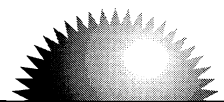


# Grand Rapids Peace Team News

Promoting Nonviolent Solutions to Conflict

An Affiliate of



MICHIGAN  
PEACE TEAM

[www.michiganpeaceteam.org/grandrapids](http://www.michiganpeaceteam.org/grandrapids)

## ... and Another March on Washington, D.C.

Corinne Carey  
Grand Rapids, MI

Washington DC — hub of our nation's major political adventures, and the historic center for our unique democracy of the people, by the people, for the people.

For Saturday, October 25, Rebecca, Gabriel and Mark Mattison carpooled to the Kalamazoo bus with me to participate with an estimated 100,000 Americans (and visitors) of all kinds in marching for peace and justice for our people, and all worldwide. We arrived Saturday morning, did some D.C. sites and actions, left a few hours later, were back to Kalamazoo by 6 a.m., then home to Grand Rapids, thanks to the KNOW — Kalamazoo Non-Violent Opponents of War.

Four-year-old Gabe will undoubtedly have exciting memories of his first trip to D.C., waving an Earth flag, participating with dedicated peacists to “Bring Our Troops Home” and citizens active in rededicating our national policies to true peace-making.

The warm sunshine matched our enthusiasm and the pageantry of speakers, marchers, signs, T-shirts, buttons, handouts, exhibits and creative costuming. There was even a herd of black umbrellas that kids

and grown-ups were converting with colorful paints to peace messages.

Announcements between the excellent speakers reminded us of similar events being held in San Francisco, other international and nationwide cities, and as we later saw, back home in Grand Rapids, demanding national policies *not* of militarism and war, but of hope and peaceable living for all peoples on Earth.

The well-organized three hours of speakers

included strong advocate Ramsey Clark and Presidential candidate Al Sharpton, as well as national and international representatives of labor, youth, gender, ethnic, religious and racial diversity.

Sponsoring groups of the day's rally and march included United

for Peace and Justice (UFPJ) and International A.N.S.W.E.R. (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism).

Democracy in action amongst our national monuments and memorials is always an inspiration to re-dedicating ourselves to the real traditional American values we learned as kids and the great challenges we face to restore them for Gabe and all of us in 2003. ●



Peace Team members Mark, Rebecca, and Gabriel Mattison (lower left) with other West Michigan activists in Washington, D.C. on October 25, 2003

*Grand Rapids Peace Team, an affiliate of Michigan Peace Team in Lansing, Michigan, is associated with the Institute for Global Education in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Editor: Mark M. Mattison.*

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# Peace Team Helps Local Church

Dave Blakeslee  
Wyoming, MI

The practice of introducing Peace Teams as a way of promoting non-violent conflict management has become increasingly common in recent years. Most often, those familiar with the Peace Team concept will think of places like Palestine, Bosnia, Chiapas and other international “hot spots” where the ravages of war and oppression are all too apparent. However, peace teams have a place in areas where the conflicts have not become militarized, because the principles at work have practical value regardless of the intensity of the situation.

Such was the case recently here in West Michigan, where a church congregation found itself going through a crisis situation that became serious enough to create fears of physical violence between members. Denominational overseers who were familiar with the work of the Michigan Peace Team contacted the Grand Rapids Peace Team to request a peace presence that would help to assure a safe and supportive atmosphere at the next congregational meeting, where the divisive issue would be debated and, to some degree, settled.

*West Michigan is typically seen as a calm, quiet place, and in comparison to other parts of the world, that description is accurate enough. But the need for peacekeepers that can help people in conflict resolve their differences nonviolently is tangible and apparent.*

For reasons of confidentiality, I'm choosing not to describe the details of the conflict. But I want to bring this recent and local application of the peace team concept to the attention of the readers of GRPT News. Our presence and

interventions that day were seen as valuable and important in helping the congregation through a difficult passage, and we received many expressions of appreciation from people on both sides of the issue that divided the group.

In a society such as ours which is based so fundamentally on values of “winner/loser” competition, it’s vitally important that those of us who have a vision of a better way find opportunities to bring such a message to others who take the status quo for granted.

Participation in Peace Team nonviolence trainings and interventions can be a powerful step toward making such a vision a reality. If you would like to learn more about the work of the Grand Rapids Peace Team, visit our web site at:

<http://www.michiganpeaceteam.org/grandrapids/>

or send an email to [grpt@iserv.org](mailto:grpt@iserv.org). •

## **“Empire in Denial: The New Pax Americana”**

Don't miss this presentation by Dr. Gary Dorrien, Professor of Religion of Kalamazoo College.

Monday, December 1, 7:00 p.m.

Fountain Street Church, 24 Fountain St., NE, Grand Rapids, MI (Park in GRCC Ramp)

Sponsored by member groups of the West Michigan Justice and Peace Coalition

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# Peace Team Joins West Michigan Coalition

*Mark Mattison  
Grand Rapids, Michigan*

Earlier this year, as our nation began to lurch ever more recklessly toward war, local activists leapt into action. Demonstrations, marches, vigils and more were scheduled throughout West Michigan. Many different peace groups united under the banner of Peace Presence and continued the tradition of vigiling every Monday in front of the Federal Building in Grand Rapids. What once had been a vigil against the economic sanctions on Iraq became a vigil against the war on Iraq.

Nevertheless, some small pockets of activists wondered if there was a better way to organize, network, and coordinate anti-war actions. Shortly after the war erupted, concerned activists began laying the framework for just such a coalition. After much discussion and discernment, what emerged was the West Michigan Justice and Peace Coalition (WMJPC). The Grand Rapids Peace Team is an active member organization of the coalition.

Other member organizations include: Ada Congregational Peace & Justice Community; Aquinas College Social Action Committee; Arab American Association of West Michigan; Don't Waste Michigan - Grand Rapids Branch; Fountain Street Church Social Action Committee; Grand Rapids District Peace with Justice Community; Grand Rapids Friends Meeting; Greater Grand Rapids Food Systems Council; Green Party of Kent County; Holland Peacemakers; Institute for Global Education; Kalamazoo Non-Violent Opponents of War (KNOW); Middle East Education Project; Newaygo County People for Peace; Peace Presence; People's Alliance for Justice & Change; Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ; Radiant Justice Implementation Group; Society for Economic Equality; Strategic Pastoral Action; TIBETMichigan; Women in Black; and Women's International League for Peace & Freedom - Kent County Branch.

Representatives from many of the member groups, together with other concerned citizens, meet the third Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at the Institute for Global Education in Grand Rapids at 1118 Wealthy St SE to share resources and coordinate programming in support of a just peace.

The coalition relies heavily on internet resources. A web page is maintained at:

<http://www.justiceandpeacecoalition.org>

An internet discussion list facilitates announcements and substantive dialogue between local anti-war activists of all types. To sign up for the discussion list, visit:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/wmjpc>

or send an e-mail to:

[WMJPC-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:WMJPC-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

Finally, the coalition maintains an interactive web-based calendar at:

<http://my.calendars.net/justiceandpeace>

The benefits of the e-mail discussion list and web calendar are enormous: Not only can member groups coordinate events, everyone can make their own announcements and upload their own events to the web calendar. This, together with the format of the monthly meetings, reinforces the egalitarian and mutually participatory nature of the coalition.

The coalition, then, is not some sort of oversight organization but a true confederation of groups and individuals with certain values and goals in common. Some differences remain, such as the viability of nonviolence, political leanings, and organizing tactics. But the dialogue and cooperation are there, and that's what's making the difference. If you're not involved already, why not get involved now? ●

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## Grand Rapids Peace Team Presents “Spirituality of Nonviolence” Book Series

Academic yet accessible, invaluable yet affordable, Grand Rapids Peace Team’s new “Spirituality of Nonviolence” book series has already inspired hundreds of people throughout the world. Available for just \$3.00 per copy, these booklets explore the basic principles of essential nonviolence.

The five titles currently in print include *Jesus: Nonviolent Revolutionary* by Mark M. Mattison; *Gandhi: An Introduction* by Jasiu Milanowski; *Gandhi’s Nonviolence: In His Own Words*, an anthology; *Iván the Fool*, a parable by Leo Tolstoy; and *Making Peace*, an anthology of Father C. Peter Dougherty, visionary and co-founder of Michigan Peace Team. Future volumes may include excerpts from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other pioneers of nonviolent resistance.

Copies are available at the Institute for Global Education, P.O. Box 68039, Grand Rapids, MI 49516.

Note: In order to conserve paper and postage, *Grand Rapids Peace Team News* is available in electronic format. If you are receiving a hard copy and would like to receive an e-mail copy, or if you are receiving an e-mail copy and would like to receive a hard copy, please send an e-mail to the editor at: [mattison@concentric.net](mailto:mattison@concentric.net).

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