

## Activist Sharon Rice Vaughan Remembered

By Sarah Martin

Sharon Rice Vaughan, long time and respected member of Women Against Military Madness (WAMM) and Twin Cities peace and justice movements, died in a car crash in Havana, Cuba on March 24. Her sudden, untimely and shocking death leaves a big hole in our community.

Sharon was an early member of WAMM. She joined over 30 years ago and has been an active and important member. Board member Marie Braun said, "She was an enthusiastic supporter of WAMM and the issues we work on." Braun, organizer of the weekly vigil on the Lake Street Bridge, said that when Sharon retired she made a commitment to come to the vigil every Wednesday. She rarely missed, and never because of weather.

Sharon was key in the founding of the movement to end domestic violence against women. WAMM member Mary Beaudoin said, "Sharon's advocacy for nonviolence extended to resisting war. She recognized that women and their children were often victims of war and among the most deeply affected by the violence of war." As a committed antiwar activist, she participated in marches, rallies, and other events against war. In the last few decades, she frequently participated in the Lake Street/Marshall Avenue Bridge vigil, opposing U.S. wars and U.S. threats of war. She was an active member of Women Against Military Madness and held the position of Co-chair of WAMM.

Sharon understood the importance of standing up against political repression. Without hesitation she drove with me to Canada for the trial of a local Central America and Cuba solidarity activist accused of helping a couple seeking political asylum to cross the US/Canadian border. Her presence, along with others who filled the courtroom, impressed the judge and resulted in no further jail time for him.

In 2014, when 22 antiwar and solidarity activists, became targets of the FBI and a federal grand jury in Chicago, without hesitation Sharon decided to support them, and became a very good friend of the Committee to Stop FBI Repression.

Several years ago Sharon answered a call to go to Alaska and stand in solidarity with a young woman going on trial. She did not know her but responded to the woman's need for support. She traveled to Alaska several times to be with her through the trial. After the woman was convicted and sent to prison, Sharon continued to visit her. She was transferred to the Carswell Federal Medical Center prison in Fort Worth, Texas. During one of those visits, Sharon spotted imprisoned people's lawyer, Lynne Stewart in the visiting room with her husband. Sharon was eager to introduce herself as one of many Minnesotans following Lynne's case. Lynne still remembers that encounter.

We really miss Sharon. She was warm, generous, compassionate, a great storyteller, and solid activist who really walked the talk.

Sarah Martin is a long-time antiwar and social justice activist, and a WAMM Board member. A version of this article originally appeared in Fight Back News.