

The Story of Rachel Corrie

A Death in Rafah

*A Dramatic Reading
Taken from the Writings of Rachel Corrie,
Her Parents, Craig and Cindy Corrie,
And Other Sources*

By Madeline T. Izzo

INTRODUCTION

At the time it occurred, Rachel Corrie's death barely made an impression on me. But three years later, when Rev. David Herndon spoke about her at First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh, I was immediately drawn to her writing.

After months of research, I prepared a work to be read by three actors playing various roles. The opening and ending are my words, but the majority of the play is taken from the writings of Rachel Corrie, her parents Craig and Cindy Corrie, a conscientious objector with whom she corresponded, and an eyewitness to her death.

As most of the original materials were intended for private correspondence (with the exception of Craig and Cindy Corrie's public statements following their daughter's death) they required streamlining and reorganizing to give the piece a more dramatic structure.

Meanwhile, a chapter of Unitarian Universalists for Justice in the Middle East was formed at First Unitarian Church. In October 2006 this chapter produced the play as a fundraiser to raise awareness about the Israeli government's treatment of the Palestinian people.

This work may upset supporters of the state of Israel, but that is not my intent. Rather, my hope is that it will spur individuals to examine the conflict and take their own positions. Few of us have the temerity to do what Rachel did. Perhaps by understanding more deeply what happened to her, however, we can become more conscientious citizens and stand up to governments that violate human rights. Reasons abound for hostilities between Israelis and Palestinians, but each group is bound to the land and they have closely intertwined histories. May both survive and flourish.

I would like to thank Bruce McConachie for his guidance and for directing all three performances at First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh. He also performed the role of First Actor. I also want to thank Meredith Conti and Seth Cassell for playing the parts of Second Actor and Third Actor respectively. I want to acknowledge Rev. Herndon for inspiring, encouraging and advising me. Craig and Cindy Corrie were most generous and gracious, and I thank them. Lastly, I have to thank my husband, Nicholas, for his patience and wisdom.

Madeline T. Izzo
July 15, 2007

CAST:

FIRST ACTOR.....Narrator, Reserve First Sergeant, Rachel Corrie's father (Craig Corrie)

SECOND ACTOR.....Narrator, Rachel Corrie, Rachel Corrie's mother (Cindy Corrie)

THIRD ACTOR.....Narrator, International Solidarity Movement member (Joseph Smith)

NOTE: The narration will be shared among all three actors. I suggest that all three
Narrators speak the underlined passages. — M.I.

NARRATORS

On March 16, 2003, an Israeli Defense Force bulldozer killed Rachel Corrie, a 23-year-old from Olympia, Washington, as she stood before the home of a Palestinian family.

FIRST ACTOR

[NARRATOR]

Rachel Corrie had crossed two continents and one ocean to get to Rafah, near the Egyptian border in the Gaza Strip, to protect Palestinian homes from demolition.

SECOND ACTOR

[NARRATOR]

She was a member of the International Solidarity Movement, a Palestinian-led movement committed to resisting Israeli occupation of Palestinian land using nonviolent, direct-action methods and principles.

THIRD ACTOR

[NARRATOR]

In the residential area where she was killed the Israeli Defense Force wanted to build a border fence and a buffer zone.

FIRST ACTOR

[NARRATOR]

Rachel was the daughter of Craig Corrie, an insurance executive, and Cindy Corrie, an amateur flautist. She graduated from Capital High School and then attended Evergreen State College where she studied art and literature. She joined the Olympia Movement for Justice and Peace. During her senior year, she joined the International Solidarity Movement to participate in demonstrations in Rafah.

NARRATORS

Did the bulldozer driver see her before he drove over her body and then backed up, driving over her again, without ever raising the blade?

FIRST ACTOR

[NARRATOR]

The Israeli Defense Forces say the driver did not see her, despite the fact that she was wearing a bright orange vest and speaking through a megaphone, despite the fact that there was another person in the cab of the bulldozer to assist him, and despite the fact that she had been obstructing his progress toward the house for more than an hour and did not move out of the way before his final, deadly pass.

SECOND ACTOR

[NARRATOR]

The Israeli government has not fully investigated the incident.

THIRD ACTOR

[NARRATOR]

Although all of the Israeli Jewish settlements have been removed from Gaza, Palestinians suffer violence and oppression every day at the hands of the Israeli government. In order to work or to visit their family and friends, they suffer the inconvenience and humiliation of checkpoints. Their children are often killed or maimed by blanket fire as they walk in the street. Their homes and livelihoods are destroyed to make way for settlements in the West Bank or for buffer zones. Somehow they endure the might of the fourth largest military in the world.

Was Rachel Corrie a provocateur, a martyr or just an idealistic and naïve kid?

FIRST ACTOR

[NARRATOR]

There are no easy answers to this question. She wrote voluminous and eloquent e-mails before and during her time in the Middle East. Upon leaving Olympia in late January, Rachel wrote this:

SECOND ACTOR

[RACHEL]

We are all born and someday we'll all die, most likely to some degree alone.

What if our aloneness isn't a tragedy? What if our aloneness is what allows us to speak the truth without being afraid? What if our aloneness is what allows us to adventure — to experience the world as a dynamic presence — as a changeable, interactive thing?

If I lived in Bosnia or Rwanda or who knows where else, needless death wouldn't be a distant symbol to me. It wouldn't be a metaphor, it would be a reality.

And I have no right to this metaphor. But I use it to console myself, to give a fraction of meaning to something enormous and needless. I live my life where I have privileges.

I can't cool boiling waters in Russia. I can't be Picasso. I can't be Jesus. I can't save the planet single-handedly.

But I can wash dishes.

THIRD ACTOR

[NARRATOR]

Some Israelis also opposed the oppression of the Palestinians in Gaza.

FIRST ACTOR

[SERGEANT]

I am Danny, a reserve first sergeant in the Israeli Defense Force. The military prisons are filling up with conscientious objectors. Many of them are reservists with families. These are men who have proven their courage under fire in the past. Some have been in jail for more than six months with no end in sight.

The amount of AWOLs and refusals to serve are unprecedented in our history as well as refusals to carry out orders that involve firing on targets where civilians may be harmed. In a time now in Israel where jobs are scarce and people are losing their homes and businesses to Sharon's vendetta, many career soldiers like me — among them pilots and intelligence personnel — have chosen jail and unemployment over what they could only describe as murder.

I'm supposed to report to the Military Justice department — it is my job to hunt down runaway soldiers and bring them in. I have not reported in for 18 months. Instead,