Annual Meeting to Feature UM’s 1st Muslim Chaplain
Mohammed Tayssir Safi speaks at St. Mary Student Parish on March 25

Each year the ICPJ community gathers for an annual meeting to connect with each other, elect members to the Board of Directors, and to reenergize our work for peace, justice, and inclusion.

This year’s annual meeting features Mohammed Tayssir Safi, who is not only the first Muslim chaplain at the University of Michigan, he is the first Muslim Chaplain at any public university in the United States—not bad for a 2003 graduate from Pioneer High School.

He brings to his work a commitment to using education and understanding to nurture a community of respect and engagement for the common good.

Where: St. Mary Student Parish, Newman Hall,
331 Thompson Street  Ann Arbor, MI 48104
(Free Sunday Parking in garage on Thompson)

When: Sunday, March 25
7:00 Dessert Reception
7:30 Business Meeting
8:00 Program

Details: www.icpj.net/2012/annualmeeting, info@icpj.net, 734-663-1870. Free and open to the public, voting limited to ICPJ members. Become a member at www.icpj.net/give or use the donation form on page 2.

ICPJ BENEFIT CONCERT
Charlie King & Karen Brandow Concert March 31
By Jeff Alson, Concert Committee

Charlie King and Karen Brandow are musical storytellers and political satirists with seven recordings to their credit. They perform with the sweet and precise harmonies of life partners. They sing and write passionately about the extraordinary lives of ordinary people, in the tradition of Woody Guthrie, Malvina Reynolds, and Pete Seeger. Charlie and Karen regularly perform at the annual School of the Assassins protest in Fort Benning, Georgia, an action which draws a large ICPJ delegation each year. Graduates of this U.S. taxpayer-funded school participated in the 2009 coup in Honduras, overthrowing a democratically elected government.

Charlie King has been coming to Ann Arbor for over 30 years and is a local favorite. Charlie is the recipient of the War Resisters League’s Peacemaker Award as well as the Sacco-Vanzetti Social Justice Award. Karen Brandow, a vocalist and classical guitarist, has been performing with Charlie since 1998.

The concert is at 7:30 pm, Saturday, March 31, at 2309 Packard Street in Ann Arbor, the home of Temple Beth Emeth and St. Clare of Assisi Episcopal Church. Tickets are $15 through ICPJ and at the door, and $50 for benefactors. Call ICPJ at (734) 663-1870 or go to www.icpj.net for advance tickets or more information.
Close Corporate Tax Loopholes
Loopholes Costs Michiganders $2 Billion

No company should be able to game the tax system to avoid paying what it legitimately owes.

And, yet, establishing shell companies in offshore havens for the purpose of tax avoidance is becoming more the rule than the exception for at least 83 of the nation’s top 100 publicly traded companies. GE, Google, Goldman Sachs and dozens of others have created hundreds of phantom entities with nothing more than a clever tax attorney and P.O. box.

Official estimates of how much Americans lose in tax revenue are between $70 billion and $100 billion per year. That’s money that is shouldered by average taxpayers, either through additional taxes today or additional debt to be paid by the next generation.

It’s not illegal, but it’s not right.

The result? The average taxpayer paid $295 more this year to cover the $100 billion that GE and others that use offshore tax havens skipped out on. And small businesses and companies that don’t use these schemes have to struggle to compete with those that do.

Meanwhile, the Michigan legislature and Congress are considering deep cuts for essential public programs — from education, to health care, to clean air and drinking water. They’re asking us to tighten our belts and make sacrifices, while giving the tax haven crew a free ride.

That’s why ICPJ is joining with the Financial Accountability and Corporate Transparency Coalition and groups like PIRGIM for commonsense changes that simply say if corporations are based here and generate profits here, then they should, like all of us who earn income in here, pay the taxes they owe.

Tax Haven Abuse by the Numbers

- $100 billion: Estimated amount that the U.S. loses in tax revenue due to offshore tax abuse every year.
- $1 trillion: The amount of unrepatriated foreign profits sitting offshore.
- $810 billion: The average outflow of illicit money from developing countries per year between 2000-2008 as estimated by Global Financial Integrity.
- 18,857: The number of registered businesses at one address in the Cayman Islands.
- 217,000: The number of companies housed at 1209 Orange Street in Wilmington, Delaware.
- 759: Number of offshore subsidiaries in tax havens for Citigroup, Bank of America, and Morgan Stanley combined.
- 30%: Corporate share of the nation’s tax receipts in the mid 1950s.
- 6.6%: Corporate share of the nation’s tax receipts in 2009.

Source: www.tjn-usa.org/storage/documents/FACT_Sheet_By_the_Numbers_Final0511.pdf

Take Action

- Call Senator Stabenow at (202) 224-4822. Ask her to co-sponsor the Stop Tax Haven Abuse Act.
- Learn more about the issue. Visit pirgim.org/issues/mip/close-corporate-tax-loopholes.
- Contact Meghan Hess at mhess@pirgim.org or 734-662-6597 to find out how you can get involved or to host a presentation at your congregation or community group.

About ICPJ

The Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice strives to create a setting where people of diverse faiths and backgrounds can come together to explore issues of faith, peace, and justice; to respectfully address differences; and to find common ground for action to create a better world.

Task forces and volunteers carry out this work, with support from staff and guidance from a steering committee. Currently the working program groups are:

- Hunger Task Force
- Climate Change & Earth Care
- Latin America Task Force
- Racial and Economic Justice
- Common Ground for Peace in Israel/Palestine
- NOW: NO Weapons, NO War

Anyone who supports our mission is welcome to join our work. Membership dues are $25 ($10 student/low income) per voting member. Memberships must be paid one week prior to a membership meeting to be eligible to vote.
Killer Coke
By Lynn Meadows, ICPJ’s Latin America Task Force

“Killer Coke? Why would I call this all-American popular product such an inflammatory name?

For more than 10 years I have been attending protests to shut down the School of the Americas/WHINSEC (commonly called the “School of Assassins” or “SOA”). Our taxes pay for this school, whose graduates, according to SOA Watch, have long been associated with human rights abuses and the torture, rape, murder and disappearance of hundreds of thousands.

At the protest this past November, I again talked to the people from the Campaign to Stop Killer Coke (www.killercoke.org) and asked how the campaign against Coca-Cola is progressing. For years I have carried 3” X 4” Killer Coke stickers that I sneak onto Coke machines wherever I go—a small satisfaction to spread the word about the dark side of this dominant corporation.

It seems that few people know about the human rights violations that Coca-Cola continues to perpetrate all over the world.

The Campaign to Stop Killer Coke focuses on holding Coca-Cola accountable for its horrific labor, human rights and environmental abuses and undermining health worldwide.

In Guatemala, Coca-Cola faces charges of murder, attempted murder and torture, including allegations that the son and nephew of union leader Jose Alberto Vicente Chavez were murdered and his teenage daughter gang-raped because of his union activities.

In Mexico, a 16-year former Coca-Cola employee and top marketing executive turned whistleblower, has accused Coke of unlawfully cheating Mexican workers out of hundreds of millions of dollars in pay and profit-sharing and the Mexican government out of millions in tax revenues through an illegal scheme of outsourcing and tax evasion.

In Colombia, eight union leaders have been murdered by paramilitaries who have a history of working closely with Coke management. Outsourced workers trying to join a union are fired. In December 2010, at the request of the company, Colombian police entered the Coke bottling plant in Medellin where they remained 24 hours a day terrorizing workers, according to SINALTRAINAL union president Javier Correa. On January 26, 2012, in Barranquilla, SINALTRAINAL leader and Coke worker Ricardo Ramon Paublott Gomez was murdered by gunfire.

In China, press reported that Coke employees are “involved in the most dangerous, intense and tiresome labor, work the longest hours, but receive the lowest wages and face arrears and even cutbacks in their pay.”

In India, after years of Coca-Cola lying and claiming innocence for environmental devastation, a tribunal was set up by a legislative body to secure compensation for inhabitants. The High Power Committee recommended that Coca-Cola be held liable for $48 million for damages caused as a result of the company's bottling operations in Plachimada. The bottling plant in Plachimada remains shut down since 2004 as a result of protests.

Coke’s enormous wealth has been built on the exploitation of labor, the environment and the aggressive marketing to children of nutritionally worthless and damaging beverages that health experts say help fuel childhood obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes epidemics.

Phosphoric acid, caramel coloring and the artificial sweetener, aspartame, used in Coke’s beverages are linked to numerous serious health disorders, including osteoporosis.

See BOYCOTT on page 7
CELEBRATE WOMEN PEACEMAKERS: DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Women Peacemakers Give Voice to the Voiceless

By Shahar Ben-Josef, ICPJ intern

NOTE: In honor of the Nobel Committee’s decision to honor women peacemakers, ICPJ is highlighting women who are working for peace across the world. Visit www.icpj.net for other profiles and for more information about this topic.

Sylvie Maunga Mbanga is a lawyer who works to end sexual violence against women in the eastern region of Congo. She is the coordinator of the program against sexual violence for the Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation and Church in Action, as well as the program officer for peace-building and conflict transformation program at the Life and Peace Institute. She also provides counseling and legal services to victims of rape and sexual violence.

Ms. Mbanga develops strategic and holistic interventions to assist victims, including the provision of psychological counseling and medical care, legal services and access to the judicial system, and economic support in the form of income-generating activities and skills building.

History of Conflict in the Congo

From colonization and military coups to rebellions and CIA operations to overthrow democratically elected officials, the history of the Congo has been a story of violence and armed conflict from before its colonization. The Congo is situated in the Great Lakes region of Africa, an area that has been plagued by the spillover effect of conflict, which has involved countries such as Uganda, Rwanda, the Sudan, and Burundi; for this reason, the conflict in the Congo has been called Africa’s World War by some.

The current conflict in the Congo is the deadliest since the Second World War, it may have become the forgotten humanitarian crisis. Since 1998, more than six million people have died, over two million people have been forced to flee their homes, and over 40,000 Congolese have sought refuge in neighboring countries. Unfortunately, as Alfred Grosser put it, “a massacre of Africans is not felt in the same way as a massacre of Europeans. Would we find it wise if an African considered slaughter in Europe a normal product of a civilization that produced Auschwitz and had already produced Verdun?”

Hundreds of thousands of women and girls, some as young as just nine months, have been kidnapped, raped, and tortured in the Congo. Sexual violence has also started to be used against men in an effort to emasculate them. Even though a peace deal and transitional government was formed in 2003, armed militias, gangs, and the army continue to terrorize the country.

The way in which sexual violence is used in the Congo is unspeakable—women and children are being attacked by multiple men, often in public and in front of their husbands, children and neighbors, and after, the rapists sometimes fire their guns into the women’s vaginas. The purpose is not just to abuse women, but also to destroy the Congolese community, and to traumatize and humiliate people.

Once women are raped, their husbands, and often their communities, will shun and even disown them. Armed groups use violence and rape to force civilians to leave mining areas so that they can exploit the lucrative minerals—specifically coltan (also known as tantalum), as well as tin and tungsten, known as the “3 T’s”.

Armed groups earn hundreds of millions of dollars every year by trading these conflict minerals, money that is used for both personal profit and to further the violence by purchasing arms and ammunition. Conflict minerals are smuggled out of the Congo through neighboring countries such as Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda, shipped to smelters around the world for refinement, and end up in consumer products.

Take Action

- Learn more at www.icpj.net/DRC
- Join Congo Activists of Michigan: www.congoactivistsofmichigan.org
- Choose greener electronics: www.raisehopeforcongo.org/content/company-rankings
- Organize or participate in Run for Congo Women: www.runforcongowomen.org/index.html
Book Review: Is Everyone Really Equal?

By La’Ron Williams, ICPJ Board Member

Not everyone reading these words will know that I am an African-American man, so I’m taking a moment to mention it here. I don’t remember a time when I was unaware of being African-American, nor do I remember a time when I was unaware that that fact made me "different" within the context of American society.

Throughout my life, the significance of my "race" has given me a kind of double vision; a way not only of seeing things as they present themselves, but also of seeing beneath the surfaces they present.

I am also a professional storyteller. In one of my stories, I describe the way I felt as a child whenever I applied a "flesh colored" Johnson’s Band-Aid to my arm. I say that it stood out "like a glaring beacon of miscoloration." I could not ignore the contrast between the color of the Band-Aid and the color of my arm.

But what if those Band-Aids at least came close to matching the color of my skin? Would I then even have noticed the subtle message they conveyed — that I was normal while whole groups of people were...well, something else?

Each of us is conditioned — or socialized — to accept the normality of the things we live with. Some of us — let’s call them "outsiders" — people like me who are not "normalized" by certain mainstream practices, often are very self-conscious about this socialization process. We can reflect upon the moments when what was normal for others subtly labeled as "different." But to many of those on the "inside," the easy match between their everyday experiences and the definitions they are given about themselves by society can cause the socialization process to pass completely unnoticed.

As an African-American "outsider," I was able to see the implicit bias of the "flesh-colored" Band-Aid. But there were thousands of others who didn’t. How can they be helped to see that what they think of as neutral, normal and fair can actually be系统ically discriminatory and harmful?


Sensoy and DiAngelo’s book begins with the important assertion that if we truly want a society that is equitable and fair, we first have to become critical thinkers — armed with knowledge that allows us to pierce the haze of certain “common sense” assumptions and equipped with an awareness of the societal contextual meaning given to all information.

From there, the authors establish a clear line of connection from socialization, through prejudice, to discrimination and oppression. Along the way, they make stops to give specific attention to "invisible privilege," racism and White supremacy.

In a sense, Sensoy and DiAngelo’s book is to social justice what the Chicago Manual of Style is to the art of writing. It acts as a kind of guidebook. It introduces several basic fundamental ideas that form the structures beneath a number of essential concepts, thereby offering a clear road map for putting those concepts into action toward affecting change.

To make it a more effective tool, it includes discussion questions and extension activities at the end of each chapter. It also is filled with stories, examples and scenarios that help to illustrate each idea introduced.

This book was selected, in part, because of its broad-based appeal. Whether you are new to the field of social justice work, or count yourself among the “seasoned veterans,” we’re certain it will provide you with numerous insights and strategies to aid you in the creation of a more just and equitable society.

La’Ron Williams is a nationally acclaimed, award-winning storyteller who has toured extensively presenting programs and workshops. ☛
Faith and Food Program Grows

By Bill Alt, ICPJ Program Coordinator

From just thirteen congregations in 2009, our Faith and Food community garden program has grown to thirty-one congregational gardens producing over five tons of fresh produce in 2011. The outstanding efforts of the faith community have helped to alleviate hunger in Washtenaw County and ensure access to fresh and healthy food for the poor and most vulnerable. We are excited to continue this dynamic partnership with Food Gatherers in 2012.

Food Gatherers is a successful non-profit that rescues and distributes over 8 tons of food a day in Washtenaw County. Working with over 150 hunger relief agencies and community groups to distribute food to our neighbors who need it, Food Gatherers helps alleviate hunger and eliminate its causes. They are at the forefront of the effort to create a just food system for the hungry and vulnerable of our community and ICPJ is proud to partner with them and connect the faith community to this work for justice.

We are holding a Kick-off event for the 2012 growing season on March 19th at 6:30pm at Food Gatherers, 1 Carrot Way Ann Arbor. New and returning congregations will learn what is new for 2012, how ICPJ, Food Gatherers, and our network of returning gardeners are a support for congregations, and how the Faith and Food garden program works.

Join this simple way to put your faith into action by planting a garden to alleviate hunger in 2012.
Common Ground for Peace in Israel/Palestine

Israeli & Palestinian Women's Dialogue, Protest & Peace Activism

March 8 is International Women's Day! Join ICPJ and Dr. Sarai Aharoni in exploring women's role in the peace process in Israel/Palestine.

When: Tuesday, March 13, 2012 at 7 PM
Where: 1st Baptist Church of Ann Arbor, Memorial Lounge, 517 East Washington, Ann Arbor MI 48104.

Dr. Sarai Aharoni is the Schusterman Visiting Israeli Professor at the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies in 2010-2012. Her Ph.D. in Gender Studies (Bar-Ilan University 2009) documented the gender perspective and the participation of Israeli women in formal Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations.

Her research also focuses on Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, which was accepted by the United Nations Security Council in October 2000. It officially recognizes the need to incorporate women in all peace negotiations and everything to do with conflicts—prevention, management, and resolution.

"We should keep using the word peace. People don’t use it anymore, and someone has to remind everyone this concept exists. Someone has to hold the torch, even in times of great darkness and disillusionment and violence. Someone has to believe it is possible. And one day someone will come and take the torch from us and keep on going." - Sarai Aharoni in an interview at 60voices.org

Boycott Killer Coke  Continued from page 3

stroke, heart attack, cancer and birth defects.

Dozens of schools have removed Coca-Cola products from their campuses, including the University of Michigan in January, 2006. However, on April 10, 2007, Coke informed Tim Slottow, Executive Vice President and CFO of the University, that independent investigations would take place in Colombia and India. Apparently without even checking Coke's claims, the University issued a statement that it would resume purchases of Coca-Cola products.

The decision was made by Mr. Slottow without any consultation with students or the University's Dispute Review Board (DRB). "Mr. Slottow has done a real disservice to students and the entire U of M community…" said Ray Rogers, director of the Campaign to Stop Killer Coke. "He and his advisors have foolishly failed to check out Coke's claims or the close relationships that already exist between Coke and its so-called 'third party investigators'." We in the Latin America Task Force are currently working to re-establish the Stop Killer Coke Campaign on U of M's campus.

Only concerted action by outraged consumers – communities, students, trade unions and others – can force Coca-Cola to act responsibly and make retribution for its abuses.
“Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed.”

-Mahatma Gandhi

Why I’m a Member: Veena Kulkarni

Discerning where to direct one’s contributions is never an easy task. Focusing on local organizations, though, has always been a priority for me. ICPJ is that and more, keeping important issues before me that impact not only our community, but our nation and the world as well. The fact that these issues are often approached and discussed from the perspectives of different faith groups adds a unique depth of concern. Though I participate in fewer activities than I would like, I support ICPJ financially and in spirit for consistently prompting me to read and think about topics I might not otherwise consider.