



peace & justice news

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What is Piracy? *Thoughts from the Human Rights in Africa Conference*

By Robin Lloyd

Piracy was one of the first topics that came up at the well-attended Human Rights in Africa

conference at the Firehouse Center on April 11. Sympathy was expressed for the captured captain, Richard Phillips of Vermont; we did not know at that time about his dramatic rescue. But by the end of the panel discussion, with speakers from the Congo, Somalia, and Sudan reporting on the causes of violence in their homelands, the question, for this participant at least, became: Who are the really successful pirates? Are they the poor, unemployed men hijacking ships off the coast of Somalia? Or are there other, more covert, white collar pirates, planning their lucrative pillage of destabilized countries from air-conditioned offices in Europe and North America – heads of fishing industries, toxic waste dumpers, gun runners and diamond and coltan merchants?

Panelist Hassan Warsame was a government geologist in Somalia during the regime of the dictator Said Barre (1969-1991) and has lived in the US for the past 10 years. He said that Somalia – formerly called the Horn of Africa – had been colonized by three countries, and that its current boundaries made no sense. The root cause of violence is interclan fighting, he said, “but a larger

cause is international interference.” He pointed out that “we don’t make speed-boats. Guns come to us from out of



state.” International groups have an interest in keeping Somalia destabilized so that they can plunder its resources, he argued.

Curious to substantiate these charges, I looked for information on the internet. *The Chicago Tribune* in October of 2008 claimed that in the early 1990s, Somalia’s unpatrolled waters became a cost-free dumping ground for industrial waste from Europe:

“Fishing boats from Italy were reported to have ferried barrels of toxic materials to Somalia’s shores and then returned home laden with illicit catches of fish. Rusting containers of hazardous

Piracy continued on page 7

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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

From Legal Rights to Equal Rights

By Anise Richey

The Vermont State House in Montpelier is about 40 miles from the Peace & Justice Center offices on Church Street in Burlington. But on the morning of Tuesday, April 7, as the House voted 100-49 to override Governor Douglas's veto of the Marriage Equality Bill, the cheers of victory and cries of joy emanating from the gallery of the House seemed to carry across that distance, with reverberations felt throughout the state. Vermont had become the fourth state to allow same-sex couples to marry, and the first state to grant the right through the legislature.

The social justice aspects of ensuring equal rights for our lesbian and gay neighbors resonates with the Peace & Justice Center's mission to create a just and peaceful world. We watched with guarded optimism as the votes were tallied and choked back tears as Speaker of the House Shap Smith announced the results. The Board and Staff of the PJC congratulate all Vermonters for taking this important step forward, once again showing how a small state can play a pivotal role in the search for equality. We took a few moments out of our hectic schedules to consider this historic occasion.

"Marriage has never been something I dreamed of as a little girl. Nor has it entered my aspirations as an adult. However, with the passage of the Marriage Equality Bill I have come to realize how important the right to marry is. Ideally, we wouldn't need this institution to have full rights as committed couples. As marriage now exists, it is an essential civil right. I am so appreciative of the determination, intelligence and courage of all the people responsible for ensuring the passage of this bill. I feel enormous gratitude and pride. Thank you to all the amazing Vermonters who brought us to full equality."

– Kathy Bouton, Peace & Justice Store Co-Manager

"No matter what your political affiliation, or whether you are gay or straight, we can all recognize the freedom to marry is an issue that is not just about marriage but about equal rights, about fairness for each member of our community. I am proud to be a Vermonter and I am one of many young Vermonters who decided to move back to this state and start my family here. We are leading the way to a more just and equitable future, thank you Vermonters, thank you legislators."

– Tiffany Silliman, Secretary, PJC Board of Directors.

"Equality is not a special right it is a human right! Congratulations Vermont for making human rights a priority."

– Jennifer Reay, Peace & Justice Store Co-Manager

"The passing of the marriage equality bill on April 7th, 2009 in Vermont's legislature is something to be celebrated. Not only is it the state recognition of a necessary human right, it is also an inspiring story of passion mixed with community organizing to override the veto by Governor Douglas. This was a historical moment in Vermont, and nationally. I, for one, am prouder than ever to live in Vermont!"

– Jen Berger, Peace and Human Rights Organizer.

"The Marriage Equality Bill is a huge step towards equal rights for all people. I am thrilled and proud to live in a state that once again has taken leadership on this issue. Furthermore, Governor Douglas has over used his veto power to thwart popular movements in Vermont. The legislature's override of the veto is a sweet victory!"

– Hilary Martin, Chair, PJC Board of Directors.

"Marriage Equality isn't just about securing those benefits that straight couples get when they get married. It's about being seen as a complete and whole participant in the world. James Neiley of Outright VT said it best when he testified before the legislature, 'When I came out, I knew I wasn't considered equal. I didn't even consider myself equal, how could I?' I think this message is something all queer kids grow up believing and sometimes they give up on the world. The Marriage Equality Bill will hopefully go a long way towards eradicating this self-doubt and allow all of us to believe in ourselves and each other."

– Anise Richey, PJC Development Director.

From deeply personal reflections to the celebration of the triumph of justice over prejudice, the passage of the Marriage Equality Bill is something we can all be proud of. The causes of social justice and human rights have been furthered. To our friends at Vermont Freedom to Marry and the legislators who chose to do the right thing for all Vermonters, we extend our warmest congratulations and thanks. And to the hundreds of thousands around the country continuing to push for equal rights in their state and beyond, take heart from the victory in Vermont and know you have an ally in the Peace & Justice Center. ☺

**From legal rights
to EQUAL rights**

Champlain's 400th War is Not the Only Legacy

By Kevin Dann

In 1609, when Samuel de Champlain piloted the *Don de Dieu* up the great river that the French would christen the *Fleuve Saint Laurent*, he had a dream that *amitié* – amity, a deep, abiding peace – would prevail in *La Nouvelle France*, unlike the situation in his own war-torn nation. English explorer Henry Hudson also had thoughts of amity as he sailed his ship the *Half-Moon* past *Menahen*, the Great Island of the Lenape that would later become known as “Manhattan.” The native peoples of the region were full of amity as well; here is *Half-Moon* crew member Robert Juet’s journal entry describing their first contact with the Lenape Indians:

This day the people of the country came aboard of us, seeming very glad of our coming, and brought greene tobacco, and gave us of it for knives and beads. They goe in deere skins loose, well dressed. They have yellow copper. They desire cloathes, and are very civil. They have great store of maize or Indian wheate, whereof they made good bread.

Only a few weeks into his voyage south from the St. Lawrence, Champlain killed three Mohawk chiefs, complicating that dream of *amitié*. And two days after Hudson’s ship made contact with the Lenape, a skirmish left one of the crew members dead. These martial encounters set the tone for centuries to come in the two valleys .

For 25 years I have had an interest in the 300th anniversary celebrations. It is my firm conviction that the social world that we build is based on the stories that we tell. In 1909, orators and audiences told stories of bloody conflict as backdrop to heroic deeds of martial valor. The crowds who gathered in 1909 (10,000 on the waterfront in Burlington; a million on the banks of the Hudson to view the largest naval war fleet ever assembled) were justifiably proud of their nation’s great progress and prosperity. They saw ahead a century of greatness, and helped to

realize that vision.

Those crowds of Tercentenary also spoke of their good fortune that the nation was at peace. Yet at that moment, a terrible, bloody, murderous occupation of the Philippines was settling in. Americans welcomed the soldiers home and showered them with praise and gratitude. Medals and keys to cities were given. Statues were raised. Parks were dedicated. As the Champlain and Hudson Valleys prepare to celebrate the 400th anniversaries of their namesakes’ deeds, America is at war on two fronts, and sustaining with much bloodshed an occupation that has lasted longer than our occupation of the Philippines.

It is time we rediscover and recommit to Samuel de Champlain’s dream of *amitié*. This anniversary year offers us an excellent opportunity. New stories are needed.

If you glance around your town, you will see places where conflict and military deeds are remembered in granite and bronze: statues, monuments, parks, and restored forts from a long series of wars. As much as we yearn for peace, this is the landscape of story within which our children grow up. There are no monuments to peacemakers, and that absence suggests the absence of stories about the history of *their* deeds of heroism.

Our children know how difficult it is to make peace, and they have an innate sense that peacemaking *is* heroic. When they extend their efforts for justice and peace in the schoolyard or at home, they learn the great challenges – and rewards – of overcoming violence. Violence in our historic valleys has come in many forms, waged by many individuals and groups. It has brought forth an equally variegated history of overcoming social, economic, and physical violence, of turning swords into plowshares and enemies into friends. Shortly after the 1909 Tercentenary celebrations ended, the State of New York issued a massive commemorative volume, lavishly illustrated, reproducing the speeches and the

pageants, describing the range of activities the citizens undertook to honor Champlain and Hudson. The Champlain Tercentenary volume included a handsome fold-out map of the region showing the places and dates where celebrations were held. The map is laced with text identifying all of the forts and battles; no other form of human activity is recorded on this map.

We need a new map! That is the central dream of the *Corridor of Amity* pilgrimage – to create a new map of our region, one that pinpoints where and when the mostly forgotten deeds of peacemaking happened. You’ll not find such a map for the Richelieu and Champlain and Hudson Valleys; indeed, I know of no such map – one identifying solely deeds of conflict resolution.

As my way of commemorating the 400th anniversaries of Henry Hudson’s and Samuel de Champlain’s deeds of discovery, I am making a pilgrimage from Montreal to Manhattan. By joyfully, mindfully walking the length of these two valleys, I hope to knit them together in my heart, and also knit together the residents of these regions who have in their heart a desire for new stories, new maps, new dreams. Instead of astrolabe and arquebus, I will be packing stories of *amitié*.

Look for more of Kevin’s story on his website www.corridorofamity.org 

Corridor of Amity Pilgrimage

Sat. May 16 Notre Dame de Bonsecours, Montreal (concert by Social Band at the Chapel at 2 PM)
 May 17 -21 towns in Quebec
 Fri. May 22 Champlain, NY
 Sat. May 23 Point au Roche, NY
 Sun. May 24 Plattsburgh, NY
 Mon. May 25 Port Kent, NY
 Tue. May 26 Winooski & Burlington, VT
 Wed. May 27 Lake Champlain Waldorf School
 Thu. May 28 Vergennes, VT
 Fri. May 29 Chimney Point Historic Site, VT
 Sat. May 30 Crown Point Historic Site, NY
 Sun. May 31 Fort Ticonderoga, NY
 Mon. June 1 Orwell & Benson, VT
 Tue. June 2 Fair Haven, VT
 Wed. June 3 Poultney, VT
 Thu. June 4 Whitehall, NY
 June 5 - June 30 NY (see website for details)
 Wed. July 1 Nat’l Museum of the American Indian; Thanksgiving ceremony in Battery Park, Manhattan, NY. Evening: Performance of “Maps & Dreams” at unofficial opening of Lenape: Ellis Island’s First Inhabitants, an exhibition at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum
 Thu. July 2, “Champlain’s Dream: Crossing the Oneiric Divide,” at Champlain College conference, Burlington, VT



What in the World is Going On?

By Jen Berger

In what is being called the ‘Post-Bush Era’, the anti-war movement seems a little, well, confused. A few weeks ago, on March 19th, the date that began the 7th year of the occupation of Iraq, turnout was low at demonstrations across the state and country. People are feeling a sense of relief and understandable fatigue. We worked tirelessly to combat the awfulness of the ‘Bush Years’. Yet the global social and political inequities began long before 2000, and we have the opportunity to re-connect with our earlier visions of social justice as we look forward from where we stand.

During two weekends in March and April, I was with thousands of other activists to share and expand the work we are doing. And to be on the streets to let the current administration know that we are not sitting down.... We are still at unrest.

The Women, Action and Media Conference, or WAM 2009!, was hosted by the Center for New Words in Boston, at MIT in Cambridge. Hundreds of activists gathered for three days to discuss, learn and share what role the media has in shaping and changing the world we live in. It was a powerful experience to be with hundreds of other activists, mostly women; women activists, queer women, trans women, trans men, women of color, and women from all generations, working hard and in solidarity with each other to create positive change in the world.

A radio journalist shared with us her approach in reporting on the story about Sheriff Joe Arpaio in Arizona. When asked, the workshop participants shared that the media representation we’ve seen has been about chain gangs and pink underwear. This reporter wanted the truth. She walked the streets of the small town of Guadalupe, population 1000. She talked with kids, with mothers, with anyone who would speak with her. She wanted to fill in the media gap of the stories from the people who are experiencing the racist actions of Sheriff

Arpaio.

She learned that everyone in the town had been pulled over for something, even for kids jumping up and down in a car while it is parked. One was pulled over twice in two days for honking. Some people won’t leave their homes for up to 48 hours out of fear of dealing with the police. She said that it is really hard to get interviews, but the stories of the residents are what matters. As people began to get to know and trust her, they started to reveal more. Many residents referred to



this experience as an ‘invasion’. One resident said he felt like he was living in “Nazi Germany”. The reporter aired her story on Air America and other radio stations. Since then, the Mayor of Phoenix has called for a civil rights investigation.

An inspiring group, called the Op-Ed project, reported that 9 out of 10 op-eds in the New York Times are from men, and 3 out of 5 nationally are from men. Women’s voices are missing from shaping the conversation about the history we are part of. They began the Op-Ed project to provide tools and increase accessibility for women’s voices to be included.

About-Face, based in California, is an organization that does media literacy with young women. Their mission is to equip women and girls with tools to understand and resist harmful media. They learn what images could look like that support self-esteem and positive body images, and use artistic and media tools to create new

media.

This theme of re-framing and new media was present in many of the workshops and tools discussed for present day activism. It was also a theme in some of the conversations I had at the “Beyond War, A New Economy is Possible” march in New York City on April 4th.

10,000 people marched on Wall Street to protest the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and to demand a larger investment in the needs of our communities. Labor, veterans, students, immigrant rights groups, military families, health care advocates, faith-based people, women’s groups, and community groups came together to have our voices heard.

Using ‘new media’, I brought a camera and interviewed people throughout the day. I met people from Detroit, Washington state, and Houston, TX who had traveled to NYC for this march. They were angry, and they wanted to be heard. Most were happy to share their stories on camera. (See our website for the video). A woman from Detroit was working with families whose homes were being foreclosed. They are working to change policies to mandate a 2-year process before a home can be foreclosed. She talked about military spending being a large reason that our economy is in crisis. Union folks, youth and others demanded more from the Obama administration. When I asked one veteran about Obama’s withdrawal plan, he stated, “It isn’t one.”

As we marched, chanted, sang, and danced to the musicians marching with us, we turned the corner onto Wall St. Hanging in front of the New York Stock Exchange was an American Flag. It was the largest flag I have ever seen. I wished it was representing the people of this country.

I don’t believe the anti-war movement has fallen apart or is sleeping, as some might think. I believe we are in a state of ‘re-framing’, as the country changes shape. I believe we look different; as people who are affected by economic and military policies are increasingly taking a stand. It is up to us to continue to band together and grow all of our social movements to work towards the country, and state we WANT to live in. 

 Economic Justice

AARP: Elder Basic Needs Budget

By Colin Robinson

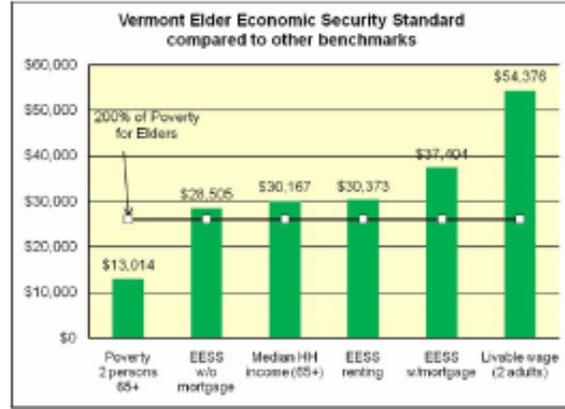
The Vermont Livable Wage Campaign has been meeting with representatives from AARP Vermont, Community of Vermont Elders (COVE) and the Vermont Commission on Women about creating a Vermont specific basic needs budget for older Vermonters. It became clear that this resource, similar to the livable wage, would be a useful tool for all Vermonters, especially in these tough economic times.

On April 6th the AARP-funded research was released. The analysis was built upon the methodology used in the Joint Fiscal Office Basic Needs Budget and was conducted by Doug Hoffer. For a copy of the report and more comparative data, go to <http://www.aarp.org/community/AARPVT/journals>.

What follows is the press release that was sent out on April 6th about the new Elder Economic Security Standard.

■ AARP Study

The basic costs of living for older Vermonters far exceed the poverty levels set by the federal government – levels often used to determine eligibility for public assistance programs. A new study released by AARP Vermont today details the costs for elders to meet the basic needs of living here, and establishes an affordability baseline called the Elder Economic Security Standard (EESS). Similar to the process of setting a livable wage calculation for Vermont workers, this data highlights the heavy economic burden on older residents (retired residents over age 65), many of whom live on very modest fixed incomes. It factors



in the costs of housing, food, transportation, health care, and a host of miscellaneous expenses such as furniture, clothing, telephone, household supplies, etc.

The study is being released today as attention focuses on Vermont's affordability and poverty problems at the 2009 Governor's Summit on Pathways to Economic Stability. The summit is taking place in the Vermont Statehouse.

"This standard provides a baseline for policymakers, state agencies and government officials as they look at programs that support this population," said Greg Marchildon, AARP state director. "The most glaring finding here is the huge gap between the Vermont EESS and the federal poverty level used to determine eligibility for a host of state and federal assistance programs. The current poverty levels are clearly outdated and do not reflect the reality of today's cost of living."

For example, to meet their basic needs, a couple over age 65 with a mortgage needs nearly triple the \$13,014 poverty level as established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. A couple without a mortgage still needs \$28,505 a year to meet their basic needs –

more than twice the federal poverty level – according to the EESS research. The EESS for an individual (without a mortgage) is \$21,058 – the highest of any state for which similar data is available.

Other measures point out the large segments of the over 65 population living at or below the edge of poverty. In recognition of this, eligibility for many public assistance programs is set at multiples of the poverty threshold (i.e., 150%, 200%, etc.). So it is disturbing to learn that: a) 18% of married couples 65+ earn less than \$15,000; b) 27% of households 65-74 are below 200% of poverty; and c) 40% of households 75+ have incomes below 200% of poverty.

Given well-known increases in costs over the years, it is not surprising that so many older Vermonters are now struggling. Since 2002, the cumulative cost of living adjustment for Social Security was 17%. During that same period, rents grew by 32%, heating oil 113%, natural gas 89%, and gasoline 26% (this includes the recent decline in some prices).

As evident below, the costs just for the most basic needs are substantial and these calculations are made on a conservative basis.

Economic & Social Measures

- 82,771** Population 65 years and older (13% of total population)
- 57,851** Households with at least one person 65 or older (23% of all HH)
- \$1,075** Average monthly Social Security retirement benefit
- 81%** Percent of households w/householder 65 or older that are owner occupied
- 19%** Percent of households w/householder 65 or older that rent
- 36%** Percent 65 and older paying 30% or more of income for owner-occupied housing costs
- 31,083** Population 65 and older with a disability (38% of all elders)
- 27%** Percent employed ages 65 to 74
- 70%** Percent of those 65 and older below poverty who are women
- 19%** Percent of those 65 – 74 who are veterans

Annual Expenses	Elder Economic Security Standard					
	Elder Person			Elder Couple		
	Owner w/o mortgage	Owner w/mortgage	Renter (1 BR)	Owner w/o mortgage	Owner w/mortgage	Renter (1 BR)
Elder Standard per year (urban)	\$20,233	\$29,139	\$23,605	\$28,036	\$36,936	\$31,409
Elder Standard per year (rural)	\$21,883	\$30,782	\$22,248	\$28,974	\$37,872	\$29,337
Average urban & rural	\$21,058	\$29,961	\$22,926	\$28,505	\$37,404	\$30,373

Figures assume the elders are in "good health" and do not include the cost of any long-term care needs.

The AARP funded research was guided by advocates from the Community of Vermont Elders (COVE), The Vermont Commission on Women and the Peace & Justice Center. It was conducted by Doug Hoffer, a Vermont economic and policy analyst based in Burlington. 

Small Arms: The World's Favorite Weapons of Mass Destruction

(Edited: For complete version go to www.africafiles.org/article.asp?ID=13824)

By *Hugh McCullum*

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, is a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.

– Former US President, Dwight D. Eisenhower, in a speech on April 16, 1953

The statistics are mind-numbing. There are 650 million guns – leave out the smart bombs, giant artillery and tanks, the mortars, the missiles, the weapons of armies, air forces and navies – in circulation world-wide, one for every 10 people on the planet. Put another way, with 16 billion units of military ammunition produced every year, there are small arms and ammunition enough to shoot every man, woman and child on the planet twice.

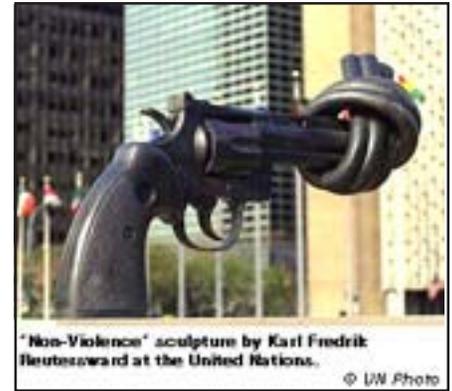
Such figures on their own mean little, of course, if it were not for the fact that the easy availability of arms, especially in Africa, increases the incidence and impact of armed violence; triggers conflict; and provokes local armed struggles into fullscale wars once they break out. Retired UN Secretary General Kofi Annan calls them “weapons of mass destruction in slow motion.”

It gets worse: The five permanent members of the Security Council are the five top exporters of small arms selling 88 percent of the world’s supply (rifles, pistols, light machine guns called Kalashnikovs or AK-47s, hand grenades and landmines – the latter are illegal but still widely manufactured and used).

Late in 2006, the vast majority of members of the UN General Assembly voted to begin working on a treaty to ban small arms; 24 abstained, including China, Russia, Pakistan and India, the world’s leading manufacturers and sellers; and one country, the US, voted an outright “no” to the treaty. President George W. Bush, a close ally of the US gun lobby, effectively vetoed negotiations on a new global Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

Children can easily use small arms. They are simple to transport and hide, ready to use without much prior training and, in most cases, require little maintenance and support. Because of this, small arms have helped create more than 300,000 child soldiers. Children are also primary victims. The increased availability of small arms through illegal channels has contributed to an alarming rise in child casualties in African conflicts where small arms have been used. More than 4 million children have been killed, 8 million have been disabled and 15 million left homeless (UNICEF).

It is estimated that 100 million small arms exist in Africa, especially around the Horn, including Somalia, Ethiopia,



Southern Sudan, the violent belt of Central Africa and many areas of West Africa. Accurate figures are hard to obtain. Even Africa has its manufacturers and illicit sales. Egypt, Ethiopia, South Africa and Zimbabwe all have manufacturing factories, distribution facilities, and illicit sales networks. AK-47s can be bought in some countries on the open market for as little as the price of a sack of flour or a chicken. In some countries like Sudan, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, guns are part of the culture; almost everyone carries a personal weapon.

The huge amounts of money spent on illegal arms and on bribing officials in Africa and other parts of the South diverts massive amounts of money that could be used to develop health care, education, infrastructure, housing and programs to advance the rights of women and children.

As long as arms are cheap and easily available, development experts say, there is little hope of solving the deep and deadly problems that beset Africa – from the brain drain of its most capable and well-educated people to the huge toll from HIV/AIDS, which is often worst in conflict zones. Development goes hand-in-hand with disarmament. However, without the investment that creates jobs for hungry, angry, unemployed young men, countries recovering from civil wars can too easily slip back into conflict. Sudan and Darfur, the Horn of Africa and Central Africa all fit these categories right now.

Bishop Tutu of South Africa has stated: “The world could eradicate poverty in a few generations if a fraction of the spending here on small arms was spent on peace.” 

Celebrating

**Jennifer Reay's
10th Anniversary**

at the
Peace & Justice
Store!



Goodbye
Surbhi

Thank you for
2 wonderful
years!

Piracy continued from page 1

waste washed up on Somali beaches as recently as 2005, after a powerful tsunami roared through. But fish poaching has proved far more devastating to Somalis, environmental officials say.

‘It’s been like a long gold rush for Thai, European, Yemeni and Korean boats,’ said Abdulwali Abdulrahman Gayre, the vice minister of ports and fisheries for Puntland, a dusty, semiautonomous state in northern Somalia that is the bastion of the pirates.

‘We have some of the richest fishing grounds in the world,’ said Gayre. ‘Scientists say it is like a rain forest of fish. But our fishermen can’t compete with the foreigners in big ships who come to steal from our waters.’

Somalia, like all maritime countries, has legal rights over an exclusive economic zone that extends 200 nautical miles to sea. And though it has no navy to enforce its control, it theoretically owns the fish and minerals in that area.

Many of Somalia’s angry fishermen have picked up rifles and joined the pirate mafias that have seized more than two dozen vessels off the Somali coast so far this year, maritime security experts say.

‘It’s almost like a resource swap,’ said Peter Lehr, a Somalia piracy expert at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland and the editor of ‘Violence at Sea: Piracy in the Age of Global Terrorism.’ ‘Somalis collect up to \$100 million a year from pirate ransoms off their coasts. And the Europeans and Asians poach around \$300 million a year in fish from Somali waters.’”

It makes one wonder: might not the piracy problem be better resolved by a commitment of the international community to abide by international fishing and toxic dumping regulations – and to help Somalis enforce them – than to bomb their port cities and take over their non-existent government, as has been proposed by some pundits recently?

■ Refugees in Vermont

According to statistics from the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program, African refugees in the Burlington area come from mainly three countries: Somalia (460), Congo (DRC) (144), and the Sudan (137). Our panelists came from those three countries, but Hassan, the Somali

participant, was not a refugee, and thus was not acquainted with the problems that caused his countrymen, the Somali Bantu, to ask for permanent resettlement in America. His statement that their “claim of discrimination is a way for them to come to the US” caused dismay in the audience, especially among people who have volunteered to help resettle Somali Bantu families and have heard something of their history. (An invitation was extended for a representative of the Somali Bantus to attend, but this was not possible).

■ Congo and Sudan

Panelist Kyendamina Mukeba is a Congolese man studying human services at UVM. He has been in Burlington since 2005. “The resources of the Congo are at the center of the crisis in my country. Many countries desire our resources. Different armed groups are supported by foreign powers.” Ever since the invasion by Rwanda in 1996, he said, these armed groups have trampled on Congo’s flora and fauna and violated its women.

Our third speaker, Chiengkuach Mabil, was one of the “lost boys” of the Sudan. He attended high school in Kenya, and graduated from UVM in economics in 2007. He presently holds two jobs: at VT Refugee Resettlement Program, and at the hospital. He argued that north and south Sudan should never have been unified in one country. The Northerners are Muslims, the Southerners are Christian and animist. “The Muslims of the north want to drive out the people of the south to obtain their resources, mainly oil,” he said. Just as the North/South war was winding down in 2003, a new war started in the Darfur region.

Chienkuach did not put all the blame for violence in Africa on outside forces. “Sometimes we have to look in the mirror as Africans and admit that we have screwed up. There are not so many differences between us, and yet we kill each other. In Uganda we have the Lord’s Resistance Army killing their own people because they don’t want to join them. The government of the Sudan is killing its own people and we as Africans have done nothing about it. The genocide in Rwanda: we also didn’t do anything about it. We need to do more than play the blame game. We need to be

smart enough to stop killing one another.”

After the panelists gave brief presentations, members of the audience were eager to join the discussion. Joshue Dimina from Congo (Brazzaville) said, “We are all suffering from greed. Africa lacks good politicians.” He agreed with Hassan and Kyendamina that the biggest problem was the intervention of Western powers. “They want to keep Africa down and separated; and as a result, everyone is doing whatever they can to save their own lives.” When we get together like this, he added, we need to think about how we can help Africa to have good leaders, and how we can fit western interests together with African peace.

This comment led to applause, and someone asked, “Is there an instinct in Africa, to make things work, on the grassroots level?”

Ali, a man from Mauritania who has participated in a group in Washington, DC called Africa New Vision, said, “We’re all in the same boat. Africans need to help Africans. That’s where we have to start. It’s a good idea to have this conference. Building a network is very important.”

Kyendamina pointed out that the need for help is right here among the refugees in Burlington. “They came here with stress and trauma. They are hoping to find peace and security as they start new lives in America.” As a translator, he helps refugees with limited language skills who sometimes are laid off unjustly, or who face discrimination “driving when black.” He said, “We have to create prevention programs so that they can protect their new lives.”

After a delicious meal provided largely by chefs from the African community, we heard from Professor Glen Elder on “The Obama Administration’s Plan for Africa,” followed by a performance by Ngoma Ya Kwetu (Drums from our Homeland), made up of Congolese youth drummers and dancers directed by Emmanuel Siriwayo. At the end of the evening, Professor Lokangaka Losambe guided us through a short history of African literature and extended an invitation to attend the 35th Annual African Literature Conference at UVM taking place the following week. I will cover these talks and events next month. ☺

Exporting the Occupation

By Jimmy Johnson, EXERPTED BY Hilary Martin

The following is an excerpt from “Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and the Warfare of Inequality Management,” an article originally printed in the *Electronic Intifada* on February 17, 2009. The full article presents a detailed survey of Israel’s extensive sales of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, known as UAVs, and their increasing demand as surveillance tools by what Johnson calls “agents of authority.” UAVs, Johnson writes, are just one instance of “how the occupation of Palestine, through tools and techniques developed over the past 41 years, is exported ... to other institutions of hegemony and power that seek to keep systems of inequality” in place. Jimmy Johnson will be on a speaking tour of Vermont on May 4 and 5. Please see page 9 for tour details. For the complete article visit <http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article10312.shtml>

Israel, with 41 years of experience in conducting operations inside densely populated urban environments (Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza Strip), is the world leader in urban warfare in areas under occupation. Other governments seek out this experience for use in their own efforts of urban control.

US Brigadier Gen. Michael Vane wrote in 2003: “we recently traveled to Israel to glean lessons learned from their counter-terrorist operations in urban areas.” *The New York Times* reported that “Ahead of the war, Israeli defense experts briefed

American commanders on their experience in guerrilla and urban warfare.” [1]

Indeed, the US Marine Corps has begun training in Baladia City at the National Urban Training Center in the Negev. Baladia City is a fake Arab town designed specifically for training in urban warfare in the Middle East. The training area features “a city center, complete with shops, a grand mosque, hospital and an old casbah quarter built with five-foot-thick walls. It even has a cemetery that doubles as a soccer field, depending on operational scenario.” [2]

The integration of Israeli training into the US armed forces is a reason why the urban warfare carried out in Fallujah was often noted as resembling Israel’s devastation of Palestinian urban areas, especially in the Gaza Strip, during the first four years of the second Palestinian intifada (2000 to 2004). But Israel’s exportation of its occupation includes technology and the techniques and battle lessons learned. The theory being that what has worked in the ever-present efforts to stifle Palestinian resistance will also provide tools, such as the UAV sales mentioned above, for the US, Australian, Canadian, British, Dutch and other troops to solidify their occupations of Iraq, Afghanistan and wherever else is deemed necessary in the future. The trade in such techniques and technologies is what my colleague, Jeff Halper, and I are calling the “Global Pacification Industry,” a young and growing industry serving a market of inequality management.

In *Planet of Slums*, Mike Davis notes that more than a billion people worldwide live in urban ghettos. [3]

Impoverished urban areas have generally been hotbeds of resistance activities. The concentration of dispossession produces attacks on concentrations of wealth by nature and necessity. The various uses of UAVs demonstrate how the occupation of Palestine, through tools and tech-

niques developed over the past 41 years, is exported to protect G8 meetings and US- and European-owned “African” oil reserves from protestors.

This export also helps shield the US from a labor market attempting to sneak across a border that capital doesn’t even notice, which is to say, the occupation is exported to fight the redistribution of wealth. It should be no surprise that the occupation of Palestine is pertinent to this task. The 19th century ethnocentric nationalism that drove the creation of Israel and the ethnocentric narrative of Jew vs. Arab, a narrative devoid of actual political content, that helps drive the occupation of Palestine often obscures the fact that the dispossession of Palestinians has included a massive upward transfer of wealth from colonized to colonizer and from occupied to occupier.

Economic concerns in Israel during the 1980s were a key factor that helped spark the political revolt that was the first Palestinian intifada. The expulsion of Palestinian laborers from Israel that came with the mass immigration of Jews from the former Soviet Union played a major role in adding further militancy to the Palestinian movement for self-determination. The ensuing imposition of policies of closure is why Gaza is now called the world’s largest open-air prison. The mechanisms of control Israel uses to try to make this situation permanent are valuable to other institutions of hegemony and power that seek to keep systems of inequality more or less sustainable. Planet of Slums provides another useful way of looking at it: Gaza, and to a large degree the West Bank as well, is one of the world’s 10 largest ghettos and has a system of walls, checkpoints and other barriers that prevent Palestinians from accessing Israel, a gated community.

The export of UAVs, techniques of urban warfare and other tools of Israel’s pacification industry is the occupation’s contribution to the sustenance of the global power structures. For Iraq it means walls, checkpoints and surveillance mechanisms in an attempt to keep another of the world’s 10 largest ghettos, Sadr City, sustainably “pacified.” Israel’s training of special forces in India, Congo, Colombia and other nations of deep



Qalandia Checkpoint, West Bank. Photo: Aisha Mershani



Abu Dis. Photo: Aisha Mershani

inequality does not bode well for the residents of ghettos there. The world, economically speaking, is diverging between rich and poor – both between wealthy and poor nations and the wealthy and poor inside individual countries. [4] The continuing urbanization of the globe, combined with economic divergence, has led to the “urbanization of insurgency” and “neither US doctrine, nor training, nor equipment is designed for urban counterinsurgency.” [5] With military “doctrine being reshaped accordingly” against “criminalized segments of the urban poor,” the pacification laboratory in Gaza, Nablus and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory will continue to be of use for the forces occupying Kabul and Baghdad today, and those who might aim for Karachi, Lagos, Caracas and other centers of “desperation and anger” tomorrow. [6]

Johnson is International Coordinator of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions.

Endnotes

- [1] Dexter Filkins, “Tough New Tactics by US Tighten Grip on Iraq Towns,” *The New York Times*, 7 Dec. 2003 (accessed 28 Jan. 2009).
 [2] Barbara Opall-Rome, “Marines to train at new Israeli combat center,” *Marine Corps Times*, 25 June 2007 (accessed 28 January 2009).
 [3] Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums*, Verso, 2006.
 [4] Alan Freeman and Boris Kagarlitsky, editors, *The Politics of Empire: Globalisation in Crisis*, Pluto Press, 2004.
 [5] Jennifer Morrison Taw and Bruce Hoffman, “The Urbanization of Insurgency: The Potential Challenge to US Army Operations,” RAND Corp., 1994 as cited in Davis, *Planet of Slums*.
 [6] Davis, *Planet of Slums*. 

Why is Israel bombing and starving Gaza? Why is Israel colonizing the West Bank?

Israeli Jimmy Johnson will address what motivates Israeli policies on his Vermont tour, May 4 and 5, with a special focus on how Israel controls space in the Occupied Territories, the role of the Jewish state’s military-industrial complex in a post-9/11 world, and how Israel’s national identity impacts its treatment of Palestinians. Johnson is just back from the Durban Review Conference on Racism in Geneva, and is now on a speaking tour of the US. He has worked as a researcher for the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD) in Jerusalem for most of the last three years. His work there included documenting human rights abuses, organizing and practicing civil disobedience, and guiding governmental and civil society groups from all over the world in political tours of East Jerusalem and environs. He is the co-author, along with Prof. Jeff Halper, of an upcoming book on the subject from Pluto Press.

MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE, MONDAY, MAY 4, 4:30PM

“Planning the Occupation.” Understanding Israeli control of public space and the built environment is key to grasping the essence of the Occupation, and the broader historical conflict between Israelis & Palestinians. From the use of radical architectural theory in urban warfare in the Balata Refugee Camp, to the zoning and planning of the settlements to house demolitions in East Jerusalem, spatial politics literally define the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The presentation will focus on the spatial relations of the Occupation, the role of architects and planners in the conflict, and how the reorientation of geography is affecting chances for a sustainable peace. The Orchard-Room 103, Hillcrest Environmental Center. FREE. Sponsored by: Middle East Action. Contact: Geoff Allen, grallen@middlebury.edu, 508-843-4838

BURLINGTON, MONDAY MAY 4, 7:30PM

“Israel’s National Consciousness and the Palestinians.” Israel’s historical memory and public discourse, with regards to anything related to Palestinians, are dominated by the use of depoliticized language, victimhood and an ethnocentric nationalism. Each of these elements reinforces the others, disempowering the Israeli public and preventing effective change from being made. The presentation and discussion will focus on how the Israeli national consciousness was formed and how it is developing today. First Congregational Church, 38 So. Winooski Ave., Burlington. Sponsored by: Vermonters for a Just Peace in Palestine/Israel (VTJP) and American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). Contact: Hilary Martin, hilarymartin@riseup.net, 802-355-3910. Talk free of charge; donations will be solicited for medical care in Gaza. Look to retn.org for this lecture.

DARTMOUTH COLLEGE, TUESDAY MAY 5, 4:15PM

“Israel & the Pacification Industry.” **The world, even prior to the current economic crisis, has seen increasing** economic divergence between wealthy and poor nations, and between the wealthy and poor inside nations. The increasing levels of poverty and inequality have coincided with the ongoing migration to cities worldwide. Military planners for power brokers have characterized the current and foreseen results of this as the “urbanization of insurgency.” The lecture and discussion will focus on Israel and the Occupation’s role in the young and growing market for “pacification” strategies, equipment and techniques that are already being used in Iraq, Afghanistan, the US and beyond. Rockerfeller 001. FREE. Sponsored by Students Concerned for Palestine. students.concerned.for.palestine@dartmouth.edu

MONTPELIER, TUESDAY MAY 5, 7:00PM

“Israel’s National Consciousness and the Palestinians.” (see Burlington description). Bethany Church, 115 Main St. Sponsored by: Vermonters for a Just Peace in Palestine/Israel (VTJP) and American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). Contact: Kathy Shapiro, shapiro.kathy@gmail.com, 802-498-3854. Talk free of charge; donations will be solicited for medical care in Gaza. 

CALENDAR

May 2009



[1] Friday

• 12 noon **Healthcare Is A Human Right Rally** at the Statehouse. Don't miss this major statewide rally organized by the Vermont Workers' Center, who launched this Healthcare Is A Human Right grassroots organizing campaign last summer and has now been endorsed by dozens of organizations across the state, including the PJC. Be a part of changing what is "politically possible" for healthcare reform in Vermont, help stop the Douglas budget cuts and support single-payer healthcare legislation. Transportation for this rally is being coordinated across the state. Learn more at workerscenter.org/healthcare or call 861-2877.

[3] Sunday

• 2pm **Vets for Peace** meet at PJC.

[5] Tuesday

• 6:15pm **Burlington-Bethlehem-Arad Sister City** meeting at Burlington College, 95 North Ave., Burlington.

[7] Thursday

• 5-7pm **The Caroline Fund**: 11th Annual Gathering & Fundraising Fest. Guest Speaker: Cheryl Hanna, VT Law School Professor and VPR Commentator. The Caroline Baird Crichfield Fund for Women in Need is dedicated to helping women make a better life for themselves and their families. St John's Club, 9 Central Ave, Burlington. 862-2001.

• 7-8:30pm **"Conversation on Race Series" with Robert L. Walsh**. A noted author, graduate of Colgate University and MA from UVM, Bob retired from the USMC as Lieutenant Colonel, served as a member of the

Vermont House of Representatives from 1983-1989, adjunct faculty at UVM, and taught African American history at South Burlington High School from 1980-1995. His life experience in these arenas has afforded him a wide range of experience as related to racism in our state, country and throughout the military world. His stories as a real life witness express the true nature of what it was like, what we see today and what the vision for our future may hold as we explore undoing racism in our community. First Unitarian Universalist Society, Burlington. More info: Vivian Mason: (802) 324-5612 vhm84@hotmail.com

[11] Monday

• 7-9pm **Vermonters for a Just Peace in Palestine/Israel** meeting at PJC.

[13] Wednesday

• 6-8pm **Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)** meeting at the Peace & Justice Center.

[31] Sunday

• 12:15 **De-Bunking Eco-Terror: Lori Kettler**, a grad of Vermont Law School, has been on the legal staff of PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) for three years, filing Freedom of Information Act disclosures against the FDA and US Fish & Wildlife agencies to learn how taxpayer dollars are used in wildlife management and animal research. Lori will give an update on the so-called "Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act," a bill passed in the wake of 9/11 that is being used to re-define environmentalists and animal activists as "terrorists" subject to the harshest federal criminal penalties. Come learn and be educated to protect free speech and legitimate dissent. At the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington.

Free Educational Web Materials Promote Friendship Amongst the Peoples of Iraq and the US

My friend, children of America,
I'm your friend from Iraq. I love you and love all the children of the world. My people love to live in peace. I want to play and grow up looking to the sun of freedom. Please I don't want war. Let us be friends. Let our both people be friends loving each other.

Your friend, Hind, age 10, Karbala, Iraq

Dear Iraqi brother,
I really wish this war would be over. I dream of a day when there is no war or killing. I want peace throughout the world. I am 12 and in seventh grade. I hope that one day you can play freely.

Love, your brother, Wilson K., St Paul, MN, USA

Letters for Peace—first sparked by letters written by Iraqi teens to their peers in the US - has generated approximately 800 letters from US school children to their Iraqi counterparts. Iraqi letters are translated into English; American letters into Arabic and all are distributed to age-appropriate schools and placed on a website for mutual viewing.

Water for Peace—a project initiated by Vets for Peace in response to the deteriorating water sanitation problems—is a service-learning project that raises funds to provide Iraqi schools with potable water. Available to US schools, clubs, and religious institutions, this project links a US organization with a recipient school.

These projects are sponsored by the Iraqi & American Reconciliation Project (IARP) of MN whose mission is to promote reconciliation between the people of the United States and Iraq in response to the devastation affecting Iraqi families, society and culture. IARP's projects offer simple means to enable the people of both countries to shed layers of immobilizing fear, to see beyond the notion of "enemy" when they consider each other. IARP works in tandem with the Muslim Peacemaker Teams (MPT) of Najaf, Iraq. The Najaf MPT chapter is directed by Sami Rasouli a US citizen for 26 years, who returned to his homeland after the US invasion of Iraq to help his people pull together to survive the chaos of occupation.

Mr Rasouli, with strong roots in both cultures, serves as a bridge-builder, helping to explain the peoples of each country to each other.

For a brighter future for children everywhere, please join us in writing letters and/or providing clean drinking water to the youth of Iraq. Let your teacher friends know about this project, too. Meet us at www.mpt-iraq.org/teachers.html. 



Vermont Peace Vigils

- Barton: 12-12:30pm Fridays on the Common
- Brattleboro: Saturday, 11-12, Post Office
- Bristol: 5-6pm Fridays, corner of Main & North Sts.
- Burlington: 5-5:30pm M-F: Top of Church St.
- Chester: Saturdays, 11-11:30am, Town Green
- Enosburg Falls: 5-5:30pm Saturdays, Main St. side of Lincoln Park
- Hardwick: 5-6pm Fridays, Peace Park
- Marshfield: Fridays; 4-5pm Rte 2
- Middlebury: 10:30-11am Saturdays, corner of Main & Merchant's Way
- Montpelier: 12-1pm Fridays, Federal Building
- Newport: 4-4:30pm Wednesdays in front of State Office Building
- Richmond: 5:30pm Thursdays, Congregational Church, Bridge St
- Rutland: 12-1pm, Fridays, Main St. Park, corner of West and Main
- St Johnsbury: Fri. 4-5pm, in front of the Main St. post office
- South Royalton: Thursdays, 4:30-5:30pm, on the bridge into town
- Vergennes: Saturdays, 10-11 am, Vergennes City Green
- Williston: 5:15-5:45pm 1st Wednesdays, steps of Williston Federated Church

For more calendar events, join our email action alerts. For Peace & Human Rights, email peace@pjcv.org. For The VT Livable Wage Campaign, email livablewage@pjcv.org

■ FYI: Plastic v Cash

More and more people are shopping with plastic. It is convenient, but if you are willing to consider the cost of credit/debit card fees to local businesses (for example the Peace & Justice Center/Store will spend about \$6,000 this year in card fees), paying in cash saves us a lot of money. Buy local and keep the money local.

■ Save paper, save postage

Would you rather read this newsletter online? If so, we can send you a link each month that will connect you to the latest issue. If you would like to change to this method, please email Wendy Coe at wcoe@pjcv.org.

■ Youth Activist Institute: June 26 - 28

Join the Youth Activist Institute taking place this summer, hosted by the Peace and Justice Center. We will engage high school aged youth in activism through community organizing and education. Our goal is to have 20 youth for the weekend institute, held at Castleton State College from Friday June 26th through Sunday the 28th. Thanks to generous grant funding this weekend is FREE to all participants.

The goals of the Institute are to:

- Enhance Peer-to-peer connection and peer-to-peer learning
- Build a community of youth activists that will sustain and support each other over time
- Cultivate tools and confidence for youth to go forward and build campaigns.

For more information or to download an application visit our website <http://www.pjcv.org/youthactivistinstitute.htm>

Burlington and Montpelier Host Families Needed for International Youth Activists

Project Harmony International is seeking host families in the Burlington, Montpelier, and Waitsfield areas for 30 teens coming to Vermont from Sunday, July 5th to Saturday, July 25th. These civically engaged 14-16 year olds are here to learn how to create socially-conscious short films on issues important to youth globally, with the goal of inspiring action locally.

What adds a particularly unique element to the program is that we're including young people from Azerbaijan and Armenia, home to the longest-standing conflict in the Caucasus, where interaction between the two countries is banned after decades of conflict. Right now, students are learning how to blog and utilize the Internet as a medium to inspire change on social issues.

The Department of State, UNICEF, ListenUp!, Change.org and a number of other organizations are working with us on this endeavor, with the goal of supporting global distribution of the work that students create. In addition, while the students are in Vermont in July, they'll be organizing a film event to showcase their work and talk about ways youth can contribute to community initiatives.

That said, 30 students is an enormous undertaking, especially since the program falls in the middle of the summer when many of us head to the beaches and lakes for vacations of our own. If you are interested in hosting one or two students for all or part of the three week stay, please contact me.

Host families are always one of most important elements of exchanges. Not only does the host family provide meals (except lunch on weekdays) and a warm bed, but also exposes guests to Vermont living and provides an invaluable cultural experience for foreign visitors. Host families are also asked to provide transportation to a centrally located drop-off and pick-up point in Burlington or Montpelier on weekday mornings (around 8:30am) and evenings (5:30pm).

I thank you immensely for opening your hearts and homes to these students during July 2009. Please contact me at elizabeth.metraux@ph-int.org for more details or check out the website for more information: <http://dotcom.ph-int.org>. ☺

■ Rewarding & Fun Volunteer Positions!

The Peace & Justice Store is looking for **volunteers** to work on the weekends in short shifts of **2-3 hours**. There will be regular shifts to cover Friday 5-7, Saturday morning 10-12, Saturday evening 5-7 and Sunday 2-5. **These will be very valuable and much appreciated positions. A year's commitment would be helpful, but not required.**

We are also looking for someone to cover a Tuesday afternoon shift from 2-4 or 5 in June, July and August.

Some retail experience is desired, but not a must. We will train you! Our hope is that a few people wanting to help out at the Peace & Justice Center, would like to volunteer in the Store in these different shifts as a fun volunteer job. If you are interested and would like to schedule an interview, email Jennifer Reay at jreay@pjcv.org.



GET THE NEWS!

YES! I / we would like to join the peace and justice community and receive a **free subscription** to *peace & justice news*.

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 - \$100
 - \$250
 - \$500
 - \$15 fixed income
 - other _____

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