

PEACE NEWSLETTER



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WE NEED A BETTER FUTURE FOR ONONDAGA LAKE

Lindsay Speer

In the next few years, many of the legally required remedies at Onondaga Lake will be wrapping up. However, the common-sense goals articulated by both the Onondaga Nation and the Clean Water Act—being able to drink the water, eat the fish, and swim in the lake—are still far out of reach. Onondaga Lake needs us.

Protectors of Onondaga Lake

Onondaga Lake is our responsibility. What would it look like if we were as passionate about protecting and restoring Onondaga Lake as those involved with We Are Seneca Lake (see page 4)? Are residents of Central New York any less deserving of a healthy lake than residents of the Finger Lakes? To create change, we have to first envision what we want. The Onondaga Nation has started this work for us, with their

Vision for a Clean Onondaga Lake (see onondagation.org/land-rights/onondaga-nations-vision-for-a-clean-onondaga-lake).

Being protectors of Onondaga Lake starts with educating ourselves about what's been done, what's being left for future generations to deal with, and what others are planning.

Onondaga County's upgrades to its sewage system have resulted in dramatically less bacteria, nitrogen and phosphorus going into the lake. The result is fewer algae blooms and higher levels of oxygen, allowing more fish to survive. Water clarity has also dramatically increased, in part due to the reduced nutrients, and in part due to the arrival of zebra mussels that filter huge amounts of water as they feed. Onondaga Lake is improving, but we should question those who rush to call the lake "clean."

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compiled by CAROL BAUM

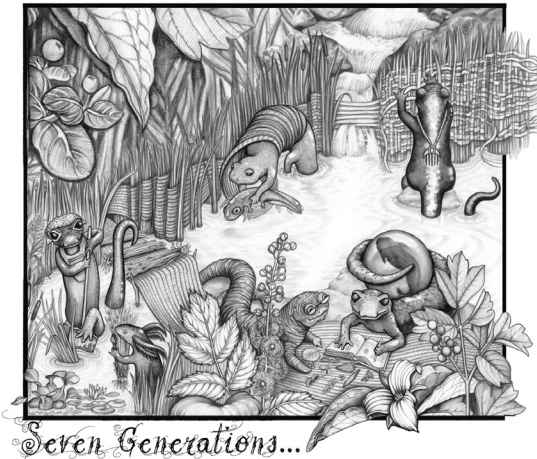
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Left: *Seven Generations*, part of the larger work *The True Cost of Coal*, The Beehive Design Collective.

Cover: *Community Assembly*, part of the larger work *Mesoamérica Resiste*, The Beehive Design Collective.

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SPC Statement of purpose

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.

educate • agitate • organize > SPC in Action

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CHECK OUT THE PEACE COUNCIL'S NEW BLOG

Inspired by having many more articles to share than the new every-other-month *PNL* publication schedule can print, the *PNL* editorial committee has embarked on a new project—the SPC Blog. We're excited to make the *PNL* more interactive—we'll be posting *PNL* print articles as well as special content and look forward to reading the comments and discussions they generate.

Our first post is "US Veteran Welcomed by Afghan Peace Volunteers" by SPC activist Ron Van Norstrand. Here's a teaser. Read the rest at peacecouncil.net/spcblog.

"Are you crazy?" "Are you out of your mind?" My friends' concerns were foremost in my mind as I boarded Turkish Air Flight 706 bound for Kabul, Afghanistan. I had recently learned that US Embassy personnel no longer drive the streets of Kabul; they travel by helicopter... Although anxious and apprehensive, I was honored to be invited to join a small delegation arranged by Voices for Creative Nonviolence for a 10-day person-to-person visit with the Afghan Peace Volunteers (APV).



Ron, second from right, with Afghan Peace Volunteers in Afghanistan. Photo: Ron Van Norstrand.

THE NAME "JUSTICE FOR PALESTINE"

SPC's committee previously known as "Central New Yorkers for a Just Peace in Israel and Palestine" officially changed its name to "Justice for Palestine" in November 2015. We began in 2009 as a response to the war in Gaza, to bring our community an understanding of the human costs in what we originally framed as the conflict between Palestine and Israel.

Changing our name was an involved process reflecting the need to have a name accurately identifying the focus of our work. Since our inception, we shared the story of the suffering and resistance of the Palestinian people to Israel's occupation,

and the US role in perpetuating violence in the Middle East. We did not want our name to imply that Palestine and Israel are equivalent in terms of power or military might, or in their abilities to end the violence and occupation. Our name change was intended to more accurately acknowledge our solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Our work is grounded in a commitment to respect human rights and one another. We come from varied backgrounds, faiths/non-faiths, identities, and social justice movements. Our members include those identifying as Jewish, Muslim,

Christian, as well as those who approach the issue from a non-religious, humanist perspective. We do not view the "conflict" between Palestine and Israel as a religious conflict, but rather a conflict rooted in the occupation of land, appropriation of resources and an unequal legal system. While for many of us faith may inspire our commitment to the work, our work together is based on human rights and our solidarity agenda.

To see our most recent "10 solidarity points" visit peacecouncil.net/justice-for-palestine.

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NEW YORK STATE: A REPOSITORY FOR PENNSYLVANIA'S FRACKED GAS

Charley Bowman

Hydrofracking in Pennsylvania began in earnest in 2005. Eleven years later, the state of “virtue, liberty and independence” is bursting at the seams with methane (aka natural gas) partly because PA lacks the pipeline infrastructure to transport it out of state to coastal regions (think export). Nationwide there are plans for 34,112 miles of new pipeline, some of it already in place.

The rapid fracking of PA also created a shortage of storage facilities for excess methane and liquid petroleum gas (LPG); hence, the interest in the empty and ever-increasing-in-size salt caverns north of Watkins Glen on Seneca Lake, the source of drinking water for over 100,000 people. Methane is now stored there, and expansion plans are afoot.

Crestwood Equity Partners, which owns the storage field on Seneca Lake, wants to store 88.2 million gallons of liquid petroleum gas from hydrofracked fields in southwestern PA, in addition to increasing the volume of stored methane from 1.5 billion cubic feet to 2 billion cubic feet. All this gas and liquid will be stored 2,000 feet underneath their 600 acre site on the western shore of Seneca Lake. The methane and LPG will be held in geologically unstable salt caverns previously created by solution mining of salt.

There have been 11 major accidents in salt-mine methane gas storage fields since 1972 and seven of these accidents resulted in fire while five also resulted in explosions.

Catastrophic accidents even occur in gas storage fields inside stable rock formations. On October 23, 2015, a pipe failed in the Aliso Canyon Gas Storage Field and methane started flowing to the surface, enveloping the wealthy neighboring community of Porter Ranch outside of Los Angeles. The smell forced four thousand families living in a three mile radius to seek temporary residence until SoCalGas gained control of the leak on February 18, 2016. The Aliso Canyon leak is the second largest in US history, exceeded only by the 2004 Moss Bluff Texas gas release with fire and explosions following a massive roof collapse in—you guessed it—a salt mine. The Aliso methane release is the equivalent of placing an extra 464,000 cars on the road.

An Aliso/Moss Bluff-style accident could also happen at Crestwood on Seneca Lake. All deep-well pipes will fail at some point in their lifetime, says Cornell University Professor Anthony Ingraffea. The few thousand residents living within a three-mile radius of the Crestwood gas storage site would need temporary housing. Unlike Los Angeles, several thousand vacant housing units are unlikely to be available in the general vicinity of Watkins Glen. Tents anyone?



On March 7, 56 Seneca Lake Defenders were arrested at the gates of Crestwood, including 350.org founder Bill McKibben. Photo: We Are Seneca Lake.

Clearly, there are pipes in Crestwood... what is their condition? What rules does NY State have in place to insure the integrity of those pipes? Are safety shut-off valves installed at the bottom of the pipes, which would prevent an Aliso-style accident? If such valves are present, would a geologic accident damage them?

These questions have neither been asked nor addressed by the NY State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), which has yet to finally rule on the expansion of Crestwood's LPG storage capability on Seneca Lake (the methane expansion has been approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, FERC, without NY State input). At a minimum, the DEC should wait until a formal study of the Aliso Canyon accident is completed before rendering final consideration of Crestwood's proposal.

The slow pace of the DEC's regulatory process surrounding Crestwood has not affected expansion of pipelines in PA. The Constitution Pipeline has surmounted all the regulatory micro-speed bumps at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and in PA, but not in New York State. Nevertheless, on January 29, FERC ordered trees removed in the PA portion of the Constitution Pipeline. Most of the maple trees on the Holleran-Zeffer property are now gone, a very sad ending to Hollerans' multi-year legal battle.

The tree removal happened in the absence of a payment agreement between the pipeline company and the Holleran family for the removal of 90 percent of their maple trees.

The Holleran's 65 year-old maple syrup business was sacrificed on the altar of dirty fracked gas for the so-called “Constitution” pipeline, without payment, via eminent domain proceedings in the land of “virtue, liberty and independence.”

Back at Seneca Lake, the members of We Are Seneca Lake sponsor nonviolent direct action at the gates of Crestwood Energy Partners. Since October 2014 there have been more than 500 arrests of Seneca Lake Defenders. The most recent action occurred on March 7.

The defense of Seneca Lake continues. For more information and to join the fight, visit WeAreSenecaLake.com. ♪

Charley chairs the Environmental Justice Task Force of the Western NY Peace Center. E-mail him at RenewableEnergy@WNYPeace.org; view his research at wnypeace.org/new/RenewableEnergy.html.

THE FLINT WATER CRISIS AND SYRACUSE

Richard Vallejo and Brian Escobar

In January 2016, news spread that Michigan's Governor Rick Snyder had ignored blatant warning signs that the water in Flint was dangerously contaminated.

A host of factors created this situation. In 2011, the governor appointed a panel to examine Flint's financial situation. That November, the panel determined that Flint was in a financial crisis and appointed an emergency manager to make unpopular budget cuts, with the power to overrule the elected city council.

In March 2014, in an attempt to save money, the emergency manager overruled the city council and switched the city's water supply to the Flint River. Chemicals from the river caused lead pipes serving Flint to corrode, leaching lead into the water supply. Residents of the post-industrial and predominantly black city immediately complained that their water was discolored, smelled odd, and caused rashes. Some households were found to have extremely high levels of lead in their water. Both the governor and the state Department of Environmental Quality dismissed these reports until a Virginia Tech study, completed over a year later, showed high levels of lead in households. At that time, the governor returned the water supply to the Detroit water system.

But with officials unwilling to replace Flint's corroded pipes, lead continued to contaminate the water. Thousands of children now have high levels of lead in their blood, which harms brain and bone development in young children. Worried that the high levels of chlorine used to treat Flint River water were corroding the pipes, officials reduced the chlorine content to low levels, allowing bacterial diseases to flow through the pipes, which may be linked to an outbreak of Legionnaires' Disease.



Flint water sample visibly contaminated, shown next to clean water from nearby Detroit. Lead itself is invisible and odorless in water. Photo: Jake May/The Flint Journal/AP.

Richard Vallejo is a Peace Council member and has previously been involved with the Partnership for Onondaga Creek in efforts seeking environmental justice.

Brian Escobar is an organizer with the Syracuse Peace Council and Syracuse for Sanders.

When the crisis was acknowledged in late 2015, taps were turned off and tax money was used to purchase truck loads of bottled water from companies like Nestlé.

In the richest country in the world, multiple levels of government placed other budget priorities before the right to clean water in a predominantly black city, treating poor black children as disposable. As journalist Shaun King put it in the *NY Daily News*, "What we have here is a horrific clash of race, class, politics and public health."

It's not just Flint. In Sebring, OH, St. Joseph, LA, Durham, NC, and even in the nation's capitol, federal regulations create incentives for cities to ignore threats to public health, particularly in predominantly black and brown, working class communities.

The EPA's "Lead and Copper Rule" (LCR) permits lead levels of up to 15 parts per billion for 90% of homes tested within a municipality or district, and mandates that the public be alerted when this standard is not met. Alarming, for the remaining 10% of homes, there is no limit; there is no requirement to alert the public; and, though the rule includes some guidelines for selecting test sites, it is unclear what oversight exists to enforce those guidelines. Flint had managed to meet these water quality standards even as lead poisoning incidents increased, making it easier for the governor to deny the problem for so long.

It's a familiar story for cities like Flint and St. Joseph with a majority "minority" population. Municipalities assume they can get away with money-saving measures and game regulations at the cost of public health because black and brown lives are valued less; black and brown residents aren't seen to have the political power or will to fight such injustices. Municipal, state and federal officials can all claim austerity measures are necessitated by a shrunken tax base. In doing so, officials shift blame onto "unfortunate realities," rather than take responsibility for their budget priorities.

This is environmental racism. When a community has a high incidence of environment-related health problems, government negligence is a form of violence. Lead poisoning can result in long-term neurological damage and other health problems. When black and brown children have a higher risk of exposure to lead and other environmental contaminants in their homes, schools, and playgrounds, there can never be a "level playing field."

Could this happen in Syracuse?

The city of Syracuse was mandated to replace 7% of lead service pipes annually until water quality met federal standards in 2006 and 2007. Without widespread local reports of contaminated water here in Syracuse, one might assume the city water quality is under control. Syracuse is fortunate to have as a primary water source Skaneateles Lake, one of the few clean water sources in the country. However, the city's water quality reports provide no real data regarding current levels of lead in our drinking water. While images from Flint of brownish-yellow tap water made their contamination visible, it is important to remember that lead is actually *invisible* and *odorless* in water, and can go undetected by residents.

continued on next page

Environmental Racism, from previous page

NYS Department of Health data show higher-than-average levels of lead in children living in neighborhoods with greater poverty and a greater proportion of residents of color. A map of these neighborhoods shows overlap with a map of tenant-based rental assistance in Syracuse, especially around the Near Westside and Southside. All of this seems to confirm what is commonly suspected: low-income and communities of color are at higher risk of exposure to lead and other environmental dangers.

Infrastructure improvements are neglected in neighborhoods away from business districts or downtown city centers. Old service pipes are less likely to be replaced in those neighborhoods, and absentee landlords often leave in place aging lead pipes and solder.

Syracuse is not Flint; we have not seen the specific and unique circumstances which led to Flint's public health disaster. In Flint, the crisis is a result of emergency managers, feigned ignorance, budgetary excuses, and insufficient regulations, all of which were deemed "acceptable" because the constituents are not white or wealthy. In Syracuse, we've seen politicians cozy with developers; commercial development prioritized over community needs; poor engineering of sewage treatment plants (ultimately defeated by community resistance); and we could see a shift in political power towards the whiter, wealthier suburbs with the proposed municipal consolidation.

Elites claim that austerity measures are necessary and that deregulation is needed to promote economic development and create jobs. The harms resulting from these policies are



Corrosive water from the Flint River caused aging pipes to leach lead into drinking water, leading to a severe increase in lead poisoning. Photo: Siddhartha Roy/FlintWaterStudy.org.

presented as a shared sacrifice, but that is a lie. These harms are not distributed evenly among all communities. In Syracuse, as in Flint or anywhere in the capitalist world, communities with less power bear the brunt of any environmental damage and subsequent threats to health. Far from addressing poverty and racism, decisions that compromise health protections exacerbate economic and racial injustices. ♻️

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Lake Not Yet Clean, from page 1

Honeywell is spending millions to encourage us to not notice the industrial pollution they're leaving behind when their "remedy" is "complete." The more they can convince the public the lake is "restored," the better able they are to diminish their legal liability for the historical and future loss of use of the lake. Keep this in mind when viewing their slick public relations campaigns.

More waste needs to be removed

Honeywell is leaving over 9.5 million cubic yards of waste on the lake bottom. These wastes include mercury, dioxins, furans, hexachlorobenzene, toluene, xylene, PCBs, and petroleum products that were dumped directly in the lake over the course of the last century. Only the top 6.5 feet (on average) were dredged in the recent "cleanup." Some areas were capped with layers of sand while others were not capped at all, relying on sediment from Onondaga Creek to "naturally" cover up the pollution. Honeywell is leaving our community with a hazardous waste landfill at the bottom of the lake, one that cannot be easily monitored or repaired.

When the "cleanup" plans were announced in 2005, the Onondaga Nation and its scientists pointed out that this design dooms the lake to a future of pollution. Mercury and other heavy metals do not biodegrade—they will always be at the bottom of the lake. Further, they predicted the cap would fail, and where it would do so. And they were right.

We only know about the cap failure because the Onondaga Nation's legal team found information years later and submitted a Freedom of Information Act request. Nearly four years after the first of the three known failures, this information finally became public knowledge on January 28, 2016.

It leaves us with many questions. Why wasn't the public told of this significant failure of the "remedy"? How can we expect the cap to maintain its integrity on top of a "black goo, the consistency of mayo," as workers describe the waste? And how will we know when it fails again? The NY Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), which has gotten cozy with Honeywell over the years while supposedly looking out for the interests of the public, needs to require more waste to be removed. When the cap fails, the remedy fails.

Will we ever be able to eat the fish?

The primary way humans are exposed to the toxins in the bottom of the lake is through eating the fish. When the cap fails, mercury and other pollutants become accessible to the organisms fish eat, thereby becoming part of the food chain. If we are to be left with a capped toxic waste landfill in the lake's bottom, there must be regular, independent monitoring and greater transparency—we need to know when the cap fails again. We need to know when the barrier wall fails, when the groundwater pumping and treatment facilities that must operate in perpetuity fail, so we can demand accountability from Honeywell.

The mercury levels in the fish are still too high for anyone to eat, although adult men may eat one meal of certain kinds of fish once a month. But we are getting mixed messages. Eager

to encourage more tourism, Onondaga County promotes sport-fishing on Onondaga Lake. There are no signs informing people to not eat the fish. As a result, more and more people are being observed fishing with buckets to take the fish home. And of course, eagles can't read.

Is it a park or a wastebed?

Another place to be wary of exposure to toxins is on Wastebeds 1–8, now home to the new section of the West Shore Trail and the Amphitheater. Onondaga County and the DEC allowed for only six inches of mulch to cover the waste in places where they do not expect people to go—such as wooded areas. Has anyone in the county government ever been to an outdoor concert? People go in the woods all the time. Have you ever tried to keep children on a path? If it's not safe to go off the trail, there shouldn't be a trail there yet.

Further, a short split-rail fence is the only deterrent between the "lawn" seating at the amphitheater and a large open space that entices people to play frisbee—which happens to be the Crucible landfill area, an area which has had no further remediation. Onondaga County needs to stop putting people at risk. More waste needs to be removed.

Onondaga Lake needs more advocates

The Peace Council's Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation (NOON) led the charge against the amphitheater last year only to lose by one vote. However, there is much we can still do. We are building a movement of advocates for the lake, developing creative ways to share what we know and demand a better future for Onondaga Lake. Follow A Better Future for Onondaga Lake and NOON on Facebook and by e-mail to stay informed, and watch for a forthcoming petition. (To sign up for NOON's low volume e-announcement list, go to peacecouncil.net/stay-in-touch.)

As elders of many traditions teach us, we are here on earth to be in relationship with each other and the plants, animals, trees, birds and waters that sustain and support life. Onondaga Lake needs us to pay attention, to engage with it in safe ways, to listen to what it needs. Walk the trails. Go out on a boat. Sit and listen. Go to meetings like the Onondaga Lake Watershed Partnership (olwp.org), and ask hard questions. Observe what's going on—and share your observations with friends, family, and with A Better Future for Onondaga Lake.

Onondaga County and Honeywell have had control over the messaging and plans for the future of Onondaga Lake for too long. It is time for all of us to renew our relationship with Onondaga Lake, and each other. It is our responsibility. ♻️

Lindsay is the Director of Creating Change Consulting and a longtime member of Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation. She recently returned home to Syracuse to continue her work for environmental justice after achieving her Masters of Environmental Law and Policy at Vermont Law School. Follow her on Twitter @careoftheearth.



MARY ROACH

lectures.syr.edu

In her latest rollicking foray into taboo, icky and underappreciated aspects of the human body, 2013's "Gulp: Adventures on the Alimentary Canal," Mary Roach takes readers on a wild ride down the alimentary canal and zips off in whatever direction her ardor for research and irrepressible instinct for the wonderfully weird lead her. It's the latest in a long line of New York Times bestsellers that includes "Packing for Mars: The Curious Science of Life in the Void" (2010), "Bonk: The Curious Coupling of Science and Sex" (2008) and "Spook: Science Tackles the Afterlife" (2005). Her approach is grounded in science, but with a fascination with what we may find disgusting and the horrifying things we do to ourselves. For her University Lectures appearance, Roach will share the stage with SU biology professor Sandra Hewett for an informal conversational dialogue.

Mary Roach

"GULP: ADVENTURES ON THE ALIMENTARY CANAL"

Tuesday, March 29, 2016

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UNDOCUBLACK: A MOVEMENT RISING

Aly Wane

I still remember it very clearly, the wound in the stomach, the stab in the heart. I was watching television with my then-girlfriend when the verdict came in. George Zimmerman, the man who shot and killed Trayvon Martin, was acquitted of the murder. I actually laughed in disbelief, as if someone had told me a particularly absurd joke. Then I changed the channel to a sitcom, because I was not ready to process this. I wanted to retreat into myself. I wanted desperately to *NOT* think about the implications of this.

Then, in the middle of the night, I woke up and started crying. I cried like I hadn't in years, thinking not only of Trayvon and his poor family, but also of my young niece and nephew who are of mixed race. I remembered all of the times I had been profiled and stopped by the cops as a Black man, and I allowed myself to feel the combination of anger and deep sorrow that comes with acknowledging that, despite all of these years, it is still incredibly tough to be a Black person in the United States.

The twist of course, is that I am an undocumented Black man from Senegal. I am not a citizen, yet the death of Trayvon and the subsequent acquittal of his killer hit me personally. That is, because I know that to be Black in this country is to be automatically considered "suspicious" or "dangerous" regardless of national origin. In many ways, as an immigrant, I had to learn

what it meant to be "Black" in the specific context of the United States of America, a country that was explicitly founded on White Supremacy, that incarcerates Black people at an unconscionable rate, and in which it is still important to affirm that "Black Lives Matter" because this simple truth is not a given.

As Black Undocumented folks, we are often an invisibilized species, a kind of "activist unicorn." In migrants' rights spaces, Latino voices are elevated. In the context of the Black Lives Matter movement, there is little room to share our stories of struggling with an immigration system whose injustices parallel and actually work in concert with the broader prison industrial complex. Yet, we matter deeply because our struggles are interconnected, and we can help to expose some of the deeper systemic inequities in this country. To wit, the same corporations (like the Corrections Corporation of America and the GEO group, just to name two) that have actively worked to make a profit from the incarceration of mostly poor Black and Latino youth in the name of fighting the bogus "War on Drugs," also openly indicated that, as the "War on Terror" took off, they were going to consider "illegal immigrants" as their new cash cows. As such, they helped push through (and sometimes actually wrote) anti-immigration legislation like Arizona's notoriously racist SB 1070 which mandated that police officers arrest anyone "deemed suspicious enough to look like an illegal immigrant."

Some of us are challenging our invisibility and are starting to create safe spaces where we can both heal and organize together. As such, it was my great pleasure to participate in this country's first "UndocuBlack" convening early this year in Florida. Organized by Undocumented Black folks along with organizations like the Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI), it was a space of liberation, education, and healing. We came from many countries: Senegal (my own), Nigeria, and Jamaica, amongst many others; however, we all shared similar painful stories of having the dual burden of challenging both this country's immigration system and the systemic racism which still affects people of color in 2016. Many of us shared very similar analyses: for example, many of us are skeptical of the current "immigration reform" movement which doesn't sufficiently recognize that the current immigration system is not just broken, but actually works quite well to hide the inequities of capitalism by controlling migrant labor. Also, we all understood that mere citizenship would not shield us from the experience of being Black in the US. Trayvon, along with countless others, like Eric Garner and Sandra Bland, are our brothers and sisters because, though they may be citizens, they are Black first, just like us.

As UndocuBlack folks, we are an important political force because the struggle for our rights is the struggle to make this country live up to its ideals—a country where immigrants are welcome and where people of all races can live in freedom and equality. If we survive, dear reader, you survive. Join us in this fight. 🌱



A few key organizers of the UndocuBlack conference. From left to right, Yannick Diouf, Jamie Richards, Opal Tometi (co-founder of BLM), and Jonathan Jayes Green. Photo: Opal Tometi.

Aly is a World Citizen originally born in Senegal. He is on the SPC Steering Committee. Attend his lecture "Towards a Global Understanding of Citizenship: Undocumented and Unafraid" April 24, 3pm at the Westcott Community Center.

MEXICO: TOO CLOSE TO THE USA?

Ed Kinane and Ann Tiffany

This past November, during its 25th annual convergence at Ft. Benning, Georgia, Roy Bourgeois of School of the Americas (SOA) Watch made a momentous announcement. In 2016 this event will instead be held in early October in Nogales, Arizona—divided from Nogales, Mexico by security forces and barbed wire-topped walls.

Puzzled at first by the move, we've become keenly aware that there's much more we need to learn about this neighbor with whom the US shares a nearly 2000 mile-long border. So, in January we joined one of several Witness for Peace delegations to Mexico this year. These low-cost, no-frills delegations—our's cost \$1100 + airfare—seek to raise gringo consciousness about the *coyuntura*, the conjuncture of economic, military and geopolitical forces shaping Latin American reality.

WFP is a nationwide grassroots organization that since the early eighties has been working to expose US hegemony in Latin America and render US policy there more humane and neighborly. Our delegation focused on the militarization of Mexican police and the criminalization of social movements. As activists ourselves who have had brushes with militarized police and who have been incarcerated for our activism, that theme struck a chord.

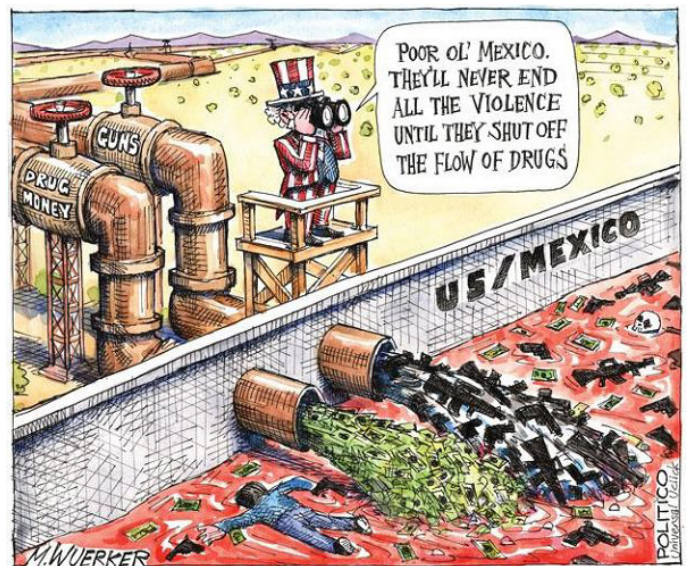
Casa de los Amigos, a Quaker house of hospitality in Mexico City near the Monument to the Revolution, served as the base for our 17-member delegation. Throughout the delegation we met with a rich array of journalists, former prisoners, relatives of the disappeared, human rights monitors, indigenous and emigrant rights activists. We also had presentations by attorney and professor Camilio Perez Bustillo, anthropologist and political journalist Gilberto y Rivas, and author Dawn Paley (*Drug War Capitalism*).

One day we had lunch at *Tochan*, a safe house providing longer-term shelter for those mostly bound for the US seeking official status or a humanitarian visa. *Tochan* depends a lot on teachers and students from the National University of Mexico (UNAM) for volunteers and financing.

As we were departing, two young men from the house came out to our van to sing us a song they had written about their dangerous refugee lives.

On another day we met with *Comite Cerezo* at UNAM. The Committee works with victims (including relatives) of arbitrary detention, extrajudicial killing, and forced disappearance. UNAM, with over 300,000 students, may be the Spanish-speaking world's most prominent university. Its buildings are covered with striking murals, some several stories high. As with many countries' public universities, UNAM is tuition is free.

After a week in the capital we traveled seven hours by charter bus along an Interstate 81-like toll road, through the sierra to



2011 Matt Wuerker. Published originally at politico.com

the restive and largely indigenous southern state of Oaxaca. One day we hiked all over Monte Alban, the ancient and partially reconstructed mountaintop city overlooking the valley of Oaxaca. Monte Alban, with its monumental pyramids, was founded 2,500 years ago by the ancestors of the Zapotecs. Our guide told us that, as with Mexico's lucrative oil industry, this World Heritage site is threatened by privatization.

Oaxaca City itself draws both Mexican and international tourists. Oaxaca's wonderful food, colonial architecture, indigenous markets and crafts, intriguing art galleries, bookstores, sidewalk cafes, and music on the *zocalo* (main plaza) are balm to the soul. But, given Oaxaca's history of popular resistance, police in twos and threes patrol on foot. And trios of soldiers with automatic weapons roam the city in the back of pick-ups.

A Fatal Embrace

Thanks to this trip we've come to see that Mexico is more deeply embroiled in US imperial politics than we knew. Since 2007 Mexico, a nation of over 120 million, has endured over 150,000 killings and 25,000 disappearances (UN High Commission of Human Rights). Some say Mexico is the world's third largest killing field.

While under-publicized in the US, the US is over-implicated in this grim picture:

- US (and Canadian) corporations seek to clear people from communally-held indigenous land and to impose large-scale infrastructure (mines, highways, airports, even wind energy projects) to extract resources. That agenda also includes overhauling Mexico's legal system to better mesh with corporately-subservient US law.
- The impunity and extreme corruption of Mexican government, military and law enforcement is abetted by the US. (Of course many US politicians are also bought by corporate donors. But—pot calling the kettle black—we habitually describe other political systems as “corrupt,” implicitly and invidiously contrasting them to the more abstract corruption [campaign finance for example] prevailing here in the US.)

- The US is determined to have its Mexican client stanch US-bound emigration. This means Central American refugees fleeing violence and displacement are much more likely in Mexico to be exploited or even disappeared. We were told mass graves are being discovered along the perilous routes to *El Norte*. The 2008 US-financed Merida Initiative (see below) provides, among other things, for the militarization of Mexico's *southern* border to deter these undocumented refugees.

- There's an open faucet of illicit drugs flowing out of Mexico to Yankee consumers. Several times we were told this couldn't happen without official—both Mexican and US—complicity. Drug cartels easily acquire weapons directly from private US dealers and indirectly from US agencies. Both the US and Mexican media use these same cartels as handy scapegoats for the considerable non-drug related violence perpetrated by the police, the military and the paramilitary.

- On January 1, 1994, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) took effect and, in response, the mostly nonviolent indigenous Zapatistas rose up in Chiapas, Mexico. From that date until 2008, the US provided Mexico with over \$60 million in military aid annually. Between 2008 and the end of 2014 such aid totaled over \$2.3 billion, largely spent in the US on US companies and contractors.

- Since 1994, US training of Mexican military in “anti-insurgency” tactics—i.e. armed repression—has surged within Mexico. The training of Mexican military also surged at the Pentagon's School of

the Americas (a.k.a. “the school of torture” and rebranded in 2001 as the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation [WHINSEC]). Colombia and Israel also provide such training.

- US corporations have connived to both heavily arm our Mexican client and make it more hospitable to Yankee investment. The Merida Initiative, a Plan Colombia clone, sometimes called “NAFTA-plus,” fosters such investment and the privatization of Mexico's national patrimony.

These corporations use local proxies to do their dirty work, whether they be police, uniformed military or paramilitary (whose shape-shifting personnel are sometimes interchangeable). This state terrorism seeks to deter indigenous and other oppressed and disenfranchised people from resisting encroachment on their land and on their human rights. The terrorism of course is also designed to deter popular resistance to privatization.

Our two weeks in Mexico recalled the similar repression we had seen elsewhere in Latin America. But before this delegation we only could speculate about the parallel and kindred realities just beyond our border. Thanks to our time outside the US bubble, on October 7–9 when we'll be in Nogales with SOA Watch, we'll have a heightened awareness of all that's at stake. ♪

Ann and Ed are social justice activists based in Syracuse who have encountered the US empire in Colombia, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala and Haiti.

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syracusecommunitychoir.org



SARAH KOENIG

lectures.syr.edu

Launched in 2014, Serial became the fastest podcast to reach five million downloads in iTunes history. The first season of the podcast presented a 12-part series on one legal case, captivating an audience that downloaded the episodes more than 100 million. In her live presentation, Sarah Koenig takes the audience backstage in this cultural phenomenon, using some of her favorite tape to narrate personal stories about the ups and downs of creating a new form of modern storytelling.

Sarah Koenig
BINGE-WORTHY JOURNALISM:
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LIFE IN OCCUPIED PALESTINE: PERSONAL ACCOUNTS

On April 13 from 7 to 9pm at ArtRage (505 Hawley Ave.), the Justice for Palestine committee will sponsor a one-woman drama about life in occupied Palestine and a talk by Palestinian human rights lawyer and artist Ahmed Hmeedat. Refreshments will be served. Contact Ursula.

STOP REPRESSIVE NYS LEGISLATION

Bills have been introduced in the NYS Legislature to punish people, companies and non-profit organizations that support boycotting Israel to protest Israel's oppression of the Palestinian people. These bills are unconstitutional and parallel the notorious 1950s McCarthyite policing of people's political beliefs. In January, members of the Justice for Palestine committee met with Syracuse-area Assembly members to share our opposition to these bills. Please contact your state Assembly members and ask them to oppose this reactionary bill. Read more at peacecouncil.net/BDS. It's urgent to take action to oppose this repressive legislation.

FIGHTING MILITARISM IN CNY

SPC has signed on to a statewide campaign spearheaded by the War Resisters League to shut down the New York Tactical Officers Association Conference scheduled for April 26–28 in Verona, NY.

NYTOAC plays on a growing culture of fear and hate by featuring as its keynote speaker Ryan Mauro of Clarion Project, which defends the profiling and surveillance of Muslim-Americans and provided the NYPD with its notoriously Islamophobic "training" film *The Third Jihad*. NYTOAC's weapons expo features over 150 vendors showcasing their latest products, with companies from around the world hawking the military-grade equipment used during the 100+ SWAT deployments each day across the US. Sign the petition to shut down the NYTOAC conference by visiting peacecouncil.net.

YOUTH PEACE AWARD 2016

Do you know a young person who has been involved in activities working for peace and justice to better our community and world? SPC's Nuclear-Free World committee recognizes young peace activists and is looking for Onondaga County high school students who have shown a devotion to peace, justice, and protecting the environment. Award winners will be recognized at a special event in the late spring. Applications are due by **May 1, 2016**. Learn more by contacting Margrit at mdiehl1@twcny.rr.com or peacecouncil.net/youthaward.

WAR IS A LIE AUTHOR TO SPEAK

Organizer and blogger David Swanson will speak in Syracuse on **Monday, April 25 at 7pm** at ArtRage Gallery to celebrate the publication of the second edition of his book, *War Is a Lie*. His goal is to abolish the institution of war.

David is an extraordinarily energetic and engaging speaker. He is the host of *Talk Nation Radio* (having recently interviewed Hancock drone resister Mary Anne Grady Flores from jail), the author of three other books on ending war, the campaign coordinator of Roots Action (rootsaction.org), and is on the coordinating committee of World Beyond War (worldbeyondwar.org). Check out his blogs at davidswanson.org and warisacrime.org.

AFRICAN-AMERICANS AGAINST THE BOMB

Syracuse-born author and political commentator Vincent Intondi, author of the book *African-Americans Against the Bomb: Nuclear Weapons, Colonialism, and the Black Freedom Movement*, will be in Syracuse in April. SPC's Nuclear Free World committee will host a book talk and signing at Barnes and Noble (3454 Erie Blvd E.) on **Thursday, April 14 at 7pm** and a talk at ArtRage Gallery (505 Hawley Ave.) **Friday, April 15 at 7pm**. Please join us to hear Intondi's unique historical insights on the contributions of black activists to the peace and nuclear disarmament movements.



Rita Gabbacia, right, made friends everywhere, in spite of language barriers. In 2002 Rita joined the annual Syracuse-Estancia Sister Community delegation to El Salvador. Photo: Shirley Novak.

RITA GABBACCIA PRESENTÉ

Years ago Rita Gabbacia moved to Syracuse after the death of her partner in marriage, stepping out of some long-held roles and beginning a new season in her life. She joined a socially-minded church and participated in the resettlement of Haitian refugees seeking asylum in Syracuse. She moved from helper to advocate to friend of that community which lasted until the day she died. This experience opened a door to a deeper understanding of social justice in the world. Both her interests and her friendships expanded to address injustices in Mexico and Latin America. She became a friend of the Syracuse Peace Council and an ally of many people working for peace and justice in Central New York.

Rita engaged with some of the great social issues of our time—she travelled to Chiapas, Mexico with Witness for Peace and worked vigorously with the CNY Caribbean-Latin American Coalition and the Syracuse Abolitionists to close the School of the Americas (WHINSIC). She wrote plays that she hoped would bring these issues to a wider audience.

There were no ego-drama issues with Rita. Instead, she had a hungry openness to new possibilities for witness, a deep willingness to collaborate, recognizing that relationship-building and social justice go hand in hand. We at SPC miss her deeply and celebrate her life.

continued on next page

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WEAPONIZED DRONE RESISTANCE STRONG

Mary Anne Grady Flores released from jail. After completing 49 days in the Jamesville jail, Hancock drone resister Mary Anne Grady Flores was released on March 7 pending the NYS Court of Appeals decision on whether it will consider her case. Her case hinges on the validity of the order of protection granted to Colonel Evans of Hancock Air Base. Orders of protection are generally issued to protect vulnerable people from domestic violence; she had been arrested for ostensibly violating this order while standing in the road outside the base and photographing peaceful drone protesters. She had been sentenced to six months.

Mary Anne sent two letters from jail. Read them at peacecouncil.net.

Hancock 31 trials are finally over. The last of the Hancock 31 drone resisters have been tried, three years after their nonviolent civil resistance action. Mary Loehr and Cynthia Banas took pleas and Harry Murray went to trial and was found guilty of trespassing. Harry's sentencing was March 10; he received a conditional discharge and a fine and surcharge totaling \$325.

Harry's powerful sentencing statement is at peacecouncil.net. He challenged the judge to engage in dialogue, and the judge did. The video is a must-watch. We'll announce via the spcannouncements listserv when it's up (to sign up for our



Ed Kinane, Mary Anne Grady Flores and Harry Murray at a news conference on March 10, before Harry's sentencing. Photo: Carol Baum

low-volume listserv, go to peacecouncil.net/stay-in-touch or contact Carol).

Upstate NYers will soon go to Creech Air Force Base in Nevada. At the end of March there will be a major protest at Creech Air Force Base, outside Las Vegas, Nevada. Creech AFB was the first US base to carry out remotely controlled assassinations using the MQ-1 Predator drones and is a major center of drone operations in the US. SPC staff organizer Carol Baum and Upstate Coalition member Peg Gefell will join the protest and represent anti-drone activism in Central New York.

STREET HEAT

At least monthly since 2010 we have been demonstrating outside Hancock Air Base to call for an end to the illegal and immoral killing of human beings by the weaponized Reaper drone. Weekly on Tuesdays and Saturdays we've been hitting the streets to call for an end to militarism dominating US foreign policy. We want Hancock base personnel to rethink their role in that killing machine, and we wish to remind the public of all the killing in our name. Please join us as often as you can.

Tuesdays: 4:15–5pm

April 5 – Hancock Air Base entrance (E. Molloy Rd., btw. Thompson & Townline Rds.)

April 12 – Adams & Almond Streets

April 19 – Hancock Air Base entrance

April 26 – Adams & Almond Streets

Saturdays: 9–10am

Regional Market main entrance (Park St.)

Contact Ed or Ann, 315-478-4571.



Some of the Street Heat crew outside Hancock Air Base in March. Photo: Ann Tiffany.

NEIGHBORS OF THE ONONDAGA NATION WORKS FOR THE LONG HAUL

Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation (NOON) has been educating ourselves and our neighbors for over 15 years. We've had moments of high activity such as the two Onondaga Land Rights series, organizing in support of court hearings, and the Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign. Other times activity has been less visible, but we trust that our persistent educational work—through our website, e-newsletter, tabling at events and the media—steadily builds solidarity and works toward justice and protecting

Mother Earth. We've learned from our friends at Onondaga that our work is a marathon, not a sprint, and like them, we're here for the long-term.

Recently we screened the film *The Doctrine of Discovery, Unmasking the Domination Code* to a packed house of 70 people. Betty Lyons (American Indian Law Alliance) and Joe Heath (General Counsel for the Onondaga Nation) both spoke afterwards. To arrange a free showing of the film, contact Carol.

OTHER VOICES, OTHER CHOICES ON CABLE

Other Voices, Other Choices, created by Wilton Vought, is a blog, a YouTube channel, and an hour-long cable access TV series promoting non-corporate political, social, economic, and environmental news and commentary. It airs primarily throughout NYS and has recently come to Syracuse under the sponsorship of SPC. Catch it Thursdays at 7:30pm on Time Warner Cable Channel 98. For upcoming programs, see othervoicesotherchoices.blogspot.com/p/broadcast.html.

SPC JOINS URBAN JOBS TASK FORCE

SPC has recently become a member of the Urban Jobs Task Force. UJTF is a collaboration of groups and citizens dedicated to creating a local economy that provides good jobs and job training for local communities of color and low income families, and more opportunities for local woman- and minority-owned enterprises. Recently UJTF has been focused on the potential development of Syracuse's Inner Harbor, demanding jobs for city residents and protesting a tax deal made with the developer. We at SPC look forward to working more closely with them.

Right: Urban Jobs Task Force at the Inner Harbor worksite, protesting the tax deal offered to the developer and demanding jobs for city residents. Photo: Diana Green.



POLICE OVERSIGHT NEED: SAVE THE CRB

Nationally, awareness of police brutality is at an all-time high. Yet in Syracuse, some city councilors are trying to weaken the independent entity tasked with investigating allegations of police brutality, the Citizen Review Board (CRB). At the time of writing, Councilor Steve Thompson, a former police chief, had introduced an amendment to curb the CRB's legal ability to subpoena for evidence. The CRB is responsible for validating or invalidating complaints against police officers and presenting disciplinary recommendations to the chief. The board frequently uses its subpoena power to complete investigations and occasionally must go to court. SPC is working with allies from many community groups to prevent any measures that would weaken the CRB. Visit peacecouncil.net for more information.

DANI RIPOSO PRESENTÉ

From roughly 1970 to 1975, Dani Riposo coordinated one of SPC's most successful Viet Nam era programs. The Neighborhood Discussion Program arranged over 200 events in homes across the Syracuse metropolitan area. These discussions usually included a speaker, short film (SPC had 12 films) and literature. Several times these programs led to ongoing, activist neighborhood groups. This was grassroots organizing and education at its best, and Dani managed it while raising a bunch of kids. It was amazing work.

RIP Dani and thank you,

—Dik Cool

WORK FOR PEACE AT YOUR DAY JOB!

A grassroots organization like SPC can only thrive with a grassroots base of support. If you're fortunate enough to have gainful employment in today's difficult economy or another source of consistent income, join our "Work for Peace at Your Day Job" campaign. Pledge an hour's wage to the Peace Council each month, and for that hour, wherever you are, you'll be working for an end to oil wars, an end to drone strikes, and for a world where violence and exploitation no longer exist...you'll be working for peace at your day job! Peace Council pledgers are a lifeline for our organization. Visit peacecouncil.net/dayjob or contact Ursula to join the campaign today. ☮

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MON TUES WED THURS FRI SAT SUN

MARCH 28
 3/26-4/1, "Defining I: Reflections of Identity & Adoption," art show, ArRage, 505 Hawley Ave. 218-5711, artaggallery.org.

29
 *EVERY TUES. Street Heat. 4:15-5pm. p14 for locations. Ann or Ed. 478-4571.
 *Learn about Reforming Energy Vision (REV) process, Alliance for a Green Economy. 7pm. ArRage, 505 Hawley, 480-1515.

4
 ACTS' Pre-K Expansion Task Force Mtg. 7pm. Jowonio School, 3049 E Genesee St. 416-6363, acts.cry@gmail.com.
 THRU 4/23, "As Bad as I Want to Be: Reimagining Black Womanhood," art show, CFAC, 805 E. Genesee St. 442-2230.

5
 *Street Heat 4:15-5pm. ACTS' Criminal Justice Task Force. 5:15pm. Grace Episcopal Church, 819 Madison St. 416-6363, acts.cry@gmail.com.
 Partnership for Onondaga Creek. 6pm. Brady Faith, 404 South Ave. Agyle, 478-5471.

6
 *Ground the Drones, End the Wars Meeting. 3pm. 2013 E Genesee St. 2nd Fl. Carol, 472-5478.
 "Everyone Can Sing!" workshop. 7-9pm. Grace Episcopal, 819 Madison. Karen, 428-8151.

11
 EVER MON starting 4/11. Syr. Community Choir Children's Choir. 3-5pm. 601 Allen St. 428-8151.
 Syracuse Greens Monthly Mtg. 7pm. 2013 E. Genesee St, 1st Floor. Howie, 425-1019.

12
 *Justice for Palestine Mtg. 12pm. 2013 E. Genesee St. Ursula, 472-5478.
 *NOON Steering Comm Mtg. 7-8:30pm. 2013 E Genesee St. 2nd Fl. Carol, 472-5478.
 Fix It Healthcare at the Tipping Point. film/panel. 5:30pm. 6333 Rte. 298, E. Syracuse. 727-0193, ajam179@aol.com.

13
 *Life in Occupied Palestine: Personal Accounts. 7-9pm. ArRage, 505 Hawley. Ursula, 472-5478. See p13.
 EVERY WED. Syracuse Community Choir. 7-9pm. Grace Episcopal Church, 819 Madison. 428-8151.

14
 *Book talk/signing: Vincent Intondi. African-Americans Against the Bomb. 7pm. Barnes & Noble. 3454 Erie Blvd E. Ursula, 472-5478. See p13.

15
 *Book talk/signing: Vincent Intondi. African-Americans Against the Bomb. 7pm. ArRage, 505 Hawley Ave. Ursula, 472-5478. See p13.

16
 Women of Distinction Awards Ceremony. 11am. Gage House, 210 E Genesee St. Fayetteville. foundation@maildopsyracuse.org.
 EVERY SAT. Westside Residents Coalition. 11am. 610 Gifford Street Community Garden.

17
 Democracy Awakening Rally in DC. Syracuse bus info: democracyawakening.nationbuilder.com/syracusenybus. Organized by Public Citizen, NAACP, CWA, Greenpeace USA & more.
 EVERY SUN starting April 10. "Disrupting Racism from the Inside Out" 4pm. 505 Hawley. 218-5711, artaggallery.org. Free.

18
 "People Who Came to My House" artist talk. 7pm. ArRage, 505 Hawley, 218-5711, artaggallery.org. Free.
 SUN Westside Coalition. 7pm. Brown Memorial, 228 Davis St. 476-7475.

19
 *SPC Steering Comm Mtg. 6:30-9pm. 2013 E Genesee St. 2nd Fl. Carol, 472-5478.
 ACTS' Spring Banquet. Yvstua Abdul-Qadir speaker. 6-9pm. Drumlins Country Club. 416-6363, acts-syracuse.org. \$65, reservations needed.

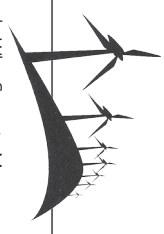
20
 Shalestock CNY Mtg. 6:15pm. Onondaga Free Library, 4840 W Seneca Trpk. Jack, 424-1454.
 Skunk City Neighborhood Assn. 6:30pm. Mundy Library, 1204 S. Geddes St. 476-7475.

21
 ArRage "What I...," film, *The Human Scale*. 6:30-8:30pm. ArRage, 505 Hawley Ave. 218-5711, artaggallery.org.
 EVERY TUES/THURS. Free High School Equivalency Prep. 6-9pm. Westcott Comm Ctr, 826 Euclid Ave. Brett, 289-9057.

22
 4/9-5/21. "People Who Came to My House: Portraits by Syracuse Area Photographers." ArRage, 505 Hawley. 218-5711, artaggallery.org.

23
 Events marked with a * are Syracuse Peace Council related events. peaceouncil.net 315-472-5478

24
 Aly Ware. "Towards a Global Understanding of Citizenship: Undocumented and Unframed." 3-4pm. Westcott Comm Center, 826 Euclid Ave. 478-8634. Eastside Neighbors Lecture Series. \$10.



COMMUNITY CALENDAR
MARCH/APRIL 2016

