

'Haunted by Our Genocide from Half a World Away'



Pat and Kevin Tillman

By Kevin Tillman

I feel suffocated by this genocide. I live half a world away from Palestine in nowhere Arizona, yet everywhere I go, it's there. Whether I'm trapped in an endless cycle of Zoom meetings for work, watching kids shoot on goal at soccer practice, driving my kids to school as we listen to music not of my choosing, or walking our overly active beagle around the park, the genocide is always there. I'm not in any physical danger. I'm not a soldier on the ground any more. I'm not a policymaker. But as an average citizen, I can't stop thinking about it.

The first thing I do in the morning is grab my phone and check what's happening around the world. The latest horror now etched in my mind came from an article by Abubaker Abed titled "Shaaban Al-Dalou, Burned Alive in Gaza, Would Have Been 20 Today," courtesy of Jeremy Scahill and Ryan Grim's new Drop Site. It was about a 19-year-old engineering student named Shaaban Al-Dalou who was set on fire by an Israeli bomb that was dropped in the night while he was lying in a tent in the courtyard of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in the central city of Deir al-Balah. Shaaban was being treated for wounds from a previous U.S. funded Israeli bombing, along with the rest of his family.

I then found a flood of videos of the attack where I can see the red and white flames of the firebomb dancing around the wreckage of the hospital equipment. People are frantically trying to help, but can't. The flames cast a shadow that turns all of the tents and other material into black-and-gray silhouettes.

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The Unspoken Spread of Fascism

By Fred Nagel

It is difficult for most Americans to judge just how dangerous Donald Trump might be. It is not that the clues are missing; there is a daily list of lies, racist comments, misogynist ramblings, and outrageous self dealing. But most citizens just don't have the right vocabulary to put his actions into some sort of context.

The left has been more confident about where Trump

There are some aspects of fascism that fit Trump quite exactly. Comparing Trump's behavior to the list of fascist characteristics created by the Italian scholar, Umberto Eco, in his essay "Eternal Fascism" is especially revealing.

Trump believes in sudden decisions rather than reflection, or as Eco describes it, "the cult of action for action's sake." Eco's fascists often equate disagreement of their policies with treason, and so too does Trump. Fascist leaders cultivate the "fear of difference" which encour-

Fascism may be encouraged by someone with the right combination of charisma and viciousness, but in the end it becomes a social illness that moves whole populations toward war and genocide.

fits in the general run of very bad presidents. He is simply a fascist, whose behavior is very similar to other calamitous dictators we have seen in the 20th century. This conclusion becomes increasingly believable when Trump talks about a confrontation that could happen if he doesn't get his way. "I can tell you I have the support of the police, the support of the military, the support of the Bikers for Trump—I have the tough people, but they don't play it tough—until they go to a certain point, and then it would be very bad, very bad."

Trump is not talking about the workings of a democracy, or the endlessly touted separation of powers between the Congress, the Executive, and the Judiciary. Bikers for Trump is simply a Brownshirt organization, waiting for their leader's call to violence.

ages racist aggression towards minorities and foreigners. In Trump's world Mexicans are rapists and Muslims are terrorists. Eco refers to another characteristic as an "obsession with plot," and Trump's conspiracies come straight from rightwing websites without the least pretense of fact checking.

Trump's own life is a perpetual battle, something he probably learned from his father's lawyer, one of the chief strategists of the McCarthy Era, Roy Cohn. Eco describes this as a "life of permanent warfare." Another of Eco's characteristics of a fascist is a contempt for the weak, or as Trump would put it referring to John McCain, "I like soldiers who don't get captured."

Trump's bragging about his power to assault women, or "grab them by the pussy" fits well into Eco's description



Are Bikers for Trump the 21st century's Brownshirts?
Photo by Paul Becker, Creative Commons License

of "machismo," the application of perpetual war to the sphere of sexuality. This tendency is well documented in the way Trump has treated the rights of women and the LGBTQ community.

Eco describes fascist leaders as using "selective populism," to manipulate economic discontent into political

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From the Editors

Unite to Shut Down the 'Madmen Arsonists'

Friends, we are entering the most dangerous time in U.S. and global history. We have no alternative but to resist the oligarchic corporate state. Our resistance may not be successful, but as human beings who value life, freedom, and real democracy, not the sham presented to us, to live honestly is to resist evil.

In January we'll have a new president, one who has threatened to crack down on dissent and personal freedoms and in many ways continues to emulate, even ally himself with and admire some of the worst totalitarian dictators in history, obviously a hateful, racist, sexist, and very disturbed person. But a large percentage of Americans voted for him.

Meanwhile, the other candidate, who was not as obviously disturbed and not as obviously totalitarian, smiled ever so broadly, while people—women, children, whole families—in Gaza were being destroyed and starved to death, as Gaza itself, her hospitals, schools, homes, and everything standing was being blown into fragments as the air, water, and earth were being toxified for generations. With vapid statements that meant little, she continued smiling as her administration was not only facilitating the genocide in Gaza but had for years pursued a war in Ukraine that could easily turn nuclear, and smiled as she gave no indication any of that would change if she were elected. At the same time, the Democratic Party deserted the working class, No wonder they lost.

Voters were asked to choose between two almost equally representative aspects of everything that has been wrong with America since the Puritans landed. Meanwhile, as many dissatisfied workers and common people voted for him, Trump won both the electoral college and the popular vote. And as always, no mat-

ter who won the election, the corporate state continued to profit while wars raged.

The Democratic administrations all the way back to Clinton should be proud of themselves: While pretending to support democracy and the working class, etc., they waged wars, tortured people they la-



beled terrorists, imprisoned truth-telling whistle blowers, providing fertile ground for an undisguised fascist like Trump to take the reins. As for this administration—the one that facilitated genocide, got the bloodbath in Ukraine going and kept it rolling, Biden and his cabinet, then Harris as candidate—well, one could almost suspect that they set the stage intentionally.

Some 50 years ago, Hannah Arendt wrote in her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, “In an ever-changing, incomprehensible world the masses had reached the point where they would, at the same time, believe everything and nothing, think that everything was possible and that nothing was true ... Before mass leaders seize the power to fit reality to their lies, their propaganda is marked by its extreme contempt for facts as such, for

in their opinion fact depends entirely on the power of man who can fabricate it.”

Supreme Court decisions allowed corporations to usurp rights intended for human beings, like free speech. Three decisions, *Buckley v Valeo* (1976), *First Nat. Bank of Boston v Bellotti* (1978) and *Citizens United* (2010) allowed money to totally and “legally” corrupt elections and governing. The last two were decided 5–4.

VFP's Democracy and Peace Working Group examines the whole range of SCOTUS rulings that gave corporations protections under the 4th, 5th and 14th Amendments as well. Small wonder we live in a corporate culture!

One of the dissenting judges in *Citizens*, John Paul Stevens (a WWII Navy veteran), wrote, “... corporations have no consciences, no beliefs, no feelings, no thoughts, no desires. Corporations help structure and facilitate the activities of human beings, to be sure, and their ‘personhood’ often serves as a useful legal fiction. But they are not themselves members of ‘We the People’ by whom and for whom our Constitution was established.”

So here we are under corporate control of our government, media, and military, facing a very real genocide in the Middle East that seems unstoppable and the potential for WWII in Ukraine. It would be easy to be depressed. As an antidote to that, long-time progressive lawyer and co-host of the radio show *Law and Disorder* Michael Steven Smith writes, “Where is our fighting spirit? Where is our imagination? Don't let it be buried under the illusion that the ex-prosecutor Kamala Harris will lead the way. She won't. The center cannot hold. We need our own independent organizations. And we need to come together. We are the majority. We have power. Let's use it.”

If there ever was a time when the left needed to unify in defense of all life on this planet, this is it.

Chris Hedges recently opined, “We must invest our energy into organizing mass movements to overthrow the corporate state through sustained acts of mass civil disobedience. This includes the most powerful weapon we possess—the strike.” Hedges goes on to say, “We have to begin, especially in an age of corporate totalitarianism, to stop asking ourselves whether resistance is going to work but to understand that we have a moral responsibility to resist what Emmanuel Kant and Hannah Arendt would call ‘radical evil.’ To paraphrase [philosopher Jean-Paul] Sartre: I don't fight fascists because I'm going to win. I fight fascists because they are fascists.”

There are active international protests of the Gaza genocide that Donald “finish-the-job” Trump threatens to continue. Here in the United States, major unions, including the UAW, NEA and SEIU, are urging Biden to stop arming Israel, while dockworkers and other unions are also activated to strike and block transport of arms to Israel. There was recently a national strike over the economy in Greece that shut the entire country down for 24 hours. General strikes and boycotts here in the United States may be long shots at stopping the genocide and the march toward nuclear armageddon, but long shot or not, we need to resist and to do so in ways that can directly affect the “Madmen Arsonists,” as former Veterans For Peace president and *Peace & Planet News* senior editor Mike Ferner calls them, those who are step by murderous step effectively destroying this world most of us love dearly.

—Tarak Kauff



Photo: Ellen Davidson

Veterans For Peace is an international organization made up of military veterans, military family members, and allies. We are dedicated to building a culture of peace, exposing the true causes and costs of war, and healing the wounds of war.



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The Politics of Cultural Despair

By Chris Hedges

It is despair that is killing us.

It fosters what the Roger Lancaster calls “poisoned solidarity,” the intoxication forged from the negative energies of fear, envy, hatred and a lust for violence.

In the end, the election was about despair. Despair over futures that evaporated with deindustrialization. Despair over the loss of 30 million jobs in mass layoffs. Despair over austerity programs and the funneling of wealth upwards into the hands of rapacious oligarchs. Despair over a liberal class that refuses to acknowledge the suffering it orchestrated under neoliberalism or embrace New Deal-type programs that will ameliorate this suffering. Despair over the futile, endless wars, as well as the genocide in Gaza, where generals and politicians are never held accountable. Despair over a democratic system that has been seized by corporate and oligarchic power.

This despair has been played out on the bodies of the disenfranchised through opioid and alcohol addictions, gambling, mass shootings, suicides—especially among middle-aged white males—morbid obesity and the investment of our emotional and intellectual life in tawdry spectacles and the allure of magical thinking, from the absurd promises of the Christian right to the Oprah-like belief that reality is never an impediment to our desires. These are the pathologies of a deeply diseased culture, what Friedrich Nietzsche calls an aggressive despiritualized nihilism.

Donald Trump is a symptom of our diseased society. He is not its cause. He is what is vomited up out of decay. He expresses a childish yearning to be an omnipotent god. This yearning resonates with Americans who feel they have been treated like human refuse. But the impossibility of being a god, as Ernest Becker writes, leads to its dark alternative—destroying like a god. This self-immolation is what comes next.

Kamala Harris and the Democratic Party, along with the establishment wing of the Republican Party, which allied itself with Harris, live in their own non-reality-based belief system. Harris, who was anointed by party elites and never received a single primary vote, proudly trumpeted her endorsement by Dick Cheney, a politician who left office with a 13% approval rating. The smug, self-righteous “moral” crusade against Trump stokes the national reality television show that has replaced journalism and politics. It reduces a social, economic and political crisis to the personality of Trump. It refuses to confront and name the corporate forces responsible for our failed democracy. It allows Democratic politicians to blithely ignore their base—77% of Democrats and 62% of independents support an arms embargo against Israel. The open collusion with corporate oppression and refusal to heed the desires and needs of the electorate neuters the press and Trump critics. These corporate puppets stand for nothing, other than their own advancement. The lies they

tell to working men and women, especially with programs such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), do far more damage than any of the lies uttered by Trump.

Oswald Spengler in *The Decline of the West* predicted that, as Western democracies calcified and died, a class of “monied thugs,” people such as Trump, would replace the traditional political elites. Democracy would become a sham. Hatred would be fostered and fed to the masses to encourage them to tear themselves apart.

The American dream has become an American nightmare.

The social bonds, including jobs that gave working Americans a sense of purpose and stability, that gave them meaning and hope, have been sundered. The stagnation of tens of millions of lives, the realization that it will not be better for their children, the predatory nature of our institutions, including education, healthcare and prisons, have engendered, along with despair, feelings of powerlessness and humiliation. It has bred loneliness, frustration, anger and a sense of worthlessness.

“When life is not worth living, everything becomes a pretext for ridding our-

Despair over the futile, endless wars, ... where generals and politicians are never held accountable.

Despair over a democratic system that has been seized by corporate and oligarchic power.

selves of it,” Émile Durkheim wrote. “There is a collective mood, as there is an individual mood, that inclines nations to sadness. ... For individuals are too closely involved in the life of society for it to be sick without their being affected. Its suffering inevitably becomes theirs.”

Decayed societies, where a population is stripped of political, social and economic power, instinctively reach out for cult leaders. I watched this during the breakup of the former Yugoslavia. The cult leader promises a return to a mythical golden age and vows, as Trump does, to crush the forces embodied in demonized groups and individuals that are blamed for their misery. The more outrageous cult leaders become, the more cult leaders flout law and social conventions, the more they gain in popularity. Cult leaders are immune to the norms of established society. This is their appeal. Cult leaders seek total power. Those who follow them grant them this power in the desperate hope that the cult leaders will save them.

All cults are personality cults. Cult leaders are narcissists. They demand obsequious fawning and total obedience. They prize loyalty above competence. They wield absolute control. They do not tolerate criticism. They are deeply insecure, a trait they attempt to cover up with bombastic grandiosity. They are amoral and emotionally and physically abusive. They see those around them as ob-

The Mourning After
by Mr. Fish



DEMOCRATIC STRATEGISTS TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW A BROWN AND PINK CAMPAIGN LIGHTLY SCENTED WITH JOE BIDEN THAT PROMOTED AN INSPIRING MESSAGE OF EQUALITY, CIVILITY, DEMOCRACY, AND GENOCIDE FAILED TO GET THEM THE KEYS TO THE WHITE(POWER) HOUSE

jects to be manipulated for their own empowerment, enjoyment and often sadistic entertainment. All those outside the cult are branded as forces of evil, prompting an epic battle whose natural expression is violence.

We will not convince those who have surrendered their agency to a cult leader and embraced magical thinking through rational argument. We will not coerce them into sub-

jectivity and creativity. The exaltation of the machine, he warned, reduced human beings to the status of slaves. He called for full employment, a minimum wage large enough to support a family, the right of a parent to stay home with children, and jobs and a living wage for the disabled. He advocated, in order to sustain strong families, universal health insurance, pensions, accident insurance, and work schedules that permitted free time and vacations. He wrote that all workers should have the right to form unions with the ability to strike.

We must invest our energy into organizing mass movements to overthrow the corporate state through sustained acts of mass civil disobedience. This includes the most powerful weapon we possess—the strike. By turning our ire on the corporate state, we name the true sources of power and abuse. We expose the absurdity of blaming our demise on demonized groups such as undocumented workers, Muslims, or Blacks. We give people an alternative to a corporate-indentured Democratic Party that cannot be rehabilitated. We make possible the restoration of an open society, one that serves the common good rather than corporate profit. We must demand nothing less than full employment, guaranteed minimum incomes, universal health insurance, free education at all levels, robust protection of the natural world and an end to militarism and imperialism. We must create the possibility for a life of dignity, purpose and self-esteem. If we do not, it will ensure a Christianized fascism and ultimately, with the accelerating ecocide, our obliteration.

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Chris Hedges is a Pulitzer Prize-winning American journalist, Presbyterian minister, author, and television host. His books include America: The Farewell Tour, American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America, and War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning. He previously worked overseas for the Dallas Morning News, the Christian Science Monitor, and NPR, and hosted the Emmy-nominated RT America show On Contact.

A Letter To My Liberal Friend Who Campaigned For Harris

By Juan Cruz Ferre, Left Voice.

Should Harris supporters blame the left for their candidate's defeat? No, they should blame the two-party system.

To my liberal friend who campaigned for Kamala Harris, I know you're probably looking for explanations for your candidate's resounding defeat. You may be itching to blame it on those of us who, despite dreading another Trump term, did not vote for Harris, much less campaign for her. But let me suggest you take your thoughts in a different direction.

First, look at the numbers very closely. Harris was defeated in all the "Blue Wall" states, and she was no closer in other swing states like North Carolina or Georgia. Trump ended up sweeping all seven swing states. Furthermore, her performance was way below projections, across the board, even in deep-blue states and districts like New York City. Popular vote numbers are particularly striking: at 67 million votes so far, she received at least

10 million fewer votes than the 81 million for Biden in 2020.

We always agreed that a second Trump presidency was nightmarish to contemplate. Yet these ghastly results should lead you to question putting your energies behind a candidate who did not bother to promise solutions to any of the main problems Americans are going through, and thus left the field open for Trump to score a triumphant comeback.

So no, it's not time to blame third-party spoilers, principled leftists, the Muslim community, or anyone who did not have the stomach to support a genocide-enabler. It is time, instead, to pause and reflect, so that next time you direct your efforts toward building a political alternative to the dead-end, two-party system.

Thousands of young activists just like you, people concerned about civil rights, women's rights, and the environment, phone-banked, donated, and canvassed for Kamala Harris' campaign. Many did so holding their noses, lamenting her terrible policy record, her platform, and her



unequivocal support for Israel's genocide in Gaza. Nevertheless, you and others thought, it would still be better than Trump.

This time it's not just me saying it—millions of people in the U.S. arrived at the same conclusion Nov. 4: Harris might have promised to protect the right to abortion, she may talk less abrasively, and be more respectful to journalists, but she's still a monster. Like the rest of the Democratic Party, her priority is the capitalist class, and the continuation of U.S. imperialism.

When you think about it, this outcome was quite predictable. Harris and the Democratic Party did not try to win over people or expand their base among working-class families, young activists,

and students. They only sought to secure the support of big donors and Republicans like Liz Cheney. This is the only way to understand why they did not put forward a more progressive platform; why Harris repeated time and again that she stands behind Israel; why she refused to propose even minimal changes to our deeply dysfunctional health care system.

On other issues, like immigration or criminal justice, she tried to outdo Trump, presenting herself as the toughest on border control. She did not dispute Trump's portrayal of undocumented immigrants as criminals. Instead, she pledged to crack down on them. You heard her tough-on-
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Fascism

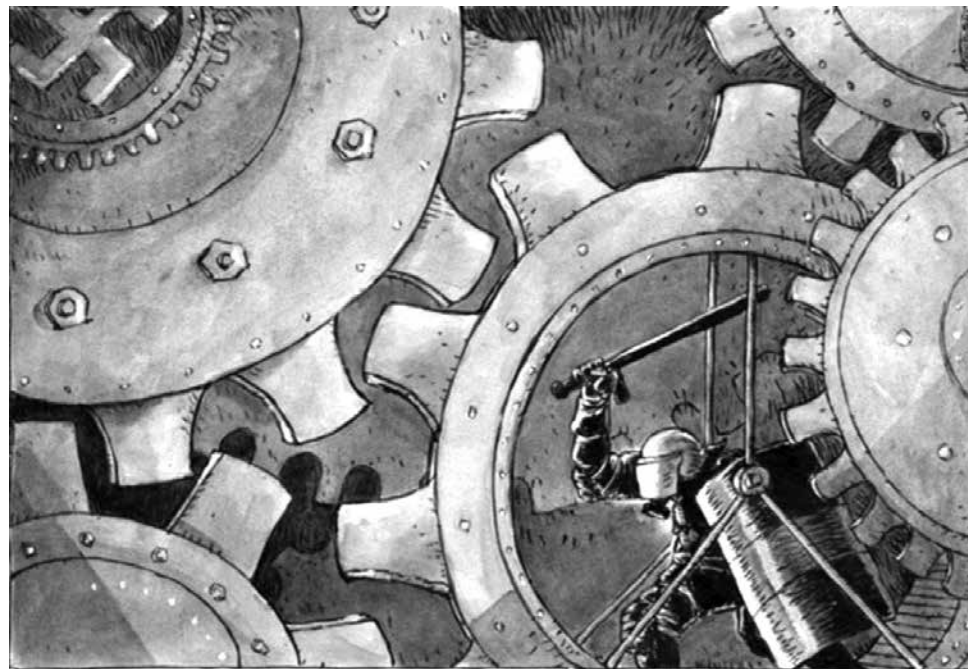
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power, becoming in effect the interpreter of the popular will. Trump's efforts to kill environmental regulations, close the Mexican border, and end abortion rights are his analysis of what the population wants. In this way, economic anger is re-directed toward goals that don't present a challenge to the rule of the rich elite.

Finally, Eco refers to "newspeak," the language of Oceania, George Orwell's fictional totalitarian state. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the ruling class controls thought by limiting language. Vocabulary is diminished, ideas are grossly simplified, and any discussion of morality reduced to black and white. Or to put it in "Trump Speak," all people and events are either "tremendous" or "very bad."

"Making America Great Again" never involves more thought than watching Fox News or chanting racist slogans. News is either real or fake. Prospective immigrants are from either great or "shithole" countries.

One characteristic of fascism, missing from more recent descriptions, can be traced all the way back to Mussolini's Minister of Education, Giovanni Gentile, who wrote about what he called "corporatism." The word itself has a long history in political theory, but to Gentile it meant an enforced harmony between social classes: workers, employers, and the state. Harmony, of course, with one person at the top making most of the decisions. It was an attractive concept for the ruling class, since corporatism would eliminate labor demands and leftist ideologies. "And above all," wrote Mussolini in 1932, "Fascism denies that class-war can be the preponder-



ant force in the transformation of society."

On the surface, Mussolini's rise to power in the early 1920s had little to do with corporatism. It was based on squads of Black-shirts that murdered thousands of socialists and unionists all across the country. Hitler employed very similar tactics starting in the late 1920s, using his Brown-shirts to beat, torture, and assassinate anyone who opposed his Nazi agenda.

Less recognized, however, is the fact that both terrorist organizations had elite corporate sponsorships. For Mussolini, that support started as early as 1922 and remained consistent until the end of WW II. For Hitler, corporate money came later, in 1928 after he had purged the socialist elements of his party.

While Gentile's definition of corporatism did not include payoffs by the rich elite to Mussolini, the support of this class proved to be a critical piece in his ascent to power. The same is true for Hitler. Before 1928, his lack of funding was a constant

impediment to achieving complete control. After that date, the major corporations saw Hitler as a way to destroy unions, end socialist resistance, and ensure profits.

Is this same phenomenon at work today in paving the way for Trump's rise to power? An interesting Market Watch study conducted two years into Trump's first presidency found that despite his reckless behavior and contempt for the democratic process, the nation's top CEOs were giving almost three times as much to Republicans as Democrats. And that just scratches the surface, since most donations to the major parties come from company PACs and dark money, controlled in large part by this same CEO class.

The 1920s were similar to the last decade in several ways. Industrialized countries saw the rich elite prosper greatly during both periods, giving them much more money to influence their political systems. At the same time, economic discontent became more overt as the major-

ity of workers became unable to support their families. Rage at the system became a distinct threat to the very wealthy.

Have the CEOs and the very rich in our time reacted in the same way as they did in the 1920s? Are they in fact funding authoritarian leaders who will protect corporate profits, using racism and nationalism to turn anger at the system into anger at immigrants, minorities, and anyone who disagrees with them?

By avoiding an in-depth description of fascism, mainstream media analysis fails our democracy in two ways. First, we as citizens can't look at Trump and judge him by historical standards. His actions may be outrageous and deplorable, but we remain oblivious to the pattern of a fascist leader that he exhibits.

The second way that the media fails is to limit how fascism is described. It is always a person rather than a national movement, a Netanyahu rather than the Israeli people, or a Hitler rather than all Germans. Fascism may be encouraged by someone with the right combination of charisma and viciousness, but in the end it becomes a social illness that moves whole populations toward war and genocide. Perhaps fascism is the madness that comes from true corporatism, or from its most recent manifestation, neoliberalism. It is the deadly mix of greed at the top, misdirected rage at the bottom, and a fascist leader who can turn it all into an engine of mindless destruction.

Fred Nagel is a Vietnam-era veteran and political activist whose articles have appeared in CounterPunch, Global Exchange, Mondoweiss, Popular Resistance, War Crimes Times (Veterans For Peace publication) and Z Magazine. He also hosts a show on Vassar College Radio, WVKR (classwars.org).

Cornell Students Continue to Resist Despite University Crackdown

by Anonymous Cornell Students & Jack Gilroy

On September 18, 2024, over 100 Cornell University students wearing masks and beating on pots, pans, and drums disrupted an on-campus Career Fair hosting weapons manufacturers Boeing and L3Harris, shutting down the event. As students chanted slogans like “Boeing, Boeing, blood is flowing” and “L3Harris, you can’t hide, we charge you with genocide,” recruiters packed up their tables over half an hour early.

Boeing ranks as the world’s fifth largest weapons manufacturer. Their F-15 fighter jets have blown apart much of Gaza and their Apache Ah-64 attack helicopter have wreaked death and destruction on the people of Gaza and now, on Lebanon. L3Harris supplies the tools and systems to make the F-15 and Apache the killing weapons used by the Israeli Air Force. In April, Cornell students overwhelmingly voted to divest from both companies and eight other weapons manufacturers. These corporations are key suppliers for the ongoing assault on Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. By investing in these companies, Cornell grows its over \$10 billion endowment through violence, ethnic cleansing, and genocide.

Students delivered a letter at the action charging L3Harris and Boeing with aiding and abetting war crimes and genocide. The letter then declared a “People’s Embargo” on the two companies, informing them that they will not be able to conduct business as usual at Cornell. The letter



Yihun Stith '26, graduate student Sriram Parasurama and Atakan Deviren '27 stand alongside supporters outside Ithaca City Court on Nov. 6.

factors on Cornell’s campus. The campus actions of last spring have not ended at Cornell or across the nation.

But in Ithaca, students have faced a draconian crackdown on free protest following the Career Fair disruption. In a flagrant violation of labor law, Cornell University suspended Momodou Taal, an international PhD candidate in Africana Studies, without due process or bargaining with the graduate workers’ union. This suspension threatened Taal’s visa status and put him at risk for deportation; the university only reduced the punishment after a student and community uproar. Several students were given “non-academic suspensions” that barred them from being on campus outside of their classes, essentially amounting to a protest ban. Four students were suspended for three years, also without due process, and given “persona non grata status” by the Cornell University Police Department for the same period of time, putting their degrees on pause. One of these students was evicted from their campus housing a few weeks later.

Despite these disproportionate measures to quell pro-

fits, with the plant breeding and veterinary science programs being among the top in the nation. It draws the attention of wealthy donors and government representatives supporting the development of a new XLEAP (X-ray beamline for Life Sciences, Environmental Sciences, Agriculture and Plant Sciences) facility or Lisa Yang endowing the Wildlife Health Center. Among scientists in these fields, there has long been a reluctance to acknowledge political issues, with many opting to take the so-called “objective” or “unbiased” route. For myself, my studies have always been political: my ability to conduct field work is contingent on Cornell’s historical and ongoing land dispossession through the Morrill Act. Each new generation of scientists has slowly been coming to the realization that their work cannot continue to be meaningful if it occupies an apolitical realm but have yet to find the spark to act.

“The moment I shared the news of my arrest and suspension, graduate students in SIPS (School of Integrative Plant Sciences) found the spark they needed. Many came together to organize their peers to meet with faculty, write letters of support, and express dissent with the University administration. It is an unprecedented level of political activation largely unseen among the scientific community for issues not pertaining to climate. Cornell administration has also been slowly undermining their stability in CALS (College of Agriculture and Life Science) through failed promises made to Indigenous students in AIISP (American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program), an already deeply politicized group. With Indigenous student recruitment at an all-time low and Indigenous faculty quitting the program, the collective rage and dissent within CALS has been continuing to mount.

“It has been inspiring to watch my peers among SIPS transition from friends to dedicated comrades and political allies. The gravest mistake our administration has made is underestimating the love we have for each other among the plant science community, a group that is committed to studying the means to life. I often find beautiful parallels between the systems I study, the symbiosis of fungi and trees, and the depth of community in which the graduate student community works together. When the tree experiences stress, the fungi help uptake nutrients and aid in the recruitment of other microbes to assist. I see the same network among people in SIPS. The administration has lit a flame in all our hearts that cannot be extinguished. We are all waking up to the ultimate responsibility of the scientist—undeterred defense of life and truth. We make a vow in the honest pursuit of knowledge, and like any form of knowledge it comes with a responsibility to act. If we do not act upon the knowledge of this genocide in Palestine, in which upwards of 200,000 Palestinians have been killed as of June 2024 by bombs funded by our own school, then who are we as scientists? As we watch the mass killing of children unfold on our phone screens, who are we as empathetic human beings?”

I was arrested ... for alleged actions at the career fair shutdown ... and have since then been suspended and banned from campus. ... I am considered an immediate “danger to public health and safety.”

was delivered alongside a list of names of children under the age of one murdered by Israel since Oct. 7, 2024.

Two days before the Cornell students shut down Boeing at the Statler Hotel Job Fair, they upset L3Harris at a prep Q&A session for job-seeking students. Some students, aware of the treachery of L3Harris weaponry, dressed in business clothes and raised hands for questions like “Hi Marshall [a recruiter’s name], you talked about wanting to leave a lasting imprint on the world, which I think is really admirable. The U.N. has estimated that rebuilding homes in Gaza could take up to 80 years and weapons provided by L3Harris helped make that possible. Is that an example of the kind of impact you want to leave on the world? Is that the kind of impact you want Cornell students to leave on the world?”

L3Harris got the message. After Monday’s disruption, L3Harris representatives pulled out of the career fair, leaving only a table with promotional materials guarded by an armed campus police officer. Cornell students were able to drive away recruiters and damage the university’s criminal relationship to genocide profiteers.

Major media did not report on either event, but both were well covered in the *Cornell Sun* and *Ithaca (NY) Times*. Curiously, *The New York Times* wrote after the shutdown of the career fair that student actions were at a dead end, making no mention of a major shutdown of two weapons manu-

test, students continue to resist.

Since the career fair, Cornell’s campus has seen multiple rallies in support of targeted students and vigils for the people of Palestine. When Cornell’s Board of Trustees held their annual meeting in a building campus, students protested for divestment on the lawn outside; when the trustees shut their curtains to try to hide from their guilt, students banged on their windows and erected a tent with a banner that read “Long Live Jabalia” on the lawn, in reference to the Palestinians murdered by an Israeli strike on Jabalia refugee camp in Northern Gaza.

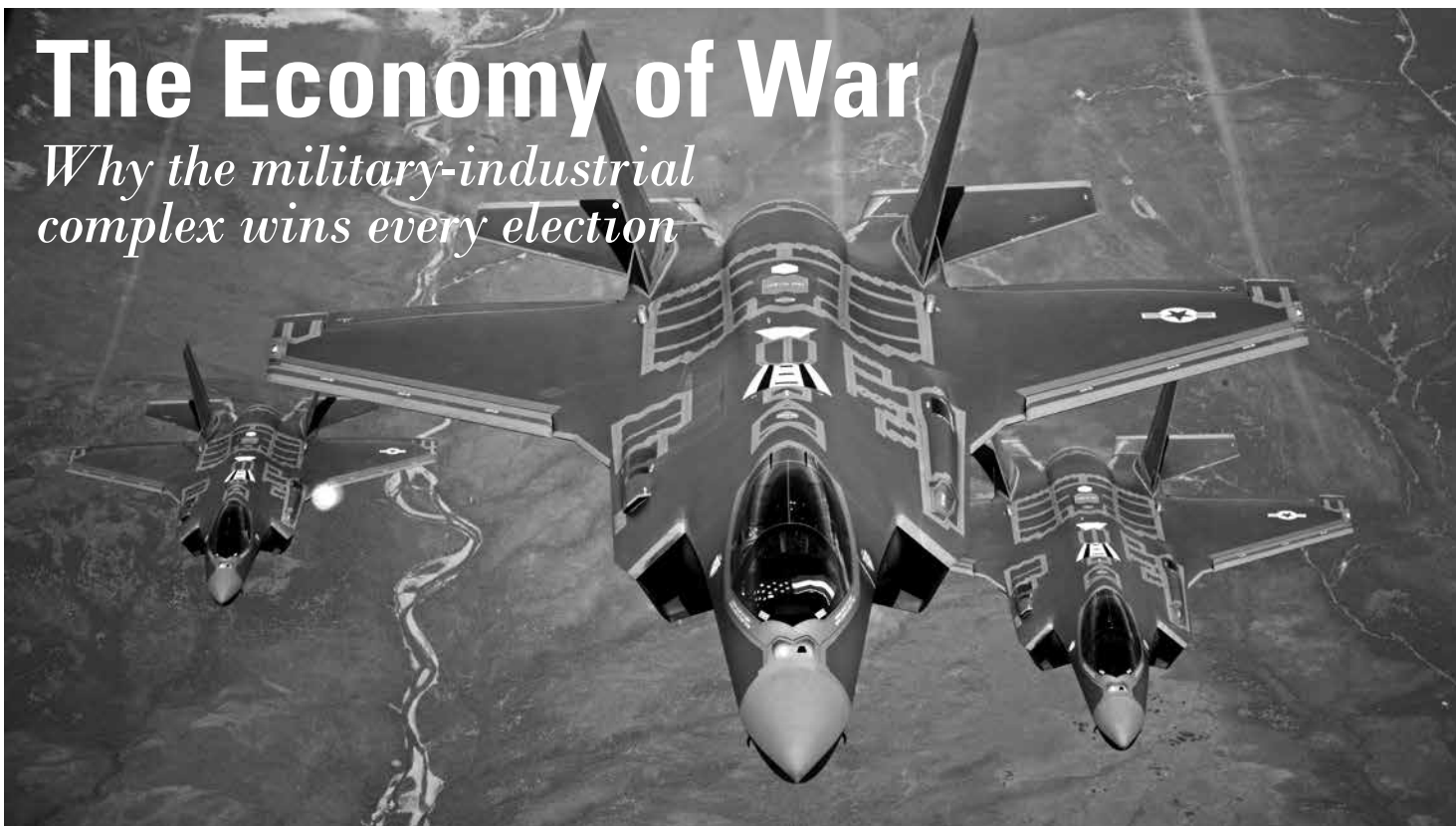
Sriram Parasurama, a student facing a three-year suspension, writes below.

“My name is Sriram Parasurama and I am a second-year PhD student in the graduate field of Horticulture, in the School of Integrative Plant Science. I research how trees in our local forests interact with fungi in the soils and how that interaction affects the web of ecology throughout the ecosystem. I was arrested on Oct. 9 outside of my home for alleged actions at the career fair shutdown that took place at the Statler on Sept. 18 and have since then been suspended and banned from campus. I am being punished without due process as I am considered an immediate ‘danger to public health and safety.’”

“The College of Agriculture and Life Science has long been a cornerstone of this university’s popularity and

The Economy of War

Why the military-industrial complex wins every election



The F-35 fighter Jet

By John Tarleton

In her acceptance speech on the final night of the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, Kamala Harris promised new investments in the care economy, support for workers rights, reproductive rights and much more. Not wanting the Republicans to attack her for being “weak on defense,” she also vowed to boisterous applause that the United States will continue to have “the strongest, most lethal fighting force in the world.”

The U.S. military straddles the Earth with around 750 foreign military bases in at least 80 countries. Spy satellites circle the globe 24 hours a day. More than 1,700 nuclear warheads can be launched within minutes by land, air and sea. Eleven aircraft carrier strike groups patrol the high seas and can project the threat of conventional U.S. firepower in any corner of the world.

All this lethal force comes at a very high price, especially for the taxpayers who have to foot the bill. The annual military budget hit \$820 billion in 2023—not counting supplemental spending on wars in Ukraine and Gaza—and will likely top \$1 trillion in the next administration. Throw in the interest being paid on past debts incurred through military spending plus the budgets of other U.S. national security agencies like the National Intelligence Program (\$71.7 billion in 2023) and the Military Intelligence Program (\$27.9 billion in 2023), which together fund the CIA, and the annual tab soars even higher.

Altogether, War Resisters League estimates that 45% of Americans’ income taxes go to pay for current and past military spending. For a worker who is being taxed at a 22% annual rate on \$50,000 in annual taxable income, \$4,950 of their \$11,000 in income taxes will go to military-related expenses.

This in turn is how the United States is able to account for 40% of the world’s annual military spending and have a military budget that, according to the Peterson Foundation, is larger than the next nine countries combined: China, Russia, India, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom,

Germany, France, Ukraine and Japan.

In the summer of 2021, President Biden and congressional Democrats pushed Build Back Better, a sweeping piece of domestic legislation that would have invested in universal preschool, expanded child care and elder care, provided a \$300 per month child tax credit for \$39 million families, a tax credit for 17 million low-wage workers, investments in affordable housing and climate action, and much more. If passed, it would have done more to ease the burdens of poor, working-class and middle-class families than any government initiative in decades.

For its critics, the \$3.5 trillion price tag was deemed an extravagant waste of money, and the bill eventually died in Congress. Left unsaid was that funding the Pentagon was going to cost roughly \$9 trillion over the next decade. But only domestic spending gets described in hefty ten-year increments.

According to tables provided by the National Priorities Project, by reducing military spending 20% in a given year, we

nipotence (see Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc.) often end in disaster.

For the generals, more war means more combat commands, more chances for promotion, more medals and ribbons as well as the chance to field test their latest weapons and military tactics.

For military contractors, it means more business and more profits.

For elected officials, there are more campaign donations to Hoover up from weapons makers.

And for the media, war is great for clicks and ratings.

If there’s one thing that transcends the red-blue divide in this country, it’s the presence of the military-industrial complex. It’s an inefficient way to do it, but military spending spurs technological innovation. It’s also an important source of jobs—and an expanding tax base—for local economies, especially in poorer rural areas. Weapons makers source the parts for a complex piece of military machinery from as many states and congressional districts as possible, even if it leads to huge cost overruns that are cov-

In Woodstock, the town synonymous with peace, love, music and ’60s-era idealism, the largest local employer is Ametek Rotron, an aerospace and military contractor that makes fans essential to the functioning of F-16 fighter jets and predator drones.

could hire 500,000 nurses (\$64 billion) and 500,000 elementary school teachers (\$51 billion) and create four million childcare slots (\$51 billion). These kinds of savings, if you prefer, could also pay for millions of public college scholarships, millions of units of public housing and so on.

Given these alternative choices, why do we seem to be locked into the well-trodden path we’re on?

For members of the U.S. foreign policy establishment, being able to wield such god-like powers anywhere in the world is intoxicating even if their illusions of om-

ered by cost-plus contracts.

In Woodstock, New York, the town synonymous with peace, love, music and ’60s-era idealism, the largest local employer is Ametek Rotron, an aerospace and military contractor that makes fans quessential to the functioning of F-16 fighter jets and predator drones. Calls by local peace activists for the company to switch production to entirely civilian use have been rebuffed for years.

A couple hundred miles north of Woodstock, 20 F-35 Lightning II fighter jets are stationed at the Vermont Air Na-

tional Guard’s base at the Burlington Airport. The deployment has the support of the state’s political leaders including Sen. Bernie Sanders, a frequent critic of bloated military budgets. According to the Vermont Department of Economic Development, the F-35 is responsible for 1,610 direct and indirect jobs, \$222 million in economic activity, and is helping grow the state’s aviation and aerospace industry.

By spreading its largesse far and wide, the Pentagon was able to sustain support for the \$1.2 trillion weapons program even when the F-35 endured years of production delays and cost overruns that were subsidized by U.S. taxpayers. The plane is now widely used by the Air Force, Navy and Marines. Its maker, Lockheed Martin, also exports the F-35 to U.S. allies including Israel where, according to breakingdefense.com, it is the backbone of the Israeli Air Force. If you see photos of whole city blocks flattened in Gaza or Beirut, there’s a good chance it was done by an F-35 dropping 2,000-pound bombs. In June Israel inked a deal to purchase 25 more F-35s with \$3 billion from the Pentagon’s Foreign Military Financing program, a pot of money used to promote weapons sales to U.S. allies.

In 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry sailed a squadron of U.S. Navy ships into Tokyo Bay demanding that Japan open trade relations with the United States, or else. The Japanese, who had sealed off their society from outside influence for centuries, quickly agreed.

While modern-day “gunboat diplomacy” is rarely so explicit, the U.S. ability to project military power around the world underpins its global economic power—its ability to access natural resources, to penetrate and control new markets and bend pliant governments to its will. All that firepower can also be used to make an example of countries that don’t fall in line (See Iraq 2003). As New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman once wrote, “The hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist—McDonalds can’t flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the builder of the F-15. And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley’s technologies is called the U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy and Marines.”

American leaders like to depict the United States as maintaining order in an unruly world. But the distinction between the “global cop” walking the beat and a mafia boss providing “protection” to weaker countries is sometimes hard to see.

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has revived the U.S.-led North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Europe. The Europeans’ military spending is up, a boon for weapons makers. Two previously neutral nations, Finland and Sweden, have joined the alliance. They will have to retool their militaries to be NATO-compatible, which will require purchasing a lot of U.S.-made weapons systems. The war has also been a bonanza for U.S. energy companies, who have been exporting record amounts of liquified natural gas to Europe at premium prices since Russia lost access to those markets.

Ukraine itself is awash in tens of billions of dollars in U.S. weapons paid for with U.S. funds. Yet the government

continued on next page ...

Trump's Plans Will Destroy VA Health Care and Benefits

By Arlys Herem

Project 2025 is now an active threat to VA health care and benefits. Efforts to privatize both the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) will move forward relentlessly unless there is massive resistance.

Project 2025 outlines a VA healthcare system that only provides care for those with service-connected conditions and limits care for those conditions. In addition, Project 2025 questions service connection for non-physical injuries such as PTSD and conditions related to exposure to toxic substances such as Agent Orange and burn pits. This would disenroll millions of veterans from their VHA healthcare and destroy the holistic, veteran-centric care the VHA now provides to veterans. Care for non-service-connected conditions would be provided by the private sector (at the veteran's expense?) The only whole-health model of healthcare existing in the U.S. would be eliminated.

The plan also wants to "increase the number of patients seen each day to equal the number seen by DoD (Department of Defense) medical facilities." Active-duty patients are generally healthy while the



Photo: Ellen Davidson

majority of VHA patients are older with multiple problems. Coordinated, comprehensive care requires time and often a team effort. At the same time, Project 2025 wants to further increase outsourcing to the more expensive private sector, whose funding demands are already stressing VHA care. Project 2025 looks to revive a plan to downsize and even close VHA facilities.

Few people, including most veterans, are aware of all the VA does. Besides providing healthcare, the VA also trains 70% of all doctors and a substantial number of all healthcare professionals, conducts research that benefits all Americans, and provides support in times of emergency,

as it did during the COVID pandemic. Project 2025 threatens not just those who get their healthcare from the VHA but all veterans and all Americans.

Project 2025 is not limited to VHA healthcare but aims at cutting future and current disability benefits. Included are plans to revise current benefit provision guidelines with the intent to limit who can receive benefits. This is very likely to impact veterans with PTSD, military sexual trauma and future injuries parallel to those caused by Agent Orange or toxic burn pits. It calls for reviewing current claims to identify the "fraud" they say exists, thus saving the government money. That Republicans were vehemently opposed to ex-

panding benefits for veterans sickened by toxic exposures or who struggle with certain mental health conditions demonstrates the likelihood of reducing benefits.

Project 2025 proposes expanding privatization of compensation and pension exams even though 63% of veterans relate negative experiences with current private contractors. It would also make it easier for "claim sharks" to make an average of \$5,000 for processing claims when free options from VSOs are available. Project 2025 wants to overhaul and reduce benefit amounts and investigate veterans for fraud.

It's worth your while to learn more about Project 2025's threats to the VHA and VBA but also to learn more about the VA itself. It is the largest publicly funded healthcare program in the country and numerous studies have clearly demonstrated that VA care is equal to and often superior to private care and is more cost effective.

Action is needed to halt and reverse the dismantling of VHA health care and benefits. If the nation means to honor those who answered the call to duty, it will act to strengthen both the VHA and VBA and provide care and benefits to all who have served.

Learn more at veteransforpeace.org/sova and veteranspolicy.org.

Arllys Herem served in the Army Nurse Corps, including a tour in Viet Nam. She worked with a local NGO in Cambodia doing home care in villages for 20 years before retiring to Minneapolis in 2018. As a SOVA Steering Committee member, she believes all veterans should be able to choose health care provided by a fully funded, fully staffed VA.

War Economy

... continued from previous page

is trying to fund its basic operations by selling off state-owned assets at fire-sale prices. And new land laws are speeding the consolidation of that country's rich agricultural lands into the hands of foreign interests. Someday the trench warfare between Russia and Ukraine will end. When it does, a coalition of investors that includes BlackRock and JPMorgan is organizing a Ukraine Development Fund to guide that country's reconstruction.

In the Middle East, the United States has bankrolled a country, Israel, that doubles as a giant land-based aircraft carrier that can militarily dominate the region. The United States has also sold tens of billions of dollars of weapons over the decades to Arab allies like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. It no longer imports large quantities of oil from the Middle East, but by guaranteeing a steady flow out of the region, the United States gains leverage over allies who rely on that oil.

China is the world's second most powerful country and is widely seen as a rising power that could displace the United States as the global hegemon in the 21st century. In the past century, it has only invaded one country—Vietnam in a brief 1979 border skirmish. Yet in recent decades China has still been able to expand its economy by leaps and bounds: It has

increased foreign trade and soft-power initiatives like the trillion-dollar Belt & Road Initiative, an infrastructure development project that spans across Asia, the Middle East and into Europe.

Is peaceful co-existence between the United States and China possible? We may never find out. For the past decade, the United States has increasingly surrounded China with military bases in neighboring countries. The bipartisan consensus in Washington is that we should settle in for a prolonged Cold War II—with the military spending on China to match.

U.S. global supremacy helps its banks and corporations extract more profits from the rest of the world, especially the Global South. The greatest benefits are reaped by the 1% in the form of higher executive compensation, quarterly stock dividends and stock buybacks for large investors. Ordinary Americans with pension plans, 401K retirement plans, mutual fund investments, etc., also receive a trickle-down benefit from higher corporate profits. Ditto for American workers whose jobs are fueled by American exports, especially if they have a union to help them win a larger share of the pie.

The cost of living in a warfare state hellbent on perpetual global domination comes with high costs, though. Above all, there is the human toll on those in the direct path of our violence as well as on the soldiers we send off to do our dirty work, who come home haunted by what they saw



Pro-Palestine, anti-genocide protesters block Ametek Rotron entrance in Woodstock.

and did. There is also the enormous opportunity cost of all the wealth that is diverted into military spending. It could be spent on meeting human needs. Or on rebates to working-class taxpayers who have been buffeted by inflation in recent years and could use some extra cash in their pockets.

With our leaders focused on maintaining global dominance, they neglect what should be priorities—like our crumbling infrastructure and the need for transformative action on climate change. The idea, for example, that the United States and China should team up in leading the world in reversing climate change, the greatest danger of the 21st century, is treated as an afterthought.

Speaking at Harvard in 1990 at the end of the Cold War, President George Bush Sr.'s Budget Director Richard Darmon

dismissed environmentalism, stating, "America did not fight and win the wars of the 20th century to make the world safe for green vegetables."

The view from the top hasn't changed much since then. Basically, we're on our own.

Any progress will require mobilizing public opinion in a way that compels the militarists who run this country to alter their priorities. A big city like New York, with 12 congressional districts, a liberal voting base and a highly diversified economy that is less dependent on military spending than most of the country could help lead the way.

John Tarleton is the editor of The Independent and cohost of The INdependent News Hour on WBAI-FM. For more information, see independent.org.

We Are Not the Only Species That Turns Friends into Enemies

Both species have a dark side, but the human version is far more powerful and destructive.

By Jane Goodall

If you are younger than 80, you likely have not seen war on your home soil. The rare period of relative peace and prosperity enjoyed by recent generations is similar to the time of accord that existed among the chimpanzee communities of the Gombe Stream Research Center in Tanzania when I arrived to begin my study in 1960. I saw the chimpanzees in “our” community using and making tools and greeting one another with kisses and embraces. I saw close bonds among family members, enduring friendships, infants learning through observation, and examples of true altruism. I came to believe that the chimpanzees, with whom we humans share 98.6% of our DNA, were so like us, but rather nicer.

My awakening to the chimps’ dark side began in 1970, when one of our researchers observed a brutal attack by a group of our males on a female of a neighboring chimpanzee community. They hit and stomped on her and even seized and killed her infant. The violence was instigated by the alpha Humphrey, whom I and other researchers referred to as something of a psychopath because he had been abusive to females in his own community.

In 1974, our chimp community divided in two, splitting territory that once was shared. This marked the beginning of a series of savage attacks by males of the northern, larger group, led by Humphrey, on males and adult females in the south. From 1974 to 1977, we witnessed the northern males commit what among humans would be called atrocities, includ-

ing cupping and drinking the blood pouring from the nose of one victim, ripping strips of flesh from another and attempted dismembering. Particularly distressing was seeing one of the males, Rodolf, stand upright to hurl a four-pound rock at young Godi’s prostrate body, and Figan charge and hit, again and again, the mortally wounded, quivering Goliath, who had been his childhood hero.

Virtually all mammals have primal, aggressive drives—mostly linked to survival. However, virtually everywhere they have been observed, the chimps—our closest animal cousins, with brains that are smaller but structurally identical to ours, and who are capable of reasoned thought, abstrac-

Living among us today are human versions of Humphrey, alphas who would unravel this progress, to rule us and send us into conflict to feed their lust for power and wealth.

tion and generalization—also commit deliberate atrocities and exhibit cruelty.

Our species observably shares this dark side. But because of the explosive development of human intellect, ours can be far worse than the chimpanzees’. We have



Jane Goodall with chimpanzee Freud at Gombe National Park in Tanzania. Photo: Michael Neugebauer/Jane Goodall Institute

devised and deployed weapons that can inflict massive-scale death and extinguish human civilization.

For the survival of our species, the better aspects of our intellect have also developed sophisticated methods of controlling our aggressive behavior and of resolving territorial and other conflicts through debate and dialogue—at the ballot box, in the halls of a congress or parliament, or around a negotiating table. Our differences have many times been resolved through cooperation, and our violent conduct constrained by the guardrails put in place with the rule of law. It has not worked in every case. But where democracy has flourished, war has receded.

Living among us today are human versions of Humphrey, alphas who would unravel this progress, to rule us and send us into conflict to feed their lust for power and wealth. As the Gombe chimps formed political coalitions to support an alpha male, wealthy and powerful humans support such leaders in hopes of benefiting materially under a violent and even cruel leader.

I was recently given Mary Wald’s new book, *Sowing Hate and Chaos: How Pro-*

paganda Is Used to Destroy Democracy. In the foreword, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and President of Timor-Leste José Ramos-Horta reiterates that an end to civil discourse and dialogue sets the stage for civil conflict, and calls Wald’s book “an invaluable exposé of psychological techniques that have been used to manipulate populations into just that—an end to the argument, an end to democracy, and a violent end to rights and freedoms.” According to French neuropsychiatrist Roger Mucchielli and other psychologists mentioned in the book, purposely aggravating the primitive drives among humans, or “lighting the fires of these ‘exploitable feelings,’ can create emotional reactions deep enough to cause the person to act in ways he or she would not otherwise act. Knowing how to do this allows someone to direct another’s behavior. And it can be done without the person even knowing it is being done.” Among the techniques they describe is painting false realities around groups and populations to purposely stimulate fear of imminent destruction of one’s family and community by “others,” stimulating the same instinctual aggression that drove horrific violence in the Gombe chimps.

Sowing Hate and Chaos cites four instances of these manipulative techniques being used to incite wars and genocides of the past century, by leaders who can only be described as psychopathic and who used the resulting chaos to rise to power. The chimps’ aggression brought death and suffering to only a few individuals; the pernicious use of mass manipulation of these primal human drives has led to the deaths of millions of people.

I believe that, like our chimpanzee cousins, most people are decent and peace-loving. If we hope to ensure for following generations the peaceful existence many of us have enjoyed, we need leaders and active citizens in all levels of our societies who will stimulate the compassionate and cooperative instincts we share with other primates, who encourage us to find the best in ourselves and work together to tackle the formidable problems we face.

Jane Goodall has spent nearly 65 years studying the social and family interactions of wild chimpanzees. She is the founder of the Jane Goodall Institute and a U.N. messenger of peace.

Only Once Did He Talk About Dachau

By Fred Nagel

On April 29, 1945, my uncle, Captain Frederick Gratwick Jr., was in the 72nd Gun Battalion attached to the U.S. Army 45th and 42nd Infantry and the 20th Armored Division when they liberated Dachau at the end of WWII. After four years of combat in North Africa, Italy, France and Germany, he had been wounded but worse than that, he had lost much of his emotional response to anything, a classic case of PTSD. He never even told his family he had been wounded. Only once did he talk about the Dachau survivors and how hard it was to keep them alive. They were nothing but skin and bones.

My uncle was proud of what he did there. His army had done the right thing, and brought an end to the Third Reich and its nightmare of exterminations. At least he had that to comfort himself for all those years in a foxhole and for being wounded in action. He was on the right side of history.

How different our world is from his. Now the United States is arming and funding an actual genocide in Gaza. Hordes of Palestinian children roam their cratered world, just looking for something to eat. They could be from Dachau, emaciated skeletons of their former selves. By the tens of thousands these Palestinian children bear witness to how our nation has gone from savior of the innocent to executioner.

My uncle wouldn’t have believed it possible, that his beloved



Emaciated survivors soon after liberation. Dachau, Germany, after April 29, 1945.

country could have turned into a facilitator of apartheid and genocide. He wouldn’t have understood how the Israel lobby was allowed to spend \$36 million on the last election, much more than the “contributions” of even the U.S. weapons makers (OpenSecrets.org). He would find himself adrift in a world where money can buy one’s soul, where “never again” is a quaint reminder of a forgotten time.

What's in a Name?

By Mike Ferner

After the fourth graders concluded singing the songs of the Army, Navy, Marines and Air Force, they were hailed as “our future heroes.” Fifty-caliber machine guns and other weapons were displayed. An invocation was offered for those missing and captured. A bagpiper skirled a haunting benediction of “Amazing Grace,” and the school kids closed it out with “Thank You, Soldier.”

In between there were speeches by local dignitaries and military officers as 1,200 people chowed down on pancakes, eggs, bacon, sausage gravy and biscuits, fruit salad, coffee and juice. When the grade schoolers filed out, several saluted, some tried a 10-year-old version of marching in step and nearly all said, “Thank you for your service!”

So concluded the 20th annual Veterans Day Breakfast that filled the University of

Toledo basketball arena on November 11.

That holiday, called Armistice Day for many years, observes the day in 1918 when the guns of the Great War finally fell silent, ending a slaughter the likes of which the world had never seen. Over 8 million soldiers were killed. Some 13 million civilians died, mostly from starvation and disease.

The original congressional resolution establishing the holiday said it “shall be a day dedicated to the cause of world peace and to be hereafter celebrated and known as Armistice Day.” At the height of the Red Scare in the 1950s, Congress changed it to “Veteran’s Day” as part of a full-court press to militarize Americans in preparation for the Russian invasion we were told to fear.

And fear we did!

Air raid sirens told us when to hide under our desks. The lives and careers of scores of people subpoenaed for McCarthy

and Nixon’s un-American hearings were ruined, as were thousands more who were named or whispered to be Reds. Labor leaders purged their most passionate organizers, insuring union membership declined from 1955 onward and the South would remain largely unorganized for decades.

ners depicting local military veterans but never nurses or teachers.

• Military recruiting billboards and commercial messages exert a daily presence everywhere, as do military recruiters in high schools and job fairs.

• The Pentagon has annual multi-

The lives and careers of scores of people subpoenaed for McCarthy and Nixon’s un-American hearings were ruined, as were thousands more who were named or whispered to be Reds.

Nationalism and its cousins, militarism and xenophobia, have long been woven in our cultural fabric and they’re seeing another peak in popularity. Such corrosions of spirit don’t arrive fully formed in the minds of adults but are part of what we breathe every day from kindergarten on up.

Veterans For Peace members and Palestinian supporters outside the UT arena distributed hundreds of flyers that explained the true meaning of November 11 and called for a modern-day ceasefire in Palestine. We included copies of Wilfred Owens’ “Dulce et Decorum Est” poem which was extremely well received when we explained he was killed one week before the end of WWI.

Our effort stood out vividly because it was so very rare. “Maybe it got a few people thinking,” we hoped, knowing how difficult that is in a thoroughly militarized society.

If that sounds like a too-harsh indictment, consider these few examples, many of which you’ve no doubt personally witnessed in some version:

• A plethora of bridges, streets, post offices and schools are named for veterans or military celebrities across the nation

• From sea to shining sea light poles on Main Streets are festooned with ban-

million-dollar contracts with the National Football League to provide flyovers of fighter jets and honor “local heroes.”

• Every high school, college and professional sports game is preceded by “the rockets’ red glare” and “bombs bursting in air.”

• Memorial Day, July 4, Flag Day, Armed Forces Day, December 7, September 11 and other days dot the calendar reminding all of the importance of the military. In my book, the two worst annual perversions have to be the military color guard that leads the Labor Day parade when militarism is a plague on working people and the Marine in full dress uniform that makes sure even the Holiday Parade’s Santa Claus is fully exploited!

Why such an omnipresent, interminable, expensive deluge of propaganda?

Because otherwise successive generations might not learn the hard way that War Is A Racket in which the few profit and the many pay ... and to make sure fourth graders become our “future heroes.”

Mike Ferner is an author, Viet Nam-era Navy corpsman, a former member of Toledo City Council and past director of Veterans For Peace. He is senior editor of Peace & Planet News.



Armistice Day Allied soldiers, sailors and Red Cross workers celebrating the end of World War I, November 11, 1918.

Liberal Friend

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crime rhetoric, her backing away from LGBTQ+ issues. You brushed all this aside. The goal was to win those independent, probably more conservative, voters in the coveted swing states. Yet it was a tall sacrifice to make: She hoped to win by boosting anti-immigrant sentiment and defending the massacre of tens of thousands of innocent Palestinians.

The fact is, by pushing for Trump’s defeat no matter what; by lifting up a candidate who only offered more imperialism, suffering, and oppression; by investing your energies into Harris, you only helped cement, once again, a two-party game that works wonders for billionaires. And once again, we lost an opportunity to reject both parties of capital, and put forward working-class politics of solidarity and anti-imperialism.

My comrades and I are convinced that the only way out of this political quagmire is to take up the fight for class independence now. This means, first and foremost, refusing to lend any support to capitalist parties, no matter what they

promise, and no matter who they’re running against. It means working-class solidarity not only within the U.S. but with the oppressed all over the world.

It can’t be overstated: we can lend no support to a person or party actively supporting Israel’s genocide in Gaza. It also means fighting for democratic rights, the right to vote, reproductive rights, the right to live as any gender, and more. We fight side by side with everyone defending these rights, but we especially work to build working-class coalitions because those are the ones that hold the promise of social change for us—not bourgeois politicians and their ballots.

A lot of time, money, and emotions have been spent on a failing Trump-lite campaign to defeat the real Trump. More convulsive times are coming. It’s time to take the lesson and prepare our own organizational and political tools to fight for ourselves and for our working-class siblings around the world.

Juan Cruz Ferre is a writer and editor for Left Voice and La Izquierda Diario. He is a political activist and medical doctor from Argentina and is currently pursuing a PhD in sociology at the City University of New York.

Poem

By Venice Williams

You are awakening to the
same country you fell asleep to.
The very same country.

Pull yourself together.

And,
when you see me,
do not ask me
“What do we do now?
How do we get through the next four
years?”

Some of my Ancestors dealt with
at least 400 years of this
under worse conditions.

Continue to do the good work.
Continue to build bridges not walls.
Continue to lead with compassion.
Continue the demanding work
of liberation for all.
Continue to dismantle broken systems,
large and small.
Continue to set the best example
for the children.



Continue to be a vessel of nourishing
joy.

Continue right where you are.
Right where you live into your days.

Do so in the name of
The Creator who expects
nothing less from each of us.

And if you are not “continuing”
ALL of the above,
in community, partnership,
collaboration?
What is it you have been doing?
What is it you are waiting for?

*Venice Williams is a black midwife/
poet.*

'Haunted by Our Genocide'

... continued from page 1

My eyes focus deeper into the flames. The fire is consuming young Shaaban's body, still lying in the hospital bed. I can't avert my eyes. His left arm sticking up in the air. Something about the way his fingers and thumb are positioned holds my attention. I keep staring. I feel wrong for watching, but also compelled to do so. He can't flee. He can't be

everyday work/life balance in the U.S. doesn't provide a lot of space for conversation about such horrors. Once a week or so I connect with a friend who also feels powerless to stop it. It helps provide short-term relief for the internal turmoil, but impacts nothing.

At this point, I feel like I'm witnessing a version of America's birth—with the principal mission of slaughtering the Indig-

aire and those they have erased.

I keep asking myself: What the hell am I supposed to do with all of this? It seems like every avenue for peace has been aggressively closed off.

Most of the state and federal representatives are providing direct political cover and the funding for this apocalypse barreling toward the Palestinian people. This same government, in col-

penetrate the psychotic level of the U.S. leadership's complicity, Democrat and Republican alike. Every international legal body we're signatory to—UNSC, ICJ, ICC, etc.—is calling it genocide while demanding a ceasefire and adherence to international law and human rights, with South Africa being the courageous nation to take the first steps. We have a moral and legal obligation to prevent genocide. The whole world is screaming, begging for it to stop. Yet it continues unabated, and the situation on the ground is getting even worse for Palestinians.

If the United States can ignore the world, international law and human rights, and the international bodies that govern it, how can my voice, or anyone else's, get through to stop the genocide?

This is very discouraging because I know what history says about the average citizen in societies where genocide took place. The question is always asked "How could they have let this happen? How could they sit back and do nothing?" I know they are judged very harshly for their inaction, as they should be. So knowing I live in a representative democracy, these questions will be asked by posterity. It doesn't matter the nuance of how our system actually works. And when it comes to foreign policy, it more literally functions as an imperialist oligarchy. But how am I going to explain it away to my kids and grandkids? I can't, nor should I be allowed to.

Even though no policymaker is asking for my opinion, I naturally feel responsible for providing the State of Israel with weapons, ammunition, military

workers, aid workers, educators, women and children, through starvation and the prevention of medical treatment, along with the destruction of Gaza's entire infrastructure, including homes, hospitals, schools, markets, places of worship, agriculture, and water treatment plants. In effect, erasing Palestinians from their land.

And to put a face to all of it, when I think of the gruesome, horrific death of young Shaaban Al-Dalou, to one degree or another, I share responsibility. I did nothing to prevent his death. My silence and inaction enabled it.

I honestly don't know what to do since every lever available to stop the genocide seems like it is being pulled, but nothing is working.

There was a time when I wasn't silent in a crisis—when I felt compelled to act, to be helpful and useful to society in order to protect innocent people. It began after the attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C., on Sept. 11, 2001. The country needed citizens to defend it from violence. So I enlisted in the army with my older brother, Pat Tillman.

Unfortunately, it didn't turn out well. Our oath to this nation was not exactly reciprocated. A few months after arriving at our unit at 2/75th Ranger Battalion, we were deployed to Iraq to participate in an overt war of aggression. Then we were sent to support a rudderless, mission-less war and occupation in Afghanistan.

On that deployment in April of 2004, Pat died in a friendly fire incident; and our family spent years fighting with our government and military over lies and deception that surrounded his death. In the end, we were doing the opposite of making America and the world



Pro-Palestinian demonstrators outside Columbia University April 18, 2024. Photo: Luke Tress

saved. Death, in all of its ravenous horror, is inescapable for him.

I navigate to an interview with Shaaban's father. With bandages and ointment protecting the major burns covering his body, he speaks about how he saved his youngest siblings but couldn't save his oldest son, "Shaaban was engulfed in flames. I stood there, helpless, completely surrendered. I told him, 'Forgive me, my son. I couldn't help you.'"

The images of Shaaban's death trigger memories of Aaron Bushnell, the U.S. airman who refused to participate in a genocide and self-immolated in the ultimate act of resistance and protest. "This is what our ruling class has decided will be normal," Aaron said before he died. Aaron's level of moral courage transcends anything I could ever relate to.

Reaching my emotional tipping point with stories of Shaaban's death, I put my phone down to charge. With shock and silent rage, I walk into the kitchen of my safe, air-conditioned home and start making coffee to prepare for another day.

This has been my general routine for a year now. Tomorrow, a new set of victims will appear on my phone, and the day after, and the day after that. I see no end in sight, not until they're all gone.

Most days I don't talk to anyone about our genocide. I've learned to keep it bottled up. The

enous population for their land. The same delusional, self-righteous, racist superiority complex of the colonizer repeating itself. I'm witnessing yet another unholy collaboration between the new state and its settlers as they pillage at will. Only this time, the indiscriminate killing of babies, children, men, women, and the elderly through bombing and starvation is being live-streamed on social media. Instead of being dehumanized as "savages" unworthy of breathing, they are now called "human animals."

I think about all the U.S. history books I've read over the years, and know that I can pull any one of them off my shelf, like *Unworthy Republic* by Claudio Saunt or *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, turn to a random page, and replace the word Sioux or Navajo with Palestinian. It will read with nearly the same level of continuity. The past is repeating itself, and it is intentional. This century-long Zionist experiment to create a Jewish Supremacy State on stolen land and by co-opting the Jewish faith is becoming a reality, all at the incalculable expense of the Palestinian people.

In some not too distant future I can already see a day set aside that whitewashes all of these crimes; a new Thanksgiving in Israel that celebrates the relationship between the genocid-

lusion with university administrators across the country, is concocting ways to criminalize dissent. Protesters, American citizens to be clear, are being labeled "antisemitic" for criticizing another country's policy of directly committing a genocide.

The Jewish community itself is even being ignored. Rabbis all over the globe are protesting. Major organizations like Jewish Voice for Peace are advocating strongly to end the violence, stop the shipment of arms, and

*I feel like I'm witnessing a version of America's birth—
with the principle mission of slaughtering the Indigenous
population for their land. The same delusional, self-righteous,
racist superiority complex of the colonizer repeating itself.*

clearly communicate "not in our name." They know this is not an inevitable situation based on biblical "Revelation" or part of "God's plan." They know Zionism is not Judaism. They know it's genocide.

The news outlets and courageous journalists around the globe are doing their part by covering the genocide day and night. International humanitarian organizations are also documenting the devastation to put pressure on the United States. Still, they can't make it stop.

Not even international law can

personnel, billions of U.S. tax dollars, intelligence and logistics to support this genocide, and for the political cover being provided at home and abroad.

Worse yet, I share responsibility for the inevitable results of that support, which includes the death of tens of thousands—deaths made up mostly of children, women, and the elderly—by missiles, bombs, drones, machine guns, incineration, and sniper fire. And those numbers climb every day with the systematic targeting of journalists, healthcare

a safer place. We were making it more dangerous and eroding our moral fabric at home. Pat lost his life for this service.

In a time like this, having a voice like Pat's in the conversation would be helpful. I don't ever speak for him, but our mom wrote a lovely story that is directly related to Palestinian freedom and those fighting for it. Pat cut out a news article of a young peace activist from Olympia, Washington, named Rachel Corrie and placed it on his mantle.

Rachel was part of the pro-



Shaaban Al-Dalou.

Palestinian International Solidarity Movement. While in Rafah, she was crushed to death by an Israeli armored bulldozer while trying to prevent a Palestinian family's home from being razed. When my mom asked Pat about the article, he said, "That's my hero." Rachel's moral and physical courage to fly halfway around the world to stand firm in the face of imminent danger to protect the vulnerable and oppressed is next level. Unfortunately, those are not the stories that fit neatly into America's narrative.

While serving, I didn't think our foreign policy could get much worse or more obscene than the Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), "Mushroom Clouds in New York City," or "Greeted as liberators" stunts—lies that drove

the Iraq war. But by the end of my enlistment, I realized a few things. The first is how casually this country uses the goodwill, courage, sacrifice, and lives of American servicemembers for belligerent U.S. interests. I still carry resentment and disgust toward our leaders' "Forever Wars," and my stomach drops when well-intentioned people say, "Thank you for your service."

I think for today's servicemembers, it's even worse. They are being ordered to support an overt genocide in Gaza that is expanding into the West Bank, Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, and Iran—the areas and countries fighting to protect the Palestinians from genocide. I cringe thinking about how current servicemembers will feel when they are thanked

for their service to this genocide. As if it doesn't matter "what" their service is being used for. What impact it has. Or even if it is legal or moral.

But the most important lesson I learned is that America has been in an endless cycle of violence abroad for pretty much ever, and it's because we function based on U.S. interests, not the rule of law or freedom or democracy or some other guiding moral principle. That's just how it's sold.

This genocide is no exception. As then-Sen. Joe Biden said on the Senate floor in 1986, "Were there not an Israel, the United States of America would have to invent an Israel to protect her interests in the region." As long as we can use the State of Israel, a strategic partner, as a military

base to store endless piles of weapons and ammunition, gather intelligence, influence the region, and plunder the Middle East, we justify our complicity in genocide to serve "U.S. interests."

And to be clear, genocide is not unique or out of character for the United States. One need look no further than a *60 Minutes* interview with former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright about the sanctions against Iraq following the first Gulf War:

"We have heard that half a million [Iraqi] children have died. I mean, that is more children than died in Hiroshima," Leslie Stahl said. "And, you know, is the price worth it?"

Albright responded: "I think that is a very hard choice, but the price, we think, the price is worth it."

Again, it's just a continuation of our existing foreign policies, by both political parties.

There was still a perception that the leading presidential candidates this November would change the course of the nation's foreign policy. One candidate was a kind of chimera, a monster cobbled together by every awful, selfish, repugnant, and virtueless human trait that can be conjured up in one's nightmarish imagination, who somehow, through a miracle in our justice system, isn't shackled to the floor of a maximum security prison cell awaiting trial for treason.

The other candidate seemed to be reasonable, and qualified. And from what I could see was

thoughtful and acted like a normal person. Yet somehow this candidate had a moral blind spot you could drive a genocide through.

And until American leadership stops placing "U.S. interest" over the rule of law and wellbeing of humanity, the cycle of violence abroad will continue and more will follow. As for America at home, our domestic policy and its politics will slowly mirror our illegal, lawless, morally bankrupt, selfish, hateful, racist, fear-driven, anti-democratic, and exploitative foreign policy. It seems pretty clear this culture has already taken root.

I'm honestly not sure what to do to be helpful for the Palestinians at this point. I'm rather disappointed and ashamed of my year-long silence and lack of initiative, and I'm simply at a loss. For now, it looks like I'll continue to have no impact on the genocide being carried out in Palestine. I'll wake up every morning to a genocide being live-streamed to my phone; drink my coffee, go to work, try to be a good parent, and be haunted throughout the day by Shaaban's death, at least until the next set of innocent victims show up on my phone.

Originally published by Scheerpost.

Kevin Tillman enlisted in the Army with his brother Pat after the September 11 attacks. He was a member of 2/75th Ranger Battalion that fought in Iraq and Afghanistan. Since getting out of the military, he writes on occasion. He currently lives with his family in Arizona.

Veterans For Peace Supports Israeli Soldiers Who Refuse to Fight in Gaza

Calls for GIs to resist illegal wars and war crimes

Veterans For Peace applauds the Israeli military reservists who are calling for a ceasefire and the release of hostages, and who say they will not participate in genocide. You are doing the right thing. Your courageous stance may be answered by official threats and even imprisonment. But you will never regret refusing to kill innocent Palestinian men, women and children.

Palestinian Lives Matter. Yet Palestinians are being systematically slaughtered before the eyes of the world. The ongoing U.S.-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza is unacceptable. It is a stain on human history. And it must be ended.

Veterans For Peace has consistently called for an end to the

genocide in Gaza, for a permanent ceasefire, and, most important, for an end to U.S. arms shipments to Israel. When U.S. bombs stop falling on Palestinian children, the genocide will have ended. Veterans For Peace has meticulously documented the U.S. laws that the Biden Administration is breaking when it sends weapons to Israel while it is bombing and starving innocent civilians. As the slaughter in Gaza has continued and escalated, we have sent Open Letters to the State Department, to President Biden, to Vice President Harris and to the Justice Department.

One thing is very clear—this is genocide, a deliberate sustained campaign to wipe out an entire nation of people. This genocide is now being intensified. And it is illegal a thousand times over.

As veterans who have partici-

pated in too many illegal and immoral wars, we also want to address our younger sisters and brothers, daughters and sons in the U.S. military. The U.S. has 40,000 troops deployed on ships and at bases throughout the Middle East. President Biden recently sent 100 U.S. troops to be stationed in Israel just as Israel is preparing to attack Iran and is bracing for Iran's promised response.

The U.S. is also backing Israel's invasion of Lebanon. The U.S. military itself has recently dropped bombs in Yemen, Syria and Iraq. Now there is active discussion about waging war on Iran!

Are U.S. troops being purposely deployed where they will be targets and casualties? Is this the way that the Biden Administration will back us into a war with Iran? Such a war is not in the interests of the peo-



Reservist Yuval Green served as a combat medic in Gaza for two months and is refusing to serve in Israel's army again.

ple of Iran, nor of Israel, nor of the United States. This is a bold war of colonialism and empire—fought for control of other people's land and resources.

Veterans For Peace has joined with several other organizations to promote the Appeal for Redress (v.2), an opportunity for active-duty GI's to safely present their concerns to their congress-

sional representatives. We refer GI's who are thinking about becoming conscientious objectors to the Center on Conscience and War. We can put you in touch with a GI rights lawyer if needed.

Remember, it is right to resist unjust wars and illegal orders. And when you do, you will have the support of Veterans For Peace.

'Zionism Is a Blight Onto Judaism and Indeed Onto Humanity'

Palestinian author gives powerful address at the Oxford Union



By Susan Abulhawa

Addressing the challenge of what to do about the indigenous inhabitants of the land, Chaim Weizman, a Russian Jew, said to the World Zionist Congress in 1921 that Palestinians were akin to “the rocks of Judea, obstacles that had to be cleared on a difficult path.”

David Gruen, a Polish Jew, who changed his name to David Ben Gurion to sound relevant to the region, said, “We must expel Arabs and take their places.”

There are thousands of such conversations among the early Zionists who plotted and implemented the violent colonization of Palestine and the annihilation of her native people.

But they were only partially successful, murdering or ethnically cleansing 80% of Palestinians, which meant that 20% of us remained, an enduring obstacle to their colonial fantasies, which became the subject of their obsessions in the decades that followed, especially after conquering what remained of Palestine in 1967. Zionists lamented our presence and they debated publicly in all circles—political, academic, social, cultural circles—regarding what to do with us; what to do about the Palestinian birthrate, about our babies, which they dub a demographic threat.

Benny Morris, who was originally meant to be here, once expressed regret that Ben Gurion “did not finish the job” of getting rid of us all, which would have obviated what they refer to as the “Arab problem.”

Benjamin Netanyahu, a Polish Jew whose real name is Benjamin Mileikowsky, once bemoaned a missed opportunity during the 1989 Tiananmen Square uprising to expel large swaths of the Palestinian population “while world attention was focused on China.”

Some of their articulated solutions to the nuisance of our existence include a “break their bones” policy in the 80s and 90s, ordered by Yitzhak Rubitzov, Ukrainian Jew who changed his name to Yitzhak Rabin (for the same reasons).

That horrific policy that crippled generations of Palestinians did not succeed in making us leave. And frustrated by Palestinian resilience, a new discourse arose, especially after a massive natural gas field was discovered off the coast of Northern Gaza worth trillions of dollars.

This new discourse is echoed in the words of Colonel Efraim Eitan, who said in 2004, “we have to kill them all.”

Aaron Sofer, an Israeli so-called intellectual and political advisor, insisted in 2018 that “we have to kill and

kill and kill. All day, every day.”

When I was in Gaza, I saw a little boy no more than 9 years whose hands and part of his face had been blown off from a booby trapped can of food that soldiers had left behind for Gaza’s starving children. I later learned that they had also left poisoned food for people in Shujaiyya, and in the 1980s and 90s, Israeli soldiers had left booby-trapped toys in southern Lebanon that exploded when excited children picked them up.

The harm they do is diabolical, and yet, they expect you to believe they are the victims. Invoking Europe’s holocaust and screaming antisemitism, they expect you to suspend fundamental human reason to believe that the daily sniping of children with so-called “kill shots” and the bombing of entire neighborhoods that bury families alive and wipe out whole bloodlines is self-defense.

They want you to believe that a man who had not eaten a thing in over 72 hours, who kept fighting even when all he had was one functioning arm, that this man was motivated by some innate savagery and irrational hatred or jealousy of Jews, rather than the indomitable yearning to see his people free in their own homeland.

It’s clear to me that we’re not here to debate whether Israel is an apartheid or genocidal state. This debate is ultimately about the worth of Palestinian lives; about the worth of our schools, research centers, books, art, and dreams; about the worth of the homes we worked all our lives to build and which contain the memories of generations; about the worth of our humanity and our agency; the worth of bodies and ambitions.

Because if the roles were reversed—if Palestinians had spent the last eight decade stealing Jewish homes, expelling, oppressing, imprisoning, poisoning, torturing, raping and killing them; if Palestinians had killed an estimated 300,000 Jews in one year, targeted their journalists, their thinkers, their healthcare workers, their athletes, their artists, bombed every Israeli hospital, university, library, museum, cultural center, synagogue, and simultaneously set up an observation platform where people came to watch their slaughter as if a tourist attraction; if Palestinians had corralled them by the hundreds of thousands into flimsy tents, bombed them in so-called safe zones, burned them alive, cut off their food, water, and medicine;

if Palestinians made Jewish children wander barefoot with empty pots; made them gather the flesh of their parents into plastic bags; made them bury their siblings,

cousins and friends; made them sneak out from their tents in the middle of the night to sleep on their parents’ graves; made them pray for death just to join their families and not be alone in this terrible world anymore, and terrorized them so utterly that their children lose their hair, lose their memory, lose their minds, and made those as young as 4 and 5 years old were die of heart attacks;

if we mercilessly forced their NICU babies to die, alone in hospital beds, crying until they could cry no more, died and decomposed in the same spot;

if Palestinians used wheat flour aid trucks to lure starving Jews, then opened fire on them when they gathered to collect a day’s bread; if Palestinians finally allowed a food delivery into a shelter with hungry Jews, then set fire to the entire shelter and aid truck before anyone could taste the food;

if a Palestinian sniper bragged about blowing out 42 Jewish kneecaps in one day as one Israeli soldier did in 2019; if a Palestinian admitted to CNN that he ran over hundreds of Jews with his tank, their squished flesh lingering in the tank treads;

if Palestinians were systematically raping Jewish doctors, patients, and other captives with hot metal rods, jagged and electrified sticks, and fire extinguishers, sometimes raping to death, as happened with Dr Adnan alBursh and others;

if Jewish women were forced to give birth in filth, get C-sections or leg amputations without anesthesia; if we destroyed their children then decorated our tanks with their toys; if we killed or displaced their women then posed with their lingerie...

if the world were watching the livestreamed systematic annihilation of Jews in real time, there would be no debating whether that constituted terrorism or genocide.

And yet two Palestinians—myself and Mohammad el-Kurd—thhowed up here to do just that, enduring the indignity of debating those who think our only life choices should be to leave our homeland, submit to their supremacy, or die politely and quietly.

But you would be wrong to think that I came to convince you of anything. The House resolution, though well-meaning and appreciated, is of little consequence in the midst of this holocaust of our time.

I came in the spirit of Malcolm X and Jimmy Baldwin, both of whom stood here and in Cambridge before I was born, facing finely dressed well-spoken monsters who harbored the same supremacist ideologies as Zionism—these notions of entitlement and privilege, of being divinely favored, blessed, or chosen.

I’m here for the sake of history. To speak to generations not yet born and for the chronicles of this extraordinary time where the carpet bombing of defenseless indigenous societies is legitimized.

I’m here for my grandmothers, both of whom died as penniless refugees while foreign Jews lived in their stolen homes.

And I also came to speak directly to Zionists here and everywhere.

We let you into our homes when your own countries tried to murder you and everyone else turned you away. We fed and clothed you, gave you shelter, and we shared the bounty of our land with you, and when the time was ripe, you kicked us out of our own homes and homeland, then you killed and robbed and burned and looted our lives.

You carved out our hearts because it is clear you do not know how to live in the world without dominating others.

You have crossed all lines and nurtured the most vile of human impulses, but the world is finally glimpsing the terror we have endured at your hands for so long, and they are seeing the reality of who you are, who you’ve always been. They watch in utter astonishment the sadism, the glee, the joy, and pleasure with which you conduct, watch, and cheer the daily details of breaking our bodies, our minds, our future, our past.

But no matter what happens from here, no matter what

continued on page 19 ...

How Close Is the Israeli Army to Collapse?

Part of Veterans For Peace's Statement of Purpose is "to seek justice for veterans and victims of war." That means all the victims of all wars—humans and the rest of nature.

We are haunted by the Palestinians who are suffering and dying by the millions and will continue to do all we can to stop U.S. support for this genocide. On the Israeli side, the numbers do not begin to compare but nonetheless, tens of thousands of Israeli soldiers, their families and communities are and will be dying and suffering as well. That's why, with our partners in Combatants for Peace—an organization composed of former Israeli and Palestinian fighters—VFP demands a ceasefire and arms embargo. Our members know too well what war does to everyone and everything it touches. The only winners in this racket are the merchants of death.

PTSD and suicides are growing at an alarming rate in the Israeli military. This article from Electronic Intifada describes those in grim detail, encapsulating the evil of war in the story of one Israeli soldier, Eliran Mizrahi, a bulldozer operator. According to a fellow soldier, he and Mizrahi ran their heavy equipment over the live and dead bodies of Palestinians and posted videos of their war crimes. When he was called up for another deployment in Gaza, Mizrahi killed himself.

Chilling and gruesome as these reports are, we need to endure these images and sounds to fully grasp what our tax dollars are buying and why we must learn and remember: War is not the answer.—M.F.

By Asa Winstanley

Is the Israeli army on the verge of collapsing? That's the question many families of soldiers recently returned from Gaza seem to be asking.

People Pieces

By Woody Powell

They do not fly very high,
no need, there is nothing to bring
them down.

They float, sighing,
so benign, not a menace until
they drop their burden,
not carelessly because it became
too heavy,
but with deadly deliberation upon
tents, hospitals, schools, homes,
homes, homes.

Black smoke leaps violently
sundering a serene sky,
rubble falls, hammer in the ground
in a punishing cascade
followed by a much softer rain
of pieces of people.

Woody Powell is a Korean War veteran and a lifetime member of Veterans For Peace.

A series of interviews with more than 20 combat soldiers and their families for an article published last month by Tel Aviv news site The Hottest Place suggests that the Israeli army is suffering from a potentially terminal crisis.

"This may be a quiet and hushed-up phenomenon," writes journalist Revital Hovel, "but [it is] one that is continuously increasing. Many soldiers are refusing to continue fighting in Gaza and are voting with their feet."

A year of armed resistance to the Israeli genocide in the Gaza Strip is taking its toll. Many Israeli soldiers are now refusing to fight.

Some are even dying by suicide rather than return to the field.

"The platoons are empty," said "Rona," the mother of one soldier. "Anyone who

"All the officers went to the second floor of a building, and they were there together, close to one another, looking out the window," said Uri.

"A missile entered the building from another window and hit them. The whole company had to evacuate them ... We were finished; we all wanted to go on home leave, and they decided to leave us in there [in Gaza] anyhow."

isn't dead and wasn't wounded was emotionally damaged. Very few remained who came back to fight."

Like everyone else quoted by The Hottest Place, "Rona" used a pseudonym for fear of retaliation from the Israeli army.

Despite the unprecedented horrors the Israeli occupation army has been inflicting in Gaza and Lebanon for the last year, many of the surviving soldiers have been mentally scarred by their experiences.

Burnout

"There is a constant hidden dropping out from fighting," said "Idit," a second mother. "This is not a conscientious objection, but rather dropping out due to burnout."

According to "Rona," the army's morale was already catastrophically low even before Israel carried out a series of assassinations in Lebanon ahead of the attempted ground invasion that began on October 1.

Her son told her, "I don't know what army they're planning to go into Lebanon with, but there is no army. I'm not going back to the battalion."

This might help explain why, one month on, the Israeli military has failed to advance any significant distance into South Lebanon, and almost 100 soldiers have been killed in the attempt.

According to The Electronic Intifada's



Israeli military bulldozer driver Eliran Mizrahi and bomber pilot Asaf Dagan both died by suicide in October. (Via X/Haaretz)

contributing editor and military analyst Jon Elmer, Israel has admitted to the killing of 70 of its soldiers on the Lebanese front alone since the invasion began.

Hizballah, the Lebanese resistance group stopping the Israelis, says that it has killed 90.

gether, close to one another, looking out the window," said Uri. "A missile entered the building from another window and hit them. The whole company had to evacuate them ... We were finished; we all wanted to go on home leave, and they decided to leave us in there [in Gaza] anyhow."

This "turning point" experience eventually led him to refuse to return to the fighting in July. "I started crying on a lawn and said that I couldn't take it anymore. I was emotionally done. I told my commander that I couldn't take it anymore."

Death by Suicide

The article in the Tel Aviv publication is among a rash of similar pieces published in Israeli and Western media in recent weeks. The goal is often to elicit sympathy for the genocidal Israeli soldiers who are currently carrying out a holocaust in Gaza.

But some of these articles give away perhaps more than their authors intend.

In possibly the most notorious such article, CNN told the story of Eliran Mizrahi, an Israeli soldier who drove a military bulldozer. Mizrahi died by suicide in June this year, reportedly only two days after he was called up to return to Gaza.

According to Guy Zaken, Mizrahi's co-driver who spoke to CNN, he and his fellow soldiers would "run over terrorists, dead and alive, in the hundreds."

He graphically explained how, "everything squirts out" from under the bulldozer.

Israelis commonly use the word "terrorist" to describe any Palestinian.

Mizrahi and Zaken proudly boasted on an Israeli TV channel earlier this year that they had destroyed the houses of 5,000 "terrorists"—before claiming that effectively all houses in Gaza belong to "terrorists."

Videos and other posts soon emerged online of Mizrahi posting evidence of his crimes on his own social media.

Originally published by *The Electronic Intifada*.

Asa Winstanley has been writing about Palestine and the Israel lobby since 2005. He spent two years living under Israeli occupation in the West Bank as an activist and writer. He has been an associate editor and reporter with the award-winning website *The Electronic Intifada* for more than a decade.

Iraqi Abu Ghraib Torture Victims Win \$42 Million

First successful suit against a U.S. military contractor for managing a torture program

By John Kiriakou

Three Iraqi survivors of U.S. torture won a major victory in early November when a jury in the federal district court for the Eastern District of Virginia awarded each of them \$3 million in compensatory damages and \$11 million in punitive damages to be paid by American defense contractor CACI, which was responsible for the cruel and inhumane treatment that they endured in Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison more than two decades ago.

The judgment is notable for several reasons. First, it is the first time that a U.S. defense contractor has ever been successfully sued for managing a torture program. Second, the jury verdict came in the notorious Eastern District of Virginia, the home district of the CIA, the Pentagon, and countless defense contractors, including CACI. And third, this is the first finding in any federal court that there was a torture program during the so-called War on Terror, that people were harmed through torture, and that torture was illegal. Oddly, the story gained almost no traction in the mainstream media.

The facts of the case were relatively straightforward. The suit alleged that employees of CACI detained and tortured Salah al-Ejaili, a reporter for Al Jazeera; Suhail al-Shimari, a middle school principal; and Asad al-Zuba'i, a fruit vendor. They were tortured by CACI employees over a period of several weeks using techniques including electric shock, stress positions, starvation, attack dogs, and humiliation through forced nudity. These techniques were consistent with those used by the CIA on so-called "high-value prisoners" at secret "black sites" around the world. The Abu Ghraib torturers apparently learned of the techniques from CIA officers serving at the prison at the same time.

One of the men was shot in the head with a taser and the others suffered broken bones. The plaintiffs also testified that they were sexually assaulted by a female CACI contractor and forced to watch the rape of a female Iraqi



in my case, when I was charged with five felonies after blowing the whistle on the CIA's torture program. During my sentencing, in which I had agreed to a Justice Department offer of 30 months in a federal prison, Brinkema said, "Mr. Kiriakou, this sentence is too short. If I could, I would give you 10 years. But my hands are tied." (My attorneys told me later that, if she had wanted to, Brinkema could indeed have rejected the plea deal and could have sentenced me to 10 years. In the end, she was probably posing for the literally dozens of national security journalists who were in the courtroom that day.)

Just two-and-a-half years later, she sentenced CIA whistleblower Jeffrey Sterling to three-and-a-half years in prison for "espionage," despite the fact that there was literally no documentary evidence that Sterling had ever

federal defense contractors. An impartial trial involving a national security issue in the Eastern District is rare.

Yet despite these roadblocks, the plaintiffs were successful.

Another issue here is that there was virtually no media coverage of this landmark decision. Sure, there were short articles in the Associated Press and the New York Times, but the real coverage came from the alternative media, like Kevin Gosztola's *The Dissenter* and *The Intercept*. And there was literally no commentary in the editorial pages of any mainstream outlet. Nothing.

As an aside, I have been teaching a graduate school course at Spain's University of Salamanca for the past year called *The History of Terrorism*. An important part of this course is the U.S. response to terrorism in the so-called War on Terror, including the torture program. When I raised the issue of torture in the most recent running of the class, in October, I was met with blank stares. I asked the students if they had not heard of the CIA's torture program. One of the students finally said, "Professor, you realize that we were all born after 9/11, right?" That comment was a non-sequitur. Most of us were born after World War II and we still learned about the Holocaust.

The fact that young people don't know about torture, the fact that the mainstream media doesn't cover developments related to torture, the fact that we still have people who have never been charged with a crime dying slow deaths at Guantanamo are all political, societal, cultural, and media failures. It's a very good thing that the CACI plaintiffs won their case. But what is the lasting positive effect on our society if nobody knows about it? It's up to the rest of us to ensure that we not remain silent.

They were tortured by CACI employees over a period of several weeks using techniques including electric shock, stress positions, starvation, attack dogs, and humiliation through forced nudity.

prisoner. The men alleged that they continue to suffer the mental effects of the torture nearly 20 years after the fact.

CACI's defense was quite simple. The company's attorneys said the employees had "minimal interaction with the three plaintiffs in the case and that any liability for their mistreatment belonged to the government, not CACI, because the civilian interrogators were acting under the command and control of the military." In other words, the defense was "we were just following orders." We heard that same excuse at Nuremberg.

The lawsuit had a long road. The span of 16 years is long even for a federal case. The delay in trial was due primarily to CACI's contention that, as a government contractor whose employees were acting on behalf of the government, it should have been indemnified against civil lawsuits. In the end, the District Court said that the company did not enjoy such protections.

Originally filed in 2008 on the plaintiffs' behalf by the Center for Constitutional Rights, the case finally made it to trial in the summer of 2024. But in August, Judge Leonie Brinkema declared a mistrial when the jury failed to reach a verdict. In many cases, the plaintiffs would have walked away. The cost of a trial already is prohibitive. The cost of two is astronomical. But the plaintiffs were determined to move forward and the suit was refiled.

Brinkema has been supportive of the intelligence community since being named to the federal bench by President Ronald Reagan in 1986. Brinkema was the judge

committed espionage. Sterling had been accused of providing information on a failed CIA operation against Iran's nuclear program to New York Times journalist James Risen. The only evidence was that Sterling and Risen had spoken by phone more than 50 times over the previous year. But Sterling had filed a racial discrimination suit against the CIA, a story that Risen had been

These techniques were consistent with those used by the CIA on so-called "high-value prisoners" at secret "black sites" around the world.

covering. Sterling argued that that suit was the subject of their calls. Sterling later said in his book, *The Unwanted Spy*, that when former National Security Advisor and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, whom he had never met, testified in court that revelation of the Iran operation was revealed, he was "doomed," despite the fact that there was no evidence that the information had come from him.

The CACI verdict is notable also for the fact that the jury was made up of residents of the Eastern District of Virginia. Imagine seating a jury where the pool includes people who work for, or who have friends and relatives who work for, the CIA, the Defense Department, or dozens of

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Biden Declares “National Emergency” Because of Nicaragua “Threat”

By John Perry

In the dying days of his administration, President Biden must have needed a reminder by his officials on November 22. He had to decide whether Nicaragua still poses an “unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States”. Presumably he agreed that it does, because he renewed its status as a “national security threat” for a further year, repeating the designation that first began under the last Trump presidency.

As figures from the Latin America Security and Defense Network show, this “threat” comes from a state which spends less of its national income on defense than almost any other country in the hemisphere. It even spends slightly less than neighboring Costa Rica, which has no army. Its total national income (GDP) is the equivalent of a small U.S. city. Its seven million people have the second lowest income per capita in the region.

What “unusual and extraordinary threat” does Nicaragua pose to a country with 50 times its population and the world’s biggest military budget, whose southern border is in any case nearly 2,000 miles away? According to the White House press release, the first threat is the Nicaraguan government’s “violent response” to a coup attempt that took place over six years ago and was, it omits to mention, instigated by the U.S. This attempted justification turns the story of what happened on its head. The uprising that shook Nicaragua lasted roughly three months, resulted officially in 251 deaths (including 22 police officers; others put the total deaths as higher) and over 2,000 injured. It allegedly “caused \$1 billion in economic damages,” and led to an economic collapse. (After years of continuous growth, GDP fell by 3.4% in 2018). What other government would not have responded to such a damaging attack on its country?

In Washington’s view, further “threats” arise because Nicaragua’s government is “undermining democracy”, using “indiscriminate violence” against its citizens and destabilizing its economy through “corruption”. Quite apart from the fact that these are gross distortions of reality in Nicaragua and are in any case blatantly hypocritical, nothing in the press release shows how—even if true—these conditions could present any threat to the U.S., let alone an “unusual and extraordinary” one.

Or could it be something else? Recently, in response to Nicaragua’s support for Palestinian liberation, the Israeli regime has made allegations that “radical Iranian forces and terror groups operate freely” in the country, again with no evidence, presumably hoping to encourage Washington to add Nicaragua to the list of “state sponsors of terrorism”. However, this is not mentioned in the White House press release.

Nevertheless, perhaps Nicaragua’s “threat” to the U.S. comes from its international relations? General Laura Richardson, until recently the head of the U.S. Southern Command, put the blame for Russia’s “malign activities” in the region on its links with Nicaragua, Cuba and Venezuela. Nicaragua’s growing relationship with China is also seen as a problematic, with Taiwan warning that China’s planned deep-water port for Bluefields in Nicaragua will be its “naval outpost” in Central America. However, Nicaragua is hardly alone in developing close links with major powers seen by Washington as key adversaries. Peru’s Chinese-built port is also viewed as a threat by General Richardson. Many other countries in the region, including Brazil, now have close ties with China and, to a lesser extent, Russia. In part, the drive behind these links is a desire to be less dependent on the

U.S. and insure against its economic sanctions.

Of course, if any country is showing threatening behavior here, it is the U.S. itself. Its sponsoring of the 2018 coup attempt involved the U.S. Embassy in Managua and funding from bodies like USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy, which (as they boasted at the time) trained 8,000 young Nicaraguans to take part in the coup. Washington has been trying to undermine Nicaragua’s Sandinista government since the moment it returned to power in 2007. It has repeatedly refused to acknowledge the outcomes of democratic elections, scores of Nicaraguan officials have been sanctioned, development loans via bodies like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund have been blocked for the last six years, Nicaragua’s government has been falsely accused of “preying on migrants”, and its people have been en-



couraged to migrate to the U.S.. The State Department advises tourists not to visit a country which, according to an international Gallup poll, is “the most peaceful place on earth”.

Nicaragua has suffered 17 years of continuous bullying by its near neighbor but this, of course, is only a short episode in a history of U.S. intervention that began in 1854 when U.S. warships were sent to threaten Nicaragua’s Caribbean coast. Later it included two decades of the country’s occupation by U.S. Marines, Washington’s support for the Somoza dictatorship for four more decades and then, under the Reagan administration, its sponsoring of the “Contra” war which cost 30,000 Nicaraguan lives in the 1980s. Reparations ordered by the World Court for the economic damage caused by that war were, of course, never paid.

So, not only is Washington the guilty party in terms of threatening behavior, but Biden’s declaration and his administration’s policies towards Nicaragua augment this by labelling Nicaragua as a pariah state, which holds “pantomime” elections and where its people flee “communism” and “political persecution”. This labelling is, of course, then repeated by corporate media.

In 2025, Nicaragua can expect new threats from Washington. Marco Rubio is penciled in as the Trump administration’s Secretary of State, acting as Trump’s “sharpshooter” against governments such as those in Ni-

caragua, Cuba and Venezuela. One target is likely to be the remittances sent by migrants in the U.S.. As in neighboring Central American countries, they account for a quarter of Nicaragua’s national income, and could soon fall both because Trump plans to tax them and because he promises to deport large tranches of those migrants, who will return, jobless, to their home countries.

Those searching for evidence of the “threat” which the country poses to U.S. interests might usefully look at developments in Nicaragua itself. For example, a recent report by the U.N.’s Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) showed that it is one of the countries in the region that invests most, proportionate to its population, in public health services. Health care is free in Nicaragua and it has by far the largest number of public hospitals in Central America, many of them recently built or modernized. ECLAC’s figures show that life expectancy in Nicaragua is one of the longest in Latin America, despite its income per capita being among the lowest. ECLAC showed that Nicaragua spends a high proportion of its national budget on social investment, and this is reflected not only in comprehensive health care, but in its advances in education, social housing, transport, electricity and drinking water coverage and its transition to renewable energy. The

Sandinista government’s current plan to reduce poverty shows that its initial efforts led to it falling from 48.3 per cent of Nicaraguans in 2005 to 24.9 per cent in 2016. Clearly those who planned the 2018 coup attempt saw the “threat” presented by improved public services, since their violence deliberately targeted town halls, health centers, universities, schools and facilities for pregnant women (casas maternas).

In 1985, at the height of the Contra war, the aid agency Oxfam published a book entitled *Nicaragua: The Threat of a Good Example?* At the time, Nicaragua’s achievements in raising literacy levels, improving food security and bringing public services to remote rural areas were legendary, but necessarily much limited by a U.S. trade embargo and the U.S.-funded attacks on health and education facilities and their workers. Perhaps in 2024, after a popularly elected government has had 17 years to develop public services and reduce poverty, with results obvious to all, Nicaragua really is the “good example” that Washington finds so threatening.

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Markings to alert aircraft to a neutral Ireland during WWII on Glengad Head, County Donegal

Role of the Irish People in the Wider World

By Edward Horgan

In this article I focus mainly on the role and importance of individual people, including Irish people, rather than on states, countries, governments, or international organisations, who are described by historian and political scientist Benedict Anderson as imagined communities. Individual members of humanity, on whose behalf these imagined communities should exist, should be the primary responsibility of all governmental organisations. All of humanity are experiencing a series of interconnected and potentially existential crises at present.

These crises include:

- The serious risk of nuclear war, due either to the conflicts in Ukraine and Israel/Palestine, and elsewhere.
- Existing conventional wars including those in Sudan, DR Congo, Somalia, Ethiopia, Yemen, Myanmar, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and elsewhere.
- The environmental crisis which may be reaching a tipping point beyond which remedial actions may not be possible.
- All these other crises are combining to cause global refugee and migration crises.

Our destruction of and interference with nature may well result in an increase in medical pandemics such as COVID.

All our communities imagined or otherwise, from the local to the global should be working tirelessly on behalf of all the over eight billion individual people who combined make up humanity. Individuals and small communities can no longer exist in splendid peaceful isolation. We have become interdependent and need to cooperate in all our best interests. Many governmental type organisations are controlled by various elite and powerful individuals and groups, who misuse their

power to promote their own personal or elite group short-term interests, at the expense of the wider interests of humanity. The interdependence that is necessary for human survival applies equally to all living creatures including humans, from the largest mammals to the tiniest organisms. The biodiversity of nature on our planet is vital for the survival and prosperity of all living creatures. There is an urgent need for the reform of constitutions at national levels, and the U.N. Charter, which should be the equivalent of a global constitution. We must cooperate together towards creating a one world community, in which there are no outsiders, or others.

Mutually assured destruction (MAD) is not a rational global security policy, it is madness and amounts to nuclear terrorism.

For historical and other reasons, Ireland and the Irish people provide a good example of the problems that need to be overcome, and the possible solutions. Like all other communities we have made serious mistakes but have also provided examples of cooperation and altruism at international level. A united Ireland is likely in the coming decades. It is the people who live on this island we must unite and not the mythical four green fields. The inequality that existed before independence has continued ever since, perpetrated by the interests of the elite at the expense of the majority, leading to enforced emigration. Many of our Irish diaspora experienced serious poverty. We must include the best interest of our Irish diaspora in our efforts to forge a just society for all who live in Ireland and for all humanity. The most positive aspect of Irish history since independence has been our foreign policy of active neutrality since we joined the United Nations, which includes promoting global justice and international peace. If a united Ireland is to happen, it

must be an actively neutral united Ireland promoting global justice and not a united Ireland within NATO, or commitments to European or other military alliances. The present Irish Government has announced plans to abandon the Triple Lock mechanism whereby a U.N. mandate is necessary for Irish military serving overseas. Replacing U.N. peacekeeping missions with European Union neo-colonial missions, or NATO bogus humanitarian missions means the abandonment of active Irish neutrality and Ireland joining resource wars of the West against the Rest.

At global level we must recognize and rectify the flaws and abuses of the nation state. Genuine accountability for such abuses must be established. The concept of the nation state arose from, or was “invented,” due to a series disastrous religious wars leading up the Treaty or Peace of Westphalia in 1648. It helped to establish the sovereignty of states but failed to protect the sovereignty and best interest of the peoples of those states. The Westphalia Treaty was intended to promote peace but abuses of the powers of those nation states led to further wars between nation states, including two disastrous world wars. European colonial exploitation was perpetrated under the guise of civilising the indigenous populations, in what frequently amounted to acts of genocide. In the 20th century national myths were used to justify the unjustifiable, including

the concept of American exceptionalism, German nazi super-race, French Franco-phone African exploitation, and the corruption of Marxist ideology in the Soviet Union under Stalin and in China under Mao Zedong. While such abuses cost multiple millions of lives, humanity did not have the capacity to destroy itself and Planet Earth until the invention and use of nuclear weapons.

The interdependence that is necessary for human survival applies equally to all living creatures including humans, from the largest mammals to the tiniest organisms. The biodiversity of nature on our planet is vital for the survival and prosperity of all living creatures.

In this 21st-century global peace cannot be achieved by making global war. Peace by peaceful means including active neutrality, must replace the full spectrum dominance being perpetrated by the West against the rest, using NATO as their protection racket enforcers. Any type of international polarisation in a world armed with up to 13,000 nuclear weapons must be avoided. In the interconnected vulnerable world that we now live in, war in any part of the world is a danger to us all. Mutually assured destruction (M.A.D) is not a rational global security policy, it is madness and amounts to nuclear terrorism.

Restorative justice and accountability must be essential elements of a new global jurisprudence system. Accountability and reparations should also be imposed for past and more recent abuses of power and for resource wars and wars of aggression. Such accountability for crimes against humanity and crimes against the environment is vital to prevent such abuses into the future, if humanity is to have a peaceful future based on justice and fairness.

We, the people, must take control of all our communities, from the local to the global.

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Dr. Edward Horgan, a former Army commandant, served with U.N. peacekeeping missions in Cyprus and the Middle East in the 1970s. He has worked as a civilian U.N. volunteer on election and democratization missions with the United Nations and the EU in Bosnia, Croatia, Nigeria, Indonesia, Zimbabwe, and East Timor. He is a veteran Shannonwatch peace campaigner, international secretary of the Irish Peace and Neutrality Alliance, founder and coordinator of Veterans For Peace Ireland, and the founder of The Veterans Global Peace Network.



U.S. military plane on the ground at Shannon Airport.

If Only Everyone Understood That the U.S. Deliberately Provoked This War

By Caitlin Johnstone

War is the single worst thing humans do. The most insane. The most cruel. The most destructive. The most traumatic. The least sustainable. Those who knowingly choose to steer humanity into more war when it could be avoided are the worst people in the world, without exception.

And there are mountains of extensively documented evidence that that's exactly what the drivers of the U.S.-centralized empire did in Ukraine. That's why so many western analysts and experts spent years warning that the actions of western powers were going to lead Ukraine into disaster, and it's why U.S. empire managers keep openly boasting about how much their proxy warfare in Ukraine advances U.S. interests. They knowingly steered Ukraine into war to advance their own geostrategic interests while being fully aware that no powerful nation would ever permit the kinds of foreign threats the west was amassing on its borders, and then they intervened in the early days of the war to prevent the outbreak of peace.

If there was widespread awareness of these facts, the U.S. war machine would lose support around the world—not



just for its actions in this one war, but for all future wars as well. Which is why so much energy goes into making sure this does not become a widespread understanding.

The official mainstream narrative throughout the western world is that Putin invaded Ukraine solely because he is evil and hates freedom. That's the actual, literal belief about this war that the Western political/media class works to instill in the western public. Anyone who counters this self-evidently ridiculous assessment with facts and evidence gets branded a Russian agent and swarmed with pro-U.S. trolls on social media, and loses all hope of securing a major platform in any mass media.

And it's important to notice that shutting down all mature adult analysis of the events which led to the war in

this way does not actually save a single Ukrainian life. It doesn't make Russia any more likely to stop fighting and withdraw its troops. All it does is prevent people from seeing the U.S. empire for what it really is. It isn't being done to protect Ukrainians, it's done to protect the empire.

The worst thing that could possibly happen to the information interests of the U.S. empire would be for a critical mass of people to become aware that all this death and destruction in Ukraine could have been avoided by the U.S.-centralized empire behaving less aggressively on Russia's doorstep, and that those aggressions were instead increased with the goal of advancing U.S. strategic interests on the world stage. If everyone really, deeply understood that all this suffering, all these mountains of human corpses could simply not have happened if the U.S. hadn't been feverishly focused on securing planetary domination at all cost, the U.S. would no longer be able to manufacture consent for its agendas. It would no longer be able to whip up international support for its actions against its enemies. It would no longer be able to persuade the world to help prop up the hegemony of the dollar.

But because the U.S. empire has the most advanced soft power apparatus that has ever existed, hardly anyone understands this. Even those who understand that the West provoked this war have not grappled with exactly what that means on a visceral level, for the most part. It's more of a superficial intellectual understanding for most, without really grokking into the horror of it all, really letting the enraging nature of what the U.S. empire did wash over them.

The West was deceived into supporting yet another evil American war, this time with the added dimension of nuclear brinkmanship threatening the life of every terrestrial organism. All to suck Moscow into another draining military quagmire so war plans can be safely drawn up against China while advancing U.S. energy interests in Europe and building support for U.S. military alliances. It's almost too evil to take in. There aren't really words for it.

And that's one of the reasons it's hard to get people to take in exactly what happened with Ukraine: people have a hard time wrapping their minds around the idea that anyone could be that evil, much less the government we've been trained by Hollywood to think of as sane and humanitarian.

It's about as monstrous a thing as you could possibly come up with. Yet here it is, still unfolding in all its blood-spattered glory.

Our task then is to help people see and understand this, not just intellectually but emotionally—really grasp deep down the horrors the U.S. empire unleashed upon our world with the war in Ukraine; the suffering; the death; the existential danger. We can't fight the empire on our own, but we can each do what we can to help weaken the consent manufacturing machine it uses to rule and terrorize the world.

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Hey America, Whose Side Are You On?

by Doug Rawlings

How Ukraine's Military Compares to Russia's Border Forces—Newsweek

My name is Jorge, and I am from Kiev, Ukraine. I am nineteen years old.
My name is Alexander, and I am from the Komi Republic, Russia. I am twenty-two years old.
We try our best to avoid each other in a town that neither one of us wants to call home;
after all, we have only come to know it as an oppressively hot and deadly war zone.

No offense, Alexander, but I really don't want to know if you left a family behind.
No problem, Jorge, I could care less if you don't ever get to see your mother again.
You see, we have sworn to kill the other if we get to see the whites of his eyes and keep on moving.
No time for pain or remorse or even to put his ravaged body into this supposedly sacred ground.

Hey, America, this is Jorge: thanks for the super-cool tank that will probably become my coffin.
Hey, America, this is Alexander: thanks for making these kids such easy targets for me and my men.
But we really got to know, America, just for some peace of mind, whose side are you really on?
Our families keep on asking what it's all for -- this war, this terribly grotesque rape, killing, and pain.

C'mon, it can't be that hard for you to get up off your couches, you saviors of democracy, you Americans
who supposedly care so much for me and my buddies slogging through the mud and rain.
C'mon, give us a word, a hint, or a clue to carry us gently into our bloody, bloody graves,
you Americans, living in your soft little cul-de-sacs back there in the home of the free and the brave.

Tell us now, real quick, whose side are you on, you mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers?
Okay, truth be told, we're thinking you probably consider us to be some kind of dumb suckers
not even smart enough to really care who we're killing or dying for at the end of the fight,
so we kind of know that you really don't give a damn if it's Jorge or Alexander who dies tonight.

Just don't tell my mom or sis or dad that you consider this some kind of game,
and we're the proxy pawns for your own kids who won't have to kill or die, rape or maim.
Just confess that you're making some real serious coin from this whole rotten deal,
and you really, really don't give a good Goddamn about how any of us actually feel.

So, let us ask yet again: America, America, whose side are you really, really on?
Not that it really matters as we sit here in our bunkers aching for the coming of another dawn.
We know that none of us will ever, ever be the same if we're lucky enough to get back home.
Too many borders have been crossed, too many souls have been forever lost. We are forever alone.

Doug Rawlings is a Vietnam veteran and the author of five collections of poems, including *Orion Rising*. He is a founding member and former poet laureate of Veterans For Peace.

Out of the Footlocker

By Herb Mintz

Let me be clear. I am not a veteran. I am an aging military dependent.

The veteran was my Dad, a career Air Force NCO drafted in July 1948 and finally, after more than 20 years as a 'lifer', retired in October 1968.

For almost 16 years, I played my part as a military dependent in a military family. I followed my Dad from one stateside duty station to another and waited for him to return home from overseas duty stations and various TDYs.

My family moved frequently, and consequently I changed schools regularly. As a military dependent, it was hard to make or keep friends as I was the "new kid in town." It was challenging to maintain a sense of community or continuity even within a military housing complex. Military families, like mine, moved routinely and suddenly. Life as a military dependent was unstable and impermanent.



Herb at age eight.

Like my Dad, we were expected to follow orders. My time as a military dependent was a sustained encounter with social, civic and political underdevelopment.

I attended schools in the civilian sector. However, many of the rights contained in the language of the American Constitution that I heard about in civilian schools didn't apply to us. My family's fear of a black mark on my Dad's service record, which might compromise his next pay raise or rank or my military family being labelled as trouble makers or communists, effectively limited our ability to take seriously rights outlined in the Constitution.

In June 1967, my Dad received orders to transfer to a new duty station: Tan Son Knut Air Force Base in Saigon, South Vietnam. He thought he would be killed in that war, so my military family would need to move to his adopted hometown of Wilmington, North Carolina. It was the closest city to the farm in Brunswick Country, NC, where my Dad grew up.

When my family arrived in Wilmington in July 1967, finding a place to live and schools to attend were our priorities. Soon my Dad was on his way to the war in South Vietnam. In his absence, the family would be headed by a single parent, our Mom. With her, my three siblings and me, we would wait, as we had done before, for my Dad to come home.

The first event in my life that later I would identify as social justice, was the fact of a Federal mandate ordering all public schools in Wilmington to desegregate. Integration was set to begin at the start of the school year in August 1967. I had no idea what the Federal mandate meant or what was social justice or why it was necessary or how integration in the public schools came about. My

sense of local history was missing in action.

Without a clue as to what was going on, I played along as I had done before as a military dependent. I joined a local Boy Scout troop, participated in student government, found a part time job delivering newspapers, learned to play the clarinet, and of course, played basketball.

During that school year, I learned one pivotal fact: Racial discrimination against black people was considered normal in Wilmington.

As an 'outsider' to Wilmington, I didn't have the same perspective on white/black race relations. I was not steeped in racist discourse or with lies about black people. I had not lived where white and black people were continuing to live within a troubling history that began many years ago.

And so, in time, I found myself listening to black students on the basketball court or in the halls of the school or in student government voice their history of discrimination and injustice.

In October 1968, when my Dad retired from the Air Force, I started a life as a civilian.

Also in 1968, I learned that Wilmington had a long history of racial oppression and white supremacy but those words weren't used in the white civilian community where I lived. Moreover, the worst details of that history were kept a secret. I didn't know until the early 1990s, long after I had moved away from Wilmington, that in 1898, a white mob of insurrectionists overthrew a democratically elected City government in Wilmington.

The Wilmington insurrection of 1898, also known as the Wilmington massacre of 1898, was a coup d'état and a massacre that was carried out by white supremacists on November 10, 1898. The attack brought to a sudden end a legitimately elected Fusionist biracial government. Substantial property damage occurred in the black community and a white mob killed an estimated 60 to 300 black people. The white press in Wilmington originally described the event as a race riot perpetrated by a mob of black people—which was a lie.

Between 1969 and 1971, a civil rights reform effort took root in the black community and soon arrived at the high school I was attending. Ideas about social change, social justice and equality were not shared by all students. Eventually, armed police roamed the halls of my high school to maintain order. In this turbulent context, I felt an impulse to do something. I spoke up in student government. I refused to play 'Dixie' in student band class. I helped start two Boy Scout troops in the black community. I listened to the complaints of black people while playing basketball.



The remains of the office of the Black-owned newspaper The Daily Record after it was burned in the Wilmington coup and massacre, November 10, 1898.

At some point, a white backlash emerged to discredit and dissolve the civil rights reform effort in the black community. The routine threat of violence from the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) lurked in the shadows. A group called the Rights of White People (ROWP) held rallies in town. And eventually, the white response included producing false charges and the wrongful charges of arson and conspiracy and the conviction of nine men and a woman who became known as the Wilmington 10.

Unlawfully convicted in October 1972 of arson, shooting at firefighters and conspiracy, most of The Ten were sentenced to 29 years in prison. All ten served nearly a decade in jail before an appeal won their release. In 1980, in the case *Chavis v. State of North Carolina*, the convictions were overturned by a federal appeals court on the grounds that the prosecutor and the trial judge had both violated the defendants' constitutional rights.

In early 1971, I was required by law to register with the Selective Service System. I was classified I-A shortly thereafter. By that time, most people I knew who were my age, even in conservative Wilmington, had doubts



The Wilmington 10.

about America's involvement in the Vietnam war.

When I entered the university in September 1971, voting rights, civil rights, women's rights, gay and lesbian rights, tenant rights, black liberation, and in particular, the Vietnam War, were front and center. I encountered those social movements not only as an ex-military dependent but as someone who was willing to struggle to comprehend the issues of the day.

Soldiers returning from Vietnam were more than willing to talk about their experiences than my Dad. Their stories helped me discern a larger picture of the role of the United States military in the world.

But I owed my start as an activist to the black community in Wilmington for opening my eyes to the serious and unresolved issues in America.

Although my involvement in the struggle for peace and justice continued for the next 50 years, there was a lingering issue that I kept quiet about: My experience of nearly 16 years as a military dependent. During those same 50 years, as I learned more about the sordid history of the United States military, the more I remained silent about my experiences in a military family.

Speaking out about my life as a military dependent was difficult for me due to my inability to reconcile that life with my commitment to peace and social justice issues.

For almost 16 years, I was on the U.S. military's 'dependent's payroll' roster. I was deeply aware that Uncle Sam had paid for most of my upbringing, my survival and my existence for so many years. And it wasn't just me, but my entire family that received a monthly government check for our services. The contradictions seemed insurmountable.

After I retired in 2016, I started reading media produced by Veterans for Peace (VFP) and the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW). I learned that these groups were making the connections between peace and social justice and the United States military. If they could speak out about the issues, as veterans, like my Dad, why couldn't I?

A light bulb suddenly turned on!

In 2018, I finally came out of the footlocker as a military dependent for peace and justice.

And now that I am out of the footlocker, I use my voice to blow the cover off the propaganda and lies peddled by my Uncle Sam to me and my family.

There was the issue of my Dad's rank. For years, my Mom would tell us that my Dad was up for another stripe. She could have only heard this information from my Dad. Any change in rank would mean additional income that could help my military family make ends meet. Instead, he remained at the rank of Technical Ser-

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Blight Onto Judaism

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fairytale you tell yourself and tell the world, you will never truly belong to that land. You will never understand the sacredness of the olive trees, which you've been cutting down and burning for decades just to spite us and to break our hearts a little more. No one native to that land would dare do such a thing to the olives. No one who belongs to that region would ever bomb or destroy such ancient heritage as Baalbak or Bittir, or destroy ancient cemeteries as you destroy ours, like the Anglican cemetery in Jerusalem or the resting place of ancient Muslim scholars and warriors in Maamanillah. Those who come from that land do not desecrate the dead; that's why my family for centuries were the caretakers of the Jewish cemetery in the mount of olives, as labors of faith and care for what we know is part of our ancestry and story.

Your ancestors will always be buried in your actual homelands of Poland, Ukraine, and elsewhere around the world from whence you came. The myths and folklore of the land will always be alien to you.

You will never be literate in the sartorial language of the thobes we wear, that sprang from the land through our foremothers over centuries—every motif, design, and pattern speaking to the secrets of local lore, flora, birds, rivers, and wildlife.

What your real estate agents call in their high-priced listings “old Arab home” will always hold in their stones the stories and memories of our ancestors who built them. The ancient photos and paintings of the land will never contain you.

You will never know how it feels to be loved and supported by those who have nothing to gain from you, and in fact, everything to lose. You will never know the feeling of masses all over the world pouring into the streets and stadiums to chant and sing for your freedom; and it is not because you are Jewish, as you try to make the world believe, but because you are depraved violent colonizers who think your Jewishness entitles you to the home my grandfather and his brothers built with their own hands on lands that had been in our family for centuries. It is because Zionism is a blight onto Judaism and indeed onto humanity.

You can change your names to sound more relevant to the region and you can pretend falafel and hummus and zaatar are your ancient cuisines, but in the recesses of your being, you will always feel the sting of this epic forgery and theft, that's why even the drawings of our children hung on walls at the U.N. or in a hospital ward send your leaders and lawyers into hysteric meltdowns.

You will not erase us, no matter how many of us you kill and kill and kill, all day every day. We are not the rocks Chaim Weizmann thought you could clear from the land. We are its very soil. We are her rivers and her trees and her stories, because all of that was nurtured by our

bodies and our lives over millennia of continuous, uninterrupted habitation of that patch of earth between the Jordan and Mediterranean waters, from our Canaanite, our Hebrew, our Philistine, and our Phoenician ancestors, to every conqueror or pilgrim who came and went, who married or raped, loved, enslaved, converted between religions, settled or prayed in our land, leaving pieces of themselves in our bodies and our heritage. The fabled, tumultuous stories of that land are quite literally in our DNA. You cannot kill or propagandize that away, no matter what death technology you use or what Hollywood and corporate media arsenals you deploy.

Someday, your impunity and arrogance will end. Palestine will be free; she will be restored to her multi-religious, multi-ethnic pluralistic glory; we will restore and expand the trains that run from Cairo to Gaza to Jerusalem, Haifa, Tripoli, Beirut, Damascus, Amman, Kuwait, Sanaa, and so on; we will put an end to the Zionist American war machine of domination, expansion, extraction, pollution, and looting.

And you will either leave, or you will finally learn to live with others as equals.

Susan Abulhawa is a Palestinian writer and human rights activist and animal rights advocate. She is the author of several books, and the founder of a non-governmental organization, Playgrounds for Palestine. Her first novel, Mornings in Jenin, was translated into 32 languages and sold more than a million copies.

Reap What You Sow

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periences as a mother, a widow, and a woman warrior who deeply regretted having killed civilians during missions in which she piloted weaponized drones. The audience learns she was married to Lt. Col. Sean Golden, a Marine who died during combat in Iraq.

Showing remarkable patience, Major Mom listens to Ellie divulge childhood disappointments, teenage angst, and her current rage over the roles her parents played in “service” to the U.S. military. At one point Major Mom says “Whoa,” and accuses Ellie of going too far in her accusations.

But Ellie, a debate team champ, doesn't back down. She has evidence to show that her mom's “arsenal of democracy” rhetoric and revitalization of World War II themes don't stand up to actual events.

In a way, the play's two characters are proxies for fully developed viewpoints. Major Mom represents the “Merchants of Death” who develop, store, sell and use vast arsenals of weaponry. Ellie champions viewpoints laid out in Howard Zinn's comprehensive historical outlay, *A People's History of the United States*.

With Ellie rebelling against revival of World War II rhetoric, the play becomes quite timely. She insists that the good Germans who supported Nazis have counterparts in the United States. The claim, “I was only following orders,” eerily enters the script.

Many of the people in the audience have, in the past, supported activists who were recently imprisoned in U.S. federal lockups for having trespassed at a U.S. base harboring nuclear weapons. One of the activists, Carmen Trotta, came to both performances. Plowshares activists literally beat swords into plowshares, damaging nuclear weapons and pouring their own blood over the decommissioned weapons. They believe in making sacrifices, themselves, on behalf of nonviolence, a theme which recurs in Gilroy's play.

During a dynamic talkback session, actors, producers, and audience members grappled with questions about conscience and pragmatic steps forward. Ellie, still acting in character, urged people to use their imagination and practice empathy. Major Mom pointed to the damage caused by structural and systemic violence. Audience members repeatedly voiced horror over U.S. support for Israel's genocidal attacks against Palestinians,

noting that Democrats dared to warn of fascist encroachment while at the same time enabling and provisioning Israel's mass killing spree. Israel's use of weaponized drones prolongs and exacerbates a war waged by a racist, far-right, nuclear armed, apartheid regime, one to which the U.S. continues to pledge unwavering support.

The characters in *Reap What You Sow* recognized pivots in their relationships and their interactions, and they assiduously preserved caring relationships. Powerful elites in our world have failed to find means for collaboration, opting instead to demonize enemies for their own political gain, pouring energy and resources into the coffers of people whose “top crop” is weaponry. President Biden refuses to negotiate with Putin, and Ukraine has already fired long-range missiles, supplied by the U.S., into Russia, sowing ominous seeds that Putin stated

could yield a nuclear exchange.

I hope the play will awaken numerous people, in audiences across this country and beyond, to the crucial question: how can we learn to live together without killing one another? And the follow-up: how can we abolish war?

Reap What You Sow, Don't Lose Heart! is the first production of the Rising Together Talkback Theater Company. The production is available, for free, to churches, schools, peace and justice organizations, and other community groups. The company is booking dates for a Summer 2025 “Reap!” Tour. For more information, contact Zool (zooltheartandpolitics@hotmail.com) or text 718-964-7643.

Kathy Kelly is board president of World BEYOND War. Kathy.vcnv@gmail.com

Footlocker

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geant for 12 years (1954–1966). I have his Air Force military service records which include his performance evaluations, which placed him in the top 10 percent of the enlisted personnel in his unit. There is even a Performance Evaluation completed during his service in South Vietnam war in March 1968. But the most profound lie perpetrated by my Uncle Sam were the “reasons” my Dad was sent to the war in Vietnam. It was the defining moment in my life as a military dependent. My Dad could have died there.

Thanks to the returning veterans and the publication of the Pentagon Papers, I learned that Uncle Sam and the Pentagon had lied about the role of the United States Armed Forces in the Vietnam war. The Gulf of Tonkin incident, the basis for U.S. intervention into Vietnam, was a fiction. The government in South Vietnam was not an aspiring democratic government in need of our Nation's support but a military dictatorship, representing only a small fraction of the citizens of the country. I also learned the United States had secretly supported the French government's effort to re-established its colonial territory in Vietnam and the later the U.S. obstructed elections in South Vietnam which would have resulted in a victory for Nationalists and Communists.

Since 2018, I have been telling my story of how Uncle Sam shamelessly lied to my family and violated our trust.



Herb's dad, also Herb (USAF), and cousin Robert (U.S. Army) Korea 1961

The one thing I have learned is that it feels good to break the silence about personal issues. I am finally doing that.

*Herb Mintz is a cultural worker and is active in local political struggles. He was a union activist for more than 20 years. He co-produced *Live Wire!*, a public access television program, which was a project of the Meridel LeSueur Peace and Justice Center in Minneapolis, MN. He is a member of VFP.*

On the Maryhouse Stage, Power Politics and War

'Reap What You Sow: Don't Lose Heart!'

By Kathy Kelly

In mid-November, New York's Catholic Worker community, located in lower Manhattan, opened their auditorium to host *Reap What You Sow: Don't Lose Heart!* a two-act play with two actors.

Prior to the performance, preparations included rearranging the space so the next issue of the *Catholic Worker* newspaper, stacked and ready to mail, wouldn't interfere with access to the theater.

Above were the exposed beams of a building that once functioned as a music school in turn-of-the-century New York City before Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, founders of the Catholic Worker, appropriated it for works of mercy, feeding hungry people and, as much as possible, housing people in the building's former musical practice rooms.

It was a fitting spot for the play's debut. Jack Gilroy, the main author, had created earlier versions. Now the play, au-

thored by Gilroy, Zool Zulkowitz, and Olivia Gilroy, incorporates the dynamics of "living theater" as actors and activists fed Gilroy their edits.

The Catholic Workers welcomed Maryknoll Mission sisters, Veterans For Peace, and Raging Grannies, along with Peace Action, World BEYOND War, Code Pink, and Fellowship of Reconciliation activists. During a "talk back" session following the play, several young people spoke up, interacting with the characters Ellie and Major Mom.

Before the play began, producer Zulkowitz played the iconic Beatles song "Imagine." Olivia Rodrigo's song, "Brutal," opened the play, with Ellie (played by Grazia Saporito) dancing along to it, vibing with the lyrics and music.

She and her mother, Major Mom, (played by Pat Russell), were winning characters. Tears glistened on Major Mom's cheeks when she spoke of her ex-

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Artwork by Robert Shetterly, taken from the playbill for *Reap What You Sow*.

Uncle Sam Says, 'So Long Suckers; I Quit!'

By Leonard Eiger

WASHINGTON, D.C.—In the greatest White House personnel shakeup in history, Uncle Sam gave notice that he is retiring.

Sam, who has been on the job since 1813, said he has finally had enough: "I'm tired of being the spokesperson for a warmongering, racist, oil-hungry empire over far too many administrations, both Democrat and Republican. And worse yet, this new guy moving into the White House is the worst kind of racist, misogynistic grifter who is bringing a whole cadre of jackboot-licking cronies along with him. This level of fascism makes Adolph Hitler and Benito Mussolini look like amateurs. I'm so done with this!"

In an unprecedented and surprise appearance before a shocked White House Press Corps this morning, Sam appeared visibly shaken by recent events. He ranted for 10 minutes about what has happened to our country and "what a damn mess politicians have made of it."

He also referred to the election of Trump as "the last straw." He was already considering retiring after the Biden administration's unending "immoral aiding and abetting of the Israeli government's genocide on the Palestinian people." For Sam, the "Congress has become a complete [bad] joke; both Democrats and Republicans ... they've given recent presidents a blank check for endless wars."

"I really thought I was doing right by the American people over the past 200-plus years, but I can see clearly now that I have been used time and time again as a pawn for these low-lives who have insidiously taken over our nation on behalf of the greedy Wall Street elites, and now the Silicon Valley tech billionaires. All while We The People have been sold a bill of goods about outside threats, like communism and terrorists, our country has been taken over by a bunch of greedy racist warmongers who are getting rich off the sweat of hardworking American taxpayers who keep the war machine factory running full speed ahead. And that's just so wrong."

Sam began to cry when asked about his iconic "I WANT YOU" posters that have been responsible for

countless young Americans joining the military and, "after being sent to fight the rich man's wars, return home damaged both physically and mentally, if not killed in the name of freedom. It's really all about the freedom of rich, greedy corporate profiteers to make a killing, both literally and figuratively." After regaining his composure he said, "I sincerely regret luring so many of our young people to fight in U.S. wars of aggression."

"Retired Marine Corps General Smedley Butler got it right when he said that 'War Is A Racket.' And it certainly is a profitable one for the Military-Industrial Complex. Damn, I wish I had listened to Eisenhower back in the day. We could have saved so many young people from needless death and suffering, not to mention the carnage, unstable and fascist governments, and ill-will we've helped create in other countries."



Sam reflected on all the wasted money that should be spent on education, health care, the nation's crumbling infrastructure, sustainable energy, and so much more. "Let's face it; this is what a failing empire does ... squanders its treasure, both human and financial, on senseless foreign adventures and the greedy desires of Wall Street, while neglecting the needs of the working people."

When asked where he is going upon his retirement, Sam replied, "Where the hell can you go? No place is out of reach of U.S. military power or its nuclear weapons, with roughly 750 U.S. foreign military bases spread across 80 nations! I'm thinking of cashing out my savings bonds and buying a time-share in an RV park doomsday shelter. That seems like the best investment these days."

Sam spoke of how he was recently diagnosed with PTSD and moral injury: "I'm going to get some well-deserved psychotherapy to work through all this. We're talking over 200 years of cumulative trauma; where do I even begin? I figure I had better do it now while I still have Medicare coverage. Who knows if it, or any other government program serving the people, will survive four years of Trump."

Reflecting on the work ahead, Uncle Sam said, "Once I'm feeling more myself, I plan to head out on the open road, joining in with every demonstration for peace and justice. After all, I've created quite a brand, and it's high time I use it to do some real good for the people of the United States, especially the young people whose future we are currently selling down the river in the greatest betrayal of all time. I'm certainly not just going to go play golf with whatever time I have left!"

Before leaving the podium, Sam said he would not be taking any further questions but admonished the members of the press for "pandering to those in power" saying, "The late broadcast journalist Walter Cronkite once said, 'We are not educated well enough to perform the necessary act of intelligently selecting our leaders.' You members of the press have a solemn duty to tell the people what they need to know rather than what they want to know in a so-called free society. It's time that each of you earn the title of journalist! That's all folks."

Leonard Eiger is an associate member of Veterans For Peace and is active in the movement to abolish nuclear weapons and build a better world with peace and justice for all people.