

Peace in Our Times



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

The great lie of war in action

Time for Peace in Afghanistan



By Matthew Hoh

It has been more than nine years since I resigned in protest over the escalation of the Afghanistan War from my position as a political officer with the U.S. State Department in Afghanistan. It had been my third time to war, along with several years of working in

positions effecting war policy in Washington, D.C., with the Department of Defense (DOD) and the State Department. My resignation in 2009 was not taken lightly by my superiors, and my reasons for opposing President Obama's "surge" in Afghanistan found support among both military officers and civilian officials at senior levels in Kabul and Washington.

I was repeatedly asked not to resign and was offered a more senior position within the State Department. Richard Holbrooke, then the President's appointed representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, told me he agreed with 95 percent of what I had written and asked me to join his staff, while the U.S. ambassador, Karl Eikenberry, told me my analysis was one of the best he had encountered and stated he would write an introduction endorsing my resignation letter if I remained with the U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan for the remainder of my tour. In conversation with the U.S. deputy ambassador to Afghanistan, he agreed the war was not just unwinnable, but also corrupt, and stated he would not let his children serve in such a war. Further support for my views was provided by my counterparts serving as political officers in the most violent parts of Afghanistan: Kandahar, Helmand, Kunar, Nuristan and Oruzgan Provinces. These men and women made clear their agreement with my assessment and my resignation. The support from the military was equally effusive and genuine; often such support included apologies along the lines of "I'd like to resign too, but I've got kids heading to college in a few years ..." (the golden handcuffs are an instrumental and integral aspect of the U.S. empire's infrastructure). When I asked Karen DeYoung, the *Washington Post* correspondent who wrote the front-page, above-the-fold story on my resignation, why she wrote such a piece about me, she replied she could not find anyone at the Pentagon, State Department or White House who disagreed with me.

I relate the above not to cheerlead for myself (although the sadness and despondency from witnessing the

continued on page 19 ...

A Planet in Crisis: The Heat's on Us

By Dahr Jamail

I'm standing atop Rush Hill on Alaska's remote St. Paul Island. While only 665 feet high, it provides a 360-degree view of this tundra-covered, 13-mile-long, seven-mile-wide part of the Pribilof Islands. While the hood of my rain jacket flaps in the cold wind, I gaze in wonder at the silvery waters of the Bering Sea. The ever-present wind whips the surface into a chaos of whitecaps, scudding mist, and foam.

The ancient cinder cone I'm perched on reminds me that St. Paul, was, oh so long ago, one of the last places woolly mammoths could be found in North America. I'm here doing research for my book *The End of Ice*. And that, in turn, brings me back to the new reality in these far northern waters: as cold as they still are, human-caused climate disruption is warming them enough to threaten a possible collapse of the food web that sustains this island's Unangan, its Aleut inhabitants, also known as "the people of the seal." Given how deeply their culture is tied to a subsistence lifestyle coupled with the new reality that the numbers of fur seals, seabirds, and other marine life they hunt or fish are dwindling, how could this crisis not be affecting them?

continued on page 8 ...



A female fur seal on St. Paul Island.

Letters to the Editor

A Bad Choice

To the editor of *Peace in Our Times*, re Mencken Prophecy cartoon

I was pleased to see the articles by Chris Hedges in the Winter 2019 edition of *Peace in Our Times*. Mr Hedges's analysis of our era is summed up beautifully in the first sentence of his article on page 3. He wrote: "The idiots take over in the final days of crumbling civilizations." On the other hand, the cartoon entitled "Prophecy" with the Mencken quote attacking democracy, misses the point completely. It is not the "perfection of democracy" that has brought us to this stage of deterioration. It is that our democracy was set up by the 1 percent so that it could be turned into what I call corporate totalitarianism. Corrupt and inept leadership in a democracy does not represent what Mencken calls "the inner soul of the people"; it indicates a beaten-down population grasping at straws for help. Why would we struggle to convince people to try and change our system in the teeth of a climate catastrophe, if the goal of a "perfect democracy" is the kind of corrupt, inept leadership we find around us with Trump in the lead?

Trump is Mencken's idea of where democracy takes us. Mencken was an anti-Semite, a racist, a misogynist, a white supremacist and an elitist. In a book entitled *Defending the Master Race* by Jonathan Peter Spiro, Mencken presented his elitism in the context of white supremacy. He said: "My impression, though I am blond and Nordic myself, is that the genuine member of that great race, at least in modern times, is often indistinguishable from a cockroach." In his diary, published 25 years after his death in 1956, Mencken had a very negative view of women and African-Americans. He wrote: "It is impossible to talk anything resembling discretion or judgment to a colored woman. They are all essentially child-like, and even hard experience does not teach them anything." When the last Jewish member of his club died, he wrote: "There is no other Jew in Baltimore who seems suitable." He also loved Germany, never condemned Hitler and opposed the U.S. opposition to the Axis during World War II. (See *The Washington Post*, "Mencken's Dark Side", December 5, 1989.)

Oppose Trump we must. But we mustn't

do it by mistakenly embracing other forms of racism and elitism no matter where they come from or what they appear to support. Mencken represents another decaying pillar of our system.

Edwin Krales, Chapter 34, January, 2019

Editor's note: Thank you for pointing this out. We should have been more careful in our image selection.

There Oughtta Be a Law

Ilhan Omar, one of two Muslim women elected to Congress, has gone over the line in suggesting that politicians are influenced by money they get from the Israel Lobby. It is OK to say that our leaders are paid off by Big Oil, Big Pharma, and Wall Street. But it is anti-Semitic to imply that the Israel lobby would do such things.

There should be a law making it illegal to reveal how much Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer get from the Israel Lobby. It is antisemitic to report that the two of them met recently with multibillionaires Haim Saban and Sheldon Adelson and promised an extensive list of "pro-Israel lawmakers" be appointed to important committees.

Boycotts, although they have a long history of being used against slave owners, Nazis, Jim Crow racists, and homophobes, are simply antisemitic when used against apartheid Israel and should be illegal. In fact, even mentioning the Palestinian People is an attempt to deny that Israel is a Jewish state. Talking about the occupation is antisemitic as well. Why not talk about human rights abuses in Darfur?

The effort to stop anti-Semitism has to start with the First Amendment. How dare our Founding Fathers promise freedom of speech and press without some qualifiers! Sure, citizens should be able to criticize politicians and foreign countries, but not a country that claims to be a religion, like Israel. No U.S. citizen should ever have the right to say that Israel has enormous power over our government.

Fred Nagel
Rhinebeck, NY

A Note from the Editors

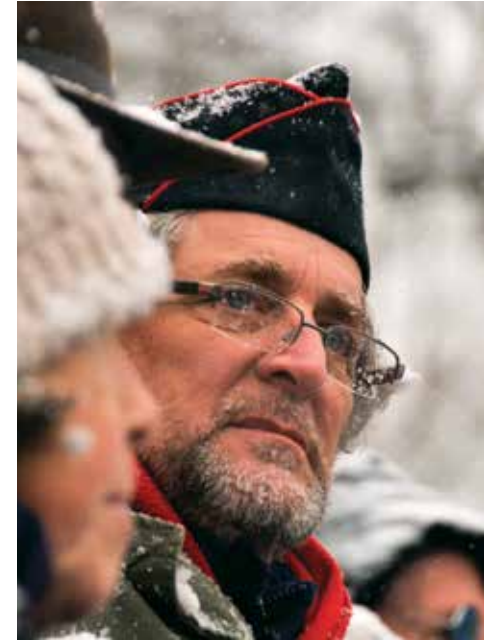
America's Collective Amnesia

For a couple weeks recently I was in the hospital because, it turns out, a cancerous mass had taken up residence in my small bowel ... not good news, especially on your birthday.

But I'm in a country with a competent health care system—if expensive and rationed by insurance companies—at a good hospital with excellent care and skilled staff. The mass is removed, weeks of nausea ended, and treatment options are explained. The way to a new life is clear.

On the ride home, however, one thing uppermost in my mind had to be consciously suppressed: the knowledge that hundreds of thousands of people, many of them children, are suffering and dying right now in Iraq from our use of depleted uranium. And what of their journey through illness? Their hospitals, staff, medicines are of what quality? Is pain relief adequate? Electricity to cool the intense summer heat? Water to drink that won't make them sicker? Family and friends healthy enough and with resources to provide critical support?

And that is "just" one category of just one country the Empire chews up and spits out on a regular basis. The list is long. We target a nation, destroy its economy, rape its environment, lay waste its people, and then ... forget about it. Rarely is the nation close enough to our borders that its people, sick enough of the chaos and pain we've caused, can actually pound on the door ... and no one understands why.



Mike Ferner before being arrested at the White House fence, Dec. 16, 2010.
Photo: Ellen Davidson.

America's collective amnesia is no accident. Without it, the system cannot function. It's maintained by the corporate media, by fetishization of sports and shopping and all the necessary distractions so the Empire can continue its devilish work.

In the words of the great Czech-born novelist Milan Kundera, "The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting."

—Mike Ferner

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Time to Break the Silence, End NATO's Militarism

By Kevin Zeese and Margaret Flowers

Fifty-two years ago on April 4, 1967, at Riverside Church, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., gave his most important speech ever, “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence.” King’s conscience drove him to take the unpopular position of publicly criticizing the Vietnam War and putting it in the context of the “giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism.” The message of that speech remains relevant today because its wisdom has not been heeded.

We put this in the context of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) because this year on April 4, the anniversary of that speech and the anniversary of the murder of King by the government, NATO will be holding its 70th anniversary meeting in Washington, D.C. Protests and other activities are being planned.

NATO is a front for Western military aggression, which has resulted in destruction around the world, mass deaths, and mass migration as people are forced from their NATO-destroyed communities. It’s time to end it.

Would Dr. King oppose NATO?

The Black Alliance for Peace explains why Dr. King would speak out against NATO if he were alive today:

“Dr. King would be opposed to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) because it is an instrument of U.S. and European militarism. He would not be confused—and neither are we—about why the liberal establishment, neocons, military-industrial complex, corporations and the corporate media are opposed to ending an anachronistic structure. NATO’s only reason for being today is to serve as the military wing of the dying U.S.-European colonial project.”

Black Alliance for Peace is not alone in seeing the reality of NATO as an aggressive arm of the U.S. military. In the *Chicago Tribune*, Victor Davis Hanson writes, “In an era when the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact are now ancient history, everyone praises NATO as ‘indispensable’ and ‘essential’ to Western solidarity and European security. But few feel any need to explain how and why that could still be so.”

The truth is that not only is NATO not indispensable or essential—it is counterproductive. It creates conflicts and is being used as an aggressive military tool. Among the wars of NATO are Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Somalia, and Yemen as well as Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo, and Yugoslavia.

David Swanson of World BEYOND War describes how NATO works against the rule of law, writing, “NATO is used within the U.S. and by other NATO members as cover to wage wars under the pretense that they are somehow more legal or acceptable.”

When the Soviet Union dissolved, the

excuse for NATO ended. Indeed, it is well known that Gorbachev and other Soviet leaders received assurances that NATO would not expand. These assurances came not only from President George H.W. Bush but also from West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, former CIA Director Robert Gates, French leader François Mitterrand; Margaret Thatcher; British Foreign Minister Douglas Hurd, and Manfred Woerner, the NATO secretary-general.

Instead of being ended after it no longer served any defensive military purpose, NATO expanded to 29 nations, 13 since the end of the Soviet Union, including countries on the border of Russia. One of the reasons for the U.S. coup in Ukraine was to antagonize Russia and prevent access to its naval fleet through Crimea. Ukraine is now partnering with NATO.

The current U.S. national military strategy calls for conflict with Russia and China. NATO continuously expanding, conducting military exercises and putting bases, missiles, and other military equipment on the Russian border are

NATO member-countries are told they must abandon hard-won social programs in order to meet U.S. demands for even more military spending.”

Acting on King’s Clarion Call

In 1967, Martin Luther King, Jr., warned, “A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.” He described how militarism was destroying the soul of the United States and called for an end to the Vietnam War. He described in excruciating detail the U.S. destruction of Vietnam, mass bombings, napalm, poisoning of water and land, and the killing of more than a million Vietnamese. He said a foreign policy based on violence and domination abroad leads to violence and domination at home, and he warned that “we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values.”

Time has shown the truth of his message, as militarized police terrorize poor communities and are used to silence dissent, creating a war at home. Other as-

we did not face this reality, U.S. militarism would spread throughout Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Today the United States has 883 foreign military bases with troops deployed in 149 countries; it sells or gives weapons to 98 countries. King described how the United States keeps troops in foreign lands to “maintain social stability for our investments accounts.” He described U.S. imperialism as based on “refusing to give up the privileges and the pleasures that come from the immense profits of overseas investment.”

King connected the extreme materialism of capitalism to militarization and racism, describing a “thing-oriented” society rather than a “person-oriented” society, where “profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people.” King talked of the new hopes in the nation as the government confronted poverty with new programs to uplift the poor, but said he “watched this program broken and eviscerated” as war funding stole from funding the necessities of the people.

Today, U.S. military spending of more than a trillion dollars—the Pentagon



Soldiers welcoming NATO troops at Lithuania's Rukla base. Photo: European Pressphoto Agency.

part of that strategy. NATO has even expanded to Colombia, which borders Venezuela, another nation the United States has threatened with war while conducting an economic war and regime change operations there.

A coalition of more than 100 organizations that are calling for an end to NATO describes its devastating impact:

“NATO has been the world’s deadliest military alliance, causing untold suffering, and devastation throughout Northern Africa, the Middle East and beyond. Hundreds of thousands have died in U.S./NATO wars in Iraq, Libya, Somalia, and Yugoslavia. Millions of refugees are now risking their lives trying to escape the carnage that these wars have brought to their homelands, while workers in the 29

pects of the war at home are the injustice system, mass incarceration, the lack of social supports and the exploitation of workers and the environment.

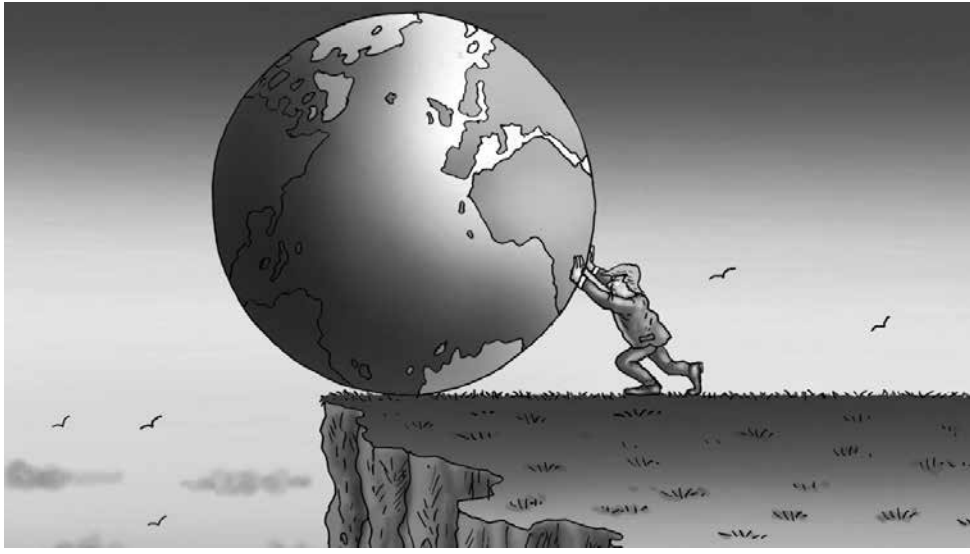
King described how war degrades U.S. soldiers who realize that “we are on the side of the wealthy, and the secure, while we create a hell for the poor.” King said he could not be silent in the face of such cruel manipulation of the poor “as poor blacks and whites” from the United States were “burning the huts of a poor village” 8,000 miles away. The dehumanization and contempt of “other” people, he noted, leads to the persecution and death of black people in the United States.

King saw war as “a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit.” King accurately predicted that if

alone is \$717 billion—accounts for more than 65 percent of discretionary spending, while poverty and homelessness rise. King called for a transformational change as an “edifice which produces beggars needs re-structuring” and urged us to “look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth.” The wealth divide today has worsened, with three people having wealth equal to half the population. King criticized “capitalists” who sought to take the wealth of nations across the globe.

On April 4, NATO will be holding meetings in Washington, D.C. This is an insult to the memory of Dr. King and what he stood for. The Peace Congress, which was held in place of Trump’s cancelled

continued on page 9...



Trump Moves the World Closer to 'Doomsday'

By Marjorie Cohn

In 1987, the United States and the Soviet Union adopted the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) in an effort to eliminate missiles on hair-trigger alert for nuclear war due to their short flight times. It was the first time the two countries agreed to destroy nuclear weapons. That treaty outlawed nearly 2,700 ballistic or land-based cruise missiles with a range of roughly 300 to 3,000 miles.

The Trump administration thought nothing of pulling out of the INF. On February 2, the United States suspended its obligations under the treaty, starting a dangerous chain reaction that brings us closer to nuclear war. Russia followed suit and pulled out of the treaty the next day.

Then the three countries with the largest nuclear arsenals quickly test-launched nuclear-capable missiles. France conducted a test of its medium-range air-to-surface missile on February 4. The next day, the United States fired a Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). And an hour and a half later, Russia launched an RS-24 Yars ICBM.

Richard Burt participated in the negotiations of the INF during the Reagan administration. Last fall, he predicted that U.S. withdrawal would lead to Russia's deployment of intermediate-range missiles and the United States' development of new sea- and air-based weapons systems. Sure enough, on Feb. 4, Russia's defense minister, Sergei Shoigu, announced his country's plans to build mid-range, nuclear-capable missiles within two years.

"New intermediate-range cruise and ballistic missiles and low-yield warheads now being planned both in Russia and United States are nothing other than filed-down triggers to all-out thermonuclear war," Daniel Ellsberg, author of *The Doomsday Machine: Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner*, told Truthout. He warns of "nuclear winter," which is the end of civilization as we know it. A consultant to the Defense Department and the White House in 1961, Ellsberg drafted Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara's plans for nuclear war.

Beatrice Fihn, executive director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, concurs. "Trump has fired the starting pistol on Cold War II. Only this one could be bigger, more dangerous, and the world may not be so lucky this time around."

Undermining Nuclear Disarmament

The adoption of the INF led to the 1991 signing of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), which considerably reduced the number of long-range strategic nuclear weapons. The New START, signed in 2010, requires the U.S. and Russia to reduce the number of deployed nuclear warheads from a maximum of 2,200 in 2010 to 1,550 in 2018. Trump's cavalier withdrawal from INF does not portend well for the renewal of New START in 2021.

Moreover, Trump's Nuclear Posture Review of 2018 would allow the United States to use nuclear weapons in response to non-nuclear attacks. This new U.S.

policy opens the door to first-use of nuclear weapons, which is prohibited by international law.

The Nuclear Posture Review also violates the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, to which the United States is a party. This treaty requires parties "to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament."

'Two Minutes to Midnight'

In order to convey the urgency of the threat to humanity and the planet, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists created the Doomsday Clock. It uses imagery of the apocalypse (midnight) and a nuclear explosion (countdown to zero). The decision to either move or leave in place the minute hand of the Doomsday Clock is made each year. The Clock is a universally recognized measure of vulnerability to catastrophe caused by nuclear weapons, climate change or other emerging technologies that could pose a threat. On January 24, the Bulletin once again kept the Doomsday Clock at two minutes to midnight. And that was before the U.S. and Russia pulled out of the INF.

"Trump and Putin are both posturing as gunslingers in a Western movie," Ellsberg warned. "But the weapons in their quick-draw holsters are not pistols; they are doomsday machines. And this is not high noon; it is two minutes to midnight."

Toward Denuclearization

In his book, Ellsberg proposes the U.S. government undertake the following measures toward the goal of abolishing nuclear weapons:

- A U.S. no-first-use policy;
- Probing investigative hearings on war plans to avoid nuclear winter;
- Eliminating ICBMs;
- Ending the pretense of preemptive damage-limiting by first-strike forces;

• Foregoing profits, jobs and alliance hegemony based on maintaining that pretense; and

• Otherwise dismantling the U.S. nuclear arsenal, which Ellsberg calls the American Doomsday Machine

On January 30, Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.), chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, took a good first step. They introduced the No First Use Act, to establish in law that it is the policy of the United States not to fire nuclear weapons first so "that the United States should never initiate a nuclear war."

The U.N. Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) forbids ratifying countries "never under any circumstances to develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices." It also prohibits the transfer of, use of, or threat to use nuclear weapons or nuclear explosive devices. The treaty, adopted in 2017, will enter into force after 50 nations have ratified it. Thus far, it has 21 ratifications. But the five original nuclear-armed countries, which also happen to be the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council—the U.S., Russia, France, China and the U.K.—did not participate in the treaty negotiations and have not agreed to it.

Resistance against nuclear weapons also takes the form of civil disobedience, such as the recent action by the Kings Bay Plowshares 7.

The Kings Bay Plowshares 7

When I was growing up in the early days of the Cold War, the fear of nuclear annihilation was pervasive. Although U.S. nuclear weapons have been on hair trigger alert for 73 years, "nuclear weapons have become normal," Patrick O'Neill told Truthout. He and six other

continued on next page ...





The Kings Bay Plowshares Seven. Carmen in the middle.

Carmen Trotta, Prisoner of His Own Conscience

By Mary Reinholz

It's not every day that I get a chance to interview a devout man of faith and derring-do whose religiously inspired activism has put him under house arrest at an East Village soup kitchen and men's shelter run by Catholic Worker volunteers. However, I did just that when I recently sat down with Carmen Trotta, indicted last spring after an anti-nuke protest in the deep South.

There, inside the Catholic Worker's fifth-floor walk-up building on East First Street, his longtime residence, Trotta, 56, wears an ankle monitor and awaits trial out of state. The reason why? Trotta joined six elderly pacifists who, on April 4, broke into the Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base in Georgia under cover of darkness to mark the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King's assassination. They splattered blood on government property to protest the anti-ballistic nuclear missiles stored inside the port's Trident submarines, calling them illegal, immoral and an existential threat to the planet.

"We went to the scene of the crime," Trotta told me. He was referring to his Catholic comrades in the radical Plowshares movement who carried bolt cutters, hammers, crime-scene tape, vials of human blood and their own indictment of nuclear weapons. "These weapons are illegal," he insisted. "If they're not illegal, then there is no law."

It took naval officers more than two hours to discover the seven protesters, according to early news reports. A base spokesperson, Scott Bassett, flat-out refused to answer my questions on what appeared to be a major breach of security at Kings Bay.

I reminded Trotta that he had broken laws to get inside a 1,700-acre base of the

Atlantic Fleet, which has at least six subs that contain missiles with nuclear warheads capable of delivering far more firepower than the U.S. bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

"Is it a crime to break into somebody's house if it's burning?" he responded.

In the wake of his April 5 arrest, for which he pleaded not guilty, Trotta—who was named Carmen after his immigrant Italian grandfather—spent about 50 days in a Georgia county jail. He was then released on \$1,000 bond. He told me he now faces the possibility of up to 20 years in federal prison.

A court date for his jury trial has yet to be scheduled, so he continues to cook meals for hungry people who come to St. Joseph House ("St. Joe's") from all over the city.

A sturdily built bachelor described as "angelic" by criminal defense lawyer Ron Kuby, who once represented him years ago, Trotta also remains politically active.

He's an associate editor for the Catholic Worker newspaper and a member of the executive board of the War Resisters League. Since 2009, he has divided his time between St. Joe's, where he helps feed hungry people from all over the city, and Long Island, where he looks after his 91-year-old widowed father.

Trotta's life changed dramatically when he and his co-defendants were hit with an indictment for alleged criminal conduct at Kings Bay. Among the others are Martha Hennessy, 63, a granddaughter of the late Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Christian anarchist Catholic Worker movement, which is committed to fostering peace and social justice. Day is being considered for sainthood by the Catholic Church.

The aging protesters are being called the Kings Bay Plowshares Seven. They were charged with three felonies, including conspiracy to commit damage on federal

property and one misdemeanor for trespassing.

Trotta said their intent was to stage a nonviolent and "symbolic disarmament" of the Trident submarines.

"We wanted to address the single most-lethal weapons on earth," he said. "A single Trident submarine, if it's blasted off, with all it has inside of itself, could drastically change life as we know it on this planet."

Trotta's protest at Kings Bay was his first "non-Gandhian" action under the aegis of Plowshares. A controversial

movement, Plowshares takes its name from the biblical prophecy of Isaiah, who called on nations to "beat their swords into plowshares." There have been about 100 raids of nuclear sites since the group's founding in 1980 by the famed Jesuit priest Daniel Berrigan and his brother Philip Berrigan.

During a hearing on the case in U.S. District Court in Brunswick, Ga., federal prosecutor Karl Knoche claimed that the movement has created a "cottage industry" for activists seeking to denuclearize the U.S.

"I believe that they think they are trying to prevent the end of the world," countered Bill Quigley. A prominent civil-rights lawyer and professor at Loyola Law School in New Orleans, Quigley is one of a group of pro bono attorneys representing the Plowshares defendants. He views them as part of a long tradition of civil disobedience by people "willing to risk arrest and prison" for their beliefs.

On Jan. 16, Quigley filed a brief in Georgia's Southern District Court for dismissal of the charges against the Plowshares defendants. His argument was based on provisions of a little-known federal law called the Religious Freedom Revival Act of 1993.

As for Trotta, who had no prior felonies from his more than 30 arrests over decades of activism, Quigley believes that "realistically" he could spend a year behind bars.

Trotta is not that optimistic.

"I'm preparing for five years," he said. "A long time."

This reporter hopes he gets lucky.

Originally published by The Villager...

Mary Reinholz is an award-winning New York-based journalist who has written for numerous publications, including The Los Angeles Times, The New York Times, and Newsday. She is a former columnist for the New York Daily News.

Doomsday

... continued from previous page

Catholic activists are facing up to 25 years in prison for their symbolic action to disarm the nuclear weapons on Kings Bay Naval Base in Georgia (see story above). The base is homeport to six nuclear ballistic missile submarines each armed with 16 Trident II missiles. They carried with them a copy of Ellsberg's book and left it on the base.

The defendants, who will likely go to trial this spring, maintain that any use or threat to use nuclear weapons of mass destruction is illegal, Kings Bay Plowshares 7 spokesperson Bill Ofenloch told Truthout. They are also arguing that their prosecution violates the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, because their actions were motivated by their Catholic belief that nuclear weapons are immoral and illegal. Finally, the Kings Bay Plowshares 7 are claiming that Trump's repeated threats to use nuclear weapons and his illegal conduct have not been prosecuted, so the government's decision to prosecute only those who protest against nuclear weapons

constitutes unlawful selective prosecution.

Co-defendant Martha Hennessy, the granddaughter of Catholic Worker Movement co-founder Dorothy Day, told Truthout, "The U.S. withdrawal from the INF treaty is designed to ensnare Russia and the world in a new nuclear arms race." She warns, "This is empire run amok; we have lost our democracy; let us pray we don't lose our world and each other."

It is incumbent upon all of us to resist the inexorable march toward nuclear winter. We must join together in coalitions and protest to Congress, the White House, in writing and in the streets. There is no time to lose. It is two minutes to midnight on the Doomsday Clock.

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The FBI's Secret War on Political Freedom

By Michael Steven Smith

The Federal Bureau of Investigation tried to destroy left organizations and the black freedom movement during the last major upsurge in radical politics in this country, in the 1960s. It looks like they are trying to do it again.

The bureau's Cointelpro (Counterintelligence Program) was a secret operation the bureau carried out against left-wing groups from 1956 to 1971. It first targeted the Communist Party, and was expanded to the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in 1961 and the "New Left" in 1968. In a secret 1968 memo, longtime FBI director J. Edgar Hoover directed his agents to "expose, disrupt and otherwise neutralize the activities of various new left organizations. We must frustrate every effort of these groups and individuals to consolidate their forces or to recruit new or faithful adherents."

Hoover directed his venom especially at the Black movement, writing that "we must prevent the rise of a new black messiah." The FBI and its accomplices in the Chicago Police Department admitted to the 1969 assassination of Chicago socialist and Black Panther Party leader Fred Hampton in his bed along with his bodyguard Mark Clark. The circumstances around the murders of Martin Luther King—who was harassed by the FBI for years—and Malcolm X remain suspicious.

Although Cointelpro was ended after it was exposed in 1971, and the FBI investigation of the SWP ended in 1976, their practices of government surveillance, infiltration and disruption of radical groups have never gone away.

Most of what we know about Cointelpro resulted from a lawsuit, *Socialist Workers Party vs. The Attorney General*, which the SWP filed in 1973 through its attorney Leonard Boudin, the finest movement constitutional litigator of his time. In 1986, a federal judge in Manhattan awarded the party \$264,000 in damages. The case is extraordinarily important today, when socialist ideas are growing in popularity and socialists are getting elected to office for the first time in almost 100 years.

The FBI first investigated the SWP in 1940. When the bureau added it to Cointelpro in 1961, a secret memorandum said the party had been "openly espousing its line on a local and national basis through running candidates for public office and strongly directing and/or supporting causes such as Castro's Cuba and integrations problems ... in the South."

The discovery aspect of the SWP lawsuit took eight years and yielded an astounding 10 million pages of documents. The judge



Fred Hampton, a leader of Chicago's Black Panther Party who was killed during an FBI-sponsored police raid:
"You can jail a revolutionary, but you can't jail the revolution."

told Boudin, "You are not going to believe what's in these documents."

The SWP came out of the Debsian wing of the Socialist Party in the late 1930s, and advocated a democratic form of socialism unlike what existed in the Soviet Union. At its peak, it had 3,000 members including its youth group. It had a weekly newspaper, a monthly magazine, an international news service, a publishing house, and owned a five-story headquarters in an old ship

such as by handing out flyers at an antiwar demonstration calling the SWP and other organizers cowards for not wanting to get "battle wounds" fighting the "pigs."

The 1986 victory was historic. The federal court decision held that advocating for socialism and being in a socialist organization were legal, ruling that "these disruption operations were directed at the kind of political activities that the SWP had a constitutional right to carry out."

The 1986 trial took three months. What was proved? The FBI had used 300 infiltrators and 1,300 informers over a 15-year period, and burglarized SWP offices and members' homes more than 200 times.

repair building in the West Village. It had chapters in most major cities and on many college campuses. It helped organize some of the largest demonstrations against the Vietnam war.

The 1986 trial took three months. What was proved? The FBI had used 300 infiltrators and 1,300 informers over a 15-year period, and burglarized SWP offices and members' homes more than 200 times. Wiretaps had been employed for 20,000 days and listening devices for 12,000. Landlords were contacted in an effort to get people evicted and workplaces were visited in order to get people fired.

The agents were also instructed to stir up mistrust in the movement and create antagonistic factions inside the party, such as by sending anonymous letters to a prominent black SWP member that he and his fellow "party monkeys" should leave and join the Black Panthers. Agents tried to get the party to engage in illegal activities,

"For the first time the FBI's disruptions, surreptitious entries and use of informers have been found unconstitutional," the *Nation* magazine wrote. "All in all, it amounted to a domestic contra operation against a peaceful political organization, for no reason other than its ideological orientation."

The FBI had played its role as the "political police of the national government," Noam Chomsky wrote. The federal government, represented by then-U.S. Attorney Rudolph Giuliani, maintained to the bitter end that it had a right to undermine an organization just because of its ideas. No government official who participated in the campaign against the SWP was ever prosecuted, and no congressional hearings were ever held.

In the post-9/11 era, even the modest legal restraints that were imposed on law enforcement surveillance and infiltration of political activity during the 1970s have

been tossed aside. The surveillance state has grown ever larger with the creation of a Department of Homeland Security that works closely with the FBI and local police departments to monitor lawful political dissent.

The FBI has already infiltrated Muslim mosques and admitted to a program targeting those whom they call "black identity extremists," that is, black people organizing to oppose police violence. Under Obama, the FBI and Homeland Security worked closely with local police departments in the fall of 2011 to monitor and later break up Occupy encampments in various cities.

We need to build solid organizations that can withstand government attempts at disruption. Here are some key practices to remember:

Don't say anything on social media or other electronic communications you would not want the government to see. They have access to all of it when they want it.

Within our movements, don't turn political disagreements into personal feuds. Don't engage in needlessly disruptive behavior—and be wary of those who do so on a regular basis. The government has a long history of using infiltrators to sow strife within left organizations.

Socialism is no longer a dirty word. We are growing in numbers and strength. It would be naïve to think that the powers that be are not cognizant of the threats to their power and privilege and are not taking steps to block it.

Michael Steven Smith is a past board member of the Center for Constitutional Rights. He co-hosts the nationally broadcast weekly radio show Law and Disorder with Heidi Boghosian and is the author of the forthcoming book Lawyers For the Left: In the Courts, In the Streets, and On the Air.

The King We Would Rather Forget

By John Marciano

On Nov. 9, 1967, Dr. King gave the Annual Convocation address of the Graduate Student Association (GSA) at SUNY Buffalo. On behalf of the GSA, I was co-organizer of the event and his driver that evening. This speech was seven months after his historic “Beyond Vietnam” oration at New York’s Riverside Church in which he condemned that war. That evening, we discussed the harsh attacks he received for his opposition. King calmly and patiently explained that he opposed the Vietnam conflict because conscience demanded it; he resolutely stayed the course until his assassination five months later.

“Beyond Vietnam” is perhaps his greatest speech, although unknown to most Americans compared with his “I Have a Dream” oration at the August 1963 March for Freedom and Jobs in Washington. Those who have heard or watched King’s magnificent oration that day are deeply moved, but to this day little is known about the pre-march “apprehension [and] dread” of the corporate media and political establishment. President Kennedy ordered 4,000 troops to be “assembled in the suburbs, backed by 15,000 paratroopers” of the 82nd Airborne Division in North Carolina; his aide was ready “to cut the power to the public-address system if rally speeches proved incendiary”; Washington banned all alcohol sales for the first time since Prohibition; and hospitals prepared “for riot casualties.” The event was a huge success: it drew a

record crowd of some 250,000 people in a marvelous and peaceful show of support for justice (Taylor Branch, “Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years 1954-63”).

Four years later, King articulated powerful truths about the War in Vietnam and this nation. He laid his firm opposition to the war squarely on the shoulders of the U.S. government—which had denied the Vietnamese their right to independence, aided brutal French colonialism there, created and supported Diem’s dictatorship in South Vietnam, and violated the 1954 Geneva Agreement.

King denounced the United States as “the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today,” and saw the war was “a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit.” Later that spring, he asserted that “the evils of racism, economic exploitation and militarism are all tied together”: We could not “get rid of one without getting rid of the others [and] the

whole structure of American life must be changed.” He stated that the injustice of the conflict was inextricably linked to the African-American struggle for civil rights. The war was an enemy of poor people because it diverted money that could be used to mitigate the effects of poverty. And the poor, especially the African-American poor, were being killed or maimed in higher proportions than their representation in the U.S. population (Southern Christian Leadership Conference Report, 1967).

King’s speech elicited vicious attacks by the political and corporate media establishment and civil rights leaders. *Life Magazine* stated, “Much of his speech was a demagogic slander that sounded like a script for Radio Hanoi.” *The New York Times* called his effort to link civil rights and opposition to the war a “disservice to both. The moral issues in Vietnam are less clear-cut than he suggests.” It concluded that there were “no simple or easy

answers to the war in Vietnam or to racial injustice in this country.” The Washington Post claimed that some of his assertions were “sheer inventions of unsupported fantasy”; that King had “diminished his usefulness to his cause, to his country and to his people.” The corporate media

The New York Times called [King’s] effort to link civil rights and opposition to the war a ‘disservice to both.’

and political condemnation of King accurately reflected public sentiment; a Harris poll taken in May 1967 revealed that 73 percent of Americans opposed his antiwar position, including 50 percent of African-Americans.

If we wish to pay tribute to Dr. King, we should read (or reread) his “Beyond Vietnam” speech, and abandon the myths about him and the movement for justice and peace to which he dedicated his life. We do a grave injustice to his legacy and that struggle by revising the actual history of the era, and by failing to fully understand and confront the economic exploitation, militarism, and racism that he condemned—which continue to poison this nation.

John Marciano wrote *American War in Vietnam: Crime or Commemoration* and co-wrote *Lessons of the Vietnam War* with William Griffen. He is professor emeritus at SUNY Cortland.



King delivering his speech “Beyond Vietnam” at New York City’s Riverside Church in 1967. Photo: John C. Goodwin, *TIME Magazine*.

I Take a Knee

By Sam Wright

*America, I love ya, But
In the face of police brutality,
I Take a Knee.
And I Take a Knee,
When you sell arms to the Saudis to starve and kill
Yemenis.
And I Take a Knee, and bow my head in shame,
When Israeli soldiers snipe Palestinians, then claim the
victims are to blame.*

*America, I love ya, But
Stop calling every soldier and cop a hero!
Guns are not heroic and I never asked anyone to go to
war for me!
Nor did I ask those who serve and protect to kill
someone for stealing a TV.
I’ve never called minorities a blight, nor said that
foreigners threaten my rights.
And I never once condoned a bullet in the back, just
because a man is black.
America, what perversions your subtle propaganda is
meant to instill:
Teaching our children to hate, conquer, and kill in
whatever theater you will.*

*America, I love ya, But
It’s time to get it right:*

*It’s the teacher, the social worker, the public defender
who are the heroes here;
It is they who man the trenches, they who tend the weak
and allay their fears.
It is they who toil for a pittance, dedicate themselves to
the greater good.
It is they who know the difference between how we act
and how we should.
They are in the game for the long haul and none better
know the score,
It’s just that they measure success by giving, not by
taking more.*

*American, I love ya, But
I Take a Knee
When you talk about building a barrier, a fence, some
grotesque hateful wall,
as if Justice is measured by the height of obstacles built
to bar the thrall.
And I take a knee when you declare it’s your duty to tear
innocent children
from their parents’ arms, then claim things ain’t quite as
bad as they seem,
after all, those brown folks have no right to claim our
American Dream.*

*America, I love ya, But
I Take a Knee,
Because you’ve taken your eye off the ball:
You vilify the protestor who’s taken to the streets, and
demonize the “socialist” in your pithy snarky tweets.
What right have others, you ask, to redistribute your
hard-earned bucks?*

*When the formula for success, or so you’ve been taught
to believe,
is sweat and just a touch of (self-righteous, pale-skinned)
luck.*

*Wake up America! Don’t you know I love you too?
That every star on Old Glory represents a state ... of
mind, hopeful and true.
You’ve settled for lip service to the poor, the out-of-work,
the disenfranchised.
You’ve become a mouthpiece for the capitalists,
given a green light to their greed,
While millions live in poverty, go hungry, see no way to
succeed.*

*America, I love ya, But
When I Take a Knee,
I doubt your indignation allows you to see me!
I suspect you see a terrorist, an ingrate attacking the
Red, White, and Blue.
I was hoping you’d come to realize
it isn’t only for me that I kneel, it’s just as much for you.*

*Yes, America, I’m a dreamer,
So I shall continue to Take a Knee!
It’s more dignified than begging
or groveling on the floor,
I’ve set my sights on Kneeling,
I Will Stand For It No More!*

Sam Wright is a Toledo, Ohio, writer and activist.



Mount Denali.

Planet in Crisis

... continued from page 1

While on St. Paul, I spoke with many tribal elders who told me stories about fewer fish and sea birds, harsher storms and warming temperatures, but what struck me most deeply were their accounts of plummeting fur seal populations. Seal mothers, they said, had to swim so much farther to find food for their pups that the babies were starving to death before they could make it back.

Just before flying to St. Paul, I met with Bruce Wright in Anchorage, Alaska. He's a senior scientist with the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association, has worked for the National Marine Fisheries Service, and was a section chief for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for 11 years. "We're not going to stop this train wreck," he assures me grimly.

'This [explosion of geologic change] exceeds the ability for normal adaptation. We've shoved it into overdrive and taken our hands off the wheel.'

"We are not even trying to slow down the production of CO₂ [carbon dioxide], and there is already enough CO₂ in the atmosphere."

While describing the warming, ever more acidic waters around Alaska and the harm being caused to the marine food web, he recalled a moment approximately 250 million years ago when the oceans underwent similar changes and the planet experienced mass extinction events "driven by ocean acidity. The Permian mass extinction where 90 percent of the species were wiped out, that is what we are looking at now."

I wrap up the interview with a heavy heart, place my laptop in my satchel, put on my jacket, and shake his hand. Knowing I'm about to fly to St. Paul, Wright has one final thing to tell me as he

walks me out: "The Pribilofs were the last place mammoths survived because there weren't any people out there to hunt them. We've never experienced this, where we are headed. Maybe the islands will become a refuge for a population of humans."

The Loss Upon Us

For at least two decades, I've found my solace in the mountains. I lived in Alaska from 1996 to 2006 and more than a year of my life has been spent climbing on the glaciers of Denali and other peaks in the Alaska Range. Yet that was a bittersweet time for me as the dramatic impacts of climate change were quickly becoming apparent, including quickly receding glaciers and warmer winter temperatures.

After years of war and then climate-change reporting, I regularly withdrew to the mountains to catch my breath. As I filled my lungs with alpine air, my heart would settle down and I could feel myself

root back into the Earth.

Later, my book research would take me back onto Denali's fast-shrinking glaciers and also to Glacier National Park in Montana. There I met Dr. Dan Fagre, a U.S. Geological Survey research ecologist and director of the Climate Change in Mountain Ecosystems Project. "This is an explosion," he assured me, "a nuclear explosion of geologic change. This ... exceeds the ability for normal adaptation. We've shoved it into overdrive and taken our hands off the wheel." Despite its name, the park he studies is essentially guaranteed not to have any active glaciers by 2030, only 11 years from now.

My research also took me to the University of Miami, Coral Gables, where I met the chair of the Department of Geological Science, Harold Wanless,

an expert in sea-level rise.

I asked him what he would say to people who think we still have time to mitigate the impacts of runaway climate change. "We can't undo this," he replied. "How are you going to cool down the ocean? We're already there."

As if to underscore the point, Wanless told me that, in the past, carbon dioxide had varied from roughly 180 to 280 parts per million (ppm) in the atmosphere as the Earth shifted from glacial to interglacial periods. Linked to this 100-ppm fluctuation was about a 100-foot change in sea level. "Every 100-ppm CO₂ increase in the atmosphere gives us 100 feet of sea-level rise," he told me. "This happened when we went in and out of the Ice Age."

As I knew, since the industrial revolution began, atmospheric CO₂ has already increased from 280 to 410 ppm. "That's 130 ppm in just the last 200 years," I pointed out to him. "That's 130 feet of sea-level rise that's already baked into Earth's climate system."

He looked at me and nodded grimly. I couldn't help thinking of that as a nod goodbye to coastal cities from Miami to Shanghai.

In July 2017, I traveled to Camp 41 in the heart of the Brazilian Amazon rainforest, part of a project founded four decades ago by Thomas Lovejoy, known to many as the "godfather of biodiversity." While visiting him, I also met Vitek Jirinec, an ornithologist from the Czech Republic who had held 11 different wildlife positions from Alaska to Jamaica. In the process, he became all too well acquainted with the signs of biological collapse among the birds he was studying. He'd watched as some Amazon populations like that of the black-tailed leaftosser declined by 95 percent; he'd observed how mosquitoes in Hawaii were killing off native bird populations; he'd explored how saltwater intrusion into Alaska's permafrost was changing bird habitats there.

His tone turned somber as we discussed his research and a note of anger slowly crept into his voice. "The problem of animal and plant populations left

marooned within various fragments [of their habitat] under circumstances that are untenable for the long term has begun showing up all over the land surface of the planet. The familiar questions recur: How many mountain gorillas inhabit the forested slopes of the Virunga volcanoes, along the shared borders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, and Rwanda? How many tigers live in the Sariska Tiger Reserve of northwestern India? How many are left? How long can they survive?"

As he continued, the anger in his voice became palpable, especially when he began discussing how "island biogeography" had come to the mainland and what was happening to animal populations marooned by human development on fragments of land in places like the Amazon. "How many grizzly bears occupy the North Cascades ecosystem, a discrete patch of mountain forest along the

continued on page 18 ...

Water Writes

*We're taught the Creator made everything
And in all we have there is life
The trees, the rocks, the air we breathe
Each has their own way to write*

*The skies open up with rain
The Grandfathers provide the heat
The winged sing their songs
The drums talk in a beat*

*The streams carry the life of us all
The oceans carry a mighty fight
It's not a splash or spray from a falls
Listen closely, it's how our waters write*

Richie Plass
09-11-18

What the Yellow Vests Have in Common with Occupy

Inside the mass protests that are rocking France

By Cole Stangler

PARIS—In Belleville Park, a small, steep public garden with panoramic views of the city, about 40 supporters of the *gilets jaunes* (Yellow Vest) movement have gathered on a chilly January night for what's billed as a "neighborhood popular assembly." It's the third such meet-up to discuss what residents of this historically working-class quarter can do to support the wave of demonstrations.

It's a wide-open question, much like the future of the Yellow Vest revolt. Online anger over a planned doubling of the fuel tax, to about 25 cents a gallon, spilled into the streets in November 2018. The movement took its symbol from the clothing item required of French motorists since 2008. Rooted in rural areas and outer suburbs, the demonstrations quickly spread, thanks in no small part to social media. They soon came to represent deeper frustrations with the rising cost of living. Far from anti-environmental, the movement simply called on the wealthy to pick up the tab for France's transition away from fossil fuels.

After weeks of traffic blockades, disruptive marches and occasionally violent clashes with the police, in December 2018 the Yellow Vests won a series of concessions from President Emmanuel Macron: the cancellation of the fuel tax increase, the scrapping of a separate tax hike on pensions passed the previous year, and the expansion of a state subsidy for low-wage workers that could amount to a monthly pay bump of roughly \$115. Nevertheless, the protests persist.

"I want to keep pissing off the politicians," Jean Robert, a 71-year-

old retiree, tells the group assembled in Belleville Park. "Whatever we can do to keep putting pressure on them."

The Yellow Vest movement is remarkably grassroots, organized independently of political parties and unions, and varying substantially by location. Protesters' calls to tax the rich and to raise wages have earned support from the French Left.

But the Yellow Vests have also won sympathy from the country's far right. The ever-calculating Marine Le Pen of the newly renamed National Rally party (formerly the National Front) has paid it lip service, and a small share of demonstrators

*'I want to keep pissing
off the politicians ...
Whatever we can do to
keep putting pressure
on them.'*

appear to share her warped diagnosis of French society's ills—calling, for instance, on France to exit the United Nations' Global Compact for Migration, which they see as a Trojan horse for mass immigration from Africa and the Middle East.

All that seems far removed from this meeting, though, whose participants are a snapshot of Belleville itself, long inhabited by immigrants and their descendants, especially from North Africa. Attendees are young and old, white and brown, leading a freewheeling two-hour discussion reminiscent of the Occupy movement. It's both exciting and messy: Someone suggests blocking a major food and produce market; another says the movement should focus on economic issues; someone else says residents

should focus on housing speculation and spray graffiti on the offices of real estate agencies. Another speaker tells everyone how much fun he had demonstrating in the city's wealthy neighborhoods.

Yann Le Bihan, a 48-year-old school administrator, takes the floor and mentions a modest decline in public support. While a YouGov study from late November 2018 found 70 percent of the country backed the Yellow Vests, a more recent version of the poll showed 62 percent approval.

"The most important thing you can do is talk to your friends and acquaintances when you hear misinformation about the Yellow Vests," says Le Bihan. "But we also need to work ourselves on our communication, on our talking points."

Not everyone agrees. "This is much bigger than talking points or public relations," Amparo, a 62-year-old schoolteacher who declines to give her last name, says to applause. "We're in the fight of our lives! ... Opinion polls go up and down, the stock market goes up and down, but so what? We're fighting for our lives."

Revolutionary ambitions notwithstanding, several pressing issues loom over the movement today. First, there's the question of the Citizens' Referendum Initiative, known as the RIC. The most prominent version of the proposal would allow French citizens to introduce and authorize legislation, to nullify laws, to revoke legislators and to amend the constitution—all by referendum. Some Yellow Vests consider it the movement's single most important demand, though others seem more suspicious. "It's a super-revolutionary proposal," bellowed one enthusiastic activist at the Belleville meeting—though he was the only one to mention it.

Then, there is the so-called great national debate. Instead of taking up the RIC, the French government has responded to the protests with a series of discussions—online and in person—

designed to address what it views as the country's deep-seated political malaise. They focus on four key themes: taxes and public spending, public services, the fossil-fuel transition and "democracy and citizenship," which includes immigration. Most Yellow Vests view the entire endeavor as a sham, a desperate effort from authorities to redirect popular frustrations into an institutionalized dead end. Ultimately, the movement's future could hinge on its capacity to set forth a coherent alternative.

For its part, the group in Belleville has committed to more immediate plans. By the end of the meeting, they've set a gathering point for the weekend's protest in Paris. And they've vowed to find a better location to keep holding their "popular assemblies" over the winter—preferably indoors.

Cole Stangler writes about labor and the environment. His reporting has also appeared in The Nation, VICE, The New Republic, and International Business Times. He lives in Paris. He can be reached at cole@inthesetimes.com. Follow him @colestangler.

NATO

... continued from page 3
military parade, called for people to unify around protests against NATO during their meetings.

The No2NATO2019 coalition, which is organizing protests against NATO, writes:

"... in a grotesque desecration of Rev. King's lifelong dedication to peace, this is the date that the military leaders of NATO have chosen to celebrate NATO's 70th anniversary by holding its annual summit meeting in Washington, D.C. This is a deliberate insult to Rev. King and a clear message that Black lives and the lives of non-European humanity, and indeed the lives of the vast majority, really do not matter."

World BEYOND War is organizing No to NATO—Yes to Peace Festival, which will include an art build, food, music and teach-ins on April 3 and a march from the Martin Luther King, Jr. memorial on April 4.

People are planning strategic, nonviolent protests against NATO's meetings and organizing nonviolent direct action training to prepare for them.

We reflect on the words of Martin Luther King, Jr. who urged us to "re-dedicate ourselves to the long and bitter, but beautiful, struggle for a new world." Protest to end NATO will be a step toward ending what King called "the deadly western arrogance that has poisoned the international atmosphere for so long." It is time for peace to "take precedence over the pursuit of war."

This article was originally published at popularresistance.org.

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'A War I've Lived With My Whole Life'

By Susan Schnall

World War II was for me a very personal war. It was the war in which my father, a Marine, was killed on the island of Guam. It was a war I've lived my whole life. It was the war in which my father felt he had to do his share and help give something to this world. He did, and I never knew him except through pictures and letters and others' memories. It was a war that destroyed my mother and her hopes and dreams and future. And we were just one family of one dead soldier. Every time I watch the news and hear about the casualties—whether, American, Iraqi, Afghan, Syrian, Palestinian—I feel this deep sense of loss for that person, for that family, for that child who lost a mother or a father or a sister or a brother.

From a Father: May 13, 1944

Dearest Susan,

Guess you don't remember your daddy, but he sure remembers you. You were just a little tyke the last time I saw you, and now Mama says you're a big girl.

I have your picture and it sure is nice. But, honey, you want to watch what you do with those beautiful eyes of yours or when you get older you'll cause all kinds of problems when you walk down the street.

Mama says you have been taking good care of her for me, and I'm glad that you're such a good little trooper and follow orders. Your mother is a wonderful woman—in fact there is no one like her in the whole world. But then, you know that, and there's no need for me to tell you.

Honey, do you miss me? I sure miss you. We used to have lots of fun together. When I get home we'll have lots more.

You and I and mother are going to do a lot of wonderful things and have fun.

Well, my little princess, I don't have much else to write about. You were a good girl for sending me all those cards and I love you very much.

Keep up the good work, sweetheart and daddy will be home one of these days. God be with you and watch over you and your mother.

All my love to the sweetest little girl I know,
Dad

From the Marines: August 4, 1944

Deeply regret to inform you that your husband and First Lieutenant Harold N. LeVine was killed in action in the performance of his duty and service of his country. No information available at present regarding disposition of remains. Temporary burial in locality where death occurred probable. You will be promptly furnished any additional information received. To prevent possible aid to our enemies do not divulge the name of his ship or station. Please accept my heartfelt sympathy. Letter to follow.

From a Husband: March 3, 1944

My beloved wife,

I hope that you shall never read this letter, not because I don't want you to know the contents, but because it will mean that I shall never see you again. You will know the reason why when it is given to you.

It's hard for me to write everything that is in my heart. I'm going into action very soon. I want you to know that I love you more than anything in the world, and, if there is another world other than the one on this earth, I will continue to love you from there.

My life with you has been the happiest years of my life. I've never regretted any moment of it. You have been a perfect wife.

I could write much of old memories and my love, but I know that you know in your heart exactly what I mean.

I have no desire to make requests and demands on you because I do not believe I should control your life now.

I would like, if possible, that my folks would be able to see Susan as often as possible, be able to see her grow up

to be a woman as wonderful as her mother.

As for you, my darling, I want you only to be happy and not to be bound by memories. You have a long life ahead of you and I want you to enjoy it. It is only for that reason that I have fought in this war.

The only reason I wanted to live was to see you and our daughter again. However, the fates have decided otherwise, and perhaps they know best.

Please darling, above all, enjoy your life. It is a precious thing and you should make the most of it. You have Susan and she is something that not many people are blessed with. I want her to grow up happy and get everything out of life, so that she one day may know a love as great as the one we have known.

I have not intended to be dramatic, but I wanted you to know that I'm always thinking of you and always shall.



Do not weep too much, darling, because I feel as though I have done my share and helped to give something to this world. In that respect I have been happy and regretted nothing. I would have wanted things otherwise than they are, but the decision was not up to me.

Goodbye my darling, enjoy your life. Give Susan a last hug and kiss for me.

I'll love you forever,
H

From a Mother and Wife: 1944–1945

The pain has come again and it flows over me in an endless succession of wave after wave. I feel weak and sick as though after a long illness, but this is not the convalescent period—not just yet for it won't release me from its grasp. It is brutal and heavy and dominating, the waves pound on my brain and there is no strength to combat this terror. This is a feeling that is old and new—old as the night they brought the telegram, as new as the horror of each new letter received.

The fear of being alone crowds itself into me again and I cringe in fear from the rooms and the walls of the house.

The heat is leaving my body and cold sweat pours over the flesh. Keep touching familiar objects in the room—concentrate on that and that alone—but the letter was so very clear. Touch the chair and cling to it; stay by it. It is an object that is clear and understandable in this room of terror and silence. Go away from the battlefield. Leave it now just for a little while—just long enough to see through the denseness and the fog, and find a brief respite. Shut your mind to it.

But I should have been there. Why wasn't I there? They left you and went away and I was here clear across the seas. Perhaps in that moment I was smiling at something but, oh my darling, I did not know. Yes, I must have been doing something quite senseless and useless while on the field you lay there helpless and in pain. Yes, they left you

because others must be attended. But they left you there not knowing that you were the dawn of the new world and the sun and the earth—the beginning and ending of all beautiful things. But there was not time for such thoughts. That was war and men must die and so you died.

They say you passed away on July 22, 1944, and you died but once, for you were a hero. Only cowards die a thousand deaths, and so I die each time I see the writing, and the battlefield is there, and only through sickness in my body can the realization come. It is impossible not to die at once.

There, we've come to it again—the release is only in that. It lies in one direction and the path is very clear to me. I want to walk it now before the sickness comes again. If I can just begin on the road, I know that the light lies at the end—illuminated by a bright star, for you are there. Then I can reach out to you and touch you—healing your wounds and the pain of having been alone.

I cannot go back and I do not know how to go forward.
Anne LeVine

From a Daughter: 2015

It's Sunday: Cemetery Day

It's Sunday morning in Chicago. Papa and I drive to pick up lox, smoked whitefish, sable, cream cheese and bagels, and then we get the three Sunday newspapers and go home.

Papa dresses as usual in his suit, tie, and hat; Nana puts on her suit and heels, and we leave for our Sunday afternoon at Rosehill Cemetery to visit their son, my father. Papa has the radio tuned to a mystery-detective program. We stop at this small florist to pick up flowers. When we arrive at the cemetery gates, Papa turns off the radio. It's important to be quiet and respectful among the dead. I am six or seven or 13, but I've learned to walk cautiously in the cemetery—never on the graves; always aware of headstones and markers. Papa drives slowly along through the windy roads, huge bushes and old oak trees, old mausoleums. It's quiet and peaceful here among the dead.

We park and leave the car; Papa carries the flowers. In winter we bring pansies. My papa is meticulous in everything he does: He goes to the grave, takes the old wilted flowers from the tin container in the ground, pours out the old water, and carefully fills the container with fresh water and the bouquet, putting them back at the headstone. Nana falls to her knees, crying: "Harold, Harold, look. Here's Susie—your daughter—see how she's growing." Papa takes my hand and we walk away to visit other relatives as Nana continues to talk with her son, sobbing at times. In her beautiful suit, open-toed shoes, kneeling in her nylons next to the grave. At times, I think she leans over to hug him—over the grave—her youngest son, her beautiful Harold.

And Papa, strong, stubborn Papa, so composed—and me, visiting my father on Sunday.

Years later, when I spoke with my mother about those visits, she wanted to know why I never mentioned them to her. I replied: "I don't know. I thought that's what kids did on Sundays, visit their fathers."

Susan Schnall

From the *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 12, 1966 A Girl's Tribute to Her Father

A 22-year-old Stanford senior this week paid a unique tribute to her hero father who died in action as a Marine in World War II. She is Susan Marina LeVine. Wishing to honor the memory of her father, Harold, who paid the supreme sacrifice for his country when she was nine months old, Susan Marina enrolled in the Navy Nurse Corps and will discard her campus dress for a uniform as soon as she is graduated. It will be her way of demonstrating her desire to continue her father's fight for freedom and justice for America and in the world.

Susan Schnall is a co-coordinator of the Vietnam Agent Orange Relief & Responsibility Campaign. She is a professor at ONYU and a member of Vietnam Veterans Against the War. She is president of Veterans For Peace Chapter 34, New York City.



New Hampshire activists protest outside the Elbit facility. Photo: CODEPINK

Israeli Militarism and U.S. Border Imperialism

Two Crimes, One Weapons Company

By Ariel Gold and Ursula Rozum

In January, 43-year-old Amal al-Taramsi became the third woman, along with a 14-year-old child and medic Razan al-Najjar, to be killed in Gaza by Israeli snipers since the Great March of Return began over nine months ago.

Israel has just announced they will block Qatari funds from entering Gaza despite the 7-mile-long densely populated enclave already having reached a status of non-livability. Medicine is close to running out, 97 percent of the water is contaminated by sewage and saline and unfit for consumption, 54 percent of the labor force (70 percent of Gaza youth) are unemployed, and 31.5 percent of households are either severely or moderately food insecure. Since March 30, 2018, over 250 people have been killed as the population desperately risks their lives in the hopes of achieving freedom.

At the U.S.-Mexico border the situation is also desperate: Families trying to enter and seek refuge are being tear-gassed and separated from their children. The dire circumstances that have caused thousands to flee on foot from their homes in Honduras and Guatemala are not dissimilar from the crises of violence, poverty, and food insecurity in Gaza.

From the suffering both in Gaza and at the U.S.-Mexico border, weapons giant Elbit Systems is reaping profits.

Elbit Systems is Israel's largest weapons company and has helped make Israel the world's leading exporter of military and surveillance drones. As of 2017, Elbit was the 28th-largest weapons manufacturing company in the world, bringing in \$3.38 billion in revenue. Elbit subsidiary Israeli Military Industries (IMI) produces cruise missiles, cluster bombs, bullets for Israeli snipers, and many more tools of death.

Elbit helps ensure that the slaughter and

repression of Palestinians by the Israeli government is as efficient as possible. Along with ammunition, weaponized drones that carry out direct attacks, and surveillance drones that guide fighter jets and snipers in Gaza, in the West Bank, Elbit provides surveillance technology for Israel's apartheid wall in the West Bank and, through a contract with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the U.S.-Mexico border.

For the past 14 years, Elbit has brought its brand of violent border surveillance to the U.S.-Mexico border. In 2004, Hermes drones manufactured by Israel's Elbit Systems were the first unmanned aerial surveillance vehicles deployed at the U.S. southern border. U.S. Customs and Border protection began contracting with Elbit Systems in 2014 for sensors, cameras, radars and "integrated fixed towers" in the desert along the Arizona border with Mexico. The towers are based on the technology used by Elbit for surveillance along Israel's apartheid wall in the West Bank, which separates Palestinians from their lands and families. The towers in the Arizona borderlands, like the border itself, are built on the lands of the indigenous people of the area, the Tohono O'odam, many of whom have actively organized against the construction of the border wall and towers on their lands.

The Elbit surveillance towers in southeast Arizona are intentionally positioned in the desert, miles away from the border wall, to track and harass migrants once they have crossed the border. According to testimony from migrants, when Border Patrol locates groups of people who have crossed, they fly their helicopters close to the ground to intentionally kick up dust. This tactic scares and scatters migrants traveling in groups, separating them into the desert and decreasing their chances of survival.

The Elbit towers in the Arizona desert are rooted in a sinister 1994 Clinton-era strategy of "Prevention Through Deterrence," which aimed to prevent illegal immigration by sealing off urban entry points into the United States such as those in San Diego and El Paso. The intention was to funnel migrants to cross through dangerous wilderness routes where they knew they would risk injury, dehydration, heat stroke, exhaustion, and hypothermia.

The logic of deterring migration by making the journey more dangerous has not only failed to decrease migration, the policy has increased migrant deaths. According to Border Patrol, over 6,000 people have died trying to cross the desert since the 1990s. Volunteers from organizations like No More Deaths hike the trails and leave water, food, socks, blankets, and other necessary supplies. In acts of even further cruelty, Border Patrol agents are known to destroy the water containers. Volunteers from No More Deaths were just convicted of federal charges for providing aid to undocumented migrants.

U.S. and Israeli military contractors are making billions in profits from a system that activists have come to call "border imperialism." A term coined by anthropologist Harsha Walia, border imperialism conceptualizes how capitalism and racism manifest in the form of militarized border enforcement to control land, maintain inequality and oppression, and reinforce white European cultural dominance (a.k.a. white supremacy) around the world. This is the case in Israel, where Elbit and U.S. military contractors allow Israel to maintain and expand its occupation of Palestinian lands, and in the Americas, where politically imposed borders are becoming increasingly militarized and migration is criminalized.

Elbit Systems, like the rest of the weapons manufacturing industry, is making a fortune from death and repression. They sell weapons across the world, and in the United States, they donate money to congressional campaigns every year in order to maintain access to U.S. government contracts.

The movement to divest from war and repression is growing. Swedish and

Norwegian pensions funds divested from Elbit in 2009, and over the last decade, activists around the world have pushed universities and banks around the world to follow suit. On Dec. 21, 2018, after a successful campaign by UK activists, HSBC bank announced that it would divest from Elbit systems, citing concerns over human rights and Elbit's manufacturing of cluster munitions.

Since CODEPINK launched its Stop Elbit campaign less than a year ago, numerous actions have taken place, including petitions, meetings asking Senator Janeen Shaheen—the largest Democratic recipient of Elbit campaign contributions—to stop taking Elbit money, and creative protests calling for a consumer boycott of the high-tech cycling glasses produced by Elbit subsidiary EverySight.

CODEPINK is actively campaigning to get investment banks—such as Bank of New York Mellon, which claims to be committed to socially responsible investment and U.N. Sustainable Development goals—to divest from Elbit and other corporations that profit from death and repression, such as Lockheed Martin and CoreCivic, the largest for-profit immigrant detention corporation in the country.

Israel is able to maintain its occupation and repression of Palestinian people through technology from companies like Elbit and through military aid and diplomatic support from the United States. We must continue to call for an end to unconditional U.S. military aid to Israel, even though a military embargo is unlikely in the near future. In the meantime, divestment from Elbit Systems and other war profiteers will play a major role in eroding the institutional and economic support that allows Israel to commit war crimes with impunity and the United States to increase border repression.

This article was originally published by Mondoweiss.

Ariel Gold is the national co-director for CODEPINK and leads their campaigns for Palestinian rights. Ursula Rozum is CODEPINK's Palestine Campaigns Coordinator. In November 2018, she visited the Arizona borderlands to learn about the impact of Elbit surveillance towers.



Activists occupy the rooftop of Israeli drone factory in Kent, England.



By Tarak Kauff

In February, my fellow *Peace in Our Times* editor Ellen Davidson and I traveled to Tijuana, Mexico, from Woodstock, N.Y., to deliver aid money collected for the deported veterans and for asylum seekers stranded at the border. We were inspired by stories from Mike Tork's organizing experiences at the School of the Americas Watch in Nogales and in Tijuana (see story below)

We spent time with the deported veterans and got to know the mainstays of the chapter—Hector Lopez, Lupita Cibrian, Robert

Vivar, Blanca Viramontes, Victor Juan Hinojosa, Felix Peralta, and others. Our experience confirmed what Mike had told us. These are remarkable, caring people, totally immersed in helping other deported veterans and serving the asylum seekers as much as possible. With Hector and Victor, we visited and brought supplies and much needed funds to the Instituto Madre Asunta, a safe haven for mujeres y niños migrantes—migrant women and children.

We did in-depth interviews with Hector, Lupita, and Robert that we will cover more in subsequent issues.

Hector

After serving six years in the military Hector got caught selling marijuana (now legal in California and other states) and was sent to prison.

When he was about to be released, he said, "Oh, I'm going home. I told my kids, everybody. Then the day before I was going home, they called me in to say, 'Oh no, you're going to immigration hold.' And they told me, 'Have you ever been an employee of the federal government? Have you ever been in the military enlisted?' I told them, 'Yeah, to both of those. I served my country for six years. I have an honorable discharge.' It didn't matter.

"When I got deported, I couldn't find my way around here in Tijuana. It was like somebody dropped me off on the moon. Because I'm an American. I speak English. I did know some Spanish, but it's not the Spanish that people here speak. I wanted to go back home."

Eventually, he made his way back (undocumented) across the border to his family and his life, but after four years, the border police came to his house.

"When the border police came to my house, I said, 'You got the wrong person. I'm a veteran of the United States Armed Forces, I served my country.' I told them when they asked me to go to war



Deported Veterans Meaning for Service

I didn't go to Mexico. I could have. I didn't go to Canada like a lot of my unit did. And the Border Police said, 'Well, that's not our problem.' I'm a veteran of the United States Armed Forces. Doesn't that actually mean anything? It didn't."

In detention, Hector fought his case for three years. "I sold my 18-wheeler truck. We sold our house. My wife got half the money and my half I spent it all on my immigration attorney. I spent over \$100,000 fighting my immigration case. Sold everything I had, I borrowed \$20,000 from my sister, and still I was deported."

Lupita

We asked Lupita, a U.S. citizen, how she got involved with the deported veterans.

"I got involved because of Hector. His mom and my uncle are first cousins. We had met in Madera, California, when we were young. I was 12 years old, and he was a year older than me. It was summer vacation, and it was like my first crush, my first little love. I thought he was like my boyfriend even though we didn't say anything."

Thirty-seven years later, they reconnected. Lupita was living in California; they had both been married but were now single. Through her aunt and uncle she heard about Hector and Lupita's dad said, "Give him Lupita's phone number."

"I was all excited—my heart was like jumping, butterflies in my stomach, I could have been in love—the only sad thing was that they said, before they

left, 'Oh, but one thing is, he's deported.'"

Eventually, they started talking by phone.

"I was like a teenager. I went back to my young years of love. I was like, Oh my god! He called me! So that was it. From then on, we talked every day for hours. In July I went to see him for the first time.

"I had a lot of reprimands from my family, from my kids, you know, because of all the dangers that I might face out there, and warnings, but that love was so strong already and the thing that—the thing that made it easier—he was helping an orphanage. I thought that was wonderful. He's committed to his community. He's healthy. I'm going. And then of course it was also the injustice that he was deported, even though he is a veteran. Helping the community, so I really got involved with that. And I would come every weekend. So it became not only love that motivated me to come down, but also the commitment of helping, because I also wanted to serve my country. I had the same feeling that they have ... because I'm a first-generation Mexican, born in the United States. And I know what commitment to the country means—and I thought, it's wrong these veterans who served the country were deported, and that needs to be corrected.

"I feel that you just can't do that to somebody that is willing to risk their lives, put their lives on the line—for our lives, for our government, for our country—for whatever reason."

The Lesson: Stay Human

By Mike Tork

What started out as a trip to learn firsthand what was happening on the border, and to help provide a little aid to asylum seekers ended up being much more. I met a caring and thoughtful group of men and women in the Unified Deported Veterans/Sgt. Barrios Memorial VFP Chapter 182, Tijuana, Mexico.

What I witnessed was a strong community of Deported Veterans and supporters that set their own struggles aside to help asylum seekers. I saw veterans supporting each other through difficult times. They were so unselfish toward each other and asylum seekers that it made me step back and recognize how important it is that we all remain human no matter how bad it gets. *Seguire siendo humano—stay human.*

These men served their country honorably—some in combat, some highly decorated—but were deported for relatively

minor mistakes they made after being discharged, mistakes like so many fellow veterans made after being discharged. Many of us have been forgiven for our mistakes—they have not. They remain deported, separated from families and friends, paying a disproportionately high price for something they did a long time ago. They have not been given the opportunity to make amends or move forward.

Many grew up in the United States, went to school in the United States, played high school sports in the United States, worked in the United States, and paid taxes in the United States. They did not necessarily join the military to become citizens, as many felt like they were already citizens. Many joined the military because they felt it was their duty. The fact that they were deported after serving their country is incomprehensible to me, because these are the exact people I would want as neighbors and fellow citizens.

Deported veterans and VFP members from San Diego delivered food, water, toilet paper, blankets, gloves, socks, backpacks, and wool caps to asylum seekers at the El Barretal Shelter.

We visited the area known as Little Haiti, where the Church of Iglesia Embajadores de Jesus is being used as a shelter for asylum seekers from Central America and Haiti. We delivered aid to this church because the Deported Veterans chapter had a relationship with the pastor, and because there was a need.

Things on the border are not going to get better soon. As members of the last caravan said, "We are not the first and we won't be the last." The crisis will remain. Real, comprehensive, immigration reform is needed, but in the meantime people are dying and living in unacceptable conditions. We need to remain compassionate.

Mike Tork served in the U.S. Navy Mobile Riverine Force during the Viet Nam War. He recently retired from working as a marine biologist in Woods Hole, Mass.

... Finding a New Home at the Border



Robert

Robert is an essential member of the Deported Veterans chapter. He was deported but he's not a veteran. His older brother was a Viet Nam veteran and his other brother was a Vietnam-era veteran, so he had this very close connection with veterans.

"I had been in the States since the age of 15 ... when we came to the States, we moved to the U.S. legally, lived there, you know, I was raised there, got my school, got married, had my kids, the whole nine yards. I was productive, worked for the airlines for over 18 years—rose through the ranks from a ticket agent all the way to a regional manager. I ended up experimenting with recreational drugs, cocaine to be more specific."

He was living in Chicago: "Things were not going very good, and I started using more

and more to the point that I started getting in trouble with the law. I had drug addiction. I had a problem. I needed help. I wanted help. So I pled guilty to a charge that I didn't commit so I could be sent to drug rehab. So instead of being sent to drug rehab, they put me in immigration proceedings to be deported."

He was deported to Mexico. "When I got here I couldn't even get a job as a security guard. So three months later I decided to go back to the U.S. undocumented, and I did. I made it. I never used drugs and alcohol again, and I dedicated myself to working, taking care of my family. I bought a new car, we got a home, we were doing really well—until immigration showed up at my door one day portraying to be law enforcement, police department, not immigration."

Robert was at work but

eventually they got him. He was moved to the Santa Ana City jail in California, where "they deported me again after 18 months that I spent fighting my case."

Robert wound up in Tijuana and it was not easy. Back in the states, his wife of 21 years left him, "I couldn't sleep, I couldn't eat. I'd go to work and I'd be working, and all of a sudden I'd have to get up and go put water on my face. I was just freaking out."

Robert started going to church because he realized he needed help. One day, coming out of church he, "saw a sign on the door that said, 'Deported Veterans.' I had heard about deported veterans down here in Mexico. So I went in and I met the guy who was in charge of the place and I just found that the more I got involved with veterans, homeless people, deported children, veterans' children, the better I felt."

This was a familiar story to us—having something positive to focus on taking someone out of his own personal trauma. We've seen this with vets who are coming back from combat or have PTSD; they get involved with Veterans For Peace and the more positive work they do, the better they feel.

Robert went further, "There's something that I would really like to say. Will Griffin [a former U.S. Army paratrooper who served in Iraq and Afghanistan] put this thought in my mind, regarding service in Veterans For Peace. A lot of the veterans, even deported veterans, still say that if they had to they would do it all over again, even though what's happened to them and everything. And they talk about the pride in their service and what they did and everything. Then I heard Will, on a video, talking about when people say, 'Thank you for your service,' how it would upset him, and he would tell them, 'You want to



Upper left: Hector, Victor, Tarak, and Will Van Natta bring supplies donated by the Deported Refugees to the asylum seekers. Center: Graffiti at on the border wall: 'No obstacles can stop us from reaching our dreams; we are Mexican, we are unstoppable.' Above: Robert and Blanca distribute communion wine and wafers at a cross-border mass conducted through the slats of the wall. Below: Lupita, Sammy the dog, Hector, and Robert at the Deported Veterans VFP chapter office. Bottom left: Names of deported veterans on painted on the wall. Bottom right: Mural on the border wall. Photos: Ellen Davidson

thank me for my service? Well, what did I do? I served so that the greedy military-industrial complex can continue to get richer, so that people like Trump can continue to get richer, and countries like Saudi Arabia and Israel can continue to oppress people? Is that what you're thanking me for? Because I helped them to do that? I didn't serve to protect the people of the United States, the constitution. I served that one percent. So no, please don't thank me."

"The reason I mention this," Robert continues, "and I mention Veterans For Peace, is because I tell the guys, being involved with what we're doing—now we really are serving. You're

not serving now to help some wealthy person continue to get richer. You're helping the people you were in the trenches with. Now you can say, when somebody says, 'Thank you for your service,' you can say, 'You know what? You're really welcome, I appreciate that.'"

For more information and videos about deported veterans, visit facebook.com/VeteransWithoutBorders/.

Tarak Kauff is a former U.S. Army paratrooper, a former member of the Veterans For Peace national board of directors, president of Woodstock VFP, and the managing editor of Peace in Our Times.



Venezuela: The U.S.'s 68th Regime Change Disaster

The most valuable way the U.S. can help is to stop making the Venezuelan economy and people scream (on all sides), by lifting its sanctions and abandoning its failed regime change operation.

By Medea Benjamin and Nicolas J. S. Davies

In his masterpiece, *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and C.I.A. Interventions Since World War II*, William Blum, who died in December 2018, wrote chapter-length accounts of 55 U.S. regime change operations against countries around the world, from China (1945–1960s) to Haiti (1986–1994). Noam Chomsky's blurb on the back of the latest edition says simply, "Far and away the best book on the topic." We agree. If you have not read it, please do. It will give you a clearer context for what is happening in Venezuela today, and a better understanding of the world you are living in.

Since *Killing Hope* was published in 1995, the U.S. has conducted at least 13 more regime change operations, several of which are still active: Yugoslavia; Afghanistan; Iraq; the 3rd U.S. invasion of Haiti since WWII; Somalia; Honduras; Libya; Syria; Ukraine; Yemen; Iran; Nicaragua; and now Venezuela.

William Blum noted that the U.S. generally prefers what its planners call "low intensity conflict" over full-scale wars. Only in periods of supreme overconfidence has it launched its most devastating and disastrous wars, from Korea and Vietnam to Afghanistan and Iraq. After its war of mass destruction in Iraq, the U.S. reverted to "low intensity conflict" under Obama's doctrine of covert and proxy war.

Obama conducted even heavier bombing than Bush II, and deployed U.S. special operations forces to 150 countries all over the world, but he made sure that nearly all the bleeding and dying was done by Afghans, Syrians, Iraqis, Somalis, Libyans, Ukrainians, Yemenis and others, not by Americans. What U.S. planners mean by "low intensity conflict" is that it is less intense for Americans.

President Ghani of Afghanistan recently revealed that a staggering 45,000 Afghan security forces have been killed since he took office in 2014, compared with only 72 U.S. and NATO troops. "It shows who has been doing the fighting," Ghani caustically remarked. This disparity is common to every current U.S. war.

This does not mean that the U.S. is any less committed to trying to overthrow governments that reject and resist U.S. imperial sovereignty, especially if those countries contain vast oil reserves. It's no coincidence that two of the main targets of current U.S. regime change operations are Iran and Venezuela, two of the four countries with the largest liquid oil reserves in the world (the others being Saudi Arabia and Iraq).

In practice, "low intensity conflict" involves four tools of regime change: sanctions or economic warfare; propaganda or "information warfare"; covert and proxy war; and aerial bombardment. In Venezuela, the U.S. has used the first and second, with the third and fourth now "on the table," since the first two have created chaos but so far not toppled the government.

The U.S. government has been opposed to Venezuela's socialist revolution since Hugo Chávez was elected in 1998. Unbeknownst to most Americans, Chávez was well loved by poor and working-class Venezuelans for his extraordinary array of social programs that lifted millions out of poverty. Between 1996 and 2010, the level of extreme poverty plummeted from 40 percent to 7 percent. The government also substantially improved healthcare and education, cutting infant mortality by half, reducing the malnutrition rate from 21 percent to 5 percent of the population and eliminating illiteracy. These changes gave Venezuela the lowest level of inequality in the region, based on its Gini coefficient.

Since Chávez' death in 2013, Venezuela has descended

into an economic crisis stemming from a combination of government mismanagement, corruption, sabotage, and the precipitous fall in the price of oil. The oil industry provides 95 percent of Venezuela's exports, so the first thing Venezuela needed when prices crashed in 2014 was international financing to cover huge shortfalls in the budgets of both the government and the national oil company. The strategic objective of U.S. sanctions is to exacerbate the economic crisis by denying Venezuela access to the U.S.-dominated international financial system to roll over existing debt and obtain new financing.

The blocking of Citgo's funds in the U.S. also deprives Venezuela of a billion dollars per year in revenue that it previously received from the export, refining and retail sale of gasoline to American drivers. Canadian economist Joe Emersberger has calculated that the new sanctions Trump unleashed in 2017 cost Venezuela \$6 billion in just their first year. In sum, U.S. sanctions are designed to "make the economy scream" in Venezuela, exactly as President Nixon described the goal of U.S. sanctions against Chile after its people elected Salvador Allende in 1970.

Alfred De Zayas visited Venezuela as a U.N. rapporteur in 2017 and wrote an in-depth report for the United Nations. He criticized Venezuela's dependence on oil, poor governance and corruption, but he found that "economic warfare" by the U.S. and its allies were seriously exacerbating the crisis. "Modern-day economic sanctions and blockades are comparable with medieval sieges of towns," De Zayas wrote. "Twenty-first century sanctions attempt to bring not just a town, but sovereign countries to their knees." He recommended that the International Criminal Court should investigate U.S. sanctions against Venezuela as crimes against humanity. In a recent interview with the *Independent* newspaper in the UK, De Zayas reiterated that U.S. sanctions are killing Venezuelans.

Venezuela's economy has shrunk by about half since 2014, the greatest contraction of a modern economy in peacetime. The World Health Organization (WHO) reported that the average Venezuelan lost an incredible 24 pounds in body weight in 2017.

Mr. De Zayas' successor as U.N. Rapporteur, Idriss Jazairy, issued a statement on Jan. 31, 2019, in which he condemned "coercion" by outside powers as a "violation of all norms of international law." "Sanctions which can lead to starvation and medical shortages are not the answer to the crisis in Venezuela," Mr. Jazairy said, "... precipitating an economic and humanitarian crisis...is

not a foundation for the peaceful settlement of disputes."

While Venezuelans face poverty, preventable disease, malnutrition, and open threats of war by U.S. officials, those same U.S. officials and their corporate sponsors are looking at an almost irresistible gold mine if they can bring Venezuela to its knees: a fire sale of its oil industry to foreign oil companies and the privatization of many other sectors of its economy, from hydroelectric power plants to iron, aluminum, and, yes, actual gold mines. This is not speculation. It is what the U.S.'s new puppet, Juan Guaido, has reportedly promised his American backers if they can overthrow Venezuela's elected government and install him in the presidential palace.

"Modern-day economic sanctions and blockades are comparable with medieval sieges of towns," [Alfred] De Zayas wrote. "Twenty-first century sanctions attempt to bring not just a town, but sovereign countries to their knees."

Oil industry sources have reported that Guaido has "plans to introduce a new national hydrocarbons law that establishes flexible fiscal and contractual terms for projects adapted to oil prices and the oil investment cycle... A new hydrocarbons agency would be created to offer bidding rounds for projects in natural gas and conventional, heavy, and extra-heavy crude."

The U.S. government claims to be acting in the best interests of the Venezuelan people, but over 80 percent of Venezuelans, including many who don't support Maduro, are opposed to the crippling economic sanctions, while 86 percent oppose U.S. or international military intervention.

This generation of Americans has already seen how our government's endless sanctions, coups, and wars have left country after country mired in violence, poverty, and chaos. As the results of these campaigns have become predictably catastrophic for the people of each country targeted, the American officials promoting and carrying them out have a higher and higher bar to meet as they try to answer the obvious question of an increasingly skeptical U.S. and international public:

"How is Venezuela (or Iran or North Korea) different from Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, and at least 63 other countries where U.S. regime change operations have led only to long-lasting violence and chaos?"

Mexico, Uruguay, the Vatican, and many other countries are committed to diplomacy to help the people of Venezuela resolve their political differences and find a peaceful way forward. The most valuable way the United States can help is to stop making the Venezuelan economy and people scream (on all sides), by lifting its sanctions and abandoning its failed and catastrophic regime change operation in Venezuela. But the only things that will force such a radical change in U.S. policy are public outrage, education and organizing, and international solidarity with the people of Venezuela.

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Medea Benjamin, co-founder of CODEPINK for Peace, is the author of Inside Iran: The Real History and Politics of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Kingdom of the Unjust: Behind the U.S.-Saudi Connection. Nicolas J. S. Davies is a researcher for CODEPINK and the author of Blood on Our Hands: The American Invasion and Destruction of Iraq.



How Trump's Attacks on Venezuela Triggered a Revolution in Haiti

By Kim Ives

Chaos reigned in Haiti in February, as people rose up against President Jovenel Moïse over his corruption, arrogance, false promises and straight-faced lies.

But the crisis will not be solved by Moïse's departure, which appears imminent.

Today's revolution shows all the signs of being as profound and unstoppable as the one that took place 33 years ago against dictator Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier and triggered five years of popular tumult.

Despite fierce repression, massacres, a bogus election and three coups d'état, the uprising culminated in the remarkable December 1990 landslide election of anti-imperialist liberation theologian Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

At a time when Nicaragua's left-wing Sandinistas and the Soviet Union had just been vanquished, the Haitian

bridges and set an example for his Latin American neighbors, who were also under the thumb of the United States.

Using Venezuela's vast oil wealth, Chávez began an unprecedented experiment in solidarity and capital seeding, the PetroCaribe Alliance, which was launched in 2005 and eventually spread to 17 nations across the Caribbean and Central America. It provided cheap oil products and favorable credit terms to member nations, throwing them an economic lifeline when oil was selling for \$100 a barrel.

By 2006, Washington had punished the Haitian people for twice electing Aristide (1990, 2000) with two coups d'état (1991, 2004) and two foreign military occupations carried out under the auspices of the United Nations. That year, the Haitian people managed to win a sort of stalemate by electing René Préal (an early Aristide ally) as president.

On the day of his May 14, 2018,



people defeated Washington's election engineering for the first time in Latin America since Salvador Allende's victory in Chile two decades earlier.

Haiti's example inspired a young Venezuelan army officer, Hugo Chávez, to adopt the same playbook. Chávez's election in 1998 helped kick off the "pink tide" of left and center-left governments across South America.

Just as Washington fomented a coup against Aristide on Sept. 30, 1991, it carried out a similar one against Chávez on April 11, 2002. But the latter was thwarted after two days by the Venezuelan people and the army's rank and file.

Despite this victory, Chávez understood that Venezuela's political revolution could not survive alone and that Washington would use its vast subversion machinery and economic might to wear down his project to build "21st-century socialism." Chávez knew his revolution had to build

inauguration, Préal signed up for the PetroCaribe deal, greatly vexing Washington, as revealed by WikiLeaks-obtained secret U.S. diplomatic cables. After two years of struggle, Préal eventually got Venezuelan oil and credit, but Washington made sure to punish him too.

Following the Jan. 12, 2010, earthquake, the Pentagon, State Department, and then-secretary of state Hillary Clinton, with some flunkies from the Haitian elite, virtually took over the Haitian government. In the lead up to the March 2011 election, they pushed out Préal's presidential candidate, Jude Célestin, and put in their own, Michel Martelly.

From 2011 to 2016, the Martelly group went on to embezzle, misspend, and misplace the lion's share of the capital account known as the PetroCaribe Fund, which since its creation in 2008 had basically kept Haiti afloat.

Martelly also used the money to help



his protégé, Jovenel Moïse, come to power on Feb. 7, 2017. Unfortunately for Moïse, having come to power just as Donald Trump did, he was about to become collateral damage in Washington's escalating war against Venezuela.

Surrounded by a gaggle of anti-communist neo-cons, Trump immediately stepped up hostility against Venezuela, slapping far-ranging economic sanctions on Nicolas Maduro's government.

Haiti was already in arrears in its payments to Venezuela, but the U.S. sanctions now made it impossible to pay its PetroCaribe oil bill (or, at least, gave them a golden excuse not to). The Haiti

sponsored motion that said Maduro is "illegitimate," after he won more than two-thirds of the presidential vote last May.

Haitians were already angry about the unbridled corruption, hungry from skyrocketing inflation and unemployment, and frustrated from years of false promises and foreign military humiliation and violence. But this spectacularly cynical betrayal by Moïse and his cronies, in an attempt to win Washington's help to put out the growing fires beneath them, was the last straw.

Surprised and paralyzed by its lack of options (and its own internal squabbles), Washington is now watching with horror

Washington is now watching with horror the not-so-sudden collapse of the rotten political and economic edifice it has built in Haiti over the past 28 years.

PetroCaribe deal effectively ended in October 2017.

Life in Haiti, which was already extremely difficult, now became untenable.

With the Venezuelan crude spigot now closed, Washington's enforcer, the International Monetary Fund, told Moïse he had to raise fuel prices, which he tried to do on July 6 last year. The result was a three-day popular explosion that was the precursor to today's revolt.

At about the same time, a mass movement began asking what had happened to the \$4 billion in Venezuelan oil revenues that Haiti had received over the previous decade. The PetroCaribe Fund was supposed to pay for hospitals, schools, roads, and other social projects, but the people saw virtually nothing accomplished. Two 2017 Senate investigations confirmed that the money had been mostly diverted into other pockets.

So, what was the straw that broke the camel's back? It was Moïse's treachery against the Venezuelans after their exemplary solidarity.

On Jan. 10, 2019, in a vote at the Organization of American States (OAS), Haiti voted in favor of a Washington-

the not-so-sudden collapse of the rotten political and economic edifice it has built in Haiti over the past 28 years since its first coup d'état against Aristide.

The U.S. Embassy is no doubt feverishly seeking to cobble together a stop-gap solution, using the United Nations, the OAS, Brazil, Colombia, and the Haitian elite as its helpers. But the results are likely to be no more durable than they were in the late 1980s.

Ironically, it was Venezuelan solidarity that may have postponed for a decade the political hurricane now engulfing Haiti.

It is fitting that U.S. aggression against Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution has created a cascade of unintended consequences and blowback, fed by the Haitian people's deep sense of gratitude and recognition for Venezuela's contribution to them—just as Chávez and Maduro often said, PetroCaribe was given "to repay the historic debt that Venezuela owes the Haitian people."

Kim Ives is an editor with Haïti Liberté newsweekly, the host of a weekly Haiti show on WBAI-FM, and a filmmaker who has helped produce several documentaries about Haiti.

The U.S. Military is Poisoning Okinawa



U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma sits in a crowded urban area.

By Pat Elder

High concentrations of the deadly compounds per-fluoro-octane sulfonate (PFOS) and per-fluoro-octanoic acid (PFOA), together known as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), have been found in the drinking water in communities adjacent to the U.S. Air Force's Kadena Air Base and the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in the Japanese Prefecture of Okinawa. The chemicals are found in the fire-fighting foam used in routine fire-training exercises on base.

The health effects of exposure to these chemicals include frequent miscarriages and other severe pregnancy complications. They contaminate human breast milk and sicken breast-feeding babies. PFAS contribute to liver damage, kidney cancer, high cholesterol, decreased response to vaccines, and an increased risk of thyroid disease, along with testicular cancer, micro-penis, and low sperm count in males.

Researchers at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health say that an approximate safe dose of PFOS and PFOA in drinking water is 1 part per trillion (ppt).

Meanwhile, municipal water systems in Okinawa have been shown to contain more than 100 times that level, while ground water is contaminated at a level 1,000 times higher. The contamination is not confined to Okinawa. For instance, groundwater at China Lake, Calif., was recently tested at 8 million ppt, according to a little-known report by the Department of Defense. Although few in America who live adjacent to military bases are aware of the contamination, the situation is different in Okinawa, where researchers and activists have been sounding the alarm.

The Okinawans are speaking to us.

The EPA's combined Lifetime Health Advisory (LHA) limit for both chemicals is 70 ppt, while a growing chorus in the

scientific community that aims to protect public health says that 70 ppt is exceedingly high. Bowing to chemical industry pressure, the EPA still does not regulate PFAS. In fact, in early 2018, Scott Pruitt's EPA and the White House frantically sought to block publication of a federal health study on PFAS, after one Trump administration aide warned it would cause a "public relations nightmare."

New toxicological profiles released in June 2018 by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry

[T]he White House frantically sought to block publication of a ... study on PFAS, ... [to avoid a] 'public relations nightmare.'

(ATSDR) has set lifetime drinking water levels of 11 ppt for PFOA and 7 ppt for PFOS.

Okinawan authorities, who represent communities straddling the bases, have been recently denied access to the source of the ongoing contamination. The Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) does not give Japanese authorities access to U.S. bases, preventing them from investigating sources of such contamination. The SOFA states, "Within the facilities and areas, the United States may take all the measures necessary for their establishment, operation, safeguarding and control."

The SOFA differs from those in force in European nations like Germany, where local authorities are allowed to enter bases. According to Japan's SOFA, Japanese officials may not conduct investigations without U.S. consent. In Germany they can.

The refusal of the U.S. military to allow

Japan's officials access to the bases hinders Japanese officials from properly addressing problems caused by the bases. No wonder most Okinawans and many Japanese oppose new military base construction.

Disregarding domestic and international laws and the Okinawa Prefectural government's cancellation of the permit for reclamation works, the compliant Japanese central government has just started construction on a massive U.S. airstrip on the beautiful Oura Bay in Henoko. Eighty percent of the Okinawan people oppose the construction. Accordingly, they demonstrated their opposition by electing Gov. Denny Tamaki in September of 2018. Like his predecessor Takeshi Onaga, Governor Tamaki has said "No!" to Tokyo. Tokyo's actions against Tamaki and his government are "discriminatory, undemocratic and even illegal," in the words of Okinawa affairs expert Gavan McCormack.

Exactly how much Tamaki is going to resist Tokyo and Washington remains to be seen. Although he is opposed to the Henoko project, Tamaki has declared his general support for shared Japanese-American military bases.

For generations, Okinawans have demanded the closure of U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma and for 20 years have opposed the idea of replacing Futenma with a new base in Henoko. Futenma is an abomination, disturbingly located in the center of densely populated Ginowan. Residents have been terrorized by the U.S. presence. Their eardrums have been split. They have been raped and poisoned and held captive in their own land. Many Okinawans view the Japanese government and the United States as occupying forces. Okinawa accounts for less than one percent of Japan's total land area but hosts more than half of the approximately 47,000 U.S. military personnel stationed in Japan.

Instead of closing the base, the American overlords have decided to build a new base 35 miles north, in Henoko,

while abandoning seriously contaminated Futenma. Governor Tamaki is appealing to the world, "Without solving issues related to democracy in Okinawa, the U.S.-Japan security alliance is going to be very, very vulnerable."

In a referendum Feb. 24, more than 70 percent of voters opposed construction of the new base in relatively unspoiled Henoko. The vast majority of islanders want the U.S. military to leave permanently and immediately—and they want the United States to clean up the mess they've made. A widely circulated petition to President Trump demanded cessation of work on Henoko until the referendum was held.

The Numbers on PFAS Contamination

According to a Marine Corps document obtained by British journalist Jon Mitchell in February 2016, PFOS at a concentration of 27,000 ppt and PFOA at a concentration of 1,800 ppt were detected when investigating the sewage in the firefighting training area on U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma.

The Okinawan Prefectural Government has identified 15 rivers and water treatment facilities with dangerous levels of PFOS and PFOA contamination, exceeding the EPA's combined Lifetime Health Advisory limit of 70 ppt.

In November 2018, Okinawa Prefectural Government officials reported that 2,000 ppt of the chemicals were detected at the Chunnagā Spring Water Site (Wakimizu Chunnagā) in Kiyuna, Ginowan City. In the summer 2016 survey, 1,300 ppt of the compounds were discovered at the same site.

The Chatan plant supplies water to Chatan Town, Okinawa City, Kitanakagusuku Village, Nakagusuku Village, Urasoe City, and Naha City. In 2015, the water at the Chatan Water Treatment Plant measured up to 120 ppt for PFAS, exceeding EPA guidelines. Furthermore, the Dakujakugawa River that runs through the base was found to contain 1,379 ppt of PFAS.

Groundwater containing PFAS near the base has been detected at these levels:

Winter survey 2017	ng/L
Hyakāgā	190 ppt
Mendakarihijāgā	680 ppt
Ogumuya River	100 ppt
Isaufugā	290 ppt
Furuchingā upstream—Ogumuya River	83 ppt

The topography is such that polluted Ginowan City is lower on the ocean side, (northwest) of the Futenma Airbase, so the rain that falls throughout the area and on the runway contaminates this side much more than the communities on higher ground straddling Route 330 on the southeast side of the base. This scenario is common in vulnerable communities adjacent to U.S. airbases around the world.

The relatively porous limestone soil found throughout Okinawa allows the contamination to spread over large areas.

When the Okinawa Defense Bureau approached U.S. military officials to discuss these findings and other issues, the U.S. military rejected the meeting, saying

continued on page 19...

Leaking Jet Fuel Threatens Hawaii, Not North Korean Missiles

It's time for the U.S. military to retire the leaking Red Hill Storage tanks—and protect our precious water supply

By Ann Wright

After the big North Korean missile scare in Hawaii a year ago, one would think that missiles are the greatest threat to the island of Oahu. Yet, it's not missiles that are the threat, it's our own U.S. military and its massive jet fuel storage tanks that are leaking into Oahu's drinking water aquifer.

A complex of mammoth 20-story military jet fuel storage tanks buried 20 stories down in a bluff called Red Hill is perched only 100 feet above Honolulu's water supply. The walls on the 75-year-old jet fuel tanks are now so thin that the edge of a dime is thicker. Each of the 20 tanks holds 12.5 million gallons of jet fuel, although 18 are in operation now. Two-hundred and twenty-five million gallons of jet fuel are a mere 100 feet from causing a catastrophic disaster for the island of Oahu.

Disaster struck in 2014, when 27,000 gallons of jet fuel leaked from a tank that had been repaired with a welded patch. The welding gave way and tens of thousands of gallons of fuel leaked into the water supply. Studies have documented leaks dating back to 1947, the continued corrosion of the tank liners, and the risk of a catastrophic fuel release.

Concerned citizens on the island have been trying for decades to get the U.S. Navy remove the dangerous tanks. The military states that the underground fuel tanks are of strategic importance to national security and they are being maintained as well as 75-year old tanks can be. Yet those who live on Oahu say: "That's not good enough! You can't have national security by jeopardizing the health security of your citizens."

It is not surprising that the Navy has made little effort to remove the tanks and put replacements in a less dangerous place. The military's hold on the island of Oahu and its politicians is strong both psychologically and economically. Oahu is filled with military bases and accompanying corporations that supply the military with equipment and services.

Hawaii is one of the most militarized states in the nation and Oahu is one of the most militarized islands with seven major bases and a total of 36,620 military personnel.

When the 64,000 military family members and military contractors are added to the active-duty military, the military-industrial complex on Oahu numbers about 100,000, 10 percent of Oahu's total population of 988,000. The state of Hawaii has only 1.4 million citizens.

Construction of the military installations on the island of Oahu began soon after the overthrow of the sovereign nation of Hawaii by U.S. businessmen and a small contingent of U.S. Marines:

- Pearl Harbor Naval Base, headquarters of the U.S. Pacific Fleet Navy and homeport for 25 warships, 15 attack submarines, nine guided-missile destroyers, and a guided-missile cruiser;
- Hickam Air Force Base, headquarters of the U.S. Pacific Air Forces, with squadrons of F-15s, F22, C-17 and B-2 bombers;
- Kaneohe Marine Base, with a Marine Air Station and three Marine regiments;
- Schofield Barracks, home to the 25th Infantry Division;
- The Tropic Regions Test Center (TRTC);
- Camp Smith, headquarters of the United Indo-Pacific

Command (responsible for all U.S. military activity in the greater Asia and Pacific region including India) and headquarters of the U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific;

- Fort Shafter, headquarters for the U.S. Army Pacific;
- Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, a military educational facility for military and civilian officials from Asia and the Pacific;
- Tripler Army Medical Center and Veterans Administration Medical Center;
- U.S. Coast Guard 14th District for the Pacific (while not part of the Department of Defense, during wartime, the Coast Guard can go under command of DOD), which includes three 225-foot buoy tenders, four 110-foot patrol boats, two 87-foot coastal patrol boats, four small boat stations, two sector commands, an air station, a Far East command, five detachments, and over 400 aids to navigation.

Major military installations have been built on other



U.S. Military Base in Oahu, Hawaii. Photo: MilitaryBases.com.

islands of Hawaii. The Puhakaloa Training Area, the largest U.S. military training area in the world with 133,000 acres for artillery, mortar, small arms and crew-served weapons firing, is located on the Big Island of Hawaii. Air Force bombers flying from the continental United States drop ordnance on the area between the two volcanoes of the island of Hawaii.

On the island of Kauai, the Pacific Missile Range Facility Barking Sands (PMRF) is the world's largest range capable of supporting surface, submarines, aircraft, and space operations simultaneously. PMRF has over 1,100 square miles of instrumented underwater range and over 42,000 square miles of controlled airspace. The Navy is currently using PMRF to test "hit to kill" technology in which anti-ballistic missiles destroy their targets by using only the kinetic energy from the force of the collision. The Navy's Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense System and the Army's Terminal High Altitude Area Defense System, or THAAD, are tested on Kauai at PMRF.

On the island of Maui, the Maui High Performance Computing Center, a Department of Defense Supercomputing Resource Center managed by the Air Force Research Laboratory, provides DoD scientists and engineers with one of the world's largest computers to solve war-making computational problems.

According to the Hawaii Chamber of Commerce, the direct and indirect economic impacts of military expenditures in Hawaii bring \$14.7 billion into

Hawaii's economy, creating more than 102,000 jobs. The military's investments in Hawaii total \$8.8 billion. Military procurement contracts amount to about \$2.3 billion annually, making it a prime source of contracting opportunities for hundreds of Hawaii's small businesses, including significant military construction projects.

The influence of the military in the Hawaiian islands and on its politicians at all levels cannot be underestimated, nor can the protection the military is given by its retirees and the citizens who benefit from it. The pressure on city and state officials to accept the status quo is very strong.

Finally, the U.S. government has acknowledged the medical problems the contamination of the drinking supply caused in another community—the huge U.S. Marine Base at Camp Lejeune and Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) New River in North Carolina. From 1953 through 1987, tens of thousands of Marines and their families were contaminated by two on-base water wells that were contaminated with trichloroethylene (TCE), perchloroethylene (PCE), benzene, and vinyl chloride, among other compounds from leaking storage tanks on the base and an off-base dry cleaner.

The Veterans Administration has acknowledged the dangerous situation on the bases in North Carolina that was ignored for decades. The VA has declared that a large

number of diseases are caused by the chemicals and that military personnel and their family members who have contracted these diseases and who are still living will be compensated. We can expect the same type of diseases with the continuing leaks at Red Hill.

On the other side of the country from North Carolina, the Navy has already closed down one complex of underground jet fuel storage tanks at Point Loma, Calif., which had 54 storage tanks. The riveted seams on the underground tanks began leaking as they aged. When 1.5 million gallons of fuel spilled from the site in 2006, the U.S. Navy decided to replace the tanks.

For us on Oahu, the bottom line is that when, not if, the massive jet fuel storage tanks leak into the aquifer of Honolulu, city, state, and federal officials must be held accountable—the public has given them plenty of warning of their concerns. As with lead in the water supply in Flint, Mich., officials knew that the drinking water was contaminated but didn't do anything to stop the community from using it. Remarkably, no Flint officials have gone to jail yet, but the community is demanding accountability for malfeasance in office—which will also happen in Honolulu when the jet fuel storage tank disaster strikes.

Why, we citizens ask our elected leaders, do they allow such a disaster to continue to threaten our water supply in Honolulu when we know that 75-year-old tanks with corroding walls are continuing to leak.

continued on page 18...

Planet in Crisis

... continued from page 8

northern border of the state of Washington? Not enough. How many European brown bears are there in Italy's Abruzzo National Park? Not enough. How many Florida panthers in Big Cypress Swamp? Not enough. How many Asiatic lions in the Forest of Gir? Not enough The world is broken in pieces now."

'A Terrifying 12 Years'

In October 2018, 15 months after Jirinec's words brought me to tears in the Amazon, the world's leading climate scientists authored a report for the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warning us that we have just a dozen years left to limit the catastrophic impacts of climate change. The gist of it is this: we've already warmed the planet one degree Celsius. If we fail to limit that warming process to 1.5 degrees, even a half-degree more than that will significantly worsen extreme heat, flooding, widespread droughts, and sea-level increases, among other grim phenomena. The report has become a key talking point of political progressives in the United States, who, like journalist and activist Naomi Klein, are now speaking of "a terrifying 12 years" left in which to cut fossil fuel emissions.

There is, however, a problem with even this approach.

Reports tend to use the lowest common denominator in their projections, which makes their science ... overly optimistic.

It assumes that the scientific conclusions in the IPCC report are completely sound. It's well known, however, that there's been a political element built into the IPCC's scientific process, based on the urge to get as many countries as possible on board the Paris climate agreement and other attempts to rein in climate change. To do that, such reports tend to use the lowest common denominator in their projections, which makes their science overly conservative (that is, overly optimistic).

In addition, new data suggest that the possibility of political will coalescing across the planet to shift the global economy completely off fossil fuels in the reasonably near future is essentially a fantasy. And that's even if we could remove enough of the hundreds of billions of tons of CO₂ already in our overburdened atmosphere to make a difference (not to speak of the heat similarly already lodged in the oceans).

"It's extraordinarily challenging to get to the 1.5 degree Celsius target and we are nowhere near on track to doing that," Drew Shindell, a Duke University climate scientist and a co-author of the IPCC report, told the Guardian just weeks before it was released. "While it's technically possible, it's extremely improbable, absent a real sea change in the way we evaluate risk. We are nowhere near that."

In fact, even best-case scenarios show us heading for at least a three-degree warming and, realistically speaking, we are undoubtedly on track for far worse than that by 2100, if not much sooner. Perhaps that's why Shindell was so pessimistic.

For example, a study published in Nature magazine, also released in October, showed that over the last quarter-century, the oceans have absorbed 60 percent more heat annually than estimated in the 2014 IPCC report. The study underscored that the globe's oceans have already absorbed 93 percent of all the heat humans have added to the atmosphere, that the climate system's sensitivity to greenhouse gases is far higher than thought and that planetary warming is far more advanced than

had previously been grasped.

To give you an idea of how much heat the oceans have absorbed: if that heat had instead gone into the atmosphere, the global temperature would be 97 degrees Fahrenheit hotter than it is today. For those who think that there are still 12 years left to change things, the question posed by Wanless seems painfully apt: How do we remove all the heat that's already been absorbed by the oceans?

Two weeks after that Nature article came out, a study in *Scientific Reports* warned that the extinction of animal and plant species thanks to climate change could lead to a "domino effect" that might, in the end, annihilate life on the planet. It suggested that organisms will die out at increasingly rapid rates because they depend on other species that are also on their way out. It's a process the study calls "co-extinction." According to its authors, a five- to six-degree Celsius rise in average global temperatures might be enough to annihilate most of Earth's living creatures.

To put this in perspective: just a two-degree rise will leave dozens of the world's coastal mega-cities flooded, thanks primarily to melting ice sheets in Greenland and Antarctica, as well as the thermal expansion of the oceans as they warm. There will be 32 times as many heat waves in India and nearly half a billion more people will suffer water scarcity. At three degrees, southern Europe will be in permanent drought and the area burned annually by wildfires in the United States will sextuple. These impacts, it's worth noting, may already be baked into the system, even if every country that signed the Paris climate accord were to fully honor its commitments, which most of them are not currently doing.

The International Energy Agency has already shown that maintaining our current fossil-fueled economic system would virtually guarantee a six-degree rise in the Earth's temperature before 2050. To add insult to injury, a 2017 analysis from oil giants BP and Shell indicated that they expected the planet to be five degrees warmer by mid-century.

In late 2013, I wrote a piece for TomDispatch titled "Are We Falling Off the Climate Precipice?" Even then, it was already clear enough that we were indeed heading off that cliff. More than five years later, a sober reading of the latest climate change science indicates that we are now genuinely in free fall.

The question is no longer whether or not we are going to fail, but how are we going to comport ourselves in the era of failure?

Listening While Saying Goodbye

It's been estimated that between 150 and 200 plant, insect, bird, and mammal species are already going extinct every day. In other words, during the two and a half years I worked on my book 136,800 species may have gone extinct.

We have a finite amount of time left to coexist with significant parts of the biosphere, including glaciers, coral, and thousands of species of plants, animals, and insects. We're going to have to learn how to say goodbye

Leaking Fuel Tanks

... continued from page 17

I will make this personal. I am 72 years old and served 29 years in the U.S. military. I retired 20 years ago. The 20 jet fuel storage tanks are 75 years old and have served each of those 75 years and are still serving.

At 72, I have had the normal number of aches and pains including a hip replacement that didn't turn out the best and skin cancer surgery that left skin grafts and patches on my face, head, and leg.

At 75, the 20-story jet fuel storage tanks also have had aches and pains as well as their skin getting thinner and thinner due to seven decades of corrosion. Patching the thin skin of the Red Hill jet fuel tanks didn't turn out so well either, with the welding on one of the patches giving



Ornithologist Vitek Jirinec at Camp 41: Some bird species in the Amazon have already declined by 95 percent since the 1980s. Photo: Dahr Jamail.

to them, part of which should involve doing everything we humanly can to save whatever is left, even knowing that the odds are stacked against us.

I often visit a small natural altar I've created amid a circle of cedar trees growing around a decomposing mother tree. In this magical spot, I grieve and express my gratitude for the life that is still here. I also go to listen.

Where do you go to listen? And what are you hearing?

For me, these days, it all begins and ends with doing my best to listen to the Earth, with trying my hardest to understand how best to serve, how to devote myself to doing everything possible for the planet, no matter the increasingly bleak prognosis for this time in human history.

Perhaps if we listen deeply enough and regularly enough, we ourselves will become the song this planet needs to hear.

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Dahr Jamail, a Truthout staff reporter, is the author of The End of Ice: Bearing Witness and Finding Meaning in the Path of Climate Disruption, The Will to Resist: Soldiers Who Refuse to Fight in Iraq and Afghanistan, and Beyond the Green Zone: Dispatches From an Unembedded Journalist in Occupied Iraq. Jamail has reported from Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Turkey and has won the Izzy Award and the Martha Gellhorn Award for Investigative Journalism.

way in 2014 and 27,000 gallons of jet fuel leaking out of the tanks, jeopardizing the Honolulu aquifer.

Those of us in our 70s, whether we are fuel tanks or humans, know all about leaks—it's a hazard of age.

I retired from the U.S. Army after 29 years of service. After 75 years of service, it's time to retire the leaking Red Hill Storage tanks—and protect our precious water supply.

Ann Wright is a 29-year U.S. Army/Army Reserves veteran who retired as a colonel and a former U.S. diplomat who resigned in March 2003 in opposition to the war on Iraq. She served in Nicaragua, Grenada, Somalia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Sierra Leone, Micronesia and Mongolia. In December 2001 she was on the small team that reopened the U.S. Embassy in Kabul. She is the co-author of the book Dissent: Voices of Conscience.

Afghanistan

... continued from page 1

wars up close and from afar and their cruel constant murder, does, at times, necessitate such crutches for me), but to relay my own personal observation of the great lie of war in action; the ability of the machine of war to propel itself forward even when those most intimate with the war, those most responsible for it and without whose support the war could not continue, carry on the war while knowing and living the lie full well.

Almost a decade after my resignation, there are reports of a possible peace deal in the making for Afghanistan. Just as my mind, and my soul, can recall the bright scarlet red of fresh arterial blood that dulls in contact with dust and cloth, or the clay-like frozen jaw of a dead young man, whether he is an Afghan, American or Iraqi, I recognize, clearly and sickeningly, the same lies used so skillfully and effectively by politicians, generals, and the media to escalate the war in 2009, now being recirculated to defeat any current attempts for peace.

Sacrifice Does Not Confer Sanctity

When President Obama entered office in 2009, fewer than 30,000 U.S. troops were in Afghanistan. Within a year and a half that number would reach 100,000 U.S. military personnel along with 30,000 NATO soldiers from Europe and over 100,000 private contractors. Since 2001, more than 2,400 U.S. service members have been killed in Afghanistan, nearly 1,800 of them since 2009. European armies have had more than 1,100 soldiers killed, and more than 1,700 contractors have been killed while performing jobs that in previous wars would have been done by U.S. soldiers. Tens of thousands have been physically wounded

while hundreds of thousands suffer from traumatic brain injuries, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), moral injury, depression, substance abuse and other “hidden” wounds of war. These hidden wounds have very real consequences: the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs reports young men and women who have served in Afghanistan and Iraq (a great many of them have served multiple deployments to both wars) have suicide rates six times higher than their civilian peers, while infantry units, those that have performed the most killing and dying, have been seen to have suicide rates 14 times higher than civilian men of the same age. In real numbers, that means, since 2001, likely more than 9,000 U.S. veterans who have served in Afghanistan and Iraq have been lost to suicide after returning home.

The numbers of Afghans who have been killed are truly unknown. The United Nations, which only began counting civilian casualties in 2009, reports tens of thousands killed, with nearly each year since 2009 showing an increase in civilian dead and wounded, a monstrous and grievous accomplishment of annual record upon record. UNAMA itself cautions that its numbers should be understood to be a minimum or base level due to UNAMA’s methodology. Assessments of the total dead in Afghanistan over the last 17 years put total dead at more than 100,000 civilians, although most who are familiar with war, including myself, are quick to say that is a low-end estimate. For example, Jonathan Steele has estimated more than 20,000 Afghans died as a result of the U.S. bombings in the first four months of U.S. military action following 9/11.

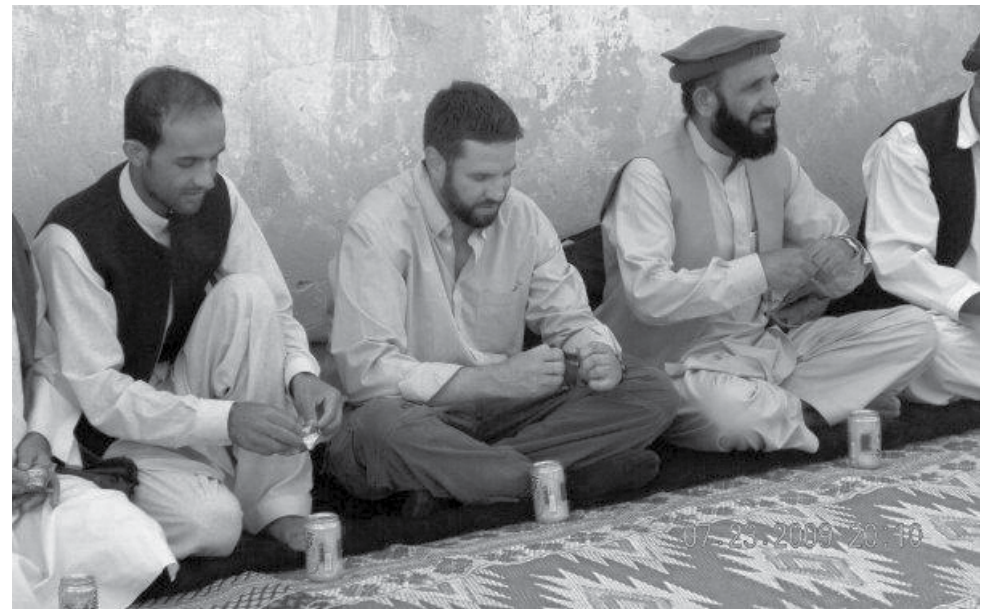
At least one million Afghans are internally displaced, while Afghans make up the second largest portion of the largest refugee population the world has known since World War Two, with millions living in camps in Iran and Pakistan or claiming asylum in

Europe. Of course the Afghanistan War did not begin in 2001, but began more than 40 years ago and not with the Soviet Union’s invasion, but with an internal civil war that saw maybe as many 100,000 dead before the Soviets invaded; U.S. support to Afghanistan’s mujaheddin, the grandfathers of the young men we are fighting today in Afghanistan, began six months prior to the Soviet invasion. Over 40 years of war have completely devastated the people and land of Afghanistan. As a consequence of the violence, Afghan society is devastated by PTSD and drug use; the countryside has been denuded and deforested, resulting in agricultural troubles and water shortages, and no industry exists besides the illicit drug trade that, despite billions of U.S. dollars spent, yields record poppy crops and narcotics exports nearly every year (2018 was an exception due to drought).

There is a desperate sunk cost argument that haunts all wars that are lost and unworthy. As it is, more often than not, it is those who have not experienced the pain and the destruction of the war who

demand more blood and more sacrifice. Turn on Fox News or open the *Washington Post* and this will be apparent. What makes such an argument even more mean and craven is that these deaths are forever tied and bound by the lies of the war, making them eternally ignoble and worthless. The dead will never be heroes, despite the exaggerations of eulogies, bordering often on hagiography, but will only be futureless victims of the greed and egos that advance and maintain the war.

Matt Hoh has nearly 12 years experience with U.S. wars with the Marine Corps and the State and Defense Departments. He is a Center For International Policy senior fellow. In 2009, he resigned his post in State Department post in Afghanistan over the U.S. escalation of the war. His writings have appeared in the Atlanta Journal Constitution, Defense News, the Guardian, the Huffington Post, and the Washington Post. He is a member of the board of directors of the Institute for Public Accuracy and of the VFP Advisory Board Member.



The author (center) on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in 2009.

Okinawa

... continued from page 16

the PFAS used in the aqueous fire-fighting foam are not regulated substances. The U.S. military is correct. The EPA, despite worldwide controversy, continues to allow their use. Reining in these substances and admitting their destructive impact might unleash a flood of lawsuits and unrest worldwide.

In an attempt to remove PFAS from drinking water, Okinawa Prefecture has installed a carbon filtration system at the



PFAS-laced foam fills Kadena Air Force Base, Okinawa, after a drunk U.S. Marine activated a firefighting system in 2013.

Chatan Water Treatment Plant at a cost of \$1.5 million. Constructing an entirely new system would have been better for public health. The U.S. military did not offer to pay the costs of addressing the contamination at Chatan. The military has also dodged financial responsibility for PFAS contamination in communities near bases in the United States. The Pentagon’s policy is to deny responsibility and refuse to pay for new water systems.

Of course, PFAS contamination is only part of the U.S. military legacy of contamination in Okinawa. Following is a brief rundown of the toxic cocktail the United States has bequeathed to Okinawa over the years. Many of these chemicals take generations or longer to break down.

Camp Kinser

In 2015, after a protracted Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) process, the Pentagon released records detailing high levels of contamination on Camp Kinser land that was scheduled for return to civilian use.

Camp Kinser includes a 46,000 square-meter highly contaminated outdoor chemical storage area located on the southern shoreline of the installation.

“Retrograde shipments from Vietnam,” including insecticides, herbicides, and solvents, were stored there. Washington has announced plans to return most of Camp Kinser by 2024. However, the return of a 5-acre parcel of land near the base of Gate 5 missed its scheduled 2014 return date. That land appears to be located within—and adjacent to—the contaminated zone.

The released FOIA information reported high concentrations of chlordane, DDT, malathion, dioxin, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), lead, and admium.

According to the FOIA documents, massive quantities of neutralized cyanide compounds, inorganic acids, alkalis, and 12.5 tons of ferric chloride were buried or “flushed” on the base.

The United States has also left behind arsenic, depleted uranium, nerve agents, and hexavalent chromium.

The Pentagon evades responsibility for the damage its bases cause.

Massive amounts of pesticides were buried at Camp Hansen in the town of Kin.

Japanese officials are demanding that the United States follow EPA guidelines for remediation before returning the land and the beaches to civilian uses. The Pen-

tagon has yet to release any comment on the contamination.

The FOIA-released documents appear to corroborate the accounts of the hundreds of U.S. veterans who claim they were sickened by dioxin-tainted defoliants—including Agent Orange—in Okinawa.

If the Henoko base is completed, it will spoil another beautiful area of Okinawa—the way communities surrounding Futenma, Kadena, and Kinser have been contaminated. After three quarters of a century of being occupied by a foreign military, this fresh assault on Okinawa must be halted.

Special thanks to Joseph Essertier, Associate Professor, Nagoya Institute of Technology, and coordinator of Japan for a World BEYOND War. Some of the findings in this article are based on the research of Jon Mitchell, a British journalist and author based in Japan, and Masami Kawamura of the Okinawa-based Informed-Public Project, a research organization focusing on environmental issues.

Pat Elder currently serves on the Coordinating Committee of World BEYOND War, worldbeyondwar.org, a rapidly expanding organization with membership in 160 countries.

Michelle Alexander Is Right About Israel-Palestine

By Marjorie Cohn

As a progressive Jew, I find that many of my family members and friends are still what we call “PEP”—progressive except Palestine. Amid ever worsening injustices created by the Israeli system of apartheid and Israel’s illegal occupation of Palestinian lands, it is past time for this to change.

I am hopeful that the firestorm sparked by Michelle Alexander’s recent *New York Times* column, “Time to Break the Silence on Palestine,” will finally generate the heat necessary to force more people and groups on the left to overcome the fundamental hypocrisy of the “progressive except Palestine” approach.

I was deeply inspired by Alexander’s column and her decision to speak so honestly about the difficulty of overcoming the fear of backlash over taking a public stand against the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

Striking a comparison between the risk taken by prominent critics of Israel and the risk Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. took by publicly criticizing the Vietnam War, Alexander observes, “Those who speak publicly in support of the liberation of the Palestinian people still risk condemnation and backlash.”

Invoking Dr. King’s exhortation that “a time comes when silence is betrayal,” Alexander reflects on “the excuses and rationalizations that have kept me largely silent on one of the great moral challenges of our time: the crisis in Israel-Palestine.”

Alexander’s words resonated with me, a Jew who uncritically supported Israel for many years until I saw the parallels between U.S. policy in Vietnam and Israel’s occupation of the Palestinian territories. My activism and critical writings have followed a trajectory from Vietnam to South Africa to Israel to Iraq to Afghanistan and other countries where the United States continues its imperial military actions.

Although many of my articles are controversial as they criticize the actions of the U.S. government—under both Democratic and Republican regimes—I get the most pushback from my writings about Israel-Palestine. When I analyze Israel’s illegal occupation and crimes against the Palestinians, I am often called a “self-hating” Jew.

I was born in 1948, the year Israel was created out of whole Palestinian cloth. When tasked with finding a destination for Jews displaced by the Holocaust, the United Nations chose Palestine. Thus began a brutal and illegal occupation that continues to this day.

In his book *Injustice: The Story of the Holy Land Foundation Five*, Israeli-American Miko Peled describes the 1948 “ethnic cleansing campaign that was sweeping through Palestine like wildfire, destroying everything in its path.” Palestinians call it the “Nakba,” Arabic for “catastrophe.”

My family was not religious but we were proud of our Jewish heritage. My father fought the Nazis in World War II and relatives perished in the Holocaust. My paternal grandmother was an activist



Michele Alexander.

against the Tsar during the Russian pogroms. On her way to a Siberian prison, she escaped and, at the age of 18, boarded a ship bound for the United States.

We revered Israel as the homeland of the Jews. At the Passover Seder, we would raise our glasses and intone, “Next year in Jerusalem!” At Sunday school, we gathered coins to plant trees in the Holy Land. It wasn’t until I left home that I learned the truth about Israel and became an outspoken critic of its policies.

In 1967, during my freshman year at Stanford, I came to oppose the war in Vietnam and joined The Resistance, a group of draft resisters and their allies. The following year, I signed up for Students for a Democratic Society, where I learned the war was not an isolated event, but rather part of a long history of U.S. imperialism. But I was still unaware that the war Israel

and Gaza.

The allegations in the report disturbed me greatly. They described Israel’s mistreatment of the Palestinians, including house demolitions, administrative detention and torture. The report documented beatings, burning with cigarettes, forced standing while naked for long periods exposed to heat or cold, dousing with hot or cold water, cutting the body with razor blades, biting by dogs, sensory deprivation, sodomizing with bottles or sticks, inserting wires into the penis, electric shocks to sensitive parts of the body, and suspension from the floor with hands or feet tied to a pulley device. Reading the case studies made me physically ill.

Alexander, author of *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration the Age of Colorblindness*, wrote that some of Israel’s practices are “reminiscent of apartheid in South Africa and Jim Crow

My family was not religious but we were proud of our Jewish heritage. My father fought the Nazis in World War II and relatives perished in the Holocaust.

launched in 1967 “completed its occupation of Palestine,” in the words of Peled.

The anti-Vietnam War movement at Stanford challenged my long-held assumptions about U.S. foreign policy. My commitment to ending an unjust war against a people fighting for liberation eventually opened my eyes to the plight of the Palestinian people and Israel’s role in repressing them.

After college, I went to law school and became a peoples’ lawyer. I joined the National Lawyers Guild (NLG), a progressive political-legal organization that I later served as president. In 1977, the NLG sent a delegation to Israel and Palestine. The report they issued was the first comprehensive analysis of Israel’s practices published by a non-governmental organization dedicated to protecting human rights. It documented violations of the 1949 Geneva Conventions by Israel as a belligerent occupant of the West Bank

segregation in the United States.”

South Africa’s Archbishop Desmond Tutu, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, pointed to similarities between apartheid in his country and Israel’s oppression of the Palestinians. “My voice will always be raised in support of Christian-Jewish ties and against the anti-Semitism that all sensible people fear and detest. But this cannot be an excuse for doing nothing and for standing aside as successive Israeli governments colonize the West Bank and advance racist laws,” Tutu wrote in a *Tampa Bay Times* article. He noted “Israel’s theft of Palestinian land,” and “Jewish-only colonies built on Palestinian land in violation of international law.”

Tutu cited a 2010 Human Rights Watch report that “describes the two-tier system of laws, rules, and services that Israel operates for the two populations in areas in the West Bank under its exclusive control, which provide preferential services,

development, and benefits for Jewish settlers while imposing harsh conditions on Palestinians.” Tutu wrote, “This, in my book, is apartheid. It is untenable.”

On July 19, 2018, the Israeli Knesset passed a law that illegally enshrines a system of apartheid. The legislation, which has the force of a constitutional amendment, says, “The State of Israel is the national home of the Jewish people, in which it fulfills its natural, cultural, religious and historical right to self-determination.” It continues, “The right to exercise national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish people.” There is no guarantee of self-determination for the 1.8 million Arabs who make up 20 percent of Israel’s population.

Tutu called on “people and organizations of conscience to divest from ... Caterpillar, Motorola Solutions and Hewlett Packard,” which profit “from the occupation and subjugation of Palestinians.” He advocated participation in the nonviolent Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS), which Alexander also mentions.

Israel continues to attack Gaza—described as the world’s largest “open-air prison”—while maintaining maintains a tight blockade, restricting all ingress and egress. Headlines in the mainstream media falsely portray an equivalence of firepower between Israelis and Palestinians in Gaza. But Israel’s use of force greatly exceeds that of the Palestinians, and the asymmetric warfare continues to escalate.

In 2014, Israel mounted an offensive called “Operation Protective Edge,” relentlessly bombing Gaza for nearly two months, killing 2,251 Palestinians, the majority of them civilians. The number of Palestinians wounded was 11,231, including 3,540 women and 3,436 children. On the Israeli side, six civilians and 67 soldiers were killed and 1,600 were injured. Tens of thousands of Palestinians lost their homes and the infrastructure was severely damaged. Israel targeted numerous schools, U.N.-sanctioned places of refuge, hospitals, ambulances and mosques.

I have become sharply critical of Israel. An active member of the NLG’s Palestine Subcommittee, I write frequent articles and do media commentary about Israel’s violations of international law. I am also a member of Jewish Voice for Peace and I work in support of BDS.

Years after I first read the 1977 NLG delegation report, I visited Ellis Island, where my grandparents arrived in the United States. It is now a museum. As I walked the route they traveled, I felt very emotional about what they endured. But my deep feelings about the suffering of my ancestors during the Holocaust are not inconsistent with my criticisms of Israel for subjecting the Palestinians to a different kind of oppression.

As stories continue to emerge about Israel’s killing of unarmed protesters at the Gaza border during the Great March of Return, it is increasingly difficult to ignore the facts. Yet even those who see the truth about Israel’s oppression of the Palestinians worry about reprisals for speaking out.

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Ilhan Omar Was Right About AIPAC

I'm ashamed to admit that endorsing AIPAC positions was all about the Benjamins for me and my candidate.

By **Ady Barkan**

In February, Republican House minority leader Kevin McCarthy said he would seek to formally sanction the first two Muslim congresswomen, Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib, because their criticism of Israel's occupation of Palestine was even more reprehensible than Congressman Steve King's defense of white supremacy.

What motivated McCarthy's false accusations of anti-Semitism? On Twitter, Omar suggested, "It's all about the Benjamins baby," quoting Puff Daddy's '90s paean to cash money. Omar subsequently specified that she was talking about spending from the likes of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, better known as AIPAC, the powerful pro-Israel lobbying organization.

AIPAC mobilized its allies to condemn Omar's comment for playing into centuries-old anti-Semitic tropes that wealthy Jews control the world. Even the Democratic leadership put out a statement condemning her. All because she dared to point out that the emperor has no clothes.

As a Jew, an Israeli citizen, and a professional lobbyist (ahem, activist), I speak from personal experience when I say that AIPAC is tremendously effective, and the lubricant that makes its operation hum is dollar, dollar bills.

In 2006, fresh out of college, I landed a job as the first real staffer on a long-shot Democratic congressional race in deep-red Ohio. My boss, Victoria Wulsin, was a charming hippie doctor with a lefty perspective on international affairs. She was skeptical of military force and opposed to the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

About a month after winning the Democratic primary, we were struggling to gain attention or money. Nobody gave us a chance to win. One political-action organization, however, did reach out to us. It wasn't Emily's List, although Vic was fiercely pro-choice. It wasn't a labor union or even a doctors' association. It was AIPAC.

A local Democratic volunteer leader of the Cincinnati AIPAC chapter sat down in Vic's living room and said that he would like to raise \$5,000 for our campaign and would also like to see Vic take a public stance on two relatively obscure issues relating to Iranian sanctions, arms sales to Israel, or some other such topic that very few voters in the district cared about.

Vic and I both thought of ourselves as pro-peace, not pro-Israel. We both felt icky about doing it; it was too hawkish and too quid pro quo. But we were desperate. So I read the AIPAC position papers that the volunteer left with us, I wrote up a statement saying that Vic supported AIPAC's stance on its



Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.)

Omar and Tlaib are powerful new spokeswomen for the movement to end the Israeli occupation; delegitimizing them is a central aim of the Israel lobby.

two pet issues of the cycle, she approved it, I posted it online, and the checks promptly arrived in the mail thereafter. We didn't win, but the money helped us get close.

It was, I am ashamed to say, definitely about the Benjamins. We never would

have done it otherwise. AIPAC's power is about more than money, certainly. It's about great organizing (they built a local chapter, and sent a local Democratic volunteer emissary who then facilitated the contributions). It's about diligence (they paid attention to Vic's campaign long before anyone else, and were happy to donate to both us and the militaristic,

political contributions. Instead, as it notes proudly on its website, individual members of its "Congressional Club," like that Cincinnati resident, do the bundling and donating directly, both as individuals and through Political Action Committees that AIPAC and its members have set up.

Omar is right to point all this out. These dynamics are not unique to the Israel-Palestine issue, however, and there is no reason that Americans should be surprised or offended by what she or I are saying. The NRA and the broader gun lobby operate in the same way. Same with ExxonMobil and the fossil-fuel lobby. But since Omar and Tlaib are powerful new spokeswomen for the movement to end the Israeli occupation, delegitimizing them is a central aim of the Israel lobby.

AIPAC and its partners, which include Christian Zionists and military contractors, are a central pillar of the Israeli occupation. Without congressional support, the Likud/anti-Palestine/pro-occupation project would be radically undermined. The money that AIPAC and the rest of the lobby spend is indispensable to that work. That's why they spend it. Pointing this out is not anti-Semitic.

We do, in fact, have a growing anti-Semitism problem in America. But Omar and Tlaib are not a part of it. They are allies of mine and of Jews across this country who are fighting for peace, racial justice, immigrants' rights, and the defeat of fascism. The anti-Semites are the Nazis and white supremacists who marched and murdered in Charlottesville, whom Donald Trump called "very fine people," and the MAGA supporter who massacred worshippers at a Pittsburgh synagogue.

The Israel lobby flexed its muscles in response to Omar's tweet. Almost all of Capitol Hill, sadly including the Democratic leadership that I have supported, was up in arms. It flexed with equal potency last month in marshaling through the Senate a clearly unconstitutional law to ban speech promoting a boycott of Israel.

For 12 years, I have harbored minor private shame for advising Vic to endorse AIPAC's position papers and more significant shame for not doing enough to stop the oppression of the Palestinian people.

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Alexander

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Alexander describes the silence of many civil rights activists and groups, "not because they lack concern or sympathy for the Palestinian people, but because they fear loss of funding from foundations, and false charges of anti-Semitism." She mentioned the case of Bahia Amawi, a U.S. citizen of Palestinian descent, who lost her Texas elementary school job last year after refusing to pledge in writing that she would not participate in the BDS movement. Glenn Greenwald pointed out the grave danger anti-BDS laws pose to freedom of speech, tweeting, "The proliferation of these laws—where U.S. citizens are barred from work or contracts unless they vow not to boycott Israel—is the single greatest free speech threat in the United States."

There is a false equivalency between criticizing Israel and being anti-Semitic. Any criticism of Israeli policy is labeled anti-Semitism, even though many Jews—

including members of Jewish Voice for Peace, Jewish Center for Nonviolence, and If Not Now—oppose the occupation.

The BDS movement is not anti-Israeli, as it targets the policies, not the people, of Israel. And actions against Israel's policies, including BDS, do not equate to anti-Semitism. Rafeef Ziadah, a spokesperson for the Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions National Committee, says, "As a matter of principle, the BDS movement has consistently and categorically opposed all forms of racism, including anti-semitism and Islamophobia."

Palestinian human rights activist Omar Barghouti wrote in *The New York Times* in 2014, "Arguing that boycotting Israel is intrinsically anti-Semitic is not only false, but it also presumes that Israel and 'the Jews' are one and the same. This is as absurd and bigoted as claiming that a boycott of a self-defined Islamic state like Saudi Arabia, say, because of its horrific human rights record, would of necessity be Islamophobic."

Even though many persist in equating condemnation of Israel with anti-

pro-Likud Republican incumbent). Their lobbyists on the Hill are the best in the business, and their legislator junkets to the Holy Land are masterfully orchestrated. But money is central to the whole system.

Technically, AIPAC doesn't make the

Semitism, groups like Jewish Voice for Peace continue to gain traction. Jews are increasingly willing to examine the facts on the ground in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

And although Congress, dominated by the powerful Israel lobby, continues to give more money to Israel than any other country, two new members of Congress—Representatives Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.) and Rashida Tlaib (D-Mich.)—support BDS.

Alexander is optimistic: "There seems to be increased understanding that criticism of the policies and practices of the Israeli government is not, in itself, anti-Semitic."

Marjorie Cohn is professor emerita at Thomas Jefferson School of Law, former president of the National Lawyers Guild, deputy secretary general of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers and a member of the advisory board of Veterans for Peace. Her most recent book is Drones and Targeted Killing: Legal, Moral, and Geopolitical Issues.

Working-Class Hero

How a Scruffy Teenager Fought Fascism

By Sean Cooney

It began nearly four years ago in Clevedon. We were in the North Somerset coastal town to do a gig. After the show, a man approached us. People often do; we love to hear their responses to our songs. The man introduced himself as Duncan and handed us two pieces of paper.

One was a photograph from the 1930s of a scruffy teenager selling newspapers on a street corner. “That’s my dad,” he said. The second was a list. “That’s what he did.” It read like a checklist of working-class struggle in the 20th century. Hunger marches, mass trespasses, the Battle of Cable Street, travelling to Spain to fight against the fascists in the Spanish Civil War.

Because the three of us in the Young’uns shared the same birthplace as his dad—Stockton-on-Tees—and because we’d sung about the fight against fascism there, Duncan hoped we might be inspired to write a song about his dad, Johnny Longstaff.

It felt like we’d discovered a forgotten working-class hero. We wanted to know more.

Duncan bombarded us with treasures from his father’s life. Johnny Longstaff’s



Teenage Johnny Longstaff selling newspapers in 1934. Photo: Duncan Longstaff.

entire library of Spanish Civil War literature arrived at my door, his name and rank written neatly inside every cover and the margins filled with his furious “corrections”—typically, “That didn’t happen—I was there!”

Next came his dad’s unpublished memoirs including stories of childhood poverty in Stockton—imagine being so hungry that you steal candles from a church to eat them. Johnny’s photo archive brought the people and events we’d been reading about to life. I loved that because he’d learned to drive in the desert in a tank during the war he was a

menace on the roads well into middle age.

Just before he died, Johnny had recorded his life story for the Imperial War Museum. We listened to the tapes. We were enthralled. It became clear that one song wasn’t going to be enough.

We immersed ourselves in Johnny’s 1930s world, reading the books he read and listening to the songs he sang. We discovered things we certainly hadn’t known.

How there were several hunger marches to London throughout the 1920s and ’30s, not just the Jarrow Crusade of 1936. Scornful students greeted the marchers in Cambridge by throwing eggs at them. We learned about lost, overlooked, and unlikely heroes of the Labour movement who had also gone to fight fascism in Spain; figures such as Lewis Clive, an Olympic rowing champion and the inspiration for Oliver in Mary Wesley’s book *The Camomile Lawn*. Johnny was with him when he died in Spain at the Battle of the Ebro.

Like many musicians, we’ve been inspired by Charles Parker, Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger’s groundbreaking *BBC Radio Ballads* of the 1950s, documentaries that wove original songs around oral testimonies, and, radically for the time, put working-class voices on to the nation’s airwaves. Why not do the same with Johnny’s story, we thought, using his own voice and our own songs to create something unlike anything we’d done before?

The piece quickly developed a narrative too—of how a 17-year-old boy from the north of England who “didn’t even know what sex was” and who “couldn’t find Spain on a map” became determined to defy the wishes of his own government and fight for democracy in a foreign land. He wasn’t alone. More than 2,500 men and women from Britain and Ireland also chose to fight in what many now see as the precursor to the second world war.

We wanted to portray the simple

humanity of Johnny’s journey and show that his radical politics were not born out of ideology but from seeing poverty and oppression firsthand.

Johnny had become determined to campaign for equality when he witnessed the huge gap between rich and poor while sleeping rough in 1930s London. He was determined to fight fascism after he met Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany and was horrified at the stories they told him. He was smuggled to Paris and then walked through the Pyrenees to get to Spain, and joined the International Brigade. He was wounded three times (once temporarily blinded) and was incredibly lucky to come back alive.

Only a few weeks after he returned in the summer of 1939 he went to Westminster to meet his local MP. Winston Churchill happened to be passing and Johnny was introduced to him as a young socialist soldier just returned from Spain. Churchill looked suspiciously at the 19-year-old and asked, “Would men like you be prepared to fight Hitler?” “I’ve been fighting Hitler all my life,” answered Johnny.

On the first day of the Second World War, Johnny went to enlist, but was turned away—because he had fought in Spain. He didn’t give up, and became a sergeant, fought at El Alamein and Monte Cassino, and was rewarded for gallantry. Back home, he married Pauline, raised a family and became a rather reluctant civil servant. He told his children much about his early life but kept from them the true extent of the horrors of war.

By early 2018 the story and 16 songs were ready. With help from the remarkable Cally of Antar.cc, we created a live show

*A 17-year-old ... who
‘couldn’t find Spain on a
map’ ... walked through
the Pyrenees to get to
Spain and joined the
International Brigade.*

that plunges audiences into Johnny’s world. Photographs and newspaper cuttings are projected onto a backdrop of peeling Spanish street posters. A copy of a revolutionary newspaper is on every seat and Johnny’s own voice comes from a 1930s-style radio.

Our first tour ended in Stockton-on-Tees, almost 100 years after Johnny had been born there. Three generations of Longstaffs lined the front row. At the end of the show we pointed them out to the audience, and the people of Teesside rose to their feet to applaud them. We all cried.

After that show someone else came up to chat. “There must have been thousands of Johnny Longstaffs out there whose stories will never be heard,” he said. That’s true, but I hope Johnny can speak for them. I think he’d be glad of that.

Sean Cooney, is a songwriter and member of the Young’uns. In 2018, their album Strangers was crowned Best Album at the BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards.

Ilhan Omar

... continued from page 21

I am speaking up now because it may be my last chance. Although I am only 35, I am dying. As I write these words, I am sitting with my wife in the waiting room of the Santa Barbara hospital emergency room, slowly bleeding from my stomach into a pile of gauze. I had a feeding tube inserted four days ago but it isn’t healing properly. I am losing the ability to swallow, because I have ALS, a poorly understood neurological disease with no treatment, which seized my body 28 months ago and has basically paralyzed me since. My hands do not work and almost nobody can understand my mumbling, so I am using amazing technology that tracks the location of my eyes and allows me to slowly type out these words with my pupil-tips.

This is my chance to redeem my Jewish guilt, to speak out against the oppression that is being perpetrated in my name, and I do not intend to let a minor obstacle like ALS stop me.

Young Jews across America increasingly agree with Omar and me, and that is making the Israel lobby very nervous. As it should:

The occupation is too immoral, illegal, and inhumane to survive an open and honest conversation in the marketplace of ideas. That is why AIPAC and its associates work to silence criticism of Israel by accusing its detractors of anti-Semitism and claiming that nobody may ever talk about how the Israel lobby uses money to build power.

The ugly truth is that the Israel lobby, like other powerful lobbies led by Jew and gentile alike, wields its money strategically and effectively. Outrage should be directed not at those who point this out (most often Muslims and people of color) but at the suffering of the Palestinian people and the simultaneous dependence of the Republican Party on genuine anti-Semites.

I do not expect to live to see the liberation of the Palestinian people. But I maintain hope that my toddler son will. If he does, it will be because young American Jews like him do the honest self-reflection taught by our forebears, take pride in our tradition of justice, and join in solidarity and struggle with fellow Semites like Omar.

Ady Barkan is an organizer with the Center for Popular Democracy and the founder of the Be A Hero PAC. His memoir, Eyes to the Wind, will be published by Atria Books in the fall.

Movie Review

They Shall Not Grow Old, Narrated By Those Who Did

They Shall Not Grow Old
Directed by Peter Jackson
139 minutes

By Lisa Savage

It was my grandfather's experiences in WWI that led him to teach his only child, my father, who passed it along to us: "Don't believe them when they say the next war is a good war; there is no such thing." Brooks Elliott Savage was wounded on the 11th day of the 11th month, basically the 11th hour of the war, by shrapnel and then mustard gas. He suffered through a long recovery and it took his parents in Skowhegan, Maine, most of a year to even find him.

Brooks, who had marched off as an idealistic high school graduate, was talking to his son about the Korean War, hyped at the time as crucial to fending off communism emanating from Red China. My dad went anyway after his dad died, but by then it was post-combat. Still, the suffering of the Korean people who had lost millions of family members and couldn't feed their kids made an impression on him.

"War is hell," is what he taught us. "There's nothing glorious about living the rest of your life with a bum leg, bad lungs, and a guilty conscience."

They Shall Not Grow Old is a historical

marvel, but it isn't a good film. Cobbled together from archival footage as a project of the Imperial War Museum in England by New Zealand director Sir Peter Jackson (*Lord of the Rings* and *Hobbit* trilogies), the documentary applies modern technology to restore images and insert sound tracks. Lip reading was used to render some of the dialogue, but most is voiceover narration drawn from BBC oral history interviews with veterans. The title of the film is never explained; we are meant to understand that it is a reference to a poem glorifying the "Great War" at its inception.

In "For the Fallen," published in 1914, Robert Laurence Binyon wrote:

They shall grow not old; as we that are left grow old:

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

I beg to differ, as the years have condemned the one million imperial troops who died in the scramble for the colonial spoils of the unraveling Ottoman Empire. To a student of history like me, WWI set off a bloody chain of events that led directly to WWII and thence to the Zionist project in Palestine and the so-called War on Terror (or WWIII if you prefer). As the grandmother of a friend remarked after returning from an organizing meeting in New York City as the United States prepared to enter WWI, This whole thing

is about nothing more than Mosul Oil.

Thus, the city of Mosul in what is now Iraq has been ravaged by battle after battle justified by the ideology du jour. The Muslim extremists largely funded by the empire are the enemy now, right?

Or maybe the war on communism is back on again as Russia sits astride her thawing permafrost full of petroleum reserves? Certainly Venezuela is in the empire's cross hairs now, because socialism and oil just don't mix well for the former Exxon executives in Washington, D.C.

No mention of any of that in Jackson's disingenuous personal introduction to his film. He didn't want to impose his views, he tells viewers, as if the curating and assembling of two hours of footage from the hundreds of hours collected by the museum were a morally neutral act devoid of political agency.

Like Ken Burns' *Vietnam War* documentary, this film made to mark an important anniversary of an imperial war is the wolf of war porn in the sheep's clothing of archival footage.

Remember how *The Wizard of Oz* burst into technicolor to signal that Dorothy (Judy Garland) was not in Kansas anymore? *They Shall Not Grow Old* bursts into colorization to signal that the scrawny teens of working-class England have entered the Great War. With their undernourished limbs whipped into shape by regular meals and bullying drill sergeants, they start to resemble an imperial army. As long as they keep their mouths shut; nothing, apparently, would be done about their fantastically bad teeth. The rot lurking in their goofy smiles as

they head off for their great adventure is an omen.

The industrial-scale carnage is no surprise to us but it was to many of the lads. Amid the cacophony one can almost hear the ka-ching of the cash register as merchants of death offscreen supply the machinery of war. Real human beings firing missile after missile aren't worth much and are easily replaced amid the sophisticated propaganda campaigns and coward-shaming back home.

It's a deeply sexist film, but such an ugly and amoral picture of human endeavor made me proud to be an anti-military woman. There are no nurses ever at any point in the film, which is historically ignorant, nor suffragette antiwar activists. Just a few moms who don't want their sons mangled, and lots of prostitutes. As the credits roll, we're treated to a lengthy version of a contemporaneous song with rude lyrics about women, for example:

Oh, Mademoiselle from Armentieres, Parlez-vous? (repeat)

She'll do it for wine, she'll do it for rum, And sometimes for chocolate or chewing gum!

It's unclear to me why Jackson displays his lack of analysis or historical perspective devoid of ethics as if they were sources of pride. Sexism—and racism—hiding behind historical drama is a hallmark of what passes for Anglo culture in the 21st century.

It may be true, but it's nothing to be proud of.

Lisa Savage is a peace activist, educator, and blogger. She is the manager of Bring Our War Dollar Home and the Maine BDS Coalition. She is the founder of the Maine Natural Guard.

Missed Opportunities

By Mike Ferner

Newspapers on the other side of the world are calling it "the biggest U.S. cinema event of all time."

Critical acclaim has poured in from all corners for the BBC production, *They Shall Not Grow Old*, a technical and emotional masterpiece on the Great War, the war to make the world safe for democracy. The way it brings old footage and therefore the soldiers to life is almost magical and powerfully moving. But because of how Peter Jackson defined his film, a critical element is virtually invisible: the wounded.

Jackson distilled the stories of 120 veterans who spoke on some 600 hours of BBC audio tape done in the 1960s and '70s. His goal was to have "120 men telling a single story ... what it was like being a British soldier on the Western Front." He artfully presents it, using no narration other than the archive of BBC interviews.

But since dead men tell no tales, nor do the severely wounded often live into their 70s and 80s, the film narrows its focus to the comradeship and purposeful adventures of young men growing up with shared experiences of tinned rations, trench life, and rats. The dead flit across the screen in graphic but limited numbers of colorized photos of corpses. The wounded receive mute witness

with brief footage of gas attacks and the classic photo of seven tommies carrying one wounded comrade through the knee-deep mud of Paschendaelle.

Jackson's team brilliantly turned herky-jerky, silent, monochrome youths into breathing, talking, living color, with compelling stories. But because of his cinematic goal, this assured award-winner is minus a depth of feeling and realism it could have projected by giving similar treatment to the agony of the wounded.

One wonders why such neglected images as these failed to benefit from Jackson's alchemy:

- Footage of shell-shock victims filmed at Britain's Netley Hospital in 1917 that would have retained its halting, jerking properties not from erratic frame speeds but because the young men were tormented with nerve damage

- Film of amputee veterans exiting Queen Mary's Workshop, dozen upon dozen upon dozen, hobbling in rapid succession

- One or two photos from New Zealand doctor Major Harold Gillies' groundbreaking book, *Plastic Surgery of the Face*, showing how red-hot shrapnel can carve bone and muscle into monstrous forms and the freakish configurations that accompany attempts at reconstruction

My own experiences revealed the side of



Photo: Archives, Imperial War Museum, London (colorized).

war that Jackson left out. Ever since nursing GIs returning from Vietnam, I've firmly believed that no member of Congress should be allowed to vote on war funding until working for a month in the back ward of a VA hospital, emptying urine bags, turning flaccid, sallow bodies and daubing the bed sores of formerly healthy youths who will never move on their own again; or taking a turn offloading wounded from a passenger jetliner serving as a "medevac" plane—seats all stripped out, replaced with four vertical rows of stretcher hooks extending all the way down both sides of the aisle, full of wounded, their IV bags replacing the drinks cart.

They Shall Not Grow Old allows the reminiscences of 70 year-old veterans to

breathe life into the determined, youthful images Jackson shows us on screen and in so doing, we gain a much greater appreciation of "being a British soldier on the Western Front." But it could also have given movie-goers a glimpse into the part of war so rarely seen. It might then have been named, *They Shall Suffer Horribly and Die Before Their Time*. Hardly a formula for box office success ... which is why war movies never go there and why the next generation always signs up when their leaders beat the drum.

Mike Ferner served as a corpsman on the neurosurgery and psychiatric wards of the Great Lakes Naval Hospital during the Vietnam War. He is a former president of Veterans For Peace.

Delivering the Facts About VA Healthcare

Wounds of War: How the VA Delivers Health, Healing, and Hope to the Nation's Veterans

By Suzanne Gordon
2018, Cornell University Press, 400 pp.

By Denny Riley

Suzanne Gordon's latest book *Wounds of War* is about the Veterans Healthcare Administration, the healthcare plan under attack by conservative politicians and commentators, the two fabulously wealthy Koch brothers, and Veterans For America, a sham veterans organization financed by the Kochs. They all malign the VHA (often simply called the VA) on the flimsiest of anecdotal facts. Many of us have been convinced by this attack that the Veterans Health Administration is in worse shape than are the men and women who turn to it for care. Many people, even veterans who qualify for VHA care, put their health in the hands of hope. They hope the HMO or private healthcare plan they're signed up with offers them healthcare professionals who are good. Whether they are good—whether they've had malpractice suits settled against them or had their licenses suspended at some time—can be difficult to discover. For-profit healthcare companies and the medical associations keep their disciplinary procedures as far from the public eye as possible. The assumption is that HMOs and private healthcare employ good people. They say so in their

Full disclosure compels me to say I am a military veteran who receives healthcare at a Veterans Health Administration facility. Suzanne Gordon writes about in *Wounds of War*, and I am satisfied with the care I get, generally pleased. Compared to my friends who are enrolled in private healthcare, I may be the only one pleased with his care.

Gordon hasn't written *Wounds of War*, however, as a champion of the VHA. She is an award-winning journalist whose 18 published books are about healthcare, patient safety, nursing, and teamwork, and she goes at this thorough book about the VHA with the mastery she has applied to all of her chosen subjects.

Subtitled "How the VA Delivers, Health, Healing, and Hope to the Nation's Veterans," the book covers all of those issues and more. Written in 17 topical chapters with an introduction, a conclusion, and an epilogue, *Wounds of War* tells it all. The evolution of many VHA programs is explained, usually in the words of the physicians and clinicians who developed them, with brief biographies of veterans who participated. I won't share the title of every chapter but some of the more expressive names are "Promises Broken and Kept," "When Wounded Warriors Are Women," "Mental Health the Way It Should Be," "Suicide Prevention," "Transcending Trauma," "Off the Streets: Reducing Veteran Homelessness," and "Better Care Where?" There is more detail in these



Author Suzanne Gordon speaks at the 2018 Veterans For Peace Convention in St. Paul.
Photo: Ellen Davidson.

sector environment," Gordon quotes her. "If a person is homeless, they can get help with a variety of agencies to get housing. If they are having trouble getting a job, we have supportive employment and compensated work therapy. We have residential programs for PTSD and substance abuse and for chronic, hard-to-treat psychiatric illnesses like bipolar or schizophrenia." Summerville goes on, "Our patients have lifestyle problems, relationship problems, work problems." She says many of the patients cannot possibly coordinate their own care or take responsibility for self-care. "The paramount thing for these people is that everybody here [the VHA facility] knows each other. We are all on the same team in the same place." Dr. Summerville continues, "We have the only system of integrated mental health and primary care in the country."

As Gordon reveals, the VHA functions very differently from the way it is depicted in most mainstream media coverage. The Veterans Healthcare System has 150 hospitals, 819 clinics, and 300 mental health centers, employing 250,000 people (a third of whom are veterans themselves) and seeing 230,000 patients a day. Among the many VHA innovations and inventions are the implantable cardiac pacemaker, CAT scans, the nicotine patch, the first successful liver transplant, the use of low-dose aspirin regimen to prevent heart attacks, and prosthetic technology to help restore the sense of touch for those who have lost an upper limb or use an artificial hand. All of this was done on the Veteran Healthcare Administration research budget where there is no profit incentive, no patents to file, and all discoveries are made available to all Americans.

Then why are problems the VHA may have not simply fixed? Why is there a movement toward privatization rather than getting it operating at the level our veterans deserve? After all aren't these the people we've been told to thank for their service, people often referred to as heroes? Well, first of all there is that \$200

billion budget the Koch brothers and their allies would like shifted to the private sector. And to a lesser degree the VHA is in a different light than private healthcare. It is a public institution with the mission to fulfill President Lincoln's promise "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan" by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's veterans. As a public institution supported by taxpayers, its books are open. We can look behind the curtain and see how it is run. So those with their eye on the big budget can poke and point with ease.

Private sector healthcare has no equivalent damning light. For instance the Cleveland Clinic, a highly regarded general medical and surgery system with 11 hospitals and 18 health centers, was fined \$650,000 for serious lab violations in 2015 and paid \$1.6 million to the Justice Department to settle "accusations that it implanted cardiac devices in patients too soon after a heart attack or surgery," in 2016, while the CEO received huge salary increases. The Cleveland Clinic averaged more than \$730,000 on lobbying between 2014 and 2018. No one clamored for the CEO's dismissal or the closing of any of the Cleveland Clinic facilities.

Of course money is the issue, it always is. But 70 percent of the United States' medical residents and 40 percent of all other healthcare professionals receive some or all of their training at a VHA facility. The VHA is the spine of American healthcare. Gordon clearly and extensively makes that point. And the VHA is looking at a stream of disabled veterans for at least the next 50 years (an estimate based on disarmament happening some time soon.) Who among us will be the one to tell the returning soldier we do not care? Anyone who wants the VHA dismantled does not know the facts. Suzanne Gordon delivers the facts in *Wounds of War*.

Denny Riley is an Air Force veteran of the Vietnam War, a writer, and a member of the San Francisco chapter of Veterans For Peace.

Seventy percent of the United States' medical residents and 40 percent of all other healthcare professionals receive some or all of their training at a VHA facility.

advertisements. Certainly better than the Veterans Healthcare Administration, one would think.

Gordon swings our attention to a different view of healthcare in America. The RAND Corporation and the MITRE Corporation "confirmed, in great detail, that the quality of the VHA's frontline care was equal to or superior to that delivered in private sector ... wait times for appointments with primary care providers or medical specialists at the VHA were actually shorter than those experienced by patients using private doctors or hospitals."

Those might be sufficient words to convince a person if discussing the matter over dinner or a glass of wine, but the force amassed in the mission to turn the VHA's budget (\$200 billion annually) over to the private sector has tremendous clout. So Gordon did the work, and with *Wounds of War* the facts are known. They are here in black and white.

chapters than some readers might need but for those with a particular interest in a particular subject, a great deal will be gained. Let's take the chapter on mental health, a subject everyone is interested in, either for yourself or for a friend or your boss.

Gordon approached the VHA not through interviews either in person or in emails or on the phone. No, she visited a VHA facility and spent days with caregivers, in their offices, in staff meetings, and with patients. She visited psychiatrist Lanier Summerall at a VHA Medical Center in South Carolina and also at a VHA Medical Center in Vermont. Doctor Summerall has been with the VHA several decades. From a mental health point of view, Dr. Summerall describes the integrated healthcare unique in the United States to the VHA.

"We have a breadth of psychological services under one roof that is unequalled even in the most well-resourced private-