

It is very hard to describe Gerry in words after all he himself was a man of action. However, I met Gerry for the first time right after the riots in LA and the brutal beating of Rodney King. At that time the Gandhi Center for Non-Violence was just being established and Dr. Gandhi had just arrived in Memphis. Although, at that time, I didn't know the extent of Gerry's effort in establishing the center for non-violence at Christian Brothers College he expressed the difficulties in having Gandhi Institute at a Catholic institution. But that was Gerry, regardless of a person's faith he was always a brother for individuals who share in the nonviolent way of life.

The bond between us was further solidified after the first bombing of Baghdad. He shared with me the pride in his successful efforts to stop the "White" train carrying nuclear material from reaching its destination by simply staging a protest at the rail road track and stopping the train. His words were "if we have to lay down our lives on the track again to stop the military supply we should be ready for it." I knew at that time that he is a man of gigantic will for war deterrence. He was hoping that the train carrying the military supply to the bombing of Iraq would pass through Memphis so he could lay his body on the track again and stop the killing of the innocent civilians in Iraq.

For a man like me who grew up in civil war of Lebanon and had known nothing about peace except the phrase "if you want peace than be ready for war," Gerry shattered that phrase by simply sharing his thoughts with me. Just imagine the colossal strength that Gerry had. However the most powerful words that came from Gerry and had their impact on me came right after the cowardly attack of September 11, 2001. In meeting at the Peace and Justice Center Gerry said "This is the time of chaos where justice is mixed with vengeance and racism mixed with patriotism and we need to be closer to individuals like Nabil, he will go through hard times and we need to support him."

Later on when the PATRIOT Act was passed and I had to go register with immigration and was detained and subjected to threats of deportation Gerry was one of my brothers who organized a peaceful contingent of peace activists that filled the court room for my trial. The federal judge said "I have to ask the audience not to block the aisle and the hall." That is the number of people who showed up in the court and the hallways in addition to those who had to stay outside the building. Gerry truly put his words into action. I'll truly miss him in every talk I get invited to and every peace activity I get involved in. I proudly say, so long brother Gerry.

Salaam  
Nabil Bayakly  
Chairman of the Muslims in Memphis Organization