

## **Meet the DC Peace Team**

The DC Peace Team is a non-profit organization whose goal is to cultivate and sustain a culture of nonviolent peacemaking and resistance. Established in 2010 in Washington, D.C., the team continues to develop the tradition of nonviolence through unarmed protection or accompaniment, networking of partner organizations and community members, and collaborative projects that cultivate effective nonviolent skills.

The team is committed to “unleashing the power of ordinary civilians to increasingly become nonviolent people by serving our communities using creative nonviolent skills, with a particular focus on unarmed accompaniment and protection.” It amplifies community wisdom and mobilizes community members to teach others peaceful practices such as bystander intervention, nonviolent communication, unarmed civilian protection, and restorative justice processes.

The DC Peace Team offers a variety of programs and trainings to promote nonviolent peacemaking. They include family peace education, restorative justice practices, active bystander intervention and de-escalation, and unarmed civilian protection and accompaniment.

The DC Peace is operated entirely by volunteers. If you would like to know more about their work or about ways to volunteer with the team, please contact Eli McCarthy ([esm52@georgetown.edu](mailto:esm52@georgetown.edu)).

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### **“Give your imagination permission to dream.” – An interview with Eli McCarthy**

*What persons or events sparked the foundation of the DC Peace Team?*

In late 2010 Cortez McDaniel, a Community Change Agent with the National Homecomers Academy, as well as a returning citizen from experience in prison, met Eli McCarthy, a local social justice activist and a Professor at Georgetown University. Cortez has been committed to building and rebuilding family and community networks of mutual support, including caring for people living on the streets at the McKenna Center. Along with community organizing experience, Eli had received training from the Nonviolent Peaceforce, which offers unarmed civilian protection and accompaniment to communities in conflict. The two shared their stories and discovered a common commitment to bringing a sustainable just peace to the city’s most violent and longstanding conflict zones. After sharing in an introductory session on the Nonviolent Peaceforce, Cortez and Eli created the DC Peace Team.

*What has been the greatest challenge to your work?*

I think the greatest challenge is mainstreaming unarmed civilian protection teams. There is such a learning curve on what these are, how they are effective, and what different situations they can

potentially handle. The vision of the armed protector is so embedded in our culture that we have a lot of modeling and experimentation to engage in our communities.

*Can you tell us a story of a moment where your dream of this team has come to fruition?*

The recent election season has really increased participation in our training sessions and in our unarmed civilian protection deployments. I was so excited and grateful to see how many people wanted to be at the polls, on the streets, at the demonstrations and into the details of strategic planning for such deployments. There are peace teams proliferating around the country as we speak and the [Shanti Sena Network](https://mettacenter.org/shanti-sena/about-the-shanti-sena-network/) is helping to grow alternative community protection mechanisms. (Resource: <https://mettacenter.org/shanti-sena/about-the-shanti-sena-network/>)

*What is the message you want to convey to undergraduates at a Catholic university?*

Give your imagination permission to dream. There is enormous potential for creative, active nonviolence in our daily lives as well as in social transformation. Let us see how far we can go with these practices and this way of life. Let us build coalitions and partnerships that create movements, not merely campaigns. Let us give ourselves to the way of nonviolent love, to dignity, to life, to grace.

*What is a question you wish we would have asked you?*

How does unarmed civilian protection work to provide safety?