

NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

CRT supports projects in several regions experiencing ongoing conflicts. Many of these conflicts are complex, with cross-currents that are hard to understand, especially from thousands of miles away. Our approach is not to offer solutions, but to respect and honor the experience of people on the ground by listening to their stories and supporting their efforts. We believe that listening can be a profound act of peace. As Calvin Coolidge said: "It takes a great man to be a good listener." In this issue, rather than reporting on CRT projects, we have asked peacemakers to share their personal perspectives in response to the question: *What would you most like people in the U.S. to know about the current situation in your country, and about prospects for peace?* Each answer was unique and compelling. We hope you appreciate their comments as much as we did.

FROM JACKIE OGEA

I believe peace can be sustained by addressing the fundamental needs of women and girls. Kenya has over 42 ethnic groups spanning the country. In the village where I was born and raised, I have not found a single woman or girl who has access to healthcare. Life is often lost as mothers trek the paths with ailing children, or pregnant women walk for miles to find a health center to deliver a newborn. Material wealth, including cars, is rare. Homes have no electricity or tapped water; women and girls cook with firewood and draw water from rivers and streams. Rape, female genital cutting, and domestic violence are still too common. But women and girls in the village are remarkably resilient. They bear all things, believe all things, and endure all things. They do hope for material goods. Yet, without them, they rely on each other. They deliver newborn children by the roadside, or share their bananas with the needy. The women and girls are survivors. They pour out their pain and joy in songs, laughter, greeting, sharing.



The process of building sustainable peace is not just about ending wars but also committing to meeting the practical needs of women and girls. That is why Mpanzi supports women and girls, the key to building sustainable peace. Despite the hardships, hope, faith and love remain.

Jackie Ogea, PhD, is the director of Mpanzi. She currently lives in Maryland, but plans to move back to her village in Kenya when her children finish school. Mpanzi has been one of CRT's peacemaking partners since 2011. Learn more at www.Mpanzi.org.

FROM MONICA MAHER



The Mountains of Yoro, Honduras

In the midst of brutal violence, there is a mystical rebellion emerging among women in Latin America. It is rooted in ancestral spiritual wisdom, powered by unwavering determination, and marked by tender gestures of solidarity in the face of extreme suffering and militarized repression. The Tolupan women of Honduras are defending their sacred lands from militarized incursions of mining companies. The Kichwa and Afro-descendent women of Ecuador are challenging gender-based violence while advocating for preservation of their culture. As I watch these women take on the seemingly insurmountable task of building peace amidst violence, I have to ask myself how we, as U.S. citizens, can do more. Many of the forces fueling the violence originate in a long history of U.S. military intervention in support of an economy which denies local democratic participation. It is only just that we do what we can to help these courageous women slowly turn the tide of history.

Monica Maher, PhD, currently lives in Quito, Ecuador. She has recently been ordained in the Congregational United Church of Christ, and has been one of CRT's peacemaking partners since 2012.



Comments From Israel

We are Jewish and Israeli-Palestinian feminists and peace activists. We want people to know that we are repairing the damage done by politicians, in our own way, through our activities - for example, by inviting Jews and Arabs to break the Ramadan fast together in the middle of ongoing violence. The war has only strengthened our will to act together peacefully. There is no other way.

- Ibtisam Mahameed
Esther Hertzog

The current situation in Israel and in Palestine is precarious. The forces for violence and war are very strong. It's important for everyone outside our region to realize that everyone is suffering; that when you take sides or become judgmental you are becoming part of the problem rather than the solution.

- Elana Rozenman

This past summer was one of the most difficult times for Arab-Jewish relations in the Holy Land. In the midst of all this, we tapped into a wellspring of hunger for connection, bringing together hundreds of Israelis and Palestinians to say 'We refuse to be enemies, our destiny is live together in peace, not just as neighbors, but as friends'.

- Eliyahu McLean

I hold the goal of stopping the occupation and achieving an agreement on two states for two peoples. It's important to enable Palestinians to have a life of respect and equality without having their land stolen from them. We need the help of other countries to advance these goals, but decisions about how to go forward have to be made by the people here.

- Iris Dotan Katz

SCENES FROM THE WEST BANK: AN INTERVIEW WITH PHOTOGRAPHER PAT WESTWATER-JONG

Note from the Director: CRT has supported projects in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. All photographs are by Pat Westwater-Jong.

Even as a small child, Pat Westwater-Jong had the soul of an activist. After recurrent nightmares about her family being tortured and killed, she saw pictures of a concentration camp and felt that her nightmares were connected somehow to the Holocaust. A question haunted her: "If I had been there, would I have had the courage to resist the Nazis?" By the time she was a teenager, she was passionate about Israel as a home for Jews.



Taayush is a group of Israelis and Palestinians striving to end the Israeli occupation through non-violent direct-action. Here members are helping to remove rubble from a recently demolished mosque in a West Bank village. Residents plan to rebuild the mosque on the site. <http://www.taayush.org>

Pat believes that a healthy government depends on citizens correcting the mistakes of their government. She actively opposed the Vietnam War, and years later, when the U.S. geared up to attack Iraq, she co-founded a local peace and justice group. When she heard Eliyahu McLean and Sheikh Ghassan Manasra give a local talk, she felt compelled to travel to Israel and the West Bank and to document their stories. On this trip, Pat reflects: "I saw the sorrow of Israeli Jews and Israeli Palestinians who had lost loved ones, and in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, I witnessed the military oppression of the Palestinian people."



An interfaith peace walk is held at Neve Shalom, a community where Jews and Muslims live together in Israel. The walk was originally planned for Bethlehem, but opposition arose from Palestinians who felt the effort reflected "normalization."

Since 2008, Pat has spent 2-3 months a year in Israel photographing interfaith peace workers and human rights activists. There are sometimes strong differences of opinion between these groups. Pat believes that interfaith activities help to increase understanding and overcome fear between the groups. But some Palestinians, growing desperate as they lose homes and farmland to encroaching settlements, believe that Israeli-Palestinian activities that don't address underlying political issues are harmful to the Palestinian cause. In their view, such activities "normalize" the current situation. One person told Pat he could no longer work with interfaith groups that remained silent: "Look how much money has been poured into interfaith efforts over the past 10 years, and look where it gotten us. From now on I can work only with Israelis who express opposition to the occupation."



A former Israel Defense Force soldier helps harvest olives in the West Bank. His presence serves as a deterrent to potential disruption from Israeli settlers who live nearby.

Back home, Pat spends her time staying in touch with people and events, trying to sort out facts from disinformation, and giving talks about what she has learned. She has seen a lot of changes in the past eight years. In the West Bank, she has watched as new settlements, barriers and checkpoints limit people's options. And she has seen a new generation of young people joining in nonviolent resistance. As for Pat herself? She states that "When I started this project, I thought that there had to be two states, that of course you need a safe place for the Jewish people. Now I fear that Palestinians in the West Bank are going to end up as a captive workforce with no room to grow. In the end, I think that a "solution" that excludes any of the Abrahamic faiths from the Holy Land will make Jews less safe, not more."

Pat Westwater-Jong describes herself as grounded in both Judaism and Christianity; her mother's family is Jewish and her father's family is Protestant. She was raised in and currently belongs to the Unitarian Universalist Church. She lives in Bolton, MA. Pat has been photographing CRT events and projects since 2008. See more at <http://www.photorelect.com/store/store.aspx?p=35457>