

Faith and Resistance Group Commemorates U.S. Nuclear Bombings with Nonviolent Witness; Six Peacemakers Arrested By Art Laffin



Peacemakers, including those from Consistent Life members Dorothy Day Catholic Worker, Jonah House, and Pax Christi USA, at August 9th witness.

Editor's note: This article has been adapted from an earlier report about the August 6th-9th Faith and Resistance Retreat. The Dorothy Day Catholic Worker and Jonah House, which helped organize the retreat, and Pax Christi USA, which participated in the August 9th witness, are Consistent Life member groups.

Peace activists belonging to the east coast-based Atlantic Life Community, which is committed to nonviolently resisting weapons and war, engaged in nonviolent witness at the Pentagon, the *Enola Gay* exhibit, and the White House to remember the victims of the nuclear weapons used at Hiroshima and Nagasaki and to call for the abolition of all nuclear weapons and war. These actions occurred during the Faith and Resistance Retreat that happens annually on the bombings' anniversaries. This year, survivors of the Hiroshima attack participated and six activists were arrested at the Pentagon.

The Pentagon witness was on August 6th, the anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing. About 15 peacemakers gathered there wearing sackcloth and ashes, carrying photos of bombing victims, and holding one banner calling for repentance and another banner that read "Why Harbor Evil Thoughts in Your Hearts?" (a quotation from Matthew 9:4). In between periods of silence, they read the Gospel account of Jesus' Transfiguration because the Feast of the Transfiguration was also that day. The peacemakers also read a short poem by Father Dan Berrigan, S.J., "Shadow on the Rock," and offered a song about a Hiroshima child who died in the bombing, "I Come and Stand."

Following the song, the group processed out of the fenced-off designated protest area. Six people went onto the sidewalk near the Pentagon Metro stop's entrance and remained there to pray in silence. The six were the educator and peace activist Beth Brockman, from North Carolina; Andrea Eiland, currently at Jonah House; Bill Frankel-Streit, from the Little Flower Catholic Worker in Virginia; Jesuit Luke Hansen, from Wisconsin; Art Laffin, from the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker; and Rosemary Thompson, Executive Director of the Murphy Initiative for Peace and Justice in Maryland. After several warnings, the six were placed under arrest and taken to a new processing site on Pentagon grounds that was formerly used as a day care center. They were charged with violating a lawful order and released; they will appear in court on October 19th.

Also that day, about nine people held a witness at the enshrined and refurbished *Enola Gay* warplane that dropped the nuclear bomb on Hiroshima. The plane is on display at the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center in Chantilly, Virginia. As a banner calling for no more Hiroshimas was unfurled, security personnel immediately confiscated it. The peacemakers were allowed to hold several photos of Hiroshima victims, however. They ended the witness by offering the poem "Shadow on the Rock" and singing "I Come and Stand." They were then escorted out of the building by security as they sang "Child, Child." *Continued on page 5*

SHADOW ON THE ROCK

By Daniel Berrigan, S.J.

At Hiroshima there's a museum
and outside that museum there's a rock,
and on that rock there's a shadow.
That shadow is all that remains
of the human being who stood there on August 6, 1945
when the nuclear age began.
In the most real sense of the word,
that is the choice before us.
We shall either end war and the nuclear arms race now
in this generation,
or we will become Shadows On the rock.

REV. JOHNNY HUNTER: "EVERYTHING IS SO LINKED"

By Elizabeth Palmberg



Rev. Johnny Hunter

Johnny Hunter's activism for life started one December in the early 1990s when his wife, Patricia, went to pray in front of the local abortion clinic. Later that day, he got a phone call from her.

"I might not be home for Christmas," his wife told him. She was in jail.

Hunter was inspired to take up the pro-life cause, eventually becoming national

director of the Life Education and Resource Network (LEARN), a national pro-life network of African Americans. Patricia is a board member and secretary of LEARN.

But, as Rev. Hunter told Consistent Life's 25th anniversary conference this year, his motivations for pro-life activism date back to another encounter with a strong woman—one at his own birth, when an old and wise lady called Aunt Charity was called in to help his mother in the rural community of Goshen Hills, South Carolina. He was born apparently lifeless, and the doctor was actually reaching into his satchel for a death certificate when Aunt Charity, determined not to lose the baby, slapped him, as she later recalled, as hard as she could, saying, "I know God didn't [have us work] this long and this hard with you for you to die now." By the third slap, Hunter had started to breathe and cry.

The lesson he draws from his near-death experience is stark: "When death had its clutches on me, I didn't even know it. In the same way Aunt Charity didn't give up on me, I refuse to give up on the next generation of children—those who are born and those who are yet to be born."

Rev. Hunter is deeply concerned, he told the conference, about "racial violence, in the womb and beyond," noting that "[e]verything is so linked—more than people want to admit."

Hunter cited racial statistics not only for abortion, but also for the death penalty. Citing the case of Richard Miles, an African American man who served 14 years in prison after being falsely convicted of murder, Hunter said, "That's one innocent man whose life was saved because he wasn't executed. I'd rather see the death penalty end than one innocent be put to death.

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RAPE AND INCEST: IMPLICATIONS OF THE EXCEPTION

By Rachel MacNair

Pregnancies resulting from the horror of a rape attack or incest perpetrated on an unwilling young woman are frequently treated as if abortion were more easily justifiable in these cases than in others. In reality, at least half—and perhaps the majority—of women with a pregnancy resulting from rape choose not to abort the baby.

Such women have already been through one traumatic experience. The trauma of having a doctor reach up inside her and tear her baby to shreds is not one she should be expected to face.

Those who push a rape "exception" are somehow under the impression that they are turning back the clock to before the pregnancy began. But once a baby is there, her mother should not be pushed into another trauma by people who don't understand what an abortion really is.

Asserting that it's somehow obvious that there should be an exception for rape is saying that pregnancy through rape is so horrendous that it's worth killing an innocent child in order to avoid it. That is outrageous pressure for an abortion, when what the mother needs is support and care and a listening ear. She certainly doesn't need any more stigma.

What sounds especially strange to the pro-life feminist ear is when people assert that she shouldn't have to bear the rapist's child. What blatantly patriarchal terms! It's *her* baby. Isn't she entitled to be regarded as the mother of her own child?

While such children are very often placed for adoption, a large proportion of women do choose to raise them. Yet much of the stereotyping that goes with the assertion that rape victims should be entitled to abortions puts a burden on them that no mother should have to bear. The law makes provision for the options of both abortion and adoption, but is often woefully lacking for those mothers who choose to raise their own children. Laws are especially deficient on the crucial matter of visitation and custody rules.

As for incest, most people who argue that this is a justification for an exception haven't thought through this most basic question: who do you think it is that brings the young woman in for the abortion? Very often, it is the man who molested her.

Thus, abortion clinics help cover up the crime. Those clinics that follow the common practice of pushing women through an assembly line with few questions asked may as well be regarded as accomplices to incest, since incest perpetrators use them to help cover up the crime. *Continued on page 5*



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PROTECTING THE POOR AND MOST VULNERABLE: REFLECTIONS ON THE SUMMER ACTION SOCIAL INSTITUTE

By Lisa Stiller

I recently attended the Summer Action Social Institute, a yearly event sponsored by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to address various social issues in light of Catholic Social Teaching. The theme of the Institute, which was held at Bellarmine University in Louisville, KY, from July 29 to August 1, was addressing poverty, with an emphasis on strategies, finding resources to help parishes, advocacy, and faith connections.

According to the U.S. Census, about 46.2 million Americans were living in poverty in 2011—15 percent of the American population. The rate for children was 21.9 percent; that is, about 1 out of 5 children in the United States lives in poverty. In one of the world's wealthiest nations, these numbers are unacceptable, and participants were urged to commit renewed resources and energy to combating poverty.

As part of the struggle against poverty, concerned ecumenical groups have organized a movement to “Build a Circle of Protection” around the poor and most vulnerable. Building this circle includes advocating for Social Security, Medicare, nutrition support, and other programs that work to address poverty.

John Carr, former Executive Director of the Department of Justice, Peace, and Human Development of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, was instrumental in lobbying for these programs in Washington, D.C. Speaking at last year's Institute, Carr reminded participants that we must keep our eyes on working for the common good: our work is not just about “protecting the middle class,” but about protecting and uplifting the poor.

Sessions at this year's Institute covered how to best use statistics in advocacy work, how to engage in civil discourse about life issues, and how local communities can raise their voices to be heard in Washington.

One of the most uplifting moments was a screening of the video *The Economics of Happiness*. The video illustrates how economic globalization—the tremendous expansion of large global corporations' power and influence—has exacerbated world problems such as poverty, unemployment, global warming, and ethnic conflict, and how, on a personal level, our lives are becoming more stressful and thus less happy.

The film portrays some creative, inspiring ways communities have come together to counter globalization's effects through “localization” of their economies. Localization emphasizes producing various goods closer to home. Farmers' markets and urban and community gardens are examples of this process. It is also shown how localized economies foster deeper connections and a greater sense of community and thus more security and greater happiness.



Consistent Life board member Lisa Stiller (front, center) at the Summer Action Social Institute, along with others who gathered to discuss advocating for healthcare for all.

AN INTERVIEW WITH MARY KRANE DERR

Mary Krane Derr is the co-founder of Consistent Life member group All Our Lives. At the Consistent Life 25th anniversary conference, she spoke with Elizabeth Palmberg about being a passionate feminist with a passionate pro-life ethic. Highlights of the interview appear below.

When I was small, I had a strong intuition that all lives are sacred. And I heard about women's liberation; I heard the feminists burned bras, and this and that and the other thing, but there was something about it that, inside, made me cheer. I was always kind of a free spirit. What I learned in college, at Bryn Mawr, was that if you're for women's rights, you have to be pro-choice—something about that just didn't sit right with me. I didn't know many people who felt the same way who would talk about it. I came from a very conservative background, and I came out of college feeling that some of my earlier moral and political intuitions were validated by feminism and progressive politics. But this issue of abortion—I just could not get away from the feeling that this is violence and it arises from injustice against women.

I wanted to do something about violence, but I felt very discontent with the pro-life movement as such. I became a social worker and worked in pregnancy care services. When I became too disabled to work a “normal” job, I went to being a writer and editor; one of my specializations is recovering lost history.

I've written on black history, Polish-American history. And I've done work on early feminists—even though the situation is different today, obviously, they have a very keen analysis, that still holds, why women have unintended pregnancies and abortions.

Two years ago Jennifer Roth and I co-founded a group called All Our Lives; we very consciously take a reproductive justice approach. Reproductive justice is a movement that arose from women of color, people with disabilities, people with a working-class perspective. Reproductive justice involves having not only the right to have a child but the social power to exercise that right, to raise the children we have in safety, and it also includes the right not to have a child.

Many people who identify with reproductive justice take a pro-choice stand on abortion, but there are many of us who don't. Loretta Ross, the head of SisterSong, a very influential reproductive justice organization, talks about “perfect choice.” If everyone had the means to do what they wanted to do reproductively and sexually, that would be the state of perfect choice. Some people believe that in that state there would still be abortions, and others of us think that it would be rare to nonexistent.

So that's why we started All Our Lives, and we've had very interesting dialogues, mostly behind the scenes, with both

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Mary Krane Derr Interview

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pro-life and pro-choice people. One thing that we're finding is a niche that nobody's taken up is that a lot of scientific research now suggests that methods that were considered abortifacient really aren't—there is so much resistance to hearing that perspective. We also have on our website a PowerPoint presentation called "Family Planning Freedom is Pro-life." It gives 10 reasons, many backed up with scientific studies. It addresses a lot of myths that both pro-life and pro-choice people have.

"As many as God sends us" is a family planning choice, and natural family planning is one, but the important thing is I don't think "choice" is an empty word. Some people think it's a cover for all abortion all the time, but I think it's very real. You can't just talk about choice in a vacuum; you have to talk about how it's compromised by issues of race, gender, disability, class, sexual orientation. Environmental justice is one; a lot of women are losing their ability to conceive when they want to because of environmental toxins.

"I just could not get away from the feeling that [abortion] is violence and it arises from injustice against women."

Believing that all life is sacred, that means women's lives too, and that means we do have a right over our own bodies. Pro-lifers often interpret that as a selfish demand, but I [don't.] I remember Muhammad Ali, when I was a little kid, boasting about how great he was; a lot of white people were saying, "God, this man has an ego!" But after living in a black community for a long time and having an interracial family, I realized that that's not egotism—that's saying, "I'm somebody, I have value." That's what women are saying when they say, "We have a right over our own bodies."

Now with pregnancy, it's a matter of two bodies, two lives. Our responsibility has two sides: one is responsibility for pregnant women and their children, and the other side is the responsibility to respect women's right to prevent conception when they want to. That is a difficult thing to write in the pro-life movement. Some Catholics have objections; the other thing is the belief in something called the "contraceptive mentality," that if your contraception fails, that you automatically have an abortion—that doesn't explain millions of pregnancy outcomes. It certainly doesn't explain why I had my daughter and why she had her son. I know lots of women who use contraception in the knowledge that it doesn't always work as intended. But if it doesn't work as intended, then you and your child have a right to everything that will help you both survive.

A lot of [the bridge-building we at All Our Lives have] done so far is behind the scenes. We find, in surprising places, opportunities to join with people who have a common concern. We have found pro-choice people who say, "I don't agree with you on abortion, but I have respect for your perspective because it's consistent, because you value women's lives." We found pro-lifers who say, "That's exactly how I feel." We share a lot of supporters with the Pro-Life Alliance of Gays and Lesbians. One very interesting thing is

that women of color, even those who identify as pro-choice, really can relate to this perspective. There's probably a lot of opportunity for common ground there.

We have a small board; most of us have disabilities. We're all female; one of our board members is a woman and an independent ordained Catholic priest. We're not anti-religious; we're open to people of all faiths. I'm someone with Catholic and Protestant ancestry, and I also practice Buddhism, and Jen Roth is an atheist. We really try to bring in multiple perspectives, which can be difficult sometimes, but so far it's worked out really well.

I was involved in Feminists for Life, I think, from 1986 until I resigned in 2007. I don't quarrel with what they do—what they do is good—but I left specifically in protest of their inaction on pre-conception issues. [They] said [they] couldn't come to a consensus because people disagree. I feel like we've worked out another approach. I kind of understand; Catholics in the United States, including my white ethnic ancestors, Polish and Irish, were targeted for eugenics, and that collective memory is still there. That legacy is one reason it's hard to talk about birth control in the pro-life movement. But I think it needs to come more out in the open, it needs to heal.

As a multiply disabled person who depends on expensive medical care, I am really concerned about the threat euthanasia poses, especially to people on public assistance. I think disability rights folks—who are often not included in the debates, but we have had some impact—have gotten people to think about the fact [euthanasia often] isn't a free choice; it can easily slide into coercion. As for the death penalty, I really think that's tied into racism, it's tied into poverty. I know a family with a member who was eventually exonerated, but he was on death row for something like 14 years. He was a young man, and he lost those years of his life. So that issue has a very human face to me. All these issues do.

War is very tied in. I know people who have gone into the military for very noble reasons: they want to serve their country, they know that some things are worth dying for. It's unfortunate that they're dying for such horrible reasons.

I see a parallel between that and a lot of women I know who've had abortions. They are not evil people; they are people trying, like all of us, to make the best of very bad situations. I know women who've had abortions who go to either the pro-life or the pro-choice movements, and I see good people in both groups. A lot of women feel they have to have an abortion because it preserves a relationship with a man, or with their parents. They are concerned about the situation they bring the child into. I just think it's unfair that women are placed in that position to begin with, that the whole karmic burden is thrown on that woman and that child. We always talk about most of these issues in terms of individual rights, but what about collective responsibility? I think that's where Americans really, really have gone wrong.

Rev. Johnny Hunter

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And that's the only thing that will prevent an innocent person from being put to death. As long as the justice system is like it is, we are the last nation that needs to be executing anybody."

Hunter encouraged conference attendees to keep advocating a consistent life position even when it's not popular: "One thing about fighting against abortion—it's politically incorrect to do so. One thing about fighting against a war—it's politically incorrect to do so. You name your issue—the death penalty—that's politically incorrect to [oppose]."

Hunter also offered words of praise for Consistent Life's bridge-building efforts: "Being one-issue-oriented means I really appreciate" groups like Consistent Life, he said, "because there's some fights I want to take up that you've taken up." As an example of a consistent life statement that he admired and had signed onto, he read from a letter that had been circulated by Alveda King, niece of Dr. Martin Luther King, and two other King family members. The statement reminded listeners of Dr. King's teaching that the work of building the Beloved Community "calls us to fight against poverty, discrimination, and violence in every form." The letter declared that "the youngest and smallest members of the human family, the children in the womb... are members of the Beloved Community," and that "our destiny is linked with theirs, and that therefore they deserve justice, equality, and protection."

The full text of the statement by Rev. Alveda King and others is available at <http://www.priestsforlife.org/africanamerican/beloved-community-and-the-unborn.htm>



Rebecca Kiessling



Shauna Prewitt

Rape and Incest

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Two women who have written eloquently on this topic are Rebecca Kiessling and Shauna Prewitt. Kiessling, an attorney and international speaker, was conceived in a rape, and she helps other people also conceived in this way to tell their stories. Prewitt is also an attorney, having become one after learning that the man who raped her was trying to get the custody rights to her daughter that fathers normally could receive.

Six Peacemakers Arrested

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The White House witness took place three days later, on August 9th, the anniversary of the Nagasaki bombing, and included members of Pax Christi USA. Roughly 20 people assembled at the White House at noontime, among them two *hibakusha* (survivors from Hiroshima), Mr. Yoshio Sato and Ms. Kimura Kuniko. Mr. Sato, 81, began the witness with heart-stirring testimony of his experience. Fourteen years old at the time, he was a little under a mile away from ground zero when the bomb was dropped. Following his testimony, there was a period of silence, and an apology was read asking forgiveness from the Japanese people for this horrific atrocity inflicted on them by the United States. Another period of silence followed, during which time ashes were placed on people's heads and on the street as a sign of repentance for the nuclear sin. The peacemakers then sang "I Come and Stand" and read the Berrigan poem.

The witness included a time to remember those who had gone before and those sisters and brothers who continue to inspire hope by their lives and actions. Those remembered included Sister Edith Stein and Franz Jagerstatter (both executed by the Nazis on August 9, 1942, and August 9, 1943, respectively); Israeli whistleblower Mordechai Vanunu; peacemaker Sister Anne Montgomery, who has served in the West Bank and Iraq; and members of the Transform Now Plowshares group who were arrested during an anti-nuclear action. The witness ended with the song "Vine and Fig Tree."

The three actions carried out at the Pentagon, the *Enola Gay*, and the White House during the Faith and Resistance Retreat were all meant to be acts of repentance for the sin of nuclear weapons and war, prayers of intercession for the victims, and appeals to everyone to nonviolently resist the nuclear empire in which we live and to make God's reign of love, justice, and peace a reality in our world. Let us pray for each other as we strive to be God's peacemakers and to create the Beloved Community.

More photos from the White House Witness on August 9th are available at:

http://photobyted.smugmug.com/SOAW/1a/24661882_sDk2QT#!i=2016186526&k=fcVCjLS.

She wrote an excellent *Georgetown Law Journal* article on the limited legal protections for women who become mothers through rape. Both Kiessling's website www.rebeccakiessling.com and Prewitt's *Georgetown* article <http://georgetownlawjournal.org/files/pdf/98-3/Prewitt.PDF> are excellent resources.



Consistent Life

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Voices for Peace and Life



Consistent Life

OUR MISSION

We are committed to the protection of life, which is threatened in today's world by war, abortion, poverty, racism, capital punishment and euthanasia.

We believe that these issues are linked under a 'consistent ethic of life'. We challenge those working on all or some of these issues to maintain a cooperative spirit of peace, reconciliation, and respect in protecting the unprotected.

OUR PURPOSE

We serve the anti-violence community by connecting issues, building bridges, and strengthening the case against each kind of socially-approved killing by consistently opposing them all.

DISCLAIMER

Consistent Life is a network of groups and individuals who agree on our mission statement and join together in working for the consistent life ethic. While some member groups focus on a particular strategy, the Network's Board supports all non-violent strategies to protect the unprotected, whether education, legislation, civil disobedience, prayer, or service. Although as an organization we do not necessarily endorse all viewpoints expressed in our newsletter—we recognize that there is a diversity of views within our constituency on many topics—we appreciate all points of view on how to advance the consistent life ethic.