

# BCA Dispatch

"The issue is not issues; the issue is the system"  
—Ronnie Dugger

Newsletter of the **December**  
**Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy** **2009**

*It is no measure of good health to be well adjusted to a sick society.*  
—Krishnamurti

## COMMUNITY NOTES

Don't be left out! Join the BCA/NorthBridge planning group—call Barbara Clancy for time of next meeting: 781-894-1179. In the meantime, MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

But sad news. Two friends of BCA passed away this month.

**Milt Raymond**, 88, died at home under loving care, of old injuries and starvation. An engineer, Milt rode his self-designed electric-assisted bicycle to meetings, and was consistently generous in supporting the chapter. Earlier he worked on nuclear weaponry, but quit war work to design better greenhouse glass. For many years he worked on his book *Social Reason*—a practical guide to overcoming authoritarianism and raising children to seek constructive possibilities rather than accept conventional wisdom. The book has been published, and BCA can help you get a copy.

**Tim Costello**, 64, died of pancreatic cancer. Tim was a labor activist and critic of corporate globalism. Many Alliance people know him through his books co-authored with Jeremy Brecher starting with *Global Village or Global Pillage* (also a film). In the Boston area Tim organized the Campaign on Contingent Work which became Massachusetts Global Action, the basis for the Boston Social Forum. See obituary by Jason Pramas at [www.openmediaboston.org/node/1065](http://www.openmediaboston.org/node/1065).

## Obama in Oslo: Traditional War He Doesn't Understand Nonviolent Conflict

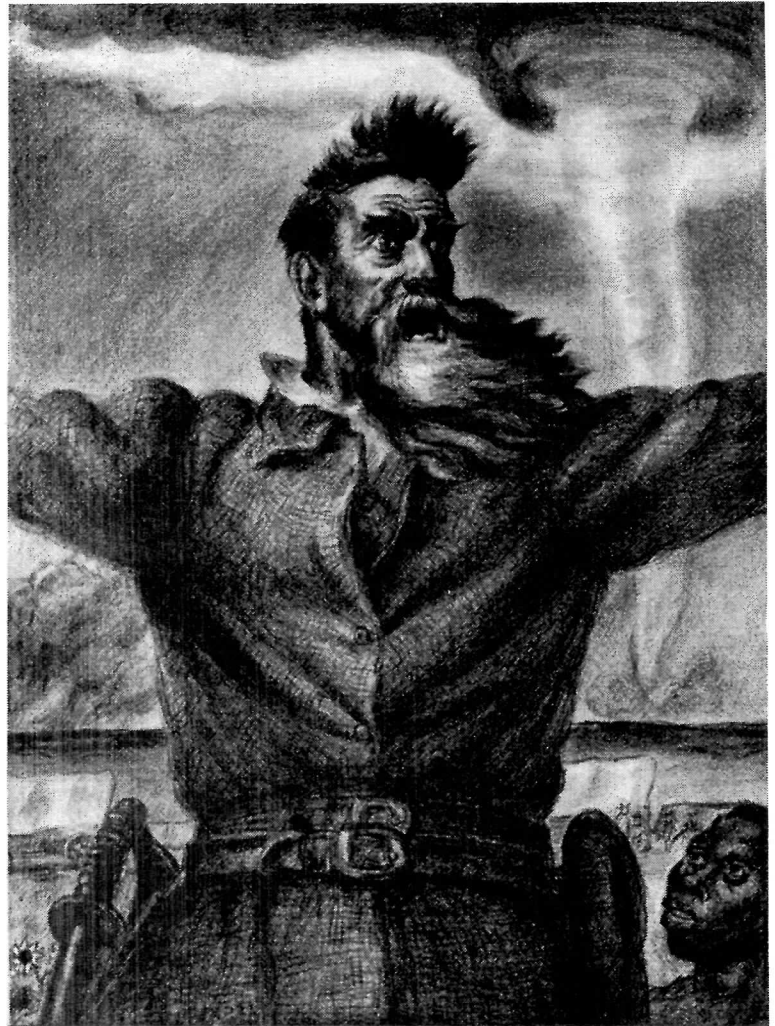
by Eric Stoner, *Foreign Policy in Focus*, 18 Dec 2009

IN OSLO LAST WEEK, PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA ironically used his acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize to deliver a lengthy defense of the "just war" theory and dismiss the idea that nonviolence is capable of addressing the world's most pressing problems.

After quoting Martin Luther King Jr. and giving his respects to Gandhi—two figures that Obama has repeatedly called personal heroes—the new peace laureate argued that he "cannot be guided by their examples alone" in his role as a head of state.

"I face the world as it is, and cannot stand idle in the face of threats to the American people," he continued. "For make no mistake: Evil does exist in the world. A nonviolent movement could not have halted Hitler's armies. Negotiations cannot convince al-Qaeda's leaders to lay down their arms. To say that force may sometimes be necessary is not a call to cynicism—it is a recognition of history; the imperfections of man and the limits of reason."

Unfortunately, this key part of Obama's speech, which the media widely quoted in its coverage (Continued on Page 6>>)



John Brown. A lithograph by John Stuart Curry (1939, left/right reversed in this reproduction). The complete mural of which this is the central figure is in the State House of Kansas which as a territory visited by John Brown in 1856 was split between pro- and anti-slavery factions.

## John Brown's Anti-Slavery Still Lives After Mold'ring 150 Years

from Wikipedia, the free online encyclopedia

**J**OHN BROWN (MAY 9, 1800 – DECEMBER 2, 1859) was an American abolitionist, and folk hero who advocated and practiced armed insurrection as a means to end all slavery. He led the Pottawatomie Massacre in 1856 in Bleeding Kansas and made his name in the unsuccessful raid at Harpers Ferry in 1859.

President Abraham Lincoln said he was a "misguided fanatic" and Brown has been called "the most controversial of all 19<sup>th</sup>-century Americans." His attempt in 1859 to start a liberation movement among enslaved African Americans in Harpers Ferry, Virginia electrified the nation. He was tried for treason against the state of Virginia, the murder of five proslavery Southerners, and inciting a slave insurrection and was subsequently hanged. Southerners alleged that his rebellion was the tip of the abolitionist iceberg and represented the wishes of the Republican Party. Historians agree that the Harpers Ferry raid in 1859 escalated tensions that a year later led to secession and the American Civil War.

Brown first gained attention when he led small groups of volunteers during the Bleeding Kansas crisis. Unlike most other Northerners, who still advocated peaceful resistance to the pro-slavery faction, Brown demanded violent action in response to

Southern aggression. Dissatisfied with the pacifism encouraged by the organized abolitionist movement, he reportedly said "These men are all talk. What we need is action—action!" During the Kansas campaign he and his supporters killed five pro-slavery southerners in what became known as the Pottawatomie Massacre in response to the raid of the "free soil" city of Lawrence. [Sometime after 10:00 pm May 24, 1856, it is suspected they took five pro-slavery settlers from their cabins on Pottawatomie Creek, who had targeted Brown's family, and hacked them to death with broadswords. Brown later claimed he did not participate in the killings, however he did say he approved of them.]

In 1859 he led a raid on the federal armory at Harpers Ferry, Virginia (in modern-day West Virginia). During the raid, he seized the armory; seven people (including a free black) were killed, and ten or more were injured. He intended to arm slaves with weapons from the arsenal, but the attack failed. Within 36 hours, Brown's men had fled or been killed or captured by local farmers, militiamen, and U.S. Marines led by Robert E. Lee. Brown's subsequent capture by federal forces, his trial for treason to the state of Virginia, and his execution by hanging in Charles Town, Virginia were an important part of the origins of the American Civil War, which followed sixteen months later.

When Brown was hanged after his attempt to start a slave rebellion in 1859, church bells rang, minute guns were fired, large memorial meetings took place throughout the North, and famous writers such as Emerson and Thoreau joined many Northerners in praising Brown.

Historians agree John Brown played a major role in starting the Civil War. His role and actions prior to the Civil War, as an abolitionist, and the tactics he chose still make him a controversial figure today. He is sometimes memorialized as a heroic martyr and a visionary and sometimes vilified as a madman and a terrorist. While some writers, such as Bruce Olds, describe him as a monomaniacal zealot, others, such as Stephen B. Oates, regard him as "one of the most perceptive human beings of his generation." David S. Reynolds hails the man who "killed slavery, sparked the civil war, and seeded civil rights" and Richard Owen Boyer emphasizes that Brown was "an American who gave his life that millions of other Americans might be free." For Ken Chowder he is "at certain times, a great man", but also "the father of American terrorism."

Brown's nicknames were Osawatimie Brown, Old Man Brown, Captain Brown and Old Brown of Kansas. His aliases were Nelson Hawkins, Shubel Morgan, and Isaac Smith. Later the song "John Brown's Body" (the original title of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic") became a Union marching song during the Civil War. In 1938-1940 American painter John Steuart Curry created "Tragic Prelude", a mural [in oils] of John Brown holding a gun and a bible [See lithograph, p.1.]

**On this 150<sup>th</sup> year of commemoration, Vermont Public Radio published many comments. Here are two:**

I am hoping that someone will mention the link between John Brown and Henry David Thoreau of which only a few in the general public are aware.

Thoreau spoke (or better, preached) about the great abolitionist when he delivered "A Plea for Captain John Brown at the Lyceum in Concord, Massachusetts in 1859.

In his plea, which he later published, Thoreau inveighed against those who criticized Brown for his violent approach to the often non-violent abolitionist movement. He also argued that those who judged John Brown as a fool (which included many of Browns former backers) were fools themselves, not recognizing

Brown's historic position in advancing the cause of abolition even though he and some of his children were killed in the process.

The most gripping aspect of the "Plea" is when Thoreau explicitly likens Brown to Christ, making the case that Brown performed a worthy, historic and, indeed, sacred act by giving his life to the most morally compelling cause of the day. Thoreau forecasts that the life of John Brown will return (resurrecting and redeeming) in some sense as the cause of liberating slaves continues to gain power.

While Thoreau is often remembered only for the portrayal of the "sacred nature" that he experienced at Walden Pond and for the cause of non-violence in so many contexts, in this historical context we find Thoreau preaching passionately in defense of a leader who used violence in the service of a greater cause. As with so many aspects of Thoreau's life and work, Thoreau's take on violence is complex and contradictory when Brown is concerned.

—Prof. Rebecca Kneale Gould, Middlebury College VT

Unlike some of his fellow abolitionists, who were racists and supremacists, John Brown believed in the equality of blacks and whites. The settlement at North Elba NY was an integrated community where John Brown and his family lived and broke bread with Black people.

John Brown was an insurrectionist not a terrorist. He did not make war on noncombatants. The men killed at Potawatimie were men who had publicly threatened to kill Brown and his family. His actions at Potawatimie need to be judged in the context in which they occurred. There was no law to turn to for protection in Kansas. He embodies the Jeffersonian view that the "tree of liberty must be watered with the blood of patriots". The real terrorists at that time were the pro-slavery southerners who routinely violated the rights of free white and black people.

—David, Stowe VT

Ed. Comment: *For liberals, the big dilemma about John Brown is his advocacy of violence where other methods of liberation aren't working. Jesus himself was nonviolent—often impatient, but always active; he didn't try to make peace, but to lead people to be fearless in their loving and generosity. John Brown knew how to get along with good people, white and black, and he was faithful and courageous. Mounting the gallows he shook hands with the sheriff and thanked the jailer to whom he had given a written statement, placed his own hood and noose, and urged the executioner not to waste time (Robert Willis Allen, Marching On! Chapter 4 online). But he wasn't much in the love department (although he fathered 20 children).*

*Gandhi also faced down an imperial juggernaut saying, at one point, that it's better to act violently than to do nothing. But he was more experienced with different classes of people, was far better read than John Brown, and gifted as a speaker and writer—all contributing to his ability to formulate both a philosophy and strategy of active, effective nonviolence based on love.*

*With his proud advocacy for the underdog, John Brown was a folk hero, with immediate magnetism for folks who had bibles and newspapers on their tables and firearms alongside their boots.*



Orozco: Dartmouth Murals (detail)

## Local Vegetables in Maine Winter Greenhouses Yield for Nutrition and Profit

by Beth Quimby, *Portland Press Herald*, 23 November 2009

**T**HE VEGETABLE-GROWING SEASON USED TO END with the first hard frost in Maine. Not anymore.

An increasing number of farmers are pushing the growing season into the winter to take advantage of the surging demand for locally grown food. As a result, more farmers are operating greenhouses, branching out into cool-weather crops and creating new markets for their produce.

"Basically, people have gotten into it because their infrastructure is already there," said Mark Hutton, vegetable specialist and assistant professor of vegetable crops with the University of Maine Cooperative Extension.

Winter farming was pioneered in the 1990s by organic farmer and writer Eliot Coleman and his wife, Barbara Damrosch, at their Four Season Farm in Harborside. The two took a trip to Europe in 1996, following the 44th parallel through France and Italy—the same latitude as Maine—when the idea of winter farming hit Coleman.

"The whole time, we had seen gardens in January with Brussels sprouts and leeks, and the minute we got above the snow line there was nothing," said Coleman. Coleman said he realized there was plenty of sunlight in Maine during the winter to grow vegetables—he just had to modify the temperature. So he came up with the idea of layered greenhouse structures that require minimal or no heating.

While there are no recent statistics on how many Maine farmers are venturing into winter gardening, agricultural experts say the number of new winter farmers markets and winter community-supported agricultural ventures reflects the increase.

There are about 18 community-supported agricultural operations selling winter shares of organic crops raised on Maine farms, according to the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association.

The organization has seen its list of winter farmers markets more than double in the past year to more than a dozen across the state. Other farmers markets are extending their seasons, including the Portland Farmers Market in Monument Square, which is staying open a month later than in past years.

Just why winter farming was not widely practiced before is a bit of a mystery. Coleman said it could be that people simply assumed vegetables wouldn't grow when there is snow on the ground. Hutton attributes the practice's growth to the advent of the locally grown movement in reaction to the rise of global corporate marketing, creating a demand that farmers are now rushing to fill.

Paul Lorrain, who raises lettuce and other vegetables in the winter at Sunset Farm Organics in Lyman, said it probably was just that vegetable farmers burned out in the summer and needed the winter to recuperate. A landscaper in the summer, Lorrain has been steadily expanding his operation since he started in 2000. His first greenhouse was unheated. But after a two-week stretch of cloudy, minus-20-degree weather destroyed his crop, he started heating his greenhouses with propane to 37 degrees.

Today he operates eight greenhouses between Oct. 1 and the end of April, harvesting about 300 pounds of produce a week. He sells it to local restaurants, at a winter farmers market in Brunswick and through a new community-supported agricultural

operation based at Wolf Pine Farm in Alfred. "We have gone from not being able to give it away to not being able to grow enough," Lorrain said.

Tom Harms, who runs Wolf Pine Farm with his wife, Amy Sprague, left his job as a computer programmer this year to manage the winter community-supported agricultural venture at the farm, which until last winter sold shares of the harvest only in the summer. "We are not just extending the season, we are making the winter our whole business," Harms said. If all goes well, next year the farm will grow vegetables just for distribution in the winter, he said.

Harms has sold 350 shares this winter, signing up summer customers as well as new customers at agricultural fairs. He hopes to sell 50 more shares. It is possibly the largest winter share operation in the state, delivering as far away as Portsmouth, N.H., to the south and Falmouth to the north. "People figure there is just a lot of turnips and kale, but we have worked really hard to bring diversity," Harms said.

Every three weeks, customers receive a box of produce—enough for three weeks—from 10 Maine organic farms. The contents vary and may include dried beans, flour and other grains, fruits and berries, vegetables and eggs. Shares cost \$500 if the customer picks up the produce; it is \$600 for door-to-door service.

Scott Jillson of Jillson's Farm and Sugarhouse in Sabattus is venturing into winter farming this year for the first time. Using techniques developed by Coleman, Jillson is growing lettuce and radishes in a hoop-style greenhouse—a series of hoops covered with a thick, taut layer of greenhouse plastic—to sell at new winter farmers markets that have opened in Falmouth and Cumberland. Jillson said the winter markets give his family another way to sell the vegetable crops it raises from the 30 acres under cultivation.

The family also sells vegetables at a year-round farm stand, through its own community-supported agriculture venture, and at summer farmers markets. Jillson said that in the past, with fewer sales venues, the family often ended the traditional growing season with a vegetable surplus. "Sometimes we would have to feed them to the animals," he said.

Winter farming doesn't work in all northern regions of the United States. Hutton said some areas, such as New York state and parts of Pennsylvania, are too overcast.

Most of the winter farming is being done on small existing farms because of the high cost of starting large-scale ventures, such as Backyard Farms LLC. That company opened a 24-acre, year-round tomato-growing operation in Madison in 2007, and this year it added another 18 acres of greenhouse capacity.

For many farmers, Hutton said, winter farming generates enough cash to allow them to retain some of their summer help and keep themselves on the farm rather than drive a snowplow or take on other temporary winter work.

Kathy Shaw of Valley View Farm in Auburn said the new winter farmers market in Falmouth keeps her busy on Wednesdays selling the meat and produce that she raises on her farm. "In the past, I would have rested," she said. Last week she had cauliflower, beets, turnips, Brussels sprouts, potatoes, parsnips, squash, onions, poultry and red meat, all raised in Auburn. She said she does it not only for the cash but also to put her philosophy into practice.

"I want to provide good fresh food to the public," she said.





## US Drones Fly Over Venezuela

### Hillary Warns Against "Flirting with Iran"

by Eva Golinger, chavezcode.com, 20 December 2009

**V**ENEZUELAN PRESIDENT HUGO CHÁVEZ REVEALED today on his Sunday television and radio program, *Aló Presidente*, that unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), also known as drones, have illegally entered Venezuela's airspace during the past several days. "A few days ago, one of these military planes penetrated Venezuela as far as Fort Mara," a Venezuelan military fort in the State of Zulia, bordering Colombia. The drone was seen by several Venezuelan soldiers who immediately reported the aerial violation to their superiors. President Chávez gave the order today to shoot down any drones detected in Venezuelan territory. Chávez also directly implicated Washington in this latest threat against regional stability by confirming that the drones were of US origin.

On Thursday, President Chávez denounced military threats against Venezuela originating from the Dutch islands Aruba and Curaçao, situated less than 50 miles off Venezuela's northwest coast. Both small islands host US air force bases as a result of a 1999 contract between Washington and Holland establishing US Forward Operating Locations (FOLs) in the Caribbean colonies. Originally, the contract stipulated US military presence in Aruba and Curaçao solely for counter-narcotics missions. However, since September 2001, Washington uses all its military installations to combat perceived terrorist threats around the world. The military bases in Aruba and Curaçao have been used for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions against Venezuela during the past several years.

In 2006, Washington began conducting a series of high level military exercises using Curaçao as the principal zone of operations. Hundreds of US aircraft carriers, warships, combat planes, Black Hawk helicopters, nuclear submarines and thousands of US military troops have been engaging in different military exercises and missions in the Caribbean region during the past three and a half years, causing substantial alarm and concern to nations in the region, particularly Venezuela, which has also been subject to hostile and aggressive diplomatic actions from Washington.

In 2008, the Pentagon reactivated the Navy's Fourth Fleet, charged with defending US interests in the Latin American region. The Fourth Fleet was deactivated in 1950, after accomplishing its original defense mission during World War II. The fleet's reactivation nearly 60 years later was perceived by a majority of nations in Latin America as a direct threat to regional sovereignty and provoked South American countries to establish a Defense Council to deal with external threats. The Pentagon responded by proudly admitting the Fourth Fleet's reactivation was a "showing of US force and power in the region" and a demonstration that the US "will defend its regional allies". This was perceived as direct support to Colombia, and an attempt to intimidate Venezuela.

On October 30, Colombia and the US signed a military cooperation agreement authorizing US occupation of seven military bases in Colombian territory and all other installations as required. The agreement is seen as the largest US military expansion in Latin American history. Although the two governments publicly justified the agreement as an increased effort to fight drug trafficking and terrorism, official US Air Force documents revealed that the US would conduct "full spectrum military operations" t

throughout South America from the Colombian bases. The Air Force documents also justified the disproportional military expansion as necessary to combat "the constant threat...from anti-US governments in the region". The documents further revealed that the US presence in Colombia will increase the success of "Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance" operations and will improve the Pentagon's capacity to conduct "expeditionary warfare" in Latin America.

Since 2006, Washington has classified Venezuela as a nation "not fully collaborating with the war against terror". In 2005, Venezuela was labeled by the State Department as a nation "not cooperating with counter-narcotics operations". Despite no substantive evidence to prove such dangerous accusations, the US has utilized these classifications to justify an increase in aggression towards the Venezuelan government. In 2008, the Bush Administration attempted to place Venezuela on the list of State Sponsors of terrorism. The initiative was unsuccessful primarily because Venezuela is still a principal supplier of oil to the US. Should Washington consider Venezuela a terrorist state, all relations would be cut off, including oil supply.

Nevertheless, Washington still views Venezuela as a major threat to US interests in the region. The US is particularly concerned about Latin American nations engaging in commercial relations with countries such as China, Russia and Iran, perceived as economic threats to US control and domination in the region. Last week, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton issued a warning to countries in Latin America that have recently forged relations with Iran, such as Bolivia, Brazil, Nicaragua and Venezuela. "...I think that if people want to flirt with Iran, they should take a look at what the consequences might well be for them, and we hope that they will think twice...", Clinton stated during remarks made regarding the State Department's Latin American policy.

The Colombian government announced yesterday that a new military base will be built right near the border with Venezuela, with funding and equipment from the United States. Colombia's Defense Minister Gabriel Silva also announced the activation of two air battalions at other border areas near Venezuela. The new military base, located in the Guajira peninsula, which borders the Venezuelan State of Zulia, would have up to 1,000 troops and would also allow the presence of US armed forces and private military contractors. This announcement clearly ups the ante against Venezuela.

Today's statements made by President Chávez regarding the US military drones discovered violating Venezuelan territory just days ago further escalate the growing tensions between Venezuela and Colombia. The MQ-1 Predator UAV, a type of combat drone, has been used over the past year in Afghanistan and Pakistan to assassinate suspect terrorists. The drones are equipped with Hellfire missiles and are capable of hitting ground targets in sensitive areas.

Venezuela is on high alert in the face of this dangerous threat. Chávez made the statements regarding the drone detection during the launching of the new National Police Force, a recently created communal police force directed at preventive security operations and community-based service.

*Eva Golinger is a Venezuelan-American lawyer and writer living in Caracas. Her most recent book is Bush vs. Chávez: Washington's War on Venezuela (2007, Monthly Review Press).*

## Local Autonomy

### The Answer to Corporate Dominance?

by Dave Lewit, Alliance for Democracy, 20 December 2009

**T**HREE-AND-A-HALF YEARS AGO the citizens of Humboldt County, on California's north coast, passed a law prohibiting outside corporations from financing campaigns in county elections. Last year the corporations shot down the law just by threatening court action. The county board of supervisors, which had to certify and implement the anti-corporate law, chickened out because the cost of litigation would be too big a drain on their resources. So the people of Humboldt County are back to square one—only maybe they are wiser for the next bout: going national.

The corporations have gobs of money to fund a front group (suing to recover their "right" to influence local elections) and their team of lawyers with their reserves (or credit) to pay fines or court costs if so ordered. Where did that money come from? Our representatives in congress and legislatures caved in to their demands over several decades, cutting corporate taxes in half. So yes, "we" gave the corporations that money to fight us.

The question of personhood now shifts to a different arena—the arena of authority. Who gave the county supervisors authority to overrule the people (who had spoken through a referendum vote)? Who (county? state?) gave the court authority to overrule the county (speaking through a handful of county supervisors)? Could it be the state of California (by a charter the legislature issued to the county)? And who gave the legislature that right—the state constitution? And who established and can modify that constitution? The issue comes down to Home Rule: persuading or forcing the state legislature to cede much authority—grant autonomy—to cities and towns.

Specifically on corporate "rights", we may have to change the constitution, as attorney Jeffrey Clements opined at the Greater Boston regional Alliance "convention". Jeff wrote the amicus brief which the US Supreme Court is now considering in the "Hillary movie" (Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission) personhood case—written for Democracy Unlimited of Humboldt County, along with WILPF, POCLAD, Shays2, and others. Amend the US constitution to exclude corporations from personal rights, or otherwise return corporations to the ancillary status they had before our Civil War.

But that is a long and thorny path for us to take. Instead, let *them*—the corporate interests—take the long path of appeal. Let us empower counties and towns by defying the courts—removing the power of the supervisors to chicken out, their authority to de-certify or refuse to implement the people's voice.\* Indeed, that is what the Alliance is getting into when, through Ruth Caplan's and Nancy Price's persistence in the Defending Water for Life campaign, we encourage towns to pass ordinances or amend their charters to deny corporations personhood, and to acknowledge the rights of Nature.

These actions will have to stand up against state courts' probably ruling that towns lack such authority. (But where do *corpora-*

\*The city of Arcata, in Humboldt County, had their police on their side—dedicated to enforcing new local election laws. The people of Maricopa County, Arizona, don't have the will to control their sheriff Joe Arpaio. It will be crucial for Alliance groups to help re-orient the local police brotherhood from elite to community allegiance.

tions, through "settled law", get such authority?) If we have the time and resources, the issue may have to go to the US Supreme Court as a Tenth Amendment case—wherein "the people" will have to be more clearly defined. Because the court has been packed with conservatives over decades, we may have to "orbit" our local rights by passing and overwhelming courts with local authority cases, or we may have to force conservative judges to resign—exactly what dozens of towns in Massachusetts did in 1774.

As in those days, we may have to encourage alternative or shadow town councils—citizen assemblies. Let us take a cue from south of the border. Five hundred cities in Latin America have adopted local Participatory Budgeting. In Porto Alegre, Brazil, where it started under the aegis of the Workers Party, the citizen Council of the Budget had the final word on the distribution of city funds. (The mayor had a veto, but never exercised it.) Why should the authority of our cities and towns be limited to potholes and dog poop, water systems and real estate taxes? Why should we not seize authority and go ahead and divert our federal war taxes to a county or regional bank for the projects we want, including limiting the power of corporations? For starters, we should draft model Home Rule laws and charters.

## How to Foreclose On the Banks They Didn't Keep Their Word

by Ted Rall, TedRall.com, 19 December 2009 (conclusion)

**B**ECAUSE THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION DIDN'T PRESSURE them, the banks stonewalled the president's \$75 billion loan modification program, which was supposed to reduce payments for the approximately ten million Americans who face foreclosure.

JPMorganChase, for example, blew off or rejected 85 percent of homeowners who asked them for help. That's better than Citibank, which enrolled 100,000 distressed homeowners in the program but only managed to actually modify loans to 270. And it's a lot better than Bank of America, bringing up the rear with a pathetic whopping 98 modifications out of the 160,000 borrowers who signed up as of the end of November.

More lowlights:

- One out of seven American homeowners will probably lose their homes by the end of 2010.
- Only 4.7 percent of distressed homeowners who enrolled in the modification plan have gotten any help.
- Out of Obama's \$75 billion program, only \$2.3 million has been spent—or 0.03 percent.

Obama's performance on the foreclosure crisis—along with unemployment, the biggest problem America faces—makes Bush's laissez faire approach to Hurricane Katrina look caring and loving in comparison. If ever there were a cause for impeachment, look no further.

No doubt recognizing political peril, Obama is now attempting to jawbone the banks into doing the right thing, even calling banking CEOs "fat cats" on "60 Minutes." Whatever.

"America's banks received extraordinary assistance from American taxpayers to rebuild their industry," Obama said after meeting with banking executives. "Now that they're back on their feet, we expect an extraordinary commitment from them to help rebuild our economy." But there were no teeth in his demand—just a polite pretty-please with a trillion-dollar-plus bailout on top.

(Continued >>)

But that's Obama's choice. If he wanted, he could foreclose on the banks—and personally give millions of desperate homeowners the best Christmas ever.

#### Here's how:

True, the Treasury Department didn't receive any written assurances from the banks that they would start lending again when they collected their bailout loot back in February. But as Obama recalled in the above quote, it was widely understood at the time that the federal government expected looser credit markets in exchange for the bailout. There were thousands of reports in the media to this effect, hundreds of statements by government officials, and—no doubt—dozens of discussions between government and bank lawyers to this effect. No one was confused. Everyone got it at the time.

Obviously Obama should have gotten it in writing. But the bailout-for-credit quid pro quo was a widely witnessed oral contract. And oral contracts are just as legally binding as written ones.

The classic example of an oral contract is two roommates who agree to share an apartment. The lease may be in the name of one person, but the non-leaseholder may not skip out on the rent. But the stakes can be bigger. Pennzoil made a handshake deal—no contract—to buy Getty Oil in 1984 but then reneged in favor of another suitor, Texaco. Pennzoil sued and won \$11.1 billion in damages.

The United States government could, and should, sue Citibank, Bank of America, JPMorganChase and other defaulting miscreants for breach of contract. With one out of seven Americans having been foreclosed upon by one of these institutions, it would be difficult to imagine any jury finding them not guilty. Mercy, after all, wasn't something these banks showed their victims.

Since damages would likely exceed the defendants' ability to pay, the U.S. could then seize the banks. The newly nationalized banks, owned by we the people, could reduce or cancel outstanding mortgages to the unemployed, sick and other worthies. They could increase credit lines and start making loans again—you know, do what they promised to do. It wouldn't necessarily get us out of the Depression. But it would be a beginning.

Foreclose on the banks! It's fair. It's smart. And it's long overdue.

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Ed. Comment: *Ted Rall's advice shows the hypocrisy of Indulgent American Capitalism. The Constitution names six reasons for establishing the USA, three of which are: "establish justice", "ensure domestic tranquility", and "promote the general welfare". Actually, most US administrations since the Civil War have tacitly placed the corporatist system above all that. If key elements of that system are shaky, they are considered "too big to fail" lest the system fail. So the Supreme Court—keeper of the system—in 1886 dubbed corporations "persons" with personal rights of the constitutional amendments, and now see to it that their corporate children also have their allowances and free rein, even if they are bullies.*

*The system has run its course, exhausting, poisoning, and cooking Mother Earth in the process of duping her people into thinking they too could get rich—a "riches for all" faux democracy, never mind brotherhood/sisterhood. Sweet Obama hasn't the imagination or guts to muzzle the Court and call a series of huge forums to work out a successor system.*

## OBAMA IN OSLO (Continued from Page 1)

of the award ceremony, contains several logical inconsistencies and historical inaccuracies that tragically reveal Obama's profound ignorance of nonviolent alternatives to the use of military force.

### The Power of Nonviolence

Almost immediately after acknowledging that there is "nothing weak—nothing passive—nothing naïve—in the creed and lives of Gandhi and King," Obama equated nonviolence with doing nothing.

To live and act nonviolently, however, never involves standing "idle in the face of threats." Dorothy Day, Cesar Chavez, Dave Dellinger, Daniel and Philip Berrigan, and countless other genuine peacemakers have put their lives on the line in the struggle for a more just world. Advocates of nonviolence, like Gandhi, simply believe that means and ends are inseparable—that responding in kind to an aggressor will only continue the cycle of violence.

"Destructive means cannot bring constructive ends, because the means represent the ideal-in-the-making and the end-in-progress," Martin Luther King explains in his book *Strength to Love*. "Immoral means cannot bring moral ends, for the ends are pre-existent in the means."

Therefore, to put it bluntly, it's impossible to create a world that truly respects life with fists, guns, and bombs. As A J Muste, longtime leader of the labor, civil rights, and antiwar movements, famously said: "There is no way to peace—peace is the way."

Using a broad array of tactics—including strikes, boycotts, sit-ins, and protests—nonviolent movements have not only gained important rights for millions of oppressed people around the world, they have confronted, and successfully brought down, some of the most ruthless regimes of the last 100 years.

The courageous, everyday citizens who spoke out and took to the streets to stop the murderous reigns of General Augusto Pinochet in Chile, Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines, and Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia, to name only a few examples from recent decades, were anything but passive in the face of evil.

Moreover, these incredible victories for nonviolence were not flukes. After analyzing 323 resistance campaigns over the last century, one important study published last year in the journal *International Security*, found that "major nonviolent campaigns have achieved success 53 percent of the time, compared with 26 percent for violent resistance campaigns."

### Victories Against Hitler

Contrary to Obama's speech and the dominant narrative about World War II, nonviolent movements in several different European countries were also remarkably successful in thwarting the Nazis.

In 1943, for instance, when the order finally came to round up the nearly 8,000 Jews in Denmark, Danes spontaneously hid them in their homes, hospitals, and other public institutions over the span of one night. Then, at great personal risk to those involved, a secret network of fishing vessels successfully ferried almost their entire Jewish population to neutral Sweden. The Nazis captures only 481 Jews, and thanks to continued Danish pressure, nearly 90% of those deported to the Theresienstadt concentration camp survived the war.

In Bulgaria, important leaders of the Orthodox Church, along with farmers in the northern stretches of the country, threatened to lie across railroad tracks to prevent Jews from being deport-



ed. This popular pressure emboldened the Bulgarian parliament to resist the Nazis, who eventually rescinded the deportation order, saving almost all of the country's 48,000 Jews.

Even in Norway, where Obama accepted the peace prize, there was significant nonviolent resistance during the Second World War. When the Nazi-appointed Prime Minister Vidkun Quisling ordered teachers to teach fascism, an estimated 10,000 of the country's 12,000 teachers refused. A campaign of intimidation—which included sending over 1,000 male teachers to jails, concentration camps, and forced labor camps north of the Arctic Circle—failed to break the will of the teachers and sparked growing resentment throughout the country. After eight months, Quisling backed down and the teachers came home victorious.

### Alternatives to the War on Terror

Obama's rejection of negotiations as a possible solution to terrorism also doesn't square with the evidence. After analyzing hundreds of terrorist groups that have operated over the last 40 years, a RAND corporation study published last year concluded that military force is almost never successful at stopping terrorism. The vast majority of terrorist groups that ended during that period "were penetrated and eliminated by local police and intelligence agencies (40%), or they reached a peaceful political accommodation with their government (43%)." In other words, negotiation is clearly possible.

For his book, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, University of Chicago professor Robert Pape created a database on every suicide bombing from 1980 to 2004. Pape found that, rather than being driven by religion, the vast majority of suicide bombers—responsible for over 95% of all incidents on record—were primarily motivated by a desire to compel a democratic government to withdraw its military forces from land they saw as their homeland.

"Since suicide terrorism is mainly a response to foreign occupation and not Islamic fundamentalism," Pape said in an interview with *The American Conservative*, "the use of heavy military force to transform Muslim societies over there, if you would, is only likely to increase the number of suicide terrorists coming at us."

Apart from pulling U.S. troops out of the Middle East, calling off the deadly campaign of drone attacks, and ending military, economic, and diplomatic support for repressive regimes in the region, how can the threat of terrorism be best minimized? A recent article in the *Independent* by Johann Hari may provide an answer.

Through interviews with 17 radical Islamic ex-jihadis over the course of a year, Hari discovered that they all told strikingly similar stories about what drew them to extremism, and what eventually got them out. They all felt alienated growing up in Britain, and connected their personal experiences to the persecution of Muslims around the world. In most cases, however, coming into contact with Westerners who took the values of democracy and human rights seriously, opposed the wars against Muslim countries, and engaged in ordinary acts of kindness first made them question whether they were on the right path.

As I silently carried a cardboard coffin from the UN headquarters in New York to the military recruiting center in Times Square during a protest on the day of Obama's speech, I couldn't help but cringe to think of the president justifying the deployment of 30,000 more troops to the "graveyard of empires." Every nonviolent alternative has not been exhausted. In reality, they have yet to be tried.

*Eric Stoner is a freelance writer based in New York and a contributor to Foreign Policy In Focus. His articles have appeared in The Nation, NACLA Report on the Americas, and the Independent.*

**Ed. Comment:** *In his Nobel speech, Obama said "...as a head of state sworn to protect and defend my nation, I cannot be guided by [Gandhi's and M L King's] examples alone. I face the world as it is, and cannot stand idle in the face of threats to the American people. For make no mistake: evil does exist in the world.\* A non-violent movement could not have halted Hitler's armies. Negotiations cannot convince al Qaeda's leaders to lay down their arms. To say that force is sometimes necessary is not a call to cynicism—it is a recognition of history; the imperfections of man and the limits of reason.."*

*(1) He is sworn to protect and defend the Constitution, not the nation. Congress did not declare war.*

*(2) Non-violence is not standing idle. In fact satyagraha (disciplined truth-force) is the bravest action, which inspired King.*

*(3) Obama was defending his Afghan war policy. It is absurd for him to imply that US war against al Qaeda and/or the Taliban is like fighting Hitler's Wehrmacht and Luftwaffe.*

*\* Both phrases were among George W Bush's favorites.*

## Military Analysts Con TV Viewers Retired Generals Don't Disclose Corp Ties

by Laura Bassett, *Huffington Post*, 11 December 2009

**M**AJOR TELEVISION NETWORKS CONTINUE TO HOST RETIRED GENERALS as military analysts without alerting viewers to their extensive ties to defense contractors and the Pentagon.

Military strategy is a frequent topic on TV in the wake of President Obama's announcement that he will send more troops to Afghanistan now—and start bringing them out by mid-2011. But few television viewers have any idea that some of what they're hearing originates from men who are literally profiting from the war.

One of these men in particular—NBC News military analyst and retired Gen. Barry McCaffrey—has appeared on MSNBC at least 10 times in the past month to criticize Obama's proposed troop-withdrawal deadline, to lavish praise upon Army Gen. David H. Petraeus, the head of U.S. Central Command, and to underscore the importance of training Afghan security forces.

But neither McCaffrey nor the MSNBC anchors ever mentioned the fact that McCaffrey sits on the board of directors of DynCorp International, a company with a lucrative government contract to train the Afghan National Security Forces. Nor did they mention that McCaffrey recently completed a report about Afghanistan that was commissioned by Petraeus and funded by the Pentagon.

On December 4, McCaffrey appeared on *Hardball* with Chris Matthews, where he was introduced only as "retired General Barry McCaffrey." Upon being asked whether we are creating our own enemy in Afghanistan, McCaffrey said: "The key is, can we create an Afghan security force that in a couple or three years will replace us? That is the real question on the table."

He added, "I think there's some belief, strong belief on the part of General [Stanley] McChrystal and others, to include me, that yes, you can create an Afghan security force. I don't believe it's possible in a year. I see this as a 3- to 10-year effort, at the front end of which we're going to take casualties and spend

a lot of money."

According to *Forbes* magazine, this 3- to 10-year effort in Afghanistan will generate about 53% of DynCorp's \$3.1 billion in annual revenue, a fact that McCaffrey failed to mention.

McCaffrey describes the report he authored last week assessing security operations in Afghanistan as an "independent civilian academic contribution to the national security debate." In the report, McCaffrey effusively praises Petraeus and the top military officials in Afghanistan, calling them "brilliant" and the "absolute best leaders in uniform."

McCaffrey continues to be presented as an objective expert despite widespread, public evidence to the contrary. In late 2008, as part of a Pulitzer-Prize winning series about the relationship between retired generals, the Pentagon, and defense contractors, *New York Times* reporter David Barstow wrote an article that exposed McCaffrey for "consistently advocat[ing] wartime policies and spending priorities that are in line with his corporate interests."

According to Barstow's article, McCaffrey used his close relationship with Gen. Petraeus and his contacts at the Pentagon to secure lucrative, mutually beneficial defense contracts at corporations such as Defense Solutions and Veritas Capital. Armed with extensive ties to both the government and the private sector, McCaffrey exercises a third sphere of influence through his media exposure. He did not respond to repeated messages from the *Huffington Post*, requesting an interview.

McCaffrey is only one of several on-air military analysts with extensive, interconnected Pentagon and corporate relationships. Retired Gen. Richard Myers, who appeared on NBC's Meet the Press on October 11 to discuss Afghanistan strategy, sits on the board of directors of Northrop Grumman, the third largest arms manufacturer in the world. But David Gregory simply introduced him as the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Gregory asked Myers whether it was necessary to escalate the Afghanistan war, Myers replied: "I think you probably do [have to escalate]," and later added that he thinks U.S. allies "should pony up as well."

Retired Gen. Robert H. Scales, Jr., an analyst for both Fox News and National Public Radio, is the president of Colgen, Inc., a consulting company specializing in issues relating to land power, war gaming and strategic leadership. Colgen's clients include the U.S. Military, the CIA and Special Operations Command. On December 1, Scales appeared on Fox News with host Bret Baier and disparaged Obama's plan to start troop withdrawals in 2010.

"Well, there's an old saying in the Army, Bret, that an operation must conform to the actions of the enemy and not to the clock or the calendar," Scales said. "My concern is we need to focus on the enemy, defeat the enemy in this region before we start talking about a timeline."

Not surprisingly, these "military analysts" on the boards of defense contractors with large potential for financial gain have consistently used their media appearances to make the case for escalation.

Last year, the Society of Professional Journalists called on NBC to sever ties with military analysts that could personally profit from the shaping of public opinion.

"By failing to be forthright and transparent, these networks—which are owned by General Electric, a leading defense contractor—are giving the public powerful reasons to be skeptical about their neutrality and credibility," said Andy Schotz, the chairman of the Society of Professional Journalists' Ethics Committee.

NBC has ignored the SPJ's call. A spokesperson from NBC

said that McCaffrey's biography on the MSNBC website details his involvement with DynCorp and other corporations, but she declined to comment about why anchors do not identify McCaffrey as a Pentagon contractor or defense contracting consultant when he appears on their shows.

"The media are not legally obligated to disclose their connections," said Melanie Sloan, Executive Director of Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington. "It's obviously a little misleading, though."

## Black Tuesday

It's more of a psychotic episode than a nightmare. The climate summit in Copenhagen just ended in disarray, at midnight the filibuster was barely hooded in the Senate after weeks of gutting health-care reform, and Wall Street hee-haws echoed over kitchen tables strewn with home-budget papers. We switch off the computer-supported video of misery around the world, and look into the bare refrigerator for comfort food.

In Sunday School we learned that sharing and hugging are the way to go, but that we must never challenge the way the school is set up—it's paths of authority. We learned that America is fundamentally good, its soldiers—all heroes. We learned that the bad guys are funny-looking—big noses and squinty eyes, and see that the good guys dress like a million bucks. We don't measure up—we are helpless.

And now the world is coming apart while our leaders play double-dare. The bulldozers keep on wrecking trees and hills, while neighborhoods turn gray. On TV our Leader, erect, speaks in cool, clipped words pretending not to see the off-screen tele-prompting panes of glass.

O America, will you stream down from your space-ship and capture the bullies and playboys and vamps—wave your baton to re-produce our beautiful schools, our graceful elms?

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