



The Damascus Road
Anti-Racism Process

Damascus Road Newsletter

For connecting, resourcing, growing teams and individuals in the Damascus Road network

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Resisting the War at Home and Abroad

The following excerpts are from a joint statement by Crossroads Ministry and The Peoples' Institute for Survival and Beyond. Both anti-racist organizations have voiced the challenge for everyone to make the connections between racism and current U.S. policies. For the complete statement or more information, send an email to crossroads@igc.org and PISAB@thepeoplesinstitute.org.

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Since the beginning of re-ignited conflict in the Middle East, anti-racists have worked to expose racism in our foreign policy – especially with regard to Iraq, Afghanistan, Israel, Palestine, and North Korea – and to connect the racism in our foreign policy to domestic racism here in the United States. As the inevitability of war looms closer, we call on all our anti-racism partners to oppose this war, to work for peace, and to make anti-war movements anti-racist peace movements.

U.S. racial and cultural imperialism abroad are fundamentally based on white supremacy at home, founded on the belief that only White

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Europeans and White Euro-Americans should set the world's agenda and control and distribute the world's resources. Economic imperialism imposed by capitalism knows no boundaries in the world today – all is there for the taking.

The burden for this war is on the backs of people of color and the poor who will both fight it and fund it. Jobs, health care, education, and community infrastruc-

“The Beggars are Marching ... Where are the Saints?”

The following sermon response was delivered by Vincent Harding in 1967 to the Mennonite General Assembly. His prophetic words are as relevant for us in 2003 as they were when he originally spoke them 36 years ago. Vincent currently lives in Denver, CO where he teaches at Iliff School of Theology. He and his wife, Rosemarie, are co-chairs of the Veterans of Hope project and will be the keynote speakers at the Mennonite Church USA Peace & Justice Gathering - When the Saints Go Marchin' (July 1-3, 2003).

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My first response to the sermon must simply be, Amen! The preacher has been true to the Spirit. And in his truth, these words leaped to my eyes: “For a long time they have lived on alms, on ‘help’ but that time is over, [the beggars] want to rise ... they become rebellious.”

The beggars are rising. It is true. The morning papers become God's message to us. The beggars are rising. They refuse to remain on the ground, lame and broken and begging. The beggars are rising. The beggars have risen. Look!

In Detroit and Harlem they are rising. In Vietnam they are rising. In Mozambique they are rising. In Ecuador they are rising. In Guatemala they are rising. Dirty, lame beggars, rising. Soon they will rise in Johannesburg and in every part of the non-western world. The crippled, broken victims of western exploitation are rising and marching and demanding a right to live as men. And as they rise they are angry, for we have eaten and drunk their sweat. They are desperate, for we have taken their silver and gold, and diamonds and oil and rubber and have left them to beg at our door.

The victims of the “Christian” West are rising, and in their midst stands the Christ of beggars, the outsider, Jesus of Nazareth. Do you see Him? Do you hear Him in the agony of their voices? Do you feel His Spirit blowing down the fortresses of safety, wealth and greed? He is there. We may hide, but He is there. We many continue to pay taxes for troops and

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ture will all be sacrificed in order to fund this war. This war subverts the agendas of

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racially and economically oppressed communities in the United States ...

The United States now treats legitimate, law abiding visitors to our country as suspected terrorists, requiring INS registration of men over 16 who

are nationals or citizens of Iran, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, Syria, North Korea, Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Eritrea, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Somalia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia will be added soon, and others may follow. Already we have seen this registration process used to wrongly initiate deportation proceedings against people with pending applications of legal permanent residency. This new profiling strategy targeting people on the basis of national origin, race, and religion has already discouraged people of color from entering or remaining in the United States and is designed to unfairly restrict immigration from targeted countries.

Anti-racism organizing strives to restore the humanity of Whites and People of Color alike. War with People of Color abroad means citizens of the United States are forced to sell our humanity for the price of oil. As this war turns our young men and women into killing machines that destroy communities in the Middle East and North Korea, it also destroys communities here at home. This war demonizes our “enemies” while simultaneously creating demons of us. We are the enemy abroad; we are no longer human in the eyes of the rest of the world ..

This ... is a call to our anti-racist partners and anti-racists everywhere who oppose war in the Middle East and North Korea. This is an appeal to deepen our collective analysis and understanding of the racist motivations and repercussions of the war including: who is most affected by the war itself in terms of the cost of lives and resources, and who benefits most from

increased military spending while decreasing spending for housing, education, health and social programs. We are not asking our partners to change direction or do something different, but rather to engage in “applied anti-racism” by applying their analysis, intelligence and resources to opposing the war on the grounds that this is a racist military action.

We call for an anti-racist anti-war movement. Anti-war movements are often dominated by liberal white organizations (especially the religiously rooted part of anti-war movements). We must build movements connecting globalization and imperialism with white supremacy, linking what happens abroad with the oppression and repression here in the United States.

Please share with us the ideas, actions and plans in which your anti-racist community is engaged. Together we can resist the war at home and abroad.

Upcoming Anti-Racism Events in 2003

May 2-4: *Anti-Racism Table Annual Gathering* - advisory group for the Anti-Racism Program and Damascus Road. *San Antonio, TX*

May 12-14: *Anti-Racism Analysis Training* for MCC West Coast staff & board. *Reedley, CA*

June 19-23: *Anti-Racism Educating & Organizing (Part II) Training* - for anti-racism teams. *Chicago, IL*

July 1-3: *When the Saints Go Marchin', MC USA Peace & Justice Gathering* - introductory anti-racism workshop. *Toccoa, GA*

July 3-8: *Atlanta 2003 Mennonite Convention* - introductory anti-racism workshop; anti-racism team resource event. *Atlanta, GA*

July 24-27: *Annual Core Trainers Gathering.* *Lancaster, PA*

August 8-10: *Anti-Racism Analysis Training* sponsored by Neighbors in Ministry. *Brevard, NC*

For more information on any of these events, please contact Damascus Road staff at 717/859-3889 or DamascusRoad@mccus.org.

“The Beggars are Marching ... *from page 1*

bombs (while crying and sighing, “what can we do?”). We may call the police and the national guard. We may crouch in terror behind law and order and the walls of the churches, but there is a spirit loose upon the earth, a spirit in search of freedom, and it will not die.

Some call this spirit communism and thereby avoid the deeper issues, for Christ loved beggars before Karl Marx was born. Some blame Black Power and miss the point, for Jesus promised freedom to the broken victims long before Dutch ships brought Stokely Carmichael’s forefathers to the American shores. Perhaps we are so busy discussing the Spirit that we are blind to His action in the world. But this much we know: The revolutionary beggars will wait no longer, and Christ has promised to be with all beggars, and His promises are sure.

Let there be no mistake, He is with them; but where are we? Mennonites, Christians, men who love humanity, where are we? If the preacher spoke truth when he said “Jesus is our Guide to life,” where are we? In conferences, shaking hands and taking pictures? In seminars, formula-ting tidy doctrines of the Spirit? In churches, singing and preaching excellent theology to the same names for generations? In quiet communities proclaiming law and order and free enterprise? Huddled behind the barricades of the status quo, praying the storm will soon be over so that life can continue undisturbed?

If we are content with such occupations in the midst of dying, rising, angry men, then let us take on our true names. Let us not associate ourselves with Jesus of the beggars. Let us honestly admit we are disciples of the church, missionaries of law and order, defenders of the status quo, those who seek peace without the cross.

If this is our condition, then let us cease to claim the Anabaptist martyrs as forefathers. Let us take no more the name of Christ in vain. For He is out in the midst of the flames. His way to give up all that He had. He stands among the bitter rock-throwers and the impassioned revolutionaries. He is being dirtied by their dirt and bloodied by their blood – even though they cannot see Him. He is trying to grasp their fight hand and lift them up to a new way of justice and love, beyond their wildest dreams of a reconstructed society.

If we stay away from the rising beggars we stay away from Him. For though He loved both oppressed and oppressor, He died outside the gate with the outcasts. (Only after He was dead could He be confined in respectable surroundings, and then only for three days!) This was more than symbolism. It was the only possible end for anyone who lives with and for beggars in

the midst of a self-righteous, religious and political community. Soon Peter would discover this too. Beggars are not very acceptable company, especially those who shout in the temple.

So if we dare to try to find our way among the marching beggars we must go like Peter and like Christ, not preaching first but reaching first, grasping their right hand and pulling hard. At times we may go down into the dirt, but do not be afraid, for Christ is Lord of the dirt too. Reach out to the angry, fearful, violent beggars. Let them know you have given up all claims to your possessions, so that they will not have to steal from you. Then grasp them firmly, trusting in the Spirit who never fails – even when the beggars are carrying guns. He will give you strength. He will provide wisdom. He may even provide words, should any be necessary after a time. But hold fast, for only God knows where the beggar-trodden road will lead – through what condemnations, out of what churches, beyond which old ideas, into what jails.

The beggars are rising. The beggars are marching, and Christ is in their midst. Where are the saints? Where are the saints? Is it we who are crippled now, crippled by fear, hobbled by the weight of our respectability, bound by the power of our possessions? Where are the saints?

March out saints, and be counted. March out of the buildings. March out of the denominations, march out of the churches, if need be. March out of conformity and out of the terror of the roaring night. You have nothing to lose but your lives, and a world to gain. March out saints. Leap up and march out! The Master is already on the road, and He says, “I am the way; follow me.” Amen.

New Options for Newsletter!

We are expanding readers’ options for the quarterly Damascus Road newsletter. As of our June 2003 issue, we will no longer be mailing out paper copies of the newsletter, unless by request. Instead, we will send you an email message each quarter that includes the headlines of the newsletter and the website link so you can access the issue online. For those who prefer a hard copy or who do not have internet access, we will be glad to continue your paper subscription. We ask that you please mail the enclosed card, or notify us by phone, so your subscription can continue without interruption. If for some reason you do not want to continue receiving the newsletter, please let us know.

We are grateful for this new option that is more environmentally friendly and also helps us save on resources. You can check out past issues now by visiting: www.mcc.org/damascusroad/newsletter.



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Editorial

God loves us so much that He is giving us new opportunities to learn and grow. With the latest world developments, people in the United States and many other places in the world have been able to recognize each other as members of a collective that has problems in common.

We have to be thankful because the world realized that there is a big gap between the wishes of the people and the decisions taken in their name, but without their consent.

We also have to be grateful because the wrongdoing of the US system was exposed in its lies and brutality; yet, once more, the world could see that a lot of people in the US were against the war.

We have to be grateful, because millions of people on the globe had the same idea: to stop the war. This is a remarkable outcome given the grave situation that caused it.

People everywhere in the world organized and mobilized, and this awakening may be a promise of new things to come.

The waters opened and once more God is showing the way out of slavery. As in that time, the people may feel that they are trading a fertile comfortable living for the desert. The only way to be cleaned of the condition of slavery is to be able to cross the desert, leaving behind all idols and creating new living conditions.

Once more as humankind we are seeing that this system controls the global economy in such a way that it may exercise violence in the country and abroad according to its interests.

We should keep this window open for continuing analysis of daily living to clearly see how the bondage of people here and abroad contributes to the accumulation of wealth, thanks to the abusive relations that oppress people of color throughout the world.

We have had the opportunity to see clearly the

way power moves and as years go by, the consolidation of power gets stronger because we allow it to use its tools.

We have been raised with a mentality of struggle, fight, and war. It is time now to start creating more and more opportunities to exercise peace, creative living and love.

God loves us all His creatures, and He gave humans creative talents. How can we use those talents to prevent evil instead of having to fight it in its own realm? How can we continue to work with others in order to strengthen a mentality of solidarity and collaboration? I imagine that is easier to win or lose a battle than to cross the desert, but we have a wonderful opportunity now to continue expanding the dialogue with common people, leaving our own circles of influence in order to create a new system.

How can we invite people in our own surroundings to a dialogue, which also means to listen and be changed by others? I think we have a great new possibility open. Let's explore new ways of communicating and working.

Zulma Prieto, Editor

The Damascus Road Newsletter is published quarterly by the Anti-Racism Program of Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Editing and layout are by Zulma Prieto. Contact Zulma with your comments, inquiries or submissions at P.O. Box 553, Goshen, IN 46527. <zulma@webelpuente.com>. Subscriptions are free and limited to members of the Damascus Road network. For address changes, contact Damascus Road at P.O. Box 500, Akron, PA 17501-0500, 717-859-3889, <bzf@mccus.org>.

The Damascus Road Newsletter is for connecting, resourcing and growing teams and individuals in the Damascus Road network. The views presented here do not necessarily represent the views of the organization or all its members.