



PASI NEWS

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

Calendar:

- SAT., JUNE 7, 10 AM – 3 PM. “Earth and Food Justice Forum.” Unitarian Fellowship Hall, 312 Fillmore St. At 1 PM, screening of “Bidder 70.”
- THURS., JUNE 12 6-8 PM. “Honoring Jonathan Schell” All Souls, 1157 Lexington Ave. at 80th Street. *Free, open to the public.*
- SAT., JUNE 14 5:45 PM. “Candidate Forum.” Olivet Presbyterian Hall, 97 Myrtle Ave. (at Broadway)
- MON., OCT. 6, 6-9 PM. Jeremy Scahill to be honored by Peace Action NYS. Please save the date!
- SAT., OCT. 18 5-8 PM. MAKE FOOD NOT WAR ANNUAL DINNER. Please save the date!

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**PASI Meeting &
Candidates Forum 2014
Saturday, June 14, 5:45 to 8 pm**

NOTE SPECIAL LOCATION
Olivet Presbyterian Hall, 97 Myrtle Ave, SI
at Broadway, one block north of Forest Ave.



Dust off your Peace Voter credentials! It’s an election year! The general election takes place on Tuesday, November 4th, but you will want to know who is running now and what their positions are on issues important to you.

PASI has invited the Congressional, State Senate and State Assembly candidates to attend a Candidates Forum that will take place on Saturday, June 14th at Olivet Presbyterian Hall. This forum will allow each candidate to give an opening statement, to ask a question themselves, and to take questions from the audience. If a candidate sends a representative because they cannot make the forum, they will be allowed to give an opening statement for their candidate but will not be allowed to participate in Q&A.

Peace Action members will be given the opportunity to ask the first question of the candidates but members of the public are encouraged to come and participate, too. The moderator of the forum will be Dennis Dell’Angelo, the former President of the Pleasant Plains, Prince’s Bay, Richmond Valley Civic Association and a board member of Peace Action of Staten Island. *This forum is free and open to the public. There will be light refreshments. From the Staten Island Ferry by bus, take the S44 or S48.*



EARTH AND FOOD JUSTICE DAY EXPO
Saturday, June 7, 2014, 10 am to 3 pm
Unitarian Fellowship Hall, 312 Fillmore Street, SI
Michele Rowan

The Social Justice Committee of the Unitarian Church of Staten Island (UCSI) and Peace Action of Staten Island (PASI) will co-sponsor an Earth and Food Justice Day Expo in the UCSI Fellowship Hall, on Saturday, June 7 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Admission is free.

The Expo will feature the work of pro-environmental and food consciousness groups, such as Food and Water Watch, The Blue Belt of S.I., Protectors of Pine Oak Woods, Sane Energy Project, and S.I. Council for Animal Welfare, and North Shore Waterfront Conservancy.

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Pope Francis at Bethlehem Wall
Photo: Boston Globe



US Pres. Barack Obama walks with Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu (L) and Palestinian Pres. Mahmoud Abbas in Washington, September 1, 2010
Photo: The Nation



Source: Wikimedia Commons

Negotiations Must be Based on Good Faith

by Richard Greve

The "peace process" between Israel and the Palestinians have been going on for decades under the auspices of the US government. These negotiations have always ended in failure, until another administration attempts to restart the negotiations.

The said aim of the negotiations have been the well known "two state solution", meaning a state for the Israelis and a state for the Palestinians based on the 1967 boundaries. These boundaries give Israel 78% of historic Palestine, and the Palestinians 22%, clearly, not an even split. However the Palestinians have agreed to these boundaries, along with the Arab League in 2002, which would include recognition of Israel by the Arab nations. The Israelis however have shown no interest in this proposal for an agreement.

Over the last few decades, even while negotiations were going on with the Palestinians, Israel has built large settlement blocks throughout the occupied territories, settlements for Jews only, on land that was confiscated from the Palestinians. This is actually a violation of International Law, which states that a conquered land and people must be protected by the occupying power, and that the demographics of the conquered territory must not be altered. The settlements are now so extensive on the West Bank and East Jerusalem, that if one looks at a map, it appears that a two state solution is now impossible. Israel has moved about 600,000 Jews into these settlements built on land taken from the Palestinians.

Any negotiations are bound to end in failure when one party continues to take land that belongs to the other, even when negotiations are going on. It's like two people arguing on how to divide a pizza, while one side is eating the pie. The US did not insist that Israel stop its settlements and land theft even during the talks. The US has leverage with Israel based on the huge financial aid we give to them, but the US did not use it.

Negotiations can only succeed if there is good faith on both sides to find a solution. When one side keeps taking the other side's land to build more settlements, in what has been called an apartheid system, this is clearly an example of very bad faith, and a lack of a genuine interest to find a two state solution. Perhaps the time has come for Israel and Palestine to exist as one state, with equal rights under the law for all its citizens, without regard to religion or ethnicity. This conflict has boiled down to a human rights issue of great importance to the world.

PASI Wants YOU on the Crew!

Do you like to hang out at the beach, make new friends, a cool drink in your hand in a lounge chair under the shade of a canopy? Then, join the **PASI Summer Tabling Crew**. PASI wants to be out there again this summer sharing a little peace & love, giving out a few peace buttons and letting folks know that, indeed, there is a peace group on Staten Island! Volunteers needed. Call 718-989-2881 or email pasi.contact@gmail.com.



Some of the Crew: Rich, Louise, Mike, Eileen and Sally at the beach (PASI News Photo)



Rescue in Maarat al-Noaman, Syria
Photo: New York Times

What Can We Do?

Commentary by PASI Chair Eileen Bardel

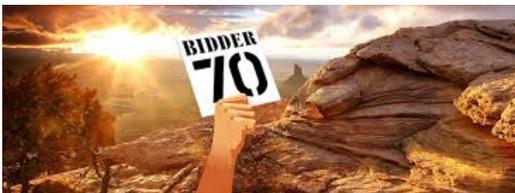
On Saturday, May 10th, Peace Action of Staten Island held a screening of the Oscar-nominated documentary “Dirty Wars” by Jeremy Scahill at the Unitarian Church. A thoughtful and lively conversation led by board member Rich Florentino ensued after the showing. Scahill’s film about the clandestine operations of the Joint Special Operations Command(JSOC) skillfully portrayed the senseless killings of innocent people in Afghanistan. The lack of accountability for these horrific actions leaves the families of the victims feeling helpless but also determined to fight back even if it means they will die doing it.

As peace activists we are compelled to ask ourselves what do we do to stop the never-ending wars that rob us of our humanity. Peace Action Co-Chair, Rich Greve commented that he hesitated to send email photos of the victims of drone attacks to the membership because of their graphic content. Recently there was a photo in the *New York Times* of a little girl who had been rescued from the rubble after a military strike in the town of Aleppo in Syria. As I browsed the Time’s archives to see if I could put an exact date to the photo I viewed picture after picture of the suffering of the children of Syria. The pain and sorrow of the families and rescuers is heartbreaking to look at.

But allow me, if you will, to comment further about the photograph of the little girl that sparked my search. She is probably about two years old, dressed in a red jumpsuit and is wearing gray and white striped socks. Her light brown, pixie-cut hair is matted and crowns her red, bruised, doll-like face. The man who has rescued her could be her father judging from his pained expression. He is clutching her tightly and her tiny arm is holding tightly onto his. There are no visible tears but the child’s eyes are tightly shut and one can only imagine what she is feeling. To the right of the photo we see two outstretched arms of a man who is guiding them to safety. The dust of the rubble is visible on his fingertips. I can’t look at this photo without wanting to do something to make it better for her.

What can we do? We can continue to raise our voices and speak out about the atrocities of war.

We can resolve that we will not be overcome by inertia or the feeling that what we do doesn’t make a difference. War was averted with Syria because the American people said no! Get involved and stay involved in the struggle for peace and justice in our communities, in our country and in the world. The children of the world deserve no less from us.



EARTH AND FOOD JUSTICE DAY EXPO

Continued from page 1

Other exhibitors will include Physicians for a National Health Plan, Move to Amend, and Occupy Staten Island. Food counselor Mary Hernandez will offer information about intentional eating.

In addition to the Expo, the award-winning documentary, “Bidder 70”, will be screened at 1:00 p.m. The film tells the story of Tim DeChristopher, 27-year-old economics student, Utah resident and climate justice activist. In an audacious move of citizen activism at a Bureau of Land Management auction of public lands for oil and gas leases, DeChristopher raised his Paddle #70 to bid more than \$1.7 million on 22,000 acres land with money he did not have. His bold direct action de-railed the auction and saved the public lands at the cost of two felony convictions and a two-year jail sentence.

The Unitarian Church of Staten Island is located at 312 Fillmore Street, one block from the east gate of Snug Harbor, Staten Island, NY 10310. This is a public event. No admission. Organic refreshments will be served. All are welcome!



The Land of No Super PACs *by Sarah Walters*

I was recently in India and found the country to be in the throes of another election that will put into place a new Prime Minister and Parliament.

By the time this appears in our newsletter, it will have been decided. The current Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh is not seeking reelection which has thrown open the gates to new voices from the two main parties; the Congress Party who has been in power for most of India's history since independence in 1947 and the Bharat Janata Party that had been seen in the past as a Hindu nationalist party.

Bharat Janata has been trying to shed this narrow-minded skin of late and did win an election about ten years ago. Their candidate now is Nanendra Modi who is currently serving as the Chief Minister of the state of Gujarat. Mr. Modi has won great acclaim for bringing about economic success in his state and is seen as one who will fight corruption, keep women safe and get things done. However, Mr. Modi was accused of taking no action when communal riots engulfed Gujarat in 2002 when Hindu mobs killed scores of Muslims. Although the Supreme Court cleared him of any wrong doing, it is still a cloud over his head.

In spite of this, however, what amazed me so much about this election is that it is truly a national affair. The whole country is stirred up and actively participating. They know the issues, no matter the caste, class or religion. Voting takes place over several weeks. People will stand in line for hours if necessary to make sure that they vote. There is no voter suppression. Indians are not blitzed by TV ads and robo calls.

There is much we can learn here about the importance of making your voice heard. Voter apathy does not exist in India. Neither does super PACs. Whoever wins there, it will be because the people have spoken, not the corporations.

(Editors note: Mr. Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party won 282 of 543 parliamentary seats, more than enough to form a government without coalition partners.)

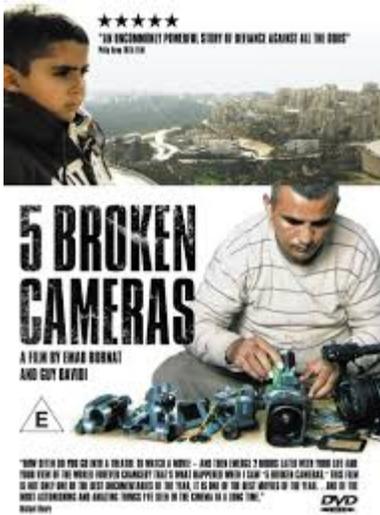
PEOPLE'S CLIMATE MARCH NYC SEPT. 20-21

This is an invitation to change everything.

In September, world leaders are coming to New York City for a historic UN summit on climate change. With our future on the line and the whole world watching, let's take a weekend and use it to bend the course of history.

Together, we'll take to the streets to demand the world we know is within our reach: a world with an economy that works for people and the planet. A world safe from the ravages of climate change. A world with good jobs, clean air, and healthy communities for everyone.

To change everything, we need everyone on board. September 20-21 in New York City. Go to peoplesclimatemarch.org.



Israel and Palestine in Independent Film *by Anne Bowers*

The Israeli/Palestinian conflict is highly emotive and difficult for many people to speak of in a rational manner. The Jewish people feel they have a right to a country of their own, a safe haven after millennia of persecution while Palestinians are struggling to retain their ancestral lands – lands where their families have lived for generations, built their homes, cultivated centuries old olive and citrus groves, tended their flocks of goats and sheep. Unfortunately mainstream media has not presented a balanced view of the situation making it difficult for most to think beyond political rhetoric and clichés and come to a reasonable conclusion. Most Americans learn about the horrors of the Holocaust and the Auschwitz and Buchenwald concentration camps – and they were horrors, but how many have heard of Sabra and Shatila or, more recently, Operation Cast Lead?

Palestinians and Israeli filmmakers – some of them rank amateurs with hand-held cameras – have been making excellent documentaries showing the conflict between Israel and Palestine from a different perspective. One of them, nominated for an Academy Award, is ***Five Broken Cameras***, a documentary about Bilin, a village in the West Bank that holds weekly non-violent protests against Israeli confiscation of their lands. Villagers, including a young man in a wheel chair, are joined by international activists, including Israelis, armed with little other than their banners, posters and idealism. They defy Israeli tear gas and rubber bullets as well as live ammunition to make their voices heard. The film gets its name from the five cameras smashed by Israeli soldiers during these demonstrations and was done as a collaborative effort by Emad Burnat, a Palestinian, and Guy David, an Israeli.

Another excellent documentary is ***Tears of Gaza***, the on-site filming of the Israeli air and land assault on Gaza during Operation Cast Lead when 1400 unarmed Palestinians, 347 of them children, were killed in a three week period in 2008-9. Hospitals, schools and refugee centers were bombed. The photographer filmed a young girl running down the street screaming in terror, a two story high bull-dozer smashing through a Palestinian home, and an Israeli F-16 swooping down to bomb a civilian center. It is a difficult film to watch because of explicit images of infants who have been shot at close range – the powder burns easily seen on their bodies.

Where Should the Birds Fly is another account of Operation Cast Lead filmed by a young Palestinian woman, Fida Quishta, when she was 22 years old. Her father forbade her to leave the house during the attack, so she climbed out the bathroom window and had her sister toss the camera to her. Fida found herself in the midst of the assault documenting the carnage taking place around her. At one point she interviews a 10 year old child, Mona, whose family was herded into a building which was then bombarded by Israeli forces. When asked if she lost family members, Mona responded as if in shock, “Not many – only 22” and then she went on to list both parents, her siblings, aunts, uncles and cousins.

This Land Divided is an historical account of the founding days of Israel in the mid-1940's based on interviews of soldiers who took part in the clearance of Palestinian villages. It is unflinching in its honesty and a tribute to Palestinian resilience. The director is an Israeli woman, Alice Rothchild, who came from a strongly pro-Zionist background but began to rethink her political views after seeing life in Gaza and the West Bank under occupation. Another film on this subject is ***The Gate Keepers*** with interviews of former members of the Shin Bet, the Israeli secret service, showing how their views on Israeli policies have changed.

Waltz with Bashir is an animated film of the massacres that took place at Sabra and Shatila. ***The Great Book Robbery*** is an account of the plundering of the libraries of Palestinian intellectuals officially sanctioned by Israel. On a lighter note, ***Flying Paper*** is a delightful film of Palestinian children making kites after “borrowing” their uncles' newspapers for the paper. ***Divine Intervention*** is a dark comedy by the brilliant Palestinian director Suleiman done in a series of vignettes. In one scene, a balloon with the face of Arafat floats over an Israeli check-point with the soldiers calling for instructions to shoot it down. In another, a beautiful Palestinian ninja defeats a team of Israeli sharp-shooters with her aerial acrobatics.

These are excellent films that give much food for thought.

Peace Action of Staten Island

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Thank You for Joining or Renewing Your PASI Membership.

If you aren't a member yet or still need to renew, it's easy.

Membership form

We have a sliding scale membership. No member turned away. Donations are tax-deductible.

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*Make check out to PASI and
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Peace Action of Staten Island, Inc. is a 501(c)3 non-partisan, non-profit organizations. Peace Action is dedicated to promoting the non-violent resolution of conflict, the abolition of nuclear weapons, halting the global spread of conventional arms, building a human rights culture and supporting human needs instead of militarism.

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EARTH AND FOOD JUSTICE DAY EXPO

Saturday, June 7, 2014,
10 am to 3 pm
Unitarian Fellowship Hall
312 Fillmore St.
Staten Island, NY

Candidate Forum

Saturday
June 14, 2014 5:45 PM
PASI Meeting
Olivet Presbyterian Hall
97 Myrtle Ave (@
Broadway)
Staten Island, NY

Honoring Jonathan Schell

1943-2014

Journalist, Truth Teller, Nuclear Abolitionist

Thursday, June 12, 2014, 6 -8 pm

Unitarian Church of All Souls, 1157 Lexington Ave, Manhattan

Program includes: Katrina vanden Heuvel, Editor and Publisher of *The Nation*, Cora Weiss, UN Representative, *International Peace Bureau*, and Rev Julie Johnson Staples, Interim Minister for Education at *Riverside Church*, and several others

Music: Singer Peter Yarrow (of Peter, Paul & Mary)
and WaFoo, "Wind of Japan" Ensemble