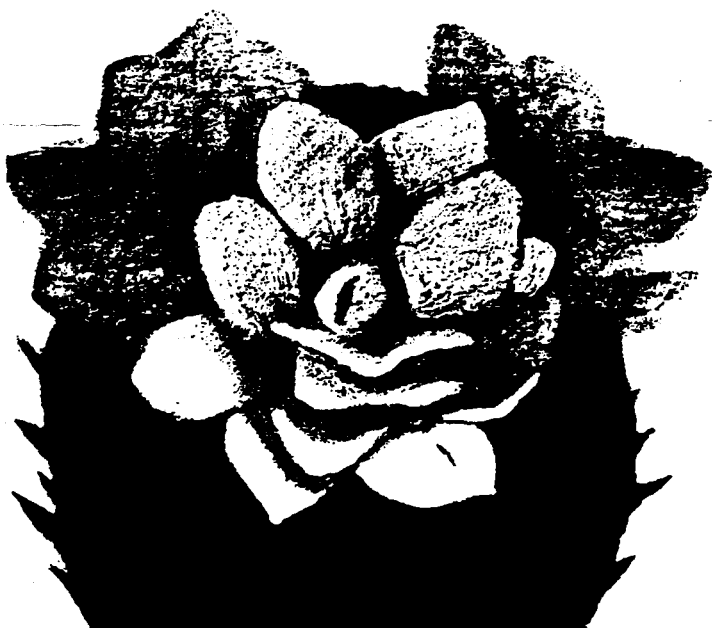
--Liz McAlister

The only credible witness to nonviolence today will come from the battlefield itself, in solidarity with those who are the direct victims of violence. Many brothers and sisters are avoiding some of the arguments that we get stuck on so often about pacifism or not pacifism. They are entering the struggle alongside those who are its victims and becoming victims themselves.

--Jim Wallis

The revolution of gospel nonviolence has not yet hit the church in the West. It is hard for us even to understand how it is possible to be a resistance church. It doesn't come naturally for those who grew up in Christendom where empire and church legitimize each other. If we are to participate in the revolution of gospel nonviolence we must seek the formation of communities which live out the Christ reality. We must learn to read the Scriptures as a counter-history, as an alternative reading of reality. The church has regularly avoided reading history from the side of the poor, or minorities, or women. The church will have to learn to repent, to turn around. The church must become a political alternative to every nation, including America.

--Richard Rohr



We attribute to St. Francis the lines, "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace." Again, an instrument. I won't always make it happen, but I will be your instrumentality to bring peace to the world. I always thought it significant that Jesus and Francis did not tell us we will be successful or we will win, or the Contras will be no more, or the Test Site will dissolve, or there will be no more homelessness, but rather we will be happy in our faithfulness. That is what is asked of us, that we be faithful. Sojourner Truth said, "Pray for the dead and fight like hell for the living."

--Joan Malone

VISIONS OF AN AMERICAN CHURCH STRUGGLING WITH NONVIOLENCE

On Dr. King Day in New York we had the great privilege of a prayer service at a shelter, the prayer being led by homeless people who then accompanied us to this notorious laboratory where Star Wars is being concocted day after day. The highly placed scientists and engineers of Riverside Research in New York quite literally step over the homeless on the streets there with their briefcases and their silk suits, to get to their bomb work and never draw the connections the poor were drawing that day when they too were arrested with us -- not just as homeless people seeking redress but as people of conscience seeking redress for the whole world, the whole human family. It's a truism and a very precious one that the poor draw connection that the powerful never will.

--Daniel Berrigan

MERCURY CHAPEL REDEDICATED

Eleven people made a religious pilgrimage onto the Nevada Test Site on the night of Good Friday. They proceeded, with the permission of the Shoshone people, to the former Chapel in Mercury. They found the door open, reminiscent of the experience of the women at Jesus' tomb. With singing, scripture readings and prayer, they transformed the building, now an administrative office for Los Alamos Labs, back into a place of worship. After several hours, they were arrested, held in Beatty jail over the weekend and released with charges pending.

Two more witnesses entered the Chapel early Easter morning for a prayerful celebration of the resurrection. They were charged in Federal Court with "trespass and entering a Federal building with purpose of vexing and annoying."

a small voice
in the desert

"In our 48 years
together in marriage,
we have been faithful
to our vows to protect
and sustain one another.

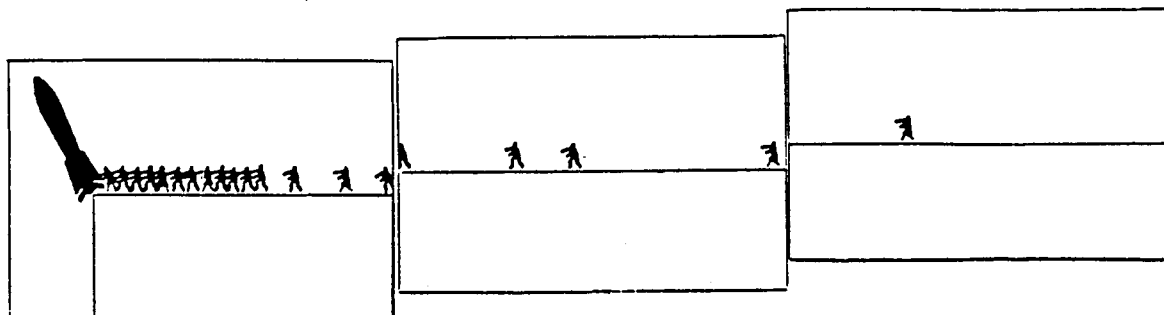
On the threshold of
the ultimate crucible
of fear and madness,
we now vow
in every way we can
to help protect
and sustain
not only our own
eleven grandchildren,
but all children and
Mother Earth."

--Mary & Russ Jorgensen,
of Santa Barbara, CA, spoke
these vows before being
arrested at the Test Site.
March 12.

INTERNATIONAL TEST BAN TREATY CONFERENCE AT UNITED NATIONS

The International Comprehensive Test Ban Campaign and Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) announced the necessary support of forty nations for a UN Amendment Conference to convert the Partial Test Ban Treaty into a Comprehensive Treaty. The amendment would ban underground testing and bind all 116 parties, if approved by a majority including the three original parties: the US, USSR and Britain. "Such a united action of 40 non-nuclear nations is unprecedented," according to the PGA. "It underscores the importance the non-nuclear nations attach to an end to nuclear weapons testing."

For further information on the campaign for a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, write Carolyn Cotton, Chair, US Coalition, Committee for National Security, 1601 Connecticut Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20009.



New NDE Co-Director. Mary Lehman was recently named Co-Director of NDE. She brings organizing experience with environmental and political groups in Wisconsin and Oregon.

Non-Prosecution Policy Extended. Nye County District Attorney Dunleavy has announced that the County will not prosecute any arrests from actions at the Test Site, including "infiltration" or "back country" arrests. It is not clear if the Federal courts will begin to prosecute.

Soviet Group Seeks Test Ban. The LA Times reported in late March that a group of Soviets calling themselves the Nevada Movement have called for an immediate halt to testing in Kazakhstan. They wish to cooperate with other anti-nuclear groups.

Reclaim the Test Site II. Over 1000 people were arrested for trespass at the April 15 rally of the American Peace Test.

Peace Camp. BLM is trying to evict the Peace Camp, but they remain across the road from the Mercury entrance with the permission of the Western Shoshone.

Nuclear Dump Opposed. Public opinion polls show the majority of Nevadans oppose location of the US high level nuclear repository in Nevada. The Nevada State Assembly has passed resolutions making it illegal to store such waste in NV.

PACE E BENE CENTER

The Franciscan Center is an evolving project in nonviolence sponsored by the Franciscans of the Santa Barbara Province in cooperation with the Nevada Desert Experience. The Center's aims include:

- uniting faith and action in the pursuit of peace;
- widening the practice of nonviolence;
- nonviolently resisting the anti-evangelical values of the prevalent culture;
- learning from and entering into solidarity with the oppressed.

During May, Louis Vitale and Alain Richard will visit people involved in nonviolent resistance in the Midwest and Eastern states to discern the next steps in the formation of the nonviolence center. The Pace E Bene Center is planning a Retreat on Nonviolence for the weekend of June 30-July 3, and a Conference on Nonviolence from August 4-9 in cooperation with NDE's annual commemoration of Hiroshima-Nagasaki.

For more information see related notice or write:

PACE E BENE
1420 W Bartlett
Las Vegas, NV 89106
(702) 648-2798

VIDEO TAPE

NDE is pleased to announce the release of "A Fertile Ground," a 12 minute video based on the script of NDE's "Notes on Nonviolence" featuring board member, Martin Sheen, as narrator. The video depicts NDE's prayerful nonviolent campaign to end nuclear weapons testing. "A Fertile Ground" is available for a donation of \$22.50 or on a \$10 rental basis. (Renting? Please give desired dates.)

AUDIO TAPES

Tape

- _____ Dan Berrigan, SJ: *Isaiah 19: Idolatry* (video available \$10, check below)
 _____ Mary Hunt, PhD: *A Feminist Perspective on Peacemaking*

Franciscan Weekend, February 17-19, 1989

- _____ Richard Rohr, OFM: *A Revolution of Gospel Nonviolence* (video available \$10, check below)
 _____ Dan Crosby, OFM, Cap: *Eucharist: Joy, Gratitude & Imagination in Peacemaking*
 _____ John-Joseph Dolan, OFM, Conv: *Justice & Peace: A Personal Reflection on Franciscanism*
 _____ Ron Griffin: *Music & Reflection*
 _____ Nancy Hemesath, OSF: *Cherishing Sister Earth*
 _____ Joan Malone, OSF: *Franciscan Roots for Making Peace*
 _____ Alan McCoy, OFM: *Central American Kairos and World Peace*
 _____ Sarah Mulholland, SFO: *Secular Franciscan Peacemaking -- What is it?*

Holy Week, March 19-22, 1989

- _____ Liz McAlister: *Voice of Nonviolence in the Nuclear Age*
 _____ Liz McAlister: *Life in Jail*
 _____ Julia Occhiogrosso & Louie Vitale, OFM: *Life on the Streets of Showtown*
 _____ Shelley Douglass, Joyce Hollyday, Liz McAlister, Jim Wallis: *Nonviolent Life and Action for the 90's*
 _____ Shelley Douglass: *Nonviolent Campaign Against the Trident*
 _____ Joyce Hollyday: *Struggle in South Africa* / Jim Wallis: *Voice of the Church in Nonviolent Change*
 _____ Joyce Hollyday and Jim Wallis: *Sharing a Nonviolent Journey*

Audio tapes are \$4.50 each (shipping included). These tapes are from events held during LDE VIII, "A Time to be Silent / A Time to Speak." Quality of tapes may vary. To order tapes, please put the number of copies you want in the column accompanying the tape titles, above. Then total order below and send this entire form along with the appropriate payment to NDE.

Name _____
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 City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Make check or money order payable to:
Nevada Desert Experience
P.O. Box 4487
Las Vegas, NV 89127

"A Fertile Ground" Video Tape	
Buy \$22.50 / Rent \$10	_____
Berrigan video \$10	_____
Rohr video \$10	_____
Audio Tapes	
_____ x \$4.50 =	_____
Total	_____

AUGUST DESERT WITNESS V

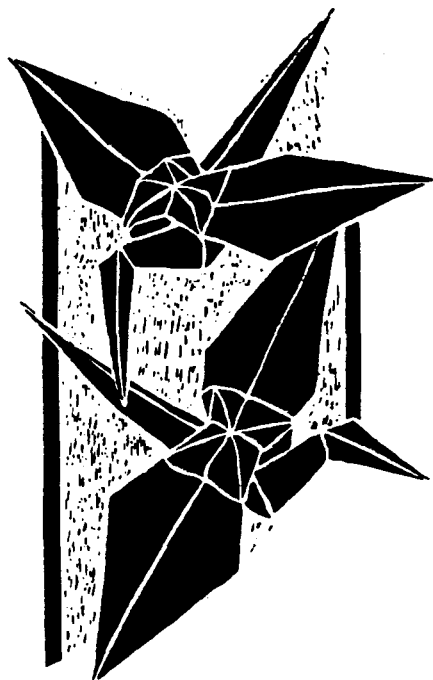
August 4-9, 1989
Commemoration of Hiroshima & Nagasaki

TYRANNY OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS
Richard Barnett ^{PN}
Institute for Policy Studies

Reflections, Prayer, Nonviolent Action
August 4-6

NUCLEAR REALITIES CHALLENGE OUR MORAL THINKING
Barry Stenger^W
Franciscan School of Theology

Workshop, Discussion, Nonviolent Action
August 7-9



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