

Handful of Salt

Volume XXXVII, Number 2

March–April 2013



*From the
Director's
Chair
By Liz Moore*

What I love most about PJALS is being part of a community of people who take action together based on the connections between human rights, economic justice, & peace.

Our Steering Committee asked you, PJALS members, to guide strategic planning for 2013-2014. We learned that you overwhelmingly support organizing to **raise revenue & reject cuts** as well as to **counter the costs of militarism**. You're also passionate about **alternatives to incarceration & police accountability**. You value that we **create community together** through our events & campaigns. You strongly support our **Young Activist Leaders Program** & our interns. You love our **Action Conference**. You want PJALS to continue to **strengthen our connections with communities of color & with rural people**.

Why prioritize those areas? You want to see **impact for the most people**. You want to **win!** You want PJALS to move more people to support our work, increase our influence, & donate to make more victories possible. You want to see us focus on issues where our

“connections analysis” is unique.

Many of you are directly affected by economic injustice, poverty, police misconduct, militarism's resource suck, the human damages of war, & a sense of unity with those who are directly affected in ways you are not. More than 1 in 4 of you live on less than \$25,000 & another 1 in 4 live in households with income of \$25,000 to \$50,000. PJALS members are disproportionately older and white, compared to Spokane County.

Our 2013-2014 plans reflect your campaign priorities & focus on creating impact & growing our active membership—particularly youth & people of color participation & leadership. We'll share learning opportunities, increase our visibility, & strengthen relationships with communities of color. We'll use a racial equity & justice lens in our policy campaigns, leadership development, & relationship building. We'll “exert moral leadership” & we'll strengthening our fiscal condition & match our capacity & our workload so our work is sustainable.

Sounds like a great community of action to be part of, doesn't it? It is exactly YOU that makes this plan realistic & achievable. Please continue & even increase your involvement. PJALS members are my favorite people! I look forward to our work together!

Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane

Affiliate of the Fellowship of Reconciliation

35 W. Main, Ste 120M, Spokane, WA 99201 • 509-838-7870 • www.pjals.org

The Handful of Salt

is published quarterly by the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane. Its name comes from Mohandas Gandhi's salt tax protest in India, a successful, nonviolent, grassroots action that created significant social change against overwhelming resource advantages.

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Contact PJALS: 509-838-7870, www.pjals.org, pjals@pjals.org

Volunteers Make It Happen

Contact Shar at 838-7870 to share your time and talents.

SAVE THE DATE!

Wed. May 1st

Stand in solidarity with undocumented immigrants on May 1st. Join together with student leaders of M.E.Ch.A de EWU and other organizations to march in support of immigrant rights across the country.



For information or to get involved in planning, please contact Lucy Vazquez at lvazquez@pjals.org

Wish List

- Desk chairs and a desk for interns.
- Donate your gently used (and not too old) desktop computer for use by our fantastic interns and volunteers.
- Printer ink: \$45
- Office Angel to help keep our supplies organized and tidy: Priceless!
- Young Activist Leaders program materials (binders, training materials, etc) for 2012-2013: \$460
- New color printer with copy, scan, two-sided printing capability: \$199

Become a Handful Contributor.
We welcome your articles, subject to editing for space and appropriateness of content.
Contact slichty@pjals.org



*Rusty Nelson on
Peace and War*

Yelling “Fire!” In A Crowded Bill of Rights

Cassandra, in
ancient Greek stories,

has become a more and more compelling character to me as I’ve observed the politics of institutional violence. What curse could frustrate you more than being able to see the future clearly while every other mind is completely closed to any warning or constructive comment you might offer? Watching epic, human-driven disasters unfold was much less painful before I realized two essential facts: The violence residing within me is part of the problem, and there is always an alternative to violence.

Our national conversation is full of presumptions that immutable conflicts emerge from the blue, with no way to anticipate or prevent them. What a waste of talk. If we can’t see poverty, inequality for women and minorities, the firearms plague, wage theft, funding cuts for education and social safety nets, codified vengeance, and the consolidation of corporate wealth and power as symptoms of a culture of violence, we’ll never fathom the magnetism of war.

Yes, I’m saying these maladies, and more, thrive in our society because we have embraced violence. Not tolerated. Not ignored. Embraced.

As desensitized as I am, I flinch every day from events, commentary, rhetoric and self-righteousness that stubbornly resist

acknowledgment of the power of nonviolence. Rare is the group or individual who maintains no shrines to gods of violence. The U.S. Constitution and Judeo-Christian theology both set out to limit acceptable violence, and they’re both cherry-picked to construct handbooks for fear-driven denominations in our civil religion.

Thousands of Americans have, for four years, been expecting President Obama to storm their homes, demanding they surrender their flintlock muskets and pistols, their sacred heritage from an amendment crafted to convince Virginians and Georgians they could ratify the constitution without losing their cherished, slavery-enforcing militias. Having converted their arsenals to assault rifles and automatic pistols, these bold patriots hear the dreaded knock, don kevlar vests and NRA badges and fling their doors open to face the jack-booted thugs sent to infringe their most precious rights. Imagine the surprise when their worst nightmare turns out to be, not flag-burning, homosexual communists, but a former congresswoman surviving a bullet to the head and the spirits of 20 beatific children, forever 6 or 7 years old.

Of course, those doors have yet to be unlocked, and the gun industry is providing barricade material and doubling down to maintain the NRA’s investment in members of Congress and other influential hair triggers.

Meanwhile, my long-held, personal position on firearms seems inadequate.

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(Rusty Nelson on Peace and War, cont from page 3)

I've told gun worshipers that I have nothing against gun ownership or responsible shooting, but I detest and fear the strongly-held belief that any individual or family is somehow safer with the presence of a firearm, regardless of training or environment. Now, I would say, "If you can't live with an interpretation of the 2nd Amendment that allows universal background checks, a ban on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, and restrictions on WMD, then I'm for repeal of your holy 2nd Amendment because I hear you yelling 'fire!' under the protection of my 1st Amendment."

I'm impatient with decisions about what is or is not constitutional, and I think very few of us wish to revisit an amendment experiment like prohibition. On the other hand, I will argue with anyone that capital punishment is forbidden by the 8th Amendment, and I'm disgusted that so few Supreme Court justices have ever expressed any concern about it. Justices cling to their own excuses for cruel and unusual punishment, just as a gun worshiper might justify the fantasy of blowing the head off a perverted and heavily-armed intruder. In reality, of course, executions propel the cycle of violence, granting permission for a few (unusual) selected (cruel) homicides, and dearly innocent lives are usually the ones lost when firearms are discharged in the home.

Another factor in our national

attitude about violence brings out even more of my Cassandra complex. It is the myth of good guys and bad guys.

After a brief military career, I realized I had been manipulated to be comfortable discerning between enemies and allies, good and bad people, good and bad violence. I had accepted a license to kill with no more sophistication than the childhood games of cops and robbers or cowboys and Indians, but I inferred that military and government leaders actually knew what they were doing.

Even after childhood turns as good guys and bad guys, we retain the notion that we are good guys, and people with different values-often translated as different economic status, religion or ethnicity- are bad guys, especially if accused or suspected of offensive thoughts or behaviors. With this myth perpetuated by every level of media and government, most of us grow up ready to justify any violence we perceive as necessary. Worse, the good-guy-bad-guy reference is used locally to undermine the concept of "innocent until proven guilty" and globally to subvert efforts toward peacemaking and diplomacy.

Our gun violence epidemic is far from over, even if we get legislation for universal firearms registration and permission to refrain from arming the mentally ill and known criminals. Our society is not ready to consider human powder kegs as criminal and/or insane just because they may harbor extreme death wishes. Conventional wisdom demands a

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Pulling at the Threads of Violence in our Culture

By Rev. Dr. Todd F. Eklof, The Unitarian
Universalist Church of Spokane

What a privilege it was to moderate during PJALS' February 7th panel discussion on violence. We don't hear about most the violence that occurs every day in our country or in our communities, but the recent and terrible tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary, as well as those in places like Aurora, Colorado, the Sikh Temple in Wisconsin, and far too many others, have reminded us all that something must be done now! So, firstly, thanks to PJALS for recognizing the urgency and the need to begin a conversation about this in our own community.

Thanks also to the excellent panelists who offered their wisdom and experience to help make the gathering so worthwhile. Bill Morlin, a writer for the Southern Poverty Law Center's blog, Hatewatch, and a former longtime reporter for the Spokesman-Review, brought his years of experience covering extremists and hate groups to the conversation. He also, as always, gave us honesty, hard as it is to hear at times. Sandra Williams, a writer, filmmaker, and activist, who has worked extensively on issues of discrimination and oppression, reminded us that violence isn't restricted to just gun-violence, but exists wherever injustice does. She also reminded us that peace begins

with each one of us. Tim Conner, Communications Director at the Center for Justice, and an accomplished journalist in his own right, brought great professional insight to the conversation, but also many touching personal accounts. No matter how distant, violence is always personal! Dr. Jacob Kamp, a professional and experienced psychiatrist, added a level of compassion in helping us to understand some of the root causes of violence. He also cautioned us about jumping to conclusions about the mental wellbeing of others, or marginalizing those we label as "mentally ill." And Victoria Redstarr, with The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, taught us that violence is as much a spiritual problem as anything, to be countered only by realizing our oneness and solidarity with others. Violence stems from a false sense of separation and the solution is in recognizing All Our Relations.

Finally, I'm appreciative of everyone from the community who showed up to participate in this important conversation. The fact that so many concerned and compassionate people are out there



Rural Organizing Revisited

By Shar Lichty

A few years ago, Liz and I had the privilege of visiting some amazing groups of rural progressives to do voter education around seven important ballot initiatives concerning revenue. We have since been wanting to make another round of visits but haven't quite figured out when to squeeze them into our busy schedules. Last spring a couple of our interns and myself went to Seattle to attend a conference on rural organizing and I left feeling a sense of urgency around re-launching our rural organizing efforts.

Having worked on a few "statewide" campaigns I understand the importance of progressives in Eastern WA and sometimes experience frustration with groups on the west side of the mountains who seem to lack this understanding. *Eastern WA is much more than just Spokane, it is a broad region full of vibrant rural communities who are vital to moving any progressive issue forward.* As such, I am excited that we are making plans to take PJALS on the road this summer to visit some of these communities, strengthen our relationships there, and find out if there are ways PJALS can support organizing efforts in them.

I spent most of my time in Washington living and



working in a rural community and remember how disconnected I often felt as it seemed I was surrounded by folks who didn't think like me. The truth is there were probably many more folks feeling the same way—we just didn't know each other! Following the model of the Rural Organizing Project (ROP) in Oregon, we would love to connect folks in rural communities around coordinated ways to take action. ROP calls them Kitchen Table Activities; they are fantastic and we would love to share what we've learned so far.

We are in the very early stages of planning and would love to hear any input our rural folks have, including information on any events this summer we should know about and attend when possible. **Are you one of the many PJALS folks living in rural Eastern WA?** Would you like us to visit your community? If so, please contact me at slichty@pjals.org.



PEACE AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE ACTION CONFERENCE

Friday, March 15: Opening Reception
6:00 -8:30 *Join us for tasty nosh, wine & more, and performances from local musical & spoken word artists.*

Saturday, March 16, 2013: Conference

Join us for a full day with three workshop sessions, a fantastic keynote speaker, breakfast, lunch, and lots of opportunities to connect with like-minded folks who are putting their values into action!

**Enjoy Early Bird Registration rates
through Saturday March 2nd!
www.pjals.org/2013conference**



Join Our Media Action Team

By Justin Filla

The Peace and Justice Action League is looking for individuals who would like to join our Media Action Team. This Media Action Team will consist of authors who would like to write letters to the editor for causes that PJALS focuses on. These letters will be submitted to The Spokesman-Review as well as other area publications. The goal of this action team is to get more progressive voices out in the Spokane community.

Letters to the editors are great in allowing

the author to reach a larger audience and create an impression of widespread support for or opposition to an issue. They are also great because most elected officials monitor the letter to the editor sections and the information is usually not addressed elsewhere in a news article.

PJALS is currently looking for authors who are interested in writing letters on the issue of getting cuts to wasteful Pentagon spending, while also demonstrating public opposition to cuts to Medicaid, Medicare, and Social Security.

If you are interested in being a part of this Media Action Team and would like to write on this topic or any other topic of interest to you get in contact with Justin Filla at (509)838-7870 or by email at jfilla@pjals.org

Young Activist Leader reflection

"...our generation has all the potential..."

By Audrey Connor, Youth Sustainability Council, Community-Minded Enterprises

Thus far into the program, YALP has really helped me understand the context of my thinking as both a semi-organizer and a private citizen.

I feel so engaged and impassioned in every discussion, and being able to share my thoughts and opinions freely among like-minded individuals (under the guidance of Shar and Liz) has been a huge gift, especially lately as I figure out what it is I want from my life and experiences.

I am also able to listen to different points of view and

have my mind changed often. I really respect my fellow program members, and many of the exercises and discussions we have had have reassured me that our

generation has all the potential I tell people it does. I am really, really grateful this program exists.



For more information about PJALS Young Activist Leader Program, visit www.pjals.org/yalp



We did it! Yes on Prop 1!

By Michelle Little

After many years and a tremendous amount of effort by groups such as the Spokane Police

Accountability and Reform Coalition, along with overwhelming support by local citizens of Spokane, we have taken a huge step in the right direction. By a landslide 70% vote Proposition 1, which mandates independent investigative authority and public reporting by the Spokane Police Ombudsman and creates a citizen oversight commission, has passed.

In 2010 these rights were given to the

ombudsman's office and then repealed by city council. This past month a measure was put on the ballot of a special election in the City of Spokane to allow the public to vote on the issue. With the passage of Proposition 1, the only thing that can repeal this authority now is another vote of the public.

I think it is important to take the time to recognize all the people and organizations who put their time and effort into this huge success. The voters in the City of Spokane also deserve a round of applause for their part in helping to make Spokane a safer city for the public and law enforcement alike. Although there is much work to be done around the issue of police accountability, for now let's all give ourselves a pat on the back and celebrate this awesome victory!!

Inland NW Death Penalty Abolition Group (INDPAG) Lobby Day Trip

By Cly F. Evans

Monday, Feb. 11, five Spokane area death penalty abolition supporters, most involved with INDPAG and/or PJALS, loaded in a van and made their way to Olympia to participate in the February 12 Death Penalty Abolition lobby day organized by the statewide campaign Safe and Just Alternatives. The Olympia Unitarian Universalist Church provided overnight accommodations for us all.

Tuesday morning we met with SJA staff who explained the plan of the day,



and provided us the names of those legislators and legislative staff who we were scheduled to meet with. We were then off in groups of one, two, or three to attend our appointments. We Spokane folks were pleasantly surprised to have an additional Spokane person join us. She had not been previously involved with our efforts but had talked to a couple of us after one of the Magic Lantern movie events. She was in Olympia, heard about the Lobby Day, and came to join us.

Throughout the day, by my count, members of our group interacted with three Senators (Billig, Padden, and Carlyle) three Representatives (Riccelli, Crouse, and Parker), the staff of two Senators (Roach and Padden), and two Representatives (Ormsby and Shea).

One of the most dynamic and memorable parts of the day was during a

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(Death Penalty Abolition, cont from page 8)

noon hour meeting where all the participants gathered to hear from bill sponsors Representative Reuven Carlyle and Senator Adam Kline. Representative Carlyle has introduced a death penalty abolition bill every session that he has served. He made profound comments explaining why it is necessary for our state to eliminate the death penalty. I wish I could quote him accurately enough to give a sense of how profound, sincere, and convincing he was. Had I not been a believer already I would have been convinced with his comments. He essentially described the fact that we as a society are constantly making moral progress and that the correct moral position that killing people is wrong is past due in being incorporated in state law.

Both he and Senator Kline encouraged us to remember that efforts such as this take time, but that the cultural shift in our state and nation is happening swiftly as evidenced by such victories as marriage equality, progress towards immigration reform, and other examples. They both assured us that even if we don't get abolition this session we have made progress, and will have a solid toe hold when the subsequent session opens.

The positions taken by the various legislators and staff we met with was largely predictable based on information we already had on what they have previously said on this topic. There were some surprises such as the number of people that reported the death penalty has

never been brought up to them, and even saying that they have never given it much thought. One republican representative told me that I was the first person since he started serving in 1995 to ever mention the issue to him. He followed that up by



saying he reads the bible a lot and that it says "some people need to be stoned". Then he acknowledged that executing an innocent person would be one of the worst things a state could do.

Other legislators appeared genuinely open to "exploring" the question but were not willing to give much of a hint as to their position at this point. Senator Billig was very positive, encouraging, and helpful, echoing the comments from Carlyle and Kline that not getting abolition this session is not failure, it just means the effort will continue and that we still have work to do.

It was an invigorating couple of days. We felt that nearly all the people we contacted genuinely appreciated we were there to talk to them, even if they didn't necessarily agree with our position. We strongly encourage you to take advantage of such an opportunity on whatever issue you are passionate about. If you can't go in person, call, or write your legislators. It can't hurt and I think we were all convinced that it is very likely to have some impact. Our group maintains the faith that several of the people we have been lobbying both in Olympia and here in Spokane will ultimately support abolition.

Time to Put People First

By Michelle Little, Young Activist Leader and PJALS Intern

Being a single mother of three young children, I depend on many programs to care for my family while I am attending college, including Medicaid, food stamps, child care assistance and the Washington State Need Grant for higher education. Continuing cuts to these programs will devastate families such as my own, and many other families who are struggling to stay afloat.

On Martin Luther King Jr.



Day I had the privilege of speaking at the rally on the capitol steps with 300 people at Washington CAN's Racial Justice Rally in Olympia. I went with a delegation from the Peace and Justice Action League including my

fellow intern Justin Filla. This was the first time I had ever spoken in front of a crowd, and although it was very scary it was also very empowering to be able to tell my story and have the support of so many people who feel the same way I do.

Along with issues surrounding racial equality in the state of Washington, we also urged

Pull the Pentagon Pork: Protect our Priorities, Protect Families

By Lucy Vazquez



On Tuesday February 19th PJALS members met with John Culton, the Eastern Washington Director for Senator Patty Murray as our

second mobilization, following up on our December action, where we delivered over 1,100 signatures of individuals and 18 different organizations that have signed on as part of PJALS' Bring Our Billions Home Campaign. As the fight over the fiscal budget continues and more cuts to social programs are on the chopping block, PJALS decided to make a stance and urge Senator Murray to protect our communities and fight to reduce wasteful Pentagon spending.

Sitting in Senator Murray's Eastern Washington Director John Culton's office with seven PJALS members and listening to

their stories made me realize this is not about numbers, it's about impacting real people and communities.

I listened to a few stories from members of our community, who represented a small portion of the amount of individuals who are being affected by these budget cuts and decisions. Hearing their stories gave me

strength to continue fighting for our social programs and emphasized the importance of telling ones' story.

PJALS will carry on the struggle to reduce wasteful Pentagon spending by joining the National Day of Action to protect our priorities at noon on February 27th. We will

engage in sign holding, gathering signatures on our Bring Our Billions Home campaign, and conducting a photo petition about pulling the pentagon pork in order to tell Congress its time they listen to us and start investing in our priorities and not in CEO's!



Rusty Nelson on Peace and War, continued
from page 4

sprinkling of sociopaths and psychopaths in our military, intelligence and law enforcement organizations, and we honor many of them as heroes for actual or perceived service to our country. They are we. They are good guys...until the moment they are overwhelmed by that element of violence that most of us feel we'll always be able to control.

I often agree with those who claim violent popular media are factors in our epidemic of real-life-and-death violence, but I'm troubled that no media favorite has stepped up to point out that the promoters of war-at-any-price have always glorified killing and destruction with impunity. That is how a nation can be horrified that Americans brutalized and humiliated prisoners at Abu Graib, vaguely disturbed that we ruined the lives of uncharged suspects at Guantanamo, and totally unconcerned about the killing of thousands of noncombatants in Iraq and Afghanistan. That's how release of a filmed massacre of civilians by U.S. helicopter gunships results in no penalties for the heroic butchers and abusive, pre-charges detention for Bradley Manning who was declared guilty long before any proof was

submitted. That's how repressed and desperate youth, especially in depressed sections of our largest cities, decide their lives will be meaningless without firearms and the willingness to use them, while the Pentagon, nervous about funding for its customary extravagance, conjures a medal for remote operators of death-dealing drones.

We who strive for justice get as angry as anyone. Even when we believe our personal demons of violence are minimized, we can scream at our loved ones, wish for harm to befall persons more prominent and more violent than we, or sling pitiful epithets toward people whose minds we think we cannot change. This is our self-imposed curse of Cassandra, a curse we can still elude by making an effort to find common ground with our adversaries and admitting our own weaknesses. Although I believe I have reasonable answers for many of the big questions of our time, I've learned it is not for me to claim more than a small portion of the Truth. It is, however, for me and for us to challenge the misperceptions, distorted history, and outright lies which make our country ignore the triumphs of King and Gandhi in favor of the spiral of violence which has failed us, every time.

legislators to raise revenue, close corporate tax loopholes and stop the cuts to vital social service programs and to expand rather than cut programs such as Medicaid and Medicare.

I also shared my concerns with two local legislators, Jeff Holy and Kevin Parker. It is important for people to understand that in

order to make changes in our world we must be proactive and continue to fight for what we believe in. Thanks to organizations like PJALS and WACAN, people like me can be given the opportunity to push our state to make changes in the right direction.

Go to www.pjals.org for video of Michelle!

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For information and registration: www.pjals.org/2013conference

Friday March 15: Evening Reception Saturday March 16: Action Conference

Please support PJALS!

The Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane depends upon gifts and dues from members to continue to work for peace and justice, locally and globally. We welcome anyone who favors free exchange of ideas and nonviolent action to war or to inaction and ignorance. PJALS, 35 W Main, Suite 120M, Spokane, WA 99201.

You determine your own level of support and participation. Members also determine issues and projects that get the most attention and effort. PJALS is a 501©3 nonprofit corporation.

Call 838-7870 to discuss the by-the-month options, or visit www.pjals.org and click "Contribute" in upper right corner.

Other membership options:

Name(s) _____

Essential/Vintage members \$60/year

Address _____

Living Lightly (low income) \$20/year

Phone/email _____















