

Dear Friends,

We have a new president and, regardless of whom you voted for, the words of Franklin D. Roosevelt give us reason for optimism: "We have always held to the hope, the belief, the conviction that there is a better life, a better world, beyond the horizon."



Here at the SSJ Sister Karen Klimczak Center for Nonviolence, we are holding fast to the hope that a better world is coming. I do not say this because we are in the midst of the pandemic, though that certainly intensifies the feeling. Despite the rising death toll from the virus, the residual political strife, and the ongoing struggle for racial justice, we at the Sister Karen Center have always believed that nonviolence is the future of our world.

It is a future not just with less violence but a future based on the presence of love and compassion, on unity and reconciliation, a way of life that will inspire others. Sister Jean Klimczak remembers, "*Karen told me, 'You leave your fingerprints on everything. We need to be people who leave imprints of peace wherever we go in our world.'*"

Sister Jean has been leaving peaceprints since helping to envision the SSJ Sister Karen Center before we opened in 2007. After serving for 13 years on the Advisory Board, Sister Jean has stepped aside to allow for fresh energy and vision from new members. Though we are sad to lose her in that official capacity, we know that she will remain very much connected to our work.

Along with heartfelt thanks to Sister Jean, we are honored to recognize our faithful supporters this past year. It has been one of many challenges for all of us, and we are especially grateful for your friendship.

The happiest of holy-days to you,

Vivian

Vivian Ruth Waltz, Director



**SSJ Sister Karen Klimczak
Center for Nonviolence
80 Durham Avenue
Buffalo, NY 14215
716.893.0808
info@sisterkarencenter.org
www.sisterkarencenter.org**



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~in honor of All Peacemakers!

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 who inspired me as a teenager
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SAVE THE DATE!
Sunday, April 18, 2021 at 3 PM
Bishop Frederick A. Gelsey
"Media Madness: Providing Youth
Alternatives to Violence"
sisterkarencenter.org for more info

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*Larry Kennedy King, Vivian Waltz,
and Bishop Gelsey with Sister Karen!*

Introducing... **The Youth Homicide Education and Prevention Media Arts Project**

We've all heard that God works in mysterious ways! That is now crystal clear to the committee that had been planning for our now cancelled April 2020 event, "Media Madness: Providing Youth Alternatives to Violence" with the Bishop Frederick A. Gelsey, Sr. In our work with Bishop Gelsey, a vision for a new program of the SSJ Sister Karen Klimczak Center for Nonviolence began to take shape. The Youth Homicide Education and Prevention Media Arts Project will integrate the Media Madness Project, the Alternatives to Violence Project, and the Hip Hop/Mumble Rap Production Project.

The **education** component of the program is the Media Madness Project (formerly the Homicide Education Project) directed by Bishop Gelsey. His fundamental belief is that homicide is a learned behavior. Youth are being trained to kill as they listen to homicidal music, watch TV and movies, and play homicidal video games about senseless brutal murder. Dr. Gelsey will educate youth on the dangerous influence of media including brainwashing, programming, the mind of a murderer, anger, forgiveness, unforgiveness, and the value of life.

The **prevention** component of the program will be a two-day Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) workshop facilitated by a team led by Vivian Waltz, with the opportunity for youth to continue training with advanced workshops. The mission of AVP is to empower people to lead nonviolent lives through affirmation, respect for all, community building, cooperation, and trust. AVP encourages every person's innate power to positively transform themselves and the world. The SSJ Sister Karen Center has provided AVP workshops in prisons, schools, churches, the community and with youth for 13 years. Among our AVP facilitators are four formerly incarcerated individuals, a valuable asset to working with at-risk youth.

The **media arts** component of the program will be a new Hip Hop/Mumble Rap Production Project. Larry Kennedy King, a 29 year-old media artist, will oversee the construction of a sound studio where he will teach youth to produce music, rap, and poems with a positive, uplifting message to counteract homicidal media influences. There will be a competition for the best of the final audio creations to be made into videos.

The audio and video creations will be distributed via YouTube and social media platforms. A media event will kick-off the release. The creations will be used in the programming of Camp Peaceprints, an alternative day camp for 8-13 year olds, and will be made available to any interested youth programs.

We are in the process of seeking funding for this new program. Contact Vivian if you have an interest in helping to get the project up and running!

CAMP PEACEPRINTS 2020

"Let's Talk Peace"

July 13-24, 2020



Camp Peaceprints 2020 was a virtual breeding ground for more inner peace, better relationships, a healing spirit, and a feeling of Beloved Community for those who participated. The 25 campers and youth assistants were buoyed up by the caring, learning, and sharing that was offered by staff, interns, special guest presenters from the community, and volunteers.

The theme of "Let's Talk Peace" was born out of the need for all of us to establish a culture of peace with people who are different from us, especially in our current political environment. We wanted to teach the children first how to find peace within themselves, and then to listen and communicate a belief in peace and justice for all people. All of this with the challenge of making distance learning fun and somehow like a camp!

Caregiver comments include, "They loved it, and always wanted to get back on ... Very interactive." "It was a real help to us." "It was something to stimulate their learning over the summer." "They kept doing and talking about things from Camp after Camp was over." Campers virtually all said they wanted Camp to last longer! Other camper comments: "It's so much fun ..." "I learned a lot about how to be kind and loving, and work for things to be better in the world." "It helped me be more peaceful and feel good."



Attendees included children and families that have been traumatized by recent and/or long-standing injustices in the community (some very much in the local news). Therefore, we practiced "Talking Peace to Myself" through:

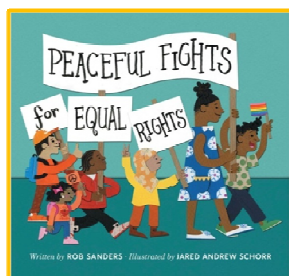
- * mindfulness and hatha yoga;
- * deep slow breathing, including with repetition (also known as japa);
 - * guided visualization and meditation;
- * self-esteem and self-confidence (with Lonnie Barlow of the Little Africa Cultural Center);
- * an understanding of self-soothing and our alert systems, also known as fight-flight-freeze;
 - * laughter yoga;
- * identifying and exploring different feelings.

Good communication and "Talking Peace to Another" was fostered through:

- * creating and abiding by a Peace Agreement with respect as the foundation;
 - * cultivating listening skills and practicing with each other;
 - * developing I-Messages and nonviolent communication;
- * learning how to be assertive (vs. aggressive, passive, or passive-aggressive).

~continued on next page~

CAMP PEACEPRINTS 2020 (continued)



This set the stage for "Talking Peace to My Community" and discussions of:

- * community and racial issues led by two insightful and expressive young black social workers Poet Jillian Hanesworth and Shawnte Wilson;
- * the police and how to interact with them led by John Curr, the Regional Representative of the NYCLU and also a dad;
- * protest and other forms of activism and advocacy, including a reading of the book *Peaceful Fights for Equal Rights*.

Nonverbal communication and the arts were also vital to our shared experience, including:

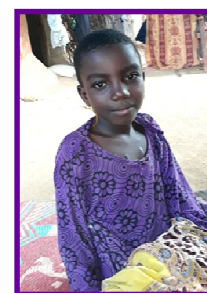
- * American Sign Language, beautifully taught by teachers from St. Mary's School for the Deaf;
- * dancing and movement, including Japanese Fan Dance, African Dance, and Indian Classical;
- * drawing and painting a community collage with stellar art teacher and counselor Jan Burns;
- * rock painting, drawing your safe place, and making your own emoji;
- * creating Zen gardens, fairy houses, fans used in Japanese dance, clay sculptures, and origami peace cranes;
- * making music with percussion egg shakers, and singing.



Activities were integrated too. An example is how Valentino Dixon, a local man now nationally known due to his exoneration and release after his 27 years of unjust incarceration, did a Draw and Talk with Me for the youth. (One of the campers has a dad who was unjustly incarcerated for 22 years and is still on parole.) The campers also decorated the journal they wrote in to help assimilate their learning during the course of camp, as well as Camp Peaceprints water bottles they used to stay hydrated.



As the Camp was entirely virtual, we availed ourselves of the opportunity of "Talking Peace to My World" by taking field trips to Machu Picchu, Peru, with Camp Co-Director Vivian Waltz and her daughter Rosita, a native of that part of the world; to Kenya with volunteer Kawiye Jamale, originally from there; and with Co-Director Vicki Ross to Afghanistan with the Afghan Peace Volunteers; India, and Nepal. The experiential learning of this cultural smorgasbord was buttressed by a presentation on World Religions and their universal teaching of the Golden Rule, all by a young Masters graduate of Union Theological Seminary.



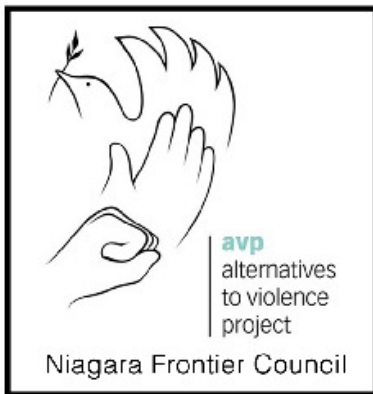
Camp Peaceprints is a program that the word – it is creating more stability youth, along with self-confidence and create more peace through justice in Peace" empowered campers to be and true nonviolence throughout their to have a lasting peace, we must start



fosters security, in every sense of in the lives of our children and wellbeing which will help them our communities. "Let's Talk activists for human rights, equality, lives. As Gandhi said, "If we want with the children."

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.



AVP at Wende Correctional Facility

All volunteer programs with New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (NYSDOCCS) have been suspended due to the pandemic. However, we are fortunate to be in touch with inmates at Wende through Jubilant Jo Clayson who serves as the Volunteer Correspondent for AVP New York. As such she communicates with people who are incarcerated regarding AVP business and she writes letters of reasonable assurance for those who have taken AVP and are up for parole. Following are excerpts from emails to Jo from one of our inside AVP facilitators at Wende.

April 24

Thank you for taking the time to ask about life here at Wende. Not being able to interact with my AVP family has been a challenge. I read my manuals but it's not quite the same. There are so many people that could discover so much just from going to a workshop. Hopefully this will soon be over.

May 10

Happy Mothers Day to you and all the women of the world but especially to our AVP family!

July 6

Greetings - first I would like to say I hope that you and your family are okay during these trying times. Also I would like to know if you have any idea when AVP will be up and running again. We have no information as to when anything will resume. Please give every one my best wishes. [Currently AVP New York has not been informed when volunteers may be allowed back into the correctional facilities.]



September 28

Hope that this life is giving you the best that it has to offer. This is a letter of appreciation, for the times that you have reached out to check on me. Just saying how am I doing, especially at this time in the world is a tremendous up lift to me. Again thank you.

Alternatives to Violence Project New York offers three-day experiential workshops at three levels: the Basic, the Advanced and the Training for Facilitators. Workshops provide brave spaces that allow us to discover the transforming power that each of us has within. For a schedule of online workshops, go to:

avpny.org

Working in Coalition ...

One of the four primary goals of the SSJ Sister Karen Klimczak Center for Nonviolence is to Build Relationships by Working in Coalition with Community Groups which Promote Nonviolence. We're proud of our relationships with our community partners.

WNY Peacemakers Gang Intervention and Outreach Program

Peacemakers continue to quell violence on the streets and have been a calming presence at racial justice rallies. Sadly, shootings are up dramatically since the start of the pandemic. Peacemakers are advocating for changes in the law so that the flow of guns into Buffalo from Pennsylvania and Ohio can be curtailed. Peacemakers have also been busy getting food, masks and other necessities to our East side neighbors. They have distributed non-perishables to families in need, delivered school lunches to students in their homes, and provided thousands of dinners prepared by Rich Products and granted through the Siegel Foundation. One recipient of the Peacemakers' care wrote:



"I am so grateful and so very blessed. I was struggling and reached out for help from Pastor James Giles and the Peacemakers. They took me shopping yesterday and made sure that myself and my family have everything we need and then some. People like the Peacemakers help me to have hope in these trying times. It's so amazing to see that there are people out here in this world who still care. I thank God for the Peacemakers ..."

VOICE-Buffalo/LiveFree Faith Leaders Caucus

SSJ Sister Karen Center director Vivian Waltz is participating in the Jefferson Avenue Peace Circle to promote restorative justice practices, even via Zoom! On October 30th the SSJ Sister Karen Center participated in the "Burial of Injustice" at the Erie County Holding Center. No longer will we allow silence about the inhumane and negligent treatment of detainees, the deaths at the Holding Center and its proposal to relocate to Alden.

Free the People

The SSJ Sister Karen Center recently joined Free The People WNY, a coalition that envisions a world free from the violence and death caused by mass incarceration. We act together to dismantle a justice system built on white supremacy and oppression, one that dehumanizes people, and we work to create in its place anti-racist systems with the values of collective liberation and true justice at their core. FTP is working for police reform in Buffalo on a number of fronts.

Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement

The Erie County Legislature passed a resolution supporting Humane Alternatives to Long-Term Solitary Confinement (HALT)! We continue to work for NYS approval of HALT legislation (A.2500 / S.1623).

Inside Coalition

This new coalition is aimed at getting volunteer programs back up and running inside NYS prisons. The goal is to begin educating the media community not only about the important work we do, but how these critical programs inside the prisons have been halted during the pandemic and how there is an urgent need to identify and implement alternative ways of providing the same services.

Sisters of St. Joseph
Sister Karen Klimczak
Center for Nonviolence
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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 eliminate 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 Sisters of St. Joseph and Associates of Buffalo.