

# ***The Peace Press* – February/March 2008**

## **The War: At Home and Abroad**

### **Getting Centered – Pushing the Pendulum of Change**

by Elizabeth Stinson, Director

*Our minds are so colonized that we can scarcely imagine what a real democracy would look like.*  
– Cornel West

Democracy can contest corporate domination. But Democracy must be much more than holding an election and even more than redefining business. Democracy must make people's humanity and constitutional rights a reality. So that we the people can use self-governance to live in harmony with all species and with the earth. Democracy School is a course that teaches citizens and activists to reframe single-issue work in a way that confronts corporate control with a single powerful front of people's constitutional rights. Democracy School teaches us that when corporations rule, democracy flies out the window. While Democracy School teachers emphasize these points in workshops across the country, enlisted people return from Iraq and Afghanistan and tell us corporations rule there, with Blackwater standards and mayhem.

What the media spins differs from the voice of the returning veteran.

This is our opportunity as a culture to stretch ourselves, to open our hearts, our homes, and our neighborhoods with a willingness to work to restore the injured and traumatized who are being flushed back and forth from the occupations. These are our children. There appears to be distinct intention to maintain permanent bases in the Middle East, but there also exists an individual intention to restore family, person and compassion.

How can those two distinctly different intentions be met?

One must be nourished, the other halted.

Are we driving by Iraq war veterans with "help me" signs? If not now, we soon will be. We cannot continue to pour resources into an occupation and deny services at home.

According to UNICEF, an estimated two million children suffer from poor nutrition, disease, and interrupted education. One child dies every five minutes because of the war, and many more are left with severe injuries. Of the estimated four million Iraqis who have been internally displaced or who have left the country, one and a half million are children. For the most part, those remaining don't have access to basic health care, education, shelter, potable water, and sanitation. Sick or injured children, who could otherwise be treated by simple means, are left to die in the hundreds because they don't have access to basic medicines or other resources. Children who have lost hands, feet, or other limbs are left without prostheses. Children with grave psychological distress are left untreated. This is the assessment of 100 British and Iraqi physicians. While homeless services, school lunch programs, healthcare and social services are gutted here at home, we can only acknowledge that those elected who are making these decisions do not represent us, cannot represent us.

What we do at home on a personal level becomes that much more meaningful. For the pendulum to swing we have to push it from here, now.

Alice Waco and her team "push the pendulum" with Alternatives to Violence in the prisons. Volunteers "push the pendulum" with their commitment to keep our Center open and engaged on a daily basis. Those who worked so hard to encourage the impeachment vote in the Santa Rosa City council do not have an illusion, they hold an ideal – a democratic ideal that those who serve must represent their will.

## **Waking Up and Walking Away**

by Casey Cochran

My first year in the military was actually a lot of fun. I had a good job, met some wonderful people, and I was going to be stationed in Northern California, which is where I wanted to go.

After the first year, things started to get rocky. I woke up and saw what was going on around me. I was helping an organization take the lives of people, regardless of the fact that they could be enemies or civilians. They were people, and that didn't sit right with me, especially when the ones being killed aren't even being considered as human beings.

Things got worse. Instead of talking about killing, our working crews were told that the job we were doing was worthless, how we couldn't do anything right. It was constant stress that built up daily without a break. I had started going through a therapy with military "therapists", where talking about certain things could get me into trouble. I was losing my mind. Severe depression was starting to set in, and my therapists turned a blind eye to it.

I was trying to figure out how to get out of this mess and get the help I needed. I did a google search of "Get out of the Military" and found the Peace and Justice center as one of the first hits. I emailed them, and was put in touch with a woman named Elizabeth. She gave me a lot of information on how to help myself get through the process. I found out by reading the DSM IV (*The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*) that I was showing symptoms of bi-polar disorder – a diagnosis I found could get me out of this mess. I told Elizabeth that I thought I had this problem: she set me up with a civilian therapist to diagnose me. I gave the diagnosis to a military psychiatrist, and I was out the door almost instantly. I received an honorable discharge.

Now that everything is over, I have my life back. I go to college full time, focusing on a degree in psychology. I am happily married and still live in the Sacramento area. Now, knowing what I do about the military, I make sure that people hear my story and know exactly what they're getting into.

## **Supporting The Homeless Troops**

by Danielle Burlison

Once or twice a week, I am visited at work by a client who stops in to get a cup of coffee and check in with me about how he is doing. Nick, as I'll call him here, is a 54 year-old homeless Vietnam Veteran who has been living outside for several years. His valuables all fit into a brown backpack that I gave him two months ago and the sleeping bag and tarp he uses to protect himself against the elements every night get stashed in a plastic bag in the bushes or hidden in dry spots in vacant buildings. Nick once had his own business and a family he adored, but the untreated PTSD he suffers from, as a result of serving as a combat troop in Vietnam, led him to self medicate with alcohol and landed him homeless. He, like many of the homeless veterans I work with, chooses to sleep outdoors, away from the loudness and chaos of the overcrowded shelters because it is "too much to take." It has taken Nick all of these years since he returned home from Vietnam to finally ask for help.

Many of the newer veterans, who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, could easily be heading down the same path. Most that I have spoken with are suffering from severe PTSD and anger at the military for the plethora of broken promises that were used to convince them to join in the first place. One young veteran that I speak with on a regular basis served three tours in Iraq, only to come home to limited employment offers and no affordable housing options. Another, who has extensive medical training, witnessed so much bloodshed as a medic in Iraq that his PTSD has made it impossible for him to ever work in the medical field again. And still another young man who

served in Afghanistan is suffering from such severe anxiety attacks and PTSD that he drinks himself to sleep every night just so he can find some peace.

Most of the returning troops that I speak with have little idea of what benefits they are eligible for and many more have too much pride, shame or depression to even seek the help they deserve. There are also a growing number of young veterans who have been dismissed from the military because of “panic attacks” or “psychological disorders” and have been given an Other Than Honorable Discharge, which excludes them from many of the veterans benefits or services that they, too deserve. They are left feeling overwhelmingly frustrated, angry and wondering why it is that their grandfathers were given jobs and support upon return from World War II and they are given nothing.

It is so easy to get overwhelmed when listening to first hand accounts of what the never-ending “Global War on Terror” is doing to the world and how it is affecting the lives of so many people here in our community. I constantly have to remind myself that that there is some hope. The fact that many of these returning troops are already asking for help is a big sign that the healing and support they need will shift things into a more positive gear. Also, groups like Iraq Veterans Against The War ([www.ivaw.org](http://www.ivaw.org)) are providing a forum and a safe space for many of these returning troops to discuss their experiences and to support each other through the difficult task of returning home. Hopefully with the support of the anti-war movement, these young men won't wait 30 years to speak out and seek help like my dear new friend Nick and a growing number of men like him.

Disclaimer: Danielle Burlison works with homeless veterans at a local non-profit and expresses her own personal views, and not necessarily those of her employer in this article (she also changed the name of the veteran she mentions). She is also a board member at the Peace and Justice Center, Food Not Bombs volunteer and can be reached at [danisavestheworld@yahoo.com](mailto:danisavestheworld@yahoo.com). She encourages all veterans to contact her if in need of resources.

## **Winter Soldier: Iraq and Afghanistan An Open Letter to the Anti-War Movement**

by Iraq Veterans Against the War

As we approach the fifth anniversary of the quagmire known as the invasion/occupation of Iraq, many of us feel a need to mark this occasion with an appropriately momentous show of resistance.

For the past few months, IVAW has been organizing "Winter Soldier: Iraq and Afghanistan." From March 13-16, 2008, we will assemble the largest gathering of US veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan in history, as well as Iraqi and Afghan survivors, to offer first-hand, eyewitness accounts to tell the truth about these occupations and their impact on the troops, their families, our nation, and the people of Iraq and Afghanistan. Winter Soldier will require IVAW's full attention and organizing capacity leading up to and during the event.

We would like to have as many people as possible attend the event and we are making arrangements to provide live broadcasting of the hearings for those who cannot hear the testimony first hand, as space will be limited. We ask all of you to help us to spread the message of the testimony, raise funds, and get more veterans and GIs involved.

We have been inspired by the tremendous support that the movement has shown us and we believe the success of Winter Soldier will ultimately depend on the support of our allies and the hard work of our members.

Because Winter Soldier will provide a unique venue for those who experienced war on the ground to expose the truth and consequences of the "War on Terror" to the nation and the world, we are requesting that, from March 13-16, the larger anti-war movement call no national mobilizations and that there be no local protests or civil disobedience actions in Washington, DC.

Some leaders of the movement have expressed a desire to have a mass assembly to mark the fifth anniversary. Some have expressed support for a concert/rally. IVAW would support any events that do not interfere with the Winter Soldier hearings, our strategy, or goals. We would encourage our members to continue participating in events of the larger movement to end the occupation of Iraq, as we acknowledge both the significance and the necessity of such actions for movement building. IVAW will also arrange to make available copies of the Winter Soldier transcript highlights to support the various efforts of the antiwar movement.

We are thankful for your enduring support of IVAW and Winter Soldier. Let us all continue to think strategically and act in a spirit of cooperation.

In solidarity, Iraq Veterans Against the War

35 representatives of the 22 Peace/Anti-War organizations agreed not to engage in "Mass Mobilization" during the 4 day period needed by IVAW to stage the Winter Soldier Investigation without disruption. Winter Soldier was first coined as a term by Thomas Paine for "those who stand up for the soul of their country, even in its darkest hours." The first Winter Soldier testimony took place in 1971, when over 100 Viet Nam veterans stood witness to the atrocities like the My Lai massacre. The Iraq Veterans Against the War will give testimony about Abu Ghraib, Fallujah and Haditha.

Visit: [www.ivaw.org](http://www.ivaw.org) for more information on how you can support the Iraq Veterans against the war.

Veterans for Peace, Sonoma County, recently active with the impeachment movement, meet the second Monday of the month in the NW room of the Santa Rosa Veterans Building.

## **The War at Home**

by Robert Edmonds and Ben Saari

There is a war at home. It is a war for social control. The enemies are: people of color, immigrants, youth, drug users, the homeless, and the mentally ill. In the past 12 months, 10 people have been killed by or died in the custody of local law enforcement. While the scale of slaughter in Iraq demands our attention, it is also imperative that we hold our ground at home. Each of the following names, represents a human life and deserves our attention.

1. Haki Kuasi Gaidi Thurston, 23, died February 23, 2007, after being shot 27 times with assault rifles by SRPD Swat team (One of these officers, Sgt. Richard Celli, also killed Richard DeSantis this year).

Haki was unarmed and running away from police Sgt. Richard Celli, Sgt. Stephen Schwartz, Officer John Barr and Officer Brian Boettger.

2. Jeremiah Chass, 16, died March 12, 2007, at his home after being shot 8 times by Sonoma County Sheriff's Deputies while suffering a mental health crisis, armed only with a pocket knife, and locked in a minivan.

3. Richard Desantis, 30, died April 9, 2007, in front of his home after being shot twice with a handgun, a rifle and with plastic bullets by Santa Rosa Police, who were told by his wife in a clear

and loud voice, that this was a mental health emergency and that her husband was unarmed. Officer Travis Menke, Sgt. Richard Celli, Officer Patricia Mann.

4. Walter L. Heller, 55, died April 22, 2007, after suffering a brain injury as he fell to the ground in front of his home while unarmed, after being shot twice with tasers by Petaluma Police officers. Officers Gary Buffo, Jason Lechleiter and Dustin Rodrigues.

5. Luis Felipe Sanchez, 27, died May 4, 2007, after being shot seven times by Sonoma County Sheriff's Deputies after they entered the home of his girlfriend and cornered him in a bathroom. Deputies Mike Frank, Greg Myers and Joe Dulworth.

6. Richard Lamont Williamson Jr., 54, died June 17, 2007, according to the Sheriff's Department while suffering from withdrawal in the Sonoma County Main Adult Detention Facility.

7. Ryan George, 22, died July 9, 2007, while suffering from sickle cell anemia in the Sonoma County Main Adult Detention Facility after repeated requests by his family for treatment by his personal physician.

8. Gregory William Townsley, 46, died September 24, 2007 – according to the Sheriff's Department while suffering from withdrawal in the Sonoma County Main Adult Detention Facility. Mr. Townsley was a houseless resident of Santa Rosa.

9. James Marrufo, 48, died December 1, 2007, according to the Sheriff's Department after he complained of not feeling well while in custody at the Sonoma County Main Adult Detention Facility. He was evaluated by jail medical staff, then transferred to Sutter Hospital for treatment. He was then transferred to Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital and finally to Marin General Hospital where he died. Preliminary cause of death is a massive stroke.

10. Jesse Hamilton, 24, died January 2, 2008, shot four times by Santa Rosa Police Department officer Michael Heiser. Jesse was in long-term residential mental health treatment. He had a nine-year history of successful treatment and medication for schizo-affective disorder. He went off his medication and was threatening violence. Police intervened in the crisis and killed Jesse.

There are unanswered questions in all of these cases. As this is written it has been 48 hours since Jesse Hamilton's killing. The local media, specifically KSRO and the *Press Democrat*, have once again failed to question the story presented by law enforcement. Rather than having an in depth discussion of the issue, the media is choosing to perpetuate the cycle of sound bites and fear mongering.

*Robert Edmonds and Ben Saari are members of CopWatch and Free Mind Media*

## **The War Is Over – Beware the Peace** **An empire of military bases** by Jack Wikse

In Bertold Brecht's classic play *Mother Courage* – about the 30 years war in Europe – the village idiot announces: "The war is over, beware the peace." I thought of this last month when someone asked me how things were going at the Peace and Justice Center. I said the peace movement faced lots of challenges – but at least the war is over. "Unfortunately," I continued, "it's the Korean war."

But apparently, the war in Iraq is over as well, and the Pentagon is preparing another "peace" there, on what Bush has called "the Korean model" (cf., Tim Holt, *London Review of Books*, October 18, 2007). Charles Krauthammer (who provides the spin on foreign policy for the Bush

administration) has declared the Iraq war a “success.” US troops are dying at a much-reduced rate. Iraq news has joined reporting on Afghanistan – no longer on the front pages of newspapers or on TV. General Petraeus will report in the spring that the “surge” has greatly reduced violence in Iraq. US “troop withdrawals” will begin then, anticipating the November elections. Bush will have “brought the troops home.”

What will this new Korean model “peace” look like? On November 26th Bush signed a “declaration of principles” with Iraqi President al-Maliki to negotiate a long term presence of US military bases in Iraq. There are currently 5 mega-bases there near completion: al-Balad (“Camp Anaconda”) near Baghdad (15 square miles); al-Talil (near Nasiriya in the South) and al-Asad, 120 miles West of Baghdad near the Euphrates (each 20 square miles); al-Qayyara, in the North; and the US military command headquarters “Camp Victory/Liberty” (near the Baghdad Airport) – so big it contains a 140 mile triathlon course. These bases are self-sufficient for utilities, power, phone systems, water, heat, air conditioning and hospitals.

This despite the fact that in the 2007 regular budget appropriations and authorization bills for the departments of Defense and State, both houses of Congress voted a ban on permanent bases in Iraq. In order to get around this and in keeping with the politics of fine semantic distinctions, the Bush administration is calling them “enduring” rather than “permanent.” These bases are being described as “lily pads”--where the US military can jump from base to base without touching down in between. (cf. “All Things Considered” NPR, 10/12/07).

The scope of these bases is enormous. (For more detail see “War and Occupation in Iraq,” UN Security Council Global Policy Forum, [www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/iraq/occupation/report/10bases.htm](http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/iraq/occupation/report/10bases.htm)). It is said that al-Balad’s 24/7 air traffic is comparable to O’Hare airport in Chicago. (cf. Thomas E. Ricks, “Biggest Base in Iraq Has Small Town Feel,” *Washington Post*, Feb. 4, 2006). These bases bring a US life-style to the troops. Balad boasts two “post exchange” department stores, four mess halls, a big sports facility, a 24 hour Burger King and a Pizza Hut. The US Embassy compound in Baghdad (100 acres, larger than Vatican City in Rome!) is located within the security perimeter of the “Green Zone.” It has blast walls 15 feet thick (Tom Dispatch, Feb 4, 2006). It has been constructed by imported labor from Asia. (cf. the video “The Bases are Loaded” at [peoplesgeography.com](http://peoplesgeography.com)). Nearly all food served in the complex will be brought in from the US. Talk about not buying local!

US imperialism manifests today as an “empire of military bases” (Chalmers Johnson). Alain Joxe has called it the “Empire of Disorder.” Joxe describes the “chaos” that has replaced the cold war order:

...zones in crisis, zones of barbaric violence, social wastelands and slow or rapid genocide; a surveillance system consisting of observational satellites and of bureaucracies to interpret their observations and data bases; a non-hierarchical system of communication, telephone, internet, cyberspace, an infosphere structured as an anarchic, but diversified space. A system of repression: mobile or fixed military bases and stockpiles all in coordination to maintain the logistics of global military intervention; systems of alliances and Euro-American command systems under American control... (Alain Joxe, *Empire of Disorder*, Semiotext(e), 2002, p. 104)

The US is prepared to consolidate an enormous set of fixed military bases in Iraq and declare the war is over. Beware this peace.

## **Farms Not Arms**

by Linda Speel

Farms Not Arms (FNA), based in Petaluma, CA, was formed two years ago by farmers who wanted to take a more active role in the broader social and political life of the country, and specifically to add a farmer's perspective to the movement for peace, social justice, and a healthy environment. Starting with a handful of farmers and food industry people from different political, religious and social backgrounds, FNA has now grown to over three hundred farmers and food industry people, with enthusiastic support and participation from the leaders of our nation's family farm organizations, like the Family Farm Defenders out of Madison, Wisconsin. Other FNA supporters include: Jim Hightower, Ambassador Carol Moseley Braun, George Naylor, Dolores Huerta, and organizations including Global Exchange, Peaceroots Alliance, Organic Consumers Association, and Chelsea Green Publishing to name a few.

One FNA project that has been attracting a lot of interest is Swords to Ploughshares, a project of the newly formed Farmer-Veteran Coalition, which seeks to provide training and employment in the agriculture field to returning war veterans. Many of them are from rural areas where there are few jobs for anyone. At the same time, America's farmers are an aging population not being replaced by new young farmers. This project seeks to connect veterans and farmers for a positive collaboration that will help both veterans and the farming community. Farming is the kind of all absorbing occupation that many veterans will require after their intense military experiences.

The Farmer-Veteran Coalition is a collaborative project of Farms Not Arms along with veterans' organizations Veterans Village, Not This Time Vets, Swords to Plowshares, and with California Farm Link, an organization that works to connect new farmers with available farmland that would otherwise move out of agriculture.

After the Farmer-Veteran Coalition meeting in Petaluma, CA last August a donor came forward offering a house to the Veteran Village located in Guerneville, CA due to open in February 2008.

Matthew Mccue, a Veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and a farmer, together with the Farmer Veteran Coalition, Farms Not Arms, and The Veteran Village are creating an apprenticeship in organic horticulture and sustainable viticulture. The apprentices will be living in Guerneville and will do a rotation between the farm I manage, which supplies fresh organic produce directly to the French Garden Restaurant in Sebastopol, and various organic vineyards and wineries. Their goal is to train the next generation of farm and vineyard managers, by helping our apprentices take the first step into the healing and joyful profession of sustainable agriculture. Apprentices will move on to other agricultural schools, internships, and apprenticeships such as ALBA and the UCSC Center for Agro Ecology and sustainable food systems, as well as having the confidence and knowledge to pursue careers in viticulture as well.

Veterans are physically strong, committed, mentally tough, proactive, decisive, and most importantly hungry to succeed. It is because of these qualities that veteran apprentices are well suited to become the future leaders of sustainable agriculture in America and in the world of international development.

This is an opportunity to show our veterans what it is like to live a life that is defined by trees blooming and the care for life. Veterans will benefit from this apprenticeship and the graciousness of the people of Sonoma County, and Sonoma County will benefit from our work in your fields and vineyards.

IVAW, San Francisco, will be sending interested veterans to the farm to share in nature this spring."

The new Farmers-Veteran Coalition is having a logo contest for their website. See details at [www.farmvetco.org](http://www.farmvetco.org).

Farms Not Arms was honored for their activism and providing farming jobs for war veterans at the recent 18th Annual Bioneers Conference in October 2007 in San Rafael, California.

May 10th 2008 will be a Farms Not Arms benefit at the Sebastopol Community Center. Save the date. For More information, contact:

– Farms Not Arms – [www.farmsnotarms.org](http://www.farmsnotarms.org), Michael O’Gorman, 619-200-5954, Linda Speel, 707-765-0196, [Linda@farmsnotarms.org](mailto:Linda@farmsnotarms.org).

– Veterans’ Village – [www.veteransvillage.org](http://www.veteransvillage.org), Nadia McCaffrey, 209-830-9555.

– Not This Time Vets – [www.notthistimevets.org](http://www.notthistimevets.org), Donna ‘DJ’ Jacobs 831-338-7695.

## **Peacemakers of the Year Members of the Demilitarization Team**

The Peacemaker of the Year Award was given by the Peace and Justice Center of Sonoma County on November 10, 2007 to Jeanie Daskais, Margaret Bregger, and Margaret Howe for their work as members of the Demilitarization Team. Jeanie Daskais’ acceptance speech will appear in the next issue of the *Peace Press*. Here are Margaret Bregger’s and Jeanie Daskais’ speeches.

### **Young people who need the caring of a larger village**

by Margaret Bregger Coston

On behalf of the three of us, I want to thank the board of the Peace and Justice Center for supporting and honoring the military separation work which Elizabeth Stinson began. Amazingly, Elizabeth worked alone for many years and was responsible for over 400 discharges. Jeanie and Margaret joined Elizabeth 1 1/2 year ago and I began in January of this year. Now the number of discharges total over 700.

Each of us will talk about a different part of this work. I want to give you an idea who these young people are who have joined the military and then cannot tolerate their circumstances. They google "get out of the military", " need help". Sometimes they see Elizabeth's name on a bathroom wall near a base. They hear word of mouth.

I know many of you wonder why they signed up. After all, isn't this a volunteer Army? I hope that some of their stories will give you some insight into this question. Let me read you some of their quotes. These are their words.

– "Both my parents are alcoholics. My father was in and out of prison my whole life. When I joined at 18, I didn't have any money or a place to live".

– "In high school, my granddad died. My mother went to prison and I found out that my dad was a drug addict all about the same time".

– "I was kicked out of the house at age 15 because I didn't get along with Mom's boyfriend. Joined the military at age 17".

– "That's it son, my father scolded me. I'm taking you to see the recruiter tomorrow. You're headed down the wrong path with your life fast. I don't want to see you make the same mistakes I did." In basic training this young person was chanting "what makes the grass grow, sir? Blood, blood, blood, sir. Whose blood? Their blood." This young person came to realize that he couldn't kill anyone or be part of an organization that does.

– This is a story of another young man who came to know that he couldn't stay in the military. In training to prepare to go to Iraq, he was told that innocent people would be killed. He was told that if everyone told the same story, there would be no problem and no one would be punished. However, he was told if you don't stick with the group, you would be excluded or killed. This young person said "I don't want to kill any innocent people". He went AWOL and found his way to the Peace and Justice Center.

Young people who have experienced trauma are particularly vulnerable to military recruiters. The recruiters promise verbally whatever the young person is seeking – friendship, money, the perfect training. By the time we see them, they know the promises were empty. Most never see the bonuses and are never able to utilize the education money.

These are young people who need the caring of a larger village than the one they came from. By the time they have found us they are in great distress. And they are very brave standing up to the military establishment.

I want to recognize Rebel Fagin, who won last year's Peacemaker of the year award, for his continued anti-military recruitment work. I want to thank this team – Elizabeth, Jeanie and Margaret – for being so supportive and inspiring as I learn to assist and to do no harm. Thank you.

## **The larger, nurturing peace work – into the belly of the beast**

by Margaret Howe

What I'm going to speak to is how we see this work in the broader context of peace work because at first it really isn't obvious. I kept asking myself, "How does helping these good ol' boys, who volunteered for service in the first place, help to end this horrible war?" But something kept compelling me. It felt like I was pulled by a force that I didn't understand, but that kept me taking new cases.

But now I see that the force that pulls me, that pulls us, to work with these soldiers, is the one that wants to pull out what is wrong with our culture... and replace it with something new. You could say that what we are doing is dismantling the edifice of war brick by brick, or soldier by soldier – doing the work of transforming our cultures mindset of domination, violence, humiliation, and power over – transforming this mindset into one where there is no "other"; where we are all related and caring for each other.

And so how we do this work then becomes as important as what we do. The four of us are mothers, and each of these soldiers is like our own child and we are carrying them to safety like a mother cat does her kittens, and carrying them with compassion, and nurturing, and love, and laying them down gently in the softest down.

And that stops them from killing anyone or being killed, but it also frees them from the intense violence that the military embodies and would have shaped their psyche for the rest of their lives. So that now they can potentially make choices that enhance their communities, not tear them down. One of our guys is going back to school to be a paralegal and one them wants to be a massage therapist.

People often assume that those we work with are CO's, and, of course, we love working with CO's – those who have had their crystallizing moments of clarity that war is wrong! Wonderful! But most of the guys and girls who call us are not CO's – at least not yet. They want out for other reasons and Jeanie and Margaret have spoken of some of those reasons. But these are the ones who often are the most affected by what we do and how we do it.

And while I don't want to sound too grandiose, still I think that the way we hold them, the way we nurture them through the process, the way we believe in them, gives them another

framework to view the world – one that values nurturing, connection, and life. And this weakens the foundation of this culture’s obsession with independence, go-it-alone, and competition. And when a human being is treated with kindness and love, the ripples begin. Each of these soldiers has a family, children, and community, and each of these then gets a little push towards another way of relating.

And this is the bigger peace work I’m talking about. We are helping birth new ways of being, and going into the belly of the beast to do it. Because actually, we do it with the military itself. When we talk to Command at Fort Knox or a Lt. at Pearl Harbor, we treat them like a human being who cares about this soldier as much as we do. And we develop relationships with them – talk about the weather, their children – whatever is needed to make a human connection. When I called Fort Stuart to check on a guy who had gone AWOL, the Sgt. complained to me about how many AWOLs they were dealing with and how hard it was morale-wise and numbers-wise for them. And of course I was thrilled that they had so many AWOLs, but to him I could just listen to his feelings and murmur my appreciation of how it was for him without going into my whole rap of how bad the war was, etc.

So this too helps wear away the pervasive acceptance of separateness and domination, which is the foundation of our military industrial society – the sense of us vs. them. Which is so pervasive now, in these times, and which is so fragmenting our sense of world community. And how can we tell how our clients will change in years to come because someone saw them as a fellow human being. And that person was often someone on the “other side” of the political fence – this subversive peace work, of undermining the patriarchy by nurturing it to death. Not nurturing what it is doing, but nurturing the people behind it. This is what we think we are doing. This, we think, is what will make another world possible.

**Book Review** (by Susan Lamont) – ***Getting a Grip: clarity, creativity and courage in a world gone mad***, by Frances Moore Lappé

*"I realize that humanity has no excuses anymore. In the span of my own lifetime, both historical evidence and breakthroughs in knowledge have wiped out all our excuses. We know that we know how to end this needless suffering, and we have all the resources to do it... We know what works... we no longer have to settle for grasping at straws - wild acts of protest, or tearful acts of charity, or any other short-term, feel-less-bad steps. We become open to the possibility of real change."* – Frances Moore Lappé, *Getting a Grip*, 2007

Frances Moore Lappé first came to worldwide attention in 1971 with her book, *Diet for a Small Planet*. In that book, she not only presented a vegetarian diet as the best choice for individual health, but also as the best choice for world health. Her message was that a diet based upon meat was an irresponsible use of the earth’s resources.

Since that time, Lappé has written or co-authored fifteen books on diet, population, democracy, Nicaragua, and, my personal favorite topic, turning off your television. Her latest book is *Getting a Grip: clarity, creativity and courage in a world gone mad*. The book begins with a question: “Why are we as societies creating a world that we as individuals abhor?” From there Lappé discusses the feelings of powerlessness that most of us have internalized. Instead of focusing on “them” as the cause of cultural dysfunction, she asks us to look at our own assumptions, peel away the layers, and discover our own power.

Lappé presents an explanation of the current model upon which our society is based. She believes it runs on the limiting premise that there are not enough goods and goodness to go around – that humans are selfish and materialistic. The result is that we can’t work for our common good and, therefore, turn to the competitive model of capitalism and the wisdom of the market. The

inevitable conclusion of this system is that competition and consumerism create ecological collapse, which in turn reinforces the original premise.

Lappé's vision is, instead, one of plenty – plenty of goods and goodness. In her model, people have a need for fairness, cooperation and meaning. This results in life-serving problem-solving, which includes cooperation and freedom from the influence of wealth. The people-power this creates then reinforces the original premise of plenty.

*Getting a Grip* is divided into three sections: Clarity, Creativity, and Courage. The section on Clarity discusses Thin Democracy – a democracy created through money-based elections and capitalism – and Living Democracy – “a way of living in which the democratic values of fairness, inclusion, and mutual accountability infuse all dimensions of our public lives.”

The section on Creativity focuses on the ability to re-imagine power. We now have power as “a zero-sum.” It strengthens some people at the expense of others. It divides what already exists.” For Lappé, power can be “mutually expanding. It builds the capacities of all involved. It is creative, generating new strengths and new possibilities.” It re-imagines democracy around ten “arts” – active listening, creative conflict, mediation, negotiation, political imagination, public dialogue, public judgment, celebration, evaluation and reflection, and mentoring. In Lappé’s Living Democracy, an activist is no longer “a rabble rouser and extremist with an agenda”, but an engaged, active, and empowered citizen.

The section on Courage examines the fears that keep us from claiming our power and acting. Lappé describes a cycle of hope in which we “recognize fear as a call to courage, not a verdict of failure” and take several steps which lead us to “experience joy in truer connection and greater efficacy and to glimpse possibility” which will create moments of opportunity.

The book ends, appropriately, on an up-note with a quote from nature photographer Harold Feinstein. When asked about the future of humanity, Feinstein replied, “Remember, life loves life. We’ve got nature on our side.”

Frances Moore Lappé will be speaking about her book at an event being co-sponsored by the Peace & Justice Center of Sonoma County and the Sonoma County Network of Spiritual Progressives on Thursday, March 6th, 7:30 pm at the Glaser Center, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Santa Rosa, 547 Mendocino Ave., Santa Rosa. \$10.00 donation suggested - no one turned away

## **Strange Fruit – Retaliating when you’re “right”**

by Susan Lamont

“Southern trees bear strange fruit,  
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root,  
Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze,  
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.”

In 1938, a photograph of a lynching inspired Lewis Allen to write the poem “Strange Fruit.” Billie Holiday was moved to put the words to music and she often had to vomit after performing the song. I was reminded of this after hearing of the killing and mutilation of US contractors in Fallujah in 2004. I didn’t have to see the photograph.

Nancy Pelosi said that the killings were “outside of the circle of civilized human behavior.” Brig. General Mark Kermit promised “overwhelming” retaliation. Kermit failed to note that the behavior of the Iraqis was itself retaliation. It might be time to consider that retaliation is itself “outside of the circle of civilized human behavior.”

A recent movie, *The Great Debaters*, revived my thoughts about lynching and retaliation. The movie uses a debate team at a black college in Texas in the 1930's as its hook, but at its core, the movie is about what it meant, and can still mean, to be black in the United States. Central to the motivation of the team and the feelings expressed in the final, winning debate is a lynching. One team member says that the response of blacks to lynchings can be violent or nonviolent and that whites had better hope blacks choose the latter.

In the past 120 years, in the "civilized" United States, there have been 4,743 confirmed lynchings. In Alabama in 1981 (within the lifetime of anyone older than 16), 19 year-old Michael Donald was hung from a tree – his body "strange fruit," like those hanging from the bridge in Fallujah. His crime was being black and convenient. The local KKK killed him in "retaliation" for a court verdict that they didn't like. In 1998, James Byrd, Jr. was dragged behind a truck, his head and arm torn off.

Here in Santa Rosa, as I stood vigil against war, someone drove by and screamed, "Nuke the fucking sand niggers!" Right here in "civilized" Santa Rosa. People who say these things aren't on the other side of the earth. They're right here and they're our neighbors.

And now the Bush administration and Congress, on both sides of the aisle, are setting us up for retaliation against Iran. Situations are being created to stimulate us to rise up in righteous anger. The citizens of this country have not rallied around Bush in his crusade against Iran, so he will try to play his trump card – the one that worked so well after September 11th.

Those who retaliate believe they are "good" people. US soldiers, the killers in Fallujah, and the angry citizens of Santa Rosa all believe this. They believe in their god, love their countries and their families. But they've all learned that if you're "right," your anger can be assuaged with retaliation. One need only look at the Palestinian/Israeli situation to see that retaliation, in which both sides feel righteously justified, has resulted in nothing more than ever-increasing body counts.

Each of us needs to step back and take a deep breath. We need to give ourselves some time and space to truly reflect. If you're religious, consider what your religion teaches at its very core. If you're not, you have formulated values to live by. Think about them. Ask your family and friends to think about them. This is worth the effort.

Being the biggest bully, with the biggest stick and the most toys, is not what life is about, particularly with the cost being the lives of our children and theirs. The poet Diane diPrima wrote, "Our death culture cannot imagine solutions that do not bleed." We need to imagine something different. We need to turn loose our imaginations – unfettered of past misconceptions. America once inspired people around the world. Now we're the most hated. We can change that. We have to.

Eleanor Roosevelt asked, "When will our conscience grow so tender that we will act to prevent human misery rather than avenge it?" The time is now. The rest will follow.

## **Black History**

When did it begin?  
With the first  
human in Afrika.  
A mystery,  
this human history:  
Over millenniums,  
melanin free descendants  
with a superiority complex  
migrated out of Afrika,

invaded turtle island,  
subjugated and enslaved  
indigenous and Afrikan  
men, women and children.  
Humans have evolved  
but human nature  
changes slowly.  
What of women's history?  
Did we not arrive  
together? – Attila Nagy, 2008

## **It's the Economy, Stupid Why Congressional Democrats Will Never Come Through for Us**

by Bruce Pardoll

*I argued that liberalism is dead in the June/July 2007 issue of the Peace Press. What follows sheds light on the material reasons why a majority of democratic politicians will not respond to our needs.*

Calculations by political economist Robert Brenner indicate the overall before-tax net profit rate for US corporations, exempting the farming sector, went from 20.8 percent between 1959 and 1969 to 15 percent from 1979 to 1990. Between 1950 and 1970, the average profit rate of US manufacturers was a whopping 24.4 percent compared to just 14.5 percent from 1970 to 1993. In 1997, during the Clinton “prosperity,” the corporate profit rate spiked at 11 percent but plunged to 8.3 percent by 2001, before 9/11.

Growth rate numbers bear out the picture of economic stagnation. Between 1995 and 2000, at the height of the 90s boom, the US gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate was a robust 4.1 percent – due chiefly to global neo-liberal policies taking effect – but GDP growth for the whole decade was merely three percent. GDP growth often hovered below three percent during Bush’s first term. When it exceeded three percent in Bush's second term, the increase has been due chiefly to rising gross real estate sales, rising gasoline prices, and deficit spending to increase output in the military industrial complex.

During the George W. Bush years, “the US share of the world's GDP has dropped dramatically from 30.8 percent in 2000 to 27.7 percent in 2006” (Joel Grier). The roughly three percent growth of the Bush years (soon to be significantly lower) compares with 4.6 percent from 1960 to 1969, 3.3 percent from 1969 to 1979 (when stagnation began), 2.9 percent from 1979 to 1990, and 2.4 percent from 1990 to 1995 before the Clinton boom gave us a transitory 4.1 percent growth rate. The pattern lends credence to Marx's claim that the long-range tendency of capitalism is for the rate of profit to fall: hence stagnation and economic decline. With the bursting of the “real estate bubble,” the US economy is on the road to still lower growth rates. The growth rate low of the early nineties cited above will likely be lower still by mid-2008. The pattern of stagnation continues.

History shows that the pattern can be interrupted by technological innovations and government policies that increase productivity or make large new markets available. The advent of the railroad, electricity, the automobile, the computer, and robotics, along with policies that suppress labor, slash taxes to the rich, and bring down protective trade barriers, are some the chief examples. Making war and rebuilding what has been destroyed is another mechanism. However, there is reason to believe – or hope – that even these historical mechanisms may have run their course.

The destruction wrought in WWII propelled the US into the world's supreme economic power – 60 percent of the world's manufactured goods came from US companies in the early 50s. But Europe and Japan eventually became competitive, challenging US supremacy. Intensive worldwide competition is accelerating the tendency towards stagnation. Data demonstrate that the age of computer and robotic technology has not radically reduced the costs of production. Rather, international competition is forcing companies to acquire better technology and cheaper labor to keep up with competitors. But for the new outrageously expensive technology to pay for itself, it must produce at nearly full capacity, leading to market gluts, bankrupted companies, layoffs, economic slowdowns and sometimes complete economic collapse.

The US now produces under 25 percent of the world's manufactures. Ninety percent of the US workforce has lost seven percent of its real income since 1973. Today, economic growth is due to luxury production for the top ten percent income earners as well as the cultural success in making

consumption a greater value than savings. In 2005 Americans spent more than they made – for the first time ever.

If multi-millionaires and mega-corporations had not secured the tax cuts they have been acquiring these past thirty years, the figures for real net growth, real profits and real capital gains would be disastrously low, discouraging investment and intensifying stagnation. To secure a safe “investment environment”, the investor class must have tax cuts (and hence slashed social spending), stagnant wages, lowered (or eliminated) worker pensions and benefits, suppression of organized labor, militarization of police to confront social protests, a compliant press, and enormous military deficit spending to preserve “stable” investment environments.

Congressional Democrats and Republicans represent their own class interests. They will never come through for us. Liberals remain perplexed over the “lack of backbone” displayed by congressional Democrats in ending the occupation of Iraq. But the Democrats have shown nothing but steady compliance with reactionary agendas ever since the Reagan presidency. The Democrats are not spineless weasels, throwing principle aside to play it safe politically. They are lying weasels. Congress – Democrats and Republicans alike – does not want US armed forces to leave Iraq for years – not until sufficient control of Iraqi oil is secured on US terms to maintain US corporate profit rates. They are in accord with their own social class, the same class that lobbies their “hallowed halls” and finances their election campaigns.

### **Martin Luther King, Jr. Event 9th Grade Oratory** **Suzi Li, Maria Carillo High School**

*“Calling our community to a higher destiny – a more noble expression of humanness” was this year’s theme for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Celebration in Santa Rosa. Suzi Li delivered the following speech at the event.*

At one point in history, there were barbarians who invaded countries savagely without logic or reason. People stumbled around drunk and attended parties daily, completely ignorant and oblivious to the world. Morality was a word long forgotten, corruption was common place, and the world was about as orderly as New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. No, I’m not talking about medieval times, but rather today, January \_\_, 2008. The history of this world extends back more than 4.6 billion years. Yet when one analyzes the world today, one will find that we, the people, have just repeated history over and over again, making the same ridiculous mistakes.

The great peacemakers of history should all be tossing in their graves at the condition of our world. It has become a place of violence, depravity and destruction because we have neglected our original goal of achieving peace. We attempt to discover the cause of all this conflict and distress, but we find that time’s just been wasted by finger-pointing, yelling, and blaming. The peace, morality and sense of justice that once existed in the hearts of the people have all but been shattered by the meaningless squabbles of today. We have forgotten the warnings and portents that great people such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Abraham Lincoln and Mahatma Gandhi have given to the world. We have forgotten Dr. King’s words that “the ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy... In fact, violence merely increases hate.” These words of wisdom have been abandoned as our consciences grow duller and our hearts grow harder with every passing moment. The world has concentrated solely upon the deaths of these men and has neglected what these men stood and died for. Their lives can be summed up by the words of, American revolutionary, Nathan Hale, “I regret that I have but one life to give to my country.” However, I believe that their lives were given not just to their countries but to the world. Given as an example to the rest of us so that we may see all that a human can truly be.

Despite all of the seeming failures of treaties and peace talks, we should see that they are only results of miscommunication for as said by Dr. King, “Men often hate each other because they fear each other; they fear each other because they don't know each other; they don't know each other because they can not communicate; they can not communicate because they are separated.”

Our society has fallen into such a dysfunctional state that there are many who will just give up and give in because they think they cannot make a difference. That the people of a country of freedom and liberty would see the commemoration of a great keeper of peace as just a day when they get sleep in. That there needs to be a contest where teenagers are ranting about nobility and peace just so the world can remember what these words mean. However, I hope nobility, justice, righteousness, and truth are still in our blood and still course through the veins of every one of us. Forty-five years ago, that blood stirred within one man, and moved him to seek out the bank of justice to claim the funds that it owed to his people. Today, we find once again in our hands bad checks from the same bank. However, instead of confronting the bank, some of us have just sat back and watched as poor souls have had to suffer the wrongs dealt upon them. Like Dr. King so many years ago, I refuse to believe that this bank is once again bankrupt and I refuse to believe that we in our hearts are indifferent to the suffering of our neighbors and colleagues. If this bank can shut its door upon these war-ravaged, underprivileged and manipulated beings, then one day it might do the same to all of us as well. Let us make sure that this does not happen. Let us once again call back the nobility in our souls and relieve our bodies of the chains of corruption, injustice, and violence, and alleviate our shoulders of our burdens of guilt, sorrow, and anger. Let us rise from the murky depths of the hell that we are caught in and seek a higher calling, a better world for ourselves and our posterity. Let us not wobble upon the shoulders of others but stand together, steady and united and know with true conviction that “when people get caught up with that which is right and they are willing to sacrifice for it, there is no stopping point short of victory” because “either we go up together or we go down together.”

**Book Review** (by Debra Birkinshaw) – **Handbook for HOPE**  
***Army of None: Strategies to Counter Military Recruitment,  
End War, and Build a Better World,***  
by Aimee Allison and David Solnit

I was eager to get my hands on this handbook, which is one of the most user-friendly, accessible and motivating guidebooks I have ever perused. Army veteran Aimee Allison and global justice organizer-puppeteer David Solnit have collaborated to offer creative and meaningful strategies that have been proven effective over more than a decade of passionate activism. They share stories of personal encounters that have saved lives and serve to illustrate how we, too, can be effective in using these strategies.

The HOPE (High School and College Outreach Peace Education) program has been created out of the Peace and Justice Center of Sonoma County, to deter military recruitment in our local schools. *Army of None* should be required reading for all HOPE counselors and students who engage in counter-recruitment. It won't feel like required reading, because it is so inspiring – it brings hope for the future of our children and for our world.

*Army of None* is a vital resource that offers a three-fold approach toward building a strong counter-recruitment movement in our community. Section One gives a full and accurate account of the slick multi-billion dollar military recruitment industry's ploys. There is a description of Operation Opt Out, which is a program that I have participated in. Most of the parents and students welcomed learning about their right to protect their private information from military recruiters.

Section Two provides guidance, encouragement, tools, and resources for education and direct action. The number one strategy is to support youth activists and activism. Here in our county, we can support United for Resistance and Free Mind Media, and students from Analy, Casa Grande, Mario Carrillo and Healdsburg High School who are all intelligent youth activists committed to direct action. I had the honor of supporting an action of the United for Resistance successful effort to shut down the Army recruiting center in Petaluma. These young activists walk their talk. They are working for their future and for the safety of people all around the world.

Section Three of *Army of None* is entitled, " People Power and Strategic Organizing for a Sustainable Movement," which presents the larger picture for how to stop war, the occupation of Iraq, and roll back the sweeping tide of Empire conquest. "...Power is not something that those in power hold but is a fragile relationship between those in power and the rest of us. Our compliance forms the pillars on which their power depends. When we withhold our cooperation and organize determined movements to intervene, we can assert our power and force changes – or remove those who refuse to make them." This section underscores the three primary pillars that must be toppled – the military, corporate profiteers and corporate media – and offers strategies for intervening in all three spheres.

The handbook is completed with a substantial list of resources. I recommend it highly. I am hopeful that some of our *Peace Press* readers will be inspired by this book to join the efforts of the HOPE project. Contact the center to find out how to become trained and to obtain materials for this work. For more information visit: [www.myspace.com/armyofnonebook](http://www.myspace.com/armyofnonebook) and [www.couragetoresist.org/x](http://www.couragetoresist.org/x).

**On the day after the 4,000th death of a US soldier in the occupation of Iraq,** the Peace & Justice Center will hold a **candlelight vigil in Courthouse Square, Santa Rosa at 6:00 pm.** Come join us as we remember the lives of all those who have died in this illegal occupation, whether from Iraq, coalition countries or the United States."

The New Social Contract next topic for consideration will be Quality Education for All. Board members Alice Waco and Jack Wikse will lead the discussions emphasizing what "quality education" is, access to it, and the No Child Left Behind legislation. The first meeting will be Thursday, February 21st at 7:00 p.m. at the Center.

**Wednesday, March 19th** marks the **5th anniversary of the illegal war against and occupation of Iraq.** The Peace & Justice Center will hold a candlelight vigil that night at 6:00 p.m. in Courthouse Square. Please join us.