

Remembering Rachel

by Lin Nelson

Nothing I could say or write conveys the sadness and outrage I feel about Rachel's death. She has been a strong and steady presence for many of us, for those of us who've gotten to know her over the past few years ... And those who've known her since she was a little girl, when she took pleasure in the streams of Puget Sound, when she started to ask herself what it takes to find courage and when she started her life as a writer.

Many of us here at Evergreen worked with Rachel last year when she was involved in a yearlong academic program called Local Knowledge. In the beginning, she was quiet, an intense observer, and a passionate witness who saw deeply into the possibilities. I first got to know Rachel through her writings, writings which put me on high alert, that kept me up late at night with their intensity, beauty, determination and humor. Rachel was searching, always searching and open to the unexpected. She appreciated things that were not always apparent to others. She appreciated other students, who became devoted friends; with them she helped to make things possible.

In Memory of Rachel Corrie

by Peter Bohmer, faculty member

Rachel Corrie was an incredibly good person. I mourn and am very saddened by her murder on Sunday, March 16th, 2003. She was killed by a bulldozer as the Israeli military ran over her as she was protesting the destruction of Palestinian homes in Rafah in the Gaza Strip. Rachel, who was 23, grew up in Olympia, Washington. I originally met her when she was a student in the Options program at Lincoln Elementary school in 1989. She was a friend of my son and played on the same YMCA basketball team as my daughter. Rachel and I talked a lot the last two years and marched together at various demonstrations, for example, May Day 2002. Rachel was a totally caring and gentle person who loved life and was outraged by oppression wherever it took place and had become very active working for social justice and peace. Rachel was a very modest, courageous and responsible person. She was the heart and soul of the Olympia Movement for Justice and Peace, a group she had originally begun working with as part of her study in the Local Knowledge program taught by Anne Fischel and Lin Nelson at the Evergreen State College. Rachel was very active in opposing the U.S. "war against terror" and U.S. militarism. One project she threw her mind and body into was a September 11th, 2002 day of remembrance for the people killed at the World Trade center a year earlier and for the people killed by the U.S. military in Afghanistan over the following year. She was also involved in a speak-out against repression in the United States at Percival Landing in downtown Olympia. She got a lot of elementary school kids and classes to participate. Therefore, it is very fitting that the vigil on Sunday, March 16th, against the war in Iraq and to honor and mourn Rachel, was at Percival Landing. Close to 1000 people attended.

Rachel was a very reflective person who constantly thought about how to link together various groups working for justice, e.g., the labor movement and the peace movement. She volunteered at the Evergreen State College Labor Education and Research

Words from Rachel's Memorial

by Larry Mosqueda

Much has been said in the past week and today about Rachel Corrie as a young child, an artist and a college student. She excelled at all of these. At Evergreen, two of the major goals of education are "Personal Engagement" and "Linking Theory with Practice." Rachel excelled at these also. She was not content to merely learn about injustice in the world but also needed to do something about it. This was true locally where she would counsel low-income people, work to save the Labor Center at the College, or connect art and peace in the Procession of the Species.

Rachel and I worked very closely together in the Olympia Movement for Justice and Peace, the OMJP. As many people have said this week, she was the Heart and Soul of the Olympia Movement. She was also one of its hardest workers and smartest participants. She has been described as one who brings

Rachel was studious and poetic in how she learned about and shared her sense of local history. If she were here right now, she might try to convince you to read some little-known piece of home-grown writing by a local author; she might tell you that she had very different ideas than the author's, but that she learned a lot, it provoked her, it helped her make connections. That it made her think deeply about her community and other communities who are desperately trying to keep their history alive and write their future.

In June of last year, Rachel wrote:

"Studying the history of this area roots me. It makes me more conscious of myself and of people around me as actors in history ... We are startled to discover that the places that we live in are important ...

"History is motivating. We've certainly waded in the same water and wandered on the same beaches as very brave people. It makes bravery seem possible."

Many weeks ago she wrote to us that the children of Palestine could not go to the beach. There was bravery in Rachel as she walked those children to their school.

In June of last year, Rachel wrote about her sense of place here in Olympia:

"I look at this place now and I just want to do right by it. The Salmon beneath downtown and the people who came to drop-ins group and the creeks and the inlets and the people who were here first and my elementary school teachers and

at the Evergreen State College Center and played a major role in organizing a conference dealing with networking and strategies for justice and peace last spring, 2002. Another major concern of hers was to involve the local Olympia community not connected to Evergreen to the anti-war and economic and social justice issues and groups. Besides going to the Evergreen State College, Rachel also worked at BHR, a local mental health clinic and was active in her union, 1199, a part of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU).

Justice for the Palestinian people was one of many issues Rachel felt deeply about. She strongly opposed the Israeli occupation and supported a Palestinian state. For Rachel, feeling deeply always meant also doing something about her concerns. She had studied Arabic at Evergreen and decided to go to the Gaza strip in occupied Palestine for winter quarter. Part of her reasoning was that it was important to have international observers there as Israeli aggression was likely to increase when the U.S. attacked, bombed and invaded Iraq. She strongly opposed the U.S. war against Iraq. Rachel was aware of the dangers and risks of going to Gaza. She left Olympia on January 18th of this year, went to the West Bank and then Gaza, and threw herself fully into human rights, activism, and solidarity with the Palestinian people. She volunteered with the International Solidarity Movement, people from around the world who have been witnesses to Israeli attacks on Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza and involve themselves in non-violent protest against the Israeli occupation. Rachel had planned to return to Evergreen State College for spring quarter to finish her studies.

Rachel Corrie will not be coming back to Olympia. But let us all take a moment to reflect on what each of us can do to carry on her legacy by doing a little more to oppose the U.S. war against Iraq, support a Palestinian state, and further justice, equality and peace in the Middle East, around the world and in the U.S. Rachel Corrie was an ordinary and an extraordinary person.

my mom. No overwhelming desire to escape. No dissociation into factoids and trivia... Certainly no bored invention of mythologies to pass the time."

Many weeks ago Rachel left this place which she embraced with both

care and impatience and went to another place she had been carefully learning about, to make the community-to-community connections that she valued so much and was so good at. As Rachel said, she just wanted to do right by it.

people together and she certainly did. But it was not just the local residents; but she also brought people together through time and space.

One example. On September 11th, 2002 on the anniversary of 9-11, OMJP sponsored an all day vigil and remembrance for the victims in New York and the subsequent victims in Afghanistan. Rachel was in charge and did a great deal of the work. She arrived before 6 AM and stayed until all the work was done at 10 PM. She set up a mural art project where people could write their feelings and create art. She had arranged for some classes from Lincoln/Options Elementary School to attend and many children wrote and drew picture on the mural project, including many children who are here today.

Rachel not only had a profound impact on me, a 53-year-old teacher; she also had a profound impact on the lives of eight- and nine-year old students. I have no doubt that in the year 2060 some of the children who have been influenced by Rachel, in the past few years, will be telling their Grandchildren that they were proud to have known her, and that she was one of the inspirations that lead them to live a life for social justice. Rachel's Heart and Soul Lives on. Thank you Rachel.

april 10, 2003

the cooper point journal