

Stanislaus CONNECTIONS

Working for peace, justice and a sustainable environment

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Mr. President, the Word Is War

By REP. DENNIS KUCINICH, Reader Supported News

Congressman Dennis Kucinich (D-OH) today released the following statement responding the Office of Legal Counsel's opinion (<http://www.justice.gov/olc/2011/authority-military-use-in-libya.pdf>) regarding the President's authority to use military force in Libya:

In the legal memo provided by the President's Office of Legal Counsel,

the Administration argues that the President had the authority to attack Libya absent Congressional authorization because he determined it was in the national interest and because the US is engaged in limited military operations that do not constitute a war.

The war in Libya is not in our national interest. The claim that the US had to act in Libya in order to maintain stability in the region - "a vital US interest" - runs contrary

to the history of US military intervention in the region. As evidenced by US intervention in Afghanistan, Iraq and drone bombing campaigns in Pakistan, rather than maintain stability, US military action in the region has unfortunately served to further insta-

bility. Occupations fuel insurgencies and close a circle of never-ending violence. Additionally, the doctrine that the US has a responsibility to act militarily, without prior authorization from

Congress, in the event of a threat to any of our friends in the world puts us on a path to permanent war and has no legal basis in the Constitution or the War Powers Act.

The Obama Administration has prosecuted a war that is "not a war." The assertion that US military actions in Libya do not constitute war belies the significant use of military force

The attempt to assert that this is not a war does violence to cognition and violence to the English language. It is positively Orwellian.

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Regarding Pfc. Bradley Manning

My experience dealing with the Department of Defense has been Kafkaesque

By CONGRESSMAN DENNIS KUCINICH, truthout

Since my initial request to visit Private First Class (Pfc.) Bradley Manning on February 4, 2011, the Department of Defense (DoD) has consistently sought to frustrate any attempts to communicate with Pfc. Manning regarding his well-being.

I, or my staff, have been shuffled between the Secretary of the Army, the Secretary of the Navy, and the Office of Secretary Gates. I was initially told that I would need Pfc. Manning's approval in order to meet with him. When Pfc. Manning indicated his desire to meet with me, I was belatedly informed that the meeting could only take place if it was recorded because of a Monitoring Order imposed by the military's Special Courts-Martial Convening Authority on September 16, 2010, which was convened for the case. Confidentiality is required, however, to achieve the candor that is necessary to perform the oversight functions with which I am tasked as a Member of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. I was also told that I could be subpoenaed to testify about the contents of my conversation with Pfc. Manning.

This is a clear subversion of the constitutionally protected oversight process and it severely undermines the rights of any Member of Congress seeking to gather information on the conditions of a detainee in U.S. custody.

Though he has been held in custody since July 29, 2010, Pfc. Manning has not been convicted of any crime. His lawyer reports that he continues to be held in isolation 23 hours a day. He was also forced to strip naked at night and to stand at attention during roll call in front of other prisoners. The conditions of his treatment may violate his right to be protected from 'cruel and unusual punishment,' and punishment without trial as

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enshrined in the 8th and 5th Amendments of the Constitution.

We now hear that the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Juan E. Mendez, was denied a private meeting with Pfc. Manning in order to determine whether the conditions of Manning's confinement amount to torture. The very existence of a U.N. Special Rapporteur on torture investigation speaks volumes about the conditions of his treatment.

The continued delays I have experienced amount to a subversion of Pfc. Manning's

Peace Camp to focus on nonviolent communication

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Name of Parent/Legal Guardian (PRINT) _____

Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian _____ Date _____

Note: If adults bring children not their own, the parent/legal guardian of those children must complete and sign a separate parent authorization.

For camp information and scholarship availability:
 Call Ken Schroeder, (209) 569-0321.

By **KEN SCHROEDER**

Register now for Peace Camp, June 24-26 at Camp Peaceful Pines in the Sierra. Lenore Mantegna will lead us in a workshop on nonviolent communication.

Lenore is a peace advocate and long-time participant at Peace Camp and the Modesto Peace/Life Center. Currently living in Santa Cruz and working as Director of Special Education for Santa Clara Unified School District, she is mother of 3 adult daughters (who also attended camp in years past, Andrea, Deanna and Lydia) and grandmother to "9". She has a background in counseling and education. She began learning and practicing Non Violent Communication in 2009 with the Santa Cruz NVC community. She says, "The work of Marshall Rosenberg (who created the NVC program) has open my eyes to the meaning of true human connections through empathy, love and compassion. I am committed to continuing NVC education and now working toward my trainer certification."

In addition to the workshops there will be hiking, campfire, a talent show, table tennis, arts and crafts, children's activities, and lots of stimulating conversation with interesting people of all ages.

At the 6,200-foot elevation in the Stanislaus National Forest near the Clark Fork of the Stanislaus River, Camp Peaceful Pines is located about 25 miles above Pinecrest off Hwy. 108. Surrounded by tall peaks, the camp is set in the forest and has a creek running through it. Sunrise Rock, with views of the river valley, is a short hike from camp.

The camp features kitchen and bathroom facilities, rustic cabins and platform tents and a cabin for those with special needs. Campers share in meal preparation, cleanup, and other work. Families and individuals are welcome.

The \$70 fee covers program, food and lodging for the weekend. Young people are \$50. Early registration, before June 6th, entitles registrants to a \$10.00 per person discount. Partial scholarships and day-rates are also available. Registration forms are available in this issue at www.stanislausconnections.org where they can be printed and mailed. Directions and additional details will be mailed to registrants.

Campers are welcome to arrive any time after 2:00 p.m. on Friday. The camp opens with supper on Friday and closes at noon on Sunday. Directions and other information will be mailed to participants before camp. Information: Ken Schroeder, 209-569-0321.

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The New Corporate World Order

BY ROBERT SCHEER

The debate over Republicans' insistence on continued tax breaks for the superrich and the corporations they run should come to a screeching halt with the report in Tuesday's Wall Street Journal headlined "Big U.S. Firms Shift Hiring Abroad." Those tax breaks over the past decade, leaving some corporations such as General Electric to pay no taxes at all, were supposed to lead to job creation, but just the opposite has occurred. As the WSJ put it, the multinational companies "cut their work forces in the U.S. by 2.9 million during the 2000s while increasing employment overseas by 2.4 million, new data from the U.S. Commerce Department show."

General Electric, which was bailed out by taxpayers and which stored so much of its profit abroad that it paid no taxes for the past two years, was forced to tighten up, but while cutting its foreign workforce by 1,000, it cut a far more severe 28,000 in the United States. Jeffrey Immelt, the CEO of GE, recently appointed by President Barack Obama as his chief outside economic adviser, admits that this does not involve poorly paid work that Americans don't want, but instead prime jobs: "We've globalized around markets, not cheap labor. The era of globalization around cheap labor is over. Today we go to China, we go to India, because that's where the customers are."

There is a bitter irony in that statement given that consumer purchasing power is down in the U.S. thanks to the devastating collapse of a housing bubble GE Capital fed with suspect mortgage financing that provided the company with well over half of its profits before the crash. The loss of well-paying jobs at multinationals like GE to other nations—54 percent of the GE workforce is foreign—exacerbates the plight of U.S. consumers while making the foreign customers even more attractive.

More than half of all discretionary spending, the dollars that the Republicans in Congress now want to take out of needed domestic programs, is accounted for by defense spending.

Of course it will be argued that multinational corporations have the right to arrange their business as they see fit in order to maximize profit. But if that is the case, do beleaguered American taxpayers have to foot the bill? When those corporations run into trouble overseas because of financial hustles or hostile locals and need the diplomatic and military might of the U.S. government to protect their interests abroad, it is again the U.S. taxpayer who must pay to maintain this new world order. It is an order, as we see with three current wars and a military budget that rivals Cold War highs, that is contributing mightily to the U.S. government debt. More than half of all discretionary spending, the dollars that the Republicans in Congress now want to take out of needed domestic programs, is accounted for by defense spending. That

defense spending to support a massive network of military bases and deployed weapons and troops is key to establishing an order in which the interests of American corporations are attended to. If the companies don't feel that way, let them

It was the deregulation of international banking standards that created the conditions for the recent disastrous housing and banking meltdown.

operate under the flag of Liberia or the Cayman Islands.

No less important than U.S. military muscle is the power of the American government to construct and enforce a worldwide trade and finance structure to the advantage of U.S.-based multinational corporations. That is why the companies spend so much money lobbying Congress on matters ranging from regional trade agreements to international banking regulations. It is precisely the impact of trade agreements like NAFTA that has facilitated the erosion of well-paying jobs. And it was the deregulation of international banking standards, led by the U.S. Treasury Department under the past five presidents, that created the conditions for the recent disastrous housing and banking meltdown.

Big government, the devil that Republicans love to inveigh against, is big precisely because it is so active in so many costly ways in serving the interests of our biggest corporations. Corporate lobbyists attest with their every breath that big government and big business are bedmates in a bountiful venture that impoverishes the rest of us. It is time to admit that we are, in practice if not surface appearance, close to the Chinese communist model of state-sponsored capitalism that sacrifices the interests of ordinary workers, be they in the public or private sector, for the exorbitant profits of the superrich. It is the corporations that need big government to protect their interests, and one would hope they would be willing to pay for the services that their government so faithfully renders to make them obscenely wealthy as it studiously ignores the well-being of the rest of us.

http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/the_new_corporate_world_order_20110419/

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I Pledge Allegiance to the Corporation: A Poem

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With Coca Cola
And Viagra
For Yahoo!

— Adam White

Manning

. . . from page 1

legal rights as well as my own rights and obligations as a Member of Congress to conduct oversight. The whole world is now watching.

What is going on with Secretary Gates and the Department of Defense with respect to Pfc. Manning's treatment is more consistent with Kafka than the U.S. Constitution. I will not cease in my efforts to determine whether or not the conditions under which he has been held constitute torture.

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<http://www.truthout.org/my-experience-dealing-department-defense-regarding-pfc-manning-has-been-kafkaesque/1302764400>

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Never judge a stove by its price tag

By JENIFER WEST

I recently found myself in the market for a stove, and actually enjoyed the highly unusual blessing of having a variety of sizes and features from which to choose.

I say blessing, but it's actually been a bit more than that. When I first looked into it, I had the somewhat dubious impression that I should be able to find a decent one for less than \$2,500. I should explain here that, as a person who spends a serious amount of time in the kitchen, I had 3 requirements, all set in stone: 1) Gas cooktop; 2) Electric oven (preferably with a convection setting); and 3) More than 4 burners. Having cooked on various stoves, gas and electric, personally and professionally, there was no question which I preferred – you could not, these days, pay me to cook on an electric cooktop. The oven, however, is another story. I'll never forget the time I attempted to bake the Thanksgiving turkey in the oven on my gas range – what a disaster!



Finally, armed with a general idea of the size and features I wanted, I talked to a nice lady at the appliance store. We spoke for several minutes, and she assured me she'd get back to me right away. And she did. She referred me to two websites, both with "star" in the name. But, after hearing the price (and recovering from the fainting), I asked her to find me something a little more reasonable. She promised to call me back when she'd found something at my "price point."

I never heard from her again.

So I realized that, if we were willing to pay a little more, I could step up to the "professional" level. Suddenly, I was seeing names like Wolf, Viking, Thermador, and Aga. And reading about features like double ovens (or more), slow cook, and even a proof setting for raising bread! I bake a lot of bread, and I must admit, that I was sorely tempted by the ones with that feature, plus a whole stockpot full of others! But oh, what a double-edged sword it is, living in the digital

age, when as much information as one can absorb (if not much, much more) is available at the click of a mouse! Those storied ranges, whose names and full-color, glossy photos one is likely to encounter in magazines like Bon Appétit, Gourmet and Food & Wine, turned out, apparently, to be fraught with issues – design flaws, and, even to my amazement, quality and reliability issues. Each time I'd fallen in love with a certain make and model, I went online to investigate the experience of some of the folks who actually own them – and would find at least as many negative reviews as positive. Aaaaargh! Who'd have thought that a person could pay that much money for a piece of equipment and still have so much to complain about. (In all fairness, if I'd paid that much for an appliance and consistently had trouble with it, I'd probably complain, long and loud, to anyone who'd listen, too.) But, oh boy, did that Aga look cool! And three ovens!

Finally, I decided that I'd probably be better off to skip the "professional" category, and go back to looking for a "stripped-down" "plain-Jane" model. So long as it offered a gas cooktop, electric oven and more than 4 burners, I'd be willing to forgo all the bells and whistles (although I sure would've liked to have that proof option). So I skipped the "professional", and just searched for "dual fuel range." After a little research, I found one that has 5 burners, got about 5 negative reviews out of 50 (as opposed to a 50 – 75% negative ratio for the higher-end units), and has 2 ovens. And it costs less than half of what we might have paid for one of those fancy, high-end jobs. I haven't been able to order it just yet, though – the house where it's going won't be available to us for another couple of weeks. But I'm glad to finally know what we need, and am ready to place the order the minute I get the green light.

Now, let me see – I know there's something else we need. Ah, yes, the hood. Now do I want just a plain hood, a hood-and-microwave combination, or... Oh my goodness, they make them with convection now, too?

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The World of Our Dreams

By DAVID KORTEN

A stunning and hopeful truth: The world we must create in order to survive is also the vision that unites us.

This is the sixteenth of a series of blogs based on excerpts adapted from the 2nd edition of *Agenda for a New Economy: From Phantom Wealth to Real Wealth*. I wrote *Agenda* to spur a national conversation on economic policy issues and options that are otherwise largely ignored. This blog series is intended to contribute to that conversation. —DK (See <http://www.yes-magazine.org/blogs/david-korten/the-world-of-our-dreams>)

In 1992, I participated in the civil society portion of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It involved some fifteen thousand people representing the vast variety of humanity's races, religions, nationalities, and languages. It was, at the time, the largest and most diverse global gathering in human history. Our discussions centered on defining, and committing ourselves to, the vision of the world we would create together.

These discussions were chaotic and often contentious. But at one point it hit me like a bolt of lightning. Despite our differences, we all wanted the same things: healthy, happy children, families, and communities living in peace and cooperation in healthy natural environments. Out of our conversations emerged an articulation of our shared dream of a world in which people and nature live in dynamic, creative, cooperative, and balanced relationships. The Earth Charter, which is the product of a continuation of this discussion, calls it Earth Community, a community of life. Download the Earth Charter at http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/invent/images/uploads/echarter_english.pdf

I've lived in a lot of places with starkly different cultures: Ethiopia, Nicaragua, Indonesia, the Philippines, California, Massachusetts, Florida, Virginia, New York City, and Bainbridge Island in Puget Sound. Surprise! Look beneath the colorful differences in cultural expression and you find at the core everyone wants to breathe clean air and drink clean water. They want tasty, nutritious food uncontaminated with toxins. They want meaningful work, a living wage, success and happiness for their children, and security in their old age. They want a say in the decisions their governments make and they want to live in peace.

Rabbi Michael Lerner, the editor of *Tikkun* magazine, observes that:

The great spiritual-religious wisdom traditions of the world have all taught some variant of this message: The deepest human pleasures come from living in a world based on justice, peace, love, generosity, kindness, and celebration of the universe and service to the ultimate moral law of the universe (whether learned through revelation or through reason).

For 5,000 years we have continuously recreated a world that appeals only to the psychologically deranged.

Beyond our varied races, religions, nationalities, and languages, we humans share a collective dream of a world of healthy, happy children, families, communities, and natural environments joined in peace and cooperation. These are all forms of real wealth that are not available for purchase or

sale and have no monetary equivalent. These are our primary sources of true happiness.

We have been trapped in Empire's pernicious rule-or-be-ruled, kill-or-be-killed, play-or-die dynamic by geographic and cultural barriers that have kept us divided and unable to embrace our true nature and common interest. The possibility to liberate ourselves from this self-inflicted tragedy is within our grasp.

The communication technologies of the Internet in place for little more than 20 years create a potential for collective dialogue, organizing, and action never before available. We now have the means, as well as the need and the right, to bridge the geographic and cultural barriers that have for so long divided us, recognize our common yearning, and bring forth cultures and institutions that cultivate and reward our higher nature.

Do we have the will? I believe we do. It is being expressed by growing millions of people working largely outside the institutions of Empire.

Yet economists prefer to assess economic performance by growth in gross domestic product (GDP), a measure of the market value of economic output. The GDP can be rising in the face of simultaneous epidemics of child obesity and starvation. It can be rising in the face of disintegrating families and a vanishing middle class, increasing prison populations, rising unemployment, the disruption of community, collapsing environmental systems, the hollowing out of domestic manufacturing capabilities, failing schools, growing trade deficits, and costly but senseless foreign wars.

And all the while, economists tell us we are getting richer. Such nonsense.

Consider how differently we might organize our human economies if we measured economic performance by indicators of the outcomes we truly seek—the sources of true happiness.

It is a stunning and hopeful truth. The world we must now create if there is to be a human future is also the world of our common dream. The barriers are self-inflicted. They include the fabricated belief that we are by nature incapable of cooperating in the common good and the use of flawed measures of economic and social performance.

So let us recognize and cultivate the potentials of our true nature and henceforth assess the performance of our economies against the outcomes we truly seek.

The ideas presented here are developed in greater detail in *Agenda for a New Economy* available at <http://store.yesmagazine.org/other-products/agenda-for-new-economy-2nd-edition>

David Korten (<http://livingeconomiesforum.org/>) is the author of *Agenda for a New Economy*, *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community*, and the international best seller *When Corporations Rule the World*. He is board chair of YES! Magazine and co-chair of the New Economy Working Group.

Source URL: <http://www.commondreams.org/view/2011/04/19-0>

War

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in Libya. The Administration's own Secretary of Defense, while testifying before Congress last month, admitted that enforcing a no-fly zone in Libya was an act of war: "A no-fly zone begins with an attack on Libya to destroy the air defenses." [1] The United States, thus far, has spent well over \$550 million on the war in Libya, using at least 112 long-range Tomahawk cruise missiles, estimated to cost up to \$1.5 million each, in the first day alone. The US also used Joint Direct Attack Munitions - 2,000 pound bombs - to bomb Libya. The characterization of the use of force in Libya solely as a humanitarian intervention cannot hide the reality of what war is. The attempt to assert that this is not a war does violence to cognition and violence to the English language. It is positively Orwellian.

The Administration also claims that authority to use US military force abroad was provided by United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1973, which authorized member states to "take all necessary measures" to protect Libyan civilians and to enforce a no-fly zone. The Constitution does not provide an exception for the President to unilaterally decide to use military force abroad if an international body, such as the United Nations, provides him with one. It is unequivocally clear, in Article 1, Section 8, that the power to authorize the use of military force or to declare war lies solely with Congress.

The law provides the President with the authority to use military force absent prior Congressional authorization only to repel sudden or imminent attack. There was no threat of sudden or imminent attack to the United States from Libya. President Obama himself recognized the constitutional limitations imposed on any US President when, in an October 2008 interview, he stated that "The President does not have power under the Constitution to unilaterally authorize a military attack in a situation that does not involve stopping an actual or imminent threat to the nation." [2]

In the sophistry of the Office of Legal Counsel's memo, the Obama administration fails to justify what cannot be justified. While the President has argued that the credibility of the United Nations (UN) was at stake if members of the Security Council did not act, it is actually the credibility of his administration and of our own democracy that is at stake. Preserving the credibility of the UN has never been a reason to go to war. A plain reading of the US Constitution explicitly places war powers in the hands of Congress.

In this flimsy attempt to justify military action in Libya, it appears as though the administration is taking scissors and scotch tape to the Constitution, cutting out sections they do not like, and replacing them with legal theory that is reminiscent of the now discredited theories (of a former administration) which were used to justify torture.

[1] Sanger, David E. and Shanker, Tom. (2011, March 2). "Gates Warns of Risks of No-Fly Zone." *The New York Times*, online.

Accessible: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/03/world/africa/03military.html>

[2] Savage, Charlie. (2007, December 20). "Barack Obama's Q&A." *The Boston Globe*, online.

Accessible: <http://www.boston.com/news/politics/2008/specials/CandidateQA/ObamaQA/>

<http://www.readersupportednews.org/opinion2/266-32/5562-mr-president-the-word-is-war>

The Gold and the Stone

By URI AVNER

THERE IS something tragicomic about the persona of Richard Goldstone.

First there was a veritable storm of fury when the original Goldstone report was issued.

What a fiend! A Jew who claims to be a Zionist and an Israel-lover, who publishes the most abominable slanders against our valiant soldiers, aiding and abetting the worst anti-Semites around the world! The very prototype of a self-hating Jew! Still worse, a “mosser” – a Jew who turns another Jew over to the evil Goyim, the most detested figure in Jewish folklore.

And now the turnabout. Goldstone, the Jew who has recanted. Goldstone who has publicly confessed that he was wrong all along. That the Israeli army committed no crimes in the 2009-2010 “Cast Lead” Gaza operation, On the contrary, while the Israeli army has conducted honest and meticulous investigations into all the allegations, Hamas has not investigated any of the horrendous crimes it has committed.

Goldstone, the Man of Stone, has become Goldstone, the Man of Gold. A man of conscience! A man to be admired!

It was, of course, Binyamin Netanyahu who had the final word. Goldstone’s recantation, he summarized, has confirmed once again that the IDF is the Most Moral Army in the World.

MY HEART bleeds for Judge Goldstone. From the beginning he was placed in an impossible situation.

The UN commission, which appointed him to head the inquiry into the allegations of war crimes committed during the operation, was acting on a seemingly logical but actually foolish calculation. Appointing to the job a good Jew, and an avowed Zionist to boot, would disarm, it was thought, any allegation of anti-Israeli bias.

Goldstone and his colleagues undoubtedly did an honest and conscientious job. They sifted the evidence laid before them and arrived at reasonable conclusions on that basis. However, almost all the evidence came from Palestinian and UN sources. The commission could not interrogate the officers and soldiers of the Israeli forces because our government, in a typical and almost routine act of folly, refused to cooperate.

Why? The basic assumption is that all the world is out to get us, not because of anything we do, but because we are Jews. We know we are right, and we know that they are out to prove us wrong. So why cooperate with these bloody anti-Semites and Jewish self-haters?

Today, almost all influential Israelis concede that this was a stupid attitude. But there is no guarantee that our leaders will behave any differently next time, especially since the army is dead set against allowing any soldiers to appear before a non-Israeli forum, or, for that matter, before an Israeli non-military forum either.

BACK TO poor Goldstone. After the publication of his commission’s report, his life became hell.

The full fury of the Jewish ghetto against traitors from its midst was turned on him. Jews objected to his attending his grandson’s Bar Mitzvah. His friends turned away from him. He was ostracized by all the people he valued.

So he searched his soul and found that he had been wrong all along. His findings were one-sided. He would have found

differently if he had heard the Israeli side of the story. The Israeli army has conducted honest investigations into the allegations, while the barbarous Hamas has not conducted any investigations at all into their obvious war crimes.

So when was Goldstone wrong? The first or the second time?



These two mental attitudes lead necessarily to a strategic and tactical doctrine which dictates the application of lethal force to anyone and anything that can possibly menace soldiers advancing in enemy territory.

The answer is, alas, that he was wrong both times.

THE VERY term “war crimes” is problematic. War itself is a crime, never to be justified unless it is the only way to prevent a bigger crime – as with the war against Adolf Hitler, and now – on an incomparably smaller scale – against Muammar Qaddafi.

The idea of war crimes arose after the horrendous atrocities of the 30-year war, which devastated central Europe. The idea was that it is impossible to prevent brutal actions if they are needed to win a war, but that such actions are illegitimate if they are not needed for this purpose. The principle is not moral, but practical. Killing prisoners and civilians is a war crime, because it serves no effective military purpose, since both sides can do it. So is the wanton destruction of property.

In Israel this principle was embodied in the landmark judgment by Binyamin Halevy after the 1956 Kafr Qasim massacre of innocent farmers, men, women and children. The Judge ruled that a “black flag” flies over “manifestly” illegal orders – orders which even a simple person can see are illegal, without talking to a lawyer. Since then, obeying such orders has been a crime under Israeli law.

THE REAL question about Cast Lead is not whether individual soldiers did commit such crimes. They sure did – any army is composed of all types of human beings, decent youngsters with a moral conscience besides sadists, imbeciles

and others suffering from moral insanity. In a war you give all of them arms and a license to kill, and the results can be foreseen. That is one reason why “war is hell.”

The problem with Lebanon War II and Cast Lead is that the basic approach – the same in both cases – makes war crimes as good as inevitable. The planners were no monsters – they just did their job. They superimposed two facts one on the other. The result was inevitable.

One consideration was the requirement to avoid casualties on our side. We have a people’s army, composed of conscripts from all walks of life (like the US army in Vietnam but not in Afghanistan.) Our public opinion judges wars according to the number of (our) soldiers killed and wounded. So the directive to the military planners is: do everything possible so the number of our casualties will be next to nil.

The other fact is the total disregard for the humanity of the other side. Years and years of the occupation have created an army for whom Palestinians, and Arabs in general, are mere objects. Not human enemies, not even human monsters, just objects.

These two mental attitudes lead necessarily to a strategic and tactical doctrine which dictates the application of lethal force to anyone and anything that can possibly menace soldiers advancing in enemy territory – liquidating them in front of the soldiers preferably from afar by artillery and air power.

When the opposition is a resistance movement operating in a densely populated area, the results can almost be calculated mathematically. In Cast Lead, at least 350 Palestinian civilians, among them hundreds of women and children, were killed, together with about 750 enemy fighters. On the Israeli

GOLDSTONE continued p. 10

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Israel and Palestine: A Dialogue

Editor's note: In the April issue, we printed the article, "Support growing for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions for Palestine" written By Dan Onorato. We received a reply to that article. It is printed below along with Dan Onorato's reply.

Editor:

Let's see if I have this correct. The Palestinians won't even recognize Israel's right to exist. They are constantly caught red handed trying to move guns, ammo and rockets into their enclaves to use against Israel. Every time Israel gives ground or steps back, Hamas uses the time and reclaimed land to constantly lob artillery into the Israeli civilian population. After days or weeks of this, Israel finally strikes back and all you hear about is the aggression of Israel.

I would expect at least a balanced report in your paper. Not just propaganda. There is plenty of blame to go around on both sides, but to just print one side is shoddy journalism at best.

Tom Stedman
Modesto

Dan Onorato's Response:

Mr. Stedman's assertion that "the Palestinians don't even recognize Israel's right to exist" is an oft repeated but factually inaccurate sweeping generalization. In 1988 Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, representing the Palestinian people at large, officially recognized the State of Israel. Since then Hamas's top leaders in Gaza and Syria have publicly stated they would recognize the State of Israel and pursue a two-State solution once Israel agreed to comply with international law on three issues: 1) withdrawing from the occupied territories (Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem) and accepting as its border the internationally recognized border between the two states, the "Green Line"; 2) granting the right of return to Palestinians who fled or were forced to flee their homes in the 1948 and 1967 wars; and 3) recognizing East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine. If these conditions are met to the satisfaction of Palestinians as expressed in a vote, Hamas has repeatedly stated it will accept Israel's legitimacy as a state. Since 1967 the U.N. has repeatedly called on Israel to comply with these three conditions, but Israel persists in its refusal. This history of Israel's ignoring international law helps create a larger perspective in which to evaluate why some Palestinians—not all or even most, as Tom implies—still don't accept Israel's right to exist.

That extremist groups, mostly in Gaza, "lob artillery" into nearby small cities in Israel is a well-known and much publicized fact. Relatively few of those rocket attacks are

effectual, so whatever weapons Gazans may be receiving are clearly not very good. However, even though the attacks have caused relatively few injuries or deaths, killing even one innocent civilian is wrong. Such acts, in my view, are forms of terrorism and should stop. I don't condone them. Besides being immoral and illegal, from a practical point of view they deepen Israel's distrust of Palestinians and make more difficult the efforts of those in Israel and the occupied territories who are working courageously for a just and lasting peace. In addition, such violence only undermines international sympathy for the plight of Palestinians living under a harsh occupation, and helps justify Israel's punishing reprisals.

The most egregious reprisal in recent years was Israel's invasion of Gaza in December 2009, in which Israeli deaths were 13, Palestinian deaths 1,400. But that invasion was unnecessary. Six months earlier, Israel and Hamas had made a truce to reduce violence on both sides. Israel agreed to loosen its blockade that was making even worse the already existing humanitarian disaster in Gaza, and Hamas would stop shooting rockets at Israeli cities nearby.

Statistics show that over five months Hamas reduced rocket attacks down to fewer than 20 a month (from over a 100). But Israel did little to mitigate the punishing effects of its blockade. In November when an Israeli commando unit killed four Gazans, the truce began to unravel. Israel could have handled the issue diplomatically, but instead it invaded in full force.

I highlight the situation in Gaza because when Tom writes, "Every time Israel gives ground . . ." I assume he has in mind Israel's removal of 8,000 settlers from Gaza in 2005 so the land would supposedly be in Palestinian control. But though its settlers left Gaza, Israel never relinquished control over it. It enforced tight restrictions on access to Gaza from the sea, as was dramatized last year in the Israeli attack on the flotilla bringing humanitarian aid, and it surrounded Gaza with a fence. Moreover, it imposed a blockade that severely reduced entry of essential fuel, medical, and construction items. Even though Israel under international pressure has since allowed more items into Gaza, the area still has an unemployment rate of nearly 50%, and many observers liken it to a concentration camp. This maintenance of control that causes continued suffering on a large scale in Gaza is hardly giving ground.

A further fact needs to be considered. One week after Israel's pullout from Gaza, Israel annexed a huge settlement east of Jerusalem, Ma'ale Adumim. The pullout got front-page coverage worldwide. News of the annexation was buried inside in a few paragraphs. The point is significant. Gaza had become a headache for Israel, a source of international criticism because Israel, as the occupying power, had kept most Gazans in utter poverty. So leaving Gaza would make Israel look good in the eyes of the world. But all the drama surrounding the pullout served another purpose: it distracted world attention from Israel's continued illegal annexations of Palestinian land for new Israeli settlements.

This continuing expansion of Israel into land that by international law belongs to the Palestinians—a fact seldom mentioned in our mainstream media—is the crux of the conflict. In February the UN Security Council voted to condemn Israel's

settlement policy as illegal and called for an immediate halt to further expansions. The U.S. vetoed the resolution. Then in March, Israel proceeded to annex another large settlement bordering East Jerusalem. So much for Israel giving ground.

Tom concludes by calling my article one-sided "propaganda." Such claims usually reflect one's point of view. It's true that when I wrote the article I was writing from the perspective of Palestinians, but I did that because our mainstream media still conveys a predominantly pro-Israel picture, and has reported little about the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) effort. I wanted to explain the Palestinians' frustration over the last few years with the international community's tepid measures to pressure Israel to end its occupation, and with President Obama, whose actions so far have not matched his stated commitment. I tried to show how their initiative to start the BDS movement was increasing the pressure of world opinion against Israel's intransigence, and thus constituted a reason for hope. It's true, as Tom writes, that there "is plenty of blame to go around on both sides," but in the mainstream media the finger usually points at the Palestinians.

Our government could play a crucial role in helping bring about a just and lasting peace that would benefit both Israelis and Palestinians. But the pro-Israel lobby has Congress in their pocket. Informed citizens committed to a fair resolution of the conflict can help change that imbalance. Therein lies my hope.

Roots of The Israel/Palestine Conflict. Where Is The Hope For Peace? What Can We Do?

Dan Onorato presents a multimedia program on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In 2005, Onorato, as part of an Interfaith Peace-Builders delegation, met with courageous Israeli and Palestinian officials, activists, and organizations working for a just and lasting peace.

Israel's occupation of Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem, and the courageous peacemakers' work will be highlighted.

Wednesday, May 11, 7 p.m., Fellowship Hall, College Avenue Congregational UCC, College & Orangeburg, Modesto, 7 pm. Info: 526-5436.



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This “liberal” does not like labels

By SALLY MEARS

It's so strange and interesting to me when I encounter 'like-minded' individuals and proceed to watch the layers peel away of what I assumed was 'like' and see how un-like we actually are. But – that's a good thing and it falls in line with what liberal people embrace: diversity. And it's a wonderful human trait.

But I'd like to, for the record, state why this “liberal” chooses to focus on what some choose to judge as somehow wrong-focused, misguided or even Anti-Human. I don't like labels, with all the built-in assumptions they convey, and that have no place in free societies containing unique individuals with a multitude of personal stories to tell. That being said, I've been stamped with a varied array of labels: animal activist (i.e. human hater), vegetarian (weirdo), environmentalist (tree hugger) and simply a bleeding heart liberal. This commentary is directed, though, to other fellow liberals and progressives that don't get why I, and others, choose to focus on some issues which seem to “un-human.” Well, I can't speak for other activists but that label is already so wrong. But-hear me out and if at the end you believe I should wear a scarlet label, I will accept it.

The causes I choose to align myself with have everything to do with issues of social justice, poverty, human rights, compassion and respect, personal responsibility and accountability, and preservation of the planet for future generations.

We cannot separate animal issues because we humans brought animals into our society in various forms and, unfortunately, shirked our responsibility in favor of more greed and power. Here are a few points:

- We test on animals and use results for humans, even growing parts in/on animals to replace our own human parts. Quite a contradiction that animal parts are good enough to install in us since the animals are similar enough to us – yet, these animals can be used/abused/discarded because they are not human. We can cut them up and sell their parts for a fun souvenir because: they are not human. We can abuse, maim and kill them for contest, sport, entertainment and gambling and it's OK – they aren't human. We can consume them without conscience, despite the magnitude of the suffering it took to get that domestic or exotic animal on your plate – we are human, and we can decide the fate of everything we encounter.

Some of us see this as a contradiction of mammoth proportions, and a complete failing of humans – burying all the best parts of what makes us human. But when some try to speak up for the other creatures who inhabit the world with us – to help some to maybe re-think and acknowledge the arrogance and greed behind much of what is now common-

place – we are told many times, in no uncertain terms: They are just animals.

- Why do we have pets? Many of us can't imagine life without them. They never judge us the way we judge them. Yet the abuse, neglect and purposeful cruelty by the hands of thousands of people that walk among you, should make us all question the human species. Humans are the only species (and yes, we are animals too) with the capacity to do what we do, and we are also the ones to step up and do better at being human.

When I'm being interrogated by others (those with very similar views on social and political issues), I am frequently baffled by a lack of tolerance of these views. I expect it from those whom I know are on opposite ends of the spectrum, always quoting the hot topics of the day, and the canned question I hear almost every time is, “Where is my concern for the unborn?” Wow – where do I start? It astounds me that compassion towards animals makes me unable to care about anything or anybody else. With the arrogance we humans wield on the rest of creation, how are advocates for any of the downtrodden and voiceless hurt more by activists bringing some unpleasant human failings to the surface? Do we suddenly lack the capacity to care on a large scale because we have specific focuses?

People who care (some, a lot) about football, dancing, church, careers etc., can do other things as well, and aren't questioned for that. But animal advocates are deemed to be single-minded zealots whom others should be wary of? Why the fear?

Animal advocacy has even reached the party line realm, though there are some Democrats who do not believe in animal protections of any kind, and some Republicans that are wonderful animal welfare supporters, it is becoming more and more one-sided, like the environmental causes today. Gone are the days when these issues were not as affected by lobbyists and large donors, and the quality of life was a human issue, transcending party divisions. It was during the Nixon administration that Earth Day was started and the Clean Air and Water acts were implemented.

I look forward to the day when we can all have respect, instead of fear and intolerance, for each other and for all earthlings and our surroundings. I hope that those, with whom I never seem to see eye-to-eye on most subjects, can at least get to the point of civil discourse. But even more so I hope my more like-minded brothers and sisters, whom I stand with at peace rallies, concerts, track meets and in the grocery line can think twice about this crazy animal activist, and realize that, with all those industries and conditions containing suffering animals, there are also suffering humans: extreme poverty, human rights violations in sweat shops and slaughterhouses, domestic violence and child abuse. The list goes on and it's all connected. With a new-found respect for all and a reduction in greed, ALL of Earth's inhabitants suffer less. There is “no humans versus animals” – we are literally in this together. A true citizen avoids the pitfalls of choosing a side or a label, and opts instead to converse, educate, advocate and continue to discover the ever-evolving perspectives of the human being.

Sally Mears, Cruelty-Free Consumers, Modesto, (209) 402-8923.

In Memoriam: Lee Nicholson, September 15, 1936 – March 19, 2011

A Remembrance

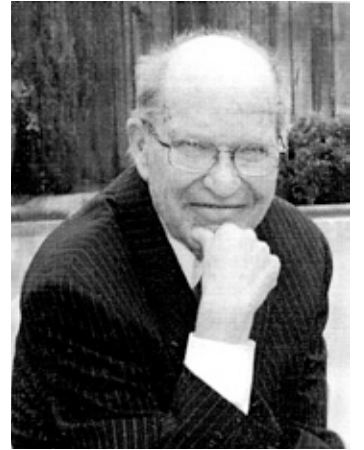
By GILLIAN WEGENER


In 1999, I gave my first poetry reading at the much-missed Bookstore in McHenry Village. I knew most of the people there, but I did not know the smiling man in the wheelchair. Poetry readings are usually quiet affairs, but while I read, this man clapped his hands and hummed and exclaimed happily. His joy in the event was complete and intense, and I now know that it was his love of poetry, his love of image and rhythm, and his love of community that made him so joyful. He was truly and completely in love with language, and whether that language was a poem or the text on a box of Cheerios (I have evidence of this.), Lee Nicholson was head-over-heels for words and always, always willing to share that love with others.

I have seldom met anyone kinder. Lee was generous to the poets in our area and beyond, listening, critiquing, encouraging, offering his own work to read, and rejoicing in the responses of others. Whether his role was that of a teacher at Turlock High School in the late 50's and early 60's or as a long-time teacher at MJC, Lee was a cheerleader for poets and poetry and for other writing he loved. His style wasn't everyone's cup of tea, but there was no denying that this man was passionate about his subject matter, and in talking with colleagues and former students and fellow poets and Lee's family over the last few weeks, there is no denying that the impact he has had is broad and long-lasting.

For me, that impact is multi-faceted. Lee's encouragement made me more confident in my own work. He made me try harder to give useful feedback to others' work. And he made it very clear, through both the great joy he took in the world around him and in the humor lurking in so many of his poems, that poetry does not always need to be Serious Business, that it can be wondrous, that it can be funny, that anything that delights—an envelope with 39 one-cent bird stamps on it, a crocheted tea cup—can instigate a poem worthy of attention and revision and often of an elaborate presentation.

Lee was the embodiment of creativity in our area. Not only did he write, but he illustrated many of his works with his own collages and paintings and beautiful calligraphy. Lee believed that the whole package, the poem and the paper the poem was printed on and the way that poem was presented to the world, counted as a work of art, and he made it so. During his last hospital stay, Lee's sisters agreed that Lee would not want to live in the world if he could not create, and I could only nod in agreement. Creativity was Lee's sustenance, and it is lucky for those of us he has left behind that we have so much of his work to read and to admire and to be inspired by and, especially, to remember him by.



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THE METHUSELAH RIVER CHARTS

That killer who began all time,
 who lived 969 years on our pretty dirt
 when it was so brand-new,
 when he was just a man who was named,
 of course, after his blunted javelin
 - that large stick up front-
 when he was a man of no words, none!
 To think with Spinoza or act or be
 he used a single stick.

He tramped and smote and murdered
 things that were tinier, even fireflies.
 until one night in the moonlight
 he chanced upon the great Methuselah river,
 a Gorge where two streams meet and greet,
 civilized as a fundraiser, blue water with red blood,
 flowing without mixing, without knowing each other,
 side by side for miles.
Blood and water cannot mix. (Time and truth never do.)

Now Methuselah sired one son called Lamech.
 He loved that son enough to map out for him
 the eight treacheries of his own two-hearted river.
 He did this in a great chart on the wet banks of the flow.
 He was - even he agreed - very old, 969 -
 when he put down his stick in clay.

*He did not know if he loved his son, but at least for him
 he could draw. (Art is never stable, always bloody.)*
 So time stopped.

Some trees stopped rustling their leaves.
 Art had built a new clock, set in Keat's slow and marbled time.
 Then the many-lived Methuselah took a last taste of sweet air.
 It was time. Methuselah died well when we were born.

*June 6, 2010, Lee Nicholson
 Version 4*



METHUSELAH AND HOPE, BREAKFASTING NEAR TIFFANY'S

Astonishing, hard to believe, but The New York Times
 had the pictures on the front page to prove it,
 a big star like Hope on regular dates with an old man like Methuselah,
 she who lived in a penthouse and he who was shut up
 in some senior citizens home. There they both were,
 in a chili dive, six blocks from Tiffany's, cozy as could be.
 Methuselah held a relish jar, and the big star
 grasped one oyster cracker, eyes saying, yes, yes.
 Methuselah had what looked like a bottomless trust fund
 -- one put in place by the Founder - and now Hope
 had a new bracelet going round and round her perfect wrist.
 Hope smiled and what looked like pure light seeped from her teeth.
 Yet what she was saying was "Sure, sure, baby, whatever you say;"
 and then she was gone to her next client.
 Something had stirred in Methuselah; it was close to love.
 Not for a second did she think about him and his too-late tears.
 Her green brocade must be kept entirely clean, ready for her next red carpet.

*July 2010, Lee Nicholson
 third version*

METHUSELAH MARVELS AT THE ELEVEN FINGERS OF HOPE

1. Hope is a dream, the one just before we all hear the shriek at midnight.
2. Hope is a fossilized fish, a truth whose life has floated belly-side up downstream.
3. Hope is a small child lost in the mall, three stores away from her father.
4. Hope is a veil of an ugly bride, a net hiding her squint.
5. Hope is why Lorca's Spaniards line their veils with pearls.
6. She once was named "Ava," which explains why at birth each one of us is given a small cage, just big enough for one bird and a very small man, Methuselah.
7. Hope is such a spacious word - if you are Methuselah or very zen.
8. Climb Mount Everest and train Sherpas to sing you up with cheerful, manful ditties in the key of hope.
9. Hope is investing in ice plants before the last big interview with Saint Peter.
10. Methuselah is a favorite doomed son - like James Dean - of Lady Hope.
11. Fanning air back and forth as though it were Methuselah's own harmonica — is one way to hope.

August 2010, Lee Nicholson third version

WATER, WEALTH...

High over city traffic with such grace Curves a metal arch which supports a
 sign. Its message hanging there in open space
 Reads WATER, WEALTH, CONTENTMENT, HEALTH -- a fine Combination of abstraction and
 pride.
 They all depend in this hot, arid land
 On one element -- Water -- the blue bride Of Sky. For each daily wedding this
 band

Of iron surrounds with ceremony all Those other essences -- earth, sunlight, air. A witness to this cosmic
 dance and brawl

It stands. ALI lovers, fighters too, should stare.

Look up. See through. Like some great Buddha's ring An arch can show a space or
 everything.

Prison Project - Save Those Samples!

By DAVID HETLAND & SHELLY SCRIBNER

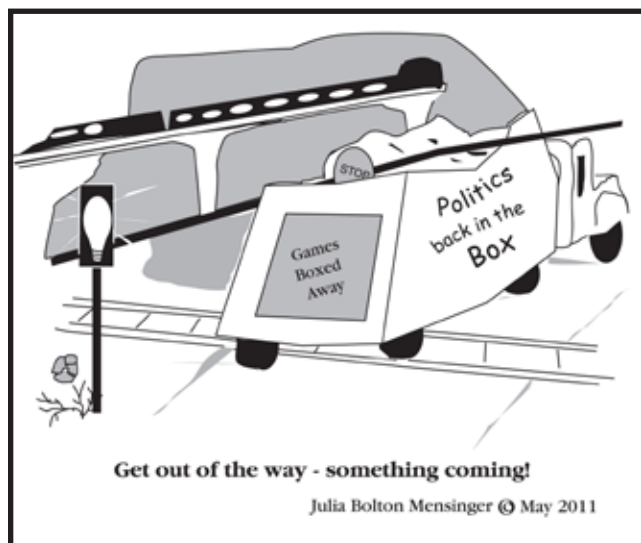
The Inmate Family Council at the Central California Women's Facility in Chowchilla continues to collect travel samples for the annual Holiday Gift Project. Last December, in partnership with many churches and community groups, 3800 packets were distributed to the women, many of whom receive nothing else during the holidays. Among the hundreds of responses received after last year's effort, one inmate wrote, "...the bags were awesome! You brightened up our day for sure."

As summer vacation time approaches, keep in mind the need for the following (all travel/sample size): soap, shampoo, conditioner, skin/body lotion, toothpaste and tissue. There's also a need for toothbrushes (regular adult size), pencils (wood, full-size, eraser top), and unused greeting cards. Donated items can be brought to the Modesto Peace/Life Center Office (call ahead to ensure the Office is open). For more information, contact Shelly Scribner (521-6304) or Dave Hetland (388-1608).

Grant Opportunity — Leading Asia: Renewing the U.S. and Japan Sister Cities Network

The grant application for U.S. and Japan sister city programs is now available. The purpose of the three-year grant is to increase institutional knowledge of U.S. — Japan sister city partnerships by providing opportunities for current and new sister city programs throughout the United States and Japan. The grant program will include conference, exchange, and research components that will promote networking, capacity building, and innovation program development. This funding opportunity is available for dues-paying members only. For more information about the application process, visit the program's <http://sister-cities.org/programs/grants/japangrant.cfm>

The application deadline is June 15, 2011 at 5 p.m. EDT. Submit applications to Asia@sister-cities.org, subject: April 2011 Leading Asia Grant Application



Dear Modesto Peace/Life Community,

I would like to send a shout out of appreciation to the members of the Stanislaus Connections editorial board, especially Jim Costello, along with the help of Myrtle Osner, Linda Knoll (layout and graphics), George Osner (online edition) and Luella Cole, plus a very small handful of others from our Modesto Peace/Life community who write monthly columns and help with distribution and mailing. Without the commitment, dedication and hard work of these people, whose schedules are stretched beyond reasonable limits, we would not have been able to bring you Stanislaus Connections for the past 23 years.

Recognizing this, we hope you find Stanislaus Connections a viable alternative to local news media, as have countless others who have discovered the paper as contributors to "A Gathering of Voices" on line and through other sources, and who have called our efforts to provide important peace, justice and environmentally sustainable information to you "very fine" and "well done."

As a long time member of the Connections editorial board, I observe that our small group of tireless and selfless volunteers is overextended, aging, and has dwindled to a level that truly compromises the continuation of this vital publication in our mostly other-oriented local interest area. That is why I am setting the time aside in my schedule to appeal to your commitment to peace, justice and a sustainable environment and asking you to step up to the plate and join us to help in any way you can to provide solidarity with the Modesto Peace/Life Center's work in educating and informing the Stanislaus area community about peace, justice and a sustainable environment through Stanislaus Connections.

If you have an area of compatible interest you are willing to write about, if there are books with appropriate messages you wish to tell the community about, if you can provide computer inputting skills, if you can help contact our advertisers, if you can help distribute Connections in Modesto or outlying communities, if you can attend meetings to help with editing articles, if you have any other skills or interests you wish to offer, if you just want to help in any way to meet our needs...this is a perfect time to join our efforts and show how important this alternative press publication is to you and your fellow peace community members.

Please contact jcostello@igc.org or call the Modesto Peace/Life Center, 529-5750, and let us know you share our passion for peace, justice and a sustainable environment by offering your time and energy to insure the future of this fine publication.

B'Shalom/ In Peace
Tina Arnopole Driskill
Editor, A Gathering of Voices
Stanislaus Connections

Goldstone . . . from page 6

side: altogether 5 (five!) Israeli soldiers were killed by enemy fire (some six more by "friendly fire").

This result did not contradict the undeclared political aim of the operation. It was to pressure the Gaza Strip population into overthrowing the Hamas government. This result, of course, was not achieved. Rather the opposite.

The logic – and the balance of casualties – of Lebanon War II were about the same, with added huge material destruction of civilian targets.

FOLLOWING THE Goldstone report, our army did indeed conduct quite extensive investigations into individual incidents. The number is impressive, the results are not. Some 150 or so cases were investigated, two soldiers were convicted (one for theft), one officer was indicted for the killing – by mistake – of an entire extended family.

This seems to satisfy Goldstone, who this week gratefully accepted an invitation from the Israeli Minister of the Interior – perhaps the most rabid racist in the entire government, in which racists abound – to visit Israel. (When the conversation was leaked, Goldstone cancelled the matter and stated that the report would not be withdrawn.)

On the other side, Goldstone is aflame with indignation against Hamas, for launching rockets and mortar shells at civilians in Israel and conducting no investigations at all. Isn't it rather ridiculous: using the same standards for one of the five mightiest armies in the world and a band of irregular and poorly equipped resistance fighters (alias terrorists)?

Terrorism is the weapon of the weak. ("Give me tanks and airplanes, and I promise I won't plant bombs" a Palestinian once said.) Since the entire military strategy of Hamas is terrorizing Israeli communities along the border in order to persuade Israel to put an end to the occupation (and, in the case of Gaza, to the ongoing blockade), Goldstone's indignation seems a bit surprising.

Altogether, Goldstone has now paved the way for another Cast Lead operation, which will be far worse.

I expect, however, that he can now pray in any synagogue he chooses.

Some thoughts on talent

By DANIEL NESTLERODE

I have been told I am talented. It is a compliment I hope I receive gratefully and graciously. I'm not all that good at taking compliments, but the real reason I say, "I hope" is because it is a sentiment that holds a basic concept with which I disagree.

Common among dictionary definitions of "talent" is the idea that some people are born with an ability that makes them superior to most of the rest of us; a sort pre-natal leg up in the world. Frankly, I don't buy it. Repeated studies by psychologists show that the only ability humans are born with is the ability to suckle.

I think we hold to a demonstrably inaccurate belief in "natural ability" because most folks cannot imagine being very skilled at an endeavor that fails to coincide with modern cultural norms of leisure and vocational activities.

Most of us come home from work and engage in a mindless activity. We turn on the television or the computer. We watch the creative output of people with whom we have no acquaintance let alone local contact. The effect is compounded. First, we consume creative output, we don't engage in it. Second, we do not have a lot of exposure to people who do spend their leisure time being creative. So being in the presence of serious creative output that comes from local people is unusual and incomparable to events in our everyday life.

Carrying all that cultural baggage makes the belief in

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If you spent years learning a craft and then got paid for nine years to continue to work that craft, you would master it. Your mastery would be demonstrable in your work; you could make it look effortless. People who were unfamiliar with the amount time you put in to your work would witness your apparent effortless and call it "talent."

innate advantage a fairly effective strategy for handling information that subtly contradicts our cultural expectations. "I can't imagine being that good a guitar player given the life choices I have made. The musician in front of me is very good and obviously a member of my community, so he or she must have some gift from God that allows such skill to come more easily than it would for me."

The advent of mass media in the late 1920's, started this ball rolling. Prior to radio networks, most entertainment was

regional and the regions were small. Indeed, one of the more popular ways to spend leisure time between about 1890 and the 1920 was to be a member of a local brass band, choir, or mandolin orchestra.

By the 1930s, the Benny Goodman Orchestra could be heard on Saturday nights from coast to coast and all you had to do to "be there" was to turn on your radio. On one hand, this new development was a good thing: musicians exposed to players more skilled than themselves gained an opportunity to improve their skills based on that exposure. On the other hand, people who played music for their own entertainment--local band, choir, and orchestra members--began to prefer to listen and dance rather than play.

The growth and development of radio arrived as the technology for capturing live musical performances and broadcasting them met the law of supply and demand. Radios that captured broadcasts were produced in ever increasing numbers, driving the price low enough to make ownership of a radio possible for most American households. These developments continued to drive people away from making music and toward merely consuming it.

The upshot is that, prior to 1930, most people actively made music--playing an instrument of some kind--and shared their musical endeavors with neighbors, friends, and family. After that most people simply consumed music.

Thus the concept of talent arises out of a disbelief in one's own ability to reach the same skill level as a person who demonstrates a high level of skill in music or a related creative endeavor. Which means the term "talent" is shorthand. People who appear talented are the ones who shake off the cultural cues pointing us in the direction of ever more expensive, detailed, and passive entertainment experiences. The talented among us spend their disposable income and leisure time learning new things, going after still unattained skills, rather than turning on the television.

In the ancient Greek region of Attica (Athens and its environs) the definition of "talent" was the amount of silver a skilled artisan or laborer could earn in nine years. This throws a little light on how and why we use the word to denote something that appears God-given.

If you spent years learning a craft and then got paid for nine years to continue to work that craft, you would master it. Your mastery would be demonstrable in your work; you could make it look effortless. People who were unfamiliar with the amount time you put in to your work would witness your apparent effortless and call it "talent."

I prefer this older definition. I know how many years of unpaid purposeful effort it has taken me to hone the connection between my ears, my mind, and my hands (30). But many friends and acquaintances do not know how long I have been working at being a musician. My apparent effortless seems to make these folks think that such skill is beyond them.

Here, then, is the reason I wanted to address this topic. I want to tell them, and you dear reader, that a high degree of musical skill is not granted by inherited trait. It is obtained through thousands of hours of effort. But this is good news: being a good musician is not beyond your capability. All you have to do make a commitment and stick to it.