

--- Grace Braley

It is a difficult time to celebrate *peace action*.

It is a complicated time to give honor with a plaque to one of the peace workers, and it is a challenge to accept it, but not a challenge to recognize the organization Peace Action Maine. Thank you for this honor.

If we can't gather together, where can we look together?

First, I'm grateful for this group of friends and peaceworkers with whom I could find a home here, some longtime **peaceorganizers** – Ursula and Bill, Wells, Selma and Hershel(emeritus), Christine, Bruce and MaryBeth, Rosalie, Morgana, Tom, Larry, Martha, Jacqui, Phil, Steve, Pat, Jessica and Stephen, Lisa and Mark, Lora Louise, Stan, Tina, Joe and Debra, Devon, Beth, Michael, Peggy, Anne and Eric, Ginny, Regis, Jason, Stan and Loukie (emeritus), Denny, Bob and Sally, Nora....and I leave so many people out, but name you anyway as part of my engagement after I left behind all my organizing and peacemaking friends at WEPAC in New York.

Thank you for calling me up, and let's celebrate.

Where we are today, some of us following our commitments and callings, while some of us wonder if anything does any good in a sense of a swamp that definitely needed cleaning but that has been poisoned and enlarged instead, to a more dismal swamp, until we wonder who is allowed to speak to whom....or maybe just the peepers right now. But there is a call to us as those who seek peace, and we hear it; we need to keep on speaking, to keep on sending the challenges toward a life without violence or threats, and to live forward with hope and creativity.

Those who know me, realize I like the creativity part. I loved asking Morgana to come sing at a pot luck, and with Phil and Steve to create that crazy event that held the Political Tent at Common Ground en thrall as we charged guests a dollar to throw slippers (remember George Bush in Iraq?) at our wooden cutouts representing Maine' contingency of war-making businesses?

Maybe Wells and Beth and Jacqui remember when Peace Action Maine gave me sanction to bring people around Back Cove with lights ten years after September 11. While the radio was so bad one had to turn it off for raising every ghoulish horror it could dream up, we went forth saying, "*It's Time for Light*" and people replied, "*Yes, this is what I want.*" Some asked us to do it again.

With Tina and others, I remember Peace Action Maine organized an incredible quality panel on the Middle East at USM, well attended by students and community.

With Martha bringing Lydia Wood (nuclearban.us) I tried to help present a strong voice for the Nuclear Ban, as a Peace Action Maine message, valuing the peace decree passed by the United Nations and

endorsed by a number of nations who realize it is the only way to go forward in a world that talks “can you top this” in nuclear threatening weapons everywhere.

So, thanks for remembering with me – and more as we move ahead.

Going forward, let's rise to the new challenges, and outdo some shouting crowds that can't be heard over the rest of the noise and pouting and failure. I mean we need to create new presentations and realize people want information for hope, and Peace Action Maine can join hands with others as we search for the road to something new and hopeful, from environmental methods to truth in media and elected bodies.

Let's have some fun at it, sing, dance, plant gardens, climb trees, shout hope from rooftops. If you don't drown a swamp, then you need to dry it up. If we haven't got them to stop spending all the money on pompous mercenary military practices and machines and parades, then we need to compete with them making costumes and ideas so different and so elegant and so beautiful that it gains support from the hopeful ones and others will follow.

We need to start songs that will be heard over the pathos of bad voting policy and show love toward good voting policy and new ideas that will be born.

OK, can we take our masks off yet? Thank you Peace Action Maine. Your voice is to be heard.