



Mid Island War Resisters Support Campaign Newsletter

Time with the Keys

By Tim Richard

A few nights back, I had the pleasure of visiting the Key family over on Gabriola Island. Being an Iraq war resister myself, it was great to visit with someone that I had something in common with. Josh picked me up from the ferry terminal in the van that, thanks to the support from the war resister community, the Key family was able to purchase and buy insurance on. Finding a suitable vehicle that will fit a family of six was no easy task, Josh later explained to me. They were very lucky to find this van, and were very grateful to all of our supporters for their help.

The Key residence is a modest yet comfortable house that is bustling with activity that one would expect with 7 people (Cliff, one of my fellow resisters, has been staying at the Key house). The little ones were busy doing what young children do best, arguing over a puzzle and running amuck. Brandi, Josh's wife, being the attentive mother she is, was busy not only attending to the children's needs, but also seeing to the comfort of her guest. Josh and I sat for a while, and talked a little bit about his experiences in Iraq. Both Brandi and Josh constantly expressed gratitude for all that the War Resister supporters have been able to do for them. Josh was working hard on finding work, and is going to start work in landscaping along with Cliff. As if watching after 4 kids isn't enough, Brandi has been actively seeking out odd jobs, such as house cleaning.

We sat, talked, and laughed about politics, things we found different about living in Canada (I'm sorry, but I can't get used to the idea of it being a "touk". It's a hat!), and how politics were much different up in Canada. We talked about how living in a new country has changed our perspectives of the world, and how we too hoped to be able to be a positive force for change. Then of course, Zach (the eldest of the Key children) couldn't resist showing us all the dental work that he had received in the past few weeks. He even had spacers put in, he exclaimed. This, of course, was also thanks to the generosity of the support group.

After a brief meal, I had to return to the mainland. They invited me back anytime, and I will take them up on that offer. The Keys are a very modest and generous family, and I was glad I could spend some time with them. I was glad to see that things were finally starting to happen for them, through the hard work of Brandi and Josh, and through the continuing support of the War Resister Support Group of Nanaimo. The task of supporting a household with 7 people isn't an easy one, and I am personally grateful for everything that the generosity of the Canadian people has been able to provide for my new-found friends.



Joshua Key and his family - photo credit wsws.org

War Resister Benefit Concert

St. Andrew's Church (Wesley St)
Sunday afternoon, April 30th

Featuring **Tim Richard, with Devon Joiner
& Rachel Iwaasa**

Suggested Donation: \$10.

This concert is a joint fundraiser for the church and for the War Resisters Support group. Tim Richard, a young U.S. War Resister, will sing, accompanied by Devon Joiner, a gifted local teenage pianist. Rachel Iwaasa is a doctoral student at UBC.

We would like to thank everyone who has made contributions to our campaign, whether through making a donation, fundraising, or working directly with one of our War Resisters. It will take all of us to make this campaign successful.

Thank You All

Rally to protest the Occupation of Iraq

All the Vancouver Island War Resisters and Peace & Justice groups will be joining forces for the annual rally to protest the occupation of Iraq. This rally will take place at the Comox Air Base on Saturday, **March 18, at 1 PM** at the base gates. Everyone is welcome to bring signs and banners.

Carpools are being arranged from Nanaimo. If you have room in your vehicle, or would like to ride with someone else, call Joan at 758-8973 or email to brian.wallace@shaw.ca

A brief note from Tim

To explain what has happened to me in the past few months would require me to write a book (in fact, that is something that I am seriously considering at this time). Needless to say, I am an Iraq war resister who has arrived in Canada, and I couldn't be happier to be here.

I was training in Camp Shelby, Mississippi, getting ready to go to war with an enemy I hadn't seen, heard, or hated. I felt that the war in Iraq was immoral, and that I couldn't kill anyone I didn't feel was a threat to me, my nation, or my family. I was also feeling quite betrayed by the military to begin with, because I had signed up for six years to serve in the Iowa Army National Guard, and my six years were up. They activated me to go on this mission without my permission, and extended my contract past the year 2031. That's not a typo.

Once I found out that I am a Canadian citizen (my father is Canadian, but I was born in the US), I decided to escape. After a series of lucky coincidences, I managed to escape what I'd imagine prison must be like. I came here to Nanaimo, since my mother lives here, and I've been here since November.

Now that I am here, I am trying to rebuild my life. I am fighting with Immigration to recognise my status so I can return to college and finish my degree in Choral Music Education and Vocal Music Performance. In the meantime, I have opened up my own voice studio at the Nanaimo Conservatory of Music and am actively seeking new students. Every day, I am grateful to the War Resisters of Nanaimo for all their help, not just logistical, but moral support. Their mission is not only one of peace, but one of social justice and humanitarianism. I can be contacted at timrichard99@yahoo.ca if you would like to hear more of my story, or you can contact the war resister support group to find out if I have any upcoming events that I will be at.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you.

Tim Richard

"WE OWE THEM OUR THANKS"

Jim Manly

We call ourselves the War Resisters Support Group; we have committed ourselves to giving support to young Americans who refuse to take part in George Bush's illegal and immoral war against the people of Iraq. Well and good—they need our support: politically, socially and financially. But as we work with others in the community to give this support it is easy for us to lose sight of the larger fact that the War Resisters are supporting us. They support us in our efforts

to oppose the war and to move our world to peace. We have marched and protested, written letters, signed petitions and raised money. The War Resisters have put their lives and futures on the line.

It's rather like the old story of the chickens who wanted to show appreciation to Farmer Brown. One of the chickens proposed to give him a great bacon and egg breakfast. "That's fine for you," said the pig. "You're willing to make a contribution but what you're asking from me is total commitment."

By coming to Canada and escaping the immoral demands placed upon them by the United States military, the War Resisters have made a total commitment. This commitment has not been without trauma and we should not be surprised to find that it sometimes leaves them emotionally fragile and depressed. They have left behind family and friends. They have sacrificed career and educational prospects. They have brought down upon their heads scorn and abuse even from friends and loved ones. In doing so they have made a great witness against the hatred and violence of war and in favour of a peaceful world. We owe them our thanks.

Recently Josh Key was interviewed by Jeff Riley, a writer for the World Socialist Web Site. Below you will find some excerpts from the story but we encourage you, if you have access to the Internet to read the full article at:

<http://www.wsws.org/articles/2005/nov2005/sold-n15.shtml>.

A Soldiers Story

by Jeff Riley

Born in 1978 in Guthrie, Oklahoma, Joshua Key grew up on a ranch and dreamed of becoming a welder, but didn't have the money to go through school to gain his certification. He met his future wife Brandi at the age of 18, and together they had two children with one more on the way when he met an Army recruiter in February 2002. The recruiters promised him that he would be assigned as bridge-builder in a non-deployable unit and assured him that he would never see combat.

Key would later realise that the recruiters knew exactly what to say to him, appealing to his lack of job security and health care for himself and his family. Taking their assurances—that they would never send the father of three small children into combat and that he could acquire the skills needed for his trade—at face value, he felt joining the Army was a sound decision.

Key went off to boot camp at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri by the end of May 2002, and after nine weeks he was stationed at Fort Carson, Colorado with the 43rd Company of Combat Engineers in a rapid deployment unit. By the time he arrived, troops were already being prepared to ship out to Kuwait in preparation for the invasion of Iraq.

"I immediately had the feeling that I was going to go despite all of their promises. As soon as they started to deploy large numbers of troops to Kuwait, I was one of the first to leave my base. I ended up in Iraq one month after the invasion in April of 2003," Key recalled.

"I was with the 43rd Combat Engineer Company 2/3 ARC [Armed Cavalry Regiment]. We were an asset to the Army because they could put us anywhere they wanted. Our main objective, at least what we thought it was when we first arrived, was to clear mines and explosives. But after we got there, that wasn't the case at all. We were never trained in how to raid houses and do traffic control points, or how to institute curfews throughout cities and make it work, but that's what we were doing. When we arrived we expected the war to be over because that's the way they made it sound. They told us that we were going to Ramadi, a city of 300,000 Iraqis. I think there was only one platoon of the 82nd Airborne there, and we were going in to keep control of the city."

"When we first arrived it was difficult to tell much from the expressions on the Iraqi people's faces—many people were coming out of their houses just sort of standing there as we would drive by," Key recalled.

"But then we learned that when Saddam was in power, if his military rolled through the city, if everyone didn't come out and run and cheer, his people would go into their houses and give them a reality check. It was mandatory for people to come out and cheer and clap. So it got to the point where we knew that's just what the people are used to doing out of obligation. So if they came out as we rolled through town, it was more because they didn't want anything to happen to them or their homes. It's what you would call habit—minus the clapping and cheering. You actually saw anger in their faces."

"The American government just calls them all terrorists and that's how they present it to the American public. Of course the American public is very much against the idea of terrorists ever since 9/11, so the government just focuses on that word, and that keeps the war going. They think that if they say that every American soldier that dies, that for all the boys and girls that are being killed, that they are being killed by terrorists, they can keep the American people behind it."

Key continued, "Even when I was there you're hearing all the time about insurgents coming in from Syria, 'they're coming in from Jordan, they're coming in from everywhere,' and there may be a few, but for the most part they are the farmers, they're the people whose homes you invaded for no reason and took their family members off to jail and destroyed their lives, maybe killed their son or their father and they want you out of their country. They look at us as being guilty of war crimes and we are. We impose killing, we detain them, we torture them—we're the ones that caused it all."

When he was given two weeks leave from Iraq in November 2003, Joshua and his wife and children climbed into a used

WAR RESISTERS SUPPORT CAMPAIGN
FINANCIAL REPORT, February 1, 2006.
Combining United for Peace and War Resisters Accounts

Income	
When we started, United For Peace had	472.
Donations & Pledges	
November	1,125.
December	1,955.
January	1,000.
Concert & auction Dec 8	1,368.
Gabriola film night Jan 12	100.
Total	<u>\$6,020.</u>

Expenditure	
General WR support	
November household supplies	\$250.
December household supplies	950.
January rent and supplies	1,400.
February rent	800.
Car and Insurance Dec	1,800.
Concert Dec 8	95.
Total	<u>\$5,295.</u>

Currently available	\$725.
February pledges	395.
Total available in February	<u>\$1,120.</u>

Monthly Pledges: seven people have made pledges, some ongoing, some for 3 to 6 months.
Amounts pledged: Nov. \$150, Dec. \$345, Jan. \$395, Feb. \$395, Mar. \$345, Apr. \$375, May \$375, June \$200.
We must work to increase the number of pledges.

Note: Josh's old car packed it in November. Since looking for jobs and going to them on the Island was essential we made a special appeal and over \$2,000 was donated specifically for the car. This is included in the November-December donations. Josh was able to find a suitable one for \$800 and we paid for 1 year's insurance; total \$1,800. Extra money donated for the car will be used for general support.

Al Stewart

We would also like to acknowledge and thank the War Resisters Support Groups in central Canada and Victoria who have contributed financially to the support of War Resisters in our area.

car, left the base at Fort Carson and drove east. Key was a wanted man, and the FBI had already contacted his mother in Oklahoma, who hadn't seen her son since before his deployment in 2003. Agents threatened her with being charged with aiding and abetting a criminal. One day, Key logged onto the Internet and typed 'Deserter—Need Help.' He eventually made contact with the War Resisters League in Toronto and lawyer Jeffrey House, who advised the couple to wait for their soon-expected fourth child to be born before heading north.

About Nanaimo War Resisters Support Campaign: LET THEM STAY!

The War Resisters Support Campaign is a project of the ad hoc peace group United for Peace and Justice Nanaimo (UPJN), which organised substantial regional protest against the US invasion of Iraq from 2002 to 2004. UPJN credits itself with providing part of the pressure on then Prime Minister Chrétien which kept Canada from entering the war.

The **LET THEM STAY!** Campaign began with the arrival of the Key family in the area in the late fall of 2005. Committee members are mostly social justice activists of long standing in the area, who take the position that those who have come into our community seeking haven from intolerable conditions for objectors of conscience from the USA deserve our support just as much as their predecessors who resisted the war against Vietnam.

The aims of the campaign are to be of support to US war resisters in this area, including:

- raising funds for basic needs during early stages of arrival;
- help those who wish to stay with achieving citizenship status;
- political action to increase general support for such resisters;
- lobbying government and agencies for appropriate actions.

How to help

Deposit directly to the War Resisters Support account at any branch of the Coastal Community Credit Union OR Send cheques to that account c/o 7516C Lantzville Road, Lantzville, BC, V0R 2H0
Financial statements are available on request.

LET THEM STAY! PLEDGE FORM

I pledge WRS to pay:

\$10 \$20 \$30 \$40 \$50 Other monthly amount: \$_____ for a total of
2 3 4 5 6 months.

I enclose I will send a series of post-dated cheques to
WRS, c/o 7516C Lantzville Road, Lantzville, BC V0R 2H0.

or, I prefer to make a one time payment of \$_____

Make cheques payable to WRS or War Resisters Support.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Mailing address: _____

Please Note:

(1) You may change or cancel your payments at any time by sending written notice to WRS, c/o 7516C Lantzville Road, Lantzville, BC V0R 2H0

(2) We are not a Registered Charity so your receipts will not be good for Income Tax deductions