

Desert Voices

The Newsletter of Nevada Desert Experience • Volume 23, Number 4 • February/March 2011
ISSN 1539-9869

Native Outrage at Nuclear Testing

by Johnnie Bobb, Chief of the Western Shoshone National Council

On January 27-29, 2011 a small group of Western Shoshone and our supporters gathered at the Nevada Test Site to remember the 60th anniversary of the first atomic assault on our beloved Shoshone treaty land. Though they have passed over, the presence of elders who have witnessed here for years, welcoming protestors onto the devastated land, is as strongly felt as ever—Corbin Harney, Bill Rosse, and many others come to mind. We pray for those who have suffered the effects of the radiation.

Above- and below-ground tests have spread the most deadly substances throughout the world. They poisoned the water that all life depends upon—that courses through us and is our life. They poisoned the animals and plants we depend upon. They poisoned the soil with radiation that is still there, invisible.

My people were never told what the tests were, that they were dangerous. We were told they were just “tests,” and they were safe. We kept up our lifestyle, eating wild game, using the plants and hides. Some of those animals had wandered off the test site. We were never told. We saw changes in how animals act, we saw plants and animals disappear. We watched our family members die of strange illnesses that we had never seen before.

But that was not enough to destroy us, to make us leave our land. So the U.S. government continues its harassment. Companies are drilling for uranium only a few miles outside Austin, NV and exploring at several other locations. We imagine the uranium will be used either for more weapons or for nuclear reactors that is called “green energy.”

But follow the nuclear chain. Indigenous people and others will suffer from the poisoned wind of the mining projects. Radioactive waste from the “green reactors” could come to our sacred Yucca Mountain, again being reconsidered as a high level radioactive waste repository. The U.S. continues to ignore scientific findings showing higher levels of cancers and other disorders around existing nuclear reactors.

The largest gold mine in the U.S., the third largest gold mining area in the world, are all on Western Shoshone treaty land, operated by foreign companies. We receive no royalties from the mines, not even money to clean up the methylmercury that has

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The Creech-14 Verdict: Guilty of Protesting US Drones

by The Creech-14

[Editor’s Note: Almost 2 years since the Creech-14 entered the air force base in Indian Springs, NV during the 2009 Sared Peace Walk, a Clark County judge ruled against the defendants, sentencing them to time-served in his 21 page written order. Twelve of the fourteen trespassers made very moving statements about drones, humanity and the ruling. Fr. Louis Vitale was absent, in prison for his November trespass against the School of Americas at Ft. Benning, GA. Renee Espeland didn’t of er remarks during sentencing. Thanks to Kathy Kelly for taking notes and to Mary Lou Anderson for selecting excerpts. -Jim]



Western Shoshone leaders drum and chant as their flag waves amid signs decrying “60 years too many” of NV nuclear tests and suggesting we “Start Testing Peace.”

Brian Terrell: Brian cited a recent interview with a Drone operator; “...the war is 7000 miles away and the war is 18 inches away; 7000 miles, the distance from Creech to Afghanistan; 18

inches, the distance from his face to the computer screen. This distance is an illusion...our action purpose was to dispel that illusion; the danger we were addressing was and is imminent.

Kathy Kelly: “It’s criminal for the U.S. to spend 2 billion dollars per week for war in Afghanistan that maims, kills and displaces innocent civilians who’ve meant us no harm.”

Sr. Megan Rice: “I have listened to the voice of the victims of drone warfare; these weapons are aptly named drones, predators, reapers. I had to enter the base in order to obey higher orders.”

Libby Pappalardo: “Our country is worse off because of the violence of war and militarism. It’s necessary to take this next step.”

Eve Tetaz: “I cannot remain silent. I went to Creech to express my deep sorrow and outrage over the fact that my country was engaged in what I believe were acts of terrorism in the use of drones against my brothers and sisters.”

Dennis DuVall: “We cannot run from the consequences of our drone air war 7000 miles away; eventually it’s going to come home to us. We’re going to be the victims.”

Brad Lyttle: “We are attacking people in an Islamic country, we are shooting missiles and killing them in an arbitrary manner. We have to develop non-military means for achieving justice and therefore peace.”

Mariah Klusmire: “As long as Afghan youth peace volunteers are working for peace and nonviolence in their country; I will too.”

Fr. Steve Kelly: Through our presence, we were trying to make the

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contaminated every waterbody. It accumulates in our bodies, poisons fish; birds and animals drink the water, eat the fish, we eat the animals, and we are further poisoned.

U.S. agencies have formed a partnership for a long-term experiment to "treat" 500,000 acres of pinyon in Nevada. Claiming the trees absorb too much water and pollute the watersheds, they intend to use our trees and our food, the pinenut, for biomass. Our trees are the only thing cooling the dry land, holding the water in their roots.

They will dig up and destroy our ancestors who rest on that land as they did with the Ruby Pipeline in northern NV, destroying our sage grouse areas, disrupting migratory pathways, overturning sacred sites. Our ancestors are in boxes in the state museum, far from their resting places— a violation of our

beliefs. Water is stolen from our aquifers, to supply Las Vegas but turning our land into desert. Radiation still on the dried land will blow in the wind redistributing radiation.

They plan to "buy" our land soon, giving about 6,000 Shoshone \$20,000 for the 70,000,000 mineral-filled acres. Many of us have refused the money.

Newe Sogobia has never been for sale. Despite government attempts to divide us and destroy us, we continue on our land. A whole new generation of young people stand with us, and the effort to get the United States to talk to the Western Shoshone National Council, successors to the treaty, will continue. 卐

Johnnie Bobb is the Chief of the Western Shoshone National Council. He is also a member of the NDE National Council.



Members of NDE's "Peace Platoon" happily waiting for the start of the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. birthday parade in Las Vegas.

Good Morning Family,

What an absolutely amazing time we had at the MLK parade yesterday. With a record breaking high of 74 degrees (in January!), the weather could not have been nicer.

The wait was long. Although the parade started at 10 am, being # 69 in the line up, our group did not "step out" until around 12:30. And it was a noisy wait, so many different groups blasting their music or their message. Then there was the annoyance of having to locate a bathroom or portapottie, and stand in line for quite a while. So, you are wondering, what was so amazing about all this?

Once we moved into the stream, joined with the living entity the parade had become, a feeling of euphoria swept over us. I was humbled to watch our dear Carolina wheel herself the entire parade route in a chair decorated with pentagram and peace sign, her daughter Amber close by pushing baby "Nikki" in a stroller. Kevin had on one of the funniest costumes I have ever seen, a

witch perched on the shoulders of a ghost. Carrying a sign with the Witch's Reed, he'd brought a large supply of erasers stamped with peace signs and passed these out to kids along the route.

Willie was there to bless all of us and the entire event with sage, Lisa was in from Arizona and boogied the entire time! There were 25 of us in all, from NDE, Pace Bene, the Temple and friends, each adding their uniqueness to the day, dancing, smiling, entertaining, educating.

Jim, Mary Lou, and all the folks at NDE along with the help of lots of volunteers, did a great job getting a truck set up with banners and loud speakers broadcasting the words of Dr. King as we walked.. Our small but powerful Peace Platoon passed out 1000 flyers honoring Dr. King with his words and his message.

The energy was amazing. All the happy, smiling faces that lined both sides of the street made the walk pass so quickly. Before we knew it we were at the end of the route.

My hope is that next year we will be ten times in number what we were this year. My dream is that this year, we will all feel the inter connectedness, the oneness of life, and put away violence forever.

Blessed be,
Candace

Candace Ross is the High Priestess in residence at the Temple to Goddess Spirituality dedicated to Sekhmet. She is also a member of the NDE National Council. This letter was sent to the Sekhmet Temple list-serve.

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imminent danger posed by drone warfare less remote."

Judy Homanich: "I prayerfully acted in solidarity with all mothers, daughters, wives and sisters here and around the world who suffer loss due to war."

Fr. Jerry Zawada: "We think of people on the other side of the border or the ocean as being different from ourselves; they're not; that's my family and your family too; we are one family."

Fr. John Dear: "In the end the judge sentenced us to time served. As we left we pledged to continue to speak out against the drones...and to stir the embers of the peace movement to speak out and take action for a new world of nonviolence. We give thanks for the opportunity to witness to peace . . . as Father Jerry said, we are all one family." 卐



The Creech-14 (absent, Fr. Louis Vitale)

Join Nevada Desert Experience in one of our nonviolent direct actions or invite us to make a presentation or prayer-offering to your community or congregation. We are grateful for your prayers and financial contributions too! Most of our income is from individuals.

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NDE does not share our list; nor do we send lots of e-mail. E-mail is very helpful for our work though —saving money, resources, and speeding the distribution of time-sensitive news.

Nevada Desert Experience is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Donations are tax deductible. Ask us for a receipt if you need one.

60 Years of Disaster

by Jim Haber, Coordinator of Nevada Desert Experience

January 27 marks 60 years since the first atomic bomb test in Nevada. Codenamed "Able" it was tiny for a nuclear weapon: the equivalent of 1,000 tons of TNT, about 1/15 the size of the bomb that killed upwards of 130,000 people in Hiroshima. Anniversaries are times to reflect, so what is the legacy of the Nevada Test Site (NTS), now called the Nevada National Security Site (NNSS)? What is the current state of the NNSS and what is going on there? Are the nation and world safer for all the Cold War and post-Cold War efforts? As the NNSS re-purposes itself to focus more on detecting and containing national security threats, it still stands as a world-wide symbol of the making of weapons of mass destruction. The name change is intended to reassert its relevance in the absence of exploding nuclear devices, but the inherent problem of the NTS remains. The NNSS is always able to resume testing nuclear weapons within two years should the president order it.

Testing of nuclear weapons didn't only happen at the Nevada Test Site. Historians even argue that using the bombs on Japan rather than demonstrating them on an unpopulated location constitute human experimentation. Treating victims as research subjects rather than patients was widely reported in Japan, as well as from victims of atmospheric testing in the 1950s. Targeting civilians was and remains a crime against humanity, as does threatening nuclear attack on non-nuclear states, no matter how repressive their leaders.

We, as a people, caused much worldwide grief for our part in the Cold War, which used small countries as battlegrounds with no concern for local populations or environments. Official tours of the NNSS and the displays at the Atomic Testing Museum in Las Vegas exhibit great pride in the NTS' Cold War role. There is little mention in their history about efforts to stop testing and other parts of the nuclear weapons complex. Efforts to shut down the Soviet nuclear test site in Kazakhstan or French test sites in Africa and the South Pacific garner barely a word. Only a limited view is presented.

At the NNSS which is run by the Department of Energy (blurring the lines between civilian and military in this country), military nuclear waste is buried even as remediation efforts elsewhere are undertaken. The detection and first responder trainings are only defensive in nature if we concurrently support the leadership of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

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Sacred Peace Walk August Desert Witness Nukes

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in its mission to monitor nuclear programs around the world. Unilateral or bilateral agreements that ignore the mandate of the IAEA actually encourage other states to seek nuclear weapons to be seen as worthy players on the international stage.

The United States military budget is on par with military spending of all other countries combined. When the US attacks countries that don't have nuclear weapons, it makes the possession of nuclear weapons seem like a necessary deterrent. But if more countries have deterrent forces, then we've lost the disarmament fight.

Taking the land of the Western Shoshone and other native peoples to use it for nuclear testing is not just. Forcing the people of Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands to live on tiny Ebeye Island, creating one of the most densely populated places on Earth is not just. Stealing and contaminating native hunting and fishing grounds is not just.

Thank God so few countries have tested or possess nuclear weapons. The global consensus is clearly to eliminate all nuclear weapons. "Stockpile Stewardship" tests at the NNSS, along with missile tests in the Pacific are undermining the credibility of the U.S.'s agreement to seriously reduce nuclear stockpiles. Sharing nuclear technology with violators and abstainers of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty while threatening countries not in egregious, well-documented breaches of the NPT is not just and promotes horizontal proliferation. Hence, continued testing whether they're full-scale tests or not, signals to the world that the US will keep its finger on the button and will brook no new players in the nuclear game.

When we devise ways for nuclear weapons to be more precise and kill fewer civilians, to be more militarily useful, we undermine the international consensus against all weapons of mass destruction. And how many design upgrades and revisions can be implemented and still not require a real test? At some point, unless we in the United States get serious about pressuring our government to cut its nuclear weapons arsenal, the Nevada Desert will again quake with detonations...and be filled with peacemakers crashing the gates like in the 1980s to shut it down once and for all. This anniversary should serve as a time to work for peace and disarmament.





“Just to be, is a blessing. Just to live, is holy.”

-Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

“Our Mother Earth is relying on us. Please join us with your thoughts, prayers and actions.”

-Corbin Harney, Late Western Shoshone Spiritual Leader

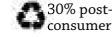
“We only need to have the eyes which are able to see in every creature, however suffering, however deformed, the divine image.”

-Sister Rosemary Lynch, OSF



Sr. Rosemary Lynch, OSF, co-founder of Nevada Desert Experience and Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service passed away on January 9 at the age of 93. Her compassion, intelligence and good humor will be missed. Gifts in her memory may be sent to Franciscan Sisters Social Programs, 6517 Ruby Red Circle, Las Vegas NV 89108. They will be shared by their refugee ministry as well as Pace e Bene and NDE.

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Fr. Jerry Zawada, OFM stands behind his sign.

Dear Readers,

This small newsletter is intended to bring you an inkling of the work of Nevada Desert Experience. There isn't space enough to include all the news deserving to be shared.

Despite the obvious violence and pain in the world, hope is found in many places: in the amazing visitors we welcome; in the new connections being forged locally with various student and religious groups; in the inspiring, courageous examples set by peacemakers

all over the world, rejecting violence and vengeance, even in the face of attack.

For updated news on peace and solidarity work including where to write imprisoned peacemakers, visit the *Nuclear Resister* blog at <www.nukeresister.org>.

For reliable news, including commentary by social justice activists rarely seen in US news, watch Amy Goodman on *Democracy Now!* at <www.democracynow.org>.

Desert Voices is edited by NDE Coordinator Jim Haber.

He likes to hear from readers:

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Regarding any upcoming actions, contact Jim or Megan:

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**Sacred Peace Walk
Las Vegas to the
Nevada National
Security Site
April 18 to 25, 2011**

65 miles with major walking days
Tues, Wed, Thurs, & Sat. Part-
time "Pilgrims" welcome. Come

for a few days. Walkers have vehicle support. This is a walking meditation, a desert healing, a political act of solidarity. It's a time for building community. It's also an opportunity for new civil resistance calling for an end to development, testing, research and use of new weapons of destruction at Creech AFB and at the NNSS, formerly the Nevada Test Site.

Registration information and a pledge form are on the NDE website. Sponsor a low-income walker! Partial schedule: 4/18 Orientation & Passover Seder; 4/22 Good Friday Stations of the Cross at Creech & Earth Day Ritual at the Goddess Temple; 4/24 Western Shoshone Sunrise Ceremony, also Easter Mass at the NNSS; 4/25 Civil Resistance at the NNSS and Creech. Devotional Chanting, other spiritual and political offerings to be planned according to walker desire and energy.

**Walk with us as we transform fears into compassion
and apathy into action!**