OMNI NATIONAL DAYS PROJECT  
NEWSLETTER #1. By Dick Bennett for a Culture of Peace. 2-28-12.

Here is the link to all OMNI newsletters:  
http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/  For a knowledge-based peace, justice, and ecology movement and an informed citizenry as the foundation for change.

NATIONAL DAYS PROJECT  
Dick Bennett

A central tenet of behavioral psychology is that people are what they do. Publics therefore can be conditioned to behave in certain ways by having them act in those ways. We are nurtured by our family and church and school to accept or reject the options we encounter. Gradually by repetition we become the persons we are. Indoctrination is so successful a method of training that it works even in short periods if intense enough.

The most obvious example is military basic training, where recruits are transformed in a short time from their family and religious values to warrior values, including killing. Reinforcement by group repetition of actions is fundamental to this psychology. Have the recruits march, sing, salute, shoot together and soon they will be changed into warriors.

But that success would be more difficult had it not been prepared for. The nation prepares its youth for war in many ways. Year after year, the nation memorializes its wars and warriors. The national anthem is played and sung, the US Flag flies, and patriotic speeches are spoken. The Pentagon spends several billion dollars each year to recruit troops, but they would have to spend much more were martial values not constantly reinforced throughout our society. We know it works; for example, military officers poll always among the highest in public regard.

A task of the peace movement is to jam the promotion of armed force without ourselves possessing the mountains of Pentagon wealth.

One way is to focus on National and International Days. Thanks largely to the United Nations, our nation recognizes the many Days
devoted to nonviolent peace and justice—International Women’s Day, Nuclear Victims Day, World Water Day, Political Prisoner Day. These Days are already celebrated by the peace and justice movement, and their affirmation should be increased. But many of the National Days—such as Armed Forces Day, Memorial Day, Veterans Day—uncritically celebrate the military as an institution and all of its soldiers. We must try to reverse this practice. We must redefine these martial days.

Step by step. We can change the rituals that reinforce the patriotism of armed force or are complicit in violence. We can do that. In fact, it is already being done. Groups have called for a re-naming of Columbus Day as Indigenous People’s Day and Memorial Day as a Day of Mourning. We can re-name and re-envision all of the National Days that encourage nationalism, violence, and wars. Here’s how it is done:

Feb. 14: Standing on the Side of Love Day (formerly Valentine’s Day)

May, 2nd Sunday: Julia Ward Howe’s Mother’s Day for Peace (Mother’s Day)

3rd Sat. in May: Peace Movement Day (Armed Forces Day)

May, last Monday: Day of Mourning for Victims of Wars (Memorial Day)

June 14: Liberty and Justice for All Day (Flag Day)

June, 3rd Sunday: Father’s Day for Peace (Father’s Day)

September 11 (9-11): Peaceful Tomorrows Day (Patriot Day)

Oct., 2nd Monday: Indigenous Peoples Day (Columbus Day):

Nov. 11: World Unity Day (Veterans Day) (Or back to Armistice Day in 1918 when WWI ended).

November: Fourth Thursday: National Day of Gratitude and Atonement (Thanksgiving)

December 7: Pacific Colonial War Day (Pearl Harbor Day)

December 25: Love and Peacemaking Day (Christmas)
It’s a two pronged structural approach to peace and justice: promoting the Days of peace and justice; reconstituting those that justify armed force.

The National Days Project is an activity of the OMNI Center for Peace, Justice, and Ecology located in Fayetteville, Arkansas. See the many Newsletters by which the Project is partly realized (http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/), and the Blog, “It's the War Department,” http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/, scroll down to the latest Index).

Other actions are under way and being added. Of course, we celebrate all Days that support people of our planet—World Refugees Day, Hiroshima-Nagasaki Days, International Justice Day (ICC), International Day of Peace--, for which we make available chronological and topical lists. And for several of these Days we have arranged public actions. For example, our annual Hiroshima-Nagasaki Remembrance began in the 1970s. For International Day of Peace, in cooperation with the City we display national flags around the city square. The essential point is the persistent repetition. And at very little financial cost.

But particularly important are the Days re-envisioned and reversed. Here, for example, Columbus Day is challenged by Indigenous Peoples of the Americas Day activities on the campus of the University of Arkansas. Julia Ward Howe’s Mother’s Day for Peace has been celebrated since 2006 by a luncheon.

Engage in the revisioning with us. Join the National Days Project.

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National interest in the NATIONAL DAYS PROJECT
Dick was invited twice to Montgomery College outside Washington, D. C. to tell about the project. They were already celebrating the UN International Day for Peace, and were keenly interested in the idea of converting some of the national days from support for wars to advocacy for peace.

Praise for the NATIONAL DAYS PROJECT
“The reason I've contacted you is because Barbara Harmony, one of my good friends, has sent me the OMNI newsletter that has your article about ways of turning normally-celebrated American holidays into holidays to celebrate PEACE. This is a wonderful idea. Being an artist, my suggestion, naturally enough, is to use art to promote your peace-holidays theme. I actually have a brand new painting that might work well for whatever Flag Day celebration people are doing. It is titled "Green America . cordially--Paula Tyndale, Eureka Springs”

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