DEFINING THE PAST TO CONTROL THE PRESENT AND DETERMINE THE FUTURE
What happened in the past, especially if controversial, is often ideologically influenced and often contested. People in power often seek to control the official historical definitions and narratives of the nation. Those in power often seek to reduce or even delete the history of marginal groups and to reinforce fear of those who are different. Others seek to counter that story with alternatives they consider more truthful and just or more favorable to their social and economic well-being. This contestation is particularly intense around the 4th of July.

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WHAT SHOULD WE CELEBRATE ON THE 4TH?
Surely not the US military strength, or coercive policies, or our consumption of a huge percentage of the earth’s resources. Instead, let us question our national priorities and ask who should be our guides. What acts of justice are we leaving undone? How can we give our planet more nonviolence and human dignity without regard to national identity or wealth? Let us think outside our nationalism.

What do people around the world celebrate on the 4th? The US officially celebrates its independence from the British Empire and army occupation. Now the US army occupies territories all over the world, and many of those people proclaim their right to be independent of from the US Empire and its bases.
The Obama Administration plans to spend $46 million to establish another military facility in Colombia, not only to increase its power in that country, but to increase US capacity for military interventions throughout Latin America. Around the world the US is building (the taxpayers are financing) for permanent war and occupation. A $17 million troop barracks at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan is part of the taxpayer-funded $220 million upgrade of the base.

Militarism—believing that violence, force, and coercion will solve world problems and spending enough money to project armed force around the world-- dominates our nation’s imagination and values.

What should we do?

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE FROM EMPIRE
All-out against war funding
Voters for Peace to jbennet
action@votersforpeace.org
Dear Dick,
The Afghan War is becoming less and less popular with only 37% of Americans supporting the war. More are seeing the war as a quagmire that is ineffective in stabilizing Afghanistan, fails to protect U.S. security and drains massive resources that the U.S. does not have. The House leadership hopes to rush $33 billion in new war funding through by this weekend.

In the midst of the firing of General Stanley McChrystal, reports of a war going badly, and an economy in collapse, the House of Representatives is considering giving $33 billion more for war. The leadership of the Democrats hopes to approve the funding by the July 4th recess. There are growing concerns among many in Congress about deficit spending and about the direction of the war, so while approval of this funding is likely, it is not a sure thing. If the war funding is combined with an unemployment and jobs bill, as is one possibility, the democrats will need near unanimous support to push the war funding through.

Please take action today to write and call your representative. Click here to send an email to your Representative in the House. The Capitol Hill switchboard is (202) 224-3121. Please call and email today.

The Constitution gives Congress the responsibility to determine whether to go to war and whether war should be funded. This constitutional responsibility gives Congress the power to end the war. Urge your Representative to stop war funding. The quagmire of Afghanistan can be ended by the House of Representatives taking their responsibility seriously, looking at the facts, and recognizing that U.S. involvement in Afghanistan is doing more harm than good. Tell Congress to represent the people - a majority of whom oppose the Afghanistan War.

The Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, David Obey, has the power to single-handedly block funding to escalate the war in Afghanistan. Currently he is doing so by refusing to advance the funding unless schools and jobs are funded. Call him every day to thank him and ask him to reject war escalation funding even if jobs and teachers are funded. Rep. Obey's number is (202) 225-3365.

No doubt it is an uphill battle to stop war funding. The process of building opposition is critical to our success. Americans need to consistently let their representatives know that
funding war, especially at a time when so many domestic necessities are unfunded, is opposed by the voters. Opposition to the Afghanistan War is growing and will continue to grow. Elected officials consistently hear from those in the military industrial complex who support war; they need to hear from us as well.

Consistent, ongoing, and informed citizen action is an essential ingredient to challenging the continuation of the Afghanistan War. Please use this opportunity to write and call your representative now.

Thanks for your continued support (click here to donate now).
Sincerely, Kevin Zeese
P.S. To see video of a panel I participated in at the U.S. Social Forum on: Who Decides War and What We Can Do About It, click here.
Voters for Peace is a nonpartisan organization that does not support or oppose candidates for office.
Voters For Peace action@votersforpeace.org
2842 N. Calvert St. Baltimore, MD 21218 443-708-8360

DECLARATION OF INTERDEPENDENCE

A Prophetic Voice in Jewish, Multireligious, and American Life

Dishonoring Jefferson or renewing America?--
Two responses to the Fourth of July

I am shocked to learn that the Thomas Jefferson Foundation has invited President Bush to speak on the Fourth of July at Monticello.

George W. Bush has replicated more of the ill deeds charged by the Declaration of Independence against King George III than any other President in our history. He is the first President to claim that torture is legitimate and to proclaim that he is violating the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution (requiring warrants to examine citizen's communications). Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration precisely to resist that kind of usurpation of power. To invite Mr. Bush to speak on the Fourth of July at Monticello makes a travesty of that sacred day and the sacred work of Mr. Jefferson.

Of course, the far deeper dishonoring is the way the President has behaved toward the Declaration and the Constitution themselves -- And on the other hand, what would we write today if we ourselves were "Jefferson"? This is a brief passage from "Declaring Interdependence" (on our Website at http://www.shalomctr.org/node/656):

When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for the peoples of the earth to declare -
our interdependence with each other and with all the life-forms of the planet, and our independence from efforts by the most powerful and most reckless among the
national governments to create a new and global Empire;
Then a decent respect to the opinions of Humanity requires that we declare the causes
that impel us to rise beyond the present Powers of the earth and to embody our
planetary community in new social, political, and economic forms.
We hold these truths to be self-evident:
That all human beings are born with equal dignity and worth, endowed by their Creator
with certain unalienable rights: -
to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness;
to the sharing of community;
to a rhythm of worthy work and shared rest that frees time for family, neighborhood,
citizenly service, and spiritual reflection;
to a life-sustaining share of the earth's abundance;
to peace among all peoples;
and to a responsible relationship amidst the whole web of life upon this planet.
...
The present government of the United States has violated our rights, broken our laws,
thwarted our hopes, and blocked many of the paths to change.
Within the United States, its actions are concentrating undemocratic power in the hands
of the super-rich and a few favored corporations;
In the world at large, its actions are concentrating undemocratic power in a small group
of gigantic global corporations and its own military.
To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world: ________________ [See our list in
web site above or name your own.]
What do we do about this? We might take the opportunity of the Fourth of July to reflect on our
lives in the body politic, to read this new Declaration and reread the old one and discuss their
meaning. To treat these texts the way some of us treat the Passover Seder -- learning it, teaching
it, enriching it. And then, like those who in 1776 with courage and determination pledged to each
other "our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor" -- we might redeem the promise of our
forebears and bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old, as they did.
Shalom, salaam, peace -- Arthur

INTERNATIONAL EVENTS OF RESISTANCE AND LIBERATION IN US PAST NEAR 4TH OF
JULY
June 25, 1945 U.N. Charter signed
June 27, 1876, Emma Goldman born
June 27, 1905, IWW founded
June 28, 1961 Stonewall Rebellion sparks LGBT
June 28, 1895, mass burning of firearms by Russian Doukhobors
July 2, 1986, US Supreme Court upholds affirmative actionas corrective to past discrimination
July 3, 1835, children strike for 11-hour workday and 6-day workweek, Paterson, NJ
July 4, 1776, “…whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive…abolish it”
July 4, 1982, 200 Israeli reservists protest Lebanon invasion
July 4, 1983, Women’s Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice begins, Romulus, NY
July 5, 1971, 26th Amendment to US Constitution lowered voting age from 21 to 18
July 8, 1867, Birth of Kathe Kollwitz, German social protest artist
July 9, 1936, Poet June Jordan born
July 11, 1968, American Indian Movement founded, Minneapolis
July 12, 1817, Henry David Thoreau’s birthday
July 12, 1904, Poet Pablo Neruda born in Chile

APPEAL FOR PERMISSIVE DIVERSITY IN USE OF US FLAG
Patricia Williams, “Semaphore.” The Nation (July 5, 2010). “Let’s hope that this variety is understood as pluralism rather than division…the tolerant engagement from which a living nation grows.”

“Why I’m Not Patriotic” (or Nationalistic) By Matthew Rothschild, July 2, 2008, The Progressive Magazine

(In memory of George Carlin.)

It’s July 4th [2008] again, a day of near-compulsory flag-waving and nation-worshipping. Count me out.

Spare me the puerile parades.

Don’t play that martial music, white boy.

And don’t befoul nature’s sky with your F-16s.

You see, I don’t believe in patriotism.

It’s not that I’m anti-American, but I am anti-patriotic.

Love of country isn’t natural. It’s not something you’re born with. It’s an inculcated kind of love, something that is foisted upon you in the home, in the school, on TV, at church, during the football game.

Yet most people accept it without inspection.

Why?

For when you stop to think about it, patriotism (especially in its malignant morph, nationalism) has done more to stack the corpses millions high in the last 300 years than any other factor, including
the prodigious slayer, religion.

The victims of colonialism, from the Congo to the Philippines, fell at nationalism’s bayonet point.

World War I filled the graves with the most foolish nationalism. And Hitler and Mussolini and Imperial Japan brought nationalism to new nadirs. The flags next to the tombstones are but signed confessions—notes left by the killer after the fact.

The millions of victims of Stalin and Mao and Pol Pot have on their death certificates a dual diagnosis: yes communism, but also that other ism, nationalism.

The whole world almost got destroyed because of nationalism during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

The bloody battles in Serbia and Bosnia and Croatia in the 1990s fed off the injured pride of competing patriotisms and all their nourished grievances.

In the last five years in Iraq, tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians have died because the United States, the patriarch of patriotism, saw fit to impose itself, without just cause, on another country. But the excuse was patriotism, wrapped in Bush’s brand of messianic militarism: that we, the great Americans, have a duty to deliver “God’s gift of freedom” to every corner of the world.

And the Congress swallowed it, and much of the American public swallowed it, because they’ve been fed a steady diet of this swill.

What is patriotism but “the narcissism of petty differences”? That’s Freud’s term, describing the disorder that compels one group to feel superior to another.

Then there’s a little multiplication problem: Can every country be the greatest country in the world?

This belief system magically transforms an accident of birth into some kind of blue ribbon.

“It’s a great country,” said the old Quaker essayist Milton Mayer. “They’re all great countries.”

At times, the appeal to patriotism may be necessary, as when harnessing the group to protect against a larger threat (Hitler) or to overthrow an oppressor (as in the anti-colonial struggles in the Third World).
But it is always a dangerous toxin to play with, and it ought to be shelved with cross and bones on the label except in these most extreme circumstances……

If we stopped that arm from reflexively saluting and concerned ourselves more with “universal ideals” than with parochial ones, we’d be a lot better off.

We wouldn’t be in Iraq, we wouldn’t have besmirched ourselves at Guantanamo, we wouldn’t be acting like some Argentinean junta that wages illegal wars and tortures people and disappears them into secret dungeons.

Love of country is a form of idolatry.

Listen, if you would, to the wisdom of Milton Mayer, writing back in 1962 a rebuke to JFK for his much-celebrated line: “Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.”

Mayer would have none of it. “When Mr. Kennedy spoke those words at his inaugural, I knew that I was at odds with a society which did not immediately rebel against them,” he wrote. “They are the words of totalitarianism pure; no Jefferson could have spoken them, and no Khrushchev could have spoken them better. Could a man say what Mr. Kennedy said and also say that the difference between us and them is that they believe that man exists for the State and we believe that the State exists for man? He couldn’t, but he did. And in doing so, he read me out of society.”

When Americans retort that this is still the greatest country in the world, I have to ask why.

Are we the greatest country because we have 10,000 nuclear weapons?

No, that just makes us enormously powerful, with the capacity to destroy the Earth itself.

Are we the greatest country because we have soldiers stationed in more than 120 countries?

No, that just makes us an empire, like the empires of old, only more so.

Are we the greatest country because we are one-twentieth of the world’s population but we consume one-quarter of its resources?

No, that just must makes us a greedy and wasteful nation.
Are we the greatest country because the top 1 percent of Americans hoards 34 percent of the nation’s wealth, more than everyone in the bottom 90 percent combined?

No, that just makes us a vastly unequal nation.

Are we the greatest country because corporations are treated as real, live human beings with rights?

No, that just enshrines a plutocracy in this country.

Are we the greatest country because we take the best care of our people’s basic needs?

No, actually we don’t. We’re far down the list on health care and infant mortality and parental leave and sick leave and quality of life.

So what exactly are we talking about here?

To the extent that we’re a great (not the greatest, mind you: that’s a fool’s game) country, we’re less of a great country today.

Because those things that truly made us great—the system of checks and balances, the enshrinement of our individual rights and liberties—have all been systematically assaulted by Bush and Cheney.

From the Patriot Act to the Military Commissions Act to the new FISA Act, and all the signing statements in between, we are less great today.

From Abu Ghraib and Bagram Air Force Base and Guantanamo, we are less great today.

From National Security Presidential Directive 51 (giving the Executive responsibility for ensuring constitutional government in an emergency) to National Security Presidential Directive 59 (expanding the collection of our biometric data), we are less great today.

From the Joint Terrorism Task Forces to InfraGard and the Terrorist Liaison Officers, we are less great today.

Admit it. We don’t have a lot to brag about today.

It is time, it is long past time, to get over the American superiority complex.

It is time, it is long past time, to put patriotism back on the shelf—out of the reach of children and madmen.
Todd Gitlin on Democracy and Patriotism

The American founders had a constructive idea: that we secure life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness through a democratic republic. In a democracy, authority needs to be convincing. But authority cannot be convincing, it cannot care for the public good, unless it is pressed to defend itself. Policy unquestioned is policy unbridled. Don’t let politicians off the hook. Patriotism should not be confused with obedience. There are some good times for obedience – heeding the fire marshals in a crowded theater. Patriotism is love of one’s people, love of their ideals – not just idle belief, but steady action. In America, our highest identity is formed from allegiance to ideas and not ancestral blood. In America, patriotism is love of constitutional principle. Serious patriotism entails readiness to sacrifice, not just wearing flag lapel pins or wishing American troops well. So I want to put in a good word for patriotism, but insist that what patriotism needs most is not a pat on our collective back, not self-congratulation, but rather intelligent skepticism and a willingness to sacrifice. It’s time for a liberal patriotism, robust, unapologetic and uncowed. It’s time for pride in democracy, not slavishness. It’s time for the patriotism of mutual aid, not symbolic displays. It’s time to diminish the gap between the nation we love and the justice we also love. Perhaps – who knows? – we might surprise ourselves. We might even stand at the edge of an auspicious turn in world history. It’s time for the real America to stand up. adapted from Todd Gitlin, Letters to a Young Activist (Basic Books, 2003), ch. 11, “On Patriotism Without Embarrassment, or Saving the World Again”

BOOKS
--Finan, Christopher. From the Palmer Raids to the Patriot Act: A History of the Fight for Free Speech in America.
Woehrle, Lynne, et al. Contesting Patriotism: Culture, Power, and Strategy in the Peace Movement. Roman & Littlefield, 2009. Rev. Fellowship (Spring 2010). A deep grounding of the peace movement is its effort to reclaim the attribution of “patriotic” for criticism of the nation-state when it wages war. The book traces the many ways “in which major groups in the peace movement have advanced this cause in their publications over the past 20 years.”