

Peace & Planet News

Dedicated to Abolishing War, Establishing Justice, and Fighting Climate Disaster
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A Convergence of Calamities

Record numbers of war-displaced to be dwarfed by those driven from their homes by climate change

By Nick Turse

I saw them for only a few seconds. One glimpse and they were gone. The young woman wore a brown head-wrap, a yellow short-sleeved shirt, and a long pink, red, and blue floral-patterned skirt. She held the reins of the donkey pulling her rust-pink cart. Across her lap lay an infant. Perched beside her at the edge of the metal wagon was a young girl who couldn't have been more than eight. Some firewood, rugs, woven mats, rolled-up clothing or sheets, a dark green plastic tub, and an oversized plastic jerry can were lashed to the bed of the cart. Three goats tied to the rear ambled along behind.

They found themselves, as I did, on a hot, dusty road slowly being choked by families who had hastily hitched up their donkeys and piled whatever they could—kindling, sleeping mats, cooking pots—

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Climate refugees in Sierra Leone. Photo: Marco Simoncelli.

Letter from the Amazon

An Indigenous woman speaks truth to power about the destruction of the planet.

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Like a Rocket in the Garden: The Unending War in Afghanistan

By Kathy Kelly

Late in November, I learned from young Afghan Peace Volunteer friends in Kabul that an insurgent group firing rockets into the city center hit the home of one volunteer's relatives. Everyone inside was killed. A few days later, word arrived of two bomb blasts in the marketplace city of Bamiyan, in central Afghanistan, killing at least 14 people and wounding 45.

These explosions have come on the heels of other recent attacks targeting civilians. On Nov. 2, at least 19 people were killed and at least 22 wounded by gunmen opening fire at Kabul University. On Oct. 24, at least two dozen students died, and more than 100 were wounded in an attack on a tutoring center.

"The situation in our country is very bad and scary," one young Afghan friend wrote to me. "We are all worried." I imagine that's an understatement.

A new report released by Save the Children, regarding violations against children in war zones, says Afghanistan accounts for the most killing and maiming



violations, with 874 children killed and 2,275 children maimed in 2019.

Since the United Nations started collecting this data in 2005, more than 26,000 Afghan children have died.

Under President Donald Trump, the

United States signed a "peace" deal with the Taliban in February 2020. It pertains to troop withdrawal and a Taliban pledge to cut ties with al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. The agreement certainly hasn't contrib-

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Note to Our Readers

With this issue, *Peace & Planet News* is suspending print publication. The health risks of in-person gatherings during the COVID-19 pandemic make it impossible to distribute large numbers of newspapers. We encourage our supporters to order small packets (5 copies) of this edition and to send them by mail to friends, colleagues, family, and fellow activists, but in the long run, this is not an economically viable model. We look forward to coming back, stronger than ever, with our message of peace and justice, when circumstances permit.

Letters

Military Spending

During my first deployment to Iraq in 2004, we were forced to weld armor onto our vehicles to protect ourselves from insurgent attacks. We weren't provided adequate protection and many service members died, while corporate munitions makers saw profits and stock prices rise year after year.

Now, we learn that the \$1 billion the Pentagon recently received to help fight coronavirus went instead to private military contractors for jet engines, spare parts, and dress uniforms.

This is yet another instance of the misplaced priorities of our leaders in Washington when it comes to actually protecting American lives.

COVID-19 has killed over 300,000 Americans, yet billions of our tax dollars go to the Pentagon. Meanwhile, the real threats facing us today—the pandemic, climate change, poverty, and more—are underfunded, mired in political debate and posturing, or totally ignored.

As a combat veteran, I want to see our tax dollars redirected to keep Americans truly safe, rather than to corporate welfare.

Matthew Hoh
Raleigh, NC

Fallacies about the War on Drugs

Three years ago, Nicholas Kristof noted that Portugal decriminalized the use of *all* drugs (including heroin and cocaine) in 2001. The decriminalization was a tribute to socialist Prime Minister Antonio Guterres. When the new policy began, 100,000 used heroin; it dropped to only

25,000! There is heavy emphasis on treatment, instead of the American emphasis on punishment and prisons. Portugal's drug mortality rate, he then wrote, "is the lowest in Western Europe—one-tenth the rate of Britain—and about one-fiftieth the latest number for the United States." Decriminalization is the real solution to Nixon's phony war on drugs. "Phony" because, as his top aide, John Ehrlichman later conceded, "You want to know what this was really about? ... the antiwar left and black people. ... We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings. ... Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did." Nixon's War on Drugs, was not about drugs but about political repression. The misinformation about drugs persists but is fortunately receding, as more states legalize marijuana.

It's more than about time that a U.N. commission remove marijuana from Schedule IV, a list of the most dangerous drugs, like cocaine and heroin. It resembles U.S. schedule I (also cocaine and heroin). Marijuana should have never been placed in either schedule. It was made illegal in the 1930s as a way to control Mexican immigrants, just as opium was made illegal to control Chinese immigrants. In June 2016, the *Journal of Pain* noted that chronic pain patients reduced the use of opioids by 60% after they started on marijuana. A 2014 *Journal of the American Medical Association* article found that where marijuana was legally obtainable, overdose drug deaths actually declined, compared to dramatic increases in other states. Let's hope the world gets ready to become less hypocritical about marijuana.

Roger Carasso, professor emeritus
California State University, Northridge

From the Editors



Dec. 22, 1950: Frostbite casualties of First Marine Division and Seventh Infantry Division, which linked up in order to break out of the Communist encirclement, wait for evacuation by plane in the Changjin area, North Korea.

Looking Ahead

"Chesty" Puller was the commanding officer of the 1st Marine Brigade at the Chosin Reservoir 70 years ago when the Chinese Peoples' Army crossed the Yalu River and attacked the American forces. When his intelligence staff officer informed him that "there are Chinese to the north of us, to the south of us, to the east of us, and to the west of us," Chesty responded, "Good. They won't get away from us this time."*

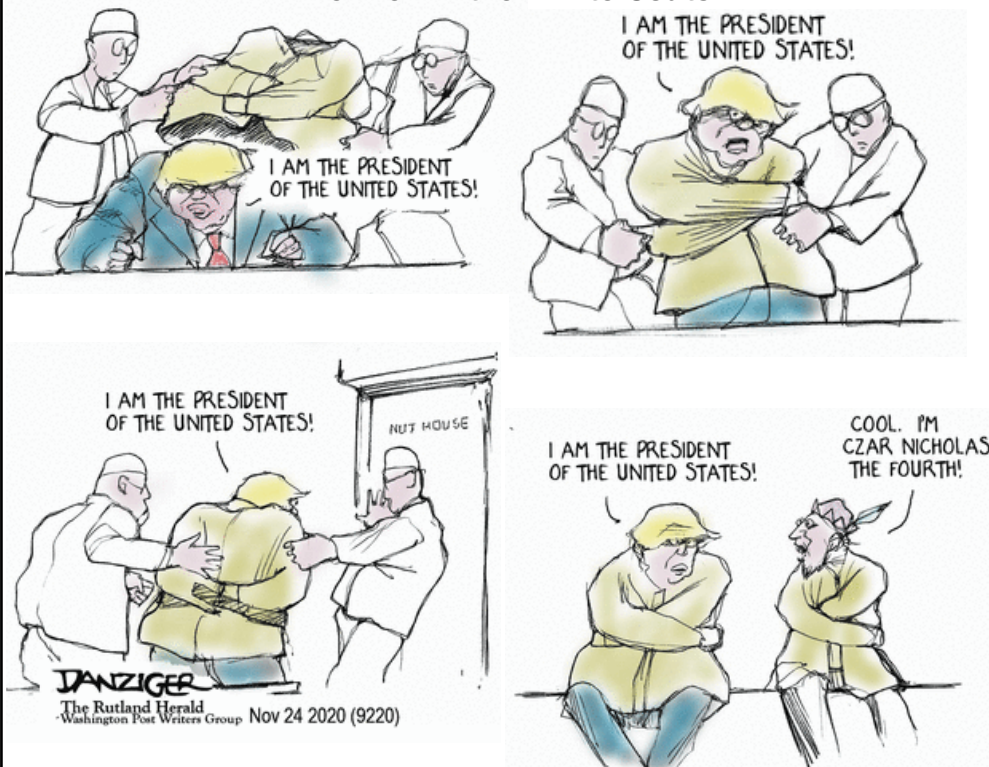
Like Chesty, we are surrounded. Surrounded by challenges: the climate crisis, national and international economic disparities, white supremacist institutions, growing fascist tendencies, an out-of-control military-industrial-congressional

complex, COVID-19, and more. So no matter which way we turn, there is an opportunity to have a positive influence on the world. Don't let it get away from you this time. As Marine vet Matt Hoh says (see article, page 8), "Keep active, fight hard, and wear a damn mask!"

—Ken Mayers

*We do not mean to make light of the battle at the frozen Chosin Reservoir—one of the most brutal in the history of war—or of the Korean War itself, which was ultimately unnecessary, solved nothing, and resulted in lost lives and unimaginable destruction to the Korean peninsula from American bombing.

The Men in the White Coats



Peace & Planet News

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Far-Right Militias Are Recruiting Vets

By Rory Fanning

After nearly four years of Donald Trump, far-right and white supremacist forces are emboldened in the United States. As a war veteran, I know very well that veterans are far from immune to this problem—in fact, the war machine conditions vets to embrace white supremacy. Meanwhile, the military carries out racist recruitment practices, targets working-class communities of color and carries out inherently racist wars abroad, feeding the connection further.

Killing another human being is the most unnatural thing a person can do, which is why the U.S. government has spent so much time and energy researching ways soldiers can overcome their instinct to avoid killing. In order for soldiers to kill, racist indoctrination needs to be part of the training. The otherization of the enemy that happens through military training is how many soldiers ultimately come to squeeze the trigger on combatants and innocent civilians. Most people can't kill another human unless they feel they have some sort of moral imperative for doing so. Racism is one of the ways the U.S. military compels soldiers to kill—by declaring their targets to be less than human.

I saw it myself when I was in the military. The people of Afghanistan were never referred to as Afghans. They were only mentioned in the most derogatory terms. We never discussed Afghans in a positive light. We focused only on the extreme and violent acts committed by a microscopic percentage of the Afghan population. Of course, there was zero acknowledgment of the exponentially larger atrocities the U.S. military has committed throughout American history. The results of this training have been devastating.

This summer, the *Military Times* conducted a poll among active-duty soldiers. Soldiers identified white nationalism as a “national security threat on par with al-Qaida and the Islamic State Group, and more worrisome than the danger posed by North Korea, Afghanistan, or Iraq.” This same *Military Times* poll reported that 57 percent of troops of color have personally experienced some form of racist or white supremacist behavior, and that one-third of all active-duty soldiers see signs of white supremacist or racist ideology in the ranks.

Vets returning home from deployments, oftentimes to dire employment situations, now only made worse by the COVID pandemic, are primed to be manipulated by far-right hate groups and militias. We are seeing this play out. The numbers are disturbing. Veterans make up 25 percent of all militia members in the U.S., according to a recent report from *The New York Times*.

The Oath Keepers is one of the largest far-right anti-government organizations in the country, with tens of thousands of members according to the Southern Poverty Law Center. The Oath Keepers see



A local militia walks to the Ohio State House in Columbus on April 18, 2020, to protest the state's stay-at-home order to limit the spread of COVID-19. Photo: Megan Jelinger/AFP via Getty Images.

vets as critical to their organization as they actively prepare for civil war.

And when we talk about far-right paramilitary groups that vets are drawn to, police departments are the largest among them. Police departments, evidenced by their overwhelming support for Trump and their disproportionate targeting of Black and Brown people, reinforce the racist indoctrination these vets were exposed to in the military.

Research done by the Bureau of Labor Statistics suggests that there are twice as many police and prison guards as there

to-day reality of the military, and they return home ready to share their experiences and fight systematic oppression. And there are hundreds of thousands of Black and Brown active-duty soldiers and vets.

The left should embrace vets willing to renounce their training. Veterans can be incredibly effective in the fight against white supremacy, not only because they have proven that they are willing to sacrifice for a cause greater than themselves, but also because they have an understanding of how deep and sophisticated the white su-

currently stationed in one of the 800 military bases around the world. We organize for student debt abolition and free education. Too many high school-age students sign up for the military because they can't afford college. And we work to defund and abolish the police and prison-industrial complex—agents of white supremacy that suck in veterans as both employees and prisoners.

The far right and the influence it has over some vets will not go away under a Biden administration. Racism thrives in desperate economic situations, and our profit-based system, enthusiastically endorsed by Biden, is incapable of solving the economic crisis now facing this country. Organized and widespread pressure needs to be imposed on the next administration if we ever hope to see real change. If we fail to come together on these issues over the next four years, the stage will be set for someone even more dangerous than Trump in 2024. Such a person will undoubtedly mobilize sympathetic, military-trained followers.

This article was originally published at truthout.org.

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 the author of Worth Fighting For: An Army Ranger's Journey Out of the Military and Across America, and co-author with Craig Hodges of Long Shot: The Triumphs and Struggles of an NBA Freedom Fighter. He regularly speaks at high schools and universities about his walk across the country and his experience as a war resister. Follow him on Twitter: @RTFanning.

Most people can't kill another human unless they feel they have some sort of moral imperative for doing so. Racism is one of the ways the U.S. military compels soldiers to kill—by declaring their targets to be less than human.

are auto workers in the U.S. Seven percent of the population are veterans; yet vets make up 19 percent of all police. This reality makes the decision to sign up for the police force an all too convenient option for returning vets.

However, active-duty troops and veterans are not a homogeneous body. Some of the fiercest antiracists I know are veterans. Thousands of them participate in groups like Veterans For Peace and About Face: Veterans Against the War. Many sign up to fight with noble intentions. They believe they are defending freedom and democracy. They, too, are victims of the U.S. war machine and propaganda. Many become disillusioned by the day-

premacist project runs in this country, not only domestically but also abroad.

The problem lies in ignoring the increasing minority of vets who gravitate toward white supremacist groups.

Radical policy changes need to be enacted if we hope to push back on the growth of white supremacy among vets. Challenging U.S. imperialism and combating white supremacy are part of the same struggle. We challenge U.S. imperialism by providing alternatives for high-school age students who see the military as their only option after graduation. We fight for the development of programs like the Green New Deal, which would provide jobs for thousands of returning vets

Yes, the Left Should Talk to Trump Supporters



By Vincent Emanuele

"To win big, we have to follow the methods of spending very little time engaging with people who already agree, and devote most of our time to the harder work of helping people who do not agree come to understand who is really to blame for the pain in their lives."

—Jane McAlevey

If we're serious about defeating the dictatorship of capital and the horrors of U.S. empire, left-wing activists, writers, and organizers should be very clear: There is absolutely no way to avoid talking and organizing with Trump supporters. It's not easy, but in many contexts, it's already happening.

Left Activism Is Not the Same Thing as Left Organizing

If your version of political organizing looks like you and your friends working only with people who agree on virtually every issue, you're not organizing—what you're doing is called activism. While it's true that activism and mobilization function as strategic components of any successful campaign or movement, it's equally true that the left has spent far too much time mobilizing people who already agree with us.

And it's not like we haven't seen plenty of leftwing/progressive political mobilizations over the past 12 years: antiwar protests, Wisconsin, Occupy, Ferguson, environmental direct action campaigns, immigrant rights campaigns, Standing Rock, Bernie 2016, MeToo, Parkland Kids, and the list goes on and on. Yet, our electoral results keep getting worse and worse: Obama, Clinton, Biden ... who the hell is next? Elon Musk?

Yes, it's true that 20 or so DSA candidates won their elections in early November, and we should applaud and learn from

those efforts. But we would be remiss if we didn't also recognize the overwhelming, broad, and deep nationwide defeat and disintegration of the Democratic Party, a process that's been playing out for over a decade.

In states like Indiana, where I live, the Democratic Party is virtually nonexistent and keeps losing ground to an increasingly irrational and vicious GOP. The Democrats are also in freefall mode in states such as Ohio and Iowa.

It would be one thing if leftists and progressives had an electoral alternative to the Democrats, but that's not the case, which leads to our problem: The electoral political vacuum left behind has been filled by right-wing lunatics and/or neoliberals. This will continue to be the case until the left develops a serious electoral strategy.

If your strategy is "no strategy," I'm not sure what to tell you. Here, I vehemently disagree with Chris Hedges and others on the left who mostly encourage people to "get in the streets." Of course, no one knows what, exactly, people will do once we're in the streets, let alone if we had the numbers to take power, whatever that might mean in the United States.

Unfortunately, concepts such as strategy and organizing are alien to most leftwing commentators, authors, and writers. I genuinely wish some of these folks would spend more time talking to those of us who are on the ground doing the work and less time speaking with fringe activists who virtue-signal their radicalism, and who, as a result, remain largely isolated and ineffective.

I would've benefitted greatly if someone had explained the critical differences between activism and organizing to me back when I first got involved with political movements. I largely came to these conclusions on my own, through years of participating in failed movements, organizations, and campaigns, and after stumbling upon Jane McAlevey's book, *No Shortcuts: Building Power for the New Gilded Age*.

In hindsight, the primary reason I was never taught the difference between mobilizing and organizing is the lack of institutional knowledge on the modern left. The institutions that would have traditionally played that role—unions, the Communist Party, community organizations, student groups—have been decapitated by the militarized state, hence no one receives a proper political education in this country, including many of the people currently engaged in campaigns and movements.

Organizers Already Speak to Trump Supporters

Anyone who is actively organizing is likely already speaking and working with Trump supporters. This is why the title of my essay is somewhat misleading and utterly unprovocative. For instance, let's say you're organizing a tenants union, which might include a rent strike. Depending on where you live, there's a very good chance that you will encounter people who voted for Donald Trump.

Of course, you can choose not to work with them, but in some parts of the United States, that means not working with 40–60% of the population. In other parts of the country, where support for Trump is very strong, you'd be ignoring anywhere from 60% to 80% of the population.

Organizers understand that you can't win big campaigns, big reforms, with only 20–40% support, no matter the context, which means if you're serious about winning campaigns that will make a material difference in people's lives, perhaps our only chance at bringing some of Trump's supporters to our side, you'll work with them. No one is arguing that it's easy, but it must be done (if we're interested in winning).

If what you're saying is the left shouldn't spend any time in the towns, counties, regions, and states that Trump overwhelmingly won, how do you expect to make

structural change in the political system in this country? Are you arguing that chaotic street protests will do the trick? Are you arguing that a violent insurrection is on the horizon, or ideal? Be clear about what you're saying because hiding behind vague statements about resistance or revolution isn't helpful, especially right now.

To those of you who argue that we shouldn't organize Trump supporters, let me ask you this: Do you think allowing rural and suburban white enclaves to drift further and further to the right is a thoughtful and strategic approach to our national political predicament?

If you don't plan on organizing Trump supporters in the context of a housing-rights campaign, what about workplace organizing? What's more important, your coworkers' cultural habits and offensive language, or your shared economic interests?

If you think you're going to conduct a successful workplace organizing campaign without speaking to people who voted for Trump, without speaking to people who might say sexist or racist things, you're lacking experience, living in a social bubble, or completely unserious.

Organizers understand this on a deep and visceral level. Anyone who's ever organized a serious campaign will tell you that it's impossible to win meaningful reforms without spending most of your time converting the unconverted. Plus, you can't block people in real life. That's not how society works. That's not how politics works. And that's undoubtedly not how organizing works.

If you're sitting there thinking to yourself, "Well, I live in Chicago/New York/Los Angeles/Detroit/Atlanta, so I don't have to think about this," guess again: your MSNBC-watching, Obama-loving neighbors, coworkers, and family members aren't necessarily budding revolutionaries. Are we not organizing them either? If not, who, exactly, are we organizing? Only the people who agree with us? That's activism, not organizing.

The 80 million or so Americans who don't vote or participate in political organizing or activist mobilization efforts are not closeted Maoists who are waiting in the wings for the right moment to strike against the capitalist state. They, like most Americans, remain ideologically confused, apathetic, alienated, and disempowered. Their political views are rife with contradictions, as polls show, as organizers know.

Also, for the identitarians who might be reading this and thinking to themselves, "Screw this guy! He's just another white leftist who thinks we should work with Trump supporters," grow up. Yes, I'm white, which means I know white (and Black, and Latino) people who voted for Trump. Some of them are nuts, it's true. Some of them are racists, no doubt. But many of them also (and rightfully) distrust the Democrats and/or hold populist views. Screw them too?

Trump's supporters, like any other group in society, are not a homogenous entity. One overarching narrative does not explain their support for The Donald. There are multiple, sometimes contradictory

continued on next page ...

The United States Is Not a Democracy

Stop telling students that it is

By Ursula Wolfe-Rocca

When U.S. voters recently cast their ballots, an unchecked pandemic raged through the nation, uprisings against racism and police violence stretched into their eighth month, and new climate change-intensified storms formed in the Atlantic.

The reactionary and undemocratic system by which we select our president was an insult to the urgency of the moment. Although millions more people voted for Joe Biden than for Donald Trump it took several

America Through the Lens (National Geographic, 2019), says this about the 2016 U.S. presidential election: "... Trump won a narrow majority of voters in a number of swing states, or states where the election might go to either party. Even though almost 3 million more Americans cast their votes for Clinton, Trump won the electoral vote 306 to 232." Since the United States' status as a democracy is taken for granted, this textbook sees no need to offer any elaboration of a system in which "swing states" are decisive, and in which the person selected by the majority of voters does not win the presidency.

Perhaps the editors of *America Through the Lens* assume students have read a previous section of the text on the Electoral College? No. Paging back to the chapter on the

representatives in Congress, and each state could decide how to choose its electors."

Students deserve an explanation for the origins of the Electoral College. Instead, the textbook offers mere description, dry as dust. But for whom was the Electoral College a solution? For some among the 55 white men at the Constitutional Convention it solved the problem of giving too much power to the people, lest they use it, in the words of James Madison, to "rage for paper money, for an abolition of debts, for an equal division of property..." For wealthy enslavers, the Electoral College solved the problem of how to politically profit off the people they enslaved.

When my textbook matter-of-factly declares that the Electoral College was a "solution," but makes no mention of the elite and white supremacist interests for whom that was true, nor the exploited and disenfran-

Act alongside current efforts to combat voter suppression, we not only provide evidence of Davis's words but also invite students into that struggle. By rejecting the glorification of a U.S. founding that meant—and continues to mean—oppression for so many, we can affirm our students' reality and provide models of activism through which they might reimagine and revise it.

On Nov. 2, 2020, one day before the general election that would deny him a second term, Trump issued an executive order establishing the 1776 Commission. The commission's mandate? A "restoration of American education" to emphasize the "clear historical record of an exceptional Nation dedicated to the ideas and ideals of its founding."

President Trump has been defeated, but this commitment to institutionalize the teaching of American exceptionalism has not been. We educators must fight for a curriculum that teaches our students facts, not fables. The United States has never been a democ-



days to learn who won, thanks to the Electoral College.

If our students only learn about this exceptionally strange system from their corporate-produced history and government textbooks, they will have no clue why this is how we choose our president. More important, they will have a stunted sense of their own power—and little reason to believe they might have the potential to create something better.

To review: A voter in Montana gets 31 times the electoral bang for their presidential ballot than a voter in New York. A voter in Wyoming has 70 times more representation in the U.S. Senate than a voter in California, while citizens in Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C., have none. The Republican Senate majority that recently confirmed Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court was elected by 14 million fewer votes than the 47 senators who voted against her confirmation.

Yet politicians and pundits regularly pronounce the United States a "democracy," as if that designation were self-evident and incontrovertible. Textbooks and mainstream civics curricula make the same mistake, stipulating the brilliance of the framers, the democratic nature of our system and the infallibility of the U.S. Constitution, so that our institutions seem outside of history and beyond politics.

The district-adopted textbook I was assigned last year in my Portland, Ore., suburb,

U.S. Constitution, one finds only this anemic paragraph:

"But how should the president be chosen? Some delegates thought the president should be directly elected by the voters. Others wanted Congress or the state legislatures to make the choice. The delegates finally arrived at a solution: an electoral college made up of electors from each state would cast official votes for the president and vice president. The number of electors from each state would be the same as the state's number of

What if our civics lessons invited students not just to become occupants of an already-built U.S. government, but engineers and architects able to redesign, reframe, and rebuild the whole structure?

chised peoples for whom it was a disaster, it does not educate students. It lies to them.

The mock elections and legislative simulations common in U.S. civics classrooms too often encourage students to investigate the swirl of issues inside the container of U.S. "democracy," but rarely the container itself. What if our civics lessons invited students not just to become occupants of an already-built U.S. government, but engineers and architects able to redesign, reframe, and rebuild the whole structure?

One way to cultivate this activist sensibility is to offer our students a curriculum rich with an alternative pantheon of "framers" and "founding parents" in the ongoing pursuit of justice. As Angela Davis writes, "Freedom is a constant struggle." When, for example, we teach students about the fight for the 15th Amendment alongside the movement 100 years later for the Voting Rights

racy, defined by freedom and equality for all.

Nor has there ever been a time when people did not struggle toward a democratic future, dreaming of freedom, risking life and limb to make those dreams manifest, and creating a more just society along the way. Let's teach civics and history in ways that affirm for our students that there's nothing sacrosanct in the political and economic status quo, that freedom fighters, past and present, are founders too, and that we all have a right to be framers—to redesign this structurally unsound house to better shelter our lives, safety, comfort, and full humanity.

Ursula Wolfe-Rocca is a high school social studies teacher in Portland, Ore. She is a Rethinking Schools editor, and an organizer and curriculum writer for the Zinn Education Project. She can be reached at ursula@rethinkingschools.org or on Twitter @LadyOfSardines.

Trump Supporters

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tory, and sometimes complementary narratives underpinning every election. I don't believe anyone has nailed down a solid analysis of the 2020 election, and I don't think someone will for years, if not decades.

Here's what I do know: Leftists must organize Trump supporters. If we don't, someone else will. Remember, organizing people who disagree with us is quite literally the essence of organizing. Honestly, this isn't even a debate. What I'm saying is utterly uncontroversial.

Anyone who thinks this is a debate is stuck in Activism Mode and should quickly switch to Organizing Mode. We're not here to create subcultures of people who agree with us on every little issue and follow our etiquette protocols—we're here to change the political economy, remember?

If you're stuck in Activism Mode, please read McAlevey's work, then put those skills and knowledge to use in the real world. Stop writing articles and books about what the left should

do and start building a left that's capable of doing more than writing sharp-tongued books and articles. Right now, we need more organizers and fewer activists.

Vincent Emanuele is a writer, antiwar veteran, and podcaster. He is the co-founder of PARC | Politics Art Roots Culture Media and the PARC Community-Cultural Center in Michigan City, Ind. He is a member of Veterans For Peace and Organized & United Residents of Michigan City. He is also a member of Collective 20. He can be reached at vincent.emanuele333@gmail.com



Journey to the Underworld and Back

By John Tarleton

“I had to go into all of these different underworlds,” says Roberto Lovato of his new memoir, *Unforgetting: A Memoir of Family, Migration, Gangs, and Revolution in the Americas*, which tries to make sense of a life filled with political and personal struggles.

Raised as an American kid in San Francisco who admired Willie Mays and identified with the Brady Bunch, Lovato only discovers his Salvadoran identity and the dark family secrets that come with it in fits and starts.

His journey of self-discovery ricochets back and forth between the rural El Salvador of the 1930s, the Bay Area of the 1970s, the Marxist guerrilla movement that he would eventually join and present-day El Salvador. Along the way, he has to excavate the harrowing childhood memories that haunt his emotionally distant father and face his own self-doubts when he falls in love with a beautiful rebel leader.

Unforgetting, however, is about more than Lovato’s personal journey.

It’s also a book about imperialism, how the economic and political structures it imposes warp whole societies and how some people will always resist. In El Salvador, a volcano-studded land where wealthy elites have long ruled the dispossessed majority with terrifying cruelty, resistance has often come at a harrowing price.

In a bout of late Cold War hysteria, El Salvador and neighboring Nicaragua became an obsession of U.S. foreign policy makers during the 1980s. Leftist movements were fomenting subversion, warned President Ronald Reagan, and were only a three-day drive from the U.S.-Mexico border.

Solidarity groups, including one that Lovato joined, sprang up in cities across the United States to aid fleeing refugees and promote public opposition to a U.S. military invasion in the region. Instead, the Reagan Administration unleashed U.S.-funded death squads and mercenary armies that killed an estimated 200,000 people in Central America, shattering already fragile societies. The story of how those young immigrant children locked in cages arrived here is a legacy of that earlier era, Lovato argues. And just as he seeks to unforget his own personal history and become stronger for it, he also invites the United States as a nation to do so as well.

John Tarleton: Why did you write this book? Why are you releasing it now?

Roberto Lovato: There were many reasons. One was the systematic erasure of Central Americans from the English-language [media]. The child separation issue was one of the biggest stories of 2018. I did a study for the *Columbia Journalism Review* and found there were zero Central American scholars cited, zero Central American community leaders, zero Central American lawyers and zero Central American journalists or any other experts in a country where we’ve been here for decades. It reflects the racial amnesia and erasure that marks our lives and has devastating effects.

JT: What is it about El Salvador that you want Americans to learn from this book?

RL: I want people to learn about not just Salvadorans but about the United States. The book is as much about the United States as it is about Central America. The histories—political, economic, cultural, and familial in my case—are intertwined and inseparable in the modern era. I want people to understand the effects of forgetting, the dangers of forgetting, for individuals, for families and for nations. And I want folks to see the benefits of unforgetting, excavating those truths that afflict the powerful.

JT: You have been bipartisan in your criticism of U.S. leaders. Still, you say Trump is especially dangerous. Why is that?

RL: The United States itself is a threat of epic proportions to the world, but Donald Trump weaponizes it

in very particular, dangerous ways. The United States hasn’t been as hollowed out by neoliberal capitalism as it is now. The separation between rich and poor in the United States surpasses that of El Salvador. We see the emptying out of whatever remains of the welfare state, the militarization of the police, attempts to introduce the military through backdoor means within the borders. We’ve never seen this speed and scale of the hollowing out of the U.S. economy. And, I would argue, its cultural system, because you can’t hollow out an economy without creating an imaginary that explains it away.

JT: It’s been a long time coming.

RL: The decline of the United States began in the late ’70s to early ’80s, when Reagan and Thatcher really started us on the turn toward neoliberalism and the changes in the global economy. People were trying to adjust their storyline about the United States. Both political parties try to keep alive the myth of American exceptionalism. El Salvador tells another story of this country.

Over the past 30 years, I’ve visited mass gravesites.



I’ve been pursued by death squads. I’ve had friends and family killed by U.S.-backed governments. I’ve seen children put in cages by Barack Obama. I’ve risked my life as a journalist to get the story out. The story of U.S. fascism from a Salvadoran perspective isn’t new because I fought a fascist military dictatorship that was backed by the United States.

JT: The right wing always needs an enemy to justify itself. For decades the communists were the official enemy, then al-Qaeda and Islamic extremism became the new official enemy. Now it’s Antifa and so-called “anarchist jurisdictions” such as Portland, Seattle, and New York.

RL: I write about “counterinsurgency policing” in my book. I track how the United States sent military advisors to El Salvador to train the military and the death squads. After the war, those trainers came back home to roost. I found out they ended up at the LAPD, at the San Francisco police department, at the NYPD. When the LAPD created anti-gang units, they were trained by former Pentagon trainers from El Salvador and other parts of Latin America.

Counterinsurgency policing starts taking hold in the United States following the war in El Salvador. In the aftermath of the 1992 Los Angeles riots, then Attorney General William Barr transferred 300 FBI agents from tracking foreign threats to focusing on gangs such as MS-13. That begins the war on gangs that combined with the militarization of police, which we’re dealing with today.

JT: You take great risks in your book to provide a more

nuanced look at the Salvadoran gangs without excusing their violent behavior.

RL: I was an “at-risk” youth who engaged in criminal activities, as did my father. I use that experience to explain to the reader how somebody becomes a “criminal.” It’s not so separate from being a member of a family, especially in a place where the vast production of criminality is what governments do.

JT: You refer to your book as a journey through the underworld.

RL: I had to go into all these different underworlds to excavate the heart lost in the darkness. We never lost our heart as Salvadorans, but it appeared we did in the English language media. Joan Dideon once wrote of El Salvador that “terror is the given of the place.” I tell a story that says that love is also the given of the place.

We in the United States could really use hearing that right now because there’s an increased amount of terror here. We’re going to need mountains of tenderness, of love, to sustain ourselves for the world that’s coming—

not just surviving Trump, the rise of a neo-fascist mass movement, the pandemic, and economic decline but the catastrophic impacts of climate change.

JT: Anything else that could help get us through these difficult times?

RL: We’re going to need what sociologists call a millenarian sensibility. We’re in the middle of a moment of epic proportions—George Lucas or Steven Spielberg or Cecil B. DeMille could have created it. But people aren’t responding to it with an epic sensibility yet. People are still sitting in front of their screens, tweeting and making light of things.

Most of the literature in the United States didn’t prepare us for this moment. Neither did the movies. So I wanted to write a book that did what I didn’t see, which was to start preparing us for adopting a more millenarian sensibility. We need a revolutionary outlook to face these epic challenges.

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John Tarleton is a co-founder and editor-in-chief of The Independent. Winner of numerous community and labor journalism awards for covering radical social movements from the Zapatistas to the Seattle WTO protests to Occupy Wall Street, he is the co-host of The Independent News Hour on WBAI-99.5 FM. Before arriving in New York, he was a migrant farmworker, juggler, and hitchhiker who traveled 75,000 miles across 17 countries.

By Bruce Gagnon

Elon Musk, and his company Space X, has a plan to take control of Mars. They want to ‘Terraform’ the dusty red planet to make it green and livable like our Mother Earth.

The first time I can recall hearing about Terraforming Mars was years ago while on a speaking tour in Southern California. I picked up a copy of the *LA Times* and read an article about the Mars Society, which has dreams of moving our human civilization to this faraway planet. The article quoted Mars Society President Robert Zubrin (a Lockheed Martin executive) who called the Earth “a rotting, dying, stinking planet” and made the case for the transformation of Mars.

Imagine the cost. Why not instead spend money to heal our lush, beautiful, colorful home? What about the ethical considerations of humans deciding that another planet ought to be transformed for our “use”? What about the legal implications, as the U.N.’s Outer Space Treaty forbids such egotistical domination plans?

I am immediately reminded of the TV *Star Trek* show’s Prime Directive. The Prime Directive, also known as Starfleet General Order 1, the Non-Interference Directive, was the embodiment of one of Starfleet’s most important ethical principles: noninterference with other cultures and civilizations.

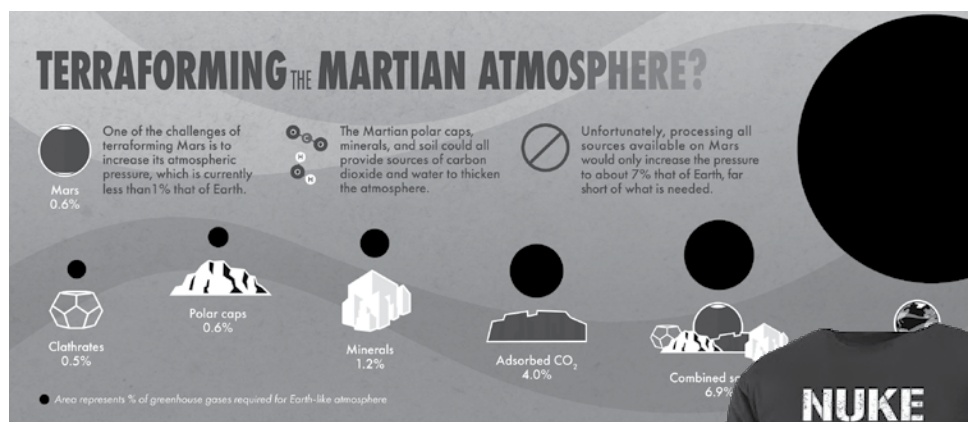
In other words, “Do no harm.”

But Elon Musk wants to do big harm to Mars and whatever elemental life that might exist there.

In an article now posted on CounterPunch, journalism professor Karl Grossman writes:

“Elon Musk, founder and CEO of Space X, has been touting the detonation of nuclear bombs on Mars to, he says, ‘transform it into an Earth-like planet.’ As *Business Insider* explains, Musk ‘has championed the idea of launching nuclear

Elon Musk’s Madness



This info-graphic shows the various sources of carbon dioxide on Mars and their estimated contribution to Martian atmospheric pressure. NASA Goddard Space Flight Center

weapons just over Mars’ poles since 2015. He believes it will help warm the planet and make it more hospitable for human life.’

“As space.com says: ‘The explosions would vaporize a fair chunk of Mars’ ice caps, liberating enough water vapor and carbon dioxide—both potent greenhouse gases—to warm up the planet substantially, the idea goes.’

“It’s been projected that it would take more than 10,000 nuclear bombs to carry out the Musk plan. The nuclear bomb explosions would also render Mars radioactive. The nuclear bombs would be carried to Mars on the fleet of 1,000 Starships that Musk wants to build—like the one that blew up [recently].

“SpaceX is selling T-shirts emblazoned with the words ‘Nuke Mars.’”

The fundamental U.N. treaty relating to these questions is the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, or simply the “Outer Space Treaty.” It was ratified in 1967, largely based on a set of legal principles the Gen-

eral Assembly accepted in 1962.

The treaty has several major points. Some key ones are:

- Space is free for all nations to explore, and sovereign claims cannot be made. Space activities must be for the benefit of all nations and humans (so nobody owns the moon or other planetary bodies).
- Nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction are not allowed in Earth orbit, on celestial bodies, or in other outer-space locations. (In other words, peace is the only acceptable use of outer-space locations).
- Individual nations (states) are responsible for any damage their space objects cause. Individual nations are also responsible for all governmental and nongovernmental activities conducted by their citizens. These states must also “avoid harmful contamination” due to space activities.

Even NASA, which has been sending probes to Mars for many years, has stated that Terraforming Mars is not possible.

(NASA is most interested in mining operations on the Red Planet.) Their website states:

“Science fiction writers have long featured terraforming, the process of creating an Earth-like or habitable environment on another planet, in their stories. Scientists themselves have proposed terraforming to enable the long-term colonization of Mars. A solution common to both groups is to release carbon dioxide gas trapped in the Martian surface to thicken the atmosphere and act as a blanket to warm the planet.

“However, Mars does not retain enough carbon dioxide that could practically be put back into the atmosphere to warm Mars, according to a new NASA-sponsored study. Transforming the inhospitable Martian environment into a place astronauts could explore without life support is not possible without technology well beyond today’s capabilities.”

In the end Musk’s call to “occupy” and “nuke” Mars could easily be described as typical “American exceptionalism.” And supreme arrogance. His ambitions are mega-terrestrial and he seems not to understand how dangerous his ideas (like launching 10,000 nukes to Mars) really are to those of us still trying to survive on Earth and to anyone who would be foolish enough to venture to Mars after such a mad scheme had taken place.

It is time for the adults in the room to sit the out-of-control and spoiled child down and inform him that he does not own the universe. No, Elon, you are not going to be the master of Mars.

Bruce Gagnon is the cofounder and coordinator of the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space. His articles have appeared in publications like Earth Island Journal, National Catholic Reporter, Asia Times, Space News, and Z Magazine.

Shooting into a Mirror

By Doug Rawlings

For years our peace action group up here in Maine would gather at our house for a Solstice Celebration. If I kept my act together long enough, I’d search out and play my record album with John McCutcheon’s rendition of “Christmas in the Trenches” on it, a beautiful, haunting song that springs out of a real event during World War I when soldiers from both sides stepped out of their trenches into No Man’s Land for a moment of peace and joy and camaraderie. You know, like what Christmas is supposed to be like. Of course this was war. They were under orders to kill these other guys whom they probably had more in common with than with their commanding officers. They knew that. That’s why they slid out of their roles as killers to celebrate what they shared as human beings. A soccer game. A song sung in two languages together. If just for a moment. Of course this moment was relatively short-lived, and soon, as McCutcheon sings, “they went back to the business of war.”

But they were changed. They knew they were killing other sons and brothers and fathers and uncles. And for what? And for whom?

This story and this song resonate with many of us who have been sent off to war. No matter what war and no matter what role we played when in uniform, we all know that we were supposed to have been a part of something bigger—like ending war for all time or defending Democracy or (fill in the blank). But when it comes down to the nitty gritty, it’s you against another you. Shooting into a mirror. Of course basic training and the bayonet drill (Kill! Kill! Kill! Have No Mercy! Kill!) are supposed to kick that silly “civilian” slop out of you so that you can become an effective killing machine. Stop thinking. Stop caring. Just do your thing, survive, and get back home.

Trouble is that if you’re lucky enough to get back to the world, “home” is no longer what it was before. Well, maybe it was, but you certainly were not able to engage with it like you had before the war. Sure, you’d play another role now as serious cit-

izen, loving partner, loving parent, loving grandparent. But, seriously, how long will that last? You know something has been torn out of you and shoved down your throat. You know what you are capable of doing to another human being.

The identity crisis that’s become your life after war is so poignantly caught up in the tale that McCutcheon spins out for us that you know deep in your soul these “lads from Kent and Liverpool” are not quaint artifacts of the past. They are us. Repeated over and over again. From one generation to the next. And when our usefulness as “assets” of war has run its course, then we are tucked away and trotted out once a year in the 11th month to be thanked for our service. Service to what? Service to whom? Dangerous questions to ask.

But ask them we must. And we must ask them remembering those “brave lads” who transcended the obedience demanded of them on that fateful night when war was frozen in time. Imagine the courage it took to walk into the jaws of death out of a pure love for mankind. We must muster up the same courage and love and say “No” to the warmongers who have carved our world up and put us into their trenches, pitting us against our



brothers and sisters to satisfy their greed. Let’s sing “Silent Night” together in every language of this planet. Let’s bury our nuclear weapons, our drones, our manufactured hatred for the “other” and embrace our common bond as human beings. Then we can turn this planet from the “No Man’s Land” that it has become into a fertile and nurturing mother for all to embrace and be embraced by. Then “home” will be restored for all of us, and we can get back to finding our true identities as lovers not killers.

Doug Rawlings is one of the founders of Veterans For Peace and a member of the Tom Sturtevant Chapter 1, Auburn, Maine.

Thoughts on the Recent Presidential Election

By S. Brian Willson

Though I felt relief knowing that Trump did not have enough popular votes in a sufficient number of particular states to prevail in the Electoral College (assuming the selected electors actually comply with the vote results which they do not have to), I also feel very anxious about what examining the vote really suggests, and the immediate future of the 2020s, moving toward fascism, if it is not already here. In fact, it has been, for the most part, a fascist police state for virtually all U.S. Americans except for Whites, for 400 years.

The vote for Biden was underwhelming in light of the abominable character of Trump, several hundred thousand dead from the ill-managed or ignored pandemic, an economy that is tanking, and a military budget depriving U.S. Americans of healthcare, relief from indebtedness, etc. Trump garnered more than 74 million voters. He has 80 million followers on Twitter, and there is a White male supremacist cult that has been built around his racist and xenophobic values and policies. This cult will continue to grow no matter whether Trump remains in the White House, in a TV studio, in a business, or a prison. He has unleashed fear and racism among White voters that have been present, even if relatively dormant, for our entire history, but especially since the Civil Rights Acts of the 1960s.

The Democrats have become corporate and have ignored the plight of millions of U.S. Americans, including a majority of the people I grew up with, went to school with, and played sports with. The Dems would have to participate in a radical turnaround rapidly with a huge plan helping millions of people who need housing, debt relief, jobs, and most of all free healthcare. Before 2024! I submit if Sanders had been the candidate he would have won in a landslide. But especially White people feel comfortable with Trump because he soothes them with their racism, and the Democrats have completely ignored a vast majority of the population. In this respect they do not deserve votes. They have not been an appealing alternative.

I am an anomaly among the people I grew up with in the 1940s, '50s, and '60s in rural, racist lower-middle-class White Protestant U.S. America, in that I went to graduate school, got stuck in Viet Nam where I was radicalized, and never fell back into the then comforting Golden Age of the USA. I became something I never knew anything about—an activist. But when I would visit my parents, I had to look at pictures of Nixon, later of Reagan and Bush, and Jerry Falwell, posted on their living room mantle as they lectured me on importance of being a Christian, and a loyal U.S. American who did not criticize national or even local policies. I attempted to be polite, but my stays were short and infrequent.

It is sad, and dangerous, that White supremacy for 400 years has imprisoned us with its stupor of exceptionalism, contributing to a

kind of ugly stupidity, pre-empting critical thinking and the nourishment of empathy. When the Dems choose to address the critical needs of the voters, instead of the politics of their donors, the United States could have a social revolution. Short of that, we are facing a kind of serfdom in fascism. Sinclair Lewis nailed it some years ago when he allegedly said, "When fascism comes to America, it will be wrapped in the flag and carrying a cross."

I would say it is critical for our dignified survival for there to be a popular revolution, led, if not by the Democrats, by a coalition of millions of people who understand the importance of people power. Meanwhile the far-right militant cultists have no competition for relieving their anger, frustration, and hatred.

S. Brian Willson served in the U.S. Air Force from 1966 to 1970, including several months as a combat security officer in Vietnam. He subsequently became a member of Vietnam Veterans Against the War and Veterans For Peace. He currently lives in Nicaragua.



[T]here is a White male supremacist cult that has been built around [Trump's] racist and xenophobic values and policies. This cult will continue to grow no matter whether Trump remains in the White House, in a TV studio, in a business, or a prison.

Keep Active, Fight Hard and Wear a Damn Mask

By Matthew Hoh

The week after Thanksgiving, COVID killed more Americans than the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have directly killed since 2001. Over the seven days from Nov. 28 to Dec. 4, 15,682 Americans died from COVID—more than the 14,000+ killed in action as both service-members and private contractors since 2001.

The number of Iraq and Afghan veterans killed by suicide since 2001 is more than 9,000, again less than that week's total from COVID.

We've had multiple days on which

COVID killed more people than were killed on 9/11. Due to 9/11 we have voluntarily given up so many civil liberties: our phones and computers are constantly monitored and catalogued by our government, we torture and kill without due process or mercy, including American citizens, and everyday experiences, like going to the airport, are macabre and debasing charades of fear-mongering security theater. Yet, as thousands die each day from COVID in the United States, we can't get large segments of the American population to wear a mask or watch their church service from home via Zoom.

There is a maddening dissonance be-

tween our actions toward COVID and what we have allowed our country to do and how we have allowed ourselves to be violated in the name of protecting ourselves from terrorism; evidently the idea of brown Muslims is more terrifying than a pandemic super-bug to many Americans. However, there are some rough and consistent equivalencies in our national reactions to COVID and 9/11. Primarily this is apparent in the astronomical amounts of money spent by the U.S. Congress on both of these national actions. The running cost for the wars and the amount spent on COVID have both been almost nothing other than subsidies to big business and banks. More than \$6 trillion for the wars and more than \$4 trillion for COVID and what have any of us seen of that? A \$1,200 check, last April, that went right to the banks for our houses, cars, and credit cards.

It does not have to be this way. We can protect our population and provide the necessary economic support for people to keep their homes, businesses and jobs. It's simply a question of political will and an understanding that corporate media, and both political parties, benefit from a simplistic, binary, and emotion-driven proposed solution set.

We need to keep pushing for real systemic change in our economy and our political leadership. Keep active, fight hard, and wear a mask for fuck's sake.

Matthew Hoh is a member of the advisory boards of Expose Facts, Veterans For Peace and World Beyond War. In 2009 he resigned his position with the State Department in Afghanistan to protest the escalation of the Afghanistan War by the Obama Administration. He was previously in Iraq with a State Department team and with the U.S. Marines. He is a senior fellow with the Center for International Policy.

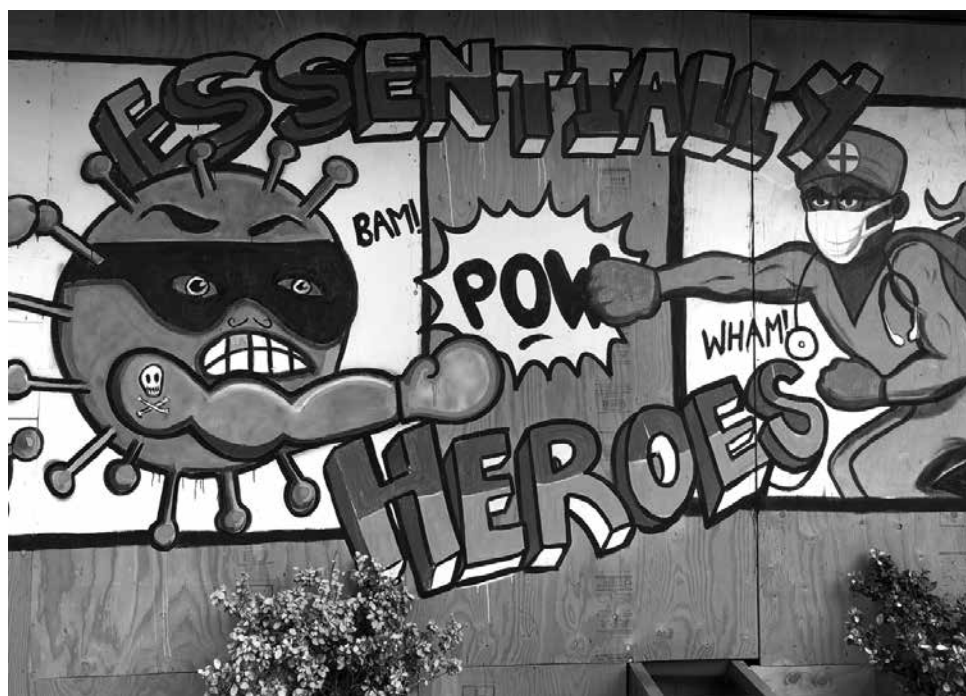


Photo: Nathaniel St. Clair

Empire, war, obedience, disobedience, pig shit, chicken shit, cow shit and bullshit

By Mike Ferner

When we think of an empire waging war, familiar images, sounds and emotions come to mind. Not just people, but all of nature is engulfed to satisfy the joint hungers of empire and war: domination, control, and money.

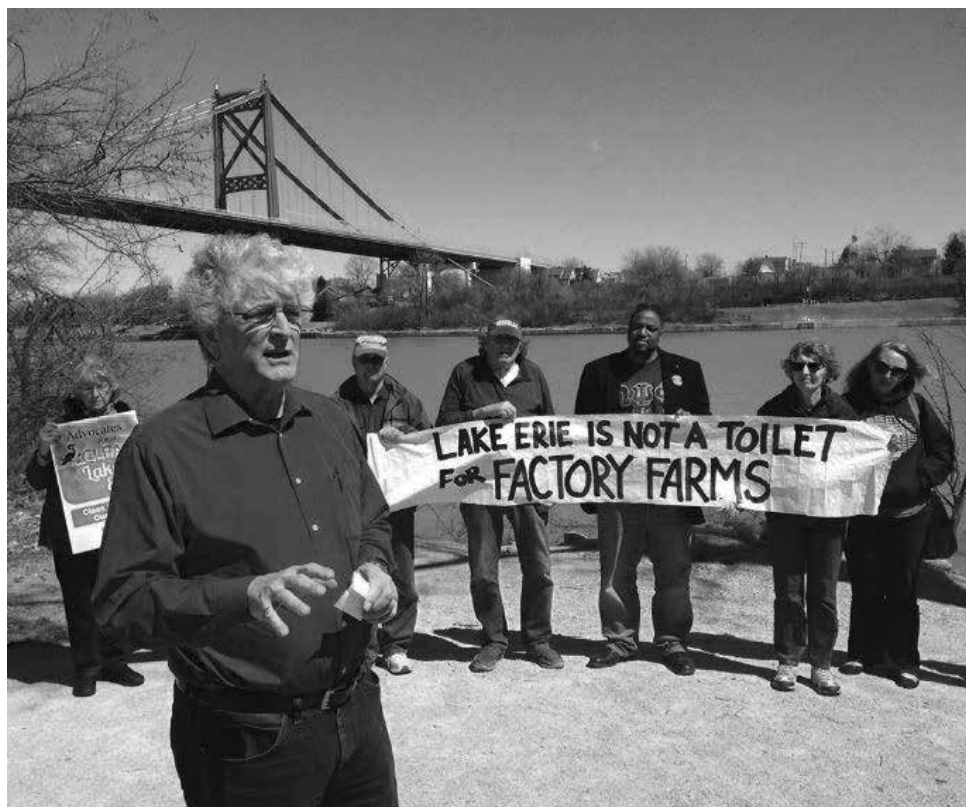
If we care to really look, we can find that avarice at work elsewhere as well. Take something as basic as food production, for example.

In our country, over 95% of the animals that produce our meat, dairy products, and eggs are confined in industrialized feeding facilities. Every aspect of those animals' lives—food, water, space, the air they breathe—is computer controlled to maximize the company's profit and limit mortality to acceptable levels. Domination and control are complete. The animals' suffering ends only at death.

As with war, this method of food production spins out collateral damage in all directions.

Traditional, small-scale livestock farmers are thrown off the land by the millions. Life in rural communities is economically, culturally, and politically bent to the demands of this industry. Workers are often undocumented immigrants who live in company-owned hovels and risk their lives daily on the job. And the waste from these factories is a flood, billions of gallons a year, liquified to streamline transportation and application on fields too often saturated. Heaven help any community at the bottom of this hill.

Toledo, Ohio, is one such community, some 280,000 residents with a metro area of a half-million, located on the western edge of Lake Erie, at the "tail end" of an 8,000-square-mile watershed, the largest



The author with members of Advocates for a Clean Lake Erie at a press conference in downtown Toledo, on the banks of the Maumee River, which flows into Lake Erie, draining 8,000 square miles containing over 800 animal feeding factories.

in the Great Lakes region.

In 2014, those half-million people, part of the 11 million who drink from Lake Erie, were told not to drink, touch, or cook with the water coming out of their taps for three days in August. Annual toxic algal blooms had become almost common practice, but conditions aligned perfectly in the summer of 2014 to overload the water treatment plant's capacity to deal with microcystin, a powerful toxin created by *Microcystis* bacteria, often called algae.

Dissolved, reactive phosphorus is the main determinant in the size of the annual bloom in Lake Erie. Nitrogen is believed to determine toxicity levels. Both are nutrients found in over-abundance in the huge quantities of animal feces and urine, which, along with antibiotic-resistant bacteria, are in the liquid waste from the feeding factories.

Since the Farm Bureau and government agencies supposed to protect the environment both reassure us that they're either not to blame or are "taking care of the problem," it's apparently up to environmental organizations to determine the impact this industry has on our lake and drinking water.

Advocates for a Clean Lake Erie does this as well as any all-volunteer citizen group can.

Measuring just the phosphorus emitted from the 25 million animals confined in our watershed, we found it to be equal to that flushed by the combined human populations of Ohio, Indiana, Delaware, Vermont, and North and South Dakota. The waste is then spread as close to the feeding factories as possible, with no treatment whatsoever, on fields that drain into western Lake Erie. It is our belief that this is the single biggest reason our lake turns toxic every summer.

on that one, declaring the Lake Erie Bill of Rights unconstitutional. With government agencies refusing to do their job to protect health and the environment, and courts outlawing citizen efforts to do so, what avenues are left to protect the systems we depend on for our very lives?

Out-of-control industrial agriculture shares characteristics with the war industry: the weaker democracy is, the more it flourishes, and it doesn't "just happen." Our own government develops and promotes it, and we pay the bill.

Has the nation-state throughout history ever truthfully explained the reasons for any war or held a plebiscite on an invasion? Did anyone in the United States vote to have our food produced in morbid factories? Did we vote to have a transportation system that is killing the planet or a healthcare system that ministers primarily to the health of insurance companies; or to invade nations that were no threat to us?

When I run into friends these days they often ask, "How's the lake doing?" or "What can we do?"

To the first question I answer, "Worse than it was last year because the state keeps licensing more animal factories."

To the second, after seeing one avenue after another closed off to citizens and tiring of replying, "Write your elected officials," I simply say, "It's not going to get any better until enough people start raising enough hell."

But I like Howard Zinn's version better: "Our problem is that people are obedient all over the world in the face of poverty and starvation and stupidity and war and cruelty. Our problem is that people are obedient while the jails are full of petty thieves and the grand thieves are running the country. Our problem isn't civil disobedience. Our problem is civil obedience."

Mike Ferner is a Toledo writer and former president of Veterans For Peace.

The Dawning Light

Haiku Comrades,
Will you allow me my angst
in this sacred space?

Our United Snakes
tighten their coils round the Earth
In self destruction

What is to be done?
We continue insisting,
"No Apologies".

Apolitical
screams will resound from rooftops
and some day be heard.

Justice will arise
from the ashes of our Sins
in the Dawning Light.

—Doug Zachary
Lifetime member of
Veterans For Peace



Is COVID-19 a 9/11 Moment?

By Michael Wong

This April, U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams compared COVID-19 to other American crises, saying this was “our 9/11 moment.” In May, President Trump said, “This is going to be our Pearl Harbor moment, our 9/11 moment. ... It’s going to be happening all over the country.”

Is this “our 9/11 moment?” And if so, what does that mean? Let’s look back at 9/11—and what came of that.

On 9/11, the nation was shocked in a way America had probably not been shocked since Pearl Harbor in World War 2. The fall of the Twin Towers was dramatic, and the U.S. response was quick and massive. First we invaded Afghanistan and overthrew the Taliban. The Taliban originally offered to surrender Osama Bin Laden, but demanded evidence first. Instead we issued an ultimatum, then invaded with proxy forces, taking the country. But in doing so, we let Osama Bin Laden and the core of al-Qaeda escape to Pakistan from his Tora Bora hide-out. The U.S. military attacked Tora Bora and had Bin Laden and al-Qaeda almost surrounded. The plan was for U.S. troops to cut off Bin Laden’s exit route toward Pakistan, but at the last minute President George W. Bush failed to give the order for U.S. troops to move, and the American commanding general then had to rely on Afghan forces to cut off Bin Laden’s escape. Subsequently, Bin Laden escaped to Pakistan. Why did Bush make that fateful error? It was never explained, but after Bin Laden’s escape, America’s “War on Terror” went on to involve U.S. military actions—overt and covert—around the world, in country after country, seeking “terrorists.”

Next we invaded Iraq and overthrew Saddam Hussein, claiming he had links to al-Qaeda, was part of an “Axis of Evil,” and had weapons of mass destruction, all claims that later proved false. Thus began two major U.S. wars that have dragged on in different forms to this very day, 19 years later. The Obama Administration, elected on a platform of peace, added two more wars, Libya and Syria, which also have not ended but continued morphing into different forms, all of them bad.

Not to mention numerous smaller, often covert wars in Africa, the Philippines, Latin America, and elsewhere around the world, in which we are now bogged down with no end in sight. Our blood and treasure have been spent, all with a mostly negative return on investment.

Our wars in the Middle East have sent a million or more refugees a year flooding into Europe, including from Syria, Afghanistan, Libya, and Iraq—all countries attacked by us. There are currently nearly 80 million refugees and internally displaced persons in the world, many fleeing U.S.-instigated wars and regime change operations. In Europe these refugees have

spiral we fell into after 9/11? After 9/11 we didn’t just go after Bin Laden and al-Qaeda, we attacked a series of nations unrelated to them, causing endless entanglements and quagmires, draining our resources and pulling us down. Today, we are under assault by a virus. But while fighting the virus with half measures, we are in full attack mode against China, denouncing it almost daily for human rights issues, passing bills in Congress to sanction it for violating our foreign policies on human rights and international affairs, filing lawsuits to sue it for COVID-19, arresting Chinese citizens for unilateral U.S. sanctions violations, attempting to dictate Chinese internal pol-



sparked protests, terrorist attacks, political turmoil (Greece, Brexit, political battles over refugees), changes of government, fragmentation within the EU, and a destabilization of Europe, our closest allies.

In terms of U.S. casualties, the death toll of COVID-19 is over 55 times greater than 9/11. The count is closing in on 400,000, compared to 9/11’s roughly 3,000. Moreover, the end is not in sight, and damage to the economy is unprecedented and its end is also not in sight. In fact, the cost to both lives and economy may be just beginning.

How does this compare to the downward

icy in Hong Kong and Xinjiang, escalating confrontations in the South China Sea and the Taiwan straits, and engaging in a new conventional and nuclear arms race in Asia. Why? Because, as Hillary Clinton put it, “I don’t want my grandchildren to live in a world dominated by the Chinese.” In other words, we are acting to stop China’s peaceful economic rise, fearing that if China develops its economy, in the future it may challenge us. Some American leaders perceive China as an “existential threat.”

Meanwhile, we are not moving effectively against COVID-19 and climate change, two actual existential threats that can best be met by working with China. In both fields, China is slightly ahead of us and has repeatedly stated that defeating COVID-19 and climate change will require international cooperation, an obvious truth. Yet here we are, seeking conflict and possible war with the key nation most able and willing to work with us for mutual survival and benefit.

Are we repeating the same type of mistakes that we made after 9/11? Then we vigorously attacked and fought nations who were not our enemies, while diverting attention and resources from our real enemy. Bin Laden and al-Qaeda were our real enemies then; COVID-19 and climate change are our real enemies now.

If we want to survive both COVID-19 and climate change, the only viable path is to work with China, not against it. The

United States and China have previously had many joint research projects, and both have benefited from those projects. China is now helping countries around the world—including some of our NATO allies—with COVID prevention, management, treatment, personal protective equipment, and other support. Our government and mainstream media initially said that China was withholding PPE from us, but at that time, I ordered 50 high-quality face masks from China via Amazon at a cost of about \$35. They arrived within two weeks. They lied, Americans died. If our government and media are lying about that regarding China, what else are they lying about? Quite a bit, according to Chinese and other sources.

Beyond the virus, climate change looms large in our future, and this is an absolute existential threat that we must deal with or suffer irreversible damage to our nation and our entire planet. If we don’t act

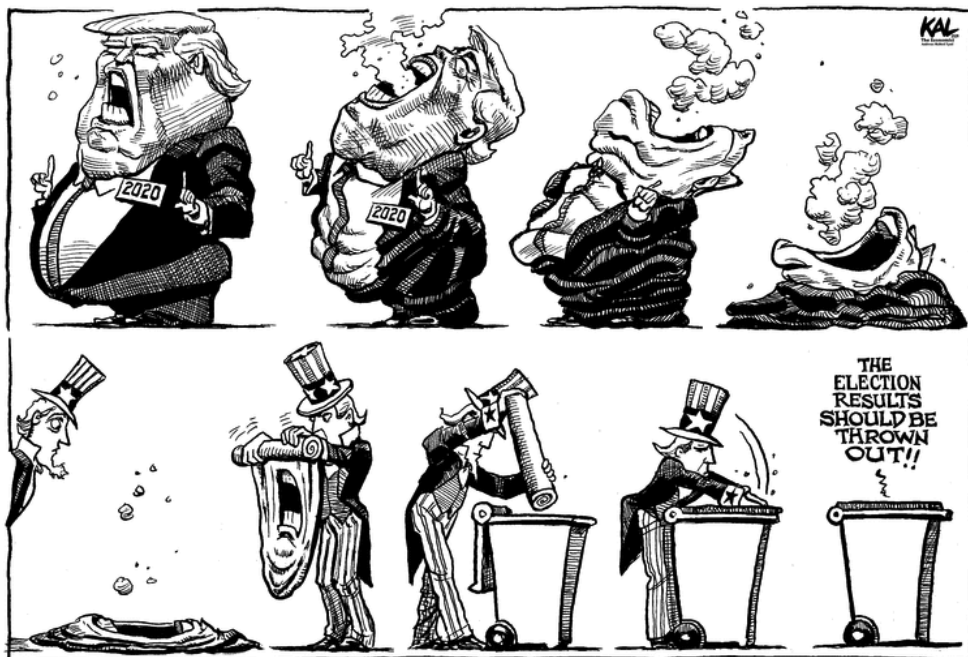
Our wars in the Middle East have sent a million or more refugees a year flooding into Europe, including from Syria, Afghanistan, Libya, and Iraq—all countries attacked by us.

quickly, it will be too late, and our planet and our nation will never recover from overwhelming devastation. In addition to COVID-19 and climate change, our new Cold War with China is creating an arms race in Asia that includes new nuclear weapons of much greater complexity than during the first Cold War, and thus a much greater risk of an actual nuclear war through either accident or miscalculation.

In other words, by our actions, we are artificially creating or exacerbating threats that could destroy us. The standard joke goes that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, and expecting different results. We are repeating the same mistakes made after 9/11, multiplied exponentially.

The likely outcome is the same result: devastation and an unraveling of our country and our world. We were seemingly the world’s “lone superpower” at the end of the first Cold War, but we sabotaged it by our own overreach and folly. Let us not do the same things over and over again, for we will not get different results.

Michael Wong is a retired social worker and the vice president of Veterans For Peace, San Francisco chapter 69, and has been published in the anthologies, *Veterans of War*, *Veterans of Peace*, edited by Maxine Hong Kingston, *A Matter of Conscience*, by William Short and Willa Seidenberg, and *Waging Peace in Vietnam*, edited by Ron Carver, David Cortright, and Barbara Doherty. He is also featured in the documentary film, *Sir! No Sir! about the Viet Nam-era GI antiwar movement*.



Standing Up for Free Expression Means Standing Up for Assange

Prosecuting Julian Assange for publishing truths the U.S. government wanted to hide is an incredibly dangerous precedent

Editors note: On Jan. 4, a British judge blocked the extradition of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange to the United States, saying he would not be safe in a U.S. prison due to his deteriorated mental state. Her ruling did not address the many press freedom issues raised by the case, and the U.S. government is expected to appeal the decision.

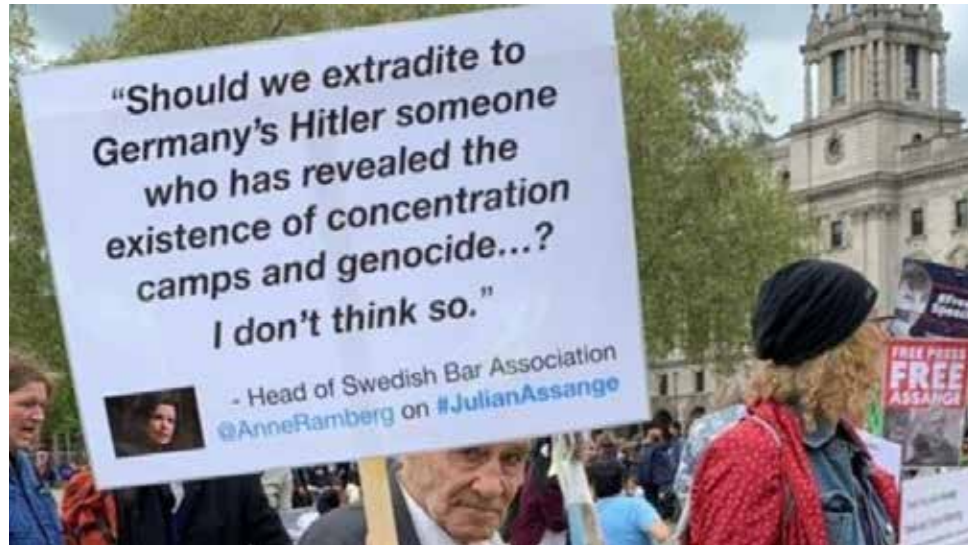
By Roger Waters

As the world remains fixated on the COVID pandemic and a divisive presidential election in the United States, it's crucial that we all remain mindful about the fact that freedom of expression is under attack.

What happened to the fourth estate? Where is the honest reporting that we all so desperately need, and upon which the very survival of democracy depends?

I'll tell you where it is: It's languishing in Her Majesty's Prison Belmarsh.

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange has spent the last year and a half in that London prison under terrible conditions. The U.S. wants to extradite him to face unprecedented charges under the 1917 Espionage Act, which could lead to a sentence of up to 175 years. Given that the



federal court in Washington, D.C., has a 100% record of guilty verdicts in espionage cases, Assange would likely spend the rest of his life in solitary confinement. In effect, it would be a lingering sentence of death. And what grave crime might fit such a punishment? The crime of publishing the truth.

Ten years ago, Assange worked with whistleblower Chelsea Manning to reveal U.S. misconduct and share it with the world. In short, he did what any respectable journalist should do: He shone a light on secrets that the U.S. government would rather keep hidden but which the public had an absolute right—and an absolute need—to know.

Because of Manning, Assange, and WikiLeaks, we learned of unreported civilian casualties, war crimes, human rights violations, the killing of journalists and the U.S. military's efforts to cover up its misdeeds through misinformation. These revelations won numerous awards for helping to change the global conversation on the post-9/11 wars.

But while human rights organizations and journalism societies have heralded Manning and Assange for the work they did in the public interest, the U.S. government has sought to make examples of them. To hang them like dead magpies in the hedge as a dire warning to others.

If the United States extradites Assange, it will set the dangerous precedent that journalists can be prosecuted merely for working with inside sources, or for publishing information the government deems harmful. As many experts have testified, this would be the death knell of investigative journalism. It would become nearly impossible for a free press to fulfill its obligation to inform the citizenry, challenge government secrecy, expose concealed wrongdoing, or share any information that might embarrass those in power.

Citizens throughout the world should consider the important role that knowledge plays in democratic life. Knowledge makes us who we are, enables us to understand our fellow citizens and encourages us to

grow. Without access to information, our power to express our will at the ballot box is weakened. And our access to information depends on the right to free expression.

The U.S. military and its partners have been at war for nearly two decades. These wars have cost millions of lives and displaced at least 37 million people. We know that our governments, through

bias, incompetence or manipulation, have played fast and loose with the truth about these wars. An independent press is the only safeguard we have against government deception. We should always celebrate brave whistleblowers and journalists committed to sharing with us the information we need to be responsible citizens. The information that Manning leaked and Assange published was true, released in the public interest, and never harmed anyone—unless damaging the reputations of public officials constitutes harm.

Right now, with the connivance of Facebook, Google, and Twitter, the U.S. government is attempting to dramatically reshape how we share information. It appears that the U.K. government is willing to help its closest ally and turn over Assange.

So what to do now? I am sometimes accused of preaching to the choir. So be it. Choir—we are a very large choir, and in the name of truth and love and freedom we must raise our voices in unison, in a mighty choral roar to demand of the U.S. and UK governments that they end their war on journalism. That they dismiss the charges against Julian Assange and cancel the extradition proceedings in the kangaroo court in London. Certainly the future of democracy, and possibly the very future of life on earth, depends upon it.

For more: action4assange.com and defend.wikileaks.org.

Roger Waters is an English musician and activist, and co-founder of the band Pink Floyd.

What It Is Worth

"The wilderness is calling all her children back again" — Leonard Cohen

for Doug Rawlings

A team of misfits, yes, I guess that pretty well describes us, thinking we could find a home, build a world that we could live in, one that everyone could live in peacefully. How we doing so far? Not so good? As you say, "Ah, well." Cuchulain couldn't defeat the sea, but that didn't stop him from trying. The wilderness may be calling her children back; I wouldn't know about that. I only know we've done what we can; we can look at ourselves in the mirror and not be ashamed. Maybe a little foolish for being naïve enough to think we could make a difference, even after all these years of failing to register even a blip in this lunatic world. But I'd rather live with that than live with knowing I did nothing to try to fix the mess we're all of us in.

—Bill Ehrhart

BOLD Ideas, ESSENTIAL Reading

"The greatest of all myths about wars is that they come to an end. This deeply personal, very human book shows how ten, twenty, thirty, sixty years later their hurts and scars live on in those who fought them. Michael Messner has brought on stage some eloquent survivors whom our politicians should listen to before they dare even consider sending young men and women out to fight yet again."

—Adam Hochschild, author of *To End All Wars: A Story of Loyalty and Rebellion, 1914-1918*

"There is a revelation on every page of *Guys Like Me*. The journey any man takes to transform his sense of his own manliness isn't direct or simple. And, as Michael Messner shows us in these five engaging life histories, each gendered journey will have added twists and turns when distorted by militarism. A truly humane book."

—Cynthia Enloe, author of *The Big Push: Exposing and Challenging Persistent Patriarchy*

"With *Guys Like Me*, Michael Messner delivers an eloquent, passionate, and moving account of how war has sometimes moved veterans towards peace. Messner's interviewees give us hope that humanity might yet one day listen to the soldiers who have gone to war, the ones who tell us, again and again, that war's devastation is never worth it."

—Viet Thanh Nguyen, author of *The Sympathizer*

"Messner's narrative points the way for other activists seeking to build popular opposition movements."

—*Kirkus Reviews*

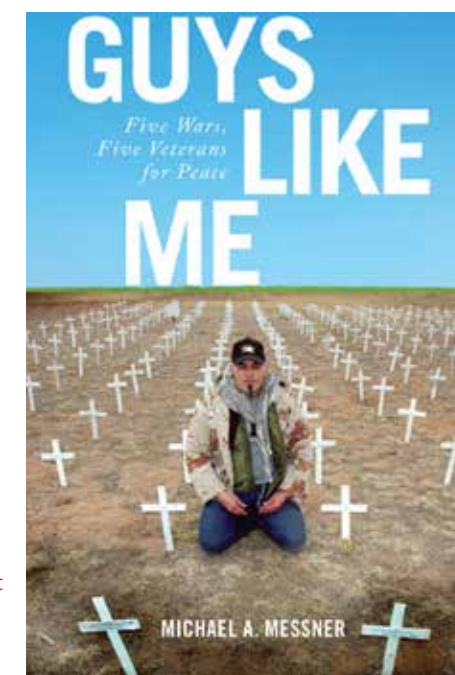
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—Hugh Gusterson, author of *Drone: Remote Control Warfare*

The Two Minutes of *Ma Rainey* That Will W

The actor's unforgettable soliloquy lays bare all the pain and struggle he hid so well in his fight against cancer

By Tirhakah Love

When word spread that Chadwick Boseman's body had succumbed to cancer, a torrent of questions followed almost immediately. How long had he fought? How long had he known? How had we, the public, never seen his struggle? Never a moment did he falter under the heat of the stage lights. But in his final living performance, as Levee in George Wolfe's Netflix adaptation of the August Wilson play *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, Boseman gives us a slice of his melancholy: the anger, the existential questioning, and spiritual conflict of his blues. Where he takes Wilson's text, where he takes himself, is an act of total immersion. A sinking. A drowning. And the wreckage is worthy of excavation.

Like Boseman himself, Levee's preternatural charm and smooth smirky self-assuredness sit above what is a quiet, bubbling intensity. After he loses an argument with his boss, blues singer Ma Rainey (a fierce, engrossing performance from Vi-

ola Davis), the future that Levee once saw for himself—as an adroit trumpeter and bandleader in 1920s Chicago—starts to fade. That's when his bandmate Cutler (Colman Domingo) tells him a parable about a reverend who, surrounded by racist White men, is told to dance if he wants to live.

Cutler is a holy fella, his tie pulled closely to his neck, his suspenders holding up a righteous morality; he's a foil to Levee's youthful distressed mess. And of the two characters, Cutler is the one who overlaps with Boseman far more—especially their shared religiosity. (When the actor passed, his spiritual mentor, Pastor Samuel Neely, highlighted his labors of godly love: "With him singing in the choir, with him working the youth group, he always was doing something, always helping out, always serving. That was his personality.")

Cutler's story is meant to show that regardless of Levee's ambition, the White man is always gonna be the White man, and the most we can do in this life is be



faithful in serving God. But after his own lifetime of swallowing disappointment after disappointment, encountering storm after storm, inheriting this thing called Blackness that holds so much beauty but elicits so much hate, Levee finally breaks.

"What I wants to know," he starts, "is, if he's a man of God, then where the hell was God when all of this was going on? Why wasn't God looking out for him? Why didn't God strike down them crackers with some of this lightning you talking about to me?"

"Levee, you gonna burn in

hell," Cutler responds, standing up from the piano bench where he began his story.

Levee knows he hit a nerve. He moves toward Cutler, clamps down even harder, highlighting the theological gulf between them. In a high and dry register, he needles further:

"What I care about burning in hell? You talking like a fool, burning in hell. Why didn't God strike some of them crackers down? Tell me that! That's the question! Don't come telling me this burning in hell shit! He a man of God—why didn't

God strike some of them crackers down? I'll tell you why! I'll tell you the truth! It's sitting out there as plain as day!"

Boseman pauses for a beat. His lips curl back behind teeth, the venom seeps onto his lips in sheen. "Cause he a White man's god. That's why," he sneers, "God ain't never listened to no nigger's prayers. God take a nigger's prayers and throw them in the garbage. God don't pay niggers no mind. In fact, God hate niggers! Hate them with all the fury in his heart."

Levee's eyes widen, revealing their tragic frenzy. He moves with a predatory swiftness, never wanting to leave Cutler's gaze. His shoulders slumped yet taut, as if waiting for his enemy to make a fatal flaw for a counterpunch. "Jesus don't love you. Jesus hate yo' Black ass. Come talking that shit to me"—head shaking in the air as if in disbelief—"talking about burning in hell! God can kiss my ass!"

In comes the first hook. Cutler landing a punch squarely on Levee's jaw, bullrushing him into the studio wall. Levee is outmatched by Cutler's size and strength—but when their bandmates separate them, he pulls out a knife and continues his bluesman missive. "I'm gonna give your God a chance to save your Black ass," Levee says, the prickly rasp of a laugh rumbling out of his chest. "I'm calling Cutler's God! You hear me, Cutler's God!?" He's screaming now, knife in the air, spit and sweat everywhere. "Come on and save this nigger! Strike me down before I cut his throat!"

The real origin of Levee's rage,

A Searing Experience

By Tarak Kauff

After you watch the film adaptation of August Wilson's play about the legendary blues singer, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, on Netflix, you might also watch the commentary by the actors—Colman Domingo, Michael Potts, Glynn Turman, Viola Davis, Taylor Paige, Jeremy Shamos—executive producer Denzel Washington, director George C. Wolfe, and composer Branford Marsalis, as they reflect on what the story demanded and what it meant about Black lives, the blues, and their remarkable survival, even transcendence over American racism.

They speak passionately, almost reverently, about Chadwick Bozeman, who played Levee, the rebellious and naive trumpeter, and to whom the film was dedicated. It was his last film. This past August, Bozeman died of cancer that he had been battling for three years.

Davis, who starred as Ma Rainey, said of Bozeman, "I think that Levee is probably one of the greatest if not the greatest role for an African American man, ever, onstage, onscreen. For me it spotlights his legacy beautifully, because his legacy was about excellence. But what you're going to see is Chadwick as an artist. So it's very fitting."

"A lot of his major scenes got pushed to the last week so he was doing, every day, monstrosity scenes," said Wolfe. "Emotionally and physically draining scenes. And for every take, every day, it

was just glorious work. Not for one second did he hold back, and not for one second did he falter. It was full heart, full craft, full being for every single moment that we were filming."

After one emotionally explosive scene, Bozeman was so in character that he began to sob. This was not in the script and you won't see it on film. "I assumed that when Levee got to the big speech that Chadwick was going to stop. But he didn't stop. He kept going, and Levee took over—it was raw and explosive. Afterwards, Chadwick just started to sob, and Colman hugged him, and then Chadwick's girlfriend basically picked him up," said Wolfe.

The magnificent core actors, all of them, just became their characters, but none more so than Bozeman and Davis. There was no separation. They went beyond "acting" and made what they did real—the essence, the spiritual gold of what it means to be a great actor and human being.

And the film adaption of August Wilson's great play, written in 1982 as part of a 10-play series on the African American experience in the 20th century, became a vivid reality that gave a brief, but intimate glimpse of the black experience and the deep meaning it holds for all of us, whatever our skin color. The film and commentary were more than just a movie and analysis that I watched twice (so far). They combined into a searing experience that penetrated deep into my very being. What more is there to say?

Win Chadwick Boseman His Oscar



Far left: Viola Davis as Ma Rainey on stage with dancers; left: Chadwick Bozeman (foreground) as Levee, with (left to right) Glym Turman as Toledo, Michael Potts as Slow Drag, and Colman Domingo as Cutler.

as he soon reveals, goes far beyond his disgust for Cutler's story. Levee harbors the childhood pain of seeing his mother's assault at the hands of White men. He learned quickly the impotency of Black life, the hurt that can come with feeling weak or vulnerable. And he hates God for doing that to him. "Come on and save him like you did my mama!" he says. "Save him like you did my mama! I heard her when she called you! I heard her when she said, 'Lord have mercy! Jesus Help me! Please God have mercy on me, Lord!' And did you turn your back? Did you turn your back, motherfucker?"

By this point, Levee is no longer concerned with stabbing Cutler—he's turned his energy towards the heavens. "Turn your back on me!" he yells to the sky. "Turn your back on me, motherfucker! I'll cut your heart out!" Again and again, challenging God until his body shakes, the knife useless in his

hands. Eventually, Levee looks around; he knows that this is a bridge that he can no longer cross. He takes his leave.

All of this happens within a span of two minutes. And it's in those minutes that Chadwick Boseman finally reveals the other side of those quiet years living with a disease that he knew would end him. The other side of the daily blessings he sent to his celebrity circles, joyously tasking them with remembering to embrace their present and breathe.

By all accounts, Boseman was a deeply spiritual man—but as James Cone writes in 1991 in *The Spirituals and the Blues*, "there is more to be said about the music of Black people than what was revealed in the Black spirituals." For all of his openness of spirit, something else compelled Chadwick Boseman to keep his struggle under wraps. To make his blues invisible.

"The blues and Truth are one

reality of the Black experience" Cone writes later in the book. He wasn't alone in that; musicians knew it, too. "The blues are that 'true feeling,'" Henry Townsend once said. The legendary Leadbelly went one step further: "All Negroes like the blues ... because they was born with the blues."

Chadwick's blues wasn't the cancer that enveloped his body. It was his understanding of the truth of a world that, faced with his diagnosis, wouldn't let him live the way he wanted. It was an act of purpose and intent that embraced his blues as a personal intimacy, not to be tainted by Hollywood's murmurings or pigeonholing. He knew he had to fight the very forces of exploitation, patronizing, and pity-partying that had caused Levee—and Ma Rainey—such great angst in their times. He did it, and he won. But the tragedy in all of this was the fact that he took

on this burden alone. "Because he was a caretaker, a leader, a man of faith, dignity and pride, he shielded his collaborators from his suffering," said Ryan Coogler, the man who made him king.

No matter how strong a soul is, the blues only grows in depth and gravity. And Chadwick Boseman carried his blues. Pain that could fit in the major lines of the palm or rest underneath the tongue's striations. Like any

blues, necessitating a vessel to flood, threatening to capsize. Boseman descended into the hold of his body's ship armed with homegrown fortitude, faithfully filling up his blues. Every so often, when the waters receded far enough, Boseman would go topside and tell the stories of his people. Our people. The blue people. Jackie and JB and Thurgood. And the other nearby ships running parallel, carrying and depositing their own mix of sweat and pain and runoff, would stop and watch. Take in this bridge of a man, showing us how to be gracious for the trudging.

Chadwick Boseman was thankful for the poetry of the suffering—how it enriched every role with a calm vitality until his dams broke. He was not Levee, but Levee was within him. And in his last performance he finally let us in on his little slice of truth. His little shred of blue.

Tirhakah Love is a freelance writer, speaker and DJ based in Philadelphia, Pa. His website is tirhakahlove.com.



A Letter From the Amazon



Dear Presidents of the nine Amazonian countries and to all world leaders that share responsibility for the plundering of our rainforest,

My name is Nemonte Nenquimo. I am a Waorani woman, a mother, and a leader of my people. The Amazon rainforest is my home. I am writing you this letter because the fires are raging still. Because the companies are spilling oil in our rivers. Because the miners are stealing gold (as they have been for 500 years), and leaving behind open pits and toxins. Because the land grabbers are cutting down primary forest so that the cattle can graze, plantations can be grown and the white man can eat. Because our elders are dying from coronavirus, while you are planning your next moves to cut up our lands to stimulate an economy that has never benefited us. Because,

as Indigenous peoples, we are fighting to protect what we love—our way of life, our rivers, the animals, our forests, life on Earth—and it's time that you listen to us.

In each of our many hundreds of different languages across the Amazon, we have a word for you—the outsider, the stranger. In my language, WaoTededo, that word is “cowori.” And it doesn't need to be a bad word. But you have made it so. For us, the word has come to mean (and in a terrible way, your society has come to represent): the white man that knows too little for the power that he wields, and the damage that he causes.

You are probably not used to an Indigenous woman calling you ignorant and, less so, on a platform such as this one. But for Indigenous peoples it is clear: the less you know about something, the less value it has to you, and the easier

it is to destroy. And by easy, I mean: guiltlessly, remorselessly, foolishly, even righteously. And this is exactly what you are doing to us as Indigenous peoples, to our rainforest territories, and ultimately to our planet's climate.

It took us thousands of years to get to know the Amazon rainforest. To understand her ways, her secrets, to learn how to survive and thrive with her. And for my people, the Waorani, we have only known you for 70

“...the word has come to mean the white man that knows too little for the power that he wields, and the damage that he causes.”

years (we were “contacted” in the 1950s by American evangelical missionaries), but we are fast learners, and you are not as complex as the rainforest.

When you say that the oil companies have marvelous new technologies that can sip the oil from beneath our lands like hummingbirds sip nectar from a flower, we know that you are lying because we live downriver from the spills. When you say that the Amazon is not burning, we do not need satellite images to prove you wrong; we are choking on the smoke of the fruit orchards that our ancestors planted centuries ago. When you say that you are urgently looking for climate solutions, yet continue to build a world economy based on extraction and pollution, we know you are lying because we are the closest to the land, and the first to hear her cries.

I never had the chance to go to university, and become a doctor, or a lawyer, a politician, or a scientist. My elders are my teachers. The forest is my teacher. And I have learned

continued on next page ...



Extinction Rebellion: ‘Spend Money on Climate Action, Not on Weapons’

By Extinction Rebellion, Bristol, UK

In the early morning of Dec. 11, protesters from Extinction Rebellion Bristol and Christian Climate Action blocked access to the Ministry of Defence (MoD) site at Abbey Wood near Bristol. They were responding to the fact that the UK government had committed some \$33 billion to new military spending while allocating only \$16 billion to “green recovery” investments.

The blockade drew attention to what the protesters described as the government's “dangerously inadequate response” to the climate emergency. Roadblocks were set up on three access roads to the site, with banners including the message “Invest in Life not Death.”

“Government policy seems to be to prepare for the international instability that's predicted as a result of increasing competition for resources, rather than taking the radical action that experts have said is needed to prevent climate breakdown,” says Bristol Extinction Rebellion activist Sita Ruskin.

The Institute for Public Policy Research, an independent policy think tank, has said that \$45 billion in annual investment is needed to meet the government's own targets.

The government's own Climate Change Committee has reported that the government has reached just two out of 31 of its own milestones, and is on track with only four of the 21 indicators on the path to zero carbon emissions.

As the UK emerges from pandemic to face the even

more serious climate crisis, we are saying: “Military spending must not be a top priority.”

Ruskin, speaking on behalf of Bristol Extinction Rebellion, said:

“We're here to say to our government: Spend our money on combatting climate change—not on putting weapons into combat.

“Failing to take action on climate change is what will fuel war. It's predicted that conflicts could increase by 10% to 20% for every half-degree Fahrenheit increase in global temperatures.”

The blockade drew attention to what the protesters described as the government's ‘dangerously inadequate response’ to the climate emergency.

Protester Reverend Sue Parfitt of Christian Climate Action, said:

“The Ministry of Defence itself has acknowledged that the UK should prepare for between 2.3 to 3.5 degrees of warming by 2100. But we don't believe the answer to the ‘aggravated threats to international peace and security’ is to develop more sophisticated weapons. We have to spend the money that's needed on climate action. If we fail on this, the results will be unimaginable suffering.”

Activists from Extinction Rebellion block roads around the Ministry of Defense in Filton, Bristol, Dec. 11. Photo: Simon Holliday simonholliday.com

Even Venezuela Opposition Says Election Legitimate

By Vijay Prashad

Before the National Assembly elections on Dec. 6 in Venezuela, the U.S. government began a campaign to delegitimize the process. The U.S. government sanctioned the head of the National Electoral Council (CNE) and members of the opposition who had decided to run in the election. Just hours after the election, both the U.S. government and the European Union (EU)—as well as their allies in Latin America—announced, predictably, that the elections had been fraudulent. They did not need evidence; they did not need anything except the reiteration of the simple line that an election in a country whose government challenges U.S. authority cannot be legitimate in any way.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the election was a “political farce” and a “charade,” and “failed to meet any minimum standard of credibility.” The high representative of the EU essentially mimicked Pompeo’s statement to the level of using a similar phrase; the EU said that Venezuela “failed to comply with the minimum international standards for a credible process.”

These statements seem to have been written days before the election. They lacked details of actual events on the ground, and neither the United States nor the EU had electoral observers on the ground. (For the record: I was in Venezuela as an electoral observer on behalf of the CNE.)

Pompeo said that “[m]ost of Venezuela’s independent political parties and civil society organizations ... reject these sham elections.” This is a stunning statement, particularly when it comes to the question of “independent political parties.”

The day before the election, I partici-

pated in an on-the-record meeting with leaders of five major opposition parties that participated in the elections. Two of these parties form the partidocracia, the old political establishment that dominated the country’s government from 1959 to 1999: Acción Democrática (AD) and Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente (COPEI). The leaders of both AD and COPEI—such as Pedro José Rojas (AD) and Juan Carlos Alvarado (COPEI)—said that there might be the normal irregularities in the election, but there was no evidence of fraud leading up to the election.

Bruno Gallo (Avanzada Progresista) told me he had spent 10 years looking closely at the CNE for fraud with the intent of undermining it, but could not find any evidence of sustained fraud. This is a fair election, he said, as far as elections go.

Timoteo Zambrano, a leader of Cambiemos Movimiento Ciudadano, told me that the key outcome of the election for the new National Assembly is to “end the duality of power in Venezuela.” All of these party leaders said they were fed up with the outrageousness of the “extremist opposition,” at whose center is Juan Guaidó and the Voluntad Popular party of Leopoldo López (now living in Spain). Gallo said this group uses “dirty tricks”; Guaidó and López represent the U.S. government more than the Venezuelan people.

To “end the duality of power” means to shut down the “government” of Guaidó imposed on the Venezuelan people by U.S. President Donald Trump. In a BBC interview a few days after the Dec. 6 election, two-time opposition presidential candidate Henrique Capriles asked the United States to drop its backing of Juan Guaidó. “The new administration,” Capriles said with reference to the incoming presidency of Joe Biden, “must un-

derstand that this plan is exhausted and cannot give continuity to the status quo: the interim [government].” Capriles, who lives in Caracas, said that any political solution “cannot be without taking into account the 25 million Venezuelans.”



Opposition party COPEI holds a press conference on Dec. 10 following the legislative elections in Venezuela. Their alliance won 17% of the seats in the Assembly. The banner reads ‘the struggle is through voting,’ manifesting their position against the far-right boycott of the process. Photo: COPEI.

derstand that this plan is exhausted and cannot give continuity to the status quo: the interim [government].” Capriles, who lives in Caracas, said that any political solution “cannot be without taking into account the 25 million Venezuelans.”

In other words, Venezuela’s political future cannot be dictated from Washington. But, Capriles admitted, the opposition is in disarray. “We enter a desert,” he said of his fellow opposition. “With no willingness to end the status quo,” Capriles noted, “we are going to disappear as an alternative in this country.”

Media Failure

Media outlets in the North Atlantic world mimic U.S. State Department and EU statements. They simply say that the election was fraudulent and that the National Assembly that will be inaugurated on Jan. 5 is illegitimate. That’s the sum total of the coverage.

The New York Times’ Julie Turkewitz, for instance, wrote a story that ignored the entire credible opposition in Venezuela, including the two main parties (AD and COPEI). The headline was “Vene-

zuela Votes in an Election the Opposition Calls a Charade,” but the only “opposition” to which it referred was Guaidó’s U.S. State Department operation.

Tom Phillips, writing from Rio de Janeiro for *The Guardian*, framed his story based on a quote from Juan Guaidó. The headline for that story read, “Maduro tightens grip over Venezuela with win in boycotted congress vote.” Who boycotted the vote? Not AD or COPEI, nor the main evangelical party (Esperanza por El Cambio), nor the main liberal party (Cambiemos Movimiento Ciudadano). Phillips only pointed to Guaidó even as he noted that Guaidó’s authority over the opposition was nil.

Neither Turkewitz nor Phillips gave any coverage to the mainstream opposition in Venezuela, which seeks a national dialogue in the country without interference from Washington and without the sword of regime change hanging over the government.

The government of President Nicolás Maduro has held discussions with this credible opposition on several occasions. Zambrano said that the new National Assembly must empanel a commission to study the impact of the sanctions—or the blockade, as Juan Carlos Alvarado of COPEI called it—on the people of Venezuela. Such moves to rebuild the integrity of the political process—attacked by the U.S. government through its alliance with López and Guaidó—are essential for the Venezuelan people. The Dec. 6 election and the inauguration of the new National Assembly on Jan. 5 are the start of this process to rebuild the political world inside Venezuela. The message from both the government of Maduro and the credible opposition is the same: Washington, don’t interfere in our political life.

This article was produced by *Globe-trotter*.

Vijay Prashad is an Indian historian, editor and journalist. He is a writing fellow and chief correspondent at *Globe-trotter*, chief editor of *LeftWord Books*, and director of *Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research*. He is a senior non-resident fellow at *Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies*, *Renmin University of China*. He has written more than 20 books, including *The Darker Nations* and *The Poorer Nations*. His latest book is *Washington Bullets*, with an introduction by *Evo Morales Ayma*.

Amazon

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enough (and I speak shoulder to shoulder with my indigenous brothers and sisters across the world) to know that you have lost your way, and that you are in trouble (though you don’t fully understand it yet) and that your trouble is a threat to every form of life on earth.

You forced your civilization upon us and now look where we are: global pandemic, climate crisis, species extinction, and, driving it all, widespread spiritual poverty. In all these years of taking, taking, taking from our lands, you have not had the courage, or the curiosity, or the respect to get to know us. To understand how we see, and think, and feel, and what we know about life on this earth. I won’t be able to teach you in this letter, either. But what I can say is that it has to do with thousands and thousands of years of love for this forest, for this place. Love in the deepest sense, as reverence. This forest

has taught us how to walk lightly, and because we have listened, learned and defended her, she has given us everything: water, clean air, nourishment, shelter, medicines, happiness, meaning. And you are taking all this away, not just from us, but from everyone on the planet, and from future generations.

It is the early morning in the Amazon, just before first light: a time that is meant for us to share our dreams, our most po-

tent thoughts. And so I say to all of you: the earth does not expect you to save her, she expects you to respect her. And we, as Indigenous peoples, expect the same.

—Nemonte Nenquimo

Nemonte Nenquimo is co-founder of the Indigenous-led nonprofit organization Ceibo Alliance, the first female president of the Waorani organization of Pastaza province, and one of TIME magazine’s 100 most influential people in the world.



Calamity

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into sun-bleached carts or bush taxis. And they were the lucky ones. Many had simply set out on foot. Young boys tended small herds of recalcitrant goats. Women toted dazed toddlers. In the rare shade of a roadside tree, a family had stopped, and a middle-aged man hung his head, holding it in one hand.

Last year, I traveled that ochre-dirt road in Burkina Faso, a tiny landlocked nation in the African Sahel once known for having the largest film festival on the continent. Now, it's the site of an unfolding humanitarian catastrophe. Those people were streaming down the main road from Barsalogho about 100 miles north of the capital, Ouagadougou, toward Kaya, a market town whose population almost doubled last year due to the displaced. Across the country's northern stretches, other Burkinabe (as citizens are known) were making similar journeys toward towns offering only the most uncertain kinds of refuge. They were victims of a war without a name, a battle between Islamist militants who murder and massacre without compunction and armed forces that kill more civilians than militants.

I've witnessed variations of this wretched scene before—exhausted, upended families evicted by machete-wielding militiamen or Kalashnikov-carrying government troops, or the mercenaries of a warlord; dust-caked traumatized people plodding down lonesome highways, fleeing artillery strikes, smoldering villages, or towns dotted with moldering corpses. Sometimes motorbikes pull the carts. Sometimes, young girls carry the jerry cans on their heads. Sometimes, people flee with nothing more than what they're wearing. Sometimes, they cross national borders and become refugees or, as in Burkina Faso, become internally displaced persons, or IDPs, in their own homeland. Whatever the particulars, such scenes are increasingly commonplace in our world and so, in the worst possible way, unremarkable. And though you would hardly know it in the United States, that's what also makes them, collectively, one of the signature stories of our time.

At least 100 million people have been forced to flee their homes due to violence, persecution, or other forms of public disorder over the last decade, according to the U.N. High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR). That's about one in every 97

people on the planet, roughly one percent of humanity. If such war victims had been given their own state to homestead, it would be the 14th largest nation, population-wise, in the world.

By the end of June, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, an additional 4.8 million people had been uprooted by conflict, with the most devastating increases in Syria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Burkina Faso. Yet, as dismal as these numbers may be, they're set to be dwarfed by people displaced by another signature story of our time: climate change.

Already, shocking numbers have been put to flight by fires, derechos, and super storms, and so much worse is yet to come, according to experts. A recent forecast suggests that, by the year 2050, the number of people driven from their homes by ecological catastrophes could be 900% greater than the 100 million forced to flee conflicts over the last decade.

Women, children, and men driven from their homes by conflict have been a defining feature of modern warfare. For almost a century now, combat correspondents have witnessed such scenes again and again. "Newly routed civilians, now homeless like the others with no idea of where they would next sleep or eat, with all their future lives an uncertainty, trudged back from the fighting zone," the legendary Eric Sevareid reported, while covering Italy for CBS News during World War II. "A dust-covered girl clung desperately to a heavy, squirming



Burkina Faso armed forces.

terror bombing, countless massacres, two atomic attacks, and the killing of 60 million people, most of them civilians, including six million Jews in a genocide known as the Holocaust. Another 60 million were displaced, more than the population of Italy (then the ninth-largest country in the world). An unprecedented global war causing unimaginable suffering, it nonetheless left far fewer people homeless than the 79.5 million displaced by conflicts and crises as 2019 ended.

How can violence-displaced people already exceed World War II's total by almost 20 million (without even counting the nearly five million more added in the first half of 2020)?

The answer: these days, you can't go

initiated, escalated, or participated in—specifically, in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Pakistan, the Philippines, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen—have displaced between 37 million and 59 million people.

While U.S. troops have also seen combat in Burkina Faso and Washington has pumped hundreds of millions of dollars of "security assistance" into that country, its displaced aren't even counted in the Costs of War tally. And yet there's a clear link between the U.S.-backed overthrow of Libya's autocrat, Muammar Qaddafi, in 2011 and Burkina Faso's desperate state today. "Ever since the West assassinated Qaddafi, and I'm conscious of using that particular word, Libya has been completely destabilized," Chérif Sy, Burkina Faso's defense minister, explained in a 2019 interview. "While at the same time it was the country with the most guns. It has become an arms cache for the region."

Those arms helped destabilize neighboring Mali and led to a 2012 coup by a U.S.-trained officer. Two years later, another U.S.-trained officer seized power in Burkina Faso during a popular uprising. This year, yet another U.S.-trained officer overthrew yet another government in Mali. All the while, terrorist attacks have been ravaging the region. "The Sahel has seen the most dramatic escalation of violence since mid-2017," according to a July report by the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, a Defense Department research institution.

The violence in Burkina Faso has led to a cascade of compounding crises. Around one million Burkinabe are now displaced, a 1,500% increase since last January, and the number only keeps rising. So do the attacks and the fatalities. And this is just the beginning, since Burkina Faso finds itself on the frontlines of yet another crisis, a global disaster that's expected to generate levels of displacement that will dwarf today's historic figures.

Burkina Faso has been battered by desertification and environmental degradation since at least the 1960s. In 1973, a drought led to the deaths of 100,000 people there and in five other nations of the Sahel. Severe drought and hunger struck again in the mid-1980s and aid agencies began privately warning that those living in the north of the country would need to move southward as farming became ever less feasible. By the early 2000s, despite

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One of the most dramatic drivers of displacement over the last 20 years ... has been that conflict in Afghanistan and the seven other 'most violent wars the U.S. military has launched or participated in since 2001.'

burlap sack. The pig inside was squealing faintly. Tears made streaks down the girl's face. No one moved to help her."

The Second World War was a cataclysmic conflagration involving 70 nations and 70 million combatants. Fighting stretched across three continents in unparalleled destructive fury, including

home again.

In May 1945, the war in Europe came to an end. By the beginning of September, the war in the Pacific was over, too. A month later, most of Europe's displaced—including more than two million refugees from the Soviet Union, 1.5 million French, 586,000 Italians, 274,000 Dutch, and hundreds of thousands of Belgians, Yugoslavs, Czechs, Poles, and others—had already returned home. A little more than a million people, mostly Eastern Europeans, still found themselves stranded in camps overseen by occupying forces and the United Nations.

One of the most dramatic drivers of displacement over the last 20 years, according to researchers from Brown University's Costs of War project, has been that conflict in Afghanistan and the seven other "most violent wars the U.S. military has launched or participated in since 2001." In the wake of the killing of 2,974 people by al-Qaeda militants that September 11 and the decision of George W. Bush's administration to launch a Global War on Terror, conflicts the United States



Nuclear Weapons Have Finally Been Outlawed

By Allen Jasson

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) will go into effect on Jan. 22, 2021. I think we should push to make it an international public holiday.

The TPNW is a legally binding international agreement to comprehensively prohibit nuclear weapons. It has the ultimate goal of total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Negotiated at a conference in March 2017, the treaty was adopted by the U.N. General Assembly on July 7, 2017, with 122 states in favor and was opened for signature by the U.N. secretary general on Sept. 20, 2017. With Honduras' adoption in late October, the treaty reached the requisite 50 ratifications, and is thus set to enter into force on Jan. 22, 2021.

At the very beginning of the 1960s, the era of "peace and love," after the United States installed nuclear missiles in Turkey aimed at the Soviet Union, which had had the audacity to experiment with a socio-economic alternative to capitalism, the USSR sought to counterbalance by installing their own nuclear missiles in Cuba. The resulting confrontation, fortunately defused without bloodshed, brought the world to a chilling realization: the very real possibility of total, global annihilation.

Amid the froth of hippie sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll, a good many people around the world were now mindful of the very real and persistent possibility of mutually assured destruction (MAD), complete erasure of humanity and most other life from Earth. Nevertheless, there are still those who remain committed to the ultimate MAD deterrent.

To consider how some of these people think of this problem, we need to look seriously at some of their reactions to the TPNW. In 2017, during negotiations on the treaty, a dozen allied ambassadors stood gathered around U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley in the corridors of the U.N. building in New York, protesting against it. For decades the nuclear-armed states have maintained an exclusive club, deciding who should be admitted and who should not, bullying non-members with the threat of nuclear attack, ultimately to assert dominance over the world's most critical and wastefully abused resources and assuaging public concern with the



hollow words of a string of disarmament treaties. The most ridiculous among them is the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT): all of its provisions are as optional as corporate tax. They even secretly admitted Israel, not a party to the treaty, as a new member of the nuclear-armed club.

As we might expect, all nine nuclear-armed states—the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, China, France, India, Pakistan, North Korea, and Israel—boycotted the U.N. treaty negotiations and the July 2017 vote. A joint statement was issued by the United States, France, and the United Kingdom declaring that they "do not intend to sign, ratify, or ever become party to it," and a similar statement was issued shortly afterward on behalf of the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council. Unsurprisingly, Christopher Ford, assistant secretary of state for the only state that has ever actually used nuclear weapons, called the initiative "obviously a misguided and counterproductive one," "a colossal mistake," and "emptily divisive virtue-signaling." In a Nuclear Posture Review, the Trump Administration labelled it "unrealistic."

With the NTPW's ratification by Honduras this year and imminent coming into force, the club is clearly taken aback. The threat of stigmatization of the nuclear-armed states and their allies by the signatories of the treaty and global and local nongovernmental organizations has become a matter of concern. As always with politicians and their masters in such a situation, like Octavius after the assassination of Caesar, they want to present a less

hostile attitude and so there is a softening of the rhetoric. Never forget: they come to bury the treaty, not to praise it.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg even said that "at first sight [the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons] seems attractive," after which he criticized it.

As the Trump era has driven a pickup truck through the already fragile provisions for maintaining what international peace we have and the coming Biden era promises only a meager cherry-picking of provisions to restore that peace, we can be sure that the Armageddon clock, now measured in seconds, will not be drifting away from midnight. We face, though many of us fail to see it, a very real ex-

istential threat. As we all attend to our own little lives, up here building our tree-houses, they are out there among our trees, an insane mob, with their chainsaws.

This is a time and a cause worthy of the global common, a cause for which we should seek international solidarity among ordinary men and women of all colors and creeds, a show of strength to face down the psychopaths: an international public holiday on Jan. 22 marking the coming into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

For more, see preventnuclearwar.org, nukeresister.org, and nuclearban.us.

Allen Jasson was in the Australian Army and is a member of Veterans For Peace UK living in London.

Calamity

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persistent droughts, the cattle population of the country had doubled, leading to increasing ethnic conflict between Mossi farmers and Fulani cattle herders. The war now tearing the country apart largely divides along those same ethnic lines.

According to a recent report by the Institute for Economics and Peace, a think tank that produces annual global terrorism and peace indexes, two billion people already face uncertain access to sufficient food—a number set to jump to 3.5 billion by 2050. Another one billion "live in countries that do not have the current resilience to deal with the ecological changes they are expected to face in the future." The report warns that the global climate crisis may displace as many as 1.2 billion people by 2050.

I don't know what happened to the mother and two children I spotted on the road to Kaya. If they ended up like the scores of people I spoke with in that market town, now bulging with displaced people, they're facing a difficult time. Rents are high, jobs scarce, government assistance all but nil. People there are living on the edge of catastrophe, dependent on relatives and the kindness of new neighbors with little to spare themselves. Some, driven by want, are even heading back into the conflict zone, risking death

to gather firewood.

Kaya can't deal with the massive influx of people forced from their homes by Islamist militants. Burkina Faso can't deal with the one million people already displaced by conflict. And the world can't deal with the almost 80 million people already driven from their homes by violence. So how will we cope with 1.2 billion people—nearly the population of China or India—likely to be displaced by climate driven-conflicts, water wars, increasing ecological devastation, and other unnatural disasters in the next 30 years?

In the decades ahead, ever more of us will find ourselves on roads like the one to Kaya, running from the devastation of raging wildfires or uncontrolled floodwaters, successive hurricanes or supercharged cyclones, withering droughts, spiraling conflicts, or the next life-altering pandemic. As a reporter, I've already been on that road. Pray you're the one speeding by in the four-wheel-drive vehicle and not the one choking in the dust, driving the donkey cart.

This article was originally published by Tom Dispatch and was reported in partnership with Brown University's Costs of War Project and Type Investigations.

Nick Turse is the managing editor of Tom-Dispatch and a fellow at the Type Media Center. He is the author most recently of Next Time They'll Come to Count the Dead: War and Survival in South Sudan and of the bestselling Kill Anything That Moves.

Rally to Support Weapons Treaty

Join peace activists in New York City Jan. 22 at a rally to celebrate the outlawing of nuclear weapons.

On Jan. 22, 2021, from noon to 2 pm, activists will gather at the Isaiah Wall on First Avenue at East 43rd Street to mark the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons coming into effect, and to distribute information about the treaty and how best to advocate its further ratification.

A march will set off from Union

Square at 10:30 to join the noon demonstration across from the United Nations.

Participants are asked to wear masks, maintain safe spacing, and bring signs with positive messages.

Action organizers include New York City Veterans For Peace, the War Resisters League, Catholic Workers, Peace Action NY, the Granny Peace Brigade, CODEPINK Women for Peace, Pax Christi, and the Manhattan Project for a Nuclear-Free World.

Australian War Crimes Report Means Get the Hell Out of Afghanistan

By Caitlin Johnstone

The much-anticipated report on potential war crimes by the Australian Defence Force (ADF) in Afghanistan has been released, recommending 19 current or former soldiers be investigated for up to 39 murders.

Not combat kills. Not accidental kills. Not non-combatants killed by disputable decisions made in the heat of battle. Not civilians killed due to recklessness or carelessness on the part of Australian forces. Murders. Of non-combatants who died for no other reason than happening to live in a region the US power alliance has seen geo-strategic value in keeping militarily occupied for 19 years.

The information about atrocities perpetrated by Australian forces in Afghanistan has taken many years to emerge, was fought tooth and claw with [government] attacks on whistleblowers and journalists, and surely only touches on a tiny fraction of the war crimes which have been perpetrated and covered up with the investigation finding that “the criminal behaviour of a few was commenced, committed, continued and concealed at the patrol commander level”.

Achieving Their First Kill

According to the Sydney Morning Herald, ADF Chief Angus Campbell describes a “self-centred warrior culture” in Australia’s Special Air Service which “was embraced and amplified by some experienced, charismatic and influential non-commissioned officers and their proteges, who sought to fuse military excellence with ego, elitism and entitlement,” leading to acts of horrific brutality.

“In this context it is alleged that some patrols took the law into their own hands:

If you train teenagers to kill, deliberately warping their minds so as to normalize the entirely abnormal act of killing their fellow human beings, and then leave them to their own devices in an unfamiliar land full of unfamiliar people over whom they hold the power of life and death, these things will happen. They cannot but happen.

rules were broken, stories concocted, lies told and prisoners killed,” says Campbell.

“The Brereton report also found evidence that junior soldiers were required by their patrol commanders to shoot a prisoner to achieve their first kill, in a practice known as ‘bleeding,’” SMH reports.

Troops “carried ‘throwdowns’—foreign weapons and equipment such as pis-



Australian Lt. Tyson Yew leads his platoon on International Security Assistance Force mission foot patrol of the town of Tarin Kowt, Aug. 16, 2008. Photo: ISAF/Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class John Collins, U.S. Navy.

tols, small hand-held radios and grenades to be placed with the bodies of enemies killed in action for the purpose of taking photos,” reports SMH. “This practice eventually was used for the purpose of concealing deliberate unlawful killings.”

The Guardian’s Christopher Knaus writes the following:

“One of the more disturbing alleged incidents canvassed in the documents released on Thursday comes from prior work by military sociologist Samantha Crompvoets, who had the job of examining special forces culture and began to hear disturbing allegations of war crimes.

“One soldier told her: ‘Guys just had this blood lust. Psychos. Absolute psychos. And we bred them.’

“She heard one allegation that two

Brereton report.”

These are unforgivable atrocities which cry out to the heavens for vengeance. Nothing can undo them. Nothing can set them right. And any grown adult looking at the situation with clear eyes knows that nothing can be done to prevent them from continuing to happen going forward.

If you train teenagers to kill, deliberately warping their minds so as to normalize the entirely abnormal act of killing their fellow human beings, and then leave them to their own devices in an unfamiliar land full of unfamiliar people over whom they hold the power of life and death, these things will happen. They cannot but happen. They have happened many, many times in ways we will never know about, not just at the hands of Australian forces but of the entire occupying coalition.

This is on top of the massive pile of corpses the U.S. power alliance has already heaped upon Afghanistan by the Trump administration’s record-shattering bombing campaigns and corresponding civilian casualties, and by the nearly two full eight-year presidential administrations previous to it.

Afghanistan is a military occupation which we know for a fact we were deceived about from the very beginning and deceived into allowing to continue, every step of the way. Knowing that we were deceived into it and knowing what its grave consequences are, there is no excuse for it to continue.

There is no legitimacy in babbling about “power vacuums” and what political system Afghanistan will have after brutalizing that nation in the way that we have. At this point such arguments are like a rapist saying he can’t stop raping a woman because some other rapist might come along and rape her if he stops. The

most depraved and murderous force in the nation, which has already been killing far more civilians than the Taliban and ISIS, has no business concerning itself with what might happen after it leaves.

Get Out

Get out of Afghanistan. Get the fuck out. Now. Not just Australia, but the entire murderous occupying coalition. It’s not your country and you’re making it worse. Get. The fuck. Out.

Do not concern yourself with what might happen when you leave. What will happen when you leave is that you will not be there murdering human beings. There are no “conditions” which need to be met first. You are the violent extremists in Afghanistan doing the killing and destroying. You are the terrorists. Leave.

There is no more destructive force on this earth than the tight alliance of nations loosely centralized around the United States which functions as a single empire on foreign policy. The only beneficial thing such a blood-soaked empire can do for the world is to cease its behavior and cease to exist. It is not the benevolent good guy staving off the bad guys, it is the bad guy, and its depravity must come to an end.

Let the world sort out its own affairs without the “help” of the psychopathic force which unleashes such horrors upon our species.

Caitlin Johnstone is a rogue journalist, poet, and utopia prepper who publishes regularly at Medium. She is the author of Rogue Nation: Psychonautical Adventures With Caitlin Johnstone and Woke: A Field Guide for Utopia Preppers. You can support her work at caitlinjohnstone.com.

Biden's Moral Hazard

After I resigned from my position with the State Department in Afghanistan in 2009 due to that war's escalation, I was asked to meet with the President's Intelligence Advisory Board (PIAB). One of the heads of the PIAB at the time wanted to know why the things I was saying about the Afghan war, echoed by military, diplomatic, and intelligence officers he knew personally, were not being communicated officially to the President. The simple answer was the honest answer: President Obama was being systematically lied to by the people advising him and running the war.

It is more than a year now since U.S. newspapers published the Afghan Papers, a mass trove of secret U.S. government documents that irrefutably detailed a coordinated effort by the U.S. government, through three presidential administrations, to lie to the American people and their elected leaders about the war in Afghanistan. Of course, these lies of the Afghanistan War followed the lies that made possible the U.S. invasion and destruction of Iraq. The 2011 war in Libya was another war built on lies, as docu-



Matthew Hoh speaks with soldiers and airmen from Bravo Co. 1-4 Infantry and the Zabul Provincial Reconstruction Team in the summer of 2009 in Zabul, Afghanistan.
Photo: Courtesy of Matthew Hoh.

mented by the British Parliament. Slips of the tongue and leaks by senior U.S. officials, including the incoming U.S. President, have shown the U.S. and its allies' role in the Syrian war to be in support of al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. Lies, perjury, and propaganda characterize what

the U.S. people have been told with regard to torture; intelligence surveillance of their phones and computers; the incredibly high rate of civilians killed by U.S. drones, including American citizens; and the presence of U.S. forces in Africa, including hiding knowledge U.S. soldiers

have been killed and wounded in countries that senior members of Congress had no idea U.S. troops were in.

The lies to elected officials and the American people continue. Ambassador James Jeffrey explained to journalists how he intentionally lied to the President of the United States about the number of troops in Syria. In case you think this is fine because the President was Donald Trump, remember it was the computers of Democratic Senators who were hacked and monitored by the CIA in retaliation for the Senate's investigation of the CIA's torture program.

When the numbers of military contractors killed and the deaths by suicide of Afghanistan and Iraq veterans are included in the total, the numbers of young Americans killed in these wars reaches nearly 25,000. More than 50,000 U.S. service members have been wounded, with more than a half-million veterans permanently disabled by traumatic brain injury and an equal number suffering from PTSD. Overseas, more than a million people have died, tens of millions have been made refugees, and entire nations have been economically, environmentally
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Afghanistan

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uted toward a more peaceful life for Afghans, and a U.N. report indicates the Taliban has continued its ties with insurgent groups.

Now, Afghans face constant battles between insurgent groups, U.S. forces, Afghan government forces, NATO forces, various powerful Afghan warlords, and paramilitaries organized by ruthless mafias that control much of the drug industry and other profitable enterprises.

Under President Biden, the United States would likely abide by Trump's recent troop withdrawals, maintaining a troop presence of about 2,000. But Biden has indicated a preference for intensified Special Operations, surveillance, and drone attacks. These strategies could cause the Taliban to nullify their agreement, prolonging the war through yet another presidency.

Mujib Mashal, a correspondent for

The New York Times, was born in Kabul. When he was interviewed recently by one of his colleagues, he recalled being a little boy in the early 1990s, living through a civil war in Kabul, when rockets constantly bombarded his neighborhood.

Taliban groups were fighting various mujahideen. Mujib's father cultivated a vegetable garden outside their home. One day, a rocket hit the garden, cutting an apple tree in half and burrowing deep into the ground.

But it didn't explode.

Mujib remembers how his father watered the area where the rocket hit, for years, hoping the bomb would eventually rust and never explode. Now he worries that Afghanistan is headed toward an explosion of violence.

"And the fear is that in that space of war, things only get more extreme," he told the *Times*. "The violence only gets more extreme. The brutality gets more extreme. That if this slips into another generational conflict, what we've seen over the past 40

years in terms of the brutality will probably pale in comparison to what will come."

I recently watched a video of a talk given in June of this year by Dr. Zaher Wahab, an Afghan professor in Portland, Ore., who laments the intensifying havoc and violence war is causing in Afghanistan. He and his wife lived there for six years, until about a year ago, when they concluded that the city was unlivable.

Dr. Wahab believes there is no military solution to Afghanistan's woes and calls for the United States to demilitarize as soon as possible. But he also offers ways forward.

He urges forming a multinational trust fund to justly assist with reconstruction in Afghanistan, including efforts to clear mines and clean up unexploded ordnance. Billions of dollars would be needed, commensurate to the sums spent on funding the war. He believes the United Nations should form a peacekeeping presence in Afghanistan relying on non-NATO countries.

The publication of the "Afghanistan papers" late last year highlighted the failure of the United States to accomplish any of its stated missions in Afghanistan. Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction John Sopko expressed his astonishment at the "hubris and mendacity" he had witnessed on the part of U.S. military and civilian personnel in Afghanistan.

Despite its failures, the United States continues to bomb Afghan civilian areas. In 2019, the United States dropped 7,423 bombs and other munitions on Afghanistan.

For Afghan civilians, ongoing war means continued bereavement, displacement, and despair. Bereft of income or protection, many Afghan householders join militias, pledging their support and possibly their willingness to fight or even die. Hence the rise of the Afghan Local Police, numerous militias fighting for

various warlords, the Afghan government fighting forces (including "ghost soldiers" who appear in name only), CIA-trained paramilitaries, and military contractors working for NATO contingents.

Afghanistan is a cauldron waiting to explode.

U.S. Army Major Danny Sjursen (ret.) notes that in the 2020 election, neither presidential candidate questioned status quo norms about U.S. foreign policy being based on threat, force, and killing. Sjursen assures that pressure to change must, necessarily, flow from the grass roots.

The United States has landed in Afghanistan like a rocket in a garden. It refuses to rust, it poisons the Earth, and even U.S. voters can't budge it. Normal life can't continue with us there.

Meanwhile, an inevitably arriving Taliban-led government—one already in control of most of the country—is growing more fanatic and deadly.

Many U.S. voters, and too many Afghans, weren't yet born when the current war was begun by the United States in 2001. Much of the U.S. public regards the Afghan people with deadly indifference.

Year after year, president after president, Americans continue to pretend the despair and futility we've caused in Afghanistan isn't our fault. We don't hold ourselves accountable.

But the forever wars, illegal and immoral, bankrupt our economy and our society as well. The military contractors become a sort of mafia. They are like a bomb in our garden, liable to explode.

And, unlike our Afghan counterparts, it's not a bomb we can complain about. After all, we put it there.

Kathy Kelly (Kathy.vcnv@gmail.com) is an activist and writer who has helped co-coordinate *Voices for Creative Nonviolence*, vcnv.org



Street in Kabul. Photo: Abdulhai Darya

Time for the One-State Solution to Go Mainstream

By Awad Abdelfattah and Jeff Halper

The “Palestinian-Israeli conflict” has often been presented as one of the most intractable in modern world history.

But one reason for this is precisely that it has been wrongly analyzed as a conflict and thus the “solutions” offered and the “peace processes” for getting there fail.

This is not a conflict. There are not two sides fighting over some issue that can be resolved through technical negotiations and compromise. Rather, Zionism was—and is—a settler-colonial project.

Jewish settlers arrived in Palestine from Europe with the intention of taking over the country and making it their own. Like all settler movements they came equipped with a narrative of why the country actually belonged to them, and they pursued their claim to entitlement unilaterally. The indigenous Palestinian population (which included Sephardi, Mizrahi and ultra-Orthodox Jews) had no voice in the process; they were not a “side,” but simply a population to be disposed of.

That remains true to this day as the settler Zionist project has virtually completed its task of Judaizing Palestine, of transforming an Arab country into a Jewish one. Its inescapable conclusion is apartheid: confining Palestinians into disconnected and impoverished enclaves scattered over 15 percent of their country.

Settler-colonialism and apartheid, however, cannot be resolved through negotiations and compromise. A people cannot negotiate their fundamental human, national, political and civil rights. The only way out of a colonial situation is through a process of decolonization.

What does that entail? It entails a fundamental readjustment to the current reality. It entails the return of Palestinian refugees and their reintegration into society. It entails

the dismantling of all structures of domination and control, be they political, economic or ideological and cultural.

It requires acknowledging that the colonized population has the right to an equal say in the construction of the post-colonial polity. It necessitates the formation of a new political system and civil society that guarantees equal rights to all its citizens as well as to the national, ethnic and religious groups that comprise it.

It further demands an equitable redistribution of resources, especially land, the prime target of settler-colonialism, along with an acknowledgment by the colonizers of the suffering they have brought, and consequent reparations.

It is such fundamental change that is needed to generate a new, shared political community. And that, in turn, is the

Like all settler movements they came equipped with a narrative of why the country actually belonged to them, and they pursued their claim to entitlement unilaterally.

only possible way settler-colonialism can be transcended.

Analysis of settler-colonialism is well developed in academic circles and offers genuinely new horizons for a just peace in Palestine/Israel. But it has not yet penetrated popular or political discourses, which are still mired in necessarily fruitless attempts to negotiate—or, more precisely, manage—a conflict.

Attempting to replace conflict resolution with the more appropriate and just process of decolonization, a

Palestinian-led initiative has emerged out of Haifa over the past three years.

The One Democratic State Campaign (ODSC), though still in its infancy, comprises Palestinians from every major community (citizens of the areas that in 1948 became Israel, the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, the refugee camps and the Diaspora/Exiles), together with their anti-colonial Israeli Jewish allies. It has issued a call for the establishment of a single democratic state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, one that will also witness the return of the Palestinian refugees to their homeland.

Building on the work of others, the ODSC has also formulated a 10-point political program that “thinks through” the entire process of decolonizing the settler-colonial entity of Israel through the establishment of a post-colonial polity and political community. They are, in brief:

1. Decolonization. The only way to resolve a settler-colonial situation is through a thorough process of decolonization that will ultimately give rise to a new, shared political community.

2. A Single Constitutional Democracy. One democratic state shall be established between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River belonging to all its citizens, including Palestinian refugees who will be able to return to their homeland. All citizens will enjoy equal rights, freedom, and security. The State shall be a constitutional democracy, the authority to govern and make laws emanating from the consent of the governed.

3. Right of Return, of Restoration, and of Reintegration into Society. The single democratic state will fully implement the Right of Return of all Palestinian refugees who were expelled in 1948 and thereafter, whether living in exile abroad or currently living in Israel or the Occupied Territory. The State will aid them in returning to their country and to the places from which they were expelled. It will help them rebuild their personal lives and to be fully reintegrated into the country’s society, economy and polity. The State will do everything in its power to restore to the refugees their private and communal property and/or compensate them.

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My Bethlehem Christmas

By Philip Farah

In late December I participated, virtually, in a simulcast that joined Palestinian Christians in the beautiful Christmas church in Bethlehem, Palestine, several congregations in Philadelphia, and over 500 online participants from several countries. The interdenominational service went back and forth in Arabic and English between both cities.

The reading in Arabic of the story of Jesus’ birth brought tears to my eyes. I am a Palestinian-American born and raised in Jerusalem and consider myself an “interfaith” person. My father, Gregory Farah, was a devout Christian; he read the same verses to us when my family gathered around our decorated tree every Christmas Eve in Jerusalem. Earlier that day, for many years, my siblings and I would accompany him on a six-mile walk from the southern outskirts of Jerusalem to Manger Square in Bethlehem.

On the way, we would stop at the Bethlehem home of my brother’s godmother, Mrs. Halaby, with gifts for her children, and enjoy the Christmas cookies she always had for the occasion. Dad had made a vow to make this walk back in 1929. Upon reaching Manger Square, still the center of Bethlehem, we’d see groups of clergy and pilgrims headed to the Church of Nativity, some caroling in different languages along the way. Dad kept his vow until 1980, when he and my mother immigrated to Canada to join their children already settled in North America.

Mother, Mary Qamar Farah, is now 100 and lives in a nursing home in Toronto. Because of COVID-19, I am unable to visit her, so the caregivers occasionally con-



Gregory Farah on his yearly Christmas walk from Jerusalem to Bethlehem in 1973.

nect me with her for virtual visits on FaceTime. Her memory sometimes fails her; for example, she sometimes mentions one or more of her siblings as if they were her children. However, her recollection of songs is amazing. She even remembers a school anthem from the Swedish School of Jerusalem, which she attended as a small child. So we spend most of our virtual visits singing Arabic songs together. One of her favorite pieces is a New Year carol, “Ya Rabbu ‘Amun Qad Mada” (“Another Year Has Passed, Oh Lord”). This was also part of our family tradition in Jerusalem: On New Year’s Eve, we would gather around the Christmas tree and sing this

lovely carol of praise.

It is sad that, today, we could not do the walk that my father did for 51 years from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. At best, we would have to go through the Israeli checkpoint with its long, humiliating lines. Palestinian friends from outside Jerusalem might not be able to join us because Israeli authorities often withhold entry permits for Palestinians from other occupied territories. Bethlehem is a very sad place today. The military occupation that has lasted since 1967 and the Israeli “Separation Wall”—much taller than the Berlin Wall—have greatly restricted all aspects of life there. Today with COVID-19, tourism—the mainstay of the already dismal Bethlehem economy—has come to a near stand-still.

Not long after the Israeli occupation in 1967, my brother George Farah reluctantly accompanied my Dad on a visit to his Jewish friends in West Jerusalem; Dad had not seen them for nearly 20 years. At Jaffa Gate leading out of the Old City, Dad reached out and touched a tiny object on the wall and kissed his hand. George asked him what he was doing; he explained it was a Jewish mezuzah, a decorative case containing holy text from the Torah. George asked him how he could do such a thing when they (Israeli Jews) had done what they did to us. His response was simple: “Do Jews, Muslims, and Christians have separate gods? We’re all God’s children.”

Philip Farah was born in Jerusalem in 1952 and like the majority of the Palestinian population, his family was forced to leave their ancestral homes and towns. In 1978 he immigrated to the United States. He currently works as an economist in Washington, D.C. He is a founding member of the Washington Interfaith Alliance for Middle East Peace (founded in 2000), and the Palestinian Christian Alliance for Peace.

'We Won't Quit Until We Stop It'

Despite the pandemic, the people's direct action against U.S.-backed ravaging of Okinawa continues

By C. Douglas Lummis

NAHA, OKINAWA—Every day except weekends, holidays, and typhoon days, even in the pandemic, charter buses leave from Naha and other cities on this island to transport protesters to three locations in the north, where the Japanese government is trying to build a super airbase for the U.S. Marines.

One location is Shirakawa, on the Pacific Ocean side of the island, where the government's Okinawa Defense Bureau is tearing down a mountain and loading it into dump trucks. There, protesters delay the work by standing in front of the trucks. The second location is the nearby Awa Pier, where the mountain-become-dirt is loaded onto small cargo ships. There, by milling around on the sidewalk at the gate where there's a traffic light, protesters reduce the number of trucks entering the area to one per green light. This reduces the number of ships that depart each day. In the water, the ships are further delayed by a brave fleet of sea-kayakers, who crowd around the bow of each ship until they are hauled away. Once free of the kayakers, the ships sail to the East China Sea side of the island, to Cape Henoko, site of the U.S. Marines' Camp Schwab, and dump the dirt into the sea as landfill to support the airstrip that is planned to cut across the cape and stick out into the sea on both sides, wreaking ecocatastrophe on the coral garden there. Another team of kayakers meets them, delaying the process still more.

The third charter bus destination is the gate on the inland side of Camp Schwab, where a daily sit-in slows down the huge fleets of trucks—cement trucks, trucks carrying building materials, and dump trucks carrying more dirt from nearby locations—that enter the construction site in the form of three convoys of 200–300 vehicles a day, even during the pandemic.

The Okinawan riot police have probably heard more anti-Henoko-base speeches than any humans on earth. Most of those speeches are delivered by women, who must remind them of their mothers or grandmothers.

Okinawa was a peaceful independent kingdom until Japan seized it in the same historical era that the United States seized Puerto Rico. Legally, Okinawans are Japanese; culturally, they are a colonized indigenous people. Occupying 0.6 percent of Japanese territory, they are stuck with more than 70 percent of the U.S. military installations in Japan, a situation they call structural discrimination. Okinawan conservatives and progressives are united in opposing the construction of yet another base.

The protesters are mostly retired people. It makes sense. Direct action targeting construction needs to be carried out during working hours. Also, people living on retirement incomes don't need to worry about getting fired. But more than that, most of these folks remember



A daily sit-in slows the huge fleets of trucks coming into Camp Schwab.

the Battle of Okinawa or the devastation that came after, and see this as their last chance to put their hatred of war into the form of a concrete achievement. Asked why they think they can win against the combined force of the U.S. and Japanese governments, their fixed answer is "Because we won't quit until we do."

Last week, I took the Wednesday bus to Henoko. Fifteen people were on it, a bit down from the previous average of around 20, probably because of COVID, but the reduced number made it easier to keep our distance.

The mood was good, with lots of happy greetings. These people enjoy one another's company and love having something meaningful to do each day. The 90-minute drive was spent listening to self-introductions from three who'd come down from mainland Japan (these buses have mics), discussing politics, exchanging information, and singing. H-san, who presides over the Wednesday bus, was her usual bubbly self, alternating between humor and anger as she talked about Japan's new prime minister. Her punch line: "As for being Japanese, I resign. I'm Okinawan!" C-san, an eloquent raconteur who always sits in the left rear seat, talked (half in Japanese, half in the Okinawan language) about why he is confident the airbase will never get built: The sea bottom on

the northern side of Cape Henoko is unstable slime—mayonnaise, they call it—and will never support a concrete airstrip. T-san, who specializes in irony and black humor, got lots of laughs. The Henoko action, including the bus ride, has been called Henoko University.

A few months ago, COVID appeared inside the construction site, and work was shut down briefly. When it resumed, the question at the gate became how both the protesters and the riot policemen could carry out their respective roles while observing social distancing rules.

This was the 2,313th day of the sit-in. Our job at the gate, together with several dozen others who'd come on different buses, was to delay the second and the third of that day's truck convoys. In the past, the interaction between police and protesters was pretty rough, especially when most of the riot police were from mainland Japan. In those days there was a lot of anger on both sides. Non-violence resembled that of a rugby match—no hitting but lots of pushing and shoving. Now most of the Japanese have been sent home. The remaining Okinawan riot police have probably heard more anti-Henoko-base speeches than any humans on earth. Most of those speeches are delivered by women, who must remind

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One-State Solution

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4. Individual Rights. No State law, institution or practices may discriminate among citizens on the basis of national or social origin, color, gender, language, religion or political opinion, or sexual orientation. A single citizenship confers on all the State's residents the right to freedom of movement, the right to reside anywhere in the country, and equal rights in every domain.

5. Collective Rights. Within the framework of a single democratic state, the Constitution will also protect collective rights and the freedom of association, whether national, ethnic, religious, class, or gender. Constitutional guarantees will ensure that all languages, arts, and culture can flourish and develop freely. No group or collectivity will have any privileges, nor will any group, party, or collectivity have the ability to leverage any control or domination over others. Parliament will not have the authority to enact any laws that discriminate against any community under the Constitution.

6. Constructing a Shared Civil Society. The State shall nurture a vital civil society comprised of common civil institutions, in particular educational, cultural and economic. Alongside religious marriage the State will provide civil marriage.

7. Economy and Economic Justice. Our vision seeks to achieve justice, and this includes social and economic justice. Economic policy must address the decades of exploitation and discrimination that have sown deep socioeconomic gaps among the people living in the land. A State seeking justice must develop a creative and long-term redistributive economic policy to ensure that all citizens have equal opportunity to attain education, pro-

ductive employment, economic security, and a dignified standard of living.

8. Commitment to Human Rights, Justice, and Peace. The State shall uphold international law and seek the peaceful resolution of conflicts through negotiation and collective security in accordance with the U.N. Charter.

9. Our Role in the Region. The ODSC will join with all progressive forces in the Arab world struggling for democracy, social justice, and egalitarian societies free from tyranny and foreign domination.

10. International responsibility. On a global level, the ODSC views itself as part of the progressive forces striving for an alternative global order that is just, egalitarian, and free of any oppression, racism, imperialism, and colonialism.

Considerable work still needs to be done to flesh out our program, which is very much a participatory work in progress. But our task in this historic moment is clear: to enter the political arena armed with a clear and compelling political program, organization, and strategy, all required if we are to effectively mobilize our main allies, the global grassroots.

A democratic state in historic Palestine is no utopian vision. It is doable, it is critical and it is urgent. The time has come for an inclusive democratic state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

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Awad Abdelfattah is the Coordinator of the One Democratic State Campaign (ODSC). He is the former Secretary-General, Balad/Tajamo party.

Jeff Halper is the head of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAH) and a founding member of the ODSC. His forthcoming book is Decolonizing Israel, Liberating Palestine: The Case for One Democratic State.

Robert Fisk: 'The Finest Journalist of His Generation'

By Lara Marlowe

The word “controversial” has figured prominently in news stories and obituaries since the death of Robert Fisk.

I dislike the word, because it seems to imply that Robert’s immense achievements are in question. If Robert was controversial, it was because he refused to conform. In nearly half a century as a journalist, which saw him win numerous press awards and publish six books, he never followed the herd. His judgments were intuitive, rapid and, in my experience, invariably right. He could not be cowed by criticism. He never jumped on the bandwagon.

I had the honour of being married to Robert Fisk for 12 years. Between 1988 and 2003, we worked together on most of the big news stories in the Middle East and Balkans. In my opinion, he was the finest journalist of his generation, one of the finest ever. No one did journalism with greater courage, dedication, determination and intelligence than Robert.

When Robert covered the NATO bombardment of Serbia from Belgrade in 1999, he was accused of supporting Slobodan Milosevic. When he opposed the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq four years later, his enemies said he was a stooge for Saddam Hussein. His coverage of the Syrian civil war since 2011 angered those who claimed he was an apologist for Bashar al-Assad.

Robert did not praise or support any of these dictators.

Many in Europe and the United States idealised the Syrian rebels at the beginning of the war. Robert had a more nuanced vision. He was proved right when many of the rebels joined jihadist movements.

Robert’s first rule was to go there, be a witness, even if it meant risking his life. He scorned clichés, journalists who covered the Middle East from afar, regurgitated the line peddled by governments and diplomats, covered wars from hotel rooms. Most of all, he condemned journalists who did not care about the people they wrote about.

Robert refused to choose sides. He knew there are executioners and victims on both sides of every civil war. British public school, a difficult relationship with his father, and the years he spent covering the Troubles in Northern Ireland imbued him with profound mistrust of authority. He never accepted the official version. He sided instinctively with the underdog. He gave voice to people who had none. That is what made him a great journalist.

As a child, Robert saw Alfred Hitchcock’s *Foreign Correspondent*, in which a U.S. reporter tangles with Nazi agents in pre-World War 2 Europe. He credited the story of the fearless reporter who triumphs over evil and gets the girl with making him want to be a journalist.

With self-deprecating humor, Rob-

ert sometimes referred to himself as Scoop Fisk. The tragedies of the modern Middle East were so great that, more darkly, he joked that he was mass graves correspondent.

As a young journalist in Paris, I followed Robert’s award-winning coverage of the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon in the *London Times*. We met the following year, when I was on a reporting trip to Damascus for CBS News.

The Israeli invasion culminated in the massacre of at least a thousand Palestinians by Christian militiamen allied with Israel in the Sabra and Chatila refugee camps. Robert was haunted by this image, from his report, published in the *Farber Book of Reportage*:



Lara Marlowe with Robert Fisk in Kuwait, near a burning oilfield, in February 1991.

“To the right of us there was what appeared to be a small barricade of concrete and mud. But as we approached it we found a human elbow visible on the surface. A large stone turned out to be part of a torso. It was as if the bodies had been bulldozed to the side of the laneway, as indeed they had. A bulldozer—its driver’s seat empty—stood guiltily just down the road.”

Life with Robert was often harrowing and exhausting. It was never dull. Our first three summers together were inter-

Robert’s first rule was to go there, be a witness, even if it meant risking his life. He scorned journalists who covered wars from hotel rooms.

rupted by the shooting down of an Iranian passenger aircraft by the *USS Vincennes* in 1988, the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989, and Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

When Iran Air flight 655 was shot down, we rushed to Dubai. We spent the entire night driving to various Gulf ports in the vain hope of chartering a boat to Bandar Abbas, where the wreckage of the plane and the bodies of most of the 290 victims had been taken. As we straggled through our hotel lobby the following morning, someone shouted, “The Iranians are taking a press plane to Bandar Abbas.”

The corpses were lined up on the floor of a cold storage warehouse, alongside piles of body parts: limbs with limbs, organs with organs. The Iranians then took the journalists to the local hotel for a kebab lunch, which many of us refused. It was before mobile telephones. We had no way to file.

“Come with me,” Robert whispered. We slipped into the switchboard operator’s cubbyhole behind the reception desk. Robert handed the operator the telephone number of the *London Times* copydesk with a pleading look. He dictated most of a front-page story, composing it in his head as he went along, before someone pulled the plug. His rivals were furious.

That night, the Iranians flew dozens of

“You are, quite simply, Fisk of the *Times*,” the editor said. Robert was polite, but firm.

Those who criticize Israel, including Robert, are often unfairly labelled as anti-Semitic. He travelled to Auschwitz in an effort to understand the carnage he witnessed in the Middle East. His masterpiece, *Pity the Nation*, begins with an evocation of the Holocaust. He repeatedly told Arabs that yes, the Holocaust really happened. Yes, it was really six million.

When the Oslo peace accords between Israel and Palestinians were signed in September 1993, we rushed to Jerusalem, where we shared a meal with my editors from *Time* magazine. They believed peace had broken out, and they were ebullient.

“Have you read the fine print?” Robert asked. The Israelis had more than 200 lawyers working on the accord. Yasser Arafat and Ahmed Qurei were virtually alone. “This cannot work,” Robert predicted. “The Palestinians will get blamed for it.” Again, he was right.

Robert and I were with Irish Unifil officers in southern Lebanon when the Israeli army bombarded Fijian battalion headquarters, where hundreds of Shia Muslim civilians were sheltering during an Israeli assault in April 1996. We arrived within minutes upon a scene of utter horror. Several of the survivors spoke of hearing and seeing an Israeli drone overhead at the time of the bombardment.

A Unifil officer, who was not Irish, leaked a videotape of the drone to Robert. It showed the Israelis could have watched the massacre from the air as it took place. His report made front-page headlines.

Robert never let go of a story. He went back to Cana, and later to the scene of a 1999 NATO bombardment in Kosovo, to reconstruct the life stories of those who perished.

The week of his death those of us who loved Robert tried to smile through our tears. His dear friend Olivia O’Leary attended his funeral. She told me this anecdote, recounted by a former foreign editor of the *London Times*: during the 1980s tanker war in the Persian Gulf, Robert was annoyed that a report he had risked his life for was buried on the bottom of an inside page. “I do not mind dying for the *Times*,” he telexed London. “But please could it be on the front page?”

Robert was eager to return to Beirut in October but was persuaded to wait until the pandemic eased. When he was hospitalized at St Vincent’s on Oct. 30, Robert asked his wife Nelofer to tell his editor he would file the following week.

Robert often asked people if they believed in the afterlife. He said it jokingly, to break the ice. If there was an afterlife, he promised, he would be the first journalist to file from there. I half expect to read his report, any day now.

Lara Marlowe is Paris correspondent with The Irish Times.



Jim Radford—Presente!

By Ben Griffin

It is with sadness that we share the news of the death of Jim Radford who died in Lewisham Hospital after several weeks in intensive care being treated for COVID-19.

Jim leaves behind his family and a huge number of friends, comrades, and musicians, all of whom could recall a Jim Radford story. In this brief article I will focus on Jim's time with Veterans For Peace and leave the other aspects of his life to those who knew him best in those realms.

Jim was born in Hull and recounted to me his experiences of the bombing of that maritime city and his youthful desire to join the fight against Nazi Germany. At the age of 15 he joined the Merchant Navy and sailed to Normandy on the rescue tugboat *Empire Larch* in direct support of the D-Day landings. After the war Jim went on to serve in the Royal Navy and it was during or shortly after that service that he developed an opposition to nuclear weapons.

I first met Jim in 2011 at an anti-war event hosted by the London Catholic Worker in an old church in Haringey. Later that year I got in touch with him to ask if he would join a new organization—Veterans For Peace UK. He joined without hesitation and was steadfast from that day onwards.

At our first Remembrance Ceremony outside the Bank of England in November 2011, Jim was one of only three VFP members present. He brought along an old Ex-Services CND banner and, not having a VFP banner at the time, we marched under that. Jim brought a wealth of experience to our fledgling organization, offering sound advice based on years of participation within antinuclear and peace organizations.

When the time came in 2014 to form a Steering Group to coordinate the rapidly expanding organization Jim stepped forward and filled a position for the next two years. Jim was forceful in arguing that we should remain a voluntary organization with no paid workers. This position

became and remains a key characteristic of our organization.

Jim brought a depth of experience, know-how, and common sense to our monthly meetings. He was involved in the planning of our first Remembrance Ceremony at the Cenotaph in 2014 and was one of only a dozen VFP who attended. We marched to The Cenotaph on that Remembrance Sunday without invitation or permission and Jim sang "1916" as crowds of people stood and watched in silence. Jim sang at The Cenotaph every year after that and our numbers grew.

Jim was well known for his singing and regularly contributed antiwar songs at our actions and meetings. It was as a speaker that Jim impressed me most. His life experience and pragmatic antiwar position was free of complicated narratives or ideological rhetoric. Once, in Los Angeles, when questioned why he campaigned for peace for so many years without tangible results he replied simply that "it was the right thing to do."

It would be impossible to mention all of the contributions that Jim made to our organization in so many different ways over the years. It would be impossible to men-

tion all of the people he has inspired, encouraged, and helped in some way.

Outside of the meetings, actions and speeches Jim took part heartily at our social gatherings, always a cheerful, generous, and welcoming presence. His capacity for socializing was almost superhuman; he was able to keep up with members one-third his age and still get up early to complete his morning exercises.

It is safe to say that Jim will be missed by members of Veterans For Peace all over the world.

I for one will miss his friendship, his guidance and his comradeship.

Goodnight Jim, you've earned it mate.

Ben Griffin was a paratrooper in the British Army from 1997 to 2005. He saw duty in Northern Ireland and Afghanistan and with the SAS in Iraq. He resigned from the British Army in 2005. He is the founder of Veterans For Peace UK. In 2013 Griffin took part in a debate at the Oxford Union supporting the proposition "We will not fight for Queen and Country," during which he stated that patriotism is a "false religion" propagated by those who benefited financially from it.

Moral Hazard

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and psychologically devastated. The running financial cost of the wars is \$6.4 trillion, to include almost \$1 trillion in interest and debt payments, while every year the US spends more than \$1.2 trillion on its military and national security.

As the Biden Administration begins its transition, names are floated in the media for potential cabinet and senior-level officials. All of the names included for positions at the Pentagon, Foggy Bottom, or in the National Security Council are those of men and women who have been essential to the last 20 bloody years of catastrophe, chaos, and confusion of American war policy. If someone walked into your workplace with a resume cataloging two decades of wasteful, counterproductive, and malfeasant failures, would you hire them? Yet, from all indications from the Biden transition team, that seems to be

exactly the plan.

Joe Biden has promised to "be the most progressive president in history." If Biden is serious about that, then his progressivism must extend to foreign and military policy and must address the mistakes, follies, and crimes of the last 20 years. Allowing those who consistently and intentionally participated in the systematic lying that enabled these wars means a Biden presidency begins burdened with moral fallacy, and hazard, and only gives evidence the United States and the world are headed for more death and waste.

Matthew Hoh is a member of the advisory boards of Expose Facts, Veterans For Peace, and World Beyond War. In 2009 he resigned his position with the State Department in Afghanistan to protest the Obama Administration's escalation of the Afghanistan War. He was previously in Iraq with a State Department team and with the U.S. Marines. He is a Senior Fellow with the Center for International Policy.

Okinawa

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them of their mothers or grandmothers. That, plus the adamant nonviolence of the protesters, has had its effect. The action has come to look less and less like rugby.

It's quite something to see. With a convoy of a couple hundred trucks halted on the highway, the officer in charge of this police unit—who has become pretty friendly toward the protesters—repeats through his bullhorn that the sit-inners are violating traffic law and must move aside. From time to time, he looks at his watch. The sit-inners continue speech-making and singing. The riot police stand silently, waiting for the order. After 15 or 20 minutes, he gives it—not to carry protesters away, but to ask them politely. This the riot police do, one by one. The protesters refuse, and refuse, and refuse again, but when the policemen make as if to pick them up, they stand up and amble to the side.

This slow-motion, spatially distant enactment of conflict may not be exciting, and it slows down the delivery by only about 20 minutes. But repeated three times, that's one lost hour a day. More important, the sit-in deprives the builders of free access to the gate and the efficiency of just-in-time deliveries; it forces them to organize convoys and protect them with hundreds of police. Through the repetition of these protest tactics, combined with refusal of the Prefectural Government to issue permits, refusal of the City of Nago to allow construction work on land it controls, and many lawsuits and protests from environmentalists, the cost estimate has tripled, the target date has been postponed by more than a decade, and many people—including some in the U.S. Congress—believe (or worry, in the case of the congresspeople) that the thing will never get done.

C. Douglas Lummis is president of the Okinawa chapter of Veterans For Peace VFP-ROC.

We Are All Stock Characters

By Denny Riley

Away All Boats, is Kenneth Dodson's autobiographical novel about an attack transport during WWII. It expounds on the toils and struggles of the six hundred men who sailed the *USS Belinda* to eight amphibious island assaults in the Pacific.

Away All Boats, begins with a cast of stock characters, all of the personalities that pop up in every war story. Soon, though, the book settles into a page-turner with minimal dialogue. After training in amphibious warfare in San Diego and Oahu, the *Belinda* loads on tanks, bulldozers, arms, ammunition, provisions, fuel enough for itself and to tend other ships, and materials and equipment for emergency repairs, then begins transporting Army and Marine Corps battalions to beachheads on Makin, Saipan, Kwajalein, Guam, Palau, Leyte, Luzon, and Okinawa. The *Belinda* traveled in task forces of up to 100 ships with orders to seize and command the islands.

In bold detail Dodson tells how taking those beachheads was done, and what in turn was done by the enemy to the *Belinda* while it carried out the mission it was specifically designed to accomplish. There is an adage, "If you want to tell the truth you have to write fiction." Dodson's book supports that. The story of the *Belinda* participating in eight island landings, of avoiding enemy submarines and mines, fending off air attacks, being struck twice by Kamikaze, could be told in a Pentagon report wrung dry of human emotion, with sentences such as this, "Ship APA 21 proceeded to 10°50'N 124°50'E without incident." This book's engagement with stock characters adds humanity to a story that occasionally lapses into 5,000-word narrations. When the U.S. aircraft carrier *Liscome Bay* is torpedoed, explodes, rolls onto its side, then slides into the sea taking 644 officers and sailors with it, there is no doubt the author saw the disaster from the bridge of another ship. It validates all other description, stock characters or not.

Away All Boats came to mind today while I listened to a podcast from Lonely Whale Foundation, an environmental group concerned with the oceans and their inhabitants. This was the first of a 12-podcast series. The interviewer was Petrice Jones. He interviewed Adrian Grenier, the actor and environmentalist who founded Lonely Whale. Among other topics related to the health of the world's water, they talked about being a nonprofit environmental organization in a capitalist society, a situation in which the nonprofit is resisting the assaults of profiting companies that are permitted, nay encouraged, to grind away at our natural resources.

I say "our natural resources" because the world belongs to all of us, I mean all living beings, not just humans, no matter how deep the illusion of ownership has been instilled. Every bit of the car I drive was mined in some fashion from

our Mother Earth, yet it was sold to me. Who gets to mine the earth anywhere is controlled by a government, and the government is controlled by "special interests." Young people have been sent to war over the illusion of ownership, generally in control of territory. Most Americans can visualize our country's borders, and think of them as immutable, yet during the 20th century the borders of Europe were rewritten four times.

Our border with Canada from Lake of the Woods in Minnesota and the Straits of Georgia in British Columbia is an unwavering line along the 49th parallel, a line not visible anywhere but on a map. The 49th parallel itself is a human concoction. We could go moose hunting and wander into a foreign country. While growing up in New York State I went to a lake in Ontario every summer. On either side of the border are different flags, different money, different holidays, and different ways of pronouncing the word "out." Is it oot, or

\$200 billion of value in the world.

A while ago a story on *The New York Times* commercial real estate page told of a new chemical processing plant in the Ohio River Valley. The biggest business in the region for years had been tearing down rust belt ruins. The new plant is built on 400 acres where a zinc smelter plant was long ago shuttered. The new plant converts liquid natural gas into polyethylene. Natural gas is abundant along the Ohio River Valley in West Virginia, Ohio, and Pennsylvania because of fracking. Since 2005, 17,000 wells in the area have been drilled deep into shale formations, and under hydraulic pressure have released methane, ethane, pentane, and propane. Fracking has caused pollution and the poisoning of drinking water in communities, but the area is also economically blighted and capital infusion can be mistaken for progress. The multinational investing companies have received billions in tax write-offs.



Kamikaze attacks on *USS Laffey*, April 15, 1945. Artwork by John Hamilton. U.S. Navy Art Gallery.

is it owt? Once a Canadian boy asked me, "Want to go oot and aboot in my boot?" I never thought any of that a reason to go to war. However, if a natural resource of great value or necessity was found to be in Canada and not in the United States, it is possible we would begin to hear of an unrelated but provoking matter, one provoking enough for people to consider going to either economic or shooting war. If that sounds cockeyed, consider how the 13 colonies came into being, and how the rest of this great land of ours that stretches from Puerto Rico to Guam, from Hawaii to Alaska, was formed.

This usurping of resources is also going on within our own borders. Chain yourself to an ancient redwood to save it from being cut down and you'll probably be arrested. Some multinational corporation that's traded on the stock exchange owns that tree and the police are on their side. On the Lonely Whale podcast Adrian Grenier said the government allows companies to reap the wealth of our natural resources without being held accountable. "Through GDP, nature has no value until turned into goods or services," he said, and added he doubts Amazon has created

The Department of Energy says gas supply in the three-state area can last 50 years at current consumption levels. Consumption is a very misleading choice of a word. The product will not be consumed. The new plant turns "1.6 billion gallons of ethane into 3.3 billion tons of little white polyethylene beads annually." The beads are made into pipes, tubes, bags, cutting boards, straws, and plastic bottles and jugs. Almost all of it will end in landfills or along our shores or on the bottom of an ocean. Ninety percent of the plastic that has entered the ocean has sunk to the bottom.

Shouldn't part of the price of those plastic products pay for cleaning up the damage and repairing the environment? Instead the *Times* article reads, "Emissions of volatile organic chemicals into the air and discharged into the river will increase in an area that already has some of the region's worst pollution."

The *USS Belinda* went to sea prepared for every imaginable contingency because the United States had to win the war. Along with the well-trained crew and the equipment they needed, the *Belinda* had onboard carpenters, shipfitters, doctors, dentists, pharmacists, sail mak-

ers, and stewards, plus the ship carried lumber, steel plates, auxiliary engines, welders, air compressors, everything for anything that could happen, and most of it did.

Most of what can happen to our planet Earth is happening too. The manufacturers of the plastic waste that comes with almost every purchase in our purchase-crazed culture have launched their ships of destruction not at our enemies but at our nature. The *Belinda* went to sea prepared to address any mishap. During the invasion of Okinawa, a Kamikaze plane slammed into the *Belinda's* hospital ward. Moments later another hit the ship below the waterline. The crew had no choice other than to carry on with their mission while simultaneously addressing the disasters aboard. The ship stayed afloat, the invasion was successful, we won the war.

Before a plastic jug is made, into its design should be contingencies for when it becomes a throw away item. And the government would spare no expense in finding a use for the leftover jugs. And the gases escaping into the Ohio River Valley would be captured and used in a productive way that in the end leaves no more than organic residue. If we can't do that, we can't make polyethylene.

For a while I lived in a house called Tomato. I rented it but let a regular flow of people crash there. Sometimes there were children, so gallon jugs of milk were bought. When the jugs were empty, they were thrown away. An idea that came to me late one night while all of us sat around solving the world's big problems was when a child was born a personalized, heavy duty plastic jug was made and it was then the child's for life. Every time a gallon of something was bought that jug was reused. With a pleasant motif, perhaps a family crest, it could be passed down for generations. This brilliant idea was laughed at.

Every plastic jug, or bag, or straw, or free fork in a delicatessen is a Kamikaze airplane, manufactured knowing it will be destructive and will not return. If the extra cost to outfitting the *Belinda* was waived to save money she would have gone down, and hundreds of other ships manufactured with the same negligence would have gone down, along with their crews. And possibly we would have lost the war.

In the Lonely Whale podcast Petrice and Adrian talked about our resignation to bad news, yet, they add, there are possibilities. None of them is easy. Waiting for the end is easiest, particularly since very few of us truly believe it will come. My thought is my car—which I enjoy but have guilt about driving—could be made entirely of recycled material. It's possible. The car would cost more but then fewer cars would be bought.

Our WWII enemies wanted to take our lives, but nature has no such desire. We ourselves have brought on the existential threat of the destruction of the environment and the death of life. We are all stock characters but together we are humanity.

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