

## Peace-teams-not-peace-marshalls

[\[Audio Link\]](#)

So, this is Shari with the Meta Peace Team. And I was really excited to talk a little bit about the difference between peace marshalls or peacekeepers and a peace team and/or Shanti Sena. And I think there's a lot of confusion out there. And some of that, I think, is because there's a lot of confusion within the movement about what language we want to use. And so, we sometimes use words interchangeably. For me, it's really important that we make a distinction because I think that they're both important jobs and that when we confuse them, we end up adding to the miscommunication and potentially to the violence, if we're not careful.

So, for me, the basic difference is that peacekeepers or parade marshalls or peace ambassadors are people from within the organizations that are planned in the event, who take on the additional responsibility of helping things go more smoothly, more peacefully. So, they may be directing people on the parade route. They may, in fact, be helping with the peace team to some extent.

But they have a stake in the outcome of the event. The organizers may decide that they want everyone to move into the meadow and to form a giant human peace sign. And peacekeepers can help direct people in that path because they have a stake that the event goes as planned. They may not want civil disobedience at their event. Or not want, you know, a particular language used at the event. And they have, you know, every right and responsibility to put that message out there.

A peace team, on other hand, our job is to prevent violence and to reduce violence. Not to stop conflict. Not to make sure the event goes as planned. In our hearts we might want the event to go as planned, but our job that day, the role that we have taken on is to protect human life and human rights. It's not to ensure that there's no disruptions or that the people get to form their giant peace sign or whatever the case may be.

And we had a real concrete example of this in Ann Harbor, Michigan, where we had placed a peace team at an anti-war march. And the organizers of the march had a parade permit and they were marching down the street with big banners. And a group of people stepped in front of the parade, about five feet in front of the parade with a big banner that said, "Support our president. Support our troops." And so, from the outside, from where the media was looking, it looked like these thousands of people were marching to say, "Support our troops. Support our president."

And the organizers of the event came up to us as the peace team and they were very angry that we didn't intervene and try to stop that. And later when we debriefed and talked with them we were able to clarify what we thought we had clarified originally, which is that's not our role. That one of the things sometimes a peace team will do is help train peacekeepers whose role that might be. And certainly, it's a place where we had peace team members present because it

could be a place and escalated conflict that could become violent. But, you know, that's a distinction.

And being clear about that allows us to communicate it in such a way that we can make the most effective use of everybody's gifts.

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