Charles Carney completes 253-mile Wichita-KC Peace Walk

Have we reached a point in history where we are ready to embrace a new way of living in the world, expanding not our military power, but our humanity? —Howard Zinn

By Mary Hladky

On Sept. 17, Charles Carney completed his 38-day walk, traveling 253 miles from McConnell Air Force Base in Wichita, KS, to the Honeywell nuclear bomb parts plant in Kansas City, MO. Charles’ purpose was to draw attention to the catastrophic dangers of nuclear weapons and the climate crisis.

About 25 activists from PeaceWorks-KC and its allies were there to greet Charles. Henry Stoever of PeaceWorks, who walked partway with Charles,

Peace Walk — continued on page 4

Join rallies before Chiefs games: ‘Change the name! Stop the chop!’

KC Chiefs games now have a prelude. Indigenous Persons and allies call to drivers coming to park at Arrowhead Stadium, “Change the name! Stop the chop!”

Gaylene Crouser, executive director of the Kansas City Indian Center, says, “We call for changing the name primarily because it’s affected the children.” According to the American Psychological Association, research (at https://apa.org/pi/oema/resources/indian-mascots) indicates that Native American mascots and imagery of ball teams “affect not only Native American children but all children,” says Crouser. Such mascots “promote stereotypes and lead to cultural appropriation,” she adds.

Responding to fans’ pressure and sponsors’ requests, the Washington Redskins are now temporarily the Washington Football Team (another name to be determined), and the Cleveland Indians are the Guardians Baseball Team. “We’re making headway!” says Crouser. Recently, the name of Shawnee Mission North High School’s football team changed from the Indians to the Bisons, and three elementary schools in the Shawnee Mission district are removing their mascots—Indians and Braves.

Every organization serving Native People in the KC area is opposed to the Chiefs name and other stereotypes, says Crouser. A petition concerning the name change is at https://endracismkc.org.

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Activism for the long haul: helpful tips

By Jim Hannah

With apologies to Sir Walter Scott:

_Breathes there an activist with soul so dead_  
_Who never to one’s self has said,_  
_“To heck with it! I’m going back to bed!”_  

The Missouri Green Party held an Oct. 6 webinar on balancing activism and self-care. It brought into sharp focus the burnout faced by today’s activists.

One challenge is “cancel culture,” described by Cambridge Dictionary as “a way of behaving in a society or group, especially on social media, in which it is common to completely reject and stop supporting someone because they have said or done something that offends you.”

Webinar speaker Dan Kovalik, a Pittsburgh union lawyer, has published a book on the topic, _Cancel This Book_. His concern is for honest dialogue without being punished or shunned—a growing tendency on both sides of the political spectrum. Social media attacks have destroyed careers, reputations, and even lives.

One such case was the experience of speaker Molly Rush, co-founder of Pittsburgh’s Thomas Merton Center and one of the Plowshares Eight protestors against nuclear missiles. Despite her decades of justice and peace activism, when Molly reposted a meme that some interpreted as racist, the Merton Center posted an online complaint, including, “we cannot work with Molly until she demonstrates both accountability to the people she has harmed and a commitment to continuous learning about how her behavior embodies white supremacy culture.”

Speaker John Courtney, president of the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 265 in San Jose, CA, described a mental health crisis stemming from the fatal shooting of nine transit workers May 26, 2021. Awhile after the massacre, people were further shocked when one of the caregivers most helpful to others took his own life. For Courtney, this highlighted the need to reduce the stigma around mental health issues and encourage people to get help. He said that for most of his life, he neglected his own mental health, going it alone despite symptoms of depression, PTSD, and sleeplessness. But now, he said, “The people who have gone through treatment are my heroes, facing their own demons.”

Chris Overfelt detailed techniques he uses to deal with PTSD and depression (see story, p. 3). And Tamala Turner, chair of the Missouri Green Party, offered a shout-out for the practice of yoga to balance mind, body, and spirit. Her counsel seemed a fitting capstone for the event: “When you’re not taking care of yourself, you’re hurting yourself.” It seems that those who seek a kinder, gentler world would do well to start by being kinder and gentler to themselves.

—Jim Hannah serves on the PeaceWorks-KC Communications Team.
Excerpts from a talk by Chris Overfelt, a PeaceWorks-KC Board member active in Veterans for Peace and the Kansas Poor People's Campaign. He spoke during the Missouri Green Party webinar Oct. 6, “Balancing Activism and Self-Care.”

Everyone experiences illness differently, whether it is physical or mental illness. For me, anxiety is a very physical thing. My muscles tense up, my heart rate rises, and my thoughts and feelings form faster than I can process them. The most routine of tasks become monumentally important, insurmountable and impossible to accomplish. In its most severe form, the anxiety feels more akin to a tiger stalking just outside my bedroom door, and my bedroom door is made of cardboard. Only I know there is no tiger, no imminent threat, yet I am still crying, still shaking and sweating, and there is no rational reason for it.

For me, depression sets in when the severity and duration of mental and physical pain become overwhelming. It becomes difficult to function at work and in my relationships. I go through my processes of cognitive behavioral therapy, mindfulness and yoga. I take my medication and see medical professionals. But still the pain persists. It becomes difficult for me to envision any scenario where I am not in pain. My mind is tired of fighting, my body is tired of fighting, and I begin to think death is the only option available for relief.

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These subjects are difficult to discuss in a public setting, but I think it’s important to be honest about my experiences with my mental illness. Instead of looking for a solution to a physical problem to relieve my anxiety, I accept my anxiety. The approach I take to activism is not one of exercising my own power, but one of simply participating in organizations. I recognize sincerely that I do not possess the answers to the world’s problems, but I do know that those answers are communal ones, not individual ones.

The last thing I want to share is a mantra I repeat each morning. I tell myself to practice love, walk in humility, and recognize that you don’t have the answers. Don’t get upset or angry at the people around you, or at the world, but look for the good in the people around you and in yourself. Accept the world as it is with its faults and flaws, and accept yourself. Let go of your fear, anger, and hate, and approach problems with compassion. Practice grace and mercy, forgive the people who hurt you, forgive the people who hurt other people, and confess your own violent nature and hateful thoughts. Let go of your life, your freedom, and your health, and exist as a spirit. Recognize that pain, sickness, and death are nothing to be afraid of, but more experiences within this reality, and be grateful to experience this reality. Erase yourself from the world. Erase your thoughts, actions, and emotions. Don’t think about the past or the future, but be like a leaf on the river and let life take you where it will.

—For more excerpts from Chris Overfelt’s talk, see https://peaceworkskc.org/nonviolence/like-a-leaf-on-the-river-let-life-take-you-where-it-will.

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Chief’s game rallies — continued from p. 1

Future rallies

Dates: Nov. 7 and 21
Time: 1:30–3:30 pm
Location: Bus stop on Blue Ridge Cutoff across from the BP gas station—on public property
Parking: In the lot at 9150 E. 41st Terrace, KC MO, at the Center for Developmentally Disabled, which charges only $15 for parking (instead of the $20 at other locations near the stadium). The center encourages car-pooling.

Need a ride? Want to drive others? Contact Henry Stoever, 913–206–4088, henrystoever@sbcglobal.net.

Posters: Some signs are available. You can also make your own, such as Love the Team—Not the Name. “The fans will still be fans even if the Chiefs change their name!” says Crouser.

—Jane Stoever of PeaceWorks-KC interviewed Gaylene Crouser for this story.
Peace Walk — continued from page 1

guided us through our Finale Rally, mindful of the beating sun and heat. I spoke briefly, thanking Charles, and all those who walked some of the way with him, for this beautiful witness. Charles makes clear what is really important: loving and caring for each other and our world.

Kathy Downing, of the Poor People’s Campaign (PPC) in Kansas, quoted from PPC national leader Rev. William Barber and Tope Folarin in an article on CommonDreams.org: “Spending more on the US military budget than the next 10 countries combined represents a huge part of the reason we have to struggle so hard to fund crucial social needs—from health care to climate to education and more.”

Ann Suellentrop of the PeaceWorks Board, who accompanied Charles during some of his journey, said we are in the middle of a second nuclear arms race, much more dangerous than the first. See Ann’s reflection here.

Maurice Copeland reminded us of the numerous illnesses and deaths experienced by plant workers exposed to toxic chemicals at the now defunct Banister Road nuclear parts plant. Maurice, employed 32 years at the old plant, questioned what toxic exposures may be happening today at the new plant.

Charles addressed the crowd with humility and humor, stressing how utterly dependent on community this walk was. Charles declared, “We will not reach a nuclear-free world alone; we will do it as an ever-expanding community of love. And I cannot say enough about how my co-walkers and support drivers raised consciousness and helped the walk keep going.” Honoring his recently deceased brother-in-law, who led the move to create a nature trail near Wichita, Charles named his trek the Wichita-to-KC Bob Lavelle Memorial Peace Walk.

At the start of the rally, I said that instead of caring for people and our planet, we have lived in the shadow of the US 20-year “Global War on Terror.” Our government spent $300 million, each and every day, for 20 years on the Afghanistan War. And that’s just a small portion of what the US spends each day on militarism. Just think what good could have been done with $300 million dollars a day (that’s $2 trillion over 20 years). Part of this war machine is the Honeywell plant—the National Security Campus—where we held our rally near the entry road. Instead
of this plant participating in making weapons of mass destruction, it could be repurposed for good, building innovative green products protecting our environment.

We can't continue down this path of destructive US militarism. Our duty is to tell the true story of war and the dangers of nuclear weapons, and to demand major cuts to the Pentagon budget. It is time now to urgently develop a culture of peace and cooperation, so that we can focus our time, money, and resources on people and the planet. *

—Mary Hladky is the vice chair of PeaceWorks-KC. The website PeaceWorksKC.org has 23 articles on the Peace Walk, from start to finish.

Learning Peace
By Ron Faust
When we model Peace
Future generations will follow
What we fear
Are figments of our imagination
We are told to conform
Not to be different
Not to stand out
Even if instruments of destruction
Might lead us to our death
We become trapped
Into false claims of living
Shopping, dining, and sports
Numbed by habits and routines
Choosing the easy way out
The path of Peace is not easy
Often a road less travelled
Maybe ridiculed and lonely
But it is the correct road
Most satisfying and visionary
With less violence
Less harm to the Earth
Most capable of
Promising a future
For our Grandchildren. *

9/17/21 (On occasion of following the Peace Walk of Charles Carney and other Peacemakers to unravel the complicated knots of our existence)

Talking about doing a “hard thing,” Charles Carney says, “The stakes are high. Our lives and life on the planet are in peril. Our children are worth being uncomfortable for.”

“You are such an inspiration to us!” writes Jonne Long to Charles as Sister Angela Fitzpatrick, OSU, holds steady the thank-you poster.

Maurice Copeland, left, asks what toxic exposures are occurring at the new plant.

Mary Hladky, at the center foreground, and others relax after the rally.
Bette Tate-Beaver died Aug. 29

Bette Tate-Beaver, executive director since 2009 of the National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME), died Aug. 29. She had been a survivor of cancer, but later it spread to her brain, and she died under hospice care. Bette’s life partner for her last 10 years, Lewis Diuguid, replied to condolences from PeaceWorks-KC leaders by saying, “Bette was a rock star nationally and internationally in peace and social justice issues. I miss her terribly.”

Bette received the Charles E. Bebb Peace Merit Award at the PeaceWorks-KC Annual Meeting in 2020. PeaceWorks Vice President Mary Hladky, presenting the award to Bette for her work with NAME, said, “NAME is a powerhouse, promoting social justice and education equity from pre-kindergarten through college.”

NAME’s obituary, nameorg.org/headline_news.php, also appears in the Sept. 3 Kansas City Call. In leading NAME, says the obituary, Bette “integrated humility with insistence on raw truth.

As the movement for Black Lives Matter gained national attention, Bette was on the ground, organizing and uplifting in Ferguson (Mo.) in protests that exploded in the aftermath of the murder of yet another unarmed Black man. Bette was always quick to act—in Oakland, in the Pacific Northwest, in Kansas City, in China, in Cuba—wherever human rights, educational equity and social justice were under attack.”

The KC peace and justice community mourns the passing of Bette, such a bright light.

Speaking to PeaceWorks March 1, 2020, Bette Tate-Beaver says of her work to bring groups to visit educators and students in other countries, “If we come to care about people who are like us in different spaces, it’s kind of hard to hate.”  
—Photo by Jim Hannah

Welcoming immigrants and refugees to the US

By Ann Suellentrop

I accompanied my friend Itto Outini to “New American Dreams,” the 14th annual National Immigrant Integration Conference (NIIC), held Oct. 3-6 in Las Vegas. Itto, recently hired by the UN, is totally blind and an asylee, originally from Morocco. She survived being blinded at age 17, was made homeless for 6 years afterwards, and finally received schooling due to her blindness. She now has a master’s degree in journalism and is a Fulbright scholar. Itto is brilliant! She attended the NIIC as a delegate for Refugee Congress, the only group at the NIIC made up completely of refugees.

The conference explored ways the US could be more welcoming and supportive of immigrants. Participants celebrated that they had been able to move President Biden to increase the immigrant quota that had been lowered under the previous administration. The conference had special sessions about Haitian and Afghanistan immigrants.

Also heard were the anguished voices of LGBTQIA+ persons, especially people of color, particularly Black transgender women, desperately asking for assistance. (Note: LGBTQIA refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, and asexual; the plus encompasses others.) LGBTQIA+ speakers said if you are not speaking up or helping them, you...
Lobbying for bills to cut risk of nuclear war

By Kristin Scheer

Some PeaceWorks-KC leaders met by Zoom Oct. 7 with senior legislative aide Kate Rohr for US Rep. Sharice Davids (D-KS). We discussed two bills about nuclear weapons that we wanted Rep. Davids to be aware of, vote for, and cosponsor.

On the call, Charles Carney, Dave Pack, Henry and Jane Stoever, and I shared our appreciation for Rep. Davids’ actions, e.g., protecting the environment. Charles said he had made over 1,000 calls for her, and I said I had knocked on doors for her. We covered points other PeaceWorks members could make with legislators.

Charles spoke of HR 2227, Investing in Cures Before Missiles Act. He said, “This bill would save $37 billion,” leaving intact the effective Minuteman III missiles (ICBMs, intercontinental ballistic missiles) without developing more expensive and dangerous weapon delivery systems. The bill would cancel funds for a new missile system and support research to save lives from emerging diseases such as COVID-19.

Henry addressed HR 669, Restricting First Use of Nuclear Weapons Act. “The framers of our Constitution could not have foreseen giving one person the power to unleash a nuclear war. Under our laws,” he said, “only Congress can declare war. Yet a president can choose to launch a nuclear war.” He insisted, “We need to install checks and balances.”

Dave observed, “People naturally have a concern about their security. But where does our real security come from?” He suggested funds should go less toward war and weapons and more toward reversing climate change and combatting COVID-19.

Please call/write your lawmakers and their aides; thank Rep. Emanuel Cleaver II (D-MO) for cosponsoring HR 669. The Senate companion bill to HR 2227 is S 982; the companion to HR 669 is S 1148. For more info, contact Henry at 913-375-0045 or henrystoever@sbcglobal.net. ⬝

—Kristin Scheer, an environmental activist, serves on the PeaceWorks-KC Board.

Welcoming immigrants — continued from page 6

are complicit, and when you know better, you can do better.

A longer version of this story is at https://peaceworkskc.org/economic-justice/welcome-immigrants-and-refugees-to-the-us. The online story names organizations that help LGBTQIA+ immigrants, as well as KC groups that deal with refugee and immigration issues.

Ann Suellentrop serves on the PeaceWorks-KC Board.

Parshu Chamlagai (left), from Bhutan, and Itto Outini stand by a poster of the National Immigrant Integration Conference. —Photo by Ann Suellentrop

Contact elected officials

Mayor Quinton Lucas: 816-513-3500
City Council: 816-513-1368
President Joe Biden: 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 dist., Mo.): 202-225-7041
Rep. Vicky Hartzler (R-4th dist., Mo.): 202-225-2876
Sen. Roger Marshall, MD (R-Kan.): 202-224-4774
Sen. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.): 202-224-6521
Rep. Sharice Davids (D-3rd dist., Kan.): 913-621-0832
Ranked choice voting petitions are circulating

By Rachel MacNair

Ranked choice voting means you can rank your preferences of candidates. If your first choice doesn’t make it by having enough votes, then your second choice counts, and so on.

Some of us in KC MO are circulating petitions to have voters decide whether to change our current voting system to ranked choice. More than 50 cities and 2 states use this form of voting already, and we have support for it from all City Council members. Why do we care so much about voting method? Because it means more democracy.

We keep having to vote for nuclear-weapon-modernizing, beligerent candidates because another candidate is even worse—or we get blamed for being spoil- ers if we back a third candidate. With ranking, you can vote for the person you actually want first.

With ranked choice voting, called “instant runoff,” we could have one municipal election, not two. We currently have a primary and runoff six weeks apart for mayor and Council members. But we have better ways to spend the $600,000+ taxpayer money than a second election that comes so soon it annoys voters.

Info on the petition drive is at http://www.betterballotkc.org. We have a deadline of Nov. 15 with a goal of 7,000 signatures.

To help circulate petitions or do related tasks, contact me at 816-753-2057 or rachel_macnair@yahoo.com.

—Rachel MacNair of PeaceWorks-KC is leading the petition drive for ranked choice voting.

Chart from FairVote, a national organization