



# Michigan Peace Team

WINTER 2009

VOLUME XV, NUMBER 1

Michigan Peace Team (MPT) empowers people to engage in active nonviolent peacemaking. MPT was started in 1993, in response to the growing need for civilian peacemakers both in the USA and abroad.

**VISION:**

To pursue peace through active non-violence in places of conflict

MPT seeks a peaceful, just, sustainable Earth Community grounded in nonviolence and respect for the sacred interconnectedness of all life.

**MISSION:**

Provide training in active nonviolence designed for the specific needs of participants.

Recruit and mentor individuals seeking experience with violence reduction teams.

Place violence reduction teams in domestic and international conflicts.

Convene, support and participate with local peace action groups.

Educate the public to the vision and practice of nonviolence.



**Newsletter Theme:** This historical “moment” is a time of injustice and violence, AND hope-filled possibilities inspired by recent events, AND a renewed understanding that transformation is born out of the sustained effort of a mobilized public seeking change...Let’s free our imaginations, build creative coalitions, and create the NEW! In this spirit, our newsletter begins by announcing an important, up-coming event – we hope you will save the date! Then it unfolds the theme in successive articles. – The Editor



## An Evening with Michael Moore

**Award winning filmmaker, author, and rabble rouser**

**DATE:**  
Saturday, May 2, 2009

**TIME:**  
6 p.m. – 9 p.m. Program & Dinner  
5 p.m. – 6 p.m. Reception

**LOCATION:**  
Democratic Club of Taylor  
23400 Wick Road  
Taylor, Michigan 48180

**DONATION:**  
\$50 per person - Dinner, Silent Auction, Entertainment and Keynote Presentation  
\$100 per person - Reception AND Program

**PROCEEDS:**  
To support the mission of Michigan Peace Team; Your contribution is tax-deductible.

For Reservations email Mary Ann Ford [smafihm@sbcglobal.net](mailto:smafihm@sbcglobal.net)  
To donate an auction item, call Maureen Aman (586) 242-4250

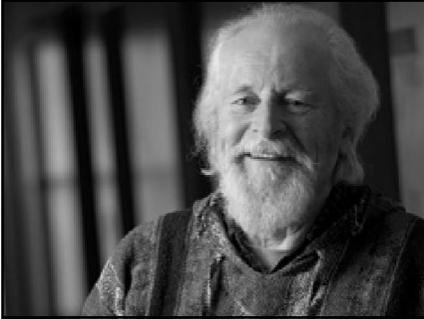
**For other information contact:**  
Kim Redigan – [kredigan@yahoo.com](mailto:kredigan@yahoo.com); 313)520-7465  
Liz Walters - [ElizabethWalters.mpt@gmail.com](mailto:ElizabethWalters.mpt@gmail.com)  
Or click on [michiganpeaceteam.org](http://michiganpeaceteam.org)

**Inside this issue:**

<b>These Times Call for Hope Alive!</b>	2
<b>Core, MPT Gratitude, and Staff Email</b>	2
<b>International Peace Teams &amp; Hope &amp; Action in a Time of Crisis</b>	3
<b>MPT Continues to Form West Bank Teams for 2009</b>	3
<b>A Nonviolence Presence in Palestine/ Israel</b>	4 - 5
<b>Intern Project: Research “Obsession”</b>	6-7
<b>Meet the Interns</b>	7
<b>Auction Items Needed</b>	1, 8
<b>Reservations for An Evening with Michael Moore</b>	1, 8

# THE TIMES CALL FOR HOPE ALIVE

by Peter Dougherty



**Peter Dougherty**  
“Come and be hope alive.”

Everyone who opens their eyes can see that our world is in crisis, on so many levels. We can do denial, despair, destructive response, or creative engagement. If we are not part of the creative solution, we remain part of the problem. Non-engagement is not acceptable.

Studies indicate that those involved in trying to change things for the better are more hopeful, and that their children respond in like manner. We inspire each other to walk the walk.

A few years ago I was with Fr. Manuel Musallam in his Palestinian parish in Gaza City. He said that of the three theological virtues, faith,

hope and charity, today the most important one for his people in Gaza is Hope. With the invasion of Gaza by Israel that began on December 27, it is truer than ever.

Mary Ann, on our MPT violence reduction peace team in Rafah, Gaza Strip, was with a handful of Palestinian women. They sat in chairs under the Israeli gun tower along the wall of occupation. These women were talking and laughing aloud as they sat there. One of them confided to Mary Ann they do that to show the Israeli soldiers they cannot break their spirit. Hope lives.

Dan Berrigan at one of his trials for civil disobedience – attempting to stop deployment of nuclear warheads – said: “I cannot not do it.” Life is a passionate celebration involving the struggle of transforming ourselves, walking with the vulnerable in our midst, and transforming the world.

It is said: “Hope is believing and acting in spite of the evidence and watching the evidence change.” Sometimes we don’t get to see the evidence change, but that does not defeat us.

Many feel a fresh hopefulness with the Barack Obama’s “change you can trust” new administration. I too hope for changes that will turn around our downward path as a nation. Nevertheless, my life commitment to hope does not depend on what President Obama achieves.

Michigan Peace Team has a vision of hope. Hundreds of people get involved in MPT’s effort to make a difference. About 75 have been on our team in Palestine/Israel, many several times. We intend to create a second ongoing peace team in another part of the world as well. We have 14 nonviolence trainers with a dozen inquiring about becoming trainers. Many serve on violence reduction teams in our cities when the need arises. Dozens volunteer for many MPT tasks, from helping with mailings to giving presentations, staffing MPT tables at events, and helping with fundraising efforts.

**You are invited to deepen your involvement in the MPT venture. Come and be hope alive.**

**We are grateful for your continued support of the mission of Michigan Peace Team!**

**MPT Core Members:**

Peter Dougherty  
Mary Pat Dewey  
Sr. Mary Ann Ford  
Mary Ellen Gondeck  
Joni McCoy  
Jasiu Milanowski  
Paul Pratt  
Sheri Wander

**MPT Staff:**

Peter Dougherty  
Mary Hanna  
Martha Larsen  
Nicole Rohrkemper  
Liz Walters

**Please contact us, if we can assist you in bringing the message nonviolence and peace to your congregation, your community, your neighborhood, your workplace ... or if we can bring a peace team to a place of need ...**

Peter Dougherty  
Mary Hanna  
Martha Larsen  
Nicole Rohrkemper  
Liz Walters

[cpeterdougherty.mpt@gmail.com](mailto:cpeterdougherty.mpt@gmail.com)  
[MaryHanna.mpt@gmail.com](mailto:MaryHanna.mpt@gmail.com)  
[mlarsen.mpt@gmail.com](mailto:mlarsen.mpt@gmail.com)  
[nicoler.mpt@gmail.com](mailto:nicoler.mpt@gmail.com)  
[ElizabethWalters.mpt@gmail.com](mailto:ElizabethWalters.mpt@gmail.com)

## International Peace Teams and Hope and Action in a Time of Crisis



**One scarlet poppy blooms in the desert, a symbol of hope and renewal despite crushingly harsh conditions.**

Our Peace Team experience teaches us that the occupation of Gaza and the West Bank is the fundamental violence in the region.

-From Michigan Peace Team "Call to Action" for Gaza

All of us at MPT hold those suffering as a result of the violence in Gaza in mind.

To find resources and to take immediate action, please visit [www.michiganpeaceteam.org/act\\_now!.htm](http://www.michiganpeaceteam.org/act_now!.htm).

In addition to taking urgent action regarding the situation in Gaza, you can explore ways to have an impact on the ongoing conflict in the region by finding out more about International Peace Teams to the West Bank in 2009. Please click on the link to "Teams" on the left toolbar on our website, or email [Nicoler.mpt@gmail.com](mailto:Nicoler.mpt@gmail.com) for more information.

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### MPT Continues to Form West Bank Peace Teams for 2009 by Nicole Rohrkemper

This time of great suffering is also a time hope and renewal around the world. With the transition of power here in the United States, many are finding new hope for changes at home and abroad, including policy changes with regard to the conflict in Israel/Palestine. MPT has hopes and plans for Peace Teams in the West Bank in 2009.

Our Core Community, staff, volunteers and friends will be supporting teams this year as we set up a new community-integrated placement location. Our previous home base location worked very well for a time, and made it possible for us to travel all over the region. One hope for Teams this year is that we can live and work even more closely with one community in a new location. Teams will still be able to respond to urgent need in many areas; but in general we'll spend less time traveling once we've established a year-round presence reducing violence in a targeted community. We'll also create new bonds with other organizations to help make sure the community receives year-round support. We're pleased to say we have a record number of team applicants to be a part of this work in 2009, including many experienced veterans-- and we'll continue to take applications for 2009 teams for many months to come!

Here at home, we're also renewing our efforts to support Teams in the field. This February, we'll be holding a "training" for those who are interested in volunteering with MPT to support teams by holding the "emergency phone," doing screening interviews, and more. We hope you can join us. There's something everyone can do to take action and support teams, no matter your skills, abilities, or location. Watch the web calendar and list-serve for more information, or contact [Nicoler.mpt@gmail.com](mailto:Nicoler.mpt@gmail.com).

Finally, we are creating new options for funding teams, including scholarship options for team members, special funding for team Anchor/veterans, and new possibilities for cooperative fundraising. If you're interested in learning about new options for potential team members in 2009, contact Nicole.

As the situation in Gaza demonstrates, the need for action is stronger than ever in 2009. One hope at MPT is that the energy that has created the current atmosphere of change in our country will continue to be put into action in the coming months. As one way to take action against violence and aggression, we hope you'll consider being part of an MPT Peace Team in the West Bank, or volunteering with MPT to support our teams.

# A NONVIOLENCE PRESENCE IN PALESTINE / ISRAEL

by Martha Larsen

*This article was first published in the November December 2008 edition of **Viva Mercy**. The message is inspiring. With special permission from Martha Larsen and **Viva Mercy**, we are re-printing excerpts in this MPT Newsletter.*



**Martha Larsen blocking land confiscation**

**T**he Iraq war, divisions in the country over the war, and the last U.S. elections caused many of us deep suffering and concern. I became disturbed by my own reactions to people who disagreed with my opinions about the need for nonviolent solutions to problems in our world. After two “debates,” one with my brother-in-law and the other with a stranger, I realized this “debating” was damaging to everyone. At first, I wanted to convince others, however, that gradually changed into a desire to listen and accept others for themselves. I came to see listening and accepting not just as pragmatic, but as better for the universe.

Through reflection and meditation, I began to see “Mercy” as nonviolence in all its aspects. The Institute Chapter’s inclusion of the practice of nonviolence in our *Direction Statement* indicated to me that many of us were seeking similar spirituality and practice as well as an integration of the parts of the *Direction Statement*.

Nonviolence as spirituality became important to me. The working definition of nonviolence from the Oakland, California Mecca Center impresses me:

“Nonviolence is a powerful method to harmonize relationships among people [and all living things] for the establishment of just and the ultimate well being of all parties. It draws its power from awareness of the profound truth to which the wisdom traditions of all cultures, science and common experience that all life is one.”

I have been deeply touched by the plight of refugees in the world. This concern and the need to be more nonviolent in expressing my opinion prompted me to search out an organization to respond to that concern and need. The response came in the form of the Michigan Peace Team [MPT].

MPT’s states, “We seek a just world grounded in nonviolence and respect for the sacred interconnectedness of all life.” MPT provides training in nonviolence, works with other local peace groups, places peace teams in areas of conflict domestically and internationally and educates on the vision and practice of nonviolence. Part of social change and nonviolence is analysis and reflection. MPT developed a statement of nonviolent perspectives on Palestine/Israel. MPTers educate people on the conflict and nonviolent efforts for peace.

Becoming aware of the woundedness and sacredness of all helps me to suspend distorted judgments and seek peace with jus-

tice. Thus, I became a member of MPT and served on MPT teams in Palestine four times in three years for a total of 10 months.

## The Methods

MPT is not a faith-based organization, but encourages daily spiritual practices. I am committed to daily meditation and the methods used by MPT nonviolence peace teams in conflict areas. In Palestine, we meet daily for “centering,” “check-in,” and for discussion of an agenda. Our centering consists of a reflective reading or a time of silence or both. In check-in, each participant’s voice is heard without comment.

After an event, we debrief, share and then discuss. We co-counsel with a partner—each person has an equal time to speak with the other’s full attention. Feedback can be requested.

MPT uses Third Party Nonviolent Intervention, TPNI, and direct action. This means “interpositioning” - positioning oneself to prevent violence. In my experience, we used this method in positioning ourselves between Palestinians and Israeli soldiers. Older white women are fairly safe and effective in doing this! A rash young soldier may later appreci-



**Martha, Brenna, and a Friend**

## NONVIOLENCE continued

Methods of observation or monitoring also reduces violence and calls people to a higher standard. Protective accompaniment is necessary when a home or Bedouin camp is under demolition order or for Palestinian school children going through an illegal and hostile Israeli settlement. Being "present" helps both Israelis and Palestinians break the cycle of fear.

### Working in Palestine

In Palestine, I worked in various areas. My first experience in 2006 was with a team of six with the Women in Black in Jerusalem, an international movement of women for peace. Later, I worked in the village of Bil'in near the green line [border], and the village of Beit Omar, south of Bethlehem.

Every Friday for three years, Bil'in villagers have demonstrated in strong, creative ways against the illegal apartheid wall which has taken 65 percent of their land. In a demonstration with Israeli soldiers shooting tear-gas, sound bombs and rubber bullets, our international nonviolent presence along with Israeli activists was appreciated by the villagers. We interpositioned ourselves between Israeli soldiers and Palestinians which once led to a brief detention. Each MPT team frequently returns to Bil'in. Our reports alert Americans to the illegal occupation of Palestinian land by Israeli settlers. MPT hosts Bil'in and Israeli peace activists on USA speaking tours and supports Bil'in's efforts in international courts.

During my time in Beit Omar, bulldozers confiscated a huge swath of Palestinian land bordering an Israeli settlement. Over 100 villagers and international peace activ-

ists walked among fertile orchards trying to prevent the bulldozing, but were forced back step by step by the Israeli army. That week was one of constant harassment by the Israeli army and nonviolent response by the villagers and the international peace activists.

We have visited with Bedouins driven from desert border areas by the bulldozing of their homes and animal structures in the south West Bank. Antagonistic settlers have beaten Bedouins, damaged their wells and destroyed their olive trees. International peace activists have also been beaten. MPTers walk two and a half hours over rugged, unsafe hill terrain to stay in Bedouin tents and caves and to monitor school children escorted by an Israel army jeep through a hostile Israel settlement. We stay overnight with these families as protective accompaniment.

Israel is building a three-story cement wall in the region of Beth-



**Martha and Kathy at Bethlehem Checkpoint**

lehem while illegal Israeli settlements continue to develop. MPT visited families in villages bordering Bethlehem to be a presence of peace and caring. We went to nonviolent demonstrations, particularly in Al Khadr, five kilometers west of Bethlehem which will lose 5,000 acres when the illegal apartheid wall is completed. A father of four from Al Walaja, an area just northwest of Bethlehem, received 96 months [yes, eight years] house arrest because he resisted home demolitions and organized people against the wall construction. His Israeli lawyer said he was considered "an agitator." A \$1,500 court case ended his house arrest and allowed him to apply for temporary, renewable Jerusalem work permits. In Beit Sahour, settlers are attempting to confiscate land designated for a children's hospital ...

### The Spirit Remains

Despite the constant threat of harassment and violence, the strength of spirit among the people remains ...

I continually rejoice in my decision to be a member of MPT. Being "Mercy," being nonviolent in Palestine, among mainly Moslem people, has taught me nonviolence, love of the Palestinian people, and a deep desire for peace and justice in Palestine/Israel and in the Middle East.

**Author Descriptor:** *Martha Larsen has worked with the Michigan Peace Team for the last three years serving as Anchor for long term teams to Palestine. She spent 12 years with the Aymara people in Peru and with Mexican immigrant farm workers in the western states.*

## MPT Intern Project: Researching “Obsession”

by Kati Garrison

*During Kati Garrison's internship at Michigan Peace Team, Mary Hanna, MPT's intern supervisor asked Kati to research the untold story about a DVD that was being delivered to mailboxes across the country. Here are excerpts of Kati's findings..*

*By way of background Kati is a graduate of Notre Dame University, and presently a graduate student at MSU. Although she completed her MPT internship in December 2008, Kati continues to volunteer at MPT one or more days a week.*

*Kati's article connects with the theme of this newsletter because she is taking personal responsibility to pursue truth and raise awareness. These efforts lead to social change!*



**Kati Garrison**

*Obsession: Radical Islam's War against the West* is an anti-Islam documentary produced by a group known as the Clarion Fund. This particular film depicts Islam as a radically dangerous religion with the central purpose of bringing about the destruction of all Western civilization. It combines inflammatory commentary with images of Nazis and depictions of Islam designed to instill terror in the average viewer, such as footage of suicide bombing indoctrinations.

On the weekend marking the anniversary of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, mass distribution of the DVD commenced. Over the course of the next month and a half, the Clarion Fund financed the dispersal of over 28 million copies of this documentary in the form of a mailing or advertising insert in newspapers across the United States. The circumstances surrounding the marketing of this film suggest that the ad constituted a sophisticated form of propaganda intended to instill fear in American citizens and utilize the manufactured fear to influence the results of the November presidential election.

This propaganda theory evolved for a number of reasons including the timing and allocation of the mailings, the funding of the distribution of the DVD, the composition of the Clarion organization, and various other discrepancies surrounding its production.

For example, the original release of *Obsession* occurred in the year 2006, but the nationwide distribution campaign did not commence until a month and a half prior to the 2008 presidential election.

In addition, the ad insert appeared in 74 newspapers across 14 states, most of which political analysts labeled as crucial determinants in the outcome of the

presidential election. According to federal election and tax laws, as a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization, Clarion Fund, Inc. must remain independent and nonpartisan. Yet, Clarion's actions suggest violation of these laws. A spokesman for the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), Ibrahim Hooper, said, "When you send material like this almost exclusively to presidential swing states that sends a message that you are trying to influence the election...It's inappropriate as a nonprofit for the Clarion Fund to do." Consequently, CAIR filed complaints with the Federal Election Commission and the Internal Revenue service accusing Clarion of promoting the candidacy of John McCain over Barack Obama.

When interviewed, Clarion spokesperson Gregory Ross insisted Clarion had no political affiliations. He asserted, "There is not one mention of Republicans or Democrats in the film, and we name no politicians specifically at all." However, at one point a Clarion website ([www.radicalislam.com](http://www.radicalislam.com)) linked the *Obsession* film to the presidential candidates by means of a posted article which stated, "McCain's policies seek to confront radical Islamic extremism and terrorism and roll it back, while Obama's, although intending to do the same, could in fact make the situation facing the West even worse." The Clarion Fund removed this article but continued to link its readers to a multitude of sites promoting Senator McCain highlighting his platform of national security.

Furthermore, a nonprofit organization such as the Clarion Fund, by law, cannot accept funding from any government, political institution, or foreign organization, and the mystery surrounding the funding behind the anti-Islam DVD suggests foul play. The estimated costs of producing and distributing the film total \$50 million. However, Clarion refuses to reveal its sources of funding ...

Even the circumstances surrounding the individuals involved in the making of the documentary call its credibility into question. Only Raphael Shore and director Wayne Kopping willingly released their identities in association with the film.

## “Obsession” continued

Both the executive producer and the production manager use aliases...Ross claims the individuals wish to remain anonymous for fear of possible lawsuits and actions carried out by radical Islamists. ...

... The *Obsession* documentary plays on voters' fears and suspicion of Muslims by immensely exaggerating threats in attempt to provide support for one political party over another. Campaign tactics, such as these utilize the strongest motivator of human action – fear – to strongly influence the way an individual votes and achieve political ends ...

According to the statement written on the *Obsession* DVD envelope, “The threat of Radical Islam is the most important issue facing us today. But it’s a topic that neither the presidential candidates, nor the media are discussing openly. It’s our responsibility to ensure we can all make an informed vote in November.”

Although the mendacity of this statement cannot be ignored, truth remains in the line on the subject of responsibility. The best way to combat fear is through knowledge, and informed citizens have the moral obligation to refuse to remain silent in the face of this deliberate propaganda.

See

1. Reuters, <http://www.reuters.com/article/pressRelease/idUS115311+27-Sep-2008+PRN20080927>
2. Jews on First, a group of Jewish professionals who defend the First Amendment. <http://www.jewsonfirst.org/08a/obsession.html>
3. <http://www.radicalislam.org/>
4. <http://www.obsessionwatch.org/>

## Meet Stephanie, MPT Intern

Stephanie Hufford is an intern with the Michigan Peace Team for the Winter 2009 Semester. Currently she is a Senior at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, MI. Her field of study is International Relations with a minor in Political Science. Stephanie is applying at Western Michigan University for Graduate School, and is hoping to enter their program for International Development Administration.

She hopes the internship with Michigan Peace Team will demonstrate the importance that nonviolent skills have in violence reduction and conflict management. Stephanie is part of MPT in the hope that she will learn nonviolent methods and skills that she can take elsewhere once the internship ends..

For fun Stephanie enjoys being with family and friends, photography, reading, and being outdoors.



## Meet Erika, MPT Intern

Erika Greenia began an internship with the Michigan Peace team in January 2009. She is a senior in James Madison College at Michigan State University majoring in Social Relations & Policy and Comparative Cultures & Politics with a specialization in Asian Studies. Post graduation, Erika will be completing a two year commitment with the Peace Corps working with HIV/AIDS public health education in Africa. After returning she hopes to pursue a graduate program in peace and conflict resolution and justice studies.

While working with MPT, Erika hopes to gain knowledge of grass-root organization building and sustainability as well as peaceful conflict resolution practices domestically and internationally with the purpose of sharing this knowledge with those blinded by hateful thought and action. Erika is committed to promoting peace and justice throughout the world as well as in everyday life and acts.

**PLEASE HELP THE SILENT AUCTION**

- **An Evening with Michael Moore will include an auction!**
- **Do you have items to donate?**

**Contact: Maureen Aman**  
Phone number on page 1

**Reservations for  
An Evening with Michael Moore**  
Individual seating or a whole table!

**Contact: Mary Ann Ford**  
Email address on page 1

**Some Ideas - Silent Auction Donations**

- Books (especially 1st editions and/or signed by authors)
- Gift Certificates to Restaurants (favorites, unusual, or fine dining)
- Gift Certificates for 2 Nights in a Hotel / Vacation Trip
- Cell Phone with Minutes
- Services (Lawn, Dental, Hairdressers, Massage Therapists, Yoga Studios)
- Business Services (Free Tax Processing, Accounting)
- Tickets to Sporting Events
- Autographed Sports Items (baseball, etc.)
- Art (paintings, tapestries, quilts, unusual works of art)
- Jewelry
- Gift Baskets
- Wine
- Great Toys for Kids
- 4 Dancing Lessons
- Computers, TV, DVD Players
- \$\$ Gift Certificates/Coupons to Stores
- Perfume
- Magazine subscriptions--such as The Nation, The Progressive, Mother Jones, etc.
- Luggage

**Michigan Peace Team**

1516 Jerome St.  
Lansing, MI 48912-2220  
**Phone:** 517-484-3178  
**FAX:** 517 484-4219  
**Web:** michiganpeaceteam.org

**If You have a preference, let us know:**

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