

# MICHIGAN PEACE TEAM

*pursuing peace through active nonviolence in places of conflict*

Vol. XIII No. 1  
Autumn 2007

## Reports on our Non-violence Teams in the West Bank

by Bill Petry

Since 1995, Michigan Peace Team (MPT) has been traveling to the West Bank and Gaza in Palestine/Israel to actively participate in third party nonviolent intervention work. Since its very beginnings, MPT has dreamed of creating a long-term presence in Palestine. I feel fortunate to have been able to further that dream by participating in this Summer's Team deployment to Palestine.

It is important to realize that as Internationals, we are there to accompany the Palestinians as they suffer the violence of the Israeli occupation, and attempt to bring a peaceful resolution to this conflict. When Peter Dougherty and I went to the West Bank in July, we agreed to intervene and record harassment of the Palestinians during demonstrations against the wall being built on Palestinian land; via a presence at the checkpoints set up all over the West Bank; during demonstrations against the confiscation of Palestinian land; and during their daily activities.

While attempting to do this work, we met many wonderful Palestinian people. The homes of some were designated for demolition. Despite this, they were determined to stay and live on their land after their homes were destroyed and in need of rebuilding. In Tuba, a village in the South Hebron hills, we provided protective accompaniment for three families of shepherds who'd already lost their homes and were then living in tents or caves. However, even with these setbacks, they would not leave their land. They went about their daily chores, taking the sheep

and goats to pasture with the realization that they might be hassled and victimized by the Israeli settlers [who live very close] Many have personally experienced or witnessed harassment from settlers who abuse the shepherds or livestock, poison their water wells, and throw stones at the children on their way to school.

To address the issue of settlers throwing stones at children from



Tuba on their way to school, the Palestinian people appealed to the Israeli High Court (IHC) for justice. The IHC declared that the military or police must safely escort the Palestinian children to and from school. This was a rare instance of justice prevailing on the side of the Palestinians.

We stayed with the shepherds for 3-4 days & nights at a time. One day, we received word that settlers were harassing shepherds of At-Tuwani, a nearby town. Christian Peacemaker Teams was on hand, intervening, and our back-up assistance was not needed. It was comforting for us to see a large contingent of both International and Israeli peace activists working hand-in-hand with the Palestinians. When Internationals are around, the Palestinians are subjected to much less harassment.

Peter and I had the privilege of participating in three different protest demonstrations against the separation (a.k.a., "Apartheid") wall in the Bethlehem region. Two of them were in Al Walaja and one was in Artas. The Israelis were attempting to build the wall completely around Al Walaja, but if the Palestinians could stop it before it was finished, they might still have access to their fields and crops. However, if things went according to plan, the Palestinians would be separated from their crops by the wall. There also was only one access gate, and the opening of this gate was subject to the whim of the Israelis. In Artas, settlers have confiscated land from Palestinians so that settlers from eight different settlements could easily dispose of their wastewater down into the valley. These actions not only destroy the valley's ecosystem, but may also destroy Palestinian peach orchards growing there.

The wall causes other hardships for the Palestinians as well. Many are challenged finding work: the wall makes it more difficult for the people to get to Jerusalem, where most of the jobs are. If a Palestinian cannot get a pass to get through

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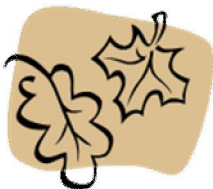
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# News from the Office....



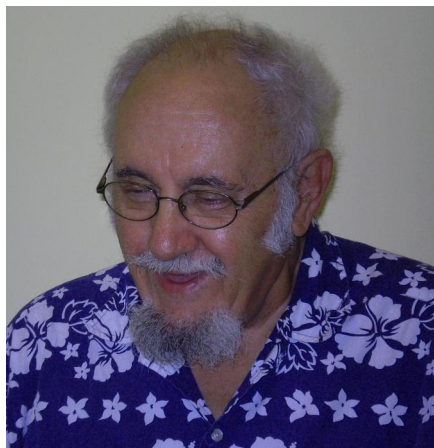
**C**hris Singer is in our newly-created position of *Development and Public Relations Facilitator*. Chris hails from the East Coast and is a graduate of the State University of New York at Purchase College with a Bachelor's in Literature. Chris got married to a native Michigander in 2005 after landing in Michigan in the spring of 2002. He met his wife Deb through the internet while both were living in New York. Chris has had a wide variety of work experiences, mostly with youth at-risk and with special needs, including: Outdoor Educator at a youth treatment center; Recreation Coordinator for a city parks and recreation department; Owner of a business that provided respite care to families of special needs children; and as an Independent Living Retreat Coordinator for unaccompanied refugee youth in Lansing. Chris also worked for a time with a rape crisis center as an educator and started a summer camp program for children who were sexually abused. Chris is heavily involved locally in the peace movement as well. Chris chairs the *African Affairs and Policy Task Force* of the *Peace Education Center*, and also participates in local efforts of *Amnesty International* and the *Michigan ACLU*. Chris welcomes this opportunity at Michigan Peace Team and is looking forward to using his skills in fundraising and media relations to enhance the great work already going on.



## Darryl Haynes

**T**he *Experience Works* program, a senior workforce solutions agency providing part-time paid training for low-income seniors 55 and older, has provided MPT with a senior volunteer:

Darryl Haynes, a former social worker and sales manager with two years of graduate school education at the University of Michigan School of Social Work, is currently assisting office staff in paperwork organization and filing. Darryl currently works in the office fifteen hours a week. He says it would be an ideal position if only there were three less flights of stairs.



## Announcements:

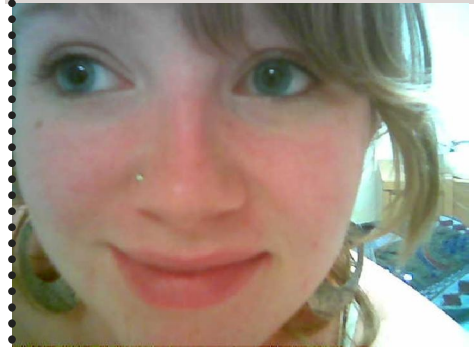
**T**hank you and best of luck to Maurya Orr, MPT

former Office Coordinator. Maurya left MPT after thirteen months to work at Interfaith Youth Core in Chicago as an Administrative Assistant. Best wishes to Maurya on this new endeavor in her career!



**M**ailing list - We are trying to clean up our mailing list. If you would like to remain on the mailing list or if you would be willing to receive our newsletter electronically, please let us know via e-mail at [michiganpeaceteam@comcast.net](mailto:michiganpeaceteam@comcast.net).

# Our Interns.... Our Interns....



## Maggie Hellwig

**M**aggie Hellwig has just graduated from Dickinson College in Pennsylvania with a Bachelor's Degree in English Literature and a minor in Creative Writing. She is an intern for the Fall of 2007, and is afterward heading down south to Greensboro, North Carolina to enter the Non-Profit community and (hopefully) a full-time job in Family Services at *Habitat for Humanity*. In the future, she has many aspirations; but among them, she hopes to attend a Master's Program for her MFA, continue to write politically-aware stories and essays, and eventually to teach others about the importance of peace and reconciliation.

## Volunteer with MPT

We are always looking for enthusiastic people to help out in our office. Filing, recycling, sorting, mailings, staffing outreach tables, and help with event planning are just a few of the things we could use your assistance with.





**Andrea Podob**

**A**ndrea Podob has been interning with MPT since August of 2007. She is a junior at Michigan State University, majoring in journalism with a specialization in Hebrew. Podob hopes to graduate from the university a semester early, and to spend that time traveling around the world. Thanks to MPT, Podob has a new found interest in peace and human rights activism and would like to pursue a career along that path.

**Wish List:**

**Items we are hoping you may be able to donate...**

**Vacuum cleaner** (shop-vac type)  
**Receiver** (to connect our DVD & VCR players to our one TV)  
**DVDs on current peace & justice issues** for our lending library  
**Volunteers to :**

- Keep our library in order
- Help office staff with filing
- Do research on Palestine/ Israel, the U.S./Mexico Border, Nonviolence, etc.
- Type up our Policies and Procedures manual
- Help organize our supplies
- Help with data entry
- Share their carpentry skills (build shelves)



**Spotlight on a Star: Michael Kotia**

*By Shirley Jones*

**W**hen I first met MPT's Volunteer Michael Kotia, his physical presence stunned me. He's like a sleek gazelle, with soft brown eyes and a gentle voice that would soothe the most rabid warmonger. Handsome and thoughtful, he surprises me with a funny quip when I least expect it. Michael is twenty-three years old, a native of New York, and a recent MSU graduate. His degree is in Political Science, Public Policy, and Public Administration, specializing in Latin American and Caribbean Studies. Fit that on a diploma! Michael's father, a native Ghanaian, has been in America for forty-five years, and is a thoracic surgeon in Sturgis. His mother, a nurse, now lives in Ohio. "I think I got interested in cross-cultural issues because of my parents. My own background involves different cultures, and that made me curious about what influences people, so I love to learn about different places and societies." Michael "doesn't have time" for leisure, but enjoys such books as Noam Chomsky's "Secret Lies and Democracy", "The Prosperous Few and The Restless Many" and other books about globalization, peace, and how humans interact. He's been accepted at LCC this fall to become a Bar Certified Para-legal, then eventually will go to law school. "Ten years from now, I hope to be a lawyer doing something in policy, diplomatic relations or something like that. I'm still learning about the possibilities," he says. Here at MPT, Michael is helping us get organized. He's working on the intern program, the archival library, and learning about non-violence programs. He hopes someday to go on a peace team with MPT and experience firsthand the difficulties and rewards of peace work.



**T**wo of our own, Sheri Wander and Sayrah Namaste, went to Africa September 24-26th for the 2007 Nonviolent Peaceforce Conference in Nairobi, Kenya. The aim of the conference was to reinforce the international community of organizations to implement, fund, organize and study unarmed civilian protection activities, to encourage greater deployment of protection missions, and to expand the global capacity for civilian protection and violence reduction. For more info, go to [www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org](http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org) AND, watch for the article in our next exciting newsletter.

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the wall, they cannot work in Jerusalem. As a result, their standard of living plummets as fewer people find employment. Despite the difficulties of living under occupation, the Palestinians have an admirable and determined persistence in refusing to leave their beloved homes.

It was incredible to witness the determination and strength of character exhibited by the Palestinians. We came face-to-face with an array of inspiring people who often attempted to overcome their difficulties through nonviolent means. And from people who have so little to share, we were touched by their warmth, generosity, and hospitality.

## Michigan Peace Team Provides Unarmed Accompaniment for Threatened Reporter

by Sheri Wander & Chris Singer

On Thursday, April 19, the MSU Chapter of *Young Americans for Freedom* (YAF) brought Chris Simcox, the leader of the Minutemen, to speak on campus. The MSU Chapter of YAF recently made headlines for being listed as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Members of the MSU and Lansing area communities planned a demonstration in response, including a talk by MPT co-founder Fr. Peter Dougherty.

Todd Heywood, a local reporter covering the event for Capitol Correspondent for *Between The Lines* asked MPT to provide unarmed human rights accompaniment for him after he'd received threats of violence. Mr. Heywood is often a target of violence from hate groups due to his investigative work on their activities. "I have been doing this [reporting] for a long time in sometimes unsafe situations," said Mr. Heywood. "Knowing that people [Michigan Peace Team members] were there to look out for me in a situation that I perceived as being dangerous was comforting and allowed me to get in the middle of things to tell the story that needed to be told." Although often employed in our international settings, this was the first instance of MPT having been asked to provide human rights accompaniment for an individual in a *domestic* (local) situation.

Four members of MPT provided accompaniment for Mr. Heywood during the event. At one point, a member of YAF aggressively jabbed a camera at Mr. Heywood's face. As MPT moved to intervene, the police (who also witnessed the aggression) immediately interceded. There were no further incidents for the remainder of the event and, as a result, Mr. Heywood was able to cover the event unharmed.

Protective accompaniment is one of the four functions of Michigan Peace Team, a TPNI (Third-Party Nonviolent Intervention) organization. The other functions are: interposition (literally or figuratively putting yourself between parties to prevent violence), observing/monitoring (reporting any witnessed violations as a means of maintaining basic human rights) and presence (demonstrating an alternative response to conflict which may have the effect of influencing people/governments to act on their best behavior).



### How is *this* for a response to violence and hate?

by Chris Singer

Recently, a Ku Klux Klan chapter in Athens, Alabama organized an anti-immigration rally in front of the Athens town hall. What was the response of the local community? **To circle them with love.** Three churches in the area joined forces to bring counter-protesters to the site. They silently circled the hate group with a ring of witness, a ring of love.

Imagine if you will, the encircling of vocal Ku Klux Klan protesters with silent protesters bearing placards reading, "Love." As unbelievable as it sounds, this really happened. Father Lucas from St. Timothy's Episcopal Church referenced Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., saying "Hate begets hate, and hate begets a downward spiral of destruction. Only love can defeat hate. We're trying to surround their hate with love."



"Al-Qaida members see themselves as vigilantes for good Muslims," Fr. Lucas said. "And KKK members see themselves as vigilantes for good Christians. The philosophy of both groups is the same: that they know the right way for everyone to live, and they identify other groups as scapegoats. They both feel that somehow through violence, through the destruction of other people, they can bring about their own pure world that represents just what they think it should."

While anti-immigrant groups continuously portray themselves as American patriots, it's time to stand up to them for what they are: the personification of hate.

Perhaps we should take the lead of these three congregations and circle the hate with love.

# MPT asked to participate in panel discussion at Michigan Alliance Against Hate Crimes Conference

by Chris Singer , Maggie Hellwig, and Mary Hanna

The MPT staff, interns, and volunteers recently attended a conference entitled "*Michigan Response to Hate: Building United Communities.*" The purpose of the conference was to develop a coordinated response effort in response to hate crimes across Michigan. In all, over 350 participants signed up for this free conference opportunity put on jointly by the Michigan Alliance Against Hate Crimes and the Michigan Department of Civil Rights. Board member President and Trainer, Sheri Wander, participated as a panelist in a workshop about demonstrations. This interactive workshop discussed how to organize and prepare for scheduled and spontaneous demonstrations involving hate and bias incidents, organized hate groups, and counter protestors. As a panelist, Sheri discussed what role and purpose MPT domestic teams could serve at these demonstrations.



There was notable diversity across the span of panelists. Two police representatives, Mark Alley, Lansing Chief of Police, and Gregory Krusinga from the

Michigan state police were present, as well as Darlene Sweeney-Newbern from the Ohio Rights Commission and Valerie Newman on behalf of the National Lawyers Guild. Sweeney-Newbern and the police officials talked at length about their confrontations at demonstrations and multiple tactics for "suppression," all of which were derived from the riots created in reaction to the Neo-Nazi National Socialist Movement march in Toledo, 2005.

While they spoke of barricades and fences, patrols and busing, the representative police officers focused on recent, specific events, and did not address the more encompassing theme of how to improve community reactions to Neo-Nazis and Hate Groups such that they become less violent. Chief Alley observed that the Nazi groups *crave* the negative attention that they often receive. Thus, when community members react violently towards Hate Groups, they inadvertently reinforce the point that the Group has sought to prove in the first place: that the people that oppose them are uncivilized and savage beings. In effect, angry counter-protestors come to embody the very violence they are protesting against.



MPT's Sheri Wander, along with Ms. Newman, picked up on the irony of Alley's statement. They emphasized that while it is the main concern of the police to *keep the peace*, the boundaries inflicted by barricades, the arrests that the police can make at their own discretion, and the physical violence that policemen have the power to wield at demonstrations are actually means of *obstructing the peace*. Furthermore, the lengths that they go to control demonstrations attracts the

negative attention that groups like the Neo-Nazis need to sustain their organizations. Sheri expressed the need for the Police and the Peacemakers to work *together*. She gave multiple examples of ways in which a creative yet compassionate approach towards both counter-protestors *and* the members of the given Hate Group can convert the negative energy of contention into an opportunity to call upon the highest ideals (and thus best behavior) in each other. When the *human* barricade between Hate Group members and their opposition becomes a *humane* barricade, this barrier acts as a reminder that people cannot be reduced to the uncivilized, inferior subordinates that any Hate Group would have you believe of their targets. **And in the end, when you extinguish the hate, you eventually extinguish the hate group as well.**



# Nashville 1960, Revisited

By Andrea Podob

**G**uided by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., nonviolence served as an extremely effective tool for social change during the tumultuous times of the 1960s. The success of active nonviolence was evidenced on April 19, 1960, and a plaque at Nashville's City Hall marks the landmark declaration from Mayor Ben West. On this date, he responded to Diane Nash's public confrontation, and openly admitted before the burgeoning crowd of nonviolent activists present that he believed racial discrimination was wrong. Within weeks, Nashville's lunch counters were desegregated.

Contrary to popular belief, this change was not brought about merely by "sitting in" at lunch counters. This is not all that nonviolent action entails. Under the tutelage of Dr. King and Rev. James Lawson, members of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) discovered that nonviolent action demands training, dedication, commitment, strategy, and confidence that the cause will prevail.

One thing that must be understood about nonviolent social change is that it is a way of overcoming injustice, not retaliating for it, and the results are often not immediately witnessed.

Much of the work of nonviolence has to do with personal evaluation and growth. Dr. King had **eight rules for personal conduct**: be creative, be firm, be humble, be forthright, be calm, be helpful, be forgiving, and be friendly.

Dr. King said to always be mindful of your opponent, because 'he is not your enemy... he is a human being with faults. One cannot vilify him. One must show good will to him no matter what he does.' By using nonviolence, one is showing a kind of strength that, in turn, reveals the weakness of cruelty and injustice. With this as a "given", one must always be humble, allowing the opponent to participate in your victory, and thus making it a victory for all.

Fisk University student and SNCC member **Diane Nash** did just that when she confronted Mayor West in that now-famous meeting on the steps of Nashville's City Hall in 1960. At the time, SNCC had marched to city hall to demonstrate and in hopes of speaking with West. Historically, West had been supporting segregation though inaction, by not taking a stand. Nash addressed her opponent, calmly asking in front of the crowds of people, "Mayor West, do you think it is wrong to discriminate against a person, based solely on their color or race?" His answer was a simple 'yes', but that one word led to the immediate desegregation of Nashville countertops. In this one brief interaction, nonviolence had yet another proven case of success.



Dr. King's teachings were strongly influenced by those of Mohandas Gandhi, who may have said it best: *"The way of truth and love has always won. There are tyrants, but in the end, they always fall...think of it...always."*

## Become a Member of Our Sustainer's Circle!

You can make a tax deductible contribution to MPT on a monthly basis through your credit card. Just let us know how much you would like to donate each month, and send us your information below. We will deduct the specified amount from your credit card each month. It's a wonderful way to keep MPT going, with little hassle for you. Please consider becoming a Sustainer!

Yes! I wish to join the Sustainer's Circle and make an ongoing contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_ each month to be charged to my credit card.

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Name (as it appears on the card)

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Signature

### Or make a one time donation:

I'm proud to be a part of the MPT community. Here is my contribution:

\$35

\$65

\$95

Other \_\_\_\_\_



creating a non-violent alternative to  
militarism and violence through  
empowered peacemaking

## Presentations

Michigan Peace Team members are available to give presentations on the organization and their first-hand experiences in the field.

Topics include:

- How to organize local/community peace teams
- What's happening at the US/Mexico Border
- The current situation in the West Bank and Gaza
- The benefits of ordinary citizens training for nonviolence
- Nonviolence Peaceforce: Who they are, what they do, and Michigan Peace Team's role with them
- Social analysis and nonviolent social change
- Nonviolence as a Christian mandate
- ....and more! Contact us to explore the possibilities!



## Nonviolence Trainings



MPT can design and adapt group training with a specific focus. The length of time available for this training will be determined by the group. The goal is to learn about and practice skills of nonviolent peacemaking.

Major components of the training include:

- Stories of empowerment;
- Theoretical and spiritual basis of nonviolence;
- Understanding the Roots of Violence;
- Theory and practice of Communication skills (Active Listening, "I" messages);
- Theory and practice of Consensus Decision-Making;
- Theory of Public Witnessing and Direct Action;
- Mechanisms for social change;
- Cultural and racial sensitivity and awareness;
- Role plays, quick decision exercises, etc.

Trainings generally last 8 hours and are designed for a minimum of 10 people. Please call for fee information.

### **FOR QUESTIONS OR MORE INFORMATION ON PRESENTATIONS OR TRAININGS:**

Michigan Peace Team  
1516 Jerome Ave. Lansing, MI 48912  
(517) 484-3178  
E-mail: [michiganpeaceteam@comcast.net](mailto:michiganpeaceteam@comcast.net)  
Website: [www.michiganpeaceteam.org](http://www.michiganpeaceteam.org)

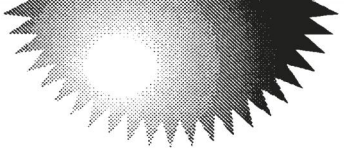
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MICHIGAN  
PEACE TEAM

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Gandhi



*"You must be the change you wish to see in the world."*

**Celebrate Non-Violence Everyday!**

- By Chris Singer



This year, the United Nations announced it will observe Mahatma Gandhi's birthday as the International Day of Non-Violence every year. The UN called upon all member nations and individuals to commemorate October 2 in "an appropriate manner and to disseminate the message of non-violence."

While many have hailed the UN for this action, it is important to think of this day as more than a symbolic gesture and recognition of Gandhi's work. If anything, it is more important than ever for people and countries around the world to recognize the universal relevance of Gandhi's message of non-violence. With many countries around the world battling violence and conflict within their borders, this day of non-violence can be one step towards putting an end to the daily suffering caused by such violence.

Non-violence is not just simply a course of action; it is a philosophy and a way of life. Nonviolence begins by learning how to be less violent and more compassionate with ourselves. We learn by building the courage to speak and act with a respect, honor, and reverence for our own being.

Kansas State University has implemented a yearly **Season of Nonviolence Campaign**. The Season of Nonviolence began in 1998 as a national 64-day educational, media, and grassroots campaign dedicated to demonstrating that nonviolence is a powerful way to heal, transform, and empower our lives and our communities. Inspired by the 50th and 30th memorial anniversaries of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., this international event honors their vision for an empowered, nonviolent world.

To see the entire list of 64 things you can do individually to practice a lifestyle of non-violence, go to:  
[www.k-state.edu/nonviolence/media/64ways\\_list.htm](http://www.k-state.edu/nonviolence/media/64ways_list.htm)