

# PASSENGERS ON THE AUDACITY OF HOPE

These short bio's were written by the passengers. They give a sense of the breadth of experience and interests of the people who will be making this journey.

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**Nic Abramson – Woodstock, NY**

Nic, age 69, a long-time resident of Woodstock, NY, has been involved in anti-war, peace, and solidarity activities since the 1960s: He was active in Vietnam protests and draft counseling; active in Central American solidarity work, especially Nicaragua, to where he traveled with an international work brigade in 1984; and he is now active in Palestine solidarity work with the US Boat to Gaza, Jews Say No!, and Middle East Crisis Response (MECR). He traveled to Cairo in 2008-2009 with the Gaza Freedom March and also visited the West Bank at that time. He is currently a board member of ICHAD (USA), and active with Vets For Peace. He is a member of a 4-person collective that publishes *The Woodstock International*, a bi-monthly left newspaper. He has been happily married for 36 years, and has 2 sons (40 and 21) and two grandchildren.

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**Johnny Barber – Gallatin Gateway, MT**

I am simply a man who believes the portrayal of the Palestinian people in the American news media is seriously lacking in truth, dimension, and perspective. Recognizing that Israel is the beneficiary of billions of dollars in American military aid, I decided to travel to the region to see for myself who the people of Palestine and Israel are. I made my first journey to Palestine and Israel in January 2002 with the Interfaith Peace-Builders. I wanted to learn of the hopes and dreams of the people I met and how they lived their day- to-day lives. Since that first trip, I have traveled to Palestine numerous times, doing what I can to support the Palestinian people. As a father, I realize that the children who live where American bombs fall are no different than my son. I am currently working as an EMT and on arrival in Gaza I hope to be an observer on a Red Crescent ambulance. My intention is to bear witness to the people's struggle and to educate those who have a desire to see the "other side." My work can be seen at [www.oneBrightpearl.com](http://www.oneBrightpearl.com) and [www.oneBrightpearl-jb.blogspot.com](http://www.oneBrightpearl-jb.blogspot.com).



**Medea Benjamin – Washington, DC**

Medea Benjamin is a cofounder of both CODEPINK and the international human rights organization Global Exchange. She has been an advocate for social justice for more than 30 years. Described as “one of America’s most committed — and most effective — fighters for human rights” by New York Newsday, and called “one of the high profile leaders of the peace movement” by the Los Angeles Times, Medea was one of 1,000 exemplary women from 140 countries nominated to receive the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of the millions of women who do the essential work of peace worldwide. In 2010 she received the Martin Luther King, Jr. Peace Prize from the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

Since the September 11, 2001 tragedy, Medea has been working to promote a U.S. foreign policy that would respect human rights and gain us allies instead of contributing to violence and undermining our international reputation. She has traveled and written extensively about Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Egypt, Israel and Palestine. She has led five delegations to Gaza, bringing humanitarian aid. A former economist and nutritionist with the United Nations and World Health Organization, Benjamin is the author/editor of eight books. Her articles appear regularly in outlets such as The Huffington Post, CommonDreams, Alternet, TruthOut, the Daily Kos and OpEd News.



**Greta Berlin – Los Angeles, CA**

Greta has been an advocate for justice for the Palestinians since the early 60s. She is the mother of two Palestinian/American children whose father was born and raised in Safad, Palestine and is a 1948 refugee. She has an MFA in Theatre and a bachelor’s in English and, when she’s not working with the Palestinians, has spent the past 35 years teaching engineers and scientists how to design and deliver presentations.

In 2003, she volunteered with the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), working in several villages in the occupied West bank as well as manning their media office, then she returned to work again in 2005 and 07. She is one of the founders of the Free Gaza Movement and was on board the FREE GAZA, the first boat with internationals to reach this besieged strip of the Mediterranean in 41 years. She then helped run three more successful voyages to Gaza between October 22 and December 23, 2008 working on the land crew and media in Cyprus, sending more than 50 human rights workers to Gaza on board the DIGNITY. She ran the media office for

Freedom Flotilla 1 and has been a spokesperson for Freedom Flotilla 2 – Stay Human.

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**Hagit Borer – Los Angeles, CA**

I was born in Israel in 1952. That is where I grew up and where I lived until 1977, when I came to the U.S. to study. In 1992 I became an American citizen and am now a Professor of Linguistics at the University of Southern California.

The 1967 war found in me a rebellious high school student, but neither my education nor my upbringing would have allowed me to question the official presentation of the events or the motivation behind that war. I believed Israel wanted peace, and I believed it would trade its 1967 victories against one. For me, what Israel came to control in the wake of the 1967 war has never been real estate. It was, and continues to be, people. My foremost and lasting impression of the occupation was formed by the expression of numbed shock in the eyes of the residents of East Jerusalem some three weeks after the war. A few years did go by before I realized that Israel is not interested in a just peace, before I was ready to challenge the official narratives and the consensus, and finally the core idea of a Jewish state. By the mid seventies, and still in Israel, I became an activist and I have been since, with groups in Israel, in the UK and in the USA, including student groups, academic faculty groups, coalition groups, and media groups (including the Hamsin Collective and KPFK's Radio Intifada). I lectured rather extensively on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, primarily throughout the US to community and academic audiences, but also in other countries, and have written and published a few articles on the topic.

In the many years that I have been an activist for Peace with Justice in the Middle East, there has been little to make me optimistic. Israel has become progressively more oppressive and brazen, both within and without the 67 borders, the situation in the Occupied Territories has become considerably worse, and international support has become progressively more feeble.

Nonetheless, in the past few years, two initiatives have emerged which have made me audacious enough to hope. One is the Boycott Campaign, and the second is the campaign of sending boats to Gaza to break the Israeli Blockade. Being part of the journey of *The Audacity of Hope* is an opportunity to express both my support for the occupied people of Palestine, and my rage at the actions of a government that pretends to speak on my behalf. I look forward to it as a means of bolstering my own belief in the possibility of change, as well as enhancing my ability to be an effective activist..

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**Regina Carey – San Rafael, CA**

Regina currently is a consultant specializing in strategic planning and planned giving. Throughout Regina's lifetime commitment to Human Rights she has focused her time and energy to the Rights of the Indigenous (original people), Water Rights and Peace. She is a co-founder of the Black/Jewish Dialogue Group in Marin County. She has been an active participant in the World Social Forum and the UN Conference Against Racism (Durban SA).

*If we are to survive as human beings we must cease to use aggression as a means of solving problems, or acquiring what we want from someone else. The use of conquest only creates generations of oppressed people. The idea that anyone has the right to divide land and territory (without the participation of those living there), treating people as chattel is past its time. I have always been committed to open dialogue, ensuring that all have an equal seat at table, and especially that the original peoples are included equally and as an integral part. If we can find no other reason to seek a peaceful solution, the impact of war on children and the continued generational trauma should impel us to change our ways.*



**Gale Courey Toensing – Canaan, CT**

I grew up in Montreal among an extended family of Lebanese aunts, uncles and cousins centered around my maternal grandmother, a tiny woman with silken silver hair who immigrated to Canada around the turn of the 19th century. My grandfather on my father's side was Ibrahim al Khoury, a Christian priest from Jerusalem, Palestine. My father, Deeb Ibrahim al Khoury, grew up in Lebanon and immigrated to Canada when he was a young teenager during the British Mandate. Immigration officials at Ellis Island anglicized the family name, al Khoury, which means priest, to Courey.

My activism for Palestine began in earnest in the late 1990s' in graduate school where I studied modern Palestinian poetry – sorrowful writings that are all about the loss of the land. During my first visit to Palestine in 2001, I was shot at by Israeli occupation soldiers as I walked toward the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Reformation in Beit Jala near Bethlehem. My response was not fear, but outrage that this was what Palestinians – and their children! – had to live with every day of their lives. And it was incomprehensible to me why the rest of the world allowed it to be that way. Ever since then I've been consumed with learning as much as I can about the history of the region and working toward securing human rights and justice for Palestinians. I work with the Middle East Crisis Committee, <http://thestruggle.org>, a nonprofit organization in Connecticut

that sponsors lecturers in state and sends interns to the Occupied Palestinian Territories, organizes rallies, organizes and sponsors Israeli Apartheid Week events, writes letters to legislators and editors, meets with legislators, supports cultural activities such as performances in the U.S. by the Al Rowwad Children's Theater to the U.S. and supports activities by other Palestine solidarity groups. I also edit [www.thecornerreport.com](http://www.thecornerreport.com), which is dedicated to posting news about the Middle East that doesn't appear in mainstream media. As a journalist, I've written stories during my visits to Palestine (<http://www.counterpunch.org/toensing07272006.html> ). Also, as a journalist writing for Indian Country Today Media Network ([www.indiancountry.com](http://www.indiancountry.com)), I'm all too aware of the parallels between the ideology of conquest and domination that allowed near total genocide of the indigenous peoples of the western hemisphere and the ideology of Zionism that allows the ethnic cleansing and settler colonization of historic Palestine. I don't want to see Palestinians end up in the equivalent of Indian reservations on their own land.



**Erin DeRamus – Portland, OR**

I am a practitioner and instructor of acupuncture, Chinese Medicine and Qigong. The past few years I have worked in public health and recovery with the local Native American Rehabilitation Association. Through various work and life experiences, I have seen many commonalities inherent to the trauma of displaced and oppressed populations; personal, cultural, and generational. I also worked on a project to teach basic ear acupuncture protocols for the treatment of PTSD to the Treatment and Rehabilitation Center for victims of torture in Ramallah as well as in Aida refugee camp in Bethlehem; which brought me to the West Bank in December of 2008. From there, I witnessed the egregious violence executed by Israel (backed by US funding) in "Operation Cast Lead" upon the people of Gaza. I was also witness to the way in which local reports were spun through the international media bias in attempts to minimize the crimes against humanity that are regularly perpetrated and rationalized as acts of defense.

I believe true resistance comes from the keeping of traditions, artistic expressions and cultural values in the face of the oppressive terror-tactics used to suppress voices of conscience. The natural power of cultural resistance, empowerment and connection to the land will eventually overcome the imperialistic aggression of our current governments. I'm tired of war being profitable and marketed, as well as the international community's silent complicity and unwillingness to defend the rights of all peoples. I do not support governments' use of violent militaristic repression to hide it's own impotence under the guise of "securing interests", resulting in the suffering and exploitation of many. I have dedicated my life's work to respect and support the sovereignty and self-determination of peoples from all tribes and nations. I am committed to securing rights, access to basic needs and safety for all individuals; and live my life in opposition to the popular belief that occupation, war and genocide are ever justifiable.



**Linda Durham – Santa Fe, NM**

For most of her sixty-eight years, Linda Durham has been (by her own description) “a freelance cultural explorer”. She is the founder and director of Linda Durham Contemporary Art—a top gallery in the West for more than thirty years. Durham is a writer and frequent lecturer on topics including art, travel, business and women’s issues. She is an adjunct professor at Santa Fe Community College; a founding board member of the Santa Fe World Affairs Forum; a member of Another Jewish Voice and the Executive Director of The Wonder Institute—a new and private “think tank” for the exploration and development of ideas that promote peace and understanding among all peoples. An independent traveler, Durham has visited some of the most off-the-beaten-path countries and regions in the World. At age sixty, she successfully climbed Mount Kilimanjaro. As a member of two Code Pink Delegations, Durham traveled to Baghdad in 2004 and to Gaza in 2009. In April of this year, she returned from her ninth trip to Myanmar where she has operated as a cultural advocate and liaison between the artists of that country and the United States. Durham is a collector of Art and fine books. She is the mother of two children: a daughter who is a history professor and a son who is a “celebrity chef”. She has one granddaughter (a budding ballerina).



**Debra Ellis – Santa Cruz, CA**

I have had the privilege of living comfortably while others have not. As a mother I was able to raise a daughter without fear of bombings, terror, or scarcity of any kind. Many mothers in Gaza, the West Bank, and Israel cannot make this claim. I am committed to preserving the sanctity of human life and restoring human dignity. I am both humbled and honored to join an international community of diverse people who insist on upholding international law even when their governments refuse to do so.

My motivation to participate in the flotilla comes from the human capacity to love. The choice to care for fellow human beings is transformative under de-humanizing conditions; it alters dynamics of power. This mission is an opportunity to put these principals and this knowledge into direct action. I firmly believe that the human crisis in Gaza, and throughout Palestine, can be altered through collective nonviolent action.

As an employee at the University of California and a member of the Santa Cruz community, I am fortunate to work with community members, students, staff, and faculty, dedicated to supporting



diversity and social justice in practice, not just promise. I work with individuals who are keenly aware of, and dedicated to changing, the inhumane conditions imposed on the Palestinians living in Gaza.



**Hedy Epstein – St. Louis, MO**

Hedy Epstein was born in Germany in 1924. She was 8 years old when Hitler came to power in 1933. In 1939, she left on a Kindertransport (children’s transport) for England. Her parents and other family members perished during the Holocaust. After World War II she returned to Germany and worked as a research analyst at the Nuremberg trial of the Nazi doctors who performed medical experiments on concentration camp inmates.

Epstein came to the U.S. in 1948, and quickly became involved in civil rights, human rights and peace related issues, both professionally and in her personal life. In 1989, she visited Guatemala, Nicaragua and Cambodia as a peace delegate. Since 2003, she has visited the Israeli occupied West Bank five times, and has made four attempts to visit Gaza by land and sea. She has written and traveled extensively in the U.S. and Europe to speak about social justice issues, with an emphasis on the Israel/Palestine issue. In 1999, her autobiography – “Erinnern ist nicht genug” (Remembering is Not Enough) was published in German, in Germany.

Epstein will be on the U.S. Boat to Gaza, part of Flotilla 2, her fifth attempt to reach Gaza.



**Steven Fake – New Orleans, LA**

Steve Fake is an activist and coauthor of “The Scramble For Africa: Darfur – Intervention and the USA,” (2009). He has written extensively on foreign policy and been active in organizing around social justice issues for many years. In 2007, he participated in a program of international peace observation and accompaniment in an autonomous indigenous community in Chiapas, Mexico through the Fray Bartolome Center for Human Rights. He is a member of the Industrial Workers of the World, Amnesty International USA, and Workers Solidarity Alliance.

I feel compelled to contribute to the Freedom Flotilla II as a means of mitigating the destructive violence perpetuated by the tax dollars of U.S. citizens. For many years, U.S. government policy has been the principal road block to peace between Israelis and Palestinians. It is a moral imperative for Americans to aid in the work of projects like Gaza-bound vessel, *The Audacity of*

*Hope.* For me, the principal attraction of the Free Gaza Movement is its demonstrated effectiveness at dramatizing the unjust policies of the Israeli government towards the Palestinian people. The first Freedom Flotilla proved to be a highly efficacious tool for raising global awareness about the U.S.-Israeli siege on Gaza and willingness to perpetrate violence upon unarmed civilians.



**Ridgely Fuller – Waltham, MA**

During my first significant trip to Gaza, John Ging, former head of the UN refugee aid effort in Gaza reflected that citizens of the world need to step in when their governments fail to resolve critical international issues. The Second Freedom Flotilla with thousands of world citizens representing some 22 countries represent that effort: coming together to insist that Israel ends its illegal blockade of Gaza and to demand that international law and human rights be applied equally to all people.

I am a social worker with an additional master's degree in international relations whose passion for Palestine developed during my first trip to the area in 2002. This study trip was inspired by my questioning the Jewish narrative deeply ingrained into my persona as the result of living in Germany and Holland as a child. I simply couldn't believe that a people who had suffered so much could condone the massive violations of Palestinian human rights that had begun to appear in the media: the theft of land, the bulldozing of homes and the breaking of Palestinian children's' arms . My first witness trip was then followed by others: an International Women's Human Rights marched organized by Israeli and Palestinian women in 2003 and 2.5 months in the West Bank of Palestine in 2008. As a social worker interested in children I also traveled with Code Pink to witness the effect of the Israeli invasion on Gaza youth in 2009 and returned in 2010 to work with mental health workers and young adults building resiliency in the Gaza youth.

On a personal note, I am proud to be a member of the Freedom Flotilla and sail on the *US The Audacity of Hope* in the name of equality for all people; for the young adults of Gaza who, living in a virtual prison, have given up their own dreams to cheerfully rebuild their people with incredible inner resources and for the many, many Americans whose demands of justice for Palestine are ignored by our own government.



**Megan Horan – Seattle, WA**



We are all called many things by many people, and I am certainly no exception. I am called “daughter” by my parents and “sister” by my nine brothers and sisters. I am called “aunt” by my fourteen nieces and nephews and “friend” by the people I have been fortunate enough to get to know all around the globe. All of these are who I am to others, and I am equally proud of each and every one, but the one I personally feel is most accurate is “global citizen.” I am fully dedicated to not only bringing aid to Gaza with the help of everyone else involved in this undertaking, I am also committed to bringing what I learn from the experience back to everyone I know who is less than aware of the persecution and oppression being carried out on a daily basis against the Palestinians. I have always been a person with an unwavering focus on what I believe in and there is nothing I believe in more passionately right now than freedom and justice for the Palestinians, and I vow to do my part to make those things and more happen. I am Megan Horan, and I stand in firm solidarity with the Palestinian people.



**Kathy Kelly – Chicago, IL**

Kathy Kelly, 58, co-coordinates Voices for Creative Nonviolence, ([www.vcnv.org](http://www.vcnv.org)) a campaign to end U.S. military and economic warfare. Since May of 2010, she traveled to Afghanistan four times, with delegations intent on learning more about conditions faced by ordinary people in Afghanistan, a country afflicted by three decades of warfare. Voices for Creative Nonviolence has been working closely with the Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers in search of non-military solutions to end the war. In 2009, she lived in Gaza during the Operation Cast Lead bombing. She was also in Lebanon during and after the 2006 Israeli assaults on southern Lebanon.

From 1996 – 2003, Voices activists formed 70 delegations that openly defied economic sanctions by bringing medicines to children and families in Iraq. Kathy and her companions lived in Baghdad throughout the 2003 “Shock and Awe” bombing. She was sentenced to one year in federal prison for planting corn on nuclear missile silo sites (1988-89) and spent three months in prison, in 2004, for crossing the line at Fort Benning’s military training school. She and her companions at the Voices home/office in Chicago believe that non-violence necessarily involves simplicity, service, sharing of resources and non-violent direct action in resistance to war and oppression.

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### **Kit Kittredge – Quilcene, WA**

I am a 53 year old mother, grandmother, peace activist working with CodePink, Seattle MidEast Awareness Campaign, VFP, Ground Zero Center for Nonviolence. I have helped lead six delegations to Gaza in the last two years. We made it five times! I work as a massage therapist and volunteer as an EMT/Firefighter and have an organic garden where I play with my

grandkids. I am passionate about Peace and work in the schools and communities to help educate and promote social justice. I look forward to continuing this process aboard The Audacity of Hope and believe all our efforts contribute to justice for Palestine and the world!



**Libor Kožnar – New Britain, CT**

Libor grew up as an artist/activist in the Czech Republic where he in 1992 joined environmental-indigenous-feminist-animal rights ANTI-war/globalization/racist/ sexist/homophobic/ oppression/ablist/classist/transphobic, xenophobia, Islamophobic, anti-Semitic movement, became a vegetarian and begun to work towards more just and equitable world. After receiving diploma in Operational Engineering Libor refused to serve in Czech military and became conscientious objector.

At the Central Connecticut State University he received degree in International Marketing. He is a cofounder of Art And Struggle (artist & activist collective) and Vice-chair of Middle East Crisis Committee which runs a weekly TV program called The Struggle – a grassroots media production covering human rights issues from the Middle East and Outwards.

Libor, a multiple media artist-activist, has been exhibiting, participating and organizing social justice events with likeminded artist/activists periodically (Far From Ordinary, Uprising, Anti-Imperialist-People's Soccer Tournament, Israeli Apartheid Week Art Festival and many others). In the fall 2010 he won a 5k Run Race for Tarek Mehana & Leonard Peltier.



**G. Kaleo Larson – Northern CA**

Garrett “Kaleo” Irving Hjalmar Larson is a social activist and a musician. He has played with the Sierra Symphony, the Ukiah Symphony, and numerous r&b, funk and jazz bands. He currently plays with the Symphony of the Redwoods in Mendocino, California. Born in Hawaii, Mr. Larson was educated in public school in San Francisco and attended City College and Skyline Community College before being drafted into the Viet Nam War. After returning from the war, Mr. Larson became a journeyman plumber with Local 38 Union in San Francisco and later worked as an Emergency Medical Technician in Santa Rosa; he currently serves as assistant to Alice Walker. Mr. Larson's work with Ms. Walker in support of human rights has taken him to places such as Gaza, Thailand, Burma, Jordan, Egypt, India, South Africa and Iceland, as well as

throughout the United States and Mexico.

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**Richard Levy – New York, NY**

Richard Levy had his bar mitzvah in 1955 at the Genesis Hebrew Center in Yonkers, New York. Richard is the former president of the North East District of the B'nai Brith Youth Organization. A graduate of Cornell U. and the NYU School of Law, he has practiced labor and civil rights law for more than 40 years. Richard was one of the attorneys challenging the destruction—by the Weisenthal Center and the Israeli government—of the ancient landmark Mamilla (Muslim) Cemetery in West Jerusalem. He is a senior partner at the Levy Ratner, PC. law firm in NYC. Richard is married to Jane Hirschmann (author, therapist, activist) and has 3 daughters Kate 31 (med student UCSF), Nell 31 (union organizer, teacher, law student), Leta 24 (actor, dancer, activist). He boards the boat believing that Israel's victimization of the Palestinian people has not only violated human rights and international laws but has proven the least effective path to peace and security for both peoples.



**Richard Lopez – Olympia, WA**

Dear friends of Palestine, my name is Richard Lopez, I live in Olympia, Washington in the Unites States of America. I have one-hard working wife and six-awesome kids, of which, one of them has died. I know what it means to feel pain. I have lost up to 500-close friends at one time because I just couldn't agree. Yet, with all my pain of broken relationships, I cannot even know the pain you must feel when like a bomb hits your kids' bedroom and your children are dead. I have learned how to play music and I have received training to be a safe space to hear your voice and then, to tell you..."We love you." I represent the best hope from around the globe and from a small town that really cares about you and is with you. We want to stop by and say, "hello," drink some coffee or tea, share good music and then hug you. We're hopping on a boat, meet us at the beach. We will see you very soon.

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**Ken Mayers – Santa Fe, NM**

Ken Mayers was commissioned as an officer in the United States Marine Corps upon his graduation from Princeton in 1958. He resigned that commission at the end of 1966 in disgust with American foreign policy and returned to the University of California at Berkeley where he earned his Ph.D. in Political Science. His doctoral dissertation was a policy analysis of minority business enterprise. He has been a peace and justice activist ever since, at the same time progressing through four successive careers. He taught political economy at Bennington College for six years, then worked in an interdisciplinary “skunk works” at Digital Equipment Corporation for 13 years followed by eight years as an independent consultant. For the past 12 years he has been the director of member relations for two international professional alliances. In the early 1980’s he and his late wife founded the Bennington VT chapter of the Beyond War Movement. In 1986 he joined Veterans for Peace (VFP) and in 2002 he founded the Santa Fe Chapter of VFP. He served on VFP’s national board of directors from 2004 to 2009, including five years as national treasurer. In December of 2009, Ken was part of the international Gaza Freedom March that got stuck in Cairo and protested in Tahrir Square and other Cairo locations for a week. He is currently a member of VFP’s Israel-Palestine Working Group. Ken is a fourth generation American of Jewish descent (non-practicing). His mother’s extended family lost at least 17 members in the holocaust. Ken is convinced that the Israeli government has learned the wrong lessons from those tragic years. He wants to demonstrate to his Palestinian brothers and sisters that even someone in his situation supports their desire for freedom. Since the government of Egypt turned him back from Gaza a year ago, he is determined to try again now.



**Ray McGovern – Arlington, VA**

An Army infantry/intelligence officer in the early 60s, Ray McGovern then served as a CIA analyst from the administration of John F. Kennedy to that of George H. W. Bush. Under President Ronald Reagan, McGovern briefed the President’s Daily Brief and other intelligence one-on-one to Vice President Bush and other senior officials. Ray now works with Tell the Word, a faith-based ministry in inner-city Washington. Born before WW-II, he experienced what happens when intimidated majorities shield their eyes from injustices like the illegal blockade of Gaza and the internment of 1.5 million Palestinians. “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere,” wrote Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He was, of course, right. And so was Gen. David Petraeus in warning Congress last year that the conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians “foments anti-American sentiment, due to a perception of U.S. favoritism for Israel” [and that]

“militant groups exploit that anger to mobilize support.”

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**Gail Miller – New York, NY**

Gail is a proud crone, elder, woman of a certain age, grandmother of nine. Social Worker by profession, she has worked with children, adolescents, and families in mental health and in education for 40 years. She is a member of the advisory committee for U.S. medical students on full scholarship at the Latin American School of Medicine in Havana, Cuba. Having visited the West Bank and Gaza, she knows what occupation looks like and is grateful for the opportunity to travel with U.S. citizens to open the sea-lanes to Gaza. Our government supports, encourages and funds the blockade and siege of Gaza at the same time as it has attempted in vain to embargo Cuba for 50 years. These policies belie the words my grandchildren recite in their classes: “with liberty and justice for all”. We sail for justice, to break the blockade and to end the occupation of Palestine.

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**Robert Naiman – Urbana, IL**

I am the Policy Director of Just Foreign Policy ([www.justforeignpolicy.org](http://www.justforeignpolicy.org)), which works to reform U.S. foreign policy so that it reflects the values and interests of the majority of Americans and so that the U.S. complies fully with international law and supports peace, diplomacy and negotiated resolutions of conflict rather than more war. The blockade of Gaza violates international laws and norms against the use of collective punishment against a civilian population, and the U.S. government is clearly complicit in this crime. In addition, the associated U.S.-led diplomatic embargo of Hamas is an obstacle to Palestinian self-determination and is also an obstacle to a just, negotiated resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I’m also concerned that the present U.S. policy could lead to yet another war in the region. I’m participating in this mission to call attention to the suffering of civilians in Gaza under the blockade and to press for U.S. policy to change to support a realistic, just, negotiated resolution to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

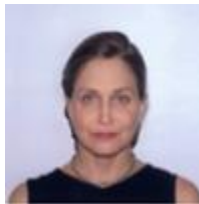
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**Henry Norr – Berkeley, CA**

Henry Norr, 65, is a retired journalist and activist. As a child going to Hebrew school and Sunday school at a Conservative Jewish temple in northern Massachusetts, he collected nickels and dimes for the Jewish National Fund – money he now realizes was used largely to cover up the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians. Since 2002, he has spent a total of six months as a human-rights volunteer in the occupied Palestinian territories, including stints with the International Solidarity Movement in the Gaza Strip, in the Wall-divided West Bank village of Jayyous, and in the Tel Rumeida neighborhood of Hebron, where Jewish settlers daily terrorize Palestinian residents. He was fired from his job as a technology columnist with the San Francisco Chronicle in 2003 in response to his support for Palestinian rights and his arrest in a demonstration opposing the U.S. attack on Iraq.

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**Ann Petter – New York, NY**

Before she began graduate studies in International Affairs, Ann practiced graphic design for over 30 years; thus qualifying for membership in *Women of a Certain Age* (WCA). She follows Hedy Epstein and Gail Miller on a journey WCA began in 2004.

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**Gabriel Matthew Schivone – Tucson, AZ**

Gabriel Matthew Schivone is a Chicano-Jewish American and undergraduate student who was born in Tucson, Arizona. He is a volunteer with prominent humanitarian/migrant-rights organization, No More Deaths/No Más Muertes, which works to end death and suffering on the US/Mexico border and throughout Arizona. He is also coordinator of AZ Jewish Voice for Peace. He draws strength and resolve to join Flotilla 2 from, among other areas, the marvelous words of Henry Thoreau: “Cast your whole vote, not a strip of paper merely, but your whole influence. A minority is powerless while it conforms to the majority—it is not even a minority then—but it is irresistible when it clogs by its whole weight.”





**Kathy Sheetz – Richmond, CA**

Kathy Sheetz, 64, is a Registered Nurse with a master's degree in Sustainable Development, focusing on food security. She has worked on human rights, health and food security, most often in Haiti. This led her to study the circumstances faced by Palestinians in their occupied homelands. She found their situation so profoundly disturbing she felt compelled by conscience to join other nonviolent, human rights activists from all walks of life and from around the world, to focus on the Palestinian issue. Kathy and her daughter Courtney sailed with Free Gaza on the first voyage, arriving in Gaza in August 2008.

In two later attempts to enter Gaza by sea, June 2009 and May 2010 (Freedom Flotilla1) she was kidnapped, sent to an Israeli prison and later deported. Kathy and her daughter also attended the January 2010 Gaza Freedom March in Cairo. They were proud signatories of “the Cairo Declaration.” She has 3 adult children and 5 beautiful grandchildren.



**Max Suchan – Chicago, IL**

Max Suchan is a 22-year-old social justice activist. Recently graduated from Beloit College in Wisconsin, Max has lived and worked in the occupied West Bank during three trips to the region between 2007 and 2010. While spending a semester studying at Birzeit University, near Ramallah, Max worked alongside students who challenged Israeli policies that hindered aspects of the Palestinian education system. He also participated in the Gaza Freedom March initiative, which attempted to reach Gaza via Egypt at the end of 2009. Max currently works with the Palestine Solidarity Project, a Palestinian-led initiative that organizes unarmed resistance to the occupation, which is based in the village of Beit Ommar.



**Brad Taylor – New York, NY**

A construction contractor with a small business in New York City, he is a dad, a social justice

activist, and a volunteer radio producer with the LGBT radio show Out-FM on WBAI. His focus on the intersection between queer politics and other freedom struggles has brought him to concentrate on the urgency of free Palestine. “In Palestine, as elsewhere in the Middle East, the spirit of the Arab Spring is rising. Now is the time for Americans to stand up – in real life – for the freedom and democracy that we talk about.”



**Len Tsou – New City, NY**

For the past eight years, I have been active in the Rockland Coalition for Peace and Justice, Rockland County, New York, holding weekly peace vigils, among other activities, to end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Knowing that the Palestine issue is one of the main causes of these two wars, I feel it is important to raise public awareness of the injustice of the Gaza blockade in the international community.



**Alice Walker – Northern CA**

Alice Walker is an internationally celebrated author, poet and activist whose books include seven novels, four collections of short stories, four children’s books, and volumes of essays and poetry. She’s best known for *The Color Purple*, the 1983 novel for which she won the Pulitzer Prize—the first African American woman to win the Pulitzer Prize in Fiction—and the National Book Award. The award-winning novel served as the inspiration for Steven Spielberg’s 1985 film and was adapted for the stage, opening at New York City’s Broadway Theatre in 2005, and capturing a Tony Award for best leading actress in a musical in 2006.

Walker has written many additional best sellers; among them, *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992), which detailed the devastating effects of female genital mutilation and led to the 1993 documentary “Warrior Marks,” a collaboration with the British-Indian filmmaker Pratibha Parmar, and *We are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For: Inner Light in a Time of Darkness*. (2009). Her work has been translated into more than two dozen languages, and her books have sold more than fifteen million copies. Along with the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award, Walker’s awards and fellowships include a Guggenheim Fellowship and a residency at Yaddo. In 2006, she was honored as one of the inaugural inductees into the California Hall of Fame. In 2007, her archives were opened to the public at Emory University. In 2010 she presented the key note address at The 11th Annual Steve Biko Lecture at the University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa, and was awarded the Lennon/Ono Peace Grant in Reykjavik,

Iceland. (Walker donated this latter award to an orphanage for the children of AIDS victims in East Africa.)

Walker's most recent works are: *Overcoming Speechlessness: A Poet Encounters the Horror in Rwanda, Eastern Congo and Palestine/Israel*; *Hard Times Require Furious Dancing*; *The World Has Changed: Conversations with Alice Walker*; and *The Chicken Chronicles: Sitting With the Angels Who Have Returned With My Memories, a Memoir*. She also writes regularly on her blog site at [www.alicewalkersgarden.com](http://www.alicewalkersgarden.com)

Walker has been an activist all of her adult life, and believes that learning to extend the range of our compassion is activity and work available to all. She is a staunch defender not only of human rights, but of the rights of all living beings. She is one of the world's most prolific writers, yet tirelessly continues to travel the world to literally stand on the side of the poor, and the economically, spiritually and politically oppressed. She also stands, however, on the side of the revolutionaries, teachers and leaders who seek change and transformation of the world. Upon returning from Gaza in 2008, Walker said, "*Going to Gaza was our opportunity to remind the people of Gaza and ourselves that we belong to the same world: the world where grief is not only acknowledged, but shared; where we see injustice and call it by its name; where we see suffering and know the one who stands and sees is also harmed, but not nearly so much as the one who stands and sees and says and does nothing.*"



**Paki Wieland – Northampton, MA**

I am 67 years old, retired social worker/graduate school faculty living in Northampton, Massachusetts, who in contemplating life in response to the question posed by Mary Oliver, what to do with, "this one precious life..." sought to join the people on the flotilla to Gaza. The purpose of my going is to bring before the international community the injustice and thereby realize the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (to lend my weight to bend) "the arc of humanity toward justice."

I am moved by the Native American proverb, "When the Grandmothers speak, the land will heal." Knowing that speaking refers to both our words and our actions, I attempt to make present justice- making through creativity. I view my work today as mystical activism/active mysticism. One might call it engaged Buddhism, living Matthew 25: 35-40, or simply responding to the spirit, to choose life.

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**Ann Wright – Honolulu, HI**

Ann is a retired US Army Colonel and a former US diplomat who served in Nicaragua, Grenada, Somalia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Sierra Leone, Micronesia, Afghanistan and Mongolia. She resigned in 2003 in opposition to the Iraq war. She was in Gaza three times in 2009 after the 22 day Israeli attack and helped organize the Gaza Freedom March that brought 1300 persons from 55 countries to Cairo. She is an organizer of the US Boat to Gaza.

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## **CREW OF THE AUDACITY OF HOPE**

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### **John Klusmire**

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**David K. Schermerhorn**

I am David K. Schermerhorn, 81, living on an island 75 miles north of Seattle, WA. I have followed the plight of the Palestinians with increasing concern since 1967. In 2008, I joined the crew of the Free Gaza, an old converted fishing boat that, together with an equally ancient boat, Liberty, were the first vessels to break the siege of Gaza imposed by the Israelis for 40 plus years. Forty-four passengers and crew joined in that demonstration of hope and solidarity under the auspices of the Free Gaza Movement. I returned twice more in 2008, was thwarted in 2009, and was captured by the Israelis during the 2010 Flotilla. In addition to Palestinian issues, I was involved in actions against the Vietnam and Iraq wars; active support for immigration reform; civil rights issues through ACLU committees. For 35 years, I was a film producer working primarily in TV commercials. In my spare time, I have made 12 trips to the Arctic from Siberia to Greenland with a trip to North Pole in 2006. Married 50 years. Two children. Three grandchildren.

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**Yonatan Shapira**

I was a captain in the Israeli Air Force and a Black-Hawk Pilot until 2003 when together with other pilots I initiated the pilots' letter and refused to take part in the crimes of the occupation. Today I am a member of Boycott, a group of Israeli citizens who are actively supporting the Palestinian call for Boycott Divestment and Sanctions from within. I have a Master degree in Peace and Conflict Studies, I facilitate dialogue groups and volunteer as a sailing instructor for children with disabilities. I've been sailing since I was a child and in September of 2010 I was a crew member on the Jewish boat to Gaza that was intercepted by the Israeli Navy. I work as a commercial pilot in the US and am still dreaming to be a musician.

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### **David Smith**

From 1986 to 1992 David worked with a variety of environmental organizations dealing with a range of issues from nuclear to whaling. He was the Marine Engineer and the on board ship campaigner for Greenpeace Marine Division, Amsterdam with involvement in many world-wide campaigns. He obtained his UK Certificate Of Competency (Marine Engineer Officer) Class 4 (Motorship) in 1990. For 10 months he helped develop and carry out the UK and European direct action awareness/fund-raising tour flying Greenpeace hot air balloon. Between 1992 and 1994, David conceived, financed and set up the charity "Wings For Wildlife". The project involved equipping the Government of Tanzania Department of Wildlife with a number of Very Light Aircraft (VLA's) for elephant anti-poaching patrols in the Selous National Game Reserve.

Between 1994 and 2003 David was involved in the formation of the marine arm of a not-for-profit charitable organization. He conceived, formulated and oversaw 'Project Skorprios' – including the Rapid Environmental Disaster Response & Rescue (R.E.'D.R.Res) Units. In 1997 he instigated and prosecuted a legal challenge to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to stop the renewal of whaling in North American Pacific waters. Lost original case in the 9th Circuit but won on appeal in 2000.

Since 2003 David has been extensively trained and certified in fire extinguishing, as well as learning many aspects of business planning: legal issues, market research, sales & marketing, financial management, forecasting techniques, record keeping and health & safety. He has a new business (Safety Equipment & Fire Extinguishers [S.A.F.E.]) that is set up to service and maintain portable fire extinguishing equipment, mainly to charitable and voluntary organizations but open to any business. Voluntary work includes work on the Free Gaza ship Rachel Corrie and the JFJFP boat (Jewish Boat To Gaza).

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