

March



PASI NEWS

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

Calendar:

- SAT., MARCH 8, 5:45 PM, "Peace Action – A National Movement." Staten Island Museum, 75 Stuyvesant Pl.
- SAT., MARCH 29, 9 AM, Peace Action NYS Annual Meeting. Email Alicia@panys.org.
- SAT., MAY 10, 5:45 PM, "Dirty Wars." Staten Island Museum, 75 Stuyvesant Pl.
- SAT., JUNE 14 5:45 PM. "Candidate Forum." Staten Island Museum, 75 Stuyvesant Pl.

Inside:

- Mercy Killers 2
- Just Asking 2
- People Power 3
- Talks or War 3
- JOIN PASI 4

Fund our Communities!
Saturday, March 8, 5:45 to 8 pm
Speaker: Jean Athey, Peace Action Montgomery
Staten Island Museum, 75 Stuyvesant Place



One of the strengths of having a national Peace Action movement is that we can campaign for change from top to bottom, bottom up, east to west, north to south, across the United States. A great example of this is the *Move the Money* campaign which seeks to transition the U.S. from a military-based economy to a civilian economy through a variety of initiatives. After the trillions of dollars spent on the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars and the Great Recession of 2008-9, the *Move the Money* campaign has resonated with many Americans. This campaign will be the topic of the next Peace Action of Staten Island meeting on Saturday, March 8, 2014, at the Staten Island Museum, 75 Stuyvesant Place.

Our speaker will be Jean Athey, coordinator of Peace Action Montgomery (MD) and chair of the Steering Committee of *Fund Our Communities, Not the Pentagon*, (www.OurFunds.org), a Maryland coalition composed of over 60 organizations whose mission is to establish a strong grassroots constituency for change in our nation's priorities, away from war and militarism and towards peace and social justice. Jean is also secretary of the Board of the national organization Peace Action.

"Those of us in the peace movement," says Jean, "are fighting for a new future, and our work for peace in this militaristic age is an immense struggle. That is why we need each other! I have learned so much from my friends in other chapters in Maryland and from those in other states. We support each other-- sharing resources and ideas, learning from each others' successes and failures, and providing moral support. All of these ways of working across geographical boundaries can make us stronger and more powerful, and ultimately, lead us to a world without war."

The *Fund Our Communities* coalition has sponsored town hall meetings throughout Maryland, organized a campaign to prevent a special tax break for Lockheed Martin, managed an innovative *Pull the Pork* political event, and sponsored a bus tour in MD called "Prosperity Not Austerity." The latest campaign is passing a bill in the state legislature designed to show that jobs need not be dependent on military spending.

In April, 2011, Jean went to Afghanistan on a peace mission. In October 2008, she volunteered with the *International Solidarity Movement* in Palestine for the olive harvest and at the Jerusalem home of a family threatened with eviction. In 2006, she co-founded the *Washington Region Religious Campaign Against Torture*, a coalition of religious groups working to end U.S.-sponsored torture and hold accountable those who have participated in torture. Jean has worked at the Federal Health Resources and Services Administration; taught at the University of Oklahoma; and served in the Peace Corps in Tunisia. She received a Ph.D. in social services policy and administration from the University of Chicago.

On the agenda for the evening is a presentation of the report by the nomination committee for the PASI board. Elections are scheduled at the annual meeting on May 10, 2014. **This event is free and open to the public. Light refreshments will be served.**



Mercy Killers: A Play That Moves Me to Action

by Eileen Bardel

The Play: Mercy Killers, written and performed by Michael Milligan, is a love story about a husband and wife who have their lives torn apart by cancer and the for-profit healthcare industry.

A door slams shut as a man enters a dark stage suddenly lit with flashing lights and the sound of police sirens in the distance. It becomes obvious that he is in an interrogation room at a local police station and is being questioned by an officer. He wants to set the record straight about what really happened. The story begins.

Michael's portrayal of an ordinary, hardworking, mid-western Joe is flawless and moving as he takes us on his personal journey of having a good life with a woman he loves to losing her to illness through no fault of his own. Mounting medical costs force the couple to sell their home to be able to continue paying for healthcare. Sub-standard treatment in a hospital worsens the young woman's health.

Milligan is a skillful storyteller who is able to create strong emotional images of his wife. Their love for each other is palpable. And because we have begun to care about this young couple's struggle we have also begun to see the personal side of healthcare. We feel the devastating impact on people when they can't receive the care they need. It isn't about money and power it is about human lives.

Michael Milligan has taken his play to a dozen states, performed on the floor of the state legislature in Minnesota, the living room of a doctor, and a 1400-seat theater in California. He would love to bring his play to Staten Island.

The Action: While the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act is helping people, it is not going far enough. We need to work for Healthcare for All. I urge you to read Congressman John Conyer's bill, The Expanded and Improved Medicare for All Act 676. Also, in the New York State Legislature, there is The New York Health Bill A-5389 and S-2078 that would create a publicly-funded health plan for all New Yorkers.

Some states are opting not to expand Medicaid and people who are eligible for coverage will not receive it. Medical debt is responsible for 62% of bankruptcies. If you become ill and lose your job you also lose your health insurance. Two-thirds of the people who filed for bankruptcy had insurance when they got sick. Almost 30 cents of every dollar goes toward profits, paperwork and marketing, not care. We spend twice as much for healthcare as any other industrialized nation. As long as healthcare delivery is dictated by insurance companies there will not be quality, affordable healthcare for all.

To learn more about the play **Mercy Killers**, go to <http://mercykillerstheplay.com>. The play just completed a New York City Off-Broadway run and is going on tour. To learn more about **Health Care for All** in New York, go to <http://www.hcn-nyc.org>.

The author, **Eileen Bardel**, eileenbardel@yahoo.com, is Chair of Peace Action of Staten Island.

Just Asking...by Sarah Walters



Sunday's New York Times dated January 31 featured an op-ed piece by Palestinian human rights activist, Omar Barghouti, entitled "Why Israel Fears the Boycott?" His article describes the issue of boycott, divestment and sanctions as weapons to change Israeli policies of oppression against the Palestinian people. Israel is becoming deeply apprehensive as more and more American Jews join the B.D.S. campaign. It is time for debate and dialogue about the role of Jewish settlements on Palestinian land. Why would this debate threaten Israeli's security? Can Israelis not lament the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza?

The author, **Sarah Walters** is a member of Peace Action of Staten Island and a regular contributor to PASI News.



We've Got What It Takes: People Power!

Commentary by Rich Greve

In our nation's political system, where the influence of big money rules, it is necessary for people to see that even those without money to give to politicians to finance their campaigns have power to change government policy and to prevent new wars. This has happened twice in the past few months, first with Syria, then with Iran.

The U.S. was ready with its war ships off the coast of Syria to strike that nation when anti-war groups became very vocal and organized in their opposition to a U.S. attack on Syria, making the point that an attack would have led to more death and suffering of Syrian civilians in the civil war that is now going on in that country. With the strong response of anti-war groups leading the way, Congress was flooded with calls, emails and petitions from citizens all across the nation demanding a diplomatic solution to the crisis. Finally, the President and Congress backed away from this reckless move. A diplomatic solution was found, sparing the Syrian people of more horrors, this time from an attack by the U.S. super power.

Anti-war groups also became organized and vocal in opposition to Senate bill S1881 which was being pushed by the AIPAC Lobby (the American Israel Public Affairs Committee) that would have derailed the negotiations between Iran and the P5+1 (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, namely United States, Russia, China, United Kingdom, and France, plus Germany) over Iran's nuclear program. Iran says that its nuclear program is for civilian purposes and in accordance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The P5+1 have raised concerns about possible weapons-related aspects to the program. Here again, anti-war groups helped to coordinate local and national responses against the war-mongers in Congress by encouraging people to call, email, sign petitions and meet with their senators and representatives. And people did. The Senate bill was stopped in its tracks by the efforts of the citizenry led by anti-war groups. As a result, the negotiations with Iran will continue for another six months and will hopefully reach a diplomatic settlement.

Our nation too often uses military might and war as a way to solve conflicts instead of using diplomacy. This approach has been a disaster for the American people and the people we have attacked and invaded. The American people may be discovering that they are not helpless to stop the war-mongers in our government. When we become active and persistent, we can move our country away from war towards negotiations and diplomacy. This is clearly the direction that human beings must take if we are not to destroy ourselves with endless wars that could become more and more catastrophic over time.

The author, Rich Greve, richardg122@gmail.com, is Co-Chair of Peace Action of Staten Island.

Talks or War: It's time for our leaders to make a choice



70 percent of voters polled oppose a military attack on Iran.

Peace Action has launched a *Talks or War* campaign to ask our representative and senators to give us a clear answer: I support letting diplomacy work, or I'm accepting the risk of leading us to war by supporting unhelpful legislation. In addition to the thousands of emails Congress will get, organizers will be on the ground collecting handwritten postcards to mail in with reply cards.

Congress will not be able to ignore the choice they face. Go to www.talksorwar.org to get involved. Also call Senator Schumer, Senator Gillibrand and Rep. Michael Grimm using Congressional Switch Board 202-224-3121 and ask them, are they for Talks or War?

**Peace Action of
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- \$26 (regular)
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**PASI 2014 Meeting
Schedule**

January 11, 2014
March 8, 2014
May 10, 2014
June 14, 2014

Fund Our Communities!
Speaker: Jean Athey
Peace Action Montgomery

Saturday
March 8, 5:45 PM
PASI Meeting
Staten Island Museum,
75 Stuyvesant Pl, SI, NY

PASI Goes to DC for the National Organizers Meeting!



New York was well represented at the national organizers meeting in Washington DC on January 25-26. You might be able to find Eileen and Sally above. We were in great company with fellow organizers from around the country!

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.