Attend PeaceWorks
Annual Meeting March 3rd

A gathering of peace-and-Earth-loving people—what could be more fun? Come enjoy our PeaceWorks Annual Meeting on Sunday, March 3, from 2 to 4pm, at Simpson House, 4509 Warwick, KC, MO. On tap: snacks, tabling, reports, elections, awards, and a trio on the interface of race, ecology, war, and peace.

Bring finger-food if you wish, or just come browse our munchies. We say hi to friends, meet new folks, and visit the tablers from 2 to 2:15 pm. Then we vote for our leaders and hear reports on the state of PeaceWorks from Board Treasurer Dave Pack and Board Chair Henry Stoever.

We’ll give the Charles E. Bebb Peace Merit Award (to an individual) and the Kris and Lynn Cheatum Community Peace Award (to a group). Cheer for our winners!

At the heart of our meeting will be reflections from persons of color in the KC metro area. PeaceWorks Board member Joseph Wun will address environmental justice. We know freight trains may, if Congress decides, carry nuclear waste right through KC. Joseph asks, “Where do freight trains run? Often through neighborhoods where people are black.

Decontaminating education, countering militarism in schools

By Joseph Wun

Pat Elder of World Beyond War will give a free talk, “Countering Military Recruitment in Public Schools & Confronting Contamination Near Military Bases,” on Thursday, Feb. 21. He will share his views with all those wanting to transform a culture of violence and war to a culture of peace and creation. Come hear and question Elder at All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church, 4501 Walnut, KC, MO, 7-8:30 pm.

Elder’s core work calls for demilitarizing U.S. schools. As the school is a place of social formation for youth, the militarization of this setting allows for a manifold conditioning to the normative existence of war-making. Whether a recruited student enlists or not, the collaboration of schools with the military enforces the mythos of the military as a social good, as a legitimate (even paramount) social authority. Destabilizing this structural infra-
Elder’s process emerges from exposing, and then uprooting, the at-present firm, yet often subtle, grip the U.S. military has upon education in this country. Namely, Elder raises alarm regarding the non-consensual access that military recruiters have to students, and what can be done to counter this de facto presence and power. Schools often forward their students’ information to military recruiters without parental consent. Additionally, even further information regarding students’ abilities is forwarded by administering the military’s career aptitude test. This deceptive three-hour assessment claims to help students decide on a range of civilian career options for students had more than 2,000 toxins. Joseph says we’re looking now at “the most disastrous intersection of the war economy, ecological devastation, racism, and economic exploitation.”

Carissa Garcia, who served in Iraq several years and continues to face PTSD, will read a short selection from her poetry. Her works draw from the battlefield of the Middle East and the battlefield of KC. Kat, a student at UMKC, will speak from her perspective as a survivor, a mother, and a water protector. Being of Indigenous ancestry, with blood from both the Choctaw and Cherokee tribes, Kat says, “I am a human who cares about our earth, air, and water. I care about our children and grandchildren, and know we have a duty to ensure their future.” Reflecting on her experience fighting the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), Kat says, “We have more battles ahead of us.”

To allow a bit of time to visit with Joseph, Carissa, Kat, and our tablers, we hope to conclude our formal meeting and return to snacks and conversation for the last 15 minutes of our time together. Hope to see you there!
Hear the trains a-comin’?

By Jim Hannah

It may never happen, but should the stalled Yucca Mountain radioactive waste disposal site ever be activated, the plan is to ship up to 70,000 metric tons of radioactive waste to the Nevada site. This would be a particular hazard for the residents of Las Vegas, only 90 miles away. But the hazard would also include Kansas City, intended as the hub of six rail routes for 3,574 shipments passing through Missouri. (See footnotes below.)

Constant vigilance will be required to prevent this nightmare scenario from becoming reality, says Beyond Nuclear, whose mission is to “educate and activate the public about the connections between nuclear power and nuclear weapons, and the need to abandon both to safeguard our future” (www.beyondnuclear.org).

On Thursday, March 21, PeaceWorks-KC will host Beyond Nuclear staffer Kevin Kamps, a long-time leading opponent of government and industry efforts to dump nuclear and other radioactive waste at Yucca Mountain. He will cover the topic “Crazy Trains” on Thurs., Mar. 21, 7:00-8:30 pm at Rime Buddhist Center, 700 W. Pennway, KC, MO. Kamps will review the history of Yucca Mountain, why it is deemed unsafe for radioactive waste disposal, and what needs to be done to ensure the site is never operational.

Reviewing the history and future of Yucca Mountain, John Hudak of the Brookings Institute notes that “while Congress authorized the construction of a nuclear waste storage facility at Yucca Mountain in 2002, Congress and President Barack Obama ended funding for the project in 2011. For nearly six years, Yucca’s status remained frozen—authorized but unfunded—and construction halted. However, after Donald Trump’s inauguration in 2017, supporters of the project saw a path to restart funding, and operations (Las Vegas Sun, Dec. 26, 2018).”

With Democrats gaining a majority in the House of Representatives this January, Hudak asks, “Did a blue wave wash away Yucca Mountain?” Not altogether, he indicates, but it certainly dampens any hope of firing it up soon. New legislation would need to be introduced on the House floor to restore funding to Yucca Mountain, an idea Speaker Nancy Pelosi has already voted against—and she pretty much controls what legislation will make it to the floor of the House. Further, Hudak notes, Democrats won big in Nevada during last year’s November mid-terms, and are therefore unlikely to alienate their constituents, who broadly oppose Yucca Mountain.

So for now Yucca Mountain may seem like a molehill. But Greek legend has a cautionary tale about Hydra, the water-snake-like monster with many heads. When one head was cut off, two more heads emerged from the wound. Come hear on March 21 what Kevin Kamps can tell us about the Herculean task of cauterizing the wounds so no new heads emerge.

Footnotes

http://www.state.nv.us/nucwaste/news2017/ymroutes17.png
The map shows KC as the hub of six rail routes to Yucca Mountain under consideration in 2008 by the U.S. Department of Energy for transportation of radioactive waste to Yucca Mountain, Nevada.

http://www.state.nv.us/nucwaste/news2017/pdf/Congressional_Districts_Affected.pdf
The 2017 report would designate up to 70,000 metric tons of radioactive waste to be shipped to Yucca Mountain, including 3,574 shipments passing through MO, with KC as the hub.

—Jim Hannah, a retired Community of Christ minister in Independence, serves on the PeaceWorks-KC Board.

—Late news note: Two “temporary” radioactive waste dumps have been proposed on the Texas/New Mexico border.
Emotions were mixed Dec. 7 when Judge Martina Peterson dismissed charges against five defendants who—last Memorial Day—were arrested for crossing the property line at the new nuclear weapons plant in south Kansas City, Mo.

The instant response when the prosecutor’s office failed to produce a witness was elation. The 60 supporters crowding the courtroom knew their colleagues would be spared fines or other punishments they and others had incurred for similar acts of civil disobedience. And when the judge welcomed the assembly to remain in the courtroom, the defendants put nuclear weapons on trial, finding the weapons guilty of crimes against humanity. In the courtroom, there was a clear sense of satisfaction that the enemy had been called out and challenged.

And yet … and yet … there was also a sense of disappointment. None of PeaceWorks-KC’s repeated acts of resistance has risen to the level of a jury trial—a goal that lawyer Henry Stoever, chair of the PeaceWorks Board, noted. He cited extensive legal grounds for civil disobedience, ranging from the U.S. Constitution to the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights. “Murder,” he said, “means the intent to kill, which is the intent of nukes. This violates our basic principles, and I hope in the future we will have a jury trial so more people can hear our arguments on behalf of humanity.”

The other four defendants added their testimony to the “mock trial,” expressing dismay over nukes from varied perspectives. Lu Mountenay, a Community of Christ minister, unrolled a yards-long list of more than 900 toxic chemicals used during 65 years of nuclear weapons production at the old Bannister Federal Complex—chemicals that resulted in more than 150 deaths and untold other health issues.

Sunny Jordan Hamrick, of Jerusalem Farm in KC, Mo., reminded us supporters we were all U.S. citizens, so “these are our bombs” that we have a duty to abolish. “Look around at those here,” he said. “What we know is that as a human family, there are no walls, gates, or bars.” Due to this human connection, he urged, “If you love anyone, or anything, join us!”

Tom Fox, president and CEO of National Catholic Reporter, reflected on the atrocities he witnessed during the Vietnam War, resulting in his sense of call to protest war—and particularly the most gross weapons of war. Using the metaphor of a burning building with children on the second floor, Tom closed with a challenge to act on the clear and present emergency posed by war and nuclear weapons today: “This is our planet on fire. We must stand up and rescue the children and grandchildren.”

Brian Terrell, co-coordinator of Voices for Creative Non-Violence, contested the idea that offering peace witness at the plant is illegal, contending instead that the production of nuclear weapons is itself illegal, a crime against humanity. Had the trial proceeded as planned, he said, and had the activists been found guilty, the court “would have been complicit in the plant’s illegality.” If the opportunity presented itself, Brian said he would say to the police officers at the plant, “A crime is being committed here. If you really are law enforcement, help us close it down!”
Here’s an arresting idea to make your next Memorial Day more memorable…

By Jim Hannah

Sign-up has already begun for persons willing to risk arrest next Memorial Day for “crossing the line” in nonviolent civil disobedience at the new nuclear weapons plant in south Kansas City.

Three peace witnesses from Europe plan to join the resistance, in company with local PWKC repeat arrestees Lu Mountenay and Jim Hannah. About 130 arrests have been made at the old plant or the new one, the National Security Campus, since 2010. With the line-crossing considered a city ordinance violation, the charges have either been dismissed or have resulted in fines up to $250 and/or community service up to 75 hours, plus monitoring fees.

The rally memorializes workers made fatally ill by contaminants at the old Bannister Road nuclear weapons plant and protests the ongoing existential threat of nuclear weapon parts being crafted at the new plant and possibly causing the end of all life on Earth.

Would you like to take your stand alongside other peace witnesses for a nuclear weapons-free world? Contact Henry Stoever at 913-375-0045 or henrystoever@sbcglobal.net for more information, or to express your interest.

Whether you risk arrest, or stand in support of those who do, here’s the date to put in your calendar, with more information to follow:

Memorial Day, Monday, May 27, 2019

—Art by Mark Bartholomew

What’s wrong with this picture?

By Mary Hladky

When we hear GOOD NEWS—for example, U.S. troops are coming home from Syria and Afghanistan—why is it that the news media almost exclusively report the viewpoints of those who have been managing our country’s endless wars, stating that bringing U.S. troops home is a bad idea? Where is the other side of the story? Namely, Americans are not being fully informed and are not well-served by one-sided conversations.

Trump may have directed the military to withdraw U.S. troops from Syria and Afghanistan without a plan, BUT the status quo, 17 years of troops in the Middle East region, has been a total disaster. Since 9/11 we have spent over $5 trillion on war, with what result? U.S. wars have not achieved their military objectives; they do not bring peace, democracy, or freedom. They do not make the lives of the people in these countries better. The American people are told that the U.S. military is a force for good, but in reality, it has brought chaos and increasing terrorism to the Middle East and the region.

With, hopefully, troops coming home, a Senate vote to end U.S. support for the brutal Saudi war in Yemen, and a newly elected, more progressive Congress, the peace movement needs to seize the moment. These are steps in the right direction! It’s our opportunity to lead, demanding an end to futile wars and building a bold peace plan. Our country needs a new foreign policy, one that stops endless war and invests in people.

This past year, we in PeaceWorks-KC worked closely with the Poor Peoples Campaign, connecting the dots among war, poverty, racism, and environmental destruction. We all must continually raise our voices. Our country is on a devastating path, and we must resist. Please join us in this vital work.

—Mary Hladky is vice chair of the PeaceWorks-KC Board.
The Lynch Family Blues

After the painting "Lynch Family" by Joseph Hirsch 1946

By Glenn North

Went out swingin’ last night, baby
Hope you didn’t wait up for me.
Said I was swingin’ all night, baby
Did you stay up late for me?
I wasn’t swingin’ in no joint, darlin’
I was out on the limb of a tree.

Now I’m walkin’ on air, baby
Feels almost like I’m free.
My feet steady kickin’ the wind
Yeah, I’m close to bein’ free.
For the first time in my life, baby
White folks is lookin’ up to me.

Hear me, son, your daddy loves you
Keep hangin’ on to hope.
You the man of the house now
Gotta help your Mama cope.
Daddy won’t be comin’ home no more
Cause I reached the end of my rope.

—Glenn North, director of public programs at the Bruce R. Watkins Cultural Heritage Center in KC, MO, is poet laureate of the 18th and Vine Historic Jazz District.
He collaborated with jazz musician Bobby Watson on the critically acclaimed recording project “Check Cashing Day.” North read his poem “The Lynch Family Blues” Dec. 1 at the Lynching Memorial Dedication Ceremony for Levi Harrington, lynched by a white mob on April 3, 1882. Newspapers said Harrington, whose former employer described him as a “faithful … honest man” who was “industrious … and cared for his family” of a wife and five children, was innocent of murder accusations against him. However, no one was held accountable for lynching him.

The Dec. 1 ceremony at West Terrace Park, at W. 8th Street and Jefferson Street, marked the unveiling of a plaque about Harrington and lynching in Missouri, where 60 racial terror lynchings have been documented between 1877 and 1950. ⚫

Contact elected officials

Mayor Sly James: 816-513-3500
City Council: 816-513-1368
President Donald Trump
202-456-1111 comments
202-456-1414 switchboard
Sen. Josh Hawley (R-Mo.): 202-224-6154
Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.): 202-224-5721
Rep. Emanuel Cleaver (D-5th dist, Mo.):
202-225-4535
Rep. Sam Graves (R-6th district, Mo.):
202-225-7041
Rep. Vicky Hartzler (R-4th district, Mo.):
202-225-2876
Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.): 202-224-4774
Sen. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.): 202-224-6521
Rep. Sharice Davids (D-3rd district, Kan.):
913-621-0832
Peace scholar award goes to Jayne Molt for 2018-19

Jayne Molt, now a UMKC law student, won the PeaceWorks-KC peace scholar award for 2018-19, an award of $1,500. Last spring, she graduated from Avila University with a baccalaureate in criminology and justice studies and a minor in women's and gender studies. In her application for the award, she wrote, “My goal is to be a public defender in Kansas City. I think this is an important way I can attempt to help those accused of crime and understand the many failures of the criminal justice system for all parties involved. … Justice is not being served by our criminal justice system.”

How does Jayne, a first-year law student, know?

Consider these experiences. While she was in Youth Court in high school, she observed juvenile court and became a secretary for it. Then she did an internship at the Independence Municipal Court, shadowing the prosecutor, helping him interview victims, and prepping for cases. “The more difficult cases were domestic violence and assaults,” she wrote. “Working with them (the victims) kept you in tune with what was happening in individuals’ lives in our local area. Trying to work with victims and offenders means you had to be honest to all parties and make a fair deal for everyone.”

During an Avila trip to Cuba, Jane said, “I got to see how the ideals of a revolution changed the course of a country. … It was enlightening to meet dissidents who are allowed to disagree in a system that we consider oppressive.”

Among Jayne’s contributions to PeaceWorks in 2018 were taking breakfast to Urban Ranger Corps students on a day they received conflict resolution training, and trouble-shooting at the cashier’s desk during the UN-plaza Art Fair. Thanks, Jayne!

US nuclear arsenal = greatest threat to US security

By Spencer Graves

The greatest threat to U.S. national security (and the future of humanity) is the U.S. nuclear arsenal. Both Robert McNamara, U.S. secretary of defense during the Cuban Missile Crisis, and Daniel Ellsberg, a nuclear war planner advising McNamara during that crisis, have said that (a) the world is extremely lucky that that crisis didn’t end in major nuclear war, and (b) it’s only a matter of time until such a nuclear war occurs unless we destroy our large nuclear arsenal first.

Ellsberg, in his 2017 book The Doomsday Machine: Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner, further says a major nuclear war would loft so much soot into the stratosphere that it would almost certainly lead to a nuclear winter. That would prevent 70 percent of the sunlight from reaching the surface of the earth, which would lead to death from starvation for roughly 98 percent of the people who survive the nuclear exchange. Reliability engineering computations suggest a probability of over 10 percent of such a nuclear war and winter in the next 40 years, killing in that way at least half of the people alive today. For details, see my Wikiversity article “Time to Extinction of Civilization” at https://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/Time_to_extinction_of_civilization.

—Spencer Graves, a member of the PeaceWorks Board, is licensed as a professional engineer in Missouri.
Mark your calendar...

- Medea Benjamin: “Building a Peace Movement in an Era of Endless War,” Sat., 2/16, 6:30 pm; at All Souls, 4509 Walnut, KC, MO; KKFI fundraiser cosponsored by PeaceWorks; tickets at www.KKFI.org/events.

- “Countering Military Recruitment in Public Schools & Confronting Contamination Near Military Bases,” Thurs., Feb. 21, 7-8:30 pm (see p. 1).

- PeaceWorks Annual Meeting, Sun., 3/3, 2-4 pm (see p. 1).

- “Lindy Lou: Juror Number 2” features Lindy Lou in person, plus the documentary that will be shown and discussed. Lindy Lou sat on a jury that handed down a death sentence and later interviewed her peers about repercussions of that decision. Sponsored by Missourians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty: Mon., 3/18, 7 pm, University of St. Mary, Leavenworth, KS; Tues., 3/19, 5 pm reception, 6 pm movie/discussion, KC Public Library, Plaza Branch, KC, MO; Wed., 3/20, 6:30 pm, Avila University, KC, MO.

- For more: info@madpmo.org or 816-931-4177.

- “Crazy Trains” (with nuclear and other radioactive waste) may come through KC; talk on Thurs., March 21, 7-8:30 pm (see p. 3).

“Race Issues ARE Peace Issues”

This panel discussion, followed by workshops, will zero in on peace and justice in marginalized communities.

When? 3-6 pm on Sat., April 27. Where? All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church, 4509 Walnut, KC, MO. Why? To learn from people of color, to take a step toward healing KC’s racial divide.

We’ll hear how groups such as One Struggle KC connect the struggles of oppressed communities locally and globally. A leader of Advocates for Immigrant Rights and Reconciliation will share ways AIRR offers the immigrant community tools to better protect themselves and their families. A presenter with Showing Up for Racial Justice will explore SURJ’s efforts to organize white people for racial justice in KC. For info, contact Henry Stoever at HenryStoever@sbcglobal.net or 913-375-0045.

PeaceWorks-KC is sponsoring this powerhouse afternoon with people from an array of KC action groups. The event is free; the ideas priceless!