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Interview with Vivian Longacre

Sadie Martin

California Polytechnic State University - San Luis Obispo, samart00@calpoly.edu

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Vivian Longacre

INTERVIEW WITH VIVIAN LONGACRE

Code Pink SLO Co-founder

Vivian Longacre is a Co-founder of Code Pink SLO, as well as an Instructional Support Technician in Chemistry & Bio Chemistry at Cal Poly since 1994. Find out more at <http://www.slocodepink.org>

Moebius: What is Code Pink?

VL: Code Pink is a woman initiated national peace and social justice organization started by Medea Benjamin, Starhawk, Jodie Evans, and Diane Wilson. The name began as a reaction to the Homeland Security Advisory System put in place after September 11, 2002. The founders of Code Pink chose a name to symbolize the actual distress many people (women) were feeling about the domestic and global repercussions of the war in Iraq and chose the color pink to signify a nurturing connotation to the yellow, orange, red codes. The first group movement happened in November of 2002. Code Pink is an international group divided into local chapters only funded by donations. Currently, there are over two-hundred active communities.

Moebius: How did you become involved with Code Pink?

VL: After the 2004 election, I was so depressed. I had no idea what to do until my friend Dian Sousa emailed me and suggested that we start a local chapter of Code Pink. At first, I was apprehensive about the idea because I had never really been an “activist,” but after I met with my friend (Dian) and talked, we both decided there was no reason not to get involved with Code Pink. We held a meeting in December of that year, and although we did not have a specific agenda or have any idea of how to run a meeting, the creative women in our circle quickly became a unified force. Medea Benjamin’s presence and speech at Cal Poly in March really brought everything into perspective for those who attended, and her speech inspired more local folks to get involved. She set the tone for our purpose that evening, and, in turn, many local peace activists started listening. Additionally, Dian and I met Dawn Ortiz-Legg that evening, who is one of our co-leaders and a dynamo. Now, our group meets the second Monday of every month and discusses the ideas of all of the members and plans actions, mostly local but occasionally out of state.

Moebius: A recent article in The New Times stated the message of Code Pink is, "Bring the troops home, and end the U.S. occupation in Iraq." Is there anything you would like to add to this statement?

VL: Yes, there are a number of issues facing our nation that we cannot fund or even begin to deal with until we end this war. We must ask ourselves how we are going to take care of the veterans when they return home, and we must think about the alternate possibilities for our children's future. Additionally, New Orleans needs to be rebuilt. It is time to rebuild America and regain our role as an international leader in the world. We must do that by using all of our resources to bring us up as leaders in technology and agriculture. But to do this, we need to have to rebuild our infrastructure as a nation, both inside and out.

Moebius: What is, in your opinion, the most effective tactic that Code Pink members use to get their message(s) across?

VL: Humor! We have a number of creative members who have collaborated and come up with many different ways to reach the desired audience and make even those that don't agree at least chuckle. For example, in January of this year when members of Code Pink traveled to Washington D.C., they dressed in pink hats, shirts, and anything else pink; and they held up pink signs that read, "Escalation is a fool's errand," and "Augmentation is for boobs." Messages like these create an environment that has fewer barriers. If people can see that we are trying to relate real-life experiences with current events, then maybe they will realize there is something everyone can do to make a difference.

Moebius: What is your most memorable experience with Code Pink?

VL: My most memorable experience was working for four days in Crawford, Texas in August of 2005. The group was so large but focused. Code Pink along with United For Peace and Justice was phenomenal at getting the work done and running the show. It was our second time working with Cindy Sheehan, as she had come to SLO the previous March to speak at a rally we gave. Watching Cindy handle her sympathetic supporters along with her detractors was inspirational. On one afternoon in particular, I watched as a young, angry veteran home from Iraq, came up to Cindy as the press was interviewing her. He had a totally opposite view of what was happening in Iraq and was clearly upset with Cindy. Cindy calmly asked the press for a few minutes alone with this man and the next thing we knew, Cindy and this angry vet were actually hugging. They walked up to the press, and she explained that they both had different opinions but understood each other. It was an amazing experience!

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Moebius: How do you feel this community supports Code Pink?

VL: I think the support is awesome. The more we get out and spread the word—the more people get involved. Our non-threatening environment provides a very open setting for anyone looking to help.

Moebius: Is Code pink for women only?

VL: No. Men are more than welcome to join. Our male Code Pink members are called Pink Panthers, and there are quite a few. They bring a lot to our table.

Moebius: How does someone get involved?

VL: Anyone who wants to get involved can. Code Pink meets the second Monday of every month from 6:30-8:30 P.M. at ECOSLO, located on the corner of Marsh and Nipomo St. There are no dues, but please bring a creative, open mind. ☺

Notes

1. Galassi, Shawna. "Washington Turns Pink." *The New Times* 6 Feb. 2007:14.

Interview on behalf of Moebius conducted by Sadie Martin, Winter, 2007.