

Michigan Peace Team

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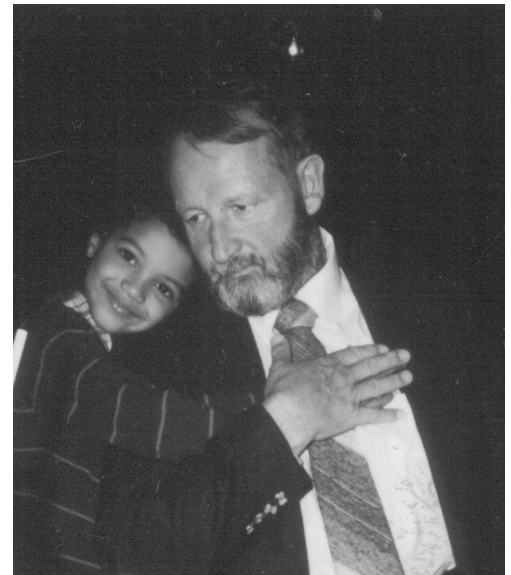
NEWSLETTER THEME: The theme of this newsletter, “My Greatest Peace Teacher,” is an invitation to MPT writers to respond to the question, *who or what informs you, inspires you, and encourages you to work for peace?* It is also an invitation to MPT readers. We hope that you too, will reflect on and respond to the question. At the same time we are hoping that your reflection/response will move you to get more deeply involved in n the wonderful work of Michigan Peace Team. We *do* need you!

Reaching the Heart of Something Bigger By Annette Thomas

What would life be like without those who influenced us, shaped us, guided us, steered us on the right course? Would we have chosen a particular path or wandered aimlessly in a very different direction? I’ve often wondered what my life would have been like had I not been born into a family of open-minded individuals, been offered a life of travel and adventure, able to explore other avenues, not only geographically but philosophically.

My parents came from very different worlds - my father born into wealth and nobility, my mother the daughter of Czech refugees who were forced to flee their homeland with nothing but a few personal possessions. Their worlds seemed to collide, but they were united in their shared thoughts and ideals.

During the Second World War, after the Kristal Nacht, my fathers grandfather, a Chocolatier in Germany, financed the escape of his Jewish employees. When the war ended, they returned to help him rebuild his bombed out factory.



My Father holding my son Nicholas

My father shared this story with me time and time again, emphasizing the importance of compassion and human decency.

After my father’s death, I found a manuscript that he, a retired University Professor, had written and in it was a passage where he questioned how crimes against humanity could deaden our sensibility and allow us to continue to be led into senseless war, when all our focus should have been placed on introducing world peace, with nations working together, not against each other. He spent his life trying to understand man’s inhumanity to man and

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MPT Vision

To pursue peace through active nonviolence in places of conflict

MPT Mission:

- Provide training in active non-violence designed for the specific needs of participants.
- Recruit and mentor individuals seeking experience with violence reduction teams.
- Place violence reduction teams in domestic and international conflicts.
- Educate the public to the vision and practice of nonviolence.
- Convene, support and participate with local peace action groups.



Reaching the Heart continued

attempted, within his own family, to instill harmony. A sometimes difficult and defiant man who struggled with his own dichotomy, it wasn't always easy.

When we first moved to the United States in the early 60s, my father was astounded by the disparity between the cultures; one segregated from the other, being refused the same rights and privileges. He made it a point to encourage us to get to know people of diverse backgrounds, to learn their history and understand their customs and culture. I married a man outside of my culture and had two wonderful children my father was very proud of. Their ethnicity never came into question - they were his beloved grandchildren.

During one of my final visits with him at a German hospital, he sat up in his bed and focused his full attention on me. Acknowledging the importance of my efforts to collect blankets for young Palestinian refugees, he stressed that it was simply a start, a beginning of something that was bigger than me, yet something very important that needed to be continued.

Then once again, shortly after his death, I found more paperwork linking him with me - he had been involved in the Palestinian cause without me ever having known it. I was truly my father's daughter. He was a greater influence than either of us could ever have imagined. For that, I thank you Dad and am profoundly grateful.

She Influences Me...Informs Me...Inspires Me

By Nicholas Thomas



When I look back on my life, even though I am only 27 years old, I feel as though I have experienced so much already. I've traveled all over the world, gone to college and held a very dynamic job for almost 10 years. I have met so many diverse

and interesting people. Throughout all of this, I have seen the very best and the very worst in people. Looking back, there is one person who stands out to me as a constant source of peace and love. That person is my mother, Annette Thomas. Like all of us, she has experienced great hardship and challenge in her life but has never turned her back on people or forfeited her passion for making someone smile in their moments of darkness. As a child, my mother was my best friend - she took me everywhere and I felt I was never separated from her. Even at that young age I could see her qualities, her character, and what she stood for. She was someone who genuinely cared about everyone she came in contact with and never squandered a moment to help someone in need. As I grew older, these observations turned into respect. In her smallest of moments, she would take in a malnourished cat with no home,

help a friend with no money, tend to the elderly; and in the largest of moments she would scramble passionately to collect for those in need across the distant and forgotten parts of our globe. She wouldn't send these much needed care items, but personally deliver them and face the dangerous obstacles along the way. I write about my mother because I feel as though she has put into action what many of us hope or think to do. While many of us hope to change the lives of those who can't change them for themselves, she has. While many of us hope to have a positive impact on those in desperate situations in other parts of the world, she now calls those people her personal friends. All of these things she has done are not tasks for her, but her life. You can see it in her face when she speaks of them and you can read them in each tear that she cries as she passionately

tells you her story. Though I wouldn't call my mother a religious person, she walks in the footsteps of Angels with her actions. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" -5:9. Mom, thank you for showing me the great impact of peace.



Risk Takers

Alice Baker

In reflecting on the question, who are my greatest peace teachers I've come to a simple conclusion; they are all those persons in my life who are Risk-Takers for Peace. So many have touched and inspired me to "step out of the box." Risk involves just that, and much more. For me, it implies one is grounded in a deep faith and trust in the One who calls, - God. For me, Jesus is my prime example of a risk-taker: facing the powers of darkness all around Him with courage and compassionate love. There are many others, too, such as Gandhi, MLK, JFK, Malcolm X, RFK, John XXIII, Dorothy Day, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, Catherine of Siena. Each one had to listen to that inner voice of Truth that called them to speak their truth to power, risking all. Facing misunderstanding, making mistakes, and suffering through consequences only made them stronger and more courageous workers for peace.



For me, peace work calls me out of myself, stretches my limits, and challenges my status-quo thinking. Never did I dream I would find myself marching for migrants' rights in the Yale-Croswell-Lexington, MI area in the late 60's. Nor did I ever see myself driving overnight to a march in support of Daniel and Philip Berrigan and the "Harrisburg 7" in Pennsylvania in the early 70's. Or did I ever think I would be involved in rallies to save our Catholic schools and parishes in the inner city of Detroit

nuclear weapons plant in Oak Ridge, TN.

And, one of my most recent challenges came when I found myself in the West Bank and East Jerusalem as a member of the Michigan Peace Team in the summers of '02 and '04. In all of these peace experiences I find hope from the community of peace activists with whom I walk. Though some immediate effects may not be positive, I know, and believe, the long term effects will always be with me. I have been stretched, challenged, and changed, and have made long-lasting friends for peace.

In the Webster Thesaurus the word, risk, as a verb or action word, can mean: to run a risk, take a chance, lay oneself open to, gamble, do at one's one peril, go beyond one's depth, lay oneself open to, go through fire and water, skate on thin ice, fish in troubled waters, live in a glass house, or leap before one looks. Without exception, I am thankful for the many unnamed people in my life that fit these descriptions. They have been present with and touched me deeply. They are Risk-Takers for Peace. May I continue together with them to run the risk - for peace.

When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love has always won. There have been tyrants and murderers, and for a time they can seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall - always!

- Mohandas Gandhi -from the movie, Gandhi -

MPT FALL 2010 TEAM TO JUAREZ, MEXICO NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

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NOW TAKING APPLICATIONS FOR SEPTEMBER- DECEMBER 2010

To apply, go to www.MichiganPeaceTeam.org/teams.htm,
or contact Nicole: Nicoler.MPT@gmail.com or (586) 419-1070.

We are still taking applications for MPT's Summer Team to Palestine/Israel.

Apply now at www.MichiganPeaceTeam.org/Teams.htm.

Who or What Inspires Those Who Inspire Us

Brief interviews facilitated by Kim Redigan

In keeping with the theme of this month's newsletter, MPT contacted peacemakers from Michigan and around the country, posing the question: *Which individual, book, or film has had the most profound effect on your work for justice and peace and your commitment to nonviolence?* It is our hope that their responses will prompt readers to rent the films they suggest, read the books they cite, tune into the media they mention, and study the lives of those who have inspired them. It goes without saying that our respondents are themselves inspirational peacemakers and justice seekers.

In the 1960s, like most Black Power activists in Detroit, I identified with Malcolm and considered Martin Luther King's ideas of non-violence and beloved community unrealistic. But as crime and violence soared in the wake of the urban rebellions and unemployment in Detroit, I began taking King's views more seriously, especially his call for a radical revolution of values not only against racism but against materialism and militarism. I was also delighted to discover that shortly before Malcolm X was assassinated, he went to Selma to tell King that he wanted to work with him.

Grace Lee Boggs, writer, activist, visionary, co-founder of Boggs Center, Detroit

Dave Dellinger's autobiography, *From Yale to Jail*, describes the life experiences of an exceptionally fine human being who dedicated his energy, intellect and courage to the further invention of nonviolence. His spouse, Elizabeth Peterson, assisted him in writing every chapter of the book. Together, they recall experiences when Dave was in prisons and war zones; they tell about problem-solving efforts in various peacemaking communities, delve into relational problems experienced over the course of their life together, and humbly offer testimony to joys and sorrows of life as uncompromising conscientious objectors to war.

Kathy Kelly, Voices for Creative Nonviolence Co-Coordinator, Nobel Peace Prize nominee

The Catholic Worker newspaper was my earliest inspiration. Though it parroted the gospel, the same gospel I heard every Sunday, the way it was lived was an eye opener. Then Dorothy Day's writings, and Thomas Merton's . . . I have found the lives of peacemakers to be the most influential force for me, the writings of academics or theologians only secondary. Perhaps to add credibility to the lives I was reading about.

John Zettner, Detroit Peace Community

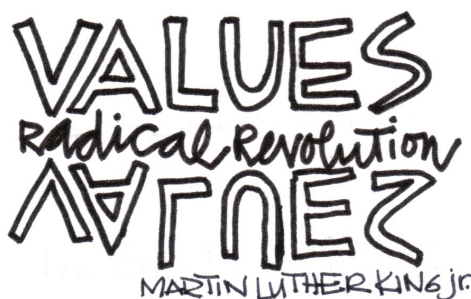
The film *Gandhi*.

Hasan Newash, Director of Palestine Cultural Office

I thought the film *Why We Fight* - which we saw in our Social Justice cohort at Marygrove - was an eye-opening look at the business of war and our addiction to it from a financial standpoint. Working in the news business and seeing the prevalence of guns on our streets and the

blatant disregard for human life everyday in our communities I can't help but think - if our government uses guns to solve problems why wouldn't our citizens think it's okay to solve problems in the same way. What is the message that we're sending? All the more reason for the important work MPT is doing everyday.

Amy Lange, Fox 2 Detroit reporter, M.A. Social Justice Marygrove College



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. -- for two reasons: First, because he articulated the interconnectivity of racism, militarism, and poverty and, second, because he always placed the struggles for peace and justice in the framework of his commitment to the best that our country has to offer.

Al Fishman, Detroit Area Peace with Justice Network Coordinating Committee

Karl Meyer, who joined Dorothy Day in refusing to take shelter during the Civil Defense drills of the 50's has remained true to his pacifist convictions since that time. A lifelong tax resister who has served frequent jail terms for nonviolent resistance, Karl continues to live simply and organically and to challenge the erosion of our civil liberties and endless wars from Greenlands Catholic Worker in Nashville.

Rosalie Riegle Troester, activist and author of *Dorothy Day: Portraits by Those Who Knew Her* and editor of *Voices from the Catholic Worker*

When I attended the first planning conference to organize Michigan's Department of Peace Campaign, I thought of my mother's favorite prayer and repeated "Lord Make Me and Instrument of Your Peace" to myself. From that powerful prayer, my dedication to love, nonviolence and peace has increased daily.

Colleen Mills, President, Livonia Citizens for Peace

Who or What Inspires ... continued

Professor Nels Ferre at the College of Wooster in Ohio , a conscientious objector in the first world war and a professor of religion, helped me transform my experiences as a junior at the American University of Beirut , Lebanon , into a position of conscientious objection and another five years in Lebanon doing alternative service. My introduction to the conflict in the Middle East and the model of individuals and groups addressing that conflict through active nonviolence has helped frame and shape my life since 1967 in service to peace and social justice for all.

Mark C. Johnson, PhD, Executive Director The Fellowship of Reconciliation

The book I chose to take with me when I was incarcerated for my first civil resistance action/prayer was Thomas Merton's Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander. What most spoke to me was his analysis of how war is based on fear. This challenges me to root out my own fears) in order to more clearly live the nonviolence to which I was drawn.

Barb Beesley, IHM, peace activist, Marygrove M.A. Social Justice instructor

My greatest inspiration has been Ammon Hennacy. I met him when I was a young man and was impressed by his continuing witness and fearlessness.

Jasiu Milanowski, MPT Core Team and Trainer

We believe that *Democracy Now* with Amy Goodman (radio and TV), *Common Dreams* on the internet, and *Empire and the Bomb* written by Joe Gerson have been excellent motivating truth forces for our life commitment in peace and justice. Thanks be to God for these dedicated journalists.

Sisters Carol Gilbert, O.P. and Ardeth Platte, O.P., Plowshares Women, Jonah House

My vote -- Jesus of Nazareth.

Joe Mulligan, SJ, Nicaragua, served on Michigan Peace Team to the West Bank

My first inspiration when I was young was Gandhi. Later, outstanding among individuals for me was Sr. Liz Walters and then Sisters Ardeth Platte and Carol Gilbert. What wonderful role models.

Sigrid Dale, lifelong peace activist, St. Leo's Bishop Thomas Gumbleton Pax Christi group

I would say George Clooney. I admire the bold statements he makes in films. Not all people with a popular following are as brave to tackle the subjects and make the points that he does.

Melanie Goldberg, Huntington Woods Peace, Citizenship, and Education Project

Weaving a Tapestry of Peace by Lydia Wylie-Kellermann

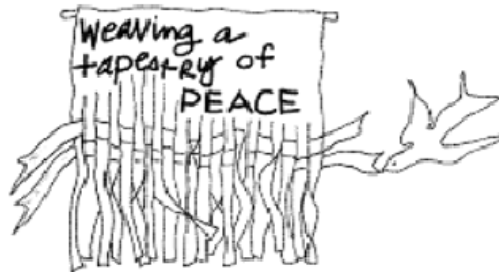
"We know that going is a little dangerous, because the way people are hurting one another. We know that we might even get hurt. Part of helping the people who are being hurt is taking that chance that you might get hurt too. I don't think there is a way to really help them or understand them or stand with them without taking some of those risks and taking a chance that we might get hurt."

These words, transcribed from a cassette, were taped for me by my dad when I was three and a half, as he, my mom, and sister prepared to leave for Palestine.

My mom wrote about my baptism as: "Water, words, community. Offering our child back to God. We would give her to a God who models the cross. We would invite her to listen for a voice calling in the night, to vigil, to put herself at risk, to leave family and friends, to speak clearly a truth for which one can be executed."

Peace and justice work was woven into the very framework of my childhood. The reality of pain and injustice were never shielded from us. My parents had a remarkable talent for telling us the truth in a way we could understand. Yet with that hard truth, also came the reality of the joy and community that comes with justice work.

I am so grateful to both my parents, Bill and Jeanie, for telling and showing me the truth. Their words and spirit will walk with me for the rest of my life in all that I do.



One Piece at a Time

By Liz Walters

Many wonderful people, every child on earth, life experiences, literature, art, music, and Mother Earth herself inspire me to be and do the work of peace. However, limited space requires brevity, so in this short article, I lift up three experiences with people who continue to teach me a great deal about nonviolence and peace.

The first happened with peacemakers, Ardeth Platte and John, a garbage truck driver in Saginaw, Michigan. Ardeth and I had been convicted of trespass in federal court and sentenced to six months imprisonment in a Saginaw federal facility for entering a nuclear weapons bunker at Wurtsmith Air force SAC Base on an Easter Sunday morning and declaring, "Christ Lives. Disarm."

Saginaw's garbage detail was one of many work assignments for prisoners. Ardeth and I were selected for this work and John's boss ordered him to take us to work sites each day. Our prison work included re-cycling yard waste, picking up debris in abandoned lots, and removing trash from abandoned buildings.

Early one morning we went to a huge, abandoned garage filled with trash from floor to ceiling. Neighbors had complained, so the city was taking action. As we approached the garage, I said emphatically, "The job is too big; there is no way we can do this."

John replied,

Of course we can! We'll do it by removing one piece at a time. If you don't want to help, you can sit down. I need to get to work.

For a time I sat on the sidelines doing nothing; then I joined Ardeth and John. The job took many hours to complete so I had lots of time to think about this experience in light of our nonviolence and peacemaking work. Here are some of my insights.

- We do peace one piece at a time.
- Nothing is gained by sitting on the sidelines.

- It's good to admire or applaud or hope for a nonviolent world. However, the great practitioners of nonviolence and peace are also doers and makers.
- We need to help each other to understand that a world without violence and peace on Earth IS possible.
- Peacemaking is easier when we work as a team.

Encounters with women in Gaza are a second source of peacemaking inspiration for me. Serving on MPT peace teams to Gaza, I quickly learned that women there are deeply spiritual and very courageous.

When I am on MPT peace teams to Gaza I especially enjoy being with a group of Gazan women who meet

weekly for prayer.

Just as Gandhi moved beyond Hindu tradition to study Jesus and western proponents of nonviolence, these women use the Koran, the Hebrew Scripture, and the Christian Scripture in their prayer. Their world view embraces the whole Earth. They pray for peace with justice in Gaza and on behalf of the whole Earth Community.



This kind of global relational spirituality is probably the most urgent spiritual need of our time. To my delight, these women understand and live this spirituality.

The courage of Gazan women is also striking. During times of Israeli invasion, men and boys, twelve years and older, flee from their homes because if they stay, they are often imprisoned by the invading forces. It is the women who remain home with the children and other family members. In the most dangerous of situations they are not afraid to nonviolently speak and act. For example, during one home invasion along the border, as a soldier was smashing a beautiful tile sink in the kitchen, the Gazan woman of the home said to him, "Why are you doing this?" The soldier replied, "We want to make you miserable then you will leave." In reply the woman said, "Because I care about you as a person, I think the better question for me to ask is, "How can you do this and live with yourself?"

Continued on page 7

One Piece ... continued

The women of Ciudad Juarez, Mexico are equally inspiring. Serving on an MPT exploratory peace team in Juarez during November 2009, I was energized by their remarkable strength and resilience. They know how to live through the tragedy that is happening, and at the same time to be women filled with love, mercy, hope, vision, gratitude, celebration, joy.

There are many experiences to share about these beautiful people. Here's one example:

The day before our MPT peace team was to return home, we were invited by a group of elderly women to come to a special Mexican meal. The food was fabulous but the most remarkable thing about the event was the dancing. These women who suffer deeply from the culture of violence and the injustice so prevalent in Juarez wanted to thank our peace team, and share with us that no matter how difficult the situation, friends always need to get together for good food AND dancing.

Choosing the path of nonviolence and peace is a lot easier when I think about whom and what in my life has influenced, informed and inspired me!

The Spirit within Me

Paula Marie Deubel

My good friend, Tom Soto, is someone who influenced my life in a peacemaking way. Sadly, my hero of 13 years died on January 7, 2010, after being in a coma he never woke up from.

Tom was Aztec Indian, tall and thin, with lovely high cheek bones and long black hair. At his deathbed, I felt a page of history quietly turn as the uniqueness of this man faded into the spirit world, just as the spirits of Geronimo and Chief Seattle had. A whole era was gone forever with his last breath.



I met Tom at S.E. Michigan (American) Indian center, in 1996, when my family donated Christmas toys for poor children and we decided to stay to wrap gifts. Tom spoke with us, and mentioned he'd lost his parents in Ohio at age two because of poverty.

Tom and two sisters were passed from orphanages to foster homes because no one wanted a "dark" child at that time. Eventually, Tom was separated from his sisters and never saw them again. When he was twelve, after a decade of being pushed around through the system, a family finally adopted him. He stayed with them for three years, but ran away when his adopted father insisted he cut his hair; much later, they reunited.

Tom deeply cared about needy and elderly people. Once, during a cold day, Tom noticed an aged lady standing outside holding a cup. Believing she was a beggar, he reached deep into his pockets and plunked a

handful of change into her cup. Hot coffee splashed out on both of them; she was merely waiting for a bus! In 2003 Tom went into kidney failure. Because of other concurrent health problems, he was forced to (temporarily) go into physical rehabilitation, but the only place available was a nursing home. Certainly, with his youthful looks and bright spirit, Tom looked very much out of place. He took it upon himself to look after certain patients in wheel chairs who never had any visitors. One day he escorted them out (very secretly) for pizza at a restaurant across the street - for two hours no one knew where they disappeared. Tom even stood in the middle of a busy intersection, holding out his arms to stop cars at a red light so the caravan of wheel chairs could safely cross. Then he was kicked out of the nursing home!

I volunteered with Tom at many events including Pow Wows and Indian Youth Programs; we tried to make the world a better place. The roots of destiny are often rooted in the past; our paths may never have crossed if not for David Chippewa, a very poor boy I once met in Lansing when I was a girl. I remember being shocked to realize anyone could be so poor. He opened my eyes to the plight of many Native Americans and, subsequently, to oppressed people of this world.



Although both have gone away their spirits remain inside me.

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MPT's 2010 Newsletter Committee

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Note regarding MPT newsletter artwork:

Nancy Ayotte creates all the artwork for the MPT Newsletters Her creations are pure gift to MPT and to our readers. This gift is yours to freely use in other peace work.

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