

WALKING THE HALLS OF CONGRESS

DEPARTMENT OF PEACEBUILDING FALL 2015 LOBBY REPORT

By Nancy Merritt

The National and CA Department of Peacebuilding (DoP) committees, and other DoP partners, lobbied **125+ members of Congress and U.S. Senators** this fall, with visits to many legislative offices in Washington DC, and “AMPLIFYING” calls and visits from our home states. The National DoP committee delivered **134 personalized letters** to members of Congress. The CA DoP group delivered almost **3,500 letters** from Californians, including 3,400 urging various members of Congress to cosponsor the Department of Peacebuilding Act of 2015 (DoP/ HR 1111) and another 100 letters asking **CA Senator Barbara Boxer** to cosponsor the Youth **Prison Reduction through Opportunity Mentoring Intervention Support and Education ACT** (YPA/ S.1770/ HR 2197).

Following our fall lobbying, to date two members of Congress -- Rep. Marcy Kaptur (OH) and Rep. Donald Payne, Jr. (NJ) -- signed on as DoP cosponsors. Others have expressed their intent to cosponsor. As of 12/01/15, HR 1111 has 28 cosponsors, many of whom signed on after lobbying by DoP supporters, who continue following up with various members of Congress.

During our DoP and related peacebuilding lobbying this fall, we focused on:

- **27 Current DoP cosponsors & sponsor** – thanked them and asked them to support YPA and other peacebuilding and restorative practice legislation
- **30 Former DoP cosponsors & “near” cosponsors** – thanked them for past support, asked them (as applicable) to cosponsor HR 1111 and thanked/ asked them to cosponsor YPA and other peacebuilding and restorative practice legislation
- **28 remaining CA Democratic members of Congress who are not current or former cosponsors & 2 Democratic CA Senators** - informed them (and non CA Democrats) that the CA Democratic Party (CDP) endorses DoP legislation and the CDP recently passed a “Resolution Urging the United Nations and All Member States to Support Infrastructures of Peace Within and Among Nations”
- **14 CA Republican members of Congress** – discussed and asked their support for DoP, YPA and other peacebuilding and restorative practice legislation
- **25+ Legislators from Non CA States of DoP supporters (FL, GA, IL, MA, MO)** – as applicable discussed and asked their support for DoP, YPA and/ or other peacebuilding and restorative practice legislation. Other Peace Alliance conference attendees also visited legislators from states such as AL, FL, OH and

NY and have actively supported YPA in their home states. (For more information on the conference, see www.peacealliance.org.)

In connecting with so many legislators, we experienced informative, thought-provoking and inspirational moments. And we had fun. We started at the office of DoP sponsor **Rep. Barbara Lee (CA)** with a meeting between her legislative director and ten, mostly long-time Peace Alliance advocates of DoP legislation. A few days later, we concluded by delivering to the office of **Rep. Joseph Kennedy III (MA)** a letter on behalf of his constituents (and my grandchildren) requesting him to cosponsor HR 1111. We also included photos of the amazing grandchildren (Jake and Hannah) and mentioned their parents, who, of course, are also constituents. In between, we visited many other legislators and/or their staffs. ***For more details, see the full report.***

I. DoP FALL LOBBYING OVERVIEW

In September, and again in October, DoP advocates lobbied in Washington DC. The October lobbying took place at the time of the Peace Alliance conference. Those who were not able to travel to DC AMPLIFIED our lobbying voices by calling the Washington offices of legislators during our October lobbying visits. During this period, others visited and/or called the district offices of their members of Congress.

A. September Lobbying

In September, I visited the offices of approximately **30 members of Congress**, and, with Doug Merritt, delivered to each a letter from the National DoP Committee urging them to cosponsor the Department of Peacebuilding Act of 2015 (DoP/ HR 1111). Dot Maver, former Peace Alliance Executive Director, educator, and peacebuilder, and I met with **Rep. Barbara Lee's (CA)** legislative director about developments in peace education/ peacebuilding at **Point of View (POV)**, an international retreat and research center at George Mason University (VA), which is expanding to include a full residential Peacebuilding Center. This will be dedicated in early 2016. This is a place where communities can go when something like Ferguson occurs, a place where peacebuilders are ready, willing and able to comprehensively facilitate conflict resolution and next steps. (See www.nationalpeaceacademy.us) We also conveyed this information to several other Congressional offices.

Talking about POV during September lobbying was a hopeful counter to the near-hysteria and vitriolic debates then taking place in Congress about the Iran nuclear deal. These hearings filled the atmosphere, the televisions and the chambers of Congress. When we watched from the Congressional gallery, we happened upon what turned out to be a fear-spewing portion of the debates ... not an easy thing to experience. Then, as we wound through the halls of Congress, we saw on television monitors calls by many members of Congress for diplomacy and giving peace a chance.

B. October Lobbying

As part of the Peace Alliance conference in October, DoP supporters arrived a day early and stayed extra days to lobby for establishment of a cabinet-level Department of Peacebuilding (HR 1111) and other peacebuilding bills which are embodied in the DoP legislation. HR 1111 mandates offices of: 1) **Peace Education and Training**; 2) **Domestic Peacebuilding Activities**; 3) **International Peacebuilding Activities**; 4) **Technology for Peace**; 5) **Arms Control and Disarmament**; 6) **Peacebuilding Information and Research**; and, 7) **Human Rights and Economic Rights**. It also provides for an **Intergovernmental Advisory Council on Peace** and a **Federal Interagency Committee on Peace**.

The Peace Alliance frames peacebuilding as: 1) cultivating personal peace; 2) empowering community peacebuilding; 3) teaching peace in schools; 4) humanizing the justice systems; and 5) fostering international peace.

C. The Dialogue and the Advocacy

During our fall lobbying, in addition to working to establish a **DoP** and **create an enduring culture of peace**, we lobbied for **YPA**, the to-be-introduced **Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act (GAPA)**, and various bills relating to the criminal justice system. (For more information, see www.peacealliance.org). During many visits, we advocated for **restorative practices in schools and restorative justice in the criminal justice system**. When visiting the offices of CA Democratic members of Congress and other Democrats, we also informed them that the **CA Democratic Party (CDP) endorses DoP** and the **CDP recently passed a “Resolution Urging the United Nations and All Member States to Support Infrastructures of Peace Within and Among Nations.”**

We got to know our legislators better. We talked about our home districts, divisiveness in politics, consensus building, and the meaning of representing the people of this nation and implications of that upon world peace.

As we expressed in our letters to legislators, **governing should be about caring for the people**. When Pope Francis addressed Congress on 9/24/15, he said it is the responsibility of members of Congress “to enable this country, by your legislative activity, to grow as a nation ... **You are called to defend and preserve the dignity of your fellow citizens in the tireless and demanding pursuit of the common good, for this is the chief aim of all politics ... legislative activity is always based on care for the people.**” Caring includes maximizing the right to thrive in a nonviolent world.

While we may differ on our interpretations of “the common good,” we – the legislators and the people – owe it to ourselves, our children, and coming generations to figure out how to make ours a more equitable, compassionate and peaceful world. That is what many of the DC conversations were about.

D. The Deliveries

We delivered individualized **letters and informational packets** from members of the National and/or CA DoP teams, and many, many letters from residents of CA to members of Congress. We presented ‘thank you’ **roses to the current DoP cosponsors** and **engraved brass invitations to former DoP cosponsors** inviting them to sign on again. To some, we also delivered the **Peace Alliance conference packet, new DoP postcards** (“Make Peace A Priority ... U.S. Department of Peacebuilding” with pictures of Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Eleanor Roosevelt), and/or **DoP posters** with images of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.

To 28 CA members of Congress, we delivered approximately **3,400 letters from CA citizens urging legislators to cosponsor DoP** and we delivered **another 100 letters to CA Senator Barbara Boxer urging her to cosponsor YPA**. The letters filled an entire checked suitcase and another airline carry-on bag. We delivered small and large bundles of letters with **large packets** going to the following CA Democrats: **Karen Bass** (almost 400 letters), **Ami Bera** (nearly 205), **Tony Cardenas** (over 175), **Judy Chu** (over 250), **Susan Davis** (over 200), **Anna Eshoo** (almost 200), **John Garamendi** (approximately 250), **Ted Lieu** (approximately 170), **Linda Sanchez** (over 200), **Adam Schiff** (over 150), **Brad Sherman** (nearly 200), **Jackie Speier** (over 150), **Eric Swalwell** (approximately 160), **Mark Takano** (approximately 160), and **Maxine Waters** (almost 175). We also delivered approximately 100 letters to Republican Doug LaMalfa.

E. October AMPLIFY Our Voices.

Prior to the October Peace Alliance conference, the CA group urged CA Democrats and those on the CA TPA database to ‘AMPLIFY Our Voices’ while we were in DC by calling from CA all former DoP cosponsors. In addition, some -- including Pat Simon (MA) and others from CA -- called their current, former or neighboring members of Congress. The peacenow.com group also publicized this DoP AMPLIFY action.

When we walked into the DC office of **Rep. Mike Thompson (CA)**, one of his aides said Maggi Koren (CA) had just called. Actually he just referred to her as Maggi and we said, “Oh, Maggi Koren, of course.” On several calls, Maggi, who contacted 34 Congressional offices, excitedly got the staffers to pull up the DoP legislation on their computer screens. She told them, “You have to look at this! You have to read this bill. **If you just read this bill, you will love it ...**”

II. WALKING THE HALLS OF CONGRESS

Walking the halls of Congress, you never know what you might see or who you might run into. This fall it was a **GIGANTIC white bear skin** on the office wall of **Rep. Don Young (AL)**, pictures and tributes to soldiers from Camp Lejeune outside the office of **Rep. Walter Jones (NC)**, a life-size **cardboard cutout of Liberace** next to the office of

Rep. Dina Titus (NV). On the door of **Rep. Alcee Hastings (FL)**, there was an engraved sign: “This office belongs to the people of the 20th district of Florida.” For **GA peanuts** or an Atlanta-made Coke, go to **Rep. John Lewis’ (GA)** office. Several legislators give out **copies of the U.S. Constitution**. If you need a **comb**, the office of bald-Congressman **Brad Sherman (CA)** is the place to go.

Rep. Carolyn Maloney’s (NY) walls are covered with framed **signed bills** she has sponsored. On the desk of **Rep. Eric Swalwell (CA)** sits a row of **rubber ducks**. **Rep. Raul Grijalva’s (AZ)** office is adorned with colorful flags and **Southwestern art**. Beach and **surfboard photos** adorn the office of **Rep. Scott Peters (San Diego, CA)**. There is a photograph of the Dalai Lama with **Rep. Jackie Speier (CA)** in her office.

As I traversed the basement walkways between Congressional buildings, I ran into former **Congressman Ron Dellums (Oakland, CA)**, who was a 13-term member of Congress from 1971 to 1998. **Rep. Barbara Lee (CA)** served on his staff. It was a joy to talk with him.

In past years, we seemed to be on the same trajectory as California water lobbyists. We have encountered highly decorated military personnel, who were supportive of a DoP. We came upon the Humane Bond Caucus Capitol Hill briefing on “American’s Hero Dogs: A Celebration of Working Dogs in Our Lives.” Sylvia Boorstein, a Peace Alliance advisory board member, author and co-founding teacher at Spirit Rock Meditation Center in Woodacre, CA, conducted a meditation for Congress members and staffers while we were in DC.

III. WHY LOBBY? WHY PEACEBUILDING?

There are at least two reasons to lobby for peacebuilding: 1) to get involved in creating a better world is to remain hopeful; and 2) creating a more peaceful world is our right and our obligation. There are plenty of reasons to be pessimistic and to give in to cynicism and inactivity. Alex Steffen wrote that **optimism is a powerful political act**, “But introduce intelligent reasons for believing that action is possible, that better solutions are available, and that a better future can be built, and you unleash the power of people to act out of their highest principles. **Shared belief in a better future is the strongest glue there is:** it creates the opportunity for us to love one another, and love is an explosive force in politics.”

While in Washington, at least one Congressional staffer told us why we had the right to be there, and another told us why we need a DoP. “It was interesting that **one of the aides (actually a General Counsel to a Senator) starting telling us the legal reason for our visit—that we have a right to bring grievances to our elected representatives** ... I appreciate the analogy from the conference—this is not a sprint on the Hill—this is one small section of a marathon, ” said Karen Johnson (IL).

“As many times as I’ve walked those hallowed halls of Congress lobbying for the DoP with a passionate delegation of Peace Alliance advocates, *it never ceases to thrill me!*”

The draw is that it always seems like a civics lesson come alive – **democracy in action**. Okay, I confess to already being a political aficionado who thinks C-SPAN is the only true “reality” TV and should be required viewing for all citizens ... Each time I dialogue about aspects of HR 1111 with a member of Congress or staff person, I believe I am **planting a seed** ... educating ever so slightly more about what is necessary to create a culture of peace. This may sound pompous but what I’ve come to realize is just how little many of our legislators really actually know about the science of peacebuilding. Thus, **merely lobbying for HR 1111 is a humungous step towards transformation**. And of course enacting H.R.1111 would be the transformative clincher,” said Anne Creter (NJ).

“When a legislator or and aide takes the time to listen, ask questions, take notes and make comments, I feel such appreciation and realization that **this is my/our government in action, and that we are a vital part of it**. We keep saying we need a voice in the government to speak for peace. **Until we have a U.S. cabinet-level Department of Peacebuilding, we are that voice**. We need to keep speaking up and adding more voices to our own,” said Kendra Mon (CA).

“I was inspired by all the dedicated Peace Alliance staff and volunteers, and the Congressional staff members I met. It gave me great hope for the future, that **with this much energy being put in to make a better world, it is bound to happen**,” said Lily Marie (CA).

IV. CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

DoP advocates visited more than 125 Congressional and Senate offices. Some of our close encounters with legislators and/or their staffers were pre-arranged meeting. Some meetings took place as a result of ‘drop-by’ visits. Some DoP advocates found much ‘easier to breach’ the offices personally than by email or phone. Most ‘drop-bys’ turned into dialogues and idea exchanges – as one person commented, this **represents the best in what our government should be about**.

Those who advocated for DoP during the fall included: Betty Cooper (MO), Anne Creter (NJ), Deborah Greene (CA), Karen Johnson (IL), Lily Marie (CA), Doug Merritt (CA), Nancy Merritt (CA), Kendra Mon (CA), David Nekimken (IL) Lorrie Norby (CA), Debra Poss (GA), Concetta Smart (IL), Jerilyn Stapleton (CA) and others working from their home states, including Brian Gibbs (CA), Maggi Koren (CA), Josh Roebuck (CA), Pat Simon (MA), and Stephanie Thomas (CA). Those who were present in DC visited offices individually or, in many cases, with others.

Our close encounters ranged from informative to inspirational. Many included personal connections and fun/interesting elements. There were random acts of kindness. The **following is a sampling of our interactions with legislators and their staffs**.

A. We Walked Both Sides of the Aisle

Bipartisanship is an important element in building peace. We had some interesting and informative meetings with both Democrats and Republicans, where we talked about issues and ideas that are important to us and to the legislators. Many legislators are working on various aspects of the criminal justice system, gun control and gun safety, sentencing reform, prevention of human trafficking, mental health issues and war prevention measures.

“One highlight was meeting with **Senator Dianne Feinstein's (CA)** staffers, who showed real interest in the Youth PROMISE Act and also in the not-yet-introduced Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act. Everyone of our group contributed significantly to the conversation. I was glad I had cut out articles on violence from that day's *Washington Post* to share, including one on the prevalence of physical discipline in U.S. schools, and then was able to follow-up with facts and figures about the effectiveness of restorative practices in Santa Rosa (CA) schools and Sonoma County (CA) restorative justice with youth,” said Kendra Mon.

Anne Creter said her prearranged appointment at the office of **Rep. John Larson (CT)** with his foreign policy advisor / legislative correspondent was “delightfully long (35 minutes) and engaging.” He had questions and recalled previous interesting dialogues with other Peace Alliance folks. He wanted to know how the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) is different from DoP -- about which they talked at length (how 85% of DoP is domestic and USIP international; how it is comprehensive, like the Congressman's signature energy bill). The staffer talked about the **wisdom of prevention** ... He commented that HR 1111 is not likely to be introduced in this political climate. Anne then mentioned the “congressional relations function” section of the bill and how it could help improve the political climate.

During a prior lobby days, we learned that, at that time, the Department of Defense had 99 Fellows working in various Congressional offices. During this lobby session, we learned there are approximately 15-20 Department of State Fellows working in Congressional offices. More than one person told us that when the Republicans cut the budget, that eliminated pages the House of Representatives.

From the Republican side of the aisle, a staffer from **Rep. Doug LaMalfa's (CA)** office said the Congressman would likely not cosponsor a DoP because of his no tax pledge, but violence prevention and working with kids early resonated with him. Because of his leadership position, **Rep. Kevin McCarthy (CA)** does not sponsor legislation, but defers to the committees. When we discussed programs and policies addressing root causes of violence, the McCarthy staffer said his mother is a social worker, and, when he was growing up, she talked about the same issues we were discussing.

In September 2015, Anne Creter attended an open house at the DC office of her Republican Congressman **Tom MacArthur (NJ)** for Congressional lottery ticket winners to see the Pope in Congress. When Anne returned to his office in October, she noted on the magazine table the Congressman's current newsletter with a story about

Pope's visit and a photo on front page of Anne talking to the Congressman about the DoP at the open house.

B. Inspirational and Inspired Moments

There were many moments of inspiration and inspired moments:

- learning that **Barbara Lee's (CA)** legislative director grew up in the peacebuilding community and that her mother teaches at George Mason University in the School of Conflict Analysis and Resolution (S-CAR)
- meeting with staffers from **John Lewis' (GA-5)** office, seeing his photos from the early days of the civil rights movement, and learning his entire staff is trained in nonviolent civil disobedience
- meeting with Jerilyn Stapleton's member of **Congress Adam Schiff (CA)** at the Capitol between votes, watching him check his "vote application" for notice of upcoming votes and learning he would give HR 1111 another look because of Jerilyn's dedication and persistence for DoP.
- encountering **Rep. Ami Bera (CA)** and **Rep. Janice Hahn (CA)** at the Capitol as they were about to cast their votes
- talking with a staffer in the office of **Rep. Adam Smith (WA)** who was excited that the CA Democratic Party endorsed HR 1111 and passed a resolution relating to peacebuilding
- learning from a staffer at **Rep. Nydia Velazquez's (NY)** office how much she values input from her constituents
- connecting with the DC office of freshman **Rep. Norma Torres (CA)** after her son and a CA staffer were very interested in learning about DoP and YPA at a recent CA Democratic Party Executive Board meeting -- they asked us to follow up with the Congresswoman
- thanking freshman **Rep. Bonnie Watson (NJ)** for **courageously becoming an original cosponsor of HR 1111 as brand new member of Congress** (keeping a promise she made to Anne Creter on a Progressive Democrats of America call during her campaign to fill the seat of former cosponsor, Rep Rush Holt, who retired)

We experienced some moments of **on-the-spot inspiration to expand our pre-planned visit list**. Some of us added impromptu visits to Congress members who represent our children and siblings. Some visited Representative from their former (pre-redistricted) districts. Some visited Representatives from their former geographic residents. Kendra Mon, who used to live in West Virginia, visited the offices of **Senator Joe Manchin III (WVA)**, **Rep. David McKinley (WVA)** and **Rep. Alex Mooney (WVA)**, where she told them about West Virginia's role in advocating for a DoP during the 1940's. When Lily Marie spotted the office of National Democratic Party Chair **Debbie Wasserman Schultz (FL)**, we returned there the next day with a letter explaining that the CA Democratic Party endorses DoP legislation and we advocated for a national Democratic Party endorsement.

C. Roses, Brass Invitations and Posters

Our ‘thank you’ roses, engraved brass invitations to sign on again as DoP cosponsors, DoP postcards and DoP Gandhi/ Martin Luther King posters evoked many favorable reactions.

After the staffer from **Rep. Donald Payne, Jr.’s (NJ)** office promised to immediately look into why the Congressman’s prior desire to cosponsor HR 1111 had not been recorded, the staffer said she liked the rose. **The Congressman is now an official DoP cosponsor!** We personally thanked **Rep. Bobby Scott (VA)** for his DoP co-sponsorship and gave him a thank you letter and a rose. When Debra Poss gave an engraved invitation to **Rep. Al Green (TX)** his staffer said "neat."

At the office of **Rep. Eleanor Holmes-Norton (DC)**, Anne Creter and district constituent Laurie Russo presented the packet with the rose and showed the scheduler the DoP postcard. She lit up because Martin Luther King, Jr. is her hero. When she heard we had similar posters, she asked if she could get one. As Anne promised to drop one off to her the next day, she dashed into Rep. Norton’s office and a second later, the **Congresswoman herself popped out** (while still on the phone) to wave a quick hello.

D. Personal Connections Matter

Personal connections matter and we made a lot of those.

Karen Johnson enlisted the help of one Congressional office to bolster support for a DoP by another. One staffer told Karen who to ask for at another office, “She’ll get it done.” Karen then visited the second Representative’s office twice -- once to deliver the engraved invitation and a second time to deliver a ‘thank rose in advance’. The chief of staff said she would keep the rose on her desk until she got the endorsement done.

During a meeting at **Senator Cory Booker’s (NJ)** office with his senior counsel, arranged by Anne Creter, not only did we have a richly informative dialogue on juvenile justice issues, we joked with him about his school affiliation. He was a wide receiver on the Stanford football team and Senator Booker also played football there. (Per Wikipedia, while at Stanford Cory Booker also made the All-Pacific Ten Academic team and was elected senior class president. In addition, he ran The Bridge Peer Counseling Center, a student-run crisis hotline, and organized help from Stanford students for youth in East Palo Alto, CA.) We told the staffer it was too bad he played for Stanford and not for San Francisco Bay Area rival University of California at Berkeley -- CAL.

At the office of **Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (CA)**, we thanked the Congresswoman for supporting Kendra Mon’s mothers, who were pioneers in the gay rights movement and advocated very early on for gay marriage. We gave the Congresswoman a rose for her leadership.

Anne Creter established a connection with the new member of Congress -- **Rep. Donald Norcross (NJ)** – who now represents her former district, where that member of

Congress was a DoP original cosponsor. Anne was pleasantly surprised at the impromptu meeting with a legislative assistant, who coincidentally happened to have worked for the former member of Congress for three years, was familiar with the DoP bill and knows Dennis Kucinich (former sponsor of DoP legislation). He was very positive.

Jerilyn Stapleton's meeting at the office of **Rep. Ted Lieu (CA)** was with her friend who is now chief of staff for the Congressman, "We had a great meeting as I presented everything and chatted about family and other things."

E. Fun/ Interesting Elements

We also had some fun.

Lorrie Norby (CA) said she and Deborah Greene (CA) had a delightful and relaxed meeting with the chief of staff in **Rep. Jim McDermott's (WA)** office. "He is the ranking member on the Ways and Means Committee which means his Congressional office is very dead. Phone hardly rings and staff is not much in evidence. His center of operations is in the committee rooms. The staffer offered whatever guidance or advice she had to offer. "

In the office of **Rep. Blaine Luetkemeyer (MO)**, his legislative aide was indifferent to the discussion until Betty Cooper brought up **Rep. Luetkemeyer's** involvement with the organization "Save the Children" and his interest in children's issues. At that point, the aide began a discussion about their work with adoption. The "communication door had opened," the indifference changed, and "we connected their work with ideas in the YPA bill."

At the office of **Rep. William Lacy Clay (MO)**, Betty Cooper and others had a rewarding meeting with his legislative aide, including a detailed discussion about politics and events in MO. At the end of the meeting, the aide insisted Betty sit in **Rep. Clay's** chair and we had fun taking photos of his "I'm-from-Missouri" and "The-Buck-Stops-Here" placards.

F. Random Acts of Kindness

Staffers of **Rep. Mark DeSaulnier (CA)** provided gallery tickets to watch the Iran nuclear deal debates during the September lobby visit, walked us to the Capitol and waited patiently as we looked at the art display there, which includes pieces by one student from each of the 435 Congressional districts. When visiting the office of **Rep. Gus Bilirakis (FL)**, a Republican, Kendra Mon, asked a staff assistant for directions to an office she couldn't find. He walked her to that office. When she told him what she was doing, he began giving Kendra reasons why we need a DoP and a peace academy.

V. CONCLUSION

Lobbying for peacebuilding and a DoP is sowing seeds and making connections. A Department of Peacebuilding is “a political tsunami ... it’s here, it’s growing and it will take hold. It is fundamentally different from any other national effort we’ve ever experienced – both in its comprehensive nature and transformational possibilities – to challenge the paradigm of pervasive and structural violence that permeates every level of our culture. It has a seductively freeing and welcoming effect on newcomers and offers a place for everyone. **We have in the Department of Peacebuilding movement a political ‘jaws of life’ prying open the crumbled hearts and minds of millions of people** who have been in series of terrible recurring accidents since the dawn of humanity. People are grateful to those who help pry us free from this life-threatening culture,” said Marta Daniels, writer, historian and long-time peace and justice activist.
