

# OMNI'S ANTI-WAR CAMPAIGN

## DRAFT TOWARD A COMPREHENSIVE OMNI PROGRAM OF ACTIONS TO OPPOSE US WARS

OMNI is ready for a more concerted, reinforced, determined campaign to turn around the militarism and imperialism our leaders and the general public have gradually become accustomed to since the National Security State was established in 1947. Become a participant in this effort by volunteering to lead or participate in one or more of these actions, and by suggesting other ways we might resist and make changes. Dick Bennett  
3-18-08

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### OUR INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM

#### DOMESTIC STRATEGY

(**Entries in red are active.**)

#### CONTINUING OUR **DEMONSTRATIONS**

Our demonstrations against the war and wars are our public front line. They tell the leaders they have not silenced the public. They show we are not fearful. They offer an alternative to the many who feel stifled and trapped, who want to speak up but who don't know how or who feel afraid. We show the public that public opposition of unjust wars is both patriotic and safe from police repression. Others at the March 8, 2008, demonstration were quoted by *The Arkansas Traveler*: The purpose of the protest is to give people an outlet, to voice their opinion, Kelly Mulhollan said. "It's to keep the pressure up, to keep a visible anti-war presence so the government doesn't think we've forgotten," he said.

There are many reasons to protest the war, such as all the military and civilian casualties, Sophia Fowler said. "If we don't do something, there might be a draft and then people will be sent over there involuntarily," she said. "It's my own duty to speak up and it's my personal goal. I might not

be able to change anything, but may hopefully keep people aware."

Keith McGill, who held a sign that read '9-11-01 It Wasn't the Iraqis,' protested the war for personal reasons. "It's all personal, actually," he said. "I am a vet, and I am against the war because it is not right, it is only over oil. [This protest is] to let the people who aren't thinking about [the Iraq War] think about it a little more."

Richard Tiffany, another protestor, agreed it should be made public that "we shouldn't be in Iraq; that it wasn't right to go in the first place and that things are only going to get better if we leave." Tiffany thinks it's important to remind people that they have to make a change.

**LET'S MAKE OUR DEMONSTRATIONS MORE RELEVANT** (from Bruce Gagnon via Gladys), If you look closely at the photo above, of a protest in Minneapolis last weekend, you will see a banner near the back that says **Money for schools not for war**.

This is a message that should be appearing everywhere these days. Other similar slogans in our marches and vigils should be **Money for jobs not for war**, **Health care not warfare**, **Convert the military industrial complex**, **We can't eat Star Wars**, **Build mass transit not endless war**, **We can't live in a bomb**, and so on.

The peace movement is doing a pretty poor job of connecting the occupation of Iraq, now costing us \$12 billion a month, to the public's concern about a declining economy, jobs moving overseas, and cutbacks in social spending.

By now people get the "No more blood for oil message." They've heard that slogan for five years. What are we saying today that is relevant to their lives?

(See below on economic conversion, an important part of a comprehensive anti-war/militarism campaign.)

## EMPATHY FOR THE VICTIMS, INCLUDING US TROOPS

**Adopt a unit of US soldiers** in Iraq (specifically Sophia Fowler's husband's). Gladys has given two persuasive talks in support of the idea, and I am ready to support it. Many of the soldiers are young, uninformed, poor victims of military recruiters. This troops idea initiates truly a cluster of opportunities for OMNI. (And I would add supporting the LR unit that agreed with my proposal to send books to Iraq through them, thereby supporting troops and Iraqis. All members of SC received a copy I believe.) Especially, it offers the opportunity to teach Gandhi's ahimsa (not killing) to warriors, an idea Gandhi embraced in his friendship with Badshah Khan, the nonviolent soldier of Islam in Western India (now Pakistan), during the 1930s. Gandhi wrote: "There is hope for a violent man to be some day nonviolent...but there is none for a coward." (P. 194, *A Man to Match His Mountains* by Eknath Easwaran.

**Rescuing refugees.** Let us give material and psychological support to the refugee family soon to arrive in NWA, and requested by Frank Head of Catholic Services. And let us formulate a long-range policy of helping other refugees, one that emphasizes structural changes and looks way ahead. See my no-yes arguments below. And see [www.refugeesinternational.org](http://www.refugeesinternational.org) and the UN Commission for Refugees. As we saw with Katrina, climate change will produce millions of refugees, and OMNI might lead the way in preparing for them. Esp. difficult will be foreign refugees: 3-18 on C-SPAN Kristelle Younes of Refugees International responded to a series of callers very hostile to our receiving Iraqi refugees.

Let us **adopt the physically and mentally maimed returned soldiers** at the VA hospital, They have a true basis for our sympathy. For example, by 2006 there was a 40% rise in Army suicides. The VA HOSPITAL is enhancing its care for wounded soldiers, according to the newspaper, with a significant mental health center headed by Dr. Janet Tekell, assisted by "about

40 new workers to its mental health service staff.” They also have a specific outreach program for “Iraqi Freedom” vets, directed by Luanna Oxford, 443-4301, extension 5620. I have asked her to notify us when she thinks we might be able to be helpful. Ms. Oxford spoke following the not-to-be-missed film shown 3-9 at VU. Two other employees of the VA Hospital attended also. (Regarding **victims**, a reminder: OMNI has an endowed, growing collection of books and films in UA’s Mullins Library.) See: *Body of War* (2008) [www.bodyofwar.com](http://www.bodyofwar.com) Meet Tomas Young, 25 years old, paralyzed from a bullet to his spine - wounded after serving in Iraq for less than a week. You can hear an October 2005 Tell Somebody interview with Tomas Young here: <http://www.pacificanetwork.org/radio/content/view/276/47/> Read: Galatas, Janis, *A Soldier’s Courage*, about her husband Norris’s recovery from extremely severe wounds.

Let us **support the hundreds of so-called “enemy combatants”** who have been illegally detained for years in Guantanamo and other prisons, many of them tortured. (We should remember that the U.N. Committee on Torture and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights have held that *incommunicado* detention—even for short periods—is torture.) For example, Jose Padilla, who after three and a half years in a Navy brig in S. C., where he was tortured, denied counsel and free religious exercise, was then sentenced to 17 years in prison for conspiracy to commit terrorism. We should also support his suit against Justice Dept. official and Bush’s legal advisor, John Yoo, who devised legal advice to justify torture, in violation of due process of law as guaranteed by the 5<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution.

## DEFENDING THE DISSENTERS

Equally concretely let us support **the soldier heroes** who have risked greatly by opposing the invasion and occupation. Here is an honor-roll short list (from Amy Goodman's *Static* ch. 14): Mike Hoffman, co-founded Iraq Veterans Against the War; Paul Rieckhoff, founded Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America; Brandon Hughey; Sgt. Camilo Mejia (declared a prisoner of conscience by AI); Pvt. Jeremy Hinzman (first US soldier to flee to Canada and publicly protest fighting Iraq); Petty Officer Pablo Paredes (turned down for CO and court-martialed). An est. 8,000 had deserted by 2006 to avoid the occupation. Let us publicly celebrate these and the many others who have refused to cooperate with this war, as Gandhi urged non-cooperation with the British occupiers and King urged sit-ins and boycotts against Jim Crow. Let us bring one of more of them here to testify, and give generously to them in gratitude for their moral clarity and bravery. Included should be the **deserters**. See the excellent report “Deserters Find Uncertain Haven” (in Canada) by Tamara Jones (*WP*) (*TMN* 3-18-08). The military says more than 16,000 troops have deserted since war began. See **Courage to Resist (NEW)**, [www.couragetoresent.org](http://www.couragetoresent.org); 510-488-3559. OMNI’s Steering Committee voted its support for CTR 3-13-08.

And Ann Wright in *Dissent: Voices of Conscience* names additional soldiers who have bravely opposed this war, and **others in government who risked their careers** to expose Bush admin. misdeeds. Let us also support these patriots who stood up and spoke truth to power.

## STOPPING THE FLOW FROM THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Let us get serious about stopping people from joining the Army, NG, Reserve by inaugurating an **educational program toward and in the public schools** about US militarism and imperialism and the illegality, immorality, and impracticality of our many wars of aggression. I condensed a letter from a counter-recruiter from Encinitas, CA: "I believe the best chance we have of keeping the current wars from eclipsing the 10-year length of Vietnam would be if groups put much more emphasis on cutting off the flow of human resources, i.e., through **counter-recruitment and school demilitarization** work. That’s something that the media, Congress and the next president

would not be able to ignore...." Rick Jahnkow, Coord., Project on Youth and Non-Military Opportunities (YANO). Read his essay:

[http://www.projectyano.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=40&Itemid=1](http://www.projectyano.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=40&Itemid=1)

(An excerpt of the conclusion appeared in the March 2008 *PeaceWork*, p. 5.)

Education must be reinforced by confronting the jingoistic, violent hero culture at large. **OMNI has had an occasional table at FHS and recently wrote to the Principal.**

CHANGING CHEERLEADING TO INVESTIGATING MEDIA (to be expanded)

The corporate mainstream media beat the White House/Pentagon drums leading up to the Iraqi invasion (and past invasions).

March 14-16 the mainstream media refused to report the Winter Soldier testimonies of US atrocities in Iraq and Afghanistan.

**OMNI has many newsletters in whole or part opposing wars and its many anti-war activities are advertised. The same is true of the next activity.**

REDUCING PATRIOTIC NATIONALISM

Following the tiny bomblet outside the recruitment center at Times Square (a window and glass door shattered), Mayor Bloomberg pronounced the act an insult to "every one of our brave men and women in uniform stationed around the world." (*TMN*3-7-08). Never underestimate the ability of a politician to dramatize for votes. Well, it was no insult, for many reasons. Let us establish a practice of continual **examination of jingoists, flag patriots (and opportunists)** via book forums, letters to editor, cartoons, etc.

EXPOSING THE WAR CRIMINALS

Some U. S. leaders are guilty of violating international laws defining war crimes. We should call them to justice just as South Africa did their criminal leaders. We might follow the model of the Truth Commission headed by Bishop Tutu, who insisted the truth must be told and confession attained, but without demanding prosecution.

CHALLENGING THE CULTURE OF VIOLENT HEROES AND REPLACING THEM WITH NONVIOLENT

Yet another film with Harrison Ford as Indiana Jones is coming out. The headline in *TMN* (3-7-08) declared: "Audiences Getting Excited About Action Hero's Return." Let us **challenge the hyping of violent heroes and affirm nonviolent heroes** through every medium open to us—letters to editors, collections of local and state biographies, Short Takes and forums on CAT, newsletters, bibliographies; we must use our imaginations.

EXPOSING THE "WAR ON TERRORISM"

The so-called "War on Terrorism" is one more method US leaders have employed to intimidate and control the public, to lead them by the nose into one illegal invasion or intervention after another. [to be developed]

KNOWLEDGE OF US HISTORY: OF THE U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY STATE

In 1947 the U.S. was transformed into a National Security State with foreign aggression and domestic repression its goal, supported by increased military power (changing the War Department to the Dept. of Defense), secrecy, and surveillance, and the new CIA and NSA. From

that time the U.S. has invaded or intervened in over 40 countries, and tens of thousands of U.S. citizens have been jailed for legal dissent. Most of the public are ignorant of this history, which allows them to believe in a benign USA friend of humankind. Let us make a strong effort to ensure the teaching of this history in the public schools. **Throughout its existence OMNI has tried to expose this history for the disasters it has led our nation to. We now should turn it to campaign intensity, as suggested for all of these activities.**

## ECONOMICS

### PUBLICIZING THE NEGATIVE ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES of WARS

See the superb *The Trillion Dollar War* by Stiglitz and Bilmes. The otherwise excellent little article "State Budget Cuts to Hit Poor" by Aaron Davis (AP) (*TMN*3-18-08) never mentions US warmaking. It lists a half dozen remedies to budget shortfalls (tax increases, lotteries, gambling), but not a word about the 3 trillion dollars to be spent on Iraq and Afghanistan. OMNI purchased a large no. of the flyer from the War Resisters League, "Where Your Income Tax Money Really Goes," which tells the truth about the economy of US militarism. I urge you to get yourself a batch of this excellent analysis of the economy of the US Warfare State to distribute yourself. **OMNI has distributed this flyer ever since OMNI began, but in small quantities and randomly.**

### ADVOCATING ECONOMIC CONVERSION FROM WAR TO PEACE

Joanne Sheehan, regional organizer for the [War Resisters League](#), arrived at our house last night for a meeting that we held about converting the military industrial complex.... Joanne worked on economic conversion issues in southern Connecticut where she lives back in the early 1990's when the issue was big in the peace movement. At the time the Cold War was ending and people all over the country began talking about the peace dividend and started thinking about converting military production facilities.... The reason that conversion did not survive the George H. W. Bush Panama and the Persian Gulf invasions was because we didn't do a good enough job of getting the peace movement to internalize the issue as essential to our being able to stop endless war....

But is the peace movement talking about this? Is the peace community offering a transformative economic vision that builds a peace-labor-environmental-social justice movement alliance? Sadly the answer is no. By and large the peace movement is saying the same things we were saying five years ago - Bring the troops home now. That just does not cut it.

We all need to stretch ourselves and begin to incorporate a positive vision of an economy that creates jobs and lessens the need for endless war. We've got to begin to link with the average American citizen who is worried about losing their home, paying for education, buying food, keeping the heat on, and holding onto their jobs. We've got to begin to talk about how military spending is killing their future and our nation.

All of our local peace and justice groups should take this 5th year of Iraq occupation as an opportunity to organize local meetings to discuss making our opposition to endless war relevant to our fellow citizens.

I'm afraid if we delay doing so we will be on the streets five years from now still holding signs that say No more blood for oil - Bring the troops home now!

Bruce K. Gagnon, Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space

## INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

The mainstream journalists failed and are failing to report the truth about the war. While there exists a glossy quarterly magazine about Lionel trains for grown men to play with, and a network of blogs gives news from a pro-military perspective (Blackfive, The Mudville, Gazette, MichaelYon.com, BillRoggio.com), no journal or newsletter or online group WATCHES THE

MILITARY. Such exposure and critique can be accomplished online. We need a network of independent web sites and blogs dedicated to reporting on the Pentagon/White House/militarism complex.

EXPOSING CONGRESSMAN BOOZMAN AS A CHIEF OFFICER FOR BUSH. Separating Boozman from his constructed image as a wise, kind person, by continually exhibiting his complete union with Bush's destructive and incompetent policies and actions: the slaughter of persons as collateral damage, torture of prisoners, displacing millions of Iraqis, creating physically and mentally damaged veterans, causing trillions of dollars war debt, ruining US international relations. Those twins are not leaders for our nation's good. If they had set out to destroy us, they could not have been more successful. **OMNI has published one newsletter on BoozmanBush. See our web site.**

A comprehensive, long-range program composed of these actions offer a model by which the word "change" gains a concrete reality often missing from the campaign speeches of Obama and Clinton.

### **OMNI: CHANGING THE STRUCTURES OF USA, or TREATING SYMPTOMS? the Function of Compassion in an Organization for Social Change**

Example: The Invasion and Occupation of Iraq: **Should OMNI support an Iraqi refugee family?**

#### **NO:**

The relief of suffering, kindness to others, is surely close to an objective imperative for compassionate people, whether religious or humanist. The act of helping others satisfies our sense of responsibility and duty. And it fulfills the truth of the Golden Rule, present in all religions and outside of religions, that we should treat others as we would be treated.

But although sympathy for others provides relief to those in need, it changes nothing of the situation that puts them there. That is why organizations devoted to compassionate social change are necessary. And for financial and personnel reasons, it is difficult to do both—to succor the needy and to change the conditions causing their need.

Let us ask: What is the better way to be actively kind? To give directly to those who need help, or to change the structures that make the unfortunate dependent upon our sympathy? For example, should we assist the refugee Iraqis? Some two million Iraqis have fled their country since the U.S. invasion, and another two million are internally displaced. And through no fault of their own.

But these facts raise a dilemma for us. Our country has victimized other countries through illegal invasion and bombings, or through neglect or abandonment, whose citizens deserve our empathy also—in the past: Guatemalans, Panamanians, Nicaraguans, Rwandans, and many more; in the present: Afghans, Palestinians, Haitians, Sudanese (Darfur). For their sake we are thankful for the many charitable organizations—religious and secular—that offer them direct assistance and hope. We would have more relief organizations, and call upon governments, corporations, and wealthy individuals to give generously toward their rescue. But which victims should be rescued?

But this dilemma should not be OMNI's. These worthy goals are short-term and make the victims endlessly subjects for our compassion and empathy, and our endless shortage of resources and money for rescue. Others must also work towards constructing a world where charitable choices are not or less necessary—Iraqis or Colombians?—where people will be safe from individual and state terror, and free from dependency upon handouts. While some organizations provide for immediate ends, others must seek to reorganize power and resources that will make the suffering independent of the compassion of others. Some organizations, like the United Nations, attempt to achieve both short-and-long-term ends, but most organizations do not possess the financial or human resources to do both.

Northwest Arkansas enjoys the presence of numerous relief organizations that give direct assistance to battered women and children, to the homeless, to the deranged. But only OMNI is dedicated to exposing and altering the conditions which cause so many millions to suffer dislocation, impairment, and even death—militarism, repression, imperialism, wars. We have always connected local with national and international. We have always considered the long-term consequences of national dysfunctions and worked to change them, to enable all people some day to live with dignity. Thus the long-run possesses its own powerful compassion.

Let us continue to examine the practices of successive US chief executives and try to mitigate and prevent their consequences, as with the global refugees. With all our human and financial resources let us prove our compassion toward future generations by trying to remove the root causes of global refugee suffering.

Finally, let us examine our program to identify strengths and weaknesses in achieving this goal.

## **YES**

Support of the refugees is a direct indictment of Bush imperialism. It is no mere act of charity, but is one more resistance to the structures of militarism and imperialism that have gradually gained control of our nation. The Bush Admin. caused their plight through an illegal, deceitful, and immoral invasion to control the natural resources of the Middle East. The refugees, pitiful victims of a callous, world-ambitious handful of officials, meant nothing to the Bush Admin. Like so much else, the populations were not considered in the invasion planning. But a handful of these millions have been given the opportunity to become legal refugees in the U. S. Many of them are destitute; surely all have felt hopeless before the 1991 invasion, ten years of bombings and embargo, followed by “shock and awe” invasion, and five years of bloody occupation. Justice and empathy cry out to us to help them.

They will soon be here. Justice aside, no Nicaraguans, no Rwandans are coming, no Haitians, no Afghans, no Gazans. NWA Catholic Services has sent us an appeal only for this one Iraqi family. It is a Samaritan moment for us.

So let us draw from our treasury to help them—not only of cash but of our personal assistance. Let us create a local plan for steady support for this family. And perhaps it might turn into a long-range model for our rescue of other victims of US world military domination.

Dick

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