

Nevada Desert Expressions #2 summer 2021

NevadaDesertExperience.org 1420 W Bartlett Ave Las Vegas NV 89106

On Palestine by Karen Pettit

On May 15, I attended the Rally to Defend Palestine by the groups Nevadans For Palestinian Human Rights and Jewish Voice For Peace. I had been aware of the struggle for human rights in Palestine but had avoided the issue. It seemed too far away, too sad, and too hopeless. I had heard of people losing their jobs for boycotting Israel and being accused of anti-Semitism for repeating anti-Zionist slogans. I felt powerless to help, but clearly something was happening that was important. The news showed atrocities, but I didn't know if I was getting a clear picture from the coverage. My friends around the country reported that they were attending events in support of Palestine, so when I saw a local event coming up, I decided it was time for me to show up. I felt confused, but I knew it was important for me to try to learn more.

At the rally, people gave speeches about colonialism and racism. There was lively music and singing. We marched and chanted and carried signs about freedom and peace. We knelt in silence as the names were read of people who were recently killed. I was encouraged to learn more.

I watched "Born in Gaza" on Netflix and heard stories of children. The children of an ambulance driver talk about their father's death in a bombing. A child talks about repeatedly rebuilding their farm after it is bulldozed. Children show the shrapnel they have in their bodies from being bombed while playing on the beach and in their homes.

I called and emailed my Senators and Representative to let them know I wanted them to support Palestine and objected to the U.S. providing billions in military aid to Israel while abuses continue. I shared pictures and stories online. I had some awkward conversations.

I started to feel a bit unbalanced. This may be how a lot of people in the U.S. felt after George Floyd's death, suddenly aware and shocked into action. Caring about Palestinians was new to me, so I went through an adjustment. When I was going about my daily life or chatting with someone, I felt wrong: like why am I not talking about Palestine or doing something to help? Maybe that is why many people don't seek out more information about injustices in the world. It's scary to take the chance you'll be overwhelmed.

I went to another Palestine rally and enjoyed the exercise, fresh air, and community. I felt encouraged by the persistence of the Palestinians. I painted some signs I was proud of. My heart has grown enough to be aware and shocked about U.S. complicity in the atrocities and still have room for daily joy.

One other thing I learned is that Palestinians I have heard from want the same thing I do: peace. They don't speak about hatred. They aren't trying for revenge. They just want Palestine to have peace.

How can they have peace while people are denied access to basic necessities? I saw a video online of a young child on a bicycle, hit by a military vehicle and arrested because he was flying a Palestinian flag. Just like here in the U.S., when people take to the street to reject police brutality, they are fighting for peace. Even the child who wants to join the resistance movement and fight is motivated by a desire for peace. They don't want others to suffer the way they have.

Fighting for peace seems like an oxymoron, but some injustices make peace impossible and people who want peace may need to put their lives on the line. Others can fight by influencing people and demanding that governments stop supporting destruction. Some Palestinian children want to be farmers and doctors and for them to grow up and do that work, we need to take action.

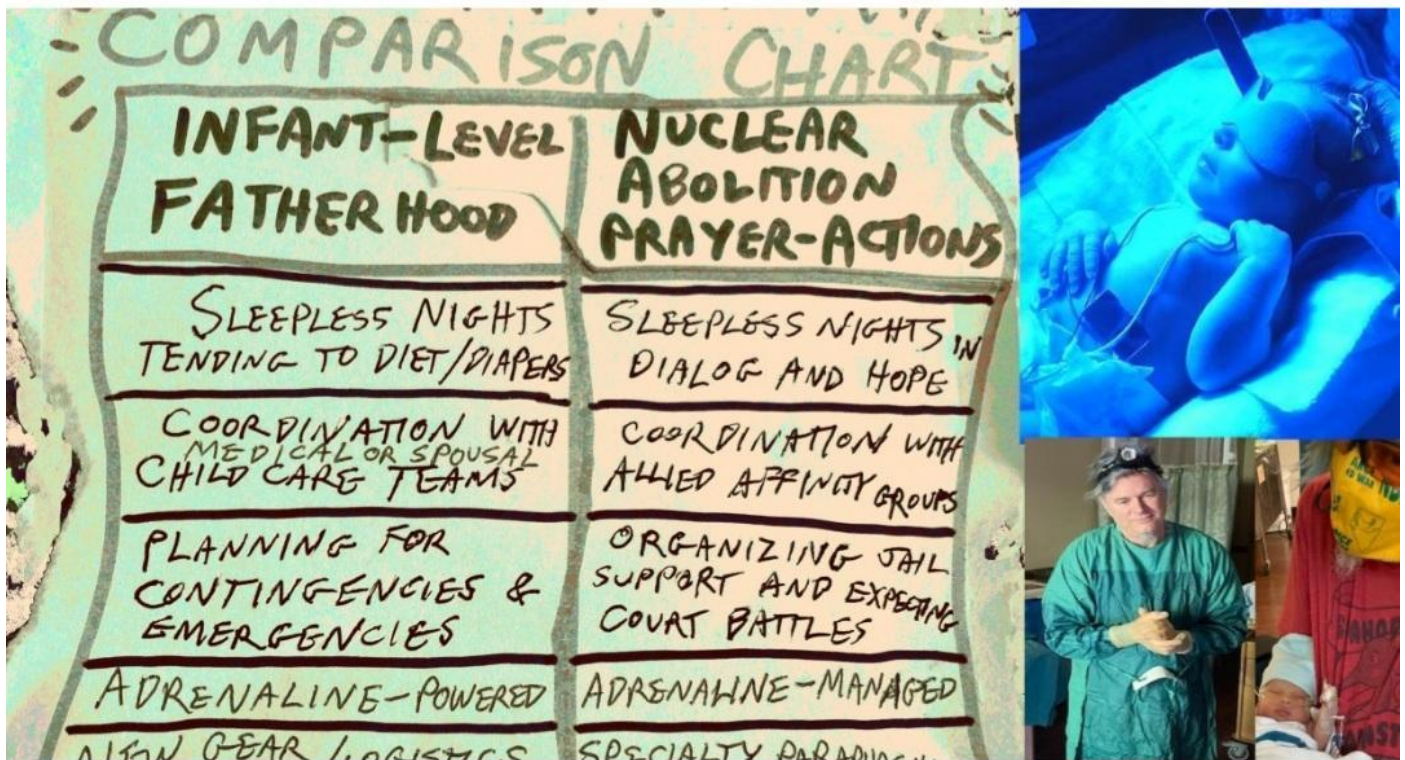
I will end with a quote from Rouzan al-Najjar, a Palestinian first aid volunteer who was killed by an Israeli soldier on June 1, 2018. I think it is a quote my fellow members of Nevada Desert Experience will support. *"We have one goal—to save lives and evacuate people. **And to send a message to the world: without weapons we can do anything.**"*



Karen Pettit
NDE Councilor



Bi-lingual (Spanish) Teacher's aide for Clark County School District, Karen Pettit enjoys painting, party planning, and other creative projects. She loves NDE because it helps her participate in her community and speak up for peace and justice



Comparison of Infant-Level Fatherhood and Nuclear Abolition Prayer-Actions by Pegasus Blaise Collonge

I've enjoyed the good fortune of participating annually (or more) with NDE prayer-actions since 1997. All our love-based jobs are connected (by Love) when we are pushing (propagandizing) for nuclear abolition and bringing folks together (organizing) to use our spiritual power (humanity) to stop governmental violence (nukes and drones) in the beloved desert (Newe Sogobia).

I thank God that I'm still alive and able to participate in the human experiment of using spiritual power to stop killer drones and nuclear weaponeering. And those past decades of organizing and propagandizing with NDE are seamlessly merging into current years of pouring love into a rapidly growing human named Lyra. My spouse (Rev. Chelsea) and I are still on the Advisory Group for NDE, and our baby was born in June, 2021.

In my current role as a new parent, I can't help but compare this new vocation to my prior works of mercy in nuclear abolition. In other words, taking care of a baby (from second half of my spouse's pregnancy to the present time of two months post-birth) is so eerily similar to the work of interfaith nuclear abolition prayer-actions, such as NDE's legacy has been since 1981.

The comparison is summed up in the identical sense that my work may not fully succeed, but it is super-important, it's a mind-blowing phase of a mission for the salvation of at least one person, if not all of humanity. That's parenthood in a nutshell, and nuclear weapons abolition too.

My entry-level position as new father for an infant, is a journey that intensified as a prayer-action to protect a single fetus (now baby) in 2020, and support her mother (my spouse) as the fetus grew and navigated health challenges. Our friends and families have been praying for our Baby Lyra's health, and for us in this new endeavor of bio-family engagement in the midst of the American Empire, at a time of climate chaos and injustices galore. The ultimate faith in our Creator's love for us all is what energizes and informs our lives dedicated to the end of nuclear violence and oppression. We can never stop praying for more goodness to propagate across this planet, whether in the form of road blockades to stop the works of mass destruction or raising children to work for justice and continue the dialogue.

NDE Councilors Dale Bolger and Dave Patterson at the Nevada Test Site. Photo by Forest Willis



Contributions welcome--please send your peace work stories, poems, pictures, and art.

NDE is hiring a volunteer coordinator!

We hope to find someone enthusiastic who understands the ideals of peace and anti-nuclearism. Please message info@nevadadesertexperience.org.