

***The Peace Press* – August/September2008**

Undoing the Damage: Human Rights, Global & Local

Declaration For Nonviolence – a World Without Torture

cover poem by Pace e Bene

I publicly declare
my opposition to torture
as policy or practice

I publicly call on all government officials to oppose torture
as policy or practice

I publicly pledge
to take peaceful steps
to oppose torture
as policy or practice

I publicly pledge
to call for
a world that safeguards human rights

a world that is just, peaceful and sustainable

a world that challenges violence through
nonviolent alternatives

a world without torture

Getting Centered – Earth Rights

by Elizabeth Stinson, Director

This *Peace Press* is dedicated to the changing tide that we are feeling and want to recognize on a local, national and international level. On July 7, 2008 Ecuador entered into its constitution the rights of Nature. This is unprecedented and necessary world-wide. According to Article 1 of the constitution: Nature or Pachamama, where life is reproduced and exists, has the right to exist, persist, maintain and regenerate its vital cycles, structure, functions and its processes in evolution. Every person, people, community or nationality, will be able to demand the recognitions of rights for nature before the public organisms.

Nature has the right to an integral restoration. In the cases of severe or permanent environmental impact, including the ones caused by the exploitation on non-renewable natural resources, the State will establish the most efficient mechanisms for the restoration, and will adopt the adequate measures to eliminate or mitigate the harmful environmental consequences. Article 3 states that the state will motivate natural and juridical persons to protect nature, it will promote respect towards all the elements that form an ecosystem.

What does this mean in a world in which corporate personhood has taken the rights of many individuals?

According to the Ecuadorian articles, the introduction of organisms and organic and inorganic material that can alter the national genetic patrimony in a definitive way is prohibited. The persons, people, communities and nationalities will have the right to benefit from the environment and form natural wealth that will allow well-being. The environmental services cannot be appropriated; its production, provision, use and exploitation, will be regulated by the State.

“Wild Law” as it is often referred to by environmental lawyers, “recognizes the rights of rivers to flow unimpeded, the rights of mountains to remain intact instead of having their tops blown off for coal mining, the rights of old growth forests to remain unlogged, and the rights of all humans, animals, birds, insects, amphibians and other beings to a habitat that supports their existence. Wild law requires that decisions made by communities, governing bodies, courts or other social or cultural authority adhere to, rather than violate, these rights. Wild Law does not place humans above other members of the “Earth Community,” as visionary Thomas Berry puts it. It is eco-centric (Earth-centered) rather than anthro-po-centric (human-centered). If we make the paradigm shift, we will enter what Berry calls the “Ecozoic Era,” taking our rightful place in the Earth Community instead of attempting to rule it.” Meanwhile, the struggle to recognize the right of the people to impeach a criminal president gains momentum and the struggle for gay marriage rights gains and loses long fought battles, forcing eyes and hearts to open wider.

These struggles are worth doing locally. Imagine if we had not taken from the earth its right to sustain us by polluting it? We can begin now, locally, by simplifying, organizing, sharing, giving. We recognize that in order to really enter a restorative phase we must begin to heal at home.

We must begin to address in new ways our growing homeless crisis, restore lost lunch programs, local low-cost health clinics must be publicized and supported, healthcare for all is only civilized. We, as a growing social justice community can find the way to tie the peoples’ needs and humanity to the care for the planet and find our way to balance.

We have lost much in the past eight years with this “presidunce.”

We also have gained tenacity, compassion and will... Mitakuyase Oyasin (All My Relations)

Letter From the Imperial County Jail – As Our Nation Enters the Frontier of Torture

by Father Louie Vitale

(Fr. Vitale will be speaking 7pm on September 7 at the Glaser Center in Santa Rosa about his global “No to Torture” campaign.)

...I write from the Imperial County jail in El Centro, California, behind bars for challenging the training of interrogators at the US Army Intelligence Center and School at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. In November 2006, Father Kelly and I had gone to Fort Huachuca to deliver a letter opposing the teaching of torture. We hoped to speak with enlisted personnel about the illegality and immorality of torture, but were arrested as we knelt in prayer halfway up the driveway at the Army base.

Mohandas Gandhi said that the cell door is the door to freedom. In freely entering the Imperial prison in India – and the Imperial County jail in California – there is nothing more to fear. Here we achieve a transformation, a turning, a teshvua (the Hebrew term for repentance). Here we discover the path of resistance: a vocation that we must follow in the midst of empire to overcome the oppression of our brothers and sisters. I realize this stance in my solitary cell in Imperial County jail. As the steel doors clang shut, there is freedom to surrender to God and this universe. There is freedom to be open to the creative call of compassion toward our global community.

I have come to this prison cell because I was moved to challenge a terrible frontier that my country has entered in its ill-conceived and ill-fated war in Iraq: torture.

Each of us has had to absorb the reality that ours is a nation that tortures. By its policies and practices, the United States has retracted the binding commitment it made when it signed the 1975 UN declaration on torture. The declaration prohibited torture, defined in Article 1 as “any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted by or at the instigation of a public official on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or confession, punishing him for an act he has committed... or intimidating him or other persons.”

As stunning as turning on our televisions on Sept. 11, 2001, to see the World Trade Towers collapse was seeing, in 2004, photos of raw torture perpetrated by the US military at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.

We have since learned the extent of these so-called “enhanced interrogation methods” – hangings, electric shock, beatings, waterboarding, and other extreme physical and psychological procedures – spelled out in memos emanating from the White House. They have been used in other prisons in Iraq, Guantanamo Bay, and in renditions to other countries such as Syria (listed by the US as part of the Axis of Evil). We outsource our enemy combatant captives for torture so that we can disclaim any responsibility.

While in Jordan and Syria in summer 2006, I spoke with Iraqis who had been imprisoned by the US in Abu Ghraib. (They were dumbfounded that some of us had gone to prison to protest their detainment and treatment.) Meeting them convinced me

that this policy and practice of torture has diminished our standing in the worldwide community.

Many say torture is worse than killing in war. It destroys not only the body but also the spirit – for the victims, but also the torturer. By extension, this is surely true for the countries involved. Major religious bodies attest that torture is immoral, sinful, evil, and always wrong.

...As a nation, we have crossed a line we had pledged we would never cross.

...As a Franciscan, I have been deeply influenced by Francis of Assisi, who brought Jesus' vision alive in concrete and powerful ways in his own time. Francis realized that we could only approach our fellow creatures with gestures of openness and love to all. He rejected the Crusaders' violence and passed through their lines to embrace the Sultan. Aware that God's goodness is revealed in all creation, they shared their common experiences and saw that goodness resists those who branded all followers of Islam as violent jihadists. Francis challenged the Franciscan brothers to live among Muslims and be subject to them in order to learn their truth. We must follow these insights if we wish to realize our deepest yearnings for peace.

The cell door clangs shut. Now I am alone. But instead of trying to escape this solitude, I enter it deeply: This is where I am. Here in this empty cell I have begun to experience prison in the way James W. Douglass in *Resistance and Contemplation* describes it, not as "an interlude in a white middle-class existence, but as a stage of the Way redefining the nature of my life." I have sensed this, little by little. These days are a journey into new freedom and a slow transformation of being and identity: an invitation to enter one's truest self, and to follow the road of prayer and nonviolent witness wherever it will lead.

I am in this little hermitage in the presence of God, in the presence of the Christ who gave his life for the healing and well-being of all. I am also in the presence of the vast cloud of witnesses, some represented in the icons that have multiplied in this cell, gifts sent to me from people everywhere: Oscar Romero, Martin Luther King Jr., Dorothy Day, Steve Biko, the martyrs of El Salvador, Pope John XXIII – those who have given their lives to fashion a more human world. I also experience a deep connection with my fellow prisoners and with those outside these prison walls. In my small cell, I have a growing awareness of the communion of saints – and the possibility of a world where the vast chasm of violence and injustice enforced by torture and war is bridged and transformed.

Father Louie Vitale, ofm, has just been released from a 5-month prison term for protesting the training of soldiers to commit treason. Fr. Vitale will be speaking on September 7, in Santa Rosa, about his global "No to Torture" campaign. Call 575-8902 for location.

Can the Damage Be Undone? Healing the Body Politic

by Will Shonbrun

Under the Bush Administration and under the guise of national security, American's 4th Amendment Constitutional right not to be spied upon without probable cause, (and the issuing of a judicial warrant for that purpose), has been eroded, and in some cases effectively discarded.

Beginning with the jingoistically named USA Patriot Act in October of 2001, American's library records, book and periodical purchases, and medical records were all deemed subject to secret scrutiny by the government. With a Kafkaesque or Orwellian twist, depending on your brand of totalitarian state paranoia, the subject of an investigation was not to be informed by those agencies whose records were to be explored: the consequence of leaking this information could be a fine and/or incarceration.

Next came the belated and shocking revelation that American's phone calls and emails had been illegally tapped and spied on in violation of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, FISA, which requires government agencies to get judicial warrants for such surveillance activities. In collecting this illicit data, the Bush administration was aided and abetted by some of the major telecom companies such as AT&T and Verizon. To what extent this has been done – the number of Americans spied on, and the type and amount of data procured – is still not known, and probably never will be, what with the recent passage of a revised FISA bill that lets the telecoms (and by extension Bush & Company) off the legal hook.

The newly configured FISA legislation has generated much consternation among liberal Democrats in the Senate, constitutional rights organizations such as the ACLU and the Center for Constitutional Rights, and those who believe the compromise was a craven sell-out and further indication of a too-acquiescent and spineless Democratic Congress. The ACLU brands the new legislation "outrageous, unconstitutional and un-American," and vows to challenge it in court. The organization asserts that, "The FISA Amendment Act allows for mass, untargeted and warrantless surveillance of all communications coming into and out of the United States. And to top it off, it hands immunity to telecom companies for their role in domestic spying."

Senators Obama and Feinstein voted for the revised FISA. Both maintain the bill was a compromise not wholly to their liking, but a "marked improvement (over)" and "substantially better" than the Republican crafted Protect America Act, which expanded government surveillance powers and offered minimal privacy protections. Both senators readily admit that the Bush Administration acted illegally, abused its powers and undermined the Constitution: they voted as they did because in effect it was the best deal they could cut given the concerns for national security. Others in the Senate, particularly Senators Dodd and Feingold, argue that the original FISA was perfectly adequate to protect national security while still safeguarding Constitutional 4th Amendment rights.

Contrary to the claims of Obama and Feinstein that the FISA Amendment ends illegal warrantless surveillance and reinstates judicial oversight, Pulitzer Prize journalist

Chris Hedges maintains that, “The new FISA Amendment Act nearly eviscerates oversight of government surveillance (and) allows the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court to review only general procedures for spying rather than individual warrants. The court will not be told specifics about who will be wiretapped, which means the law provides woefully inadequate safeguards to protect innocent people whose communications are caught up in the government’s dragnet surveillance program.”

So the question remains: Can these egregious Constitutional breakdowns, the underpinnings of our legal system, be changed back, reformed or undone?

I’d answer, yes and no.

Laws can be reinstated, or new ones written to correct a course, if there is the political will to do so. This remains to be seen when a new administration comes to power. However I believe it’s imperative that we ascertain the extent of the clandestine warrantless surveillance that has been ongoing for the last seven years, and not let it simply be swept under the rug by enacting a “new” FISA and saying the job is done.

If we do not proceed with Congressional hearings and investigations to discover the extent of the damage done, and hold legally accountable those who transgressed and are responsible for these actions, then the body politic cannot heal and will remain infected. If we try to dismiss or ignore the illicit actions of those in government responsible for taking the nation in an illegal and immoral direction, then the damage to our legal system, and the degradation of our moral code of behavior and standards of decency will not be undone. There are some small signs of hope on the horizon, but we are still far from shore.

If you want to take action and lend support to constitutional rights organizations seeking FISA reforms contact: The American Civil Liberties Organization at www.aclu.org, The Center for Constitutional Rights, www.ccr.org, The Bill of Rights Defense Committee, www.bordc.org or The Electronic Frontier Foundation, www.eff.org.

Will Shonbrun writes: www.shonbrunreport.blogspot.com and publishes: www.sonomavalleyvoice.com.

The Public’s Right to Know About Police Misbehavior

by Rev. Ann Gray Byrd, former Chair NAACP & ACLU

California is one of the most secretive states in the country when it comes to information about police complaints and discipline. As recently interpreted by the California Supreme Court in the Copley Press v. Superior Court decision and subsequent lower courts, police agencies, commissions and even citizen review boards are now prohibited from releasing any information about the conduct of officers.

While the Legislature and courts have bent over backward to protect the police lobby, records associated with confirmed misconduct of other public employees are open to the public. With the increasing number of deaths involving police officers (49 deaths since 1999), the NAACP and the ACLU partnered with numerous other

community-based groups to gain access to complaint information – the Police Accountability Coalition.

Following a community-wide forum and numerous meetings with city and county personnel, there is still no access. Several things became clear. SB1019 (Romero, D-Los Angeles), seeking to overturn Copley Press, stalled in the Assembly Public Safety Committee last year. ACLU-Northern California is now neutral on the current narrowed-down amended version of the legislation.

Those now seeking election to City Councils and the Board of Supervisors must be held accountable and responsible for establishing policies and procedures to effectively ensure that sworn officers meet the highest standards to “protect and serve” ALL citizens. The erosion of civil liberties is rampant, and release of accurate and timely information to the public after a serious incident involving sworn officers should be priority.

A natural outgrowth of the Police Accountability Coalition is the addition of a clinic and hotline to document incidents and complaints about sworn officers. The Police Accountability Clinic and Hotline (PACH) will compile the data to be made available to the public or any request. As with most advocacy groups, the office space and telephone at 719 Orchard Street, (707) 542.PACH, is staffed on a voluntary basis. PACH will distribute and collect complaint forms for incidents within Sonoma County.

Rev. Ann Gray Byrd is former Chair NAACP & ACLU.

An Organization with Real IMPACT!

by Debra Birkinshaw

Members of an evolving Petaluma social movement are working to expand their projects and campaigns for workers justice, immigrants' rights, and police accountability. Through direct action, grassroots organizing, leadership development, community building and solidarity, this group seeks to build successful models for radical social change on a local level, as well as provide support to other organizations working for peace and justice.

Ever mindful of maintaining basic human rights for all inhabitants of their city, the diligent members of the group now known as IMPACT! engages in pragmatic actions such as shutting down the local recruiting center for an entire afternoon, monitoring police interrogation, setting up free breakfast programs with immigrant workers and staging Critical Mass bike rides.

All those activists in our community who might be asking skeptical questions like – "Where are the younger people? Why aren't they joining us?" and "Isn't there anything positive happening in this movement?" and "What effect can grassroots organizing really have?" – Take note!

This social movement is well established, accomplished, and sustaining in its efforts. This is exciting! We can all learn from the success and perseverance of this group of young activists; furthermore, we should be supporting their efforts. We should be at their side, bicycling down the street in the name of ecological sustainability,

dishing up some food and serving up some "Know Your Rights" cards written in Spanish, and observing police actions for the protection of those they confront.

In the next year, the members of the group IMPACT! are hoping to raise money to expand the many projects now under way, by hiring 2 full time staff members and obtaining a small office space. So if you cannot be at their side, one helpful thing you could do is donate to their cause, so that they may sustain their organizing efforts and build on prior successes.

Sure, you could practice "armchair activism" with a punch of your computer key. You could stand on a corner, waving a peace sign, reminding people who would rather not remember, that there is still a war going on. Those actions do have merit. Here's the real question that should be asked: are you ready to be involved, really involved? Here are some upcoming events that this group is inviting you to join:

Events/Meetings (weekly and not-so-weekly) in Petaluma (From Carl, an IMPACT! Organizer):

*Mondays – Critical Mass. 5pm. We meet at the Luchessi Center parking lot on N. McDowell Blvd in Petaluma, (across from the KMART shopping center.)

*Tuesdays – City of Refuge meeting 6pm, and CopWatch meeting 7pm. Come for one or both, everyone welcome, 1251 Marian Way (Carl's house). The City of Refuge campaign is a new effort by our organization to pass an ordinance, similar to the one in San Francisco, prohibiting the use of any city funds or resources in the assistance of federal immigration investigations. This is a grassroots effort, and in the coming months we will be going into our community to begin building the base for a popular campaign for immigrants rights here in Petaluma.

*Friday afternoon – Free Spanish classes/workshops 4pm, Petaluma Public Library. Free one hour Spanish sessions, taught/facilitated by organizers within the group. These classes are primarily for other activists/organizers, but everyone is welcome to participate. Generally, the "classes" will be focused on conversational Spanish, with some grammar work to correct any errors that may appear.

*Friday evening – CopWatch shifts. We are seeking to have two shifts per night: from 8pm-10pm, and from 10pm-midnight. Each shift should have between 4-6 people. A shift consists of patrolling the streets, in cars and on foot, observing police activity, speaking with people who have been detained, and outreaching to people on the street. Anyone is welcome to volunteer for a shift, although we do prefer to do a brief orientation beforehand. The more volunteers we get, the more flexible we can be with our shifts to accommodate other people's schedules.

*Saturdays – Food Not Bombs serving. Cooking begins at 9am. Serving begins at 11am at the corner of Washington and Howard St. to the day laborers. The purpose of this project is to form a relationship with immigrant workers and help them organize a labor center where they can find work easier and organize themselves on an egalitarian basis. We need volunteers to collect food donations, cook, and speak Spanish with the workers we serve to.

If you can do at least one of these things, we encourage you to volunteer.

*Other events: *Sundays – General Meeting for our organization, 12 noon, 1251 Marian Way. (Carl's house). The last Sunday of every month we have our larger general meetings, where broader decisions are made about our movement and our organization. Decisions are made by members only, (if you have never been to a meeting but want to be a member, all you have to do is show up and say you want to be a member), but all are welcome to participate, give suggestions and advice, and see how our group is proceeding. Also, allied groups and organizations are encouraged to show up and give updates on what they are doing.

IMPACT! Statement of Principles

Brothers and Sisters,

We are IMPACT!, a collection of individuals united by a vision of justice in this world and driven by a common spirit of resistance. We are students, workers, artists, farmers, travelers, poets, immigrants, friends, and neighbors. We are rebellious and dignified. We speak up and we act out. We are fanatic lovers of liberty and justice. Bad government and greedy people have controlled this world for far too long. We are one voice among many that will say “no” to them, and “yes” to a beautiful world that lays just over the horizon.

Our ideas, experiences, and methods are as varied as the streets we grew up on, and there are a thousand ways in which each one of us will choose to struggle towards a just and peaceful world. We are neither politicians, nor do we wish to hold power over anybody. We are not a vanguard and we do not have “the answers.” We will not be arrogant, or claim that our way is the only way. We search for a world where respect and cooperation maintain us, instead of violence and coercion. We use our differences as tools that can strengthen our communities. We do not ignore them or let them tear us apart.

We are not weak and we will not be co-opted by clever and disingenuous politicians or officials. We will always keep our word and never act dishonestly. We are a tension, a resistance to injustice everywhere, an example, a dream of a new world where all worlds fit. We do not follow any one ideology.

As an organization, we have five main points. These are not the only points we have to make, but they will begin to give you a small picture of what exactly we are fighting for. They are:

Community Governance/Autonomy

We want freedom. We can no longer accept that rules and customs be imposed on us from outside our community. We recognize that we are fully capable of making our own decisions and that each community must be free to guide its own destiny without being restricted or oppressed by outside forces. Thus we propose, not a new regime or political platform, but rather the opening of spaces for ALL to participate directly. These would be in small assemblies in every neighborhood, where the people are able to decide best what they need and how to meet those needs collectively and democratically. We neither seek political office, nor do we believe that real change will

come from above. Bad government has given us nothing of value, nothing of freedom or democracy, nothing good and certainly nothing worth defending or maintaining.

Workers' Power/Local Economy

The fruits of our collective labor must be enjoyed by all. The shops, factories, and fields all belong to those who work them. Thus, we suggest that all workers organize themselves into strong and democratic unions in order to take back what is rightfully theirs. We seek to support local merchants, farmers, artists, etc., and defend them from greedy people and corporate chains. Furthermore, we believe in creating a strong local economy by resisting the unbridled invasion of big development. These massive companies, in exchange for our money, resources, labor, sweat, and land offer us nothing but monotony, boredom and uniformity. In short, we do not need them.

Solidarity

This struggle is a puzzle with seemingly infinite pieces, and it takes all types to put it together so that we may see an image of the new world we carry in our hearts. We come from different places, with different ideas, and we take different paths, but essentially we are all seeking the same thing- justice and peace with dignity.

We must respect these differences and focus on how we can each contribute to this expanding global movement for democracy and justice, and not on where we diverge from other people. We will always work in solidarity with others who are struggling for social justice, in a way that mutually complements our efforts.

One organization alone cannot create the momentum necessary to achieve sustainable social change. Neither can one idea, approach, strategy, nor tactic appeal to the amount of people necessary to build a truly democratic world. Our movements must operate like an open hand, each digit capable of moving separately and independently, but at any moment ready to bring itself together to form a clenched fist.

Equality/Anti-Oppression

We will actively and consistently confront all forms of oppression that exist in our community, and especially in our organization. We will create safe spaces for those whom identify with oppressed groups to discuss the problems that exist within or outside the organization. Furthermore, we will work towards fostering leadership among traditionally marginalized groups, including, but not limited to: youth, people of color, womyn, queer/trans folk, immigrants, and the working class.

We are products of a flawed and oppressive society. Not only does oppression flourish in our established institutions, but all too frequently it appears in our organizing. Many of us have grown up with unearned privileges due to our skin color, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, class, and their combination. It is our responsibility to bring about real equality and an end to these privileges.

Culture

Culture must be something that is open and free to everyone. It should be provocative, not numbing. It should be what makes life exciting, not something for which we ask permission. We vow to work towards defending our artistic spaces and fighting to construct many more. We suggest many diverse and collective acts that together can

breathe life and joy into our communities, creating spaces for socializing, free expression, and recreation.

A community must have music, art, color, poetry, ideas, theater, and literature to give it meaning. Otherwise it is dull, dreary and dreadful. Yet every day we find that we have fewer and fewer spaces to create, to play, and to express ourselves. Socializing has become criminal. Youth music venues are shut down.

Public space is made private, leaving many artists with no legal outlet for creative expression. School programs for art and music are cancelled. Our culture has become something far removed from us, something only those who can afford it get to enjoy. And the rest of us become outlaws and criminals. Without culture, all social movements are meaningless. Therefore it will be central to everything we do.

For more information contact Carl: email: theunitedresistance@gmail.com or phone: 338-5318.

What Does the Peace and Justice Center Offer?

The Peace & Justice Center of Sonoma County is the largest peace and social justice group in Sonoma County with a membership of around 750. Through the efforts of our Director, Elizabeth Stinson, the Board of Directors, and a dedicated group of volunteers, the Center does a wide variety of work.

Counsels and separates men and women from the military.

Organizes counter recruiting in the schools.

Edits and publishes the *Peace Press*.

Offers information on a variety of peace related issues.

Hosts speakers events on peace related issues.

Provides insurance for events.

Provides fiscal sponsorship for emerging groups.

Encourages coalitions and provides a meeting space for peace and justice groups.

Furnishes a video and book lending library.

Holds an annual dinner to celebrate peace and social justice work in the community

Provides a voice for peace in newspapers, magazines, radio and television.

Holds a weekly anti-war vigil.

Organizes bus and/or carpooling for anti-war marches.

The Center is always looking for people who would like to help with any of these activities. Please contact the Center if you can lend support. We are also always seeking to increase our membership. Funds are always short for doing this work. All help – physical, mental or fiscal – is warmly welcome.

Nagasaki / Hiroshima Remembrance: Building Toward a Nuclear-Free World

The 2008 commemoration of the nuclear bombing of Nagasaki & Hiroshima will be held at the Glaser Center on Saturday, August 9. This is the 63rd anniversary of the day the second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. The doors will open at 6:00pm for a reception with refreshments and viewing of the "Under the Mushroom Cloud" Exhibit. The program will start at 7:00pm and will feature Nobuaki Hanaoka, a survivor who lost his mother & sister in the disaster. Sonoma County Taiko will perform, among others.

Under the Mushroom Cloud

The Mayors for Peace Hiroshima - Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Exhibit is a collection of photographs and drawings which convey the realities of the atomic bombings and the present status of nuclear issues, in the hope of arousing international sentiment towards nuclear weapons abolition. The exhibit will be showing at the Glaser Center from Saturday July 26 through Sunday August 24. The Glaser Center is open for viewing of the exhibit from 10am - 4pm, Sunday - Friday. For more information, call 823-9203.

Farms Not Arms – Farmers Say No to War and Terror

We can no longer have both guns and butter. When Farms Not Arms was formed in January 2006, we spoke about the misuse of the world's resources on war as a threat to our ability to feed everyone. Food prices, food shortages, and food riots now are daily news. It is very likely that the wars of this century will be about food, farmland and water.

Help us create a national and international movement for peace and justice, made up of those of us that feed the world. We can stop being the victims of war and become a force that stops war. Read why we think it is important for the farming and food community to speak out and why we think we can bring a voice of hope and optimism to the national debate. farmsnotarms.org/statements/15_reasons.aspx

Farms Not Arms joins National Family Farm Coalition

By a unanimous vote at their winter meeting outside Baltimore, Maryland in February, the steering committee of the nation's largest grassroots family farm organization welcomed Farms Not Arms into their coalition. Newly elected NFFC President, Mississippi vegetable farmer Ben Burkett, and Vice-President, Montana rancher Dena Hoff joined other family farm leaders in endorsing Farms Not Arms. FNA is honored to be part of NFFC, to support their important work and to get a chance to work with La Via Campesina, the powerful international farmers movement that NFFC belongs to. www.nffc.net and viacampesina.org

War on Bugs – War on People

Organic farming pioneer and Farms Not Arms national co-chair Will Allen has compiled ten years of amazing work in a new book, *The War on Bugs*, just released by

Chelsea Green Publishing. Famed academic and scholar, Dr. Vandana Shiva writes: "In 1984, when the gas leak from Union Carbide's pesticide plant in Bhopal killed thousands, I asked myself why agriculture had become like war. The War on Bugs will help us all move from violent agriculture to nonviolent agriculture, which protects all life and our health." www.chelseagreen.com/2007/items/waronbugs

"And they Shall Beat their Swords into Plowshares..."

Farms Not Arms has been spearheading efforts to bring young men and women returning from Iraq and Afghanistan back to our farms. Now we are helping to form an exciting new group, the Farmer-Veteran Coalition. While FNA will always stand firm in its opposition to war, we cannot help but be moved by the huge numbers of young soldiers returning to our rural communities – and their need for viable employment, services and healing. It is important that this new coalition be totally neutral about the war in order to gain access to our young soldiers at military job-fairs and other gatherings. We cannot create a return to local and regional agriculture in this country without these hard-working, self-sacrificing young people. www.farmvetco.org

Register as a supporter of Farms Not Arms today by visiting the Farms Not Arms web site. Your public show of support helps our young organization grow and gain credibility. Your farm, business or organization will be listed for identification.

Donate today to help Farms Not Arms spread its important message by using the shopping cart on our web site or sending a check to: Farms Not Arms, PO Box 255, Petaluma, CA 94953. Money is urgently needed to reach out to farmers and food industry people around the nation and the world, and to support the work we do on behalf of the Farmer-Veteran Coalition until it has its own fiscal organization in place. farmsnotarms.org/

Thank you - on behalf of Farms Not Arms

by Will Allen & Kate Duesterberg, Cedar Circle Farm, East Thetford, VT; Jim Cochran, Swanton Berry Farm, Davenport, CA; Jim and Rebecca Goodman, Northwood Farm, Wonewoc, WI; Michael O'Gorman, Just Farms Consulting, San Diego, CA

The Prevention of Farm Animal Cruelty Act

by Hope Bohanec

When we go to the polls in November, it will be an exciting time in our nation's history. Not only can we overturn 8 years of Republican rule, we have the opportunity to *make history* for animals.

The Prevention of Farm Animal Cruelty Act, Proposition 2, sponsored by the Humane Society of the United States, will be on this year's ballot. This legislation will ban three of the most inhumane forms of intensive confinement in animal agriculture: veal crates, gestation crates for pigs and battery cages for egg-laying hens. These cruel devices are already banned in the European Union. Here in the US, veal and gestation crates have been banned in four other states – Florida, Arizona, Oregon and Colorado. The banning of the battery cages would be a historic first for animals.

A 2007 national poll, funded by the American Farm Bureau Federation, found that 75 percent of Americans would vote for a law in their state requiring more humane treatment for farm animals. The Prevention of Farm Animal Cruelty Act offers the most basic protections, allowing animals to turn around and extend their legs and wings.

Devises to be banned:

Veal Crates – Veal calves are separated from their dairy cow mothers at birth. They spend their entire short lives chained at the neck in a tiny crate where they can't walk, turn around or even lie down comfortably. They live in extreme frustration, stress, fear and pain, lying in their own waste.

Gestation Crates – On many intensive factory farms, female breeding sows are confined for almost their entire life to a two-foot wide crate. These crates are so restrictive that the pigs are unable to even turn around. Many animals suffer painful leg and joint trouble, extreme discomfort and psychological problems. Pigs are intelligent, social creatures. This intensive confinement is extremely inhumane.

Battery Cages – In California, nearly 20 million egg-laying hens live with several other chickens in a cage so small, they can barely move. Battery cages are filthy wire mesh enclosure where the hens are so cramped that many are rubbed raw down to pink skin, and festering sores develop where feathers used to be. All natural instincts to nest, dust bathe, perch and simply walk are denied to the battery-caged hen.

Each of these confinements are so intensive that it would be like living your entire life in an airline seat or being cramped into a full elevator. And this is not just till you reach the next floor, this is all the space you have been given to live!

Here in California, we have been given the rare democratic opportunity to cast a vote to alleviate the suffering of tens of thousands of animals statewide. Please vote YES on Prop 2, *The Prevention of Farm Animal Cruelty Act* in November.

If you would like to help with this historic humane legislation, endorsements are needed from businesses, churches and vets. Fundraising and get-out-the-vote events are in the making and in need of volunteers. Animals need our care, compassion and our vote!

For more information visit the website: www.humanecalifornia.org or contact Hope Bohanec (707) 545-3031 or hopefull@sonic.net.

Hope Bohanec is Sonoma County Coordinator, Californians for Humane Farms

Genocide

by Susan Lamont

I recently spent twenty-four hours sitting by myself in a ravine near Bolinas. I had a cheap, too-thin sleeping bag, a flashlight and water. I did not have food or any diversions. This was a mini-vision quest – an opportunity to test myself and reflect on my life. For those who go camping or back-packing, this may seem a bit silly. But I've only camped three times in sixty years and only with a group and in a campground.

Though there were people close enough to hear an emergency whistle, I was alone and in an area where mountain lions had killed two goats in the previous few weeks. I was actually terrified. I really didn't want to sit alone in the dark with mountain lions. But I did it. To some that means I conquered my fears. For me, the jury is still out.

It was also cold, windy, and wet. I was expected to sit in one spot – no walking about. This made it seem much colder and my aging joints ached from holding one position. Again, this may seem silly and self-indulgent. After all, I had chosen this. I could get up and leave any time I wanted and would, in fact, do so after twenty-four hours. Obviously I was privileged in having a choice. But this stillness was just what Pablo Neruda wrote about in his poem *Now we will count to twelve* which follows these musings.

Susan Griffin, in *The Eros of Everyday Life*, wrote about the Yiddish word for the Nazi genocide. It is *hurbn* and means “the violation of the sanctified life within a community.” We are living in a worldwide genocide. We are living in a world which has declared everything that people commonly value – love, family, beauty – to be valueless. And most people haven't even noticed. They've been dazzled by the trinkets, if they have the money, and distracted by the yearning for them if they don't. In seeking for more, few people realize that they actually have less. In the rush to keep up or to survive at all, they don't have time to just sit and ponder on the wonder of the earth and revel in the diversity and commonality of humanity. We need to re-sanctify life in order to come together to save what is disappearing. That which is sacred is that for which one is willing to sacrifice. The trinkets may seem necessary, but it's time to consider sacrificing them. We need that awareness. We need that conversation. We need to call this what it is. We need to call it genocide. I hope it's not too late.

I have always thought that I had empathy for the homeless, for farm workers stooped over in the fields, for those whose lives are shattered by war. Does it matter that, as I sat huddled and shivering, I could imagine myself curled up over a heat vent on a sidewalk in San Francisco? Does it matter that I could feel the ache and cramping from bending over for hours picking strawberries? Does it matter that I could imagine the fear of not knowing when a bomb might fall as I worried about the stealth of mountain lions? I don't know. I don't know what the added degree of compassion will eventually mean. But this was not “total inactivity,” as Neruda wrote. It was the “life” he wrote of. And I hope I will find a way for it to make a difference in the world. The courage to sit with mountain lions will mean little if I don't find the courage to sacrifice.

Now we will count to twelve

by Pablo Neruda

Now we will count to twelve
and we will all keep still.

For once on the face of the earth
let's not speak in any language;
let's stop for one second,
and not move our arms so much.

It would be an exotic moment
without rush, without engines;
we would all be together
in a sudden strangeness.

Fishermen in the cold sea
would not harm whales
and the man gathering salt
would look at his hurt hands.

Those who prepare green wars,
wars with gas, wars with fire,
victories with no survivors,
would put on clean clothes
and walk about with their brothers
in the shade, doing nothing.

What I want should not be confused
with total inactivity.
Life is what it is about.
I want no truck with death.

If we were not so single-minded
about keeping our lives moving,
and for once could do nothing,
perhaps a huge silence
might interrupt this sadness
of never understanding ourselves
and of threatening ourselves with death.
Perhaps the earth can teach us
as when everything seems dead
and later proves alive.

Now I'll count up to twelve
and you keep quiet and I will go.

Federal Impeachment Efforts at the Grassroots Level

by Dan Monte

The Resolution to Impeach Coalition effort got started in Sonoma County in January 2007 at the Impeachment Forum in Healdsburg. The goal was to encourage our Congresswoman, Lynn Woolsey, to support impeachment action in the House of Representatives. When it became clear that there was substantial, broad-based support for impeachment, a coalition was formed to lobby City Councils so they could also tell Congress to begin an impeachment effort. In just over a year there has been some success in this effort. Representative Woolsey has become a reliable supporter in the House and the more cautious Representative, Mike Thompson, has signed on to a request for impeachment of Vice President Cheney. Locally, four cities were asked to hear the case to send an impeachment resolution to Washington. Three City Councils

agreed to hear from their citizens. Of those, Santa Rosa and Cotati Councils agreed with the people of those cities that the Presidential Administration may well have violated laws, abused its powers and thereby harmed their communities.

The Coalition of local citizens collected petition signatures for months to present to the Councils. People were often surprised but anxious to sign. There were a few who said, "I have voted twice for George Bush and will vote for him again," but the majority of people were very supportive. Some wanted to sign, but were afraid. That ultimately became a reason for some of them to do so, regardless. In 2007, most of the people we spoke to were optimistic about impeachment. But as it has become clear that our Congressional leadership are interested in their own political futures and not in carrying out their duties, people are again feeling disenchanting. This disillusionment is what has caused most Americans to drop out of the political process. The Coalition's resolution efforts have given people the power to speak directly to their local government and through their City Councils to the federal government. This is a moment of strength for the people of this country that has been denied them for many years.

The Impeachment Resolution went right to this personal dynamic and was written from strongly held beliefs about moral responsibility in leadership. It passionately addresses the consequences of the separation of our government from the people. Over the last six years, many of us have met someone with a young relative who enlisted in the military, bolstered by idealism and motivated by lack of options in current society. We have all seen the funeral parades on our city streets, mourning the soldiers who have died. We know that many of those who have returned alive are severely damaged by their experiences and have been abandoned by the government they served. The harm to these individuals and to our communities will be enduring. The justifications for the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq have now been clearly demonstrated as false. Millions of civilians have died in Iraq, Afghanistan and other countries as well from the US military aggression. This betrayal adds to the emotional power of the charges. Many of us were originally blinded by the administration's lies, frightened by the events of 9/11, and misled by the silence of Congressional leaders that knew the truth and said nothing.

The last article in the Impeachment Resolution deals with a fundamental change in our self-image. We have come to grips with the fact that our nation is an admitted violator of international treaties concerning human and civil rights. As youth we were taught that the US was a country that fought against such forces of tyranny and were counted on to uphold human decency. The symbol of the Statue of Liberty protecting the world's masses is now forever shattered. The shattering of this great symbolism has changed the core of every American. We now recognize that we are a nation of torture and a nation that denies justice through a court system.

The efforts of the Resolution to Impeach Coalition and the process we have worked on within our local government have given us all a brief moment of to recognize that we have taken back our power as individuals in society. It can be a model for many important issues and for future action as we acknowledge our strength and work together for justice.

Dan Monte, who retired to Sonoma County, recently became politically active

when he heard how Bush stole the 2004 election and that Congress legalized torture and indefinite detention without judicial review in this country by passing the Military Commissions Act of 2006.

Aesop revisited

by Laure Reichek

Great

Great

X 100

Grandmother Lucy

Your children are devouring

each other

in their greed, gluttony, arrogance

unchecked desires

they inflate themselves

like toads

wanting to be bulls

bullish – bullies.

Unavoidably

the toad

will explode.

Aiding and Abetting – Selling Weapons for Oil

by Linda Hale

A few months ago, headlines in *USA Today* announced: *Iraqis Load Up On Arms From US* I was confused. Weren't we fighting a war there? All in all, Baghdad is committed to buying \$3 billion worth of US weapons in the near future. The May 22, 2008 article stated that this "puts Iraq among the top current purchasers of US military equipment." Jim Michaels, the journalist breaking this front page news, also wanted to make sure that the American public felt due pride in our ability to manufacture and sell the best weapons that money can buy. After the multiple successes of American weapons on the battlefields during the Gulf War in 1991 and the 2003 US-lead invasion of Iraq, the Iraqi government wants to buy our more sophisticated weapons. After all, "AK-47s are generally suited for less developed militaries." Could Michaels be referring to the insurgents who have waged and will continue to wage war with outdated weapons originally sold by the top American, Russian, and British defense contractors to Iraq?

Michaels does mention that although US equipment is generally superior, it is often more difficult to operate and maintain, especially for fledgling militaries. (He failed to mention that third world countries often receive outdated equipment and systems for their investment.) Who pays for these weapons? The United States continues to support Iraq's security forces with our taxes to the tune of \$3 billion this fiscal year alone to equip and train Iraq's security forces. We pay them \$3 billion to buy \$3 billion worth of weapons from US weapons manufacturers like Lockheed Martin and General Electric. And the Pentagon routinely negotiates many of these corporate welfare deals on behalf of US arms manufacturers. These weapons are often resold by the likes of Saudi Arabia to their neighbors. It might be in our best interest to think this through. There just might be a conflict of interest somewhere down the line, folks.

Rampant weapons sales are making the world less safe, but no region is currently more volatile than the Middle East, which we continue to arm to the tune of billions. This fuels tensions in the region and creates an arms race (which may be the point). Since 1990, Saudi Arabia has been America's best customer, purchasing over \$39.6 billion in weapons and training, as well as \$384 million worth of arms (according to the CIA *World Factbook* in 2002). MSNBC reports that the Bush Administration plans to supply Saudi Arabia with \$123 million worth of precision-guided bomb technology in exchange for pumping more oil (an effort to lower gas prices, they assure us, despite selling to the highest bidder, which may be China). Also on the table are shipments of Patriot missile defense equipment worth \$9.7 billion to the United Arab Emirates and a \$1.7 billion upgrade of Kuwait's missile systems (according to MSNBC's recent article). And there's the \$3 billion in sophisticated equipment that Baghdad is committed to buying with its new found oil wealth. Joseph Benkert, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for global security affairs, points out that these new deals are helping to cement the future relationship of Iraq to the United States since they have put "a substantial amount of money...on the table." We've already done this with Israel, providing that same \$3 billion in military aid each year. This is the same weaponry now being used to threaten Iran.

The US Senate is on top of this. Recently, concerned senators wrote to President Bush, questioning the "merit of rewarding members of OPEC with lucrative arms sales ... at a time when high energy prices are causing widespread anxiety." But they aren't alarmed by weapons sales in the first place. The senators are now pressuring the President to use the arms deals to get more oil pumped from Saudi fields. So we are selling weapons for oil, it's that simple. Between the many arms fairs sponsored by governments around the world, numerous military think-tanks such as GlobalSecurity.org standing guard, and worldwide government agencies that both sell *and* regulate arms, we should all feel safer at night. As John Pike of Global Security is quoted as saying in the *USA Today* article, "Give it (Iraq) another five, six or eight years and you could be talking about deals that put the Saudis to shame."

Linda Hale is a retired secondary teacher and educational consultant from Glen Ellen.