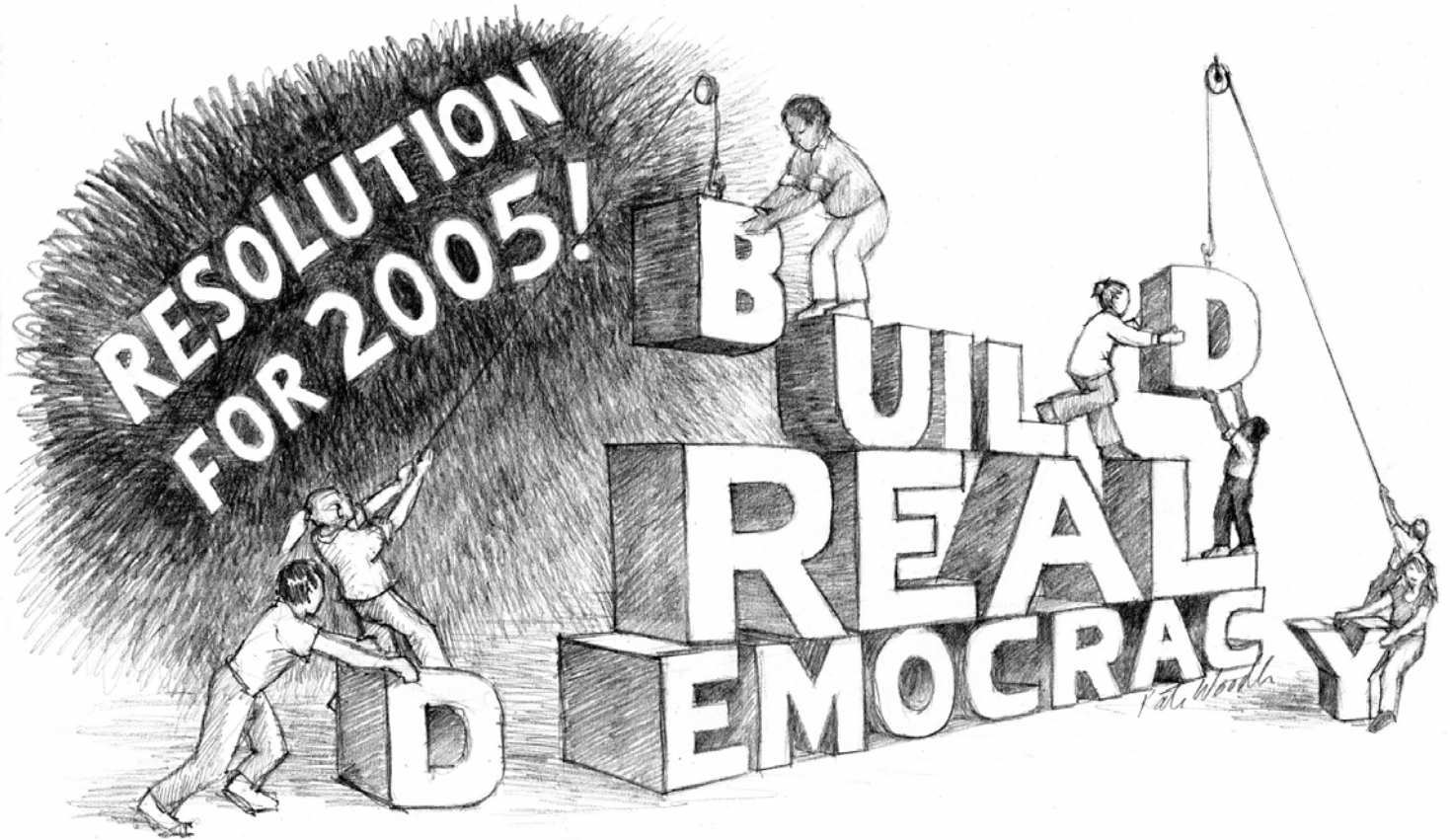


Peace Newsletter

Central New York Voices for Peace and Social Justice

January 2005 PNL 738



OBSTACLES TO DEMOCRACY

Ed Kinane

Democracy: a political system in which we shape the decisions that affect our lives

We face many obstacles to achieving real democracy in the United States. Considering these obstacles will help us clarify our agenda for the short days and long nights ahead.

On November 3 more voters voted *against* the incumbent President than ever before in US history. It also seems, alas, that there were even more votes *for* the incumbent than ever before.

This seeming paradox stems from November's record voter turnout. Greater

turnout is highly desirable – especially if it means more informed citizens are getting involved.

Generally, the power structure benefits from low voter turnout. The power structure thrives when we are asleep, indifferent or too cynical to participate.

Mr. Bush seems destined to remain with us for four more years. That is, unless there is a timely and persuasive recount in states like Ohio. Or unless Mr. Bush is impeached or indicted for war crime.

The US seems further from democracy and closer to fascism* now than ever before in my lifetime. This would be true even if (say) Ralph Nader were being in-

augurated January 20.

*In June 2003 the PNL reprinted Laurence Britt's "14 Characteristics of Fascism." Each is an obstacle to democracy. Britt, a political scientist, says these characteristics are common to Hitler's Germany, Mussolini's Italy, Franco's Spain, Suharto's Indonesia and Pinochet's Chile.

Items on Britt's list that I don't even discuss here: hyper-nationalism, disdain for human rights, scapegoating, military supremacy, national security obsession, entwined religion and government, anti-unionism, anti-intellectualism, obsession

Democracy / continued on page 2

Democracy / continued from cover

with crime and punishment, cronyism and corruption, and rampant sexism.

Corporate Power

Historically, much of democracy's weakness – and fascism's strength — stems from the rise of corporations. Corporations rule. There is nothing in them predisposed to foster democracy. Chartered by the states supposedly for the public good, corporations now are legal persons with more rights than humans.

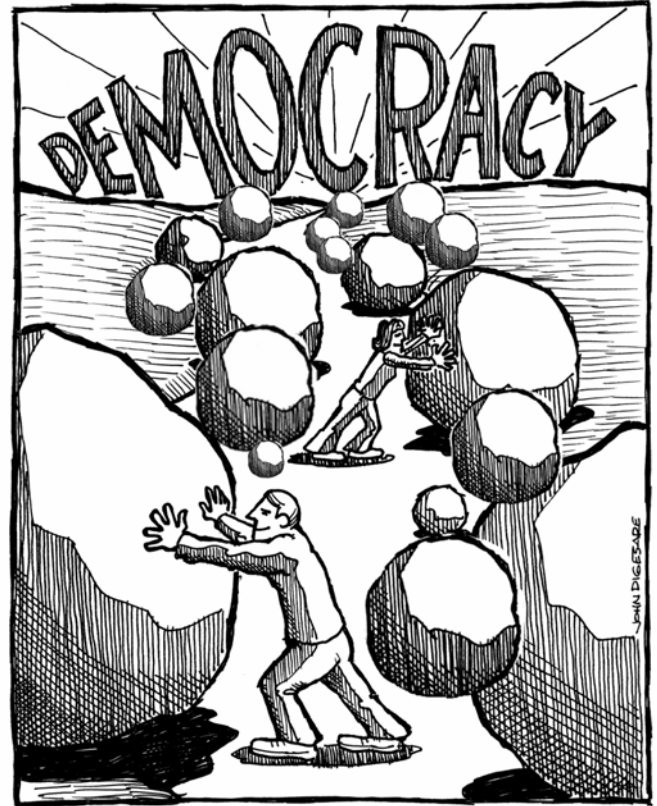
Corporations have no conscience and no social vision – or at least none that favor humans and the planet's fragile environment. Indeed by law corporate officers are forced to forsake social responsibility in favor of maximizing profit for shareholders.

Corporations finance political campaigns. Such sponsorship is really a form of theft. Corporate-financed candidates, easily the majority, are stolen from their constituents. Such candidates surrender their soul and vision. As long as corpora-

tions buy our candidates, they buy Congress and the Executive. And the Executive appoints the Supreme Court.

But corporate control is even more insidious. More penetrating. Such control extends to the millions of people employed by corporations. Like the military (with whom there is much overlap), corporations are hierarchical. Workplace democracy is as scarce as hen's teeth.

Employees—i.e. most voters – spend half their waking hours immersed in the little tyranny of the workplace. We're either bosses or bossed. With this template imposed on our very being, what direct experience would we have with democracy? How would we know what democracy is? How would we even know what we're missing?



Peace Newsletter

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Syracuse Peace Council

924 Burnet Avenue, Syracuse, NY 13203

What Does Democracy Mean?

If ever there was a cant word, a bullshit word, it's "democracy." Politicians use it all the time. They never define it...and we seldom demand that they define it.

Without quite saying so, politicians often equate "democracy" simply with voting or with the so-called free market system. This is a serious error. Politicians virtually never use "democracy" to refer to a political system in which the people shape the decisions that affect our lives.

Voting gets the hype, but it's just one facet of democracy (or, for that matter, of dictatorship). This would be true even if the electoral process itself weren't an obstacle to democracy.

As we learned in Florida in 2000, the electoral process has spun out of our control. But to say that is to mistakenly suggest that the Founders designed the electoral process to foster democracy (for an an-

tidote to such thinking, see, Howard Zinn's classic, *A People's History of the United States*).

One website (nov.3.us) suggests various reforms that could bring us closer to democracy:

- ◆ count every vote!
- ◆ guarantee a voter-verified paper trail for all voting machines;
- ◆ replace partisan oversight with non-partisan election commissions;
- ◆ make it easier to vote (e.g. by making election day a national holiday);
- ◆ re-enfranchise ex-felons and non-felons;
- ◆ implement instant runoff voting (IRV);
- ◆ implement proportional representation;
- ◆ replace big money control with public financing and equal air-time;
- ◆ guarantee "third parties" equal access to the ballot and debates;
- ◆ abolish the Electoral College.

Other obstacles to democracy — many implied by the above proposals — abound.

After avoiding TV for decades, these days Ed regularly watches three hours a week: Bill Moyers' "Now" at 9 pm on Friday and Amy Goodman's "Democracy Now" 9 to 11 am Saturdays on SPC TV.

Democracy / continued on page 7

Educate, Agitate, Organize

SPC IN ACTION

compiled by Jessica Maxwell

Building Real Democracy

Building Real Democracy (BRD), the last phase of SPC's *Bush Must Go!* campaign began Nov. 3, with SPC's demonstration downtown demanding that every vote be counted. We have since held two public meetings to generate ideas and discussion on how to move forward. At the Plowshares Craftsair, we invited people to add their ideas on "How to Build Democracy" on a giant wall poster. In January, BRD is organizing an educational program on progressive electoral reform efforts (see box below).

Inauguration Protest

SPC is working with the Syracuse Greens, Student Environmental Action Coalition, Student Peace Action Network and American Friends Service Committee to send a bus to protest Bush's Inauguration on Thursday, January 20. The bus leaves late Wednesday night and returns 24 hours later. Tickets are \$40, \$25 student or low income.

To reserve bus seats: Kate Simmer, lahira@hotmail.com or 477-0666.

SPC will also coordinate a local action: Jessica, 472-5478, or (jessica@peacecouncil.net).

34th Plowshares Craftsair

Twenty years at Plymouth Congregational church. Thirteen years at Southwest Community Center. And now one glorious year at Nottingham High School. One hundred and twenty artisans and community groups offered their crafts, and explained their causes to approximately 2,500 enthusiastic patrons. And a wonderful variety of song and dance entertained throughout the day in both the gym and cafeteria.

Good weather and good publicity – combined with an exciting new location and greatly expanded parking – helped bring our community out in droves, nearly doubling our best numbers at Southwest Community Center and generating much-needed funding for SPC's ongoing work. The

publicity around our being picketed on Saturday by three men out in the parking lot surely added to our numbers on Sunday. The picketers – one wearing a mask – held signs questioning Islam's legitimacy and SPC's commitment to democracy. In the spirit of nonviolent action, SPC quickly recruited people to maintain a presence near the demonstrators with a sign stating: "Islam is not our enemy."



The 2005 Plowshares Craftsair was a smashing success and certainly a "Hate Free Zone" inside. Outside a handful of protesters displayed their hatred for Islam. Photo: Janet DeTota

No transition and expansion of this size is without unforeseen problems, and our move to Nottingham was no exception. Students taking the SAT's Saturday morning used many of our wonderful new parking spaces, and a gym hot enough to almost create the First Naked Plowshares Festival were but a couple of the "minor" obstacles to be overcome.

This wonderful festival is only possible through the year-round efforts of a core committee, and the weekend help of a remarkable number of capable and dedicated volunteers

See you again in December!

In Peace,

The Plowshares Committee:

Andy Molloy, Beth Mosley, Barbara Floch, Lanny Freshman, Karen Kerney, Mardea Warner, Marie Summerwood, and Rae Kramer

SYRACUSE PEACE COUNCIL

924 Burnet Ave., Syracuse, NY 13203
(315) 472-5478

spc@peacecouncil.net • www.peacecouncil.net

OFFICE HOURS: Mon.-Fri. 10 am - 5 pm

Staff email addresses:

Andy Mager (andy@peacecouncil.net)

Carol Baum (carol@peacecouncil.net)

Jessica Maxwell (jessica@peacecouncil.net)

Welcome New Steering Committee Members!

SPC's Steering Committee is responsible for our political direction and financial health. It's a significant commitment and we're happy to welcome Joan Conley, Barb Humphrey and Mike Pasquale. They'll join returning Steering Committee members Gary Bonaparte, Dik Cool, Emily Moeller, Beth Mosley, Tina Musa, Shirley Novak, Nick Poulos and Carole Resnick.

Great thanks to retiring Committee members Doug Igelsrud, Rae Kramer and Ann Tiffany for their energy, spirit, commitment and continuing SPC activism.

Interns, Interns, Interns!

This fall SPC was fortunate to have three interns. Amy Campbell, an Antioch College student, worked full-time, updating our *Peace Newsletter*

SPC / continued on page 4

SPC MONTHLY PROGRAM

Making Our Elections Democratic

Thursday, January 20

7-8:30 pm

Westcott Community Center
(corner of Euclid and Westcott, Syracuse)
followed by refreshments & discussion

Panel presentation on statewide efforts for progressive electoral reform followed by working group sessions. Topics will include the impact of the Help America Vote Act on 2006 NYS elections, requiring verified paper ballots and preventing disenfranchisement.

SPC in Action / from page 3

ter archives, assisting with phones, tabling, mailings and more. Miljan Poro, an OCC student intern, assisted with our *Bush Must Go!* Campaign. Miljan made hundreds of phone calls, stuffed envelopes and staffed SPC tables at events. Justin Kopa, a Jesuit Novice, researched and reported on conflict resolution programs used in Syracuse City schools.

In January, we welcome Kelsey Waggaman, our third Antioch intern, and Lauren Neider, a Cicero resident now attending Bennington College. Kelsey will be with us through April, while Lauren will work with us through February. We're excited to have them both!

Start the New Year With SPC's Study Group

If you've been thinking about joining SPC's Study Group on the US Global Agenda, now is a great time to start. We're beginning a new book in January – Vandana Shiva's *Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution and Profit*.

Meetings are the second and fourth Mondays at the Friends Meeting House (821 Euclid Ave., across from the Westcott Community Center) from 7-8:30 pm.

Our next meeting is January 10. Join us for an evening of analysis and discussion about issues that matter. Contact Carol for the chapters we'll be discussing.

Keep the Money Coming!

By publication time, the fall fund appeal has brought in nearly \$5,000. We count on this money to support us through the winter and spring. Thanks so much to everyone who responded.

If the fund appeal hasn't yet made it to the top of your mail pile, now is a good time to excavate and make a donation. Contributions of \$50 or more can be tax deductible if made out to the "A.J. Muste Memorial Institute" (write SPC in the memo line). Credit card contributions can be made via "paypal" at our website (www.peacecouncil.net/donate.htm).

Bookkeeping/Accounting Help Wanted

If you're a detail person, comfortable with numbers and a computer, we have the perfect volunteer opportunity for you! We're looking for someone familiar with SPC to help an average of 1-2 hours a week with our books. We'll train you. Six month commitment required. Contact Jessica.

Does Uncle Sam Want You?

Information about the Draft & Draft Registration.

Wednesday, January 12 @ 7 pm
Soule Branch Library, 101 Springfield Rd. (near Le Moyne College).

Feeling a Draft?

Bush's election increases the prospect of a renewed draft. A new youth outreach group formed at the November Peace Council Program. It has been meeting to plan stepped-up outreach to young people about military recruitment, draft registration and the draft. Contact Andy.

Weekly Peace Outreach

"End the War; Bring the Troops Home"

Now Thursdays, 7:30-8:15 am

- Jan 6: S. Salina & E. Colvin Sts.
- Jan 13: E. Genesee St. & Erie Blvd.
- Jan 20: Teall Ave. & Rt. 690
- Jan 27: Adams St. & Rt. 81
- Feb 2: Valley Dr. & Seneca TnPk.

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US Building 14 Permanent Bases in Iraq

Donna Muhs-McCarten

The reason Bush Inc. can't provide an exit strategy for Iraq is because there is none.

Christine Spolar of the *Chicago Tribune* writes that US engineers are over-seeing the construction of 14 "enduring bases" for thousands of US troops expected to serve in Iraq for years. Included in this network is a US embassy in Baghdad, destined to be the largest in the world, with over 3000 staff.

Although Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld denies it, military planners call for over 110,000 personnel to establish a long-term military presence to control Iraqi oil reserves. This will also allow the US to control an entire region of instability from the Gulf of Guinea to the Persian Gulf and into Central Asia.

US permanent bases and airfields, four of which are already completed, are or will be sited in Baghdad, Mosul, Taji, Kirkuk, Tehril, Fallujah and elsewhere. With the Department of Defense (DOD) in charge of 18 billion taxpayers' dollars allocated for "reconstruction," the DOD in June 2003 signed a \$200 million contract with Kellogg, Brown and Root, a Halliburton subsidiary, to build in as many as 20 locations.

In an email interview with McGraw-Hill Construction's online newsletter, Lt. Col. Mark Holt, Deputy Commander of the US Army's 130th Engineering Brigade who

has been assigned the task of facilities development, revealed recently that a major mission of the US Army Corps of Engineers is to build these facilities for the "bed-down" of US forces.

A secret clause in an agreement between Paul Bremer, then top US administrator in Iraq, and the US-appointed Iraqi Interim Governing Council, guarantees the establishment of at least six permanent bases. Such bases would allow the US to stage and manage preemptive strikes as necessary in all four directions as well as deter Iraq's neighbors from attacking.

Establishing the 14 permanent bases supports the US' hegemonic ambitions. In *The Sorrows of Empire*, Chalmers Johnson writes that bases are not designed for military preparedness but as a permanent claim on a nation's resources.

Bush Inc.'s imperial policies are responsible for the deaths of thousands of Iraqi and US soldiers and citizens. If the neocons and the war hawks are allowed to prevail, more will die as the "footprint" of the US military becomes a trail.

In the past our Congressional repre-



sentatives often sided with their constituents when caught between them and imperial elites. That possibility still exists; we must develop it.

Sources:

- enr.construction.com/news/bizlabor/archives/031020.asp
- GlobalSecurity.org, Tribune reporting
- nwtimes.com
- Nation Institute - 21st Century Gunboat Diplomacy Project
- ProgressiveTrail.org-Tom Englehardt-Five Missing Stories from Iraq

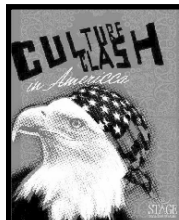
Donna is a long-time global studies teacher and a member of the PNL editorial committee.

MARGARET R. MATHEWS C.S.W.

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SPC Theatre Bash!

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Democracy / from page 2

One is the “two party” control of the electoral process, of Congress, of the Executive.

Parties ought to represent identities, interests and ideologies. In the real world these are multiple...and yet we're stuck with the Republicans and the Democrats, different wings of the same war party.

The Republicans and Democrats aren't quite tweedledum and tweedledee. But they overlap hugely. Both rely on corporate funding, frequently on the same corporations. Such funding not only corrupts, it homogenizes.

The “two party” system filters out a broad array of issues – e.g. global warming or disarmament – vital to human and planetary survival. The “two party” system effectively disenfranchises those who see little point in voting; it discourages potential candidates who see little point in running. And for those alternative candidates who might be elected, it provides little point in serving.

Yet another obstacle to democracy is consumer culture. That culture, perpetrated by corporate capitalism, *distracts*,

addicts, and *co-opts* too many of us. It also *snarcs us in debt*.

Distraction, addiction, co-optation and indebtedness are modes of disempowerment. They undermine awareness and public spiritedness. They heighten numbness and dependence. They foster anomie and alienation. They erode citizenship.

Dumbed Down by TV

The handmaid of the corporation, of “two party” control, and of consumer culture, is TV. Since the early sixties TV has had a profound impact on what passes for “democracy.” Because TV ads cost so much, candidates must turn to corporate funding to reach the electorate. This puts them morally in hock.

TV is a major player in distracting and addicting the populace. Insofar as its commercials and product placement encourage consumption, TV fosters in viewers a vested interest in the maintaining the system that provides the goodies. Needless to say, it also encourages indebtedness.

Further, because TV commercials are

so stupid – cunningly so – it just wouldn't do to have them embedded in intelligent program content; the contrast would undermine them. Hence the need for stupid programming and hence the dumbing down of those hooked on these programs. These junkies, with critical faculties numbed, become ideal targets for TV commercials, political or otherwise.

And then there's TV network news. In their news reporting the networks, each bought up by multinational corporations, compellingly and consistently purvey the corporate/government view of the world. Regular viewing of such news fosters the illusion that we're learning about what's going on in the world.

The obstacles to democracy – and the props of fascism – are formidable and pervasive. They surround and infiltrate us. Let us resist them in our personal lives and combat them in our organizing lives.

Achieving democracy will never be other than a ceaseless struggle. But we have no choice. Fortunately we can draw on a rich legacy of experimentation here and from around the world. But that is a topic for another article.... ♪

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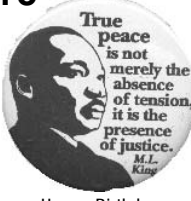
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<p>Syracuse Peace Council Community Calendar</p> <p>JANUARY 2005</p> <p>Bush Must Go! Campaign theme:</p> <p>BUILDING REAL DEMOCRACY</p>		<p>To list your group's event or meeting, call 472-5478 or send the info to SPC at pnl@peacecouncil.net</p>	<p>Dr. Dhafir's Trial Continues: Every Mon-Thurs through the end of 2004. 8:30 am at the Federal Courthouse, 100 S. Clinton St. Prayer gathering 8 am each day of the trial.</p>	<p>EVERY THURS: Free Legal Services for people denied unemployment benefits or have a welfare hearing. Westcott Community Center, 826 Euclid Ave. 6-8 pm.</p> <p>EVERY THURS: Interfaith Peace Vigil, Conventual Franciscan Friars, Assisi Center, 800 North Salina St. 5:30-6 pm. 473-0952.</p> <p>EVERY THURS: Womens Voices Radio. WAER - 88 FM. 8 pm.</p>	<p>News Years Resolution: Get Democracy Now! on the local radio dial. WAER is losing a public affairs program (The Tavis Smiley Show). Contact Ron Ockert (443-4021 or rgockert@syr.edu) to request that they fill the slot with Democracy Now!</p>	<p>1 HAPPY NEW YEAR!</p> <p>EVERY SAT: Democracy Now! w/Amy Goodman. Time Warner Cable Channel. 98, 9-11 am. The show also airs nightly at 7 pm on Dish Network Channel 9415 and on Direct TV Channel 375.</p>
<p>2</p> <p>EVERY SUN: People's 60 Minutes. Time Warner Cable Channel 98. 8 pm. Produced by SPC. Tape it, share it!</p> <p>Syracuse Gay/Lesbian Catholics & Friends Mass: St. Andrew's Church, 124 Alden St., 5 pm. 636-7726.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Youth Outreach Meeting. Help organize on the draft and military recruiting. 208 Slocum Ave. 7 pm. Andy 472-5478.</p> <p>EVERY MON: Morris Dancing. Westcott Community Center, 826 Euclid Ave., 7-8:30 pm. 478-8634.</p>		<p>5</p> <p>EVERY WED: Military & Draft Counseling Noon - 3 pm. SPC. 924 Burnet Ave. Marge 472-5478.</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Weekly Peace Outreach: 7:30-8:15 am. S. Salina and East Colvin (Southside).</p> <p>Stonewall Committee Meeting: 6 pm, Bonnie Strunk 422-0144.</p> <p>Syr. United Neighbors SW/ Tallman Mtg: Brady Faith Ctr, 404 South Ave. 7 pm. 476-7475.</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Folkus Project Concert: Dana & Susan Robinson. \$10. May Memorial, 3800 E. Genesee St. Reservations 440-1818 or tickets@folkus.org</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Westcott Second Saturday: Annie Gallup - poetic & musical alchemy. 8 pm. \$10 (\$8 for WCC members) at Westcott Community Center, 826 Euclid Ave. Reservations 478-8634.</p>
<p>9</p> <p>EVERY SUN: Common Threads, Acoustic local music. WAER FM 88.3. 2 - 5pm.</p> <p>CNY SOA Abolitionist Monthly Meeting: Brady Faith Center, 404 South Ave. 4-5:30 pm. 478-1592.</p> <p>CLAC Monthly Meeting, Brady Faith Center, 404 South Ave. 5:30-7 pm. 478-1592.</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Westcott East Neighborhood Assoc. Mtg: Petit Library, 7-9 pm. Starke Donnelly 472-2140.</p> <p>Syracuse United Neighbors/ Southside Mtg: Payton Temple, 1816 Midland Ave. 7 pm. 476-7475</p> <p>SPC Study Group on the US Global Agenda: 7-8:30 pm, Friends Meeting House, 821 Euclid Ave. <i>Water Wars</i> by Vandana Shiva. Carol 472-5478 or carol@peacecouncil.net.</p>	<p>11</p> <p>EVERY TUES: Rough Times Live. Television by, for & about teens. 8 pm. Time Warner Cable Channel 98. 478-UNIT.</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Does Uncle Sam Want You?: Information about the Draft & Draft Registration. 7pm. Soule Branch Library, 101 Springfield Rd. FREE. Andy 472-5478 or andy@peacecouncil.net.</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Weekly Peace Outreach: 7:30-8:15 am. E. Genesee St. and Erie Blvd. (Dewitt).</p>	<p>14</p> <p>SAVE THE DATE</p> <p>Sunday, March 6, 2-4 pm</p> <p>Strike for Peace Benefit Bowl-a-thon: Organize a team! \$10/person covers 2 games and shoes. Solicit pledges for SPC. Andy 472-5478, andy@peacecouncil.net</p>	
<p>16</p> <p>Syracuse Gay/Lesbian Catholics & Friends Mass: St. Andrew's Church, 124 Alden St., 5 pm. 636-7726.</p> <p>MLK Day Service. Tucker Missionary Baptist Church, 515 Oakwood Ave. 5 pm. 475-8175.</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Syracuse United Neighbors/ Westside Mtg: Brown Memorial Church, corner Davis and S. Geddes St. 7 pm. 476-7475.</p>		<p>19</p> <p>Justice Breakfast: 7:30-9:00 am. Call for location. Andy 472-5478.</p> <p>Syracuse United Neighbors/ Skunk City Mtg: Mundy Library, S. Geddes St. 6:30 pm. 476-7475.</p> <p>EVERY WED: Open Figure Drawing Inc., We Draw People! 7-10 pm. Westcott Community Center, 826 Euclid Ave. 478-8634</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Weekly Peace Outreach: 7:30-8:15 am. Teall Ave. & Rt. 690.</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Folkus Project: The McKrells-Celtic-charged bluegrass songwriting. 8 pm. \$12. May Memorial, 3800 E. Genesee St. Reservations 440-1818 or tickets@folkus.org</p>	<p>15</p>  <p>Happy Birthday Martin Luther King, Jr.!</p>
<p>23</p> <p>Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration: Seminar 3 pm. SU Maxwell Aud. 5:30 pm dinner at the Dome. Tickets for dinner \$20, \$13 students. Call Hendricks Chapel 443-5044. Evening Program 6:30 pm. FREE. Includes 2005 Unsung Hero Award. Keynote speaker Ruth Simmons, President of Brown University.</p>	<p>23</p> <p>SPC Study Group on the US Global Agenda: 7-8:30 pm, Friends Meeting House, 821 Euclid Ave. <i>Water Wars</i> by Vandana Shiva. Carol 472-5478 or carol@peacecouncil.net.</p>	<p>25</p> <p>PFLAG Monthly Meeting: 7:30 pm. 446-5940</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Friends of Dorothy Benefit Dinner. Funds support hospitality for people with AIDS. 5:30-7 pm. St. Vincent's Parish Center, Winton St. and Hawley Ave. Donation. 471-6853.</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Weekly Peace Outreach: 7:30-8:15 am. Adams St. and Rt. 81 (Downtown).</p> <p>Vigil Against Death Penalty: Noon. Columbus Circle. 637-3344.</p> <p>SPC Newsletter Mailing Party: 2-5 pm. SPC Office, 924 Burnet Ave. Free Pizza.</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Just Desserts III: Evan Wolfson. Presentation on Marriage Equality and book signing. 7-9 pm. Wellington House, 7262 Genesee St., Fayetteville. Musical entertainment, gourmet desserts and a cash bar. Suggested donation \$35. Stonewall Committee. 422-0144.</p>	<p>22</p> <p>EVERY SAT: Sharing the Earth. Animal rights & environmental videos. 10 pm. Time Warner Cable Ch. 98. People for Animal Rights.</p>
<p>30</p>	<p>31</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Pax Christi Monthly Meeting: 9:30 am-noon. Frank Woolever 446-1693.</p> <p>Peace Council Benefit: Performance of "Culture Clash in America" Syracuse Stage. 3 pm. Tickets \$28. Reservations 446-3950.</p>				

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