

Peace in Our Times



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

Extinction Crisis: Is There a Way Out?

If we want to halt the extinction crisis, we need to embrace Indigenous worldviews.

By Four Arrows

In May, the United Nations released a report warning of the imminent extinction of as many as 1 million species, the result of climate change, pollution, exploitation of land and sea, and other human-created assaults on the environment. The report has tragic significance, but offers hope if “transformative change” occurs immediately. The problem is that the source of that transformative change has been largely ignored by most media; one must read the report’s summary—all that has been released so far—to realize that such transformative change is largely about indigenizing our systems and institutions. It is about a worldview that connects us to nature.

It is no mere coincidence that the 5% of the global population that are Indigenous are responsible for 80% of Earth’s biodiversity. The summary of the report says as much. Throughout it are references to the importance of Indigenous “paradigms, goals, and values,” along with examples of the “wide diversity of practices” that help nurture biodiversity. There is no denying, the authors write, that the destructive extinction trends, so visible across the planet, “have been less severe or avoided in areas held or man-



Indigenous water protectors at Standing Rock, N.D., stand against the Dakota Access Pipeline in October 2017. Photo: Ellen Davidson.

aged by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities. ... Nature managed by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities is under increasing pressure, but is generally declining less rapidly than in other lands.”

Beyond these explicit nods, the report also telegraphs a more subtle, implicit message on the need to adopt indigenous

models and approaches. In one section, it describes different views about our relationship to nature, such as “the material versus the spiritual domain” and “living well in balance and harmony with Mother Earth.” Under “Key Messages,” the authors write, “Nature embodies different concepts for different people, including biodiversity, ecosystems, Mother Earth

and other analogous concepts.” Although they are careful not to alienate the public, such unprecedented language suggests that they are referring to the two core belief systems operating in our world today. One is essentially human-centered, hierarchical, patriarchal, and materialistic. The other is animistic, non-hierarchical, ma-

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Veterans Arrested in the Cause of Peace



Photo: Ellen Davidson

Protesting U.S. Military Flights Through Neutral Ireland
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Ken Mayers and Tarak Kauff on the airfield in Ireland’s Shannon Airport.



Protecting the Venezuelan Embassy from the Coup-Mongers
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VFP President Gerry Condon after being thrown to the ground by Secret Service Police.

Letters to the Editor



The Wrong Side of History

Germany has come out swinging in its recent support of Israel, condemning the boycott of Israeli products and cultural events as anti-Semitic. Criticizing anti-Semitism would have changed the course of history 90 years ago. Is this just a case of bad timing?

Today, it is not the Jews facing racism, violence, and the systematic erasure of their culture; it is the Palestinians. Jews in Israel don't need protection any more than the Nazis did during the Third Reich. What the Israelis are doing to the Palestinians is almost exactly what was done to Jews in the 1930s.

Maybe Germany just doesn't get that human rights are for all people, not just for those in power. In the years up to WW II, all the Germans could talk about was racial purity and how they needed other people's lands, about the same things being demanded by Israelis today.

In fact, Germany and Israel have agreed on human rights issues before. Both countries opposed the boycott of apartheid South Africa, and both condemned Nelson Mandela as a terrorist. Human rights for black South Africans was about the last thing that either country cared about when it mattered the most.

Germans may think that aligning themselves with Israel will somehow erase the horrors of the Holocaust. It's a cheap fix. Germany is abandoning the Palestinians now for short term commercial and geopolitical political gain. Once again, the Germans are on the wrong side of history; they have learned so very little.

Fred Nagel

Middle East Crisis Response
Veterans For Peace
Rhinebeck, NY

'Cuba Syndrome'

We're suffering from what can be called the Cuba Syndrome. We have long felt that Cuba should be our property and offered Spain \$100 million (President Polk), \$130 million (President Pierce) and \$300 million (President McKinley) for Cuba. When Spain refused to sell, we attacked it and turned Cuba into a protectorate that lasted until the overthrow of Batista in 1958. Fidel Castro refused to let Cuba remain a protectorate and beat back attempts—including the Bay of Pigs attack, biological warfare, and economic strangulation through brutal embargos (globally condemned)—to overthrow his regime. We really didn't feel Cuba had a right to be independent—and to not be ruled by rapacious capitalism and mobster fleshpots. Even when President Obama recognized the Castro regime, it was done under the pretext that this new policy would help return Cuba to "democracy": the rule of multinational corporations and their organized crime companions. Thus, Cubans could become one of the world's most stressed peoples, like today's United States.

The United States wrecked the Venezuelan economy and resents that Cubans tried to help President Maduro. We feel it is intolerable for somebody other than us to intervene in the affairs of other countries.

Roger Carasso

Professor Emeritus, California State University, Northridge

A Note from the Editors

Doug Rawlings Testifies

Earth Day, April 22, 2019. The Maine State House. Judiciary Committee hearing rooms. 8:00 a.m. Sitting next to me on my right, also prepared to testify, was one guy wearing an NRA t-shirt. He was quite knowledgeable about weapons, a nice enough guy whom I joked with (about our weight, etc., etc.) on occasion. I asked him how many guns he has in his house. "Twenty-seven" was his reply. He collects them, works on them, and studies them. He knew a great deal about how they worked. I asked him what unit he was with back in the day. He wasn't in the military. Hmmm. So he knows how his 27 guns work, but he does not know, I mean really know, what they can do to a human body. He asked me how many guns I own, and when I said "None," he paused for a moment, glanced at the VFP logo on my shirt, quickly shifted gears and asked about the weather.

The guy on my left was my age, dressed in full cammies, sporting a long walking stick with Vietnam veteran insignia all over it. We chatted. He was with the 101st Airborne in Nam from 1970 to 1971, up around Chu Lai. "How about you?" he asked. I told him I was in the central highlands with an artillery unit attached to the 173rd from 1969 to 1970. "It was pretty hot there, wasn't it?" he asked. He wasn't talking about the weather. "There were some moments," I replied. We hit it off. We had each extended our "tours" in Viet Nam to get out early, because we knew we couldn't

do stateside service. He leaned into me at one moment and asked if I had PTSD. I told him I didn't think I did. "How about you?" I asked. "Yep. I have nightmares," he said, "and sometimes I just break out crying for no reason. I don't like going out into my yard at night either." We then talked about Togus, our VA hospital—he'd been there, but just on the second floor (outpatient psych ward). When I told him I volunteered on the third floor (the "committed" Psychiatric Ward), his eyes glazed over. Maybe he thought I was going to evaluate him. Then he said "they" aren't going to take his guns away from him. No way. I didn't ask him who "they" were, but I sensed that he had put me in that category way before we began talking to one another. Our chatter drifted off as the testimonies from the hearing room came over the loudspeaker.

As we listened to testimony after testimony, we each shifted around, grunted, or swore under our breaths in direct correlation to "the truth" coming out of that speaker. Of course their version of the "truth" was not mine and vice versa. Still, we maintained civility. Ironically, the guy to my left commented on a woman who broke down in tears while testifying for the bill: "Jeez, there they go again. Crying. They always pull that trick..." I wasn't there when he finally testified, but I wonder if he kept his composure. I wonder if he started crying. It's tough to maintain equanimity under

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Only Rebellion Will Prevent an Ecological Apocalypse

No one is coming to save us; mass civil disobedience is essential to force a political response

By George Monbiot

Had we put as much effort into preventing environmental catastrophe as we've spent on making excuses for inaction, we would have solved it by now. Everywhere I look, I see people engaged in furious attempts to fend off the moral challenge it presents.

The commonest current excuse is this: "I bet those protesters have phones/go on holiday/wear leather shoes." In other words, we won't listen to anyone who is not living naked in a barrel, subsisting only on murky water. Of course, if you are living naked in a barrel we will dismiss you too, because you're a hippie weirdo. Every messenger, and every message they bear, is disqualified on the grounds of either impurity or purity.

As the environmental crisis accelerates, and as protest movements like YouthStrike4Climate and Extinction Rebellion make it harder not to see what we face, people discover more inventive means of shutting their eyes and shedding responsibility. Underlying these excuses is a deep-rooted belief that if we really are in trouble, someone somewhere will come to our rescue: "they" won't let it happen. But there is no they, just us.

The political class, as anyone who has followed its progress over the past three years can surely now see, is chaotic, unwilling, and, in isolation, strategically incapable of addressing even short-term crises, let alone a vast existential predicament. Yet a widespread and willful naivete prevails: the belief that voting is the only political action required to change a system. Unless it is accompanied by the concentrated power of protest—articulating precise demands and creating space in which new political factions can grow—voting, while essential, remains a blunt and feeble instrument.

The media, with a few exceptions, is actively hostile. Even when broadcasters cover these issues, they carefully avoid any mention of power, talking about environmental collapse as if it is driven by mysterious, passive forces and proposing microscopic fixes for vast structural problems. The BBC's *Blue Planet Live* series exemplified this tendency.

Those who govern the nation and shape public discourse cannot be trusted with the preservation of life on Earth. There is no benign authority preserving us from harm. No one is coming to save us. None of us can justifiably avoid the call to come together to save ourselves.

I see despair as another variety of disavowal. By throwing up our hands about the calamities that could one day afflict us, we disguise and distance them, converting concrete choices into indecipherable dread. We might relieve ourselves of moral agency by claiming that it's already too late to act, but in doing so we condemn others to destitution or death. Catastrophe afflicts people now and, unlike those in the rich world who can still afford to wallow in despair, they are forced to respond in practical ways. In Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Malawi, devastated by Cyclone Idai; in Syria, Libya, and Yemen, where climate chaos has contributed to civil war; in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, where crop failure, drought, and the collapse of fisheries have driven people

from their homes, despair is not an option. Our inaction has forced them into action, as they respond to terrifying circumstances caused primarily by the rich world's consumption. The Christians are right: Despair is a sin.

As author Jeremy Lent points out in a recent essay, it is almost certainly too late to save some of the world's great living wonders, such as coral reefs and monarch butterflies. It might also be too late to prevent many of the world's most vulnerable people from losing their homes. But, he argues, with every increment of global heating, with every rise in material resource consumption, we will have to accept still greater losses, many of which can still be prevented through radical transformation.

Every nonlinear transformation in history has taken people by surprise. As Alexei Yurchak explains in his book about the collapse of the Soviet Union, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*, systems look immutable until they suddenly disintegrate. As soon as they do, the disintegration retrospectively looks inevitable. Our system—characterized by perpetual economic growth on a planet that is not growing—will inevitably implode. The only question is whether the transformation is planned or unplanned. Our task is to ensure it is planned, and fast. We need to conceive and build a new system based on the principle that every generation, everywhere, has an equal right to enjoy natural wealth.

This is less daunting than we might imagine. As Erica Chenoweth's historical research reveals, for a peaceful mass movement to succeed, a maximum of 3.5% of the population needs to mobilize. Humans are ultra-social mammals, constantly if subliminally aware of shifting social currents. Once we perceive that the status quo has changed, we flip suddenly from support for one state of being to support for another. When a committed and vocal 3.5% unites behind the demand for a new system, the social avalanche that follows becomes irresistible. Giving up before we have reached this threshold is worse than despair; it is defeatism.

Today, Extinction Rebellion takes to streets around the world in defense of our life-support systems. Through daring, disruptive, nonviolent action, it forces our environmental predicament onto the political agenda. Who are these people? Another "they," who might rescue us from our follies? The success of this mobilization depends on us. It will reach the critical threshold only if enough of us cast aside denial and despair, and join this exuberant, proliferating movement. The time for excuses is over. The struggle to overthrow our life-denying system has begun.

George Monbiot is a Guardian columnist.



Extinction Rebellion's Fashion: Circus of Excess event in London, a protest against disposable and wasteful fashion. Photo: Yui Mok/PA.

Extinction Crisis

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triarchal, spiritual/aesthetic. Considering that a “worldview” is the foundational lens through which we understand the world and is much more than a religion, culture, belief, or ideology, we can assume the report is talking about the dominant worldview and the contrasting Indigenous one.

The degree to which the authors apparently have utilized Traditional Indigenous Knowledge is unprecedented—a point the authors themselves acknowledge in the summary.

Past scholarship has mostly dismissed Indigenous ways of understanding the world. Consider *The Invented Indian*, published as recently as 1990, by James Clifton, who writes that “acknowledging anything positive in the native past is an entirely wrongheaded proposition, because no genuine Indian accomplishments have ever really been substantiated.” *Sick Societies: Challenging the Myth of Primitive Harmony*, published in 1992 by UCLA anthropologist Robert Edgerton, claims child abuse and other social maladies were far more pervasive in primitive societies, proving the superiority of Western culture. And as recently as 2000, in *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History*, Shepard Krech was asserting falsehoods such as the demise of the buffalo was the fault of the Indians themselves.

The U.N. extinction study clearly challenges such dismissals of the worldview that guided us for 99% of human history before we began our conquest of nature. The authors “recognize the positive contributions of Indigenous peoples to sustainability” such as the unique “knowledge, innovations and practices, institutions, and values of Indigenous peoples ... that often enhances their quality of life, as well as nature conservation, restoration, and sustainable use, which is relevant to broader society.” They add that “regional and global scenarios currently lack and would benefit from an explicit consideration of the views, perspectives, and rights of Indigenous Peoples.”

Although every effort to support Indig-

enous sovereignty should be part of the equation for restoring life systems, there is not sufficient time for whatever positive potential exists for such political transfer of power. So, while we fight for sovereignty in the future, we can immediately begin reembracing the Indigenous worldview, as the report suggests.

More and more scholarship is calling for this to happen. Consider the recent publication, *Indigenous Sustainable Wisdom First-Nation Know-How for Global Flourishing*, whose contributors describe our original nature-based relational worldview and how it relates to anthropology, psychology, sociology, leadership, science, history, and art. This contribution to Indigenous mainstream education coincides with decolonizing and counter-hegemonic movements in higher education.

As uncomfortable as it may be to reconsider the value of our Western or Eurocentric assumptions about human-nature relationships, the extinction report is clear about the need to do so. It calls for a very different way of understanding how to live in harmony with nature. Audrey Azoulay,

Whatever diverse religions, cultures, or beliefs we may have, and such diversity is vital, the underlying worldview that sees our interconnectedness with Nature, as many Indigenous Peoples still do, is essential.

director general of UNESCO, says as much in a statement about the report:

“This essential report reminds each of us of the obvious truth: the present generations have the responsibility to bequeath to future generations a planet that is not irreversibly damaged by human activity. Our local, indigenous, and scientific knowledge are proving that we have solutions, and so no more excuses: we must live on earth differently.”

The different way to live on earth is not about more reliance on science or technology so much as it is about understanding our place in the world. Whatever diverse



Carlos Sandi, president of the native communities of the Corrientes basin, protests against pollution in the Peruvian Amazon, 2017. Photo: Reuters/Guadalupe Pardo

religions, cultures, or beliefs we may have, and such diversity is vital, the underlying worldview that sees our interconnectedness with Nature, as many Indigenous Peoples still do, is essential. While respecting Indigenous rights and support-

in Colombia, presented before a group of Navajo students striving to obtain doctoral degrees from Fielding Graduate University. The students want to use the degree to walk in both worlds in ways that can help maintain and nurture their at-risk traditional lifeways and language. Having all but lost their traditional knowledge and language, the 11,000 members of the Misak nation began decolonizing their education systems in the early 1980s. Today most of them now speak their mother tongue and practice their traditional ways of being. Not only are the people happier and healthier, but their local husbandry and ecosystems have been significantly enhanced as a result.

We may not be able to learn the original place-based languages of those on whose land we dwell. Nor will we easily learn their ancient knowledge of the landscapes. We can, however, reclaim the shared worldview that guided us for most of human history, while doing our best to stop continuing genocide and culturecide of Indigenous peoples and support their goals for sovereignty. We can learn to live with just enough modern technical and structural conveniences while creating systems of egalitarianism and sustainable living based on both Western and Indigenous science. With new intentionality, spiritual awareness, trance-based learning, community support, and courageous truth-seeking, we might be able to do this before it is too late. Inspired by the vital message hidden in the sobering U.N. report that the way to live on this planet “differently” involves a new partnership with our original Indigenous worldview and those that still fully understand it, we can have hope for future generations. Of course, concern for future generations may depend on which worldview precepts we choose as well.

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Water protectors at Standing Rock, N.D. in October 2017. Photo: Ellen Davidson.

'Double Your Climate Targets'

Tens of thousands of children are school striking for the climate on the streets of Brussels. Hundreds of thousands are doing the same all over the world. And some are here today.

We are school striking because we have done our homework. People always tell us that they are so hopeful. They are hopeful that the young people are going to save the world. But we are not.

There is simply not enough time to wait for us to grow up and become the ones in charge. Because by the year 2020, we need to have bent the emissions curve steeply downwards. That is next year.

We know that most politicians don't want to talk to us. Good. We don't want to talk to them either. We want

them to talk to the scientists instead. Listen to them. Because we are just repeating what they are saying and have been saying for decades. We want you to follow the Paris Agreement and the IPCC reports. We don't have any other manifestos or demands. Just unite behind the science, that is our demand.

Many politicians, when they talk about the school strikes for climate, talk about almost anything except for the climate crisis. Many people try to make the school strikes a question of whether we should go back to school or not. They make up all sorts of conspiracies and call us puppets who can't think for themselves.

They are desperate to remove the focus from the climate crisis and change the subject. They don't want to



Greta Thunberg, outside the Swedish parliament in 2018.
Photo: Anders Hellberg via Wikimedia Commons

talk about it because they know they can't win this fight. Because they know they haven't done their homework. But we have.

We need new politics.

Once you have done your homework, you realize that we need new politics. We need new economics where

We need to start living within the planetary boundaries, focus on equity and take a few steps back, for the sake of all living species. We need to protect the biosphere, the air, the oceans, the soil, the forests.

everything is based on our rapidly declining and extremely limited remaining carbon budget.

But that is not enough. We need a whole new way of thinking. The political system that you have created is all about competition. You cheat when you can because all that matters is to win, to get power.

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Students in Dublin join the worldwide school strike for climate change, March 16, 2019. Photo: Ellen Davidson.

Lake Waits for People to Wake

By Mike Ferner

A rare, hybrid environmental campaign is underway to save a great lake—in fact, a Great Lake—Erie.

That grand body of water, declared dead in the late 1960s, experienced a textbook turnaround by the mid-'80s, but is once again in critical condition every summer.

Just as citizens of a previous generation finally held polluters accountable, they're beginning to mobilize once again. That "Second Battle for Lake Erie" in the late '60s and early '70s was necessitated by massive pollution from sewage treatment plants, industrial offal, and phosphates in detergents. The current "Third Battle for Lake Erie" is also about eutrophication (premature aging) from excess nutrients, but this time coming nearly 90% from agriculture, particularly hog, poultry, and dairy factories.

Using traditional street protests, picketing, and public education, people are starting to demand that elected officials and the EPA (created in large part because of the last Lake Erie crisis) do their jobs. But it doesn't stop there—hence the hybrid nature of the campaign.

Not trusting that a stripped-down, rotting-from-the-top EPA can or will do the job this time, Toledoans are also showing what the modern democracy movement can do. This is the movement envisioned by the Pro-

gram on Corporations, Law and Democracy (POCLAD) through the 1990s; turned into a grassroots organizing tool by Move to Amend (MTA); and imbued with the goal of protecting the rights of nature by the Community Environmental and Legal Defense Fund (CELDF). And judging by press accounts, it has recently literally put the world on notice.

... some 775 of these animal concentration camps now blot the watershed, producing more than twice the amount of sewage generated by Los Angeles and Chicago combined.

Two separate but allied citizen groups coordinate the work in Toledo.

Advocates for a Clean Lake Erie (ACLE) takes a more traditional approach, from street protests and picket lines to suing the U.S. EPA for not doing its job. It has showed its "Third Battle for Lake Erie" presentation to over 40

groups and generated many hundreds of calls and letters to public officials. In its three years of spunky organizing, the group has successfully raised the profile of Lake Erie's ills, as well as the corruption of regulatory agencies.

For example, one action saw ACLE members dump water choked with toxic algae and dead fish into the fountain at Toledo's Government Center. And the group wasn't shy about calling out the Ohio EPA's deputy director for having worked as a lobbyist for the Ohio Farm Bureau for 19 years.

Toledoans for Safe Water (TSW), composed mostly of younger activists, worked with CELDF to go beyond that approach. Ignoring sunburn and frostbite, they collected 10,000 signatures to place a city charter amendment on Toledo's ballot establishing that Lake Erie has the legal rights of people and placing Toledo at the forefront of an international movement for the rights of nature.

The Lake Erie Bill of Rights (LEBOR) passed on February 26, but only after surmounting multiple challenges by the county board of elections and a cabal of corporate lobbying groups that tried keep it off the ballot and then funded an unsuccessful \$320,000 effort to defeat it.

Lobby groups included the Affiliated Construction Trades unions, the Ohio Chamber of Commerce, American Petroleum Institute, Ohio Oil and Gas Association, and the Farm Bureau, as well as hog, poultry, and dairy factory lobbyists. British Petroleum, N.A. Inc., contributed the lion's share of the "Vote No" campaign.

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The US military is the world's biggest polluter. Photo: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Stopping Wars Is Essential for Stopping Climate Change

War isn't just a waste of resources that could be used to tackle climate change; it is itself a significant cause of environmental harm

By Elaine Graham-Leigh

War is not often mentioned in mainstream discussions about the causes of climate change. The 1992 Kyoto Protocol indeed explicitly excluded greenhouse gas emissions from military action from its emissions targets. This automatic exclusion was removed in the 2015 Paris Agreement, but it is still not mandatory for signatory countries to track and re-

duce their military carbon emissions.

The enormous cost of the military machine in both the United States and the UK gives the lie to claims that dealing with climate change would be unaffordable for Western governments. When proposers of a Green New Deal in the United States are told that “there’s no money to pay for it,” it’s natural to look to the \$716 billion of U.S. military spending as a potential source of those elusive funds. Sim-

ilarly, in the UK, we should not forget that a government that apparently can’t find money for the NHS, public services or green infrastructure can find \$260 billion for renewing Trident.

The connections between war and climate change, however, go further than simple competition for government funding. War isn’t just a waste of resources

tanks, jeeps, Humvees, jet planes,” as Steven Groves from the Heritage Foundation put it in 2015. To put the figures into perspective, U.S. military personnel on active service make up around 0.0002% of the world’s population, but are part of a military system that generates around 5% of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions.

Much of these emissions are from the

The enormous cost of the military machine in both the United States and the UK gives the lie to claims that dealing with climate change would be unaffordable for Western governments.

that could be used to tackle climate change; it is itself a significant cause of environmental harm. The armed forces have considerable carbon footprints. This is most true of the U.S. military, but the UK armed forces will have similar practices, albeit on a smaller scale.

The U.S. military admits to getting through 395,000 barrels of oil every day, including jet fuel consumption, which makes it the single largest consumer in the world. This is an astonishing figure that is, nevertheless, likely to be a considerable underestimate. Once all the oil use from military contractors, weapons manufacturing, and all those secret bases and operations that get missed out of the official figures is factored in, the real daily usage is likely to be closer to a million barrels. As even supporters of the military admit, “vast swathes of our military are big carbon emitters—

military infrastructure that the United States maintains around the world. The environmental cost of war itself is considerably higher. It has been estimated that the Iraq war between 2003 and 2007 accounted for 141 million metric tons of CO₂, more than 60% of all the countries in the world.

The environmental damage caused by war is not limited, of course, to climate change. The effects of nuclear bombing and nuclear testing and the use of Agent Orange, depleted uranium, and other toxic chemicals, as well as land mines and unexploded ordnance lingering in conflict zones long after the war has moved on, have earned the U.S. military a deserved reputation as “the greatest single assault on the environment.” It has been estimated that 20% of all environmental degradation around the world is due to military and related activities, much of

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Lake Erie

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Two heartening developments in that campaign are worth noting.

The corporate forces created two dummy groups to promote a truly absurd, over-the-top message that, if passed, LEBOR would “raise the cost of food and nearly everything” beyond the reach of consumers and negatively affect “even churches”; they used a graphic widely associated with anti-domestic violence programs to indicate how it would frighten children. But a quick look at their dummy facebook page revealed that every single comment was accusing the sponsors of lying and trying to deceive voters.

The other encouraging point was to hear many people, not just core activists, readily state that “if corporations have the rights of people, why shouldn’t Lake Erie?” That observation, won through decades of hard work by the democracy movement, quickly put the lie to any claims that LEBOR was foolishly unconstitutional.

That, of course, is what the corporados immediately tried to prove the very day after the election, by enlisting a farmer to be plaintiff in a lawsuit challenging LEBOR. The court put a stay on implementing the measure until the suit is settled.

Meanwhile, the lead organizer for TSW, Markie Miller, was invited to speak on Earth Day at the United Nations about Toledo’s success and reporters from around the globe have called to find out more about the rights of nature.

Also in April, ACLE promoted a new report issued by the Environmental Working Group and the Environmental Law and Policy Center that showed the number of hog, poultry, and dairy factories in the Maumee River Watershed, all upstream from Toledo’s location on Lake Erie, has exploded in the last decade, far outnumbering anything state officials have claimed.

The study estimates some 775 of these animal concentration camps now blot the watershed, producing more than twice the amount of sewage generated by Los Angeles and Chicago combined. That waste, containing antibiotic-resistant bacteria, hormones, viruses, and massive amounts of E. coli, is dumped, untreated and often to excess, on fields that drain into the Maumee.

Providing the proverbial final straw, that report motivated ACLE members to endorse a national campaign organized by Food and Water Watch to ban factory “farms.” Previously, the group concentrated strictly on how these facilities affect Lake Erie water quality. Supporting a ban has broadened the group’s concerns to include inhumane con-

ditions, overuse of antibiotics, and the significant reduction in number of traditional family farms that used to include sustainable livestock operations.

Coincidentally, an article in the UK *Guardian* postulates that a successful strategy for Democratic presidential candidates to win rural votes would be to support a moratorium on any more of these massive operations, given their impact on air and water quality in the immediate areas where they’re sited.

Of course, waiting for significant

change to come from the top has been shown to be unproductive time and again, so both TSW and ACLE say Lake Erie’s fate will be decided by people choosing to wield the power of democracy.

Mike Ferner served as a Navy corpsman during the Vietnam war and was discharged as a conscientious objector. He is a former president of Veterans For Peace and author of Inside the Red Zone: A Veteran For Peace Reports from Iraq, published in 2006. He is a founding member of Advocates for a Clean Lake Erie.



Mike Ferner: 'Toledoans are also showing what the modern democracy movement can do.'

On Getting Arrested at Bath Iron Works

In the shadow of warships and the climate emergency

By Rob Shetterly

Too few people are connecting the dots between our gigantic military and the climate crisis. But, if we love our children, if we love the miracle of life, and all our fellow species—we must make this connection clear.

In April, I chose to get arrested at a demonstration at Bath Iron Works (BIW) in Bath, Maine. The day was cold, windy, and wet. A huge new battleship, the *USS Lyndon Baines Johnson*, was being launched. BIW is one of two shipyards in the United States capable of building these mammoth, deadly ships. Maine's congresspeople and senators were there along with the top executives of BIW and General Dynamics, the parent company of BIW—as well as hundreds of other guests—to extol our military might.

These launchings are a big deal. Such ships take years to build and are high-tech marvels of stealth, surveillance, and destruction. This one cost around \$7 billion. Bath is a modest coastal Maine community dominated by the enormous shipyard, Maine's biggest employer.

The 75 of us who chose to protest the launch lined up along the sidewalks of Washington Street at one of the entrances to the yard. We wore hats and gloves and rain-coats. We carried signs that said “Convert!” The casual passerby, seeing signs like those, might have been taken us for a religious cult calling on the warmongers to get right with God before the endtimes. The conversion we demanded, however, was secular—more about economics, war-making, and militarism's connection with climate change. The impending doom in the acceleration of climate change, however, did lend our demand an aspect of threat: Act now on climate change, or else! And any passerby would also notice that most of us were, as we say, of an age—a cheerful, motley assortment of activists who cut their yellowing teeth protesting the Vietnam War and marching for civil rights in the 1960s.

The U.S. military—with its nearly 1000 bases worldwide and insatiable reliance on fossil fuel to keep all of its ships, planes, tanks, trucks, and jeeps running—is the single largest source of carbon dioxide emissions (the gases causing climate change) in the world. The Pentagon's carbon footprint is 70% of total U.S. emissions. Our military uses more oil than 175 smaller countries combined. The Navy's firepower outmatches the next 20 countries combined. We spend more on our military than the next seven countries, including China and Russia.

Those statistics are meant to identify a problem. The problem is that if we are serious about reversing the climate course we are on, we are not going to succeed by changing light bulbs. Nor will electric cars and local organic farms do it. Even legions of solar panels and wind turbines won't cut it. We've got to cut the military, too. That's why 25 people chose to get arrested protesting the launch of this incredibly expensive and militarily redundant ship on April 27.

A person doesn't oppose the U.S. military in this country to win a popularity contest. The Pentagon has spent billions over the years successfully propagandizing about the greatest country in the world defended by the greatest army in the world, that our “way of life” is secured by our vast and far-flung weaponry. Even politicians, who lament that we can't seem to find enough money for education, health care, repairing infrastructure, fighting poverty, and protecting the environment, are afraid to mention that nearly 60% of our discretionary funds go to the military. And they are certainly afraid to point out the obvious: U.S. militarism is more about business, about profit for the defense contractors,



Activists get arrested outside Bath Iron Works April 27. Photo: Regis Tremblay

than defense. And a large portion of that profit is recycled into donations to politicians to keep the game going.

The continuation of ongoing insecurity creates vast fortunes. It has been said that for the \$6 trillion the United States has spent on war making since 2001, the entire planet could have been converted to clean energy. That \$6 trillion didn't explode in the deserts and mountains of Iraq and Afghanistan. It rained like gold dust into the pockets of General Dynamics, Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Halliburton, Raytheon, Northrop Grumman, etc. A taxpayer subsidy for the contractors. Can anyone tell me what good has come of all that war and suffering unless

“I wasn't there to be arrested because I have a gripe with the humongous size of the US military. I was there because the humongous size of the US military is endangering the survival of all plant and animal species on this planet.”

you happen to share in the war profits?

Since it would be very hard for anyone to claim any good results for the United States after nearly 30 years (dating from the first Gulf War in 1990) of criminal war-making, one might assume that the people making decisions about our wars are very, very stupid—that is unless you were a defense contractor and now very, very rich. And then you might wonder if the people making decision to go to war didn't turn out to be the same people reaping the profits.

But I wasn't there to be arrested because I have a gripe with the humongous size of the U.S. military. I was there because the humongous size of the U.S. military is endangering the survival of all plant and animal species on this planet. I wasn't there to dispute whether maintaining this immense military was an acceptable risk considering how dangerous the world is, no matter what the scientists say about climate change. I can't imagine a more absurd—and why not say it, insane—proposition: that the imminent extinction of much of the earth's life, including us, is secondary to U.S. military domination. Hello?

I also wasn't there to shut down Bath Iron Works. Those signs we carried that said “Convert!” were demanding that BIW start making green infrastructure—wind turbines, solar panels, high-speed rail cars, electric cars, fossil free cargo ships, all those things that create sustainable jobs—in fact, better-paying jobs—than weapons. Someone will point out that I said a few paragraphs earlier that all that green stuff isn't enough to stop climate change. That's right, except it does work if we stop making warships and shrink the bloated military. That's what conversion is.

We had hoped to block the limousines carrying the corporate and political dignitaries into the *LBJ*'s “christening.” But those privileged folks used a secret entrance to the yard. Instead we blocked a bus and a few cars carrying guests. We peacefully lay down on the wet road.

No one likes to get arrested. Handcuffs can be uncomfortable and the hours of processing are tedious. The Bath police, though, were respectful and courteous to us. They didn't want to give us something else to complain about. Our goal was not to get arrested. Our goal was to use the arrest to get a soapbox in the media to talk about the link between militarism and climate change. The real risk most often in getting arrested is not the danger or ignominy of arrest. The real risk is if you will get a chance to tell the world why.

Everywhere I go now I hear people—old people, young people, all people—despairing over what's happening with the climate, with animal and plant extinctions, with powerful people at the top of our government ignoring this crisis. What are the powerful thinking? And very few people are connecting the dots between our gigantic military and climate. If we love our children, if we love the miracle of life and all our fellow species, shouldn't we say, as Mario Savio did in the 1960s:

“There's a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious—makes you so sick at heart—that you can't take part. You can't even passively take part. And you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus, and you've got to make it stop.”

As kids we laughed at the notion that early mariners feared the world was flat and that they might sail over the edge into the black abyss of a cold cosmos. The politicians, the fossil fuel execs, and the war profiteers have indeed made the world flat and sailed us to the brink. The kids aren't laughing.

Robert Shetterly is a writer and artist who lives in Brooksville, Maine, and the author of *Americans Who Tell the Truth*. Posters of Shetterly's portraits of Howard Zinn, Rachel Carson, Edward Snowden, and scores of others are now available at americanswhotellthetruth.org.

Gung Ho For Privatization

How a troubled Marine recruit from a privileged background became an angry advocate for VA privatization

Unbecoming: A Memoir of Disobedience

By Anuradha Bhagwati's

Simon and Schuster, 2019, 336 pp.

By Suzanne Gordon



Ever since the United States launched its open-ended Middle Eastern wars, testing the limits of an all-volunteer army, military recruiters have had bigger quotas to fill in poor and working-class communities.

Young people with a history of violent and aggressive behavior in their childhood or teenage years—or carrying other emotional baggage from dysfunctional family life—may survive basic training. But their assignment to active duty is often fraught with multiple opportunities for experiencing new forms of trauma, at home and abroad.

Recruits in better shape initially can later develop mental or physical problems that adversely affect their job performance and lead to their expulsion from the military. Several hundred thousand of these veterans now have “bad paper”—less-than-honorable discharges—which makes them ineligible for much needed care from the Veterans Health Administration (VHA).

Instead, one speaker after another offered moving testimonials to the care they received and the dedication of their care-givers. The most common message was, ‘the VA saved my life.’

About 400,000 men and women who managed to complete their tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan now qualify for VHA treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Self-Mortifying Culture

Anuradha Bhagwati's account of her life in the Marines, *Unbecoming: A Memoir of Disobedience*, is a case study in how military service can make mental health conditions worse when troubled young people flee civilian life for the adventure, discipline, or employment benefits of active duty. In the author's case, her prior experience of parental abuse plus sexual harassment as a teenager made her particularly vulnerable to hazing, sexual harassment, and general brutality in the Marine Corps. She was, as she explains in the book, drawn to a self-mortifying “culture in which degradation and humiliation were entwined with belonging.”

Being a clinically depressed, bisexual woman of color raised by two high-powered Ivy League economics professors—who nurtured resentment against every conceivable academic sleight—virtually guaranteed that her military service would be traumatic. Predictably enough, her escape from her overly controlling parents landed her in an environment even more toxic than a family that fat-shamed her and found fault with her every academic

choice or achievement at Yale. Writing about her father, the author notes that “the only thing worse than his cruelty was my self-hatred.”

In her early 20s, after dropping out of graduate school at Columbia, Bhagwati visited a military recruitment center in Manhattan. She tested so well that she was immediately dispatched to officer candidate school.

“What I really wanted,” she recalls, “was some kind of physical and mental reckoning. Taming my body was a form of control I didn't have in any other part of my life.”

Instead, she became part of a hierarchy (and patriarchy) that included “a small class of folks who issued orders and a large mass of folks who executed them, regardless of their opinions or talents.”

As Bhagwati confesses in her memoir, she developed her own “bloodlust” and “violent edge,” although neither was ever tested in combat. She became part of the Marines' managerial class, rising to the rank of captain. But amid the fierce misogyny of the corps, she endured much hostility and inappropriate behavior by fellow officers, her superiors, and subordinates.

Even when a male Marine expressed concern about her “stabbing knee pain” after a training injury, she reacted as if he was an enemy too. “I'm sure the mother-fucker wanted me to quit,” she writes. “I wasn't going to give him the satisfaction.”

Wrong Turn

Bhagwati left the military, like thousands of other men and women, with deep psychological scars. After a four-year fight with the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), her service-related condition, based on military sexual trauma (MST), was finally recognized; she received a 40% disability rating (and later appealed for a higher one). After her discharge, and more floundering in graduate school, she became an advocate for better treatment of women in the military.

The group she co-founded and directed, the Service Women's Action Network (SWAN), seeks full integration of women into the armed forces and better recognition and treatment of MST, a widespread problem much in the news lately due to Arizona Sen. Martha McSally's disclosure that she was raped by a superior officer in the Air Force.

The VHA's national health care system has been flooded with new patients thanks to military occupations and interventions under Presidents Bush, Obama, and Trump. Veterans' hospitals and clinics are caring for nine million people overall. Despite underfunding and understaffing, they deliver higher quality of care than most civilian hospitals—and private sector providers of mental health services. The VHA's mission includes reducing veterans' homelessness and suicide rates and helping its patients cope with PTSD, MST, traumatic brain injuries, lost limbs, and other service-related problems like burn pit exposure.

In her book, unfortunately, Bhagwati turns her own personal experience into a wholesale indictment of the VHA—as if that federal agency, not the Pentagon, were responsible for disabled veterans' pain and suffering, in-

cluding her own considerable mental distress.

Echoing the party line of the Koch brothers-backed Concerned Veterans of America, she writes that the VA is “just a paper-pushing monstrosity, with poor management and long lines.” She neglects to mention that Congress' insufficient funding and the eligibility rules it has imposed are responsible for VBA claims processing delays and benefit denials—not the agency's overworked clerical staff.

Her fellow veterans make up about one-third of the VHA workforce, some getting jobs through a Compensated Work Therapy program. But in the author's view, many are “lazy, incompetent, or downright mean.”

Mimicking a parental practice she abhors, she describes one among them as a “chubby 50-something ... mindlessly dishing out a government mandated survey for new veterans”—actually one of several screening tools used to identify depression, suicide risk, MST, and PTSD. She even scoffs at the efforts of her own VA shrink.

No Love at the VA?

During a patient visit to the VA Medical Center in Manhattan, she noticed “security measures in the lobby” but “nothing suggested safety” to her. After she collapsed, sobbing heavily in a hospital corridor, a staff member approached and asked if she was okay. “I shooed her off, hand waving and muttering something like yes. There was no love here. There was only rats and roaches.”

I read this passage just three months after spending several hours in the same hospital lobby, with no vermin in sight. Instead, New York Veterans For Peace was conducting an impromptu “speak out” by veterans and their family members. Any patient who happened to be passing by was free to raise any criticism or concern.

Instead, one speaker after another offered moving testimonials to the care they received and the dedication of their care-givers. The most common message was, “the VA saved my life.”

In Bhagwati's universe, there appears to be only one true savior of veterans—herself. She writes that, when socialist Bernie Sanders served as chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, he showed “as little interest in service women's empowerment as Republicans.”

Liberal Democrats who have championed veterans' issues get no love, either: California Rep. Jackie Speier is credited (in a footnote) with being one of “the first members of Congress to take on military sexual assault comprehensively.” Yet the author faults her for not having “the military background, language and temperament necessary to engage the Pentagon,” plus being a “a mess of histrionics, misplaced blame, and grudge holding.”

Nancy Pelosi, now speaker of the House, triggered Bhagwati's own favorite grudge when she mistakenly called her Ann, instead of Anu. This faux pas gets much attention in *Unbecoming*, a memoir full of personal slights and prickly judgments. The fact that Sanders, Speier, and Pelosi all helped secure billions of dollars in new funding for VA programs, including those favored

continued on next page ...

Warning to Noncitizen Soldiers and Vets: Complete Your Paperwork

Even after honorable discharge, foreign-born veterans who get arrested run the risk of deportation

By Ann Wright

No U.S. military veteran should face deportation, but many do.

United Deported Veterans, with an office just off the plaza after crossing the U.S. border into Tijuana, Mexico, helps deported vets find housing, get medical care, and access disability checks if they have a disability pension from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

It is also tracking more than 400 noncitizen U.S. veterans with green cards who have been deported for conviction of crimes in the United States. Most of the crimes are nonviolent, drug-related charges. Many deported veterans had been living in the United States for decades.

During a visit to his office earlier this month, Hector Lopez, the group's office director, estimated thousands more noncitizen U.S. veterans have been deported and have not sought assistance from his office.

Three percent of the U.S. military veteran population in 2012, or about 608,000, were foreign-born. All of these veterans should ensure they have citizenship to protect themselves from deportation.

Recruited on Citizenship Promise

Many deported vets, according to United Deported Veterans' Lopez, were recruited to join the U.S. military on the promise that it would provide a path to citizenship. However, once they are enlisted, few unit commanders help them file the necessary paperwork or provide time to keep the various appointments required to complete the citizenship package.

Lopez says some immigrant veterans who have lived in the United States most of their lives assume they became citizens by virtue of their military service.

That was what he once thought, too.

Lopez was brought by his parents to the United States

from Mexico when he was 3 years old. He grew up in Fresno, Calif., served in the military and was honorably discharged. Remarkably, it wasn't until he was convicted of a nonviolent crime as a civilian and deported to Mexico, that he realized he was not a U.S. citizen and that being a veteran did not protect him from deportation.

Many veterans born in Mexico are deported to Tijuana and several have settled there. Veterans For Peace has established a chapter in Tijuana for deported veterans that assists other deported veterans in ways similar to United Deported Veterans; with housing help, access to medical care, getting VA disability checks. Members are also providing food and water for a church near the U.S. border that is housing people from Central America and Haiti who are requesting asylum in the United States.

'Discharged Then Discarded'

A 2016 ACLU report "Discharged Then Discarded" profiles 59 veterans, including the charges that landed them in jail and what happened after their deportation. Seventy-three percent indicated they had no immigration attorney representing them in their removal proceedings, often because they could not afford to hire one.

Due to their military training, veterans can be recruited by gangs and drug cartels in the countries to which they are deported, the ACLU report notes. Deportation also means breaking up families and losing access to VA medical assistance that many vets need due to high levels of post-traumatic stress caused by combat in U.S. wars.

In less than one decade, Congress greatly expanded grounds for deportation, beginning in 1988 when a new category of crimes, "aggravated felonies," was created for which immigrants could be deported. Previously, murder, drug and firearms trafficking were the main offenses for which persons were deported.

An aggravated felony could mean any of more than 30 types of offenses, including simple battery, theft, filing a false tax return, and failing to appear in court, and includes conduct that some states classify as misdemeanors or do not criminalize at all.

Getting back to the United States after deportation is hard. An alien who was removed because of an "aggravated felony," has to stay out of the country for 20 years.

any contact with them can be as "humiliating" and "traumatizing" as "walking past a framed photo of the president—a self-proclaimed pussy-grabber—on the way to VA appointments." As the author of a recent veterans' healthcare study that references polling data showing broad, cross-generational patient support for the VHA, I can only observe that Bhagwati's view is highly personalized, badly distorted, and not widely shared.

Ironically, by the end of her memoir, the author has become so burned out by the "abuse, jealousy, and antagonism" of her "female peers" inside the Beltway that she abandons "professional advocacy" for a more balanced life centered on cooking, mindfulness meditation, and yoga. There's even a hint that relations with her parents, or at least her 86-year-old mother, have slightly improved. Most readers of *Unbecoming*, will, of course, have no idea that the three healing activities—now practiced by the author—are all taught at the mean, incompetent, hyper-masculine, and better-off-privatized VA.

Originally published by Jacobin.

Suzanne Gordon is the author of many books about politics, feminism, and health care. Her latest is *Wounds of War: How The VA Delivers Health, Healing, and Hope to the Nation's Veterans*. She can be reached at sg@suzannegordon.com.



Hector Lopez and Lupita Cibrian.

For lesser charges, the wait may be five or 10 years before it is possible to apply for a waiver.

As recently as 2012, 24,000 noncitizens were in the military, with 5,000 green-card holders enlisting every year.

The number of veterans receiving disability benefits has increased dramatically since 2001, reports Lawyers for the Disabled. This is due to injuries, both physical and mental, from U.S. wars. In 2000, approximately 2.3 million veterans received disability compensation, but 16 years later, after the wars on Afghanistan and Iraq, that number doubled to 4.6 million. Many suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder from what they did or saw in the wars.

Noncitizen U.S. veterans receive lifelong service-connected treatment in Veterans Administration facilities located in the United States. However, if a veteran is deported, the only VA facility outside the United States and

Deportation also means breaking up families and losing access to VA medical assistance that many vets need due to high levels of post-traumatic stress caused by combat in U.S. wars.

its territories (Guam, American Samoa, Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands) is in the Philippines.

Most of the deported veterans known to United Deported Veterans are from Central America and do not have the resources to travel to the Philippines for medical assistance.

Among many other remedies, the ACLU, in its report, calls on the Customs and Border Protection to facilitate the parole of deported veterans into the United States for medical appointments and family visits.

Originally published by Consortium News.

Ann Wright served 29 years in the U.S. Army/Army Reserves and retired as a colonel. She was a U.S. diplomat for 16 years and served in U.S. Embassies in Nicaragua, Grenada, Somalia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Micronesia, Afghanistan and Mongolia. She resigned from the U.S. government in March 2003 in opposition to President George W. Bush's war on Iraq. She is co-author of *Dis-sent: Voices of Conscience*.

Privatization

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by Bhagwati, is noted little or not at all.

In her book, the author blames her former military comrades—rather than the Electoral College or Republican voters in general—for the disastrous outcome of our 2016 presidential election. "Veterans voted two to one for Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton," she writes. "This betrayal was one too many for me to take."

Nevertheless, only two years later, the author did Trump a big favor when she penned a *New York Times* op-ed designed to promote her book, headlined "Donald Trump is Getting It Right on Veterans Care."

At a moment when all major veterans organizations are taking a stand against VA outsourcing, Bhagwati enthusiastically embraced the idea. She accused VA privatization foes of being "out of touch with the needs of a younger and more diverse veterans' population" and focused instead on the needs of "older men whose cultural norms are becoming increasingly obsolete."

According to her *Times* piece, the 300,000 VA caregivers—whether male or female, civilian or former military—"largely take their cues from hypermasculine military culture." Thus, in a VA hospital or clinic, having

Climate Targets

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That must come to an end. We must stop competing with each other. We need to co-operate, and work together to share the resources of the planet in a fair way.

We need to start living within the planetary boundaries, focus on equity and take a few steps back, for the sake of all living species. We need to protect the biosphere, the air, the oceans, the soil, the forests.

This may sound very naïve but if you have done your homework, then you know that we don't have any other choice. We need to focus every inch of our being on climate change. Because if we fail to do so, then all of our achievements and progress will be for nothing. And all that will remain of our political leaders' legacy will be the greatest failure of human history. And they will be remembered as the greatest villains of all time because they have chosen not to listen and not to act.

But this does not have to be. There is still time. According to the IPCC report, we are about 11 years away from being in a position where we set off an irreversible chain reaction beyond human control.

To avoid that, unprecedented changes have to take place within this coming decade. Including a reduction of our CO2 emissions by at least 50% by year 2030.

And please note that those numbers don't



Students in Dublin join worldwide school strike for climate change March 16. Photo: Ellen Davidson

We need a whole new way of thinking. The political system that you have created is all about competition. You cheat when you can because all that matters is to win to get power.

include the aspect of equity, which is absolutely necessary to make the Paris Agreement work on a global scale. Nor do they include tipping points or feedback loops like the extremely powerful methane gas released from the thawing arctic permafrost.

They do, however, include negative emission techniques on a huge planetary

We have been told that the EU intends to improve its emissions reduction target. In the new target, the EU is proposing to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to 45% below 1990 levels by 2030. Some people say that is good or ambitious. But this new target is still not enough to keep global warming below 1.5°C. This target

is not sufficient to protect the future of children growing up today.

If the EU is to make its fair contribution to stay within the carbon budget for the 2°C limit, then it needs a minimum of 80% reduction by 2030. And that includes aviation and shipping. So about twice as much as the current proposal.

The actions required are beyond manifestos or party politics. Once again, [politicians] sweep their mess under the carpet for our generation to clean up and solve.

Some people say that we are fighting for our future. But that is not true. We are fighting for everyone's future. And if you think that we should be in school instead, then we suggest you take our place in the streets, striking from your work. Or better yet, join us so we can speed up the process.

And I'm sorry, but saying everything will be alright while continuing to do nothing at all is just not hopeful to us. In

fact, it is the opposite of hope. And yet, this is exactly what you keep doing. You can't just sit around waiting for hope to come. Then you are acting like spoiled irresponsible children.

You don't seem to understand that hope is something that you have to earn. And if you still say that we are wasting valuable lesson time, then let me remind you that our political leaders have wasted decades through denial and inaction. And since our time is running out we have started taking action.

We have started cleaning up your mess and we won't stop until we are done. Thank you.

Greta Thunberg is a Swedish school-girl who, at age 15, began protesting outside the Swedish parliament about the need for immediate action to combat the impending climate disaster and has since become an outspoken climate activist.

Stopping Wars

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which of course has involved the United States and the UK.

The U.S. military is particularly secretive about its energy requirements. Journalists have commented that it is easier to get casualty figures out of the Department of Defense than it is to get statistics on military oil use. U.S. military behavior tells us, however, that there is an absolute commitment to continue to get through oil at the current, astonishing rate, even when there might be good, military reasons for reducing it. When the U.S. Defense Science Board reported in 2001 that the military would need either to develop more oil efficient weapons or better support systems to be able to keep themselves supplied, "the generals seem to have chosen a third option: capturing access to

more oil," according to Ian Angus' book *Facing the Anthropocene*. This indicates the fundamental truth about the military and climate change: that the modern way of war emerged from and is only possible

plies was crucial in the Second. The Allies would not have won had they not been able to cut off German access to oil and to maintain it for themselves. The lesson for the United States in particular after the

gas-emitting technologies for military and domestic production; the source of the climate change we are facing now.

The last 70 years have been 70 years of imperialist wars and 70 years of climate change. These are not unrelated unfortunate facts, but a demonstration of how greenhouse gas emissions and environmental destruction are inescapably part of modern warfare.

We can have wars for oil, or we can have a moderate climate and an inhabitable planet. It is increasingly clear that we cannot have both.

*Elaine Graham-Leigh has been an environmental campaigner for more than a decade, focusing on issues of climate change and social justice. She speaks and writes widely on green issues and is a member of Counterfire (counterfire.org). Her book, *A Diet of Austerity: Class, Food and Climate Change*, was published in April 2015 by Zero Books.*

... [G]reenhouse gas emissions and environmental destruction are inescapably part of modern warfare.

with profligate use of fossil fuel.

The rapid rise in greenhouse gas emissions that created the current climate crisis began in around 1950; in other words, in the period immediately following the Second World War. This is not a coincidence. Oil had been important in the First World War, but controlling access to oil sup-

war was that continuing access to and monopolization of the world's oil was essential if it was to be the world's superpower. This made oil a central military priority, and also cemented the dominant position of the petroleum/automotive sector in the United States. These were preconditions for a system dependent on greenhouse

A Vietnamese View of Memorial Day

Since 2015, Veterans For Peace has organized a campaign to bring letters to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall on Memorial Day. Below is the letter delivered this year by Vietnamese-American writer and humanitarian Le Ly Hayslip.

From the Unknown Soldiers Gravesite on Route 9, Ho Chi Minh Trail ...

Dear Names on The Wall, in Washington, D.C., USA,

I just returned from Vietnam, our Motherland, where you lost your lives. You are so much luckier than my countrymen in Vietnam. At least your names are here on these beautiful black marble walls, standing right in your capital near the White House where they made the decision for your life to send you away to Vietnam.

Since I was a young girl growing up in my village I heard the name “Dãy Núi Trường Sơn” (Annamite Mountain Range) to describe the many mountains around us in Danang. Later when the war against you and your country broke out, Trường Sơn become something very sensitive and secretive. Our parents always looked at the mountains with sad faces and told us there were so many people from the ethnic groups living in the mountains who died. We saw the smoke rise up after some airplanes dropped something on them.

*When forced to choose
between life and death,
we always choose life.*

I came to the United States in 1970 and learned from the English language news that the Ho Chi Minh Trail was in the Trường Sơn Mountains, where the United States carried out heavy bombing and killed hundreds of Vietnamese almost daily. They are tall mountains with deep jungle covered with heavy vegetation and forests extending over 1,100 km in length. These mountains extend from north to south Vietnam and were used by the north to infiltrate troops and supplies into South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos during the U.S. war in Vietnam.

For the last 32 years I learned from people in Vietnam who traveled on foot for months from south Vietnam to the north to study in Hanoi. Some were badly wounded and had to be carried by two men on a stretcher walking for months before reaching Hanoi for treatment. I also talked to people like my brother, Bon Nghe, and countless cousins who left families and villages in 1954 to join Uncle Ho's army in the north. He was only 17 years old and walked most of the way.

In 1972, Bon Nghe and our cousins walked from the north back to central Vietnam. They walked for four days, stopped for a day of rest, then continued on amid heavy aerial bombing, mortars, and artillery fire from every direction and watched human beings killed like ants. It took

brother Bon and his comrades years to arrive near our home, where they fought to liberate the south. On the way, they buried as many dead comrades as they could.

On March 28, 1975, they achieved their goal: Danang, Quang Nam, and all of central Vietnam were liberated. Bon shared with me many stories of bravery and horror about the Trường Sơn Mountains and Ho Chi Minh Trail that Bon and his comrades witnessed on their way. The Ho Chi Minh Trail was used by the National Liberation Front from 1959 to 1975 during heavy fighting and bombing.

After 1975 until about 10 years ago, Vietnam opened up tours for world visitors to come and visit old battlefields and hot spots all over Vietnam in places like Khe Sanh, Dien Bien Phu, Hamburger Hill, Hue City, Phu Bai, etc. They widened the old Ho Chi Minh Trail into a big highway from south to north for tour buses to carry veterans from the United States, France, Japan, and many other countries so that veterans who fought there could return to show their families and friends the places and battlefields where they experienced that terrible time and saw so many of their comrades fall.

For a long time I wanted to visit these places to capture the experiences that my brother Bon and others told me about while they walked in the Trường Sơn Mountains. Many advised me not to visit, worried that I could not take it! So I resisted this urge until my trip to Vietnam last April, when people invited me to join them on two major spiritual events that I could not resist.

The first event was to honor the memory and sacrifice of the Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thay Thích Quảng Đức on the 56th anniversary of his self-immolation at a busy intersection in Saigon on June 11, 1963, to protest against the war. The ceremony was held at the famous Linh Mu Temple in Hue, and I was one of 10,000 national and international guests on that day, April 23, 2019.

After a huge ceremony and lunch for several thousand monks, nuns, and guests, by noon there were just 10 monks and 30 of us headed to the Trường Sơn Mountains to the location of the Trường Sơn Martyrs' Cemetery on Route 9, where most of the unknown soldiers' gravesites are located. It is the largest national military cemetery of the Peoples Army of Vietnam. Without knowing what I was getting myself into, I was shocked when we reached the gravesites.

While monks and disabled people were working and praying for the souls of those fallen comrades to be released from earth to heaven, I walked around to see the full expanse of this gravesite and how many graves were there, but that would have taken me days to complete.

I have visited many of the largest military cemeteries and sites of massacres in the world, including U.S. Civil War sites such as Andersonville National Cemetery in Georgia, the Nazi concentration camps in Auschwitz, the Passchendaele battlefield in Flanders, Belgium, Battlefield 1 in Australia, the site of the Battle of Okinawa, the atomic bomb site in Hiroshima, Japan, just to name a few, but nothing was like the Trường Sơn National Cemetery. Not only was it so large, but the powerful spiritual force pres-

ent there deeply affected me both physically and mentally in that moment. No matter which country or military cemeteries I visit, they are all victims of war.

I walked and walked, crying in the hot sun; finally I sat and meditated under a tree to let my soul be with the spirits in the mountains, the frost and the death. Their spirits spoke to me, I prayed for them and asked for the release of their souls. I was deep in meditation when a vision came and showed me the story of human struggle in battles and the aftermath of wars as deep as the waters in the sea. Seemingly never ending fighting.

When forced to choose between life and death, we always choose life. A voice came to me: “Against all odds, we chose to be heroes and recognize our destiny to protect our Motherland by following our government's demand to make a sacrifice. That is why we are here at this lonely military gravesite on Route 9 of the Ho Chi Minh Trail not far from the DMZ (demilitarized zone). We never did make it to the south.”

Then I heard a song coming through the winds above, the song “Mẹ Việt Nam,” which every single Vietnamese mother can relate to, including myself.



Le Ly Hayslip.

The monks and disabled ones prayed hard in the four-hour ceremony in hopes that all the souls in these mountains be released from earth and move to a higher realm, to be with their loved ones, ancestors and their God to find peace. I joined the monks and the group praying and asked those souls to forgive and be forgiven, and to move on.

*There was a soldier who left home in springtime
He left his poor family and their bamboo hut and never
returned
His name is now engraved in the mountain stone
Clouds cast a shadow on the yellow flowers by his grave
Clouds in late afternoon cross the blue sky
Old mother still waits for her son to come home
Old mother keeps looking at the path where her son
walked
Oh Mẹ Việt Nam, Oh Motherland Vietnam
Tall mountains just like the love of our mother
The four seasons have whitened her hair
Still, she looks for her son to return
Oh Việt Nam ơi, Oh Motherland Vietnam
Fire is burning in the mountains where you fell
Red flowers bloom there
Showing the beauty of the evening sunset*

Our mother waited for my brother, Sau Ban, for 38 long years, but he never returned. Mother carried her patience with her to the grave, and hopefully reunited with him in the afterlife.

Le Ly Hayslip founded two charitable organizations: East Meets West Foundation and Global Village Foundation for humanitarian and emergency assistance in Vietnam and other countries of Asia. She wrote *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* which became a motion picture directed by Oliver Stone, and *Child of War, Woman of Peace*.



Trường Sơn Martyrs' Cemetery—Quảng Trị, Viet Nam.

If Socialism Falls in Venezuela, Colombia Shows Us What Will Replace It



By James Patrick Jordan

Corporate media, ever beating the drums for whatever war, coup, or intervention the oligarchs are pushing, plays its dutiful and subservient role. An example that comes immediately to mind is the false reports about weapons of mass destruction that paved the way for the invasion and occupation of Iraq in the Second Gulf War.

... [C]orporations like U.S.-based Drummond Coal, heavy operators in that region, don't want the U.S. public to know how they are robbing the people of water, diverting the flow of rivers from communities and food production, all in order to mine and process their dirty energy source.

Right now, something very similar is happening with regard to Venezuela. There is a barrage of unverified allegations and outright lies regarding that country, not to mention half-truths devoid of analysis. Every economic woe that has befallen the Venezuelan people is presented as a failure of the administration of Nicolás Maduro and a result of the path the country is taking toward socialism. Virtually never offered is any kind of explanation about the devastating effects of massive hoarding of goods by the opposition, and the U.S. government's policies of sanctions, blockades, and other forms of economic sabotage.

Meanwhile, we hear virtually nothing about the humanitarian crisis in Colombia, and when we do hear about that country, it is absurdly paraded as some kind of success story for democracy and capitalism. Just the other day I was listening to National Public Radio and heard Janet Napolitano, homeland security secretary under the Obama Administration, talking about how U.S. engagement in Colombia has resulted in a much improved human rights situation, painting a rosy picture of the country as a tourist destination. Well, Janet, either you're lying or intolerably misinformed, because if that picture is rosy,

the red tint you're seeing is painted with blood.

How many know that in Colombia, in La Guajira, over the past eight years, at least 6,100 indigenous children have died from hunger and lack of water? We don't hear about that because Colombia is basically a colony of the United States, and a partner in the U.S.-NATO empire, and publicizing the information would be an indictment and an embarrassment. We don't hear about that because

corporations like U.S.-based Drummond Coal, heavy operators in that region, don't want the U.S. public to know how they are robbing the people of water, diverting the flow of rivers from communities and food production, all in order to mine and process their dirty energy source. Ironically, in the name of fighting alleged repres-

sion and a manufactured crisis in Venezuela, Colombia is a staging ground for intervention in the neighboring country.

One thing the oligarchs, coup plotters, and warmongers have right is this: Venezuela in the hands of the opposition would look very much like Colombia today—but not the charming tourist attraction painted for us. The situation in Colombia is horrible and continues to plummet. Every day the statistics of terror pile up on top of each other. Every year since 2016, when a peace accord was signed and implemented to “end” Colombia's civil war, killings of social movement leaders and ex-insurgents participating in the peace process have become increasingly common. Since 2016, somewhere around 500 social movement leaders and peace process participants have been murdered by military and paramilitary shock troops.

It's the same with displacement. We hear constantly about refugees from Venezuela crossing into Colombia and other countries. But the reality is that for a long time, Venezuela has been absorbing refugees fleeing political violence in Colombia, and Colombia leads the world in the number of forcibly displaced people: over 7.7 million.

As for democracy, the White House and Congress and the corporate lie-machinery tell us that the legitimately elected government of Nicolás Maduro is in fact a dictatorship, as contrasted with Colombia, presented as a healthy democracy. But I was present during elections in Colombia last summer, and followed the vote closely. The Alliance for Global Justice had teams of observers, and each one saw irregularities.

During the presidential campaign, left and center-left campaigns were attacked by paid thugs, and campaign workers were even killed. During congressional and primary elections, there were shortages of ballots in more than 20% of polling places, including the three largest cities of Bogotá, Medellín, and Cali. Some 30% of voters said they were not able to vote privately.

As I write this report, I am back in Colombia traveling around the country hearing about mounting threats and political violence. Today I will travel to an area where armed death squads are threatening and already have attacked social movement leaders. The picture I'm seeing is not rosy, it's blood-drenched.

Pro-democracy activists, Afro-Colombian, indigenous, rural leaders, and ex-insurgents must every day walk with caution and concern for their lives. What's amazing to me is that they continue to struggle for a Colombia at peace; they continue to maintain their faith in that, against every outrage and onslaught.

The allegations against Venezuela are based on misinformation and distortions, and the silence about the crisis in Colombia is all part of a package to create false con-

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U.S. Illegally Evicts Protectors From Venezuelan Embassy



Banner outside the Venezuelan Embassy May 11. Photo: Ellen Davidson.

By Marjorie Cohn

On May 16, law enforcement agents broke into the Venezuelan Embassy in Washington, D.C., and arrested the four remaining members of the Embassy Protection Collective. “We denounce these arrests, as the people inside were there with our permission, and we consider it a violation of the Vienna Conventions,” Venezuelan Deputy Foreign Minister Carlos Ron said.

For 36 days, the protectors had lived in the embassy to shield it from a raid by U.S. authorities working in concert with opponents of Venezuela’s lawfully elected president, Nicolás Maduro. Since U.S. officers had refused to allow food into the embassy, only four of the some 50 members of the collective had stayed in order to conserve supplies.

The Trump administration has been trying to engineer an unlawful coup and regime change in Venezuela. After U.S. puppet Juan Guaidó declared himself “interim president” of Venezuela on Jan. 23, high Trump officials quickly ratified his declaration. The U.S. government seeks to illegally install Guaidó and a new ambassador in the D.C. embassy as part of its coup attempt.

After cutting off electricity and refusing to allow food and water to the protectors, agents from the Secret Service, State Department, and Washington, D.C., police tried to raid the embassy on May 13. They read

who has undertaken three failed coup attempts and is calling for military intervention in Venezuela. Guaidó and the United States share a dangerous agenda which has little support in Venezuela.”

On April 30, Guaidó tried unsuccessfully to convince the Venezuelan military to seize power from Maduro. Six days prior to Guaidó’s foiled effort, the State Department posted a fact sheet bragging about the United States’s central role in the attempted coup, but quickly removed the posting.

Since 2017, the U.S. government has imposed illegal sanctions on Venezuela, which have caused 40,000 deaths and a 36% reduction in oil production.

Moreover, the Trump administration is moving dangerously close to an illegal military intervention in Venezuela.

Violating U.S. and International Law

On May 13, the National Lawyers Guild posted a letter to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, the U.S. Secret Service, the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department and Idriss Jazairy, U.N. special rapporteur on the negative impact of the unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights. The signatories, including this writer, condemned the law-breaking by U.S. agents at the Venezuelan Embassy in Washington. The letter cited violations of the U.N. Charter and the Vienna Convention on Dip-

tacked, bloodied, and arrested by Secret Service agents to prevent him from delivering food to the invitees.

The raid of the embassy and eviction of the protectors violates two treaties the United States has ratified. When the U.S. ratifies a treaty, its provisions become part of domestic law under the Supremacy Clause of the Constitution.

Article 22 of the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (VCDR) states, “The premises of the mission shall be inviolable.” U.S. agents are forbidden from entering the embassy without the consent of the Maduro government. The United States is also “under a special duty to take all appropriate steps to protect the premises of the mission against any intrusion or damage and to prevent any disturbance of the peace of the mission or impairment of its dignity.” The premises, furniture, and other property “shall be immune from search, requisition, attachment, or execution.”

The 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (VCCR) states in Article 33, “The consular archives and documents shall be inviolable at all times and wherever they may be.” Article 27 provides, “In the event of the severance of consular relations between two States: the receiving State [in this case the United States] shall ... respect and protect the consular premises, together with the property of the consular post and the consular archives.”

Article 31 of the VCCR says, “The authorities of the receiving State shall not enter that part of the consular premises which is used exclusively for the purpose of the work of the consular post except with the consent of the head of the consular post or of his designee or of the head of the diplomatic mission of the sending State,” in this case, Venezuela. Furthermore, “the receiving State is under a special duty to take all appropriate steps to protect the consular premises against any intrusion or damage and to prevent any disturbance of the peace of the consular post or impairment of its dignity.”

Protecting Power Agreement

On May 13, the Embassy Protection Collective wrote a letter to the U.S. State Department and the Venezuelan Foreign Ministry proposing a lawful resolution to the standoff: A mutual Protecting Power Agreement “would avoid a military conflict that could lead to war.” The letter stated that the United States wants a Protecting Power for the U.S. embassy in Caracas and Venezuela wants a

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Six days prior to Guaidó’s foiled effort, the State Department posted a fact sheet bragging about the United States’s central role in the attempted coup, but quickly removed the posting.

from an unsigned piece of paper titled “Trespassing Notice,” which stated that the U.S. government recognized Guaidó as president of Venezuela and Carlos Vecchio as Venezuelan ambassador to the United States.

The paper, which had no official letterhead or insignia, threatened that “anyone who refuses to obey the demands and orders to vacate the property will be in violation of federal and District of Columbia law, and could be arrested and criminally prosecuted.” After speaking with the protectors’ attorney, who told them they needed a warrant, law enforcement authorities left the premises.

Retired U.S. Army Reserve Col. Ann Wright told Truthout in an email: “The attempt of the Guaidó faction and the U.S. government to seize the embassy of the government of Venezuela should be of concern to everyone. As a former diplomat,” she said, “I am particularly disturbed by the U.S. government’s recognition of Guaidó,

lomatic Relations and demanded that immediate action be taken.

“[T]he United States government, through various law enforcement agencies, have condoned and protected violent opponents in support of an attempted siege of the Embassy,” we wrote. Those actions are “creating a dangerous precedent for diplomatic relations with all nations,” the letter continued, which “are not only illegal, but they put embassies around the world at risk.”

Citing the Secret Service’s actions in “permitting violent opposition demonstrators to physically attack the Embassy, assault the peaceful invitees and prevent them from entering the Embassy with supplies of food and water,” the letter also decried “the hurling of racist, sexist and homophobic slurs at those expressing to support the peace activists inside the Embassy.” The letter noted that Gerry Condon, president of Veterans For Peace, was



Activists Kevin Zeese and Margaret Flowers in the Venezuelan Embassy May 11. Photo: Ellen Davidson.

Testifying

... continued from page 2

these conditions. I know I didn't.

There were so many of us there for the hearing that we were shuttled into three different rooms. I stayed in the same room for hours, not taking a lunch break, but waiting for my name to be called. We listened carefully to testimonies being offered from the Judiciary hearing room. The system developed was a good one, I thought: eight people would testify for three minutes against the bill and then eight would testify for it. Back and forth. The legislators and the bill sponsors were allowed to speak at length. The others of us had our three minutes, but then we were asked questions from the Judiciary Committee. Some testimonies went



on for some time.

So the day was a long one. I got to the state capitol building around 7:30 a.m. and left around 3:00 p.m. Others stayed until 6:00 p.m. The Judiciary Committee was hearing testimony from many, many people for and against LD1312, the so-called "red flag bill" that, if passed and enforced, would allow police officers and concerned family members the right to intervene if they thought someone was a danger to himself/herself or to another. The intervention would be specifically to take away that person's guns. It is, in my opinion, a well-thought-out bill that includes a number of safeguards against abuse and truly empowers the police to act quickly and effectively. Not everyone there that day at the state house agreed. In fact, people estimated that we supporters were outnumbered by at least two to one. My testimony focused on preventing veterans from committing suicide. A sitting representative on the committee told me he was "offended" by my stance (more on that later). I kind of lost my composure at that moment.

I approached the podium to give my testimony around 2:30 p.m. I was wearing a black dress shirt with our Veterans For Peace logo on it, so it was pretty clear where I was coming down on this bill. I handed out 20 copies of my remarks to the committee members and began. My essential "case" was that a veteran caught up in the vortex of PTSD or moral injury or just plain old deep depression might, in a moment of desperation, reach for his or her favorite weapon and end it all. Wouldn't it make sense for a loved one, who is sensitive to the veteran's dilemma, to intervene and protect her or his veteran in this mo-

ment of crisis, I asked. Since so many of us are quick to "thank" service members for their service, shouldn't we, then, be called upon to actually serve them as well? The number of veterans committing suicide is at epidemic levels; many of them choose a gun to end it all in a spiraling moment of despair. What if a gun were not available? Sure, there are other means to end one's life, but maybe, just maybe, this move might be the one that saves that veteran's life. The chair of the committee thanks me for my testimony and then asks if anyone on the committee has any questions. This is where it gets interesting.

Understand that we had been sitting in this room listening to testimonies and questions for hours; we all got to know, through voice recognition, who certain committee members were. One guy stands out because not only did he ask pointed questions that revealed his stance on guns (think NRA puppet), but also because he would constantly use his position on the committee as his own soap box. More than once the chair of the committee (I found out later that the chair is a fellow Vietnam veteran) had to rein in this "representative" and counsel him to ask questions. So now, at the podium, I can finally put a face to a voice. That's when he told me he was "offended" by my remarks. Which is, of course, out of line—he's just supposed to ask questions and, in the words of the chair, to remain at least nominally neutral. I wish I could relate that I had the perfect comeback (like, "Oh I am so glad. Now we're even. You've been offending me all day."), but, alas, I just looked at him and said, "Really? Really? You're telling me this now..." Then we had an exchange that basically involved him challenging my notion that many suicidal veterans are men who kill themselves with guns (DOD statistics support this). He says that he thinks more people commit suicide with alcohol. That's when the exchange got heated. I, in turn, challenged that notion—where's your evidence, I asked him, that a person who dies from alcohol consumption is actually committing suicide. "We're working on that," he said. "Yeah, I bet you are," was my retort when the chair stepped in and admonished the "representative" for arguing with a witness. The chair then asked me about suicides among Vietnam veterans, and we shared our belief that that number is quite high—more committing suicide than were killed in combat. No more questions were forthcoming. I stepped back into the audience.

Afterwards, many people thanked me for my testimony as I thanked others—



even a emergency room doctor who testified against the bill—not for his flawed argument, but because he was obviously a compassionate person who cared for the well-being of his patients, many of whom are veterans. But then the chair of the committee approached me and asked me to step out of the room. Uh oh, I thought, here comes more fireworks. That's when he told me he was in Nam and then he gave me his card. "I want to join Veterans For Peace.

to cut through the fog of Second Amendment Rights. Appealing to people's sense of decency and compassion for others was constantly thwarted by some abstract notion that "they" are coming for our guns and we, the advocates for the Red Flag Bill, are mere dupes of some socialist plot to shuttle them into some sort of "strategic hamlet" where they'll be forced to till the fields. Only the Second Amendment stands between them and such a bleak

Appealing to people's sense of decency and compassion for others was constantly thwarted by some abstract notion that 'they' are coming for our guns...

Thanks for your testimony. Keep up the good work," he said as he stepped back into the room to control the rest of the hearing.

Upon reflection, the long day was worth it. Not because I got to really hear how some people think about the issue of gun ownership, as opposed to reading about them filtered through someone else's lens; not because I felt that I had acted as a bona fide citizen in a democracy exercising my constitutional rights; but because I got to see the Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America in action. These women are courageous, intelligent, and politically savvy. They know how to organize, and they know how to stand up to some pretty obtuse, and sometimes threatening, individuals.

Still, I waiver between despair and hope. I despair because I could see no way

future. They'll use their guns to defend themselves against us, too. I have no doubt about that. They even trotted out lawyers, police officers, and health professionals, as well as moms to testify on their behalf.

But there is hope. The Moms also had their lawyers, health professionals, and police officers with their testimony to debunk the myths of the anti crowd. My favorite standoff was between police officers—"their side" spoke of their concern for fellow officers brought into a domestic dispute with a crazed individual; "our side" spoke of the professionalism of fellow officers, spoke of their awareness that they, in our service, do face danger, spoke of how many officers are veterans who feel a certain affinity with fellow suffering veterans, and a firm belief that lives can be saved with this bill in place.

On any given day, despair can supersede hope. That's a fact of life, I suppose. Today the sun is finally shining and the Judiciary Committee is going into its draft-working stage. We'll soon find out what version of this bill will go forward. But, in any event, I hold much more faith in the hearts and souls of the people than any legislative process. No matter the upshot of this whole process, I firmly believe that, together, we can make this world a better place for us and our children. Veterans For Peace, Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, and countless other groups (tribes?) will see to that.

—Doug Rawlings



Standing Up for Irish Neutrality

Direct action at Shannon Airport highlights complicity in U.S. war crimes

By Edward Horgan

Imperialism may be too kind a word to describe the role of the United States over the past few decades. A small minority of powerful people and deep state organizations have managed to gain control of the most powerful country in the world at the expense of the majority of U.S. citizens and of the majority of humanity and are waging resource wars worldwide in an effort to maintain their undue elite status. The United States misused World War 1 and World War 2 to achieve global domination, while claiming to be doing this in the interests of humanity. World War 2 has been portrayed as a fully justified war, but this is only valid if we ignore the fact that World War 2 resulted directly from World War 1, which was wholly unjustified.

It is likely that the prime minister of neutral Ireland was coerced or otherwise persuaded by U.S. President George W. Bush to allow U.S. military and CIA aircraft to land and refuel at Shannon Airport on their way to U.S. wars of aggression in Afghanistan and Iraq. U.S. military aircraft did not need to land in Ireland, as they had multiple options to refuel in airbases in NATO countries, including the UK. Over three million armed U.S. troops and huge quantities of military materials have transported through Shannon Airport in breach of international laws on neutrality. This is causing serious damage to the relationships between the peoples of Ireland and the United States. Why is this happening? The likely reason is that the U.S. government has a strategy to lure neutral countries such as Ireland into its “coalition of the complicit.”

Over two-thirds of the Irish people support positive Irish neutrality. Ireland is a small state with limited military capacity, and our neutrality allows us to do far more to promote international peace and justice. Eighty-eight Irish soldiers have died on peacekeeping duties with the United Nations since 1960. These justifiable sacrifices are being betrayed by Irish complicity in U.S. war crimes in the Middle East.

Peace activists have been protesting and taking nonviolent direct actions at Shannon Airport since 2001. In January 2003, Mary Kelly damaged a U.S. Navy aircraft at Shannon and was initially convicted, but this conviction was overturned on appeal. She said, “The real crime here is the continuing use of Shannon Airport by the U.S. military and the CIA, and the fact that the Irish government have prevented the search of these aircraft by the Gardaí and continue to do so.”

In February 2003, five Catholic Workers damaged the same aircraft but they were found not guilty by a jury mainly on the grounds of lawful excuse (that they

were trying to prevent a greater danger or crime). In the meantime, there have been several other peace actions at Shannon involving the arrest and trial of activists who entered the airport to attempt searching and investigating U.S. military aircraft. I initiated a constitution case in the high court on the issue in 2003, and while the court ruled against me (arguably incorrectly) on the constitutional issues, it ruled in my favor that the Irish government was in clear breach of international laws on neutrality by allowing U.S. military to use Shannon Airport.

In 2004 I and two others were arrested in a boat on the Shannon Estuary near the airport where I was attempting to arrest President Bush. The charges against us were eventually dismissed. I

Veterans For Peace, Ken Mayers and Tarak Kauff, entered Shannon Airport on St Patrick’s Day this year to search and investigate an Omni Air plane carrying up to 300 armed US troops to the Middle East. When brought before the court the following day, they were denied bail and held in prison for 12 days, until we arranged a high court appeal against their unjustified imprisonment. While the high court did release them on bail, their bail conditions prevent them from returning home to the United States until after their trial, which could take up to three years. These unjustified bail conditions will be further appealed in the near future.

The significance of two U.S. veterans being involved in this nonviolent peace action at Shannon is considerable, and

Davidson is an associate member of VFP and co-editor of *Peace In Our Times*. They were assisted by documentary filmmaker Chris Smiley.

When they arrived at Shannon on St. Patrick’s Day, there was an Omni airplane on contract to the U.S. military being refuelled at the airport while transporting U.S. troops to Kuwait. Mayers and Kauff decided to enter the airfield to inspect this aircraft, but were arrested before they succeeded in reaching it.

Why are these matters so important? Since 1999, the United States and NATO have perpetrated unjustified wars of aggression against Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria. They have actively assisted unjustified military attacks in Yemen and Palestine and unlawful targeted assassinations elsewhere. These wars have resulted in the deaths of several million people, including, tragically, up to one million children. These



Veterans For Peace members Enya Anderson, Mike Ferner, Edward Horgan, and Mike Hanes at Shannon Airport March 17. Photo: Ellen Davidson.

have also been arrested and charged before the courts on six occasions but found not guilty of all charges so far. I and three others are still before the courts on similar charges relating to peace actions in 2016 and 2017. Four other peace activists, including octogenarian Margaretta D’Arcy and Niall Farrell, and two Irish independent parliamentarians, Clare Daly and Mick Wallace, were convicted of trespass at Shannon Airport and they decided not to appeal their convictions but to serve time in prison to further highlight the abuse of Irish neutrality.

Protest is often dismissed as futile, but Margaretta D’Arcy has had different experiences. She was involved in the Greenham, England, protests against the basing of U.S. Cruise missiles, which ended after 19 years when the missiles were removed. Margaretta later joined protests against the use of Shannon Airport, opposing the movement of US troops, military equipment, and black-ops specialists taking people away to be tortured to advance the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. This, she said, made Ireland complicit in war crimes and its people targets for revenge and violated the country’s constitutional position on neutrality.

More recently, two U.S. members of

this has been reflected in the media attention they received in Ireland and in the United States. It also highlights the importance of international cooperation and solidarity in the broader peace and antiwar movements, and this cooperation is increasing. The Global Campaign Against US/NATO Military Bases (<https://nousnatobases.org/>) is a vital part of this cooperation and the First International Conference against US/NATO Military Bases that was held in Dublin in November 2018. It was attended by close to 300 participants from over 35 countries from around the world.

Seven members of Veterans For Peace from the United States came to Ireland in March 2019 to show solidarity with Irish peace activists. They included two Iraq combat veterans, Mike Hanes and Enya Anderson, who passed through Shannon airport in 2006 on their way to the war in Iraq. Ray McGovern was an Army intelligence officer in the early sixties and a CIA intelligence analyst for 27 years. Mike Ferner was a Navy corpsman during the Viet Nam War and was a former president of Veterans For Peace. Major Ken Mayers served 20 years in the Marines and Tarak Kauff was a paratrooper in the Army during the early sixties. Ellen

wars and other actions by the United States and NATO amount to crimes against humanity.

The bigger plan most likely includes similar aggression against Iran, Russia, and eventually even China, and of course oil-rich Venezuela. This madness must be stopped, and Veterans For Peace in cooperation with other peace groups must continue to do all we possible can to promote international peace and justice and to oppose international terrorism and war crimes. No small group of peace activists or no one country can successfully take on such a powerful abusive state. International cooperation is vital among peace groups, and between states that are likely to be targeted by the United States for the theft of their resources.

By entering the airfield, attempting to inspect the airplane and getting arrested, Mayers and Kauff took some small steps into Shannon Airport for humanity.

Edward Horgan is a retired Irish Army major with 22 years service including U.N. peacekeeping in the Middle East. He has worked on election-monitoring missions in Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa. He is the international secretary of the Irish Peace and Neutrality Alliance and chairperson of Veterans For Peace Ireland.

The White Settler Elite Is Doubling Down

By Jon Jeter

Anticipating a government plan to seize their farms for redistribution to landless blacks, white South Africans have begun shuttling Israeli ex-commandos into the country to train embattled farmers to defend their properties, some parcels of which have been in their families' hands for more than a century.

The Israelis who are lending white South Africans a hand, of course, know a thing or two about what it takes to dispossess a darker-skinned people of their ancestral lands; since emerging victorious in the 1967 Six-Day War with its Arab neighbors, Israel has illegally annexed more and more land, squeezing Palestinians into smaller and smaller slums, akin to South Africa's all-black townships, or its rural bantustans, in a process that is similar to the gentrification that is reorganizing the American metropolis today.

Both the settler state of Israel and apartheid were created in 1948, and when the international community imposed sanctions on South Africa's white minority government in the 1980s, Israel continued to sell goods, munitions, and even nuclear technology to the rogue regime. Conversely, South Africa's black majority has long articulated its steadfast solidarity with the Palestinians, with no less an authority than the iconic Nelson Mandela asserting that the emancipation of black South Africans is incomplete without Palestinian sovereignty. His fellow Nobel Laureate, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, has gone even farther with his assessment that Israel's treatment of Palestinians is actually worse than apartheid.

While Israeli soldiers are rushing to the aid of their fellow white settlers in Africa, so too are politicians in the United States helping Israel stare down the global boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement, or BDS, which represents an existential threat to the state, much as an international embargo sparked the abolition of apartheid 25 years ago. Cynically branding criticism of Israel's occupation as anti-Semitism, 27 states have approved either legislation or executive orders prohibiting state agencies from doing business with vendors who support BDS; in February the U.S. Senate passed a bill introduced by Republican Marco Rubio of Florida to extend the ban nationwide, a move the ACLU decries as a violation of the constitutional guarantee of free speech.

Rubio is also carrying water for the Trump administration's plan to re-establish control over Venezuela's ample oil supplies, which was nationalized by a socialist uprising of the country's workers—the mostly Afro-Caribbean and mestizo populations who built the country—against the lighter-skinned European descendants who own the country. And just as white South African farmers have asked for Israel's help in putting down an intifada of destitute blacks, the Trump Administration has asked Brazil's

President Jair Bolsonaro to join the United States in recognizing Venezuela's opposition leader Juan Guaidó as the country's interim president, even though his party boycotted the elections; two-thirds of voters cast ballots to reelect Hugo Chavez's successor, Nicolás Maduro, to a second term.

Bolsonaro is himself quite an interesting case. Four months into his presidency, he has already established himself as a Trump Mini-Me, with his rancid racist and misogynistic appeals, demonization of the poor, and cuts to social spending deepening the fissures in a country that abducted more slaves from Africa than any other country in the Western Hemisphere, and where the gap between the haves and have-nots is wider than practically anywhere on earth.

What we are witnessing, from Ramallah to Rio, Capetown to Caracas, Green Bay to Gaza, is the white settlers' last stand as the sun sets on a post-colonial order that has proven to be materially worse than the worldwide Kipling-esque kleptocracy it replaced. The 2008 financial crash that blanketed the world like soot from a nuclear fallout delivered a deafening final verdict on the neoliberal era inaugurated on September 11, 1973, when Chilean troops stormed the presidential palace of the country's socialist President Salvador Allende, at Henry Kissinger's behest.

Never has the global white settler elite

What we are witnessing, from Ramallah to Rio, Capetown to Caracas, Green Bay to Gaza, is the white settlers' last stand as the sun sets on a post-colonial order that has proven to be materially worse than the worldwide Kipling-esque kleptocracy it replaced.

seen its leadership so widely discredited, its privilege so openly challenged, its reputation so ignobly trampled, or a knavish, restless, mob quite so large, or angry, amassed as its gate.

"It wasn't the indigenous or the Black population who should pay the bill," Brazil's former President Luiz Inacio da Silva—commonly known as "Lula"—said in 2009 of the global financial crisis, "but those really responsible, the blue-eyed bankers."

For the crime of being modestly responsive to Brazil's Black population, Lula today sits in a jail cell, convicted of corruption charges that are almost certainly exaggerated if not fabricated entirely. Like Gramsci or other famous political prisoners of old, he is permitted limited contact with the outside world, his circumstances similar to that of Julian Assange, who earned the enmity of the global white settler class by exposing the state terrorism that is the rebar of monopoly capitalism's international campaign of dispossession.



South African militant white farmer receiving training.

Consider, if you will, the almost complete lawlessness that led last month to the stunning images of British police officers frog-marching a visibly feeble Assange from Ecuador's London Embassy. To surrender Assange to the British, Ecuador's President Lenin Moreno took the extraordinary step of rescinding the citizenship of a refugee who had been granted asylum; authorities in the United Kingdom sentenced him to a year in jail for skipping bail in a Swedish sexual assault investigation in which no charges were filed and plan to transfer him to U.S. custody when they are expressly forbidden from extraditing anyone to a country that has the death penalty; and the Trump Administration is apparently hellbent on prose-

ment. The result is that it's been a quarter century since voters of all races went to the polls to vanquish apartheid and 90% of the country's wealth remains in the hands of 10% of the population—overwhelmingly white—while 80% of the population, overwhelmingly Black, owns nothing at all according to a 2016 research paper by a graduate student at Stellenbosch University, Anna Orthofer. The official unemployment rate is 27%, higher than in the United States at the nadir of the Great Depression. "The gap between black and white has just grown bigger and bigger," 59-year-old Thamsanqa Mashigo told Associated Press reporter Andrew Meldrum.

The same can be said in the United States, where 156 years after Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, 42 million African-Americans own all of 1% of the country's total wealth. Brazil's recovery from its worst recession ever has been anemic, and Lenin Moreno's collaboration with Trump is part of an effort by Ecuador's white settler class to douse the fire next time in the form of an uprising by the country's restive and impoverished indigenous majority. And what is often left unsaid is that Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution was sparked by the state's 1989 massacre of as many as 2,000 workers protesting the abrupt advent of neoliberal price hikes and austerity policies.

Venezuela's proletariat was merely the first to reject the satrap's response to their demands, but like dominoes falling, one nation after another is reaching its tipping point, and realizing, finally, that the epochal disaster that has befallen us is not of our making. If it wasn't clear to African-Americans before, it certainly is now, after the great heist that was subprime loans: our persistent grinding poverty is not attributable to our depravity but theirs.

We suffer mightily because someone has stolen all of our shit, and now we want it back.

A great reckoning is due.

This article previously appeared in Medium.

Jon Jeter is a communications strategist and writer, a former Washington Post Bureau Chief, and an author and Pulitzer Prize finalist.

cutting Assange for publishing leaked information which some might refer to as standard journalistic practice.

Wholly bereft of new ideas, deeply insecure, morally bankrupt, and exposed as frauds, the global white settler elite is doubling down on the only tactic it knows—primitive violence—and closing ranks around each other in a dissonant bid to protect the tribal brand, elude accountability, and delay the inevitability of decolonization.

Africans refer to it as the last kicks of a dying mule and point to the final days of apartheid, which produced a surge in violence and corruption as bankers, corporate executives, and investors swindled one another to grab what they could before the system of racial privilege went belly up. That did not happen immediately, however; the Lords of Capital persuaded Mandela and his comrades within the ANC that the best way to redistribute wealth from the colonizer to the colonized was by replacing industrial enslavement with financial enslave-

Is BDS Behind Israel's Declining Diamond Exports?

The Israeli diamond exchange initially blamed weak global demand and globalization but the sudden steep decline shows that's plainly not the case

By Sean Clinton

Israel's gross diamond exports have crashed by a staggering 45% since the 2014 massacre in Gaza that resulted in the death of over 2,200 people, mainly civilians, including over 550 children.

The net value of Israel's diamond exports has fallen even further, by 60% from \$11.25 billion to \$4.4 billion over the period. This is about the same as the value of Israel's total arms exports.

The Israeli diamond exchange initially blamed the decline on weak global demand and more recently on globalization but the sudden steep decline shows that's plainly not the case.

Reports on the state of the global diamond market show demand increased slightly over the past five years. No other diamond exporting country has suffered such a steep fall. The Belgian diamond industry, which is a major hub for both the rough and polished diamond trade to and from Israel, has also been impacted by the steep decline in Israel's exports. Meanwhile, India has gained market share and in 2016, for the first time ever, exported more diamonds to the United States than Israel, which has traditionally supplied up to 50% of the U.S. market in value terms.

The situation has become so serious that Israel is now offering to pay airfares as well as provide free hotel accommodation to attract buyers to Tel Aviv. Although the jewelry industry and NGOs have remained silent about Israel's leading role in the diamond supply chain, human rights activists have campaigned to expose it. There can be no doubt that one of the most important and the most vulnerable sector of the Israeli economy is feeling the impact of Israel's blood-drenched brand image. The global campaign of boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) has highlighted jewelry industry links to Israeli human rights violations that are funded to a significant degree by revenue from the diamond industry. Both appear to be impacting the Israeli diamond industry particularly hard, with exports down a further 6% in 2018.

In 2012 activists first revealed the linkage between the Steinmetz Diamond Group (SDG) and the Givati Brigade of the Israeli military, which was responsible for the 2009 massacre of the Samouni family in Gaza, a suspected war crime documented by the U.N. Human Rights Council and others, including Israeli human rights group B'Tselem.

This set in motion a series of actions that continue to reverberate through the upper echelons of the diamond industry. When the Anglo American-owned De Beers Group put a Forevermark Steinmetz diamond on display in the Tower of London in honor of the Queen of England's Diamond Jubilee, the Inminds human rights group staged regular protests outside the Tower.

A member of the Samouni family in Gaza recorded a video appealing for the blood diamond to be removed. The diamond was removed a few months later without any of the fanfare and publicity that accompanied its unveiling. It hasn't been seen or heard of in public since.

Sotheby's Diamonds is a 50:50 partnership between Sotheby's, the famous auctioneering house, and Diacore, the now rebranded Steinmetz Diamond Group.

Since 2012, Inminds has staged a number of protests outside Sotheby's premises in Bond Street, London, highlighting the link to Israeli war crimes.

In January 2013, Sotheby's CEO and board were sent a

registered letter alerting them to the damage to their reputation and the risks to their brand posed by their partnership with the Steinmetz Group. Months later in Geneva, in a blaze of global publicity, Sotheby's auctioned the Steinmetz Pink, a specimen diamond. It was bought by a syndicate of investors lead by Isaac Wolf for a world record \$83 million. The pre-auction publicity and spin gave no indication that the diamond was tarnished by association with Israeli war crimes in Gaza and was, therefore, a blood diamond. Four months after the auction it was revealed that the investors defaulted and Sotheby's were forced to take the diamond into inventory costing them millions.

In April 2017, in a much quieter event, the blood diamond was auctioned in Hong Kong and bought by Chow Tai Fook for \$71 million.

The Isaac Wolf syndicate wasn't sued.

Sotheby's continues to partner with Diacore despite the fact that the Steinmetz Foundation "adopted" the Givati Brigade which stands accused of war crimes.

Indications that jewelers are shunning diamonds linked to Israeli human rights violations emerged earlier this year when it came to light, via a Tiffany & Co.



submission to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, that the iconic diamond brand had terminated a supply agreement with a Steinmetz owned mine in Sierra Leone. Tiffany's loaned Steinmetz \$50 million to develop the mine and was one of their leading buyers.

Tiffany's divestment came following pressure from human rights activists who exposed the fact that Tiffany's sourced diamonds from a miner that donated to and supported suspected Israeli war criminals.

Although Tiffany & Co. divested from a Steinmetz mine they continue to conceal the identity of the companies they buy 25–35% of their polished diamonds from. Tiffany's customers cannot, therefore, know where their jewelry comes from despite assurances by the new CEO Alessandro Boglioni.

"Our customers place great value on sustainability. They want to know where their jewelry comes from, how it is made and how the jewelry-making process impacts the planet as well as its people and communities. Tiffany & Co. holds this kind of transparency dear and, through this creation of shared value, we have a unique opportunity to build meaningful, lasting relationships with our customers."

Given Israel's leading role in the industry and the absence of a statement from Tiffany's affirming, as they have done with Zimbabwe and Angola, they do not buy diamonds from the apartheid state, it is likely Tiffany's is sourcing diamonds from companies in Israel.

Diamond companies in Israel employ people who have served in and are members of the Israeli army, have openly funded and supported attacks on the defenseless residents of Gaza, have been widely implicated in serious fraud, and discriminate against non-Jews who make up 20% of the population.

Although revenue from the diamond industry is a significant source of funding for an apartheid regime that has killed over 210 Palestinians, including women, children, medics, and journalists, and injured and maimed thousands more with live ammunition in besieged Gaza in the past six months alone, jewelers fraudulently claim diamonds processed in Israel are responsibly sourced and conflict free.

This blood diamond cover-up and fraud is perpetuated by public companies and governments who collaborate to shield rogue regimes in Israel, Zimbabwe, and Angola that they depend on to keep their coffers full, bolster dividends for shareholders and provide fat pension pots for c-suite executives.

The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KP), the blueprint of which was drafted by the World Diamond Council, is the primary vehicle facilitating the ongoing blood diamond trade.

Although the remit of the KP is deliberately restricted to banning rough diamonds that fund rebel violence, jewelers use it to claim other blood diamonds are conflict free even when they fund war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Shamefully, Amnesty International, Global Witness, Human Rights Watch, and Impact (Partnership Africa Canada), which the public relies on to expose the blood diamond trade and speak up for the victims, have said and done nothing to hold the diamond jewelry industry to account for funding Israeli war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Kimberly Process a Charade

The silence of NGOs on Israel's blood diamond trade means the Kimberley Process charade continues to con most people and can keep mainstream media focused on the mining sector in Africa.

Hilde Hardeman is the EU chair of the Kimberley Process in 2018. Indications to date suggest that she, like others before her in South Africa and Australia, will ignore the latest call from human rights activists for Israel to be suspended from the KP until those responsible for massacres in Gaza are brought to justice and held to account.

Some voices in the jewelry industry are speaking out. The most recent example being the Ethical Jewelry Exposé: Lies, Damn Lies, and Conflict Free Diamonds, by Marc Choyt and his team at Reflective Jewelry. The exposé peels back the layers of bogus schemes "through the metaphor of Russian nesting dolls, with eight layers of babble obscuring the nefarious truth hidden at the core."

The exposé leaves readers in no doubt as to the magnitude of the fraud being perpetrated by the key stakeholders in the diamond industry, particularly the Responsible Jewelry Council, which is now chaired by Signet Jewelers Vice President of Corporate Affairs David Bouffard. Signet Jewelers sources many of its diamonds from companies in Israel.

The successive withdrawal of human rights organizations from the KP, including Global Witness, Impact Transform, International Alert, Fatal Transactions, and Ian Smillie—a key architect of the Kimberly Process scheme—has removed the fig leaf and left its exponents exposed with their bloody diamonds in full view.

Sean Clinton is a human rights activist from Ireland. He has written a number of articles exposing the links between the global diamond industry and the Israeli occupation and war crimes in Palestine. Follow him on Twitter: @wardiamonds.

'We Ain't Got to Walk Around Struttin' Talking about Two-State Solutions'

A showstopping speech by Temple University professor Marc Lamont Hill

By Philip Weiss

In May the University of Massachusetts at Amherst fielded a panel of fierce advocates for Palestinian freedom in Roger Waters, Linda Sarsour, Sut Jhally, Dave Zirin, and Marc Lamont Hill. UMass is a prestige space, and there have been many efforts to shut down the forum; one Israel lobby group sued for a federal injunction and compared the gathering to a rally of the Ku Klux Klan. That motion was turned down by a district court judge May 2.

On May 1, Hill, a Temple professor, gave a speech about the "radical imagination" at the annual dinner of the progressive organization WESPAC in White Plains, NY. It was a showstopper; I can

only imagine what he brought to the Massachusetts panel, which focused on false anti-Semitism charges leveled against advocates for Palestine and is titled, "Not Backing Down."

Hill lost his job as a commentator at CNN last year after he spoke at the United Nations and had the temerity to call for one state "from the river to the sea." Equal rights in Israel/Palestine is a heresy in the mainstream.

Palestine continues to be at the center of his activism. Indeed Marc Lamont Hill seems emboldened by his firing, to speak of "gettin' rid of the settler colonial project altogether" and to mock the term, "liberal Zionist, whatever that is." His theme was the need for progressives to rise above social inhibitions and imagine true freedom, and he mentioned Palestine often.

He said that activists should channel the bravery of the abolitionists and enslaved "freedom fighters" in the time of slavery and not bend to conventional ideas of justice.

"If we have ambitious freedom dreams,

we won't dream about warmer and fuzzier prisons, we can dream about a world without prisons," he said. "We ain't got to walk around struttin' talking about two state solutions. ... What about a world where everyone has freedom, justice, equality, safety and self determination? One person one vote. Gettin' rid of the settler colonial project altogether."

He linked that vision with the goal of ending toxic masculinity that is a cause of criminal conduct. Why not, he said, "eliminate the impulse and the idea and the logic and the ritual and the practice of unhealthy masculinity?"

He called on activists to listen to "women, other-abled folk, trans folk, and young folk" and said our presidential races should not focus on the middle class as the "marker of citizenship," but on the vulnerable and the poor.

He said repeatedly that professional activists start to worry about their "grants" and "respectability politics," when the question should be, "What would it take for us to listen to our original story?" Again, Palestine made an appearance.

What does it mean to invest in schools, only to criminalize young folk?

What does it mean for rape culture to prevail on our campuses and our world?

What does it mean for us to continue to fund an illegal occupation?

Hill said that different activists can't operate in "silos"; there's a direct connection between mass incarceration and bad schools and between militarism and Palestine.

[You say] "I'm worried about police brutality, I can't think about Palestine." Oh yeah, well these deadly exchange programs in the United States and in Israel are creating models of practice that are being used by Israeli law enforcement and by United States law enforcement. They're training each other. We got to pay attention to the intersection. Don't tell me that you can be worried about poverty so you can't take on militarism. Because who are the most vulnerable in the United States who get put in the front lines of these wars of aggression? And who are the people in the global South who are being bombed and droned and exploited? The vulnera-

ble, the poor, and the black and the brown Don't tell me that you ain't worried about the environment. [If] you're worried about racism, go to Flint Michigan.

Hill lamented those who "have access to resources and choose to protect our power and privilege rather than change the world." He referred to his own experience at CNN indirectly, and mocked liberal Zionists.

It's easy sitting here and being radical as hell... . But what happens tomorrow when the job is on the line? Do you go from being a [unintelligible] to just a liberal Zionist, whatever that is? Do you go from being a radical to a liberal, become a pragmatist? What happens to our politics when they get tested? What happens when something is on the line? When the job promotion is on the line, when your friendship network is on the line, when your TV job is on the line? What are you going to sacrifice, what are you going to put aside for justice? ... Everybody's rocking with you, when you're popping. Everybody's with you when you can get on board, everybody's with you when you can hook em up.... What happens when you're standing on the mountain alone?

He cited Angela Davis working for prison abolition when it wasn't popular, Harriet Tubman running through the woods with freed slaves when official political culture opposed radical acts.

What happens to you when you're speaking out for Palestine, what happens to you when you're speaking out for Uganda, when you're speaking out for Haiti? What happens to you when all those men who loved you when you were talking about race start to laugh when you're talking about gender? You start to feel alone...

Some of you work with folk who are liberal on every issue but Palestine. You start to feel alone. But there's never been a revolution started by the majority. The spark is always a few people, a few brave souls.... allies willing to sacrifice their privilege for justice ...

Hill ended his speech with the word Palestine.

Thank you, free the land for Palestine!

Philip Weiss is a U.S. journalist who, with journalist Adam Horowitz, founded and co-edits Mondoweiss, a news website devoted to covering American foreign policy in the Middle East, chiefly from a progressive Jewish perspective (mondoweiss.net).



Banner hanging off the roof of the Venezuelan Embassy. Photo: Ellen Davidson.

Embassy

... continued from page 13

Protecting Power for its embassy in Washington, D.C. "Such agreements," the collective noted, "are not uncommon when diplomatic relations are severed."

Indeed, Article 45 of the VCDR provides that if diplomatic relations are broken off between the U.S. and Venezuela, the U.S. must respect and protect the premises of the mission, including its property and archives. It also provides that Venezuela may entrust the custody of the embassy, including its property, archives and interests, to a third country acceptable to the United States.

There is precedent for a third party taking charge of an embassy. "This has happened in the case of Iran, Cuba, and North Korea," CODEPINK co-founder and embassy protector Medea Benjamin said on *Democracy Now!* "The U.S. has often used the countries such as Sweden and Switzerland to protect its embassies. And

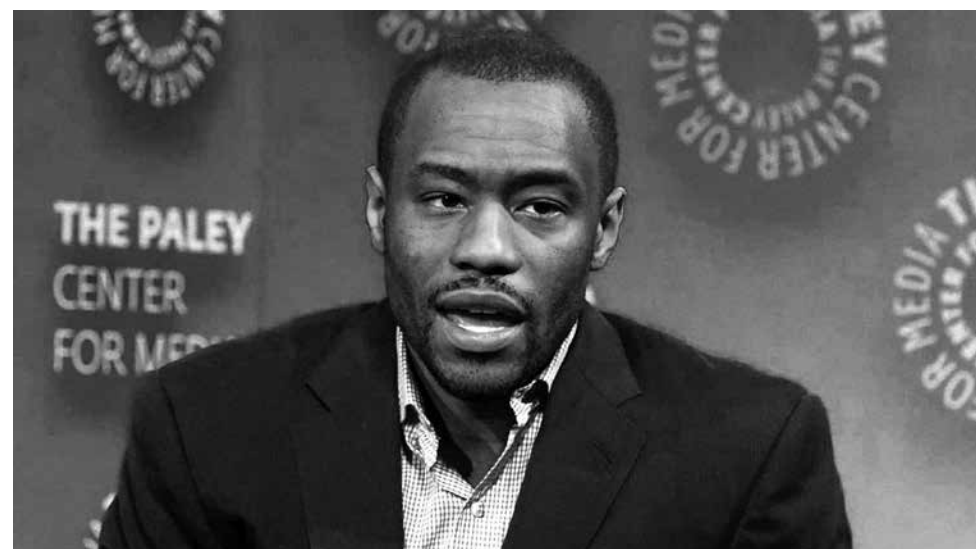
this could be easily done in the case of the U.S. and Venezuela right now."

Meanwhile, the Trump administration is moving toward the use of military action in Venezuela. Guaidó has organized a meeting with the U.S. Southern Command to get "strategic and operational" cooperation in removing Maduro.

Team Trump and Guaidó are playing with fire and plotting to violate the law in the process. The U.N. Charter forbids one country from using military force against another except in self-defense or with the blessing of the Security Council, neither of which has happened in this case.

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Marc Lamont Hill.



Photo: AP/Luis Since.

By David Swanson

I don't know if most people in the United States ever knew what Fallujah meant. It's hard to believe the U.S. military would still exist if they did. But certainly it has been largely forgotten—a problem that could be remedied if everyone picks up a copy of *The Sacking of Fallujah: A People's History*, by Ross Caputi (a U.S. veteran of one of the sieges of Fallujah), Richard Hill, and Donna Mulhearn.

"You're welcome for the service!"

Fallujah was the "city of mosques," made up of some 300,000 to 435,000 people. It had a tradition of resisting foreign—including British—invasions. It suffered, as did all of Iraq, from the brutal sanctions imposed by the United States in the years leading up to the 2003 attack. During that attack, Fallujah saw crowded markets bombed. Upon the collapse of the Iraqi government in Baghdad, Fallujah established its own government, avoiding the looting and chaos seen elsewhere. In April, 2003, the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division moved into Fallujah and met no resistance.

Immediately the occupation began to produce the sort of problems seen by every occupation everywhere ever. People complained of Humvees speeding on the streets, of being humiliated at checkpoints, of women being treated inappropriately, of soldier urinating in the streets, and of soldiers standing on rooftops with binoculars in violation of residents' privacy. Within days, the people of Fallujah wanted to be liberated from their "liberators." So the people tried nonviolent demonstrations. And the U.S. military fired on the protesters. But eventually, the occupiers agreed to be stationed outside the city, limit their patrols, and allow Fallujah a degree of self-governance beyond what the rest of Iraq was permitted. The result was a success: Fallujah was kept safer than the rest of Iraq by keeping the occupiers out of it.

That example, of course, needed to be crushed. The United States was claiming a moral obligation to liberate the hell out of Iraq to "maintain security" and "assist in transition to democracy." Viceroy Paul Bremer decided to "clean out Fallujah." In came the "coalition" troops, with their usual inability (mocked quite effectively in the Netflix Brad Pitt movie *War Machine*) to distinguish the people they were bestowing liberty and justice upon from the people they were killing. U.S. officials described the people they wanted to kill as "cancer," and went about killing them with raids and firefights that killed a great many of the non-cancer people. How many people the United States was actually giving cancer to was unknown at the time.

In March, 2004, four Blackwater mercenaries were killed in Fallujah, their bodies burned and hung from a bridge. The U.S. media portrayed the four men as innocent civilians who somehow happened to find themselves in the middle of a war and the accidental targets of irrational, unmotivated violence. The people of Fallujah were "thugs" and "savages" and "barbarians." Because U.S. culture has never regretted Dresden or Hiroshima, there were open cries for following those precedents in Fallujah. A former advisor to Ronald Reagan, Jack Wheeler, reached for an ancient Roman model in demanding that Fallujah be completely reduced to lifeless rubble: "*Fallujah delenda est!*"

The occupiers tried to impose a curfew and a ban on

Within days, the people of Fallujah wanted to be liberated from their 'liberators.' So the people tried nonviolent demonstrations. And the U.S. military fired on the protesters.

carrying weapons, saying they needed such measures in order to distinguish the people to kill from the people to give democracy to. But when people had to leave their homes for food or medicine, they were gunned down. Families were gunned down, one by one, as each person emerged to try to recover the injured or lifeless body of a loved one. The "family game" it was called. The only soccer stadium in town was turned into a massive cemetery.

A seven-year-old boy named Sami saw his little sister shot. He watched his father run out of the house to get her and be shot in turn. He listened to his father scream in agony. Sami and the rest of his family were afraid to go out. By morning both his sister and father were dead. Sami's family listened to the shots and screams at the surrounding houses, as the same story played out. Sami threw rocks at dogs to try to keep them away from the bodies. Sami's older brothers would not let his mother go out to close her dead husband's open eyes. But eventually, Sami's two older brothers decided to rush outside for the bodies, in hopes that one of them would survive it. One brother was instantly shot in the

head. The other managed to close his father's eyes and to retrieve his sister's body but was shot in the ankle. Despite the efforts of the whole family, that brother died a slow and horrible death from the ankle wound, while dogs fought over the bodies of his father and brother, and the stench from a neighborhood of dead bodies took over.

Al Jazeera showed the world some of the horror of the First Siege of Fallujah. And then other outlets showed the world the torture the U.S. was engaging in at Abu Ghraib. Blaming the media, and resolving to better market future genocidal acts, the Liberators withdrew from Fallujah.

But Fallujah remained a designated target, one that would require lies similar to those that had launched the whole war. Fallujah, the U.S. public was now told, was an Al Qaeda hot-bed controlled by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi—a myth depicted as if real years later in the U.S. film *American Sniper*.

The Second Siege of Fallujah was an all-out assault on all human life that included the bombing of homes, hospitals, and apparently any target desired. A woman whose pregnant sister was killed by a bomb told a reporter, "I cannot get the image out of my mind of her foetus being blown out of her body." Instead of waiting for people to emerge from houses, in the Second Siege, U.S. Marines fired into houses with tanks and rocket-launchers, and finished the job with bulldozers, Israeli style. They also used white phosphorus on people, which melted them. They destroyed bridges, shops, mosques, schools, libraries, offices, train stations, electricity stations, water treatment plants, and every bit of the sanitation and communication systems. This was a sociocide. The controlled and embedded corporate media excused all.

Within a year after the second siege, with the city transformed into a sort-of open-air prison among the rubble, staff at Fallujah General Hospital noticed that something was wrong. There was a dramatic—worse than Hiroshima—increase in cancer, stillborn births, miscarriages, and never-before-seen birth defects. A child was born with two heads, another with a single eye in the center of his forehead, another with extra limbs. What share of the blame for this, if any, goes to white phosphorous, and what to depleted uranium, what to enriched uranium weapons, what to open burn pits, and what to various other weapons, there is little doubt that the U.S.-led Humanitarian War is the cause.

Incubators had come full circle. From the lies about Iraqis removing infants from incubators that (somehow) justified the first Gulf War, through the lies about illegal weapons that (somehow) justified the massive terrorism of Shock and Awe, we were now arrived at rooms full of incubators holding deformed infants quickly dying from benevolent liberation.

The U.S.-installed Iraqi government's Third Siege of Fallujah came in 2014–2016, with the new tale for Westerners involving ISIS control of Fallujah. Again, civilians were slaughtered and what remained of the city was destroyed. *Fallujah delenda est* indeed. That ISIS arose out of a decade of U.S.-led brutality capped by an Iraqi government's genocidal assault on Sunnis went unmentioned.

Through all of this, of course, the United States was leading the world—through the burning of the oil the wars were fought over, among other practices—in rendering not just Fallujah, but most of the Middle East, too hot for humans to inhabit. Imagine the outrage when people who support someone like Joe Biden, who played a key role in destroying Iraq (and who can't even seem to regret the death of his own son from open burn pits, much less the death of Fallujah) discover that almost nobody in the Middle East is grateful for the collapse of the climate into an unlivable inferno. That's when the media will be sure to tell us who the real victims are in this story.

David Swanson is an author, activist, journalist, and radio host. He is executive director of WorldBeyondWar.org and campaign coordinator for RootsAction.org. Swanson's books include *War Is A Lie*. He blogs at DavidSwanson.org and WarIsACrime.org. He hosts Talk Nation Radio. He is a 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 Nobel Peace Prize Nominee and was awarded the 2018 Peace Prize by the U.S. Peace Memorial Foundation.

US Military Base Threatens Biodiversity in Okinawa



Police remove Okinawan activists blocking the construction gates at Henoko. Photo: Ellen Davidson

By Jon Letman

Hidden beneath the aquamarine waters off Cape Henoko in northern Okinawa, Oura Bay teems with life. Orange-spotted filefish dart among reefs of blue coral, fantastic Christmas tree worms and tiny translucent invertebrates called sea squirts nestle in colonies of porites corals and red-eye gobies flit among forests of stony coral.

Hemmed by white sand beaches, Oura Bay is a hotspot of biodiversity, home to more than 5,300 species of corals, fish, invertebrates, and Okinawa's last remaining population of dugong, an endangered manatee-like marine mammal.

According to a Japanese Ministry of Defense Environmental Impact Assessment, more than 260 endangered species—giant sea cucumbers, snakes and slugs, crabs, sponges, and other species still undescribed by science—live in Oura Bay. Surveys document a high level of endemism (species that occur only in a single location), offering the potential for new scientific discoveries.

But Oura Bay and Henoko are also the site of a new U.S. Marine airbase being built alongside the existing Camp Schwab. For decades, Washington and Tokyo have been planning to close the controversial and dangerous Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in the densely populated south of the island and relocate operations to Henoko.

The Futenma Replacement Facility at Henoko, however, has proven to be even more unpopular than the base it's intended to replace, with a majority of Okinawans consistently rejecting the Henoko plan. Opponents cite noise, danger, and the destruction of fragile marine and terrestrial ecosystems among the chief reasons they are calling for the new base to be built outside Okinawa.

Despite decades of protests, arrests and appeals by Okinawan officials and a growing number of Japanese and foreign supporters, Tokyo and Washington insist

the Henoko plan is “the only solution” and have started a massive land reclamation effort in Oura Bay based on a “V”-shaped runway, helipads, and fuel docks that would link the new installation to an existing ordnance ammunition depot and other military infrastructure.

Japan's accomplished record of island building and nature-defying engineering feats is being tapped as Henoko's reclamation work requires 21 million cubic meters of dirt and sand imported from other parts of Japan be poured into the bay.

An Outsized Burden

Okinawa, formerly the independent Ryukyu Kingdom, has a history and culture distinct from Japan. This southern-

cast in opposition to the Henoko plan. Following the vote, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe responded by insisting the Henoko plan would go forward.

'Soft as Mayonnaise'

Politics and protests aside, from an engineering standpoint, the Henoko plan is fraught with problems, including a sea-floor one Japanese official described as being as “soft as mayonnaise” and unable to support the proposed construction.

Okinawa also has a history of earthquakes, and a recent survey in the area surrounding Henoko strongly suggests the site is on an active fault.

Furthermore, according to the Japanese Defense Ministry, it may take another 44

In a non-binding referendum ... 72% of votes were cast in opposition to the Henoko plan. ... Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe responded by insisting the Henoko plan would go forward.

most prefecture represents less than 1% of Japanese territory, yet it hosts more than half of the 57,000 active duty U.S. military personnel stationed in the country.

Following the bloody battle of Okinawa at the end of World War II, Okinawa was occupied by the U.S. military until its reversion to Japan in 1972. Okinawa continues to bear an outsized burden on behalf of mainland Japan, prompting regular anti-U.S. base protests, which erupt anew whenever there is another U.S. military-related accident, crash, violent crime, drunk driving incident, or aircraft part falling onto a public space.

In a non-binding referendum held in Okinawa in February, 72% of votes were

months to modify the seafloor to the degree that it could structurally support the proposed base expansion.

In 2015, an Okinawan Expert Commission's preliminary summary of a report appointed by then-Gov. Takeshi Onaga said the U.S.-Japan Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) would keep requests to respect environmental considerations just that—requests.

Under the U.S.-Japan SOFA, the U.S. military has wide latitude to do as it wants including: “to construct, install, maintain, and employ in any facility or area any type of installation, weapon, substance, device, vessel, or vehicle on or under the ground,

in the air, or on or under the water.”

“In the end, no environmental preservation measures have been proposed that could effectively make the U.S. military operate with consideration towards the environment,” the report read.

In 2014, seabed drilling began, and by 2015, giant concrete blocks, reportedly weighing at least 20 tons, were being positioned on the floor of Oura Bay in “dozens of places.”

A March 2018 summary report of a symposium on Henoko-Oura Bay stated that Japan bears responsibility to preserve the coral reefs of Okinawa. Yet, in February 2019, Japanese media broadcast a television interview with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe falsely claiming corals had been relocated outside of the construction zone.

In 2014, 19 Japanese conservation organizations collectively recognized the coral reef ecosystem of the Western Pacific as being “home to the highest marine biodiversity around the world.” Individually, however, many scientists in Japan are reluctant to speak out on Henoko, fearing political and professional backlash from taking a position contrary to the Abe administration's unwavering support for the Henoko plan.

One marine biologist is not afraid to discuss her findings. Dr. Mariko Abe is chief of the conservation division of the Nature Conservation Society of Japan, one of the three largest conservation NGOs in Japan. Abe has been conducting extensive coral reef and seagrass bed surveys in Oura Bay since 1998.

Speaking from Okinawa after a coral reef survey in March, Abe told Truthout that one of Oura Bay's defining characteristic is its complex topography of submarine mountains and valleys—300 feet deep in places—that support high levels of biodiversity like “very, very rare corals” that can live at depths of 100 feet.

The bay's depth makes it attractive to the military, Abe said. “This is why military people want to use [Henoko], because they have submarines and big ships. It's very difficult to go to other places.”

In the summer of 2018, during a two-month suspension of the Henoko landfill permit, Abe and fellow researchers were allowed to conduct surveys within the restricted area, which revealed the loss of one species of seagrass and impacts to the bay's topography resulting from the base's seawall construction.

“We are now losing our seagrass beds directly because of the construction,” Abe said.

The Dugong Are Gone

Oura Bay's seagrass beds are habitat for the dugong, explained Dr. Masahito Yoshida, chair of world heritage and cultural studies at the University of Tsukuba.

“Oura Bay is one of the last remaining and northernmost habitats of [the] endangered dugong populations in Okinawa,” Yoshida told Truthout in an email. Until recently, there were thought to be only three animals in waters around Okinawa, but in March, the body of a dead female dugong was discovered in northern Okinawa.

Yoshida added that Oura has unique

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Okinawa

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environments that include “shallow mangrove forests, seagrass beds, and deep waters that are home to blue coral and various benthic (bottom dwelling) species found nowhere else in the world.”

None of this is lost on Giovanni Masucci, a marine biologist and PhD student at the University of the Ryukyus in central Okinawa, where he evaluates the impacts of seawalls, landfills, and other construction

steps are taken, Masucci said Oura Bay has already been impacted.

“Once you [create a] landfill, there are so many impacts. Not just on the area you are landfilling,” Masucci said. “You have a reef being covered by dirt and then by concrete, so of course nothing will survive there. Even beyond the landfill, red soil will spread and there will be consequences.”

With seawall construction under way, Masucci said that where seawater had been contained for months, lower water quality has led to the growth of nutrients, producing seaweed and algae that compete with coral.



Plant-topped mountains rise from the ocean: Rare geologic formations in the limestone caverns of Nagashima, a small island off Cape Henoko, are but one of a number of ecosystems that environmentalists are fighting to protect from new military construction in Oura Bay. Photo: Jon Letman

on Okinawa’s coastal areas. Most of his research focuses on the less-populated far north beyond Oura Bay where access is restricted due to base construction at Henoko.

Masucci told Truthout that Oura Bay’s rare and undescribed diversity “is something noteworthy, important, and that should be protected.” Even if mitigation

As a scientist, he said it’s not his place to say if the base at Henoko should be built or not, but added, “Corals all over the world are facing an unprecedented crisis already due to humans and climate change. So in this context, when we have a biodiversity hotspot, we should think carefully about what happens when we

start altering it and really think if there is no alternative solution because sometimes there are other solutions.”

Among the many Okinawans fighting to protect Henoko and Oura Bay is underwater photographer Osamu Makishi, who began investigating the effects of coral bleaching in 2004. Makishi points out that Oura Bay supports not only sea life, but is also an important breeding ground for migratory terns that travel from as far as Australia to lay eggs and feed their young on the rich waters of Oura Bay.

Bird numbers have been declining in recent years, Makishi said, as the shallow waters of Oura Bay are laid with floats and oil fences that divide the waters. He worries about the environmental toll of land reclamation, revetment, and additional environmental disturbances.

“Henoko-Oura Bay is a local Okinawan treasure,” Makishi told Truthout. “But the immeasurable natural heritage is also a treasure for the world. Destroying this bay doesn’t only mean losing these 262 endemic and endangered species. It also means losing irreplaceable life.”

Avoiding Responsibility

Despite the central role the U.S. plays in the base at Henoko, the controversy remains scarcely known in the United States.

At the heart of the dispute, the U.S. Marine Corps is effectively silent on the question of its own presence. A spokesman for the Marine Corps Installation Pacific told Truthout, “The [Futenma Replacement Facility] construction project and construction site is managed by the Okinawa Defense Bureau (ODB). It would be inappropriate for us to comment on any construction project details, construction progress, timelines, or plans.”

For its part, the ODB says it cannot comment on the Henoko project, and referred all inquiries to the Japanese Minis-

try of Defense, which did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Member of Congress have similarly avoided any responsibility for the Henoko plan. In Hawaii, which shares strong cultural ties and a sister-state relationship with Okinawa, Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard once said, “Protecting our water ... is an issue that is important to all people and living beings everywhere. Water is life ... it is essential that we prevent water resources from being polluted in the first place.”

When asked about Henoko in 2016, she insisted it was an internal dispute between Tokyo and Okinawa, and said, “of course the U.S. government is not going to get involved.”

Gabbard did not respond to multiple requests for additional comment.

Also representing Hawaii in Congress, Sen. Mazie Hirono, who was born in Japan, said of U.S. military bases in Okinawa, “It’s not as though we are forcing bases in these places. We are generally asked to come.”

As officials in Washington and Tokyo point fingers at each other, Okinawa Gov. Denny Tamaki, himself the son of a U.S. soldier, is staunchly opposed to the building of a U.S. airbase in Oura Bay and has called for three-way talks to discuss an alternative to Henoko, yet politicians in Japan and the U.S. have long refused to consider anything else.

Ultimately, construction of a new U.S. military installation at Henoko could cost \$23 billion, reportedly 10 times the initial estimate. That cost is not shouldered by the United States, but by Japanese taxpayers, and especially by Okinawans who are seeing Oura Bay transformed from a sanctuary for nature and biodiversity into a staging ground for military operations.

Originally published at truthout.org.

Jon Letman is a freelance journalist on Kauai. He writes about politics, people and the environment in the Asia-Pacific region.

Global Network Russia study tour declaration

We Should Offer Russia Diplomacy, Not Demonization

The Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space organized a delegation to the Russian Federation this spring. Below is their statement:

May 9, 2019.

As an international delegation to the Russian Federation of 25 individuals, we have visited Moscow, St. Petersburg, and three cities in Crimea (April 25–May 9).

We came to learn, to listen, and to build a bridge of friendship through citizen diplomacy. We have had daily important meetings with Russian journalists, activists, academics, ordinary citizens, and gained first hand information and historical perspective. The Russian people met us with warmth, openness, and generosity.

We came because we are alarmed by the U.S. demonization of Russia and the NATO provocations which have created a world of increasing military confronta-

tion, with the U.S. even threatening the first-use of nuclear weapons.

Since the collapse of the USSR in 1991 US/NATO has encircled Russia with bases, so-called “missile defense” systems, escalating “war games” right on its borders, and with warships increasing military operations in the Black Sea.

Numbers don’t lie. Russia is a country of just 144 million people, with average income of \$400 a month, or \$13 a day. Their annual military budget is \$60 billion and decreasing. The U.S. military budget is \$800 billion and increasing. The U.S. has more than 800 bases encircling the world.

The Russian people love their country with a warmth and depth of love that is difficult for Americans to comprehend. It is a love born of centuries of history, culture and religious faith, and a love born of the suffering and sacrifice of the repeated



Delegation members march on Victory Day in St. Petersburg May 9. Photo: Will Griffin.

defense of their Motherland.

On Victory Day, May 9, in St. Petersburg, we walked in solidarity with 1.2 million family members and survivors of the 1941–1945 defense of the former Soviet Union when Americans and Russians were friends and allies against the German fascist invasion and occupation. (It should be remembered that 28 million

Soviet citizens lost their lives during the fight against the fascists.)

Our message is a call to end the demonization of Russia, remove US/NATO warships from the Black Sea, end the escalating war maneuvers on Russia’s borders, and build bridges of diplomacy and friendship.

Redacting

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bombing North Vietnam from the bases in Thailand was highly classified. Only a few people at Korat knew with certainty what our mission was. Everyone guessed we were bombing the North but only a few of us could confirm it and we didn't.

Another secret existed that was kept under much snigger wraps. The first night I reported to the target room I was put to work creating a photo briefing for a flight of fighters who were going to fly combat air support for a mountaintop camp being overrun in Laos. The aerial photos were arriving less than an hour after being taken. As I worked on the briefing, I watched the fight go on in black and white stills. These were our special forces troops in Laos under the auspices of the CIA. This was news to me. Even with all of my big security clearance, I had arrived in that target room believing the word from Washington that we were neutral on the civil war in Laos. When I saw what we were doing, I said we weren't supposed to be doing it but a sergeant assured me the guys up the chain of command knew what was right so I went along. It was a long time after I was out that I openly talked about that. We bombed Laos from December '64 to March '73. We lost a number of aircraft and pilots.

Who knew about this? The people of Laos and North Vietnam and China and those of us doing it did. Who didn't know was all of the people in the United States. What harm would have been done to tell the American people what we were doing? Well, it might have taken some of the sheen off the apple pie myth about who we are as a country. As a person who worked on targets in Laos, I can tell you the bomb-



Crater from U.S. bombing in Laos during the Viet Nam War. Photo: Jerry Redfern.

ing went far beyond only interdicting the Ho Chi Minh Trail. For one, there were armed reconnaissance flights during which anything moving was a target.

We didn't consider civilian lives. There were villages near targets, like the settlement in North Vietnam beside the Yen Bay Railway Interdiction Point, as the target was designated, that we blew to smithereens along with the two-track rail yard. By some estimates one-third of our ordnance did not explode but still does when a farmer or a builder or a child disturbs it.

The words "baby killer" are sometimes hurled at GIs and veterans. As a guy who

was over there two times, the second time working with B-52s that carpet-bombed South Vietnam, the moniker is appropriate for every air force. The idea of precision bombing is a story told by the government to soothe the civilian conscience. During WWII, the Norden Bombsite was developed and promoted as so accurate it could drop a bomb in a bushel basket. Ever since we have continually heard of the increase in accuracy of our bombing and our missiles. I don't believe any of it, and my experience while I had a Top Secret Extremely Sensitive Information, Single Integrated Operations Plan, Crypto

Access is too full of situations where the people we were keeping in the dark were other Americans. Thus I cannot imagine the parts of the Mueller Report redacted are of any worth to another government, which would be the reason for them being secret, unless the redactions are simply facts kept from us. Perhaps someone with a spine will make them available. You can be sure what has been blacked out in the report is the truth. How much of this short article would the government redact?

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

Venezuela

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trasts with Venezuela and sell intervention and a possible foreign military invasion.

My friend, Yajaira, is an ecological activist from Venezuela. She has opposed some government policies. I emphasize that, because she's not someone without criticisms. I asked her what would happen if the right wing came to power in Venezuela and she told me, without a moment's hesitation, "It would be a disaster. It would be a bloodbath." She added that even when activists like her have disagreements with the government, they at least have a voice, they are heard—and most of all, they are not threatened and killed for speaking out and advocating for their desired reforms.

Look at Colombia today and we glimpse what Venezuela could look like tomorrow if coup plotters ever achieve their goal.

Here is only one case: April 22, 2019: Dimar Torres Arevalo was an ex-insurgent who had laid down his arms to be reincorporated into civil life. He was a resident of the village of Carrizal, in the Municipality of Convención, Department of Norte de Santander. Wilson had gone to



Photo: Ellen Davidson.

the nearby village of Miraflores to buy a hunting knife. When village residents noticed he had not returned some time later, they went to a nearby military checkpoint that has been in the area for years, asking after his whereabouts. Later, they heard gunshots and returned to find soldiers trying to bury Wilson's corpse. The vil-

lagers surrounded the soldiers, began recording them, and took possession of the body, refusing to leave, even when the military began firing warning shots in the air. They demanded the presence of competent Colombian authorities and U.N. representatives. A later forensics report detailed a chilling succession of events.

The murder had been committed by 5-8 soldiers, preceded by torture. First, he was beaten with rifles and sexually violated, before his genitals were cut off. He was then further beaten and shot at point-blank range.

In almost every instance that someone is killed in acts of right wing political violence in Colombia, I receive a report, and, often receive photos of the bodies, including the heart-wrenching photos of the mutilated body of Dimar Torres, who just wanted to lay down his arms, to "beat his sword into plowshares" for a just peace in a New Colombia.

Knowing about this crisis, I also know it is unacceptable for people who want peace to stand and do nothing while the oligarchs, coup plotters, and warmongers try to do to Venezuela what is being done to Colombia.

The cry for peace and justice must always be sounded by all those who refuse to surrender hope, even in the worst of times.

El pueblo no se rinde, Carajo! The people will not give up!

James Patrick Jordan is a writer and national co-coordinator for the Alliance for Global Justice (afgj.org). He is responsible for its Colombia, labor, and ecological solidarity programs.

Bruce Beyer, Buffalo Nine Antiwar Activist, Presente!

By Mark Sommer

Bruce Beyer, Aug. 21, 1948–April 15, 2019.

The story in August 1968 spoke to the times and to Bruce Beyer's convictions.

The headline, "Protesters, Police Battle in Church," appeared on the front page of the Buffalo Courier-Express in large letters, above photos of the confrontation.

"Seven Jailed Along With 2 Resisters."

They became known as the Buffalo Nine—Mr. Beyer and his friend, Bruce Cline, were the war resisters—and their arrests drew national attention. Thirty-two FBI agents and federal marshals, backed by 100 Buffalo police officers, came to the Unitarian Universalist Church on Elmwood Avenue to arrest him. It led to a fist-swinging melee and Mr. Beyer's conviction for assault in 1969.

The episode marked a turning point for Mr. Beyer, who died Monday from complications of congestive heart failure in Hospice Buffalo, Cheektowaga. He was 70.



Left: Beyer is arrested by federal authorities at a Buffalo church in 1968. Right: Beyer returns to Buffalo over the Peace Bridge in 1977.



It set him on a lifelong course of opposing what he considered the U.S. government's imperialist foreign policy and offering support to those who resisted the military. It also put him squarely on the side of those he considered victims of an unjust social and economic system.

Ten months before that confrontation, Mr. Beyer had stood on the steps of the Justice Department in Washington, D.C., to return his draft card during a large protest against then-U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark.

In August 1968, after refusing to report to the Army for induction, Mr. Beyer and Cline took symbolic sanctuary for 10 days in the Unitarian Universalist Church, where his parents were members, after his father

convinced other parishioners to take in the war resisters. After 10 days, the feds arrived.

"Bruce had an uncanny ability to inspire people to action with his commitment," said Bill Berry, a fellow member of the Buffalo Nine who became friends with Mr. Beyer in 1968. "He laid his body and his beliefs and his whole life on the line in dedication to the cause of the antiwar movement and equality," he said.

Mr. Beyer was also a great friend, Berry said.

"He would always just be there if you needed him," Berry said. "He was a loyal and supportive friend. He was also expressive, a very emotional guy. I always learned a lot from him."

Born in Buffalo, Earl Bruce Lazarus was given up for adoption by his mother, Pamela Lazarus, an unwed teen from Wilkes-Barre, Pa. Seeking to find his biological parents through Ancestry.com in 2015, he discovered through DNA testing that his actual father was major league baseball player Joe Tipton, the backup catcher for the Cleveland Indians in the 1948 World Series, who had played for the Wilkes-Barre Barons in 1947.

Adopted by Robert and Elizabeth Beyer, he attended a military academy and graduated in 1966 from Bennett High School. In a commentary in *The Public* in 2017, he recounted how he worked as a night clerk in the Imperial 400 Motel at Main and Summer streets during the riots on the city's East Side in 1967 and "I drew parallels between the (Vietnam) war and racial injustice."

Nevertheless, he recalled, he planned to enlist in the Air Force that summer until he met a woman, an antiwar activist, who convinced him to become a resister. Two months later, he said, he went to an antiwar demonstration in Washington, D.C., and turned in his draft card.

While out on bail, Mr. Beyer gave a speech at the University at Buffalo and was charged with inciting a riot after students destroyed the ROTC offices in Clark Gym. Facing a three-year jail sentence, he fled to Canada and then to Sweden, where he was granted humanitarian asylum. He married his Canadian girlfriend and moved back to Canada, where he lived for five years before returning to the United States to face the assault charges.

Mr. Beyer crossed the Peace Bridge back to Buffalo in October 1977, joined

by Clark and 50 Vietnam vets, including a Marine Corps ex-prisoner of war, who called for universal unconditional amnesty. In the end, U.S. District Court Judge John Curtin, who had allowed Mr. Beyer to attend the Woodstock festival while out on bail in 1969, reduced his sentence to 30 days, with 19 days served.

He settled in Buffalo and lived for many years on the East Side above his wood-working shop. He was a stagehand with Local 10 of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees.

In October 2017, Mr. Beyer returned to the steps of the Justice Department in

'We have not even begun to atone for the genocide committed against native peoples when we invaded their lands,' Beyer wrote.

Washington to commemorate his act of defiance there 50 years earlier.

"We have not even begun to atone for the genocide committed against native peoples when we invaded their lands," Beyer wrote in *The Public* days before leaving for the nation's capital.

"We have yet to pay reparations for hundreds of thousands of African-Americans dragged here in chains and forced into slavery," he said. "Long dormant bombs and anti-personnel devices continue to kill across Southeast Asia."

"Agent Orange persists, affecting the lives of unborn children," he said. "When will we ever learn?"

Survivors include his wife of 28 years, Mary Biggie Beyer; three daughters, Liz Beyer Partin, Amy Rodriguez and Bridget Baumer; and a son, Brian Fitzgerald.

"The last words he spoke were 'I love you,'" Biggie Beyer said.

This obituary originally appeared at the BuffaloNews.com.

Mark Sommer is an enterprise reporter and former arts editor at The Buffalo News.

A Dialogue with My Granddaughter

For Bruce Beyer, who had the courage to step off the meat wheel

So it's been fifty years and I can't escape the allure of trying to remember back then where I was, what I was

Out of my reverie by the fire on this late February evening my granddaughter whispers "Grandpa, the fire needs tending."

Where is easy—at the tail end of basic training Ft. Dix New Jersey. What I was is more elusive.

"You know, Grandpa," she continues petting our old dog on the couch "I think dogs can smell the future." I am stunned by this insight.

I'm trying, I'm trying to get this straight: I was between posts next stop would be Ft. Sill in Oklahoma off to learn the fine art of artillery

"So what about cats?" I ask to continue exploring her wisdom and she smiles, with our black cat on her lap purring, purring, purring.

Still they wouldn't tell us where we were going, hinting at Korea or even Hawaii

as we rose each morning from the barracks bunk beds, shaking our boots out for scorpions.

"Maybe cats are lost in the present moment, the here and now," I toss out there.

She doesn't take the bait. Still she refuses to say a word. Enigmatic little smile on her face.

Fifty years ago in early July I catch a plane to Viet Nam and war. Did I smell that coming?

I don't think so. And if I did, would I have stepped off the meat wheel and gone home instead?

"Grandpa, I'm tired. It's time for bed. And, grandpa, the fire still needs tending."

"And grandpa, I think the future smells like roses." For you, my sweet, surely for you, I think.

And the past needs to be wrapped up in an airless coffin, placed in a vacuum, left to

moulder away far from the inquisitive snout of an old, dying man come home from the war.

Free from his granddaughter's future plans whatever they are. Wherever they may lead.

—Doug Rawlings

Edge of Sports: Saving Coach Fofo

When a beloved soccer coach faced deportation, his community rallied.

By Dave Zirin

Often sports is just a leisure activity: a pleasant escape from the most burdensome pressures produced by this world. Sometimes it is a foghorn of reactionary refuse, spewing pro-war propaganda or advocating corporate welfare in the guise of stadium spending.

We have also seen sports be a platform for athletes willing to speak out stirringly for social justice. And there are times when sports can play a role in galvanizing an entire community to fight against evil and right a political wrong.

This happened recently in suburban Maryland—Montgomery and Prince George's Counties—when efforts by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to deport a beloved local soccer coach to the small West African nation of Togo resulted in petitions, protest rallies, and even a soccer game. In the end, it became a remarkable example for the entire country that ICE can be beaten back.

The coach is Agbegnigan Amouzou, known locally as “Coach Fofo.” He has been in this country for more than 20 years. He has a wife and a son. He works with special needs children in Prince George's County public schools. In addition, he runs a soccer school—the Elite Soccer Youth Development Academy in Silver Spring—for young people throughout the region, where they focus on schoolwork and healthy so-



Coach Agbegnigan Amouzou

cial interactions as much as soccer.

Coach Fofo actually lives up to the cliché “a pillar in his community.” He has been seeking asylum for years, without success, although he faces physical harm if he were to return to Togo due to his criticisms of the country's authoritarian leadership. (Mass protests in Togo in 2017 were ruthlessly crushed.)

Even though Coach Fofo was left without formal asylum status, he had been allowed to stay in the country as long as he checked in with immigration officials on a regular basis. But when ICE—due to new regulations handed down from the Trump Administration—was ready to send Coach Fofo back to Togo, the community leapt into action. Friends and neighbors who had not necessarily seen themselves as “politically active” changed their posture dramatically.

As Silver Spring resident Michele Bellis said to me, “We all know what Coach

Fofo means to our area. This is a community with a huge immigrant population from West African countries and El Salvador, and also a large, more affluent white population. Coach Fofo has bridged these communities through the power of soccer and through his own amazing ability to preach teamwork and reach children. We knew that we needed to do something. Losing Coach Fofo was for us simply not an option.”

And so Bellis and others demonstrated, raised money, and signed petitions. They were able to hold a community soccer game that was aimed at raising awareness about his case. The soccer game also served as an organizing event, drawing new people into the struggle. The petitions—many handed out at the game—garnered hundreds of signatures and prompted local politicians in the area to call for any deportation to be halted.

When the dust had cleared, ICE granted

Coach Fofo a six-month reprieve.

“We owe this victory to the power of people's mobilization,” says Ingrid Zelaya-Ascencio, a communications specialist with CASA, a civil and immigrant rights organization based in Langley Park, Md. “When community members work together we achieve great things.”

Of course, the fight is not over. “Coach Fofo still faces imminent deportation,” she says. “CASA will continue to argue as strong a case as possible to allow the beloved soccer coach to remain in the United States alongside his wife and teenage son ahead of his newly rescheduled ICE check-in on October 28, 2019.”

The story is a stirring example of how sports can unite a community and provide a way for people to not feel so beaten down and helpless in the age of Trump.

But, in the short term, the story is a stirring example of the way that sports can unite a community, raise the profile of a tremendous coach, and provide an opportunity for people to not feel so beaten down and helpless in the age of Trump. It's a story that should be known nationally, and replicated.

Dave Zirin is the author of *Brazil's Dance with the Devil: The World Cup, the Olympics, and the Fight for Democracy*. Email dave@edgeofsports.com to receive his weekly column *Edge of Sports*.

Redacting

By Denny Riley

The Mueller Report includes one entirely redacted page and many others that are mostly redacted. To redact simply means to edit, but in official jargon it does not mean a blue pencil is drawn through poorly constructed sentences. It means the text contains classified or sensitive content and we the people should not read it.

More than most citizens, even more than most people who have served in the military, I had experience with classified information. Because of this I know many of the most closely held secrets are not kept from our adversaries but from us.

Following basic training, in the late summer of 1963, I went to Armed Forces Air Intelligence Training School. My first few weeks at that base were spent in a holding barracks until I was given a provisional Secret clearance. When I had the Secret, and on the first day of the program, I and the other airmen and seamen in my class were told to lie about what we were doing. I think every one of us liked the sound of that, being able to tell people

we couldn't tell them what we did. None of us actually wanted to be in uniform. All of us had volunteered because civilian life wasn't quite working out and the military gave us an opportunity to bask in the bullshit about serving our country. When I went home on my first leave I had something to boast about. It almost made up for the personal catastrophe I already knew joining the Air Force had been.

After tech school and that first leave, I went to a Strategic Air Command airbase. I was cleared for Top Secret Extremely Sensitive Information, Single Integrated Operations Plan, Crypto Access and worked in the Intelligence vault on the war plan to nuke the Soviet Union. We had a contingency plan on Cuba, and I knew but did not see the plans we had on our allies. (That will be redacted, as other pieces of this essay will be, when it falls into official hands.) Bombers and crewmembers were ready to go at a moment's notice. It went on for years. Some crewmembers spent their career on alert. Less considered by people not on a bomber crew or working on the war plan was where the bombers went after they dropped their nukes. Since we still have a nuclear force that includes bombers, this may still be classified but here it is. When I worked on the war plan, in '64 and



Lobby of the Vinh Thong Guesthouse in Phonsavan town, Laos. Photo: Jerry Redfern.

'65, we had Top Secret agreements with a bunch of third world countries to welcome our crews after the attack. Probably the Soviets knew this though, so had those countries targeted.

In late '65, Operation Rolling Thunder accelerated to an enormity that didn't allow for the number of needed airbases to be in South Vietnam, so the U.S. built airbases in Thailand. I was sent to a base be-

ing carved out of the jungle near Korat. Before I went up country, during a general orientation in Bangkok in a hangar full of other guys, we were told it was classified information that the United States had bases in Thailand. Dumb time to tell me and the thousands of other airmen who arrived with “Thailand” printed right on our orders. But that was nothing. That we were

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