

BCR REPORTS

A Publication of the
Social Welfare Action Alliance

Volume XIV, Number 1

June 2003

Wars Without End?: Living in Post-War America

No more war.

It seems in my four decades on the planet, the notions of war and violence have been a central focus and tools for creating imagery to meet the goals of the “powers that be”, the Unseen Hand, the “man” and so on. I write this in the so-called post-Iraq wartime, the time following the illegal occupation of Iraq, which involved the injury and killing of thousands of Iraqi people, in the name of liberation, freedom, and democracy. So many images, so little time to analyze, digest, think through the ramifications of it all. American flags, “support our troops” yard and business signs, yellow ribbons, women and men in uniform on ships, in tanks, walking in the sand, using cell phones to talk with their fearful families – juxtaposed with pictures of toppling Saddam Hussein, rubble, and so-called pro-U.S. crowds with flowers to give our troops. I don’t have to describe this – you saw it, thought about it, perhaps protested it and now, we are all going to have to live with it – the many ramifications of this action.

War is for superficial thinkers.

As social workers, community organizers, researchers, writers, and academics, we will all have to live with the decisions that so many of us opposed or had little to no say in. In this way, we are like the Iraqis in both pre- and post-war Iraq. But this is not news to people who are active members of their communities all over the U.S. Many formal academic programs as well as popular education organizations promote the value of critical thinking as a part of what it means to be a “good” citizen, professional social worker, “objective” researcher or writer or such. Reliance on violence to solve disputes, even as “self-defense”, a concept not originally intended for nations and governments but for hand-to-hand aggression, is like any other addiction and works as a solution only for those people who cannot think beyond superficial equations. It takes a lot of work – thinking, dialogue, fact-finding, discussion, experimentation, and reworking – to generate ideas that move beyond the fist, club, gun, B-1, or the Stealth Bomber. Those are the tools of superficiality. We know this or we wouldn’t work so hard for funding for violence prevention to stop the violence and health care to mend those broken by violence.

So many wars, so little time, resources, energy . . .

The War on Iraq. The War on Poverty. The War on Drugs. The War on Crime. The War on Terror. The War on America. The War on Freedom. The War on Workers. The War on Tobacco. The War on Women. The War on Religion. The War on Christians. The War on the Constitution. The Coming War on the Automobile. The War on Spam. Waging War on Lung Cancer. War Against Juveniles. War on the Environment. War on Weeds. War on Privacy. War on AIDS. War on the Earth. War on Graffiti. War on Red Tape. War on the Poor.

In an Internet search on 6/12, I searched the term “war on” and found nearly 2 million hits. In the first 400, the wars listed above were found with, not surprisingly, the war on Iraq garnering the most attention. Still, given the war’s recent occurrence, it is a bit surprising so many other wars emerged in the top 400 at all. Upon a further glance, however, it may not be that surprising. Who declared these wars? Who is fighting them? At what point in a struggle for justice does it become a war and who says so? If we, progressives, are opposed to the violent resolution of problems, (and not all SWAA activists are) and if we participate in the struggles for justice, access, and resources for these issues and causes, are we “warriors”? Since labels are so important to us – both to help us communicate and to “keep people in their place”, should we accept the moniker of “warrior” and proceed with our work or should we reject being a “warrior” and rename ourselves “activists”, “revolutionaries”, “social workers”, teachers, advocates or other labels?

And while we have the luxury of considering the merits and the interesting points of such questions, families in America are struggling:

- To keep their families together because of poverty
- To keep their jobs and/or to improve working conditions
- To get to work with safe transportation and for adequate, affordable child or family care assistance
- To get a useful, meaningful education
- To get adequate and necessary health care and mental health care
- To get safe, affordable housing or even one night of rest in safety

Continued on next page □

Wars Without End? continued...

- To feel proud of our government and not fear it
- To keep our rights and freedoms from withering away
- To ensure rights in the future
- To bring media attention to the issues facing the poor and working class
- To maintain hope for a bright future for themselves and their loved ones
- To get legal rights afforded to others
- To pay their rent and mortgages and to stave off bankruptcy and creditors
- To find good-paying, secure jobs and careers
- To find and keep love and connections between family members
- To maintain a sense of dignity in the face of ill-treatment and social disregard for their struggles
- To fight alienation from society (though some may welcome it too)
- And so many other struggles that people face every day all over the U.S.

Are these struggles “wars”? Are these struggles, our struggles in SWAA? And if they are, what might that mean for us as individual SWAA activists and for us as an organization?

2004 – no more war?

First, let’s support the campaign for the *Department of Peace*. Sure, it’s another layer of bureaucracy but we’re not afraid of a little thing like that, right? The discussions that such a measure would bring to our communities, dinner tables, classrooms, baseball fields, and such might be fascinating and could lead people to reconsider their support of the mass expenditures of money and human resources for death into a new focus. Both defense and Homeland Security expenditures are causing massive amounts of suffering here at home. We see it with “cuts” at the federal, state and local levels – America is hemorrhaging money for profits for a few with the blood, sweat, and tears of the poor and/or the less politically connected. This, while our individual liberties are being stripped through amendments, court decisions, and legislation right under our noses? If WAR is not the answer, then how shall we “*wage peace*” against the Bush administration and their supporters as the next election approaches? Should we even care about 2004? What peaceful means of protest and objection shall we use to bring these electoral thieves and murderers and co-conspirators to justice?

Second, as we plan for our first national SWAA gathering in two years for next July, let’s begin now to think about and document, in whatever ways you can (interview, survey, photographs, letters to the editor or other body, etc) the State of the Union from a progressive perspective. What if anything is working and - where policy is failing our brothers and sisters – let’s document it to share, persuade, present and educate. If ever there was a time that the world and our nation needed us to step up, speak up and act up, it is now. SWAA is a valuable, influential asset in the progressive movement and we call upon all like-minded human service professionals to join us “in struggle”. □

– by Michel Coconis



The SWAA banner, Seattle members Toni Ameslav and Marilyn Moch, with fellow traveler Susan Moore, at the International Women’s Day rally in Occidental Park in Seattle, March 8, 2003. The themes combined anti-war sentiment with issues of women and immigrants. SWAA was an endorser of the event and on the planning committee.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS ON SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Affilia is seeking your help as we start a campaign to publish the hidden voices of social work. We are searching for manuscripts from social work practitioners – practitioners of all kinds of social work – as well as from users of social services. Both groups have valuable insights and knowledge – of what works, of what fails to work – in one-on-one practice, in the manager’s office, in community work. This is sometimes called practice wisdom but it is rarely to be found in the pages of journals. Much of what is now published is not written to be accessible to the practitioners of social work.

As a feminist journal, we are of course most interested in aspects of interest to feminist social workers, that use a feminist lens for analysis. We are interested in publishing essays, analyses of efforts at change, efforts to organize, efforts to do social work as well as the user’s perspective on the service system. Please help to spread the word among colleagues. With your assistance, we hope to publish the voices of the unheard.

All submissions will be reviewed by the editors, as all other submissions are. Please send four copies, no longer than ten pages, double-spaced in standard 12 point font to:
Dr. Miriam Dinerman, Editor in Chief, Yeshiva University
School of Social Work, 2495 Amsterdam Avenue, New York,
New York 10033

We thank you for your help in seeking submissions that capture the practice wisdom not now published. □

HOW TO ORGANIZE A SWAA CHAPTER:

“How to Organize a SWAA Chapter” organizing packets are available by contacting Mel at Communication Services at (518) 438-2826, 50 Colvin Avenue, Albany, NY 12206. The contents of the packets include such things as posters, brochures, book order forms, recent newsletters, copy of by-laws, names of SWAA organizers from the Steering Committee who will help you, and much more! Allow 4 weeks for delivery. □

JPHS

The Journal of Progressive Human Services (JPHS) is available to members of SWAA at a substantial discount. It can be ordered through SWAA using the application in this issue of the *BCR Reports*. Neither the JPHS collective nor SWAA are involved in subscription fulfillment, that is the responsibility of our publisher, Haworth Press. If you are a subscriber and have not received an issue, contact Kathy Rutz at 1-800-HAWORTH. To submit an article to JPHS, send four copies of your manuscript, including a short abstract to: David Prichard, JPHS Collective, University of New England, School of Social Work, 716 Stevens Avenue, Portland, ME 04103. It is important that your name and any other identifying information not appear on three of these copies. We also encourage submissions of poetry and short (500-1000 word) opinion pieces for our Soapbox column and letters to the editors.

The Table of Contents of the current issue (13/2) and the forthcoming issue (14/1) appear below. Also, see our CALL FOR PAPERS in this issue of the *BCR Reports*.

— Marcia Cohen

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CHAPTER UPDATES:

Philadelphia: Our chapter's members have been involved in a multitude of activities, most of them in concert with KWRU and the national Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign. Our work is being noticed! We are proud to announce that Mary Bricker-Jenkins was named NASW-PA's Social Worker of the Year. We are equally as proud to announce that Jennifer Jones was named NASW Philadelphia Division Social Worker of the year. Kristin Nicely, Jen Netherton, and Lauren Rudisill swept major awards at Temple's graduation, and Mary Ignatius won three awards at Rutgers! And this just in: Willie Baptist will be the Smith College of Social Work's commencement speaker this August.

As part of the ongoing KWRU Narratives Project, a participatory research effort, Sara Gentry and Marsha have been interviewing social workers who are members of KWRU as well as emerging KWRU leaders. Sarah and Marsha have received permission from Smith to use their work on the project for their Smith thesis.

The Economic Human Rights-Pennsylvania Campaign continues to grow in strength and influence. A joint project of KWRU, NASW-PA Chapter, and State Representative Larry Curry, we were successful in renewing the state legislature's commitment to studying the integration of economic human rights into Pennsylvania law and policy. The study, authorized last year by house resolution and renewed this year by HR 144, requires that hearings be held by a special legislative committee, and we are using the hearings to organize and educate around the state. Scores of social workers and their clients – people directly affected by violations of economic human rights – have testified in the past year. More importantly from an organizing perspective, those involved are coming together to form local EHR committees, with poor and economically vulnerable people, social workers, and other allies working in common cause.

Our Economic Human Rights training team (Jen Netherton, Lauren Rudisill, Jennifer Jones, Kristin Nicely, Laura Rogers, Willie Baptist, Rosemary Barbara, Tara Colon, and Mary B-J) have conducted CEU-bearing trainings throughout the state of Pennsylvania and in New Jersey, reaching over 500 social work students, faculty, and practitioners. These included two workshops at the NASW-PA Chapter state conference in March: an overview of the Economic Human Rights framework and using the framework in clinical practice. These workshops were repeated in New Jersey. In addition to the trainings, we have been involved in other speaking engagements. Mary Bricker-Jenkins presented the Economic Human Rights-PA project at the New England Women's Studies Conference in Boston the last weekend in March. Blair Hyatt worked with the Deaf and Deaf Blind organization in Ohio to help them develop a strategic plan. Jennifer Jones spoke of the effects of

drugs on clients on the Kensington Welfare Rights Union Drug Reality Bus Tour. Willie Baptist spoke at a teach-in on Economic Human Rights in honor of MLK Day at the University of Pennsylvania.

Learning as we teach, we have initiated a study group focusing on the thinking and work of Martin Luther King, Jr. on uniting the poor of all races in a movement to end poverty. The group meets every other week. Additionally, we continue to meet biweekly and utilize our meetings to discuss current cases and what it means to develop an Economic Human Rights Framework to social work. We were delighted to have Fred Newdom attend our winter retreat, which focused on integrating economic human rights principles into daily practice – an ongoing focus of our work.

We are working to mobilize social workers for the Poor People's March to be held this summer in the month of August. We have been circulating flyers and other information at our speaking engagements. See the article in this issue and www.kwru.org for more information.

Rochester: The Rochester SWAA Chapter – with the Rochester Poor People's Coalition, the House of Mercy, and SUNY Brockport Social Work students – organized a downtown rally on December 7th at the Salvation Army and the Central Church of Christ to greet the New Freedom Bus Tour. Through donations and fund-raising, students were able to buy the food and prepare and serve a dinner for the freedom riders. Students also found housing for the bus riders, and another downtown church fed the group breakfast. A vigil was held at School No. 17 on December 8th in Rochester with local welfare rights activists and the Freedom Bus riders to draw attention to the national campaign for economic human rights as well as the fact that Rochester is the 11th in the nation in the numbers of its children living in poverty. This event was covered in the *Democrat and Chronicle* newspaper and two local TV news programs).

In March, SWAA members Barbara Kasper and Melissa Sydor gave a workshop on “women and welfare reform” as part of the annual International Women's Day conference. The workshop was well attended and it generated a great deal of positive feedback.

In April, the chapter sponsored its fifth “Reality Tour.” We were able to fill a school bus with students and members of the community for this three-hour consciousness-raising event. Tour “guides” included representatives from the Rochester Poor People's Coalition, Human Service Workers United, EMPOWER Welfare Rights, and folks who work with people with AIDS in the low-income community. One local TV station sent a reporter and camera person to cover the tour, and a newspaper reporter accompanied us to most of the tour stops as well.

Beyond these activities, our Chapter continues to bring together activists from various organizations to plan action strategies aimed at drawing attention to the devastating effects of the County budget cuts and the numerous ways our local welfare department is denying people their right to services.

ACTION NEEDED TO OPPOSE FEDERAL MARRIAGE AMENDMENT

Urge your U.S. Representative to oppose the Federal Marriage Amendment, House Joint Resolution 56, proposed legislation that would amend the U.S. Constitution to define marriage as between a man and a woman. This is a gratuitous attack on gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people.

House Joint Resolution 56, the Federal Marriage Amendment, was introduced May 21, 2003 by Reps. Marilyn Musgrave (R-CO-04), Jo Ann Davis (R-VA-01), David Vitter (R-LA-01), Ralph M. Hall (D-TX-04), Collin Peterson (D-MN-07) and Mike McIntyre (D-NC-07).

Amending the Constitution is very rare and is only done to address great public policy need. In our nation's 225-plus year history, the Constitution of the United States has only been amended 27 times, only 17 after the Bill of Rights was adopted in 1791.

This amendment not only attempts to deny equal rights to individuals in same-sex couples, but it also attempts to undermine legislative and legal efforts to protect same-sex couples these families.

Such a cynical amendment illustrates a cruel irony for groups that call themselves "pro-family." H.J. Res. 56 goes beyond defining marriage and seeks to deny same-sex families fundamental protections such as hospital visitation rights, inheritance rights and health care benefits. There is nothing pro-family about that.

Send a letter to the your Congressperson; see the sample below:

Subject: Please oppose H.J. Res. 56,
Federal Marriage Amendment

Dear [decision maker name automatically
inserted here],

As your constituent, I urge you to oppose H.J. Res. 56, the Federal Marriage Amendment. This amendment not only attempts to deny equal rights to individuals in same sex couples, but it also attempts to undermine legislative and legal efforts to protect these families.

The Constitution and its subsequent amendments were designed to protect and expand individual liberties, such as granting women the right to vote, not to revoke or restrict these liberties. If the amendment makes it through the difficult process necessary to amend the Constitution, this would be the first time in history that the Constitution was amended to restrict the rights of a whole class of people, in conflict with its guiding principle to provide equal protection for all.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments.
(Information taken from the Human Rights Campaign Web site – www.hrc.org) □

CALL FOR PAPERS

The Journal of Progressive Human Services

The *Journal of Progressive Human Services* invites manuscripts that address critical issues for radical practice and analysis today.

The *Journal of Progressive Human Services (JPHS)* is the only journal in the United States that uses a radical framework to examine political, professional, and personal issues in the human services. Moving past more conventional conservative and liberal analyses of the problems we face and the solutions put forth to meet them. *JPHS* is committed to developing knowledge about theories, social policies, clinical practice, organizing, administration, research, and history that reflects and responds to radical concerns. The *JPHS* publishes critiques of leading social issues, fresh insights on direct practice, and reports of innovative human services in various countries. It also publishes discussions of oppressed groups, struggles by workers and clients on the job and in the community, dilemmas of practice in conservative and liberal contexts, and strategies for ending racism, sexism, ageism, heterosexism, and discrimination against persons who are physically challenged or psychologically distressed. International exchanges of critical ideas and information about programs among human services workers throughout the world community are promoted and encouraged. *JPHS* aims to stimulate debate about major social issues and to contribute to the development of analytic tools needed for building caring societies based on equality and justice.

Suggestions for topic areas include, but are not limited to the following:

- Abuse of Power
- Criminalization of Social Problems
- Scarcity of Services as Abuse
- Insidious Health Disparities
- Radical Analysis of Substance Abuse Policy

Date for Submissions: Open

SWAA Book Fund Submission Policy

1. Author must be an active SWAA member.
2. Author must have presented at a SWAA regional or national conference.
3. Author will negotiate with their publisher for the best discounted purchase price.
4. Books will be sold to active SWAA members at a discount from the list price.
5. Only paperback or "reasonably priced" hardcover books with general distribution potential will be considered.
6. Submissions will be considered yearly by January 31st. Forward submission requests to:
Laura Walther
c/o SWAA Book Fund
Columbus Circle Station
P.O. Box 20563
New York, New York 10023

“Put on those walkin’ shoes. . .” MLK’s Poor People’s March Continues this Summer

Mary Bricker-Jenkins

In May of 1967, the leadership of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) gathered for a staff retreat at the Penn Center in Frogmore, South Carolina. The civil rights movement had captured the attention of the world and achieved many of its stated objectives. The war in Viet Nam was raging, and Martin Luther King had come out firmly against this war. Some of the leaders and supporters of the SCLC were in consternation about his stand, fearing reprisals and erosion of the solidarity of the civil rights movement. In a speech to those assembled at the retreat, the Reverend Dr. King explained his position: “We must see now that the evils of racism, economic exploitation and militarism are all tied together. And you really can’t get rid of one without getting rid of the other” (1967, May, p. 9).

Today, thirty-five years later, we are once again at war – not only in one country, but around the globe. Once again the poor in America and in the countries named as “enemies” are likely to bear a disproportionate share of the casualties. And once again we are keenly aware – when we dare to look at the economic vulnerabilities faced by the majority of Americans – that the mechanisms of economic exploitation have reached a level of intensity and development unimaginable in Dr. King’s day. Increases in poverty are accompanied by an even more pernicious increase in the gap between the “haves and have-nots,” and increasing numbers of the “have enoughts” are working longer hours, often at multiple jobs, for incomes that are falling in purchasing power (Economic Policy Institute, 2002). We are worse off today than when Dr. King spoke these words at the retreat, words that have a special meaning to social workers:

We have moved into an era where we are called upon to raise certain basic questions about the whole society. We are still called upon to give aid to the beggar who finds himself in misery and agony on life’s highway. But one day, we must ask the question of whether an edifice which produces beggars must not be restructured and refurbished (1967, May, p. 9).

For many of us, the day has come.

The Poor People’s Economic Human Rights Campaign

While we are working to give aid and organizing to reweave what we can of the safety net, many of us are asking the structural question. And we are seeing that there is a movement building in this country to restructure and refurbish the edifice. The movement rises from the ranks of the poor and seeks to take up “the mantle of Martin.” We are joining the movement.

A major force in the building of the movement is The Poor People’s Economic Human Rights Campaign (PPEHRC), a rapidly expanding network of over 60 groups, most of them led by people living in poverty. The PPEHRC, spearheaded by the Kensington Welfare Rights Union of Philadelphia, has a clear and simple vision – that everyone’s economic human rights be secured in this country.

Simply put, that means ending poverty and every other form of economic injustice in America – and, necessarily, around the globe. The groups in the network work on many different issues in many different ways, but share a common interest in ending poverty. And as Martin Luther King taught, the lessons of history are clear about what that will take – a massive movement based in the unity and leadership of the poor, but including committed people from all segments of society who grasp the significance of this moment in history and the possibilities it presents. At Frogmore, Dr. King gave this reading of history:

I think it is necessary for us to realize that we have moved from the era of civil rights to the era of human rights... We are talking about a good, solid, well-paying job. We are talking about a good, sound, sanitary house. We are talking not merely about desegregated education, but we are talking about quality education (1967, May, p. 3).

Dr. King also understood that the era of human rights also called for a unity of the poor of all colors. Calling such a unity an “unsettling force,” he began to recruit for “this nonviolent army, this ‘freedom church’ of the poor” led by the poor:

The dispossessed of this nation – the poor, both white and Negro live in a cruelly unjust society. They must organize a revolution against injustice . . . against the structures through which the society is refusing to take means which have been called for, and which are at hand, to lift the load of poverty (1967/1989).

Cognizant of Dr. King’s assessment of the need for unity, the PPEHRC is consciously multiracial and diverse in every other dimension of human character and circumstance. This does not mean that the specific forms of oppression and prejudice are ignored, but that they are confronted both as specific injustices that cannot be tolerated and as inherent threats to the solidarity demanded by the work of the movement.

The PPEHRC Continues the Poor People’s March

In addition to supporting each other’s campaigns whenever possible, the PPEHRC groups undertake common and coordinated efforts. One that is projected for the summer of 2003 is intended to fulfill a dream interrupted by Dr. King’s assassination in April, 1988 – a continuation of the Poor People’s March of 1968.

This is what Dr. King said on December 4, 1967 at a press conference announcing the Poor People’s March:

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference will lead waves of the nation’s poor and disinherited to Washington, DC next spring to demand redress of their grievances by the United States government. ...America is at a crossroads in history and it is critically important for us as a nation and a society to choose a new path and move upon it with resolution and courage. ...[This will be a move that will be

consciously designed to develop massive dislocation. ...It will be massive dislocation without destroying life or property and we've found through our experience that timid supplications for justice will not solve the problem. We've got to massively confront the power structure (1967, December).

Later in the press conference, Dr. King was asked for the projected date of the march. Explaining that recruits to the leadership of the non-violent army of the poor would have to be trained in the discipline and tactics of non-violence, he projected April of 1968 as the target date. As we know, he was assassinated in Memphis in early April. Although plans moved forward, the line of march was thin and dispirited. But the march is not over.

Put on your walking shoes . . .

In August of 2003, the 35th anniversary of Dr. King's Poor People's March, the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign groups will come together to keep it going. They are calling upon all people who understand that poverty can and must be ended in America to join them in a march from Mississippi to Washington, DC or to support the marchers in other ways.

If there is one condition that pervades and confounds nearly all of the work we do as social workers, it is poverty. If there is one thing that can bind us together in common cause – among ourselves and with our clients – it is ending poverty. So let's put on those walking shoes and enlist in the nonviolent army of the poor.

For more information and to learn of the plans as they evolve, check www.kwru.org regularly. If you are interested in organizing participation in or support for the march, e-mail kwru@kwru.org and say "attention social workers" in the subject line; a member of the KWRU Social Work Strategy Subcommittee will respond. Background and study information is available at the website of the PPEHRC's educational arm, the University of the Poor – www.universityofthepoor.org – which is developing its School for Social Workers. □

Economic Policy Institute. (2002). Introduction and Executive Summary: The State of Working America 2002-03. Retrieved 1/5/03 from <http://www.epinet.org>

King, Martin Luther, Jr. (1967, May). Speech at Staff Retreat [of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference], Penn Center, Frogmore, South Carolina, May 23-31. King Library and Archives. Photocopied transcript, p. 9.

King, Martin Luther, Jr. (1967, December). Press conference announcing the Poor People's Campaign. Atlanta, GA. Transcript retrieved December 9, 2002 from <http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/publications/papers/unpub/671204-003 Announcing Poor Peoples campaign.htm>

King, Martin Luther, Jr. (1967/1989). The trumpet of conscience. San Francisco: Harper & Row
(This article previously appeared in the ACOSA newsletter).

CONNECTIONS

It was 1967. The poster on my wall showed helmeted police beating demonstrators, and the caption read, "Our foreign policy reflects our domestic policy". As I recall, the quote was from Lyndon Johnson. The police came to the door, following up on a minor burglary in the building. Their eyes sweeping the room, the first question one asked was, "Are you a protestor?" My stomach knotted. Protestors don't merit protection? Protestors might harbor thieves? Protestors might be thieves?

Years earlier, I was a child lying on my stomach in front of a TV, watching the Hollywood HUAC hearings. "Are you now, or have you ever been...?" My stomach knotted. Being a communist was legal, but communists don't merit protection? Those accused might harbor Who? Communists or leftists or protestors might... What?

The U.S. isn't on Security Alert. It's on Fear Alert. And what is feared isn't external – it is internal. The traditional response to economic difficulties at home are at play – make a war to distract from the domestic and boost the economy (though too much hardware was already available and not enough of it was destroyed in this 'war' to require any new production – oops), but the connections between waging war and domestic repression are tighter than just waging war to distract the citizenry and boost the economy.

This administration has merely accelerated the trend which became glaringly obvious in 1996-97 with the passage of tax, welfare and immigrant 'reform', criminal 'justice', and 'antiterrorism' legislation of minimizing government's responsibility for the people while maximizing the penalties for engaging in the struggle to hold government responsible.

Foreign diplomats who found they were unable to influence U.S. foreign policy have resigned; INS officials, even of high rank, who exercised a dollop of compassion and common sense have been replaced; politicians who don't go along with a narrow, inflexible party line lose committee chairmanships and funding, and governors who fight against decreased funding find their funding reduced even further. And the poor, immigrants, and those of us organized to defend and ally with them are increasingly intimidated, accused, made pariahs. Others are made to fear us, and we are made to fear retaliation. The corrupting arrogance of power connects our policies – foreign and domestic.

Much has been written about the war, but two recent statements stand out to me as making the connections between foreign and domestic policy.

You could have planted Peace and Solidarity; but you didn't do it. You could have generated programs for the life and development of the people, and you didn't do it. You elected to follow the worst of the paths. Who will be your next victims?

– *Adolfo Perez Esquivel, Argentinean peace activist who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1980.*

The likelihood that your acts of resistance cannot stop the injustice does not exempt you from acting in what you sincerely and reflectively hold to be the best interests of your community.

– *Susan Sontag, speech on March 30, 2003, at the presentation of the Rothko Chapel Oscar Romero Award to Ishai Menuchin, chairman of Yesh Gvul*
Contributed by Marilyn Moch, SWAA member and Co-Chair, the Committee for International Human Rights Inquiry (CIHRI). □

SOCIAL WORK DEPOLITICIZES THE BUSH WAR ON IRAQ

— Sanford F. Schram

Clinical social work has an explanation for why George Bush was so insistent on waging war with Iraq: He is a recovering alcoholic. As quoted in the *Charleston Gazette* Professor Katherine van Wormer of the University of Northern Iowa, an expert in addiction, says Bush has many qualities of a “dry drunk”, a former alcoholic who stopped drinking but still thinks obsessively. She wrote: “Bush’s rigid, judgmental outlook comes across in virtually all his speeches. To fight evil, Bush is ready to take on the world, in almost a biblical sense. ...Bush possesses the characteristics of the ‘dry drunk’ in terms of his incoherence while speaking away from the script; his irritability with anyone (for example, Germany’s Gerhard Schroeder) who dares disagree with him; and his dangerous obsessing about only one thing (Iraq) ... Bush drank heavily for over 20 years until he made the decision to abstain at age 40. About this time, he became a ‘born-again Christian,’ going as usual from one extreme to the other.”

I beg to differ. Clinical explanations for the causes of the Iraq war leave me depressed. Why all this compulsive medicalizing by supposed progressives? To turn the tables, it’s as if we can’t overcome our addictive personalities and put behind us our days of blaming the structures of power on alleged deficiencies our medical models impute to individuals. Won’t we ever get over the imperialistic lust to medicalize far beyond the realms where such thinking is appropriate and effective? It looks not. Once a drunk (with the power to find causes in the individual), always a drunk.

This sort of medicalizing is popular in part because it is politically safe. While it criticizes George Bush, it more importantly deflects attention away from the more serious sources of the problem.

The war on Iraq is a manifestation of the United States’ questionable relationship to the rest of the world. U.S. imperialism and its growing need to police the world to ensure its leadership of an emerging new world order is rooted in our history, culture, economics, and politics. We have been preparing for this role for a long time and Americans, one and all, need to look in the mirror and ask what have they been doing in their lives to challenge this drift toward militarism as a way of consolidating our hegemony in the world. Medicalizing the causes of the war as an aberration of Bush’s personality actually distracts us from examining the real roots of the problem.

Sure, Bush is culpable. He is an irresponsibly ignorant President (like almost none other in U.S. history). He is a craven tool of corporate interests. He is thoughtlessly willing to mystify his efforts on behalf of the acquisitive classes with appeals to Christianity. He may even be in need of relying on the crutches of cliches and simplistic slogans to get through the average day of waging his war on terrorism. None of this is excusable. Yet, none it explains why the U.S. was hated around the world for a long time before Bush seized the Presidency and for an

even longer time before that hatred congealed in the desperate acts of 9/11.

I guess we could medicalize the Arabs who went on the suicide mission of 9/11. It does seem sick what they did. People are often sick, literally and figuratively, but mostly figuratively, which means that literalizing the sickness by medicalizing it and categorizing it just creates more jobs for clinicians. In the case of the war, it does not help us understand the powerful historical forces making someone as sick as George Bush plausible. As sick as he is, he is popular. Now think about that. Is the mass public deluded or indoctrinated or wait, no, they are sick. We are sick. My point exactly!

Cynicism aside. The time is for politics not therapy. Many people around the world, including many social workers, are getting arrested resisting the war. They are involved in politics. They are participating in the public realm, working with other citizens trying to influence our sick political process. We all should be doing that. Let those people who care about George Bush help him get the treatment he needs.

Social work historically, more often than not, prefers to translate political problems back into clinical ones where the safe settings of social work practice can operate. This is depoliticizing important political struggles. We are only helping the enemy when that happens.

Sure Hitler was deranged or so it seems. Was the Holocaust the product of one man’s sickness? Did Hitler invent anti-Semitism? If he had gotten treatment would six million Jews have lived?

Americans hate politics. Piles of books have that in their title. To what extent does obsessing about Bush’s addictive personality reflect our inability to stand up for democracy? This is the challenge to social work in an era of frightening politics. □

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Letters to the editor, essays, news items, BCRS Chapter activities, cartoons, etc., are all welcome!

Please note: The deadline for materials submitted for inclusion in the next *BCR Reports* is **Sept. 15, 2003**.

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WEBSITE UPDATE

– Michael Coconis

It's finally here – a new and much improved website for SWAA. For now, it will have a different address and I'm sorry to add another piece of information to your "favorites" and bookmarks. The site will be "officially" launched for public viewing by July 15, 2004 as modifications are being suggested and changed now. So, come visit us and then add suggestions. Visit: <http://swaaction.homestead.com> for an

updated look. Now, we just need information and useful content for the page so if you've written something that you'd like to see on the site, contact Michel at michel4justice@yahoo.com for consideration.

We look forward to your visit and hope you'll tell your friends about us. BTW, you can now get the membership form on-line! Hint, hint! ☐

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