

# THE Round Table

WINTER  
2011

"...a path from where we are to where we should be." --Peter Maurin



AFGHANISTAN  
ENDLESS  
WAR?

# Why This Issue?

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Raise your hand if you're tired of hearing about Afghanistan. How do we interest you in a war that doesn't really affect your daily life? Even though 60% of Americans think that the war is 'un-winnable', who is really willing to do anything about it?

Ten years into this war (Ten years! We ask our relatives about growing up in wartime without realizing that today, no child under ten years old has lived without their nation being at war), it seems like another permanent fact of life. The nightly news has the sports, weather, pick-me-up story, a short update on Afghanistan, and a few soundbites of news. Is permanent war now inevitable for the United States? How are we consenting and participating (actively or not) to its continuation?

Right now, it feels like we are all just too darn busy to think about this war; our lives are consumed by both real and manufactured distraction. Many of us are in large amounts of debt, understandably worried about health insurance, concerned about our children's education, or how we will retire. Simultaneously, though, we are extraordinarily busy learning the new iPhone app, playing the latest Xbox360 game, and TiVo-ing our favorite prime-time television shows (followed by the obligatory Facebook status-updating and Tweeting to tell everyone about it.) The accumulation of these bloated days - both of real worry and consumerism-driven distraction - leaves us feeling unable to put our best intentions for justice into action.

We send you this issue of The Round Table to shine a bright spotlight on this illegal war and occupation. When brainstorming the articles for The Round Table, we wanted to pose some commonly-asked questions to our authors: **Who are these people living in this war-scarred country?** Sarah Latham does a thorough job of describing the history, culture, and religion of Afghanistan. **What about the Taliban, the War on Terrorism, 9/11, and by the way, is all this really about oil?** Teka Childress and Ben Schartman attempt to provide answers to these and other Frequently Asked Questions in their well-researched article. **What about Afghanistan's women?** Colleen Kelly addresses this question, investigating the propaganda behind media portrayal of Afghanistan's women, and highlighting statements directly from (rather than about) the women there. **What is the local connection?** Andrew Wimmer discusses war's relationship to capital and propaganda, illuminating St. Louis' place within this country's war-making. **So, what does the Catholic Worker (CW) have to say about this war?** Megan Heeney details a brief history of the CW response to past wars, setting the stage for current CW action: protesting the rising use of drones, addressing the issue of torture and illegal detention, and participating in war tax resistance.

Following these main articles, Timmy Cosentino reflects on the how to describe the work of Karen House, Annjie Schiefelbein and I write a reflection on Teka Childress House, and Carolyn Griffeth reflects on the Catholic Worker's longevity.

There's no end in sight for this war in Afghanistan, nor any reason to think that the U.S. will end its practice of exploiting the globe for resources it deems necessary. It helps me, within the bloatedness of daily life, to regularly remind myself that I have a continuing responsibility to learn more, and to act for justice with those born without my privilege. It's important for me to acknowledge that the consumerism that fuels resource-driven wars lives strongly in me, and that I need to persistently seek to extinguish it.

I also know that it's hard for me to initiate uncomfortable conversations with my family and friends, and that consuming justly is easier said than done - it takes time, research, and often, more money. It's easier to stick to light topics, drive everywhere, get what's on sale at my "local" box store, and rationalize it all, while (directly or indirectly) providing the fuel for war.

It has been instructive and important for our community to publish this Round Table. We hope it will be a resource and an impetus for you as well. Can we step outside our harried lives to end these wars? It's up to each of us to answer the question.



- Jenny Truax

Cover: Katie Cushwa  
Centerfold: James Meinert

## *The St. Louis Catholic Worker Community*

*Karen House*  
1840 Hogan  
St. Louis, MO. 63106  
314-621-4052

*Ella Dixon "Little" House*  
1540 N. 17th St.  
St. Louis, MO. 63106  
314-974-7432



*Carl Kabat House*  
1450 Monroe  
St. Louis, MO. 63106  
314-621-7099

*Teka Childress House*  
1875 Madison  
St. Louis, MO. 63106  
314-588-9901

[www.KarenHouseCW.org](http://www.KarenHouseCW.org)

# Afghanistan: An Introduction

by Sarah Latham  
with Annjie Schiefelbein

Let's try a little experiment—close your eyes and picture a typical person who was born and raised in Afghanistan. As you imagine this person, tell me what you see about their life, their culture. Under what philosophies did their parents raise them? What religion do they practice? Where do they work? How do they spend their time when they are not at work? How do they see the outside world?

For any culture, identifying a typical person is problematic at best. Isn't individuality foundational in defining the human condition? For Afghanistan in particular, getting to "typical" is a hopeless journey. Typical, in part, comes from consistency - something Afghanistan has lacked for all of its existence. The life of the people has been mired by a variety of invading forces, external political control, and the interference of outsiders.

During my senior year of college, I dedicated a large portion of my final thesis to the vast complexities of this region and the conflicts which surround it. I want to introduce Afghanistan to you; its geography, history, and people, have all been shaped by a constantly transforming landscape.

Afghanistan is a south-central Asian country landlocked by Pakistan, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and China. Kabul, a city that has become known in our nightly news, is the capital. Afghanistan has importance geographically because it connects south and central Asia to the Middle East and even Europe. It has thus had a dizzying array of invaders and occupiers, including some historical heavyweights like Alexander the Great (in 328 B.C.) and Genghis Khan and his Mongol

army (in 1219). In between those two, Afghanistan was shaped by many outside forces, some peaceful and some not. The introduction of Buddhism came to Afghanistan from travelers along the Silk Road on their way to China. In the 640s Islam came to Afghanistan by way of the Arabs. In the 9th and 10th centuries some of these Islamic groups became dynasties and rose to power, until the Turkic Ghaznavids from the east gained control around 998. They held on until Genghis Khan hit the scene. In the 14th century Tamerlane incorporated the territory

into his Asian Empire, and the mid 1880s brought the Anglo-Afghan wars. Boundaries were officially established (by the British and Soviets, not by the Afghans themselves) in the late 1800s. In 1919, the day celebrated as Independence Day in Afghanistan, Britain relinquished control of foreign affairs (after the 3rd Anglo-Afghan war).

Confused? You're not alone, and that is the most basic of overviews of the major forces controlling Afghanistan and its people leading to the 1900s. More recent history is clearer, but not by much. From 1933 to 1978 Afghanistan had its own king, and legislature, but in 1978 the PDPA (People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan), with support from Moscow, overthrew the existing government. They imposed a Marxist style "reform" program which ran against Afghan tradition. Many of the traditional elite and intelligentsia were persecuted. By 1984 Afghanistan was one of many Cold War chessboards played upon between the Soviets and the United States. The Mujahideen formed to oppose the Soviet-supported PDPA, and received weapons from the U.S.. Mujahideen



Afghani Field Workers, 1960

army (in 1219). In between those two, Afghanistan was shaped by many outside forces, some peaceful and some not. The introduction of Buddhism came to Afghanistan from travelers along the Silk Road on their way to China. In the 640s Islam came to Afghanistan by way of the Arabs. In the 9th and 10th centuries some of these Islamic groups became dynasties and rose to power, until the Turkic Ghaznavids from the east gained control around 998. They held on until Genghis Khan hit the scene. In the 14th century Tamerlane incorporated the territory into his Asian Empire, and the mid 1880s brought the Anglo-Afghan wars. Boundaries were officially established (by the British and Soviets, not by the Afghans themselves) in the late 1800s. In 1919, the day celebrated as Independence Day in Afghanistan, Britain relinquished control of foreign affairs (after the 3rd Anglo-Afghan war).

Since moving into the community, **Sarah Latham** has strengthened the foundation of Karen House, quite literally, by learning to tuckpoint in the basement.

literally translates from Arabic to “strugglers”. There are members and sects in countries all over the Arab world, formed in response to the immense power the Soviets had throughout the Middle East. The rest of the 1980s saw the Mujahideen gain increasing power and control. Soviet withdrawal was planned by the Geneva Accord of 1988. From 1988 to 2001, the country was under the control of a myriad of warlords connected with the Mujahideen, the Taliban, or other militia groups. In 2001, the U.S. invaded and established itself as an occupying force, an invasion planned prior to the 9/11 attacks (see Teka and Ben’s article for more information on this.)

The people of Afghanistan are shaped by political forces, certainly, but shaped as well by the culture and religion brought to them by each group that has been introduced. I mentioned Buddhism; Zoroastrianism was also introduced. Islam, however, has continued to define the country to the present day.

The overwhelming majority of Afghans are Muslim. Muslims are adherent to Islam. Islam is the religion; Muslims are its followers; Allah is the God of this monotheistic religion. To be a Muslim means to believe in the divinity of Allah and that Muhammad was His messenger. Many non-Muslims confuse this point. A temple cannot be Muslim; neither can a book, or a type of clothing. These objects can be Islamic, but they are not Muslim. Much like the other major world religions, Islam has many subgroups that practice differently. Following the death of the prophet Muhammad, his followers (Muslims) were divided as to who the new leader should be. This led to the creation of the two largest sects of Islam: Sunni and Shiite. About 80 percent of Afghans are Sunni, and their leaders are selected by the members of the Islamic communities by voting. This is why Sunnis follow the prophet’s close friend and advisor Abu Bakr as the first Caliph, or political head, of the Islamic nation. They believe that the Mahdi or “Rightfully Guided One” (similar to the Messiah in the Judeo-Christian belief) has yet to come to Earth. Shiite Muslims, which make up about 19 percent of the population of Afghanistan, believe that their leaders must be direct descendants of the Prophet Mohammad, or those chosen by Allah Himself. They believe that the first true leader was Ali, Mohammad’s cousin/son-in-law. The majority of Shiite Muslims are concentrated in Iraq, Iran, and Lebanon; they believe that the Mahdi is already here and is just waiting for the right time to make His reappearance.

Each Afghan’s reality is determined by more than reli-

gion. In addition to the differing Islamic groups are many different ethnic groups. Like many other countries whose borders were set by foreign governments, many different ethnic groups inhabit the Afghan region, represented by different languages, religious values, and even different physical traits. While there are over ten identified ethnic groups, over 90 percent of the population count themselves as Pashtun, Tajik, or Hazara.

Before the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, the Pashtun people made up about 50 to 60 percent of the population. As the largest and most influential ethnic group, the Pashtun have dominated the society and politics of Afghanistan for the past 200 years. The Pashtun people are Sunni Muslim and strictly observe Purdah (the seclusion of women from being publicly observed). There is a firm division of labor between the sexes. In rural areas, women mostly remain inside the home where they are in charge of raising children and cleaning and preparing meals, although some women may help with the harvesting of the crops. Purdah is often observed so strictly that women are rarely allowed to leave the house even to do the basic shopping. Monogamy is the most common form of marriage. The couple’s parents generally arrange the marriage, and the decision usually depends on bride-price. Inheritance is only divided among the males in a family.

According to the Joshua Project, “Pashtun culture holds fast to a rigid, unwritten ‘code of ethics’ - the Pushtunwali (the way of the Pashtun). Behavior expected without question includes hospitality and protection for guests, provision of refuge to a fugitive and acceptance of a sincere offer of peace, bravery, steadfastness, persistence, defense of property and family honor and protection of female

relatives.”

The Tajiks make up 30-40 percent of the Afghan population, and are also Sunni Muslims. Because they make up the bulk of Afghanistan’s educated elite and possess substantial wealth, they have considerable political influence. Those living in rural regions engage in agriculture and herding. However, because of lasting effects of the Soviet occupation, there has been a growth of Tajik women in the labor force. Although women can be seen regularly in high positions, most women continue to do domestic and agricultural work. The Soviet occupation also influenced the practice of marriage among the Tajiks. Young people generally see marriage as a choice of their own and the married couple will usually live with the groom’s family only until a location is found for the couple to occupy alone.



Hazaras are lower than Pashtun and Tajik in both numbers and class ranking. Hazaras are generally Shi'ite Muslim, making them both an ethnic and religious minority. They speak Hazaragi in the home and in the more isolated areas. Hazaras make up less than 10 percent of the population, and while in power, the Taliban engaged in ethnic cleansing against the Hazara people.

In the Hazara household, all of the family members participate in the field work. Men do the plowing, gathering and swidden (a slash and burn technique used in many forms of horticulture) while women and children help with the weeding. Women also take care of all of the domestic responsibilities. Polygyny (a form of marriage when a man has more than one wife) is allowed but only very wealthy men can afford to do it. The Hazaras follow Islamic inheritance law, allowing daughters to be given inheritance, but sons are given twice as much, although there have been situations in which women took their brothers to court.

The languages of Afghanistan reflect its diverse history and population. The constitution has long stated that Pashto (the traditional language of the Pashtun people) and Dari (Farsi, the traditional language of the Tajiks) are both equal and official languages of the country. This is often a point of contention with many Pashtuns, however, who claim that most government documents and popular media are only available in Farsi. Farsi is a more widely used language, being the official languages of Iran and Tajikistan, as well as being spoken largely in Uzbekistan and China. Pashto, for the most part, is used only in Afghanistan and northern Pakistan.

The religion of Islam has long played a principal role in the daily life and social customs of Afghanistan, although its practices are controlled by the sect of the ruling parties. Although the Taliban practice the most severe Islamic code, even under the Mujahideen the sale of alcohol was banned, and women were pressured to cover their heads in public. Under Taliban control most forms of entertainment, including TV, were banned. Full beardedness was regarded the mark of a true Muslim man, and men who failed to grow beards and leave them untrimmed were fined and jailed. Though seemingly widely unpopular, most Afghans appeared to accept Taliban rule for the more orderly society it brought.

But as always with Afghanistan, the tides are changing. Since the Taliban have lost some power, the ban on most forms of entertainment has been lifted and the social tone has become more relaxed. Afghans are again enjoying activities such as kite flying. Kite flying, or kite running was introduced to many Americans by the 2003

novel The Kite Runner. It is a favorite past time for many Afghan boys and men. Unlike the image we have of flying kites in the U.S., kite flying is not a leisurely activity, it's a competition. The strings of the kite are covered in glue and crushed glass and the object is to cut the string of another kite without damaging your own kite and to remain the last kite in the air. The running comes in when a cut kite is soaring to the ground. Any onlooker can chase after it and whoever gets to it first gets to keep it as their free prize. As many families cannot afford to buy or even make a well functioning kite, obtaining a cut one can be quite a prize.

The most popular sport in Afghanistan however is almost unquestionably the game of buzkashī. In this rough contest horsemen (sometimes in teams but often as individuals) compete to secure the headless carcass of a goat or calf (weighing anywhere from 40–100 pounds) and carry it to a goal while concurrently fending off opponents.

Education has also been transformed in Afghanistan. In the post-Taliban era, schools have been reopened, and women are once again entering the workforce. However, urban women have continued to wear the chadri, the full body covering mandated by the Taliban. A few men have changed the

appearance of their facial hair, however, most have continued to dress traditionally in loose trousers along with a long over-shirt and thick vest.

What we are left with, then, is the most basic understanding of a people who defy definition, with only a few generalities with which to gain a semblance of what is typical in Afghanistan. Occupation has defined the country, and different wars (most not of Afghanistan's making) have characterized this country for almost 100 years. People live out their entire lives in Afghanistan knowing nothing but war. The life expectancy is 44 years, the median age is 18. The overall literacy rate is 23 percent, 12 percent for females. Today, daily life for most Afghans revolves around the need for rebuilding a war-ravaged state. Neglect and destruction of the agricultural system coupled with a drought since the late 1990s have had devastating effects on the ability of Afghans to feed themselves. Poor nutrition is improving slowly with more food security, but remains a great cause of concern. This is a region that has been dominated, occupied and invaded by so many foreign forces that it becomes difficult if not impossible to define or celebrate what is typical in Afghanistan. But perhaps the tide is finally shifting for the better, and Afghanistan will be left to decide its own definitions, and our attempts to know and understand her people will not be such a difficult endeavor.



Kite Running in Afghanistan



# Afghanistan: Questions from the Devil's Advocate

by Teka Childress and Ben Schartman

## 1. Is the war in Afghanistan ending the threat of terrorism?

On October 7, 2001, the United States launched "Operation Enduring Freedom." While this war has largely been seen as a U.S. response to the attacks on the World Trade Centers on 9/11, plans to attack the safe havens of the al-Qaeda network, then in Afghanistan, were being contemplated prior to September 11, 2001.

Richard Clarke, chair of the Counter Terrorism Security Group, allegedly presented a plan to the Bush Administration in January of 2001 that involved covert action against the al-Qaeda network in Afghanistan.(1) Additionally, Naiz Naik, former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, claims that at a meeting in mid-July 2001, senior U.S. officials warned him that unless Osama bin Laden was handed over, the U.S. would take military action to kill or capture bin Laden and Taliban leader Mullah Omar in the middle of October 2001.(2) In any event, in 2001, the war in Afghanistan was seen as a way to deal with the terrorist threat that the al-Qaeda network posed to the United States and other Western countries.

However, the United States' war in Afghanistan has never really met the goal of ending terrorism. It has had only minimal military success against the al-Qaeda network and only temporary success in removing the Taliban from power. Since 2006, the Taliban's strength has been on the rise, particularly in the southern part of the country where they've long had their stronghold.

Family members of victims of 9/11 who formed the group "September Eleventh Families for Peaceful Tomorrows" have published a 22-page document, *Afghanistan: Ending a Failed Military Strategy*. In this report they write, "While public attention shifted to the war in Iraq, the conflict in Afghanistan entered a new phase of violence and decay." They argue that a war on terror cannot re-

ally be won militarily, and that the current policies only enhance the very elements that make acts of terrorism more likely.

Further evidence of the ineffectiveness of the war's success in fighting terrorism can be found in the recent Wikileaks report that lays bare the war's numerous failures. One particular document found in the vast Wikileaks military logs was described by Philippe Sands in the English newspaper, *The Guardian*.(3) He tells of how a 2007 operation by the combined NATO and Afghan Security forces seeking a Taliban leader ended in the deaths of seven Afghan police officers, "catalyzing local resentment."



UNICEF School in the Kishim District

The document *Afghanistan: Ending a Failed Military Strategy* points out that the loss of Afghan lives fosters opposition to the U.S. military presence. It reports that Afghanistan is one of the most heavily land-mined countries in the world; two people per day are killed or disabled by mines. The 1,228 cluster bombs (with 284,956 bomblets) dropped by the U.S. military campaign have greatly added to this problem for

Afghan civilians who are often children. Additionally of the 1,445 civilian recorded deaths in the earlier part of 2008, 40 percent were credited to U.S., NATO and Afghan forces. This record can only continue to anger Afghans and ensure that the war, whose stated goal is to oppose terrorism, is lost.

## 2. Will the "surge" in troop levels help win a war on terror?

Following two policy reviews in 2009, President Obama decided to pursue a strategy to increase the number of U.S. forces while stating a deadline to begin pulling troops out in 2011. This policy (containing questionable logic) led to a planned surge of 30,000 additional troops in 2010. By May of 2010 approximately one third of that additional number was in place for a total of 83,000

**Teka Childress** is enjoying her new grandbaby Cayden, and inspires us with her leadership in Winter Outreach.

**Ben Schartman** has been rehabbing houses for the last six years and is eagerly looking forward to the time when he won't have to go to the hardware store anymore.

American and 45,000 Allied Forces in Afghanistan.(4)

Yet, in a September 13th piece in *The Huffington Post*, Derrick Crowe quotes an article from the *New York Times*: “Even as more American troops flow into the country, Afghanistan is more dangerous than it has ever been during this war, with security deteriorating in recent months, according to international organizations and humanitarian groups... With one attack after another, the Taliban and their insurgent allies have degraded security in almost every part of the country (the one exception is Panjshir Province in the north, which has never succumbed to Taliban control.)”(5)

Another indication of the unlikelihood of the surge bringing stability is the fact that even the United States ambassador in Kabul expressed his doubt about the current strategy of bearing up the current government in Afghanistan. He warned his superiors there in November that President Hamid Karzai “is not an adequate partner” and “continues to shun responsibility for any sovereign burden.”(6)

### 3. Is the War in Afghanistan the “good war?”

It would be rightly asked in a Catholic Worker publication if there were any such thing as a “good” war. Since Catholic Workers generally do not believe in such a thing, we will simply evaluate if this war is meeting its stated purpose.

Recently, in taking up the command of the war in Afghanistan, General Patraeus said, “...Together with our Afghan partners, we must secure and serve the people of Afghanistan. We must help Afghan leaders develop their security forces and governance capacity so that they can, over time, take on the tasks of securing their country and see to the needs of their people.”(7)

Back in 1998, Madeleine Albright, then Secretary of State, expressed her understanding of the U.S. role in the world, in words that are bolder, but perhaps not that different from those commonly held by U.S. policy-makers: “If we have to use force, it is because we are America. We are the indispensable nation. We stand tall. We see farther into the future.”(8) However, the United States does not always stand tall, and examining its support of the current Afghan government proves this to be so.

The Afghan government, which is only able to stay in power because of the U.S. and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) support, is full of corruption. *The Afghanistan Justice Project* accused several Karzai Administration officials of war crimes, including the vice president, Karim Khalili. Additionally, Mohammad Mohaqiq, accused of nailing prisoners to the wall, is an elected member of the Afghan parliament. Human Rights Watch has said that approximately 60 percent of the parliament are warlords or have ties to warlords. 93 percent of the world's opium trade comes from Afghanistan and most of the poppy fields are owned and controlled by the warlords. Thus, it is highly unlikely that United States support is providing a way for the Afghan leaders to “see to the needs of their people.”



Afghan boy at Gudham Shahar Camp in Mazar-i-Sharif  
Photo: Luke Powell

Besides supporting a corrupt government, the United States' and Allied Forces' responsibility for civilian casualties provides a further argument against the war. An article in November 15, 2010 of *The Nation*, by Jeremy Scahill, tells of a militant Taliban imam, Mullah Sahib Jan, who walked into the office of the Independent National Reconciliation commission to join its effort to bring reconciliation to the country. He went out to encourage other Taliban members to lay down their arms. On January 14, 2010 he was found shot many times, reportedly killed in a night raid by U.S. Special Operations Forces.(9)

The reality of civilian casualties, the threats due to landmines, the corruption of the government, the unclear role of the United States involvement and the failures of the war to end terrorism make it impossible to see the war in Afghanistan as either a “good war” or even one that is meeting its purported goals.

### 4. Aren't we providing essential development to Afghanistan?

Close to half of the United States development funds go to five U.S. contractors: KBR, the Louis Berger Group, Chemonics International, Bearing Point, and the DynCorp International. These contractors have wasted great sums of money. They employ foreign consultants who earn up to half a million dollars a year and 40 percent of the aid flows immediately out of the country. They work on short-term projects, there is a huge shortfall in promised monies, and the aid is severely compromised by its connection to military operations. In 2004 PRTs (Provisional Reconstruction Teams) were created to work in conjunction with combat troops. Under these teams humanitarian aid has been used as a bribe to gain information.(10)

Imagine what might be done if some of the war funds



The MQ-9 Reaper Hunter-Killer, one of the drones currently being used by the U.S. For every militant killed by drones in Afghanistan and Pakistan, 10 or so civilians have also died. Drones, which can carry up to 15 Hellfire missiles and two 500 pound laser-guided bombs, are currently being flown over Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Honduras, and the U.S.-Mexico border. - *brookings.edu, govexec.com, also see nodrones.com*

were diverted to meeting development needs in Afghanistan and in the United States. It appears then, that the United States is not only providing minimal developmental help to Afghanistan but it is missing a real opportunity to offer healing for decades of suffering experienced by the Afghan people.

### 5. Why Afghanistan?

In his novel, *Kim*, Rudyard Kipling referred to the bid for hegemony in Central Asia between Russia and England as "The Great Game." (11) This contest for power took place from the early nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan on December 24, 1979, a battle for control of Afghanistan by countries outside of it was again being waged.

It is likely that many U.S. citizens do not fully realize the role that the United States played during the Soviet Union's war in Afghanistan. The Cold War's sphere included Central and Southern Asia, and winning power and influence in Afghanistan was seen as a key element in winning that war.

Not only did the United States have a major part in funding and training the Mujahideen (Afghanistan's "freedom fighters") in their fight to oust the Soviet Union, but, according to Zbigniew Brzezinski, Jimmy Carter's National Security Advisor, U.S. support for the Mujahideen began prior to the Soviet invasion.

In a 1998 interview with *Le Nouvel Observateur*, Mr. Brzezinski said that the CIA aid to the Mujahideen began on July 3, 1979 (five months prior to the invasion) when President Carter signed the directive for secret aid. Mr. Brzezinski himself had supported funding the guerillas, who he thought were badly organized and poorly led, even though he thought (and so informed the President), that aiding them would induce a Soviet invasion. (12)

After the end of the Cold War, American interest in

Afghanistan shifted. At this time --1990 or 1992 until 1998 -- the U.S. government and U.S. corporations, mainly Union Oil of California (UNOCAL) saw Afghanistan as the optimum country through which to build an oil and gas pipeline. This oil and gas pipeline would transport energy from one of the world's wealthiest oil fields on the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea through Afghanistan and into Pakistan. This was important to UNOCAL because it would be immensely profitable and important to the U.S. government; it would free these energy reserves from the control of the Russians or Iranians.

For these reasons UNOCAL and the U.S. government supported the Taliban. Of course, the U.S. government could not be seen to support such a violent and repressive regime. However, according to William O. Beeman, an anthropologist specializing in the Middle East at Brown University, "It is no secret, especially in the region, that the United States, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have been supporting the fundamentalist Taliban in their war for control of Afghanistan for some time. The U.S. has never openly acknowledged this connection, but it has been confirmed by both intelligence sources and charitable institutions in Pakistan."

Whether pursuing economic interests or geo-political goals, the United States has a great deal to lose by its occupation of Afghanistan. Chalmers Johnson, in his book, *Blowback: the Cost and Consequences of American Empire*, points out that short-sighted war-waging is not without its consequences. "Blowback" is shorthand for saying that a nation reaps what it sows. (13) By funding and training the opponents of the Soviet Union, the United States planted the seeds of its current conflict in Afghanistan. It can reasonably be asked: What seeds are being planted by its current policy?

### 6. Who are the Taliban and what is their relationship to al-Qaeda?

One of the arguments for the current policy in Afghanistan is the necessity of defeating the Taliban who are seen as agents of al-Qaeda. So, it is important to have an understanding of who the Taliban are.

The Taliban as a specific and coherent group originated as recently as 1994. They formed around Mullah Omar, out of the tradition of the Mujahideen, the group of radical Muslim fighters that opposed the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. The Mujahideen were comprised of local

Afghan fighters but were also gathered from across the Muslim world in part by the ISI (Pakistani Secret Service) and supported by both the ISI and the CIA. In the mid-1980's Osama bin Laden was a key player in the effort of recruiting and training non-Afghan Muslims to fight against the Soviets.

After its formation in 1994 the Taliban quickly became the most powerful of the many groups vying for control of Afghanistan. In 1996, Osama bin Laden moved from Sudan to Afghanistan and forged an alliance between al-Qaeda and Mullah Omar's Taliban. From this point until the early 2000s, the Taliban and al-Qaeda remained close allies. However, in recent years a rift has opened between these two groups and the difference between them has become clear. In 2005 al-Qaeda's second-in-command, Zawahiri, lamented in a letter to the Taliban that after the U.S.-led invasion, Taliban members retreated to their tribes and villages and showed little attachment to the global Islamist struggle.

Indeed, the Taliban is not much concerned with the global Islamist struggle now. It is much closer to the truth to see the current Taliban as a nationalist group opposed to foreign occupation. In a recent interview with Amy Goodman on *Democracy Now* Matthew Hoh, a former Marine and State Department official, described the Taliban as "a very broad group...that's not monolithic--it's composed of many separate groups that have joined together, basically to repel foreign occupation and also to repel a central government, or resist a central government that is very corrupt, extremely corrupt...[Y]ou find that the support for the Taliban comes not out an ideology, not out of a hatred for the West, not out of some kinship with al-Qaeda or because they're terrorists, but because they do not want to be occupied and they are resentful of a government that is very corrupt and unrepresentative."

#### 7. Isn't the United States only fighting against the Tali-

**"Afghanistan, as the saying goes, is where empires go to die."**

**ban because they are extremely violent and repressive, particularly toward women?**

No, for as described above, the U.S. government supported this same Taliban in the 1990's, when it seemed to suit the U.S.' strategic and economic interests. However, this argument is being cynically used by the powers-that-be to support this war. One of the thousands of documents recently leaked by Wikileaks is a four page CIA report that suggests how European governments can win the "war of perception" over NATO involvement in the war in Afghanistan. One of the main strategies recommended by the CIA is to use the plight of Afghan women as pro-war propaganda.

While it is extremely important that the United States use its influence to protect the weak and abused, and the rights of women in Afghanistan, we need to be wary when those arguments are used as an excuse to wage an extremely unjust war.

#### 8. Why is the U.S. conducting military operations in



Sakena Yacobi, an Afghan woman who set up underground schools to educate women during Taliban rule in Afghanistan

#### Pakistan?

It is only a slight oversimplification to say that the U.S. is conducting military operations in Pakistan because the British arbitrarily drew a line on a map in the 19th century creating the nations of Afghanistan and Pakistan. These lines do not exist to the native Pashtun people who live in this part of the world on either side of the "border" between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Due to civilian deaths from ISAF air strikes and invasive home raids, many Pashtuns have been galvanized into a force of nationalist or ethnic opposition to a foreign occupier and have thus joined the Taliban in large numbers.

As the Pashtuns live on the border between these two countries, they and other Taliban cross back and forth, coming in to Afghanistan to attack ISAF forces and then retreating to Pakistan. American drone attacks in Pakistan, which have killed militants but have killed many more innocent civilians, have created massive resentment within the Pakistani people and have threatened to further destabilize the already unstable government of Pakistan.

#### 9. What is Pakistan's relationship to Afghanistan?

It is very complicated, yet, G. Simon Harak, S.J. in a piece published on the *Voices for Creative Nonviolence* website offers an excellent explanation:

"The Pakistani government's schizophrenic response to the Taliban puzzled me for most of my visit. One response was to pursue, destroy and drive them out, a policy that the government pursued remorselessly in the Swat Valley where we visited. Though I stand opposed to violence, I at least could understand that this would be the 'natural response' of a militaristic government's

perception of a threat to its power. But the other course of action puzzled me the more I learned of it. The Pakistani government also seemed at the same time to be siding with, even promoting the Taliban. A certain Pakistani General Imam boasted that he had 'raised up' that Taliban. Retired generals were known to go to the Taliban camps and train the Taliban in warfare...

I found what seemed to me to be a satisfactory answer in my discussions with Jesuits [there]. The reasons are geopolitical, rather than local. First, Pakistan is quite aware of history. No country, no empire has EVER conquered Afghanistan. It is, as the saying goes, 'where empires go to die.' So the Pakistani government knows that inevitably, the U.S. will lose in Afghanistan and when it does, the Taliban will move right back in. So the Pakistani government wants to keep at least some degree of 'good relations' with the Taliban so that when they re-take Afghanistan, the Pakistani military/government will have bona fides with the ruling authority of Afghanistan.

Second, the Pakistani military has to be concerned about the Kashmir, an area over which it is in conflict with India for control. Pakistan knows that the Indian army far outnumbers its own, so they wish to keep the Taliban as a sort of 'Pakistani militia' in case of an Indian military incursion into Kashmir."

#### 10. What are the costs of the War in Afghanistan?

Perhaps there is no more profound way to answer this question than to simply lay out the reality line by line. What it means to the people of Afghanistan and the United States will hopefully move us all to act.

- It costs 1 million dollars a year to keep one American soldier in Afghanistan.
- From the beginning of the war until 2009, the American military spent more than \$185 billion on the war in Afghanistan.
- The total costs of this war, which includes the hidden costs (things like health care to veterans) and social costs (things like spouses of veterans being forced to quit their jobs in order to take care of wounded veterans) is estimated to be somewhere between \$800 billion and \$3 trillion. Compared to these numbers, the \$34 billion to restore Afghanistan's agricultural infrastructure seems small.
- It is estimated that between 55 percent to 90 percent of money awarded to infrastructure projects



Afghan Internally Displaced Persons in Herat Photo: Eskinder Debebe

and contracts goes to 'overhead' or is simply stolen from American taxpayers and the Afghan people by private contractors. (A concrete example of this is offered by SSG. Christopher Bentley of the Marine Corps: Hand pump wells, he says, cost \$800 for local Afghans to build, however, America has been paying \$10,000 for each one.)

- Since 2001 the Air Force has dropped 31 million pounds of bombs in Afghanistan.

- Over 235,000 Afghan civilians currently live in Internally Displaced Person camps due to U.S. bombing.

#### Civilian Death Estimates:

- Total civilian deaths since 2001: 14,643 - 34,240 (14).
- Civilians killed by Taliban: 4,949 - 6,499(15).
- Civilians killed by Coalition Forces: 8,991 - 28,583(16)

#### Quotes from unnamed Afghans in internally displaced person camps:

- "Nobody wants death, but I swear to god I want it. I swear to god, I swear to the messenger that I want it. I do not want this life because I cannot see the children getting killed from hunger."(17)
- "We are all deformed: we are missing fingers, some people are missing eyes, some people are missing legs."
- "I have five orphans; my husband was killed; my daughter-in-law was killed. All these kids are left for me and I am sick. They're hungry and thirsty and I don't know what to do with them. We don't have anyone to help us."

#### 11. What are the Alternatives to War?

Often we believe that peaceful means cannot possibly succeed but as it has often been said, peace is rarely tried and it has been regularly proven how poorly war succeeds. To see alternatives to dragging out a failed war, look at the "Recommendations for a Changed U.S. Policy" from *Afghanistan: Ending a Failed Military Strategy* reprinted on the next page. The 9/11 Families for Peaceful Tomorrows suggests eight steps the United States and the Coalition Forces can take to work toward an end to the long war in Afghanistan which one would believe could only help end terrorism.



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## ***Recommendations for a Changed US Policy***

1. *Set a swift timetable for the withdrawal of US and NATO military forces, to be substituted by UN forces for short-term security.*
2. *Immediately cease air strikes on targets in Afghanistan and Pakistan.*
3. *Support negotiations between all parties involved in the conflict, including Afghan women leaders.*
4. *Reform humanitarian aid and reconstruction funding efforts to prioritize Afghan organizations over foreign contractors. Ensure that funded projects address the needs and requests of Afghans and are not simply pet projects of foreign donors.*
5. *Invest in long-term aid that increases self-reliance such as sustainable agriculture efforts.*
6. *Immediately discontinue the use of Provincial Reconstruction Teams, which are costly, inefficient, and have militarized the aid process.*
7. *Standardize, increase, and publicly document compensation to Afghan families and communities affected by US military actions.*
8. *Sign the treaty to ban cluster bombs, pay for cluster bomb and landmine clean up in Afghanistan, and pledge never to use these weapons again.*

adapted from  
[http://www.peacefultomorrow.org/downloads/primer\\_flyer\\_jan\\_09.pdf](http://www.peacefultomorrow.org/downloads/primer_flyer_jan_09.pdf)

# “What About the Women?”

by Colleen Kelly

Last week the police department called about a young woman with an infant who had walked into the police station. She had been calling shelters all day to no avail and needed a place to stay. The police called us. We had already given our emergency room away for the night, but we found a place for her in our library. As we were talking amongst the community, we joked about asking the police if they had an extra bed in their home to offer her space, or whether they could convert one of the many city jail cells to hospitality space. This young woman was caught in the midst of bureaucracy. At seventeen, she wasn't eligible for many services, so fell into the dangerous precarity of many young teens that find themselves homeless. When she arrived at Karen House, she was quiet and soft spoken; I could immediately tell she was terrified. Who wouldn't be? Can you imagine at seventeen, staying at a place where you know no one, and sleeping in a big room with no doors? It's scary. I'm struck over and over again by how our country determines its priorities. We make such little effort to provide safe spaces of dignity for humanity, and instead focus our efforts and our money on building massive military-prison industrial complexes across the world.

We spend one million dollars a year for one U.S. soldier to occupy Afghanistan. I could give all sorts of statistics and analysis on how much we spend on the war, but most of our readers, as well as the majority of the American public, oppose the war in Afghanistan (57% according to CNN).(1) However, in all the conversations I have on Afghanistan as part of my outreach for the St. Louis group *Instead of War*, the question I most get asked is “What about the women?” (after, “Well, what should we do?”). This question seems to most often come from women in their 50s and 60s. They most likely feel affinity toward the women of Afghanistan, and remember a time where their own wants and desires were ignored. They've seen great changes in their lives as a result of the women's liberation movement. It makes sense that there is a collective feeling of solidarity among women, especially when the images are so graphic. It also makes sense to the government; in the face of an increasingly unpopular and expensive war, this notion becomes more important to perpetuate.

I am not arguing at all that the Taliban is not repressive and that the abuses perpetuated towards the women in Afghanistan are not horrific. However, I am attempting to put into context how that issue is manipulated to appeal to, and influence, the collective consciousness of our society. The March 2010 release of Wikileaks' documents included a CIA report directed towards European governments. It specifically detailed how important it was to capitalize on this universal empathy. The document details how to fight the “war of perception” over public opinion: “Media events that feature testimonials by Afghan women would probably be most effective if broadcast on programs that have large and disproportionately female audiences.” It further said that women are the “ideal messengers in humanizing the ISAF [International Security Assistance Force] role in combating the Taliban”(2).

It's not surprising then, that TIME magazine plastered the face of Aisha on the cover of its magazine. The image was graphic and detailed a story of a young woman whose face was disfigured by members of her family. Many Americans were moved by the young woman's story. What the story did not say was that this event happened in 2009, eight years after the U.S. invasion. The story strongly indicated that Aisha's abuse was done by the Taliban. However, many groups familiar with Aisha's case have put forth that it was not the Taliban, but actually the men in her family. This is just one example of an attempt by mainstream media to politically manipulate and attribute a case of domestic abuse to the Taliban.(3)

The issue is enormous and complicated, because it is true that there are fundamentalists within Afghanistan who will not grant women rights and who will further the abuses if they are allowed. Yet if this was a main motivating factor for the United States, or even a fundamental policy focus, the support of the Karzai government contradicts those aims. The majority of the Karzai government is made up mostly of Northern Alliance officials, the group that was in power before the Taliban. When the Northern Alliance ruled Afghanistan from 1992-1996, some women from wealthier families were allowed to be educated but all had to be shielded, and they were not allowed to travel outside their home. Although the abuses under the

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Colleen Kelly, who looooooves her new cowgirl boots, thinks that flash mobs for social change may just fulfill her desire to live in a musical.

Northern Alliance did not match the level of the Taliban, women were still subjected to rape, torture, while lacking freedom of movement, and legal recourse, all of which has been documented by international organizations.(4) This history played out a few months ago in the headlines; the Afghan government passed a law that legalized rape in marriage and restricted a woman's right to leave her home.(5) Another recent report from the Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) indicated that many Afghan women are sitting in prison well after their terms have been served. The authorities have refused to release them on their own recognizance, instead, insisting that a male relative take responsibility for them.(6) The idea that the United States is in Afghanistan, in part, to "save" the women from the Taliban is clearly false, since propping up governments that have a history of documented abuse towards women clearly contradicts those claims.

But really, what about the women? If all forms of government have a history of oppressing women, what can be done? Regardless of the manipulation of the media towards the public to "sell" a war, the fact still remains that women are largely not recognized as equal participants in society and are often subjected to all forms of physical and emotional abuse. Wouldn't it make sense for the U.S. government or ISAF forces to instill some good old fashioned "western values" in regards to the rights of women? One problem is that we don't promote the equal rights of women even in our own society: in the U.S. military, 30% of military women are raped while serving, 71% are sexually assaulted, and 90% are sexually harassed.(7) Even in St. Louis, Missouri - far, far away from the complex political situation of Afghanistan - we still see women, particularly women of color, in the worst economic strata without equal opportunity. Even with all of that knowledge and recognition of our own country's struggles with equality, there is still a tendency for folks to think that we can make it better for another country.

Malalai Joya, a woman parliamentarian who resigned from the Afghan government and who now refuses to participate in elections because she feels the Karzai government is a sham, recently stated that the "[women] situation was just invoked to justify war" and that "many warlords and commanders aligned with NATO and Karzai



Midwives outside an Afghan School - Eric Kanalstein

carry out their sexist, misogynist crimes with impunity."(8) She has been an outspoken advocate for the removal of the United States as an occupying force: "All of the troops must leave and the militia of the warlords must be dismantled. Democracy can't be established by an occupying force that does nothing more than spread out and strengthen the Talibanization of my country. And it's my people who suffer." Joya is not an isolated case or opinion. Many women's rights organizations have similar sentiments. RAWA (The Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan) works tirelessly for equal treatment of women and tellingly has listed first among their stated goals, "To struggle against any types of the funda-

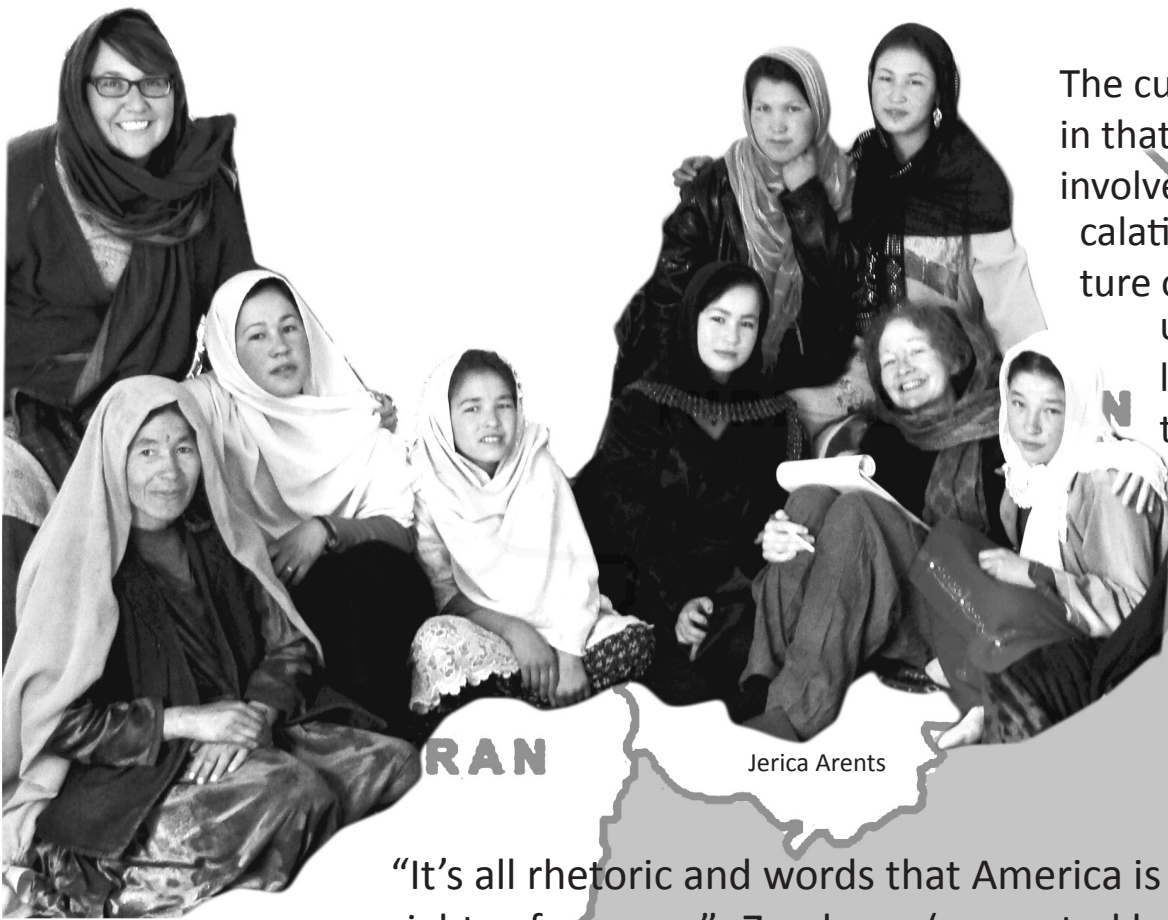
mentalists and their foreign masters." It is only after the declaration of opposing occupation that they list, "To establish freedom, democracy, peace and women's rights in Afghanistan."(9)

I certainly have become frozen at times writing this article, (and in fact, this is my second try, after throwing out the first one altogether), attempting to choose the most compelling fact, statistic, or dominant narrative in the American

public to pick apart to show how U.S. troops are doing more harm than good. I certainly read a lot about Afghanistan; trying to condense the information into a small sound bite is difficult for me, especially when the stakes are so high. When I read that 2,300 women are attempting suicide every year(10), that covert troops in a recent night raid killed two pregnant women and a teenage girl and then went on to inflict "cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment" to the remaining survivors(11), or that the U.S. has developed a "smart" gun whose bullets only detonate after it has gone through a wall of a house to assure "target success"(12), I can't help but be overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of suffering that our violent occupation is causing.

It's important to remember some basic facts on Afghanistan: it is largely rural, and the majority of women live in rural settings, far removed from the politics of Kabul. 450 children die every day - EVERY DAY. Of those who survive past age five, half suffer from malnourishment. Afghanistan has the world's highest rate of mortality of women who die in childbirth (dropping three places since the United States invaded). (13, 14)

Try and imagine those statistics describing you; if



IRAN

Jerica Arents

“It’s all rhetoric and words that America is defending the rights of women.” -Zerghuna (as quoted by Jerica Arents)

The current Afghan war is un...  
in that there are [many] coun...  
involved in an entrenched ar...  
calating global cul-**UZBEK**...  
ture of [violence]...  
unsustainably and poin...  
lessly employing violer...  
to deal with violence.

- Dr. Hakim

One of the first things that hit me when I arrived on the Pakistan border was, "as a nation, we've been here before". Now, I'm not referring to the Soviet conflict where we helped train and arm the Mujahideen with the help of the Pakistani ISI. I'm referring to the initial invasion of the North American continent, what we now call the United States.

Ultimately, I had to go back and face the facts: we, as a nation, are still erasing indigenous peoples and cultures to this day, in the name of freedom - and I had played a roll in this history of culture assassination. There is no difference between the erasing of the Lakota nation through framing them as 'terrorist' and the erasing of the simple society constructs in Afghanistan, in an attempt to transplant democracy.

I spoke with many Afghans there, and here in the States, and the general consensus is the tribe never asked for democracy; the tribe has it's own system of government.

I now view my past warmongering as a mental health issue and think we as a nation are mentally ill. [But], behavioral disorders can be corrected if we'll just acknowledge our behavior.

As a child I was taught war games and I've played those games for most of my 28 year life. Until recently, I was always the cowboy - but now, I will forever be the Indian.

-Former Sgt. Jacob George

# AFGHANISTAN

With women and child...  
from being caught in th...  
the effects of poverty, n...  
available health care, th...



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Jerica Arents

I have been traveling to Afghanistan from 2003 to my last trip in August of 2010. I have found that the conditions are much worse than they were when I started to travel there. My experiences and observations have been reinforced by the conversations I have had with the Afghan people who feel less safe now than they did in 2003.

When I began my travels I thought that our government and military could possibly assist with security for reconstruction. I have never believed in war as an answer. My beliefs have become strengthened that war is never the answer and we MUST support those projects that are functioning and are really assisting the Afghans in rural areas to improve their everyday lives. We need to shift from military-driven decision making to a humanitarian response to problems around the world. We must stop trafficking in weapons and begin to "traffic" in diplomacy and development. -Connie Frisbee Houde

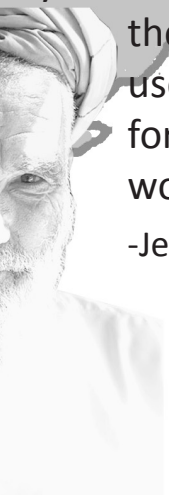


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INDI

Morality, intellectualism, and 'democracy' are dying in the hands of the 'warring' global community - Dr. Hakim

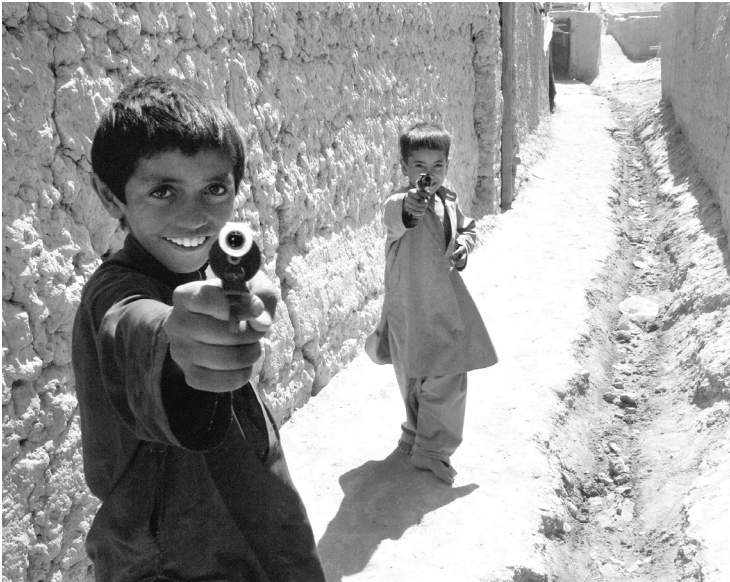
ren dying daily not only  
the crossfire, but also from  
malnutrition, and lack of  
they are skeptical about  
the justifications  
used by foreign  
forces around  
women's rights.  
-Jerica Arents



Frisbee Houde



Jerica Arents



Afghan Village - Eric Kanalstein

every day you were worried about figuring out ways for your family to survive, to eat, to find water; if every day, you had to watch your small child cry from hunger. On top of that, add the fear from hearing the buzzing sound of a plane in the distance, getting louder as it nears, and waiting, hoping that the drone does not drop its next bomb on your home. You hear a loud explosion. You realize with relief that your home has been spared and your children are safe, until you hear the wail of your brother-in-law next door whose family has been killed by a U.S. drone, intent on increasing the “safety” of your country. According to the United Nations report released in 2010, the number of children killed or injured has risen 55%, along with 6% more women, from the same period in 2009. “Afghan children and women are increasingly bearing the brunt of this conflict. They are being killed and injured in their homes and communities in greater numbers than ever before.”(15)

When I look at these reports and those of other human rights organizations, I can’t help but wonder how on earth our country can justify bombing and killing women and their children, call it “successful”, and then go further by calling for a “surge”, thinking that increasing the number of bombs dropped from drones (which actually increases the number of indiscriminate killing,) saves and liberates women. When does the escalation of violence ever lead to the elimination of violence? Sure, politically, an occupying force may drive out another political force with weapons and then establish a strict regime to avoid the resurgence of that violence. That has certainly been the history of Afghanistan; it has cycled through many occupying forces and regime changes in the last century. One entity takes power and holds on to that power by force. And after years of violent occupation, the effects of hierarchical oppression have taken hold and women are at the bottom. The pecking order prevails; one group takes out their frustrations and lack of control on those just beneath them in the social order. As Emma Goldman

once said, "It is organized violence on top which creates individual violence at the bottom."(16)

How unbelievably arrogant it is of our country to expect someone to live in ways completely contradictory to the way we are modeling. Through our actions, we are saying to the Afghan people: “Listen to us, obey us, or we will attack you.” Is it any wonder that violence trickled down to Aisha, who has spent half of her life under the U.S. occupation? Afghanistan’s women will not be saved by more oppressive force and killing. One way of breaking through the cycle of systematic violence and abuse is to ensure that families have access to basic survival, and that both men and women gain some control in how their lives are conducted - without the manipulation of foreign governments, and without legalized oppression.

I have never been to Afghanistan but I have been to North St. Louis. I don’t think that people are that different around the world. Most want their families and their loved ones safe. Most families I know think very little about politics and the endlessly posturing discussions from politicians that go along with it. Most people want to live their lives, to enjoy their families, to make sure that their needs are taken care of, and to live without fear. The stories and images that invade our airwaves about the atrocities of the Taliban towards women – the ones describing stoning, beatings, forced marriage, acid on faces, exclusion of schooling, etc., are certainly horrific and evoke sympathy and outrage. However, they shouldn’t be used as an excuse to exact even more horror and brutality by bombs and highly sophisticated weaponry on Afghans. But don’t believe me; listen to the words of a young Afghan woman: “We don’t like Coalition troops. They bomb our homes and kill our people. They said they came here to help us, but we don’t see it.”(17) ✦

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# A Hard Rain: Afghanistan, St. Louis, and How to Make Peace

by Andrew Wimmer

## War and Capital: "A Hard Rain's Been Fallin'"

We are living in a time of cataclysmic change. Multiple wars, financial crises. I fear, though, we've heard only the initial rumblings. Over the past thirty or forty years, capitalism has established itself globally. National and international laws, treaties, and regulations have been thoroughly refashioned to protect and further its hegemony. Technology has connected us all, obliterating the limits of time and space in ways unimaginable just a decade or two ago. Capital, which by its nature abhors limits and restrictions, has been liberated to grow by means of transactions conducted in nanoseconds, playing each and every odd. The global economy (the fundamental mechanism of exchange that makes it possible for each of us to live) has been converted into a giant roulette wheel under which we are being crushed to death.

Capital, in its relentless drive, needs protection, and for this, the most destructive arsenal ever seen on this planet has been constructed. It's not a metaphor, and often the language we use is to talk about it is too complicated.

During the course of my lifetime I've seen those who oppose wars be transformed into defense analysts, gathering data like demons. I include myself. There is always another country's political complexities to master, another weapon system to study. Websites, links, blogs.

The reality is much simpler. The most recent ten years of war waged in defense of capital have seen a civilization destroyed in Iraq, with more than 4 million people now living in exile. Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Yemen, Palestine. Constant threats against Iran. Do we need to rehearse the numbers? Or do we simply numb ourselves by their repetition? 300,000 Soldiers with PTSD because

they've been asked to make the 'ultimate sacrifice' – to abandon their humanity. Unending, ubiquitous warfare. Robots and drones enlisted to serve when human beings can't, or won't, or fail. Everything is a battlefield. This is not difficult to understand.

Kathy Kelly wrote this week from Afghanistan, "It's hard to imagine the extent of explosive popular rage that would result...if U.S. people were subject to aerial bombing, night raids, destruction of civilian homes, displacement and starvation."



Adbusters flag photo: Jonathan McIntosh

## The Local Connection: "Meet Me in St. Louie"

St. Louis is at the center of these efforts. Each morning I receive a press release in my email. Here's December 3, 2010:

### *Boeing to Provide A160T Hummingbird Unmanned Aircraft for US Marine Corps*

"We look forward to working with NAVAIR and the Marines to provide this important capability to warfighters on the front lines," said Vic Sweberg, Unmanned Airborne Systems director for Boeing. "The A160T has

**Andrew Wimmer** at times may be mistaken for a hermit named Andrew Wimmer, but is actually an exiled Jedi Master we like to call "Obi-Wimm".

proven its ability to autonomously deliver cargo to forward operating bases in austere conditions in a demonstration setting, and we are confident in its ability to do the same in battlefield conditions."

And the signature: "Headquartered in St. Louis, Boeing Defense, Space & Security is a \$34 billion business with 68,000 employees worldwide. Follow us on Twitter: @BoeingDefense."

In short, most everything capital needs to wage wars of aggression and domination is made here:

- The Massive Ordnance Penetrator, a new "bunker buster" bomb, conceived and built in St. Louis.
- Drones for Afghanistan and Pakistan
- High-tech security walls for Israel
- B-2 stealth bomber
- Satellites and space-based weaponry

These are the projects being worked on by Boeing in St. Louis and directed from St. Louis. And as a Boeing executive said a few years ago in a speech at Webster University, "Boeing feels very comfortable in St. Louis." Part of the family. Indeed, just about everyone in St. Louis has a relative, friend, or neighbor who works for Boeing.

With the departure or demise of corporations with long St. Louis ties, Boeing and Monsanto stand as the two premier corporate citizens. Their influence is woven into the fabric of this city.

At St. Louis University, the Board of Trustees has regularly included Boeing executives and other military

contractors during Lawrence Biondi's tenure as University President. In an interview marking his twentieth year in the job, Biondi singled out former board president Michael F. Shanahan as a gifted mentor and trusted confidant. Shanahan was also one of the most handsomely rewarded CEOs in the United States when his St. Louis corporation, Engineered Support Systems, Incorporated, posted stratospheric earnings in 2004 and 2005. "The Army goes no where without us," boasted Shanahan. Unlimited, ubiquitous warfare requires a lot of support. When Biondi asked Shanahan to chair the drive for a new arena for the school, Shanahan and his wife donated the first million. Billiken basketball; Iraqi and Afghan dead.

By most anyone's reckoning, capital's onslaught these last few decades has been an unmitigated success. Today, the top 1% of the population in the United States holds 42% of the financial wealth. In 1970, the top 1% of the population earned 9% of the annual income. By 2008 that number had grown to a staggering 28%. The top 1% in the United States earns more than at any time since 1928. These figures translate into power. Power to control. Power to buy protection.

**Propaganda: "We Have All Been Here Before"**

Robert Gates, standing alongside Hamid Karzai at a news conference last week in Kabul, told reporters, "I will go back convinced that our strategy is working," adding that the war efforts had "exceeded my expectations."

The Wikileaks documents revealed that the U.S. systemically ignored torture and abuse committed by Iraqi police and military. "The difference in how the *New York Times* reported on (i.e., whitewashed) these horrific, incriminating revelations about the U.S. and the rest of the world media reported on it could not be more vast." - *Glen Greenwald, Salon.com*

**YOU WRITE WHAT YOU'RE TOLD!**



**THANKS, CORPORATE NEWS! We Couldn't Control The People Without You**

A MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTRY OF HOMELAND SECURITY

The collage features several news articles:

- BBC News Middle East:** "Huge Wikileaks release shows US 'ignored Iraq torture'" (23 October 2010). Subtext: "Wikileaks has released almost 400,000 secret US military logs, which suggest US commanders ignored evidence of torture by the Iraqi authorities."
- Hindustan Times:** "Iraq leaks: US ignored torture, civilian killings" (Washington, October 24, 2010). Subtext: "Secret field reports filed by the US army and made public raised the estimate of the number of civilian deaths in Iraq."
- Guardian.co.uk:** "Iraq war logs: secret files show how US ignored torture". Subtext: "Massive leak reveals serial detainee abuse", "15,000 unknown civilian deaths in war", "Full coverage of the Iraq war logs", "Datalog: every death mapped".
- The New York Times:** "Middle East" section. Article: "THE WAR LOGS". Subtext: "This article is one of several being published by The New York Times, based on a trove of secret field reports from the battlegrounds of Iraq. The archive is the second such cache obtained by the independent group Wikileaks and made available to several news organizations." Another article: "Detainees Fared Worse in Iraqi Hands, Logs Say". Subtext: "The public image of detainees in Iraq was defined by the photographs, now infamous, of American abuse at Abu Ghraib, Iraq."

In October 1966 Daniel Ellsberg stood on the tarmac with Robert McNamara at Andrews Air Force Base after returning from a trip to Vietnam. On the flight home McNamara had acknowledged to colleagues that “the underlying situation is really worse.” When he stepped from the plane, however, he told the assembled reporters, “We’re showing great progress in every dimension of our effort.” The event set Ellsberg on his course to release the Pentagon Papers.

But then there is Wikileaks. Can the release of a huge trove of documents make an impact in an age that is drowning in information already? Perhaps not immediately. A recent poll in the United States reported that almost 70% of respondents viewed the release as “dangerous,” and almost 60% called for prosecution of Julian Assange and others involved in the leaking. A mere 20% expressed the opinion that the leaks may serve some useful purpose. A version of “Don’t ask, don’t tell.”

“The president expressed his regrets for the deplorable action by WikiLeaks,” according to a recent White House release, though Philip Giraldi, a former CIA agent and military intelligence analyst wrote, “Call me Saul on the road to Damascus. I have seen the light. As a former intelligence officer, I was initially appalled at the leak of a quarter of a million classified documents by someone who had responsibility for protecting them. I was highly skeptical of the entire WikiLeaks and Bradley Manning saga, but following the leaks has convinced me that there is a lot of material that deserves a public airing to demonstrate to the American people how Washington is pursuing a senseless policy almost everywhere in the world. I have been particularly mortified in reading the accounts of meetings of U.S. Ambassadors and Undersecretaries of State with their foreign counterparts, encounters revealing an unbelievable arrogance derived from the Bush Administration dictum ‘you are either with us or against us.’ Persian King of Kings Darius addressing his satraps could not do it any better.”

**What to Do: “Stand in the Place Where You Live”**

Barack Obama, in his first address to the joint houses of Congress back in February 2009 brought everyone in the room to their feet for a sustained minute of applause when he praised “our brave men and women” in the Armed Forces. What brought the members of Congress to their feet was Obama’s forceful contention that “every American” supported and honored their service. “We stand with you...”

In February 2007 when more than fifty people here in St. Louis were arrested over the course of several weeks at sit-ins at Russ Carnahan’s office at the time of a Congressional vote to appropriate new war funding, Democrat David Obey was lambasting the mother of a Marine veteran outside his office for being stupid about the ways of power. “We don’t have the votes!” But, of course, two years later, with both houses of Congress in Democratic hands and a Nobel Peace Prize laureate as President, we still don’t have the votes.

It is long past time for us to get clear about “we” and “they.” “We honor your service.” No, it is not “we.” Draw

the line. Make a simple statement. Where do we stand?

Let’s look locally. A metropolitan area of almost 3 million people, 10 years of war, yet no real understanding of where people are. There are no public forums, few conversations, and no place to have them. Our efforts need to be local, serious, and sustained. We need to make the global issues local by making connections. Repeatedly, publicly, and seriously.

In 2008 the media were happy to portray the election of Obama as an overwhelming mandate. The ‘peace candidate’ had been elected;

the people had spoken. Once that fiction had served its purpose, it was jettisoned, leaving the people off balance.

It is important to think about a very simple statistic. Polls continue to show that a majority of people in the United States oppose the wars. And then what? I don’t believe that it is a question of “speaking truth to power.” The phrase has become something of a trap from which we need to liberate ourselves. Let’s not be naïve. Power is ruthless and its juggernaut is rolling over us all.

Much more to the point, we need to learn to speak truthfully in our daily interactions. Fill all the spaces of silence that have been created. Speak in all the places where we have allowed them to tell us it is “inappropriate,” “not the right time,” “not professional,” “not business-like.” Reclaim the public time and space. Confront, build a movement.

The antiwar movement, born in the 60s, has run its course. Let it die. Let’s give birth to new thinking, new constellations, new language. Let’s abandon the familiarity of the liturgical forms that we find so comfortable.

This should take a concrete form. Each of us has myriad relationships with family, friends, co-workers, neighbors. A quick mental survey would reveal, I’m sure, plenty of places to begin to break things open. Where have you kept quiet?



**What You Can Do**

Catholic Workers believe in nonviolent resistance; one of the best ways to resist war is to live simply and use less. If we push ourselves and urge others to consume fewer goods, the need for oil wars will be reduced - the demand simply will not be there.

**A few ideas:**

**Purchase Less:** avoid petroleum-based products, particularly plastic.

**Travel Sustainably:** bike more, avoid air travel, use public transportation, carpool.

**Shop Locally:** the more local goods you buy, the less you rely on oil to transport goods all over the country and world.

**Educate!** The *St. Louis Instead of War Coalition* can provide speakers and materials and current campaigns to get involved. [www.insteadofwar.org](http://www.insteadofwar.org)

## Open letter from Afghan Youth to our World Leaders

***Dear Mr. Obama, Mrs. Clinton, Mr. Petraeus, Mr. Rasmussen, and all our world leaders,***

We are Afghans and we ask the world to listen. Like yourselves, we couldn't live without the love of our family and friends. We were hurt by your criticism of Mr. Karzai for voicing the people's anguished pleas, "Stop your night raids." Please, stop your night raids.

If you could listen, you would have heard 29 NGOs in Afghanistan describe how we now have "Nowhere to Turn".

If you could listen, you would also have heard Mr. Karzai and the 29 NGOs express concern over your Afghan Local Police plan; the world will henceforth watch our militia killing the people, your people and our people, with your weapons and your money.

If you could listen, you would have heard the sound of your drones crystallizing the nights of hatred among the Afghan, Pakistani and global masses.

Instead, we hear your determination to 'awe, shock and firepower' us with Abrams tanks. We hear distant excitement over your new smart XM25 toy, a weapon you proudly proclaim will leave us with 'nowhere to hide'. Nowhere to turn and nowhere to hide.

Your actions have unfortunately dimmed our hopes that we the people could turn to you. Along with our Afghan war-makers, you are making the people cry. Yet, we understand. You are in the same trap we're in, in a corrupt, militarized mania. Love is how we're asking for peace, a love that listens, and reconciles....

It is time to listen broadly and deeply to both local and overseas Afghan civil groups and the numerous alternative solutions they have proposed for building a better socio-political, economic and religious/ideological future for Afghanistan.

We have shared the pain of our American friends who lost loved ones on September 11, by speaking with and listening to them. Though, if the world could listen like these American friends did, the world would know that few Afghans have even heard about September 11 and that no Afghans were among the 19 hijackers. The world would have heard our yearnings as we were punished over the past 9 years.

If the world could listen, they would know how much we detest the violence of the Taliban, our warlords, any warlord, or any bullet-digging finger-trophy troops. And now, for at least another four more years, we will grieve over souls who you are unwilling to 'count' and we are unwilling to lose. It is extra painful to us and to your troops because clearly, there are non-violent and just alternatives.

We understand the pain of financial hardships but try telling an Afghan mother about to lose her child or a soldier about to take his life that the only way their illiterate and angry voices can ruffle the posh feathers of our world leaders is when it disturbs not their human or truth deficit, but their trillion dollar economic deficits. How do we explain that without denuding ourselves of human love and dignity?

What more can we say? How else can we and our loved ones survive? How can we survive with hearts panicking in disappointment while perpetually fleeing and facing a 'total' global war, a war that wouldn't be questioned even in the crude face of a thousand leaks?

We would survive in poverty, we may survive in hunger, but how can we survive without the hope that Man is capable of something better?

We sincerely wish you the best in your lives.

We are Afghans and we ask the world to listen.

Salamat bAsheen! Be at peace!

Meekly with respect,

***The Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers***

# The Catholic Worker on War: 78 Years of Nonviolent Resistance

by Megan Heeney

“We believe this needed personal and social transformation should be pursued by the means Jesus revealed in His sacrificial love. With Christ as our Exemplar, by prayer and communion with His Body and Blood, we strive for practices of...

**-Nonviolence:** "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God." (Matt. 5:9) Only through nonviolent action can a personalist revolution come about, one in which one evil will not be replaced simply by another. Thus, we oppose the deliberate taking of human life for any reason, and see every oppression as blasphemy. Jesus taught us to take suffering upon ourselves rather than inflict it upon others, and He calls us to fight against violence with the spiritual weapons of prayer, fasting and non-cooperation with evil. Refusal to pay taxes for war, to register for conscription, to comply with any unjust legislation; participation in nonviolent strikes and boycotts, protests or vigils; withdrawal of support for dominant systems, corporate funding or usurious practices are all excellent means to establish peace." - From the *Catholic Worker Aims and Means*

The Catholic Worker movement is founded on the principles of nonviolence. “We oppose the deliberate taking of human life for any reason.” The Catholic Worker strives to be non-violent, because Jesus lived a nonviolent, person-centered life. Our nonviolence is rooted in personalism, which places the dignity and freedom of the human person as the focus of all morals. If we regard persons with dignity, we cannot practice violence, since violence by its nature oppresses, taking away dignity.

The Catholic Worker opposes the war in Afghanistan because this war takes away the dignity of people, and has been doing so for over nine years. Estimates vary in terms of the overall death toll with civilian deaths between 14,643 - 34,240, as described in Teka and Ben's article. Over 2,200 U.S. and International Security As-

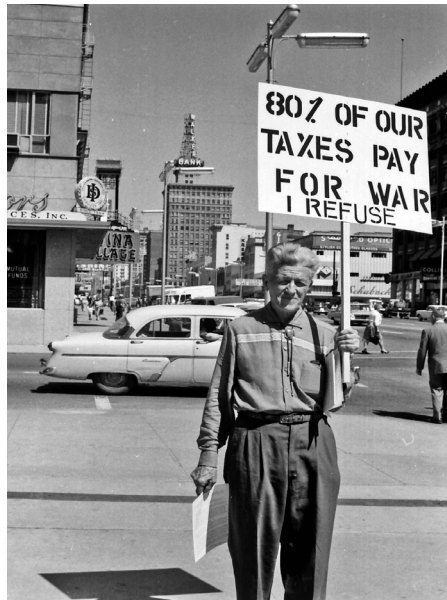
sistance Force (ISAF) military members have died in the Afghanistan War. These deaths, the 235,000 displaced, the countless number of soldiers returning home with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and other health issues, are the precise reason we cannot remain silent.

The Catholic Worker has a rich history of anti-war activism. Founded in the early 1930s, the Catholic Worker Movement spoke out during the Italian invasion of Ethiopia and during the Spanish Civil War. From its foundation the movement has been rooted in a commitment to absolute nonviolence. This devotion to nonviolence wrought consequences. Catholics were not speaking out against the invasion of Ethiopia or the Spanish Civil War; quite the opposite occurred. The Spanish Civil War was justified by Catholics as a war to defend their faith, and those who opposed the war were considered infidels.

During these early years the Catholic Worker editors took two approaches in delivering their pacifist stance to readers. They tried to appeal to a broader audience by justifying their pacifism based on Just War principles, and Dorothy Day wrote to the perfectionist position, exhorting the “Counsels of perfection.” This meant encouraging all Catholics to strive for the moral standards of Christ and in doing so, to live up to the Sermon on the Mount.(1)

The Catholic Worker position of nonviolence on the Spanish Civil War, which in the eyes of American Catholics was seen as neutrality, led some priests to encourage their parishioners to stop getting the Catholic Worker paper delivered to their homes. Many bulk parish subscriptions were cancelled. But the Catholic Worker unceasingly spoke out for peace. Dorothy wrote about the opposition to war-making in June of 1940:

“Instead of gearing ourselves in this country for a gigantic production of death-dealing bombers and men trained to kill, we should be producing food, medical supplies, ambulances, doctors and nurses for the works of



Ammon Hennacy, one of the most influential advocates of nonviolent direct action in the Catholic Worker Movement. Photo: ©Jerry Currier

**Megan Heeney** has taken a new job with Community Alternatives doing outreach for homeless folks with addiction. She has been accused of making them listen to the musical *Wicked* at loud volumes while she takes them to appointments.

mercy, to heal and rebuild a shattered world. Already there is famine in China. And we are still curtailing production in agriculture, thinking in terms of 'price,' instead of human needs. We do not take care of our own unemployed and hungry millions in city and country, let alone those beyond the seas.”(2)

During World War II the Catholic Worker paper lost three-fourths of its readers and simultaneously many Catholic Worker communities throughout the country were forced to close their doors, due to lack of donations and communal funding. The Catholic Worker's nonviolent stance was central to its vision, however, and withstood the criticism it received during World War II.

Peter Maurin's Easy Essay “Moral Disarmament”, part of which is quoted below, brings us to our current situation:

Theodore Roosevelt used to say:

“If you want peace  
prepare for war.”

So everybody prepared for war  
but war preparations  
did not bring peace;  
they brought war.

Since war preparations  
brought war,  
why not quit  
preparing for war.

If nations prepared for peace  
instead of preparing for war,  
they might have peace.

Aristide Briand used to say:  
“The best kind of disarmament  
is the disarmament of the heart.”

This country has built an economy which is rooted in production for war. We have spent over \$185 billion in Afghanistan, in the name of peace abroad, national security, and job construction in the United States.

This spring a few Catholic Workers visited our local Congressperson, Lacy Clay, to discuss our horror and dismay around how much money is being spent on war. Clay, who has similar feelings on war spending (although he is not as vocal as us,) asked us to remember that many St. Louisans are employed by Boeing and these are hard times. We responded to him that we knew of these hard times; many of the women who live with us at Karen House are out of work. But we cannot justify killing people in the name

**“The party line has become job construction, at the cost of moral destruction...”**

of job creation. We discussed whether there was anything that Boeing could create which wouldn't deliver weapons, but would instead create more “green jobs” here. We had some ideas, but I don't think he was too excited about that prospect. Congress feels comfortable writing blank checks for weapons; maybe the checks wouldn't be so blank if Boeing was creating green technology.

The party line has become job construction, at the cost of moral destruction. There is confusion for elected officials around war, because we see war profiteers funding campaigns and even the occasional social service agency for good measure. We continue to allow funding for war and weaponry, while ignoring domestic issues such as education, housing and jobs.

But as Catholic Workers, even if we lived in a place where the basic needs of our sisters and brothers were being met, we would still oppose war and doing violence to others. It is disgusting though, in these times when so many here and abroad are suffering, that we waste precious resources on the manufacturing of destruction.

Catholic Workers have opposed the war in Afghanistan on many fronts. Specifically, Catholic Workers have opposed war spending, torture and the drones being used in Afghanistan, Pakistan and now Yemen. The war in Afghanistan has spurred interest in many nonviolent resistance campaigns. Some campaigns I'd like to touch on include Witness Against Torture, “Ground the drones, lest we reap the whirlwind,” and War Tax Resistance.

#### **Witness Against Torture**

“Witness Against Torture formed in 2005 when 25 Americans went to Guantánamo Bay and attempted to visit the detention facility. Once they returned from that journey, they began to organize more broadly to shut down Guantanamo, working with interfaith, human rights and activists' organizations.

The Witness Against Torture campaign has planned a series of nonviolent direct actions which aim to expose and decry the administration's lawlessness, build awareness about torture and indefinite detention amongst Americans and forge human ties with the prisoners at Guantanamo and their families.”(3)

The Witness Against Torture group gathers annually in January in Washington, DC to hold those responsible for the continuation of torture in Guantanamo and Bagram accountable. (Bagram is a detention center forty miles north of Kabul where hundreds of detainees are being held without rights. In January 2010, 645 names of detainees were released. The center became well known in 2005; it was released in popular news media that two men named Dilawar and Mullah

Habibullah had been tortured to death there in 2002. Conditions are akin to Guantanamo.) The group raises awareness through public actions such as marches, press conferences, and civil disobedience. They promote education in the United States around torture, raising the question of what kind of people we want to become: Do we want to be a culture that dehumanizes our sisters and brothers, or one which does the difficult work of loving our enemies? Catholic Workers have a duty to bring the injustice of torture and illegal detention to the forefront of our neighbors' minds, by practicing personalism and decrying violence.

### **Ground the Drones, Lest We Reap the Whirlwind**

The "Ground the Drones, Lest We Reap the Whirlwind" campaign involved fourteen people, including some Catholic Workers, who trespassed onto Creech Air Force Base in April of 2009. This campaign is targeted at raising aware-

ness around the un-personed drones which are being flown by throttle and joystick from the Creech Air Force base in Nevada. The drones will soon be run out of Whiteman Air Force Base, here in Missouri.

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center for seven Air Force bases in the continental U.S. where crews fly drones over Iraq and Afghanistan. "And on the drive home, you get ready for that part of your life that's going to be the soccer game."(4)

We are living in a country where there is so much disconnection between what is happening in Afghanistan and what is occurring in our day-to-day life. People often forget that there is even a war going on right now. Many of us cannot comprehend what it would be like to hear drones over our heads, wondering if bombs will drop or what surveillance is taking place. I recently heard an interesting comparison at an *Instead of War* meeting. What if a member of the U.S. Army came back from combat in Afghanistan and was home with family - the soldier might have no idea if and when a drone might fly overhead and destroy part of the town, simply because he/she was home. This might create a life of constant fear, making one



At the Creech 14 trial, the defendants described the civilian deaths that U.S. drones cause in Afghanistan by describing the image of a baby trapped in a house on fire: "We...see the smoke and will not allow a 'no trespass' sign to stop us from reaching burning children."

ness around the un-personed drones which are being flown by throttle and joystick from the Creech Air Force base in Nevada. The drones will soon be run out of Whiteman Air Force Base, here in Missouri.

Those who fly un-personed drones are disconnected from their reality. Air Force officers leave their base and go home to their families, sometimes without the cognitive recognition that they flew a drone whose firearms killed people and left families without homes 7,500 miles away. A Los Angeles Times article earlier this year interviewed a retired Air Force member who participated in drone operations: "On the drive out here, you get yourself ready to enter the compartment of your life that is flying combat," said retired Col. Chris Chambliss, who until last summer commanded drone operations at Creech Air Force Base, the command

on edge and unable to participate in day to day life. The drones are creating more destruction and anti-American sentiment abroad. The "Ground the Drones, Lest We Reap the Whirlwind" campaign continues full throttle.

### **War Tax Resistance**

Many opt to resist war in personal, concrete ways, war tax refusal being one such way. War tax resistance is a refusal to pay some or all of the federal tax which goes to supporting war. The largest federal war tax is the income tax; some of the income tax goes into trust funds that pay for things such as Social Security, while about 50% of it goes to support war.

There are many ways to resist the war tax; many Catholic Workers utilize the fact that if you make less

than \$9,350 a year there is no need to file federal income tax returns. The tax money which would have been spent on supporting the war in Afghanistan and occupation in Iraq can then alternatively be spent on human needs. We also try to meet these human needs, such as food, shelter, clothing and access to education, in houses of hospitality.

Wally Nelson, an American Civil Rights Activist and war tax resister, explained his resistance simply, "What would you do if someone came to your door with a cup in hand asking for a contribution to help buy guns and kill a group of people they didn't like?"

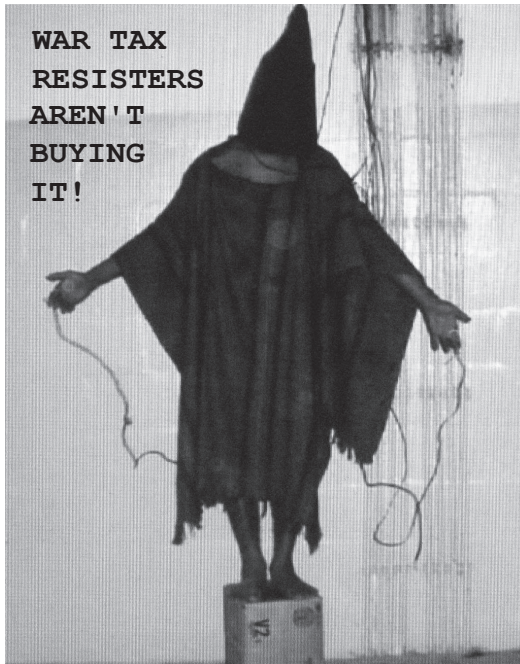
If your answer to them would be "No, I would not contribute to that fund," then perhaps you should consider war tax resistance.(5)

We are aware too, that we ourselves participate in the war machine. We do so by living in this imperialistic country, by continuing to participate in structures that demean, by not practicing healthy relationships with our earth, and by benefiting from consumerism- we get countless supplies in donations when people choose to buy newer products. We can remember an article from Dorothy Day in 1942, which may help us reflect on where we are and where we need to go:

"...[T]hat accusation "holier than thou" is also made against us. And we must all admit our guilt, our participation in the social order which has resulted in this monstrous crime of war.

We used to have a poor demented friend who came into the office to see us very often, beating his breast,

**WAR TAX  
RESISTERS  
AREN'T  
BUYING  
IT!**



quoting the penitential psalms in Hebrew, and saying that everything was his fault. Through all he had done and left undone, he had brought about the war, the revolution.

That should be our cry, with every mouthful we eat, 'We are starving Europe!' When we look to our comfort in a warm bed, a warm home, we must cry, 'My brother, my mother, my child is dying of cold.'

'I am lower than all humans, because I do not love enough. O God, take away my heart of stone and give me a heart of flesh.'"(6)

How many things have we done and left undone? We still have so much work to do.



1. LeBrun, John L. "The Way of Love: Pacifism and The Catholic Worker Movement, 1933-1939." Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement Centenary Essays. Ed. William Thorn, Phillip Runkel, and Susan Mountin.
2. Day, Dorothy. "Our Stand." The Catholic Worker [New York] June 1940.
3. [witnessstorture.org](http://witnessstorture.org)
4. Zucchino, David. "Drone Pilot Fights Afghan War from Nevada Base." Los Angeles Times [Los Angeles] 24 Feb. 2010. Los Angeles Times. Web.
5. The National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Council - [nwtrcc.org](http://nwtrcc.org)
6. Day, Dorothy. "Why Do the Members of Christ Tear One Another?" The Catholic Worker [New York] February 1942.

## End the War because:

**US troop casualties in Afghanistan are on the rise.**

**Military occupation of Afghanistan does not curb terrorism.**

**Military occupation has hampered humanitarian aid and reconstruction efforts.**

**US and NATO occupation creates civilian casualties, angering Afghans.**

**Afghan women continue to face violence and oppression under the occupation.**

**US policy has empowered warlords, drug lords and the Taliban.**

**The occupation contributes to violence and destabilization for ordinary Afghans, including refugees.**

adapted from

[http://www.peacefultomorrows.org/downloads/primer\\_flyer\\_jan\\_09.pdf](http://www.peacefultomorrows.org/downloads/primer_flyer_jan_09.pdf)



# From Teka Childress House

by Annjie Schiefelbein and Jenny Truax

This past Labor Day, we celebrated the three year anniversary of Teka Childress House (TC House). To say that it is different from what we expected would be an understatement of epic proportions! We're still doing long-term hospitality to the same family - the kids are in 6th, 8th, and 10th grade now, and their mom works as a cook. Talking with others through these years, we've learned that most people spend a good amount of their time reconciling how they thought things would be with how they actually are. That is a strong theme for us. It has been far more difficult than we ever imagined, but there is something else - there is love. It is not at all a kind or peaceful love. It is not even the harsh and dreadful love Catholic Workers talk about, at least not in the way we've experienced harsh and dreadful before. It is a love of choice; it is a love with little emotion or "warm fuzzy" feelings. But it is love. It looks painful, often surprising, and sometimes even comforting. We've found it in some of the following scenes:

\* At a recent High School night, we listened to the different school presentations. A plaid-skirted junior enthusiastically recounted her recent service project of cleaning out the space of a homeless family. We wondered what it must have felt like to our eighth-grader who could have been a recipient of such effort, and who was now entering this world where she might become the "giver". It was a little befuddling.

\* We wonder how best to support our high school Sophomore. He is navigating two vastly different realities; being formerly homeless (carrying all the baggage from this experience), and now being ensconced in a mostly white, elite, private high school. How is there room in anyone's brain or heart to navigate these two worlds? He amazes us by prospering in both these disparate realities.

\* We worry that even in a best case scenario - all three kids graduating from both high school and college - that they might (understandably) make a bee-line from poverty to self-centered wealth accumulation. We decided to make sure that the kids at least understand some of our beliefs, and the ideas behind the Catholic Worker. So Jenny and Megan created a Summer Social Justice program at Karen House for six high school students that focused on social analysis and understanding privilege. Our 15 year old participated terrifically. Jenny revised the program for the 11 year old during his summer break. He enthusiastically created a model of the Gulf oil spill, watched current events on *Democracy Now*, gave a house-wide presentation on recycling, and initiated a recycling program for his family that he manages (with

a little help).

\* We try to spend time with the kids after school; it seems extremely important just to be present, to ask questions, and to listen. We listen to reports from football and basketball practices, Student Council meetings. We hear how they did on the science quiz, who got in trouble (never them somehow), and what everyone was wearing. The 11 year old likes to quiz us on the science he learned that day. These moments literally save us.

\* One of the hardest things about our house is that we are helping, not parenting per se, and so feel a lot of responsibility with no real power. We worry an incredible amount. We worry about the typical things kids encounter: who they are hanging out with, whether they are supervised, grades, sex, lying, drugs, etc. The coping mechanisms that have served the family during years of instability can't be easily left behind; the resulting boundary, anger and trust issues continue to be significant obstacles. We often feel helpless to alter the course that poverty, dysfunction, and lack of structure and opportunity have charted for the kids.

\* Sitting at the kitchen table with the 11 year old (whose love of dogs may match Annjie's), searching the internet for a new rescue dog makes life feel ok. Later, watching the boys play with our puppy Obi, and brand new dog Zannah, makes life feel great!

\* We've spent a fair amount of time pondering our own presence in the neighborhood; 2010 was very violent. In June, a large group of kids threw a brick through our bedroom window. In July, a bullet went through that same window, lodging in a wall a foot from where we were sleeping. In October, Annjie was jumped by four teenagers near work as she biked home. These things have left us shaken but physically unharmed. When deciding to stay here after Dan was murdered, Jenny said she wanted to choose where to live based on where she wanted her life to be every day, not by where she could (maybe) have a greater chance to avoid death. It is now as it was then--we want to be here despite our fear.

Sitting here on a beautiful November morning, these things can almost seem hopeful and poignant, but our actual experience of them has not felt all that romantic or poetic. We take a lot of comfort from the Dorothy Day quote we put in our living room last year: "We are often tempted to sadness, knowing life as it here on earth, the suffering, the Cross. We must overcome it daily, growing in love, and the joy which goes with loving." We count ourselves lucky to have enough hope and joy to continue. It may not look like we imagined it would, but we can still recognize it as love. And for now, that is enough. ✦

**Annjie Schiefelbein** inspired her community by finishing her first 5K while simultaneously giving up caffeine. After perfecting homemade toothpaste, **Jenny Truax** has moved on to making shampoo and pasta under the watchful eyes of her dogs Obi and Zannah, both named after Star Wars characters.



# From Karen House

by Timmy Cosentino

Whenever I am talking about Karen House to people for the first time I am often asked a question along the lines of, "So what is it that Karen House does?" I normally reply, "Well, that *is* a really good question!" It is a really good question, and one that is a little difficult to answer. The challenge, for me, comes from the fact that Karen House is not a non-profit, but rather just a really big house. In a world of non-profits with fancy brochures and mission statements, Karen House can seem out of place and possibly even irrelevant. I struggle with answering the question of what we do because, at its core, Karen House provides women with a place to live; no more and no less. We don't have any extra services or licenses to help our guests, just a room. Okay, so some of you right now are saying, "But what about this, and what about that." Things like the clothing room and big community meals happen because you generous readers give us the supplies to do them, but they are not the primary reason for Karen House being here. I speak to groups and individuals about Karen House all the time; I haven't been comfortable listing things that don't mean that much to me, just so I could answer with something more than "giving people a place to live."

I struggled with this until one day I came upon my good idea for the month: a way for me to accurately explain the work of Karen House. It dawned on me to turn the question of "What does Karen House do?" towards the people with whom I am speaking, because the God-honest truth is that what we do at Karen House isn't that special, it is just the only thing we can do. So I ask people to imagine a close family member or friend; let's call this person James (my best friend and community member).

Sadly, something tragic but ordinary has happened to James - maybe his house burned down. Thankfully, James is perfectly safe but he's lost everything: his home, clothes, identification papers, etc. Now what do you do for James, whom you love dearly, to help him out? Of

course you are going to welcome James into your home, help him find new clothes, get his IDs back, help find him a job if he needs it- the list goes on. You are going to do whatever you can (a lot!) to help James get back on his feet because you love him, not because you have a mission statement and a brochure in tow. The important thing is that he is in a crisis, needs help, and you can help him in a basic but very important way, with a place to live.

The analogy goes on though, because it helps to explain many things about Karen House. Imagine again your friend, James, in a crisis and living with you. You

have helped him do some things, but you are beginning to think it is time for James to move on. For one thing, he never cleans up after himself, is cranky and gets in fights with the other people in your house; things are not working out with you and James anymore. You still love him, but are beginning to see you are approaching a limit. So you kindly talk to James and tell him that you can provide him space for another couple of

weeks or a month but that he needs to start working on finding a new space. Or perhaps James is a great house guest and really good things are happening. He gets along with people, helps out, fixes bikes for people, and makes enjoyable background music while playing guitar. So you invite him to live with you as long as he needs, so he can really set himself up in a good situation with a solid place to live. Both scenarios are possible, though the truth is likely somewhere in between.

The analogy can go on, but I think you understand. The major differences between Karen House and your house is that we have a very large view of who friends and family are, possibly more patience in how long we let people live in our house, and a large extended community that supports us. But the reason we help, and our motivations, are not special or saintly but rather the normal loving that anyone would do for those close to them.



Karen House community, Fall 2010 photo: Tony Hilkin

**Timmy Cosentino** can often be found reading the daily comics in the office, or cooking elaborate lunches at Karen House. Soon, he will also be found in Culinary School at Forest Park Community College.



# Catholic Worker Thought & Action

by Carolyn Griffeth

A surprising thing happened at a Catholic Worker (CW) wedding in Dubuque this past October. After enjoying the liturgically beautiful marriage ceremony of Brenna Cussen and Eric Anglada, guests, including myself, were served an extraordinary feast at New Hope Farm, the home of the newlywed couple. The feast was literally the fruit of Eric and Brenna's shared life and labor: creamy squash soup, green beans, potatoes, spinach salad, and grilled chicken, almost all of which were grown a stone's throw from where we sat. The dessert was equally significant: apple and pumpkin pies made from New Hope's apples, pumpkins, and butter, combined with wheat flour grown by a nearby monastery and bartered for with New Hope's eggs.

As guests were finishing off their desserts, a fellow community member made an announcement: An unexpected weather forecast indicated that that night would be the first hard frost. Rather than let their frost-sensitive crops be ruined, the community made a request of those gathered: Would anyone like to take a moment to help gather squash from the fields? What followed was a sight to remember - friends and family members, many still dressed in church clothes, tromping through the fields handing pumpkins to one another. Some folks, myself included, were so content harvesting that we went on to harvest the peppers, tomatoes, and eggplants.

As we picked tomatoes, an interesting conversation ensued between Sheila McCarthy of the South Bend CW, Claire Schaeffer-Duffy of the Worcester Massachusetts CW, and me. Sheila was explaining the subject of her PhD which has to do with the other progressive, religious movements that developed around the same time as the Catholic Worker. Comparing the Catholic Worker to other contemporary movements, they questioned why the Catholic Worker has endured when these other movements have perished.

Since the time of the wedding, I too have pondered this question and attempted to formulate an answer. My immediate response is that the Catholic Worker continues to thrive because it is a living tradition, meaning that no fixed pattern was fossilized early on only to become outdated. Instead, the early Catholic Worker experiments - which were diverse themselves - spawned offspring of even greater variety, making the Catholic Worker in the words of Peter Maurin an organism, not an organization.

Yet, the organic nature of the CW movement seems an insufficient explanation of its enduring vitality. An enduring movement must not only be adaptive to maintain its relevance, but also traditional in a way that maintains its original coherence. In his recent book [The Catholic Worker After Dorothy](#), Dan McKanan argues that "throughout the movement the works of mercy--concrete acts of care for

the 'least of these'--function both as a defining practice and a hermeneutical principle which unites the CW movement despite the variety of its expressions." This argument is supported by the words of Dorothy who called the works of mercy "[O]ur program, our rule of life."

To make sense of the whole of the CW movement - which includes farms like New Hope (which focuses largely on growing food, prayer, and study) and resistance communities like the new White Rose CW in Chicago (which focuses largely on nonviolent direct action) - we must recall that the works of mercy that Dorothy spoke of included not only the "corporal works of mercy" such as feeding the hungry, and sheltering the homeless, but also the often forgotten "spiritual works of mercy." These practices include instructing the ignorant, counseling the doubtful, admonishing sinners, bearing wrongs patiently, forgiving offenses, comforting the afflicted, and praying for the living and the dead. Although the spiritual works of mercy are generally not on the tip of most Catholic Workers' tongues, it is worth noting that these practices are the very things needed to create a thriving community where forgiveness is practiced, and where members are challenged and nurtured. Furthermore, the core Catholic Worker practices of speaking truth to power through nonviolent public resistance to evil and "clarification of thought" through round table discussions and publications are examples of how Catholic Workers to this day attempt to instruct the ignorant, including ourselves.

I am inclined to agree that the practice of the works of mercy truly is what binds together the Catholic Worker movement, both as a common activity and as a "hermeneutical principle," or lens through which we see the world. After all, Dorothy also described the works of mercy as our chosen "revolutionary technique and means for changing the social order." Through this lens, the wonderful intentionality around food at New Hope Farm and around nonviolence at the White Rose are a perfect compliment to the hospitality to the poor practiced at Karen House. To Dan McKanan's argument I would only add the following observation: The combination of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, when taken seriously, also creates an uncommon balance between the inner-work of transforming ourselves in the context of community, and the outer-work of transforming the world. It is this balance which has created an equal place for the worker and the scholar, the activist and the direct care-giver, and thereby maintained a rare dialectic from which the dynamism of the Catholic Worker continues to flow.



Dan McKanan, *The Catholic Worker After Dorothy: Practicing the Works of Mercy in a New Generation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008).

**Carolyn Griffeth** is currently working on a book project titled, "Recipes for the Beloved Community: Works and Wisdom gleaned from the Catholic Worker, New Monasticism, and other Radical, Spiritual Communities," and is seeking articles from all forms of Catholic Worker communities. Check out [belovedcommunityrecipes.org](http://belovedcommunityrecipes.org) or call her at 314-588-8351.

# The Round Table

Karen Catholic Worker House

1840 Hogan ■ St. Louis, MO. 63106

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*The Round Table* is the quarterly journal of Catholic Worker life and thought in St. Louis. Subscriptions are free. Please write to *The Round Table*, 1840 Hogan, St. Louis, MO. 63106. Donations are gladly accepted to help us continue our work with the poor. People working on this issue include: James Meinert, Megan Heeney, Timmy Cosentino, Colleen Kelly, Sarah Latham, Jenny Truax, Teka Childress, Ben Schartman, Carolyn Griffith, and Ellen Rehg. Many thanks to Voices for Creative Nonviolence for their input into this issue. Letters to the editor are encouraged; we'll print as many as space permits.

## Round Table Discussions at Karen House

Please join us for our Spring Round Table series! All discussions are on the third Friday of the month, 7:00-8:30pm in the Karen House dining room.

### **February 18: Afghanistan in Person**

Jerrica Arents from White Rose CW in Chicago recently returned from a delegation to Afghanistan with *Voices for Creative Nonviolence*.

### **March 18: Radical Nonviolence**

We'll hear from some folks who recently participated in the "Radical Nonviolence" retreat at the Possibility Alliance, an inspiring intentional community in northern Missouri that lives electricity- and petroleum-free.

### **April 15: Anti-Racism in Thought and Action**

Justin Stein recently trained with the Catalyst Project learning to assist social justice groups strengthen anti-racist politics and practice.

### **May 20: Food as An Agricultural Act**

Exploring our involvement in agriculture and discovering the effects of our actions from seed, or birth, to our tables.

### Karen House Needs

Coffee (Fair Trade preferred), large heavy blankets, hats, gloves, deodorant, toilet paper, sugar, bus tickets, old bikes!



### Karen House Email Updates!

Let us know (621-4052 or karenhousecw@gmail.com) if you'd like to receive our once-a-month emails, with Karen House needs and event updates

### Kabat House Needs

- People to cook dinner occasionally or teach English to an immigrant
- Dish soap, silverware, laundry soap, toilet paper

### Catholic Worker Resistance Retreat

April 29-May 2, Kansas City

The retreat will be focused on the new nuclear weapons production facility being built in Kansas City, the first one to be built in the last 32 years AND the first one to be owned by a municipality instead of the Federal Government. Contact Nick Pickrell, Cherith Brook Catholic Worker, 816-241-8047

Check [KarenHouseCW.org](http://KarenHouseCW.org) for updates on Karen House, resources on the Catholic Worker, an archive of past RoundTables, and more!