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Linkages



The State of IJPC

PAST THE SEEKER AS HE PRAYED CAME THE CRIPPLED AND THE BEGGAR AND THE BEATEN. AND SEEING THEM... HE CRIED, "GREAT GOD, HOW IS IT THAT A LOVING CREATOR CAN SEE SUCH THINGS AND YET DO NOTHING ABOUT THEM?"

GOD SAID, "I DID DO SOMETHING. I MADE YOU." – SUFI TEACHING

The State of the Union?

Often times, those in the peace and justice movement view the State of the Union, and indeed the world, a bit differently. You will find in this issue, some peace and justice reflections about where we stand now and where we should go. Reflect, enjoy, respond!

Welcome to a new and updated format of *Linkages*! Many of you may be wondering where IJPC and *Linkages* has been. We've been busy! Last spring, our Steering Committee decided to phase out the paid position of a Coordinator and work with an all-volunteer board. As the former Coordinator, I supported these changes and knew that opening up that income would lead to exciting opportunities for IJPC. Since many of our Steering Committee members had served multiple, faithful years to IJPC, many chose to "retire." They had full faith that the future of IJPC was bright, as

did I, and I was happy to move into the position of Interim Chairperson. Since then, we have gathered some new volunteers to lead us. They are part of an Interim Planning Committee that is helping to shape our future. This new edition of *Linkages* is a first step. We decided to go with a more internet-friendly layout of *Linkages* so that it could be easily emailed and accessible on our website, www.ijpcnwohio.org. We will still mail copies of this new *Linkages* to those who request it via postal mail. Over the next few months, we will be asking you what delivery method you prefer. We



also hope that you will print it off and pass it along to friends, neighbors, anyone!! **We are also forever indebted to Gena Krueger, who since 1990, has edited *Linkages* and been an inspiration to so many people. As she retires, let us thank her for her tireless effort in keeping the peace and justice voice alive in Northwest Ohio. Thank you Gena! We dedicate this issue to you!**

Our Promise to You!

As the new Interim Planning Committee sat down to brainstorm how to make IJPC, and the peace and justice movement stronger, we made a few key decisions and promises to all of you. Our first step was to remain committed to bringing you *Linkages* and offering the best in

local, thought-provoking, and inspiring peace and justice articles. In addition, in Summer 2008, we will launch exciting, grass roots meetings that will reflect those ideals.

The result, we hope, is a stronger peace and justice movement, increased participation, and a wider network

of groups and congregations working for social justice. Would you like to be a part of planning this exciting time? Call us at 419-885-5626 or email ijpc@sistersosf.org!

Reflecting on the School of the Americas Protest

As I attended my tenth SOA Watch vigil to close the School of the Americas, the most defining image I carried back from this experience related to the vast number of high school and college youth involved. Five of us from TACCA (Toledo Area Committee on Central America) arrived in Columbus, Georgia, in time to attend workshops Friday afternoon, November 16. We viewed a constant stream of youth moving past us from busses into the large hall to attend the two-hour Ignatian Family Teach-In offered by the Jesuits. There was a similar large teach-in on Saturday morning in which the students from St. John's High School participated. Several persons speaking from the platform in front of the Ft. Benning entrance Saturday and Sunday noted how the average age of the participants was dropping, which bodes well for the future.—**Chester Chambers**

"I crossed the line at WHINSEC and prayed on the grounds to bring attention to the teaching of torture and assassination. When enough people learn the truth about this school and act to end these practices, the healing can begin."
 — Diane Lopez-Hughes, one of the SOAW 11

Update: There are 118 cosponsors of Representative McGovern's HR 1707, the Latin America Military Training Review Act. It was introduced on March 27, 2007 with 71 bipartisan cosponsors and has grown to 118 cosponsors. This legislation would suspend operations at the SOA/ WHINSEC and investigate the history of torture and human rights abuses associated with the school. Rep. Kaptur (Toledo area) has signed on but Rep. Latta (outlying area) has not. www.soaw.org for more information about the school.

SOA Watch Update

The Eleven courageous souls that willingly put their freedom and bodies at risk to stand in witness against the SOA/ WHINSEC during the November 2007 Vigil were sentenced on January 28 to federal prison on charges of "trespassing on on a military base".

The trial took place in a courthouse located just a few miles from Fort Benning, the current site of the SOA/WHINSEC. An institute known around the world for its ties to brutal dictatorships and human rights abuses, which continues to operate, unchallenged by our government but not by the people. The SOAW 11, ranging in ages from 25 to 78 and from very diverse walks of

SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS WATCHERS by Sue Dwyer

The blue-hairs wind
 through the mountains
 stopping at homes
 of grown children deployed
 throughout the south
 for some a yearly
 Pilgrimage
 to the school of shame
 Fort Benning

has become
 they haven't molotov
 cocktails
 perhaps a nip of sherry
 Aging men and women
 their bumper-stickered vans
 in cautious tandem
 threading the wild mountain
 roads
 outrage in their bypassed
 hearts
 pace-makers ticking madly.



life, testified today before magistrate G. Malon Faircloth.

Ed Lewinson, a 78-year old History professor who in November crossed the line for the fourth time, was sentenced to 90 days in federal prison and a \$500 fine. This is his first conviction since in previous years the government refused to prosecute due to his blindness. Tiel Rainelli, a 25 year old activist from Canton, OH who was arrested this past November after climbing over the barbed wire fence blocking the main gate of Fort Benning, announced that in spite of the courts decision to sentence her to 90 days in prison, she would return to protest at the gates of Fort Benning in November.

Until Lions have their historians, tales of the hunt shall always glorify the hunter—African Proverb
—by **Delma Jackson, III**

MLK's message is annually used as a state of the Union address regarding race relations in America. 2008 was no exception. And every year despite police killings, race riots, and continued institutional injustices, (remember the Jena 6 case?) the Union is apparently better than ever. King's intent behind his most famous speech has been "lost" in the same way that the story of the lion is lost. King held a mirror to the collective faces of a nation that claimed a moral authority over the rest of the world while simultaneously relegating its own citizens to a subhuman station:

"...But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not

free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languishing in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. So we have come here today to dramatize a shameful condition."

Celebrations that would recognize the spirit of MLK, would do well to continue his legacy by using our collective resources and energies to "dramatize a shameful

condition", that still exists in contemporary America. Any celebration of MLK's legacy that fails to do so, is not a celebration of his legacy at all but rather a feel good session for those of us who would deny the continued hypocrisy of this classist, racist, misogynistic, war mongering system. I often remind people that in MLK's day, he was often encouraged by both people with and without color to, "quiet down". Read Letter from a Birmingham Jail, where King wrote,

"We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly, I have yet to engage

in a direct action campaign that was "well timed" in the view of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I have heard the word "Wait!" It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This "Wait" has almost always meant "Never." We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurists, that "justice too long delayed is justice denied."

As we enter into another Black History Month, ask yourself when you as an individual last challenged yourself in your relationship to American racism. Ask yourself why the MLK celebration at UT every year feels more and more like a group hug and less like a call to serious reexamination of who we are, and whom we choose to become. MLK could have said, "Well at least we're not slaves anymore". He chose a higher path. Will you? **"You** must seek to be the change that you want to see in the world. "
-Mahatma Gandhi

Our Vanishing American "We" by Phyllis Palmer

Whatever happened to the old American "WE"? We as in "We the People," the ordinary folks once referred to in "government of the people, by the people, and for the people." Somewhere along the way, while we were busy watching American Idol or Donald Trump, our democracy morphed into a government of the rich, by the rich, and for the rich. Now it seems only millionaires have a chance to gain entry into the halls of power – no one else need apply. And they don't speak for us, or care much about us.

Could there be a correlation between the elevation of corporate capitalism to almost the status of our national religion, and the shrinking of shared commitment to the public good? Now that "the business of America is business" has become our national

mantra, and we are intent on spreading the gospel of corporate capitalism globally (under the pretense of spreading democracy), the profits and power of the largest multinational corporations over our government have increased exponentially. At the same time the quality of life for all but the wealthiest Americans has deteriorated.

Remember Eisenhower's prophetic warning about the military-industrial complex gaining unwarranted influence? War has become enormously profitable for corporations such as Bechtel, Halliburton and Blackwater with connections to high government officials, and conveniently the War on Terror promises to provide an inexhaustible supply of enemy groups and countries to keep these war profiteers well in the black for years to come

(and our children and grandchildren in the red!). One year's Pentagon budget incredibly equals an expenditure of \$20,000 for every hour since Jesus Christ was born! That's one year's military budget!

Let us hope that one day soon, Americans awaken from their TV-induced stupor to the realization that the greatest threat to our country comes not from Al Qaeda, but from our own leaders.

The powers arrayed against us are formidable indeed, but we can take courage from the successful examples of non-violent people-power. But the first step must be to rediscover, or recreate, the great American WE, and become once again the force our leaders most fear – WE THE PEOPLE!

The two greatest obstacles to democracy in the United States are, first, the widespread delusion among the poor that we have a democracy, and second, the chronic terror among the rich, lest we get it. – Edward Dowling



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WE'RE ON THE WEB!
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Lakota Leaders Announce Secession from the US

—www.lakotafreedom.com

The Lakota Sioux Indians, descendants of the legendary warriors Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse, are no longer citizens of the United States, having declared sovereign nation status. Long-time Indian rights activist and actor Russell Means announced at a news conference in December that the Lakota have decided to unilaterally withdraw from all treaties with the U.S. government, some 150 years old, claiming these treaties are worthless since they have been "repeatedly violated in order to steal our culture, our land and our ability to maintain our way of life."

"In order to stop the continuous taking of our resources – people, land, water and children- we have no choice but to claim our own

destiny," said Phyllis Young, a former indigenous representative to the United Nations, who helped organize the first international conference on indigenous rights in Geneva in 1977.

The Lakota reservations are among the most impoverished areas in North America, a shameful legacy of broken treaties and apartheid policies. Lakota has the highest death rate in the United States and Lakota men have the lowest life expectancy of any nation on earth, excluding AIDS, at approximately 44 years. Lakota infant mortality rate is five times the United States average and teen suicide rates 150% more than national average. 97% of Lakota people live below the poverty line and unemployment hovers near 85%. This action is the culmination of a long journey to freedom begun back in 1974 when the

Lakota drafted a declaration of continuing independence." This dramatic break from the U.S., which they claim is fully legal under U.S. and international laws, was finally made possible when in September the United Nations adopted a non-binding declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples -- despite opposition from the United States, which said it clashed with its own laws

A delegation of Lakota leaders delivered their declaration of independence to the State Department, and then visited the Bolivian, Chilean, South African and Venezuelan embassies. They will continue on their diplomatic mission and take it overseas in the coming

weeks and months. Lakota's efforts are gaining traction as Bolivia, home to Indigenous President Evo Morales, shared they are "very, very interested in the Lakota case" while Venezuela received the Lakota delegation with "respect and solidarity."

Lakota country includes parts of the states of Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana and Wyoming. The new country would issue its own passports and driving licenses, and living there would be tax-free -- provided residents renounce their US citizenship, Means said. "We are no longer citizens of the United States of America and all those who live in the five-state area that encompasses our country are free to join us."