

Peace in Our Times



A Veterans For Peace publication exposing the root causes and enormous costs of war



South Korean authorities carry the author (with yellow umbrella) away from protest in Ganjeong Village, Jeju, South Korea

Peace Movement Must 'Pivot' into Asia-Pacific

By Bruce K. Gagnon

Unexpectedly on Sept. 16 the first Navy Aegis destroyer (outfitted with so-called "missile defense" systems aimed at China) pulled into the new Navy base in Gangjeong village on Jeju Island, South Korea. The base, which will port Pentagon aircraft carriers, nuclear submarines, and Aegis destroyers, is rumored to be heading toward an early December official opening. While I was in Gangjeong village in late August, the Navy was beginning to work on construction of a new front gate—in the process taking even more precious farming land from the small village.

As the Aegis arrived at the new Jeju Navy base, activists slid kayaks off the rocks into the sea. (Their universal access to the public port is being increasingly blocked by the South Korean Coast Guard.) They paddled out toward what turned out to be five ships entering port on this occasion. Other activists stood along the rocks with signs and banners as they tried to defend the sacred memory of the beloved Gureombi coastline—now blasted and covered in concrete.

The 500-year-old fishing and farming community is being torn apart to host the base. Just offshore, the UNESCO-recognized endangered soft coral forests,

which form some of the most spectacular temperate Octocoral forests on earth, are being destroyed, as dredging is under way to make it possible for U.S. warships to port there. The U.S. Navy handed base specifications to the Korean government some years ago. The villagers' eight-year campaign against the base has resulted in 700 people being arrested and more than 50 jailed (one as long as 15 months, just for blocking cement trucks).

On my last day on Jeju Island, I was taken to Jeju City to do a radio interview about my experiences there. As my translator and I sat in the station lobby waiting to go on the air, we heard a news broadcast that said the South Korean Navy was planning to file a court action against Gangjeong villagers for \$20 million on behalf of Samsung Corporation (the lead Navy base construction contractor). The claim is that their eight-year nonviolent protest in the village has "obstructed business operations" and resulted in delays and profit loss. Upon hearing about this plan to demand \$20 million from this small village (fewer than 2,000 citizens) I was told village elders cried out "The Navy is trying to kill our village!"

When the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space first got involved helping to support

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Capt. Mena Sandoval: A Different Kind of Soldier

By John Lamperti

The Salvadoran army was carrying out a major counterinsurgency operation they called "Hammer and Anvil," using scorched-earth tactics, banned in the 1977 Geneva Conventions, to clear northern Morazán of "subversion." Capt. Francisco Emilio Mena Sandoval's unit was responsible for capturing Villa El Rosario, a village of about 1000 people which at the time also harbored many refugees from army operations further north; a captured teenager told the soldiers that all the guerrillas were gone. "I began to think," Mena wrote later, "and I remembered that lieutenant [Lt. William Calley] who had been tried for committing a massacre in Vietnam. The next morning I told the commanding officer that the information we had about that village was contradictory, and I asked permission to clarify it with him. But he said my orders were clear: attack at 10:00. That meant to call in air strikes and bombard the town with artillery."

Instead of making that call, Captain Mena traveled by helicopter to Perquín to confront the colonel in person. The discussion went nowhere; he was again ordered to attack. He talked it over with his four subordinate officers, and told them



Capt. Francisco Emilio Mena Sandoval (left).

they were going capture the town without using any artillery or bombing. "It was a big responsibility, so I went in first," he wrote. Two sons of the village civil guard commander appeared, then their father. "Orejas" (informers) with the soldiers denounced these three as guerrillas and they were taken prisoner. Mena and his men then entered El Rosario without firing a shot. He reported by radio that he had captured his objective without any casualties and was told he had a new mission: "All that village is a guerrilla base. Destroy it, and don't leave anyone alive."

Mena looked around in Villa El Rosario as his men forced the people to assemble in the town square. The population was swollen to several times its normal size

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Names of families murdered in El Mozote massacre in 1981, El Salvador, when members of the Salvadoran Army's specialized Atlacatl Battalion entered the village on their way to a guerrilla stronghold in northern Morazán. Although the village was known for its neutrality in the conflict between leftist guerrillas and repressive government forces, members of the battalion—trained by the U.S. military—raped and massacred the entire population, estimated to be between 200 and 700 men, women, and children.

Letters



'I'm just hoping we can keep this whole thing under control after the police find out we're stealing their pensions!'

Finding the Courage with VFP

I just want to thank you for all the work you put into VFP over the years. Just the existence of VFP has made my life a little easier. The convention was an amazing experience. I learned so much in a brief period of time and am thankful for every bit of it, even though some of it was difficult to handle. The convention gave me the courage to speak up. Tonight I went to my local school board meeting and proposed that they remove JROTC from the school. I wouldn't have had the courage to do that if it weren't for VFP. To my surprise, my presentation went over well and I was thanked by many of the school board members for raising such an important issue. So, I just wanted to say thanks. You have helped me find the courage to try to make the world a better place.

Mike Peterman
U.S. Army, 2002-06

Like a Harpoon to the Heart

Yesterday, I held a banner with an activist friend marking the first year anniversary of the U.S. bombing in Syria.

Over 300,000 people have been killed in Syria. Cause and effect are Missing In America (MIA), as Americans constantly wonder why terrorism is committed against U.S. corporate interests. There is a mass exodus of refugees leaving Iraq and Syria for Europe, and most Americans are blaming it on the Islamic State.

If you bomb countries to hell year after year, you give rise to extremism. The disconnect is beyond the intellect. As activists, we are affected by U.S. terrorism around the world like a harpoon to the heart. It has been a thousand cuts to the soul.

Horror quotes by politicians are important to me, because it gets me out of bed in the morning. It absolutely drives me to bear witness for those who cannot speak, or will not speak, as it does for countless antiwar activists I know around the U.S. This is what George W. Bush once said: "The casualties of Iraq will be seen as a comma in history."

Makes you wonder why the Pope said: "God Bless America."

Mike Hastie
Army Medic, Vietnam

A Note from the Editors

The Asia Pivot, U.S. Militarism, and Agent Orange Relief

In each issue of Peace in Our Times, we invite one of our editors to contribute an essay reflecting her or his point of view on a topic important to VFP. Below are Tarak Kauff's reflections on the current political scene in Viet Nam.

In 1954 the fiercely independent Vietnamese crushed the U.S. backed French Colonial Army at Dien Bien Phu and then in 1975, after some 15 years of brutal fighting and millions of casualties, North Viet Nam and the National Liberation Front of South Viet Nam defeated the U.S. military and its proxy South Vietnamese army.

States. And while Russia supplies most of Viet Nam's military hardware, the Vietnamese are not averse to obtaining sophisticated U.S. military technology as well. At the same time, since Viet Nam has long been able to get whatever it needed from its closest ally, Russia, it is doubtful that they will endanger that relationship by getting too cozy with the United States.

Viet Nam also has a relationship with China to weigh in the balance, and there is concern among the Vietnamese about how China will react to U.S.-Viet Nam military dealings. The Vietnamese have not forgot-

and covertly, attempting to bring Viet Nam into its orbit. Many Vietnamese are well aware of such U.S. machinations and watch closely such organizations as the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), both of which have a long history of less than benign covert operations.

In December 2014, police in Ho Chi Minh City arrested two bloggers for alleged anti-government postings. It turns out many dissident bloggers, and probably those two as well, are not simply critical of the Vietnamese government; they are funded by NED and represent U.S.-backed agents of sedition.

The United States, with such agencies as NED and USAID often working closely with the CIA, has wreaked havoc in many countries. Quite often, however, they are exposed and by this time most politically sophisticated people are watchful of them.

The Vietnamese no less so.

That being the case, USAID, in particular, although still watched carefully by the Vietnamese, has been on somewhat good behavior in Viet Nam since the end of the American war there.

The Vietnamese, as well as U.S. government operatives, recognize that if the organization pursued nefarious ends in all its "international development" projects, it would eventually lose its ability to further the goals of empire. In order to keep up their image, there are times when even the worst elements of oppressive governments actually do good. The Vietnamese are aware of that, as they are aware of the essential nature of superpowers like Russia, China and the United States.

Recently, there has been concern among U.S. activists over the Asia Pivot, U.S. military goals, and a per-

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May 7, 1954: A Vietnamese soldier waves flag after capturing the French command post in Dien Bien Phu. The fighting began March 13, 1954, and 56 days later, shell-shocked survivors of the French garrison hoisted the white flag to signal the end of one of the greatest battles of the 20th century.

But the U.S. battle for control of Viet Nam still rages. U.S. plans for the Asia Pivot, which seeks to contain China and gain U.S. military and economic control of Southeast Asia, faces a critical stumbling block in Viet Nam, which is very aware of U.S. global ambitions to dominate and control.

On March 11, 2015, U.S. Army Pacific Commander Gen. Vincent Brooks demanded that Viet Nam stop allowing Russian refueling jets to land in its Cam Ranh Bay military base. Brooks claimed Russia was carrying out "provocative flights" and that it was "acting as a spoiler to our interests and the interests of others." The following day Viet Nam rejected the demand in no uncertain terms, calling it "interference in the internal affairs of Viet Nam, a sovereign state that determines its own policies for cooperating with its friends and partners."

Viet Nam continues to trade with China, Russia, and the United

ten the 1979 border war with China that left 50,000 dead. China and Viet Nam have often been adversaries. In some respects the Vietnamese have more friendship and trust with the United States than with their powerful northern neighbor.

Viet Nam has a protective "Three-No's" defense policy: no military alliances, no foreign military bases on Vietnamese territory, and no reliance on any country to combat others.

Nonetheless, the United States continues meddling, both overtly

Peace in Our Times

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Editorial staff: Tarak Kauff, Managing Editor; Ellen Davidson, Mike Ferner, Becky Luening, Ken Mayers, Doug Rawlings

Website coordinator: Fred Nagel

The Power of Conscience: U.S. Military and the Myth of Violence

By Maria Santelli

We have this tragic misperception that humanity is predisposed to violence.

The truth is that humanity is predisposed to peace. The default position for humanity is that of conscientious objector to war and violence.

In our work at the Center on Conscience & War, this is proven to us daily, through our individual conscientious objectors. Science has proven it, too. This tendency for cooperation over competition is evident in daily life: On an average day, most people will witness countless acts of cooperation, kindness, and humanity toward one another, and not one act of violence or competition. And most of it is so commonplace, we barely even notice it. We take our nonviolence for granted.

And so does the news. What makes the news is violence, not cooperation. Particularly, on our local news programs, the top stories are the ones that depict street crimes and “home invasions.” Seeing this interpersonal violence, I am convinced, leads us to believe that people are predisposed to act violently toward one another. We all make decisions based on patterns we observe, and if the patterns we observe highlight violence, we are going to decide that humanity is violent.

How does this relate to war? If we believe that violence among humans is natural, we will believe that war is inevitable.

But violence is not natural. Our conscience tells us killing another human being is wrong. And it is the military that knows this better than anyone.

The military has taken notice that, over time, and through the history of war, the vast majority of individuals refuse to shoot to kill. That means, instead of firing directly at an “enemy,” soldiers (used here to cover all members of the Armed Forces: soldiers, Marines, airmen and women, and sailors) would fire their weapons away from their “targets,” or pretend to shoot. One investigation found—and these studies have been replicated—that in World War I only about 5 percent of people shot

to kill; in World War II, about 15 percent of people shot to kill. By the U.S. war in Vietnam, the rate at which soldiers were shooting to kill was found to be 90 percent. Today, that number could be even higher.

What happened? Training evolved to meet the military’s goals.

There is a science of teaching soldiers to kill and it is called killology. It is the science of circumventing the conscience.

In order to get an otherwise psychologically healthy individual to kill, U.S. military training has been developed to bypass the conscience and have the act of killing—the act of firing one’s weapon with the intent to kill—become reflexive.

Our conscience knows that taking another human life is wrong. We don’t want to do it; we know that it is the worst possible thing we could do. So the training

There is a science of teaching soldiers to kill. ... It is the science of circumventing the conscience.

has been developed to teach a soldier to kill without thinking, without filtering through the conscience.

When we take the time to think—to filter through the conscience—we make better decisions. And in the case of war and killing, the vast majority of us already have decided.

In fact, 99 percent of us have decided by default that we will not choose to kill. The military makes up less than 1 percent of the total U.S. population. When you add veterans to that number, it still only creeps up to 7 percent, and some of them, of course, had been drafted; they didn’t volunteer to join the military. And did volunteers join the military with a desire to kill, or for some other purpose?

In my experience talking to members of the military every day, people that volunteer hold a sincere desire to serve and protect and to do something bigger than themselves. We call it “the service,” after all. The people



Staff Sgt. Camilo Mejia sought to be declared a conscientious objector in 2004 after he saw civilians killed in Iraq.

who join the military are some of the most beautiful, selfless, and loving people you could know. Sure, there are some cynical and self-serving reasons we could suggest for why people join the military, and there

about guilt and betrayal of conscience.

So, is humanity predisposed to violence? I don’t think so. We’ve allowed ourselves to be deceived not only by the military-industrial complex, which profits from war, of course, but also by all the major pillars of our society: our government, our schools, our media, and even our churches. They all tell us that violence is human nature. Even the peace movement falls victim to this myth. We think, “People who join the military are different from me. They can kill. I can’t kill.” Well, what I’ve learned and what the evidence shows is that they can’t kill either—not without consequences.

Between 22 and 35 veterans—depending on who is counting—and an average of one active-duty service member are killing themselves every day.

Remember, veterans make up just 7 percent of the population, yet they represent 20 percent of the suicides in this country. That’s a very telling and shameful number.

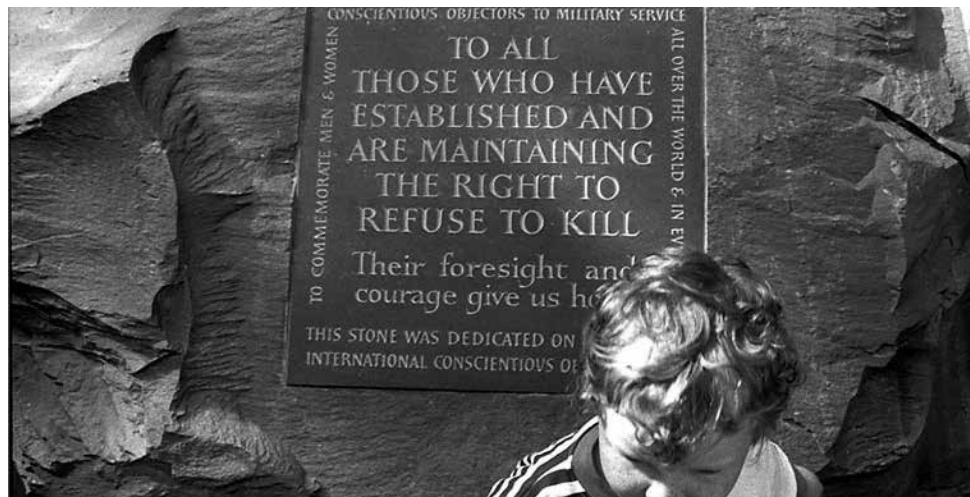
So what’s a soldier of conscience to do? Too often, soldiers in crisis believe they have only two choices: violate their conscience or violate their orders. Of the two, violating their orders is a piece of cake. Maybe they’ll get court-martialed, go to jail, get busted down in rank, lose some pay. Maybe they’ll get kicked out with a bad discharge. That’s finite, that’s measurable, and it’s manageable by most people.

But the violation of the conscience? We are just beginning to understand its consequences, and they can be immeasurable.

It’s important that people know there is a third option: conscientious objection—a legal pathway through which one can apply for discharge by affirming our natural predisposition for peace, by affirming the power of conscience.

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Maria Santelli is executive director of the Center on Conscience & War, a 75-year-old organization founded to provide technical and community support to conscientious objectors to war. Based in Washington, D.C., Santelli has been working for peace and justice since 1996.



Monument and plaque dedicated to conscientious objectors in Sherborn, Mass.

Why Doesn't the U.S. Observe Armistice Day?

We're more comfortable with war than peace

By Rory Fanning

I get angry and frustrated with each Veterans Day because it's less about celebrating veterans than easing the guilty conscience of warmongers

In November, the United States should be celebrating Armistice Day, pausing as a nation to think about the terrible costs of war—including the loss of so many lives. Unfortunately, we replaced it with a very different holiday.

On June 1, 1954, less than a year after America exited the Korean War in defeat, the U.S. Congress got rid of Armistice Day, which was established in 1919, and started Veterans Day. In place of what had been a celebration of peace, Congress instituted an annual veneration of those who fought in war. America would ever after celebrate not the beauty of peace, but its purveyors of state violence in World Wars I and II, Korea, Vietnam, the Dominican Republic, Lebanon, Grenada, Kosovo, Somalia, Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan and more.

Governments had meant to do the opposite in 1919: If you go back and read the newspapers of the time closely enough, you can almost hear the collective sigh of relief and jubilation on the first Armistice Day. Millions celebrated peace and renounced war on that November day, a year after the violence in Europe had ended: after the mustard gas stopped burning off soldiers' skin, after Gatling guns stopped mowing down young boys from mostly poor and working-class families, after fighter planes stopped streaking the sky, and after bloody bayonets were wiped clean. In the wake of so much carnage, it was then clear to millions of people that wars were not about valor or romantic ideals, but about empire, which benefits a few at the expense of many.

It took only two more wars fighting for empire before the Americans buried that day's history as a celebration of peace.

Kurt Vonnegut, a World War II veteran, wrote in 1973: "Armistice Day has become Veterans' Day. Armistice Day was sacred. Veterans' Day is not. So I will throw Veterans' Day over my shoulder. Armistice Day I will



keep. I don't want to throw away any sacred things." Armistice Day was sacred because it was intended to evoke memories of fear, pain, suffering, military incompetence, greed, and destruction on the grandest scale for those who had participated in war, directly and indirectly. Armistice Day was a hallowed anniversary because it was supposed to protect future life from future wars.

Veterans Day, instead, celebrates "heroes" and encourages others to dream of playing the hero themselves, covering themselves in valor. But becoming a "hero" means going off to kill and be killed in a future war—or one of our government's current, unending wars.

I am more angry and frustrated with each passing Veterans Day—this is my tenth since leaving the U.S. Army Rangers as a conscientious objector—because it gets clearer and clearer that Veterans Day is less about honor-

cate of international law in America. He drafted the U.S. implementing legislation for the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention known as the Biological Weapons Anti-Terrorism Act of 1989.

"Over the years, 27-10 has proven to be a total embarrassment to the Pentagon because it sets forth a fair and accurate statement of the Laws of War both as of 1956 and as of today," Boyle says. He termed the new manual a "warmongering" document.

The new document seeks to distinguish between "legitimate" and "illegitimate" acts of military violence against civilian targets, using the criterion of military necessity, points out Peter Martin of the World Socialist Website. "Thus, acts of mass slaughter of civilians could be justified if sufficient military advantages were gained by the operations."

The bulk of the document, Martin continues, "amounts to a green light for military atrocities, including mass killings."

Martin said the most comprehensive previous such document, the 1956 Pentagon field manual, did not state

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ing veterans than it is about easing the guilty consciences of those who have sent (and continue to send) others to kill and die for reasons that have very little to do with democracy or freedom. I can't seem to shake the feeling that the day is more of a slap in the face than a pat on the back to those who served, despite the endless thank-yous, parades, and concerts supposedly held in our honor.

The Armistice-turned-Veterans Day celebrations will be held in a country that has 668 military bases around the globe. They will be held in a country that has conducted military operations in two-thirds of the world's countries since 9/11. They will be held in a country that spends three-quarters of a trillion dollars each year on its military—more than the next 13 countries combined. They will be held in a country that has taken hundreds of thousands of lives around the world these past 14 years, and which shows no sign of slowing down.

What do the millions of people in Afghanistan, Iraq and many other countries who have lost loved ones to America's wars think of these celebrations? What should veterans coping with post-traumatic stress disorder, dealing with traumatic injuries, or struggling with chronic unemployment think of these events? What do the families of those soldiers and veterans who have taken their own lives feel?

Still, many soldiers are beginning to question America's wars and their tolls at home and abroad. According to journalist Matt Kennard, more than 40,000 U.S. soldiers have

Armistice Day was a hallowed anniversary because it was supposed to protect future life from future wars.

declared their own personal Armistice Days by becoming conscientious objectors since 9/11—and I am one of them.

Once I left the military as a conscientious objector and began speaking about it, the personal "thank-yous" from strangers started to dry up—apparently, it's more heroic to kill people under orders than to demand that you be allowed to stop. But there are many ways to cover yourself in valor and act the hero, even if there's only one way sanctioned by a federal holiday.

If we really wanted to honor veterans, we would abolish Veterans Day and replace it with a day that celebrates peace, not war. Peace is a better way to honor the sacrifice of veterans like me than a day designed to recruit the next generation of soldiers we'll have to thank for their "service" in yet another war.

Rory Fanning walked across the United States for the Pat Tillman Foundation in 2008-09, following two deployments to Afghanistan with the 2nd Army Ranger Battalion. He became a conscientious objector after his second tour. He is the author of *Worth Fighting For: An Army Ranger's Journey Out of the Military and Across America*.



New Pentagon War Manual Reduces Us to 'Level of Nazis'

By Sherwood Ross

The Pentagon's new Law of War Manual (LOWM) sanctioning nuclear attacks and the killing of civilians "reads like it was written by Hitler's Ministry of War," says international law authority Francis Boyle of the University of Illinois at Champaign.

"Historically, this is a terrible development," he added in an exclusive interview with this reporter. "We are reducing ourselves to the level of the Nazis."

The grim, 1,165-page document, issued in June by the Defense Department's Office of the General Counsel, also sanctions the use of napalm, herbicides, depleted uranium, and drone missile strikes, among other barbarities.

Boyle points out the new manual is designed to supplant the 1956 U.S. Army Field Manual 27-10 written by Richard Baxter, the world's leading authority on the Laws of War. Baxter was the Manley O. Hudson Professor of Law at Harvard Law School and a judge on the International Court of Justice. Boyle was his top student.

Boyle is the leading professor, practitioner, and advo-

Peace in Our Times Editor to Run for Mayor of Toledo

By Mike Ferner

Twenty-two years ago I finished up two terms as an independent on the Toledo City Council with a razor-thin loss in the mayoral race. During that time I pushed for and won a policy to reduce corporate tax abatement that brought an additional \$1 million dollars a year over 10 years to the city's struggling public schools, secured initial funding for a prostitute diversion program for young women that has evolved into one of the leading "human trafficking" coalitions in the country, led a lively but unfortunately unsuccessful effort to establish a public electric system in the city, and sponsored a successful resolution to Congress opposing the Persian Gulf War under Bush the Elder.



The author was one of 130 mostly veterans arrested at the White House December 16, 2010, demanding an end to the U.S. wars and occupations around the world.

Since then, as some of you may know, I worked as communications coordinator for the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) AFL-CIO as well as the Program on Corporations Law and Democracy (POCLAD), and served as national president of Veterans For Peace.

As war loomed against Iraq again in early 2003, I traveled there with a Voices

in the Wilderness (now Voices for Creative Nonviolence) delegation and stayed for a month, returning two weeks before the missiles fell on Baghdad. Within a year I returned for another two months to write *Inside the Red Zone: A Veteran For Peace Reports From Iraq* (Praeger, 2006) and got arrested several times for, as I'm fond of putting it, "disturbing the

war." In 2010, I accompanied Kathy Kelly on one of her many trips to Afghanistan. Lately, I've gotten more active with Move to Amend's work to strip corporations of constitutional rights.

Now I'm running again for mayor of Toledo.

The experiences of the intervening years have been invaluable. I'm zeroing in on fundamental issues that expose the workings of Empire and how it affects people in cities just like Toledo, Ohio. It will actually be fun to say the things that need saying in this campaign, things no other candidate is knowledgeable about or would dare say if they were, ideas like establishing a public bank like the State of North Dakota has. People young and old are responding to what we've put out there already and I have a solid chance of being our city's next mayor.

What that will mean for promoting the values we hold in common and being an incubator for municipal populism and economic democracy I will leave to your imagination.

To keep up with developments in Ferner's mayoral campaign or to support his efforts, go to mikeferner.com.

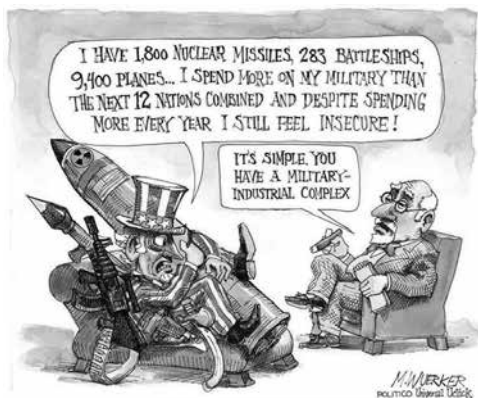
War Manual

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that civilians, unlike military personnel, should be spared "unnecessary suffering" because it assumed "that any deliberate targeting of civilians was illegal and a war crime."

Among the flagrant violations of international law sanctioned by the Pentagon's new LOWM, Martin writes, are:

- Legitimizing the use of nuclear weapons.



ons. LOWM states, "There is no general prohibition in treaty or customary international law on the use of nuclear weapons." This flies in the face of a number of existing international covenants. Under the U.N. Charter as interpreted by the World Court in its Advisory Opinion on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons, even threatening to use nuclear weapons, as the United States and Israel have threatened Iran, is illegal and thus a war crime.

- Authorizing the use of banned incen-

diary weapons such as napalm, herbicides (as Agent Orange in Viet Nam), depleted uranium munitions (as used in Iraq). Napalm, for example, is banned under Protocol III of the 1980 U.N. Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

- Authorizing the use of cluster munitions, mines, and booby-traps. The LOWM rationalizes that "the United States is not a Party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions," an agreement signed by the overwhelming majority of the world's nations.

- Defending drone missile attacks, both by the Pentagon and intelligence outfits such as the Central Intelligence Agency, declaring flatly: "There is no prohibition in the law of war on the use of remotely piloted aircraft." To the contrary, targeted killing off the battlefield is prohibited.

- Authorizing the use of exploding hollow-point bullets, stating the United States is not a party to the 1868 St. Petersburg declaration banning their use.

In sum, the move by the Pentagon to supplant the 1956 manual with the LOWM represents an effort to justify the excesses of its trillion-dollar-a-year war machine, one that is as large as the next dozen nations combined.

The Pentagon today operates some 900 military bases globally, allegedly for "defense," and engages in warfare in a dozen countries. The new Pentagon manual underlines the downward drift of the United States from a democratic to a totalitarian society.

LOWM has received no play in a media "following orders to conceal from the American people ... the Pentagon's preparations for new and more massive war

crimes, along with the destruction of democratic rights spelled out in the U.S. Constitution," Martin says.

Indeed, it seems TV "news" stations beam more commercials than news stories, and news reports of carnage inflicted by the Pentagon are virtually nonexistent.

War? What war?

Sherwood Ross is an award-winning freelance journalist who has reported for The New York Herald-Tribune, The Chicago Daily News, and major wire services. He can be reached at sherwoodross@gmail.com.

VFP in Chile to Protest U.S. Torture School



SOA Watch founder Roy Bougeois, Ann Wright, Peter Berres, and Tom Egan, all U.S. military veterans, protested with 70 Chileans at Fuerte Aguayo, a Chilean military base funded by the United States; the banner says 'No more Chilean soldiers sent to the School of the Americas.'

By Chris Hedges

The Palestinians are poor. They are powerless. They have no voice or influence in the halls of power. They are demonized. They do not have well-heeled lobbyists doling out campaign contributions and pushing through pro-Palestinian legislation. Palestinians, like poor people of color in the United States, are expendable.

Justice for Palestine will never come from the traditional governmental institutions or political parties that administer power. These institutions have surrendered to moneyed interests. Justice will come only from us. And the sole mechanism left to ensure justice for Palestine is the boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel. Sanctions brought down the apartheid regime of South Africa. And they are what will bring down the apartheid regime of Israel. BDS is nonviolent. It appeals to conscience. And it works.

All Israeli products including Jaffa citrus fruits, Ahava cosmetics, SodaStream drink machines, Eden Springs bottled water and Israeli wine must be boycotted. We must refuse to do business with Israeli service companies. And we must boycott corporations that do business with Israel, including Caterpillar, Hewlett-Packard, and Hyundai. We must put pressure on institutions, from churches to universities, to divest from Israeli companies and corporations that have contracts with Israel.

Gaza, a year after Israel carried out a devastating bombing campaign that lasted almost two months, is in ruins. Most of the water is unsafe to drink. There are power outages for up to 12 hours a day. Forty percent of the 1.8 million inhabitants are unemployed, including 67 percent of the youth—the highest youth unemployment rate in the world. Of the 17,000 homes destroyed by Israel in the siege, not one has been rebuilt. Sixty thousand people remain homeless. Only a quarter of the promised \$3.5 billion in aid from international donors has been delivered—much of it diverted to the Palestinian Authority, the Israeli puppet regime that governs the West Bank. And no one in Washington—Republican or Democrat—will defy the Israel lobby. No one will call for justice or stay the Israeli killing machine. U.S. senators, including Bernie Sanders, at the height of the Israeli bombardment last summer voted unanimously to defend the Israeli slaughter of a people with no army, navy, air force, mechanized units, artillery, or command and control. It was a vote worthy of the old Soviet Union.

Israel, like the United States, is poisoned by the psychosis of permanent war. It too is governed by a corrupt oligarchic elite for whom war has become a lucrative business. It too has deluded itself into carrying out war crimes and then playing the role of the victim. Israeli systems of education and the press—again mirrored in

Why I Support the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement Against Israel



Photo by Ellen Davidson

the United States—have indoctrinated Israelis into believing that they have a right to kill anyone whom the state condemns as a terrorist. And Israel's most courageous human rights campaigners, intellectuals and journalists are slandered and censored in their own country, just as critics such as Norman Finkelstein, Max Blumenthal and Noam Chomsky are in the United States.

Those who become addicted to the wielding of the instruments of war,

by the right-wing demagogue Meir Kahane, openly discriminate against Israeli Arabs and Palestinians. Ilan Pappé calls the decades-long assault against the Palestinian people “incremental genocide.”

In Gaza, Israel practices an even more extreme form of cruelty. It employs a mathematical formula to limit outside food deliveries to Gaza to keep the caloric levels of the 1.8 million Palestinians just above starvation. This has left 80 percent of the Palestinians in Gaza dependent on

As horrible as the apartheid state in South Africa was, that nation never used its air force and heavy artillery to bomb and shell black townships.

blinded by hubris and a lust for power, eventually become war's victims. This is as true for Israel as for the United States.

Israel's goal is to make life a living hell for all Palestinians, ethnically cleansing as many as it can and subduing those who remain. The peace process is a sham. It has led to Israel's seizure of more than half the land on the West Bank, including the aquifers, and the herding of Palestinians into squalid, ringed ghettos or bantustans while turning Palestinian land and homes over to Jewish settlers. Israel is expanding settlements, especially in East Jerusalem. Racial laws, once championed

Islamic charities and outside aid to survive. And the periodic military assaults on Gaza, euphemistically called “mowing the lawn,” are carried out every few years to ensure that the Palestinians remain broken, terrified and destitute. There have been three Israeli attacks on Gaza since 2008. Each is more violent and indiscriminate than the last. Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman has said that a fourth attack on Gaza is “inevitable.”

During its 51-day siege of Gaza last summer Israel dropped \$370 million in ordnance on concrete hovels and refugee camps that hold the most densely packed

population on the planet. Two thousand one hundred four Palestinians were killed. Sixty-nine percent—1,462—were civilians. Four hundred ninety-five were children. Ten thousand were injured. (During the attack six Israeli civilians and 66 soldiers were killed.) Four hundred Palestinian businesses were wiped out. Seventy mosques were destroyed and 130 were damaged. Twenty-four medical facilities were bombed, and 16 ambulances were struck, as was Gaza's only electrical power plant. Israel tallied it up: 390,000 tank shells, 34,000 artillery shells, 4.8 million bullets. Most of the civilians who died were killed in their homes, many of the victims torn to shreds by flechette darts sprayed from tanks. Children were burned with white phosphorous or buried with their families under rubble caused by 2,000-pound iron fragmentation bombs. Others died from dense inert metal explosive, or DIME, bombs—experimental weapons that send out extremely small, carcinogenic particles that cut through both soft tissue and bone.

The Israeli Defense Forces, as Amira Hass has reported, consider any Palestinian over the age of 12 to be a legitimate military target. Max Blumenthal's new book, *The 51 Day War*, is a chilling chronicle of savage atrocities carried out by Israel in Gaza last summer. As horrible as the apartheid state in South Africa was, that nation never used its air force and heavy artillery to bomb and shell black townships.

A report by Action on Armed Violence (AOAV) found Israel killed and injured more civilians with explosive weapons in 2014 than any other country in the world. Hamas' indiscriminate firing of wildly inaccurate missiles—Finkelstein correctly called them “enhanced fireworks”—into Israel was, as a U.N. report recently charged, a war crime, although the report failed to note that under international law Hamas had a right to use force to defend itself from attack.

The disparity of firepower in the 2014 conflict was vast: Israel dropped 20,000 tons of explosives on Gaza while Hamas used 20 to 40 tons of explosives to retaliate. Israel's wholesale slaughter of civilians is on a scale equaled only by Islamic State and Boko Haram. Yet Israel, in our world of double standards, is exempted from condemnation in Washington and provided with weapons and billions in U.S. foreign aid to perpetuate the killing. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who during his last election campaign received 90 percent of his money from U.S. oligarchs such as Sheldon Adelson, has internally mounted a campaign of state repression against human rights advocates, journalists, and dissidents. He has stoked overt racism toward Palestinians and Arabs and the African migrant workers who live in the slums of Tel Aviv. “Death to Arabs” is a popular chant at Is-

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Photos by Ellen Davidson



April 26, 2015: Hibakusha (radiation victims) and Veterans For Peace were among the thousands marching in New York City to demand nuclear disarmament.

Survivor Justice

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War, an equivalent number of people suffer serious diseases and children continue to be born with defects from Agent Orange. U.S. veterans of the Vietnam War and their children suffer as well.

Agent Orange caused direct damage to those exposed to dioxin, including cancers, skin disorders, liver damage, pulmonary and heart diseases, defects to reproductive capacity and nervous disorders. It also resulted in indirect damage to the children of those exposed, whose symptoms include severe physical deformities, mental and physical disabilities, diseases and shortened life spans.

Dan Shea joined the U.S. Marine Corps in 1968 at the age of 19. He served in Vietnam a little more than two months. But he was in Quang Tri, one of the areas where much of the Agent Orange was sprayed. When Shea saw barrels “all over” with orange stripes on them, he had no idea the dioxin they contained would change his life forever. When they ran out of water, he and his fellow Marines would drink out of the river.

In 1977, Shea’s son Casey was born with congenital heart disease and a cleft palate. Before his third birthday, Casey underwent heart surgery for the hole in his heart. Ten hours after surgery, Casey went into a coma and died seven weeks later.

Just as the United States censored in-

formation about the effects of radiation after the atomic bombings, the U.S. government and the chemical companies that manufactured Agent Orange—including Dow and Monsanto—also suppressed the 1965 Bionetics study that demonstrated dioxin caused many birth defects in experimental animals. The spraying of Agent Orange finally stopped when that study was made public.

Shea works with me on the Vietnam Agent Orange Relief and Responsibility Campaign. We seek to obtain relief for the Vietnamese, Vietnamese-American and U.S. victims of Agent Orange through the recently introduced H.R. 2114. U.S. vets have received some compensation, but not nearly enough. Vietnamese people and Vietnamese-Americans have received nothing for their suffering.

This bill would assist with the cleanup of dioxin still present in Vietnam. It would also provide assistance to the public health system in Vietnam directed at the three million Vietnamese people affected by Agent Orange. It would extend assistance to the affected children of male U.S. veterans who suffer the same set of birth defects covered for the children of female veterans. It would also lead to research on the extent of Agent Orange-related diseases in the Vietnamese-American community, and provide them with assistance. Finally, it would lead to laboratory and epidemiological research on the effects of Agent Orange.

The U.S. government has also denied that Agent Orange is present on Okinawa,

the Pentagon’s main support base during the Vietnam War. In February 2013, the Pentagon issued a report denying that there is Agent Orange on Okinawa, but it did not order environmental tests or interview veterans who claimed exposure to Agent Orange there. “The usage of Agent Orange and military defoliants in Okinawa is one of the best kept secrets of the Cold War,” according to Jon Mitchell, a journalist based in Tokyo.

“The U.S. government has been lying about Agent Orange on Okinawa for more than 50 years,” Mitchell said. An investigation by Okinawa City and the Okinawa Defense Bureau found dioxin and other components of Agent Orange in several barrels found on Okinawa. Many bore markings of Dow Chemical, one of the manufacturers of Agent Orange. *The Japan Times* cited reports of military veterans who said that burying surplus chemicals, including Agent Orange, “was standard operating procedure for the U.S. military on Okinawa.”

Two hundred and fifty U.S. service members are claiming damages from exposure to Agent Orange on Okinawa during the Vietnam War, but very few have received compensation from the government. In spite of the Pentagon report, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs granted relief in October 2013 to a retired Marine Corps driver who has prostate cancer. In this case the judge ruled that his cancer was triggered by his transport and use of Agent Orange.

Abolish Nuclear Weapons and Compensate Victims of Agent Orange

Besides being criminal, the United States’ use of nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and poisoning of Vietnam and Okinawa with Agent Orange are a shameful legacy. The denial and cover-up of each of these crimes adds insult to injury.

As we implement the nuclear deal with Iran, the U.S. government should abide by its commitment to nuclear disarmament in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

It is also time to fully compensate the victims of Agent Orange and fund a total cleanup of the areas in Vietnam that remain contaminated by the toxic chemical. Urge your congressional representative to cosponsor H.R. 2114, the Victims of Agent Orange Relief Act of 2015.

Finally, we must hold our leaders accountable for their crimes in Japan and Vietnam, and ensure that such atrocities never happen again.

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Marjorie Cohn is a professor at Thomas Jefferson School, former president of the National Lawyers Guild, and deputy secretary general of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers. A co-coordinator of the Vietnam Agent Orange Relief and Responsibility Campaign, she is on the national advisory board of Veterans For Peace. Her latest book is *Drones and Targeted Killing: Legal, Moral, and Geopolitical Issues*.

Twelve-Hour Shifts

A drone pilot works a twelve-hour shift, then goes home to real life. Showers, eats supper, plays video games.

Twelve hours later he comes back, high-fives, takes over the drone from other pilots, who watch Homeland, do dishes, hope they don’t dream in all screens, bad kills, all slo-mo freeze-frame.

A drone pilot works a twelve-hour shift, then goes home.

A small room, a pilot’s chair, the mic and headphones crowd his mind, take him somewhere else. Another day another dollar: hover and shift, twelve hours over strangers’ homes.

Stop by the store, its Muzak, pick up the Cheerios, get to the gym if you’re lucky. Get back to your babies, play Barbies, play blocks. Twelve hours later, come back. Take over the drone.

Smell of burned coffee in the lounge, the shifting kill zone. Last-minute abort mission, and the major who forgets your name. A drone pilot works a twelve-hour shift, then goes home.

It’s done in our names, but we don’t have to know. Our own lives, shifts, hours, bounced off screens all day. A drone pilot works a twelve-hour shift, then goes home; fresh from twelve hours off, another comes in, takes over our drone.

—Jill McDonough

Jill McDonough is the author of *Where You Live*. She teaches at University of Massachusetts Boston.

Black Americans and the Military: This Country Is Not to Die For



Left to right: Sgt. James Brown, Kenneth Chamberlain Sr., Anthony Hill, Brenda Williams, all killed by police.

By William C. Anderson

"If violence is wrong in America, violence is wrong abroad. If it is wrong to be violent defending black women and black children and black babies and black men, then it is wrong for America to draft us, and make us violent abroad in defense of her. And if it is right for America to draft us, and teach us how to be violent in defense of her, then it is right for you and me to do whatever is necessary to defend our own people right here in this country."

—Malcolm X (El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz)

Black people should reconsider dying for a country that does not see fit for us to live. Since the U.S. project began, Black people have been working on the front lines to build, expand, and protect this empire. This empire has never returned the favor—it has never fully recognized the humanity of or granted protection to Black people, in exchange for endless Black labor, blood, sweat, and tears.

Sgt. James Brown, an active-duty soldier who self-reported for a two-day sentence at the El Paso, Texas, county jail and died behind bars, is one more in a long string of Black soldiers who have returned home from wars to be killed. Brown checked himself into the jail in

July 2012 for driving under the influence. He expected to serve 48 hours of jail time. After he died in custody, authorities stated Brown died from a pre-existing medical condition. However, video obtained from the jail by KFOX14 News shows Brown's final moments were much more complex than what authorities led his family to believe.

According to his mother, Brown was given an injection after reportedly becoming "combative," and 45 minutes later, his body was shutting down. Whatever

over his face, Brown slowly began losing consciousness. Near the end of the video footage, Brown appears completely unresponsive and no longer able to beg and plead for his life. Family attorneys say no ambulance or 911 call was made to obtain help, despite Brown's pleas.

Brown's death is not an isolated incident. It is not simply an "unfortunate tragedy," as Sheriff Richard Wiles described it. Army veteran James Allen, 74, was killed earlier this year in Gastonia, N.C., after his family asked authorities to check

Black soldiers are doubly jeopardized by the economic onslaught at home, because they generally come from the communities that already suffer the most from poverty.

he was given led to his body's complete dysfunction. Something, likely the injection, caused Brown to bleed in his cell; he wasn't speaking with the jail guards.

Then a team of riot police became involved, restraining Brown while he repeatedly yelled that he could not breathe. After yelling this several times and being placed in a restraining chair with a mask

on his well-being. Kenneth Chamberlain, Sr., died the same way a few years ago, when police arrived at his residence responding to a call sent by a medical device he wore to alert emergency responders in times of need. The same is true of Brenda Williams. A 27-year-old Air Force veteran, Anthony Hill, was naked and unarmed when he was killed by po-

lice this March in the parking lot of his apartment complex.

In fact, my own grandfather, for whom I am named, was a World War II veteran who was killed by the police when he returned home from the war. He was killed in 1956 because he "got smart" with police in Jemison, Ala., while walking home. They shot him several times and left his body in a ditch. Alas, over 50 years later, in a supposedly different United States, the tradition of U.S. police killing Black soldiers continues.

The threat of police violence against Black service members and their communities, of course, comes on top of the more amorphous threat of institutional neglect, which all veterans face during this time of ever-looming budget cuts and federal abandonment.

Black soldiers are doubly jeopardized by the economic onslaught at home, because they generally come from the com-

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New York City, December 13, 2014.

Black Americans

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munities that already suffer the most from poverty, as well as inadequate education and employment opportunities. These public disenfranchisements have persisted over the generations for Black people in the United States: This empire touts how much progress it has made, but it only restyles old oppression for modern times. The slavery system was replaced with mass incarceration, which the military also feeds into, as noted by Angela Davis. Voting tests were replaced with voter ID laws. Black soldiers continue to come home only to find out they still aren't "good enough."

Traditionally, Blacks have been overrepresented in U.S. conflicts and in combat, like the Vietnam war. And even though there has been a rise in "minority" officers, "minorities" such as Black people are still underrepresented in these leadership roles. C.L.R. James once said, "American 'democracy' did not want to have even any American colored officers. And it took a hard fight to have a few hundred." Moreover, the strong impetus to place Black people in harm's way for the sake of this empire also highlights Black disposability.

From the American Revolution to military unit integration to the GI Bill, which left out Black Americans, these second-class soldiers color a picture of perversion inside the borderlines of this empire. The lead coming from their guns sketches the stark reality that the Black men and women willing to take life abroad could very well return home to have their lives taken because they're Black.

And so, we must confront a key question: Why serve a country that doesn't serve you? Why pledge allegiance to a nation that has still not demonstrated allegiance to Black people—even those who serve it? Black service members salute and pledge an oath of loyalty to a country that does not protect them after they have protected it.

Of course, many young Black people see the military as a way to pay for college or find a promising career, although Black enlistment has been on the decline since 1985. The power structure has exploited a void of opportunities to grow its numbers for quite some time. Instead of filling that social void with education or on-the-job-training, the government steers many toward enlistment.

However, the military is no safe haven. Black soldiers will not be protected by their decorations and medals. We will not be protected by police. We will not be protected by wealth. We will not be protected by office. We will not be protected by fame. We will not be protected by gender. We will not be protected by age. Blackness renders you forever unsafe here.

That being said, it's up to Black soldiers who realize this to communicate it to young Black people considering military service. Those young Black people should be made aware that dedicating themselves to the United States through military service guarantees them absolutely nothing, not even veteran's assistance.

The U.S. military has and continues to function as a conduit for young people who are being otherwise neglected by the wealthiest nation on earth. The United States overspends on the military while failing to provide education, job training, and development in the communities that need it most. Whether it's the student drowning in college debt or a young person looking for direction, this economic disharmony works to the advantage of military recruitment and against the interests of young Black people. An important change is needed that addresses the misappropriation of funds for imperialism and the neglect of funds for sustaining overlooked Black communities.



Teargas in the streets of Ferguson, Mo., August 2014.

During the wave of protests against racist police violence that have recently taken place around the country, many Black soldiers have spoken up about their mistreatment. One emotional Black veteran spoke up in Baltimore to a CNN anchor live on air, saying: "They're talking about we're part of this country man; how can we be?" After being pressed further by the interviewer, he exclaimed: "When I was in the Marine Corps, they called me a patriot, a Marine! But now that I'm fighting for my people, they call me a fucking thug!"

If we do not have the right to defend our own communities here, what sort of sense does it make to attack others defending their communities elsewhere from U.S. "interests"? After all, every time it is announced that another officer will walk free for killing a Black person, the authorities make it clear there is "no excuse for violence."

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William C. Anderson is a freelance writer. Follow him on Twitter @Williamcson.

Vietnam and Asia Pivot

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ceived connection with USAID's role in distributing increased millions of dollars in congressionally mandated funds for Agent Orange relief in Viet Nam.

Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) pushed through \$21 million over five years for expanded and improved disability programs in Viet Nam specifically to deliver services to disabled families that need the most help.



Nguyen Thi Hin, 83 with her granddaughter, Pham Thi Tu Thuy, 13. Thuy's grandfather was exposed to Agent Orange.

Chuck Searcy, a Viet Nam War veteran living in Viet Nam for the past 20 years, is a co-founder and now international advisor for Project RENEW, which for 14 years

has dealt with unexploded ordnance (UXO) and Agent Orange (AO) Relief. Searcy, a member of Veterans For Peace, states, "The unwritten message, communicated rather clearly from Sen. Leahy, is that this [new] effort should be targeted to the most severely disabled, with the greatest needs, i.e. families suffering from Agent Orange."

Some people feel that the Agent Orange relief money is being used as a carrot to induce the Vietnamese to come more into the U.S. military orbit but Searcy contends, "To this point there has not been the slightest indication of any quid pro quo regarding these humanitarian services and the U.S. push for approval of the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement, or the cozier military relationship the U.S. wants, or decisions about weapons sales to Vietnam—all troublesome issues that bear watching and which veterans living in Viet Nam discuss with their Vietnamese friends in and out of the government. But those questions have little relationship to UXO and AO war legacies, except they should be warnings to the Vietnamese to be very careful in their dealings with the United States. The war legacies are issues of moral responsibility, redress for harm done, matters of human decency and justice."

USAID has been the conduit for years for distributing smaller amounts of money for disability programs, some \$3 to \$4 million a year. Still, many are suspicious that USAID, now with larger sums of money to give, will do what it has attempted in many other countries—use aid money to subvert and manipulate or even overthrow governments that do not exactly conform to U.S. wishes.

But Vietnamese officials involved in UXO and AO relief have told Searcy, "We know all about USAID. We have watched them carefully for years. Don't worry about us. Our people need your help."

Photo by Michael Uhl

By Ellen Taylor

On June 20, 2015, a crowd gathered on the bank of Zerlang & Zerlang Boat Yard in Samoa, Calif., to witness the launching of *The Golden Rule*. It was a bright gray afternoon. Members of Veterans For Peace were still raising money for their voyage to the San Diego annual convention, so they had piles of T-shirts out and everybody was buying commemorative glasses of champagne. Out on Humboldt Bay kayaks and yachts drifted around, waiting for the splash-down.

Although the excitement was congratulatory, a somber note hummed in the air. Most of the people present were old enough to have life experiences entangled with the history about to be commemorated. And this event was starkly allegorical, beginning with the very name, *Golden Rule*, foundation of practically all the philosophies and religions of the world, gleaming on the boat's stern. Its successful premiere performance, almost 60 years ago, had been the publicized attempt to save the earth by sailing 2000 miles across the Pacific into the U.S. atomic bomb testing grounds. The Coast Guard caught them almost immediately. But the aspiration of the frail boat caught the public's imagination and resulted in a miracle, almost like the Butterfly that Stamped of the Kipling tale. The Partial Test Ban Treaty, which ended atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons, was signed in 1963.

The boat then disappeared from history for a long, mysterious interval, but its crew most certainly did not. They were not young men. They wended their way through the topography of

the century, samurais for social justice. Take James Peck. He began his protests getting beaten up during the 1930s labor movements. He spent three years in jail for antiwar protests during WWII, during which time he succeeded in desegregating the prison mess hall. He demonstrated tirelessly during the anti-nuclear movement after the war, and participated in delegations to Russia and China.

He was on the first Freedom Ride, the Journey of Reconciliation, in 1947, with Bayard Rustin. He was beaten to a pulp during the Freedom Rides of the sixties. He brought a successful lawsuit against the FBI for colluding with the KKK in their vicious attacks on the riders.

He demonstrated steadily against the Viet Nam war. He was gassed and arrested at the Columbia University demonstrations and at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. He set up tiger cages in front of the United Nations protesting the treatment of Vietnamese political prisoners. He demonstrated in support of draft card burners. He organized die-ins, sang Japanese protest songs at the gates of nuclear power plants, and was arrested in a giant demonstration on Wall Street against the financiers of the nuclear industry.

In the words of William Huntington, another member of the crew, spoken in 1978 at the 50th reunion of his Harvard class, "We have had a lifespan laid out in the heart of the 20th century. Before we were born, the Hague Conferences promised an end to war. After WWI, which dominated our youth, we were told that was the last war. At the close of WWII, which dominated our prime years, we joined in the resolve that this should never hap-

pen again ... and now, as I take my seat for the final act, I cannot imagine how it will end ... what will make it come out right. But in my heart I know it must. The grandchildren will live! Harvard and the world will go on. Somehow something or somebody will turn the tide. But in today's reality we cannot not just be audience..."

Orion Sherwood, the only surviving crew member, was present at the launching. So were children of Captain Albert Bigelow and George Willoughby. Shigeko Sasamori, who had been burned almost past recognition at Hiroshima, rechristened *The Golden Rule* before the boat slipped back into her element. She described her experience, in strong, eloquent broken English when, as a 13-year-old girl in 1945, exhausted from sprints to the air raid shelter and, just in case her house was hit by fire bombs, wearing the two pairs of pants, which wound up saving her from fatal burns, she pointed out the Enola Gay to a friend as it floated into the peerless blue sky over Hiroshima ... and instantly lost consciousness.

Jessica Reynolds read from her father's diary. Earle Reynolds was one of the world's experts on the effects of radiation. She was 10 when he piloted the *Phoenix of Hiroshima* into the nuclear testing grounds around Bikini Island. Earle had been present in Honolulu at the trial of the *Golden Rule's* crew for criminal contempt, and was deeply impressed. In his beautifully written diary he ruminated on the challenge of continuing the mission. Although instinctively law-abiding, he recognized the U.S. ban on travel in the 380,000 square miles around the Marshalls as illegal. He had worked on Hiroshima, and had on board a young man whose mother had crawled through heaps of burned corpses looking for her family. He recorded the spectacle as they approached Bikini Island: the giant flashes and the dirty orange light in the western sky of what would ultimately amount to 67 atmospheric nuclear bomb tests.

Leroy Zerlang, owner of the boat yard, told of *The Golden Rule's* 50-year plunge into obscurity, much of it under water, and its mysterious return. He and the others, who worked doggedly for five years to recall this boat to life, have conferred



Golden Rule crew member and VFP member Helen Jaccard

Photo by Ellen Davidson

The Golden Rule



Rule Sails On



honor upon Humboldt County, and set free upon the sea a little hope for the entire country. They have in fact achieved a sort of saintly status. They would, I am sure, scoff at this reflection. Indeed, Leroy Zerlang, in telling how they raised *The Golden Rule*'s rotting hulk from the bay, cloaked his story in the common patois of self-interest, declaring that he "knew it was famous and he could sell it" though he finally gave it to "those clowns that stand in front of the courthouse on Fridays in the rain" (the Veterans For Peace). They, if anybody, have the fortitude to be heirs to the illustrious crew of 1958.

Orion Sherwood sat in the bow of *The Golden Rule* as she moved out into the water, his silver hair lifting gently in the breeze. What was he thinking? Of the crew dancing on the deck in mischievous delight as they stole away from the Coast Guard 57 years ago?

Or was he thinking of the aforementioned grandchildren of William Huntington's musings?

The instinct for survival, demonstrated by U.S. citizens in their response to the 1958 voyage of *The Golden Rule*, has languished in today's world. If they are aware at all that the United States and Russia each have 2500 nuclear warheads aimed at each other's cities, on hair-trigger alert, they do not seem to feel the targets burning into their backs. Somehow they have stifled the outrage natural to being held eternally hostage, a sacrifice to financial and political leaders who do not share a single one of their own interests.

Contemptuously and imperiously the United States defies its obligation under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty to decrease its nuclear stockpiles. We make 80 new H-bombs a year and are perfecting the B61-12 bomb, a tactical nuclear weapon designed to be used, not merely held as a deterrent. We are going to spend \$341 billion on nuclear weapons over the next 10 years.

People do not want to cooperate in their own suicide. They hate the sickening militarism with which the media infects us. But the mechanisms of democracy have been usurped by money, and resistance is every day less possible.

At the Mattole Grange barbecue this Fourth of July, as I listened once more to the beautiful

voice of Claire Trower singing our national anthem, I suddenly had a vision of what the song really meant. It is not a war song. Francis Scott Key, also on a boat, is staring through the blackness and destruction with which the British Empire is smashing Fort Henry, searching desperately for a glimmer of hope.

Today's empire is not the British, but, alas, we ourselves. It is imperialism that is the enemy, our own imperialism. With manic savagery we are bombing and shelling the shreds that remain of the inspiration for which our flag might have stood. Then, like Key, we peer desperately

though the blackness of our own moral monstrosity, many times more evil than the simple blade of an ISIS fanatic, hoping to see a flash of what the flag once aspired to.

May the miracle of *The Golden Rule*'s resurrection restore hope to the people in all harbors it graces, and the stamina to insist on the survival of our grandchildren and great-grandchildren on all the waterfronts of the world.

To learn more and to support the *Golden Rule Project*, go to vfpgoldenruleproject.org.

Ellen Taylor can be reached at ellenetaylor@yahoo.com.

Peace Boat Shines on West Coast Journey



The Golden Rule sails by the Golden Gate Bridge.

The *Golden Rule* peace boat, a national project of Veterans For Peace, continues on her maiden voyage as a restored sailing vessel, plying the waters of the Pacific Ocean as she "port hops" up the California coast after her debut at the Veterans For Peace national convention in San Diego.

The Golden Rule and her intrepid crew have stopped for educational and fundraising events in San Diego, Long Beach, Santa Monica/Marina del Rey, Santa Barbara, Morro Bay/San Luis Obispo, Monterey, Santa Cruz, San Francisco, Berkeley, and Sausalito.

"VFP members and friends greeted us at every stop," said Gerry Condon, the shore support person for the *Golden Rule* crew. "We had great events, many potluck dinners and good media coverage. We received a proclamation from the mayor of Santa Cruz. We made hundreds of new

friends, many of whom actually went out sailing with us. *The Golden Rule* truly inspires people, and makes them happy too."

The Golden Rule returned to San Francisco October 6-11 to participate in Fleet Week activities with members of Veterans For Peace, Iraq Veterans Against the War, CODEPINK Women for Peace, and the Nonviolent Peaceforce.

With her red sails emblazoned with a huge white peace sign and Veterans For Peace logo, *The Golden Rule* made for quite the counterpoint to the Navy's huge orgy of militarism in San Francisco's Fleet Week.

"We are sailing for a nuclear-free world," said crew member Helen Jaccard. "That means the whole nuclear cycle, from when they take the uranium out of the ground, to nuclear power and nuclear weapons. All of this must end if humanity is to survive."

WWII Hero Condemns Nuclear Weapons 70 Years After Nagasaki Bombing

By Pamela Alma Weymouth

In 1950, my grandfather, Ralph Weymouth—a decorated World War II naval aviator who would become a vice admiral—stood inside the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum, viewing for the first time the human cost of the atom bomb. He saw a child's charred lunchbox, a helmet with the remains of a victim's skull still stuck to the interior, a clock frozen at 11:02, and the one thing he'll never forget: "fingers on a human hand ossified in glass."

Last week my grandfather told me this was the moment that changed him. The eldest of three boys, he joined the military as a midshipman at age 17 to help his divorced mother in the midst of the Great Depression. He entered the Navy with "a schoolboy mentality" about the military: "I was your typical young, ardent performer." The four visits he made to ground zero during his service in the Korean War left an indelible imprint on his views, leading eventually to his transformation from military man to activist for nuclear disarmament.

"I could see the facts from a different viewpoint," he said, "right there at ground zero." The remnants of the blast, the apology letter from some 50 physicists, the Smyth Report, released just days after the blasts—all these things conspired to transform my grandfather from a man who believed that war was inevitable into a man who believes that peace is possible.

Ralph is part of a generation of men who were taught that boys don't emote—so when he says that what he saw was "pretty awful," what I gather is that he was shaken to the core. Unable to fully voice his views within a secretive and pro-nuclear military, after his retirement in 1973 he became an advocate for peace and eventually a board member of Veterans For Peace. But he doesn't appreciate those who would write him off as a fringe thinker: "I regret that I have been incorrectly described as a traitor or peacenik or pacifist. ... I am an anti-nuclear-weapon determined ex-warrior."

Now 98, Ralph is one of the few remaining American World War II veterans who remember the true cost of nuclear war. Over the course of his career he received the

Navy's highest award, the Navy Cross, for his actions as a pilot of a carrier-based dive bomber and commanding officer of bombing Squadron 16 in the east Philippine Sea; he received two Legion of Merit badges and four Flying Cross badges for "extraordinary achievement" in aerial combat in WWII and the Korean War. In the course of his 35-year career he commanded squadrons, air groups, and ships; he was commander of the Iceland Defense Force and on the staff of the chief of naval operations and the secretary of defense for internal security affairs.

Ralph confounds all movie stereotypes of brutish military men. He is a lanky 6 feet 6 inches tall, still has a full head of hair and has sea-blue eyes. While he has a few more wrinkles than he used to and moves a bit slower, he's still handsome, charming, and a powerful blend of gentleness and strength. Even at 98 he's inordinately stubborn in his refusal to accept help or the fact that he's not 25 anymore. Last week, he tried doggedly to remove a canoe from the

Ralph ... [was] taught that boys don't emote—so when he says that what he saw was 'pretty awful,' what I gather is that he was shaken to the core.

top of my aunt's car, even though he had just recuperated from breaking a hip in a fall. At Bearcamp Pond in his native New Hampshire, surrounded by towering pines and an untouched natural landscape, I climbed into the canoe with him. It took all of my strength (at age 47) to keep up with his paddling, but I wanted to earn his respect, and I wanted some of his determination to rub off on me.

I imagine it was this kind of stubbornness that made him a great admiral—he's not one to easily admit defeat, nor is he willing to let fear or old age get the better of him, nor is



he willing to concede that we've lost the chance to save this planet from further destruction. He likes to repeat a mantra from President Kennedy's speech at the time of the Bay of Pigs debacle with Cuba: "War is not inevitable."

When I told my grandfather that I wanted to interview him for the 70th anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, he got so stirred up that he rushed across the two-lane highway with his off-road walker to interrupt my breakfast. My twin sons and I were staying in the tiny wood cabin that he had rebuilt and lived in for years with my French grandmother, Lo Weymouth. "Sit down," he said, after ducking so he wouldn't hit his head on the front door frame. I thought I'd offended him, or that someone had died; but I finally gathered that he saw this as his last chance to tell the world what he's learned in his 98 years, and the gravity of my task weighs upon me. Can I really tell a story that will convince our citizens or leaders to wake up? Do the politicians and military powers who matter even read newspapers anymore? Can one journalist's story make a difference?

During the Cold War, Ralph participated in meetings in which nuclear war was being planned, considered, discussed. His inner struggle over the ethics of what our nation was planning tore him apart. "All of us left those meetings starry-eyed. I was terrified by this time that we were trigger-happy. [I felt] a growing disturbance about whether it was really right to be enchanted with maximum [use of] force; it was becoming part and parcel of our system," he said.

The atom bombings, and more recently the earthquake at Japan's Fukushima nuclear reactor, were proof of what Ralph began to realize 65 years ago at the Atomic Bomb Museum. "To think that we can make a perfectly safe nuclear power plant is wrong," he said. "The whole pyramid of nuclear command is full of places where mistakes can be made. A lot of them are people mistakes: The system is so sophisticated, and the weapons so complicated, much of it covered with secrecy, that a human error can occur almost anywhere in the system."

My grandfather recounted a story about a near miss that would be funny if it weren't true. It occurred over northern Greenland in 1960, one of multiple near misses that nearly launched full-scale nuclear war. The Ballistic Missile Early Warning System had reported with 99.9 percent certainty that the Soviets had launched missiles at the United States. "You know what it turned out to be?" Ralph asked. "It was the moon coming up over the horizon."

During the Cold War, Ralph was evolving into a skilled negotiator. He was called upon several times to mediate the growing competition between the Navy and the Air Force. In these negotiations he saw the power of words to do what war cannot.

"There was a body of thought submerged within the military that nuclear weapons were bad," but the climate of the military did not allow for opposition, he said. Ralph tried to advocate for adherence to the Geneva Conventions, he lobbied against those who wanted to use laser methods to blind the enemy; he lobbied against nuclear weapons for the same reason. But his voice was drowned out, the push for

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Remains of a Shinto Temple in Nagasaki after the atomic bombing.

Radiation and Agent Orange Survivors Deserve Justice

By Marjorie Cohn

We have just marked anniversaries of the war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the U.S. government against the people of Japan and Vietnam. Seventy years ago, on August 6, 1945, the U.S. military unleashed an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, killing at least 140,000 people. Three days later, the United States dropped a second bomb, on Nagasaki, which killed 70,000. And 54 years ago, on August 10, 1961, the U.S. military began spraying Agent Orange in Vietnam. It contained the deadly chemical dioxin, which has poisoned an estimated three million people throughout that country.

Devastating Effects of Radiation

On the day of the first atomic bombing, 19-year-old Shinji Mikamo was on the roof of his house in Hiroshima helping his father prepare it for demolition when he saw a huge fireball coming at him. Then he heard a deafening explosion and felt a searing pain throughout his body. He said he felt as if boiling water had been poured over him. Shinji was three-quarters of a mile from the epicenter of the bomb. His chest and right arm were totally burned. Pieces of his flesh fell from his body like ragged clothing. The pain was unbearable. Shinji survived but most of his family perished.

Shinji's daughter, Dr. Akiko Mikamo, told her father's story at the Veterans For Peace convention in San Diego on August 7. She wrote the book, *Rising From the Ashes: A True Story of Survival and Forgiveness From Hiroshima*. Akiko's mother Miyoko, who was indoors about a half-mile from the epicenter, was also severely injured in the bombing, but she too survived.

Akiko said 99 percent of those who were outdoors at the time of the blast died immediately or within 48 hours. A week after the bombing, thousands of people had experienced a unique combination of symptoms, Su-

san Southard wrote in the *Los Angeles Times*:

"Their hair fell out in large clumps, their wounds se- creted extreme amounts of pus, and their gums swelled and bled. Purple spots appeared on their bodies, signs of hemorrhaging beneath the skin. Infections ravaged their internal organs. Within a few days of the onset of symp- toms, many people lost consciousness, mumbled delir- iously and died in extreme pain; others languished for weeks before either dying or slowly recovering."

Southard notes that the U.S. government censored Jap- anese news reports, photographs, testimonies, and scien- tific research about the condition of the survivors.

Gen. Leslie Groves, director of the Manhattan Project, which created the atom bombs, testified before Congress that death resulting from exposure to large amounts of radiation takes place "without undue suffering." He

added it is "a very pleasant way to die."

Thirty years after the end of World War II, numer- ous cases of leukemia, stomach cancer and colon cancer were documented.

The bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were crimi- nal because at the time Japan was already defeated and had taken steps to surrender. With these atomic bomb- ings, the United States launched the Cold War, marking the beginning of its nuclear threat.

The Continuing Legacy of Agent Orange in Vietnam

Sixteen years after the United States' nuclear attacks on Japan, the U.S. military began spraying Vietnam with Agent Orange-dioxin. In addition to the more than three million Vietnamese people killed during the Vietnam

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WWII Hero

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nuclear proliferation won, and conventional warfare was replaced by the kind of wars we're embroiled in today, in which civil- ians are killed or harmed "by accident," and the wars themselves and the treatment of POWs flout the Geneva Conventions' rules, rules intended to protect our own soldiers as much as the soldiers and citizens of our adversaries.

Ralph is honest about the seductive power of war, how it can trick you into forgetting your own moral compass. Or worse, killing becomes strangely addic- tive because of the language that dehu- manizes your actions; you aim to blow up "targets," not humans. But of course in- side there are humans.

"I loved flying," he told me. "Yet to turn that into bombing a ship? I got to love bombing; all those [moral] revul- sions evaporate after a while." He was not the kind of military man who abused his power. He told me about the farmer with an ox cart that he told his fleet not to shoot at, despite orders from above to "shoot everything that moved." There are few

things that scare Ralph, but one of them is the way he saw our military lose sight of the values we were trying to defend.

Coupled with his museum visits, the Smyth Report woke Ralph to the barbarity of nuclear war: "A weapon has been devel- oped that is potentially destructive beyond the wildest nightmares of the imagination; a weapon so ideally suited to sudden unan- nounced attack that a country's major cit- ies might be destroyed overnight by an os- tensibly friendly power." It is startling, and sad, how relevant Smyth's words are today:

"Because of the restrictions of military security there has been no chance for the Congress or the people to debate such questions. ... The men on the project have been thinking as citizens of the United States vitally interested in the welfare of the human race. ... In a free country like ours, such questions should be debated by the people and decisions must be made by the people through their representatives."

Ralph remembers the Japanese attempts to surrender before the dropping of the bombs. He recalls that they were trying to save their emperor; they sought a way out that would allow them to save face. He be- lieves that Truman did not have to drop the bombs—that a bomb demonstration (which

many scientists on the Manhattan Project lobbied for) would have been enough to force Japan to surrender. At the time, the U.S. government sold the bombings to the American people as necessary in order to "save American lives." Ralph's second wife, Diana Beliard, a student at Radcliffe during the war, told me, "You have to understand: We were so afraid. It was us versus them."

When Ralph learned that Japan had surrendered, he got drunk for the second (and last time) in his life. Soldiers kissed women in the streets, couples danced, children played; while in Japan grand- fathers, grandmothers, mothers, fathers, schoolchildren and babies had been in- cinerated, charred, or scarred for life by the radioactive blasts that killed at least 140,000 in Hiroshima and 70,000 three days later in Nagasaki. The blasts were so hot that some victims, on their way to work or school or praying in churches or temples, evaporated, leaving only silhou- ettes burned onto concrete.

When I asked Ralph the question that truly gnaws at me: "Is the world today more disastrous than it was when you were young?" he said no. He's an optimist who refuses to give in to despair. Shortly after the death of my grandmother, his wife of



68 years, Ralph (to his own surprise) fell in love for the second time in his life. At 94, he married Diana—his next-door neighbor, a journalist, an activist in her own right, and the daughter of a journalist who had been kicked out of Germany by the Nazis.

My grandfather continues to teach me that the impossible is never totally out of reach. If he can fall in love at 94 and paddle a canoe at 98, perhaps it's also true when he says, "Every war can be examined to find that its buildup contained opportunities to halt the eventual moment when there was no alternative. ... War is not inevitable."

Pamela Alma Weymouth writes for Truthdig, Justmeans and the Huffington- Post. She teaches humor writing in San Francisco and tells stories on any stage that will have her. Learn more atpame- laalma.org

From Jeju and Afghanistan, an Asia Peace Pivot

By Dr. Hakim

“Don’t you touch me!” declared Mi Ryang.

South Korean police were clamping down on a villager who was resisting the construction of a Korean/U.S. naval base at her village. Mi Ryang managed to turn the police away by taking off her blouse and, clad in her bra, walking toward them with her clear warning. Hands off! Mi Ryang is fondly referred to as “Gangjeong’s daughter” by villagers who highly regard her as the feisty descendant of legendary women sea divers. Her mother and grandmother were Haenyo

divers who supported their families every day by diving for shellfish.

Since 2007, every day without fail, Mi Ryang has stood up to militarists destroying her land.

In doing so, she confronts giants: the Korean military, Korean police authority, the U.S. military, and huge corporations, such as Samsung, allied with these armed forces.

Mi Ryang and her fellow protesters rely on love and on relationships that help them to continue seeking self-determination, freedom and dignity.

Jeju Island is the first place in the world to receive all three UNESCO natural science designations (Biosphere Reserve in 2002, World Natural Heritage in 2007, and Global Geopark in 2010). The military-industrial complex, having no interest in securing the island’s natural wonders, instead serves the U.S. government’s national interest in countering China’s rising economic influence.

The United States doesn’t want to be number two. The consequences of the U.S. government’s blueprint for “total-spectrum dominance” globally are violent and frightening.



Picasso's Massacre in Korea

I recently attended a conference held at Jeju University, where young Korean men told participants about why they chose prison instead of enlisting for the two-year compulsory Korean military service. “I admire these conscientious objectors for their brave and responsible decisions,” I said, “and I confess that I’m worried. I fear that Jeju Island will become like Afghanistan, where I have worked as a hu-

manitarian and social enterprise worker for the past 10 years.

“Jeju Island will be a pawn harboring a U.S. naval base, just as Afghanistan will be a pad for at least nine U.S. military bases when the next Afghan president signs the U.S./Afghanistan Bilateral Security Agreement.”

When the Korean authorities collabo-

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Island of Peace

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Gangjeong in 2008, we organized a campaign for U.S. citizens to call the South Korean Embassy in Washington, D.C., to share our support for the struggling villagers. When I and others called, we were told by South Korean Embassy staff, “Don’t call us, call your government. They are forcing us to build this base.”

This is a theme we hear a lot these days, even from Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-ME), who has said that we must cut our military budget by having our “allies pay more” for our bases. In this case, the United States got the South Korean government to build a Navy base on Jeju Island (called the Island of Peace); with our “Status of Forces Agreement” (SOFA), the Pentagon has the right to use any base in South Korea any

time it wishes. Same story in Japan (particularly Okinawa), the Philippines, and other locations around the world.

On Aug. 5, the U.S. Navy admiral assigned to South Korea publicly declared that the Navy was eager to use the new Jeju Island base to port warships being assigned to the region. These deployments on Jeju would put U.S. warships right in the middle of the Yellow Sea shipping lanes that China utilizes to import 80 percent of the resources, particularly oil, to run its economy. It will also make Gangjeong village a prime target in the event of hostilities.

The U.S. “pivot” into the Asia-Pacific is expensive, dangerous to world peace, and highly provocative. Official Washington calls the “pivot” a “rebalancing” of U.S. forces that has resulted in more airfields, ports-of-call, and barracks being required for these expanded U.S. operations.

Similar stories are heard from Okinawa, where expansion of U.S. military operations is being greeted with increasing outrage by the island population and political leaders. It is an insult to the Okinawan people when U.S. Ambassador to Japan Caroline Kennedy tells them they must accept Pentagon base expansion, while at the same time helping to ensure that Article 9 of the Japanese constitution forbidding Japanese troops to engage in foreign military operations was dumped by the ruling right-wing government of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe—under U.S. direction.

The life-destroying insults on Jeju and Okinawa keep coming from Washington, as it callously devastates the lives of people in the region. The goal is “full-spectrum dominance” over China and Russia and the profits to U.S. weapons corporations are an expected side benefit.

China feels it must respond and has increased its spending on hi-tech weaponry. The unrestrained military-industrial complex likes that because it keeps the treadmill of fear and anxiety moving, making it easier to get Congress to increase the Pentagon budget even more and to pay for it with more debt and further austerity measures.

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, in 2014 the United States spent 34 percent of the total world military outlays, while China was at 12 percent and Russia at 4.8 percent. When you add in the numbers from the cancerous NATO war machine, the United States and its Western allies come to over 50 percent. (NATO is increasingly becoming a global military alliance; it has now formed “partnerships” with Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand, giving them even

greater power in the Asia-Pacific region.)

It’s obvious that China is not a real threat to the U.S. except insofar as it is challenging Washington’s unrealistic dream of “unipolar” control of the world. Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, and other emerging powers are insisting that global decision-making must be a multi-polar process. It only makes sense.

Washington’s last move to stay in control on the grand chessboard is the military card and thus the “pivot” into Asia and the Pacific. World War III could be the result, if the psychotic rulers of the “exceptional nation on the hill” determine they are willing to risk everything in their gamble for total control. The peace movement, and particularly Veterans For Peace, can be out front leading the opposition to these dangerous and destabilizing U.S. military adventures in the Asia-Pacific region before things get even worse. Activists in the region are begging for Americans to hear their voices, show greater solidarity, and begin to work in tandem to build a global resistance movement to endless war and environmental destruction. There is a great need for courageous peace activists from the United States to stand in solidarity with the people in Japan, Okinawa, South Korea, Guam, Philippines, and more as citizens there try to remove Washington’s ugly boot from their necks.

Bruce K. Gagnon coordinates the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space. He lives in Bath, Maine, and is a member of VFP.

Editors note: As promised in a May 2015 letter delivered in person to the governor and several mayors of Okinawa, Veterans For Peace is sending a delegation of veterans to join the resistance on Jeju and Okinawa.



On July 10, three members of Veterans For Peace UK met in Trafalgar Square, London, and walked down Whitehall toward the residence of the prime minister.

Once at Downing Street the veterans lined up, faced the police barricades and made the following statements.

“We are members of Veterans For Peace UK, an ex-services organization of men and women who have served this country in every conflict since the Second World War. We exist in the hope of convincing you that war is not the solution to the problems of the 21st century. We have come here today to hand back things, given to us as soldiers, that we no longer require or want,” said Ben Griffin.

“This is my Oath of Allegiance, it is something I had to recite in order to get the job as a soldier. At 15 years old I had little understanding of its true meaning. Now I fully understand the words, they have no meaning at all,” said John Boulton, who then discarded his Oath of Allegiance.

“This is my Oath of Allegiance, this was a contract between the Monarchy, the British Government and a 15-year-old child. I am no longer loyal to the Government or the Monarchy,” said Kieran Devlin, who then discarded his Oath of Allegiance.

“This is my Oath of Allegiance, I made this oath when I was 19 years old. It required me to obey orders without question. I am no longer bound by this contract,” said Griffin who then discarded his Oath of Allegiance.

“This is my Army hat, it defined me as a soldier and a cog in the military machine. I reject militarism,” said John Boulton, who then discarded his beret.

“This is my Army hat, this was given to me as a 16-year-old boy. I reject militarism, I reject war. And it

UK War Veterans Discard Medals in Rejection of Militarism and War



John Boulton, Kieran Devlin, and Ben Griffin on their way to the British prime minister's residence.

means nothing to me,” said Kieran Devlin, who then discarded his beret.

“I used to wear this hat as a soldier, it used to have great significance to me. I no longer want to keep hold of this symbol of militarism,” said Ben Griffin, who then

discarded his beret.

“These are the medals given to me for the sick dichotomy of keeping the peace and waging war. They are trinkets, pseudo payments. But really all they represent is the self-interest of those in there, who hold power,” said John Boulton, who then discarded his medals.

“These are my medals, these were given to me as a reward for invading other people's countries and murdering their civilians. I'm now handing them back,” said Kieran Devlin, who then discarded his medals.

“I was given these medals for service on operations with the British Army. This particular medal here was given to me for my part in the occupation of Iraq. Whilst I was over there, I attacked civilians in their homes and took away their men, off to be tortured in prison. I no longer want these despicable things,” said Ben Griffin, who then discarded his medals.

The three veterans then walked away from Downing Street leaving the oaths, berets, and medals lying scattered on the ground.

John Boulton served in the Armoured Corps. He deployed on operations to Cyprus and Afghanistan. He is now a member of Veterans For Peace UK.

Kieran Devlin served in the Royal Engineers. He deployed on operations to the Gulf War and Northern Ireland. He is now a member of Veterans For Peace UK.

Ben Griffin served in the Parachute Regiment and the SAS. He deployed on operations to Northern Ireland, Macedonia, Afghanistan, and Iraq. He is now a member of Veterans For Peace UK.

Jeju: Don't Touch

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rated with the U.S. military in 1947, at least 30,000 Jeju Islanders were massacred.

How many more ordinary people and soldiers will suffer, be utilized or be killed due to U.S. geopolitical interests to pivot against China?

As many as 20 percent of all tourists to Jeju Island are Chinese nationals. Clearly, ordinary Jeju citizens and ordinary Chinese can get along, just like ordinary Afghans and citizens from the U.S./NATO countries can get along. But when U.S. military bases are built outside the United States, the next Osama bin Ladens will have excuses to plan other September 11s!

A few nights ago, I spoke with Dr Song, a Korean activist who used to swim every day to Gureombi Rock, a sacred, volcanic rock formation along Gangjeong's coastline that was destroyed by the naval base construction. At one point, coast guard officials jailed him for trying to reach Gureombi by swimming. Dr. Song just returned from Okinawa, where he met with Japanese who have resisted the U.S. military base in Okinawa for decades.

The Okinawan and Korean activists understand the global challenge we face. The 99 percent must link to form a strong, united 99 percent. By acting together, we can build a better world, instead of burning out as tiny communities of change. The 1 percent is way too wealthy and well resourced in an entrenched system to be stopped by any one village or group.

“We are many, they are few” applies more effectively when we stand together. Socially and emotionally, we need one another more than ever, as our existence is threatened by human-engineered climate change, nuclear annihilation, and gross socioeconomic inequalities.

The governments of South Korea, the Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan, Japan and even my home country Singapore have dangerously partnered with the United States against China in Obama's Asia pivot, dividing human beings by using the threat of armed force, for profit.

The nonviolent examples of the people of Gangjeong Village should lead people worldwide to make friendships, create conversations, build alternative education systems, promote communally beneficial, sustainable economies, and create peace parks where people can celebrate their art, music, and dancing. Visit Gangjeong Village and you'll see how residents have created joyful ways to turn the Asia War Pivot into an Asia Peace Pivot.

Alternatively, people can choose the “helpless bystander” role and become passive spectators as oppressive global militarism and corporate greed destroy us. People can stand still and watch destruction of beautiful coral reefs and marine life in Jeju, Australia, and other seas; watch livelihoods, like those of Gangjeong and Gaza fishermen, disappear; and watch, mutely, as fellow human beings like Americans, Afghans, Syrians, Libyans, Egyptians, Palestinians, Israelis, Ukrainians, Nigerians, Malians, Mexicans, indigenous peoples, and many oth-



Mi Ryang, standing with Gangjeong Village Association members and Gangjeong's mayor outside the Jeju Courts, where they refused to pay fines for protests against the U.S. naval base construction.

ers are killed.

Or, we can be Like Mi Ryang. As free and equal human beings we can lay aside our individual concerns and lobbies to unite cooperatively, making our struggles more attractive and less lonely. Together, we're more than capable of persuading the world to seek genuine security and liberation.

The Afghan Peace Volunteers have begun playing their tiny part in promoting nonviolence and serving fellow Afghans in Kabul. As they connect the dots of inequality, global warming, and wars, they long to build relationships across all borders, under the same blue sky, in order to save themselves, the earth and humanity.

Through their Borderfree effort to build socioeconomic equality, take care

of our blue planet, and abolish war, they wear their Borderfree Blue Scarves and say, together with Mi Ryang and the resilient villagers of Gangjeong Village, “Don't touch me!”

“Don't touch us!”

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Dr Hakim (Dr. Wee Teck Young) is a medical doctor from Singapore who has done humanitarian and social enterprise work in Afghanistan for the past nine years, including being a friend and mentor to the Afghan Peace Volunteers, an inter-ethnic group of young Afghans dedicated to building nonviolent alternatives to war. He is the 2012 recipient of the International Pfeffer Peace Prize.



Tear gas wafts through homes in Nabi Saleh after a weekly demonstration.

Armed Robbery: The Israeli Army's Policy in the West Bank

Editor's Note: On August 28, 2015, Israeli forces, as they have done regularly, violently disrupted the weekly protest in the West Bank village of Nabi Saleh, where residents are resisting the encroachment of the Israeli settlement of Halamish on village lands. At one point, a masked Israeli soldier chased down a terrified 12-year-old boy with his arm in a case, placing him in a chokehold. The child was rescued from the soldier by courageous village women, including his mother and 14-year-old sister.

By Amira Hass

The soldier who choked 12-year-old Mohammad Tamimi in August belongs to the organization that carries out and ensures the continued armed robbery of land in Nabi Saleh, employing various methods to terrorize the residents. He is not the first and not the last; the armed robbery is not conducted solely on the lands of this village, and the spring at Nabi Saleh is not the only one in the West Bank taken over by Jewish settlers.

The praise the soldier received from his father and the media over the “restraint” he showed mostly teaches us something about what has happened to Israeli society. In the eyes of Israeli society, the courageous behavior of a civilian confronting an armed soldier is mutiny. To Israeli society a uniform and military ID card are retroactive justification for firing, injuring, and killing civil-

soldier, and felt sad for him. The father, Bassem Tamimi, who saw the soldier grab hold of his son and choke him, said about the theory of restraint that it is “proof that everyone is appalled by the absence of humanism. Therefore [the soldier’s father] is trying to present his son’s behavior as the opposite of what it is—violence.”

Tamimi is the one who alerted the officer so that he could rescue the soldier, and pull him out of the swamp in which the policy of armed robbery had cast him. The Palestinian father worried about the life of his own son, and at the same time worried about the wellbeing of the soldier. He did not want any of the angry youths in the village to try to harm the soldier who was, at that moment, the weakest link of this same armed organization.

It was apparently the blondness of the family that triggered the memory of the Israeli media, which recalled that the sister, 14-year-old Ahed, had “confronted” soldiers in the past. That time they arrested her older brother, and her cries and screams did not get him released. Israelis see seriality (a synonym for criminality) in the family’s actions. Israelis have eyes but cannot see the true criminal seriality

in the theft of the spring and the land for the good of the settlement “Halamish,” and the ban that prohibits the village from building on a large part of its lands.

The Israeli media dealt a lot with the rocks the boy threw, or did not throw. “I don’t understand,” said Ahed, who has experience with journalists who cannot take their eyes off her blond curls. “A rock is violence and a rifle is not violence?”

If there were no land theft and no settler-lords, there would be no need for a rifle to enable the settlements to blossom and expand, while the Israel Defense Forces’ Civil Administration disseminates demolition orders and stop-work orders for houses in the Palestinian village on whose land the settlements are built. And if there were no rifles and soldiers to block access to the spring, there would not be rocks. So simple really, just like it sounds.

The real problem is not the rocks but the fact that the burden of holding demonstrations, the same modest and determined weekly reminder that the armed robbery continues, falls on the shoulders of so few. The raids of their houses, the arrests, the tear gas, the fear of being injured and killed take their toll, said Nariman, who almost four years ago lost her brother (a Palestinian police officer, who by the way did not throw rocks and did not fire): An Israeli soldier shot him in the back, killing him.

At the demonstration in his memory, a soldier shot her with live ammunition and wounded her seriously in her leg, while she was filming. She admits the individual struggle is tiring. “We did not choose this publicity or this status. It is clear that if more people would join us, the struggle would be heard more and gain strength.”

Amira Hass is an Israeli journalist and author, mostly known for her columns in the daily newspaper Haaretz. She is particularly recognized for her reporting on Palestinian affairs in the West Bank and Gaza, where she has lived for a number of years.



Bassem and Nariman Tamimi meet with Veterans For Peace board member Tarak Kauff in Nabi Saleh.

Israel BDS

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raeli soccer matches. Thugs from right-wing youth groups such as Im Tirtzu routinely beat up dissidents, Palestinians, Israeli Arabs, and African immigrants in the streets

of Tel Aviv. It is a species of Jewish fascism.

Israel is not an anomaly. It is a window into the dystopian, militarized world that is being prepared for all of us, a world with vast disparities of income and draconian systems of internal security. There will be no freedom for Palestine, or for those locked in our own internal colonies and terrorized by indiscriminate police violence, until we destroy corporate capitalism and the neoliberal ideology that sustains it. There will be no justice for Michael Brown until there is justice for Mohammed Abu Khdeir. The fight for the Palestinians is our fight. If the Palestinians are not liberated none of us will be liberated. We cannot pick and choose which of the oppressed are convenient or inconvenient to defend. We will stand with all of the oppressed or none of the oppressed.

Originally published at Truthdig.com.

Chris Hedges is an award-winning journalist, activist, and author of best-selling books, including War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning.

‘A rock is violence and a rifle is not violence?’

ians, including children. The noteworthy exception (both positively and negatively) is he who “shows restraint.”

For the sake of the soldier and his parents we must hope that it was a conscious decision to refrain from seeking the trigger of his rifle, and not the numerous cameras around him that led to his restraint. Nariman Tamimi, who like every sane mother struggled with him using her fists to try to free her son, also discovered the child in the



Palestinian Mother: 'The Occupation of Palestine Is the Real Enemy'

By Nariman Tamimi

I would like to start by stating that I believe in peace, that I believe peace is a global language common to all humanity. Let me take you on a journey to two moments in time that I hope will awaken your emotions, two moments where two women and two children led us to question life itself, and to seek a life of peace, justice, and freedom. These moments show us that life is built on contradictions and unity.

Imagine what it was like for me to see my son, my hope for the future, my own vulnerability as a mother, held by an armed Israeli soldier wearing a ski mask, standing in the same place where another soldier murdered my younger brother Rushdy. Imagining what might happen to my son, that he might meet the same end as Rushdy,

The screams of fear, the sound of bullets, and smell of tear gas took me back to another moment in my life. A moment I lived and constantly relive over and over again: I am the sister of a martyr; my brother Rushdy was killed by colleagues of this soldier, in front of my very eyes.

was a crushing feeling. I could see my son and daughter as though the midst of a fire, seeing them fight so bravely, I was filled with anger and could not remain silent like a coward.

I could see the contrast between a soldier, armed and trained to kill, releasing his anger with brute force against my child, who was helpless, terrified and with a broken arm. All my boy had on his side were the anguished screams of his mother.



Masked Israeli soldier terrorizes 12-year-old Palestinian boy in Nabi Saleh August 28.

At that moment I realized that the occupation of Palestine is the real enemy. It stands in contrast to all that is humane: from the abuse of children to the abuse of our land. My children, my family and I together with our land are the very contradiction of this occupation.

The screams of fear, the sound of bullets, and smell of tear gas took me back to another moment in my life. A moment I lived and constantly relive over and over again: I am the sister of a martyr; my brother Rushdy was killed by colleagues of this soldier, in front of my very eyes. These soldiers who plant fear and terror as

they march through my beloved village of Nabi Saleh bringing death to every door they enter and every street they cross.

I have learned to go on living after the loss of my brother but I cannot comprehend the loss of my child even for a moment.

Just as these moments inevitably lead us to believe that the occupation of Palestine will continue, I will always believe in justice and in our right to continue our resistance. We continue to resist as a family and community and we are joined by others, people of conscience who believe in our cause. These people are our shield against the occupation and all its horrors. Together we carry the torch of freedom, walking together toward our dream of a better life and a future for our children free from war and terror.

I want a life of dignity for my eight year-old son whose photos continue to fill newspapers and satellite channels. He is our youngest son and we named him Salam, which means peace, as a sign of hope for a better future. Imagine my surprise when my little boy decided to change his name, feeling in his own innocent way that peace will not exist while we are under occupation. Who will restore my son Salam's belief in his name?

I am engulfed by a whirlwind of memories caught in photos of us and our children, of journalists who lived and documented our struggle and our pain, by my daughter Ahed, an outspoken young girl, her voice heard by our people and anyone with the compassion to listen, and by the daily suffering we all endure, suffering that is not captured by the media.

I feel that I am a grieving messenger of humanity. My only hope being an awakening of humanity and courage in the Israeli soldiers and their mothers: I ask them to refuse to take part in the oppression of our people and the occupation of our land. I ask that they allow us to live in peace in the land of prophets and peace.



Nariman Tamimi and her daughter Ahed rescue her 12-year-old son Mohammad.



Fighters in the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front in El Salvador.

Mena Sandoval

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with refugees fleeing from the army's advance, and food and other supplies had been cut off for weeks. The people were starving and miserable. He didn't find armed enemies or a "communist threat"; he saw hungry, tired women, toothless old people, children who were barefoot and under-nourished. These were his people, Mena thought, the people he had sworn his oath as a military officer to protect. "I felt a great crisis of conscience," he said later, "because I was fighting against an enemy who I believed had justice on their side in the struggle."

Captain Sandoval did not obey the orders he'd been given. He did the opposite: ordered his men to distribute their food to the hungry villagers and called in more supplies. He released the prisoners the informers had (often falsely) accused, and did his best to ensure that no one in Villa El Rosario would be killed by the army.

Later Mena was informed that the General Staff was preparing a court martial against him for disobeying orders. He replied: "What was my mission? I was ordered to capture

'What was my mission? I was ordered to capture the town and we did that. ... But of course if my mission was to kill all civilians ...'

the town, and we did that; we occupied it completely and by the most economical means. But of course if my mission was to kill all the civilians ..." His accusers didn't want to put that order into the record, and the case was dropped.

What the high command had planned for Villa El Rosario was of a piece with the massacre carried out at nearby El Mozote a year later. Their goal was to "dry up the sea"—i.e. eliminate the people among whom the

guerrillas exist. At El Mozote, some soldiers showed a little reluctance to murder tiny children but no officers hesitated to enforce their criminal orders. That was the army norm. "When a soldier is given an order, you follow it and that's that," Mena said much later in an interview. "At the School of the Americas at Fort Benning in Georgia, where most of us trained, this is personified and taught in a very systematic way. You do not question; it is blind obedience. ... They teach you to kill children because you are to see them as 'potential' communists."

In the following weeks Mena's doubts about his role in El Salvador's armed forces intensified. He understood that la Fuerza Armada was an instrument used to control and repress workers and campesinos who were not submissive to the existing order. And not only the poor were assassinated. On November 28 National Guard and police kidnapped and murdered a son of the oligarchy—Enrique Alvarez—and seven other leaders of the legal, civilian opposition to the regime. Less than a week after that, other soldiers raped and murdered four U.S. citizens, religious women working with victims of poverty and oppression. Even some military officers were targets for death squad execution, as Mena knew from his own experience.

Mena Sandoval, together with his friend Captain Marcelo Cruz (medical corps), prepared to act on their understanding; they would not go on fighting in an unjust cause. On January 10 the civil war broke into the open with the FMLN's "final offensive," and on that day Mena and Cruz left the Salvadoran army to join the revolution. Many men from Mena's unit went with them when their captain told them "We have made the decision to join the struggle of the people!" It was a big decision. The two officers participated in that struggle for the next 11 years, and Francisco Mena Sandoval's signature appears on the historic 1992 treaty that finally ended the war.

Francisco Mena Sandoval might have seemed an unlikely candidate for a dramatic act of humanitarian disobedience; in many ways he was a natural soldier. Born in 1944, the fourth of six children, he lost his father to disease when he was only six and the family struggled to

get by. Francisco was a rebellious teenager, and at age 18 was enrolled in the army as punishment. Surprisingly, he excelled there despite the harsh treatment and conceived the ambition to become a military officer. With new purpose he left the army and graduated from high school, and in 1964 he entered El Salvador's military academy. The final period of his military "education" was four months of training at the U.S. School of the Americas in the Canal zone, where he learned techniques of counter-insurgency including torture and murder, and was indoctrinated with ultra-right, anticommunist values. But Mena Sandoval, considered a troublemaker and possible subversive, did not graduate with his class, and only in 1970 was he commissioned as a second lieutenant.

In 1972 the military's candidate for president, Col. Armando Molina, faced serious political opposition from a center-left coalition whose candidate was José Napoleon Duarte. The armed forces were mobilized to campaign for Molina's election, but when the ballots were first counted, it appeared that Duarte had won at least a plurality, and maybe more. Crisis! The country had to be saved from "communism," and military officers, including Mena Sandoval, were organized in teams to falsify the results by destroying some ballots and substituting others—they were told this was necessary to save democracy. The operation was successful and Col. Molina was duly sworn in as president of the republic. Mena had followed his orders, but wondered whether committing electoral fraud was really the honorable service he had dreamed of.

Lieutenant Mena prospered in his career. He served enthusiastically in the parachute corps and became its commander in 1976 when Col. Domingo Monterrosa left that post to attend a staff course. In 1977 Mena attended a six-month staff course, and on July 31 was promoted to captain. He was happy with his new rank, but not with his assignment to the National Guard, where he served for a year and a half. He found evidence of many cases of financial corruption, of murder, of political prisoners tortured and held in miserable conditions, and more. "The Guard, far from serving the people and the nation as its standard declared, was one guarantee more of the oppression of the poor in El Salvador," he wrote.

During 1979 Captain Sandoval joined the movement of "young officers" planning a coup that they hoped could reform the armed forces and save the country from civil war. He also came to know leading Jesuits at the University of Central America (UCA), as well as Monsignor

'You do not question; it is blind obedience. ... They teach you to kill children because you are to see them as "potential" communists.'

Oscar Romero, whose advice he highly valued. Once Mena asked Romero whether he should resign from the Army since it was so involved in corruption and repression. Romero told him no, "it's not your duty to stop being a soldier, what you must do is make the army change!" Of course that was exactly the hope of the idealistic officers among the coup planners.

Sadly for El Salvador, although the coup succeeded in October 1979, the cause was lost; the younger reform-minded officers were outmaneuvered and the corrupt and hard-line seniors were soon back in control. Mena Sandoval deserves considerable blame for this defeat,

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What if Americans Had Known in 2013 that U.S. rejected Syria Deal in 2012?



Photo by Pablo Tosco

Syrian man stands amid the rubble in Aleppo.

By David Swanson

In the United States it is considered fashionable to maintain a steadfast ignorance of rejected peace offers, and to believe that all the wars launched by the U.S. government are matters of “last resort.” Our schools still don’t teach that Spain wanted the matter of the *Maine* to go to international arbitration, that Japan wanted peace before Hiroshima, that the Soviet Union proposed peace negotiations before the Korean War, or that the United States sabotaged peace proposals for Vietnam from the Vietnamese, the Soviets, and the French. When a Spanish newspaper reported that Saddam Hussein had offered to leave Iraq before the 2003 invasion, U.S. media took little interest. When British media reported that the Taliban was willing to have Osama bin Laden put on trial before the 2001 invasion of Af-

ghanistan, U.S. journalists yawned. Iran’s 2003 offer to negotiate ending its nuclear energy program wasn’t mentioned much during this year’s debate over an agreement with Iran—which was itself nearly rejected as an impediment to war.

The Guardian reported in September that the former Finnish president and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Martti Ahtisaari, who had been involved in negotiations in 2012, said that in 2012 Russia had proposed a process of peace settlement between the Syrian government and its opponents that would have included President Bashar al-Assad stepping down. But, according to Ahtisaari, the United States was so confident that Assad would soon be violently overthrown that it rejected the proposal.

The catastrophic Syrian civil war since 2012 has followed U.S. adherence to actual U.S. policy in which peaceful com-

promise is usually the last resort. Does the U.S. government believe violence tends to produce better results? The record shows otherwise. More likely it believes that violence will lead to greater U.S. control, while satisfying the war industry. The record on the first part of that is mixed at best.

Supreme Allied Commander Europe of NATO from 1997 to 2000 Wesley Clark claims that in 2001, Secretary of War Donald Rumsfeld put out a memo proposing to take over seven countries in five years: Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Iran. The basic outline of this plan was confirmed by none other than former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who in 2010 pinned it on former Vice President Dick Cheney:

“Cheney wanted forcible ‘regime change’ in all Middle Eastern countries that he considered hostile to U.S. interests, according to Blair. ‘He would have worked through the whole lot, Iraq, Syria, Iran, dealing with all their surrogates in the course of it—Hezbollah, Hamas, etc.’ Blair wrote. ‘In other words, he [Cheney] thought the world had to be made anew, and that after 11 September, it had to be done by force and with urgency. So he was for hard, hard power. No ifs, no buts, no maybes.’”

U.S. State Department cables released by WikiLeaks trace U.S. efforts in Syria to undermine the government back to at least 2006. In 2013, the White House went public with plans to lob some unspecified number of missiles into Syria, which was in the midst of a horrible civil war already fueled in part by U.S. arms and training camps, as well as by wealthy U.S. allies in the region and fighters emerging from other U.S.-created disasters in the region.

The excuse for the missiles was an al-

leged killing of civilians, including children, with chemical weapons—a crime that President Barack Obama claimed to have certain proof had been committed by the Syrian government. Watch the videos of the dead children, the President said, and support that horror or support my missile strikes. Those were the only choices, supposedly. It wasn’t a soft sell, but it wasn’t a powerful or successful one either.

The “proof” of responsibility for that use of chemical weapons fell apart, and public opposition to what we later learned would have been a massive bombing campaign succeeded. Public opposition succeeded without knowing about the rejected proposal for peace of 2012. But it succeeded without follow-through. No new effort was made for peace, and the United States went right ahead inching its way into the war with trainers and weapons and drones.

In January 2015, a scholarly study found that the U.S. public believes that whenever the U.S. government proposes a war, it has already exhausted all other possibilities. When a sample group was asked if they supported a particular war, and a second group was asked if they supported that particular war after being told that all alternatives were no good, and a

[I]n 2012 Russia had proposed a process of peace settlement ... that would have included President Bashar al-Assad stepping down.

third group was asked if they supported that war even though there were good alternatives, the first two groups registered the same level of support, while support for war dropped off significantly in the third group. This led the researchers to the conclusion that if alternatives are not mentioned, people don’t assume they exist—rather, people assume they’ve already been tried. So, if you mention that there is a serious alternative, the game is up. You’ll have to get your war on later.

Based on the record of past wars, engaged in and avoided, as it dribbles out in the years that follow, the general assumption should always be that peace has been carefully avoided at every turn.

David Swanson is an author, activist, journalist, and radio host. He is director of WorldBeyondWar.org and campaign coordinator for RootsAction.org. Swanson’s books include War Is A Lie. He blogs at DavidSwanson.org and WarIsACrime.org. He hosts Talk Nation Radio. He is a 2015 Nobel Peace Prize nominee. Follow him on Twitter: @davidcnswanson and FaceBook.

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due to his mistaken belief in the honesty and honor of Col. Abdul Gutiérrez, whom he maneuvered to place on the post-coup junta. By the end of 1979, the hope of military reform was only a memory.

Those who stood out among the “military youth” now became suspects and in some cases targets for elimination, as were the progressive Jesuits and Romero. An attempt by National Guard agents to kill Sandoval nearly succeeded in February 1980; he escaped with a nonfatal wound. When he recovered he sought an interview with the Minister of Defense (García) and presented a report, showing that the attack on his life had come from the Guard. García offered him a scholar-

ship to study abroad.

On March 23 Archbishop Oscar Romero gave his famous sermon telling soldiers not to obey orders to kill civilians. The next day he was shot and killed in the act of performing mass. The murder had been organized by Major Roberto D’Aubuisson.

Early in October of that year, Captain Sandoval, born soldier, dedicated officer, faced a “transcendental moment.” His superior officer had ordered him to commit mass murder, to kill the people whom he had sworn to serve. “I had to choose between life and death,” he said. He choose life.

John Lamperti is a professor emeritus of mathematics at Dartmouth College. He is the author of Enrique Alvarez Cordova: Life of a Salvadoran Revolutionary and Gentleman.



The Other Feminism

A review of Hilary Klein's Compañeras

By Charlotte Maria Sáenz

Volumes have been written about the Mayan indigenous Zapatista social movement of Chiapas, Mexico, since they made their first public appearance on January 1, 1994. However, until now, we were missing the direct voices of women from the communities themselves. Hilary Klein's *Compañeras: Zapatista Women's Stories* (Seven Stories Press) reveals their perspectives as contemporary indigenous women who are active subjects together with men in shared processes of change and liberation.

Compañeras: Zapatista Women's Stories covers a lot of ground: from the early days of recruitment and organizing clandestinely to the steep learning curve of taking on greater political and economic participation in their communities to their impact on the world beyond. The Zapatistas are forging their own kind of feminism, one unique to their particular histories, identities, and subjectivity as modern indigenous men and women. Klein's book demonstrates how defending indigenous culture and women's rights need not be mutually exclusive. As Ester, a Zapatista comandanta from the Huixtán region said to the Mexican Congress in 2001, "It is the current (national) laws that allow us to be marginalized and degraded, as in addition to being women, we are also indigenous, and, as such, we are not recognized."

Struggles for women's equality are of course global, and everywhere we still have a long way to go. What is impressive about the Zapatistas' journey toward gender equality is what extraordinary gains have been made in 20 years. Klein's book chronicles how the Zapatista process of working toward women's rights was simultaneously a push from above and below. The Zapatista communities' Women's Revolutionary Law of 1993 was

a major structural change that has since been followed by their collective project of unlearning patriarchal ways. It became clear that both men and women had to change, in both thoughts and actions. A Zapatista woman called Isabel recalls of the years after the law was passed:

"We made a commitment to fight against injustice, and we knew that men and women united, with the same rights, with the same opportunities within our organization, could unite our forces against the capitalist system. But first we had to change ourselves and understand that there needs to be a revolution between men and women, in our heads and in our hearts."

It would not be an easy process: there was initial resistance from the men, lack of confidence from the women in themselves and their abilities. Says Celina, "As a woman, I learned to speak up. I learned to defend myself. Both of us have to change, that's what I realized back then. Men have to change, but so do women." By postulating gender equity as essential for shared liberation from capitalist and patriarchal systems, the Zapatistas created a feminism for everybody: *Todo para todos; nada para nosotros*, says the well-known Zapatista idiom, "Everything for everyone; nothing for us."

Although the Zapatistas do not use the term of "feminism" themselves, some movement scholars such as Mercedes Olivera have described the process unfolding as an "Other Feminism." This use of the word "Other" as in "La Otra" references the way in which the Zapatistas have built alternatives to dominant systems of health, education, and justice that do not serve those systems, nor reflect their interests. Instead, they have created an Other Education, Other Health, Other Justice, etc. Therefore, an "Other Feminism" is not one derived from feminisms in Europe or the United States or even

from Mexico's cities, but rather from a collective process of building a society where all genders participate in the struggle against a capitalist patriarchy.

This process is beautifully illustrated in the words of a political education pamphlet produced by Zapatista women of the Morelia region:

"The problems of inequality and discrimination are like a very large tree. Its roots are very deep and they are not easy to uproot. The government has humiliated us and discriminated against us, denying us our rights; we understand this well. But what we do not always see is that, without realizing it, we are repeating the government's oppression against women within our own homes. We must pull out the bad roots in order to plant the new tree that we want, together, men and women. ... Liberation will not fall like a miracle from the sky; we must construct it ourselves. So let's not wait, let us begin."

No one truly writes alone, as we are always building and creating in dialogue and community with so many others in a collective construction of shared knowl-

experiences.

Compañeras: Zapatista Women's Stories provides the world with the voices of indigenous Zapatista women as a new political element: one being created and theorized from their own place and history, with openness to worlds and perspectives beyond. Like the movement itself, Zapatista "Other Feminism" draws upon its various indigenous and political inheritances, as well as from the knowledge gleaned from their daily lives.

Klein brings us the voices of modern, indigenous women who are active subjects in the ongoing construction of their collective autonomy. They are building a new society alongside men in a shared political project of everyday struggle, one for true equality within and outside of their communities. In this, they are united in shared resistance and co-construction of a new society from which we all can learn.

Charlotte Maria Sáenz teaches at the California Institute for Integral Studies in San Francisco, where she is a founding member of the Center for Art and

'[F]irst we had to change ourselves and understand that there needs to be a revolution between men and women, in our heads and in our hearts.'

edge. Klein's careful research methodology is integrative, qualitative, and, above all, relational. It is one based on collaboration, daily encounters, and a shared political project. It includes dialogues, conversations, anecdotes, testimonies, memories, stories, meals, harvesting, and rituals. She follows a relational paradigm together with an ethics of humility and transparency. Such methodology reflects that of the Zapatista process itself, that of *caminando, preguntando*, "walking while asking questions," as it traces and explores their historical and lived

Social Justice. She has 20 years experience working globally in schools, streets, universities, refugee camps, autonomous zones and traveling programs in her native Mexico and throughout Lebanon and the United States. She returns yearly to work with Universidad de la Tierra Chiapas and Al-Jana in Beirut, and taught on World Learning's global traveling program "Beyond Globalization." She is a member of the global Learning Societies and the International Organization for a Participatory Society.

