

# ***The Peace Press* – December/January 2007/2008**

## **The Next Generation of Activists**

### **Getting Centered – Seeking Accountability**

by Elizabeth Stinson, Director

Feeding the homeless in Petaluma and Santa Rosa. Young activists – cooking and serving the homeless good, tasty, vegan food – are consistently meeting a need the community neglects. Copwatch in Petaluma and Santa Rosa is a bold, civilian move towards police accountability in a time when administrative oversight is sadly lacking. It is a move also initiated by young students and spirited activists seeking accountability by the brass that so often is perceived as abusing its power. In this visionary climate of people actually working together – GASP for change, for free – a more natural sort of recognition is necessarily placed on their achievements.

How do we get the “haves” to realize that by being who they are, by satiating their egos with “goods” at the expense of “others,” they are not just contributing to the problem, *they are the problem*.

The recent deaths in police hands in Sonoma County are “not” going unnoticed or not responded to by local young activists with cameras, eyes watching, recording, and holding accountable. The local “copwatchers” know that their activities possibly deter violent acts by those in power who are less likely to be abusive with the accountability a video camera demands.

We learned from watching the press be systematically excluded from two invasions and now an occupation of Iraq, abuses at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, how accountability goes out the window with the inability to make public, to view and to record aggressive activities.

There is an awakened, conscious mentality fermenting and expanding in our community. Next time you see some young activists dumpster diving, help them out. The momentum to address the needs of the hungry and the homeless with the waste of a community is inspiring. Last February when I was traveling in Europe I was able to “couch-surf” and avoid the hotel/motel scam and meet some very interesting members of the DIY (do it yourself) movement, along with many who would rather be part of an active DIY underground than to ever contribute to the misspent wealth of a Paris Hilton.

I am too old to hang in youth hostels, so “couch-surfing” has opened up new opportunities for last minute travel, adventure and inspiration. We have much to learn from the intentions of poet Mateo Strawbridge, artist Reena Pal, intern Natasha Chastina, Brad Morrison, Evelina Molina, Karin Adams, Lyla Kahn, Ben Saari, Dani Burlison-Craft, Joey Crottogini, Analy High drama students, Adam Reich, Nicole, Seth, Patrick, Dezire, Dillon Bendellini and many more unnamed and not forgotten who have worked to feed as well as defend the human rights of the unnamed and forgotten of our community.

We are trained to look back seven generations and learn, and try to make decisions with regard for the next seven generations to follow.

The next two generations of Sonoma County activists are providing the vision we need...  
peace, Elizabeth

## Engaging in Public Problems – Action in the Face of Fear

by Adam Reich

I grew up in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the eldest son of Robert Reich and Clare Dalton. My father was a lecturer on economics and social policy at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, who went on to become Secretary of Labor in Bill Clinton's first administration. He now teaches public policy at the University of California, Berkeley. My mother was a professor at Harvard Law School until she was denied tenure in the mid-1980s, sued the university for sex discrimination, and used the settlement money to found a law clinic for victims of domestic violence at Northeastern Law School. It is unsurprising that my parents produced another academic, but they taught me that academic work is meaningless if it does not engage directly with public problems.

But while my parents would deconstruct current events at the dinner table, the dinner table itself was situated in a large, blue, Victorian house off of Brattle Street. Brattle Street, for those unfamiliar with Cambridge, is nicknamed "Tory Row," after being home to some of the only colonial settlers in Massachusetts who sided with the British during the Revolutionary War. That being said, if my childhood was the embodiment of ensconced wealth and privilege, I did not exactly experience it as comfortable. Indeed, given the circumstances, I found an amazing amount to worry about. Chief among these worries was a fear of "robbers." Each night, from the age of seven to the age of twelve, I would meticulously hunt the house for signs of invasion. When the unthinkable actually did happen, and a close friend of my mother's was murdered only two blocks away, my anxieties felt justified. It took several years of child therapy before what was diagnosed as a mild case of obsessive-compulsive disorder elided into acceptable form, and by middle school I had become an obsessive student.

At the age of eighteen, in 1999, I headed forty miles south to Providence, Rhode Island, to begin college at Brown University. I was still pretty close to home, but far enough away – I suppose – to begin to confront my fears and look at the world through new eyes. Within a year, I was working with a group of 16-19 year old young men at Rhode Island's only juvenile prison to publish a newspaper, *Hidden Trewth*. I became so engaged with the work that I decided to take time off of school, during which time I began to work with young people being released from the facility.

Jacob Delgado was one of the first young men with whom I worked on the outside, a talented poet and performer who had written a proposal for the reform of the juvenile prison soon before his release. In the early morning hours of December 15, 2001, he was shot to death after allegedly cutting in line at a sandwich truck. The few news stories that covered the story at all dismissed the death as gang-related. Jacob's death was the first time I had lost a friend, and it was shocking, stomach-churning, world-altering. After the paralysis of grief subsided, Jacob's death inspired me to examine the ways young offenders make sense of and exert control over their lives. What is the attraction of criminal involvement for young people, and what relationship does it have to the social structures that we all take part in creating? Ultimately, these questions would lead me to graduate school at UC Berkeley, where I'm currently working on my doctoral degree in Sociology.

If I've learned anything, it's that criminal involvement has a lot to do with the absence of dignified work for young people, and the absence of organizations within which people are able to make meaning and gain a sense of power in their lives. I continue to think that the prison is a useful prism within which to examine social problems, but my work outside the academy is now in the labor movement, with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). Labor unions like

the SEIU, I think, are the organizations with the greatest potential in our country for linking individual leadership development with collective social and political change.

This work is what has brought me to Sonoma County. In 2003, workers at Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital began trying to organize their union – for a voice in patient care, and a sense of security in their jobs. Since then, the nuns who own this Catholic hospital have persistently discouraged workers from organizing, and have endorsed a concerted anti-union campaign. What makes this especially compelling, and confusing, is that this position flies in the face of centuries of Catholic social teaching, and even the position of the Santa Rosa Diocese.

Over the last fifteen months I've watched leaders at the hospital advocate powerfully for themselves and their co-workers. On November 3, now four years after workers began organizing, over a hundred employees stood outside the hospital asking for justice. This courage – not the absence of fear, but action in the face of fear – inspires me to continue the fight in Santa Rosa, and to continue fighting for the world in which I want to live.

## **Activists Keep It Running**

by Gabrielle Hamilton

I was born and raised in the small town of Petaluma, and have been around for almost 18 years. I grew up in a loving home of six others, two of which were cats. From a very young age, I was exposed to the truths of the world and, being a highly emotional person, was always confused as to how I was supposed to react. I went to my first protest with my great aunt and great uncle when I was probably about ten or eleven years old. I don't remember, now, what it was that I was protesting for or against, but I do remember a few days earlier asking my mom, "What can I do to help? I just want to do something about it," and my good ol' mother, a smile on her face, said "Go protest. I bet Aunt Laurel plans to go." So it was decided, and I brought a friend or two with us. We held signs, we asked people to honk for peace, and truthfully, it was one of the most empowering moments of my life. Never had I felt so much like that was my place in the world – making a difference. Since then, I haven't been much of a protest-hopper, but I've done my share of standing up for what I believe in.

What is it that I believe in? Well, my center-of-the-core belief is in Equality. I love Peace, but there just wouldn't be True Peace without Equality. Compromise is another one of my best friends, and it took me a while to recognize Compromise (mostly because I was a stubborn "gotta have it my way" kind of kid), but I would be nowhere today without it! Truly listening to what everyone has to say is the only way for everyone to be healthfully happy. Selflessness is also utterly important to me as a human being, and I try to put others before myself in most situations. When everyone feels special, no one feels left out. Sometimes I run the risk of not getting anything I "want," but I gain on the other side of the spectrum because I'm pleasing everyone else.

The very last aspect of my life is Non-violence. My family members aren't the only ones that taught me that, though: the sad, cruel world of Today did. Watching horrendously disgusting videos and reading almost-unbelievable essays and news stories, I taught myself to be wary of violence; it can sneak up on you in the most unexpected places. Being at home, school, work, just walking on the sidewalk, violence is an unavoidable exposure. However, I'm so glad that there was no attempt at hiding it from me, because otherwise I wouldn't feel so strongly about the negative effects Violence has on society as a whole! All the more reason to defend yourself, right?

Something that not many realize is that self-defense does NOT have to be violence against violence; it can be quieting the Violent by showing them Love, in many different ways. When someone just wants to be angry at you, let them be angry. Instead of provoking them, just ask them why they're angry; what's upsetting them? When you show someone that you're okay with him/her being mad, they'll slowly calm themselves and back down. This is why I believe in Activism!

Activism is just showing your opinion, right? And who says we don't have the freedom to express ourselves peacefully? The Constitution sure isn't against it; is that not the framework of our society? I mean, isn't it SUPPOSED to be? Anytime you feel like there's no way out of what the nation is throwing at you, just step back, take a deep breath, and dive in for the plunge! The waters are comfortably warm, because Activists have kept it running and have been swimming in it for years...

*Gabrielle is president of Students Against Violence united and of Student's Animal Guardian Alliance, both at Petaluma High School.*

## **Landscaping as Activism – Enacting Change**

by Rick Taylor

Landscaping as Activism? Absolutely!

I grew up in a mid-western family, the youngest of eight. My mother was an artist and homemaker turned accountant and my dad was a heavy equipment operator/truck driver turned investment counselor. My mother was absolutely passionate about her annual flower plantings. At an early age I began questioning the blue powder my mom put on our flowers to “make them grow”. It did not look of the same world as the soil, plants, worms, manures, etc. My questioning turned into an unwillingness to even have my plants near the chemicals and I finally ended up with my own separate garden in which I fertilized using only manure. I had gone organic by age 10 and didn't even know it.

I was soon able to articulate my belief that if minerals from the soil were going up into my vegetables, then these synthetic chemicals could too. I felt something burning inside me and was trying to figure out what. By my early teens I had decided that the only thing that I could produce that wouldn't end up in the landfill would be food. I was going to become a chemical-free farmer. Whatever that meant.

Years later I discovered UC Santa Cruz's agro-ecology program. I had finally found people who spoke the language I needed to learn. After being denied entrance, I rented a room on a small ranch in Southern Oregon where I was blessed to meet a man who was moving towards sustenance living and another who is the most knowledgeable herbalist and woodsman I have ever met.

While landscaping for an income, learning to care for horses, wildcrafting, and intensively growing vegetables at the ranch, I saw a flyer for something called Permaculture. I had never heard of it, but it included most of the things I wanted to learn. That 2-week course changed my life and set me on the path that I am on today.

Two years after the course I was living in Sonoma County for the first time, working on a farm for minimum wage and about to have a baby. My ecological ideals were in a standoff with my intense economic reality. Out of that standoff came the understanding that I could apply my skills and effect on the ground change by becoming a licensed landscape contractor. Until recently, I had always seen myself as a person who had infiltrated somebody else's profession to

enact change. Today I find myself managing my own successful landscape firm and striving to balance social, environmental, and economic needs. My experience has shown me that diligently following one's passion pays off in ways unforeseeable at the beginning of the journey. So find your passion, engage, and enact change.

*Rick Taylor, Elder Creek Landscapes, Urban Permaculture Design*

## **Violence Is a Choice**

by Margaret Koren

Very little has changed in our culture since John F. Kennedy said in his 1968 speech, *The Mindless Menace of Violence*, "... we seemingly tolerate a rising level of violence that ignores our common humanity and our claims to civilization alike. We calmly accept newspaper reports of civilian slaughter in far-off lands. We glorify killing on movie and television screens and call it entertainment. We make it easy for men of all shades of sanity to acquire whatever weapons and ammunition they desire."

Forty years later, our culture continues to be divisive. It poisons relationships between "them" and "us," dividing people because of their color, belief system, customs, gender and sexual orientation. Our government continues to spend billions of dollars on weapons and war, with very little investment in existing programs to avert violence at its root cause.

A cabinet level Department of Peace and Nonviolence would facilitate the research, funding and implementation of the best practices to reduce violence. Dennis Kucinich introduced HR 808 in 2001. It is not surprising that so many cities have now passed resolutions to endorse HR 808. They include such diverse cities as Atlanta, Detroit, Cleveland, Oakland, San Jose, Minneapolis and several others in Michigan, Minnesota, Vermont and California, including our very own Sebastopol.

There is a growing movement of youth activists who work for a culture of peace. They are learning to **be** peace, through nonviolent communication and mediation, learning how to raise funds and the best ways to lobby their Members of Congress at home and in Washington DC. Through the amazing organizational skill of Aaron Voldman at Brandeis University in Massachusetts, young people from 56 universities, colleges and high schools have been mobilized. In fact several young people from Sacramento, spurred on by the Teach Peace Foundation, shall be leaving in February 2008 to lobby their Congressional Representatives in Washington DC. I am hoping that young people reading this article shall be inspired to join them.

Through the work of The Peace Alliance Foundation and the Global Alliance for Ministries and Departments of Peace, three annual Global Summits have been held to provide workshops for learning, assistance, and collaboration. The delegates are able to network, share tools and strategies which help citizens to connect with each other and their leaders in their respective governments to make violence prevention and nonviolent conflict resolution a national priority.

This year's Summit in Japan was attended by about 50 civil society activists and government officials from 21 countries and 6 continents. The delegates came from Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Costa Rica, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Palestine, Philippines, Romania, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda, United Kingdom, and the United States. Delegates from Cameroon, Ghana, Iraq and Sierra Leone were denied visas by the Japanese government and therefore were unable to attend.

There were several notable outcomes of this year's Summit. There was the launching of the African Alliance for Peace. Secondly, there was the positive energy of our youth delegates

who inspired many people, young and old, to join JUMP, Japan for a Ministry of Peace. These articulate, inspiring young peace ambassadors work ever more globally and connect more easily than we ever could.

Most importantly we celebrated the accomplishments of Manish Thapa, a young university graduate, from Nepal, who in the past year helped in the creation of The Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction. By forming the Nepal Peace Initiative Alliance, a coalition of people from academic institutions, non governmental organizations, the media, faith-based and student organizations, they were able to lobby the 7 key political parties, including the Maorist insurgents, who had been using extremely violent tactics to change the status quo of the Nepalese women, the caste system and the oppressed rural community. Another young man, Peter Lukwiya, who survived childhood trauma by the cult-like rebels of Uganda, founded the Uganda Peace Foundation Initiative to support and rehabilitate the young who had been abducted and used as soldiers and sex slaves. While fostering a culture of peace, he is working with government officials for a Ministry of Peace.

Miki Kachtan, from BayNVC in Oakland, facilitated the workshops in Japan. We were able to observe her skillfully unravel the deep feelings of “would be” enemies through the different techniques of mediation and role play she uses. We literally experienced the transformation of several of the delegates who are now very eager to bring nonviolent communication to their work and schools in their respective countries.

Here in Sonoma county the relationship between the police and the community is increasingly more difficult. The leaders are too ready to buy and use the latest weapons, but seem loathe to invest in ongoing training of peaceful conflict resolution. As a society we choose violence when we do not invest in education and tools for conflict transformation. We choose violence when we do not concern ourselves with poverty. We choose violence when we support war by investing in companies who make weapons of war through our mutual funds. We choose violence when we focus on punishment rather than restorative justice. Let’s choose to work for peace. Let’s choose peace by investing in peace with our talents and resources, our energy, time and money.

Please join us in this historical and unstoppable movement. It makes sense.

*Margaret Koren RN is Department of Peace Team leader for Congressional District 1.  
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## **Youth Activism Today**

by Maggie Coshnear

In the future, when people look back at the youth of the new millennium, what will they say? Will they comment on our musical taste, dance moves, sense of fashion, or awareness of the world?

Sabina Ahmed is a senior at Casa Grande High and involved in social justice groups such as CopWatch and Food Not Bombs. As a young woman of color, Ahmed faces high police presence in her neighborhood and has witnessed what she believes to be wrongful police activity.

CopWatch, says Ahmed, is an organization dedicated to stopping police brutality. She heard about the Petaluma chapter from friends who were involved. Petaluma CopWatch meets Friday nights with a police scanner and then drives to places where someone is being detained and observes to make sure no one has their rights violated. They also do Know-Your-Rights

trainings in high schools and colleges, teaching basic information that everyone should know but nobody knows, like the right to remain silent.

Food Not Bombs serves food otherwise thrown out for free on Saturday mornings. Cooking food brings awareness to war and poverty, says Ahmed, because in both occasions there is lack of food. The work of Food Not Bombs also builds solidarity with migrant workers in their community.

CopWatch in Santa Rosa meets Tuesdays at 7pm on 546 Pacific Ave. (Free Mind Media). Food Not Bombs Santa Rosa serves food Sundays, 5pm at Courthouse Square.

As a young woman of color, Ahmed has to take daily sacrifices to be active. “Socially active youth of color with migrant parents, who have experienced a revolution in their country, have to deal with them being suspect of their involvement in social justice.”

These students, and under-privileged students, work to help their families by getting jobs or good grades. Their parents want them to have a secure future. Ahmed believes that this society is becoming a police state and wages cannot support families as they used to. She says it is important to start grassroots organizing now.

“A secure future to me seems absurd to certain classes. Kids should just renegade against any authority that’s oppressing them wrongfully, even if it’s their parents.”

But being an active youth is not easy. Ahmed remembers a teacher once saying that people hear a student speak and they pause and think, “This is going to be a voice of anger.” She says all youth activists have that obstacle to combat: the lack of recognition and not being taken seriously because of age.

Ahmed feels that teen action is held back by lack of support groups. “Kids want to do something but don’t know where to start.” She suggests reading political thought, and exploring things like anarchy or distributism, the economic system in which property is well dispersed. “Get to events, even if they suck. You will meet people and raise your consciousness.” She wants more kids of color to participate and take direct action. “I know how hard it is to break out of your family.” But Ahmed says that things won’t change unless you “combat those daily oppressions.”

“No matter how old you are you experience injustice and oppression,” says Ahmed. “The youth voice that is out there is as important as that of those from the 60s.”

## **Eyes Wide Open**

by Debra Birkinshaw

While working at the Peace and Justice table at the Petaluma Progressives Festival in September, I had the honor of meeting three young woman who are strong advocates for decreasing sexual assault and abuse upon women in Sonoma County. Their names are Nicole Sutter, Sara Pasco, and Jessikah Briggs, and they are members of the feminist group Eyes Open, on the Casa Grande High School campus.

These three enterprising young women organized a march which took place on November 4, carrying signs through Petaluma to protest violence against women. The event, which was part of the National Take Back the Night anti-violence campaign, brought out more than 50 people. Signs with slogans such as “Women Unite, Take Back the Night” and statistics citing the percentage of women who sustain serious injury beyond the assault itself, were carried with dignity and fervent concern. The event was featured in the November 5 *Press Democrat* Empire News section.

Throughout its history, the movement “Take Back the Night” has inspired both women and men to confront a myriad of social ills, including rape, sexual violence, domestic violence, violence against children, and violence against women. The unifying theme throughout these diverse topics is the assertion that all human beings have the right to be free from violence, the right to be heard, and the right to reclaim those rights if they are violated.

These young women are to be commended for their efforts in making their community a safer place to live. For more information on the Take Back the Night movement, you can visit: <http://www.takebackthenight.org/>.

If you or someone you know has been assaulted, there are two excellent organizations that offer a myriad of supportive services. You can contact United Against Sexual Assault at 707-545-7270, website: <http://uasasonoma.org/services/rts.html>. United Against Sexual Assault offers education and training, as well as a crisis hotline and a trained team that responds to reports of sexual assault. In individual cases, a three-person team consisting of a police officer, sexual assault nurse examiner, and an advocate respond to sexual assault reports, offering their services but leaving all decisions to the victim/survivor. The Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) strives to provide the first response to all sexual assaults in Sonoma County to ensure a consistent, compassionate, and professional initial contact for victims.

The YWCA Domestic Violence program also offers invaluable support to Sonoma County women and their children. This program provides a wide range of services to victims of domestic violence and their children so they can heal, become self-sufficient, and return productively to the community. Services include psychological and legal support, as well as safe shelter for women and children. Visit their website [www.ywca.org/site/pp.asp?c=fulTI6OXH&b=67374](http://www.ywca.org/site/pp.asp?c=fulTI6OXH&b=67374) or call 707-546-9922.

## **Refuse to Cooperate with ICE!**

by Susan Lamont

Sonoma County Board of Supervisors:

My father’s family came to North America in 1619. John and Sarah Woodson settled in Jamestown and John was the settlement’s doctor. They later moved to a settlement nearby called Flowerdew. The records show that they bought slaves off the very first slave ship to come to continental North America. In a revolt to reclaim their land, native Americans attacked the settlement. John was killed. Sarah, two sons and a visiting friend survived after killing several native Americans. There are still branches of the family which take pride in telling the story of the killing of the native Americans. That’s my history and that’s how I came to be free to stand here before you. The indigenous people all over this continent – with its artificial boundaries – haven’t been as lucky. As someone who is here because of stolen land, spilled indigenous blood, and bonded lives, I do not feel that I have the right to tell someone there is a correct way to move across these boundaries. We have laws which were written to benefit those who write them. It’s time to change those laws. The first step – in the time-honored tradition of civil disobedience – is to ignore them. There are millions of us who are citizens who have at least a trace in us of our bloody history – whether it is from conquering the eastern seashore or California. We need to repudiate this bloody history. The people who come here need us and we need them. It’s time to find a way of living which is based upon cooperation, not exploitation. I ask you to practice civil disobedience – refuse to cooperate with ICE.

## **Reasons for a County of Refuge**

by Maggie Coshnear

Have you worn red or blue, flipped a peace sign, or talked to a gang member lately? You may qualify for the gang list collected by the Sonoma County Sheriff. These lists are made by Multi-Agency Gang Enforcement Team (MAGNET) officers to rid the community of gang-related violence. The sheriff department uses this to justify illegally detaining suspects.

In the past few months, the sheriff department has collaborated with the Immigrations and Customs Enforcement to detain and deport dozens of suspected gang members. "ICE came to us and said we want to work with you on this issue," says Matt McCaffrey to Jan Lanzendorfer, reporter of the *Bohemian* newspaper. "There's always the possibility that when ICE is out with us, they may make an arrest on their own." This policy has affected many teens in the county.

Jesus Guzman, graduate of Sonoma Valley High, tells the story from a student's point of view. "In February, ICE detained 3 Sonoma High students and deported one graduate. Many students didn't go to school that day. For the next few months there was unrest. The change is that now the threat of deportation is local."

He explains that "shipping" suspected gang members out of the US doesn't solve the problem. Guzman gives MS 13, a Salvadoran immigrant gang in LA, now international, as an example. The members were deported to El Salvador and now the country is run by the gang. He says that deporting gangsters is just "spreading the plague."

Guzman also describes the Sanctuary Movement, an effort to "stop tax-payer dollars from funding continuing collaboration of ICE and the sheriff or police employees." He believes that the job of the police and sheriff departments is to keep the community safe, but this is terrorizing. "If you see the police collaborating with the ICE, that's not something you're going to forget. So if you get robbed, you might think twice about calling the police, because that would be deporting yourself."

The Committee for Immigrant Rights of Sonoma County has been working on the County of Refuge Campaign for months to bring this issue into the light for the community. They have held several town hall meetings with panelists such as the Santa Rosa mayor, the Chief of Police, and an audience of hundreds. Throughout the summer and fall, there were weekly vigils on Sebastopol Road. Petitions against the Sheriff/ICE collaboration were signed at the vigil and at the events, and were inserted in the Oct/Nov edition of the *Peace Press*. Over 4500 petitions will be handed to the Sheriff Department and the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors.

## **Cease Fire and Dialogue Prepare for a National General Strike**

by Jack Wikse for the Board of Directors

In our concern that the unconstitutional US war in Iraq is about to be extended into Iran, the Board of Directors of the Sonoma County Peace and Justice Center issue the following statement:

### **1/ A History of Covert War**

The US has been involved in covert war with Iran for decades. Beginning with the well-documented CIA-managed coup against Mossadek in 1953, the US has considered narrow economic interests above the self-determination of the Iranian people. It once scandalously armed Iran against Iraq, pursuing a policy of divide and conquer. But neither the interests of transnational financial access to oil, nor avowed concern for peace and security in Israel can

justify the destabilization of a people. It is a travesty of justice that the US government can even speak the word “reconciliation” as if this were its intent in the Middle East. We call for broad public disclosure of the history of this tragic, secret war.

## **2/ Re-framing the Iraq War as Counter Insurgency**

The war in Iraq is being reframed in terms of counter-insurgency. Charges of military support from Iran of Iraqi “insurgents” are being used to rationalize overt military intervention against Iran. Reports of preparations for “surgical strikes” against Iranian sites are being received at the center from US military personnel and reported in the press (see Seymour Hersh, “Shifting Targets,” *New Yorker*, Oct. 8). We must resist this repackaging of the war in Iraq and its extension to Iran.

## **3/ Congress Gridlocked**

It seems clear that the US Congress is not prepared to cut war funding or provide meaningful withdrawal from Iraq, and that the 2008 Presidential election will not alter the foreign policy of US domination of the Middle East.

## **4/ National General Strike**

Therefore, in the name of peace and justice, we advocate an immediate cease-fire and dialogue in the Middle East, and call for organizing a national general strike in anticipation of attacks on Iran. General strikes are a time-honored and effective tradition in other parts of the world. It is time for the people living in the United States to take this additional step to show their resolve to end this war and prevent the next one. We suggest that there be widespread “learn-ins” about Iran and Iraq at workplaces and schools on a date coordinated nationally and that there be no “business as usual.”

## **Center Intern Hopes to Establish Peace & Justice Scholarship**

If you’re a member of the Peace & Justice Center (and we hope you are!), you’ll soon be hearing from Natasha Chastina, a student at Santa Rosa Junior College and an intern at the Center. Natasha will be coming to you with a request for help in establishing a scholarship for SRJC students. It is her hope that the Peace & Justice Center will begin to offer grants to three students majoring in Peace Studies, the social sciences, or the humanities.

It is Natasha’s vision that the Center, through your contributions, will be able to support students who are interested in pursuing peacemaking jobs. A student seeking the scholarship would write an essay interpreting Martin Luther King Jr.’s quote, “True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice.”

Natasha is working with Professor Jack Wikse, a member of the Board of Directors of the Center and Elizabeth Stinson, Director of the Center.

Please look for her letter asking for your support and help her make this dream come true. We hope that Natasha will be able to report on the success of her efforts in an upcoming *Peace Press*.

Thank you to everyone who made this year's Annual Peacemaker Awards Dinner and Auction a success: the attendees, the sponsors, the auction donors, the award recipients, the volunteers, and the dinner committee for a job well done. See you next year!

**Cultivating the Spirit of Nonviolence**  
**The Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) Basic Workshop**

January 25-27 Friday evening through Sunday afternoon. Registration deadline Friday, January 21. Space limited to 16 participants. For more information call 707-220-8269.

**Advice to Young People – Turn Off Your Television!**

by Susan Lamont

“Turn off your television.” It’s good advice and easier than you’d think.

I’ve had a few opportunities to be interviewed by high school students on KRCB. I’m always asked, “If you could give us one action to take, what would it be?” I always say, “Turn off your television.”

Of course, as liberals, progressives, or revolutionaries, we all know how much misinformation there is in the mass media. Anyone watching and listening is immediately at a disadvantage if they want a clear view for assessing the world around them.

But more than that, and much more damaging to our culture, television separates you from your imagination. And I think that’s its goal. It may not have been the original purpose of television, but it’s now fundamental to the entertainment/information industry. The more time you spend in front of the television, the less time you spend working and playing with your own creativity. And the more you rely on others to come up with a vision of our culture, the more that vision serves the advertisers. What’s good for General Motors is not necessarily what’s good for you or the future of this planet!

Human beings are enormously creative. We have imagination and we’re designed to use it. We’ve been led to believe that creativity resides in a few special people. This belief is incorrect and harmful. We’re all creative and failure to use this creativity is damaging to the individual and to society. Whether you use that creativity to paint a painting, sing a song, write an essay, teach a student, cure a disease, raise a child, or resolve a conflict, our world is the better for it. Rollo May, Matthew Fox and others have written eloquently on the importance of creativity in giving meaning to our lives. And if you are engaging your imagination, you are less likely to believe the “experts” when they say that war is the only solution.

The challenges facing our world are great. We need imagination to deal with them. Whether you are inspired by the Cuban Revolution, the New Deal, or Gandhi, they are just that – inspirations – not road maps. What’s needed now will be something different and creativity is required to find that difference. And some of the solutions are already out there and are being suppressed by those who control what you watch on television and read in your newspapers. Creativity is needed to get out from under that suppression and to “subvert the dominant paradigm” as the bumper sticker urges.

Yes, I know there are some good things on television, but few people have the self-control to turn it off when the lousy stuff comes on. I get along quite well without Jon Stewart. Better off to go cold turkey. Pretty soon you’ll wonder how you ever had the time to watch it.

By the way, I give the same advice to your parents.

## **A Little White Lie – "I'm not racist, I'm colorblind"**

by Christopher Bowers

In white, liberal culture people often think of themselves as "colorblind", seeing only humans, not their race. It seems reasonable enough. We want to be humanists and believe that we see people for who they are inside, for what we have in common with them. It is important to ask, is what we feel inside really a commonality or could that also be as different as the color of our skin?

A true humanist sees the beauty of difference as well as commonality and yet still isn't satisfied. A true humanist tries also to understand the distinct struggles with which every human lives. We are humans and as such we live in societies. To be "colorblind" is to neglect a fundamental part of humanism – of the many realities we exist in, the most compelling, consuming, and dire reality, is our social reality. It is the reality that will determine our fate. While race is not a biological reality, it is a social one. Not seeing color is to not see reality; it is to not see adversity. Colorblindness is a fantasy world in which we don't truly know one another. It would seem then that to not see someone's struggles (struggles often related to race) is to not see them at all. How would white people feel if their markers of individuality and community, be it artistic expression, intellectual prowess, gender or sexual orientation were glossed over as inconsequential? What if these important factors were swept under the carpet in the name of overcoming prejudice? It is a hard irony indeed. Some might argue here that it is those markers that we have in common. This is true. It is also true that those markers are themselves marked by race and the social reality of inequality and history.

To be colorblind is to be simply blind. It is to collaborate with the inhumane practices of assuming that all humans have the same experience, whether they are black, white, gay or straight, male or female. So the consequences of colorblindness must also be dealt with. Colorblindness implies also that since we are all the same, we have all had equal opportunity. This implication has led to enormous power differentials economically and politically that persist to this day.

It is doubtful that we can achieve a genuine equality without dealing honestly with our social reality. The social reality is that we are a diverse human family and that race affects every aspect of our lives. White people often have a hard time seeing this. It is as if they are blind.

*Christopher is on the staff of Face to Face, the Sonoma County AIDS Network.*

## **Turning This Tide**

by Ben Saari

Local law enforcement is getting away with murder, literally. Since the beginning of 2007 eight people have either been killed by or died in the custody of law enforcement agencies in Sonoma County. All of the officers involved in these killings are still on active duty. Sgt. Richard Celli, who was involved in the killings of Haki Kuasi Gaidi Thurston and Richard Desantis, routinely patrols downtown Santa Rosa. It is reasonable to question the wisdom and humanity of expecting a person who has recently killed two people to function in the high stress life and death situations that society expects police to deal with.

Local government officials and even some community leaders have refused to hold police accountable. The *Press Democrat* refuses to characterize denial of medical services at the county jail resulting in death as brutality, or emergency mental health help calls that result in a hail of bullets as abuse. The police-maintained gang database functions a lot like Joe McCarthy's list of communists, no one ever gets to see it, question it, or dispute their inclusion on it. Santa

Rosa City Schools collaborate with police to criminalize Latino, Black, Asian and Native students by having them sign gang contracts without parental notification.

As mental health services are cut, police become providers of last resort, and the county jail functions as an emergency treatment center. The public defenders office routinely advises clients to plead guilty, rather than secure a day in court. The Sonoma County Sheriff's Department (SCSD) continues to collaborate with Immigration and Customs Enforcement to harass and criminalize immigrant communities. Sheriff Cogbill refuses to meet with community members to receive petitions against this collaboration. Community requests for public records go ignored or are denied. Community members who step up to observe the police in action are harassed and intimidated. Lawful requests that police identify themselves go unfulfilled and ignored. Activists are threatened with stalking charges and arrest while legally observing police activities. In recent public forums and media interviews, police officials dismiss criticism as being without merit. The position offered by both the Santa Rosa Police Department (SRPD) and the SCSD is that both agencies have internal complaint procedures that are adequate, and that community groups critical of the police or Sheriff are unable to substantiate their claims.

What both agencies and the media fail to acknowledge is that, as soon as a complaint passes into the hands of a police agency or the Sheriff's department, it becomes a sealed personnel record. SRPD's 2006 Annual Report claims -0- sustained citizen complaints, but doesn't mention the number of complaints actually filed. Recent requests for these records have been denied, or linger far beyond the timeframe made under the California Public Records Act. Local police agencies consistently portray themselves as the thin blue line that separates bucolic Sonoma County life from some terrified imagining of third world savagery. There is a law enforcement noise machine that generates stacks of press releases daily, at the same time as police administrators refuse to allow their documents to be reviewed by the public or media. An inflated and unexamined gang database is hauled out for mentioning in any situation imaginable, but this database has never been critically reviewed. The criteria for inclusion in the database are obviously redundant and racist; for example, familial relation and where a subject lives are concurrent criteria.

There are exaggerated claims of over one thousand 911 calls being fielded by the SRPD daily, but there has been a flat refusal to show call logs to community members. It should be noted that police are required to release this information upon request. SRPD is currently in violation of "police blotter" record-keeping requirements of the California Public Records Act.

In short, corruption and abuse of power are rampant, privileged sections of our community are unaware of these realities, or worse, happily complicit. It is our work as Peace and Justice activists to turn this tide. For more information and on-going updates, check [www.scdirectaction.org/copwatch](http://www.scdirectaction.org/copwatch).

*Ben Saari is a member of Santa Rosa CopWatch. "I became interested in the idea of social change when I was very young, while listening to my parents and their friends talk about resisting the Vietnam war and tearing down Jim Crow. I developed an independent critique of the world in my early teens, after being jarred out of complacency by things like the MOVE bombing, the Union Carbide poisoning of Bhopal, and Reagan's cowboyesque nuclear brinksmanship. I continue to struggle to balance principle, pragmatism, and vision. Currently I work with Free Mind Media and Santa Rosa CopWatch."*

## Flipping the Script and Taking Responsibility

by Christopher Bowers

We often don't want to ask what social dysfunction might say about the perpetrators. Yet, if we do not, we may not understand how oppressive and hierarchical belief systems begin. For example, last year we heard many ask "What does hurricane Katrina mean for black people?", an important question to be sure. However, as anti-racist activist Tim Wise points out, another important question is what does hurricane Katrina mean for white people? For black people it may have meant the devastation of their communities and for most white people in the area it meant their continued insulation and entitlement to safety and wealth, despite mother nature. Granted some white people were also devastated by the hurricane, most of them found it easier to relocate, get trailers, and to get their lives back on track. Why don't we ask more about why that is?

In the process of understanding social identity we must understand that aspects of race and gender are formed not in a vacuum but in contrast to it's so-called opposite. Therefore, white is defined, and has been historically, as everything that black isn't. Men also are defined against women. However, it is often the privileged group who is doing the defining. In fact, it is a part of privilege to define the world around you and to have that definition be considered reality. So with the privilege of definition, dominant groups can create a reality in which they are not culpable, a reality in which the problems of society are the problems of certain sectors of society.

For example, let's look at sexual violence and rape. It is most often defined as a problem for women. But, what if we flip the script and ask not how many women are raped, but how many men have raped? If the stats are correct, at least 1 in 3 women have been raped and about 95% of the rapes are committed by men. Therefore, taking into consideration that some men violate multiple women, approximately 1 in every 5-10 men are rapists. How many men do you know? How many men do you work with, go to school with, party with?

Likewise, homophobia is seen as a problem for gay people. This, despite the facts that the most deadly hate crimes against the queer community were committed by self-identified straight men. So whose problem is this? Furthermore, by this scape-goating logic, racism is a problem for black people, and white people then, as always, are off the hook. This despite the fact that it is white people who harbor most of the wealth and power, and white people who are most often discriminatory and abusive to people of color.

This understanding of power and privilege is not intended to shame or demonize men, heterosexual people, or white people. Instead, this understanding gives us an opportunity to take responsibility if we find ourselves in a dominant social group. It is an opportunity to realize that reality may be different than we had been brought up to think, that we have a part in the ills of society and that in fact, we truly have the power to stop oppression in it's tracks. To be an ally isn't just to say "How can I help you with your problems?" To be an ally, to be a human, is to say "This is my problem too."

## **Sunglasses**

by Susan Lamont

I want to remember this scene. No amnesia. The man and woman stare out blankly from the newspaper. There is no sign of emotion. There is nothing on their faces to betray that they are seated by the coffin of their only child. The man's eyes are empty. The woman's are hidden by dark sunglasses. They look as dead as the young man they are burying.

A moment ago I'd been relishing the warmth of the sun on my breakfast table – relishing the brief forgetting with which I am occasionally blessed. But now the picture in the morning paper has brought on a cold sweat. The couple looks so stoic, but I know the cost. I had wanted to moan and wail and, most certainly, to rip off those damn sunglasses – sunglasses I'd worn so casually until that day – sunglasses I'd used to play Peek-A-Boo with Josh – sunglasses I share with this other mother.

They'd brought me the folded flag and laid it in my lap. I'd looked up, through my sunglasses, not knowing what to do, remembering the gleam in Josh's eyes as he sat at the picnic table in the backyard explaining why he wanted to enlist.

The parents in the picture don't touch, each in separate worlds of remembering. Maybe they'll make it; maybe they won't. There is no way to tell. I couldn't have survived that day without Dave, without his hand to steady me. Yet, I still don't know if Dave and I will make it either.

On the day I learned of Josh's death in a fire fight in Baghdad, I was sure that I would never stop crying; crying would be my life. But the officer who brought us the news had performed well. He had spoken of duty and honor and pride – most of all, pride. This other mother must have heard the same words. And so, when the time came, we'd both put on our sunglasses and tried to concentrate on duty and honor and pride – tried to concentrate on anything besides what we had lost. And sitting here in the sun, staring at this mother, I'm trying to remember – why can't I remember? – why hadn't I ripped off my sunglasses and moaned and wailed and said to Josh, "No, you can't go!"?

## **Analy High School Sows, (and Sews) Seeds for Peace**

Analy High School students are active in making the world a better place. They have an active Peace Club on campus. There are several other activities that the young student activists are engaged in:

### **Jeremiah's Garden Project**

Jeremiah Chass was a student with wisdom beyond his years. One of his dreams was to implement a school garden that would complete his vision of campus "resplendification" while benefiting the Analy High School community.

In his memory, the Analy High School students are creating a school garden to incorporate several different areas – a peace garden surrounded by a visionary pathway where staff and students can reflect in a calm setting, a perennial garden which will bring color and beauty year round, and a sustainable vegetable garden through which Analy staff and students can enjoy the harvest on a monthly basis at no charge.

The three year vision for this project includes the creation of a healthy organic salad bar once a month, service learning experiences, and cross-cultural classroom enrichment programs. There will also be a collaborative effort with the Empty Bowls Project. When the garden reaches the stage of production, the students will fill the empty bowls with the fruits of their labor. The

bowls are created in the school's ceramic classes, and are filled at the annual "Open House" event – students, teachers and parents purchase both the contents of the bowl, and the bowl itself. Proceeds are donated to worthy causes chosen by the Analy Leadership group.

The level of interest and commitment displayed by this school community is unsurpassed. Walrus Hunt, a band composed of Analy High School students, did a benefit concert to raise the funds to start the garden. Students and parents have worked together to create the garden. The students believe that Analy High can be at the forefront of promoting learning while enhancing their campus environment, student health and wellness and community involvement.

For more information, please contact Garden Coordinator, Rosalie Abbott, at 824-2315, [rabbott@analy.org](mailto:rabbott@analy.org), or Garden committee member Alicia Mills at 824-2314, [amills@analy.org](mailto:amills@analy.org).

### **The "More Than Warmth" Quilting Project**

More than Warmth is an educational project for students of all ages to learn about world cultures. It fosters understanding, knowledge and compassion among cultures through nonviolent, nonpolitical, and nonreligious means. The website for this project includes objectives, lesson plans and instructions for how to create peace quilts.

While helping to create a growing awareness of world cultures, students also learn about regions of strife and conflict in the world. More Than Warmth offers students a chance to effect positive change in their world. Students are also able to discuss how violence in the world affects them.

Over 10,000 students have created over 1,000 quilts since this project began. Quilts have been given to schools for girls, orphanages, daycare centers, schools for the deaf, street children, and trauma centers. Analy High students have been creating quilts, writing letters of peace, friendship and hope, and sending them to children of war-torn countries all around the world.

For more information on this project, visit the website [www.morethanwarmth.org/index.html](http://www.morethanwarmth.org/index.html).

### **The Analy High School Theatre Department**

Analy High students, under the direction of Starr Hergenrath, have been educating themselves and the public about a variety of peace and justice issues, through the art of theater.

An example of student activism through the arts is the students' most recent production, "*Lysistrata*", a modern adaptation of Aristophanes' Greek Comedy. The drama depicted Greek women resolving to take charge, tired of losing their children and husbands to war – they freeze both the treasury and their husband's and boyfriend's accessibility to them until they, the men, sign the treaty to end the war. Proceeds from the benefit performance were donated to several peace-oriented organizations: CodePink, Vets for Peace, and Farms Not Arms.

The Analy High Theatre Department also sponsors a special public performance by The San Francisco Mime Troupe (a theatre group dedicated to public awareness of progressive issues), to raise funds for their program each September. To find out how to support their worthwhile endeavors, and learn about upcoming shows, visit Analy High's website [www.analy.org/theater/](http://www.analy.org/theater/).

*Information was gathered from the Analy High School website, and in an interview with Starr Hergenrath, by Debra Birkinshaw.*

## Iran – A Nest of Democratic Activism

by Earl Herr

The Bush Administration, unable to see beyond old methods of forcing “democracy” on Iran from the outside, is now threatening military attack for the all too obvious goal of regime-change. Meantime and completely unacknowledged, democratic ideals are fermenting in Iran as political activists from within the multiple social sectors of the Islamic Republic find their ways to challenge the theocratic autocracy.

Iran’s burgeoning population is very young and educated. *“Despite the apparent consolidation of conservative power... Iran’s sophisticated youthful populace can be neither appeased by cosmetic concessions nor silenced by threats of coercion.” “It is impossible for Iran to become a rigid authoritarian state. The call for representation and the rule of law, for accountability and equality, have transformed the average Iranian... into an active agent of change. The resilience of the forces of progress stems from their diversity. Clerical reformers, disillusioned youth, a burdened middle class, women seeking emancipation and intellectuals yearning for freedom of thought have come together in their demand for a government responsive to its citizenry.”* (*Hidden Iran, Paradox & Power in the Islamic Republic*, 2006, by Ray Takeya, senior fellow at the Council of Foreign Relations).

Shirin Ebadi is an exemplar of successful Iranian democratic activism. To rebuild after the devastating Iran-Iraq war, the patriarchal Iranian theocracy needed back the women it had excluded from participation since the 1979 Revolution. In 1992 women lawyers were again permitted to practice law. Ebadi had been a judge under the Shah. She was still excluded from her prior role as judge, but now able to resume her legal work. She chose solely pro-bono human rights cases that could showcase the injustice of the Islamic Republic’s laws. She found cases that illustrated the tragic repercussions of the theocracy’s unjust and pathological legal discrimination against women – setting the value of a woman’s life as worth half as much as a man’s, giving child custody only to the father. *“To attract people’s attention, to solicit their sympathies and convince them that these laws were not simply unfair but actively pathological, I had to tell [the] stories. Iranian culture, for all its preoccupation with shame and honor, with all its resulting patriarchal codes, retains an acute sensitivity to injustice.”* (*Iran Awakening, A Memoir of Revolution and Hope*, by Shirin Ebadi, 2006).

Ebadi’s activism was particularly effective. In her 2003 Nobel Peace Prize lecture she proclaimed that *“If human rights fail to be manifested in codified laws or put into effect by states, then, as rendered in the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, human beings will be left with no choice other than staging a “rebellion against tyranny and oppression”. A human being divested of all dignity, a human being deprived of human rights, a human being gripped by starvation, a human being beaten by famine, war and illness, a humiliated human being and a plundered human being is not in any position or state to recover the rights he or she has lost.”* Ebadi’s vision is of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of expression and opinion, and be safeguarded and protected against fear and poverty.

The current great danger to all efforts democracy-minded Iranians have recently made is posed by our continuing use of military force, now threatened against Iran and offering the devastation we see in Iraq. *“If the 21st century wishes to free itself from the cycle of violence, acts of terror and war, and avoid repetition of the experience of the 20th century, that most disaster-ridden century of humankind, there is no other way except by understanding and putting into practice every human right for all mankind, irrespective of race, gender, faith, nationality or social status.”* (Ebadi)

Ebadi’s eloquent voice and her clear vision gives us and Iran cause for hope.