OMNI ALTERNATIVES TO ARMED FORCES DAY NEWSLETTER, Compiled by Dick Bennett for a Culture of Peace
See: OMNI Nonviolence Newsletters, www.omnicenter.org

This newsletter is part of OMNI’s NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL DAYS PROJECT, by which we counter the conditioning for violence and wars in such celebrations as Columbus Day and Armed Forces Day. These national days of violence reinforce the national drive for wars, for invasions and interventions—some fifty since WWII, amounting to permanent war-- examined by Richard Rubenstein in his book Reasons to Kill: Why Americans Choose War (2010). Rubenstein analyzes seven “key rationales for war” employed by successive governments to gain public support for military action.

(The other half of the Project is the affirmation of nonviolent DAYS, such as United Nations DAY, Human Rights DAY, and Indigenous People’s DAY, in which the goals of equity and health for all and a world free of war and the threat of war strive to protect all species.)

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Celebrate the US Armed Forces?
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Remember the Poor Yes

CELEBRATE US ARMED FORCES WITH THIS RECORD?
-----Gordon, Joy. Invisible War: The United States and the Iraq Sanctions. Harvard UP, 2010. Rev. Fellowship (Fall 2010). Killing at least 500,000 civilians during over a decade of invasion, sanctions, and bombings followed by an, unnecessary, illegal, and unjust invasion and occupation for eight more years, purportedly to keep the US safe, is largely unknown in the US. Yet Iraq has suffered mass killing surely approximating genocide. AND Iraq is only one of the some 50 unnecessary, illegal, and unjust invasions and occupations by the US since WWII (see William Blum).

INSTEAD, LET’S CELEBRATE THOSE WHO REFUSE TO KILL
--Kovac, Jeffrey. History of Civilian Public Service Camp #21 at Cascade Locks. Oregon SUP, 2009. Rev. Fellowship (Spring 2010). About 50,000 men refused to be conscripted in WWII. Some of them were sent to Cascade.
--Elster, Ellen and Majken Jul Sorensen, eds. Pref. Cynthia Enloe. Women Conscientious Objectors: An Anthology. War Resisters International, 2010. Women in one country after another have created for themselves the concept, analysis, and practice of a distinctive feminist antimilitarism. Perceiving that militarization is not just the existence of armies, but the deformation of daily life in myriad ways, these women chose to object. The book also exposes the links between patriarchy and militarism as central to countering the sources of war; changing masculinities and femininities is integral to reducing militarism and war.
--Every War Has Two Losers: A Poet’s Meditation on Peace. Based on the Journals of William
Civilian defense is a strategy for defending against potential military aggression which uses unarmed civilians, rather than armed forces, to defend against attack. Thus, rather than relying on military force to deter or repel an invasion, civilian defense uses nonviolent approaches--primarily massive noncooperation--to make invasion more trouble than it is worth. By withholding political, social, and economic cooperation from the invading army and government, the local citizens can make the society come to a stand still. Political noncooperation, for example, would include civil disobedience, the boycott of governmental activities (such as voting) and the establishment of alternative governmental offices. Social noncooperation can include refusing to participate in social activities, or even failing/refusing to acknowledge the presence of the invaders. Economic noncooperation includes strikes and boycotts of goods and services. Although none of the acts alone will be successful, if many of these protest tactics are implemented by a large body of citizens, they can be very difficult to overcome. This will prevent the invaders from gaining any benefits from their occupation, and may well lead them to abandon their efforts.

Civilian defense also diminishes the legitimacy of the invading force, which slowly will reduce its power. As Gene Sharp, an expert in nonviolent direct action asserts, all governments, no matter how tyrannical, govern only with the consent of the people. If this consent is withdrawn, the government will fall, as it takes people to implement its policies. Although it has not been widely utilized, civilian defense has been used successfully in the past. For example, the Germans used this approach to resist the Kapp Putsch in 1920, the French used it to oppose a coup in 1961, and the Norwegians used it to resist Nazi occupation. Most recently, it was used by Lithuanians and Russian citizens in 1990 when the Lithuanians were fighting for the independence from the Soviet Union and the Russians prevented the coup against Gorbachev.

Although the use of civilian defense to deter attack is more difficult than to defend one after it has occurred, some scholars think that its use as a deterrence strategy will increase as its use increases and its effectiveness becomes better known.

Links to Examples

Peter Ackerman and Christopher Kruegler -- The Principles of Strategic Nonviolent Conflict
This article discusses the use of nonviolence for civilian defense.

Links to Related Sections

Non-Violent Struggle
Empowerment
The Nature of Threats
Defense
Deterrence, Counter-Threats (and Arms Races)
Florida Governor Signs PTSD Awareness Week Proclamation
Veteran Community Leaders Celebrate Long-Awaited PTSD Awareness

Brevard County, FL (Vocus/PRWEB) December 13, 2010

Florida's Governor, Charlie Crist, signed a proclamation Friday, Dec 10th, bringing PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) awareness into the Florida spotlight, and in so doing, made the plight and dream of a 20 year homeless veteran advocate and local community hero come true. George Taylor, President of the National Veterans Homeless Support (NVHS), has been working towards legislation and awareness such as this with political and community leaders since 1991. Known as a tireless homeless veteran advocate, leader and local hero to homeless veterans, Taylor brings organizations together for the support and awareness of those he serves.

Monday, Dec 13th, 2010 marks the beginning of the first official PTSD awareness week in Florida and the beginning of what Taylor and other community leaders hope will be a turning point for the veterans suffering from the chronic condition of PTSD. The signed proclamation makes Florida one of the first states in the country to have a week officially dedicated to the community awareness of PTSD. This appears to be a movement gaining ground as it follows the news in June of this year when the U.S. Senate passed a resolution declaring June 27 National PTSD Awareness Day.

Taylor was honored for his years of advocacy on Saturday night by receiving news of the Governor's signature before it was publicly announced and receiving his own original document. An emotional Taylor said, "This is what I've worked 20 years for. Our veterans and the community they live in deserve this and are best served by this awareness. I hope it leads to bigger things, and better healing. This is a victory for all of us who work together to make sure our veterans are understood and not forgotten. I thank all my friends and the community of vet support groups for working together to help make this happen. I also want to thank Miss Jackie Colon for helping make it a reality. This is a dream come true for our vets."

Approximately 7.7 million American adults, or about 3.5 percent of people 18 and older, in a given year, have PTSD. Up to 76% of homeless veterans are thought to suffer from some level of PTSD, which often manifests itself into alcohol, drug, and avoidance issues. Stigma is also said to play a role in servicemen and women not coming forward to discuss options and seek treatment. "Because you can't see PTSD, as you can a physical battle scar, it can go undetected, but PTSD can be more devastating", said Taylor.

The U.S. has 6 states with veteran populations over 1 million. Florida's veteran population of 1.8 million is second only to California, with 2.3 million. Texas, New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio also make the top 6. Pennsylvania's House of Representatives approved a resolution for a PTSD awareness week in November of this year, and like Florida, many states will likely follow suit.

News of the new, state-wide and week long observation is sweet success to those who have championed the cause for many years, continuously working with legislators, as the voice for those
suffering PTSD to bring awareness to the cause.

A humble congratulatory ceremony was held for Taylor, at the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 4228, in Titusville, Sunday afternoon, where representatives from local veteran support groups came together to celebrate the victory.

"Working together is what it's all about", said Dorothy Walsh, NVHS VP and Sargent at Arms for the USA River Rats. Among the leaders present at the ceremony were Carl Schneider, American Legion Eastern Area Commander, Bill Hoppner, American Legion Dept. of FL Disaster Preparedness Chairman, Arthur `Gunner' Dudley, the American Legion Dept.of FL Homeless Veterans Chairman, Al Diaz, President of USA River Rats, and 10 other proud and excited officers of the USA River Rats.

Another key player in the awareness and treatment of PTSD in Florida is Dr Scott Fairchild of Welcome Home Vets. Fairchild, a Psychologist making strides in the treatment of PTSD in Florida, and Welcome Home Vets are teaming up with Taylor of the National Veterans Homeless Support, to offer direct clinical psychological services to the homeless veterans brought in by the Search and Rescue teams of NVHS who are suffering PTSD.

Dr. Fairchild said, "It is a monumental accomplishment and the culmination of over 20 years of work on behalf of so many, to honor the many Floridians who have experienced psychological trauma and suffered the invisible wounds of war. There are new tools and treatments available, which dramatically impact the healing process and can retrain the brain to healthy patterns, some without medication, which we at Welcome Home Vets have seen reduce PTSD symptoms by 63%. In addition to treatments though, it is critical to realize that community support must be thicker than a bumper sticker."

Based on the newly signed proclamation, it would appear the Florida legislators concur. As the community claims a victory for their honored and often misunderstood veterans, ideas and plans are already taking shape to make the best use of this yearly week of awareness.

Taylor is asking veteran support groups across the state and nation to come together, reach out and share ideas. Interested parties may contact Taylor and his organization, through the contact form on the NVHS web site.

"This week we spend in celebration," touts Taylor, "We are appreciative our veterans are being recognized and honored in our state. Soon we'll start planning for next year's PTSD awareness week in Florida. We hope others will join us."

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REMEMBER THE KILLED AND MAIMED WHO WERE SO POOR THEY HAD TO GO TO WAR?
---Kriner, Douglas and Francis Shen. The Casualty Gap: The Causes and Consequences of American Wartime Inequalities. Oxford, 2010. Rev. Andrew Bacevich, “Unequal Sacrifice,” The Nation (9-20-10, a significant essay on US wars). By comparing official casualty records in four US wars (WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq) with Census data, the authors conclude that “when America goes to war, it is the poorer and less educated in society who are more likely to die in combat,” except during WWII.

WHAT SHALL WE CALL OUR ALTERNATIVE TO ARMED FORCES DAY?

END OF ARMED FORCES DAY NEWSLETTER #1