



peace & justice news

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Cost of War Speaker & Film Series

By Colleen Deignan, Program & Development Coordinator

The Peace & Justice Center has always worked on anti-war and peace issues in some form or another. As an educational non-profit organization we have provided educational forums, films, conferences, and speakers over the past 33 years – believing that by educating people, change happens. It’s in our mission to be working for peace.

The costs of war are numerous, horrible, and well-researched, but largely invisible or ignored in our political consciousness. The “costs” go way beyond money. We feel that it is our mission to educate the public about these issues and to bring to light an alternate view of “the cost of war”. Through a series of films and speakers, the Peace & Justice Center will present various views of what war costs us: life, shattered families, trauma, money, and the opportunities lost for investing in people’s needs when we invest in war.

Our first event was January 22nd; a film called *Hell and Back Again* by Danfung Dennis. The film tells the story of a young man from North Carolina who has been deployed to Afghanistan several times, and how different his life is when he finally returns, injured. The Chief Veteran’s Service Officer for the State of Vermont, Richard Reed, facilitated a Q+A after the film. People were asking about PTSD in Vermont, how we can help veterans who just returned from Iraq this winter, how injured veterans care for themselves financially upon returning, etc. These questions are very important. As of 2010, there were 52,000

veterans living in Vermont (US Department of Veterans Affairs). As of September 2011, 88 Vermonters were wounded and 22 dead in Iraq. Financially, as a nation we have spent nearly 1.3 trillion dollars on war since 2001, and as a state, Vermont has spent 1.7 million dollars on war since 2001.

Jo Comerford will be speaking about the financial cost of war for the next event in our speaker in film series on Saturday, February 11th at Contois Auditorium at 4:00pm. Jo Comerford is the Executive Director of the National Priorities Project, which makes complex federal budget information transparent and accessible, so people can prioritize and influence how their tax dollars are spent. Ms. Comerford has previously worked as the Director of Programs at The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts and also as Director of the American Friends Service Committee’s western Massachusetts office. She is a frequent media contributor with pieces appearing in outlets such as The Nation, TomDispatch, The Huffington Post, Salon.com, Mother Jones and Dollars and Sense.

The series is tentatively planned through June. Some events to look forward to are: Eugene Jarecki speaking before his film, *Why We Fight*; a film about women in the military *Service: When Women Come Marching Home*; a presentation by Helen Benedict, author of *Sand Queen* and *The Lonely Soldier*; and the film *Restrepo* by National Geographic.

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PJC MISSION

Our mission is to create a just and peaceful world. To this end, we work on the interconnected issues of economic and racial justice, peace, and human rights through education, advocacy, training and non-violent activism, and community organizing, since 1979.



From the Center

Dear Friends,

First, a huge thanks to all of you who contributed funds to the Center near the end of 2011, to those who made loans to the Center to enable us to have a successful holiday sales month, and to all of you who are paying attention to the issues of the world, and supporting positive efforts for change.

Our Annual Fund drive raised \$33,500 from October through December. This is within a few hundred dollars of 2010, and these funds meet critical program and operations needs through the first three months of 2012. THANK YOU!

The staff of Gaby, Colleen, Wendy and Jake are intelligent, committed, hardworking and positive — each of them put an incredible amount of energy and work into the mission. **Their efforts have put the Peace & Justice Center back at the forefront of local activism in support of our mission: to create a just and peaceful world.** Through their efforts our three current campaigns are making significant progress:

The Cost of War film and speaker series addresses the human, psychological, social and financial costs of war with the goal of shifting policy to a build a peace economy. **The kick-off event on January 22, the movie “Hell and Back Again,” got the series off to a great start.** Our next event is February 11th at 4:00pm — featuring speaker Jo Comerford speaking on the “Dollars and Sense of War Spending. Jo is the Director of the National Priorities Project.

The Cocoa Campaign seeks to raise awareness about child trafficking and forced child labor in the cocoa industry. We educate and engage consumers to demand chocolate free of forced child labor, and influence Vermont chocolate producers to verify their supply chain to ensure human rights are preserved in the production of cocoa. Gaby has met with dozens of school groups, and the demand for Fair Trade chocolate is increasing.

Corporations ≠ People Campaign: The Peace & Justice Center is a principal organizer of the Vermont coalition to promote equal access to political speech and transparency in campaign and political message financing. We join Vermont Senator Ginny Lyons in support of an Amendment to the constitution stating that Corporations are not people and should not enjoy the same rights under the law.

Along with these campaigns, several of the staff are involved with organizing and supporting the Occupy Burlington movement, collaborating with partner organizations, and keeping their fingers on the pulse of our communities.

We were thrilled to learn in December that the Peace & Justice Center is the recipient of a grant from the Block Foundation to support the Cost of War campaign. These funds enable us to schedule this series going forward, promote the events well, and work with the most prominent speakers. **We will be looking for sponsors and underwriters to help defray the costs of future programs in this series, so if you can help us either with a special contribution or with a suggestion for a possible sponsor, please contact Colleen Deignan at <Program@pjcv.org>.**

Nathan Suter
Board Member

■ PJC Volunteer statistics

October 2011: 14 volunteers worked 240 hours
November 2011: 11 volunteers worked 190 hours
December 2011: 6 volunteers worked 120 hours
January 2012: 13 volunteers worked 120 hours

■ PJC Out in the Community

During October-January, the PJC did 17 school/college presentations; 7 tablings; and 9 events/rallies

Corporations ≠ People

By Colleen Deignan

More than 70 people gathered in Burlington's Contois Auditorium on Saturday, January 21 for the Peace & Justice Center's **Corporations ≠ People** panel discussion about the local and national implications of the *Citizens United vs. Federal Election Commission* ruling by the US Supreme Court in 2010. The 21st marked the second anniversary of the decision.

The panel included Aquene Freechild, Senior Organizer of Public Citizen's Democracy is for People Campaign, Ginny Lyons, Vermont State Senator, Dan Barrett, Staff Attorney for the VT ACLU, and Jerry Greenfield, Co-founder of Ben & Jerry's.

Nathan Suter, member of the Peace & Justice Center's Board of Directors moderated the discussion, and gave a brief overview of the ruling. One of its implications is that corporations have the right to spend unlimited amounts of money to influence elections. According to the Democracy Is for People Campaign, "The problem we now face is that the US Supreme Court has interpreted the Constitution to extend the First Amendment rights of real people to corporations. Congress does not have the power to overturn a court decision based on the Constitution."

Panelist Aquene Freechild stated that "This ruling is incredibly corrosive for our democracy... Corporations should be held accountable in a democratic process". Freechild, Lyons, and Greenfield agreed that a constitutional amendment is the best solution. To that end, Senator Lyons introduced a resolution in the Vermont Senate calling for a constitutional amendment (J.R.S. 11). A local coalition of activists and organizations, Vermonters Say Corporations Are Not People, has been working to collect the signatures required for each town to put the resolution on their town ballots. 5% of voters from each town are required to sign a petition to get the resolution on their town ballot, and 1/3 of towns in Vermont must vote in favor of the resolution before it can reach the state

level.

At one point in the discussion, Jerry Greenfield addressed the audience, asking "Who here feels like their government represents their interests?" Only one person raised their hand. Greenfield also made a comparison between groups which have historically held the most power in our society; religion and government, and the most recent power; corporations. He stated that "...business has an incredible influence/control over us...and all is done in the interested of making money. The major difference between business, religion, and government, is that business does not look out for the common good".

Panelist Dan Barrett opposed a constitutional amendment. He recommended that Vermont make several structural changes to its own election system before working on an amendment. He also argued that there is a problem enforcing already existing laws. Barrett suggested that voters end the cycle of reelecting Congressmen who may not be representing their interests. He felt that



Jake Schumann and Gabriela Ochoa Brenneman from the Peace & Justice Center joined others on January 20, the National Day of Action, at the VT State House. Photo by Robert Lehmert.

this would eliminate the need to change the Constitution. Greenfield countered that elections are bought and sold today, and many good candidates won't have access to funds for their campaigns like other candidates under this ruling, unless they accept donations from corporations — essentially selling their candidacy.

A brief Q+A followed the panel, where many different opinions were voiced about the amendment. Many agreed, including panelists, that publicly financed elections are necessary. For more information about the amendment, or how Vermonters can get involved, please visit www.vermonterssaycorporationsarenotpeople.org or www.democracyisforpeople.org.

Summary of *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*

By Miranda Berchten, PJC Intern

Two years ago, on January 21, 2010, the US Supreme Court ruled on the case of *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*. *Citizens United* had originally brought the case against the FEC as a narrow, technical question dealing with using corporate funding to produce a political movie. The Supreme Court expanded the the question to pertain to campaign finance rules and the first amendment. They ruled that the limits put on corporate spending violates a corporations' first amendment rights to free speech. The Supreme Court overturned over 100 years of campaign finance rules and stated that corporations have the right to spend unlimited amounts of money to promote or defeat candidates.

The implications of the ruling are far reaching and effect so many aspects of our society. Most importantly it will have an extremely negative effect on our democracy. Money will have an even greater power to influence politics, the interests of the wealthy will have greater representation, and the corporate lobby, who is not motivated to promote public good, will have greater influence. The only way to change this ruling is through a constitutional amendment because the decision was based upon the constitutional protections in the first amendment and cannot be reversed by legislative action.

Creating Opportunities

By *Gabriela Ochoa Brenneman, Program Director and Store Manager*

One of the ways the Peace & Justice Center works for economic justice is through our Fair Trade Program. Our local Fair Trade store at the Waterfront has been among the many organizations working to create sustainable opportunities for artisans and farmers to lift their families and their communities out of extreme poverty.

The Fair Trade movement works to include people that have been traditionally bypassed by the benefits of commerce in agreements like NAFTA and CAFTA. Fair Trade producers work is based on a business model that markets directly to consumers minimizing intermediaries and enabling the producer to retain more of the retail price for the items and investing it back into their communities.

Fair Trade works with marginalized populations especially in rural areas where nearly 75% of the world's poorest live. Fair Trade benefits more than 7.5 million artisans and farmers in more than 60 countries. The movement empowers women, supports transparency and sustainable development.

We partner with more than fifteen artisan and farmer cooperatives in different countries. In addition to provide a market for their goods, we are committed to share their stories, goals, and accomplishments. Sharing stories about their realities, gives us all a better understanding of the local context and challenges in this market.

We believe that our work marketing Fair Trade products needs to be accompanied by education. We continue our work educating and raising awareness in our community. This is done through presentations in colleges, elementary schools, high schools, faith groups and any group interested in learning how Fair Trade creates an opportunity for producers to earn a fair wage and work under dignified and sustainable conditions.

Each of the cooperatives that we represent have one or several programs that benefit their local communities. Some of the programs include micro credit for

starting small cooperatives, education, medical care, vocational training for youth, street violence prevention, housing, community gardens and more.

Here are a few of the groups we represent in our Fair Trade Store. We hope you continue to support our work and the efforts of many fair trade organizations working for economic justice.

■ Bead For Life

Bead for Life provides sustainable job opportunities for women in northern Uganda living in extreme poverty. Many of these women have returned to their land after decades of civil war. Women make beads from recycled paper or collect and process Shea nuts to produce



premium Shea butter.

The goal of the Bead for Life program is to support women to become independent and self sufficient in 18 months. The program assists women in launching their own small businesses or in creating new revenue streams. Bead for Life provides entrepreneurial training, facilitates savings accounts, and makes business funds available. In the rural areas, the program focuses on agricultural development.

Bead for Life sponsors Community Development projects in health, vocational training for impoverished youth, affordable housing, and business development. These projects are financed with the net profits from the sale of the beads and Shea butter products and support not only our members, but also other impoverished people living in Uganda.

■ Ganesh Himal

Ganesh Himal has been working with producers in Nepal since 1984. Their work consists of assisting in product development, purchasing, and importing artisan products. The goal of Ganesh Himal has been to create mutually beneficial, long-term partnerships with low income, refugee and fair trade artisan groups in Nepal.

The principles of fair trade are central to their philosophy and the way they trade with the artisans. Ganesh Himal has worked with artisans for 25 years in Nepal seeing the country go from peace into civil war. They have been able to reach out to the ones deeply affected by the conflict.

■ Upavim

Upavim was founded 1988 to support the Healthy Babies Growth Monitoring program in La Esperanza Colonia in Guatemala City. It has since grown to provide economic support for the women of La Esperanza and the surrounding Colonias. Other projects Upavim manages: medical and dental clinic, laboratory and pharmacy, Montessori school, day care and child nutrition center, university scholarship program, tutoring center, typing school, and soy dairy.

Upavim employs over 60 women – mothers and homemakers, widows, women abandoned by husbands, and women who confront alcoholism in their families. Many are the sole providers of economic support for their families.

Upavim has 20 more employees working as teachers, nurses, administrators, cooks, cleaners, and secretaries. Upavim also has employees from outside the community, including a general manager, a full-time doctor and a dentist who works twice a week. Upavim supports rural Mayan cooperatives by helping them to retail their own Fair Trade products. ☺



OCCUPY SOLIDARITY NEWS

COMPILED AND EDITED BY ROBIN LLOYD

Occupy Washington

By Dylan Kelley

For full report with photos, and other blogs by Dylan go to Vtcommons.org.

On January 17th, a contingent of Occupiers from Burlington, together with a nearly uncountable number of other Occupy movements descended upon the nation's capital from encampments as far flung as Boston, Oakland, Oregon, Orlando, San Diego, Tampa, Santa Cruz, Des Moines, New York, and New Hampshire.

By combining the new and emerging tools of Web 2.0 and convergent media with the time tested methods of community organizing, pavement pounding, and a little bit of street theater; the Occupiers have built an enormous movement that is now comprised of a patchwork of individual movements both across the country and around the world. At last count, 82 countries and an excess of 2500 cities had Occupy movements that were active and functioning in their respective communities.

After several hours on the National Mall, as well a massive attempt to meet with Representatives of their various states, many of the Occupiers, now in a swelling crowd of 3,000 or more marched from the Capitol to the steps of the Supreme Court as Capitol Police cruisers, motorcycles, and patrolmen scrambled to frantically shut down the streets and sidewalks in a semi-chaotic flurry of lights, sirens, and audibly overwhelmed radio dispatches.

Taking the steps of the Supreme Court,

the enormous crowd chanted "MONEY IS NOT SPEECH! MONEY IS NOT SPEECH!" in reference to last year's decision by that body to allow unlimited campaign contributions, one of the vast myriad of issues that nearly all Occupiers are able to speak at length about on a moment's notice.



This cryptic but genial Guy Fawkes mask, worn by an Occupier, was popularized by the film *V for Vendetta* and is frequently seen at Occupy rallies. It may represent the cryptic and not so genial, but generally non-violent online organization, Anonymous. One of their self descriptions is "We are Anonymous. We are Legion. We do not forgive. We do not forget. Expect us." Anonymous has been called one of the three major successors to WikiLeaks. Photo by Dylan Kelley.

A few moments later, a spontaneous decision was made to move the rally onwards to a location that sent police and journalists running for their vehicles and shouting into their radios and phones. With a nearly deafening chant of "TO THE WHITE HOUSE! TO THE WHITE HOUSE! TO THE WHITE HOUSE!" the crowd surged towards Pennsylvania Avenue. "FREE SPEECH!... FREE SPEECH!"

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What's Next for the 99%?

By Stephen Marshall

The Occupy movement in Vermont has felt widespread support from the community. But it has not been adept in including those supporters in its process. How can folks who identify with the Occupy Wall Street movement be part of the movement? Surely not by attending a General Assembly! There would never be enough room for everyone!

Folks active in the movement and folks who are not, I think, have this common interest: To find a meaningful way for every Vermonter who is sympathetic to the concerns of the Occupy movement to participate and propel the change we want to see. From down here on the ground, "How can we extend our sense of empowerment to the full diversity of the 99%?"

There are deep questions about what those concerns actually are, and what the values are that drive those concerns, but answers to the question might be simpler than expected, and more interesting, for supporters of the movement.

■ Occupy Your Self

Many of the values and methods of the Occupy movement come out of Anarchist thought. Like the Trojan horse and liberal democracy, it carries within it the seeds of its own destruction, and the seeds of profound creativity. These seeds invite anyone to participate, to define a purpose and a goal, and pursue it. It coincides with the state motto of Vermont: Freedom and Unity – that our personal freedom is protected by our unity, that our unity is

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National Defense Authorization Act

By Bill Oetjen

The National Defense Authorization Act, signed by President Obama on January 1, authorizes the US military to arrest, on suspicion alone, anyone, anywhere, including Americans, on American soil, and detain them indefinitely. In case you suspect that you misread that statement, I suggest that you reread it. Several times.

This law contends for the title of 'Worst Law Ever Enacted.' It makes the hallowed civil liberties of Due Process and Habeas Corpus optional, rather than the basis of all other Constitutional rights. The NDAA also negates the principles of the Insurrection Act of 1807 and the Posse Comitatus Act, which narrowly limit military action inside the territorial USA.

On January 10, I participated in a pair of Occupy Burlington actions. Seven of

us visited Senator Leahy's office and spoke for at least an hour with John Tracy, his State Director. He accepted our statement condemning Leahy's assent to this treasonous bill. We also demanded that he support legislation rescinding all of the un-American provisions of the NDAA.

Tracy promised that Senator Leahy will support the Due Process Guarantee Act, which purports to set limits on how long the government may indefinitely detain us. To try to persuade us that our rights are still safe, he cited President Obama's Signing Statement; Obama's promise to not enforce the parts of the law with which he disagrees. Signing statements have no authority over this or future Presidents' actions and the Due Process Guarantee Act won't even begin to regain the ground lost in the NDAA. We left,



unconvinced.

Congressman Peter Welch voted "no" on the NDAA, along with Senator Bernie Sanders, The 99% opposes it and demands the complete restoration of everything the NDAA takes away.

Tracy told us, "I can't promise you the moon." The Founders did not give us the moon. They gave us the Bill of Rights, and we demand it back.

Bill Oetjen is 52, a teacher, occupier, and Burlington resident since 1982.

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In the dim light of the street, Occupiers ranging in age from seven to seventy moved in a solid mass up the Avenue towards number 1600. Chanting the slogan of the movement such as the now familiar "WE ARE THE 99 PERCENT!" as well as new adoptions such as "A- ANTI-ANTI-CAPITALISTA!" the dense throng of people paused for a few moments outside the Newseum to read, via the repeating People's Mic, the gigantic 1st Amendment to the Constitution that is engraved upon its towering facade.

Arriving at the White House, the crowd chanted "OBAMA, COME OUT, WE HAVE SOME THINGS TO TALK ABOUT!", "BANKS GOT BAILED OUT, WE GOT SOLD OUT!" as well as "SHOW ME WHAT HYPOCRISY LOOKS LIKE! THAT IS WHAT HYPOCRISY LOOKS LIKE!" as they pointed towards the illuminated front of the Executive Mansion.

After approximately 20 minutes at the fence of the White House, during which time some Occupiers had begun to meditate as others sang "We Shall

Overcome", a ripple of fear and uncertainty swept through the crowd when somebody set off a smoke grenade near the front of the crowd. Believing it to be tear-gas fired by the police, Occupiers rushed away from the noxious smoke, doused face-scarves with water to aid breathing, and prepared for a potential assault by police forces.

The assault never came. In its absence

there has since been much speculation about the source of the smoke grenade that alarmed so much of the crowd in addition to putting the White House itself on lock-down.

Dylan Kelley is a photojournalist and student at Burlington College, from Chelsea VT.



Poetic Prose
from Mia Occupy YourHeart
I Occupied City Hall Park for a little while. There was fairy dust sparkling down from the tree branches, and the tents were shimmering in the darkness. It was kind of hard to tell, what with all the glossy neon smiling at everyone from Main Street. Might have been rain. But the trees definitely told me to send some happy sprinkles and sparkles to their beautiful friends...

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lost if we exercise our freedom to the detriment of those around us. It is a profound paradox, and the ignition point of unforeseen creativity. It challenges each of us to be part of the solution.

Which means that the answer to the question “What are the goals of the Occupy movement?” is probably held within you. YOU know exactly what those goals are, because you help to define them and express them. When you act on them, you participate in creating the world we all want to live in.

But doesn't the Occupy movement have goals? Aspirations? Isn't there an organization setting policy? If I am not signed up and paying dues, how do I (or does anyone) know I am part of the movement? How do I know I will be accepted as contributing, and how do I gain some control over what other people are doing? If there is no authority, no hierarchy, no precise definition of the ideals of the movement, “How do I find the boundaries of what is possible?”. Who will hold me accountable for my actions?

As I understand it, yes, there are goals and aspirations, and no, there are not. Chief among them is liberation from hierarchy, so no one else decides for you what they are. So no, there are no goals and aspirations *which are dictated to you*. The values goals and aspirations are determined *culturally*, by conference, collaboration, and relationship. The dues you pay to join this movement are the efforts you make to discover your power, and to connect with other people who are discovering their power. They are the efforts you make to create relationships with other Occupiers in which you are a leader among leaders. The dues you pay are contained within the effort you make to work out your actions as an equal member of a community, in which your team is equal to every other team, in which our clusters of teams (working groups, trust groups) are equal to that of every other across the nation and the world.

Americans are generally not accustomed to non-hierarchic cultures, where privilege is eschewed. The culture of Occupy intends to change that. Occupy

your heart. Occupy your humanity. Occupy your authority. Occupy your right to be. Occupy your being. Occupy yourself.

■ Occupy Your Community

To me, the Occupy movement is fundamentally about building a culture and building community based on that culture. Privilege withers where people insist on relationships of equality. Community and Relationship are the chief strategies for combating inequality and privilege, and they rely on mutual accountability.

We are accountable to each other because we are all equal in our authority. This is the root of our freedom and our unity. We can do what we want to, but expect others to sometimes disagree, and tell us as much. Since there are no police,

***Occupy Burlington
General Assembly
meets every Sunday at
2pm at the First Unitarian
Universalist Society of
Burlington
at the top of Church St.***

no priests and no judges, we can keep doing what we want to, with whatever support we might or might not get from the rest of the community. But sometimes we need to step back, accept the priorities of others as greater than our own. It is commitment to prosperous coexistence which holds us together. It is the understanding that “I must make the world safe for you so that you will want to make it safe for me.”, which compels mutual accountability and doing the right thing.

As a person accustomed to the hierarchy of American society, emerging into equality has been a profound, growth-propelling experience. By itself, I don't think this vision is sufficient for managing the affairs of the world, or even of a small state like Vermont, but the

vision isn't complete. It's a work in progress. It's an evolving organic cluster of possibilities, not a rigid set of rules which preordains the solutions. It can be chaotic, and sometimes frustrating, *but we are all part of it!* We all get to participate in creating the world we want to see, and together we have challenges to meet!

■ Occupy Your Occupation

Once you know that you identify with the Occupy movement, there are numerous ways to get connected.

The first is the most natural in a new, uncontrolled environment: Ask “Why am I here?”. Your sense of connection to the Occupy movement is your key to participation. Another good question is “What do I want for myself and the world, that connects me to the Occupy movement?”. And, “How can I put force behind the change that we advocate?”. Answering these questions leads you and friends to specific actions that you might want to take.

If you are already active, in an anti-war group, in domestic violence education, in fighting global warming, in feeding people, if you are doing these things to empower people, to build a culture of mutual care, you are already involved. Now, just say to people, “*This is my Occupation!*” Put “WE ARE THE 99%” on your banner.

Other ways include reading the blogs, “friending” or “liking” the Facebook pages, picking up some of the new books about the Occupy movement, surfing the internet for news and discussion, and generally engaging in self education. One place to start is our web page, occupyburlington.org. Probably the easiest way to connect with people who are active is at a General Assembly. It's a logical starting point for meeting folks, although not necessarily the most relaxed. They are business meetings and are not conducive to conversation. But a new person would attend to find out what the current business is, and to be there at the end to meet other people. Another way is to join an existing working group. It's an unfamiliar, unripe paradigm. It can take some effort.

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■ Occupy (verb) Occupy (proper noun)

Beyond these actions, I would have to ask you, “What do we who are active in the movement need to do to connect with you?” What are the natural channels of communication where you would expect to see us and you do not? With need, with time, communication will open and we will become more adept at connecting with each other, and with the full diversity of the 99%. We do have work to do to make these connections. We are only just getting started. Movement development is not recruitment. It is the process by which we recognize each other. Remem-

ber, you are already a 99%er. You are us!

■ Occupy Occupy!

There are lots of ways for folks to be involved, to promote positive change. Why is another way needed? The Occupy movement does not propose to create a new non-profit with a staff and an issue. The Occupy movement proposes to create a new culture and a new community, one in which everyone is important. It proposes to be the community from which every effective activist group springs. Our next job, as Occupiers, is to establish those lines of communication, and communicate our solidarity. Our goal, as Occupiers, is to connect us to each other, to build relationships and a social network which becomes the

community that becomes the world we want to see.

This is what the Occupy movement is about for me. The other issues, such as the decay of democracy, profligate consumerism, and pathological corporate greed, are expressions of the way our society has failed. Along with resistance to a corrupt, bankrupt system, we share a vision of a new world, a sustainable world, and any thing you do to help us get there, we do together.

Stephen Marshall writes and works for a world that is healthy, safe, sustainable and meaningful, for life and humanity, in Burlington Vermont. ☪

Closing the Impunity Gap: *How Lawyers and Judges are Holding Higher-Ups Accountable*

By Charlotte Dennett, Esq. For complete article, see the Fall 2011 edition of the VT Bar Association Journal

The year 2011 will go down in history as a year of protest, from the Arab Spring to Occupy Wall Street to uprisings around the world. Of all the issues emerging from the massive demonstrations of popular discontent, one that connects them all is the protesters’ insistence on accountability. Average people — the 99% if you like — are sick and tired of living under a double standard where the rich and the powerful not only get richer — all too often, by breaking the law — but also escape legal responsibility for their illegal acts.

As constitutional lawyer and *Salon* blogger Glenn Greenwald recently observed, one of the things that is driving citizen anger is this chasm between how we treat ordinary Americans in the justice system, imprisoning them for petty and trivial offenses, versus how we treat the world’s most powerful and wealthiest individuals, who can commit the kind of fraud on the massive scale that we saw in 2008 with no accountability, pure impunity.

Case in point: prosecutors admit that they don’t have the time or the staff to

adequately prosecute the higher-ups. The result? According to *The New York Times*, “mortgage fraud and deed theft cost homeowners \$4 billion to \$6 billion annually,” but “a mortgage fraud ring walks away with hundreds of thousands of dollars per house, and runs little risk of arrest.”

.....

For those of us who have participated in what I call the “accountability movement,” the Arab Spring, followed by Occupy Wall Street, erupted as welcome developments following three years of relative silence over legal impunity in the United States and around the world.

Philippe Sands, a British human rights lawyer best known for his role in the war crimes arrest of former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet in a London hospital bed in 1994, is an inveterate optimist when it comes to closing the impunity gap. He told an accountability conference in 2008: “You never know what will happen. This [arrest] happened twenty-five years ago and ten years after Pinochet left office. Things take time.” Others agreed, noting that things happen

when there is political will to make them happen. “Lawyers and judges won’t act unless there is a grassroots movement.”

The accountability movement is in its infancy. But it is already showing that in this age of globalization, it has the power to spread rapidly and to join with other struggles for true democracy and equal rights under the law.

Shortly after this article was written, a Spanish judge, under the doctrine of universal jurisdiction, is proceeding with its criminal investigation of Bush, Cheney and Rumsfeld (among others) for authorizing alleged torture of detainees at Guantanamo. And British authorities have begun a probe into CIA renditions to Libya. In short, while Obama caves to “national security” pressures at home, other parts of the world are pushing the struggle for accountability forward.

Charlotte Dennett, Esq., is a lawyer, author, and investigative journalist based in Cambridge, Vermont. Her latest book is The People vs. George Bush. ☪

Shut Down Vermont Yankee

By *Hattie Nestel*

I have been hearing many people talk about supporting the state of Vermont to shut down Vermont Yankee.

I see no reason to support the state of Vermont regarding shutting down Vermont Yankee. For the past forty years, some branch of the state government or another has historically allowed VY to operate—with impunity and lies and poisoning the water, air, and life of its surrounding area.

When Entergy bought VY and quickly petitioned the state for a 20% increase in power—translated to increase in profits—and then for additional on-site storage—despite the testimony and objections of notable citizen watchdog groups like New England Coalition, the Conservation Law Foundation, scientists, and nuclear engineers—the state gave VY the necessary licenses that allowed them to continue to poison citizens and the environment.

Although the state senate did vote overwhelmingly to deny Entergy a certificate of public good to operate beyond March of 2012, the state has done nothing to prosecute the eleven top executives of Entergy who lied under oath about the existence of pipes leaking tritium under the reactor, did nothing to shut down Vermont Yankee when tritium was discovered in the groundwater and the river, far above the legal limit. The state has done nothing to stop known emissions of Strontium-90 into the groundwater and Connecticut River where fish are now registering radioactive toxins that can only have come from VY toxins. Of course, any of us could rant on and on about cracks, submerged cables, lack of fire prevention standards, and continuing deficits of maintenance and transparency and accountability.

The final nail for the coffin of Vermont Yankee should have been the knowledge that Vermont Yankee is the same type of reactor with the same problems as Fukushima's reactors. Yet the state has not deemed it imperative that they shut

down Vermont Yankee, as Massachusetts Congressman Edward Markey (D-Malden) and many notable politicians, physicians, and environmental groups have called for, at least until studies and necessary remediation are completed to make sure the VY does not become the next Fukushima. And, as we all know, there is no way to “make sure.”

Japan and Germany have both shut down their oldest and all of the GE Mark 1 reactors that were the same as those that failed at Fukushima.

I do not see any branch of the governing bodies of the state of Vermont—including the governor, department of health, or the attorney general taking a proactive role in shutting down Vermont Yankee with any sense of urgency or immediacy. I do believe if there were any other business or private entity poisoning the air, water, food chain, and people of Vermont in only a fraction of the amount attributable to Vermont Yankee, the state would surely have imposed fines and insisted the business or private entity shut down until it cleaned up its act or ceased to operate. However, Entergy and Vermont Yankee—with cynical, slyly-placed donations and false advertising throughout the state—continues to operate while those attempting to shut it down get arrested for doing so.

So why support the state? As we should have learned by now, tomorrow may very well be too late. The day before the horrific accidents at Chernobyl, Three Mile Island, or Fukushima, everything seemed fine, but—as we have learned—everything was not fine. Or it really O.K. that the Vermont DPH says its fine to eat the fish. Really, say the Dr. Harry Chen and Dr. Bill Irwin, “I’d eat the fish”. A little Strontium 90 isn’t going to hurt anyone. A pregnant mother, a toddler? This sounds a bit like *JAWS* to me — don’t tell anyone there is a human eating shark in the water—it may unsettle the tourists who come to fish in the Connecticut River downstream from VY.

March 11, 2012, will mark one year since the beginning of the Fukushima disaster. Should we continue to have blind faith in the state of Vermont, believing that it may negotiate a 180-degree change of course as we saw Prime Minister Angela Merkel of Germany do? As an anti-nuclear movement, we may be tempted to kick the can down the road and deny the obvious so that we do not have to put our bodies on the line. But the stakes are too high. We should be in the streets NOW, when everything SEEMS fine, before it is too late.

The Germans took to the streets by the hundreds of thousands, and Angela Merkel took note. I encourage all of us to truly see the terrifyingly dangerous dinosaur that threatens all we hold dear. Help create the critical mass that will in fact SHUT DOWN VERMONT YANKEE.

Maybe the state will surprise us—but can we depend on that? Should we risk waiting? I, for one, don’t want to allow blind faith in the state or the NRC to protect me. I want to shut down Vermont Yankee so we are not the next Chernobyl, Three Mile Island or Fukushima. ☪

SAGE Alliance

The SAGE Alliance is developing a people’s campaign of nonviolent direct action to shut down Vermont Yankee on March 21st, 2012. Vermonters and our tri state community have worked for 30 years to shut down Vermont Yankee. We support the state of Vermont in its efforts to fight this untrustworthy corporation. However, the people must also make it clear to Entergy, the courts, the State of Vermont and the media, that it is unacceptable for Vermont Yankee to continue to operate after its license expires in March 2012.

In the event that Entergy Corporation defies Vermont law and continues to operate Vermont Yankee or, that the courts, ruling on the lawsuit brought by the Entergy against the State of Vermont, refuse to uphold Vermont law, the democratic process, and the will of the majority of Vermonter’s and our neighbors in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, we will Act! See calendar items on p. 10 and go to sagealliance.net ☪

CALENDAR

February 2012

[5] Sunday

- 12-1 **Vets for Peace** live call-in show on Channel 15.

[6] Monday

- 6:15pm **Burlington-Bethlehem-Arad Sister City Committee** meeting at Burlington College.

[8] Wednesday

- 5-6:30pm **Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)** meeting at the Peace & Justice Center. 862-4929.

[10] Friday

- 7:30 pm. North End Studio, Burlington. **PARTY and Fun(d)raiser for Migrant Justice! Migrant Justice** allies Gabriel Shapiro and Will Bennington of Brass Balagan volunteered to throw a concert and fundraiser for us. Check 'em out here: <http://www.brassbalagan.org>, <https://www.facebook.com/brassbalagan>. Join us for great music, REAL Mexican food, campaign updates, raffles, dancing and fun! Please let us know if you can help out by donating something to the raffle, promoting, setting up or breaking down after party. We hope to add to the venue so stay tuned for updates. <https://www.facebook.com/events/304775282905964/>

[11] Saturday

- 4pm Jo Comerford, the executive director of the National Priorities Project, will speak on **"The Dollars and Sense of War Spending"** at Contois Auditorium, City Hall, Burlington. This event is the second in the PJC's Cost of War Series. The NPP website is www.nationalpriorities.org

[12] Sunday

- 2pm **Occupy General Assembly** meets every Sunday at the 1st Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington. occupyburlington.org

[13] Monday

- 6-8pm **Vermonters for a Just Peace in Palestine/Israel** meeting at PJC.
- 6:30-8pm **CORN/Conversation On Race Now: Mayoral Candidate Forum** with Wanda Hines, Miro Weinberger, and Kurt Wright exploring their personal/professional stories and experiences of race/racism. Moderator: Hal Colston, Executive Director of SerVermont. Burlington High Scholl cafeteria.

[15] Wednesday

- 6:30pm **Decommissioning and Accountability for Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Reactor: A Public Educational Forum.** Fletcher Free Library, Community Room, Burlington, VT

[18] Saturday

- 8:30am to 6pm **Non-violent Direct Action Training.** The goal is to prepare community members who seek social change in a spirit of peace. Immediately, our concern is to close Vermont Yankee and other regional nuclear power plants. Not all who participate will be expected to put themselves in a position to be arrested. Some will prefer to act as team support. Others may come primarily to better understand the action-philosophy of Gandhi and Martin Luther King. We do hope to form one or more affinity (action) groups out of this session with the goal of coordinating with SAGE Alliance, Shut it Down and other peace-oriented anti-nuclear groups. Suggested participant donation, \$10. to help cover costs. Registration required by Wednesday, February 15th. Contact Spencer Smith (802-540-0002) or Robin Lloyd (802-862-4929). Quaker Meeting House, 173 N. Prospect Street, Burlington, Vt.

[23] Thursday

- 4-5pm **Fair Trade Cafe** at St Michael's. Discussion about the Fair Trade movement at St. Michael's. Interpretation of what it means to be a Fair Trade campus. Farrell Room.

[27] Monday

- 7pm **Are Corporations People? Citizens Respond to Citizens United.** Panel: John Bonifaz, Co-Founder and Director, Free Speech For People; Jerry Greenfield, Co-Founder, Ben & Jerry's Homemade, Inc.; Anthony Iarrapino, Esq., Citizen Activist; VT State Senator Virginia "Ginny" Lyons. Moderator: Dr. Paul Olsen, Saint Michael's College. At Saint Michael's College McCarthy Arts Center.

March 2012

[12] Monday

- 6-8pm **Vermonters for a Just Peace in Palestine/Israel** meeting at PJC.

[11] Sunday

- 11am **Mock Evacuation Walk.** Brattleboro, VT

[14] Wednesday

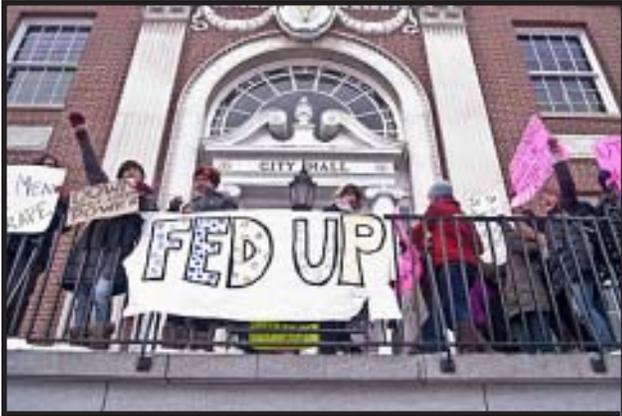
- 5-6:30pm **Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)** meeting at the Peace & Justice Center. 862-4929.

[17] Saturday

- 6pm **Vermont Yankee Panel - Public Ed Expo,** Middlebury Union High School, 73 Charles Ave, Middlebury, VT.

[21] Wednesday

- 11am **Vermont Yankee Retirement Party.** VT State House Montpelier, VT.



Every Sunday at 5:00, Fed Up meets in the PJC conference room to discuss issues of misogyny in our society. Since its creation last summer with the now famous SlutWalks, Fed Up has been an effective force in the community and on the UVM campus, and led the movement to suspend - in just six days of organizing- the Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity for circulating a questionnaire asking its members, "if you could rape anyone, who would it be?" In January, Fed Up held a teach-in and rally in City Hall and on UVM Campus about rape culture in Burlington, presenting a list of four concrete demands to the UVM administration to help combat behavior which is conducive to rape culture. In the coming months, you can expect to hear a lot more from Fed Up VT! Photo by Dylan Kelley.

Institute of Civic Engagement Lecture Series

The upheaval and revolutions which swept the Arab World in the Spring of 2011 were contagious: the overthrow of the governments of Tunisia and Egypt were quickly followed by similar upheavals throughout the Middle East. The US caught the revolutionary bug in the American Fall. From Wall Street in New York City to Oakland, CA, Philadelphia, PA, and Burlington, VT, occupying citizens took over the city squares and parks of America. The direct democracy practiced by the General Assemblies demanded an end to "Greed", "an egalitarian economy", and the actualization of real democracy or rule of the people. The occupations had mixed results: In some cases, democratic societies were born; in others new authoritarian rule caused increased political unrest. In this series, we continue to examine the upheavals rocking the world, possible solutions to the problems of failed economies and political systems and the implications for the world of all the noise. All events at 6:30 to 8:30pm at Burlington College.

Feb. 15 - The Agricultural Response: Organic Food Movement, Grace Gershuny, Institute of Social Ecology, Plainfield, Vermont

Feb. 22 - Global Wars: Congo Today, Kyendamina Cleophae Mukeba, a graduate student at St. Michael's College from Congo

Feb. 29 - Occupy the Food System: Sustainable Agriculture, Grace Gershuny, Institute of Social Ecology, Plainfield, Vermont

Mar. 7 - The International Crisis and Women of the Planet, Robin Lloyd, Board Member Burlington College, Women's International League of Peace and Freedom

Mar. 14 - Sustainable Energy: The Case of Vermont Yankee, Cheryl Hanna, Vermont Law School, South Royalton, Vermont

Mar. 21 - Sustainable Cuba and Vermont, Tom Sabo, Teacher and Developer of Sustainable Agriculture Programs and visitor to Cuba

Mar. 28 - Beyond Permaculture, Integrating Ecology, Economics and Equity and A Future of Sustainability Grace Gershuny, ISE. 

Series continued from page 1

■ Counter-recruitment

Some of the most important work we've done as a Center is counter-recruitment in high schools. Students are exposed to recruiters at jobs fairs and it's important that there's another voice providing them with other options, other than enlisting in the military. It is one of our goals this year to become much more involved with counter recruitment. Any time there is a job fair or recruiters at a local high school, there should be a voice advocating for non-violent conflict resolution, peace, and against war.

■ Soldier Suicides Break Records

Active-duty soldier suicides have reached a record high in 2011 according to US Army officials, with the expected Army suicide rate in 2011 to be 24 in 100,000. This revelation confirms the Army's recent report "Generating Health & Discipline" which details the rising rate of suicide in the Army. The report found that Army personnel are more likely to commit suicide than civilians, with a rate of Army suicides of 21.9 in 100,000 in 2009. According to the Veteran's Association, veterans composed 20% of national suicide, far exceeding any other group in the US.

The report explores the causes behind veteran's suicides, linking it to prolonged exposure to violence in combat: "Additional research concluded that, in general, combat exposure increased individual risk for suicide but, in particular, combat associated with higher levels of violence, injury and death affected the "acquired capability" by desensitizing the individual to fear of painful experiences."

This report comes with the war in Afghanistan surpassing all other conflicts as the longest war in US history and the conclusion of the Iraq war after 8 years.

■ Learn More

Interested in learning more about the costs of war? Join us for our second event in the Cost of War Speaker and Film Series, on February 11th at Contois Auditorium for a presentation by Jo Comerford, "The Dollars and Sense of War Spending". 

Decommissioning and Accountability: A Future Without Vermont Yankee

February 15, Wednesday, 6:30pm at Fletcher Free Library, Burlington. Free. Panel: Deb Katz, Executive Director of the Citizens Awareness Network; Chris Williams, Organizer for Vermont Citizens Action Network; Robert Stannard, Citizen Lobbyist for the Vermont Citizens Action Network

The overwhelming vote in the Senate to reject VY as part of Vermont's energy future and the legislature's refusal to return to the issue in 2011 was a great victory, but the debate continues with Entergy winning its court case to continue operation. We must demand continued legislative action to support a successful transition to sustainable energy and stricter decommissioning and operational standards. Questions remain. Can we survive without VY? Can citizens play a role as VY is properly dismantled, cleaned-up and radioactive waste safely stored? With the slow motion Fukushima disaster highlighting the vulnerabilities of Mark 1 reactors, how will the state deal with the increased vulnerability of this aged reactor? Contact: yeseath1@gmail.com 



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