



PASI NEWS

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

Calendar:

- THURS. JUNE 9, 6:30 to 8:30 PM, PASI MEETING. Unitarian Fellowship Hall, 312 Fillmore St.
- WED. JUNE 22, 7 PM, Preparing for the March in Philadelphia. New York Society for Ethical Culture, 2 West 64th Street, Manhattan
- JULY 15-21. People's Convention in Cleveland before RNC. www.counterrnc2016.org
- SUN. JULY 24, ALL DAY. Clean Energy Revolution in Philadelphia March before DNC. www.cleanenergymarch.org
- SUN. AUGUST 7, HIROSHIMA and NAGASAKI Commemoration at Unitarian Church, 312 Fillmore St.
- SATURDAY, OCT. 15. 5 PM. MAKE FOOD NOT WAR DINNER. Olivet Presbyterian Fellowship Hall, 97 Myrtle Ave (at Broadway)

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Drones and the Global War of Terror in Pakistan

Thurs. June 9, 2016 6:30-8:30 PM
Unitarian Fellowship Hall
312 Fillmore St., Staten Island

At the next PASI meeting, on Thursday June 9th, 6:30 PM at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Staten Island, **Peace Action of Staten Island will be hosting a special screening of Wounds of Waziristan. A discussion with College of Staten Island professor, and Pakistani scholar, Dr Saadia Toor will follow.**

Since the drone attacks began in Pakistan in 2004, much of the focus has been on the technology. And, although the borderlands between Pakistan and Afghanistan are endlessly debated and declared upon by journalists and pundits, the ordinary people who actually live there are rarely heard from. Wounds of Waziristan records the voices of those who have been either labeled "militants," or summarily dismissed as "collateral damage."

Dr. Saadia Toor is a long time anti-war feminist activist and educator at the College of Staten Island. Her book ***State of Islam: Culture & Cold War Politics in Pakistan*** was published in 2011 by Pluto Press and chronicles the role played by the US in marginalizing the Left and strengthening the various forces of the Right in Pakistan from the early 1950s onwards.

Please join us for this important discussion on US drone wars and the history of intervention in Pakistan.

*Peace Action of Staten Island welcomes everyone to come to its meetings. New faces are very welcome. **Doors will open at 6 pm. This is a Pot Luck! Please bring something to share for our light refreshment table.***

Bus Directions from Staten Island Ferry Terminal: Take S40 Bus to Clinton Ave and Richmond Terrace. Walk 2 blocks. The Unitarian Church is at Clinton Ave and Fillmore St.

Drone Illness

The assassination order is given while coffee cups
sit on desks
in a whitehouse room.

The target is chosen based on intelligence-often-
wrong.

They have his cellphone number to track him down
and the drone is ready in the sky.

The young soldier slept badly last night--he
remembered the last strike. The kids.
Collateral damage. A cost-of-war they told him.
This somehow didn't satisfy. They gave him
antidepressants.
All would be fine.

But it was not.

The whitehouse staff, who drank good coffee
were the judge and jury but there was no trial
and he was the executioner growing more and more
unwilling.

Had the target let someone use his cellphone--his
wife, his brother.

And the missile doesn't kill just one-he had seen
that. He did it.

Now he was having coldsweats as he entered the
modern kill box
with the comfortable chair.

Why are we doing this. Well of course terrorists,
terrorists, terrorists.
But now, was he one too.

The kids were innocent.

In civil wars is this our business anyway
We shocked and awed them with our might.
Might not they be angry.

He didn't go in that comfy pilot chair that day
He just said no. He would have hell to pay
but maybe a better hell where he could sleep.

(c) Richard Greve, February 16, 2016

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May 1st Prison Strike by Jen Carlo

On May 1st, some Peace Action Staten Island members joined the Industrial Workers of the World, the IWW Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee, and the New York City Anarchist Black Cross in a noise demonstration in lower Manhattan in solidarity with the Free Alabama Movement's call for inmates in Alabama's prison system to sit down instead of working for a system that exploits them.

Inmates in Alabama's Department of Corrections (ADOC) facilities are subjected to many civil and human rights abuses, including overcrowding, substandard living conditions, denial of release and parole, exorbitant medical fees, and also the fact that they are forced to work for little or no money. Forced prison labor is widespread in the US, and many items labeled "Made in the USA", are actually made by inmates who were not paid or were paid pennies per hour to make this. Last year, Whole Foods came under fire after End Mass Incarceration Houston called them out for using forced prison labor to produce their cheeses and tilapia. When taken into the context of an unjust Criminal Justice system and mass incarceration of young people of color, the practice of incarcerated workers being forced to work for little or no pay reminds us far too much of the earlier practice of slavery.

Previous protests in Alabama had resulted in riots at the Holman facility in which two guards were assaulted, but the work strike which spread to three prisons was completely nonviolent and did achieve the goal of blocking a bill that would have expanded the prison system in Alabama. Inmates who participated in the strike complained of "bird feeding" in which they were given insufficient food or starvation rations, and the facilities were put on lockdown. The strike ended after 10 days, when ADOC brought in other incarcerated workers as strikebreakers.

Inmates across the US are expected to go on strike September 9, 2016, on the 45th anniversary of the Attica prison riots.



VOTER SUPPRESSION NYC-Style

by Jen Carlo

The New York City presidential primary held on April 19th was fraught with problems for many voters. Some polling places were not open until the afternoon, other polling places were experiencing technical issues with the ballot readers and voters were turned away, and some voters who were registered as longtime Democrats or Republicans showed up to vote only to learn that despite having checked their voter registration status online against the State Board of Elections records, they either were not found in the poll books (which are maintained by the county BOE), or that their registration had been switched.

Shortly prior to the election, it was discovered that more than 126,000 voters were dropped from the rolls in Brooklyn alone. Many of these voters were either turned away from the polls or forced to vote by affidavit, most of which were not counted. In Staten Island alone, only about 500 of 4,566 affidavit ballots were counted in the certified results.

Due to these and other irregularities, **ElectionJusticeUSA** filed a lawsuit to attempt to delay certification of the election until these issues were resolved. The NYC BOE suspended two clerks in the Kings County BOE, and the NYC Council passed a number of laws that would require the county BOEs in NYC to be more transparent with voter records, but neither of these actions addressed the widespread voter disenfranchisement that took place in New York on April 19th. Despite this, the election results were certified on May 5. Under election law, voters forced to vote by affidavit had until May 25th to inquire with the BOE as to the status of their ballot, get the documentation required, and file a court hearing. More information can be found on the ElectionJusticeUSA Facebook post on this topic:

<https://www.facebook.com/ElectionJusticeUSA/posts/878215785638449:0>

VeriGreedy the Story of Neo-Liberal Development in the USA

by Ilya Geller



A decade ago Verizon promised to lay down a high speed fiber optic network throughout the northeast of the United States receiving billions of dollars in subsidies and tax breaks, reducing their taxes to nearly nothing (varying at 10% to -1.8%, depending on year and accounting). During this time they brought in revenues hovering around \$100 billion dollars a year. As this monopoly went around ripping out copper, their accountants went on re-distributing funds. Through financial machinations Verizon was able to report net losses on the FIOS network and back out of their contractual obligations with the claim that FIOS was unprofitable.

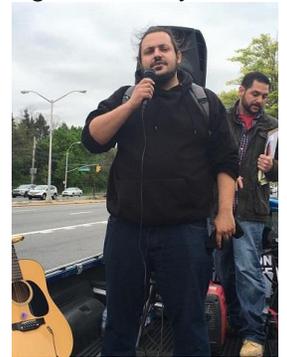
Over the past 5 years Verizon shrank their workforce in half (from 83,000 to 39,000), through lay-offs and attrition. On Staten Island Verizon hired a total of zero employees over a period of 16 years. At the same time they have denied the wireless retail employees raises, despite the fact that the Verizon CEO, Lowell McAdam, makes their entire yearly pay in a little over a day.

On April 12th Communications Workers of America (CWA), and members of International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, employed by Verizon went on strike for the future of good paying jobs on Staten Island and the USA. Peace Action of Staten Island has been alongside them on the streets and in meetings since day one.

On May 5th I spoke at CWA Local 1102's National Day of Action Against Verizon, connecting the union-busting at home to worker exploitation abroad. One week later workers in the Philippines contracted out to operate Verizon call centers for \$1.78 an hour met with a delegation from CWA, and joined them in protest for a fair contract and better working conditions.

Board members of Peace Action of Staten Island “adopted” the picket at the Verizon Wireless on New Dorp Lane (corner of Hylan Blvd) on Saturday's between the hours of 11:00 AM and 2:00 PM.

[On May 27, 2016, after 45 days on strike, CWA reached an agreement “in principle” on a four-year contract with two unions representing nearly 40,000 workers, with key concessions made by Verizon on creating new jobs.]



Facebook photo (L to R: Ilya Geller, PASI co-chair, Steve Lawton, President, CWA Local 1102)

PASI in DC



A PASI delegation went to the offices of Rep. Dan Donovan on May 25, 2016, to lobby on the final day of the national Peace Action organizers meeting. Dan Donovan is the new, conservative, Republican member of Congress, elected in May 2015, in a special election with low voter turnout (11%). He replaced former Rep. Michael Grimm who was convicted of tax fraud and sentenced to 8 months in prison in 2015.

PASI asked Rep. Donovan to defund the Long Range Stand-Off nuclear weapon when it comes up in the next couple of weeks as an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act. They also asked him to co-sponsor the S.A.N.E. Act (HR 1534) and oppose plans to spend

\$1 Trillion over the next 30 years escalating the nuclear arms race. In addition, they asked him to oppose U.S. arms sales to Saudi Arabia by co-sponsoring HJ Res 90 on the grounds of human rights violations in the use of these arms in Yemen. PASI also asked him to support declassifying the unreleased 28 pages of the 9/11 report (HR 14) which may reveal the Saudi role in the 9/11 attacks. There was no commitment on the part of Deputy Chief of Staff Blaire Bartlett that Donovan would support PASI's asks but she said she would pass on the requests.

PASI photo (L to R: Ilya Geller, Sally Jones, Jen Carlo, Tiffany and Tatiana Arguello, David Jones and Mike Santangelo).

Multi-Faith Anti-Drone Conference: Stony Point Center April 8-9, 2016

"McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the designer of the F-15. And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies to flourish is called the US Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps." (Thomas Friedman, NY Times)



A group of interfaith peace activists gathered at the Stony Point Center in Westchester County, NY on April 8th and 9th, to address the failure of the peace movement to address drone warfare effectively.

First, they heard from **Arun Kundnani**, author of *The Muslims Are Coming!: Islamophobia, Extremism, and the Domestic War on Terror* and Adjunct Professor of Media, Culture, and Communication at New York University, who set the stage in a talk he called "Violence Always Comes Home: Terrorism, Empire and Islamophobia." He quoted Thomas Friedman (see above quote) and said that America has taken on the role of the British Empire and right now is exhibiting the anxiety of an empire on its last legs. He debunked the current C.V.E. or Countering Violent Extremism policy because it is based on the premise that there is an ideological problem in the Muslim community. The use of the entrapment model by U.S. anti-terrorism agencies is counter-productive, along with the constant vocabulary around Islamic extremism. We need to get inside the argument that Islam is violent. For that, we need to talk about Empire. ISIS is a symptom of capitalism, not a threat to capitalism.

In 2012, **Medea Benjamin** of **CodePink** published *Drone Warfare: Killing by Remote Control*. Addressing the conference, she acknowledged that we are in a "pretty miserable" place today. Even Bernie Sanders says he "likes" drones. Drones are a sort of placeholder for some other kinds of wars – like carpet-bombing. Drones give the appearance of keeping the war going with no U.S. casualties and the appearance of "being tough." It is a technical solution to a political problem which is that Americans are war weary. There is a bi-partisan consensus in Congress that drones are fine. Drone killing has become President Obama's solution to not adding more prisoners to Guantanamo. Few whites are victims of drones and these are mostly by mistake, making the use of drones overtly racist. On the positive side, she sees support for drone warfare slipping. In 2012, 83% of Americans supported drone warfare (Washington Post/ABC). More recently, that support has slipped to 58% (Pew Research Center, 2015). We must continue to engage the public on the consequences of and blowback from drone warfare.

Other speakers brought other perspectives. **Muhammed Malik** of **Muslims for Ferguson** noted the relationship between those killed in marginalized communities in the U.S and those killed in war by drones. **Rabbi Michael Feinberg** of the **Greater NY Labor-Religion Coalition** reminded the audience drones are only one weapon in a huge arsenal used for warfare. His experience in the labor movement has taught him how important it is to make room for everyone and bring marginalized people directly into the leadership. **Imam Hakim Rashadah** of **Masjid Al-Ikhlās** in Newburgh, NY, recalled how the FBI entrapped four vulnerable men from his mosque who were easily manipulated by promises of money and setup for their arrest on terrorism charges. **Brian Trautman** of **Veterans for Peace** from Albany talked about the Veterans Challenge Islamophobia campaign and the civil disobedience of anti-drone activists like Mary Anne Grady **Flores** who was sentenced to 6 months in prison for protesting at Hancock Air Force Base near Syracuse, NY. (She is currently out of prison pending an appeal.)

PASI News photo (L to R: Aaron Stauffer of Religions for Peace, Rabbi Feinberg, Irene Siegel of Jewish Voices for Peace, Muhammed Malik, Imam Rashadah.) See video of conference sessions at <http://unityandsolidarity.org/2016/04/18/stony-point-multi-faith-anti-drone-conference-489/>

The Democratic Presidential Candidates on Foreign Policy

April 17, 2016 A Forum at Judson Memorial Church



NYU Professor Mark Crispin Miller, author of *Boxed In: The Culture of TV; The Real Case for Electoral Reform*, led a teach-in at Judson Memorial Church on April 17, 2016, just 2 days before the New York State Presidential Primary, with **Scott Ritter, former U.S. Marine Major and former U.N. weapons inspector in Iraq**, and **Ray McGovern, former U.S. Army Infantry/Intelligence officer and former CIA analyst for 30 years**. The topic was an examination of the foreign policy positions of the Democratic Presidential candidates, in particular with relation to the U.S.

global war on terrorism.

Ritter took the audience back to the Iraq-Iran War (1980-1988). When Iran started prevailing in the war, Iraq went from being a rogue state run by a rogue dictator to a close ally of the U.S. receiving \$100 million in loans and intelligence support for their war effort. Then, overnight, Iraq switched back to being an enemy after it invaded Kuwait in August 1990. Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was not supposed to survive the Gulf War in 1991 that crushed the Iraqi Army, so U.S. President George H.W. Bush turned to economic sanctions and eventually a no-fly zone. The next President, Bill Clinton, supported the Bush I policy and solidified it with the 1998 Iraq Liberation Act which had overwhelming support in Congress. Senator Bernie Sanders joined the full Senate and voted for the Act, too. (He voted against the first Gulf War in 1991 and was a “no” in the 2002 Iraq war vote. Senator Hillary Clinton, now in the Senate, said she supported the 1998 Act, and voted in support of going to war with Iraq in 2002.)

Moving to Libya, in 2011, during widespread Arab Spring uprisings in Libyan cities, then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton pushed for intervention and regime change. Bernie Sanders, again, voted in support of a no fly zone but called for the U.S. to go to the U.N. to get approval from the Security Council. Today, as Libya descends into chaos, President Obama calls Libya his main foreign policy mistake.

In Syria, Ritter described the “peaceful uprising” across Syria from 2011 as not so peaceful. According to Ritter, the sarin nerve agent used in Syria that nearly provoked the U.S. to launch a major attack on Syria, did not have the same signature as the chemicals possessed by the Syrian military. Secretary of State Kerry cited an unidentified “government source” to lay blame on the Syrian government. The cost of the Syrian war has decimated all sides. Of the 450,000 killed in the Syrian civil war, 200,000 are Syrian armed forces, 150,000 rebel forces, and 85,000 civilians. According to Ritter, U.S. policy in Syria is falling apart under the weight of its own lies. Hillary Clinton continues to support regime change and a “no fly zone” in Syria. Sanders has been more circumspect, warning of “getting sucked into perpetual warfare in that region.”

In Iran, the U.S. government (going back to Bush II) went overboard hyping its nuclear program, insisting that the country had to be willing to go to war over the program. As Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton bragged about how sanctions drove the Iranians to the table. In Ritter’s opinion, the opposite is true. In the Senate, Bernie Sanders voted in support of the Iran deal.

Former CIA employee Ray McGovern talked about the pressure on President Obama to attack Syria in 2013. If the Syrian government used chemical weapons in the civil war, that was going to be the “red line,” that, if crossed, would initiate the U.S. to launch attacks on Syria. According to McGovern, this was a red line placed by Hillary Clinton prior to her leaving the State Department at the end of 2012. Obama had to actually go behind Secretary of State Kerry’s back to find a way out of the rush to attack Syria. He also stated that Clinton’s use of a private email server was dangerous.

See a recording of the forum at <http://raymcgovern.com/2016/04/19/scott-ritter-and-ray-mcgovern-talk-about-the-two-democratic-candidates-foreign-policy-view-moderator-nyu-professor-crispin-miller/>.

Photo from video recording (L to R: Mark Crispin Miller, Scott Ritter, Ray McGovern)

Right-Wing Populist Movements



Brooklyn for Peace hosted a thought-provoking forum on the “Rise of the Right in the U.S.” at the Commons in Brooklyn on May 9, 2016. The panelists were Chip Berlet, award-winning investigative journalist and author, with Matthew Lyons, of *Right-Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort* (Guilford Press, 2000) and Bill Fletcher, host of “The Global African” TV show on Telesur and author of *Solidarity Divided: The Crisis in Organized Labor and a New Path toward Social Justice* (UC Press, 2009). Bill Fletcher is also a contributor to *The Politics of the Right*, edited by Leo Panitch and Greg Albo (Merlin, 2015).

With the emergence of Donald Trump as the Republican Presidential nominee, many individuals and groups in the U.S. and around the world are paying more attention to the strength of American right-wing populism that now has a voice in the Trump candidacy.

Chip Berlet said it is important to understand what is behind the narrative of right-wing populism. That narrative is rooted in the American creed of rugged individualism, survival of the fittest, and free market orthodoxy, which is taught as a base line in American civics classes and internalized by its citizens. There are also the elements of bigotry and conspiracy in the movements that can be traced back to the 1600’s when settlers came to the American colonies to escape corrupt England and build a “shining city on the hill.” Historians used to trace American populism to the late 1890’s with the Populist Party but have come to see the Ku Klux Klan as the first manifestation of American populism emerging in the late 1860’s with its brand of white supremacy and white nationalism, fueled by anti-black, and, later, anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic, and anti-Semitic sentiments. After World War II, a coalition formed of free market libertarians, anti-unionists and anti-communists, and moral traditionalists (the Christian right). On the left hand, we have the Republican Party fueled by new energy from the Tea Party. On the right hand, we have the ultra-right white supremacy groups like the KKK fueled by armed militias. In the center we have a Right-Wing Populist Movement, building because of the economic contraction of the U.S. economy, finding its voice in the Trump candidacy. The mainstream media’s product is its audience, so it falls right into raising these voices at the national level so that it can sell commercial time.

Bill Fletcher said the left is guilty of saying “anything we don’t like is fascist.” He sees fascism as an independent, revolutionary movement that burns the underbrush within capitalism to build a different kind of capitalism. It is a subset of Right-Wing Populist Movements (RWPM). These movements take different forms depending on time and place. Here in America, we need to understand that the RWPMs have taken root in this nation’s settler, racist history as a version of the American founding myth. When that myth weakens, RWPMs emerge. The result is that we are in the midst of a neo-Confederacy that promotes “nullification” (the ability of states to limit federal power) exemplified by the states’ roll back of abortion rights, voting rights, and LGBT rights. And we are seeing the deconstruction of political parties.

In the discussion of what should be done in the face of the rise of right-wing populism, Bill Fletcher pushed back vehemently on the idea that the worse things get, the better the climate will be to make real change. The Communists in Germany in the 1930’s thought that, once Hitler was in power, the Nazis would expose themselves for what they truly were. Their mantra was “After Hitler, Us.” (That didn’t work out so well, did it?) Instead, he argues that here in the U.S. what is needed is more progressive activism, building on the work of Occupy, the Black Lives Matter movement, and the Sanders campaign. He calls for a broad front and a proliferation of organizing and organizations that offer alternatives to right-wing populism.

PASI News photo (L to R: Chip Berlet, Bill Fletcher, Moderator Juliet Ucelli.) Watch excellent video of the entire forum: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z02kXaVd5gc>

Peace Action of Staten Island

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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.
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PASI MEETING
THURSDAY, JUNE 9th,
6:30-8:30 PM

Drones and the Global
War of Terrorism in
Pakistan

Short Film:
"Wounds of Waziristan"
Speaker:
Prof. Saadia Toor

Unitarian Fellowship Hall,
312 Fillmore St. (at
Clinton Ave.)

PASI's SUMMER 2016 MEMBERSHIP DRIVE HEATS UP!

*Every summer, we ask our members to RENEW their membership in
Peace Action of Staten Island AND invite all of our friends to JOIN.*

Why join Peace Action? Peace Action of Staten Island is your peace and justice group on Staten Island that will help you raise your voice to call for peaceful resolution to conflict at the local, state, national, and international level.

Help create a culture of peace and justice on Staten Island for now and the future! Fill out the enclosed membership form & return it today.