ACTION FOR PEACE, JUSTICE, AND ECOLOGY
Newsletter #4, April 9, 2012. Compiled by Dick Bennett for a Culture of Peace, (#2: June 23, 2011; #3 1-1-2012)

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 to recreate the world.

Probably half or more of OMNI’s newsletters could be filed under ACTIVISM: Gandhi, MLKJr, nonviolence, et al. etc.

Contents of #3
Sending a Petition
Z Magazine January 2012
Yes! Fifteen Activists
New Book: Becoming the Leaders We Need
New Book: Save the Humans?
New Book: Dream of a Nation
New Documentary on Effects on People of US Capitalism and Remedies
Occupy Wall Street
Justice for Tomato Field Laborers
Global Rallies for Renewable Energy
Journalistic Dilemma in Reporting Protest
Looking Back

Contents of #4 April 9, 2012
The People’s Charter to Create a Nonviolent World
Civic Resistance
Strike
Book: Dream of a Nation
Book: Mobilizing
Book: Collaboration
Mark Ruffalo
John Graham, Giraffe Project
Nonviolent Method: Shame
3 Dissenters: Press, Joya, Jacob George
How to Organize an Event

Launch of ‘The People’s Charter to Create a Nonviolent World’
May 25, 2011 by robertjburrowes http://thepeoplesnonviolencecharter.wordpress.com/
The People’s Charter to Create a Nonviolent World was launched simultaneously on 11 November 2011 at several locations around the world.
The aim of this Charter is to create a worldwide movement to end violence in all its forms. *The People’s Charter* will give voice to the millions of ordinary people around the world who want an end to war, oppression, environmental destruction and violence of all kinds. We hope that this Charter will support and unite the courageous nonviolent struggles of ordinary people all over the world.

As you will see, *The People’s Charter* describes very thoroughly the major forms of violence in the world. It also presents a strategy to end this violence.

We can each play a part in stopping violence and in creating a peaceful and just world. Some of us will focus on reducing our consumption, some of us will parent our children in a way that fosters children’s safety and empowerment, some of us will use nonviolent resistance in the face of military violence. Everyone’s contribution is important and needed. We hope this Charter will be a springboard for us all to take steps to create a peaceful and just world, however small and humble these steps may be. By listening to the deep truth of ourselves, each other and the Earth, each one of us can find our own unique way to help create this nonviolent world.

Why did we choose 11 November as the date to launch *The People’s Charter*?

‘When I was a boy … all the people of all the nations which fought in the First World War were silent during the eleventh minute of the eleventh hour of Armistice Day, which was the eleventh day of the eleventh month. It was at that minute in nineteen-hundred and eighteen, that millions upon millions of human beings stopped butchering one another. I have talked to old men who were on battlefields at that minute. They have told me in one way or another that the sudden silence was the Voice of God. So we still have among us some men who can remember when God spoke clearly to mankind.’ (Kurt Vonnegut Jr., an atheist humanist, in his novel *Breakfast of Champions*.)

**Organisation**

So far, the organising groups in various locations have organised launch events in their localities around the world. Some groups are organising follow-up events so that other people have the chance to become involved in local, personal networks.

See ‘Future Events’ for information about the next public event nearest you.

**Signing the Charter**

*The People’s Charter* can be read and signed online: click on ‘Read Charter’ or ‘Sign Charter’ in the sidebar. [http://thepeoplesnonviolencecharter.wordpress.com/about/](http://thepeoplesnonviolencecharter.wordpress.com/about/)

‘A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history.’ Mohandas K. Gandhi

*The People’s Charter  to Create a Nonviolent World* was posted on 25 May 2011.

RobertJ.Burrowes—flametree@riseup.net
AnitaMcKone—flametree@riseup.net
Anahata Giri – anahatagiri@gmail.com

---

**CIVIC REBELLION**

Review
Srećko Horvat, Igor Štiks
Pravo na pobunu (The Right of Rebellion)
Srećko Horvat and Igor Štiks have written the book *The Right of Rebellion* in order to show that the 2009 student university blockade is the most important event in contemporary Croatian political history.1(*Politička misao*, Vol. 47, No. 5, 2010, pp. 203-206)

Vocabulary of the “neoliberal paradigm”, which claims that the market economy in combination with representative democracy represents the best political order on the planet. Transitional countries like Croatia are also “neoliberal”. In their opinion, SFR Yugoslavia crumbled because “neoliberal financial institutions”, like the IMF, had been forcing it to conduct “neoliberal reforms”. The “neoliberal” character of today’s Croatia is, among other things, reflected in the preferential political treatment of private investments in the case of Varšavska Street, as well as in the implementation of the “neoliberal Bologna Process”.

It is not hard to notice that the word “neoliberal” carries several rather different meanings. “Neoliberalism” thus means liberalism, capitalism, the Western world, global economy, the alliance of politics and capital, the market and the understanding of society in which property rights are fundamental rights. Such broad understanding of the notion is politically useful because it can be argued that the protests of farmers, students and citizens in Varšavska Street were all motivated by the common phenomenon against which they should all fight together. That is exactly what Horvat and Štiks claim. Farmers’ roads blockades, civil disobedience in Varšavska Street in Zagreb and the blockade of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences are diverse manifestations of civil resistance to the Croatian “neoliberal Regime”. The authors write the notion of “Regime” with a capital letter and give it a substantial meaning. “Regime” is an “oligarchical conglomerate” and consists of political elites regardless of their party affiliation, of “Capital”, the media, the state apparatus, parts of civil
society and organized crime. Regime is therefore much more than government, and it brings together the winners of “neoliberal transition”. The vast majority of citizens are transitional losers whose loser status is being covered up by the media, religious associations and educational institutions. In such a constellation the student movement assumes a first-class political significance, because, according to the authors, it manages to shake an “ideological consensus” which is justifying the unbearable social injustice deriving from transition.

The central motif of the book is an attempt to show that a plenum represents a model of direct democracy and therefore is not a body designed for negotiations for free education, but becomes much more. For Štiks and Horvat, a plenum becomes some sort of a liberated territory within the “neoliberal state”, which, aware that it is an alternative form of a political organization, refuses to communicate with its surroundings by the rules of the surroundings. The goal of the blockade is not only free education, but the establishment of a plenum as a direct opposition to existing institutions, “not as a general advisory assembly in the context of protests and strikes, but as a rebellious ‘legislative’ body on the taken territory” (p. 57). Students thus become a sparkle of direct democracy, showing to the majority of citizens in post-socialist Croatia that resistance to the “Regime” is possible, as well as the final establishment of the new type of social order, both economic and political.

This requirement for a revolutionary action presupposes that there is not much sense in fixing the Croatian transitional state and transferring it into functional liberal democracy. The combination of market economy and representative democracy cannot have a human face. The obliteration of the distinction between liberalism and neoliberalism done by Horvat and Štiks has numerous deficiencies, both theoretical and practical - if
all orders with market economy and representative democracy are neoliberal, then there is no politically relevant difference between Denmark and Croatia, Sweden and the United States of America, Obama and Bush, Old Labour and New Labour. For Štiks and Horvat, political differences within liberal democracies, as well as the differences between market economies with representative governments, are only gradual. This insensitivity to differences creates problems. First theoretical, because important distinctions are lost, and then practical, because the specific causes of objective problems cannot be recognized. Neoliberalism in its real meaning is a branch of liberalism which claims that the fundamental human right is the property right and that the market guarantees the most rational allocation of resources. In its original version (Mises) it was a capitalist answer to the appearance of planned economy, and during the Cold War it became the means of the criticism of totalitarianism (Hayek), while in contemporary liberal democracies it serves as an ideological foundation of conservatism (Friedman and others). As an argument for small government, neoliberalism has played a crucial role in the criticism of Keynesian liberalism and in forming Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan’s politics. Furthermore, the attempt to establish the global free market is neoliberal by definition. Be that as it may, the first and immediate enemy of neoliberalism in liberal democracies is liberalism (social democracy in the European political vocabulary). Negating the difference between neoliberalism and liberalism also creates problems in the interpretation of normative content of the demands of the University of Zagreb students, who have more or less completely adopted the position of the International Student Movement, which Štiks and Horvat simply ignore. The ISM clearly defines the goal of its struggle – free and emancipatory education as a human right. The aim of that education is one’s critical
autonomy, education should be understood as a public good and academic freedoms should be protected. All this has been part of the classic arsenal of American liberal egalitarianism for the last 40 years. It is possible to fight for free education without the destruction of liberal democracy. Students in Europe and America fight against neoliberal policies within the frame of their legal systems without bringing them into question. The same goes for civil disobedience of the movement Pravo na grad. You can fight the government without bringing the entire political order into question. Disobedience breaks the law to ensure its lawfulness. Hayek would support them as well.

Unlike numerous authors, who saw in the collapse of the welfare state a danger to representative democracy itself, Štiks and Horvat, by saving the Croatian welfare state from neoliberalism, bring into question the sense of any state, especially a liberal-democratic one. Neoliberals advocate a minimal state, Štiks and Horvat are on the verge of saying that they are against the state itself. They never discuss normative contents of a direct-democratic action and the differences between anarchism and communism. Therefore, an interested reader cannot find out what their understanding of the state or property is.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the concept of omnipresent “neoliberalism”, in which this notion stands for almost everything that is in some way connected with market economy, shows its explanatory deficit at the first step, when defining a problem which the students should be the most familiar with – the Bologna Process. The fact that Dragan Primorac, who is responsible for the fact that Croatian bachelors are literally unemployable, is accused of “neoliberalism”, is laughable. The Croatian implementation of the Bologna Process is not shortening the 4-year diploma in order to force students to enter the job market sooner, it is doing exactly the opposite. In order to get a decent employment,
students are forced to acquire
a Master’s Degree. Mumbling about the
neoliberal reform of higher education in a
country in which the Constitutional Court
declared unconstitutional the provisions of
law providing for mandatory integration
of the university is pathetic. Preconditions
for any kind of reform have been buried in
2006. It is a sad fact that the wider academic
community in Croatia learned that the
Prague Communique explicitly determines
that higher education is a public good only
after the blockade had called it a “neoliberal
commercialization”. If the Bologna
Process should be tagged with political
labels, then it is most probably a socialdemocratic
manoeuvre, which is obvious
from emphasizing the “social dimension”
introduced in Leuven. The emphasizing
of positive examples of free education in

**Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Norway is**
also mysterious, since every single one of
them is a liberal democracy.

“Neoliberalism” as “defined” in the book
is not a “floating signifier”, but merely
a simplification which is theoretically
wrong and politically limited. A meaningful
action presupposes distinctions which
are blurred by an overblown notion of “neoliberalism”.
This book cannot be recommended
to the readers interested in fair fi-
nancing of higher education, in a precise
notion of neoliberalism, or in a theoretical
discussion on the right of rebellion that
would include discussions on the relation
between the plenum and civil disobedience,
or the differences between communist
and anarchist criticism of transitional regimes.
If, on the other hand, you are excited
by the idea that the “capillary infected”
unity of radical students, peasants and movements
like **Pravo na grad** could create a
mass of plenums large enough to eliminate
transitional democracy in Croatia forever,
and thus contribute to the disposal of liberal
democracy into the dustbin of history,
Horvat and Štiks have written a book for
you. Zoran Kurelić
THE STRIKE


Author: Joe Burns
Saturday, June 18, 2011 12:35 pm Pacific time
Welcome Joe Burns, and Host David Swanson

[As a courtesy to our guests, please keep comments to the book. Please take other conversations to a previous thread. - bev]

*Reviving the Strike: How Working People Can Regain Power and Transform America*

Reviving the Strike: Joe Burns’ Cure for What Ails the Labor Movement

By David Swanson

Joe Burns’ incredibly important *new book* seems to me much larger than the labor movement. I hope he will share with us today some insights into his view of U.S. labor history and the potential for a U.S. labor future, but also his perspective on how this impacts our society as a whole. Are we right to look to the labor movement as a possible ally in the struggle for justice and maybe even peace?

How do you get politicians living off legalized bribery to criminalize bribery? How do you persuade the corporate media to report on the interests of flesh-and-blood, non-corporate people? How do you take over a political party when the only other one allowed to compete is worse? These are not koans, but actual problems with perhaps a single solution.

It might seem like there are a million solutions: pass state-level clean election laws, build independent media, build a new party, etc. But the fundamental answer is that when the deck is stacked against you, you insist on a new deck. Power, as Frederick Douglas told us, concedes nothing without a demand. We cannot legislate our way out of plutocracy. Instead, we the people must seize power.

The problem of seizing power for non-billionaires is the problem of the dying labor movement. To many, this looks like an unsolvable riddle as well. How do you pass the Employee Free Choice Act to legalize unionizing when you have no aggressive unions willing to pressure Congress to do so? And if Congress works for corporate masters, do we need to apply the pressure there instead? But making a scene in a corporate lobby doesn’t hurt a corporation in an era of shamelessness, and we can’t unelect CEOs.

What to do?

Joe Burns, I think, has an answer in his new book “Reviving the Strike: How Working People Can Regain Power and Transform America.” Burns argues that for the last 30 years, since 1980, the labor movement has sought ways to succeed without employing the fundamental tool required, and that employing that tool is a choice available to the labor movement and to all workers immediately without waiting for anyone’s approval.

From 1930 to 1980, unions created ever improving lives for millions of workers, improving our economy and our politics in the process. And they did it by striking. They would have found the idea of unions that did not strike unimaginable. Congress and the courts have stripped away unions’ power to effectively strike, but so has corporatist ideology. When the anti-union assault intensified in the 1980s,
and ever since, the labor movement has responded in a completely new and completely hopeless manner. Rather than halting production, unions set up picket lines that merely watched scabs replace union workers. And when unions are able to negotiate contracts, they no longer seek to establish standardized wages for a whole industry, but negotiate a variety of standards even at a single corporation.

To survive and succeed, Burns argues, unions must use strikes to halt production and impose their demands; and those demands must be industry-wide. Unions must use secondary or solidarity strikes and boycotts in support of other striking workers. A solidarity boycott is far more effective than the extremely difficult consumer boycotts that well-meaning atomized citizens are always dreaming about. Compelling a store to stop selling a particular product is far easier than persuading consumers to not buy that product.

The central tool that must be revived is the strike that halts production and imposes a cost on an employer. A strike is not a public relations stunt, but a tool for shifting power from a few people to a great many. The era of the death of labor, the era we have been living in, is the era of the scab or replacement worker. Scabs were uncommon in the 1950s, spotted here and there in the 1960s and 1970s, and widespread from the 1980s forward.

In the absence of understanding the need to truly strike, the labor movement has tried everything else for the past 30 years: pretend strikes for publicity, working to the rule (slowing down in every permitted way), corporate campaigns pressuring employers from various angles, social unionism and coalition building outside of the house of labor, living wage campaigns, and organizing for the sake of organizing. These approaches have all had some defensive successes, but they all appear powerless to turn the ship around.

“[T]he idea that the labor movement can resolve its crisis simply by adding new members — without a powerful strike in place,” writes Burns, “actually constitutes one of the greatest theoretical impediments to union revival.” From 1995 to 2008, with unions focused on organizing the unorganized, the U.S. labor movement shrank from 9.4 million to 8.2 million members. The Service Employee International Union (SEIU)’s famous organizing success is in large part the takeover of other unions, that is of people already unionized, and in large part the bribing of politicians (through “campaign contributions” and other pressure) to allow the organizing of public home health-care workers. What’s left of the labor movement is, in fact, so concentrated in the public sphere, that unionized workers are being effectively attacked as living off the hard-earned pay of private tax-payers.

The Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA), so much a part of candidate Obama’s campaign, and now long forgotten, might not fix anything if passed, in Burns’ analysis. To succeed, the labor movement needs the sort of exponential growth it has had at certain moments in the past. Easier organizing alone would not persuade enough workers that joining a union is good for them. But persuading them that joining a union holds immediate advantages for them would revive labor with or without EFCA. And EFCA might make things worse. EFCA tries to legislate the right to quickly create new contracts, to avoid employer stalling. But it does this by subjecting workers to the decisions of arbitrators. Rather than empowering a class of arbitrators, the labor movement we had until 30 years ago would have considered the obvious solution to be empowering workers to compel the creation of contracts through the power of the production-halting strike.

Striking does not require a union or majority support but is itself a tool of organizing and radicalizing, with a minority of leaders moving others to join in what they would not choose to do alone. Solidarity is the process as well as the product of a labor movement. And it is by building strikes with the power to halt entire sectors of the economy, not through bribes and emails and marches, that ordinary people gain power over their so-called representatives in government. “Imagine telling Samuel Gompers or
Mother Jones or the Reuther brothers or Jimmy Hoffa that trade unions could exist without a strike. However, in the name of pragmatism,” Burns writes, “the ‘progressive’ trade unionists of today have fit themselves into a decaying structure. On a deeper level, they have abandoned the goal of creating the type of labor movement capable of transforming society.”

To turn this around, Burns suggests, we will have to change the way we think about workplaces. According to our courts, a man or woman can work for decades in a business and nonetheless have no legal interest in it, the legal interest belonging entirely to the employer. The employer can move the business to another country without violating a labor contract. The employer can sell out to another employer and eliminate a labor contract in the process. The employer can break a strike with scabs. The National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) of 1935 might have looked good on paper, but its interpretation by courts and restriction by other legislation — notably the Taft Hartley Act of 1947 — have made clear its weaknesses. Labor has no choice left, Burns argues, but to repeal the NLRA by noncompliance.

There are recent examples to build on: the 1986 United Food and Commercial Workers Local P9 strike against Hormel in Austin, Minnesota; the 1989 Pittson Strike in West Virginia, in which workers used sit-ins and road blocking, as well as vandalism, to successfully resist concession demands; the 1995 lockout of workers at A.E. Staley and Company in Decatur, Illinois; the 2000 campaign to free the Charleston 5 in which a global strike in ports was organized to successfully oppose the prosecution of five picketers in South Carolina; the 2008 takeover of Republic Windows and Doors, in which workers in Chicago compelled an employer to pay them severance; and the 2011 pushback against union busting in Madison, Wisconsin.

The specific approaches used in a newly striking and solidarity-building labor movement will be invented as needed and vary with the circumstances. Burns proposes creating new start-up unions without the financial assets that are placed at risk in this country by exercising the international and human right to strike. Strike funds could be transferred to such “new unions created to protect old unions.” Employers have manipulated the law, creating new entities for every purpose under the sun. Labor needs to become equally aggressive about finding the way to create its vision of a just society.

How compromised/ corrupted / misguided is the labor movement right now? How embedded in the Democratic Party? How embedded in the NLRA? How divided in its leadership from its membership?

What can those outside of labor hope for from the labor movement or do to help? What can bring workers and students and academics and activists together? Are there lessons to draw from Walkerville and Bloombergville?

I just returned from England where labor unions oppose foreign wars. What would it take for that to occur in the United States?

And above all, how did we come to this place where we imagine that the theatrical reproduction of labor struggles can serve the purpose of the real thing? We peace activists, too, get ourselves arrested blocking a sidewalk in front of the White House that nobody actually has to walk on to fight the wars. We don’t close down the Pentagon or the Congress or the White House or the State Department or the weapons factories. We do theatrical picketing. We imagine that public shaming is enough in a day and age that seems shameless. We have sex scandals. But when was the last political scandal?

Was there a time when rhetorical and theatrical resistance made more sense than it does at the moment? Or did it always fall so laughably short? How did we come to accept it? How can we overcome it?

I hope Joe will pick up some of these themes and that you all will as well in asking him what’s most on your minds.
DREAM OF A NATION

The Book, A Vital Tool for the Engaged Citizen

If you want be a part of the critical effort to build a better America, then *Dream of a Nation* is for you.

A vital tool for building our future, this work is both eye-opening and inspiring. Alice Walker sums it up well in her assertion that “*Dream of a Nation* offers hundreds of ideas and examples of how smart, committed, and daring we can be.” Offering a laser-focus on solutions, *Dream of a Nation* restores faith that we can solve our current looming environmental, economic and societal challenges.

Over three years in the making and with contributions from more than 60 pioneering visionaries and organizations, a comprehensive path forward is presented across a range of key issues including: Building an Equitable and Green Economy, Waging Peace, Strengthening Community, Media Reform, People-Centered Government, Ending Poverty, and much more. It is everyday citizens who make this nation great and the critical information found in Dream of a Nation empowers you with what you need to be an agent of change.

100% of the proceeds support over 60 organizations and leaders within the civil society movement.

A perfect gift. A wonderful educational resource. A way to give back.

The content is applicable to readers of varying political persuasions and the material comes alive through four-color authentic images, and accessible graphics and illustrations. Contributors include:

(Click links below to see samples of the look and feel of the book!)

- Alice Walker
- Vice President Gore
- Time 100 Visionary Geoffrey Canada
- Bioneers Founder Kenny Ausubel
- NASA Astronaut Jerry Linenger
- Frances Moore Lappé
- Common Cause
- New America Foundation
- United for a Fair Economy
- The Bipartisan Bridge
- Citizen Effect
- Veterans for Peace
- (and nearly 50 more)

Foreword by Paul Hawken
Closing by Alice Walker
Full List of Contributors


MARK RUFFALO
Interviewed in *The Progressive* (April 2012). Started Farmhearts ([farmhearts.org](http://farmhearts.org)) to support farmers and Water Defense ([waterdefense.org](http://waterdefense.org)) to oppose extreme energy extraction (tar sands oil, fracking, mountain-top removal, etc.).

JOHN GRAHAM

**Stick Your Neck Out**
Views, news and coaching tips from John Graham, Director of *Giraffe Heroes International*.

Helping people solve the public problems they care about. "Life's an adventure, sometimes a risky one. The key is knowing what to take risks for, and how to take them well."

Dear James,
The US Army thought it could squeeze one more combat tour out of **Staff Sgt. Robert Bales**. It was wrong.

Bales is now accused of shooting and stabbing to death 16 Afghan civilians, most of them women and children.

Sgt. Bales should not go into the dock alone. Many of us should be there too, charged with willful ignorance, with acting as if war was not what it is—a series of relentlessly horrific acts destroying bodies, psyches and souls. Sgt. Bales was no rogue. But to admit that warriors who snap are an inevitable product of war upsets the storyline that keeps too many of us comfortable sending generation after generation into battle. Read more.

Please also visit Coach's Corner—short pieces of advice on some aspect of public problem-solving. My aim with these pieces is to help you, or perhaps someone you know, take on a meaningful challenge and succeed. The advice comes from my own thirty years as a citizen activist, and from what I've learned from others, especially the "Giraffe Heroes" honored by the nonprofit I work for, the Giraffe Heroes Project.
This time the subject is but how to structure a winning team. Go here for the full article.

It's OK to reprint anything on this blog in your organization's website or magazine, with attribution.

Opinions are welcome (well, most of them). Join a conversation on my blog, On the Edge or reply directly to me.

If you've received this email from somebody else, you can join this list by emailing me or by hitting the "Join Our Mailing List" button below.

Feel free to send this piece on to whomever else you want to see it by hitting the "Forward email" link at the bottom of this page. And, of course, there's an "unsubscribe" button down there too.

Sit Down Young Stranger Now Available on Kindle

John Graham's award-winning memoir is now available on Kindle. You can download it from Amazon.com's Kindle store.

Click here to find out more about the book that Henry Aubin of the Montreal Gazette called "a riveting, important memoir."

Quick Links
John Graham bio, speeches, workshops and books

More on the Giraffe Heroes Project

Contact Information
Email John Graham
phone: 360 221 7989
write: PO Box 759 Langley WA 98260

For a Sane Economy in 2012, How About a Little Shame?
Richard (RJ) Eskow, Op-Ed, NationofChange, January 3, 2012:
The other day I was asked what one single thing could do the most to save our economy. What one idea or tool might help us create a more just society? My answer was “shame.” Shame isn’t always a wasted or negative emotion. On the contrary, it can perform an important and
socially useful function. Shame enforces our moral values even when legal and political institutions are too broken or corrupt to do so. Our society must learn to develop a “moral economics,” and morality is often enforced through shame.

READ | DISCUSS | SHARE http://www.nationofchange.org/sane-economy-2012-how-about-little-shame-1325600486

DISSENTERS

MALALAI JOYA
“Protesting the Afghanistan Occupation with Malalai Joya,” Veterans for Peace (Winter 2012)

December 5, Bonn Germany – We are on the protest boat “Beethoven” on the Rhine River near where Hillary Clinton and Harmid Karzai are meeting with 1,000 people from several countries who share an “interest” in the future of the US/NATO occupation of Afghanistan. They are purportedly discussing what Afghanistan will look like after the U.S. troop withdrawal that Obama has promised for 2014. But many peace activists have gathered here too, mostly from Germany, but also from Belgium, Ireland, the United Kingdom and the United States. We are here to state clearly that all foreign troops should leave NOW, and that only the people of Afghanistan can determine Afghanistan’s future. Thousands of us had marched through the streets of Bonn two days earlier, and then participated in a well-organized weekend counter-conference. Now it is Monday morning and the politicians are arriving in limousines escorted by police cars with lights flashing. On the beach opposite the conference site, large letters spell out rotating slogans, including Bring the Troops Home Now! We have been invited to join activists who are cruising up and down the Rhine, past the site of
Talking with us in a panel discussion is Malalai Joya, internationally known as “the bravest woman in Afghanistan.” In 2005 Joya was elected to serve in the parliament of Afghanistan, its youngest member, in her mid-twenties. Due to her outspoken advocacy on behalf of Afghani women and her bold criticism of warlords as well as Taliban, Joya was banned by the parliament in 2007. She has survived several assassination plots since then and her life is constantly under threat. Malalai Joya now serves as the director of the OPAWC, the “Organization Promoting Afghan Women’s Capabilities” in the western Afghan provinces of Herat and Farah. She often travels to other countries to tell the story of her country and her people. Here is what she has to say:

Many thanks to the organizers and to all the activists who came to protest the conference of Karzai and Clinton, and to speak against the war. In Germany there are so many people who love freedom and democracy.

In Afghanistan, we are like a tree – our leaves are occupation, war, human rights problems, and women’s rights problems. Our roots are in Islamist fundamentalism, which we must fight against. As long as we have occupation and fundamentalism we will not have human or women’s rights.

Lies – propaganda of war – that we must resist. One big lie is that if the U.S. leaves Afghanistan, then civil war will happen. Another lie is that the U.S. intends to take its troops out of Afghanistan soon. Another is that because a few soldiers are tried for war crimes, it solves the problem of war crimes. The U.S. government teaches the soldiers to “hate” an enemy, in order to occupy them. The U.S./NATO bombing of Libya was a funny game to remove Khadafi. There is no such thing as “humanitarian intervention.”

The United States will not leave Afghanistan soon because they want to control Asia. Today in this meeting with Karzai, their purpose is to legitimize the occupation of Afghanistan. But military machines and propaganda machines are nothing compared to the power of the people who are justice loving and democratically minded.

Q: Where do you get your strength, Malalai?

MJ: The power of each of us is the truth – from it come strength, hope, love, and courage. Our people hate these occupiers, warlords, and Taliban. The resistance of the Afghan people gives me hope, love, and determination. Seeing you here makes me more determined. Silence at this moment would be political death for us.

Q: I’m Gerry Condon with Veterans For Peace and I know
many U.S. veterans who have fought in Afghanistan and Iraq. They have participated in or witnessed the killing of innocent civilians and they are angry that they were lied to about the real purpose of these wars and occupations. When they come home our government does not properly care for their health needs. Women in the military have faced an epidemic of sexual assaults by their fellow soldiers. Veterans are now on the front lines of the peace movement. Is there anything you would like to say to them?

MJ: Last year I was at a “No to NATO” event and I met Matthis Chiroux from Iraq Veterans Against the War. He said, “I apologize.” Veterans apologize. I say to them that this is your government and it is they who should apologize to you. The troops are victims too – the government uses them as a tool for a bad cause. The government is going to schools to tell them lies under the name of bringing peace. This is treason and they fear the truth. I heard of one young veteran who is living in a church (Rodney Watson in Vancouver, British Columbia, contact him on Facebook at “War Resister in Sanctuary.”)

In Japan I met a U.S. veteran of the Afghanistan occupation. He was crying – would Malalai be angry with him? I hugged him and said, “You are like my family. You have your family, and now that your conscience is awake, it is not too late.” If there are war mongers you should be proud to have veterans that speak out against the war. They are victims and unfortunately their government used them for their evil plans.

Q: Are there groups that we can support in Afghanistan?

MJ: We have terrorist groups, but we also have democratic leaders who go person-to-person to organize demonstrations. There are some really good NGOs that you can support, one of which is “Organization of Promoting Afghan Women’s Capabilities”. These are the future of Afghanistan.

The war mongers say that we have only two choices – the Taliban and civil war, or foreign occupation, and that the lesser of two evils are put to the Afghans by the U.S. and NATO.

Regarding Obama – do not be deceived by him.

Question: Can you tell us about your daily life?

I don’t like to talk about myself – I am
here for my people. My life is under threat with six assassination attempts. In Afghanistan I must change houses constantly with people that I have known for years and trust with my life. It is like being in prison.

**Question: What about the role of the United Nations?**

Malalai: Now the United Nations has **no good name with my people.** The U.N. attacked Libya. There is massive corruption in my country - some officials say that during the winter there is no way to reach people with aid money, which is true, so they pocket the money.

**Question: What is the attitude of Afghans toward Islam?**

Malalai: Most of us are Muslim but **you must be aware** that most of us are not political fundamentalists. People confuse Islam with political fundamentalism. I strongly believe in secularism and a democratic, independent government. We have a beautiful constitution that gives freedoms of press, religion, and speech. Our constitution is not perfect, especially with respect to women’s rights, but it is beautiful. We condemn those who say that you should or should not pray. Education is the key.

Helen Jaccard and Gerry Condon; Helen and Gerry are traveling throughout Europe, networking with peace and justice activists as they go. You can follow their adventures at [www.mobileactivist.blogspot](http://www.mobileactivist.blogspot).

---

**JACOB GEORGE**

“**A RIDE TO THE END: THE BIKES NOT BOMBS TOUR**”

*Veterans for Peace* (Winter 2012). Jacob George’s ARTTE and his return to Afghanistan. See the ARTTE newsletter at [www.operationawareness.org](http://www.operationawareness.org). Contact ARTTE at: [a.ride.till.the.end@gmail.com](mailto:a.ride.till.the.end@gmail.com)

April 10, 2012

**Subject: Want the secrets to highly successful events?**

Attend our webinar.

Learn how to save time, effort and money on your events. View this email in a web browser.
Classes, parties, seminars, fundraisers. No matter what kind your organization puts on, you'll get invaluable event success tips with our FREE live webinar, "The Nonprofit Event Management Success Formula: Planning and Promotion."

Our expert in-house host will show you how to:
Create buzz around your event with a compelling communication plan
Increase registration and attendance via online and social sharing tools
Get donations from non-attendees
Use events as a referral engine to find new members and donors
Measure and understand the results you get
Bring your questions. We'll bring the answers.
Come learn the master formula of event success!
Join Us For:
The Nonprofit Event Management Success Formula: Planning and Promotion;
Date: Tuesday, April 24, 2012
Time: 4PM EST
Constant Contact User Name: omnicenter 12-2842
© 2012 Constant Contact, Inc. All Rights Reserved.