

# Peace in Our Times



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

## One More Warship We Don't Need

### *Twelve Arrested at Launch of Zumwalt 'Stealth' Destroyer*

By Dud Hendrick

*Editor's note: The following remarks were delivered on June 18, 2016, outside Bath Iron Works in Bath, Maine, during a protest against the christening of the U.S. Navy's new Zumwalt-class destroyer battleship. The author, along with 11 others, was subsequently arrested during an act of peaceful civil resistance outside the shipyard's gates. They were released on their own recognizance.*

I am a proud member of Veterans For Peace. As a young man, really a boy, I received a congressional nomination to attend the U.S. Naval Academy. Totally a product, as we are all, of the era and environment in which I had spent the first 18 years of my life, I proudly went off to Annapolis; just as, seven years later, I proudly went off to Vietnam, having volunteered to serve there. Among my Naval Academy classmates was Bill Fitzgerald. He, too, proudly served in Vietnam. In 1967, Bill died heroically when his base was overrun by Viet Cong. The *USS William Fitzgerald*, an Arleigh Burke destroyer, was launched in January 1994. I was here on that occasion as well, only across the street.

My politics have changed since the 1960s. I credit truth-tellers like Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn mostly. But our country's heinous and bloody history in the intervening years has validated my change of heart. Think of it—this history. Low-lights might include:



Protesters block a road in Bath, Maine, June 18 before the christening of the USS Michael Monsoor at Bath Iron Works.

In September of 1968, Admiral Elmo Zumwalt became commander of naval forces in Vietnam. During this period he ordered the spraying of Agent Orange over the Vietnam countryside.

Later we bombed Bach Mai Hospital in Hanoi not once, three times—each a war crime.

At war's end we had killed 2–3 million Vietnamese. Unbelievably, a like number of Laotians and Cambodians were also killed. Today some 2–3 million Vietnam-

ese exist in institutions, unable to take care of themselves, the second and third generations of Agent Orange exposure.

The scholar William Blum reports we've bombed 28 countries since the Vietnam War.

Andrew Bacevich, the author and West Point graduate, says we've bombed 14 Islamic countries in this century.

Over 250,000 Iraqis have been killed since 2003. A couple of million made refugees.

More recently, we bombed the Kunduz Hospital in Afghanistan—again a war crime. Human beings! These were all human beings!

These are only a few pieces of a history that has earned the United States the distinction of being the country deemed to be the greatest threat to world peace according to an international poll. The United States garnered 24 percent of the votes, well ahead of Pakistan, a distant second

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Left: The author is handcuffed at June 18 protest against launching of new Zumwalt-class destroyer. Right: Death ship leaves the shipyard at Bath, Maine.



## Letters

### The Power of the Press

I began reading the alternative press in 1969 while I was a child in the Marines. “Underground” newspapers led me to seek a more honest understanding of U.S. history and of my role as a citizen. We all owe a debt to this tradition. In all my nearly half-century of seeking independent sources of authoritative coverage and insightful analyses of political events and currents, I have never, ever seen the equal of *Peace in Our Times*. And I was personally responsible for the production of a 12- to 16-page monthly tabloid for nearly a decade, so I know what I’m talking about.

Doug Zachary  
Veterans For Peace

### Lesser of the Evils?

An AP poll recently found that 90 percent of Americans “lack confidence in the country’s political system.” Perhaps that’s because the lesser of two evils approach to voting has become absurd.

Hillary, the presumptive nominee of the Democrats, is a proven war hawk who will accelerate the new Cold War by pushing U.S. bases and nuclear missiles ever closer to China and Russia. The resulting hair-trigger alerts for nuclear war will bring the world ever closer to Arma-

geddon. But the American Empire has bought Hillary, from the major financial institutions to the weapons makers, and the corporate-controlled media has crowned her the victor early and often. With 800 military bases on foreign soil, Hillary will spread U.S. wars for dominance into Africa, Asia, and Latin America, all to profit the very richest in our society.

Hillary is also the queen of fracking, having promoted the drilling for gas in many parts of the world as secretary of state. In fact, she has proven herself an expert in milking the oil-rich dictatorships for contributions to the Clinton Foundation. Advanced fighter planes sent to Saudi Arabia brought in another \$10 million. No wonder her emails are hidden. Yes, Hillary has learned to love catastrophic climate change, a million-dollar contribution at a time.

Hillary will give the American people two ways to destroy life on earth, by accelerating the wars of empire and by burning more fossil fuels. Can the bombastic and racist Trump possibly be the greater evil? Can there be a lesser of these two evils?

Fred Nagel  
Veterans For Peace  
Rhinebeck, NY

## A Note from the Editors



*Zapatista Subcomandante Moisés: ‘We don’t call for people not to vote, nor do we call for them to vote.’*

## ‘It’s Your Nickel’

Portland, Ore., Veterans For Peace has a tradition called “It’s your nickel” at the end of meetings, where attendees can share whatever is on their mind. Spending his nickel at our June 2016 meeting, 89-year-old World War II veteran Will Pool proclaimed loudly, to much head-bobbing: “It won’t matter who you vote for in the presidential election, the policies will remain the same. The system is rigged, and it has been from the start!”

Will, who once described his political orientation as “left of a red diaper baby,” like many others not quite so radical, has been bitterly disappointed by the failure of our system to allow any candidate who cares about economic or social justice or world peace to be seriously considered for the highest executive office. Voting has often been a case of holding one’s nose and choosing the lesser of two evils.

There are grave questions to be asked about a culture that lets wealthy media moguls and backroom party operatives choose the race’s frontrunners by virtue of who is given time, attention, and editorial backing. The attention serves to legitimize the worst of the candidates and their most racist and hateful behavior.

One reason networks and news corps give so much coverage to candidates who would never have been considered “presidential” is advertising profits, because

these elections can be quite entertaining, much in the way professional wrestling is entertaining. The clowns are scary, and yet we can’t tear our eyes away! Mainstream news media and its smoke-and-mirrors coverage serve to promote the candidates who will most faithfully serve the financial interests of their rich and powerful owners.

Nevertheless, due to the dynamics of this particular race, U.S. Americans seem to be paying attention, learning perhaps for the first time about the workings of different states’ processes; about primaries and caucuses and super delegates. It remains to be seen whether first-time voters become activated or apathetic as a result of their experience in an election that appears rigged to select pre-chosen candidates.

A while back, I ran across statements made by Zapatista Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés at a seminar in spring 2015, clarifying the EZLN’s stance on Mexican elections: “We don’t call for people not to vote, nor do we call for them to vote,” he explains, and then goes on to offer a scathing critique of the Mexican electoral process and to encourage people, whether they choose to vote or not, to get on with the work of effecting change outside of the electoral process.

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### Peace in Our Times

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# Viet Nam Vet Returns to Southeast Asia on His Own Terms

By Mike Ferner

Army Spec. 4 Class Mike Marceau sat on his bunk, listening to Armed Forces Radio, at a base near Pleiku, Viet Nam, just 30 miles from the Cambodian border. The big news was that four college students, protesting Richard Nixon's invasion of neutral Cambodia, had been shot dead on the campus of Kent State University. He broke down in tears, thinking, "I'm not over here so armed National Guardsmen can kill unarmed students."

The next day, the Viet Cong retaliation included firing a dozen rockets into Mike's base, one of which came within a few centimeters of taking the 21-year-old telephone switchboard operator's life.

"May of 1970 was tragic for so many people," Mike recalled, "but I've always felt especially connected to the thousands of casualties that month in the war, the 13 people shot at Kent State and the 14 shot at Jackson State, in Mississippi."

Now 67 and on 80 percent service-connected disability, he remembers that

*The next day, the Viet Cong retaliation included firing a dozen rockets into Mike's base, one of which came within a few centimeters of taking the 21-year-old telephone switchboard operator's life.*

day each year with a visit to Panel 11 of the Viet Nam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., where his name would be chiseled had not a South Vietnamese soldier abandoned his Jeep during the rocket attack, leaving it for a buddy of Mike's to commandeer and dash 10 minutes to the 71st Evac. Hospital with him.

After 12 hours of surgery he woke up, "a plumber's nightmare with tubes coming out of everywhere," minus a small piece of shrapnel that went into his left lower back, through a lung, breaking a rib, bouncing off a shoulder, hitting his brachial nerve trunk and closing off that artery while managing to miss his spine and heart.

The operation left him with half his left lung and a jelly bean-sized piece of shrapnel the operating room medic taped to his bed, only to have the nightly cleanup crew throw it out before Mike could claim the valuable souvenir.

He spent a month at the 71st, then on to a hospital in Japan and eventually to Walter Reed in Washington for eight months. During his extensive physical therapy there, Mike gave himself permission to be a permanent outpatient and recuperate on home cooking with his parents. "The

Army told me I couldn't, but what were they gonna do, send me to Viet Nam?"

Mike was born at the Bethesda Naval Hospital in 1949, after his father, a career Navy Corpsman who served in WWII married his mom, a Navy WAVE.

On his 20th birthday in January 1969, Mike received a draft notice along with his birthday cards. His parents, "as unaware of current events as I was" and steeped in the patriotism surrounding the defeat of fascism, thought Mike should answer the call and afterwards use his G.I. Bill benefits to attend college.

It wasn't until the most recent U.S. war on Iraq that Mike became an active participant in the peace movement, joining a weekly vigil at Walter Reed hospital organized by Code Pink, followed by a large demonstration in September 2005. After that, he used his familiarity with the D.C. area to secure permits for demonstrations and guide out-of-towners to actions and congressional offices on a regular basis.

Early the next year, he met Veterans For Peace member Kevin McCarron, who introduced him to the D.C. chapter, where Mike quickly became chapter vice president.

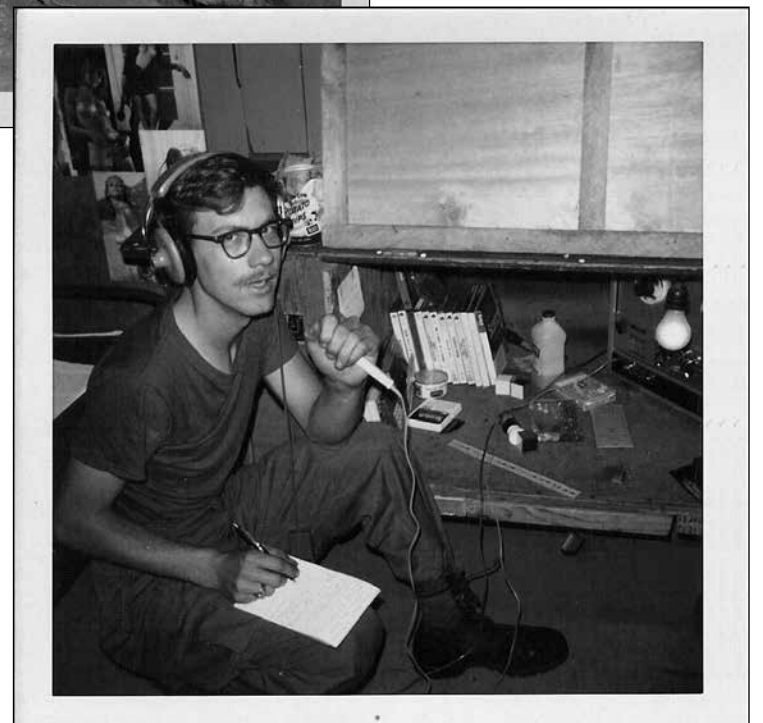
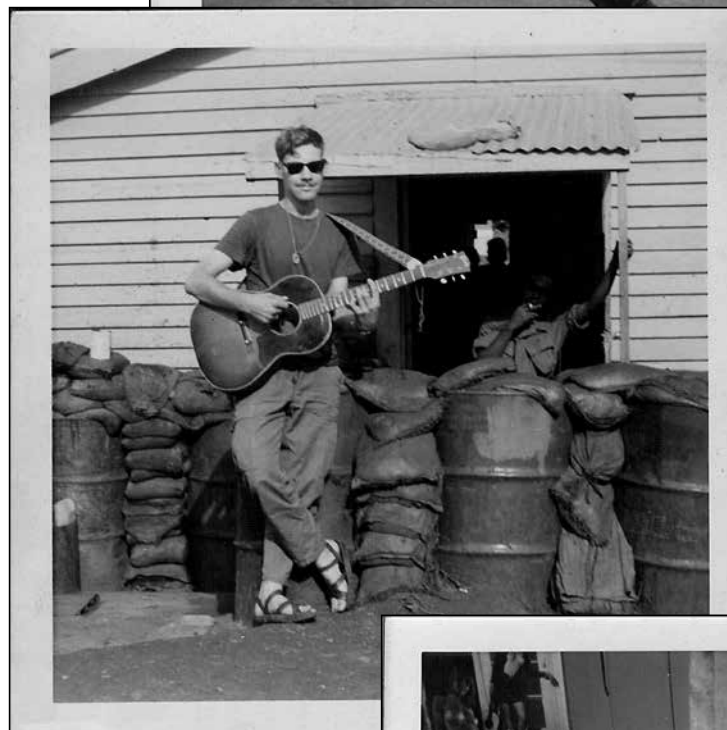
During the next few years he did "counter-recruiting" in numerous high schools, showing the *Ground Truth* documentary and talking about his experience in the Army and years of physical rehabilitation.

When Mike was at Walter Reed he had a lot of time to think about what had happened to him and what he needed to do to move forward. He realized he had no animosity toward the Vietnamese people who were defending their country from outside invaders, just as anyone would have done. He thought he would like to return to a peaceful Vietnam if he ever had the chance—but on his terms, not the U.S. Army's!

That chance came in 2012, when the San Francisco chapter of Veterans For Peace organized a two-week tour for 10 veterans and several non-veterans. The main purpose was to meet Vietnamese groups who were helping victims of Agent Orange, still a big problem, with third and fourth generations affected by disease and birth defects.

They visited schools, medical facilities, and job training sites as well as several homes to observe the daily struggles endured by the families of victims. "It was very difficult for us veterans to realize we had done this as members of the U.S. military ... we all agreed it was the hardest part of the trip."

But wherever they went, they were warmly received, Mike recalled. The Vietnamese were even more appreciative when they learned that most of them were military veterans. At several places they met with former enemies for meals and conversation



**Top to bottom: Mike Marceau playing soldier with M-14 rifle with bayonet, flak vest, helmet, and gas mask on left leg; singing in front of the barracks; in the barracks recording a talking letter to his parents using a 3" reel tape; .**

and were honored guests at a dinner in Hanoi hosted by retired generals of the North Vietnamese Air Force.

Mike enjoys life away from activism by playing upright bass in a D.C.-based bluegrass band and has gone on two international tours with the band for the State Department.

He's come to believe that yellow ribbons and "all this rah-rah shit after 9/11" left out much of the real story about the cost of war, especially the cost paid by wounded veterans. He continues to apply that perspective to issues of the day, including health care needs and infrastructure problems as exemplified by the Flint, Mich., water crisis.

"We have to stop spending so much money on the military and spend it at home and on diplomacy. What we're

spending on the military is just pissing off people around the world. That's why I find the VFP message so attractive. It's helped me continue to speak out to change things in America."

Mike Ferner served as a Navy corpsman during the Vietnam War and was discharged as a conscientious objector. He is a former president of Veterans For Peace and author of *Inside the Red Zone*: A Veteran For Peace Reports from Iraq.

# Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz Corrects the Record on U.S. Genocide

By Stephyn Quirke

*Inside the United States, the standard education in U.S. history fails to acknowledge that the United States was founded on genocide, the largest in world history up to that time. And it's even harder to learn about the nearly 3 million indigenous peoples still living in the United States today, comprising 500 federally recognized indigenous nations and communities.*

*These are issues addressed in Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz's book, An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States. A renowned activist and scholar, Dunbar-Ortiz has written extensively on indigenous issues in North America and has spent years organizing with the American Indian Movement.*

*I caught up with Dunbar-Ortiz to talk with her about her book and her views on the state of indigenous resistance today.*

**Stephyn Quirke:** Could you describe your background in the indigenous rights movement and how that has informed your academic research?

**Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz:** I was an anti-war, civil rights, and women's liberation activist during the 1960s while a graduate student at UCLA. It was actually my dissertation research that led me to involvement in the American Indian Movement and the International Indian Treaty Council in 1974. I was recruited at that time to serve as an expert witness in a federal hearing on the 1868 Treaty, which is what the Wounded Knee uprising had been about. That involvement brought me to focus on oral history as the bedrock of my academic research and writing.

**SQ:** You talk a lot in your book about the importance of naming colonialism and genocide, which is not something everyone is accustomed to doing in U.S. history. Could you tell readers why we need these terms to understand U.S. history?

**RD-O:** These are technical terms of international human rights law that were codified in the post-World War II period in the response to the massive people's liberation movements in Asia, Africa, the Pacific, and the Caribbean. They delineate precisely what native peoples in North America have experienced under U.S. colonization.

**SQ:** I recently learned about the history of the Black Hills in South Dakota, a natural formation sacred to the Lakota, and the compensation arrangement you described in your book after it was blasted with dynamite and renamed Mount Rushmore. Could you give a brief sketch of this story, and what it says about the kind of justice we need for indigenous peoples?

**RD-O:** As the period of decolonization began, and with the founding of the United Nations, the U.S. government responded to indigenous nations' demands for land restitution or self-determination by establishing the Court of Indian Land Claims, but with the proviso that no land would be returned, or monetary compensation for indigenous lands confiscated without consent by treaties or agreements. The Lakota Sioux did not file for a claim because they did not want financial compensation,



rather the return of the Black Hills. Militant actions over two decades, culminating in the Wounded Knee siege of 1973 and the subsequent founding of the International Indian Treaty Council to take the 1868 treaty to the United Nations, led to the 1980 Supreme Court decision, which acknowledged that the United States had taken the Black Hills illegally, but ordered only monetary compensation, which the Sioux refused. The United States established a trust fund with the funds, which have now grown to over a billion dollars.

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*From the beginning of colonialism some five, six centuries ago, those who were first hit by the brunt of it and survived—the indigenous peoples of the Americas—have always known that it wasn't only about their own survival, but also the survival of humanity, of all life and sustenance.*

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This is one of many land issues that must be resolved with restitution of land; in nearly every case, the disputed territories are sacred sites for the particular Native Nation, including the Black Hills. And, in nearly every case, these lands are held by the federal or state governments, not private landholders or municipalities.

**SQ:** You write extensively about the myth that Native Americans disappeared after European settlement, which seems closely related to the myth that the continent was sparsely inhabited or barely managed before Europeans. Could you give readers a rough sense for how long and how extensively this continent had been inhabited by indigenous peoples prior to the start of official U.S. history?

**RD-O:** The estimate for the original population at the onset of European co-

lonialism is 100 million, with 30 million in North America, including Mexico and Central America, some 10 million north of the Rio Grande. Up to the 1960s, when native scholarship developed and questioned the figures, the estimate was 10 million for the whole hemisphere, and 1 million north of the Rio Grande. Both the fields of demography and archeology (and of course, anthropology) were highly politicized in their pseudo-scientific attempts to keep numbers low, presumably to lessen the charge of genocide.

Even with the new figures, there remains the master narrative of the “germ theory” of the horrific initial death rates associated with European colonization, supposedly reducing the populations throughout the hemisphere by some 90 percent. This argument, which ignores the other causes of death and disappearance, particularly genocidal warfare and forced removals, also lessens the charge of genocide, as it's said to be unintentional. However, we know that the majority of Jews subjected to concentration camps died of disease and starvation, not in gas chambers, and this is the case in a genocide.

**SQ:** Do you think the standard narrative of U.S. history reflects an enforced silence on indigenous genocide? What happens when we break that silence?

**RD-O:** Yes, the standard narrative has

avoided dealing with genocide; One recent book by a notable U.S. historian elaborates on the many atrocities committed against native people, but argues that there was no genocide, and calls the process “ethnic cleansing.” However, more radical historians, following Howard Zinn's lead in his *People's History of the United States*, do acknowledge genocide.

**SQ:** You mention Truth and Reconciliation hearings in your book—something I'm familiar with in the context of South Africa and Rwanda. What do you think this process could look like in the North American context? Are there any positive signs that it could happen?

**RD-O:** There are many moves toward apologies and pleas for reconciliation, but not so much truth-telling. The Boarding School research projects in the United States and Canada are the most important initiatives. For the past 35 years, indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere and the Pacific and Arctic have been documenting historical and contemporary genocidal practices of governments at the United Nations. There's certainly enough material and expertise available to hold formal hearings, and in Guatemala they did take place, with actual charges and trials of genocide resulting.

**SQ:** There have been many campaigns recently to support indigenous resistance to environmental destruction: the Seminoles in Florida are fighting a new fossil-fuel power plant, tribes in Washington are fighting coal and oil trains, and last year we saw an eruption of tribes physically closing shipping routes to the Alberta (Canada) Tar Sands fields. What opportunity do you see in these alliances? Does it reflect a broader movement for indigenous sovereignty, or could it turn into one?

**RD-O:** These campaigns are vitally important, and the alliances that are evolving

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# Dunbar Ortiz

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are extraordinary—nothing like it since the early 1970s. For indigenous peoples, it's a matter of survival, and sovereignty is essential to survival, but the settler population, or at least the youth, is realizing that it is a matter of their survival as well. No people in the world have fought as hard and long for survival as peoples as North American indigenous peoples; they have a lot to teach others, and their leadership in the climate movement is a turning point.

**SQ:** Is there a connection between the disruption of indigenous cultural patterns and the disruption of the earth's biological patterns?

**RD-O:** The system of capitalism that developed in Western Europe through the accumulation of wealth in plundering the Americas and Africa (colonialism) is the same force that has destroyed the ecologies of the planet and now threatens all species, including humans. Indigenous peoples warned of this from the beginning of the onslaught up to the present. The environmental movement (and other social movements) in North America needs to pay attention to and learn from the indigenous people's insistence on land restitution and indigenous self-determination.

**SQ:** As your book documents, U.S. policy toward Native Americans has often moved from direct assaults on their existence to the strange idea that the U.S. government is now "protecting" them. You talk about the modern period of "termination" that began in Oregon with the Klamath tribe, where the government essentially declared that they'd cared for Indians long enough and were no longer going to extend their "generosity." Could you explain this policy of termination and the effects it had on indigenous peoples?

How did people fight back?

**RD-O:** The U.S. Congress Termination Act of 1953 is an instance of official genocidal policy, which actually falls under the 1948 U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The official appointed to implement termination was Dillon S. Myer, who had been in charge of the wartime relocation and incarceration of U.S. citizens of Japanese descent. It was a two-pronged plan, using the carrot and the stick. First, the most economically self-reliant Native nations, including the Klamath and the Menominee (Wisconsin) were instantly terminated, their reservations and governments dissolved. Those terminated quickly fell from prosperity to impoverishment, set upon by predatory corporations.

The other part of the plan was one of enticement, called Relocation, which was voluntary and targeted young singles and couples, the expectation being that with only old people left to die off, and the young people assimilated by the exciting urban world of consumer abundance and entertainment, the reservations would simply disappear. It didn't work out that way. Instead, the burgeoning civil rights movement offered new methods of resistance to the "urban Indians," who at any rate never divorced themselves from their families and communities back home. The result was the National Indian Youth Council and a little later the American Indian Movement, the Survival for American Indians and many other organizations. In 1974, following Wounded Knee, the Termination Act was rescinded, and the reservations that had been terminated were reconstituted, although irreparable damage had been done.

**SQ:** The activist group Yes Men recently made national headlines by impersonating State Department officials and telling weapons contractors that the government was going to start purchasing renewable energy from reservations—which would be



Russell Means, left, talks to media in 1973 in the village of Wounded Knee, South Dakota.

fully owned and controlled by First Nations. What was your reaction when you saw that stunt? Do you think it's viable?

**RD-O:** Yes, it was interesting that the weapons contractors found the idea attractive. My reaction to the stunt was "why not?" It's a perfectly viable idea. I don't know of any concrete plans in the works, but I know it's implied in indigenous aspirations, not only in North America, but the rest of the Americas. The real utopists are those who believe that capitalism can be reformed.

**SQ:** You write about "the American way of war"—one based on unlimited violence and the total destruction of the enemy. You write that this was alien to indigenous peoples, and that warfare for them was highly ritualized and involved quests for personal glory, but resulted in few deaths. Why is this important to recognize? Do you think examining the war against Native Americans can affect our willingness to mobilize for war today?

**RD-O:** The first way of war, which became the U.S. way of war, was formed in the 13 British colonies with settlers forming militias to terrorize the indigenous peoples, destroying their villages, food stores, and fields, killing everything that moved. That phrase, "kill everything that moves," was openly used by commanding officers in Vietnam and is taken for granted in other U.S. irregular wars, that is, counterinsurgent wars and wars of occupation since the founding of the United States to the present. I think that embedded in the texture of U.S. patriotism, which centers on reverence for the military, is the settler-colonial mindset of extermination. And I do think that if people become conscious of this, including those who serve in the military, many would recognize the truth and be repulsed.

**SQ:** What are your thoughts on the Idle No More movement?

**RD-O:** Idle No More is an amazing movement, surging from the grass roots of First Nations in Canada and spreading over the continent, emulated around the world. It was theater at the onset, but has continued as a strong and constantly growing base spawning many projects.

**SQ:** Do you see energy from Idle No More coming in to the United States?

**RD-O:** Yes, Idle No More infused energy into the Native movements in the United

States. Many locales now have INM representatives who network with their counterparts in Canada and each other. INM fused indigenous sovereignty and environmental issues like nothing had before. I thought this was visible in the glorious Climate Convergence in New York in September 2014. And it gave more visibility to the "Cowboys and Indians" alliance in the Northern Plains in opposition to the Keystone pipeline.

**SQ:** You emphasize in your book that the survival of indigenous peoples in the United States testifies to successful cultures of resistance—that without it, they would not have survived so many repeated attempts at assimilation and genocide. What does it mean to participate in a culture of resistance, and what responsibility do we have to support such resistance?

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**RD-O:** From the beginning of colonialism some five, six centuries ago, those who were first hit by the brunt of it and survived—the indigenous peoples of the Americas—have always known that it wasn't only about their own survival, but also the survival of humanity, of all life and sustenance. They have continued to resist and to survive, but they cannot overcome and transform without the mass of humanity being involved. Everything now is about survival, so it's not so much a question of supporting indigenous resistance as joining it.



A Lakota Sioux in Pine Ridge, South Dakota.



# Silencing America on the Path to War

By John Pilger

Returning to the United States in an election year, I am struck by the silence. I have covered four presidential campaigns, starting with 1968; I was with Robert Kennedy when he was shot and I saw his assassin, preparing to kill him. It was a baptism in the American way, along with the salivating violence of the Chicago police at the Democratic Party's rigged convention. The great counterrevolution had begun.

The first to be assassinated that year, Martin Luther King, had dared link the suffering of African-Americans and the people of Vietnam. When Janis Joplin sang, "Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose," she spoke perhaps unconsciously for millions of America's victims in faraway places.

"We lost 58,000 young soldiers in Vietnam, and they died defending your freedom. Now don't you forget it." So said a National Parks Service guide as I filmed last week at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington. He was addressing a school party of young teenagers in bright orange t-shirts. As if by rote, he inverted the truth about Vietnam into an unchallenged lie.

The millions of Vietnamese who died and were maimed and poisoned and dispossessed by the American invasion have no historical place in young minds, not to mention the estimated 60,000 veterans who have taken their own lives. A friend of mine, a Marine who became a paraplegic in Vietnam, was often asked, "Which side did you fight on?"

A few years ago, I attended a popular exhibition called "The Price of Freedom" at the venerable Smithsonian Institution in Washington. The lines of ordinary people, mostly children, shuffling through a Santa's grotto of revisionism, were dispensed a variety of lies: the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki saved "a million lives;" Iraq was "liberated [by] air strikes of unprecedented precision." The theme was unerringly heroic: only Americans pay the price of freedom.

The 2016 election campaign is remarkable not only for the rise of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders but also for the resilience of an enduring silence about a murderous self-bestowed divinity. A third of the members of the United Nations have felt Washington's boot, overturning governments, subverting democracy, imposing blockades and boycotts. Most of the presidents responsible have been liberal—Truman, Kennedy, Johnson, Carter, Clinton, Obama.

The breathtaking record of perfidy is so mutated in the public mind, wrote the late Harold Pinter, that it "never happened. ... Nothing ever happened. Even while it was happening it wasn't happening. It didn't matter. It was of no interest. It didn't matter." Pinter expressed a mock admiration for what he called "a quite clinical manipulation of power worldwide while masquerading as a force for universal good. It's a brilliant, even witty, highly successful act of hypnosis."

Take Obama. As he prepares to leave office, the fawning has begun all over again. He is "cool." One of the more violent presidents, Obama gave full rein to the Pentagon war-making apparatus of his discredited predecessor. He prosecuted more whistleblowers—truth-tellers—than any president. He pronounced Chelsea Manning guilty before she was tried. Today, Obama runs an unprecedented worldwide campaign of terrorism and murder by drone.

In 2009, Obama promised to help "rid the world of nuclear weapons" and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. No American president has built more nuclear warheads than Obama. He is "modernizing" America's doomsday arsenal, including a new "mini" nuclear weapon, whose size and "smart" technology, says a leading general, ensure its use is "no longer unthinkable."



*Clinton's presidential campaign has received money from all but one of the world's ten biggest arms companies. No other candidate comes close.*

James Bradley, the best-selling author of *Flags of Our Fathers* and son of one of the U.S. Marines who raised the flag on Iwo Jima, said, "[One] great myth we're seeing play out is that of Obama as some kind of peaceful guy who's trying to get rid of nuclear weapons. He's the biggest nuclear warrior there is. He's committed us to a ruinous course of spending a trillion dollars on more nuclear weapons. Somehow, people live in this fantasy that because he gives vague news conferences and speeches and feel-good photo-ops that somehow that's attached to actual policy. It isn't."

On Obama's watch, a second cold war is under way. The Russian president is a pantomime villain; the Chinese are not yet back to their sinister pig-tailed caricature—when all Chinese were banned from the United States—but the media warriors are working on it.

Neither Hillary Clinton nor Bernie Sanders has men-

*In Asia, the Pentagon is sending ships, planes, and special forces to the Philippines to threaten China. The United States already encircles China with hundreds of military bases that curve in an arc up from Australia to Asia and across to Afghanistan. Obama calls this a 'pivot.'*

tioned any of this. There is no risk and no danger for the United States and all of us. For them, the greatest military build-up on the borders of Russia since World War Two has not happened. On May 11, Romania went "live" with a NATO "missile defense" base that aims its first-strike American missiles at the heart of Russia, the world's second nuclear power.

In Asia, the Pentagon is sending ships, planes, and special forces to the Philippines to threaten China. The

United States already encircles China with hundreds of military bases that curve in an arc up from Australia to Asia and across to Afghanistan. Obama calls this a "pivot."

As a direct consequence, China reportedly has changed its nuclear weapons policy from no-first-use to high alert and put to sea submarines with nuclear weapons. The escalator is quickening.

It was Hillary Clinton who, as secretary of state in 2010, elevated the competing territorial claims for rocks and reef in the South China Sea to an international issue; CNN and BBC hysteria followed; China was building airstrips on the disputed islands. In its mammoth war game in 2015, Operation Talisman Sabre, the United States practiced "choking" the Straits of Malacca, through which pass most of China's oil and trade. This was not news.

Clinton declared that America had a "national interest" in these Asian waters. The Philippines and Vietnam were encouraged and bribed to pursue their claims and old enmities against China. In America, people are being primed to see any Chinese defensive position as offensive, and so the ground is laid for rapid escalation. A similar strategy of provocation and propaganda is applied to Russia.

Clinton, the "women's candidate," leaves a trail of bloody coups: in Honduras, in Libya (plus the murder of the Libyan president), and in Ukraine. The latter is now a CIA theme park swarming with Nazis and the frontline of a beckoning war with Russia. It was through Ukraine—literally, borderland—that Hitler's Nazis invaded the Soviet Union, which lost 27 million people. This epic catastrophe remains a presence in Russia. Clinton's presidential campaign has received money from all but one of the world's ten biggest arms companies. No other candidate comes close.

Sanders, the hope of many young Americans, is not very different from Clinton in his proprietorial view of the world beyond the United States. He backed Bill Clinton's illegal bombing of Serbia. He supports Obama's terrorism by drone, the provocation of Russia and the return of special forces (death squads) to Iraq. He has nothing to say on the drumbeat of threats to China and the accelerating risk of nuclear war. He agrees that Edward Snowden should stand trial and he calls Hugo Chavez—

*continued on page 10 ...*

# Policing Isn't Working for Cops Either

By Kazu Haga

"It's okay, Mommy.... It's okay, I'm right here with you..."

Those were the words of four-year-old Dae'Anna, consoling her mother Lavish Reynolds after she witnessed the police shoot and kill her boyfriend Philando Castile.

Those words are now scarred into the psyche of America, much like words that came before it: "Hands up, don't shoot." "I can't breathe." "It's not real."

If you haven't realized that the system of policing isn't working for the black community, you haven't been paying attention. Just hours after the killing of Alton Sterling, a four-year-old child witnessed someone getting shot and bleeding out while she sat in the backseat. The system didn't work for her, her mother, or Philando Castile. The system didn't work for Alton Sterling, or for Mike Brown, or for Freddie Gray or for countless others.

But here's something we miss in this climate of police violence: the system of policing isn't working for those working in law enforcement either. It doesn't serve anyone.

When I watched the video taken by Lavish Reynolds, I was blown away by the cool and calm demeanor in her voice and how it was offset by the complete panic in the voice of the officer. His was filled with fear.

And why wouldn't it be? Behind that trigger lies a man who just took the life of another man in front of a child. I've worked with enough people in prison, as well as veterans who have taken the lives of others, to know that no human being is immune to the fear, guilt, and shame that comes with the taking of another's life.

The system of policing is one that relies on violence, fear, repression, and a colonizer mentality. But the individuals who are employed to enforce that mentality are human beings with a human psyche, just like any other. It's silly to assume that these men and women aren't impacted by the violence they witness and participate in every day. No human being can participate in the levels of heightened violence that police are engaged in without being affected by it.

The tragedy in Dallas is a response from a people within a community that has lived with that fear and violence for generations. If you belong to a community that is constantly facing murder, incarceration and dehumanization, it should come as no surprise when members of that community decide that they have had enough and react with violence. It is tragic, yet should not be surprising if you can see their perspective. Similarly, just because police experience that violence from "the other side," it should not surprise us that it may affect them in similar ways, and that they may similarly react with outbursts of violence.

Marin Luther King Jr. wrote that "the white man's personality is greatly distorted by segregation, and his soul is greatly scarred." He said that the work of defeating segregation was for the "bod-

ies of black folks and the souls of white folks." He understood that to be a white supremacist, to hold hatred in your heart for so many and to inflict violence on others destroys your soul.

Others have written about the history of policing in the United States—especially in the South—and its roots in the slave patrol. So it should come as no great leap to consider that participating in policing in 21st-century America could scar one's soul.

This is not about being an apologist for the individuals responsible for the killing of black life. It is not about comparing the suffering of black communities to that of law enforcement. But in nonviolence, we know that if you don't understand the perspective of those you are in conflict with, you do not understand the conflict. You do not need to agree with, excuse or justify the other's perspective, you simply need to understand it so you can see the complete picture.

And part of the picture looks like this:



Dallas Police Chief David Brown prays during a vigil at Thanks-Giving square in Dallas on July 8.

Cops are human. They work for an institution with historical ties to slavery and a long legacy of racism. They are indoctrinated in a culture of "us vs. them," of doing "whatever is necessary so you get home," of fear, distrust, and dehumanization of those deemed as being on "the other side." They are taught to fear for their lives. They are trained almost exclusively in tactics of violence and repression. They are sent into situations of conflict every day with those limited tools, into communities where they are playing out tensions that have been brewing for hundreds of years.

Looking at that picture, no one should be surprised at incidents of police violence, and we should all understand that to some extent, it is rooted in the spiritual and emotional degradation that results from being immersed in such a violent institution.

I've been thinking lately about Eric Case-

bolt, the officer who responded to a call at a pool party in McKinney, Texas, and proceeded to throw a young girl onto the ground and point his gun at other teenagers.

Casebolt should have been fired immediately, and his record should follow him everywhere, preventing him from ever having employment as a cop or even as a security guard.

If we look more into the history of that conflict, the story of Casebolt's own trauma begins to emerge. The pool party was the third call that he attended to that day. His first was a suicide where he witnessed a man blow his head off in front of his family, and had to console the family. Immediately after, he was called to another attempted suicide, where he had to talk a young girl down from jumping off a ledge—also in front of her family. By the time he reached the pool party, he was an emotional wreck.

Again, that's not to excuse his actions as an individual. But understanding that

on the individual who pulled the trigger, the more we are letting the system off the hook. And the more the system defends the individual, the more we want to see him or her locked up, as if they are the problem.

Individual accountability requires healing and a space for the perpetrator of the harm to feel remorse for their actions. I've learned over time that people can't empathize with the pain they have caused until their own pain and story has been honored. So, can we build a movement that honors the pain of the officers, creates spaces to help them see the pain they cause, and—following the example of former Baltimore officer Michael Wood—allows them to defect from a system that doesn't serve them either?

And can we hold that level of compassion without pacifying our righteous indignation toward a system that doesn't value human life? How do we build a fierce and powerful resistance movement that addresses the individual and the system? What does it look like to hold individuals accountable with compassion, and

context and perspective also allows us to point our fingers at the larger culprit: a system of policing that didn't care enough about Casebolt's mental health that they couldn't even give him the rest of the day off. A culture of machismo that doesn't give space for cops like Casebolt to grieve or process what he just went through.

When the system comes together to defend cops like Casebolt, their defense of him is a smokescreen. The system doesn't care about any individuals—the individuals are dispensable. It is trying to distract us from the fact that the system itself is corrupt. If the system truly cared about the people who work in the system, it would create fundamental changes to stop the killings of black people, thereby decreasing the chances of retaliatory killings like the ones in Dallas.

But for us, the more we focus our anger

systems accountable with indignation?

Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, and Dallas are sobering reminders that violent institutions are causing human death on all sides. And until we find justice for all people, their spirits will be with us, nudging us to answer those questions.

Originally published at [wagingnonviolence.org](http://wagingnonviolence.org).

Kazu Haga is a Kingian nonviolence trainer based in Oakland, Calif. Born in Japan, he has been involved in many social change movements since he was 17. He conducts regular trainings with youth, incarcerated populations, and activists. He is the founder and coordinator of East Point Peace Academy and is on the board of Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice, PeaceWorkers, and the OneLife Institute.



## Veterans Talk Pathologies of Hate and Violence After Orlando Nightclub Tragedy

By Brian J. Trautman

In the days following the horrific attack on the Pulse nightclub in Orlando—one of the worst mass shootings in modern U.S. history, which claimed the lives of 49 people (50 counting the shooter) and left over 50 wounded—evidence began to mount that the gunman likely had multiple motives. This evidence is not surprising in light of what research has revealed about the origins of violence, which includes the knowledge that most people who commit violent acts are driven by a complex, multifaceted, and intertwined set of factors. The underlying root causes of violence, then, cannot be reduced to one or two sources. The world is not black and white. The nature of violence is no exception, and our individual and collective understanding of it must not be either if we are to effectively address and prevent all forms of it.

It is becoming increasingly clear that one of the shooter's perceived justifications for perpetrating the murderous rampage may have been intense psychological and emotional pain over his sexual orientation—a catastrophic blend of deep shame, humiliation, and bitterness over his possible queerness. Besides his apparent queer inclinations, there were several noteworthy details about the shooter's life that were omitted during many discussions about motives: his history of domestic violence, both as a victimizer and a witness to it in childhood; his employment with G4S, one of the largest private security firms in the world, for which he rendered services that included the imprisonment and mistreatment of juvenile offenders; and, his fascination with the NYPD, which he apparently idolized. In

addition, based on testimony from eyewitnesses and acquaintances, racism could also have influenced his choice of target. What is more, we know from reports that both the ideologies behind and atrocities of the so-called U.S.-led “war on terror” and terror groups operating across the world could have contributed to the gunman's unspeakable act.

All these factors, plus additional ones that may surface, may have played a role in the shooter's toxic thinking and derangement and ultimately led to the massacre that unfolded that awful night.

Yet, almost immediately after news of the nightclub tragedy broke, various political leaders and members of the corporate media, among others, began engaging in selective hate and bigotry against

herring of immigration and foreign “terrorism” to advance their own xenophobic and jingoistic agendas.

Demagoguery and fear-mongering about terrorism and the “Other” is extremely lucrative for the multi-trillion-dollar war industry. The tragic incident in Orlando could prove to be another opportunity for war profiteers to grow even richer.

Islamophobia and racism sell war. A national conversation about homophobia, domestic violence, the security-surveillance state, and the prison-industrial complex does not.

We will never stop mass shootings if we continue to fault Islam. Sadly, however, the religion will probably continue to be targeted and exploited by small-minded people to communicate and spread anti-

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*Islamophobia and racism sell war. A national conversation about homophobia, domestic violence, the security-surveillance state, and the prison-industrial complex does not.*

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Muslims. They did not ask questions. They did not want answers. They conveniently ignored or discounted credible information regarding the gunman's background and automatically defaulted in their dogmatic thinking to blaming so-called “radical” Islam.

Those who spew hate, especially in the wake of a national tragedy, only reveal their bigotry, cowardice, and bad character, and, whether they intend to or not, incite further hostility against vulnerable minority groups. Practitioners of such reactionary thinking tend to use the red

Muslim, ultra-nationalist propaganda. Horrendous violence is sometimes committed in the name of Islam, as it is in the name of other religions. However, this in no way makes religion culpable for it, yet Islam is deliberately and repeatedly scapegoated.

The good news is that a significant number of antiwar and peace and justice groups are working diligently to identify and eliminate the multiple and interconnected forms of violence that could have influenced the mass shooting at Pulse. The Vets vs. Hate movement is one ex-

ample of this work. Vets vs. Hate was inspired by efforts including the Veterans Challenge Islamophobia (VCI) campaign, a national initiative of Veterans For Peace (VFP) launched earlier this year in collaboration with Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW).

The campaign seeks to confront and stop the verbal and physical targeting of Muslims. Along with on-the-ground nonviolent protest/civil disobedience actions against the vitriol being directed at Muslims, social media has been a vehicle through which veterans and allies have expressed their solidarity with the Muslim community.

Veterans have a unique perspective on the various ways enmity and violence develop and destroy lives, as many of them were thrust into situations where it was inescapable and on full display. Veterans can speak with authority on how and why demonization and persecution of the “Other” can and do produce violence. Frequently, they are eager to share their insights with anyone willing to listen and learn. The aftermath of the Pulse massacre has proven to be one such time when veterans are speaking out.

Below are the voices of veterans who offer their perspectives on the Pulse nightclub attack and the hate rhetoric and blame game that followed:

“Anytime a shooting or bombing occurs around the world, the collective heart of 1.7 billion Muslims is shattered and the anxious prayer ‘please don’t let them claim to be Islamic’ is uttered. All Muslims know that the tenets of Islam proclaim the unjust taking of one life is equivalent of killing all of humanity in the sight of God—particularly during this time of Ramadan—when it is forbidden to even engage in an argument with another person much less commit a mass shooting.

“This is precisely how every Muslim knows that the Orlando shooter was a fraud whose only belief system was violence and hatred. But, true to form, in the aftermath of this tragedy, the world is witnessing the charity and goodness of Muslims, who are donating blood (even though they are fasting from food and water), bringing sustenance to those in need, or, like me, standing shoulder to shoulder with the LGBTQ+ community through tears in solemn vigils of remembrance for the beautiful souls we lost.”—Nate Terani, Navy veteran, VFP member, and Phoenix-based VCI field organizer

“Both the events of 9/11 and the Orlando massacre caused tremendous suffering for many. But we must not forget these tragedies hurt the Muslim community as well. When 9/11 occurred, I, like many Americans, said we needed to go over there and do something about it. However, I didn’t understand Islam. I ended up meeting a man who explained the beliefs of Islam to people who didn’t know, to counter the belief that all Muslims are evil. Since that time, I’ve never looked back and even in the Marine Corps (while I never deployed), I stood up for our brothers and sisters, some of whom were Muslim. ... Knowledge is

*continued on next page ...*



# Hair-Trigger Alert On Bombs, Guns, and the Failure of America

By Robert C. Koehler

I feel the finger on the trigger. I also feel it on the button.

“Dear President Obama,” the letter begins. It goes on to remind him of something he said in his 2008 presidential campaign: “Keeping nuclear weapons ready to launch on a moment’s notice is a dangerous relic of the Cold War. Such policies increase the risk of catastrophic accidents or miscalculation.”

The letter, from the Union of Concerned Scientists, is signed by 90 scientists, including 20 Nobel laureates. It continues: “After your election, you called for taking ‘our nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert.’”

Presidential campaigns, mass killings, war ... nuclear war. Washington, we have a problem.

The time has come for extraordinary change. Who we are—this monstrous, planet-destroying entity called America—needs to be decommissioned and reconstructed on a foundation more solid than the present myths of greatness, greed, and entitlement. We need a new vision, a manifestation of the moral intelligence that is also part of who we are: a vision of how this nuclear-armed, gun-saturated nation can disarm itself and, in the process, become a force for real peace.

“We urge you,” the scientists write, “to take U.S. land-based missiles off hair-trigger alert and to remove from U.S. war plans the option of launching these weapons on warning. The United States should encourage Russia to follow suit, but it should not wait to act. Taking these steps would have profound security benefits for all Americans by reducing the risk of nuclear disaster.”

I think about this in the context of the Orlando murders and see a gruesome similarity between U.S. militarism and the violent forays of armed loners—and the “concentrated horror” both inflict. The main difference, as far as I can tell, is that the human carnage and environmental destruction resulting from U.S. militarism remain emo-



tionally invisible, you might say, to the American public.

In a powerful essay at TomDispatch.com, William J. Astore, a retired U.S. Air Force lieutenant colonel, takes a harsh look at the wars we have waged from on high since World War II, noting that “for all its promise of devastating power delivered against enemies with remarkable precision and quick victories at low cost (at least to Americans), air power has failed to deliver, not just in the ongoing war on terror but for decades before it. If anything, by providing an illusion of results, it has helped keep

but the war ended in no better than a stalemate; more than half a century later, Korea remains a bitterly divided nation.

Then came a decade of war in Southeast Asia. By the time this pointless war ended in dishonorable defeat, the U.S. had dropped, according to Astore, “a staggering seven million tons of bombs, the equivalent in explosive yield to more than 450 Hiroshimas,” on Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. We also poisoned the jungle with defoliants, having given ourselves free rein to commit environmental carnage with horrific consequences well into the

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*We need a new vision, a manifestation of the moral intelligence that is also part of who we are: a vision of how this nuclear-armed, gun-saturated nation can disarm itself and, in the process, become a force for real peace.*

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the United States in unwinnable wars, while inflicting a heavy toll on innocent victims on our distant battlefields.”

He adds: “At the same time, the cult-like infatuation of American leaders, from the president on down, with the supposed ability of the U.S. military to deliver such results remains remarkably unchallenged in Washington.”

He points out that in the Korean War, in the early ‘50s, the United States pounded North Korea with 635,000 tons of bombs and 32,557 tons of napalm. Cities were leveled,

unforeseeable future for absurdly limited tactical ends.

It took a decade and a half for the military-industrialists to overcome “Vietnam syndrome,” the public’s weariness of war, but eventually they were able to put Iraq in the crosshairs, devastating the country with bombs and missiles—including munitions made of depleted uranium—over the course of several decades, spreading immediate carnage and long-lasting genetic damage, all of course to no end except endless war.

And the War on Terror, which I call the War to Promote Terror, is still going on 15 years later, with no end in sight. The funding for it is unquestioned and seemingly limitless. The point of it is also unquestioned, except at the social and political margins. It certainly is unquestioned in the 2016 presidential race, especially the winnowed-down version of it—Trump vs. Clinton—that’s left. The military-corporate branch of the American government remains well beyond public reach.

And so I think about the Orlando murders and the unending grief they have caused in the context of all the murders the United States and its allies and its enemies have committed in the name of war.

And I think about the congressional failure to enact any legislation in regard to the sale of assault weapons in the context of the letter 90 scientists associated with the Union of Concerned Scientists wrote to President Obama, reminding him that before he was president he expressed awareness of the danger of having nuclear weapons on hair-trigger alert, and asking him to remove the 450 land-based nuclear missiles (but not the submarine-based missiles) from high alert.

And I wonder at my certainty that the request will be ignored. And I wonder what will happen next.

*Originally published by Common Dreams.*

Robert Koehler is an award-winning Chicago-based journalist and nationally syndicated writer. His new book, *Courage Grows Strong at the Wound*, is now available. Contact him at [koehlercw@gmail.com](mailto:koehlercw@gmail.com) or visit his website at [commonwonders.com](http://commonwonders.com).

## Veterans Talk

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power and if we do not understand Islam we need to educate ourselves in order to dispel hate and Islamophobia.”—Renee Whitfield, Marine Corps veteran, Vets vs. Hate supporter

“A serious conversation is necessary to discuss the ways toxic masculinity, militarism, homophobia, and Islamophobia contributed to the shooting in Orlando, as well as helping shape the narrative told by U.S. media outlets and posturing of U.S. politicians. We live in a society that is homophobic, heterosexist, and discriminatory towards marginalized people. In communities across the United States, both children and adults are learning to perpetuate oppressive behavior toward the LGBT+ community. Homophobia, like Islamophobia, can be fear-driven, but it is also contempt-driven.”—Ramon Mejia, Marine Corps veteran, IVAW member, Texas-based VCI field organizer

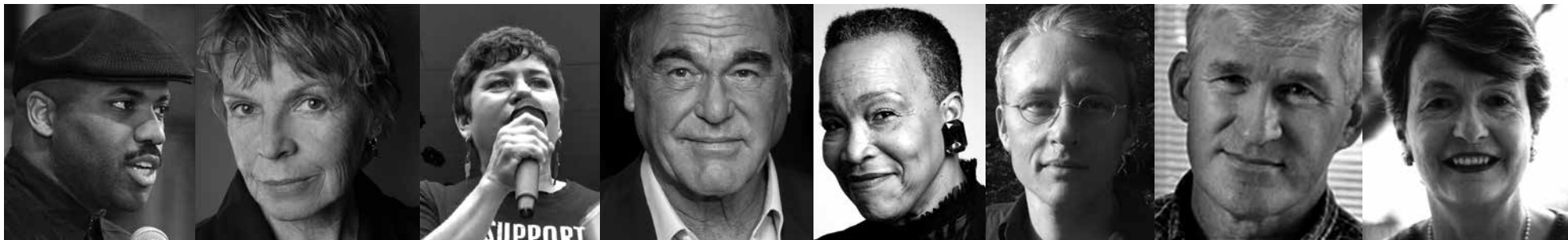
“A long time ago, I made it a point not to watch the news, listen to the radio or read a newspaper regularly. It felt like ingesting poison. Existing in our society at times feels the same way; an onslaught of verbal insults or the stare of an unspoken judgment. It has been a long journey of realizing my existence is not an embarrassment,

the color of my skin is not some mistake, who I love is not a sin, and that my last name does not warrant that I be singled out and labeled.

“When I step outside my home, emotionally and spiritually I prepare myself to deal with the world. I know I may encounter individuals who believe what mainstream mass media has been feeding them: ready-made summaries consisting of lies, fear, and pre-packaged judgments of hate. When I am confronted with someone who unleashes that poison upon me, I work many times over to not mirror their behavior lest I prove true to that person what the media machine has fed them.

“We are all connected. Admittedly, I struggle with this belief when I encounter another’s fear and hate. Whether in that moment or thereafter, there is a deep realization that their anger and hate is a symptom of the insecurity and disempowerment syphoning away the spirit of the many in our country. My responsibility then, is to ensure my journey and activism remain genuine and fluid, rooted in and from a spiritual connection.”—Monique Salhab, Air Force and Army veteran, VFP board member

*Brian Trautman serves on the VFP national board of director. He is a post-Cold War veteran of the U.S. Army. Brian teaches peace studies and economics at Berkshire Community College in western Massachusetts and resides near Albany, N.Y. On Twitter @BriTraut.*



Convention speakers Jonathan Hutto, Ann Jones, Antonia Juhasz, Oliver Stone, Rhodessa Jones, Roy Scranton, Andrew Bacevich, and Dr. Helen Caldicott.

## VFP Convention: Speakers to Rock the House

By Denny Riley

This August 12–15 the University of California Clark Kerr campus in Berkeley will be home to the 2016 VFP national convention. Poetry and music, great works of art and good food will abound. Plenty of affordable housing and dining is available in the attractive cluster of Spanish Mission-style buildings that make up Clark Kerr, a city, state, and national landmark. The speakers include Ann Jones, Andrew Bacevich, Helen Caldicott, Antonia Juhasz, Roy Scranton, Oliver Stone, Jonathan Hutto, Dr. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, Rhodessa Jones, Michael McPhear-

son, David Cobb, Milly Harmon, Ann Wright, Dave Logsdon, Jim Driscoll, Lee Eklund, Kathy Kelly, Metasabia Rigby, and David Hartsough. Morning sessions in yoga, meditation, and AA will be available. The days will be sunny and warm with a breeze coming off San Francisco Bay. Nights will be cooler so bring something warm to pull on. Thirty-four workshops and plenaries on pro-peace, anti-establishment topics will be presented by the some of the world's foremost experts.

Clark Kerr is a five-block walk from the main Berkeley campus, through a neighborhood of fraternity and sorority houses busy with young people intent, it seems, on mak-

ing some of us feel old. Not that we are, but Clark Kerr campus is named after the man who was president of Berkeley during the free speech movement. That was 50 years ago. Kerr suffered dismissal by the newly elected governor, Ronald Reagan, because he was too sympathetic to the protesters' point of view, but he was exonerated when the evidence was found to have been trumped up by, you guessed it, the FBI. An interesting bit of history most people at the convention will be either too young to have heard about or too old to remember.

A twist to this tale is that the public event and the banquet will be held in the Pauley Ballroom, an impressive venue

atop the Cal Student Union hard by Sproul Plaza where the free speech movement began and where numerous rallies and riots occurred through the sixties, a facility named after Edwin Pauley, the UC regent who encouraged Reagan to give Kerr the axe, the kind of ironic juxtaposition that could get VFP picketing itself.

So be there. People will be talking about this convention for years to come. Go to [veteransforpeace.org](http://veteransforpeace.org) and make your reservations. Rooms are comfortable and include some dining hall meals. Fly into Oakland if you can, but OAK and SFO are both connected to Bay Area Rapid Transit, or BART. Take BART to the Ashby station in Berkeley where a VFP van will meet you



## 2016 Maine Peace Walk Stop the War\$ on Mother Earth

The annual Maine Peace Walk begins October 11 with a potluck supper hosted by the Penobscot Nation on Indian Island, Maine.

We come together out of our deep concern about the many different wars being waged on Mother Earth, ranging from over-fishing, deforestation, and human-caused extinctions, to climate disruption and endless war.

Close to home we support the Penobscot Nation's struggle for Justice for the River, opposition to the East/West Corridor, and conversion of war production to alternative energy at Maine shipyards. We know from past experience of walking through rural and urban Maine that many people will be reached with our messages. We hope the spiritual act of walking and sharing conversation and food will help people in our state feel less isolated and despairing about the future.

The title of the 2016 walk is Stop the War\$ on Mother Earth.

### Schedule

Oct 11 Penobscot Nation on Indian Island (orientation, supper and opening program)  
Oct 12 Indian Island to Dexter  
Oct 13 Dexter to Pittsfield  
Oct 14 Pittsfield to Unity  
Oct 15 Unity to Waterville  
Oct 16 Waterville to Augusta  
Oct 17 Augusta to Norway  
Oct 18 Norway to Lewiston  
Oct 19 Lewiston to Brunswick  
Oct 20 Day off in Brunswick  
Oct 21 Brunswick to Freeport  
Oct 22 Freeport to Portland  
Oct 23 Portland to Saco  
Oct 24 Saco to Kennebunk  
Oct 25 Kennebunk to York Beach  
Oct 26 York Beach to Kittery Naval shipyard

For more information, contact Bruce Gagnon at [globalnet@mindspring.com](mailto:globalnet@mindspring.com) or (207) 443-9502.

## Silencing ...

... continued from page 6

like him, a social democrat—"a dead communist dictator." He promises to support Clinton if she is nominated.

The election of Trump or Clinton is the old illusion of choice that is no choice: two sides of the same coin. In scapegoating minorities and promising to "make America great again," Trump is a far-right-wing domestic populist; yet the danger of Clinton may be more lethal for the world.

"Only Donald Trump has said anything meaningful and critical of U.S. foreign policy," wrote Stephen Cohen, emeritus professor of Russian history at Princeton and New York University, one of the few Russia experts in the United States to speak out about the risk of war.

In a radio broadcast, Cohen referred to critical questions Trump alone had raised. Among them: why is the United States "everywhere on the globe"? What is NATO's true mission? Why does the United States always pursue regime change in Iraq, Syria, Libya, Ukraine? Why does Washington treat Russia and Vladimir Putin as an enemy?

The hysteria in the liberal media over Trump serves an illusion of "free and open debate" and "democracy at work." His views on immigrants and Muslims are grotesque, yet the deporter-in-chief of vulnerable people from America is not Trump but Obama, whose legacy is his betrayal of people of color, such as the warehousing of a mostly black prison population, now more numerous than Stalin's gulag.

This presidential campaign may not be about populism but American liberalism, an ideology that sees itself as modern and therefore superior and the one true way. Those on its right wing bear a likeness to

19th-century Christian imperialists, with a God-given duty to convert or co-opt or conquer.

In Britain, this is Blairism. The Christian war criminal Tony Blair got away with his secret preparation for the invasion of Iraq largely because the liberal political class and media fell for his "cool Britannia." In *The Guardian*, the applause was deafening; he was called "mystical." A distraction known as identity politics, imported from the United States, rested easily in his care.

History was declared over, class was abolished and gender promoted as feminism; lots of women became New Labour MPs. They voted on the first day of Parliament to cut the benefits of single parents, mostly women, as instructed. A majority voted for an invasion that produced 700,000 Iraqi widows.

The equivalent in the United States are the politically correct warmongers on *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and network TV who dominate political debate. I watched a furious debate on CNN about Trump's infidelities. It was clear, they said, a man like that could not be trusted in the White House. No issues were raised. Nothing on the 80 percent of Americans whose income has collapsed to 1970s levels. Nothing on the drift to war. The received wisdom seems to be "hold your nose" and vote for Clinton: anyone but Trump. That way, you stop the monster and preserve a system gagging for another war.

John Pilger was chief foreign correspondent for the London Daily Mirror, Britain's biggest-selling newspaper, reporting from all over the world, covering numerous wars, notably Vietnam. He was the youngest journalist to receive Britain's highest award for journalism, *Journalist of the Year* and was the first to win it twice. He has also created many award-winning documentaries.





Photo by Ellen Davidson

Veterans For Peace members outside the New York State Capitol Building June 15.

## VFP Sends NY Governor a Message About BDS

On June 15, members of Veterans For Peace joined a rally in Albany, N.Y., to protest Gov. Andrew Cuomo's anti-free speech executive order requiring the state to compile a blacklist of organizations that support boycott, divestment, and sanctions of Israel and banning any state funding for such organizations. The demonstrators delivered 13,000 signatures on a petition asking the governor to rescind the order, and VFP members Tarak Kauff, Jay Wenk, Jules Orkin, Jerry Hassett, and Fred Nagel (pictured below) delivered a letter from VFP Executive Director Michael McPhearson. The full text of the letter is below.

June 16, 2016

Dear Governor Cuomo,

Veterans For Peace calls on you to rescind Executive Order 157 that would create a list of groups, institutions, and businesses that support the use of boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) as a tool in the struggle against Israeli oppression of the Palestinian people. This order will force all executive branch agencies and departments to cut contracts with any companies and organizations on this list.

As veterans of the U.S. military, we were told that we served to protect the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Your Executive Order, coming on the heels of unsuccessful attempts in the New York Legislature to pass anti-boycott legislation, not only attempts to circumvent the authority of the state legislative branch, it also tramples on the constitutional right of free speech. Your order is undemocratic and an abuse of power.

We are sure you are familiar with this quote from John F. Kennedy, "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable."

The BDS movement provides a form of nonviolent political expression and action that allows people of conscience to support the ongoing Palestinian struggle

for justice. Because of the obvious unjust treatment of Palestinians by the Israeli government and the nonviolent work of committed activists, this movement has gained traction, including among young people across university campuses and large organizations such as the U.S. Presbyterian Church and United Methodist Church. Your executive order attempts to intimidate and repress these students' and religious groups' nonviolent attempts to create change and work for justice. This type of repression ensures more violence as some people lose confidence that nonviolent paths to change are effective.

Through this order, you have claimed to take a moral stand, stating, "this state will do everything in its power to end this hateful, intolerant campaign."

However, [South African] Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, a man who has lived with and struggled against great injustice most of his life and knows it when he sees it, supports the BDS movement. He has called on others to support the campaign, saying, "Please turn the tide against violence and hatred by joining the nonviolent movement for justice for all people of the region,"

Finally, no matter what one thinks of the BDS movement, this compilation of lists by government agencies, of organizations and groups participating in a campaign of political dissent recalls the McCarthy era, attempting to stifle political opinions and actions. You have become part of a worrisome trend in our country of ignoring democratic principles and using power and public fear for political gain. Your choice to follow this trend is deeply disappointing. We ask you to follow the more difficult path that ensures our national principles of liberal democracy are followed. We call on you to work for all to receive just outcomes and for none to be subjected to oppressive government and occupations.

Again, Veterans For Peace calls on you to rescind Executive Order 157. If you are trying to be constructive and work for peace in the region, this is the wrong way to do it. Do not stand on the side of repression and occupation. Stand with those who are taking nonviolent steps to bring about the just peace we need in the region.

Sincerely,  
Michael T. McPhearson  
Executive Director



Photo by Ellen Davidson

## Sending in the Troops

"How long would authority and private property exist, if not for the willingness of the mass to become soldiers, policemen, jailers and hangmen?"

—Emma Goldman

Photos arriving on the wire.

Soldiers boarding planes,  
dressed for success:  
designer helmets, makeup and Kevlar vests;  
leaden boots and M-16's slick as Hollywood.  
Bodies taut as cocked weapons,  
their hearts will become as hollow as the discarded shells.

They will bomb the square  
where elders gather to tell stories,  
tear-gas the laughter  
that rides the perfumed winds of desert nights,  
and pillage the secrets of lovers.  
They will make orphans of the future,  
mutilate the past—  
rape and rub wounds with salt.  
These are humanity's hangmen.

I stare at the faces.

They could be waiting to board a bus,  
or standing in a movie line.

Is this the face  
once caressed by a mother?  
—once stroked by a lover?

Are the cheeks soft?  
Kissable?

How many of these faces  
will return to applause, college degrees,  
and a home behind a rose-wrapped fence?

How many will lose their minds  
or drink themselves to death,  
spare-changing between veteran's appointments?

Don't you know, soldier, that you are nothing?

You with the patriotic baby blues,  
you with your family in the ghetto,  
you with the dark skin at the front of the line,

or you who wanted to show them  
your parents don't have to speak the language

for you to belong,  
your president cares about you  
less than last year's hottest car model.  
You are like a little boy  
whose dreams are too small  
and whose boots are far too big—  
talking tough, terrorizing the playground  
so no one will notice  
you trembling as you take aim against those

who have more in common with you  
than do the billionaires  
your weapon protects.

—Margot Pepper





*Photos by Regis Tremblay, clockwise from upper left:*

*Police arrest VFP National Board member Tarak Kauff and organizer Bruce Gagnon; a Bath officer told one of those arrested that 'you all are the conscience of the community.'*

*Vietnam veteran and poet Gerry Kamke suffers from multiple ailments caused by his exposure to toxic Agent Orange during the war.*

*Retired architect Cynthia Howard from Biddeford Pool, Maine, being handcuffed and moved to a van for a journey to the Bath Police department for processing.*

*Thousands of people were lined up to go into the shipyard for the event and were captive ears for the messages from the speakers and musicians.*

*Peter Woodruff (in blue, from Arrowsic, Maine) is a recently retired worker from the BIW shipyard, the only worker ever to speak at a shipyard destroyer 'christening' protest. He can barely talk due to poisoning from the steel dust at the shipyard over the years. In the background is Pete Sirois (Madison, Maine) also a former BIW worker who now makes political videos and plays them on public access TV stations in his part of rural Maine*





# What Would Christ Say?

By Russell Wray

I am writing regarding the christening of the Navy's Zumwalt guided-missile destroyer that is going to take place on June 18 at Bath Iron Works. I do not believe many things that the Navy or the Pentagon states. Those two entities are masters of deception in many ways. However, the designation of the ship as a "destroyer" is one instance where they speak the truth. Does it strike anyone else as being sadly ironic that a vessel that is designed for destruction, including the destruction of who knows how many human beings, would be blessed in the name of Jesus Christ, also known as the Prince of Peace?

Human beings are not all this destroyer will destroy. How many opportunities for the betterment of the lives of people are being destroyed as our government chooses to spend over \$4 billion for this destroyer of lives? That money could do an amazing amount of good if it were fun-

neled into things that actually improve people's lives, such as education and health care. The government could even put that money into dealing, for once, in a realistic manner with a genuine threat to our national security ... the very real threat of climate change, which even the Pentagon understands and acknowledges (notwithstanding the fact that it does have the single largest carbon footprint on the planet).

How many lives among those beings who live in the sea will be destroyed by this destroyer? It is well known that the Navy's use of sonar can wreak havoc on the lives of marine species, disrupting biologically important behaviors such as feeding, breeding, migration, and communication. It can raise stress levels, lowering animals' ability to successfully reproduce, and making them more susceptible to disease. And sonar use can and does result in hearing loss and other injuries, as well as death. Not all sonar victims wind up mass-stranded upon some shore:



Russell Wray, in a dolphin hat, being arrested.

those that do are likely just the tip of the destruction iceberg.

And what of the lives of people living in places such as Gangjeong Village on Jeju Island in South Korea? Although the people there overwhelmingly opposed the building of a navy base on their shore, and have nonviolently and heroically resisted its construction on a daily

basis for going on nine years, sustaining fines, imprisonment, and injuries at the hands of police, the base is now complete and soon will port U.S. Navy warships. Perhaps this very same destroyer. Those people, who even today continue to resist, have had their village, their sacred places, and their once-beautiful environment destroyed

by this base.

Yes, this Zumwalt is a destroyer ... of lives, opportunities, and peace. I do not believe the Prince of Peace would ever bless such a thing.

*Russell Wray of Hancock, Maine, volunteers with Citizens Opposing Active Sonar Threats (COAST) and is a member of Veterans For Peace.*

## Destroyer

... continued from page 1

with only 8 percent of the votes.

No doubt we can attribute this unwanted eminence, in part, to this history I've cited, as well as to Guantánamo, to Abu Ghraib, to Bagram Detention Facility, and to the continuing policy of torture in such places as well as to our targeted assassination program—extrajudicial state-sanctioned murder by drones. According to a recent report, 90 percent of the victims of drone attacks in Afghanistan have been innocents. Pakistan is the site of more U.S. drone strikes than any other country. The Obama administration has carried out more than 370 drone attacks there, killing as many as 1,000 civilians, including up to 200 children, according to data collected by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism.

All this is well-known history around our digitally connected world.

What does all this have to do with why we are here to protest the launching of the Zumwalt destroyer? Well, because this destroyer, the *Monsoor*, is another piece, another symbol, albeit a small, but expensive one, of how misguided our leaders are. How wed to imperialism and world domination they are. The price tag on this destroyer is \$4 bil-

lion and rising. Alternatively, we could enable 40,000 students to attend four years of college debt free. Whether we call it socialism or not, that would seem to make more sense than building one more warship to better arm a country that already spends more than the next seven biggest-spending countries and already has the world's most powerful navy by far.

At the beginning of my remarks I mentioned Admiral Zumwalt, after whom this new class of warship is named. He who authorized the Agent Orange spraying of Vietnam, ensuring the agonies of millions of Vietnamese and of the descen-

dents of those American troops similarly exposed for generations to come. It is an extreme irony, isn't it, that Admiral Zumwalt's son, a young lieutenant who himself served in the Mekong Delta during the spraying, who died young, and his son, the admiral's grandson, born with congenital anomalies, were evidently among the victims of the poisoning? They, too, were human beings. Something about reaping what one sows.

Our Congress, voting again and again for increased military expenditures, is like a pack of drunken sailors, totally out of control, but comparing them with military men would be un-

fair—given they are almost all millionaires or better and that their pockets and campaign war chests are lined with coin from those who benefit directly from our war-making—the wealthy elite who run the behemoth corporations of the defense and security industries.

I'd like to quote President Obama. During his recent visit to Hiroshima, he said, "We must change our mindset about war itself to prevent conflict through diplomacy and strive to end conflicts after they've begun. We must see our growing interdependence as a cause for peaceful cooperation and not violent competition. We must define our na-

tions not by our capacity to destroy, but by what we build. And perhaps above all, we must re-imagine our connection to one another as members of one human race."

Wow. Did he really say this? Better that he really "be" this!

It is past time that we the people make certain that our leaders don't simply utter platitudes, but that we insist they deliver leadership worthy of the people we believe we are and represent values that reflect a respect for our planet and for all people. Human beings! All human beings! Fellow human beings!

In closing, let us consider the people of Gangjeong village on Jeju Island, Korea.

Over the past nine years the villagers, joined by thousands of other Korean and international activists, to include several of us here today, have worked to prevent the construction of a naval base on this once tranquil coast. The war ships built here at Bath Iron Works will be harbored at Jeju, further escalating tensions in the Asia Pacific. We stand in solidarity with our fellow human beings, our brothers and sisters of Gangjeong village.

*Dud Hendrick is a member of Veterans For Peace. He has traveled widely to meet with and to speak about the victims of U.S. foreign policy. He resides on Deer Isle, Maine, and can be emailed at dudhe@myfairpoint.net.*





# Russians Ask ‘Why Do You Demonize Us When We Are So Much Like You?’

By Ann Wright

I’ve just ended two weeks visiting four regions of Russia. The one question that was asked over and over was, “Why does America hate us? Why do you demonize us?” This article is a composite of the comments and questions addressed to our 20-person delegation and to me as an individual.

None of the questions, comments or views tells the full story, but I hope they give a feel for the desire of ordinary Russians that their country and its citizens be respected as a sovereign nation with a long history and not demonized as an “evil” outlaw state.

“The United States worked hard to make the Soviet Union collapse, and it did. You wanted to remake Russia like the United States—a democratic, capitalist country in which your companies could make money—and you have done that.

“We have exclusive stores with top-of-the-line clothing and cosmetics for the richer. We have massive rush hour traffic jams in our cities, just like you do. We have extensive, safe, inexpensive metros in all of our major cities, just like you have. When you fly across our country, it looks just like yours, with forests, farm fields, rivers and lakes—only bigger, many time zones bigger.

“You sent your experts on privatization, international banking, stock exchanges. You urged us to sell off our huge state industries to the private sector at ridiculously low prices, creating the multi-billionaire oligarchs that in many ways mirror the oligarchs of the United States. And you made money from this privatization.

“And we have the poor just like you do. We have villages, towns and small cities that are struggling with migration to the big cities with people moving in hopes of

*‘You wanted to remake Russia like the United States—a democratic, capitalist country in which your companies could make money—and you have done that.’*

finding jobs, just like you do.

“You have your allies and we have our allies. You told us during the dissolution of the Soviet Union that you would not enlist countries from the Eastern block into NATO, yet you have done that. Now you are placing missile batteries along our border and conducting major military exercises with names such as Anaconda, the strangling snake, along our borders.

“For our own national security, we must respond, yet you vilify us for a response that you would have if Russia would have military maneuvers along the Alaskan coast or the Hawaii islands or with Mexico or with Canada.”

## Syria

“For decades, we have had military ties to Syria and the only Soviet/Russian port in the Mediterranean is in Syria. Why is it unexpected that we help defend our ally, when the stated policy of your country is for ‘regime change’ of our ally—and you have spent hundreds of millions of dollars for Syrian regime change?



Retired U.S. Colonel and diplomat Ann Wright speaking at the NATO protest in Warsaw.

“Russia saved the U.S. from an enormous political and military blunder in 2013 when the U.S. was determined to attack the Syrian government for ‘crossing the red line’ when a horrific chemical attack that tragically killed hundreds was erroneously blamed on the Assad government. We provided you documentation that the chemical attack did not come from the Assad government and we brokered a deal with the Syrian government in which they turned over their chemical weapons arsenal to the international community for destruction.

“Russia has offered to host talks with the Assad government about power sharing with opposition elements. We, like you, do not want to see the takeover of Syria by a radical group such as ISIS that will use the land of Syria to continue its mission to destabilize the region. Your policies and financing of regime change in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Libya and Syria have created instability and chaos that is reaching all over the world.”

## Coup in Ukraine and Crimea Reuniting with Russia

“You say that Crimea was annexed by Russia and we say Crimea ‘reunited’ with Russia. We believe the U.S. sponsored a coup of the elected Ukrainian government that had chosen to accept a loan from Russia rather than from the EU and IMF. We believe that coup and the resulting government was illegally brought to power through your multi-million dollar ‘regime change’ program. We know that your Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Victoria Nuland described in a phone call that our intelligence services recorded the pro-West/NATO coup leader as ‘our guy—Yats.’

“With the takeover of the Ukrainian government, over 95 percent of the population of Crimea, which is majority ethnic Russians, participated in a referendum in which 80 percent voted to unite with the Russian Federation instead of staying with Ukraine.

“We wonder whether citizens of the United States realize that the Southern Fleet of the military of the Russian Federation was located in the Black Sea ports in the Crimea and in light of the violent takeover of Ukraine that our government felt it was vital to ensure access to those ports.”

## Sanctions on Crimea and Russia—Double Standards

“While the U.S. and European governments accepted and cheered the violent overthrow of the elected government of the Ukraine, both the U.S. and European nations were very angry at the nonviolent referendum of the people of Crimea and have slammed Crimea with all sorts of sanctions that have reduced international tourism, the main industry, to almost nothing. You are the first group of Americans we have seen in over a year. Now, our business is with other citizens from Russia.

“We believe you want the sanctions to hurt us so we will overthrow our elected government, just like you put sanctions on Iraq or North Korea or Iran for the people of

those countries to overthrow their governments.

“Sanctions have the opposite effect from what you want. While we know sanctions hurt the ordinary person and if left on a population for a long time can kill through malnutrition and lack of medicines, sanctions have made us stronger.

“Now, we may not get your cheeses and wines, but we are developing or redeveloping our own industries and have become more self-reliant. We now see how the globalization trade mantra of the United States can and will be used against countries that decide not to go along with the U.S. on its worldwide political and military agenda.

“We wonder why the double standard? Why haven’t the member states of the United Nations put sanctions on the U.S. since you have invaded and occupied countries and killed hundreds of thousands in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Yemen, and Syria.

“Why is the U.S. not held accountable for kidnapping, extraordinary rendition, torture, and imprisonment of almost 800 persons that have been held in the gulag called Guantánamo?”

## Nuclear Weapons and War

“We want the elimination of nuclear weapons. Unlike you, we have never used a nuclear weapon on people. Even though we consider nuclear weapons a defensive weapon, they should be eliminated because one political or military mistake will have devastating consequences for the entire planet.

“We know the terrible costs of war. Our great-grandparents remind us of the 27 million Soviet citizens killed during World War II, our grandparents tell us of the Soviet war in Afghanistan in the 1980s and the difficulties arising from the Cold War.

“We don’t understand why the West continues to vilify and demonize us when we are so much like you. We too are concerned about threats to our national security and our government responds in many ways like yours. We do not want another Cold War, a war in which everyone gets frostbitten, or worse, a war that will kill hundreds of thousands, if not millions.”

## We Want a Peaceful Future

“We Russians are proud of our lengthy history and heritage. We want a bright future for ourselves and our families ... and for yours. We want to live in a peaceful world. We want to live in peace.”

*Col. Ann Wright (ret.), a 29-year Army/Army Reserves veteran and retired State Department official, served in Nicaragua, Grenada, Somalia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Sierra Leone, Micronesia and Mongolia. She publicly resigned to protest the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Wright was also a passenger on the Challenger 1, which along with the Mavi Marmara, was part of the 2010 Gaza Freedom Flotilla. She is the co-author of Dissent: Voices of Conscience and has written frequently on rape in the military.*



# Standing with the Mothers in Odessa

By Bruce Gagnon

Many feared that there would be more violence in Odessa, Ukraine on May 2, 2016, similar to what took well over 50 lives exactly a year ago. But in fact the day was peaceful when up to 10,000 people gathered near the Trades Union Hall to place flowers and stand with the Mothers Committee in a makeshift memorial. The public was blocked from having direct contact with the Trades Hall by huge numbers of local police, national security services, and fully armed neo-Nazi Azov Battalion members who have been incorporated into the newly formed “National Guard” in Ukraine (equipped and trained by U.S. Special Forces troops at a base in western Ukraine).

The morning began with a surprise outside our hotel window when we noticed that six buses full of Army personnel were using the spot as a staging area for the day’s events. We joined a group of international alternative media people who were taken on a walk through this beautiful city to a park where a right-wing group was holding a small protest. They chanted some of their usual nationalist slogans but were nearly outnumbered by the media people filming their every move.

The public seemed to be going about their normal Monday activities on this sunny but breezy day almost as if nothing was happening in a nearby part of town.

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*[T]he entire area was sealed off and behind the plastic crime scene string of red tape were heavily armed Azov Battalion members.*

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As we approached the Trades Union Hall, there were huge numbers of people holding flowers heading toward the now sacred site. But the entire area was sealed off and behind the plastic crime scene string of red tape were heavily armed Azov Battalion members. The irony is that the neo-Nazis were now guarding the very grounds where those of their political ideology had committed the horrific crimes of May 2, 2014. The people, including the mothers of the dead, were not allowed to lay their flowers at the scene of the crime.

Instead, several thousand people crowded into a tight space with the Trades Hall looming just a couple of hundreds yards away—close but ever so far away. The people were solemn, and Regis Tremblay and I took the time to do some interviews with people in the crowd, including a man named Alexander who told the story of being at the Trades Hall on May 2 while three of his friends were killed. Two died from smoke inhalation inside the burning building and one, who



**Odessa Mothers Committee returns to the scene of the massacre at the Trades Union Hall May 2.**

jumped from a first-floor window, was beaten to death with bats by neo-Nazis who had set the building on fire and were picking people off as they tried to escape.

We were taken back to the hotel for lunch. Just before entering the banquet room, a gaggle of what appeared to be politicians came up the stairs to the second floor and made a grand entrance. We learned they were EU politicians who proceeded to go around the room and shake everyone’s hand. They didn’t appear to be very interested in speaking to any of us and once we entered the luncheon we noticed a large empty table that had apparently been reserved for the EU group. Several from the Mothers Committee rose in turn and made a toast in memory of those who were killed during the May 2 massacre. After each finished speaking everyone rose from the dining tables with their wine glass in hand. Before we were able to finish the meal we were given a five-minute warning that we were going to return to Kulikovo Square in hopes that we might now be able to actually reach the Trades Hall.

We quickly boarded a bus parked just outside the hotel and drove the short distance to the square. Police had blocked roads all around, but one of the mothers jumped off the bus and ran across the street and began demanding that the bus full of grieving women be allowed to pass. At last the police agreed and as the bus approached the square we saw out the right-side windows a group of chanting Nazis who, when they realized who was on the bus, threw something that hit a window. Once we arrived at the square and got off the bus we found another mass of people lined up, who created a path between them that the mothers passed through with international guests following closely behind.

As we passed through this line, I saw people weeping and then chanting. We soon came upon a makeshift altar full of flowers and candles. The Trades Hall loomed in the near background. A banner

was held up with photos of those killed and various mothers were handed the microphone to share some words. One woman’s emotion struck me deeply and I recognized the words “fascist” and at the end “nyet, nyet, nyet.” They released a bunch of white doves that flew toward the hall and then black balloons were set off into the clear blue sky.

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*The irony is that the neo-Nazis were now guarding the very grounds where those of their political ideology had committed the horrific crimes of May 2, 2014.*

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Not long after this a couple of Nazis tried to pick a fight with some police but otherwise they were kept at a distance from the mourning crowds. I learned that organizers believe that throughout the day about 10,000 people had come to the square. The original hope was that at least 3,000 would come. The government worked hard in advance to scare the public away from the event. Days before, photos were widely spread of military vehicles parked directly in front of the Trades Hall bearing Nazi insignias used by the Azov Battalion. Rather than frighten people, this heavy-handed tactic made the public more determined to come to the site of this unpunished crime.

Despite the Western media calling people in Odessa and throughout Ukraine who oppose the U.S. puppet regime in Kiev “Russian separatists,” organizers here repeatedly used the word “federalists” to describe themselves. After the U.S.-sponsored coup d’état in early 2014,

one of the first things that the new “government” did was to declare speaking Russian illegal in Ukraine. For a high percentage of the people in Ukraine, Russian is their first language—especially those who live in the eastern part of the country near the Russian border. The idea of federalism really means local autonomy—people want to live in a federated Ukraine where locally they would have the power to choose their own language and their own leaders rather than have them appointed by the now totally compromised so-called government in Kiev.

We were astounded that the three of us from the United States (Phil Wilayto, Regis Tremblay and myself) were even allowed to enter Ukraine. Four people from France, two from Germany and 10 EU parliament members were denied entry to Ukraine in recent days. But in the huge crowds we saw people holding signs saying they came from Italy, France, Germany, Switzerland, Netherlands, and Israel—in all we heard that people came from more than a dozen countries.

At 10:00 am May 2, four of the key leaders of the Mothers Committee were ordered to report to the local offices of the SBU (Security Services) where they were detained until just after 9:00 pm. The goal of the government was to destroy the May 2 events planned by the families of the victims. But others from the group stepped into the breach and organized a powerful event on the fly.

Having spent the last two years following the illegal and immoral U.S.-NATO war on the people in eastern Ukraine, I have been honored to be here in Odessa. I will continue to do everything I can to help build resistance to the cynical creation of chaos inside Ukraine as a way to draw Russia into a war with the United States and NATO. Being here and feeling the heartfelt pleas from the Mothers Committee makes me more determined than ever.

*Bruce K. Gagnon is the coordinator of the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space.*

# The Road to Hell: A Brief History of Modern Syria

By Dana Visalli

In spite of the ongoing struggle for dominance in Syria by the various factions, there is in fact less and less to dominate, as the country has largely been destroyed by the four-year war raging there.

More than 400,000 Syrians have been killed in the war, at least one million have been wounded, and an estimated 12 million Syrians (half the population) are refugees, some inside and some outside the country.

A generation of Syrian children are growing up without an education in a landscape laid to waste. In this sense Syria has become hell on Earth. How did this happen?

It might seem that Syria is inherently difficult to unite and govern and is therefore in constant danger of fracturing, composed as it is of a plethora of religious sects and ethnic groups, including Sunnis, Shia, Alawites, Druze, Greek Orthodox Christians, and Maronite Catholics, and among ethnic groups primarily Arabs (90 percent) and Kurds (9 percent). But somehow Syria's pluralistic society experienced 400 years of almost continual peaceful coexistence as part of the Ottoman Empire. Therefore there must be a divisive force today that is consciously or unconsciously driving a wedge into the formerly pluralistic society and causing it to splinter.

A brief review of Syrian history since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire may help clarify why Syria is shattered into pieces today.



ration was named) was a fundamentalist Christian who believed that the Almighty had chosen him to be an instrument of the Divine Will, the purpose of which was to restore the Jews to their ancient homeland, as a precursor to the Second Coming of the Messiah (as prophesied in the bible, see for example Luke 21:24).

For the Jews to succeed in this divinely inspired task they had to drive 700,000 Palestinians out of the country. Israel now claims 80 percent of what had been Palestine, while there are 4,255,000 million Palestinian refugees living in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and the West Bank. Understandably, this imposition of a Jewish state on Arab land has not been fashionable with the Arabs.

French rule over Syria was unpopular and was resisted. A revolt broke out in 1925 with fierce battles being

In 1956 the CIA planned to once again overthrow al-Quwatli, who had been re-elected to the Syrian presidency the previous year. When that plan failed, another coup attempt was fomented by the CIA in 1957, followed by a CIA-planned triple assassination of three Syrian government leaders (who had helped foil the 1957 coup attempt), this being part of a larger plan to disrupt the functioning of Syrian society. This effort included supplying weapons to paramilitary groups including the Muslim Brotherhood, leading to an invasion of Syria to establish a government compliant with U.S. demands.

These well-documented affronts to Syrian sovereignty will give the reader an understanding of American efforts to control the policies and the politics of Syria and the Middle East without enumerating the longer list of outrages against the Syrian people. It also goes a long way in explaining why the Syrian government evolved from democratic beginnings to a controlling authoritarian state; there were constant pressures from abroad to destroy it.

A series of papers written by Israeli and American policy think tanks in the 1980s and 1990s advised that the best way to enhance the security of Israel would be to break up the Arab world into statelets. The initial division of the Middle East under Sykes-Picot was devised to deflect Arab unity.

In 1920 the French created the new state of Lebanon out of the coastline of Syria; in 1922 Palestine was extracted from Greater Syria. An Israeli paper entitled *A Strategy for Israel in the 1980s* recommended “the division of the whole area into small states by the dissolution of all existing Arab states.”

An American report issued 1996 noted that “Israel can shape its strategic environment by weakening Syria,” and recommended regime change in Iraq in order to weaken Syria. In 2006 William Roebuck, chargé d'affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Damascus outlined strategies for destabilizing the Syrian government and presented the increasing presence of Islamic extremists as an “opportunity,” and indeed the following year the Bush administration began to fund Islamic fundamentalists in Syria, including the Muslim Brotherhood.

Robert Kennedy Jr. wrote in a lengthy article on Syria in early 2016 that the war in Syria did not start with protests in 2011, but rather “when Qatar proposed to construct a \$10 billion, 1,500 km pipeline through Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria and Turkey”—which Syria opposed.

A more accurate starting point for the war in Syria would be the secret drafting of the Sykes-Picot Agreement in 1916, which operated under the grandiose presumption that the British and the French had some mysterious right to dictate the future of other societies and nations.

A second step toward the war in Syria was the pathological imaginings of Arthur Balfour, who perceived himself as a divinely chosen messenger, the message being the transfer of Palestine from the Arabs to the Jews for Christ's sake. Then came years of American covert

*continued on page 21 ...*

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*A generation of Syrian children are growing up  
without an education in a landscape laid to waste.  
In this sense Syria has become hell on Earth.  
How did this happen?*

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While it was the allied forces of the United States, England and France that brought an end to the Ottoman Empire when it was defeated along with Germany at the end of World War I, it was primarily Syrian Arabs fighting for an independent Syria that defeated the Turks and took Damascus in 1918.

Soon afterward, elections for a Syrian National Congress were held, with delegates representing all sectors of “Greater Syria,” which at that time included Lebanon and Palestine. Despite earlier British promises to Arab leaders that Arab territories would be free to rule themselves (in return for Arab participation in the British war effort), Britain and France signed a secret accord called the Sykes-Picot Agreement in 1916 dividing up the Arab world between them as “spheres of influence and control.”

In the agreement Syria was given to France, while Britain took control of Palestine, Jordan and Iraq. The newly formed Syrian parliament refused to acknowledge any right claimed by the French to any part of Syrian territory.

In 1920 France issued an ultimatum to the Syrians to relinquish control, and then intervened militarily and occupied Damascus in June 1920, dissolving the Syrian Congress.

In the Sykes-Picot Agreement, Palestine was split off from Syria as a separate entity, and control of that territory soon given to Britain. This was in anticipation of turning Palestine into a new Jewish state, as had been promised in the 1917 Balfour Declaration, even though at that time Palestine was 85 percent Arab and only 7 percent Jewish.

The leading theory for why the British government made this agreement is “to assist in the fulfillment of biblical prophecy.” Arthur Balfour (for whom the Decla-

fought and Damascus being shelled by the French. Syrians declared independence a second time in 1936, but the French refused the proposition. Independence was declared a third time in 1941, when France itself was occupied by Germany. When the French government came back into power in 1945, it attempted to regain its Syrian colony, aerially bombing and shelling Damascus, killing 400 people, destroying hundreds of homes, and burning the parliament building to the ground. Continuing pressure from Syrian nationalist groups forced the French to evacuate the last of their troops in April 1946 and Syria became an independent state, overseen by a government which had been elected by the Syrian people in 1943.

Direct U.S. involvement in Syria began in 1949, when the CIA sponsored a coup that overthrew President Shukri al-Quwatli.

The overriding U.S. policy objective in Syria at the time was allowing the construction of the Trans-Arabian Pipeline, which the democratically elected government of Syria had blocked. The pipeline project was immediately ratified following the successful coup.

When U.S. State Department official Dean Hinton became aware of the planning for the coup, he presciently stated, “I want to go on record as saying that this is the stupidest, most irresponsible action a diplomatic mission like ours could get itself involved in, and that we’ve started a series of these things that will never end.”

After this initial imposition of American will on Syria, instances of U.S. intervention in Syrian affairs are almost too numerous to recount.



# Four Critical Lessons from the Iraq War and Chilcot Report

*The War Was Not a 'Mistake'; It Was Intentional*

By Joe Glenton

I was a soldier in Tony Blair's wars. I have little faith in an establishment inquiry delivering the actionable legal charges against senior politicians required to make Chilcot a meaningful exercise.

Regardless, here are four lessons we

must learn from Iraq.

**1. We already know what happened, Chilcot is just an establishment take on events.**

All the evidence discouraged an attack on Iraq yet it looks like Tony Blair and his close allies lied to take Britain to war. It cost the lives of 179 soldiers and hundreds

of thousands of Iraqis. In the end the war also gave us Islamic State (Isis/Daesh) and so the horror slithers on.

In recent and coming weeks the real issue—why we went, the deadly deception—will be blurred by references to peripheral issues about the conduct of the war. Let's be clear. Bad equipment, for example, is

secondary in the big scheme of things.

Nor was the war a "mistake" or "accident." Tripping and falling is an accident, getting drunk and trolling your boss at the Christmas party is a mistake. Iraq was neither. It was calculated and intentional.

Going to war with Iraq required careful planning and deep forethought. I would call that premeditated murder.

**2. Blairism is dead.**

Iraq exposed Blairism as the art of sounding progressive while being vicious. Whatever the inquiry yields, we also know Blair's legacy has an undead

*Throughout the EU referendum there was barely a mention of the UK's special relationship with America, yet it has been infinitely more damaging than EU membership.*



Photo by Doug Mills/New York Times

**Tony Blair, left, and George W. Bush, then U.K. prime minister and U.S. president, respectively, were chief architects of a thoroughly misguided war in Iraq.**

## 'It's Your Nickel'

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Moisés' remarks struck a chord, as there were about 19 people in the race for Republican nominee at that time, and I couldn't help but see them all as disembarking from the same tiny clown car, in an election that many were calling a circus. I couldn't help noticing how much time and attention was devoted to this one race—and how much hope was pinned on this one office—when there are so many other critical issues begging our attention—all the things we wish our leaders were paying attention to but will probably not change no matter who is elected.

Consider the wisdom emanating from the mountains of southeast Mexico. In his statements, Moisés makes a distinction between the "institutional Left" and "parties on the left that ... don't sell out, or give up, or change their belief that we must end the capitalist system." But ultimately, he encourages people to recognize and harness their own power to effect real, systemic change, regardless of who is selected president.

"As Zapatistas, we don't call for people not to vote, nor do we call for them to vote. As Zapatistas, every time we get

the chance we tell people that they should organize to resist and to struggle for what they need."

"It is the people who create solutions, not leaders or parties."

"So the ... brother comes to us all sad and asks us what to do, saying that he is screwed.

"Well, you know what we say to him:

"We don't tell him that he should change to another party, the one that is now the least bad option. We don't tell him to vote. Nor do we tell him not to vote. We don't tell him that he should become a Zapatista, because we already know, through our history, that not everyone has the strength of heart to be a Zapatista. We don't make fun of him. We tell him that he should organize, plain and simple. 'And then, what do I do?' he asks. And so we say to him: 'Then you will see for yourself what to do, what emerges in your heart and your head, no one else is going to tell you what to do.' And he says: 'The situation is really bad.'

"And we don't lie to him, or make grand narratives or speeches. We tell him the truth: 'It's going to get worse.'

"Because it is not just in one place or in one way that capitalism oppresses. It oppresses you if you're a woman. It oppresses you if you're a white-collar

worker. It oppresses you if you're a blue-collar worker. It oppresses you if you're a campesino. It oppresses you if you're a young person. It oppresses you if you are a child. It oppresses you if you're a teacher. It oppresses you if you're a student. It oppresses you if you're an artist. It oppresses you if you think. It oppresses you if you are human, or plant, or water, or earth or air or animal. It doesn't matter how many times they wash it or perfume it, the capitalist system is 'dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt.' ...

"You can see that they don't realize that if they get rid of the bad parts of capitalism, then it won't be capitalism. And I'm going to tell you why: because capitalism is the exploitation of man by man, of the many by the few. ...

"That is why we, the Zapatistas, don't get tired of saying organize yourselves, let's organize ourselves, each person where they are, let's struggle to organize ourselves, let's work to organize ourselves, let's begin by thinking about how to start to organize and let's gather together in order to unite our organizations for a world where the people command and the government obeys."

—Becky Luening

zombie quality. It is dead and yet it keeps on killing, as the recent attacks in place like Iraq, Paris, and Brussels prove.

Like 179 British soldiers, Blair's ideology died fighting for Uncle Sam. Like the equipment in Iraq, it was not fit for purpose. It can't be reconditioned. The time has come to say goodbye.

Moreover, let it be known to every Blairite—and every other British backer of the war—that the deaths of those 179 British soldiers belong to you. Have the moral courage to take ownership of those lost lives this week.

**3. The heroes of the Iraq War were the ones who resisted it.**

There is much talk of war heroes these days. History will show that the heroes of the Iraq War were those who opposed it. Just a few examples:

Military Families Against War (MFAW). Mums, dads, sisters, brothers who, in many cases, lost loved ones and were wracked with grief. Yet they took on and resisted the establishment over Iraq. They blinked back tears to fight on. Bit back sorrow to struggle for truth and justice. These are heroes.

Stop the War Coalition (STWC). Its leaders and its rank and file. A decade and a half of speaking, organizing, manning lonely stalls in little towns and big cities. All they predicted has come to pass: more terrorism, more racism, less liberty. Heroes.

Jeremy Corbyn. An antiwar hero forged in the movement that opposed Iraq's destruction. At an anti-war demonstration in 2003 he urged the establishment to "stop now or pay the political price." He was

*continued on page 19 ...*

## Narrative of a Young Woman

# Life and Hope Under the Israeli Occupation

By Manar Wahhab

My story begins in 1948 with the words of my grandmother. “Before the British left in May 1948, they humiliated the Arabs. We used to think that they sold petrol for only five dinars, but when we opened the bottles we discovered that they sold us water!”

She continued, “I want to tell you what happened to me and my family when we lived in Al Ramlah. My six children and I sat at home. Two men knocked on the door. When we opened the door, they told us to leave the house because there would be clashes. I was cooking for my children. Then we suddenly heard shelling and bombing. I took my children and went to the Catholic convent to hide. There we met a lot of people, both Christians and Muslims. The children were afraid and cried because of the sounds they heard. There was no food or water anymore. The Israeli soldiers told the boys and men to visit a specific place if they wanted to get permission to be in the streets, but the Israelis were lying: when the men went to that place, they all were taken

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*This is the thing that Israel can't kill: the dream, the hope, the smile, and especially the insistence and the steadfastness that the Palestinian people have to regain their occupied land.*

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to prison. The Israeli airplanes shelled most of the houses. The snipers killed many boys, men, women, and children, even dogs and cats in the street.”

Grandmother went on. “After a few days, my brother, who was from Bethlehem, came to Al-Ramlah to take me and my sons with him. My husband couldn't come, but followed us later. Families in Al-Ramlah left their houses and went to other places. Some of them went to Nablus, Bethlehem, Hebron, Jordan, and some immigrated to America. After the Jews won, they were happy; they drank wine and whiskey. They threw the bottles in the air and broke them on the streets.”

Starting a new life in Bethlehem wasn't so easy for my father's family, because they had to adapt to the new environment, find jobs and places to live.

People thought that they would just stay for a while and go back home, but did not realize what the future held for them, so they waited and waited. Eventually, after much time passed, they decided to build homes. Refugees used to receive food and medical help from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), and to

this day we have a refugee card that allows us to take food from UNRWA.

Grandfather found a job in Bethlehem working in a café, and after that he dug artisan wells. Life continued and my dad grew up, married my mom, and they had my two sisters and me. I grew up hearing about how we are refugees and sometimes my grandmother told stories.

The story of what happened in 1967 in Bethlehem, is also from grandmother, who stayed in Bethlehem and didn't go back to Al-Ramlah. She told us, “I was with my son [my dad] going to the market to buy some vegetables and fruits. While we were walking, we saw airplanes in the sky. At first we thought they were Jordanian. A car came and a man shouted from his window at people, urging them to go home because these airplanes were Israeli and would shell

unclear dreams and hope.”

Having refugee status is a reminder for all of us, that there are rights we should keep insisting on until we get them. It reminds us that still there is occupation, of the pain that people feel everyday, of the dear land we can't reach, and especially that we have to continue to handle the pain, so as to reach the day that peace and justice will prevail.

Living in Palestine is a matter of fighting for living instead of dying: fighting for success instead of dying with shame, waiting for hopes and dreams, and looking to the future in a positive way.

Living in Palestine is like being in prison. You feel that you are turning around yourself; that you can't develop or improve... why? Because of the depression we feel, because Israeli government oppression makes the Palestinian people psychologically ill.

land, and the water sources. People don't know what to do, where to work, how to bring money. Families are not able to pay for school and university study. A big slice of the nation has left their studies in order to work to get money to live. Lots of young kids are working now to help their families. The siege doubled this problem.

A nation's pain, hurt, and unheard voices are represented in the daily suffering and difficulties that the people face. We are watching conditions in our occupied country get worse as we wait for freedom. And yet, despite this hard situation, we have hope.

We can see the light and that is what pushes us to continue our march toward freedom. We still smile and hope because Palestinian people are still longing for their freedom. We have hope because our land is



Manar Wahhab with her son in front of her family's one remaining olive tree.

the area. I held my son under my arms and ran home. They kept shelling every night. Israelis soldiers entered Bethlehem. They walked in the streets without any fear. We looked at them from the windows without making noise so as not to be seen. The war ended after only six days.”

She added, “On the morning of June 5, 1967, while we sat at home, we heard bombing and shelling. We went quickly to a nearby cave to hide. Nearly 60 persons were hiding in the cave. During the nights nothing happened; we used to go out in the early morning to look at the places that had been shelled. At one point we saw many Israeli airplanes; initially we thought they belonged to Iraq and that there was still war out there, but the war ended in six days and because of that everyone calls it ‘The Six-Day War.’”

After this war the Israelis entered and occupied the West Bank. Life has continued, but with more hurt, more pain, less land,

For example, geographically, we now live on less than 54 percent of the West Bank, and the separation Wall, it's ugly, dividing, and it makes me feel really sad, but it challenges me to keep fighting for my rights, especially the right to live freely without fear.

This is the thing that Israel can't kill: the dream, the hope, the smile, and especially the insistence and the steadfastness that the Palestinian people have to regain their occupied land.

Movement between Palestinian cities and villages is difficult because of the large number and tough procedures at the checkpoints. There is no freedom, and familial relationships are negatively affected. The Wall divides family members from each other.

Our economy is depressed, and there are no jobs, while the population increases. This is a serious problem that became even more dangerous when they built the Wall. Israel took the good land; the agricultural

sacred to us.

We are a nation that no Wall, no checkpoints, no house demolitions, nor persecutions, can destroy.

Now I am working as a public relations officer and project coordinator in our new small center, which was established by my husband Milad Vosgueritchian and his brother Noubar. Establishing this center in the midst of a diverse population was challenging for them.

The center seeks to help particularly the kids and youth in our society who are gifted with a variety of talents and abilities, because these are the pillars on which a healthy society should stand. Guiding, directing, and channeling young people's abilities promotes opportunities for developing literature and various other art forms. The center aims to strengthen Palestinian youth by exposing them to other cultures and new concepts, such as human rights,

*continued on next page ...*



## Life and Hope

... continued from previous page  
nonviolence, peace, and justice.

We believe in the path of nonviolence, which resonates effectively throughout the world.

I have learned that I should not blame the Other—sister, friend, neighbors, even

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*We are a nation that  
no Wall, no checkpoints,  
no house demolitions,  
nor persecutions,  
can destroy.*

---

Israelis—for my problems. I should think and ask about the reason and background of things, try to develop insight, and search for the truth before making any decision.

We must break through. We are fed up. We are finished living like this. We want freedom and dignity like anyone else in the world. At this moment, I feel like I will explode. But I am grateful to have a pen and a piece of paper to write this, to be able

to write down my pain, my fear, my desire for freedom, and my hope that we will achieve it.

Bombs, tanks, bullets, jeeps, military helicopters, F-16s—I am used to these things. In the beginning, the first time I heard and saw tanks and military jeeps, I was frightened, especially when there was shooting at night in areas where the Israelis had turned off the electricity, a sure sign that they would attack there. I am used to this now.

The numbers of people imprisoned, killed, handicapped, and emotionally destroyed by the Israeli occupiers are very high.

Nonviolence and education are the most important tools we have. Ninety percent of people in Palestine are educated, but that number is going down because of the Wall, the confiscation of land, the siege, and the economic collapse due to all these things. Families are leaving, if not entire families, the young people are leaving in droves when they get any opportunity.

My message is one of hope: We want justice and freedom. We want you to come here and see the reality. We are people of life, not people for death.

*Manar Wahhab graduated from Bethlehem University with a BA in Business Administration. She lives in Bethlehem near Al Azkeh Refugee Camp with her husband and two children.*

## Chilcot Report

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right. They were wrong. And now they must pay. His elevation to the leadership of the Labour Party and the anti-democratic coup currently being conducted against him by Blair's acolytes bear testament both to his foresight and to their failings.

**4. We need a referendum on the special relationship that dragged us into Iraq.**

Throughout the EU referendum there was barely a mention of the UK's special relationship with America, yet it has been infinitely more damaging than EU membership.

Both sides of the EU debate, if they are honest, have a strong interest in binning the special relationship—especially given the ongoing tragedy of Iraq.

For example, anyone genuinely concerned for British sovereignty or independence should direct their ire west in the wake of our recent wars.

Note that not one single soldier died in a

pointless war the EU dragged us into and not one single EU base squats—parasitic and unwelcome—on British soil.

At the same time, if you are honestly committed to inclusiveness and multiculturalism, you must fight to isolate any nation that puts rapacious savagery against people of color at the center of both domestic and foreign policy.

If you want to deal with a really progressive question you must look to the United States, forget Brexit and fight for an Amerexit in legal, political, military, and economic terms.

This is the debt we owe the Iraq War dead. The centenary of the Battle of the Somme has just passed. Note that its astonishing death toll pales when compared with that of Iraq. We must never forget and never repeat a criminal tragedy on such a monstrous scale.

*Joe Glenton is an Afghanistan veteran and a member of Veterans For Peace UK. He is a journalist for Russian TV and author of Soldier Box, published by Verso Books.*



Israeli war resister Tair Kaminer.

## Letter to an American Soldier

Dear Mr. Smith,

You don't know me, but I feel that we are very close. For the past 20 days I've been wearing your shirt. At least it was yours when you served in the American Army. See, I'm in Israel's military prison, and our uniforms—the uniforms of the prisoners in military jail—were donated by your country to my country. Yes, that's really what we wear, the desert camouflage uniforms of the U.S. Army; some of the jackets still have U.S. ARMY sewn on the left pocket flap and the last name of the soldier on the right flap, in capital letters. This time, I got the jacket with your name sewn on the right side.

I want to tell you why I'm in jail. I'm in prison because I refused to enlist in the Israeli army. I object to continuing the occupation in the territories. I asked to do alternative civilian service, but they won't let me. This time, when this uniform came with a name, I thought about you. I wondered what you think, how do you feel about my wearing your uniform.

Entire communities along the border with the Gaza Strip have for years lived with running to the bomb shelter due to missile strikes, not only in wartime but on a daily basis. Large numbers of soldiers and civilians live with trauma and anxiety.

In short, it's not safe here, not for anyone. The reason this affects you is that your government is very involved. Your taxes fund these wars; we receive allocations for "defense," and in Israel defense means the occupation, siege, and restrictions on the movement of the Palestinians. For the security of the Israelis, of course. In addition, the U.S. administration is very powerful and influential in this regard. You could say that your president is running these wars. Your shirt didn't reach me by chance, your country does a bit more than just giving us your old uniforms.

So now that you know, does it bother you that your clothes and your money are in effect perpetuating the occupation of the Palestinians, the absence of security in Israel?

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*I want to tell you why I'm in jail.  
I'm in prison because I refused to enlist in  
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occupation in the territories.*

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I wonder who you are. Obviously, at the beginning, I imagined you as a typical American, watching football, and maybe you don't even know what's happening here. You're not aware that there's this very complex and sad Israeli-Palestinian conflict, that since the state was founded there have been wars. So it's important to me to tell you that I'm wearing your shirt. We've been in this situation for a long time, a difficult situation of repeated wars. Thousands of people on both sides have died as a result of these wars.

The Palestinians live under Israeli occupation. That means they have been deprived of the most basic rights, to life, liberty, security and dignity. The Palestinians in the Gaza Strip live under a heavy blockade imposed by Israel, and every two years or so, its forces go in and destroy the place. Of course, the Israelis suffer from the situation too. The "circle of bereavement," the families who have lost members to the violence, grows each year.

Do you sleep well at night knowing that?

The truth is, I want to imagine you differently. I want to believe that you are socially active, just because it would be nice if the shirt I'm wearing belonged to someone who made a difference in their community. And who was very aware of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and who is even critical of Israel. And who knows that fighting the occupation and supporting the nonviolent struggles against it doesn't make you an anti-Semite, because Israel does in fact commit crimes and it's important to you, as a citizen of the world, not to lend a hand to this. You care about how your money is used, and that's great. But I wonder whether you make the connection, on a higher level, between your activism in your city or your country and what is happening here, overseas. We in the Middle East are also significantly affected by the policies of the United States.

Let me explain. It's very important  
*continued on page 21 ...*

# The Peacemakers of Okinawa

By Jon Mitchell

Sixty years ago, the U.S. government released the controversial Price Report, triggering mass protests on Okinawa that gave birth to leaders who, while renowned in the prefecture, remain little known outside it.

It's 6 a.m. outside the gates of U.S. Marine Corps Camp Schwab, Nago City, and 100 demonstrators are limbering up with calisthenic stretches designed to reduce their chances of injury from confrontations with the dozens of riot police lined up behind the installation's barbed wire fence.

For more than a year and a half, demonstrators have maintained a 24-hour sit-in to try to stop construction of a new base in the nearby bay at Henoko. Some days the protesters succeed in blocking the government construction trucks; other days, the police manage to clear them away, often injuring demonstrators in the process.

It's a war of attrition and both sides know how high the geopolitical stakes are.

Washington and Tokyo say the new base needs to be built before closing Marine Corps Air Station Futenma to the south. Justifying its necessity, they point to a

## History of Abuse

In her history of the island's peace movement, "Myth, Protest and Struggle in Okinawa," author Miyume Tanji describes Okinawans as "among the most and longest abused peoples of the 20th century."

It's hard to disagree.

Once an independent kingdom, Okinawa was annexed by Japan in 1879, setting it on a downward spiral from which it has never really recovered. Beginning with the suppression of the islands' native culture, Japanese mistreatment culminated in the spring of 1945 when Tokyo sacrificed Okinawa to delay the invasion of the Imperial homeland. More than a quarter of the civilian population was massacred—many by the Japanese soldiers who were supposed to protect them.

The end of the war brought no peace for Okinawans.

In 1952, the Treaty of San Francisco ended the U.S. occupation of mainland Japan, but the U.S. military retained control of Okinawa. Governed by a U.S.-appointed high commissioner whom Okinawans had no power to elect, islanders possessed none of the basic constitutional freedoms enjoyed by mainland Japanese. Brutal military

ocracy than military force."

In 1947, Senaga, helped to found one of Okinawa's first postwar political parties, the Okinawa People's Party. However, he soon learned the limits of U.S. democracy when he was arrested in 1954 for helping to harbor Japanese communists and imprisoned for a year and a half.

Shortly after Senaga's release in June 1956, the United States published the Price Report. Penned by U.S. officials after a brief tour of Okinawa, the paper legitimized the permanent presence of military bases on seized land and it paved the way for further confiscations. It also reiterated Washington's right to store atomic weapons on the island. It's a paper that remains at the root of many of the island's ongoing troubles.

Okinawans reacted to the report with mass demonstrations. At one talk in Naha attended by 150,000, Senaga gave a speech still remembered today in which he proclaimed, "Not one liter of water, nor one handful of sand, nor one tsubo [about 4 square yards] of land belongs to the United States."

In December 1956, Naha residents chose Senaga as the city's mayor. The election so angered the U.S. government that it altered Okinawa's ordinances to force him from office. The move backfired, and Senaga's popularity soared.

Today in Naha, the Fukutsukan museum charts his life, including the hundreds of letters of support he received while imprisoned and photos from his time as the island's first post-reversion Diet member.

"My father believed in the idea of *shinnen ga magenai* (sticking to your convictions)," says his eldest daughter, Chihiro Uchimura, who directs the museum. "Senaga said, 'Oppression invites resistance. And resistance invites friendship.' We can still see that spirit among the demonstrators at Henoko."

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*'Senaga said,  
"Oppression invites resistance.  
And resistance invites  
friendship." We can still see  
that spirit among the  
demonstrators at Henoko.'*

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## 'Okinawa Is Ours'

Outside Camp Schwab, it's now 8 a.m. and the number of protesters has swollen to more than 400. University students, Buddhist monks and retirees, among others, block the gates of the base, preventing traffic from entering or leaving.

The riot police form a human wall, but today there are too many protesters and they're powerless to clear them.

Many of these police have been brought in from mainland Japan and barracked in an off-season resort hotel. Local police, the demonstrators say, are too sympathetic to their cause.

At the gates, elderly Okinawan protesters stand close to the mainland police and whisper their war stories. They tell them the last time uniformed Japanese men were here they were Imperial Japanese Army troops and they murdered Okinawans. They tell them they're exercising their constitutionally protected right to free speech. They tell them to go back to Tokyo.

Outnumbered, young and nervous, the police don't meet the demonstrators' eyes.

Yamashiro leads the crowd in chants of "No new base," "Save the sea," and "Stop construction."

Then he halts, locks arms with the protesters alongside him, and breaks into a song. Soon all the demonstrators join in:

*Warera wa sakebu Okinawa yo. (We cry out Okinawa.)  
Warera no mono da Okinawa wa. (Okinawa is ours.)  
Okinawa o kaese. (Give back Okinawa.)  
Okinawa o kaese. (Give back Okinawa.)*

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Police remove protesters trying to block construction vehicles at Camp Schwab gates.

nuclear-equipped North Korea and an increasingly aggressive China.

On the other hand, the demonstrators, backed by the island's governor and a public that overwhelmingly opposes construction, argue Okinawa already has 32 bases and it doesn't need any more, especially one that will destroy the pristine coral reefs of Henoko Bay.

Leading those opposed to the new base is 63-year-old Hiroji Yamashiro, director of the Okinawa Peace Movement Center. Despite a six-month bout with malignant lymphoma and two detentions by U.S. security guards, he has led demonstrations in all weathers, including scorching sun, typhoons and a rare smattering of snow.

Now Yamashiro picks up a megaphone and addresses the crowd in a blend of Japanese and Okinawan.

"The American military stole our land to build bases," Yamashiro says. "Then they used these bases to wage wars around the world. If they build a new base here, they will use it to fight new wars."

Tightening his trademark powder blue poncho, he leads the demonstrators toward the lines of riot police.

"If we win here, we can send a message of peace around the world," he says. "But if we lose, there is no future. The fight is here. The time is now. Follow me to the gates!"

crimes, such as the rape and murder of 6-year-old Yumiko in 1955, reinforced Okinawans' sense that their lives were worth less than those of the Americans.

Most blatant among U.S. human rights violations was the forcible seizure of civilian land, which, according to military records, had displaced 250,000 residents out of a total population on the main island of 675,000 by 1955. Known today as the era of "bayonets and bulldozers," this oppression gave rise to Okinawa's first generation of postwar peace leaders.

In March 1955, Shoko Ahagon witnessed U.S. troops destroying farmers' houses to build a new base on the island of Iejima. Soldiers dragged families from their homes, looted their alcohol and drunkenly slaughtered their goats. In response, Ahagon led the now-landless farmers on a "beggars' march" around Okinawa to publicize their mistreatment. He also drew up a list of nonviolent principles for Okinawans to follow in their dealings with the U.S. military.

Ahagon died in 2002 at the age of 101, but he is still remembered as the "Gandhi of Okinawa."

Another influential leader from this period was Kamejiro Senaga.

"As a Battle of Okinawa survivor, he was appalled by war," explains his grandson, Kazuo Senaga. "However, he respected U.S. democracy. He had more faith in dem-



# Okinawa

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## Military Violence

Throughout the 1960s, Okinawans continued to stage huge protests against the U.S. government, which, at the time, was using the island's bases, including Camp Schwab, to fight its war in Vietnam.

Fearing Okinawan anger might jeopardize the ongoing presence of their bases, the United States returned the islands to Japanese control in 1972.

For 27 years, the U.S. had prioritized military infrastructure over civilian growth. As a result, Okinawa lagged far behind the rest of Japan, so Tokyo embarked upon a series of public works and tourism projects that slowly brought a veneer of equity with the other 46 prefectures.

For two decades, resentment against the U.S. military presence simmered. And then in September 1995, almost 40 years to the day since the murder of Yumiko, the rape of another schoolchild caused the island to explode.

"Women have borne the brunt of military violence on Okinawa for more than 70 years," says Suzuyo Takazato, a former social worker and one of the leading figures in the islands' current peace movement. "If all those women who have been victimized spoke out, then the public outcry would be so large that it would be impossible for the U.S. military to remain on Okinawa committing such crimes."

Takazato has attempted to catalog rapes committed by the Americans, but she says it's a difficult task given that many women are too ashamed to speak out—among them the estimated one-third of U.S. service members who have suffered sexual violence while in the military.

"Rape is not a crime of individual soldiers—it is structural," she says. "The U.S. military has been here for more than 70 years as government employees. They come and go—but women have been here carrying the damage."

Highlighting Takazato's message was the alleged rape and murder of a 20-year-old Okinawan woman by a former U.S. Marine in April and the alleged rape of a Japanese tourist by a U.S. sailor in a Naha hotel in March.

Takazato explains how the proposal to build the new base at Henoko is inextricably linked to U.S. military sexual violence. In the wake of the protests following the 1995 rape, the U.S. and Japan agreed to shutter Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, but there was a catch: First, they would build a new mega-base in Henoko Bay.

## 'Tears of the People'

Back outside Camp Schwab, the gates are still blocked. The demonstrators have won and construction has been halted—at least for today.

The temporary victory affords Yamashiro a chance to

reflect on why he values peace so highly. He explains how he grew up with his father's accounts of being wounded in the Battle of Okinawa and the silence of his mother, too traumatized by her wartime experiences on Tinian Island to discuss what had occurred there.

As a teenager, Yamashiro protested U.S. rule by arranging a hunger strike and then a school shut-in for which he was expelled. When he broke news of his expulsion to his mother, she told him she was proud of him.

As an adult, Yamashiro took part in campaigns to block the construction of Osprey landing pads near civilian communities in the northern Yamaru jungles and then, in 2012, he organized a blockade to protest the deployment of Ospreys, a demonstration that closed Futenma air base for four days.

In the past, he possessed a fiery temper, but age and his fight against cancer have both mellowed him to a slow burn, he explains.



Despite receiving the prestigious Yoko Tada Human Rights Award last year, Yamashiro remains modest.

"I'm just an ordinary Okinawan man," he says. "I'm not special—I grew up in a farming family. I feel history run through me and the tears of the Okinawan people."

"How we protest is the Okinawan way. Sometimes we sing and sometimes we dance. But we always fight hard with a smile. We are not afraid of anything—except habu snakes."

Yamashiro laughs, then he turns serious.

"Okinawans have exactly the same dreams as Americans," he says. "All we want is the return of our land and peaceful skies. All we are asking for is the right to decide the future for ourselves."

*Jon Mitchell is a Welsh-born journalist based in Japan. In 2015, he was awarded the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan's inaugural Freedom of the Press Lifetime Achievement Award for his reporting on Okinawa. Former U.S. service members with information about military contamination—or other human rights abuses—are encouraged to contact him at jonmitchellinJapan.com.*

# Letter to a Soldier

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that all this criticism of Israel be passed on. But it's not enough. See, the atmosphere in Israel has become more violent, racist, and extremist, and it's our government that's leading the way; and your government keeps patting my government on the head. Yes, sometimes there are tensions, and I know that Bibi sometimes screws up in our relations with you, but, after all, you provide protection for the atrocities committed here, unofficial but very important approval. So please: Stop. Stop cooperating, stop with the funds that pay for the occupation, stop sending us military equipment, stop the hypocritical intervention that in fact also seeks to maintain the status quo.

Yes, as the person who is wearing your old shirt, I am asking you to use a little pressure there in the United States. Don't give your government legitimacy to support the crimes committed here.

It suddenly hit me: You could be dead. After all, you too are a soldier, you too served in a violent system and perhaps the power struggles killed you too? Perhaps you lost your life to war-profiteering tycoons? Maybe you were married and had children who were orphaned because some pig wanted more money? He wanted to sell more weapons, more ammunition, so he too applied pressure where it was needed, so that the war would continue. He never even thought about your mother, who lost her son; he was probably buying a new car at the time. He didn't think about your sister, who lost her big brother while he was bribing the decision-makers a little to make sure he'd keep getting rich. I'm sure he didn't think about your best friend either; he probably sleeps just fine.

I'm sorry, Smith, I didn't think about it, and now I feel a little bad. You, like the Palestinians and the Israelis, are a victim. A victim of capitalism, which sells our lives, and of the right wing, which discriminates between us, and of the governments that sow racism, and of injustice.

So, Smith, I'm sitting here for you, too, because I'm not willing to be a part of the injustice that killed you and that is killing many others. So thank you, Smith, for being with me in this fight for the better world that we could have here. For your children, and for my children also.

*Tair Kaminer, a 19-year-old from Tel Aviv, entered military prison in early 2016 because she refused to serve in the Israeli army.*

# A History of Syria

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and overt intervention, including repeatedly supporting and arming Islamic fundamentalists.

The propriety and legality of this sordid tale of decades of American intervention in the internal affairs of Syria (and many other societies and countries) is summarized by an observation by political commentator Noam Chomsky, who stated that if the laws formulated at the Nuremberg trials in Germany at the end of World War II to try and sentence the Nazi war criminals were to be upheld, "then every postwar American president would have been hanged."

It must be noted that America's inimical behavior toward Syria is not an isolated phenomenon; the United States has engaged in serious interventions into the functioning of other nations at least 70 times since the end of World War II, slaughtering an estimated 20 to 30 million people in their home countries in that time.

Americans with any sense of ethics, intelligence, or love for the rest of humanity who want to participate in altering this tragic scenario are going to have to come up with "a new way of thinking," as Albert Einstein put it.

*Dana Visalli is a biologist living in Washington state; he has visited Iraq and Afghanistan often and attempted to visit Damascus in March. He has essays on Iraq, Afghanistan, and Vietnam at methownaturalist.com*



Tens of thousands of demonstrators rally against U.S. military presence on the Japanese island of Okinawa.

# Army's 'Wisdom' on Defeating Terrorists in Africa



Photo by U.S. Army Africa

*U.S. Africa Command Major General David Hogg inspecting Sierra Leone troops.*

**By Denny Riley**

On May 16, 2016, *The New York Times* reported: “After 15 years of conflict, the Army knows how to fight terrorist groups and how to train its partners to do so as well.” These words appeared in an article by Helene Cooper reporting on Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Milley’s trip to Africa to meet with senior military officials of 38 countries to discuss how the United States will work with them to contain terrorist threats. Three days later an article in the May 19 *Times* carried the headline, “A Week of Terror Attacks in Baghdad That Killed Hundreds.” A map accompanied the story, with circled numbers where eight bombings occurred: four open markets, two checkpoints, a gas plant, and a restaurant. If I were quicker, I might have moved on from what I’d read on the 16th, but I’m kind of slow, so I was still chewing on the claim that we know how to fight terrorists, a claim that sounded absurd to me, when along came the second *Times* story to prove my point.

Those 15 years mentioned in the first story happened in Afghanistan and Iraq. We invaded Afghanistan after their Taliban government ignored our demand they cough up Osama bin Laden, but getting bin Laden didn’t happen for 10 years because control of the situation was muddled by Afghans who didn’t want us in their country. Meanwhile, seemingly out of the blue and on false pretenses, our troops barreled into Iraq with a subtext of building a democracy, a noble sounding adventure that killed and maimed millions and destroyed the infrastructure of a functioning dictatorship formerly our ally. We pulled out most of our troops after building the largest embassy in the world, 15,000 employees on 104 acres in the heart of the Bagh-

dad, the Green Zone, a zone Americans are timid to leave because the ancient capital is regularly ravaged by terrorist bombings, something that did not occur until we arrived uninvited.

Fifteen years doesn’t go very far back in our military’s history, but that was when it became popular to call the enemy terrorists. Had the label been in fashion in the ’60s, it would have been put on the Viet Cong and Pathet Lao, two groups of insurgents we fared poorly against. One could say we learned very little from our losses in Southeast Asia if our generals didn’t recognize a similar peril before jumping into Southwest Asia.

The label terrorist would probably have been put on George Washington and his men also, and any other band of freedom fighters in between. If Robert E. Lee hadn’t graduated from West Point, where he and his classmates who became Union generals were taught the warfare of facing your enemy across a field, the South’s army would probably have been disconnected bands of guerrillas, sniping and hiding and ultimately defeating the armies of the North. Those armies knew little more than to march straight forward with such repetition that they’d march in open ranks up a hillside toward an enemy who fired freely from behind a stone wall, as the Union Army had marched at Fredericksburg, a hillside held hallow in memory of the men who fell, without mention of the blundering generals who ordered the slaughter.

It seems doubtful that General Milley’s visit to Africa being about meeting with senior military officials of 38 countries to share his army’s wisdom on how to defeat terrorists. In fact, it appears those 38 African nations may be threatened by terrorists in part because of the unprepared way our army barreled into Afghanistan

and Iraq, both military operations fraught with wisdom akin to throwing a stick at a hornet’s nest with the intention of teaching the hornets a lesson.

No, this is about giving 38 governments our money to buy aircraft and arms from U.S. corporations. This is about assuring corporate America’s access to Africa’s natural resources. This is about our troops helping defend those 38 governments from peasant uprisings, people we will label insurgents or terrorists. This is about the United States occupying Africa.

**The U.S. military  
has built an  
extensive archipelago  
of African outposts.**

The Africa Command is “headquartered” in Stuttgart, Germany. The command officially says it has no bases in Africa, although it admits to “cooperative security locations.” Someone in the Pentagon dreams up these euphemistically misleading names, someone who converted his affliction for chronic bullshitting from a problem to a profession.

Regarding that bullshit, investigative reporter Nick Turse has written, “In the shadows of what was once called the ‘Dark Continent,’ a scramble has come and gone. If you heard nothing about it, that was by design. But look hard enough and—north to south, east to west—you’ll find the fruits of that effort: a network of bases, compounds, and other sites whose sum total exceeds the number of nations on the continent. For a military that has stumbled from Iraq to Afghanistan and

suffered setbacks from Libya to Syria, it’s a rare can-do triumph. In remote locales, behind fences and beyond the gaze of prying eyes, the U.S. military has built an extensive archipelago of African outposts, transforming the continent, experts say, into a laboratory for a new kind of war.”

Africa, however, is not the biggest issue on General Milley’s mind. “Today a major in the Army knows nothing but fighting terrorists and guerrillas,” he says (a sickening assessment of an army professed to be the best in the world while terrorists operate with impunity in Baghdad). The general is worried the Army has forgotten how to fight a large land war of the type studied at West Point by the generals who directed the war between the states. Milley said, with combat operations wound down in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Army was supposed to get ready to fight powers such as Russia, China, and Iran.

Helene Cooper doesn’t put that grouping of Russia, China, and Iran in quotes, so we don’t know if they are Milley’s words or the words of someone else. So much of the news about our military forces appears to be engineered to give us a good feeling about the troops, the kind of engineering that would have a news article state that “the Army knows how to fight terrorist groups,” when in fact they appear not so good at the job. Iran grouped as a power with Russia and China sounds like more engineering, as though we are being told to fear and loathe Iran.

*Denny Riley is an Air Force veteran of our wars in Vietnam and Laos and a member of VFP Chapter 69 in San Francisco. His writing has appeared in CounterPunch and Z Magazine. A novel he recently completed, How to Roll a Number, is looking for an agent.*



# 'Sniff Out These Forms of Deceit'

*Counter-Recruitment and the Campaign to Demilitarize Public Schools*

Palgrave MacMillan, 2015

By Scott Harding and Seth Kershner

**By Doug Rawlings**

Counter-recruitment is hard work. It takes creativity, intelligence, perseverance, and a thick skin. Those stalwart souls who enter schools today to inform our younger citizens about the insidious nature of militarism are often met by hostile recruiters, co-opted school administrators, and sometimes even by disingenuous students.

That's why Scott Harding and Seth Kershner's new book is such an important tool to have if you are joining the ranks of veterans engaged in this critical work.

They write, "The history of organizing against militarism in schools is marked by measurable progress tempered by stories of disappointment and loss ... We are confronting an immoral behemoth that will not voluntarily step aside."

Harding and Kershner provide a history of recent counter-recruitment efforts as well as sound advice on how to approach school administrators and students in the most effective manner. They also give some powerful profiles of those who have been persistently doing this work on our schools. Both men have been personally engaged in the work, and are also professional researchers.

The book is rich with workable definitions, solid data, and moving accounts of

both the difficulty and rewards of taking on a billion-dollar industry. It is heartening to see Veterans For Peace members referenced throughout the book.

Harding and Kershner assert the primary function of counter-recruiters "is to challenge the socialization of youth to a culture of militarism, confront U.S. foreign policy, and contest misinformation spread by military recruiters."

What is militarism? The authors answer, "The cultural trend that normalizes war and a constant state of military mobilization. ... an ideology that ... glorifies the military and promotes military solutions to problems."

With the new "voluntary military in place ... each Army recruiter must sign up two new recruits a month and each Marine recruiter two and a half." Recruiters are often working 60 hours/week to meet these quotas. Many commit fraud by enlisting young people who do not meet the rigorous requirements of military service.

Harding and Kershner state, "[In] their zeal to sign up new soldiers, recruiters often engage in several types of deception: they misrepresent the risks of military service, distort the nature or length of time commitment required after enlisting, and they exaggerate the availability of training or vocational opportunities in the military." As the authors suggest, one of the most effective strategies we can use is to show students how to "sniff out these forms of deceit." Let's not forget the "stop-loss" policy whereby military personnel can have their tours extended

beyond their required service—"In the Army alone, nearly 58,000 soldiers were affected by stop-loss orders between 2002 and 2008." Most of them did multiple tours in Afghanistan and Iraq.

"Building multiracial coalitions, making counter-recruitment a broader social justice issue" can be effective in reaching students. Long-time American Friends Service Committee activist Janine Schwab believes that "counter-recruitment ... has a lot more to do with economic justice and education justice. ... According to a 2010 U.S. Army War College report, the most powerful weapon counter-recruiters have at their disposal is the military veteran."

What's the best way to engage students in the very short time you have in their schools? "Arts-based learning can serve to help people see the world and themselves in a different way, which can, in turn, help with the questioning of uncritically absorbed perspectives." The authors include many examples based on activists' direct experience, including poetry slams, arts nights, etc.

There is also the legislative approach to loosening the grip of the militarists on our children's throats. The authors define this tactic as "any organizing strategy that aims to regulate and/or remove militarizing structures in public schools through policy change." This approach can be utilized to restrict recruiters' access to students; to protect the privacy of students taking the ASVAB; to encourage students to "opt out" of the federally mandated

request for contact information; and/or to regulate existing JROTC programs or prevent their establishment altogether.

The authors provide many examples of legislative victories over the past few decades that we should become familiar with. There have been state and federal rulings restricting what Harding and Kershner call "the Pentagon's dependence on public schools as de facto military recruiting stations." For example, in a 1986 ruling, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals declared that since military service was indeed a controversial political topic, any school-sponsored forum that is open to military recruiters (career fairs, for example) is legally obligated to provide access to groups representing opposing views.

So how to approach teachers who are willing to listen and are as concerned as we are about recruiting "child soldiers," not just in Nigeria but in rural Maine (pick your state) as well? The beauty of the authors' approach is that they combine solid research, moving anecdotes, and practical tactics. In that spirit, they conclude their book with sample lesson plans and a comprehensive resource glossary.

This is important work. Harding and Kershner have done us a great service by compiling a readable, resource-rich how-to guide for engaging our most vulnerable citizens.

*Doug Rawlings is a Vietnam War veteran and co-founder of Veterans For Peace. He taught at the University of Maine at Farmington. His two books of poems, Orion Rising and A G.I. in America, attempt to capture the life of a veteran for peace in America today. He currently lives in central Maine.*

## March with VFP at the SOA Watch Convergence at the Border

October 7-10, 2016 – Nogales, Arizona / Nogales, Sonora



**"The moment has arrived to express our solidarity with the migrants. We have heard their cry. We can't be silent."**

**— Fr. Roy Bourgeois, Founder, SOA Watch**

The 25-year SOAW vigil at Fort Benning, Georgia has traditionally been the second largest annual gathering of VFP members. Most of those have come from east of the Mississippi. With the convergence moving to the border at Nogales this year, veterans in the Western US will be able to turn out in force. Visit [soaw.org/border](http://soaw.org/border) for details about the October *encuentro*. Watch for updates from organizers about VFP march plans.

**SOA WATCH TO MOVE ANNUAL PROTEST OUT OF COLUMBUS**



**CAUTION**



**October 7-10, 2016**

**Converge on the U.S./Mexico Border**

**Resist Militarization, Support Refugees  
End Migrant Incarceration**





New York Liberty guard Sugar Rodgers before July 10 game at Madison Square Garden.

## WNBA Teams Show What Black Lives Matter Solidarity Looks Like

*The white men in sports could learn something from these women.*

By Dave Zirin

In 2010, the entire Phoenix Suns team wore shirts that read Los Suns as a statement of solidarity with the Latino people in Arizona threatened by the brutal anti-immigrant bill, SB 1070. That was the first time, according to my own research, that a professional U.S. sports team undertook a united political stand that was sanctioned—or at least not shut down—by both coaching staff and upper management. Then in 2012, the Miami Heat posed in hoodies to protest the killing of Trayvon Martin at the hands of George Zimmerman. In 2014, several NBA teams wore shirts emblazoned with the slogan “I Can’t Breathe,” the last words of Eric Garner as he was being choked. Management may not have sanctioned these acts, but it sure as hell was not going to stop them.

Now two more teams have come together to make a political statement. The Minnesota Lynx and the New York Liberty of the WNBA have chosen to advocate an idea that really should not be radical but somehow is, in the United States of 2016: the idea that black lives matter. The Lynx wore jet-black warm-up shirts that read on the front, “Change starts with us—Justice & Accountability.” On the back of the shirt were the names Philando Castile and Alton Sterling, both shot and killed by police officers in the first week of July. Castile died just a short drive from where the Lynx play, in the suburbs of St. Paul. The back of their shirts had a small Dallas police star for the police officers killed July 7, right over the

phrase, “Black Lives Matter.”

Before the game, team captains Maya Moore, Rebekkah Brunson, Lindsay Whalen, and Seimone Augustus spoke to the media. Moore said, “If we take this time to see that this is a human issue and speak out together, we can greatly decrease fear and create change. Tonight we will be wearing shirts to honor and mourn the losses of precious American citizens and to plead for change in all of us.”

On Twitter, the team’s (white) coach Cheryl Reeve wrote, “To rebut BLM with ‘All Lives Matter’ implies that all lives are equally at risk, and they’re not. #Black-

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*‘My husband is 6’6”,  
220 pounds. If my husband  
gets pulled over, when you  
look at him, does he make you  
scared? Is something going to  
happen to him? Those are things  
that go on in my head.’*

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LivesMatter doesn’t mean your life isn’t important if you aren’t black—it means that Black lives, which are seen without value within White supremacy, are important.”

Then there is the New York Liberty. Before their game on July 10 against the San Antonio Stars, the entire team wore t-shirts with the words #Blacklivesmatter and #Dallas5 on the front and a blank hashtag on the back. That blank hashtag was, according to the indispensable

WNBA blog Swish Appeal, to show the importance of “creating a new hashtag everyday [that] will help continue to spread the word.” But it could also have been a statement that too many black men and women have become, in death, hashtags, and we do not know the name of the next one, only that it is coming and will continue unless something changes.

After the game, five players walked into the media room and explained why they took this step. Liberty star Swin Cash said to the press, “My husband is 6’6”, 220. If my husband gets pulled over, when you look at him, does he make you scared? Is something going to happen to him? Those are things that go on in my head.”

These kinds of stances actually make a difference. They legitimize people’s anger and right to resist at precisely the moment when people in the mainstream media and politics are trying to disrupt and distort a growing movement. They also matter because these are public and visible displays of real solidarity: white players joining with their black teammates, wearing the same shirts and standing alongside them in a show of multiracial unity against anti-black bigotry.

The white men in sports could learn something from these women. Stand with your teammates. Take on some of the weight. Give them political cover as the haters and bigots descend upon them. It’s not complicated. If your team really is a family, then you should care about the lives of your sisters and brothers. The Lynx and the Liberty are showing what solidarity looks like. The men need to take a lesson.

Dave Zirin writes about the politics of sports for *The Nation* magazine. He hosts the popular weekly show, *Edge of Sports Radio*. He is the author of eight books on the politics of sports, most recently, *Brazil’s Dance with the Devil: The World Cup, the Olympics, and the Fight for Democracy*.