

Topeka Center for Peace and Justice

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COOPERATION TIMES

March–April 2003

Prophet Martin King

by Kent Fellenbaum

Dr. C.T. Vivian made an immediate connection with his audience in Topeka when he expressed his appreciation of the presence of hate picketers outside the service. “It says that we have not arrived yet,” he said.

This year’s *Tenth Community Celebration of the Birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.* featured Dr. Vivian, a member of Dr. King’s executive staff. In his address, titled *Martin King: Prophet of Our Age*, Vivian interspersed humorous anecdotes with poignant stories of his days working along side of King during the height of the civil rights movement in the 1960s.

Vivian, who lives in Atlanta, introduced the evening’s topic by explaining the role of a prophet, saying that prophets are great, not because they tell of an impending event, but because they come to guide generations.

Whereas we often think of prophets as historical figures, like Moses or Isaiah from scripture, prophets speak in their own times, through words and action, calling humanity to the issues at hand and helping us to understand. Vivian stated that only when we know ourselves as a community can we know ourselves individually, not by words but by action, “because it’s in the action we really find out who we are.”

(Continued on page 2.)

Fair Trade Coffee

by Luke Conyac

On **March 6** at 7:00 p.m. the CENTER, the Washburn’s Environmental Law Society, the Hispanic American Law Student Association and the Multicultural

Center at Washburn will host a presentation by Peter Stauffacher. He will speak on “Fair Trade Coffee and Latin America,” in Room 102 at the Washburn School of Law.

Peter Stauffacher manages the seasonal Barstow Organic Farmers Market in South Kansas City. He is active with the Greater Kansas City Fair Trade Coalition, the Chiapas Justice Coalition, and the Fair Trade Coffee Campaign. As Chair of the Latin American Task Force he is an activist with a special interest in Latin American issues.

Stauffacher’s presentation will include a historical perspective and the current state of indigenous people in regions of Guatemala, Bolivia, Nicaragua, and specifically, Chiapas, Mexico. Stauffacher is a regular visitor to Latin America where he has

seen first hand the military-backed corporate impact upon indigenous people.

Stauffacher is doing his part to bring global “fair trade” awareness to the Midwest. His approach to easing

(Continued on page 5.)

Meet Your Candidates

Monday • March 10

See page 3.

Art for Peace

by Carolyn Voth

Several artists in Topeka are planning “An Afternoon/Evening for Peace.” They include members of Topeka Symphony, teachers and other artists with local and national reputations. They are seeking the use of White Concert Hall and its foyer for the event sometime early in April. The group is called “Concerned Artists Respond.”

In the meantime, they are looking for volunteer artists who are willing to share their art (music, visuals, dance, acting) and individuals who could publicize, plan logistics, usher, etc. They plan to raise money for UNICEF to provide help to Iraqi women and children.

If you would like to help please call Carolyn Voth at 785-235-5406. Let’s make this a great event!

(Carolyn Voth teaches music in the Topeka Public School system. She plays cello in the Topeka Symphony.)

Other Responses to War • Page 5

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR THE TOPEKA-TALPETATES PROJECT

by Ken Cott

For a decade, Topekans and others in northeast Kansas have accompanied the people of the village of Talpetates in El Salvador as they seek to recover from a brutal civil war and build better lives for themselves and their children. Most of the attention of Kansans has focused on education, which the people of Talpetates identified as their top priority. With our help, the Talpetates school has flourished. Today, it is a model rural school. While our commitment to the school continues, it needs less help than it did in the early years of the project. That has enabled us to pay more attention to another pressing community need—improved health.

The people of Talpetates face major health challenges, among them parasites and other gastrointestinal problems, respiratory and skin afflictions, diabetes, the consequences of chemical and natural pollution, alcoholism, sexually transmitted diseases, and domestic abuse. The only health facility in the community is the Casa Materna, built in the mid-1990s with European funds and originally intended to be a birthing center. It has evolved into a community health center, staffed by a midwife and several volunteer health workers. The Topeka-Talpetates Project, a project of the CENTER, has begun to channel some of the funds previously devoted to education to the Casa Materna.

We are also investigating the possibility of taking a medical team to Talpetates in July. It would focus on obtaining a clearer understanding of the health problems of the community, educating school children and training the staff of the Casa Materna, and seeing individuals with problems that can be alleviated in a single visit with a health care professional. Nurses, doctors, and dentists who are interested in participating in this activity are encouraged to contact the CENTER at 785-232-4388 or <TopekaCPJ@aol.com>, or Ken Cott at 785-(H)235-6790, W)231-1010, x2059 or <ken.cott@washburn.edu>.

(Ken Cott is a Professor of History at Washburn University. He has visited Talpetates with a delegation of Topekans every summer since the Project began in 1992.)

Prophet King.. *(Continued from page 1.)*

“[The world] understands that this man who we placed on the American calendar and is forever stamped on the American consciousness is not only an American, he is God’s man in the world in which we live,” Vivian said. He called the civil rights leader the most significant religious figure of the last century, emphasizing that King’s greatness transcends nationality, race, and religion.

Vivian identified the key characteristics of a prophet:

Prophets are called to do God’s will. Vivian explained that prophets are not self-made, but chosen by God and by others, pointing out how, when King went to Birmingham in 1955 he did not set out to start a revolution. Rather, the young preacher had taken some time off while working on his dissertation, and upon giving a speech shortly after Rosa Parks’ arrest, was chosen to lead the burgeoning movement. Willing to lay their lives on the line, 50,000 people followed a man they hardly knew using a philosophy they had never heard—nonviolence.

Prophets respond to the love of God in every circumstance.

Dr. Vivian recalled the “moment of epiphany” that King had when he struggled with the dilemma—“between doing what we know we should do and wanting to do what the culture tells us to do”—of whether or not to buy a gun for protection against an increasing number of death threats. King heard a still small voice remind him to stand for righteousness and truth. From that point on, his fear of death dissipated and he began preaching against violence.

Before long, the minister’s mettle was tested when the living room of his home was bombed and his wife, Coretta, and their first child narrowly escaped death. Neighbors rushed to the scene ready to get revenge against the perpetrators. King told them to return to their homes, saying “[violence]

email

The CENTER is building its capacity to notify *COOPERATION TIMES* readers via email of upcoming events—notices that frequently cannot wait until the next issue of the newsletter. Please send your email address to the CENTER at <TopekaCPJ@aol.com>.

Please comment on what kinds of notices you particularly want and don't want. We'll code your request.

In addition, *COOPERATION TIMES* is now posted on the CENTER'S web site <<http://www.networksplus.net/tcpj>>.



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will never be the way.”

Prophets are not seduced by material things. In addition to violent retaliation, the civil rights leader faced the temptations of fame and materialism, turning down a lucrative offer to preach elsewhere, because it would have taken him away from where the action was in the South.

King was selfless with money, making sure his staff was compensated before himself. “He didn’t want anyone to think that there was any connection between his work and wealth,” Vivian explained.

After winning the Nobel Peace Prize, King split the award money with the organizations involved in the civil rights movement. He also declined offers to be included on “the inside”—the circle of the elite. “After the Nobel prize, the idea was, ‘hey, are you really going to go back to the ‘valley’?’” said Vivian.

Vivian contended that “Doctor” is a misleading title for King, because he was more a preacher than an academic, even though we seldom read of him as a man of God. “We used to say the only board a black person could serve on was the deacon board,” Vivian quipped about the limited leadership opportunities African-Americans once had.

Prophets are unstoppable. Vivian maintained that prophets like Dr. King impact every sector of society, from laws to government, education, business, and culture. Neither do they dodge the social ills of their day, but instead face them head on, as did King. Likewise, not only did Martin Luther King change the landscape of our society, he prepared the United States to lead a diverse world into the 21st century. Vivian cautioned that this leadership must come not by force, but out of a “sense of soul.”

In order to understand the prophet (and the movement), we must understand the spiritual context from which it
(Continued on page 4.)

Mediation Works – Thanks Mayor Felker

WHEREAS, mediation offers creative problem solving, encourages the generation of options for settlement of disputes, empowers the parties to recognize the interests of

all concerned and facilitates a process whereby the participants control the outcome of conflicts in families, communities, businesses, and public policy issues; and...

WHEREAS, the **Topeka Center for Peace and Justice**, through victim offender mediation has reached agreements in over 60 cases resulting in \$8,310 in restitution for victims of crime and 250 hours of community service for juvenile offenders; has contacted over 500 students/parents/staff through a school mediation program, resulting in fewer suspensions among participating students; and...

WHEREAS, the **Topeka Center for Peace and Justice**, Kansas Children’s Service League, Safe Streets and Washburn Law School have collaborated to form the Shawnee County

Mediation Association and have provided mediation training and conducted a public awareness campaign about the benefits of mediation; and

WHEREAS, Topeka citizens can choose mediation—with assistance from volunteer, court-affiliated, and private mediators—to peacefully resolve their own conflicts, making the city of Topeka a leader in providing integrated approaches to the effective resolution of family, community, business and public policy disputes.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Harry “Butch” Felker, MAYOR of the Great City of TOPEKA, do hereby proclaim April, 2003, to be **Mediation Month** in the city of Topeka, and urge every citizen to recognize the role mediation and mediators can fill in encouraging all Topekans to seek more harmonious, peaceful outcomes in all their relationships.

Meet Your City Council Candidates

Human Rights and Other Challenges to Topeka

Monday • March 10 • 7:00 p.m.
Room 102 • Washburn Law School

This forum will give all 10 of Topeka’s primary-winning city council candidates the chance to talk about human rights (i.e. protection for people suffering from hatred and/or discrimination) and other challenges they see for the city. Questions will be taken from the audience. The forum is sponsored by Concerned Citizens for Topeka, the CENTER, the Topeka Branch of the NAACP, the League of Women Voters of Topeka/Shawnee County, and Washburn University. For more information call 785-232-4388.

Prophet King.. *(Continued from page 2.)*

came. For example, when King's followers marched from Selma to Montgomery, they knew nothing about Gandhi and nonviolence, but they knew about the Sermon on the Mount and what Jesus said about turning the other cheek. Nonviolence is a spiritual imperative that changes relationships, because love was at the root of King's philosophy. "Peace is not the absence of things, it's the presence of things—truth, justice, love," Vivian stated, "If you have them, you don't need guns."

This contemporary of Dr. King told story after story, including one vignette about a meeting with George Wallace, after the Alabama governor had been shot and left partially paralyzed. The civil rights marchers had come all the way from Selma to Montgomery and stood outside Wallace's office in the Statehouse, singing and speaking. The governor called for a meeting with ten of King's staff, including Vivian, who sat directly across from Wallace so he could look him in the eye to see if Wallace actually meant what he said about his softened views on race.

Martin Luther King understood that changing the racial climate of the country required a deep change at the personal level. America answered with politics and some economic development. For King on the other hand, the civil rights movement was not about politics, but "saving the soul of America."

Dr. Vivian connected his message with the ongoing struggle for universal human rights in Topeka, stressing the need to build unity with all people—black, white, gay, straight, male, female, poor, and rich. "To understand King is to have solidarity with suffering," he said.

Vivian concluded by reminding us that "this giant in our midst" loved us when he didn't have to. "He loved blacks when we didn't love ourselves," he said. Dr. King also came to warn us that we must love "the least of these." "Every people, every nation, every group ... has learned to lift those who have lifted them," he said.

(Kent Fellenbaum is a full time volunteer with Mennonite Voluntary Service, serving his second year in the CENTER's office as Administrative Assistant.)



Dr. C.T. Vivian spoke about his friend Martin Luther King to this year's Celebration.

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Regret To Inform

by Charlotte Adair

Regret To Inform is an Academy Award nominated documentary film by Barbara Sonneborn that honors the experiences and perspectives of all widows of war. What begins as one woman's journey to come to terms with the death of her husband in the American-Vietnam War, evolves into a powerful testimony to the shared experience of all widows of War.

Barbara Sonneborn's deeply moving stories will be told in Topeka on **April 10** in the Georgia Neese Gray Theater (behind White Concert Hall). Her film will be featured at **6:00 p.m.** followed by a discussion with her at **7:30 p.m.** The public is invited to participate.

Sonneborn is the niece of Irv Sheffel, a long time CENTER supporter and Topeka resident.

Sonneborn's appearance is free, sponsored by Central National Bank, Washburn University and the Georgia Neese Gray Lecture Series. For more information, please call the Washburn Endowment Association, 785-231-1020.

(Charlotte Adair is the Director of Planned Giving for the Washburn Endowment Association.)

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COMMUNITY
Peace Vigil

**Saturdays at 5:30 pm
Beginning March 1**

**Grace Episcopal Cathedral
8th & Polk Topeka, Kansas**

Fair Trade Coffee.. (Cont. from page 1.)

the burdens of the Chiapan refugees includes selling organic coffee harvested by Chiapan farmers. The indigenous and communal farmers handpick the beans, allowing the coffee to have an excellent non-bitter flavor. Fair trade would guarantee at least one dollar a pound for the farmers. Then Stauffacher is giving consumers in the north an opportunity to bypass the intermediaries who would normally take the majority of the profits from the sales. Considering that the coffee is the second largest worldwide traded commodity, generating \$18 billion in annual revenue, there is considerable profit for the middlemen.

Why organic coffee? The U.S. Agency for International Development went on an \$80 million spending spree through out the 1970s to "modernize" the Latin American region. This "modernization" was essentially a corporate-based plan to transform the region into artificially high-output coffee farming. The plan included cutting down native shade trees to make room for high-yield, full-sun varieties. This practice ultimately led to severe soil erosion, deforestation, and habitat destruction upon which the native flora and fauna relied. Accompanying this ecologically devastating practice was the use of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers that caused further environmental degradation.

Fair Trade coffee guarantees a floor price of \$1.00 to \$1.26 per pound for small farmers who grow natural, shade grown, pesticide free coffee in the region. This minimum price assures the farmers that they will not have to sell their coffee at a fraction of the world market price, keeping them impoverished. This is an admirable venture when considering Chiapas is Mexico's leading coffee producer and the nation's poorest region.

Stauffacher's slide and video presentation will also illuminate concerns about violence in the region. The communal co-ops and the indigenous movement are affiliated with the Zapatista National Liberation Army and its self-sufficiency principles. The relationship with the Zapatista movement is necessary for their survival in light of violence from federal police, and paramilitary forces intimidating, displacing, and killing the inhabitants of the region.

This hour-long presentation will be followed by a time for questions and answers. Chiapan coffee will be served and snacks will be provided. Fair Trade coffee will also be available for a requested donation of \$10 per pound. Please come take part in this important presentation and learn first hand the dynamics of Fair Trade and the strife of our neighbors to the South.

(Luke Conyac is a second year law student at Washburn Law School where he is President of the Environmental Law Society.)

Responses to A War On Iraq

Several weekly opportunities have emerged during the last few weeks for Topekans concerned about any U.S. War on Iraq to gather for demonstrating, prayer, waiving a sign, or holding a candle.

Every **Thursday** at 5:00 p.m. Topekans are invited to gather at 17th & Topeka Blvd. with signs that promote peace or oppose war. Contact Kris Holmes at 785-221-5305 or <klholder@aol.com> for more information.

On **Monday** of every week a vigil is held at Topeka's Federal Building, 5th & Quincy, to demonstrate opposition to a war with Iraq. People meet from Noon until 1:00 p.m. on the west side of the building. Contact Bill Lucero at 785-232-5958 or <Lucerolb@aol.com>.

A silent peace vigil meets from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. each **Tuesday** at Washburn University Campus Ministry, 1633 SW Boswell. Contact Rev. Neil or Bridget Gately at 785-233-1844.

Grace Episcopal Cathedral, 8th & Polk, is hosting a community Peace Vigil every **Saturday** at 5:30 p.m. Contact Michael Massey at 785-368-8134.

"War may sometimes be a necessary evil. But no matter how necessary, it is always an evil, never a good. We will not learn to live together in peace by killing each other's children."

—Jimmy Carter, accepting the Nobel Peace Prize

Yes, I want to help the Topeka Center for Peace and Justice in 2003!

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Please clip and return this coupon to: Topeka Center for Peace and Justice, 1248 SW Buchanan, Topeka, KS 66604. [17-2]

CALENDAR

See a listing of responses to War on Iraq on page 5.


- Mar. 4 Beginning/Intermediate Yoga classes every Tuesday and Thursday 5:30-6:30 p.m.; Zen meditation practice 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Thursday and 6:00 to 7:00 a.m. Tuesday and Thursday; Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 4775 SW 21 (For more information call Bill Lucero, 785-232-5958).
- Mar. 6 Fair Trade Coffee and Latin America (See article on page 1.).
- Mar. 6-8 Regional NAACP Conference, Topeka (William E. Richards, 785-234-4555).
- Mar. 7 "Where Do We Go from Here in Building Healthy Muslim/Christian Relations?," Dr. Nabil Seyam, Pres. Islamic Society of Wichita, and Dr. Patricia Shelly, Assoc. Prof. of Bible and Religion, Bethel College, 7:30 p.m. (6:00 dinner), Bethel College Mennonite Church, 2600 College Ave., N Newton (316-284-5217).
- Mar. 10 City Council Candidates Forum (See announcement on page 3.).
- Mar. 18 **CENTER Board Meeting**, 7:00-9:00 p.m., 1248 SW Buchanan (785-232-4388).
- Mar. 20 Kansas Action Network: The Coalition for Workers Rights, Social Justice and Economic Justice, bimonthly meeting, agenda includes state budget strategy and organization building, 10:30 a.m., KS AFL-CIO, 2131 SW 36th, Topeka (785-232-4388).
- Mar. 20 Charlie King and Karen Brandow, songs and stories providing biting commentary of the events of the day, 7:00 p.m., Just Off Broadway Theater, 3051 Central, KC,MO, \$20 (816-292-2887 or 816-960-4636).
- Mar. 22 **NAACP Topeka Branch** monthly meeting, 1:00-3:00 p.m., Hillcrest Community Center, 1800 SE 21st (William E. Richards, 785-234-4555).
- Apr. 1 Topeka City General Election – VOTE!
- Apr. 10 "Regret To Inform," widows and war (See article on page 4.)
- Apr. 14 "Critical Issues in Restorative Justice," Lorraine Stutzman Amstutz, Dir. of Mennonite Central Committee's Office on Crime and Justice, 7:30 p.m., Krehbiel Auditorium, Bethel College, N Newton (316-284-5217).
- Apr. 18-9 "Ethics, Psychophysiology and the Sacred: Multidimensional Methods for Creating Wholeness In a Chaotic World," Joel and

Michelle Levey, Seattle, and Pat Norris, Topeka, Biofeedback Society of Kansas, Washburn Room, Washburn Union (Ken Hagen 785-233-7138)

Apr. 25-6 Healthy Congregations Workshop with Dr. Peter Steinke, author of several Alban Institute publications, conducted by Lombard (IL) Mennonite Peace Center, at Community of Christ World HQ in Independence, MO (630-627-0507, <www.LMPeaceCenter.org>).

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Rev. Lynn Brodie,
Interim Minister

10:30 a.m. Sunday

COOPERATION TIMES, ©2003, is published by the **TOPEKA CENTER FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE**. Bimonthly circulation is 4,441. Readers are invited to respond with letters to the editor or with articles. Opinions expressed are those of the writers and not necessarily policy statements of the CENTER. Items for the next issue should be submitted by April 20.

The CENTER is a Kansas nonprofit, tax exempt, organization that works to promote justice and peace through education and action for social

change by working with individuals and organizations in the greater Topeka community. Its Board of Directors meets on the third Tuesday, every odd month at 1248 SW Buchanan Street. All CENTER members are welcome.

The CENTER's Executive Director and Editor is Bill Beachy.

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