

# Peace in Our Times



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

## Navy Vet Shares Her Truth

Angie Hines joined the U.S. Navy in November 2001, at the age of 19. After training, she was assigned to the USS Cowpens, a CG-63 Guided Missile Cruiser, as an operations specialist, which she likens to being an air traffic controller, doing navigation and air traffic control in combat situations. After she was deployed to the Persian Gulf in 2003, her main duty was to keep the no-fly zone clear in the gulf.

Angie Hines has been a counter-recruiter in the Portland, Ore., school district for five years. She is a member of Iraq Veterans Against the War and Veterans For Peace, and co-hosts the monthly radio show Veteran's Voice on KBOO community radio.

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*'So the whole military culture is very dark and very unhealthy. And it's dominant, and it never apologizes, and it cares zero about anybody else. ... And that is how the aggression happens.'*

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In this interview with Peace in Our Times Associate Editor Becky Luening, Angie discusses her personal experience as a woman in the Navy, and how it has shaped her views and continues to affect her postmilitary life.

**Becky Luening:** Tell me about your deployment to the Persian Gulf in 2003.

**Angie Hines:** We were the first battle group to enter the gulf. We were with the Kitty Hawk [aircraft carrier] and another destroyer, and my ship [the USS Cowpens] was the first to strike anything through Operation Iraqi Freedom. So when people back in the United States were watching things blow up on the news; when

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Local Veterans For Peace Contact:

## Veterans Stand with Standing Rock

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A veteran on horseback leads marching water protectors toward the rope barrier for a peaceful prayer. Photo: David Gutierrez



## Letters

### The Sacred Fire

I joined Veterans Stand for Standing Rock last week to stand nonviolently for the rights of the Indigenous Americans in their struggle to stop the oil pipeline from destroying their water source.

Being a warrior is highly respected in the Indigenous culture. A greater percent of Indigenous Americans have served in the military than any other ethnic group.

We 4,000-plus veterans of World War II and later wars were prepared to follow the wishes of the elders and nonviolently absorb whatever blows the police, national guard, and the hired security group Tiger/Swan might inflict. In the end an agreement of sorts was reached and a direct confrontation was avoided.

I happened to be near the sacred fire at the Oceti Sakowin camp when the Army Corps of Engineers rejection of a permit to drill under the Missouri River was announced. I was able to take part in the victory celebration of winning this one battle in the ongoing war against Mother Earth. As a vet, I received lots of hugs and even a kiss for upholding my oath to protect their constitutional rights.

As I was heading east on I-90 ahead of the oncoming blizzard, I could not help but compare it to another long eastbound journey home from another mission. Decades ago on my trip home from Vietnam, I was carrying shame. On this journey I was carrying honor. I will be eternally grateful to the Great Sioux Nation for giving me honor.

Paul Appell  
Altona, Ill.

### Perspective

Veterans For Peace was founded with a key part of our mission being to “restrain our government(s) from intervening, overtly or covertly, in the internal affairs of other nations.”

There are two reasons for this:

1) As veterans, citizens and residents, we have the responsibility, credibility, and leverage to press for the correction of the policies of our own government(s); and

2) The United States, where the vast majority of VFP members live, is “the greatest purveyor of violence on earth today” (even truer today than when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said this in 1967).

When someone says “U.S. imperialism” (over 900 foreign military bases), we should not feel compelled to respond with “Russian Empire” (maybe 10 foreign military bases).

In fact, we should acknowledge that, whatever its motivation, Russia sometimes uses its power and influence to counteract U.S. interventionism (as in Vietnam, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Syria).

Russia’s policies are certainly not beyond critical examination. However, we should not add our voices to those who are trying to stir up a new Cold War. Blaming every ill on Russia, even the election of Donald Trump, is crazy, and dangerous too.

A de-escalation of hostility and suspicion in U.S.-Russia relations is in *all* of our interests. Except for warmongers and weapons manufacturers...

Gerry Condon  
Vice President, Veterans For Peace



### Peace in Our Times

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## A Note from the Editors



Police at Dakota Access Pipeline protest Oct. 10. Photo: Ellen Davidson

## A Wave That Has Been a Long Time Coming

*“Time is the wave upon the shore. It takes some things away, but it brings other things.”—Amy Neftzger*

There is a wave coming. It’s now a tidal wave. The actual shape it will finally take, under Trump or someone else after him, probably won’t make much difference in the long run.

We need to recognize that America has been moving for decades toward naked totalitarianism, toward an unveiling of what was present from the beginning when the richest men in the colonies formed what they called a democracy.

It was not then, and has never been, a true democracy.

This country was founded on genocide of Native people and slavery. That has not changed, only taken different forms. The most wealthy have always been in control and they profit while people and the earth suffer. Now more than ever, with our president-elect and his billionaire cabinet, it has become obvious. There might have been a time when it was possible to stop the wave, but that time is past.

Long ago, Thomas Paine said, “Society in every state is a blessing, but government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil; in its worst state an intolerable one.”

That intolerable time may be upon us now. An ugly wave that began forming centuries ago is just off shore. The wave may devastate or even destroy the over-glorified, consumerist American way of life as we know it. The massive collapse could well be traumatic (putting it mildly) for all of us. The good news is that after the collapse, there is always the possibility for rebirth of something truly democratic and noble.

We (meaning what we believe in—truth, beauty, community, love of the living planet) will have to survive to see that happen. Our role is to continue to resist, despite the odds, to continue nonviolently, even prayerfully, as the Sioux leaders at Standing Rock enjoin, to stand for truth, peace, and the living planet—to be a part of keeping all that alive.

The Native American struggle at Stand-

ing Rock to protect the water and the land against tremendous odds is a lesson in courage, in the collective strength of community, and in spirit. It is important to remember that this struggle is not just about climate justice and water, it is part of a long and heroic struggle against settler colonialism and for First Nation sovereignty.

President Thomas Jefferson, who was a mass of often brilliant contradictions, developed plans for Indian removal west of the Mississippi, but also pledged in 1786, “It may be taken for a certainty that not a foot of land will be taken from the Indians without their consent.”

Later, as president, in an 1802 letter to the Secretary of War, he came up with a devious plan to circumvent those earlier noble-sounding sentiments: “There is perhaps no method more irresistible of obtaining lands from them than by letting them get in debt, which when too heavy to be paid, they are always willing to lop off by a cession of land.”

America’s very foundations are rooted in a betrayal of principles, in lies and deception and, when necessary, brutal, ruthless violence.

It is critically important to continue the nonviolent struggle for peace and justice, not because we will avert the coming tidal wave—that has been forming over centuries and will take its toll—but because the very act of resistance, of standing for truth, justice, and community, affirms our humanity and strengthens all of those elements in us and in the community of those whose eyes and hearts are opening.

We need that strength, solidarity, and awareness, and we need to survive, to create a different model, both as individuals and as community, of what is possible for human beings.

The Lakota Sioux are providing a powerful example of how to struggle nonviolently for justice, protect the earth and live on it sustainably.

It is our hope that this newspaper contributes to that struggle and that awareness.

—Tarak Kauff

# We Are All Deplorables

By Chris Hedges

My relatives in Maine are deplorables. I cannot write on their behalf. I can write in their defense. They live in towns and villages that have been ravaged by deindustrialization. The bank in Mechanic Falls, where my grandparents lived, is boarded up, along with nearly every downtown store. The paper mill closed decades ago. There is a strip club in the center of the town. The jobs, at least the good ones, are gone. Many of my relatives and their neighbors work up to 70 hours a week at three minimum-wage jobs, without benefits, to make perhaps \$35,000 a year. Or they have no jobs. They cannot afford adequate health coverage under the scam of Obamacare. Alcoholism is rampant in the region. Heroin addiction is an epidemic. Labs producing the street drug methamphetamine make up a cottage industry. Suicide is common. Domestic abuse and sexual assault destroy families. Despair and rage among the population have fueled an inchoate racism, homophobia, and Islamophobia and feed the latent and ever-present poison of white supremacy. They also nourish the magical thinking peddled by the con artists in the Christian right, the state lotteries that fleece the poor, and an entertainment industry that night after night shows visions of an America and a lifestyle on television screens—*The Apprentice* typified this—that foster unattainable dreams of wealth and celebrity.

Those who are cast aside as human refuse often have a psychological need for illusions and scapegoats. They desperately seek the promise of divine intervention. They unplug from a reality that is too hard to bear. They see in others, especially those who are different, the obstacles to their own advancement and success. We must recognize and understand the profound despair that leads to these reactions. To understand these reactions is not to condone them.

The suffering of the white underclass is real. Its members struggle with humiliation and a crippling loss of self-worth and dignity. The last thing they need, or deserve, is politically correct thought police telling them what to say and think and condemning them as mutations of human beings.

Those cast aside by the neoliberal order have an economic identity that both the liberal class and the right wing are unwilling to acknowledge. This economic identity is one the white underclass shares with other discarded people, including the undocumented workers and the people of color demonized by the carnival barkers on cable news shows. This is an economic reality the power elites invest great energy in masking.

The self-righteousness of the liberal class, which revels in imagined tolerance and enlightenment while condemning the white underclass as irredeemable, widens the divide between white low-wage workers and urban elites. Liberals have no right



*[Evangelicals] believe they can create a 'Christian' America. ... That a sleazy developer and con artist was chosen as their vehicle for achieving this goal is startling, to say the least.*

to pass judgment on these so-called deplorables without acknowledging their pain. They must listen to their stories, which the corporate media shut out. They must offer solutions that provide the possibility of economic stability and self-respect.

Martin Luther King Jr. understood the downward spiral of hating those who hate you. "In a real sense all life is inter-related," he wrote in "Letter From a Birmingham Jail." "All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be. ..."

We cannot battle the racism, bigotry, and hate crimes that will be stoked by the Donald Trump presidency without first battling for economic justice. This is not a gap between the tolerant and the intolerant. It is a gap between most of the American population and our oligarchic and corporate elites, which Trump epitomizes. It is a gap that is understood only in light of the demand for economic justice. And when we start to speak in the language of justice first, and the language of inclusiveness second, we will begin to blunt the protofascism being embraced by many Trump supporters.

I spent two years writing a book on the Christian right called *American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America*. I spent many months with dispossessed white workers in states such as Missouri, Kansas, Florida, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and California. I carried into the

book project all the prejudices that come with being raised in the liberal church—a disdain for a magic Jesus who answers your prayers and makes you rich, a repugnance at the rejection of rationality and science and at the literal interpretation of the Bible, a horror of the sacralization of the American empire, and a revulsion against the racism, misogyny, homophobia, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, and blind intolerance that often afflict those who retreat into a binary world of good and evil.

Those enthralled by such thinking are Christian heretics—Jesus did not come to make us rich and powerful and bless America's empire—and potential fascists. They have fused the iconography and symbols of the American state with the iconography and symbols of the Christian religion. They believe they can create a "Christian" America. The American flag is given the same sacred value as the Christian cross. The Pledge of Allegiance has the religious power of the Lord's Prayer. That a sleazy developer and con artist was chosen as their vehicle for achieving this goal is startling, to say the least (81 percent of evangelicals voted for Trump). But this is not a reality-based movement. Most of those who profit from this culture of despair, many wrapped in the halo of the ministry, are, like Trump, slick, amoral trolls.

My view of the tens of millions of Americans who have fallen into the embrace of the Christian right's magical thinking underwent a profound change as I conducted interviews for the book. During that time I did what good reporters do: I listened. And

the stories I heard were heartbreaking. I grew to like many of these people. The communities they lived in, many of which I visited, looked like the towns where my family lived in Maine. They were terrified of the future, especially for their children. They struggled with feelings of worthlessness and abandonment. I fear the Christianized fascism in which they enshroud themselves, but I also see them as its pawns.

They hate a secular world they see as destroying them. They long for the apocalyptic visions of Tim LaHaye's "Left Behind" series. They want the cruelty and rot of "secular humanism" to be obliterated before they and their families are lifted into heaven by the rapture (an event never mentioned in the Bible).

I finished my book with a deep dislike for megachurch pastors who, like Trump, manipulate despair to achieve power and wealth. I see the Christian right as a serious threat to an open society. But I do not hate those who desperately cling to this emotional life raft, even as they spew racist venom. Their conclusion that minorities, undocumented workers, or Muslims are responsible for their impoverishment is part of the retreat into fantasy. The only way we will blunt this racism and hatred and allow them to free themselves from the grip of magical thinking is by providing jobs that offer adequate incomes and economic stability and by restoring their communities and the primacy of the common good. Any other approach will fail. We will not argue or scold them out of their beliefs. These

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# Punishing Seniors for Protesting

By Ann Wright

Governments go pretty low to silence dissent—curtailing one's travel to neighboring countries and, now, stopping Social Security checks.

In 2005 and 2006, the Bush administration put some of us protesting Bush's war on Iraq into the National Crime Information Data base. Yes, we had been arrested for failure to comply with orders to move from the fence in front of the White House during protests against the war on Iraq, torture at Guantánamo and other U.S. prisons in Iraq and Afghanistan or sitting in ditches at Bush's Crawford, Texas, ranch. These were misdemeanors, not felonies, yet we were put on the FBI's international crime list, a list for felony violations.

Canada is the only country that seems to use the list—and they use it to deny entry into Canada. At the request of Canadian parliamentarians to challenge Canada's compliance with the Bush administration's political retaliation list, I made another trip to Canada to test it and was expelled from Canada in 2007. The Canadian immigration officer told me as he was putting me unceremoniously on the flight back to the United States, "An expulsion is not as bad as being deported. At least each time you want to attempt to come into Canada, you can undergo 3–5 hours of interrogation answering the same questions as the last time you attempted to enter, and you might get an exemption to the expulsion. With a deportation, you will never get in." Over the past six years, I have gone through the lengthy interrogation twice: I was given a 24-hour exemption to the expulsion when accompanied by a Canadian parliamentarian and a Canadian Broadcasting TV crew filming the event, and I received a two-day exemption in order to speak at several Canadian universities.

Under the Obama administration, the latest effort to silence dissent, for those of you 62 or older, takes the form of someone in the government falsifying jail records to show that you were in jail/confinement for more than 30 days and sending the records to the Social Security Administration. SSA will then stop your monthly Social Se-



**Col. Ann Wright arrested at Creech Air Force Base in Nevada March 31, 2016.**

curity check and demand that you repay months of payments received during the time you were allegedly in jail—in my case \$4,273.60.

On March 31, 2016, along with six Veterans for Peace and one Granny Peace Brigade member, I was arrested at Creech drone base in Nevada when I participated in the semi-annual protest against assassin drones. We spent five hours in the Clark County Jail as our arrests were processed and then were released. Charges of "failure to disperse" were eventually dropped by the Clark County court.

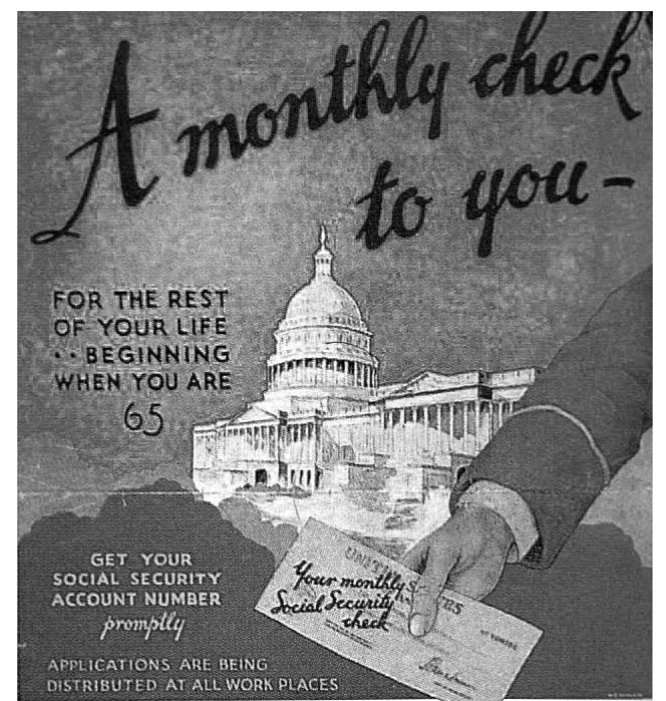
Yet, someone submitted my name and Social Security number to SSA as a person who has been in jail since September 2016. SSA informed me that because of my "criminal conviction and confinement in a correctional institution for more than 30 days, we cannot pay your monthly Social Security payment."

When I went to my local SSA office in Honolulu to explain the situation, the office staff said their supervisor must call Las Vegas and get documents showing that I had not been convicted of a crime, was not in jail and had not been in jail for 30 days or more. Such bureaucratic investigations often take many months if not years. In the meantime, the checks have been suspended.

If I didn't know better, I might think this is part of the Israeli "lawfare" program, in which Israel attempts to derail protest against its policies by filing bogus lawsuits that end up having to be answered in court, tying up human and financial resources. I came back in October after having been kidnapped on the Women's Boat to Gaza, taken against my will to Israel, charged with entering Israel illegally and deported ... again. This is the second time I have been deported from Israel for challenging the illegal Israeli naval blockade of Gaza. My deportations from Israel now total 20 years, which preclude me from visiting Israel or the West Bank.

Stay tuned for the next chapter in this saga of our government appearing to attempt to silence dissent! Of course, their attempts to silence us will not be successful. See you soon—on the streets, in the ditches and probably even in jail!

*Ann Wright served 29 years in the U.S. Army/Army Reserves and retired as a Colonel. She also served 16 years as a U.S. diplomat in U.S. Embassies in Nicaragua, Grenada, Somalia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Sierra Leone, Micronesia, Afghanistan, and Mongolia. She resigned from the U.S. government in March 2003 in opposition to the war on Iraq.*



**As long as you behave yourself ...**

## Deplorables

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people are emotionally incapable of coping with the world as it is. If we demonize them, we demonize ourselves.

In story after story, Arlie Russell Hochschild's book *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* makes clear that members of the white underclass are also victims and deserve our empathy.

The liberal class has no hope of defeating the rise of American fascism until it unites with the dispossessed white working class. It has no hope of being an effective force in politics until it articulates a viable socialism. Corporate capitalism cannot be regulated, reformed, or corrected. A socialist movement dedicated to demolishing the cruelty of the corporate state will do more to curb the racism of the white underclass than lessons by liberals in moral purity. Preaching multiculturalism and gender and identity politics will not save us from the rising sadism in American society. It will only fuel the anti-politics that has replaced politics.

Liberals have sprinkled academic, corporate, media, and political institutions with men and women of different races and religions. This has done nothing to protect the majority of marginalized people who live in conditions that are worse than those that existed when King marched on Selma. It is boutique activism. It is about branding, not justice.

Murray Bookchin excoriated the irrelevancy of a liberal class that busied itself with "the numbing quietude of the polling booth, the deadening platitudes of petition campaigns, car[-]bumper sloganeering, the contradictory rheto-

ric of manipulative politicians, the spectator sports of public rallies and finally, the knee-bent humble pleas for small reforms—in short the mere shadows of the direct action, embattled commitment, insurgent conflicts, and social idealism that marked every revolutionary project in history."

Human history, as Bookchin and Karl Marx understood, is defined by class struggle. America's corporate elites successfully fused the two major political parties into a single corporate party, one that seized control of electoral politics, internal security, the judiciary, universities, the arts, finance, and nearly all forms of popular communication, including Hollywood, public relations, and the press. There is no way within the system to defy the demands of

***The only route left is revolt.  
If this revolt is to succeed, it must  
be expressed in the language  
of economic justice.***

Wall Street, the fossil fuel industry, or war profiteers. And Trump is about to remove whatever tepid restraints are left.

In *The Decline of the West*, Oswald Spengler predicted that, as Western democracies calcified and died, a class of "monied thugs," people such as Trump, would replace the traditional political elites. Democracy would become a sham. Hatred would be fostered and fed to the masses

to encourage them to tear themselves apart.

The only route left is revolt. If this revolt is to succeed, it must be expressed in the language of economic justice. A continuation of the language of multiculturalism and identity politics as our primary means of communication is self-defeating. It stokes the culture wars. It feeds the anti-politics that define the corporate state.

"The heirs of the New Left of the Sixties have created, within the academy, a cultural Left," Richard Rorty wrote. "Many members of this Left specialize in what they call the 'politics of difference' or 'of identity' or 'of recognition.' This cultural Left thinks more about stigma than about money, more about deep and hidden psychosexual motivations than about shallow and evident greed."

Our enemy is not the white working poor any more than it is African-Americans, undocumented workers, Muslims, Latinos, or members of the LGTB community. The oligarchs and corporations, many of them proponents of political correctness, are our enemy. If we shed our self-righteousness and hubris, if we speak to the pain and suffering of the working poor, we will unmask the toxins of bigotry and racism. We will turn the rage of an abandoned working class, no matter what its members' color, race or religious creed, against those who deserve it.

*Chris Hedges is a journalist, activist, and author of best-selling books including War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning (2002) and Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt (2012, written with cartoonist Joe Sacco). He spent nearly two decades as a foreign correspondent and has reported from more than 50 countries.*

# The Mourning After: Waking Up in Trump's America

By Nicholas Powers

The blue morning painted my bedroom into a dark ocean. I was at the bottom of it, sunken by fears that moved through shadows like cold currents. Drawing breath was work. Lifting my head was hard labor.

I reached for my phone, typed in “NY Times.”

The previous night, I met friends at a bar in Bushwick to watch Hillary Clinton win the presidency. But state after state went red for Trump. I left before the final votes were counted, hoping to wake up and see her shimmy a victory dance on the news.

Then I read the Times’ headline, “Trump Triumphs.” Sitting up, I shook my head as if throwing out the words. Something broke. Inside me. Like bone snapping. Like a photo of home being torn.

“I can’t believe they did it,” I muttered. “I can’t.”

In the shower, I stared at water swirling into the drain. I got dressed, left for work beneath a grey, cloud-filled sky. All around me I saw strained faces. Construction men sullenly strapped on tool belts. Parents somberly took kids to school. People lined up sadly for the bus. Something died in us. Some hope that America could accept our humanity. Where that hope had been was now an emptiness. It echoed so loudly that I leaned on a streetlight and screamed inside myself: Oh God. Oh God. Oh God.

Rubbing my face, I blinked. The world was still here. Trump was still president. The man had called us rapists, terrorists; he said our neighborhoods were war zones and we were losers. Now he was putting his hands on the power of the state and soon would hurl it at us.

I knew that under his administration, some of us would be arrested. Some of us deported. Some of us fired. Some of us killed. I felt my friends within me. Already terrified. Political homies who’d be surveilled and beaten at protests. Students who were immigrants. Neighbors who’d go back to jail.

My phone buzzed. I took it and saw a row of text mes-



## Fear 101

“My president is Black,” Young Jeezy rapped from the speakers as we sat on the shuttle bus; students and professors traded looks and smiled, as if to say, “What the hell?” Jeezy recorded it after Obama’s 2008 win. Our new president, Trump, was not black and definitely not getting rap songs showing him love.

“They playing this to keep our spirits up,” a young woman said to everyone. “Them DJs at Hot 97 are funny. They know what we’re feeling.”

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*For the whole campaign, whole swaths of white male America had been squeezing their hands into fists, and now the fight had started.*

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sages: OMG!—I’m scared of this world—My heart is broken—HATE THIS COUNTRY! I stood there with a phone that buzzed with a new text every second as if I’d taken out my heart and held it as it pulsed with fear.

It took work to stand up. It took work to breathe and walk to the train. Everything was work now.

## Learning from History

“We survived slavery,” she said. “We got this.”

“Slavery.” I listened to Jamara on the phone and looked from the train window at the Long Island suburbs. Trump won Long Island. Nearly every American city, like New York, was liberal blue, surrounded by conservative red suburbs and countryside, packed with whites who threw our nation into the small hands of a reality TV star.

I scanned the white faces on the train. You in the business suit? Or you in the hard hat and paint-splattered boots? Did you vote for Trump?

“We did survive slavery,” I said to her in a high squeaky voice, “although that is a low bar.”

“We have a long history of overcoming,” she spoke in warm, reassuring tones. “Conservatives are trying to hold on to an America that doesn’t exist anymore. Time is on our side. We’re strong. We got this.”

I thanked her and hung up; soon she texted clips of Black Panthers holding up their fists. Moving the phone in front of the window, they looked like giant, Black historical figures, straddling the white suburbs and raising their fists over them, again and again.

I nodded and saw a dreamy, far-away glaze on people’s faces as if they were transported back in time to the euphoria of Obama’s election. As the song finished, a troubled wind passed through their eyes and one by one, they blinked and were again in the present.

We rolled up to the college and I went to New Academic Building. I loved it here. The halls were a little United Nations where Muslim women in hijab laughed with Caribbean guys who then shouted to Long Island white jocks about a party who in turn invited a Dominican woman with dyed green hair who slung her arm around her girlfriend and said sure, we’ll come through. It was fun. It was New York kids becoming New York adults.

Today the halls were quiet. Professors huddled at doorways, talking low, rubbing words over each other like packs of ice on a bruise. When I got to my class, the students were sitting in the dark, staring at their hands. When I asked what was going on, a young man raised his face and said, “It feels like someone died.”

I asked them to tell me, to lay it all down. One by one, they spoke of fear and shock. One of the women said white people were walking with their chest out. Full of pride. In the back sat a disabled man who always dressed like he was going to a club. “I was at the station and a car of white guys sped by,” he said, face scrunched in post-shock confusion. “They yelled, ‘Get out of here, nigger!’”

Others said they felt trapped by the way others looked

at them; like they were surrounded by a million little Trumps. “Somehow,” said a student flipping through her book nervously, “the wall he wanted to build was built overnight. It’s in every city and street. It’s in my family. I can’t talk to them. I get angry just thinking about it.” She looked at everyone. “Maybe the wall was always there, but we chose not to see it.”

## Street Healing

Speed. Everything was picking up speed, going too fast, blurring into a montage. I was on the train, rushing out of Long Island to the city, and when I blinked, a roll of images flashed. Trump. Rain. Scared eyes. The wall. Nervous flipping of book. Rain.

The wall was in my chest. Breathing was hard labor. Muscles tense as if waiting for a giant fist to hammer me down. For the whole campaign, whole swaths of white male America had been squeezing their hands into fists, and now the fight had started.

The wall was in my mind. What thoughts could I think? What stories could I tell myself? When would I be told that my truth was illegal?

The train rolled into Penn Station. I dashed out, up to the street, the lights, the noise, the people. My friends texted me directions to the march and I felt them, heard them before I saw them. Loud rhythmic chants. A thundering river of people, some holding placards, some making a megaphone with their hands and booming out no to Trump, no to hate, no to fear. We wove through the thousands protesting in front of Trump Tower like a centipede but in the shuffle, broke apart. I stood there, feeling everything rising up, up, up into my throat. The rage at America. The sorrow of lost hope. The blue lit morning. An ocean of sorrow. The silence that moves through our lives. All of it rose to my lips and I just shouted, “FUCK TRUMP! FUCK TRUMP! FUCK TRUMP!”

We all yelled. We yelled for our dreams. We yelled for our loved ones. We yelled and our breath, our music, was like a horn blasting across space and time. We yelled, and the wall he wanted to build came down.

*This article was originally published in The Independent, independent.org.*

*Nicholas Powers is a poet and associate professor of literature. He has written for The Independent, Truth-Out, The Village Voice and Alternet. He has reported from hurricane-hit New Orleans, the Darfur genocide, Burning Man and post-earthquake Haiti.*

# Navy Veteran

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they saw Saddam's palace blow up, that came from the ship I was on. For the remaining amount of time we went around East Asia and Eastern Europe, making various appearances at different ports and showing our military might as the U.S. Navy.

**BL:** Were those mostly friendly ports?

**AH:** They were. We went to some other places, like off the coast of South Korea, at times when there was talk of North Korea building up, but I feel like a lot of that was propaganda and just trying to find something to do. I was never really afraid of any of that stuff. There was talk of us being redeployed to the gulf, but that didn't happen either. So yes, they were friendly ports, besides the prostitution, and besides the bricks getting thrown through people's windows, and besides the fights that happened, and besides basically U.S. sailors going into other people's ports and harming the local civilians and harming the peace that was already there. Incidents like that would happen, and sometimes rapes would happen.

**BL:** You mean perpetrated by U.S. military?

**AH:** Yes. Perpetrated by—for example, we were in Okinawa, and one person from my boat threw a brick through a family's window, while they were eating dinner, just because he was acting out—probably [drunk]—a random act.

**BL:** Was he punished?

**AH:** Yes, he was. But he could have gotten away with it. There were things like that; it was peaceful on the part of the places we were going. It wasn't always peaceful on our part.

I was forward deployed, which means for three years I was stationed in Japan, and from there, we were the first deployed to confront any type of war scenario or threat in East Asia. [The U.S. 7th Fleet] for years has always been deployed first. So it's like being infantry in the Navy or something. And outside Yokosuka Naval Base in Japan, where I was stationed, it was constant fighting. Constant drunkenness. I watched an old Japanese man get beat by a group of sailors one night. I'll never forget that. There were stabbings, rapes, and murders. There were massive protests by Japanese civilians outside of our base on a semi-regular basis because of the murders that would happen. One happened in the process of stealing \$10 from an old woman, chasing her downstairs into the train station.

**BL:** What do you attribute this kind of behavior to? Is there something in the military culture? Does it have to do with the quality of recruits they're getting now? Does it have to do with the fact that the higher-ups aren't paying attention or don't care?

**AH:** Well, I think at the core, it is our American ethnocentrism that feeds our thoughts about ourselves as Americans. That if we go into another country, we are

dominant and more privileged than they are, and I would see that played out in any port we went to. Americans act like they're better than other people. And to top that is the massive masculinization of the entire military. So you take a bunch of 18- to 25-year-old men, you get them really drunk, and then you tell them that they're the best and that they can do anything, get away with anything they want, and they're going to test that. And, you know, maybe part of it does have to do with the type of recruits they're getting, but I've also seen really sweet people join the military and then become really, really corrupt, from the other people they're around. So the whole military culture is very dark and very unhealthy. And it's dominant, and it never apologizes, and it cares zero about anybody else. At the core. And that is how the aggression happens, I believe, and the violence.

**BL:** And of course, you're a woman, and you were on that ship. How many other women were on that ship that you were on?

**AH:** There were about 350 people on the boat I was on, and no more than 40 women at any time. That includes officers and enlisted. So the ratio is very small. Women did have a separate living quarters, but men would come in there sometimes. I was actually attacked in the middle of the night while I was sleeping. I was only 19; it was only a few weeks after I got there. I was sleeping in the middle of the night where I was supposed to be, and a male went in there, and grabbed me out of my rack and dragged me out into the hallway, and basically tried to either make out with me or rape me or whatever he could get away with, and I ended up fighting him off, so that didn't happen fortunately. But the protection [for women] is very minimal. There was no way for me to protect my-



Angie Hines.

**AH:** Because she betrayed the unit, our division, by trying to get him in trouble. We were just told not to talk to her in general. She was blamed for it. And that's how it works.

**BL:** Seems like I've heard that story before.

**AH:** There was a guy on my ship that got raped.

**BL:** Did the same thing happen to him?

**AH:** He didn't try to report it. He was just chastised and called gay. People just called him a fag over and over, and he would cut himself and burn himself and drink himself into complete, scary drunkenness. So, yeah, reporting any kind of assault like that is almost impossible,

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*'At the core, it is our American ethnocentrism that feeds our thoughts about ourselves as Americans. That if we go into another country, we are dominant and more privileged than they are, and I would see that played out in any port we went to.'*

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self, really. I mentioned it to one person, and he told me that if something like that ever happened again I should report it, but I didn't want to report it, because I saw what happened to another female that reported being grabbed, and we were told to shun her. She was actually in the same division as me. We had the same job. She reported that she was being grabbed by somebody, and I believe that that happened, and they pulled all of her qualifications. She was taken away from doing any kind of job that she normally does, and she was made to just chip paint and clean and was basically kept away from us. We were told not to talk to her. I was the only person that did.

**BL:** Did they give you a reason for not talking to her?

if not completely impossible, and sometimes what happens to you is worse with the backlash than it just happening and then forgetting about it. It's a rape culture. That's what the military is; it's rape culture.

**BL:** You came into the military November 2001. Did you sign up as a result of 9/11?

**AH:** I signed up on a delayed entry program during the summer of 2001, before September 11th, and I did not care about serving my country at all. I came from a pretty liberal—I grew up as a punk rock kid, very alternative, and so, basically, the reason I signed up was because I was really poor. I lived in rural northern California, I couldn't see a whole lot of options for myself. I wanted to go to school; I didn't know how to do that. My grandma suggested it. I told her, "No way, I'm not doing that. I'm not joining the Navy." And the next day I called a recruiter. I was living with my parents, who were alcoholics, and I am the oldest of three kids. I was working at Winco; I was paying for the electricity to be on at my house, I was paying for the groceries; I was being the parent. That's how most of my childhood was. Now my parents are clean and sober, but at that time I was the only mechanism seeming to make anything function, and it was really wearing on me, really hard, and so I thought, 'Man, maybe I can join the military and just get out of here, maybe I can just get out of this place. I can get away, I can make money, I can go to school. I don't care about the United States, but I do care about myself, you know.' And that's the way I think a lot of people join, and that's how it happened [for me], and so 9/11 happened, and I went back to my recruiter, and I said, "You know, I don't know if I want to be part of this stuff. This is intense. This is like real war happening. I really

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# Navy Veteran

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don't know about this." And he said, "Well, there's nothing you can do about it. You signed the papers." He said, "You leave in a couple months. You joined the Navy, don't worry about a thing. You'll be fine. You'll be on a boat somewhere else." Well, you know, I ended up going first in the gulf, and first to strike in Operation Iraqi Freedom, and they would consider this boat a threat, you know, so that wasn't true. It wasn't true that I had to go. I could have gotten out of that. That was a lie. Technically you have six months to get out of your contract; there's a window of time [to reconsider] even after you're in boot camp.

**BL:** Do you have to have a certain strong reason to back out?

**AH:** You can have just about any reason you want. It can be, 'I don't like this. I don't agree with this. This isn't me. This isn't what I want to do.' And you can 100 percent challenge that, and a recruiter or somebody in boot camp will tell you differently, but it's a lie.

**BL:** What about the representations or the things that you believed you were going to get out of the experience. Do you feel like you got some of that fulfilled? You know, education, self-improvement—what did you come out of it with?

**AH:** Well, I came out of it with a huge insight into how the military-industrial complex has such a stronghold on our society. Yes, I got some college money. It's not enough to get you through college. It's disappointing. The transition out of the military was disappointing to me. I'm glad that I got to go to other countries. I've been to many other countries, but I could have done that without joining the military. It just took me a few years to not regret joining, and that's because [I have this] experience I can tell other people. That's the only reason I don't regret it. Otherwise, it was a waste of time, to be honest. I could

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*'You take a bunch of 18- to 25-year-old men, you get them really drunk, and then you tell them that they're the best and that they can do anything, get away with anything they want, and they're going to test that.'*

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have done without the college money. I could have gone to community college myself. I could have done without all the experience. I could have done without the PTSD.

**BL:** And what would you say your PTSD stems from? What part of your experience has caused the most stress and trauma in your life?

**AH:** Well, I have combat-related PTSD from constantly thinking I'm going to die, because we were under alerts all the time. We were constantly going into alert scenarios that I didn't know if I was going to live or die. Chemical bombs, things like that. So I'm very skittish. But I also have military sexual trauma as well.

**BL:** Is that from that incident of being grabbed, that attempted assault, or was there other stuff that went on in the military that you were subjected to?

**AH:** The entire culture is constantly demeaning female sailors or soldiers or service people. Female service members are treated like second-class citizens, and you're constantly being looked at. If you screw up, people notice. If you're 30 seconds late, people notice. One time I was leaving the boat to go on free time, and I went to the store, did some errands whatever, came back, and then as soon



USS Cowpens

as I walked back on the boat, people were saying, "Wow, I didn't know you were having sex with so-and-so." Just because I was walking off the boat at the same time as another person, people assumed I was sleeping with them. So it was always, "What are you doing with your vagina?" Everything has to do with, "What is she doing with her vagina? She is disgusting. She's a whore. She's a slut. She's a bitch. She's a lesbian." For a long time, I didn't want to have anything to do with any male sailors, so everybody was calling me a dyke, they were calling me a lesbian, and it seems if you do hook up with somebody, you're a slut, you're a whore. And there is no shame in them telling you these things. They will—I've been told some of the worst things I've ever heard in my life. Just standing with my division in the morning, people would say, "Oh, look at her ass," about me. Walking around the boat, "Oh, look at your ass." It's constant harassment.

**BL:** If you complain to the authorities then you're shunned?

**AH:** The authorities are sometimes the people who are saying those things. And the intimidation for reporting it is very high. At one point, my mom actually emailed my captain, because I was being hazed. I was being held down and smacked, and I told my mom about that, and another guy almost broke my hand by squeezing it so hard, and I told my mom about that. I had bruises. And the captain came up to me and he said, "Hey, I got an email from your mom. Nothing's happening, right? Like, everything's OK, right?" And here's the captain, the highest of highest on the boat. And he's telling me, basically, with his eyes and his demeanor and tone, "You better shut the hell up. Or have your mom shut up." So that's how it works. It's enough to change somebody, for life. It's enough to change your psychology.

**BL:** And you were saying there's an element of that even, there's something you've been struggling with or thinking about having to do with civilian culture and women and men and the job market and what-have-you?

**AH:** The Navy was 17 percent women. For my job as a carpenter, it's less than 3 percent, and it's always one percent with me, because I'm always the only female on my job site. Women join the military at 17 or 18 or 19 years old, and they're trained like men. They're trained to be like men, to think like men, and to work like men, and they work like men for years. And then they get out of the military, and they're supposed to be women now. Some, like me, don't know what that means. I just don't know how I am supposed to fit into a female role, or do a "woman's job," and I don't necessarily even want to do that. So here I am loading 75-pound rounds into a five-inch gun for four

years, and then I'm supposed to get out and type things on a computer? I can't necessarily do that. Nor do I want to, or comprehend that. I feel like this is how female veterans are put into a really unique circumstance, because their gender roles are being swapped around. That doesn't happen to men at all. Their gender roles are being fed and nourished, and probably even perverted in certain ways. But for women, our gender roles are being all screwed up.

I think that might have something to do with the higher unemployment rates that female veterans have, the higher homeless rates that female veterans have. They have higher rates of these things because you get out, and how are you supposed to fit into the world? You don't even know how to do that. And then people look at you like you're a freak when you get out, because you don't know how to do the things that women typically do. And some, a lot of female veterans have higher rates of having children, or being single mothers, [compared to the rates for male veterans being] single fathers, and they might get out of the military and not have anywhere to go. So it's a unique challenge for women to be able to fit back into a society that really hasn't changed, from my perspective. Because women have made strides in music and art and finance and all these different areas of life, but in the trades, they haven't. That is still what's called occupational segregation. And a lot of female veterans can't necessarily sit in an office, or work with a lot of people. I can't do that.

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*'It's a rape culture. That's what the military is; it's rape culture.'*

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**BL:** I feel like historically, you look back at other wars and you hear about comfort women and you know that a lot of soldiers in Vietnam had sexual relations with Vietnamese women who were prostituting themselves, and it's very common for the military to give its men access to sex, somehow?

**AH:** Yeah, that definitely happened. You know, people are sexual beings, and they need an outlet for that or whatever—especially guys, when they're younger. At Yokosuka Naval Base, if you walk outside the base, it's all prostitutes. Eventually when I made E5, I got an apartment, and on my way home to this apartment I would say hi to them every day. And they were all Filipinos. They would come to Japan in hopes of a better life, and then they would turn to prosti-

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## Navy Veteran

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tution because they couldn't really get jobs, and that's because sex shops were huge in Japan.

**BL:** Because of the military presence?

**AH:** I think, partially, but it's also part of the Japanese culture, part of the Yakuza [mafia] culture, for one, because in Tokyo, which is not near any military base, they have a lot of Russian prostitutes, sex workers basically. [All sex workers in Japan are] foreigners. They come to Japan thinking they're going to be models or waitresses or something like that, and then [the mafia will] take their passports and keep them basically as sex slaves. That's what happens.

**BL:** So Japan is a big player in that. Portland, Ore., is too, we've heard, right?

**AH:** Yeah, it is. And I would see that firsthand. Basically, it was all just brothels outside the base, bars and brothels, [there to service U.S. naval personnel]. I sometimes wonder if more women were in the military, would the military not be so awful, but then I think, actually, when I was in the military, I started to act aggressively too, by nature of my surroundings.

In one specific incident—and this shows how much people can change—we were firing Tomahawk Cruise Missiles, and I was up on the bridge, and I couldn't see anything. The whole outside of the ship was covered in smoke from the missile launchings. There were these huge explosions that would shake the entire ship. And there was a girl, a fellow sailor, she was from Haiti, and she just started crying. And I got in her face, and I yelled at her, and I told her to shut up and stop crying. And what was going on in my head was, I don't want you to be a weak person and have these males identify you and all of us as weak females. And so it was this fear that caused this aggression, and fear and aggression just feed each other.

**BL:** I know, people want equal rights for women, so they think it's a good thing that women can now become combat vets and that kind of thing, but to me, that's not really a gain for women.

**AH:** I don't think the military cares about women at all. I think it's all bogus. They just want more bodies. They are having a hard time finding anybody who wants to join that isn't poverty stricken. To find somebody who actually wants to join the military be-

cause they like America is really hard. I mean, I don't know anybody who joined because they like America. It's all because they want to go to college. And if the military cared about women, then for one, it would start processing reports [of sexual assaults] outside of the military branch, outside the Department of Defense. You would be able to report that stuff to a civilian entity, you know?

Opening up combat roles for women is because they need more bodies. They don't act like they care about women in any other way, so why is that caring about women? They don't care about equal anything. It's just smoke and mirrors. We

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*'Everything has to do with, "What is she doing with her vagina? She is disgusting. She's a whore. She's a slut. She's a bitch. She's a lesbian."'*

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shouldn't even be in the Middle East. We should have never gone over there. The occupation was a complete lie. It's not a war with Iraq. It's an illegal occupation, and we owe reparations to every civilian survivor of war, and veterans, reparations for what the United States has done. We should be downsizing the military. The only way to reach equal rights for women is to end the occupations and the violence, and then start educating women, getting them healthcare, throughout the entire world. We know that that helps with the birthrate, right?

If there's overpopulation, the number one thing to do to help that is to educate women. We should be focusing on rebuilding our planet, after all this bombing and all this destruction.

**BL:** Would you say you were somewhat politically conscious before you ever went in the military, even as a teenager?

**AH:** Well, I was a kid. I knew something—I put American flags on my belt and my jacket.

**BL:** Because you were a punk.

**AH:** Cause I was a punk, yeah, and I did not know how to explain the system, but I knew that there was something really, really wrong, when I would go to school, and you know, my family and some other people's families I knew were struggling so hard, and then other people that I went to school with, the kids had brand-new cars when they were 16 and stuff like that. I recognized classism from a very young age,

and I recognized that money means that you have more power. And that was a problem to me.

I didn't understand sexism until I joined the military, at all. I actually thought—I thought that everybody was equal. That wasn't even a concept to me. And neither was racism. I didn't even understand that. The military taught me sexism. And it taught me racism.

**BL:** So you saw colored people within the military also being discriminated against?

**AH:** Well, there was segregation within what jobs people were given. The boat I was on was majority minority, as a lot of the Navy is, actually. I think it's partly because a lot of people join the Navy from the islands, from the Philippines and from Puerto Rico, maybe because Navy service features many island-type places, or because these are sailing cultures. In any case, I think the Navy might have the highest rates of non-white people. You know, George Bush opened up that opportunity for anyone from the Philippines to join the U.S. military.

**BL:** Do they get U.S. citizenship out of that?

**AH:** I never heard that actually joining the military to get citizenship actually works. I think that it's a big lie that the recruiters tell people, because none of the people that I served with were U.S. citizens. They would have to go through the process like

they join or not. So allowing them to be able to ask me anything they want, and get that unbiased, unpaid-for, unsponsored answer is something that every student should have access to. Every student. I've actually been there, I know what it's like, and they can ask me anything, and I will give them an answer. Because recruiters will tell them anything to get them to join. Recruiters will lie. So there's that.

The radio show is important to me because post-9/11 veterans are less than one percent of the U.S. population. So literally, over 99 percent [of Americans do not share my experience], because there's no draft. And to have people actually care about the issues that we're going through, it's really hard. I have mixed feelings about [re-instituting a military draft], but most of the time, people's eyes glaze over when they find out that I'm [a military veteran]. Most people don't know a post-9/11 veteran. Most people don't know anybody that's in the military right now, or from the gulf wars. They don't know us. We're invisible. And so I use that one hour a month I get on the radio to try to address some of the issues from a progressive veteran's perspective, to help our veterans community grow and recover from a lot of the damage that was done. Much of that damage is not even being considered, because nobody talks about the wars.

**BL:** So how do we cut through the fear, and the overwhelm, and motivate people to act?

**AH:** I think it's through intersectionality that we're actually going to move forward, and I've seen this. Standing Rock I feel is a really good example of that, because here is the Native movement, combined with the environmental justice movement, combined with, if you look at some of these videos, how many of these Native people are wearing hats that say "veteran" on it? Native Americans have the highest enlistment rate of any race in the military. That is how we're going to move forward, by piecing together different things that we have in common, and it will continue to build in that way.

Becky Luening is an associate member of Veterans For Peace Chapter 72 in Portland, Ore., and a board member of the Vietnam Friendship Village Project USA.



**Panayiota Bertzikis, executive director of the Military Rape Crisis Center and U.S. Coast Guard rape survivor.**  
Photo: Sand Angel Media

anybody else. It might help their case if they were in the U.S. military, but it's a really troubling fact that a lot of [these people join] the military, then go to the continental United States, and they think they're actually U.S. citizens because they were veterans, and then they might get a parking ticket or something like that, and get arrested, and then they're deported, so that leads to a whole other thing.

**BL:** I want to talk to you a little bit about your experience as a veteran peacemaker. I mean, you're working for a living doing construction and stuff, but I see you out there doing some counter-recruiting, and you're co-hosting the monthly *Veterans Voice* radio show on KBOO with Marvin Simmons. Do you spend a lot of time thinking about strategies and tactics for trying to, you know, make a dent in people's consciousness or something?

**AH:** Yeah, well there's a couple different angles I'm coming from. Number one, counter-recruiting is important to me—and I wish I had more time to do it, but maybe that will happen again. It's important to me because [it involves] trying to stop the problem before it starts. So if I can talk to some of these kids, which I've been doing for five years now, and provide them with an opportunity to talk to a real live veteran, who's not being paid by anybody, who isn't gonna tell them what to do. I have no vested interest in what they personally do. I want peace to happen, but I don't have anything at stake, whether





Veterans For Peace at the People's Climate March in New York City September 2014: We are all a part of the struggle to save the planet. Photo: Ellen Davidson

# Struggle to Defend Mother Earth

By Mike Ferner

When a local brewer asked me to participate in an event to support the Standing Rock activists and connect that effort to what we are doing to rescue Lake Erie, it took me a little while to see that we're a legitimate part of that same bigger picture.

The historic nonviolent standoff in North Dakota galvanized the world's attention and support, including my own small bit. But not until the conversation with that brewer was my mind and heart reawakened to my first feelings about environmental activism.

Standing Rock was dramatic and heroic. What we are doing here in Toledo and other communities around the western shores of Lake Erie to stop the massive, toxic algal blooms of past summers seems, well, sort of pedestrian, what you're just supposed to do. But I felt differently 40-some years ago when I first became an environmental activist.

Perhaps it was because I'd just gotten out of the Navy, where I'd taken care of hundreds of young men coming back in pieces from Viet Nam. Like many of today's Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, I was looking to fill a void recently filled by a sense of purpose. But this time I wanted a legitimate sense of purpose, not a perverse one used by warmakers to swindle a young generation. So when I discovered the many ongoing struggles of the early 1970s to save the natural world, I got engaged and never looked back.

However, after decades of meetings, lost causes, marching constantly uphill and, let's face it, getting old, that fiery feeling of defending Mother Earth against rapers and pillagers can subside into "it's just what we do."

But the people running hundreds of animal feedlots—"farmers" is a misnomer,

more like meat fabricators or milk engineers—and, more important, the politicians who sell out to them control both ag and environmental policy at the highest levels, in Ohio and no doubt elsewhere.

For example, these meat and milk factories dump liquid manure equal to more

gal "standing" to the waters and the creatures that live in it, arguing that nature is not only sacred, but entitled to take legal action against its destroyers.

Courts have not been friendly to this approach, but then our courts once held that people were property, that women

else would we allow our country to be destroyed? Why else would we be rewarding its destroyers? ... Most of us are still too sane to piss in our own cistern, but we allow others to do so and we reward them for it. We reward them so well, in fact, that those who piss in our cistern are wealthier than the rest of us. How do we submit? By not being radical enough."

The water protectors at Standing Rock showed us how to get to the root, or how to be radical. They called out the pipeline project for exactly what it is, a war of conquest waged on Mother Earth, alias "economic development," alias "energy independence," alias "national security," alias "jobs."

Here, the Farm Bureau and its economic allies—the Pork Council, the Dairy "Farmers," the Chicken Council, and the Chamber of Commerce—use the same arguments, wield the same power, corrupt governments, and poison the same water.

We are indeed in a struggle to defend Mother Earth. It's a good place to be.

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

*The water protectors at Standing Rock showed us how to get to the root, or how to be radical. They called out the pipeline project for exactly what it is, a war of conquest waged on Mother Earth.*

than Chicago and L.A.'s combined sewage, untreated, on fields draining into western Lake Erie every year, and they do it with massive public subsidies and with impunity. They treat drinking water for 10 million people as their toilet, and we pay them to do it.

Fortunately, some of us also picket public officials and get in their faces when they insist on parroting the Farm Bureau's line that "we don't want to put family farmers out of business." We exposed a consulting firm's role in a Farm Bureau attempt to kill the Chesapeake Bay cleanup before the company was given a platform to try the same here. We educate and create ways citizens can participate, believing the power of democracy is the key to winning this fight.

And there is a new effort beginning in Toledo that First Nation people and water protectors everywhere would be glad to see. It involves citizens gathering signatures for a 2017 ballot initiative to change the city charter, giving individuals the right to directly sue polluters instead of going through the EPA's regulatory process. Perhaps most important, it gives le-

were not persons and could not vote, that children could be exploited in coal mines. And they yet hold that war can be legal. As we fight for our lake, we are also fighting for our souls.

Wendell Berry was right when he wrote, "We Americans are not usually thought to be a submissive people, but we are. Why



An algae bloom blights Lake Erie.

# The Power of Spirit: Victory Day at Standing Rock

## By Four Arrows

The Army Corps of Engineers has denied the easement permit needed to complete the Dakota Access pipeline. The struggle is not over yet, but this is a major victory for Standing Rock. Might the large number of people, Indians and non-Indians alike, sending prayers for life on Mother Earth actually have had a role? I can only share my observations and experiences of the hours before the decision.

December 3

9:45 p.m.: I landed in Bismarck and went to claim my rental car at Enterprise. I had reserved it two weeks previously. The young man at the counter looked at me and my attire, or so it seems. The American flag was sewn upside-down on my jacket and I wore a baseball cap with USMC (U.S. Marine Corps) on the front and an eagle feather on the back. He then told me, "I'm so sorry, but we are out of cars."

It was a two-hour drive to Standing Rock, and snow was on the ground. The airport was closing. I replied, "Would you please write down exactly what you told me, along with the date, time, my reservation confirmation number, and then sign your name?" He looked puzzled. "This problem will wind up costing me quite a bit, and your company will be responsible."

I pushed a writing tablet in front of him and suddenly, in a faltering voice, he said, "Wait, I think there is one car out there, but it is dirty." I told him I would take it. The Jeep Compass wasn't dirty at all.

December 4

7:30 a.m.: I left the Bismarck hotel with Jules, a Veterans For Peace colleague, and drove to the main camp. There were five times more people and cars and dwellings than when I was here a month ago. I decided to stay at the gym at Cannonball instead.

11:30 a.m.: A couple of hundred vets out of the 2,000-plus who were part of Wesley Clark Jr.'s Veterans Standing for Standing Rock group were im-

patiently waiting for directions. Many who had volunteered to participate in "arrestable" front-line actions were anxious about the required training. People informally gathered and some newcomers who had learned that the Indians did not use a strict hierarchy—and that Wesley was honoring this—spoke about the importance of peaceful words, behaviors, and engagement at all times, because it is ul-

young veterans wanted to help in these spiritual ways, and they were very receptive to my words, which did not at all sound like they were coming from a Marine officer. I ended with a Lakota prayer.

1:30 p.m.: I called in to Duncan Campbell for a scheduled radio interview. I expected he wanted a report on what was happening with the veterans, but instead, he spoke about how the world needs to

gally with anticipation that the new president of the United States would come to its aid. Or, even if they honored the order, they would buy off the Army somehow, or "President Trump" would find a way to stifle or overturn a legitimate environmental impact report.

When we arrived, everyone was in a state of loving appreciation, but with a look of disbelief in their eyes. Did the In-



**Forty-mile-per-hour winds did not stop water protectors from leaving the comfort of camp to join a peaceful prayer near the barrier on highway 1806. Photo: David Gutierrez**

timately love and peace that will prevail.

A half-hour into the conversations and questions, I jumped in. After all, this is why Wesley wanted me there. I elaborated about how if no action at all occurred, but people kept praying and sending prayerful intentions out with all the others who had been doing so for months, then their trip here would have been worthwhile. It was easy to tell how desperately the

"demilitarize" its habitual thinking. Having just shared words about this with the vets, I was more than ready to reply and told him that the vets had been remarkably engaged in prayerful, respectful intentionality since they arrived the previous day, and that if nothing else this would make a difference somehow.

2:20 p.m.: Wesley and I met in Cannonball after his presentation to troops who had gathered there. We hugged and talked about how spirit was moving things along in a good way.

3:09 p.m.: Jules and I were driving to Sitting Bull College when he received a message on our Vets For Peace listserv. He jokingly said, "It is from your Fielding Graduate University student, Brian. He says news just came in that the Army Corps of Engineers has denied DAPL the easement and is calling for a full environmental impact report that requires public input."

Our skepticism caused us to joke about Brian's scholarship somehow being inaccurate, but Brian kept sending more news from various stations. By the time we got back to Cannonball, we were yelping with reserved joy. We both knew what Bobby Kennedy said about it being a sure thing such a study would shut down the pipeline. However, we wondered if DAPL would continue clandestinely and ille-

dians really win this time?

December 28: Afterword

Although it was both surprising and wonderful when the Army's Assistant Secretary for Civil Works denied the permit for the Dakota Access Pipeline to continue drilling, there are reasons to believe that construction did not stop and the memorandum from the Pentagon might be being violated. If so, this will not be surprising. Members of Veterans For Peace are currently working with me to produce and distribute evidence of this to the appropriate people. So stay tuned

*Reprinted with permission from Truthout.org.*

*Wahinkpe Topa (Four Arrows), aka Don Trent Jacobs, is a professor at Fielding Graduate University. Of Irish/Cherokee descent and a made-relative of the Oglala, he previously served as director of education at Oglala Lakota College on Pine Ridge Reservation. He fulfilled his four sun dance vows with the Rick Two Dogs Medicine Horse band. He was named one of 27 Visionaries in Education by the Alternative Education Resource Organization, and received the Martin Springer Institute's Moral Courage Award for his activism. He is the author of 20 books and co-founder of the Flagstaff, Ariz., chapter of Veterans For Peace.*



**Shield-bearing and chemical mask-wearing veterans are briefed by a Vietnam veteran. He and other veterans remind the group of their peaceful role at the Oceti Sakowin Camp. Photo: David Gutierrez**



# How Standing Rock Has Changed Us

*As we work toward a post-fossil fuel society, we can look to these lessons from the Sioux.*

**By Sarah van Gelder**

At the Oceti Sakowin camp there were celebrations into the night when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' decision was announced. Fireworks lit up the sky, which is normally dominated by police searchlights, and there were songs, prayers, and dance. And tears. The decision to halt work on the Dakota Access pipeline may be the victory that the Standing Rock Sioux tribe and thousands of water protectors were looking for.

On the heels of the announcement, Energy Transfer Partners issued a statement insisting that they will go ahead with the project. What that means is not yet clear, but, whatever happens, the events at Standing Rock have been transformative, and these victories are not ones that Energy Transfer Partners or even President-elect Trump can take away.

Here are just a few things that have shifted in our world because of the extraordinary Native-led uprising at Standing Rock.

## Decolonizing

It was a scene I didn't think I'd ever witness. Veterans at Standing Rock, led by Wesley Clark Jr., spoke of the many ways the U.S. military had brutalized Native people, through killings, through taking their lands and even their children. And then they knelt down and apologized in front of the elders. These nonviolent warriors, sworn to uphold the Constitution, came to North Dakota to protect the water protectors, but they did something even more important by acknowledging historic harms and showing remorse.

Clergy too came with humility and apologies. At a gathering in early November, one Christian denomination after the

next burned the Doctrine of Discovery, a centuries-old religious doctrine that made its way into law and condones taking the lands of non-Christians.

If it is possible to heal from the long U.S. history of genocide, these moves by clergy and veterans were powerful steps in that direction.

The work of decolonizing is much bigger though, and it is Native-led. Within the camps, Lakota culture is at the foundation of everything, from the early morning prayers at the sacred fire to the food line, where elders are served first. Newcomers are reminded to respect these ways. Native people have led this movement from the beginning, and they are reclaiming their power. This time, non-Natives in large numbers stood with them and learned from them ways to live that are inclusive and collective.

And as people return home from the camp, the effects will ripple out into communities across North America for years to come.

## Respect for Mother Earth and Our Bodies

Walk to the edge of the Cannonball River at Standing Rock, or to the banks of the Missouri River, which provides water to the Standing Rock Sioux tribe and Cheyenne River tribes, and to millions of others farther downstream. And then consider what it would mean if DAPL ruptured, spewing toxins into this precious shared water.

The core idea that "water is life" is self-evident, as our bodies are nearly two-thirds water. Yet the implications are radical. What would it mean to actually protect water and, therefore, to also protect our health? Even more radical is the idea that we would sacrifice the comforts of fossil fuel-based consumerism for the



quality of that water, giving a gift of well-being to our children and future generations.

Water is important everywhere, but the Sioux people, by protecting the water of their place on Earth, have shown what moral authority looks like. Their commitment attracted support from around the world, and showed people everywhere what it means to protect your home.

## Finding Our Power

The American people want to switch to renewable energy—not invest more in fossil fuel infrastructure. Many are closing accounts with big banks and moving their funds into credit unions and community banks, thus helping to rebuild the economy to support communities and life. And at Standing Rock, people found many ways to exert power. In the face of pepper spray, rubber bullets, dogs, concussion grenades, and water cannons, the water protectors remained nonviolent. They were arrested by the hundreds, strip-searched, and placed in fenced enclosures resembling dog kennels. But their responses were prayerful and sometimes even loving. This display of courage moved the hearts of millions. As law enforcement escalated the violence, water protectors increased their presence.

And because of independent reporting and social media, the story got out in real

time even when other media weren't paying attention. Amy Goodman's *Democracy Now!* coverage of dogs attacking water protectors was the first reporting to alert the world to the brutality of pipeline security. The beautiful short films featuring the people at the camp, the posters and art, the water protectors' drones, the tweets and live feeds from Standing Rock—all have kept the story alive for months.

People power in all these forms works. Thousands came to the remote plains of North Dakota. Hundreds of thousands took action through donations and demonstrations. The sense of power and hope that goes with this decentralized movement, and the accumulating know-how, will make the next action easier to pull off, and the next one after that.

## What's Next?

The work, prayers, hardship, and collaborations are not over. There may be new rounds at Standing Rock, and more water protectors may be injured and traumatized there or at other locations. There may even be loss of life. And there are other pipelines that need to be confronted by water protectors. Just last week, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau gave the green light to the Kinder Morgan pipeline, and the presidency of Donald Trump could threaten everything we hold dear.

Nonetheless, this is a time to celebrate. The water protectors won a huge victory with the Corps of Engineers decision—a victory that benefits not only the Sioux tribes, not only those along the Missouri River, but everyone. We all drink water and need a stable climate. As we navigate what may be the most dangerous time in human history, the lessons from Standing Rock can guide us. As we create a post-fossil fuel society, we can take the lessons of respect and nonviolence, of valuing life over money, of learning from the indigenous peoples as cornerstones. A revolution in values and culture is rippling out across the country and the world, and it started at Standing Rock.

*This article was written for YES! Magazine, [yesmagazine.org](http://yesmagazine.org).*

*Sarah van Gelder is co-founder and editor-at-large of YES! Magazine, and author of The Revolution Where You Live: Stories from a 12,000 Mile Journey Through a New America. Follow her blog and connect with Sarah on Twitter: @sarahvangelder.*



**Wesley Clark Jr. asks Leonard Crow Dog for forgiveness at a ceremony at Standing Rock Dec. 5.**



**Text by Denny Riley**  
**Photos by David Gutierrez**

Last April, when I learned the native people on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation were demonstrating with the goal of stopping an oil pipeline intended to burrow under their source of water, I thought I should go there and stand with the native people in their resistance to this latest aggression on the speck of land we've let them keep. But I was able to find reasons not to go. There was the VFP convention in Berkeley, and when that was over, there was the rocking chair by the window in my kitchen where I'm inclined to sit and contemplate the great things I should do.

I followed the resistance, though there was scant coverage of it other than on *Democracy Now!* Other tribes joined the Lakota Sioux at Standing Rock reservation, and the Native people's resistance to the pipeline became a counterculture news story with videos of thugs with vicious dogs attacking resisters who chose to be called "water protectors." When the weather began to change, I nobly thought I might go there in the winter. They'll need reinforcements then, I reasoned.

Days later, the call came for veterans to be there on Dec. 5, the day the North Dakota governor had set for an emergency evacuation of Oceti Sacowin, the camp north of the reservation across the Canon Ball River. The governor claimed concern for the health and well-being of those in the camp, disregarding that the worst health concern had been the assaults with dogs, mace, and water cannons by the governor's troops. Paul Cox and I decided to go, and it quickly grew to a van full of people and gear.

I didn't know it when we headed out, but I was going to Standing Rock to learn about who I am. Not something as fundamental as I could camp out on the Plains in frigid weather, or that I would put myself in harm's way for a cause, but that I was full of ideas about the Native people that did not jibe with the Native people at Standing Rock. The European war against Native people began more than 500 years ago, and something other than the truth about Native people was spread to white people in Europe. Eventually that version of the truth was taught to everyone of every race and hue, even the Native people, who have a town on their reservation, Fort Yates, named after one

of Custer's officers. The white man's war against the native people needed an invented truth, because most of us could not live with what really happened. The white man's war became a genocide, effectively permitting the land grab of what we now call the United States of America.

On an intellectual level, I knew what we'd been fed was not the truth. Most people who read this will say they knew too. I'm reminded of Dante's *Inferno*. I read the book when I was in my 40s and was brutally brought back to when I was a kid who believed in hell, because it had been taught to me from my earliest memory. The same was true of my ideas of Native peoples. The white man's story about them is with us from early childhood, and because few of us are intimately involved, even if we know it is false, we never bother to fully uproot it.

It was a 1600-mile drive from my rocking chair to Oceti Sacowin, two nights and most of three days. When we finally crossed the Cannon Ball River Bridge and up a rise and the camp spread out before us, we were in awe. It was a western movie scene, teepees and tents and smoke rising above a settlement on the Great Plains, icy and muddy, rapidly growing while harried by the same government that took everything from the Native people but the few square miles of the reservation. The mighty Missouri flowed by in the background. The camp was full of every cliché in every cavalry movie I ever saw, but I wasn't aware of looking at it through that lens.

The next morning, we attended orientation in the white dome. Sage was burning, and though people crowded in, we were hushed by the presence of something spiritual we did not

understand. Johnnie led the orientation, a ruggedly handsome Native man with long black hair and denim shirt and pants. He spoke words full of truth but also full of humor. He said, "We will start with prayer. Everything we do today will spring from prayer." This was the beginning of an awakening I hadn't seen coming, or didn't know could come. Before I left that tent I'd laughed, I'd wept, and I'd realized I'd come to Standing Rock feeling superior to the Native people. I now understood that Oceti Sacowin was a spiritual gathering; everyone was involved in a ceremonial prayer, prayer as protest, and if you wanted something different than prayer when you came here,

you should leave. And if you're cold, there's probably work you could do.

Truths he shared: It's not about me or you. It's about one spirit, one love, one race. But it was all about me. It was about confronting the attitudes I've carried about Native people all my life.

Whiteness is a culture of domination, genocide, and slavery. Whiteness permeates our institutions. Take a step back. Take up only the space you occupy. Colonization is a rape culture. White supremacy is rape. Mining and drilling rapes Mother Earth and robs her of her possessions.

Everyone looks after everyone. We are accountable for what we do and for what we don't do.

# Veterans Stand w





# ith Standing Rock



Listen and learn. Step back, breathe, a truth may come. This is a fight against colonization. How can we use our white-skin privilege?

Keep this resistance indig-enous centered. In 500 years of native resistance, the idea you want to share may have come up.

That evening, the Standing Rock Reservation council chairman spoke to a warehouse full of veterans. “We are not going to win a battle. Look what we are up against. We have to believe in victory and we have one. When they hear thousands of veterans have come, it scares them. But as soon as we use violence, we lose. There have been so many wrongs, but I know one thing. We will receive

no apology, so we have to learn to forgive. There are two choices: Don’t forgive and we ruin our lives; forgive and we grow.”

The young Native men make the high-pitched warbling sound we heard when the wagons were circled around the fire at night and the trail boss was anticipating trouble. The Native men make the noise the way I whistle after a good play in a ballgame, not with malice, just a tricky noise probably learned when they were tikes, probably passed down for hundreds of years. I’m floored by the assumption white culture tied to that noise, the assumption of the menacing savage in the dark.

I became aware of how little I respected Native culture. But here on Standing Rock, culture is a people. An eagle feather is sacred and is worn as such. Headdresses made in China and bought at Target are an abomination.

In a cook tent I sat with two elders. They grew up on the Cheyenne River Reservation south of here. One told me he was 16 when he joined the Marines. He joined because there was nothing on the reservation for him. He told me he thought the camp was growing into a Woodstock, but that was okay.

Oceti Sacowin is on disputed land. It had been part of the reservation, but now belongs to the Bureau of Land Management and is leased to cattlemen. The bumper sticker I like best says, “You are on Indian Land.” Valid anywhere in North America. The story preached to all of us as kids,

regardless of race or hue, tells of men such as Gen. John Sullivan, who in the summer of 1779 marched an army through New York State on a scorched-earth campaign that wiped out Native villages and opened the land to white settlers, some with slaves. Somehow, Sullivan’s crime is told in a manner that makes the white invaders honorable and decent. Historical plaques mark the sites of Sullivan’s battles, which were, in truth, massacres. Cavalry movies I saw as a boy do not begin with the Native people living good lives on their own land. They begin with the white settlers slaughtered and scalped, their daughters kidnapped by redskins.

Stories about Native people now are about squalor and poverty and alcohol and tarpaper. But up the road in Fort Yates and at Oceti Sacowin, I met and saw Native people whose lives are on a positive path. Despite the U.S. government’s efforts to suppress their language, culture, and beliefs, they pray and chant and make music and dance. They hold eagle feathers sacred, a belief as solid as anyone’s faith, if we consider faith is a belief we cannot prove. I know, I know. You are absolutely sure, through personal experience, that your religious beliefs are true. Good. The Lakota Sioux believe if a miracle occurs it will be followed by difficult weather. While we were at Oceti Sacowin camp a miracle occurred. The Army Corps of Engineers stopped the pipeline, and the North Dakota governor said he would not evict the people at Oceti Sacowin camp. This huge news was followed almost immediately by a blizzard.

The snow was beautiful and vicious. The wind could knock you over. Visibility was a few feet. Only a special person, someone raised as kin to this



Photo: Margo Schueler

hard land, could survive a trek on foot from Oceti Sacowin to Fort Yates in the weather that came with the miracle.

What I heard from the elders:

Victory will come because the federal government will learn Native people do not stand alone. The feds will learn they can no longer trample tribal agreements.

If people were in touch with their hearts, we wouldn’t have this problem.

One family, one race, one people. We have to take care of each other.

Pray with your breath. Take another breath. It’s a prayer.

If the law is breaking the law then there is no law.

A soldier takes orders. A warrior does what is right.

You’re an elder if you’re good to listen to. If you’re not good to listen to, you’re just old.

There are people who will pollute the water because they have the means of purifying it and selling it back to us at whatever price the market will bear, and the poor will not have clean water.

White people, it is time to leave the denial of the holocaust that happened in North America.

Denny Riley is a member of

VFP Chapter 69 in San Francisco.

David Gutierrez is a photographer in Brooklyn, N.Y. He served two tours in Iraq with the Army 3rd Infantry Division from 2006 to 2011. He used his G.I. Bill benefits to attend culinary school and photography school. His website is snutt.com.

**Photos clockwise from top right: The author (right) with VFP member Paul Cox. / A group of Native Americans celebrates the announcement that the Army Corps of Engineers denied the easement needed for the Dakota Access Pipeline to be built under Lake Oahe. / A trio of ‘Spirit Riders’ looks over the sacred fire as thousands of veterans arrive at Standing Rock. / As veterans begin to leave Oceti Sacowin, a Lakota native and his family show their gratitude by praying for them and singing the Lakota Nation’s Flag Song. / A Desert Storm Navy veteran joins hundreds of people around the sacred fire. / In response to Energy Transfer Partner’s statement that it ‘fully expect[s] to complete construction of the pipeline without any additional rerouting in and around Lake Oahe,’ a group of veterans marches toward the barrier put up by local authorities on Highway 1806.**





# The Cruel Experiments of Israel's Arms Industry

By Matt Kennard

RAMALLAH, Palestine—Around the back of Ramallah's main hospital lies the house of Iyad Haddad, a 52-year-old human rights investigator. His home office is the storefront of a decrepit building and at first glance it looks like a bric-a-brac shop. But the objects placed out on the tables are not household trinkets. The surfaces are, in fact, cluttered with spent ammunition, tear gas canisters, sponge bullets and shell casings.

Haddad has spent the past three decades documenting the violence of the Israeli forces occupying his people's land. These ugly little pieces of memorabilia are his testament to that process.

Many of these weapons have been fired on peaceful demonstrators protesting against Israel's wall and settlements in the occupied West Bank. The villages of Ni'lin, Bil'in, and Nabi Saleh have been organizing regular protests for years. To my surprise, Haddad does not approve of those demonstrations.

"Sometimes they are using us so they can know how to use each kind of weapon," he said. "For me, these kinds of activities by the Palestinians become helpful to the Israelis, because it makes this area into a laboratory to test their weapons, to develop them and make it a commercial industry in order to sell them to other countries."

The idea that the Israeli arms industry benefits from the occupation through having a captive population it can test new weaponry on is now widely accepted.

Israel tries out weapons in the West

Bank and Gaza and then presents them as "battle proven" to the international market.

The high-velocity tear gas canister has been heavily tested in Bil'in. In 2009, the weapon killed Bassem Abu Rahmah, an unarmed local activist protesting the wall slicing into that village. At the end of 2011, another protester, Mustafa Tamimi, was killed in Nabi Saleh by a tear gas canister shot at his head.

There is a sense of weariness in Haddad's voice. "I have seen how they are developing their tools and their weapons industry and the ways of dealing with the community," he said. "And in 30 years, I never heard once that there is any kind of accountability for any soldier."

But he goes on. He must go on.

## 'Tested and Retested'

"The laboratory of the occupied territories is where things can be fine-tuned, they can be tested, they can be retested," said Neve Gordon, a politics professor at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. "They can say, 'Hey this was used by the IDF [Israel's military], this must be good.' And that helps the marketing of the goods."

Later, in Ramallah, I sat down with Abdallah Abu Rahmah, coordinator of the Popular Struggle Committee against the wall and settlements in Bil'in. Every Friday for a decade he and his neighbors have gone to the wall to protest.

For these efforts, they have been subject to night raids by the Israeli military. Abu Rahmah himself has been arrested and imprisoned by Israel a number of times.

"There are many reports about when they [the Israelis] have tried to sell mil-

itary products and they told the buyers about its use in Bil'in," said Abu Rahmah. "Things like skunk water, they used it the first time in our village."

Skunk water is a putrid smelling liquid sprayed at protesters in order to get them to disperse. "Because Bil'in is famous, sometimes they come to our actions and they take video and photographs showing how effective the weapons are in stopping the action," Abu Rahmah said.

Jeff Halper, author of *War Against the People*, a book on Israel's arms and surveillance technology industries, said: "Israel has kept the occupation because it's a laboratory for weapons."

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*[That] the Israeli arms industry benefits from the occupation through having a captive population it can test new weaponry on is now widely accepted.*

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"Now, there has always been a tension," added Halper, also a founder of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions. "Because you've had the right wing that look at the West Bank as Judea and Samaria, and Gaza as Gush Katif, and, of course, East Jerusalem. So they want it all as part of the land of Israel. But then you've got another part—especially I would say the military and the economic people—that say, 'Hey, this is a laboratory, this is really a resource for us, and we really shouldn't give it up.'"

Eitay Mack, a Jerusalem-based human rights lawyer and activist, raises the pros-

pect that Israel uses Palestinians as test subjects for foreign arms companies as well.

## Testing America's Bullets

"In East Jerusalem, the Americans give Israel sponge bullets," Mack said. "First, they started with a blue sponge bullet, but then they decided—this is their statement—that because the Palestinians wore a lot of clothes, it was not very effective so then they changed it to a [more powerful] black sponge bullet, which caused huge damage, and there are dozens of Palestinians that have lost their eyes and other organs of their body."

The black sponge bullets are manufactured by Combined Tactical Systems, a Pennsylvania-based firm that also supplies Israel with tear gas.

The company's brochure for these bullets contains a note marked "caution." It reads: "Shots to the head, neck, thorax, heart or spine can result in fatal or serious injury."

Israeli troops began using the black bullets in 2014.

The Israeli arms industry is dominated by four companies: Israel Aerospace Industries, Elbit, Rafael, and Israel Military Industries.

More than 75 percent of all weapons exported by Israel are made by the first three of those firms. In 2015, the total value of Israel's arms exports came to \$5.7 billion.

The attack on Gaza the previous year enabled Israel to showcase some of its newest weapons. It was reported, for example, that the Hermes-900, one of Elbit's drones, made its "operational debut" in that assault.

Israel allocates more than 5 percent of gross domestic product to the military. That means Israel spends a higher proportion of its national income on the military than even the United States, the world's only superpower.

## 'War Sells Weapons'

Some veterans of the Israeli military have developed careers as experts on the arms industry.

Shlomo Brom is one of them. A retired brigadier general, he now works at the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv.

I asked Brom if it's true that Israeli arms companies use the fact that their products have been tested on Palestinians to gain international business. "Of course," he replied. "Why not? Marketing [professionals] try to use any advantage, and if they can use the advantage that this system was tested operationally and it worked, they will of course use it for marketing."

Uzi Rubin, a founder of Arrow, an Israeli anti-ballistic missiles program, is now a researcher at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies in Bar-Ilan Uni-

*continued on next page ...*



**Palestinian protesters stand in a cloud of tear gas fired by Israeli forces during confrontations in the West Bank city of Bethlehem in October 2015. Photo: Anne Paq, ActiveStills**



# Veterans For Peace Statement on Syria

DECEMBER 21, 2016—The war in Syria has been ongoing for five years, with the situation in Aleppo, once Syria's most populous city, having deteriorated over the past four years into a multi-proxy war and a humanitarian disaster.

We have seen strong disagreements within the peace movement on the reasons behind this war, and on what our response should be. Those disagreements even exist within our ranks. As we struggle through the complexities of the war, we recognize that most of us are far removed from it, fortunate to be safe in our homes and able to voice these disagreements without fear of reprisal.

However, our mission at Veterans For Peace has not changed. We oppose war. We are against the targeting of, as well as the failure to protect, innocent civilians caught up in war, or any other conduct by an individual, group or nation that could be classified as a war crime. We oppose U.S. military involvement in other countries that violates international law.

Veterans For Peace believes we have a great responsibility to hold our government accountable for the atrocities it has committed across the globe. Therefore, we call upon the United States to end its wars that violate the Constitution, in particular Article 1, Section 8, as well as its obligations under its treaties, including, but not limited to, the United Nations Charter, War Powers Act, the Authorization for the Use of Military Force 2001, and the Kellogg-Briand Pact.

The U.S.-led "War on Terror," and its war and occupation against Iraq, led to the destabilization and destruction of several countries, which contributed to the creation of ISIL and to an increase in ter-



Syrian refugees wait to cross border into Turkey. Photo: Reuters

rorist activity throughout the region, including in Syria.

The United States is bombing Syria, while supporting armed extremist groups who seek to overthrow one of the last secular, multi-religious states in the Middle East.

A continuation of the war in Syria, which has been waged by many actors, including the United States, NATO, Russia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, will not be the answer to ending the extreme suffering of the Syrian people.

The United States and other countries are responsible for the tragic outcomes of military imperialism. We will continue to demand justice for the people—most of whom are the victims of war, not only in Syria, but also in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, where militarism and war

have brought devastation.

Veterans For Peace knows from experience that civilians are the primary victims of modern warfare. We call on all sides to take extra precautions to protect civilian lives, and to uphold human rights for civilians and combatants alike.

We will continue to urge our government to open its borders to Syrian refugees. The United States has done little to accept refugees from the region. We will continue to stand against anti-Muslim hate and bigotry. Veterans For Peace denounces Islamophobia and the rhetoric of the "War on Terror," which has been deployed as a means to deny a safe haven to refugees whose very lives are at risk.

We will continue to push for a ban on all U.S. and foreign arms sales to the region. We realize it is the height of hypocrisy that our government condemns arms sales to the region by other countries, while ignoring its own.

We will hold the U.S. media accountable and demand coverage of Syria that engages in critical reporting on our government's involvement in the war and its influence in the region.

We are relieved that the terrible Battle of Aleppo might finally be coming to an end. Many observers believe this could be a real turning point in the Syrian war, bringing it closer to an end. However, many experts believe the war will continue for several more years, wreaking even more death, destruction, and displacement on the Syrian people.

We believe that the United States has a responsibility, as one of the most powerful nations in the world, to use diplomacy to push for an immediate ceasefire and to apply pressure on other parties who are contributing to civilian deaths, to do the same. We urge all sides to agree to a ceasefire immediately, and to begin sincere efforts toward a just peace for all the

Syrian people.

Peace in Syria will only be achieved through a political process.

Veterans For Peace continues to recommend full normalization of relations between the United States and Syria, including recognition of Syria's elected government and constitution and withdrawal of all covert and overt support of internal or external aggression against the Syrian government.

We call on the United States and all foreign governments, including any armed groups, to bring to a complete halt to their war-making in the Middle East, including in Syria, and to withdraw their armed forces and contractors immediately. We also call on these parties to cease "regime change" efforts in the Middle East and elsewhere, to end economic sanctions and all forms of war by other means, and to redirect resources to helping war refugees.

The wars in Syria and throughout the Middle East will continue to cause environmental damage and ecological degradation, further decimating a region already suffering from widespread resource depletion and the devastating effects of climate change, such as severe and prolonged drought and climate driven conflict. Veterans For Peace urgently appeals to all nations and warring factions to end these wars, which are a direct attack on our shared planet and the ecological systems on which all life on Earth depends.

Finally, the wars in the Middle East have heightened tensions between the United States and Russia, with the real potential to increase the risk of nuclear war. We urge the United States and Russia to reach out to each other to find ways to ensure that no differences or potential conflicts are allowed to escalate beyond the ability of each to control the outcome, without resorting to violence in any form.

## Experiments

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versity near Tel Aviv.

He defended the way Israel has marketed its weapons as "battle proven."

"It is legitimate, because the Vietnam War sold a lot of weapons," he said. "War usually sells weapons. But this is not to say that Israel is seeking war in order to sell weapons."

Barbara Opall-Rome has spent a few decades covering Israel for *DefenseNews*, a trade magazine for arms manufacturers. She pushes for Israel to allocate greater resources for what she calls "less-than-lethal technologies."

In her view, the Israeli weapons industry should think beyond weapons such as tear gas and skunk water, which it is already deploying in the West Bank.

"I'm talking about using the electromagnetic spectrum or high-powered mi-

crowaves to get people dizzy," she said. "If you're dizzy you lose your balance. You know, I'd rather people just get an upset stomach and really just have to have diarrhea right in the middle of a demonstration or puke their guts out than to be killed."

Her comments reveal much about the sadistic mentality of Israel's weapons-makers and their promoters. For them, Palestinians are not human beings worthy of respect, but subjects in one cruel experiment after another.

*Originally published by the Electronic Intifada.*

*Matt Kennard is director of the Centre for Investigative Journalism in London. He is the author of Irregular Army: How the U.S. Military Recruited Neo-Nazis, Gang Members and Criminals to Fight the War on Terror and The Racket: A Rogue Reporter vs. the American Elite. His trip to Palestine was partly funded by the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.*

# Trump in Space: Dangers Abound for Space War

By Bruce Gagnon

It's still a bit hard to completely figure out Trump's foreign and military policy. His rejection of the Russia baiting coming from the Democrat Party (who want to blame Hillary's Electoral College loss on Putin) is good. His appointment of Gen. "Mad Dog" Mattis to be Secretary of Endless War is a bad sign. Mattis, who says he loves to brawl, was in command during the U.S. "shock and awe" campaign in Iraq.

Our local paper in Bath, Maine, recently reported that Mad Dog serves on the board of directors of the General Dynamics Corporation, which owns the Bath Iron Works (BIW) shipyard where Navy destroyers are made. The standard Aegis



*The Zumwalt was in the news recently when it broke down soon after leaving the BIW shipyard and then again when it was trying to pass through the Panama Canal.*

destroyer costs \$1.3 billion, but the new Zumwalt "stealth" destroyer is coming in at over \$4 billion per ship. The Zumwalt was in the news recently when it broke down soon after leaving the BIW shipyard and then again when it was trying to pass through the Panama Canal on its way to its permanent port in San Diego.

Even more controversial is the cost of the shells for the Zumwalt's new "electromagnetic rail gun," which can fire a shell the distance from New York City to Philadelphia. The primary job of the Zumwalt is to sneak up on China and blast them from afar with these guns. Come to find out, each shell costs \$800,000, and the Navy can't really afford that. The first shot had better hit the target, because after that they'll be shooting blanks.

Activists in Maine regularly protest BIW, calling for the conversion of the shipyard to peaceful and sustainable production. We keep reminding the public, and the shipyard workers, that the Pentagon has the largest carbon footprint on the planet, and if future generations are to

have any real future on our Mother Earth, we've got to quickly transition to building commuter rail systems, wind turbines, tidal power systems, and solar power generators. Studies have long revealed that investing in these kinds of programs, rather than military production, creates many times more jobs.

But for now, General Dynamics and Mad Dog Mattis are fixed only on expansion of the war machine to take down those not in full compliance with corporate globalization. China is at the top of that list. Recently Mattis suggested that more U.S. naval warships are needed to give the Pentagon full-spectrum dominance over China. He said, "With the cutbacks to the Army and Air Force and fewer forces around the world, military aspects of our strategy will inevitably become more naval in character. Today I question if our shipbuilding budget is sufficient, especially in light of the situation in the South China Sea."

The U.S. "pivot" into the Asian Pacific also includes the deployment of so-called "missile defense" (MD) radar systems and interceptor missiles in Guam, Taiwan, Japan, Okinawa, Hawaii, and South Korea. Some of these will be on board Navy Aegis destroyers. Others, like the Patriot (PAC-3) and Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD), are ground-based mobile launchers.

The THAAD system, set to be deployed in South Korea in 2017, has caused massive protests around that country as even formerly rightwing farming villages have rejected the proposal to station MD systems in their neighborhoods. They've come to understand that THAAD has nothing to do with defense from North Korea, but is in fact aimed at China and Russia and would serve as the shield after a U.S. first-strike attack is launched against either of those nations.

MD systems were once banned under the U.S.-Russia Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, but when George W. Bush pulled the United States out of that treaty after taking office in 2001, the provocative and destabilizing MD program took off like a rocket.

In mid-December, South Korea's main opposition party demanded the government delay the controversial deployment of the advanced THAAD system until the next administration, as President Park Geun-hye faces impeachment over corruption allegations. The Pentagon will not be happy with this development.

The main South Korean opposition Democratic Party said the deployment could lead to a decrease in Chinese tourists, adding that South Korea should be careful, as the United States is also expected to have an icy relationship with Beijing with the new administration led by Donald Trump.

The Republican-controlled government in Washington is signaling that the Trump administration will rapidly move ahead



with offensive space technology systems. Rep. Trent Franks, an Arizona Republican on the House Armed Services Committee, recently said, "In every area of warfare, within the Geneva Conventions, America should be second to none. That includes satellite warfare. ... We cannot be victims of our own decency here."

The suggestion to increase Pentagon spending to put anti-satellite weapons in space is most disturbing because it indicates a mindset in those now coming to power that anticipates a full-blown war in space.

## Profiteering Opportunities Abound

The enormous cost of a Trump-led arms race in space is certainly causing the aerospace profiteers to salivate. But how will a Trump administration pay for what the Pentagon once described as the most expensive industrial project in human history? Trump has already declared he intends to reduce taxes on corporations. Will Medicare and Social Security be put on the chopping block in order to pay for war in space?

Russia and China for years have pleaded at the U.N. for the United States to enter into serious negotiations for a treaty to ban weapons in space, the idea being to close the barn door before the horse gets out. Under both Republican and Democratic administrations, the United States has blocked the development of such a forward-thinking treaty, maintaining that there is "no problem," while the military-

to speak out is now—before more money is wasted and the shooting starts.

Most of the MD interceptor systems now being used to encircle Russia and China are built in and around Huntsville, Ala., at the Army's Redstone Arsenal/Marshall Space Flight Center, now the "director-ate" for the Pentagon's missile defense program. Redstone Arsenal was the place where Nazi rocket scientists were brought after WWII to help create the U.S. space weapons programs. So many federal tax dollars have been pumped into Huntsville over the years that the city is called "The Pentagon of the South."

When the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space held a protest and conference in Huntsville in 2001, soon after George W. Bush's inauguration, the media response was surprisingly good. The Global Network has decided that to hold its annual conference and protest in Huntsville again in 2017, its 25th year of organizing to stop the militarization and nuclearization of space.

Scheduled for April 7–9, 2017, this conference is an important opportunity for people around the world to learn more about these dangerous U.S. space technology systems that have the potential to trigger World War III. Already peace activists in Guam, South Korea, Japan, and Europe plan to attend in order to express opposition to the U.S. escalation of the already dangerous space arms race. Peace movement leaders from around the United States coming to the confer-

*Russia and China for years have gone to the U.N. pleading with the United States to seriously enter into negotiations for a treaty to ban weapons in space.*

industrial complex that stands to profit has worked hard to ensure such treaty negotiations are dead on arrival.

Thus Russia and China will be left with only one option—to respond in kind as the United States attempts to "control and dominate space," as called for in the U.S. Space Command's "Vision for 2020" plan. The world can't afford a new arms race, nor can the public allow the Trump administration to squander the national treasury on the foolish notion that the United States will be the "Master of Space" (motto of the 50th Space Wing of the Air Force Space Command in Colorado). The time

ence include VFP members Ann Wright, Tarak Kauff, Will Griffin, Ken Jones, and myself. We urge all VFP members to consider joining us in Huntsville in April to help build the movement and greater opposition to these dangerous and destabilizing MD and space weapons programs. Find more on the Huntsville conference and protest at [www.space4peace.org](http://www.space4peace.org)

Bruce K. Gagnon is a Vietnam-era Air Force veteran and VFP member who lives in Bath, Maine. He is coordinator of the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space.



# Understanding Russian Foreign Policy Today

By Raymond Smith

Each country has its own national interests, which sometimes conflict with the national interests of other countries. Conflict is not necessarily a bad thing. Satisfactorily resolved conflicts can improve relations, create expectations about how future conflicts will be resolved, and decrease the likelihood that countries will consider resorting to violence.

Russia's view of its interests has changed in fundamental ways in the quarter-century since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Much of that change would have been likely whether Vladimir Putin succeeded Boris Yeltsin or not. The Russia that emerged from the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union was intent on becoming part of the Western world and wildly optimistic about what that would mean.

Boris Yeltsin, its president, had staked his political future on destroying both the Communist Party and the Soviet system in which it was embedded. His foreign minister, Andrei Kozyrev, was as intellectually pro-West as anyone in his position had been throughout Russian history. They inherited from Mikhail Gorbachev a foreign policy outlook—the Common European Home—that they intended to implement and extend.

The Russian people, giddy from the collapse of the corrupt, oppressive regime under which they had labored for generations, hungered for a normal relationship with the rest of the world and believed that the result would be quick and dramatic improvement in their lives.

In 1992, I wrote that these expectations could not be met, and that a period of disillusionment would inevitably follow. The policy challenge for both the West and Russia was to manage that period of disillusionment so that it would lead to a more mature and well-grounded relationship and limit the likelihood of a Rus-

sian turn toward autarky and hostility. A quarter-century later, it is clear that the relationship has not been managed well. The West—and particularly the United States—bears at least as much responsibility for that as Russia does.

## Time of Troubles

The 1990s were a chaotic decade in Russia's economic and social history, a new "Time of Troubles." Where the West saw an emerging democratic, market-oriented society in the Yeltsin years, Russians saw criminality, disorder, poverty, and the emergence of a new,

telling Russia that none of this harmed Russian interests; Russia kept replying that, yes, it does harm our interests.

At the turn of the century, what were those interests? Russia's international behavior and the statements of its leadership suggest to me the following: first, not to have a potentially hostile military alliance on its borders; second, not to be isolated politically and economically from the most important European institutions; and, third, to have a meaningful say on developments in the region, particularly on the orientation of the newly independent countries that had been part of its empire.

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*The Putin regime will continue to be assertive in pursuit of its international interests, believing that the alternative is that its interests will be ignored.*

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corrupt, and astronomically wealthy class of oligarchs. If this is what was meant by capitalism and democracy, they did not like it. Internationally, the Russian leadership saw the expansion of NATO eastward as a betrayal and a potential threat. Well before 1998, Yeltsin was discredited and Kozyrev was gone, replaced by a foreign minister with far more traditional views of Russian interests.

By 1998, when Putin replaced Yeltsin, the U.S.-Russian relationship had already deteriorated, driven by the NATO expansion, as well as by differences over the civil wars that stemmed from the breakup of Yugoslavia. The Russians saw in these and other developments an attempt to establish a U.S.-dominated international system in which Russia would have no meaningful role. The Common European Home would be common to every European state except Russia. Any state might seek membership in NATO, unless that state was Russia. The United States kept

## Interpreting Interests

So, is it appropriate, then, to consider the Putin regime inherently predatory? A number of foreign policy analysts who are not Russophobes, or do not want to be seen as such, trace the problem not to the country but to the regime governing it. Proponents of the predatory Putin regime thesis point to the Russian invasions of Georgia and Crimea, its support of separatists in eastern Ukraine, and its support of the Assad regime in Syria as evidence of an intent to recreate, insofar as possible, the geography and international influence of the Soviet Union. Their policy prescription for the United States is to contain this expansionism by replacing the Russian influence or presence with a U.S. influence or presence.

In my view, there are serious problems with this interpretation of Russian intentions and the policy approach that flows from it. First, it does not stand up well to critical examination. Second, its zero-sum

view of the U.S.-Russian relationship assumes that a mutually beneficial resolution of conflicting interests is all but impossible.

The policy challenge for both the West and Russia was to manage that period of disillusionment so that it would lead to a more mature and well-grounded relationship.

The Putin regime has been more assertive, particularly during the past several years, in advancing Russia's interests than was the Yeltsin regime throughout the 1990s, but it inherited a relationship with the West that its predecessors also considered deeply flawed. Despite continuing differences over issues such as NATO expansion, the new regime's relationship with the United States reached a high point after 9/11, when Putin appeared to believe that a Russian-American alliance against international terrorism could be forged. The two countries shared an interest. They were then and remain today the two developed, non-Islamic states that have suffered the greatest losses from terrorism.

This embryonic alliance was useful to Washington when it invaded Afghanistan and overthrew the Taliban regime. It began to fray when the United States invaded Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein from power. When the United States moved to place anti-ballistic missile systems in Eastern Europe and NATO, and the European Union moved to develop closer relationships with Georgia and Ukraine, the Russian regime fundamentally reassessed the prospects for relationships with the West that would respect its concerns and interests.

## Hardball International Politics

With regard to Georgia and Ukraine, the Putin regime has made no secret of its view that it is a fundamental Russian interest that these countries not become NATO members under any conditions, and that they become European Union members only under conditions acceptable to Russia. To assert that Russia has no right to such interests is beside the point. Trying to tell other countries what their fundamental interests are is generally a futile exercise. To argue that the assertion of such interests is *prima facie* evidence of predatory intent is historically dubious.

In Georgia and Ukraine, Russia used means that were appropriate to the achievement of limited objectives in support of its national interests. Since there are many who will find every element of that statement objectionable, some clarification is in order. First of all, to say that means are appropriate to an objective is not a moral judgment, but rather a statement that the means were right-sized to achieve the objective; they were necessary and sufficient, neither too large nor too small. In neither case was the objective to occupy the country or overthrow the regime in power.

Rather, the objective was to force a re-evaluation, both in the country concerned and among the Western powers, of the

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# Veterans Go on Antiwar Tour in Japan

*Two American veterans journeyed to Japan to apologize for U.S. war crimes and found a growing grassroots antiwar movement.*

**By Rory Fanning**

A vibrant antiwar movement is blooming in Japan right now. Trade unions, civic groups, and an overwhelming number of young people are galvanizing the country around Article 9 of the Japanese constitution—the article that has kept Japan out of war for the last seventy years.

Each weekend since March, between 5,000 and 10,000 people have gathered outside the Diet (Japan's parliament) in Tokyo to protest Japanese Prime Minister Shinzō Abe and the hawkish members of his Liberal Democratic Party who are trying to repeal Article 9. Abe, the first world leader to congratulate Trump in person after the November election, is a fierce defender of U.S. military bases inside Japan and is making significant legislative gains toward ridding Japan of the article, which ensures Japan only takes up arms against another country when it is being directly attacked.

Antiwar mobilizations have sprung up in response. In March, 30,000 people protested Abe on the streets outside the parliament, as 35 cities across Japan held similar demonstrations demanding that the article stay.

Michael Hanes, a former Marine Force Recon (the Marines' version of the Navy Seals) staff sergeant, who was part of the initial 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, and I, a former U.S. Army Ranger—I was deployed to Afghanistan between late 2002 and 2004 before becoming a war resister—recently toured Japan on a trip sponsored by Veterans For Peace and a group within the Japan Federation of Bar Associations (JFBA) dedicated to protecting Article 9. Organizer and translator Rachel Clark, a Japanese-born U.S. citizen, accompanied us. We spoke twice a day for eight days, reaching as many as 10,000 people in total.

We aimed to express solidarity with those opposing the 50,000 U.S. troops stationed at 122 U.S. military sites inside Japan and to help this emerging antiwar movement expose the many dangers and lies that accompany militarization.

"Every one of the million or so deaths—the vast majority being innocent civilians—resulting from U.S. military interventions around the world since 9/11 has been carried out in the name of 'self-defense.' Please don't let your government sell you that same false argument to repeal



*Michael Hanes and Rory Fanning lay a wreath at the peace park in Hiroshima.*

Article 9," we stated every time we spoke in venues across Japan, including before the A-bomb dome at the Peace Memorial Museum in Hiroshima in front of a half-dozen Japanese news cameras.

Further, we issued an apology on behalf of all Americans who oppose the unjustified U.S. firebombing of Tokyo and the atomic blasts in Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II—something President Obama failed to do when he visited Hiroshima in May 2016.

## American Bases

The antiwar upsurge in Japan has been sparked in part by the country's activities in South Sudan. Japan currently has 350 Self Defense Force (SDF) soldiers stationed in South Sudan, allegedly guarding the 20 Japanese embassy workers in the country.

Under Article 9, in order for Japan to justify sending the SDF into a country, a cease-fire agreement must be in place within the country, the SDF must have consent from the government in the conflict zone, the SDF mission must be conducting a nonpartisan

seventy years because of Article 9.

The situation in South Sudan, the world's youngest country, is grim, with over 2.6 million displaced and tens of thousands dead since the country fell into civil war in 2013. There are real fears that South Sudan could turn into a genocidal situation similar to Rwanda, if it's not already.

As we have seen in Iraq, Syria, Libya, Afghanistan, and all the other countries the United States has invaded since 9/11, however, military intervention only makes a country less stable and more violent. Besides, Shinzō Abe has made it very clear that he is less interested in South Sudan and more concerned with following in the footsteps of his grandfather, Nobusuke Kishi, who in October 1958, as prime minister of Japan, urged the country to abandon Article 9.

For the last 15 years Abe has called Article 9 "shameful," echoing the sentiment of his grandfather, who believed the article was a grave threat to Japanese nationalism. Abe has also said that Article 9 is not "normal" and that it leaves the coun-

try vulnerable to military attacks from China and North Korea because it is unable to defend Japan's allies and launch preemptive strikes that could thwart "clear dangers" to the country.

in the world, Abe rushed to the president-elect's Manhattan penthouse days after the election. Trump's comments have reinforced the arguments of those who wish to repeal Article 9. Abe repeatedly warns of attacks should the United States close its bases (such closures are unlikely).

But many Japanese, particularly those living in Okinawa, are fed up with the U.S. military's presence in the country.

"We are living in a highly stressful situation in which we don't know when another military aircraft might accidentally fall from the skies, or when a U.S. soldier might kill someone or rape someone, or when the life of one of our children might be taken in an auto accident," Yasukazu Oshiro, a resident of Okinawa, recently told Al Jazeera. "Our human rights are surely being threatened."

Large and ongoing protests on the island have sprung up in the wake of the June 2016 rape and murder of a 20-year-old local woman by a former Marine working as a contractor at one of the U.S. bases in Okinawa. The protesters are also responding to a 2004 Bell Boeing V-22 Osprey crash into a university on the island and U.S. military expansion projects that are destroying pristine natural habitats and consuming large chunks of the country's best beaches (which would bring in much-needed tourism dollars) in order to make room for helipads.

Eighty percent of the 1.4 million people living in Okinawa want all U.S. military bases removed from the country. Every Saturday, as many as 500 people drive two hours to the remote sections of the island to the gates of the U.S. bases to protest.

## The Cost of War

The conversations Mike and I had with hundreds of Japanese men and women in Hiroshima, Kobe, Kyoto, Tokyo, and other places were incredible. Our apologies seemed like small and insignificant gestures, but they opened up each venue we spoke in.

Dozens of elderly people directly af-

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*[M]any Japanese, particularly those living in Okinawa, are fed up with the U.S. military's presence in [their] country."*

operation, Tokyo must have the freedom to pull the plug if any conditions are not met, and, finally, the SDF must limit use of force.

None of these conditions are being met in South Sudan, making Japan's military presence in the country a clear violation of Japanese law.

In the last 70 years, Japan's SDF has only been involved, in very limited capacity, in U.N. peacekeeping missions that provide medical and humanitarian aid in conflict areas (and even then, not until the late 1980s and early '90s.). Only 250,000 of the country's population of 126 million are members of the SDF. Offensive war has been completely off the table for the last

try vulnerable to military attacks from China and North Korea because it is unable to defend Japan's allies and launch preemptive strikes that could thwart "clear dangers" to the country.

In early 1946, General Douglas MacArthur and his staff wrote the Japanese constitution and sought, in part, to ensure that Japan never posed a military threat to the United States and the world again. Despite its being written by a conquering general, 70 years on, large numbers of Japanese cherish this element of the existing constitution.

Concerned that Trump will close the U.S. military bases in the country if Japan doesn't pay its "fair share" militarily



# 'America Has Lost' in the Philippines

By Pepe Escobar

"Your honors, in this venue I announce my separation from the United States... both in military and economics also."

With these words, on Oct. 16, 2016, Philippines President Rodrigo "The Punisher" Duterte unleashed a geopolitical earthquake encompassing Eurasia and reverberating all across the Pacific Ocean.

And talk about choosing his venue with aplomb; right in the heart of the Rising Dragon, no less.

Capping his state visit to Beijing, Duterte then coined the mantra—pregnant with overtones—that will keep ringing all across the global South: "America has lost."

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*[C]ontaining China and ruling over the First Island Chain has been at the core of U.S. naval strategy since the beginning of the Cold War.*

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And if that was not enough, he announced a new alliance—Philippines, China, and Russia—is about to emerge; "there are three of us against the world."

Predictably, the Beltway establishment in the "indispensable nation" went bananas, reacting as "puzzled" or in outright anger, dispensing the usual expletives on the "crude populist," "unhinged leader."

The bottom line is that it takes a lot of balls for the leader of a poor developing country in Southeast Asia or elsewhere to openly defy the hyperpower. Yet what Duterte is gaming at is pure realpolitik; if he prevails, he will be able to deftly play the United States against China to the benefit of Filipino interests.

## 'The Springtime of Our Relationship'

It did start with a bang; during Duterte's China visit, Manila inked no less than \$13 billion in deals with Beijing—from trade and investment to drug control, maritime security, and infrastructure.

Beijing pulled out all stops to make Duterte feel welcomed.

President Xi Jinping suggested Manila and Beijing should "temporarily put aside" the intractable South China Sea disputes and learn from the "political wisdom" of history—i.e., give space to diplomatic talks. After all, the two peoples were "blood-linked brothers."

Duterte replied in kind: "Even as we arrive in Beijing close to winter, this is the springtime of our relationship," he told Xi at the Great Hall of the People.

China is already the Philippines' second-largest trade partner, behind Japan, the United States, and Singapore. Filipino exports to these three are at roughly 42.7 percent of the total, compared to 22.1 to China/Hong Kong. Imports from China are roughly 16.1 percent of the total. Even as trade with China is bound to rise, what really matters for Duterte is massive Chinese infrastructure investment.

What this will mean in practice is indeed ground-breaking: the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) will definitely be involved in Philippine economic development; Manila will be more involved in promoting smooth China-ASEAN relations in all sorts of regional issues (it takes the rotating chair of ASEAN in 2017); and the Philippines will be more integrated in the New Silk Roads, aka One Belt, One Road (OBOR).

Three strikes—no wonder the United States is out. And there's even a fourth strike, embedded in Duterte's promise that he will soon end military cooperation with the United States, despite the opposition of part of the Filipino armed forces.

## Watch the First Island Chain

The buildup had already been dramatic enough. On the eve of his meeting with Xi, talking to members of the Filipino community in Beijing, Duterte said, "It's time to say goodbye" to the United States; "I will not ask but if they [the Chinese] offer and if they'll ask me, 'Do you need this aid?' [I will say] 'Of course, we are very poor.'"

Then the clincher: "I will not go to America anymore. ... We will just be insulted there."

The United States was the colonial power in the Philippines from 1899 to 1942. Hollywood permeates the collective unconscious. English is the lingua franca—side by side with Tagalog. But the tentacles of Uncle Sam's "protection" racket are not exactly welcomed. Two of the largest components of the U.S. empire of bases were located for decades in the

Philippines—Clark Air Force Base and Subic Bay Naval Base.

Clark, occupying 230 square miles, with 15,000 people, was busy during the Vietnam War, serving as the main hub for men and hardware moving in and out of Saigon. Then it turned into one of those Pentagon "forward operating" HQs. Subic, occupying 260 square miles, was as busy as Clark. It was the forward operating base for the U.S. 7th Fleet.

Already in 1987, before the end of the Cold War, the RAND Corporation was alarmed by the projected loss of both bases, predicting it would be "devastating for regional security." "Devastating" in the (mythical) sense of "defending the interests of ASEAN" and the "security of the sea-lanes."

Translation: the Pentagon and the U.S. Navy would lose a key instrument of pressure over ASEAN, as protecting the "security of the sea-lanes" was always the key justification for those bases.

And lose they eventually did; Clark was closed down in November 1991 and Subic in November 1992.

It took years for China to sense an opening—and to profit from it; after all, during the 1990s and the early 2000s, the absolute priority was breakneck speed internal development. But then Beijing did the math; no more U.S. bases in the Philippines opened untold vistas as far as the First Island Chain is concerned.

The First Island Chain is a product, over millennia, of the fabulous tectonic forces of the Ring of Fire, a chain of islands running from southern Japan in the north to Borneo in the south. For Beijing, they work as a sort of shield for China's eastern seaboard; if this chain is secure, Asia is secure.

For all practical purposes, Beijing considers the First Island Chain to be a non-negotiable Western Pacific demarcation zone—ideally with no foreign (as in U.S.) interference. The South China Sea—part of which is characterized by Manila as

the Western Philippine Sea—is inside the First Island Chain. So to really secure the First Island Chain, the South China Sea must be free of foreign interference.

And here we are plunged into the heart of arguably the key 21st-century hotspot in Asian geopolitics—the main reason for the Obama administration's pivot to Asia.

The U.S. Navy, so far, has counted on the Philippines to oppose the proverbial, hyped-up "Chinese aggression" in the South China and East China seas. The neocon/neoliberal-con industrial-military-complex fury against "unhinged" Duterte's game-changer is due to the fact that containing China and ruling over the First Island Chain has been at the core of U.S. naval strategy since the beginning of the Cold War.

Beijing, meanwhile, will have all the time needed to polish its strategic environment. This has nothing to do with "freedom of navigation" and protecting sea-lanes; everyone needs South China Sea cross-trade. It's all about China—perhaps within the next 10 years—being able to deny "access" to the U.S. Navy in the South China Sea and inside the First Island Chain.

Duterte's game-changing "America has lost" is just a new salvo in the key 21st-century geopolitical thriller. A Supreme Court justice in Manila, for instance, has warned Duterte that, were he to give up sovereignty over the Scarborough Shoal, he could be impeached. That won't happen; Duterte wants loads of Chinese trade and investment, not abdication from sovereignty. He'd rather be ready to confront being demonized by the hyperpower as much as the late Hugo Chavez was in his heyday.

Pepe Escobar is a Brazilian independent geopolitical analyst who has been a foreign correspondent since 1985, covering the arc from the Middle East to Central and East Asia with an emphasis on Big Power geopolitics and energy wars. He is a frequent contributor to websites and radio and TV shows from the United States to East Asia, and the author of books including *Obama Does Globalistan*, *Empire of Chaos*, and *2030*.



Fire and rescue teams respond to a downed Philippine Air Force OV-10 Bronco aircraft that swerved off the runway upon landing at Clark Air Base. Photo: U.S. Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Ricardo Morales

## Russia

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costs involved in pursuing NATO and EU membership. By recognizing Abkhaz and Ossetian independence and by annexing Crimea, Russia imposed an immediate cost on the countries concerned and also sent a message that there could be further costs if its interests were not taken into account.

This is hardball international politics, and we do not have to like it, but it falls well short of evidence that the Putin regime's ambitions extend to the recreation of the Soviet Union. In fact, our differences with Russia on Georgia and Ukraine are not fundamental. The Russian interest in not having those two countries in NATO should be shared by the United States.

It is not in the U.S. interest to provide Georgia and Ukraine the kind of security guarantees entailed in NATO mem-

bership, and it is difficult to understand why the idea even received consideration. Clearly disabusing them of the idea will provide an incentive for them to work out a mutually acceptable relationship with their much larger neighbor. The economic relationship among the EU, Russia and the countries Russia calls the "near abroad" is not inherently zero-sum.

There is no fundamental reason why an arrangement beneficial to all sides cannot be found—which is not to say that finding it will be easy.

### The Case of Syria

It appears to me that Russia's Syrian intervention has served a number of its foreign policy objectives: 1) attacking Islamic terrorist groups where they live, rather than waiting for them to attack Russia; 2) avoiding the takeover of Syria by a terrorist group, which it believes would be the most likely outcome of the violent overthrow of the Assad regime; 3) supporting a regime that has allowed

it a military presence; 4) supporting the principle that regimes in power should not be overthrown by outside forces; 5) expanding its role in the Middle East; and 6) challenging U.S. unilateralism in the international system.

We have common interests with Russia on the first two of those objectives; on the remainder, our attitude may range from indifferent to opposed. Turning those shared interests into joint action has been extraordinarily difficult because we do not always agree on which groups are terrorists, and because terrorist and nonterrorist groups are often intermingled on the ground. Moreover, Russia's client—the Assad regime—sees them all as threats to its rule and, thus, equally subject to attack. For our part, we have not been able

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*For our part, we  
have not been able to  
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to persuade the moderates (our clients, in Russia's eyes) to separate themselves physically from the terrorists because the moderates, the weakest militarily of the combatants, fear that such a move would leave them more vulnerable to attack from both the Assad regime and Russia.

There is only one outcome of the Syrian civil war that would threaten vital U.S. national interests: the victory of a Taliban-style regime (or worse). On that, at least, the United States and Russia can agree. We are in error if we see the war there as a zero-sum U.S.-Russia contest. Russia is not the Soviet Union. We will not always

be in agreement on what should be done in Syria, or more broadly in the Middle East. But Russia's support for the nuclear negotiations with Iran and its help in persuading the Assad regime to rid itself of chemical weapons demonstrate that we can cooperate there, and elsewhere, on some difficult issues.

### Prospects

Militarily, Russia is a significant regional power with a superpower nuclear capability. Economically, it is rich in raw materials and has vastly improved its agricultural sector, but continues to struggle to be competitive internationally in the industrial and information sectors. Politically, it is ruled by a semi-authoritarian regime that falls well within Russian historical traditions, is far milder than the Soviet-era norm, and has a substantial level of popular support.

The Putin regime will continue to be assertive in pursuit of its international interests, believing that the alternative is that its interests will be ignored. Yet a normal relationship with Russia under the Putin regime is possible.

Unlike during the Soviet era, the two countries are not ideological opponents. There will be areas where our interests conflict. Resolving those conflicts constructively will require both countries to understand the limits of their interests.

*Raymond Smith was a Foreign Service officer from 1969 to 1993. He served in Moscow twice and while he was political counselor in Moscow drafted the 1990 cable, "Looking into the Abyss: The Possible Collapse of the Soviet Union and What We Should Be Doing About It." He also served as director of the Office of the Former Soviet Union and Eastern European Affairs in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. A longtime international negotiations consultant, he is the author of Negotiating with the Soviets and The Craft of Political Analysis for Diplomats.*



## Antiwar Tour

... continued from page 18

fected by the bombings approached us, often with tears in their eyes, to convey how much the apology meant to them. Mike and I are not the first Americans to express an apology for the bombing, but many Japanese people have never heard one.

After the apologies, we talked about our own military experience, the devastating effects our actions had on the people of Afghanistan and Iraq, why the world is less safe as a result of U.S. military intervention around the world, and how fighting racism is crucial to any antiwar movement. We talked about how education, health care, infrastructure, and the environment all suffer as a result of militarization; we discussed how our leaders often overstate threats to security to justify bloated military budgets and steal other countries' resources through interventions.

The response was overwhelming. Our talks were always jam-packed. We had multiple two-hour press conferences with the national media. We apologized for Trump. People laughed—most in Japan are disgusted with him too.

We discussed how U.S. military bases could actually serve to antagonize perceived enemies as opposed to deterring them, and how U.S. protection comes with condi-

tions that water down sovereignty and democracy. Many of our conversations ultimately centered on questions of how to build solidarity and support for poor and working-class people living in countries we are taught to fear: China, North Korea, and the whole of the Middle East.

Despite its problems—and they are many—Japan's achievements since the end of World War II are a testament to what can be done when a country limits spending on the military and invests in education, health care, and infrastructure.

When it comes to education, Japan is in competition with South Korea for the best education system in the world. Japanese people live longer than just about any other group of people in the world. Japan has the best rail system and some of the best infrastructure in the world. They have virtually eliminated gun-related deaths, and have the second-lowest murder rate in the world. And there is greater economic equality in Japan than in Norway.

Japan is still a strong capitalist country and is far from perfect. Sexism is a major issue. The country has a complicated problem with suicide, and of course it has a dangerous dependence on nuclear energy.

All that said, it is impossible for an American visiting the country not to be struck by the contrasts in standards of living between Japan and the United States, a country that spends a trillion dollars a year supporting its military.

In Japan, Mike and I saw a glimpse of what is possible

when a country is able to resist its leaders' demands for war and channel its resources to human development and flourishing. We saw the power of civilian diplomacy. We learned that ordinary Japanese have much more in common with ordinary Americans than we do with our respective leaders who send us off to kill each other in war.

When Mike and I spoke in front of the Diet, 5,000 people stood in cold and rainy weather to listen. As we walked a city block up to the stage, hundreds called out to us by our first names—despite the fact that we had only been in the country seven days.

Mike and I have no notable profile; we are simply former U.S. soldiers who went to Japan to support peace, not war. In a country that has embraced peace for 70 years but now fears war, this was national news.

As far-right demagogues rise to power around the world, international solidarity becomes increasingly important. Ordinary working-class people around the world don't want war—their leaders and corporations do. By reaching out to those people across borders, we can make sure that the machinery of war stays silent.

*Rory Fanning walked across the United States for the Pat Tillman Foundation in 2008–09, following two deployments to Afghanistan with the 2nd Army Ranger Battalion. He is a housing activist living in Chicago and the author of Worth Fighting For: An Army Ranger's Journey Out of the Military and Across America.*



# Pope Issues Catholic Church's First Statement on Nonviolence—Ever

By Rev. John Dear

On Dec. 12, 2016, Pope Francis released the annual World Day of Peace Message for January 1, 2017, called “Nonviolence—A Style of Politics for Peace.” This is the Vatican’s 50th World Day of Peace message, but its first statement in history on nonviolence, in the tradition of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

We need to make “active nonviolence our way of life,” Francis writes at the start, and suggests nonviolence become our new style of politics. “I ask God to help all of us to cultivate nonviolence in our most personal thoughts and values,” Francis writes. “May charity and nonviolence govern how we treat each other as individuals, within society and in international life. When victims of violence are able to resist the temptation to retaliate, they become the most credible promoters of nonviolent peacemaking. In the most local and ordinary situations and in the international order, may nonviolence become the hallmark of our decisions, our relationships and our actions, and indeed of political life in all its forms.”

In his historic statement, Pope Francis discusses the violence of the world, Jesus’ way of nonviolence, and the viable alternative of nonviolence for today. His message is a breath of fresh air for all of us, and offers a framework for all of us to envision our lives and our world.

## ‘Violence Not the Cure for a Broken World’

“Today, sadly, we find ourselves engaged in a horrifying world war fought piecemeal,” Francis writes. “It is not easy to know if our world is presently more or less violent than in the past, or to know whether modern means of communications and greater mobility have made us more aware of violence, or, on the other hand, increasingly inured to it. In any case, we know that this ‘piecemeal’ violence, of different kinds and levels, causes great suffering: wars in different countries and continents; terrorism, organized crime and unforeseen acts of violence; the abuses suffered by migrants and victims of human trafficking; and the devastation of the environment. Where does this lead? Can violence achieve any goal of lasting value? Or does it merely lead to retaliation and a cycle of deadly conflicts that benefit only a few ‘warlords’?”

“Countering violence with violence leads at best to forced migrations and enormous suffering,” Francis continues, “because vast amounts of resources are diverted to military ends and away from the everyday needs of young people, families experiencing hardship, the elderly, the infirm, and the great majority of people in our world. At worst, it can lead to the death, physical and spiritual, of many people, if not of all.”

Jesus lived and taught nonviolence, which Francis calls “a radically positive

approach.” Jesus “unfailingly preached God’s unconditional love, which welcomes and forgives. He taught his disciples to love their enemies (cf. Mt 5:44) and to turn the other cheek (cf. Mt 5:39). When he stopped her accusers from stoning the woman caught in adultery (cf. Jn

example, was Leymah Gbowee and the thousands of Liberian women who organized pray-ins and nonviolent protest that resulted in high-level peace talks to end the second civil war in Liberia. The Church has been involved in nonviolent peacebuilding strategies in many coun-



Pope Francis prays in silence at the wall that separates Jerusalem from the West Bank town of Bethlehem (2014). Photo: AFP/L'Osservatore Romano

8:1-11), and when, on the night before he died, he told Peter to put away his sword (cf. Mt 26:52), Jesus marked out the path of nonviolence. He walked that path to the very end, to the cross, whereby he became our peace and put an end to hostility (cf. Eph 2:14-16). Whoever accepts the Good News of Jesus is able to acknowledge the violence within and be healed by God’s mercy, becoming in turn an instrument of reconciliation.

“To be true followers of Jesus today also includes embracing his teaching about nonviolence,” Francis writes. He quotes Pope Benedict, who said that

tries, engaging even the most violent parties in efforts to build a just and lasting peace. Let us never tire of repeating: ‘The name of God cannot be used to justify violence. Peace alone is holy. Peace alone is holy, not war!’

“If violence has its source in the human heart, then it is fundamental that nonviolence be practiced within families,” Francis writes. “I plead with equal urgency for an end to domestic violence and to the abuse of women and children. The politics of nonviolence have to begin in the home and then spread to the entire human family.”

“An ethics of fraternity and peace-

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*‘I pledge the assistance of the church in every effort to build peace through active and creative nonviolence.’*

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the command to love our enemies “is the magna carta of Christian nonviolence. It does not consist in succumbing to evil..., but in responding to evil with good and thereby breaking the chain of injustice.”

## Nonviolence Is More Powerful than Violence

“The decisive and consistent practice of nonviolence has produced impressive results,” Francis explains. “The achievements of Mahatma Gandhi and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan in the liberation of India, and of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr in combating racial discrimination will never be forgotten. Women in particular are often leaders of nonviolence, as for

ings were very positive and constructive. Our host, Cardinal Turkson, head of the Pontifical Office of Justice and Peace, asked me to write a draft of the 2017 World Day of Peace statement on nonviolence for Pope Francis. I sent in a draft, as did my friends Ken Butigan, Marie Dennis, and the leadership of Pax Christi International. We are glad to see our main points, even some of our exact language, in his message.

“Peacebuilding through active nonviolence is the natural and necessary complement to the Church’s continuing efforts to limit the use of force by the application of moral norms,” Francis concludes. “Jesus himself offers a ‘manual’ for this strategy of peacemaking in the Sermon on the Mount. The eight Beatitudes (cf. Mt 5:3-10) provide a portrait of the person we could describe as blessed, good, and authentic. Blessed are the meek, Jesus tells us, the merciful and the peacemakers, those who are pure in heart, and those who hunger and thirst for justice. This is also a program and a challenge for political and religious leaders, the heads of international institutions, and business and media executives: to apply the Beatitudes in the exercise of their respective responsibilities. It is a challenge to build up society, communities, and businesses by acting as peacemakers. It is to show mercy by refusing to discard people, harm the environment, or seek to win at any cost. To do so requires ‘the willingness to face conflict head on, to resolve it and to make it a link in the chain of a new process.’ To act in this way means to choose solidarity as a way of making history and building friendship in society.”

## Consolation and Challenge

His concluding words should be a source of consolation as well as a challenge for us in the days ahead:

“Active nonviolence is a way of showing that unity is truly more powerful and more fruitful than conflict. Everything in the world is interconnected. Differences can cause frictions, but let us face them constructively and nonviolently.

“I pledge the assistance of the Church in every effort to build peace through active and creative nonviolence. Every such response, however modest, helps to build a world free of violence, the first step toward justice and peace. In 2017, may we dedicate ourselves prayerfully and actively to banishing violence from our hearts, words, and deeds, and to becoming nonviolent people and to building nonviolent communities that care for our common home.”

As we prepare for years of resistance to come, I hope we can take heart from Pope Francis’ global call for nonviolence, help spread his message, and do our part to become nonviolent people, build the global grassroots movement of nonviolence, and uphold the vision of a new world of nonviolence.

Rev. John Dear is an internationally known voice for peace and nonviolence and is on the staff at Campaign Nonviolence. A priest, peacemaker, organizer, lecturer, and retreat leader, he is the author or editor of 30 books, including his autobiography, *A Persistent Peace*.

## The Vatican Conference on Nonviolence

Last April, 80 of us from around the world met for three days at the Vatican to discuss Jesus and nonviolence with Vatican officials and to ask the Pope to write a new encyclical on nonviolence. Our meet-

# Giving Water Can Have Unintended Consequences

By Marcus Eriksen

In war, natural disaster and poverty, water is the first relief to arrive alongside the security of life and limb. It is the gift that aids the weary traveler, sits at the table before a meal arrives. The lack of it kills before the lack of food does. As was argued during the Bolivian Water Wars against privatization of public wells, it is not a commodity, but a human right. So when the U.N. sanctions against Iraq in

the 1990s stressed schools and hospitals to the point of disrepair and abandonment of their wells, human rights activists stepped in.

In 1999 a group of veterans, working through Veterans For Peace, founded the Iraq Water Project with a mission to improve the health prospects of some part of the Iraqi population dependent upon water treatment facilities in desperate need of repair. Once a site is selected, usually a school or clinic, a three-stage filtration



*A school in the Therthar village near Falluja.*



*Iraqi children scavenging for recyclables in a dump near Najaf. Photo: Haidar Hamdan/AFP*

unit, with reverse osmosis and ultraviolet light treatment, is set up to clean water from a river, well, or municipal source.

To date, 160 units are in place, mostly in schools and clinics across Iraq. We've installed filter units in an orphanage, a refugee camp, six prisons (including Abu Ghraib, which is now closed), and the al Askari shrine in Samarra (which al Qaida bombed in 2006).

Our partner, Muslim Peacemaker Teams, installed five units in Najaf schools, while Life for Relief and Development, a U.S. Islamic NGO, installed two units in schools in the Diyala Province in east-central Iraq. For reasons of security, we cannot name the group we work with in Nassiriya that installed four water treatment units in the new Nassiriya Heart Center and another four in local schools. These organizations are do-

ing the lion's share of the work, taking responsibility for the installation, security and maintenance of the water filter units, and providing citizens access to clean water.

What's come of this investment are positive unintended consequences that have exceeded our expectations, in terms of both social justice and conservation. By contributing to the relief of someone's suffering, a wonderful sense of humility and joy emerges, especially among the U.S. veterans participating in the project, which I can attest to personally. More important, lives are saved; dysentery among small children and water-borne illnesses have been reduced where the water filters are installed. Unexpectedly, the water filters not only serve the schools and clinics, but they become a community hub—

*continued on next page ...*

## John Heuer

*... continued from page 24*

Francis de Sales). I am terribly saddened to know that John Heuer is no longer with us. John, you were a great friend to so many of us and a wonderful, strong and committed member of the peace and anti-war community. Peace, John. Thank you for all you did. Rest well, my friend.

—Matthew Hoh

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My heart is saddened to hear of the passing of my friend, John Heuer. A gentle soul and tireless advocate for peace, nonviolence, human rights, and social justice. He will be greatly missed. Rest in Peace, my friend.

—Ymani Simmons

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I'm so sad about John's passing. For two years I've enjoyed his company, wise council, experienced activist perspective, and his appreciation of being able to pass on Secretary duties to me and his good advice for that. I miss him.

—Kourtney Andar

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John Heuer, Vietnam-era conscientious objector, stalwart of Veterans For Peace, dear friend and mentor, died unexpectedly last night. Determined to recover fully from recent surgery, John was doing everything he could, from physical therapy to acupuncture, to get past the

pain and carry on. The only consolation I can glean from his passing is that he was spared not only his own physical suffering, which was intense, but also the realities of what a Trump presidency would bring to a nation that John had fought so hard to protect from the fascists and the madmen. Losing him is an immeasurable loss for us all.

—Vicki Ryder

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John was a man with a heart that encompassed ALL. May his spirit be with us till all people are free from tyranny, hatred, and poverty.

—Ruth Austin

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I knew John through my work in the office at VFP. John was such a sweet and soothing presence. The last time I talked with him he told me how glad he was he retired when he did and that he had good years before his health issues arose.

—Virginia Druhe

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John Heuer will always be a gentle breeze, always with us. He'll join us in the first light of day, the bird's call overhead, the scent of rain.

—Kate Beckwith

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I'm deeply saddened by news of the passing of my VFP comrade John Heuer. I will be forever grateful for the tremendous honor of serving with John on the VFP board of directors this past year. My

first impression of John as a gentle and compassionate soul was only strengthened over the relatively short time that I had the great pleasure and privilege of knowing him. John was second to none in his dedication and commitment to peace and justice. His integrity, humility and peacefulness was evident in every interaction I had with him. I am a better person having known John, and I'm confident that the world is a better place because he was in it. We will miss you, John. Presente!

—Brian Trautman

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I had the greatest respect for John and will always remember, and appreciate, the kind advice he offered me with my Grandmothers For Peace group. Thank you, John. You had a life well lived and I have no doubt that you will, finally, rest in sweet peace.

—Lynn Heritage

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John was Lighthouse of Peace in an angry sea of darkness, his steadfast principles against bigotry, violence and perpetual wars, whether at home or abroad, kept VFP on course with its mission to abolish war. VFP colleague Doug Zachary described John as "a gentle breeze" ...so appropriate as the earth's temperature rises when war tensions between nations heat up and the domestic battle to Protect the Water and Sacred Lands of Standing Rock Sioux against the Dakota

Access Oil Pipeline which has captured the hearts and minds of people across the globe, becoming a non-violent movement on fire. If ever we needed a gentle breeze, it is now. John Heuer Presente!

—Dan Shea

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Incredibly sad to hear of the passing of my friend, John Heuer. I spent the most time with John while we were organizing GRIM - the Grassroots Impeachment Movement, trying to get our Congressman, David Price, to support the impeachment of both Bush and Cheney for war crimes. John was a tireless advocate for peace and justice and an inspiration. My love goes out to his wife, Sue A Merris. He will be missed. Rest in Peace, John, and my deepest sympathies go to his family.

—Rebecca Cerese

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RIP to Brother John Heuer...we stood together (and got arrested) many times... he was indeed one of the great and gentle ones.

—Ward Reilly

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[John's] life and light in this world, the gift of peace that he exuded as a human being is beyond measure. I will miss you dearly John, always. Rest in peace and power. Your light will shine on through me and many others whose lives you touched.

—Julie Mark Dobson





*Veterans For Peace leads the march down Grand Avenue in Nogales, Ariz., Oct. 8, 2016. Photo: Jonathan Clark and the Nogales International*

## School of the Americas Watch Reaches Across U.S.-Mexico Border

By Becky Luening

Sixty Veterans For Peace members joined nearly a thousand others in Arizona Oct. 7–10 for the “Encuentro at the Border” organized by School of the Americas Watch (SOAW). Focused on U.S. policies in Latin America, militarization of the border, and compassion for migrants and refugees, the convergence began Friday evening with a solidarity rally at the private Eloy Detention Center.

After marching to the border Saturday, people split off to attend workshops held simultaneously in the U.S. and Mexico, in ambos Nogales. Sister stages set up in proximity of each other on both sides of the border fence enabled a divided audience to access all speakers and

entertainments, while bilingual programming helped bridge the language gap.

Begun 25 years ago to close the School of the Americas at Ft. Benning, Ga. (now named Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, or WHINSEC), SOAW’s vigil has long been the second largest annual gathering of VFP members, after the convention. VFP–SOAW liaison Mike Tork was nervous about VFP turnout leading up to the event, given the divergence in timing and location from previous years, and helped make the case for the move to the border. “Keep in mind,” he wrote, “that in most cases these people are escaping violence and extreme poverty caused by U.S. policy and intervention ... [and] often, those trained at WHINSEC (SOA), or other such U.S. training facilities,

are the ones causing that violence. We also know that the Border Patrol is now training some of their personnel at WHINSEC. So moving to the border isn’t a huge stretch for SOAW. It is all connected.”

Some VFP members showed up to advocate for the thousands of Mexican veterans of the U.S. military who live across the border—legal residents who were convicted of a crime and then deported with no possibility of judicial discretion, despite their military service. A VFP chapter was formed in Tijuana, Mexico, in August 2015 to address this issue.

On Sunday, 200 people engaged in nonviolent direct action at the U.S. Border Patrol checkpoint 20 miles north of Nogales on I-19 to call attention to human rights violations. The action was underscored with chanting, singing, and drumming. A wide, colorful banner proclaimed, in English and Spanish, “Checkpoint Closed Due to Demilitarization!” Roy Bourgeois and other veterans were among those who linked arms and refused to leave the checkpoint, effectively shutting it down for more than five hours.

## Giving Water

... continued from previous page

a meeting place. The goodwill that emerges from Iraqi organizations managing their own recovery, and the relationship that forms between Iraqis and U.S. citizens is invaluable. There is reconciliation and atonement, which are hard to find.

Interestingly, giving water contributes to solving another problem: plastic pollution. Often, when relief aid is sent after a natural disaster or during civil unrest, it comes packaged in stuff that becomes garbage. Water bottles by the millions are strewn across villages in Iraq, reflective of the years of poor waste management, garbage from war, and relief aid. U.S. bases established in Iraq employed “burn pits” to incinerate garbage. The same burn-and-bury strategy exists in villages across the country, sending acrid smoke into communities. Iraq’s waste problem contributed to public outbreaks of cholera

and dysentery, and roadside bombs found ample trash piles to be concealed within.

One water filter can sustain daily drinking water for 1,000 residents for up to three months before filters need to be changed. The same volume would exceed half a million one-liter plastic water bottles. By providing the “means to fish, rather than the fish itself,” access to water becomes seemingly endless. But in today’s political climate in Iraq, there are continued challenges to keep these water filter units operational.

Therefore, what continues today is maintenance and new installations of water filter units where they are needed. We recognize that past sanctions, war, and poverty exacerbate suffering, but sharing this gift is contributing to Iraq’s recovery in sometimes unpredictable ways. It all begins with water.

*Dr. Marcus Eriksen is a Gulf War veteran who is dedicating his life to cleaning up the waters of our planet. He is a strong supporter of the Veterans For Peace Iraq Water project, led by veteran Art Dorland,*

## Christmas Morning Sunrise: A Resolution

Step into the sound of wind scouring  
skeletal maples, oaks, ash, and birch  
Allow it to enter into yourself

Absorb the rising sun bruising  
the scudding clouds into deep reds and purples  
Bear witness to this dark hour transformed

Pass through the house sleeping with  
the children of your children trusting you  
to be the one they hope you are

And then become that man.

—Doug Rawlings



# John Heuer: Antiwar Movement Loses a Gentle Breeze



Veterans For Peace national board member John Heuer died Nov. 15, 2016. A resister who went to Canada during the Vietnam War, he spent the rest of his life working to end militarism and war and advance peace and justice in the United States and abroad. Below are just a few of the tributes from the many people he touched in his life.

John Heuer, my dear sweet husband and best friend, passed from this earthly world to the next level. He “talked the talk and walked the walk”. What will I do without your smiling face upbeat attitude even in trying times? You have taught ALL who knew you life’s lessons on kindness, thoughtfulness, generosity, and more. Thanks for sharing these past

8 years with me. Love you!

—Sue Merris

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John Heuer was a beautiful man who served humanity against the wars of this system, and united with all people in struggle. Rest in peace, friend. La lucha continua.

—Scott Trent

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I met John way back when we both were involved - he more deeply than I - in SE-ANC District 25. He was always a delight to be around, then after retiring we kept running into each other at VFP and other social/economic justice events. His passing is a great loss to us all. You’re in my thoughts and prayers, Sue. May you take comfort in knowing how very loved and respected John is. He will make heaven a better place.

—Tana Hartman

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Our beloved brother, John. Though he’s gone, he’s not lost to us, shared forever by and through us...His shining spirit is a lodestar to all of us who loved John, as he loved us all. May it ever be so. Rest sweet in the Mystery, John. PRESENTE!

—Mia Austin

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John Heuer is a vanguard voice regard-

ing the dismantling of White Male Supremacy. For reasons particular to my life experience, I almost never fully trust males .... That said, within a few seconds of meeting John Heuer, I knew I had no need for my usually defensive perimeter. John embodies gentleness. I am so sad that I will never see John again. Entering a room and seeing John’s gentle smile is walking off the highway into a grove of Old Growth Redwoods. He remains a gentle breeze.

—Doug Zachary

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What a wonderful human being he was and what a great spirit he will always be. We were almost always in agreement on issues and as intense as I am, John never lost patience with me. We knew we were allies. Now I am so sad I didn’t treasure him enough while he was with us. He had the qualities and wisdom of a saint and he had great love. Now he is free from the shackles of the body and from earthly bondage. God speed on your journey John. We will miss you more than we know.

—Tarak Kauff

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“Nothing is so strong as gentleness, nothing so gentle as real strength.” (Saint *continued on page 22 ...*)

## Reclaiming the Meaning of Armistice Day

### John Heuer’s Last Op Ed

This year’s Armistice Day has left me wondering if we ever will regain the original meaning of the day, a day that Congress proclaimed in 1924 to be a day to celebrate the outbreak of peace following WWI.

Thirty years later, Congress renamed November 11 “Veterans Day,” and the concept of celebrating peace seemingly has been assigned to the trash heap of history. This year, we heard endless tributes to our military service members and veterans, but not a word about ending our wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Syria, Libya, Yemen and Somalia, or ending our sale and shipment of weapons around the world. How far we have come from the original intent of Armistice Day! We now are the world’s major weapons supplier, our government is engaged in multiple endless wars, and we are the largest operator, by far, of military bases throughout the world.

A recent story in *Sports Illustrated* brought home to me how we manage to maintain endless wars while imagining that we are living in peace. Football star Eric Reid was asked why he was supporting Colin Kaepernick’s protest during the opening of the NFL games this year. Reid replied that he supported Kaepernick’s effort to draw attention to injustice in this country. Howls of protest ensued, with claims that anything less than total



John Heuer with Sue Merris.

respect for our flag and anthem was an insult to our veterans and service members. Reid then pointed out the hypocrisy in idolizing our men and women in uniform and then ignoring homeless vets when they return because we don’t care enough about them to provide for reasonable adjustment to civilian life.

We take any criticism of the United States, or of U.S. policies or shortcomings, to be synonymous with disrespect for our troops. In this way, we blind ourselves to the fact that all our platitudes about defending our freedoms are simply excuses for engaging in endless war. We always have money for war, but never have enough money to properly care for

our veterans.

And why is it that we couldn’t have a peace candidate in our recent election?

In 1935, retired Marine General Smedley Butler published *War Is a Racket*. He described a racket as a system that operates without most people’s understanding of how or why that system operates. Gen. Butler described war as fitting the definition of a racket because “the few profit while the many pay,” and few understand the real reasons for any particular war.

The 2003 invasion of Iraq fits this description perfectly. George W. Bush should be tried for war crimes for this totally unnecessary war, yet, 13 years later, the war goes on, others are blamed, Con-

gress allows waging war to be a sole prerogative of the president, and successive presidents attack other countries seemingly for sport. With all this, neither major political party saw fit to make room for a peace candidate.

Veterans For Peace members have been working to expose this racket, and the true costs of war, since the organization was founded in 1985. Obviously, they have a long way to go to overcome the constant drumbeat of war propaganda offered by our mass media. It should come as no surprise that our mainstream media are owned by the same corporations that manufacture the weapons of war. This is all part of the racket.

One of the great costs of war is the fact that all soldiers also are victims. This recognition is why Veterans For Peace has expanded to include new chapters not just in the United States, but in England, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and Mexico, and welcomes new members from Israel, Palestine, Germany, Australia, Canada, and Russia, among other nations struggling with global militarism.

Imagine a world in which soldiers and veterans realize mutually that their enmity for each other has been manufactured for the benefit of a few profiteers. Only then can we begin to understand the true spirit of Armistice Day. Perhaps, on the centennial of the original Armistice Day—November 11, 1918—we will have managed to recruit peace candidates to lead all our political parties, and the holiday will again be dedicated to the celebration of peace rather than the glorification of war.