

In Our Name

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On September 11, the United States was brutally and tragically brought into the world community in a way that ended our sense of exemption from horrors that plague the rest of the world all too frequently. The interconnectedness brought on by travel, communication, media and trade, and the rise of global technologies and corporations, has reduced the safe distance Americans long felt from the rising violence and political divisions of the rest of the nations of the earth. The shock and grief that followed the events of that day, and the resulting end of a sense of invulnerability, have shifted the consciousness of the American people profoundly.

An entirely different context and set of assumptions now pervades in the discourse and actions of both American citizens and the structures of power that are in place. Not only the present, but the past and future are now perceived through a different lens. At the same time, certain agencies and elements of power and governance are responding to or manipulating the aftermath of the event to redefine political and budget priorities, infrastructure, and methods of decision-making. Also affected are security procedures, and many of the most basic aspects of both Constitutional principles and civil liberties, as well as aspects of everyday life, commerce, communications and travel.

We are in a different political reality since that day, despite the outward appearances of society that continue, seemingly unaffected. We are also having that political reality defined for us each day. Agendas of political control and prerogative, of domestic and international relations, of a permanent war economy and a shift in tax budgets and profits, and of resources and regional control abroad, are being rearranged and set for us. The focus has shifted away from local politics, except for matters of immediate security precautions, to national and global politics, where most decisions are now being made.

1. The Situation

Analysis

We are still sorely lacking in good analysis of what actually occurred on September 11. The evidence presented to date has not been convincing, neither to the public nor to the foreign leaders who saw the "secret evidence" (they deemed it circumstantial). It is not clear as yet who actually carried out the operation, or who was the ultimate sponsor. Even if Osama bin Laden was involved in the planning, it does not yet tell us who might have put him up to the attack, since he has had many sponsors over the years, including the CIA, Pakistani ISI and Saudi Arabian wealth.

Questions still linger about the inability of the CIA to secure advance knowledge of bin Laden's operation, especially since he had been identified during the Clinton Administration as the top threat to the United States, and targeted for assassination. Questions remain about the lack of military intervention or response to the plane that crashed into the side of the Pentagon without being confronted, intercepted, or shot down.

We still need to study the broader political and historical framework around the events and the Arab-Afghani and Muslim army that was funded, armed, trained and created by William Casey of the CIA to attack the former Soviet Union in the 1980s. Also, the geopolitical importance of the region we are now attacking is significant, including our relation to plans for massive oil pipelines that would run through Afghanistan from the Caspian to the Arabian Seas, and the continued reliance on opium profits by the Northern Alliance forces. Broader questions about other countries in the region and the overall politics of this destabilizing effort need to be examined; as do possible future targeted "terrorist states", such as Iraq and Colombia, to name only a few. What is the nature of this protracted "war against terrorism"? What purpose or agenda does it serve? What is its goal? Who are the actual protagonists?

The domestic implications still need to be explored in full, especially the federal expenditures, and the federalization of decision making by FEMA, the NSC and the Pentagon. We are in a state of declared national emergency and Congress has invoked special war powers for the President. The "locked box" of Social Security has clearly been raided. Tens of billions of dollars are already being allocated to military and intelligence efforts, to agencies that have already failed to protect us. Domestic spending priorities have been severely altered. The economy, already part of a worldwide slump, is slipping deeper into recession. A whole new generation may be forced to grapple with the possibility of

participating in war. The implications are profound, but not yet fully explored.

Only with a clear analysis of these events and the international response and situation, can we make an informed and sensible decision between alternatives. We should not give up our most cherished and basic values in our fear or anger. Rule of law, democratic rights, civil liberties, open flow of information, tolerance of others and of dissent, international diplomacy, common sense, and war as a last resort have been so quickly and mistakenly abandoned in favor of this militarized response and the development of massively increased security procedures.

Purpose

"This war will secure American interests abroad for decades to come."

--Donald Rumsfeld, *Secretary of Defense*

What is the real purpose of this widening war? Is it a limited use of bombs to dismantle a terrorist network in Afghanistan? Is it to eradicate "evil" in the world, as Bush once stated? According to the international press, Secretary of State Colin Powell was telling world leaders in June and July that the United States would conduct a military intervention in Afghanistan in mid-October. Is this war really a response, or something more? Authorities have stated that even if Osama bin Laden was already captured or killed, it would not end the bombing operation in Afghanistan. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said more recently, "We may never capture Osama bin Laden, that is not my mission."

Afghanistan has vast reserves of natural gas, and has been at the center of 80% of world opium production in what is called the "Golden Crescent". The Taliban were paid \$43 million by the US government to stop growing opium this year, and did so. The Northern Alliance is now growing the bulk of the opium instead. Massive oil pipeline routes from the Caspian to the Arabian Seas were in the planning for a long period, involving Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan, with large investments by the US and other countries. The US military presence in these countries will also secure access to the vast resources and cheap labor of Russia and the former countries of the USSR.

War always profits a few, and serves as a testing ground and a way to secure access to resources, labor and land. War provides an organizing principle for civil society, usually at the cost of democratic rule, truth and principles. War also makes victims of women and children first, in both countries and groups involved. Social services, family ties, legal rights and human/ecological priorities are dismissed in favor of war-related spending and destruction. "War," as former Marine Corps Commandant Smedley Butler once noted, "is a racket".

Endless War

"The vice president bluntly said: 'It is different than the Gulf War was, in the sense that it may never end. At least not in our lifetime.'"

--Bob Woodward, *"CIA Told to Do 'Whatever Necessary' to Kill Bin Laden"*, *Washington Post*, October 21, p. A1

We are told that the American people, by an overwhelming majority, support the current military response. It has been portrayed as precisely targeted and limited, and defended because food was dropped along with the bombs. But the American people have not been offered any other option, just military action or inaction. In their sense of helpless rage, they want to "do something", to retaliate or strike out. When you factor in massive civilian or troop deaths, the support diminishes to less than half. When you propose an alternative, the figures begin to shift. More recent polls show that a majority of the American people, as well as a vast majority of people around the world, supports an international tribunal to try this crime against humanity.

In my experience in Washington, DC, on the streets and talking to people, the majority of people question this war as a proper response once discussion begins. They question the official version of what happened on September 11 and who is responsible. And when presented with these calls for an endless war and the economic recession that they know will accompany it, they do not and will not support it. A huge initial response against the policy was visible across the whole country. More people turned out to organize a response than normally attend political actions. Hundreds of thousands if not millions of people made their dissent visible in the first few weeks following the events and more national and local actions continue to be planned. Hardly a day passes without a forum or meeting concerning dissent to the military response. Voices across the country are rising in opposition.

As time passes, support for the war and its horrible new extensions will wane. International aid agencies have already identified the hypocrisy and futility of the limited food drops carried out by the US forces, including the problem of land mines in the drop zones, inedible foodstuffs, and a lack of rational distribution, which the aid agencies are now blocked from doing. They are predicting a minimum of a million deaths from starvation within a month from now due to disruption of their supply lines, and a doubling in the number of displaced persons in a country already suffering a drought. Yet, the administration clearly plans to extend the war and its domestic consequences with or without consent of the governed.

Given the instability they have already created and the breadth of their projected targets, the war does threaten to become "endless" because it will grow into the Third World War, a war against the poor and disenfranchised of the earth and any pocket of resistance to the corporate globalization they have planned. Our work must be to put a halt to it before it spreads further.

Self-Education

The mainstream sources of information and education separate us from both history and the rest of the world. Few Americans have an international context to draw on, a basic geography, or a comprehension of the global politics that the US government and global corporations have been involved in. Without such basic education and sense of history, there is no way to comprehend what is actually happening, or what these changes and interventions will mean.

Initially focused on Osama bin Laden and others targeted as responsible for the crimes of September 11, many have initially supported military actions and interventions in Afghanistan as a way to do "justice" for the mass murders. Despite repeated official

statements about a "protracted 10 year war", the public seems to have put their hopes into a quick-fix bombing campaign against bin Laden and the al-Quaeda in Afghanistan. When the bombing produced little result beyond killing civilians, destabilizing the international situation, and threatening to cause over 1 million deaths from starvation due to interference with international relief efforts, some began to question its efficacy. They were told that we had to "smoke them out" first, then that bin Laden was not important, just one man among many we were fighting, and finally a recent admission from Donald Rumsfeld that "we don't know where bin Laden is now".

Following the US bombing of a clearly marked International Red Cross compound, meetings were held in Geneva about the incident, claimed to be accidental or misinformed targeting. "Errant bombs" were credited with all such strikes, as well as any civilian deaths. After being given all the coordinates for Red Cross relief stations in Afghanistan, and after promising never to bomb such targets again, the US bombed the same compound for a second time. This time, they said that it was an error in target information made by the satellite communications, and that one of those misdirected bombs had also gone astray due to a mechanical failure in the bomber targeting device, hitting a village nearby and causing more civilian casualties. The Red Cross was outraged, demanding another meeting. In a final statement, the US admitted to targeting the buildings intentionally, since the Taliban were "stealing food and supplies" there.

Secrecy and a "bodyguard of lies" have already been posed and defended by authorities concerning their statements and our ability to know about this protracted warfare. It will be covert, most of all from us. Past covert operations have been large factors in our current situation globally, as well as on September 11. Without a clear history and knowledge of international politics, relations and resources, we can never understand how we got here or where we are being asked to go. Alliances and enemies have been reduced to a formula world wide -- you are either "for us or against us," as the president remarked.

We must now either make sense of history and the world we live in and with, or give that function over to a government, a military and a corporate conglomeration that are more than willing to hand us their simplistic version of "good" against "evil". In their scenario, history began yesterday, and the current crisis sprang unannounced and unexpected into being without any rational or causal source. We are being attacked, we are told, because people hate our "American way of life", our diversity, our plurality, our freedoms, and our democracy. Yet these very basic values are the same ones this "war against terrorism" threatens and renounces both here at home and abroad, once it is seen clearly.

Without such clear analysis or self-education, we will fail to confront and address the alternate political agenda and definitions of reality that are being foisted on a frightened and a-historical American people. We will also fall prey to confusions and misunderstanding, empty sloganeering, and an approach that alienates rather than educates and empowers the public. Information is the lifeblood of real democracy, and when the system will not provide it, we must. It is our only hope of reversing the spin and properly defining the situation.

2. The Challenges

Fear

"All we have to fear is fear itself."
--President Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Fear is a powerful motivator of human action and behavior. If allowed to take control, fear can either paralyze or reverse the natural instincts of social communication and love. Fear is love's oldest enemy. We have to find ways to help people overcome fear and panic in this situation, to calm and to give people strength, courage and a sense of proportion about who is really under attack, and by whom. Otherwise, our responses will be reactive, and easily controlled by external forces. Under the guise of protecting us, fear often puts us in the way of other, even greater harm. One way to help people move past fear is to give them accurate information, and a sense of connection and support with other people.

As the apparent attacks continue, people's confusion and panic rises, as does their sense of impotence. It is easy to manipulate fear as well, to get people to surrender liberties and resources in order to feel protected. But has the vast arsenal of weapons built over these last decades really protected us? Can it? How is it possible that the multi-billion dollar Pentagon/CIA Security State could have been so unprepared for the events of September 11? Will pumping the last of our social security funds and social services into that coffer really improve our chances of survival or create a world of true security and peace? Will a fortress state with less democracy and liberty actually provide safety?

Rage

In their fear and sense of impotence, people turn to rage. "We have to do something," they say, in defense of the military bombing and retaliation. They seek the immediate satisfaction of knowing someone has been killed in reply. But grief frozen in rage never heals, and the desired catharsis of revenge never relieves the deeper pain. All of us lost someone or something on September 11, but we must not also lose our sense of balance or our basic values.

Indeed, we do have to do "something". But the something is so much broader and more extensive than this bombing could possibly address, that this response actually interferes with what must be done. What follows are some of the parameters of what that "something" really is, and how to carry out the organizing work necessary to shift the consciousness of the American people enough to change directions and realize the real goals of peace and justice.

Response

All of this presents a special challenge for activists and citizens who, for a wide range of reasons, oppose the current policy and the longer-term agenda of a worldwide war, a recession and even further cuts in social services to fund it. The organizing methods of the

past, and even the recent present, were already only minimally effective; and they are now counter-productive in most cases. Confrontational demonstrations, harsh messages of demand or blame, indifference to grief and shock, meeting rage with anger, and failing to propose reasonable alternatives in our work and message will almost surely alienate the broader public and defeat any hope of effective change. Visibility is important, so that people do not feel alone in their questions or criticism. But the message given must be able to reverse the onslaught of pro-war propaganda, as well as the sense of fear and frustration that garner support for it. More important is beginning an informed and democratic discussion at very local levels, proposing alternatives, and empowering people with the tools and the courage to own and change these policies being carried out in their name.

The slogans, the marches, and the ideological party building of the past cannot link us to or include the broadest range of people directly affected by this war. Our message has to be one of shared basic values about cycles of violence, rule of law, civil liberties, tolerance, international diplomacy, and the role of justice in creating peace. This is not the time to win an argument; it is time to start an informed debate. We need to be able to speak to and unite the largest number of people possible, but not in order to build some new organization or to march in great numbers in the streets. We need to decentralize our method of organizing to the most local level and create democratic control of our country, our military, our foreign policy and our lives. We will live with all the consequences of this war, as will people all around the world, so we must own the decision making process about it.

All of this also requires a different organizing model, a different kind of response. To begin, we must crack the matrix of new assumptions being put forward by the Bush administration and most of the media about the situation and the military response. We have to challenge the definitions being created by authorities for what justice is, what war and terrorism are, and what crimes against humanity mean. We have to assert the most basic and common sense values that we share as a society, even if they are more ideals than reality. Cynicism is cheap, and it ends in the same place as naivete, inaction. We have to change consciousness and awaken conscience, not merely attempt to get people to join with our own view of reality. What follows are some of the keys to that challenge, as well as the alternatives, democratic empowerment and tools that give us any hope of reversing this crisis to build a world of justice and peace.

3. The Issues

Deconstruction

"Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the peacemakers for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country."

--Hermann Goering, Reichmarshall in Nazi Germany

Political power rests in the ability to define a situation. Currently the Pentagon and the White House are creating the definitions of "war", "terrorists", "evil", "justice", "American interests", "security", "rule of law", "peace", "victims", "democracy" and much more. Our power lies in the ability to deconstruct their definitions and to return these concepts to their

real meanings. We must rescue them from the abstract, and provide the concrete political and historical framework in which they exist. That is our primary task, because breaking the matrix of assumptions is the only way to raise consciousness and reverse support for this war in the long run.

Perhaps the most important one is "terrorists" since so many groups and nation states qualify under that rubric. From another point of view, the United States could be said to be "harboring a terrorist" from justice in the person of Henry Kissinger, now formally charged in the US courts with political crimes in Chile. Kissinger has used the US government and his own private security to elude efforts by foreign courts to bring him to trial. Terrorism is a loaded word, which generally applies to individuals or small groups, but which has been used to define not only state-sponsored acts, but mass violence by a nation state. The Rand Corporation made a formal decision not to use the term in their publications because "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter".

Deconstructed in this instance, terrorists can be said to be a small faction of a larger society or nation that has sanction, support and sanctuary to conduct covert violent acts against a much more powerful group or country. Reacting violently to them only gives them more credibility and converts. The source of their support is a history of injustice or abuse, and a sense of despair and hopelessness of changing it. The route to disarming them is not to replicate their acts but to restore justice and through it hope, thus undermining their support.

It is important for us not to surrender the terms they have perverted. We must get them back to their clear and traditional meanings or support better definitions. One example is the term "justice", which has been altered to mean "frontier justice" instead, or merely execution and death. Military retaliation is now termed "bringing justice to them". We know better what real justice and rule of law mean, and we must assert that against this travesty. And the broader meaning of social and economic justice is the basis for any lasting social or economic peace. It is our last best hope in these times. We must not abandon calling for or asserting its real meaning.

In the same way, we should not abandon the symbols of democracy to their cause. One of these is the American flag. Though often used in times of war, Old Glory does not represent warfare or the ills of the society, but rather its vision and hopes. In wartime, some claim that any criticism of the government or its policies cannot be tolerated. In the current situation, those calling for alternatives have been called "blame America firsters" in the press. One correspondent wrote to me that if I hated America so much I should leave and find another country. My reply was that I don't hate America, but I am critical of some things done by the government, often without knowledge or consent of the public, and that I have a right and a duty to make those criticisms in a democracy. I suggested that if he was uncomfortable with democracy and our freedom of speech, perhaps he should look for some more repressive country to live in. I find the term anti-American a curious oxymoron, and could only use it to define those people who would accuse others of it. Ours is as much the flag of those who call for peace as it is of those who call for war. We need to reclaim it and its better message, not shun it.

Inclusiveness

At local and national organizing meetings I have attended, a major topic of discussion has been "principles of unity". I knew it would be a politically loaded discussion and that it had great potential to become principles of dis-unity.

I tried to stress one point, that the principles that might unify those of us in that room were meaningless, since we alone would not change the policy or stop the war. Instead, any principles of unity have to be based on unifying all of those not in the room already. To do this, we have to speak to existing values and beliefs, the positive underpinnings of this culture and society, even if they are illusions in the strict sense. I opposed using phrases beginning with "we" because that is not an inclusive model. It immediately creates a wall between "we" and others who are not "we". A few of us cannot claim to be "we the people". Despite our own wish for security or strength in numbers, the creation of a set of beliefs/demands that "we" support is the same as a religion with tenets of faith that are inflexible.

To be inclusive, positive values must be stated in a pro-active way. Active and positive verbs, like "support", "defend", "protect" should begin statements of what we wish for, and values can be stated for themselves. This makes our message inclusive, or at least potentially so. The more basic the statement made, the broader the response will be. To be inclusive, we have to speak to ordinary people and their values. And we have to have an organizing model that lets them participate at many different levels and in many different kinds of activities from education to outreach, gatherings and campaigns. If there had been but one form of opposition to the war in Vietnam it would have been crushed.

Many activists, members of a broad stripe of progressive formations and socialist parties themselves, want to approach this protest in the same manner as had been used before the crisis, with the same methods and goals. Create political orthodoxy in all statements, unite under a single umbrella group, build one organization/movement to oppose the war, march and be visible as your main activity, focus on membership in this group, meet and vote on issues with a controlling quorum being those present at the meetings. Their attempts to force this model and process have already lost people who were newly activated, and decimated the broad base of activists willing to be involved. They continue to meet, reduced in number; familiar faces from a few primary organizations. The energy of the original efforts has dissipated. New membership is waning.

The broad base of motivated people necessary to actually make democratic decisions about the war is not and never has been engaged by these groups or their methods. The methods are, in the new paradigm, counter-productive to that end. We must motivate people who do not consider themselves "political" or "activist" at all, yet who need to be empowered to own this decision. The broad base of people will never join an organization, promote a party, adopt a firm set of beliefs, or march in the streets and chant. Yet, they are part of social groupings at the local level. To include them, we must respect their beliefs and reactions, and respect their right to decide based on good information, presentation of alternatives, and discussion.

"Spray paint" organizing, which requires everyone to be the same color (ideology) as we are,

is a dead end. The traditional forums, marches and even message will not work in the new matrix of assumptions. We need to be able to cut across not only lines of color but across economic lines in order to have a chance of effecting the sorts of changes that could end this war and build a new world. We have to be as inclusive as possible in that effort. And we have to be able to accommodate a range of opinions. The press and the system have already absorbed and discredited our traditional methods. We have to find another way.

Values

What are the underlying values that can be invoked in order to shift the perspective the media and government officials are promoting so hard? We need keys to open the door to conscious and informed decision-making, but first we need to restore acceptance or adherence to time-honored values. We need to raise questions that will challenge the sets of assumptions and redefinitions being handed to us. What follow are just a few basic concepts:

- **Violence begets only violence.** Breaking the cycle of violence is only possible when one side refuses to retaliate in kind. Violence only replicates the original crime, killing more innocent people. Violence carries its own consequences for both sides in a war, and plants seeds for more violence in the future. War and violence represent the breakdown and failure of communication, diplomacy and reason. War breaks from the tradition of international relations and common decision-making promoted by the United Nations and the United States to countries around the world. Just recently, the United States again admonished Israel to refuse to respond in kind to a Palestinian act of violence. Until the cycle of violence is broken, it continues without respite.
- **The rule of law, not force, has been the cornerstone of both domestic tranquility and international peace.** War puts the aggrieved in the position of being accuser, investigator, prosecutor, judge, jury and executioner, without benefit of a full or public hearing of the facts or a tribunal to reach proper judgment and sentence. The inexcusable crime against humanity that occurred on September 11 is already viewed by almost every nation in the world as such. Laws against such crimes have been ratified by almost every nation on earth. Mechanisms exist to carry out justice without vengeance or favor. An *ad-hoc* tribunal, such as the one carried out for Nazi war criminals at Nuremberg, is the common and appropriate method to stay the hand of vengeance after a great wrong has been done, and to rise above such wrongs being repeated. A recent poll showed that 55% of the American public and 85% of the world public favor such a response over military retaliation and war. That is a clear majority of the world's people, and it is common sense. Replicating the crime is inexcusable.
- **President Bush's call for "Wanted dead or alive" is not justice.** It is the frontier justice of the lynch posse and the bounty hunter, who are appointed as executioners before the trial. The proposed US military tribunals, suggested for any captured suspects, are similarly inappropriate forums to find justice. We have leaped from a suspect to an execution. When "circumstantial" evidence is deemed "sufficient", that is a travesty on justice. Bush avers he will "bring them to justice, or bring justice to them". Again, this skips over the most important aspect of what constitutes real justice in any situation -- charges, evidence, a fair hearing and a conviction. Instead, this is scapegoat justice, the justice of the mob. It is beneath us.

- **Our civil rights, democratic traditions and civil liberties are more precious than our immediate sense of security.** We need to protect and defend them against the current erosions being implemented by the Justice Department and Congress. Very basic principles of conduct of Congress and legislative procedures, habeas corpus rights against arbitrary and indefinite detention, rights to privacy, rights to free speech and an unfettered press and media, rights to democratic local decision-making, rights implied by the separation of police and military functions, rights to free flow of information necessary for oversight and decisions, rights against excessive secrecy, and many more are under attack in the name of security. This trend is more recently reflected in the establishment of military tribunals. Attorney General Ashcroft has also called for a renewal of spying on political and religious groups, reviving the abuses of COINTELPRO, the FBI program aimed at the civil rights and anti-war movements of the last four decades.
- **Tolerance of those we disagree with, as well as ethnic groups and racial groups we have made into "enemies" abroad, is an essential part of our social contract.** Yet, increased racial and religious attacks, intimidation, a chilling of free expression, and calls for mass deportation or incarceration, reminiscent of the terrible excesses of World War II against Japanese Americans, are spreading. "You are either with us or against us" is the message from the White House. Thus, anyone calling for an end to the war or the attacks on basic rights is seen as aiding the "terrorists", and can be treated as one of them. This sharp polarization, and the fears and hatreds it creates, is antithetical to basic American values of tolerance and even support for other people in a civil society.
- **Only social and economic justice will lead to peace.** Without justice there is no peace. Restoring social justice restores hope and ends support for violence. This is true from the community level to the international level. Justice is not revenge or retaliation by the aggrieved; we live by rule of law instead. Global justice will lead to real security and global peace. War and violence lead to more of the same, wasting our moral authority as the victim, replicating the crime of innocent deaths, increasing the credibility and support for the smaller violent faction, and planting the seeds of resentment and immediate response, as well as future violence. The only way out of this endless cycle, that has marked much of human history, is to break it and refrain from vengeance and retaliation. Especially in the modern world of high-tech weapons of mass destruction, and very high percentages of non-combatant deaths resulting from the scope of modern conventional weapons, war is never an appropriate response or solution to national conflicts. We have the strength and resources to live through this tragic crime and to stand above it by calling on the rest of the world for justice, both for our people and for theirs.

We need to promote positive statements of these and other basic values. A more recent addition will be saving the lives of innocent displaced Afghans who are without food with the onset of winter in mid-November. Humanitarian aid agencies, unable to reach them because of the bombing campaign, estimate a minimum level of one million deaths from starvation. The United Nations Security Council is considering a call for a cessation of bombing because of that prospect. Our message must unite us with the largest possible range

of people who are not yet standing with us, but who have many questions about this policy now and in the future.

Alternatives

"The paradigm of the last 500 years has been money values and its accumulation, violence as a means of resolving disputes, and 'God is on our side', the winning paradigm for the next 500 years will be human values and protection of the planet, nonviolence, and 'God doesn't take sides.'"

--Kevin Danaher, co-founder of Global Exchange

During a crisis, failing to provide alternatives, or providing only one, is manipulative and cynical. In their pain, people seek some sort of response to renew their sense of security. The Bush administration has only offered one response -- military aggression and retaliation -- and many have accepted it for lack of any other. It is not enough to say, "Stop the bombing" or "Peace not war," with no rational alternative presented. In their fear and frustration, people will insist we must "do something". To offer no alternative, but only criticisms and demands effectively says, "You had it coming, so sit there and take it". Even though America's policies and actions abroad clearly played a role in these events -- including funding, training and arming what were then called "freedom fighters" against the Soviet Union, and are now called "terrorists" against the United States -- the American victims of this tragedy are hardly to blame for policies carried out primarily in secret and without popular consent.

There are possible and positive alternatives that rely on the same international laws and principles that even the current government has been invoking up to the present day. Diplomatic negotiations, and the use of international organizations and other countries to assist those, were not exhausted or even attempted prior to bombing. Under the rubric of "self-defense" the US has claimed not only the right to bomb Afghanistan weeks after the actual event, but also other nations according to a recent communication with the UN Security Council. Article 51 of the UN Charter, which allows a sovereign nation to act in self defense *in extremis*, was invoked by officials here, but that same article limits the response to the time necessary for the Security Council to hold an emergency meeting and establish other responses. The United States has been preventing this from happening.

The UN charter, and the moral principles of a "just war", requires an exhaustion of every possible alternative to military attacks and war. Offers made by the Taliban prior to and during the bombings have been ignored, and the bombing has escalated each time. Our "no negotiation" stance violates the spirit of international law and treaties. A continuation of the bombing now threatens a "minimum of a million deaths" according to international humanitarian aid organizations who are unable to get food supplies through to a displaced population that has doubled to 7 million since the war was threatened in early October. Winter and all its hardships will set in during November, on a population already plagued by a severe drought and a lack of civil infrastructure necessary for survival.

International laws signed by almost all countries around the world condemn the mass murder of September 11 as a crime against humanity. Mechanisms exist to establish an internationally representative *ad hoc* tribunal, turn the suspects over for interrogation and charges, and try them in a fair and open hearing that can lead to convictions of those guilty. Taking this route, which is supported by the vast majority of the world's people right now, would have increased the stature of the US around the globe, and disarmed the terrorists. At

least one former chief prosecutor at Nuremberg is calling for just such a tribunal. The recent Executive Order by President Bush authorizing the use of military tribunals to convict captured suspects is both unconstitutional and judicially biased. The proper jurisdiction is an international tribunal using international laws prohibiting crimes against humanity. Rule of law is the only rational way to resolve disputes between nations, groups and communities. Rule of force only replicates crimes, wreaks havoc, and encourages more violence in response.

When alternatives are presented, they will often be met with cynicism, as if any possible flaw makes the military option inevitable. However, an honest assessment of that option will find it failing in result and disastrous in consequence as well. It is no less imperfect, and its consequences are far worse; but for some it is a show of strength and therefore gratifying and reassuring. Its consequences are already coming to bear in the destabilization of the whole region, the mounting civilian casualties and pending starvation, and the futility of their approach in terms of its stated goals. But rational alternatives must be promoted and defended, and cynicism is both cheap and dangerous right now. Those committed to violence, as the "only" solution, must be countered with appeals to higher values that the world of nations has adopted and the US has at least abstractly promoted.

Many will even pose anything but a military response as "doing nothing". But by using military force instead of international law and pressure, the US has abandoned the moral authority it had on September 11 around the whole world. In the long run, the alternative must be to create real democracy here regarding domestic and foreign policies, and to insure global justice so that all of us can live in peace. We have the resources, wealth and technology to build a better world, a sane world, and a world that will make violence of any kind counter-intuitive and counter-productive. That would be "doing something."

Re-humanization

"Those people" is a phrase in the air nowadays, referring at different moments to "terrorists", Afghani people, Muslims, followers of the Islamic faith, and East Asian people in general. Once an "enemy" is named, the dehumanization begins, the xenophobia, the racist commentary. Separating out human experience is the first and most necessary step to rationalize or justify violence, murder or even suicide. Once the "other" is created in our imagination, they can be stripped of all the attributes that we accord ourselves in describing our worth, dignity and humanity.

We are told that the enemy is purely evil, while we are purely good and benign. We are told they comprehend no language but violence, and thus cannot be reasoned or negotiated with. We are told that they do not value human life in the same way we do. We are told that their religious beliefs cause them to be filled with intolerance, hate and violence toward all those outside their faith. We are told that their religion makes them into unreasoning fanatics, willing to accept any cost to carry out their hate-filled mission against us. We are told they hate us not for what we do, but for what we are, something we cannot change. We are told that they are not like us, that we cannot understand or communicate with them. We are told to fear them.

While people capable of mass murder of innocents seem different or alien to us at first, we

must remember that under certain conditions and demands, with certain life experiences, almost any of us might take part in activities that have the same effect. Vietnam veterans had problems reconciling what they were ordered to do or saw done to civilians in that war with what they believed and were taught to live by. Loss, grief, oppression, abandonment, betrayal and other wounds can fester into hatred. Once a group is deemed an "enemy" then killing can be justified, even of innocents. The "other" can be blamed for any such killings on our part because of their original crimes or offenses. These civilian deaths are called "collateral damage" in a military context, even though they approach 85-95% of all casualties in modern warfare.

It is an urgent task for us to refuse to fall into this dehumanization. Many now distinguish a "good Islamic" from a "fanatic Islamic". And, of course, no religion can be judged solely on its most fundamentalist adherents. But even the Taliban, though misguided and oppressive, are still human beings, as are those who committed the mass murders on September 11. This does not excuse their excesses, but it may help explain them.

We need to introduce ourselves to cultures and peoples around the world that we have long ignored or worse yet, hated without knowing. We need to re-humanize them and ourselves. We need to seek tolerance, and require it as well. We do not have to turn a blind eye to injustice or oppression in other countries because it is their "culture", but we have to keep an eye open to our own culture's excesses as well. We can only teach what is positive by example, as others will teach us. We can encourage change and struggles for justice without arrogance or the use of force against other countries. We must humble ourselves enough to listen, and extend ourselves enough to learn about others in this vast and diverse world. We must reconnect with the universal humanity that binds us all.

This can begin with contacts in and work with the Islamic communities here in America, and with study and travel abroad to learn about the rest of the world. Unearthing our own hidden history of covert military operations and overt economic dominance abroad is essential to a balanced perspective as well. The primary lesson to be learned will be how much suffering goes on beyond our privileged lifestyles. The deeper one will be learning how the realities of economic suffering and privilege connect, and create each other. In the end, the only way to finally overcome an enemy is to make them your friend.

RePentagon

"When they said, 'Repent! Repent! Repent!' I wondered what they meant."

--Leonard Cohen, *"The Future"*

Militarism is a key to understanding much of the current situation, and the past mistakes that brought us to this point. It is equally as important as racism and poverty in what creates oppression here and abroad. An honest assessment of priorities in production and tax expenditures since WWII shows that we live in a permanent war economy, dependent on weapons sales abroad and ongoing wars. This has militarized the society we live in, giving primacy to military values and ethics, which they do not deserve. The Pentagon and military attitudes have dominated social functions, schools, universities, research priorities and foreign policies. Social services have been continually sacrificed to Pentagon spending, at a cost of \$13 trillion since the end of the last world war.

At the end of WWII, Japan and Germany were de-militarized under terms of surrender, while the US and USSR entered into a protracted arms race and Cold War. It gutted the social production infrastructure in both societies, and skewered expenditures away from human and global needs. Japan and Germany built their industrial base and became competitors with the much larger and more prosperous United States. All they lacked was oil, and the US continues to control their access to it.

The corporations that produce armament and weapons, that make profits from any war, have created a global market in the southern hemisphere for their wares, as well as the ensuing wars and genocide that imbalances in weapons stockpiles generate. One Boeing lobbyist recently threatened Congress members that any refusal to approve military expenditures now would lead to their defeat in the next election. The armament makers and the Pentagon planners are dipping into an open cookie jar of federal funds now, the locked boxes of Social Security and domestic needs have been raided once more. The projected ten-year war will cost hundreds of billions of dollars to conduct, and the recession that is now global will deepen.

A new generation will be propagandized, recruited or drafted, and militarized. Pentagon officials and certain Congress members are calling for an end to the separation of military and police functions, a basic element in any real democracy. Citizens exercising democratic dissent to the war are being isolated and charged with a lack of patriotic loyalty. Blind obedience is seen once again as some sort of virtue. Dissent is seen as anti-American. The Attorney General accuses Congress members who question these trends as giving aid and comfort to the enemy. Congress lines up to approve whatever the war planners ask.

Militarism blinds us to our own history, our own responsibility as a member of the world of nations and peoples. Pretending to protect us, it endangers us instead. War, never a real answer to anything, is promoted as the only possible response. Sacrifice and obedience are called for as the last resources of the planet are both seized and squandered. More enemies are created, more arms are demanded to conquer them. Ecological destruction escalates. In the 21st century, the age of mass destruction and mass communication, war should be unthinkable.

Our weapons of global destruction, our indifference towards the accumulation of wealth, our equation of national service with military duties, our fortress mentality that pits us against each other and the whole world, our standing armies that do not stand, our emerging technology of world domination from space, our testing and use of more horrific weapons in new battlefields, our empty revenge of killing more innocent victims, our reduction of civil order and basic liberties in the name of security, and the risk of yet another generation to the equal horrors of death or survival in combat -- all of these must finally be seen as unacceptable. We have seen where the mire and blood and muck of war lead for 20 centuries of human history, as our ability to kill each other in larger numbers and more horrible ways has only grown. There is only one way out, we must disarm and stop, refusing to take part in war any more.

We must finally turn and face our own part in the long and awful history of war in this world: our role in the use of nuclear weapons and their proliferation, our role in covert and overt wars for political purposes that have cost millions of lives, our still unacknowledged

legacy of ecocide, ethnocide and genocide in South East Asia, the horror of our military interventions in so many countries since, our part in arming the people of the world against each other and ultimately against us, our part in the new and looming holocaust that beckons now from what our military interventions are causing and creating, our consistent and isolated resistance to almost every international treaty and convention that aims to limit war and the production of weapons of death, and our continuing refusal to use our vast resources and technology to create a world of justice and peace, not privilege and war. These must be acknowledged.

The American people have had much of this history hidden from them, but not all of it. The American people have certainly not been given an opportunity for informed consent or wise refusal in a world of national security secrecy and denial. But, those who wished to know our hidden history could unearth it. Until we face what has been done in our name, and how the world has seen us, we cannot repent, we cannot change, and we cannot end militarism and embrace the world that can arise without it.

Troops

"If you want to have a war, don't ask the infantry, and don't ask the dead."
--Ernest Hemingway

Thousands of enlisted members are being called up in reserve units or expecting to be. One million were authorized for mobilization, and orders cut for 35,000 already. Thousands of them are also filing for discharge as objectors to this war. The enlisted members during Vietnam, even more so than the draftees, resisted the war on the field, and eventually cost the military its ability to function effectively. Rights of conscience must be protected, especially since many Muslims are in the armed forces. Recruits, lured in with false promises of college education and job training, are now being sent into war against an undefined enemy in scores of potential locations across the globe. These enlistees and their families have questions about this war, and they will have to make their decisions about fighting it now.

During the Gulf War the military issued mobilization regulations that did not permit filing many discharge claims, and illegally denied the rights of conscientious objectors to have their claims heard before being shipped overseas. There were more objector discharge applications made then than at the height of opposition to the Vietnam War, especially from the inactive reserve units then called up. Most of the claimants were African American or Muslim. Makeshift prisons had to be created in Saudi Arabia to deal with the high levels of refusal, and returning troops said as many as 3,600 GI's were locked up in them. Other troops complained of being beaten, shackled and thrown onto transport planes to the Gulf when they filed discharge claims that were ignored, and then resisted being sent to war.

Vietnam should have taught us that the voices of military service members and veterans are at the heart of a democratic response to war, and should be listened to, supported and made visible. Providing counseling, support and connection for these people is essential work right now. Currently their claims are legal under the regulations and must be heard before they are sent to war. We need to defend their basic right to religious belief, conscience and objection to war.

4. A Different Organizing Model

Voices of reason

There are respected, credible voices of reason speaking out against this war. We must support them and make sure they are heard over and over. To name just a few:

- Cong. Barbara Lee (D-CA), the only member of the House to vote against the war powers act.
- Cong. Tom McDermott, who voted against the counter-terrorism legislation.
- Cong. Cynthia McKinney (D-GA), who spoke out from the first for rule of law, and has been a critical voice in relation to the current crisis of starvation looming because of continued bombing in Afghanistan.
- Benjamin Ferencz, a former chief prosecutor at Nuremberg, who is calling for an international tribunal.
- Francis Boyle, a distinguished law professor who is speaking out in defense of the Constitution, civil and international rule of law.
- Barbara Kingsolver, noted author, who has been deconstructing the mythology of the war.
- Alice Walker, a novelist who has called on our reserves of love.

Their credibility is as important right now as their message. Many church leaders are speaking from reason, and a tradition of their humanitarian values against the war. All of these people need to be supported for their courage and brought before broader audiences to hear them. Videotapes, Internet sites, radio appearances, and public forums all present an opportunity to make them heard. We can always quote them when we speak privately or publicly as well, and cite them when we call into talk shows.

Confrontation

In a time of fear and grief, direct confrontation and blame are counter-productive and insensitive responses. We need to be clear and firm, but inclusive and open to others reacting from their pain. At a local event, I intentionally tried to organize a stationary space, which would include families with children and others not comfortable with taking to the streets, a response that seems to be the only one some are capable of imagining. I suggested calling it a community walk, not a march. I suggested that we sing, not chant. At an earlier procession, we were silent, carrying candles and handing out a small flyer. It worked well and minimized defensive counter-responses. We need to calm people down in the way we convey our messages. We do not need to be at war with those supporting one.

Creativity

When the drums of war are being beaten, we need to learn to play a flute if we want to be heard.

On September 30, some 3,000 people walked through DC communities of color, in a very diverse and colorful action, with 100 puppets, artistic banners, and lots of music and singing. In addition, a separate group ran alongside from door to door talking to and leafleting people who were viewing it. And many of them joined in. It was not strident, demanding, or rhetorical. We opened a space for different types of responses and a calm and peaceful atmosphere. The police called in saying they had nothing to do, we had already provided peacekeepers on bike patrol along the route for any emergency. Also, many stayed at a local park where there was music, dance, and artistic visions for a different future, community group tables, and activities for children, grief counselors and spiritual space, including a meditation maze. Many creative ideas and responses were encouraged. Many more are possible. Our responses should be cultural as well as political.

Non-violence

"Love is the only engine of survival."
--Leonard Cohen, *"The Future"*

Gandhi said he knew a way out of hell, the hell of human history and warfare. His solution was non-violence as a discipline, known as satyagraha or "truth force". This enables both parties in a dispute to rise above differences and resentments, and allows mutual survival and moral victories. It takes a great deal of courage to use this discipline, especially in the face of violence. But non-violence has a history of transforming the human and social experience when it is invoked, especially by large groups of people as part of social justice movements. While this can end the long nightmare of human suffering, it will not necessarily protect social or economic privilege, which is the deeper source of all other violence. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. adopted this method with great success in the civil rights movement here, exposing the moral hypocrisy of his racist opponents, but also allowing them to change. Others have studied and used these principles and tactics in modern political movements and campaigns for human rights. Ahimsa is another such principle, meaning harmlessness, requiring a humility and concern in all our relationships with other human beings.

We cannot ask peace of nations without practicing and establishing peacefulness ourselves. Even if we are not pacifists on a global scale, this principle must guide modern movements for democratic social change. This method asserts the possibility to reach and change human consciousness and moral behavior without force or coercion. A cynicism about that ability leads to the use of violence; it is a mark of despair. Anyone advocating the use of weapons in the 21st century lacks imagination. This system won the gun game a century ago, with the development of rapid-fire technology. We have to discover how to use our heads and hearts to win instead. Unless we imagine and live a different world, we will continue to be trapped in the old one.

5. A Democratic Solution

"From the homicidal bitchin' that goes down in every kitchen,
to determine will eat and who will serve . . .
Democracy is coming, to the USA."

--*Leonard Cohen, "Democracy"*

Civil liberties

"Those who would trade their liberty for security deserve neither."

--*Benjamin Franklin*

The protection and expansion of existing civil liberties and democratic rights for all the people of the United States is best done by exercising those rights in times of crisis and discord. We must never let fear or crisis convince us to abandon the principles of democracy. Crisis, instead, should inspire vision of what real democracy should look like. The Bill of Rights is the most central aspect of the Constitution; the rest could be changed with far less effect. Jefferson would not accept the first draft of the Constitution because it did not include the Bill of Rights; so George Washington drew one up for approval. We have expanded those initial rights since.

The current emergency and war are being used as a rationale to change many legal protections and to expand the powers of elected and appointed officials. Recently passed legislation goes far beyond what has been on the books to date in giving powers to the police over individual privacy and the rights of habeas corpus. The rush and manipulation of Congress to pass the Patriot Act has been termed "the least democratic thing ever done in the House". Indefinite detentions are on the rise, and the government will not release the names of unknown numbers of individuals already being held. Senator Warner is openly challenging the principle of separation of police and military functions in society, known as *posse committatus*. Chilling actions have been taken against the first amendment rights of dissenters, without government challenges.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. identified three pillars of injustice that are the foundation of this society -- poverty, racism and militarism. Militarism is the least understood and the least addressed. It erodes civil authority and civil liberty in favor of military strength and posture. Martial law and open military rule have been invoked locally in the past, and suggested nationally in times of crisis such as these. No democracy can function under military dominance. Congress and the courts have long been too deferential to the expanding military-industrial-intelligence complex that has grown since WWII, despite President Eisenhower's warnings. Civilian oversight and separation of powers is crucial. Although the line has already been eroded between the police and the military, it cannot be made official and legal without undermining the very freedoms that the military claims to protect.

Refusing to surrender civil rights is the first and most basic step to building a complete democracy, because they protect the possibility to dissent and build alternatives to the current system. Elements of our most democratic institutions have already suffered, including travel, communications and mail. No real security is gained in a world without basic rights. We must not live on fear and distrust; we must open our society to its potential

for community and growth towards our real values. We must use the current window of opportunity to make the most use of our rights when they are under attack. We are in danger of losing them if we fail to act.

Secrecy

"History, to be successful, must be conducted in absolute secrecy."

--Henry Kissinger, *White House Years*

In the period following the Vietnam War, the culture of government secrecy increased exponentially. The public was perceived as an "enemy" who could not be trusted with real information about what the government was doing in their name. Oliver North admitted to Congress that while Nicaraguans, other Central Americans, and even the Soviet Union were all aware of the secret Contra war he was funding and conducting, the American people intentionally were not allowed to be. Former Secretary of State Alexander Haig condemned the presence of the press at the front lines of war, claiming that during the Vietnam War it had eroded both support for the war at home, and troop "morale". During the invasion of Panama and the first incidents in the Persian Gulf, the US military specifically excluded the press, sometimes at gunpoint. This trend continued in the Gulf War, with pre-selected "press pools" being given access to official briefings, but limited access to the battlefield areas. That war was viewed only at a distance, usually from the balcony of some hotel in Baghdad that showed a view of distant bombing in the background. The current war is viewed, if at all, as vague light images and bombs going off on invisible targets. Computer graphic simulations could just as well have been used to portray it.

Haig claimed the need for secrecy lay in the fact that if you asked the American people about participating in a war, a majority would refuse. This came to be known as the "Vietnam syndrome" and the military and the press worked mightily to overcome it with the "victory" of Desert Shield. Haig went further, saying that you could not base foreign policy on "the lowest common denominator of public opinion". Their solution clearly was to hide foreign policy operations from us instead, and to keep us from making informed decisions.

In the current war we are being told openly that secrecy will rule, including open lying to the American people if necessary. This marks an end to the democratic process. The standards for release of information under the Freedom of Information Act have now changed, with Attorney General Ashcroft vowing to put the weight of the Justice Department against any legal suit for release of secret files that an agency does not wish to release. President Bush has given himself and future presidents control over release of White House records from previous administrations. Even the evidence of who is alleged to have committed these crimes on September 11 is being held in secret from the US public, though foreign leaders have been allowed to see it instead to garner their support.

The commonwealth of the electronic media is dominated entirely by a few corporate entities that tightly control the range of debate and the content of what is revealed or discussed. They also clearly carry propaganda messages on behalf of the government and the corporate elites. Only a few independent broadcasters have been refusing to wear flag pins on their lapels, for instance. The corporate-owned press has not been much better in giving a range of information, although alternative views are being heard from time to time. This censorship is

not the result of some "free market of ideas" in which dissenting views are merely "less popular", and therefore ignored. The press has a responsibility to investigate and present the fullest possible truth available about any situation, if they are to serve an authentic democratic process.

Thomas Jefferson said, "Given a choice between a government with no newspaper or a newspaper with no government, I would always choose the latter". He might not have thought so had he read the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post*. Still, he recognized that the most basic principle of a democracy is access to information, because without that no legitimate decisions can be made. The excessive secrecy being defended by the administration has even aggravated an otherwise docile press corps. Leads have dried up completely in the government and military agencies. Individuals detained indefinitely cannot be identified, the government refuses to release their names. And while there is a reasonable demand for secrecy about military operations and movements, this goes far beyond that.

We have to break open our media and access to information. It is the heart of our democracy and it is still a commonwealth. We can demand back, as a "time tax", at least a third of corporate-licensed programming for actual public discussion and debate on the crisis confronting us. And we have to assert our right to oversee and consider support for all military and government policies and actions, since we are the ones held responsible for them, and we will live with their consequences. Total secrecy and government deception in a time of crisis is not acceptable. The media should be reflecting our diversity and dissent. They had already been failing on that score, and in a time of war they are even more pressed to accept what little they are told. The net effect is to support secrecy and unaccountable governance, not democratic rule.

Starting a discussion

I don't want to win an argument; I want to start a discussion, an open and democratic debate about what is being done in our names. This discussion needs to be held at the most local level possible. The smaller the group is the better, actually, if we can accommodate it. The discussion must include politically informed people so that it can be genuinely democratic. However, we should not begin with a teach-in or speaker format that people come out to hear. We need to ask local schools, groups and churches to host a discussion with their existing members, or even house parties, and then make sure information and knowledgeable people have input, but not dominance. This respects the opinions of all, and their right to make decisions.

This is a model of popular education, used by some groups already on other issues. Listening to a presentation that you probably already agree with is passive. This format is not likely to draw a broad audience unless the topic is very broad. Open discussion and debate is active and empowering. If communities want more information, then a teach-in or presentation can be arranged. But the first step must be to listen to others and discuss the alternatives together. These discussions can provide educational materials and reading suggestions (or a book club for those interested). But the purpose is not to build organizational membership or to insist on some ideological purity. The purpose is to engage, inform and empower individuals and local groups to act democratically in relation to this crisis. We have begun to implement and explore such local, democratic discussions under a campaign titled "In Our Name".

Centralized models of organizing have obvious limits to their size and efficacy. Decentralized models plant seeds and bear fruit in many places. The alignments and loyalties of this period will be very different than before, and quite surprising. The war will affect, and already has, large segments of the society in many different ways. Unemployment, loss of family members, decisions about participation, democratic processes, discrimination and ethnic hatred, civil rights and liberties, cuts in social services, economic recession, renewed deficit spending, drastically altered legal authorities, as well as international relations and the corporate globalization agenda are already affecting millions of people here and abroad. The troops themselves, being called up from reserve units, are questioning the war. Innocent civilians abroad are already displaced, starving or dead. Relations between many nations are destabilizing or strained. We cannot yet see what the long term or overall costs of this war will be, but they are not positive.

In order to reach the very diverse segments of this society and the world that are being impacted by this war, we have to use a range of methods and be inclusive in all we do. Worried mothers, draft-age youth, enlisted members, suddenly jobless workers, displaced families, Muslims under attack here, working families, people of color, and decision makers are only a few of the segments we need to be talking to now, and engaging. To decentralize, we must be able to give them tools and information, and to empower them to act for themselves, not force them to join an organization or take a specific action we endorse. Ultimately, this decision rests with the people themselves.

Decentralization

Rather than build one big organization or party, or bring more and more people to centralized meetings, we need to spread out all the people already concerned and activated to reach others in their neighborhood, church, school, workplace, community group, or existing smaller organizations, and open these discussions. A centralized model, focusing only on visible actions aimed at convincing the government to change its policy, has been used repeatedly and unsuccessfully in recent years. As gratifying as the solidarity can be to participants, the actual effect on policy is minimal.

Even civil disobedience, a tactic that worked very well for the early civil rights movement, has diminished in its effect. Constant petition drives to influence Congress, while sometimes effective, are still woefully insufficient to translate public will into public policy. The fact of the matter is that the current system of elected representatives most often stands in the way of popular democracy. We used all these methods during the Vietnam War era to oppose that policy, but in the end it was the resistance on the field and on bases by the GI's, and the response of the veterans that finally forced the hand of the system to end the war. We demonstrated for so long we could get nostalgic about it, and the policy continued.

How can we carry the messages against war, support the alternatives that exist, and engage ordinary people in a process that empowers them, from a top-down organization or a march in the streets? We need a method that can potentially open every door in America to us, from the home to the school and church, to the community organizations. We need a method that will not alienate people or box us into a corner as "blame America firsters", as the media wants to do.

A decentralized model relies on local decisions, made within a global perspective. Local organizing can help build tools for community decision-making on many aspects of policy, not just national questions. Local decisions are not abstract, and people come to know and work with others in their own communities. It is an "underthrow" of the government, because it builds from the bottom up. We have to create democratic mechanisms that can be used locally or nationally to address policy issues.

Creating Real Democracy

"Can it be that what Jihad and McWorld have in common is anarchy: the absence of common will and conscious and collective human control under guidance of law we call democracy?"

--Benjamin Barber in Jihad vs. McWorld

Practicing democracy between wars is like being a vegetarian between meals. Wartime is when democracy counts. But we need mechanisms of democratic decision-making we do not yet have in place. One is referendum, which can be both local and national, with or without legal weight at first. That requires a full and open debate that every voter can hear and participate in. We have the technology to make it happen in a fair and open way. It will plant the seed that this is our decision. It belongs to us, the American people.

Another tool can be direct allocation of taxes, starting with a voluntary tax pie form produced by a citizens group, to be included with annual IRS form returns. Compiled copies returned to the group will show what a people's tax pie would look like, and to compare it to the spending pie of Congressional, state and local representatives. Ask the representatives to come out and explain the differences.

Making local decisions that reflect global realities is also important to break the hold on democratic processes by global corporations. A Five-Borough Council in New York City is going local by trying to make the rebuilding of the destroyed area reflect community needs and values. Almost any participation in social and economic justice builds democracy.

As yet, we do not have the tools for a real democracy here. The representative one we have is broken; and given the size and complexity of modern society, I don't think we can fix it. We have the tools and information distribution possible to hold issue referendums instead of candidate elections, especially on pressing issues like this one. We have to be sure there is full discussion and debate, not just a quick reaction to events translated into policy. But, if the people do make mistakes, they can fix them quicker than this system will. And if people really allocate their tax dollars directly, we will finally have taxation with representation.

6. At The Crossroads

Pan-daemonium

I had a dream image about September 11. I grew up in the halls of the Pentagon, because members of my family were civilian employees there for many decades. I felt my windows shake when the plane exploded into the side of the building. I was offered a job at the

Pentagon library when I was 15 years old, but my moral consciousness was already too far developed to accept it. After my relatives died, I took a photo of the Pentagon that they kept in their house, and hung it in my room. I know of no other reason to build a five-sided figure, which points to the south, except that in the arcane it is used in rituals to summon the Devil. While I do not believe in the Devil, I do believe in human evil. I always felt that the structure summoned it. In the ritual, the pentangle not only summons but also contains the Devil. My dream image was the plane breaking the pentangle and releasing the Devil. Pan-daemonium, as Milton called the capital of Hell. That evil must again be contained, and not summoned again.

Two Paths

"And the words that will be used for to get the ship confused . . . "

--Bob Dylan, *The Hour That The Ship Comes In*

We are at a new crossroads in modern human history. There is an agenda set for a long-term global war with consequences we cannot now even imagine. The fabric of international relations will be torn. The quality of life, democracy and survival here and globally will decline. The coming generation will be asked to make horrific personal choices about their participation in this war. The war will not remain as "surgical" bombing of the remaining infrastructures of the already impoverished country of Afghanistan; it will spread. The "free market" countries that are part of the global corporate neo-liberal agenda have formed a new global alliance. We are in a similar situation to one the German people were in during September of 1939, following the invasion of Poland, with World War II and the Holocaust looming ahead. If we do not renounce it, we will reap its consequences, as will the world's people.

We have but two paths ahead of us now. Either we will reclaim democracy, end war and establish global justice, or we will descend into the nightmare world of permanent war and millions of deaths resulting from the destabilization we are creating. We have other options -- to use negotiations and the rule of law to disarm the terrorist groups we suspect of carrying out the events of September 11 -- but we have resisted using them, even when proffered. This war has already been planned to last at least a decade, according to White House authorities. What is truly needed has not yet been planned, but must be if we are to live in security and peace ever again.

Our choice is to build a new world based on protecting the planet and its resources, using alternative energy sources and efficiencies, using existing resources to meet human needs before profits, and using the surplus created by the technology of the industrial age to make survival and education possible for all the people of the world in the information age. We can decentralize economies and resource use for local needs, and create a fair system of exchange beyond basic needs being met. We can realize the totality of human potential now. We can create a world that will survive for future generations with its basic ecologies intact. And we can do this with less work and effort than we expend daily now. We can if we choose. Or, we can refuse to change our relationships with nature and other peoples, and join a war to protect the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, and the few social privileges that trickle down to the rest of us. We can also cost the world more lives and suffering by supporting the war we are told is the only option. We can if we choose. It's up to us.

Vision

Like those who created the first national experiment in democracy, we must envision our liberation anew. We must create a vision of a more perfect future that can guide us there. What are the elements of the new world we might create? What are the alternatives we might establish to find real peace and lasting security for the entire world? What would constitute the global justice that leads to global peace? The following are only a few pieces of that vision, but ones that have a direct impact on the current crisis.

- Alternative energy can create independence from non-renewable sources. We can use the emerging technologies for energy efficiency and more rational use (first by corporations and the military) to end our dependence on the centralized monopoly of oil and nuclear sources that endanger the environment as well as lead into wars abroad. Decentralized energy sources, at neighborhood, community or house/farm level can create and store sufficient energy to break the cycle of dependence. This technology exists now. The appropriate uses of energy and efficiency can reduce the harm being done to the atmosphere, the waters and all living things. The globally disproportionate use of energy by our society can be replaced by an energy generation and distribution revolution that can empower the rest of the world and protect the planet.
- Local alternative economies of ethical credit and production for local use, rational use of arable land for food first, and an end to subsidizing large corporations against the long term interests of local communities, can break the effects of global economic recession on any community willing to break free. Communities prospered during the Depression of the 1930s using similar methods. Mass communication and travel will allow communities to work out complementary production to meet local needs by networking and exchange. The globalizing corporations have no interest in sustaining communities. They move wherever labor and production are cheapest, and put pressure on any local government to lift any condition or legal restraint, and to comply with their profits. Devaluation of currency and hiking price rates for decades has created a huge and growing gap between rich and poor. Alternative economies will stabilize and rationalize the means of exchange based on actual production, not on market speculation on worthless currencies. Direct allocation of any taxes paid by individuals would make them representative and fair, as well as reduce them.
- Technology, which is not inherently centralized, offers an end to the need for extensive human labor in the production of basic human needs. We are long past the subsistence level of human history. We are currently in a surplus period. Much of the current economy in the information age is service or information oriented, not based on industrial production. This means that the basic needs of housing, clothing, energy, food, health care, education, and even basic technological tools and conveniences can be met for all the people of the world with rational planning and distribution of resources and productive technology. Such needs can also be met with much less labor than is currently being expended if the work is distributed more evenly. In addition, every human being can be educated and given the chance to realize their human potential, no longer strapped to meaningless work in order to survive. We live in a world of plenty, distorted into a world of need and suffering only by the concentration of wealth and privilege that we are asked to protect through wars and violence against

the disenfranchised.

- Decentralization is another key, for both decision-making and for any planning models. We need decentralization to neighborhood levels of the responsibility for creating and preserving simple justice and civil rights, resting on rotating voluntary service of all citizens that live there, with a democratically agreed set of rules and laws governing acceptable behavior, and training in negotiated, mediated settlements of disputes. Violence, rape, abuse, and other violations would lose their social acceptance. Local, direct, participatory democracy, through full information sharing and debate, and with a global perspective as well as a local one, can begin to create a truly diverse, tolerant and vibrant society. Statewide or national decisions or policies will require a local impact assessment before being agreed upon or experimented with. Both George Washington and Thomas Jefferson opposed political parties. Parties and their politics are enemies of true democracy, where all the people affected should decide policy, because they put the power back in the hands of an elite instead and attempt to manipulate individual public opinion. Only the individual is truly representative. The simple technology of mass communication makes real democracy possible, and has since the 1930s.
- Ecology and planetary concerns must play a role in any decision about use of land, water, air or resources. There is no need to endanger the planet in order for human beings to survive or prosper. Other species can co-exist in a world where human and planetary values replace profit and exploitation. Conscious and informed decisions about global warming, non-toxic fuels, permaculture, energy alternatives, organic reconstitution of soil, healthy foods and grain/vegetable/fruit centered diets, potable water preservation policies in a time of massive desertification, species protection, watershed and oxygen security by reforestation, pollution abatement, rural revitalization, and a view of the natural world that does not see it merely as objects for our use and exploitation to the point of exhaustion -- these will all help to create a livable and lively planet that we can pass on to future generations with the tools for proper interaction and co-evolution.
- End war and disarm the stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction and conventional warfare. Establish global rules of law and human rights that will secure the rights and end the abuse of all people on the planet. Abolish the social, cultural, race, gender and other privileges that are the basis for all other social and international violence and war, because they destroy the human spirit. Bring an end to the primacy of nation states and monopolies on land and resources that are the source of most conflicts in history. Support the promotion and teaching of peaceful methods of communication and resolution of conflict for individuals, communities and nations. Condemn and treat as a crime any act of terror, mass murder or war by any group, individual or nation. Demand the creation of internationally representative tribunals to investigate and prosecute such crimes under an agreed rule of law. Assist in the creation of a voluntary but respected and socially rewarded national/international service program in the interests of global justice and peace as a moral equivalent to war for coming generations.

Add your own visions concerning what is most important to you. Child rearing? Community

building? Open and accountable society? Democratic access to mass communications? Education of the whole person? Free flow of information? Transportation alternatives? Future social planning? Scientific and research accountability? De-corporatization? Arts? Spirituality? Personal emotional support? Land use? Our visions are our hopes, and they need to become our realities.

Owning it

"You can't fool all of the people all of the time."
--President Abraham Lincoln

All that has brought us to this juncture in history and all that will follow, has been and is being done in our name, in the name of the American people, in the name of protecting democracy and freedom. But at the same time, most of what has been done and is being done exists behind a veil of secrecy, a veil of national security and covert military operations. Most Americans do not know the real history of United States foreign policy since the end of WWII, because much of that history is hidden. History is an optional topic of study in schools, a topic of little serious concern in public discourse and film, a topic of disinterest or distortion in our media, a topic that requires literacy and an interest in research from a post-literate generation. History is a commodity of our National Security State as well, whose obsession with secrecy and classification has stolen it from the people who most need to know it.

Every citizen of the United States will be affected over decades by the decisions made in this period of time. The path chosen at this crossroad will have consequences for all of us and for the people of the world. The Pentagon planners and the Bush administration have chosen a path of permanent war, at least for a decade to come. As that war widens, it will engage and destroy more and more people, here and abroad. This war will have serious economic and social consequences for everyone who is part of it, and we are all part of it in some way, whether supporting it or not.

Therefore, the decision about the war belongs to us all. It is our country, our military, our foreign policy and our future. We own the decision as "the people" in a democratic society. We cannot make that decision without complete information. We can't make it based on media propaganda and "polls".

The bottom line is, the country and its political realities and policies belong to the people. Jefferson knew of "no safe depository of the ultimate powers of society except the people themselves". He said if we do not trust their decisions, then we should "inform their discretion". Because we will live into future generations with these decisions, we have to own them and make them ourselves. We cannot leave them to experts, officials, pundits, intelligence agencies, closed-door meetings or even presidents and the Congress. They are too important for that now. What is being done in our name belongs to us. And for the sake of the whole world, it is now up to us to decide. We have the final power, and the only power right now to make these decisions. We have the moral responsibility to exercise that power. We are the world's last best hope, now, or its worst enemy. We decide. We must.