

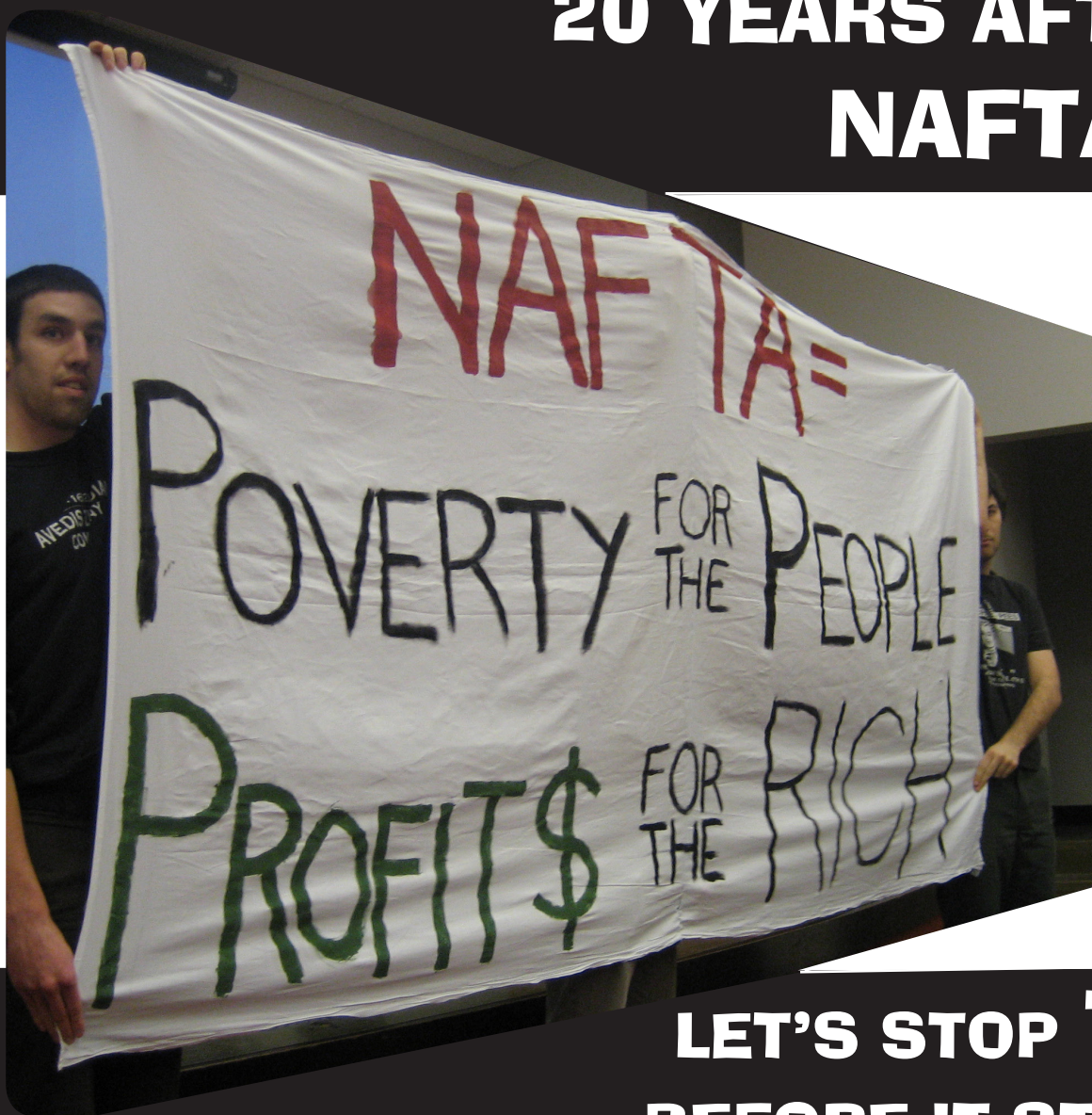
SYRACUSE PEACE COUNCIL'S

Peace Newsletter

Central New York Voices for Peace and Social Justice

February 2014 #831

20 YEARS AFTER NAFTA...



**LET'S STOP TPP
BEFORE IT STARTS**

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SPC INFO

SPC Steering Committee 2014

Jessica Azulay, Carol Baum, Jack Brown, Sarah Eggers, Barbara Humphrey, Ben Kuebrich, Kimberley McCoy, Julianne Oldfield, Amelia Ramsey-Lefevre, Carole Resnick, Ursula Rozum, Brian Tackett, Richard Vallejo, Aly Wane, Jim Weidman, Wendy Yost.

SPC's Peace Newsletter

Editorial Committee: Ben Kuebrich, Saptarshi Lahiri, Leahann Lynagh, Amelia Ramsey-Lefevre, Nikeeta Slade, Aly Wane. **Layout Coordinator:** Jessica Azulay. **Proofing:** Rae Kramer, Andy Molloy.

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Read the PNL online (issues dating to 1936!). See all our projects and events.

SPC Committees & Projects

Bikes 4 Peace: fixing bikes and working cooperatively with youth

Radical Reading: reads & discusses timely books

CNY Working for a Just Peace in Palestine & Israel: education, action

Ground the Drones & End the Wars: education, demonstrations, outreach

Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation: education, hydrofracking ban,

Two Row Wampum campaign

Military Alternatives Education Project: counter-recruitment in high schools

Youth RIOT: Resisting Imperialism & Oppression Together (youth organizing)

Fundraising: overall planning to raise funds to support SPC's work

Event Committees: Birthday, Bowlathon, Plowshares

Finance: analysis, reports, budget, general oversight

Peace Newsletter: produce SPC's monthly newsletter

Affiliated Projects & Coalitions

Alliance of Communities Transforming Syracuse: faith & secular groups

Caribbean Latin America Coalition: sister communities, solidarity, SOA

United as One: working for justice in the local justice system

We Are NY: labor and community activists working for the common good

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Peace Newsletter

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Advertising: Call 472-5478 or visit our website for rates and sizes.

Calendar: Submit items for the March PNL calendar by February 17.

The Syracuse Peace Council (SPC),

founded in 1936, is an antiwar/social justice organization. We are community-based, autonomous and funded by the contributions of our supporters.

SPC educates, agitates and organizes for a world where war, violence and exploitation in any form will no longer exist. We challenge the existing unjust power relationships among nations, among people and between ourselves and the environment. As members, we work to replace inequality, hierarchy, domination and powerlessness with mutual respect, personal empowerment, cooperation and a sense of community.

Present social injustices cannot be understood in isolation from each other nor can they be overcome without recognizing their economic and militaristic roots. SPC stresses a strategy that makes these connections clear. We initiate and support activities that help build this sense of community and help tear down the walls of oppression. A fundamental basis for peace and justice is an economic system that places human need above monetary profit. We establish relationships among people based on cooperation rather than competition or the threat of destruction.

Our political values and personal lives shape and reflect each other. In both we are committed to nonviolent means of conflict resolution and to a process of decision-making that responds to the needs of us all.

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Educate, Agitate, Organize: SPC IN ACTION

compiled by Jessica Azulay

Strike for Peace! SPC Annual Bowlathon

The annual Strike for Peace! Bowlathon is scheduled for **Sunday, March 30** at Bowl Mor Lanes (201 Highland Ave, E. Syracuse 13057). Sessions start at 1 pm and 3 pm. As always, this fun event will feature costumes, prizes, team spirit, and funny shoes! Spend an afternoon socializing with other peaceniks to benefit SPC's peace and justice organizing.

Teams are 4-6 people (individuals are welcome—we'll match you with a team). Entry fee is \$15 for adults, \$10 for kids (12 and under) and includes two games plus shoes. The alley is completely accessible and bumpers are available. Registration is open until March 14, and discounts are available for early reservations (by February 28). Call Amelia or register online at www.peacecouncil.net/bowl.

"Dirty Wars" in Syracuse

SPC's Ground the Drones, End the Wars committee will host a free showing of Jeremy Scahill and Richard Rowley's documentary *Dirty Wars* on **Monday, February 10 at 7 pm** at ArtRage Gallery (505 Hawley Ave., Syracuse). The film just received an Oscar nomination for Best Feature Documentary and has already won numerous awards.

No TPP Fast Track!

As we go to print, the Peace Council is organizing against the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a free trade agreement that would affect workers' rights and wages, the environment, sovereignty of nations and democratic rule of law, internet freedom and online creativity, food safety and agriculture, healthcare, financial regulation, and much more. There is a national movement to tell Congress not to give President Obama the "fast track" power to



Andrea Levine from Ithaca speaks at a press conference just before the start of the Hancock 17 Drone War Crime Resisters trial on January 3, 2014. Photo: Charley Bowman

negotiate and sign the agreement without Congressional approval. On January 28, we held a teach-in about the many ways the TPP would affect our lives. To learn more, see www.flushthetpp.org.

More BDS Activism Needed

Thanks to all who stopped by the CNY Working table at Plowshares to sample the homemade hummus and learn about the international Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaign in support of Palestinian rights. We talked to many long-time activists who were very interested but not very aware of this campaign. So, we are even more energized in our determination to bring BDS to the forefront of awareness in our community. Don't buy Sabra or Tribe hummus, Sodastream, Ahava, Hewlett Packard, or Motorola products! (They are produced in Israeli settlements in Palestine.) Contact Jessica for more information or to get involved with our work.

Hancock 17 Drone Resisters

The trial of the Hancock 17 Drone War Crimes Resisters will conclude on **February 7** with the verdict. The trial itself was spread over five long evenings over the course of a month.

The Hancock 17 were on trial for having symbolically blocked the three entrance gates at Hancock Air Base on October 25, 2012. They called for an end to drone warfare and read a Citizen's War Crimes Indictment. They were at the Base because MQ9 Reaper drones which fly over Afghanistan are piloted from Hancock.

The resisters argued that their actions were legal. They had come to Hancock to ask their government for redress of grievances and to fulfill their duties to uphold International Law, under which wars of aggression and indiscriminate killing are crimes. See SPC's website for updates.

GMO Free CNY

In December, GMO Free CNY met with Senators John DeFrancisco and Dave Valesky and asked them to support legislation that

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SYRACUSE PEACE COUNCIL www.peacecouncil.net • OFFICE HOURS: M-Th, 12-7 pm

STAFF ORGANIZERS

Carol Baum: carol@peacecouncil.net • Ursula Rozum: ursula@peacecouncil.net

Jessica Azulay: jessica@peacecouncil.net • Amelia Ramsey-Lefevre: amelia@peacecouncil.net

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would require the disclosure of genetically modified organisms (GMO) in our food. Please call DeFrancisco (315-428-7632) and Valesky's (315-478-8745) offices and ask them to sponsor NY's GMO labeling bill. The next local organizing meeting will be **7 pm on February 10** at the Peace Council Office. To learn more about the campaign for GMO labeling and to sign your business on to the GMO Labeling campaign, contact Ursula or visit www.gmofreeny.net.

Organizing Against Solitary Confinement

The Peace Council was happy to partner with the Center for Community Alternatives and NYC-based Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement (CAIC) on January 26 to host a networking event for over 20 people interested in organizing against solitary confinement. People in isolated confinement are held in small cells for 22-24 hours a day without meaningful human contact, therapy, education or training. New York prisons and jails currently subject far too many people (thousands on any given day), including particularly vulnerable groups like young people and people with mental health needs, to isolated confinement for far too long (months, years, and decades) in conditions that can cause deep and permanent psychological damage. CAIC organizers visited upstate cities to share information about their work and hear about ours. We discussed ideas for collaboration and heard about plans for a demonstration against mass incarceration in Albany in May. Contact Amelia to hear more details or connect with the work.

PEACE OUTREACH

Show your opposition to war and the reaper drones! Bring your own sign or use one of ours.

**First Tuesdays
December - March
4:15 - 5:00 pm**

Hancock Air Base Entrance
(E. Molloy Rd., between Thompson & Townline Rds.)

Contact Ed or Ann, 315-478-4571

Stop Corporate Rule

In January, democracy activists relaunched local efforts to challenge corporate domination of our political system. To mark the fourth anniversary of the *Citizens United* US Supreme Court ruling, the Peace Council joined Move to Amend of CNY at a film screening and press conference to promote the Legalize Democracy campaign. *Citizens United* allows corporations and other organizations to spend unlimited funds for or against candidates, by essentially declaring that corporations are "people" and have the right to free speech. Nationally, Move to Amend is leading efforts to pass local and state resolutions in support of the "We the People" amendment that would abolish corporate personhood and overturn *Citizens United*. The next meeting of Move to Amend CNY will be at **7 pm on Thursday, February 20** at the Syracuse Peace Council office. To learn more about how you can be part of the national campaign to Legalize Democracy, contact Ursula.

Challenging the Two Faces of Drones

SPC's Ground the Drones, End the Wars Committee is bubbling with plans. Our efforts to educate our community about and build resistance to the US' illegal use of weaponized drones continues. We also will build on the successful passage of the Syracuse City Council's resolution to ban drones from our airspace until federal, state, and local legislation is adopted that protects our First and Fourth Amendment rights. Would you like us to push for a similar resolution at the County level? If so, we need you to join the subcommittee!

Our activism is only limited by the number of people standing up. Please join us in this exciting work. Contact Carol.

NOON Gets Moving

NOON is picking up steam on a number of exciting projects, and we're thrilled that the table was quite crowded at our last Steering Committee meeting!

Following the US Supreme Court's rejection of the Onondaga Nation's Land Rights case late in 2013, the next steps in



Image: Eric P from farmanac.com

legal action to further pursue a just settlement are expected to be taken soon. NOON is preparing to focus our energy on this effort, and will look forward to engaging as many people as possible to make this a successful campaign of support. Justice for the land is justice for everyone.

A major project is on the verge of completion: a new historical marker that will be placed at Onondaga Lake has been approved by the Onondaga Nation Council. The marker tells a different version of CNY's history than we've been taught in school—it shares the perspective of the indigenous people of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. We hope to announce the unveiling of the sign very soon.

We're also working to improve the navigability of our new website as we continue to pull material from the old site. For information or to get involved, call Carol or Amelia.

Activist Appreciation: Barbara Floch

Barbara Floch has been involved with the Peace Council for what seems like forever. In the olden days before there was a Plowshares Committee, the job of organizing SPC's Plowshares Craftsfair and Peace Festival was led by one person. Barb did that role for several years and did

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20 Years of NAFTA: Struggle, Resistance, and a New Foe

Aly Wane

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement. Corporate news outlets have mostly been touting its success. President Clinton used Fast Track authority in order to ram through this legislation on January 1, 1994. Not all people were blind to the potential negative consequences of this deal, however.

The same day NAFTA passed, aware of what it would do to indigenous communities in Mexico, the Zapatista army protested the agreement. In the end, this deal ended up hurting both US and Mexican workers, became one of the root causes of the migration crisis we have in this country, created new powers for multinational corporations, and deepened global inequality.

NAFTA, Workers' Rights, and Migration

One of the most insidious things about NAFTA is that, despite the lofty rhetoric about how it would help all countries involved, it actually hurt the working class of the signatory countries (the US, Canada and Mexico). NAFTA allowed for the easier movement of factories (capital) across borders, but not of workers (labor).

This set up what some economists have called the "race to the bottom" where multinational corporations repeatedly move across borders to find cheaper, more exploitable, union-free labor (in industry-speak, they call these exploited workers "flexible labor"). The deal helped decimate the manufacturing industry in this country as many factories in the South of the US moved to Mexico in order to find cheaper labor.

This agreement allowed for US corn to be dumped on the Mexican market, putting

many Mexican farmers out of business. Desperate for work, these workers moved to Mexican cities to work in the newly created free trade zones, in factories with very little regulation. After a few years of this, as the wages in these areas started to rise, these factories moved once again to Southeast Asia in order to find even cheaper labor.



Image: We Party Patriots website www.wepartypatriots.com

The Mexican workers who moved to the city couldn't go back to working their lands as a source of income (many of these lands had actually been bought by large agribusinesses) and were forced to migrate North into the US to eke out a living. This created a dilemma whereby US workers are made to feel that their "jobs are being stolen" by poor undocumented people here, when in fact workers in both countries have been impoverished by the same system.

The Zapatistas Call Out Neoliberal Capitalism

On the day of its passing, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation announced itself and its intentions to fight the Agreement with its revolutionary slogan "Ya Basta," which means "Enough." Based in the southern state of Chiapas, this group of indigenous peasants predicted that the forces unleashed by NAFTA would mean economic genocide for Mexican farmers and for indigenous communities, specifically.

In fact, three months prior to the signing of NAFTA, the Mexican government eliminated some of the few remaining barriers to foreign industry access to Mexican land. The Zapatistas correctly saw that NAFTA was an expression of neoliberal ideology, an economic project which calls for completely deregulated markets, the cutting of public spending (especially for social services) and total privatization.

The Zapatistas are currently focusing on protecting their lands and preaching their vision of a world free from the influence of neoliberal ideology. They control about a third of the state of Chiapas, which they organized into five autonomous regions. The power of the Zapatista revolution lies partly in the way Zapatismo (the political ideology of the Zapatistas) directly identified NAFTA as being an extension

of the 500-year colonial exploitation of the indigenous people. They see neoliberal capitalism through the lens of a history of dehumanization, commodification and exploitation inherent in the neoliberal project.

They also explicitly condemn the cult of individualism that this ideology fosters, and their practice of wearing face masks and not having an individual

continued on next page

Aly is an undocumented activist and a member of the PNL Editorial Board.

NAFTA / from previous page

leader comes from a deep commitment to the community as the ultimate decision maker. The Zapatistas have also stressed the importance of women and children being part of decisionmaking. The quote "another world is possible" is often used in activist circles, but the Zapatistas are already, in a way, living in that world, having liberated a space and freed it from neoliberal influence.

Doubling Down: Here Comes the TPP

Sadly, despite NAFTA's cost to the middle class and the working poor, the US is about to repeat the same mistake, as President Obama is seeking Fast Track authority to pass the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which has often been referred to as "NAFTA on Steroids." This new deal would establish a so-called "Free Trade" zone that would stretch from Vietnam to Chile and would affect about 30% of the world's agricultural exports alone. It has been largely negotiated behind closed doors (as NAFTA was), but much of the text of the draft has been

released through Wikileaks.

Interestingly enough, this deal has even less to do with trade than previous such deals. It has 29 chapters and only five of them are about trade. Most of the deal involves limiting governments' ability to regulate industries and establishes new powers for corporations. Public Citizen activist Lori Wallach called the deal a "corporate Trojan horse." Some of the powers included are investor privileges that promote job offshoring to lower wage countries; increased freedom of corporations to cross borders and scoop up natural resources for mining, oil and gas; a ban on "buy local" procurements; and new internet copyright laws which aim to undermine net neutrality.

Basically, the deal is a cornucopia of things corporations have been trying to push for but have not been able to get through regular democratic processes. NAFTA pushed corporate personhood to such an extent that it allowed corporations to sue governments for loss of profits through instruments like the World Trade Organization; the TPP aims to empower corporations to an even greater extent.

The way the TPP is being negotiated

also indicates the weakness of our current democratic process. Members of Congress are supposed to have exclusive control over trade deals, but they were not able to see the text until June of this year, after a large group of them complained to the administration about the secrecy of the deal. Now, they have the right to request to see one chapter at a time and do not have the right to communicate what they've seen with the public. This amounts to a sort of economic coup d'état by corporations. After Congressman Alan Grayson read the text, he told activists: "I can tell you that it's very bad for America. I just can't tell you why."

The good news is we still have some time. As stated previously, President Obama is seeking Fast Track authority to pass the deal and the first step in scuttling the TPP would be to push against Fast Track so that the public can have a debate about the TPP's merits. Websites such as www.flushthetpp.org and www.popular-resistance.org are collecting signatures to petition individual congresspersons to strip the president of Fast Track authority. Please consider checking out these sites and contributing to the resistance. ♪

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That Pope Francis... Marxist in Disguise?!

by Dave Pasinski

Perhaps the strangest critique bestowed on this new and engaging pope is the condemnation by Rush Limbaugh that Francis was spewing “pure Marxism.” It reminds some of us of the famous quotation of the popular bishop of Recife, Brazil, Dom Helder Camara, who famously said, “When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist.” Argentinian Jorge Marie Bergoglio lives in this example, even if he does not name it as the politically charged “liberation theology” of 30 years ago.

To be sure, Pope Francis is no Marxist but he has said publicly that he respects many Marxists and atheists, and in his Christmas address he called on believers and unbelievers alike to find common ground to work together “for the betterment of humankind.” He vexes many liberals in maintaining the traditional Catholic teachings against women’s ordination, rejecting abortion, and by not endorsing same-sex marriage. Yet, overshadowing these issues is his emphasis on social justice and commitment to the poor that resonates with more traditionally liberal coalitions. He has gone further than any pontiff in calling for a far greater role and respect for women, in reaching out personally to women in troubled pregnancies, and saying of gay and lesbian persons, “who am I to judge?” The press is fascinated that he can “walk the talk” on simple living, on his commitment to the disenfranchised, and in his critique of an unbridled capitalist system.

Theologians have pointed out that this

call for social justice is by no means new and is well rooted in Catholic tradition. Even the more doctrinally conservative John Paul II and Benedict XVI issued strong—if academically dense—documents on social justice and charity. For example, Pope Benedict XVI once said to Mexican bishops in 2005, “It is not enough to relieve the greatest needs, but to go to their roots, proposing measures that will give social,



Pope Francis holds a sick person in Saint Peter’s Square at the end of his General Audience in Vatican City. Source: EPA (European Press Agency)

political, and economic structures a more equitable and solidaristic configuration.” But their demeanors were not nearly as engaging or congruent in the eyes of a world hungry to see a human face and more straightforward vocabulary.

Consider these phrases from Pope Francis in his first singular exhortation, “The Joy of the Gospel”:

“While the earnings of a minority are growing exponentially, so too is the gap separating the majority from the prosperity enjoyed by those happy few. The imbalance is the result of ideologies which defend the absolute autonomy of the marketplace and financial speculation.”

More pithily yet, “The socioeconomic system is unjust at its root.”

Perhaps his most repeated quotation is: “How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points?”

Statements like these have already roused suspicions at the conservative American Enterprise Institute and among some church fundraisers who wish to dismiss his evaluation of capitalism as naive. Yet it would be naive and wrong if we thought that his critique is only for those political conservatives or those with deep pockets. “The “traditional” part of Pope Francis’ message is his call for respect for every human life, but what has been newsworthy is his daily example in that regard. Whether it be in the liturgical ceremony of washing the feet of incarcerated male and female juveniles including those of Islamic faith, in celebrating his birthday with the homeless, or in kissing a disabled youth and also the head of a man with multiple growths in the example of his twelfth century model St. Francis, who famously kissed a leper, he is bringing substance to traditional teachings. Many different Scriptural quotations might be apt in describing this personalism, but perhaps it is Matthew’s last judgment

account that is most descriptive...,” “Whatever you did for the least of my brothers (and sisters), you have done unto me...” Readers of the *Peace Newsletter*, many Catholics, and varied persons of goodwill may find much to argue with him about in some areas noted above. Yet many will also find a resonance and something to emulate in his simpler lifestyle; his call to seriously review international, national, and personal monetary and political policies; and in his personal commitment in some way to those who are poor.

Perhaps a final admonition of his is applicable to all of us concerned with justice and peace. “One of the more serious temptations which stifle boldness and zeal is a defeatism which turns us into querulous and disillusioned pessimists—sourpusses. This is no way to assist others to appreciate our point of view.” How about that for a resolution—even in a debate with Rush Limbaugh!

Dave is a Hospice of CNY chaplain and active member of St. Lucy’s and Plymouth churches and involved in various peace and justice concerns.

Palestine in Lebanon 65 Years Later

by Dana April Seidenberg

With fighting in Syria spilling over into Lebanon, Beirut's Palestinian refugees—and now Palestinians in Syria—are caught in the crossfire of a regional conflict they neither started nor can abate. Israel's iron-fisted policies of the last century, particularly the forced removal of Palestinians from newly-formed Israel in 1948, turned the whole East Mediterranean region into a combat zone. After successive military adventures leading to a prolonged resistance that exists to this very day, tens of thousands of lives have been lost with increasing numbers of homeless people desperate for peace and security.

Lebanon is being flooded with Palestinians fleeing camps in Damascus, Latakia and Aleppo. The refugee population in that increasingly fragile country has swelled to an unconscionable 900,000, comprising 20% of the population.

Western political pundits are quick to declaim every conflict as ethnic strife, dwelling on seemingly senseless war games and political rivalries between “tribes” and “terrorists.” Recent explosions in the south-Beirut stronghold of the Shi'a Hezbollah, and retaliatory car bombs in the northern Sunni stronghold of Tripoli are examples of the spillover into Lebanon.

Yet, easy ethnic explanations fall away as shifting arrangements of power and privilege offer incisive pointers to hidden economic issues. In investigating structural rather than human agency, we need to remember that the world's population has doubled in the last fifty years. With the struggle for scarce resources—particularly water to the region, with gas and oil pipelines to the West needing protection—the glacial speed in addressing the Palestinian issue is easy to understand!

Whichever way, Palestinian lives are on hold. The refugees, both outside their homeland and inside as IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) in Gaza and West Bank camps, exist in perilous states of permanent unease and insecurity.

It didn't have to end this way.

Dana is a supporter of the Palestinian resistance.



In spiraling alleys of squalid dwellings, a tangled maze of live power lines supplies electricity (2009). Photo courtesy of the author.

The Sun Countries

After sleepy centuries under Ottoman rule, rumblings in the eastern Mediterranean began two years before the end of World War I when imperial France and Britain decided to reorder Bilad el Sham (“the sun countries”) into four protectorates—Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. Remote control governance from Paris and London is the reason for the strange configuration of geometric borders that cut across antique societies in economic decline.

In 1917, when Britain's Lord Balfour declared a homeland for the Jews in Palestine, it was not intended that 78% of British-Mandated Palestine would evolve into a *herrenvolk* democracy under European Jewish control. Yet, to the present moment, with the full connivance of the US and the European Union, walled-off Palestinians remain under surveillance in the West Bank and Gaza with those who remained emptied of their identity as rebranded “Arabs.” The Palestinians expelled to surrounding eastern Mediterranean rim countries became human scavengers, pushed aside in overcrowded nations already struggling with economic miseries of their own.

A Week Visiting the Camps

In 2009, it was to these forgotten people of Beirut's Sabra, Chatilla and Bourj el Bourajneh camps that I first went at the invitation of American peace-with-justice activist Ellen Siegel. Comparisons with similar scenes of underserved Nairobi neighborhoods in the city where I live were easy. In streets teeming with hawkers and traders, Palestinians, as with the majority of Nairobians, were busy surviving on a few dollars a day. The aroma of street food cooking in smoky kiosks, hundreds of vendors offering fresh produce, heaped piles of clothing and Chinese trinkets displayed on makeshift structures were all familiar.

But unlike Nairobi, the silent agony of being stuck for decades in someone else's country was compounded by the fatal indifference of world leaders and their own leaders. Justice seemed a depressing improbability. In spiraling alleys of squalid dwellings, a tangled maze of live power lines supplied electricity. Indoor plumbing for water points and toilets were the only modern features that set Palestinian daily life in Beirut apart from Nairobi's notorious informal settlements. A privileged few

had interior gardens where solace against the daily strain of forced exile might be imagined.

Still managing after 65 soul-crushing years to put on a brave face for the committed crowd of 40-70 anti-Zionist activists, Palestinians had been prepared to meet with us: a curious mélange of Italian Communists; the well-respected Ang Swee Chai, a Singaporean orthopedic surgeon; a *Counterpunch* journalist from the US; a 93-year-old political cartoonist with his gorgeous Eritrean mistress; and a dread-locked African-American pastor—are just some of those who arrive each year to preserve the memory of the three tragic days in September 1982 when Lebanese Christian Phalange troops backed by Israeli Defense Forces entered the camps, leaving scores—some say 3,000—dead, later buried in unmarked graves.

Although respected as a social activist, I felt more like the proverbial ugly American as daily itineraries set the pace for bus excursions linking us political tourists to people and events, current and past... for me a shocking experience crying out for justice and compensation.

Planned by Kassem Aina, himself a Palestinian refugee, the journey began with a three-hour trip to the southern border between Lebanon and Israel, with its painful landscapes of flourishing kibbutzim built over former Palestinian villages. Palestinians looked forlornly across the graffiti-splashed separation wall at their ancestral homes. Yet the worthiness of the Israeli project remains unquestioned by the US Government and many cocooned US Jews. Although collective guilt does not exist, I felt it anyway.

At Beit Atfal Assamoud, a women's center supported by American-Near East Refugee Aid, a revived art form of old Palestine—traditional embroidery—was sewn and sold. Solar hot water systems and GPS tracking systems, rather than beautiful scarves and handbags for desperately-needed cash, were a more lucrative deal. At other venues, with pro-Palestinian Lebanese journalist Talal Salman, PLO leaders, Hezbollah and Lebanese Communist Party members, we listened to strategies for ending the occupation.

A solidarity march through Beirut to a cemetery where Sabra-Chatilla victims are

buried filled another day. Back in southern Lebanon, visits to cemeteries of interred martyrs and to a memorial museum commemorated Hezbollah's defeat of Israel. The shocking sight of rusting American-made tanks, missiles and guns used in imperial Israel's ongoing aggression against Lebanese Palestinians left no doubt of US complicity in this conflict.

But the highlights of the grueling week's events were the invitations into



The author (left) and Palestinian rights activist Ellen Siegel at a demonstration in support of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Photo courtesy of the author.

private homes, allowing us the privilege of hearing firsthand what happens when key reference points that center existence—the key being a defining image of nation and home for the refugees—are confiscated. Over freshly-brewed Turkish coffee, baleful personal histories were tearfully recounted. One woman whose husband had disappeared during the massacre was still waiting for him to return. Another woman spoke passionately of her two sons. One lived in faraway Gaza and another was in an Israeli prison. A large painting of a key—to the very home lost in 1948—looms over us. Would these decades of sacrifice, like those in South Africa, end in freedom and the compassionate power of a Nelson Mandela? Nothing is inevitable. I knew I had to contribute my time to resolving this ongoing tragedy.

My March Away From Zionism

Credit for my own evolution from luke-warm Zionist to full support of a democratic, secular state in all of former British-Mandated Palestine is due to three sources. First, my family: arriving in Syracuse before World War I, my grandfather, a Polish Jew, opened a shoe repair shop on Geddes Street and attended, with Rose, the Orthodox shul in the city. The shoemaker's son married the industrialist's daughter, Faith Seidenberg. Their mutual passion for civil liberties was my core upbringing.

But, it took a chance introduction to Ellen Siegel, a psychiatric nurse at Beirut's Gaza Hospital, and eye-witness to the 1982 massacre, to throw old sympathies for the Jewish state off balance. Siegel is a revolutionary. Her dedication, compassion and moral outrage have made her a hero to millions in the Palestinian struggle.

Finally, after reading Israeli historian Ilan Pappé's *Ethnic Genocide in Palestine*, a life-transforming work that contextualized random events into a highly-readable historical account, the air was cleared of any existing illusions about the Jewish state. Turning a harsh light on the 1948 Arab-Israeli War from recovered pre-State Haganah defense force diaries and Palestinian oral testimony, he documents the Naqba ("catastrophe") when, during the months of April and May, explicit orders were given to wipe out 531 Palestinian villages and remove the villagers. In the space of several months, tens of thousands of Palestinians were displaced and 700,000 Palestinians made homeless, the mantra

kill or be killed leaving no doubt that like former British Kenya, this was colonialism!

The *Old Testament* is replete with stories of the prophets Jeremiah and Isaiah exhorting Jews to dismantle Israel and Judah because they were not satisfying the Lord's requirements for Jewish states. If history teaches anything, it is that nations are always being dismantled, rearranged and reconfigured, with few countries contoured the way they were even 100 years ago. Why should the eastern Mediterranean region be different? Whether it is a deZionised Israel, a bi-national state, or democratic secular state with, of course, the right of return of all refugees to all of occupied Palestine—or an entirely new vision of refugees joining Bilad al-Sham into one political-economic free-trade unit of Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan—it will happen. ♻️

DIRTY WARS

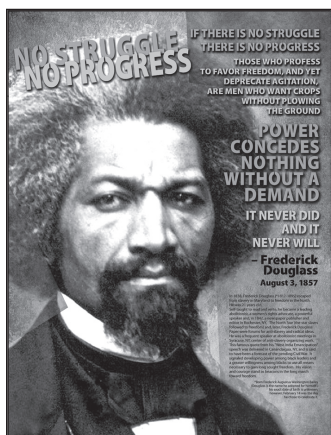
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Dirty Wars follows investigative reporter **Jeremy Scahill** from a remote corner of Afghanistan, where covert night raids have claimed the



lives of innocents, to the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), a shadowy outfit empowered by the current White House to assassinate those on an ever-expanding 'kill list,' including at least one American.



Poster: Sale! \$9.10

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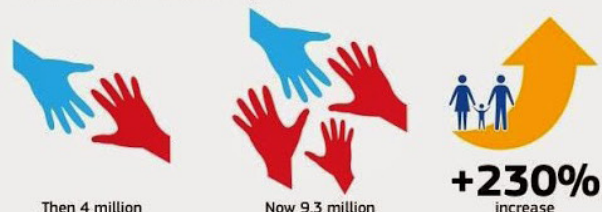
Classic
 Frederick Douglass
 quote



SYRIA CRISIS Comparing statistics

December 2012 - December 2013

Estimated number of people in need of assistance inside Syria



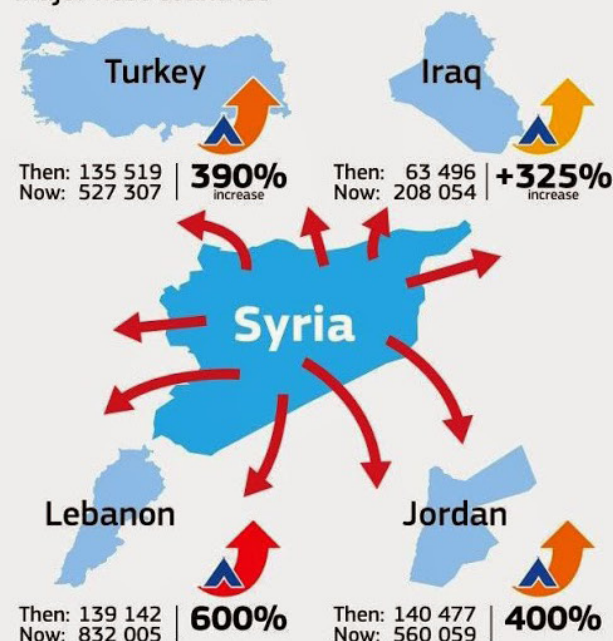
Estimated number of people displaced inside Syria



Estimated number of refugees in neighbouring countries (Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq, Egypt, North Africa)



Estimated number of refugees in major host countries



European Union: Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department of the European Commission. Source of figures UNHCR and OCHA.

SPC Unity Statement on Syria

Syracuse Peace Council Steering Committee

Editor's note: Following President Obama and Secretary of State Kerry's attempts to rush to bomb Syria in the late summer of 2013, the SPC Steering Committee undertook to write an organizational statement responding to that call for war and the situation on the ground in Syria. We found it a surprisingly challenging task due to the complexity of the situation and differing analyses within our leadership. We find these differences mirrored across the left in the US. After a thoughtful process, we would now like to share this statement outlining our values and points of consensus regarding the horrific conflict in Syria.

As we go to press, peace negotiations between the Assad government and certain factions of the opposition are opening in Geneva. Just ahead of negotiations a Qatari-financed report was released claiming proof that Assad's military tortured, starved and killed thousands of prisoners. On Day 1 in Geneva harsh words were flying with the Syrian Foreign Secretary positing that the disinvitation of Iran guaranteed a mix of "anti-Syrian" countries. Meanwhile, opposition leaders called the Assad government "a disease" and some observers are concerned that negotiations can't possibly be meaningful because so many sections of the opposition refused to participate.

Those of us inspired by the cry for democracy and human rights that continues to reverberate from Tunisia to Egypt to Syria were saddened and horrified to see that same movement violently repressed by the Syrian state beginning in 2011. We were further dismayed when foreign governments including the US, Russia, and Saudi Arabia armed various sides in the Syrian conflict. The Peace Council has consistently spoken out against any government, especially our own, escalating armed conflict in Syria in the form of airstrikes, invasion, or weapons shipments to armed groups.

We continue to stand in solidarity with those in Syria struggling for freedom, dignity, peace and social justice in the face of both overwhelming state violence and escalating attacks on civilians from some anti-government groups. Syrian activists and revolutionaries continue to struggle for democracy and human rights, showing a resiliency of human spirit and organizational creativity that is truly inspiring. As an organization committed to nonviolent struggle against militarism and all forms of oppression, we find most affinity with nonviolent movements within Syria also fighting against militarism and oppression.

Russia continues to support and arm the al-Assad government, while the US, Saudi Arabia and Qatar continue to arm some of the anti-government groups. This is not the conduct of governments seeking peace or working to help the Syrian people come to a popularly supported solution to the crisis engulfing their country. It is reprehensible for our government or any government to use



SPC activists protested the threatened US invasion of Syria in August 2013. Photo: Carol Baum

Syria as a pawn in a geo-political chess game.

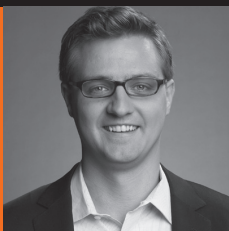
We will continue to oppose any attempts by the Obama administration to militarily intervene in Syria. In opposing US military strikes on Syria or weapons delivery to any side in the conflict, we seek to prevent further loss of life. We do not turn a blind eye to the violence and oppression faced by the Syrian people, nor do we ally ourselves with the Syrian state. We do seek to prevent the US from using the situation in Syria to further its own political and economic agenda at the expense of Syrian self-determination. We share the desire to do something to end the bloodshed, but there is no evidence that bombing Syria or arming opposition groups in Syria will make life better for Syrian civilians.

We reiterate our call for our government to participate in and strengthen international institutions designed to prevent war, human rights abuses and hold international war criminals accountable, including those within our own borders. We call on our own government and governments around the world to divert money from weapons to humanitarian aid through international institutions to help ease the severe humanitarian crisis.

We stand with the majority of Americans who are opposed to a military intervention in Syria. We are heartened to see such an outpouring of opposition to the use of military force and increasing skepticism over the idea that the US can use military clout to support human rights and democracy.



CHRIS HAYES



Chris Hayes covers a wide range of political and social issues on his MSNBC show, “All In with Chris Hayes” which airs at 8 p.m. (Eastern) Monday through Friday. Hayes is also editor-at-large of The Nation. In his University Lectures presentation, Hayes will mix deft political analysis, timely social commentary and deep historical understanding to reorient our perspective on our times by arguing that the public’s loss of trust in the federal government, corporate America and the media has led to a crisis of authority that threatens to engulf not just our politics but our day-to-day lives. He is a former fellow at Harvard University’s Edmond J. Safra Foundation Center for Ethics and a Bernard Schwartz Fellow at the New America Foundation. Hayes has written on a wide variety of political and social issues, from union organizing and economic democracy to the intersection of politics and technology.

Chris Hayes

POLITICAL COMMENTATOR, MSNBC HOST

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PEACES

compiled by Amelia Ramsey-Lefevre

CeCe McDONALD GETS AN EARLY RELEASE

CeCe McDonald, the Minnesota woman jailed for stabbing and killing a man in self defense, was released on January 13 over one year early. She will continue to be monitored by authorities until the end of her original 41-month sentence.

In 2011 McDonald and a few friends were walking to a grocery store late at night when they were confronted by a group of people standing outside a bar who started yelling racist and transphobic slurs. McDonald testified that a fight broke out in which a glass bottle was smashed on her face and, ultimately, she stabbed one attacker with scissors in an act of self-defense.

McDonald, a transgender woman, spent the last 20 months in two men's prisons in Minnesota because authorities did not acknowledge her gender identity. Throughout her case, supporters around the world rallied behind McDonald, calling her incarceration unjust and her placement in a men's facility discriminatory. McDonald's supporters are celebrating her early release and we will keep up the resistance to the racist and heteronormative system.

A few words from McDonald's personal blog: "I would have rather been punished for asserting myself than become another victim of hatred. No, I'm not saying violence is key or all people should react the way I did, but our communities, whether here or abroad, have become the victim of malicious and hateful crimes. We need to start now."

FIRST GMO BAN IN THE US!

On December 5, 2013, Mayor of the island of Hawaii Billy Kenoi signed Bill 113, which prohibits biotech companies from operating on the island and bans farmers from growing new genetically modified organisms (GMOs). The bill exempts papayas—over 200 farmers currently grow GMO papayas on the island—and the one field of GMO corn that was already planted before the bill was approved.

Speaking on the day he signed the bill, Mayor Kenoi said: "Our community has a deep connection and respect for our land, and we all understand we must protect our island and preserve our precious natural resources.... With this new ordinance we are conveying that instead of global agribusiness corporations, we want to encourage and support community-based farming and ranching."

There is growing public resistance to the use of GMOs worldwide, while some sectors of the science community indignantly claim that GMO crops are no riskier than conventional crops. Activists wonder what exactly the scientists mean by "risky" and whose payroll they are on. Sixty-four countries label GMOs. The US is not among them.

In related news, Mexico recently imposed a temporary moratorium on planting GMO corn. Commentators view this move as only a delay, not a step toward a permanent ban. However, Mexico's agriculture ministry intends to designate areas where GMO corn would be banned and create other safety regulations.

LYNNE STEWART LEAVES PRISON ON COMPASSIONATE RELEASE

Lynne Stewart had a long career of defending what were, in her words, "revolutionaries against

unjust systems or people whose cases expose those injustices." But in 2009 she was convicted of materially aiding a terrorist organization. How did that happen?

After Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman was convicted of planning terrorist attacks, Stewart continued to defend him in prison. He was subjected to restrictions on his communications with the outside world and his lawyers also had to agree to certain restrictions. Stewart circulated a press release for Abdel-Rahman in 2000. Stewart said she found out later that the Clinton administration had chosen not to prosecute her. After 9/11, in April 2002, Attorney General John Ashcroft announced her indictment for materially aiding a terrorist organization.

In November 2009 Stewart entered prison to serve a term of



CeCe displays her resilience of spirit when trans rights activist Leslie Feinberg visits her at a Minnesota men's prison. Photo: Leslie Feinberg

continued on next page

28 months. She was a cancer survivor when she entered prison at age 70, but she was receiving chemotherapy by the time of her resentencing in July 2010. Her outlook became even grimmer then with a new sentence of ten years.

Stewart's supporters have been working tirelessly asking for her compassionate release so that she may be home with family in these days of old age and illness. We are so overjoyed for her long-awaited homecoming.

FRACKING BANS SPAN NYS



The town of Moravia successfully passed a ban on hydrofracking and related activities within its town limits in December. In 2012 the town had imposed a moratorium while activists gathered support for a comprehensive ban.

There are over 300 municipalities in New York State that have some kind of rule against fracking or related activities, according to Joe Hoff, Chairperson of Keuka Citizens Against Hydrofracking, who tracks hydrofracking legislation, court cases and similar activities. He estimates that 2.4 million New Yorkers benefit from these bans, moratoria, and other restrictions.

Sergio Garcia will become the first ever undocumented immigrant to be licensed to practice law in the US. The Obama Administration actively tried to prevent the California Supreme Court from issuing the license. In 2012 the Department of Justice stated that the Court could not issue a license to Garcia because of his immigration status, despite the fact that he had fulfilled all the requirements laid out in the state bar's admissions policy. California's highest court rejected that argument on January 2.

Garcia had been pushing for this for four years since he passed the Bar Exam in 2009. But Larry DeSha, a former prosecutor in California, says Garcia's troubles are not over: "He can't say he is going to fulfill his duties as attorney when one of those duties is to uphold all federal laws, when he's here illegally. And no one can administer the oath to him knowing he's going to be illegal the minute he puts his hand down. And the other thing is clients can't pay him money. And any client who finds out that he is illegal has to fire him under federal law."

While DeSha intends to show that even with a license Garcia won't be able to function in the system as a lawyer because of his undocumented status, perhaps he more effectively demonstrates how the immigration system does not reflect or respond to the realities of millions of people living and working in the US.

There are two other similar cases currently under consideration: Cesar Vargas in New York and Jose Godinez-Samperio in Florida.



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a wonderful job. Since the formation of the Plowshares Committee, Barb has been the liaison to The Mission regarding the food vending at the event, and she has helped organize set up and clean up the Friday night “potluck of munchies.” Because of her experience and knowledge as a craftsperson, Barb has been our main source of “real life” information about the craft show scene—how other shows do things, what they charge, the size of their booths, etc., and her knowledge is invaluable. Barb has been key in developing and carrying out our jurying process to choose Plowshares participants. Barb is upbeat, fun to be with, and very talented with her endlessly evolving crafts. She has a strong following that seeks her out at Plowshares. Last and very much not least—as we have often said—much of the success of the Plowshares Committee is because we meet and EAT! Sharing wonderful food together for many years has helped us deal with a variety of issues and concerns. Barb always brings something substantial like a homemade casserole. We know that even if our pickings might be little slim because of other demands, Barb will provide with gusto!

SPC Meets with Rep. Maffei

On Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, January 20, SPC met with Rep. Dan Maffei and two of his aides in his Syracuse office. Maffei is on the Armed Services Committee and the Science, Space and Technology Committee, so the topics we addressed – the military budget and the two faces of drones (weaponized and surveillance) - were particularly appropriate. We had a friendly exchange of ideas and all left with homework and the promise to get back to each other. We also anticipate a meeting in the spring focused exclusively on drones.

Thanks to Jerry Lotierzo for setting the meeting up. He, Peter Swords, Ursula Rozum and Carol Baum all attended from SPC.

Justice in the Americas

The CNY-Colombia Support Network is planning a delegation to visit our sister community, the Small Farmers Movement of Cajibío, Colombia in July. To apply to go on the delegation or to donate to the CNY delegation fund, contact CNY-Cajibío coordinator, Jessica Maxwell, 751-7242.

Fighting Fracking

Two thousand fracktivists from across the state rallied outside Gov. Cuomo’s State of the State address on January 8 calling for a fracking ban. On **February 6**, the New Yorkers Against Fracking coalition will meet at the Onondaga Free Library, 4640 W. Seneca Turnpike, at **7 pm**. Issues to be discussed include understanding and responding to the NYS Energy Plan and stopping shipments of fracking-waste (known as bakken crude) through Central New York.

NY Energy Plan Mostly Business as Usual Your Comments Needed

In January, the New York Energy Planning Board released the 2014 New York State Energy Plan for public comment. The good news is the Plan sets a goal for 80% greenhouse-gas reductions by 2050, a win for the environmental movement. The bad news is the Plan does not outline any specifics for how New York policy makers intend to meet that goal. Though there are some programs to promote renewable energy in the plan, most of the plan revolves around our current fossil-fuel and nuclear fuel-heavy system. Of particular concern is the Plan’s emphasis on ramping up natural gas infrastructure and use in New York. The Plan is a far cry from the roadmap we need for a carbon-free, nuclear-free energy system.

Through our involvement in the Alliance for a Green Economy (AGREE), we’ll be working with other environmental groups to encourage the public to submit comments on the plan and to



Rachel Cary, Simone Richmond and Ursula Rozum at the State of the State anti-fracking protest.
Photo: Eric Jones

participate in public hearings. The word on the street is that one of the public hearings on the plan will take place in Syracuse. Stay tuned for details. Contact Jessica or see www.agreenewyork.org.

Honoring the Two Row Means “No Fracking”

The Two Row had a significant presence at the Anti-Fracking/ Renewable Energy Rally at the New York State Capitol on January 8 where our 30-foot banner garnered much attention. Two Row activists from Onondaga, Syracuse, the Capital District, Hudson Valley, New York City and elsewhere reunited. We gathered nearly 100 signatures on our Declaration of Intent as well (sign at HonorTheTwoRow.org/declaration). Contact Andy, 315-701-1592.

