

The WNY Peace Center: Who We Are and What We Do

Statement of Vision

The WNY Peace Center believes that peace is both necessary and possible. We work toward a future without violence in all its manifestations and toward a future without bigotry, oppression, intolerance, and exploitation.

To this end we will work to eradicate violence in our local and global communities by:

- Providing a safe space for the practice of peace
- Using education to build a nonviolent present and future
- Encouraging people to envision, create and use nonviolent solutions to conflict
- Standing with and advocating for the powerless
- Providing a meaningful and active response to intolerance, bigotry and violence
- Networking and organizing with other institutions and individuals
- Maintaining an active presence in Western New York so the hope of peace will exist for future generations

Who We Are

The Peace Center is one of very few peace and justice organizations from the Vietnam War era that has been able to sustain itself and continue to thrive and grow. Our abbreviated mission is four-fold:

To provide a safe space for the practice of peace; to resist violence in all its manifestations; to stand with and advocate for the powerless; and to provide a meaningful, active response to intolerance, bigotry and violence.

For four decades, the Peace Center has proudly established itself as a force for progressive social change in Western New York and beyond. The organization came into existence in 1967, formed in opposition to the Viet Nam War as a chapter of Dr. Martin Luther King's Clergy and Laity Concerned. It was launched by a local United Church of Christ congregation, Riverside Salem on Grand Island, which remains actively involved in all aspects of the Peace Center, holding a permanent position on the organization's 13-person Coordinating Board.

Over the years, the center's small staff and more than 1,000 dedicated members have maintained the most established organization of its kind in Western New York. While our overarching activism and education efforts focus on organizing a local response to global violence and human rights concerns (especially in response to the impacts of U.S. policy on international "hot zones" in the Middle East, Latin America and Africa), the Peace Center is similarly dedicated to enriching the quality of life of our local community through awareness-raising and direct action to achieve our vision of a truly humanistic, inclusive and equitable society.

Coordinating Board Roster as of 10/07

Hank Bromley, Board Chair
Wayne Alt, Treasurer
Allison Duwe, Secretary
Sophia Azeb
Charley Bowman
Joshua Coppings

Nan Cosby
Joanna Drzewieniecki
Bob Kuebler
Bill Marx
Irene Morrison
Rebecca Town
Jim Whitlock

Coordinating Board Committees

Committees, chaired by members of the Peace Center Board, are a way for members to have their say in the how our organization operates.

Fundraising Committee: Responsible for helping to plan fundraising events, including the annual dinner, as well as brainstorming new sources of funding.

Membership Committee: Charged with recruiting new members, retaining existing members, and watching out for the needs and concerns of Peace Center members.

Nominating Committee: Responsible for centralizing the process of nominating a slate of new board members to be voted on by the membership.

Personnel Committee: Responsible for evaluating the Director and resolving disputes between staff.

What We Do

Peace Action

Peace Action is our response to U.S. militarism, in general, and the ongoing war in Iraq of late. Anti-war tactics include coordinating rallies, letter-writing campaigns, and targeted actions designed to pressure elected officials to 1) withdraw support for the war machine, 2) vote against war money and against nuclear proliferation, and 3) support policies that will help our world become a safer, more peaceful place. The Peace Action arm of the Peace Center is strongly collaborative in nature, working together with a number of like-minded organizations to mobilize rapid responses to current events that comprise human safety and basic rights. Over the years, the Peace Center broadened its focus on anti-militarism and disarmament work to include a number of campaigns under the umbrella of non-violent social justice, including:

The Latin America Solidarity Committee (LASC)

In its second decade, the Latin American Solidarity Committee remains the Peace Center's longest running taskforce. LASC's organizing paradigm is three-fold: political advocacy, public awareness and humanitarian aid. Through routine congressional visits, LASC advocates for specific changes in U.S. policy on fair trade, farmworker rights, the Cuban travel ban, and government-sponsored torture in Latin America through the School of the Americas at Ft. Benning, GA, among many other important matters. Through its monthly coffeehouse series, LASC engages hundreds of students, activists, and educators on Latin American issues each year. Putting its money where its mouth is, LASC's dedicated members have mobilized over tens of thousands in humanitarian aid to Latin America, including Cuba, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, Haiti and Belize.

Taskforce Peaceful Resolution of the Israel/Palestine Conflict (IS/PAL)

Launched in 2004, the Israel/Palestine taskforce promotes human rights, international law, and fair, balanced media coverage as its guiding principles for a just settlement of this long-standing Middle Eastern conflict. Advocating for equal rights to a just peace and real security for both Israelis and Palestinians, the taskforce challenges U.S. citizens, foreign policy and public perception where traditional methods of education and mobilization on both sides of the issue have fallen short of real strategies for change. IS/PAL is deeply convinced that all types of violence, no matter who is responsible, begets more violence and undermines the road to the peaceful solutions the Palestinians and Israelis so deeply desire. By focusing on human rights and international law, IS/PAL employs meetings with congressional

representatives, bi-annual speakers' series, community presentations, editorial board visits, and participation in national campaigns as its strategies.

The Visions for a Better World Committee

The Visions for a Better World Committee was formed in the aftermath of September 11th as a way to constructively move beyond mere protests of militaristic and violent responses to terrorism. The inspiration to form the Visions Committee came from an urgent, collective need to creatively reshape the path of the world's direction beyond the projections of political leadership and the mass media. In the context of war, jeopardized civil liberties, and political/economic hardships felt nation-wide, Visions offers an innovative, reflective approach to building community, artistically vocalizing dissent and celebrating the spirit of the peace movement as a complement to the Center's more action-oriented components.

The Africa in America Taskforce

The human and economic development of Africa (and its extension throughout the Diaspora) is the central goal of the Africa in America Working Group – a multiracial collective addressing human rights issues affecting Africa, U.S. policy on these issues, and the contemporary impacts of colonialism on the lives of African-Americans. Africa in America works to align the Peace Center's resources and energies to challenge the political/corporate entities responsible for African suffering stemming from poverty, violence and persecution while also acknowledging parity between destabilization in Africa and the destabilization of the inner city. Still in its earliest stages, Africa in America works locally to effect changes in both contexts through targeted educational efforts and developing strategies for direct action.

The Peaceful Conflict Resolution Program (PCRP)

The Peace Center's Peaceful Conflict Resolution Program offers in-school support to foster non-violent solutions for students, as well as structured trainings for adults from all walks of life. This intensive, program offers a number of tools and techniques that employ caring, constructive feedback and creativity to help resolve a number of perceptual and behavioral problems before they escalate into violence, especially for at-risk youth. Born out of the Alternatives to Violence in Schools Program created in 1990, PCRP offers weekly, half-day and day-long workshops that are offered year-round and have become an important, income-generating staple of the Peace Center's local peacemaking efforts.