



# FOCUS: Peace Now!

OFFICE OF THE AMERICAS

OfficeOfTheAmericas.org

## OFFICE OF THE AMERICAS GIVES AN INTERNATIONAL FORUM TO CENSORED VOICES

Some of the strongest spokespeople for peace are currently heard by way of WORLD FOCUS on radio and TV. We are part of an international effort to speak the truth to an out-of-control administration in Washington. And now we have reached a point where the majority of our citizens understand that the government has wasted our substance on an unnecessary and criminal war. We have witnessed the tragedy of the death, physical and mental wounding of our own citizens together with so many innocent civilians killed, wounded and damaged for life in Iraq and Afghanistan. Nobel prize-winning economist, Joseph Stiglitz, a Columbia University professor and former World Bank chief economist states that in addition to the horrendous human tragedy of these wars we can count on an actual expenditure of two trillion dollars of our tax money. This waste of lives and money was conducted by a tiny cabal of ideologues of extremely limited intellectual or moral substance. As might be expected, membership in this club of losers requires the approval of torture. The disaster in Iraq is another example of on-going foreign policy losses which have taken place since the Korean War of 1950. It is time now to rebuild the dysfunctional infrastructure of the United States, to foster health care and education for all and to end over a half century of destructive military adventurism.

WORLD FOCUS airs locally on KPFK (90.7 Los Angeles, 98.7 Santa Barbara), at 10:00 AM on Sundays.

WORLD FOCUS (same

name as our radio program but with different guests) airs on Adelphia Television on Channel 98 in Los Angeles, Channels 77 and 75 in Santa Monica, and Channel 43 in Beverly Hills. Check with station for upcoming schedule.

Both our radio and television programs are available for airing on other stations.

### Latin America

The currents of progressive change in Latin America have given us great hope. From Tierra del Fuego in South America to the Mexican border with the United States we are witnessing the acceptance of popular power and the rejection of so-called Free Trade agreements (neo-liberalism). The Zapatistas began their revolution on the very day that NAFTA took effect, January 1, 1994. They have had a great influence on the indigenous communities of Latin America and are now proceeding through Mexico without arms to express their hopes, desires and goals for the future. Historic currents of change are measurable in Venezuela, Bolivia, Argentina, Uruguay, Ecuador, Chile, Brazil, Central America, and the Caribbean. Haiti continues to suffer as a result of the capture and removal of duly elected President Jean Bertrand Aristide by the United States, and a counter-productive occupation by the United Nations. Colombia suffers the ongoing presence of United States military and corporate mercenaries, which simply add gasoline to the fires of a long-standing domestic conflict.

When the Office of the Americas began in 1983, we

supported a future of self-determination in Latin America. It is truly amazing to us to see that with some exceptions these goals are becoming a reality. The credit belongs to the Latin American people. We are proud of our long-standing solidarity with them.

### A STANDARDIZED TEST FOR ASPIRANTS TO THE SUPREME COURT.

We have even answered the questions as I think Judge Alito might answer them.

1. Are you in favor of the death penalty? *Yes.*
2. Is the President allowed to start a war? *Yes.*
3. Do we have liberty and justice for all in the United States? *Yes.*
4. Would you send an innocent person to death because of a procedural impasse? *Yes.*
5. The United States is a classless society? *Yes.*
6. Do you believe that torture is legal? *Yes.*
7. Do you think that the Supreme Court is less powerful than the president? *Yes.*
8. Do you think that the power of judicial review must exclude foreign policy decisions? *Yes.*
9. Regardless of your religion, do you think that less harm would be done if abortion were illegal? *Yes.*
10. Do you think our prison system is just? *Yes.*
11. It is best to keep the Constitution the way it is and NOT to amend it to declare health care as a right for all. *Yes.*
12. It is best to keep the Constitution the way it is and NOT to amend it to declare

and dedication, that in remembering them I will be forever humbled.

I also believe that this is a wonderful opportunity for Office of the Americas. OOA remains a strong organization with a loyal following. Now it is time to find someone who will take OOA to the next level. We begin the search for a new staff person for the Office of the Americas, and we encourage you all to search with us. I am sad to leave, but I intend to spend the next few months, with your help, paving the way for a bright future for the Office of the Americas.

Sincerely,  
Clarissa Romano

As Clarissa's letter expresses, she will be moving on toward her life's goal as a writer. She will continue at OOA until April of this year. She is and has been a blessing to our organization and to us personally. We will miss her terribly but we send her on to her true vocation with loving blessings.

EXECUTIVE BOARD  
Edward Asner  
Blase Bonpane, Ph.D., Director  
Theresa Bonpane, Executive Director  
Lois Davis  
William Davis  
Paul Haggis  
Nancy Hollander, Ph.D.  
James Lafferty  
Alice Powell, Ph.D., President  
Martin Sheen  
Patrice Wagonhurst  
Haskell Wexler  
Don White

ADVISORY BOARD  
Rabbi Leonard Beerman  
Rev. Roy Bourgeois  
Rev. Greg Boyle  
Noam Chomsky, Ph.D.  
Maria Elena Durazo  
Jodie Evans  
Jackie Goldberg  
Dolores Huerta  
Rev. James Lawson  
Ramona Ripston  
Angela Sanbrano  
Studs Terkel  
Howard Zinn, Ph.D.

Clarissa Romano, Administrative Assistant

Typesetting by OOA Volunteer  
Chris Stockdill

Leave the legacy of your commitment to your heirs: When drafting your will, please consider making a bequest to THE OFFICE OF THE AMERICAS. We are a 501-c-3 non-profit educational corporation. All contributions are tax deductible.

dent they won't give up. The question is, will the rest of us give up, or will we stand with them? New Orleans' last and only hope depends on the answer to this question.

James Lafferty is Executive Director of the National Lawyer's Guild Los Angeles.

### Dear Friends of the OOA,

Having spent two and half wonderful years working as the Administrative Assistant at Office of the Americas, I write with the sad news that I will not be renewing my contract this year. While I am excited about the possibilities in front of me, it is with mixed feelings that I leave the world of Office of the Americas. I have had the best job in Los Angeles for these last two years, and the adventure of working with OOA will shape and inform the rest of my life. I have met and had the honor of working with some of the most inspiring people I will ever meet in my life, and I have heard so many stories, and witnessed so many examples of courage

### Become an Office of the Americas Sustainer or Member

All contributions are tax-deductible

**Members** receive OOA's quarterly newsletter and the satisfaction of being part of an international movement for peace and justice.

- Founder \$1,000  Patron \$500  Sponsor \$500  Donor \$200  Friend \$100  
 Family \$35  Individual \$25  Limited income \$10  Other\$\_\_\_\_\_

**Sustainers** receive monthly mailings of OOA issues, activities and special events.

- I pledge: \$\_\_\_\_\_ each  month  quarter  year  other\_\_\_\_\_ for OOA's work.

### Recruiters for Peace

- Please check here if you would like to work as an OOA Recruiter for Peace Volunteer.

### Response for Peace

Enclosed is my check for \$\_\_\_\_\_

Please charge \$\_\_\_\_\_ to my  Visa  Mastercard  AMEX

CC# \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

- I would like to receive OOA's weekly email calendar. E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Please send me information on your volunteer program.  
 Please remove me from your mailing list.

education a right for all citizens. *Yes.*

13. Are the CIA and NSA structured in accord with the Constitution of the United States? *Yes.*

14. Is rendition of captives for torture in foreign lands legal? *Yes.*

The examiners, should then say, "Thank you for your participation, Judge, but you have failed every question. Sorry, we have no further questions. Please look for some other employment."

It seems that the spiritual death process is well underway when a majority of the

Supreme Court Justices can concur on the death penalty. They obviously are out of touch with the civilized world which has denounced the death penalty. They obviously have made the war, death, gun, military industrial culture into a suicidal cult. **THE SUPREME CULT.**

"Yes" men have been drafted into our administration with a vengeance. Their yes is to power, their no is to the sovereignty of the people.

## OFFICE OF THE AMERICAS IN ACTION:

\* We began the New Year with a most unusual celebration on the Santa Monica Promenade. Some weeks ago Maria Bello and Paul Haggis suggested that artists and celebrities should make a strong statement for peace in the New Year.

What followed was Resolution for Peace. See the website <[www.resolution4peace.com](http://www.resolution4peace.com)>

New Years Eve was marked by the appearance of a large group of artists proclaiming their commitment to work for peace in 2006. The artists were present on the Promenade to sign three huge tablets of resolutions for peace in 2006. The public followed their good example by signing their names and making their resolutions for peace as well.

This is the first action of a new group of which the Office

**OOA is on the search for a new Associate Director. For more information, visit our website at [www.officeoftheamericas.org](http://www.officeoftheamericas.org).**

**Closet Liberal Collectible Sales Held Quarterly! To donate, to schedule a pick-up, or for a schedule of future sales, call Muriel at 323-934-9185 or Beverly at 323-295-2306.**

of the Americas is a sponsor.

We hope these talented people will continue with creativity and passion.

\* Some recent guests on our program **WORLD FOCUS:**

Arlene Inouye  
David Kreider  
Richard Falk  
Howard Zinn  
Brian Concannon  
Cindy Sheehan  
Bianca Jagger  
Kathy Kelly  
Linda Pollach  
Robert Fisk (twice)  
Norm Stamper  
John Stewart (Zimbabwe)  
Siddhartha  
Rajiv Vora  
Jackie Allen  
Jeremy Brecher  
Peter Phillips  
Robert Muller  
William Quigley  
Ilan Pappé  
Dan Ellsberg  
Michael Ratner  
John Amadon  
Barbara Trent  
Jodie Evans

A few recent programs of the Office of the Americas:

- On stage after the play **WHAT I HEARD ABOUT IRAQ** and responding to questions and comments from the audience.
- Speaker with Ron Kovic at the Christmas Vigil to end the war in Iraq held at Hollywood and Highland on December 17, 2005.
- Presentation on "Peace in the Middle East" given to the Sholem Community at Culver City Middle School.
- Sponsoring two events for the visit of Violeta Mejivar who is running for Mayor of San Salvador in El Salvador.
- Standing room only presentation on **THE PROGRESSIVE CURRENTS IN LATIN AMERICA** at the Tuesday Night Forum in North Hills.

• We spoke together with Academy Award winner (PANAMA DECEPTION) Barbara Trent as she showed her latest film **SOLDIERS SPEAK OUT** at various Southern California venues.

• Speaker at **THE WORLD CAN'T WAIT** demonstration in Hollywood on the evening of Bush's State of the Union Message.

## FRANK WILKINSON, A MORAL GIANT

He considered becoming a Methodist Minister. After hitchhiking through the Middle East, however, he determined that his vocation was non-sectarian.

What a great life! We want to call your attention to the very large articles in the New York Times (January 4, 2006) and the Los Angeles Times (January 5, 2006).

Frank was a dear friend. He was the antithesis of the "yes" men who have currently infested our government.

He identified injustice and denounced it. His life speaks to the world about the extreme dangers of illegal government spying. As the Bush administration rages on with rampant illegality, we must look to Frank for the example of how to fight it.

The history of this non-violent warrior for excellence in government is marked by 132,000 pages of FBI surveillance. Just as Dr. Martin Luther King, Frank Wilkinson was targeted by the perverted mind of J. Edgar Hoover under his counterintelligence program (COINTEL-PRO). Agents followed Frank's every movement across the United States, trying to destroy the movement to abolish the House Un-American Activity Committee.

The FBI worked surreptitiously to cancel meetings, infiltrate and disrupt events and discredit Frank wherever he went. The FBI learned of an assassination plot against Frank,

**Getting duplicate mailings? Misspelled name or address? Please let us know so we can update our records.**

**THE COALITION AGAINST MILITARISM IN OUR SCHOOLS OFFERS THE ADOPT A SCHOOL PROJECT GUIDEBOOK**

**You may order this guidebook and learn how you can help through their website: <[www.militaryfreeschools.org](http://www.militaryfreeschools.org)> or by calling the CAMS Office at: 626-799-9118.**

staked out the location of the expected crime and did not tell Frank. The would-be assassins failed but the FBI never tried to prosecute anyone.

Our condolences to Frank's wife our dear friend, Donna Wilkinson.

We all need his courage and single hearted perseverance at this time.

To our shame, 193 governments have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Somalia and the United States have refused.

OFFICE OF THE AMERICAS is proud to endorse **THE CHILDRENS' AND YOUTHS' BILL OF RIGHTS FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITY**. For further information on this document contact Nick Seidita <[nickseidita@sbcglobal.net](mailto:nickseidita@sbcglobal.net)>

## "A Visit to What's Left of New Orleans"

*By: Jim Lafferty, OOA Board Member*

This past December, I and several other Lawyers Guild members from Los Angeles joined a dozen or more other lawyers from around the country in New Orleans. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss how best to protect the legal rights of its citizens in the wake of what is now acknowledged to be the worst natural disaster in U.S. history. I was unprepared; no words, or even pictures, can capture the full scope of the disaster. (For example, did you know that so much oil from destroyed autos and so many chemicals from near-by chemical dumps have seeped into the soil of New Orleans that to really make the

land once again safe you'd have to remove and somehow discard the top one-foot of soil from all of New Orleans?)

On the one day my comrades and I were driven around New Orleans, covering an area roughly 100 square miles in size, all we saw was mile after mile of complete devastation. Remains of houses barely standing. Markings on the front of houses telling how many bodies of people or animals were found in them. Cars in trees or on roofs of houses. Houses on houses. Trees on houses. Mountains of debris outside of those homes so far excavated in the hope of one day being rebuilt. We passed a huge fishing vessel that had been blown over 40 miles from the bay across the flooded bayous. Only one school out of the 145 public schools was open for classes at the time of our visit. Millions of medical records have been destroyed. The courts and their records were destroyed. Prisoners in jail for even minor offenses, and who might have been eligible for release within a matter of days, are still languishing in jails all around the state and nation. And no one knows for sure where they are or what's happened to them.

Before the storm New Orleans was a city of about nearly 500,000 people. In December it was estimated that less than 100,000 had yet returned. This means that nearly 400,000 people from New Orleans have spread out across the country, put their children in schools, gotten new jobs and found new living accommodations. Will they come back if New Orleans isn't really safe? If not enough schools reopen? If they've no home to come back to? I saw a sign in a fast-food restaurant window advertising jobs at \$10 an hour! This would have been an unheard of hourly wage at a fast-food restaurant before Katrina. But the restaurant was still closed. How can you take the job if you have no place to live and no school for your child to attend? So the restaurant stays closed, and workers look elsewhere for jobs and places to live and that, in turn, causes the restaurant to go out of

business and more jobs are permanently lost and...well, you get the idea.

The latest scheme to rebuild New Orleans was drawn up by a commission appointed by the unpopular Mayor, a commission which lacks the support of grass-roots activists. What this plan seems to envision is a New Orleans half the size of its former self and, as a consequence of which neighborhoods were destroyed and which were spared, without an African-American majority. In other words, a city designed for tourists and bankers and the shippers who use the largely undamaged port.

In lecturing to law students in recent years I have said that you can learn all you need to know about U.S. foreign policy and U.S. imperialism by studying the war and the lead up to the war in Iraq. Well, you can now learn all you need to know about U.S. domestic policy under capitalism by studying the government's response to Katrina, and its neglect of the poor people of New Orleans before Katrina. Think of it: A major U.S. City destroyed, one famous for its richness of culture, its diversity, and its acclaim as a tourist destination, and as matters now stand no one believes it will be rebuilt to match its former self.

A number of community groups have formed and are working around the clock to insure the people of New Orleans have a say in what its future looks like and to protect its victimized citizens against insurance companies and developers and corrupt politicians. (If readers want to help, they can go to the Common Ground Collective web site: [www.common-groundrelief.org](http://www.common-groundrelief.org)) New Orleans' only hope lies with the determination of these grass roots groups to never give up. Having met with them and talked with them and watched what they've been able to do so far, I'm confi-

**Visit OOA's website [www.officeoftheamericas.org](http://www.officeoftheamericas.org) and Blase's Blog [blasesblog.blogspot.com](http://blasesblog.blogspot.com)**