

Getting Centered **Let's Work to End the Occupation**

by Elizabeth Stinson, Director

The focus of this issue of the *Peace Press* is *Ending The Occupation*. Before coming to the Center in 2001, I was working with human rights organizations as well as with indigenous nations. I would come home to Sonoma County and although I found support for Central American issues strong, years ago there was a dominant feeling that the voice of the left wasted its time kicking the left, too often overlooking the heartfelt and tenacious work of local activists. The seeds these overlooked activists planted made it possible for us to accomplish the work we do today.

The activists, who saw the need for a steady presence in the community, labored to build a social justice community with a diversity of concerns. These activists also laid deep the foundation for us, on which to create a resistance to the ravages of war. It was these activists who founded and supported the Peace and Justice Center of Sonoma County. The times demanded that I learn to activate locally and see the relationship between what is happening here and what is happening in the Mid-East.

I am grateful to report that the peace movement in the North Bay has evolved into a formidable presence: The Peace Movement is having a necessary impact, with support from the MLTF – the Military Law Task Force of the National Lawyers Guild – which continues to offer us legal support as well as to guide legal counselors through a maze of military-war induced cases.

I am grateful to the Veterans for Peace who offered continued numbers and support in Crawford as well as in Louisiana and throughout the country on the “Bring Them Home Now Tour” and who continue to be a productive force for peace, to be reckoned with on a regional as well as international level.

I thank the founders as well as the courageous teens and young adults who have decided their schools are not going to be feeding grounds for military recruiters. A huge cheer for Maria Corillo activists, Casa Grande High activists and Sonoma State and Healdsburg High student activists.

As we continue to strive to find leaders capable of resolving the Iraq quagmire, which has already maimed and killed countless military and civilians, the blood continues to flow.

I propose that we create motivations for those who got us into this death propagating mess to get us out of the Mid-East and Out of Iraq.

Let us all work to End the Occupation.

I propose that one of the ways we do this is by making the voice of dissent so loud and so constant that even corporate-owned media cannot ignore it. Whether that voice be by e-mail, letter writing, public radio support or at vigils and organizing meetings, lets work to turn up the volume.

I encourage all of you to normalize and humanize the dialogue that will lead to the end of this illegal and immoral war and occupation. In our everyday life, let us work to make obsolete the mentality that looks to violence as a solution. Let us all work to be the nonviolent role-models that our children deserve to have.

Everyday when we awake, we need to know that our commitment to make things better, our commitment to “not be part of the problem”, our commitment to find solutions with “social justice impact” is strong and heartfelt and undefeated... and that commitment continues to find nourishment at the Peace and Justice Center.

With great Hope for Peace in 2006, Elizabeth

Holistic Peace and Justice – Bring Them Home Now!

by Marti Hiken

War does not take place in a vacuum. It is but one manifestation of how a society deals with fear and violence. My first memory of war is from a huge volume about World War II in my family’s bookcase. I remember sitting akimbo on the floor of the living room and dragging the book, which was almost as large as I was, from the bookcase and going through it. I was so young. Each black, white and grey photo was worse than the next. Bombs. Smoke. Destruction. And then there was the photo of the little girl about 2 years old screaming in the midst of all the bombing. She was alone and covered in ashes – terrified. I looked at the book often.

Today, when George Bush appears on television and elevates “freedom,” “democracy,” and “war on terror” above the destruction and reality of war, I think of that child. Each time he answers with the same words at every military base he visits, I think of that child. Each time he laments the necessity and service of the Americans dying in Iraq and Afghanistan, I think of that child. Her face never blurs and never fades.

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are not immoral; they go beyond immorality to amorality, i.e. the lack of any morals. For what we face is not a moral dilemma in this country; rather, it is a well thought-out, calculated political, religious and philosophical position and analysis brought to us by both Democrats and Republicans who hold power.

We should ask ourselves the question, “Why is this war occurring?” It is not simply that the American people were lied to. It’s not a question about terrorism, 9/11, democracy or nuclear weapons. It goes much deeper than this. What is it that allows this society to conduct an amoral war in our name? The answer lies in the very perceptions of peace and justice, the very foundations of our society. We have one of the largest incarceration rates in the world with 165,000 Californians in prison. Three strikes imprisons people for life. The death penalty is running rampant in most states of this country. Mere innocence is no longer a reason for overturning a death penalty decision. We don’t feed countless numbers of our people; we allow them to live homeless. Our literacy rate is low. Our birth mortality rate is high.

This is a mean-spirited country; we have been taught and led to believe that when we fear something, we can pass a law or use violence to control whatever means to harm to us. This is the case whether the perception is the reality or not. In the middle of the 20th century a phrase became very popular in America. Its importance grew as the decades continued. It eventually became one of the most commonly used phrases in our vocabulary: *law and order*. With this concept, fear of crime, of violence and fear of each other took over as the reason to build prisons and more prisons. The prison industry grew right along with the military industry, gradually combining their technology and resources. The American people were taught that when afraid, it is acceptable to give up our rights and freedoms in order to be “safe.” Over the years, more laws were passed to deal with whatever we were told to fear.

It was a short jump from the fear that was inflicted upon us at home to fearing all Muslims and Arabs after 9/11. The atmosphere was charged, and again, the American people were fearful and carte blanche handed over our freedoms to a despot who so easily and righteously claimed them as his to do away with. Bush didn't require Congress' approval. The fear was enough to allow Bush to do what he deemed was necessary.

The war in Iraq is not Bush's fault, however. It is not the fault of the Republicans. The responsibility lies with the American people. We are a people who are so fearful, we give up all hope for change or rectification and instead rely upon violence and revenge for protection. We bury ourselves as well as reality and reason when we feel at a loss to understand what is going on around us.

Those of us who have created peace and justice centers in our local communities, and there are hundreds in the United States, understand that definitions of violence, medical care, rehabilitation, care of our children and providing for their needs and education – all of these are issues fundamental to peace, justice and freedom. They are not part and parcel of war.

There is no argument for an amoral war to be continued. There is no argument for an immoral people to judge what is necessary in Iraq. There is no reason for us now to remain in Iraq to ensure democracy than there was to bomb the country in the first place.

We must demand that the troops be brought home immediately. We need to create a society based on our peoples' needs and not on the needs of those few Republicans and Democrats and their campaigns to infuse fear into our bloodstreams.

We need to build peace and justice at home, and it begins in each community, with citizens who come to together to bring reason and rationality back to our people.

Marti Hiken is co-chair of the Military Law Task Force of the National Lawyers Guild.

State Terrorism and Moral Sensibility

by Harold Pinter, Nobel laureate in Literature, 2005

What has happened to our moral sensibility? Did we ever have any?... The invasion of Iraq was a bandit act, an act of blatant state terrorism, demonstrating absolute contempt for the concept of international law. The invasion was an arbitrary military action inspired by a series of lies upon lies and gross manipulation of the media and therefore of the public; an act intended to consolidate American military and economic control of the Middle East masquerading – as a last resort – all other justifications having failed to justify themselves - as liberation. A formidable assertion of military force responsible for the death and mutilation of thousands and thousands of innocent people.

We have brought torture, cluster bombs, depleted uranium, innumerable acts of random murder, misery, degradation and death to the Iraqi people and call it 'bringing freedom and democracy to the Middle East'.

How many people do you have to kill before you qualify to be described as a mass murderer and a war criminal? One hundred thousand? More than enough, I would have thought. Therefore it is just that Bush and Blair be arraigned before the International Criminal Court of Justice. But Bush has been clever. He has not ratified the International Criminal Court of Justice. Therefore if any American soldier or for that matter politician finds himself in the dock Bush has warned that he will send in the marines. But Tony Blair has ratified the

Court and is therefore available for prosecution. We can let the Court have his address if they're interested. It is Number 10, Downing Street, London.

Death in this context is irrelevant. Both Bush and Blair place death well away on the back burner. At least 100,000 Iraqis were killed by American bombs and missiles before the Iraq insurgency began. These people are of no moment. Their deaths don't exist. They are blank. They are not even recorded as being dead. 'We don't do body counts,' said the American general Tommy Franks.

Early in the invasion there was a photograph published on the front page of British newspapers of Tony Blair kissing the cheek of a little Iraqi boy. 'A grateful child,' said the caption. A few days later there was a story and photograph, on an inside page, of another four-year-old boy with no arms. His family had been blown up by a missile. He was the only survivor. 'When do I get my arms back?' he asked. The story was dropped. Well, Tony Blair wasn't holding him in his arms, nor the body of any other mutilated child, nor the body of any bloody corpse. Blood is dirty. It dirties your shirt and tie when you're making a sincere speech on television.

The 2,000 American dead are an embarrassment. They are transported to their graves in the dark. Funerals are unobtrusive, out of harm's way. The mutilated rot in their beds, some for the rest of their lives. So the dead and the mutilated both rot, in different kinds of graves.

Many thousands, if not millions, of people in the United States itself are demonstrably sickened, shamed and angered by their government's actions, but as things stand they are not a coherent political force - yet. But the anxiety, uncertainty and fear which we can see growing daily in the United States is unlikely to diminish.

I believe that despite the enormous odds which exist, unflinching, unswerving, fierce intellectual determination, as citizens, to define the real truth of our lives and our societies is a crucial obligation which devolves upon us all. It is in fact mandatory.

If such a determination is not embodied in our political vision we have no hope of restoring what is so nearly lost to us – the dignity of man.

This is an excerpt from the text of the lecture by Harold Pinter when he received the 2005 Nobel prize for literature on December 10th, 2005.. Forbidden by doctors from going to Stockholm to receive the £720,000 prize, the ailing playwright and poet delivered his speech by video. www.nobelprize.org/literature/laureates/2005/pinter-lecture-e.html

Torture of Detainees – To Stand Silent is to Condone It

by Debra Birkinshaw

In the October *Human Rights* issue of the *Peace Press*, the disregard for US and international law in affirming the practice of torture worldwide was explored. The very last line of that article was an imploring request to "keep the fire of inquiry alive." As the inquiry continues, an insidious long-term pattern of human rights abuses continues, with plans to flaunt presidential powers under the thin veneer of counter-terrorism. It is these very practices that *promote* ongoing war and terrorism.

We ask, "How can this continue to go on? According to Louise Arbour of the *San Diego Tribune*, there are two strategies that have an acutely corrosive effect on the global

ban on torture and inhumane treatment. "The first is the practice of having recourse to so-called "diplomatic assurances" to justify the return and "rendering" of suspects to countries where they face a risk of torture – one can be skeptical about just how effective those assurances can be.

The second is the holding of prisoners in secret detention. Holding people in secret detention, with the detainee's fate or whereabouts, or the very fact of their detention, undisclosed, amounts to "disappearance" which in and of itself has been found to amount to torture or ill-treatment of the disappeared person."

The Torture Resolution of the UN Commission on Human Rights, March/April 2005, has been written to address these concerns. The specific language of this resolution is directed at the United States and is very necessary. It "reaffirms that the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment is absolute and non-derogable (not limited in times of national emergency)." It "stresses that the use of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment is a serious violation of international law and cannot be authorized or justified under any circumstances." It also "stresses that no state may expel, return ("refouler"), or extradite a person to another state where there are substantial grounds for believing that he or she would be in danger of being subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."

We need to remind our representatives in government what constitutes cruel and inhumane treatment, and get them to uphold this resolution. We must recognize what we are complicit with when we allow our three branches of government to reign unchecked. Lowering the standard for humane treatment of detainees endangers everyone. Our hypocritical government is doing the very things – use of toxins, white phosphorus, disregard for life and property, and torture – that they are accusing Saddam Hussein of doing, and they are doing it in the name of freedom, in *our* name. We are guilty of violating human rights conventions. Our leaders are being tried and found guilty in international court for destroying 50 years of diplomatic efforts. Unless we protest their actions, we should go to court right along with them!

One stealth strategy that the administration uses to rebuff congressional and international interference with the practice of torturing detainees is the use of "presidential signing statements." G.W. Bush has used this strategy more than any other president in history. According to the *Washington Post*, as far back as 1986 Samuel Alito, then deputy assistant attorney general in the Office of Legal Counsel, outlined a strategy for having the president routinely issue statements about the meaning of statutes when he signs them into law. An example of the most recent use of the statements is the case of McCain's torture legislation, in which Bush agreed that the US would not torture people, unless of course, it decided to do so. This is the underhanded work of our future swing-vote Supreme Court justice, Alito, unless we challenge our congressional representatives to oppose his nomination. While it is our job to pressure Congress to stop the torture practice, in a balance of power it is up to Congress to hold the President accountable, and to watch for his evasive tactics. We cannot relent in our demands to Congress to hold the President in check, and to maintain equanimity on the Supreme Court.

So, get busy. Write/fax/call/meet with your Senators and Representatives every day, to encourage their Right Action, and to press them to be ever vigilant and ever undaunted in challenging the powers that be.

Sources: *Truthout, No Exceptions to the Ban on Torture, 12/7/05; CINAT Resolution, 4/05; Altnet, "The Mix" 1/9/2006.*

The Moral and Human Cost of Occupation – Palestine

Yesterday...

In 1948, 750,000 Palestinians were forced to flee from their homes by Zionist militias who destroyed their villages and confiscated their land and resources. The State of Israel was created on 78% of historic Palestine. In 1967 Israel occupied the remaining 22% of historic Palestine – the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Since then Israel has illegally expropriated Palestinian land and resources for its own use, denies basic rights to the occupied Palestinians and has taken direct or indirect control over Palestinian political and economic expression and Palestinian land and resources. (www.meccaforpeace.org.)

Today...

Today, 3.8 million Palestinians, 53% of whom are children, continue to live under an "Israeli military occupation."

What continues to be an oppressive reality for Palestinians is the direct result of Israeli policies, with the US not only turning a blind eye to human rights abuses, but supporting these repressive policies.

Palestinians, today, live as a captive people with the basic conditions of their lives determined by others. James Zogby, president of the Arab American Institute, states "place any people in the same conditions that the Palestinians have lived under during the last century and they would fare no better."

The Palestinian reality:

- Two-thirds of their population is below the poverty line.
- Unemployment is 50%, with 80% of youth unemployed within the Gaza strip.
- Victimization by land confiscations continues.
- Access to movement is denied within already confined areas.
- Repeated acts of violence occur within an oppressive environment.

Palestinians have no control over their economy, nor do they have the freedom to impact their economy through change.

"The despair and the anger resulting from these circumstances have distorted all aspects of daily life and have now become internalized, with potentially devastating consequences" (Zogby). These combined conditions create a traumatized and desperate population... a formula for continued violence.

The right to self-determination is a basic human right, which continues to be denied the Palestinian people.

Tomorrow... ?

For further information and programs that support dialogue and understanding towards the end of the occupation of Palestine, please contact the Middle East Children's Alliance, 901 Parker Street, Berkeley, Ca 94710, phone 510-548-0542, www.mecaforpeace.org.

Compiled by Elizabeth Stinson.

The Point of No Return – The Casualties of War

by Debra Birkinshaw

Any exit strategy for ending the war in Iraq must include a plan for meeting the needs of the returning veterans. As an occupational therapist, I have treated veterans for the injuries, both mental and physical, from which they may never recover: I must advocate for their care and for the welfare of their families. I don't find evidence that veterans returning from the Iraq war are going to be supported or treated adequately. They have been under-represented and unprotected thus far.

A group of House Democrats recently confronted the Pentagon's practice of underreporting casualties in Iraq. They argued that Pentagon casualty reports show only a small percentage of the injuries, mostly wounds from bombs or bullets. (Note: Many of those injuries might have been prevented, if all the troops had been given the proper protective gear in the first place. "A secret Pentagon study has found that as many as 80 percent of the marines who have been killed in Iraq from wounds to the upper body could have survived if they had had extra body armor," according to Michael Moss, of the *New York Times*). The reports omit accidents, illness, disease and mental trauma, in a heartbreaking repeat of the denial and suffering that Vietnam and Gulf War veterans faced. Minimizing casualties is all part of the misguided rationale for continuing to occupy Iraq, and it bodes ill for the treatment of veterans upon their return home.

Even as Bush was sending troops through a revolving door of repeated exposure to trauma, through the infamous "back door draft", he was supporting legislation to cut Veteran's benefits and close Veteran's Administration Hospitals throughout the country. Lynn Woolsey, in a letter to her constituents, dated 12/9/05, states "The term, 'Support the Troops' is thrown around rather promiscuously these days. But the shocking truth is that we have seen cutbacks in veterans' benefits in recent years, at a time when we should be honoring our soldiers' sacrifice by giving them the support and services they need."

"That means health care benefits, not just for the body but also the mind, as many veterans are coping with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. It means fully funding pensions for disabled veterans and ending the 'veterans tax' that prevents them from receiving both health and retirement benefits."

Disabled veteran, anti-war and pro-human rights political activist Ron Kovic spoke against the horrors of the Viet Nam War, after feeling betrayed by the country he fought for. Following his example, returning veterans of this war are sounding out about their experiences:

Jim Massey is a 34-year-old veteran, suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress disorder. He is haunted by flashbacks in which he participated in the massacre of innocent Iraqi civilians. He writes of his regret: "Captain Schmitt came towards me and asked me, very calmly 'Are you OK, Chief-Sergeant?' 'No, Captain. I'm not OK' I answered without hesitation. 'It's a bad day. We killed a lot of innocent civilians.'" That apparently was the last straw. Massey has organized *Veterans against the War*, and now spends his time making anti-recruitment visits to schools.

Camilo Mejia declined to return to Iraq, and was incarcerated one entire year for desertion. While in prison, he wrote, "I failed to fulfill my duty as a human being and instead I chose to fulfill my duty as a soldier. I apologize to the Iraqi people. To them I say, 'I am sorry for the curfews, for the raids, for the killings.' May they find it in their hearts to forgive me."

Forgiveness is a part of establishing peace. We have all suffered at the hands of G.W. Bush. Part of our healing at the end of this war will be in the difficult task of forgiving these young soldiers who committed atrocities for a lie; furthermore, we must welcome them home, and advocate for their care and recovery from this ordeal. They are asking for forgiveness. They will have a hard enough time forgiving themselves.

Sources – Truthout 10/27, 11/02 and 12/11/05; The Catholic Worker, 5/05; letter, Rep. Lynn Woolsey, 12/10/05; NYTimes, 1/7/06.

Weapons of Eternal Destruction

by Rebel Fagin

The face of US warfare has changed significantly in the last fifteen years with the introduction of space warfare and tactical nuclear weapons as standard operating equipment. These actions are manifestations of the steering document of the neo-Cons, known as the Defense Planning Document of 1992 (a.k.a. the Wolfowitz Doctrine).

Theater-wide application of advanced space technology was used for the first time in Iraq in 1991. Satellites enabled the US to target and destroy 90% of Hussein's weapons in the first two or three days of the war. The lesson here was that whoever controls space wins all wars on earth. Therefore the US must not only control space, but deny it to all others. All international treaties concerning the militarization of space became immediately defunct. The second space war took place in Kosovo. In Afghanistan unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) were in use and there wasn't a country on earth that could challenge the US on a technical front.

The future calls for space based lasers and post-Shuttle military aircraft, called military space planes. These space planes orbit the earth with the ability to duck down and bomb earth targets before returning to space.

Orbiting satellites can be used to send signals to space based lasers. The laser then fires at targets on earth. Lasers are hard to shoot down. Satellites follow predictable patterns. They are slower and easier to hit. China and other countries will be forced to develop anti-satellite weaponry in self-defense. There are currently thirty-four nuclear reactors in space. In the vacuum of space one nuclear accident and space exploration will no longer be an option for the people of earth.

The techno-nightmare doesn't end here. Huge nuclear bombs hurt profits so they can't be used successfully in war. Instead the US army has, since 1991, employed depleted uranium (DU). DU is made from the waste product of a uranium enrichment process created in the manufacturing of nuclear weapons and energy: Uranium 238. U-238 has a half-lifetime of 4.5 billion years. Its effects on life include cancers, tumors, and mutagenic damage to sperm cells.

DU is used to enhance bunker busters and antitank shells because it burns hot enough to penetrate cement and steel. When it hits a tank it goes straight through, subsequently exploding in a cloud of radioactive vapor and dust as the top hatch flies through the air. In the first phase of the Gulf War (1991) 320 tons of DU were used. Estimates of DU usage by the US and UK during the 2003 invasion are between 110-165 tons. US Army regulations require clean up of any nuclear materials used in war. This never happened,

according to a man sent there with that mission, Dr. Doug Rokke. Both civilians and soldiers are impacted by the release of highly toxic U-238. Again, army regulations require treatment and again it ain't happening. Not only is the army violating its own rules, but in a March 1991 Los Alamos memo, it ordered that all reports be altered to hide and downplay the use of DU.

DU can be inhaled, ingested, introduced into the blood, and absorbed through the skin. Civilian victims of the war and soldiers alike are diagnosed with tumors and other cancers: when they bring the toxins back home and share them with their wives and partners, ghastly birth defects have been the result. Children are born with hands and no arms; eyes red, huge and blind; skin that crawls with boils and tumors; twisted frames – how can these families remain sane? These are the weapons of war that the government is keeping quiet about, for if the people knew about them, they would never support their use. These birth defects will go on and get worse as the centuries unfold. This will be America's timeless legacy to the Middle East. Is that all right with you? It's not with me and it must stop now! End the occupation and the terrorism now! It is not necessarily true that the maniacs in the White House get their way. It's our job to see that they don't.

Sources: sf.indymedia.org, Veterans For Peace Newsletter May 2, & September 12, 2003, Boston University School of Public Health, September 2003. Vision for Twenty/Twenty, U.S.Spacecommand.gov. Videos: Beyond Treason (c) 2005 Power House Productions, Arsenal of Hypocrisy (c) 2003 AOH. Radio: KPFA: Flashpoints interview with Dr. Doug Rokke, 11/9/05

Ending the Occupation: How to “Bring the Troops Home Now!”

by Susan Lamont

Public opinion on the U.S. war on Iraq has changed dramatically in less than three years. In the weeks after the start of the war in March of 2003, only 19% of those polled felt that the invasion had not been worth the cost in dollars or human lives. The latest polls in January of 2006 reveal that 52% of Americans now believe that the war has not been worth it.

This should be cause for celebration in the peace community. But if you're like me, you know that this collective awakening has come more than 2,000 U.S. and 100,000 Iraqi deaths too late.

And despite the American change of heart, the dying will continue indefinitely. Unfortunately, the majority of our fellow citizens agree with Colin Powell – you break it, it's yours. Though they're looking for a timetable, they don't believe we should withdraw now. And a stunning 69% believe that, given enough time, the United States can “win” the war.

So what are we to do? Convince them otherwise, of course! Our arguments for withdrawal are compelling, but we need to hone them into a clear and concise message. Then we need to repeat that message over and over again. We need to send it to our legislators, we need to get it in print on our newspaper opinion pages, we need to share it with our families and friends, and we need to share it with the world.

Locally, we are lucky to have Lynn Woolsey as our representative in Congress. Lynn is a founding member of the Out of Iraq Coalition, but she does not feel that she can present a withdrawal plan to Congress. Recently, Sebastopol resident and Center member Robert Manning organized a meeting between Woolsey and several local peace activists. The

subject was convincing Congress to withdraw the troops now. It is Woolsey's belief that the plan must come from the war's initial supporters, such as John Murtha or Lindsay Graham, though it's unlikely to be to our liking. If we want more, she advised us to create the message and such a groundswell of support for it, that other legislators can't help but listen.

A quick internet search reveals that many people and organizations have begun putting out their plans for withdrawal. The Friends Committee on National Legislation has links to several of them, written by Tom Hayden, Medea Benjamin, and others. Checking your favorite anti-war website or group will lead you to more. Here in Sonoma County, Robert Manning is seeking input and editing for a plan that he would like to put forward. Most of these proposals are based upon certain shared principles:

One – The occupation is the cause of the insurgency. Nothing – not the Patriot Act, not N.S.A. spying – will enhance our safety more than a withdrawal from Iraq.

Two – Our military bases must be dismantled. The U.S. had no bases in Saudi Arabia until the Gulf War. Osama bin Laden cited those bases as one of the main reasons for attacking the United States. The same is true for the bases in Iraq.

Three – We must give Iraqis control over their economy and their oil. Under orders from Paul Bremer, Iraqi farmers may not save their seeds. This one point is sufficient evidence that this occupation is not about the establishment of democracy – it's about control of economic markets.

Four – We must pay to reconstruct a country we destroyed.

Most plans mention the United Nations as a replacement for our troops. But the U.N. rubber-stamped the sanctions requested by the United States after the Gulf War. In the eyes of some Iraqis, the U.N. has blood on its hands.

There are many other recommendations. All of them should be on the table for discussion as part of a national dialog on ending the occupation of Iraq. We need to facilitate that dialog.

But we must be honest. It is important to admit that a withdrawal will not end the violence in Iraq. We can't claim to have all the answers or a crystal ball. All we can do is argue that ending the occupation will lessen, not end, the killing and dying in Iraq. Unfortunately, it is unlikely that having the majority of Americans on our side will be enough. In 1970, 56% of the public wanted the troops brought home from Vietnam within one year. That wasn't enough to get them home.

Now, as then, we can't rely on our government to come up with the plan. Richard Nixon said he had a plan. He didn't. George Bush says he has a plan. He doesn't. So that's our job. When the people lead, the leaders will follow.

Notes: For the results of many of the polls taken on Iraq since the beginning of the war, check out www.pollingreport.com/iraq.htm.

For some withdrawal ideas from various public figures, go to www.fcni.org.

To work with Robert Manning on his plan, contact him at oneheart@sonic.net or 707-874-9133.

An AWOL Experience from a Sonoma County Fathers' Perspective

Don't ask me how we got in the mess, but we were in it up to our eyeballs. My son had served about four months in the US Army and then he decided he'd had enough and bolted. He flew home to California. He was AWOL. What a mess! His mom had a connection that put us in touch with the Peace and Justice group of Sonoma County. They were obviously anti-military and we are living in a pro Bush pro War era. Great timing son.

I was skeptical as to their influence with the military. But, without a better plan, we went with it. They got us a lawyer, from Berkeley California, (now that's gonna ring sweet with some lifetime military judge) and she began to build our case for his discharge. It seemed to take forever. I wondered if he should just flee the country until a new President was elected. Finally, they said our package was ready.

(There are a number of steps that go into the preparation of a military-separation packet, for more information: please contact Elizabeth at the Peace & Justice Center). The Peace and Justice lawyer had called Fort Sill, Oklahoma and she said she had worked out most of the details. Our case worker, Elizabeth, (who was continually on the road and going to events like the sit in at Crawford with the mother who wanted to meet with the President) kept us updated all along and told great stories of getting soldiers discharges. (I was skeptical of her numbers and figured the military were laughing at us back in Oklahoma). Nonetheless, I flew with my son, at the suggestion of the Peace and Justice staff and was told to get there by 10 am on Tuesday. Now it got weird as we arrived. I was eager and ready, but my son was more keenly aware of the bias against a deserter and did everything he could to obfuscate our intentions as he spoke with military at the gate. They searched our rental car and sent us in to the Welcome Center. I made a few wrong turns and we ultimately and fortunately ran in the door at exactly 10 am.

I couldn't believe what happened next. They greeted us and said they were expecting our arrival. They took us into a secondary office and soon a retired military man came in and he knew everything about my son. He said he would personally look after him. He did not want anyone to interfere nor upset my son. They had spoken with our lawyer and had already worked out most of the details and expected to grant him an uncharacterized discharge. I was sent home. Then the Peace and Justice Center's group kicked it up another notch and called Fort Sill staff every two hours, not in an intrusive manner, but in a concerned mode that was well received.

They reported back to me all week. My son needed a ride back to the Oklahoma City airport and Peace and Justice found local supporters who waited all afternoon and finally took my son and housed and fed him overnight, following his discharge. The next morning they delivered him to the airport for his flight. They felt that contact and comfort after a rough week of being back at the base was crucial and they took care of my boy. My son is now home, discharged and the mess has been cleaned up.

I had expected that Peace and Justice would be well meaning but ultimately not so effective.

My mistake, my apology.

They were and are in fact most capable, extremely effective and acutely adept in how they get what they want for their clients. It is their work, it is their mission, their obsession and they are wonderful at what they do. Thank you. Forever, I thank you.

The Opposite of Good is Apathy

by Cindy Sheehan

The apathy of the people is enough to make every statue leap from its pedestal and hasten the resurrection of the dead.

– William Lloyd Garrison

The apathy of most of America is stunning and appalling to me. When I found this quote I was filled with wide-eyed wonder that there is one statue left in America complete with statue, or one grave or tomb still occupied.

On October 26, as MoveOn.org was holding its candlelight vigils across the country to mourn the death of the 2000th American soldier in Iraq, I and two dozen others were being arrested in front of the White House protesting the carnage done in our name by the illegitimate residents therein.

Now, counting the 11 American soldiers who were pointlessly killed in George's unconscionable and brainless war of terror in the Middle East, the American "official" death toll is up to 2193: 200 more families ruined in less than three months!

My son Casey was in the first 1000 to be killed in Iraq. We reached that dismal mark by September 2004. MoveOn.org conducted candlelight vigils for that occasion. Then a little over a year later, MoveOn.org conducted candlelight vigils to commemorate the 2000th soldier. If we don't get off of our collective apathetic and complacent backsides to stop the barbaric killing in Iraq, when will the next candlelight vigil be? George Bush and the evil neocons are killing our precious soldiers at the rate of 2.78 per day. By my calculations, we should be lighting our candles again and singing "Kum bah ya" by October.

This article is not intended to be an indictment of MoveOn.org, which does some amazing work and who were big supporters of Camp Casey. But my point is this, America: the longer we allow the illegitimate pretender to the White House and his conniving and callous gang of co-conspirators to continue, the more our collective humanity is damaged. Apparently, candlelight vigils do very little to stop, or even slow down a little, the carnage committed by the war criminals in DC.

Then we have the unfortunate innocents of Iraq. I have heard reports of up to as many as 200 of them killed yesterday. So if 200 were reported, one has to really wonder what the true count was. Bill O'Reilly and George Bush define a terrorist as someone who "kills innocent men, women and children." Am I the only one who sees the irony and stunning hypocrisy in this statement?" Who do Bill and George think are being killed in Iraq? A well-trained and organized Army? Terrorists? We all know that is false. This is who is being killed in Iraq: living breathing human beings, identical to Americans or any other human beings on earth, who are just trying to go about their lives, trying to survive in a war-torn country that was no threat to America or our way of life.

"I would say 30,000 more or less have died as a result of the initial incursion and the ongoing violence against Iraqis," said George on December 12, 2005. Even if one accepts this very low guess-timate by George, his policies have been responsible for ten times the 3000 deaths on September 11, 2001. By his own admission, he is ten times the terrorist that Osama ever was. If George says 30,000 ... who knows what the truthful total is. It fills me with sorrow and hurts my heart to even contemplate the number.

America: this is what you are allowing your government to do in your name:

Detain and torture prisoners without due process. Use chemical weapons on other members of humanity. Spy on Americans without a court order (I hope my conversations put them in a coma of boredom). Carpet bomb cities filled with human beings like yourselves. Destroy the infrastructure of other countries. Destroy the infrastructure of American cities. Cut taxes on the rich while pouring money and blood into the thirsty sands of the Middle East. Decimate our treasury. Rape the environment. Et cetera, etcetera, ad nauseum.

Hillary Clinton told me that the “wheels of government grind slowly.” This is a tired cliché and it is unacceptable blather while the war machine is grinding the bones of our children. It is time for us wide-awake Americans to make our elected officials speed up the timetable for withdrawal from Iraq. If I hear one more rendition of “We Shall Overcome” and then watch the vigilers or marchers go home and turn on their TVs and crack open a brewsky, content in the fact that they have done something for peace that day, I am going to scream! We can’t overcome unless we take the proverbial bull by the horns and overcome!

Hold your vigils and marches in relevant places: such as warmongering local Congressional offices. So many Senators and Congresspeople come to mind. Or in front of a recruiting station. Or federal buildings. Or military bases. Then instead of going home and cracking open a beer, or uncorking a bottle of wine, sit down and say “we aren’t leaving until you call for an immediate end to the occupation of Iraq.” Put your butt on the line for humanity.

Change will not happen until we make it happen. We can’t make change happen by wishing or praying that it will happen.

We actually have to do something.

Cindy Sheehan is a co-founder of Gold Star Families for Peace and the author of Not One More Mother’s Child, available at www.koabooks.com. From truthout, Friday January 6, 2006.

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Peace & Justice Center Section

Marijke Byck-Hoenselaars Memorium

Our dear friend and companion, Marijke Byck-Hoenselaars, on the way to a peaceful and just world, died due to a car accident on January 5. We cannot imagine how we will ever fill the hole she leaves in our hearts and in Sonoma County. Her presence was active in so many avenues of peace and of justice. Yet in her humble ways, she remained in the background publicly while she worked with the hungry, the homeless, the poor, the oppressed not just once-in-awhile, but continually through her life's journey. Her commitments were unbounded and with love from the bottom of her heart. May we continue her legacy of caring.

Her generosity to the Peace and Justice Center came not only financially and in kind with wine, but more so in her encouragement and support of *who* we are and what we do. We are so fortunate to have her husband also on our team for peace and justice, and we express our deepest feelings of compassion and love to Walter and the family.

The family is preparing a memorial to Marijke at a planned Poetry House. Donations to the memorial and/or to her other causes like the Task Force for the Homeless, are gratefully welcome.

Community News

Cultivating a Spirit of Nonviolence Beginning basic Alternatives to Violence Project

An experiential workshop that empowers individuals to liberate themselves and others from the burden of violence. The basic is the first of a series of workshops to become a facilitator in the community or in prisons. Held at the Peace and Justice Center, Friday March 24, 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM; Saturday March 25, 9:00 AM to 9:00 PM, Sunday March 26, 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Call 707 220 8269 for more information or email northbayAVP@yahoo.com

PeaceRoots Alliance Billboard Campaign

(See cover of this issue)

For the last two years PeaceRoots Alliance has been involved in a project that began as a small peace grassroots group—putting up billboards around the US promoting peace and working to end the war in Iraq. The billboard depicted on the cover of this publication is the one PeaceRoots is currently posting. Borrowed from Working Assets with their permission—with the addition of the words: “Listen to KPFA 94.1FM.” Being a small group, PeaceRoots’ administrative costs are very low. The group recently finished posting 35 billboards for an average cost of \$270 each, including administrative fees, for a 30 day posting.

Any contributions in helping to fund the billboard campaign would help get more up. Donations are tax deductible.

PeaceRoots Alliance Vision Statement We seek to create a peaceful, just and sustainable world for future generations by emphasizing our common humanity, promoting non-violence and working to remove the root causes of war.

Contact PeaceRoots Alliance, P.O. Box 255, Petaluma, CA 94953, 707-765-0196, www.peaceroots.org.

Help Plan 'Arlington West – Sonoma County'

March 19, 2006 is the third anniversary of the Coalition Forces attack on Iraq. Join in with the community to create a week of events commemorating the tragedy that is Iraq with the addition of Arlington West - Sonoma County – the type of camp that was created by Cindy Sheehan in Crawford, Texas. This week long series of events – inspired by last month's 'A Symphony of Peace Week' in the town of Sonoma, and the 'Arlington West' events around California – will begin, March 19 with an event that will be multid denominational and all-inclusive in nature. It will include Crosses, Stars of David, and Crescents w/Stars, as well as non-religious symbols; dynamic speakers and music. These events will be an excellent opportunity to expand your opposition to this war/tragedy, to a much broader general public.

Imagine 'A Compassionate Communication Marathon;' an evening of bi-lingual testimonies; an art exhibit and films; and a 'Support Our Troops Sunday.' Please come and share your ideas and enthusiasm to make this commemoration of the fallen and wounded men and women in the military and of the beleaguered citizens of Iraq to be as powerful as possible.

Support and participation from the community is needed, for this "statement" to bring our troops home, to be a success. For more information, please call Robert Manning at 707-874-9133 or email: oneheart@sonic.net.

Need a State Medical Marijuana Card?

The State of California established a voluntary ID card program for patients and caregivers to allow law enforcement to verify their legal status instantly. Now, patients and caregivers who possess a valid ID card, and are otherwise in compliance with state and local guidelines, may not be arrested or have their medicine seized.

Applicants must be county residents and need to apply to the Sonoma County Dept. of Health Services, 625 5th Street, Santa Rosa. Call (707) 565-4442 for an appointment. The cost is \$80 for patients and caregivers, or \$40 for Medi-Cal participants.

Some, wary of this program, are concerned that their identity would be revealed to the federal government and that they would be targeted for arrest. Most advocates and officials agree that the likelihood of that happening is remote. Sonoma Alliance for Medical Marijuana recommends that you apply for an ID card because it gives you more protection from arrest. The choice is yours.

To learn more about the new ID Card, come to the Peace and Justice Center on Thursday, March 30, 7-9 pm. SAMM will present updates, including the Possession & Cultivation guidelines, revised Do's and Don'ts, and the Santa Rosa Dispensary ordinance. If you want to be legal, you need to be informed. Info: (707) 522-0292.

Lock-downs and Drug Dogs

by Adam Buxbaum, Analy High senior

In an era where torture is condoned, nations are toppled, and sovereignty is overthrown, perhaps it shouldn't come as a surprise that a small local high school has begun using authoritarian rule to keep the student population at bay.

On November 8th, the Analy Administration issued a new set of rules stating that teachers are no longer allowed to release students from class early, and students with free periods in the middle of the day "are not allowed off campus during the school day."

More alarmingly, the Analy Administration has instituted what it calls a 'lock-down policy' on tardiness. The policy reads: "Be on time to class! We will start locking doors to classrooms when the bell rings. Students who are locked out because they are late to class will be gathered by a staff member and will stay in the cafeteria until the period is over. These students will be given a referral and parents will be called." A referral usually results in a work program.

Speaking as a senior, I think a policy such as this 'lock-down' only encourages kids to cut class. If a student is five minutes late to a class, he is presented with two options. Does he go to the cafeteria and take his referral, or does he simply leave campus? The penalty is the same for either offense. Many of my friends, presented with this choice, have picked the latter of the two options. Students earn Analy about \$37/day for attending class. Absent students earn nothing. All this policy is going to do is ultimately reduce Analy's funding!

The next item on a list of increasingly outrageous school reforms comes with four legs and a handful of fleas. On Sunday, December 3rd, the Press Democrat reported that West County High Schools are considering a constant presence of drug-sniffing dogs on campus. The article states that students would not be searched, but that the dogs would only sniff lockers, and cars in the student parking lot. However, when I confronted Analy Vice-Principal, Peyton Fatherree about the issue, he scoffed, saying, "[searches] wouldn't be limited to that," inferring that backpacks and purses may also be searched.

Though the school is technically within its legal right to bring dogs onto campus, this practice is not only unethical; it may be unconstitutional. Public schools manage to side step the Constitution, due to a law that allows campus administrators to search students at any time for any reason, according to Officer Conner of the Sebastopol Police Department. However, these dogs will naturally be accompanied by police officers that are prohibited from searching students without 'reasonable cause.' **The Fourth Amendment of the Bill of Rights states: "The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized. "**

According to The American Civil Liberties Union Student Rights guide, "The ACLU has also challenged school policies that require students to leave belongings in a classroom so that dogs can be brought in to sniff them. Importantly, the California Attorney General has issued an opinion saying that such policies are unconstitutional."

The proposed policy has caused quite a bit of unrest among Analy faculty and students. "It's fascism, pure and simple," said one teacher who asked to remain anonymous. "If you allow this, what's next?" "This is ridiculous!" scoffed senior Dylan Titus. "What's next, breathalyzers before each period?"

"Stronger drug measures like this are just what we need," argued senior Andy Froess. "We need to send a message to those freshman that says 'this is not okay.'" As of this writing, freshmen suspensions have totaled over 96 days for drug-related offenses. Principal Marty Webb responded, when I asked him about the proposed searches, "Kids just shouldn't be bringing dope to school!"

A solution to these problems is more difficult to manage than dogs. Educational programs should be implemented in middle school, informing students about individual drugs, their effects and risks. Counseling or peer mediation should also be required as part of any drug-related punishment. Effective drug deterrents should begin *before* students start using drugs.

Poem -

American Idiot

Don't want to be an American idiot
Don't want a nation under the new mania
Can you hear the sound of hysteria?
The subliminal mind fuck America

Welcome to a new kind of tension
all across the alienation
Where everything isn't meant to be o.k.
Television Dreams of tomorrow
Were not the ones meant to follow
for that's enough to argue.

Maybe I am the faggot America
I'm not a part of a redneck agenda
Now everybody DO THE PROPAGANDA
And sing along to the age of paranoia.

Don't want to be an American idiot,
one nation controlled by the media
Information Age of hysteria
Calling out to IDIOT AMERICA

by Green Day, an award-winning American alternative rock band.