

# BCA Dispatch

Newsletter of the  
Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy

May  
2003

*I pledge allegiance to the Earth  
On which I stand  
And to all living things  
One world  
One people  
Undivided  
With food, shelter and justice for all.*

—Robin Goodrow, puppeteer. [www.onegiantstep.org](http://www.onegiantstep.org)

## ALLIANCE NEWS (continued on page 8)

### Chapter Calendar

#### xxx Lethal Globalism... xxx

The Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy's next meeting will be on **Wednesday, May 21**, from **7:00 to 9:15 p.m.** at **Cambridge Friends Meeting**, 5 Longfellow Park (9 minute walk from Harvard Square T station, west on Brattle St.)

— Discussion Agenda —

#### “LETHAL NEOLIBERALISM and the WTO”

Come join two distinguished scholars on globalization—

\* **Richard Peet**, economic geographer, Clark University  
author: *Unholy Trinity: The IMF, World Bank and WTO*.  
(See excerpt, page 5) ◀

and

\* **Elaine Hartwick**, geographer, Framingham State College  
co-author with Peet: *Theories of Development*, Guilford, 1999  
Will globalization continue? What are the alternatives?

## Racism in South Africa US Media Neglect Failure of “Freedom”

by Dilip Dutt, Cambridge MA.

In one of history's bitter ironies, the country which spawned as abhorrent a system as apartheid, which legalized racism and perpetrated enormous brutalities on its indigenous population for 342 years, was chosen as the venue for the *World Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance* this past August.

While the scaffolding of apartheid is now gone, its monstrous legacy survives to this day. Despite the euphoric change of the guard in 1994, going by the mainstream papers black South Africans continue to be targets of vicious racist violence on an almost daily basis. Moreover, the media, the judiciary, the civil service, the police, and the army are still mired in blatant racism, as borne out by the S.A. Human Rights Commission.

In the latest of a series of gruesome happenings, a black boy, Tsepo Motgola, was severely beaten, shot, killed, and his body surreptitiously disposed of in a nearby lake by nine white members of a rugby club—just

(Continued on page 2 >>)



This issue features Black concerns in a world of racism, imperialism and war. Read more about Phillis Wheatley, early American author (above), in **Lester Lee's** review on page 7.

## War on Iraq:

### What Do African-Americans Feel?

Nancy Beardsley, Africa Online, 12 March 2003

NEW YORK: A new poll shows that African-Americans are more opposed to a US war with Iraq than other major ethnic group in the United States. The Pew Research Centre Survey found 44% of African Americans support military action, compared to 73% of white Americans and 67% of Hispanics. Best selling African American crime writer Walter Mosley is among those who question the need for military action. He recently published a non-fiction book called *What Next: A Memoir Toward World Peace*. Like other people in the United States, African-Americans have been listening to President Bush's charge that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein has weapons of mass destruction, and that he presents an international threat that justifies going to war.

**W**alter Mosley sees at least two important reasons why African-Americans are likely to oppose an invasion of Iraq. "Why would we want to support a war against people, when you feel that number one, in your own country, there are issues facing African-Americans which are dire and which this war has nothing to do with," he said. "And of course because there's such a disproportionate number of people of colour in the army, why would we want to send our own people over there to get killed?"

(Continued on page 2 >>)

## South African Racism (cont'd from page 1)

because the boy had strayed onto the club's premises while hunting birds with a slingshot.

According to a BBC report on July 25, "racism is now worse than ever" in South Africa. Black South Africans have never been more marginalized, excluded, and impoverished than at present, with "nearly 75 per cent of new hires being white South Africans" while whites represent only about 17 per cent of the population. The unemployment rates for the black and white—48 and 7 per cent respectively—have basically remained unchanged for the past five years.

Whites still hog the income of the nation. Only one per cent of whites are officially poor as opposed to 62 per cent of blacks. Some 60,000 white farmers still own more than 80 per cent of the best agricultural land, thanks to the abysmal failure of the World Bank's market-based land reform policy dictated to the corrupt and politically bankrupt African National Congress (ANC) government. To date, under the government's "willing buyers and willing sellers" land reform policy, less than five per cent of 30 million hectares of white-owned agricultural land—the ballyhooed goal—has been redistributed.

What moral authority does the ANC have to host a world conference on racism when black South Africans still cannot walk freely in their own land, and when black South Africans cannot get even a piece of their ancestors' land to build their houses on, or farms?

Regrettably, one seldom if ever gets to read in [The Globe] either reports or analyses of these issues, which are of paramount importance to intelligent readers who, fortunately, are not prisoners of the pervasive ghetto mentality. In your paper one hardly ever gets to know the other side of the picture in ANC-"liberated" new South Africa.

*Dilip Dutt is a former Pan African Congress anti-apartheid activist and political prisoner in South Africa. This report was written on 26 July 2001 as a letter to the Boston Globe. Since then, according to Dilip, the governing African National Congress has been busy satisfying global investors by cutting social services, flexibilizing labor, liberalizing industrial controls, privatizing the airlines, water and telephone systems, reinstating arms manufacture and sale to Middle Eastern, Israeli, Indian, and Pakistani clients.*

*Bishop Desmond Tutu has decried ANC's corruption. The government rejected the recommendations of the now-disbanded Truth & Reconciliation Commission—to pay over a 20-year period reparations of \$42,000 to each of 30,000 people (\$63 million a year) proven to have been dispossessed or tortured by the apartheid regime, with complicit South African corporations sharing the expense. Instead, the government, under pressure from IMF budgetary limits and corporate intransigence agreed to pay only \$4000 in reparations to only 7000 victims, has omitted the amount from the budget, and has been evicting those dispossessed who have become squatters.* ■

## Black Attitude on Iraq War (cont'd from page 1)

Walter Mosley invites anyone to read his book, but What Next is really a call to action for African-Americans. The author has a view of the World Trade Centre from his apartment window, and when the first plane crashed into the tower on

September 11, he heard the impact.

Later he remembered a question he'd once asked his father. "I asked him were you afraid to go to World War II? And he said, 'No, I wasn't afraid. I thought it was a war between the Germans and the Americans. But I didn't realise I was an American. I just thought I was a Negro. I figured if the Germans came up to me and said where are the Americans, I'd just point. I'd say the Americans are over there. But the Germans started shooting at me. That's when I realised I was an American.' When I saw those planes crash into the World Trade Centre, that's when I realised I was in this conflict with people in the Middle East and other places.

And what was my response? My father's response, and a million other people of his time, was the Civil Rights Movement. My response is the inverse of that. There are people around the world who don't have what I have. They don't have running water. They don't have food to eat. I have to make sure those people, mostly people of colour, around the world, are treated fairly and well," he said. And Walter Mosley believes that's the best way to change the conditions that breed terrorism. "Once that's done, the question of terrorism goes out the window," he said. "Nobody's going to support it. And the idea that we think we have to fight a war, that's not a winnable battle."

One of the ironies of the current debate is that US Secretary of State Colin Powell is an African-American who's spoken in favour of the conflict. "The intelligence case is clear that they have weapons of mass destruction of one kind or another and they are trying to develop more and develop those they do not yet have an operational capability for," said secretary Powell.

Condoleezza Rice, President Bush's National Security Adviser, is also African American and also supports the war. "It is extremely important that the Iraqi people understand that America has always stood not just for power and stability but also for values," she said. "And this is a chance for the Iraqi people to liberate themselves of oppression, and it is a chance for the region to see an example of perhaps an Iraq that is on the path to democracy." While he disagrees with them, Walter Mosley sees the prominence of those government figures, even their unpopularity in some parts of the world, as a step forward for Black America.

"You realise that the Pakistanis see Colin Powell not as a black man, but as an American," he said. "And so black people also have to see themselves as Americans. I think George Bush has given more power to black people in the bodies of Condoleezza Rice and Colin Powell than any other President ever has. And I think the impact over the years will probably be pretty good for Black America. But if Black America doesn't stand up for itself, doesn't say what they think is right in the world, then that power is useless."

Walter Mosley urges black Americans to work for peace grassroots style, by forming discussion groups on current events, by supporting public officials who work for peace, maybe even by running for office themselves. He says African Americans are especially well equipped to understand the fear and hostility on both sides of the terrorist divide. "We understand hatred and oppression by external groups whom we have to learn how to live with," he said. "And what we have to do as a group of people, is we have to identify the principles of unity that bring together the African American communities. It used to be that we had single issues—slavery, apartheid. Now there's all kinds of different people, rich, middle class, poor black people. We have black people from Africa, black people from the Caribbean, black people from America, black people from Europe. All of them see schisms in each other and there are fights. But I think there's a spine of political awareness that brings us all together. And that's what we have to identify." ■



## Alliance Derails Water Privatization Look Out Lawrence, Davis, Cancun, Miami!

The Alliance for Democracy scored an important victory in its work to stop privatization of public services and natural resources, according to **Ruth Caplan**, co-chair of AfD's campaign on Corporate Globalization & Positive Alternatives. After years of struggle by AfD, Sierra Club, and other citizen groups, US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick rejected the British trade minister's bid to allow megacorporations to take over US' and other countries' water and sewer systems for profit. At least in the current round of negotiations for extending the rules of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), water will be off the table. But others "services" such as postal systems, public schools, public health facilities, and others not yet made vulnerable are still coveted by corporations in UK, France, Germany, Netherlands, and other WTO member countries.

Foreign corporations nevertheless can bid on taking over municipal water systems in the US. The GATS agreement would go further and give foreign firms assured access and freedom from traditional regulations. The UK trade minister even requested access to US federal business loans—the same as some domestic businesses. This is to be expected under WTO pro-investor principles of "national treatment" and "[no] most favored nation".

In Massachusetts, United Water Inc, a subsidiary of the French multinational Suez, is bidding to take over the municipal water system of Lawrence MA. The mayor favors the bid as a way of escaping the task of raising large sums of money to repair the now-public system. He is loath to raise water prices, even though Lawrence's rates are below average and the city still makes a profit on water billings.

**Jonathan Leavitt** of Hands Off Our Water alerts citizens in Lawrence and their friends in Boston-Cambridge that United Water will present a contract to the city council any day now. He requests that Boston friends help in the campaign to encourage Lawrence voters to contact their city councillors. If the council does approve the contract (at present one more councillor needs to disapprove it), citizens will have 21 days to gather about 3400 resident signatures to mandate a special election which can defeat the privatization bid. To get involved email [gonzalezrose@earthlink.net](mailto:gonzalezrose@earthlink.net) or phone 978-975-2421 or 617-266-8687.

GATS, WTO, and FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas) negotiators and ministers will be met by protesters in Davis, CA (WTO agriculture and environment ministers, June 23-25); Cancun, Mexico (WTO ministers, Sept 4-11); and Miami FL (FTAA-interested ministers, Nov 20-21). Book a seat on a bus, and join the protest! Information: BOstion Fair Trade Action—call 617-576-1709 or Catherine Benedict 617-628-2928.

## No Thanks to BioTerror Lab for S. End An Open Letter to My City Councillors:

"First, do no harm." That might have been fine for Hippocrates and your family physician, but for the trustees of Boston University's medical school it may be swamped by an appetite for a

piece of the American Empire, or an incredible zeal to protect Americans from vague dangers. BU wants \$1,600 million from the Department of Homeland Security, via the Department of Health & Human Services, to build and operate a top-security "biosafety" laboratory in the South End of Boston. This lab would produce and experiment with the deadliest toxins known to germ warriors, such as ebola, marburg, lassa, machupo, encephalitis, and several other forms of hemorrhagic fever. Ostensibly the results would be used to foil terrorist attacks using such biotoxins, but in the process may inadvertently become a source of supply for terrorists, or simply another Bhopal.

The dangers are evident in events which already have infected and killed several workers in other federally funded biosafety facilities. Leaks into the community from a lower toxic facility in California were reported by Associated Press in the last *BCA Dispatch*. The obvious question is: Do we need this? How real is the bioterror threat? How effective can any biosafety defense be? Are other methods of defense more effective such as diplomatically or socially reducing terrorist motivation? How much of the "demand" for vaccines and anti-toxins is created by White House policy and media promotion, which may change after the 2004 elections? With a StarWars-like budget for the BU lab and its 4 or 5 sisters-to-be across the nation, can the normal bio-medical research establishment continue to function properly with hundreds of its best scientists and technicians diverted to "defense"?

Can the White House, which failed so spectacularly to block the September 11 attacks, and which refuses to investigate adequately, be trusted to plan a proactive bioterror defense featuring Level 4 (maximum danger) laboratories such as BU's? Or might such labs be research sites for further developing the US arsenal of deadly weapons against any challenger of US domination—a direction suggested by Vice President Dick Cheney's fascist Project for a New American Century?

**M**r./Ms. Councillor, is it true that the Boston City Council has no say in this matter? Mr. Bush, merely, cannot cut the oversight and consultative functions of elected officials, nor cut legislative investigation. BU is moving fast in this matter, and keeping silent on details. As a property owner and former resident of the South End, now living close by, I am concerned about having this facility in my environment.

Since BU is tax exempt, what fiscal benefit will there be for the city? It is the wrong thing for us and for America and the world. We should be developing biological and other agents to defeat AIDS, TB, malaria, river blindness, and other debilitating diseases of former colonies, and easing the drug patent laws, rather than invading or manipulating those countries.

Please let me know whether you are following this proposal, and what you intend to do about it. I would like to be kept abreast of developments, and to offer my help and possibly that of our Alliance chapter, as you see possibilities.

Sincerely with Aloha—

*David W. Lewit*, PhD, Co-chair of the Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy. 617-266-8687. [DLewit@igc.org](mailto:DLewit@igc.org).

Readers: To discover and contact your city councillor, tap in your (Boston) address at <http://www.cityofboston.gov/whoami/> When your city councillor's name turns up, click on it and send your message. Or phone 617.635.4635 or 617.635.4000 and ask for the name and number of your city councillor. ●

## Durban Diary: Up Close and Black at the World Conference Against Racism

by Makani Themba-Nixon, [www.seeingblack.com](http://www.seeingblack.com).

She is author of *Making Policy, Making Change: How communities are taking law into their own hands. 1999. Here are excerpts of her report from S. Africa days before the fateful 9/11.*

26 August 2001

...I'm struck by how much nation status—being from the U.S.—affects one's worldview. It's funny, I never feel very American in the United States. At home I am the perpetual foreigner. I get hassled in the customs line coming back. At my drivers' test, I, a native New Yorker with paternal lineage that dates back two centuries on these shores, was asked to produce my green card. My green card!

**H**ere in Durban, my links to the U.S. are obvious. Men comment that I walk like an American. Cab drivers ask to speak with me about America — before I even open my mouth to reveal my Harlem twang. The cultural effects of "America" on my tongue and carriage I can cop to. The hard part is facing the fact that my nation status is a privilege. Yes, a privilege that mediates my identities as a woman of African descent living in the most powerful nation on earth.

As I look out the window of my high-rise hotel, I see lots of Black folk that I feel strong kinship with but I know in many ways we are different. Fifty percent of the very poor in Durban, just beyond my hotel, are Black. There are thousands living in shacks, or under the open sky, with little to eat and even less on their backs. As a result, crime is high. The army and the police patrol the streets with M16s ostensibly to protect us from them. We are told to stay away from the townships, from shanties, from "them" so we can be safe. And I don't want to stay away. I want to be where "real people" are.

We resist the temptation to ignore the warnings after a person in our delegation narrowly escaped an attempted robbery at knifepoint in broad daylight. He was saved by a gun toting, local passerby.

The three young black men who wielded the knives weren't stealing to support a drug habit, or to buy some high priced athletic shoes, or even for fun. They were stealing to survive. It didn't matter that we were there to help make a better tomorrow. These brothers needed to eat today.

Crime and security are two of Durban's booming industries. The country of my birth plays a major role in this. And I benefit through the availability of cheap products from exploited labor, the concentration of resources in the country where I live, and the false security that I deserve to have what I have regardless of its role in creating this kind of poverty worldwide. Of course I know I'm oppressed, too. I just don't want to use it as an excuse for any role I might play in the oppression of others...

28 August 2001

...The joking is almost as relentless as the work. I've come to see humor as one among the many common bonds we share as a people. There's also that "sister thing" — the flippant roll of the neck with our hands to the hip — I've learned that, too, is universal. Whether the sister is from Lagos, London or Louisiana, she's got the head thing going on.

Of course, there are many things that make us different, that challenge our work together. There are times when we black folk from the U.S. get a little pushy and have less patience for our brothers and sisters with less linear approaches to the work. We understand that, for many reasons, this unity is wrought by ignoring other differences just beneath the surface. But right now, I don't care. I just enjoy it...

29 August 2001



...It is far easier to organize against a common enemy than for a common vision. This struggle of transforming rights into reality, into what some organizers call nation building is clearly a whole 'nother party. This all makes the past a much more comfortable place to be.

I certainly can't judge. We in the U.S. have a similar attachment to the 60s. It was when the "real" movement was going on and the revolution was just around the

corner. There was the passage of watershed legislation that gave us new legal handles to assert our rights. Jim Crow cars were a thing of the past and anyone who could afford a first class ticket could get a seat in the bosses' car. The bottom line is that even with all the rights in the world, without the resources to make them concrete it's all just paper. It's why few constitutions guarantee the right to food and shelter — the right to have as much freedom as you can buy is an easy promise...

...In the U.S., black people have never held state power but the truth is that we have done relatively little with what we do control. When people talk about "the movement" with few exceptions they are reminiscing. Few organizations have a vision of what they are for, some picture, some notion of what it means to have strong and vibrant communities — and what must change to make it so. To do so would mean letting go of the uneasy peace between an ambiguous future and the comfort of the past...

2 September 2001

...These last twelve days have shown me that, at the core, there's much unity among us NGOs. It sure didn't start out that way. We all had some stretching to do. Two years ago, few of us knew the oppression facing the 250 million Dalits in India. We never heard of the Bhutanese or contemporary slavery in Niger. Many of our colleagues came into this process unsure about reparations for slavery and colonialism and a significant number had little clue about present day racism in the U.S. By the time the final plenary session closed at nearly 1 a.m. this morning, most of these issues were not only understood — they received unanimous support...

...Most of us agree that there are central issues of injustice—poverty, racism, sexism, marginalization among them; that globalization has meant a great deal of escalation of these and other challenges; and that we must take on both the market and our governments if we hope to make a difference...

...I will never forget the time I unwittingly spent as a colored person here in Durban. End of formal apartheid notwithstanding, this is still a place where one is pegged by their surname. In South Africa, I'm a walking contradiction — an African American woman with long dark hair, a sort of butterscotch brown and with a Zulu last name. One hotel clerk was so undone he blurted out in disbelief, "It cannot be. Themba is a black name."

And I am a black woman, I say and say again trying to ignore the way these words dig at these old wounds I carry. I



I still hate when Black folk ask me what I'm mixed with. I pull myself together and find some patience for those who "don't know". I have learned repeatedly that I am surely among them.

These last twelve days offered yet more evidence that mainstream news media is more interested in covering the same old hopelessness than new stories of hope. The debate related to Israel's treatment of the Palestinian people dominated coverage. A black woman was among the network reporters refusing to attend a press conference less than 20 feet away on reparations in order to film yet another hour of verbal conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.

The press also mostly ignored the quiet group of rabbis that protested along side Palestinians in their effort to forge new definitions of Zionism. Perhaps most importantly, they missed the truth – and given the fact that mainstream media outlets conducted few interviews with attendees, it didn't seem as if the truth really mattered to them all that much. It all has made me even more grateful for the ethnic and independent media that worked tirelessly to tell the whole story of the gathering.

I take one more careful walk along the beach for the little girl in me that wants to cry for all the times I have to explain my blackness, to assert my membership in the clan. The sand between my toes brings me back to the moments of laughter, camaraderie and victory that have punctuated this arduous process. Whatever our "leaders" and the mainstream press do from here on in, the people have spoken. That's the music I'll fly home by. ✈

## Does the WTO Have to Go?

### Excerpt—Preview of Peet's New Book

by Richard Peet, Clark U. geographer, our May speaker

The WTO is an institution formed through the interactions of governments under certain conditions. Governments meet at the WTO through their trade ministers, representatives, and delegates under specific circumstances—to discuss trade issues—with declared immediate objectives in mind—to reduce trade barriers, settle trade-related problems—and with an overall purpose—to increase the volume of trade, increase production and raise incomes. Even more than an institution, the WTO is a place, or a restrictive discursive space, where inter-governmental meetings occur, experts congregate, expertise is employed, and decisions are made within a common understanding expressed in a specific, political-economic language. In other words, the WTO is an agent dominating a center of hegemonic power, as outlined in chapter 1, part of a broader complex of institutions, mostly UN-connected, in Geneva, and ensconced within a broader geo-economic regime.

In the dialogue that occurs within this power-space, economies are viewed from entrenched positions, and discourse is contained within limits on what is taken seriously, as part of a "constructive dialogue," and what is regarded as irrelevant, frivolous or "not constructive." The approved dialogue now centers on free trade, within an overall neoliberal conception of economic growth, justified through the universalistic belief that everyone benefits (mainly as consumers) from trade and growth. The WTO itself says that it serves the interests of all equally in that free trade produces economic growth which produces higher incomes for everyone. But when everyone is equal, we suspect that some might be more equal than others.

In thinking about this, consider the items whose international movements are "liberalized" under WTO agreements—commodities, services and the capital associated with their production. Who produces these? Corporations. And what movements are not covered? Workers wishing to move to areas where wages are higher or working conditions better. Consider too that issues of worker rights can hardly be raised, let alone discussed within the WTO, and that the institution's record on the regulation of environmental relations belies its rhetoric on multilateral agreements. Consider as well that intellectual "property" rights apply mostly to multinational corporations, not singers desperate for the revenues lost by pirated CDs. And remember the influence of the investment bankers on trade missions.

From these and the many other considerations arising from our detailed examination, we conclude that the WTO acts in the interest of multinational corporations in creating a global economic space freed from governmental regulations that might otherwise restrict the movement of capital. We find that governments interact within the WTO under conditions that limit discussion to an approved set of topics using the language of neoliberal optimism. Furthermore, the WTO itself, as an organization, is active in the formation, promotion and protection of the free trade component of an overall neoliberal ideology. It promotes the extension of its own powers of regulation into vast new areas, like intellectual property rights, that are governed in the most undemocratic of ways – within closed rooms, where an already committed expertise rationalizes foregone conclusions. And further, under the directorship of Michael ("Mike") Moore, the WTO turned into a nasty, reactionary organization, employing personal attacks on those who disagreed with its positions and tactics. The center of power around trade is a focal point of controversy. As a crucial dimension of contemporary economic life, trade is an activity that can be used for political and social change. This need not be "reform" that benefits corporations. Trade is a discursive space that has to be opened to a broader, democratic process, where social movements represented by highly informed NGOs are active agents, and alternative conceptions like fair trade, under which workers get a living wage and environments are actively protected, contend with equal force. Unless these kinds of changes are made the WTO is a dangerous new form of global state... that has to go!

—from *Unholy Trinity: the IMF, World Bank, and WTO*. Zed Books, 2003 (July), ch 5.



"Don't think of them as terrorist states. Think of them as terrorist markets."

## Iraq's Historic Documents Torched Who has hired this manic destruction?

by Robert Fisk, The Independent (UK), 17 April 2003 (excerpt)

There is something dangerous – and deeply disturbing – about the crowds setting light to the buildings of Baghdad, including the great libraries and state archives. For they are not looters. The looters come first. The arsonists turn up later, often in blue-and-white buses. I followed one after its passengers had set the Ministry of Trade on fire and it sped out of town.

The official US line on all this is that the looting is revenge – an explanation that is growing very thin – and that the fires are started by "remnants of Saddam's regime", the same "criminal elements", no doubt, who feature in the marines' curfew orders. But people in Baghdad don't believe Saddam's former supporters are starting these fires. And neither do I.

The looters make money from their rampages but the arsonists have to be paid. The passengers in those buses are clearly being directed to their targets. If Saddam had pre-paid them, they wouldn't start the fires. The moment he disappeared, they would have pocketed the money and forgotten the whole project.

So who are they, this army of arsonists? I recognized one the other day, a middle-aged, unshaven man in a red T-shirt, and the second time he saw me he pointed a Kalashnikov at me. What was he frightened of? Who was he working for? In whose interest is it to destroy the entire physical infrastructure of the state, with its cultural heritage? Why didn't the Americans stop this?

As I said, something is going terribly wrong in Baghdad and something is going on which demands that serious questions be asked of the United States government. Why, for example, did Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, claim last week that there was no widespread looting or destruction in Baghdad? His statement was a lie. But why did he make it?

The Americans say they don't have enough troops to control the fires. This is also untrue. If they don't, what are the hundreds of soldiers deployed in the gardens of the old Iran-Iraq war memorial doing all day? Or the hundreds camped in the rose gardens of the President Palace?

So the people of Baghdad are asking who is behind the destruction of their cultural heritage: the looting of the archaeological treasures from the national museum; the burning of the entire Ottoman, Royal and State archives; the Koranic library; and the vast infrastructure of the nation we claim we are going to create for them.

Why, they ask, do they still have no electricity and no water? In whose interest is it for Iraq to be deconstructed, divided, burnt, de-historied, destroyed? Why are they issued with orders for a curfew by their so-called liberators?

And it's not just the people of Baghdad, but the Shias of the city of Najaf and of Nasiriyah – where 20,000 protested at America's first attempt to put together a puppet government on Wednesday – who are asking these questions. Now there is looting in Mosul where thousands reportedly set fire to the pro-American governor's car after he promised US help in restoring electricity.

It's easy for a reporter to predict doom, especially after a brutal war that lacked all international legitimacy. But

catastrophe usually waits for optimists in the Middle East, especially for false optimists who invade oil-rich nations with ideological excuses and high-flown moral claims and accusations, such as weapons of mass destruction, which are still unproved. So I'll make an awful prediction. That America's war of "liberation" is over. Iraq's war of liberation from the Americans is about to begin. In other words, the real and frightening story starts now.

### LETTERS

*BCA Dispatch's March issue carried an excerpt from H. Bruce Franklin's book about the unpopularity of the war in Vietnam, and holding that the "spitting upon Viet veterans" was merely a myth to bolster belligerence. One reader takes issue:*

My husband is a Vietnam veteran who was drafted by the Army in March, 1968. In the fall of 1969, he received his orders for Vietnam and served there with the 25th Infantry for 15 months.

On his first day back in the States, he went to a pizza parlor on the edge of the Stanford University campus with two civilian friends. He was in full dress uniform, the only clothes he had. As they waited for the pizza, a half dozen young men approached him hurling anti-war epithets and spitting on him.. The date was Nov. 10, 1970, the eve of Veterans Day, and the eve of a campus protest.

My husband, unprepared for such an attack, had a choice to make. He could respond in kind, and engage in physical violence, or he could put violence behind him. He chose the latter. He took his pizza, and looking ahead to being reunited with his family, he left, determined to resume a normal life.

Each year, on Veteran's Day, he relives the pain of that experience. —S. Boni, Boston

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*The March issue also carried an editorial discussing the Cheney gang's Project for a New American Century. A reader, who is a leader of the dormant AfD chapter in the mountains of western Massachusetts, has read PNAC and responds, in part:*

...The PNAC proposes that the U.S. dominate the globe militarily, economically, and every other way. Iraq is just the beginning... Syria and Iran will be next. In the meantime, perpetual war will impoverish this country even further. The Bush budget is designed to starve publicly funded services, which will leave towns and cities no alternative but to accept privatization of their water systems, education, health care, and (who knows?) even police and fire protection.

In short... my country is just about gone. And many of us are convinced that the next election will be either "fixed" through tampering with voting machines, or, in the name of war, suspended or cancelled... I lived through the rise of the Nazi regime, and this administration is following that strategy to the letter.

...Hopes for a renewed chapter here in the Berkshires are pretty shaky. The AfD's original purpose, I fear, is now academic in light of what this government is doing behind the smokescreen of war and "liberation". You will never get rid of domination by corporations if you don't first defeat the PNAC. And PATRIOT Act II will, if passed, deprive you and me of the right to fight against both of them.

—Maryellen Lake, Chester MA

*Readers: can we help ML restart her chapter?—in numbers there is strength—and possibly new perspectives and courage.*



# The Indy Page

All material on this page except the author's photo, which BCA Dispatch requested, is the responsibility of a citizen editor, independent of the Dispatch. This issue's editor and author is Lester P. Lee, Jr., of Cambridge MA. Lester is Lecturer in Cooperative Education for History and International Affairs at Northeastern University. He introduced Ronnie Dugger, principal speaker at the forum for organizing the Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy, March 1996. Contact him at [L.Lee@neu.edu](mailto:L.Lee@neu.edu).

## Early African-American Writers

by Lester Lee

*Genius in Bondage: Literature of the Early Black Atlantic.* Edited by Vincent Carretta and Philip Gould. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2001. vi, 272 pages. \$34.95 US

The title of this collection of essays comes from a revealing phrase in an eighteenth century letter. In 1778, Ignatius Sancho, a former African slave living in London, wrote to a Philadelphia Quaker that Phillis Wheatley, a poet of African descent living in Boston, was a "genius in bondage." In describing her as such, Sancho critically touched upon one of the contradictions in the Age of Enlightenment. The eighteenth century was also the era of the Atlantic slave trade and slavery that tried to transform the humanity of Africans into a commodity. In this edited volume, Vincent Carretta, a professor of English at the University of Maryland, and Philip Gould, an associate professor of English at Brown University, bring together discussions that interpret how Africans wrote about their responses and resistance to that transformation.

Divided into three parts, these thirteen essays of literary criticism are guided by an analytical perspective that is historical in nature. Part One is a discussion about the construction of race and gender in the Atlantic world. In Part Two, property rights and the ownership of identity are examined in the context of capitalism. For Part Three, the editors bring together essays that critique black literature as a complex language in an ideological encounter with the contradictions in the Atlantic world. Throughout the book, the writings of Ignatius Sancho, Phillis Wheatley, Olaudah Equiano, Ottobah Cugoana, Briton Hammon, John Marrant, Mary Prince, Jupiter Hammon, Benjamin Banneker, and Nathaniel Paul are parsed to show how they reflect early black sentiments about the slave trade, slavery, religion, race, freedom, justice and equality.

Early black literature emanated from the shadow and substance of the Atlantic world. Socially, blacks were on the margins of eighteenth century English-speaking society; but, economically, they were a major source of that society's wealth, power and prestige. What black people remembered of their experiences is crucial to understanding what they



chose to make known to the reading public. They recalled how the slave trade and slavery degraded them. They wrote about their spiritual liberation through Christianity. They expres-

sed their hopes for racial equality in a common humanity.

For example, one essay critiques Mary Prince, an escaped West Indian slave. She collaborated with an amanuensis, an unmarried English woman, to authenticate to English society how slavery was wretched and sexually abusive. Another essay examines the experiences of Olaudah Equiano, a black abolitionist in England. He maintained control over the marketing of his narrative not only through subscription but also through a clever advertising strategy that subtly emphasized his triumphal survival of the horrors of the slave trade. And a third essay renews interest in Benjamin Banneker's intellectually stimulating 1791 letter to Thomas Jefferson. The freeborn son of a former African slave, Banneker tried to engage Jefferson as one farmer and scientist to another in a futile effort to gain the American politician's opposition to slavery.

*Genius in Bondage* is an important contribution to the dialogue between history and literature. The contributors demonstrate the potency of memory in the black imagination. They enhance the literary discussion about the meaning of social change and political consciousness among peoples of African descent in the Atlantic world. The scholarship is informed and insightful although the general reader will probably find it at times dense. Most importantly, this book is a reminder that literature is a complex language because, regardless of condition, circumstance, class, or color, people are endowed with the genuine feelings and complicated thoughts that make up the human experience.

*This review originally appeared in The Dalhousie Review, Autumn 2002*

## ALLIANCE NEWS (continued from page 1)

India, with 10-12 percent of its people Muslim, is suffering long-term strife evident at the time of partition with Pakistan a half century ago, but aggravated for 20 years by globalization. The system having failed to ensure food and shelter, the nation has been polarized, with the fundamentalist Hindutva, armed with tridents and gasoline, rampaging in major pogroms in villages and cities alike, and on trains between them. Indian and Pakistani soldiers fight over Kashmir without consulting the Kashmiris. The ruling BJP party seeks to change the education and court systems to prevent the harmonizing of diverse peoples and the assurance of liberty.

Thus our guest discussion leader, **Dr. Abha Sur** of MIT, characterized the trends Gandhi and others led India to oust the British colonial raj at the end of World War II. The **March 19<sup>th</sup> meeting** began with a showing of Ghandi's nonviolent Truth Movement in the 1930s—part of the PBS series "A Force More Powerful" advised by Tufts University trustee Peter Ackerman. Dr. Sur indicated that Gandhi was murdered by the same people who are rioting and murdering today for the sake of their hegemonic "truth."

**April 24th's meeting** was devoted to discussing relations between the **national Alliance for Democracy and the chapters**. We heard and discussed the views of **Ruth Weizenbaum** and **Bill Haff**, northeast representatives to the AfD Council, which had met in Washington at the end of March, as well as of **Dave Lewit** who also attended (see April's *Dispatch*). Ruth advocated a strong supporting role for national as well as regional initiatives and action. Bill, a new representative, saw little substance in the Council dialog, and advocated strong interchapter and interorganizational collaboration at the local and regional level. Among the suggestions were:

- \* sharing the Boston-Cambridge database with national
- \* shrinking or eliminating the national office; favor networking
- \* at chapter meeting, sharing issue-oriented concerns
- \* clarifying our goals now, after 6 years
- \* ensuring frequent regional conferences
- \* forming an interchapter web committee or editorial board
- \* write a short explanation of the *Common Agreement on Investment and Society*, compare with CSUN's *Peace Platform*.

In contrast with the national meeting, BCA's tone is optimistic and regionally-oriented. AfD's **Seacoast chapter** has recently met and named **Bill Pagum** as its liaison with a regionally-expanded *BCA Dispatch* and web site.

**Giuseppe and Gisele Bisaccia, Brit Eckhart, Jed Schwartz, Mary Rossborough, Bob Stubbs, Jean Maryborn** and **Dave Lewit** attended "People Over Profit" conference at Boston College on 10 May. With Boston City Councillor **Felix Arroyo** Dave co-led a workshop on "Local Impact of Globalization", which they intend to revise and repeat elsewhere in Boston and with city councillors in other MA cities. The general thrust of the conference was involvement in spreading understanding of corporate globalization, its consequences, and what we can do about it—e.g., alternatives to FTAA and WTO.

National AfD's **Alliance Alerts** Spring 2003, 16 pp, is here! Call Stephanie Scadding, AfD office, 781-894-1179, for a copy.

## ACTION ALERTS!!

❖ **Sat. 31 May. 9 am.—3:30 pm. Boston. Peace & Justice in Boston & the World**—A strategy conference for building a movement. Discuss how to stop the Bush war machine, fund schools/housing/jobs, unite gender/age/class/age/geography, change local/state/national politics. Speakers, strategy discussions, workshops. ~\$5 + \$10 for meals (according to your means). Sponsors: United for Justice with Peace (UJP) and Northeastern U School of Law Anti-War Society. (UJP includes CPPAX, PeaceAction, AFSC, and dozens of other groups in Boston neighborhood, Somerville and Arlington. WHERE: Northeastern University Law School, 400 Huntington Ave., Room 97. INFO: (617) 661-6130, ext. 500, or (617) 426-3040, or email [UJPCoalition@yahoo.com](mailto:UJPCoalition@yahoo.com); [www.justicewithpeace.org](http://www.justicewithpeace.org)

❖ **June 26-30. Boston. Unitarian Universalist Association General Assembly 2003**. Among other things, culmination of two years' national and local study of corporate power and globalization. Keynote speaker: Julian Bond, NAACP chair. WHERE: Hynes Convention Center. INFO: [www.uua.org/ga](http://www.uua.org/ga) or call Bob Stubbs 508-872-6137 or David Olson 617-266-6710.

❖ **May or June. Lawrence MA.** City council to act on water privatization. See page 5 of this issue: "Alliance Derails Water Privatization"—second half of article, for INFO and contacts. You can make a difference, even in the comfort of your living room (phone project)! Stay tuned for Jonathan Leavitt's call!

## JOIN THE BCA

YOU DON'T HAVE TO LIVE IN BOSTON TO LOVE BCA  
Please help us as we fight to make a better future for ourselves and our children — Join the Boston/Cambridge Alliance for Democracy. (Cut out this form and send it to Dave Lewit, 271 Dartmouth St., Boston, MA 02116.)  
BOSTON-CAMBRIDGE ALLIANCE for DEMOCRACY PLEDGE  
\_\_\_ \$26/Year - "Count me in!"  
\_\_\_ \$52/Year - "Contributor" (We need to average this amount.)  
\_\_\_ \$104/Year - "Sustainer" (Helping us thrive.)  
\_\_\_ \$208/Year - "Community Steward"  
\_\_\_ \$500/Year - "Realize the vision"  
\_\_\_ What's fair for YOU? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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