

July-August-September 2009

Peace Matters

There Is No
Peace Without
Justice

Potluck Fundraiser for Palestinian Hospitals

By Anne Else, Co-Chair
Palestinian Rights Taskforce

Monday, September 21, 6:00 pm
Lord of Love Lutheran Church
10405 Fort Street
Just west of I-680 on Fort Street

**Featuring: *A Pilgrimage of Accompaniment*
Bishop David deFreese, Nebraska Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church of America**

A report of the bishop's trip with 40 Lutheran bishops to Palestine and Israel in January during the time of the siege of Gaza.

"The timing — although it made us nervous ... and hesitant — it couldn't have been better," the bishop said.

"It was an opportunity for us to stand behind our pledge of partnership and support of the small Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. Because of the increased tensions of the fighting, our presence spoke even deeper to the shared journey among Christ's Church. When is the best time to be a friend but when the need is real and the caring is not easily given?"

**Special Guest: Huwaida Arraf
Free Palestine Movement**

Ms. Arraf, a Christian, earned a J.D. from American University's Washington College of Law and has focused on international human rights. She is a co-founder of the International Solidarity Movement, which uses non-violent resistance actions to oppose the Israeli occupation. More recently, she has been a leader in the Free Palestine Movement, which has

sought to break through the blockade of Gaza with boatloads of humanitarian aid.



Donations received at the potluck will go to the Lutheran-run Augusta Victoria Hospital in Jerusalem and the Episcopal-sponsored Al Ahli Hospital in Gaza. If you cannot attend and wish to make a donation, make your check payable to

Lutheran Metro Ministries and mail it to Rev. Dr. Damon Laaker, Lutheran Metro Ministries, 4205 Boyd Street, Omaha, NE 68111.

Co-sponsored by: Nebraskans for Peace, the Omaha Palestinian-American community and other organizations.

**Carpool to NFP's Annual
Peace Conference October 24**
By Mark Welsch, NFP Omaha Coordinator

To reduce our collective carbon footprint, NFP's Omaha chapter is organizing carpools to the Annual Peace Conference this year. The conference is in Grand Island on October 24, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. We must leave Omaha by 6:15 a.m. and will return around 6:00 p.m. An optional Annual NFP Membership Business Meeting will last until 4:30 p.m. Carpools that stay for the meeting will return to Omaha around 7:15 p.m.

We hope you will participate by either driving or riding. For more information and to sign up, contact Mark Welsch at NFPomaha@nebraskansforpeace.org or by calling 453-0776. (Continued on page 2)

Peace Matters

This year's conference keynote speaker is Phyllis Bennis of the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington DC. She will be speaking about "What a Just U.S. Policy in the Muslim World Would Look Like."

Planned workshops are:

1. Responding to the Afghan Quagmire & Obama's Vietnam
2. How Nebraskans Can Work for Justice in Palestine
3. The End of the American Dream? Coming to Terms with Economic Reality
4. The Hidden Massacre at Whiteclay, Nebraska
5. Putting Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency on Nebraska's Legislative Agenda
6. Play the "Immigration Board Game"—Get a Feel for What It's Like to Be an Immigrant in America Today
7. The Future of the Death Penalty in Nebraska
8. Preventing an Arms Race in Outer Space: Getting the U.S. (and StratCom) to Support a New UN Space Treaty
9. Resisting Dating Violence and Enforcing Nebraska's New State Law
10. The Moral Dimension of Healthcare Reform
11. Ending Coal's Dominance in Nebraska's Energy Portfolio
12. Uranium Mining in Nebraska—an Update

The brochure to sign up for the conference will soon be on NFP's website at www.nebraskansforpeace.org. Just print it out and send it in.

The cost is \$25 for registrations received on or before October 20 or \$30 at the door. Student/low-income registrations are only **\$10**. Child care is \$5 per child, which includes a meal. **Advance registration for child care is required. Maximum age is 7.** For more information see the Nebraska Report newsletter or go to our website at www.nebraskansforpeace.org.



“Black-White Dialogues” to Increase Understanding and Respect

By Elaine Wells, M.S., Licensed Mental Health Practitioner & NFP Member

Huge efforts are being made to improve dismal conditions in the Black community. In the last issue of Peace Matters, Stuart Williams introduced eight organizations that are addressing many issues, especially the need for mentors.

One of these groups, Empower Omaha, is made up largely of Black leaders who said in 2007, "... It is incumbent upon leaders and community members to figure out ways to work together in a collaborative and coordinated way. Together we have the opportunity to reach our common goal of 'transforming Omaha into a model city for all of its citizens.'" They have developed strategies for preventing crime, improving housing, enhancing education and youth



programs, providing health care, sustaining strong families, empowering voters, and developing jobs and the economy.

Simultaneously the North Omaha Development Project—composed of the Chamber of Commerce, large corporations, private foundations, Black business leaders, and others—has committed \$750,000 to improve infrastructure and bring viable businesses to the area. Yet when I attended their public meetings, I heard much distrust expressed.

Black and White people must work together to solve big problems. We must understand each other before we can cooperate. We must communicate before we can understand. We must get together,

again and again, before we can communicate at a meaningful level.

Thus, over the next two months, the Black-White Dialogues are being held for Black and White individuals to share respectfully and listen with open minds. We hope to have another session of these meetings next year, so stay tuned for more information!

Are Taxes Really Needed?

By Mark Welsch, NFP Omaha Coordinator

The Omaha city budget and the possibilities of an entertainment tax, higher property taxes, a fee to inspect satellite dishes and a tax on people who work in Omaha's city limits have all been discussed and debated by our city council. By the time you read this, it should all be finalized. But someone asked me if taxes are really needed, and that made me think about what exactly tax money pays for.

At the federal level, I think most of us would agree that a lot of our tax money is funneled to companies in the military-industrial complex. Sure, we need the ability to defend this country. But do we need to maintain 2000 nuclear warheads? Do we need a military base in just about every country in the world? Sometimes the military doesn't even want the expensive weapons that Congress and the President force them to buy. According to some estimates, almost half of our taxes are devoted to current military expenses and paying down the debt from past military spending.

In Omaha I think there is less wasteful spending. Fire and police departments are needed to protect us and to catch the "bad guys". We need streets to be kept in good repair and free from ice and snow. (Well, okay, at least they keep them clear enough--I haven't gotten high-centered on a snowdrift lately.) But do we need a Public Safety Auditor, libraries, swimming pools, the Sun Dawgs program or even city parks? I think we do.

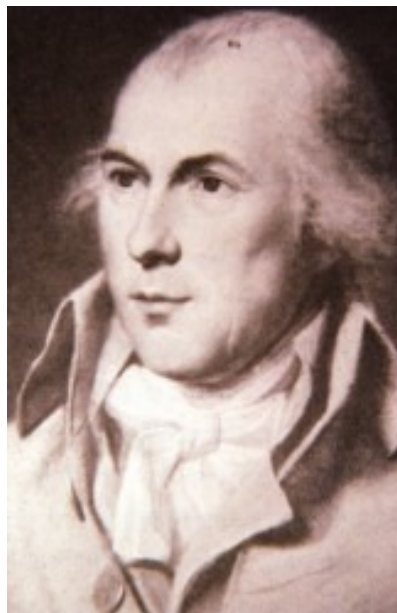
Funding for a Public Safety Auditor was cut from this and next years' budgets. A person in that position would help keep us all safer. Many people in north and south Omaha do not trust the police, because they or a family member or friend have been racially profiled and stopped by the police.

I was stopped in west Omaha when I had a Black woman in the car with me. No ticket was issued, so there is no record of the stop. Even though you don't get much whiter than me, I was stopped for DWB, which usually means Driving While Black, but in my case it is Driving With a Black. Unfortunately, this

happened before I knew to get the officer's name and badge number so I could report the unnecessary stop. An auditor would investigate incidents like this and help restore the public's faith in the police department.

Libraries, swimming pools, the Sun Dawgs program and city parks are needed to keep our city youth busy, away from gangs and other trouble. They help educate and keep all of us more physically fit. We need these services.

In the future we need to work with our elected



officials to see if there is any fat in our budget that could be cut without reducing needed services. We need to help them find the fairest way to raise the money to pay for what we do need. And we need to convince them that we need a Public Safety Auditor.

To learn more or help with any of these issues, please contact Mark Welsch at [NFPOmaha@nebraskansforpeace.org](mailto:NFPomaha@nebraskansforpeace.org) or 453-0776.

Answer: Who said, "Of all the enemies to public liberty war is, perhaps, the most to be dreaded because it comprises and develops the germ of every other. War is the parent of armies; from these proceed debts and taxes ... known instruments for bringing the many under the domination of the few... No nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare."?

Answer: James Madison, Political Observations, 1795. He was the fourth President of the United States (1809–1817).

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Question: Who said, "Of all the enemies to public liberty war is, perhaps, the most to be dreaded..."? (The answer and rest of quotation are inside.)

Calendar of Events

Send future events to the editor to be included in the next PM edition or in an email alert to NFP members and supporters. Send them to:
NFPomaha@NebraskansForPeace.org

Monday, September 28, 7:00 p.m. NFP Palestinian Task Force meeting at the Sisters of Mercy Apartments common room at 1705 South 72nd Street. Contact Anne Else at 556-5184.

Wednesday, October 7, Noon-1:00 p.m. Tor Mach Kuet, Director, Southern Sudan Community Association will be the speaker at "The Hungry Club" meeting at Big Mamma's Kitchen at 3223 North 45th Street, Building A on the Turning Point Campus. Mr. Kuet is originally from south Sudan. He left Sudan at age 14 and lived at the UNHCR's Itang Refugee Camp in Ethiopia. He came to Omaha in 1996 and became a US citizen in June 2001. Contact 455-MAMA.

New Schedule! Monday, October 12, 7:00 p.m. NFP Omaha Leadership meeting at Augustana Lutheran Church at 3647 Lafayette Avenue. Contact Mark Welsch at 453-0776. **This meeting has been moved from Wednesday to Monday.**

October NFP Palestinian Task Force meeting. Contact Anne Else at 556-5184 for date, time and location.

Monday-Wednesday, November 2nd - 4th, Peace Vigils at the Strategic Space Symposium outside of the Qwest Center in Omaha. Watch your Email for times and locations. Contact Mark Welsch at 453-0776.

To stay up-to-date about these and other events and activities, send your email address to:
NFPomaha@NebraskansForPeace.org

502-5887.

New Schedule! Monday, November 9, 7:00 p.m. NFP Omaha Leadership meeting at Augustana Lutheran Church at 3647 Lafayette Avenue. Contact Mark Welsch at 453-0776.

Every Wednesday, 4:30-5:30 p.m. Peace Vigil at StratCom/UNO at 6801 Pine Street (east of UNO's Scott Technology Center). Contact Jerry Ebner at

Every Wednesday, 7:00 p.m. Progressive movies and dinner at McFoster's Natural Kind Cafe at 38th and Farnam Streets. See <http://www.progressiveomaha.com/films.htm> for more info.

Every Saturday, 1:00-2:00 p.m. Anti-War and Peace Vigil at 72nd and Dodge Streets. Contact Steve Horn at 426-9068.

First Wednesday of every month, Noon-1:00 p.m. "The Hungry Club" meeting at Big Mamma's Kitchen at 3223 North 45th Street, Building A on the Turning Point Campus. Interesting speaker every month. Contact 455-MAMA.

Second Saturday of every month, Progressive Omaha the Organization potluck begins at 6:00 p.m., meeting at 7:00 p.m. A time for networking, discussion and planning. All Omaha progressives invited. Jo Peterson's house at 4924 Chicago Street.

Second Thursday of every month, 6:30-8:00 p.m. Peace Seekers and Pizza. A time for discussion, reflection and leadership support at Jo Peterson's house at 4924 Chicago Street.