



## **Civil rights tour follows a path that stretches to Westminster**

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**By Kevin E. Dayhoff**

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This January, local Carroll Countians Dr. Pam Zappardino and Dr. Charles Collyer are headed south.

Are they "snow-birds" looking for an escape from the cold and the snow? No, though we certainly couldn't blame them if they were.

Actually, this annual pilgrimage has a more important meaning than personal comfort. For the sixth January in a row, Drs. Pam and Charlie are leading folks on an historical civil rights tour, called: "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around: Retracing the American Civil Rights Movement."

The Ira and Mary Zepp Center for Nonviolence and Peace Education helps sponsor the tour. The Zepp Center is a program of "Common Ground on the Hill," a nonprofit organization that brings people together through traditional arts and music at McDaniel College.

The Zepp Center is named for two longtime Westminster teachers. Ira and Mary Zepp have had a long association with McDaniel College, and with the promotion of justice by peaceful means. The center is directed and staffed by Drs. Pam and Charlie.

Ira and Mary Zepp have also supported Common Ground since its founding more than a decade ago. Walt Michael, director of Common Ground and a person who really "gets" the message of nonviolence - both personally and artistically - has been a partner in creating the Zepp Center, and introducing it to the community.

Efforts such as this couldn't be any more relevant than today. Syndicated columnist Larry Elder recently wrote, "rudeness plagues America." He called to our attention a recent Associated Press-Ipsos poll that revealed that nearly 70 percent of Americans consider people "more rude" than they were 20 or 30

years ago. Americans, he suggested, are engaged in a "great sorting-out," causing folks to stake out "well-defined, even intolerant, ideological camps."

This is where folks like Drs. Pam and Charlie come into play; helping us find meaningful solutions to the challenges we face through the practice of nonviolence. The duo stresses that practicing nonviolence often involves finding the hidden humor, opportunities, and "silver linings" in the problems we face.

Their mentor (and mine) is Dr. Bernard LaFayette. I had the pleasure of attending a class with Dr. LaFayette a few years ago.

He has visited Westminster several times and is remembered at McDaniel for his remark that, as an approach to solving problems, violence is "cute, but not tough enough" because it usually creates more problems.

Dr. LaFayette worked closely with Dr. Martin Luther King and, along with the likes of Dr. Ira Zepp, is a beloved figure among this generation of nonviolence educators.

This brings us back to the civil rights tour that the Zepp Center helps to sponsor. The tour takes folks to locations where nonviolence was used not only to achieve gains for African Americans, but to open the political process to wider participation in some of the darkest days of our country's response to the intolerance of segregation.

The purpose of studying history is not to take us back to these dark days - but to bring past lessons to the present, and capitalize on the positive lessons learned.

The Ira and Mary Zepp Center for Nonviolence and Peace Education continues the American tradition of nonviolent problem solving associated with Dr. King. It provides workshops and resources to the community on the skills, philosophy, and history of nonviolence, from the personal level up to movements such as those of Gandhi and King.

For information about the January tour, or the opportunities provided by the Zepp Center, call the Common Ground office, at 410-857-2771, or e-mail Pamela Zappardino at [paxwarthog@aol.com](mailto:paxwarthog@aol.com).

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