

SYRACUSE PEACE COUNCIL'S

Peace Newsletter

Central New York Voices for Peace and Social Justice

May 2015 #842



Image: Favianna Rodriguez

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SPC INFO

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Read the PNL online (issues dating back to 1936!). See all our projects and events.

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Affiliated Projects & Coalitions

Alliance of Communities Transforming Syracuse: faith & secular groups
United as One: working for justice in the local justice system
New Yorkers Against Fracking: statewide coalition opposing hydrofracking
Move to Amend: works against corporate control of the democratic system
Upstate Coalition to Ground the Drones and End the Wars

The Syracuse Peace Council (SPC),

founded in 1936, is an antiwar/social justice organization. We are community-based, autonomous and funded by the contributions of our supporters.

SPC educates, agitates and organizes for a world where war, violence and exploitation in any form will no longer exist. We challenge the existing unjust power relationships among nations, among people and between ourselves and the environment. As members, we work to replace inequality, hierarchy, domination and powerlessness with mutual respect, personal empowerment, cooperation and a sense of community.

Present social injustices cannot be understood in isolation from each other nor can they be overcome without recognizing their economic and militaristic roots. SPC stresses a strategy that makes these connections clear. We initiate and support activities that help build this sense of community and help tear down the walls of oppression. A fundamental basis for peace and justice is an economic system that places human need above monetary profit. We establish relationships among people based on cooperation rather than competition or the threat of destruction.

Our political values and personal lives shape and reflect each other. In both we are committed to nonviolent means of conflict resolution and to a process of decision-making that responds to the needs of us all.

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Article submission criteria: Contact pnl@peacecouncil.net or 472-5478.

Advertising: Call 472-5478 or visit our website for rates and sizes.

Calendar: Submit items for the June PNL calendar by May 18.

Peace Newsletter

Central New York Voices for Peace & Social Justice

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Educate, Agitate, Organize: SPC IN ACTION

compiled by Carol Baum

Nuclear Free World Committee Joins SPC — Celebration May 27

This spring, you'll notice a new committee working with SPC—the Nuclear Free World committee! We are thrilled that activists with Peace Action CNY have decided to bring their organizational resources and energy into SPC. For years, the two groups have collaborated on a number of projects, so it feels very natural, like a close friend joining the family. On Wednesday, **May 27 at 7 pm at ArtRage Gallery**, the Nuclear Free World Committee will host the annual Youth Award—which this year will also kick off the new chapter in our anti-war organizing work. Friends of SPC and Peace Action are warmly invited to attend!

A major committee focus this spring and summer will be acknowledging the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the connections to our ongoing work of exposing the true costs of the US policy of endless war. Would you like to join the Hiroshima Day planning committee? Contact Ursula.

Four Drone Resister Cases Dismissed!

No it wasn't an April Fool's joke—on April 1, Town of Dewitt Court Judge Jokl dismissed all charges against four defendants following the April 2013 nonviolent protests at Hancock, "in the interest of justice." SPC Steering Committee member Julianne Oldfield was among the four. Binghamton area activist Jack Gilroy, who had been charged in the same protest, recently served three months in jail following a jury trial last summer.

For updates on cases and upcoming court appearances, see www.upstatedroneaction.org. Please be aware that court dates can change suddenly. Contact Carol.



Members of the newest SPC committee (see left) comprise the No First Strike! Bowlathon team.
Photo: Ursula Rozum

Strike for Peace

On April 12, over 130 community activists participated in the Strike for Peace Bowlathon. This year's coveted Team Spirit award went home with Team RABL (Radical Anarchist Bowling League), captained by Zarha Dillon of the Bread and Roses Collective House and The D.R.E.A.M. Freedom Revival, which brought three teams organized by Michael Messina-Yauchzy! We are especially grateful to the team captains who organized their friends to raise funds for SPC.

Thank you also to Bowlathon Committee members Wendy Yost, Sandy Porter, Lindsay DeMay, Rae Kramer and Ursula Rozum for helping make it such a great event. If you'd like to help organize this fun fundraiser with us next year, contact Ursula.

CNY vs. the TPP

Throughout March and April, SPC activists flooded Rep. John Katko's office with calls about the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), urging him to oppose "Trade Promotion Authority" aka Fast Track, for this secretly negotiated multi-national trade agreement (see *PNL* issue # 841 for background information). The Fast Track would require Congress to vote "yes" or "no" on the TPP without changes or amendments. TPP would impose global trade rules that benefit transnational companies at the expense of local and national considerations. Opponents of TPP are calling it "NAFTA on steroids" and "global corporate personhood." Visit www.peacecouncil.net for updates on organizing to stop Fast Track and the TPP. You can also call Ursula or Brian at the SPC office.

County Seeking Jail Review Candidates

The Onondaga County Legislature has until June 26 to institute a jail incident review

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SYRACUSE
PEACE
COUNCIL

www.peacecouncil.net • OFFICE HOURS: M-F, 11 am-5 pm

STAFF ORGANIZERS

Carol Baum: carol@peacecouncil.net • Ursula Rozum: ursula@peacecouncil.net

Amelia Lefevre: amelia@peacecouncil.net

STREET HEAT

Get back out in the streets every week speaking out against war and Reaper drones. Bring your own sign or use one of ours.

Tuesdays 4:15-5 pm

May 5 Hancock Airbase Entrance
(E. Molloy Rd., between
Thompson & Townline Rds.)
May 12 E. Genesee St. & Erie Blvd.
May 19 Hancock Airbase Entrance
May 26 E. Genesee St. & Erie Blvd.

Every Saturday 9-10am

Regional Market, Park St. entrance

**Questions? Contact Ed or Ann,
315-478-4571**

SPC in Action / from previous page

committee and to reinstate the county's Human Rights Commission, following the passage of legislation shepherded by the United as One Coalition. The Legislature is in the process of selecting people to comprise each body. Contact the Legislature at 435-2070 if you would like to be considered as a potential committee member.

The United as One Coalition will meet next in July. Contact Amelia.

Be the Media!

Skillshare: Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor are an effective way to make our voices heard about critical issues that impact our world and community, and to make sure that local media reflects the concerns of citizens, not just political and corporate elites. On **Monday, May 11 at 6 pm** at 2013 E. Genesee St. we are hosting a LTE writing workshop during which participants will learn tips for writing effective letters that will get published and educate readers. Join this training led by Ursula Rozum, SPC staff organizer and *Post Standard* guest columnist, and Brian Escobar of the *Peace Newsletter* Editorial Committee. At the end of training, participants will have a drafted LTE ready to submit to our local papers. Please contact Ursula to let us know you are coming.

Veterans for Peace to Meet

Veterans for Peace (VFP) is a global organization of military veterans committed to building a culture of peace by using their experiences and lifting their voices. CNYVFP Chapter 51, one of 100+ chapters in the US and Vietnam, was built by such voices. After a short time of relative quiet, those voices are ready to soar again, to raise awareness and change public opinion. SPC is strongly supporting this effort.

Won't you add your voice? All are welcome to the next meeting of CNYVFP on Wednesday, **May 13, at 7 pm** in the accessible Community Room of the Center for Peace and Social Justice (2013 E. Genesee St.). Use the parking lot entrance and go straight. For more information: Barbara Humphrey, behumphrey@gmail.com.

— Barbara Humphrey

Got Human Rights? Palestinians Don't!

CNY Working for a Just Peace in Palestine and Israel continues to host well-attended educational events. On April 19, we hosted a talk titled "Got Human Rights?" with

(505 Hawley Ave, Syracuse). "Nakba" refers to the 1948 Palestinian exodus that occurred when more than 700,000 Palestinian Arabs left, fled or were expelled from their homes in what is today the State of Israel. The commemoration features a film, food and poetry. Contact Ursula.

8-Foot Giant Books Block Hancock Air Base Gates

On March 19, the twelfth anniversary of the US illegal invasion of Iraq, seven members of the Upstate Coalition to Ground the Drones and End the Wars shut the main gate of Hancock Air Base with a giant copy of the UN Charter and three other giant books — *Dirty Wars* (Jeremy Scahill), *Living Under Drones* (NYU and Stanford Law Schools), and *You Never Die Twice* (Reprieve). The nonviolent activists also held a banner quoting Article 6 of the US Constitution, stating that every treaty signed becomes the supreme law of the land. They brought the books to Hancock to remind everyone at the base of the signed treaties that prohibit the killing of civilians and assassinations of human beings. Among those arrested were Syracusans Ed Kinane and Julienne Oldfield.



Bev Rice of NYC and giant books blockading the main entrance of Hancock Air Base. Photo: Ellen Grady

Palestinian organizer Iyad Burnat. Burnat spoke about life under Israeli occupation, his village's ongoing struggle for justice and freedom, and what inspires him to continue non-violent resistance. Iyad is the coordinator for the Popular Committee in Bil'in, Palestine, a small farming village seven miles west of Ramallah in the occupied West Bank.

Our next major event will be the 5th annual Nakba commemoration on **Sunday, May 17 from 4:30-6:30 pm** at ArtRage

Much To Do About Drones

SPC's Ground the Drones, End the Wars committee works locally and as part of the Upstate Coalition to Ground the Drones and End the Wars. The focus of both groups is Hancock Air Base, just outside Syracuse, where drones are piloted to fly over Afghanistan; it is also a training

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Workers' Center: Organizing Over Advocacy

Yanira Rodríguez and Ben Kuebrich

As May Day approaches we reflect on the value of our local Workers' Center as it creatively mobilizes resources to bring about workplace justice. Through volunteering with the Workers' Center of CNY, we have witnessed a model that puts workers at the center of decision making. The Workers' Center gives us a vision of what is possible, a people's democracy that is not truncated by the limits of established structures or traditional unionizing efforts and that acts creatively and passionately to resist wage theft and workplace abuses.

A current class action lawsuit against an apple processing plant in Oswego, NY that produces a product called Grab Apples helps to illustrate the power and possibility in this type of grassroots labor organizing.

Recently, a number of workers from this plant came to the Workers' Center. Workers alleged that the company made them wait, unpaid, for up to two hours before work began. When several workers left during this period of unpaid waiting, they were fired. Further, workers allege that the company regularly failed to give workers full lunch breaks, instead clocking them out for an hour while requiring them to continue working.

"There's other places where this has happened to me, and one just takes it," said Marina Baltazar, one of the five plaintiffs. "I didn't know I had rights, but the way they fired us was unjust and that's why I directed myself to the Workers' Center. I found we all have rights and we have to stand up for them." Baltazar said she wants the company to be held accountable for keeping workers waiting to work and withholding compensation. "Things are still the same since we were fired and they need to change," said Baltazar.

Unlike with some organizations that might provide direct services (which provide temporary relief but do not address root causes), workers from the plant came to talk with members of the organization, fellow workers, to decide on a course of action. This included bringing in a lawyer and eventually filing a class action lawsuit

on behalf of five workers.

Through discussion with Teague Paterson, a local labor lawyer who has taken on the case, workers learned that if waiting is a condition of employment then it is work and must be paid. This and other examples of wage theft became the center of the lawsuit.

But organizing does not stop at the pursuit of legal aid. "We can use the law without leaving behind the collective organizing" said Rebecca Fuentes, a lead organizer with the center. "While laws provide some protections for workers, we have to make them work," said Fuentes. For example, in response to countless workplace safety issues, workers organized to bring their stories to representatives of the Occupational Health and Safety Administration calling on OSHA to do surprise inspections of local farms. "OSHA only does inspections when there is a fatality or there is a complaint. So the same farms where workers were getting injured were hardly ever being inspected," said Fuentes. As a result of worker-lead organizing through documenting stories of injuries and sharing testimonies of families of workers who had died in NY farms, OSHA developed a Local Emphasis Program for Dairy Farm Operation. The program is designed to carry out surprise inspections of local farms to make sure they comply with health and safety standards.

Grab Apples

Up to 850,000 students in New York City schools eat Grab Apples for their school lunch, opening plastic bags of the pre-sliced fruit. The company has seen rapid growth in recent years because of its growing public school customer base with



*Members of the Workers' Center recover wages at a farm in Lowville, NY.
Photo courtesy of the Workers' Center of CNY*

an estimated sales volume of 12.3 million dollars. With exploitative labor practices, Grab Apples feeds school children and profits. It also wins awards for business. In 2010, the Dygert family, who owns the company, was awarded Manufacturer of the Year by the SUNY Small Business Development Center.

This company has depended on state and federal funding to incubate and finance its operations. Grab Apples received 7.5 million dollars in contracts from the Department of Defense between 2002 and 2009 and \$800,000 in tax credits from the state via the Empire Development fund. Despite the company's financial success and business accolades, and its dependence on public funds, workers allege that Grab Apples does not adhere to minimum state and federal labor law requirements.

Upcoming Events

On May 1st there will be a "Rally for Dairy Workers Rights" in Lowville, NY. The rally will speak up against violence in the workplace and wage theft.

The Workers' Center of Central New York holds workers' meetings, open to all types of workers on the third Thursday of every month.

Visit <http://workerscentercny.org/> for more information.

Yanira and Ben are volunteers with the Workers' Center of Central New York.

In These Times: Creating a Beloved Community as a Radical Act

Margo Okazawa-Rey

Editor's Note: Margo Okazawa-Rey was a founding member of the Combahee River Collective, a groundbreaking collective of Black feminists. Margo is also involved in Palestinian solidarity. These remarks were written as the keynote address for THE General Body's Teach in to Act Out in Syracuse on January 31 of this year.

"Greetings! Much appreciation goes to everyone who made "Teach In to Act Out" possible, especially Mary Rose Go, who held my hand to get me here.

And thanks to all the comrades in the struggle who are here; I am honored to be among you!

I want to remember and honor two who left us recently. One most of you know or have heard of is Leslie Feinberg, the transgender warrior who made us understand, among other things, the inextricable links between gender classifications and identities and global capitalist processes, and the deeply loved spouse of our sister friend Minnie Bruce Pratt.

The other feminist most of you will not know or even have heard of is Maha Abu-Dayyeh, the Palestinian activist and director of the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counseling (WCLAC), one of the most influential leaders of the modern Palestinian women's movement, and one of my dearest friends and teachers. It was through her and our work together at WCLAC that I developed many of the ideas I will be sharing with you today.

As I was thinking about what to say today, Dickens's lines from *The Tale of Two Cities* came to mind:

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times;
it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness;
it was the epoch of belief, it was the winter of despair."

We have ample evidence of all these polarities: The 1% of the world owns nearly half the world's wealth, and 80% of the world's peoples are living on less than \$10 a day. There are advances in medicine and



Margo Okazawa-Rey (second from left) with Barbara Smith (second from right) and other activists protesting the Roxbury Killings in Boston in 1979. Photo: Tia Cross.

technology; there's creativity and beauty in the arts and music and performance and wars, massacres, and horrific violence of all forms, as we have been witnessing.

We also see possibilities, as many people, from various walks of life, organize for justice, equity, and a truly secure and sustainable world. This weekend's gathering is a very good example of that. As is the nationwide organizing around policy brutality; worldwide organizing against violence against women; the BDS movement to help end Israeli occupation of Palestine; the years-long fight against the installation of new US military bases in Okinawa and Korea; and the struggle for the rights of domestic workers in New York and LA, to name a few. At the same time, the future looks unrelentingly bleak.

This country, the US, one of the richest and the most militarily powerful, is in deep trouble and is the source of deeper troubles worldwide. All of us in this room know the signs. One of the most destructive, I believe, is fear combined with hyper-individualism, so embedded in this society. Many, even some of the most conscious and privileged folks among us, are afraid and motivated by fear. This has

led to accepting the prevailing message that aggression leads to peace and that closing borders provides security. A kind of collective and individual self-absorption has gripped this nation.

Audre Lorde said, "we have been socialized to respect fear more than our own needs for language and definition, and while we wait in silence for that final luxury of fearlessness, the weight of that silence will choke us."

Cornel West says, "We've forgotten that a rich life consists fundamentally of serving others, trying to leave the world a little better than we found it."

But it's not easy. Leaving the world a better place demands courage. West says, "In many instances, we will be stepping out on nothing, and just hoping to land on something. But that's the struggle. To live is to wrestle with despair, yet never allow despair to have the last word."

I am firmly convinced that we—those who care, those who struggle for a just peace—should give the last word to LOVE, understanding that its most generative expression is the struggle for justice. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. has told us, justice is what love looks like in practice.

As activists struggling for social and ecological justice, we must love as we DO: love the work, love the ideas and values that frame the work, and above all love the people we work with and humanity itself.

To do so, we must ourselves develop our own humanity because, in one way or another, we are indigenes of the neo-liberal, neo-colonial project that reproduces and adapts itself to try to

of relational growth helps us to love deeper, more fully, and in Thich Nhat Hanh's words, with great equanimity.

These ideas about growth answer a question that often emerges in conversations about how change happens: what has to happen first, individual change or change outside of individuals. "We have to change first before we can do the work." This is what I have most often heard. But they are inextricably linked.



Students, faculty, and staff of THE General Body on the last day of the 18-day sit-in at Syracuse University. Photo: Mark Rupert

ensure we will always be looking in the wrong direction—anti-racist, anti-capitalist, anti this and that—rather than imagining a truly radical alternative.

In mainstream US culture, we are expected to grow by separating and individuating ourselves from others; that is how we are supposed to become mature. Along the way, we proclaim our uniqueness, difference, and exceptionalism. And we are rewarded. By standing out, people may see us as leaders, as more intelligent and competent than others and so on. It's an extension of the pervasive American exceptionalism. Many of us believe, deep inside, that we can do things better singularly than collectively, even as we gather in groups like this. When push comes to shove, we still place a lot of faith in individual charismatic leaders. In a sense, identity politics may be a collective example of this growth through separation and individuation as well.

As a kind of corrective, feminist psychologist Jean Baker Miller and her colleagues developed a theory of human development suggesting that, in fact, growth and development happen through relational connection with and to others. They call this growth-in-connection.

Growing in this way as adults requires different kinds of engagements in groups—whether we are talking about activist spaces, organizations, or universities. It means, using Joyce Fletcher's term, a relational practice that centers caring, being involved in the nitty-gritties of organizing, seeking consensus, paying attention to others' emotional needs and states, and addressing the contradiction that results from the structural inequalities (and hierarchies whether we acknowledge it or not) embedded in most kinds of group engagements. This kind

We must go even further because love and loving are not simply an individual act or stance. I want us to create Beloved Communities as we engage in the struggles. Because, as Dr. King said, "the end [of struggle] is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of the beloved community. It is this type of spirit and this type of love that can transform opposers into friends. It is this type of understanding-goodwill that will transform the deep gloom of the old age into the exuberant gladness of the new age. It is this love which will bring about miracles in [our] hearts."

We can do this. As the late poet June Jordan wrote in her poem for South African women struggling against the apartheid regime, "We are the ones we have been waiting for!"

The following quotes were added after the conference. One was inspired by Minnie Bruce Pratt, my teacher and friend, and the other was posted on my Facebook homepage:

At the risk of seeming ridiculous, let me say that the true revolutionary is guided by a great feeling of love. It is impossible to think of a genuine revolutionary lacking this quality. Perhaps it is one of the great dramas of the leader that he or she must combine a passionate spirit with a cold intelligence and make painful decisions without flinching. Our vanguard revolutionaries must idealize this love of the people, of the most sacred causes, and make it one and indivisible. They cannot descend, with small doses of daily affection, to the level where ordinary people put their love into practice...[O]ne must have a great deal of humanity and a strong sense of justice and truth in order not to fall into extreme dogmatism and cold scholasticism, into isolation from the masses. We must strive every day so that this love of living humanity will be transformed into actual deeds, into acts that serve as examples, as a moving force. —Che Guevara

To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness.

What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places—and there are so many—where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction.

And if we do act, in however small a way, we don't have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory.

—Howard Zinn 🌱

A Climate for Revolution

Richard Vallejo

This spring, the island nation of Vanuatu was virtually obliterated by Cyclone Pam, the worst storm it has ever seen. A few years ago, Hurricane Sandy made landfall on New York, fueled by warmer oceans and escorted by a shifting jet stream. Erratic and extreme weather events are becoming the norm as we consistently hear of temperature, precipitation and other meteorological records being broken, year after year. Once thought of as future events, catastrophic climate threats are now immediate, disproportionately weighing on marginalized global populations. While capitalist interests have precipitated the activities contributing to climate change, environmentalists and scientists alike hesitate to name capitalism as the root cause. Our responsibility, more than ever, is paramount. We must determine a viable course of action to take, in a time frame that we can afford.

In seeking the roots of climate collapse we must set our sight squarely on the prevailing capitalist system, its infinite growth, externalization of costs, and the powerful minority it engenders. The interests of the vast majority of the world's population—the poor, working class, Global South—are at direct odds with, and entirely neglected by, those of capitalism's incessant expansion and amassing of wealth. The natural world and the majority of global citizens share a common antagonist and a common aim. As one suffers ecological destruction, we face the unraveling of social existence; as one demands balance and diversity, we seek a social order freed from capitalist intervention. The contradiction of infinite growth on a finite planet leads to resource extraction for polluting industries, threatening the livelihood and sovereignty of local communities impacted by the acquisition, conversion, and usage

of such "commodities."

There is a growing persuasion that we must "vote with our dollars" to effect change, as if modern consumer capitalism were a democracy capable of being less destructive. Only through revolutionary action will we find the necessary alternatives to our current socio-existential quandary. Through such action, a truly global "we" can emerge and carry out the will of society, fulfilling the needs of human life as well



Image: Lincoln Cushing

as creating ecological harmony.

While we must avoid fanatical alarmism, or simplistic conflation of weather events with long-term trends, there is palpable reason for concern. Increasing arctic temperatures have slowed the jet stream; global average temperatures have increased .85°C since 1880 (as of 2012)¹; melting of the West Antarctic ice sheet has accelerated; and coral reef populations are threatened by ocean warming and acidification. All of these factors trigger greater intensification as climate change builds momentum, challenging our earlier conservative predictions.

The ongoing historic drought in California reveals the inability of the state to rein in capitalism. Despite agriculture and

fossil industries being by far the greatest wasters of water, both were exempted from the state's first ever usage restrictions. In contrast with this myopic solution, we will reach a two degree Celsius global average temperature increase within 17 years, beyond which full-scale catastrophe rapidly escalates. If there is a question of whether we may still be able to avoid such a fate, California seems to have answered with their unwillingness to hold industries

accountable for the consequences of their excess. If this suggests the impotence of governments and corporations, the case of Occupy Sandy offers optimism for the bold potential of civil society. After the unprecedented landfall of Hurricane Sandy and amid the circumspect response of officials and conventional relief organizations, neighbors organized a decentralized, coordinated relief effort. In Red Hook, Rockaway, and elsewhere, Occupy Sandy not only organized relief in the aftermath of the storm, but has continued its work to this day, with mutual aid as a basis for recovery efforts long after official programs shifted their attention elsewhere.

The situation is dire, and time is certainly running out. We must not let notions of so-called "realistic" change

prevent us from plainly seeing what must be done. To imagine full-scale revolutionary change within a matter of decades, in the hopes of mitigating the worst effects of climate change, is daunting. We must address the daily needs and realities of our communities, while building examples of the new society we wish to see from local to global arenas, and we must prepare, mentally and materially, to respond to inevitable disaster. It is imperative that we understand the need for revolutionary change away from capitalism. It is also gravely important that we avoid defeatism and resignation. We must embrace the uncertainties of a new order, even if faced with eventual demise, rather than forfeit to annihilation in the old one. In taking action, in this moment, we may at the very least ease the impacts and maintain some social order in the midst of climate chaos. ♻️

Richard is an anarchist, auto mechanic and web developer, born and raised in the Syracuse area. He hopes to one day live in a non-hierarchical world without militarism, borders, ecological devastation, and exploitation. He lives at Bread & Roses collective.

¹ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. "Climate Change 2013, The Physical Science Basis, Summary for Policy Makers"

National Campaign for Nonviolent Resistance Call to Action

For those of us who marched in New York City on September 21, 2014, we saw hundreds of thousands of citizens taking to the streets to save Mother Earth. There was a serious anti-war presence in the march, making the connection between militarization and the destruction of the earth.

A lame-duck President Obama has, on occasion, done the right thing—supported the dreamers, recognized the insanity of official US policy on Cuba—continues to release prisoners from the concentration camp in Guantanamo. It seems now is the time to challenge this administration to do more by ending the killer-drone program, and to convince environmentalists to be vocal critics of the Pentagon's role in the destruction of Mother Earth.

The ineffectiveness of drone warfare is clear. Thanks to Wikileaks we have access to a July 7, 2009 secret report produced by the Central Intelligence Agency's Office of Transnational Issues discussing the failure of drone warfare in making the world safe. "The potential negative effects of HLT [High Level Targets] operations," the report states, "include increasing the level of insurgent support [...], strengthening an armed group's bonds with the population, radicalizing an insurgent group's remaining leaders, creating a vacuum into which more radical groups can enter, and escalating or de-escalating a conflict in ways that favor the insurgents."

The effect of militarization on the environment is clear. By starting the march at the Environmental Protection Agency, we [tried] to encourage environmentalists to join the action. A letter was sent to Gina McCarthy of the Environmental Protection Agency to seek a meeting to discuss the Pentagon's role in ecocide. A letter would also be sent to Chuck Hagel requesting a meeting to discuss the Climate Crisis, exacerbated by US warmongering.

This Call to Action highlights the need for the environmental agency to recognize the destructive role the military machine plays in climate chaos and to take action to remediate the situation.

According to Joseph Nevins in *Greenwashing the Pentagon*, "The US military is the world's single biggest consumer of fossil fuels, and the single entity most responsible for destabilizing the Earth's climate."

The Pentagon is aware that national security could be affected by climate chaos. However, as Nevin tells us, "Such 'greenwashing' helps to mask the fact that the Pentagon devours about 330,000 barrels of oil per day (a barrel has 42 gallons), more than the vast majority of the world's countries. If the US military were a nation-state, it would be ranked number 37 in terms of oil consumption—ahead of the likes of the Philippines, Portugal, and Nigeria—according to the CIA Factbook."

To see another example of the military's destructive nature, see *Okinawa: A Small Island Resists US Military's "Pivot to Asia"* by Christine Ahn, which appeared in December 2014 in *Foreign Policy in Focus*. We are including some of the points made in the article:

"Takeshi Miyagi, a 44-year old

continued on page 13

US Military — Global

Hasmik is a sophomore studying women's and gender studies at SU who loves to be involved with sustainability initiatives. She interned with SPC in Fall 2014.

The Pentagon produces more carbon emissions than any other industrial complex. Ironically, according to Voices for Creative Nonviolence, the Pentagon has released multiple reports that describe climate change as the largest threat to US national security.

This reality is obscured: often outreach strategies place the responsibility for combating environmental degradation on individuals. The roots of climate change remain unrecognized because individual consumption becomes the talking point while industrial, and particularly military, carbon emissions go unchecked.

No matter how fervently individuals reduce, reuse, and recycle, their collective efforts will barely scratch the surface of the mountains of waste and pollution that industries are responsible for. This truth shouldn't engender apathy for what efficacy individuals can have, but it is important to recognize the forces behind climate change



Image: Seth Tobocman & Sandy Sanders

Activist Awakenings

Compiled by PNL Editorial Committee

Editor's Note: "Activist Awakenings" is a new occasional feature that showcases the diverse ways in which we each came to political activism. To submit your own story, send 150-200 words to pnl@peacecouncil.net or mail a hardcopy to the office. This premiere edition of the column includes the stories of each current member of the PNL Editorial Committee.



Brian Escobar

I have had strong opinions about politics since childhood. As a student and aspiring academic my political participation was limited to voting and studying towards a career conducting research to inform policy, particularly to stop the mass extinction underway.

While aware of the corruption in politics, I didn't take it seriously enough to question how my goals were premised on the assumption that in a democracy policy represented an educated public informed by experts. I was noncommittal and open—aware of arguments for many sides but, as an academic, not feeling a pressure to determine for myself which was ultimately worth struggling for.

My understanding of capitalism and our policy-making process was naïve, which I realized as I struggled to come to terms with critiques of my ideas. Officials can easily ignore inconvenient research and expertise, and information and understanding is difficult to disseminate in our media. Personal difficulties and the social structure combine to render my dreams all but impossible in our current society. This leaves me little choice but to work towards changing the society, replacing capitalism with a better model, which I term democratic socialism.

Amelia Lefevre

My mind was prepared as fertile ground for political dissent by parents skeptical of, if not actively opposing, the status quo political scene in the US. My political consciousness started to develop when I was in high school, first around LGBTQ rights. This was around the time Massachusetts became the first state to legalize same-sex marriage. I joined the "gay-straight alliance" (which we renamed "Spectrum" to be more inclusive), but our activities didn't seem to have much impact.

The transition from consciousness to action took place after learning about genetically modified organisms in my AP Environmental Science class. I realized GM corn was being grown throughout my county and wrote my first letter to the editor of the local paper, not mentioning my age. My letter appeared as the top letter on the op-ed page a few days later. I was thrilled with my ability to get information and analysis out to a large audience. The next year I became the editor of the school newspaper and authored several articles about environmental and human rights issues.

It's no secret that I am still enamored of print media as a means of education and activation for important issues.

Aly Wane

In a way, activism is really in my genes. My mother worked at the United Nations and always instilled in me a sense that it was important to give back to the community.

I started out doing a lot of community service in High School, but my real political education began when I did a stint with a Catholic Worker community in Upstate, NY, called St. Francis Farm. The Catholic Worker movement is a movement which highlights the social justice teachings of the Catholic Church and aims to live them out in places called "houses of hospitality." There, I was introduced to concepts of social change through nonviolent resistance and agitation.

Ever since then my work has focused on antiwar, economic justice and migrants' rights issues. Alice Walker once famously said, "Activism is my rent for living on the planet." That sums up my philosophy. The other quote which inspires me is an old Kikuyu proverb: "I am only well if you are well." I don't believe that it is possible to grow as an individual without caring for the community.



Ben Kuebrich

In 2001 I was a senior in high school. In 2003 two college friends were in the National Guard, ready to go to war. I read about Abu Ghraib. I argued about war and about GW Bush, but I was apathetic. I had a developing political consciousness, but there was no possibility. I didn't know of any contemporary social movements. I didn't know they were necessary or could be successful.

As a Masters' student I joined a living wage campaign—my friends and colleagues got me involved. It was my first time organizing. I had worked many low wage jobs and through that work I identified with the custodial staff on campus, seeing them as similar to the workers I met washing dishes at fast-food restaurants and loading semi-truck trailers. My first summer, working with the union, we successfully defended healthcare benefits. I've been organizing since then.

From Peace to Race: On the Elections in Israel

Dana Lloyd

When “the only democracy in the Middle East,” which is also considered the most secular state in the Middle East, defines itself as a Jewish democracy, what could “Jewish” mean? It couldn’t possibly mean religion, right? Could it perhaps mean race? And if it does, could a Jewish state be democratic?

A month has passed since the elections for the twentieth Israeli parliament. A month since Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (colloquially referred to as “Bibi” by Israelis) has been elected for the fourth time after warning the Israeli Jewish public that “the Arabs are voting,” prompting people to vote Likud and save the country from its Palestinian citizens.

This call has raised red flags for Americans, who are particularly sensitive about race and voting rights. I spent some time trying to convince myself (and others) that despite his appearance as a tyrant, these elections are not about Bibi Netanyahu himself at all. It is Israel’s regime that matters, and there is a growing chance we will be able to change it in the foreseeable future, given the growing representation of Palestinians—the most invisible group in the state of Israel—in its parliament. Therefore, we should really be hopeful.

Then, on March 21, only a week after the elections, a six-year old Palestinian girl was attacked and injured by two Jewish settlers in Hebron. In the face of this incident I was having a hard time feeling hopeful or writing a piece I was supposed to write about the future of the Middle East and of the “peace process.”

In reality, peace is not on the agenda of any of the major parties in Israel anyway. Peace, which was a part of all major parties’ campaigns in 1996 (the Likud’s 1996 elections campaign slogan was “Netanyahu—Making Safe Peace”), was not a part of any of the major parties’ campaigns in 2015.

A racist slogan which was seen on billboards during the last weeks before the elections read “with Bibi-Bennett we will be stuck with the Palestinians forever.” Bibi is, as mentioned



Photo: Haggai Matar

above, Benjamin Netanyahu. Bennett is no other than Naftali Bennet, the leader of the religious nationalist party The Jewish Home, which is on the extreme right wing of the political map in Israel. This campaign was sponsored by an ostensibly leftist non-governmental organization, and its logic is also the logic of the peace process and of the Oslo Accords: Jews want to disengage from Palestinians; indeed, they *should* disengage from Palestinians. According to the slogan, it is the right, even the extreme right, wing of the political map that is to blame for us (Jews) being “stuck” with the Palestinians. Only peace will enable us to separate from them. This is the “leftist” logic of the peace process. In other words, the peace process is not really about peace, but about disengagement. If the peace process follows a logic of disengagement, which is essentially a racist logic, perhaps we should talk about something else instead. Perhaps instead of talking about peace we should talk about freedom.

A new hope for a peaceful protest, for a peaceful struggle for change, has risen in this round of elections in Israel. The unification of the Palestinian parties and

their campaign as the Joint List, declaring war on racism, won them thirteen seats in Israel’s parliament, an increase of almost 20% in comparison with the last elections, when they ran separately.

Race, of course, plays a more complicated role in Israel. Racial tension exists in Israel not only between Jews and Palestinian—a tension that is usually referred to as “national”—but also between Ashkenazi (white, European) Jews and Mizrahi (African, Arab) Jews—a tension that is often referred to as “ethnic.” There is also racial tension between Israeli citizens and between work immigrants and refugees, who are usually racial minorities. And race has been a large part of this round of elections, more visible than in previous rounds. The ultra-orthodox Shas party’s identity politics and its campaign slogan “A Mizrahi votes Mizrahi” is one example.

Another is the disqualification by the elections committee of the ultra-orthodox party Yahad’s racist campaign video, a campaign against “terrorism, asylum seekers, and immigrant workers” (and the party’s

Dana has studied and practiced law in Tel Aviv. She is currently a PhD student in the department of religion at Syracuse University.

continued on page 13



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farmer, said he abandoned his fields in July to join the resistance by monitoring the sea by canoe. Miyagi says he and other activists are ensuring the protection of the biologically rich ecosystem of the Henoko and Oura Bays and the survival of the dugong. The Japanese Ministry of the Environment lists the dugong—a marine mammal related to the manatee—as “critically endangered.” It is also on the list of US endangered species.

“Okinawans are also pointing to the historic chemical contamination by US military bases. Last month, the Japan Ministry of Defense began excavating at the Okinawa City soccer field where barrels containing toxic herbicides were discovered last year. In July, the Japanese government unearthed 88 barrels containing ingredients used to produce Agent Orange in reclaimed land next to the Kadena Air Force Base.”

Finally, read *Climate Change Challenges* by Kathy Kelly: “...it seems the greatest danger—the greatest violence—that any of us face is contained in our attacks on our environment. Today’s children and generations to follow them face nightmares of scarcity, disease, mass displacement, social chaos, and war, due to our patterns of consumption and pollution.”

She adds this: “What’s more, the US military, with its more than 7,000 bases, installations, and other facilities, worldwide, is one of the most egregious polluters on the planet and is the world’s largest single consumer of fossil fuels. Its terrible legacy of forcing its own soldiers and their families, over decades, to drink lethally carcinogenic water on bases that should have been evacuated as contaminated sites is covered in a recent *Newsweek* story.”

If you are concerned by the challenges facing Mother Earth and want to end the killer drone program, get involved with the National Campaign for Nonviolent Resistance on April 22, Earth Day. ♡

disappearance from Israeli politics for the time being). The success of the Kulanu party, with an agenda of social and economic justice, whose leader is a working-class Mizrahi Jew who may become Israel’s next minister of finance, is yet another example.

But race was also visible when immediately after the elections the web filled with denouncements of marginalized racial groups for their failure to see Netanyahu’s role in their oppression and for their contribution to his victory. The Israeli Jewish left (traditionally Ashkenazi in large part) was called to stop “giving charity” to and showing solidarity with these groups until they wake up and stop supporting him (later we discovered that Likud had more Ashkenazi than Mizrahi voters, a discovery that revealed that the assumption that only Mizrahi Jews vote Likud is racist and detached from reality).

And so, if race is such a burning issue in Israel, and if even the peace process follows a racist logic of separation, then perhaps it is freedom from racial oppression, not peace, we should all strive for. Bringing racial oppression into the vocabulary of mainstream Israeli public discourse—which certainly happened in these elections—might be a first step in the right direction.

Once, Israeli elections were about peace, but merely the illusion of peace. In 2015, Israeli elections are (finally) about race—racial solidarity and racial hatred. If this change—from peace to race—brings about a shift from a logic of disengagement to one of solidarity, then perhaps there is a reason to be hopeful. ♡

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SPC in Action / from page 4

site for drone pilots, sensor operators and maintenance technicians.

SPC's Committee has continued our lobbying and twice monthly Street Heats at Hancock's main entrance (see page 4). Recently we participated in a Playback Theater event in Poughkeepsie, organized by Drone Alert Hudson Valley. Playback Theater is an improvisational theater in which we were invited to share our stories about our anti-drone activism, which were enacted on the spot. Then on April 18 we presented a staged reading of the play *The Predator* at the Dewitt Community Library. The play invites dialogue and is an excellent introduction to different points of view regarding weaponized drones. If you would like us to perform for your faith community, class, library or group, contact Carol.

Great Conferences Coming Up

The next few months are busy with connecting to other peace and social justice activists nationally. Contact Carol if you'd like to join SPC activists going to:

- United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC) Conference, May 8-10 in Secaucus, NJ. www.unacpeace.org
- The Left Forum, May 29-31 in New York City. www.leftforum.org
- The US Social Forum, June 24-28 in Philadelphia. www.ussocialforum.net (can also contact Richard Vallejo: vallejo@riseup.net).

All of these events have great speakers and workshops, and are amazing opportunities for cross fertilization of issues, coalition building, learning and fun.

A Just Energy Transition for NY

Alliance for a Green Economy (AGREE) is busier than ever this spring. In March, we gathered with community partners and participants from the 2014 Solarize Syracuse campaign to celebrate a successful effort that doubled installed solar photovoltaic systems in our target area. We also announced an ambitious Solarize CNY campaign for 2015 that will encompass Cayuga, Cortland, Madison, Onondaga and Oswego Counties. The CNY Regional Planning and Development Board will take the lead on the regional organizing, while AGREE will focus on the city of Syracuse.

In April, we co-organized a two-day meeting of the Energy Democracy Working Group in Albany. Participating groups are addressing the Public Service Commission's Reform the Energy Vision process, the proposed Clean Energy Fund, legislation related to Shared Renewables (such as community net metering, to make technologies like solar accessible even to those who can't put it on their property) and Energy Affordability. In addition to adopting a draft mission statement and principles, the group changed its name to the Energy Democracy Alliance.

We also continue watchdogging our local nuclear plants. Exelon Corporation, owner of the Ginna nuclear reactor near

Rochester, recently negotiated a special above-market contract with Rochester Gas & Electric, which will raise the rates of all RG&E customers. The contract has yet to be approved by the Public Service Commission, and public hearings have been scheduled for May 6 (Webster, NY) and May 7 (Rochester, NY), with the public comment period extended to May 20. Visit www.allianceforagreenconomy.org for details on this and all of our campaigns.

— Jessica Maxwell

Move To Amend

On **Saturday May 9**, Move To Amend (MTA) co-sponsors the DREAM Freedom Revival presentation of "The Rise of FRANKENCORP: Has a Corporate Monster Stolen Our Rights?" at Southwest Community Center (401 South Ave.), 7 pm. The show includes provocative, original skits and songs including "We the People Move to Amend." Admission is free; a \$5 donation is welcome.

On April 2, MTA held a rally in downtown Syracuse, with 40 people calling on President Obama to issue an executive order requiring all federal contractors to disclose their political contributions. Legislators deciding whether we go to war should not receive secret money from corporations that profit from war!

To learn more, contact Michael Messina-Yauchzy at 315-663-5640, mmy229@gmail.com.

— Michael Messina-Yauchzy

NOON Updates

Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation (NOON) meets the second Tuesday of every month from 7-8:30 at SPC. You're welcome to join us. Please contact Carol first in order to more fully understand agenda items. Here are a few things we're up to:

- We are exploring how to interact with the Onondaga Lake clean-up. Even though the quality of the lake has improved, there is still much more that should be done.
- Distribution of the *Neighbor to Neighbor; Nation to Nation* booklet has been picking up. Volunteers have distributed them to Ithaca schools and colleges, Syracuse University, the NYS Historians Conference, Syracuse City Schools history teachers, in Saratoga Springs and elsewhere. To suggest other venues, contact Carol.



The D.R.E.A.M. Freedom Revival team won the Team Spirit Award at the Bowlathon on April 12. Photo: Ursula Rozum



SPC supporters gather in downtown Syracuse to protest US militarism on the anniversary of the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Photo: Ursula Rozum

- We email a monthly e-newsletter to over 2700 subscribers, or you can find it at www.peacecouncil.net/noon.
- We highly recommend ArtRage Gallery's current exhibit on fracking, "Capillary Reaction: Hydrofracking and Irrevocable Loss." NOON is one of the show's co-sponsors.

— Sue Eiholzer

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Contact Amelia for ad sizes and prices. Reserve space by May 13 for the June issue.

Thank You, Spring Interns!

The Peace Council was lucky to have an active and well-rounded group of interns working with us this spring. We enjoyed another semester with Zach Field, who continued working with CNY Working for a Just Peace in Palestine and Israel and also helped with general office tasks. Lindsay DeMay worked behind the scenes to support the annual Bowlathon, partnered with NYPIRG to screen a film about GMOs on the SU campus, and worked on social media management. Brian Escobar and Henry Nelson both worked on opposing the Trans-Pacific Partnership. In addition to helping with all manner of odd jobs, Brian has written for the *PNL* and joined the Editorial Committee. Henry is organiz-

ing with the Ground the Drones, End the Wars committee.

We're sad to see these internships end, but we hope to maintain connections with these great organizers and thinkers as they will all remain in the area for at least a little while longer.

Summer Interns Wanted

The Peace Council is accepting applications for summer internships! Whether you commit to an internship (typically 10-15 hours per week) or an ongoing weekly volunteer commitment, summer is a fun time to get more involved! This summer, we are planning outreach tables, the Hiroshima Day procession and more. You can find the internship application at www.peacecouncil.net/intern. To learn more about internship opportunities, contact Ursula.

Center Office Space Available

SPC's offices are in the Syracuse Center for Peace and Social Justice, which also houses Alliance for a Green Economy, NY Center for Alcohol Policy Solutions, New Yorkers Against Fracking, Public Citizen, Syracuse Alternative Media Network and Syracuse Greens. The Center's mission is to "facilitate collaboration among groups working for peace and social justice," and as such is committed to rents at reasonable prices to non-profits, as well as providing a green and accessible space.

The Center has office space available—two small offices (one on the same floor as SPC!), one medium-sized office and one large office. Contact the Center at 315-701-1580 for more information.

Last summer the parking lot was re-done with porous pavement, and a ramp was built to make the Community Room on the ground floor more accessible. To donate towards making the building more

"green" and accessible, please send your donation to The Center, 2013 East Genesee St., Syracuse, NY 13210, or go to www.syracusecenter.org.

Not Another Blank Check for War

On March 19, the twelfth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, anti-war activists rallied downtown to denounce President Obama's request to Congress for Authorization for Use of Military Force against ISIS. Read the full statement opposing this blank check for war on www.peacecouncil.net. Speakers at the rally included Dave Kashmer of Veterans for Peace; Henry Nelson, SPC intern and activist at Syracuse University; and Ed Kinane, long time SPC activist who was in Iraq during the 2003 US invasion. We urge you to contact our federal representatives and ask them to vote against another AUMF that would further entrench the US in the endless war in the Middle East.

SPC's Retreat Fruitful

SPC's annual two-day retreat is the time each year when SPC activists step away from day-to-day organizing and problem solving to look at our larger vision. Saturday was spent getting to know each other's political perspectives better, discussing different strategies of social change and evaluating SPC's work over the past year. Sunday looked at how to better integrate the many parts of SPC, focusing on how committees can communicate better with each other and how they can better support each other in their work. By the end of the retreat we felt energized, full of ideas and specific plans for moving forward.

Thanks to Julianne Oldfield for making lunch both days and to everyone who participated.

