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The Peace Abbey Newsletter

May 2011

IMPORTANT ARTICLES

[Rethink Afghanistan](#)

[An invitation to stand for a better world!](#)

[War Hawk or Deficit Hawk? You Cannot Be Both by Michael True](#)

[Noam Chomsky, Who Owns the World?](#)

Tikkun Daily: What is Worth Saving? by Roger S. Gottlieb

As we cut the budgets and let the social programs wither, as global warming and invasive species threaten the integrity of ecosystems and human health, as endless and endlessly faster technological change leads everything that is solid to "melt into air," it is reasonable to ask: what should we try to preserve? What is worth holding onto?

This newsletter begins with congratulations to our friend Jagatjoti Heyokha Khalsa who was recently honored at the National Down Syndrome Society Spring Luncheon in NYC for his extraordinary book, **I'M DOWN WITH YOU**. Humanitarian and actress Sharon Stone gave a moving keynote address at the ceremony and claimed the privilege of presenting the award to her friend Jagajoti. Lewis Randa was an invited guest of the author who has for many years been a supporter of The Life Experience School and The Peace Abbey. The event was a celebration of the heart for a roomful of loving parents and their children.

Despite the widespread recognition of its unique and invaluable work, in an era of declining resources and funds, the Peace Abbey, like many other organizations, has struggled financially. And as before, we will meet this challenge and move forward to further the message of peace and the power of nonviolence and love.

A special thanks to all who have rallied recently with an outpouring of faith and support for the Abbey in a world that yet needs to hear the message of peace it embodies.

Please consider the Peace Abbey when donating to a cause as this organization deserves to not only exist but to grow and expand in the coming years.

Here's one answer: The Peace Abbey and the Life Experience School of Sherborn, Massachusetts.

The Abbey is an interfaith spiritual center dedicated to the peace and justice teachings of all the world's faiths. The centerpiece of its grounds is a life sized statue of Gandhi, flanked by a series of plaques with quotations about peace and justice from Quakers, Catholics, Buddhists, Jews, Hindus, Muslims, Taoists, Indigenous peoples, and secular champions of social goodness.

It houses a remarkable library of resources on pacifism, peace, veganism, women's and gay rights, liberation for ethnic and national minorities, and interfaith respect and cooperation.

When a member of the armed forces seeks C.O. status the Peace Abbey is there to help; when a Tibetan is imprisoned by the Chinese for seeking to document Tibet's cultural heritage, the Abbey takes up his cause.

When vegans, peace activists, or supporters of human rights needs a place to meet - they use the Abbey. When America's response to 9/11 threatens the civil liberties of American Muslims, the Peace Abbey broadcasts the Muslim Call to Prayer over its loudspeakers; and when the U.S. invades Iraq, Abbey leaders chain themselves across the front entrance of nearby army base in protest and are arrested for civil disobedience.

"To make gentle the life of the world," is the Abbey's slogan, but it knows that this gentleness must be expressed in political action: moral witness that there is another way than the variety of 'isms' (racism, nationalism, fanaticism, militarism, terrorism,

We are very grateful to Susan Meagher's family who asked friends to send donations in her memory to the Peace Abbey instead of flowers. She was truly loved by many, many people and we know her light will always shine.

Dot Walsh

• Rethink Afghanistan

Over the past two months, Rethink Afghanistan worked to make sure people understand how much the Afghanistan War costs them personally. On April 16, a bipartisan press conference was held in Washington, D.C., as the culmination of the Tax Day campaign. Here is an update:

On April 5, we launched the Rethink Afghanistan War Tax Calculator, which lets you know how much you are paying for the war. The tool also lets you send a message to your Member of Congress asking for your money back. Roughly 100,000 people used the tool, and on April 16, we took your I.O.U.s to Congress.

Our Tax Day press conference included several Members of Congress from both parties, including U.S. Reps. Raul Grijalva (D), Walter Jones (R), Mike Honda (D), Dana Rohrabacher (R), Barbara Lee (D), James McGovern (D), Chellie Pingree (D), Lynn Woolsey (D), and Dennis Kucinich (D). Also joining us were Afghanistan Study Group's Matthew Hoh, former USAID official Scott Dempsey, Reagan legal counsel Bruce Fein, Veterans for Rethink Afghanistan's Jake Diliberto, and Sojourner's Rev. Jim Wallis. The event helped create a narrative of bipartisan opposition to the cost of the Afghanistan War.

Here's just a sample of the coverage we received from The New York Times:

"It isn't every day that liberals like Representative Jim McGovern, a Democrat from Massachusetts, appear at Capitol Hill news conferences with conservative stalwarts like Representative Walter B. Jones, a Republican from North Carolina.

"But the war in Afghanistan has made for some unusual bedfellows. On Thursday, the two congressmen, along with a mashup of conservative, liberal and even libertarian lawmakers and organizations found common ground in calling for an end to the war in Afghanistan."

imperialism, sexism, etc.) that shape the world now.

The founder of the Abbey, Lewis Randa, created a school for special needs students, The Life Experience School, as his alternative service as a conscientious objector during the Vietnam War. The students that have passed through the doors of this tiny haven for the last forty years have had intellectual disabilities, serious emotional problems, and physical handicaps. While Randa and his staff have taught them as much of the "usual" as they could - a smattering of math or reading or social studies-the real educational message is far more vital. "You are important, you are worthwhile, your voice and your presence matter to the rest of us."

This is the message they imparted to my daughter Esther, who spent three years at the Life Experience School. Esther's combination of physical and intellectual problems has created a medical history that would fill a large book. But shortly after she first arrived Randa asked her to greet people coming to a school function. Time after time he called on her to speak - even when she was hesitant, unsure of herself, and more than a little scared. Randa's faith in Esther helped give her a voice - which she now uses to do presentations at public schools and in fundraising efforts for groups which work for people with special needs.

Ultimately both the Abbey and the School have this same mission: to give a voice to all who need and deserve one, but who are marginalized, trampled, and shut out by the dominant social structures of our time. These are places for people of faith who believe that God prefers love to self-righteousness; for patriotic Americans who think our country should choose peace over war; for

Thanks in part to our work bringing attention to the cost of war in Afghanistan, opposition to the war is growing across the ideological spectrum. A new poll from ABC/Washington Post shows that "a record 49 percent of Americans now disapprove of President Obama's handling of the situation in Afghanistan, up 8 points since January. The spike in disapproval in the latest survey is almost entirely due to a slide in support on the right."

Derrick Crowe, Robert Greenwald and the Brave New Foundation team.

• **An invitation to stand for a better world!**

A Mother's Day Event

May 8, 2011 marks the fifth year women are standing firm and together for the sake of earth's children on what is Mother's Day in many countries.

This is no small thing that we do, for we have tapped a wellspring of deep agreement in all sectors of society and in every country in the world around the children.

In these divisive times let us turn to one another and deeply appreciate all the prayers, all the intentions, all the ways we step forward for the sake of our children. In this we are One humanity.

Let us know, experience, and value our united stand. Let us truly shift the currents of our planet as we hold dear earth's children and their future.

• **War Hawk or Deficit Hawk? You Cannot Be Both by Michael True**

"If voting made any difference, it would be illegal," according to the late Philip Berrigan.

This satiric comment seems especially relevant during our present military and economic crisis. President Obama proposes reasonable remedies, but fails to follow through on them, while Republicans issue counter proposals that are bound to make things worse.

"If it was not clear before, it is obvious now," according to the New York Times editorial (April 19), that the Republican party "is fully engaged in a project to dismantle the foundations of the New Deal and the Great Society, and to liberate

animals who cannot speak in words, but whose suffering in factory farms and labs cries out for help; for the developmentally disabled who need the rest of us to listen much more carefully to find the insights and value that their lives have to offer us.

Not surprisingly, in this time of fiscal fear both the Abbey and the School are in deep financial trouble. They need a great deal of money to continue. I invite any readers who seek a better way for our nation and our planet to visit their website, look deeply at what they see, and make a financial connection to them. If we truly want a better world, it is the Peace Abbeys and the Life Experience Schools that will help us get there. They can help save us, and they already have. But they can continue to do so only if we try to save them as well.

Special Message to Everyone

**A gentleman just
came through the
door and offered
\$1,000. to be
matched by as
many donors who
love the Peace
Abbey as he does.
Please contact the
office**

**508-655-2143 if
this is something**

business and the rich from the inconveniences of oversight and taxes."

Why do we refuse to recognize the economic consequences of our failed policies, or to halt the Bush/Obama war on Afghanistan? According to a U.S. Army lieutenant, "no one benefits from this war. Only the CEOs and executive officers of war-profiteering corporations find satisfactory returns on their investments."

Some Americans, including politicians, profit from wasteful military expenditures and corporate greed, while 17% of the population remains permanently impoverished. Millions support laying waste to Kandahar, while New Orleans and Detroit deteriorate.

"The remains of villages destroyed by our bombs, the dead killed from our munitions, leave us, too, with bloody hands," as Chris Hedges has said. "We can build a new ethic only when we face our complicity in the cycle of violence and terror."

Flaunting our military power around the globe, we resort to brute force and economic domination. Must we, as a people, squander our wealth and our young people in wars of conquest and intervention, financing 1,000 military bases around the world, funding corrupt dictatorships, and imposing "democracy" on countries whether they want it or not? Going along to get along, Democrats and Republicans support policies that justify torture, undermine the right of habeas corpus, destabilize unions, abandon our once-admired educational system, and neglect our own people.

Dismantling a war culture that has undermined democratic governance and cultivating a peace culture mean promoting cooperative rather than domination models, locally, nationally, and internationally. Why not?

Initial steps in this direction require our
(1) reducing the military budget, larger than all military budgets in the world combined;
(2) abolishing tax breaks for the filthy rich and the multinational corporations;
(3) reviving community self-reliance to reduce our dependence on agribusiness and foreign fuel.

To read the whole article follow the link Published on Monday, April 25, 2011 by CommonDreams.org

Michael True, Emeritus Professor, Assumption College, is Vice-president, Center for Nonviolent

you would like to do.

Solutions in Worcester, MA. and a recipient of the Peace Abbey Courage of Conscience Award

Cost of War to the United States

Total Cost of Wars Since 2001
\$1,188,619,771,846

Cost of War in Iraq
\$787,725,647,368

Cost of War in Afghanistan
\$400,894,124,478

May 1, 2011

American soldiers killed in Iraq
4452

American soldiers killed in
Afghanistan 1566

Quick Links...

- [Peace Abbey Website](#)
- [Blog by Abbey Guest](#)
- [BVS](#)
- [Jagatjoti Heyokha Khalsa](#)

-
- [Pakistan and Afghanistan Journey of Hope](#)

Grandmother Love

- [more information](#)

STONEWALK 1999-2007

- [pictures and information](#)

Quick Links

- [A Wonderful NEW video about Emily and Vegan lifestyle](#)

• Noam Chomsky, Who Owns the World?

Posted by Noam Chomsky at 9:49am, April 21, 2011.

Military bases R U.S. Or so it seems. After the invasion of 2003, the Pentagon promptly started constructing a series of monster bases in occupied Iraq, the size of small American towns and with most of the amenities of home. These were for a projected garrison of 30,000 to 40,000 U.S. troops that top officials of the Bush administration initially anticipated would be free to hang out in that country for an armed eternity.

In the end, hundreds of bases were built. (And now, hundreds have been closed down or handed over to the Iraqis and in some cases looted). With present U.S. troop strength at about 47,000 (not counting mercenaries) and falling, American officials are now practically pleading with an Iraqi government moving ever closer to the Iranians to let some American forces remain at a few giant bases beyond the official end-of-2011 withdrawal date.

Meanwhile, post-2003, the U.S. went on a base-building (or expanding) spree in the Persian Gulf, digging in and enlarging facilities in Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain, "home" to the U.S. Fifth Fleet. In that island kingdom, an Obama administration preaching "democracy" elsewhere has stood by in the face of a fierce Bahraini-Saudi campaign of repression against a majority Shiite movement for greater freedom.

Meanwhile, not to be outdone, the State Department decided to build a modern ziggurat in Iraq and so oversaw the construction of the largest "embassy" on Earth in Baghdad, a regional citadel-cum-command post meant to house thousands of "diplomats" and their armed minders. It is now constructing a similar facility in Islamabad, Pakistan, while expanding a third in Kabul, Afghanistan.

In fact, in the years after the invasion of Afghanistan, the Pentagon, as Nick Turse reported for this site, went on a veritable base-building bender in that country, constructing at least 400 of

Quick Links

- [The Life Experience School](#)
-

- [Our Website](#)
-

For contact use
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them, ranging from micro-outposts to monster spreads like the Bagram and Kandahar air bases, complete with gyms, PXs, Internet cafes, and fast-food outlets. Now, in the tenth year of a disastrous war, the Obama administration is evidently frantically negotiating to make at least some of these permanently ours after the much-vaunted departure of American "combat" troops in 2014.

As in Iraq, American officials carefully avoid the word "permanent." (In 2003, the Pentagon dubbed the Iraqi bases "enduring camps," and this February Secretary of State Hillary Clinton offered the following description of the Afghan situation: "In no way should our enduring commitment be misunderstood as a desire by America or our allies to occupy Afghanistan against the will of its people. We do not seek any permanent American military bases in their country.")

And yet, despite all the bases built in the Greater Middle East and all the firepower on them, the U.S. has found itself, embarrassingly enough, dealing with a region spinning ever more rapidly out of its control. Perhaps, remembering our similarly giant base complexes in Vietnam -- the pyramids of their day -- and their postwar fate, U.S. officials have simply decided to shun "permanent" as a reasonable precaution against reality. After all, what's permanent? Not us.

• The Peace Abbey Gift Shop



Palestinian Olive Oil, peace calendars and calendars with the Prayers for Peace. We have books with copies of the long version of The Prayers for Peace, dvd's with the prayers in English and Spanish and copies of the quotes from the Pacifist Memorial along with jewelry items.

Please come and visit!

[The Peace Abbey Gift Shop](#)

- [**Tours, Weddings, Conferences**](#)

A wonderful way to be introduced to the memorials on the grounds and the buildings at The Peace Abbey is to schedule a group tour. We have retreats for individuals and groups. Schools and colleges, church groups, community organizations and other groups are welcomed. For wedding and conference information, please call the office: (508) 655- 2143
\$100 Donation for Tours



- **Opportunities Exist to Underwrite the Courage of Conscience Award and the Gandhi Exhibit**

We are interested in having a family foundation, a business organization or individuals underwrite the Courage of Conscience Awards. Please call the office if you have suggestions. Thank You!

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