

BCA Dispatch

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

Newsletter of the **March-April**
Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy 2011

We must close union offices, confiscate their money and put their leaders in prison. We must reduce workers salaries and take away their right to strike.

—Adolph Hitler, 2 May 1933

COMMUNITY NOTES

Don't be left out! Join the BCA/NorthBridge planning group—call Barbara Clancy for time of next meeting: 781-894-1179.

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Web Site Under Reconstruction

Our regional web-site, www.NewEnglandAlliance.org, has been up and running since 2004 in a rudimentary form. Thanks to support from **Harold Stokes** of the Detroit MI area, as well as other regular readers of the *BCA Dispatch*, we have the money to rework and improve the site to make it more interactive and useful to Alliance groups and other pro-democracy groups in New England (including the Albany NY area). For starters, check out the "About Us" section, now in draft below (Page 14). Also, check the *BCA Dispatch* archive, which now is complete back to Jan 2002. Be patient!—download of some issues may take 2 minutes. Soon there will be an index. Editor's favorite: Feb 2003, "Psychopath in the White House". (Continued on Page 14 >>)

Nudity & Conditioned Helplessness Manning Treatment from Bush Torture Book

Consortiumnews.com 4 March 2011 Editor's Note: *The disclosure that Army Pfc. Bradley Manning was subjected to seven hours of forced nudity on Wednesday—amid new pressures aimed at getting him to identify others involved in the WikiLeaks case—recalled how the Bush administration used nudity and other abusive tactics to break down "war on terror" detainees. In 2004, the CIA told President George W. Bush's lawyers how useful forced nudity was for instilling "learned helplessness" in prisoners, though the repeated emphasis on nudity took on a lewd and sadistic quality, as Robert Parry reported in this article from Consortium News archives:*

The CIA shared with George W. Bush's Justice Department the details of how an interrogation strategy—with an emphasis on forced nudity and physical abuse—could train prisoners in "learned helplessness" and demonstrate "the complete control of Americans."

The 19-page document, entitled "Background Paper on CIA's Combined Use of Interrogation Techniques" and dated Dec. 30, 2004, contains repeated references to keeping suspected al-Qaeda captives—called "high-value detainees" or HVDs—naked as part of the strategy for breaking down their resistance.

The first of several "specific conditioning interrogation techniques" lists "Nudity. The HVD's (Continued on Page 12 >>)



Uri Avnery (right, foreground) and others outside Jerusalem's old city protesting Israeli housing encroachment

Israeli Sees Handwriting on Wall All Must Join Arab March to Democracy

by Uri Avnery, palestinechronicle.com, 19 February 2011

This is a story right out of 1,001 Nights. The genie escaped from the bottle, and no power on earth can put it back.

When it happened in Tunisia, it could have been said: OK, an Arab country, but a minor one. It was always a bit more progressive than the others. Just an isolated incident.

And then it happened in Egypt. A pivotal country. The heart of the Arab world. The spiritual center of Sunni Islam. But it could have been said: Egypt is a special case. The land of the pharaohs. Thousands of years of history before the Arabs even got there. But now it has spread all over the Arab world. To Algeria, Bahrain, Yemen. Jordan, Libya, even Morocco. And to non-Arab, non-Sunni Iran, too.

The genie of revolution, of renewal, of rejuvenation, is now haunting all the regimes in the region. The inhabitants of the "Villa in the Jungle" are liable to wake up one morning and discover that the jungle is gone, that we are surrounded by a new landscape.

When our Zionist fathers decided to set up a safe haven in Palestine, they had the choice between two options: They could appear in West Asia as European conquerors, who see themselves as a bridgehead of the "white" man and as masters of the "natives," like the Spanish conquistadors and the Anglo-Saxon colonialists in America. That is what the crusaders did in their time.

The second way was to see themselves as an Asian people returning to their homeland, the heirs to the political and cultural traditions of the Semitic world, ready to take part, with the other peoples of the region, in the war of liberation from European exploitation.

I wrote these words 64 years ago, in a brochure that appeared just two months before the outbreak of the 1948 war. I stand by these words today.

These days I have a growing feeling that we are once again standing at an historic crossroads. The direction we choose in the coming days will determine the destiny of the state of Israel for years to come, perhaps irreversibly. (Continued on next page >>)

ibly. If we choose the wrong road, we will have "weeping for generations," as the Hebrew saying goes

And perhaps the greatest danger is that we make no choice at all, that we are not even aware of the need to make a decision, that we just continue on the road that has brought us to where we are today. That we are occupied with trivialities—the battle between the minister of defense and the departing chief of staff, the struggle between Netanyahu and Lieberman about the appointment of an ambassador, the non-events of Big Brother and similar TV inanities—that we do not even notice that history is passing us by, leaving us behind.

When our politicians and pundits found enough time—amid all the daily distractions—to deal with the events around us, it was in the old and (sadly) familiar way. Even in the few halfway intelligent talk shows, there was much hilarity about the idea that "Arabs" could establish democracies. Learned professors and media commentators "proved" that such a thing just could not happen—Islam was "by nature" anti-democratic and backward, Arab societies lacked the Protestant Christian ethic necessary for democracy, or the capitalist foundations for a sound middle class, etc.

At best, one kind of despotism would be replaced by another. The most common conclusion was that democratic elections would inevitably lead to the victory of "Islamist" fanatics, who would set up brutal, Taliban-style theocracies, or worse.

Part of this, of course, is deliberate propaganda, designed to convince the naïve Americans and Europeans that they must shore up the Mubaraks of the region or alternative military strongmen. But most of it was quite sincere: most Israelis really believe that the Arabs, left to their own devices, will set up murderous "Islamist" regimes, whose main aim would be to wipe Israel off the map.

Ordinary Israelis know next to nothing about Islam and the Arab world. As a (left-wing) Israeli general answered 65 years ago, when asked how he viewed the Arab world: "through the sights of my rifle." Everything is reduced to "security," and insecurity prevents, of course, any serious reflection.

This attitude goes back to the beginnings of the Zionist movement. Its founder—Theodor Herzl—famously wrote in his historic treatise that the future Jewish state would constitute "a part of the wall of civilization" against Asiatic (meaning Arab) barbarism. Herzl admired Cecil Rhodes, the standard-bearer of British imperialism. He and his followers shared the cultural attitude then common in Europe, which [Palestinian] Eduard Said later labeled "Orientalism." Viewed in retrospect, that was perhaps natural, considering that the Zionist movement was born in Europe toward the end of the imperialist era, and that it was planning to create a Jewish homeland in a country in which another people—an Arab people—was living.

The tragedy is that this attitude has not changed in 120 years, and that it is stronger today than ever.

Those of us who propose a different course—and there have always been some—remain voices in the wilderness.

This is evident these days in the Israeli attitude to the events shaking the Arab world and beyond. Among ordinary Israelis, there was quite a lot of spontaneous sympathy for the Egyptians confronting their tormentors in Tahrir Square—but everything was viewed from the outside, from afar, as if it were happening on the moon.

The only practical question raised was: will the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty hold? Or do we need to raise new army divisions for a possible war with Egypt? When almost all "security experts" assured us that the treaty was safe, people lost interest

in the whole matter.

But the treaty—actually an armistice between regimes and armies—should only be of secondary concern for us. The most important question is: how will the new Arab world look? Will the transition to democracy be relatively smooth and peaceful, or not? Will it happen at all, and will it mean that a more radical Islamic region emerges—which is a distinct possibility? Can we have any influence on the course of events?

Of course, none of today's Arab movements is eager for an Israeli embrace. It would be a bear hug. Israel is viewed today by practically all Arabs as a colonialist, anti-Arab state that oppresses the Palestinians and is out to dispossess as many Arabs as possible—though there is, I believe, also a lot of silent admiration for Israel's technological and other achievements.

But when entire peoples rise up and revolution upsets all entrenched attitudes, there is the possibility of changing old ideas. If Israeli political and intellectual leaders were to stand up today and openly declare their solidarity with the Arab masses in their struggle for freedom, justice, and dignity, they could plant a seed that would bear fruit in coming years.

Of course, such statements must really come from the heart. As a superficial political ploy, they would be rightly despised. They must be accompanied by a profound change in our attitude toward the Palestinian people. That's why peace with the Palestinians now, at once, is a vital necessity for Israel.

Our future is not with Europe or America. Our future is in this region, to which our state belongs, for better or for worse. It's not just our policies that must change, but our basic outlook, our geographical orientation. We must understand that we are not a bridgehead from somewhere distant, but a part of a region that is now, at long last, joining the human march toward freedom.

The Arab Awakening is not a matter of months or a few years. It may well be a prolonged struggle, with many failures and defeats, but the genie will not return to the bottle. The images of the 18 days in Tahrir Square will be kept alive in the hearts of an entire new generation from Marrakesh to Mosul, and any new dictatorship that emerges here or there will not be able to erase them.

In my fondest dreams I could not imagine a wiser and more attractive course for us Israelis than to join this march in body and spirit.

Uri Avnery is a "post-Zionist" Israeli writer. He served 4 years in the terrorist organization Irgun, 11 years in the Israeli parliament, was stabbed for his peace organizing, interviewed Yasser Arafat during the war with Lebanon, and founded the peace organization Gush Shalom.

Sexual Prey in the Saudi Jungle Human Rights in a US Client Country

by Walden Bello, *Foreign Policy in Focus*, 1 February 2011

He was an officer in the Saudi Royal Navy assigned to the strategic Saudi base of Jubail in the Persian Gulf, and he wanted to hire a maid. She was a single mom from Mindanao in the Philippines who saw, like so many others, employment in Saudi Arabia as a route out of poverty. When he picked her up at the Dammam International Airport last June, little did she know she was entering not a brighter chapter of her life but a chamber of horrors from which she would be liberated only after six long months.

The tale of woe recounted by Lorena (not her real name) was one of several stories of rape and sexual abuse shared by do-

mestic workers with members of a fact-finding team of the Committee on Overseas Workers' Affairs of the House of Representatives of the Philippines. The high incidence of rape and sexual abuse visited on the women we met in the shelters run by the Philippine government for runaway or rescued domestic workers in Jeddah, Riyadh, and Al Khobar most likely reflects a broader trend among Filipina domestics. "Rape is common," said Fatimah (also an alias) who had been gang-raped in April 2009 by six Saudi teenagers. "The only difference is we escaped to tell our story while they're still imprisoned in their households."

The working conditions of many domestics, which include 18-22 hour days and violent beatings, cannot but be described except as virtual slavery. Saudi Arabia abolished slavery by royal decree in 1962, but customs are hard to overcome. Royal and aristocratic households continue to treat domestic workers as slaves, and this behavior is reproduced by those lower in the social hierarchy. Apparently among the items of the "job description" of a domestic slave in Saudi is being forced to minister to the sexual needs of the master of the household. This is the relationship that so many young women from the Philippines, Indonesia, India, and other labor-sending Asian countries unwittingly step into when recruitment agencies place them in Saudi homes.

Rape does not, however, take place only in the household. With strict segregation of young Saudi men from young Saudi women, Filipino domestic workers, who usually go about with their faces and heads uncovered, stand a good chance of becoming sexual prey. This is true particularly if they make the mistake of being seen in public alone—though the company of a friend did not prevent the teenagers from snatching Fatimah. And the threat comes not only from marauding Saudi youth but also from foreign migrant workers, single and married, who are deprived by the rigid sexual segregation imposed by the ever-present Religious Police from normal social intercourse with women during their time in Saudi. Perhaps as a result of the institutionalized repression of Saudi women and their strict subordination to males, Saudi society is suffused with latent sexual violence, much more so than most other societies.

Lorena's Tale

Lorena is in her mid-twenties, lithe, and pretty—qualities that marked her as prime sexual prey in the Saudi jungle. And indeed, her ordeal began when they arrived at her employer's residence from the airport. "He forced a kiss on me," she recalled. Fear seized her, and she pushed him away.

He was not deterred. "One week after I arrived," she recounted, "he raped me for the first time. He did it while his wife was away. He did it after he commanded me to massage him and I refused, saying that was not what I was hired for. Then in July he raped me two more times. I just had to bear it because I was so scared to run away. I didn't know anyone."

While waiting for her employer and his wife in a shopping mall one day, Lorena came across some Filipino nurses, whom she begged for help. On hearing her story, they gave her a sim card and pitched in to buy her phone time.

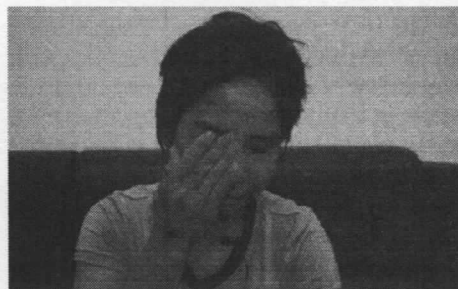
But the domestic torture continued. She would be slapped for speaking Arabic since her employer's wife said she was hired to speak English. She was given just one piece of bread to eat at mealtime and she had to supplement this with scraps from the family's plates. She was loaned to the wife's mother's household to clean the place, and her reward for this was her being raped by the wife's brother; kinship apparently confers the right to rape the servants of relatives. Also during that month, October, she

was raped—for the fourth time—by her employer.

She not only had to contend with sexual aggression but with sheer cruelty. Once, while cleaning, she fell and cut herself. With blood gushing from the wound, she pleaded with the employer's wife to bring her to the hospital. The wife refused, and when Lorena asked her to allow her to call her mother in the Philippines, she again said no, telling her this was too expensive. The employer arrived at that point, but instead of bringing her to the hospital, he said, "You might as well die." Lorena had to stanch the wound with her own clothes and treat herself with pills she had brought with her from the Philippines.

Rape During Rescue

Wildly desperate by now, Lorena finally managed to get in touch with personnel of the Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO) in Al Khobar. Arrangements were made to rescue her on December 30. That morning, the rescue team from POLO and the local police arrived at the residence. Lorena flagged them frantically from a second



story window and told them she wanted to jump, but the team advised her not to because she could get break her leg. That was a costly decision, since the employer raped her again—for the fifth

time—even with the police right outside the residence. When she dragged herself to her employer's wife and begged her to keep her husband away from her, she beat her instead, calling her a liar. "I was screaming and screaming, and the police could hear me, but they did not do anything."

When the employer realized that he was about to be arrested, he begged Lorena not to tell the police anything because he would lose his job. He even offered to pay for her ticket home. "I said I would not tell on him and say that he was a good man, just so that he would just let me go," Lorena said. When she was finally rescued moments later, Lorena recounted her ordeal to the POLO team and police, and the employer was arrested.

Released from captivity, Lorena was determined to obtain justice. However, arduous bureaucratic procedures delayed a medical examination to obtain traces of semen right after her rescue. When it was finally conducted, she was given an emergency contraceptive pill—an indication, said the POLO officer who led the rescue, that seminal traces had been found in and on her. Also, the examination revealed contusions all over her body and bite marks on her lips.

The criminal investigation is still ongoing and the employer, who has been identified as Lt. Commander Majid Al-Juma-in, is still in jail at the Dammam Police Station. Lorena is worried that the evidence might be tampered with. "These people are influential," she said. "They have a lot of money. I am only a maid. They said they could put me in prison." Her fear is palpable. Her greatest wish is to be repatriated, but she knows she must stay till he is convicted and sentenced to death.

Decision Point

Other governments have begun to take drastic steps to protect their citizens in Saudi Arabia. Owing to numerous cases of abuses of its nationals, India has banned the deployment of women under 40 to Saudi Arabia. After a much-publicized case in which an Indonesia domestic worker suffered internal bleeding

and broken bones from a ferocious beating by her employer, who pressed a hot iron on her head and slashed her with scissors, two labor-exporting Indonesian states, West Nusa Tenggara and West Java, banned the recruitment of domestics for employment in Saudi Arabia last December. Earlier, in October, the Sri Lankan Ministry of Labor backtracked from an agreement arrived at between the Saudi National Recruitment Agency and the Sri Lankan labor federation, asserting that the terms of the agreement was unfavorable to the Sri Lankan domestics and the Sri Lankan economy. This led the Saudis to indefinitely freeze recruitment from Sri Lanka.

These moves by other governments have led to greater demand for Filipino domestic workers. While the informal policy of the Philippine government has been to slow down the recruitment of domestics to Saudi Arabia, legal and illegal recruiters, many of them tied to Saudi interests, have been trying to step it up. The new Aquino administration may soon reach a critical decision point on the issue of Saudi recruitment since the amended Act on Overseas Workers requires the Department of Foreign Affairs to certify that a country is taking steps to protect labor rights if workers are to be deployed there. With its hideous record and its resistance to expanding coverage of its labor code to domestic workers, Saudi Arabia will not likely be certified.

For the many who have already been raped and degraded sexually, however, a move to prevent the deployment of more women to Saudi Arabia comes too late. Lorena may well secure the conviction of Lt. Commander Majid, but that will not restore her to her former self. As Fatimah put it in a handwritten note she passed on to the team, although her tormentors had been sentenced to seven years imprisonment and 2500 lashes each, "there's no equivalent amount for what they've done. They destroyed my life, my future."

Foreign Policy In Focus columnist Prof. Walden Bello of Akbayan is chairman of the Committee on Overseas Workers' Affairs of the House of Representatives of the Philippines. He recently led a fact-finding mission to Saudi Arabia. He can be reached at waldenbello@yahoo.com.

Electronic Hoarding of Food Speculation Ups Prices, Starvation, Riots

by Robert Alvarez, *CommonDreams.org*, 4 Feb 2011

The dramatic rise in food prices is fueling a great deal of discontent in Tunisia, Egypt and elsewhere. It is a deep under current propelling many of the poor, facing prospects of starvation to resort to the streets and to violence. According to the United Nation's Food Agency (Food and Agriculture Organization—FAO) world food prices are up for the 7th month in a row and are likely to remain close to the record high reached in December 2010. There's no end in sight to this destabilizing battle with food price inflation in places like Egypt, where more than half of an average income goes for food. According to the U.S. State Department, more than 60 food riots occurred worldwide over the past two years.

In March 2008, a dramatic spike in food prices led thousands of people on the brink of starvation in Egypt to violently riot—sending a seismic shock wave through the Mubarak regime. After the Egyptian military was able to distribute enough wheat to dispel the rioting, efforts to stockpile wheat by the Mubarak government have failed, as food prices continue to hover at record highs.

Many reasons are given in the media for this problem ranging from soaring demand, cuts in food subsidies, droughts, and government mandates to use more grain-based bio-fuel. But, another significant factor is at play: unfettered speculation by investment banks. As noted in USA today, in 2008, "the bulls may not be running on Wall Street, but they're charging in the commodities pits." *

At issue are the still deregulated commodity markets ushered in by the Clinton Administration and the U.S. Congress with the passage of the Commodity Futures Modernization Act of 2000. Before this law, the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) served as a cop on the beat, enforcing rules that prevent distortion of manipulation of prices beyond normal supply and demand. But Wall Street Banks and companies such as EN-RON, and British Petroleum were determined to make a lot more money from speculation by exempting energy-derivative contracts and related swaps from government oversight. And so, the 2000 law allows entities that have no stake in whether adequate amounts of food and fuel are available for ordinary people and commodity-dependent businesses, to make huge sums of money by gambling with other people's money.

Soon after passage of the 2000 law "dark" unregulated futures trading markets emerged, most notably the Intercontinental Exchange (ICE) in London—created by Wall Street and European investment banks and several oil companies. A key practice involves "over the counter index trading" in which hundreds of billions of dollars of pension, sovereign wealth other institutional funds are used to flood "dark" commodity markets to buy and hold futures contracts without an expiration date or oversight. When it's time to make money on a losing bet, these funds are withdrawn causing commodity price crashes and economic instability. These transactions do not involve customary "bona fide" commodity traders, such as an airline company hedging on the price of jet fuel by purchasing futures contracts. As noted by Michael McMasters, a prominent hedge trader before a U.S. Senate panel in 2008, this amounts to "a form of electronic hoarding and greatly increases the inflationary effect of the market. It literally means starvation for millions of the world's poor." **

Some world leaders are willing to speak out against the pernicious role of "dark" commodity markets. Recently, French President Sarkozy warned of further unrest and even war at the Davos forum, unless commodity speculation is reined in—something that is being fought bitterly by Wall Street and Congressional Republicans. The Dodd/Frank Financial Reform Law places some restrictions on this practice by the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC). In particular, the CFTC is beginning the process of weeding out "non bona fide" investment bank speculators. True to form, House Republicans are demanding that the CFTC slam on the brakes and are planning hearings and legislation to hamstring these efforts.

The spontaneous mass uprising of ordinary people in the Middle East against their authoritarian regimes has many root causes. One that should receive much greater attention is the unfettered speculation over food supplies by powerful private financial institutions that could [not] care less about world-wide starvation and its impacts.

Robert Alvarez is a Senior Scholar at the Institute for Policy Studies and served as a senior policy adviser to the U.S. Secretary of Energy from 1993 to 1999.

*http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/food/2008-02-11-food-prices_N.htm

**http://hsgac.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Hearings.Hearing&Hearing_ID=3fe95f08-0b7d-45d0-94ea-4c4346c353de ■

Gene Sharp, Nonviolence Strategist His Methods Helped Oust Egypt's Dictator

by Samuel P Jacobs, *Daily Beast*, 14 Feb 2011

The young lions of Tahrir Square found inspiration in the writings of an 83-year-old American.

There are many roots of the Egyptian revolution. But one of the most unlikely goes back to an East Boston row house, where an 83-year-old named Gene Sharp runs a shoestring operation called the Albert Einstein Institute—and arguably just changed the course of history.

For the last half century, Sharp has been writing about non-violent protest, and trying to make his ideas accessible to dissidents the world over [*where he also conducted workshops —Ed.*]. No mean feat, given that his signature work, *The Politics of Non-Violent Action*, weighs in at 900 pages and was published in 1973. But it's working. Thanks in part to a distillation of his ideas entitled *From Dictatorships to Democracy*, which can be downloaded from Sharp's website in dozens of languages, his gospel of upheaval has apparently become essential reading for budding revolutionaries in Cairo and parts beyond.

Ahmed Maher, a 28-year-old construction engineer, was one of the young Web-savvy upstarts who helped set in motion the protests that last week ended Hosni Mubarak's 30-year rule. Maher, of the April 6 Movement, looked to Serbia's democratic movements for inspiration. There, he found Otpor, a protest group which helped take down strongman Slobodan Milosevic. From Otpor, the young Egyptians discovered the teachings of Sharp, who urges nonviolent resistance as the most efficient way to topple dictatorships.

Sharp says he hasn't been directly in touch with anyone in Egypt since the uprising began late last month. But he says he is happy to know that his ideas may have had some influence. "I'm very pleased," he says. "I've been studying this question of dictatorships for many decades. It is a lonely struggle. To get this kind of recognition is very important."

The pro-democracy advocates aren't the only ones who've noticed. In 2007, Hugo Chavez accused Sharp of being part of a CIA-led conspiracy to overthrow his government. The following year, Iranian officials made a similar charge, alleging that the former Harvard researcher was working hand-in-hand with the likes of John McCain and George Soros to foment rebellion in the country. (The paranoia is perhaps understandable; thousands of copies of *From Dictatorships to Democracy* had been downloaded in Farsi in advance of protests that flooded Iran's streets in 2009.) The Burmese felt similarly hoodwinked by the solitary scholar.

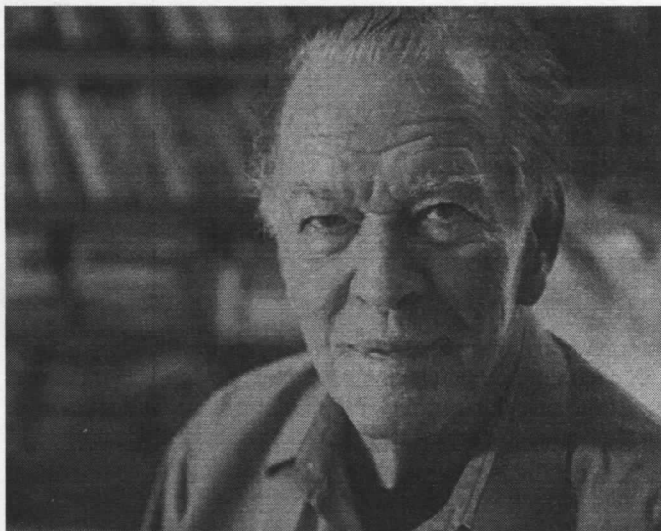
Sharp first published his manual to resistance, which teaches 198 methods of nonviolent action [see *BCA Dispatch*, March 2004], in Myanmar. Among his less-conventional suggestions for protest, Sharp has advocated the "Lysistratic nonaction," in which women use sex as political leverage. He's also called for disrobing and skywriting as political statements. His advice is particularly granular, giving instructions from how "rude gestures" can function as "symbolic public acts" to using "guerrilla theater" as a form of "social intervention." According to one take, Sharp's Albert Einstein Institution is "a U.S. intelligence asset used to spark 'nonviolent' regime change around the world on behalf of the U.S. strategic agenda."

In most interviews, Sharp holds up the shabby state of his

institute as a sign that he's not in the cahoots with George Soros or anyone at the CIA. Lately, he had to let go of most of his staff. "We are very small and very poor," he says. [*Note: A decade ago Sharp's institute was thriving in a posh suite in Harvard Square. —Ed.*]

Not that Sharp isn't without his benefactors. One former student, the financier Peter Ackerman, once told *The Wall Street Journal* that he's given his mentor's institution more than \$10 million over the years. In 2004, the pair had a falling out.*

These days, Sharp says, resistance leaders usually find him. "We get news from all over the world. We never know where the next phone call will come from, what part of the world," Sharp says.



(Photo: Mary Knox Merrill, *The Christian Science Monitor* / Getty Images)

Sharp argues that dictatorships share certain traits throughout the world—making it easier to tailor a one-size-fits-all approach. But he's not blasé about what happened in Cairo last week; he ranks the fall of Mubarak as "at the top" of democratic revolutions he's witnessed. And he's confident that the spirit shown in Tahrir Square won't end there.

"People are learning that they don't have to be afraid," Sharp says. "The fear is gone. People can see the example. The Egyptian example will be imitated elsewhere. We don't know where, but it will happen."

***Ed. Comment:** About this time your Editor asked Sharp to sit down and talk about using strategic nonviolence to dethrone giant corporations. Sharp flatly refused. Since he was willing to talk about bringing down political dictatorships, we wondered whether this had something to do with corporations as funding sources. We may never know.

As for Hugo Chávez's criticism of Sharp—as collaborator with the CIA—there is little doubt that the CIA has been aware of strategic nonviolence as a tool to bring down governments inimical to US interests, and that they probably helped Otpor in this regard. It is evident that Sharp is interested in strategic nonviolence as a universal tool for toppling anti-democratic dictatorships. It is less obvious as to how strategic nonviolence can dissolve and possibly transform diffuse authoritarian systems, e.g., capitalism or any orthodox religion, if you consider them oppressive. Sharp does not really deal with revolution in the sense of creating any new democratic system. ■

The Terrorists Are Commming!!

The English are feeling the pinch in relation to recent terrorist threats and have therefore raised their security level from "Miffed" to "Peeved." Soon, though, security levels may be raised yet again to "Irritated," or even "A Bit Cross."

The English have not been "A Bit Cross" since "The Blitz" in 1940 when tea supplies nearly ran out.

Terrorists have been re-categorized from "Tiresome" to "A Bloody Nuisance." The last time the British issued a "Bloody Nuisance" warning level was in 1588, when threatened by the Spanish Armada.

The Scots have raised their threat level from "Pissed Off" to "Let's get the Bastards." They don't have any other levels. This is the reason they have been used on the front line of the British army for the last 300 years.

The French government announced yesterday that it has raised its terror alert level from "Run" to "Hide." The only two higher levels in France are "Collaborate" and "Surrender." The rise was precipitated by a recent fire that destroyed France's white flag factory, effectively paralyzing the country's military capability.

Italy has increased the alert level from "Shout Loudly and Excitedly" to "Elaborate Military Posturing." Two more levels remain: "Ineffective Combat Operations" and "Change Sides."

The Germans have increased their alert state from "Disdainful Arrogance" to "Dress in Uniform and Sing Marching Songs." They also have two higher levels: "Invade a Neighbor" and "Lose."

Belgians, on the other hand, are all on holiday as usual; the only threat they are worried about is NATO pulling out of Brussels.

The Spanish are all excited to see their new submarines ready to deploy. These beautifully designed subs have glass bottoms so the new Spanish navy can get a really good look at the old Spanish navy.

Australia, meanwhile, has raised its security level from "No worries" to "She'll be alright, Mate." Two more escalation levels re-main: "Crikey! I think we'll need to cancel the barbie this week-end!" and "The barbie is canceled." So far no situation has ever warranted use of the final escalation level.

—John Cleese, BBC, 29 January 2011

Sledge Hammer to America

The Scandalous Republican Strategy

by Robert Reich, RobertReich.org, 18 February 2011

The Republican strategy is to split the vast middle and working class—pitting unionized workers against non-unionized, public-sector workers against non-public, older workers within sight of Medicare and Social Security against younger workers who don't believe these programs will be there for them, and the poor against the working middle class.

The GOP strategy is playing out in plain sight. Namely: They pit average working Americans against one another, distract attention from the almost unprecedented concentration of wealth and power at the top, and conceal Republican plans to further enlarge and entrench that wealth and power. By splitting working

America along these lines, Republicans want Americans to believe that we can no longer afford to do what we need to do as a nation. They hope to deflect attention from the increasing share of total income and wealth going to the richest 1 percent while the jobs and wages of everyone else languish.

Republicans would rather no one notice their campaign to shrink the pie even further with additional tax cuts for the rich—making the Bush tax cuts permanent, further reducing the estate tax, and allowing the wealthy to shift ever more of their income into capital gains taxed at 15 percent.

The strategy has three parts.

The battle over the federal budget.

The first is being played out in the budget battle in Washington. As they raise the alarm over deficit spending and simultaneously squeeze popular middle-class programs, Republicans want the majority of the American public to view it all as a giant zero-sum game among average Americans that some will have to lose.

The President has already fallen into the trap by calling for budget cuts in programs the poor and working class depend on—assistance with home heating, community services, college loans, and the like.

In the coming showdown over Medicare and Social Security, House budget chair Paul Ryan will push a voucher system for Medicare and a partly-privatized plan for Social Security—both designed to attract younger middle-class voters.

The assault on public employees

The second part of the Republican strategy is being played out on the state level where public employees are being blamed for state budget crises. Unions didn't cause these budget crises—state revenues dropped because of the Great Recession—but Republicans view them as opportunities to gut public employee unions, starting with teachers.

Wisconsin's Republican governor Scott Walker and his GOP legislature are seeking to end almost all union rights for teachers. Ohio's Republican governor John Kasich is pushing a similar plan in Ohio through a Republican-dominated legislature. New Jersey's Republican governor Chris Christie is attempting the same, telling a conservative conference Wednesday, "I'm attacking the leadership of the union because they're greedy, and they're selfish and they're self-interested."

The demonizing of public employees is not only based on the lie that they've caused these budget crises, but it's also premised on a second lie: that public employees earn more than private-sector workers. They don't, when you take account of their education. In fact over the last fifteen years the pay of public-sector workers, including teachers, has dropped relative to private-sector employees with the same level of education—even including health and retirement benefits. Moreover, most public employees don't have generous pensions. After a career with annual pay averaging less than \$45,000, the typical newly-retired public employee receives a pension of \$19,000 a year.

Bargaining rights for public employees haven't caused state deficits to explode. Some states that deny their employees bargaining rights, such as Nevada, North Carolina, and Arizona, are running big deficits of over 30 percent of spending. Many states that give employees bargaining rights—Massachusetts, New Mexico, and Montana—have small deficits of less than 10 percent.

Republicans would rather go after teachers and other public employees than have us look at the pay of Wall Street traders, private-equity managers, and heads of hedge funds—many of whom wouldn't have their jobs today were it not for the giant

taxpayer-supported bailout, and most of whose lending and investing practices were the proximate cause of the Great Depression to begin with.

Last year, America's top thirteen hedge-fund managers earned an average of \$1 billion each. One of them took home \$5 billion. Much of their income is taxed as capital gains—at 15 percent—due to a tax loophole that Republican members of Congress have steadfastly guarded.

If the earnings of those thirteen hedge-fund managers were taxed as ordinary income, the revenues generated would pay the salaries and benefits of over 5 million teachers. Who is more valuable to our society—thirteen hedge-fund managers or 5 million teachers? Let's make the question even simpler. Who is more valuable: One hedge fund manager or one teacher?

The Distortion of the Constitution

The third part of the Republican strategy is being played out in the Supreme Court. It has politicized the Court more than at any time in recent memory.

Last year a majority of the justices determined that corporations have a right under the First Amendment to provide unlimited amounts of money to political candidates. Citizens United vs. the Federal Election Commission is among the most patently political and legally grotesque decisions of our highest court—ranking right up there with Bush vs. Gore and Dred Scott.

Among those who voted in the affirmative were Clarence Thomas and Antonin Scalia. Both have become active strategists in the Republican party.

A month ago, for example, Antonin Scalia met in a closed-door session with Michele Bachman's Tea Party caucus—something no justice concerned about maintaining the appearance of impartiality would ever have done.

Both Thomas and Scalia have participated in political retreats organized and hosted by multi-billionaire financier Charles Koch, a major contributor to the Tea Party and other conservative organizations, and a crusader for ending all limits on money in politics. (Not incidentally, Thomas's wife is the founder of Liberty Central, a Tea Party organization that has been receiving unlimited corporate contributions due to the Citizens United decision. On his obligatory financial disclosure filings, Thomas has repeatedly failed to list her sources of income over the last twenty years, nor even to include his own four-day retreats courtesy of Charles Koch.)

Some time this year or next, the Supreme Court will be asked to consider whether the nation's new healthcare law is constitutional. Watch your wallets.

The strategy as a whole

These three aspects of the Republican strategy—a federal budget battle to shrink government, focused on programs the vast middle class depends on; state efforts to undermine public employees, whom the middle class depends on; and a Supreme Court dedicated to bending the Constitution to enlarge and entrench the political power of the wealthy—fit perfectly together.

They pit average working Americans against one another, distract attention from the almost unprecedented concentration of wealth and power at the top, and conceal Republican plans to further enlarge and entrench that wealth and power.

What is the Democratic strategy to counter this and reclaim America for the rest of us? ■

ENVIRONMENT

Will We Frogs Jump Out of the Pot? Politicians Diddle, Permafrost Isn't Waiting

by Stephen Leahy, Inter Press Service, 20 February 2011

Thawing permafrost is threatening to overwhelm attempts to keep the planet from getting too hot for human survival.

Ice melts in the source region of China's Yellow River outside of Maduo on the Qinghai-Tibet plateau, known as the "Roof of the World", in 2010. Global warming could cause up to 60 percent of the world's permafrost to thaw by 2200 and release huge amounts of carbon into the atmosphere that would further speed up climate change, a study released Wednesday warned. Without major reductions in the use of fossil fuels, as much as two-thirds of the world's gigantic storehouse of frozen carbon could be released, a new study reported. That would push global temperatures several degrees higher, making large parts of the planet uninhabitable.

Once the Arctic gets warm enough, the carbon and methane emissions from thawing permafrost will kick-start a feedback that will amplify the current warming rate, says Kevin Schaefer, a scientist at the National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC) in Boulder, Colorado. That will likely be irreversible.



Methane flames

We're less than 20 years from this tipping point. Schaefer prefers to use the term "starting point" for when the 13 million square kilometres of permafrost in Alaska, Canada, Siberia and parts of Europe becomes a major new source of carbon emissions.

"Our model projects a starting point 15 to 20 years from now," Schaefer told IPS. The model used a 'middle of the road' scenario with less fossil fuel use than at present. Even at that rate, it found that between 29 and 60 percent of the world's permafrost will thaw, releasing an extra 190 gigatonnes of carbon by 2200. The study is the first to quantify when and how much carbon will be released and was published this week in the meteorological journal *Tellus*.

Runaway Carbon Release

"The amount of carbon released is equivalent to half the amount of carbon that has been released into the atmosphere since the dawn of the industrial age," Schaefer said. The additional carbon from permafrost would increase the average temperatures in the Arctic by eight to 10 degrees C, the study reported. Not only would this utterly transform the Arctic, it would also increase the planet's average temperature by about three degrees C, agrees Schaefer. And this increase would be on top of the three to six degrees C from continuing to burn fossil fuels over the next 100 years. The Earth's normal average temperature is 14C, so heating up the entire planet another six to nine degrees C would be like increasing our body temperatures from the normal 37C to a deadly fever of 53 to 60 degrees C.

As catastrophic as all this is, Schaefer acknowledges his study underestimates what is likely to happen. The model does not measure methane releases, which are 40 times as potent in terms of warming as carbon. Methane could have a big impact on temperatures in the short term, he says. "There would be a lot of methane emissions. We're working on estimating those right now," he said.

Methane Bubbles, Deadly Cracks

The model also does not include emissions from the large region of underwater permafrost. IPS previously reported that an estimated eight million tonnes of methane emissions are bubbling to the surface from the shallow East Siberian Arctic shelf every year. If just one percent of the Arctic undersea methane (also called methane hydrates) reaches the atmosphere, it could quadruple the amount of methane currently in the atmosphere, Vladimir Romanovsky of the University of Alaska in Fairbanks previously told IPS.

Nor does the model account for a process called thermokarst erosion, acknowledges Schaefer. This is a widely observed process where meltwater erodes the permafrost and exposes it to warmer temperatures and speeding up the thaw. "We can't model that yet but it could contribute to major releases of carbon and methane," he said.

None of this has been taken into account by politicians and policy makers looking to cut humanity's carbon emissions with the agreed on target of keeping global temperatures below two degrees C. Nor is there a wide appreciation for the fact there is no 'reverse gear'. Even if all fossil fuel use stopped today, global temperatures would continue to rise and permafrost would thaw for another 20 to 30 years, Schaefer estimates. And once the permafrost carbon is released, "there is no way to put it back into the permafrost".

Even if there was a way to lower the Earth's human-induced fever, it would take a century or more for thawed permafrost to reform, he said. Permafrost has been warming and thawing since the 1980s. A 2009 study reported that the southernmost permafrost limit had retreated 130 kilometres over the past 50 years in Quebec's James Bay region. The major loss of sea ice in the Arctic allows the Arctic Ocean to become much warmer, which in turn has increased temperatures of coastal regions an average of three to five degrees C warmer than 30 years ago. More ominously, large parts of the eastern Arctic were 21C higher above normal for a month in the dead of winter this year, as previously reported by IPS.

Era of Safe Energy Is Possible

However, while on the edge of a most dangerous precipice, there is a safer path available. A new energy analysis demonstrates that fossil fuel energy could be virtually phased out by 2050 while offering comfortable lifestyles for all. The Energy Report by Ecofys, a leading energy consulting firm in the Netherlands, shows that humanity could meet 95 percent of energy needs with renewables utilising today's technologies.

"The Energy Report shows that in four decades we can have a world of vibrant economies and societies powered entirely by clean, cheap and renewable energy and with a vastly improved quality of life," said WWF Director General Jim Leape. WWF worked on the report with Ecofys.

"The report is more than a scenario—it's a call for action. We can achieve a cleaner, renewable future, but we must start now," Leape said in a statement. ■

Dakar: Hope for the World

World Social Forum Lurches Ahead

Marc Becker, Truman State U./MO, 14 February 2011

Fifty thousand activists from around the world descended on Senegal's capital city of Dakar at the westernmost point in Africa the first week in February for the World Social Forum. Meeting on an almost annual basis since its first gathering in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2001, the WSF provides a space to discuss and debate proposals and collaborative actions to build a new and better world.

The WSF first met as a response to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Instead of exclusionary spaces that placed corporate greed over human needs, the WSF championed the daring proposition that indeed another world is possible. The WSF now has a decade of bringing together social movements dedicated to a struggle against neoliberal capitalism and militaristic imperialism, and in favor of constructing a world based on humane fairness and social justice.

Through a sequence of global meetings in Brazil, India, Kenya, and now Senegal, as well as many more local, national, and regional forums, the WSF has fundamentally shifted political discourse to the left. Bringing the forum back to Africa helped refocus attention on the region as well as linking local realities to a global struggle.

The forum met in the context of an ongoing crisis in the global capitalist system. This crisis has had its most visible impact in the poorest countries, and can be seen through problems in the financial, food, and energy systems as well as climate change. Neoliberal policies of privatizing public resources that international institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) have promoted have had a particularly negative effect on Africa.

To confront these issues, the Dakar forum was organized around the three main themes of deepening a critical analysis of capitalism, strengthening struggles against capitalism and imperialism, and building democratic and popular alternatives to these systems of oppression.

The six-day meeting began with a massive march from downtown Dakar to the university where the forum subsequently held its events. Participants were in high spirits, and their chants and banners revealed a wide range of social justice issues they had come to champion. The march culminated with a rally at the university featuring a speech from Bolivia's leftist president Evo Morales. Morales denounced imperialism, and pointed to the importance of the forum as a school where activists could come to learn how to build stronger, more powerful, and more effective social movements.

A thousand activities were planned over the course of the forum. The first day of meetings focused on Africa and the African diaspora, including a session with the daughters of Franz Fanon and Malcolm X in which they debated the legacies of their famous fathers for today. A meeting with former Brazilian president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva emphasized his work to build closer relations between Africa and his South American country. Not only is Brazil home to the forum, but it is also home to the largest African diasporic population.

The following two days featured self-organized activities representing the wide range of interests and concerns that activists brought to the forum. Evenings were filled with musical and cultural events as well as informal networking. The final two days

were dedicated to convergences of organizations, networks, and international movements during which participants proposed actions around common themes for building a better world. The forum finished with a closing ceremony at which organizations presented their statements and programs for action.

With South America, Governments May Now Be Welcome

The WSF was initially conceptualized as a space for divergent civil society groups to meet and collaborate around common concerns. It was designed to mobilize and empower grassroots organizations rather than creating a unified movement with a specific agenda. Its failure to make statements has opened it up to criticism by some who would like to take advantage of its momentum to advance a specific political agenda.

Facing a hegemonic Washington Consensus that favored privatization of resources when it first met in 2001, the WSF initially emerged out of anarchistic tendencies that viewed governments as part of the problem. Organizers explicitly excluded governments, political parties, and armed insurgent movements from this meeting of civil society. Global political discourse has shifted significantly to the left over the past decade, and nowhere is this more apparent than in South America. As a result, more participants now warm to the idea of using political parties and governments as instruments to solve the problems facing the crisis of global capitalism.

As with all WSFs, most of the participants came from the host country, with large caravans also bringing delegates from neighboring West African countries. Senegal's former colonial overlord France also contributed a significantly large number of participants. In comparison, Asia and the Americas contributed relatively small delegations. Many WSFs are multilingual events, but in francophone Africa, French became the lingual franca leaving some participants from the former British colonies of Nigeria and Kenya feeling excluded.

The larger social forums have attracted as many as 150,000 participants. In comparison, the 50,000 activists in Dakar seemed to be quite small. Nevertheless, the largest forums have been held in Brazil and India with much larger populations than the twelve million people in Senegal. Since forums draw so heavily on the host country's population, as forum founder Chico Whitaker noted, the size of this forum should be seen as a success rather than a failure.

Each social forum acquires its own style and unique characteristics. Unfortunately, the 2011 Dakar forum will be known for its frustrated chaos. This is unfortunate because it was a forum with a high degree of unrealized potential. Africa is no stranger to the social forum process, and the region has had more social forums than any other continent.

A series of logical problems plagued the Dakar forum. The task of organizing the forum was apparently more than the local committee could handle, but yet it refused offers of international assistance. In what has become a standard problem at WSFs, the schedule of events came out late and in piecemeal fashion, making it difficult if not impossible for many participants to find their sessions.

Student Strike Preempted Rooms

Further complicating the issue, due to an earlier strike classes were still in session at the university. Students displaced activists from planned meeting spaces, leaving some participants wondering why the forum could not have done a better job of incorporating students into the events. Organizers quickly set up tents to house the sessions, but the chaos and a lack of space led to the cancellation of many sessions.

Most significantly, in the aftermath of popular uprisings that

toppled authoritarian governments in Tunisia and Egypt, Senegal's president Abdoulaye Wade feared the arrival of well-organized social movements that could similarly place his government under siege. The expense and logistical difficulties of hosting such a large meeting require the tacit consent if not outright support of the host government, but in Senegal an antagonistic president sought to sabotage the forum. [*Ed. Note: Wade fired the university rector who planned to suspend classes to accommodate the Forum, and replaced him with another who continued classes and closed most classrooms to the Forum, forcing the Forum organizers to set up many tents for meetings.*]

A running debate within the forum is whether a world meeting of social movements is worth the financial cost, environmental consequences, and logistical nightmares involved in organizing such a massive meeting. Too often only well-connected non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with access to the time, financial resources, and visas necessary to travel can attend the forum instead of grassroots organizations that are its intended base. Some activists have proposed holding a virtual [multi-way television] meeting instead, yet (as many universities find as they move away from online education) much value is to be had in face-to-face meetings. [*Ed. Note: virtual meetings virtually rule out interpersonal and intergroup networking.*]

Will Mideast Surge Swell Next WSF?

After a successful run of ten years of meetings, the future of the WSF is unclear. At the close of the meeting in Dakar, the forum's international organizing committee met to plan future strategies. When the forum first met in Porto Alegre it embraced a novel strategy of organizing around social and economic justice issues from the perspective of the global south. Although logistical problems have worn some of that initial shine off of the meeting, for many participants coming together every two years in a global meeting still holds much value. As long as the WSF continues to meet, the global justice movement shows no sign of abating.

Marc Becker teaches Latin American History at Truman State University [in rural northeast Missouri], and writes on social movements in the South American Andes. More information on the Dakar meeting is available on his website <http://www.yachana.org/reports/wsf11/>.

No Good Deed Goes Unpunished Debunking the Case against Chuck Turner

by Shirley Kressel, Beacon Hill Times, 15 February 2011

Before joining in the universal chorus cheering the harsh sentence [3 years in prison] meted to former City Councilor Chuck Turner for "attempted extortion" in a liquor-license case, journalists should take time to read the court documents, including FBI affidavits and trial transcripts. In them, I found that:

- 1) The FBI had absolutely no evidentiary basis for suspecting Turner of past corrupt behavior, but simply decided to turn their focus onto him, for no apparent reason, to see if he'd accept money if offered.
- 2) Turner did no special favors for the license applicant (who is black), but merely called for a hearing on possible racial discrimination in his community, which includes Empowerment Zone neighborhoods needing economic development assistance. When he was told that state legislation was being proposed to increase the number of permits as a solution, he

postponed the hearing, assuming no further action was needed. He and Representative Gloria Fox also signed letters of support for the application, a common and public gesture for constituents.

The judge instructed the jury that "the Government must prove that Mr. Turner knowingly and willfully obtained cash.... obtained or attempted to obtain a payment to which he is not entitled knowing that the payment was offered to him in return for taking or withholding or influencing official acts." But all that really happened was that the FBI sent their paid informant, Ron Wilburn, to put money in Turner's hand after Turner took action on behalf of his community. Here are the words, at the trial, of the FBI agent who sent the informant to give him money:

Q. [by prosecution attorney] And what were the instructions that you gave Mr. Wilburn before you sent him out with this video camera that day?

A. To have this conversation with Mr. Turner, to have, as I describe it in one report, a carefully worded conversation. I want Mr. Wilburn to say words to the effect that Mr. Turner is going to understand and know that he's accepting this—he's being offered money for official acts that he took as a Boston City Councillor.

Q. And other than telling him to have this conversation, what else did you tell Mr. Wilburn to do?

A. Pay him the thousand dollars.

In other words, the agent was constructing a "crime" retroactively by having Wilburn give Turner unbidden money and saying words to him that would not reveal the exact nature of the set-up but would insinuate enough that the FBI could later claim they showed that Turner knew he was taking money in return for things he did as a Councillor.

But in fact, Turner neither asked for any payback for calling that hearing, nor expected any, nor understood what was handed to him to be a payoff for calling a public hearing on a district problem. As Wilburn put it, it could have been a gift or a campaign contribution. Since there was no quid pro quo, there was no bribery or extortion involved; accepting a bribe is a matter of intent, a deliberate sale of public powers, and extortion further implies a threat to coerce a payback.

Note that Mayor Tom Menino's aide, Michael Kineavy, deleted thousands of official emails (including emails about the Mayor's role, which both Wilburn and Wilkerson mentioned, in getting Wilburn this license) violating the Public Record Law; AG Martha Coakley absolved him and everyone else in the Mayor's office because she concluded they had no "criminal intent" and therefore had committed no crime.

When newspapers confront Mayor Menino or Governor Patrick with records of campaign contributions by corporations that have received favorable official treatment, they simply say, "oh, that didn't influence me"—and that's enough; no investigation is ever done, even when huge amounts are contributed right at the time of these favors. Millions of dollars are contributed and dealt out under these rules of legalized graft; therefore, if Turner had recorded the amount in his hand in his campaign ledger, he would have had no problem, even if it had, in fact, been a bribe.

3) The FBI could not prove how much money was actually given to Turner by the informant. The money was not, as required per FBI protocol, counted out before a camera prior to delivery by the informant, and the informant (who was having big financial problems) was not searched afterward. He didn't announce the amount as he handed it to Turner, as he always did with Sen. Dianne Wilkerson ("Here's a thousand dollars,

Dianne"); he said, "Here, take your wife to dinner."

So it's entirely possible that the informant, who showed up at Turner's district office without an appointment and sat around waiting to be seen for forty minutes while staff and other visitors milled around near-by (an unlikely scenario for Turner to set up if he was expecting a bribe!), helped himself to most of whatever the FBI had stashed, unseen, into his hidden-camera bag, and handed Turner a sum of money that was, in fact, a "dinner" amount, and thus, when uncrumpled later, unmemorable for Turner, who, in fact, had barely met this man before and had done nothing particularly on his behalf, much less at his behest. If the amount was \$50 or less, it was totally legal. If it was more, it was either an excessive gift (an ethics violation if no disclosure form is filed) or an unrecorded campaign contribution (although \$1000 would be legal for the informant and his wife to contribute). This is hardly three-years-in-federal-prison material.

Councilor Mike Ross abused his office to fix 35 of his own parking tickets worth \$1000 over the course of four years; he got a \$2000 fine, in a settlement. As I recall, the *Beacon Hill Times* editor lamented that if the young, handsome Ross had a wife to take care of these little things, he wouldn't have had this silly problem.



Tom Finneran (center), Sal DiMasi (right) and others of the Beacon Hill mob represent truly corrupt Boston politicians, having shuffled millions. Both federally prosecuted, neither Finneran nor DiMasi has gone to prison.

4) The other public officials, besides Wilkerson, who were named in the documents as involved somehow in the license imbroglio, (Mayor Menino, City Council president Maureen Feeney, Senate President Terese Murray, Senator Michael Morrissey, and the License Board chair, Daniel Pokaski (who got a substantial pay raise at the time of this license issue and just left, three years later, with a nice pension boost), and board members Michael Connolly and Suzanne Ianello, who awarded the license without a public hearing and thus broke, at very least, the Open Meeting Law, a violation the DA's office has acknowledged but not prosecuted) have all gone, to my knowledge, without even a look-over by the FBI. As it turns out, a well-connected lawyer paid by Arthur Winn, whose development subsidy Wilkerson was pushing, finally simply went backstage at the License Board and said, give this guy a permit, and voila! they did. Turner was not even peripherally involved in the meetings and shenanigans around this matter and had no idea he was the star of the show. He was, as the informant told the *Boston Globe*, "naïve, and a victim of circumstances, not a thief."

5) This classic case of "no good deed goes unpunished" was not even eligible for FBI investigation, as no interstate commerce was involved. So the FBI got someone to testify that liquor sold in Massachusetts is manufactured out of the state, and thus the award of an existing license to this applicant was a matter of interstate commerce. By that kind of logic, every action taken by every human being falls within FBI jurisdiction. This is jurisdiction gerry-mandering. Turner was gerrymandered in, and Menino and the others were apparently gerrymandered out. If it's not racially or politically motivated, I for one, would be interested in knowing exactly why it happened.

I have been a watchdog over city corruption for over fifteen years, and if I could detect a shred of evidence of corruption on Turner's part, I'd be fully willing to expose and criticize it. I can't. And my reliable sources in Roxbury can't, either. I can say from my experience that, after Felix Arroyo, Sr., left, Turner was the only Councilor to whom I could turn for help—to call for a hearing, to get documents that should have been public but weren't, to ask questions at scheduled hearings, to speak against the tax giveaways and boondoggles and corruption that are bleeding our city. He helped me and others, and he never cared about protecting himself and didn't expect anything in return. He was against developer tax breaks, against the bio-terror lab, against a pay raise firefighters extorted for sobriety testing and against a City Council raise when it was enacted without a proper public hearing. He helped get CORI reforms so prisoners could re-enter society with gainful employment. He provided an affidavit to support the citizens' suit against the City Council for its twelve Open Meeting Law violations, which intensified the guilty Councilors' hatred of him and his independent ways, and made his expulsion from the Council a moment of gleeful revenge for them. [Italics added —Ed.]

Dianne Wilkerson was heard on the tapes saying, "He [Turner] would be good, if you needed somebody... to go pick up a ruckus and just protest for you. You want to get something done... that's not what he does." She also said, "Chuck is crazy, he lives in the 1960's." He was the one *stickler for principle* on our deeply flawed City Council—and that was indeed a crazy thing to do. This is his punishment.

It's easy to hide smugly behind the jury's verdict as an indisputable truth (remember the O. J. Simpson's jury verdict?) and to scapegoat Turner for all the corruption that angers and frustrates us all. But without a context, that widely disseminated picture of the money in the handshake doesn't say more than a thousand words; it tells a misleading story, and I've seen no journalist trying to get it right. If his appeal is unsuccessful, Turner will go to prison, but it won't serve justice, and we'll lose a real public servant.

TORTURE

February 2, 2011
The Honorable Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defense
1400 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Gates:

This morning, The *Washington Post* reported that Pfc. Bradley J. Manning, the Army intelligence analyst who is accused of being the source of the WikiLeaks documents, was known by the Army to have had mental health problems even before his deployment to Iraq. "At Fort Drum, Manning balled up his fists and screamed at higher-ranking soldiers in his unit...." A "mental

health specialist" recommended that he not be deployed to Iraq, "but his immediate commanders sent him anyway...."

In Iraq, evidence of his mental health problems accelerated. "[A] master sergeant who supervised Manning was so concerned about the private's mental health that he disabled Manning's weapon in December 2009...." "[I]n May 2010, Manning was demoted a rank for assaulting a fellow soldier...."

The Army ignored Private Manning's mental health problems before he was arrested for leaking the documents to WikiLeaks, and the consequences of that disinterest are now obvious. Since his arrest, the Army has reportedly treated Private Manning in a way that is almost certain to exacerbate his mental health problems.

In December 2010, Glenn Greenwald reported on the conditions of Private Manning's confinement at the Marine brig in Quantico, Virginia.

Since his arrest in May, Manning has been a model detainee, without any episodes of violence or disciplinary problems. He nonetheless was declared from the start to be a "Maximum Custody Detainee," the highest and most repressive level of military detention, which then became the basis for the series of inhumane measures imposed on him.

From the beginning of his detention, Manning has been held in intensive solitary confinement. For 23 out of 24 hours every day—for seven straight months and counting—he sits completely alone in his cell. Even inside his cell, his activities are heavily restricted; he's barred even from exercising and is under constant surveillance to enforce those restrictions. For reasons that appear completely punitive, he's being denied many of the most basic attributes of civilized imprisonment, including even a pillow or sheets for his bed.... For the one hour per day when he is freed from this isolation, he is barred from accessing any news or current events programs.

In sum, Manning has been subjected for many months without pause to inhumane, personality-erasing, soul-destroying, insanity-inducing conditions of isolation similar to those perfected at America's Supermax prison in Florence, Colorado—all without so much as having been convicted of anything. And as is true of many prisoners subjected to warped treatment of this sort, the brig's medical personnel now administer regular doses of anti-depressants to Manning to prevent his brain from snapping from the effects of this isolation.

On January 3, 2011, the Psychologists for Social Responsibility issued an "Open Letter" in which they protested the conditions of Private Manning's incarceration "based on the exhaustive documentation and research that have determined that solitary confinement is, at the very least, a form of cruel, unusual and inhumane treatment in violation of U.S. law." Their Open Letter quotes extensively from the findings of Dr. Craig Haney, "a psychologist and expert in the assessment of institutional environments...."

"Empirical research on solitary and supermax-like confinement has consistently and unequivocally documented the harmful consequences of living in these kinds of environments... Evidence of these negative psychological effects

comes from personal accounts, descriptive studies, and systematic research on solitary and supermax-type confinement, conducted over a period of four decades, by researchers from several different continents who had diverse backgrounds and a wide range of professional expertise ... [D]irect studies of prison isolation have documented an extremely broad range of harmful psychological reactions. These effects include increases in the following potentially damaging symptoms and problematic behaviors: negative attitudes and affect, insomnia, anxiety, panic, withdrawal, hypersensitivity, ruminations, cognitive dysfunction, hallucinations, loss of control, irritability, aggression, and rage, paranoia, hopelessness, lethargy, depression, a sense of impending emotional breakdown, self-mutilation, and suicidal ideation and behavior."

"To summarize, there is not a single published study of solitary or supermax-like confinement in which non-voluntary confinement lasting for longer than 10 days where participants were unable to terminate their isolation at will that failed to result in negative psychological effects."

Today's article states that the Army actually recognized that Private Manning had mental health problems, but deployed him to Iraq anyway. Once he was in Iraq, the Army reportedly did not adequately supervise him and allowed his mental health problems to fester. His sergeant recognized that Manning's mental health was so compromised that he took the unusual step of disabling Manning's weapon in a war zone.

Now, reports indicate that the Army has taken Pfc. Manning, a soldier with documented mental health problems, and confined him under conditions that are almost guaranteed to exacerbate his mental health problems. If true, the Army's treatment would obviously constitute "cruel and unusual punishment" in violation of the Eighth Amendment to the United States Constitution.

If these reports are true, the Army must end the extreme conditions of Private Manning's confinement, and provide him with the mental health treatment that the Army recognized he needed even before his deployment to Iraq. At the very least, the Army must explain the justification for confining someone with mental health problems under conditions that are virtually certain to exacerbate those problems and explain the danger he now presents that only these extreme conditions of confinement can avoid.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Dennis J. Kucinich Member of Congress

Ed. Comment: *Congressman Kucinich is focusing on the Manning case. If he were drafting legislation he might cover causes and consequences of punitive solitary confinement, improved conditions for release, and forms of trial and punishment of military decision-makers. Our military is an anachronism. Psychological science has helped it develop exquisite instruments of sadistic torture, but has not been applied to military means—if there are such—to foster democracy and justice. Readers: can anyone summarize relevant provisions in Kucinich's proposals for a Department of Peace? ■*

clothes are taken and he remains nude until the interrogators provide clothes to him."

The CIA said the prisoner is kept nude (or occasionally dressed in a diaper) while being subjected to other "conditioning techniques," sleep deprivation and a bland diet of Ensure. Nudity continues while interrogators apply other more aggressive techniques designed to emphasize a prisoner's helplessness.

The background paper, which was prepared for the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel and released in August 2009 in response to an ACLU lawsuit, described in bureaucratic wording the process used to interrogate a suspected terrorist after his capture and "rendition" to a CIA-run "black site."

"During the flight, the detainee is securely shackled and is deprived of sight and sound through the use of blindfolds, earmuffs, and hoods," the report said. "There is no interaction with the HVD during this rendition movement except for periodic, discreet assessments by the on-board medical officer."

From the start, the goal was to dramatize the prisoner's vulnerability.

"The HVD is subjected to administrative procedures and medical assessment upon arrival at the Black Site," the report said. "The HVD finds himself in the complete control of Americans."

Initially, that control is underscored by an ominous coldness of the reception.

The report said: "The procedures he is subjected to are precise, quiet, and almost clinical; and no one is mistreating him. While each HVD is different, the rendition and reception process generally creates significant apprehension in the HVD because of the enormity and suddenness of the change in environment, the uncertainty about what will happen next, and the potential dread an HVD might have in US custody."

The prisoner is next subjected to a dehumanizing process in preparation for the interrogations.

"The HVD's head and face are shaved," the CIA report says. "A series of photographs are taken of the HVD while nude to document the physical condition of the HVD upon arrival. A Medical Officer interviews the HVD and a medical evaluation is conducted to assess the physical condition of the HVD. ... A Psychologist interviews the HVD to assess his mental state."

Then, if no "contraindications" are found, the interrogations begin, with continued emphasis on stripping the prisoner of his clothing, his self-respect and his ability to resist.

'Learned Helplessness'

"Effective interrogation is based on the concept of using both physical and psychological pressures in a comprehensive, systematic, and cumulative manner to influence HVD behavior, to overcome a detainee's resistance posture," the CIA report said.

"The goal of interrogation is to create a state of learned helplessness and dependence conducive to the collection of intelligence in a predictable, reliable, and sustainable manner."

The report said a typical "session one" would start as "the HVD is brought into the interrogation room, and under the direction of the interrogators, stripped of his clothes, and placed into shackles."

After a round of questioning — that would include some slaps and slamming the prisoner against a wall — sleep deprivation and dietary manipulation (which along with nudity are regarded as "conditioning techniques") are begun.

The report said: "The interrogators, assisted by security officers ... will place the HVD in the center of the interrogation

room in the vertical shackling position and diaper the HVD to begin sleep deprivation. The HVD will be provided with Ensure Plus [a commercial high-nutrition drink —Ed.]... to begin dietary manipulation. The HVD remains nude."

In the next session, "coercive techniques" are brought into play. The nude prisoner is doused with cold water, repeatedly slammed against a wall and forced into stress positions before being returned to the shackling position for more sleep deprivation and more dietary manipulation, with the recurring advice, "the HVD remains nude."

Summing up this second session, the CIA wrote, "the following techniques were used: sleep deprivation, nudity, dietary manipulation, walling, water dousing, attention grasp, insult slap, and abdominal slap. The three Conditioning Techniques were used to keep the HVD at a baseline, dependent state and to weaken his resolve and will to resist."

For session three, the CIA also noted that the prisoner "is nude" before more abusive techniques are added to the mix and then applied in combination. The report stated:

"Interrogators will often use one technique to support another. As an example, interrogators would tell an HVD in a stress position that he (HVD) is going back to the walling wall (for walling) if he fails to hold the stress position until told otherwise. ... This places additional stress on the HVD who typically will try to hold the stress position for as long as possible to avoid the walling wall."

According to the report, wall slamming, which involves putting a harness around a prisoner's neck and whipping him into a wall, "is one of the most effective interrogation techniques because it wears down the HVD physically, heightens uncertainty in the detainee about what the interrogator may do to him, and creates a sense of dread when the HVD knows he is about to be walled again. ...

"An HVD may be walled one time (one impact with the wall) to make a point or twenty to thirty times consecutively when the interrogator requires a more significant response to a question. During an interrogation session that is designed to be intense, an HVD will be walled multiple times in the session."

After the end of the third session, the prisoner is put back "into the vertical shackling position to resume sleep deprivation. Dietary manipulation also continues, and the HVD remains nude," the report said.

Cramped Confinement

In later interrogations, the prisoner could also be locked in boxes for differing periods depending on the size of the box. Under guidance from the CIA's medical personnel, "the duration of cramped confinement limits confinement in the large box to no more than 8 hours at a time for no more than 18 hours a day, and confinement in the small box to 2 hours," the report said.

According to the report, "sleep deprivation may continue to the 70 to 120 hour range, or possibly beyond for the hardest resisters, but in no case exceed the 180-hour time limit."

Although "the entire interrogation process outlined above ... may last for thirty days," the report said, "if the interrogation team anticipates the potential need to use interrogation techniques beyond the 30-day approval period, it will submit a new interrogation plan to HQS for evaluation and approval."

The Bush administration insisted that its "enhanced interrogation techniques," which earlier also included the near-drowning of "waterboarding," were effective in eliciting valuable intelligence about al-Qaeda and its plans, but FBI and some military interrogators opposed the techniques as counterproductive.

Questionable Effectiveness

As early as spring 2002, FBI agents objected to the CIA's brutal treatment of badly wounded al-Qaeda captive Abu Zubaydah, only to be informed that the tactics had been approved "at the highest levels," according to a Justice Department Inspector General's report that was released last year.

FBI interrogators claimed that they achieved better results from rapport-building and other non-violent techniques with Zubaydah than the CIA did later with its use of torture.

For instance, author Jane Mayer in her book *The Dark Side* wrote that the two FBI agents, Ali Soufan and Steve Gaudin, "sent back early cables [in 2002] describing Zubayda as revealing inside details of the [9/11] attacks on New York and Washington, including the nickname of its central planner, 'Mukhtar,' who was identified as Khalid Sheikh Mohammad. ..."

"During this period, Zubayda also described an Al Qaeda associate whose physical description matched that of Jose Padilla. The information led to the arrest of the slow-witted American gang member in May 2002, at O'Hare International Airport in Chicago. ...

"Abu Zubayda disclosed Padilla's role accidentally, apparently. While making small talk, he described an Al Qaeda associate he said had just visited the U.S. embassy in Pakistan. That scrap was enough for authorities to find and arrest Padilla.

"These early revelations were greeted with excitement by [CIA Director George] Tenet, until he was told they were extracted not by his officers but by the rival team at the FBI."

Soon, a CIA team arrived at the secret CIA detention center in Thailand where Zubaydah was being held and took command, adopting more aggressive interrogations tactics, Mayer wrote. The Bush administration approved the full battery of harsh tactics, including waterboarding, in mid-summer 2002.

Mayer's account was backed up by one of the FBI agents, Ali Soufan, who broke his long silence on the topic in an op-ed in the *New York Times*, citing Zubaydah's cooperation in providing information about Padilla and KSM before the CIA began the harsh tactics.

"It is inaccurate ... to say that Abu Zubaydah had been uncooperative," Soufan wrote. "Under traditional interrogation methods, he provided us with important actionable intelligence." [NYT, 23 April 2009]



Pfc.
Bradley
Manning

After taking office in January 2009, President Barack Obama issued an executive order closing the "black sites" and prohibiting the CIA's "enhanced interrogation techniques." The Obama administration also has released documents describing how Bush's Justice Department issued legal opinions that permitted waterboarding and other torture techniques.

In August 2009, the Obama administration released a 2004 CIA Inspector General's report, which was critical of the CIA's abusive interrogations. The CIA background paper detailing how the methods were used in combination was part of the package of documents made public at that time.

Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and Newsweek. His latest book, *Neck Deep: The Disastrous Presidency of George W. Bush*, was written with two of his sons, Sam and Nat.

***Ed. Note:** We wonder whether Parry, who wrote an article ["The 9/11 'truth' parlor game", ConsortiumNews.com, 16 January 2011] in which he claimed that the "inside job" theory was "preposterous", had concluded that Zubaydah's coerced confessions were enough to indict Al-Qaeda as the principal or whole force behind the 9/11 attacks and building collapses. He evidently accepted the seriously flawed explanations—as cited at the end of his article—of the National Institute of Standards & Technology (evidently based on MIT engineer Eduardo Kausel's armchair analysis—see BCA Dispatch Nov-Dec 2010, p.1a) and Popular Mechanics, and did not reference thoroughgoing critics such as David Ray Griffin. Sadly, Parry's (mis)understanding was picked up and repeated by Bill Moyers in his 27 January 2011 speech to media people in New York.

COMMUNITY NOTES (Continued from Page 1)

"About Us" website draft

The **New England Alliance for Democracy** is an autonomous part of the Alliance for Democracy (AfD), a national, grassroots organization dedicated to ending corporate rule and fostering true, participatory democracy and fair, regionalized economy. We are dedicated to nonviolent, systemic change, locally- and regionally-based.

Our model is the great anti-corporate Populist movement of the 1880s and '90s, begun in the hill country of Texas and spread throughout central and southern United States. The movement had important consequences such as banking for the people (largely farmers in those days), affordable food, decent incomes, and popular election of senators, but fell short of becoming the national standard because it failed to consolidate with industrial and urban workers of the East.

Founded in 1995, the North Bridge and Boston-Cambridge chapters—in and around Boston—have combined to call for collaboration among all pro-democracy groups in New England and beyond. We believe that local and regional economies can thrive, and that the New England town meeting can be a model for a more active and direct democracy on issues affecting people's daily lives. We believe that working together we can influence national and even international policies.

The national AfD also endorses and supports campaigns of other groups, including anti-war coalitions and the current efforts to support unions and public service budgets. Local and regional groups can also choose to support efforts that respond to their local communities. Recent examples are work on **solar feed-in tariffs** in Oregon, **alternative media** projects in Oregon and California, working with local farmers to defend **local food systems** and **community traditions** in Maine, and efforts to prevent **federal interference** in local government in Boston.

Through forums and local organizing we can support the work of the national AfD and also initiate projects of specific local and regional importance. National and local AfD campaigns have included:

- working in the Move to Amend coalition to amend the U.S. constitution to assert that **corporations** are not persons and have none of the constitutional **rights** accorded persons;
- support for a variety of campaign finance and other **electoral**

reforms; working to educate people about the vulnerability of electronic voting machines to illegal manipulation;

- replacing **corporate globalization** with a model of fair trade that recognizes the **rights** and interests of the peoples of all nations, and rejects the power of multi-national corporations; helping to form and support state **citizen trade policy commissions**;

- working on rights-based ordinances that strengthen the **autonomy of cities and towns**, assert the **rights of nature**, and reinforce home rule principles; defending local communities from large-scale **water** extraction for bottling and selling outside the watershed, and from corporate take-over of public water and sewer systems;

- working toward systems of **participatory budgeting**, locally and regionally, to insure that budgets reflect the needs and interests of the people;

- working with a variety of groups to institute a universal, single-payer, not-for-profit **health care** system;

- educating people, including students, about the concepts of the **common good** and the public interest.

We are open to all, and try to live daily the change we advocate.

Please send us your critique of this draft so that the statement may be improved for posting on the web.

Democracy's friend City Councilor **Chuck Turner** was sentenced to 3 years in prison by federal Judge Douglas Woodlock, for—according to the judge—taking a \$1000 bribe for helping provocateur Ron Wilburn get a liquor license, and especially for "lying" to the FBI agents who questioned him in his office. The blindness and cruelty of this judgment is clear from **Shirley Kressel's** article (Page 9 above) as well as *Dispatch* articles published in Nov-Dec 2010 and Jan-Feb 2011 issues. Because of the unwarranted guilty verdict of the jury, the city council hypocritically deprived Chuck of his seat and his pension, thus sentencing him and his wife to poverty since he used his savings to keep open his optional office in his district. Your editor attended the trial and has transcripts of the judge's lengthy remarks to the jury and to all present upon sentencing, which we will discuss in an upcoming edition. The issue is not simply the prejudice of this Reagan-appointed judge, but the perversity of the FBI and the cowardice of the US Justice Department.

State **Sen. Jamie Eldridge** has introduced a resolution (Docket 1488) to amend the US constitution to block corporate funding of elections, thus challenging the US Supreme Courts perverse decision in the "Citizens United" case. To help in this and the national MoveToAmend to ban corporate personhood, contact mary.white100@verizon.net or Barbara Clancy at 978-562-1378. For talking points if you call your state legislators, see: www.thealliancefordemocracy.org/pdf/resolutiontalkingpoints.pdf.

Our task of arranging for **Chicago's Alderman Joe Moore** to speak in Boston about Chicago's experience with **participatory budgeting** was kindly preempted by folks in Roxbury. The event is being organized by **Judith Roderick** of Boston City Council's District 7 Roundtable and Fund Our Communities/Cut Military Spending 25% Coalition. It will be on April 12 in Roxbury. See **Action Alerts** in this issue for details... We have suggested that Newton MA may also be a good venue for a return visit by Moore, since several city councilors there may be attuned to

participatory budgeting... Please contact us if such an event makes sense for your community. We might also get PB expert **Gianpaolo Baiocchi** of Brown University to speak.

Dave Lewit has been working to provide nominees to Governor Patrick for the newly mandated Massachusetts citizen commission on international trade policy. So far we have fine acceptances from citizens in the areas of labor, environment, human rights, small business, law, and economics. We have yet to line up nominees representing farms, municipalities, and export business. And, worthy readers, we welcome your nominees in any of these areas.

ACTION ALERTS

Wed. 16 Mar, 6:30pm. Dorchester (Boston). Building on the Wisconsin Uprising. Speaker: **George Gresham**, president of SEIU 1199 (a union of 375,000 healthcare workers in MA, NY, DC, MD, NJ, & FL). This One Nation Working Together event organized by 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East, Majority Agenda Project, and Jobs with Justice. At SEIU 1199 Union Hall at 150 Mt. Vernon St (JFK T Stop on Red Line). Info: Enid Eckstein at 877-409-1199, enid.eckstein@1199.org, or info@majorityagendaproject.org, 888-400-1225.

<http://bit.ly/Gresh> (Map only at <http://bit.ly/1199Boston>). (n.b.: It's in Dorchester, not Beacon Hill. Free parking on premises).

Sat. 19 March, 12 noon, Washington DC. Vets Peace Rally, 8th anniversary of the invasion of Iraq. Many speakers including **Chris Hedges**. Sponsors: Iraq Veterans Against the War, March Forward!, Vietnam Veterans Against the War and Veterans for Peace. Gather at Lafayette Park, across from the White House, Pennsylvania Ave. Info: paulvfp@comcast.net, 978-356-7671 or patscanlonmusic@yahoo.com, 617-797-1784.

Sun. 20 March, 2-4pm, South Boston. Saint Patrick's Peace Parade. After years of struggle with the American Legion and VFW war glorifiers, who banned peace marchers and other social justice marchers from their parade (expensive for the city's police), the Boston authorities have finally permitted the peace marchers to have their parade in the wake of the "traditional" one. So "we will have the Leftist Marching Band and are very hopeful to have other Honk Parade marching bands with us." Get your group to sign on.

Meet at 2pm at the Broadway T station (Red Line) at Broadway & Dorchester Ave. Come yourself and cheer! Some signs: Bring the Troops Home; Take Care of Them When They Get Here; Cut Military Spending; Save Jobs: Teachers, Fireman, Police; Peace is Patriotic! Not a Dirty Word. Info: www.Smedleyvfp.org. Groups sign on: Pat Scanlon, Veterans For Peace: 978-475-1776; Cole Harrison, United for Justice with Peace: 617-466-9274; or American Friends Service Committee: 617-497-5273.

Thu. 24 Mar, 7pm. Boston. Framing the Innocent: Crimes Under Color of Law at the Massachusetts US Attorney's Office. Speakers: **Chuck Turner**, **Bob Boyle** (lawyer experienced in defending against FBI), **Laila Murad** (organizer for Tarek Mehanna), **Michael Avery** (Suffolk Law School professor, successful against FBI on behalf of 4 men wrongfully convicted of murder). Sponsors: Northeastern School of Law Chapters of the NLG (National Lawyers Guild), EPIC (Ending the Prison Industrial Complex), BLSA (Black Law Student Association), Community Church of Boston, Boston ABC, Black and Pink.

At Northeastern Univ School of Law, 240 Dockser Hall, 65

Forsyth St., Boston. Info:

<https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/usattorneywatch>;
usattywatch@hushmail.com.

Thu-Thu, 24-31 March. Brookline. "Orgasm, Inc." a documentary film examining women's sexuality, and Big Pharma corporations inventing "female sexual dysfunction" and getting the FDA to approve their female Viagra "remedy". True, behind-the-scenes filming with comic currents. At 7pm opening night film-maker (and *Dispatch* reader) **Liz Canner** and sex expert **Kim Ains** will lead discussion. Coolidge Corner Theater, Harvard St. just N of Beacon St, on Cleveland Circle Green Line T. Info: www.orgasminc.org

Thu. 31 March, 2:45-4:30pm & 6-8pm, Boston. Globalization Symposium: focus on global commodity chains, neoliberalism, and human rights. The evening session, in particular, will explore issues related to politics and activism surrounding global commodities such as coffee, coca cola, drugs, arms, as well as clothing and apparel. Sponsor: Northeastern Univ Sociology Dept. At Northeastern University, 20 West Village F, 40 Leon St. (just west of Law School) Info: Venue: (617) 536-3610. Content: <http://globalcommodities2011.blogspot.com>

Fri.-Sun, 8 Apr, 8am—10 Apr 3pm, Boston. "The National Conference for Media Reform is the biggest and best conference devoted to media, technology and democracy. Thousands of activists, media makers, educators, journalists, policymakers and people from across the country are coming to Boston for this 5th NCMR. Together we will explore the future of journalism and public media, consider how technology is changing the world, look at the policies and politics shaping our media, and discuss strategies to build the movement for better media." Speakers: **Stiglitz, vanden Heuvel, Copps, Huh, Lessig, McChesney, Cyril, Fanning, Amy Goodman, etc.** At Seaport World Trade Center, 1 Seaport Lane. \$175. info: <http://ncmr11.eventbrite.com/>

Tue. 12 April, 6-8pm, Roxbury. Participatory Budgeting for Boston. Chicago Alderman **Joe Moore** will discuss how to launch this highly empowering mode of democratic control of our cities and our selves. *Municipal officials from Boston-area cities and towns especially welcome.* Sponsored by Boston D7 and the Coalition to reduce the military budget by 25%. Location to be announced. Info: phone BCA Dispatch at 617-266-8687.

Obama vs. Chávez

Asks \$5 Million to Sway Venezuela Election

By Eva Golinger, chavezcode.com, 18 February 2011

The US government is setting the terrain for the 2012 presidential elections in Venezuela, soliciting funding to back anti-Chavez groups and help prepare a "candidate" to oppose Chavez. Republicans call for an "embargo" against the oil-producing nation.

This week, US President Barack Obama presented Congress with a \$3.7 trillion dollar budget for 2012, the most expensive budget in United States history. Within his massive request, which proposes cuts in important social programs and federal jobs throughout the country, is a partition for special funding for anti-Chavez groups in Venezuela.

Included in the whopping \$3.7 trillion request is over \$670 billion for the Pentagon's ever-increasing annual budget, nearly

\$75 billion for the intelligence community and \$55.7 billion for the State Department and the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

For the first time in recent history, the Foreign Operations Budget (State Department) openly details direct funding of at least \$5 million to anti-Chavez groups in Venezuela. Specifically, the budget justification document states, "These funds will help strengthen and support a Venezuelan civil society that will protect democratic space and seek to serve the interests and needs of the Venezuelan people. Funding will enhance citizens' access to objective information, facilitate peaceful debate on key issues, provide support to democratic institutions and processes, promote citizen participation and encourage democratic leadership".

While the descriptive language justifying the diversion of millions in US taxpayers dollars to fund political groups in a foreign nation may sound "pretty", this type of funding has been a principal source of promoting subversion and destabilization in Venezuela against the democratic and majority-supported government of Hugo Chavez during the past eight years. According to public documents, just between the years 2008 to 2011, the US State Department channeled more than \$40 million to the Venezuelan opposition, primarily directing those funds to electoral campaigns against President Chavez and propaganda slated to influence Venezuelan public opinion.

The funding requested in Obama's 2012 budget for anti-Chavez groups in Venezuela comes from a State Department division titled "Economic Support Fund" (ESF), which per State spokesman Philip Crowley, is used to fund NGOs and other non-governmental groups in "key strategic and important countries" for Washington. On top of the ESF funds for the Venezuelan opposition, additional multimillion-dollar financing for political campaigns, media propaganda and other destabilization activities in the South American nation is channeled through the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), International Republican Institute (IRI), National Democratic Institute (NDI) and various other US and international agencies that support groups around the world who promote US agenda...

The State Department budget also requests \$20 million in funding for anti-Castro groups in Miami and elsewhere to continue efforts to undermine the Cuban Revolution... ■

LETTERS

Is Obama Guided by the CIA?

February 06, 2011

Dave,

I wonder about all those revelations about Barack [see *BCA Dispatch*, Jan-Feb 2011]. Remnick, so far the best biography, says almost nothing about any CIA connection. I've never heard Gov[ernor]Neil [Abercrombie], who knew Barack Sr pretty well, say anything about it. So what is needed is documentary evidence. And to say that the EWC [Hawaii's East West Center] is a CIA front needs deep modification—like documentary, or at least witnessing, evidence. There have been CIA goons there, but also Kuomintang goons, etc. I'll ask Alice Dewey what she knows about it (she was Stanley Ann's [Obama's mother] PhD adviser, and co-editor of the book by SAo published by Duke UP). The only one of that family I've met is Maya, and that was only to shake hands. But I'm suspicious when there's some pretty tough stuff but hardly any checkable attribution.

Keep up the good fight.

George [Simson], Honolulu

Dear George—

About Obama's CIA nexus. I was shocked when I first read Madsen's stuff. So I labored through all that was available at his site. Looking for a good summation, I came across Sherwood Ross' in two publications. I didn't come across Remnick, and probably would not have had the patience to read the book if I had—though now I'm seeing commentaries about it at Amazon, thanks to you. Since CIA operations are covert, why should Abercrombie or anyone else know the breadth and depth of CIA involvement in East West Center? I taught a seminar at EWC and had no idea of any CIA involvement.

You are suspicious of Madsen's intimation. And why not? Madsen's evidence is merely guilt by association—a wide net of associations—and not of any specific CIA crime. But we cannot absolve Obama merely because biographers and informers omit specific evidence. I am put in mind of Samuel Eliot Morrison's authoritative biography of Columbus, with hardly a word about Columbus' barbarous treatment of the Arawak people who fetched him the gold he was after, or had their hands chopped off.

I am left with the impression that Obama, the opportunist, takes the CIA as an omnipresent uncle—sorta like Willy Loman's brother Ben—whose methods are all in the family, and accepted, even revered, because they seem to have been working.

Remnick's book title, *The Bridge*, makes me wonder. Bridge to where? Hope for what? These two years of Obama's administration provides evidence only of a U-shaped bridge back to Bush. I had read half of Obama's *Dreams From My Father*, and maybe now I'll finish it. But the big question in my mind is "how did Obama get chosen for the convention speech and thereafter be catapulted to the candidacy? Did the CIA have a significant role in that and his election?"

Aloha---

Dave [Lewit], Editor

JOIN THE BCA

YOU DON'T HAVE TO LIVE IN BOSTON TO LOVE BCA

Please help us as we fight to make a better future for ourselves and our children — Join the Boston/Cambridge Alliance for Democracy. (Cut out 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!"

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___ \$111/Year - "Sustainer" (Helping us thrive.)

___ \$222/Year - "Community Steward"

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COLOPHON

Dave Lewit, Editor 617-266-8687 dlewit@igc.org

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