

BCA Dispatch

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

Newsletter of the **November-December**
Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy 2010

... to take apart the system of illusions and deception which functions to prevent understanding of contemporary reality [is] not a task that requires extraordinary skill or understanding. It requires the kind of normal skepticism and willingness to apply one's analytical skills that almost all people have and that they can exercise.

—Noam Chomsky

COMMUNITY NOTES

Don't be left out! Join the BCA/NorthBridge planning group—plan to implement MA citizens trade commission, plan campaign to dump corporate personhood, discuss entrapment of officials—call Barbara Clancy for time of next meeting: 781-894-1179.

Chuck Turner Screwed

Boston City Councilor **Turner**—fighter for economic justice, critic of corrupt system, caught in sting operation— will be sentenced on 25 January. Read 2 articles and 2 comments about it and what you can do about it on Pages 1 and 12-14 of this issue.

Move-to-Amend Walkers Reach DC

With a little help from the Alliance for Democracy and other groups, Laird and Robin Monahan, 69 and 67, walked across the USA, educating folks about the Citizens United fiasco and the necessity of amending the Constitution. (*Continued, Page 16*)

Chomsky's Challenge

Interviewing MIT Engineers About 9/11

by Dave Lewit, Alliance for Democracy, 11 October 2010

MAGGIE ZHOU AND I—A MOLECULAR BIOLOGIST AND A SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGIST—were challenged to find out what MIT engineers think of the collapse of the World Trade Center's (WTC) Building 7. Armed with a portable player and a 5-minute "Building 7" segment of the hour-long DVD "9/11 Mysteries" (2007), we descended on the student center cafeteria and professors' offices in the Civil & Environmental Engineering department. We were driven by Professor Noam Chomsky's disdain for "the 9/11 Truth industry" and their "insane conspiracy theory" which implies that the fall of the Twin Towers of New York's World Trade Center in the aerial attacks of 2001 might be an "inside job". [See Page 3, below.] He challenged his audience in a recent lecture to go to MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) and ask the experts. So we did.

Maggie and I were concerned mostly with the collapse of the 47-story Building 7 which was not hit by an aircraft but by some hurtling parts of the exploding towers, sustaining small fires fueled evidently by diesel oil stored in the building along with emergency oxygen supplies. The building suddenly collapsed several hours after being evacuated following the hits on the towers. It's top buckled downward ("crimp") and then went totally down at near free-fall speed, (*Continued on Page 2>>*)



Chuck Turner, center, and Michael J. Sullivan

In 2007 Bush-appointed Sullivan, as US district attorney for Massachusetts, ordered the entrapment of Councilor Turner by the FBI's corruption squad. Chuck has been an outspoken promoter of the interests of Boston's minority communities and critic of its corrupt political system.

When Sting is King

Chuck Turner: "Guilty", Energized

by Dave Lewit, Alliance for Democracy, 31 October 2010

THIS WAS A "BIZARRE" PROCEEDING, according to a headline in the *Boston Globe*. Veteran Boston City Councilor Chuck Turner from the mainly-black Roxbury district including parts of Fenway, South End, and Dorchester—known for his ardently principled pro-democracy community organizing, his system reform activism, and simple life-style—was on trial in October for "attempted extortion" and three counts of "lying to FBI agents" in his district office. All of which he denied. Here was the rare councilor who had voted "no" on council pay increase. Here was the only councilor who has maintained a district office, at his own expense, to better serve his constituents. After eight days of testimony and a day and a half of deliberation, the jury returned a verdict of "guilty" on all four counts.

A Martignetti wholesale liquor employee had been called to the witness stand in the sparkling glass and marble US District Court on the Boston waterfront. Under systematic questioning by US prosecutor John McNeil, she testified that more than 99 percent of the liquors they—and competing wholesalers—sold to package stores, restaurants, bars, etc., were manufactured out of state. Why such questioning in a local corruption trial? Because this case could not be brought to a federal court unless "interstate commerce" was involved—the alleged briber had wanted a liquor license. A bit of a stretch for FBI involvement in local corruption cases. This also meant that the jury could be—and was—selected from all over the state including areas unfamiliar with Boston doings. Among the sixteen or so jurors and alternates were two black faces, one Asian, and the rest white.

The case against Chuck Turner (*Continued on Page 12 >>*)

INTERVIEWING MIT ENGINEERS (Continued from Page 1)

neatly into its footprint, generating huge clouds of toxic dust from its constituent materials. Buildings 3, 4, 5, and 6—closer to the towers—were more seriously damaged, and burned, but none collapsed. Building 7 was virtually unknown to the public outside New York City and ignored by the mainstream media.

Exploring Student Opinion

Before approaching the professors, we tried out our DVD with several pairs of young people having lunch. One engineering undergrad watched for a minute and then lectured us on fire-weakened steel and “exploding oxygen”—similar to explanations offered in reports by the National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST). The second engineering undergrad was silent, but also rejected the idea of controlled demolition by set explosives. They both wanted more information on where the stored diesel and oxygen tanks in building 7 were.

At the next table two toxic waste removal workers under contract to MIT fully accepted the idea of controlled demolition, noting the extremely improbable form of the collapse. At yet another table the one mechanical engineering student who was not preoccupied with his own laptop watched carefully and rated the collapse “probably” a controlled demolition.

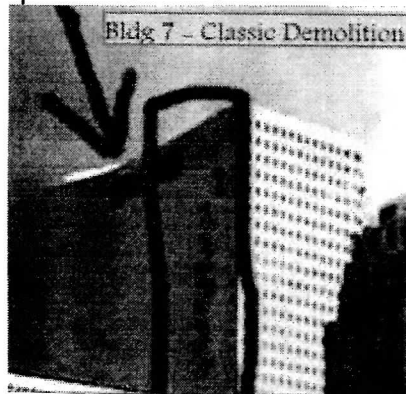
Now come the professors. It being around class time, most of the offices were locked, but we managed to talk with three professors in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering and one more the following day. The first, evidently retired, said he had no expertise on any of the WTC buildings, but offered that burning office paper provided enough heat to weaken the steel skeleton of the towers, yielding to the weight of floors collapsing from above. He said he knew nothing about Building 7, but referred us to Professor Eduardo Kausel who had studied the Tower collapses. We approached the department head, who was on his way to teach a class, and he also referred us to Kausel, saying that Kausel was the only one in the department who had studied the WTC collapses.

An Engineering Department's Expert

This was an experience. The award-winning professor Kausel, who teaches structural dynamics, had been shocked to see the towers falling on TV, and within hours was writing a paper on this, finished it within a few days, and circulated it among his colleagues, who “liked it”. This paper, accessible in the online book *The Towers Lost and Beyond* (May 2002) which Kausel edited, apparently framed his investigation of other sources and energized his conversation with us. The burden of his explanation was the fire-generated “pancaking” theory which, as a consultant, he shared with NIST—as well as *The New York Times*—which featured it and which became the basic explanation of the official US investigative commission. The sounds described by firemen as sequential explosions around the perimeter of a tower Kausel attributed to the “ratchet-like” (approximately 9 per second) noise of floors hitting one another at nearly free-fall speed. He was very brief with this, but good-naturedly belabored the craziness of science fiction and movie kooks who want to believe that explosives were planted and used to bring the towers down. We gently stated that we were not sci-fi or movie fans but were PhD scientists looking for sound explanations of any anomalies that have been put forward by many architects and engineers. That made no difference. “It’s a free country,” he repeated. “People believe all sorts of things. They can believe what they want.”

Regarding Building 7, in response to our questions and not having watched our DVD, Kausel speculated that the specially heavy floor on which the mayor’s emergency control center was located might have forced collapse of the floors below, rather than a partial collapse. He said he did not investigate Building 7, and had no curiosity as to why it collapsed, or what questions other people have been raising about it, because he already has his explanations for 9/11 and the twin towers, and as far as he’s concerned, the matter is closed.* He ignored the squibs and flashes visible in later-appearing videos. He deflected mention of recent nanothermite findings indicating high-level explosives.

Years later MIT linguistics professor Noam Chomsky, annoyed by frequent e-mailers and not willing to discuss the physical evidence of 9/11, was saying much the same thing as his engineering colleagues, perhaps taking their word for it. In



Marked photo of Building 7, 2-3 seconds into collapse. Arrow points to crimp at penthouse. Daubs inside box are where windows exploded outward.

conversation, one gets the sense that Professor Kausel was the passing bandwagon of MIT on this issue, having been loaded with overall explanatory responsibility where only a few others issued more limited speculations, having approached the matter theoretically with sparse data on only a few available parameters.

Granted that Prof. Kausel had students waiting to see him, he seemed dismissive or defensive—mocking fanciful and prejudiced layper-

sons almost as a conclusion—rather than being open to evidence of explosives inferred by some practicing engineers and materials scientists studying the emerging evidence such as is reflected in Sofia Shafquat’s “9/11 Mysteries”, and most recently, chemistry professor Niels Harrit’s study of residues of extremely explosive nanothermite in WTC’s dust, online at *Open Chemical Physics Journal*.

Another Scientist's View

The fourth MIT professor contacted (by DL alone) was Ted Postol, an award-winning, engineer-physicist professor of Science, Technology and International Security, who has had extensive experience with the US military and has been critical of government and industry distortion of ballistic missile defense capability. Now watching the Building 7 DVD for the first time, he recalled his immediate reaction nine years ago when he saw on TV the first tower coming down: Phone some influential person in New York and tell them to evacuate the second tower immediately! This, because the huge shock waves of the first building collapsing could be transmitted through the ground, weakening the structure of the second tower. If big fires were to break out in the second tower, it too could come down!

Professor Postol had not tried to research the WTC or Building 7 in particular, but offered two hypotheses: one based on fire and the other on explosives. Either might be true. The fire hypothesis would be plausible if the diesel-based fires noted in Building 7 were extensive enough—building up heat over the 6 or more hours before the building

(Continued on Page 4 >>)

Giant with Clay Feet

Noam Chomsky's Dismissal of 9-11 Truth

FOR DETAILED CRITIQUE OF US IMPERIALISM it is hard to match that of Noam Chomsky, MIT professor emeritus of linguistics, establishment critic, and "world's foremost intellectual". I have heard him speak extemporaneously many times, always quoting the news and opinion surveys of the day as well as recent and remote facts of political history. His dry wit skewering the illogic of perpetrators and apologists of the right and sometimes of the left endears him to thousands many of who may turn out for any one lecture. He is generous with his time for questions and comments, even by mail (he responded personally and at length to two of mine).

Chomsky is a system thinker whose remarks are invariably framed by his (and our) anarchistic convictions based on humanistic values of justice, compassion, and truth. He is loved probably because he is adamant in defense of democratic principles against the self-serving "realities" insisted upon by establishment institutions and agents who define America's boons and threats, friends and enemies. These are the verities and indignities which resonate with and reinforce his audiences. Because of such redundancies, I have stopped attending his lectures, frequent in the Cambridge area. If I have missed something, his notoriety assures reports and video recordings of his recent and even 8-year-old appearances and interviews, plentifully posted on the internet.

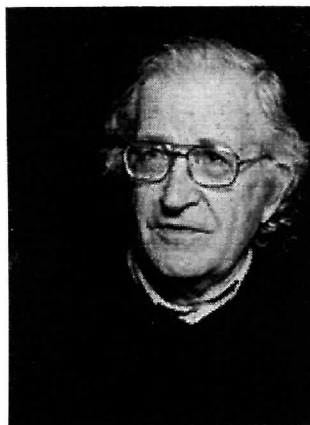
It is among these documents that I found elaboration of the few offhand refusals I have witnessed of requests for his analysis of the catastrophic crashes and building collapses at New York's World Trade Center and at the Pentagon on 11 September 2001. Chomsky adamantly avoids comment beyond denigration of the 9-11 Truth "industry" and his insistence on how focus on 9-11 distracts from allegedly far more significant concerns.

His reasoning on this issue is at odds with his truth-seeking on most other issues. He has asserted that corporate powers probably like and encourage the 9-11 Truth controversy because, he says, it distracts people from scrutinizing wars and other ongoing disasters and their causes. Amazingly, he asserts that 9-11 as an insider conspiracy would be "insane" and of "no significance"—ignoring not just the absence of criminal investigation but largely ignoring its function as reason or pretext for US invasion of Afghanistan and expansion of military operations to Iraq and Pakistan as well, not to speak of demonizing of Arabs, Muslims, and Islam in general, and the consequent undermining of democratic public institutions and civil liberties at home—matters of great concern to him.

Here is a man who overwhelms audiences with facts, yet he never addresses the myriad interrelated facts around 9-11, saying merely that allegations of controlled demolition are groundless or else evidence would appear in "peer-reviewed journals" like *Nature*, *Science*, or engineering journals. I have found no comment of Chomsky's about discovery around the World Trade Center site of dust containing nanothermite—a rare, extremely energetic explosive associated with the US military—published in Volume 3 of the peer-reviewed *Open Chemical Physics Journal*. (Might Chomsky then insist on "well-established" peer-reviewed journals?)

Nanothermite is capable of explosively cutting through the steel skeletons of the WTC buildings which cannot have been

cut or melted—leaving angle-cut pillars and pools of molten steel—by aviation fuel. Chomsky derisively asks why 9-11 critics have not sought answers from MIT engineering faculty, saying that "only one or two" engineers [anywhere] support the demolition theory. (Are MIT professors with Dept of Defense grants or contracts immune to establishment pressures?) He ignores the more than 1000 certified architects and engineers whose credentials and statements appear on AE911Truth.org condemning the official US 9-11 Commission's report and averring the likelihood of controlled demolition with pre-set explosives—not likely the work of alien Muslim conspirators.



Most amazingly, Chomsky is silent about the evidence amassed by the highly reputable professor David Ray Griffin, who has devoted much of the last eight years to research and publication featuring massive evidence concerning 9-11, with the inevitable conclusion that the orchestrated destruction was an "inside job" with controlled demolition and corporate benefits. (Griffin says he likes Chomsky's thinking generally.) Chomsky instead dismisses this hypothe-

sis as absurd, saying that the operation would have to be so big that someone would surely have leaked inside information. One wonders why alien Muslim lips should be any more sealed than American lips.

Many people refuse to look at the video evidence on the collapse not just of the twin towers, but of Building 7 in the WTC, several hours after the plane crashes on Buildings 1 and 2. In addition to critical Securities & Exchange Commission case files on WorldCom and Enron, and FBI and CIA offices, Building 7 housed the mayor's Emergency Control Center (which conceivably could deploy aircraft guidance equipment similar to drone-control equipment—there has been no investigation) vacated by the mayor's staff shortly before 9/11. Like the towers, the 47-story Building 7 mysteriously collapsed at free-fall speed straight down into its footprint, with tell-tale crimping of the top section first, as in controlled demolitions of other skyscrapers. Chomsky is silent about this, despite the easy availability of videos on the internet.

Let me speculate, giving Chomsky the benefit of the doubt. He seems to use virtually only written evidence. He does not speak of his personal observations of public events, nor does he often refer to videos even of trusted sources. He is careful to cite only authoritative sources, nevertheless placing confidence in surveys of non-expert folks' opinions. (Never mind that half of New Yorkers told Zogby interviewers in 2004 they believed the US to be complicit in 9/11 attacks.)* Noam, have you read Griffin: *The New Pearl Harbor Revisited*, *Debunking 9/11 Debunking*, *The Mysterious Collapse of World Trade Center 7*, or other recent, reputable 9-11 books critical of the official story? Have you viewed the 9-11 videos? Have you seen the horizontal blow-outs (squibs), consistent with firemen's reports of explosions, around the towers? Have you noted the near-free fall speed of the collapses of all three buildings? Or do you discount them all? Do you still believe the Bush-appointed commission's report, which hardly mentioned Building 7? Or the earlier MIT engineers' conjectures with which the commission report is consistent? Have you considered subsequent

evidence?

In a recent appearance Chomsky expressed great irritation at the "hundred letters" he receives daily from 9-11 skeptics, some asking him to do his duty to comment, saying that these skeptics purport to become civil engineers by spending an hour or two on the internet. How are citizens to judge anything? [See his self-contradictory quotation at the top of page 1, above]. This kind of put-down is not characteristic of this democratic activist professor. It is strange that he says nothing about ever having seen the videos with his own eyes. Does he not trust his visual perception? Is this author of *Manufacturing Consent*—book and film—one hundred percent verbal?

Chomsky has repeatedly refused to speculate about futures—about the probable effects of reforms or political transformations. Or about what to do other than participating somehow in the World Social Forum and related human rights and solidarity movements. Perhaps this is why he avoids speculating on the consequences of investigation and exposure of 9-11 truths covered up in the official reports—NIST's (National Institute of Standards and Technology, which discussed the physics of collapse), the Commission's, and others. He seems to differ sharply with those who say that exposing 9-11 truth would shake the whole US imperial enterprise to its roots, and possibly revolutionize US politics.

—D.L.

* www.zogby.com/news/readnews.cfm?ID=855

MIT ENGINEERS ON 9/11 (Continued from Page 2)

collapsed—to soften its shaken steel skeleton at the base. Once the mass of the building above the fires started to move downward, the collapse would likely be immediate and vertical. He did not know enough about the building or the fires to say how the central columns would give way first, as indicated by the crimp in the top floor before the rest of the building came down—a phenomenon critics attribute to timing of explosions by demolition experts.

He agreed that controlled demolition was also possible, but doubted that proof could be kept secret, since a hundred or more workers and agents would have to have been involved in a project of this size. Asked about the squibs—the horizontal spurts of smoke visible in videos below the collapsing upper floors of the towers attributed to explosives by critics—he guessed that they might have resulted from weak spots in the buckling peripheral columns under suddenly increased pressure from falling upper stories.

I gather that evidence regarding the temperature, location, and duration of the fires in Building 7 would be critical in any investigation. But who will come forth with evidence?

Professor Postol teaches students in the School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, and welcomed for possible use in classes the DVDs which I proffered concerning the collapse of all three WTC buildings, and concerning nanothermitic products found in the dust of the collapses.

After 9/11

Causes aside, the consequences are what troubles Postol. Toward the end of our hour he turned the conversation to the development here of a police state—fascism—which gained impetus from the 9/11 events. President Bush was foolish and cowardly to run from his responsibility to return immediately to Washington and deal positively with public panic and military disposition. The ongoing and looming loss of life and liberty far surpass that of 9/11 itself. The event has been exploited by

large organizations, he said. Postol is concerned that we work to create real security.

These few hours of seeking out engineering students and professional experts, none of whom examined the remains at Ground Zero, were suggestive though hardly definitive. None of the people we interviewed had seen or read materials of the critics of the official 9/11 commission report. Surely folks in the Alliance for Democracy and many others share Ted Postol's concerns regarding a police state and the challenge of creating the conditions for real security—with freedom and justice.

However, we believe that the process of justice in the case of 9/11 and of systemic change requires knowing the causes, including who orchestrated the events and why. There was no regular police investigation—amazing with this gigantic crime, but only a reflex military attack in geopolitically strategic Afghanistan supposedly to root out al-Qaeda, the small set of terrorists immediately judged to have trained or directed those who enacted the 9/11 attacks.

I parted from Ted Postol with the suggestion that he review evidence of possible CIA, FBI, and/or Pentagon involvement in this war-and-repression-triggering catastrophe in books by David Ray Griffin (e.g., *The New Pearl Harbor Revisited* and *The Mysterious Collapse of World Trade Center 7*), John Perkins (*Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*), and James Douglass (*JFK and the Unthinkable*).

Postol said that, in his experience with government, there have been unusual cases of maintaining complete secrecy. But let us hope that, in a new investigation with subpoena powers, some insider or insiders—Arab or American—will come forward. ■

* Prof. Kausel did advise on a Master of Engineering thesis by Jeremy A. Kirk entitled *The World Trade Center Disaster: Analysis and Recommendations*, dated June 2005. In it there is no mention of explosives. His review of MIT publications cited nothing beyond the papers in Kausel (2002) on web. Kirk does not cite Griffin or any other critic of the official 9/11 story. Griffin's *The New Pearl Harbor: Disturbing Questions About the Bush Administration and 9/11* was published in March 2004, and his *9/11 Commission Report: Omissions and Distortions* in Nov, 2004.

Unlikely Diaspora

Young Israelis Moving to Berlin

Associated Press, *Jerusalem Post*, 19 September 2010

NIRIT BIALER, GRANDDAUGHTER OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS, welcomes listeners in Hebrew to a one-hour radio show of music, talk and interviews. The setting isn't her native Israel but a radio station in the heart of the German capital—and hundreds of Israeli Berliners are tuning in.

The city from which Hitler unleashed the genocide of 6 million Jews is now attracting a small but growing community of Jews from Israel for whom it embodies freedom, tolerance, and an anything-goes spirit.

"Berlin has become a real magnet for Israelis—everybody wants to move here," said Bialer, 32, whose Friday noon "Kol Berlin," Hebrew for "the voice of Berlin," started three years ago and is something of an institution for young Israelis in Berlin. Nobody knows exactly how many Israelis have moved here in recent years; unofficial estimates suggest 9,000 to 15,000—far fewer than the 120,000 Jews who lived in Berlin before the Nazis came to power in 1933. But their presence is a powerful symbol of generational change. Years ago, Israelis viewed emigration from their country as a betrayal of the Zionist cause, and moving to Germany was reviled as the worst betrayal of all. Many wouldn't set foot in Germany even as tourists.

Today, Israelis make up the second-largest group of non-European tourists coming to Berlin, after Americans. The streets of Tel Aviv feature billboards featuring Berlin's landmark Brandenburg Gate as a tourist attraction. The Israelis who come to stay are looking to work, study, party and make art, and don't seem to care much about the Nazi past. They arrive on student visas, overstay tourist permits or have German or other European ancestry that entitles them to citizenship. Many start families with German partners, far from the tensions of the Middle East.

"I love Israel, but I just couldn't live there anymore—it's like a small village and so militaristic," explained Lea Fabrikant, a photography student who arrived two years ago. "Most of all, I needed freedom and space, and I found it here." Fabrikant, 26, said she lived through the many suicide bombings in Jerusalem, her home town, during the 1990s, and loves Berlin's tranquility, relaxed spirit and affordability for students and artists. Germany's past, she said, "doesn't affect me at all."

New Jewish community

On the other hand, Asaf Leshem, a 36-year-old travel guide, said his move three years ago had much to do with his family's past in Germany. He has walked through the Schoeneberg neighborhood where his grandfather lived as a child before emigrating in 1938, and visited the family plot at the Jewish cemetery in Weissensee. Leshem thinks his grandfather, were he alive, would have supported his decision. "The Nazis ruled Germany for twelve years and many German Jews felt like the Nazis abducted the country from them," Leshem said. "They also had good memories, especially from their childhood in Germany, how they used to go on trips to the Baltic Sea or go for a swim in Berlin's Grunewald forest." Leshem grew up in Israel but says he feels a bit German himself and appreciates German culture.

For those who miss the flavors of home there are Israeli delicatessens, bakeries, bars and child care groups. Berlin is friendly to gays, and the Israelis among them throw a monthly party, called "Meshuggah"—Yiddish for "crazy."

Udi Cohen, 32, wandered around the US and Europe for years before settling in Berlin. He opened "Luigi Zuckermann," a bistro in Berlin's Mitte district where he sells sandwiches and salads with an Israeli twist. "In Israel, I couldn't function, I couldn't find a job, but here I'm fine and enjoy the vibe and energy of the city," he said.

Gal Bar-Adon, 27, learned trombone in Berlin and produces dancefloor music that he said is played in clubs across the city and beyond. "Israel is simply too small," he said. "There's not enough of an audience for my kind of music."

Bialer said that despite Berlin's attraction, living here also means coming to terms with Germany's past. She notices that sustained conversation with Germans inevitably shifts to the Nazi era. "It can be exhausting, it can be liberating—but it is a sure thing that at some point we will talk about the Holocaust," she said. When the grandchildren of the victims and of the perpetrators meet for the first time, the experience can be sensitive and guilt-ridden.

Living here has also made Bialer more aware of her Jewishness. "In Israel you don't think about what it means to be Jewish because everybody is celebrating Shabbat or the Rosh Hashana" (Sabbath and Jewish New Year), she said. "In Germany, you suddenly realize who you are as a Jew and you're different from everybody else around you." In the end, Bialer said, an Israeli influx could start to fill the void left by the

Holocaust. "I think there's something growing here: A new Jewish community in Berlin."

WikiLeaks War Update

Typical Routine Killing Report

by Robert Koehler, CommonDreams.org, 28 October 2010

WIKILEAKS HAS GIVEN US ANOTHER COLD BATH IN REALITY: "As the vehicle approached Post 7, the Marines on post used hand and arm signals but the vehicle did not yield. The Marine at Post 7 employed a pop-up flare when the approaching vehicle was 200m S of the post and the vehicle continued.

"The Marine on post then engaged the vehicle with (30) rounds of 7.62mm when the vehicle broke the plane of the 'no penetration line' 50m south of Post 7. The vehicle traveled an additional 15m toward post 7 before coming to a stop. . . .

"The Marine that engaged from Post 7 was unable to determine the occupants of the vehicle due to the reflection of the sun coming off the windshield. The EOF resulted in (1) NKIA and (4) NWIA. All casualties were in the vehicle. The (1) NKIA was an adult IZ female (mother). The (4) NWIA consisted of: (1) NWIA adult IZ male, urgent (father), (1) NWIA adult IZ female, routine (daughter), and (2) NWIA children IZ females, routine (daughters). There was an additional IZ child (daughter) in the vehicle that was not injured. The (4) NWIA were medevaced to Fallujah surgical. I 3/8 escorted and turned over the female IZ KIA to the imam of the Al Subiahah."

EOF: escalation of force. NKIA: national (i.e., native Iraqi) killed in action. NWIA: national wounded in action. IZ: International (i.e., Green) Zone.

Last week the superpower-defying website, in collusion with unknown U.S. military personnel, posted 391,832 field reports from Iraq—SIGACTs, in military-speak, or significant actions in the war—including the checkpoint incident above. They're all rendered in the same style, with the sensitivity of ledger notes at a meat-processing plant.

This extraordinary leak is itself a SIGACT—a direct penetration of military secrecy and public display of war in the raw, free of spin and propaganda. This is why, from the military point of view, it is such an outrage. No war-making enterprise can sustain itself without serious information control and the home-front dominance of its inviolate core message: We are good and our enemies are evil.

From what I can tell, the primary significance of the leak is the act itself: the sheer comeuppance of it. Last summer, after WikiLeaks released a similar cache of field reports from Afghanistan, the Pentagon struck a note of stern moral gravity to vilify the website. "The truth," said Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "is that they might already have on their hands the blood of some young soldier or that of an Afghan family" — this, from War Crime Central, the bloodiest perps on the planet. Damage control begins by professing a reverence for "the troops" and all other innocents, otherwise known as the fodder of our wars of choice and aggression.

The field reports, written between May 2004 and March 2009, itemize a total of 109,032 deaths in the Iraq war: 66,081 are listed as civilians; 23,984 are insurgents; 15,196, Iraqi government forces; and 3,771, coalition forces.

Among the starker revelations: Some 1,300 incidents of torture of detainees, including rape and murder, at the hands of Iraqi security forces, were reported by U.S. soldiers up the

chain of command, but were never investigated; and 832 Iraqis were killed at checkpoints, of whom 681 were civilians, including 30 children.

Blood on our hands!

"The reports make it clear that most civilians, by far, were killed by other Iraqis," Sabrina Tavernise and Andrew W. Lehren wrote in the *New York Times* last week, subtly downplaying American responsibility for the horror that Iraq has gone through over the past seven-plus years. The article does look at some of the U.S.-generated carnage described in the field reports, including what it calls "misunderstandings" at checkpoints, but it misses—as all of the mainstream U.S. media continually miss—what might be called the "Nuremberg significance" of the WikiLeaks disclosures.

Robert Parry, the former AP reporter who broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s, put it this way a few days ago in Consortium News:

"Assessing the barbarity unleashed by the Nazis, the Nuremberg Tribunal identified 'war of aggression' as 'the supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole.'

"What those judges meant was that every evil that comes with war — the slaughter of civilians, the brutality faced by soldiers, the depredations of hunger and disease, the destruction of homes and businesses, the temptation to torture, and all other war crimes — can all be traced back to the original crime of invasion."

We started this war and, in so doing, shattered the nation of Iraq. We bear responsibility for "the accumulated evil of the whole" — which is far greater than the stats and unvarnished details of the WikiLeaks disclosures. American soldiers weren't writing field reports about environmental damage, escalating rates of cancer and birth defects or their own PTSD, but these hellish consequences also stem from the crime we launched, with near-universal mainstream media support, at the beginning of the last decade.

I applaud WikiLeaks for daring to rip the frock of respectability off the criminals in high places in the U.S. government.

Robert Koehler is an award-winning, Chicago-based journalist, contributor to One World, Many Peoples and nationally syndicated writer. His new book, Courage Grows Strong at the Wound (Xenos Press) is now available for pre-orders. Contact him at koehlercw@gmail.com or visit his website at commonwonders.com.

Reading War on China

US Builds SuperBase on Guam

by Praveen Swami, Telegraph UK, 25 Oct 2010

THE US IS BUILDING AN £8 [\$13] BILLION SUPER MILITARY BASE on the Pacific island of Guam in an attempt to contain China's military build-up. The expansion will include a dock for a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, a missile defense system, live-fire training sites and the expansion of the island's airbase. It will be the largest investment in a military base in the western Pacific since the Second World War, and the biggest spend on naval infrastructure in decades.

However, Guam residents fear the build-up could hurt their ecosystem and tourism-dependent economy. Estimates suggest that the island's population will rise by almost 50 per cent from its current 173,000 at the peak of construction. It will eventually house 19,000 Marines who will be relocated from

the Japanese island of Okinawa, where the US force has become unpopular.

The US's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has said that this could trigger serious water shortages. The EPA said that dredging the harbour to allow an aircraft carrier to berth would damage 71 acres of pristine coral reefs. The EPA's report said the build-up would "exacerbate existing substandard environmental conditions on Guam".

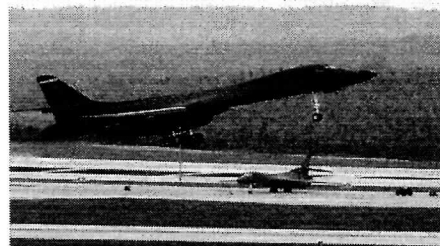
Local residents' concerns, however, have been sidelined by the US-China strategic competition. China has significantly expanded its fleet during the past decade, seeking to deter the US from intervening militarily in any future conflict over Taiwan, which Beijing claims as its own, and to project power across disputed territories in the gas and oil-rich South China Sea. Beijing's naval build-up is also intended secure the sea lanes from the Middle East, from where China will import an estimated 70-80 per cent of its oil needs by 2035 supplies it fears US could choke in the event of a conflict. China has therefore invested in what are called its "string of pearls" a network of bases strung along the Indian Ocean rim, like Hambantota in Sri Lanka and Gwadar in Pakistan and in developing a navy which can operate far from home.

Experts agree China does not currently have the capability to challenge US supremacy in the Pacific and Indian Ocean. "China has a large appetite", says Carl Ungerer, an analyst at Australian Strategic Policy Institute, "but it hasn't got enough teeth". But China clearly intends to add bite to its naval arsenal. The country has acquired several modern Russian-made submarines and destroyers. Its shipyards are building new nuclear-powered submarines, as well as an aircraft carrier. There have also been reports that China is planning to test a new type of ballistic missile, the Dong Feng 21D, which would effectively render US carriers defenseless.

"China's charm offensive is over", says Ian Storey, an expert at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore, "and its given way to what you might call an adolescent foreign policy. The country's flexing its muscles, letting us know it won't be pushed around".

The US is also investing another £126 [\$204] million on upgrading infrastructure at the British-owned Indian Ocean atoll of Diego Garcia, 700 miles south of Sri Lanka. Key among the upgrades at Diego Garcia, which are due for completion in 2013, will be the capability to repair a nuclear-powered guided-missile submarine which can carry up to 154 cruise missiles striking power equivalent to that of an entire US aircraft carrier battle group.

Diego Garcia, which has served as a launch-pad for air strikes on Iraq and Afghanistan, is already home to one third of what the US navy calls its Afloat Prepositioned Force equipment kept on standby to support military deployment anywhere in the world.



A B-1B Lancer takes off from Andersen Air Force Base in Guam in 2003.

Photo: GETTY

Privately Produced "Public" TV PBS Much the Same as Commercial TV

by Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting (FAIR), 19 Oct 2010

A MULTI-PART FAIR EXPOSÉ OF PBS's most prominent news and public affairs programs demonstrates that public television is failing to live up to its mission to provide an alternative to commercial television, to give voice to those "who would otherwise go unheard" and help viewers to "see America whole, in all its diversity," in the words of public TV's founding document.

In a special November issue of studies and analyses of PBS's major public affairs shows, FAIR's magazine *Extra!* shows that "public television" features guestlists strongly dominated by white, male and elite sources, who are far more likely to represent corporations and war makers than environmentalists or peace advocates. And both funding and ownership of these shows is increasingly corporate, further eroding the distinction between "public" and corporate television. There is precious little "public" left in "public television."

FAIR undertook the examination following news last fall that PBS was canceling *Now* and that Bill Moyers was retiring from *Bill Moyers Journal*. PBS announced that it was replacing the two shows, which exemplified the public broadcasting mission, with "Need to Know", a news magazine launched in May and anchored by two journalists from the corporate media world. FAIR's study of the first three months of *Need to Know*'s guestlist and segments finds that its "record so far provides little encouragement that it will ever serve as an adequate replacement for "Now" and the "Bill Moyers Journal." The program's heavily white (78 percent) and male (70 percent) guestlist failed to "break out of the narrow corporate media box." Corporate representatives outnumbered activists 20 to 12. And black people appeared overwhelmingly on stories on drugs and prisons.

PBS NewsHour

If PBS's signature news show is any indication, the system is doing little to help us "see America whole, in all its diversity."

- The NewsHour's guestlist was 80 percent male and 82 percent white, with a pronounced tilt toward elites who rarely "go unheard," like current and former government and military officials, corporate representatives and journalists (74 percent). Since 2006, appearances by women of color actually decreased by a third, to only 4 percent of U.S. sources.
- Women and people of color were far more likely to appear as "people on the street" providing brief, often reactive soundbites, than in more authoritative roles in live interviews.
- Viewers were five times as likely to see guests representing corporations (10 percent v. 2 percent) than representatives of public interest groups who might counterweigh such moneyed interests—labor, consumer and environmental organizations.
- While Democratic guests outnumbered Republican guests nearly 2-to-1 in overall sources, Republicans dominated by more than 3-to-2 in the program's longer format, live segments. (FAIR's 2006 NewsHour study, which examined a period when Republicans controlled the White House and Congress, showed Republican guests outnumbering Democrats in both categories: 2-to-1 among all sources, 3-to-2 in the longer live interviews.)
- On segments about the BP Gulf of Mexico oil spill, the most frequent story of the study period, viewers were four times as likely to see representatives hailing from the oil industry (13 per-

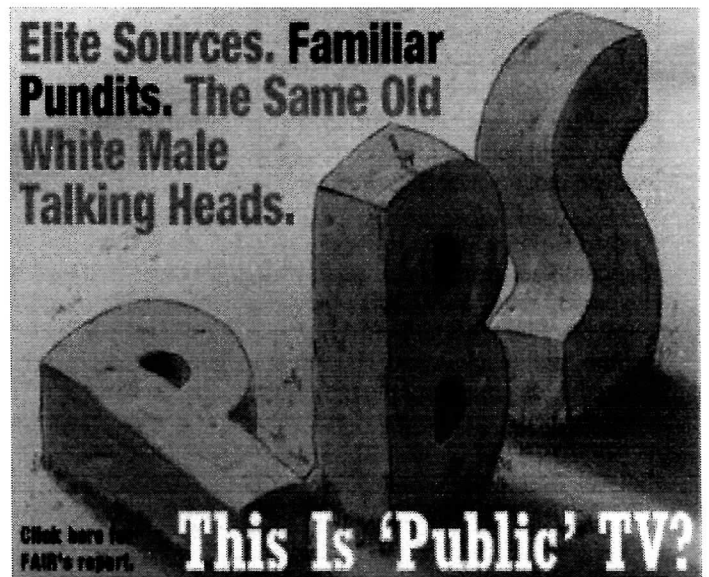
cent of guests) as representatives of environmental concerns (3 percent).

- On segments focusing on the Afghan War, though polls show consistent majorities of Americans have opposed the war for more than a year, not a single NewsHour guest represented an antiwar group or expressed antiwar views. Similarly, no representative of a human rights or humanitarian organization appeared on the NewsHour during the study period.

The NewsHour, "public TV's nightly newscast," is actually privately owned. For-profit conglomerate Liberty Media has held a controlling stake in the NewsHour since 1994. The company is run by industry bigfoot John Malone, who has declared that "nobody wants to go out and invent something and invest hundreds of millions of dollars of risk capital for the public interest." Public dollars still support the NewsHour, and former PBS president Ervin Duggan declared the show "ours and ours alone," but Liberty CEO Greg Maffei refers to the program as "not our largest holding," but "one we're very proud of."

And it's not just the NewsHour. The "Nightly Business Report" was sold earlier this year by public station WPBT to a private company. The details of the deal—which shifts the most-watched daily business show on television into private hands—are mostly unknown.

The "Charlie Rose Show"—a show produced outside the PBS system but widely carried on public television stations—boasts a remarkably narrow guestlist. FAIR found the most common guests (37 percent) were reporters from major media outlets, and corporate guests, well-known academics and government officials also made frequent appearances. Of the 132 guest appearances, just two represented the public interest voices that public television is supposed to highlight (equaling the number of celebrity chefs who appeared). Eighty-five percent of guests were male, and U.S. guests were 92 percent white.



"Washington Week", the longest-running public affairs show on public television, suffers from similar problems—which would seem to be by design, given the show's inside-the-Beltway focus. In four months of programs (May-August 2010), Washington Week presented 29 [64] reporter guests; only one did not represent a corporate-owned outlet. Only four of 64 appearances by guests were by non-white panelists (6 percent), and the guestlist was 61 percent male. ■

Judge Ponders Drone Protests Even Remote Controllers Stress Out

by John Dear, CommonDreams.org, 18 September 2010

FOURTEEN ANTI-WAR ACTIVISTS MAY HAVE MADE HISTORY today in a Las Vegas courtroom when they turned a misdemeanor trespassing trial into a possible referendum on America's newfound taste for remote-controlled warfare." That's how one Las Vegas newspaper summed up our stunning day in court on Tuesday, when fourteen of us stood trial for walking on to Creech Air Force Base last year on April 9, 2009 to protest the U.S. drones.

We went in hoping for the best and prepared for the worst. As soon as we started, the judge [William Jansen] announced that he would not allow any testimony on international law, the necessity defense or the drones, only what pertained to the charge of "criminal trespassing." With that, the prosecutors called forth a base commander and a local police chief to testify that we had entered the base, that they had given us warnings to leave, and that they arrested us. They testified that they remembered each one of us. Then they rested their case.

We called three expert witnesses, what the newspaper called "some of the biggest names in the modern anti-war movement:" Ramsey Clark, former U.S. attorney general under President Lyndon Johnson; Ann Wright, a retired U.S. Army colonel and one of three former U.S. State Department officials who resigned on the eve of the 2003 invasion of Iraq; and Bill Quigley, legal director for the New York City-based Center for Constitutional Rights. We presumed they would not be allowed to speak. All fourteen of us acted as our own lawyers, and were not allowed any legal assistance, so members of our group took turns questioning our witnesses, and trying not to draw the judge's wrath.

Lo and behold, the judge let them speak, and they spoke for hours. They were brilliant. They spoke about the meaning of "trespassing," and the so-called necessity defense and international law, which allows citizens to break minor laws in adherence to a higher law.

Ramsey Clark, looking like Atticus Finch [protagonist lawyer in Harper Lee's novel *To Kill A Mockingbird* —Ed.] on the stand, said it was a duty. They cited the classic example of someone driving down a street, seeing a house on fire, noticing a child in the third floor window, hearing the screams, breaking through the front door, violating the no trespass law, and entering the house to save the child.

"[People] are allowed to trespass if it's for the greater good—and there are certainly exceptions [to the law] when there is an emerging, urgent need," said Quigley. He cited the history of protesters who broke petty laws, from our nation's founders to the Suffragists to the civil rights activists who illegally sat in at lunch counters. In the long run, we honor them for obeying a higher law, for helping to bring us toward justice, he said. Unfortunately, there is a gap between "the law" and "justice," and so, he explained, the struggle today is to narrow that gap. The best test is through "a hundred year vision," he explained. That is, how will this law and ruling be seen one hundred years from now?

The prosecutors challenged each witness, but their questions only enabled the witnesses to speak further on our behalf. When they were asked if they actually knew us, the prosecutors and judges were stunned to hear that they were our friends, in some cases, lifelong friends. When the prosecutors presented

our experts' articles from the internet in order to discredit them (such as Bill Quigley's superb Common Dreams piece, "Time for a U.S. Revolution—Ten Reasons"), that only added fuel to their fire. Bill launched into an eloquent plea for citizens to stand up and work for nonviolent change.

Through carefully crafted questions, the defendants were able to extract several key points from their witnesses:

- Intentional killing is a war crime, as embodied in U.S. constitutional law.
- Drone strikes by U.S. and coalition forces kill a disproportionate number of civilians.
- People have the right, even the duty, to stop war crimes.
- According to the Nuremberg principles, individuals are required to disobey domestic orders that cause crimes against humanity.

After our experts testified, co-defendant Brian Terrell told the judge we would now call five of us to take the stand. The judge said he would not recommend that. So our group huddled together for a minute.

"He's sending us a signal," co-defendant Kathy Kelly said. "He's telling us not to call any more witnesses, that if one of us testifies that we crossed the line under cross examination, he will have no choice but to find us guilty. Let's rest our case." So, despite days of preparation, we did. With that, Brian Terrell stood up and delivered a short, spontaneous closing statement. It was one of the most moving speeches I have ever heard. Here are excerpts. Several of our witnesses have employed the classic metaphor when talking of a necessity defense:

There's a house on fire, and a child crying from the window and there's a no trespassing sign on the door. Can one ignore the sign, kick down the door and rescue the child?...

It was a great privilege for us to hear Ramsey Clark, a master of understatement, who put it best. "Letting a baby burn to death because of a no trespass sign would be poor public policy."... I submit that the house is on fire and babies are burning in Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan because of the activities at Creech AFB... The baby is burning also in the persons of the young people who are operating the drones from Creech AFB, who are suffering from post traumatic stress disorder at rates that even exceed that of their comrades in combat on the ground... [Emphasis ours. —Ed.]

Colonel Ann Wright testified that soldiers do pay attention to what is going on in the public forum, and that they do respond to a "great debate" in the public sphere. There is no great debate going on about drone warfare in our country. Some have noted that the trend toward using drones in warfare is a paradigm shift that can be compared to what happened when an atomic bomb was first used to destroy the city of Hiroshima in Japan...

When Hiroshima was bombed, though, the whole world knew that everything had changed. Today everything is changing, but it goes almost without notice. I hesitate to claim credit for it, but there is certainly more discussion of this issue after we were arrested for trespassing at Creech AFB on April 9, 2009, than there was before...

Judge Jansen, we appreciate the close attention you've given to the testimony you've heard here. The question that you asked Bill Quigley, "Aren't there better ways of making change than breaking the law?", is a question we are often asked and that we often ask ourselves... It was a question that was asked of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1963 when he was in jail in Birmingham, Alabama. Several clergy people of Birmingham wrote a letter to Dr. King asking him the very same questions

that you asked Professor Quigley. Isn't there a better way? Why sit-ins? Why marches, why protests? Isn't negotiation the better way?

Dr. King's reply to these questions—in his famous Letter from the Birmingham Jail, which is regarded by many as one of the finest things ever written in the English language—heartily agreed that negotiation is the better way. But, he said that a society that refuses to face crucial issues needs "nonviolent gadflies" using direct action to raise the level of awareness and raise the level of "creative tension" for a society to rise from the depths of monologue to the majestic heights of dialogue, where the great debate that Colonel Ann Wright says we need, can happen...

The house is on fire. And we fourteen are ones who have seen the smoke from the fire and heard the cries of the children. We cannot be deterred by a "No Trespassing" sign from going to the burning children.

As he finished, Brian burst into tears and sat down. Many in the courtroom wept. Then Judge Jansen stunned us by announcing that he needed three months to "think about all of this" before he could render a verdict. He marked twenty-five years on the bench just the day before, he said, and this was his first trespassing case and he wanted to make the best decision he could. There is more at stake here than the usual meaning of trespassing, he noted. The prosecutors were clearly frustrated and disappointed. With that, we were assigned a court date of January 27, 2011 to hear the verdict. As he left, he thanked the fourteen of us and the audience, and then seemed to give a benediction: "Go in peace!" Everyone applauded.

"By all accounts, the Creech 14 trial is the first time in history an American judge has allowed a trial to touch on possible motivations of anti-drone protesters," the local paper said.

While I wish he had immediately found us Not Guilty and sent a signal to the U.S. military that these weapons are illegal, it was astonishing to watch this judge begin with his hostile directives and then slowly listen to the testimony of our friendly experts, and then conclude that he needed more time to seriously consider their argument. That alone was a minor victory. I wish everyone in the United States would take time to reconsider our drone program, beginning with the president, the Secretary of State, Pentagon officials, military officers, and Creech Air Force Base employees. The more one thinks about it, the more we realize how terrifying it is, and the harm it will inflict on the whole world for generations to come.

We saw that future as we walked onto Creech Air Force Base on April 9, 2009. We wanted to rescue the children and civilians who are being killed by our "Unmanned Aerial Vehicles," as they're called.

I hope and pray the judge will "think" about the drones, and issue a verdict on our behalf, on behalf of all the victims of our drones, on behalf of the world's children, that we might reject the drones, learn nonviolent ways to resolve international conflict, and let everyone live in peace.

John Dear is a Jesuit priest, activist, and author of 25 books on peace and nonviolence including Daniel Berrigan: Essential Writings (2009), A Persistent Peace, and Put Down Your Sword. He writes a weekly column for the National Catholic Reporter at www.NCRonline.org.

Ed. Comment: This is a great first step in changing modern warfare. It is "modern" because it follows the same pattern of technological superiority for the last 200 years from the start of the industrial revolution and the upswing of capitalism, and the last 500 years in terms of overwhelming force in warfare—

"guns, germs, and steel" (see Jared Diamond's book of that title).

Now it is clear that modernism is biting us in the ass, and will soon consume us all if we don't take radical steps to change the system. The Creech Fourteen took a radical step. It will be a great day when public schools in our great cities begin to teach nonviolent resistance and the necessity to humanize law and our Constitution—or constitutions of as many autonomous parts of America as may be necessary. Nonviolent resistance was half of Gandhi's teaching and practice. The other half is social construction—not just ending war but building means of water and sanitation for all on earth, educating for critical and constructive thinking and experimentation in practice, and for brother/sisterhood.

Education Film and Reality

"Waiting for Superman" Touts Business Model

by Rick Ayers, *The Washington Post*, 27 September 2010

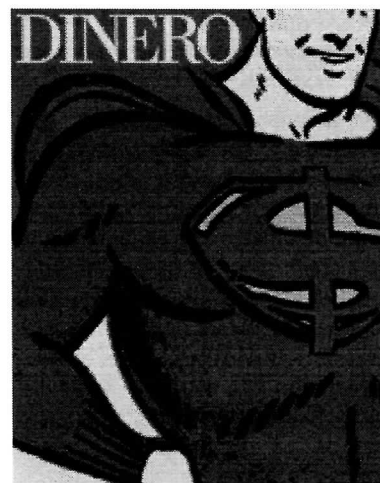
Ed. Note: The big-screen documentary film "Waiting for Superman" was made by Davis Guggenheim, the same writer-director-producer who made "Inconvenient Truth" with Al Gore about our disastrous climate change. "Superman" focuses on shortcomings in public schooling and teacher inadequacy, touts semi-private, non-union "charter" schools, and repeatedly shows the anxiety of families who undergo public lotteries for their kids to get into charter schools, or—mostly—not. The superman idea suggests that ordinary people are helpless to improve their children's education.

WHILE THE EDUCATION FILM "WAITING FOR SUPERMAN" has moving profiles of students struggling to succeed under difficult circumstances, it puts forward a sometimes misleading and other times dishonest account of the roots of the problem and possible solutions.

The amped-up rhetoric of crisis and failure everywhere is being used to promote business-model reforms that are destabilizing even in successful schools and districts. A panel at NBC's Education Nation Summit, taking place in New York today and tomorrow, was originally titled "Does Education Need a Katrina?" Such disgraceful rhetoric undermines reasonable debate.

Let's examine these issues, one by one:

Waiting for Superman says that **lack of money** is not the problem in education.



Yet the exclusive charter schools featured in the film receive large private sub-sidies. Two-thirds of Geoffrey Canada's Harlem Children's Zone funding comes from private sources, effectively making the charter school he runs in the zone a highly resourced private school. Promise Academy is in many ways an excellent school, but it is dishonest for the filmmakers to say nothing about the funds it took to

create it and the extensive social supports including free medical care and counseling provided by the zone.

In New Jersey, where court decisions mandated similar programs, such as high quality pre-kindergarten classes and extended school days and social services in the poorest urban districts, achievement and graduation rates increased while gaps started to close. But public funding for those programs is now being cut and progress is being eroded. Money matters! Of course, money will not solve all problems (because the problems are more systemic than the resources of any given school)—but the off-handed rejection of a discussion of resources is misleading.

*Waiting for Superman implies that **standardized testing** is a reasonable way to assess student progress.*

The debate of “how to raise test scores” strangles and distorts strong education. Most test score differences stubbornly continue to reflect parental income and neighborhood/zip codes, not what schools do. As opportunity, health and family wealth increase, so do test scores. This is not the fault of schools but the inaccuracy, and the internal bias, in the tests themselves.

Moreover, the tests are too narrow (on only certain subjects with only certain measurement tools). When schools focus exclusively on boosting scores on standardized tests, they reduce teachers to test-prep clerks, ignore important subject areas and critical thinking skills, dumb down the curriculum and leave children less prepared for the future. We need much more authentic assessment to know if schools are doing well and to help them improve.

*Waiting for Superman ignores overall problems of **poverty**.* Schools must be made into sites of opportunity, not places for the rejection and failure of millions of African American, Chicano Latino, Native American, and immigrant students. But schools and teachers take the blame for huge social inequities in housing, health care, and income.

Income disparities between the richest and poorest in U.S. society have reached record levels between 1970 and today. Poor communities suffer extensive traumas and dislocations. Homelessness, the exploitation of immigrants, and the closing of community health and counseling clinics, are all factors that penetrate our school communities. Solutions that punish schools without addressing these conditions only increase the marginalization of poor children.

*Waiting for Superman says **teachers' unions** are the problem.*

Of course unions need to be improved—more transparent, more accountable, more democratic and participatory—but before teachers unionized, the disparity in pay between men and women was disgraceful and the arbitrary power of school boards to dismiss teachers or raise class size without any resistance was endemic.

Unions have historically played leading roles in improving public education, and most nations with strong public educational systems have strong teacher unions.

According to this piece in *The Nation*, “In the Finnish education system, much cited in the film as the best in the world, teachers are—gasp!—unionized and granted tenure, and families benefit from a cradle-to-grave social welfare system that includes universal daycare, preschool and health care, all of which are proven to help children achieve better results in school.”

In fact, even student teachers have a union in Finland and, overall, nearly 90% of the Finnish labor force is unionized. The demonization of unions ignores the real evidence.

*Waiting for Superman says **teacher education** is useless.* The movie touts the benefits of fast track and direct entry to teaching programs such as Teach for America, but the country with the highest achieving students, Finland, also has highly educated teachers. A 1970 reform of Finland’s education system mandated that all teachers above the kindergarten level have at least a master’s degree. Today that country’s students have the highest math and science literacy, as measured by the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), of all the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) member countries.

*Waiting for Superman decries **tenure** as a drag on teacher improvement.*

Tenured teachers cannot be fired without due process and a good reason: they can’t be fired because the boss wants to hire his cousin, or because the teacher is gay (or black or...), or because they take an unpopular position on a public issue outside of school.

A recent survey found that most principals agreed that they had the authority to fire a teacher if they needed to take such action. It is interesting to note that when teachers are evaluated through a union-sanctioned peer process, more teachers are put into retraining programs and dismissed than through administration-only review programs. Overwhelmingly teachers want students to have outstanding and positive experiences in schools.

*Waiting for Superman says **charter schools** allow choice and better educational innovation.*

Charters were first proposed by the teachers' unions to allow committed parents and teachers to create schools that were free of administrative bureaucracy and open to experimentation and innovation, and some excellent charters have set examples. But thousands of hustlers and snake oil salesmen have also jumped in. [Italics ours throughout. —Ed.]

While teacher unions are vilified in the film, there is no mention of charter corruption or profiteering. A recent national study by CREDO, The Center for Research on Education Outcomes at Stanford University, concludes that only 17% of charter schools have better test scores than traditional public schools, 46% had gains that were no different than their public counterparts, and 37% were significantly worse.

While a better measure of school success is needed, even by their own measure, the project has not succeeded. A recent Mathematica Policy Research study came to similar conclusions. And the Education Report, *The Evaluation of Charter School Impacts*, concludes, “On average, charter middle schools that hold lotteries are neither more nor less successful than traditional public schools in improving student achievement, behavior, and school progress.”

Some fantastic education is happening in charter schools, especially those initiated by communities and led by teachers and community members. But the use of charters as a battering ram for those who would outsource and privatize education in the name of “reform” is sheer political opportunism.

*Waiting for Superman glorifies **lotteries** for admission to highly selective and subsidized charter schools as evidence of the need for more of them.*

If we understand education as a civil right, even a human right as defined by the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, we know it can't be distributed by a lottery. We must guarantee all students access to high quality early education, highly effective teachers, college and work-preparatory curricula and equitable instructional resources like good school libraries and small classes. A right without a clear map of what that right protects is an empty statement.

It is not a sustainable public policy to allow more and more public school funding to be diverted to privately subsidized charters while public schools become the schools of last resort for children with the greatest educational needs. In *Waiting for Superman*, families are cruelly paraded in front of the cameras as they wait for an admission lottery in an auditorium where the winners' names are pulled from a hat and read aloud, while the losing families trudge out in tears with cameras looming in their faces—in what amounts to family and child abuse.

Waiting for Superman says **competition is the best way to improve learning.**

Too many people involved in education policy are dazzled by the idea of "market forces" improving schools. By setting up systems of competition, Social Darwinist struggles between students, between teachers, and between schools, these education policy works are distorting the educational process.

Teachers will be motivated to gather the most promising students, to hide curriculum strategies from peers, and to cheat; principals have already been caught cheating in a desperate attempt to boost test scores. And children are worn out in a sink-or-swim atmosphere that threatens them with dire life outcomes if they are not climbing to the top of the heap.

In spite of the many millions of dollars poured into expounding the theory of paying teachers for higher student test scores (sometimes mislabeled as 'merit pay'), a new study by Vanderbilt University's National Center on Performance Incentives found that the use of merit pay for teachers in the Nashville school district produced no difference even according to their measure, test outcomes for students.

Waiting for Superman says **good teachers are key to successful education.**

We agree. But *Waiting for Superman* only contributes to the teacher-bashing culture which discourages talented college graduates from considering teaching and drives people out of the profession.

According to the Department of Education, the country will need 1.6 million new teachers in the next five years. Retention of talented teachers is one key. Good teaching is about making connections to students, about connecting what they learn to the world in which they live, and this only happens if teachers have history and roots in the communities where they teach.

But a recent report by the nonprofit National Commission on Teaching and America's Future says that "approximately a third of America's new teachers leave teaching sometime during their first three years of teaching; almost half leave during the first five years. In many cases, keeping our schools supplied with qualified teachers is comparable to trying to fill a bucket with a huge hole in the bottom."

Check out the reasons teachers are being driven out in Katy Farber's book, *Why Great Teachers Quit: And How We Might Stop the Exodus*, (Corwin Press).

Waiting for Superman says "we're not producing large numbers of **scientists and doctors** in this country anymore. . .

This means we are not only less educated, but also less economically competitive."

But Business Week (10/28/09) reported that "U.S. colleges and universities are graduating as many scientists and engineers as ever," yet "the highest performing students are choosing careers in other fields." In particular, the study found, "many of the top students have been lured to careers in finance and consulting." It's the market, and the disproportionately high salaries paid to finance specialists, that is misdirecting human resources, not schools.

Waiting for Superman promotes a nutty theory of learning which claims that teaching is a matter of **pouring information into children's heads.**

In one of its many little cartoon segments, the film purports to show how kids learn. The top of a child's head is cut open and a jumble of factoids is poured in. Ouch! Oh, and then the evil teacher union and regulations stop this productive pouring project.

The film-makers betray a lack of understanding of how people actually learn, the active and engaged participation of students in the learning process. They ignore the social construction of knowledge, the difference between deep learning and rote memorization.

The movie would have done a service by showing us what excellent teaching looks like, and addressing the valuable role that teacher education plays in preparing educators to practice the kind of targeted teaching that reaches all students. It should have *let teachers' voices be heard.*

Waiting for Superman promotes the idea that we are in a **dire war for US dominance in the world.**

The poster advertising the film shows a nightmarish battlefield in stark gray, with a little white girl sitting at a desk in the midst of it. The text: "The fate of our country won't be decided on a battlefield. It will be determined in a classroom."

This is a common theme of the so-called reformers: We are at war with India and China and we have to out-math them and crush them so that we can remain rich and they can stay in the sweatshops.

But really, who declared this war? When did I as a teacher sign up as an officer in this war? And when did that 4th grade girl become a soldier in it? *Instead of this new educational Cold War, perhaps we should be helping kids imagine a world of global cooperation, sustainable economies, and equity.*

Waiting for Superman says federal "**Race to the Top**" education funds are being focused to support students who are not being served in other ways.

According to a study by the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights under Law, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., and others, Race to the Top funds are benefiting affluent or well-to-do, white, and "abled" students. So the outcome of *No Child Left Behind* and *Race to the Top* has been more funding for schools that are doing well and more discipline and narrow test-preparation for the poorest schools.

Waiting for Superman suggests that teacher improvement is a matter of increased control and **discipline over teachers.**

Dan Brown, a teacher in the SEED charter school featured in the film, points out that successful schools involve teachers in strong collegial conversations. Teachers need to be accountable to a strong educational plan, without being terrorized. Good teachers, which is the vast majority of them, are seeking this kind of support from their leaders.

Waiting for Superman proposes a reform “solution” that exploits the feminization of the field of teaching; it proposes that teachers just need a few good men with hedge funds (plus D.C. Schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee with a broom) to come to the rescue.

Teaching has been historically devalued—teachers are less well compensated and have less control of their working conditions than other professionals—because of its associations with women. For example, 97% of preschool and kindergarten teachers are women, and this is also the least well-compensated sector of teaching; in 2009, the lowest 10% earned \$30,970 to \$34,280; the top 10% earned \$75,190 to \$80,970. (—Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008). By comparison the top 25 hedge fund managers took in \$25 billion in 2009, enough to hire 658,000 new teachers.

* * *

Waiting for Superman” could and should have been an inspiring call for improvement in education, a call we desperately need to mobilize behind.

That’s why it is so shocking that the message was hijacked by a narrow agenda that undermines strong education. It is stuck in a framework that says that reform and leadership means doing things, like firing a bunch of people (Rhee) or “turning around” schools (Education Secretary Arne Duncan) despite the fact that there’s no research to suggest that these would have worked, and there’s now evidence to show that they haven’t.

Reform must be guided by community empowerment and strong evidence, not by ideological warriors or romanticized images of leaders acting like they’re doing something, anything. “Waiting for Superman” has ignored deep historical and systemic problems in education such as segregation, property-tax based funding formulas, centralized textbook production, lack of local autonomy and shared governance, de-professionalization, inadequate special education supports, differential discipline patterns, and the list goes on and on.

People seeing “Waiting for Superman” should be mobilized to improve education. They just need to be willing to think outside of the narrow box that the film-makers have constructed to define what needs to be done.

Rick Ayers is a former high school teacher, founder of Communication Arts and Sciences small school at Berkeley High School, and currently adjunct professor in teacher education at the University of San Francisco. He is the co-author, with his brother William Ayers, of the forthcoming Teaching the Taboo from Teachers College Press.

Thanks for ideas and some content from many teacher publications, and especially from Monty Neill, Jim Horn Lisa Guisbond, Stan Karp, Erica Meiners, Kevin Kumashiro, Ilene Abrams, Bill Ayers, and Therese Quinn.

CHUCK TURNER TRIAL (Continued from Page 1)

was based on the notion that he took a bribe to help an applicant named Ron Wilburn to get a liquor license, which had been denied to his nascent supper club in Roxbury, by putting pressure on the Massachusetts Alcoholic Beverages Control Commissioner and/or the Boston Licensing Board. Because a license ultimately was issued to Wilburn’s proposed establishment, and because as an undercover agent he had been trained and wired (audio and video) and loaded with cash by the FBI, Wilburn appeared in Chuck’s Roxbury office “to show his gratitude”—supposedly slipping Chuck \$1000 in a handshake. [Disclosure: I have worked with Chuck on various Alliance projects and other civic projects, and consider him a friend; hence the familiar appellation.]

Many of the details of the trial are recounted in the accompanying article by Gintautas Dumcius in the *Dorchester Reporter*. In actuality Chuck was not interested in Wilburn’s getting a license, but in Roxbury and surrounding “minority” areas (south of Massachusetts Avenue) getting their fair share of licenses. Despite those areas having been designated an “economic development zone”, the coveted, money-making licenses had been distributed only to establishments outside this district. To help, Chuck had called a city council hearing on the issue, which was canceled, and supported a state-level bill to increase the number of liquor licenses to be issued.

The trial was largely involved with who said what to whom, when, and for how long, together with showing of the FBI secret video several times. The video, shot through a tiny hole in the FBI’s special briefcase inconspicuously aimed by Wilburn, fuzzily revealed two buff streaks (ignored in the proceedings) and “something” greenish between the two hands in the goodbye handshake following (or preceding?) Wilburn’s audio-recorded comment to “take the wife to dinner.” It could have been a folded \$50 bill, the maximum cash allowable under Council gift or campaign contribution rules. (Five-hundred dollars is allowed by check.)

Chuck testified that he had no recollection of the incident—he sees 50-60 visitors a month and this was more than three years ago. The prosecutor told the jury that it was the “sly slip” of a \$1000 “wad” of cash, implying sly recipient rather than sly agent. Chuck had never asked for anything, nor had he implied favor for favor, nor was there any such evidence. According to Barry Wilson, the defense lawyer, he had been “doing his job” of assuring equitable treatment for people south of Massachusetts Avenue. Read Dumcius’ article for further details. For my court experience and reflections, and for a taste of Chuck’s current, post-conviction energy, read on...

Moral Considerations

First, I was aghast at the openness and pride shown by the FBI agents in their undercover work—the scheming and wiretapping and lying and rigging of equipment and dispensing of public money. I was incensed at their immunity from prosecution for doing daily what they prosecute others for—the immorality of it all. Their *agent provocateur*, Mr. Wilburn, referred to his “doing their dirty work”, and was very angry at the FBI for short-changing him and “hanging me out to dry” (after they paid him \$29,099 for similar work on both state senator Dianne Wilkerson and Chuck Turner)—exposing him, thereby ruining his later chances for certain employment or business deals. (Following the trial Chuck referred to Wilburn, who also is black, as a “puppet” and “handkerchief-head”.)

Here was a case where the FBI knew that their victim was the most honest and dedicated politician in the city, but an active critic of the system of greed and corruption long evident on Beacon Hill. So they set out to *make* a criminal of him. To my mind, their business should be to *find* criminals and gather evidence to convict them—criminals whose activities have had a significant detrimental effect on the commonwealth, like the big fish in the State House who over time have taken hundreds of thousands in kickbacks. (Chuck testified that possibly 90 percent of Boston politicians are corrupt, himself among the other 10 percent, which seemed to rattle the prosecutor.)

The next thing that struck me was the niggling and myopic processes of the courtroom. Every word uttered by a witness must be instantly calculated to be “true” but inoffensive, avoiding the loaded terms introduced by the prosecutor. Hesitation is a minus. The defense called only one witness (against the

advice of counsel): Chuck Turner himself. Why didn't they also call a law professor with a degree in philosophy to explain what "lying" or "extortion" really were? These concepts—charges—are often complex and contextually nuanced. Yet Reagan-appointed Judge Woodlock let the jury be focused on the passing of cash, yes or no, endlessly repeated by the prosecutor. To my mind, "extortion" refers to premeditated, forcefully and underhandedly seeking to take something valuable from somebody—literally, "twisting out". Was Michael J. Sullivan, the Bush-appointed US district attorney who sicced the FBI onto Chuck in 2007, practicing extortion when he unethically moved local cases to his federal jurisdiction? (After the trial Chuck told his supporters that Clinton-appointed US district court Judge Nancy Gertner accused Sullivan of as much, the accompanying lies forcing cases to be dropped.) It is rumored that Sullivan was trying to prosecute a sensational case to help him become the next Governor. Extortion?—Chuck evidenced no such motive. So conversely, what is "entice"ment—an action by the FBI, not the defendant? *Lead us not into temptation...* Still, as Wilburn told a reporter, "they are going to *crucify* his ass."

The judge interrupted now and then to caution the witnesses and the prosecutor and defense lawyer to stick to the narrow details of the case, to refer only to oral testimony given in that courtroom in that trial and written documents and recordings shown there, and to block from their mouths and ears unauthorized contextual information. For example, the judge admonished the jury not to think of "entrapment"—motives for choosing targets of sting operations. With limited context, how can jurors form meaningful conceptions of "knowing" and "willing" actions—as opposed to inadvertently receiving something? It's a bit like testing chemicals in a test-tube, isolated from the many elements of their natural environments, with arbitrarily chosen reagents, and with only yes-or-no results. And the jury were not to consider the harm done or not done by the subject of the charges (or perhaps by the prosecutor). Nor the consequences of conviction.

Energy

All these misgivings seemed to melt away as I listened to Chuck Turner, free on bail, speak extemporaneously to a crowd of about 200 on the lawn in front of his Roxbury office the chilly day after the verdict. Chuck was in highly energetic form. After a long historical introduction highlighting an emerging fascistic regime here, he viewed the prospect of jail as one of joining the distinguished company of others unjustly imprisoned. He commented on the unsavory character of Wilburn and his associates, and on the racist motives and lack of shame of prosecutor McNeil and the FBI in trying to destabilize the community of color—where progress is being made in empowering workers and the unemployed, and against discrimination—racial, gender, and economic. His strategy, he said, is first to build economic democracy, prioritizing the building of public infrastructure with jobs for people of all backgrounds.

Chuck emphasized the importance of moral education for children—not buying into the philosophy of white male supremacy—as well as systemic understanding, involving both mind and heart. "Our purpose on earth is not to party, but to bring about [positive] change," he said. He vowed, as a life-long organizer, that he would organize in prison (if he landed there). In part because this could rankle authorities and because he could accomplish more by continuing to organize in the community, he is asking his supporters to recommend that Judge Woodlock grant probation when he passes sentence on January 25th. He also asks supporters to write to Michael Ross,

current president of the city council, to postpone council action on his possible removal from the council until Judge Woodlock pronounces sentence.

On January 25th we shall see whether the Court is complicitous in the immorality of sting, and the persecution of radicals who challenge the largely corrupt system.

Please Note: *Addresses are: Hon. Michael Ross, President, Boston City Council, One City Hall Square, Suite 550, Boston MA 02201-2043. Hon. Douglas P. Woodlock, United States District Judge, One Court-house Way, Suite 2300, Boston MA 02210. Please send your letter for Judge Woodlock to Hon. Chuck Turner, Boston City Council, One City Hall Square, Suite 550, Boston MA 02201-2043, for passing on to the Probation Office which advises the judge.*

Two Insights Posted on the Web

Does anyone know if the prosecution proved intent—that is, that Turner would not have helped Wilburn get a license if he had not been given money, or conversely that in Turner's mind there was a connection between the money he took from Wilburn and the attempt to get Wilburn a re-hearing on the license issue? I believe that Turner in his mind knows he is innocent because he would have helped Wilburn whether or not he was given money by Wilburn. I hope there will be an appeal on this basis. [*Ed. Note: Chuck Turner says he will not appeal.*]

—**Sandra Foster**, *United for Peace with Justice* web site

Regarding Chuck Turner's conviction, let me see if I have this straight. Banks, oil companies, pharmaceuticals and communications conglomerates all pour hundreds of millions of dollars into the campaign chests of United States senators. In return they often get to help write the legislation that means billions of dollars to them through subsidies, contracts and regulations. (As one prominent Senator remarked recently, "the banks own this place"). But the Supreme Court rules that this is just fine.

On a much smaller scale, it is well known that **developers in Boston contribute heavily to Mayor Menino's campaigns** for re-election. These developers do lots of profitable business with the city through the Mayor's office once the election is won. But the last I looked, Tom Menino is still the Mayor because this is just fine.

Then there is this week's news: The FBI, without any indication that Councilor Turner was on the take, paid a covert operative thousands of dollars to shove one thousand dollars into Turner's hand—even though Turner never asked for any money—precisely to see if they could nail the City Councilor by videotaping this **unsolicited exchange**. This cash payoff to the FBI's informer in exchange for the FBI getting what it wanted is evidently just a fine thing to do. Councilor Turner insists he never received the thousand dollars. But the Jury decided that the Councilor did in fact have one thousand dollars put in his hand and that, evidently, because he did not give back the money he never asked for, he is guilty of extortion and could get 20 years in jail. All this despite the fact that there is no indication that Turner ever performed the very service he allegedly was paid off to perform.

Tens of thousands of dollars or even hundreds of millions of dollars handed out with very visible results is just fine. But a piddly \$1,000 with no evident result is made into a federal case. **Talk about straining out the gnat and swallowing the camel!**

—**Paul Shannon**, *submitted to Boston Globe, 30 Oct 2010*

The Chuck Turner Trial

Winds Its Way to the Truth

by Gintautas Dumcius, *Dorchester Reporter*, 28 Oct 2010

STANDING BY THE COURTHOUSE ELEVATORS minutes after wrapping up his testimony, Roxbury businessman Ron Wilburn, the star witness in City Councillor Chuck Turner's corruption trial, predicted that the jury would "crucify" Turner. In taking the stand a day later, the six-term city councillor may well have crucified himself.

Acting against the advice of his attorneys, Turner testified, leaving himself open to pointed and uncomfortable questions from the federal prosecutor. And those questions gave way to uncomfortable answers from the defendant. "I don't remember," Turner said repeatedly, when asked what happened in meetings with Wilburn.

Turner, a member of the Green-Rainbow Party who represents Dorchester and Roxbury on the City Council, is charged with accepting a \$1,000 bribe in exchange for action in his capacity as a district councillor and with allegedly making false statements to the FBI in denying he had met with Wilburn. Turner has maintained his innocence.

His prospects seemed brighter last week. "Looking up for Chuck," the *Boston Herald* said on its Saturday front page, adding at the bottom, "Feisty Turner faces down feds after week of prosecution missteps."

In his cross-examination of Wilburn, Turner's lead attorney, Barry Wilson, worked to raise reasonable doubt, questioning Wilburn's credibility and seeking to point out numerous inconsistencies between what Wilburn was telling the jury in his testimony, what he had told a grand jury that had handed up the indictments, and what he said when he was covertly taping and recording Turner as a cooperating witness for the FBI.

Wilburn repeatedly said that he handed Turner money and it was never returned, but he frequently added that FBI agents told him it was \$1,000. Additionally, the FBI apparently didn't follow the usual protocol in counting out and showing the money on camera.

FBI agents seemingly blundered again when they appeared at Turner's City Hall office in October 2008, just after Dianne Wilkerson, then still a state senator, had been arrested for taking more than over \$23,000 in bribes from Wilburn and undercover federal agents. If the agents believed Turner would help them bolster their case against Wilkerson, they displayed a shocking lack of knowledge of local politics and about Turner, who has called the FBI "evil" and relishes fights with institutions he argues are out to get him.

Turner has committed plenty of mistakes himself. Declining to talk to an FBI agent without a lawyer present is a pretty normal thing for anyone to do. Instead, that day in his office, Turner launched into what even he admitted was an angry "diatribe." He says he believed they were involved in the removal of a Liberation movement flag from City Hall Plaza and that the agency has a history of "setting people up."

Then there was his highly questionable decision to testify on his behalf on Tuesday. He admitted that Wilburn had handed him "something" during their Aug. 2007 sitdown, but he kept adding that he had no memory of the meeting, and he was going off of [i.e., describing] the FBI tape. He maintained that he had a responsibility to testify as a public official and proclaim his innocence.

Asked by the prosecutor, John McNeil, what was the "something" Wilburn put in his hand, Turner answered, "I don't know." Something changed hands, McNeil said. It looked like it, Turner responded, but he said he couldn't see. "I don't remember what happened that day," he added.

But Turner did recall a five-minute phone conversation with the chairman of the city's Licensing Board on the liquor license that is at the heart of the trial, which happened before the face-to-face sitdown with Wilburn, McNeil said.

Earlier, under questioning from one of his attorneys, Turner noted that he meets with 50 to 60 people in his district office per month. And he added that he had never received the kind of cash the FBI says Wilburn handed to him.

After Turner finished his first day of testimony, he stepped outside and held forth for several minutes with reporters while behind him, his lawyers slipped away, almost unnoticed.

A television reporter chased them down while other reporters remained with Turner, who started to wave around a spiritual guidebook in his hands.

"Do you wish he had not testified?" the television reporter asked Wilson. "I don't have any comment," Wilson said.

Quote of Note: Chuck Turner on his trial's potential place in history—"Before [it's] over, this could become the trial of the decade." That's what he wrote on a blog he was posting to as the trial was getting underway. Let's put aside the fact that it's the start of the decade, so there's plenty of time for somebody to top a fairly thin case against a district city councillor in Boston who is also a member of a left-leaning political party [Green-Rainbow] that barely gets any traction in this state. ■

ACORN Declares Bankruptcy

Are Those Gutless Dems Still in Congress?

by Greg Kaufmann, *The Nation*, 3 November 2010

ON THIS ELECTION DAY, WHEN DEMOCRATS STAND TO SUFFER at the polls, and fewer voters have registered than in previous midterm elections, it seems sadly ironic that ACORN has declared bankruptcy.

This is the final chapter in the long and winding rightwing witch hunt against an organization that stood for poor and working people on issue after issue. As Bill Moyers described the community-based group: "More than any group I've covered over my long career in journalism, ACORN was devoted to helping poor people become their own best champions."

Yet despite ACORN's mission and history, when the rightwing echo chamber targeted it for destruction too few Congressional Democrats stood in the way. Fox played "shocking" videos of a "sting operation" against ACORN ad nauseam, and rather than questioning the source and content, too many Democrats failed to do due diligence and instead acted cravenly in passing unconstitutional legislation to defund the group.

Never mind ACORN's track record of registering millions of new voters, fighting predatory lending, rebuilding homes in New Orleans, helping wage and hour enforcement—rightwing operative James O'Keefe had racy videos featuring a pimp, a prostitute, and complicit ACORN employees.

Except that he didn't.

When Rachel Maddow and others exposed that the videos were fabricated, and the Congressional Research Service, former Massachusetts Attorney General, Brooklyn District Attorney General, and California Attorney General—in all there were at least 46 federal, state, and local investigations—cleared

ACORN of wrongdoing, it was too late. Eighteen months of screaming headlines and brutal attacks against the anti-poverty group had taken their toll.

As ACORN CEO Bertha Lewis wrote in a letter posted on the organization's website today, "The pressure and cost of defending ourselves in multiple investigations as a result of the falsified videos has eroded our organization. As a result we will be filing Chapter 7 bankruptcy by close of business today."

You can bet the leaders and activists of this storied organization aren't going anywhere. There will be new organizing efforts and new campaigns. Hopefully this time around they will be able to count on their allies when an emboldened rightwing tries to take them down again.

Ed. Comment: With the GOP more obstructionist and deceptive now than ever, what must be done to empower the oppressed in this country? Many Americans—voters and nonvoters—are stupified by TV, its ads and its racist, jingoist "pundits" and talk show hosts, and diverting and misleading entertainment. Two stratagems: (1) strengthen independent and public media, and (2) promote alternative activities (or rest & recreation) more attractive than watching TV, or hearing it or talk radio incessantly as one works or walks around the house.

In 2009 the Pentagon spent more than \$4.7 billion on propaganda, public relations, and psychological operations. Can the US president (also as commander-in-chief) transfer that money, and perhaps the technical personnel, to new civil public media, democratically run?

To deal with mainstream media, can we change patent and copyright law, which focuses on corporate-approved music, networks, and software at the expense of local culture, enterprise, and control? Can we change law regarding slander and defamation to inhibit producers and distributors of fake, misleading documentaries (like the ACORN sting) and ads? More fundamentally, can we be weaned from slick Hollywood and NY-type products and iphones, and move toward local live entertainment, local experts, stories, personalities, and media production?

We might start with media literacy in elementary schools, with field trips for kids to see teleprompters, makeup, and contrived events—hands on!

LETTERS

Dispatch Useful to Arizona Reader

I just wanted to give kudos for another excellent newsletter! I eagerly await the *BCA Dispatch* each time and devour it from front to back. It is such an excellent publication because you use a wide variety of sources and present information that is otherwise hard to find.

I am organizing a Chautauqua this coming Saturday (9/11) for an Independent candidate for state senate on the topics of "Democracy and Governance" and C.J. Jones (formerly of Mendocino AfD, now in Tucson) will be giving a talk on Corporate Personhood and MoveToAmend for the Chautauqua. I'll be talking about Envision Spokane (which failed on their first attempt to put a Community Bill of Rights into their city charter) and Participatory Budgeting (a good way to enliven Democracy at the local level.)

So, the "Frack" article about people in Pittsburgh working on a local "bill of rights" ordinance was of interest to me in light of Spokane's failure with their bill of rights. It will be interesting to see how that plays out. Of course, a charter amendment is a bit different than an ordinance, but time will tell. I hope you will be able to report on how Pittsburgh's ordinance turns out and if it

fails, what were the likely causes. Then, there was your article on Participatory Budgeting, including the short additional article on some bad outcomes of PB...very timely information for the short overview I'll be giving.

The article by Rick Jurmain is a powerhouse! I wanted to ask you if we can get permission to copy it to hand out. I also appreciated the Costa Rica story because I had received alarming email notices about our warships heading that way and wondered what that was all about.

The "New England Win-Win Strategy" article is very useful because just yesterday, I attended a debate for the four candidates for this state senate seat (of the Independent candidate mentioned above.) One of the candidates, a very earnest and likable young man—Republican candidate, former AF pilot, just-graduated-and-passed-the-bar lawyer, believes that economically, we have to endure more cuts and pain to rebuild the economy **before** we can consider working on education. Now, mind you, AZ is in dire straits economically and we're #50 in education, which faces even more cuts. We (two Independents and one Democrat v. the one Republican) happen to believe that education is one of the basic investments that need protection from cuts. So, this article is one I will forward to him to read because it cites research bolstering our view that investing in education is critical for a healthy economy...not the other way round. Maybe it will help open his eyes to a different reality.

Re: the Gulf of Mexico Dead Zone article...I just read last week about a farmer up in Minnesota who is farming with the Gulf in mind. He doesn't know anyone down in the Delta region but he recognizes how his old farming practices have directly contributed to the dead zone and he is trying to inform and rally more farmers in his area to change their farming practices to save the Gulf. He already started a few years ago to change how he does his farming.

<http://www.cnn.com/2010/TECH/innovation/08/30/gulf.dead.zone.minnesota.farm/?hpt=Sbin>.

The Cambridge Forum series looks amazing...You BCA folks are really impressive with what you do! [Ed Note: We advertised, but didn't organize this venerable series. Lectures may be heard now by googling: NPR archive "Cambridge Forum". Click on "recent".]

ACTION ALERTS

Tues, 30 Nov. 7pm, Cambridge. Deadly Spin. Corporate whistle-blower **Wendell Potter** reveals the ways the insurance industry altered and tried to stop the process of health care reform. How is the power of corporate lobbyists exercised in our nation's capital? What can be done to counteract that power? First Parish Church in Cambridge, 3 Church Street, Harvard Square. Info: 617-495-2727 www.cambridgeforum.org. Free.

Now Playing (at a quality movie theater near you, like Coolidge, Kendall Square, W. Newton): "**Inside Job**". "In the brilliant, essential documentary Inside Job, designed with diamond-cutter precision, Charles Ferguson sets out to demystify the financial meltdown of 2008 that roiled both America and the global economy. Combining an impressive array of interviews with impeccable research, the film manages to render a complex subject, riddled with such arcana as 'credit default swaps' and 'securitization of mortgages', accessible to the average filmgoer."

—*Film Journal International* [Live interview briefs with Barney Frank, Eliot Spitzer, dean of Columbia Business School, head of Harvard Economics Dept, a Wall St madam, embarrassing clips of Obama, Bush, Hank Paulson, Goldman Sachs, etc. Scorches academia as well as Wall Street.] ■

COMMUNITY NOTES (Continued from Page 1)

On October 20, after five months on the road, they arrived at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington where sponsors unrolled a mammoth replica of *We The People*... the preamble of the US Constitution before small crowds of tourists and the press.



Laird Monahan

The sponsors were Move to Amend, Reclaim Democracy, Democracy Unlimited of Humboldt County (CA), the **Alliance for Democracy**, Progressive Democrats of America, and Womens International League for Peace and Freedom. The accelerating campaign aims to write and pass a constitutional amendment denying corporations any rights which real persons enjoy, legally subordinating corporations to limits placed on them by the states—as in the first century of this country—thus ending corporate buying of elections, easy access to legislators, and virtual control of administrations. It could also close the revolving career door connecting politicians with corporations.

Did Scott Brown Steal Massachusetts Senate Seat?

BCA's **Jonathan Simon** and other analysts at the Election Defense Alliance have found evidence that this may be so. State senator Scott Brown, Republican from Wakefield, defeated Democratic state attorney general Martha Coakley in a special election on 19 Jan 2010 following the death of US senator Ted Kennedy, by a margin of 52 to 47 percent of the vote. They contested the critical 60th Democratic seat in the Senate where 60 votes are needed to end any filibuster. Pundits attributed Brown's victory to gaffes made by the popular Coakley during the campaign. There were no recounts (by hand).

While 280 communities in MA electronically counted the Dem and GOP preferences among their 2,163,001 ballots, 71 communities counted preferences within their 64,688 ballots by hand, in public view. In the machine-counted areas Brown won by a 5.2% margin. In the hand-counted areas *Coakley* won by a 2.8% margin. If the hand-count areas were biased toward the Democratic party compared with machine-count areas, that could explain Coakley's winning there and losing in the other areas. Party registration data and recent voting patterns show that's not the case. In fact, the percentage of *Republicans* in hand-count areas was 8% *more* than in the machine-count areas. Furthermore, in the last two US senatorial races (Kerry/Beatty 2008, Kennedy/Chase 2006) the areas were virtually equal in their Dem vs GOP preferences. So might electronic vote-counting machines have given the edge to Brown? In the absence of exit-polling Jonathan thinks so.

The "opti-scan" machines which were used in most pre-

cincts in MA are vulnerable to secret manipulation, as proven by Princeton professor Edward Felten and others. In fact, the count-programming cards in the machines are deemed a trade secret and only company employees are legally authorized to look at them—election officials are barred. The machines can in a matter of seconds be altered to reverse votes as they come in, so as to favor a particular candidate. Until patent law is changed, we are helpless to investigate. Widespread vote fraud in the 2004 and 2006 elections, some involving machines whose counts were grossly discrepant from exit polls, give us pause about any "upset" election result such as Brown's. The answer, ultimately, is returning to hand-counted paper ballots, which everyone agrees is the only sure method.

UMass/Boston Profs and Staff Would Boycott Israel

September 20, 2010 — Faculty and staff at the University of Massachusetts/Boston asked non-profit TIAA-CREF, which provides some of UMB's life insurance and pensions, to divest its holdings from companies that do business with the Israeli Occupation. Signed by 80 UMass Boston faculty and staff, the letter asked TIAA-CREF CEO Roger Ferguson to withdraw its funds from five companies that arm and profit from Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian territories: Caterpillar, whose bulldozers Israel uses to demolish Palestinian homes; Motorola, which manufactures the surveillance equipment for Israel's West Bank checkpoints; Elbit Systems, which manufactures drones used to kill Palestinian civilians; Veolia, which designs light rail connecting illegal settlements, and Northrup Grumman, which manufactures weapons, missiles, and helicopter parts.

During the question and answer period following Ferguson's public address at UMB, he said that he is accountable to all of his clients and is currently in the phase of "listening" to hear what investors on all sides of the issue have to say. [The concern has not been discussed in the faculty Senate—perhaps disallowed] —*Palestinian Campaign for the Academic & Cultural Boycott of Israel* (www.pacbi.org)

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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 or copy this form and send it to Dave Lewit, 271 Dartmouth St. #2h, Boston, MA 02116.)

BOSTON-CAMBRIDGE ALLIANCE for DEMOCRACY PLEDGE

- \$33/Year - "Count me in!"
- \$66/Year - "Contributor" (We need to average this amount.)
- \$111/Year - "Sustainer" (Helping us thrive.)
- \$222/Year - "Community Steward"
- \$500/Year - "Realize the vision"
- What's fair for YOU? \$_____

Name : _____ Date: _____

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Phone: Day _____ Night: _____

E-mail (for occasional contact): _____

COLOPHON

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