

# Peace & Planet News

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## Protecting the 'Heart of the Earth' from Ecocide

*A groundbreaking documentary sheds light on the urgent need to make ecocide a crime and protect indigenous territories in the Brazilian Amazon*



By Yasmin Dahnoun

Through the powerful firsthand accounts of five indigenous leaders spanning four generations, *Amazônia: The Heart of Mother Earth* paints a picture of the ongoing struggle to safeguard these vital lands.

Directed by Gert-Peeter Bruch and Princess Esmerelda of Belgium, the film features notable figures. Among them are chief Raoni Metuktire of the Kayapo people, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, and Sydney Possuelo, the former president of the National Indian Foundation.

Their stories, along with others, serve as a rallying cry for global support in demarcating and preserving indigenous territories in Brazil and urging the establishment of an international law to criminalize ecocide.

Brazil is currently considering a law against ecocide, which the Brazilian political party Partido Socialismo e Liberdade (PSOL) submitted to congress on June 5.

The proposed law seeks to criminalize “performing illegal or wanton acts with the knowledge that they generate a substantial probability of serious and widespread or long-term damage to the environment,” reflecting the international definition of ecocide.

The proposal is supported by a collaboration of PSOL, Ecoe Brasil, Observatório do Clima, Stop Ecocide International, International Rivers, Climate Counsel and

many others.

At present, ecocide is officially a crime in 10 countries, including France (Article 231-3), Ecuador (Article 98) and both Russia (Article 358) and Ukraine (Article 441), and is being actively discussed in another 27 countries, according to Ecocide International.

When Jair Bolsonaro took office as president of Brazil in 2019, he sent a clear message that the region was “open for business,” leading to a 92% surge in deforestation in the first eight months of his leadership, according to data from the country’s INPE satellite service.

Founder of French NGO Planete Amazone, Gert-Peeter Bruch said: “In four years, Jair Bolsonaro destroyed or weakened several decades of international efforts to protect the Amazon rainforest and indigenous territories. Returning to power, President Lula has made the protection of both a policy priority.”

Protection of indigenous lands represents the most viable path to halt the ecocidal deforestation plaguing the Amazon.

New data has shown that Amazon deforestation rates dropped 34% in the first six months of Lula’s presidency.

“However, the Brazilian congress remains outside of Lula’s control and has recently approved a proposal that strips the environment ministry’s oversight of the rural land registry and removes the power of the ministry of in-

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## Waging Peace in Viet Nam

*Army Veteran returns to Viet Nam 53 years later*

By Doug Rawlings

I was able to return to Viet Nam 53 years after I was first there as a soldier with the 7/15th artillery in the central highlands (July 1969 to August 1970). Was it strange? Yes. Was it enlightening? Yes. Was it more than just a tourist trip? Yes. Before I elaborate, though, let me first reach out to my brothers and sisters who fought in Somalia, Iraq, and Afghanistan and wish all of you the opportunity to return to the lands of your godforsaken wars for a chance to make some form of amends. I know, I know, I said the same thing years ago—“There’s no way in hell I’m going back.” But things change. Here’s how they changed for me.

To begin with, the union activist, long-time anti-war activist and organizer Ron Carver reached out to me and asked if I wanted to join a panel at the 14th annual “Engaging With Vietnam Cultural Heritage” conference held in Hue this August. It was hosted by Hue University and attended by over 500 scholars and students. So, I was not returning as a tour-

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'Vietnamese Girl Statue' by Le Thanh Nhon.

Photo: Josh Rawling

# From the Editors

## The Trail Ellsberg Blazed

I got tired of being packaged up and sold to the military industrial congressional complex. First I was a student, then a soldier, then a veteran, and now I am an aging retiree. They loved me as a young kid awash in their textbooks and delusional world vision. A Midwestern privileged white male being packaged for full delivery to some corporation. But then the military wing stepped in front

to emerge as my own person. I began to think for myself. What started as a long and torturous journey morphed into one of satisfaction and even joy as I raised a family and became a teacher. I went back into that system, into the belly of the beast if you will, and engaged with young people. I had a mission. I didn't know it at that time, but I know it now—I was walking along the same trail that Daniel Ells-

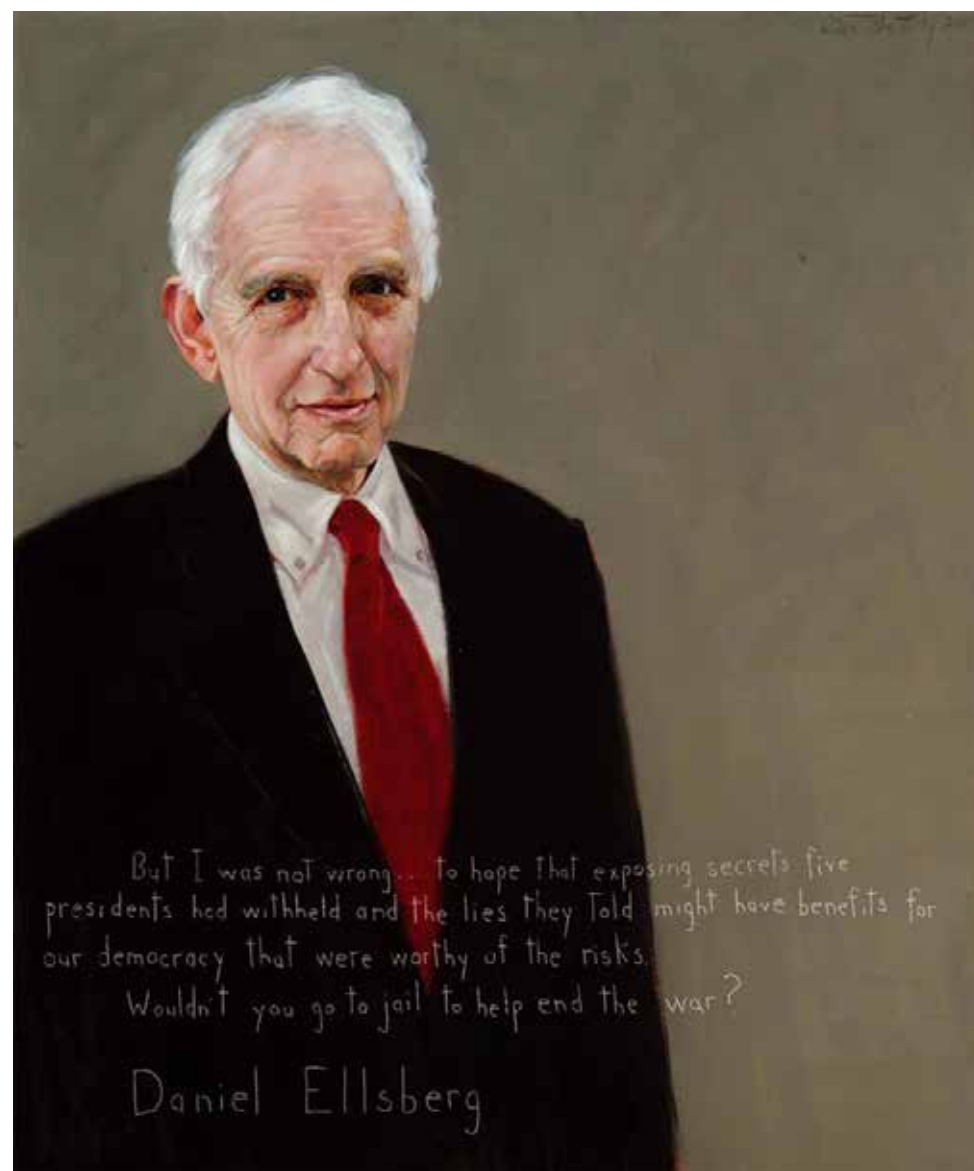
*We never imagined what a life of social activism could achieve. And that really is what Daniel Ellsberg was telling us through his words and his actions over these past 50 years.*

of the industrial lackeys—I was drafted and re-packaged to serve in their colonial war in Viet Nam. When that package returned to these shores as a soiled, misshapen mess (i.e., a veteran), they didn't quite know what to do with it. The delivery system was beginning to fall apart. No UPS drivers wanted to pick it up and drop it off at some doorstep (i.e., my family and friends). Certainly no corporations wanted it in their mailrooms.

Ah. It was at that moment in my life that I began my struggle out of the box that America wrapped around me and

berg blazed—that of following truth despite the risks, while resisting all wars, but especially the nuclear threat hanging over our heads. He said, “Can humanity survive the nuclear era? We don't know. I choose to act as if we have a chance.”

Now, as a retiree, I am standing at the precipice and wondering what legacy I might leave behind me that could possibly defy the aforementioned complex. Even when Ellsberg was in his last months, we could turn to him for inspiration. “I feel lucky and grateful about having a few months more to enjoy life with my wife



Portrait by Robert Shetterly in *Americans Who Tell The Truth*

and family, and in which to continue to pursue the urgent goal of working with others to avert nuclear war in Ukraine or Taiwan (or anywhere else).” He was very aware of the horror of war and especially concerned about the possibility of nuclear war. He wrote, “The current risk of nuclear war, over Ukraine, is as great as the world has ever seen.”

Along my own life's trail I was blessed to join with others to form Veterans For Peace (VFP) in 1985. As one of five white males in the whitest state in the nation (Maine) contemplating how to use our veteran status to throw a monkey wrench into our government's Central American wars, we never imagined that VFP would be a force in repatriating Hispanic veterans unjustly deported in the 21st century. Nor did we imagine we'd be joining with people of color fighting against hyper-militarized police forces. Or sitting at the feet of Indigenous elders learning from their struggle to live a life of decency and honor. We never imagined what a life of social activism could achieve. And that really is what Daniel Ellsberg was telling us through his words and his actions over these past 50 years.

Now, as the 38th national VFP convention comes to a close, we gather to honor Dan Ellsberg not just through words but through action. Please read the latest print issue of *Peace & Planet News* with that in mind—how can we best confront the looming and monstrous military industrial congressional complex with the vigor, compassion, and street smarts that he employed? How to help turn our children's and grandchildren's lives into love letters and not into packages?

Our editor-in-chief, Tarak Kauff, wrote this about Dan: “He was a rare human being, truly a spiritual giant who loved and cared for others more than himself. Yet, he was always approachable, always one of us. He was a friend and a brother to everyone in Veterans For Peace. And he always signed his e-mails, ‘Love, Dan,’ as if you were family. He showed by example how to live, and as we all know, faced death with the same dignity, joy and love that he lived with.”

Dear brother Daniel Ellsberg, we are still listening. Your life looms large in our lives. And in the lives of generations to come. Thank you.

—Doug Rawlings



Photo: Ellen Davidson

**Veterans For Peace is an international organization made up of military veterans, military family members, and allies. We are dedicated to building a culture of peace, exposing the true causes and costs of war, and healing the wounds of war.**



**For more information or to join or support our work, scan the QR at left or visit [veteransforpeace.org](http://veteransforpeace.org).**

### Peace & Planet News

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# The Climate Crisis Will End When Capitalism and Militarism End

*The climate emergency won't end because of heartfelt pleas to the people and interests who created the crisis*



Photo: Ellen Davidson

By Margaret Kimberley

*No more drilling on federal lands. Period. Period. Period. Period.*

—Joe Biden, February 9, 2020

The March to End Fossil Fuels will take place in New York City on Sept. 17, days before the U.N. Climate Ambition Summit. Considering that July 2023 was the hottest month ever recorded on earth, the role of fossil fuel production in the climate crisis surely needs public attention and action.

But there is something highly problematic about marches and meetings that don't address two large elephants in the room: capitalism and militarism. The U.S. military is the world's biggest emitter of fossil fuels, having emitted 1.2 billion metric tons of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere since 2001. The huge number is no surprise, considering that the United States has more than 800 military facilities around the world and needs huge amounts of fossil fuels in order to operate them all.

Fossil fuel usage can only end with radical changes to life in industrialized nations and with very radical changes in politics. The March to End Fossil Fuels website is replete with pleas to Joe Biden to suddenly stop doing what he's been doing throughout his presidency, "It's time for Biden to pick a side: is he with us, or is he with the fossil fuel CEOs destroying our planet and polluting our communities?" Biden answered that question. He is, like his predecessors, on the side of the fossil fuel CEOs.

The duopoly's good cop/bad cop routine is quite predictable. Republicans

pledge to drill for oil and proclaim their disdain for environmental concerns by opting out of international climate accords. Democrats join the climate accords and claim they will work towards a fossil free future, as Biden did during his 2020 campaign. But once in office they do what Republicans do. The United States is now producing a record 12.8 million barrels of oil per day, more than any other nation. Democrats are the worst liars in this regard, as they are well aware that their voters want action on the environment, but their bread is buttered by big oil.

Biden has issued more permits for oil drilling on federal land than Donald Trump did. He approved the Willow Project on federal lands in Alaska, a project



Photo: Ellen Davidson

that is estimated to produce more than 239 million metric tons of greenhouse gasses over its 30-year life. The much-vaunted Inflation Reduction Act, presented as a path to a fossil-free future, actually ties renewable energy programs to oil and gas drilling. The IRA prohibits leasing of federal lands and waters for renewable energy projects such as wind and solar, unless the government has offered at least 2 million acres of public land and 60 million acres in federal waters for oil and gas leasing during the prior year. Any environmental benefits are outweighed by acquiescence to corporate interests that are jeopardizing all life on the planet.

Not only has Biden backtracked on campaign promises, but U.S. inclusion in the Paris climate accords doesn't amount to very much. The Paris Agreement makes reporting on military CO<sub>2</sub> production voluntary. NATO member nations may report on their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions but NATO-led operations and training exercises are excluded from any reporting.

The climate accords themselves are problematic. They allow for a 1.5-degree Centigrade rise in global temperatures, don't compensate the global South for damage created by industrialized polluting nations, and their goals of CO<sub>2</sub> emission reduction are vague and purely voluntary. Virtue signaling and phony honor systems have led the world to the brink.

Participants in the March to End Fossil Fuels certainly have their work cut out for them. Most of them vote for Democrats, who, once in office, do exactly what Republicans do regarding the environment. Their actions benefit fossil fuel corporations and the military industrial complex. The duo-

poly are of one accord in this regard as they are on so many other important issues.

It is high time for climate marchers to end their political naivete and denial. Black Agenda Report contributor and editor Ajamu Baraka said, "[T]he fight for climate and environmental justice is in fact a revolutionary project, requiring mass-global resistance and the expropriation of economic and political power of finance and corporate capital." What he describes is surely a heavy lift but hoping that the servants of capital will have an epiphany and serve the needs of humanity is to believe in fantasy.

Humans have an infinite capacity for wishful thinking, but a revolutionary

*Fossil fuel usage can only end with radical changes to life in industrialized nations and with very radical changes in politics.*

project is by definition a recognition that wishes are for fairy tales. Yes, demonstrations must be part of the plan to save life on earth. They aren't enough though, and appealing to the people who have no shame is not a good use of time. Anyone who marches against fossil fuel production must be ready for very radical political change. Presidents of the United States and the nation's entire political leadership are errand boys and girls for the capitalist classes. Record-breaking heat will only end when capitalism does too.

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Margaret Kimberley's Freedom Rider column appears weekly at Black Agenda Report and is widely reprinted elsewhere. She is the author of Prejudicial: Black America and the Presidents. You can support her work at [patreon.com/margaretkimberley](https://www.patreon.com/margaretkimberley) and also find it on X and Telegram. She can be reached at [Margaret.Kimberley@BlackAgendaReport.com](mailto:Margaret.Kimberley@BlackAgendaReport.com).



Photo: Ellen Davidson

# The Totalitarian Dystopia Is Already Here



By Caitlin Johnstone

I had a nightmare that I leaked some classified information and got arrested and waterboarded by *New York Times* reporters.

The goal is to keep us fighting with as much hostility as possible over issues that inconvenience our rulers as little as possible. It's really amazing how successful they are at this.

ine that a future technocratic dystopia created by those measures would look a lot different from the dystopia we're in right now, and it simply would not. Those measures would be used to help keep this current system locked in place, not to create a new one.

People imagine totalitarian dystopia as some dark threat looming in the future because they don't understand how

the oligarchs and power into the hands of the imperialists, and all efforts to resist and change these funneling systems have been successfully quashed by mass-scale psychological manipulation.

This totalitarian dystopia looks like freedom because they let us more or less do what we want, while controlling what it is that we want to do using mass-scale manipulation. They further bolster this by creating systems where what we do has little or no meaningful effect. Even if we had actual software in our brains that gave our rulers total and complete control over our minds, they'd have the masses think and behave in more or less the same way they do right now.

The primary weapon of our totalitarian rulers is not surveillance, police robots, digital IDs or CBDCs—their primary weapon is propaganda. The system of mass-scale psychological conditioning they've created is unlike anything that has ever existed in history. The ability to detect and suppress an emerging revolution is vastly inferior to the ability to use psy-

their rulers, without ever even thinking that they are unfree or should try to become so.

Try to design a more effective totalitarian dystopia than this.

You can't. It's perfect.

Propaganda is the real mechanism of control, and that's what we're going to have to fight if we're ever to become free. The only way out of this giant matrix of psychological control is to show people how unfree we are, how they're being deceived, how much better things could be. Awaken people to the lies, to the real nature of the political, educational, and media institutions designed to keep us enslaved, weaken public trust in the propaganda machine, and then we might have the beginnings of the possibility of real change. Until then, we're locked in.

Who you think of as an anti-authoritarian hero says a lot about you as a person. If I ask you to picture someone fighting the power and you think of Tank Man or Navalny or some historical figure instead of the living people fighting the power struc-

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*You couldn't design a more effective totalitarian dystopia than the one we're in right now. One where everyone's brainwashed by propaganda without even knowing it, where everyone thinks, acts, votes, and shops exactly as their rulers want them to, all while thinking they are free.*

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The other day I saw a video of a guy angrily running over a case of Budweiser with a monster truck for reasons that made no sense to me, and everyone was excitedly yelling their opinions about it, and I was just like, oh my god we are so fucked. They've got us totally wrapped up.

You couldn't design a more effective totalitarian dystopia than the one we're in right now. One where everyone's brainwashed by propaganda without even knowing it, where everyone thinks, acts, votes, and shops exactly as their rulers want them to, all while thinking they are free.

People worry about technocratic escalations like increasing surveillance, digital IDs, central bank digital currencies etc, and rightly so; those measures do give the powerful a greater degree of power over the populace. But many incorrectly imag-

profoundly unfree we already are right now. They think we're free because we can choose what to buy at the supermarket and call the president "Brandon," but we're not. They imagine that our rulers have some grand conspiracy to create a dystopia where they can force us all to do as they wish, not realizing that we're already in a dystopia where we are doing exactly as they wish. It really can't be improved upon. They're just locking it in.

Seriously, think about it: What could the rulers of Western society possibly extract from us that they're not already getting? There's no meaningful political opposition, no antiwar movement, no anti-capitalist movement, very little critical thought—they've got total control. Everything we do in this dystopia is designed to funnel profit into the coffers of

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*Awaken people to the lies, to the real nature of the political, educational, and media institutions designed to keep us enslaved, weaken public trust in the propaganda machine, and then we might have the beginnings of the possibility of real change.*

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chological conditioning to prevent people from even thinking about revolting in the first place. That's what real power looks like. That's total control.

This is a dystopia whose inhabitants all move fully in alignment with the will of

ture you actually live under, it means you have swallowed the lie that your own government and its allies are good and virtuous in the here and now, and that "fighting the power" is something that could only

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# Silencing the Lambs: How Propaganda Works

By John Pilger

In the 1970s, I met one of Hitler's leading propagandists, Leni Riefenstahl, whose epic films glorified the Nazis. We happened to be staying at the same lodge in Kenya, where she was on a photography assignment, having escaped the fate of other friends of the Führer.

She told me that the "patriotic messages" of her films were dependent not

playwright Harold Pinter made two extraordinary speeches that broke a silence.

"U.S. foreign policy," he said, is "best defined as follows: kiss my arse or I'll kick your head in. It is as simple and as crude as that. What is interesting about it is that it's so incredibly successful. It possesses the structures of disinformation, use of rhetoric, distortion of language, which are very persuasive, but are actually a pack of lies. It is very successful

programmed to swallow a pack of lies. If we don't recognize propaganda, we may accept it as normal and believe it. That's the submissive void."

In our systems of corporate democracy, war is an economic necessity, the perfect marriage of public subsidy and private profit: socialism for the rich, capitalism for the poor. The day after 9/11 the stock prices of the war industry soared. More bloodshed was coming, which is great for business.



*Leni Riefenstahl told me that the 'patriotic messages' of her films were dependent not on 'orders from above' but on what she called the 'submissive void' of the German public.*

*Harold Pinter: U.S. crimes 'have been systematic, constant, vicious, remorseless, but very few people have actually talked about them. ... It's a brilliant, even witty, highly successful act of hypnosis.'*



on "orders from above" but on what she called the "submissive void" of the German public.

Did that include the liberal, educated bourgeoisie? I asked. "Yes, especially them," she said.

I think of this as I look around at the propaganda now consuming Western societies.

Do we live in a media society where brainwashing is insidious and relentless, and perception is filtered according to the needs and lies of state and corporate power?

The United States dominates the Western world's media. All but one of the top 10 media companies is based in North America. The internet and social media—Google, X, Facebook—are mostly American owned and controlled.

In my lifetime, the United States has overthrown or attempted to overthrow more than 50 governments, mostly democracies. It has interfered in democratic elections in 30 countries. It has dropped bombs on the people of 30 countries, most of them poor and defenseless. It has attempted to murder the leaders of 50 countries. It has fought to suppress liberation movements in 20 countries.

The extent and scale of this carnage are largely unreported and unrecognized, and those responsible continue to dominate Anglo-American political life.

In the years before he died in 2008, the

propaganda. They have the money, they have the technology, they have all the means to get away with it, and they do."

In accepting the Nobel Prize for literature, Pinter said this: "The crimes of the United States have been systematic, constant, vicious, remorseless, but very few people have talked about them. You have to hand it to America. It has exercised a quite clinical manipulation of power worldwide while masquerading as a force for universal good. It's a brilliant, even witty, highly successful act of hypnosis."

Pinter was a friend of mine and possibly the last great political sage—that is,

Today, the most profitable wars have their own brand. They are called "forever wars": Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq, Libya, Yemen and now Ukraine. All are based on a pack of lies.

Iraq is the most infamous, with its weapons of mass destruction that didn't exist. NATO's destruction of Libya in 2011 was justified by a massacre in Benghazi that didn't happen. Afghanistan was a convenient revenge war for 9/11, which had nothing to do with the people of Afghanistan.

Today, the news from Afghanistan is how evil the Taliban are—not that President Joe Biden's theft of \$7-billion of the

*I asked [Pinter] if the 'hypnosis' he referred to was the 'submissive void' described by Leni Riefenstahl. 'It's the same,' he replied. 'It means the brainwashing is so thorough we are programmed to swallow a pack of lies. If we don't recognize propaganda, we may accept it as normal and believe it. That's the submissive void.'*

before dissenting politics were gentrified. I asked him if the "hypnosis" he referred to was the "submissive void" described by Leni Riefenstahl.

"It's the same," he replied. "It means the brainwashing is so thorough we are

country's bank reserves is causing widespread suffering. Recently, National Public Radio in Washington devoted two hours to Afghanistan—and 30 seconds to its starving people.

At its summit in Madrid in June,

NATO, which is controlled by the United States, adopted a strategy document that militarizes the European continent and escalates the prospect of war with Russia and China. It proposes "multi-domain warfighting against nuclear-armed peer-competitors." In other words, nuclear war.

It says: "NATO's enlargement has been a historic success."

I read that in disbelief.

A measure of this "historic success" is the war in Ukraine, news of which is mostly not news, but a one-sided litany of jingoism, distortion, and omission. I have reported a number of wars and have never known such blanket propaganda.

In February, Russia invaded Ukraine as a response to almost eight years of killing and criminal destruction in the Russian-speaking region of Donbass on their border.

In 2014, the United States sponsored a coup in Kyiv that got rid of Ukraine's democratically elected, Russian-friendly president and installed a successor who the Americans made clear was their man.

In recent years, American "defender" missiles have been installed in Eastern Europe, Poland, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic, almost certainly aimed at Russia, accompanied by false assurances all the way back to James Baker's "promise" to Gorbachev in February 1990 that NATO would never expand eastward beyond Germany.

Ukraine is the frontline. NATO has effectively reached the very borderland through which Hitler's army stormed in 1941, leaving more than 23 million people dead in the Soviet Union.

Last December, Russia proposed a far-reaching security plan for Europe. This was dismissed, derided or suppressed in the Western media. Who read its step-by-step proposals? On Feb. 24, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy threatened to develop nuclear weapons unless America armed and protected Ukraine. This was the final straw.

On the same day, Russia invaded—according to the Western media, an unprovoked act of congenital infamy. The history, the lies, the peace proposals, the solemn agreements on Donbass at Minsk counted for nothing.

On April 25, U.S. Defense Secretary General Lloyd Austin flew into Kyiv and confirmed that America's aim was

to destroy the Russian Federation—the word he used was "weaken." America had got the war it wanted, waged by an American-bankrolled and -armed proxy and expendable pawn.

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# Pentagon Budget Nears \$1 Trillion; Tell Biden: Enough

By Brett Wilkins

In response to reports that the Biden administration may propose the highest level of military spending in U.S. history for fiscal year 2024, a broad range of nearly 60 advocacy groups urged the White House to divert “some of our supersized Pentagon budget to better meet the needs of the American people.”

Last week, Pentagon Comptroller Michael McCord told Politico that officials were “very close” to agreeing on a topline figure for what would likely be the largest-ever U.S. military budget, which the Biden administration will include in its overall 2024 budget request.

“I do expect it will be a bigger number than Congress provided last year,” McCord said.

In a letter to President Joe Biden, 59 peace, national security, climate justice, racial justice, faith, and anti-poverty groups wrote that “we cannot and must not defend the status quo when it comes to the Pentagon budget.”

“This year’s military budget—\$858 billion—is the second-highest since World War II. It is 10 times Russia’s military budget and more than 2.5 times that of China. It is greater than the next nine countries combined,” the groups noted.

The letter continues:

“About \$452 billion of it will go straight into the pockets of big corporate weapons contractors. Congress added \$45 billion on top of what your administration requested—an amount greater than the entire climate investment portion of the Inflation Reduction Act. It will not take many more years for our military budget to hit the \$1 trillion mark, an astonishing sum given the Pentagon has never been able to pass an audit or properly account for the billions it already receives.”

“This is why we urge you to request a lower military budget this year,” the groups explained. “We reject recent calls to roll back the entire federal budget because we can and should be spending more on meeting human needs and ad-

ressing the climate emergency through a just transition from fossil fuels and support to communities on the frontlines of the climate crisis.”

“One of the many ways we can accomplish this is by spending less on the wasteful Pentagon budget,” the letter argues. “We reject pouring our dollars into outdated ships, malfunctioning planes, or record-breaking contractor CEO salaries while everyday people remain hungry, unhoused, in need of adequate healthcare, or seeking a living wage.”

In a recent opinion piece, retired Air Force Lt. Col. William J. Astore—a self-described “card-carrying member of the military-industrial complex”—wrote in favor of slashing the Pentagon budget in half.

“Isn’t it time to force the Pentagon to pass an audit each year—it’s failed the last five!—or else cut its budget even more deeply?” asked Astore, whose piece invoked earlier military-industrial complex critics including former World War II Supreme Allied Commander and President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Maj. Gen. Smedley Butler.

“Isn’t it time to hold Congress truly responsible for enabling ever more war by voting out military sycophants?” Astore added. “Isn’t it time to recognize, as America’s founders did, that sustaining a vast military establishment constitutes the slow and certain death of democracy?”

In an interview with CBS News’ *The Takeout* that aired last week, former U.S. Acting Defense Secretary Christopher C. Miller also said the military budget should be halved.

“We have created an entire enterprise that focuses economically on creating crisis to justify outrageously high defense spending,” said the former U.S. Army Special Forces colonel—who served for 73 days during the final months of the Trump Administration, including during the January 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

*Brett Wilkins is a staff writer for Common Dreams.*



## The Toxic Legacy of the U.S. Military

By Whitney Webb

Media outlets in 2017 gave minimal attention to news that the U.S. Naval Station in Virginia Beach spilled an estimated 94,000 gallons of jet fuel into a nearby waterway, less than a mile from the Atlantic Ocean. While the incident was by no means as catastrophic as some other pipeline spills, it underscores an important yet little-known fact—that the U.S. Department of Defense is both the nation’s and the world’s largest polluter.

Producing more hazardous waste than the five largest U.S. chemical companies combined, the U.S. Department of Defense has left its toxic legacy throughout the world in the form of depleted uranium, oil, jet fuel, pesticides, defoliants like Agent Orange, and lead, among others.

In 2014, the former head of the Pentagon’s environmental program told *Newsweek* that her office has to contend with 39,000 contaminated areas spread across 19 million acres just in the United States alone.

U.S. military bases, both domestic and foreign, consistently rank among some of the most polluted places in the world, as perchlorate and other components of jet and rocket fuel contaminate sources of drinking water, aquifers, and soil. Hundreds of military bases can be found on the Environmental Protection Agency’s list of Superfund sites, which qualify for clean-up grants from the government.

Almost 900 of the nearly 1,200 Superfund sites in the United States are abandoned military facilities or sites that otherwise support military needs, not counting the military bases themselves.

“Almost every military site in this country is seriously contaminated,” John D. Dingell, a retired Michigan congressman and war veteran, told *Newsweek* in 2014. Camp Lejeune in Jacksonville, North Carolina, is one such base. Lejeune’s contamination became widespread and even deadly after its groundwater was polluted with a sizable amount of carcinogens from 1953 to 1987.

However, it was not until this February that the government allowed those exposed to chemicals at Lejeune to make official compensation claims. Numerous bases abroad have also contaminated local drinking water supplies, most famously the Kadena Air Force Base in Okinawa.

In addition, the United States, which has conducted more nuclear weapons tests than all other nations combined, is also responsible for the massive amount of radiation that continues to contaminate many islands in the Pacific Ocean. The Marshall Islands, where the United States dropped more than 60 nuclear weapons between 1946 and 1958, are a particularly notable example. Inhabitants of the Marshall Islands and nearby Guam continue to experience an exceedingly high rate of cancer.

The American Southwest was also the site of numerous nuclear weapons tests that contaminated large swaths of land. Navajo Indian reservations have been polluted by long-abandoned uranium mines where nuclear material was obtained by U.S. military contractors.

One of the most recent testaments to the U.S. military’s horrendous environmental record is Iraq. U.S. military action there has resulted in the desertification of 90 percent of Iraqi territory, crippling the country’s agricultural industry and forcing it to import more than 80 percent of its food. U.S. use of depleted uranium in Iraq during the Gulf War also caused a massive environmental burden for Iraqis. In addition, the U.S. military’s policy of using open-air burn pits to dispose of waste from the 2003 invasion has caused a surge in cancer among U.S. servicemen and Iraqi civilians alike.

While the U.S. military’s past environmental record suggests that its current policies are not sustainable, this has by no means dissuaded the U.S. military from openly planning future contamination of the environment through misguided waste disposal efforts. In November, 2016 the U.S. Navy announced its plan

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# The World's Biggest Climate Change Enabler

By Jangira Lewis

The U.S. military recently released a report analyzing the Department of Defense's climate risk. The Pentagon acknowledged that rising temperatures are "reshaping" the world with "more frequent, intense, and unpredictable extreme weather conditions caused by climate change" but failed to analyze the Defense Department's own contributions to climate change.

In 2019, a report released by Durham and Lancaster University found the U.S. military to be "one of the largest climate polluters in history, consuming more liquid fuels and emitting more CO<sub>2</sub> (carbon-dioxide equivalent) than most countries." It established that if the U.S. military were a nation state, it would be the 47th largest emitter of greenhouse gases (GHG) in the world. These figures were from considering the emissions from fuel usage alone.

This report did not come as a shock. The U.S. military is a vast infrastructure and relies upon an extensive global network of trucks, cargo planes, and container ships to supply its operations. These operations can range from anything—to humanitarian aid, to bombs and hydrocarbon fuels.

ment Centre said: "The U.S. military has long understood it is not immune from the potential consequences of climate change—recognizing it as a threat multiplier that can exacerbate other threats—nor has it ignored its own contribution to the problem."

"Yet its climate policy is fundamentally contradictory—confronting the effects of climate change while remaining the largest single institutional consumer of hydrocarbons in the world, a situation it is locked into for years to come because of its dependence on existing aircraft and warships for open-ended operations around the globe," Bigger added.

Dr Benjamin Neimark, associate director of the Pentland Centre for Sustainability in Business at Lancaster, said: "This research provides ample evidence to support recent calls by activist networks to include the U.S. military in Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's Green New Deal and other international climate treaties."

"Our research demonstrates that to account for the U.S. military as a major climate actor, you must understand the logistical supply chain that makes its acquisition and consumption of hydrocarbon-based fuels possible" added Dr Oliver Belcher, of Durham University's

perenced by the residents of those islands more than 75 years later.

Between 1944 and 1977, the Hanford Nuclear Reservation in Washington state released radioactive toxic gases and fluids, affecting the fish that provide food and economic subsistence to the residences. In addition to this, Uranium mining and aboveground nuclear weapons tests had been occurring for approximately 50 years on and around these reservations. These actions have caused dramatic increases in cancer rates among indigenous people that reside in this region.

U.S. military land pollution does not only take the form of nuclear testing; it can also take the form of military real estate. Reports have indicated that both domestic and foreign U.S. military bases rank among some of the most polluted sites in the world. This is due to the astonishing amount of toxic chemicals, such as perchlorate and other components of jet fuel, that are found to contaminate drinking water, aquifers, and the soil surrounding the bases.

Additionally, a lot of the land is wasted by the U.S. military. Abandoned military sites are very common, with reports finding that almost 900 of the 1,200 Superfund sites in the United States alone are abandoned military sites. These military sites are also said to be contaminated, with special cleanup grants distributed to them from the government.

The U.S. military has claimed it is implementing positive changes to its policies, but these efforts have been so slight as to bring into serious doubt that the military



## U.S. Military Air Pollution

The U.S. military is greatly enlarging the carbon footprint suffered by our planet.

In 2017, the U.S. Air Force bought \$4.9 billion worth of fuels, the Navy bought \$2.8 billion, the Army \$947 million and the Marines \$36 million. The U.S. military was also found to have purchased 269,230 barrels of oil a day and emitted more than 25,000 kilotonnes of carbon dioxide.

These two examples are not exceptions. The Cost of Wars Project found that U.S. military pollution had accounted for 1.2 billion metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions, which amount to 257 million passenger cars annually. They noted that this astonishing output was higher than the emissions from whole countries like Sweden, Morocco, and Switzerland.

The report released by Durham and Lancaster University was an independent public assessment of the U.S. military's greenhouse gas emissions and calculated U.S. military pollution through critical analysis of its logistical supply chains around the world. This study establishes the U.S. military as one of the world's largest institutional consumers of hydrocarbons.

Dr Patrick Bigger of Lancaster University Environ-

Department of Geography.

Belcher continued, "How do we account for the most far-reaching, sophisticated supply chains, and the largest climate polluter in history? While incremental changes can amount to radical effects in the long-run, there is no shortage of evidence that the climate is at a tipping point and more is needed."

## U.S. Military Land Pollution

Two of the most harrowing cases of U.S. military pollution activity were the nuclear weapons tests they performed in the Marshall Islands and the Navajo Indian reservation.

From 1946 to 1958, the United States tested 67 nuclear weapons in what is now known as the Republic of the Marshall Islands. These weapons tests have been equated to being 1,000 times greater than the Hiroshima bomb, and the fallout from the tests had the largest impact on four northern atolls: Eniwetok, Bikini, Rongelap, and Utrok, each of which were evacuated due to radiation emitted from these tests. Radiation poisoning, birth defects, leukemia, thyroid and other cancers are just a few of the detrimental life-threatening consequences ex-

*The damage the U.S. military has inflicted is shocking, and they have shown complete negligence and disregard of human life.*

takes seriously the need to reduce its carbon footprint. Additionally, the U.S. Navy Task Force Climate Change initiative that was attempting to prepare military bases for global shifts in sea levels and warming ocean temperatures was quietly shut down.

## U.S. Military Water Pollution

The damage the U.S. military has inflicted is shocking, and it has shown complete negligence and disregard for human life.

In 2017, the U.S. Naval Air Station Oceana in Norfolk, Virginia, was found to have spilled 84,000 gallons of jet fuel into a waterway. Similarly, in 2019, statistics arose showing that the Air Force contractor had been dumping industrial solvent Trichloroethylene (TCE) into the ground surrounding the Tucson International Airport for 29 years. It was found that over 1,350 residents suffered from cancer and other illnesses due to these negligent actions. Claims were filed against the Air Force by many South Tucsonans, who claim to be suffering to this day from the damage caused by drinking the polluted water.

This negligence and disregard for life is not new behavior from the U.S. military. From 1953 to 1986, Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune in North Carolina was found to have been contaminating the groundwater with harmful chemicals that far exceeded safety standards. As a result of this negligence, a large number of servicemen contracted cancer and other illnesses.

U.S. military wars have had a devastating effect on the

*continued on page 9...*

# The Ways U.S. Militarism Fuels the Climate Crisis

By J.M. Rine

The U.S. military fuels the worsening climate crisis in numerous ways. One way is directly, as the largest institutional emitter of greenhouse gases (GHG). If the Pentagon were a country, in 2019 it would have ranked 53rd in GHG emissions.

To ascertain the full impact of U.S. military emissions, however, you need to add the GHG produced by the war industry that supports it. Adding these, what are termed scope 3 emissions, the resulting GHG produced is at least three to four times that of the Pentagon alone, or

nations felt able to contribute only \$10 billion to a fund to help countries which are exceptionally vulnerable but had no difficulty in increasing their defense spending by \$1 trillion. This suggests that, contrary to what global leaders may say publicly, many of them are in fact preparing for a future of intensified conflict."

Under the Biden administration's direction, is the Pentagon taking serious steps to reduce its emissions? In January 2021, U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin stated the Defense Department "will immediately take appropriate policy actions to prioritize climate change considerations

zero" are absent in subsequent NDAs for 2023 and 2024, despite the enormous size of these NDAs. With federal deficits increasing, it is unlikely both political parties will agree to fund the additional expense of "greening" a military that maintains or increases its present size. What needs to be done was pointed out in a February 2022 *Time Magazine* article headlined "To Take Climate Change Seriously, The U.S. Military Needs to Shrink."

An argument could be made that current security concerns warrant increased military spending. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research

recently, "China's actions are moving it down the path toward confrontation ... ." This is gross hypocrisy from a country with hundreds of overseas bases, versus China, which currently has just one base in Djibouti, along the coast of the Horn of Africa.

Based on the climatic catastrophes confronting the world in 2023, shouldn't the two largest emitters of GHG, China and the United States, be instead concentrating on how best to lower their emissions? Dr. Neta Crawford states in her book *The Pentagon, Climate Change, and War*, "Even in the context of greater fuel efficiency and emissions cuts in the Pentagon, continued military supremacy and a new cold war with China may come at the cost of a livable planet."

Are security concerns driving these confrontations with Russia and China or is it the greed of military contractors? Approximately half of the Pentagon budget goes to contractors who, in return, lobby Congress for more funding. According to Open Secrets, lobbying expenditures to Congress by military contractors exceeded \$100 million annually since 2005.

Can an imperialist country with an overwhelming military whose quest is "full-spectrum dominance" be trusted to be a "force for good" during a worsening climate crisis? On Jan. 6, 2021, an insurrection was inspired if not directed by a president who is purported to have once asked about the use of nuclear weapons, "If we had them why can't we use them?" With Donald Trump bidding to regain the title of commander-in-chief of the world's largest military, it would not be a stretch to conclude that most of the globe considers the United States a clear and present danger and not a force for good.

Amitav Ghosh writes, "[N]ationalism, military power, and geopolitical disparities are fundamental to the dynamics that have repeatedly stymied efforts to reach a global agreement on rapid decarbonization. . . . [I]t could be said that conflict and national rivalries are fundamental drivers of climate change."

*Resources are available from the Climate Crisis and Militarism Project within Veterans For Peace, including reference materials, presentations, and suggestions for actions. Visit veteransforpeace.*



Photo: Ellen Davidson

about equivalent to the GHG emitted by the Netherlands. Not an amount to be ignored, but these direct emissions may not be the most impactful way the Pentagon fuels the climate crisis.

President Biden promotes the United States not only as a "force for good" but also as a leader on fighting climate change citing its rejoining the Paris Climate agreement (but not meeting the pledged targets of that agreement), hosting a climate leaders' summit, participating in COP 26 and 27, and signing into law the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) of 2022. But can the United States be a credible leader in addressing the climate crisis when its prime mitigation tool, the IRA, receives less than 5% of the funding lavished on the U.S. military?

The United States justifies annual spending of tens of billions of dollars to maintain approximately 800 bases worldwide, many of which are heavy polluters but can manage only \$1 billion in climate financing for developing countries. Amitav Ghosh highlighted this problem in an essay in Greta Thunberg's *The Climate Change Book*, "... global leaders may speak a certain language during international negotiations, but when we examine what they are actually doing it would seem that their actions are indeed driven by a will to power. That perhaps is why affluent

in our activities and risk assessments, to mitigate this driver of insecurity."

In 2021, a Democratic-controlled Congress passed a National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2022 that mandated the Pentagon "submit to Congress a plan to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions of the Department of Defense." All military branches followed these instructions by submitting separate plans, with the Space Force melding with the Air Force in a Department of Air Force (DAF) plan. Citing President Biden's Executive Orders 14008 and 14057, both the Army and Navy promised to be net zero including procurements (scope 3) by 2050.

Inserted in Biden's Executive Orders regarding the obligations to attain "net zero" is: "To the maximum extent practicable and without compromising national security." This caveat is a hole in the "net zero" commitment big enough to drive an Abrams battle tank through!

The Air Force plan, which covers emissions from the world's largest fleet of military aircraft, makes no promise to achieve net zero emissions. The DAF plan, which only promises to "make climate-informed decisions" while maintaining "air and space dominance," is perhaps the most realistic of the three branch plans. This is because significant funding to achieve the goals of "net

Institute (SIPRI), the war in Ukraine has spawned an increase in global military spending to \$2.2 trillion. The United States follows this trend even though it already spends almost three times more than China, over 10 times more than Russia, and more than the next 10 countries combined, according to 2021 estimates by SIPRI. Considering the gross disparity in spending by the United States on its military, combined with the fact that many of the numerous U.S. overseas bases border Russia, it is not unreasonable to think that

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*The Air Force plan, which covers emissions from the world's largest fleet of military aircraft, makes no promise to achieve net zero emissions.*

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President Putin's fears of invasion are rational. After all, the United States almost went to war over the USSR placing missiles in a single country, Cuba. Consequently, it could be argued that the current insecurity and present war in Ukraine is partly if not largely the fault of the United States and its NATO allies.

Then there is the U.S. "conflict" with China. General Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told a House panel

[veteransforpeace.org/take-action/climatecrisis](http://veteransforpeace.org/take-action/climatecrisis) for more information.

James (Jim) M. Rine, after serving in the U.S. Army in West Germany (1969–1973), was a research geologist for 35 years. In 2020, he helped form the Veterans For Peace Climate Crisis and Militarism Project. Rine is also an adjunct professor in the Department of Environmental Science and Geology at Wayne State University in Detroit.



# Air Pollution Cuts More Than Two Years Off Human Life Expectancy

*Particulate pollution remains the world's greatest external risk to human health*

By Jake Johnson

High and rising levels of global particulate matter pollution—caused by wildfires, the combustion of fossil fuels, and other factors—are cutting 2.3 years off of the average human's life expectancy, according to research unveiled Tuesday.

The latest version of the Air Quality Life Index (AQLI), produced annually by the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago (EPIC), estimates that fine particulate matter (PM2.5) pollution's impact on global human life expectancy is "comparable to that of smoking, more than three times that of alcohol use and unsafe water, more than five times that of transport injuries like car crashes, and more than seven times that of

HIV/AIDS."

Despite the terrible impact of air pollution on human health, governments around the world are doing little to address the crisis, according to EPIC's research.

"While there is a large global fund for HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis that annually disburses \$4 billion toward the issues, there is no equivalent set of coordinated resources for air pollution," the new report states. "The entire continent of Africa receives under \$300,000 in philanthropic funds toward air pollution. Just \$1.4 million goes to Asia (outside of China and India). Europe, the United States, and Canada receive \$34 million, according to the Clean Air Fund."

*Jake Johnson is a staff writer for Common Dreams.*



Alchemy and the Transmutation of Gold. Jewelpedia

## The Bitter Alchemy of War

*Turning bullet lead into corporate gold*

By William J. Astore

As the Ukrainian counteroffensive against Russia grinds on (or falters?), as U.S. disaster relief for Hawaii is tied to more military aid for Ukraine, as depleted uranium shells join cluster munitions as America's latest gift to a blasted war zone, as calls for diplomacy continue to be muted when they're not actively discouraged and dismissed, I was reminded of the alchemy of war.

Alchemists of the early modern period were sophisticated experimenters driven by an often quasi-religious quest for perfection. We tend to remember only the most craven part of their experiments: the attempt to transmute lead into gold. This transmutation could not be effected, but alchemy itself transmuted into chemistry as its practitioners, through trial and error, developed a better understanding of the nature of the elements, reflected in part by today's Periodic Table.

Yet the business of war succeeded where alchemists failed. In their alchemy, the merchants of death turned bullet lead into corporate gold. And what gold! Yearly war budgets continue to soar in

the United States toward the trillion dollar mark. Weapons shipments to Ukraine continue at a pace that promises many more shattered and blasted bodies, Ukrainian and Russian.

In a sense, dead bodies are also being transmuted into corporate gold.

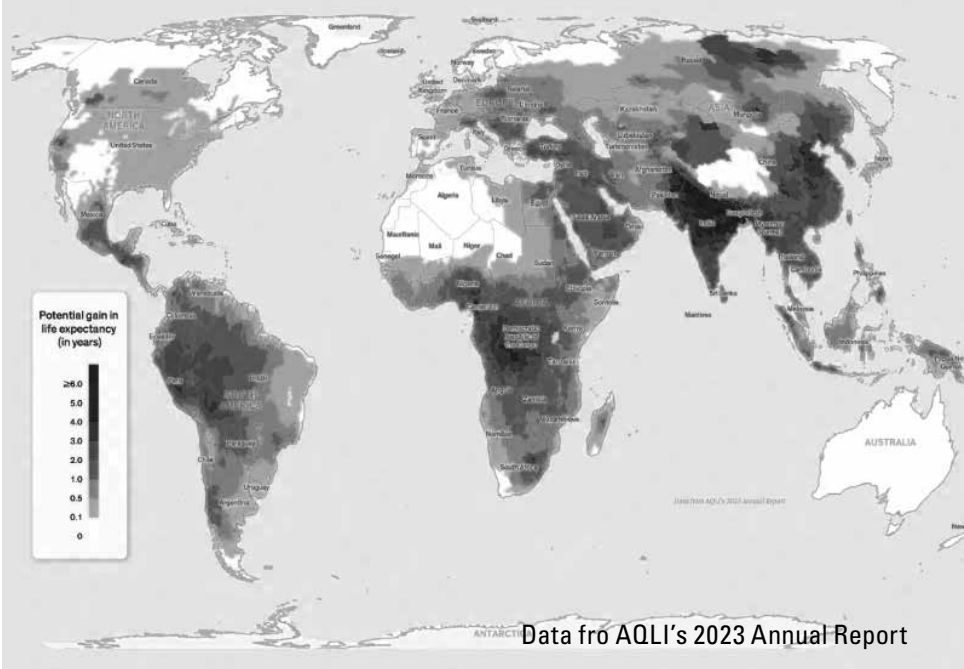
Transmutation, I was taught as a Catholic, is a miracle. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us (Jesus Christ, the Son of God, of course). We have made the miraculous the mundane, and indeed the profane. We take lead and spill blood which becomes gold. And some even celebrate this as good for business in the United States.

All these weapons: they're job-creators! So we crucify the Word and elevate the life-takers and widow-makers as gods.

We are far more deluded than the alchemists of the past.

*William J. Astore served in the U.S. Air Force for 20 years, retiring in 2005. He was a professor of history, and has written extensively for TomDispatch.com, Truthout, History News Network (HNN), Alternet, Salon, Antiwar.com, and Huffington Post among other sites. He is the author or co-author of three books, most recently Soldiers' Lives through History: The Early Modern World (2007, co-written with Dennis E. Showalter).*

If current levels of air pollution persist, 17.8 billion life-years will be lost worldwide



## Climate Enabler

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economies and population of the countries they intervene in. Perhaps one of the most recent cases to their detrimental environmental record is the intervention of Iraq. The Iraqi economy is suffering tremendously as they are now forced to import more than 80% of their food, due to the desertification of 90% of Iraqi territory. U.S. policies are negligent and disregard the safety of their servicemen as well as the Iraqi population.

A great deal of U.S. interventions occur as American corporations wish to protect their access to oil and other fossil fuels. We see this dependence on oil as one of the driving factors of why there is such a heavy U.S. military presence in many parts of the Middle East.

These interventions not only come with

a high cost to life, but to the environment too. The Cost of Wars Project found the total emissions from war-related activity in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Syria to be estimated at more than 400 million metric tons of carbon dioxide alone.

Former U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon stated in 2014, "The environment has long been a silent casualty of war and armed conflict. From the contamination of land and the destruction of forest to the plunder of natural resources and the collapse of management systems, the environmental consequences of war are often widespread and devastating."

*Jangira Lewis currently works as a Secondary School English Teacher in Hong Kong. Born and raised in Luton, she has a master's degree in International Journalism from the University of Leeds. Her interests lie in geopolitics, health and nutrition, humanitarian issues, and animal welfare.*



Photo: Ellen Davidson

# Propaganda

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Almost none of this was explained to Western audiences.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is wanton and inexcusable. It is a crime to invade a sovereign country. There are no "buts"—except one.

When did the present war in Ukraine begin and who started it? According to the United Nations, between 2014 and this year, some 14,000 people have been killed in the Kyiv regime's civil war on the Donbass. Many of the attacks were carried out by neo-Nazis.

Watch an ITV news report from May 2014 by the veteran reporter James Mates, who is shelled, along with civilians in the city of Mariupol, by Ukraine's Azov (neo-Nazi) battalion.

In the same month, dozens of Russian-speaking people were burned alive or suffocated in a trade union building in Odessa besieged by fascist thugs, the followers of the Nazi collaborator and anti-Semitic fanatic Stephen Bandera. The *New York Times* called the thugs "nationalists."

"The historic mission of our nation in this critical moment," said Andreiy Biletsky, founder of the Azov Battalion, "is to lead the white races of the world in a final crusade for their survival, a crusade against the Semite-led Untermenschen."

Since February 2022, a campaign of self-appointed "news monitors" (mostly funded by the Americans and British with links to governments) have sought to maintain the absurdity that Ukraine's neo-Nazis don't exist.

Airbrushing, a term once associated with Stalin's purges, has become a tool of mainstream journalism.

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***Today, the most profitable wars have their own brand. They are called "forever wars": Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, and now Ukraine. All are based on a pack of lies.***

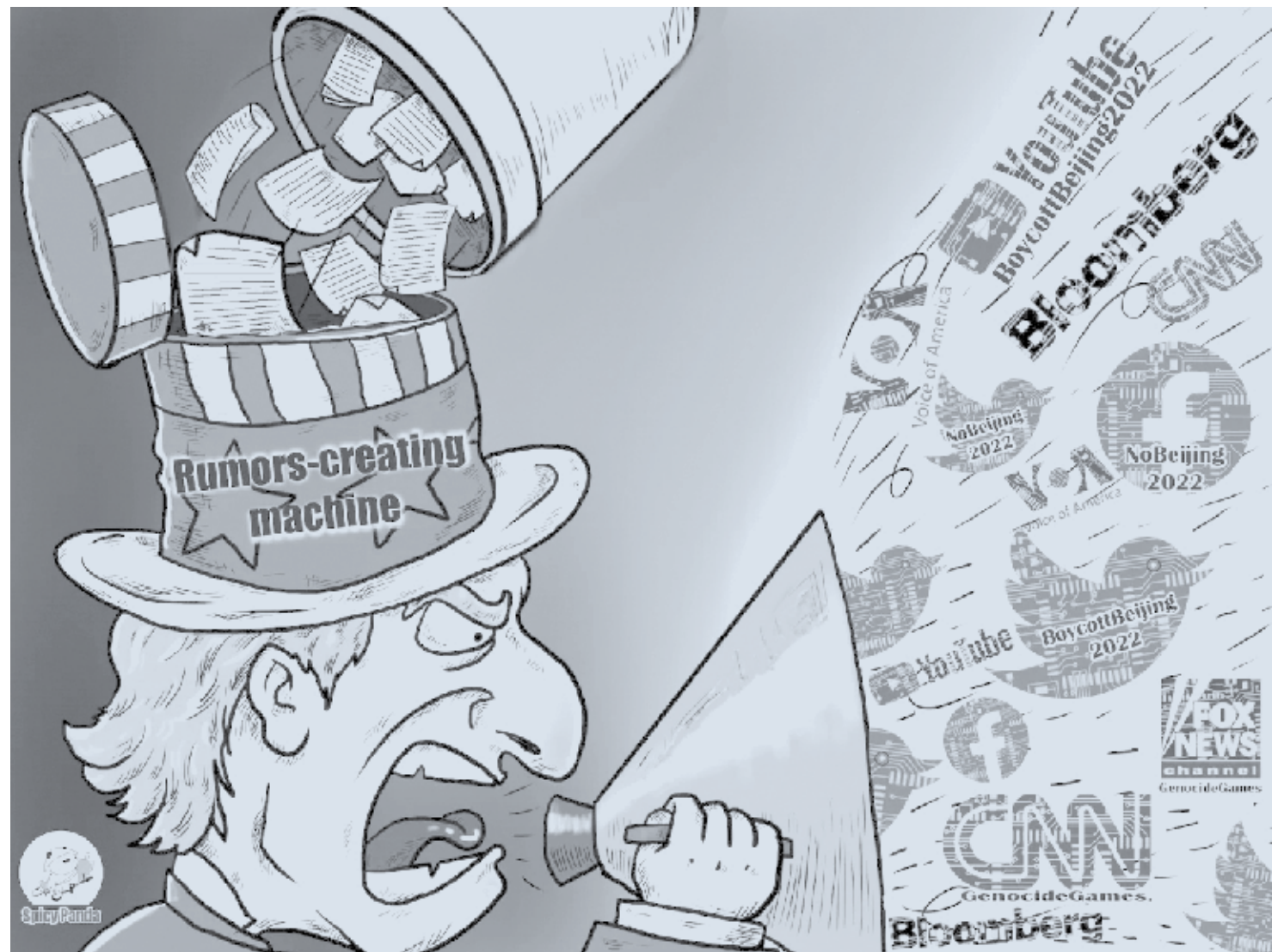
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In less than a decade, a "good" China has been airbrushed and a "bad" China has replaced it: from the world's workshop to a budding new Satan.

News about China in the West is almost entirely about the threat from Beijing. Airbrushed are the 400 American military bases that surround most of China, an armed necklace that reaches from Australia to the Pacific and Southeast Asia, Japan and Korea. The Japanese island of Okinawa and the Korean island of Jeju are loaded guns aimed point-blank at the industrial heart of China. A Pentagon official described this as a "noose."

Palestine has been misreported for as long as I can remember. To the BBC, there is the "conflict" of "two narratives." The longest, most brutal, lawless military occupation in modern times is unmentionable.

The stricken people of Yemen barely exist. They are media unpeople. While the Saudis rain down their American clus-



ter bombs with British advisers working alongside the Saudi targeting officers, more than half a million children face starvation.

This brainwashing by omission has a long history. The slaughter of World War I was suppressed by reporters who were knighted for their compliance and confessed in their memoirs. In 1917, the editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, CP Scott, confided to Prime Minister Lloyd George: "If people really knew [the truth],

stream. "Defenestrated" is the word used. The spaces once open to mavericks, to journalists who went against the grain, truth-tellers, have closed.

The case of Julian Assange is the most shocking. When Assange and WikiLeaks could win readers and prizes for the *Guardian*, the *New York Times*, and other self-important "papers of record," he was celebrated.

When the dark state objected and demanded the destruction of hard drives and the assassination of Assange's character, he was made a public enemy. Then-Vice President Biden called him a "hi-tech terrorist." Hillary Clinton asked, "Can't we just drone this guy?"

The ensuing campaign of abuse and vilification against Assange—the U.N. Rapporteur on Torture called it "mobbing"—brought the liberal press to its lowest ebb. We know who they are. I think of them as collaborators, as Vichy journalists.

When will real journalists stand up? An inspirational samizdat already exists on the internet: Consortium News, founded by the great reporter Robert Parry, Max Blumenthal's Grayzone, Mint Press News, Media Lens, Declassified UK, Alborada, Electronic Intifada, WSWS, ZNet, ICH, CounterPunch, Independent Australia, Globetrotter, the work of Chris Hedges, Patrick Lawrence, Jonathan Cook, Diana Johnstone, Caitlin Johnstone, and others who will forgive me for not mentioning them here.

And when will writers stand up, as they did against the rise of fascism in the 1930s? When will filmmakers stand up, as they did against the Cold War in the 1940s? When will satirists stand up, as they did a generation ago?

Having soaked for 82 years in a deep bath of righteousness that is the official version of the last world war, isn't it time

those who are meant to keep the record straight declared their independence and decoded the propaganda? The urgency is greater than ever.

*Originally published by Information Clearing House.*

*John Pilger is an award-winning Australian journalist, writer, scholar, and documentary filmmaker. He has mainly been based in Britain since 1962. He is also a visiting professor at Cornell University in New York.*

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## Dystopia

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happen for noble reasons in other countries or back during other points in history.

In reality, the need to "fight the power" is greater under the U.S.-centralized empire that rules over anyone who's likely to be reading these words, because the U.S.-centralized empire is the most murderous and tyrannical power structure in the world right now.

So when I ask you to picture an anti-authoritarian figure who comes to mind, if you are lucid you won't picture someone like Tank Man, Navalny, Gandhi, Mandela or MLK. You'll picture someone like Julian Assange: someone who's fighting the real power where it stands here and now.

*Caitlin Johnstone is a 100% crowd-funded rogue journalist, bogan social-ist, anarcho-psychonaut, guerilla poet and utopia prepper living in Australia with her American husband and two kids. She writes about politics, economics, media, feminism, and the nature of consciousness. She is the author of the illustrated poetry book Woke: A Field Guide For Utopia Preppers. Her website is [caityjohnstone.medium.com](http://caityjohnstone.medium.com).*

# 'Heart of the Earth'

... continued from page 1

igenous peoples to demarcate Indigenous lands. Both of these measures pave the way for a return to unimaginably harmful levels of deforestation," Bruch said.

The Amazon rainforest now stands on the precipice of an irreversible tipping point. Scientists have issued dire warnings, urging immediate action to halt the ongoing destruction.

In response, campaigners are pushing for the Brazilian Ecocide Bill to be enacted, which they argue will provide much needed protection for the Amazon and its ecosystems, and would support the rights of indigenous communities to continue their guardianship of the forest.

Jojo Mehta, executive director of Stop Ecocide International, highlighted the timeliness and significance of the bill, which she said served as a rallying point for civil society and social movements, empowering them to advocate for change in an increasingly challenging political environment.

## Rights of Nature

Alongside the development of ecocide laws, activists have been advocating recognition of Rights of Nature.

This legal concept grants nature with rights similar to personhood, aiming to protect and preserve ecosystems. In Brazil, Rights of Nature laws have started to gain traction.

For instance, the municipality of Bonito, located in the state of Pernambuco, enacted a Rights of Nature law in 2017. Two other cities in Brazil, Paudalho and Florianópolis, have also incorporated provisions related to Rights of Nature in their legislation.

These efforts reflect a growing recognition of the intrinsic value of nature and the need to safeguard its well-being through legal means.

In June 2023, the city council of Guajará-Mirim acknowledged the rights of Brazil's Laje river to "maintain its natural flow," "nourish," and "be nourished"—the first ruling of its kind in Brazil, which marked a crucial milestone in safeguarding rivers and forests from ecocide.

Criminalizing ecocide and Rights of Nature are different in their approaches but have the same aim: to bring about legal protection of nature under constitutional law.

While ecocide laws refer to the destruction or severe damage of ecosystems and criminalize those responsible, the Rights of Nature laws grant legal standing to natural entities. This allows landscapes such as forests and rivers to be represented in court with the granting of certain rights and protections.

In Ecuador, the Rights of Nature law has already achieved historical milestones. The court ruling in favor of Alambi River and the "Quito without mining" campaign have translated the rights of landscapes into legal language, further strengthening environmental protection measures.

*Amazônia: The Heart of Mother Earth* spurs international debate on why ecocide laws need to be adopted not just in Brazil, but globally. The film's message is clear: the permanent demarcation and protection of indigenous lands represents the most viable path to halt the deforestation of the Amazon.

First printed in *The Ecologist*.

Yasmin Dahnoun is assistant editor at *The Ecologist*.



Photo: Ellen Davidson

## Ellsberg

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ther first or second, would be lofted into the stratosphere where it would not rain out and would [envelop] the globe within days. That pall would block up to 70% of sunlight for years, destroying all harvests worldwide and causing death by starvation for most of the humans and other vertebrates on earth."

Dan told me, "This is not a species to be trusted with nuclear weapons. It's urgent to get this war ended. ... We need a ceasefire and negotiations before Putin is confronted with any prospect of losing Crimea and all of Donbass," which would "make the danger of nuclear war initiated by Russia more dangerous than any time since the Cuban Missile Crisis."

Dan was alarmed at how the Ukraine war could escalate, especially given Zelenskyy's effort, backed by the United States, to expel Russia from all areas, including those it has held for eight years. Dan was doubtful that negotiations would ever begin if Zelenskyy continued to insist that every Russian troop leave Ukraine before negotiations can occur. If the United States were to enter the war "directly with its pilots and combat troops and missiles ... I believe that Putin would very likely carry out his threat to initiate tactical nuclear war ... even with a high probability of escalating ... which would threaten all of humanity with nu-

clear winter," Dan told me.

The whistleblowers and truth tellers who have followed in Dan's footsteps include Chelsea Manning, Katharine Gun, John Kiriakou, Edward Snowden, Daniel Hale, Thomas Drake, Reality Winner, and Julian Assange. Dan was one of the co-chairs—with Noam Chomsky and Alice Walker—of *Assange Defense*.

"Every empire requires secrecy to cloak its acts of violence that maintain it as an empire," Dan testified at the Jan. 20 Belmarsh Tribunal opposing *Assange's*



Photo: Ellen Davidson

extradition from the UK to the United States, where he faces 175 years in prison for exposing U.S. war crimes. "If you're going to use the [Espionage] Act against a journalist in blatant violation of the First Amendment," Dan stated, "the First Amendment is essentially gone."

In 2008, during the Bush administration, when I was president of the National Lawyers Guild, Dan delivered the keynote address to our convention in Detroit. He warned of the dangers of unchecked executive power, saying, "The U.S. president is not a king."

Dan was arrested 90 times. He referred to his fellow arrestees as "my tribe." During a webinar honoring Dan on Nagasaki Day, Tarak Kauff said, "We respected him for all that he did, but loved him for who he was. He showed the world how to live with courage and joy—even in the darkest times. He always smiled when getting arrested, which was often. Witnessing him smiling and flashing the peace sign behind his back when in handcuffs was priceless." Dan demonstrated "a profound humanity and a life of principled resistance."

Tarak said that Dan "was a rare human being, truly a spiritual giant who loved and cared for others more than himself. Yet, he was always approachable, always one of us. He was a friend and a brother to everyone in Veterans For Peace. And he always signed his e-mails, 'Love, Dan,' as if you were family. He showed by example how to live, and as we all know, faced

death with the same dignity, joy and love that he lived with."

Dan's wife Patricia said that in the four months between his diagnosis and his death, she "never saw him happier. He had lived such a noble life. His death was as blessed as his life." Dan told her, "I feel so relieved. I don't feel the weight on my shoulders anymore." He enjoyed eating lox and bagels and salty foods he was forbidden from eating for so many years by his cardiologist.

Dan was a brilliant, intense, compassionate man with a great sense of humor and a remarkably curious mind. I cannot count the times he called me for legal analysis of the U.S. government's illegal action du jour. I am proud to have called him my friend.

The theme of this convention is "Choose Peace, Stand Up, Speak Out." Dan chose peace. He stood up. And he spoke out.

We must honor Dan's extraordinary legacy by committing ourselves to peace, and the struggle to protect the world from nuclear annihilation.

¡Dan Ellsberg, Presente!

*Marjorie Cohn is professor emerita at Thomas Jefferson School of Law, former president of the National Lawyers Guild, and a member of the national advisory boards of *Assange Defense* and *Veterans For Peace*, the bureau of the *International Association of Democratic Lawyers*. Her books include *Drones* and *Targeted Killing: Legal, Moral and Geopolitical Issues*. She is co-host of *Law and Disorder* radio.*

# Time to Dance the Salmon Home



By Juliet Grable

Late in the morning on July 12, a helicopter landed in a field near the entrance to AhDiNa, a campground on the McCloud River in Northern California. Children ran ahead to greet the craft, and soon the road was lined with spectators waiting to witness the delivery of precious cargo: an insulated bucket containing 25,000 fertilized winter-run Chinook salmon eggs.

These eggs would not only bring the Winnemem Wintu Tribe one step closer to bringing salmon, or Nur, back to their ancestral waters, but could also help save the species from extinction.

Winter-run Chinook spawn in summer, but the spring-fed McCloud River runs cold all year round, buffering eggs and young salmon from even the worst summer drought. For 80 years the formidable Shasta Dam has blocked Chinook from the McCloud. Now fish are stuck in California's Central Valley, where sizzling temperatures and water withdrawals make the Sacramento River lethal.

Winter-run Chinook eggs were first brought to the McCloud River last summer, as part of an emergency plan spearheaded by NOAA Fisheries, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Winnemem Wintu to help the fish survive a third straight year of drought.

"We were flying by the

Above: Winnemem Wintu dance ceremony. Right: Chief Caleen Sisk (photo: Juliet Grable). Opposite top left: Chief Sisk demonstrates the Nur Nature Base (photo: Juliet Grable). Opposite lower right: An adult winter Chinook salmon at the Livingston Stone National Fish Hatchery (photo: Laura Mahoney/USFWS). Opposite bottom right: Gathering around the eggs (photo: Juliet Grable).

seat of our pants," says Cathy Marcinkevage, assistant regional administrator for NOAA Fisheries West Coast Region. "We had no idea what was going to happen last year. We had no idea if any of them would survive."

The young salmon released into the McCloud River not only survived—they thrived, growing larger than those that reared in the Sacramento River below Shasta Dam.

Late last year the California Department of Fish and Wildlife captured and trucked 1,600 of the fry downstream so they could continue their journeys to the ocean. This year—with a new juvenile collection system, a novel streamside incubation system designed by the Tribe, and agreements in place that recognize the Winnemem Wintu as co-equal decision-makers—the partners hoped to build on their success.

Together Marcinkevage and Marine Sisk, fisheries supervisor for the Winnemem Wintu Tribe, carried the bucket to the ceremony grounds, a caravan of children and adults in their wake. Later in the afternoon, the partners would deliver the eggs to incubators on the riverbank.

First, it was time to dance the salmon home.

AhDiNa is at the end of a bone-juddering road south of the town of McCloud. On that July day, the campground was full of Winnemem Wintu, agency folk and their families, and people with Run4Salmon, a movement and prayer journey started by Winnemem Wintu Chief Caleen Sisk in 2016 to call salmon home to the McCloud River.

The ceremony took place in a circular arbor made from wood poles and conifer boughs. A fire in the center burned throughout the day, and as the sun rose higher, the circle had to be sprayed with water before the barefoot dancers could enter.

Between dances Chief Sisk invited partners from the agencies and organizations to join her in the circle. While a tribal member blew sage on each person, Chief Sisk asked the partners to open their hearts and minds and pressed for her two most urgent goals: building a "fishway" around Shasta Dam and bringing salmon, or Nur, from New Zealand back to the McCloud River.

Chinook eggs from the McCloud River were exported to New Zealand in the early 1900s, where runs formed in streams on the South Island. In 2010, Māori tribal members invited the Winnemem Wintu to come



to New Zealand and see the fish, who Chief Sisk believes are the true relatives of McCloud River Nur.

In their agreements NOAA Fisheries and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife have vowed to work with the Tribe to determine whether Nur can be safely imported from New Zealand to California and reintroduced in the McCloud River. Both the state wildlife department and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would have to sign off on the plan. Some of

the questions they will need to answer: Would the fish bring new pathogens to the McCloud? Would they compete with the other reintroduced Chinook for the same resources?

"Bringing the fish back to the U.S. doesn't necessarily fulfill the recovery objective that we have for winter-run because, to our understanding, [the New Zealand fish] are not genetically the same as the winter-run Chinook that we have now and are trying to recover," says Marcinkevage. "But we understand



they are culturally significant fish for the Tribe and there's probably a feasible opportunity to have a dual reintroduction that would support both of these species."

Chief Sisk says that if it weren't for regulatory barriers, the Māori could deliver 20,000 fertilized eggs as early as next year.

"Some of the rules are wrong for salmon, and they need to be changed," she says.

For now the eggs come from U.S. Fish and Wildlife's Livingstone Stone hatchery on the Sacramento River. To the people gathered at AhDiNa, they were still worth celebrating.

The Salmon Dance was the last dance of the ceremony. While the women sang and men drummed, two dancers entered the circle, stepping lightly, undulating like fish. Next came a pair of warriors, their steps more emphatic, underscored by the clatter of anklets. A fifth dancer weaved in and out of the others.

The fifth dancer was the Salmon Spirit, dance captain Rick Wilson explained. First he dances with the salmon and thanks them for presenting themselves. Then he dances with the warriors in the same style.

"He makes sure they're doing it for the right reason," says Wilson. "He's saying, 'It's okay; you're good to go.'"

### Stronger, Faster, Larger

Down by the river after the ceremony, a small crowd of adults

and children pressed around a shade structure, where two vertical stacks of trays were set up. A pipe trickled water continuously through the stack. Each tray can accommodate thousands of salmon eggs. Used in virtually all hatcheries, the system is an efficient if unnatural way to grow fish.

Adjacent the shade structure was a second incubator system designed by Chief Sisk and built with the help of scientists from UC Davis.

Chief Sisk doesn't like how the fry in the hatchery trays are stacked on top of each other; she wants them to have access to gravel and more agency. Her system, called the Nur Nature Base, has a much larger footprint than the hatchery trays and resembles a backyard water feature. Two deep square basins, lined with gravel, connect to a central pool that is planted with rocks and willow shoots. A sloping chute leads from the pool to a shallow, cobble-lined basin alongside the river.

Once the eggs hatch, the fish can swim over the lip of the basin into the pool, Chief Sisk explained to the crowd. "And when they're ready, they'll swim into this side channel, which the Winnemem Wintu have always built."

Children crowded around Chief Sisk and her daughter, Marine, waiting for their turn to scoop cups of the orange, BB-sized eggs into the hatchery trays, then into one of the basins of the Nur Nature Base. By the

time they completed the task, there were 11,000 eggs in the hatchery trays and 14,000 in the Nature Base.

Chief Sisk is confident that the Nur Nature Base will give the young fish a jump-start. "They'll be stronger, faster, and larger," she says.

In a few years, the team will know if she's correct. Because the fertilized eggs come from the hatchery, the scientists know the identities of their parents and have segregated eggs from unique families between the hatchery trays and the Nur Nature Base. This way any fish that survive and return to the Sacramento River as spawning adults can be genetically traced back to one of the two rearing systems.

Eggs were delivered again in late July and early August, for a total of up to 80,000. Using two different systems and three simulated spawning dates will help the partners learn which strategies work best.

"We'll know and learn better ways of setting up rearing and incubation," says Rachel Johnson, salmon life history program lead for NOAA Fisheries Southwest Fisheries Science Center. "What I also love is we

are braiding natural science with spiritual and culturally relevant practices."

Later this summer, the state wildlife department and the Tribe will place a rotary screw sampling trap downstream so they can estimate the number of fry that make it downstream. The agency also hopes to test an experimental in-river fish-trapping station where the McCloud River fattens into an arm of Shasta Lake. Finally, the California Department of Water Resources will install its Juvenile Salmonid Collection System to catch any fish the other traps miss. The system, which the agency piloted last year, uses cold water to funnel young salmon to a collection point, where they can then be trapped and transported below the dam.

Though this is the first project to reintroduce salmon to historical habitat above a large dam in California, Marc Commandatore, environmental program manager at the Department of Water Resources, says the winter-run project is "just the beginning."

NOAA Fisheries has identified reintroducing fish to high-elevation tributaries as a key

climate resilience strategy, especially for salmon languishing in the Central Valley.

"Fish are in the frying pan in the valley," says Commandatore. "They want to be in this beautiful cold water."

The partnership with the Winnemem Wintu is also a welcome sign of new respect and collaboration among Western scientists and the region's original salmon stewards. "To bring tribal knowledge into decision-making ... I'm humbled by it," says Commandatore. "We wouldn't be here if science and engineering and belief hadn't all come together."

*Juliet Grable is a freelance writer who lives in southern Oregon. Her work has appeared in many national and regional magazines, including Popular Science, Audubon, Sierra, Washington Post, Green Builder, Home Power, Earth Island Journal, Oregon Humanities, Redwoods Magazine, Travel Oregon, and 1859. She has authored three books and helped produce a short documentary and is currently collaborating on a feature-length film with Synchronous Pictures.*



# Whales Could Save the World's Climate, Unless the Military Destroys Them First

By Koohan Paik-Mander

The U.S. military is famous for being the single largest consumer of petroleum products in the world and the largest emitter of greenhouse gases. Its carbon emissions exceed those released by “more than 100 countries combined.”

Now, with the Biden administration's mandate to slash carbon emissions “at least in half by the end of the decade,” the Pentagon has committed to using all-electric vehicles and transitioning to biofuels for all its trucks, ships and aircraft. But is only addressing emissions enough to mitigate the current climate crisis?

What does not figure into the climate calculus of the new emission-halving plan is that the Pentagon can still continue to destroy Earth's natural systems that help sequester carbon and generate oxygen. For example, the plan ignores the Pentagon's continuing role in the annihilation of whales, in spite of the miraculous role that large cetaceans have played in delaying climate catastrophe and “maintaining healthy marine ecosystems,” according to a report by Whale and Dolphin Conservation. This fact has mostly gone unnoticed until only recently.

There are countless ways in which the Pentagon hobbles Earth's inherent abilities to regenerate itself. Yet, it has been the decimation of populations of whales and dolphins over the last decade—resulting from the year-round, full-spectrum military practices carried out in the oceans—that has fast-tracked us toward a cataclysmic environmental tipping point.

The other imminent danger that whales and dolphins face is from the installation of space-war infrastructure, which is taking place currently. This new infrastructure comprises the development of the so-called “smart ocean,” rocket launchpads, missile tracking stations and other components of satellite-based battle. If the billions of dollars being plowed into the 2022 defense budget for space-war technology are any indication of what's in store, the destruction to marine life caused by the use of these technologies will only accelerate in the future, hurtling Earth's creatures to an even quicker demise than already forecast.

## Easy Way to Sequester Carbon

It's first important to understand how whales are indispensable to mitigating climate catastrophe, and why reviving their numbers is crucial to slowing down damage and even repairing the marine ecosystem. The importance of whales in fighting the climate crisis has also been highlighted in an article that appeared in the International Monetary Fund's Finance and Development magazine, which calls for the restoration of global whale populations. “Protecting whales could add significantly to carbon capture,” states the article, showing how the global financial institution also recognizes whale health to be one of the most economical and effective solutions to the climate crisis.

Throughout their lives, whales enable the oceans to sequester a whopping 2 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide per year. That astonishing amount in a single

year is nearly double the 1.2 billion metric tons of carbon that was emitted by the U.S. military in the entire 16-year span between 2001 and 2017, according to an article in Grist, which relied on a paper from the Costs of War Project at Brown University's Watson Institute.

The profound role of whales in keeping the world alive is generally unrecognized.

**There are countless ways in which the Pentagon hobbles Earth's inherent abilities to regenerate itself.**

Much of how whales sequester carbon is due to their symbiotic relationship with phytoplankton, the organisms that are the base of all marine food chains.

The way the sequestering of carbon by whales works is through the piston-like movements of the marine mammals as they dive to the depths to feed and then come up to the surface to breathe. This “whale pump” propels their own feces in giant plumes up to the surface of the water. This helps bring essential nutrients from the ocean depths to the surface areas where sunlight enables phytoplankton to flourish and reproduce, and where photosynthesis promotes the sequestration of carbon and the generation of oxygen. More than half the oxygen in the atmosphere comes from

phytoplankton. Because of these infinitesimal marine organisms, our oceans truly are the lungs of the planet.

More whales mean more phytoplankton, which means more oxygen and more carbon capture. According to the authors of the article in the IMF's Finance and Development magazine—Ralph Chami and Sena Oztonun, from the IMF's Institute for Capacity Development, and two professors, Thomas Cosimano from the University of Notre Dame and Connel Fullenkamp from Duke University—if the world could increase “phytoplankton productivity” via “whale activity” by only 1 percent, it “would capture hundreds of millions of tons of additional CO<sub>2</sub> a year, equivalent to the sudden appearance of 2 billion mature trees.”

Even after death, whale carcasses function as carbon sinks. Every year, it is estimated that whale carcasses transport 190,000 tons of carbon, locked within their bodies, to the bottom of the sea. That's the same amount of carbon produced by 80,000 cars per year, according to Sri Lankan marine biologist Asha de Vos, who appeared on TED Radio Hour on NPR. On the seafloor, this carbon supports deep-sea ecosystems and is integrated into marine sediments.

## Vacuuming CO<sub>2</sub> From the Sky?—a False Solution

Meanwhile, giant concrete-and-metal “direct air carbon capture” plants are being planned by the private sector for construction in natural landscapes all over the world. The largest one began operation in 2021 in Iceland. The plant is named “Orca,” which not only happens to be a type of cetacean but is also derived from the Icelandic word for “energy” (orka).

Orca captures a mere 10 metric tons of  
*continued on page 19...*



Photo: Mark Woodward/Native Santa Cruz

# Don't Laugh Off Rebellious Orcas and Sea Otters

By Alexandra Isfahani-Hammond

Memos galore centered on the “orca revolution” have inundated the online realm. They gleefully depict orcas launching attacks on boats in the Strait of Gibraltar and off the Shetland coast.

One particularly ingenious image showcases an orca posed as a sickle crossed with a hammer. The cheeky caption reads, “Eat the rich,” a nod to the orcas’ penchant for sinking lavish yachts.

A surfboard-snatching sea otter in Santa Cruz, California, has also claimed the media spotlight. Headlines dub her an “adorable outlaw” “at large.”

Memos conjure her in a beret like the one donned by socialist revolutionary Ché Guevara. In one caption, she proclaims, “Accept our existence or expect resistance ... an otter world is possible.”

My scholarship centers on animal-human relations through the prism of social justice. As I see it, public glee about wrecked surfboards and yachts hints at a certain *schadenfreude*. At a time marked by drastic socioeconomic disparities, white supremacy, and environmental degradation, casting these marine mammals as revolutionaries seems like a projection of desires for social justice and habitable ecosystems.

A glimpse into the work of some political scientists, philosophers, and animal behavior researchers injects weightiness into this jocular public dialogue. The field of critical animal studies analyzes structures of oppression and power and considers pathways to dismantling them. These scholars’ insights challenge the prevailing view of nonhuman animals as passive victims. They also oppose the widespread assumption that nonhuman animals can’t be political actors.

So while meme lovers project emotions and perspectives onto these particular wild animals, scholars of critical animal studies suggest that nonhuman animals do in fact engage in resistance.

## Nonhuman Animal Protest Is Everywhere

Are nonhuman animals in a constant state of defiance? I’d say, undoubtedly, that the answer is yes.

The entire architecture of animal agriculture attests to animals’ unyielding re-

sistance against confinement and death. Cages, corrals, pens and tanks would not exist were it not for animals’ tireless revolt.

Even when hung upside down on conveyor hangars, chickens furiously flap their wings and bite, scratch, peck and defecate on line workers at every stage of the process leading to their deaths.

Until the end, hooked tuna resist, gasping and writhing fiercely on ships’ decks. Hooks, nets, and snares would not be necessary if fish passively allowed themselves to be harvested.

If they consented to repeated impregnation, female pigs and cows wouldn’t need to be tethered to “rape racks” to prevent them from struggling to get away.

If they didn’t mind having their infants permanently taken from their sides, dairy cows wouldn’t need to be blinded with hoods so they don’t bite and kick as the calves are removed; they wouldn’t bellow for weeks after each instance. I contend that failure to recognize their bellowing as protest reflects “anthropodenial”—what ethologist Frans de Waal calls the rejection of obvious continuities between human and nonhuman animal behavior, cognition and emotion.

The prevalent view of nonhuman animals remains that of René Descartes, the 17th-century philosopher who viewed animals’ actions as purely mechanical, like those of a machine. From this viewpoint, one might dismiss these nonhuman animals’ will to prevail as unintentional or merely instinctual. But political scientist Dinesh Wadiwel argues that “even if their defiance is futile, the will to prefer life over death is a primary act of resistance, perhaps the only act of dissent available to animals who are subject to extreme forms of control.”

## Creaturely Escape Artists

Despite humans’ colossal efforts to oppress them, nonhuman animals still manage to escape from slaughterhouses. They also break out of zoos, circuses, aquatic parks, stables, and biomedical laboratories. Tilikum, a captive orca at Sea World, famously killed his trainer—an act at least one marine mammal behaviorist characterized as intentional.

Philosopher Fahim Amir suggests that depression among captive animals is likewise a form of emotional rebellion

against unbearable conditions, a revolt of the nerves. Dolphins engage in self-harm like thrashing against the tank’s walls or cease to eat and retain their breath until death. Sows whose body-sized cages impede them from turning around to make contact with their piglets repeatedly ram themselves into the metal struts, sometimes succumbing to their injuries.

Critical animal studies scholars contend that all these actions arguably demonstrate nonhuman animals’ yearning for freedom and their aversion to inequity.

As for the marine stars of summer 2023’s memes, fishing gear can entangle and harm orcas. Sea otters were hunted nearly to extinction for their fur. Marine habitats have been degraded by human activities including overfishing, oil spills, plastic, chemical and sonic pollution, and climate change. It’s easy to imagine they might be responding to human actions, including bodily harm and interference with their turf.

## What Is Solidarity with Nonhuman Animals?

Sharing memes that cheer on wild animals is one thing. But there are more substantive ways to demonstrate solidarity with animals.

Legal scholars support nonhuman animals’ resistance by proposing that their current classification as property should be replaced with that of personhood or beingness.

Nonhuman animals including songbirds, dolphins, elephants, horses, chimpanzees and bears increasingly appear as plaintiffs alleging their subjection to extinction, abuse and other injustices.

Citizenship for nonhuman animals is another pathway to social and political inclusion. It would guarantee the right to appeal arbitrary restrictions of domesticated nonhuman animals’ autonomy. It would also mandate legal duties to protect them from harm.

Everyday deeds can likewise convey solidarity.

Boycotting industries that oppress nonhuman animals by becoming vegan is a powerful action. It is a form of political “counter-conduct,” a term philosopher Michel Foucault uses to describe practices that oppose dominant norms of power and control.

Creating roadside memorials for nonhuman animals killed by motor vehicles encourages people to see them as beings whose lives and deaths matter, rather than mere “roadkill.”

Political scientists recognize that human and nonhuman animals’ struggles against oppression are intertwined. At different moments, the same strategies leveraged against nonhuman animals have cast segments of the human species as “less than human” in order to exploit them.

The category of the human is ever shifting and ominously exclusive. I argue that no one is safe as long as there is a classification of “animality.” It confers susceptibility to extravagant forms of violence, legally and ethically condoned.

I believe quips about the marine mammal rebellion reflect awareness that our human interests are entwined with those of nonhuman animals. The desire to achieve sustainable relationships with other species and the natural world feels palpable to me within the memes and media coverage. And it’s happening as human-caused activity makes our shared habitats increasingly unlivable.

Solidarity with nonhuman animals is consistent with democratic principles—for instance, defending the right to well-



Single breaching orca.  
Photo: Minette Layne.

being and opposing the use of force against innocent subjects. Philosopher Amir recommends extending the idea that there can be no freedom as long as there is still unfreedom beyond the species divide: “While we may not yet fully be able to picture what this may mean, there is no reason we should not begin to imagine it.”

*Alexandra Isfahani-Hammond is Associate Professor Emerita of Comparative Literature and Luso-Brazilian Studies at the University of California, San Diego. Her publications on Critical Animal Studies and the legacies of African enslavement include “Haunting Pigs, Swimming Jaguars: Mourning, Animals and Ayahuasca,” “Akbar Stole My Heart: Coming Out as an Animalist,” and White Negritude: Race, Writing and Brazilian Cultural Identity. Her current book project, Home Sick, blends theory with creative nonfiction to meditate on grief, end of life, the medical-industrial complex, Islamophobia, and the commodification of (human and nonhuman) animals.*

# Environmental Apartheid in Palestine

*How Zionist colonialism has destroyed the environment in Palestine*

By Institute for Middle East Understanding

Environmental apartheid refers to Israel's systematic exploitation of the environment in Palestine/Israel and the discriminatory system by which Palestinians are dispossessed of their land, water, and other natural resources while being disproportionately impacted by ecological damage caused by Israel.

Israel's environmental apartheid is harmful to the climate and violates the human rights of Palestinians, and is part of Israel's broader system of apartheid against Palestinians both inside Israel's internationally recognized borders and in the territories it has militarily occupied since 1967 (the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza). To distract attention from its abuses of Palestinian human rights, Israel engages in "greenwashing," promoting itself as an eco-friendly country even as its policies and actions cause tremendous harm to the environment and to Palestinians.

According to the U.N. Development Program, "So pervasive are the effects of the Israeli occupation on the climate vulnerability of Palestinian communities that the occupation—in and of itself—is considered here a 'risk,' alongside environmental risks such as sea-level rise and altered rainfall patterns."

For countless generations, Palestinians have lived and worked sustainably and in harmony with the natural environment in Palestine, maintaining the indigenous landscape, sharing common resources, and growing a wide variety of crops, including watermelon, wheat, cit-

rus, grapes, and olives, the latter of which form a central part of Palestinian culture and identity.

Since 1948, when the state of Israel was established on 78% of Palestine and three-quarters of all Palestinians were expelled from their homes, Israel has been damaging and destroying the environment in order to exploit its natural resources; to pressure Palestinians to leave their land, as part of its repeated military assaults and 15-year-old illegal siege and blockade of Gaza; and to erase evidence of Palestinian existence and connection to the land.

Under international law, it is illegal for Israel as the occupying power to exploit Palestinian natural resources in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza for its own purposes.

## Theft of Palestinian Water

Israel systematically denies Palestinians in the occupied territories and parts of Israel access to clean and safe drinking water. Israel steals more than 80% of water in the occupied West Bank and expropriates it for use in illegal settlements, denying Palestinians access to water while supplying Israeli settlers with enough water to fill swimming pools, irrigate crops, and wash vehicles.

Because of Israeli restrictions, Palestinians living in the occupied West Bank and Gaza are restricted from drilling water wells and installing water pumps, and are denied access to the Jordan River and freshwater springs. The Israeli army also regularly destroys Palestinian pipelines

and water tanks, blocking Palestinians from even collecting rainwater. As a result, Palestinians are forced to live on an average of just 19 gallons of water per day—well below the WHO minimum.

Israel's theft of Palestinian water causes severe environmental damage. Since 1967, Israel has consolidated complete control over all Palestinian water sources

ated more than four million acres of land belonging to the approximately 750,000 Palestinians who were driven from their homes and made refugees, denying their internationally recognized legal right to return along with the thousands of others internally displaced inside Israel.

Palestinians who remained inside what became Israel were granted Israeli citi-

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*Israel steals more than 80% of water in the occupied West Bank ... for use in illegal settlements, denying Palestinians access to water while supplying Israeli settlers with enough water to fill swimming pools, irrigate crops, and wash vehicles.*

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in the occupied territories. Israel's over-extraction of Palestinian water sources has caused a drop in the water table and a distortion in the natural flow of groundwater, increasing vulnerability to extreme weather events such as floods and droughts, which damage Palestinian agricultural and residential areas. Over time, Israel has also degraded the water quality of the single largest source of freshwater, the Sea of Galilee, by clearcutting 25,000 acres of native wetlands and draining Lake Hula to make room for farming settlements.

## Theft of Palestinian Land

**Inside Israel:** During its establishment in 1948, the new state of Israel expropri-

zation but stripped of most of their land and placed under martial law until 1966, their freedoms severely restricted. Despite lifting martial law in 1966, Israel has continued to dispossess Palestinian citizens of Israel, destroying their homes and entire communities, and taking their land. Palestinian citizens of Israel, who comprise more than 20% of Israel's population, also face systematic discrimination when it comes to their ability to access state-owned lands—about 93% of all the land in Israel—for residential, agricultural, or commercial purposes.

**In the Occupied Palestinian Territories:** Since 1967, Israel has expropriated huge tracts of Palestinian land in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem. More than 247,000 acres of Palestinian land have been appropriated by Israel over the past 55 years to build over 280 Jewish settlements and a massive wall that have both been condemned as illegal by the United Nations, the International Court of Justice, and human rights organizations, in addition to destroying over 50,000 Palestinian homes and other structures such as farm buildings and water tanks.

Israel severely limits Palestinians' right to access land in the occupied West Bank. Under the terms of the supposedly temporary Oslo Accords signed in the 1990s, Palestinian land in the occupied West Bank has been fragmented into three areas: Areas A, B, and C. Over 60% of the land in the West Bank—encompassing the majority of residential and development reserves as well as key natural resources like water and oil—has been classified by Israel as Area C, making it subject to full Israeli civil and military control. Through a discriminatory zoning system, Israel prohibits Palestinians from using the land in Area C, refusing to approve requests for building permits and thus destroying hundreds of "unauthorized" Palestinian homes each year. Seventy percent of the land in Area C has been appropriated for the use of illegal settlements, leaving only 1% to Palestin-

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Palestinian farmers inspect the damage done to their olive trees by Israeli settlers. Photo: Issam Rimawi/Anadolu Agency





A Palestinian youth inspects damage following an Israeli air strike in Gaza City on July 24, 2014. Photo: AFP/Mohammed Abed

## Palestine

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ians; in East Jerusalem, 35% of the land has been expropriated for the construction of illegal settlements, restricting Palestinians to only 13%.

### Destruction of Palestinian Trees and Agricultural Land

Israel uproots trees and destroys natural habitats in order to erase Palestinian

history and existence. In 1948 and following years, Israel uprooted native trees and agricultural crops—such as carobs, hawthorns, oaks, olives, figs, and almonds—and replaced them with over four million non-native European species as part of an effort to hide the ruins of hundreds of Palestinian communities that were systematically destroyed during the state's establishment. These non-native trees have caused vast environmental damage, reducing biodiversity, increasing droughts, and worsening wildfires throughout the region.

In the occupied territories, the Israeli government and its settlers target Palestinian olive groves as a way to force Palestinians off their land. Since 1967, Israel has uprooted at least 2.5 million trees in the occupied territories, including nearly one million olive trees, which are a primary source of food and income for many Palestinians. Israeli settlers backed by the army frequently attack Palestinian farmers and their supporters during the olive harvest; between August 2020 and August 2021, Israeli soldiers and settlers destroyed more than 9,000 Palestinian olive trees in the West Bank. The widespread destruction of olive trees is a key strategy in Israel's efforts to push Palestinians off their land and expand illegal settlements, and has led to habitat fragmentation, desertification, land degradation, rapid urbanization, and soil erosion.

### Environmental Destruction Caused by Illegal Settlements

Israel steals Palestinian land in order to build illegal settlements, destroying the natural environment in the process. Israel has clear-cut and uprooted tens of thousands of trees in order to build settlements on Palestinian agricultural and grazing lands, leading to increased soil erosion. In 2021, the Israeli army uprooted, destroyed, and burned approximately 19,000 trees. Some settlements

have also been built on nature reserves in the West Bank.

In building an extensive network of roads connecting settlements to each other and to Israel, and other settlement infrastructure for the exclusive use of Israelis, Israel has bulldozed huge areas of Palestinian land; the Israeli military regularly destroys any trees or buildings within 75 meters (246 feet) of these roads, which dissect the occupied West Bank, isolating Palestinian communities from one another and the outside world.

### Impact of Settlement Pollution on Palestinian Health and the Environment

Israeli settlements release dangerous pollutants into the environment and nearby Palestinian communities. Israeli settlers produce twice as much solid waste per capita than Palestinians, and Israel dumps approximately 90% of the wastewater generated by illegal settlements into the West Bank, discharging 52 million cubic yards of untreated sewage each year in addition to other hazardous materials such as infectious medical waste, metals, batteries, and electronic industry byproducts. Many settlements are strategically located on hilltops above Palestinian towns and villages so polluted settlement wastewater and other contaminants

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# Once We Were Proud and Supportive

*The State of Israel has betrayed the very essence of everything good and decent about being Jewish*

By Tarak Kauff

I was born in 1942 to a Jewish family while WWII was raging. My mother hated not only the Nazis but the German people for allowing that to happen. She never forgave them. Never would she buy or touch anything made in Germany. In 1948 the Jewish State of Israel was founded. My family were fiercely proud and supportive of what we felt was the heroic Zionist achievements in Israel. We knew nothing about Palestinians. All we knew was that Arabs hated Jews and did terrible things. At a young age I decided to join the U.S. Army and "become a man." I spent three-and-a-half years, mostly in the 101st Airborne division as a paratrooper, and now I'm an 81-year-old veteran.

After my military discharge I became

involved in efforts to stop the Vietnam War. I also started to hear negative stuff about Israeli treatment of Palestinians, which of course I was in denial about. The Arabs were the bad guys after all. Nonetheless, I began to do some research and soon saw that there might actually be something to the criticism. Eventually I went to the West Bank with a team of U.S. veterans along with a former IDF paratrooper to experience the reality for myself. Four of us on that team were Jewish. I made two trips a few years apart. What I saw and experienced directly confirmed much of what I had researched, and it wasn't pretty.

I'll cut to the chase. The Zionist State of Israel has betrayed the very essence of everything good and decent about being Jewish. Instead of being kind, compassionate and empathetic to the oppressed and dedicated to truth, Israel has become a most vicious oppressor. I saw Palestine children brutalized. They are killed on almost a daily basis. Children! Many are languishing in Israel prisons for throwing rocks at occupying soldiers or for just being suspected of that. Israeli soldiers often break into Palestinian houses in the dead of night, terrorize the family and arrest children. And there is no such thing as a fair trial. If you are arrested, you are guilty. Palestinians are considered vermin.



August, 2015: Nabi Salah, West Bank: Palestinian child being terrorized by an Israeli soldier.

And the armed settlers with their hatred and biblical stupidity—"God gave us this land"—are the worst. Yes, their god is a real-estate agent in the sky. Idiocy. And there is no excuse for it—none. Just as there was no excuse for what the Nazis did and what they became—arrogant monsters. How ironic that I saw such a similar phenomenon in Israel, especially in my direct confrontations with the IDF and the rabid settlers. Now I understand my mother's revulsion to everything German. I'm a Jew and I wanted to see the truth, to actually see the reality apart from the mythology and the hasbara. The reality is that Israel has become an anathema to the humanistic tradition of Juda-

ism. Instead it is sadistically violent and ruthless, as were the Nazis, but it is the arrogance most of all that repulses me.

Finally, I suggest that people who want to defend Israel first spend some time in the West Bank as an objective observer. As many have, you will then see the truth. It may shock and disturb you, but you will become a better, more honest person because of it.

*Tarak Kauff is the editor-in-chief of Peace & Planet News. He was a paratrooper in the U.S. Army from 1959 to 1962 and is a lifetime member and former board member of Veterans For Peace. He is a longtime activist for peace, justice, and the environment.*

# Viet Nam

... continued from page 1

ist. I had a purpose. Many of the attendees were not aware of the vibrant resistance movement in our ranks on their behalf to end the war. We wanted to insert that narrative into their discussion of Viet Nam's heritage. And it worked. We packed the room during our panel discussion.

The panel consisted of Ron, who provided a brilliant summary of the GI Resistance Movement (he was instrumental in setting up underground newspapers and GI coffeehouses during the war); Dr. Tran Xuan Thao, who spoke eloquently of her museum—the most visited museum in Vietnam and one of the world's premier museums; Chuck Searcy, a veteran who has lived in Vietnam for the past 30 years and is a driving force behind the RENEW project and The Friendship Village; and myself, who was asked to read a couple of my poems that appear in Ron's book *Waging Peace in Vietnam*, which was just translated into Vietnamese.

At this point, I must acknowledge the significance of having my son with me. He is 46 years old and an experienced international traveler. Not to mention that he's an excellent photographer. As his old man wandered here and there chatting it up with various conference attendees, he roamed about the city of Hue and engaged with the people in his own inimitable fashion. His stories of those encounters greatly enhanced my own experiences.

And since both Josh and I are advocates of "organic travelling," we were able to change plans on the spur of the moment. That led to phase two of the trip. The conference was part of the game plan, but our encounter with Chuck Searcy opened up another possibility that we jumped on. Chuck suggested that we go with him to Dong Ha in the Quang Tri Province to visit the offices of Project RENEW. Sure, we said. The evening after our conference presentation we flew out to Dong Ha, where Chuck had arranged hotel reservations and lined up a driver. We were about to hit the road.

Both of us were glad to leave the urban settings of Hanoi and Hue and head out to the countryside. Much of this countryside suffered enormous environmental damage due to bombing and the massive spraying of Agent Orange. This was the experience I had of Viet Nam those many years ago. During our five days of travelling by car we went to Khe Sanh, the



**"10 Ways the War in Ukraine Threatens Our Environment. War is NOT Green!" is an excellent short video available on YouTube. Produced by CODEPINK Women for Peace, the 8-minute film explains why a ceasefire and negotiations are urgently needed to prevent further destruction of the environment.**

**End the war in Ukraine before it ends us! Join in the Global Days of Action for Peace in Ukraine, Sept. 30–Oct. 8. For more information, visit [peaceinukraine.org](http://peaceinukraine.org).**

DMZ, Da Nang, and Dong Ha. We went through a tunnel system built by the Vietnamese to survive the bombings; went to prison museums and war education centers that offered the perspective of those who suffered under our military occupation; and we got to engage with the people since Chuck speaks Vietnamese and our driver spoke English. As Chuck remarked, "We are now travelling down the Ho Chi Minh Trail."

In the RENEW office in Dong Ha we met with the program's director and four of his staff members. They told us of their work to remove unexploded ordnance from the villages in Quang Tri; they showed us their work on prosthetics to provide victims of our cluster bombs with a means to gain some semblance of "normal lives"; and they explained how they are refashioning village homes to accommodate those impacted by our Agent Orange sprayings. Their commitment to those still suffering from our war was impressive. Their thanks to Veterans For Peace and others who are providing financial assistance was heartfelt and deep.

Right now they have 125 agents who are called out to villages to remove the aforementioned ordnance and they have a rudimentary set-up to provide prosthetic arms and legs. They need more funding to reach out to the victims of our war. Their presentations convinced me that I have a role to play in their work. I was not a tourist any longer.

Then we went to the Friendship Village outside of Hanoi.

This village was first set up by VFP member George Mizo. It started as one building and has now expanded to a campus of classroom buildings, a playground, and office facilities. Who lives there? Children and grandchildren of Vietnamese exposed to Agent Orange. They all suffer from both mental and physical disabilities as they struggle to live meaningful lives. The campus also houses Vietnamese veterans from the war—from both sides. They are there to help out as much as they can. Again, more funding is needed.

Right now a lot of the financial support for Project RENEW and the Friend-

ship Village come from private sources, including a Norwegian group and an Irish group. The U.S. State Department has provided some initial funding but not much of late. Both projects employ doctors and nurses as well as student interns, but they are strapped for funds as the need for their work expands throughout the country. I am going to start up an outreach program, and I would love to have some assistance. Not only do we owe it to the Vietnamese people to help them recover from that war, but we also need to show the American people the realities of using cluster bombs and chemical weapons and their impact on the land and on generations of war victims. This life-changing visit to Vietnam was not all about me. It's about all of us.

*Rawlings is a Vietnam veteran and the author of four collections of poems: Orion Rising, A G.I. Portrait, In the Shadow of the Annamese Mountains, and A Baker's Dozen (children's poems). He is a founding member and former poet laureate of Veterans For Peace. He can be reached at [rawlings@maine.edu](mailto:rawlings@maine.edu).*

## Vietnam Redux: Going Back By Doug Rawlings

for Josh

I look twice now where I used to look only once like where routes two and four merge with route 156 or when my imagination takes me to a little village just on the other side of the river Styx.

Where there truly was hell to pay those many years ago across that river and up and down those swirling tides where Beelzebub got to play with his gift box of GI Joes as we desperately hung on for his Satanic little ride

I went back to that land of my fifty-year-old dreams thinking I'd finally put some nightmares out to pasture hoping to quiet down those mama san betel-mouthed screams looking for that proverbial sense of closure

But who am I to expect more from this madly tortured land that once swallowed up my illusions of masculine grandeur and spat out a soldier boy who had tried to become a man only to become a tool of that mindless, endless slaughter?

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

Fifty years later, survivors of the war in Viet Nam still need our help! Please visit [renewvn.org](http://renewvn.org) to make a tax-deductible donation or a bequest in your name to Friends of Project RENEW.

Readers of *Peace & Planet News* are also eligible for a special 30% discount on copies of the companion book to the *Waging Peace in Vietnam* exhibit. Just remember to use the code **PEACE30** at checkout when purchasing copies of *Waging Peace in Vietnam: U.S. Soldiers and Veterans Who Opposed the War*. Go to [WagingPeaceInVietnam.com](http://WagingPeaceInVietnam.com).

# Whales

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CO<sub>2</sub> per day—compared to about 5.5 million metric tons per day of that currently sequestered by our oceans, due, in large part, to whales. And yet, the minuscule comparative success by Orca is being celebrated, while the effectiveness of whales goes largely unnoticed. In fact, President Joe Biden's \$1 trillion infrastructure bill contains \$3.5 billion for building four gigantic direct air capture facilities around the country. Nothing was allocated to protect and regenerate the real orcas of the sea.

If ever there were “superheroes” who could save us from the climate crisis, they would be the whales and the phytoplankton, not the direct air capture plants, and certainly not the U.S. military. Clearly, a key path forward toward a livable planet is to make whale and ocean conservation a top priority.

Unfortunately, the U.S. budget priorities never fail to put the Pentagon above all else—even a breathable atmosphere. At a December 2021 hearing on “How Operational Energy Can Help Us Address Logistics Challenges” by the Readiness Subcommittee of the U.S. House Armed Services Committee, Representative Austin Scott (R-GA) said, “I know we're concerned about emissions and other things, and we should be. We can and should do a better job of taking care of the environment. But ultimately, when we're in a fight, we have to win that fight.”

This logic that “we have to destroy the village in order to save it” prevails at the Pentagon. For example, hundreds of naval exercises conducted year-round in the Indo-Pacific region damage and kill tens of thousands of whales annually. And every year, the number of war games, encouraged by the U.S. Department of Defense, increases.

They're called “war games,” but for creatures of the sea, it's not a game at all.

Pentagon documents estimate that 13,744 whales and dolphins are legally allowed to be killed as “incidental takes” during any given year due to military exercises in the Gulf of Alaska.

In waters surrounding the Mariana Islands in the Pacific Ocean alone, the violence is more dire. More than 400,000 cetaceans comprising 26 species were allowed to have been sacrificed as “takes” during military practice between 2015 and 2020.

These are only two examples of a myriad of routine naval exercises. Needless to say, these ecocidal activities dramatically decrease the ocean's abilities to mitigate climate catastrophe.

The most lethal component to whales is sonar, used to detect submarines. Whales will go to great lengths to get away from the deadly rolls of sonar waves. They “will swim hundreds of miles... and even beach themselves” in groups in order to escape sonar, according to an article in Scientific American. Necropsies have revealed bleeding from the eyes and ears, caused by too-rapid changes in depths as whales try to flee the sonar, revealed the article.

Low levels of sonar that may not di-

rectly damage whales could still harm them by triggering behavioral changes. According to an article in Nature, a 2006 UK military study used an array of hydrophones to listen for whale sounds during marine maneuvers. Over the period of the exercise, “the number of whale recordings dropped from over 200 to less than 50,” Nature reported.

“Beaked whale species... appear to cease vocalising and foraging for food in the area around active sonar transmissions,” concluded a 2007 unpublished UK report, which referred to the study.

The report further noted, “Since these animals feed at depth, this could have the effect of preventing a beaked whale from feeding over the course of the trial and could lead to second or third order effects on the animal and population as a whole.”

The report extrapolated that these second- and third-order effects could include starvation and then death.

## The ‘Smart Ocean’

Until now, sonar in the oceans has been exclusively used for military purposes. This is about to change. There is a “subsea data network” being developed that would use sonar as a component of undersea Wi-Fi for mixed civilian and military use. Scientists from member nations of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), including, but not limited to Australia, China, the UK, South Korea and Saudi Arabia, are creating what is called the “Internet of Underwater Things,” or IoUT. They are busy at the

drawing board, designing data networks consisting of sonar and laser transmitters to be installed across vast undersea expanses. These transmitters would send sonar signals to a network of transponders on the ocean surface, which would then send 5G signals to satellites.

Utilized by both industry and military, the data network would saturate the ocean with sonar waves. This does not bode well for whale wellness or the climate. And yet, promoters are calling this development the “smart ocean.”

The military is orchestrating a similar overhaul on land and in space. Known as the Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2), it would interface with the subsea sonar data network. It would require a grid of satellites that could control every coordinate on the planet and in the atmosphere, rendering a real-life, 3D chessboard, ready for high-tech battle.

In service to the JADC2, thousands more satellites are being launched into space. Reefs are being dredged and forests are being razed throughout Asia and the Pacific as an ambitious system of “mini-bases” is being erected on as many islands as possible—missile deployment stations, satellite launch pads, radar tracking stations, aircraft carrier ports, live-fire training areas and other facilities—all for satellite-controlled war. The system of mini-bases, in communication with the satellites, and with aircraft, ships and undersea submarines (via sonar), will be replacing the bulky brick-and-mortar bases of the 20th century.

Its data-storage cloud, called JEDI (Joint Enterprise Defense Infrastructure),

will be co-developed at a cost of tens of billions of dollars. The Pentagon has requested bids on the herculean project from companies like Microsoft, Amazon, Oracle and Google.

## Save the Whales, Save Ourselves

Viewed from a climate perspective, the Department of Defense is flagrantly barreling away from its stated mission, to “ensure our nation's security.” The ongoing atrocities of the U.S. military against whales and marine ecosystems make a mockery of any of its climate initiatives.

While the slogan “Save the Whales” has been bandied about for decades, they're the ones actually saving us. In destroying them, we destroy ourselves.

*Originally published for Local Peace Economy/Independent Media Institute at CounterPunch*

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Abandoned Air Force Base in Greenland. Photo: Ken Bower

## Toxic Legacy

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to release 20,000 tons of environmental “stressors,” including heavy metals and explosives, into the coastal waters of the U.S. Pacific Northwest over the course of this year.

The plan, laid out in the Navy's Northwest Training and Testing Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), fails to mention that these “stressors” are described by the EPA as known hazards, many of which are highly toxic at both acute and chronic levels.

The 20,000 tons of “stressors” mentioned in the EIS do not account for the additional 4.7 to 14 tons of “metals with potential toxicity” that the Navy plans to release annually, from now on, into inland waters along the Puget Sound in Washington state.

In response to concerns about these plans, a Navy spokeswoman said that heavy metals and even depleted uranium are no more dangerous than any other metal, a statement that represents a clear rejection of scientific fact. It seems that the very U.S. military operations meant to “keep Americans safe” come at a higher

cost than most people realize—a cost that will be felt for generations to come both within the United States and abroad.

*This article was first published on May 15, 2017, in Mint News.*

*Whitney Webb is a MintPress News journalist based in Chile. She has contributed to several independent media outlets including Global Research, Eco-Watch, the Ron Paul Institute and 21st Century Wire, among others. She has made several radio and television appearances and is the 2019 winner of the Serena Shim Award for Uncompromised Integrity in Journalism.*

# The Case Against Digital Technology

By Koohan Paik-Mander

The cell phone, with its GPS, texts, voice recognition, and kaleidoscope of other apps, has become an indispensable appendage to modern humans. In fact, we are awash in such technologies, merged with them—our culture, institutions, ways of thinking, even our DNA. Meanwhile, the systemic embrace of algorithm technology has resulted in staggering economic inequity and environmental collapse, widespread alienation and disconnection from Nature. Something feels wrong about it, yet we are still accustomed to ordering from Amazon or attending a Zoom meeting. It seldom crosses our minds that we have become one with a construction, the direct genealogy of which is militarism.

Indeed, all the technologies we take for granted as part of modern life were actually first developed as weapons at the Pentagon. The plethora of applications that were subsequently spun off for consumer use and corporate profit are the ones we interface with every day. Meanwhile, the development of more advanced military technologies has never abated hurtling forward, unnoticed, toward a horrifying new reality of 21st-century warfare. And now, with multiple generations of artificial intelligence (AI) teed up for development, everything is about to get even more insane.

A glimpse of what's to come can be gleaned from the Lockheed Martin website. It states that the primary weapon of war in the 21st century is "information." In the very near future, data transmissions through networks of satellites and WiFi will enable AI to summon, at once, unmanned robot weapons to rain terror down on any spot in the world—a swarm of drones, hypersonic missiles, submarine torpedoes, and bombers—and all with the ease of calling an Uber.

The technologies for the latest trend in satellite-robot warfare found their beginnings in the military research that took place under the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) to develop missiles—often dubbed "Star Wars"—during the Reagan Administration. This research fast-tracked robotics and digital-tech development and gave birth to early AI. These technologies have been integrated into civilian "dual use" applications over the past two-and-a-half decades, enabling explosive growth of companies like Google, Apple and Microsoft.

A new generation of highly sophisticated AI is triggering another tsunami of research funding. For example, the U.S. has mandated, in its National AI Initiative Act of 2020, to plow tens of billions of dollars specifically into AI, and not only for Pentagon research. Other agencies will also be researching and integrating AI into the workflow, including DARPA, the National Security Council, Homeland Security, the National Science Foundation, NASA, the National Institute of Health, USAID, NOAA, and even the

departments of Agriculture, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, State, Transportation, Veterans Affairs, and more.

The groundwork is being laid for artificial intelligence, not human beings, to make determinations on how people will be governed, how Nature will be ravaged, and how war will be waged. In order to resist, it is crucial to deconstruct the military worldview and the epistemologies that drive all the existential crises we are all working so hard to revert.

## Algorithm Technologies

The French philosopher and technology critic Jacques Ellul coined the term *La Technique* to describe how a society's technologies are part of a seamless fabric inseparable from political and economic structures, behavior, and thought. Technology is not just a cell phone or a drone or an algorithm or a nuclear bomb. It is a whole

sequently, these values have been inherent to the algorithm technologies developed during the last 25 years. But the new technologies also possess an additional trait that amplifies their capacity for destruction. That trait is its ephemerality, which is its ability to function outside the boundaries of time and space—the very language of Nature. It's also a trait that is highly prized by military strategists.

Although not readily apparent, the ability to operate unbounded by time or geography is a potentially grave existential threat. Geographies and cycles comprise the operating system for the intricate web of life. The seasons, the ebb and flow of tides, sunrise and sunset, systole and diastole, and countless other rhythms. We ignore them at our peril. Sacred cycles and places have been scripture since time immemorial for Indigenous societies, instructing when and how to plant, to fish, to harvest, to give birth, to bury one's dead. But the new technologies erase, in

A lot of people believe that technology is only "a tool" that can produce either good or bad results, depending on who its user is and how it's being used. Actually, all technologies have inherent properties that are unique to that particular technology. Technology is not value neutral.

Jerry Mander gives a great example of a technology's inherent properties by comparing solar power to nuclear power:

"The existence of nuclear energy, and nuclear weaponry, in turn requires the existence of what Ralph Nader has called a new 'priesthood'—a technical and military elite capable of guarding nuclear waste products for the approximately 250,000 years that they remain dangerous. So if some future society, tiring of the present path, should determine to move away from a centralized technological society and toward, say, an agrarian society, it would be impossible. The technical elite would need to remain, if only to deal with the various wastes left



AI experts condemn development of "killer robots" in South Korea.

way of thinking, a way of organizing society, a way of being. It is systemic. Algorithm technologies, specifically, accelerate, amplify and perpetuate the values of the Pentagon, which gave them birth.

Our society's prevailing ideologies include militarism, capitalism, neo-liberalism, globalism, and imperialism. All these "isms" share the same values with the technologies that now pervade our world. Those values include: 1) the profit imperative, 2) the growth imperative, 3) the efficiency imperative, 4) competition and aggression, 5) amorality, 6) hierarchy, 7) quantification, linearity and segmentation, 8) homogenization, 9) dehumanization, 10) exploitation, and last, but not least, 11) the destruction of Nature to achieve these values and objectives.

These values have been dominant in Western culture ever since the barbarism of the so-called "Age of Discovery." Con-

one fell swoop, these ancient guideposts. They are seen as "too inefficient."

Instead, millions of algorithms trample constraints of season or space, working ceaselessly 24/7 to buy and sell on world stock markets, to secure deals to cut down forests, extract commodities on all continents and seabeds, set up factory farms, and displace traditional sustainable communities, which had survived for millennia, due precisely to their respect for cycles and geographies.

A rigorous deconstruction of the military worldview, its associated technologies and the epistemologies that drive all existential crises is long overdue. What role have military-derived technologies played, and continue to play, on the freefall collapse of society, the environment, and geopolitical harmony? How much longer will we keep pinning all hope on the empty promise that "technology will save us"?

behind. So it is fair to say that nuclear energy inherently steers society toward greater political and financial centralization, and greater militarization.

"Solar energy, on the other hand, is intrinsically biased toward democratic use. It is buildable and operable by small groups, even by families. It does not require centralized control. ... And solar energy requires no thousand-year commitment from society."

In other words, every technology is imbued with its own inherent characteristics. Consequently, technology that is derived from values of war and domination will inevitably proliferate those values.

## Inequity Accelerator

Reagan's so-called "Star Wars plan" gave birth to the algorithm tech upon  
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which the rulers of the world were built—Google, Oracle, Microsoft, Amazon, Facebook, Tesla, Apple, Uber, and all the rest.

When the tech giants first rolled onto the consumer scene, we were assured a shining tomorrow that would “level the playing field,” “democratize society,” and “empower” individuals. All we had to do was buy their devices—or be ridiculed as a Luddite.

In the midst of the collective hallucination, no one ever suspected that nearly every human activity would soon be reduced to a screen and a set of options to click. Or that the screen would be the interface between us and the techno-feudal lords to whom we would pay regular tribute. Who knew that the digital revolution would soon represent the largest transfer of wealth in U.S. history to the 1%, and be the nail in the coffin of the American middle class?

Today, 70% of Americans now live with constant economic stress, just to keep a roof over their heads. 60% of Americans live paycheck to paycheck. One in four live with medical debt. Few can afford higher education, healthcare is in shambles, crime is rampant, society is wholly polarized, and the fentanyl epidemic has turned urban streets into a bad zombie movie. Clearly, it was never about “leveling the playing field,” as was promised. Instead, digital technology has been the most efficient inequity-accelerator in modern history.

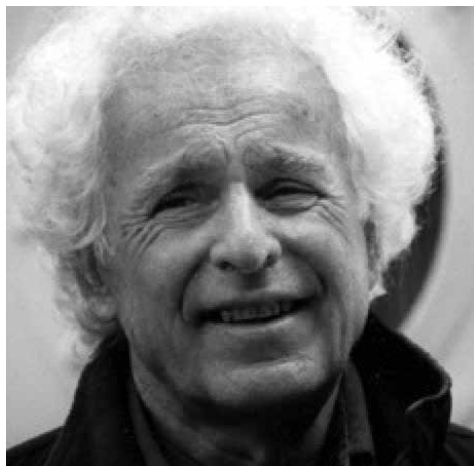
The esteemed Luddite, Chellis Glendinning, wrote a decade ago: “The concerned will rave about war, poverty, oil depletion, and climate upheaval—as well they should. Some venture to name racism, capitalism, empire; cruelty and greed can be high on the lists. But technology’s role in shaping these same tragedies handily slips from the perceptual gaze.”

## Disruption Capitalism

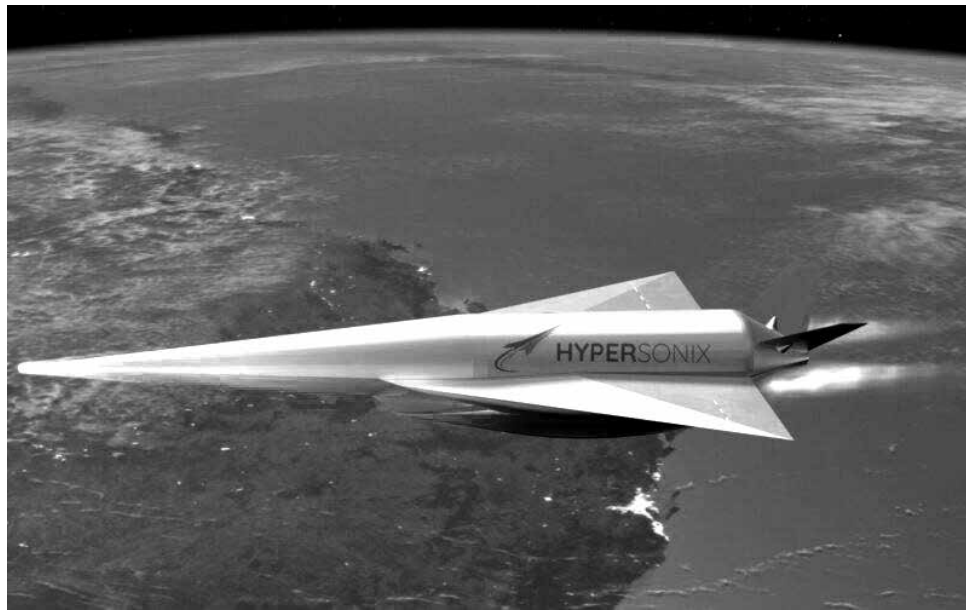
Naomi Klein’s term “disaster capitalism” describes the phenomenon when, in the aftermath of war or natural catastrophe, private investors profit from reconstruction. Likewise, algorithms are introduced to the market with the express goal of causing disaster—by disrupting and replacing a traditional part of a culture or economy.

Disruption capitalism, as it were.

The price of disruption has been a cascade of systems-collapses within both civilization and Nature. Examples are all



Jerry Mander.



around us. Local community was decimated by Amazon’s disruption of brick-and-mortar shops. Hotel unions were gutted by AirBnB and VRBO. Taxicab jobs were wiped out by Uber and Lyft. Jobs for actors, writers, musicians, and artists are all slated to be replaced by AI. The profound implications to the well-being of society by this “disruption” cannot be overstated.

Not only human dignity has been sacrificed for tech profits. So, too, has Nature. We now have what Bill Gates calls “digital agriculture” that relies on industrial-scale mono-cropping. We also have nanotechnology, gene editing, geo-engineering, and synthetic biology—all distortions of Nature calibrated to meet industrial output goals. The cumulative net effect is more systems collapse, all unravelling toward full-spectrum ecocide.

Vandana Shiva recently criticized gene-editing, noting that “life is complex [and] self-organized. It’s not a Word program that you can cut and paste with no consequence.”

New technologies have also accelerated extraction, and mightily. Robotics, AI, automated drone mining, networked communications and 3D imaging have enabled mining to take place on the deep ocean floor, which had never before been accessible. The Center for Biological Diversity has compared mining the deep sea with strip mining in the mountains of Appalachia, extinguishing whole ecosystems in a day.

The civilian application of robots to grow food, mine the Earth and drive taxis, among other dubious ventures, are direct spinoffs of inventions that emerged in the endless quest for an all-robotic military.

In the race to create a robot military, one wonders how AI might be even remotely capable of handling a Cuban Missile Crisis scenario.

Let’s just imagine a nuclear-armed hypersonic missile set to strike North America in six minutes. Military planners believe that, within that short a duration of time, rational, emotionless machines should be in charge of responding. They believe that humans would be prone to panic during such a moment of urgency, whereas machines would not. That’s why algorithms have actually been positioned to decide when and if to “push the button.” This dystopia is our reality, no longer science fiction.

As machine decision-making accelerates warfare, it is plain to see how conflict could easily escalate. Compressed time and space creates the incentive for each side to strike first and strike fast in a perceived crisis. This is a recipe for instability. Even if neither party initially planned to strike first, the accelerated dynamic inherent in an AI-driven scenario forces the likelihood of Mutually Assured Destruction. Diplomacy is not part of the algorithm.

The justification for Mutually Assured

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*In the midst of the collective hallucination, no one ever suspected that nearly every human activity would soon be reduced to a screen and a set of options to click.*

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Destruction is predicated on the belief that leaders of superpower nations were too rational to allow escalation of a war that would end with the destruction of both nations. But you see, back then, no one ever factored into the equation what we have now—that one day, AI algorithms would be programmed and positioned to press the button. And algorithms couldn’t care less about Mutually Assured Destruction, or whether the whole planet is blown to smithereens.

This isn’t an arms race. It’s a suicide race.

## Demystifying AI

In the past few months, the topic of artificial intelligence has dominated the media with false promises, hyped-up worries, genuine concerns, and last but certainly not least, stock-market excitement.

The first warning in recent months came from Geoffrey Hinton, often called “the godfather of AI.” A kind of elder statesman of computing, he left his job at Google in order to speak freely, he has explained, with no corporate attachments, so that he could warn of the dangers of AI subjugating humanity—or eliminating it altogether.

And then there’s the letter signed by 1,800 corporate signatories, including Elon Musk, Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak and engineers from Amazon, Deep-

Mind, Google, Meta, and Microsoft. The letter called for a six-month pause on the development of systems “more powerful” than that of the large-language AI model GPT-4. The ostensible “fear” is that robots will become smarter than humans and take over.

Timnit Gebru, has received much less media coverage than Hinton or Elon Musk about her objections to AI. Gebru is an Ethiopian-American AI developer who was notoriously fired from Google for calling out the race bias in the company’s algorithms. Gebru believes that the biggest threat from AI is taking place right now, not off in the distant future. One of her concerns is about how AI draws from the internet for its existing database, as a result, it amplifies the race and gender biases that are already rampant online.

Gebru finds the letter calling for a pause on AI research to be disingenuous. “Why does Elon Musk ... someone who pumped hundreds of millions of dollars into OpenAI and DeepMind, why is he so interested in caution?” She continues to point out that his company, Tesla, is not cautious at all in labor practices, “If we’re talking about ... the largest racial discrimination lawsuit in the history of California, that’s not what he wants us to talk about.”

Unlike Musk, Gebru does not believe that AI is some big, magical, mysterious thing that will take over humanity all on its own. Like anything else, AI gets its power from the money that is invested into its development—in this case, on the order of hundreds of billions. A 2023 KPMG report estimates that investment in AI, along with machine learning and robotics, is set to reach \$232 billion by 2025. It’s enough to re-make the world, several times over. Which is exactly the disruption plan.

Dan McQuillan, who teaches Creative and Social Computing at Goldsmiths, University of London, supports Gebru’s concerns in his book, *Resisting AI*. He believes that AI is a political technology, implemented expressly to impact the distribution of power.

“AI is a form of computation that inherits concepts developed under colonialism and reproduces them as a form of race science,” he writes. “AI is sold as a solution to social problems, when what it is really doing is applying algorithmic morality judgements to target groups while obscuring the structural drivers of the very problems it is supposedly solving.”

The current reductionist paradigm has produced technologies that flout the parameters by which the earth flourishes and a just civilization thrives. New tech has accelerated inequity, destabilized global

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# The Christian Radical Who Believed Creation Care Meant Sabotaging a Pipeline

By Matt Bernico

**O**n the night of the 2016 presidential election, Jessica Reznicek, a Catholic Worker and water defender, began her “peaceful direct action campaign” against the Dakota Access Pipeline. Along with activist Ruby Montoya, she burned five pieces of heavy machinery in Buena Vista County, Iowa. From there, armed with an oxy-acetylene cutting torch, Reznicek went on to other pipeline construction sites and pierced through the empty steel valves, sabotaged electrical units, and burned other heavy equipment. In a 2017 statement, Reznicek wrote, “We acted for our children and the world that they are inheriting is unfit.”

Following her actions, Reznicek was arrested. She pled guilty to one count of “conspiracy to damage an energy facility,” but in the months following her court date, prosecutors persuaded the judge to add additional charges labeling her a “domestic terrorist.” Despite the fact that she did not harm a person and explicitly took action against a corporation and not the government, these new charges drastically increased her sentence. She was sentenced to eight years in prison with three months probation; she also must pay over \$3 million in restitution to Energy Transfer, the company that controls the Dakota Access Pipeline. Reznicek has never pled guilty to the terrorism charge.

August 11 marked two years since Reznicek’s incarceration, but the scandal of it all remains fresh. The U.S. would rather incarcerate someone trying to slow the death march toward extinction than apply new legislative standards that would reduce emissions, mitigate mounting temperatures, and protect creation.

Labeling Reznicek a domestic terrorist creates a dangerous precedent for future movements attempting to protect the environment from corporate degradation. Reznicek found the courage for her direct action from her spirituality and faith. Christians should tap into that same courage and demand that our government free Reznicek and prioritize people, not the corporations currently destroying our planet for profit.

While I’m not recommending anyone sabotage an oil pipeline, I think it’s clear that we cannot count on the goodwill of corporations or our government to address the issue of climate change. Corporations, motivated by maximizing profits, simply lack the compassion to act in the best interests of the planet and people. Similarly, the U.S. government is considerably beholden to the interests of fossil fuel companies and has not yet provided an adequate mitigation strategy that will fundamentally make a difference in addressing the rising global average temperature. It’s up to the diffuse network of political and social movements to pressure the powers and principalities of the world to do what is right.

This is exactly why people like Reznicek are so important: Her actions were not only strategic, insofar as they literally slowed down the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline, but her actions also drew attention to the issue of defending the water and land from the destruction that the Dakota Access Pipeline was causing.

Reznicek’s concerns about the future have been vindicated. With a new climate catastrophe every week, it is completely correct to say that the world our children are inheriting is unfit. This is not just a piece of rhetoric or romanticism about nature but a demonstrable fact, as the global average temperature continues to rise, resulting



in devastation. We’ve seen out-of-control fires in Maui, Canada, and the U.S. Northeast and Pacific Northwest regions, not to mention the unprecedented hot surface temperatures of coastal waters and the intense heat dome currently covering the U.S. Midwest region. A warming planet is not some far-off proposition—it’s a reality.

With the right steps, some future warming could be averted, but it would require the governments of the world, especially the U.S. government, to double their efforts and rein in destructive corporations. And it is unlikely that this change would happen without significant

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*The U.S. would rather incarcerate someone trying to slow the death march toward extinction than apply new legislative standards that would ... protect creation.*

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activist pressure, like that of Reznicek.

For Christians who find Reznicek’s activism “too radical” or “out of line with Christian teaching,” it’s important to understand that Reznicek places herself in the long tradition of civil disobedience embodied by the Catholic Worker movement. Her direct action aligns with people like Daniel and Phillip Berrigan, Catholic priests who burned draft cards to protest the Viet Nam War.

Reznicek, like the Berrigans, put her body on the line to draw attention to the reality of the situation: The planet is warming and big corporations like Energy Transfer are responsible. As Alleen Brown reported for The Intercept back in 2018, “The Dakota Access pipeline leaked at least five times in 2017.” These leaks all occurred within the first six months of its operation. By continuing to use and produce fossil fuels, we are hurting both our local and global environments.

For example, on Aug. 8, the deadliest wildfires of the 21st century swept across Lahaina on the island of Maui, Hawaii. With winds gusting up to 81 miles per hour, the fire spread a mile every minute, consuming everything in its path. The wildfire burned right up to the shoreline, scattering toxic materials and debris into the water. Not

even the coral was safe from the fires.

What do the Dakota Access Pipeline and Maui wildfires have to do with each other? The oil passed through the pipeline contributes directly to increased carbon emissions, exacerbating and worsening the drought and winds, which caused the fires in Maui to burn out of control.

Maui is no stranger to wildfires, but the intensity and destruction of these fires were not some causeless natural disaster or “act of God,” but directly correlated to the continued production and use of fossil fuels.

It’s unclear exactly what sparked the fires in Maui. But what is clear is that the prolonged drought and strong winds from Hurricane Dora amplified the wildfire, making it an absolute disaster. Yet it would be a misstep to leave the chain of causality there. Droughts and storm intensity are both amplified by a rising global average temperature. Higher temperatures mean that water evaporates quicker, ramping up the intensity of droughts. Similarly, higher temperatures also mean more intense storms. The increased evaporation of water means more intense rainfall and storm surges.

Rounding out the chain of causality, wildfires in Maui as well as droughts and storms all stem from a rising global temperature created, in large part, by companies like Energy Transfer. The oil passing through the Dakota Access Pipeline contributes to more carbon emissions and a rising global average temperature. The most recent assessment from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change demonstrates that limiting the rising global average temperature will require significant reductions in carbon dioxide emissions, in which fossil fuels play a huge role.

It’s clear that in the case of Jessica Reznicek, things are upside down. A person trying to protect the environment from continued degradation and exploitation was arrested and incarcerated, while fossil fuel companies continue to tap new sources of production and make record-breaking profits. It’s nothing short of climate denial to allow carbon emitters to continue their operations. More Christians should recognize what Reznicek so perfectly articulated: The world is unfit, and we must act now.

*Originally published by Sojourner Magazine.*

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# Palestine

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run directly into the Palestinian communities below.

Pollution and pesticides from illegal Israeli industrial settlements also have toxic effects on the air and water in nearby Palestinian villages, leading to an increase in serious diseases like asthma and cancer, and eye and respiratory health issues, as well as genetic health disorders causing miscarriage and congenital birth defects. The Israeli government provides financial incentives that make it more profitable to build waste treatment plants in the West Bank, encouraging industrial settlements to exploit Palestinian land while polluting the earth and water supply with little to no regulatory oversight.

As noted by a 2017 report by B'Tselem: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories: "Israel's environmental policy in the West Bank—including siting polluting waste treatment facilities there—is part and parcel of the policy of dispossession and annexation it has practiced in the West Bank for the past 50 years."

## Impact of the Apartheid Wall

In 2002, during the second Palestinian uprising against Israel's military rule, Israel began constructing a wall to separate Palestinians in the occupied West Bank from Israel and occupied East Jerusalem and from Israeli settlements built inside the West Bank. In addition to restricting Palestinian freedom of movement through the use of military checkpoints, settler-only roads, and other physical impediments, the wall has had an overwhelmingly negative impact on the environment.

Both the construction process and the physical presence of the wall have had detrimental effects on the natural environment in the West Bank. Eighty-five percent of the wall has been built on Palestinian land, taking up 10% of the West

Bank and carving up Palestinian communities; cutting off farmers from their lands; and harming local ecosystems. The construction of the wall—which has been deemed illegal by the International Court of Justice—has meant uprooting thousands of trees and bulldozing thousands of acres of Palestinian farmland. Some of the environmental effects of the wall include deforestation, soil erosion, ecosystem fragmentation, loss of biodiversity, and flooding.

## Impact of Gaza Blockade

Along with the West Bank and East Jerusalem, Gaza has been under Israeli military occupation since 1967. Since 2007, Israel has imposed a crippling siege and naval blockade on Palestinians in Gaza that has been condemned by human rights organizations and the United Nations as illegal collective punishment of the whole population. The siege and blockade have inflicted enormous hardships and suffering on the more than two million Palestinians trapped in the tiny coastal enclave, and caused an environmental disaster.

Israel's occupation and blockade have caused catastrophic pollution in Gaza. Israel's blockade has led to widespread environmental degradation in Gaza, affecting the water, air, and soil. The Israeli government severely limits the materials and supplies that are allowed to enter Gaza, and years of Israeli military attacks on Gaza have destroyed pipelines and sanitation facilities, making it impossible to develop adequate water and waste infrastructure. As a result, tens of thousands of cubic yards of wastewater are poured into the ocean every day, seeping into the groundwater and contaminating agricultural production and air quality.

Israel's occupation and blockade have created an environmental health disaster. Over 96% of water in Gaza is undrinkable because of Israel's blockade. As a result, Gaza's water supply is slowly poisoning Palestinians living there. Twelve percent of deaths among young children and in-



fants in Gaza—and more than 25% of all diseases—are linked to poor water quality. Palestinians in Gaza have also seen a dramatic increase in kidney problems in recent years due to contaminated water, and high cancer rates are likely the result of the Israeli blockade's negative impact on the quality of air and soil.

Gaza's coastal wetlands and natural aquifer are shrinking because of Israel's blockade. The Wadi Gaza is considered one of the most important coastal wetlands in the Eastern Mediterranean Basin, providing the main source of water for Palestinians in Gaza. But Israel's blockade has led to extensive pollution and overuse, harming the natural ecosystem and causing a continuous decline in the water supply. As extreme weather events brought on by global warming threaten the long-term availability of groundwater globally, Israel's blockade exacerbates matters by degrading Gaza's only natural aquifer.

## Greenwashing Apartheid

Promoting itself as an eco-friendly country, Israel uses false and misleading claims about its environmental impact to distract attention from and avoid accountability for its human rights violations against Palestinians. Israeli apartheid is not eco-friendly; Israel's violent oppression of Palestinians is making climate change worse, and its sustained damage to the natural environment is a war crime.

Israeli apartheid is accelerating global warming with a disproportionate impact on Palestinians. Israel has a significant per capita ecological footprint that is 6.9 times larger than that of Palestinians. Israel's ecological footprint far exceeds the biocapacity of the land, ranking third in the world for its biocapacity deficit. Approximately 96.4% of Israel's electricity production comes from fossil fuels, including natural gas extracted from stolen Palestinian land. The consequences of global warming—rising temperatures, scarcity of water resources, desertification, and drought—are being exacerbated by Israel at a higher cost for Palestinians, who are more vulnerable to climate haz-

ards due to Israel's oppression.

Israel's military-industrial complex is a major contributor to global pollution. Arms manufacturing and trade, a major pillar of Israel's economy, is one of the world's most pollutive industries. Israel is the 10th largest weapons exporter in the world, contributing significantly to global air pollution and widespread ecological damage. The violence of the Israeli military is also bad for the environment: Israel's devastating 2014 attack on Gaza killed more than 2,000 Palestinians in addition to destroying Gaza's only power plant, which ignited 520,000 gallons of diesel fuel and severely polluted the air.

Israel purposely undermines sustainable development and environmental protections in order to make life difficult for Palestinians as part of an effort to force them off their land. Since Israel refuses to issue building permits for Palestinians in most of the occupied West Bank, the Israeli army destroys any "unauthorized" Palestinian structures, including agricultural projects, sanitation infrastructure, and solar equipment, preventing Palestinians from accessing sustainable forms of electricity and sanitation.

Israel's occupying army also undermines sustainable Palestinian agriculture by uprooting thousands of olive trees each year and replacing them with non-native species that accelerate desertification; by preventing Palestinians from developing adequate waste infrastructure; by harassing and attacking Palestinian farmers; and by attempting to suppress Palestinian civil society organizations dedicated to uplifting equitable and sustainable agricultural development.

*The Institute for Middle East Understanding (IMEU) is an independent non-profit organization that provides journalists with quick access to information about Palestine and the Palestinians, as well as expert sources, both in the United States and in the Middle East. Both through its website and its staff, the IMEU works with journalists to increase the public's understanding of the socio-economic, political, and cultural aspects of Palestine, Palestinians, and Palestinian Americans.*

# Digital Technology

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society, and has, heartbreakingly, fast-tracked us into the Sixth Mass Extinction.

A sweeping paradigm shift is called for—one that is based on holism. Holism recognizes that everything exists in relation to everything else. The intricate web of life is an exquisite expression of this fundamental truth.

How do we organize our world around life, cooperation, and justice? What alternative technologies might be implemented to foster such a shift?

These are the sorts of questions that must be discussed to develop a deep, systemic critique of megatechnology, and move toward a regenerative worldview. Doing so will make apparent that digital technologies will not save us. As Audre Lorde reminds us, "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house."

Techbusters.org will be holding a symposium in October 2024 to examine the implications of AI and megatechnology, as well as their alternatives. Speakers will include Vandana Shiva, Winona LaDuke, Richard Heinberg, Severine von Tscharner-Fleming and others. Details to be determined.

*Koohan Paik-Mander, who grew up in postwar Korea and in the U.S. colony of Guam, serves on the boards of World BEYOND War and the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space and on the advisory committee of the Global Just Transition project at Foreign Policy in Focus. She is co-author of The Superferry Chronicles: Hawaii's Uprising Against Militarism, Commercialism and the Desecration of the Earth. She has written on the environment and militarism in the Asia-Pacific for The Nation, The Progressive, Foreign Policy in Focus, and other publications. She can be reached at koohanpaik@gmail.com.*

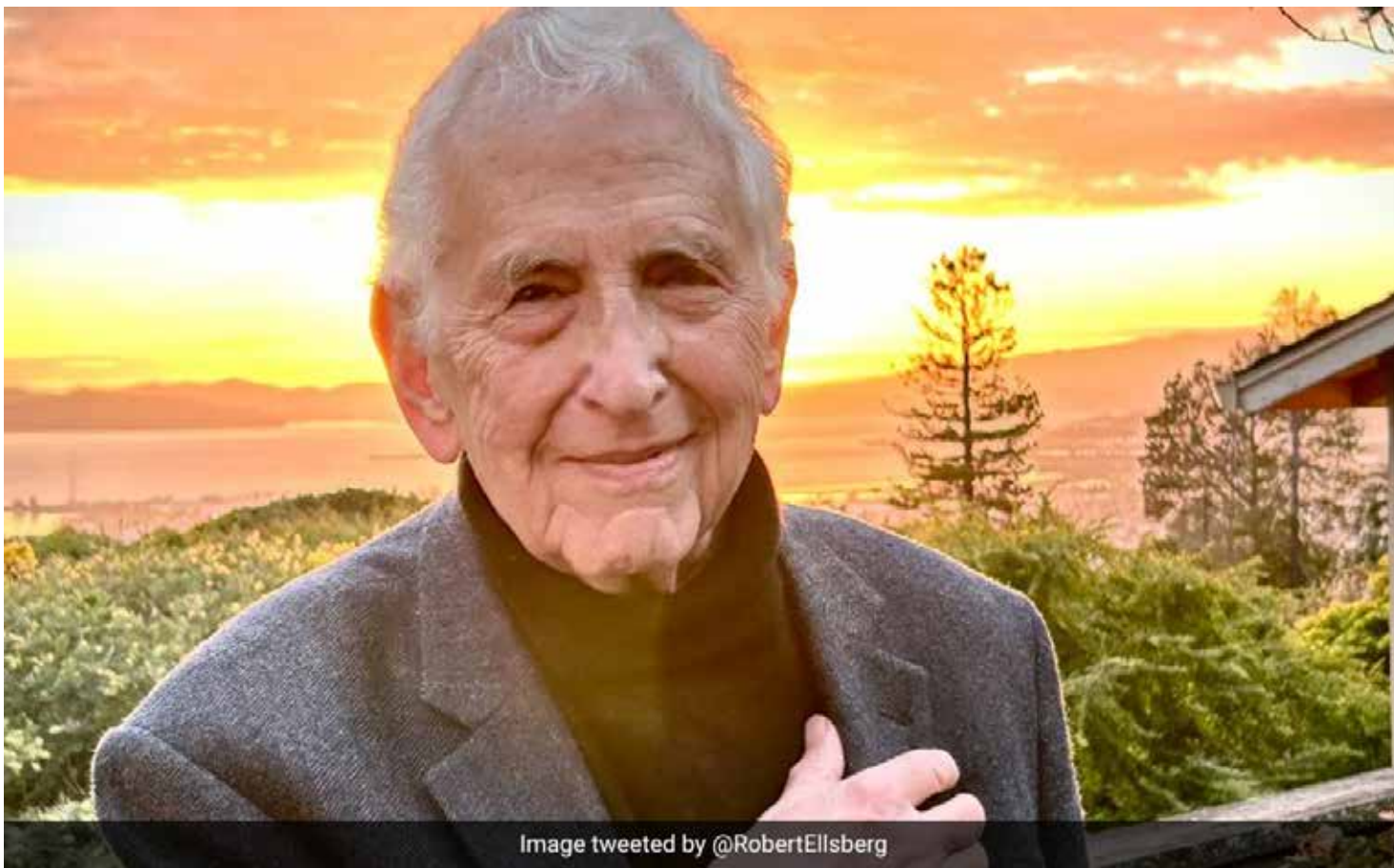


Image tweeted by @RobertEllsberg

# Who Was Daniel Ellsberg, the 'Most Dangerous Man in America'

The following remarks were delivered on August 25, 2023, at the Veterans For Peace National Convention.

By Marjorie Cohn

We dedicate this convention to Daniel Ellsberg, a beloved member of our Veterans For Peace Advisory Board. Dan died on June 16 at the age of 92.

Dan displayed uncommon courage in 1971 when he publicized the 7,000-page top-secret Pentagon Papers, which he had helped write. As a consultant to the Department of Defense, Dan also drafted Defense Secretary Robert McNamara's plans for nuclear war, which Dan later spent his life trying to prevent.

Dan joined the Marines in 1954 and served in the Middle East but saw no action. He was very pro-military. But in 1968, while working for Rand, his views began to change. In 1969, Dan attended a War Resisters League meeting in Pennsylvania. It was there he heard Randy Kehler voice his intention to refuse the draft. Dan was deeply moved. He later said, "I left the auditorium and found a deserted men's room. I sat on the floor and cried for over an hour, just sobbing. The only time in my life I've reacted to something like that."

Dan began to oppose the war—joining antiwar demonstrations, writing articles and letters to the editor, and testifying at trials of draft resisters. He resigned from Rand.

In his book, *Secrets: A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers*, Dan wrote that the Pentagon Papers exposed the "secrets five presidents had withheld and the lies they told" about U.S. decision-making in Viet Nam. "This truth telling set in

motion a train of events, including criminal White House efforts to silence or incapacitate me. Much more important," Dan noted, "these particular Oval Office crimes helped topple the president, an act that was crucial to ending the war."

Henry Kissinger, Nixon's National Security Advisor, called Dan Ellsberg "the most dangerous man in America," who "had to be stopped at all costs." But Dan was not stopped. Facing 115 years in prison for violation of the Espionage Act and conspiracy charges, he fought back. The case against him was dismissed due to egregious government misconduct. Dan's story was portrayed in the Oscar-nominated film, *The Most Dangerous Man in America*. Edward Snowden told Dan that film strengthened his intention to release the NSA documents.

In 2014, Dan gave a keynote speech at the 45th reunion of the Stanford Anti-Vietnam War movement. He explained how the United States came dangerously close to using nuclear weapons during the Vietnam War. In 1965, the Joint Chiefs recommended to President Lyndon Johnson that U.S. forces hit targets up to the Chinese border. Dan thought their real aim was to provoke China into responding and then the U.S. would cross into China and demolish the communists with nuclear weapons.

Dan wrote in an email, "When I copied the Pentagon Papers in 1969, I had every reason to think I would be spending the rest of my life behind bars. It was a fate I would gladly have accepted if it meant hastening the end of the Vietnam War, unlikely as that seemed (and was)."

Dan's courageous actions did help end that war. In an email responding to Dan's revelation of his terminal pancreatic cancer diagnosis, Bui Van Nghi, secretary

general of the Viet Nam-USA Society, wrote, "We highly appreciate Dan's good will, friendship, and love to Viet Nam and his support of the struggle for national independence and reunification of the country by the Viet Nameese people. And (for) his courage to reveal the truth about the American Viet Nam War by the U.S. government. And (for) waging the waves of peace, anti-war movements, campaigns to call for early ending of the [war] that helped save hundred[s] of thousands of lives on both sides."

The Pentagon Papers "remain today the most vital discussion of a war from the inside," Seymour Hersh wrote in a tribute to Dan. Sy Hersh broke the story of the My Lai Massacre, which the U.S. government covered up for a year. It was a war crime committed by U.S. forces who murdered hundreds of elderly men, women and chil-

dren during the Viet Nam War.

Dan helped launch the anti-nuclear movement. For more than five decades, he spent nearly every waking hour working for peace and trying to prevent nuclear war.

After his diagnosis, Dan continued the struggle to avoid a nuclear holocaust. "I will continue, as long as I'm able, to help these efforts," he wrote in an email to family and friends three and a half months before he died.

"I feel lucky and grateful about having a few months more to enjoy life with my wife and family, and in which to continue to pursue the urgent goal of working with others to avert nuclear war in Ukraine or Taiwan (or anywhere else)."

Until he died, Dan spoke out wherever he could—in the media and on webinars—imploping us to prevent nuclear war.

Those who make the nuclear weapons and the investment banks that finance them "have never been interested in limiting them. Their only interest is to have better ones," Dan told me when I interviewed him in mid-March for Truthout. Those same people "have never been interested in keeping Russia from having H-bombs [hydrogen bombs], ICBMs [intercontinental ballistic missiles] or MWHs [multiple warheads] at the cost of giving up ours."

Dan wrote in his book, *The Doomsday Machine: Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner*, "Contrary to public understanding, [the] strategy has not been a matter of deterrence of nuclear attack on the United States, but rather the illusionary one of improving first-strike capability."

To reduce the risks of nuclear war, Dan told me, "it is essential that members of NATO press the U.S. and others to renounce the atrocious NATO backing of the first-use of nuclear weapons."

"The current risk of nuclear war, over Ukraine, is as great as the world has ever seen," Dan wrote. He warned that nuclear war between the U.S. and Russia would result in "nuclear winter." That means that "more than a hundred million tons of smoke and soot from firestorms in cities set ablaze by either side, striking ei-

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Tarak Kauff, Ray McGovern, and Daniel Ellsberg on the White House fence before being arrested Dec. 16, 2010. Photo: Ellen Davidson