OMNI THANKSGIVING DAY NEWSLETTER, NOVEMBER 25, 2010,
NATIONAL DAY OF GRATITUDE, MOURNING, AND ATONEMENT by
Dick Bennett, for a CULTURE OF PEACE..

For a decade OMNI has promoted the UN concept of Building a Culture of Peace. I have interpreted this goal to include the reconstitution of certain national “Days” (the creation of alternative national "Days"). We have a Julia Ward Howe Mother's Day for Peace, Indigenous People's Day (to replace Columbus Day), Unity Day (Veteran’s Day), for examples, and we celebrate many Days that oppose war and tyranny (UN Day, Human Rights Day, etc.). These are structural changes, not just treating symptoms (such as battered women’s shelters and homeless rescue, which we need, given the world as it is), but trying to change the countless sources of the US Violence-Corporate-Military State (our National Security State). We have not yet tackled Thanksgiving. What should we do?

One approach is to remember that Thanksgiving Day is a day to remember and give thanks for and with immigrants, and mourn for and with them, and help them. Margaret Regan's book The Death of Josseline tells the story of a 14-year-old Mexican girl who dies crossing the desert on the U.S.-Mexican border. Regan connects that sad tale with the story of her own great-grandparents, who emigrated from Ireland in 1872 only to die penniless in Philadelphia at the ages of 36 and 34. Thanksgiving should not be a time to only to take a break or celebrate self-indulgence, but to remember the immigrants who risk everything to seek a better life and do not always have a happy life or ending. During Thanksgiving this year ask what is your family’s immigration story. When did your immigrant ancestors’ descendents begin to enjoy a better life, of if they all did.

Another way to Thanksgiving is to try to perceive Thanksgiving from the perspective of Native Americans. What do American Indians think of the immigrants? Check out: Thanksgiving A Loaded Holiday for Many Native-Americans http://www.commondreams.org/headline/2008/11/27-1
For some Native Americans and their European-American friends, the idea of a National Day of Atonement is growing. The idea is to unravel the US superiority complex (US “exceptionalism”) that leads to blindness to our wrongdoings against Native Americans, Many in the general population condemn the genocides committed by the Hutus or Turks, but cannot add the Westward movement across the continent as also genocidal. This cartoon expresses the extreme edge of this point of view. This is such a fundamental overturning of a major US annual self-deception that I cannot hope for its acceptance by more than a handful for a long time to come. (Thanks to Sue Skidmore.).

Why We Shouldn't Celebrate Thanksgiving
By Robert Jensen, AlterNet
Thanksgiving Day should be turned into a National Day of Atonement to acknowledge the genocide of America's indigenous peoples. Read more Â»

Thanksgiving in America

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Dick Bennett
Wars and Warming: Reducing the Footprints

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