

**DAVID MICHAEL GREEN** | DISPATCHES FROM THE END OF EMPIRE  
**JOHN W. RUTHERFORD** | A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF A POLICE STATE  
**DIANA JOHNSTONE** | THE IMPERIALIST CRIME COVER-UP

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# ColdType

JUNE-JULY 2011

WRITING WORTH READING

ISSUE 57



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## AGENT OF THE PEOPLE

Why Julian Assange won top journalism award



Cover art: Michael Thompson  
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# ColdType

(FORMERLY THE COLDTYPE READER)

JUNE - JULY 2011 / ISSUE 57

## EDITOR'S NOTE

### Back to the, er, past . . .

This month we've changed our name from *The ColdType Reader* back to the original, and simple, title of *ColdType*. It's the third time we've changed: the first incarnation of *ColdType* was in tabloid printed format; then, after a long hiatus, it became *ColdType2*, an e-magazine inside ColdType.net. After a couple of issues, we switched to the less-confusing *ColdType Reader*. Now, with our 57th issue, we're back where we began: *ColdType*, which will be, I hope, our final change.

– **Tony Sutton**, editor  
editor@coldtype.net

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# Dispatches from the end of empire

David Michael Green is stunned by the hypocrisy, disarray and sheer incompetence as US politicians gear up for the next election

**W**ell folks, there's good news, and there's bad news in America today.

The good news is that people seem to be waking up just a bit to what's being done to them.

The bad news is that it really is just a bit that they're waking up.

The good news is that the Republican Party is showing some serious signs of preparing for self-immolation.

The bad news is that that leaves us with Barack Obama and the other Republican Party as an 'alternative'.

Such is the state of America at the end of empire.

At the end of last month, one of the reddest districts in the country voted to send a Democrat to Congress. There was a special election to fill the seat, after the highly moralistic married Republican who had been holding it previously got busted sending out hunky topless pictures of himself as he trolled for a little babe action on Craigslist. What a shock to find that those who lecture us incessantly about our sexual morality turn out to be, er, somewhat hypocritical about it all, eh?

If you ask me, it's one of the few iron laws of political science. You can bet the house that any politician who makes it his or her business to speak and legislate on your sexuality is, in fact, secretly one of the most

twisted vines in the jungle. Count on it.

But back to our story. A Democrat won the special election in a hugely Republican-leaning district simply by pointing out that her opponent had said that she would have joined almost every other Republican in the House in voting for Paul Ryan's Medicare Massacre. Interestingly, that alone was enough to destroy the GOP candidate in what was otherwise going to be a slam-dunk victory. Then, amazingly, Harry Reid actually stumbled accidentally into going on the offensive for the first time in his life, and forced a vote on the same legislation in the Senate, the very next day. Almost every Republican voted for it there as well.

But they sure didn't want to. Talk about your proverbial rock and a hard place. Your Scylla and Charybdis. These guys are really in a bad way. And, remarkably, because of their own ideological inanity, they are poised to lose a presidential election in 2012 to a guy who by then will have presided over four years of vast unemployment, high gasoline prices, endless wars and unpopular legislation. I mean, think about it. Just how ugly do you have to be to pull off that feat? And all this after having won a crushing victory over Democrats just six months ago.

The problem for Republicans, of course, is Republicans. The problem is that they take their rhetoric and their ideology sorta seriously. Well, that's fine, but sooner or

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## LEADERS OF THE PACK?

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later one would expect Americans to cease hoisting themselves up for their regular voluntary piñata beating. Yes, even in America, where there seems to be almost no imaginable limitation to the depths of political stupidity, you'd think the laws of political physics would ultimately kick in, and, if nothing else, naked self-interest would be enough to shut down the national rape factory that is today's GOP.

For a while there, I was wondering if we hadn't somehow shot through the wormhole into some alternative universe where gravity was inverted or something. As it turns out, what it was instead was that inane voters were more than happy to vote against "wasteful spending", provided that term referred to welfare for negroes and foreign aid for, well, foreigners. Once you start talking about their own gubmint bennies, well then that's a whole 'nuther story, brother.

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**When reality strikes**

Which brings us from the laws of physics to the laws of mathematics. Even the magic of religion is not enough to turn lead into gold, try as one desperately might. If you insist on spending even more for 'defense' than we already do, and if you insist on cutting tax revenues even more than we already have, and if you agree that defaulting on the interest owed from previous borrowing would be a very bad idea, you then come up headlong against a very stiff and well constructed wall otherwise known as basic math. Even by slashing social spending mercilessly, you still cannot remotely balance the budget given the above sacred cow assumptions as your starting point. Indeed, since the Ryan plan calls for slashing taxes even more than they already have been these last thirty years, what Republicans never tell you is that - according to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office analysis - it will actually produce the precise opposite effect to that which is being claimed in order to sell it. It will actually increase debt, not lower it. That's right. When all is said and done, and the smoke clears, seniors will be far sicker

and far deader, in exchange for which the national debt will have only grown fatter. Such a deal.

But the thing for the GOP today is that they have become so rabid that they cannot divorce themselves from their own litmus tests and fairytales, and they are now eating themselves up from within, like the rapacious cancer they in fact truly are. What can you possibly say, this side of Lewis Carroll or Salvador Dali, about a party in which the likes of Newt Gingrich is drummed out for being insufficiently regressive, and just plain lacking in an adequate degree of meanness?

Gingrich, a veritable cartoon of what it means to be a regressive today, pushed the self-destruct button on his own presidential election campaign when he called the Ryan plan "too radical". It's not like the guy all of a sudden found morality or something, notwithstanding (actually, despite) his newly-adopted Catholicism he is placing at the center of his campaign. Gingrich is absolutely capable of being, saying or doing anything in the endless quest to salve his boundless personal insecurities by grabbing the White House. So, rest assured that he didn't make those remarks because he recently got clobbered by the honesty stick or anything like that. What he did was to make a political calculation that killing Medicare was an electoral loser, at least in a general election. He didn't need New York's 26th district to tell him that, though ironically he might not have gotten mugged so violently by his own school of pirana if he had waited to make the same remarks a week later.

Might. Quite likely, though, it still wouldn't matter. There's a certain powerful suicidal tendency to regressive politics today (which - by the way - suits me just fine). They are, of course, completely divorced from logic, empirical evidence, and, therefore, reality, and completely wedded to dogmatic faith in their magical incantations. That's why you have to support the Ryan plan to have a prayer at the Republican nomination, even though it actually

increases deficits, not lowers them. Math no longer matters. Objective analysis is for socialists. Truth is for pissing on when urinals are otherwise unavailable.

Which brings us to an interesting little field test of just how insane America truly is that is likely to play out over the next several years. The nature of this experiment can be boiled down to one more or less simple proposition and one more or less simple question. The former is that it is increasingly clear that no even remotely sane (or, more accurately, honest) person can hope to win the Republican nomination for president. Increasingly, this logic also applies to other races down the ticket, so that even a far-right senator like Bob Bennett can get primaried out of existence for lack of ideological purity. This is why we're seeing the astonishingly hilarious sight of human prostitution machines like Mitt Romney or Tim Pawlenty constantly trying on extremely ill-fitting gladiator costumes, and asking us to forget everything about their histories, in a truly pathetic effort to placate the tea party voters of the GOP, who (especially in early states like Iowa, New Hampshire and South Carolina) will be picking the Republican nominee. Get used to it. This is going to get a lot worse before it gets better. This is the sort of electorate for whom believing that Barack Obama was actually born in America makes you suspiciously Marxist.

So that's the premise. No one who isn't as regressive as The Inquisition and as caustic as sulphuric acid will emerge with the Republican presidential nomination. The much beloved (in hagiographic form, at least) Ronald Reagan could never satisfy these monsters, so tame was he in comparison. So the question then becomes, can such a person hope to win the presidency in the general election? And that is the aforementioned test of American sanity.

The last decade – and really, the last three – have not been so good in that respect. I confess that I have spent most of the last dozen years or so with my jaw firmly attached to the floor, incredulous at the idi-

ocy of which Americans are capable. From impeachment, to Election 2000, to the tax cuts, to Iraq, torture and beyond, I have just been stunned at how unenlightened a people we are capable of being. And it's not a simple matter of policy preference discrepancies, either. It isn't just that I prefer Path A while others prefer the equally legitimate Path B. I'm sorry, but this is about national hallucination. And, worse, we have mostly been doing this tripping during times of relative prosperity, which raises the question of what the country is capable of when things get worse. Like now, for instance.

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**Dissatisfaction sets in**

It's hard to get a good reading on America these days. We are, more than anything, in an extended period of political oscillation which reflects, I think, a fairly profound fundamental dissatisfaction with the direction of the country. In 2002, the electorate went strongly for the Republicans and their fear-mongering campaign against the same foreign bogeymen GOP administrations had just gotten done ignoring or, earlier, even supporting. By 2004, this bit was already getting so tedious that a pair of turds like the Johns Kerry and Edwards could almost win the election (and actually may well have, but for the theft of Ohio) against an incumbent president fighting two wars, bathing in the 'heroic' glow of 9/11 and presiding over a decent economy. The flood-gates then opened in 2006 and 2008, with crushing defeats of Bushism. But these were then quickly followed by the Democratic train wreck of 2010, which seemed a century removed from the election of just two years earlier.

What this represents, I think, is a sort of bratty toddler of an American body politic, badly in need of a diaper change. The little bastard knows that it is unhappy, though it can't quite discern why. It is agitated and acting up in the name of change, but it wants somebody else to take care of the matter. This country is fighting three or four wars at the moment (or is it more? – I'm a professor

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## LEADERS OF THE PACK?

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of international relations, and even I can't keep an accurate count), suffering through the worst and most prolonged economic crisis since the Great Depression, is plunged heavily into debt, and is (not) grappling with the über-crisis of global warming – and that's all just for starters – and yet there were more votes cast recently for American Idol than there were in the 2008 presidential election. Need we say more?

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**Whose democracy?**

Apparently people are angry, but not angry enough to roll their obese American physiques off the couch, turn off the TV's latest episode of "This Or That Cloned Breathless Police Drama!", and actually take ownership of their democracy to the extent necessary to learn about issues and demand credible solutions. Such a combination of angry petulance and a lazy desire to have someone else wave a magic wand and solve the problem is, history has made emphatically clear, quite a fine prescription for disaster. Can you say, "Man on horseback"?

This is the main reason – among very, very many – that the Democratic Party generally and Barack Obama particularly are so disastrous. If no one provides real, constructive solutions, the scary monsters of the right will gladly offer the fake, catastrophic ones. The most charitable reading of Obama is that he seems to believe that affability is what people want in their president. Maybe in the era when Leave It To Beaver was the top show on national television that was true, but certainly not today. People want solutions to personal and national problems, and they want security above all, which has been rapidly eroding under their feet. Hence the electoral oscillations of the last decade, and hence the danger of the present moment.

Very few people will be voting for Obama in 2012, even though he'll get lots of votes. Many of those will be much more against his embarrassingly lame opponent than for his embarrassingly lame self. His two greatest assets in that election will be the Repub-

licans of yesterday and the Republicans of today. Even in a society as politically immature as is America, there does still seem to be some residual memory of the former, in the form of the national horror show known as Bush/Cheney, though still not enough to prevent the remarkable amnesia/dementia of Election 2010.

As to the present, the only folks on the planet capable of making Obama look like a political giant just happen to be the same folks going for the Republican Party presidential nomination. Gingrich? Palin? Romney? These are like the rejected extras for the midget riot scene from "Banana Republic II: The Empire Strikes Out". You know you're talking about a real stinker of a party when everyone's lamenting the fact that Mitch Daniels has decided not to run for president. Apart from the fact that he's bald, has bad skin, is about five foot five, and his wife ditched him to run off with some other guy, who she then later dumped to return to Mitch, somebody was bound to mention during the campaign the slightly inconvenient fact that the guy who would have been leading 'the party of fiscal responsibility' happened to previously preside over a full doubling of the national debt as George W. Bush's Director of the Office of Management and Budget. If a loser like this creates a massive vacuum at the top of the GOP by choosing not run, you know you're looking at a sad sack of a party, indeed. And you are.

I don't think Obama's prospects are great for 2012, though they are probably good for precisely this reason of the nature of his opposition. But I'd say the thing to fear is not so much 2012 as what comes after. Obama is not about solutions, unless, of course, you happen to be a partner at Goldman Sachs. So the oscillations will continue. People will vote for the party not in power – even if they just were a mere two years ago, and even if their solutions are laughable – to try for yet another cheap fix. But it won't work, of course, and each round will breed further desperation. Which will breed further

willingness to accept radical and radically destructive 'solutions'. If you think I'm exaggerating about this, just look at the progression within the Republican Party from Gerry Ford to Ronald Reagan to Newt Gingrich to George W. Bush to Sarah Palin. Trust me, you don't wanna know what comes after that.

But the choices are all merely relative when the empire's in decline. An Obama victory over the forces of madness would represent a mere postponement of the reckoning definitively headed our way, and it's a very angry fellow indeed. The bad news is that even if the GOP loses, it still wins. Only it's called the Democratic Party instead.

It may be the Wisconsin and New York's 26th represent a liberal spring in America, or a long-delayed realization that regres-

sives are not the friends of the middle class. I doubt it. More likely, certain stupid and selfish voters simply revolted from the mantra of slashing government spending when it became their turn to face the meat axe themselves.

But at this point in the history of what has now become a rapidly sinking kleptocracy of a polity, I'd happily settle for even the pathetic politics of self-interest.

Anything that could slow the national pillaging by America's oligarchs would represent a step in the right (that is to say, left) direction. **CT**

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# The search for war

‘War Without End’ appears to be the national slogan of the United States, writes **Norman Solomon**, who’d rather find a peaceful alternative

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**Whether or not the “war on terror” buzz phrase gets official use, the tacit assumption of war without end is now the old normal, again renewed in the wake of Osama bin Laden’s death**  
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**I**n times of war, US presidents have often talked about yearning for peace. But the last decade has brought a gradual shift in the rhetorical zeitgeist while a tacit assumption has taken hold – war must go on, one way or another.

“I am continuing and I am increasing the search for every possible path to peace,” Lyndon Johnson said while escalating the Vietnam War. In early 1991, the first President Bush offered the public this convoluted: “Even as planes of the multinational forces attack Iraq, I prefer to think of peace, not war.” More than a decade later, George W. Bush told a joint session of Congress: “We seek peace. We strive for peace.”

While absurdly hypocritical, such claims mouthed the idea that the USA need not be at war 24/7/365.

But these days, peace gets less oratorical juice. In this era, after all, the amorphous foe known as “terror” will never surrender.

There’s an intractable enemy for you; beatable but never quite defeatable. Terrorists are bound to keep popping up somewhere.

A permanent war psychology has dug a groove alongside the permanent war economy. And so, we hear appreciably less about Washington’s ostensible quest for peace.

Right now, we’re told, President Obama is wrestling with the question of how much to reduce US troop levels in Afghanistan.

It’s a fateful decision, and we should pressure members of Congress and the White House, pushing for military withdrawal and an end to the air war.

But, just as the reduction of US troop strength in Iraq allowed for escalation in Afghanistan, a search for enemies is apt to be inexhaustible. When Uncle Sam’s proclaimed global mission is to prevent other countries from being used as a base for a terrorist attack on the United States, the Pentagon’s combat tasks are bottomless.

Whether or not the “war on terror” buzz phrase gets official use, the tacit assumption of war without end is now the old normal, again renewed in the wake of Osama bin Laden’s death. Every day, the warfare wallpaper inside the mass-media echo chamber is a bit more familiar, blurring the public vision into more drowsy acceptance of perpetual war.

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**Big spenders**

Years ago, US military spending climbed above \$2 billion per day. Some of the consequences can be understood in the context of words that President Dwight Eisenhower uttered in April 1953, during a speech that began by addressing “the chance for a just peace for all peoples” and ended with the word “peace.”

In the speech, Eisenhower declared: “Every gun that is made, every warship



launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. ... This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.”

Maybe, as a former commanding general, Ike felt some freedom to talk like that. But in the current era, trapped within the “war on terror” matrix, Washington’s political framework leaves very little space for serious talk of peace.

When war (“on terror”) is touted as the embodiment of eternal vigilance, war must be eternal – and in that case, why bother to talk much about striving for peace?

So, peace might be a good goal to recommend to some others – but if the United States is terrorism’s biggest target and most powerful foe, then this country is the last place that should expect, or seek, peace.

In the process, the warfare state pins a multitude of hopes on war – with a perverse acculturated faith that it will right wrongs,

avenge cruelty, straighten the crooked, cleanse the fetid, prevent violence. Countless times, those delusional hopes have boosted the spirals of suffering. But who’s counting?

In one of Kabul’s poorest neighborhoods, when I spoke with a group of about twenty very poor women in the late summer of 2009, I asked what they needed most of all. Their unanimous response translated as one word: “peace.”

But at the top of Washington’s hierarchy, the yearning is very different. The nation’s decade-long war effort in Afghanistan, where it costs \$1 million to deploy one US soldier for one year, is a grisly symptom of chronic war fever. More enemies are easy to find, and even easier to make.

A country that’s committed to being at war will treat the real potential for peace as an abstraction. **CT**

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*Norman Solomon’s books include “War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death.” He lives in Northern California, where he is a candidate for the US House of Representatives – [www.SolomonForCongress.com](http://www.SolomonForCongress.com)*

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“David Swanson writes in the tradition of Howard Zinn. War Is A Lie is as clear as the title. Wars are all based on lies, could not be fought without lies, and would not be fought at all if people held their governments to any reasonable standard of honesty.” – **Charles M. Young.**

“David Swanson is an antidote to the toxins of complacency and evasion. He insists on rousing the sleepwalkers, confronting the deadly prevaricators and shining a bright light on possibilities for a truly better world.” – **Norman Solomon**, author of *War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death*

**WAR IS A LIE**  
**DAVID SWANSON**

**Available now at [www.warislalie.org](http://www.warislalie.org)**

# Whose war on terror?

A look at a new film on Cuba convinces **Barry Lando** that acts of terrorism aren't just confined to states that upset Washington

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**Almost from the time that Castro marched into Havana and made it clear his revolution was the real thing, American Presidents – Republican and Democrat – have attempted to combat and then overthrow his regime by every possible means**  
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**A**t a time when the White House is spending hundreds of billions and has dispatched killer teams to liquidate Osama Bin Laden and lesser targets, imagine what the leaders of other countries might do if they were to declare their own War on Terror. Cuba, for instance. That question is provoked by a disturbing new documentary chronicling the past half century of Cuban-American relations and titled, “Will the Real Terrorist Please Stand up.”

Written and directed by radical, Emmy-award-winning filmmaker Saul Landau, the report shies away from revolutionary cant and vague rhetoric. Instead, Landau backs up his case with research and interviews that, taken together, represent a damning indictment of US policy. Most of the facts he cites are not news to those who have closely followed relations between Cuba and the US since February, 1959 when Castro came to power. But the great majority of Americans have not paid attention. And most of what they have been told has been filtered through a Cold War prism that continues to warp US -Cuban relations to this day.

Washington's war against Castro began long before May 1961 when he declared himself a Marxist-Leninist. Indeed, almost from the time that Castro marched into Havana and made it clear his revolution was the real thing, American Presidents – Re-

publican and Democrat – have attempted to combat and then overthrow his regime by every possible means, from an embargo that strangled the country's economy, to allowing Cuban exiles operating from Florida to attack Cuba's refineries, infrastructure, sugar cane fields, and assassinate government officials. Of course, there were also notorious attempts by the CIA to kill Fidel himself. And then came the disastrous Bay of Pig's Invasion in 1961.

Incredibly, after Cuba charged – accurately – that the US was behind the invasion, UN Ambassador, Adlai Stevenson, had the gall to “categorically” deny the allegation: “The United States has committed no offense against Cuba and no offensive action has been launched from Florida or any part of the United States”

As part of the agreement ending the Missile Crisis in the Fall of 1962, President Kennedy pledged that the US would not invade Cuba, but the White House and the CIA continued to support the radical exile groups based in the US intent on using terror and violence to topple Fidel.

According to Landau's report, for instance, in October 1976, the CIA had information that one of the Cuban exiles linked to them was planning to plant a bomb on a Cuban airliner – but the US never informed the Cuban government. All seventy-three passengers were killed. Altogether, the Cu-

bans estimate that more than three thousand of their people have been died in such terrorist acts.

All this, of course, would have been immediately denounced and massively countered by the United States – if such a campaign had been waged against the US or its allies by the likes of Iran, North Korea, Hamas – or Cuba.

On several occasions, Castro attempted to negotiate with the US government. And there were Americans who argued for a change in policy. As John Burton, the former President of the California Senate put it, “We do business with all sorts of bad quote undemocratic countries without free elections, but we pick on Cuba because we can, because they’re small because ther’s political benefit to doing it in Florida.”

Even after the end of the Cold War, millions of voters in Florida still view the struggle to bring down Castro as a holy crusade, which is the reason no American President – including Obama – has had the guts to change course. In effect, Florida is the only state with its own foreign policy. One of the best comparisons is the lock that the powerful pro-Israel lobby in the US has had on America’s Mideast policy.

In the face of unrelenting attacks from US territory, Castro’s government did what any government would have done: it dispatched intelligence agents to the US to infiltrate radical exile Cuban groups and thwart their plans.

One of the groups they targeted was “Brothers to the Rescue”, flying small planes out of Florida to buzz Cuban cities, dropping anti-Castro leaflets and propagan-da. According to Landau’s report, the group was also experimenting with weapons that could be fired from the air.

In 1996, Fidel Castro told visiting Bill Richardson, the former governor of New Mexico: “You’ve got to tell your government to get control of these people.” As Fidel declared, “What would the US do to if the Cubans flew over Washington? How long would that plane last?” Richardson re-

layed the message to Morton Halperin point man for Cuba on Clinton’s National Security Council staff. Halperin said he would raise the issue with the FAA. The flights continued.

Again, a top Cuban official asked Saul Landau to alert Halperin that there would be drastic consequences if the US didn’t stop the flights. According to Landau, Halperin indicated he would have the FAA cancel the licenses of the exile Cuban pilots. But the FAA didn’t. And on February 24,1996 Cuban Migs shot down two of three small Cessnas over international waters, killing their passengers. Clinton, who reportedly had been hoping to loosen American policy towards Cuba, instead was forced by political pressure to further tighten the embargo.

Radical Cuban exile groups also targeted Cuba’s vital tourist industry, warning potential visitors they would turn the island into a free-fire zone. They bombed several Havana hotels, injuring and killing the innocent.

According to Landau, in 1998 Fidel Castro gave a letter to Colombian writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez to transmit to President Clinton: to stop the violent exile groups, Cuba would be willing to cooperate with the FBI. An FBI team was dispatched to Havana and the Cubans supplied them with substantial information about exile terrorist activities.

Instead of dismantling those exile groups, the FBI used the information to discover the identities of the undercover agents in Florida working for the Cuban government. On September 12, 1998, five Cuban intelligence officers were arrested in Miami and charged with, among other things, conspiracy to commit espionage and murder. Among the allegations – they had giving the Cuban government the information needed to shoot down the “Brothers” illegal flights.

The Cubans denied that charge, but spent more than a year in solitary confinement and – most important – were denied a motion to move the trial from Dade County, an area seething with anti-Castro sentiment. They were found guilty and received

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**Even after the end of the Cold War, millions of voters in Florida still view the struggle to bring down Castro as a holy crusade**

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## DEFINING EVIL

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After the payment of “blood money” to the murdered men’s relatives, Davis was quietly released

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maximum sentences; in the case of one of them, two life sentences without possibility of parole. Last October, the US Supreme Court turned down their appeal to have the trial remanded for change of venue.

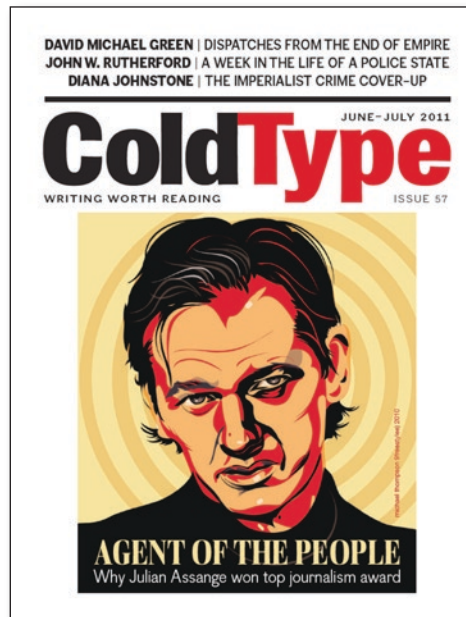
A couple of months later, on the other side of the world, a CIA contract operative, Raymond Davis, was arrested by Pakistani authorities after killing two men in Lahore, presumably part of America’s War on Terror. After a barrage of calls to Pakistani officials from the highest levels in the US government and the payment of “blood money” to the murdered men’s relatives, Davis was quietly released to American authorities

and spirited out of Pakistan.

Meanwhile, in Florida the most prominent of the radical Cuban exiles – those proudly linked to the campaign of terrorism against Castro’s Cuba – remain free and the toast of many inside and outside the exile community. **CT**

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*Barry M. Lando spent 25 years as an award-winning investigative producer with “60 Minutes.” He has produced numerous articles, a documentary and a book, “Web of Deceit,” about Iraq. Lando is just finishing a novel, The Watchman’s File,” a novel of Israel’s most closely-guarded secret*



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# WikiLeaks: An unpalatable truth

**John Pilger's** speech at the presentation of the Martha Gellhorn Prize for Journalism won this year by WikiLeaks' founder Julian Assange

*John Pilger's speech at the recent presentation of the Martha Gellhorn Prize for Journalism to WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.*

**T**hank you all for coming to the 12th annual award of the Martha Gellhorn Prize for Journalism. Some would say there are too many awards for journalism that merely celebrate the status quo. The Martha Gellhorn Prize is very different. We believe it's the most prestigious and sought-after award for journalism in Britain because it recognises that the best journalists are subversives – because the truth is so often subversive.

Let me quote in full why we give it: "This prize is in honour of one of the 20th century's greatest reporters. It's awarded to a journalist whose work has penetrated the established version of events and told an unpalatable truth. It's validated by powerful facts that expose establishment propaganda, or 'official drivel', as Martha Gellhorn called it."

Martha Gellhorn, an American who settled in Britain, is renowned as a war reporter. She was more than that. As both a reporter and humanitarian she was also a pioneer: one of the first in Vietnam to report what she called "a new kind of war against civilians": a precursor to the wars of today.

She and I became good friends. All my fellow judges have that in common; we knew

Martha and understood what she meant by "official drivel". Her phone calls were memorable. She would call me very early in the morning and open up the conversation with one of her favourite expressions – "I smell a rat".

When George Bush senior invaded Panama in 1990, pursuing his uppity, former CIA buddy General Manuel Noriega as a pretext for controlling the Panama Canal, the media reports made little mention of civilian casualties. My phone rang. "I smell a rat," said Martha. The next day she was on a plane to Panama. She was then in her 80s. She went straight to the slums of Panama City, and walked from door to door, interviewing ordinary people. That was her way.

She estimated some 6,000 people dead from the American bombing that had accompanied Bush's invasion. She then flew to Washington and stood up at a press conference and asked a general: "Why did you kill so many people then lie about it?" Try to imagine the BBC asking that. That is what we are honouring today. Truth-telling, and guts.

This year is different from previous years. It has been a momentous year in journalism that has forced us to modify the rules, such as each submitted article running to at least 1500 words. For the first time, we have gone to the internet and searched for work you are unlikely to read in a newspaper. The choice was amazing. For this reason we are giving a

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**We believe it's the most prestigious and sought-after award for journalism in Britain because it recognises that the best journalists are subversives**  
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## COVER STORY

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**Julian Assange is an editor, publisher and journalist in the oldest and finest tradition of our craft. He is brave. He is a true agent of people; and I should say that those who dismiss him a hacker merely betray themselves as hacks.**  
.....

Martha Gellhorn Special Award.

There are the three finalists for the Special Award. They are Umar Cheema, who writes for the website The News International in Pakistan. His work exposing official corruption is simply astonishing. Let me give you a flavour. Here is the first paragraph of one of his pieces:

*ISLAMABAD: An officer convicted by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) of financial and economic crimes for 14 years has been appointed head of the Federal Investigation Agency's (FIA) Economic Crime Wing (ECW) by the PPP government after his crime record was concealed during the promotion process [because] he is a friend of President Asif Ali Zardari.*

Imagine writing that in Pakistan, a country in turmoil. Umar Cheema has been harassed and tortured. On Tuesday, the body of another courageous Pakistani journalist Saleem Shahzad was found, murdered. Umar was due to fly to London to be with us today, but the British High Commission in Pakistan refused to expedite his visa within 12 days of his application – knowing that we wanted to honour him. A disgrace.

The second finalist for the Special Award is Charles Clover of the *Financial Times*. What impressed us was his powerful investigation into far-right gangs in Russia and their links to the government. This was brave, tenacious and meticulous work. The third Special Award finalist is Jonathan Cook, who is based in Nazareth. I have been reading Jonathan's work on the internet for years. On Palestine and Israel, I can think of no more reliable source. His de-coding of propaganda and analysis is so good, so consistent, it is always bracing. Jonathan Cook and Charles Charles Clover, together with Umar Cheema, are the winners. It was impossible to choose. Each of you receives a cheque for £2000.

I mentioned that this was a momentous year for journalism. A revolution is taking place: a revolution in information that threatens old power orders, in politics and journalism. WikiLeaks is at the forefront of this revolution.

When he founded WikiLeaks in 2006, Julian Assange wrote, "The goal is justice, the method is transparency." This moral dimension of truth-telling and justice has been largely ignored, and WikiLeaks has been portrayed as a phenomenon of the hi-tech age, which it is. But it is much more. It reveals what our politicians say in private, and how they lie in public. It tells us how wars begin and how innocent men, women and children are killed and maimed in faraway places, in our name. This information is precious for it not only informs; it empowers people rising up in countries such as Egypt and Tunisia and Palestine.

In 2008, when he was running for president, Barack Obama, said: "Government whistleblowers are part of a healthy democracy and must be protected from reprisal." As president, Obama has pursued and prosecuted more whistleblowers than any other US president. Bradley Manning for one.

And this prize-giving occasion pays tribute to the heroism of that young man.

Julian Assange is an editor, publisher and journalist in the oldest and finest tradition of our craft. He is brave. He is a true agent of people; and I should say that those who dismiss him a hacker merely betray themselves as hacks. WikiLeaks has given the public more scoops and more truth than most journalists could imagine: certainly more than those who police the perimeters of the mainstream media, who indulge in a censorship by omission and who understandably feel threatened by Assange and WikiLeaks, whose independence and achievements stand in vivid contrast to their own.

In March 2008, a Pentagon secret document made clear its plans to destroy trust in WikiLeaks. Criminalising and smear would be the methods. One of the ways of fabricating a charge against Julian Assange in Washington is to somehow prove he is not a journalist and is therefore not protected by the First Amendment. We judges were unanimous. The award of the Martha Gellhorn Prize for Journalism repudiates that slur; above all, it honours a remarkable recipient. **CT**

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**John Pilger's latest film, "The War You Don't See", is now available on DVD at Amazon.co.uk. His web site is [www.johnpilger.com](http://www.johnpilger.com)**  
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# The Imperialist Crime Cover-up

Why is it that the leaders of countries attacked by NATO are the ones shipped off to the International Criminal Court? wonders **Diana Johnstone**

**O**n May 16, Luis Moreno Ocampo, chief prosecutor at the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague, officially sought an arrest warrant for Libyan leader Moammer Kadhafi for “crimes against humanity”. Also accused were the leader’s son Seif al-Islam Kadhafi and Libyan intelligence chief Abdullah Senussi.

US jurist David Scheffer told Agence France Presse: “NATO will doubtless appreciate the ICC investigation and indictment of top Libyan leaders, including Kadhafi.” Well, yes. And nobody is better placed to know what NATO appreciates than David Scheffer.

The day before, Tripoli had made yet another offer of a truce, calling for an end to NATO bombing and for peace negotiations with the armed rebels based in Benghazi. NATO’s response took the form of the ICC indictment. When NATO bombs a country to unseat a leader, the targeted leader must be treated like a common criminal. His place cannot be at the negotiating table, but behind bars. An international indictment handily transforms NATO’s military aggression into a police action to arrest “an indicted war criminal” – an expression that evacuates the presumption of “innocent until proven guilty”.

This is a familiar pattern.

On March 24, 1999, NATO began bombing Yugoslavia in support of armed Albanian rebels in Kosovo. Two months later, in mid-May, as the bombing intensified against Serbia’s

infrastructure, the chief prosecutor at the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague, Louise Arbour, issued an indictment against Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic for crimes against humanity. All but one of the alleged “crimes against humanity” took place in Kosovo during the chaos caused precisely by the NATO bombing.

On March 31, 2011, NATO began bombing Libya, and this time the International Criminal Court was even faster. And the charges were even less substantial. Ocampo said that there was evidence that Kadhafi personally ordered attacks on “innocent Libyan civilians”.

In Libya as in the Kosovo war, the accusations are those made by armed rebels supported by NATO, with no discernable trace of independent neutral investigation.

In the spring of 1999, David Scheffer, who was then US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright’s Ambassador at large for War Crimes, visited Louise Arbour and provided her with NATO reports on which to base her indictments. Indeed, Scheffer had earlier helped set up the ICTY as instructed by Ms Albright. The May 1999 accusations served their main immediate purpose: to block negotiations and to justify NATO’s continued bombing. As Madeleine Albright put it, “We are not negotiating with Milosevic... The indictments, I think, clarify the situation because they really show that we are doing the right thing in terms of responding to the kinds of crimes against hu-

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**In Libya as in the Kosovo war, the accusations are those made by armed rebels supported by NATO, with no discernable trace of independent neutral investigation**  
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## CRIMINALS' COURT

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**The ICC so acts mainly as a way of putting political pressure on, or justifying military action against, weak governments the Western powers want to replace with leaders of their choice**  
.....

manity that Milosevic has perpetrated.” (See Michael Mandel, *How America Gets Away With Murder*, PlutoPress, 2004, pp.141-145.)

To sum up, in both cases an “international criminal tribunal/court” intervenes in the midst of a NATO bombing to accuse the leader of the country being bombed of “crimes against humanity” based on flimsy evidence provided by NATO itself or by its rebel clients. Thus the International Criminal Court turns out to be a continuation of the ICTY, that is, an instrument not of international justice but the judicial arm of Western intervention in weaker countries. The ICC could well stand for Imperialist Crimes Cover-up.

It certainly does not deserve its official title, since it studiously ignores truly “international” crimes, such as US and NATO aggression or the many massacres of civilians that result. Rather, so far the only alleged crimes it has undertaken to prosecute have all been the result of internal conflicts taking place in countries on the African continent. The ICC so acts mainly as a way of putting political pressure on, or justifying military action against, weak governments the Western powers want to replace with leaders of their choice.

Concerning the Kadhafi indictment, Schefler is quoted by AFP as saying that the move might increase pressure on Kadhafi to think about finding refuge in a country that has not agreed to ICC jurisdiction. This is a senseless remark, since Libya itself has not agreed to ICC jurisdiction. Nor has Sudan, which has not prevented the ICC from going after its president, Omar Al Bashir, even though the ICC is supposed to apply only to countries that have recognized its jurisdiction. But non-recognition of ICC jurisdiction proves to be of no protection for weak countries.

Just as NATO and the ICC continue to pursue Kadhafi on the pretext that he is “killing his own people”, in Afghanistan NATO armed forces continues to kill people who are not their own, with impunity.

The ICC has developed into one of the most blatant illustrations of double standards. The United States manipulates the ICC without recognizing its jurisdiction, and having fur-

ther protected itself by bilateral agreements with a long list of countries that provide immunity for United States citizens as well as by Congressional laws to protect US citizens from the ICC.

Other NATO countries have recognized ICC jurisdiction, but there is no sign that they will ever be troubled by the international court.

Last Sunday, two notoriously nonconformist French lawyers, Jacques Vergès and former foreign minister Roland Dumas, announced that they intended to bring a lawsuit against President Nicolas Sarkozy for “crimes against humanity” in Libya. At a press conference in Tripoli, Dumas deplored that the NATO mission to protect civilians was killing them, and said he was ready to defend Kadhafi at the ICC. Meanwhile, the two lawyers intend to represent the families of victims of NATO bombing in litigation against Sarkozy in French courts. “We are going to break through the wall of silence,” announced Vergès.

There is more solid evidence of the civilian victims of NATO bombing, including the three baby grandchildren of Moammer Kadhafi, than of the “crimes against humanity” attributed by Ocampo to the Libyan leader. But the French public has been mesmerized by the propaganda portraying Kadhafi as a bloodthirsty ogre whose only desire is to “kill his own people”. Since most people in the West know absolutely nothing about Libya, anything goes.

On Monday, as France and Britain prepared to send in combat helicopters to support the armed rebels and hunt down Kadhafi, NATO secretary general Anders Fogh Rasmussen announced that Kadhafi’s “reign of terror is coming to an end”. The real “rain of terror” is the rain of NATO bombs falling on defenseless Tripoli, with the clear intention of terrorizing Libyans into surrendering to the NATO-backed rebels. And there is no sign of it ever coming to an end. **CT**

.....  
*Diana Johnstone is the author of "Fools Crusade: Yugoslavia, NATO and Western Delusions". She can be reached at [diana.josto@yahoo.fr](mailto:diana.josto@yahoo.fr)*



# NATO's feast of blood

Stop bombing Africa and the poor of the world, says **Cynthia McKinney**

**W**hile serving on the House International Relations Committee from 1993 to 2003, it became clear to me that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was an anachronism. Founded in 1945 at the end of World War II, NATO was founded by the United States in response to the Soviet Union's survival as a Communist state. NATO was the US insurance policy that capitalist ownership and domination of European, Asian and African economies would continue. This also would ensure the survival of the then-extant global apartheid.

NATO is a collective security pact wherein member states pledge that an attack upon one is an attack against all. Therefore, should the Soviet Union have attacked any European member state, the United States military shield would be activated. The Soviet response was the Warsaw Pact that maintained a "cordon sanitaire" around the Russian heartland should NATO ever attack.

Thus, the world was broken into blocs, which gave rise to the "Cold War." Avowed "Cold Warriors" of today still view the world in these terms and, unfortunately, cannot move past Communist China and an amputated Soviet empire as enemy states of the US whose moves anywhere on the planet are to be contested.

The collapse of the Soviet Union provid-

ed an accelerated opportunity to exert US hegemony in an area of previous Russian influence. Africa and the Eurasian landmass containing former Soviet satellite states and Afghanistan and Pakistan along with the many other "stans" of the region have always factored prominently in the theories of "containment" or "rollback" guiding US policy up to today.

With that as background, a recent NATO rocket attack on Tripoli is inexplicable. A civilian metropolitan area of around 2 million people, Tripoli sustained 22 to 25 bombings in one night, rattling and breaking windows and glass and shaking the foundation of my hotel.

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## **Sky flashed red**

I left my room at the REXIS Al Nasr Hotel and walked outside the hotel and I could smell the exploded bombs. There were local people everywhere milling with foreign journalists from around the world. As we stood there, more bombs struck around the city.

The sky flashed red with explosions and more rockets from NATO jets cut through low clouds before exploding.

I could taste the thick dust stirred up by the exploded bombs. I immediately thought about the depleted uranium munitions reportedly being used here – along with white phosphorus. If depleted uranium weapons

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**I could taste the thick dust stirred up by the exploded bombs. I immediately thought about the depleted uranium munitions reportedly being used here – along with white phosphorus**  
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## WAR ON THE POOREST

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**I did wonder, too,  
if the any of the  
politicians who  
had authorized  
this air attack  
had themselves  
ever been on the  
receiving end  
of laser guided  
depleted uranium  
munitions**  
.....

were being used, what effect on the local civilians?

Women carrying young children ran out of the hotel. Others ran to wash the dust from their eyes. With sirens blaring, emergency vehicles made their way to the scene of the attack. Car alarms, set off by the repeated blasts, could be heard underneath the defiant chants of the people.

Sporadic gunfire broke out and it seemed everywhere around me. Euronews showed video of nurses and doctors chanting even at the hospitals as they treated those injured from NATO's latest installation of shock and awe. Suddenly, the streets around my hotel became full of chanting people, car horns blowing. I could not tell how many were walking, how many were driving.

I did wonder, too, if the any of the politicians who had authorized this air attack had themselves ever been on the receiving end of laser guided depleted uranium munitions. Had they ever seen the awful damage that these weapons do a city and its population? Perhaps if they'd actually been in the city under air attack and felt the concussion from these bombs and seen the mayhem caused they just might not be so inclined to authorize an attack on a civilian population.

Only the day before, at a women's event in Tripoli, one woman came up to me with tears in her eyes: Her mother is in Benghazi and she can't get back to see if her mother is OK or not. People from the east and west of the country lived with each other, loved each other, intermarried, and now, because of NATO's "humanitarian intervention," artificial divisions are becoming hardened.

NATO's recruitment of allies in eastern Libya smacks of the same strain of cold warriorism that sought to assassinate Fidel Castro and overthrow the Cuban Revolution with "homegrown" Cubans willing to commit acts of terror against their former home country.

More recently, Democratic Republic of Congo has been amputated de facto after Laurent Kabila refused a request from the

Clinton administration to shave off the eastern part of his country. Laurent Kabila personally recounted the meeting at which this request and refusal were delivered. This plan to balkanize and amputate an African country – as has been done in Sudan – did not work because Kabila said "no" while Congolese around the world organized to protect the "territorial integrity" of their country.

I was horrified to learn that NATO allies – the Rebels – in Libya have reportedly lynched, butchered and then killed their darker-skinned compatriots after US press reports labeled Black Libyans as "Black mercenaries." Now, tell me this – pray tell: How are you going to take Blacks out of Africa? Press reports have suggested that Americans were "surprised" to see dark-skinned people in Africa. Now, what does that tell us about them?

.....  
**Who will be held accountable?**

The sad fact, however, is that it is the Libyans themselves who have been insulted, terrorized, lynched and murdered as a result of the press reports that hyper-sensationalized this base ignorance. Who will be held accountable for the lives lost in the blood-letting frenzy unleashed as a result of these lies?

Which brings me back to the lady's question: Why is this happening? Honestly, I could not give her the educated, reasoned response that she was looking for. In my view the international public is struggling to answer "Why?"

What we do know, and what is quite clear, is this: What I experienced is no "humanitarian intervention."

Many suspect it is about all the oil under Libya. Call me skeptical but I have to wonder why the combined armed sea, land and air forces of NATO and the US, costing billions of dollars, are being arraigned against a relatively small North African country and we're expected to believe it's in the defense of democracy.

What I have seen in long lines to get fuel

is not “humanitarian intervention.” Refusal to allow purchases of medicine for the hospitals is not “humanitarian intervention.”

What is most sad is that I cannot give a cogent explanation of why to people now terrified by NATO’s bombs, but it is transparently clear now that NATO has exceeded its mandate, lied about its intentions, is guilty of extra-judicial killings – all in the name of “humanitarian intervention.” Where is the Congress as the president exceeds his war-making authority? Where is the “conscience of the Congress?”

For those of you who disagree with Dick Cheney’s warning to us to prepare for war for the next generation, please support anyone who will stop this madness.

Please organize and then vote for peace. People around the world need us to stand

up and speak out for ourselves and for them because Iran and Venezuela are also in the cross-hairs.

Libyans don’t need NATO helicopter gunships, smart bombs, cruise missiles and depleted uranium to settle their differences. NATO’s “humanitarian intervention” needs to be exposed for what it is with the bright, shining light of the truth.

As dusk descends on Tripoli, let me prepare myself with the local civilian population for some more NATO humanitarianism.

Stop bombing Africa and the poor of the world!

**CT**

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*Cynthia McKinney is a former Georgia congresswoman and Green Party presidential candidate*

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**Libyans don’t need NATO helicopter gunships, smart bombs, cruise missiles and depleted uranium to settle their differences**  
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# California and the incarceration society

Finally, a US court takes action on the overcrowded state of US prisons, writes **Sherwood Ross**



Justice Anthony Kennedy, writing for the majority in a 5-to-4 ruling, may have been swayed by photographs of inmates jammed into “telephone booth-sized cages without toilets”

Last month’s Supreme Court decision ordering California to reduce its overcrowded prisons by 30,000 inmates is as welcome as a ray of sunlight streaming through prison bars. State officials have known for decades of the horrific, if not criminal, neglect of prisoners. Five years ago, then Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger called their plight an “emergency.” Some “emergency!” Justice Anthony Kennedy, writing for the majority in a 5-to-4 ruling, may have been swayed by photographs of inmates jammed into “telephone booth-sized cages without toilets” – conditions so dreadful that a lower court that earlier heard the case found it to be “an uncontested fact” that “an inmate in one of

California’s prisons needlessly dies every six or seven days due to constitutional deficiencies.” This, according to the *New York Times*, which supported the court’s ruling in an editorial.

It’s just another day in the Incarceration Society. In California alone, 33 adult jails warehouse 143,000 inmates. The US has the dubious distinction of ranking first in prison population, ahead of all other nations with 2.3-million convicts behind bars. USA has more mentally ill in its jails where they are not getting proper treatment than in its asylums, where they might be restored to health. As in California, everywhere one sees States slashing funds for the rehabilitation of prisoners – whether it’s for their education, mental health, retraining, drug counseling, job search, or eventual readmission into society. Prisons make inmates worse by tossing ever more of them into isolation cells where, if they were not mentally distressed before incarceration, they almost surely will be driven mad during it. It was in this way that President Obama allowed Bradley Manning to be abused for nearly a year in solitary over the findings and advice of Army psychiatrists.

We have prisoners given stiff sentences mandated by laws. Judges often are not free to use their discretion. As the *Los Angeles Times* reported: “More than 40,000 prisoners, about one in four, are serving extended





*Prison photos were taken at the California Institution for Men in 2006*

sentences for second and third offenses that are punished more severely under the three-strikes law than the crimes would warrant as a first offense, according to state corrections records.” The article also quotes professor Laurie Levenson, of Loyola Law School, Los Angeles, a former federal prosecutor and veteran criminal law scholar, who linked the high recidivism rate with past cuts in funding for prison rehabilitation and education programs. She said this is a formula for even worse crowding. “We have to stop the insanity of sending nonviolent drug offenders and low-level theft offenders to prison for life,” Levenson said. “Nobody is saying we should let murderers out.... We have to stop the revolving door of parolees being returned for minor violations.”

Unfortunately, what the Supreme Court

found in California could also apply to many other states, including Illinois, Alabama and Massachusetts. Justice Kennedy, the *Times* said in an editorial, affirmed that “overcrowding is the ‘primary cause’ of severe and unlawful mistreatment of prisoners through grossly inadequate provision of medical and mental health care” leading to “needless suffering and death.” And that’s happening all over.

Let’s get it straight. Our criminal justice system overwhelmingly reflects the views of the privileged as against the poor. It is class war, pure and simple. The *Los Angeles Times* quotes Michael Romano of Stamford Law School as saying some inmates are serving life sentences for stealing a \$2 pair of socks or \$20 work gloves. Yet President George W. Bush who ordered illegal wars

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**Our criminal justice system overwhelmingly reflects the views of the privileged as against the poor. It is class war, pure and simple**  
 .....

## INMATE NATION



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**The time I visited the New Jersey state prison at Rahway so many men were walking around with books under their arms I thought I was back in high school during class break**  
.....

against Afghanistan and Iraq was photographed the other day enjoying a baseball game. The reason minority parents are so militant battling school superintendents is because they know without a decent education and a decent chance to earn their sons will wind up behind bars. The time I visited the New Jersey state prison at Rahway so many men were walking around with books under their arms I thought I was back in high school during class break. If only, one thought, these men had been properly educated before!

On May 24th the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled that New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie's cost-cutting was unconstitutional "and ordered lawmakers to raise spending for poor, urban schools by \$500-million next year," according to the *New York Times*. Justice Jaynee LaVecchia said the State "made a conscious and calculated decision" to renege on its pledge to do better for urban residents. So the system goes on

recreating the conditions that will lead to poverty and crime.

In America today, "justice" doesn't exist for those at the top. President Obama has refused to exercise his obligation to bring charges against his predecessor president, vice-president and scores of other ranking Bush officials who broke the law. Nor has Mr. Obama, a former CIA payroller and exponent of the CIA's imperialist philosophy, moved against CIA officials who kidnapped, tortured and murdered innocent prisoners and who then destroyed the evidence of their crimes. If you want a glimpse into the soul of a nation, visit one of its prisons. California is no exception. It's typical. If you want to see who really runs a country, look for those who are above prosecution. **CT**

.....  
**Sherwood Ross** is a Coral Gables, Florida, based public relations consultant who also writes on political affairs. Reach him at [sherwoodross10@gmail.com](mailto:sherwoodross10@gmail.com))



# Celebrating war with a holiday

Does America really need a public holiday to celebrate those who fought its wars in Iraq and Afghanistan? No, says **David Swanson**

Memorial Day is nice, I suppose. Veterans Day is all right. Patriots Day can be fun. Yellow Ribbon Day's not bad. But you will be pleased to hear that the US House of Representatives unanimously voted, in pure bipartisan harmony, to add the following gem to the big war-funding, war-expanding, bill that now goes to the Senate:

"The President shall designate a day entitled a National Day of Honor to celebrate members of the Armed Forces who are returning from deployment in support of Iraq, Afghanistan, and other combat areas."

Catchy, ain't it? I can't wait to find out what day the President will so designate. I do hope it's my birthday, but I'm not trying to be greedy – I know you all just had the same thought. While, oddly, not a single newspaper took notice, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee (Dem., Texas) proposed this historic bit of legislation on the floor of the House thusly:

"Today I rise with an amendment supported by my colleague and a member of the Armed Services Committee, Mr. [Hank] Johnson, to ask support for an amendment that can bring all of us together, the designation of a national day of honor to celebrate the members of the Armed Services who will be returning from deployment in Iraq and Af-

ghanistan and other combat areas. This national day of honor would recognize the enormous sacrifice and invaluable service that those phenomenal men and women have undertaken to protect our freedom and share the gift of democracy in other parts of the world.

"How many of us have stopped to say 'thank you' to a soldier walking alone in an airport, maybe having made a travel of millions of miles, thousands upon thousands of miles, to find himself or herself in their rural hamlet or urban center coming home. They have come home over the years, and they have come home not seeking glory or appreciation. That's our men and women. The men and women of the United States military and intelligence community who helped bring Osama bin Laden didn't ask for applause and appreciation.

"My amendment will give all Americans, no matter what your political views, religion, ethnicity, gender or background, the chance to be able to say 'thank you.' It is reminiscent of times that some of us did not live through. I am reminded of the pictures that I saw of those celebrating in the streets during World War II."

Now, technically, the members of the armed "services" (and the roughly equal number of mercenaries and contractors who appar-

.....  
**I can't wait to find out what day the President will so designate. I do hope it's my birthday, but I'm not trying to be greedy – I know you all just had the same thought**  
 .....

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## GIVE ME A BREAK

.....  
**We leave the members of our military there tempting retaliation in order to protect against retaliation, as we celebrate the childish murder against which retaliation was entirely predictable**  
.....

ently will not be honored or celebrated), while enduring outrageous hardship and exhibiting courage and determination, have not actually protected anyone's freedom or actually shared with anyone the gift of democracy. The point, however, is to be reminiscent of a time when those claims were less ludicrous. And while no one actually helped "bring" Osama bin Laden anywhere, as the armed "services" were assigned to put bullets in his head and did so, the point is to celebrate his murder without focusing on what it was. And while the armed "services" and the president and the television spokesgenerals went out of their way, and all the way to lower Manhattan, to ask for applause and appreciation, the idea is to give them a bit more, darn it.

"My uncle served in World War II. My grandmother sent her sons to war. She watched them one by one, and proudly so. As an immigrant American, she was glad to be able to send them to fight our battles. Now, as we make our decisions to bring our troops home, to be able to provide them the opportunity of economic enhancement such as jobs and education, let's have a day where all of us will be able to be in the streets, if you will, to simply say 'thank you;' and job well done!"

While World War II killed more human beings than any other event in history, it has done far more damage in the 65 years since then, by serving as a justification for more killing. Got an unpopular war that a strong majority has come to see as misguided and declares never should have happened? Not a problem! Just pretend it's World War II and celebrate accordingly. That this is unlikely to work terribly well is demonstrated by the total lack of interest in the passage of this amendment on. Of course, there were more important stories to cover in the news, and the most important ones were nearly ignored as well. While Congresswoman Jackson Lee speaks as if the troops are coming

home, the House actually passed, with her vote, a mammoth bill to fund the continuation of the wars, and rejected numerous amendments that would have made it more likely some troops might come home. In addition, the House voted down an amendment that would have stripped from the bill language empowering current and future presidents to make war almost anywhere at any time, regardless of Congress or the Constitution.

"We are in the midst of ongoing conflict and warfare. We must show continued support of our troops and increase their morale. What better way to demonstrate our support than by celebrating their return from deployment with a National Day of Honor. Though we may be divided by our positions on the war in Iraq, Afghanistan and other combat areas, we stand together to support our veterans. Currently, there are close to 100,000 troops serving in Afghanistan. And even in the aftermath of the death of Osama bin Laden, troops remain in Afghanistan to protect against retaliatory attacks and to help rebuild the country."

Do they, now? No bases, no weapons positioning, no gas pipeline, no profiteering, no protecting of corrupt war lords, no destruction of the country? On the contrary, this is a humanitarian mission to "rebuild" and "protect." But protect whom? Is al Qaeda expected to retaliate against the people of Afghanistan or against the foreign occupying army? We leave the members of our military there tempting retaliation in order to protect against retaliation, as we celebrate the childish murder against which retaliation was entirely predictable - retaliation that has already caused the deaths of some of those we're honoring and celebrating. The language says we are to celebrate those returning; it doesn't say they have to be alive at the time.

"As of April 2011, close to 46,000



American troops are serving in Iraq. At the height of the Iraqi dispute, close to 170,000 US troops were stationed in Iraq. These courageous men and women are mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, yet they have risked their lives and left their families to fight for what they believe in which is freedom, equality, and all the like principles that America stands on. The courage and sacrifice of the men and women are certainly well deserving of celebration. Their service is an extraordinary act of patriotism for which we should all be thankful.”

This is demonstrably false. Polls of US military members in Iraq over the years have shown them to be persuaded they are there to exact revenge for a crime Iraq had no part in, or bewildered as to what they are doing there, resentful of having been sent there, and in favor of ending that war. Many have gone AWOL or refused the illegal order to participate in an illegal war. How about a holiday for that bravery? How about a holiday for peacemakers – as distinct from peace prize laureates – who help avoid wars? Members of the US military do not need holidays that most of this country will laugh at. They need to be kept out of imperial adventures. They need to be brought home. They need job training, education, healthcare, childcare, pensions, a sustainable environment, and a democracy in Washington, D.C., none of which we can have while pretending that it is our patriotic duty to pretend the military is in Afghanistan on a humanitarian mission.

Word to the wise: you can care about the people put through the horrors of our wars, including the 95% who are not Americans (how about a holiday for them?), and including the members of the US military, and the mercenaries, and the contractors, and the warmongering presidents and senators and congress members, and the weapons profiteers, all without ceasing to denounce what they are doing. The best way to honor veterans is to stop creating more of them.

And the only way to do that is to call a halt to this celebratory scam. I’m not going to “say thank you” to a participant in an illegal war. I’m going to say “I’m sorry we gave you no education or job options and allowed our government to put you through that hell. What can I do to help?”

“In the words of President John F. Kennedy, ‘As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.’ It is not simply enough to sing the praises of our nation’s great veterans; I firmly believe that we must demonstrate by our actions how proud we are of our American heroes.”

Kennedy wrote but didn’t dare speak aloud, this: “War will exist until that distant day when the conscientious objector enjoys the same reputation and prestige that the warrior does today.” Why do we keep trying to make that distant day more distant?

“We promise to leave no soldier or veteran behind.”

Oh? Will you provide them with jobs, housing, healthcare, apologies, explanations, truth about what you’ve done to them? I didn’t think so. Jackson Lee showed big photos of military members in action in our wars, none of veterans living on our streets. Her holiday is about celebrating war, not about caring for the people we imposed war on. A separate amendment introduced by Jackson Lee toothlessly expressed the sense of Congress that access to treatment of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder should be expanded. I’d prefer Congress actually expand that treatment and, more importantly, reduce the incidence of the trauma.

The Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee Buck McKeon (Rep., Calif.), author of the language granting presidents war-making power, was quick to agree with Jackson-Lee:

.....  
**I’m not going to ‘say thank you’ to a participant in an illegal war. I’m going to say ‘I’m sorry we gave you no education or job options and allowed our government to put you through that hell’**  
 .....

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## GIVE ME A BREAK

.....  
I'd rather party  
like it was 1999,  
before the current  
madness really  
kicked in  
.....

"I thank the gentlelady for doing this. I think she is exactly right on. I think everything that we can do to honor these warriors who are out there fighting for our freedoms and freedoms of those around the world we should do."

Congressman Adam Smith (Dem., Wash.) agreed:

"I am just in awe of how great our military is . . . and what a tremendous job they have done for us."

Chairman McKeon emphasized that not only was celebrating troops a way to celebrate war, but passing this amendment was grounds for passing the underlying bill to fund more warmaking:

"We have a good bill, this National Defense Authorization Act of 2012. It is a very good bill. We have a lot of good things in it; but this amendment, this amendment alone is reason to vote for the bill."

The amendment passed on a voice vote, but Jackson Lee insisted on a roll call, upon

which it passed unanimously – [www.clerk.house.gov/evs/2011/roll370.xml](http://www.clerk.house.gov/evs/2011/roll370.xml) .

The same bill proposes April 9th be made Yellow Ribbon Day, honors in various ways the veterans of a wide variety of past wars, defunds the US Institute of Peace (thus saving the cost of five hours in Afghanistan), and requires that all suspected foreign terrorists who are not killed be tried, if they are tried, by the military and not in courts. This is, I repeat, the same bill that formally gives presidents virtually unlimited power to make war. This may be the worst bill ever deemed likely to pass into law. A holiday for the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars somehow just doesn't make up for that in my mind. I'd rather party like it was 1999, before the current madness really kicked in. I hope we all still have jobs from which to get time off for Jackson Lee's holiday. **CT**

.....  
*David Swanson* is the author of "War Is A Lie" – <http://warisalie.org>

ARTIST WITHOUT BORDERS



design / illustration

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# South Africa risks all with Walmart

Walmart's goods might be cheaper, but there'll be a huge price to pay if they're allowed to operate in Southern Africa, writes **Khadija Sharife**

If recent media reports are correct, Walmart, both the world's largest private employer and its largest company, has threatened to pull out of the R16.5 billion (about \$2.4b) merger with Massmart if the South African government insists on imposing conditions to protect local manufacturers. According to Massmart's CEO, "It would be disruptive of the competition process championed under the Competition Act to impose local procurement targets on one retailer to the exclusion of its competitors."

There are, of course, blatant contradictions in this statement. For one thing, whatever the Competition Tribunal rules, Walmart's system of "category management" is distinctly anti-competitive and downright collusive. Category management refers to the system where corporate "category captains," mega-companies like Coca-Cola, manage all issues related to a specific product group in a store. These include shelf space, product selection, promotion and pricing, as well as indirect issues such as cost and source of labour and production.

Not only does the normalised practice of category management provide "category captains" with confidential information about other suppliers, facilitate collusion between manufacturers, promote collusion amongst retailers and hinder the growth of 'rivals', it also ensures that local domestic suppliers don't stand a chance of compet-

ing when major multinationals source the world's cheapest goods made by the world's cheapest bodies. The US Federal Trade Commission's Bureau of Competition acknowledges all of this.

So if, for example, you're thinking about manufacturing something as simple as apple juice - forget about it.

Walmart, with more than 8,000 stores globally, is the largest seller of food in the US, allegedly holding over a fifth of the market. China has upward of 60% of the US market in apple concentrate, sold at 91% below cost and 80% in ascorbic acid or vitamin C - and Walmart's preference for cheap Chinese products is widely acknowledged. In fact, over 70% of Walmart's goods have a Chinese component. By 2004, more than 80% of Walmart's factories were Chinese.

This system of sourcing "lowest cost globally" for "every day lowest prices" will no doubt be integrated in South Africa. South African softdrink favourites such as Ceres fruit juice may well have to conform to cheap Chinese concentrates, many of which are loaded with heavy metals, or lose their market position. Minute Maid, under the Coca-Cola captain, sources concentrates from China, as do other "All American" brands such as Mott's.

And while Walmart has claimed that additional jobs will be created through expanding trading space by 20% (Massmart current-

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**South African softdrink favourites such as Ceres fruit juice may well have to conform to cheap Chinese concentrates, many of which are loaded with heavy metals, or lose their market position.**  
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## SHELF INVASION

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**Even in the US where Walmart preaches all things “All American,” over 200 000 jobs were lost between 2001-2006. These days 15% of all Chinese imports are earmarked for Walmart**  
.....

ly has 28,000 employees) we’ve all read the facts: displacing just one percent of domestic supply to Massmart will cause 4,000 job losses. When it comes down to it, save for a better geopolitical risk profile, South Africa, as a nation, stands to benefit little from the deal if Walmart’s existing retail model remains as is.

From an objective standpoint there is nothing illogical about the tendency of our government, eager to protect national strategic interests, to motivate for local procurement policies currently in force by Massmart. After all, the company sources some 60% of goods locally. In fact, many of the so-called ‘free market’ governments such as France and Germany have engaged in hostile state interventions against foreign takeovers - stances described by former EU Trade Commissioner, Peter Mandelson, as “the emotions of economic nationalism” jeopardising the credibility of the EU’s free market position.

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**Constraints on capital**

While strategic issues are more discretely negotiated in European countries behind doors only slightly ajar to foreign scrutiny, when it comes to developing countries - prescribed the economic medicine of GDP growth and tethered to FDI as the only alternative for said growth - the news of governmental constraints on foreign capital is often received as a sign of something ghastly and short-sighted.

To understand the South African government’s position, we must first analyse the value of foreign investment and the context of GDP: the latter, a specialised and narrow tool solely measures overall economic activity. That is, it does not take into account how and where profit is generated; how and where benefits accrue and are distributed (or alternately concentrated); neither how much value is added to economies nor the volume of capital flight. Over 60% of Africa’s illicit capital flight is siphoned, after all, through corporate mispricing.

Similarly, foreign investment represents

only one side of the story: how private capital will be utilised for the company’s gains, not the consequences to the host country. It is instead the nature of investment and economic activity and even growth that matters, and must be analysed.

To further understand government’s position, we must identify the most crucial definition of national competitiveness. In his article ‘The Competitive Advantage of Nations’ written for *Harvard Business Review*, Michael Porter asks the same question, querying whether competitiveness is evidenced in a country with low labour costs and a flexible labour market; a largely positive balance of trade; a nation where the exchange rate makes it goods competitively priced in global markets; and a nation of competitive industry within borders.

On examining and contrasting different nations, he comes to the conclusion that what best constitutes the competitiveness of nations is productivity, defined as the “value of the output produced by a unit of labour or capital,” in nations where the principal goal is to facilitate a high and rising standard of living for its citizens, and whose ability to do so depends on the productivity with which a nation uses and develops labour and capital.

We all understand why Walmart’s position is opposed to that of the government: maximum private profits, minimum private costs. It is to this end, for instance, that Walmart seeks to artificially cheapen labour. Walmart’s manager’s toolkit even guides administration on “how to remain union free in the event union organizers choose your facility as their next target.”

But while cheapened labour is often the focus, it is the value of “exported jobs” through imported goods that remains the biggest threat. Even in the US where Walmart preaches all things “All American,” over 200 000 jobs were lost between 2001-2006. These days 15% of all Chinese imports are earmarked for Walmart.

These twin reasons - cheapened labour and cheap goods - comprised the singular reason Walmart started operating in Shenzhen,

China's most famous 'special economic zone' (read: tax free and slave wages) less than one year after its establishment in 1980.

Though the Cold War was raging at the time, Walmart's best corporate supplier was the product of China's most famed Communist leader, Deng Xiaoping, and the success of the "global procurement model" that gave Walmart its "everyday low prices" advantage, sourcing exports from China - as much as 40% from day one - was sustained through the deprivation of civil and political rights.

Not even the Chinese Communist Party's slaughter at Tiananmen Square dissuaded Walmart, which attempted to distance itself by creating the exclusive buying agency called the Pacific Resources Export Limited (PREL), which rehired Walmart's Asia staff. And while Walmart aggressively preached the policy of the "Buy American" campaign, too many of the products peddled were Asian.

#### Correct responses

These days Walmart games the corporate social responsibility process through factory managers who, informed prior to the visit of auditors, coach workers on the "correct" responses. And of course, Walmart does not care much for corporate tax.

The company was incorporated and maintains multiple entities in Delaware (one of the world's leading tax havens) essentially tax free for profits earned out of state; and gained notoriety for manipulating its books, for example, by paying 'rent' to itself through the Delaware-based real-estate investment trust scheme, disguised as 'expenses' deducted from taxes owed to numerous states.

Walmart is not the only company to engage in category management, use tax havens and source cheapened labour to reduce costs. But it is certainly the largest and arguably the most powerful. Presently the Company controls as much as 30% or more of specific sectors in the US.

Does Walmart add real value to the economies in which they operate, at least in its cur-

rent form?

Many domestic industries in the US, such as the domestic apple industry stagnate or decline when "Wal-Mao" enters the picture.

It is not for Walmart to care about South Africa's manufacturing industry, labour laws, employment and more broadly, national competitiveness. But can we deny our government, whose very purpose is to serve the public interest, the right to establish a protective framework?

South Africa, losing almost a quarter of a million manufacturing jobs during the recession, has little chance of competing. And with Massmart's bases in at least 12 other sub-Saharan African countries, the issue is not simply a domestic one.

Like the British East India Company, the colonial-style mega-corporation that "administered" large tracts of colonised resource-rich nations for the purpose of trade, Walmart's operations, generating daily sales higher than the GNP of more than 52 developing countries, are comparable to a private quasi-government. In fact, were it a government, it would be one of China's top ten trading partners.

Walmart claims that a hundred million rand local supplier fund or just above R33 million annually, expended over three years, if the transaction is approved, is a better substitute than having conditions imposed on it. Many would beg to differ. It is a concession that constitutes a drop in the bucket for the company, estimated to lose three billion dollars to theft alone, annually.

Certainly, Walmart's goods may be cheaper for South Africans, but is Walmart the solution? If so, at what cost and who pays the price?

**CT**

*Khadija Sharife is a journalist and contributing author to the South African Tax Justice Network, currently completing a masters in law in international business. She is the author of Tax Us If You Can (Africa). This essay was first published by the South African Civil Society Information Service – [www.sacsis.org.za](http://www.sacsis.org.za)*

Does Walmart add real value to the economies in which they operate, at least in its current form?



# The sunshine of his accomplishment

**Akunna Eneh, Khury Petersen-Smith and Alan Maass** pay tribute to Gil Scott-Heron, whose politically charged poetry and music gave voice to the labour movement

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**Gil Scott-Heron's stories, poems and songs are rich with contempt for racism and for the institutions of American power**  
.....

**W**e lost one of the more brilliant minds and powerful voices for freedom last month. Gil Scott-Heron, the musician and spoken-word legend, died on May 27 in New York City at the age of 62.

Many of the articles written about his passing reduced his life to his struggle with drug addiction, and his massive body of work over 40 years to a single piece, “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised.” But all of Scott-Heron’s music and poetry should be celebrated – and he deserves to be remembered as one of the most powerful voices of the Black freedom struggle.

Born in Chicago in 1949, Scott-Heron spent his childhood with his grandmother in Tennessee. It was there that Scott-Heron became enamored with Langston Hughes, one of the great Black writers of the Harlem Renaissance. After his grandmother died when he was 12, Scott-Heron moved with his mother to the Bronx. There, he was recruited to attend the Fieldston School, a private prep school, where he was awarded a full scholarship for his exceptional abilities as a writer.

Scott-Heron attended college at Lincoln University, a historically Black college in Pennsylvania that Hughes had attended four decades before. He took time off to write two novels, *The Vulture* and *The Nigger Factory*, both of which received acclaim.

But Scott-Heron would become best

known for his poetry and music – a unique, percussion-driven blend of jazz, blues and soul serving as the setting for his words, spoken or sung, but always powerful and politically charged.

He became an important voice of the Black Power era that shaped him. On the liner notes of his first album, *Small Talk at 125th and Lenox*, Scott-Heron listed Malcolm X, Black Panther Party cofounder Huey P. Newton, and musician Nina Simone as among his influences.

Gil Scott-Heron’s stories, poems and songs are rich with contempt for racism and for the institutions of American power. A favorite target was the hypocrisy of northern liberals who decried the racism of the Jim Crow-era South while ignoring the poverty, police violence and discrimination that Blacks experienced in the North.

But Scott-Heron also turned his critical eye on Black America, challenging powerful institutions of the African American community such as historically Black colleges, and aspects of Black culture that undermined unity in the face of a hostile society. He mercilessly skewered Blacks who rose to prominence as political moderates – like, in “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised”: “Roy Wilkins strolling through Watts in a red, black and green liberation jumpsuit that he has been saving for just the proper occasion.”

Scott-Heron was especially moving in his

depiction of the destructive toll that drugs took on the Black community. Tragically, Scott-Heron battled his own drug addiction, struggling under the weight of the brutal society that he resisted.

While Scott-Heron's art spoke most directly to the oppression that he experienced intimately – racism – he turned his fire against other forms of discrimination and injustice. Songs like “Who Will Pay Reparations on My Soul” expressed solidarity with indigenous peoples of the Americas. In 1979, Scott-Heron performed his song “We Almost Lost Detroit” at the No Nukes concert at Madison Square Garden in protest of nuclear energy.

His “Three Miles Down” is an anthem of solidarity with labor – mineworkers in particular. The words from a 1978 album will remind labor activists today of the April 2010 mine disaster that killed 29 workers in West Virginia:

*Damn near a legend as old as the mines  
Things that happen in the pits just don't  
change with the times.*

*Work till you're exhausted in too little space.*

*A history of disastrous fears etched on your face  
Somebody signs a paper everybody thinks is  
fine*

*But Taft and Hartley ain't done one day in the  
mines.*

*You start to stiffen. You heard a crackin' sound.*

*It's like workin' in a graveyard three miles down.*

More recently, Scott-Heron cancelled a show in Tel Aviv during a 2010 tour in solidarity with the Palestinian boycott of Israel, stating he wouldn't play in Israel “until everyone is welcome there.”

Scott-Heron's work had an immense influence on poetry and music. His particular approach to spoken-word and the integration of it with music was seminal in the birth of hip-hop. Public Enemy's Chuck D attested to his stature with his Twitter comment in response to Scott-Heron's death: “RIP GSH... and we do what we do and how we do because of you.” Kanye West's recent album *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy* closes with what is both a tribute to Scott-Heron and essentially a remix of his poem “Comment #1

(Who Will Survive in America)”

Scott-Heron himself was more skeptical about his music's connection to hip hop. He preferred the description “bluesologist” and believed his singing/spoken-word style reached back into the blues tradition.

However it's categorized, though, there's no denying the power of Gil Scott-Heron's work – and its painful relevance today. Listening to some of his pieces from the 1970s, you could think he's talking about 2011 – like “We Almost Lost Detroit,” which is about the ever-present threat of nuclear disaster and eerily speaks to the Fukushima catastrophe in Japan:

*Just thirty miles from Detroit*

*Stands a giant power station.*

*It ticks each night as the city sleeps,*

*Seconds from annihilation.*

*But no one stopped to think about the people*

*Or how they would survive,*

*And we almost lost Detroit*

*This time.*

As beautifully and bitterly as Scott-Heron described and attacked the experience of racism and oppression, he also lovingly celebrated the contributions of Black activists and artists in creating a more livable world.

His fast-paced and brilliant poem “Ain't No New Thing” – recorded for his *Free Will* album accompanied by flute and percussion – is a scathing indictment of a society that exploits and oppresses Black people and then appropriates Black music, literature, art and culture. In it, Scott-Heron names Black artists such as Billie Holiday, Charlie Parker and Jimi Hendrix and proclaims that they:

*...will live on!*

*And on and on in the sunshine of their  
accomplishments,*

*The glory of the dimensions that they added  
to our lives.*

Gil Scott-Heron, too, will live on. His contributions to art and radical politics will not be forgotten, and his legacy will far outlive his too-short life. **CT**

*This tribute first appeared at  
www.socialistworker.com*

.....  
**His particular  
approach to  
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of hip-hop**  
.....

# The lying game

Ray McGovern returns to his old school and doesn't like what he hears

.....  
**More than half of the U.S. Army is drawn, via a poverty draft, from the inner cities and the small towns of less than 50,000 – places with few jobs and even fewer educational opportunities**  
.....

**C**elebrating a reunion with close friends of Fordham College (class of 1961) on a perfect June day in New York should be a time of little or no stress. So I should have avoided a long lecture by a retired four-star general from the class of 1966, Jack Keane.

Keane, now on Fordham University's Board of Trustees, has been the go-to general for the neoconservatives in recent years. He said he was speaking to us before catching a flight to Europe where he would lobby leaders of the 41 NATO countries who, except for three, have been "unwilling to ask their people to sacrifice" in places like Afghanistan.

(By all indications, Keane has apparently given no thought to the possibility that the Europeans have been far quicker to understand that the war in Afghanistan – aka Vietnamistan – is a fool's errand.)

In the lecture, Keane mentioned that he had asked top UK military leaders at Sandhurst why even the British seem to be going wobbly on Afghanistan. He said that over cocktails, British generals commiserated with Keane, asking him, "Have you Americans lost confidence in us?"

"Yes we have," Keane said he answered. He bemoaned increasing U.S. isolation – even from its closest allies – on matters of war and peace.

Keane indicated that he was a very frequent traveler to Europe – as well as to the

Middle East and Southwest Asia – and would continue trying to transplant some of the U.S. "strength of character" into European backbones.

Keane suggested that the two world wars had weakened the fiber and resolve of most Europeans, but another "ingredient" in what he described as the lamentable "unwillingness of European leaders to ask their people to sacrifice" was the continent's reliance on Social Democracy.

One of Keane's listeners threw up his hand to ask what sacrifices most Americans have been asked to make during ten years of war in Afghanistan – especially the relatively wealthy white Americans like, sadly, all of us in the audience.

On such a beautiful spring day, only a skunk at the garden party would mention the relatively few Americans being sent off to kill and be killed.

Keane and his Establishment colleagues are quite okay with asking those Americans to sacrifice, especially since more than half of the U.S. Army is drawn, via a poverty draft, from the inner cities and the small towns of less than 50,000 – places with few jobs and even fewer educational opportunities.

Keane pretended not to see the waving hand of my classmate.

.....  
**Playing skunk**

And, although most of my classmates

proved to be malnourished by the thin gruel of information served up by the Fawning Corporate Media (FCM), there were a few like me who were deeply troubled that our alma mater would lionize Gen. Keane.

After all, Keane was a key figure in promoting the so-called “surge” of over 30,000 U.S. troops in 2007 that helped the Shia complete the “ethnic cleansing” of much of Baghdad, which went from being a predominantly Sunni city into an overwhelmingly Shiite city.

I had expected Keane to brag about the “success” of the surge – and I had prepared questions on that topic – but his hour-long lecture had a broader sweep. What Keane had to say about the “threat” from Iran occupied center stage of his talk.

Keane portrayed Iran as part of an “ideological” struggle to create an Islamic Caliphate by defeating America’s moral fiber, with the first step of this assault the attack on 9/11.

According to Keane, not only is the Iranian “dictatorship” intent on acquiring “regional hegemony,” it is trying to “fundamentally change the world” by acquiring nuclear weapons.

The United States is rightly concerned, continued Keane, with the repression of civil rights in Iran and the suffering there, but the “fundamental concern” is that the Iranians “are acquiring nuclear weapons” and that they are “thugs and killers.”

My hand went up, but I had to wait until Keane finished his global sweep. He reassured his audience that America has little to fear from a resurgent China.

When I finally got my turn, I prefaced my question by noting that I shared his Fordham ROTC background and was a Distinguished Military Graduate myself.

(I should point out that Keane attended the Fordham Business School, lest his free-wheeling comments and insights reflect poorly on the quality of the college’s courses on history and international relations during the Sixties.)

After my active duty in the Army, I had

spent 27 years as a CIA analyst. I then thanked him for warning us at the outset that he was a direct, open person with strong opinions, and that some of what he would say was his opinion.

Then I alluded to Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s famous dictum that everyone is entitled to his own opinion but not to his own facts.

Could he be unaware that in late 2007, the 16 agencies of the U.S. intelligence community had concluded – unanimously, and “with high confidence” – that Iran stopped working on a nuclear weapon in mid-2003?

Did he miss that National Intelligence Estimate, or the testimony of National Intelligence Director James Clapper, who told Congress in March of this year that there was no change in that judgment?

It was like waving a red flag before a four-star bull. “What’s your question?” he barked.

I said, “My questions: Why do you join with those neoconservatives who have such difficulty distinguishing between the strategic needs of Israel on the one hand and those of the U.S. on the other? Why do you keep claiming the Iranians ‘are acquiring nuclear weapons,’ when you know that is not true.

“How can you possibly say with a straight face that Iran is our ‘main strategic enemy?’ That is also not true, and you know it.”

I then suggested that he find time at the airport to pick up Sy Hersh’s investigative article on this issue in the current *New Yorker* magazine. I might have guessed that Keane’s response would be not only unresponsive but also disingenuous.

“There is evidence that was available starting in 2006, even before that National Intelligence Estimate was drafted, that Iran is working on a nuclear weapon,” he said.

That was it. I lost it. Knowing that to be not only a whopper, but also one that could end up getting thousands more killed, I said, “That’s a lie.”

Some of my classmates told me later that at a Gala Jubilee Reunion it is very much frowned upon to call a wealthy Trustee of the

.....  
**That was it. I lost it. Knowing that to be not only a whopper, but also one that could end up getting thousands more killed, I said, “That’s a lie.”**  
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.....  
**Even some level-headed Israelis are doing their best to warn their countrymen that Israel's right-wing government is again, dangerously, beating the drums for an attack on Iran**  
.....

university – and a four-star general to boot – a liar. Even if he is.

(I had felt I could risk going to hear Keane speak in the first place because, prior to my upcoming Mediterranean cruise to Gaza, my cardiologist had pronounced my blood pressure under control. I felt as good, and energized, as 50 years ago.)

The next questioner asked Keane, “Why not a nuclear free zone in the Middle East?”

The questioner, a classmate of Keane, was cut off as he tried to point out that only Israel is opposed to such a zone, with Washington’s full support. Another questioner asked about the influence of the Israel lobby. Keane’s response, “Sorry, we’re out of time.”

.....  
**Not just debating points**

The possibility of an attack on Iran seems to be on the front burner again, thanks to folks like Keane. In Washington in the not-too-distant past, we used to call these neocon warmongers “the crazies” but they have since become the capital’s opinion leaders.

Yet, even some level-headed Israelis are doing their best to warn their countrymen that Israel’s right-wing government is again, dangerously, beating the drums for an attack on Iran. It has reached the point where former Mossad intelligence chief, Meir Dagan, stated publicly that Israeli leaders may be on the verge of doing something really dumb.

In a recent talk at Hebrew University, Dagan called a military attack on Iran “a stupid idea” that “would mean regional war” while giving “Iran the best possible reason to continue the nuclear program.” Dagan said, “The regional challenge that Israel would face would be impossible.”

But many hard-line Israelis – like their neocon counterparts in the United States – don’t want to hear such warnings.

The Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* reported: “Most of the politicians, and amazingly (and absurdly) enough, also a large number of journalists, want [Dagan] to be quiet. They don’t want him to get us upset with his fears or arouse us from our slumber with his warnings.

“We’ll just leave the fateful decision of whether to attack Iran to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Ehud Barak, and to them alone, and let the storm over the issue subside. As if blind, we will follow them and be led by them straight into the midst of the danger.”

However, *Haaretz* commented that if Dagan “thinks it’s a matter of a threat to our existence at our doorstep, it is not only his right to make himself heard, it is his supreme duty. He should attempt to stop it, to act as a gatekeeper. If he acted otherwise, he would have been abusing his role as former Mossad director.”

I’ve had a day now to reflect on why I blurted out, “That’s a lie.” I mean, aside from the fact that it was a lie. I could have said something more polite, like “I don’t believe you have that right, general.”

I think I’ve pieced together the reasons for my bluntness. My umbrage derived mostly from the tens of thousands of human beings – Iraqis, Afghans, Pakistanis, Libyans and Americans – who have died because of lies like the one Keane told about Iran “acquiring nuclear weapons.”

And I confess that I am particularly outraged by Gen. Keane. In the Sixties, Fordham’s business school students were required to study moral theology/ethics.

Moreover, I regard Keane and his neocon friends as mostly responsible for the “surge” of some 30,000 additional U.S. troops into Iraq between February 2007 and July 2008. U.S. troop deaths spiked to over 900 in 2007 alone, making it the deadliest year of the U.S. since 2004.

As for Iraqi civilians, the first half-year of 2007 was the most deadly first six months of any year since the invasion of Iraq. The “surge” brought death and destruction on an industrial scale under the pretense of quelling Iraq’s violence.

What really happened during the “surge” was that the additional U.S. troops in Baghdad helped the Shiites disarm the Sunnis. Once the Sunnis were disarmed, the Shiite militias poured into Sunni neighborhoods



at night and ethnically cleansed those neighborhoods.

Mixed neighborhoods in Baghdad ended up with virtually no Sunnis. In short, Baghdad went from a predominantly Sunni city to being overwhelmingly Shiite.

It is true that the horrific sectarian violence declined once the ethnic cleansing was far advanced, because there were far fewer mixed neighborhoods where Sunnis and Shiites could kill one another (although the butchery remains horrible even to this day).

As for what the violent “surge” did in terms of brutalizing American troops, one need look no further than the gun-barrel video taken from an Apache helicopter on July 12, 2007, in a southeastern neighborhood of Baghdad.

WikiLeaks, of course, released the video with sound and it can be accessed via collateralmurder.com in an 18-minute and a 39-minute versions. An excellent report on the video was done by the German TV program Panorama, which translated its report into a 12-minute segment, with commentary, in English.

.....  
**Unasked questions**

Before Keane chose to focus on Iran, I had jotted down a few questions to ask him about the “surge,” mostly to enlighten those of my classmates who still don’t know where to look for objective information and analysis.

I was confident that his answers or non-answers would be instructive regarding the widespread misunderstanding of what the “surge” in Iraq was really all about.

In the fall of 2006, CENCOM commander Gen. John Abizaid and the commander of U.S. troops in Iraq, Gen. George Casey, in formal testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee, strongly advocated that the U.S. NOT send additional troops to Iraq.

They argued that keeping the U.S. footprint relatively small was the only way that Iraqi politicians would finally get the message that they must put their own house in order.

Just before the 2006 mid-term election, then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld supported his commanders, or in the view of the neocon hardliners in George W. Bush’s administration, he went wobbly on the Iraq War. Immediately after the election, Rumsfeld was ousted and was replaced by Robert Gates in December 2006.

Also, in December 2006, James Baker, the former Secretary of State and White House Chief of Staff (under President George H. W. Bush), announced the results of the highly regarded Iraq Study Group. Rather than advocate sending more U.S. troops to Iraq, the study group did the opposite, urging a draw-down.

In addition, most, if not all, of the Joint Chiefs of Staff were against the “surge.” However, with Keane and the neocons ascendant, Bush cast aside the advice of his field commanders, the Iraq Study Group, and the top brass at the Pentagon. Soon, Abizaid and Casey were gone, too.

My planned question to Gen. Keane was to ask him to tell us why he and his neocon allies persuaded President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney to ignore all that expert advice and rather heed the neocon plan for a “surge.”

And how do you answer those who say it was simply a case of postponing the day of definitive defeat in Iraq until Bush and Cheney could ride west into the sunset?

How do you justify the deaths of nearly 1,000 more U.S. soldiers and countless thousands of more Iraqis in exchange for sparing Bush, Cheney and the neocons the embarrassment of having the catastrophe in Iraq hung firmly around their necks?

Perhaps someone else can pose those questions to Gen. Keane sometime soon. **CT**

.....  
*Ray McGovern works with Tell the Word, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. He served as an Army infantry/intelligence officer and then for the next 27 years as a CIA analyst. He is co-founder of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS).*

.....  
**How do you justify the deaths of nearly 1,000 more U.S. soldiers and countless thousands of more Iraqis in exchange for sparing Bush, Cheney and the neocons the embarrassment of having the catastrophe in Iraq hung firmly around their necks?**  
 .....

# The meaning of life?

George Monbiot has discovered the answer – and it's all to do with cash

.....  
**If you thought the true value of nature was the wonder and delight it invoked, you're wrong. It turns out that it's a figure with a pound sign on the front**  
.....

Love, economists have discovered, is depreciating rapidly. On current trends, it is expected to fall by £1.78 per passion-hour between now and 2030. The opportunity cost of a kiss foregone has declined by £0.36 since 1988. By 2050 the net present value of a night under the stars could be as little as £56.13. This reduction in the true value of love, they warn, could inflict serious economic damage.

None of that is true, but it's not far off. Love is one of the few natural blessings which has yet to be fully costed and commodified. They're probably working on it now.

Under the last government, the Department for Transport announced that it had discovered "the real value of time". Here's the surreal sentence in which this bombshell was dropped: "Forecast growth in the real value of time is shown in Table 3."

Early this month, the Department for Environment announced the results of its National Ecosystem Assessment, a massive exercise involving 500 experts. The assessment, it tells us, establishes "the true value of nature ... for the very first time."

If you thought the true value of nature was the wonder and delight it invoked, you're wrong. It turns out that it's a figure with a pound sign on the front. All that remains is for the Cabinet Office to tell us the true value of love and the price of society,

and we'll have a single figure for the meaning of life.

The government has not yet produced one number for "the true value of nature", but its scientists have costed some of the assets that will one day enable this magical synthesis to be achieved. The assessment has produced figures, for example, for the value of green spaces to human well-being. If we look after them well, our parks and greens will enhance our well-being to the tune of £290 per household per year in 2060.

How do they calculate these values? The report tells us that the "ecosystem services" it assesses include "recreation, health and solace", and natural spaces "in which our culture finds its roots and sense of place".

These must be taken into account when costing "shared social value". Shared social value arises from developing "a sense of purpose", and being "able to achieve important personal goals and participate in society." It is enhanced by "supportive personal relationships" and "strong and inclusive communities." These are among the benefits which the experts claim to be costing.

The exercise is well-intentioned. The environment department rightly points out that businesses and politicians ignore the uncosted damage their decisions might inflict on the natural world and human welfare. It seeks to address this oversight

by showing that “there are real economic reasons for looking after nature.”

But there are two big problems.

The first is that this assessment is total nonsense, pure reductionist gobbledegook, dressed up in the language of objectivity and reason, but ascribing prices to emotional responses: prices, which, for all the high-falutin’ language it uses, can only be arbitrary. It has been constructed by people who feel safe only with numbers, who must drag the whole world into their comfort zone in order to feel that they have it under control. The graphics used by the assessment are telling: they portray the connections between people and nature as interlocking cogs.

It’s as clear a warning as we could take that this is an almost-comical attempt to force both nature and human emotion into a linear, mechanistic vision.

**Public benefits**

The second problem is that it delivers the natural world into the hands of those who would destroy it. Picture, for example, a planning enquiry for an opencast coal mine. The public benefits arising from the forests and meadows it will destroy have been costed at £1m per year. The income from opening the mine will be £10m per year. No further argument needs to be made. The coal mine’s barrister, presenting these figures to the enquiry, has an indefeasible case: public objections have already been addressed by the pricing exercise; there is nothing more to be discussed. When you turn nature into an accounting exercise, its destruction can be justified as soon as the business case comes out right. It almost always comes out right.

Cost-benefit analysis is systematically rigged in favour of business. Take, for example, the decision-making process for transport infrastructure. The last government developed an appraisal method which almost guaranteed that new roads, railways and runways would be built, regardless of the damage they might do or

the paltry benefits they might deliver. The method costs people’s time according to how much they earn, and uses this cost to create a value for the development. So, for example, it says the market price of an hour spent travelling in a taxi is £45, but the price of an hour spent travelling by bicycle is just £17, because cyclists tend to be poorer than taxi passengers.

Its assumptions are utterly illogical. For example, commuters are deemed to use all the time saved by a new high speed rail link to get to work earlier, rather than to live further away. Rich rail passengers are expected to do no useful work on trains, but to twiddle their thumbs and stare vacantly out of the window throughout the journey.

This costing system explains why successive governments want to invest in high-speed rail rather than cycle lanes, and why multi-billion pound road schemes which cut two minutes off your journey are deemed to offer value for money.

None of this is accidental: the cost-benefit models governments use excite intense interest from business lobbyists. Civil servants with an eye on lucrative directorships in their retirement ensure that the decision-making process is rigged in favour of over-development.

This is the machine into which nature must now be fed. The National Ecosystem Assessment hands the biosphere on a plate to the construction industry.

It’s the definitive neoliberal triumph: the monetisation and marketisation of nature, its reduction to a tradeable asset. Once you have surrendered it to the realm of Pareto optimisation and Kaldor-Hicks compensation, everything is up for grabs. These well-intentioned dolts, the fellows of the Grand Academy of Lagado who produced the government’s assessment, have crushed the natural world into a column of figures. Now it can be swapped for money.

**CT**

*George Monbiot’s latest book is “Bring On The Apocalypse”. This piece first appeared in London’s Guardian newspaper.*

.....  
**It’s the definitive neoliberal triumph: the monetisation and marketisation of nature, its reduction to a tradeable asset**  
 .....

# Skating into the financial abyss

Almost three years after the big crash, financial reform now seems to be the enemy, writes **Danny Schechter**

.....  
**There is no corporate privilege or malevolent bank practice that the lobbyists will not defend in the name of fostering economic growth**  
.....

Some years back Thomas Frank nailed it in his book, “The Wrecking Crew.” It was subtitled “How Conservatives Rule” and showed how narrow self-interest and well-practiced cynicism in the service of partisan warfare has crippled our political system resulting in a deep paralysis despite the threat of a collapse.

I call it sabotage, a tactic that goes way back and involves deliberate effort to insure that reforms are effectively undermined.

When the book came out, *Publishers Weekly* praised it and criticized it in the same breath, writing, “Frank paints a complex and conspiracy-ridden picture that illuminates the sinister and controversial practices of the Republican Party in the 20th and 21st centuries.

“While Frank’s assessments and interpretations of key events, players and party doctrines is accurate and justifiable, his overwhelming blame of the Republican Party as the source of everything that’s wrong with this country and as the emblem of self-destructing government denies the Democrats and the citizenry their roles in a decaying democracy”

How true! They didn’t quibble with his findings, calling them “accurate and justifiable,” but also note that political labels are often poor guides to understanding how this game operates.

That’s because politics is no longer, if it

ever was, a game played just by politicians. Politics is now an industry that plays itself out in an arena of the seen and unseen.

Today, the hatchets are out to do in needed financial reforms contained in a bill that has already been neutered and nit-picked, trimmed, sliced and diced by what’s called legislative compromise.

A congressional-style Seal Team Six has been assembled and is ready to pounce on the new enemy – financial reform. There is no corporate privilege or malevolent bank practice that the lobbyists will not defend in the name of fostering economic growth.

One juicy sex scandal involving one or more pols gets more ink than all the investigations of how special interests, well-paid lobbyists, billionaire funders, think-tank gunslingers and slippery lawyers for hire operate to serve the status quo and stop even mild reforms that might cost the industries they work for money or influence.

They are no reforms they won’t endlessly amend into oblivion.

First, they commission bogus and selective studies to “prove” why reforms need to be “reformed” their way. Then, with PR and complicit media, they orchestrate coverage to sell their policies. They start with something small like protections for debit cards and then escalate to full-scale war.

Thanks to the Democratic majority in the Senate, an attempt to delay rules governing

what banks and credit-card companies can charge for retailers to process cards was voted down, with the *New York Times* noting that this war will continue:

“Even with the defeat, the vote represented a remarkable come-from-behind lobbying campaign by banks to recover from the drubbing they took during the anti-Wall Street atmosphere that pervaded last year.”

A day later, the knives were out for the new Consumer Protection Bureau with a major campaign targeting Harvard Law Professor Elizabeth Warren, who first proposed the agency and was considered the most qualified to lead it.

She was then demonized by the industry and the Right – and now the Obama administration seems ready to abandon her, rather than fight for her.

Four years ago, the markets melted down sparking a global crisis. The bailouts followed and a bank-led “recovery” helped many banks recover. However, unemployment and foreclosures stayed high. Growth seized up. The crisis continues.

What to do?

There were several schools of thought.

The administration locked itself into an alliance with Wall Street. They killed proposals for structural reform and restraints on private economic power. They are gambling on a turnaround – their version of faith-based politics – even as jobs are not coming back.

In short, they have no answers and are not prepared to fight any messy battles with the real power structure. In the name of pragmatism, they have betrayed their own campaign compromises and tacked right to out-Republican the Republicans.

They call it “triangulation.” Their critics call it a sell-out although what’s left of the Left was quickly left out.

The Republicans retreated into simplistic ideologies, blaming everything on Democrats and government spending. They began fueling a scare about the deficit the way their predecessors raved against the Red Menace.

They have no answers either.

In Congress, the wise men came up with a financial reform called Dodd-Frank. After stripping it of any radicalism, they offered up some pragmatic measures to increase regulation and try to force the finance industry to act responsibly with more transparency and accountability. The bill explicitly rejected proposes for any and all international standards.

Dodd-Frank passed, but then the real bargaining began on what the new rules should be. The finance industry mounted a lobbying force of 25 high-powered lawyers and consultants for every member of Congress. The deliberations moved out of public view and into the corridors and closed clubs in Washington.

The predictable result has now surfaced in the *New York Times*:

“Nearly one year after Congress passed financial changes to rein in the banking sector, more than two dozen of the legislation’s rules are behind schedule, and no end to the wrangling over details is in sight.

“The delays come as regulators extend public comment periods on the rules, and as some on Wall Street and in Congress resist the changes. One result may be that many new safeguards do not take hold in earnest before the next election, an outcome that could open the door for newly elected officials to back away from the overhaul.”

The respected blog *Naked Capitalism* has followed this in excruciating detail.

Concluded Richard Smith, a London based capital markets IT Specialist:

“So where does that leave us with our shadow banking reforms? Well, we have a modest tweak to bank capital requirements, of unknown efficacy. The mountain has labored, and brought forth a mouse.

“Or you might prefer to pursue the anaconda/rabbit imagery to a physiologically realistic conclusion.”

(Translation: The snake swallowed the rabbit.)

Yves Smith, the editor of the blog is not surprised, suggesting this was the outcome

.....  
**The administration locked itself into an alliance with Wall Street. They killed proposals for structural reform and restraints on private economic power**  
 .....



## BLOCKING REFORM

.....  
**The problem is that while many see the logic of an illogical system, so intricately sabotaged from within, it is set up to make it almost impossible to stop the train wreck**  
.....

that was always intended: To kill the bill by appearing to “strengthen” it.

So where are we? Nowhere, or perhaps it’s even worse than that. Many in the public backed the reforms including protections of consumers. They think it is being enacted.

When the next market crash occurs, as many insiders fear it will, they will realize how they were played, but then it will be too late.

Are we condemned for more of this rollercoaster ride to the apocalypse?

Smith seems disgusted, pointing out that even these tepid reforms emerged from a “weak analysis of the causes of the crash, some disjointed looking proposals, some mild BS. Kind of picking at the problem, with lobbyists at the ready.

“But what is the result of nine months’ thought and some horse-trading with concerned Congressmen, juggling lobbyists and angry voters? “

What, indeed! We can see where all this is headed. We will find out soon enough if the predictions of a possible “great, great depression” come to pass.

The problem is that while many see the logic of an illogical system, so intricately sabotaged from within, it is set up to make it almost impossible to stop the train wreck. On this, the press is largely missing.

The astute economics editor of the

Guardian, Larry Eliot sees only one possible way to stop this disaster in the making:

“Policy, as ever, is geared towards growth because the great existential fear of the Federal Reserve, the Treasury and whoever occupies the White House is a return to the 1930s.

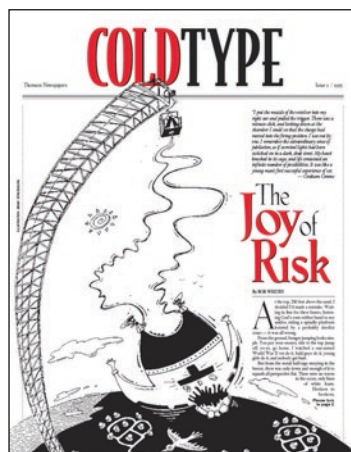
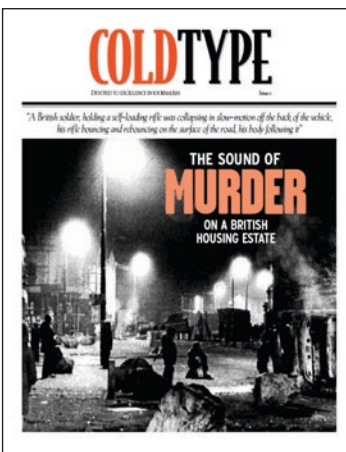
“Back then; the economic malaise could be largely attributed to deflationary economic policies that deepened the recession caused by the popping of the 1920s share market bubble. The feeble response to today’s growth medicine suggests the US is structurally far weaker than it was in the 1930s.” (Emphasis mine)

To tackle these weaknesses it must break finance’s stranglehold over the economy and boost ordinary families’ spending power to cut their reliance on debt.

Can we break finance’s stranglehold over the economy if these issues can’t displace the sex scandal of the week, as the real threat to our future. Can we identify and stop the saboteurs?

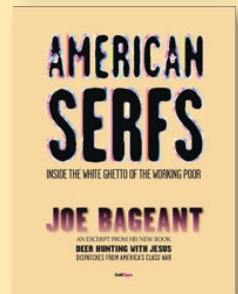
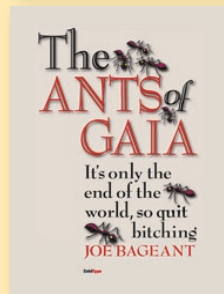
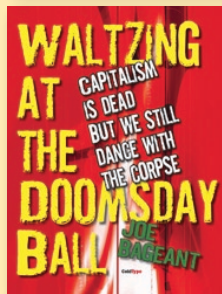
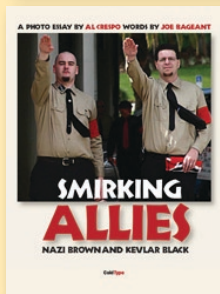
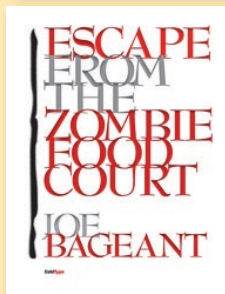
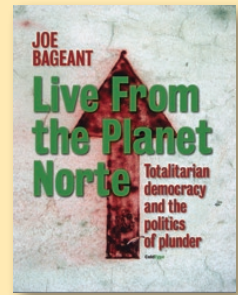
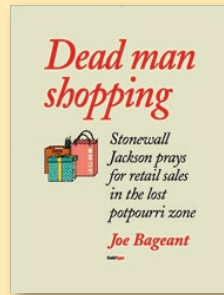
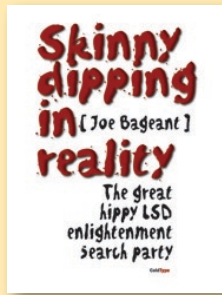
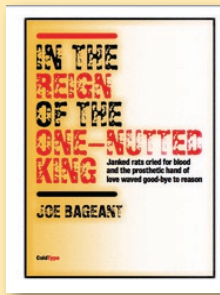
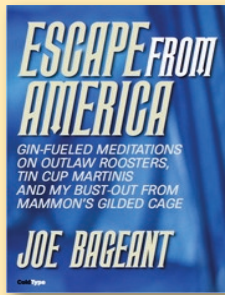
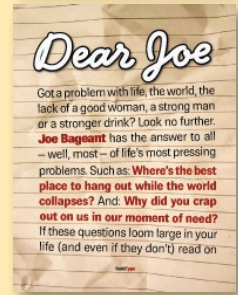
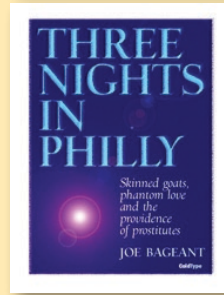
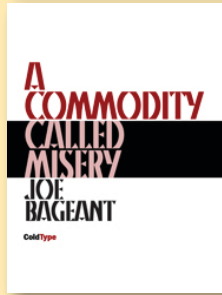
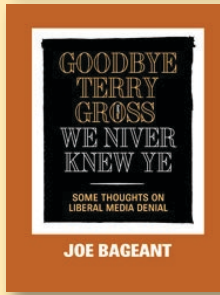
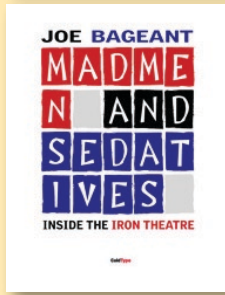
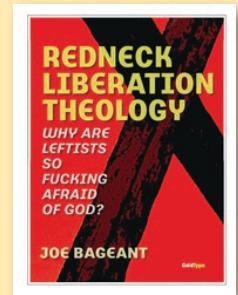
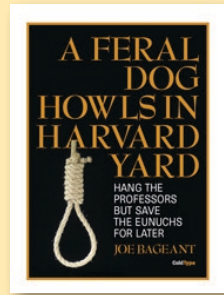
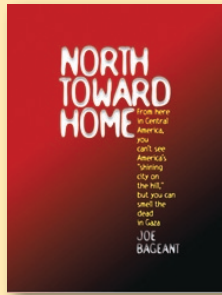
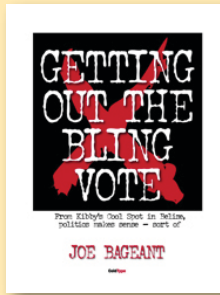
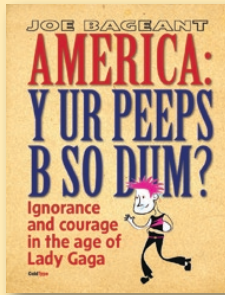
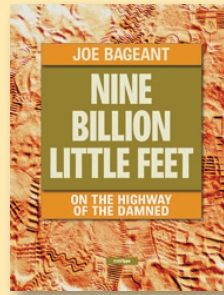
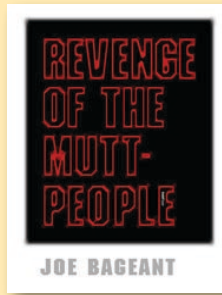
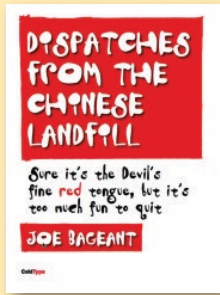
We keep reading about the Arab Spring, but not the American winter. **CT**

.....  
Danny Schechter directed the film “**Plunder The Crime of Our Time,**” a film about the financial crisis as a crime story – *Plunderthecrimeofourtime.com* – The accompanying book was first published by Coldtype



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# Welcome to post-legal America

Tom Engelhardt on the slide to national and international lawlessness

.....  
**But honestly, did anyone anywhere ever doubt that no Bush-era official would be brought to trial here for such potential crime?**  
.....

**I**s the Libyan war legal? Was Bin Laden's killing legal? Is it legal for the president of the United States to target an American citizen for assassination? Were those "enhanced interrogation techniques" legal? These are all questions raised in recent weeks. Each seems to call out for debate, for answers. Or does it?

Now, you couldn't call me a legal scholar. I've never set foot inside a law school, and in 66 years only made it onto a single jury (dismissed before trial when the civil suit was settled out of court). Still, I feel at least as capable as any constitutional law professor of answering such questions.

My answer is this: they are irrelevant. Think of them as twentieth-century questions that don't begin to come to grips with twenty-first century American realities. In fact, think of them, and the very idea of a nation based on the rule of law, as a reflection of nostalgia for, or sentimentality about, a long-lost republic. At least in terms of what used to be called "foreign policy," and more recently "national security," the United States is now a post-legal society. (And you could certainly include in this mix the too-big-to-jail financial and corporate elite.)

It's easy enough to explain what I mean. If, in a country theoretically orga-

nized under the rule of law, wrongdoers are never brought to justice and nobody is held accountable for possibly serious crimes, then you don't have to be a constitutional law professor to know that its citizens actually exist in a post-legal state. If so, "Is it legal?" is the wrong question to be asking, even if we have yet to discover the right one.

.....  
**Pretzeled Definitions of Torture**

Of course, when it came to a range of potential Bush-era crimes – the use of torture, the running of offshore "black sites," the extraordinary rendition of terrorist suspects to lands where they would be tortured, illegal domestic spying and wiretapping, and the launching of wars of aggression – it's hardly news that no one of the slightest significance has ever been brought to justice. On taking office, President Obama offered a clear formula for dealing with this issue. He insisted that Americans should "look forward, not backward" and turn the page on the whole period, and then set his Justice Department to work on other matters. But honestly, did anyone anywhere ever doubt that no Bush-era official would be brought to trial here for such potential crimes?

Everyone knows that in the United States if you're a robber caught breaking into someone's house, you'll be brought to trial, but if you're caught breaking into



someone else's country, you'll be free to take to the lecture circuit, write your memoirs, or become a university professor.

Of all the "debates" over legality in the Bush and Obama years, the torture debate has perhaps been the most interesting, and in some ways, the most realistic. After 9/11, the Bush administration quickly turned to a crew of hand-picked Justice Department lawyers to create the necessary rationale for what its officials most wanted to do – in their quaint phrase, "take the gloves off." And those lawyers responded with a set of pseudo-legalisms that put various methods of "information extraction" beyond the powers of the Geneva Conventions, the UN's Convention Against Torture (signed by President Ronald Reagan and ratified by the Senate), and domestic anti-torture legislation, including the War Crimes Act of 1996 (passed by a Republican Congress).

In the process, they created infamously pretzled new definitions for acts previously accepted as torture. Among other things, they essentially left the definition of whether an act was torture or not to the torturer (that is, to what he believed he was doing at the time). In the process, acts that had historically been considered torture became "enhanced interrogation techniques." An example would be waterboarding, which had once been bluntly known as "the water torture" or "the water cure" and whose perpetrators had, in the past, been successfully prosecuted in American military and civil courts. Such techniques were signed off on after first reportedly being "demonstrated" in the White House to an array of top officials, including the vice-president, the national security adviser, the attorney general, and the secretary of state.

In the US (and here was the realism of the debate that followed), the very issue of legality fell away almost instantly. Newspapers rapidly replaced the word

"torture" – when applied to what American interrogators did – with the term "enhanced interrogation techniques," which was widely accepted as less controversial and more objective. At the same time, the issue of the legality of such techniques was superseded by a fierce national debate over their efficacy. It has lasted to this day and returned with a bang with the bin Laden killing.

Nothing better illustrates the nature of our post-legal society. Anti-torture laws were on the books in this country. If legality had truly mattered, it would have been beside the point whether torture was an effective way to produce "actionable intelligence" and so prepare the way for the killing of a bin Laden.

By analogy, it's perfectly reasonable to argue that robbing banks can be a successful and profitable way to make a living, but who would agree that a successful bank robber hadn't committed an act as worthy of prosecution as an unsuccessful one caught on the spot? Efficacy wouldn't matter in a society whose central value was the rule of law. In a post-legal society in which the ultimate value espoused is the safety and protection a national security state can offer you, it means the world.

As if to make the point, the Supreme Court recently offered a post-legal ruling for our moment: it declined to review a lower court ruling that blocked a case in which five men, who had experienced extraordinary rendition (a fancy globalized version of kidnapping) and been turned over to torturing regimes elsewhere by the CIA, tried to get their day in court. No such luck. The Obama administration claimed (as had the Bush administration before it) that simply bringing such a case to court would imperil national security (that is, state secrets) – and won. As Ben Wizner, the American Civil Liberties Union lawyer who argued the case, summed matters up, "To date, every victim of the Bush administration's tor-

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ture regime has been denied his day in court.”

To put it another way, every CIA torturer, all those involved in acts of rendition, and all the officials who okayed such acts, as well as the lawyers who put their stamp of approval on them, are free to continue their lives untouched. Recently, the Obama administration even went to court to “prevent a lawyer for a former CIA officer convicted in Italy in the kidnapping of a radical Muslim cleric from privately sharing classified information about the case with a Federal District Court judge.” (Yes, Virginia, elsewhere in the world a few Americans have been tried in absentia for Bush-era crimes.) In response, wrote Scott Shane of the *New York Times*, the judge “pronounced herself ‘literally speechless.’”

The realities of our moment are simple enough: other than abusers too low-level (see England, Lynndie and Graner, Charles) to matter to our national security state, no one in the CIA, and certainly no official of any sort, is going to be prosecuted for the possible crimes Americans committed in the Bush years in pursuit of the Global War on Terror.

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**On Not Blowing Whistles**

It’s beyond symbolic, then, that only one figure from the national security world seems to remain in the “legal” crosshairs: the whistle-blower. If, as the president of the United States, you sign off on a system of warrantless surveillance of Americans – the sort that not so long ago was against the law in this country – or if you happen to run a giant telecom company and go along with that system by opening your facilities to government snoops, or if you run the National Security Agency or are an official in it overseeing the kind of data mining and intelligence gathering that goes with such a program, then – as recent years have made clear – you are above the law.

If, however, you happen to be an NSA employee who feels that the agency

has overstepped the bounds of legality in its dealings with Americans, that it is moving in Orwellian directions, and that it should be exposed, and if you offer even unclassified information to a newspaper reporter, as was the case with Thomas Drake, be afraid, be very afraid. You may be prosecuted by the Bush and then Obama Justice Departments, and threatened with 35 years in prison under the Espionage Act (not for “espionage,” but for having divulged the most minor of low-grade state secrets in a world in which, increasingly, everything having to do with the state is becoming a secret).

If you are a CIA employee who tortured no one but may have given information damaging to the reputation of the national security state – in this case about a botched effort to undermine the Iranian nuclear program – to a journalist, watch out. You are likely, as in the case of Jeffrey Sterling, to find yourself in a court of law. And if you happen to be a journalist like James Risen who may have received that information, you are likely to be hit by a Justice Department subpoena attempting to force you to reveal your source, under threat of imprisonment for contempt of court.

If you are a private in the US military with access to a computer with low-level classified material from the Pentagon’s wars and the State Department’s activities on it, if you’ve seen something of the grim reality of what the national security state looks like when superimposed on Iraq, and if you decide to shine some light on that world, as Bradley Manning did, they’ll toss you into prison and throw away the key. You’ll be accused of having “blood on your hands” and tried, again under the Espionage Act, by those who actually have blood on their hands and are beyond all accountability.

When it comes to acts of state today, there is only one law: don’t pull up the curtain on the doings of any aspect of our spreading National Security Com-

plex or the imperial executive that goes with it. As CIA Director Leon Panetta put it in addressing his employees over leaks about the operation to kill bin Laden, “Disclosure of classified information to anyone not cleared for it – reporters, friends, colleagues in the private sector or other agencies, former Agency officers – does tremendous damage to our work. At worst, leaks endanger lives... Unauthorized disclosure of those details not only violates the law, it seriously undermines our capability to do our job.”

And when someone in Congress actually moves to preserve some aspect of older notions of American privacy (versus American secrecy), as Senator Rand Paul did recently in reference to the Patriot Act, he is promptly smeared as potentially “giving terrorists the opportunity to plot attacks against our country, undetected.”

#### Enhanced Legal Techniques

Here is the reality of post-legal America: since the attacks of September 11, 2001, the National Security Complex has engorged itself on American fears and grown at a remarkable pace. According to Top Secret America, a *Washington Post* series written in mid-2010, 854,000 people have “top secret” security clearances, “33 building complexes for top-secret intelligence work are under construction or have been built since September 2001... 51 federal organizations and military commands, operating in 15 US cities, track the flow of money to and from terrorist networks... [and] some 1,271 government organizations and 1,931 private companies work on programs related to counterterrorism, homeland security, and intelligence in about 10,000 locations across the United States.”

Just stop a moment to take that in. And then let this sink in as well: whatever any one of those employees does inside that national security world, no matter how “illegal” the act, it’s a double-your-money bet that he or she will

never be prosecuted for it (unless it happens to involve letting Americans know something about just how they are being “protected”).

Consider what it means to have a US Intelligence Community (as it likes to call itself) made up of 17 different agencies and organizations, a total that doesn’t even include all the smaller intelligence offices in the National Security Complex, which for almost 10 years proved incapable of locating its global enemy number one. Yet, as everyone now agrees, that man was living in something like plain sight, exchanging messages with and seeing colleagues in a military and resort town near Islamabad, the Pakistani capital. And what does it mean that, when he was finally killed, it was celebrated as a vast intelligence victory?

The Intelligence Community with its \$80 billion-plus budget, the National Security Complex, including the Pentagon and that post-9/11 creation, the Department of Homeland Security, with its \$1.2 trillion-plus budget, and the imperial executive have thrived in these years. They have all expanded their powers and prerogatives based largely on the claim that they are protecting the American people from potential harm from terrorists out to destroy our world.

Above all, however, they seem to have honed a single skill: the ability to protect themselves, as well as the lobbyists and corporate entities that feed off them. They have increased their funds and powers, even as they enveloped their institutions in a penumbra of secrecy. The power of this complex of institutions is still on the rise, even as the power and wealth of the country it protects is visibly in decline.

Now, consider again the question “Is it legal?” When it comes to any act of the National Security Complex, it’s obviously inapplicable in a land where the rule of law no longer applies to everyone. If you are an ordinary citizen, of course, it

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applies to you, but not if you are part of the state apparatus that officially protects you. The institutional momentum behind this development is simple enough to demonstrate: it hardly mattered that, after George W. Bush took off those gloves, the next president elected was a former constitutional law professor.

Think of the National Security Complex as the King George of the present moment. In the areas that matter to that complex, Congress has ever less power and, as in the case of the war in Libya or the Patriot Act, is ever more ready to cede what power it has left.

So democracy? The people's representatives? How quaint in a world in which our real rulers are unelected, shielded by secrecy, and supported by a carefully nurtured, almost religious attitude toward security and the US military.

The National Security Complex has access to us, to our lives and communications, though we have next to no access to it. It has, in reserve, those enhanced interrogation techniques and when trouble looms, a set of what might be called enhanced legal techniques as well. It has the ability to make war at will (or whim). It has a growing post-9/11 secret army

cocooned inside the military: 20,000 or more troops in special operations outfits like the SEAL team that took down bin Laden, also enveloped in secrecy. In addition, it has the CIA and a fleet of armed drone aircraft ready to conduct its wars and operations globally in semi-secrecy and without the permission or oversight of the American people or their representatives.

And war, of course, is the ultimate aphrodisiac for the powerful.

Theoretically, the National Security Complex exists only to protect you. Its every act is done in the name of making you safer, even if the idea of safety and protection doesn't extend to your job, your foreclosed home, or aid in disastrous times.

Welcome to post-legal America. It's time to stop wondering whether its acts are illegal and start asking: Do you really want to be this "safe"? **CT**

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*Tom Engelhardt, co-founder of the American Empire Project and the author of The End of Victory Culture, runs the Nation Institute's TomDispatch.com. His latest book is The American Way of War: How Bush's Wars Became Obama's (Haymarket Books)*



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# Mass affluence is over, says Madison Ave.

Marketing to the rich used to be a niche market. not any more, now it's the only market, says **Sam Pizzigati**

**T**he American middle class, concludes a new study from the ad industry's top trade journal, has essentially become irrelevant. In a deeply unequal America, if you don't make \$200,000, you don't matter.

The chain-smoking ad agency account execs of *Mad Men*, the hit cable TV series set in the early 1960s, all want to be rich some day. But these execs, professionally, couldn't care less about the rich. They spend their nine-to-fives marketing to average Americans, not rich ones.

*Mad Men*'s real-life ad agency brethren, 50 years ago, behaved the exact same way – for an eminently common-sense reason: In mid-20th century America, the entire US economy revolved around middle class households. The vast bulk of US income sat in middle class pockets.

The rich back then, for ad execs, constituted an afterthought, a niche market.

Not anymore. Madison Avenue has now come full circle. The rich no longer rate as a niche. Marketing to the rich – and those about to gain that status – has become the only game that really counts.

“Mass affluence,” as a new white paper from *Advertising Age*, the advertising industry's top trade journal, has just declared, “is over.”

The *Mad Men* 1960s America – where average families dominated the consumer

market – has totally disappeared, this *Ad Age* New Wave of Affluence study details. And Madison Avenue has moved on – to where the money sits.

And that money does not sit in average American pockets. The global economic recession, *Ad Age* relates, has thrown “a spotlight on the yawning divide between the richest Americans and everyone else.”

Taking inflation into account, *Ad Age* goes on to explain, the “incomes of most American workers have remained more or less static since the 1970s,” while “the income of the rich (and the very rich) has grown exponentially.”

The top 10 percent of American households, the trade journal adds, now account for nearly half of all consumer spending, and a disproportionate share of that spending comes from the top 10's upper reaches.

“Simply put,” sums up *Ad Age*'s David Hirschman, “a small plutocracy of wealthy elites drives a larger and larger share of total consumer spending and has outsize purchasing influence – particularly in categories such as technology, financial services, travel, automotive, apparel, and personal care.”

America as a whole, the new *Ad Age* study pauses to note, hasn't quite caught up with the reality of this steep inequality. Americans still “like to believe in an egalitarian ideal of affluence” where “everyone has an equal shot” at “amassing a great fortune through

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**In mid-20th century America, the entire US economy revolved around middle class households. The vast bulk of US income sat in middle class pockets**  
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## CLASS STRUGGLE

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**In the future, if current trends continue, no one else but the rich will essentially matter – to Madison Avenue**  
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dint of hard work and ingenuity.”

In actual life, the new *Ad Age* study points out, “the odds of someone’s worth amounting to \$1 million dollars” have shrunk to “1 in 22.”

The new *Ad Age* white paper makes no value judgments about any of this. The ad industry’s only vested interest: following the money, because that money determines who consumes.

“As the very rich become even richer,” *Ad Age* observes, “they amass greater purchasing power, creating an increasingly concentrated market for luxury goods and services as well as consumer goods overall.”

In the future, if current trends continue, no one else but the rich will essentially matter – to Madison Avenue. “More than ever before,” the new *Ad Age* paper bluntly sums up, “the wealthiest households will be the households with significant disposable income to spend.”

On the one hand, that makes things easy for Madison Avenue. To thrive in a top-heavy America, a marketer need only zero in on the rich. On the other hand, a real challenge remains: How can savvy Madison Avenue execs identify – and capture the consuming loyalties of – people on their way to wealth?

Before the Great Recession, the Madison Avenue conventional wisdom put great stock in the \$100,000 to \$200,000 income demographic, a consuming universe populated largely by men and women 35 years

and older.

These “aspirational” households, ad men and women figured, could afford a taste of the good life. They rated as a worthwhile advertising target.

Targeting this \$100,000 to \$200,000 cohort, the new *Ad Age* report contends, no longer makes particularly good marketing sense. These consumers don’t “feel rich” today and won’t likely “graduate into affluence later on.”

Only under-35s who make between \$100,000 and \$200,000, says *Ad Age*, will likely make that graduation. This under-35 “emerging” tier will have “a far greater chance of eventually crossing the golden threshold of \$200,000 than those who achieve household income of \$100,000 later in life.”

So that’s it. If you want to be a successful advertising exec in a deeply unequal America, start studying up on 20-somethings making over \$100,000 a year.

The ad industry, with this new affluence report, seems to have the future all figured out. And those of us who don’t make \$200,000 a year, and don’t have much chance of ever making it, what about us? No need to worry. Who needs purchasing power? We have Mad Men reruns. **CT**

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*Sam Pizzigati is the editor of the online weekly Too Much – [www.toomuchonline.org](http://www.toomuchonline.org) – and an associate fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies.*

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# A week in the life of a police state

**John W. Whitehead** chronicles the continuing assault on individual freedom in the United States

**K**eeping up with the real news can be difficult today – especially since those who provide us with the “news” often deliver entertainment packaged as news. In this way, what passes for news serves merely to distract us from what is really happening in the world around us. Gradually, the powers-that-be have erected a police/surveillance state around us. This is reflected in the government’s single-minded quest to acquire ever greater powers, the fusion of the police and the courts, and the extent to which our elected representatives have sold us out to the highest bidders – namely, the corporate state and military industrial complex.

Indeed, a handful of seemingly unrelated incidents in the week leading up to Memorial Day perfectly encapsulated how much the snare enclosing us has tightened, how little recourse we really have – at least in the courts, and how truly bleak is the landscape of our freedoms. What these incidents reveal is that the governmental bureaucracy has stopped viewing the American people as human beings who should be treated with worth and dignity. That was the purpose of the Bill of Rights. The Fourth Amendment’s protection against unreasonable searches and seizures of our persons and effects was designed so that government agents would be forced to treat us with due respect. With this protection now gone, those who attempt to exercise their rights will often be forced to defend them-

selves against an increasingly inflexible and uncompromising government.

For example, on May 24, 2011, a Virginia Circuit Court refused to reverse the expulsion of a 14-year-old honor student charged under a school zero tolerance policy with “violent criminal conduct” and possession of a weapon for shooting plastic “spitballs” at classmates. This young man eventually faced three assault and battery charges as a result of three students being hit on the arms by the spitballs. Despite the fact that the judge acknowledged the school’s punishment to be overreaching, he refused to intervene, essentially washing his hands of the matter and leaving it to the schools to act as they see fit.

Two days later, the US Supreme Court – the highest court in the land, in a devastating ruling that could do away with what little Fourth Amendment protections remain to public school students and their families, threw out a lower court ruling in *Alford v. Greene* which required government authorities to secure a warrant, a court order or parental consent before interrogating students at school. The ramifications are far-reaching, rendering public school students as wards of the state. Once again, the courts sided with law enforcement against the rights of the people.

That night, in a race against the clock, Congress pushed through a four-year extension of three controversial provisions in the USA Patriot Act that authorize the government to

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## SURVEILLANCE STATE

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use aggressive surveillance tactics in the so-called war against terror. Since being enacted in 2001, the Patriot Act has driven a stake through the heart of the Bill of Rights, violating at least six of the ten original amendments – the First, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Amendments – and possibly the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments, as well. The Patriot Act has also redefined terrorism so broadly that many non-terrorist political activities such as protest marches, demonstrations and civil disobedience are considered potential terrorist acts, thereby rendering anyone desiring to engage in protected First Amendment expressive activities as suspects of the surveillance state.

Under the Patriot Act, for the first time in American history, federal agents and police officers are authorized to conduct black bag “sneak-and-peak” searches of homes and offices and confiscate your personal property without first notifying you of their intent or their presence. The law also grants the FBI the right to come to your place of employment, demand your personal records and question your supervisors and fellow employees, all without notifying you; allows the government access to your medical records, school records and practically every personal record about you; and allows the government to secretly demand to see records of books or magazines you’ve checked out in any public library and Internet sites you’ve visited (at least 545 libraries received such demands in the first year following passage of the Patriot Act).

In the name of fighting terrorism, government officials have been permitted to monitor religious and political institutions with no suspicion of criminal wrongdoing; prosecute librarians or keepers of any other records if they told anyone that the government had subpoenaed information related to a terror investigation; monitor conversations between attorneys and clients; search and seize Americans’ papers and effects without showing probable cause; and jail Americans indefinitely without trial, among other things. The federal government has also made liberal use of its new powers, especially through the use

(and abuse) of the nefarious national security letters, which allow the FBI to demand personal customer records from Internet Service Providers, financial institutions and credit companies at the mere say-so of the government agent in charge of a local FBI office and without prior court approval.

Unfortunately, although the Patriot Act has been perversely applied to average Americans, when some of the more controversial provisions recently came up for renewal, they were passed by many of the same individuals – many ushered into office on the impetus of the Tea Party – who had claimed to oppose it. Within hours of the Patriot Act extension being passed, however, Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Oregon), a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, revealed in an interview that the “real” Patriot Act is classified. In other words, Wyden’s message is that the government has been broadly interpreting the Patriot Act for its own purposes and keeping that interpretation under wraps. Stated Wyden: “We’re getting to a gap between what the public thinks the law says and what the American government secretly thinks the law says.” Thus, the violations of the Patriot Act are worse than we thought.

Then, on May 28, a small group of young people showed up at the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, DC, to protest a recent appeals court ruling that expressive dancing is prohibited at the memorial. The ruling concerned a 2008 incident in which a group of 20 people descended on the Jefferson Memorial at midnight for a flash mob – a spontaneous (and silent) dance tribute to Jefferson on the eve of his 265th birthday. Of the 20, one – Mary Oberwetter – was arrested, handcuffed and charged with failing to follow police orders and interfering with operation of the memorial. Oberwetter sued, insisting on a First Amendment right to free speech, only to have the court declare that the US Park Service has a duty to maintain “decorum” at the nation’s monuments and that any demonstrations, whether one person or many, are not allowed inside the nation’s memorials. A subsequent appeal to the US Court of Appeals for the

District of Columbia resulted in a ruling that “expressive dancing falls within the spectrum of prohibited activities” and that “the Park Service has a substantial interest in promoting a tranquil environment at our national memorials.”

In response to the ruling, a motley crew of activists, determined to exercise their First Amendment right to free expression and protest and armed with nothing more than head-phones, entered the Jefferson Memorial on May 28, 2011, the weekend before Memorial Day. “The founders understood that the only thing that was going to make the American experiment succeed was the people standing up for these rights,” Jared Denman, one of the demonstrators, remarked. Unfortunately, this particular experiment was short-lived.

Swaying minimally to whatever music was in their heads, the small group barely had time to “bust a move” before Park Police descended on them. The resulting fracas, in which police choked and body slammed one protester, Adam Kokesh, handcuffed others and shut the memorial down altogether, was captured on YouTube. Mind you, these were people who were silently dancing – a far cry from violent drug dealers or armed dissidents. One couple was simply holding each other in an affectionate embrace and swaying, only to be forcibly separated and handcuffed. “I’m not shutting up. You cannot shut me up,” shouted one of the dancers. “That’s not the way this works. You cannot shut anyone up. You cannot stop them from dancing. You cannot stop them from kissing... This is a police state!”

Indeed, for anyone wanting to truly understand what it is to live in a police state, which US Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas defined as one “in which all dissent is suppressed or rigidly controlled,” I would strongly recommend watching the footage. This Jefferson Memorial event is just the latest in a long series of incidents that clearly illustrate the extent to which our government has adopted an authoritarian mindset, one that is most clearly seen in the way law enforcement deals with American citizens.

Consider, for example, a recent incident

involving a young ex-Marine who was killed after a SWAT team kicked open the door of his Arizona home during a drug raid and opened fire. According to news reports, Jose Guereña, 26 years old and the father of two young children, grabbed a gun in response to the forced invasion but never fired. In fact, the safety was still on his gun when he was killed. Police officers were not as restrained. The young Iraqi war veteran was allegedly fired upon 71 times in what appears to be yet another senseless killing. Guereña had no prior criminal record, and the police found nothing illegal in his home. Incredibly, medical authorities were kept away from the scene for more than an hour, by which time it was too late to save Guereña’s life.

Shocking, yes, but what’s more shocking is that such raids, which annihilate the Fourth Amendment, are actually being sanctioned by the courts. Just a few weeks ago, the Indiana Supreme Court broadly ruled in *Barnes v. State* that people don’t have the right to resist police officers who enter their homes illegally – which, by the way, is the state of law across the country. And then within days of that ruling, the US Supreme Court effectively decimated the Fourth Amendment in an 8-1 ruling in *Kentucky v. King* by giving police more leeway to smash down doors of homes or apartments without a warrant when in search of illegal drugs which they suspect might be destroyed if the Fourth Amendment requirement of a warrant were followed.

What these assorted court rulings and incidents add up to is a nation that is fast imploding, one that is losing sight of what freedom is really all about and, in the process, is transitioning from a republic governed by the people to a police state governed by the strong arm of the law. In such an environment, the law becomes yet another tool to oppress the people. Hence, as a recent report points out, “Federal criminal law has exploded in size and scope and deteriorated in quality. It used to focus on inherently wrongful conduct: treason, murder, counterfeiting, and the like. Today, an unimaginably broad range of socially and economically beneficial conduct is criminal-

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## HEADER SURVEILLANCE STATE

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**Martin Luther King, Jr. eloquently addressed this need for urgency in the face of injustice and oppression in his "Letter from Birmingham City Jail." Dr. King wrote this stirring essay on April 16, 1963, while serving a sentence for participating in civil rights demonstrations in Birmingham, Alabama**  
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ized.... Despite existing overcriminalization, Congress continues to criminalize at an average rate of one new crime for every week of every year (including when its Members are not in session)."

America is spiraling into an authoritarian vortex from which there appears to be no return. And if freedom is to survive, we're going to need leaders – not talking news heads or politicians at rallies – who will, like the great dissidents of the past such as Mahatma Gandhi, dare to defy the "law" and the establishment in effectuating change.

One thing is clear: the time to act is now. Martin Luther King, Jr. eloquently addressed this need for urgency in the face of injustice and oppression in his "Letter from Birmingham City Jail." Dr. King wrote this stirring essay on April 16, 1963, while serving a sentence for participating in civil rights demonstrations in Birmingham, Alabama – one of the most racially segregated cities in the country at the time. Although King rarely bothered to defend himself against his opponents, he put pen to paper when eight prominent "liberal" Alabama clergypersons, all white, published an open letter castigating King for inciting civil disturbances through nonviolent resistance. The clergymen called on King to let the local and federal courts deal with the question of integration. King, however, understood that if justice and freedom were to prevail, African-Americans could not afford to be long-suffering. Quoting US Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, King wrote, "Justice too long delayed is justice denied." Action was needed immediately. In his letter, King declared:

"We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial "outside agitator" idea. Anyone who lives in the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere in this country.... Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and establish such creative tension that a community that has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the

issue that it can no longer be ignored.... We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.... You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws. This is certainly a legitimate concern.... One may well ask, "How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer is found in the fact that there are two types of laws: there are just and there are unjust laws. I would agree with Saint Augustine that "An unjust law is no law at all."... Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust.... I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and willingly accepts the penalty by staying in jail to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the very highest respect for law.... We can never forget that everything Hitler did in Germany was "legal" and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was "illegal." It was "illegal" to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler's Germany. But I am sure that if I had lived in Germany during that time I would have aided and comforted my Jewish brothers even though it was illegal.... It is the strangely irrational notion that there is something in the very flow of time that will inevitably cure all ills. Actually time is neutral. It can be used either destructively or constructively. I am coming to feel that the people of ill will have used time much more effectively than the people of good will.... But as I continued to think about the matter I gradually gained a bit of satisfaction from being considered an extremist. Was not Jesus an extremist in love – "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you."... Was not Abraham Lincoln an extremist – "This nation cannot survive half slave and half free." Was not Thomas Jefferson an extremist – "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." So the question is not whether we will be extremist but what kind of extremist will we be. Will we be extremists for hate or will we be extremists for love? **CT**

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**John W. Whitehead** is a constitutional attorney and founder and president of The Rutherford Institute. His new book "The Freedom Wars" (TRI Press) is available online at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). He can be contacted at [johnw@rutherford.org](mailto:johnw@rutherford.org)  
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# No refunds for a failed rapture

No Rapture, no tribulation, no earthquake, and no refunds. May 21 was a warning, says Harold Camping; the world is really going to come crashing down on October 21! **Bill Berkowitz** reports

On Monday evening, May 23 – two days after Judgment Day failed to materialize – Harold Camping stepped up to Family Radio’s “Open Forum” mic and basically declared “Mission Accomplished.” Coming only a day after he admitted to being “flabbergasted” by events, Camping’s rambling and discombobulated statement maintained that the end of the world had been postponed until October 21, because “God is a loving and merciful God” he would not allow “long term suffering for anyone.”

On October 21, the world will end quickly, Camping said, without any build up.

The past few days have been a “learning program” for me, Camping said. However, he pointed out, we’re not changing our tune. During the question period, which got pretty raucous, Camping’s apology was less heart-felt than Jimmy Swaggart’s after being caught with prostitutes, Jim Bakker’s after having been found to have ripped off his followers to the tune of millions of dollars, and Jerry Falwell’s after blaming 9/11 on the gays, liberals, abortion supporters, etc.

In fact Camping didn’t really apologize at all; it was only after being asked whether he would apologize to his followers that he even used the “a” word. In essence, Camping claimed that everything he had said before May 21 was correct and that the world will be destroyed - sans any more warnings from

him and his crew – on October 21.

“Our task is done,” says Camping. “The whole business of Judgment Day and all the terrible things we have been saying in the past will all be gone.” He added that they will not be putting up any more billboards because the world has already been told. In fact, Camping pointed out, the billboards will be coming down. The Bible clearly teaches that on October 21 the World will be destroyed very quickly, he claims.

Since The Rapture didn’t happen, does Camping, the nearly 90-year-old founder of the highly profitable Family Radio stations, owe his followers anything?

As Camping emphatically stated, in response to questions about whether he would help those followers who had contributed mightily to his efforts and may have spent their life savings before May 21, there would be no restitution, no payoffs, no refunds.

## Rapture in the air

Boston was hopping on Saturday, May 21. It was a beautiful spring afternoon. I was in town for my daughter’s sister’s graduation (same mother, different fathers) and the streets were packed with all sorts of folks. I can’t say everyone was talking about Harold Camping’s End Times prophesy - set for six that evening - but talk of The Rapture was in the air.

The alternative newspaper, the *Boston*

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**Camping claimed that everything he had said before May 21 was correct and that the world will be destroyed - sans any more warnings from him and his crew – on Oct 21**  
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## CHANGE OF DATE

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**Despite Camping's re-setting of the date, most of the money he's collected in the past year or so, still resides in his bank account**  
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*Phoenix*, featured a massive front-page headline: "May 21, 2011: Is This The End?" A busload of Camping followers, who had been traveling around the country warning people that the end was near, were also in town, having chosen Massachusetts for the final stop on its Judgment Day tour.

Regardless of whether you think Harold Camping is a crackpot, a cult leader or a savvy businessman – and he could be all three, especially the latter – one thing is for sure: Camping was dead wrong when he predicted, with unrelenting certainty, that May 21, 2011, would usher in the End of Times.

The following morning, outside the front door of his house in Alameda, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported, Camping admitted that it had "been a really tough weekend."

The *Chronicle* reported that "on Sunday, almost 18 hours after he thought he'd be in heaven," there was a "flabbergasted" Camping, outside his home in Alameda, "wearing tan slacks, a tucked-in polo shirt and a light jacket." Various reports had Camping spending close to \$100 million to promote the May 21 date.

So Camping had a "really tough weekend" and was flabbergasted," a condition that was not nearly as dire as those of some of his followers who had gotten rid of their possessions, quit their jobs, gave away their bank accounts, and left their families.

Take, for example, Keith Bauer from Maryland, a trucker who drove his family across the country so they could spend their final hours in the empty parking lot of Camping's Family Radio station in Oakland. Bauer told the Associated Press that he "had some skepticism, but "was trying to push the skepticism away because I believe in God. I was hoping for it because I think heaven would be a lot better than this earth. It's God who leads you, not Harold Camping," he said.

AP reported that Bauer "began the journey west last week, figuring that if he 'worked last week, I wouldn't have gotten paid anyway, if the Rapture did happen.' Now, having seen the nonprofit ministry's base of operations, Bauer planned to take a day trip to the Pacific

Ocean and then start the cross-country drive back home today with his wife, young son and another relative."

Or Robert Fitzpatrick? Reuters reported that Fitzpatrick spent "over \$140,000 of his savings on subway posters and outdoor advertisements": "As he stood in Times Square in New York surrounded by onlookers, Fitzpatrick, 60, carried a Bible and handed out leaflets as he waited for Judgment Day to begin. [...] When the hour came and went, he said: 'I do not understand why ...,' as his speech broke off and he looked at his watch. 'I do not understand why nothing has happened.'"

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**Chunk of dough**

Harold Camping owes the folks who supported him - variously labeled suckers, naive, mindless true believers – more than a toothless apology. He needs to take a chunk of dough out of his remarkably ample bank account (CNN-Money reported that Family Radio, which has a total worth of \$72 million, received \$18 million in contributions 2009), and make restitution, or at least offer restitution, to those that were snookered.

At the least, Camping should offer to support them until October 21, the next date he has cited for Judgment Day.

The blog [haroldcamping-21](http://haroldcamping-21) ("This Site is not about the Correct or Misteachings of Harold camping (sic). This site will expose how the 'followers' of this man (and other leaders) are affected"), underestimated Camping's steadfastness. It pointed out that "everything has disappeared" except "Camping's followers": "Well of course the T-shirts and banners have disappeared. And of course the money has disappeared. Everything has disappeared except what was suppose to disappear, Camping's followers into the sky!"

Despite Camping's re-setting of the date, most of the money he's collected in the past year or so, still resides in his bank account. It is from that account that he should start cutting checks to the innocent, the desperate, the feeble-minded, and the hopeful that believed Camping's cockamamie story. **CT**

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**Bill Berkowitz is a freelance writer and longtime observer of the conservative movement**  
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# Bibi and the Yo-Yos

A swooning Congress shows how much US foreign policy is in the hands of Israel, writes **Uri Avnery**

**I**t was all rather disgusting. There they were, the members of the highest legislative bodies of the world's only superpower, flying up and down like so many yo-yos, applauding wildly, every few minutes or seconds, the most outrageous lies and distortions of Binyamin Netanyahu.

It was worse than the Syrian parliament during a speech by Bashar Assad, where anyone not applauding could find himself in prison. Or Stalin's Supreme Soviet, when showing less than sufficient respect could have meant death.

What the American Senators and Congressmen feared was a fate worse than death. Anyone remaining seated or not applauding wildly enough could have been caught on camera – and that amounts to political suicide. It was enough for one single congressman to rise and applaud, and all the others had to follow suit. Who would dare not to?

The sight of these hundreds of parliamentarians jumping up and clapping their hands, again and again and again and again, with the Leader graciously acknowledging with a movement of his hand, was reminiscent of other regimes. Only this time it was not the local dictator who compelled this adulation, but a foreign one.

The most depressing part of it was that there was not a single lawmaker – Republican or Democrat – who dared to resist.

When I was a 9-year-old boy in Germany, I dared to leave my right arm hanging by my side when all my schoolmates raised theirs in the Nazi salute and sang Hitler's anthem. Is there no one in Washington DC who has that simple courage? Is it really Washington IOT – Israel Occupied Territory – as the anti-Semites assert?

Many years ago I visited the Senate hall and was introduced to the leading Senators of the time. I was profoundly shocked. After being brought up in deep respect for the Senate of the United States, the country of Jefferson and Lincoln, I was faced with a bunch of pompous asses, many of them nincompoops who had not the slightest idea what they were talking about. I was told that it was their assistants who really understood matters.

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**One-word message**

So what did the great man say to this august body?

It was a finely crafted speech, using all the standard tricks of the trade – the dramatic pause, the raised finger, the little witticisms, the sentences repeated for effect. Not a great orator, by any means, no Winston Churchill, but good enough for this audience and this occasion.

But the message could be summed up in one word: No.

After their disastrous debacle in 1967, the

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leaders of the Arab world met in Khartoum and adopted the famous Three No's: NO recognition of Israel, NO negotiation with Israel, NO peace with Israel. It was just what the Israeli leadership wanted. They could go happily about their business of entrenching the occupation and building settlements.

Now Netanyahu is having his Khartoum. NO return to the 1967 borders. NO Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem. NO to even a symbolic return of some refugees. NO military withdrawal from the Jordan River - meaning that the future Palestinian state would be completely surrounded by the Israeli armed forces. NO negotiation with a Palestinian government "supported" by Hamas, even if there are no Hamas members in the government itself. And so on - NO. NO. NO.

The aim is clearly to make sure that no Palestinian leader could even dream of entering negotiations, even in the unlikely event that he were ready to meet yet another condition: to recognize Israel as "the nation-state of the Jewish people" - which includes the dozens of Jewish Senators and Congressmen who were the first to jump up and down, up and down, like so many mariottes.

Netanyahu, along with his associates and political bedfellows, is determined to prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state by all and any means. That did not start with the present government - it is an aim deeply embedded in Zionist ideology and practice. The founders of the movement set the course, David Ben-Gurion acted to implement it in 1948, in collusion with King Abdallah of Jordan. Netanyahu is just adding his bit.

"No Palestinian state" means no peace, not now, not ever. Everything else is, as the Americans say, baloney. All the pious phrases about happiness for our children, prosperity for the Palestinians, peace with the entire Arab world, a bright future for all, are just that - pure baloney. At least some in the audience must have noticed that, even with all that jumping.

Netanyahu spat in Obama's eye. The Republicans in the audience must have enjoyed that. Perhaps some Democrats too.

It can be assumed that Obama did not. So what will he do now?

There is a Jewish joke about a hungry pauper who entered an inn and demanded food. Otherwise, he threatened, he would do what his father did. The frightened innkeeper fed him, and in the end asked timidly: "But what did your father do?" Swallowing the last morsel, the man answered: "He went to sleep hungry."

There is a good chance that Obama will do the same. He will pretend that the spittle on his cheek is rainwater. His promise to prevent a UN General Assembly recognition of the State of Palestine deprived him of his main leverage over Netanyahu.

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**Obama in Jerusalem?**

Somebody in Washington seems to be floating the idea of Obama coming to Jerusalem and addressing the Knesset. It would be direct retaliation - Obama talking with the Israeli public over the head of the Prime Minister, as Netanyahu has just addressed the American public over the head of the President.

It would be an exciting event. As a former Member of the Knesset, I would be invited. But I would not advise it. I proposed it a year ago. Today I would not.

The obvious precedent is Anwar Sadat's historic speech in the Knesset. But there is really no comparison. Egypt and Israel were still officially at war. Going to the capital of the enemy was without precedent, the more so only four years after a bloody battle. It was an act that shook Israel, eliminating in one stroke a whole set of mental patterns and opening the mind for new ones. Not one of us will ever forget the moment when the door of the airplane swung open and there he was, handsome and serene, the leader of the enemy.

Later, when I interviewed Sadat at his home, I told him: "I live on the main street of Tel Aviv. When you came out of that

plane, I looked out of the window. Nothing moved in the street, except one cat – and it was probably looking for a television set.”

A visit by Obama will be quite different. He will, of course, be received politely – without the obsessive jumping and clapping – though probably heckled by Knesset Members of the extreme Right. But that will be all.

Sadat’s visit was a deed in itself. Not so a visit by Obama. He will not shake Israeli public opinion, unless he comes with a concrete plan of action – a detailed peace plan, with a detailed timetable, backed by a clear determination to see it through, whatever the political cost.

Another nice speech, however beautifully phrased, just will not do. After the latest deluge of speeches, we have had enough. Speeches can be important if they accompany actions, but they are no substitute for

action. Churchill’s speeches helped to shape history – but only because they reflected historic deeds. Without the Battle of Britain, without Normandy, without El Alamein, those speeches would have sounded ridiculous.

Now, with all the roads blocked, there remains only one path remains open: the recognition of the State of Palestine by the United Nations coupled with nonviolent mass action by the Palestinian people against the occupation. The Israeli peace forces will also play their part, because the fate of Israel depends on peace as much as the fate of Palestine.

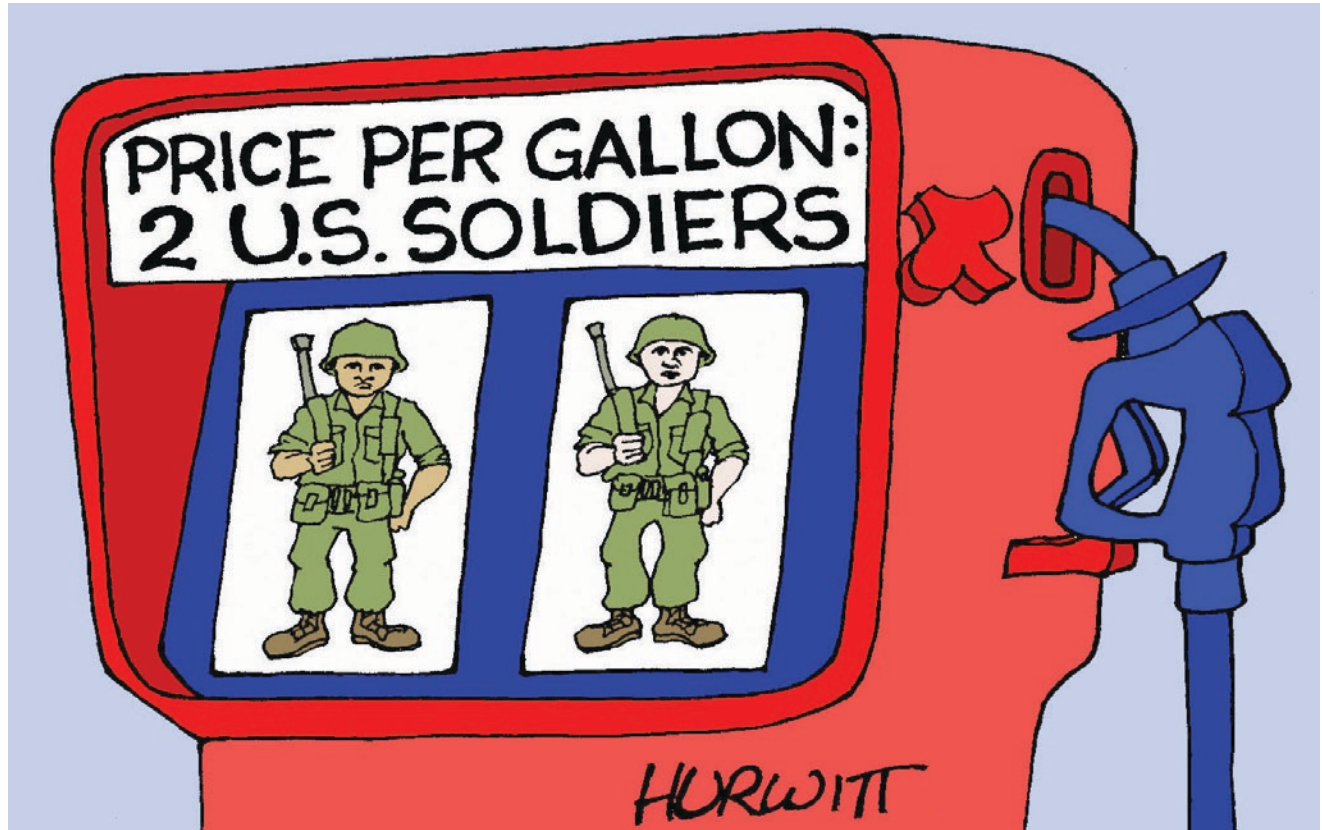
Sure, the US will try to obstruct, and Congress will jump up and down, But the Israeli-Palestinian spring is on its way. **CT**

*Uri Avnery is an Israeli peace activist, He recently celebrated his 89th birthday.*

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**HURWITT’S EYE**

Mark Hurwitt



# On patriotism

Examining the firmware for war, with **Fred Reed**

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**Once the pack – citizenry, I meant to say – have been properly roused to a pitch of patriotism, they will, under cover of the most diaphanous pretexts, rape Nanking, bomb Hiroshima, kill the Jews or, if they are Jews, Palestinians**  
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**P**atriotism is everywhere thought to be a virtue rather than a mental disorder. I don't get it.

If I told the Rotarians or an American Legion hall that "John is a patriot," all would approve greatly of John. If I told them that patriotism was nothing more than the loyalty to each other of dogs in a pack, they would lynch me. Patriotism, they believe, is a Good Thing.

Of course the Japanese pilots who attacked Pearl Harbor were patriots, as were the German soldiers who murdered millions in the Second World War. The men who brought down the towers in New York were patriots, though of a religious sort. Do we admire their patriotism?

Of course not. When we say "John is a patriot," we mean "John is a reliable member of our dog pack," nothing more. The pack instinct seems more ancient, and certainly stronger, than morality or any form of human decency.

Thus, once the pack – citizenry, I meant to say – have been properly roused to a pitch of patriotism, they will, under cover of the most diaphanous pretexts, rape Nanking, bomb Hiroshima, kill the Jews or, if they are Jews, Palestinians. We are animals of the pack. We don't admire patriotism. We admire loyalty to ourselves.

The pack dominates humanity. Observe that the behavior of urban gangs – the Vice

Lords, Mara Salvatrucha, Los Locos Intocables, Crips, Bloods – precisely mirrors that of more formally recognized gangs, which are called "countries." Gangs, like countries, are intensely territorial with recognized borders fiercely defended.

The soldiers of gangs, like those of countries, have uniforms, usually clothing of particular colors, and they "throw signs" – make the patterns of fingers indicating their gang – and wear their hats sideways in different directions to indicate to whom their patriotism is pledged. They have generals, councils of war, and ranks paralleling the colonels and majors of national packs. They fight each other endlessly, as do countries, for territory, for control of markets, or because someone insulted someone. It makes no sense – it would be more reasonable for example to divide the market for drugs instead of killing each other – but they do it because of the pack instinct.

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**Dominating society**

Packery dominates society. Across the country high schools form basketball packs and do battle on the court, while cheerleaders jump and twirl, preferably in short skirts (here we have the other major instinct) to maintain patriotic fervor in the onlookers. Cities with NFL franchises hire bulky felons from around the country to bump forcefully into the parallel felons of other cities, arous-

ing warlike sentiments among their respective fellow dogs.

Fans. Fans.

Such is their footballian enthusiasm that they will sometimes burn their own cities in delight at victory or disturbance at loss. Without the pack instinct, football would hardly matter to them at all.

It's everywhere. The Olympics, the World Cup, racial groups, political parties – Crips and Bloods, all.

Part of patriotism is nationalism, the political expression of having given up to the pack all independence of thought.

Patriotism is of course incompatible with morality. This is more explicit in the soldier, a patriot who agrees to kill anyone he is told to kill by the various alpha-dogs – President, Fuehrer, emperor, Duce, generals.

Is this not literally true? An adolescent enlists, never having heard of Ruritania, which is perhaps on the other side of the earth.

A year later, having learned to manage the Gatlings on a helicopter gunship, he is told that Ruritania is A Grave Threat. Never having seen a Ruritanian, being unable to spell the place, not knowing where it is (you would be amazed how many veterans of Viet Nam do not know where it is) he is soon killing Ruritanians.

He will shortly hate them intensely as vermin, scuttling cockroaches, rice-propelled paddy maggots, gooks, or sand niggers.

**Loyalty to whom?**

The military calls the pack instinct “unit cohesion,” and fosters it to the point that soldiers often have more loyalty to the military than to the national pack. Thus it is easy to get them to fire on their own citizens. It has not happened in the United States since perhaps Kent State, but in the past the soldiery were often used to kill striking workers. All you have to do is to get the troops to think of the murderees as another group.

If you talk to patriots, particularly to the

military variety, they will usually be outraged at having their morality questioned. Here we encounter moral compartmentation, very much a characteristic of the pack. If you have several dogs, as we do, you will note that they are friendly and affectionate with the family and tussle playfully among themselves – but bark furiously at strangers and, unless they are very domesticated, will attack unknown dogs cooperatively and kill them.

Similarly the colonel next door will be honest, won't kick your cat or steal your silverware. Should some natural disaster occur, he will work strenuously to save lives, at the risk of his own if need be. Yet he will consciencelessly cluster-bomb downtown Baghdad, and pride himself on having done so. A different pack, you see. It is all right to attack strange dogs.

The pack instinct, age old, limbic, atavistic, gonadal, precludes any sympathy for the sufferings of outsiders. If Dog Pack A attacks intruding dog Pack B to defend its territory, its members can't afford to think, “Gosh, I'm really hurting this guy. Maybe I should stop.”

You don't defend territory by sharing it. Thus if you tell a patriot that his bombs are burning alive thousands of children, or that the embargo on Iraq killed half a million kids by dysentery because they couldn't get chlorine to sterilize water, he won't care. He can't.

The same instinct governs thought about atrocities committed in wartime. In every war, every army (correctly) accuses the other side of committing atrocities. Atrocities are what armies do. Such is the elevating power of morality that soldiers feel constrained to lie about them. But patriots just don't care. Psychologists speak of demonization and affecting numbing and such, but it's really just that the tortured, raped, butchered and burned are members of the other pack.

I need a drink.

**CT**

*Fred Reed's web site is  
www.fredoneverything.net*

In every war,  
every army  
(correctly)  
accuses the other  
side of committing  
atrocities.  
Atrocities are  
what armies do

# God bless America – and its bombs

**William Blum** outlines the two rules that qualify a country to become a target of US aggression

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**The fall of the American Empire would offer a new beginning for the long-suffering American people and the long-suffering world**  
.....

*When they bombed Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, El Salvador and Nicaragua I said nothing because I wasn't a communist. When they bombed China, Guatemala, Indonesia, Cuba, and the Congo I said nothing because I didn't know about it. When they bombed Lebanon and Grenada I said nothing because I didn't understand it. When they bombed Panama I said nothing because I wasn't a drug dealer. When they bombed Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen I said nothing because I wasn't a terrorist. When they bombed Yugoslavia and Libya for "humanitarian" reasons I said nothing because it sounded so honorable. Then they bombed my house and there was no one left to speak out for me. But it didn't really matter. I was dead.*<sup>1</sup>

**I**t's become commonplace to accuse the United States of choosing as its bombing targets only people of color, those of the Third World, or Muslims. But it must be remembered that one of the most sustained and ferocious American bombing campaigns of modern times – 78 consecutive days – was carried out against the people of the former Yugoslavia: white, European, Christians. The United States is an equal-opportunity bomber. The only qualifications for a country to become a target are: (A) It poses an obstacle – could be anything – to the desires of the

American Empire; (B) It is virtually defenseless against aerial attack.

.....  
**The survivors**

*"We never see the smoke and the fire, we never smell the blood, we never see the terror in the eyes of the children, whose nightmares will now feature screaming missiles from unseen terrorists, known only as Americans."*<sup>2</sup>  
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**Looking for humanity**

NASA has announced an audacious new mission, launching a spaceship that will travel for four years to land on an asteroid, where it will collect dust from the surface and deliver the precious cargo to Earth, where scientists will then examine the material for clues to how life began. Truly the stuff of science fiction. However, I personally would regard it as a much greater accomplishment of humankind if we could put an end to America's bombings and all its wars, and teach some humility to The Holy Triumvirate – The United States, the European Union and NATO – who recognizes no higher power and believe they literally can do whatever they want in the world, to whomever they want, for as long as they want, and call it whatever they want, like "humanitarian."

The fall of the American Empire would offer a new beginning for the long-suffering American people and the long-suffering world.



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**Why is the United States waging perpetual war against the Cuban people's health system?**

In January the government of the United States of America saw fit to seize \$4.207 billion in funds allocated to Cuba by the United Nations Global Fund to Fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria for the first quarter of 2011, Cuba has charged. The UN Fund is a \$22 billion a year program that works to combat the three deadly pandemics in 150 countries.<sup>3</sup>

"This mean-spirited policy," the Cuban government said, "aims to undermine the quality of service provided to the Cuban population and to obstruct the provision of medical assistance in over 100 countries by 40,000 Cuban health workers." Most of the funds are used to import expensive AIDS medication to Cuba, where antiretroviral treatment is provided free of charge to some 5,000 HIV patients.<sup>4</sup>

The United States sees the Cuban health system and Havana's sharing of such as a means of Cuba winning friends and allies in the Third World, particularly Latin America; a situation sharply in conflict with long-standing US policy to isolate Cuba. The United States in recent years has attempted to counter the Cuban international success by dispatching the US Naval Ship "Comfort" to the region. With 12 operating rooms and a 1,000-bed hospital, the converted oil tanker has performed hundreds of thousands of free surgeries in places such as Belize, Guatemala, Panama, El Salvador, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Nicaragua and Haiti.

However, the Comfort's port calls likely will not substantially enhance America's influence in the hemisphere. "It's hard for the US to compete with Cuba and Venezuela in this way," said Peter Hakim, president of the Inter-American Dialogue, a pro-US policy-research group in Washington. "It makes us look like we're trying to imitate them. Cuba's doctors aren't docked at port for a couple days, but are in the country for years."<sup>5</sup>

The recent disclosure by WikiLeaks of US State Department documents included this

little item: A cable was sent by Michael Parmlly from the US Interests Section in Havana in July 2006, during the run-up to the Non-Aligned Movement conference. He notes that he is actively looking for "human interest stories and other news that shatters the myth of Cuban medical prowess".

Michael Moore refers to another Wikileaks State Department cable: "On January 31, 2008, a State Department official stationed in Havana took a made-up story and sent it back to his headquarters in Washington. Here's what they came up with: [The official] stated that Cuban authorities have banned Michael Moore's documentary, 'Sicko,' as being subversive. Although the film's intent is to discredit the US healthcare system by highlighting the excellence of the Cuban system, the official said the regime knows the film is a myth and does not want to risk a popular backlash by showing to Cubans facilities that are clearly not available to the vast majority of them." Moore points out an Associated Press story of June 16, 2007 (seven months prior to the cable) with the headline: "Cuban health minister says Moore's 'Sicko' shows 'human values' of communist system."

Moore adds that the people of Cuba were shown the film on national television on April 25, 2008. "The Cubans embraced the film so much it became one of those rare American movies that received a theatrical distribution in Cuba. I personally ensured that a 35mm print got to the Film Institute in Havana. Screenings of Sicko were set up in towns all across the country."<sup>6</sup>

The United States also bans the sale to Cuba of vital medical drugs and devices, such as the inhalant agent Sevoflurane which has become the pharmaceutical of excellence for applying general anesthesia to children; and the pharmaceutical Dexmetomidine, of particular usefulness in elderly patients who often must be subjected to extended surgical procedures. Both of these are produced by the US firm Abbot Laboratories.

Cuban children suffering from lymphoblastic leukemia cannot use Erwinia L-asparaginasa, a medicine commercially known as

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**The United States sees the Cuban health system and Havana's sharing of such as a means of Cuba winning friends and allies in the Third World, particularly Latin America; a situation sharply in conflict with long-standing US policy to isolate Cuba**

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**Wait until the American conservatives hear that Cuba is the only country in Latin America offering abortion on demand, and free**  
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Elspar, since the US pharmaceutical company Merck and Co. refuses to sell this product to Cuba. Washington has also prohibited the US-based Pastors for Peace Caravan from donating three Ford ambulances to Cuba.

Cubans are moreover upset by the denial of visas requested to attend conferences in the field of Anesthesiology and Reanimation that take place in the United States. This creates further barriers for Cuba's anesthesiologists to update themselves on state of the art anesthesiology, the care of severely ill patients, and the advances achieved in the treatment of pain.

Some of the foregoing are but a small sample of American warfare against the Cuban medical system presented in a Cuban report to the United Nations General Assembly on October 28, 2009.

Finally, we have the Cuban Medical Professional Parole (CMPP) immigration program, which encourages Cuban doctors who are serving their government overseas to defect and enter the US immediately as refugees. The *Wall Street Journal* reported in January of this year that through Dec. 16, 2010, CMPP visas had been issued by US consulates in 65 countries to 1,574 Cuban doctors whose education had been paid for by the financially-struggling Cuban government.<sup>7</sup> This program, oddly enough, was initiated by the US Department of Homeland Security. Another victory over terrorism? Or socialism? Or same thing?

Wait until the American conservatives hear that Cuba is the only country in Latin America offering abortion on demand, and free.

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**Items of interest from a journal I've kept for 40 years**

\* "Remember the scene in Battle of Algiers in which, after the French have 'killed off' the revolution, mist fills the screen and then, gradually, coming out of the mist, the Algerians appear waving their fists, ululating with that sound both thrilling and frightening? That's how I see 9/11 for those of us

who grew up believing that the US stood for something grand, despite eras such as slavery, indigenous genocide, Jim Crow, etc. Many people say 'Everything changed on 9/11.' I think it's more that 'Everything became clear, finally, on 9/11.' The mist cleared away." – Catherine Podojil

\* From a reader in Slovakia: I used the word "democracy" and not "capitalism", because we were told [after the dissolution of the Soviet Union] that democracy was introduced in Slovakia, not capitalism. Everything was done in the name of democracy and not in the name of capitalism.

\* "If someone other than Stalin had gained ascendancy in the Soviet Union, it is likely that millions of lives would have been spared – but millions of others still would have been caught up in the maw of the state machine, because the system itself was based on violence, repression and lawlessness – all in the name of 'preserving the Revolution,' a phrase which served the same function for the Kremlin as 'national security' does for the American elite, or the 'higher law' of God does for religious extremists of every stripe." – Chris Floyd

\* Bill Richardson, as US ambassador to the UN, re the newly-formed International Criminal Court in 1998: The United States should be exempt [from the court's prosecution] because it has "special global responsibilities".

\* Russia might be a target of an American invasion some day because it's the most powerful geopolitical opponent of the United States, with the power to extinguish the US in 30 minutes. The US might want to control the Russian oil and have complete control of Central Asia. That's what's behind the many missile sites the US has been building in Europe, not the stated fear of Iran.

\* Bolivia has South America's largest hydrocarbon deposits after Venezuela.

\* "The notion that we ought to now go to Baghdad and somehow take control of the country strikes me as an extremely serious one, in terms of what we'd have to do when we got there. You'd probably have to

put some new government in place. It's not clear what kind of government that would be, how long you'd have to stay. For the US to get involved militarily in determining the outcome of the struggle over who's going to govern in Iraq strikes me as the classic definition of a quagmire." – Dick Cheney, when he was Secretary of Defense in 1991.

\* When the plans for a new office building for the US military were brought before the Senate on Aug. 14, 1941, Sen. Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan was puzzled. "Unless the war is to be permanent, why must we have permanent accommodations for war facilities of such size?" he asked. "Or is the war to be permanent?" (Steve Vogel, "The Pentagon: A History" (2007) p.84)

\* The combination of free trade and heavy US subsidies to American businesses has crippled the Mexican agricultural sector, causing impoverished former subsistence farmers to immigrate to the US by any means necessary. Conservative policies of supporting free trade while restricting immigration are inherently incompatible.

\* The head of the Coalition Provisional Authority, the first US occupation administration of Iraq in 2003, Paul Bremer, made free enterprise a guiding rule, shutting down 192 state-owned businesses where the World Bank estimated 500,000 people were working. (UPI, July 25, 2007)

\* If an individual were behaving as Israel does as a country, that person would be removed to an institution for the criminally insane and subjected to intense drug therapy and a lobotomy. The person might find the guy next door to be named America.

\* The United States threatens other states sufficient to cause those states to engage in defensive responses in order to exploit these to justify increasing "defense" expenditures.

\* Bush, Obama and Western Europe have used criticism of Russian President Vladimir Putin's authoritarianism as a way of showing their publics how they allegedly stand up for democracy.

\* US right-wingers have a desire to replace our constitutional form of government with

an authoritarian theocracy, and to (militarily) spread that theocratic construct around the world. (Ironically, the exact same objective fundamentalist Muslims have!) – Kerry Thomasi, Online Journal

\* "Behind the 'unexamined nostalgia for the "Golden Days" of American intelligence' lay a much more devastating truth: the same people who read Dante and went to Yale and were educated in civic virtue recruited Nazis, manipulated the outcome of democratic elections, gave LSD to unwitting subjects, opened the mail of thousands of American citizens, overthrew governments, supported dictatorships, plotted assassinations, and engineered the Bay of Pigs disaster. 'In the name of what?' asked one critic. 'Not civic virtue, but empire.'" – Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (1999)

\* ... a more just world, a deeper democracy and a liveable planet ...

\* "Colin Powell's presentation at the UN, February 5, 2003 seems like something out of Monty Python, with one key British report cited by Powell being nothing more than a student's thesis, downloaded from the Web – with the student later threatening to charge US officials with plagiarism." – Bill Moyers

\* "Venezuela's well-off complain endlessly that their economic power has been diminished; it hasn't; economic growth has never been higher, business has never been better. What the rich no longer own is the government." – John Pilger **CT**

**Notes**

1. Full list of US bombings since World War II
2. Martin Kelly, publisher of a nonviolence website
3. Prensa Latina (Cuba), March 12, 2011
4. The Militant (US, Socialist Workers Party), April 4, 2011
5. Bloomberg news agency, September 19, 2007
6. Huffington Post, December 18, 2010
7. Wall Street Journal, "Cuban Doctors Come In From the Cold" (video), January 14 2011

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**William Blum**  
*is the author of: Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War 2; Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower; West-Bloc Dissident: A Cold War Memoir; Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire. Signed copies may be purchased, at [www.killinghope.org](http://www.killinghope.org)*  
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