

The background of the cover is a photograph of soldiers in a desert environment. One soldier in the foreground is wearing a dark jacket and a beret, looking towards the right. Another soldier in full combat gear is visible behind him. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

**Campus Action**  
newsletter of the Campus Antiwar Network

**Dec. 15, '04**  
**Issue 2**

# **BRING THE TROOPS HOME NOW**

**The Case  
for Withdrawal**  
**Defending Academic  
Freedom at Columbia**  
**Iraq Vet Speaks Out**

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# The Case for Immediate Withdrawal from Iraq

## New York University's Campus Anti-War Network

The brutality of what it means to occupy another country is on full display in Iraq—even the mainstream press can't ignore the reality of life for ordinary Iraqis and for those standing up to join the resistance and kick the United States out of their country.

The US government conducted an illegal war of conquest against Iraq. The real reasons for invasion had nothing to do with weapons of mass destruction, getting rid of Saddam Hussein, or the “liberation” of an oppressed people.

The US has two intentions in Iraq: one, to gain control of Iraqi resources (most obviously oil) and give the green light to corporations like Halliburton and Bechtel to set up shop in Iraq; and two, to use Iraq as an example of the fact that the US calls the shots in the Middle East and any ruler or people that stands in the way will pay a deadly price. The Bush administration went to war in order to occupy Iraq and now the US is attempting to consolidate that occupation with a U.S.-led puppet government and Iraqi police force.

And – with 100,000 Iraqis dead<sup>1</sup>, over 2000 killed in Fallujah in the past month<sup>2</sup>, – this year has left no doubt as to how far the US is willing to go to carry out its interests. We have witnessed gut-wrenching displays of torture in Abu Ghraib and the U.S. bombing of wedding parties, hospitals, and civilian houses. Now they are demolishing entire cities where the resistance has bases.

*This horror can only end through the immediate withdrawal of US troops.* Anything short of this demand inevitably means more war, more brutality, more torture, and more death of both Iraqis and US soldiers.

The US government, in its quest for oil and empire, has no good intentions in Iraq. Nor can the occupation be altered into a benevolent force by supplanting US soldiers with so-called UN “peacekeepers.” In order to ensure corporate control over the entire country, the US is hoping to engage in a phased withdrawal of US troops by bringing in the UN and foreign troops, setting up sham elections in January, and paving the way for a puppet government that will rule in US interests.

Unfortunately, many anti-war activists see the process of phased withdrawal as a way forward for Iraq. In this article, we argue that this is wrong on two counts. First, it misses the reality of what the U.S. is doing in Iraq. The U.S. occupation is responsible for the death, torture, and immiseration of countless Iraqis, as well as of the soldiers forced to carry out that violence. It is impossible to look at pictures of the assault in Fallujah and argue that the occupation must continue to prevent “chaos” in Iraq. The occupation *is* chaos, and it is also the planned and inevitable violence of an occupying force trying to break the resistance of the people it occupies. Every day that the U.S. occupies Iraq, it makes life worse for the Iraqi people. If we say now that the U.S. forces must stay because things are too bad to leave, then what will we say in six months, when their continued presence has made things much worse? By failing to grasp that the U.S. is the source of the terrible problems in Iraq, and could not be otherwise, the argument for “withdrawal later” becomes an argument for “withdrawal never,” and has the effect of serving as a left-wing cover for the U.S. to solidify its dominance over Iraqis.

Second, we will argue that the arguments against immediate withdrawal rest on mistaken ideas that Iraqis are not as capable of governing themselves as any other group of people. Our conclusion is that only an *immediate* withdrawal of all US troops has any hope of bringing democracy and freedom to the Iraqi people.

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<sup>1</sup> Roberts, Les, et al. “Mortality before and after the 2003 invasion of Iraq: cluster sample survey.” *The Lancet*, Volume 364 Issue 9448 Page 1857

<sup>2</sup> Qassem Daoud, Iraqi Secretary of State of National Security, Nov 26, 2004, Baghdad.

### ***What does “phased withdrawal” really mean?***

We saw variants of this demand about a year ago at protests where some demonstrators held up signs that said "US out UN in." We hear about it today, as well - the Win Without War Coalition, for instance, calls for a phased withdrawal. This is advocated as a "more practical" alternative to immediate withdrawal that will better appeal to Americans. What this argument misses is the current goal of the US in Iraq, that is, to engage in a phased withdrawal in order to legitimize the occupation by setting up a puppet government. A successful phased withdrawal will serve only to legitimize the US assertion of its massive dominance over the wishes of the Iraqi people. We, instead, want the US to fail in subverting Iraqi sovereignty and for the US military to be kicked out of that country, leaving no US-imposed governmental structure in place.

A US-imposed regime could include any government selected, appointed, or funded by the US or its allies – including Arab states that maintain their power through US governmental support, or “multilateral” forces such as the United Nations.

The United Nations is governed by the interests of the Security Council, where the most powerful countries in the world make all decisions. The UN eventually endorsed this brutal occupation (in a 14-0 vote), under an agreement that France and Russia would be paid the bulk of Saddam Hussein’s \$400 billion international debt. The UN now serves to legitimize the US occupation under the cover of “multilateralism.”

The US also used the so-called “transfer of power” on June 30th as a step in their phased withdrawal. In reality, the “transfer of power” meant the appointment of Iyad Allawi behind closed doors and the selection of John Negroponte as US Ambassador to Iraq. Now the U.S. hopes to use elections – which, carried out by the occupying power, are guaranteed to be anything but democratic – as the latest strategy to legitimize its Iraqi puppets, co-opt certain resistance leaders, and serve as a cover for assassinating others. Thus, the elections are no step toward ending the occupation, but rather another strategy for carrying it out, and continuing to solidify U.S. interests in Iraq at the expense of the Iraqi people.

The US consistently tries to confuse people into believing that it is in the process of withdrawing its influence from Iraq - that these are all steps towards Iraqi autonomy - and the UN has served to add another layer to the confusion, as long as other powerful countries can get a piece of the economic pie.

So we face a choice: the US can withdraw on its own terms, or on ours. It will either withdraw after setting up an Iraqi police force that is strong enough to carry out US wishes, or in defeat, giving the Iraqi people a real chance at democracy.

It is crucial that the anti-war movement not support the Bush administration’s plans for phased withdrawal -- and instead demand the immediate withdrawal of all US troops. If we opposed the invasion of Iraq and believe that the US has absolutely no right to be there, then we must also call for the immediate withdrawal of US troops and a defeat for the Bush administration, his corporate cronies, and any other government body that wishes to legitimize the deaths of innocent Iraqis and US soldiers. And in order for imperialism to be defeated in Iraq we must support unconditionally the demand for Iraq’s self-determination – meaning, Iraqis (and only Iraqis) have the right to decide their future and what their country looks like.

### ***The case for self-determination***

Resistance is the justified reaction to a country occupied by the largest military force in the world. Evidence suggests what is shaping up in Iraq is a popular national resistance against the occupation.

We may disagree with their tactics – for example, indiscriminate bombings of civilians is counterproductive to building popular support for the fight against the occupation – but we must first and foremost stand in complete solidarity with the Iraqis fight to kick the US and all that it brings out of their country.

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The resistance hopes to free Iraq from the daily and deadly war waged upon them without choice. We must support their right to resist in any way they decide to do so. It is fundamentally a question posed to anti-war activists: "Which side are you on?" We must choose the side of the Iraqis. The US occupiers and the Iraqi resistance have diametrically opposed interests. The US will stop at nothing to maintain control of Iraq to carry out its imperialist interests, even if it means crushing the resistance and using US soldiers as cannon fodder.

The Iraqi people, the US soldiers, and most people in this country have a common interest in defeating the US government in Iraq. US soldiers and Iraqis are paying with their lives for a war that benefits only the rich. Billions of dollars are taken out of our pockets while we watch our schools crumble, our tuition increase, and our health care become privatized.

When the Bush administration began its invasion in March of 2003, they thought it would be a cakewalk. Instead they have been met with a resistance that only continues to grow the bloodier the occupation gets. For every resistance fighter shot down, two more will join. It is this resistance that has stalled US imperial projects elsewhere in the Middle East and has created a political crisis for the Bush administration that they hoped to stamp out in Fallujah but is proving far more difficult.

### ***An occupation propped up with racism***

Racism plays a critical role in legitimizing US occupations around the world. Epithets spewed from the Bush administration and the media when speaking of ordinary Iraqis reflect such racism: "terrorist," "fanatic," "extremist," "insurgent," "fundamentalist." How ironic that George W. Bush, a man who believes he is appointed by God, calls Iraqis "fundamentalists."

These words imply that the culture that exists in the Middle East is inherently insignificant compared to that of the North-Western world. It is these "culturalist" ideas that are a fundamental tool used by those who are pro-occupation for keeping their interests intact throughout the duration of the war. The conclusion of these ideas is often an argument that the US cannot pull out of Iraq because "chaos" will inevitably ensue or that Islamic countries are somehow incapable of democracy.

By depicting the culture as violent and unruly, they instead propagate the notion that Iraqis are fundamentally unable to govern themselves. Thus, the seeds of the pro-occupation mindset are sown. We in the antiwar movement then find ourselves pitted against each other politically, believing that the occupation cannot end because the country would be thrown into chaos. What this misses is that the US government is the sole source of chaos in Iraq. In fact, the US occupation depends on divisions among racial and ethnic lines in order to maintain power, since playing up these divisions is the best way to prevent a united national liberation movement. This is a classic "divide and conquer" strategy used historically by colonial occupiers.

This doesn't mean that everyone who makes this argument is racist – although unambiguous racists certainly do argue it. For example, an article in the *Journal of Current History* muses, "Could it be that something particular to the Arab world makes it especially allergic to democracy or incapable of practicing it? ... [I]t is impossible to refute this supposition categorically until we have our first functioning Arab democracy."<sup>3</sup> This is obviously racist, and moreover, it's a sentiment that everyone in the antiwar movement rightly finds repulsive. So the point isn't that the people we meet at our tablings echoing this argument are all bigots, but rather that *the racism against Arabs and Muslims that our country is steeped in serves to obscure the fundamental dynamic of the occupation*. That fundamental dynamic is imperialism and colonialism on one side, and a basic democratic right to self-determination on the other.

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<sup>3</sup> Muravchik, Joshua, "Bringing Democracy to the Arab World," *Journal of Current History*. January 15, 2004. Available online: <http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/ReadArticle.asp?ID=11768>

The British occupation of Northern Ireland provides a useful counterpoint. The population there is Catholic, a religion that oppresses women in many parts of the world. But where are the left-wing voices and the women's groups in the U.S. calling for Britain to stay in Northern Ireland, because otherwise a Catholic government might come to power and oppress women? Actually, no one on the Left makes that argument – because the colonial nature of that occupation is clear. Our job as the antiwar movement should be to make it similarly clear about Iraq.

### ***What if the U.S. leaves and Islamists take power?***

An argument we often hear at our tablings on campus is that immediate withdrawal is too dangerous because it could allow an Islamist government to come to power, and, in particular, that this would result in the oppression of Iraqi women.

It is important to start by stating that there's nothing inherent about Islam that makes its adherents gravitate toward sexism or oppressive ideas. Moreover, there is nothing inherent about Muslims that leads them toward Islamism as the only political response to imperialism.

In fact, the resistance in Iraq currently encompasses a wide range of ideas, some Islamist, some not. While it's very hard in the U.S. to access information about what the Iraqi resistance is really like, one thing that is clear: the U.S. government wants to paint the entirety of it as led by a small number of Islamist leaders from outside Iraq. In reality, though, the resistance seems to be primarily a national liberation movement informed by a variety of ideas. For example, although the Islamist Abu Musab Zarqawi is constantly publicized in the U.S. as the leader of the Iraqi resistance, Iraqi exile Sami Ramadani has noted that in September, while there were 2,700 attacks on U.S. and U.S.-puppet forces in Iraq, Zarqawi had claimed credit for exactly six of them.<sup>4</sup>

Many who argue against the possibility of immediate withdrawal reference the oppression of women under Islamic governments. The argument goes that when the US withdraws, Islamism will most likely take hold, and women will pay the price. But the greatest disaster would be for the antiwar movement in the U.S. to be misled into a pro-war position by the idea that our government will make things better for women in Iraq.

This idea has been promulgated through the U.S. war and occupation in Afghanistan – a war that many mainstream women's rights groups in the U.S. celebrated. It is worth taking a closer look, however, at the condition of women in Afghanistan today. Large numbers of women and young girls still face rape by members of armed warlord gangs, forced marriages, violence within their homes, and fear of attending school. In the recent "election" (widely noted as a sham when the ink meant to prevent voter fraud turned out to be removable), many women reported being unable to vote without permission from their husbands.

Women's liberation in Iraq, and Afghanistan, will have to come in tandem with a broader struggle against imperialism. It may begin with women demanding their place as equal members of the struggle to kick the U.S. out – and uniting men and women the way the struggle against the occupation has already given rise to striking instances of unity between Sunni and Shiite Muslims in Iraq, for example.

Moreover, the condition of women cannot be separated from the overall context of the occupation and the devastation it has wrought on the people of Afghanistan. The average life expectancy for adults dropped from 46 in 2001 to 43 in 2004. Only 9 percent of Afghans have access to electricity, and 6 percent to safe drinking water. An estimated one woman dies every twenty minutes in pregnancy or childbirth.<sup>5</sup>

No one could confuse this with liberation – for women or for men. This is equally true of Afghanistan and Iraq. Thousands of Iraqis die every week, their homes blown into pieces, and their children dead from starvation and

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<sup>4</sup> Ramadani, Sami, "The true face of Iraqi resistance," *The Guardian*, available online: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,3604,1316000,00.html>

<sup>5</sup> All Afghanistan statistics from: Dwyer, Katherine, "Afghanistan's Endless War," *International Socialist Review*, September-October 2004. Available online: <http://www.isreview.org/issues/37/afghanistan.shtml>

illness. There is rampant unemployment, little access to basic foods, entire cities without electricity, and a refugee crisis beyond belief.

Bush has no mandate for such brutality and it is our responsibility to let him know.

Our stand is simple but must be firm – Iraq is for Iraqis. Only the immediate withdrawal of US troops can bring any real possibility of democracy in the Middle East. This means the U.S. must be *defeated* in its aim to occupy Iraq as a step to dominating the whole world. We will contribute to this defeat – by building protests here at home that carry our demand: that not one more human being should die for oil at the hands of George W. Bush.

## The Antiwar Movement and the Iraqi Resistance

Sid Patel – Berkeley Stop the War Coalition

A wide variety of positions on the Iraqi resistance exists within the anti-occupation movement, ranging from condemnation to support. This debate has important consequences, particularly because the right-wing of this country is attacking our movement by arguing that an immediate withdrawal right now would lead to chaos and the ascendance of dangerous Islamic terrorists. During the recent attack on Fallujah, the US military even claimed that they were “liberating” Fallujah from the tyrannical, cruel reign of the resistance. If anti-occupation activists do not counter the right-wing’s claim that the occupation is necessary to quell the resistance, we will have a very hard time winning broader layers of people to join our movement. Antiwar activists should support the Iraqi resistance, and we should point to the very existence of the resistance to demolish the claim that the occupation is about liberation and democracy.

“It was a mistake to discount the Iraqi resistance,” Lt. Col. Kim Kessler told the *Wall Street Journal* in October 2003. “If someone invaded Texas, we’d do the same thing.”<sup>1</sup>

The most widespread slander against the Iraqi resistance is that they are all a bunch of foreign terrorists, criminals, and former Baathists. The warmongers in Washington and the corporate media constantly play-up and repeat this distortion to ensure that the American public develops no sympathies with those ordinary Iraqis fighting for independence. Unfortunately, sections of the anti-occupation movement have accepted this smear and concluded that we actually should not support the resistance, just like we should not support Osama bin Laden. The fact of the matter, though, is that the vast majority of the Iraqi resistance is composed of ordinary Iraqis who have decided to take up arms to rid their country of a colonial occupation. Even American officials and generals admit this much:

Bush administration officials have drawn a consistent picture of the insurgents they have been fighting in the past 17 months of occupation: religious extremists, “dead-enders” associated with Saddam Hussein and foreign terrorists slipping across the country’s porous borders.

But a wide range of interviews with Iraqis and U.S. officials here paints a starkly different portrait -- a growing, intensely nationalist resistance determined to remove U.S. forces and their Iraqi allies.<sup>2</sup>

The concrete reality of life under occupation fuels the resistance. Remember that unemployment in parts of Iraq is up to 70%, according to independent reporter Dahr Jamail’s article “Iraq’s Economy”<sup>3</sup>. Electricity, water, and sewage have not been fully restored, even in Baghdad, and hospitals all throughout Iraq are facing severe shortages in supplies and medicines. Most damning of all, a study by researchers at Johns Hopkins, Columbia, and

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<sup>1</sup> Trofimov, Yaroslav, "In a Tent Hospital, A Close-Up View Of Attacks in Iraq Doctors Face Rising Toll Of Badly Injured Troops," *The Wall Street Journal*, October 29, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Daragahi, Borzou, “Nationalism Drives Many Insurgents as They Fight U.S. 'Terrorists,' Only One Element, Experts Say.” *SF Chronicle* A-9, October 26, 2004

<sup>3</sup> Jamail, Dahr. “Iraq’s Economy.” *Zmag* < <http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?SectionID=15&ItemID=6619> >. Nov 11, 2004

Al-Mustansiriya University in Baghdad concluded that at least 100,000 Iraqi civilians have died as a direct result of the US occupation.<sup>4</sup>

This must be the starting point for discussion: a small section of the Iraqi resistance is composed of hard-core militants and the al-Zarqawi network, but the overwhelming majority is ordinary Iraqis fed up with the daily destruction, poverty, and humiliation of the occupation. If the resistance can slow down some of the daily death and destruction by forcing the US military to stay in its bases on the outskirts of cities, then by all means I hope they succeed.

Faced with an overwhelming disadvantage in terms of military power, the resistance has turned to tactics that have appeared in all armed struggles for national liberation. These include guerrilla warfare (e.g. hit and run ambushes, roadside bombs) and attacks on Iraqis who collaborate with the US military, like the police, the new national guard, and members of Allawi's government. Also, a small section of the resistance has taken and executed hostages as a means of pressuring foreign governments. In our discussions about the tactics of the resistance, we must recognize that imperial powers label *all* acts of resistance "terrorism" in an effort to completely delegitimize the genuine struggles and grievances of colonized peoples. We should share nothing in common with that approach.

At the same time, we can both unconditionally support the resistance and have an honest opinion about some of the tactics they employ. While we should not pontificate from afar about what strategies oppressed peoples can and cannot pursue in an incredibly difficult struggle for their liberation, we can assess what tactics seem best in terms of inflicting damage on the US military and strengthening the anti-occupation movements in the oppressor countries. And we should never forget that the main source of the most hideous, abhorrent violence in Iraq right now is the US military.

The second most common objection to supporting the resistance is that it is dominated by political Islam. Thus, if the resistance actually were to drive the US military out, Iraq would turn into an Islamic state that would violate the rights of women, gays and lesbians, religious and ethnic minorities. But this argument has several serious problems, not the least of which is that the resistance is made up of several dozen if not hundreds of groups with varying ideologies and platforms, from secular nationalists to trade unionists to political Islamists.

That aside, this argument is purely hypocritical coming from the right-wingers in this country – since when did they care about women's rights, civil rights, and gay rights? The Democrats and the Republicans have joined hands to push through dramatic rollbacks in abortion rights, the evisceration of affirmative action, the expansion of the racist criminal justice system, and the denial of equal marriage rights for gays and lesbians. And *they* want to protect these groups in Iraq? In reality, the main underpinning for the right's newfound "concern" for women, minorities, and LGBT people in Iraq is Islamophobia, which has been reinforced by the War on Terror. If the United States were illegally invaded and brutally occupied by a foreign state, and a significant part of the American resistance, especially in the Southeast, was led by conservative Christians and evangelicals, would it then be right to abandon the Americans and tell them that the occupation was good for them?

On the other hand, many genuine women's rights activists have raised a similar concern, saying that an Islamic state would be worse for women and other oppressed groups than what exists in Iraq right now. I think we have to take on this question in two ways. First, the *Lancet* study concerning civilian deaths in Iraq concluded that most of the deaths reported were of women and children. It is patently untrue that the US military is somehow protecting women – in fact, it's killing thousands of them. Secondly, genuine self-determination means that Iraqis would act independently, electing leaders and enacting policies as they see fit. Anti-occupation activists in the US *cannot* take the position that we are for Iraqi independence only if they behave according to our criteria. That's just another form of the "White Man's Burden", the racist justification for colonialism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries that has been resurrected by a new generation of liberal imperialists: we civilized folk know what's good for the barbarians, and we'll advance their culture (after slaughtering many hundreds of thousands of them and while exploiting their resources and labor). Anti-occupation activists must be unconditionally for the right of Iraqis to determine their own future – no strings attached.

That said, I would strongly support the emergence and growth of a secular, radical, progressive current that fought for better positions on women's rights, gay rights, and minority rights within the politics of the resistance.

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<sup>4</sup> Roberts, Les, et al. "Mortality before and after the 2003 invasion of Iraq: cluster sample survey." *The Lancet*, Volume 364 Issue 9448 Page 1857. October 24, 2004.



Furthermore, after the US is forced out, there will surely be a political struggle within Iraq, and I hope to see that same current grow and win in an independent Iraq. As long as US troops remain in Iraq, though, it will be nearly impossible for a mass women's liberation movement to fight for equality. Arundhati Roy, a leading radical anti-imperialist, said,

The Iraqi resistance is fighting on the frontlines of the battle against Empire. And therefore that battle is our battle.

Like most resistance movements, it combines a motley range of assorted factions. Former Baathists, liberals, Islamists, fed-up collaborationists, communists, etc. Of course, it is riddled with opportunism, local rivalry, demagoguery, and criminality. But if we are only going to support pristine movements, then no resistance will be worthy of our purity.

This is not to say that we shouldn't ever criticize resistance movements. Many of them suffer from a lack of democracy, from the iconization of their "leaders," a lack of transparency, a lack of vision and direction. But most of all they suffer from vilification, repression, and lack of resources.

Before we prescribe how a pristine Iraqi resistance must conduct their secular, feminist, democratic, nonviolent battle, we should shore up our end of the resistance by forcing the U.S. and its allies' governments to withdraw from Iraq.<sup>5</sup>

Some activists, particularly those who are rightly trying to bring veterans and military families to the forefront of the movement, believe that there is an inconsistency in both supporting the resistance and being saddened by the deaths of over 1200 American soldiers. This contradiction, however, is a consequence of the dynamic of imperialism – namely, that working people from different countries are pitted against each other in wars that are truly competitions between their ruling classes. The best way to prevent more soldiers' deaths is to bring the troops home immediately.

Unfortunately, though, this occupation is strategically critical to the interests of the American ruling class, and they aren't going to withdraw without an intense fight. Crucial to ending the occupation will be soldiers refusing to take part in the carnage, like the recent incident with the 343<sup>rd</sup> Quartermaster Company. Part of that fight will be a raging anti-occupation movement in this country. And part of that fight – the central part of that fight – will be an organized Iraqi resistance able to exact a price from Washington for its barbaric occupation.

The Iraqi resistance is at the center of the battle against the US Empire as a material challenge to the American ruling class – all of Rumsfeld's and Wolfowitz's dreams of moving quickly on to Iran and Syria were crushed by the emergence of Iraqis who fought back. The resistance has eroded public support for the occupation and forced the US government to deal with the lies about liberation. If Iraqis are liberated and happy, then how do you explain the resistance? How do you explain the intense public outrage in Iraq over the attack on the resistance in Fallujah? The anti-occupation movement is fighting in America to deal a blow to the US government and its imperial designs. The Iraqi resistance is fighting to do the same and to win self-determination. Their fight is our fight.

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<sup>5</sup> Roy, Arundhati. "Public Power in the Age of Empire." San Francisco, California on August 16th, 2004. Copyright 2004, Arundhati Roy. Available online at < [http://www.democracynow.org/static/Arundhati\\_Trans.shtml](http://www.democracynow.org/static/Arundhati_Trans.shtml) >

# Hope and Activism

**Jackie Ball – Cornell University United for Peace and Justice**

We all know that the war on Iraq was never about disarming Saddam Hussein or spreading the gospel of democracy. Not about freedom or big-brotherly benevolence, the occupation reflects U.S. self-interest inherently pitted against the interest of others. Put bluntly by a daring and compassionate U.S. veteran of the war, Mike Hoffman, as he retold the words that his Drill Sergeant imparted to him, “we are here for one thing and one thing only, and that is oil.”<sup>1</sup> Mike, cofounder of *Iraq Veterans Against the War*, now travels the country spreading his message to alert listeners, many of who *did not* know the “real” intentions of the United States during the invasion. And how could they? Since when do we live in a country where one must assume that he or she is being lied to by his or her very own government, and that those who trust elected officials are ignorant? In my own self-righteous hope for peace and justice I assumed that we, the citizens of America and of the world, are all on the same page about the inner-workings of the current U.S. government. So, if you didn’t catch it on the Today Show or Fox News, I offer this newsflash: war is never pretty, and not surprisingly, neither are its motivations. A hunger for power cast as a hope for positive, necessary change, the invasion of Iraq deeply hurts those it claims to behoove. Families are ripped apart as innocent Iraqi brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers die along side American soldiers whose duties as wives, husbands and children are sacrificed “for their country.” Houses crumble at the foot of U.S. Army tanks – like big, bad wolves who aren’t crying “watchout! Democracy incoming!” as they huff and puff and blow the whole country down.

Now on the same page, or at least, temporarily indulging what many see as “the real truth,” let us reiterate the dismal state of affairs. The invasion of Iraq was about projecting U.S. power into the Persian Gulf in a way that the Bush administration and its believers think will strengthen U.S. economic, military and political interests. They claim to create a safer and more democratic Middle East as they slay innocent citizens and coerce its government. But will America or the world, Mr. Bush, be any safer the day after the war ends? Will we alleviate the threat of terrorist attacks? Will Iran be next on the Bush/Cheney checklist? The first attack against American occupation forces by Iraqi Shi’a can easily be used to promote such a move, and indeed, after the election (was Bush really elected, anyway?) coverage and commentary about Iranian relations is already reemerging in the U.S. mainstream media. Or maybe imperialist sights will be set on Syria, a country many see as the powerhouse of Arab resistance to Western coercion.

We can conjecture but not predict, but can assuredly say that the United States, the self-proclaimed pillar of freedom and democracy, is currently waging war in a multitude of places on a massive amount of people. Our job is to stand vigil with these places and people, to acknowledge these global connections as we continually strive to deepen our knowledge. In our defense of Iraq we must remember the Palestinians who face the violence and cruelty of oppression each day. When we think of the killings in Baghdad and Fallujah we must stand-up for the people of Africa who suffer from the pandemic effects of colonization and neo-liberalism. As we demand to end the occupation now, we must advocate for the Columbians stricken with civil war, an auto-immune disease propagated by U.S. imperialist forces. In order to be effective, the anti-war movement cannot limit itself to just the current occupation (is it really a war, anyway?), but must denounce pre-emptive military strikes and aggressive unilateralism of which the “war” in Iraq is merely the tip of the iceberg. The struggle for peace and justice is the same struggle against racism, sexism, classism, ethnocentrism and violent fundamentalism. We must keep these connections in the forefront of our consciousness as we support each other whenever possible, as we reinvigorate the hope born out of despair and suffering so that we may begin to re-fashion the world to favor humanity over an elite few’s delusions of grandeur.

But alas, the “many” that such a reconstruction would favor is much like the “all-knowing” public discussed earlier. Many people are not involved in politics, and those that are seem to be riding on personal interest or investment. Yet, most people, whether conservative, liberal, radical, reformist, atheist or anything in between, do hope for a greater good, and would wish to see a decent life for all people, not just themselves. Unfortunately, what many of our fellow humans have realized is that these are not the same principles that instruct government policy and action. Is “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,” then, merely an epithet on democracy’s gravestone? How

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<sup>1</sup> Hoffman, Mike. Speech to the Campus Anti-War Network National Conference, Nov 13, 2004. Available online at <[http://www.traprockpeace.org/audio/can\\_hoffman\\_nov04.mp3](http://www.traprockpeace.org/audio/can_hoffman_nov04.mp3)> and below.

might this hope for an individual become a reality for all, and how might the pursuit of one's own happiness allow for, perhaps even afford, the happiness of others?

The answer may be a matter of hope. No human being is immune to hope, and we all seem to need and seek its grace at different times in our lives. If we are desperate or fearful or uninspired, hope can renew our motivation and redirect our drive. Hoping imbues the very act of living, and can also influence our sets of ideas about the world. If hope's universality lies in its ability to nurture the soul, we must respect that the ideas and imagined horizons spawned from hope will differ from person to person. How, then, can we know if our ideas are valid or worth pursuing? We must, I believe, continually oscillate between our experiential self and our self-reflexive self, without allowing one of these two "selves" to administer judgment on the other. In doing so, we foreclose the potential to didactically judge the viewpoints of other people. What we know about the war and what we believe about its effects comes from ourselves and others; we should collaborate with this collective respectfully. We must speak about peace with peace in our hearts.

So how do we listen to those who tune us out? How can we handle those who want to hold on to their power at any price? How do we deal with those destructive others who have sworn to bring us down? The keyword here, my friends, is compassion. Though inspired by those who seem to be "on our side" and disgusted by our opponents, I believe that trying to understand "the enemy" or "the other" can only strengthen, never hurt, our common cause. Generally speaking, the nature of politics breeds a narrow world view as it requires one to take up and maintain a particular stance. For activists, that stance is intertwined with the case for which they fight. The sense of urgency that the anti-war movement sees and seeks to create surrounding worldly matters necessitates, for many, certain unbending ideas. That being said, an appreciation of hope can reinvigorate the opportunity for change, emphasize the ironies of inter-subjectivity in the pursuit of truth, and underscore the role of human agency in social innovation.

Obtained through processes of self-reflection, hope can foster credence in the limitless power of the individual. Though quite real in its efficacy, hopeful thinking is contingent upon the imagination, of conceiving of and striving for the best of all possible worlds. Consequent of this mode of self-construction is an understanding of the paradoxical relationship between the individual and the social; though society is shaped by individual consciousness, a person can never achieve a complete understanding of another's subjectivity. Ironically, such a pursuit is best enabled by a commitment to one's own self-awareness that, likewise, hinges upon cognitive detachment. In this way, the individual is continually growing and redefining his or her self amidst his or her social environment.

Asymptotic in nature, realizing the self need not seem desperate or vain if one appeals to the sense of irony that propels it. Inherently temporal beings, our capacity to conceptualize the present rests on our ability to see it, and such clarity is only permitted from a distance. We cannot, as humans, simultaneously experience reality and reflect upon it, though each is part-and-parcel of the other. As a result, while one may never reach a supreme meta-awareness of his or her self and the world he or she inhabits, meaning can be found through these constant revaluations. And how else could life be lived? Time, unceasing, precipitates movement and characterizes our own existence within it. By engaging the multiple layers of one's self, an individual cannot escape time's grasp but can influence the way in which it unfolds. Just as the individual is shaped by environment and individual consciousness, so is a person constrained by time but also able to draft its future. Embraced by the individual, the strength and beauty that hope, in relation to thinking, engenders is imbued with an irony that promotes the possibility of self-betterment as it accepts the impossibility of human omnipotence. Your imperialist ideology forgets, Mr. Bush, that humanity struggles not for omnipotence but for benevolence. Where would you be, the alleged "leader of the free world," without Mom and Dad's nurturing, sir? Without inheriting opportunity to run the show, might your political career have stopped before it started? Before you were a politician, were you eating Doritos, drinking beer and playing *John Madden Football* like the innocent high-school graduates sent off to serve for your democratic aristocracy? Would you condone today's assault if born into more meager circumstances? Lucky us, instead of sinking video-game battleships you're sitting on the trigger-button in arrogant boredom, waiting to shoot.

So how can we, as activists, as thinkers, as brothers, sisters, musicians, artists, workers, rich and poor find hope in ourselves and in one another? Inflexible in its age, our mind cannot always extend to meet its unrealized needs. Political jive often triggers the black-and-white rigidity of "what I can do" versus "what I wouldn't be caught dead even speaking about." Saying yes to one path often denies another; at times, membership to a group or movement declares battle on some external set of forces. Ideas, whose meaning intimately hides within the Soul

can, on sociality's surface, collide, crash, and run-over one another. So let us remember what lies beneath politics, nationalities, ideas and arguments when we talk with and listen to one another. Let us not wage war on each other as we struggle to eradicate violence. Instead, let us turn our eyes inward and upward as hope adoringly awaits resuscitation, so that the moment of saving grace flows to infinitude in a succession of marching nows. Now. Now

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## **Talk by Mike Hoffman**

### **Iraq Veterans Against the War**

([www.ivaw.net](http://www.ivaw.net)), at the National Conference of the Campus Antiwar Network, November 13, 2004

#### **Where do we go from here? What happens now?**

And I think there's a couple things we gotta look at. First of all we have to realize that, if Bush won, if Kerry won, it wouldn't have made a bit of difference to those who are on the ground in Iraq now: the Iraqi civilians and the American and British and the rest of Coalition troops, not a thing would have changed.

Kerry's plan – I heard it said before – Kerry's plan was "Bush-light". He wanted to send more troops in but he wanted to pull out the American troops and send in international troops. Which would have meant – to me – he would end up sending more American troops in. Because what world leader in their right mind right now seeing the mess we've made would send his own citizens in that country? None.

Which means Kerry would have ended up having to send more of our own troops in there to do what he planned, and let me tell you something right now: there are no more troops. Those in the military now are incredibly overextended, the reserves have already hit the maximum amount of deployments already. Contractually and by law most National Guard units cannot be deployed anymore. So they've got to figure out something and I'm afraid the only thing they can do now is going to be draft.

Before the election there was a vote on a draft bill. I'm going to talk about that a little bit. The bill that came up was from Representative Charles Rangel, Representative from Harlem, Korean War veteran, member of Veterans for Peace who himself was drafted. And fought in the Korean War and saw horrible combat there.

If you talk to him, he said he put that bill forward and he did not want it to pass. His whole point of putting that bill forward was to highlight the poverty draft. Because the bill he put forward called for mandatory terms of service for every man and woman between 18 and 25. Two years mandatory service no matter what and that's the bill he put forward. He voted against his own bill.

But this is the bill the Republicans chose to talk about. They did not choose to talk about the other two draft bills that were also sitting in committee, both of which were proposed by Republicans. The first called for a lottery system, which is the same thing they were doing back in Viet Nam, Korea, World War 2 and everything else. The second one, and this is the dangerous one, this is what you need to go back to your schools and talk about, called for a Skilled Selective Draft. No lottery, no ...everybody serves. They pick and choose who serves. That means when you turn 18 and I think every year after that you have to submit a report stating what skills you possess. And then they pick and choose who they want to bring in. So if they need computer operators, they're going to go after computer majors. If they need motor [sic] people, they're going to call up mechanics and truck drivers. And if they need more grunts and ground-pounders they're going to call up the uneducated, unskilled workers of the lower middle class. That's what they're looking at.

Also...there was another horrible thing about this election. One thing I think everyone here realizes about the media right now is that repetition is true. With the American public and what they see on the news, repetition is true. Now you had two main candidates, Bush and Kerry, both calling for a conditioned occupation of Iraq. Which meant no one was talking about withdrawing in the media. No one got any air play talking about withdrawal, which

meant for the past year all the American public heard is we need to stay and finish the job. Two different opinions on how we finish the job – we need to stay.

[This] means we have an uphill battle right now talking about immediate withdrawal. They don't know anything about it in the public, they think the truth is that we need to finish the job. Our job right now is to make them understand that the Iraqis can finish the job themselves. We also need to make them understand that by saying that we are now abandoning the people of Iraq. What we need to do is we need to stand by them in their time of need, but not with the military, and not with Halliburton and not with Bechtel and not with Kellogg Brown and Root.

We need to work with them and give them every little bit of financial and material assistance they need to rebuild their country because they can do it themselves. They've proven it in the past: if you look at Iraq in the past before Saddam Hussein ruined it, it was the most advanced country in the Middle East. It was a secular country, it was an advanced country, they've shown they can do it and we need to give them that opportunity again.

What I think we need to do to win the "war on terror," is not occupy and destroy every country we feel is harboring terrorists or doing terrorists things. What we need to do is what we did with the Marshall Plan, except expand it to the rest of the world, help those countries rebuild, not for our profit but for their profit and their general well-being. If the rest of the world is living at standards we have when we're not busy trying to oppress them and steal their natural resources, there would be no terrorism. [Applause]

That's what we need to understand and that's what we need to let this rest of the country know. We need to clue them in on the true history of what's actually been going on in the world. And when they start understanding that they'll see the rest of this in context and see what we have to do.

Talking again about the war in Iraq. What's going on right now is not what the news is telling people. The reality on the ground is so much different from what's being told on the news; it makes me sick watching the news some days. After being there, being on the ground, seeing the reality, talking every single day to other people been there or come back or just guys who are still there right now, it's unbelievable the difference. And the first thing I think everyone understands but we need to keep saying it:

Who we are fighting in Iraq is not terrorists. They're not, you know, all these Islamic militants coming in from Syria, Jordan, Libya...Egypt, all these countries...there are some of them there. They're the ones responsible for the suicide attacks mostly, but the average day-to-day fighting, those who are really taking a toll on our fighters over there, are the average Iraqi citizens. They are occupied, and they want their freedom back and I believe they have every single right to have it [Applause].

This is something that those on the ground understand. They're the ones shooting at them, they're the ones getting shot at, [and] they see who they're shooting at. They know what's going on. We've got a member who's stationed outside Samara right now, with an armored recon unit. And we told me a story where one night they got hit by an ambush, perfect L-shaped ambush, he knew they were Iraqis, using good military tactics.

So they got hit, they returned fire, they got out of there. And the next morning, he saw a funeral procession traveling through the city, and when he looked at the body they were carrying, he recognized it. It was someone who had been working a shop for the last few months he'd been there. This was not somebody streaming over the border, this was an average citizen. For all he knew in a raid they had done before, in a bombing the day before, they had killed his wife, his brother, his children, one of his friends. That's what's happening over there, that's what's driving the resistance.

A five-hundred pound bomb, as accurate as it may be, is still a five-hundred pound bomb. It is going to level every single thing in the nearby vicinity, including innocent women and children. Including people who want nothing to

do with this war except to live their lives, take care of their families and carry on – the exact same thing people here in the US want.

Those who are serving over there, they know what is going on. You talk to them, and if they are for the war or against the war, they will tell you, to a man, that if somebody was doing to us what we are doing to the people of Iraq, we would be fighting just as hard if not harder.

So we've got to make people understand what's going on. We've got to make them realize what this war really means. That means we've got to break past the news, we have to go past what the news is telling us. Just like what I said before – it makes me sick to watch the news. And when they talk about the war, they use big impersonal numbers in this clean analytical discussion of what's going on.

When somebody's talking about what's going on in Fallujah, it's not somebody standing there dodging bullets and ducking behind a tank. It's someone sitting in a Pentagon briefing room or a briefing room in the Green Zone and you wouldn't even know they're anywhere near the fight. They don't know anything about the fight they're just repeating to them what's been told to them by whatever Pentagon official or whatever armchair general they had on [sic] five years ago.

They are not getting the personal stories. If people heard the personal stories and really heard and understood those, this war would be over in a second. And that's what we have to do. We've got to get those voices heard. Voices like mine, the other members of Iraq Veterans Against The War, Military Families Speak Out, their voices need to be heard....just to give you a couple examples of what you hear on the news and what's the reality.

A couple months ago on the news where I live in Philadelphia, there was a report, "Today in Iraq the first Pennsylvania National Guardsman was killed in action in Iraq since World War 2. He was killed near Baghdad with a roadside bomb." End of story, that's the news.

Real story, personal story, Celeste DePala had an Army Captain show up on her doorstep and just knocked and said, "Are you Sherwood Baker's mother?"

And she looked at him, and when she realized what he was there to tell her, she fell on the floor and just started screaming for a half hour. That's what we're not hearing in the news. You hear in the news, during the invasion period, a US Marine was killed by a sniper outside of Nazeria. End of story.

Talk to Rob Saire – who watched his friend bleed to death in front of him after being shot to death by a sniper, and realizing that his life would have been saved if he had been properly equipped. He only had one ballistic plate – his chest was protected but his back wasn't. He got shot in the back. And Rob had to watch him bleed to death because they couldn't get to him because they were still taking fire.

That's what we're not hearing. If we heard those personal stories in the news this war would be over in a second. But they don't want us to hear that, because they know that will end the war. That is what we've got to do. We've got to take out to the streets and make sure these voices are heard. That is the only way we will end this war. That is what will turn people against the war.

The last thing I want to say is, people are down, you know, I heard it called post-election depression...so how do we keep people reenergized? How do we get them back into the streets? And I say, because there is this sense of urgency right now – people are dying, Iraqi, American, British, Italian, all of them, they are dying as we speak. Right now, as I speak, bombs are dropping in Fallujah. I think right now over a dozen Marines have died in that assault and countless Iraqis. The first thing we did was take over that hospital so that accurate civilian deaths did not come out.

And now they're going after Mosul. As soon as we attacked Fallujah everyone went to another city, because that's the right thing to do in a guerilla war. And they [the leadership] act dumbfounded when they [Iraqis] do things like that. That's proper tactics. The Iraqis have been fighting ever since the Iran-Iraq war. These people are hardened fighters; they know what they're doing. They're not going to stand and get slaughtered, they're going to up and move and blend in with the population and go to the next town. And that's going to continue happening.

There's this sense of urgency now, and that is what we have to carry through. We have to let people know that bombs are dropping and people are dropping. The next one to die might be their neighbor, might be their friend from high school. That is what we need to let them know and that is what's going to get people reenergized to get them back out on the streets.

One last thing, this is what I told the other members of Iraq Veterans Against War after the election: Yeah, it sucks that Kerry lost. It's going to be harder on some fronts...but this is our goal now. We have to hit Bush. We have to hit Bush so hard that he is going to wish he was never elected [applause]. ...if we continue this fight, we will make him really dead. His place in history books will be so black, he will be remembered as the worst president ever.

Thank you. [Applause]

## **Campus Updates**

### **Shepard University, West Virginia**

The semester started out with a quick pace, as in the first couple of weeks in school we protested Bush's closest visit to Shepherd and a Klan rally just on the other side of the Potomac. We started out getting at least 10 people at every meeting for at least a month (pretty good for a small school like Shepherd). The meetings were outside next to this little creek that runs through town, so there was a nice friendly feel to the meetings, that most definitely helped to keep them interesting.

After the first couple of weeks, we settled down to work on a Rock Against Bush concert that on campus. It went on a week before voter registration ended in mid-October and was about a month in the planning. It was an all-day event, on a Friday as kids got out of class and into the evening. There were probably about 500 out for the whole thing, and some local politicians showed up to speak.

Following Rock Against Bush, we focused in on the election by registering kids to vote and helping out the 527s that were putting a hell of an effort into the local area. We had another hastily planned concert that was nothing like the Rock Against Bush and we brought a person running for the Supreme Court of WV to campus. We have shown movies over the course of the semester and brought kids out to an end of the semester stress relief concert. We went down to a few protests to, IMF/World Bank and the SOA protest.

For next semester, we're planning out a movie and speakers series. Have almost all the ducks in a row to get Medea Benjamin out here plus political movies every couple of weeks and maybe a film festival at some point. We're organizing to give kids a way to get down to D.C. on the 20th and throughout the semester we'll be organizing around Mountaintop Removal coal mining and how to protect WV's mountains.

The group's webpage is <http://www.shepherd.edu/greenweb>.

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### **San Francisco State University**

This semester started off very well for us, with only 5 continuing members from last semester growing to approximately 15-18 core members by the end of the semester. We had a number of events this semester, some more successful than others. There was also a racist occurrence on campus at the end of the semester that has led to a number of our members becoming part of the Ad-Hoc Committee Against Racist Scapegoating.

Over the summer, a few of us submitted articles and created a newspaper, which we called "Shock and Awe." We've used this as a tool at our table to inform the student body about what we stand for and to start dialogues with people. The articles covered the election, the Iraqi resistance, depleted uranium, and a few other topics. We've found that people are pretty impressed with it, and I'd recommend this type of thing for any other

school that has the time to put it together. Luckily one of our former members who graduated is a graphic design major, so it's a pretty professional looking paper, but what really counts is the quality of the articles, all written by us. Our first event of the semester was an all day visual memorial followed by a teach-in about the draft that evening. We made cardboard headstones, all painted white with RIP in the middle to represent the number of Iraqis who have died (at the time the most accurate reports said 14,000 although we later found out that over 100,000 had died). There was 1 headstone for every 200 deaths. We also had headstones for the American soldiers that had died, painted like American flags. There were 5 American headstones and about 70 Iraqi. It was a pretty powerful image, held in the grassy quad in the center of campus. We handed out informational flyers about the number of casualties and US refusal to do a real body count, along with a flyer for the teach-in and some information about the draft (at the time, the bills hadn't yet been voted down). At the draft meeting that evening, we had two speakers from Veterans for Peace come, along with a new member of our group. Only about 20 non-SAW members showed up, which was somewhat disappointing, but it was certainly better than nothing and the presentations were pretty powerful.

A week or two later, we held a debate on campus. We've debated the campus republicans about the war every semester for the past 3 semesters, and this semester we invited the newly formed College Democrats and Students for Nader to join us. The Democrats backed out at the last minute (surprise surprise) so it was a 3-way debate between SAW, the Republicans, and Students for Nader. This is always our biggest event, and we had a packed room of about 75 or so students. As could be expected, SAW and Students for Nader held pretty much the same opinions and also the majority of the audience support. We also got to answer questions from the audience. This is another thing that I would really recommend that other campuses do; it gets a big audience, because people love to hear both sides in the same room and get a chance to question both sides on the issues. It's also a great platform to put out some real anti-war arguments that are never heard in the mass media. We tried to organize a Beats Not Bombs musical event, but couldn't find a venue. It was really disappointing since we had a lot of musicians who wanted to play and I'm sure it would have drawn a huge audience. We also organized a second memorial for the week after the election, to demonstrate that regardless of who the president was, the occupation was still continuing. We made more headstones and were planning on reading off names and biographies of people who had died from the war and occupation of Iraq, and we had even arranged for a member of Iraq Veterans Against the War to come and speak. But the day of the event it rained, and we had to cancel it. There was never a good time to put it on after that, so it never happened. Hopefully we can do it again next semester.

The day after the election there was a protest in downtown San Francisco, so we went as a group and mobilized about 15 to 20 other students to attend it with us. It was a great experience as many of our new members hadn't been to a protest before, and it was the first anti-war march since last semester. We decided to replace our second to last meeting with a showing of "The Battle of Algiers," hoping to attract new people and have a discussion about the nature of occupation and how it related to Iraq. As it was already the beginning of December and people were starting to worry about finals, we had a small turnout and the only people who stayed for a discussion were SAW members. One of the things that has taken up a lot of our time over the last month and a half has been the formation of an Ad-Hoc Committee Against Racist Scapegoating. On November 1st there was an incident on campus between members of the College Republicans and four Middle Eastern and Afghani women, in which the Republicans called the women terrorists, told them to go back to their own country, and slapped one of the women's hands. Two days later, the day after the election, the women and their friends again confronted the Republicans, who were then tabling. A group of students formed around the table, and it turned into anti-racism, anti-war, anti-Bush protest of about 250 students, and some of us led a walkout through campus. There are too many details to go into here, but ever since then, we've been working with the four women and other campus organizations such as La Raza, Mecha, the Women's Center, etc. to organize an anti-racism campaign on campus. This has involved a petition, on which we've gotten hundreds of signature, and we attempted to hold a press conference for the women to tell their side of the story, but it had to be cancelled because one of the women's lawyers said it might be a bad idea right now. Not much has been solidly accomplished yet for a variety of reasons, most specifically because of finals, but we are planning on working on it over winter break and coming back strong next semester. SAW has decided to organize an all-day teach in about war and racism with other student organizations, hopefully to be put on at the end of February. We think that this will be a good way to link issues that are happening on our own campus to the war, along with making good networks with other student organizations and reaching out to students who aren't already involved. A number of us will be here over break and

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will be organizing for the teach-in, for January 20th- specifically for the summit we'll be holding that evening, working with other campuses to rebuild their CAN chapters, and working on a campaign to either deal with military on campus (which we don't really have) or some other campus-based issue.

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### **Columbia University**

Since the CAN National Conference in November, the Columbia University Anti-war Coalition has been extremely active following the release of "Columbia Unbecoming," a film that targets professors in the Middle Eastern and Asian Languages and Cultures (MEALAC) program, saying they "intimidate" students. A Boston-based Zionist group, the David Project, funded the documentary as an attempt to dislodge the credibility of professors who teach an anti-Zionist, anti-imperialist perspective. The film is not an honest portrayal of sentiment on campus—it features six well-known right-wing Zionist students and alumni who hold a very specific political agenda in making such a film.

As soon as the film was released, it became evident that its claims against MEALAC, and particularly Professor Joseph Massad, were dishonest and egregious. Only one of the students featured in the film actually took a course with Massad and opinions of students satisfied with MEALAC, particularly Jewish students who do not feel intimidated on campus, were purposefully ignored and silenced. The lies, gross misinterpretations and exaggerations in the film show that these students and the David Project have no interest in academic freedom. They wish to marginalize those like Massad who speak up against Israel and Zionism in support of the Palestinian people. The film attempts to silence voices, not protect students.

Unfortunately, the University gave in to political pressures and called an official investigation of the MEALAC department. What began as a small collection of unsubstantiated claims has spiraled into an attack across campus on professors who hold dissenting opinions. Beyond Columbia's gates, the NYC city council threatened to investigate MEALAC if Columbia's own investigation "came up dry." The controversy has been picked up by several major newspapers, including the Daily News, New York Times and The New York Sun, all featuring stories that criticize Columbia's so-called "anti-Semitism."

The implications of these attacks are widespread and reflect the growing censorship of the left, especially on high-profile campuses like Columbia, and the mounting attacks on Arabs and Muslims both on and off campus. If the David Project succeeds in their attempt to chill dissent, it will be easier for them and right wing Zionist groups like Campus Watch to do so elsewhere. We have already seen censorship occur at New York University and most recently, the firing of a City College professor due to her political views.

In response to the attacks, the Columbia University Anti-war Coalition called a meeting for all students, professors and community members who wished to organize against the academic intimidation and in support of MEALAC. More than 80 people showed up for the first meeting and were able to form the Ad Hoc Committee for the Defense of Academic Freedom at Columbia. On Tuesday, December 7th, the Ad Hoc Committee hosted a press conference on campus to present the position against the film and against the politically-motivated investigations. The press conference was attended by over 50 students, alumni, community members and members of the press. Past and present students of the MEALAC department representing a diverse array of experiences and backgrounds spoke to the press, as well as a representative of the anthropology graduate program. Some of the speakers who addressed the press were Jewish students who have taken classes in MEALAC or with Professor Massad and who have not felt intimidated or marginalized in the classroom. Also, several students spoke about the real make up of the Columbia campus, which has one of the largest and most vibrant Zionist communities on any campus today. In fact, one speaker argued, it is not the Jewish or Israeli perspective that is being silenced as they claim, but the voices of those who are in support of Palestine.

In the midst of all the heightened activity, CAN activists have decided to primarily devote their time and energy to getting the campaign off the ground. We have been at the center of the Ad Hoc Coalition and have met many students who previously were not politically active on campus. We hope to focus on getting more of these students involved in the campaign and in CAN. Though as we approached finals all the action around MEALAC did not leave much time or energy for planning events and actions around Fallujah, we hope to start off next semester with the capacity to handle both the MEALAC campaign and an Iraq campaign. We are also trying to organize buses to the anti-inauguration protest in DC in January. During the break, several activists will also hopefully work on a petition campaign in support of MEALAC

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## **Georgia State University**

"Bring Them Home Now"

On Tuesday, November 16, some 30 people gathered at Georgia State University in Atlanta to attend a forum hosted, by Students for Peace and Justice, featuring two members of military families who are outspoken critics of the war in Iraq. Denise Thomas, whose daughter served in the Army in Iraq, and Howard Wolf, whose son is currently serving as a member of the Air National Guard, discussed their outrage over this illegal war and occupation.

Denise's story was deeply touching and infuriating. Her daughter, Shanell, enlisted in the Army after Denise lost her job and it became apparent that there would be no money for college. Despite having severe scoliosis, Shanell was sent to Baghdad, where she was stationed for over a year, living in one of the regime's bombed-out palaces. Denise described the daily torment of wondering whether her daughter had been killed far from home in a war which Denise increasingly came to see as unjust and unnecessary. Shanell wrote her mother letters describing the horrors in Baghdad; the scene there was far different from the one portrayed by American media. Shanell spoke of bodies rotting in the streets and mass rapes of Iraqi women. The moderate Denise soon found herself a "moderate who had swerved to the left."

Luckily enough, Shanell made it home alive, thanks to Denise's hard efforts to get her out due to her preexisting medical condition. Afterward Denise found herself gaining some profile as a critic of the war. She wrote a response to the widely-circulated pro-war letter "A Soldier's Father Speaks Out" and started a website to tell her story and reach out to others in her position. She now receives letters and emails from soldiers and soldiers' families all over the country, sharing her outrage.

"Many people I talk to think we should throw our soldiers to the wolves," Denise said. "This is an unnecessary war. I also think the Afghan war could have been avoided. We should bring them home now."

Howard Wolf's son joined the Air National Guard out of "a love of flying," much as Howard had as a young man. He now finds himself flying F-16s from an Air Force Base in Qatar. "He's one of the people bombing Fallujah right now," Howard noted, with an air of disappointment. Howard, a Vietnam veteran and member of Military Families Speak Out, spoke solemnly of the horrors of war and how undemocratically the war in Iraq was approved. "Iraq looks to me like an instant replay of Vietnam," Howard noted. "Johnson and McNamara lied to us to take us to war, just like Bush." Howard brought up other historical lessons, pointing to the failure of the British occupation of Iraq in the early 20th century, which was dogged for years by a strong resistance movement. "We need to get out of Iraq now, because we can do no better. We're making the same mistake as the British."

Denise and Howard's comments spawned a rich discussion, which covered the election, the state of the anti-war movement, the underlying reasons for the war, and the future of the Bush doctrine. There was a general sense of relief that the elections were over and excitement at the prospect of rebuilding a vibrant anti-war movement. As one activist noted, "The movement's not dead, it's only sleeping. It's up to us to wake it up." The importance of military families, veterans, and active-duty soldiers in an anti-war movement was underlined, as was the need for a call to bring all the troops home now. As Denise said, "Iraq is a mess because we're there."

The forum was a great first step toward rebuilding a real grassroots movement against the occupation of Iraq.

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## **New York University**

This semester has been a trying one for the NYU Chapter. Though we gained a few people in the beginning, we seem to have since remained stagnant. It appears that this has come to pass as a result of the overall inward focus of the group. Our weekly meetings have been plagued with scheduling issues, and as a result, have not been as consistently well-attended as we would have liked.

That is not to say, however, that a great deal of effort towards the group has not been made. Our core remains firm and steadfast in our effort to become a presence on campus. We have attempted to table at least once per week, to which the reception of students has been expectedly mixed. We have experienced a great deal of uncertainty in the voices of those we meet. They are consistently unsure if what we are doing actually accomplishes anything, and they often reveal after a few minutes of conversation that they believe that the occupation is

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“warranted” or “legitimate”. (This usually stems from the belief in the “chaos theory”, which advocates that a withdrawal from Iraq would create a chaotic and ultimately catastrophic state.) Also, there is a widespread feeling among many of those on the left at NYU that because Bush was re-elected, our efforts in stopping him are futile. These are issues that we have tried to address through conversation.

Among the hardships, we have had a few beams of hope. We have had several brilliantly thought-provoking discussions in our weekly meetings. (debating the possibility of withdrawal, discussing and researching Palestine, etc.) The CAN conference seems to have refueled us politically, and since then we have had a couple particularly successful tablings (actually getting up on tables in the cafeteria and condemning the war in Iraq) and a viewing of “Rebels With a Cause”, a documentary that detailed the anti-war movement of the 60’s (specifically SDS).

We are currently working toward getting people to the protest in Washington DC on January 20th, and we are looking forward to next semester to overcome our failures and repeat our successes.

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### **RIT, Rochester, New York**

Recently in Rochester, several groups interested in protesting the racist fear monger Daniel Pipes met to discuss options and begin to work on a framework to challenge his racism. This meeting involved RIT Anti War, the Muslim Students Association, the International Socialist Organization, the Islamic Center of Rochester, the Rochester Interfaith Center, the Rochester Committee for Middle East Peace and a few others that I can't remember (several groups were represented by the same person). There was a definitive political spectrum in the room, with the anti-war group and the ISO on the left, the MSA in the middle and the liberal/ religious groups from the city on the right. RIT Anti War argued for a visible energetic protest and picket on the day of the speech in combination with an aggressive publicity campaign calling out Pipes for what he is, a racist. The liberal/ religious groups argued for no protest, no campaign to try to change people's ideas but rather only a follow up panel or maybe pressuring the school to put an opposing view on stage with Pipes. The meeting ended in a compromise of no protest, but definitely a publicity campaign against Pipes. RIT Anti War feels that this is not the best way to build a campaign against him and is continuing to build support for a full blown protest in the Muslim community on campus, both in and out of the MSA.

The newly formed School Without Walls anti-war group, a high school student group based at the progressive public alternative high school in the heart of downtown Rochester intervened this past Tuesday in a meeting held about the problems with the "No Child Left Behind" Act. They concentrated on opposing the section about how the school must turn over student records to military recruiters. They spoke out about their opposition to the occupation and how the NCLB act and the war are tied together. They are discussing the idea of launching a City District wide "Opt Out" campaign, both as a way to make sure that Rochester's inner city low income youth are not preyed upon by the recruiters but also as a way to build awareness of anti-war activity in the high schools. Later this week the group will vote on its official name, its points of Unity and whether to officially affiliate with CAN.

We protested General Tommy Franks, the one who led the invasion and coined "Shock and Awe," when he came to speak at a right wing hospital foundation's annual fundraising dinner. Turnout was about 35 people, which considering the conditions wasn't too bad, seeing as it was pouring and there was a big "International Human Rights Day Celebration" called at the same time by the big city liberal groups (it was inside too). The protest was made up largely of students from RIT Anti War, School Without Walls, the ISO and some other unaffiliated activists from Rochester. While few, we were very spirited and confident and the rain didn't impinge on morale too much. We marched from the Liberty Pole plaza down Main Street to the Convention Center, carrying pickets, banners and chanting. We rallied out front chanting "Franks Feasts While Children Starve" "Hey Tommy, You Can't Hide, We Charge You With Genocide" in addition to the usual chants. Speakers from the participating groups included Matt Y. from SUNY Geneseo Anti War Coalition, Jeddy B. from School Without Walls, Brian L. from the ISO and myself. Anti War and the CAN CC. The speakers helped to put the event in perspective and remind everyone why we were out there in the pouring rain. As we were walking back up to the Liberty Pole plaza we made a sudden turn onto a side street and were able by using a side entrance to a neighboring building get into the connecting skyway overpass being used by the dinner attendees to enter the convention center without having to face us. We created a chanting gauntlet in the skyway and held up our signs to the windows to the traffic passing below. The police were totally caught off guard and there was no reaction from them for almost 15 minutes. Eventually the sergeant

assigned to supervise the harassment of protesters came along and threatened everyone with arrest if they didn't leave immediately. This was an issue of contention seeing as the skyway is over public property (the street) and thus it seemed like it should be legal for us to occupy as long as we didn't TOTALLY constrict traffic flow. When a member of the ISO spoke up and questioned the cop about this, the cop ordered his immediate arrest, to serve as an example that what they say goes. We then left the way we came with the same energy and continued our chants all the way back to the street level.

Outside we waited for the cops to come down with our friend in cuffs where we then chanted "Let Him Go" really loud in their faces prompting the cops to draw their pepper sprays and threaten the crowd, but thankfully they did not attack. As our friend was taken away we held a quick meeting and decided that if they took him to the "Hall of Justice" we too would go there and continue our protest till they released him. The cops apparently didn't like that idea so they called for his return to the scene and they sat around the corner and filled out an appearance ticket for trespass. When they released him we all cheered and then we marched as a group back to the Liberty Pole with continued confidence. He has to appear in court on Tuesday and he plans to plead "Not Guilty" at which point it will be up to the District Attorney whether he wants to face a trial with hecklers in the audience and protesters outside or whether he'll just make it all go away. Either way we feel confident that we can turn the situation in our favor.

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### **UC Santa Cruz**

Virtually, no anti-war activities took place on the UC Santa Cruz campus this quarter. There have been a handful of seminars that have been held by a few academics regarding the U.S. occupation, however most of these were almost apolitical in that they argued that the "decline of the U.S. empire is inevitable" and gave little reason to organize. Almost all of the elements that made up the previous anti-war group devoted their time to the elections (mostly campaigning for John Kerry). The drive to get Bush out of the office halted most progressive activities on campus, especially the anti-war movement.

However, with the re-election of the Bush administration, massacre in Fallujah, and four deaths of local men who were fighting in the war there has been an upsurge of political activity on campus. The remnants of the UCSC CAN chapter, along with various left groups, are working together to organize a united action on January 20th. We hope to create a fully formed anti-war coalition on campus, and will hold our first general meeting after the action on January 20th. Anger is brewing against the war in Iraq and we are making a valiant effort to turn that anger into action.

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### **UC-Berkeley**

The Berkeley Stop the War Coalition has experienced real growth this semester, from a core of about three people to about twelve people who consistently come to meetings and have all been active in organizing our events. About 30 people attended our first meeting in September, and we immediately started brainstorming. The next week the thousandth soldier was killed in Iraq, and we basically blocked traffic through Dwinelle plaza with huge banners reading, "37,000 Iraqi civilians killed," "1,000 + U.S. soldiers killed," and "Bring the Troops Home Now." We passed out flyers for a movie screening of "the Fourth World War," which about eighty people attended. The discussion quickly turned into a debate about the election, but the general consensus was that we needed to start actually doing something to get people involved and protesting. We started organizing a forum around the draft, which was turned into a forum on what the war means to us at home when the draft legislation was defeated in Congress just a few weeks before the event. On October 20th, Jobert Poblete from Action in Defense of Education, Daniel Saver from BSTW, Michael Eisencher from U.S. Labor Against the War, a draft resister named Steve Kessler, Lee from Vietnam Veterans Against the War, and Diana from Iraq Veterans Against the War spoke about the utter havoc this war has wreaked on the lives of students, people of color, working people, the soldiers, and the Iraqi people. Diana's speech was especially powerful. She wasn't speaking as someone with an agenda to push, or an argument to sell, but as someone who has seen what is happening and thinks it is wrong. "Nothing we're doing over there is liberation," she said. "The only liberated Iraqis are dead Iraqis." Though speakers of this caliber should have been presenting to hundreds of people, the turnout was roughly a hundred people, reflecting the de-mobilizing impact the elections have had on the anti-war movement as a whole. Nevertheless, we took about 15

people to the Not In Our Name post-election rally in San Francisco the next week, and organized a speak-out against the attacks on Fallujah on Dwinelle Plaza where about 30 people signed up on our listserv. We've begun planning a visual memorial of over a thousand cardboard tombstones for the Iraqis and soldiers killed and a forum with Diana to kick off the semester. We've also added a demilitarization working-group, and right now we're working on reaching out to other activist groups on campus to build a strong counter-recruitment coalition on campus for next semester. The response so far has been very positive: we've already gotten replies from the Boalt Law LGBT Caucus and the Rise Up for Peace organization. This break, some of our members are going to be working on fact sheets and an article about the case for getting military recruiters off of campuses to share with CAN. Most people in BSTW think that we need to be very action-oriented next semester, so our focus is going to be on strong, consistent tabling and giving everyone who comes opportunities for concrete activism.

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