

BCA Dispatch

Newsletter of the **Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy** July 2003

Q: "Why can't we vote the bastards out?"

A: "Because we didn't even vote the bastards in!"

—James and Kenneth Collier, *Votescam* (on vote rigging)

ALLIANCE NEWS (continued on page 8)

Chapter Calendar

*** Faith and Globalization... ***

The Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy's next meeting will be on **Wednesday, July 16**, from **7:00 to 9:15 p.m.** at **Cambridge Friends Meeting**, 5 Longfellow Park (9 minute walk from Harvard Square T station, west on Brattle St.)

— Discussion Agenda —

Unitarian Universalists studied for 2 years and now **resolve to do something about corporate globalization**. Four local activists were at the UU Gen'l Assembly in Boston last month. What will they do? and what will you do? Join the discussion with

- * Paul Brailsford, Ipswich shipmaster, Veterans for Peace
- * Carol Dwyer, Concord Grassroots Action, Mexico observer
- * Aileen Montour, Cambridge acupuncturist, Mexico observer
- * Mary Rossborough, popular educator, Salem State U.

—Refreshments—

Notice: Next Steering Committee meeting: 23 July, 5:30 pm at 32 Fayette St, Cambridge. 617-864-3931. "Figure the future!"



THE MYRTLE CROWN

Now that it looks like we are going to have an empire, perhaps we should adopt the ancient Roman custom of decorating the heads of victorious leaders with wreaths of leaves. A wreath of laurels signified the highest honor, but there were others. According to William Smith's *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, a crown of myrtle "was given to those who merely deserved an ovation, which happened when the war was not duly declared, or was carried on against a very inferior force, or with persons not considered by the laws of nations as lawful enemies, such as slaves or pirates; or when the victory was obtained without danger, difficulty, or bloodshed." ~ROBERT GROSSMAN

The Black Radical Congress A Partner for Alliance for Democracy?

by Dave Lewit, Boston-Cambridge and national AfD

Look in the mirror. Look around you. Chances are you and your fellow Alliance members are white, college educated, and over 50. The few black people seen at early national AfD meetings have disappeared from the scene, as well as the poor people, if there ever were any. Are we "democratic and inclusive"? Do we have the legitimacy, credibility, and authority to lead a populist movement? Should we try harder to diversify our membership, or give in to socially narrow reality, or start working with groups which are black/brown, blue-collar/poor, or even bourgeois?

Several years ago I happened to look at the website of the Black Radical Congress (BRC). I was struck by parallels with the Alliance—pro-democracy, anti-imperial, non-dogmatic, radical, assertive, local-national. I managed to talk on the phone with two local members, but failed to connect face-to-face. I managed to get onto

(Continued on page 6 >>)

Rigging the 2004 Election How George Bush Could Steal It Again

by Sandeep Atwal, www.infernalpress.com, Toronto,
25 June 2003 Adapted by BCA Dispatch

In the 7 November 1988 issue of *The New Yorker* Ronnie Dugger interviews many experts and officials on voting methods and builds a strong case against arcane machines and for using simple balloting methods which any voter can understand (read "Counting Votes" at www.csl.sri.com/users/neumann/dugger.html).

In their 1992 book *Votescam: The Stealing of America*, James and Kenneth Collier detail the long history of voting fraud over the previous twenty-five years with a special focus on voting machines.

American politicians and large media outlets have ignored their book, and their charges remained unanswered. Now, their concerns are being echoed by a new group of writers, journalists and activists who have brought forward alarming

details about electronic voting in America. Professors Rebecca Mercuri and David Dill and organizations such as the Association for Computing Machinery have carefully documented how voting systems are vulnerable to fraudulent manipulation. Journalists such as Lynn Landes, Jerry Bowles and Bev Harris are alerting Americans to an electronic coup d'etat in the making. If their charges are true—and there is little evidence to contradict their claims—George W. Bush will already have won the 2004 election.

To understand how George W. Bush will win the next presidential election, it helps to understand how he won the last one. While all public attention was drawn to hanging chads, butterfly ballots and a skewed recount in the wake of the 2000 Presidential election, the roots of the problem have been overlooked. As investigative reporter Greg Palast uncovered (see *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy*), the state of Florida purged over 90,000 people from their list of eligible voters under the guise that they were felons. In fact, almost none of the disenfranchised voters were felons, but almost all were blacks or democrats...

Rigging Inside the Computer Code

Ethnically cleansed voter lists are only one method of pre-determining the outcome of an election. An even more serious problem lies inside the voting machines themselves. While representatives of Diebold, Election Systems & Software (ES&S) and Sequoia herald the benefits of their systems, not everyone shares their enthusiasm. Dr. Rebecca Mercuri is an Assistant Professor of Computer Science at Bryn Mawr College and has been referred to as "the leading independent expert on electronic voting technology." Shortly before the 2000 Presidential election, Mercuri defended her Ph.D. dissertation on the subject of "Electronic Vote Tabulation: Checks and Balances" at the Engineering School of the University of Pennsylvania.

Mercuri's website www.notablessoftware.com/evote.html is an astonishing checklist of the lack of safeguards and other failings that plague the current crop of electronic voting systems. One of Mercuri's primary concerns is that electronic systems provide no way for a voter, or election officials, to verify that a cast ballot corresponds to the vote being recorded. As Mercuri notes on her site, "Any programmer can write code that displays one thing on a screen, records something else, and prints yet another result." There is no known way to ensure that this is not happening inside of a voting system. Companies such as Diebold, ES&S and Sequoia, which manufacture the machines and provide the code that runs them, simply take a "trust us" approach.

Mercuri also reports that no electronic voting system has been certified to even the lowest level of the U.S. government or international computer security standards such as the ISO Common Criteria, nor are they required to comply with such standards. Thus, no current electronic voting system is secure by the U.S. government's own standards.

Electronic voting systems without individual printouts for examination by voters do not provide an independent audit trail. All voting systems can make mistakes and the ability to perform manual hand-counts of ballots is the only way to verify results. Computer glitches are already cropping up all across the United States. Numerous irregularities with electronic voting machines have already been reported:

- In Georgia, which recently purchased 22,000 Diebold touch screens, some voters touched one candidate's name on the

screen and saw another candidate's name appear.

- A former news reporter in Florida discovered that votes were being tabulated in 644 Palm Beach precincts—but Palm Beach only has 643 precincts. An earlier court case in Florida found the same discrepancy. A reporter in New Jersey observed 104 precincts with votes in an area that has only 102 precincts.

- Baldwin County results showed that Democrat Don Siegelman won the state of Alabama. However, the next morning, 6,300 of Siegelman's votes disappeared and the election was handed to Republican Bob Riley. A recount was requested and denied.

- In North Carolina, a software programming error caused vote-counting machines to skip over several thousand votes, both Republican and Democratic. Fixing the error turned up 5,500 more votes and reversed the election.

- In Comal County Texas, an uncanny coincidence resulted in three Republican candidates winning by exactly 18,181 votes each. Two other Republican candidates outside Texas also won by exactly 18,181 votes.

- In October, election officials in Raleigh, N.C., discovered that early voters had to make several attempts to record their votes on ES&S systems. Officials compared the number of voters to the number of votes counted and realized that 294 votes had been lost.



Rebecca Mercuri

A report from the Caltech-MIT Voting Technology Project states that an estimated 1.5 million presidential votes were not recorded in 2000 because of difficulties using voting equipment and that electronic machines have the second highest rate of unmarked, uncounted and spoiled ballots in presidential, senate, and governor elections over the last 12 years.

Federally mandated voting machines, almost exclusively manufactured by ES&S,

Diebold, and Sequoia are being constructed and tested under obsolete FEC recommendations. The US has authorized spending of over four billion dollars on new voting equipment, but as Mercuri notes, "failed to require or enforce adequate security, usability, reliability, and auditability controls over the products being purchased." The numerous flaws cited above ably demonstrate Mercuri's point.

Her concerns are echoed by Professor David Dill from Stanford University. He has created a resolution warning of the dangers of electronic voting machines. "Do not be seduced by the apparent convenience of 'touch-screen voting' machines, or the 'gee whiz' factor that accompanies flashy new technology," he writes. "Using these machines is tantamount to handing complete control of vote counting to a private company, with no independent checks or audits. These machines represent a serious threat to democracy."

Suspicious Upset

Chuck Hagel first ran for the U.S. Senate in Nebraska in 1996. Electronic voting machines owned by ES&S reported that he had won both the primaries and the general election in unprecedented victories. His 1996 victory was considered one of the biggest

upsets of that election. He was the first Republican to win a Nebraska senatorial campaign in 24 years and won virtually every demographic group, including many largely black communities that had never before voted Republican.

Six years later Hagel ran again against Democrat Charlie Matulka in 2002, and won in a landslide. He was re-elected to his second term with 83% of the vote: the biggest political victory in the history of Nebraska. Again, the votes were counted by ES&S, now the largest voting machine company in America.

While these victories could be dismissed simply as a Republican upset, a January 2003 article in the independent Washington paper *The Hill* revealed interesting details about Hagel's business investments and casts a different light on his election successes. Chuck Hagel was CEO of ES&S (then AIS) until 1995 and he is still a major stockholder of the parent company of ES&S, McCarthy & Company. Hagel resigned as CEO of ES&S to run for the Senate and resigned as president of the parent company McCarthy & Company following his election (where he remains a major investor).

Today, the McCarthy Group is run by Michael McCarthy, who happens to be Chuck Hagel's treasurer. Hagel's financials still list the McCarthy Group as an asset, with his investment valued at \$1-\$5 million. Campaign finance reports show that Michael McCarthy also served as treasurer for Hagel until December of 2002. ES&S also has a connection to the Bush family. Jeb Bush's first choice as running mate in 1998 was Sandra Mort-ham who was a paid lobbyist for ES&S and received a commission for every county that bought its touch-screen machines.

The Hill's revelations of Hagel's conflict of interest was disturbing enough to cause Jan Baran, one of the most powerful Republican lawyers in Washington D.C., and Lou Ann Linehan, Senator Chuck Hagel's Chief of Staff, to walk into *The Hill's* offices to "discuss" the story. According to the author of the article, Alex Bolton, nothing similar had happened in the three-and-a-half years he's worked for the paper. It was, no doubt, a story Hagel would rather see go unreported.

If the connections between Hagel and ES&S seem suspect, the origins of America's largest electronic voting machine companies may be just as distressing, especially for those who venerate the separation of church and state. The convoluted system of renaming and buyouts of America's voting system companies is a complicated story. However, once the various corporate trails have been followed, a disturbing picture comes into focus.

Brothers Bob and Todd Urosevich founded American Information Systems. Bob is currently president of Diebold and Todd Urosevich is Vice President, Aftermarket Sales, of ES&S. (In 1999, American Information Systems, purchased Business Records Corp to become ES&S.) American Information Systems (AIS) was primarily funded with money from Ahmanson brothers, William and Robert, of the Howard F. Ahmanson Co. The majority stake in ES&S is still owned by Howard F. Ahmanson and the Ahmanson Foundation

The Crown Rights of Jesus Christ

Howard Ahmanson belongs to Council for National Policy, a hard right wing organization and also helps finance The Chalcedon Institute. As the institute's own site reports, Chalcedon is a "Christian educational organization devoted to research, publishing, and promoting Christian reconstruction in all areas of life... Our emphasis on the Cultural or Dominion Mandate (Genesis

1:28) and the necessity of a return to Biblical Law has been a crucial factor in the challenge to Humanism by Christians in this country and elsewhere..." Chalcedon promotes Christian Reconstructionism, which mandates Christ's dominion over the entire world. The organization's purpose is to establish Old Testament Biblical law as the standard for society.

What To Do?

Few individuals who are trying to alert citizens to the dangers of electronic voting are against computer voting unequivocally. Rather, the complaints focus on the lack of a verifiable paper trail and the inability of the public to examine the code that runs the machines. Professor Mercuri's October 2002 article, "A Better Ballot Box?" provides a solution to these concerns. She also poses a series of questions that she believes must be answered in order to allay security concerns. Mercuri's work is partly an attempt to design a machine in line with minimum standards set by the U.S. federal government, unlike the voting machines currently being installed across America.

The New York State Assembly recently passed legislation that specifically requires that machines "produce and retain a voter verified permanent paper record with a manual audit capacity" (but fails to mention the code that runs the machines). Rep. Rush Holt (D-NJ) has introduced federal legislation, *The Voter Confidence and Increased Accessibility Act of 2003* (HR.2239) with similar aims. The measure would require all voting machines to produce an actual paper record by 2004 that voters can view to check the accuracy of their votes and that election officials can use to verify votes in the event of a computer malfunction, hacking, or other irregularity.

Other solutions exist to ensure the integrity of voting machines and address the concerns of people like Professor Mercuri. Jason Kitcat is the author of the Free e-democracy project, an open source project that builds Internet voting software. Likewise, Australia makes the code for their machines available online whereas American companies jealously guard the code that runs their machines. It seems a fair question, considering the list of problems that currently plague voting equipment, why are none of these alternatives being investigated?

The 2004 election will be the first to use nation-wide electronic voting. With the purging of voter lists, secrecy surrounding voting machines, the lack of a verifiable paper trail combined with voting machine companies with strong Republican ties and funding from the radical right, a Bush victory may be inevitable.



Ed. note: We agree with Ronnie Dugger, who suggests that all balloting be done in the old fashioned way—paper ballots counted by citizen poll watchers of different parties, after the polls close, checking each other. This is already what's being done in thousands of precincts. The disadvantage is that the media and viewers will have to wait (gosh!) hours, or days, for election results. The advantage is not only accuracy, but shared community activity, trust, and democracy.

New England AfD's are undertaking to mount a conference on vote-rigging for this fall or winter, to educate both the public and voting officials, and to initiate a movement to take effective action across the country to prevent vote manipulation. We need your help. Contact The Dispatch at 617-266-8687.

Keys to the Presidency

Can We Block Another "Florida"?

BCA Dispatch asked Karyn Strickler for advice in stopping Bush from stealing the presidency again in 2004. Karyn is now a consultant after years of heavy-duty advocacy on issues of abortion rights, endangered species, and women in politics. Here are excerpts from our correspondence:

1 July 2003 9:04 am

Hi, Karyn—

...I am concerned with the possibility that G W Bush will again steal the election—in 2004. One friend fears that the election will not be that close, and that Bush will not need to rig it. I believe the opposite—that a large majority want a more progressive president, and that we must see to it that they are motivated to get to the polls regardless of perceived obstacles (or sense of futility), AND that the voting machines are not rigged.

We particularly want to ensure that voting machines (or computers) are fool-proof, and that voters are confident of this in advance. Can you suggest anything from your experience to help ensure our success?

1 July 2003 11:37 pm

Dear Dave,

...I definitely agree that Bush stole the last Presidential election. My husband, Allan Lichtman, is the author of the book "13 Keys to the White House," which was reprinted as "Keys to the Presidency." It's a system for predicting Presidential elections and the theory is that elections are referenda on the PARTY in power. There are 13 key factors which determine whether the party holding the White House will be returned to power. You can likely find the system on the web. The only Key that the challenger controls is the Challenger Charisma Key. Other Keys include things like: Long-term and Short-term Economy Keys; Third Party Key; Incumbency; Foreign Policy Successes and Failures. If 6 of the Keys are turned against the party in power, they lose. Otherwise, they're re-elected. The Keys correctly predicted every Presidential election retrospectively to 1860. The Keys have correctly, prospectively predicted the last 5 Presidential elections. The Keys are saying that Bush is only 4 keys down at the moment for 2004 and likely to win unless the short-term economy tanks and we get a charismatic challenger. I'm a big devotee of the Keys, so unfortunately I think we're stuck with that goon for another 4 years.

That said, the federal government was supposed to be giving the states a bunch of money for election reform to update voting machines and so forth. Write to your Senator and Congressman to ensure that gets back on track and the states get the promised funds. Get your organization and it's members to do the same. I hope that's helpful, if not hopeful.

3 July 2003 12:36 am

Dear Karyn:

Your husband's election forecasting system is extremely interesting. But of course my wish to see the Republican candidates defeated (for president and for congress) spurs me to be skeptical. Didn't Bush have *reverse* charisma in 2000? If Bush's *putsch* is unprecedented in US history, then might not the Keys paradigm fail to work for Bush elections—or at least one of them? Especially if vote tampering or blocking becomes evident before election day? Also, can you define "charismatic"?—would Kerry's physique qualify him; would Dean's frank-

ness qualify; would Kucinich's morality qualify? Might not a 14th Key—Internet—operate in 2004? And on the economy—isn't it now the "perceived" economy, given that the "objective" indicators are down—perhaps to "tanking" level, whatever that is?

Like the damping judgments of your bosses' "Do Nothing Strategy", the psychology of "groupthink" enters the Keys. Who says that the "short term economy" is not tanking, and that none of the Democratic candidates are as "charismatic" as Bush? *The big question is, what can we conscientious citizens DO to prevent another stolen election?*

Also, on your prayer for funds to "update" voting machines, I worry that such funds might be used—by the private companies who contract to maintain the machines—to tilt the results with arcane reprogramming in key districts. In the longer term, why not simply go back to wooden ballot boxes, paper ballots, and local people counting votes—checking on one another? Besides the media-driven instant gratification of knowing who won, what's the big deal about waiting a few days for confirmed election results?

3 July 2003 2:34 pm

Dave,

The best way to answer most of your questions regarding the Keys is to read the book or check out the system online. (<http://dhartung.edittthispage.com>) There are many websites dedicated to the system. The Keys do not say that there is no way to change an inevitable outcome. Remember, the Keys only predict the popular vote and they predicted a Gore victory. Gore did win the popular vote. Tragically, George W. Bush turned American democracy on it's head in 2000 and ended up as President of the United States.

How do you prevent that? That's a huge question that requires much contemplation, but I think the American public should have been outraged and in the streets demanding that all of the Florida votes be counted. Political Unrest is one of the Keys. Political unrest may have changed the equation. The U.S. Supreme Court does respond to public pressure. There's the Do Nothing Strategy again. Where was the leadership to demand that justice be served? It was non-existent.

Best, Karyn

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Saudi People-Butcher

Hey, It Pays the Bills

by Dave Mulcahey, In These Times, 21 July 2003

"When I cut off a hand I cut in off at the joint," says Muhammad Saad Al-Beshi. "If it is a leg the authorities specify where it is to be taken off, so I follow that." Beshi is describing his job as the chief head-lopper of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. In an interview with the Saudi newspaper *Okaz*, digested by the English-language *Arab News*, Beshi muses on the funny little aspects of life under the black hood—like the nerves he felt as a newbie, decapitating his first malefactor. (He was relieved to see he made a clean cut, and surprised to see that the head rolled a few meters.)

Like any workman, he has hectic days, when he dispatches as many as seven wrong-doers. And there are the usual irritations, as when witnesses faint at executions. ("I don't know why they come and watch if they don't have the stomach for it," Beshi complains.) But he is conscientious, unfailingly seeking clemency for the condemned before it comes time to execute the sentence. And if he takes his job home with him, it's only for a little help cleaning and honing his tools of the trade. He's even trained a son in the profession. "I sleep very well," Beshi says. "As long as I'm doing God's will, it doesn't matter how many people I execute." ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂

Love Saddam? Love Bush? The Uneasiness of Arab-Americans

by Stéphanie Chayet, *Le Point (Paris)* 28 March 2003
Reprinted in translation, *World Press Review*, June 2003

It is the time of the women and children at the Karbalaa Islamic Educational Center, an Iraqi mosque in greater Detroit. A swarm of young mothers, veiled in black, is crowding around the Coke machine. Every day, several hundred Shiite refugees come to pray under the dim neon lights of this former warehouse.

They arrived in the United States after the first Gulf War, fleeing the brutalities of the Baghdad regime. Like Husham Al-Husainy, their imam, they are among the most fervent supporters of the "regime change" advocated by George W. Bush. "This intervention is something we have all hoped for," comments Ghasaq Qureeashi, a 20-year-old woman. She adds: "If Saddam is overthrown, we will leave on the first plane."

At age 7, Ghasaq had to cross the desert to reach a refugee camp in Saudi Arabia. Today, she is an American citizen, a student in pharmacology. "The Iraq crisis," she says, "has deeply divided the city's Arab community. On campus, I spend my days arguing with the other Arabs. They are against the war, especially the Palestinians. Some of them consider Saddam a hero, because he supports them against Israel. In the meantime, the Iraqis are the ones who are suffering. My brother-in-law still bears the scars of the tortures to which he was subjected. Three of my cousins disappeared without a trace. Those who do not want this war are selfish."

Dearborn, Michigan. The dark silhouette of an imposing dome, still covered with scaffolding, can be seen through a snowstorm. Here, at a cost of \$17 million, the largest mosque in North America is being built. On Warren Avenue, the stores, with names like "Euphrates Groceries" and "Al-Salam Supermarket," display their specials in Arabic and English. This blue-collar suburb of Detroit, in the heartland of the automobile industry, is considered the capital of the Arab-American community. Christians who were driven out of the provinces of the Ottoman Empire, Syrians and Palestinians who arrived after the Second World War, Lebanese and Yemenis fleeing their civil wars, have all come to Dearborn in successive waves.

For the past 10 years, it has been the turn of the Iraqi Shiites. After being incited to overthrow Saddam Hussein following the Gulf War and then abandoned by their allies to suffer repression, they found refuge by the thousands in this icy city where one of every three residents has roots in the Middle East.

Between these newcomers and the earlier arrivals, things are no longer going well. When George Bush came to raise funds for his party in the ballrooms of the Dearborn Ritz-Carlton in October, two parades of demonstrators filed in front of the hotel. "The Iraqis were demanding a military intervention from one side of the street, while the rest of the community was chanting pacifist slogans on the other," as Nabeel Abraham, a professor of anthropology at Henry Ford Community College, recalls.

The dispute has remained civil, a "gentlemen's disagreement among Arab brothers." Nonetheless, the split runs deep. "The Iraqis feel misunderstood," notes Hassan Jaber, assistant director of ACCESS (Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services). "Their feeling of being excluded is all the more acute since they are the latest arrivals and as such the least well integrated."

As for the community leaders, they are resolutely opposed to the use of force against Iraq. Riding in his gleaming black Cadillac, with his cell phone pressed to his ear, Osama Siblani, age 48, is among the notables of the city. This American, born in Lebanon, publishes the bilingual weekly Arab-American

News, with a circulation of 25,000 in the region. Woven with diatribes against the government's foreign policy ("Paul Wolfowitz's diabolic cabal," "The United States, Great Britain, and Israel: The true axis of evil"), his newspaper, he says, reflects "the convictions of the immense majority of the community."

According to him, the Iraqi refugees "do not deserve" the freedom promised by the United States. "You want to overthrow Saddam? Then do it yourselves!" he shouts, pretending to address his "Arab brothers." "You don't free your country by hiding behind the tanks of a foreign power." But it is for the U.S. administration, which he calls "a gang of Taliban in three-piece suits," that this editor in chief reserves his harshest words. Still, Siblani lent his support to candidate Bush in 2000. "He even called to thank me," he says. "But in hindsight, I could kick myself."

According to the polls, the majority of Arab-Americans in Dearborn voted for "George W." in the presidential election. The Republican candidate assiduously courted this prosperous community, made up of businessmen and merchants. Flattered at finally being a part of the electoral landscape, the community gave him its votes. This was a decision reinforced by religious considerations. As Abed Ayoub, a law student, readily put it: "Al Gore would have gotten more votes in Dearborn if his running mate, Joe Lieberman, had not been a Jew. But today, those who voted for Bush bitterly regret it. They feel betrayed."

After Sept. 11, the Arab-Americans in the city displayed the Stars and Stripes everywhere. "People were trying to outdo each other," recalls Nabeel Abraham. It looked as though the community was shouting, "Look at us, we're loyal! We are Americans!" The appeals for tolerance by the White House seemed to bode well to them. Then the wind shifted. According to Imad Hamad, the regional director of the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee, Arabs are in the hot seat. "We are being questioned for no reason. Our conversations are being wiretapped and the accounts of our businesses are under scrutiny by the FBI. Even those who were born here are the objects of suspicion."

In the area of foreign policy, the break with the White House is complete. Arab-Americans never talk about Iraq without immediately bringing up Israel. "We can no longer put up with this double standard," chimes in Imad Hamad, who was born in a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon. "The anti-Americanism at work in our countries of origin distresses us, but how can we defend our adopted country? The United States' policy in the Middle East is unjustifiable."

Another source of resentment is the "partiality" of the media. "I signed up for satellite, because my sons could no longer stand to see me screaming in front of the television," reports Fadia Faraj, 38. Today she watches the BBC, Al-Jazeera, and the American pacifist stations Free Speech and WorldLink TV. "I have them to thank that I am not completely depressed," she says.

Baker Albaaj, in contrast, does not hide the joy he feels as he sees the military machine gearing up. This right-hand man of the imam at the Karbalaa Center, an Iraqi with a crew cut, demonstrated in favor of the war in Washington and New York. At the end of February, he was chanting anti-Saddam slogans at a meeting with the deputy secretary of defense, Paul Wolfowitz, who had come to Dearborn to garner the support of Iraqi refugees.

In 1991, Albaaj took part in the Shiite uprising against the dictator of Baghdad. After spending four years in a camp in Saudi Arabia, putting up with snakes and sandstorms, he was welcomed by the United States. "After what happened in 1991, it is hard to trust them," he said, speaking of the U.S. government. "We aren't naive; we know very well that they are not going into Iraq on account of our good looks. But to get rid of Saddam, there we have a common interest." ●

Black Radical Congress (Continued from page 1)

a BRC listserv. Then, earlier this year, came an announcement of BRC's biennial national conference—at Seton Hall University in my home town of South Orange, N.J., no less! By chance I also learned from his talk that Boston's poet/historian Gary Hicks was a member and attending. Voilà!—I boarded the \$10 Chinatown (Boston/NY) bus and went.

What They Discussed

The parallels held up, with differences as well. The conference, attracting about 150 participants, was billed as "War, Racism, and Repression: Confronting the US Empire". Yes, corporatism and imperialism are dirty words for BRC as well as for AfD, but racism is even more so. The first day of the 2½ day conference focused on Africa and the diaspora of African people in North and South America and the Caribbean. Here are a few situations that got my attention:

■ **Liberia** is the "Kuwait of West Africa"—resource-rich and elite controlled. Black-on-Black violence is rife in coastal West Africa as well as Congo. Orphans become ethnic soldiers and homicidal gangs (see page 2). Speaker: Abdul Lamin.

■ **Afro-Colombians**, many of whom dared to found farms and coöps under a new law, are being genocidally slaughtered by paramilitaries (like indigenous people in Central America?). The speaker (M.C.) hid out for two days under water. Speakers: Marino Cordoba; Lincoln van Sluytman (elites pit East Indian immigrants against Blacks).

■ **Brazilian workers** crossed the border into **Venezuela** (in "Bolivarian" solidarity) and helped to sustain the popular Chavez government and the Venezuelan economy by replacing elite unionists on strike in the oil and shipping industries. Speaker: Humberto Brown.

■ **Congo** can be saved not by votes or counter-coups, but by a mass movement for Ethical Truth (like China?). Speaker: Jacques Depelchin.

■ **US soldiers in the Middle East**, 25% of whom are African-Americans, were never asked what to fight for. They are victims of corporate power, reopening as private, for example, the Iraq-Haifa oil pipeline. Speaker: Rania Masri.

■ **The 75 Cuban dissidents** jailed, and three executed, were recipients of saboteur pay by the US chief-of-interest-section. Contrary to US press reports, they were not "librarians," and few were "journalists". US also arranged 8 hijackings and sold the Cuban planes as "reparations". Speaker: Lucius Walker.

■ Other hot spots discussed included **Panama, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Eritrea, Iraq, and Palestine**.

Many of these and the other speakers of the day, with the membership, interpreted such situations in contextual and systemic terms—corporate globalization, class and race division, colonial transformations, and so on. Socialist concepts played somewhat more of a part in BRC discussions than they do in AfD's. Reparations, for example, involve analysis of the value of work of slaves and other oppressed classes, as well as projections of the social usefulness of financial redistribution, as well as moral and legal imperative.

Local Concerns

More important than such considerations are local challenges. Six small groups were formed, with 8 or more participants each. My group came up with ten consensus suggestions, including

◆ decide if and how BRC should get involved in electoral work

(2004 campaigns)

◆ support participatory budgeting/democratic empowerment (as in Brazil)

◆ use selected information technology



Linda Burnham ("Durban") and Humberto Brown ("Venezuela")

◆ promote diaspora-affirming education.

◆ Also: see international in local; confront race/class/gender/sexuality/nation interactions; youth outreach; language training; marketing our message.

Other small groups came up with

◆ Black community sentiment is overwhelmingly anti-war—Translate it into "action beyond just mass mobilization".

◆ Link immigrant persecution with generally racist Prison-Industrial Complex

◆ Challenge the military as "a way out" for Black and Brown people

◆ Create a "Change the World Café" to help create a culture of peace

◆ Practice local and regional social forums like the World Social Forum

◆ Link progressive hip hop culture with issues

◆ And many others, including process concerns.

Day Two of the conference focused on BRC internal development. First, BRC's 1998 founders—Bill Fletcher (TransAfrica Forum; formerly AFL-CIO), Manning Marable (Columbia U.), Leith Mullings (CUNY Grad Center), Barbara Ransby (U. of Illinois/Chicago), and Abdul Alkalimat (U. of Toledo)—were celebrated with a keynote address by TV star/activist (on TransAfrica Forum's board) Danny Glover, speaking on "Fighting Back Against the War". Committees and caucuses followed, dealing with fund-raising; youth development (including fighting TV consumerist brainwashing); feminist issues; e-organizing; and "Education Not Incarceration". A second round dealt with reparations work; youth caucus; working class core; education not incarceration; and building and rebuilding Local Organizing Committees (LOCs). [Other national caucuses include international, and "fight-back" alternatives to "the war on terrorism."]

Organizational Structure

This LOC discussion reviewed BRC's structure: (1) a set of

local organizing committees (chapters? local coalitions?) in San Francisco Bay area, Chicago, DC/Maryland, Minneapolis, New York, NY area, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh, with affiliate organizations in Raleigh and St. Louis; (2) a national council elected, 2 from each LOC; and (3) a Coordinating Committee (CC) of 5 elected by the membership at this conference. This structure may not be working well, and will be continually reviewed. Following member consensus avoiding officers, CC will decide which of the 5 is responsible for what functions. Bill Fletcher and Debbie Bell have stepped off the CC to make room for new leadership. There has been no office, but BRC has just won a two-year \$150,000 grant for building structure, including paid director and webmaster, and key program support. Leaders have argued strong guidelines to avoid grant dependency.

Local Organizing Committees are key to BRC development. In a small group discussion led by Ewuare Osayande—a poet who recited the first evening along with poets Sonia Sanchez and Arthur Flowers—active organizing by LOCs was emphasized, featuring accountable communication with CC, especially through email and new web sites. BRC sends out mass emails. The web site www.BlackRadicalCongress.org, stalled since 2001, is now back in operation with 14-17 LOCs/affiliates. In addition to current campaigns, see the 1999 no-nonsense Freedom Agenda.

BRC's 10-page **Political Report** climaxes with situation #19 (of 20):

"In the aftermath of the plans to expand the World Trade Organization, we have witnessed the coalescence of the peace movement, the anti-globalization movement, the Jubilee movement (debt cancellation campaign), the environmental movement, and the reparations movement. These have intersected with streams of anti-sexism, anti-racism, and anti-militarism. This political convergence can produce a tidal wave against the US Empire and its collaborators. Given that the political Right is openly proclaiming the existence of and need for empire, the opportunities exist to build greater unity with anti-imperialist forces around the world. It is also easier to educate and organize within the US about imperialism.

"For Black America, there is general solidarity with anti-imperialism, but in this age of declining resources we must be aware that Black Americans are also subject to the seduction of imperial consciousness to the extent to which they see themselves as part of massa's house. This necessitates special propaganda work among our youth that are becoming cannon fodder for the prison industrial complex and being seduced into the military."

The Report—adopted by the conference—ends with five Tasks Ahead [here abbreviated]: (1) help build a broad-based new politics of democracy and healing; (2) help build an anti-globalization movement opposing US imperial aggression; (3) lead in defense of democratic rights; (4) rebuild BRC's internet presence; and (5) build BRC as an "organization of organizers and organizations"...with "a permanent physical presence through popular political education." ■

Ed. Note: The author automatically joined BRC upon registering. To help form AfD-BRC collaboration, call him at 617-266-8687.

Tax Weapons → Feed the Poor? G8, Journalists Deaf to Lula's Logic

by Gideon Burrows, Guardian (UK), 1 July 2003 (Abridged)

It was exactly one month ago today that, buried among the empty speeches and photo opportunities of the G8 world leaders, the Brazilian president 'Lula' da Silva made a concrete proposal to tackle two of the worst problems facing the world today - extreme hunger and the trade in weapons.

There is a need for a global hunger fund, Lula told the G8, "that would not only give food to those in need but would also create the conditions necessary to strike at the structural roots of hunger. There are many ways of gaining financial resources for such a fund. Taxes could be levied on the international arms trade: this would prove advantageous from both an economic and an ethical standpoint."

The G8's silence on the proposal, apart from a few platitudes from Chirac, betrays the fact that leaders from the developing world were invited to Evian as window dressing rather than to be listened to.

It is perhaps no surprise that the G8 leaders, from France, Italy, Russia, Spain, Japan, Canada, the UK and the United States gave short shrift to Lula's proposal. Between them, the group of eight account for more than 85 percent of world arms sales. They would have to contribute most in taxes, because the majority of arms transfers are between Western nations. They too would suffer most when poorer countries cut back their arms spending to reduce their tax liability.

Unlike the trade in many other goods, which are monitored by rules at the World Trade Organization, the global arms trade is subject to no international monitoring or regulation. Another benefit of the arms trade tax would be to tackle this unaccountability. It would impose a structure on the trade that could make it easier to monitor. The UN, or even the WTO, could take up this function, taking into account company's claims to commercial confidentiality.

Or monitoring could be applied on a national basis... Labour's scandalous arms exports to Indonesia, Turkey and Zimbabwe for use against civilians might have been prevented by a UK committee warning them of heavy tax charges.



After Baghdad—Tolerance? Harvard Commencement Speech

by Zayed Yasin, 6 June 2002

I am one of you. But I am also one of "them." What do I mean? When I am told that this is a world at war, a war between the great civilizations and religions of the earth, I don't know whether to laugh or cry. "What about me?" I ask. As a practicing Muslim and a registered voter in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, am I, through the combination of my faith and my citizenship, an inherent contradiction?

I think not. Both the Qu'ran and the Constitution teach ideals of peace, justice and compassion, ideals that command my love, and my belief. Each of these texts, one the heart of my religion, the other that of my country, demand a constant struggle to do what is right.

I choose the word "struggle" very deliberately, for its connotations of turmoil and tribulation, both internal and external. The word for struggle in Arabic, in the language of my faith, is jihad. It is a word that has been corrupted and misinterpreted, both by those who do and do not claim to be Muslims, and we saw last fall, to our great national and personal loss, the results of this corruption. Jihad, in its truest and purest form, the form to which all Muslims aspire, is the determination to do right, to do justice even against your own interests. It is an individual struggle for personal moral behavior. Especially today, it is a struggle that exists on many levels: self-purification and awareness, public service and social justice. On a global scale, it is a struggle involving people of all ages, colors, and creeds, for control of the Big Decisions: not only who controls what piece of land, but more importantly who gets medicine, who can eat.

So where is our jihad, where is our struggle as we move on from Harvard's sheltering wall? Worthly adversaries are innumerable. We can turn our struggle to the war against oppression, poverty, disease... But before looking outward, we must first look inward. Before deciding what we are against, we must decide what we are for. The only way to define the inner moral force that drives our struggle is to learn through action—to get our hands dirty. To strive to see the world as it sees itself, testing the boundaries of what we think we know, and how we know it. To combine our academic search for truth with a sense of empathy for our fellow humanity—to seek Veritas in Humanitas.

On one level it's simple: everyone wants the same things that we do. The true American Dream is a universal dream, and it is more than a set of materialistic aspirations. It is the power and opportunity to shape one's own life: to house and feed a family with security and dignity, and to practice your faith in peace. This is our American Jihad.

As a Muslim, and as an American, I am commanded to stand up for the protection of life and liberty, to serve the poor and the weak, to celebrate the diversity of humankind. There is no contradiction. Not for me, and

not for anyone, of any combination of faith, culture and nationality, who believes in a community of the human spirit.

Some of this is a mantra that has been spoken at myriad graduations. Worth repeating, perhaps, but nothing new. What is new was taught us by last fall's tragedy and carnage. The status quo is shattered, and we have now been forced to engage more closely the troubles of this world. We are in a privileged position to shape a more just, peaceful, and honorable global society.

So I ask again: where is our jihad? Whether on our way to an investment bank in New York, or to Sierra Leone to work with orphans, Harvard graduates have a responsibility to leave their mark on the world. So let us struggle, and let us make our mark. And I hope and pray that our children, our grandchildren, and those who take our seats in the years to come, will have cause to be proud.

BCA and New England Alliance News

Good News #1—North Bridge, 24 June. **Jonathan Leavitt** announced that United Water will go away—the Lawrence City Council is ready to reject the contract for privatizing the city's water works. Looks like we won't need to phone or door-knock.
Good News #2—**Abha Sur** questioned Vandana Shiva about her speaking at a Hindutva (fundamentalist) meeting. When Shiva learned that there was to be no diversity of speakers, she withdrew.

Good News #3—Summer's here! TAKE A BREAK! Write us!

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Please help us as we fight to make a better future for ourselves and our children — Join the Boston/Cambridge Alliance for Democracy. (Cut out this form and send it to Dave Lewit, 271 Dartmouth St., Boston, MA 02116.)

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