OMNI INDEPENDENCE DAY NEWSLETTER #1, JULY 4, 2012. Compiled by Dick Bennett for a Culture of Peace and Justice.

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.

OMNI NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL DAYS PROJECT


The nationalistic, imperialistic, war-and-warrior-glorifying Days were part of the problem. I came to believe that if world peace was ever to be attained it would be through allegiance, not just to the territory of USA, but to humanity and all sentient beings. Each individual needed to become a Citizen of the World-- Citoyen du monde, Ciudadano del mundo. Thus it seemed necessary for US Armed Forces Day to become Peace Movement Day, US Memorial Day the Day of Mourning for Victims of Wars, US Flag Day: Liberty and Justice for All Day, US Patriot Day: Peaceful Tomorrows Day, and US Veterans Day: World Unity Day. Transformed National Days became part of the peace movement’s search for every opportunity to counter the warfare state.

So it is very necessary to change the jingoistic 4th of July to Independence Day for the values of the Declaration of Independence and liberty for all the people of the world instead of bombs bursting in air.

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July 4--Celebrating America & Making It Interdependence Day
July 3, 2012
Tikkun/Network of Spiritual Progressives
info@spiritualprogressives.org via uark.edu
to jbennet [Actually an Interdependence Day already exists—September 12, and an Interdependence Movement: In 2011 it was celebrated around the world. See OMNI’s Interdependence Day Newsletter Sept. 12, 2011. Perhaps July 4 could be called Independence/Interdependence Day! Dick]

A note from Rabbi Michael Lerner, chair, the interfaith Network of Spiritual Progressives www.spiritualprogressives.org RabbiLerner.tikkun@gmail.com
Faced with July 4th celebrations that are focused on militarism, ultra-nationalism, and “bombs bursting in air,” many American families who do not share those values turn July 4th into another summer holiday focused on picnics, sports, and fireworks, while doing their best to avoid the dominant rhetoric and bombast. This year that kind of celebration is particularly difficult when many of us are deeply upset as we watch our government escalating its policy of drones, still fighting a pointless war in Afghanistan, running elections in which only the super-rich or their allies stand a chance of being taken seriously by the corporate media, watching as the distance between rich and poor becomes ever wider, while education and social programs for the poor get defunded, the Supreme Court reaffirms the right of corporations to donate without limit to political campaigns, the environment reaches beyond the tipping point and nobody even bothers to pretend that they are going to do something to repair the ecological crisis, and the government passes legislation that in effect does away with habeas corpus and the right of people to a trial by their peers (by legislating life imprisonment without trial for anyone the government suspects of being a foreign operative, including US citizens), and dispirited by the lack of vision of the Democratic Party, and the disunity and nit-picking on the Left which seems to only know what it is against but has not yet developed a coherent vision of what it is for! Oy.

That's why we've developed a July 4th celebratory program that you can draw from (and songs--see the bottom of this note) to create for yourself and your friends and/or family a celebration that will have meaning to you. We wish to affirm what is good in America without ignoring its problems, and to affirm a vision of hope that transcends this moment in 2012 and its disappointments. And we can even celebrate that some people who didn't have medical coverage will now, after the Supreme Court decision last week to allow the Obamacare plan to be implemted, and before the Republicans find a way to eviscerate it, have that coverage--a concrete step towards "The
Caring Society--Caring for Each Other and Caring for the Planet" that is the goal of the Network of Spiritual Progressives (which is also welcoming to atheists and agnostics and anyone else who wants a world based on love and generosity).

We in the Network of Spiritual Progressives believe that avoiding July 4 or turning it into nothing more than a picnic with friends is a mistake for progressives. There is much worth celebrating in American history that deserves attention on July 4th, despite the current depravity of those who lead this country, though the celebration-worthy aspects of our society are rarely the focus of the public events.

We also acknowledge that in the twenty-first century there is a pressing need to develop a new kind of consciousness — a recognition of the interdependence of everyone on the planet. A new revolution is necessary — one in which our actions reflect a realization that our well-being depends on the well-being of everyone else on the planet and of the planet itself.

We’ve designed the following material as a possible guide for individual families or for public celebrations that share the values we hold. We hope that families will reflect on the themes raised in this holiday guide at their celebrations, and that churches, synagogues, unions, community organizations, and neighborhood associations will incorporate this material into their public celebrations of July 4th.

This is the equivalent of a Passover Haggadah, the guide to doing a Passover Seder, only designed for an interfaith and secular humanist community like the Network of Spiritual Progressives. Please feel free to use any part of it or all of it--but also please urge your friends and family to join our Network of Spiritual Progressives at www.spiritualprogressives.org so we can afford to keep doing this kind of work!!!

Guide to a Communal or Family Celebration of July 4 Inter-Dependence Day

Celebrating What Is Good about the United States of America

(Go around your picnic table, or your July 4th gathering and have each person read a paragraph until everyone has been able to do so, and then repeat that process till you've read aloud through this whole thing. Feel free to cut, add, or in other ways change this approach.

Today hundreds of millions of Americans will celebrate all that is good in the history of the United States of America. Even though we know there is much to criticize about America (including the use of the word “America” as synonymous with the United States, thereby ignoring Canada, Mexico, and Central and South America) there is also much to celebrate.

Today we mark the signing of the Declaration of Independence, a document that still inspires many Americans today. We’re going to read the declaration aloud. As we do, listen for those ideas that you
find inspiring or resonant or in some other way pertinent for our lives in twenty-first-century America.

Unfortunately, the high ideals expressed in the Declaration, “that all men are created equal and endowed with their creator with certain inalienable rights, among them life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” were not actually put into practice when the Constitution was created and the United States came into existence. The word “men” was applied not in a general sense to include women, but rather to only include men. And, in fact, for the first decades of our country, the only people who could vote were white men who owned property. Worse, slavery was permitted and African Americans were counted as 3/5 of a European American in the census, which determined how many people lived in a given area who deserved representation in the Congress. Native Americans — those who had survived the near genocide of European settlement — did not figure at all in these equations. Some of these distortions got rectified through the democratic process that had been set up by the founders of our country. History books focus on the people who were in power as if all change comes from those in positions of authority. The truth is, though, that much of what we love about America was created by ordinary citizens. Often they encountered resistance from those in power; sometimes they found allies in power who joined in the struggle.

At this celebration, let’s give thanks for the ordinary and extraordinary Americans whose struggles brought about those changes. As I read each of the following, let’s enjoy a bite of food, raising our forks each time in celebration of their achievements!

To the waves of immigrants from all parts of the world who struggled to accept each other and find a place in this country.

To the escaped slaves and their allies — particularly Quakers, evangelical Christians, and freedom-loving secularists — who built the underground railroad and helped countless people to freedom.

To the coalitions of religious and secular people — women and men, black and white — who built popular support for the emancipation of the slaves.

To the African Americans and allies who went to prison, lost their livelihoods, and were savagely beaten in the struggle for civil rights.

To the working people who championed protections like the eight-hour day, minimum wage, workers’ compensation, and the right to organize, often at great personal cost to them.

To the immigrants who fought against “nativist” tendencies and refused to close the borders of this country to new groups of immigrants, and who continue to support a policy of “welcoming the stranger” just as this country opened its gates to their ancestors when they were the immigrants and strangers, and to all who fight for the safety and decent treatment of immigrants.

To the women who risked family, job security, and their own constructed identities to shift our collective consciousness about men and women and raise awareness of the effects of patriarchy.
To all of those who risk scorn and violence and often lose their families to lead the struggle against homophobia and for the acceptance of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and queer people.
To those who continue to work for equal access for people with disabilities.
To those who advocate for sensitivity to animals and to the earth itself.
To all of the innovators and artists who have brought so much beauty and usefulness into our lives.
To those who fought to extend democratic principles not only in politics but also in the workplace and in the economy.
To those who developed innovations in science and technology, in literature and art, in music and dance, in film and in computer science, in medical and communication technologies, and in methods to protect ourselves from the destructive impacts of some of these new technologies.
To those who developed psychological insights and increased our ability to be sensitive to our impact on others.
To those who developed ecological awareness.
To those who brought the insights of their own particular religious or spiritual traditions that emphasized love and caring for others and generosity toward those who had been impoverished and sought to turn those ideas not only into a call for personal charity but also into a mission to transform our economic and political systems in ways that would reflect those values.
To those who fought for peace and nonviolence, and who helped stop many wars.
All of that we celebrate in America involved hard-won struggles to overcome entrenched ways of thinking. Adding to the difficulty of the struggle were the struggles among groups of people working for liberation. Sometimes people in oppressed groups would say, “My suffering is more intense or more important than your suffering” to each other, undermining rather than building solidarity. Sometimes one oppressed group was used by the people with power to fight against another oppressed group. Some people in each previously oppressed group would seize their hard-won power and turn their backs on the needs of others, even discriminating against or looking down on others whose struggles had not yet been won. It was sad and shocking when people struggling for peace found that some of their allies were racist or sexist or homophobic or anti-Semitic or anti-Islamic or anti-Christian or held hateful views about all religious people or about all secular people or about all white people or about all men. Sometimes that would lead people to give up. Luckily, many others did not give up, and so the struggles for human freedom dignity, human rights, economic security, and civil liberties were not abandoned.
Those struggles continue today, and it could easily take many more decades before they are fully realized.
But the good news is that many people have retained their basic decency and caring for others. We are surrounded by people who care. True, it’s often hard to show that. When first approached, many people express indifference to the well-being of others. Our economic system encourages selfishness, me-first-ism, “looking out for number one,” and indifference to the ecological and ethical impacts of our activities, and acting counter to those attitudes feels not only unfamiliar but also risky.

Yet underneath all that, most people yearn for a different kind of world, but they think it is “unrealistic” to struggle for what they really believe in, since they are convinced that nobody else shares that desire with them. They momentarily overcame that fear in 2008 by giving a strong majority vote for Obama — allowing themselves to believe that a Democrat who promised “change we can believe in” and told people “yes, we can [build a very different kind of world]” could himself make the difference. What we’ve learned subsequently is that no candidate within this current system is likely to stick to any transformative goals in the face of overwhelming corporate power and the power of the corporate-subservient media unless we can build a powerful movement of us ordinary people to change our system.

This is part of the reason we’ve created a Network of Spiritual Progressives to support each other in building a world that really does reflect our highest values. If peace, social justice, ecological sensitivity, full implementation of human rights, and the creation of a society based on love is “unrealistic,” then we say “screw realism.” Being realistic in a deeper sense is not accepting “reality” as it is presently presented to us.

We want a different kind of world, and we have to engage in nonviolent struggles to build it. And that has always been the way we have won the battles for precisely the things that make us proud of the victories of the American people: it was always people who were told that what they wanted was “unrealistic” and who essentially said “screw realism – we’re going to fight for what is right” who became the real heroes of the American story. Of course, the powerful often obscure that history, and teach us to think that all the human rights and liberties and freedoms were “given to us,” but actually it was precisely the little people like us who made the big changes that have made this country worthy of celebration.

So the NSP is putting forward the ESRA – the Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. If passed, the ESRA would prohibit the use of private monies in national elections, hence removing the need of candidates to raise money from the wealthy and the corporate elites – and have elections publicly financed, but with much less money spent, because ESRA would also prohibit media advertisements in the last three months before an election and require those media to give free and equal time to all major candidates. It would also require corporate social and environmental responsibility by requiring that every large corporation get a new corporate charter once every five years, which would only be granted
to those corporations that could prove a satisfactory history of environmental and social responsibility to a jury of ordinary citizens. And we, the communities who were affected by the operations of that corporation, including its workers, but including anyone whose environment had been shaped by that corporation’s activities, would be able to provide testimony to that jury about how environmentally and socially responsible that corporation had been. So when we at the NSP say that we want to fight for the survival of the planet, we go to the core of contemporary selfishness – the way our economic system encourages the pursuit of profit as the highest goal, and we challenge that way of thinking and that way of organizing a society.

Today we celebrate the moments when the U.S. and the American people have acted not only from self-interest but also from genuine caring. The people of this country have a huge amount of goodness in them, and they’ve shown that side to the world as well. They showed it when they supported the World War II efforts to stop Hitler and the fascists. They showed it when they stopped the war in Vietnam. They showed it when they reacted with revulsion at the torture being done in our name at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo. The majority of Americans today disagree with the war policies of our government, but after the failure of the Obama administration to live up to the peace promises that most Americans thought would be the essence of this administration’s foreign policies, many have given up in despair. That sense of powerlessness must be overcome – but don’t confuse powerlessness with evil intent, because when people felt there was hope, they voted for it, and thought they were going to get a very different kind of world. If in the next elections they allow the country to move to the right, it is more out of despair than out of commitment to an agenda of power and hate. We insist that there is much to be proud of about being an American.

Now let’s take a moment to each share own story about times when we’ve felt proud of the United States or of Americans. [If there is a large group, break it into smaller groups of four or five people. If the group is small, just go around to everyone in the circle. After allocating at least three minutes for each person, resume the larger group conversation.]

We are proud of our country. We love its physical beauty. Many of us come from immigrant families who found refuge here when there were few other societies on the planet that would welcome our ancestors. Let us once again commit to overcoming the fear of the other and cultivating a spirit of generosity and love toward the stranger. We are proud of the people of this country in many of the same ways that we are proud of our own families – not by denying that there are problems, sometimes even overwhelming problems, but that we are still proud and care very deeply about them, and are committed to working through the problems.
Celebrating Global Interdependence

Part of the cherished myth of this country is the notion of the rugged individualist who makes his own way (the rugged individualist is almost always male in this myth) without anyone else’s help. This image was never true. Even on the frontier, people relied on their neighbors, on the animals that provided their food, and later on those who built and operated the railroads, bringing supplies to frontier towns.

Today it is even less possible to be a rugged individualist. We can’t drive on a road, operate an appliance, run water, or make a phone call without benefiting from the work of countless other human beings, some here in the United States and some in other parts of the world.

With the advent of a deeper understanding of how our global environment works, and with the increasing integration of the economies of all countries into a global economy, we’ve come to see that our well-being is linked to the well-being of everyone else on the planet.

Our well-being depends on their well-being, and their well-being depends on our well-being. We are all fundamentally interdependent.

And we’ve learned the same thing about Nature – when we pour poisons into the air, the ground, or the oceans, those toxics eventually come back to hurt us and other people around the world, just as when they do the same it ends up hurting us and not just people who live near them. Yet the ideal of individualism persists, and we’re encouraged to act as if we need no one else, no community support.

We would like to invite all attendees at this table or this celebration to take some time now to comment on the ways you see the archetype of the self-sufficient individualist influencing your own lives or the life of our country. [Conduct small group discussions.]

Despite the persistence of this individualist mindset, our impact on others and theirs on us is huge, and manifests not only in personal and cultural terms but also in relationship to economic and political conditions.

Today, close to 3 billion people (half the people in the world) live on less than $2 a day, and close to half of that number live on $1 a day. Huge numbers of people are starving or very hungry, even as we are reading this and preparing for a good meal and playful celebration. Is it any wonder that some of these people, and those who care about them (even if they themselves are not poor), are very angry at the way the world’s politics and economics get set up?

We don’t think it is good or legitimate when anger gets expressed in violent ways. But we also have to take some responsibility for benefiting from a world order that is so unfair and so cruel.

According to United Nations figures, somewhere between 20,000 and 30,000 children under the age of five will die today, and again tomorrow, and again the next day, because they don’t have the food
and basic medical supplies that could have kept them alive. That’s over 12 million children a year — the equivalent of two Holocausts per year!

We in the Network of Spiritual Progressives want to change all this, both by changing the terms of global trade agreements so that they work on behalf of the poor and the hungry, and by establishing (first in the United States, and then in all the advanced industrial societies) a Global Marshall Plan that would allocate between 1 percent and 2 percent of our Gross Domestic Product each year for the next twenty years toward the goal of ending once and for all domestic and global poverty, homelessness, inadequate education, and inadequate health care.

On this celebration of our interdependence, we want to reaffirm our shared commitment to these goals and commit to working with the Network of Spiritual Progressives on best ways to achieve these goals. We are proud that our idea for the Global Marshall Plan was introduced into the House of Representatives as House Resolution 157 by Hon. Keith Ellison (the first Muslim in the House) and was co-sponsored by Hon. Emmanuel Cleaver, Hon. Barbara Lee, Hon. James Moran, Hon. John Conyers, Hon. Dennis Kucinich, and others. The list is growing — ask your representative in Congress to become a co-sponsor by contacting the office of Keith Ellison.

The key to our alternative, what we call the Strategy of Generosity, is our commitment to re-establish trust and hope among the peoples of the world so that we might begin to reflect and act coherently on ending world poverty in our lifetimes and saving the global environment from the almost certain destruction it faces unless we reverse our policies and give highest priority to protecting the earth. Instead of asking, “What serves the interests of American economic and political geo-power best?” we want a foreign policy that asks, “What best serves all the people on this planet and best serves the survival of the planet itself?”

A world divided by nationalist struggles and vain fantasies of dominating the resources of the earth on behalf of one or a few of the more powerful nations must be recognized as increasingly insane and self-destructive for the human race. Yet very many decent and moral people, having been talked into accepting the current construction of politics as “the given” within which one must work, end up participating in this insanity and calling it “realistic.” We were not made safer by the war in Iraq, we will not be made safer by the war in Afghanistan or by sanctions and military strikes against Iran, and our ally Israel is not made safer by its Occupation of the West Bank or its blockade of Gaza.

It is an urgent necessity to break through that set of assumptions about what is and what is not realistic so that people can look at the Strategy of Generosity not through the frame of existing, inside-the-beltway assumptions or the “common sense” thrown at us daily by a corporate-dominated media, but rather through the frame of what the human race and the planet earth urgently need in order to stop the
Insane people who have power at the moment from continuing their disastrous path.

It is a huge delusion to imagine that the insanity of framing our foreign policy only in terms of narrowly conceived American interests is somehow confined to one political party or one set of candidates for office—it is a shared insanity that must be challenged in every part of our political thinking, and it is just as likely to be articulated by people with whom we agree on many other issues as by people who are overtly reactionary or overtly ultra-nationalistic.

We are calling for a **Strategy of Generosity** to replace the Strategy of Domination as the best path to Homeland Security. Building that Strategy of Generosity requires that we reconnect with the human capacity to recognize the other as an embodiment of the sacred, or, in secular language, as fundamentally valuable for who they are and not as only instrumentally valuable for what they can do for us.

Recognizing the other as sacred reflects a pre-reflective, pre-nationalist connection between people—and that must become the center of our campaign for peace and environmental sanity. The bonds of caring among human beings can and must be fostered by our policies.

So although we can emphasize that it is in our own interests as humans to recognize that our individual and societal well-being depends on the well-being of everyone else on the planet, and sometimes will frame part of the argument for the Global Marshall Plan in those terms, we have to emphasize as well that our commitment to the **Global Marshall Plan** is not only because it could save the planet from nuclear and conventional wars and jumpstart the process of global environmental planning, but also because it reflects our deepest truth: the Unity of All Being and our commitment to care for each other as momentary embodiments of the God energy (or in secular terms, the goodness and love and generosity) of the Universe at its current stage of evolutionary development.

We wish to foster an ethos of caring and love for others because it is ethically and spiritually right to do so, not only because it is instrumentally the only sane policy for saving the planet and saving the lives of our children and grandchildren.

The **Global Marshall Plan** is the first step toward providing the sense of mutual trust that will allow for the next step needed by humanity in the twenty-first century: a global plan for how to allocate the world’s resources and regulate what is put into the environment by individuals and corporations. We cannot save the planet from ecological destruction if we are not willing to develop a coherent rational plan and then use it to guide our use of the resources of the planet. Such a global plan will not be workable until the peoples of the world truly understand their interdependence.

Our celebration of Interdepedence Day is an important part of the process of building a new consciousness. For that reason, we need to ask each other now to make a pledge to spend some time this summer taking around our petition of support for the **Global Marshall Plan**.
and for the Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. We ask you to spend time collecting signatures of endorsement, getting your congressional representatives and U.S. senators to back these measures (they are around now for a week), plus getting everyone you know to sign the Global Marshall Plan and the Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment petition.

Our interdependence with the world goes is deep and dramatic. Every human being on the planet is valuable, created in the image of God, fundamentally deserving of love, caring, kindness and generosity. We know that there is a huge cultural and intellectual richness in the variety of cultures, religions, spiritual practices, music, literature, and shared wisdom of the societies that make up our world. On this Interdependence Day, we not only commit to helping improve the material conditions of the rest of the world, but also to learning from the rest of the world. We approach this task in a spirit of humility, aware that we in the United States have sometimes appeared to the rest of the world as a big bully and not as a society genuinely interested in sharing its cultural and intellectual and material gifts or in learning from others about their own particular cultural and spiritual heritages.

The impression of arrogance is particularly intense at this historical moment when the war in Iraq and the attempts by the U.S. to manipulate other countries is so visible to many of the people on our planet, but it will be a problem even after we stop the war in Iraq.

We want to communicate to the peoples of the world our own deep sorrow and repentance at the ways that our wonderful country has taken wrong turns in its foreign policy, and the ways that it has acted with arrogance and insensitivity to the needs of others, and supported an economic system whose insensitivity to the needs of the environment and its preaching of “me-first-ism” and looking at everyone with a “what’s in it for me?” consciousness has already done immense damage.

We are happy to celebrate this Interdependence Day on Independence Day for the United States. Some of us wish to invoke God’s blessing on our country and will do so now. But before we go there, we also wish to invoke God’s blessings on all people on our planet and on the planet itself. We know that nationalist chauvinism, thinking that we are or can be better than everyone else, and the manic need to be “number one” can lead us into wars and destructive behavior. Instead, we want to bless everyone on the planet, to celebrate with everyone. So we rejoice in the people of this country; we rejoice with them as we celebrate all that is beautiful and good in this country, and at the same time we affirm our deep connection to all people on this planet and invoke God’s blessing on all of us, together, and pray that we soon will see a triumph of a new spirit of kindness, generosity, love, caring for others, ecological sensitivity, and celebration with joy, awe, and wonder at all the good that surrounds us in this amazing universe.
If you choose to model a July 4 celebration on this holiday guide, we invite you also to incorporate songs from the NSP July 4 song sheet, which includes alternative lyrics for songs such as “America the Beautiful” and “Imagine.”

NSP July 4 Song Sheet

**Songs for July 4 from the Network of Spiritual Progressives**


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**HOWARD ZINN**

*Put Away the Flags*

on this July 4, we would do well to renounce nationalism and all its symbols: its flags, its pledges of allegiance, its anthems, its insistence in song that God must single out America to be blessed.

Is not nationalism -- that devotion to a flag, an anthem, a boundary so fierce it engenders mass murder -- one of the great evils of our time, along with racism, along with religious hatred?

These ways of thinking -- cultivated, nurtured, indoctrinated from childhood on -- have been useful to those in power, and deadly for those out of power.

National spirit can be benign in a country that is small and lacking both in military power and a hunger for expansion (Switzerland, Norway, Costa Rica and many more). But in a nation like ours -- huge, possessing thousands of weapons of mass destruction -- what might have been harmless pride becomes an arrogant nationalism dangerous to others and to ourselves.

Our citizenry has been brought up to see our nation as different from others, an exception in the world, uniquely moral, expanding into other lands in order to bring...
civilization, liberty, democracy.

That self-deception started early.

When the first English settlers moved into Indian land in Massachusetts Bay and were resisted, the violence escalated into war with the Pequot Indians. The killing of Indians was seen as approved by God, the taking of land as commanded by the Bible. The Puritans cited one of the Psalms, which says: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee, the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the Earth for thy possession."

When the English set fire to a Pequot village and massacred men, women and children, the Puritan theologian Cotton Mather said: "It was supposed that no less than 600 Pequot souls were brought down to hell that day."

On the eve of the Mexican War, an American journalist declared it our "Manifest Destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence." After the invasion of Mexico began, The New York Herald announced: "We believe it is a part of our destiny to civilize that beautiful country."

It was always supposedly for benign purposes that our country went to war.

We invaded Cuba in 1898 to liberate the Cubans, and went to war in the Philippines shortly after, as President McKinley put it, "to civilize and Christianize" the Filipino people.

As our armies were committing massacres in the Philippines (at least 600,000 Filipinos died in a few years of conflict), Elihu Root, our secretary of war, was saying: "The American soldier is different from all other soldiers of all other countries since the war began. He is the advance guard of liberty and justice, of law and order, and of peace and happiness."

We see in Iraq that our soldiers are not different. They have, perhaps against their better nature, killed thousands of Iraq civilians. And some soldiers have shown themselves capable of brutality, of torture.

Yet they are victims, too, of our government's lies.

How many times have we heard President Bush and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld tell the troops that if they die, if they return without arms or legs, or blinded, it is for "liberty," for "democracy"?

One of the effects of nationalist thinking is a loss of a sense of proportion. The killing of 2,300 people at Pearl Harbor becomes the justification for killing 240,000 in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The killing of 3,000 people on Sept. 11 becomes the justification for killing tens of thousands of people in Afghanistan and Iraq.

And nationalism is given a special virulence when it is said to be blessed by Providence. Today we have a president, invading two countries in four years, who announced on the campaign trail last year that God speaks through him.

We need to refute the idea that our nation is different from, morally superior to, the other imperial powers of world history.
We need to assert our allegiance to the human race, and not to any one nation.


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The Shalom Report

Independence Now!! -- From Corporate Domination

Resources for the Fourth of July

[Bold added by Dick]

Dear Folks, Below the 13-starred Flag that for many Americans symbolizes resistance to tyranny, you will find a new “Declaration of Independence from Corporate Domination.” We recommend it for study during the days before and after the Fourth of July, and in its spirit we welcome to Philadelphia the Occupy national gathering.

Beneath the Declaration you will find three questions for exploration as we read it, along with guides to other material, ranging from the Biblical passage setting forth History’s first limits on the powers of a king, to the Seneca Falls Declaration on Women’s Rights (July, 1848); Frederick Douglass’ speech about the meaning of July 4 in a slave-owning society (1850), and Emma Goldman’s New Declaration of Independence (July 1909).

New Declaration of Independence from Corporate Domination

We hold these truths to be self-evident:

That all men and women are created equal, endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.

That chief among these are life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, and the sharing of a Beloved Community throughout our planet;

And that to achieve the actual living of these rights, we must ensure --

• honorable jobs with living wages and income, based on livable hours:

• a rhythm of work and rest that frees time for family, neighborhood, citizenly service, and the spirit;

• a life-enhancing share of the earth's abundance:

• ascertaining the consent of the governed through democratic elections not controlled by wealth;
• pure water, air, and food, and the preservation of open space, wilderness, and the multitude of species;

peace among all peoples;

• and responsible relationships amidst the whole web of life upon this planet.

We affirm that governments, corporations, and other institutions are founded solely to secure these rights and uphold these responsibilities, deriving their just powers from the consent of those they govern and whose lives they shape.

We affirm that at the present time, the power of large corporations -- especially those in banking, the military-industrial complex, health care, and fossil fuels -- is dominating many branches and aspects of the American government and deeply damaging the American future;

And therefore we demand:

1. Actual full employment with a living income for all on the basis of a 32-hour work week.
2. Universal health care on the model of Medicare for all
3. Restoration of full Congressional control over declaration or initiation of any use of armed force, as well as adherence to the United Nations Charter’s prohibition of all war other than immediate self-defense; the reduction and redirection of US military spending to meet the needs of defense, not corporate subsidies or foreign entanglements; and the redirection of funds now wasted beyond those needs to meeting the urgent civilian needs of the American people and of poverty-stricken regions of the world
4. Strong laws to prevent global climate disaster by capping greenhouse-gas emissions; ending all off-shore oil drilling by July 4, 2015; and swiftly moving the US and world economy from fossil-fuel dependence to renewable energy
5. Laws requiring that all large corporations that do any business in the United States be publicly reviewed at seven-year intervals by a jury of citizens which has the power to cancel the corporate charter, so as to ensure and enforce that these corporations are meeting the needs and balancing the interests of their stockholders, workers, customers, the environment, and society as a whole
6. A Constitutional amendment to pay for all election campaigns solely by public contributions by the US or the states, and contributions from natural persons, i.e. actual human beings, under limits set by Congress
7. Abolition of the filibuster in the U S Senate

And to the achievement of these goals, through our covenant with each other and with the help of the sacred Interbreathing of all life, we pledge our hopes, our commitment, our nonviolent action, and our sacred honor.

^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^

We suggest that during the next several days, including religious gatherings this Friday, Saturday, and Sunday and on the Fourth of July itself, this Declaration become a central text
for engaged study. Three questions:

§ Does the vision of the Beloved Community set forth here square with our own values? How might we change it?

§ Is the general statement of domineering behavior by the powerful 1% accurate and adequate? What specifics would we name?

§ By what nonviolent forms of action -- voting, lobbying, sit-ins, boycotts, vigils, mass marches, strikes, etc. -- can we end these transgressions and bring the Beloved Community closer to reality?

For additional resources to study, including history’s first limits on the powers of a king, in Deuteronomy 17: 14-21 (usable as a festival Torah reading on July 4); the original Declaration of Independence with trope marks as a chantable Haftarah, arranged by Cantor Jack Kessler, for use on the Shabbat nearest July 4; the Seneca Falls Declaration on Women’s Rights (July, 1848); Frederick Douglass’ speech about the meaning of July 4 in a slave-owning society (1850), and Emma Goldman's New Declaration of Independence (July 1909), click to our Website here.

With blessings of freedom, justice, peace, and the planetary Beloved Community -- Arthur

Please strengthen our transformative work by donating here.

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The Shalom Center
6711 Lincoln Drive
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**Independence from Dirty Energy**

Sam Parry, Environmental Defense Action Fund takeaction@edf.org via uark.edu
7-4-12 to jbennet

Dear Dick,

Fight Back Against the Dirty Energy Industry’s War on Your Clean Air and Climate Future.

35,000 daily heat records have been set across America in the last year alone. Can this pattern of wild and violent weather patterns — which climate scientists have long predicted — simply be coincidence?

We need to stabilize our climate now. That’s why I urge you to take advantage of this special
$2-for-$1 matching gift opportunity.

Your donation will be TRIPLED with a $2-for-$1 match by an anonymous EDAF Trustee funding our climate and energy programs. So your $25 investment becomes $75, your $50 investment becomes $150, and so on.

But, the $2-for-$1 match deadline is midnight, July 6th. So, please donate today to triple your impact and fight back against the Dirty Energy Lobby assault on our clean air and climate future. [https://secure2.edf.org/site/Donation2?idb=0&df_id=7526&7526.donation=form1&autologin=true&utm_source=EDF%20action%20network&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=donation&JServSessionIdr004=f61rbxl5t3.app341b](https://secure2.edf.org/site/Donation2?idb=0&df_id=7526&7526.donation=form1&autologin=true&utm_source=EDF%20action%20network&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=donation&JServSessionIdr004=f61rbxl5t3.app341b)

Extreme weather is affecting nearly every region of the U.S. We're deeply concerned about our supporters who are experiencing these effects first hand: record heat and power outages in the East, destructive wildfires prompting mass evacuations in Colorado and other parts of the Southwest, the tropical storm that flooded much of Florida and other parts of the Southeast.

That's why I am outraged by the Dirty Energy Lobby's continued disregard for our planet.

If you think the threat isn't real, consider this: more than 80 percent of 2012 Super PAC spending by groups like the Koch Industries has gone to ads about energy. Not health care, not jobs, not government spending — energy.

The goliaths of the fossil fuel industries, with their backs against history's wall, know this could be their last chance to knock out the clean energy movement.

Thank you for your support,
Sam Parry
Director of Membership

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Bill moyers confronting contradictions 7/1/12
Post on Sunday, July 01, 2012 11:01:49 PM by MaryLou1

Full Show: Confronting the Contradictions of America’s Past June 29, 2012
Bill opens this weekend’s Moyers & Company with a reminder that behind this Fourth of July holiday are human beings, like Thomas Jefferson, who were as flawed and conflicted as they were inspired, who espoused great humanistic ideals while behaving with reprehensible racial discrimination. That conflict – between what we know and how we live – is still a struggle in contemporary politics and society.

No stranger to the contradictions of history and their racial touchpoints is Bill’s studio guest Khalil Gibran Muhammad, head of the New York Public Library’s Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and author of The Condemnation of Blackness. Muhammad and Moyers discuss the importance of confronting the contradictions of America’s past to better understand present issues of race and equality.

TORTURE VIOLATES US AND INTERNATIONAL LAWS

How the US Rendered, Tortured and Discarded One Innocent Man by Clara Gutteridge.

[Actual title in this no. of The Nation: “Is There Freedom After Torture?” D]

In fall 2009, I found myself in a Tanzanian hotel lobby, sitting across from Suleiman Abdallah, a lanky man with a goofy smile and a broken tooth. Over the next few days, he would describe in excruciating detail how he had been captured in Mogadishu in 2003 by a Somali warlord and handed over to American officials, who had him rendered via Kenya and Djibouti to Afghanistan for five years of detention and torture. Imprisoned in three different US facilities, Suleiman had been unceremoniously released from Bagram Air Force Base the year before, with a piece of paper confirming his detention as well as his innocence. By the time I met him, he was a free man, living with his mother and attempting to rebuild his life.

Body Block - Left

About the Author
Clara Gutteridge
Clara Gutteridge is a human rights investigator who documents national security–related abuses in the East and...

Related Topics
Bagram Air Force Base Djibouti Kenya Nairobi Social Issues Stone Town Suleiman Abdallah United States War Zanzibar

I had first come across Suleiman’s case in 2006. At that time my work at the British legal charity Reprieve involved searching for information about prisoners who had been
“disappeared” by the United States in the “war on terror.” Finding people was like assembling a jigsaw puzzle for which one had first to hunt for the pieces. Evidence of Suleiman’s existence was available only in fragments: a 2003 CNN report that one Suleiman Abdallah had been captured by Somali and Kenyan security personnel; other media reports suggesting that there had been help from plainclothes American officers and a notorious Somali warlord named “Mr. Tall.” A subsequent report placed Suleiman in Kenya, whose security minister announced that he was to be flown to the United States for trial, for offenses related to the 1998 embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam.

In fact, Suleiman never arrived in the United States, and none of the authorities ever disclosed his whereabouts. Suleiman joined the **growing list of disappeared prisoners** held at undisclosed locations with no access to a lawyer, tracked by a handful of global NGOs.

As in other countries caught in US crosshairs following the attacks of September 11, 2001, a **bounty system** emerged in Somalia in 2002, whereby people were captured by local warlords and sold to the CIA as “terror suspects” in return for cash. In lawless Somalia, anyone without local protection is highly vulnerable; as with many others, the main operating factor in Suleiman’s abduction appears to have been that he was a foreigner with few local connections.

As East Africa’s quiet war on terror became an increasing focus of my work, Suleiman’s file grew steadily more intriguing. Shuttled through the global system of secret US prisons, he remained mostly invisible. His name appeared in the margins of a confession barred by a Kenyan court in 2005 for having been obtained through torture. A 2007 report from West Point suggested that upon capture Suleiman was initially presented to the CIA as Fazul Mohammed, a Comorian terror suspect who was eventually killed by Somali police in
Mogadishu last year. Elsewhere, media reports confirmed that as a young man, Suleiman’s nickname was “Travolta” because of his love of dancing.

But I still had no idea where Suleiman was being held. My questions probing his whereabouts evoked only blank faces from the former US prisoners I interviewed around the world. Finally, in 2008 I learned “off record” that Suleiman was being held at Bagram by American troops. About a year later, I discovered that he had been released. I arranged to visit him at his home on the Indian Ocean.

* * *

At our first meetings in Stone Town, the crumbling capital of Zanzibar, Suleiman would turn up wild-eyed, refusing food because eating upset his stomach. We soon forged a routine of driving together into the bush, where, he said, he could find peace. On our first trip, Suleiman drove to a derelict underground prison that had once been used by Arab slave traders, a dungeon that presumably resembled the first place he was held in Afghanistan, a secret prison he called “The Darkness.”

When Suleiman arrived there, he thought he was back home in Zanzibar, so overwhelming was the distinctive smell of the coral reef. (A clinical psychologist would later explain that olfactory hallucinations are a common response to extremely stressful situations. They are the brain’s way of making one think there is something familiar to hold on to.) In fact, Suleiman was thousands of kilometers from his familiar Indian Ocean reefs, in an underground prison in central Afghanistan.

“It was pitch black, with constant noise and not enough food,” he recalled. His American interrogators would pour freezing cold water on him and beat him, saying, “We know you are
a sea man, but here we have more water than out there in the sea. It never stops raining here.” Suleiman also describes being hung from the ceiling in the “strappado position,” slung in chains so that his toes just touched the floor. He also says American interrogators would take the ablution jug (used by Muslims for ritual cleansing before prayer), and stick its long spout up his rectum.

In mid-2003, Suleiman arrived at Bagram, where he was ordered to stand within the outline of a square drawn on the floor. “>From today onward, your name is 1075,” the American guards told him. “You are in our box, and we have five basic rules: One: No talking. Two: Don’t look around. Keep your face down. Three: Don’t touch anything around the cage. Four: Don’t speak. Five: Don’t run.” Later, one of the guards looked at tall, skinny Suleiman and said, “You must be related to Snoop Dogg. Maybe he’s your father.” After this Suleiman’s name at Bagram was Snoop Dogg.

At Bagram, Suleiman never saw the sun, only the constant, blinding lights hanging just above his wire-mesh cage. He says he would look at the birds flying among the rafters, swooping down to peck around his cage. Bird droppings fell from the high ceiling through the mesh. Watching them, Suleiman would think, “Look at me today! I am on the side that the birds ought to be. I am in the cage, and they are free!”

Suleiman was finally released in July 2008. What prompted the decision is unclear. Authorities most likely realized that he had little intelligence to offer and posed no threat. So they let him go.

***

In the early days after his release, Suleiman hardly slept. Walking along an empty Zanzibar
beach, Suleiman described how he would wake at night, panicking that he was back at Bagram. The only way he had found to ease his anxiety after a flashback was to play with the baby rabbits his family kept in a hutch in the yard. Shrugging, Suleiman explained that his family told him he was crazy for playing with rabbits in the middle of the night.

In the spring of 2010, Suleiman met with an American legal team, along with Kenyan and American medics who specialize in assessing and treating victims of torture. Suleiman had reached out in a plea for help rebuilding his life. The purpose of their trip was to conduct a medical evaluation and discuss his legal options. Sondra Crosby, a Boston-based medical doctor who works with Physicians for Human Rights, describes the clinical evaluation as "unorthodox, to say the least."

“We had to conduct the assessment over two days in a hotel room, because in Zanzibar we had no access to clinical facilities," she recalls. “The litany of abuses described by Suleiman included severe beatings, prolonged solitary confinement, forced nakedness and humiliation, sexual assault, being locked naked in a coffin and forced to lie on a wet mat, naked and handcuffed, and then rolled up like a corpse. It was extremely tough. There were times when both of us clinicians, and the patient, broke down in tears.”

Suleiman’s legal options were few. “There is currently no political or judicial avenue available to a person like Suleiman who has been wronged by the United States," explains attorney and professor Joe Margulies, author of Guantánamo and the Abuse of Presidential Power. “In limited circumstances, like prisoners at Guantánamo, people can seek their release in court, but no one can seek anything more than that.” Under both the Bush and Obama administrations, he notes, “any suggestion that the US should compensate an innocent man for the wrong done to him is a complete nonstarter.”
In theory, Suleiman could have sued one of the regional states—Djibouti or Kenya—for their complicity in his rendition and torture. But weak, slow-moving and overburdened legal systems make this option unlikely to yield any tangible benefit.

Regardless, in the face of such evident suffering, a principally legalistic response felt insufficient. “It was difficult to leave Suleiman after having uncovered such desperate need and having no available resources to alleviate his suffering,” Crosby recalls. So, scattered across three continents, with minimal funding and lacking access to the proper facilities, a support team comprising members of Reprieve, Physicians for Human Rights and the Independent Medico-Legal Unit (IMLU), a Kenyan NGO, cobbled together ad hoc basic treatment for Suleiman. Antidepressants were mailed to him, and an IMLU psychologist made regular trips from Kenya to meet with him. Crosby has continued to keep in touch with him by telephone, and has developed a relationship of trust against significant odds.

Three years following his release from Bagram, despite being found to “pose no threat to the United States,” the stigma of being a former detainee continues to haunt Suleiman. Like former Guantánamo prisoners, whose mobility is forever restricted and who become immediate suspects during any terror threat, Suleiman, and men like him, are stuck indefinitely with the nebulous label of “terror suspect.” For Suleiman, this is a significant hobble on his recovery. He has been advised not to travel to Kenya, as this could result in his disappearance or rendition once again, so he has been unable to travel to the regional torture rehabilitation center in Nairobi for proper medical treatment. He lives an isolated existence in Stone Town, where many people are afraid to associate with him, and he lacks the confidence and emotional resources to build relationships.

“Suleiman’s post-traumatic stress disorder left him unable to work and without means to
support himself," says Crosby. "His lack of self-sufficiency has led to further depression and feelings of inadequacy and shame, because he has to rely on his family for his basic needs."

Crosby is now working with a European psychologist on a plan to take Suleiman to a torture rehabilitation center in Britain for six months of intensive therapy. After that, he will return to Zanzibar, where he will have local support to start a microeconomic project building a small business. She is optimistic: "Now all we need is the funding!"

So far, finding funding has proven difficult. "But more important," says Crosby, "recently, I have detected something new in our communication—hope. Suleiman is now hopeful about his recovery and future. And I am hopeful that it is possible to repair the wounds my country has inflicted."

Clara Gutteridge

White Colonists Sought to Escape King’s Tyranny While Black Slaves Sought to Escape the Colonists’ Tyranny by Joining the King!

Slaves, Pursuing Liberty, Looked to a King


When Patrick Henry declared, "Give me liberty or give me death," his ringing proclamation reached unexpected ears. White patriots were not the only ones in Colonial America who thirsted for freedom. Black slaves, as the war for independence broke out, spied their own opportunity to throw off the chains of oppression, and it lay not with George Washington or the founding fathers, but with the British.

Simon Schama

ROUGH CROSSINGS

Britain, the Slaves and the American Revolution

By Simon Schama

In "Rough Crossings," the British historian Simon Schama offers an impassioned account of the war waged by black Americans against their former masters, and, in the aftermath of
defeat, their long struggle to obtain justice from the British, who had promised liberty and land. It would take years, and a brutal exodus to Nova Scotia and onward to Sierra Leone, before many of them got either.

The shot heard round the world did not pass unnoticed in Virginia. The smoke had barely cleared in Lexington and Concord when hundreds of slaves presented themselves before the beleaguered British governor, Lord Dunmore, and offered to fight in return for their freedom. Dunmore (a slave owner himself) soon organized more than 300 volunteers into a unit he called the Ethiopian Regiment, whose uniforms carried the motto "Liberty to Slaves."

All over the South blacks fled the plantations in droves. A quarter of South Carolina's slave population and a third of Georgia's left, part of a human tide that reached some 80,000 to 100,000 over the course of the war. Many took up arms and fought for the British. . .

NYC pub. a 2nd review June 4, 2006 by Brent Staples, “Give Us Liberty.”

INDEPENDENCE FROM THE ARROGANCE OF US MYTHS
NOTE ON ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE EDITORIAL, JULY 4, 2010.
In the opening three paragraphs the writer makes three erroneous claims.
The US is exceptional. Rather, its Declaration of Independence was restricted to white men, and its history has been imperial: nothing exceptional in either.
“...we’ve never been one of Bismarck’s blood-and-iron nations....” The writer had not read William Blum’s Killing Hope or Rogue State or the dozens of other books recounting the violent US invasions and interventions resulting in the deaths of millions.
“...here we speak American....” The writer should say North American, but one of the consequences of the arrogant belief in US exceptionalism is the way the US population presumes to speak for all the Americas—South, Central included. The title of one of former Senator Fulbright’s books describes the attitude well: The Arrogance of Power. But North Americans do get carried away by the myths abounding from ’76 to 2012. Dick

This 4TH of July, 2012 – Independence for the Afghan People
IVAW webmaster@ivaw.org via uark.edu
to jbennet
Dear James ,
Help this video go viral: This 4th of July – Independence for the Afghan People
Sparked by the March for Justice and Reconciliation at the NATO Summit this past May there is a new growing anti-war movement here in the United States led by the most impacted communities, Afghan civilians and veterans. This emerging movement will have a massive impact on winning a new independence for the Afghan People. That is why on this Independence Day Iraq Veterans Against the War wants to highlight our work with Afghans For Peace and introduce you to our emerging relationship with them through this exclusive interview shot
the day after the march.

Watch the video here and then help it go viral by posting the link to Facebook and sharing with your friends.

http://www.ivaw.org/blog/4th-july-independence-afghan-people

Please donate to help IVAW continue our important work.

In Solidarity,
Aaron Hughes, Organizing

INDEPENDENCE FOR PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

Celebrate July 4th by Taking Action to Support Freedom of Speech

Dear Dick,

As we mark our country’s independence today, we recall the ringing, aspirational words of the Declaration of Independence: “We hold these truths to be self-evident,” that all people “are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

The long struggle for equality in the United States isn’t over. As we continue to struggle today for equality here, our country’s $30 billion in military assistance and our invaluable diplomatic support for Israeli occupation and apartheid denies Palestinians that same equality, the very principle on which our country was founded.

A few weeks ago, the Coalition to Stop $30 Billion to Israel, a member group of the US Campaign, drew attention to how our taxes bankroll Israel’s inequality toward Palestinians. They erected 23 billboards in the Los Angeles area to tell Congress to end aid to Israel.

Guess what? Almost as soon as the billboards went up, the billboard company—CBS Outdoor—took them down.

Why? Could it have been for the laughable reason that CBS Outdoor provided for breaking the contract, which was that we, along with the Coalition to Stop $30 Billion to Israel, set up a petition to thank them for running these ads? Doubtful.

Perhaps it had something to do with the fact that the Anti-Defamation League didn’t take a shine to the ads? Or, maybe, it was because Rep. Howard Berman (D-CA) complained about them in a press release?

Berman, who seems to have had no more important matter to take care of, such as helping to solve the national economic crisis or ending the war in Afghanistan, was agitated because he “must drive past” the billboards “every morning.” And, as Berman noted, he believes that he was elected to Congress by his constituents “in large part to fight for a stronger U.S.-Israel relationship. This has been, and will continue to be one [of] my top legislative priorities in Congress.”

Really, Rep. Berman? According to our website www.aidtoisrael.org, your constituents are paying nearly $57 million of their hard-earned tax dollars from 2009 to 2018 to bankroll Israel’s illegal military occupation. We’re betting that you didn’t ask the 20 percent of families...
with children living below the poverty line in your district whether they sent you to Congress to fund the Israeli military?

Dick, whether Rep. Berman is your Member of Congress or not, we need you to take action this July 4th and stand up for the principle of free speech by signing this petition supporting the message in these censored billboards.

From now until July 9, which is the seventh anniversary of the Palestinian civil society call for boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) against Israel and corporations that profit from its oppression of Palestinians, help us collect 10,000 signatures to deliver to Rep. Berman letting him know that you support sanctions against Israel, including ending U.S. military aid.

This is not just another lame internet petition that won’t go anywhere. We deliver our petitions to their intended targets and put effective political pressure on them. Just last week, we organized a delegation to the State Department headed by Sandra Tamari, a Palestinian-American, who was discriminated against both by Israel and the United States when she was recently denied entry at Ben-Gurion airport.

Together with member groups Jewish Voice for Peace, St. Louis Palestine Solidarity Committee, American Muslims for Palestine, and our friends at the Arab American Institute, we delivered more than 17,000 signatures to the State Department protesting U.S. and Israeli discriminatory policies. Check out the video from Palestine Studies TV as Sandra discusses our meeting with the State Department. http://www.youtube.com/user/PalestineStudiesTV

We’ve got a creative delivery planned for these petitions to Rep. Berman on July 9, but only if we have enough signatures to really show our strength. Help us reach our goal of 10,000 signatures by signing today, and then forwarding it to all your friends, and sharing it on Facebook and Twitter. http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/641/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=11047

Thanks for standing up for free speech, and working to end U.S. aid to Israel!
Sincerely yours, Josh Ruebner