



Desert Voices

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JUSTICE FOR OUR DESERT

By Robert Majors

Justice for our Desert (JfoD) is one of the newest forms of public outreach pursued by Nevada Desert Experience. We are taking a step into the new society of social activism, which is a necessary step into the metamorphic form of peace within a growing world of information and expression. The constant mode of discussion among the aging peace community is "what will continue after all those who have lived through such great movements as the farm workers, civil rights, and Vietnam drafts? Where will this experience and knowledge go if there is no community to pass it down to?"

In a position of constant strategic dialogue with the military culture to weed our communities of unwanted growth it is necessary to remember the reason we weed in the first place, so that the garden can flourish. Just as protest and civil disobedience expresses our need to provide a safe space to grow in, we must plant the seeds and more time if not all the time must be spent to nourish that, because even weeds may be a plant to bear fruit or grass to form wheat.

So as for the direction of the peace movement and all that we are eager to get out, we do not grow by telling the seed to grow, but by nurturing its needs. Such is the nature of the peace movement that holds an overwhelming amount of knowledge of infinite worth. How good is it to those who are hungry to be heard if they are only to be spoken to? The lecture is the politics, but if you live a life of peace it is present in all you do. So it is time to listen to our desert, to our future, that is so quiet. With open ears you will hear them and with open arms you can help them. Continue to listen, without objectives, because if peace is our only agenda then we have failed to love.

What does justice look like in our desert? It is agreement that everyone needs to be heard and what nourishes that will grow, and what grows in love will last. If we teach to listen then they will learn to listen, so teach by example and eventually it will be learned. JfoD gave us a great opportunity to listen and I hope to do much more listening in the future. We listened to music from many local artists who spoke of love and justice in their own lives, we listened to poetry that contained a rhythm of words and emotion that could move mountains, we listened to the police and hired guards, we listened to the culture and struggle of the people, to the faith and prayer that others hold. The world spoke for us in many instances. The future could be heard and when our future can be heard then justice is served.

A VISIT TO RUSSIA for "Life Extension" of the Planet

By Brian Terrell

On October 9, I was in the Nevada desert with Catholic Workers from around the world for an action of prayer and nonviolent resistance at what is now called the Nevada National Security Site, the test site where between 1951 and 1992, nine hundred and twenty-eight documented atmospheric and underground nuclear tests occurred. Since the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the apparent end of the Cold War, The National Nuclear Security Administration, NNSA, has maintained the site, circumventing the intent of the treaty with a stated "mission to maintain the stockpile without explosive underground nuclear testing."

Three days earlier, as if to remind us that the test site is not a relic with exclusively historic significance, the NNSA announced that earlier in the month, two B-2 Stealth Bombers from Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri dropped two dummy B61 nuclear bombs at the site. "The primary objective of flight testing is to obtain reliability, accuracy, and performance data under operationally representative conditions," said the NNSA press release. "Such testing is part of the qualification process of current alterations and life extension programs for weapon systems."

"The B61 is a critical element of the U.S. nuclear triad and the extended deterrent," said Brig. Gen. Michael Lutton, NNSA's principal assistant deputy administrator for military application. "The recent surveillance flight tests demonstrate NNSA's commitment to ensure all weapon systems are safe, secure, and effective."

General Lutton and the NNSA do not explain what threat the testing of B61 nuclear bombs is meant to deter. The military industrial complex, including the "life extension programs for weapon systems" the U.S. intends to spend a trillion dollars on over the next decades, is not a response to any real threat but exists only to perpetuate itself. For public consumption, however, expenditures of this magnitude require justification. The not so subtle message that this was a "dry run" of a nuclear attack on Russia was not missed by the media that picked up the story.

Shortly after leaving Nevada, I was in Moscow, Russia, as part of a small delegation representing Voices for Creative Nonviolence from the United States and United Kingdom. Over the next 10 days in Moscow and St. Petersburg, we saw nothing of the massive preparations for war there that are being reported in the Western media. We saw no sign of and no one we spoke to knew anything about the widely reported evacuation of 40 million Russians in a civil defense drill. "Is Putin preparing for WW3?" asked one U.K. tabloid on October 14: "Following a breakdown in communication between the USA and Russia, the Kremlin organized the huge emergency practice drill - either as a show of force or something more sinister." This drill turned out to be an annual review that firefighters, hospital workers and police routinely conduct to evaluate their capacities to manage potential natural and manmade disasters.

Over the past years I have visited many of the world's major cities and Moscow and St. Petersburg are the least militarized of any I've seen. Visiting the White House in Washington, DC, for example, one cannot miss seeing uniformed Secret Service agents with automatic weapons patrolling the fence line and the silhouettes of snipers on the roof. In contrast, even at Red Square and the Kremlin, the seat of the Russian government, only a few lightly armed police officers are visible. They seemed mainly occupied with giving directions to tourists.

Traveling on the cheap, lodging in hostels, eating in cafeterias and taking public transportation is a great way to visit any region and it gave us opportunities to meet people we would not otherwise have met. On one occasion we were invited to address students in a language school in a formal setting, but most of our encounters were small and personal and we did more listening than talking. The four of us, me from Iowa, Erica Brock from New York, David Smith-Ferri from California and Susan Clarkson from England, hoped that by meeting Russian citizens we could help foster better relations between our nations. The only genuine diplomatic efforts being made between the U.S. and NATO countries at this time are citizen initiatives like our own little delegation. It is questionable whether the U.S. is capable of true diplomacy while it surrounds Russia with military bases and "missile defense" systems and carries out massive military maneuvers near its borders.

I am conscious of the need to be humble and not to overstate or claim any expertise. Our visit was less than two weeks long and we saw little of a vast country. Our hosts reminded us continually that the lifestyles and views of Russians outside their country's largest cities might be different from theirs. Still, there is so little knowledge of what is going on in Russia today that we need to speak the little we have to offer.

While we heard a wide variety of views on many crucial issues, there seems to be a consensus among those we met about

the impossibility of a war between Russia and U.S./NATO. The war that many of our politicians and pundits see clearly on the horizon as inevitable is not only unlikely, it is unthinkable, to the Russian people we talked with. None of them thinks that our countries' leaders would be so crazy as to allow the tensions between them to bring us to a nuclear war.



Russian students laughed at the joke, "If the Russians are not trying to provoke a war, why did they put their country in the middle of all these U.S. military bases?" But I ruefully told them that due to our nation's professed exceptionalism, many Americans would not see the humor in it. Rather, a double standard is considered normal. When Russia responds to military maneuvers by the U.S. and its NATO allies on its borders by increasing its defense readiness inside its borders, this is perceived as a dangerous sign of aggression. This summer in Poland, for example, thousands of U.S. troops participated in NATO military maneuvers, "Operation Anakonda" (even spelled with a "k," an anaconda is a snake that kills its victim by surrounding and squeezing it to death) and when Russia responded by augmenting its own troops inside Russia, this response was regarded a threat. The hyped up proposition that Russia might be conducting civil defense drills raises suspicion that Russia is preparing to launch World War III. Yet, a practice run, dropping mock nuclear bombs in Nevada, is not viewed in the West "as a show of force or something more sinister," but only as an indication of a "commitment to ensure all weapon systems are safe, secure, and effective."

The life extension of our planet needs to be a universal goal. To speak of, let alone pour a nation's wealth into a program of "life extension programs for weapon systems" is nothing short of madness. Our Russian friends' confidence in our collective sanity and the steadiness of our leadership, especially in the wake of the recent election, is a great challenge. I am grateful to new friends for the warmth and generosity of their welcome and I hope to visit Russia again before long. As important and satisfying as these "citizen diplomatic" encounters are, however, we must honor these friendships through active resistance to the arrogance and exceptionalism that might lead the U.S. to a war that could destroy us all.

MAKE THE WORLD SAFE AGAIN:

- ◆ DEFUND new nuclear weapons programs.
- ◆ STOP automated and robotic (drone) weapon systems.
- ◆ ENSURE that NO nuclear weapons are on hair-trigger alert

Interfaith Person

By Laura-Marie River Victor Peace

I've been a seeker of god for as long as I can remember. The ecstasy of god, anything ecstatic. I've thought of myself as a very religious person searching for her religion.

First I had the religion of my mother—Christianity. Then I turned to paganism, whispering prayers in candlelight. Then I turned to Hinduism for 16 years, chanting in Sanskrit and singing in Bengali. Now I find myself returning to paganism, which is personal and personalized, and I'm hoping to settle here in paganism for some good years.

To be a person of faith is to me synonymous with looking for religion—both are a search for meaning.

My pantheism is loose. I find god in my spouse, in nature, in the cosmos. My pantheism has at times felt atheist. The variety and apparent contradiction--the tension is energetic. I value its energy.

To be a person of faith means I love my values and the way they inform my actions. If god is love, then I sit within god and strive to function from that place.

I feel like an interfaith person. So it makes sense that I help run Nevada Desert Experience, an interfaith peace organization. This year was my fifth Sacred Peace Walk, and I've been arrested for civil disobedience at the test site seven times.

My faith is hard to define and impossible to pin down. I notice it can be confusing to others, but I don't feel confused within myself.

The variety and apparent contradiction fuel me.

Sacred Peace Walk Photo Album

Contact Tami Yaron for a copy of the 2016 SPW photo-book called *The Beauty Is In The Contrast*. This excellent photographic publication is being sold

by Tami, and a portion of the proceeds will be donated to NDE. Get a copy! Phone: 702-646-4814 or contact: TamiYaronPhotography@gmail.com

REGISTER FOR THE SACRED PEACE WALK

Unlike many of our past Sacred Peace Walks which have included Good Friday of the Christian Holy Week, NDE wants you to know that this year the Sacred Peace Walk in 2017 will be held from the Saturday before Palm Sunday through Holy Thursday. This interfaith event includes Christian, Jewish and Pagan prayer services.

NDE suggests that you make this pilgrimage a walk-a-thon, soliciting donors on your behalf. Please start with a \$75 registration "fee" as your initial donation. You can send it in with this paper.

Please send in this paper to NDE, or email the info to NDE (info@NevadaDesertExperience.org)

1420 W Bartlett Ave, Las Vegas, NV 89106

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Name: _____

Phone(s): _____

Email: _____

Registration Fee: _____

Home Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Dietary Needs/Restrictions: _____

Any travel needs to come to or from Vegas? _____



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Las Vegas, NV 89106-2226

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CounterPunch.org
says that

NDE is one of the Top-20
non-profit groups working
for justice worthy of
national attention.

See their article on
the “Thin Green Line:
20 Groups Standing
Between You and
Doom”

SAVE THE DATES for these

NUCLEAR ABOLITION and WAR-RESISTING EVENTS

January 20: National Campaign for Nonviolent Resistance (regional actions, including in D.C.)

March 5-7: Pacific Life Community gathering in Port Orchard, WA

April 7–13: Sacred Peace Walk from Las Vegas to Creech & the Nevada National Security Site

April 23–29: Shut Down Creech (organized by CODEPINK, Veterans for Peace and NDE)

July 12–18: International Week of Resistance to US nukes at the German military base:
www.Buechel-AtomBombENFREI.de

August 6-9: Seventy-two hour International Fast for the end of nuclearism (multiple locations)