

Getting Centered From Crawford to Katrina

by Elizabeth Stinson

This special issue of the *Peace Press* brings a focus on the **Human Rights Conventions and Declarations** that have been painfully constructed over time in order to provide diplomatic recourse for the peoples of the world. The human rights conventions are being systematically ignored and abused by the Bush administration. As long as we do little to change the direction of our government, we risk becoming complicit with their abuses.

I want to thank our membership and the Community for supporting this very important work in these very threatening times.

Cindy Sheehan and a natural disaster in the shape of hurricane Katrina have brought us a moment when organizers and activists are forced to draw the world's attention to the painful results of the disconnect between governance and the people. Along with the grieving response of the mothers of those who have been killed in Afghanistan and Iraq, are the family members who have decided that their children's, niece's, nephew's and grandchildren's deaths cannot be for a "lie." Families came in droves to Crawford, Texas. This was followed by the exposure to the world of the real danger from the policies of George Bush and the criminal negligence in which they are managed, resulting in the death of countless more individuals following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.

The United Nations, at the request of the City of Berkeley and of many nations worldwide has appointed a special *rappporteur* to investigate the US for war crimes. NGOs (non-governmental organizations) have been asked to submit reports and complaints of this nation's violations of the human rights covenants. In this issue we will give our readers information about those abuses.

While in Crawford, I found the strength of commitment of family members who will not let their personal loss continue to be for a lie, but have decided that their loss must voice the need to "Bring The Troops Home Now!"

They came to do whatever they could to support Cindy Sheehan's efforts to prevent other families of the military from experiencing the same suffering. Family members explained that they know all loss is severe and debilitating, but to find your country had lied and your child or husband had been killed under a policy of greed and deceit and now no longer has a future, has brought an undeniable pain that cannot be ignored.

The family members who have lost children met with a diversity of activists, mid-western families, families who had been staunch Bush supporters for two elections and now have a different view about what is going on under the Bush regime and where the country is being taken. We met with pro-war people. We met with members of Families for Peaceful Tomorrows—those who had lost family members in the World Trade Center and continue to ask that their loss not be co-opted for corporate gain and military aggression.

My first night in Crawford, I met the mother of a rescue worker in the World Trade Center; her son was killed. Her husband has since developed cancer and also passed away. Her multiple losses brought her to Crawford.

We met with many members of Vets for Peace who know first hand the emotional, physical and psychological toll that war takes. The Vets have been and continue to be incredible support for the “Bring the Troops Home Now Tour,” and set up the new Camp Casey across from the White House. Until the war ends there will be a Camp Casey close to wherever George Bush resides, and wherever Cindy Sheehan continues to lobby elected officials throughout the country in her attempt to hold Congress and the Senate accountable for this illegal war.

Many of you know that following a speech at the Veterans For Peace Conference in Dallas, in which Cindy spoke of wanting to set up a vigil outside of the Bush ranch, the Veterans brought Cindy to Crawford. They helped her set up Camp Casey I and II and worked very closely with those of us at the Crawford Peace House facilitating the voice of the grieving family members who had lost their loved ones in Iraq, Afghanistan, or in one of the Towers of the World Trade Center. It was their sorrowful and heartfelt voice that organizers worked to make sure was heard. Cindy Sheehan is the “point person,” but hundreds of grieving families gathered in Crawford and are now gathering in Washington D.C to draw attention to the criminal neglect that resulted in needless death in New Orleans and the continued and growing number of lives being lost in the Mideast.

As Linda Foley, whom I was honored to work with in Crawford, said. “What I will carry away from Crawford and Camp Casey is the realization that even where there is pain, loss, grief or just plain loneliness, there is still the possibility for joy and hope and the gift of love. It is comforting to know that friendship, respect, trust and love took root in the plains of Texas—even in the stifling August heat, in a scorpion-filled ditch lined with barbed wire and rocks. When I feel discouraged and alone in this peace work that seems to never end, I will pull out these memories and emotions and take great pleasure in them. I will remember faces, voices, smiles, hugs, steady hands and strong shoulders and people who put their hearts and souls into Crawford. We are optimistic enough to think that we can open hardened hearts and create peace there. We have not chosen this path. It has chosen us.”

The need to make a positive difference to a neglected population took the Vets for Peace bus to Covington, Louisiana where the Veterans worked to assist a population neglected by their own government following hurricane Katrina.

As we work to understand how a government could get so out of control that the people most severely in need are left neglected and dying for days, we must continue to network, brainstorm, organize and activate. We must continue to be a dissenting voice until the screams are so loud and so many of us are gathered that change is inevitable.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

There are 30 very important articles to the Declaration of Human Rights. In this issue we would like our readers to focus on the first ten articles and have access to the preamble. The complete document is on the web at www.un.org/Overview/rights.html.

On December 10, 1948 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Following this historic act the Assembly called upon all Member countries to publicize the text of the Declaration and "to cause it to be disseminated, displayed, read and expounded principally in schools and other educational institutions, without distinction based on the political status of countries or territories."

Preamble

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now, Therefore The General Assembly proclaims This Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

Article 1.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2.

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 3.

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 4.

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Article 5.

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6.

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Article 7.

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 8.

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

Article 9.

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10.

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

The Geneva Conventions

There are four Geneva Conventions, signed August 12, 1949, and the two additional Protocols of June 8, 1977.

Convention I

For the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field, Geneva, 12 August 1949: Sets forth the protections for members of the armed forces who become wounded or sick.

Convention II

For the Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea, Geneva, 12 August 1949: Extends these protections to wounded, sick and shipwrecked members of naval forces.

Convention III

Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Geneva, 12 August 1949 – lists the rights of prisoners of war.

Available at: unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/91.htm

Convention IV

Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, Geneva, 12 August 1949: Deals with the protection of the civilian population in times of war.

Protocol I

Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts, 8 June 1977: Extends protection to victims of wars against racist regimes, wars of self determination, and against alien oppression.

Protocol II

Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts, 8 June 1977: Extends protection to victims of internal conflicts in which an armed opposition controls enough territory to enable them to carry out sustained military operations.

International Rules About Civilians

Both the fourth Geneva Convention and the two Additional Protocols extend protections to civilians during war time.

- Civilians are not to be subject to attack. This includes direct attacks on civilians and indiscriminate attacks against areas in which civilians are present.
- There is to be no destruction of property unless justified by military necessity.
- Individuals or groups must not be deported, regardless of motive.
- Civilians must not be used as hostages.

- Civilians must not be subject to outrages upon personal dignity.
 - Civilians must not be tortured, raped or enslaved.
 - Civilians must not be subject to collective punishment and reprisals.
 - Civilians must not receive differential treatment based on race, religion, nationality, or political allegiance.
- * Warring parties must not use or develop biological or chemical weapons and must not allow children under 15 to participate in hostilities or to be recruited into the armed forces.

Grievance Procedures

If a person or a group of people feels that their rights have been violated, there are a number of agencies and organization to whom they may turn for help. Many of these agencies and organizations collect case histories and other documentation of war crimes and human rights abuses for the purposes of distributing them to the media. These agencies and organizations include, but are not limited to:

- * The International Committee of the Red Cross
- * The United Nations, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the International Criminal Court.
- * Committee on the Rights of the Child
- * War Crimes Tribunal on Former Yugoslavia
- * International War Crimes Tribunal for Rwanda
- * Inter-American Court on Human Rights
- * Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
- * Amnesty International
- * Human Rights Watch
- * Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders)
- * Local human rights groups, military commanders, elected officials

Full text of the Conventions are available from the Society for Professional Journalists resource: www.genevaconventions.org/ or at the Peace & Justice Center. By referring to "Prisoners of War" as Detainees, the Bush Administration has denied protections afforded prisoners under the Geneva Conventions : the International Human Rights agreement legally Binding the United States.

US Human Rights Abuses

The following are excerpts from *Challenging US Human Rights Violations Since 9/11*, a report from the Meikeljohn Institute presenting complaints of US human rights abuses and submitted to the Inspector General of the US, and to the UN Human Rights Committee.

A. Basic Rights of All People Under US Jurisdiction

1. Right Not To Be Killed Or Disappeared

Report 1.8: Cluster Bombs Kill After Invasion of Afghanistan Ended

On October 10, 2001, the United States began dropping cluster bombs on “soft targets” (vehicles and people) in Afghanistan. “Eleven weeks later, US planes had dropped 1,210 cluster bombs, each containing 202 BLU-97 bomblets.” The British Halo Trust estimated that 20 percent of the bombs failed to explode. Accordingly, 48,884 yellow, soda-can-sized, deadly submunitions now litter the villages and fields of Afghanistan.

“A single BLU-97 bomblet kills anyone within a 50-meter radius and severely injures a person within 100 meters.” The unexploded yellow bomblets look like toys and are very attractive to children.

Report 1.11: US Troops Charged with Massacre of Afghan Prisoners

US soldiers and their allies, the Afghan Northern Alliance, had a role in “disappearing” around 3,000 men in northwest Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban, according to witnesses.

Almost 500 suspected al Qaeda members were taken to the Qalai Jangi prison while the remaining 7,500 were loaded in containers and transported to the Qala-I-Zeini fortress. Human rights advocates say that close to 5,000 of the original 8,000 are missing. Two-hundred to three-hundred prisoners were forced into (each) container for a two-to three day convoy. “The prisoners were crammed at gunpoint into large, oblong freight containers. When no more could be squeezed in, the metal doors were shut tight. Slowly they began to suffocate.”

“When the trucks arrived and soldiers opened the containers, most of the men inside were dead. Witnesses also said that US Special Forces directed that the containers carrying the living and dead be taken into the desert, and they stood by while the survivors were shot and buried.”

Jamie Doran, a veteran BBC filmmaker, included eyewitness accounts of this human rights disaster in his documentary film, *Afghan Massacre: The Convoy of Death*: Two civilian drivers said they drove trucks carrying men to Dasht-e-Laile, near Shebargan, where the prisoners were shot. A driver told Doran that there were US soldiers present at Dasht-e-Laile. “How many Americans were with you?” Doran asked. The driver replied, “Thirty or forty.”

Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) personnel attached to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA) investigated mass gravesites in Afghanistan. In May 2002, at the Dasht-e-Laile gravesite, PHR personnel dug a test trench that revealed the remains of fifteen people. Three bodies were exhumed and autopsied. The likely cause of death was determined to be suffocation.

2. Right Not To Be Tortured

Report 2.7: US Soldiers Rape US Servicewomen and Often Are Not Punished

As of July 2004, one hundred seventy-six US servicewomen who served in either Iraq or Afghanistan reported being sexually assaulted by fellow military personnel. Many alleged that superior officers ignored their desire to prosecute fellow service members, refused to post guards around bathrooms and shower facilities where rape is most prevalent, and denied abortions in war zones after they were sexually assaulted. US military policy allows for abortion in the case of rape, but women must pay for the abortion themselves.

Report 2.16: *US Government Refuses to Close School that Teaches Torture*

In 1946, the United States opened the US Army Caribbean Training Center in Panama to help train and “professionalize” militaries across Latin America and the Caribbean. In 1963, the UACTC was renamed School of the Americas (SOA), and it shifted to a cold war-driven focus on counterinsurgency. The SOA’s 60,000 graduates include dictators and mass murderers Manuel Noriega and Omar Torrijos of Panama, Leopoldo Galtieri and Roberto Viola of Argentina, Juan Alvarado of Peru, Guillermo Rodriguez of Ecuador, and Hugo Banzer Suarez of Bolivia. Other graduates have been responsible for the assassination of Archbishop Romero and the El Mozote massacre in El Salvador, Contra massacres in Nicaragua, and the annihilation of entire indigenous villages in Guatemala and Peru during the 1970s and 1980s. In 1984, the SOA as moved from Panama to Fort Benning, Georgia.

Seven Spanish-language training manuals used at SOA up to 1991 taught military officers violent interrogation techniques, and ways to subvert union organization through the use of propaganda, blackmail, and methods of execution. Former SOA human rights instructor Charles Call reported that “human rights training is not taken seriously at the school, and it accounts for an insignificant amount of students’ overall training.”

3. Right Peaceably to Assemble and Petition the Government

Report 3.6: *Miami Police Used Federal Money Against Peaceful Union Demonstration*

Before November 21, 2003, the United Steelworkers of America (AFL-CIO), the Citizens Trade Campaign, Public Citizen’s Global Trade Watch, and United States Against Sweatshops secured permits for peaceful rallies and a parade in Miami, Florida, to protest the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) Ministerial.

On November 21, a manned armored personnel carrier sat within a few yards from the entrance to the venue. The Steelworkers told Congress members that, “It is doubly condemnable that \$9 million of federal funds designated for the reconstruction of Iraq was used towards this despicable purpose.”

The wife of a retired steelworker from Utah said the police slammed her to the ground facedown and aimed a gun point-blank at the back of her head. While peacefully attempting to enter the AFL-CIO rally at the Bayfront Amphitheater, the codirector of the Citizens’ Trade Campaign was forced to the ground and had a gun put to the back of her head

During the trial of two protesters who were arrested, Judge Richard Margolius of Miami said he personally saw police officers commit at least twenty felonies during the

demonstrations in Miami in November 2003. The judge asked how many police officers had been charged for their actions on the street.

The prosecutor answered, "None."

"That is a pretty sad commentary... Pretty disgraceful what I saw with my own eyes. And I have always supported the police during my entire career. This was a real eye-opener. A disgrace for the community." He said he would have been arrested if a police officer had not recognized him as a judge.

C. The Government's Duty to Obey the Constitution, the Law of the Nations, and the Laws of War

17. Not to Maintain Weapons of Mass Destruction or Design New Nukes

Report 17.5: US Forces Contaminating Afghanistan with Uranium

In 2000 and 2003, the Uranium Medical Research Centre (UMRC) of Canada tested soil and urine samples obtained in areas of Afghanistan that had been bombarded with US weapons. The UMRC found the levels of uranium contamination to be much higher than what would be expected because of contamination from so-called depleted (DU) weapons. "The results were astounding: the donors presented concentrations of toxic and radioactive uranium isotopes between 100 and 400 times greater than in Gulf veterans" that the UMRC had tested in 1999. Dr. Asaf Durakovic, Director of UMRC was "stunned" by the results. An Afghan grandfather told the research team, "After the Americans destroyed our village and killed many of us, we also lost our houses and have nothing to eat. However, we would have endured these miseries and even accepted them, if the Americans had not sentenced us all to death. When I saw my deformed grandson, I realized that my hopes of the future have vanished for good, different from the hopelessness of the Russian barbarism, even though I lost my older son Shafiqullah. This time, however, I know we are part of the invisible genocide brought on us by America, a silent death from which I know we will not escape.

Appalling Failure of Bush Administration to Prepare for and Respond to Katrina Disaster

Released 9/14/05 by the National Lawyers Guild

The National Lawyers Guild (NLG) extends its deepest sympathies to the victims of Hurricane Katrina and we unequivocally condemn the criminally negligent lack of preparation for the hurricane, as well as the appalling racist and classist response of the Bush administration to the disaster. We call for immediate and massive coordinated relief efforts to assist those harmed and displaced by Katrina.

The Guild calls for an independent, nonpartisan investigation into the government's lack of preparation and abysmal response. We do not have confidence that an investigation led by the federal government will be conducted with integrity and result in the appropriate officials being held responsible. We call on the public to

demand accountability from the elected leadership of this country and we demand an end to the cover-up which has already begun, exemplified by FEMA's ban on press photographs of the dead. The Guild demands an immediate end to the repressive law enforcement tactics employed by the military and police occupation of New Orleans.

It is no secret that most of those left behind in New Orleans were poor and black, and that they lacked the means to evacuate. It is likewise no secret that the Army Corps of Engineers and emergency management officials in the Gulf Coast have been warning of such a disaster for years, while the Bush administration has diverted critical funding to the war on the people of Iraq. The Katrina disaster is the logical outcome of an administration that has diverted funds from emergency preparedness to imperial war. We demand an end to the war on the people of Iraq, which has already cost over \$200 billion.

The disaster is also the result of decades of economic policies that continue to increase the divide between rich and poor. The Bush administration's lethal negligence and deliberate indifference toward poor people and people of color cannot be tolerated. Nor can its indifference to the future of our planet. It is no secret that the increase in severity of hurricanes over the last several years is a consequence of global warming, but the Bush administration continues to deny that global warming even exists, to the ongoing dismay of the rest of the world.

We call on FEMA to immediately grant presumptive eligibility for benefits to victims of the Katrina/Bush disaster. We call on the federal government to value the lives of all of the people in this country, and to grant aid for food, housing, healthcare and education to the victims of Katrina. We call for a committee consisting of community members and evacuees to oversee all reconstruction efforts to ensure that developers do not use this devastation as an opportunity to permanently displace poor people, immigrants, and those whose first language is not English. Further, we demand that those community members who have lost housing have a guaranteed right to return upon rebuilding. The Guild supports the demand by the National Urban League for a Katrina Victims Bill of Rights, including a victims' compensation fund, disaster unemployment assistance, voting rights protection and other necessary measures.

The majority of the victims of Katrina are the victims of poverty caused by racist economic policies that continually reward the extremely wealthy, while cutting the most basic of necessities from the poor. Property rights have continually been protected over the health and safety of the people. We demand an end to such policies. The response of the Bush administration is nothing short of racism, and we demand the immediate impeachment of all responsible administration officials.

In the days immediately following the flooding, the National Guard troops and police in New Orleans kept people from leaving some areas at gunpoint, and are now prohibiting media coverage of the government-caused carnage. We demand that media, whether corporate or independent, have full access to every aspect of the destruction caused by the criminal negligence of the Bush administration.

The NLG already has teams of lawyers, law students and legal workers who are assisting those harmed and displaced. We will continue to provide legal support for the victims of Bush's war on the poor. We are currently organizing a national network of legal professionals who will provide public benefits advocacy to victims.

The NLG encourages the public to make their complaints against FEMA, the FBI, National Guard, and other appropriate federal agencies to the *Office of Inspector General*. These complaints should also be copied to the new *UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Violations since 9/11*; to the *UN Human Rights Committee*; to the *UN Committee Against Torture* (and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment); and to the *UN Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination*.

Sabotaging the United Nations: John Bolton

by Susan Lamont

*"... the only question for the United States is what is in our national interest."
John Bolton, UN Ambassador*

It may come as a surprise to US citizens, but their definition of "our national interest" and that of John Bolton may not be the same.

US newspapers, at the conclusion of the UN World Summit, claimed the Bush administration was furious that curbing nuclear proliferation had been dropped from the resulting UN document. The foreign press told a different story. According the *The Observer/UK*, the Bush administration refused to accept any mention of nuclear disarmament. Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary General, called Bush's position "a disgrace." Even our ally, Great Britain, worked behind the scenes against the US.

How would US citizens react if they knew that the weapons they had been programmed to fear since the 9/11 attacks were being allowed to proliferate at the insistence of their own government? For John Bolton, it means United States' pre-emptive nuclear policy can continue unchallenged. For the weapons salesmen twisting arms in Congress, it means a continuation of business as usual in the country that provides the most instruments of death to the world. But for you and me, it means a more dangerous world brought to us by an administration that has claimed to make us safer.

During his occupation of the White House, George Bush has met with little resistance from Congress. But his nomination of John Bolton to be ambassador to the United Nations was different. 102 former US ambassadors signed a letter urging rejection of his nomination. Sen. George Voinovich, R-Ohio, called Bolton "the poster child for what someone in the diplomatic corps should not be." When even a Republican dominated Senate refused to confirm Bolton, Bush used a recess appointment to put him in the UN. Sen. Pat Roberts, R-Kansas, said the appointment "would weaken not only Mr. Bolton, but also the United States."

Roberts is right. John Bolton is a bully. Bullies have the power of physical strength behind them, but never the power of moral strength. Since squandering the goodwill of

the world after 9/11, George Bush has inspired increasing hatred of the United States by people all over the globe. The words and strong-arm tactics of John Bolton will hasten that trend.

At the UN summit, Bolton also deleted the principle that “the use of force should be considered as an instrument of last resort.” This puts the stamp of approval on future US invasions of sovereign nations by a body formed to save “succeeding generations from the scourge of war” and opens the door for aggression by other regimes.

Mr. Bolton opposes restrictions on small-arms trade, landmines, biological weapons, and child soldiers. He believes the United States has “discretion in using force to advance its national interests.” And in violation of the 6th amendment to the Constitution, he says the US has no legal obligation to honor signed and ratified treaties. These stands place him at odds with most of the country and the world and discredit our claim to be the beacon of hope and freedom in the world.

The United Nations requires that member nations make regular reports on their enforcement of human rights. Though far from perfect, this requirement has helped reduce human rights violations around the world. The Bush administration has failed to make these reports. In thumbing its nose at the UN, the United States opens the door for similar stances by other nations.

In an increasingly interdependent world, John Bolton’s unilateralist positions put this country at risk.

“Great civilizations die from suicide, not by murder.” Arnold Toynbee

Discarding the Geneva Conventions: Guantanamo Bay

Following the September 11, 2001 attacks on the US, President Bush began his war on terrorism with the military conflict in Afghanistan. Already in January 2002 the US began placing prisoners from the Afghan theater into the open-air cages of Camp X-Ray at the US naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. They were labeled as “unlawful combatants,” who, according to Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, “do not have any rights under the Geneva Convention.” Rumsfeld made it clear that the US would no longer comply with international law, saying that we would “for the most part, treat them in a manner that is reasonably consistent with the Geneva Conventions, to the extent they are appropriate.”

White House counsel Alberto Gonzales, in a January 25, 2002 memo to Bush, urged the president to declare the Taliban forces in Afghanistan as well as al-Qaeda outside the coverage of the Geneva Conventions to preserve US “flexibility” in the war against terrorism, which “in my judgment renders obsolete Geneva’s strict limitations on questioning of enemy prisoners.” This also “substantially reduces the threat of domestic

criminal prosecution.” He did not tell Bush the worries of military leaders that these policies might “undermine US military culture which emphasizes maintaining the highest standards of conduct in combat.”

The President, as Commander in Chief of a country that had not formally voted to declare war on any country, ordered the arrest of hundreds of men in forty countries, and had them sent to Guantanamo to be detained under harsh conditions leading to many suicide attempts. The most pervasive human rights violations since 9/11 occurred during the detentions of people on various grounds. Guantanamo Bay held the largest category of detainees, and held the longest without any due process or procedure for determining why they should be detained. The Bush Administration uniformly denied detainees clear legal right to retain a lawyer, and to go before a judge in a habeas corpus proceeding to find out the charges, in violation of federal and international law.

Moreover, the abusive interrogations at Guantánamo Bay, developed under Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Miller, who later reorganized Abu Ghraib, used such tactics as women in uniform who were also exploited and turned into sex workers in the interrogations to develop techniques of sexual embarrassment and humiliation.

Many detainees at Guantanamo Bay alleged they were sold into capture. Their claims have some credence since US allies regularly got money to help catch Taliban and al-Qaida fighters. Gary Schroen said he took a suitcase of \$3 million in cash into Afghanistan himself to help supply and win over warlords to fight for US Special Forces.

In June 2004, the US Supreme Court ruled in *Rasul v. Bush*, that the US Constitution does apply to persons captured after 9/11 and taken to Guantanamo Bay, and designated as “enemy combatants.” They are entitled to *habeas corpus*. Detainees should be given some kind of due process.

In February 2005 a US federal court judge ruled that military tribunals initiated by the Pentagon to determine the status of terrorist suspects held at the naval base at Guantanamo Bay are unconstitutional because they do not satisfy minimal due-process requirements. “This decision reaffirms that the Guantanamo detainees cannot be imprisoned outside the law, that they have a constitutional right to a fair hearing and that evidence resulting from torture and coercion cannot be used to continue their imprisonments,” said Michael Ratner, president of the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), which represented the detainees. The judge also found that it was illegal for the President to unilaterally determine that an entire group of the Guantanamo prisoners were not POWs protected by the Geneva Conventions.”

But in July 2005 a federal appeals court ruled that the Bush administration's plan to convene military tribunals to try terrorist detainees at the US Naval Base on Guantanamo Bay is constitutional. This is the first time since the close of World War II that prisoners of war and enemy combatants would be tried in a quasi-military court-martial setting. Many retired generals and admirals of our military have stated that the cavalier treatment of individuals at Guantanamo Bay, and the setting aside of the

Geneva Convention in the military commission process, threatens our troops, our interests, and our way of life.

Information is from Human Rights Watch, Meikeljohn Institute and Amnesty International.

Prisoners of war in Guantanamo began a hunger strike on August 11, 2005, asking that they be treated in a manner "consistent with the Geneva Conventions." Defense Secretary Rumsfeld has insisted that the prisoners are being treated in a manner "consistent" with the Conventions. Human Rights Observers disagree. The Conventions mandate that, unless convicted of a crime, "prisoners of war may not be held in close confinement." In Camp V each detainee is held in a Supermax solitary cell, hermetically sealed from all human contact, allowed out for just one hour each week. The detainees... include juveniles and Sami Al Laithi, held for more than four months in his wheelchair after being found innocent by the US military's own biased tribunals. The Conventions forbid coercive interrogations. Human Rights Watch reports: prisoners objected when, on August 5, 2005 Hisham Sliti had a mini-refrigerator thrown at him by an interrogator nicknamed King Kong. The Conventions guarantee the free exercise of religion. Complaints include deprivation of right to group prayer, and the abuse and beating of a Yemeni prisoner and the trampling of his Koran.

The conclusion is inescapable: The United States is guilty of violations of the War Crimes Act of the Geneva Conventions. The hunger strike has passed day 50, while the administration ignores their rights and the media ignores their plight.

Peace and Justice Center Annual Dinner

Peace Now: The annual Peace awards' dinner and auction is on Saturday November 12 at the **Santa Rosa** (not Sebastopol) Vets Building. Call 575-8902 for reservations and information. The silent auction and pre-dinner sharing opens at 4:30PM and the dinner is scheduled around 6:15 followed by the award ceremony honoring community activists. We are hoping to have a person from the military who found his/her way out of going to Iraq and a mother of a military son/daughter share with us their experiences. The dinner/auction is our principle fundraiser. We always have a great auction. Come early to bid and please look around your home for some truly exciting item(s) for the auction and/or ask your favorite restaurant, stores, services, etc. for a gift item. Drop the items by the Center or call Alice at 545-1798 with your item information.

We are looking forward to an interesting and enjoyable evening together with our peace community.

Community "Movement" Award: Women in Black

Women in Black is an international network of women who stand in silent vigil against the horrors of violence. They are not an organization, but a means of

mobilization and a formula for action. Women in Black vigils were started in Israel in 1988 by Jewish and Palestinian women standing together protesting Israel's Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

Following the September 11 attacks, several women from Sonoma County, led by Diane and Jude Mariah, decided to begin a vigil in Sebastopol. They visualize a more compassionate humankind where violence is not considered a solution to conflict. Today as many as thirty women stand every Friday from noon to 1 pm in Sebastopol and downtown Santa Rosa.

Peacemaker of the Year Award: Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey 6th District

Representative Lynn Woolsey, has been a long time supporter of progressive issues. More often than we care to acknowledge, our elected officials do not represent us. Not so with Lynn Woolsey who carries our concerns to Congress and makes them a priority. It makes us proud because they are her values too.

She is a co-chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus. One of her strongest progressive endeavors is the SMART Security Resolution (H.Con.Res.158) which addresses preventative alternative strategies for the War on Terrorism.

Rep. Woolsey's progressive and often unpopular stands have required courage and determination to be heard. She stands before the nation each evening after the business of Congress is finished to speak against the war in Iraq and to bring the troops home now. Each speech (5 minutes) addresses not only the war as we know it but also the way decisions are made for supporting it.

Since Rep. Woolsey's requests of the President and the Republican controlled Congress have been ignored, Congresswoman Woolsey organized an informal hearing on Sept 17th to discuss US strategies to achieve military disengagement while still playing a constructive role in the rebuilding of Iraqi society.

We know Rep. Woolsey also speaks out for the environment, public education, Social Security, women's issues and many other important issues. We honor her for her commitment to peace and justice.

The Russ and Mary Jorgensen Courage of Commitment Award: Elizabeth Stinson, Director of the Peace and Justice Center

This extraordinary woman, Elizabeth Stinson, stands out among us all as a unique prophet in our community and our world. As director of the Center and as a committed peacemaker, Elizabeth has awakened us to challenging issues expanding our vision for effective work. Her deeply committed endeavor to demilitarize our schools through HOPE (High School and college Outreach Peace Education) has expanded to include those who were deluded into joining the war in Iraq. They have found in her a

listening heart and a way of following their conscience to remove themselves from the unjust war.

There was no doubt to Elizabeth that she was needed in Crawford. Not only was her presence there an act of solidarity with those speaking out with their bodies, but also an act of love to someone suffering somewhere, anywhere—as in the late 80's when she took risks by making her home a sanctuary for Central American Refugees. During the 90's before she became the director of the Center, she was liaison to UNPO (Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization for Lakota, Dakota, Nakota: (Souix) Nation). Her awareness and compassion drew her to International-Intertribal Diplomacy and human rights observation on the reservations. She brings those same qualities to her work at the Center.

Elizabeth's work, as director of the Center and as a family therapist, does not only happen during her work hours but makes her entire life an attentive effort to bring peace and justice. She says so wisely: "We are forced to reinvent ourselves."

The Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute's
Challenging US Human Rights Violations Since 9/11
Edited by Ann Fagin Ginger

This October, the United Nations Human Rights Commission will meet in Geneva to receive reports on human rights abuses by the Bush administration. The United States is required to file reports with the Commission, but has refused to do so regarding domestic violations at the Republican National Convention and international violations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Guantanamo. As a result, the Commission has asked for reports from four NGO's, including the Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute.

The Meiklejohn Institute's assessment is presented in detail in a new book, *Challenging US Human Rights Violations Since 9/11*, edited by the Institute's executive director, Ann Fagin Ginger. This evidence was submitted as a shadow report to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and to the US State Department in Washington on April 18, 2005.

The book's Dedication is a poignant reminder of those whose rights have been violated and of all of us who work so hard to change the course of US domestic and foreign policy. It is dedicated "to all of the victims of human rights violations since 9/11, and to everyone who has been busy exercising their human rights, the men and women, young and old, of all races, nations, languages, and religions, the whistle-blowers, conscientious objectors, peaceful pickets and demonstrators, and to the people in the government who did their job of protecting human rights for all, the Congress members and Judges and Inspector Generals, the Council members and Public Defenders, and to those who study their stories and decide to work for human rights and peace law in the future..."

At the end of its session in Geneva on July 28, 2005, the Human Rights Commission reprimanded the US for its very tardy and incomplete report. Under the human rights treaty, that report should cover violations and enforcement of human rights by cities, counties, and states, as well as by the federal government. If a complete report is not received before the Commission's next meeting in October, the Commission will adopt a list of issues on US actions, "notably the implications of the Patriot Act on nationals as well as non-nationals; and problems related to the legal status and treatment of persons detained in Afghanistan, Guantanamo, Iraq and other places of detention outside the USA."

The Commission has specifically stated that it "has often stressed the importance it attaches to receiving information... from non-governmental sources" in the Commission's work to implement the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights by the US and other signatory nations.

As one of these non-governmental sources, the Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute (MCLI) has carefully collected all of the known violations by all US governmental agencies since 9/11. MCLI has listed eleven "Basic Rights of All Peoples Under US Jurisdiction" and nineteen "Government Duties." From Abu Ghraib to Guantanamo to NYPD to Los Alamos, the book includes 180 violations of these rights and duties. The rights include the "right not to be killed or disappeared," the "right not to be tortured or ordered to torture," the "right peaceably to assemble and petition the government," and the "right of libraries not to report on readers." Among the duties, are the "duty to count the votes accurately and report to people honestly," the "duty to obey the Constitution, the law of nations, and the laws of war," and the "duty to protect people's rights."

But this book is more than a list of violations. It includes the texts of the documents upon which our rights are based. These include the US Constitution, the UN Charter, the Convention Against Torture, and the Nuremberg Principles. These documents are particularly useful because many US citizens are unaware that Article VI of the Bill of Rights establishes any ratified international treaty as the supreme law of the land. Many have forgotten that a US Supreme Court justice presided over the Nuremberg trials which established that acting "pursuant to order of his Government or of a superior does not relieve [a citizen] from responsibility under international law, provided a moral choice was in fact possible to him."

The MCLI report also inspires us with 200 actions people have taken and the texts of petitions, resolutions and ordinances written by individuals, organizations, and local governments in an attempt to protect our freedoms. These include resolutions against the USA PATRIOT Act, against the invasion of Iraq, and the "exemption of bookstores and libraries from orders requiring the production of any tangible things for certain foreign intelligence investigations."

Ann Fagin Ginger asks us to think "new thoughts," read "new books," and follow "new paths" to help ourselves stop the Bush administration. She writes "the goal of this

book is to encourage so much action that these reports and ordinances and victories described here must be updated immediately... this is a time for each of us to find our most basic beliefs, the principles by which we live." In editing this report, she helps us do just that.

This is an immensely valuable book for all Americans concerned about their constitutional rights in the midst of a supposed "War on Terrorism." Ann Fagin Ginger has pulled together a shocking compendium of human rights violations, and at the same time has given us practical tools, legal and political, for defending our liberties. Howard Zinn, author of *A People's History of the United States*

Submitted by Deb Nash

Stop the Training for Torture at SOA

Come to Fort Benning, Georgia November 18-20 weekend. Say no to war and torture, confront injustice, speak out for truth, and change the oppressive US foreign policy.

Fort Benning has one of the largest military bases in the world and is the home of the notorious School of the Americas (SOA) now called Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC). The School of the Americas (SOA) is a US Army school that trains soldiers and military personnel from Latin American countries in subjects like counter-insurgency, military intelligence and counter-narcotics operations.

Under Department of Defense jurisdiction. This school is funded by US taxpayers, all of the training is conducted in Spanish, and most of the instructors are Latin American. According to SOA, more than 60,000 members of Latin American militaries have attended the SOA since its inception in 1946. SOA/ WHINSEC graduates have included some of the worst and most notorious human rights abusers in Latin American history, and for much of the world, the school, under any name, is synonymous with torture and impunity. SOA graduates have led military coups and are responsible for massacres of many hundreds of people.

We are in a period of great change. We are going to close this school that continues to create death and suffering. Justice is within our reach when we gather this year, in numbers too big to be ignored. We will send a message to this government that they must close this school down when they vote in the months after our Vigil. This year is different, and it will take all of us, standing together and voting with our feet, outside the gates of Fort Benning on November 18-20, 2005!

Now's the time to start planning! Lets try to get together a group from Sonoma County. Please call Alice Waco 545-1798 if you are interested.

Torture at Abu Ghraib: Violence only Breeds More Violence

by Debra Birkinshaw

Abu Ghraib. The image of an abused, humiliated hooded figure still haunts me. Concern over the alleged abuse of Abu Ghraib detainees has resurfaced in the media.

Questions arise. "Who is responsible for this misconduct? How will other nations view our administration's sanctioning of torture and humiliation among prisoners of war? Does that increase the danger of retaliation?"

On August 5, 2005, the *Press Democrat* published an article, "Prison Abuse: Time for Independent Panel to Look at Treatment of Prisoners." According to the *Washington Post*, Army investigators have reported to Congress that an al-Qaida suspect at Guantánamo was threatened with snarling dogs, forced to wear women's underwear and led by a leash – all during the time Army General Miller was in charge.

These events are strikingly similar to reports from Abu Ghraib that have fueled outrage in the US and around the world. Allegedly, General Miller claimed that he was going to "use a template from Guantánamo Bay to 'Gitmo-ize' the operations out at Abu Ghraib."

This article suggests that General Miller may have acted under direct orders from Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. It also highlights the call by Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., for an independent congressional commission to look into prisoner abuse.

One lone Army officer, Janis Karpinski, was identified as responsible for the heinous abuse at Abu Ghraib. By her own account, she was neither a witness to, or responsible for the horrendous acts portrayed by those unforgettable pictures. Ms. Karpinski reports being "waved off" by Military Intelligence and the CIA, and she concurs that General Miller, formerly in command at Guantánamo Bay, is directly responsible.

In an interview with Marjorie Cohn, of Truthout, (August 24, 2005), Karpinski also holds Donald Rumsfeld responsible. This is not just speculation on her part: her conclusions are based upon a memorandum signed by Rumsfeld, authorizing a list of "maybe 6 or 8 techniques: use of dogs; stress positions; loud music" with a handwritten postscript: "Make sure this happens!!"

Such tactics as those described above, and others that have subsequently been documented, clearly defy the Geneva Convention. Convention III Article 13 reads:

"Prisoners of war must at all times be humanely treated. Any unlawful act or omission by the Detaining Power causing death or seriously endangering the health of a prisoner of war in its custody is prohibited, and will be regarded as a serious breach of the present Convention.

Likewise, prisoners of war must at all times be protected, particularly against acts of violence or intimidation and against insults and public curiosity."

This act of defiance on the part of Rumsfeld, and therefore, his Commander-in-Chief, Bush, mirrors their rebuff of UN intervention prior to the onset of the war in Iraq. They apparently do not hold themselves accountable to anyone, and they will go to any lengths to get control of that region in the world. As eyewitness Karpinski notes, the promise of power and lucrative contracts were key motivating factors in maintaining this illegal practice in Iraq.

According to Karen J. Greenberg, in her article, *Torture Doesn't Work: The Achilles' Heel Of Torture*, (August 29, 2005, TomDispatch), JAG, or Judge Advocate Generals Corps, cites " the potentially dangerous repercussions that might come from alienating our allies, and the endangerment of our citizens and our troops in a world in which reciprocity in the decent treatment of prisoners might no longer be honored" as primary reasons to refrain from detainee abuse.

Those of us in this community who oppose every kind of violence must keep the fire of inquiry alive.

Right to Moral Opposition to War: Paredes Sues Navy

On September 16, 2005 Pablo Paredes, the San Diego-based sailor who refused to board his Iraq-bound ship last December 6, filed a petition for a writ of habeas corpus in Federal District Court. The petition stated the Navy improperly rejected the Paredes application for discharge as a conscientious objector and asks the Court to order the Navy to give Paredes an honorable discharge.

Mr. Paredes' application for discharge as a conscientious objector was denied by the Navy on July 6, 2005. Since then, Paredes has been serving the sentence from his court martial. His sentence is scheduled to be completed on October 4, 2005. The basis of the petition is that, while Mr. Paredes' application showed that he met the criteria to be discharged as a conscientious objector, the Navy denied his request without giving any reason as is required by regulations. Since Mr. Paredes made a prima facie case for his opposition to war in any form on the basis of deeply held moral and ethical beliefs, and since the Navy had no reason and no basis in fact for denying his claim, the Navy acted improperly and should now discharge him as a conscientious objector.

In explaining his decision to challenge the Navy in Federal Court, Mr. Paredes said, "Recognizing the legitimacy of a person's conscientious objection to war is a magnanimous concession that our country yields to it's citizens. When true and deeply held, such beliefs must be respected, otherwise the first victim of war is a piece of our nation's humanity. I am taking my objection to the federal courts to ensure that a human being's right to a moral opposition to war is respected, and not dismissed capriciously or

frivolously as the Navy has done in my case.” Paredes is represented by San Diego Attorneys Jeremy Warren and Robert Swain. According to Swain, Mr. Paredes’ prospects in court are good. “The right of service members to challenge denial of conscientious objection claims on the basis that the denial lacks a basis in fact is well established. In this case, the Navy failed to offer a valid reason.

On December 6, 2005, Mr. Paredes had been found guilty of missing troop movement. At the court martial, Mr. Paredes said that he acted on the basis of conscience and on his understanding of his responsibility as a service member not to participate in war crimes, such as by contributing to a war initiated in violation of international law. Although he faced a maximum punishment of 12 months confinement, forfeiture of 2/3 pay, reduction in rank, and a Bad Conduct Discharge, Mr. Paredes was sentenced to just 60 days restriction, 90 days of hard labor without confinement, and reduction in rank. His sentence was far less than that of other war refusers such as Stephen Funk and Camilo Mejia. Mr. Paredes’ case attracted international attention and was covered widely in the English and Spanish language media. He gained statements of support for such leading intellectuals as Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn and Chalmers Johnson, and was declared a “prisoner of conscience” by Amnesty International.

Pablo Paredes continues to use every recourse to challenge the governments denial of his right to “conscientious objector” status. His case is based on, and represents the right to a moral imperative and the governments struggle to deny him this right.

Information is from the San Diego Military Counseling Project, which continues to support Pablo Paredes.

There is 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. And you've got to indicate to the people who run it, to the people who own it, that unless you're free, the machine will be prevented from working at all!

– *Mario Savio, the conclusion of his memorable speech, before Free Speech Movement demonstrators entered Sproul Hall to begin their sit-in on December 3, 1964.*

In 1992 and 1994 the US ratified three UN human rights treaties: *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR 1992); Convention on Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD 1994), and the Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT).* Under the US Constitution, a treaty is "the supreme law of the land." In ratifying these treaties, the US government made commitments to submit periodic reports to the three UN committees that administer and enforce the three treaties. The tool of enforcement is the

mobilization of shame: media coverage of accurate reports by national and local governments on violations of rights by or within each nation. To date the US government has only filed one of three reports due to the Human Rights Committee (that enforces the *ICCPR* in 1994) and one of five reports due to the Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD in 2001).

The UN Human Rights Commission on April 21, 2005 for the first time established a Special Rapporteur to "identify and promote best practices on measures to counter terrorism that respect human rights and fundamental freedoms" and to work closely with UN bodies. Mexico proposed the resolution, similar to previous UN resolutions establishing Special Rapporteurs to study and act on violations in Rwanda and Bosnia. The Commission members, officially representing 53 governments including the US, took this action by consensus and will hear reports from this Special Rapporteur for the next three years.

On May 6, 2005, the US submitted its second report, due in 1999, to the UN Committee that enforces the *Convention Against Torture (CAT)*, which the US Senate ratified in 1994. Its 95 pages do not cover the actions of local, state and federal law enforcement officers at the GOP National Convention, or many other recent well-known violations of human rights covered in the CAT. The report specifically refuses to discuss alleged violations at Abu Ghraib or other prisons in Afghanistan and Iraq, and refuses to discuss Guantanamo, saying they are not covered by the *CAT*. Article 5 (1.(a)) says it applies "when the offenses are committed in any territory under its jurisdiction ... " The third report was due in 2003.

In view of US Government refusal to file the required reports, and to enforce the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and based on the UN Charter human rights Articles 55 and 56 and three treaties the US ratified in 1992 and 1994, **the UN Human Rights Commission has taken unprecedented steps concerning alleged violations of human rights by the US Government in the "war on terror."** On Aug. 3, 2005 the Commission sent an email sent to four NGOs in the US asking for information on "the effect of measures taken in the fight against terrorism" – specifically "the implications of the Patriot Act on nationals as well as non-nations" and in detention and treatment of prisoners in Iraq, Afghanistan, Guantanamo, etc. (mentioning by name the places the US had said it didn't have to discuss under the Torture Convention). The NGOs contacted were the ACLU, Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute, World Organization for Human Rights USA, and The Tandem Project.

Find info at www.indybay.org/news/2005/09/1766963.php

Where is Hope to be Found?

by Georgia Woods

An answer to the unsigned diatribe against the Sonoma County Mental Health System printed in the last issue of *The Peace Press*.

I just retired from the Sonoma County Mental Health System. I was a case manager in the Adult Outpatient Department, which this writer is focused on. I found everyone I worked with to be caring, patient, and having the interests of the clients at heart.

When he talks about handcuffs and conservatorship and “disappearing” he is talking about the few clients who are hospitalized against their will. There are very strict rules that apply here. A person cannot be hospitalized against their will unless they are an imminent danger to self or others, or are gravely disabled. That means about to commit suicide and have a plan and the means, about to hurt someone and have a plan and the means, or in danger of dying because they can't take care of themselves or accept care from others. If a person is on the street and has the means to feed, clothe, and shelter him/herself, they are not gravely disabled. That is why you see people walking along, talking to themselves, dirty, sunburned, limping. The law says if they aren't violent or in danger of dying, they are to be left alone, and they are.

Conservatorship is also very hard to get, because of the protection of freedom and individual rights. A Conservatorship lasts for only one year, and then the person is released if they are no longer gravely disabled. Staying on meds is sometimes, but not always, considered in the release. The clients can request a hearing every six months during that year to challenge the Conservatorship, and can request a jury trial, if they wish, for any Conservatorship hearing.

There have been several clients who have died in Santa Rosa Creek. The woman he talks about was a speed addict. I loved her too. She was on my caseload. She refused every form of treatment available for her condition, and came to the hospital on her own when the drugs made her so scared she couldn't function. Some said she didn't have a mental illness, rather a condition called “amphetamine-induced psychosis.” In any case, the mental health system did not cause her death, her addiction did.

The writer asks, “Where is hope to be found?” The answer is: in the medicines he calls toxic and rejects. Once a person has his/her brain chemistry improved by medication, he/she may take care of life with no other outside help. Or, if the remission is partial, he/she can accept the help and services of others. Perhaps that is what he means when he talks about resignation. Living in a Board and Care Home is better than the street, but some don't go on from there. Others get up, go back to school, live independently with the help of HUD, and make their way back into the community of work and relationships.

I know what I am talking about. In 1981, after being depressed for 20 years, I tried to kill myself. After I left the hospital, and when I started feeling better, I decided I was well and stopped the meds. Lots of people do this. In a few weeks I was manic: talking nonstop and running up and down the state of California on the bus.

After a few more ups and downs I got stabilized on Lithium and Paxil, and went from being homeless to having my own apartment and a job. But I couldn't have done those things had the depression and mania been left uncontrolled. In either state, I can't concentrate on anything useful, and just make a mess of my life.

I do not understand why some clients make such a fuss about the meds. They are clearly disabled by their illnesses, clearly helped to focus and take care of themselves when given meds, and yet their response is anger at the cure and the helpers. Granted not everyone is cured, but every last one of our clients is better off than the guy wandering the streets and talking to himself.

A Message from Occupied Washington, D.C.

On the eve of the "Bring The Troops Home Now" protest in Washington, D.C., Elaine Holtz and I wandered through the city looking at the buildings and monuments which make up the US seat of power. We were out after midnight, still on West Coast time. Everything was beautiful, lit up on a warm night.

I've been to D.C. several times, but this was the first time for Elaine. I do not consider myself a patriot. I prefer to think of myself as a citizen of the world rather than of the USA. But it was fun to share Elaine's enthusiasm and awe as she encountered each new site. We were having a good time until we reached the front of the White House.

Many of us in Sonoma County are angry that George Bush has been allowed to occupy the White House after two uncontested stolen elections. But when you actually stand in front of that beautiful building, the enormity of the crime hits you like a ton of bricks. You can see him walking in on inauguration day and you wonder why we were not there barring the door.

The Justice Department is a huge building down Constitution Avenue. It is identified as "The Office of the Attorney General." Again it hits you. The current occupant of that office, Alberto Gonzales, is a man who condones torture, in flagrant violation of the Geneva Convention, the supreme human rights law of the land. And just like Bush, he was allowed to walk through the door and occupy the building.

In an ideal world, we would have circled both buildings and refused to allow these men in. In an ideal world, all Americans would have realized that people who

violate human rights put all of us in jeopardy. In an ideal world, the beautiful buildings would be beacons of hope, not symbols of a dream gone wrong.

I enjoy visiting Washington, D.C. It's an exciting city with wonderful museums, monuments and gardens. But I look forward to the day when I can visit it with pride, knowing that it truly inspires freedom and is not an empty promise. We at the Peace and Justice Center of Sonoma County hope that this issue of the *Peace Press* will be a useful tool to help create a new dream, based upon unabridged human rights for all the people of the world. Please use it and help us fulfill that promise.

Submitted by Susan Lamont, president of PJC board