



### *From Our Director*

MOVING is on the top five list of stressful life events. Many of you know that the Sister Karen Center sustained irreparable damage in the Christmas blizzard last December. We are currently in the process of moving to a new home at 211 West Ferry Street in Buffalo! The Center will be on the third floor of my new house—so I have double the moving stress! The west side provides a new and diverse environment, but we will never abandon the issues of violence and unrest that residents of the east side face every day. We are ONE Buffalo!

Even amidst the upheaval we managed to have a very successful annual event, "Moving BEYOND White Fragility" with Nanette Massey in April. A highlight of the day was the "Nonviolence Begins with Me!" award given to John "Tubbs" Smith. We are pleased to share these stories along with photographs in this issue of "Alternatives."

At long last our Alternatives to Violence Project program at Wende Correctional Facility has resumed post-pandemic! I'll be sharing more about our work there in the coming months. Meantime, you'll be interested to read our AVP community news.

Camp Peaceprints 2023 is right around the corner! Our theme is "Healthy Lives Matter." We will learn what personal and community health is and how to maintain it. We will be exploring justice issues around health equity and why impoverished communities face major health challenges. Campers will understand that their own health matters in creating a healthy community. There is still room to register campers if you know any 8-13 year olds!

Have a healthy and happy summer!

Vivian Ruth Waltz

**SSJ Sister Karen Klimczak  
Center for Nonviolence  
4975 Strickler Road  
Clarence, NY 14031  
716.893.0808  
info@sisterkarencenter.org  
www.sisterkarencenter.org**



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### Our Advisory Board

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(SSJ Leadership Team liaison)  
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*In loving memory of  
James Mang  
(Member 2007-2021)*



## **"Moving *BEYOND* White Fragility" Annual Event with Nanette Massey**



The warm hospitality of Ss. Columba-Brigid Church was a lovely contrast to the chill in the spring air outside as we were welcomed to our annual event on Sunday, April 23rd. Father Roy Herberger, a longtime friend of the congregation and a dear friend of Sister Karen, invited the Spirit's presence in the opening prayer. His prayer was immediately answered in the spirited entry of the children's choir led by Amuna Loki, waving streamers and singing "This Little Light of Mine." We joined in singing as best we could, reading the second verse in Swahili!

Sister Karen Center Director Vivian Ruth Waltz began her overview of our work by acknowledging that when we gathered a year ago, we couldn't have imagined the horrific violence that would befall our community a few weeks later. In the immediate aftermath of the Tops massacre, as a representative of the Center Vivian attended numerous prayer vigils, press conferences, and clergy and coalition meetings. Sister Jean Klimczak placed doves with the victims' names in the ground at the site along with "I Leave Peaceprints" and "Nonviolence Begins with Me" signs which were seen in local and national media.

Other highlights of the work of the Center were a Healing Conversation held between members of the Buffalo community affected by the tragedy and people of faith from the killer's home in Conklin and Broome County, the regrouping of our area Alternatives to Violence Project facilitators and planning for future workshops, and the resumption of our AVP program at Wende Correctional Facility. This July marks the 16<sup>th</sup> year of Camp Peaceprints. Our theme is "Healthy Lives Matter." (For more information, see page 10.)

Following the celebration of the work of the Sister Karen Center, Audrey Mang came forward to present the "Nonviolence Begins with Me" Award to John "Tubbs" Smith." Audrey knew Tubbs when she coordinated the AVP program at Wende Correctional Facility. Read the presentation to John on page 4-5.

It was time for Sister Karen Center board member Tracy Craig to introduce our featured speaker Nanette Massey. Nanette is a local author, activist, and educator on diversity and inclusion. As a child, Nanette wanted to be a public speaker, but she never planned to be talking about race. Then Obama's first run for president opened up a floodgate where America wanted to talk about race and didn't quite seem to know how. Nanette stepped into that void.

*(continued on next page)*

**Moving BEYOND White Fragility Annual Event (continued)**

Nanette began her presentation by sharing that she was raised in Buffalo in the 1970s in the middle of school bussing. She grew up around White schoolmates and teachers, and Black family and friends. Having a foot in both worlds, Nanette believes she has a unique perspective on racism in our community and in our society.

Nanette's work has evolved into disseminating the learnings in Robin DiAngelo's best-selling book "White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism." Nanette leads workshops and has shared the stage with Robin for a number of programs.

Nanette asserted, "When White people talk about race they are afraid of saying the wrong thing or looking like the bad person. None of that is important, you have to risk letting go of looking good, being right, and be willing to change and take a risk."

In her experience, White people repeatedly ask Nanette for "the answer" in their conversations about race. To elucidate the complexity of a response, Nanette referred to DiAngelo's borrowing from anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus.

There are three variables in any social interaction: The **field** is the specific social context (e.g. party, workplace, school), **capital** is the social value people hold in a particular field (e.g. the boss has more capital, but it can shift with the field) and **habitus** includes a person's internalized awareness of status as well as responses to the status of others (where the goal is smooth social interactions). Because each racially charged encounter or conversation is unique, the field and capital and habitus is always in flux. Therefore, there can be no "right answer."

"When it comes to asking people of color what should I do, what should I say? I can't answer. What you're really asking is what should I say where I don't have to risk field, capital, and habitus. Being a White antiracist is about what you are willing to risk. If not risking is more important than working for inclusion, nothing will change," Nanette admonished.

Sister Karen's journal writing about "Reaching, Risking, Responding to the Spirit of More" spoke to Nanette when she read *Peaceprints: Sister Karen's Paths to Nonviolence*. "We are called to leave more understanding, more vulnerability by taking risks in response to God's Spirit."

A question from the audience elicited an inspirational close to Nanette's presentation. "I am a huge believer that we are literally all one. What I give to others, I give to myself. You all are a part of me. White folks – step back from 'we need to help Black people.' The healing of the Black community is YOUR healing. Only when you see it that way are we going to have some real change. Our healing is your healing and that's why you should do this work."



As is our custom at the end of every annual event, we joined in singing "Peaceprints" played by Linda Appleby on the piano. We committed once again to answer Sister Karen's call to Leave Peaceprints in our community and in our world.

Mini-sandwiches prepared by the Sisters of St. Joseph food service were enjoyed at the reception following the program, along with lively conversation and much laughter. We are grateful to all our sponsors and to everyone who joined us for this special day to make our annual event a success!





## **"Nonviolence Begins with Me!" Award Presentation to John "Tubbs" Smith** *by Sister Karen Center Director Vivian Ruth Waltz*



Audrey Mang, who along with her husband Jim were the first directors of the Sister Karen Center, and I are privileged to present the 2023 "Nonviolence Begins with Me" award.

I first met John Smith in a meeting of Alternatives to Violence Project facilitators at Wende Correctional Facility close to ten years ago. His adjective name was Titanic Tubbs. It was only a few days ago in preparation for this presentation that I asked him "Why Titanic Tubbs?" He told me that it was the way the ship got hit. They saw the glacier's tip but never saw hitting the bottom coming. In the same way, he did not see 27 years of his life being sunk in the depths of incarceration.



Those years were filled with pain and regret as evidenced by Tubbs' writing in *Tears from a Prison Yard*, a best-selling book he penned from inside the walls. It chronicles not only his own grim emotions and the harsh realities faced by prisoners on a daily basis, but also the suffering his family endured in his absence.

And yet in that dreadful place, twenty years ago John's life was transformed by an Alternatives to Violence Project workshop at Wende he reluctantly attended when a friend dragged him there. One of the foundational community-building practices of AVP is affirmation, which we believe is essential to empowering people to live a nonviolent life. John shared with me, "Affirmation is something that people don't get often, especially in prison. To me it is proof that punishment doesn't work. AVP affirmed the good in me so I could see good in my own situation. It was a transformation."

After completing a series of three weekend workshops and an apprenticeship, John was awarded a gold certificate and became a lead facilitator at Wende. He often told the Sister Karen Center volunteers, "If I knew before what I've learned in AVP at Wende, I would never have ended up here. Please work with youth in the community to prevent them from making the mistakes I made."

One Thursday night meeting at Wende somewhere around 2017 Titanic Tubbs surprised us by announcing that his new adjective name was "Wandering Wadud." I looked it up as soon as I got home. Wadud in Arabic means The Most Loving One, often in reference to Allah. Again, I asked John a few days ago why Wandering Wadud? He told me that his experience with AVP enabled him to see the gift of freedom that living nonviolently gave him even in the brutal culture of prison. I quote, "I learned to love and value who I was becoming. Not wandering aimlessly but wandering toward God with purpose."

One purpose that Wandering Wadud found in his final years at Wende was as a Hospice aide. A racist inmate with cancer at first rejected him, but even so Wadud went every day and bathed him. Gradually the man's heart softened and his last words were a tearful "thank you for caring about me." What a testament to what John wrote in *Tears from a Prison Yard*: "Through relationships with different people, we love in different ways, just because you got hurt do not be afraid to love because we only cheat ourselves."

Since his release in 2019, John has been true to his calling to prevent youth from making the same mistakes he did in his teenage years. He is currently employed by Back to Basics Outreach

*(continued on next page)*

### *Nonviolence Begins with Me!" Award (continued)*

Ministries as Youth Coordinator of the HEAT program – Health, Empowerment, Attitude, and Teamwork. He provides structure to the lives of young people through curriculum and life skills focusing on physical, emotional, and nutritional well-being.

As a member of the Buffalo Peacemakers Youth Violence and Gang Intervention Program, John ensures safe passage to and from school for students at McKinley High School, preventing fights, suspensions, and arrests. He has also continued as an AVP facilitator in a workshop with the Peacemakers and we expect more from him in that arena!

I was impressed to learn that John has worked with Shaquille O'Neal on two projects in Atlanta: The "Please See Me Campaign" is about racial tension and police violence – could that be more timely? He and Shaq also created a movie on manhood called "Car Lot" about fathers and what they hand down to the young.

When I first saw John "on the outside" in Buffalo a few years ago I didn't know what to call him. It's a little strange in conversation to bust out with Wandering Wadud, but I had never called him John. Then I learned that he was going by Tubbs again. I asked why and he vaguely said something about needing to go way back and start over, which I didn't really understand.

But our conversation these last days made it crystal clear. Titanic Tubbs told me that decades after the Titanic sank, divers raised it piece by piece gently and carefully and it is now a national treasure. "That's me" Tubbs affirmed with humility, "being raised over decades piece by piece."

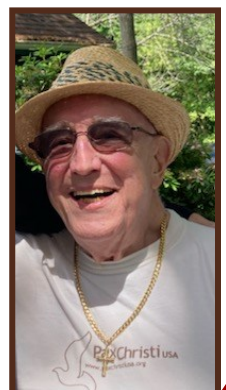
John, Wandering Wadud, Titanic Tubbs, you are a treasure. For raising and rescuing yourself with God's loving help, it is our privilege to honor you with the 2023 "Nonviolence Begins with Me" award which reads, "2023 Nonviolence Begins with Me! Award Presented to John "Tubbs" Smith In Grateful Recognition of Your Commitment to the Alternatives to Violence Project and Love for the Youth of Our Community April 23, 2023 SSJ Sister Karen Klimczak Center for Nonviolence.



In accepting the award, Tubbs shared passionately about how youth today need help to find their way. He said that we have to affirm them and let them know they are valuable, and needed, and LOVED. If that didn't choke us all up, he told us that (thanks to his wife Marisa) his mother and his sisters and their husbands surprised him by being there. "The last time my mother was in a room with me and a lot of people, I was sentenced to 25 years to life. Now she is here to witness me receiving this award." Not a dry eye in the sanctuary!

### *In Memoriam*

Also in John's acceptance speech, he remembered with great affection and heartfelt gratitude Bill Marx, who passed away on March 5th. Bill was the dedicated coordinator of the AVP program at Wende Correctional Facility for many years where he touched countless men with his genuine love and unwavering support. Bill also served on the Sister Karen Center Advisory Board for multiple terms and was always a compelling voice for peace and justice in every aspect of our work. He was the recipient of the 2018 "Nonviolence Begins with Me!" award, and shared his daily prayer: "Loving Father, transform me into the person you created me to be, the very best version of myself ... I hold nothing back; I make myself 100 percent available to you. Lead me, guide me, and show me, what it is you are calling me to; then fill me with the courage and grace to do it." We dearly miss this man of courage and grace, but we rest assured in the knowledge that he is with our Loving God ... and Sister Karen.



# Annual Event Reception

We are a social bunch!



Our thanks go out to Jonah Waltz-Rieber for his excellent photography!



## Annual Event Reception

### Smiles galore!



### We are grateful for our event sponsors!

Anonymous in memory of Bill Marx  
 Buffalo Teachers Federation  
 Barbara Diebold  
 Felician Sisters of North America  
 Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph  
 James V. and Mary G. Glynn  
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 Joseph Testa  
 University at Buffalo Neurosurgery  
 Wegmans Food Markets  
 WNY Asset Management

# Alternatives to Violence Project News



The mission of the Alternatives to Violence Project is to empower people to lead nonviolent lives through affirmation, respect for all, community building, cooperation, and trust. Founded in and developed from the real-life experiences of prisoners and others, and building on a spiritual base, AVP encourages every person's innate power to positively transform themselves and the world.

## Global Peacemakers Visit Buffalo for "Power of Goodness" and Advanced Workshops

*by Nadine Hoover*



It was so nice to have folks from the WNY Peace Center and the Buffalo and Orchard Park Quakers join AVP Niagara Frontier for two workshops. Local Peacemakers from Back to Basics Outreach Ministries also attended and shared their testimony of how AVP is supporting peace in Buffalo as well as around the world.



Quaker, Catholic, Muslim, and Mennonite Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) facilitators shared with us the power of AVP for anyone who is inwardly guided by Transforming Power, love, conscience, wisdom, God, Spirit — whatever name you use for that inward guide. AVP brings together enemies who have been in war for decades. It gives children, parents, teachers, and community members the support needed to recover from war, colonization, and violence. The Peacemakers shared how desperately this is needed right here at home. It's wonderful to share practical skills to help us do this work. Still, we need to step out of the workshop room and off our regular path, onto the streets and into gathering places beyond our comfort zone. AVP helps build our skills and sense of community, but then it is on us to step out and use those skills to create communities of justice and peace.

## AVP Youth Workshop

**August 25-26, 2023 (Friday evening and all day Saturday)**

**Lincoln Memorial United Methodist Church**

**641 Masten Avenue, Buffalo**

**For more information:**

- **AVP page at [sisterkarencenter.org](https://sisterkarencenter.org)**
- **[avp@sisterkarencenter.org](mailto:avp@sisterkarencenter.org)**
- **716.893.0808**





# CAMP PEACEPRINTS

Alternative Summer Camp for Youth 8 - 13 years old

## "Healthy Lives Matter"

### LEARN ABOUT

Nonviolence  
Activism  
Community  
Social Change

Monday - Friday

July 17 - July 21, 2023

July 24 - July 28, 2023

10 am - 3 pm

Network of Religious Communities  
1272 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo

\$20/day ~ \$100/week  
Sliding scale and full  
scholarships available



### GET TO DO

Games  
Art Projects  
Music  
Swimming

Contact:

Sister Karen Center  
716.893.0808

[info@sisterkarencenter.org](mailto:info@sisterkarencenter.org)

WNY Peace Center  
716.603.0015

[director@wnypeace.org](mailto:director@wnypeace.org)

Healthy Lunches  
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### Eight Dimensions of Wellness:

- Physical
- Social
- Intellectual
- Emotional
- Occupational
- Environmental
- Financial
- Spiritual



Camp Co-Directors  
Vivian Waltz and Deidra EmEl

For more information, go to  
Camp Peaceprints page at  
[sisterkarencenter.org](http://sisterkarencenter.org)

To register for camp, go to  
[bit.ly/wnycpp2023](http://bit.ly/wnycpp2023)

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## **Our Mission Statement**

To carry on Sister Karen's vision  
of a world without violence, the  
**SSJ Sister Karen Klimczak Center for Nonviolence**  
is committed to eliminating violence in ourselves,  
in our society, and in our world.

We work to create a nonviolent community  
in our thinking, our acting, and our relationships.

***The SSJ Sister Karen Klimczak Center for Nonviolence  
is a ministry of the Congregation of the  
Sisters of St. Joseph and Associates of Buffalo, New York.***