

## **Report on Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center**

Compiled by Judy Huston, with help from Rich Andrews, Chris Allen, and Betty Ball (from RMPJC).

The PSJ request for release of funds for the Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center was not approved at the January 2018 Meeting for Business. There were objections to its opposition to nuclear power and other vague objections. No one mentioned its positions on Middle East peace. Many said they were willing to stand aside, and the Clerk noted that there did not seem to be unity in the Meeting on supporting the organization.

Friends in PSJ noted an inaccuracy in the Meeting for Business minutes that suggested that the Peace Center had used the Meeting House in an unworshipful way and had apologized later. PSJ would like to correct this inaccuracy when the Peace Center next comes up in Meeting. Chris Allen did some research and gleaned the following information:

The Peace Center held a public talk with Max Blumenthal where he discussed his book "Goliath: Life and Loathing in Greater Israel", on Nov. 15, 2013 at the Friends Meeting House. Max's talk was sponsored by the Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center, Veterans for Peace, The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and Lemon Tree. One person (Mimi Ito, not from Meeting) wrote to the Daily Camera objecting to Blumenthal without hearing him speak, claiming that Boulder Meeting endorsed his point of view. When discussed at Meeting for Business, the sense of the Meeting was that Friends did not want to limit the free exchange of ideas, and the idea of closing our Meeting House to controversial speakers was not where we wanted to be. A number of Friends had attended the event, and thought it was a good talk presenting a variety of facts and perspectives that were worth hearing. Others had watched the video of the event on Vimeo and said the same thing. There was no mention of anything being "unworshipful".

In August of 2014, an ad hoc committee (6 Friends) met with representatives of the Peace Center (9 staff/Spokespeople) to keep dialogue open, and determine whether to recommend funding of the Peace Center. The recommendation was to honor PSJ's \$1100 budget line item.

Since that time PSJ has continued to ask for release of funds (varying amounts each year). Meeting for Business has always agreed to the disbursements, though not without some degree of controversy.

### **The Peace Center Today:**

A very important aspect of their work is providing fiscal sponsorship for small activist groups who share the Mission and Purpose of RMPJC, in order to provide them with nonprofit status while they are getting organized and able to apply for their own 501(c)(3) status. The Peace Center takes care of their infrastructure so they can focus on their mission, fundraising and building their organization.

"At the moment, we are providing fiscal sponsorship for Black Lives Matter 5280, Boulder Showing Up for Racial Justice (BSURJ), Restore Colorado which is engaging in projects to restore contaminated sites, and demonstrating how seed saving and

replanting can be great tools to help restore various areas, a Rocky Flats educational art and film project, and In Support of Women Peace Activist Musicians, which provides support and performance opportunities for women who are working to spread peace through music. (p.s. Rich Andrews has been assisting with the Rocky Flats film project)

“We are very proud that over the years we have provided support to several groups who are now "well established on their own" . Two of those groups are Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition, and Clean Energy Action. Both of those groups are doing very remarkable effective work state-wide”.

The very successful and energetic and now internationally recognized youth group, Earth Guardians, got its launch with RMPJC, and is in the news with a youth led Colorado Supreme court case for local environmental controls to require health and environmental protection over corporate profits. “While it is true that RMPJC greatly supported and nurtured Earth Guardians in its early days, we have played less of a role as of late, though we have signed an amicus brief in support of the lawsuit”.

A member of the RMPJC staff is “leading the efforts of the Global Peace Collective, the Economic Collective and the new Media collective, which is focusing on analyzing the media in trying to find "true and accurate" reporting.

“The main long-term issue of course is Rocky Flats. The Nuclear Nexus/Guardianship Collective is engaged in an outreach and educational campaign aimed at keeping Rocky Flats closed and not allowed to open for public recreation.

“The Center was, until recently, working on the pesticide issue in Boulder County, but now another organization has taken the leadership on that issue. We network with, collaborate with and assist in organizing numerous social and environmental campaigns locally, though others in the community are actually the lead organizers” . — Betty Ball, from RMPJC

### **Older issues/campaigns:**

Alternative Radio with David Barsamian was fiscally sponsored for many years. RMPJC acted as the fiscal sponsor for Bee Safe Boulder, a group initiated by Boulder Friend, Molly Greacen. That group graduated into People and Pollinators Action Network (PPAN) and no longer needed RMPJC sponsorship.

RMPJC has always worked with environmental protection issues, and rights of nature and local control in our county and region.

RMPJC has been engaged in voting rights, seeking to get money out of politics. They have engaged in mobilizing citizen participation in town meetings, which sadly many politicians have avoided in recent years.

They worked heavily on indigenous rights, and continue to engage with celebrations on Martin Luther King Jr day activities.

There have been several groups within RMPJC serving and supporting other racially disadvantaged populations, and many different youth oriented groups that were related to providing food (like Food Not Bombs) as well as salvaging foods to serve food insecure folks.

They helped start Everybody Eats, a safe food group, and what became the New Farmer Cultivation Center, an educational farm and CSA. RMPJC worked on issues of GMOs and pesticide free/organic farming, supported chemically sensitive people on campaigns to eliminate noxious chemicals in public places.

They helped initiate the Colorado Communities for Justice and Peace (CCJP), the Interfaith Leaders for Non-violence (ILNV) after 9/11/2001.

RMPJC has had long affiliations with AFSC-Denver over the years, in immigrant rights, anti-war/militarism efforts, getting military recruiters out of the public schools, helping with draft counseling & conscientious objector assistance, and many associated programs/actions.

RMPJC has worked closely with and encouraged student groups at CU, Naropa and local secondary schools.

It has worked for economic fair trade, and economic justice overall.

RMPJC works regularly and for many decades with the Colorado Coalition for the Prevention of Nuclear War. RMPJC has conducted innumerable trainings for peacemaking, and non-violence training with its many workshops that have been used by many other organizations.

RMPJC has been strongly affiliated with LGBT programs, seeking equal rights.

“Overall RMPJC is the most constant and recognized voice for peace and justice in our community...and we would all be poorer and the world would be disadvantaged and less safe, less just without RMPJC”. — Rich Andrews

Several other Boulder Friends have been directly engaged with RMPJC over the years, as ardent volunteers and unpaid staff, as well as participants in the many activities of the Peace Center, including uncounted visits to the offices and town meetings of our elected officials lobbying for peace, social justice, and non-violence. Several Boulder Friends have received awards for their service to peace and justice from RMPJC at the annual Elise Boulding awards ceremony.

### **Miscellany Article, January 2017**

The Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center, dedicated to progressive social change, is a multi-issue organization that works to restore and protect Earth and human rights, through education, organizing, action, and community building. RMPJC maintains a commitment to nonviolence, including nonviolent action training.

The structure of RMPJC consists of the spokescouncil (responsible for overall oversight, policy-making and fundraising), staff, collectives, around 200 active volunteers, and members at large.

The work of the RMPJC is carried out through education and action groups known as “Collectives.” Each collective has a specific issue focus, and the work of all the collectives is interwoven and interconnected. In addition to working locally, most of the collectives participate in statewide and national coalitions. Issues addressed by the collectives are chosen by the staff and spokescouncil with input from the community.

Collectives:

Nonviolence Collective, which facilitates Nonviolence Training, meeting facilitation, conflict transformation, and community building events.

Nuclear Nexus & Nuclear Guardianship Collective, which includes Nuclear Abolition

Rocky Flats Nuclear Guardianship.

Social Justice Collective supports other organizations working within the realm of social justice, including SURJ and BLM5280.

Economic Justice Collective addresses the Global Economy and Fair Trade issues.

Global Peace Collective addresses the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan, Iran, and U.S./NATO and Russia Relations.

Citizens for Pesticide Reform addresses the risks that pesticides pose to our community's health and environment by reducing pesticide use in Boulder County and beyond.

PSJ requests release of \$750 at the January Meeting for Business.

### **Report of the Ad Hoc Committee for Dialogue with Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center, September 14, 2014**

The Ad Hoc committee was asked to meet for dialogue with the Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center, and to recommend whether meeting should release funds from the 2014 budget to the Peace Center, and if so, how much.

The committee met on August 8, 2014, to prepare for the dialogue. Minutes of this meeting are available if Friends would like to see them. On August 24, we met for dialogue. Nine members of the staff and SpokesCouncil of the Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center were present (Chris Alred, Betty Ball, Carolyn Brinski, Ron Forthofer, Suzie Helburn, Judith Mohling, LaRoy Moore, Matt Nicodemus, and Daryl Ann Vitale), and six members of our ad hoc committee were present (Spencer Cambor, Mary Golden, Maria Krenz, Paula Palmer, Leslie Stephens, and Jane Volckhausen).

Spencer served as convener. He explained that the meeting has not been able come to unity about continued funding for the Peace Center. He asked Peace Center representatives to give an overview of their work, focusing on the last three years. We learned that most of the Peace Center's work is done by standing committees of volunteers, called *collectives*.

The *Nuclear Nexus Collective* is active nationally and internationally as part of the Alliance for Nuclear Accountability. Locally they advocate for safe cleanup of the still-contaminated Rocky Flats land and health care for workers and others affected by the contamination. They conduct research, organize conferences, write articles and letters to the editor, conduct protests, and lobby legislators here and in Washington D.C. LeRoy Moore is a nationally recognized spokesman for Nuclear Guardianship. The Nuclear Nexus Collective also collaborates with Native Americans whose sacred site on Valmont Butte is contaminated with nuclear waste. They are urging the City of Boulder to clean up the site and provide health care to Native people who may suffer illness from using the site for their sweat lodges and ceremonies.

Another collective, the *Nonviolence Education Collective*, trains many local organizations in the principles and practice of nonviolent action for social justice. Recently, they have trained youth organizations and student groups at CU and Naropa, as well as local groups that work on fracking, anti-racism, community rights, and other issues. They also

offer courses in compassionate communication, conflict transformation, and community building.

The *International Collective* works for peace and justice on global issues where the US government is involved. They protest against US military actions in Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan, and they work in coalition with national organizations to oppose trade agreements that favor multinational corporations and reduce environmental protections. They educate, demonstrate, give presentations, write columns and letters, and encourage others to do so.

The *Middle East Collective* defends human rights and international law and calls on the US to stop military aid to Israel. They educate, ask membership to write letters, bring in outside speakers, demonstrate, and vigil. When asked whether their actions are one-sided, they said they believe the mainstream media is biased toward Israel, so they think US citizens need to learn about Israel's abuse of human rights. This is especially true because our government is complicit in these abuses since we supply Israel's weapons. Asked how they respond to the charge that some of their statements are anti-Semitic, they said they take care to distance themselves from anti-Semitic groups and refuse to collaborate with them.

Friends expressed concerns about the use of violent language that condemns one side in a conflict. Peace Center staff said they will take more care to review language created by other organizations before forwarding it to their lists. They will continue to emphasize the need for justice and human rights for the Palestinians, speaking the truth as they see it. They apologized for any publicity that could give the impression that the Meeting co-sponsors the events that they hold in our space. They can't control misinformation that is circulated by others, but they will be careful to be very clear about this in their own publicity.

We learned that the Peace Center's annual budget is \$99,500. Their administrator is the only staff member with a full-time salary; the bookkeeper and web designer are paid for part-time work. All other staff and SpokesCouncil members are volunteers who have day jobs to support themselves. This is one reason why they use the collective structure and why they work in coalition with so many other organizations. They said they are the "go-to" organization in Boulder County for anyone who wants to raise a concern about injustice. They help people connect with others who share their concerns, and they help them publicize and organize their events. This has been their role in the recent protests against Walmart in Boulder, the community rights and home rule ballot initiatives, anti-fracking and pesticides initiatives, the criminalization of homelessness, campaign finance reform, and water conservation issues.

The Peace Center also created a chorus called the *Solidarity singers*. They perform at events and fundraisers for lots of local organizations, using the transformative power of music to promote peace and justice.

Based on our dialogue, it is clear to the Ad Hoc committee that the Peace Center values its relationship with Boulder Meeting highly, not only because of our donations and the use of our building, but because they feel a special bond with Friends in our dedication to nonviolence, peace, and justice. In closing the dialogue, we emphasized that Friends' approach is to work with both sides in any conflict without condemning anybody, leaving doors open, without judgment and with open listening.

Now we think it's important for Friends to ask how we will do this ourselves in relation to the Peace Center.

The Ad Hoc committee recommends that the meeting honor its \$1,100 budget allocation to the Peace Center this year.