

July/August 2008

# Peace Matters

There Is No  
Peace Without  
Justice

## PALESTINIAN AMERICANS WILL HOLD FIRST POPULAR CONFERENCE

By Musa Al-Hindi, Co-chairman Nebraskans for  
Peace Palestinian Rights Group

Especially since the advent of the Palestinian-Israeli "peace process," Palestinian-Arab identity has been severely and systematically fragmented. Like the bantustanization of Palestinian lands, Palestinian national identity has been bantustanized by a series of laws, processes and events (as indigenous South Africans were forced by White settlers to live in small portions of the poorest lands). Today there are the Palestinians within Israel, those within the Occupied Territories, those in refugee camps, those in the global diaspora, and most recently those in the West Bank, who have become distinct from those in the Gaza Strip. Making Palestinian identity whole necessitates articulating a single narrative that addresses the whole and not just several of its parts.

Aware that the existing Palestinian leadership, as comprised by the Palestinian Authority, is not interested in articulating this narrative but instead would like to consolidate the power that it can over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, Palestinians in the United States and throughout the global diaspora have taken it upon themselves to develop this narrative.

In the United States this process began in June 2006, in Detroit, Michigan. Palestinian activists, academics, students and professionals met and agreed to organize a national popular conference of Palestinians in 2008. We committed ourselves to organizing a conference that would be transparent, democratically shaped and, above all, inclusive of all Palestinians. The conference will be held in the Wyndham O'Hare Hotel in Chicago on August 8 –

10, 2008. People from Omaha will attend the conference.

Under the banner of Palestinians in the United States, namely, reclaiming our voice, asserting our narrative and shaping our future, the organizing body of the conference, the U.S. Palestine Conference Network held three preparatory meetings. At each of those meetings the USPCN expanded its network and affirmed its commitment to a democratic and inclusive process, as well as to decision-making by consensus.

In a similar vein, in order to ensure the greatest participation and inclusion, the program is being organized much like the World Social Forum. Essentially, the program committee has identified five different workshop tracks: education/political vision, youth/family, identity/culture, strategy, and dealing with internal struggles within the Palestinian American community. The program

committee also identified two themes: Nakba (the 1948 Palestinian Catastrophe) and youth. Finally, the program will also have room for exhibits.

The goals of the conference include cultivating our national Palestinian-Arab identity, exploring grounds for cooperation and collective expression, and motivating and organizing the US-based Palestinian community to assume a greater role in realizing Palestinian human rights.

At this historical juncture, when Israel's ongoing efforts to ethnically cleanse Palestine of its indigenous population--as it has done with the inhumane blockade of Gaza--continue to threaten the existence of a Palestinian-Arab national identity, Palestinians in the United States must step up as more powerful agents of change and accountability.

To learn more or get involved visit: [www.palestineconference.org](http://www.palestineconference.org), or contact Musa Al-Hindi at 402-551-0674 ([malhindi@netzero.net](mailto:malhindi@netzero.net)).



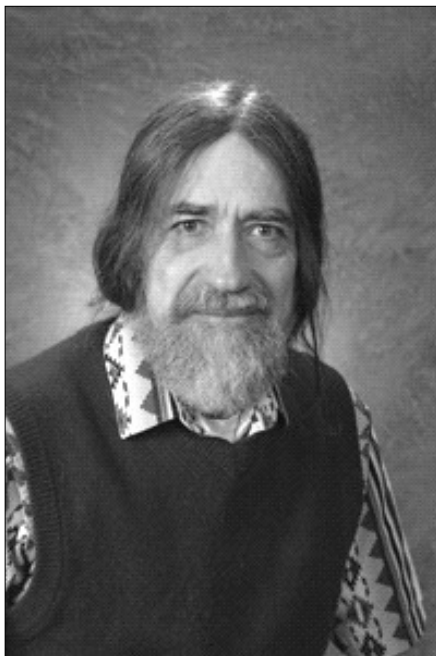
# Peace Matters

## ANNUAL RICE AND BEANS DINNER Speaker Describes A Three Trillion Dollar Headache

By Elaine Wells, State Board,  
Nebraskans for Peace

Those without a relative or friend in Iraq may think that the war is of little consequence. Most are not acquainted with any of the Nebraska casualties, 43 soldiers killed and 230 wounded by the end of May, so the costs to family, state or nation do not seem like much. But a very grim picture was painted by University of Nebraska at Lincoln Economics Professor Hendrik (Hank) van den Berg at the NFP Rice and Beans Picnic on June 1 at the Hanscom Park Pavilion. The costs of the war are making a huge negative impact on Americans as well as on Iraqis, he said.

According to Dr. van den Berg, several studies estimate that the United States will spend over \$3 trillion (for direct costs, replacing equipment, paying interest, and coping with casualties) even if the United States



leaves Iraq soon. **THREE TRILLION DOLLARS** could solve many problems we are now ignoring, that will have ever-greater consequences if left unresolved and that could drive our economy into a long and deep depression. Iraqis will likely pay that much because of the war too. With a fraction as many people as in the United States, they will pay much more per person than people in the United States.

1. Our military expenditures (including national defense, security, surveillance, intelligence gathering, StratCom, research, military assistance to foreign allies, etc.) total over \$1 TRILLION per

year! This accounts for 6 to 7 percent of our gross domestic product and more than half of all military expenditures in the whole world.

2. Our foreign debt, which has been growing at about 6 percent of GDP per year, is now \$3 TRILLION, much of it being held by the governments of China, Japan, Korea and Taiwan. When foreigners stop lending, we'll have to consume 6 percent less than we do now—even if they don't demand repayment.

3. The United States disproportionately contributes to environmental degradation, and 2 percent of our GDP over the next 25 years will be our share of the cost to reduce emissions enough to reverse global warming.

4. We spend \$70 billion per year to feed and house 2.2 million persons in jail; seven times as many per capita as European countries incarcerate. The loss of their labor costs at least another 1 percent of GDP. Our almost 10 million ex-convicts are less productive than people who were never incarcerated, thus decreasing GDP by another 0.5 to 1 percent.

5. While other developed countries provide better health care for 1/2 to 2/3 of what we pay, we spend almost 15 percent of GDP on health care that results in shorter life expectancy, higher infant mortality rates and worse preventive care.

6. Our education is improving at the lowest rate among high-income countries.

Dr. van den Berg believes that all these issues are related and can be corrected when we stop focusing on wars and start investing in solutions we already know.

Government needs to respond to needs, and citizens must keep their determination alive. It is deplorable to spend trillions of dollars for wars instead of building a gym for a South Omaha school, using drug treatment programs instead of incarceration, delivering Meals on Wheels, providing health care for all and upgrading the infrastructure.

If you want to be part of the solutions, please become an active member of Nebraskans for Peace. America needs you more than ever in this historic election year.

Attendance and pledges at the dinner were down from last year. Twenty people attended this year

### Answer:

George Washington (1789-1797).

compared to over 100 last year. Donations and pledges totaled \$8,332, which was over half of last year's. The reduction in attendance (and thus pledges and donations) was probably because of the change in the date, time and location of the meeting.

## March for Peace

By Candella Foley-Finchem,  
NFP-UNO Chapter

Let there be peace in the heart  
Peace in the home  
Peace among neighbors  
Peace among nations  
Peace in the skies  
Peace in the seas  
Peace in space  
Peace for our planet

These lines were repeated by over 50 participants of the March for Peace as they carried signs, banged on drums and blew bubbles (bubbles not bombs) along Dodge Street between 60<sup>th</sup> and 72<sup>nd</sup> Streets in Omaha on May 24 during the March for Peace. Though local forecasters predicted storms and hail Saturday afternoon, the sky was a brilliant blue and the marchers enjoyed the pleasant breeze along the way. In addition to many veterans of the peace movement, students from elementary, high school, and several local colleges attended. Some of the participants stated the march was their "first time" to get involved in peace activism. Many motorists honked, waved or signed with a thumbs up or peace sign, that they agreed with the message of the March for Peace. After marching the distance from 60<sup>th</sup> to 72<sup>nd</sup> and back, some of the marchers came together for a peace sign made of people.

The idea for the March for Peace came from a few independent students from Metro Community College, Iowa Western Community College and the University of Nebraska at Omaha Chapter of NFP, who wanted to get involved but were unsure how to do so. Though the March for Peace was a fairly simple act of demonstrating, it was a great beginning for some new activists, and a reaffirming boost of energy for some veteran activists. And for those who saw us along Dodge Street, or on the evening news, hopefully, it was another reminder that we should all be waging peace. Pictures of the event are posted here: [http://harderwoods.com/gallery2/main.php?g2\\_itemId=39](http://harderwoods.com/gallery2/main.php?g2_itemId=39)



### **Peace Matters Committee:**

Editor: Mark Welsch  
Assistant Editor: Victoria Peterson  
Layout: Carol Windrum and Tim Fickenscher

**NFP-Omaha Office**  
**PO Box 6418**  
**Omaha, NE 68106**  
**402/453-0776**  
**nfpOmaha@NebraskansForPeace.org.**

NONPROFIT ORG  
U.S. Postage  
Paid  
Omaha, NE  
Permit #83

**Question:** What former President said, "Few men have virtue to withstand the highest bidder."? (Answer Inside)



## Calendar of Events

---

**Every Monday, 7:45-8:15 a.m.** Peace Vigil outside of Kinney Gate at Offutt Air Force Base in Bellevue. Sponsored by the Franciscan Sisters in South Omaha. Contact person is Sr. Marian Klostermann at 731-2910.

**Every Wednesday, 4:30-5:30 p.m.** Peace Vigil at StratCom/ UNO, 6801 Pine Street (east of UNO Scott Technology Center). Contact person is Jerry Ebner at cwomaha@gmail.com or 502-5887.

**Every Wednesday, 7:00 p.m.** Progressive movies and dinner at McFoster's Natural Kind Cafe at 38<sup>th</sup> and Farnam Streets. See <http://www.progressiveomaha.com/films.htm> for more info. Free admission.

**July 2, Noon-1:00 p.m.** Senator Ernie Chambers will be the speaker at "The Hungry Club" meeting at Big Mamma's Kitchen & Catering at 3223 North 45th Street, Building A on the Turning Point Campus. Arrive early and be assured of a seat. The "Hungry Club" meets the first Wednesday of each month from 12:00pm - 1:00pm. For more information call 455-MAMA.

**July 9, 7:00 p.m.,** NFP Omaha Leadership meeting at Augustana Lutheran Church, 3647 Lafayette Avenue. All are welcome. Contact person is Mark Welsch at 453-0776.

**July 12, 6:00 p.m.** Peace Seekers and Pizza, **7:00 p.m.** discussion, reflection and leadership support at 4924 Chicago Street. Contact person is Jo Peterson at 350-3019.

**July** NFP's Palestinian Task Force meeting. Contact person is Anne Else at 556-5184.

**August 5 through 9, Atomic Bombings of Japan Vigils. Tentative schedule, contact people are Jerry Ebner, [cwomaha@gmail.com](mailto:cwomaha@gmail.com), 402-502-5887 or Frank Cordaro [frank.cordaro@gmail.com](mailto:frank.cordaro@gmail.com) 515-282-4781.**

**August 5, Evening** - Vigilers arrive in Omaha and set up in basement of St. John's Church on Creighton University Campus

**August 6, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.** Vigil at Kinney Gate at Offutt Air Force Base in Bellevue. Please participate in all or some of the four days' vigils that start on the 6<sup>th</sup> and end on the 9<sup>th</sup>.

**August 6, 7:00 p.m.** Movie "The Day After Trinity: J Robert Oppenheimer and the Atomic Bomb" at McFoster's Natural Kind Cafe at 38<sup>th</sup> and Farnam Streets.

**August 7, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.** Vigil at Kinney Gate.

**August 7, 6 p.m.** - Mass and Potluck at Omaha Catholic Worker house 1104 North 24th Street, Omaha.

**August 8, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.** Vigil at Kinney Gate.

**August 8, 7:00 p.m.** PowerPoint Slide Show "The Story of StratCom at Offutt, its New Mission in the World and Our Resistance to It" by Frank Cordaro. Basement of St. John's Church at Creighton University.

**August 9, 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.** Vigil at Kinney Gate. Closing ceremony and prayer (and line crossing if anyone is up to it).

**August 13, 7:00 p.m.,** NFP Omaha Leadership meeting at Augustana Lutheran Church, 3647 Lafayette Avenue. All are welcome. Contact person is Mark Welsch at 453-0776.

**August 14, 6:00 p.m.** Peace Seekers and Pizza, **7:00 p.m.** discussion, reflection and leadership support at 4924 Chicago Street. Contact person is Jo Peterson at 350-3019.