

January
2015

PASI NEWS

Newsletter of Peace Action of Staten Island, www.peacesi.org 718-989-2881

Calendar:

- THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 7 to 9 PM, "The Eric Garner Case and the Movement for Racial Justice in the U.S." Peace Action Meeting. Staten Island Museum, 75 Stuyvesant Place.
- JANUARY 24-26, Peace Action Organizers Meeting and Lobby Day (p. 2)
- THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 7-9 PM, "No Nukes is a Human Right." Peace Action Meeting. Staten Island Museum, 75 Stuyvesant Place.
- FRIDAY – SUNDAY, April 24-26. Peace and the Planet Actions (p. 5).
- SATURDAY, MAY 9, 5:45 - 8 PM, Peace Action Meeting.
- SATURDAY, JUNE 13, 5:45 - 8 PM, Peace Action Meeting.

Inside:

Nat'l Organizing	2
Nicaragua	2
Chomsky	3
Poems	4
Peace & Planet	5
JOIN PASI	6



The Eric Garner Case and the Movement for Racial Justice A Panel Discussion Thursday, January 15, 7 to 9 pm Staten Island Museum, 75 Stuyvesant Place

In a change of time and venue, the next Peace Action of Staten Island meeting will be held on a **Thursday night** and will take place at the **Staten Island Museum** auditorium at 75 Stuyvesant Place, one block from the St. George Ferry Terminal. On the agenda is a panel discussion on the Eric Garner case and the potential of a new movement for racial justice in the U.S. The meeting is open to the public.

Protests about police misconduct and our dysfunctional legal system have exploded in the last several weeks. The roots of the "New Jim Crow" are in our political economic system that produces profound inequality. We have a two tier legal system with one set of rules for the poor and one for the rich and powerful. Poor people are harassed daily and sometimes even brutalized and killed as in the Eric Garner case. People close to power (e.g, police, Wall Street brokers, military torturers, politicians that commit war crimes) have immunity.

Peace Action would not be consistent in our principles if we protest when people are mistreated around the world and then ignore it when it happens in our home. This panel will help us understand the policy changes that could lead to greater equality and justice making our society safer for both police and citizens.

Mr. Alex S. Vitale is associate professor of sociology at Brooklyn College and author of *City of Disorder: How the Quality of Life Campaign Transformed New York Politics*. He is senior adviser to the Police reform Organizing Project and serves on the New York State Advisory Committee to the US Civil Right Commission. His Twitter handle is @avitale. He writes for The Nation magazine and articles he has written can be found online at: <http://www.thenation.com/authors/alex-s-vitale>.

Ms. Shirley Belton is a long-time grassroots revolutionary, practicing Christian, advocate-activist. She is member of Peace Action Staten Island, Stop Mass Incarceration, Community Voices Heard, North Americans against a Police State, Occu-Evolve, the October 22 Coalition to Stop Police Brutality – New York, the People's Power Assembly in New York, and Staten Islanders Against Racism and Police Brutality. She has worked as a social worker, teacher and a behavioral rehabilitation specialist.

Come to Washington and Join Peace Action to tell Congress: Diplomacy, Not War is the Answer

Monday, January 26 Congressional Education Day on Capitol Hill, Washington, DC

Join Peace Action leaders from across the country in the nation's capital on January 26. We are going to Capitol Hill to lay out an agenda to end the wars and promote an end to a militarized foreign policy.

Our National Organizers Meeting will be held January 24-25 to plan our campaigns for peace in 2015. Then, the next day, Monday, January 26, we'll head to Capitol Hill to tell the new Congress that peace and diplomacy, not more war and out of control Pentagon budgets, are the priorities we need.

Help us bring these demands to the new Congress:

- **Diplomacy, Not War** or increased economic sanctions with Iran
- **Political solution** not bombing Iraq and Syria, and implement smarter alternatives to dealing with ISIS
- **Change national spending priorities** -- cut the Pentagon budget and invest in peaceful and just priorities (the U.S. spends nearly as much on "defense" as the rest of the world's countries combined! Enough!)
- **Slash funding for the foolhardy and exorbitant "modernization" of the U.S. nuclear arsenal**

We will **conduct** a lobby training and provide materials for your visits. We will match you with experienced activist lobbyists wherever possible. For more information, email pasi.contact@gmail.com.

Live & Direct from Nicaragua by Sally Jones

I am an American citizen who lived through the Sandinista Revolution (1978-1979), the Contra War (1981-1990), the defeat of the Sandinistas at the polls in 1990, and their electoral victory in 2005 (after being out of power for 16 years). But my knowledge has always been tangential – through news reports.

For my friend, retired pediatrician Dr. Arnie Matlin of Genesee Valley Citizens of Peace (a Peace Action chapter), this history is lived history. In 1988, he became involved in Nicaragua after witnessing firsthand the devastation brought on by the Contra War. Over the course of 10 years, 30,000 Nicaraguans lost their lives in this war, in which the Reagan Administration supplied arms to right wing groups determined to defeat the Sandinistas government. For the last 26 years, through thick and thin, Arnie has been traveling to Nicaragua putting his medical background to work to improve the lives of ordinary Nicaraguans.

Last March, Arnie invited me to accompany him on his 32nd trip to Nicaragua to check on programs his family helps support in a small town called El Sauce. One of these programs is La Casa Materna, a residence for women with at-risk pregnancies. Over the years, Arnie has also helped arrange for undergraduates and medical students to come to El Sauce from Rochester and SUNY Genesee. He wants the students to do more than participate in building projects in Nicaragua. He wants them to understand the historical context of the Sandinista Revolution and what it has meant to the welfare of the people.

It was an honor for me to be invited on a trip to Nicaragua and be immersed for a week in the life of El Sauce and gain directly an appreciation of and love for this beautiful country and its people. Go to my facebook page to see more photos.



*Inez Martinez (coordinator),
Arnie, and Sally at Casa
Materna in El Sauce*



*Arnie, Father Miguel d'Escoto
(former President of UN
General Assembly), and Sally
at Father Miguel's home in
Managua*



Chomsky's Challenge: Organize to Scale

by John Lawrence

On November 15, 2014, Brooklyn for Peace (BFP) celebrated its 30th anniversary by honoring Noam Chomsky with the Pathmaker to Peace Award. Noam Chomsky is the “father of modern linguistics,” a relentless critic of U.S. foreign policy, and world renown champion for the struggle for social justice. On a personal note, I was excited to see Chomsky. His writing influenced the course of my political life. I grew up in a conservative family. My father worked for a military contractor and I was apolitical as a youth. In college, I read Chomsky's *Turn the Tide* which detailed the United States' horrific war on Central America. In his characteristic way, Chomsky meticulously documented the atrocities being committed by the U.S. Outraged by the war and inspired by student activists at my college, I joined the peace movement.

In his talk, Chomsky honored BFP for its persistence and longevity. Creating long standing vibrant institutions is essential for developing movement memory and capacity. He stated there may be more citizen activists in the United States currently than at any other time in U.S. history, but a major deficiency of the movement is that we are scattered across both time and space. Because of the lack of long standing organizations, we tend to work in isolation, forget our history, and reinvent the wheel when faced with new crises.

All of the political challenges we face today have a deep history. For example, racism in the United States is long standing and patterns of discrimination and violence have replayed throughout U.S. history. Immigrants have always been attacked often by the group they were replacing in the workforce. For example, in the 19th Century the Irish were treated almost as poorly as African Americans. Early gynecologists experimented on African American and Irish women without their consent. The racist Immigration Act of 1924 was admired by Hitler and prevented potential Jews and Italians immigrants from fleeing fascism to the United States. The attack on the gains of the civil rights movement and the current criminalization of black life in the United States is similar to the end of Reconstruction following the Civil War and the implementation of Jim Crow. Since the foundation of the U.S., there have only been a few decades in which African Americans could participate in society on somewhat equal terms.

Class war is also a repeated theme in U.S. history. The United States has a much more violent labor history than Europe. Labor parties and unions were virtually destroyed following WWI. And, the downward trajectory of the American working class today can be traced to the attacks against unions and labor parties after WWII and escalated by Reagan in the 1980s.

The U.S. ruling class also has a long history of being incredibly reckless and literally risking the survival of humanity to further their hegemony. In 1983, the Reagan administration was developing first-strike nuclear war capabilities and probing Russian defenses. One day a false alarm went off in the Soviet Union detection system indicating a U.S. nuclear attack. One Soviet Air Defense officer decided it was a computer malfunction and did not initiate a counterattack preventing a nuclear holocaust. The U.S. continues to take enormous risks such as starting wars (e.g. Iran and Afghanistan) and proxy wars (e.g., Somalia, Libya, and Ukraine), fostering a global financial system based gambling and prone to crises, ignoring the global public health infrastructure which could prevent epidemics such as Ebola, and actively undermining an international response to global warming. This suicidal lack of precaution is hardwired into the organization of really existing capitalism. The CEOs of Exxon and the other major oil and coal companies are legally obligated to maximize profit, thus maximize oil production, and the rushing towards a climate catastrophe.

The U.S. public is against the policies of hegemony. In polls about specific policies, Americans favor social democratic policies (e.g., a right to healthcare, expanding social security, higher minimum wage, working through the United Nations to diplomatically solve problems). Why aren't those policies realized? A recent study published in *Perspectives on Politics* by Gilens and Page demonstrates that the very rich set policy in the U.S. and average people have no influence on government. Thus, most people feel alienated from politics. In this last election the U.S. had the lowest voter turnout since World War II.

Continued on page 5...

Future Forward

Progress, moving forward...When people speak of progress they most often refer to humanistic values; but this is not inherently the case. Progress can also be tied up in concepts of ingenuity, existing power structures, ideologies and conceptions of our place within the world.

In the wake of the great war there was devastation and the birth pangs of the resurrection of nations. In this frenzy of the great task to build anew there flourished hubris, amplified by the propaganda uttered by the invention of magical devices transmitting sound and moving picture from great distance; a carrying of specter across great length to celebrate resiliency and triumph. With its expansive visions of might and power, a final conquest and vanquish of nature. In its stead interconnected network of highways running roughshod over villages, massive structures piercing the sky, the relationships of space redefined wholesale, plumes of smoke covering acres in production of shining steel - a literal fall into darkness.

*To Keep Moving Forward,
Perhaps the manifesto of our time
Paving over the past with flashes of blinding light and
mushroom clouds
In an ever increasing fervor to bring on the future*

*Or maybe, more base
An eternal monologue that bids us go forward
As if orders from our central command
That, as with ants, leads us to a perpetual motion
originating from a fear of stopping,
One that is invariably tied in with the fear of
annihilation
- a loss of self*

*Or just perhaps a fear of the present moment
the crossroads of the past and future
whose being is indivisibly tied to the continued existence
of both,
those that precede and the ones that follow*

*A fear of stopping to take notice
Brought on by past experience of pain
Of digging too deep and finding things that we would
rather not
Or as Nixon would put it - "we know not what kind of
wonders the future brings,
but what we do know is that without a doubt it is for the
betterment of mankind"*

I spend a lot of my time feeling sad

By Ilya Jalal

Soldiers, Don't Die for Empire

Soldiers, don't die for empire,
Don't die for nasty deeds
your leaders won't have their own sons and
daughters do.
Don't be deceived--don't go.

Soldiers, don't give your only life
for the lies of liars,
They just want their profits,
Dead bodies don't deter.

Soldiers don't be used
to kill the enemies that are not yours.
See instead what your leaders have done
to manufacture all these enemies.

Soldiers, don't die for empire.
Instead, live to unmake enemies.
Long before Mohammed, Jesus and Moses,
Empires have been creating enemies.

It is their work, it is their greed
It is their creed
Don't make it yours,
Don't die for empire.

(c) Richard Greve, 2014



Don't Nuke the Climate: Peace & Planet Mobilization

Join Us for a Nuclear Weapons-Free, Just and Environmentally Sustainable World

April 24-26, 2015, New York City

The Ukraine crisis and the simulated U.S. nuclear attacks against North Korea remind us that the threat of nuclear war and annihilation didn't end with the Cold War. 2015 will mark 70 years since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; still, the nuclear powers possess nearly 17,000 nuclear weapons. We demand that when the world's nations gather in New York for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference they mandate the beginning the good faith negotiations to eliminate the world nuclear arsenals, as required by the Treaty. Peace Action is part of an International Planning Group organizing an international conference, interfaith service, rally, march, youth and student programs and a global peace wave on April 24-26, preceding the NPT conference. For more information, please visit us at www.PeaceAndPlanet.org, "Like us" on Facebook at Peace & Planet, or e-mail us at info@PeaceAndPlanet.org.

Chomsky's Challenge: Organize to Scale...continued from page 3

So, how do we organize? Chomsky asserted that the U.S. has a strong radical tradition and populist forces have had many successes in expanding the realm of freedom. He stated that perhaps the most important progressive movement in U.S. history was the populist movement, a farmers' movement of at the end of the 19th century. He also discussed some of the gains of the labor, civil rights and women's movements. Chomsky was complimentary of both Occupy Wall Street and the climate justice movement. However, he stated that occupy movement had many of the weaknesses common to populist uprisings in the United States. It was spontaneous, lacked historical memory, and lacked the institutional organization necessary to adapt once the tactic of occupation had played out.

I wanted to ask Chomsky what type of organizations does the "left" need to develop to organize a more integrated and powerful movement with a long term vision and strategy; however, I did not get the opportunity to ask the question. Currently, the "left" in the U.S. is organized into many small relatively autonomous groups that share an amorphous sense of egalitarian values. We can come together for short burst of coordinated activism and biannually to be co-opted by the corporation-dominated Democratic Party.

The nascent worker cooperative movement which is attempting to build a federated system may be a model for the political left. Worker cooperatives are businesses democratically owned and control by workers. Worker cooperatives across the U.S. are building regional organizations such as the New York City Network of Worker Cooperatives and a national organization, the U.S. Federation for Worker Cooperatives, which work to create the educational, legal and political infrastructure necessary for a cooperative economic system to grow.

Politically, the "left" also needs a federated "party" independent from the Democratic Party and corporations where we can democratically and respectfully debate and agree on vision and strategy and have the organizational capacity to sustain coordinated tactics to pursue our ends. Though the lefts core values include solidarity, communalism and democracy, we have no institutional vehicle to practice democratic decision making and planning on a scale large enough to really vie for power. Yet the time seems right to build such an organization. Since the 2008 crash, worldwide, dissatisfaction with corporate capitalism is palpable. Moreover, the climate crisis, perpetual war and the political and economic disenfranchisement of the 99% make building a "party" imperative. This is our challenge. Humanities survival literally rides on us rising to that challenge.

(John Lawrence is a Professor of Psychology at the College of Staten Island. In addition to his professional work in the field of psychology, specializing in psychosocial burn rehabilitation, he writes about social justice issues and is on the editorial board of Grassroots Economic Organizing (GEO) Newsletter, which focuses on the movement for economic democracy, and is on the board of Peace Action of Staten Island.)

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The Eric Garner Case and the Movement for Racial Justice

Thursday
Jan 15, 2015 7-9 PM

PASI Meeting
Staten Island Museum
75 Stuyvesant Place
(one block from St.
George Ferry Terminal)
Staten Island, NY

PASI Members head to the Millions March NYC on December 13, 2014

