OMNI MEMORIAL DAY NEWSLETTER #3 MAY 30, 2011

Compiled by Dick Bennett for a Culture of PEACE. (#1 May 20, 2009; #2 May 31, 2010). OMNI'S NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL DAYS PROJECT: OMNI SEEKING ALTERNATIVES TO US MILITARISM, WARS, EMPIRE, FOR A CULTURE OF PEACE.

Formerly Decoration Day, the last Monday in May remembers members of the armed forces killed in war. (Veterans Day: Nov. 11, a legal holiday in the US in commemoration of the end of WWI and in honor of veterans of the armed forces, formerly, Armistice Day.)

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NORMALIZING MILITARISM ‘KEEPING US FREE’

Memorial Day. In memory of our military killed in war. A solemn occasion. It must pain loving relatives to see it so commodified. A typical ad appeared in The Arkansas Gazette on May 27, 2011, selling
GMC Sierra trucks. “Memorial Day” is announced at the top, but the ad otherwise entirely about the trucks, and a small push for Little Rock’s RiverFest, “Where the Fun Runs Deep.” Google “Memorial Day” and you will find mainly commercialism, including an ad for “Las Vegas Memorial Day Weekend Party Packages…a great 3-day weekend to Sin City,” where the “parties are endless,” the ad grotesquely juxtaposed in Google with a Memorial Day “for remembrance of those who’ve served and those who’ve paid the ultimate price…keeping us free.” The commercialism of our soldiers’ deaths is reprehensible. But the statement just quoted raises an even deeper objection.

It is not an objection easy to express in our often jingoistic nation. The editor of National Review Online, in a review of anti-war films explaining why they failed at the box office, wrote that “Americans are both anti-war and anti-anti-war.” What he was referring to was the majority of the public’s two-fold opposition to the Afghan war—“because it was going so badly,” and they disliked criticism of the troops. The majority public was not outraged at the wars, as were the filmmakers, because the Afghan and Iraq wars were foolish, immoral, illegal, killed civilians indiscriminately, brutalized our own troops, and had nothing whatever to do with keeping the US free, but they opposed the wars only because they were weary (because, let’s add, of the individual taxes and national debt).

But if the Afghan war, the Iraq war, and all the other wars initiated by the US since WWII possess these liabilities, how can we legitimately remember those who served and died without making some distinctions and offering some contexts? Many US soldiers fought and died because they were from military families and tradition. But in addition, many other troops, without the draft a mercenary military establishment, were deceived and bought by their own government. The budget for military recruiting runs into the billions of dollars annually. And prospective recruits are promised bonuses, professional skills for civilian life, college education, and present and future medical care, only some of which come true. That is, we do and should grieve for our troops killed in foreign wars, not because all were heroes (some became rapists and murderers, and all were engaged to some degree in killing civilians), and not because they protected the USA, protected the American Way of Life; rather we mourn for them because they too were victims. The suffering unleashed against the Iraqi and Afghan people is unspeakable. But thousands of US troops have been killed or now suffer from life-lasting physical and mental damage.

For these reasons, the present remembrance of Memorial Day is unacceptable because it contributes to permanent war by making war normal and therefore acceptable.

Normalizing militarism in our culture—for example, through war toys, weapons systems, VA hospitals, permanent war, military cemeteries, and memorializing the killed troops—prepares the population to support wars, and thwarts efforts to end them. Any effort to end US interventions and invasions must confront all of the US Culture of War that support present and future wars—from ethnocentrism, exceptionalism, chauvinism, and xenophobia to poverty and the Pentagon budget. Several national days are part of this cultural reinforcement (including Veterans Day, Armed Forces Day, and Columbus Day), and Memorial Day—as though all the wars have been needed and legal—is a powerful example.

This Memorial Day has again exhibited a fierce, warrior USA. AMC Weekend did its patriotic best as an arm of the military-corporate complex by giving us “War Heroes Weekend.” One program, “A Path to
Honor, “depicted some soldiers in their first deployment, leaving families, making sacrifices, for honor, freedom, nation, god. And the soldiers were Black and Hispanic. The documentary was paid for American Airlines, “supporting the troops and their families,” no mention of the millions of dollars paid to AA for war transport. Soon followed by an ad for the Acura TL with a beautiful female doing a striptease from plain clothes to elegant evening dress, with the message: “Aggression in its most elegant form.”

Even PBS, intended originally to be a medium for mindfulness between national aggression and corporate aggression, bristled with US wars and war patriotism. Sunday night PBS presented three-and-a-half hours of the “National Memorial Day Concert,” packed with patriotic songs, speeches, and fireworks. Monday we could see “War Letters” and “Hallowed Grounds” (US overseas cemeteries). And Tuesday night presented three-and-a-half hours of “American Road to Victory” (D-Day, Hell’s Highway, Battle of the Bulge, the US military’s worst defeat in its history depicted as a heroic stand against overwhelming odds).

Memorial Day USA today promotes consumerism/US capitalism and militarism. Let us re-imagine it for all the victims of the US National Security State, for all who have suffered US state terrorism, and let us re-name it for compassion—Mourning Day. Dick

RABBI ARTHUR WASKOW, SHALOM CENTER, A Prophetic Voice in Jewish, Multireligious, and American Life

“Memorial Day: Mourning for -- Gil Scott-Heron, Arthur Goldreich, & All who suffer in war, terrorism, & torture” 5-29-11

Earlier this month, I sent out the full text of "Ashes, Stones, and Flowers: A Litany of Mourning for All Who Have Suffered in War, Terrorism, & Torture" in the hope that many of our readers would prepare ahead of time to use it on Memorial Day. I write now in the firm belief that the deepest observance of Memorial Day must be not memory only but also action to end war, terrorism, and torture.

To embody that commitment, please join in our petition to end the Afghanistan War by clicking here. office@shalomctr.org [copying lost the link, sorry]

With prayers and action for shalom, salaam, peace -- Arthur

[We also join with Arlene Goldbard in remembrance of Gil Scott-Heron. Arlene is chair of the board of The Shalom Center and a community-arts activist and speaker. Subscribe to her blog and/ or post comments here. She writes:]

Gil Scott-Heron died on Friday, and that is a sad, sad sentence to
write. If you are familiar with his music, then you know what I'm talking about; and if you're not, you can begin to remedy that by following the links in this essay. Listen to the beautiful "Rivers of My Fathers" from 1974's Winter in America to start your journey by clicking here. . . . office@shalomctr.org

HONORING THE TROOPS BY BRINGING THEM HOME
This Memorial Day, honor the killed by ending the war 5-29-11

Drew Hudson, USAaction/TrueMajority.org to jbennet
We're 11 votes away from ending the war
Dear Dick,
We came within a few votes of ending the war last week.

Tomorrow is Memorial Day, and Americans everywhere will gather at parades and barbecues and family functions to remember our veterans and those we lost to war. And on the minds of many will be the longest war in American history, a conflict that has claimed over 1,500 American lives -- the war in Afghanistan.

But this Memorial Day, we've got a real reason to hope for a more peaceful future.

A few days ago, we came within 11 votes of ending the war in Afghanistan. That's more support than ever before for ending the war in Afghanistan, and includes endorsements from some of the most powerful people in Congress - including Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi.

With new supporters and more powerful allies than ever before, we need to press our advantage and keep the pressure on Congress and the White House to set a timetable to end the war and bring home our troops.

In honor of Memorial Day, can you donate $10 right now to our campaign to end the war in Afghanistan?

Here's what's next: Rep. McGovern, whose amendment nearly passed this week, has already turned his plan to end the war into a stand-alone bill with several Republican cosponsors. This gives us a great chance to pick up the 11 votes we need, and pass a law that ends the war in Afghanistan. At the same time, we'll be working with key Senators to include a timeline for withdrawal in their version of the bill the House passed today -- setting up a showdown in Congress later this summer.

But waging a major campaign in both Houses of Congress is a big job. We need support to print materials, send delegations to meet with key
members of Congress in D.C. and in their home districts, organize press events to highlight public support for an end to the war and build more effective online actions that put you in contact with legislators fast, before the next vote to end the war.

Help us see this through and make 2011 the year that we began to end the war in Afghanistan.

Sincerely,
Drew Hudson
USAction / TrueMajority

1 - [http://www.thenation.com/blog/160965/crucial-day-congress-ongoing-war-afghanistan](http://www.thenation.com/blog/160965/crucial-day-congress-ongoing-war-afghanistan)

USAction, 1825 K St. NW, Suite 210, Washington, DC 20006
PH: 202.263.4520 FAX: 202.263.4530

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**Are 1,500 reasons enough? From Robert Greenwald**

Watch the Video | Sign the Petition [http://bravenewfilms.org/](http://bravenewfilms.org/)

Dear James,

Thanks to your financial support, we're able to create powerful, timely actions to end the war like this.

It’s time to say, “enough is enough.”

This weekend, many Americans will mark Memorial Day at barbecues or other patriotic events, but thousands of families will spend the day dealing with the heartbreaking absence of a loved one. Others will spend the day like they spent every day for the last decade: hoping there’s not a phone call or a knock at the door to tell them their deployed family member won’t be coming home.

**This should be the last Memorial Day we put military families through this agony for a war that’s not making us safer.** Watch our new video and then sign our petition to tell your Member of Congress why the troops should come home from Afghanistan. More than 1,500 troops have died in the Afghanistan War so far, and the best way to honor their memory is to get our men and women home. President Obama and Congress will soon decide how many troops to bring home and whether we'll keep wasting $2 billion a week on a senseless war. It’s critical we let them know we want a swift return of all of our troops from Afghanistan.

Please watch our new Memorial Day video and sign our petition to end this war.

Sincerely,
Derrick Crowe, Robert Greenwald

and the Brave New Foundation team. To ensure delivery of our emails, please add [info@bravenew01.org](mailto:info@bravenew01.org) to your address book.

[http://bravenewfilms.org/](http://bravenewfilms.org/)

Also find us on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, iTunes or RSS.

Brave New Foundation | 10510 Culver Blvd., Culver City, CA 90232
Another three-day holiday weekend arrives. Here in the Northeast spring has finally sprung! Throughout the United States workers and students alike enjoy the five federal Monday holidays as well-earned vacation days. Yet these five holidays all have unique meanings, and Memorial Day is especially poignant for many families.

This Monday we take time to remember the soldiers who have fought for us. Families dress gravesites with flowers, share treasured photos, and participate in Memorial Day parades. Those of us who have not experienced personal loss reflect on the coffins coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan. We remember how the media exposed the Walter Reed Hospital as less of a healing haven and more of a bureaucratic maze. We ache for soldiers who come home with brain damage from IEDs, loss of limbs, and horrifying war stories. We pay attention.

On this Memorial Day, I am watching my three-month-old grandson and hoping. Can I imagine him at war? Absolutely not! Will he be a patriot? Absolutely. Defend his family? Yes. But I know that as I hold him, rock him, coo to him, cuddle and sing, the Congress of the United States is considering a bill that would allow the President to go to war without anyone else’s approval.

It’s dubbed the “endless war” bill. This country has been at war so long, a generation has grown up thinking that is just the way it is. I can’t stand that. Not just because of my grandson, but because of the endless waste. Some wars are won. But the devastation is so extraordinary, it ends up defining history. The sacrifice on every side is unfathomable. This Memorial Day I am thanking all those who have served and suffered. I am also thinking of peace. A federal budget that is not primarily spent on weapons and war. A future for all our sons and daughters with no thoughts of having to die on a battlefield somewhere far from home. I will spend this holiday Memorial Day on vacation with my family -- grateful, remembering, and wishing -- plus readying myself to get back to my day job working for peace every single day. Peace for my baby boy Bennett and for all of the babies everywhere.

By Susan Shaer
WAND Executive Director

IRAQI VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR ACTION FOR WOUNDED
Take Action
Send a Letter-to-the-Editor.
Make a donation to support our efforts at Fort Hood.
Sign the Operation Recovery Pledge of Support.
Send us your feedback.

Dear James,
Operation Recovery Team steps up the pressure at Fort Hood
Today, our Operation Recovery team deployed at Fort Hood, Texas will attempt to meet with base commander General Donald Campbell to address concerns about the plight of the thousands of traumatized troops under his authority and care. His office has not responded to our previous attempts to communicate with him, including the hundreds of emails supporters like you have sent to bring this issue to his
You can do your part to support our efforts this Memorial Day by sending a Letter to the Editor to your local newspaper about the plight of traumatized troops at Fort Hood and across the military. Fort Hood is ground zero in our fight to end the deployment of traumatized troops across the military. As the largest military installation in the United States, Fort Hood represents 10% of the Army's fighting force and rotates a large number of troops in and out of Iraq and Afghanistan.

A USA Today article last fall described the dire situation for troops dealing with trauma at Fort Hood, citing the following staggering statistics:

Fort Hood psychological counselors meet with 4,000 patients every month. The base counseling services are overwhelmed and have to refer many soldiers for counseling off-base.

In 2009, over 7,000 Fort Hood soldiers were on anti-depressant or anti-psychotic medications.

As of last fall, there was only one social worker available at all of Fort Hood to handle cases of Military Sexual Trauma.

The article, written just 7 months ago, includes dire predictions from many Fort Hood staff that the problem would grow much worse with the continued conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This is why we are at Fort Hood this summer. We are outreaching to soldiers and their families to gather data on the dire situation for traumatized troops at Fort Hood, and to help empower the military community there to take action and do something about it.

We know that Fort Hood is the tip of the iceberg when it comes to this issue that is ravaging the entire military.

Help us raise awareness about the issue of traumatized troops in your local community by sending a Letter to the Editor this Memorial Day.

We will keep you posted about our attempts to meet with General Campbell. Wish us luck!

Sincerely,
The Operation Recovery Campaign Team
Killeen, Texas

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**Strength Through Peace: Out of Iraq and Afghanistan**

From: Jim <jimrobinson@sbcglobal.net>
Date: Mon, 31 May 2010 06:31:58 -0700 (PDT)
Subject: Memorial Day 2010

“Memorial Day 2010, “War Is An Old Recycled Lie”
Three dead Americans in Afghanistan~Why ?

War is a waste so why do we celebrate it with parades, flags and glorious war stories when, in reality, they are fought by our youth who are but pawns in the hands of old men~ seduced by power and greed~ who are more than willing to waste our most precious resource on illegal wars and occupations: Allen L Roland
On this Memorial Day 2010, America is still enmeshed in a costly and illegal war and occupation of Iraq, rapidly increasing its military presence in illegally occupied Afghanistan and preparing for the possibility of war with Iran. The American War Wagon has not slowed down in 2010 but is accelerating ~ with little if any deep reflection on the true human and moral cost of this insanity.

On this Memorial Day, much of the media will roll over backwards to glorify war and all the soldiers slaughtered in wars. Tributes to the dead are easy; the dead don't talk back and if they did they would most certainly say ~ why ?

Here's an excerpt from Gronquist's timeless article written on Memorial Day 2005 ~ " The media will continue, this weekend, to suppress the truth, which is that the war in Iraq is a massive foreign policy failure; Iraq is a failed state, an incredibly chaotic unstable mess where tens of thousands of Iraqis have died needlessly. Unworried Americans will say we can't judge Iraq yet, we have to "wait and see," because down the road, if oil rich Iraq becomes a (Western-style) democracy "it will all be worth it". These are such easy words to utter, from the armchair experts on democracy for Muslims, so smug with remote controls in-hand. Yes, tell the loved ones of one million dead Iraqis that someday the deaths of their family members will all be worth it, as your own children scurry about safe and warm...

On Memorial Day we will blithely ignore the massive protest and hatred that our polices, occupations, torture and wrongful imprisonment have inspired in the Muslim and Arab world. Come to think of it, many Europeans, Latin Americans and Africans aren't enthralled with our foreign policies either. But an empire can ignore the common sense of the global masses of people who oppose war, and we can easily choose not to try to understand root causes of anti-American sentiment. C'mon - America, it's Memorial Day, tune that negative reality out and turn on your television for yet another glorious war hero story."

On May 30, 2010, the direct cost of occupying Iraq and Afghanistan hit $1 trillion. In a few weeks, the House of Representatives will be asked to vote for $33 billion of additional "emergency" supplemental spending to continue the illegal occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan.

We must now face the hard cold reality that War is an insurmountable human waste and an old recycled lie ~not a cause for glorification and celebration ~ and then demand action from our political leaders to end this waste by no longer funding our foreign wars and occupations.
Mohandas Gandhi said it best ~ What difference does it make to the dead, the orphans and the homeless, whether the mad destruction of war is wrought under the name of totalitarianism or in the holy name of liberty and democracy? Jim Robinson

FEAR, WARS, ENDLESS MEMORIAL DAYS

The Anti-Empire Report June 5th, 2009

by William Blum  www.killinghope.org  [PREVENTING ANOTHER WAR]

The great, international, demonic, truly frightening Iranian threat

The United States is "facing a nuclear threat in Iran" — article in Chicago Tribune and other major newspapers, May 26

"the growing missile threat from North Korea and Iran" — article in the Washington Post and other major newspapers, May 26

"Iran's threat transcends religion. Regardless of sectarian bent, Muslim communities need to oppose the attempts by Iran ... to extend Shia extremism and influence throughout the world." — op-ed article in Boston Globe, May 27

"A Festering Evil. Doing nothing is not an option in handling the threat from Iran" — headline in Investor's Business Daily, May 27, 2009

This is a very small sample from American newspapers covering but two days.

"Fifty-one percent of Israelis support an immediate Israeli strike on Iran's nuclear sites" — BBC, May 24

After taking office, on Holocaust Memorial Day, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said: "We will not allow Holocaust-deniers [Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad] to carry out another holocaust." — Haaretz (Israel), May 14, 2009

Like clinical paranoia, "the threat from Iran" is impervious to correction by rational argument.

Two new novels have just appeared, from major American publishers, thrillers based on Iran having a nuclear weapon and the dangers one can imagine that that portends — "Banquo's Ghosts" by Rich Lowry & Keith Korman, and "The Increment" by David Ignatius. "Bomb, bomb, bomb. Let's bomb Iran," declares a CIA official in the latter book. The other book derides the very idea of "dialogue" with Iran while implicitly viewing torture as acceptable.1

On May 12, in New York City, a debate was held on the proposition that "Diplomacy With Iran Is Going Nowhere" (English translation: "Should we bomb Iran?"). Arguing in the affirmative, were Liz Cheney, former State Department official (and daughter of a certain unindicted war criminal) and Dan Senor, formerly the top spokesman for Washington's Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad. Their "opponents" were R. Nicholas Burns, former undersecretary of state, and Kenneth Pollack, former National Security Council official and CIA analyst and author of "The Threatening Storm: The Case for Invading Iraq", a book that, unsurprisingly, did not have too long a shelf life.2
This is what "debate" on US foreign policy looks like in America in the first decade of the 21st century AD — four quintessential establishment figures. If such a "debate" had been held in the Soviet Union during the Cold War ("Detente With The United States Is Going Nowhere"), the American mainstream media would unanimously have had a jolly time making fun of it. The sponsor of the New York debate was the conservative Rosenkranz Foundation, but if a liberal (as opposed to a progressive or radical leftist) organization had been the sponsor, while there probably would have been a bit more of an ideological gap between the chosen pairs of speakers, it's unlikely that any of the present-day myths concerning Iran would have been seriously challenged by either side. These myths include the following, all of which I've dealt with before in this report but inasmuch as they are repeated on a regular basis in the media and by administration representatives, I think that readers need to be reminded of the counter arguments.

- Iran has no right to nuclear weapons: Yet, there is no international law that says that the US, the UK, Russia, China, Israel, France, Pakistan, and India are entitled to nuclear weapons, but Iran is not. Iran has every reason to feel threatened. In any event, the US intelligence community's National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) of December 2007, "Iran: Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities", makes a point of saying in bold type and italics: “This NIE does not assume that Iran intends to acquire nuclear weapons.” The report goes on to state: "We judge with high confidence that in fall 2003, Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program ."

- Ahmadinejad is a Holocaust denier: I have yet to read of Ahmadinejad saying simply, clearly, unambiguously, and unequivocally that he thinks that what we know as the Holocaust never happened. He has instead commented about the peculiarity and injustice of a Holocaust which took place in Europe resulting in a state for the Jews in the Middle East instead of in Europe. Why are the Palestinians paying a price for a German crime? he asks. And he has questioned the figure of six million Jews killed by Nazi Germany, as have many other people of all political stripes.

- Ahmadinejad has called for violence against Israel: His 2005 remark re "wiping Israel off the map", besides being a very questionable translation, has been seriously misinterpreted, as evidenced by the fact that the following year he declared: “The Zionist regime will be wiped out soon, the same way the Soviet Union was, and humanity will achieve freedom.” Obviously, he was not calling for any kind of violent attack upon Israel, for the dissolution of the Soviet Union took place peacefully.

- Iran has no right to provide arms to Hamas and Hezbollah: However, the United States, we are assured, has every right to do the same for Israel and Egypt.

- The fact that Obama says he's willing to "talk" to some of the "enemies" like Iran more than the Bush administration did sounds good: But one doesn't have to be too cynical to believe that it
will not amount to more than a public relations gimmick. It's only change of policy that counts. Why doesn't Obama just state that he would not attack Iran unless Iran first attacked the US or Israel or anyone else? Besides, the Bush administration met with Iran on several occasions.

The following should also be kept in mind: The Washington Post, March 5, 2009, reported: "A senior Israeli official in Washington" has asserted that "Iran would be unlikely to use its missiles in an attack [against Israel] because of the certainty of retaliation." This was the very last sentence in the article and, according to an extensive Nexis search, did not appear in any other English-language media in the world.

In 2007, in a closed discussion, Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni said that in her opinion "Iranian nuclear weapons do not pose an existential threat to Israel." She "also criticized the exaggerated use that [Israeli] Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is making of the issue of the Iranian bomb, claiming that he is attempting to rally the public around him by playing on its most basic fears." This appeared in Haaretz.com, October 25, 2007 (print edition October 26), but not in any US media or in any other English-language world media except the BBC citing the Iranian Mehr English-language news agency, October 27.

LET PREVENTING VIOLENCE AND WARS BE OUR PURPOSE AS PEACEMAKERS

END OF MEMORIAL DAY NATIONAL DAY NEWSLETTER MAY 2011