

# Peace & Planet News

*Dedicated to Abolishing War, Establishing Justice, and Fighting Climate Disaster*  
*Published Quarterly by Vietnam Full Disclosure and New York City Veterans For Peace*

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## The American Chaos Machine

### *U.S. Foreign Policy Goes Off the Rails*

By Danny Sjrursen

In March 1906, on the heels of the U.S. Army's massacre of some 1,000 men, women, and children in the crater of a volcano in the American-occupied Philippines, humorist Mark Twain took his criticism public. A long-time anti-imperialist, he flippantly suggested that Old Glory should be redesigned "with the white stripes painted black and the stars replaced by the skull and cross-bones."

I got to thinking about that recently, five years after I became an antiwar dissenter (while still a major in the U.S. Army), and in the wake of another near-war, this time with Iran. I was struck yet again by the way every single U.S. military intervention in the Greater Middle East since 9/11 has backfired in wildly counterproductive ways, destabilizing a vast expanse of the planet stretching from West Africa to South Asia.

Chaos, it seems, is now Washington's stock-in-trade. Perhaps, then, it's time to resurrect Twain's comment—only today maybe those stars on our flag should be replaced with the universal symbol for chaos.

After all, our present administration, however unhinged, hardly launched this



madness. President Trump's rash, risky, and repugnant decision to assassinate Iranian Major General Qassem Suleimani on the sovereign soil of Iraq was only the latest version of what has proven to be a pervasive state of affairs. Still, that and

Trump's other recent escalations in the region do illustrate an American chaos machine that's gone off the rails. And the very manner—I'm loathe to call it a "process"—by which it's happened just demonstrates the way this president has taken

American chaos to its dark but logical conclusion.

Any military officer worth his salt knows full well the importance of understanding the basic psychology of your  
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Susan Schnall speaking at San Francisco GIs and Veterans March For Peace, Oct. 12, 1968.

## 'I Couldn't Heal Their Souls'

*Susan Schnall was a Navy nurse during the Vietnam War. The following is excerpted from an podcast produced by Courage to Resist in collaboration with Vietnam Full Disclosure. For the full transcript or to listen to the interview, go to [couragestorestist.org](http://couragestorestist.org) or [vietnamfulldisclosure.org](http://vietnamfulldisclosure.org).*

**Matthew Breems:** Why don't you take us back? How did you come to a place where resisting the war, specifically the Vietnam War, became such a life obsession for you?

**Susan Schnall:** Let me start by talking about war, because it is an entity that I've lived with my whole life. My dad was in the Marine Corps in the Second World War and was killed on the island of Guam, 1944. I went into the Navy as a nurse and felt that I would be taking care of those who were harmed and hurt in a war in Southeast Asia.

I was sent to Oak Knoll Naval Hospital in Oakland, California, where I took care

of the guys who were coming back from Vietnam. And I heard their stories, their pain. I heard their stories of how they viewed the Vietnamese and heard how they were trained to be killers and trained to hate people who looked different from the way that they did.

I don't know why I was so naïve, but I didn't quite expect that. It was startling to hear stories firsthand from men who had been to war. They were young; they were 18, 20, 21 years old. They told me their stories, that they had participated in war, how some of them had learned to hate "the enemy."

And there were other stories I heard from young guys who were in the Navy, who worked with the civilian population, who didn't have that fear and hatred. But I also heard their physical and psychological pain. We had one unit that was called the Amputee Unit, and I will never forget it. It was an open ward that had about 30, 35 young men on it. They all had am-

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# From the Editors

Dear Reader,

The first full 24-page issue of *Peace & Planet News* is in your hands. A Vietnam Full Disclosure and New York City Veterans For Peace publication, this newspaper is an evolution of our popular five-year publication, *Peace in Our Times*. As it says on the front page, we are dedicated to abolishing war, establishing justice, and

The issues we covered ranged from the climate disaster and the environment, to women's rights, LGBT issues, indigenous issues, Black Lives Matter, the American War in Vietnam, current wars and resistance to them, sports and politics, poetry and more.

We recognize that humanity has not one but two Swords of Damocles sus-

*There are people out there fighting against incredible odds to save this planet. Perhaps there will rise out of these times a genuine resistance to the corporate rape of the Earth.*

fighting climate disaster.

*Peace in Our Times* was always totally independent—and although it was a Veterans For Peace paper with a veteran's voice we strove then as now, to be a print manifestation that reached out to the larger progressive movement. The idea was to have a paper that included a veterans' perspective with an emphasis on good veteran writing, but one that would be of interest to any open-minded person.

pending over our heads—the threat of war, specifically nuclear war, and the climate crisis. Our very existence on this planet is threatened by war and militarism, which, besides the direct destruction and killing, has long-lasting deadly effects on the climate and the environment. *Peace & Planet News* will focus on something of urgent importance to us all—the intimate connection between militarism and the destruction of our precious

and endangered biosphere.

If we want to have any chance of averting the looming ecocide—and the end of civilization as we know it, if not all life on Earth—then we must recognize the interconnectivity of all peace, justice, and environmental movements. Saving the planet is up to all of us.

As we rush to finalize the paper we're hoping we can do it before our printers possibly close, as many businesses have. If you have this paper in your hands, you know we made it. We're all faced with a new threat, but one that is undoubtedly connected to everything else, and here in the United States is further exacerbated by an exploitive capitalist system that cares more for profit and stock market shares than for people. Naomi Klein, author of the brilliant book, *The Shock Doctrine*, speaking about the coronavirus and our corporate government system's response, recently said, "We are seeing this very predictable process that we see in the midst of every economic crisis, which is extreme corporate opportunism."

The COVID-19 pandemic may well be here for longer than we imag-

ine, and despite the lack of concern and preparedness from the government, we'll do our best to deal with it in nonviolent community supportive ways. As we watch, with dismay, our so-called "leaders" floundering about, *Peace & Planet News* will try to focus on individuals and small groups rising to the occasion, whatever and wherever that may be. There is hope in resistance and action. There is hope in community.

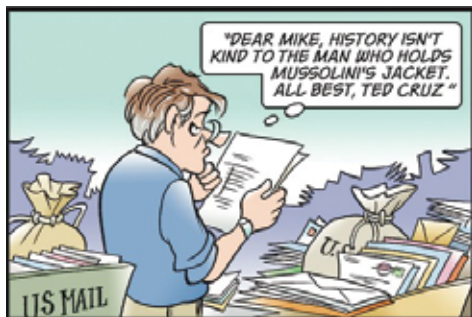
In these times of crisis when many of us might feel helpless, the stories (and poems) in this issue will, we hope, give you solace and inspiration. There are people out there fighting against incredible odds to save this planet. Perhaps there will rise out of these times a genuine resistance to the corporate rape of the Earth.

We are all in this together, for the planet and for life.

Welcome to the first of what we hope will be many issues of *Peace & Planet News*. Read on, dear friends.

And we'd love to hear from you. Letters to the editor can be sent to [peaceandplanetnews@gmail.com](mailto:peaceandplanetnews@gmail.com)

For Peace and the Planet,  
The Editors



## Peace & Planet News

*Peace & Planet News* is published quarterly by Vietnam Full Disclosure ([vietnamfulldisclosure.org](http://vietnamfulldisclosure.org)) and the New York City chapter of Veterans For Peace. Bundles are \$35 for 70 and \$20 for 35. To donate, subscribe, or order bundles, visit [vietnamfulldisclosure.org/ppn](http://vietnamfulldisclosure.org/ppn) or send a check to NYC Veterans For Peace, 170 East 88th Street, Apt. 2C, New York, NY 10128.

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Vietnam Full Disclosure represents an honest commemoration of the American War in Vietnam, focusing on the war's continuing impact on the United States and on the Vietnamese and its relevance to today's world politics. The website also contains many first-person stories from Vietnam veterans.

New York City Veterans For Peace consists of military veterans and their allies who aim to build a culture of peace by exposing the causes and enormous costs of war. Contact us at [NYCVFP@gmail.com](mailto:NYCVFP@gmail.com).



# 'Palestinian-Native American-Israeli Tempest in Small-Town Teapot

By Kathy Christison

A propaganda war centering on indigenous rights—involving Native American solidarity with the Palestinian struggle against Israeli oppression—has lately been raging on public walls and local newspaper columns in Santa Fe, N.M. Although Santa Fe is a mere teapot of a city, the tempest is sizable. Not only does it involve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, raising automatic charges of lies and anti-Semitism from some in the Jewish community, but it is also becoming a vehicle through which Native Americans are putting forth their own protests against colonialist oppression, in solidarity with the Palestinian

ing more durable signs, moving from wheat paste to display boards mounted on posts buried in the ground. Even these were taken out.

The city eventually got into the act and, because the wall is in a designated historical district where the city's public face is controlled by a set of architectural standards, imposed restrictions on the signage. The property owner was required to obtain a city permit, to confine the display to one sign, and to limit the dimensions to just 3' x 4'. The vandals nonetheless persisted.

Suddenly, one Sunday in early January, a Navajo artist from Arizona named Remy stepped up and literally plastered

estinian struggles. He writes, "What the average American does not understand is that Indigenous children in cages have been normalized on our continent since ships landed on our shores. ... Not much has changed for us in over 520 years of continued genocide, but we still exist and in the spirit of many Indigenous warriors like Faris, we still resist. [Faris] did what he did for the love of his people and he was not afraid and we shouldn't be either."

Not surprisingly, there has been both criticism and vandalization. The image of Faris standing in front of a tank has been torn off totally; another iconic image of a blindfolded teenage boy surrounded by 20 Israeli soldiers is in shreds. But—and

ing Rock, where several social justice activists and lawyers from Santa Fe, including members of Santa Feans for Justice in Palestine, participated actively in that long-running protest. Members of The Red Nation have in turn been particularly active in Palestine, sending individuals and small groups there to assist, be educated, and stand in solidarity with fellow indigenous strugglers. This is a heart-felt solidarity struggle: Remy speaks of how emotionally draining his project has been: "As hard as this project was physically, mentally, and spiritually to endure," he asserts, "this is nothing compared to what our Indigenous brothers and sisters go through in Gaza and other settlement prisons on a daily basis." He and his Native relatives have been there.

All public criticism has come from the Jewish community, and most critics take the stance of the victim: all the images are lies, anti-Semitic, and likely to ignite fur-



Left: Muhamad al-Durrah, the little boy crouched behind his father before he was killed by crossfire of IOF snipers.



Right: Native American artist Remy's portrayal on a wall in Santa Fe.

struggle. It is fast becoming an edifying symbol of intersectionality, the 21st century's prevalent sense that each struggle by marginalized, oppressed people is inextricably interlinked with all others.

It all began on a small scale about five years ago, when a long-time Santa Fe resident, who happens to own a large corner lot on a main thoroughfare into the city—a property surrounded, like many Santa Fe-style residences, by a five-foot-high adobe wall—allowed a local Palestine solidarity organization to use his wall to post occasional pro-Palestinian signs. Santa Feans for Justice in Palestine, a small but persistent group of activists, began pasting signs on the wall protesting the billions in U.S. military aid given to Israel, lamenting the killing by Israeli sharpshooters of nonviolent protesters in Gaza's Great March of Return, urging support for legislation aimed at preventing Israel's jailing of Palestinian children, and highlighting various other instances of Israeli oppression of Palestinians.

The signs were always vandalized—ripped off the wall, sometimes painted over, even on one occasion side-swiped by a pickup truck driver who either drunkenly or with sober malevolence crashed into the wall in the pre-dawn hours, taking out not only a sign but a small power installation as well, which cost the city \$100,000. The activists responded mak-

the entire long wall with multiple large digitized images of Israeli soldiers aiming weapons at Palestinian women and children, soldiers arresting Palestinian boys, Israeli tanks, and one sign saying simply "Stop Military Aid to Israel."

Still photos of some of Remy's images are on his website along with a brief video showing overhead footage of the full extent of the wall and the art. This site in

*'We still exist and in the spirit of many Indigenous warriors like Faris, we still resist.'*

turn links to Remy's story, "In the Spirit of Faris," of how he came to know Palestine and Palestinians and why he began this project, as well as to his defiant reaction to the criticism and vandalization of his art, "Here's Why You Can't Exterminate Us."

"Faris" is Faris Odeh, a 14-year-old Palestinian shown in one of the wall images throwing a stone at an Israeli tank. Faris was shot to death by Israeli soldiers several days after the photo was taken. With this story in mind, Remy brings in the intersection of Native American and Pal-

this is something always to be hoped for with the oft-silenced Palestinian struggle and the even more thoroughly suppressed story of our colonialist oppression of Native Americans—there has also been wide publicity. Prominent articles about the wall art have appeared in Santa Fe and Albuquerque newspapers, on local television newscasts, on Palestinian websites, and on Hyperallergic, a national site that describes itself as a "forum for serious, playful, and radical thinking about art in the world today."

The brouhaha continues. Santa Fe city authorities (no doubt less interested in being playful or radical than in dealing with criticism from irritated Jewish community members) ruled that the art violates city codes, not because of the location or the subject matter but, oddly, because of the medium, papier mâché. The ruling has been appealed, and the city has another two weeks to decide what to do. In the meantime, local Native Americans, led by The Red Nation, a New Mexico-based but nationally known Native rights organization, is sponsoring a rally at the wall in a few days to demonstrate solidarity with "our Palestinian relatives," to protest the fact that all of Santa Fe sits on Native land, and to proclaim, that "you can't exterminate us."

Important aspects of Native-Palestinian intersectionality have played out at Stand-

ther anti-Semitism. The latest op-ed, by a local academic, laments, not unreasonably, that Jews in the United States today feel under siege as they have not felt since the 1930s. But he goes on to liken the appearance of the wall images at least implicitly to recent attacks at synagogues, labeling the artwork incendiary and provocative of greater anti-Semitism. Another myopic criticism came from a local orthodox rabbi interviewed for the initial newspaper report. He objected to Remy's comparison of the Palestinian struggle to Native Americans' anti-colonialist struggle. There can be no comparison, the rabbi declared, because Jews are a native population returning to their original homeland, the implication being that Palestinians are not native to Palestine. Even were this good history (it is not), his suggestion that indigeneity gives permission to oppress the "other" is most un-rabbinical.

The power of intersectionality and the inspiration oppressed peoples today take from each other are beautifully spiritual and empowering: "This was for you, Faris," Remy writes, "and as long as I live, so will you because you are me and I am you."

For more information on the artist, see [firstsevendesignlabs.com](http://firstsevendesignlabs.com).

Kathy Christison is a member of EPF PIN and a member of Veterans For Peace-Santa Fe.



# I Couldn't Heal Their Souls

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putations, whether upper extremity or legs, and what was left, their stumps were hanging by butcher-like contraptions that held their limbs aloft. They were in pain, they were terribly infected, and I would hear their cries from one end of the unit to the next when they would cry out for pain medication.

I also heard their nightmares when they talked about being careful as they walked through the jungle, and they would call out to another person, to a comrade, to say, "Be careful!" And it became more and more obvious to me as I took care of these guys and physically got them better, that I couldn't heal them psychologically, and I certainly couldn't heal their souls. And I thought, "I've become a part of the military. I need to do something about this, and we need to end this war."

I became aware of a GI and veterans march for peace in the San Francisco Bay Area that was occurring on October 12, 1968, and became involved, and organized with my corpsmen and corps WAVEs, and we talked about participating in that march. We put posters up in the hospital in the middle of the night, and they were torn down by the morning. I kept thinking, “You know, we need to do a better job of letting people know about this antiwar demonstration that will be led by GIs, active-duty military.”

I had seen stories on the television about the United States Air Force dropping fliers and leaflets on the Vietnamese in South Central Vietnam that told

them to go to “protective strategic hamlets,” where they would be safe from both bombing by the United States, and they would be safe from the chemical defoliation. And I thought, “Okay, if the United States can do this, 8,000 miles away, why can’t we do this in the United States?” I had a friend who was a pilot, and we talked about filling a single-engine plane

*'It became more and more obvious to me as I took care of these guys and physically got them better that I couldn't heal them psychologically, and I certainly couldn't heal their souls. And I thought, "I've become a part of the military. I need to do something about this, and we need to end this war.'*

up with fliers about the antiwar demonstration, which we did on October 10, 1968. We flew the plane and fliers over five military installations in the San Francisco Bay Area.

We flew over Oak Knoll Hospital, where I was working, and dropped flyers on the hospital, on Treasure Island, Yerba Buena Island, on the Presidio, a large Army compound in San Francisco. And then we flew into Alameda Naval Air Station, where an aircraft carrier was docked, and we flew about 100 feet above the aircraft carrier and dropped the fliers on the ship. And then flew back to Oak-

land, where I held a press conference in my uniform, because I felt it was so important for the American public to hear someone in a military uniform speak out against the war.

I understood that there would be repercussions. I really thought that by doing these actions, that it would be able to bring enough attention to antiwar active-duty military people, for the American public to understand that we were also against the War in Vietnam, and to say it was time to bring the troops home.

I wore my uniform in that press conference, and then I went back to work at Oak Knoll. I was working nights. I was handed an informational all-navy military regulation that said active duty military were not allowed to wear their uniforms while speaking publicly about religious, economic, political issues, so I knew that was going to be an issue. But I went to the antiwar demonstration on October 12th and just felt I had to wear my uniform. I was not a civilian, I was active-duty military, and I had the same rights as General Westmoreland, who spoke to the United States Congress about increasing the number of

troops and increasing monies allocated to the War in Vietnam. I thought, if General Westmoreland could speak about the war publicly, why couldn't I? And that actually was my defense.

I had two charges that were read to me at what's called a captain's mast. One was "conduct unbecoming an officer," for dropping the fliers on military bases, urging troops to disobey—and this was true, to disobey orders. They claimed to harm the military, and I said, "No, this didn't harm the morale of the troops. What it actually did was it improved the morale of the troops, because now people in the military could understand that they could do something about the war."

**MB:** Okay. What were the results, then, of that trial?

**SS:** Actually, I went back to full duty and to full work. I was still working on the active-duty military unit up until the time of the general court martial, which was the end of 1968, beginning of 1969. The result was a sentence of six months' confinement at hard labor, dismissal from the military. Because I was an officer, I did not get a general-conduct or a dishonorable discharge. The decision was made because I was a woman that they would send me back to work at the hospital, and they put me on the women's unit and the pediatric unit, with a warning, "No more organizing."

But you know, it was a great time to organize. I had faced the military, and thought, "Well, there's not much more they can do to me now." So we organized an antiwar GI coffeehouse where people came and spoke about the war and about what people faced. And we put together an underground newspaper. Originally it was called "The Underground Oak," and then we changed the name to "The Oak," where we distributed information about GI antiwar protests. The protest, the demonstration on October 12th, was led by a couple of thousand active-duty GIs and veterans. There was another person, Airman Michael Locks, who also wore his uniform in the demonstration, and then there were quite a few of the corpsmen I worked with and an Army and Navy active-duty military who took part in the demonstration. I think it was the first time that an antiwar demonstration had been led by active-duty military.

**MB:** You've had this court martial, you've received your sentencing, it hasn't slowed you down a bit. Take us into the next phase of your activism.

**SS:** I worked for another six months at Oak Knoll Naval Hospital, and then left and moved to New York. In New York I worked with an organization called Medical Committee for Human Rights that was a major part of the civil rights organizing in the South. Some doctors went, and nurses and nurse practitioners, to start clinics in the rural South. Some people went and did medical presence at demonstrations. I kind of came in a little differently and did a lot of antiwar organizing with MCHR.

I also worked with an organization  
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# American Chaos Machine

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commander. President George W. Bush liked to call himself “the decider,” an apt term for any commander. Senior leaders don’t, as a rule, actually do that much work in the traditional sense. Rather, they hobnob with superiors, buck up unit morale, evaluate and mentor subordinates, and above all make key decisions. It’s the operations staff officers who analyze problems, present options, and do the detailed planning once the boss blesses or signs off on a particular course of action.

In 2009, as a young captain, fresh out of Baghdad, Iraq, I spent two unfulfilling, if instructive, years enmeshed in exactly this sort of planning system. As a battalion-level planner, then assistant, and finally a primary operations officer, I observed this cycle countless times. So allow me to take you “under the hood” for some inside baseball. I—and just about every new staff officer—was taught to always provide the boss with three plans, but to suss out ahead of time which one he’d choose (and, above all, which one you wanted him to choose).

The key to success was what some labeled the Goldilocks method. You’d always present your commander with a too-cautious option, a too-risky option, and a “just-right” course of action. It nearly always worked.

And as recent events remind us, such exercises play out remarkably similarly, no matter whether you’re dealing at a battalion level (perhaps 400 to 700 troops) or that of this country’s commander-in-chief (more than two million uniformed service personnel). The behind-the-scenes war-gaming of the boss, the entire calculus, remains the same, whether the options are ultimately presented by a captain

(me, then) or -- as in the recent decision to assassinate Iranian Major General Suleimani—by Mark Milley, the four-star general at the helm of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Soon after President Trump’s egregious, a-strategic, dubiously legal, unilateral execution of a uniformed leader of a sovereign country, reports surfaced describing his convoluted decision-making process. Perhaps predictably, it appears that The Donald took his military staff by surprise and chose the most extreme measure they presented him with -- assassinating a foreign military figure. Honestly, that this president did so should have surprised no one. That, according to a report in the New York Times, his generals were indeed surprised strikes me as basic dereliction of duty (especially given that, seven months earlier, Trump had essentially given the green light to such a future assassination -- the deepest desire, by the way, of both his secretary of state and his then-national security advisor, John Bolton).

## Bush, Obama, and the Chaos Machine’s Tragic Foundations

The current commander-in-chief could never have expanded America’s wars in the Greater Middle East (contra his campaign promises) or unilaterally drone-assassinated a foreign leader, without the militaristic foundations laid down for him by George W. Bush and Barack Obama. Guided by a coterie of neoconservative zealots, Bush the Younger committed the nation to the “original sin” of expansive, largely unsanctioned wars as his chosen response to the 9/11 attacks. It was his team that would write the playbook on

selling an ill-advised, illegal invasion of Iraq based on bad intelligence and false pretenses. He also escalated tensions with Iran to the brink of war by including the Islamic Republic in an imaginary “axis of evil” (with Iraq and North Korea) after invading first one of its neighbors, Afghanistan, and then the other, Iraq, while imposing sanctions. He ushered in the use of torture, indefinite detention, extraordinary rendition, illegal domestic mass surveillance, and drone attacks over the sovereign airspace of other countries -- then lied about it all. That neither Congress, nor the courts, nor his successor held him (or anyone else) accountable for such decisions set a dangerous new standard for foreign policy.

Barack Obama promised “hope and change,” a refreshing (if vague) alternative to the sins of the Bush years. The very abstraction of that slogan, however, allowed his supporters to project their own wants, needs, and preferred policies onto the future Obama experiment. So perhaps none of us ought to have been as surprised as many of us were when, despite slowly pulling troops out of Iraq, he only escalated the Afghan War, continued the forever wars in general (even returning to Iraq in 2014), and set his own perilous precedents along the way.

It was, after all, Obama who, as an alternative to large-scale military occupations, took Bush’s drone program and ran with it. He would be the first president to truly earn the sobriquet “assassin-in-chief.” He made selecting individuals for assassination in “Terror Tuesday” meetings at the White House banal and put his stamp of approval on the drone campaigns across significant parts of the planet that followed -- even killing American citizens without due process. Encouraged by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, he also launched a new regime-change war

in Libya, turning that land into a failed state filled with terror groups, a decision which, he later admitted, added up to a “shit show.” After vacillating for a couple years, he also mired the U.S., however indirectly, in the Syrian civil war, empowering Islamist factions there and worsening that already staggering humanitarian catastrophe.

In response to the sudden explosion of the Islamic State -- an al-Qaeda offshoot first catalyzed by the Bush invasion of Iraq and actually formed in an American prison in that country -- its taking of key Iraqi cities and smashing of the American-trained Iraqi army, Obama loosed U.S. air power on them and sent American troops back into that country. He also greatly expanded his predecessor’s nascent military interventions across the African continent. There, too, the results were largely tragic and counterproductive as ethnic militias and Islamic terror groups have spread widely and civil warfare has exploded.

Finally, it was Obama who first sanctioned, supported, and enabled the Saudi terror bombing of Yemen, which, even now, remains perhaps the world’s worst humanitarian disaster. So it is that, from Mali to Libya, Syria to Afghanistan, every one of Bush’s and Obama’s military forays has sowed further chaos, startling body counts, and increased rates of terrorism. It’s those policies, those results, and the military toolbox that went with them that Donald J. Trump inherited in January 2017.

## The Trumpian Perfect Storm

During the climax to the American phase of a 30-year war in Vietnam, newly elected President Richard Nixon, a well-established Republican cold warrior, developed what he dubbed the “madman theory” for bringing the intractable U.S. intervention there to a face-saving conclusion. The president’s chief of staff, H.R. Haldeman, recalled Nixon telling him:

“I call it the Madman Theory, Bob. I want the North Vietnamese to believe I’ve reached the point where I might do anything to stop the war. We’ll just slip the word to them that, ‘for God’s sake, you know Nixon is obsessed about communism. We can’t restrain him when he’s angry—and he has his hand on the nuclear button’ and [North Vietnamese leader] Ho Chi Minh himself will be in Paris in two days begging for peace.”

It didn’t work, of course. Nixon escalated and expanded the war. He briefly invaded neighboring Cambodia and Laos, secretly (and illegally) bombed both countries, and ramped up air strikes on North Vietnam. Apart from slaughtering hundreds of thousands of innocents, however, none of this had a notable effect on the ultimate outcome. The North Vietnamese called his bluff, extending the war long enough to force an outright American withdrawal less than four years later. Washington lost in Southeast Asia, just as today it’s losing in the Greater Middle East.

So it was, with the necessary founda-

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The bodies of Moro insurgents killed by U.S. troops during the Battle of Bud Dajo in the Philippines, March 7, 1906.





American troops waterboard Filipino prisoners.

## American Chaos

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tions of militarism and hyper-interventionism in place, that Donald Trump entered the White House, at times seemingly intent on testing out his own personal “fire and fury” version of the madman theory. Indeed, his more irrational and provocative foreign policy incitements, including pulling out of the Paris climate accords, spiking a working nuclear deal with Iran, existentially threatening North Korea, seizing Syrian oil fields, sending yet more military personnel into the Persian Gulf region, and most recently assassinating a foreign leader seem right out of some madman instruction manual. And just like Nixon’s stillborn escalations, Trump’s most absurd moves also seem bound to fail.

Take the Suleimani execution as a case in point. An outright regional war has (so far) been avoided, thanks not to the “deal-making” skills of that self-styled “stable genius” in the White House but to Iran’s long history of restraint. As retired Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, a former top aide to Secretary of State Colin Powell, recently put it: “The leadership in Tehran is far more rational than the leadership in Washington.”

Trump’s unprecedented assassination

order backfired at every level. He even managed briefly to unite a divided Iranian nation, caused the Iraqi government to demand a full U.S. troop withdrawal from that country, convinced Iran to end its commitment to restrain its enrichment of uranium, and undoubtedly incentivized both Tehran and Pyongyang not to commit to, or abide by, any future nuclear deals with Washington.

If George W. Bush and Barack Obama sowed the seeds of the American chaos machine, Donald Trump represents the first true madman at the wheel of state, thanks to his volatile temperament, profound ignorance, and crippling insecurity.

All of which raises another disturbing

question: What if this administration’s chaos-sowing proves an end in itself, one that coheres with the millenarian fantasies of sections of the Republican Christian right? After all, several key figures on the Trump team—notably Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Vice President Mike Pence—explicitly view the Middle East as evangelical Christians. Like a disturbing 73% of evangelicals (or 20% of the U.S. population), Pompeo and Pence believe that the Rapture (that is, the prophesied Christian end of the world) is likely to unfold in this generation and that a contemporary conflict in Israel and an impending war with Iran might actually be trigger events ushering in just such an apocalypse.

Donald Trump is, by all indications, far too self-serving, self-absorbed, and cynical to adhere to the eschatological blind-faith of the two Mikes. He clearly believes only in Donald Trump. And yet what a terrible irony it would be if, due to his perfect-storm disposition, he unwittingly ends up playing the role of the very Antichrist those evangelicals believe necessary to usher in end-times.

Given the foundations set in place for Trump by George W. Bush and Barack Obama and his capacity to throw caution to the wind, it’s hard to imagine a better candidate to play that role.

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## Heal Their Souls

... continued from page 4

called Medical Aid for Indochina that raised money for medical supplies that went to the North and went to the National Liberation Front, because we were healers, and we wanted to talk with healthcare professionals about what was going on in Southeast Asia and have more people work with us to end the war.

I also worked a couple of times a week at Lincoln Hospital in the South Bronx, in the intensive care unit. I was startled when I first started to work there and had patients who had wounds similar to those my active-duty military had. They had gunshot wounds. They had knife wounds. They obviously were also the victims of war, only this war was in the South Bronx in New York City.

I kept organizing and educating people about the wars that were going on in this country against the poor, against people of color, and the similarity between that war and the war in Southeast Asia.

**MB:** Susan, I know part of the work that you have done is with Agent Orange. Tell me a little bit about the work that you’ve

done there.

**SS:** When I retired from the hospitals in 2006, I went to Vietnam and visited a hospital in Hồ Chí Minh City called Tù Dũ Hospital. I saw children there who had been harmed by the United States use of Agent Orange dioxin in South and Central Vietnam. They were born with terrible deformities and birth defects, and I thought, “We need to deal with the chemical companies that produced this pesticide. We need to educate people about how it was used as a chemical defoliant and how it harmed the people who were directly sprayed as well as their children.”

I came back and began work with an organization called Vietnam Agent Orange Relief and Responsibility Campaign, and also got involved with Veterans For Peace through my Agent Orange work. We have been working together for the last eight, nine years. We also work with an organization called the Children of Vietnam Veterans Health Alliance, who are the children of American male Vietnam veterans, who have been born with birth defects and have never been cared for by the United States government or the VA.

But the basic importance, I think, of it is to educate the American public. We do have legislation in front of the House of

Representatives, HR 326, that was sponsored by Representative Barbara Lee of California.

We use it to raise awareness, to educate people about what these chemical companies did. The chemical companies were Monsanto and Dow, and they need to be held accountable for what happened. Monsanto, you may know, was recently bought out by Bayer, and Bayer also has its history of producing the gasses for the concentration camps to kill people during the Second World War. That is corporate evil. There is no other way to describe it.

**MB:** What do you feel was the most significant impact and contribution of your activism over the years?

**SS:** I hope it has been education and informing people that you can take a step against the reigning authority or the reigning government, and you can say, “I disagree with you, and I’m going to do something about it.” That you not only will survive, but you’ll survive with your moral conscience intact. I think it’s important to understand that we all make mistakes. I’ve listened to a lot of guys talk about feeling guilty for what they did in Vietnam. They were used. They were young, you take an adolescent, and you

can get them to do almost anything.

It’s what they do afterwards, once they have recognition of what they participated in, that’s so important. In terms of having been in the military at that time, I felt I had a responsibility to end the war, and I feel as an American citizen I still have a responsibility now to put human values first, and to have us all understand our work, and work together to make those priorities a reality.

I know I’m not going to see the changes I struggled for 50 years ago. I know I’m not going to see the ending of poverty and racism and a better quality of life for people. But hopefully I will leave stories that people will remember, and I’ll leave an energy in the atmosphere that is positive, that will have an impact at some point in the future and create the change that we’ve all been working for.

It’s also talking to groups and community groups and young people, and saying, “This is what our experience was. And what I’d like you to remember is that you can be a part of that change, that positive change, so go do it.”

*Matthew Breems creates podcasts of interviews with Vietnam veterans that are published by [couragetoresist.org](http://couragetoresist.org) and [vietnamfulldisclosure.org](http://vietnamfulldisclosure.org).*



By Rory Fanning,

What will happen next? It's a question that has been running through my head since the United States assassinated Iran's Gen. Qassim Suleimani on Jan. 3. I've had numerous conversations with people of Persian descent and they too are asking themselves the same question, only with even more anxiety.

One of the most troublesome outcomes of Trump's reckless, illegal and dangerous decision to assassinate Suleimani is that we are already seeing border patrol agents stopping dozens of Iranian-Americans at the border; some even being denied entry to the United States after returning from a concert in Canada. This type of racial profiling is its own form of violence and is a reminder of the Islamophobia we saw in the wake of 9/11, only with an even more reactionary and nationalistic administration in office—an administration particularly focused on targeting Muslims.

Then there is the fear of escalating war. The additional 3,500 troops speedily deployed to Iraq less than 24 hours after the assassination, who will be meeting up with an estimated 6,000 already in the country, is deeply concerning. The millions marching in the streets of Tehran and in the countryside demanding revenge for the "martyrdom" of this general only increases the fear of escalation.

Trump's Twitter outbursts after the attack must have provoked many to wonder if there is a bunker to hide in. Watching Trump handle this situation, as a meme I saw on Twitter said, "is like being strapped to a chair watching a toddler playing with a loaded weapon." It's so easy to feel powerless and siloed right now.

I understand this feeling—I have my own urge to find a bunker for my family. However, it's becoming increasingly clear that we have no choice but to challenge that sense of fear and isolation, which the administration is hoping will stymie us into inaction. There are things we can do.



# Soldiers Want to Stop Fighting

*Let's build a movement that welcomes them*

People across the country have and are registering a loud and determined vote against a war with Iran. In Chicago where I live, a coalition of organizations coordinated a huge rally in front of Trump Tower. New York, Los Angeles, and dozens of small and big cities had similar rallies. One of my favorite signs

from these rallies was from a man in Boston reminding people that we have much more in common with Iranian civilians than with the U.S. billionaires foaming at the mouth for more war. This message is one that should be echoing in everyone's head right now. Combating Islamophobia wherever it rears its ignorant head will

help keep us out of war.

In these efforts to oppose war and Islamophobia, it's important to not leave a large group of people behind: veterans and active-duty soldiers. I found the courage to resist the war in Iraq and Afghanistan in large part because of the movement against the war back home in 2003. Make no mistake: Tens of thousands of soldiers are looking for a way out right now. They just need a movement that will welcome and support them.

If soldiers lay down their weapons and ignore the orders of their chain of command, then it becomes increasingly difficult to carry out the war, as was the case in Vietnam.

Because the military targets poorer school districts, we know that many sign up for the military to escape a desperate situation, and are seduced by recruiters who only speak of the positives of the military and none of its horrors. I visit high schools regularly to speak about the military, and have heard much about the recruiting tactics these students are subject to.

Let's not underestimate active duty soldiers' ability to understand what's wrong with the mission. People don't try to leave one desperate situation—the cycle of poverty—to willingly walk into another, such as a bloody war with Iran.

## We've Done It Before, We Can Do It Again

Will it be easy to build the type of movement needed to support war resisters in the ranks? Of course not. But this kind of movement-building has been done before and we can do it again. Fifty thousand active duty soldiers resisted Global War on Terror between 2001 and 2012. Appealing to these former members of the military to tell their stories at rallies, getting them into schools so kids know the full picture before they sign up, making the connections between the racism so many recruits feel in their own marginalized neighborhoods and the racism required to fight trillion-dollar wars—this is how we start to build the movement. This is how we support active-duty soldiers in their ability to resist.

This looming war was instigated by a privileged and ignorant administration. The President himself will, of course, never be fighting in a war. Instead, he is putting countless other lives at risk—and many of those whose lives are on the line do not want to sacrifice themselves for Trump's whims.

Let's build that movement and welcome the troops who resist home.

*Originally published by Truthout.*

Rory Fanning walked across the United States for the Pat Tillman Foundation in 2008–2009, following two deployments to Afghanistan with the 2nd Army Ranger Battalion. He is a housing and antiwar activist living in Chicago. He is the author of *Worth Fighting For: An Army Ranger's Journey Out of the Military and Across America*. Rory's writing has appeared in *The Guardian*, *The Nation*, *Mother Jones*, *Salon*, *Common Dreams*, *TomDispatch*, *Socialist Worker*, and many other outlets.

## Nature Bats Last

"I'm two with nature"—Woody Allen

We fled Woody and the cities  
in the tie-dyed seventies  
headed back to the land, man,  
and fed ourselves on nature's bounty  
while planning on saving the planet along the way  
forgetting that nature bats last.

It's been almost fifty years now  
of have-a-heart traps, deer caught in the headlights,  
road kill left to glisten in the moon-filled nights  
while the weather changed and changed and changed  
it seems that saving the planet was put on hold  
Nature is stepping out of the dugout, bottom of the ninth

So what have we found out about ourselves over these  
years?  
Are we one with nature or have we zeroed out?  
Are we part of the problem or are we part of the solution?  
Are we most parts compost or are we mainly pollution?  
Does the planet really care if we're one or two with its  
grand evolution?

The first pitch is in the dirt.

The bats are KIA, the bees are missing in action  
The ticks have taken over and the mice are moving out  
We retire into the sterile comfort of our insulated houses  
watching our clever little devices for news far from home:  
How about that Serengeti Plain? That Asian oceanfront  
swallowed up by tsunamis?  
A visit to the mound—how to pitch to the Great Mother?

Meanwhile forgetting to ponder this—will anyone be left to  
tend our own graves, to till our fields?  
Are we stewards of this planet, or are we merely along for  
the ride?  
Does the climate change because of us, despite us, or to  
dispose of us?  
Cartesians have sat high in the saddle for four centuries  
telling us not to worry  
Now it's time to listen to Chief Seattle, Geronimo, and the  
Haudenosaunee  
lest we forget that nature bats last.

—Doug Rawlings



# Resource Wars Push U.S. Toward AI Weaponry

By Nick Mottern

It was 1963. I was in the Navy, stationed in Saigon, when I met someone working for the Defense Advanced Research Project Agency, known as DARPA; then and now they handle exotic research projects for the Pentagon. He was engaged in placing sensors across the Ho Chi Minh trail that would be used in preventing the North Vietnamese infiltrating into the south to conquer the American puppet South Vietnamese government.

What I did not know then, and only learned recently, is that his work appears to have been part of a complex technological project called Igloo White that used heat, motion, sound and even urine sensing devices and powerful IBM computers to try to track and target North Vietnamese soldiers so that they could be attacked from the air. All the data was fed into a modern 200,000-square-foot facility in Thailand, where the entire Ho Chi Minh trail operation was displayed in real time, in color, on screens three stories high.

Igloo White was a military failure against the ingenuity and determination of the North Vietnamese defending their own homeland. For example, the North Vietnamese hung buckets of urine away from trails to thwart urine-sensing devices.

Nevertheless, Igloo White evolved into what today is called the electronic battlefield, as was predicted by the U.S. commander in Viet Nam, Gen. William Westmoreland, who said in an address in 1969:

“On the battlefield of the future, enemy forces will be located, tracked, and targeted almost instantaneously through the use of data links, computer-assisted intelligence, evaluation and automated fire control.”

The next major U.S. invasions of foreign lands after the Viet Nam War came in 1990 with Desert Storm, pushing Saddam Hussein back within Iraqi borders; then in 2001, into mineral-rich Afghanistan; then 2003 with the invasion of Iraq itself, an invasion driven by the greed of U.S. companies to gain more profitable access to Iraqi oil than could be gotten under Hussein’s nationalized oil system.

The first U.S. drone attack was launched on the first day of the invasion of Afghanistan. Today, U.S. drones are ranging over at least eight nations and are conducting particularly intensive attacks in Afghanistan. Wherever you see drones in the air you will find oil or other treasure in the ground. Indeed, drones are seen as critical in the growing struggle over who profits from oil. U.S. politicians and bosses of resource-extraction corporations see drones and other automated weapons as the substitute for sending soldiers to control resources, as well as offering the possibility of controlling foreign politicians with the threat of assassination and/or terrorizing their populations.

Hence, there was tremendous push for what amounts to a de facto draft of AI technicians into military service, a push that began with the need to sort and analyze the tremendous amount of data involved in drone operations.

And that is where we are today, with Microsoft just having been awarded a \$10 billion Pentagon contract to build a giant AI brain dubbed JEDI, a contract that Amazon thought it had locked up and is now fighting to gain. Jedi will use AI to aid all the U.S. military services in gathering surveillance information, sorting it, analyzing it for targeting, selecting, and



Seeding of the Ho Chi Minh Trail by air with sensors like this above—some 20,000 of them mostly by Navy and Air Force airplanes

speeding weapons deployment and coordinating attack, not just for drones, but all weapons, including nuclear weapons. In JEDI’s brain, the world will be an electronic battlefield.

What could go wrong?

The Pentagon itself is concerned about this. Last fall, it released a draft report by its Defense Innovation Board entitled “AI Principles: Recommendations on the Ethical Use of Artificial Intelligence by the Department of Defense.”

The fifth and last ethical principle in the report reveals the Pentagon’s fear of AI-controlled weapons going rogue:

“DoD AI systems should be designed and engineered to fulfill their intended function while possessing the ability to detect and avoid unintended harm or disruption, and disengage or deactivate deployed systems that demonstrate unintended escalatory or other behavior.”

A key portion of the narrative explaining the fifth principle says:

“AI systems will fail to achieve their stated function, and it is foreseeable that when they fail, they may fail in surprising ways. As DoD will utilize myriad AI systems throughout the Department and Service Components, careful attention ought to be paid to the specifics of each system, ensuring that all reasonable measures to

minimize unintended harm or disruption of a faulty or failing AI system. This is increasingly important for safety-critical systems, especially those utilizing AI in an open world (or ‘in the wild’), where the real world complexity and dynamic changes in an environment offer many opportunities for a system to fail. Thus, correctly designing and engineering AI systems to be governable when they move outside of their domain of use is crucial.”

As one reads this, and other parts of the document, it seems an unstated Pentagon message is: “Yes, there will be AI failures, both off and on the battle field, but as with other weapons systems, we will experiment until we get it right.” The underlying assumption here is that there will be AI collateral damage, that is dead humans and material destruction.

Just one case of faulty AI thinking in a conventional weapon could ignite a chain of AI conclusions leading to the launch of nuclear weapons. In that case, “collateral damage” would be all living things.

*Nick Mottern is the author of *Suffering Strong*, recounting experiences of his first trip to Africa. A Vietnam Navy veteran, he is a member of *Veterans For Peace* and is the founder and coordinator of *Knowdrones.com*. He can be reached at [nickmottern@gmail.com](mailto:nickmottern@gmail.com).*

## Death Comes in Trickles

For David from a friend



David Mokusui Hawk Bruner  
November 27, 1947–February 16, 2020  
Vietnam veteran, father, Zen Buddhist priest,  
wayfarer, activist, beloved friend

Death comes in trickles  
Thickens the air  
Gathers clouds  
Darkens the stillness  
Until the rains come  
The rivers gorge and eat their banks  
Explode the heights and flood the plain

The harsh breathing of vindictive Earth Shaker  
Who bedeviled Ulysses  
Drawing in and collapsing shores  
All that is dislodged and floating by  
Tossing up and down  
Waving hello, waving goodbye  
A maelstrom pulling me  
Toward you in the underworld

My harpoons’ man  
We went after that great white whale  
While all the soothsayers sang of wrack and ruin  
What can sailors do but sail

You carried the horrific winds of war  
And battened our sails toward better destinies  
From the insult of our headway  
I am gazing at distant lights  
So much now in our wake

All the small places you inhabited  
The sustainable house you built  
That could not quite preserve you  
Women friends fair and foul  
A son for whom you are the angel he must wrestle  
I loved your goofy broad brimmed hats  
With their serious purpose to save your skin  
Your quiet and meticulous intent  
Incessant efforts

Coffee on the dawn fire  
The four of us leaning against our kayaks  
Drinking the brew

This diluvian spill swelled over  
As I awoke from a dream  
Of grassy hills and a village  
Where news of your death was shared with warmth  
Where babies were being born  
And folks were tending to spring planting  
Would that I could have held just that  
Held you better and longer  
Promise you I will  
Yes, I will  
Will sail out again with your fine charts

—Roshi Paul Genki Kahn, spiritual director, Zen  
Garland Order, Desert Bone Zen Hermitage



# Judge Supports Nonviolent Protesters at Maine Shipyard

By Bruce Gagnon

On June 24, 2019, 22 nonviolent peace activists were arrested at Bath Iron Works (BIW) during another destroyer “christening” as they blocked buses and cars full of people trying to enter the shipyard for the event.

On that day nine in the group refused to pay the \$60 bail commissioner fee and spent two nights in jail. In the end some of those arrested paid a \$152 fine (being told they would lose their driver’s license if they did not pay the fine), some had their charges dropped (after a screw-up at the DA’s office) and seven decided to take their case before the West Bath District Court.

The entire group had wanted a jury trial but the state reduced the charges to a “jaywalking infraction” that was not severe enough to warrant a jury trial. Thus a bench trial, before a judge only, was in order.

On Feb. 13, four of the remaining defendants (Brown Lethem, Natasha Mayers, Ridgely Fuller, and Ashley Bahlkow) appeared before Judge Joseph Field for the bench trial.

Judge Field is known in peace movement circles as the presiding judge in 1997 following a plowshares action at BIW.

Before dawn on Feb. 12, 1997, Ash Wednesday, the

*‘Go ye hence and continue to do good work Keep it nonviolent without property damage.’*

beginning of the Christian season of Lent, six religious peace activists—Steve Baggarly from Norfolk, Va.; Philip Berrigan, a former Josephite priest from Baltimore; Mark Colville of New Haven, Conn.; Susan Crane, from Baltimore; Tom Lewis-Borbely of Worcester, Mass.; and the Rev. Steve Kelly, a Jesuit priest from San Jose—calling themselves Prince of Peace Plowshares, boarded the *USS The Sullivans*, an Aegis destroyer, at BIW. Inspired by Isaiah’s prophecy to turn swords into plowshares, they poured their own blood and used hammers to beat on the hatches covering the tubes from which nuclear missiles can be fired and unfurled a banner that read “Prince of Peace Plowshares: They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks ... Isaiah 2:4.”

When the Prince of Peace Plowshares were brought for arraignment in Sagadahoc County District Court the same day, Judge Joseph Field felt impassioned enough to

say, “Anyone of my generation knows Philip Berrigan. He is a moral giant, the conscience of a generation.”

When we entered the courtroom today we didn’t know who the presiding judge would be. It wasn’t until the proceedings were over that we realized that Judge Field had once again made an impassioned statement for peace and our constitutional rights.

When the judge began, he said the following:

“I personally agree with what you are doing. I support your right to speak out. No damages occurred by your action. I am horrified about our rights being taken away these days.

“I want you to know this. We are not seeing any [positive] leadership out of Washington, DC.”

Judge Field went on to cancel the \$152 fine the District Attorney’s office was requesting. Instead he gave the four activists 20 hours of community service at a place “where real people are being touched.”

He then sent his clerk back into his office to retrieve his laptop, on which he searched for something that he tearfully read in full before the courtroom. It was a quote by former President Eisenhower:

“Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone.

“It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children.

“The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: a modern brick school in more than 30 cities.

“It is two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000 population.

“It is two fine, fully equipped hospitals. It is some 50 miles of concrete highway.

“We pay for a single fighter plane with a half million bushels of wheat.

“We pay for a single destroyer with new homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people.

“This, I repeat, is the best way of life to be found on the road the world has been taking.

“This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.”

Judge Field asked each of the four defendants if they wished to make a statement. Natasha Mayers told a story about a Labor Day rally at BIW in 1994 joined by President Bill Clinton, Sen. George Mitchell, Rep. Tom Andrews, BIW President Buzz Fitzgerald and other national and local labor leaders. They all called for the conversion of the shipyard to civilian production, so there is indeed a tradition in Bath



Veterans For Peace member Dud Hendrick being arrested at BIW action.

along these lines to ensure job and community stability.

The judge responded by asking what kinds of products could be built at the shipyard. Attorney Logan Perkins (Belfast), representing the four, replied, “These are people of conscience who risked their freedom to take a stand against climate change by peaceful assembly. They are not anti-worker, not anti-BIW. They insist we convert the Pentagon—the world’s biggest polluter, which is on a death march of producing destroyers at BIW. They have a bold and creative vision to transform our economy to sun, wind, and rail systems.”

Judge Field closed the legal proceedings with these words, “Go ye hence and continue to do good work. Keep it nonviolent without property damage.”

As the judge rose those in attendance applauded this remarkable man and this incredible experience—unlike any we’ve ever experienced in an American courtroom.

*Bruce Gagnon is a member of Veterans For Peace and the executive director of Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space.*

## This is our legacy

How will they curse us,  
the 3rd, 4th generations,  
the ones that survive  
the deaths we left them?

How could we explain  
the world on fire, species  
wiped out daily, oceans  
with more plastic than fish?

That we let a corrupt man  
stomp refugees fleeing  
rape, murder and hunger  
that we let him set blazes

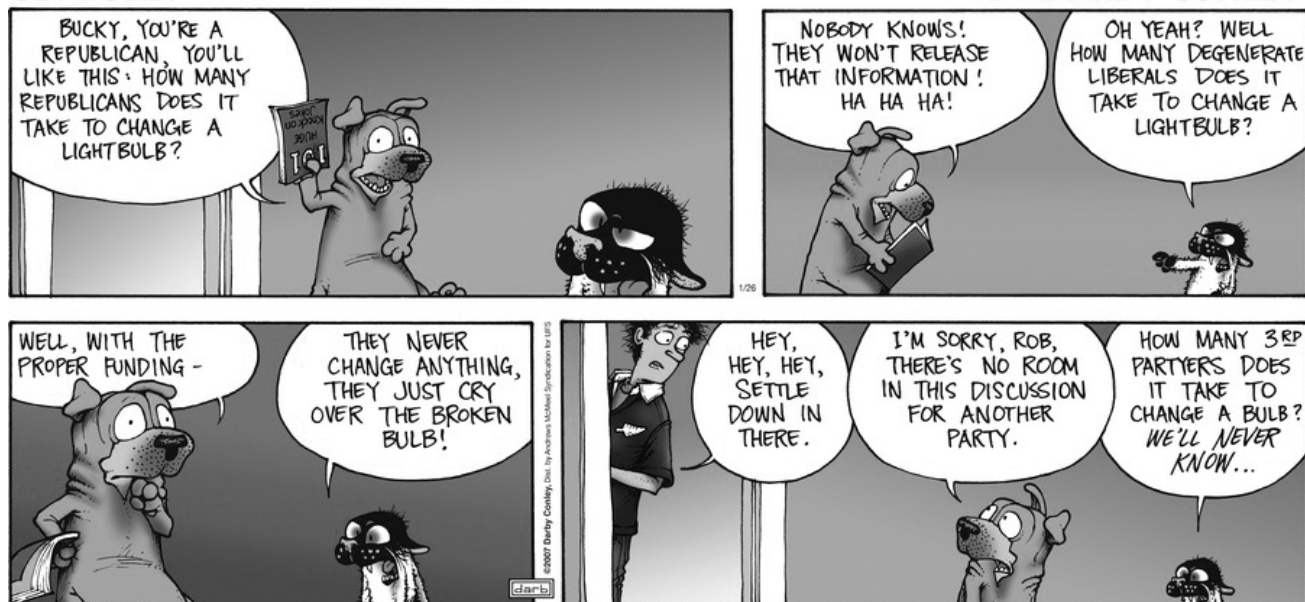
no one could put out.  
We saw the cliff ahead  
We were well warned  
We took everyone over.

That was how our world  
ended, in lies and greed  
vast and numerous maggots  
dining on the corpse of hope.

—Marge Piercy, author of many novels and books of poetry, most recently *Made in Detroit*

## GET FUZZY

BY DARBY CONLEY





# Gay Pride and Nuclear Weapons

By Anthony Donovan

01.07.2019—New York, USA

Bayard Rustin, the chief organizer of the 1963 March on Washington, DC, at which Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr gave his Dream speech, traveled in the 1950s with pacifist A.J. Muste to the Soviet Union to build the bridges that would help save the world from our mutually assured nuclear weapon annihilation. Later on Rustin often had to work behind the political scenes because of threats about his sexual preferences, his love, his great, beautiful and gay heart. He would go on to organize NYC's first anti-Vietnam war protest in 1964, purposely held on Hiroshima day.

Not many people knew that earlier, in 1957, Bayard joined with his fellow War Resisters League leader, the late David McReynolds, two-time U.S. presidential candidate on the Socialist Party ticket and the first openly gay candidate for president whose platform prioritized nuclear disarmament, in an action down at New York's City Hall with the famed activist Dorothy Day. She and others were arrested during sit-ins each year, protesting the insanity of compulsory air raid drills for nuclear attack.

Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker in 1933, stood up against the nuclear bomb from the day of Hiroshima (Aug. 6, 1945), asking us to feel that these, our brothers and sisters of Japan, had just been vaporized, and there was no reason to celebrate this new level of human atrocity and killing.

Brendan Fay made it to America from the Emerald Isle and found welcome, acceptance for himself as is, and solidarity with the causes lived out in Dorothy Day's Maryhouse on East 3rd Street in downtown Manhattan. Twenty years ago Brendan founded the St. Pat's For All parade in Queens, a courageous and most joyful alternative to the New York City's St. Patrick's Day parade, which until recently excluded LGBTQ+ organizations from participation. He had also made a beautiful documentary on the life of Fr. John McNeill, borrowing the title from his breakthrough book, *Taking A Chance On God: Liberating Theology for Gays, Lesbians, and Their Lovers, Families, and Friends*.

At the United Nations on July 7, 2017, after years of hard work, 122 nations stood up and adopted the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons: one wise, brave act taking on the nuclear weapon states bent on incomprehensibly endangering us all each hour of each day, in the false name of their own security. For its combined efforts ICAN was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize that year.

Brendan Fay picked up on this clear call to action, and while visiting Maryhouse. Speaking with longtime friend Joanne Kennedy in particular, he began to find the way to share this triumph of positive accomplishment toward protecting all life and future generations.

Seven people from the Catholic Worker



Above: Gay Pride and Nuclear Weapons LGBTQ+ anti-nuclear campaigners march at St. Pat's For All Parade in Queens, March 1. Left: St. Pat's For All founder Brendan Fay. Photos: Ellen Davidson

At the "St. Pat's For All" parade in 2019, Councilmember Dromm called out to Brendan and team, "Let's do a resolution to support this!" Work began immediately.

On June 26, 2019, with Brendan and the NYC Divest team present in the rafters of City Hall, Dromm read out and introduced two bills: Resolution 0976-2019 on nuclear disarmament and INT1621-2019 to create a nuclear disarmament and nuclear weapons-free zone advisory committee.

Indeed, in a long line of activist leaders, including many thousands here unmentioned and long working behind the scenes, Gay Pride can tip its hat toward these astoundingly brave, dedicated, wise frontrunners, trail blazers, leaders for a survivable world, a world to not only live in, but to joyously celebrate together.

On Jan. 29, New York City moved one step closer to divesting from nuclear weapons. At a joint committee hearing in City Hall, after hearing testimonies from about 60 people, the Mayor's Office moved quickly to announce they would "find a way" and Councilmember Fernando Cabrera announced his support for divestment. With Cabrera's support, these two resolutions now have a veto-proof majority of support on the New York City Council.

The first of the two bills, introduced by Councilmember Dromm, is INT 1621, which calls for the establishment of an Advisory Committee to investigate and report on New York City's status as a "nuclear weapons-free zone," a status New York City has had since 1983. The second, RES 976, calls on the city comptroller to divest the pension funds of public employees in New York City "to avoid any financial exposure to companies involved in the production and maintenance of nuclear weapons." It also calls on the

federal government to support and join the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Councilmember Dromm said he was "energized" by the testimony coming from a wide range of organizations and from people ranging in age from 19 to 90, from descendants of the original Lenape Nation inhabitants of Manhattan to Nobel Peace Prize-winning members of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons to members of Veterans For Peace.

Speakers ranged from proud New Yorkers to survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to a soldier involved in numerous nuclear bomb tests in Nevada to a relative of Mikhail Gorbachev, from elderly activists who repeatedly spend years in jail for protesting nuclear weapons to bankers and investment experts explaining why divestment from nuclear weapons is actually beneficial to their portfolios.

Manhattan, epicenter of the invention of nuclear weapons, is still suffering from radioactive contamination from those days. A Teamster recalled working in a warehouse where the High Line is now, where barrels were radiating heat and melting the asphalt on the floor. There were multiple mentions of the Doomsday Clock, started in 1947 by guilt-wracked Manhattan Project scientists, which is now "set" closer to "midnight" than at any time in history.

Manhattan has been home to human life for 3,000 years. But expert testimony made clear that one nuclear weapon could erase all the people, animals, art and architecture, and that the radioactivity would last for way more than 3,000 years into the future. New York City, of course, is a prime target for nuclear attack.

Anthony Donovan is the director of the documentary *Good Thinking: Those Who've Tried to Halt Nuclear Weapons*



# U.S. Military Is Destroying the Environment

By Ilana Novick

The increasingly horrific warning signs on climate change include the suggestion that the earth already has warmed 1.5 degrees Celsius since the start of the Industrial Revolution and that we have only 12 years in which we can sustain this level, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

The goals to ward off irreparable harm, however, are as Sisyphean to accomplish as they are necessary for human survival. That's partially because of who is doing the polluting, in particular fossil fuel companies. However, a less well known, but equally culpable, player is the U.S. military. As Murtaza Hussain writes in *The Intercept*, "the largest industrial military in the history of the world is also the single biggest polluter on the planet."

A June report from Brown University's Costs of War project reveals "the DOD is the world's largest institutional user of petroleum and correspondingly, the single largest producer of greenhouse gases in the world." A similar study released just weeks later from Durham and Lancaster universities in England concurred, finding that, as *Popular Mechanics* reported, "its fuel emissions alone would make it the 47th largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the world" (see article below).

The war in Afghanistan, to Hussain, is a particularly glaring example of how the U.S. pollutes abroad, with no redeeming value:

"That massive additional burden on the planet might be justifiable were it all being done in the name of vital national security interests, but the biggest components of the U.S. military's carbon dioxide footprint have been in wars and



U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan. Photo: Jonathan Mallard

occupations that were almost entirely unnecessary. To put it crudely: The U.S. poisoned the planet for vanity projects."

The Iraq War, too, Hussain writes, "led to a spike in carbon dioxide emissions through U.S. military activity, [and] it resulted in the widespread poisoning of the Iraqi environment through the use of toxic munitions and the same so-called burn pits on military bases that were used in Afghanistan."

The injustices of invasion include environmental destruction. Hussain explains:

"In addition to emitting millions of tons of carbon dioxide during the war, the U.S. military footprint contributed more directly to the immediate destruction of the Afghan environment. Deforestation has accelerated amid the chaos of the war and, through trash burning and other means, the U.S. armed forces released toxic pollutants into the air that are blamed for sickening Afghan civilians and causing chronic illnesses among U.S. veterans."

Compounding the problem is that even when the United States attempts to take responsibility for the pol-

lution of war, it focuses mostly on threats to its own resources and equipment and not the damages to the countries it invades.

U.S. military "climate policy is fundamentally contradictory," said Patrick Bigger, of Lancaster University Environment Center and a coauthor of the study, in a media statement. He added this is because the military is "confronting the effects of climate change while remaining the largest single institutional consumer of hydrocarbons in the world, a situation it is locked into for years to come because of its dependence on existing aircraft and warships for open-ended operations around the globe."

If those who care about the future of the planet don't take massive action, Hussain writes, the result will be even more exploitation of the countries that least protect against it: "Faced with a planet that is clearly at the limits of the abuse it can take, the groundwork is still being laid for more exploitation and violence."

*Ilana Novick is an editorial assistant at truthdig.com*

## Calculating the Impact of the U.S. Military

By Benjamin Neimark, Oliver Belcher and Patrick Bigger

The U.S. military's carbon footprint is enormous. Like corporate supply chains, it relies upon an extensive global network of container ships, trucks and cargo planes to supply its operations with everything from bombs to humanitarian aid and hydrocarbon fuels.

Our new study calculated the contribution of this vast infrastructure to climate change.

Greenhouse gas emission accounting usually focuses on how much energy and fuel civilians use. But recent work, including our own, shows that the U.S. military is one of the largest polluters in history, consuming more liquid fuels and emitting more climate-changing gases than most medium-sized countries.

If the U.S. military were a country, its fuel usage alone would make it the 47th largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the world, sitting between Peru and Portugal.

In 2017, the U.S. military bought about 269,230 barrels of oil a day and emitted more than 25,000 kilotonnes of carbon dioxide by burning those fuels. The U.S. Air Force purchased \$4.9 billion worth of fuel, and the Navy \$2.8 billion, fol-

lowed by the Army at \$947 million and the Marines at \$36 million.

It's no coincidence that U.S. military emissions tend to be overlooked in climate change studies. It's very difficult to get consistent data from the Pentagon and across U.S. government departments.

In fact, the United States insisted on an

*[A]ction on climate change demands shuttering vast sections of the military machine. There are few activities on Earth as environmentally catastrophic as waging war.*

exemption for reporting military emissions in the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. This loophole was closed by the Paris Accord, but with the Trump administration due to withdraw from the accord in 2020, this gap will return.

Our study is based on data retrieved from multiple Freedom of Information Act requests to the U.S. Defense Logistics Agency, the massive bureaucratic agency tasked with managing the U.S. military's supply chains, including its hydrocarbon fuel purchases and distribution.

The U.S. military has long understood

that it isn't immune from the potential consequences of climate change—recognizing it as a "threat multiplier" that can exacerbate other risks.

Many, though not all, military bases have been preparing for climate change impacts like sea level rise. Nor has the military ignored its own contribution

to the problem. As we have previously shown, the military has invested in developing alternative energy sources like bio-fuels, but these make up only a tiny fraction of spending on fuels.

The U.S. military's climate policy remains contradictory. There have been attempts to "green" aspects of its operations by increasing renewable electricity generation on bases, but it remains the single largest institutional consumer of hydrocarbons in the world. It has also locked itself into hydrocarbon-based weapons systems for years to come, by depending on

existing aircraft and warships for open-ended operations.

Our study shows that action on climate change demands shuttering vast sections of the military machine. There are few activities on Earth as environmentally catastrophic as waging war. Significant reductions to the Pentagon's budget and shrinking its capacity to wage war would cause a huge drop in demand from the biggest consumer of liquid fuels in the world.

It does no good tinkering around the edges of the war machine's environmental impact.

The money spent procuring and distributing fuel across the U.S. empire could instead be spent as a peace dividend, helping to fund a Green New Deal in whatever form it might take.

There is no shortage of policy priorities that could use a funding bump. Any of these options would be better than fueling one of the largest military forces in history.

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# Blocking Trains and Removing Coal, Climate Activists Fight to Close One of New England's Largest Power Plants

By Sarah Freeman-Woolpert and Arnie Alpert

Under cover of darkness, dozens of #NoCoalNoGas climate activists snuck into the forest in the small town of Harvard, Mass. The air was buzzing with nervous excitement as the group filed along a dirt path next to railroad tracks, carrying heavy metal scaffolding. After half a mile of walking, the group set up camp and assembled the scaffolding into a 16-foot-tall metal structure above the train tracks.

Once the scaffolding was secured in place, the group formed a circle and joined hands. One of the activists placed a call to the railway's emergency number, alerting the dispatcher that there were people and a metal structure on the tracks. Four people were stationed a ways ahead, waving red flags to make sure the coal train would stop. And stop it did—waiting several costly hours for police to arrive and arrest the four activists who had climbed onto the scaffolding and refused to come down.

This blockade, which lasted through the night on Jan. 2, was just the latest action by a coalition of regional climate groups and activists calling themselves the #NoCoalNoGas campaign. With the aim of shutting down fossil fuel infrastructure—starting with Merrimack Station, New England's last coal-fired power plant without a shutdown date—the campaign has been leading



350 New Hampshire Action Field Organizer Emma Shapiro-Weiss poses at the fuel pile at Merrimack Station in New Hampshire. Photo: Twitter/Emma Shapiro-Weiss

actions across Massachusetts and New Hampshire since August.

As blockades surged in recent months, so too has the campaign. Escalating from symbolic actions to obstructing Merrimack Station's ability to operate—leading to dozens of arrests in the process—the #NoCoalNoGas campaign is mounting the most serious challenge to the plant since it opened in Bow, N.H., in 1960.

“What we're trying to do is to show that burning coal at this stage is completely unacceptable and won't be tolerated,” said Tim DeChristopher, one of the activists arrested at the Harvard blockade. “Coal trains can't roll through our communities anymore without being impeded.”

DeChristopher's group, the Climate Disobedience Center, or CDC, helped form the campaign, collaborating with 350 New Hampshire Action and a regional coalition of other climate action groups and individuals, including many first-time activists.

campaign of the 1970s, which fought to stop construction of the Seabrook Nuclear Power Plant in New Hampshire. In 1977, during the largest of several acts of mass civil disobedience, 1,415 people were arrested while occupying the construction site. While the Clamshell Alliance wasn't able to stop Seabrook, it sparked a national antinuclear movement that deserves credit for largely shutting down further nuclear construction, as well as inspiring a greater public understanding of nonviolent direct action.

The #NoCoalNoGas campaign could do for coal what Clamshell did for nuclear energy: build a blueprint for shutting down a dangerous industry through coordinated direct action.

## From #BucketByBucket to #TrainByTrain

Although many participants in the #NoCoalNoGas campaign are new to civil disobedience, the campaign's core organizers are veterans of nonviolent struggle. DeChristopher, who is a co-founder of the CDC, famously posed as a bidder at an oil and gas auction in 2008 to protest the sale of public lands—a stunt that landed him in prison for 21 months.

It's no surprise that the #NoCoalNoGas campaign began with a bit of surreptitious action, when a core group of activists decided to scout out the coal plant's layout firsthand. In August, five of them walked straight onto the grounds of the power plant to see it for themselves.

“After having a good look around, we went in and talked with some of the managers of the plant,” DeChristopher said. “We explained to them that we need to shut this plant down for the sake of the climate and our survival. They were pretty surprised that we were able to just walk right into the plant.”

On Aug. 17, the campaign launched its first action when eight activists removed over 500 pounds of coal in buckets from the power station grounds. Three days later, they dumped the buckets in front of the New Hampshire State House in Concord and told the media they were laying the responsibility for ending coal usage on the government's



doorstep.

A month later, on Sept. 28, dozens of people dressed in white tyvek suits and carrying plastic buckets tried to approach the coal pile at Merrimack Station. Met by police in riot gear, 67 were arrested and charged with criminal trespassing. They sang and drummed on buckets throughout the action, while 300 more rallied in the field across the street from the plant. According to the organizers, it was one of the largest environmental civil disobedience actions in New England since the Clamshell actions at Seabrook 40 years ago.

Seventy-six-year-old Espahbad Dodd was one of the bucket-bearing activists arrested that day. Having never taken such a risk before, he noted, “It just got to the point where it was time. I figured I don't have grandchildren, but I have lots of friends that do. I don't want to think about any responsibility I have for not leaving them a world in which they can live.”

The next major action took place in December. Shifting from #BucketByBucket to a rallying cry of #TrainByTrain, activists began blockading railroad tracks as trains carried shipments of coal through New England to Merrimack Station. The first blockades happened during the night of Dec. 7 and into the next day. Over 100 activists blockaded the train tracks at three different points along the route, beginning in Worcester and Ayer, Mass., and culminating with a third blockade in Hooksett, N.H. The coal train was delayed for several hours, resulting in 24 arrests on trespassing charges. Two people were further charged with resisting



Top: Tim DeChristopher blocking a coal train in Harvard, Mass. Bottom: #NoCoalNoGas activists march to the coal pile at Merrimack Station on Sept. 28, singing and drumming on buckets. Photo: Facebook/350 New Hampshire Action

arrest after refusing to come down from a railroad bridge.

Activists attempted to blockade the tracks again on Dec. 16 in West Boylston, Mass. However, despite calling the emergency dispatcher and waving red flags to signal the conductor, the coal train did not stop, and almost two dozen activists had to jump out of the way as the train barreled towards them.

The group remained undeterred, organizing another train blockade Dec. 28, when over 20 people in Worcester stood across the tracks. Ten were ultimately arrested, setting the stage for the scaffolding blockade in Harvard on Jan. 2.

“If [the Harvard blockade] had been an isolated action, then maybe it would feel like we didn't accomplish much,” said Cody Pajic, who was arrested at the blockade on Jan. 2. “But #NoCoalNoGas is a long-term strategic campaign, and when Bow finally shuts down, we'll know that the train blockades were part of the path that got us there.”

The train blockades embody

one of the campaign's guiding principles: that ordinary people can take matters into their own hands to disrupt fossil fuel infrastructure and address the climate emergency.

“We can stop these trains fairly easily,” DeChristopher said. “It's a very simple thing to do, and it needs to become commonplace.”

*A longer version of this article was originally published by [wagingnonviolence.org](http://wagingnonviolence.org), a source for news and analysis about struggles for peace and justice around the globe.*

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## Save the Whale, Save the Earth!

By Russell Wray

About 40 years ago, I bought a small pewter pin which remains one of my cherished possessions. The pin beautifully depicts that amazing creature, the sperm whale, with the words “Save the Whale ~ Save the Earth.”

Save the wWhales! That rallying call, which became a symbol for the early environmental movement of the seventies, was focused on the need to shut down commercial whaling, which had already pushed the Atlantic gray whale into extinction in the 18th century and was continuing to decimate other whale populations.

Now, decades later, whaling and a host of other human activities increasingly threaten the existence of the world's whales.

In the not-so-long run, I wonder if we will be able to save the whales ... or those other beautiful and inspiring creatures, the dolphins and porpoises, who along with the whales are known collectively as cetaceans. Although *Mind in the Waters: A Book to Celebrate the Consciousness of Whales and Dolphins* was published way back in 1975, and more recent research reinforces the notion that these animals do indeed possess intelligence, consciousness, and creativity, not much has changed in our treatment of them. I really wonder if we can save them, and ourselves, and the Earth ... from ourselves.

We have already failed to save the Yangtze river dolphin, which was declared functionally extinct in 2006, a victim of human activities and indifference.

Japan, Iceland, and Norway continue to kill whales for profit, despite the International Whaling Commission's 1982 moratorium on commercial whaling. A number of other nations engage in hunts, both “legal” and illegal, of whales and dolphins, including the infamously cruel dolphin slaughter at Taiji, Japan. Although the intentional killing of cetaceans most certainly is harming those targeted species, nowadays it is not their most serious threat.

Human-driven climate change poses an existential threat to all, or at least most of us, cetaceans included. This year, for example, has already seen, at the time of this writing, around 190 gray whales stranded along the West Coast, many of which

were severely malnourished. Grey whales migrate up the coast from their mating and calving grounds in Baja California to feed in the cold waters around Alaska. The trouble is, as our oceans warm and the ice recedes, so do the algae that grow on the underside of the ice. And it is this algae that are food for the tiny crustaceans that the whales feed upon. Biologists reported that half of the gray whales arriving in Mexico last fall were already malnourished, even before the start of their 11,000-mile journey back up to their feeding grounds.

Recent years have seen a number of similarly malnourished humpback whales stranding in Australia. This is because the population of the Antarctic krill, the whale's food, has been reduced by 80% since the 1970s largely due to the loss of sea ice. The climate crisis already is having very serious impacts on humpbacks and other cetaceans. As the oceans continue to warm, and acidify, these impacts, and perhaps others unknown at this time, will increase.

Another extremely serious problem these animals have to contend with is being incidentally caught in fishing operations, referred to as bycatch. It is estimated that hundreds of thousands of cetaceans are killed each year in fishing gear, and that number is increasing.

The vaquita, a small porpoise found in the northern Gulf of California, whose population plummeted from around 600 in 1997 to around 10 today, was decimated by gill nets. It is on the verge of extinction.

In the waters off the coast of Maine, where I live, is another critically endangered cetacean, the North Atlantic right whale. The number one cause of death in this species, responsible for 85% of deaths between 2010 and 2016, is entanglement in fishing gear. It is estimated that 83% of this population have been entangled at least once, and 59% more than once. Although most recent entanglements have involved Canadian crab-fishing gear, Maine lobster gear has also entangled right whales in the past. Yet, Maine's governor and entire congressional delegation, far more interested in protecting Maine's lobster industry and economy than whales, have recently appealed to Trump to intervene in federal rule making to protect right whales. This, despite the fact that scientists are predicting

*continued on page 16 ...*



Four #NoCoalNoGas campaign activists block a coal train near Worcester, Mass., Dec. 7. Photo: Twitter/Jay O'Hara



# Landmark Win in 'Fight for Habitable Future'

*Jury refuses to convict climate activists who presented necessity defense*

By Jake Johnson

Environmentalists celebrated a landmark victory in the “fight for a habitable future” Feb. 27 when a Portland, Ore., jury refused to convict five Extinction Rebellion activists—including valve turner Ken Ward—who presented the climate necessity defense at their trial for blocking a train track used by Zenith Energy to transport crude oil.

The activists emphasized that the win was only partial because the criminal trespassing case ended in a mistrial rather than a full acquittal. Just one of six jurors voted to convict the activists while the five others voted to acquit.

But Ward said the jury’s refusal to con-

April for building a garden on the tracks of Houston-based Zenith Energy’s railroad terminal in Portland to protest expansion of the fossil fuel infrastructure.

“The activists had been protesting the expansion of the oil terminal at a time when they say we should be dismantling fossil fuel infrastructure, not creating more,” the local radio station KOPB-FM reported at the time. “A few small mounds of soil extend onto the rail line—not much, but apparently enough to make it unusable. Activists also sat on the tracks.”

“Zenith Energy Corporation, and the city’s inability to shut it down, is the poster child for what is wrong with our system,” defendant Margaret Butler said in a statement Feb. 27. “We need to take note of the lessons learned by the labor movement—mass civil disobedience works. The climate crisis is a workers’ issue, we need to unite to shut down business as usual. Right now.”

Lauren Regan, lead attorney for the

*The jury’s refusal to convict even when presented with video evidence of the trespassing ‘is a vindication of our call for climate activists to use a climate necessity defense,’ which states that it is at times justified to break the law to combat the planetary crisis.*

vict even when presented with video evidence of the trespassing “is a vindication of our call for climate activists to use a climate necessity defense,” which states that it is at times justified to break the law to combat the planetary crisis.

“When citizens are told the truth about the climate crisis—which is the first of Extinction Rebellion’s demands—they take appropriate and responsible action, as our jury did, and we thank them,” said Ward.

The five activists were arrested last

group of activists, said it is now up to the Multnomah County district attorney’s office to decide whether to re-prosecute the climate campaigners.

“The jury’s inability to convict the activists,” said Regan, “reflects the prevailing community consciousness, which is unlikely to punish climate defenders for acts of nonviolent resistance.”

*This article was originally published at [commondreams.org](http://commondreams.org).*

*Jake Johnson is a staff writer for Common Dreams.*



The Zenith Five in court. ‘Zenith Energy Corporation, and the city’s inability to shut it down, is the poster child for what is wrong with our system,’ said defendant Margaret Butler. Photo: @RickRappaport2020



Methuselah, a Great Basin bristlecone pine, is the oldest living tree in the world at 4,851 years old. Its location is kept secret to protect it.

## Scientists Discover that Trees Have a ‘Heartbeat’

There is a huge number of living things on Earth, all with their own set of characteristics and unique ways of life. From the smallest ants up to the huge giraffes and elephants, one thing that everyone has in common is that they are alive! One type of living organism is plants and trees. While they may not walk around like other organisms, or have a kidney and liver, they do actually have their own set of organs, so to speak.

### The Secret Heartbeat

While a tree definitely doesn’t have a heart, the idea that they have their own beat and sense of rhythm isn’t as far-fetched as many people think. According to a study was headed by András Zlinszky, Bence Molnár and Anders S. Barfod from Hungary and Denmark, trees do in fact have a special type of beat within them which resembles that of a heartbeat. Who would have known?

To find this hidden heartbeat, the researchers used advanced monitoring techniques known as terrestrial laser scanning to survey the movement of 22 different types of trees. The results shocked everyone and revealed that at night, while the trees were sleeping, they often had a beat pulsating throughout their bodies, just as humans, and other living creatures do.

### What Is It?

While these pulses aren’t an actual heart beating, they effectively do the same job in keeping rhythm and pumping liquids around the organism. The pulses that the scientists discovered are actually the tree pumping and distributing water around its body, just as a heart pumps blood. It has long been assumed that trees distribute water via osmosis but this

new finding says otherwise. This could change the way humans see and understand trees forever; so many things could change now. The “heartbeats” themselves were quite slow and steady, with some occurring every few hours. Even so, it’s an amazing find that proves nature is far

*Trees do in fact have a special kind of beat within them, which resembles that of a heartbeat.*

more complex than anyone could have ever imagined.

It wasn’t just the heartbeat that the study discovered either; it also revealed that trees move quite a lot during the night, far more than people initially thought. As it turns out, a large number of species lowered their leaves up to 10 centimetres after the sun went down. When trees do this, it’s actually because they’re sleeping (another human/animal trait), and they enter their own type of circadian rhythm known as “circadian leaf movements,” which is incredibly interesting to watch.

Trees and plants are some of the most mysterious living organisms that harbor so much information and have plenty of secrets left to give up. Some even say that trees have the ability to cry and feel pain, both of which would change the world if true. There’s still so much we need to learn and more studies will hopefully reveal some more answers about the mysterious, yet mesmerizing world of plants, and trees.





Pito Maria Pito has been working for decades to protect Indigenous culture and the environment in the Colombian Andes.  
Photo: Daniel Henryk Rasolt

# ‘They Cannot Keep Us Silent’

*Colombian Indigenous leaders face persecution as they defend the rights of people and the environment*

By Daniel Henryk Rasolt

Maria Pito has dedicated her life to protecting “Uusdy’Ju Yajcha Umiñisa”—a Nasa Yuwe term that roughly translates to “the web of life.” A 52-year-old leader of the Nasa ethnic group from the town of Pitayo in the Colombian Andes, Pito founded an association called Mama Wala, or “Mother Earth,” in the early 1990s, driven by a concept of interconnectivity and the conservation of culture and the environment.

“Mama Wala promotes the rights and autonomy of Indigenous women and territory and the recuperation of lost and dying Nasa traditions,” Pito said.

For over 30 years, these rights have been the center of Mama Wala’s efforts.

Maria Pito’s principled actions have resulted in numerous threats within an ecologically critical and highly volatile region of Colombia. Pito and her family have been threatened on numerous occasions. Militant actors have killed her family members, and leaders of her own people have threatened her more than once, spurred by interests that they felt her activism compromised.

Pitayo is situated in southern Colombia’s Cauca department, the center of a complex ongoing conflict between guerrilla groups, neo-paramilitaries and criminal gangs, much of it involving disputes over territory and control of the drug trade.

These illegal groups also fight against or work alongside speculating multinational corporations and the Colombian military. There are a lot of blurred lines between all of these groups.

Cauca also harbors some of Colombia’s most invaluable ecosystems and watersheds. Some call it a “water factory,” where high-Andean cloud forests and *paramos*, a kind of moorland, give birth to some of the country’s most important river basins. The headwaters of the Cauca, Paez, and Jambalo Rivers, for example, are within the Cauca *paramos*, while Colombia’s principal river, the Magdalena, rises in the high mountains along the border between the Cauca and Huila departments, as does the critical Caqueta River that connects Andes and Amazon ecosystems.

*Paramos* exist at an altitude between 3,000 to 5,000 meters. More than 50% of the world’s *paramos* are in Colombia, and an estimated 70% of Colombians depend on *paramos* for clean drinking water. These landscapes are also rich in endemic biodiversity, especially birds and plants, and function as buffers against the impacts of climate change, such as melting mountain glaciers and extended droughts. *Paramos*, however, are also threatened by climate change and human land use, especially road-building, mining, grazing, and agriculture.

In Cauca, these essential watersheds are within the ancestral territories of resilient Indigenous groups who still fight for their protection.

Constitutionally recognized autonomous Indigenous territories in Cauca, concentrated in the highlands of the Central Cordillera of the Andes, house the second largest Indigenous population in Colombia.

Seventy percent of the 300,000 Indigenous people in Cauca belong to the Nasa (often referred to as Paez), followed by the Yanacona and Misak. Self-identifying as the “children of water and the grandchildren of thunder,” the Nasa are known as active defenders of their rights and territories. Many national human rights and environmental rights movements and protests, such as Colombia’s recent “National Strike,” have been sparked or fortified by the “mingas” (which translates as collective work or communal actions) and “Indigenous guard” of the Nasa.

But Cauca is also at the confluence of some of Colombia’s most notorious militant and illicit economic forces. The climate and mountainous terrain of Cauca is ideal for growing and hiding marijuana and

*Militant actors have killed her family members, and leaders of her own people have threatened her more than once.*

coca plantations. The relatively easy access to the city of Cali and the “legal” industries of the Valle de Cauca department, such as sugar cane and construction material, keep the money flowing. The isolated rivers, such as the Naya River, allow for the trafficking of drugs from the Andean slopes—or all the way from the Amazonian departments of Putumayo and Caqueta—through the mountains of Cauca, and to the coast for export. Illegal gold mining is also a pervasive scourge in the region.

There remains almost no state presence in the highlands of Cauca. The department was a former stronghold of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC. Drug trafficking and illegal gold min-

ing funded much of their activities. Many groups, including FARC dissidents, still-active National Liberation Army Marxist Guerillas, the “New Sinaloa Cartel,” neo-paramilitaries, and less organized gangs of drug traffickers are now vying for control of this “corridor” after a power vacuum formed following the 2016 Peace Accords between the FARC and the Colombian government and subsequent lack of implementation.

Some compromised Indigenous leaders agreed to be complicit in certain endeavors, such as the expanded planting of coca (a traditionally sacred plant for the Nasa) and marijuana or mining and road building, within and through their territories. They did this presumably to reap certain financial benefits or to avoid conflict at a particular time. Once these forces were allowed to enter, however, it was and remains a dangerous proposition to try to remove them.

“All combined, this has made Cauca, especially the northern and western parts of the area, a strategic corridor for drug trafficking, and created a ‘perfect storm’ that explains present and past conflict in the region,” geographer Juan Gonzalez explained to me at Cauca University in Popayan.

For those reasons, the area has been plagued by conflict for decades, and Indigenous communities have found themselves at the center of it.

Consequently, Nasa leaders are consistently among the most threatened, kidnapped, displaced, and assassinated social leaders in notoriously dangerous Colombia.

Pito knows these realities well. “I was first abducted by the since-defunct M19 guerillas, whose leaders unsuccessfully tried to indoctrinate me,” she told me of an experience back in the 1980s. “Soon after that I was questioned by the Colombian army, who accused me of being a revolutionary.”

Despite those and many other hardships, Pito’s social activism has begun to leave its mark in Pitayo. With Mama Wala, Pito addressed the unjust suppression of Indigenous women as income earners, both by challenging male-dominated Indigenous governance and through broader movements supporting women’s rights in Colombia. This was at a critical time when

many Indigenous men were being threatened and forced into Colombia’s conflict.

Mama Wala has also recovered many Nasa traditions of weaving, language, symbolism, native seeds, and traditional medicine practices (Pito is also a trained nurse). The “Cuatandera,” a Nasa representation of the stages of existence from the communal fireplace to the *paramos* and the sky, is one deep cultural heritage that Pito has helped recover and preserve through the Mama Wala group. “Recovering the weaving techniques and symbolism of the Cuatandera has also helped us to strengthen our families, language, traditions, territory, and communal de-

*continued on page 16...*



# Colombia

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fense of the paramos,” she said.

“We have largely been able to keep the drug trafficking and illicit crop cultivation that intoxicates surrounding territories and threatens the vital Pisxnu Paramo out of Pitayo, for now,” Pito said emphatically. “The paramos and rivers that are born from them weave together the essence of our culture, our health, our connection to our ancestors, and our relationship to other people and living beings. They must be protected.”

Pito’s most recent fight focused on a road building and mining initiative within the paramo and sub-paramo ecosystems concentrated around the sacred mountain El Peñón.

The expanded dirt road in question connects the high-conflict region of Jambalo in Northern Cauca with the municipality of Silvia and will intersect a soon-to-be paved road through the Pisxnu Paramo and Nasa and Misak territories. This new network of easily transversable roads through fragile ecosystems and a high-conflict corridor for drug trafficking will undoubtedly have numerous social and environmental consequences.

Pito’s struggle did not focus on the actual construction and expansion of the road, however, but on the 54 hectares of land around El Peñón granted for mining concessions, officially for construction material for the road.

El Peñón is a large granite rock that sits between high Andean forest and sub-paramo at around 3,000 meters, just below the Pisxnu Paramo. The slopes of El Peñón are described as an “estrella

fluvial,” or fluvial star, which means that it’s the source of many rivers and streams. These rivers flow into the massive Cauca and Magdalena River Basins, making El Peñón a high-priority area for conservation.

The cultural significance of El Peñón is equally profound. As Pito explained, “El Peñón is a sacred natural and historical site for the Nasa, where we pay respects to Mama Wala and where Nasa warriors once expelled Spanish conquistadors.”

Pito also questions the true intentions of the mining operation. Geomorphological maps reveal that El Peñón and the land immediately around it are dense in ancient volcanic fluvial metamorphic rocks likely rich in valuable mineral deposits like gold, platinum, and rare-earth metals. Pito says mining experts were clan-

destinely brought in to determine points of extraction.

In May 2018, after rallying the approximately 400 Nasa from a “vereda” (settlement) adjacent to El Peñón called Buena Vista, Pito, her 30-year-old son Wilson, and others successfully expelled the corporation that was tearing apart the mountain. They did so by demonstrating the clear violation of two Colombian laws: First, the “Second Law of 1959” prohibits mining in forest reserves and fragile paramo ecosystems, and second, Indigenous communities have no obligation to provide road-building materials when roads are built through their territories.

Of course, the Nasa governor of Pitayo at the time had illegally sold away these rights. As a result, Pito, Wilson, her brother Edilberto, and one other Nasa

leader were threatened and blocked from participation in Indigenous governance for 10 years. But that hasn’t stopped Pito and other Nasa leaders from continuing to fight for the survival of her people and the land on which they depend.

“They cannot keep us silent,” said Pito. “If four of us are not allowed to speak, six more will come and fight for the web of life.”

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Colombian highlands are the source of some of the country’s most important river systems.

## Save the Whale

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that this magnificent whale will be functionally extinct within 20 years should we fail to significantly reduce human-caused deaths. Money doesn’t talk; it screams!

By now many of us have seen the increasingly common, but still very disturbing news photos of dead cetaceans next to piles of plastic bags and other plastic debris that had filled their stomachs and eventually killed them. And what of orca populations, including the highly endangered southern resident pods in Puget Sound, who, at the top of the food chain, are accumulating so many PCBs in their body tissue that when one dies, its body literally has to be treated as hazardous waste? Scientists are predicting these pollutants may bring about the collapse of orca populations globally in as little as 30–50 years. Plastic and chemical pollution is definitely taking its toll on cetaceans.

Whales continue to be injured and killed by being struck by ships. After entanglement, ship-strikes are the second leading cause of mortalities in the aforementioned North Atlantic right whale. As shipping worldwide is increasing, it is likely that so will ship-strikes.

This global increase in shipping brings

with it another problem: all that noise from all those ships is making the oceans much noisier than they used to be, and that noise is doubling every decade. Because much of shipping noise is in the lower frequencies, it propagates through the water over long distances, affecting the creatures in those waters. Add to this the extremely intense noise from oil and gas industry seismic surveys, where numerous airguns blast simultaneously every 10 seconds, 24 hours a day for weeks or months at a time, filling entire ocean basins with noise. Imagine how that cacophony mushrooms when multiply surveys are occurring. Throw in all the noise from other commercial, recreational, and military activities, and we have a real problem. Given the fact that cetaceans are acoustically oriented—that they “see” the oceans, their social group, their mates, their food, and the things that threaten them primarily through sound—all of this human-produced noise is seriously impacting cetacean survivability.

Speaking of noise and things military, naval sonar continues to wreak havoc on the lives of cetaceans. This was well illustrated in the Northeast Atlantic last year, where subsequent to the UK Defense Minister’s announcement of a tenfold increase in Russian submarine activity, NATO warships engaged in a spate of

anti-submarine warfare maneuvers involving sonar. In the following weeks, over 80 dead beaked whales, the majority of them Cuvier’s beaked whales (frequent victims of naval sonar) washed ashore on the coasts of Ireland, Scotland, and Iceland. These whales had died at sea and drifted with the currents over a period of weeks before landing on a beach.

Scientists have estimated, based on this number, that as many as 1,000 whales may have been killed. The population of Cuvier’s beaked whales in the Northeast Atlantic prior to this event had been estimated at 2,286, meaning that a little under half the population may have been wiped out by NATO sonar in a matter of weeks.

Considering the fact that the United States and other navies use sonar in exercises and warfare around the world, this too is a real threat to cetacean, as well as other marine life. Though we have known this for decades now, precious little has changed—those in power inevitably attempt to justify sonar use, always under the pretext of “national security”—which doesn’t talk, it swears!

Taken together, all of these various human activities, including some that I didn’t address here, pose an enormous threat to the continued existence of cetaceans. It is very likely that the vaquita will soon follow the Yangtze River dol-

phin and Atlantic gray whale into extinction. Will the North Atlantic right whale and others be forced off this planet as well, disappeared and gone forever?

The fact that humanity is looking for signs of intelligent life “out there” in the universe while at the same time showing so little regard for some of the most intelligent, self-aware and conscious animals right here on Earth has always struck me as extremely strange, and sad. We have only begun to understand how deep those qualities are embedded in some cetaceans. It may be that we humans could learn a lot from cetaceans, these fellow Earthlings. Will we have that opportunity?

As Native American leader Chief Seattle is purported to have said: “Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.”

I believe this is true. We need to make some serious changes, and very quickly, in the way we are treating the cetacean strand, and so many other strands in that still beautiful, but rapidly unraveling web of life.

Save the Whale ~ Save the Earth!

*Russell Wray is a sculptor, print-maker, and activist living in Maine. He co-founded and volunteers with Citizens Opposing Active Sonar Threats and is an associate member of Veterans For Peace.*



# Bernie Sanders Was Right About the Cuban Literacy Campaign

By Catherine Murphy

The corporate media have long been looking for ways to discredit Bernie Sanders, and they settled on a surprising statement he made in the 1980s during his tenure as mayor of Burlington when he said, “We have a lot to learn from Cuba.”

Ironically, in 2016, President Obama said something quite similar, expressly celebrating Cuba’s hard-won national education system. He said:

“Every child in Cuba gets a basic education. That’s a huge improvement from where it was. Medical care, the life expectancy of Cubans, is equivalent to the United States, despite it being a very poor country, because they have access to healthcare. That’s a huge achievement.”

This followed Obama’s historic announcement, in December 2014, that the United States would change course from decades of hostile foreign policy toward Cuba, saying that the U.S. embargo on Cuba had not achieved its goals. Obama said that the United States would take steps to re-establish diplomatic relations with Cuba and embark on a path of learning to live as neighboring nations, respecting our many differences and collaborate in areas of joint interest.

I spent 10 years recording stories of the youngest women teachers from the 1961 Cuban Literacy Campaign, learning about this experience through the eyes of a multiracial group of Cuban women, who were adolescent girls at the time. Their stories are a powerful testament to the real possibility of a nation overcoming illiteracy and to the personal transformations that can happen in the process.

The first huge leap toward building the Cuban national education system began in September 1960, when Fidel Castro announced to the U.N. General Assembly that the country would become free of illiteracy within one year. This was a seemingly impossible task.

Following this statement to the United Nations, Cuba made an open call for volunteer teachers. Over 250,000 people came forward. It was voluntary to participate, both for the teachers and the students. The volunteer applicants under 18 years of age were required to submit written permission from both of their parents to take part in the campaign.

Obtaining parental consent was often difficult for the girls, as the work violated gender norms of the day. But many of them entered into an intense period of negotiation with their parents, which in itself was a major departure from the confines of the patriarchal family structure of Cuba at a time, when many young women could not leave their homes without the presence of a chaperone.

Fifty thousand young women were successful in securing their parents’ permission and embarked upon a groundbreaking path for Cuban women as they left home for the first time.

They went for a two-week training period at the beachside town of Varadero, which had previously been an exclusive resort for the wealthy. Along with methods for teaching literacy, they learned how to give basic health instructions such as how long to boil drinking water and how to make latrines. They were given hammocks, kerosene lanterns, and two books that would guide their teaching experience: *la cartilla* and *el manual*, lesson plan and teacher guide.

The first section of the teacher guide, under “General Orientation” says:

“Establish friendly relationships with your students of cordial respect, because they need your help. Show concern for their problems. Understand them and encourage them so they don’t lose hope. Remember that many of your students may have limitations with their vision or hearing that makes it more challenging to learn. Don’t give orders.”

The literacy campaign was the top-priority issue of the nation in 1961. Every institution played a role. The pilot pro-

*By the end of 1961, Cuba had reduced illiteracy from 20% to under 4%, making it one of the most successful literacy campaigns in the world.*

gram of volunteer teachers had been in the mountains for a year, and these teachers served as counselors and guides for the multitudes of young teachers who began to arrive in remote mountain regions.

They lived with rural families, working with them during the daytime and teaching classes on nights and weekends. They taught their students how to write the alphabet and sign their names, helping them leave behind humiliating experiences of signing land titles and other essential documents with an X. In the testimonies I recorded, the literacy workers told me stories of teaching mountain people who didn’t know they lived on an island, or who didn’t know the Earth was round.

There were complexities and challenges. Rural life was hard for the students. They had to adapt to living without electricity and running water, wash their clothes in the river, and use the woods or an outdoor latrine instead of an urban bathroom. They received very small stipends, which they often talked about turning over to their host families, but it was often not enough to make up for the



Participants in the Cuban Literacy Campaign march in December 1961.  
Photo: Liborio Noval, used with permission.

chronic undernourishment that those rural families faced. Many of the teachers described eating only rice, only sweet potatoes, or in one case, only mangoes for days upon end.

And there were teaching challenges. Some husbands did not want their wives to take the classes, especially from male teachers. They also had to navigate—and attempt to bridge—the vast social divides of race, class, gender, and urban-rural cultural differences and mistrust.

But the testimonies that I collected over a decade reveal how profoundly the young teachers were transformed in the process, and reveal a story of what great feats are possible when people come together to solve pressing social problems. Many of the women said their experience

gram in which the newly literate adults could continue learning through sustained campaigns to achieve third-grade reading levels, then sixth-grade reading levels, and then ninth-grade levels, which is now the standard minimum across the nation.

Many of the young teachers fell in love with the experience of teaching in 1961. Thousands of them went on to dedicate their lives to education across various specialties.

One of the original teachers, Leonela Relys, who was 13 years old in 1961, went on to specialize in adult literacy. Her life’s work became focused on developing a methodology called “Yo Sí Puedo” (Yes I Can”), which has now been used in over 30 countries around the world in multiple languages, winning the King Sejong Literacy Prize from UNESCO in 2006 for advancing “individual and social potential through innovative teaching methods” around the globe. The methodology involves training facilitators who guide students through a series of audio-visual classes specifically developed together with each community to be culturally relevant, appropriate, and meaningful for each context.

Through Relys’ work, Cuba’s literacy project thus not only transformed Cuba, it has also benefited Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela, Spain, Angola, South Africa, Jamaica, Aboriginal communities in Australia, Maori communities in New Zealand, and First Nations communities in Canada. Yo Sí Puedo methodology has been used with Indigenous languages including Quechua and Aymara in Bolivia, and in Haiti through an innovative radio program in Haitian Creole.

Politicians such as Sen. Marco Rubio and corporate media pundits like Anderson Cooper have expressed shock at Bernie Sanders’ decades-old statement that Cuba’s literacy project is something to emulate, but Sanders was absolutely right to say that the United States can learn from Cuba on the question of literacy and education.

A CIA fact sheet claims that the United States is 99% literate, but major national studies show a different picture. In 2003, the National Assessment of Adult Liter-

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# Next Irish Government Needs to Restore Neutrality



By John Lannon

According to its Department of Foreign Affairs, Ireland's foreign policy is based on a set of core principles that include the maintenance of peace and security as enshrined in the U.N. Charter; promoting and protecting Ireland's interests abroad; respect for and the promotion of human rights; and a commitment to the rule of international law. Over the past two decades these commitments have been eroded, however. This has been particularly evident in two key areas. The first is Ireland's participation in the European Union's Permanent Structured Cooperation initiative on security and defence (PESCO). This is the part of the EU's security and defence policy (CSDP) in which 25 of the 27 national armed forces pursue structural integration. PESCO member-states are expected to increase defense budgets, provide troops for use in EU Battle-Groups, and join "structures partaking in European external action in the military field." The second clear and obvious breach of Ireland's commitment to the maintenance of peace and the rule of international law is the ongoing use of Shannon Airport on the west coast by the U.S. military. The effective transformation of Shannon into a U.S. forward operating base in 2002/2003 was, and still is, deeply offensive to the majority of Irish people. In allowing it to be used for the illegal invasion and occupation of Iraq, the Irish government at the time was guided more by a desire to accede to the demands of the Bush administration than to serve the interests or wishes of its own people. Almost two decades later, U.S. military and military-contracted planes

still pass through Shannon on a daily basis.

As the country's political parties now come together post-election to try to negotiate a program for government, there is a golden opportunity to address departures from the stated principles of Irish foreign policy. This policy has always been predicated on a position of neutrality. It too has been eroded, with recent governments referring to a notion of "military neutrality," which is narrowly

*Ireland's ... involvement in Europe's security and defense industry reduces its standing as an honest broker in world affairs.*

defined as non-membership in military alliances. The terms "military neutrality" and "neutrality" are now used interchangeably in public opinion analysis and policy statements, thus leading to a lack of clarity over what exactly our role is in international affairs.

It is now time for the political parties in Ireland to ensure the stated principles of our foreign policy position are reflected in the next program for government. There are four key steps that need to be taken to give effect to this. They are:

1. End the use of Irish airports, airspace, seaports, and territorial waters by foreign powers preparing for or engaging in war or

other armed conflict, and in particular an end to the U.S. military use of Shannon Airport and Irish airspace for such purposes;

2. Commit to ending Ireland's participation in military exercises and deployments not mandated and operated by the United Nations, including NATO, EU, and other multilateral exercises and deployments;

3. Revoke Ireland's ratification of PESCO, and cease all involvement in European Defense Agency programs;

4. Protect and copper-fasten Irish neutrality, by holding a referendum to amend the constitution to give effect to this, and/or the codification of neutrality in domestic legislation.

As noted by European and Irish foreign policy expert Karen Devine in 2008, the Irish public have consistently adhered to a clearcut concept of active or positive neutrality. This embodies the following characteristics: peace promotion, non-aggression, the primacy of the United Nations, and the confinement of state military activity to U.N. peacekeeping, not being involved in wars, and maintaining Ireland's independence, identity, and independent foreign policy decision-making, particularly in the context of "big power" pressure. This commitment to neutrality was confirmed in a 2016 Red C poll in which 57% of respondents said that Ireland's neutrality should be enshrined in the constitution.

The form of neutrality favored by the majority of Irish people goes beyond the concept of military neutrality. It also accords with traditional norms and international law on neutrality.

The 2016 Red C poll also confirmed that the majority of Irish people believe

that the Irish government should not allow the U.S. military to use Shannon Airport for military transit purposes.

The next Irish government needs to accede to the wishes of the Irish people and to restore Irish neutrality.

Ireland's participation in PESCO undermines the support of the Irish people for an active neutrality. Furthermore, the European Defense Agency, which is the brainchild of the multi-billion-euro European arms industry, is likely to lead us down the road of participation in an EU army. Ireland should resist this.

Ireland's history of peacekeeping gives it significant potential in conflict resolution, but involvement in Europe's security and defense industry reduces its standing as an honest broker in world affairs. The damage being done to our global environment by military forces and unjustified wars endangers all of humanity. Restoring Irish neutrality is the safest and most progressive way to promote and protect Ireland's interests abroad, and more important, the interests of humanity as a whole. The time has come for an Irish government that will develop and deliver a principled and independent foreign policy that promotes peace and justice and has active/positive neutrality at its heart. The devastating human consequences of policies that support military interventions are clear in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen, and other parts of the Middle East. It's time Ireland did something to break this cycle and stopped facilitating war.

*John Lannon is a founding member of Shannonwatch, a group of peace and human rights activists that opposes the U.S. military use of Shannon Airport. See [www.shannonwatch.org](http://www.shannonwatch.org).*



# U.S. Army Invades Virus-Plagued Europe

By Bruce Gagnon

In the midst of a staggering virus epidemic that has shut much of Europe down, the United States began sending 30,000 Army troops throughout Europe for war games known as Exercise DEFENDER-Europe 20.

According to the U.S. European Command (EUCOM), “Exercise DEFENDER-Europe 20 is the deployment of a division-size combat-credible force from the United States to Europe, the drawing of equipment and the movement of personnel and equipment across the theater to various training areas.

“U.S.-based equipment will leave from ports in four states and arrive in six European countries. This will require the support of tens of thousands of service members and civilians in multiple nations.

“U.S. service members will then spread out across the region to establish intermediate staging bases with multinational forces and participate in various annual exercises.

“DEFENDER-Europe 20 is the largest deployment of U.S.-based forces to Europe for an exercise in the more than 25 years.”

Peace groups in Europe are now demanding that these provocative war games be cancelled but so far the U.S. military is ignoring these legitimate concerns. On March 13, the German Bundeswehr command announced a decision to withdraw German troops from DEFENDER-Europe 20 due to the spread of corona-virus. The main training venue is training grounds in Poland and Germany.



As the soldiers emerged from their transport planes they shook the hands of U.S. and European military officials welcoming them to the hot bed of corona-virus.

The departure of the Bundeswehr from DEFENDER-Europe 20 means a stop on the entire supply line of military equipment and weapons for the exercises. According to Agence France Presse, the further transfer of American soldiers to exercises from the United States through German airports has been stopped. This means the actual curtailment of the exercises.

U.S. European Command (EUCOM) announced that the number of U.S. troops participating in DEFENDER-Europe 20 was being cut back, although several U.S. units have already arrived and moved into position in NATO alliance states.

“In light of the current corona-virus outbreak, we will modify the exercise by reducing the number of U.S. participants,” the EUCOM statement said. “Activities asso-

ciated with the exercise will be adjusted accordingly, and we’ll work closely with allies and partners to meet our highest priority training objectives.”

As part of a modified war exercise, they expect that an armored brigade combat team already deployed to Europe will conduct gunnery and other combined training together with Allies.

Ostensibly this massive war game is to “protect” the people of Europe from the exaggerated “threat” from an attack by Russia. Of course that is total nonsense. The NATO, led by the United States, is in fact threatening Russia, and when these wars games are over, much of the military hardware delivered there will be left in large new “storage depot” bases located in Poland and other locations near Russian borders.

The United States will likely be leaving something much more dangerous during these exercises. There is no way in hell that during this current pandemic many of these troops won’t become carriers of the virus. What message is being sent to the people of Italy, Germany, or France that they should lock themselves inside their homes while U.S. troops play war throughout Europe?

*What message is being sent to the people of Italy, Germany, or France that they should lock themselves inside their homes while U.S. soldiers play war?*

And what happens when these likely contaminated troops return to the United States—to be fanned out across this nation—bringing home the contagion that they carry inside their bursting patriotic chests which now are loaded with the virus?

Meanwhile, preparations for war games called Aurora 20 are continuing according to plan. Aurora 20—the largest military exercise in years—will include a debut of the Pentagon’s Patriot missile system and is due to take place in Sweden from May 11 to June 7. Preparations already include transport of equipment and soldiers to Sweden.

When will the world begin to realize that the USA is not here to help you?

Bruce K. Gagnon is a member of the Maine chapter of VFP and he is the Coordinator of Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space.

## Cuban Literacy

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acy, sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics, found that one in five U.S. adults (21%) do not have sufficient English literacy skills to complete tasks that require comparing and contrasting information, paraphrasing, or making low-level inferences. This translates into 43 million U.S. adults who possess low literacy skills. The researchers explained that people categorized by the study as “functionally illiterate” lacked the basic reading and writing skills necessary to manage ordinary, everyday tasks, such as filling out a job application.

From 2011 to 2014, the Program for the International

Assessment of Adult Competencies, conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, carried out a large-scale international assessment that set out to measure literacy, numeracy, and digital problem-solving. Their results placed study participants in the lowest two categories.

Those 43 million U.S. adults with unmet literacy needs have difficulty navigating complex documents that have critical importance in their lives, such as forms related to healthcare, health information, mortgages, and bank loans, and of course, voting ballots.

The mainstream U.S. narrative frames illiteracy as an individualized problem, placing blame on individuals who suffer low literacy. And they often blame themselves. But a 20% low-literacy rate in the United States indicates a systemic problem that requires collective strategies toward solutions.

One of the key strengths of the Cuban campaign was to reframe illiteracy as a collective issue and to encourage all people to participate, bringing together those who had the opportunity to be educated with those who had not in order to overcome a national problem. The results and the stories speak volumes.

Bernie Sanders was right when he said the United States has important things to learn from Cuba about literacy.

*Originally published by Truthout.*

Catherine Murphy is founder and director of The Literacy Project. Her documentary *Maestra* explores the 1961 Cuban Literacy Campaign through the eyes of the youngest women teachers. Her oral history archive of testimonies on the Literacy Campaign is housed at the University of North Carolina Wilson Library.



Five female literacy volunteers return to Havana at the end of the literacy campaign in December 1961. Photographer unknown



# U.S. Sanctions Lead to Global Rise in Coronavirus

## *Big Pharma and Healthcare for Profit Hold Lives Hostage*

By Sara Flounders

As COVID-19 (coronavirus) spreads, it is a clear reminder that germs and viruses don't respect national boundaries in an interconnected world. But the mainstream press has certainly not publicized how corporate capitalism and imperialism cross national boundaries to destroy people's health.

On a global scale, the connection of the largest U.S. pharmaceutical corporations to U.S. sanctions policies—whether signed by executive order, voted for in the U.S. Congress or pushed by U.S. ambassadors through the U.N. Security Council—demands careful scrutiny.

Consider the role of Josh Black. He was U.S. head of sanctions and counterterrorism enforcement at the United Nations from 2008 to 2016 under the Obama administration; then Black joined the Trump administration's National Security Council.

Black's stated role was coordinating "peacekeeping operations" and sanctions policies passed by the U.N. Security Council—measures calculated to strangle economies and ruin lives in Iran, North Korea, Libya, Syria, Yemen, and Sudan.

Josh Black now represents the giant medical corporations that hold people's lives hostage to profits. He is still based at the U.N., now as vice president of one of this country's most powerful lobbying organizations. PhRMA—short for Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America and also known as Big Pharma—is the global lobby for the U.S. pharmaceutical industry.

Josh Black is just one of thousands of lobbyists and government officials who rotate in and out of lobbying



and government positions. Their role changes very little from appointment to appointment; it is always about setting and enacting policies, laws and regulations that benefit capitalist corporations.

PhRMA is often called the war criminal of public health. It represents the world's largest pharmaceutical companies, including Merck, Eli Lilly, Pfizer, Bayer and Bristol-Myers Squibb. It is part of a coalition of insurance providers, pharmaceuticals, and investor-owned hospitals in the Partnership for America's Health Care Future.

PhRMA is the organizational think tank behind the push to derail "healthcare for all" campaigns at national and state levels. It has spent \$28 million on lobbying, arguing that the U.S. government can't pay for a nationalized health care system. As PhRMA sees it, hospitals, drugs, medical equipment, and all forms of health care, along with every government service, must be a source of private and corporate profit.

Just how far these capitalist medical and food industries will go, and what kinds of brutal threats they are prepared to make to enhance their profits, can be seen by their actions around breastfeeding.

The World Health Organization estimates that breast-



Veterans For Peace members at the St. Pat's For All parade in Queens, NY, March 1. Photo: Ellen Davidson

feeding infants would save the lives of 820,000 children under five annually. To educate the public, WHO wanted to pass a nonbinding resolution encouraging breastfeeding at the May 2018 U.N. World Health Assembly in Geneva. The resolution called on governments to "protect, promote, and support breastfeeding" and for policymakers to restrict the promotion of unhealthy food products.

Ecuador was scheduled to introduce this resolution. The U.S. officials at the meeting quietly threatened to unleash harsh economic sanctions on Ecuador's critical trade goods and on scheduled aid just for introducing a nonbinding U.N. resolution.

Finally Russia, already sanctioned, agreed to introduce the breastfeeding resolution. But language calling for an end to "inappropriate promotion of foods for infants and young children" was removed after the United States reportedly threatened to cut its contributions to WHO.

### Sanctions Target Healthcare Globally

More than 39 countries are currently under U.S. economic sanctions—more than one-third of the world's population. But as in the case of Ecuador, every country can be routinely threatened with economic strangulation for the smallest attempt to limit U.S. profits.

Powerful corporations' very existence is based on expanding the price of medicines and creating shortages of doctors, drugs and hospitals. Nationalized health care programs around the world threaten their profit taking. Developing countries that have invested substantial resources in dramatically improving health standards and medical access are an increasing target of U.S. corporations.

The destruction of public health caused by U.S.-imposed economic sanctions is extensively documented. Denial of medicine and nutritious food has been measured in painful detail in Iraq, Iran, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Zimbabwe, and Venezuela, including preventable deaths and stunted growth of children.

As the COVID-19 outbreak continues to spread worldwide, the impact of U.S. sanctions on health care threatens to thwart attempts to contain the disease. U.S. sanctions have severely hampered Iran's efforts to respond to the outbreak, limiting access to medical supplies, test kits, and information about the virus.

Before the U.S. hit Iran with the harshest sanctions ever, Iran had an advanced, free health care system in place. There was also a system of private health care.

The Iranian government has focused on expanding basic healthcare ever since the Iranian revolution in 1979 nationalized oil and gas resources. The government became the main provider of healthcare with an extensive network of primary, secondary, and tertiary services.

There is a vast network of over 17,000 Health Houses—neighborhood health clinics for immunizations, pre- and postnatal care and urgent care needs. The Health Houses provided free contraception and other family planning tools lacking in many neighboring countries.

The intensification of sanctions and the resulting hyperinflation have undermined decades of progress.

The rapid spread of COVID-19 in Iran confirms that U.S.-imposed sanctions on a third of the world's people will quickly impact the whole global population.

### Devastating Healthcare in Iraq, Libya, Syria

U.S. wars have caused widespread destruction in Iraq, Libya, and Syria. Prior to the wars, these three countries were the most modern, secular states in the Middle East and North Africa, with the best records on women's rights, standard of living, and free, accessible healthcare.

In 2003, after imposing 13 years of devastating sanctions, the U.S. invaded Iraq. During the decade of direct military occupation, the U.S. forces of occupation did not build any hospitals. But they did build military bases throughout Iraq and in Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Saudi Arabia.

In Libya in 2011, the objective of seven months of U.S./NATO bombing was not to help the Libyan people. It was outright piracy—to gain control of Libya's natural resources. Libya had the highest standard of living in Africa, using its nationalized oil wealth to sustain progressive social welfare programs for all Libyans. The population enjoyed not only free healthcare and education to the college level, but also free electricity and interest-free loans.

NATO declared that its mission in Libya has been "one of the most successful in NATO history." Now all institutions of higher education, even medical schools, are closed. Hospitals have been looted. Cities are in ruins.

Following the massive bombing of Libya, the United States has not rebuilt any of Libya's infrastructure. But it has built new U.S. military bases in Seychelles, Kenya, South Sudan, Niger, and Burkina Faso, along with numerous secret bases throughout Africa.

Syria is another example of the targeted destruction of national healthcare. Syria had an advanced network of primary health care at three levels—village, district and provincial—and thousands of trained doctors and medical personnel.

Beginning in 2011, Syria was faced with a vast influx of U.S.-funded mercenary forces determined to overthrow the government. Syria saw the destruction of medical facilities, deterioration in the functioning of medi-

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# Stop Tightening the Thumb Screws

By Kathy Kelly

U.S. sanctions against Iran, cruelly strengthened in March of 2018, continue a collective punishment of extremely vulnerable people. Presently, the U.S. “maximum-pressure” policy severely undermines Iranian efforts to cope with the ravages of COVID-19, causing hardship and tragedy while contributing to the global spread of the pandemic. On March 12, 2020, Iran’s Foreign Minister Jawad Zarif urged U.N. member-states to end the United States’ unconscionable and lethal economic warfare.

Addressing U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres, Zarif detailed how U.S. economic sanctions prevent Iranians from importing necessary medicine and medical equipment.

For over two years, while the United States bullied other countries to refrain from purchasing Iranian oil, Iranians have coped with crippling economic decline.

The devastated economy and worsening coronavirus outbreak now drive migrants and refugees, who number in the millions, back to Afghanistan at dramatically increased rates.

In the past two weeks alone, more than 50,000 Afghans returned from Iran, increasing the likelihood that cases of coronavirus will surge in Afghanistan. Decades of war, including U.S. invasion and occupation, have decimated Afghanistan’s healthcare and food distribution systems.

Jawad Zarif asks the United Nations to prevent the use of hunger and disease as a weapon of war. His let-

ter demonstrates the wreckage caused by many decades of U.S. imperialism and suggests revolutionary steps toward dismantling the U.S. war machine.

During the United States’ 1991 “Desert Storm” war against Iraq, I was part of the Gulf Peace Team—at first, living in a “peace camp” set up near the Iraq-Saudi border and later, following our removal by Iraqi troops, in a Baghdad hotel which formerly housed many journalists. Finding an abandoned typewriter, we melted a candle onto its rim, (the U.S. had destroyed Iraq’s electrical stations, and most of the hotel rooms were pitch black). We compensated for an absent typewriter ribbon by placing a sheet of red carbon paper over our stationery. When Iraqi authorities realized we managed to type our document, they asked if we would type their letter to the secretary general of the United Nations. (Iraq was so beleaguered even cabinet-level officials lacked typewriter ribbons.) The letter to Javier Perez de Cuellar implored the United Nations to prevent the United States from bombing a road between Iraq and Jordan, the only way out for refugees and the only way in for humanitarian relief. Devastated by bombing and already bereft of supplies, Iraq was, in 1991, only one year into a deadly sanctions regime that lasted for 13 years before

the United States began its full-scale invasion and occupation in 2003. Now, in 2020, Iraqis still suffering from impoverishment, displacement and war earnestly want the United States to practice self-distancing and leave their country.

Are we now living in a watershed time? An unstoppable, deadly virus ignores any borders the United States tries to reinforce or redraw. The U.S. military-industrial complex, with its massive arsenals and cruel capacity for siege, isn’t relevant to “security” needs. Why should the United States, at this crucial juncture, approach other countries with threat and force and presume a right to preserve global inequities? Such arrogance doesn’t even ensure security for the U.S. military. If the United States further isolates and batters Iran, conditions will worsen in Afghanistan and U.S. troops stationed there will ultimately be at risk. The simple observation, “We are all part of one another,” becomes acutely evident.

It’s helpful to think of guidance from past leaders who faced wars and pandemics. The Spanish flu pandemic in 1918–19, coupled with the atrocities of World War I, killed 50 million worldwide, 675,000 in the United States. Thousands of female nurses were on the “front lines,” de-

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CODEPINK protests outside the Treasury Department. Photo: Medea Benjamin

## Sanctions

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cal equipment due to lack of spare parts, and shortages of drugs and medical supplies due to sanctions. The killing of hundreds of health care workers was unprecedented. These attacks have dangerous implications for medical neutrality in all conflict zones.

The lack of security and the deliberate targeting of health workers and health facilities led to the exodus of trained staff. The destruction of Syria’s health infrastructure contributed to the increase in communicable and noncommunicable diseases and in rising morbidity and mortality. Sanctions have created waves of desperate migrants, uprooted from communities of care.

After the Bolivarian Revolution, extensive inoculation programs and the availability of free healthcare provided by the Venezuelan Institute of Social Security made Venezuela’s healthcare infrastructure one of the more advanced in Latin America. However, following U.S.-imposed sanctions, the Venezuelan healthcare system has all but collapsed, as 86%

of medical supplies were being imported.

In March 2019, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that the “collapse of Venezuela’s health system, once one of the best in Latin America, has led to a surge in infant and maternal mortality rates and a return of rare diseases that were considered all but eradicated.”

### U.S. Healthcare Dominated by Profit Motive

The complete domination of U.S. health care by for-profit drug and insurance companies has led to the lowest life expectancy and the most deaths from preventable diseases in the U.S. of any industrialized countries—lower than comparable statistics in 30 other nations.

U.S. preparedness to deal with the threat of COVID-19 has been further hampered by the personnel and budget cuts of the Trump administration over the past three years. Until Feb. 26 there was no one in the White House tasked specifically with overseeing a coordinated governmentwide response in the event of a pandemic, since the post of senior director for global health security and biothreats on the National Security Council was eliminated in May

2019. Global health issues were not considered to be a “national security” priority.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention has seen a 30% funding cut since 2003, despite an increasing number of public health emergencies.

In its 2020 budget the Trump administration proposed a further 10% cut in CDC funding, equivalent to \$750 million. It zeroed out funding for epidemiology and laboratory capacity at state and local levels. The funding cuts have also forced the CDC to reduce or discontinue epidemic-prevention efforts in 39 of the 49 countries it had been helping.

On Feb. 26, Trump appointed Vice President Mike Pence to lead the government’s COVID-19 response team. This is a field in which Pence has no credentials, no expertise. He is not a doctor or a medical expert. As governor of Indiana, Pence, who is notoriously anti-LGBTQ2+, ignored all public health advice on HIV/AIDS.

The response team will be led by none other than Alex Azar, a former Big Pharma lobbyist and former executive of pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly. Azar is now Trump’s Secretary of Health and Human Services.

The extensive corporate press coverage of COVID-19 contrasts with what little press coverage there is of the current 2019-20 flu season, according to the CDC. So far there have been 15 million illnesses, 140,000 hospitalizations and 8,200 deaths in the U.S.—from the ordinary flu.

And while it is being trumpeted that 3,000 people have died worldwide from COVID-19, no media attention is being paid to the 25,000 people who globally die of hunger each day.

The far greater crime than unpreparedness for this emerging pandemic is the disease of capitalism itself, where only profits are measured, while millions of people fall through the gaping holes of a fraying system of private ownership for profit.

*Sara Flounders helps coordinate the International Action Center and United National Antiwar Coalition. She is an associate member of VFP, 021 and writes for the Marxist newspaper Workers World. She coordinates the Sanctions Kill Campaign and has organized delegations to countries devastated by U.S. wars and sanctions including Iran, Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Palestine, Yugoslavia, Cuba, and Venezuela.*



# Superbowl

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and the demonization of General Soleimani as a “terrorist” whose murder by U.S. drone is justified “to keep America safe.”

I’ve been reading Sigmund Freud’s 1930 classic *Civilization and Its Discontents* and, as I watched the Super Bowl, I was reminded of an absurd moment of football fandom I experienced some years ago, something Freud would probably understand. I was with friends at a bar in Atlanta devoted to the Philadelphia Eagles. Don’t ask me why there’s such a bar, but there is. The place was jammed and everybody was drinking and having a good time, as was I.

I’m not particularly interested in football, but I’m a committed people-watcher. So I was drinking, laughing, and eyeballing the crowd. The Eagles were moving down the field and scored a touchdown. Standing nearby was an ordinary late-30s guy; he could have been a carpenter or a lawyer, I don’t know. As the Eagles scored, this excited fellow started hollering, loud, pumping his fist in a very public manner, “Fuck that ass! Fuck that ass!”

No one else seemed to notice. I wasn’t really shocked; I just wondered: What the hell was going on here? He didn’t seem to be thinking sexually. He certainly had no idea how bizarre it sounded. He was just excited his team had scored and had humiliated the other team.

Freud addresses this kind of linkage with the subconscious in *Civilization and Its Discontents*. The excitement of the moment has overwhelmed repressive barriers established by social contract to permit the growth of civilization over barbarism; here was a simple outburst of deep, satisfying aggression. In this case, it was a feeling of power expressed as sodomy and rape, a primal exultation over humiliating an enemy that suddenly exploded out into the open.

It’s Freud’s contention that civilization requires the suppression of an anything-goes approach to sexuality and aggression, or to put it into pop culture terms, Lenny Bruce liked to describe the male aggressive impulse as: “Men will fuck mud.” The first taboo for civilization is, of course, incest, something I recall our cats doing all the time when I was a kid. It’s all part of Freud’s fundamental theory of sublimation. Here’s Freud himself:

“[C]ivilization is obeying the laws of

economic necessity, since a large amount of the psychic energy which it uses for its purposes has to be withdrawn from sexuality. ... [I]t is impossible to overlook the extent to which civilization is built up upon a renunciation of instinct. ... As we know, it is the cause of the hostility against which all civilizations have to struggle.”

Besides being a shrink, Freud was an excellent writer with a broad range of interests. Late in his life, he was obsessed with aggression, violence, and war. Following World War I, he exchanged letters with Albert Einstein. In their different ways they were both interested in understanding the impulses toward violence and war that they saw unraveling in the newspapers. They wanted to put the brakes on a coming conflagration. *Civilization and Its Discontents* comes from this period.

Freud’s gift to humankind is the revelation of a subterranean mind that interacts with the world. That is, what’s going on outside our minds “in the real world” is ruled and driven by what goes on inside our minds. Complex and unruly sexual

*Today, the war cycle is beginning all over again with Iran. Instead of made-up WMDs, we have the torpedoing of a peace deal and the demonization of General Soleimani as a “terrorist” whose murder by U.S. drone is justified.*

and aggressive impulses play out in this inner life, often playing havoc with our outside lives.

What someone like Sigmund Freud writes about can’t be reduced to a sound bite or a Tweet. I like the idea of dialoguing with someone who was a truth-seeker 90 years ago, in this case, a voice responding to a profound historic moment—the period between WWI and WWII—a moment that has frightening echoes for our time. It’s not like you can grab hold of this stuff and nail it down like a fact. You have to be able to think for yourself; you either trust the writer in question—or you don’t. It entails the taking of pleasure in metaphors and literary allusions; it’s why a psychoanalyst tries to make sense of the most ephemeral of experiences—dreams—and why someone like Lenny Bruce or Woody Allen is provided so much material to make jokes about his own ridiculous neu-

is the story of Claude Wheeler who grows up on that farm. Most readers will see the Great War lying directly in this boy’s path. His father and mother think he is rather dull. He, though, dreams of something more than life forever on the farm. When America enters the war he enlists and is commissioned and sent to France. Finally, in an act of unselfish heroism he is killed. It’s a sad moment, written by a great writer.

But Willa Cather’s story doesn’t quite end there. Only a few years after the Armistice, suicide among veterans was common knowledge enough for her to write, “One by one the heroes of that war, the



Freud and Einstein

roses. It’s fluid story and narrative, comedy and tragedy, the nexus between inside and outside. It’s where people who accept and relish the notion of complexity dig in to find answers, while those interested in power and control go the way of the Spanish fascist officer who famously said: “When I hear the word culture I reach for my revolver.”

Like Freud, Albert Einstein’s thinking

is wonderful to wade into. His quotes are like Martin Luther King quotes, endlessly compelling. Here’s my favorite that hangs on the wall in my downstairs bathroom; I pause to read it often:

“A human being is part of a whole, called by us the Universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separate from the rest, a kind of [perceptual] delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circles of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.”

1) Of course, it’s sexist language and should include she and hers. In his time, his did include that; but in the identity politics of 2020, it’s flat-out sexist. But,

then, a question worth asking now: Is identity politics one of those delusional traps he cites?

2) Confession: As part of my sense of dialogue with this paragraph, I took the liberty of replacing the adjective in “optical delusion” with “[perceptual] delusion.” For me, it expresses my grasp of his grand idea much better.

In my inner world of meaning, this statement of Einstein’s stands on one end of a continuum representing the purest form of left-liberalism and progressivism when you consider things like environmentalism, peaceful coexistence, democracy, and supranational political bodies like the United Nations, while on the other end of the continuum, we have the narcissism, authoritarianism and tribalism represented by Donald Trump and his policy of America First. The farther one goes on the continuum toward Einstein’s vision of freeing ourselves “by widening our circles of compassion,” the better off the world will be in the unfolding 21st century.

Freud eerily speaks directly to our age on the subject of human tools “useful to men for making the earth serviceable to them,” something that began with the “control over fire and the construction of dwellings.” He foresaw new tools of the sort we all now deal with on a daily basis. “Man has, as it were, become a kind of prosthetic God,” he writes. “Future ages will bring with them new and probably unimaginably great advances in this field of civilization and will increase man’s likeness to God still more.”

I think of all the Super Bowl glitz and the larger-than-life warrior special effects, the whooshing graphics, the quick cutting, that whiplash vulnerable minds this way and then that way; the ordinary young men and women assaulted by dreams projected onto their psyches of sexy mythic life and awesome superheroism; and the lethal drones hunting poor, brown people in the skies over the Middle East “piloted” 12,000 miles away by young Americans in air-conditioned cubicles sipping on Diet Cokes while glancing at Facebook updates on their i-phones.

John Grant is journalist, a Vietnam War veteran, and an active member of Veterans For Peace. He writes for [thiscantbehappening.net](http://thiscantbehappening.net) and has taught documentary photography at Widener and Drexel Universities and creative writing to inmates in the Philadelphia Prison.

## One of Ours

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When this happens, they can be lost. Not only are they still the fucked-up kid who joined, they are now a fucked-up veteran too. Helpless. Suicide can look logical.

Veterans taking their own lives is in the news. Not with the amplification and urgency a veteran’s suicide should get, but with recognition there is a problem. Willa Cather’s fifth novel, *One of Ours*, was published in 1922. It begins on a farm in southwest Nebraska in the early 20th century and

men of dazzling soldiership, leave prematurely the world they have come back to. Airmen whose deeds were tales of wonder, officers whose names made the blood of youth beat faster, survivors of incredible dangers—one by one they quietly die by their own hand. Some do it in obscure lodging houses, some in their office, where they seemed to be carrying on their business like other men. Some slip over a vessel’s side and disappear into the sea.”

Denny Riley is an Air Force veteran of our war in Vietnam, a writer, and a member of San Francisco Veterans For Peace Chapter 69.



# Reflections on a Waging Peace Exhibit

By Zaynab Quadri

It was the final day of the extraordinary Waging Peace in Vietnam: U.S. Soldiers and Veterans Who Opposed the War exhibit in Washington, D.C. An older gentleman kindly struck up a conversation. He had served in Vietnam, he told me. It was the first time I had spoken to a veteran one to one before, and it struck me, speaking with a man around my grandfather's age, how simultaneously close and far-flung the Vietnam War is from my own experience.

As a 20-something Pakistani-American Muslim woman in 2019, I am the product of a different war, a different strand of transnational American history.

I was born in Lahore soon after the Cold War ended, and my family moved to the United States just one year before the towers fell and changed everything. The world that 9/11 made—of endless wars on terror, the data-hungry security state, the 24/7 pundit shows paid to debate the humanity of my identity—is the world that I know and recognize as creating me, structuring the dangers and possibilities, the priorities and absurdities, of my life. It is the world I sought to make comprehensible by abandoning my immigrant-parent-approved ambitions of pediatric medicine in order to study American empire. I am currently writing my dissertation on private military contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan, because I see



Ron Carver with the Waging Peace exhibit. Photo: Gary Jones

rying around with me, which was now refracted across space and time, with people I didn't yet know and a history I was still learning. I was aware intellectually that the history of the Vietnam War factored into the more recent past I was deep in the middle of researching, but the connection became so much more visceral when I was confronted with the primary sources, the documents and archival footage and stories told by the living veterans who attended.

The issues of that period are, in fact, urgently entwined with issues of this moment. I see it in brutal war crimes against people and landscapes unfamiliar to most Americans. I see it in these asymmetric conflicts cloaked in ideological hyperbole, in which there is a market for those who win the contracts for state-building. The draft, abolished due to the work of the anti-war and GI movements, is a large part of the reason the contractors I study ended up in Iraq and Afghanistan in the first place. In these important, institutional ways, the Vietnam War set the stage for the wars that have scaffolded my life and work.

*Though I am a 21st-century immigrant, navigating my fraught Americanness in the post-9/11 era, the United States is my home and thus I am, however obliquely, a product of the Vietnam War too.*

these wars as emblems of the politics that define our times: willful manipulation by leaders who face little lasting consequence; the rapaciousness of private, unregulated capital enabled and emboldened by perpetual war; the utter devastation of land, water, air, and body that result, sullying our collective humanity as well as the biome we share with all living things.

It is this perspective, this orientation of being, that engendered continuous pangs of recognition in me throughout the Waging Peace events around the Waging Peace exhibit. In the documentary *Sir! No Sir!*, in the discussion on teaching the history of the war; in the panel about the lingering environmental effects of Agent Orange and land mines, over and over I kept experiencing a sense of eerie familiarity. A deep horror I was already car-

I have felt not a small amount of grief, sitting with such continuities and legacies of violence. Though I am a 21st-century immigrant, navigating my fraught Americanness in the post-9/11 era, the United States is my home and thus I am, however obliquely, a product of the Vietnam War too. This country is bound in blood to many places around the globe; but Vietnam, with all that was wounded and lost beyond redress, looms especially large.

Despite the victories of the GI movement—an important story anchoring the sprawl of topics explored by various events—I nevertheless found myself haunted by the temporality of protest, the way we could only learn of the horror and fight back when so much damage was already done. So when I heard veterans on camera testify to the wasteful senseless-

ness of war, when I witnessed the human cost of chemical warfare, it was this I thought about. The crushing, inarticulate helplessness of losses so vast I could barely wrap my mind around them. The bitterness of knowing similar evils would be repeated a generation later in the Middle East, with ugly reverberations around the world.

As the unofficial emcee of the exhibition, Ron Carver insisted multiple times that the story of the GI movement was not a sad one—that it was a story of people coming together to make a difference. This is indeed a compelling frame to think about an underappreciated nook of history. But what I want to dwell on a little longer, is in fact the despair—the ways in which moral lessons must be learned, not once, but again and again, at the expense

of the marginalized, the innocent. It is a productive despair, I think, more than a paralyzing one. In listening to the stories of hope and despair from the week-long exhibition, I was reminded of Judith Butler's conception of grievable life; how some lives are deemed more grievable than others. The events' push for the excavation of a usable, grassroots history struck me as a way of trying to redress the inequality of grievability, elevating every life at stake as a worthy weight to bear together. Even if it had to come after the fact, it has come. Grief restores us our humanity to each other. It is what exposes the stakes of everything we do, and everything we are.

There is still work to be done in the American consciousness around Vietnam, as well as the more contemporary Middle Eastern wars. But the hope embedded in grief—that people matter, that their loss must be made meaningful, that we have the capacity to learn and eventually, somehow, do better—is what I will try to carry with me along with everything else.

The Vietnam War is a fraught but essential human story. This exhibition provided a rich, provocative, and deeply moving opportunity to remember both the horror we are capable of inflicting on one another, and our simultaneous potential to empathize across time and borders, and grapple with what kind of world we might create, but only if we are wise and brave enough to create it.

*Zaynab Quadri is a fourth-year PhD candidate in American Studies at George Washington University.*

## Thumb Screws

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livering healthcare. Among them were black nurses who not only risked their lives to practice the works of mercy but also fought discrimination and racism in their determination to serve. These brave women arduously paved a way for the first 18 black nurses to serve in the Army Nurse Corps and they provided “a small turning point in the continuing movement for health equity.”

In the spring of 1919, Jane Addams and Alice Hamilton witnessed the effects of sanctions against Germany imposed by Allied forces after World War I. They observed “critical shortages of food, soap, and medical supplies” and wrote indignantly about how children were being punished with starvation for “the sins of statesmen.”

Starvation continued even after the blockade was finally lifted that summer with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. Hamilton and Addams reported how the flu epidemic, exacerbated in its spread by starvation and postwar devastation, in turn disrupted the food supply. The two women argued a policy of sensible food distribution was necessary for both humanitarian and strategic reasons. “What was to be gained by starving more children?” bewildered German parents asked them.

Jonathan Whitall directs Humanitarian Analysis for Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders. His most recent analysis poses agonizing questions:

“How are you supposed to wash your hands regularly if you have no running water or soap? How are you supposed to implement ‘social distancing’ if you live in a slum or a refugee or containment camp? How are you supposed to stay at home if your work pays by the hour and requires you to show up? How are you supposed to stop crossing borders if you are fleeing from war? How are you supposed to get tested for COVID19 if the health system is privatized and you can't afford it? How are those with pre-existing health conditions supposed to take extra precautions when they already can't even access the treatment they need?”

I expect many people worldwide, during the spread of COVID-19, are thinking hard about the glaring, deadly inequalities in our societies, wonder how best to extend proverbial hands of friendship to people in need while urged to accept isolation and social distancing. One way to help others survive is to insist the United States lift sanctions against Iran and instead support acts of practical care. Jointly confront the coronavirus while constructing a humane future for the world without wasting time or resources on the continuation of brutal wars.

*Kathy Kelly co-coordinates Voices for Creative Nonviolence. (www.vcnv.org).*



# One of Ours

By Denny Riley

The Super Bowl is a splendid example of the Pentagon's continual scramble to fill its ranks with volunteers.

The latest one had a huge red, white and blue Super Bowl LIV logo painted on the midfield turf where the coin toss took place. It had flags and banners surrounding the two team captains and the referee. It had members of the military in full-dress uniform standing numbly at attention. Preceding the coin toss was a rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner," and a flyover by four fighter aircraft.

By far the greatest portion of the audience to this spectacle was Americans watching at home on television, which is just as well, because this particular flipping of the coin was produced primarily to be seen by that audience. We are so frequently bombarded by this style of nationalism, mistakenly called patriotism, that many of us enjoy it, look forward to it, cheer the fly-over fighters without considering what the ultimate purpose of the fighters is.

Not much is gained by middle-aged Americans loving this stuff. It only reinforces their belief that writers like me should be punched in the face. The emptiness of being a patriot rests in the truth that absolutely nothing is required to register as one but to say you are patriotic, or you love your country, or you love the flag. You don't have to do anything.

All over America, though, teenagers were glued to the tube, and they were the real purpose of the pregame hoopla. They are the reason we have been taught to call everyone who wears a uniform a hero and why everyone who has worn one is thanked for their service, not because those who served should be thanked, but so those the military needs might be persuaded by seeing they



will be thanked for the rest of their lives.

Many of the teens will look at the pregame show and think it looks pretty cool but know they have better ways to spend the next few years of their lives than being a part of that. There are 27 million Ameri-

where tributes to our troops? It is a fact that some members of the military serve under harrowing conditions and some perform heroic deeds. However, most of the military is support. Many of those called heroes do nothing braver than drive a snow-

opportunity, of technical training and of travel. Everyone is good-looking, everyone is focused. Like any ad campaign, the best is always shown but there is no other advertiser with a downside to their product as horrific as the military.

The target of this massive recruiting campaign and the real target of the Super Bowl coin toss is kids with futures that don't look as good as they wish they did. If you sat down next to a young soldier in an airport and asked her or him why they joined, the young soldier would probably tell you to serve our country, and why wouldn't that be the answer you'd hear? That reason for having volunteered has been pounded into everyone's head. You may have already thanked her or him for their service as soon as you sat down.

I inadvertently conducted a four-year survey on why young people volunteer for the military. This was during our war in Vietnam so some of those surveyed were in the Air Force (where the survey was conducted) to avoid being drafted into the Army or Marines, not a truly patriotic or desire-to-serve reason for signing up. Of the others surveyed (all were male), the reasons for joining were profuse but similar. Many didn't have high school grades good enough to get into college. Many had flunked out of college, with a subset of this reason being they quit college to join, which no one believed. Some were kicked out of high school, or their dad kicked them out of the house, or they were arrested for hooliganism and told by the judge to enlist, or their girlfriend tossed them over, or something else, but during the four-year survey no one ever said his reason for joining was to serve this great land of ours. I met a kid who on his 18th birthday was taken down to the recruiter by his adoptive dad and told to enlist. I met a kid who joined because it was the only way he saw to get off the reservation. I met a dozen kids who believed a hitch in uniform would give them a chance to get the bullshit out and refill themselves with know-how.

It is not the exception, if their life has not been taken, to come out feeling no better about themselves than when they went in.

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*"Like any ad campaign, the best is always shown but there is no other advertiser with a downside to their product as horrific as the military."*

cans between 18 and 24 years old. The military needs 2% of them to don the uniform. Not many, it appears. Then why the never-ending spectacle of calling them heroes and thanking them, to say nothing of ribbons and decorations, and flag-draped coffins coming off cargo aircraft at Dover, and military funerals with color guards and 12-gun salutes, and all the time and every-

plow at an airbase in North Dakota. Still, with some two million needed in the all-volunteer military, recruiting cannot pause for a moment. The TV commercials aired during every sporting event (between advertisements for upcoming violence-based movies) show erect and healthy youths with trim haircuts, neat uniforms and a willing hustle. The ads show a world of

## Freud Goes to the Super Bowl

*Flags, male aggression and pole dancing*

By John Grant

It would be hard to find a more obnoxious display of American corporatism and imperialism than this year's Super Bowl. The whooshing super-hero graphics, the flag-waving, the pre-hyped \$11-million-a-minute ads and J-Lo pole-dancing at halftime. If I hadn't decided to write about it as decadent spectacle, I'd have turned it off and read a book.

But, then, there was the game itself. The come-from-behind, three-touchdowns-in-five-minutes in the last quarter led by a modest-looking 24-year-old quarterback with goofy hair named Patrick Mahomes was an exhibition of athletic competence that almost transcended the glitzy nonsense.

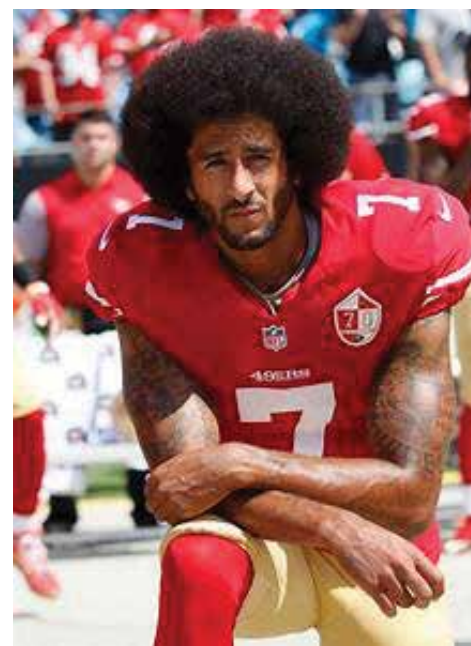
Colin Kaepernick was a competent quarterback with moral courage, and look what happened to him: blackballed from a career for the unforgivable crime of "taking a knee" to oppose an epidemic of police violence against black people.

Yet, things do evolve. Black quarterbacks are now everywhere so the NFL feels the pressure. In cahoots with Jay-Z, the NFL ran a progressive ad during the Super Bowl on police violence. Jay-Z is clearly in it for money, but, still, his company's

social justice efforts working with the NFL are real. Speaking of Kaepernick, he says: "We are two adult men who disagree on the tactic but are marching for the same cause."

This reminds me of antiwar activists during the run-up to George W. Bush's Iraq War whose message was blackballed from mainstream venues and forced into the street to be choreographed by the police. After it became obvious even to Republicans that the war was the disaster that the antiwar movement said it would be, Bush's war was thrown under the historic bus. Yet, the "forever war" goes on and money and power won't give up an ounce of its arrogance.

Today, the war cycle is beginning all over again with Iran. Instead of made-up WMDs, we have the torpedoing of a peace deal



Colin Kaepernick takes a knee.

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