‘Ban the Bomb butterfly effect’

By Jim Hannah

Did you feel that flutter a few weeks ago?

You might call it the “Ban the Bomb butterfly effect,” more evidence that small actions can have outsized impact.

The stir came when this year’s Nobel Peace Prize was awarded on Oct. 6 to ICAN, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons.

The Nobel citation commends ICAN “for its work to draw attention to the catastrophic human consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and for its groundbreaking efforts to achieve a treaty-based prohibition of such weapons.”

The Norwegian Nobel Committee called ICAN “the leading civil society actor in the endeavor to achieve a prohibition of nuclear weapons under international law,” noting ICAN’s active role in development of this year’s Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. That treaty has been signed by 53 nations and, since July, ratified by three nations; when ratified by 50 nations, it will become the first legally binding treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons.

In a time of heightened awareness of the nuclear threat, as North Korea and the United States square off with threats and counter-threats, it is particularly significant that the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to a civil society organization advocating nuclear weapons abolition.

ICAN, a coalition of non-governmental organizations from more than 100 nations, is now pursuing a nuclear weapons ban from within the United Nations.

A statement on ICAN’s website underscores the urgency of the moment: “This is a time of great global tension, when fiery rhetoric could all too easily lead us, inexorably, to unspeakable horror. The

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UNplaza Art Fair—beauty in the park

Ricardo Nuñez, top seller at PeaceWorks’ UNplaza Art Fair, graced our annual fundraiser with this striking image.

Art fair details and more pictures by Mark Semet are at the center of this newsletter.

UNplaza Art Fair — see pp. 4-5
Activists aim to oust US nuclear weapons from Germany

By Mary Hladky and Spencer Graves

Marion Küpker, of Hamburg, Germany, spoke to PeaceWorks members recently about her work to oust US nuclear weapons from her country.

After the Cold War, said Küpker, the German people believed all US nuclear weapons in Germany had been removed. In 1997 it was discovered that 20 B61 nuclear bombs were still deployed at Germany’s Buchel Air Base. B61 bombs, each 10 times stronger than the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, are also deployed in Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Turkey, said Küpker, for a total of about 180 such bombs in Europe. Küpker spoke to 27 persons Oct. 18 at All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church in KC, MO.

If President Trump, through NATO, ordered a nuclear attack from German soil, Küpker explained, the bombs would need to be flown by German pilots using German planes. According to a March 2016 poll of the German chapter of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, 93 percent of Germans want nuclear weapons banned, and 85 percent agree that the US weapons should be withdrawn from Germany.

Currently the US intends to spend $12 billion to “modernize” these bombs, added Küpker. The US would build new B61 bombs that are “intelligent”—with more accuracy—making them more likely to be used. Unfortunately, part of the work to make the new B61-12 weapons is expected to be done at the Honeywell plant, the National Security Campus in KC, MO.

In 2016, Küpker helped launch an annual 20-week-long series of nonviolent protests at Buchel Air Base, demanding withdrawal of these 20 weapons of mass destruction. Several Americans attended this year’s events, and Küpker invited us to participate next year.

Küpker and the German Peace Society of United War Resisters, committed to a world free of nuclear weapons, has these goals:

- removing B61 nuclear bombs from Germany and elsewhere in Europe,
- halting modernization of the bombs, and
- applying pressure on Germany to sign and ratify the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

—Mary Hladky and Spencer Graves serve on the PeaceWorks-KC board.

SURJ 11/20 meeting targets gentrification

SURJ-KC, Showing Up for Racial Justice, will explore gentrification in its monthly meeting Monday, Nov. 20, looking at this phenomenon through the lens of systemic and strategic racism. The meeting will be Nov. 20, 7-8:30pm, at St. Mark Hope and Peace Lutheran Church, 3800 Troost, KC MO. The group is a gathering of white persons committed to acting against racist policies and attacks. First-time SURJ attendees should come at 6:30 pm for orientation.
Afghanistan—the forgotten war

By Mary Hladky

Watching the PBS series on the Vietnam war is a graphic reminder of the horrors of war. Unfortunately, one of the few things the US government learned from the Vietnam war was how to hide the horrors of the Afghanistan war from public view as much as possible, to prevent the backlash experienced during the Vietnam war. No body counts, no reporters roaming free, only embedded journalists, minimal media coverage with little footage of the actual war, and no pictures of coffins returning home.

The Trump Administration has decided to continue to support the war in Afghanistan, only with more troops and no stated end game. As this war completed its 16th year, on Oct. 7, more troops were on their way to Afghanistan. The suffering of our troops, their families, and the Afghan people will continue.

Afghanistan is the forgotten war, even though it is currently the United States’ largest military foreign engagement, with 16,000+ troops and tens of thousands of defense and agency contractors.

The only people who benefit from this war are the military contractors and the corrupt Afghan government, made up of many drug and warlords guilty of human rights abuses and war crimes. The Afghan government controls, protects, and benefits from the enormous poppy crop that supplies over 90 percent of the world’s heroin. SIGAR (Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction) reports that reconstruction in Afghanistan is nearly nonexistent after an expense of $100 billion.

The Afghan government, which the US has propped up with billions of dollars and thousands of American lives, remains overwhelmingly corrupt, a government the Afghan people will never accept. In the meantime, the Taliban has grown in numbers and holds more territory than ever before, 40-50 percent of the country. Instead of pursuing peace, our government continues to opt for more war.

Americans need to take a stand against the Afghanistan war. We need to reflect on what it is that we believe. Ask yourself two basic questions:

How, as Americans, do we continually accept sending young men and women to risk their lives for a futile, never-ending war?

What would you say to a mother who loses her son or daughter in Afghanistan? Can you explain what her child actually died for? What was the noble cause?

It’s up to every one of us who are uncomfortable with the answers to these questions to demand an end to the Afghanistan war.

—Mary Hladky, vice chair of the PeaceWorks-KC board, serves on the boards of Military Families Speak Out and United for Peace and Justice. Her son, Ryan, an Army infantry officer, was deployed to Afghanistan for 13 months at the height of President Obama’s surge.

The US has 16,000 troops and tens of thousands of defense and agency contractors in Afghanistan.
UNplaza Art Fair—beauty in the park

PeaceWorks’ 27th UNplaza Art Fair, our annual fundraiser, brought us many new patrons. One of them, Jack Kleven, a local art fair aficionado, said our Sept. 23-24 fair was better than the Liberty fair, better than the Westport fair. Why? “Every booth is unique, with work I have never seen before, and reasonably priced. The artists are thrilled that you come in to see their work.” Kleven and perhaps 2,000 others came to Southmoreland Park, west of the Nelson-Atkins Art Museum, for this year’s fair—the first we’ve held in a park. These pictures, by Mark Semet, give a glimpse of the fair’s artists and artwork.

Above: Painter and jewelry-maker Felicia Roth, left, waits by a park tree for patrons. They did not disappoint!
Below: Can you see affection in the way Chris Watts holds his driftwood art?
Abolish prison slavery—write prisoners

By Brianna Peril

The Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee (IWOC) is a prisoner-led section of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). We struggle to end prison slavery from inside the prisons and from the outside. On Sept. 9, 2016, we were part of a coalition of inside and outside groups that launched the largest prison strike in US history. Resistance to prison slavery continues with work stoppages, hunger strikes, and other acts of resistance to business as usual.

But it will take a mass movement—inside and out—to abolish prison slavery. We have outside branches in over 15 states in the US, and our membership continues to grow. We invite all those who agree that slavery should be abolished in the US to join us at our weekly letter-writing meet-ups where we try to address torturous conditions while simultaneously working to support prisoners’ efforts to form labor unions inside prisons. Contact us at greaterkciww@gmail.com for more information on times and locations for letter writing.

—Brianna Peril, a member of IWW/IWOC Local 15 in the KC, MO, area, has coordinated letter writing to prisoners for several years.
How to keep our children safe from guns?

By Joseph Wun

The recent Grandparents Against Gun Violence forum, cosponsored by PeaceWorks-KC, wrestled with the thick question of preventing gun violence: How to keep our children safe?

Gun violence prevention tends to focus on objectified categories—guns and their manufacturers, mental illness, school security. Keynote speaker Nicole Hockley, the mother of a son killed in the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre in Newtown, CT, in 2012, advised moving our attention from objects to subjects.

After a 2013 Universal Background Check bill failed to pass Congress, Hockley and other Sandy Hook advocates reasessed. They studied polling data about gun violence and found a general apathy or personal distance from the epidemic. They studied police reports from mass shootings; each shooter had displayed signals and indications that he (it is almost always a he) was going to commit the deadly act.

Enter Sandy Hook Promise’s personal, root-level activity. “My son’s death was not an accident,” Hockley proclaimed, continuing, “it was preventable.” Dylan was six. His mother remembers that he “loved the moon, garlic bread, and drawing big purple dots that he would give me every morning.”

As we at the forum let our tears run, we were reminded that Dylan was a little boy with a heart that pumped blood and hands with fingers that waved with all fervor at his beloved mother.

In this reminder, Hockley declared the imperative of Sandy Hook Promise: personal intervention at every level of school interaction. It is as simple and revolutionary as “Starting with Hello” and spreading kindness and compassion. The men who murder en masse were once little boys in school. Sandy Hook Promise contends that no act of kindness can be too small to prevent someone from extreme violence by redirecting their lives to friendship.

Hockley also called for more immediate intervention. For youths who have grown into disaffected teens, it is vital to know the signs that they may be considering harming themselves or others, particularly with a firearm.

Other speakers noted the clinical evidence that youth suicide is expedited by firearms (they are accessible and lethally effective) and that restricting these means—even by locking guns in a safe or removing them from an at-risk youth—has a substantial effect in preventing death. For more information, see SandyHookPromise.org and PeaceWorksKC.org.

—Joseph Wun is a member of the PeaceWorks-KC board.

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specter of nuclear conflict looms once more. If ever there were a moment for nations to declare their unequivocal opposition to nuclear weapons, that moment is now.”

Among the voices leading the opposition have been those of a former Independence, MO, couple, Matthew Bolton and Emily Welty. Both instructors at Pace University in New York City, they have actively supported ICAN’s treaty efforts.

In an interview with the Independence Examiner, Bolton said, “When we hear the current administration threatening to use them (nuclear weapons), what many citizens forget is what that really means—thousands of deaths, toxic land, multi-generational harm.”

His remarks echo those of ICAN: “The belief of some governments that nuclear weapons are a legitimate and essential source of security is not only misguided, but also dangerous, for it incites proliferation and undermines disarmament. All nations should reject these weapons completely—before they are ever used again.”

Could nuclear weapons ever be delegitimized, and banned? Many might say no, but a creative minority of civil society actors have a different message:

Yes, ICAN! Yes, WE can!

—Jim Hannah is a PeaceWorks-KC board member.
Coalition forms to tackle contamination at Bannister Federal Complex

By Jamie Jackson

The mission of the Coalition Against Contamination (CAC) is to support workers and their families whose health has been impaired because of toxins at Bannister Federal Complex (BFC) at Bannister and Troost in KC, MO. Parts for nuclear weapons were made there, at the Kansas City Plant, from 1949 to 2014, when the plant was replaced by a new facility in south KC, the National Security Campus. The newly formed CAC, including some long-time PeaceWorks members, is educating former workers and the public about past injustices and alerting the community about potential hazards from toxins released into the air and water once the planned BFC demolition goes forward.

The Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act (EEOICPA) was signed into law in 2001. Part B mandates compensation for those employed at covered facilities and their survivors who have been diagnosed with certain cancers and pulmonary diseases. Hundreds of claims have been filed since 2001. Many have been unjustly denied. Recently, a Department of Labor whistleblower told the media that DOL officials have been deliberately thwarting workers’ claims by changing regulations to make the process more obscure. CAC welcomes the House and Senate investigations of DOL obstructions.

CAC held a town hall on Oct. 28 to gather testimony from workers, politicians, lawyers, scientists, and activists. Public awareness of this injustice will help workers move forward with the complicated claims process. CAC also wants the public to understand the potential threat from toxins released during the demolition and cleanup. The current plan for the demolition to meet industrial standards is not enough. Rather, demolition must be done to residential standards to protect the surrounding community. The coalition recommends using a huge tent during excavations and demolition to encapsulate contaminated dust, as other hazardous sites have used.

CAC needs your help. Find out how you can support CAC’s efforts at Coalition Against Contamination - KC: Bannister Cover Up on Facebook.com. For more information, contact Maurice Copeland of the CAC at 816-844-0304 or mauriceasc@aol.com.

—Jamie Jackson is a charter member of CAC.
Trump’s tax plan: Billionaire budget giveaway

President Donald Trump’s tax plan is nothing more than a massive con. Here are five reasons we must stop it. Please contact your senators and representative using these talking points.

It’s not tax reform. Trump’s tax plan is a massive taxpayer-funded giveaway to millionaires, billionaires, and big corporations. Eighty percent of the tax benefits would go to the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans.

It’s for major donors. Trump’s tax plan is a handout to his leading campaign donors. Billionaires and big corporations have been funding political campaigns for years, and they want something in return.

It’s self-serving. Trump didn’t drain the swamp, he brought it into the Oval Office. His tax plan would make his family and his billionaire cabinet even wealthier.

It harms working families. With income inequality on the rise, the last thing we need is a tax code even more rigged in favor of millionaires, billionaires, and corporate insiders.

—Mark Semet, a licensed professional counselor, adapted these talking points from Stand Up America (see StandUpAmerica.org).