INDEPENDENCE DAY NEWSLETTER #4, JULY 4, 2019.


Compiled by Dick Bennett for a Culture of Peace, Justice, and Ecology

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INDEPENDENCE DAY AND IMPERIALISM
PROTEST AGGRESSION AGAINST IRAN

Dear Friends,

Last month, we held three consecutive No Iran War Peace Protests, and received a large number of supportive Honks for Peace from passing cars each time. We'll continue protesting the war on Iran during the next four Saturdays in July at 11 A.M. to noon in front of the Washington County Courthouse in Fayetteville.

We'll also expand the protests by highlighting the economic warfare of Iran sanctions, and the hidden context of U.S. imperialism. We must help our fellow citizens recognize the Iran war as yet another imperialist war, as well as all the harmful consequences of empire, like causing millions of refugees from the Middle East to Latin America.

We must remember Mark Twain and the Anti-Imperialist League that arose in response to the American annexation of the Philippines in 1898, which killed over 200,000 civilians.

Our protest effort will include a short speech at the beginning of the protest, as well as relevant printed handouts. Additional signs will be created, and participants are encouraged to make their own too.

We want to increase the advertising, including a newspaper ad. Please consider making a donation.

Thank you,
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3274 Lee Ave., Fayetteville, 72703

ADG REPORTS President Trump’s Independence Day
“The military hardware is moving into place... Under White House direction, the Pentagon was arranging for an Air force B-2 stealth bomber and other warplanes to conduct flyovers .... Navy – F35 and F-18 fighter jets, the Navy Blue Angels aerial acrobatic team, Army and Coast Guard helicopters and Marine V-22 Ospreys.” No overall cost estimate, but a B-2 bomber costs $122,311 an hour to fly, and a F-22 fighter $65,128. Two Bradley fighting vehicles are in place where Trump will deliver a speech, and two 60-ton Army Abrams battle tanks have been sent by rail. And that’s not all; e.g., many military officials will attend. Trump tweeted that military leaders are “thrilled” by the display of US military power. But privately some said it politicized the armed forces, and the cost of a million dollars was a waste.

And protesters will be there too: “an inflatable version of the president that depicts him as a baby in a diaper,” though not allowed to fly. Trump tweeted: “It will be the show of a lifetime!"

And at the end of the newspaper report the authors directly criticized the Trumpian bias of his upcoming speech, and reminded readers of the military’s role of defending the Constitution, not the elected leader.

Anti-Militarist Reflections on July 4th, 2019
War Resisters League
Dear Community,

As battle tanks are being deployed on the DC streets to celebrate this nation’s founding, I, like many of you, am reflecting on the past few months of this country’s imperialist aggression.

The night before the Hanoi summit in February, I confided in a friend: I believe the Korean War will end tomorrow. Last year, my family took to the internet and rewatched the viral clip of Kim Jong-Un and Moon Jae-In walking hand in hand across the border that shattered the peninsula seventy years ago. We were awestruck.

After everything Koreans have experienced - the separation of families, US backed dictatorships, relentless sanctions, and brutal repression of the left - the shift from imminent war to the suspension of US-ROK military exercises has pushed the boundaries of my imagination. **Reunification and the end of war could all be real in my lifetime because of the transnational organizing of Korean women and workers.**

The war did not end that day. The US refused to lift its sanctions on the DPRK, so the summit abruptly ended and no agreement was reached. Since then, Trump has announced new sanctions on Iran, threatened their people’s “obliteration,” and approved a military strike before suddenly pulling back.

To the dismay of many warmongering Democrats and media pundits, Trump also crossed the DMZ to meet with Kim Jong-Un. The news coverage by and large sidelined how Moon Jae-In facilitated this meeting, and the fact that the majority of South Koreans are supportive of denuclearization talks. Meanwhile, ⅓ of Americans approve of a preemptive nuclear strike on the DPRK if it tests a long-range missile capable of reaching the US, even if it means one million Koreans will die.

Trump is clearly, undeniably pro-war, which will remain true even if more negotiations with the DPRK, said to come in the near future, take place. **However, both liberal and right-wing Americans rationalize this country’s inherent violence and advocate for militarized national security,** which targets Black and Indigenous peoples, the working class and the poor, immigrants and refugees, queer and trans people, and Muslims.

Though international diplomacy can serve as immediate harm reduction and curb an American preemptive strike on the DPRK, **true Korean peace cannot be achieved as long as this empire remains**, as long as the US military occupies the ROK along with dozens of other lands. It is precisely because the path to peace is deeply incomplete or endangered in the hands of statesmen like Trump that we must organize transnationally, in service of global self-determination for all oppressed peoples. It is invigorating to be part of a group like WRL that names these complexities and actively works to build the power of internationalist movements for justice, peace, and self-determination.
This July 4th reminds me how important it is to annually renew our commitment to dismantling empire, particularly in this country that exceptionalizes itself from denuclearization, and rationalizes the cruel havoc it wreaks generationally on our communities. I have no national pride, but I do have pride in fighting back - and when we fight, we win. I'll be holding my people close today.

Warmly,

Yuni Chang
Field Organizer

INDEPENDENCE DAY AND SLAVERY

Why hasn't Arkansas banned slavery? 7-4-19
RootsAction Team via uark.onmicrosoft.com

Twenty U.S. states' constitutions, including the Constitution of Arkansas, contain the same shortcoming found in the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. They permit slavery, or in the case of Louisiana, "involuntary servitude," as punishment for a crime.

Click here to email your governor and state legislators.

Until recently, Colorado had the same problem, but Colorado has amended its Constitution to ban slavery. Period. No exceptions. Arkansas can do the same.¹

Send a quick email to your state legislators and governor.

Banning slavery is not simply a formality. U.S. prisons market the labor of prisoners and have created financial incentives to maintain that labor force. While prisoners may benefit from training, and may prefer employment to doing nothing, they and society as a whole do not benefit from labor without a living wage, labor without workers' rights, labor that undermines others' wages, and labor that creates motivations to keep more people in prison longer.

That's slavery.

Let's end it.

Paying prisoners for their labor enables them not only to better provide for themselves while in prison, but also to pay bills and unpaid court fees that may have landed many of them in prison in the first place. Compensating prisoners for their labor through a legitimate "Work
Time" system that reduces their sentence grants hardworking prisoners the opportunity to be reviewed early by parole boards -- which also helps state taxpayers.

[Click here to send the following message to those who have the power to ban slavery in Arkansas:]

As a constituent, I urge you to take immediate action to amend our state constitution to ban slavery and involuntary servitude as punishment for a crime, and in all circumstances. While Colorado has amended its Constitution to ban slavery entirely, our state lags behind. Our current Constitution protects and promotes the legal exploitation of people’s labor and human dignity and should be amended immediately.

After signing the petition, please use the tools on the next webpage to share it with your friends.

This work is only possible with your financial support. Please chip in $3 now.

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**JUSTICE INITIATIVE**

**African Demands for Freedom During the American Revolution**

**Was the American Revolution Fought to Save Slavery?**

[Review of *Rough Crossings* by Simon Schama]

by Heather Gray

Justice Initiative

July 4, 2018 [INDEPENDENCE DAY]

**Preface**

Today, July 4, is when Americans celebrate their independence from what they considered the oppressive colonization of Britain. Yet, largely left out of the narrative is that during this same revolutionary period in the 1700s, enslaved Africans were also seeking their independence from the European slave holders and thousands attempted and/or achieved that goal.

While I sent out this article below about the American revolution in 2015, I think it bears repeating, as the theme itself, about the desire for freedom, is always powerful. It is also what we are witnessing with refugees today all over the world as they seek freedom from oppression.

The story is an intriguing one and **British historian**
Simon Schama's book "Rough Crossings: Britain, the Slaves and the American Revolution" (2006) describes it all. But Schama also importantly infers that the American Revolution itself was likely fought or was ultimately won to preserve slavery. Another look at the revolution and its repercussions is essential. 

MORE 
https://ibw21.org/editors-choice/revolutionary-war-slaves-also-sought-freedom/

References
Landers, Jane, Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions (Boston, 2010) Harvard University Press. 

Heather Gray is the editor of the "Justice Initiative" and producer of "Just Peace" on WRFG-Atlanta 89.3 FM covering local, regional, national and international news. She lives in Atlanta, Georgia and can be reached at hmcgray@earthlink.net

Note: Was the American Revolution fought to save slavery? It seems highly likely that was the case. Also, if there is to be a celebration on July 4, acknowledgement needs to be given to thousands of Africans who also fought for their freedom.

The abolitionist movement in Britain was building in the 1700s and became hugely vocal and instrumental in the early to mid-1800s. Regarding this fact, it is important to note that American leaders of the Revolutionary War, such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and others, were
slave owners. In reference to these slave owners, the assumption is that, if America remained a British colony, given the influential and growing anti-slavery movement in Britain, an end of slavery in the American British colony would likely be in the offing. That is certainly not what Washington, Jefferson and others desired. Here is from British scholar Simon Schama about the movements against slavery during this period:

As (Simon) Schama notes, international news about slavery and legal decisions made in Britain, for example, spread like wild fire through the slave populations of the South in the late 18th century. By the time of the Revolutionary War, the Black community in the South and throughout the country, in fact, were aware of the political posturing and opportunities they perceived for gaining their freedom.

Schama also wisely notes that before there was the white revolution in America, Blacks were already engaged in revolutions of their own. Just prior to the American Revolution, there were slave rebellions throughout the Caribbean. Schama describes after 1772 that "Three ferocious and bloody rebellions were underway in Surinam, St. Vincent and Jamaica and all were widely and apocalyptically reported in the North American press." This was largely in areas where the black population outnumbered the whites. (Gray)

Everyone wanted Freedom
It is important to point out that, as mentioned, everyone wanted their freedom and that included, of course, the slaves in America.
George Washington’s slave Harry Washington, for example, also escaped and fought with the British against the Americans.

On November 7, 1775, the British Lord Dunmore offered freedom to African slaves if they fought with the British against the American colonists and the response from Africans was massive:

...some 30,000 slaves had left Virginia; it is also estimated that two-thirds of all slaves in South Carolina had escaped. (Simon) Schama notes that some of the signatories to the Declaration of Independence that (hypocritically) stated "all men are born free and equal" and who lost slaves were: Thomas Jefferson (lost 30 slaves); James Madison, Benjamin Harrison (lost 20 slaves), Arthur Middleton (lost 50 slaves), Edward Rutledge (the youngest signatory who lost slaves as well). (Gray)

For more information about slavery and the American revolution please read my 2011 article "Was the American Revolution Fought to Save Slavery?"

MORE
Heather Gray
July 4, 2019
Justice Initiative
[Gray has written several articles about slavery, food for thought on US 4th of July. –Dick]
Today is the day that we commemorate our American Revolution — the time that we became sick and tired of living under the rule of an unaccountable king and fought to win our freedom.

In modern America, we once again live under the authority of a set of rulers who, instead of representing our interests, write our laws to the benefit of the most economically and politically powerful corporations in the world.

This isn’t just rhetoric; it’s been proven by a Princeton University study which concluded that the opinions of non-wealthy Americans about potential laws have been “statistically insignificant” to bills that passed in Congress over the last 30 years.

The consequences of selling our government to the highest bidder are all around us: expensive and inadequate health care, soaring higher education costs, innocent children in private prisons, rising economic inequality, and a business community willing to invest in a president who uses racism and hate speech for political gain because he gave them a massive tax cut.

That’s why Our Revolution is building a grassroots movement powerful enough to force politicians to fulfill the promise of our founding and act in the best interest of the American people.

For all of our country’s flaws and sins, one thing we have going for us is that embedded in the very DNA of our founding is a profoundly human longing for freedom from tyranny. Over this election cycle, and throughout President Sanders’ terms, our mission is to turn the perception of America taught in schools, that we are a democracy of, for, and by the people, into a reality. To make that possible we need your help.

In Solidarity,
Joseph Geevarghese [Our Revolution]
info@ourrevolution.com

Dick,
FROM RASHIDA

A few days ago, I went with a Group of my fellow members of Congress down to Texas to visit some of the Trump administration’s horrific migrant detention centers.

Today, July 4th, our country celebrates freedom and liberation. But how can we do that when we’re caging innocent people in torture camps along our southern border?

This July 4th, we have a duty to free as many innocent migrant families as we can, as quickly as we can.

Please donate now to local community bond funds, which help reunite migrant families by freeing imprisoned migrant parents held on bond. This is how we can celebrate the kind of society we want to live in.

Our congressional delegation went to Texas to be the eyes for the American people, to tell the truth about what is happening at the border. What we saw was devastating. The look in one father's eyes broke me.

I met with people who’ve come here because they want a better future for their children, like my parents did.

And what is our country doing to human beings who come here without other options, seeking a better life? Dehumanizing them and treating them with deliberate cruelty, to discourage more people from coming.

As my colleagues and I entered each facility, we felt a heavy tension. It was clear as we spoke to mothers and grandmothers, that the culture from within the facilities was rooted in anti-immigrant hate.
It’s hard to describe the deep devastation from being trapped in these conditions. When I touched an expectant mother’s hand or hugged the grandmother —treated them like humans—they teared up. The dehumanization is leading to trauma. I wasn’t prepared for that. I’m still shaken to my core. I don’t know how we can ever make up for the deeply rooted demonization of a whole generation of people.

It will have to start with us. Immigrant bond funds have a long backlog of requests from detainees who are eligible for bail but can’t afford it. And now that a federal judge finally ruled in favor of asylum-seekers on Wednesday, by requiring that they be allowed to seek release from detention through bond hearings, more and more people will be eligible for bail.

So we’re directing people to a central fund managed by the National Bail Fund Network, which will allocate money we raise to immigrant bond funds that are ready and waiting to bail out detained migrants. Thank you.

Despite CBP instructing us not to talk with people on our tour, my brave colleague AOC made her way into a cell and started speaking with women in Spanish, who immediately began sobbing, as she said, “out of fear of being punished [for talking with us], out of sickness, out of desperation, lack of sleep, trauma, despair.” They were only allowed one shower every 15 days, though the CBP allowed them to start bathing—and gave them sleeping bags—once we announced we were coming to visit.

People are dying in these despicable, inhumane conditions, including at least 7 children over the past year—after a decade with no child deaths. We are traumatizing an entire generation of children and their loved ones. Why? All because of the color of their skin and where they were born. All because we have a White House that delights in cruelty and racism.
That's why I'm asking you to donate what you can today to community bond funds, which free our friends and neighbors from immigration detention and make sure they are able to work on their case from a place of freedom.

MOERE

RASHIDAM of 62,537

Veterans For Peace via salsalabs.org

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Critiques:

Emily Kaitz: As veterans and as people who work for justice we value the history of this land that resists oppression, racism, sexism, all forms of hate and imperialism. We honor this long and moral resistance because it is the engine of change that moves us toward a more just and peaceful world.

Rabbi Lerner: At a moment in our history where the U.S. is participating in wars that rage on for decades, building military bases across the globe, caging people at our borders, stripping children from their families and banning people based on their religious identity, we know that resistance and disruption are vital.

Remember: "I do not celebrate the country we are, I celebrate those who struggle for the country we aspire to, and one day will be." -Michael McPhearson

Donate Now!

Money, MC

Public Citizen vs. Citizens United: US To Be a Nation Ruled Not by the Wealthiest Few, But by and for ALL of We the People

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END JULY 4, 2019 INDEPENDENCE DAY NEWSLETTER

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