



Desert Voices

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Desert Justice

By Laura-Marie River Victor Peace

Justice for Our Desert is an annual event organized by Nevada Desert Experience in the fall. Our purpose is to mobilize the community to learn and act on social issues that we face together. It's also about celebrating our beautiful desert and the diversity of people who call this place home.

This year's Justice for Our Desert was a two day event held September 9th and 10th. The first day was a music and social justice festival held in the Funkyard at a venue called ReBar in Las Vegas' Arts District, and the second day we peace vigiled at the Nevada National Security Site in Mercury, Nevada.

At the music and social justice fest, the mood was joyful. We started with drumming. Johnnie Bobb, Chief of the Western Shoshone Nation and Native American Spiritual Person, led us in prayer as we stood holding hands in a circle.

Then there were more than ten musicians who performed, including NDE's own Vera Anderson. There were also several speakers who talked about their social justice organizations--there were speakers from Las Vegas Catholic Worker, Showing Up for Racial Justice, Las Vegas Radical Mental Health Collective, All Shades United, and Yo Soy 132.

In addition to music and speakers, there was free food provided throughout the afternoon and into the night. Artists had tables set up under canopies and sold their art. There were big clouds and some wind, but it never rained.

A "Security Site" of Killing

By Marcus Page-Collonge

In early September five of us left the safety of Las Vegas to tour the nuclear weapons proving ground 70 miles away, on one of the Department of Energy's public relations shows of brutality towards the Mojave Desert. Some of us had minor health concerns of radiation at ground zero, but it seemed worth the risk. Our physical presence there in the midst of historical mega-violence against the planet, the Western Shoshone, and the downwinders of nuclear fallout left us queasy, if not nauseated. How can this be called "security" when the violence of nuclearism creates insecurity for enemies of the USA?

I need to tour this historical test site only once a decade to feel the reason for NDE's existence: we stand in opposition to the heartless, sanitized, disconnected human activity of sending death across time and space into the bodies of other humans. The chances for nuclear weapons to destroy habitat for all mammals (including ourselves) continues to threaten the planet, and the NNSS caused actual damage to people who developed cancers and died within decades of the active above-ground testing, particularly the downwinders of Utah.

That kind of unprecedented mass destruction brought the world's attention to Southern Nevada in the era of full-scale bomb detonations. Sixty years later, we see the world of journalism focusing its eyes and ears on the shocking spectacle of Southern Nevada violence again. The smell, taste and feeling of violence—whether from a nuclear weapon detonated by a single person's hand or from rifles carried into a hotel and discharged at a Vegas concert by a single person's hands—that disturbance of the peace is not easily explained

Security Site (continues)

or collectively resolved. Each individual person facing such terrible evils (whether developing and distributing the weapons, or holding hands with the hurt victims) can take personal responsibility to stop these disturbances. The media, including our own Desert Voices you are now reading, can never mediate the full-spectrum depth of pain, suffering, and trauma felt by nearly 600 people shot or killed that night, and their thousands of friends, relatives, first-responders, medical helpers, therapists, etc.

It's a definite terror to enable one person to have a massive impact—whether that man is the US President with singular authority to launch nuclear attack, the Security Site's employee with a finger on the button, or a lone sniper. The efficiency of the system of violence is undeniable: guns and bombs located on the same continuum of violence are destined to fulfill their murderous purpose. People persist in developing more potent ways of maiming, terrorizing, and killing themselves and other life forms. Opponents of weaponry have been around for centuries, and modern folks in that lineage are fighting more technologies as more high-tech systems of killing are developed, from guns to drones to radiological explosives.

Any individual killed or traumatized by the violence of the NNSS in these past 66 years felt in their own body the unspeakable pain of weapons and systems of insanity enabling other humans to conduct the works of terror and war. Those thousands of downwinders of Utah killed and permanently altered (via cancers, leukemias and genetic change caused by radioactive fallout from the skies above their once-peaceful homes) didn't get much of a chance to resist their oppressors. But the survivors still alive today DO have a chance to work for peace and justice, to work to prevent further incidents of mass violence, even while trying to heal from the injustices perpetrated upon them and their families.

In our tour of the NNSS the only place a souvenir photograph is allowed is at the Sedan crater, created by a "plowshares" test supposed to show how good-intentioned nuclear scientists endeavored to use nuclear explosives for non-warrior purposes. Yet the war against mother earth is obvious there, and the farce of the peaceful nuke is a disgusting ploy to lure us into expecting good to come from an evil endeavor of pursuing "peace through [violent] strength"! Anyone whose community has been under attack (whether at a concert, on streets amid ethnic groups targeted by police, or in a place of worship targeted by haters) understands that true security comes from united communities, a healthy and clean environment, social justice, et cetera; true security comes from interconnections with other humans, and intercultural relationships.

Justice For Desert (continues)

On the second day of Justice for Our Desert, six peace activists carpooled from Las Vegas out to the Nevada National Security Site. Johnnie Bobb, drumming, led the rest of us to the line. We held signs and flags. The guards were ready for us and slightly outnumbered us. Johnnie Bobb spoke truth to power, and we prayed together. One of the officers joined our circle and held hands with us as we prayed, which was a moving surprise.

As Johnnie Bobb ended his speech, three of us crossed the line into the Nevada National Security Site in civil disobedience and were arrested. The guards didn't want to open the pens for so few of us, so they gave us our tickets near their parked trucks and released us.

Justice for Our Desert 2017 was inspiring and energizing. It brought together many activists new and old. Please join us next time!



Ready to cross the line at the NNSS on the final day of JFOD 2017.

The work of NDE and Pace e Bene for the past several decades has helped me see the continuum of violence from inside any single person to the international level is solely a spiritual problem. Solving the individual cases of violence on this spectrum requires specialized tools (therapy, lobbying, education, weapons abolition, lawsuits, boycotts, etc.) for different places on the continuum. And the work of our ancestors helps me feel ever-more-hopeful that we can always prevent the next catastrophe, if we are willing to continue the works of justice!

Book and Film Reviews

WASTING A MOUNTAIN

By Ming Lai (Book Review)

I went to a presentation of *Waste Of A Mountain: How Yucca Mountain was Selected, Studied, and Dumped* coauthored by Michael Voegele who is the former chief scientist on the Yucca Mountain project.

I attended the presentation and read large portions of the interesting book of 900+ pages. Admittedly I am under the presumption that nothing I read will convince me to believe that storage of nuclear waste under Yucca Mountain will be a good thing.

Some things that I have noticed while being at the presentation and the subsequent reading of the thick book is the thoroughness of the coverage of the scholarly materials yet there was a significant lack of questioning the presumption that nuclear waste must be continued to be produced.

That the waste should be disposed of on land that does not belong to the US government per the Treaty of Ruby Valley was not mentioned.

The book simply dealt with the idea and political turmoil troubles of the implementation of disposal of nuclear waste. The book as a history of the project is comprehensively exhaustive.

VOICES FOR PEACE : War, Resistance and America's Quest for Full-Spectrum Dominance

(Book Review courtesy of VCNV)

Seeking to inform and educate, this penetrating anthology is edited and introduced by author T. J. Coles, who gives a broader framework and context to the individual articles. This timely anthology includes articles by Kathy Kelly, Brian Terrell, Noam Chomsky, John Pilger, Cynthia McKinney, Bruce Gagnon and others. The United States' military doctrine, as proclaimed by its Department of Defense, is to attain 'full-spectrum dominance... in the air, land, maritime and space domains and information environment... without effective opposition or prohibitive interference.' This is an agenda for global conquest - for an ever-expanding US empire. As America prepares for conflict with Russia and China, wars continue in the Middle East and North Africa, tens of millions are exiled from their homes whilst many more face famine. But there is not only hope for change in the air, there is active resistance. People all over the world are challenging the status quo by taking nonviolent action. Voices for Peace features some of the world's leading thinkers, journalists and activists, offering insight, inspiration and solutions to the world's most critical problems: nuclear war, environmental destruction and refugee flows. In the wealth of material presented here, Kathy Kelly talks about the Afghan Peace Volunteers and Standing Rock protesters in the USA, calling for global unity. Brian Terrell challenges the legality of drone warfare and outlines the grassroots links being forged between US and Russian citizens. Noam Chomsky discusses US policies towards Russia and Syria, as well as South America, trade, ISIS and Ukraine. [... and so much more—get the book!]

HOLY WEEK

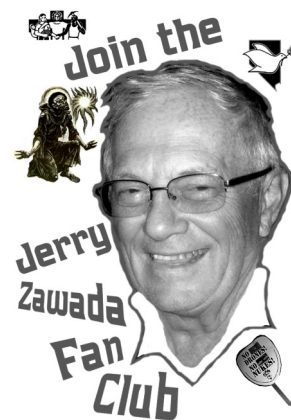
By Marcus Collonge (Movie Review)

Last year Seamus Knight produced a movie about our NDE Sacred Peace Walk with our complete cooperation. NDE's Council had been contemplating a new film to replace the old one we had produced at the turn of the century. So it was a lovely gift to NDE when Seamus came forward with skill and sensitivity to document our modern signature event—the Sacred Peace Walk. The only things missing, when comparing the old NDE movie (*In the Nuclear Age*) to *HOLY WEEK*, is a thorough summary of the history of nuclear violence in the desert, the latest developments from nuclear weaponeers and robotic war-mongers, and the global movement in solidarity with NDE. We are very grateful for this cinematic gem currently being entered in 14 film festivals with social justice components.

Our movement would benefit from more folks getting a chance to view *HOLY WEEK: The Story of the 2016 Peace Walk*. As the film opens at the beginning of the Sacred Peace Walk, the editing weaves together prayer and action emblematic of engaged Buddhism (also a modis operandi of Catholic Workers). This motif is a big part of NDE's heritage—dwelling at the juncture of prayers and actions for peace and justice, and facilitating such prayer-actions. The movie recently received a small grant a British soap company which funds anti-drone activism, enabling Caneyhead Pictures to get more screenings (bigger film festivals), and get closed captioning and Spanish subtitles for the internet release. If you have seen it or are interested in the project and getting chances to see it, you can follow the progress and like it on the internet via social media logging on to: facebook.com/HolyWeek2016

Jerry Zawada: Presente!

One of NDE's long-standing supporters and subtle leaders close to all of our hearts has crossed over to the other side. In August, this gentle Franciscan saint with great courage left his body to move on to heavenly pursuits. Fr. Jerry was one of the Creech 14 in 2009 along with Kathy Kelly and Brian Terrell (mentioned in the book review to the left) and he participated in numerous Sacred Peace Walks. He will be missed in many states and many movements as we continue forward for peace and justice.



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Spiritually-oriented groups can use these sign-on letters to mobilize support for abolition of nukes globally. Call us for copies of these resources to circulate, or see our website for copies: NevadaDesertExperience.org/tug

**Sacred Peace Walk 2018:
Join NDE from March 24-30**

Mark your calendars, invite your friends and family, tell the world that they can peacefully join NDE on the annual Sacred Peace Walk this coming Spring!

Go online to our website to register early, or phone our office, or email us to get involved. Our contact info is in the Save The Dates box below...

**SAVE THE DATES for these 2018
NUCLEAR ABOLITION and WAR-RESISTING EVENTS**

Call NDE for more info (702.646.4814), or email: info@NevadaDesertExperience.org

January 15: Las Vegas Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Parade

January 27: Salt Lake City (and elsewhere): Nuclear Downwinders Day; call NDE or see our webpage for a listing of commemorative prayer-services: NevadaDesertExperience.org/downwind

March 2-4: Pacific Life Community gathering in Las Vegas, NV

March 24-30: Sacred Peace Walk from Las Vegas to Creech AFB & the NNSS

April 8-14: CODEPINK's Camp Justice hosts Shut Down Creech across US Hwy 95 from the Base

Congratulations to the Nobel Peace Winner of 2017: ICAN

The Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) in early October. ICAN helped the UN pass the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, adopted on 7 July with the backing of 122 nations (not including the nuclear states such as the USA). The treaty categorically outlaws the worst weapons of mass destruction and establishes a clear pathway to their total elimination.