

Peace in Our Times



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

An Organizer of the Great March of Return Says:

Protests in Gaza 'Must Go On'

By Ahmed Abu Artema

The Great March of Return established itself as a new way for the Palestinian people to re-energize our cause and generate political pressure against the occupation in innovative ways without the devastating cost of military struggle; a way to put Palestinian rights back on the global agenda and reclaim the image of a people justly struggling for freedom and rights in the face of brutal and violent racist oppression.

Mistakes have also been made in this effort, however, which have harmed this peaceful approach and even jeopardized its future.

The Great March of Return must go on. There is simply no alternative to peaceful popular resistance. But we also need to take a step back and think about how we can reduce its cost in lives and injuries to our people, so that we may be able to nurture and grow this new form of resistance.

Our struggle for freedom is long, and its victory will be the fruit of countless efforts and sacrifices. The occupation state has been revealed as the main perpetrator of murders and massacres, and its aim is clear: to raise the cost of the Great March of Return until we ourselves abandon this path.

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Palestinians practice parkour on Gaza-Israel border. Photo: Asharq Al-Awsat.

A Mile in Their Shoes

In Praise of Afghans Walking for Peace

By Kathy Kelly

This past Friday in Afghanistan's Ghazni province, Hazara girls joined young Pashto boys to sing Afghanistan's national anthem as a welcome to Pashto men walking 400 miles from Helmand to Kabul. The walkers are calling on war-

age and vision of the Helmand-to-Kabul peace walk participants. It seems likely that ordinary Afghans, no matter their tribal lineages, share a profound desire to end 40 years of war. The 17-year U.S. war in Afghanistan exceeds the lifetimes of the youngsters in Ghazni who greeted the peace walkers.

Rather than extending a hand of friendship to people in other lands and, in the case of Afghanistan, paying reparations for the terrible suffering we've caused, the United States continues to seek security through dominance and military might. It's a futile effort.

ring parties in Afghanistan to end the war. Most of the men making the journey are wearing sandals. At rest stops, they must tend to their torn and blistered feet. But their mission grows stronger as they walk. In Ghazni, hundreds of residents, along with religious leaders, showed remarkable readiness to embrace the cour-

On June 7, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani declared a weeklong halt to attacks against the Taliban. Spokespersons rep-

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As U.S. intensifies airstrikes in Afghanistan, Pashtun men stage a 400-mile walk calling for peace.



Letters to the Editor

U.S. Empire: Soft Power and Respect?

Paul Krugman believes that the American empire was “a remarkably benign empire”; but that it was “held together by soft power and respect rather than force” is puzzling (“Fall of the American Empire” *New York Times*, June 19, 2018). It was force or violence that emasculated Indian tribes; it was military force that compelled Mexico to cede over half of its territory. We attacked Spain to make Cuba a satellite. We intervened militarily numerous times in Latin America. We intervened in the Korean civil war, wiping out some 20 percent of the North Korean population. We helped wipe out new democratic regimes globally, including Iran (1953), Guatemala (1954), Congo (1960), Chile (1973), Nicaragua (1980s), and Haiti (2004). We killed millions during the Vietnam war and bear responsibility for the hundreds of thousands victims in the Middle East. We unerringly intervened to support upper classes abroad. It’s hard to reconcile these facts with Mr. Krugman’s assertion that we stood for “freedom, human rights and the rule of law.” As for upholding the rule of law, we broke treaties continuously, including virtually all of the hundreds of treaties signed with Indian tribes, and including the United Nations Charter, which forbids intervention in other countries. There have been worse empires, but ours is nothing to brag about.

Roger Carasso

Professor Emeritus, California State University, Northridge

Time to Relinquish the Myths

I am going to have an aneurysm if I hear one more person say in reference to the forced separation of children from their parents that this is not the America I know, love, served, etc.

The fact is such horrendous crimes against people have been the rule in American history. The forced separation of families in slavery was not just common it was considered sound business practice (all hail capitalism), while the forced separation of Native American children from their families in order to kill the Indian in them continued into my lifetime.

This isn’t a Trump issue, it’s an American issue. Such crimes didn’t begin with Trump and they certainly won’t end with

his demise, which of course won’t be soon enough.

These crimes will only end when we stop repeating the false myths and factual fallacies of American history and begin to build a society based upon values of love, compassion, acceptance, and equality.

Matthew Hoh

Veterans For Peace, Virginia

Old Friends Reunited

My beloved friend and compañero and I were reunited at the Texas State Capitol on April 15 at a demonstration in opposition to the Trump regime’s illegal war activities against the Syrian people. Adrian Boutureira and I had not seen each other since early 2001. He and I had been together in 1996 in the southern Mexican jungle, in the administrative and military headquarters of the revolutionary Zapatista Army (EZLN), a village the Zapatistas had named *Realidad* (Reality).



Adrian Boutureira and Doug Zachary.

We were 600 revolutionaries from every country in the Western Hemisphere, providing accompaniment and protection for roughly 600 Indigenous Zapatistas, all of us surrounded by 60,000 soldiers of the Mexican Army Infantry. I have been blessed with a world of the sweetest, kindest, most fierce folks I could ever have wished to know and love.

Doug Zachary

Veterans For Peace, Austin, Texas

A Note from the Editors

We Can’t Do It Alone



“Where is the antiwar movement?” I often hear from my comrades. “Why is there no antiwar perspective in the [environmental/anti-Trump/civil rights/antiracist/you-name-it] movement?”

I want to be clear. I am not an “antiwar activist.” I am an activist for the planet, for all living things on it. I am a feminist, antiracist, environmental, economic and social justice, antiwar, anti-exploitation, human rights, anticapitalist, health care, LGBTQ-rest-of-the-alphabet, immigration rights, education, cultural, civil liberties, labor, and a whole host of other issues activist.

I am an activist who wants to overturn this system that is destroying life, beauty, justice, and everything I love on this planet. You could say that I’m a revolutionary. Whatever.

And because I want to bring down this whole rotten structure, I put my energy into whatever wedge is pushing into the cracks. In the 1960s, it was the anti-Vietnam War movement, civil rights, and women’s issues. Today it’s Occupy, it is Black Lives Matter, it’s #metoo and Time’s Up, it’s stopping the bases that are destroying the home of the dugong in Okinawa, it’s BDS against Israeli apartheid, it’s standing up with anyone else who stands up for life on this planet, justice, peace, love, and living in harmony with every other living being on this planet.

I’m tired of discussions about how we can revive the antiwar movement. I’m tired of people bemoaning the lack of people on the streets protesting the endless wars in other countries.

It’s all connected. And it’s going to take all of it to save this world from the vicious greed that drives our economy and destroys everything in its path.

Black Lives Matter is antiwar work, demanding money for human needs instead of the military is antiwar work, pushing back against the culture of violence and guns is antiwar work, demanding meaningful jobs for everyone and enriching education is antiwar work.

Whatever helps to break apart this suffocating oppressive deadly edifice that is pushing our planet over the cliff is antiwar work, is human work.

And that’s where I want to put my little bit of energy and talent and love in the short time I have on this plane.

—Ellen Davidson



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Editorial staff: Tarak Kauff, Managing Editor; Ellen Davidson, Mike Ferner, Becky Luening, Ken Mayers, Doug Rawlings

Website coordinator: Fred Nagel

Black Liberationist Debbie Sims Africa Speaks Out After 40 Years in Prison

By Ed Pilkington

The first member of a group of black radicals known as the Move Nine who have been incarcerated, they insist unjustly, for almost 40 years for killing a Philadelphia police officer has been released from prison.

Debbie Sims Africa, 61, walked free from Cambridge Springs prison in Pennsylvania on June 16, having been granted parole. She was 22 when she and her co-defendants were arrested and sentenced to 30 to 100 years for the shooting death of officer James Ramp during a police siege of the group's communal home on Aug. 8, 1978.

She emerged from the correctional institution to be reunited with her son, Michael Davis Africa Jr, to whom she gave birth in a prison cell in September 1978, a month after her arrest.

"This is huge for us personally," Sims Africa told *The Guardian*, speaking from her son's home in a small town on the outskirts of Philadelphia where she will now live.

Davis Africa, 39, who was separated from his mother at less than a week old and has never spent time with her outside prison, said they were coming to terms with being reunited after almost four decades.

"Today I had breakfast with my mother for the first time," he said. "There's so



Debbie Africa sits with her lawyer, Brad Thomson (left), and her son Michael Davis Africa Jr.

erationists and early environmental activists. Its members all take "Africa" as their last name, to signal that they see each other as family.

Hundreds of police officers, organized in SWAT teams and armed with machine guns, water cannons, teargas, and bulldozers, were involved in the siege, which came at the end of a long standoff with the group relating to complaints about conditions in its premises. Two water cannon and smoke bombs were unleashed. The Move residents took refuge in a basement.

cendary bomb on to the roof of its then headquarters in west Philadelphia, killing six adults including the group's leader, John Africa, and five of their children.

That incident continues to have the distinction of being the only aerial bombing by police carried out on U.S. soil.

At Sims Africa's trial, no evidence was presented that she or the three other women charged alongside her had brandished or handled firearms during the siege. Nor was there any attempt on the part of the prosecution to prove that they had had any role in firing the shot that killed Ramp.

Sims Africa has had an unblemished disciplinary record in prison for the past 25 years. The last claim of misconduct against her dates to 1992.

Her attorneys presented the parole board with a 13-page dossier outlining her work as a mentor to other prisoners and as a dog handler who trains puppies that assist people with physical and cognitive disabilities. The dossier includes testimony from the correctional expert Martin Horn, who reviewed her record and concluded it was "remarkable."

Horn said Sims Africa had "chosen to be a rule-abiding individual with the ability to be a productive, law-abiding citizen if she is released. I see a record of growing maturity, improved judgment and the assumption of personal responsibility. I do not believe that Debbie Sims is today a threat to the community."

Sims Africa's lawyer, Brad Thomson, commended the parole board for "recognizing that she is of exceptional character and well-deserving of parole. This is a storied victory for Debbie and her family, and the Move organization, and we are hoping it will be the first step in getting all the Move Nine out of prison."

The release of Sims Africa comes less than two months before the 40th anniversary of the siege. Commemorative events are being held in Philadelphia, organized by Move, on 5 and 11 August.

The release of Sims Africa is bitter-

sweet, however. Two of the nine have died in prison—another female inmate, Merle Austin Africa, in March 1998, and Phil Africa in January 2015.

Also bittersweet is the fact that Sims Africa went up for parole at exactly the same time, and on exactly the same terms, as the other two remaining Move Nine women—Janine Phillips Africa and Janet Hollaway Africa. They were both denied parole and will have to wait until May 2019 to try again.

Thomson said the disparity in the parole board's decision was "very surprising," given that the Philadelphia district attorney's office that carried out the original trial prosecution had written letters supporting parole for all three. The parole board gave what the lawyer said were "boilerplate justifications" for the denial of Phillips Africa and Hollaway Africa, saying they displayed "lack of remorse."

Debbie Sims Africa's husband also remains behind bars. Mike Davis Africa Sr is next up before the parole board, in September. The other Move Nine prisoners are Chuck Sims Africa, Delbert Orr Africa and Eddie Goodman Africa.

Debbie Sims Africa told *The Guardian* the remaining prisoners were constantly in her mind and that she planned to devote much of her time campaigning for their release.

"Having to leave them was hard," she said. "I was torn up inside because of course I want to come home but I want them to come with me. I was in shock when it didn't happen that way."

Asked if the two Move women with whom she had shared a cell in Cambridge Springs would be a threat to society if released, she said: "Absolutely not. They would not be a danger as I'm not."

"Nobody from the Move movement has been released from prison and ever committed a crime, going back to 1988. We are peaceful people."

Ed Pilkington is the chief reporter for *The Guardian* U.S. He is the author of *Beyond the Mother Country*.

Hundreds of police officers, organized in SWAT teams and armed with machine guns, water cannons, teargas, and bulldozers, were involved in the siege.

much we haven't done together."

The release of Debbie Sims Africa is a major breakthrough in the struggle against the ongoing incarceration of large numbers of individuals involved in the black liberation movement of the late 1960s and 1970s who are now growing old behind bars. At least 25 men and women belonging to Move or the former Black Panther Party remain locked up, in some cases almost half a century after their arrests.

Sims Africa's release also involves one of the most hotly contested criminal justice cases in Philadelphia history. The nine were prosecuted together following a police siege of their headquarters in Powelton Village at the orders of Philadelphia's notoriously hardline mayor and former police commissioner, Frank Rizzo.

Move, which exists today, regarded itself as a revolutionary movement committed to a healthy life free from oppression or pollution. In the 1970s it was something of a cross between black lib-

Sims Africa was eight months pregnant and was carrying her two-year-old daughter, Michelle. "We were being battered with high-powered water and smoke was everywhere," she said. "I couldn't see my hands in front of my face and I was choking. I had to feel my way up the stairs to get out of the basement with my baby in my arms."

Shooting broke out and Ramp was killed by a single bullet. Prosecutors alleged that Move members fired the fatal shot and charged Sims Africa and the other eight with collective responsibility for his death.

Eyewitnesses, however, gave accounts suggesting that the shot may have come from the opposite direction to the basement, raising the possibility that Ramp was accidentally felled by police fire. After the raid was over, weapons were found within the property. None were in operative condition.

In 1985, Philadelphia authorities carried out an even more controversial and deadly action against the remaining members of Move. A police helicopter dropped an in-

Moral Injury 24-7

"You" are walking around in circles, morbidly depressed and withdrawn.

Nothing makes any sense anymore.

But, it never made any sense long before "You" ever went to war.

It was simply "your" turn to find out the absolute truth, and finally realize why countless veterans throughout history wound up in suicide cemeteries.

"You" never knew about betrayal, because those who went before "you" were never allowed to speak.

The public just wants heroes.

They do not want to know the veteran's mindfield.

The magnitude of "your" illness is equal to the depth of "your" silence.

—Mike Hastie,
Army Medic, Viet Nam



Maj. Danny Sjursen, left, with his Afghan National Army partner, far right.
Photo courtesy Danny Sjursen.

Unbridgeable Gap: Who We Were and Who We Thought We Were

Americans, and their soldiers, were led to believe they fought for democracy and freedom these past 17 years; the truth was far murkier.

By Maj. Danny Sjursen

“War is just a racket ... I spent 33 years and four months in active military service ... during that period, I spent most of my time being a high-class muscle-man for Big Business, for Wall Street and for the Bankers. In short, I was a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism.”—Major General Smedley Butler, U.S. Marine Corps, two-time Medal of Honor recipient (1935)

I grew up in blue-collar Staten Island, New York City. My mother was a waitress, my father an overqualified civil servant who also painted houses and delivered Chinese food in Brooklyn. I come from a world where it seems you’re either a cop, a fireman, or a junkie. My mother had four brothers; two, along with my grandfather, were FDNY to the core; the others fell deep into the drug and alcohol game; it killed them both. But not me; no, I was the family’s golden child, always the pleaser, always high achieving, and I’d do something special. I thought it was my destiny.

In July 2001, while my high school friends partied during the summer before college, I found myself at Cadet Basic Training—“Beast Barracks,” as we

called it—a new officer candidate at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Hating it from the start, I wanted out, but, well, quitting wasn’t an option. Four years later, I was one of 911 cadets who graduated—*Time* magazine profiled us as the “Class of 9/11”—and commissioned in the U.S. Army on May 28, 2005. Some 18 months later, I arrived in Baghdad.

For me, a high school senior in the year before the world changed, the army seemed glamorous, and, surprisingly safe. Back then there were no long, or “real,” wars. American soldiers almost never fired a shot in anger, let alone got killed. I guess I imagined overseas travel, at worst

recognize that kid anymore.

The intervening 17 years have been a blur: training, deployment, promotions, more training, another deployment. It’s been a long, emotional path from enthusiasm to belief, to doubt, to dissent. Reflecting now on my wars—Afghanistan and Iraq—and on my country’s other conflicts—Libya, Syria, Yemen, etc.—is both difficult and cathartic. What’s been most disturbing is discovering the gap be-

The U.S. military injected chaos, shattered a society, unearthed sectarian tensions, and unleashed a brutal civil war.

tween who we, the vets and this whole nation, thought we were, and, in reality, who we actually were.

And, in each war, in every case, there’s been a tremendous chasm between the comforting fables we’re told to believe, and the reality of the American military’s role in the Greater Middle East.

- Afghanistan seemed the most defensible invasion. Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda were there, they’d planned the broad contours of the 9/11 attacks in that landlocked, barren shithole (to borrow a cheeky phrase from our current commander-in-chief). We, the soldiers and the American citizenry, were told to kick ass, take vengeance, and, in the process, to bring democracy, gender equality, and basic modernity to Kabul and Kandahar.

In reality, bin Laden escaped, Al Qaeda fighters died or fled, and counterterrorism quickly morphed into armed nation-building. The U.S. military backed venal warlords, an increasing illegitimate, corrupt central government run by the Karzai clique and a slew of drug lords. By the time I arrived, in 2011, we were battling illiterate farm boys calling themselves “Taliban” and fighting and dying for scraps of worthless dirt we’d evacuate soon enough. And we’re still there.

- Iraq, we were told, had weapons of mass destruction and had colluded with Al Qaeda, and Saddam Hussein was a loose cannon who had to be stopped, like, now! Once there, on the ground, the U.S.

shattered a society, unearthed sectarian tensions, and unleashed a brutal civil war. Hundreds of thousands of civilians were killed, millions became refugees. By the time I arrived, in 2006, the place was on fire and we found the tortured corpses in the streets. We locked up who we could, killed who we couldn’t, and paid off former insurgents to lay down their arms. ISIS, which didn’t exist on 9/11, was birthed and matured in our prison

camps. It exploded across northern and western Iraq in 2014, a veritable Frankenstein’s monster of our ill-advised invasion. Iran backed the Shia militias that saved Baghdad from ISIS and it was Iran, not the United States, that emerged as the real winner in Iraq. Of course, we’re still there, anyway.

- Libya was a supposedly “humanitarian” intervention, unleashed by a Nobel Peace Prize recipient, a “liberal” president. We had an R2P—a responsibility to protect—rebels who’d otherwise be slaughtered by their brutal dictator, “Mad Dog” Gadhafi. It’d be short, it’d be neat, and the U.S. military could do much good with little exertion.

In reality, the United States and its NATO allies took it a step further. The R2P morphed into all-out regime change, and—without any real plan for the day after Gadhafi was brutally murdered—Libya descended into chaos. “No-drama” Obama candidly called it a “shit show.” Rival militias carved out fiefdoms, ISIS opened a local franchise, and tribal fighters once allied with Gadhafi took their skills—and an arsenal of weapons—south, destabilizing Mali, Cameroon, and Niger. Soon enough, American soldiers would start dying in that last locale. We’re still there, too, and still bombing Libya.

- In Syria, we’d back local rebels to topple another pitiless tyrant, Bashar al Assad. No ground troops or airstrikes would be necessary. The Saudis and other Gulf States were on our team. The rebels were moderate, they’d take Damascus and install a democratic government allied to the West.

In reality, the rebels couldn’t prevail, they’d be bombed into oblivion and rise like an Islamist Phoenix from the ashes. Our arms would end up in the hands of an Al Qaeda affiliate, Russia would intervene, and so would Iran. The Saudis, our “friends” would back those same Al Qaeda-linked groups, and ISIS—newly empowered in Iraq—would jump the border and wage a transnational jihad. The United States would do some bombing, but only to protect vulnerable civilians. There’d be no ground troops, until there were. Civilians would be spared by our escalated bombing, until they weren’t. We’d do what it took to collapse the caliphate, and would back the loyal Kurds, until we abandoned them too. Now we militarily occupy one-third of

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ISIS, which didn’t exist on 9/11, was birthed and matured in our prison camps. It exploded across northern and western Iraq in 2014, a veritable Frankenstein’s monster of our ill-advised invasion.

a tour peacekeeping in Kosovo or something, which, I figured, would provide cool photo ops and interesting stories.

Two months after beginning basic training, in September, while sparring in plebe (freshman) boxing class, the towers fell, and everything changed. I’m embarrassed to admit that, for the next four years at West Point, my biggest fear was that the wars would end before I could ship over and do my part. Truth is, I don’t

military had to stay indefinitely, to “fight them over there,” so that we didn’t have to “fight them here at home.” It was a farce, a fiasco. Then, we were told, we had to re-engage, keep fighting (we still are) to vanquish the ISIS menace.

In reality, it was all so much BS. The intelligence was wrong, potentially fabricated, and Saddam, in truth, was a tightly caged animal unable to menace his neighbors. The U.S. military injected chaos,

Memories of a Grandfather Never Known

Editor's note: As part of VFP's Vietnam Full Disclosure Project (vietnam-fulldisclosure.org), over these past four years we have asked people to write letters to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (The Wall). We have over 400 letters now. Three of those letters come from a young woman finishing college and starting her career as an educator. Her grandfather, a captain in the Special Forces, was killed in Cambodia in 1964. Over these three

games? Would you have sat me on your lap and read me stories? Would you look like the picture that's been on my wall since I can remember? Would you smell like aftershave or soap? What would your voice sound like when you told me that you loved me?

I wonder if you thought that it was worth it in the end. Did you whole-heartedly believe in your mission and purpose for being there? Did you regret being there in

didn't write my thoughts on paper, so here they are.

Since starting college, I've discovered that I love history. I've taken six or seven history classes, and in three or four the topic of the Vietnam War has been introduced. We're fed information and forced to regurgitate facts, names, places, and dates. Ho Chi Minh, Saigon, the Gulf of Tonkin, 1975. I try to reconcile this information and find you in it. Cambodia, 1963. Sometimes I just want to get up and leave the classroom. Especially when the professor starts talking about the reasons why we went to Vietnam. For a brief moment, I hold my breath. I think that their reasons might be something I haven't heard before. I feel a pang of hope in my gut. I think maybe I'll finally find clarity. Maybe I'll get a reason that justifies why you died. Why thousands and thousands of people died. The hope is fleeting. The feeling in my gut is quickly eclipsed by a deeper feeling of frustration and confusion because the reason is always the same. "The United States was fighting the good fight against Communism." I can't help but see it for what it is. Propaganda. Rhetoric. Fallacy. Lies disseminated by our government to rally the people behind a meaningless cause. And I can't help but feel like you died for nothing. Because what does any of it matter if you aren't here? Isn't that a horrible thought to have?

I feel so conflicted. No one wants to hear or believe that their loved ones' sacrifices mean nothing. In fact, that's the surest way to enrage any American. At the same time, I can't help but feel like there's something in our culture that holds war and violence as religion. That morphs the truths of war into epics that ensure future generations will perpetuate the actions in hopes that they, too, will become the protagonist in their own heroic tale.

Even worse, I see it playing out today. The lies and stories that turn the people of the United States against the people in the Middle East. Dehumanize and transform an entire group of people into an evil other. We can't see that U.S. soldiers are just as capable and guilty of committing evil acts as the enemy we so despise. Our actions are



This is my favorite picture of my grandfather because it's the clearest photo of his face. My mother had it framed on her bureau.



This is one of many that we have of my grandfather in Cambodia. I was told that the man holding the snake with him was Bill Edge, the man he saved from a punji pit. According to his letters, he and his friends caught the snake and ate it for dinner.

letters I have seen a developing and deepening sense of the costs of war. We share the letters below.—Doug Rawlings

Letter One: Questions

Captain Herbert F. Hardy Jr.
First Special Forces

I don't know how to start this letter because I never gave you a specific nickname, and it feels inappropriate to call you by your first name. Most of the time I just refer to you as "my grandfather." I was told about this letter project today in one of my college classes, and I immediately wanted to write to you. I don't really know why. I know you won't answer me. Maybe it's because I feel like when I put these words down on paper you might be able to see them, and you might know that I'm writing to you and thinking about you. There are things you should know, but mostly I have a lot of questions.

You should know that Nanny, your wife Helen, stands up every Thanksgiving and thanks you for your sacrifice. Fifty-two years have passed since you died, but you haven't been forgotten. I grew up knowing about you, and learning about you. I've been told about all of the brave and unusual things that you did. Did you ever think that someday memories and stories would be the only way that your children and grandchildren would know you? I think you would be proud of your family for carrying on your story. I know that they are proud of you. I'm proud of you.

Sometimes I find myself wondering what life would've been like if you hadn't died in Cambodia. Would you have come to our football, field hockey, and soccer

your last moments? I wonder what your last thoughts were. Did you think about your mom and dad? Your wife? Your four small children? Your unborn baby?

I know it wasn't your intention to end up on a wall. I don't think it was anyone's intention. My mom always says that there's a reason for everything. I think there are some things that you can't find reasons for.

Love,

Your granddaughter Linsay

Letter Two: Lies and Stories

Let me start by saying that I didn't know if I was going to write a letter this year. I thought maybe I had said all I needed to say, but now I know I would regret it if I



Pictures of my grandparents together are extremely limited, and even though it's blurry, I love how happy they were in this photo, and that the Maine coast is in the background.

justified. Our deeds are commended. We turn a blind eye to the horrors and fear felt during the Vietnam War, a kind of memory loss that's willingly put in place, and we rally again behind those that call for war.

But what about love? Haven't we heard, time and time again, stories of compassion and feats of humanity that play out among the unlikeliest of people in the most desperate of circumstances? These stories of love and compassion are the ones that withstand time and are retold to countless audiences. It has been said that in love, one recognizes itself in the other. Isn't that a strength that surpasses brute force? What would the world be like if our eyes were opened to the similarities between our enemies and ourselves? Those that have seen war, seen the savagery, the death, and the unnecessary cruelty cry out for us to feel this compassion. Why don't we listen to them? Why can't we heed their calls for peace?

I want you to know that I think I've found the person I'm going to marry. He's funny and sweet, and he loves me despite my flaws. I can't help but think of how I would feel if I lost him in some far off war, like my grandmother lost you. I remember asking my mother once why she married my dad. She told me that she knew he would be a great father. That he would love and dote on their children. She needed to give us the thing that was taken from her. How many children grow up without knowing the love of their mothers and fathers? How many people are losing their loved ones to war every day? If I can feel love for you, a person I've never met, why can't soldiers find even a sliver of feeling for the living, breathing humans across the battlefield? A feeling that might give them pause. A feeling that might shift the course of history, maybe just for one family. I know this love could transform us if we found it and let ourselves feel it.

I hope someday my children will know a world that readily gives this love. That the strength it takes to see ourselves reflected in others is valued more than the ability to hate. That they can look back on

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The U.S. Military: World's Biggest Polluter

Native people have been living on this land for 10,000 years and we've destroyed it in a hundred.

By Pat Elder

In 1542, when the Spanish explorer Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo anchored at Point Loma at the mouth of the San Diego Bay, he saw a beautiful and unspoiled bay, teeming with abundant species of plant and aquatic life. The golden hills were alive with vegetation and wildlife.

The historical record suggests that Cabrillo sailed his ship, the *El Salvador*, into San Diego Bay to escape a storm blowing out of the southwest. He may have anchored off the current location of the San Diego Naval Station and marveled at the pristine beauty of the place. The shore along San Diego Bay had been inhabited by the Kumeyaay Indians for 10,000 years, dating back to the Mesolithic Age. These people could teach us so much! They knew they were part of the land and they treated it with reverence. After 500 generations of stewardship, they were forced to cede control of the land, the water, and the air to the invading Europeans.

The waterway leading to the safety of San Diego Bay that Cabrillo sailed on that fateful day is less than half a Spanish milla wide, or about 2,000 feet. The thin stretch of land north of Point Loma, on the port side of the great ship, separated the raging sea from the relative calm of the protected bay. Sadly, that protective strand of rock and sand is now home to the Naval Center for Combat and Operational Stress Control (NCCOSC). It is an



Point Loma Naval Base and fuel storage facilities

active EPA Superfund site today, having been poisoned by three generations of U.S. naval activities. The soil is contaminated with dangerously high levels of arsenic, copper and compounds, vanadium, and lead.

The cleanup of the contamination at NCCOSC has already cost taxpayers \$27.6 million. Military cleanup operations are still ongoing, and even when they're completed, the site may still be hazardous, as many of these locations are put under long-term monitoring or other restrictions.

Cabrillo sailed into the safety of San Diego Bay to the unspoiled waters of Chollas Creek where it empties into San Diego Bay. Today, it is one of the most polluted places on the planet.

The deadly contamination at Point Loma is tiny compared to the environmental disaster caused by the Navy at the San Diego Naval Station. The Naval Station has 26 active EPA Superfund sites that have already cost the American public \$127 million and are expected to cost another \$288 million before the poisons are removed by 2029, if they ever are.

Since 1922, when then Secretary of the Navy, Teddy Roosevelt Jr., established the facility known then as the U.S. Destroyer Base, San Diego, the land and water have been polluted by the U.S. Navy, its corporate sponsors, and a disengaged, largely uninformed public.

The contaminants in the water and soil today are threatening to all varieties of plant and animal life. The data on these pollutants was collected by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The Trump Administration has submitted a budget that strips \$2.5 billion from the annual budget of the EPA—an overall reduction of more than 23 percent. Meanwhile, many of the agency's web pages detailing environmental destruction at the hands of military and corporate polluters are disappearing.

The screams of the Kumeyaay can be heard in the winds as they rip across the poisoned sea and land.

Same deal on the other side of the continent. In 1607, 65 years after Cabrillo sailed into the San Diego Bay, the English

moved into the Chesapeake region of the North American continent, setting in motion the same kind of calamity for the Indians, the land, the water, and air. Nature counts time in millions of years, but it has taken one century to destroy huge swaths of the Potomac River basin.

In 1608, John Smith became the first European to explore the waters of the Potomac River from the Chesapeake Bay to Washington. Describing the river and the Chesapeake, Smith wrote, "Heaven and Earth never agreed better to frame a place for man's habitation." Legend has it that Smith and his crew tried to catch fish with a frying pan during their exploration of the Chesapeake in the summer of 1608.

It is still lovely, and much of it, surprisingly, remains undeveloped, but 400 years later, the waters and soils are poisoned, like they are in San Diego Bay. Let's take a cruise down the Potomac from its source in the mountains of West Virginia to its mouth at the Chesapeake Bay. The journey down this mighty waterway details six EPA Superfund sites created by the Pentagon's reckless disregard for the fragile ecosystem of the Potomac River watershed.

The U.S. Navy's Allegany Ballistics

Laboratory in Rocket Center, W. Va., 130 miles north of Washington, is a critical source of contamination in the Potomac River. The onsite disposal of explosive metals and solvent wastes contaminates soil and groundwater with hazardous chemicals.

Traveling the river 90 miles further south brings us to Fort Detrick in Frederick, Md., the Army's "proving ground" for the nation's biological warfare program. Anthrax, phosgene, and radioactive carbon, sulfur, and phosphorous are buried here. The groundwater is laced with deadly trichloroethylene, a human carcinogen, and tetrachloroethene, suspected of causing tumors in laboratory animals.

Just 40 miles down the river from Fort Detrick lies Washington's Spring Valley neighborhood and the campus of American University. This area was used by the Army during World War I to test lewisite, a lethal gas made of arsenic. Soldiers tied animals to stakes and set off chemical bombs to see how quickly the animals died. The area was densely covered with deadly biological agents, while soldiers buried the remaining stockpiles of munitions after testing. One hundred years later, perchlorate and arsenic are present in groundwater and houses are still being demolished because of the contamination.

Five miles further south, the Washington Navy Yard is located on the Anacostia River, close to its confluence with the Potomac.

Captain Smith sailed up the Eastern Branch of the Potomac at present-day Washington and was well received by the Nacotchtank, a native people of the Piscataway Tribe in present-day Anacostia. Smith's map marks the area as Natcotchtanck, the location of today's Washington Navy Yard.

Today, ancient Natcotchtanck is one of the most contaminated patches of real estate on the continent. The Navy Yard was a former foundry for the manufacture of

continued on next page ...



Cabrillo wouldn't recognize Chollas Creek and the San Diego Bay today.

At the VA Pharmacy

*The vet was anxious and talking to himself in the waiting room.
You don't know what he experienced in war.
You don't know what he did.
You don't know who he saw die.
You don't know what guilt he carries.
You don't know how much rage he has behind betrayal.
You don't know what he lost when he came home.
Alcohol gave him wings to fly, then it took away his sky.
He had a backpack on that looked worn out.
Worn out, that's a good observation.
He was up and down, eyes darting around the room.
When he got his meds at the pickup window,
he was gone.
Home died a long time ago.*

Mike Hastie
Army Medic, Viet Nam

Military Pollution

... continued from previous page

cannons, shells, and shot. The ground adjacent to the river is severely contaminated.

Along the Maryland shoreline, 20 miles from the Navy Yard, we come to the Indian Head Naval Surface Warfare Center in Charles County, Md., with its 100-year history of dumping and burning hazardous waste products. Groundwater samples collected at Indian Head contained perchlorate at concentrations between 1,600 and 436,000 micrograms/liter. To put these data into context, the Maryland Department of the Environment established a drinking water advisory level of 1 microgram/liter. Perchlorate has been linked to negative effects on the thyroid gland.

Finally, we arrive at the Naval Surface Warfare Center—Dahlgren, located another 20 miles south of Indian Head,

along the Potomac River in King George County, Va. We notice changes in the waterway. Salt from the sea mixes in the water where crabs and oysters have found a home for millions of years. Their habitat is threatened. Reckless disposal of chemical agents contaminates the soil, groundwater, and sediment. To this day, Dahlgren open burns hazardous waste, sprinkling a powder of poison over the Potomac, the northern neck of Virginia, and southern Maryland.

At Dahlgren, discarded mercury is mixed with sediments in Gambo Creek, which empties directly into the river. The burial of munitions contaminated with heavy metals and polyaromatic hydrocarbons have poisoned the earth along the mighty Potomac. PCBs, trichloroethane, and various pesticides mix with lead contamination from firing ranges and buried depleted uranium used to make a type of nuclear weapon favored by Army commanders and known as a bunker buster.

The sands of the Potomac beaches south of Dahlgren hold a treasure of Indian artifacts, like arrow points and spearheads, lost by Piscataway hunters over thousands of years, but walking along the beach at Dahlgren is prohibited today, due to the unexploded ordnance and potential for fragmenting metal.

The EPA has identified over 40 highly toxic poisons in the waters of the Potomac River basin, all of them the result of military activities. Few in power give a damn.

The Pentagon's destruction of the Potomac and San Diego Bay is the rule, rather than the exception at military bases across the country. About 900 of the EPA's

1,300 Superfund sites are the result of the military's disregard for the environment. These pollutants are threatening to all varieties of human, plant and animal life and their effects may last forever. Meanwhile, the public's watchdog, the EPA, is slowly being dismantled. Just sayin'.

Pat Elder is the director of the National Coalition to Protect Student Privacy, studentprivacy.org and serves on the steering committee of the National Network Opposing the Militarization of Youth, nnomy.org. He is on the coordinating committee of World Beyond War, worldbeyondwar.org. He can be reached at pelder@studentprivacy.org.



Chemical contamination discovered in water supply at North Carolina military base.

Grandfather

... continued from page 5

past wars with incredulity, but sleep easily knowing that war is a concept that no longer exists. I think that world would be beautiful.

Love,
Your granddaughter Linsay

Letter Three: Duty to Tell the Stories

It's me again, your granddaughter Lindsay. I've been thinking a lot about my letter this year. You see, April 29 was the one-year anniversary of Nanny's death. Your wife was finally able to be with you after 53 years. While I find peace in that idea, I'm left unsettled. After Nanny died, I realized how much of her life was you. Remembering you for her children and grandchildren. Telling and retelling every story so many times that they all blurred together. Her life, my mom's life, my life has been shaped so much by those memories and that war, that I can't exist without them. But every story is told from one perspective; hers was one of a proud widow recalling her late husband's bravery and selflessness. It has taken me a long time to come to terms with the fact that American involvement in Vietnam was not an altruistic and noble cause. That you may not have always been the hero your family remembers you as. With Nanny's death, the

mortality of her children became increasingly apparent to me. It got me wondering which one of her grandchildren would tell your stories. What I can't seem to shake is the resounding whisper in the back of my mind that keeps telling me we should move on. Your fate has molded and decided so much of my mother's, aunt's, and uncles' lives. Should we keep passing that burden on to future generations? I almost didn't write a letter this year. It would slip my mind for weeks and even months at a time, and then find a way to come back to me. It wasn't until this afternoon that I realized I knew the answer to my question. It's my duty as someone who has lost a family member to war, and as an American citizen, to tell your stories so that my children or my children's children will never have to know the annihilation and despair that is war. I couldn't walk away from your stories, just like I couldn't walk away from writing this letter. Losing you is a part of me that can't be forgotten or stifled. So I will carry the torch that my grandmother left, but I will tell your stories from own perspective; that of a granddaughter who lost the chance of knowing her grandfather, that of a young American hoping for peace.

Love,
Linsay

Peace in Our Times Staff Expands

The editors of *Peace in Our Times* are pleased to announce that we have hired three new reporters. Elvis, Lupin, and Puck are widely respected journalists whose stories for Cat News have been syndicated internationally. As you can see from their first report, below, these intrepid newsmen uncover little-noticed stories that the mainstream media are afraid to cover.

Breaking Cat News

By Georgia Dunn



Does the Burns/Novick Vietnam Documentary Deserve an Emmy?

The war was never ‘begun in good faith’; it was never just a ‘mistake’; it was, from the beginning and throughout, a morally depraved undertaking.

By Doug Rawlings

By the time I reached Episode Four in this 10-episode film, I concluded it should not be touted as an Emmy Award-winning documentary.

Episode Four, “Resolve,” is the story of 1966, a year that the producers of this film have designated as the time when doubt began to worm its way into American troops. This doubt is the breeding ground for what we now call “moral injury.”

The American soldier in Vietnam begins to realize that his job of killing others, or supporting those who are carrying out the killing, is not divinely ordained. He is not in a just war. In fact, he is being used by others who have much more pedestrian motives—rank, saving face, gaining political favor, selling weapons.

This is three years before I even set foot in country, into a war much different from that of early 1966. In 1969, we trudged into that muck and mire as reluctant cynics. We were intent on surviving, not attaining some fanciful glorious victory over the demonic communists—but this was not so for members of the 173rd Airborne in the Central Highlands in mid-1966.

So, let’s assume that Burns and Novick et al. are somewhat accurate in setting off 1966 as the “turning point” in our slow awakening to the truth. So what?

First off, this would have been a good point for the auteurs to work in the aforementioned concept of moral injury. As that term begins to be thrown around in popular culture, losing any real meaning, it is important to note that it was intended to mean a slow, remorseful process of recognizing one’s complicity in what most religions call “evil,” combined with a soul-shaking sense of betrayal.

You realize that there is no excuse for your unwillingness or inability to stop human degradation as it unfolds



U.S. forces shown in Vietnam in 1962. Photo: Horst Faas

before you, as your deeply held moral codes wither away. And now you must accept the consequences of that debilitating malaise that has worked its way into your head.

Some of us have deflected that responsibility by attacking the commanders and officers and politicians who told us to follow their orders. But that excuse wears thin over time. Even as the filmmakers worked for a decade on their enterprise, the proverbial chickens have come home to roost. The filmmakers do not overtly acknowledge this concept, but its presence begins to cast shad-

umentary film. In my eyes, documentation is rooted in facts and, if at all possible, immutable truths. The documentarian’s function is to get down to historical truths, to discover cause and effect, and to provide us with a trustworthy scaffolding on which to rebuild our memories as soundly as possible. No, we are watching instead a series of anecdotes, each one imbued with the earnestness of the teller. Who dares to question the grieving mother or disillusioned sister or duty-bound soldier? We are not being invited into a logical discussion of facts

You are 19, and you can end life, make life for another unbearable, and you can do it with virtual impunity. A person does not come back from that world unscathed.

ows on their narrative.

As I watched the faces of the soldiers caught up in the moment or moments that will change their lives forever, those acts of quick reflex to survive or to avenge the deaths of buddies, I cringed. Doug Peacock, a medic with the Green Berets for two tours, captures “the horror, the horror” of it all in his memoir *Walking It Off*, when he writes about the staggering realization that “everything is permitted.” You are 19, and you can end life, make life for another unbearable, and you can do it with virtual impunity. A person does not come back from that world unscathed.

At this juncture, four episodes into a 10-episode saga, it is evident to me that we are not watching a true doc-

umentary film. In my eyes, documentation is rooted in facts and, if at all possible, immutable truths. The documentarian’s function is to get down to historical truths, to discover cause and effect, and to provide us with a trustworthy scaffolding on which to rebuild our memories as soundly as possible. No, we are watching instead a series of anecdotes, each one imbued with the earnestness of the teller. Who dares to question the grieving mother or disillusioned sister or duty-bound soldier? We are not being invited into a logical discussion of facts

here—we are being asked to bear witness. As a veteran of that war who has tried to bring to light its utter depravity, and as a teacher, I oppose letting this visual extravaganza stand as a definitive historical record that students will turn to in their studies.

It is a cornucopia of anecdotes that gives us a glimpse of that war that I’m sure the Pentagon and the Koch brothers, who funded it, would approve of, but its priorities are misguided. The war was never “begun in good faith.” It was never just a “mistake.” It was, from the beginning and throughout, a morally depraved undertaking.

Three million soldiers from this country sent to Vietnam did not “serve”—we were used. We were sacrificed on the altar of greed and power along with millions of Vietnamese dead. And for what?

John Pilger, the Australian journalist and award-winning documentary filmmaker, wrote: “The invasion of Vietnam was deliberate and calculated—as were policies and strategies that bordered on genocide and were designed to force millions of people to abandon their homes. Experimental weapons were used against civilians.”

Burns and Novick avoid those conclusions, although thousands of Vietnam veterans came to realize the soul-devastating truth during the war or soon after. A film that brings their words into the narrative would be a major step forward. This one is far from that.

This is not history we are watching. We are watching theater. And we who lived through that war, whether “in country” or not, must see ourselves as players on a stage. That exercise is not without merit, but let’s not confuse it with a “healing” historical account or an Emmy Award-worthy documentary.

Doug Rawlings retired six years ago after teaching writing composition for 33 years at high school and college levels. He was drafted in 1968 and was with the 7/15th artillery in the Central Highlands of Vietnam from July 1969 to August 1970.



Doug Rawlings in Vietnam

Bearing Witness to Homelessness in San Diego

By Stan Levin

*They are here, by the hundreds, by the thousands, the dispossessed among us.
People having little in the way of the niceties of a comfortable existence
That equates with the concept of "Home."*

*Many wear all the clothing they own, on their backs, day and night.
Some push their collection of meager possessions around in a shopping cart
they have found
Or stolen, ahead of them in their endless wanderings
To nowhere in particular.*

*Their days are twenty-five hours.
Some arrived here hours ago, and some have occupied and survived the street for years
... even a decade ... Incredibly, even more.
They make do with no bed other than a piece of cardboard
or ragged blanket isolating themselves from the concrete of the sidewalk or the tarmac
of the street. Increasingly, tent communities are springing up,
Marginally better living.*

*No tub to bathe or shower in.
No toilet for nighttime relief
No sink No fridge No couch No car No washing machine.*

Imagine that!

*Wheelchairs aplenty
Teeth ... not so much*



Homeless encampment in San Diego. Photo: Michael McConnell

*Some panhandle "for a living,"
Others collect recyclables to sell,
Almost all make use of available charitable offerings.
They are down in their luck, but, make no mistake,
They are not stupid.*

*They are all genders, all races, the very old and frail, and the very young children.
Many are veterans of war, and show their scars. For what?
(But that is a story for another day)
Some are out on parole. Some cannot find work, lacking sale-able skills.
Some are educated, some are not. Some are healthy
Most are not.*

*They suffer, in common
Numerous physical, emotional and social ills.
They are burdened by a disproportional percentage of people struggling with PTSD,
alcohol and drug addictions, paranoia, schizophrenia, dementia, depression, mental
instability, or incapacitation by common or uncommon disease.*

Victims of abuse, violence and rape ... abound on the street.

*These unfortunate brothers and sisters are broke, hungry, cold, fearful, abandoned.
They often smell bad of human chemical compounds.
They are devastatingly vulnerable and fragile ... even those appearing strong.
(Be reminded it is not our place to pass judgment on them, not at all productive
beyond letting us off the hook, nor is it any of our business how people have managed
to get themselves into such a sorry fix.)*

*They are human beings, having worth, no less than the rest of us,
In some ways superior in their caring and sharing and looking out for each other.*

*Like so many species of forest animals, they are being inexorably
Squeezed out of their habitat
Into the shadows.*



A homeless woman walks down 17th Street in downtown San Diego.
Photo: Adriana Heldiz

*Creating more room to construct more pricey high-rise digs.
Accommodating, in the main, the immeasurably more fortunate among us,
Many of whom would rather the homeless would just disappear out of their sight,
Because they and their very presence are disgusting and scary.*

*Many newbies,
(I speculate),
are themselves new arrivals to the city, resourceful, buying up the neighborhood,
Providing obscene profits for builders, marketers and investors,
Adding pressure to the existing finite resources and to an already reeling environment.
(But that, too, is a story for another day, not to be belabored here.)*

*Sidewalk occupants present an embarrassment to this segment's tribal sensitivities,
Of this I harbor little doubt.*

*There is considerably more to know of the homeless dilemma
And much for the so inclined to empathize with, and show charity towards.
And for those willing
To shoulder the burden of dealing with the problem.*

*But, in summary, this is who the street people are.
And we San Diego Veterans For Peace are trying to lend a hand,
Doing whatever we might to alleviate the group suffering
To bring an end to what we perceive as an
Unacceptable
Abominable
Affront
To humanity.*

*I submit Homelessness in San Diego must be ended.
Peace.*

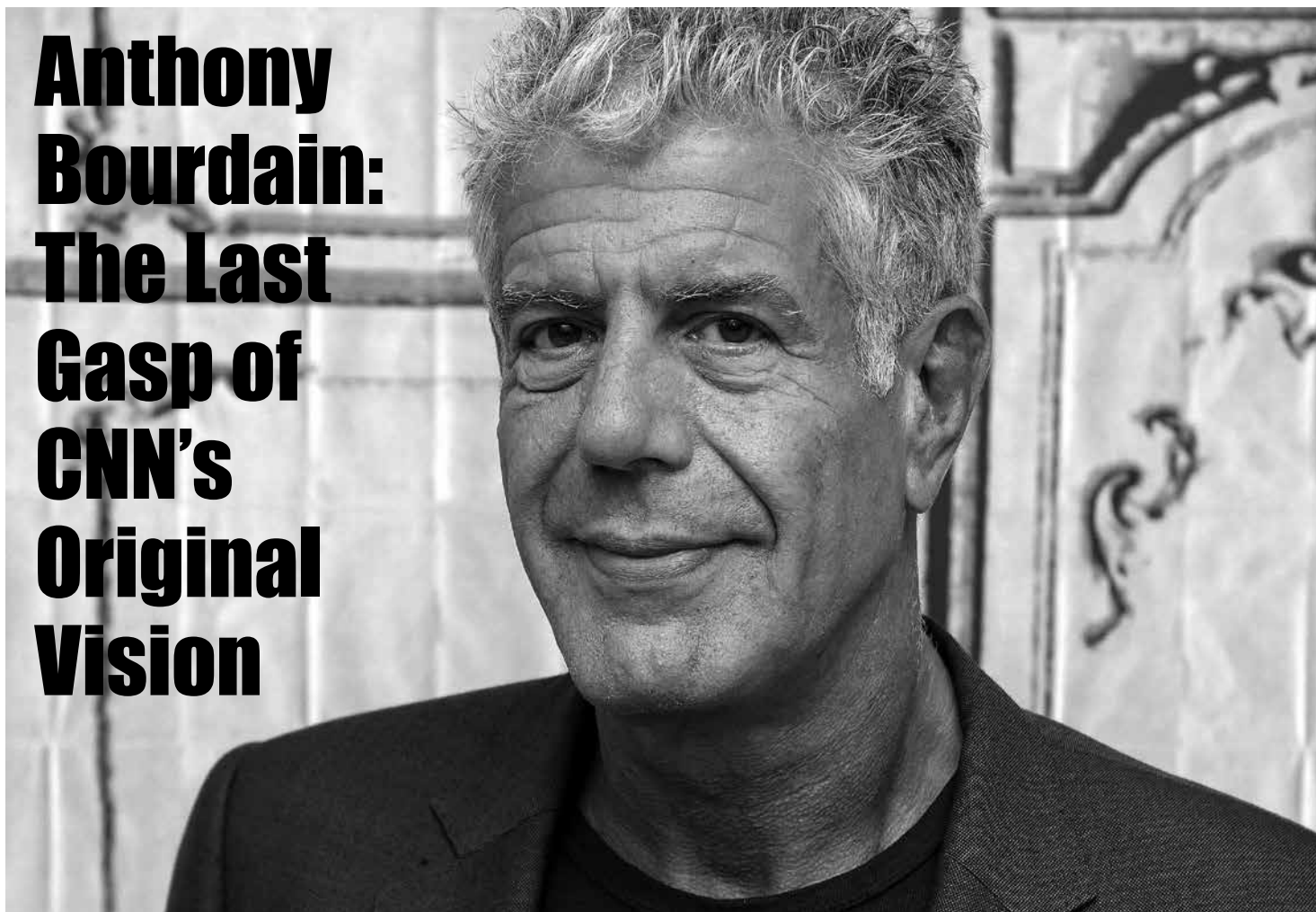
Stan Levin is a veteran of the Korean War and a member of Veterans For Peace San Diego chapter.

*For more information on San Diego Veterans for Peace sleeping bag distribution
program to our homeless residents, see sdvfp.org.*



Stan Levin and Gil Field of VFP San Diego distribute sleeping bags to the homeless
last December.

Anthony Bourdain: The Last Gasp of CNN's Original Vision



'Once you've been to Cambodia, you'll never stop wanting to beat Henry Kissinger to death with your bare hands. You will never again be able to open a newspaper and read about that treacherous, prevaricating, murderous scumbag sitting down for a nice chat with Charlie Rose or attending some black-tie affair for a new glossy magazine without choking. Witness what Henry did in Cambodia—the fruits of his genius for statesmanship—and you will never understand why he's not sitting in the dock at The Hague next to Milošević.'

By Sam Hussein

CNN began with the slogan, articulated by its founder Ted Turner: "The news is the star."

That has long since ceased to be a reflection of what CNN does. Despite promoting itself with its dubious "facts first" slogan, the network endlessly touts its celebrity pundits and anchors: Wolf Blitzer, Anderson Cooper, Chris Cuomo, Christiane Amanpour, Fareed Zakaria, et al. The view of the world that they depict is what the viewer needs to understand—not the world itself.

Anthony Bourdain didn't join CNN until 2013, didn't do "news" per se, and his own personality was certainly a major part of his show, *Parts Unknown*, but the lens was largely on the places Bourdain went, whether Armenia or West Virginia, and the people he met there. This work was more mini-doc than anything else typically found on CNN.

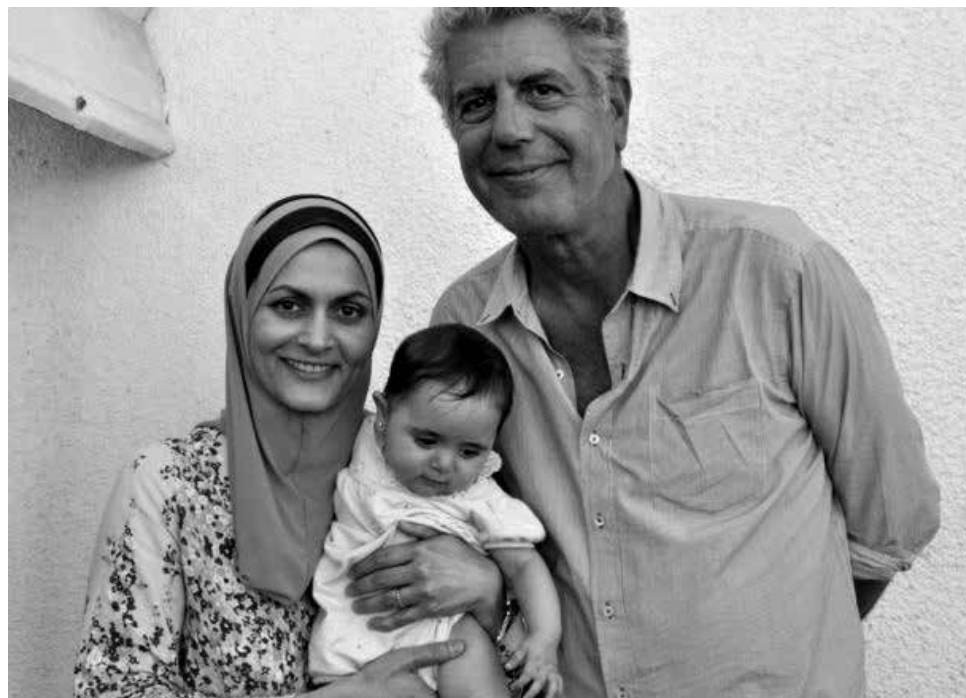
At his best, to Bourdain, the world was the star. The people, the cultures, the varied beliefs, the booze, the music, the rivers, the cities, the ethnic groups, what they share and their tensions. He'd often at least indicate class distinctions in his

shows, at times gender dynamics as well. He spoke up in defense of the many immigrants in the restaurant industry, and was an ally of the #MeToo movement.

Starting with *A Cook's Tour* (on the Food Network) and then the Travel Channel's *No Reservations* and *The Layover*,

Bourdain often presented the realities of places around the world, using the universalism of food—everybody's gotta eat, right?—as a way to show both the commonality of humanity and the creativity of various cultures.

Bourdain's programs were in sharp



Anthony Bourdain and Gaza-based journalist Laila El-Haddad.

contrast to corporate media's typically clichéd depiction of other countries, frequently shown as synonymous with their caricatured rulers, with canned images tirelessly repeated. Bourdain was a television man who actually allowed the world to crash into people's living rooms: Fresh visuals from places most U.S. viewers would never visit.

While so much of media adds spin, Bourdain, in his earlier writing and later video work, often sought to strip away the façade—get people past the veneer of tourist traps. He started by writing about what he knew, the reality of the restaurant kitchen, and then moved out from there. Though his work sometimes devolved into self-involvement or snark, he brought something to U.S. cable that is a rarity: a sense of the reality of the World Out There.

Bourdain couldn't necessarily be considered reliably left or progressive; he occasionally dismissed the left, frequently adopting a "look at the foibles of both sides" attitude about various issues. He relished mocking farmers markets and glamorized eating red meat. His program on Libya (5/19/13) almost wholly accepted the NATO line. Sometimes I wished he would come down more harshly on the powers that be—showing the side that came through when he declared that seeing the devastation of Cambodia made him want to kill Henry Kissinger.

Perhaps Bourdain's most striking programs went to places where official punditry is often at its most uniform. He'd write:

"Iran was mind-blowing. My crew has NEVER been treated so well—by total strangers everywhere. We had heard that Persians are nice. But nicEST? Didn't see that coming."

Upon accepting the "voices of courage and conscience media award" from the Muslim Public Affairs Council for his program on Israel/Palestine (9/15/13), Bourdain remarked that it should take little courage or conscience to do what he did:

"I was enormously grateful for the response from Palestinians in particular for doing what seemed to me an ordinary thing, something we do all the time: show regular people doing everyday things, cooking and enjoying meals, playing with their children, talking about their lives, their hopes and dreams. It is a measure, I guess, of how twisted and shallow our depiction of a people is that these images come as a shock to so many."

Bourdain's death—and the improbability that CNN will again offer anything like this show—should be a wake-up call to a range of people, from documentary filmmakers to independent media outfits wanting to use the internet in creative ways: There's a hunger among regular people in the United States for the unvarnished realities of the rest of the world, and major media are serving up precious little to feed it.

Sam Hussein is a Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) associate and a writer based in Washington, D.C. His personal blog can be found at husseini.posthaven.com.

In Tribute to Abe Arbeiter

March 14, 1922–May 4, 2018

Editor's note: This tribute to her father is from Laurie Arbeiter, an incredibly passionate and dedicated long-time activist and organizer. Arbeiter was one of the founders of the We Will Not Be Silent artist/activist collaborative language project 12 years ago. Its website describes its mission as follows: "Through the creative use of language embodied on shirts, people are noticed coming and going in their everyday lives, and engage in conversations they otherwise would not have. Through the use of messages emboldened on signs from the collection, One Thousand Signs For Our Times, people respond to social justice crises and concerns." Today t-shirts and signs from the project can be seen around the world, wherever people stand up for their rights.

By Laurie Arbeiter

In love, we buried my father today, and I am sharing what I read at his funeral.

My father taught me many things about life.

My father taught me to appreciate simple things in life and that life's pleasures could be simple and should never be taken for granted. He loved a basket of food as a gift, whenever I brought it to him, as though it was a gift of great wealth. When he was young, he had to live in a car in a used car lot due to the forces of poverty and the instability of not having a home. He sometimes did not eat for days.

to earn enough money to provide for his family and so that he would never be a burden on anyone. My father taught me about economic inequality and the stress it causes for people that have to endure it and that this was very wrong. He believed that we were here to share the wealth.

My father taught me about love and hate.

He loved my dear mother, his Daisy, to whom he was forever loyal, and my sweet and sensitive mother, who was gentle and hard-working, who had a most beautiful smile and who had a joy for life—she loved and so admired my father. They found joy and romance together when they let themselves be free. My parents taught me loyalty through the good and the bad times.

My father was loyal to his family. He provided for all of us and for my maternal grandmother as well, who lived with us and whom he loved deeply. He helped her to learn English as a second language to her native Greek, supporting her to get her citizenship after decades of being here as an immigrant. He admired her fortitude and he knew how much we all received from her unconditional goodness, love, and generosity.

My father taught me, although he lived 96 long years, that really life is very short, therefore not to waste life, and that we all deserve to live free for the time we are here.

My father taught me to question. To say



Abe Arbeiter in the hospital with Laurie, who is wearing an iconic t-shirt from the We Will Not Be Silent project.

served—his words taught me until the very end, lessons for which I will always pay tribute to him. He said, "You have to make a better tomorrow but you cannot just dream about it ... you have to work at it ... work hard at it."

And he spoke about "LOVE ... we all deserve it ... everyone should get it ... HAPPINESS"

So much of his life he wore a lot of armor protecting a great big and vulnerable heart that finally, when unburdened from the weight of responsibility he strove to fulfill, opened to express the love he felt all along and wanted so much to receive himself.

The late, great James Baldwin said:

"I imagine one of the reasons people cling to their hates so stubbornly is because they sense, once hate is gone, they will be forced to deal with pain."

And Baldwin also said, if you are fortunate enough, "Love takes off masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within."

My father and I were both fortunate to recover, to struggle meaningfully over a long life, and to take off the masks, to feel admiration and a deep love between us.

I will forever love you, Pop. Thank you for teaching me.

*The late, great James Baldwin said:
'I imagine one of the reasons people cling
to their hates so stubbornly is because they
sense, once hate is gone, they will be
forced to deal with pain.'*

This was a fact of his life I learned at an early age. He never forgot that this was the condition from which he had to survive, and as I grew up, I understood his struggle against economic insecurity and never forgot how this had shaped him. He was resilient and tough and fiercely independent, and worked long days all his life



Abe Arbeiter.

what you mean and to mean what you say. He challenged me to be intelligent. To always strive to be honest. To take responsibility for everything you set out to do. To fulfill your promises. To work very hard. To do the very best.

He taught me how deeply wrong it is to burden another with irrational and unjust hate and inequality. That racism is deeply wrong and should be fought against. He taught me that racism and all oppression is actually rooted in the self-hate and lack of confidence of the hater and would have no place if we made a just, compassionate, and confident world where we could live together, lifting one another up. He strove to make that clear to us. He did have a fierce spirit of righteousness and a willingness to do good unto others and to speak out against injustice.

My father's last words, as he was quieting his big, active, wise and self-taught mind so that he could finally go to where he will rest in the great peace that he de-

Unbridgeable

... continued from page 4

Syria and stare down Russians, Turks, Iranians, and Assadists along the Euphrates River, just one spark, one mistake, away from a major war. There we remain.

• In Yemen, we were told the Houthi rebels were an Iranian front. We had to back our "allies," the Saudis, in their terror bombing campaign. Otherwise Iran would win! It was really the Houthis who denied the civilian populace access to humanitarian assistance. Besides, this was a Saudi war, and the United States would take a back seat.

In reality, the Houthis weren't Iranian stooges; that was an exaggeration. The official toll is 10,000 dead civilians, though most counts stopped in 2016. Iona Craig, an investigative journalist and Yemen specialist, recently told me that 50,000 is a more likely figure. A Saudi starvation blockade has ushered in famine and the world's worst cholera epidemic. And the whole war is at a stalemate, unlikely to end anytime soon. Worse yet, here, at least, the United States could end this war. We have that in our power. Without U.S. provision of in-flight refueling, guided munitions, and targeting intelligence, the Saudi campaign would ground to a halt. We are complicit, and we should be ashamed. We still back the Saudis.

In so many of the above cases the United States has worked with, or for, peculiar regional powers: on behalf of or to the advantage of Saudi Arabia or Iran. In Yemen, and, sometimes Syria, the U.S. military has been nothing more than the Saudi Kingdom's air force, logisticians, and arms dealers.

As a lowly, ground-pounding, soldier, I've been an embattled police officer of sorts, doing the bidding of Iran, Saudi Arabia, Israel, or their associated proxies across the region. Never, in any tangible sense, did we act in vital American interests or make the world a safer place.

In that broader, global sense, we were told the United States was a force for good, an "indispensable nation," a bringer of liberty. In reality, we were a counterproductive force for chaos, the armed wing of an increasing rogue, though ostensibly democratic, regime in Washington.

And me, well, I survived, and tried to get as many of those around me, those in my charge, home safe. At that I failed. And so did America.

Maj. Danny Sjursen is a U.S. Army strategist and former history instructor at West Point. He served tours with reconnaissance units in Iraq and Afghanistan. He has written a memoir and critical analysis of the Iraq War, Ghostriders of Baghdad: Soldiers, Civilians, and the Myth of the Surge.

My Obit, by Jay Wenk

Jay Wenk passed away quietly at home on May 29, 2018, surrounded by his family, listening to Mozart. In his quest to die as he lived, on his own terms, he wrote his own obituary, which is presented here.

Well now, I face the entrance to the exit. Life began when I was around two, when I became unhappily aware, while in a playpen, of the high, dark furniture surrounding me. As a three-year-old in 1929, sitting on the back seat of the family car, I saw carpenters installing rafters on a house. A brief time later, that became our home, where I watched the milkman, with his horse and cart, deliver the clinking bottles as the horse proceeded to the next stop on his own. When it snowed, often in Boston, same horse, same milkman, but the cart was now a heavily built sleigh with runners.

Around age 10, I became besotted with aviation and the Boy Scouts. My gang and I built model airplanes and flew them, and the Boy Scouts gave me the opportunity to go overnight camping, out of the city. Ahh, those were the days, feeling grownup while still adolescent.

WW2 came along, all the boys

my age were eager to get in and eventually I did, but so many didn't come back. I've written a book about the war, *Study War No More*. Being in the right place at the right time, I got to see the looks on the faces of the German generals of the 11th SS Panzer Division and their troops when they surrendered to us, in a large open field in Czechoslovakia. My squad and I went past them, but without grinning; there were hundreds of armed German SS there. That memory is a treasure. I've always wanted to be first with something, so I'm pleased that one of my poems about veterans, "Thank You For Your Service," was given first place in a national poetry contest last year.

I studied musical composition at Juilliard, lived in the Village, worked at Café Rienzi, met Irene and married. We had two beautiful daughters, Sarah and Emily, and Sarah brought forth Conor, who is a wonderful, creative person, as is his partner, Megan. Our young family eventually moved to San Francisco where, in 1962, Larry Ferlinghetti issued a call for vets to form a new organization, Veterans For Peace, and I'm honored to have been a member ever since. We continue to work



for peace, even though we have often been arrested for our work.

I'd studied psychotherapy at the Adler Institute in New York and opened a free Emotional Health center in Woodstock called "the Place," and I was constantly scrabbling for money to keep it open. It became an essential part of Family [a social services agency in Woodstock]. During that same period, I was also working as a cabinet maker, built a studio up here on Mead Mountain, enjoying the opportunity to design and build all sort of useful stuff: furniture, kitchens, my own home, and life in general, parties, friends, and dirty jokes.

Becoming a councilman on the Woodstock Town Board, winning four elections, is a happy achievement. That insecure young boy transformed into a voice for our town.

Veterans Loses Tw



On my way out, I'm secure in knowing that nothing, literally, waits for me. Can you imagine being greeted someplace by uncountable family, all wanting to shake my hand at the same time? Can you imagine thinking, "Do I have to live with them again?"

I wish there were a Hell like the place described by Bernard Shaw in his 'Don Juan in Hell'; It sounds lively and worthwhile.

There's so much more, especially about wonderful friends, but *Ars Longa, Pages Brevia*. Have good days, and be a Lefty.



Poem For Jay Wenk, A Dragonfly

By Doug Rawlings

*It's that time of year again
bridging late spring and early summer
when up here the black flies contend with
the mosquitos for my blood in the garden dirt*

*And then come the dragonflies
who don't know me from Adam
but they somehow find me in my time of need
swinging by to let me breathe a bit easier.*

*So, Jay, I asked in the backseat of Ellen's car
in the middle of our usual veterans' bitch session
was there any time you guys stopped your pissing and moaning?
Yeah, he said. When we freed that concentration camp.*

Clockwise from top right: Jay Wenk as a young man; Joel Kovel (left) and Jay march on the White House Dec. 16, 2010; Joel with his daughter Molly and grandson Desmond at his Woodstock home in 2011; Joel in 2016; Tarak Kauff (left) with Joel and Jay in Woodstock October 2012; Jay on Memorial Day in Woodstock 2012; Jay getting arrested at the White House March 17, 2011; Jay in uniform. Color photos by Ellen Davidson.



For Peace No Giants



For Mother Earth: The First Ecosocialist International

Joel Kovel's vision of ecosocialism was manifested in the First Ecosocialist International in Venezuela in 2017. Below is Quincy Saul's report on the event.

Off the radar of the mass media, a people's victory has been prefigured against world war, mass extinction and the National Security State. At the end of last year, delegates representing social and environmental justice movements from five continents and 19 countries founded the First Ecosocialist International. Its founders and adherents have committed to a 500-year plan of action; a "collective strategy and plan of action for the salvation of Mother Earth." It happened in rural Venezuela, and was led by Maroons (Africans who escaped from slavery and

mixed with the indigenous peoples and formed independent settlements) and indigenous peoples, but it's open to everyone.

"We have made the decision and the collective commitment to constitute the First Ecosocialist International: To reverse the destructive process of capitalism; to return to our origins and recuperate the ancestral spirituality of humanity; to live in peace, and end war ... right now we are not living—we are merely surviving. We confront a contradiction: restore life, or lead it to extinction. ... We are radicals; we shall return to our roots and our original ways; we shall see the past not only as a point of departure but also as a point of arrival."

Ecosocialism symbolizes insurgency and love, it is spiritual, pluri-cultural and multi-ethnic, and it teaches decolonization and anti-imperialism.

The First Ecosocialist International is a covenant to reweave the sacred hoop of the world's peoples, and offers a gift of unity between indigenous cosmologies and the revolutionary ideologies of the industrialized world. A "Route of Struggle" connects the dots in a program of decolonization which promises to "re-weave Pangaea."

We want you! It's Mother Earth asking this time, not Uncle Sam!

Visit ecosocialisthorizons.com for more information.



Joel Kovel: Friend, Comrade, Visionary Ecosocialist



By Quincy Saul

I first met Joel Kovel in 2011. I had heard of him before, when I was involved in Students for Justice in Palestine at Hampshire College, and somewhere along the way caught wind of his dismissal from a tenured faculty position at Bard College for daring to write a book with the seemingly simple argument that racist states don't have a right to exist. Such sentiments are not allowed in the liberal arts, and so Joel was cast out; not only from his job but from polite society and the lecture circuit. All the better for myself, and a coterie of radical artists and organizers who coalesced around his study groups held at St. Mary's church in Harlem. As we got to know him better, it dawned on us that he was not only a generous teacher and a radical mind, but really a giant—with a dozen seminal books on themes as diverse as psychiatry, nuclear disarmament, political economy, and spirituality, and contacts on every continent. We gradually became friends and comrades, and as time went on decided to join forces in founding an organization, Ecosocialist Horizons, with the modest goal of "advancing ecosocialism as a worldview and as a movement capable of offering real answers to the crises caused by capitalism."

It was Joel's book on capitalism and ecology that clinched the issue for me. It grounds its analysis of capital and capitalism in Bhopal, the scene of the

worst industrial accident in history, perpetrated and profited on by the Union Carbide Corporation. Yet reviews of this book often elide what I believe is the most radical point, and the most promising seed for an epistemological breakthrough. Joel's book goes far beyond the simple argument that infinite growth on a finite planet is both unjust and suicidal. What resonated most with me was his insistence on what he called "the intrinsic value of nature," which in Joel's ecosocialist theory takes its place alongside the Marxist categories of use value and exchange value, each to be understood as sites of struggle. For me, this was the missing keystone to an

arch connecting the revolutionary ideologies of the industrialized world with the cosmologies of indigenous peoples. Without this critical intervention into its value theory, it is impossible for me to imagine a lasting Marxist solution to our ecological crisis, let alone genuine (as opposed to merely pragmatic or instrumental) solidarity between anarchists/socialists/communists and indigenous/tribal/state-free/First Peoples. With it, we may be able to imagine reweaving what Black Elk called the Sacred Hoop, and what the Zapatistas called for in their Sixth Declaration; the unity of indigenous peoples with the workers of

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An Israeli Addresses Iranian Students and Revolutionary Guard

By Miko Peled

YAZD, Iran—As I looked at the 200 or so young cadets sitting on the floor of the prayer hall, all I could think of were my two boys, Eitan and Doron, who are about the same age as they. The previous day I visited the families of Iranian martyrs, boys who fell during the protracted war between Iran and Iraq. And while giving one's life in the service of one's country is often seen as a great honor, I do not share that feeling at all. So all I could say as I began my remarks was that, seeing how they are about the same age as my own boys, I wish for them and their families that they will not be martyrs but return home safe as soon as their service was over.

The Revolutionary Guard base in Yazd is right off the main road. I was informed the night before that I was to deliver a 7:30 a.m. lecture but no details were provided. That morning, as we were driving, I was told that I would need to leave my camera and phone behind because we were entering a military base. Then they told me that I would be speaking in front of cadets of the famed Iranian Revolutionary Guards, known in Iran as the "Sebah." I entered the prayer hall, accompanied by a translator and several report-

ers who escorted me throughout the trip, and we were greeted and led to a seat with a microphone. On the floor about 10 rows of young men were seated 20-across with their legs crossed and another hundred or so people in civilian clothes were seated along the walls of the large hall.

Though I would have expected young cadets in training to be sleepy and restless, they were attentive and well groomed, clearly the cream of the crop of Iranian

eral, and I too served in the Israeli army."

I pause for minute to see what will happen. After all, this was the lion's den and, according to the Israeli and American governments, they are terrorists. The hall was as silent as ever a hall with hundreds of people might be. I continued:

"I am here today because I reject Zionism and the State of Israel that was established on stolen Palestinian land, at the expense of Palestinian lives."

my sister's 13-year-old daughter."

It is in situations like this that one's faith in humanity is restored. Regardless of how much demonizing goes on, regardless of how many times one reads that the other is evil, bloodthirsty and may be committed to terrorism, people's compassion comes through at moments like this, and here it did not fail.

After I finished my remarks there was time for questions and the final one was about a comment Iran's Supreme Leader made, saying that in 25 years there will be no Israel. They were wondering what I thought of his comment.

Once we left the base, we were headed to a local high school for another talk. I was unsure what I would say to high school kids, what level of pre-existing knowledge they might have on Palestine. Once again we walk into the prayer hall, this time at the high school, and here close to 200 students were sitting cross-legged on the carpeted floor, about a hundred adults sitting around the perimeter, and chairs and a mic set up at the front. I told the students I was from Jerusalem, Palestine, and I asked them what they knew about it.

After a brief pause, one student in the front row raised his hand and gave a brief

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The so-called 'Iran threat' mantra repeated by Israel ad nauseum is used to divert the world's attention from the killing fields of Gaza. Unless we are able to see the smokescreen for what it is ... the killing in Gaza will continue uninterrupted because of a concocted, fictional greater threat.

youth, and there I was, holding the two identities with whom they may find themselves fighting a deadly war. I made up my mind not to hold back and go all out:

"Though I am introduced as an American, and I do reside in the United States, I am actually not from the United States. I am an Israeli, son of an Israeli army gen-

That was not going to be enough, so I had to go on, go deeper:

"Change like that I had undergone usually comes as a result of a tragic experience and my case was no different. My perspective and my worldview had changed when three young Palestinians executed a suicide mission in Jerusalem and killed

Afghan Peace Walkers

... continued from page 1

resenting an undetermined number of Taliban affiliates accepted the ceasefire on June 9, with the United States also agreeing to suspend attacks against Taliban fighters.

Can the declared ceasefire lead to negotiations and an end to the war? Given the desperate circumstances I saw during a visit to Kabul in early June, it seems clear that a lasting peace will require finding ways to employ people and enable them to provide food and water for their families.

Destitution has caused numerous Afghan people to enlist in military forces, pro-government or insurgent. It's extremely difficult to earn a living wage in Afghanistan, but military and paramilitary units, answerable to various warlords, including the United States, pay wages that many Afghan families can't afford to dismiss. My young friends in Kabul assure me their family members who joined military groups don't want to cause bloodshed and they don't want to be killed. They simply don't have other viable options.

Almost 54 percent of Afghan citizens live below the poverty line, according to Afghanistan's Tolo News coverage of a recent joint survey undertaken by the Central Statistics Organization and an international NGO.

The Afghan Peace Volunteers (APV), who welcomed me as their guest, want to help build a more egalitarian economy that will provide basic human needs. This year, they're forging ahead in establishing worker cooperatives. During my visit, they celebrated the opening of a shoe-making cooperative. They've also devised a one-year plan for seamstresses to form a tailoring cooperative and explored possibilities for a carpentry cooperative.

"Once up and running," their blog explains, "these worker cooperatives will pledge part of their earnings to the long-term, self-reliant work of the Afghan Peace Volunteers."

The APV find inspiration in the story of Badshah Khan, sometimes referred to as "the Muslim Gandhi."

After meeting Gandhi in 1919, Badshah Khan educated and organized members of the Pashtun (or "Pathan") tribe in an area that is now a border between Pakistan



One of several murals created by Kabul's 'ArtLords' painters to welcome the Helmand-to-Kabul peace walkers. Photo: Kathy Kelly/VCNC

and Afghanistan, steadily building a movement to rebel against British occupation. The "khidmatgyars"—Servants of God—refused to cooperate with the British and instead practiced self-reliance. They created their own constructive projects and persisted even when British repression became increasingly brutal.

Describing the growth of the "Servants" movement, Michael Nagler writes: "After perpetrating a terrible massacre in 1930 in Peshawar, the British saw the ranks of the Servants swell from several hundred to 80,000." They continued rejecting armed struggle, choosing instead to experiment with Gandhi's methods of nonviolent resistance. To the astonishment of onlookers, they were a key element in the eventual liberation from British rule.

Badshah Khan's preferred method of transportation was walking. He trod along paths linking mountain villages and small towns, relying upon goodwill and the truth of his cause, not on weaponry, for his defense.

A likeness of Badshah Khan decorates the entrance to the APV center in Kabul. Stenciled underneath is his fundamental belief: "My religion is truth, love and ser-

vice to God and humankind."

I worry that in my country, the United States, the dominant religion has become militarism. Rather than extending a hand of friendship to people in other lands and, in the case of Afghanistan, paying reparations for the terrible suffering we've caused, the United States continues to seek security through dominance and military might. It's a futile effort. The Helmand-to-Kabul peace walkers display a better means of securing peace: the path of fellowship with our neighbors on this planet, of living simply so that others might simply live, and of willingness to share, even partially, in the human hardship and precarity others face.

I hope those walking for peace, working for equality, and imploring a different way forward can be heard and celebrated not only in Afghanistan, but in every country and among every group that has ever caused bloodshed and ruin in Afghanistan.

Kathy Kelly is a founding member of Voices in the Wilderness and currently a co-coordinator of Voices for Creative Nonviolence.

By Meredith Tax

Rojava, a Socialist-Feminist Bastion in Syria, Is Under Siege

In the middle of a war zone, despite constant attack and a Turkish and Iraqi-Kurdish economic blockade that has cut off access to sufficient food, medical supplies, and electricity, the four million people of Rojava are trying to build a new kind of feminist democratic politics.



Women of the Shingal Resistance Unit rest on a hillside in Rojava. Photo: Joey Lawrence.

On Jan. 20, 2018, Turkey invaded Afrin, one of the three cantons of the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria, better known under its Kurdish name, Rojava. The invasion—conducted by a NATO army with the participation of Islamist militias—highlights the urgent need for solidarity with this beleaguered socialist experiment, whose survival could help to determine our own possibilities for a more democratic future.

In the middle of a war zone, despite constant attack and a Turkish and Iraqi-Kurdish economic blockade that has cut off access to sufficient food, medical supplies, and electricity, the four million people of Rojava are trying to build a new kind of feminist democratic politics. Rojava offers new ways of thinking and self-organization to a world where for decades the only two choices have seemed to be neoliberalism and violently hateful forms of nationalist fundamentalism.

Rojava is not run by a state nor does it aspire to become one. In the writings of its jailed ideological leader Abdullah Ocalan, the state is seen as inimical to true democracy. So Rojava, which is the size of Massachusetts, is run by a bottom-up “self-administration,” built on a foundation of elected neighborhood committees called communes. Women’s liberation is central to both their ideology and practice; every organization and administrative bureau from the smallest commune to the committee that administers the whole region must have at least 40 percent women members and be led by co-chairs, one male and one female, while education on the importance of gender equality is mandatory in every institution. And all these organizations have parallel all-female counterparts. The economy being planned will be ecologically sustainable and based on cooperatives, though it is still very small because of the blockade and the constant state of war.

The rule of gender parity, parallel women’s organizations and joint leadership also applies to the army, the People’s Protection Units (YPG) and Women’s Protection Units (YPJ). In fact, the commander

the United States come to their aid if they were attacked by Turkey. Then Turkey attacked, and the United States did nothing.

During the last six years, Afrin had become a safe haven for hundreds of thousands of war refugees from other parts of Syria. Without U.S. help, the YPG-YPJ had no air cover and could not hold out indefinitely against the technically advanced Turkish army and allied militias.

tried to return to Afrin are being turned away by the Turkish army.

Meanwhile, Turkish President Tayyip Erdoğan and his Syrian counterpart, Bashar Assad, seem to have done a deal to benefit both, in which Assad sends anti-government rebels from Ghouta and other areas near Damascus to faraway Afrin, where Turkey-sponsored militias give them homes and businesses stolen from the Kurds. Thus Assad gets rid of rebels close to his capital, Erdogan gets rid of some of the Kurds close to his border and the human rights of civilians on both sides are trampled.

Civilians who did not leave Afrin have been subjected to even worse fates: kidnappings, confiscation of homes and property, the unexplained disappearance of up to 15 teenage girls and the imposition of sharia law enforced by ISIS-style burqua-wearing enforcers. Erdogan clearly announced his plan to ethnically cleanse an area that has been Kurdish for centuries and replace the inhabitants of Afrin with more ethnically desirable refugees from other parts of Syria. Some of his paid militias are linked to al-Qaeda and Kurdish sources say that known members of ISIS have been incorporated into Turkey’s proxy army. Certainly, one of the first things the invaders did was knock down Yazidi shrines, a signature gesture when one remembers ISIS’s 2014 genocide of

the Yazidis.

In response to the inattention being paid to Afrin inside the United States, a group of concerned academics, activists and writers including Judith Butler, Noam Chomsky, David Graeber, Bill Fletcher, Gloria Steinem, Michael Walzer, and yours truly published an open letter in the *New York Review of Books Online*, forming an Emergency Committee for Rojava and saying: Turkey must be isolated economically, diplomatically, and militarily until it withdraws its troops and its proxy militias from Kurdish Syria. In the long run, there can be no peace in the region until Turkey is willing to reopen negotiations with its own Kurds and grant all its citizens democratic rights, including freedom of expression and the right to form political parties and win elections without reprisals.

We are calling on the U.S. government to:

- impose economic and political sanctions on Turkey’s leadership;
- embargo sales and delivery of weapons from NATO countries to Turkey;
- insist upon Rojava’s representation in Syrian peace negotiations;
- continue military support for the SDF.

To some U.S. progressives, it will seem counterintuitive to call on the U.S. government to support a socialist-feminist enclave. To others, the fact that the United States has given the Rojava Kurds military support (if only to use them for its own ends) shows they are sell-outs. Progressives today must put behind those narrow and static versions of anti-imperialism, dating from the Cold War period, and see that we live in a globalized world of constantly shifting alliances, where the same two countries can both contend and collaborate, and no single hegemonic power calls the tune for the world, no matter how much the United States would like to.

Global politics today are shaped by an epic conflict between fundamentalist, tribalist forces like ISIS, Turkey, and others all over the world who want to go back into a theocratic Neverneverland inhabited by the ethnically or racially pure, versus the forces of what Ocalan calls “capitalist modernity,” or neoliberalism if you prefer, where the only values that count are listed on the U.S. Stock Exchange.

Since the end of the Cold War, progressives have been searching for some alternative to both these worldviews, something new. Something we are still defining. The Kurds are working on their version of this in praxis; they call it democratic confederalism and see women as central to its development. Their experiment and the lessons we can learn from it are desperately important to all of us for the future. But we cannot learn from this experiment unless we help it survive. Defending Rojava is part of defending our own ability to imagine something new.

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Meredith Tax, a feminist writer and organizer, is the author of A Road Unforeseen: Women Fight the Islamic State and a cofounder of the Emergency Committee for Rojava, defendrojava.org.

Rojava offers new ways of thinking and self-organization to a world where for decades the only two choices have seemed to be neoliberalism and violently hateful forms of nationalist fundamentalism.

of the campaign to liberate Raqqa was led by a Kurdish woman seconded to the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the joint Kurdish-Arab army that is part of the U.S. coalition against ISIS. The Kurds had no particular need to fight in Raqqa, which is Arab territory nowhere near Rojava, but they hoped their sacrifices would make

Afrin fell on March 14. Fearing a bloodbath, the YPG-YPJ told all civilians to leave Afrin and head for Kobane. But the territory in between is controlled by the Assad government, which would not let many pass and thousands are still trapped outside on the road, in heavy rains, without food or medical attention. Those who



Deir Yassin after the 1948 massacre: Zionists raped, tortured, and killed over 100 men, women, and children.

A Microscope's Journey Through Israel

By Dana Visalli

I spent the month of March in the Palestinian city of Hebron, volunteering as an English teacher. Because I work as a botanist, I was interested in introducing Palestinian children to the pleasures of observing flowers, and for this reason I brought a cheap dissecting microscope with me. My plan was to leave it as a gift upon my departure, but plans often go astray. I signed in with the Israeli El Al airline in New York for the flight to Tel Aviv, but once the El Al personnel learned that I was going to Palestine, I was subjected to considerable scrutiny. This was magnified substantially when they encountered the little microscope, which they took away for a long inspection. Ultimately they confiscated it, and let me know that, if it did not have explosives in it, they would send on a later flight.

A few days later I received a telephone call in Hebron from a delivery company informing me that the microscope had made its way to Tel Aviv, and they wanted to bring it to me. The glitch in this plan was that Hebron, being Palestinian, is closed to Israelis—except for the Israeli settlers and soldiers that live in enclaves in the city. There is a red sign at the highway turnoff that reads, “The Entrance For Israeli Citizens Is Forbidden, Dangerous To Your Lives, And Is Against Israeli Law.”

The delivery service decided to drop it off at a hotel in Jerusalem, where I could presumably come pick it up. But the hotel had a policy to not even touch a package not addressed to them, so they certainly were not going to accept delivery. In the end, the box with the microscope was sent back to the airport in Tel Aviv, where I was able to pick it up on my way out of the country, and after another hour of physical and X-ray inspection, bring it back to the United States with me.

The question is, what is going on here? Why are Israelis afraid of a microscope? What is the history of events that have put so much fear and trepidation into Israeli citizens? I had an analogous experience while hiking in a natural area near Hebron called Wadi al-Quff. I took a taxi out to the trailhead, and by the time the 20-minute drive was completed the Palestinian driver had given me a children's book he himself had written and invited me to his home for a meal. I spent two hours hiking up a steep trail to the hilltop, where there proved to be a concrete bunker and a soldier pointing a machine gun at me. The site was an Israeli military outpost, and the soldiers were completely shocked to see a human being out

looking at flowers. The female soldier lowered her gun when I produced my American passport, but she repeatedly exclaimed, in English, how weird it was that anyone would be out observing nature in Palestine, and that in her opinion any Palestinians who found me would kill me. There was a small irony here, in that the only Palestinian I had encountered on this outing (the taxi driver) had given me a gift and invited me home for dinner. So again, the question arises, what's going on here?

What is going on, of course, is that the Israelis and the Palestinians both claim the same small piece of the Earth to be their homeland. The actual history of the area often referred to as the Levant is long and complex. (The Levant refers to the countries of the eastern Mediterranean; the word came into being in about 1500 from the Latin word for “rising,” as in Italy the sun rises in the Levant.) In the larger sweep of history, both Israelis and Palestinians are merely bit players, present over the past 2,500 years in one form or another in a land that has a 10,000-year tribal history and 100,000-year human history. Both are Semites, which is a language group, not a

race or ethnicity. Genetic studies have shown that Mediterranean Jews (Sephardic) are identical to Palestinians; that is, they are the same people, while both are more distant genetically from European Jews (Ashkenazi).

An evolutionary (scientific) explanation for religion is that it unites its adherents as being a “chosen” people by the ruling god or gods of any given belief system. This is true for Judaism as for any religion. A famous teacher of the Kabala, Rabbi Kook, stated, “The difference between a Jewish soul and souls of non-Jews is greater and deeper than the difference between a human soul and the souls of cattle.” Exceptionalism can be said to be the very core of all religious belief, granting social identity, albeit imaginary, to the believer.

When Zionist Jews decided to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine (a seminal date for this being the First International Zionist Conference in 1897), their sense of their own exceptionalism reduced the existing population of Muslims and Christians in Palestine to a subhuman, almost nonexistent status. Thus Golda Meir (the fourth prime minister of Israel) was able to pronounce in 1969, “There is no such thing as a Palestinian people. It is not as if we came and threw them out and took their country. They didn't exist.”

In fact about one million people lived in Palestine at the turn of the 20th century, and Muslims and Christians made up 97 percent of that population. The only way for Palestine to become a Jewish state was to drive the non-Jews out. In December 1940 Joseph Weitz, responsible for Jewish colonization and a senior official of the Yishuv (settlement plan), wrote in his diary, “It must be clear that there is no room in the country for both peoples. ... If the Arabs leave it, the country will become wide and spacious for us. ... The only solution is a Land of Israel, at least a western land of Israel, without Arabs. There is no room here for compromises.”

A common misconception about the formative years of Israel is that violence erupted between Arabs and Israelis after Israel declared independence on May 14, 1948. But in fact a series of Israel massacres of Palestinians was initiated the year before, the purpose of which was to drive the “nonexistent” Palestinians from their land. The massacres were consciously executed to terrorize the Palestinian people.

The village of Deir Yassin became the most widely known massacre because of the barbarity involved and the fact that over 20 villagers were taken to a nearby Jewish settlement, paraded as game, and then killed. Menachem Begin gloated about the massacre, writing, “The legend in Deir Yassin helped us in particular in

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Dana Visalli (at right) dines with friends in Hebron.

Microscope

... continued from previous page

the saving of Tiberia and the conquest of Haifa. ... All the Jewish forces proceeded to advance through Haifa like a knife through butter. The Arabs began fleeing in panic, shouting Deir Yassin. Arabs throughout the country were seized by limitless panic and started to flee for their lives."

The Red Cross representative who found the bodies at Deir Yassin arrived in time to see some of the killing in action. He wrote in his diary that Zionist militia members were still entering houses with guns and knives when he arrived. He saw one young Jewish woman carrying a blood-covered dagger and saw another stab an old couple in their doorway. The representative wrote that the scene reminded him of SS troops he had seen in Athens.

Richard Catling, British assistant inspector general for the criminal investigation division, reported on "sexual atrocities" committed by Zionist forces. "Many young school girls were raped and later slaughtered," he re-

ported. "Old women were also molested."

The Deir Yassin attack was perpetrated by two Zionist militias and coordinated with the main Zionist forces, whose elite unit participated in part of the operation. The heads of the two militias, Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir, later became prime ministers of Israel. Begin, head of the Irgun militia, sent the following message to his troops about their victory at Deir Yassin:

"Accept my congratulations on this splendid act of conquest. Convey my regards to all the commanders and soldiers. We shake your hands. We are all proud of the excellent leadership and the fighting spirit in this great attack. We stand to attention in memory of the slain. We lovingly shake the hands of the wounded. Tell the soldiers: you have made history in Israel with your attack and your conquest. Continue thus until victory. As in Deir Yassin, so everywhere, we will attack and smite the enemy. God, God, Thou has chosen us for conquest."

The British decision to give Palestine to the Zionists, formalized in the Balfour Declaration of 1917, is now understood have been calculated to help the British win World War I, to help keep Britain's route through the

Suez Canal to its "crown jewel" colony of India (where it was growing opium to unload on China) protected, and as an added bonus, to induce the messiah Jesus to come back to Earth. Seriously. This is the level of intelligence that drives most big government decisions (which really should make people question the existence of big governments).

By mid-1916, Britain was in danger of losing World War I. In the Battle of the Somme of that year, a half-million men were killed or wounded, with nearly 60,000 lost in the first day of fighting. Wealthy Zionists offered to persuade the United States to enter the war on the side of Britain in return for the gift of Palestine as "homeland." President Woodrow Wilson, who had won re-election in 1916 on a promise to keep the United States out of the war, then declared war on Germany in April of 1917. Thus, it was the Jewish-Zionist community that engineered the defeat of Germany in that war (a fact not lost on the Germans after the war).

In addition, Britain's most lucrative colony in its worldwide empire was India, and access to and from India via the Suez Canal was vital to controlling the oppressed Indian people and keeping them working for British profits. In creating a "Judeo-Christian enclave" in the Levant, the British government felt it could better protect its shipping route through the canal. It is also the case that Arthur Balfour (the Foreign Secretary of Britain during World War I and one of the authors of the Balfour Declaration) was a fundamentalist Christian who believed, with some others, that certain passages in the Bible indi-



Iranian high school students. Photo: Miko Peled.

Miko Peled

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lecture:

"Palestine was a peaceful place, where Jews, Christians, and Muslims lived and worshiped together, until it was occupied, and today it is plagued with violence and war."

That was a good opening for me, and I went ahead, telling them my story and the story of Palestine. After I was done, during the Q&A, I was asked whether it was true that the Jews came to Palestine and bought land there and then the Palestinians came and took it away. No, I replied, it wasn't like that; it was the Zionist Jews who came and took the land and the homes from the Palestinians. What did I think of the combination of religion and politics? I think they should be kept as far apart as possible, though I realize that in Iran this is not the case.

Is a 'Hitler' Needed to Free Palestine?

The final question was more of a comment, but it required a detailed reply. A tall, good-looking young man stood up and said that he thought "Palestine could only be free if there was another Hitler." The adults sitting around the room were visibly uncomfortable by the insinuation that only Hitler could free Palestine. But this was an opportunity. I know enough to recognize that when a kid in high school tells you what he or she thinks, and you absolutely hate it, this is a golden opportunity.

I reminded the boy of the statement made by the Supreme Leader, that a quarter of a century from now Israel will not exist, and, as I did earlier when asked about this, challenged him and the others to think of what he meant by that? Did he want people to die? Did he want women and children to suffer and become homeless refugees? Of course not. What the Supreme Leader was talking about is ending the cruel, racist Zionist regime that exists in Palestine today and seeing it replaced by a state where Jews, Christians, and Muslims will be free to live and worship together, just as they did before.

With the death of 21-year-old Palestinian paramedic Razan Al-Najjar, it is hard to think of anything else. Her beautiful face looking at us from all the social-media outlets, the videos of her and the interviews are too painful to handle. So where is the connection between the death of this lovely, courageous young Palestinian and Yazd, Iran? The so-called "Iran threat" mantra repeated by Israel ad nauseum is used to divert the world's attention from the killing fields of Gaza. Unless we are able to see the smokescreen for what it is, to recognize that there is no threat in Iran, but rather a peaceful, confident nation, and that it is all about Gaza—it is all about Razan and countless, countless others in Gaza—the killing in Gaza will continue uninterrupted because of a concocted, fictional greater threat.

Miko Peled is an author and human rights activist born in Jerusalem. He is the author of *The General's Son: Journey of an Israeli in Palestine*, and *Injustice: The Story of the Holy Land Foundation Five*.

Golda Meir (the fourth prime minister of Israel) was able to pronounce in 1969, "There is no such thing as a Palestinian people. It is not as if we came and threw them out and took their country. They didn't exist."

cated that Jesus would not return to Earth until "the Jews were back in Jerusalem." Which, if you think it through, means that the last 70 years of conflict in the Holy Land have been in the name of the Prince of Peace. It has been said that God loves irony.

With this background information, we can better understand the behavior of the Israelis I encountered on my trip to Palestine. Because they terrorized the Palestinian people in 1947–48 and drove one million of them off their land and into refugee camps, then stole the land and the dwellings and made them their own; because for 70 years now they have continued to usurp Palestinian land, to brutalize the Palestinian people, and to try to drive them out of Palestine; because all of this nefarious behavior is based on power and dominance and mythology and lies—the Israelis have to constantly watch their backs. In fact, 70 years after the creation of a Jewish state on Palestinian land, the most dangerous place in the world to be a Jew is in Israel.

There is a clear way out of this Gordian Knot, and that is for the Israelis to abandon the pseudo-religious mythology of being somehow superior to the rest of humanity, to tear down the concrete walls they have built across the Holy Land and the concrete walls permeating their minds and hearts, and to create an egalitarian society based on human decency and perhaps even a measure of love, with the other inhabitants of the Levant, the Palestinian people, their genetic and geographic brothers and sisters.

Dana Visalli is an ecologist living in Washington State. He can be reached at dana@methownet.com. His website is www.methownaturalist.com.

Photojournalist Loses a Leg Covering Gaza's Great Return March

He Refuses to Give Up His Dream

By Karama Fadel

"Basketball is my favorite sport and sometimes I like to play football with my friends in our neighborhood. I am a fitness trainer too. But I don't know if I will be ever able to play sports again!"

Yousef al-Kurnz, a 20-year-old Gazan photojournalist, lost his left leg after being hit with an explosive bullet from an Israeli sniper while he was covering the Great Return March. It was March 30, 2018, the 42nd anniversary of Land Day, and protesters were peacefully marking it as they called for enforcement of paragraph 11 of U.N. resolution 194, which endorses the right of Palestinians to return to their ancestral homeland.

Tens of thousands of Palestinian men, women, children and the elderly participated that day, representing all political parties and sectors of civil society. Among them were Yousef and two of his fellow journalists; the

border is just 1,000 meters away from his house.

"The first thing I did when I arrived was to put on the 'press' vest and slip my journalist ID card in my bag," he recalls. "We were very careful not to go close to the security fence, just to be on the safe side."

However, that didn't protect him. At approximately 2:15 p.m., when Yousef was photographing the protesters about 750 meters from the security "fence," he was hit with a 16-millimeter bullet in his left leg, knocking him down with its force. When Yousef tried to stand up, the sniper fired a second bullet into his right leg. He could no longer stand.

"I didn't feel much pain when I was shot in my left leg; the Israeli used a silencer weapon and my friends didn't even notice I was wounded," he recalls. "But when the sniper shot my right leg, I felt my entire body trembling like electricity was running through it. I shouted, throwing down my camera."

Yousef was rushed by ambulance to the closest hospital, where he was admitted to intensive care. Despite the lack of sufficiently equipped medical facilities in Gaza, Yusuf was at first refused an Israeli permit to travel out through the Erez crossing. The Rafah crossing into Egypt was closed.



Yousef al-Kurnz, a 20-year-old Gazan photojournalist, lost his left leg after being hit with an explosive bullet from an Israeli sniper while he was covering the Great Return March. Photo: Abeer Abu al-Naja.

After three days, his doctors decided they had no choice but to amputate his left leg. Two Palestinian-rights advocacy organizations filed an appeal with Israel's High Court, demanding an urgent permit. Four days later, Yousef finally was allowed to travel to Ramallah to try to save his right leg. (The Adalah and Al-Mezan human rights organizations also appealed for an exit permit for Mohammad al-Ajouri, 17. However, Mohammed was shot in one leg only. His wounded leg already had been amputated by the time of the court hearing, so the permit was not granted.) The court made it clear in its ruling that Yousef's was an exceptional case, due to the urgent need for treatment, and its ruling would have no bearing on future transfers of patients from Gaza to the West Bank.

"I don't regret that I went to the demonstration," says Yousef, who is studying montage and design at university and now is in his freshman year. "I am so proud of my work, I will succeed and I will achieve my dream to be a famous photographer. I still have two hands to hold my camera with."

Ashraf al-Qedra, spokesperson for the Ministry of Health, said that as of April 19, 33 Palestinians had been killed by Israeli snipers during the Great Return March, including three minors, and another 4,279 have been injured (642 minors and 243 women). Of those, 1,539 were shot with live bullets; 14 have lost legs and four had arms amputated. Yousef was among nine journalists who were shot; one—Yasser Murtaja—died of his wounds.

Originally published at WeAreNotNumbers.org. Karama Fadel is a Gaza-based writer for WeAreNotNumbers.org.



Palestinian paramedic Razan al-Najjar tends to an injured colleague during clashes in the Gaza Strip near the border with Israel; she was killed by an Israeli sniper June 1. Photo: AFP/Said Khatib.

Gaza In My Sights

In memory of Razan al-Najjar and the others slaughtered at the Gaza fence.

*On the ledge,
atop the fence,
the soldiers waited—
snipers to be precise.*

*Below the fence,
the desperate rallied
at the edge of their cage
unarmed and wanting
to go home*

*The snipers had their orders,
shoot to kill and maim.
spare not the medics,
the reporters, the children.
We don't want reports.
Silence the crime.*

*Time to take aim.
These soldiers are the army's best—
the snipers.*

*He had her in his sights.
He could even see that she was a pretty one
clearly a medic trying to save
one already shot.
Maybe by his buddy three snipers away.*

*What did he think, after the kill, this gifted
marksman.
Was he thinking about his supper that night
and what was on the menu.*

*Or was he thinking of his weekend pass.
Should he see his parents or have a weekend on
the beach.*

*Did he think about the lovely one he took out
(such is the euphemism for assassination)
Did he think of her parents, and her never going to
the beach again.
Is he laughing.*

*Did he sleep well,
did he see her pretty face in his dreams
and wake up sweating
with the panic of a nightmare.*

*A crime of course
but not to Uncle Sam
who would have no part
of any condemnation.*

*And so we sink
lower.*

—Richard Greve

*Richard Greve is a member of Santa Feans for
Justice in Palestine.*



Yousef al-Kurnz.

Great March of Return

... continued from page 1

Beyond this obvious interest of the occupier, however, we must also be able to engage in reflection and self-examination, to objectively assess our successes and failures to date and to narrow the space available to the occupation to attack and kill our people.

What do we want from the Great March of Return?

Our struggle against the occupation is ultimately one of symbols and images; a battle to be waged in the global media and before the people of the world. It is this, more than any direct physical engagement with occupation forces, that can transform the broader conditions that allow the occupation to continue. And this can be done without spilling another drop of Palestinian blood.

The next phase of the Great March of Return must see

Peaceful resistance is a winning strategy because it destroys the propaganda foundation on which the occupation stands. ... It demands continuous dedication to the work, to creativity, and to minimizing harm to our people.

an escalation in artistic, cultural, and social actions. Instead of direct confrontation with occupation soldiers, the struggle can take the form of art exhibits, dance, and theater; children planting trees; university professors holding free classes in tents at the base camps; girls in our national dress; people painting; school and family trips; playgrounds and children's games; novelists and writers sharing our story with the world; musicians bringing our music to the world—all of this taking place in the return camps.

Hundreds of peaceful and creative actions can be imagined. But what will they achieve? They will show the world that we are people who love life, that we keep our national consciousness alive in our hearts, and that we are the victims of a racist occupation regime.

Let us not underestimate this goal. The occupation devotes tremendous energy to create the opposite image: that we are people who love death, who seek chaos, burning, and vandalism. The occupation will continue as long as it can justify itself in the eyes of the world. That is why it cannot tolerate our peaceful march and that is why it has done everything in its power to make our march look violent. The occupier cannot simply kill us for no reason; he needs to be able to justify his killing to the world. Otherwise, he would not spend so much time and energy creating these images that explain to the

world why he's killing us.

Peaceful resistance is a winning strategy because it destroys the propaganda foundation on which the occupation stands. It strengthens our moral legitimacy and our ability to develop a strong global advocacy for our just and human cause. It requires wise judgement and unwavering faith in its effectiveness. It demands continuous dedication to the work, to creativity, and to minimizing harm to our people.

Now is the time to take a step back, to reflect and to plan for the future. Now is the time for the victory of

peaceful Palestinian resistance.

A version of this was originally published on Facebook on June 18, 2018, in Arabic. Translation by Denny Cormier and Peter Cohen.

Born in Rafah, Gaza Strip, in 1984, Ahmed Abu Artema is a Palestinian refugee. An independent Gaza-based writer and social-media activist, he has written the book Organized Chaos and numerous articles. He is one of the original founders and organizers of the Great March of Return.



Marine's Message

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During his frequent trips to Okinawa, Nelson visited Iejima Island near the main island's northwestern coast where he met Shoko Ahagon—the founder of the postwar Okinawan peace movement. Then in his 90s, Ahagon had waged a decades-long campaign to reclaim farmland seized by the U.S. military in the 1950s. Apparently Nelson was so impressed by the elderly Okinawan that he likened Ahagon to Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr.

Meetings with Ahagon and other Okinawan peace campaigners cemented in Nelson a strong sense of outrage against the U.S. presence on the island. He participated in demonstrations against the bases and railed against the authorities' violent treatment of peaceful protesters.

Despite his outward displays of strength, however, Nelson still battled PTSD. Ohata realized this when he took Nelson on a hike into the hills of Gifu Prefecture to pick wild mushrooms; the veteran suddenly grew fearful of possible landmines and snipers. Fireworks festivals, a popular summertime event in Japan, were likewise a no-go zone.

The lectures, too, often left Nelson physically and mentally drained.

"Every time he talked about Vietnam, he had to go back there in his mind," explains Ohata. "It was very hard for him to constantly return to combat in the jungles."

In January 2009, Nelson discovered that his 13 months in Vietnam had not only taken a mental toll. Doctors diagnosed him with multiple myeloma—a form of bone marrow cancer—that Nelson believed had been sparked by exposure to Agent Orange in the jungles of Vietnam.

Hospitalized in the United States, Nelson applied to the Department of Veterans Affairs for assistance. But

as his condition worsened and his medical bills soared, it became clear that VA processing would take too long. His friends in Japan stepped in to help. They organized a collection to pay for his treatment and, to ensure the money arrived safely, they delivered it in person to Nelson in his hospital bed.

But the cancer was already too far advanced and on March 25, 2009, Nelson passed away. Three months later, his ashes were interred at one of the places where he had felt at peace in Japan—Kousenbou Temple in Kaga, Ishikawa Prefecture.

Although their collection couldn't help Nelson's condition, his friends realized that the remaining money could ensure that the former Marine's legacy would survive. In keeping with his belief that education was key for children to escape poverty, in 2010, his supporters established the Allen Nelson Fund to assist impoverished students in Vietnam.

Since its creation, the fund has distributed financial aid to more than 600 children. The most recent donation in February 2015 saw Okinawan representatives hand out aid to 120 youngsters living in Tam Ky City and Que Son District in Quang Nam Province. The fund gives priority to children who, like Nelson, come from single-parent families.

Nelson's message also survives with those who knew him the best.

"Allen always used to say that Article 9 was stronger than any army. Today Article 9 is in danger more than ever before," says Ginoza. "His words encourage us to keep opposing the destruction of the constitution and Henoko Bay. If Allen were alive today, he'd continue to build peace alongside us."

Jon Mitchell writes about human rights issues on Okinawa. He received the 2015 Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan Freedom of the Press Award for Lifetime Achievement for his investigations into U.S. military contamination on Okinawa and other base-related problems.



A Palestinian girl during clashes with Israeli security forces at tents protest where Palestinians demand the right to return to their homeland, in east of Gaza City on April 20, 2018. Photo: Atia Darwish/APA images.



South Korean missiles: If a lasting peace is achieved in the Korean Peninsula, the market for U.S. weapons could dry up.

North Korea Agreed to Denuclearize, But When Will the United States?

By Marjorie Cohn

A powerful economic incentive continues to drive the nuclear arms race. After the Singapore Summit, the stock values of all major defense contractors—including Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, Boeing, and General Dynamics—declined.

Given his allegiance to boosting corporate profits, it's no surprise that Donald Trump is counterbalancing the effects of the Singapore Summit's steps toward denuclearization with a Nuclear Posture Review that steers the United States toward developing leaner and meaner nukes and lowers the threshold for using them.

The United States has allocated \$1.7 trillion to streamline our nuclear arsenal, despite having agreed in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1968 to work toward nuclear disarmament.

Meanwhile, the United States maintains a stockpile of 7,000 nuclear weapons, some 900 of them on "hair-trigger alert," according to the Union of Concerned Scientists.

"If weapons are used, they need to be replaced," Brand McMillan, chief investment officer for Commonwealth Financial Network has argued. "That makes war a growth story for these stocks, and one of the big potential growth stories recently has been North Korea. What the agreement does, at least for a while, is take military conflict off the table."

Moreover, economic incentives surrounding conventional weapons also cut against the promise of peace on the Korean Peninsula. Eric Sirotkin, founder of Lawyers for Demilitarization and Peace in Korea, has pointed out that South Korea is one of the largest importers of conventional weapons from the United States. If North and South Korea achieve "a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula," as envisioned by the agreement between Trump and Kim Jong Un, the market for U.S. weapons could dry up, according to Sirotkin.

Even so, U.S. defense spending will continue to increase, according to Bloomberg Intelligence aerospace expert George Ferguson. "If North Korea turns from a pariah state to being welcomed in the world community, there are still enough trouble spots that require strong defense spending, supporting revenue and profit growth at prime defense contractors."

United States Lags Behind on Denuclearization

Last year, more than 120 countries approved the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which requires ratifying countries "never under any circumstances to develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices." It also prohibits the transfer of, use of, or threat to use nuclear weapons or nuclear explosive devices.

Since the treaty opened for signature on September 20, 2017, 58 countries have signed and 10 have ratified it. Fifty countries must ratify the treaty for it to enter into force, hopefully in 2019.

The five original nuclear-armed nations—the United

'[Trump] of course omitted the simple fact that there never was a realistic nuclear threat from North Korea, which has been frantically building a nuclear capability to act as a deterrent against U.S. aggression.'

States, Britain, France, Russia, and China—boycotted the treaty negotiations and the voting. North Korea, Israel, Pakistan, and India, which also have nuclear weapons, refrained from participating in the final vote. During negotiations, in October 2016, North Korea had voted for the treaty.

In advance of the Singapore Summit, dozens of Korean-American organizations and allies signed a statement of unity, which says:

Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula means not only eliminating North Korea's nuclear weapons but also denuclearizing the land, air, and seas of the entire peninsula. This is not North Korea's obligation alone. South Korea and the United States, which has in the past introduced and deployed close to one thousand tactical nuclear weapons in the southern half of the peninsula, also need to take concrete steps to create a nuclear-free peninsula.

Prospects for Denuclearization

The jury is out on whether the statement signed by Trump and Kim after months of hurling incendiary nuclear threats at each other will prevent future nuclear threats and pave the way for global denuclearization.

On April 27, 2018, the Panmunjom Declaration, a momentous agreement between South Korea and North Korea, set the stage for the Singapore Summit. It reads, "The two leaders [of North and South Korea] solemnly declared before the 80 million Korean people and the whole world that there will be no more war on the Korean Peninsula and thus a new era of peace has begun."

The Trump-Kim statement explicitly reaffirmed the Panmunjom Declaration and said North Korea "commits to work towards complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula."

However, when the summit was in the planning stages and before Trump anointed John Bolton as national security adviser, Bolton skeptically predicted the summit would not deter North Korea from acquiring nuclear weapons.

Bolton wants regime change in North Korea. His invocation of the Libya model—in which Muammar Qaddafi relinquished his nuclear weapons and was then viciously murdered—nearly derailed the summit. Bolton cynically hoped the summit would provide "a way to foreshorten the amount of time that we're going to waste in negotiations that will never produce the result we want."

Sirotkin told Truthout, "Sadly, [the summit] may be set up in this way to please the John Bolton neocon wing as this offers nothing but the peace we agreed to after World War II for all countries of the world in the U.N. Charter."

Meanwhile, Trump claims he has achieved something his predecessors—particularly his nemesis Barack Obama—were unable to pull off. "There is no longer a Nuclear Threat from North Korea," Trump tweeted upon landing in the United States after the summit. Five minutes later, he again took to Twitter, declaring, "Before taking office people were assuming we were going to War with North Korea. President Obama said that North Korea was our biggest and most dangerous problem. No longer—sleep well tonight."

In an analysis shared via Facebook, H. Bruce Franklin, professor emeritus at Rutgers University, pointed out that—in a sideways fashion—Trump was correct when he tweeted there is no longer a nuclear threat from North Korea:

[Trump] of course omitted the simple fact that there never was a realistic nuclear threat from North Korea, which has been frantically building a nuclear capability to act as a deterrent against U.S. aggression. If the United States stops threatening North Korea, North Korea will have no motive to threaten the United States with retaliation. The United States never faced any nuclear threat until we forced the Soviet Union to create one in 1949 to serve as a deterrent against our aggression.

The significance of the Singapore Summit should not be underestimated. Trump is the first U.S. president to meet with the leader of North Korea. Trump showed Kim respect, and Kim responded in kind. Trump and Kim made a major commitment to peace. We should applaud and support it, and encourage Trump to sit down with Iran's leaders as well.

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Veterans For Peace members at the Korean War Memorial in Washington, D.C., on Memorial Day. Photo: Ellen Davidson.

Progress for Peace in Korea

By Gerry Condon

Veterans For Peace is absolutely delighted that peace is breaking out on the Korean Peninsula. We congratulate the Korean people, who cried out for peace and unity, and we applaud their leaders, who listened and acted courageously.

The joint statement from the historic summit between President Trump and Chairman Kim Jong Un is a hopeful departure from hostile relations between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Just months ago, the two leaders were threatening nuclear war. The world can breathe much easier today.

President Trump and Chairman Kim Jong Un agreed on four basic points:



1) "... to establish new U.S.-DPRK relations in accordance with the desire of the peoples of the two countries for peace and prosperity;

2) ... to join their efforts to build a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula;

3) the DPRK commits to work toward the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula; and

4) the United States and the DPRK commit to recovering POW/MIA remains, including the repatriation of those already identified."

The joint communiqué also states that "President Trump committed to provide security guarantees to the DPRK." Within hours of signing this agreement, President Trump surprised many by announcing a suspension of the U.S./South Korea "war games," which he called

"expensive" and "provocative." This much needed step is exactly what Veterans For Peace has been calling for, along with peace advocates in the United States and, Korea and around the world.

Sadly, this historic opportunity for peace on the Korean Peninsula is being met with widespread skepticism by mainstream media, who all seem to be reading from the same talking points. Even more alarming is the outright opposition from many in the Congress, both Democrats and Republicans. Two Democratic senators, Tammy Duckworth of Illinois, a disabled Iraq veteran, and Chris Murphy of Connecticut, have already introduced an amendment to the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that seeks to prevent President Trump from withdrawing U.S. troops from South Korea. This is perhaps just a taste of what is in store.

It is worth noting that prior to the Kim-Trump summit, North Korea had unilaterally provided all the security assurances, by halting missile and nuclear tests, releasing U.S. detainees, and destroying its nuclear test site. These confidence-building steps are overlooked by those who complain that President Trump has given much but gained nothing.

Skeptics who claim "the agreement is lacking in substance" do not appear to want peace at all. Are they more comfortable with a dangerous nuclear standoff and endless taxpayer spending on "defense"? In fact, the joint agreement is quite general, and a tremendous amount of work remains to be done. These negotiations will take some time, and the process of demilitarization of the Korean Peninsula will take years.

The U.S. peace movement has played an admirable role in building support for a peace agreement with North Korea. Over the last year, many outstanding activists and organizations, coordinating through the Korea Peace Network, have shared information and strategies. Veterans For Peace helped to write and distribute the People's Peace Treaty with North Korea, which has been signed by tens of thousands of people in the United States. Women Cross DMZ made repeated visits to Korea, both the north and the south, building peace together with Korean women. Well-informed voices for peace have succeeded in breaking through into the mainstream media.

We share in this victory. We pause to celebrate. But we know our work is cut out for us. If this historic opportunity for peace is not to be squandered, or strangled in its crib, we must step up all of our efforts. We will need to keep our eyes on the prize, and rise way above partisan politics.

Veterans have a special role to play. We must remind our friends and neighbors of the millions who died in the Korean War—70 percent of them civilians. The Korean people have been waiting a long time for peace. We will

continue to call for the withdrawal of our sons and daughters, brother and sister GIs from South Korea (32,000 of them, plus families). We will press our government to sign a peace treaty formally ending the Korean War.

With over 800 military bases in 80 countries, the United States is intervening overtly and covertly in many places, and threatening even greater wars. These wars have nothing to do with the legitimate security needs of the people of the United States; they are fought by poor and working class GIs for the benefit of the billionaire class. In such a poisoned environment, the sudden opening for peace on the Korean Peninsula is quite startling.

We must also push for the United States to be at peace with the people of Yemen, Afghanistan, Syria, Iran, Palestine, Venezuela, Russia, China, and all the world. We must demand the withdrawal of U.S. occupation forces and the closure of U.S. military outposts around the world. We must push for the de-nuclearization of the entire planet, starting with the United States.

The Korean people are showing us that peace really is possible. If the people of the United States and Korea persist, despite all the obstacles, we can win a major victory for world peace. We can start by talking with our neighbors, writing letters to the editor, and talking with our political representatives. Tell them that we want peace. Peace with Korea, and peace with all the peoples of the world.

Gerry Condon is a Vietnam-era veteran who serves as board president of Veterans For Peace.

Denuclearization

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The joint agreement signed by the two leaders in Singapore was admittedly sketchy, and denuclearization will not happen overnight. But the agreement was a critical first step in a process of rapprochement between two countries that have, in effect, been at war since 1950. Trump stated at the post-summit press conference that the United States would suspend its "very provocative" war games.

Trump also announced a freeze on any new U.S. sanctions against North Korea and indicated that the United States could lift the current harsh sanctions even before accomplishing total denuclearization. Kim promised to halt nuclear testing and destroy a testing site for ballistic missile engines.

Ultimately, however, it is only global denuclearization that will eliminate the unimaginable threat of nuclear war.

Marjorie Cohn is professor emerita at Thomas Jefferson School of Law, former president of the National Lawyers Guild, deputy secretary general of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers and an advisory board member of Veterans for Peace. An updated edition of her book, Drones and Targeted Killing: Legal, Moral, and Geopolitical Issues, was recently published. Visit her website: marjoriecohn.com.

On a Firm Foundation of Mayonnaise

Human and Natural Threats to the Construction of a New Base at Henoko

By Douglas Lummis

The reasons for abandoning construction of the new U.S. Marine Corps Air Facility at Henoko in northern Okinawa are many. It tramples on the Okinawan people's antiwar sensibilities; it places an unequal burden on Okinawa compared to mainland Japan and is therefore discriminatory; it will cause more accidents and crimes victimizing Okinawans; it will damage, perhaps fatally, the coral garden in Oura Bay (much of which is to be filled) and destroy the habitat and feeding ground of the dugong, an endangered species considered sacred by Okinawans; it can only be done by overriding the people's will with massive riot police force. If that's not enough, another factor is being increasingly discussed at the protest site and in the newspapers.

It may be that, from an engineering standpoint, it can't be done.

The reasons for entertaining this doubt are also many. First, the fact that testing of the soil beneath Oura Bay, begun in 2014, continues today, suggesting that the Defense Agency has been unable to determine that the sea bottom is firm enough to bear the weight of the airstrip-length block of concrete they plan to set down there. Among the protesters are several engineers, who have suggested some explanations. Much of Okinawa's bedrock is limestone, which is notoriously soft. If the sea bottom is even partly limestone, that would make poor foundation for an airport. To people who argue that surely the government's engineers know how to overcome such problems, the protest-side engineers point out that Kansai International Airport, completed in 1994 by reclaiming land in Japan's Inland Sea, is slowly sinking; every day trucks bring in rocks and dirt to shore it up, and the buildings are kept level with jacks. A further problem: Okinawa's bedrock is laced with limestone caves. If there are any



Construction of the new U.S. Marine airstrip in Oura Bay involves dumping millions of tons of rock onto an ocean floor that may be unable to support it.. Photo: Tarak Kauff.

*Try to imagine a project more insane than
putting a nuclear weapons storage site
|on top of an active earthquake fault.*

such caves under the Henoko construction site, that would also make it a terrible place to put an airport.

Recently one of our engineers obtained from the Defense Agency a soil test re-

port, which the agency understandably had not shared with the media. While much of the testing is done by bringing up samples with boring equipment, this report describes the results of the Standard Penetration Test (SPT). This test is carried out using a rig somewhat like a small pile driver. An iron tube is lowered to the sea bottom; it is attached to a rigid pole long enough to extend above sea level. An iron slide hammer of fixed weight is dropped from a fixed distance on to the pole, and the number of blows required to drive the tube down six inches is recorded. This number is called the N-value, and an N-value of 50 or more is considered a firm foundation. According to the report, in several places under the airstrip site the weight didn't need the hammer: when it reached what looked like the sea bottom it just kept on going to the six-inch mark and beyond. The sea bottom there was given an N-value of "0." To give the protesters an image of what this "0" meant, the engineer suggested they imagine a sea bottom composed of tofu. Hearing this, an expert on sea bottoms from mainland Japan offered a correction: not tofu: mayonnaise. Since then, "mayonnaise" has become a

buzzword at the protest site. We are told that in some places this "mayonnaise" (slime would be another name for it) extends as far down as 130 feet.

In late April, Tarak Kauff was here with a small Veterans For Peace delegation. He and I talked to one of the protesting engineers. I told him I had heard two mayonnaise theories: one, that a mayonnaise sea bottom would make construction impossible; two, that construction is possible but would require new permits from the governor. He told us the latter is true. When the sea bottom is unstable, it is possible to bring in a (real) pile driver, drive huge pylons into the stable hardpan (assuming there is such) beneath the gunk, and then set a steel framework over those, like a table with many legs. But the construction permit under which they are working now, granted by the previous governor, is for a different operation, so they would need to apply to the present governor for a new permit, which he is unlikely to grant. This is one reason the government of conservative Prime Minister Abe Shinzo is anxious to defeat Governor Onaga Takeshi in the election this fall. Since then, I learned that an expert on sea bottoms recently testified at a meeting of the National Diet's U.S. Military Base Problem Council that (assuming a permit is promptly granted) such an operation would delay construction for another two to three years.

There is more. Seismologists have found two active earthquake faults directly under the construction site. That might be a gamble worth taking if it were a matter simply of providing aircraft a place to land and take off. But in the Marine Corps' Camp Schwab, which is where construction is taking place, there is a former nuclear weapons ammunition storage facility which, we are told, is to be upgraded so as again to be used to store nuclear weapons for the new airbase. Try to imagine a project more insane than putting a nuclear weapons storage site on top of an active earthquake fault.

In the Okinawa protest movement these issues are much discussed. It's not just a matter of engineering science. Okinawans tend to talk about their land as a sentient being. Many have the feeling that not only the people, but also the land itself is rejecting the construction of the new base. Many remember how the anti-U.S. base movement in the Philippines was supported by the 1991 eruption of Mt. Pinatubo, resulting in the demise of the U.S.'s Clark and Subic Bay bases. So with apologies to Robert Frost,

*Some say Camp Schwab will surely sink
in slime.*

*Some say it will be shattered by a fault.
From what we know of nature's scale
of time,*

*Its final grave will certainly be slime.
But far beneath the slime, an active
fault*

*Could swiftly bring its business to a
halt*

Douglas Lummis is a writer, former professor at Tsuda College in Tokyo, and former U.S. Marine officer. He lives and teaches in Okinawa and is a member of Veterans For Peace.

Joel Kovel

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the cities and countryside.

I dug deeper and learned that ecosocialism was not merely an abstract conjecture dreamed up by Joel Kovel and Michael Lowy in their 2001 manifesto and revised into the Belem Declaration in 2009, but a living movement with ancestral roots and futuristic horizons, strongest in the global South. Joel Kovel was no armchair theorist. Since that time we have worked in Ecosocialist Horizons toward connecting these ecosocialist movements of the Third and Fourth Worlds with those of us behind enemy lines in the Belly of the Beast, awakening our dreams through convergences, events, publications, campaigns and a radio show. This work culminated last year in Venezuela with the foundation

of the First Ecosocialist International, followed by a U.S. tour organized by its adherents (New York, Los Angeles, Jackson, New Orleans, Pittsburgh) to scatter its seeds.

Joel passed away from this world on April 30, 2018, but not without leaving us his memoir, *The Lost Traveller's Dream*. A memorial essay by his friend and Ecosocialist Horizons cofounder Salvatore Engel-DiMauro concludes for many of us: "Ecosocialists such as I may have lost the Lost Traveller, but certainly not his Dream."

Quincy Saul is a writer, musician, and a co-founder of Ecosocialist Horizons. He is the author of Truth and Dare: A Comic Book Curriculum for the End and the Beginning of the World. He writes for Truthout, Telesur, Counterpunch, and more. He is an associate member of Veterans For Peace.

By Tarak Kauff

Okinawan Anti-Base Activists Are in for the Long Haul

It is now 73 years since the battle of Okinawa, called the largest sea-land-air battle in history, three months of intense combat that left the island devastated, with over 100,000 Okinawan civilian, 72,000 American and 100,000 Japanese casualties. This trauma is still tangible on the island, and many Okinawans feel they were sacrificed on the altar of war by the Japanese.

In April, I was in Okinawa as part of a Veterans For Peace (VFP) Peace Team delegation with longtime activists Bruce Gagnon and Dud Hendrick. We witnessed firsthand the determination of the Okinawan people to rid their island of the dominating U.S. military presence that has lasted nearly three-quarters of a century.

After World War II, the U.S. military retained control of Okinawa, expanding and consolidating its bases, which were used to launch air strikes against North Korea during that conflict and as a staging area for the U.S. war in Vietnam. In 1972 govern-

Airbase, deemed the “most dangerous in the world” due to its placement in a densely populated urban area, to the village of Henoko. The new base is being built in the pristine waters of Oura Bay and will destroy the natural habitat of many endangered marine species, including Okinawa’s beloved dugong, a relative of the manatee.

For over 5,000 straight days, Okinawans and allies from mainland Japan and around the world have been blocking the construction gates at U.S. Marine Camp Schwab with their bodies, slowing and sometimes stopping the construction process.

Bruce, Dud, and I spent full days at the

can be seen in many of the police faces. This is physically difficult and morally reprehensible duty they are ordered to perform.

Witnessing the Okinawans’ struggle to rid themselves of the U.S. and Japanese military yoke choking their land and their inalienable right to self-determination is motivational. They know, without question, the United States and its military with its bases and troops, its disregard for the environment, its shooting and economic wars, is not only devastating their island but beyond that represents the greatest global threat to continued life on this planet. As a veteran who was once part of this death-machine, but more as a human being, I feel an obligation to join and support others who are resisting.

The Okinawans accept us with open arms, with graciousness and love, we who are from the United States, a country that has militarily occupied them for 73 years. Every day, they offer us the opportunity to speak, and we do so to receptive faces. Doug Lummis, a former Marine officer stationed in Okinawa, now a professor and leader in the Okinawa VFP chapter (VFP ROCK), translates our English to Japanese in his own, often humorous and also sometimes very serious way as I know he takes the liberty as a dear friend and comrade to expand, emphasize, and if needed re-enforce what we say.

The days are long, hot, and somewhat tiring, yet in the presence of such resolute nonviolent resistance peace does not seem so far off and we have an inspiring and even joyful time. Remembering the words of Martin Luther King Jr, “World peace through nonviolent means is neither absurd nor unattainable. ... Those of us who believe in this method can be voices of reason, sanity, and understanding amid the voices of violence, hatred, and emotion.”

One of our days started with a short ride on a glass bottom boat to see some of the

corral that will be destroyed along with much of the marine life, as a good portion of Oura Bay is filled in with millions of tons of rocks and gravel being brought in by the trucks. And what for? To accommodate yet more weapons of war, to build runways into this pristine bay for warplanes to take off and land.

As the days wore on, the Japanese police were getting smarter, using more police to clear the space so the trucks could get in faster. Instead of five hours or even three, they managed to get the road open in about an hour. The protesters were also discussing new strategies to counter this. It’s like a chess game.

One day, in anticipation of the trucks’ arrival of the trucks, some of us walked up the road in the direction they would be coming and waited. When the trucks showed up, we stepped out into the road, blocking what soon became a long line of trucks as far as the eye could see.

We managed to hold the trucks up for maybe an additional hour before the Japanese police got there and removed us. We were careful not to get arrested for a number of strategic reasons, but especially because the organizers did not want any more arrests.

On another day, as we waited for the trucks, the organizers asked me to speak. A Buddhist monk translated. I can’t remember everything I said but I tried to speak from my heart and pointed out that the police, who were standing right there, were not our enemy, but were being used by the U.S. and Japanese governments and the U.S. military to enforce the will of the oligarchs who profit from destruction of the natural environment, militarism and wars. I said we are inspired by the sustained resistance to the 73 years-long U.S. occupation of their island. The crowd seemed to approve enthusiastically of every statement. I also apologized from my heart to these wonderful people for all the suffering the military I was once a part of had caused them. I promised that Veterans For Peace would always stand in solidarity with them and that we would return again and again to join them in the struggle.

Tarak Kauff is the managing editor of Peace in Our Times and the coordinator of the Veterans Peace Team. He has traveled to Okinawa four times.



Tarak Kauff: ‘I don’t think this man liked what he had to do. Never saw him manhandle anyone.’ Photo: Tarak Kauff.

ing control reverted back to Japan, which had annexed the island in 1879. Under the status of forces agreement, U.S. military command and U.S. bases remained, along with the crime and violence that all U.S. military facilities generate. Since 1972 there have been almost 6,000 crimes by U.S. servicemen including close to 600 violent acts such as rape and murder.

With more than 30 bases on a land mass one-third the size of Rhode Island, the U.S. military, with Japanese consent, is an overwhelming presence. The Okinawans, a majority of whom want all U.S. bases gone, are reduced to second-class citizens.

Seventy-five percent of U.S. military facilities in Japan are on Okinawa, which is only 0.6 percent of the total land area of Japan; American bases occupy some 20 percent of Okinawann land; U.S. military personnel number over 25,000. Noise from military aircraft is incessant, and other forms of pollution, such as dioxin from Agent Orange that was buried in rusting drums, endanger the island’s fragile ecosystem. Rather than serving to as protection, as claimed by the U.S. and Japanese governments, these facilities put Okinawans once again at a “front line” risk in any war.

But the key issue for the last 14 years has been the proposed transfer of Futenma

Camp Schwab gates with hundreds of protesters resolutely blocking the gates and the long line of construction trucks even before they arrive at the gates.

The demonstrators struggle vigorously, clinging hard to each other, as they are repeatedly carried off Japanese police, all imported from the mainland. Many of them are heavily muscled and many are rumored to be experts in martial arts. It is not easy work for the Japanese police to untangle the interlocked arms and legs, including those of five paraplegics in wheelchairs, who resist as much as anybody.

In general, the police are highly disciplined and are not intentionally abusive, although the system they represent is. There are exceptions: A woman had three ribs and a collarbone broken while we were there, but that is unusual.

“About Japan,” Bruce said yesterday, “it wasn’t too long ago that they were a fascist nation and with Abe, it looks like they are heading, with U.S. encouragement, in that direction again.” The well-trained, very fit police, doing their job efficiently and very methodically seem to fit that analysis. I imagine that some of them however, as they stand witness, will take in for later thought some of the powerful words and emotions expressed by the people—and it seems that



Doug Lummis and Dud Hendrick block the construction gate at Camp Schwab. Photo: Tarak Kauff.

Marine's Message Lives on in Okinawa and Vietnam

By Jon Mitchell

U.S. Marine Allen Nelson first visited Okinawa in 1966 when the entire island was under U.S. control and functioned as its springboard for the war in Vietnam. For two weeks, Nelson and his fellow new recruits spent their days practising guerrilla warfare at Camp Hansen, central Okinawa, then in the nights, they headed into civilian areas to drink, fight, and look for women. In later interviews, Nelson recalled drunken U.S. Marines beating taxi drivers and bar workers unconscious: “When we are coming to town, we don’t leave our violence on military bases. We bring our violence into towns with us.”

The next time Nelson visited Okinawa was 30 years later. This time when he visited local communities, he brought something very different: the message that the U.S. military presence on the island was unjust and the bases should be closed immediately.

What had happened in those intervening years to transform Nelson’s stance so profoundly has been explored in numerous Japanese books, TV shows and even a manga (Japanese comic) published in 2005 titled “Nelson-san, Anata wa Hito o Koroshimashitaka” (“Mr. Nelson, Did You Kill People?”). But very little has been written in English about the former Marine and, although his story cuts to the core of

following combat, he had to stack the civilian dead into piles—sometimes with surviving children clinging to their mother’s corpses.

In total, Nelson served four years with the U.S. Marines. After returning to civilian life, he found it impossible to readjust to peace time: the military had taught him how to kill but not how to live. Suffering from severe PTSD, he wound up homeless and it was only after years of counseling that he could begin to accept what he had experienced in combat.

Determined that other young Americans not suffer as he had, Nelson joined the Quakers, a pacifist Christian sect. He took part in demonstrations against overseas U.S. intervention and he led campaigns to oppose military recruitment in schools.

In September 1995, Nelson heard the news that three U.S. service members—including two Marines from Camp Hansen—had raped a 12-year-old girl on Okinawa.

“The news shocked Allen both as a former Marine and a father. What also surprised him was the fact that U.S. bases were still on Okinawa. He’d assumed they’d all been closed after the end of the Vietnam War,” says Yutaka Ohata, a friend and long-time supporter of Nelson.

Through Quakers in Japan, Nelson was invited to visit Okinawa. In 1996, he arrived on the island and, at schools and community centers, he gave a series of

*‘When we are coming to town,
we don’t leave our violence on military bases.
We bring our violence into towns with us,’
Nelson recalled.*

current U.S.-Japan relations, he remains largely unknown in his home country.

Born in Brooklyn in 1947, Nelson, like many other African-Americans, benefited little from the economic boom heralded by U.S. victory in World War II. His father was absent and his mother raised Nelson and his four sisters in poverty; often there was not enough money for food and Nelson shared shoes with his sisters. After dropping out of high school, he was drawn to one of the few places that guaranteed a steady income to undereducated black males: the U.S. military.

In 1965, Nelson signed up for the U.S. Marines. Following his training in the United States and Okinawa, he was deployed to Vietnam where, for the next 13 months, he experienced combat so horrific that no amount of training could ever have prepared him. Nelson killed Vietnamese soldiers and saw his comrades killed beside him. He was wounded in an explosion and he participated in at least one execution of a prisoner.

What especially seared Nelson’s memories were the raids on villages where,

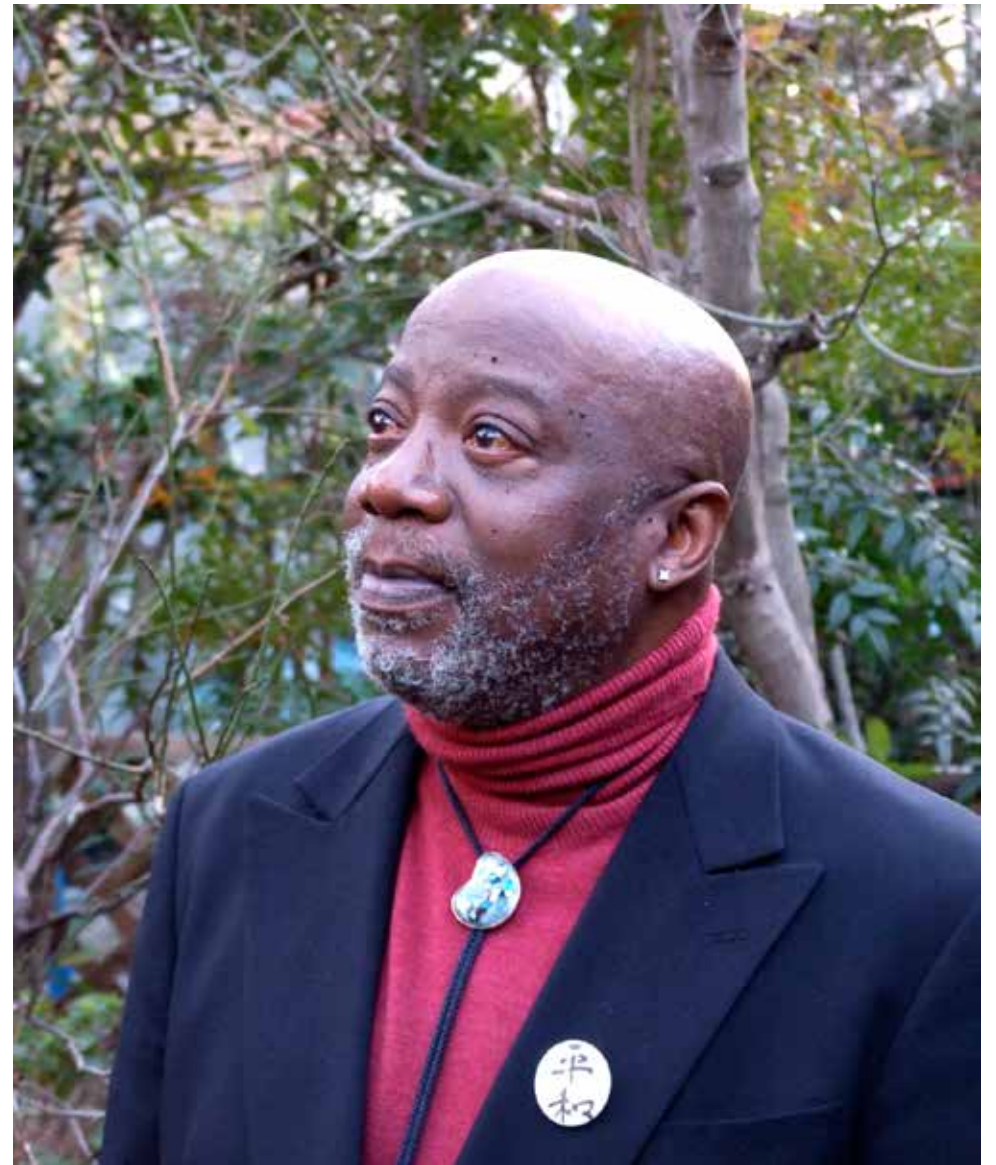
talks about his service in the military.

“For many Okinawans it was the first time to learn about how Americans experienced the Vietnam War and what went on within the bases we lived alongside,” says Eiko Ginoza, a high school teacher who met Nelson during his first visit and became a lifelong friend. “Allen told us about the nuclear weapons, chemical weapons, and Agent Orange. He told us all the ways he’d been taught to kill—and we were very surprised.”

Nelson’s accounts of how Vietnamese civilians bore the brunt of combat also struck a chord with Okinawans whose island had lost more than a quarter of its residents during World War II.

His talks on Okinawa were so well received that word of his eloquence soon spread to mainland Japan. Upon his return to the States, he was flooded with requests to come back and give lectures throughout Japan. So began 12 years of annual visits during which he racked up more than 1,000 speeches at schools, universities, temples and community centers.

Nelson’s visits punctuated a tumultuous



Former U.S. Marine Allen Nelson.

time in Japanese politics with many similarities to today. In 2004, Tokyo attempted to start construction of a new U.S. base at Henoko, Okinawa, triggering widespread protests on land and sea. The government also tried to foist a more assertive international role on the nation’s Self Defense Forces—particularly in the Iraq War where Japan dispatched to Iraq more than 5,500 members of the Ground Self Defense Force between 2004 and 2006 to aid reconstruction. As with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s current ploy to reinterpret the role of the Japanese military, these moves were seen by many critics as attempts to undermine the Constitution’s Article 9, which renounces the use of military force.

Nelson was an ardent supporter of Article 9, arguing that it had saved Japan from becoming embroiled in misguided U.S.-

Article 9 saved not only you Japanese people but also millions of other people.”

Following his talks at Japanese schools, children often asked questions that adults would never have asked: How does it feel to kill? Did he miss his mother in Vietnam? Had he been afraid to go to the toilet in the jungle?

“I started to understand: Little children, they understand war from the bottom up; adults, we try to understand from the mind. But we can’t understand the horror of war intellectually,” Nelson said.

In order to cap such painful discussions with a positive note, Nelson—an accomplished guitarist—often ended his talks with a spiritual song such as “Amazing Grace.”

These talks gradually made Nelson a well-known figure in Japan. From Hok-

*‘Allen told us about the nuclear weapons,
chemical weapons, and Agent Orange.
He told us all the ways he’d been taught to kill—
and we were very surprised.’*

led conflicts such as the Vietnam War.

During a speech in 2003, for example, he told the audience of Japanese high school students:

“Because Article 9 is there, no one in the world says that their land was bombed by Japanese bombers or their towns and villages were burned by Japanese troops; no one says that their children were killed or hurt by Japanese soldiers. In this sense

kaido to Kyushu, all across the country he was invited to give lectures—as well as in Vietnam and at The Hague in the Netherlands. Okinawa, though, always retained a special place in his heart. According to Ginoza, Nelson believed the island’s poverty and history of Tokyo-backed discrimination mirrored his own experiences as an African-American.

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