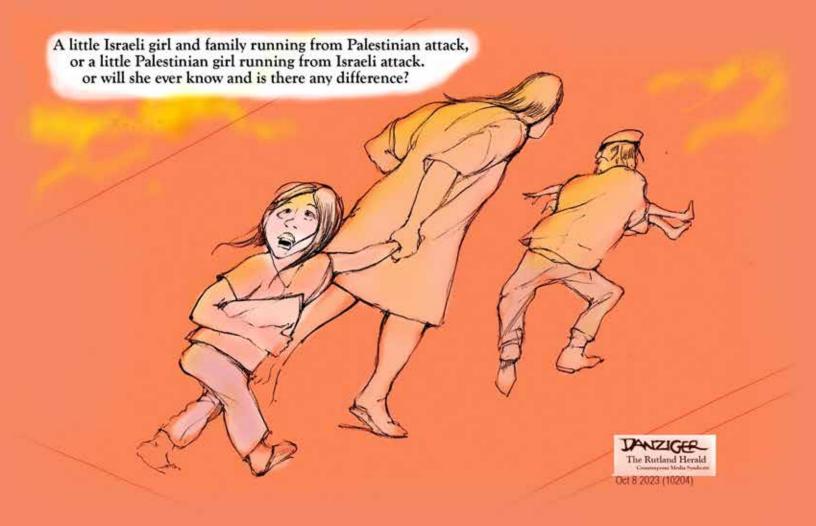


- Music & Cheer in the Face of Trying Times



# Gainesville Veterans for Peace Activities in 2023

by Mary Bahr

**WELCOME** to our 37th annual Winter Solstice Concert and our 16th year celebrating at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Gainesville!

Vets for Peace marched together into 2023 in the Martin Luther King Parade, proudly carrying our banner and our hopes for peace and justice in the new year. At our January meeting, VFP began planning for 2023, including giving away your contributions to worthy peaceful causes from the Civic Media Center to Project Renew, which clears minefields in Vietnam.

February saw emails going out to schools to announce the annual VFP Peace Poetry Contest with an Apr. 7 deadline for poem submission. In this contest, children submit poems on the topic of Peace, and a committee of VFP members and local poets does judging. The award ceremony happens right here at the Unitarian Fellowship in May. If you have children or grandchildren or teach k-12, plan to participate in 2024. The announcement will be on our website at <a href="http://www.vfpgainesville.org">http://www.vfpgainesville.org</a> by February, and a video of the 2023 awards is posted under Events 2023.

Peace Scholarship announcements were also sent out in February, with money set aside to fund up to 4 scholarships. VFP offers these \$1500 scholarships to high school seniors or college/trade school students who have been active in peace and social justice. The Labor Council and Alachua County Labor Coalition helped with outreach. Peace Scholarships are awarded at our May ceremony, along with Peace Poetry awards.

Anti-war picketing continued on Tuesdays from 4:30 to 5:30 at NW 16th Blvd and 43rd St. in the Fresh Market parking lot. In keeping with our commitment to peace with justice, VFP advertised and attended The Samuel Proctor Oral History Project (SPOHP) panel discussion on Feb. 23. Dan Berger and Zoharah Simmons spoke and answered questions about Dan Berger's book *Stayed On Freedom* which tells the story of Black Power activists Zoharah Simmons and Michael Simmons and their fight for freedom.

Golden Rule: Bill Moran and Diane Clark visited the Golden Rule ship during its stop in Jacksonville. The sailing ship is touring the nation to bring attention to the continued threat of nuclear war sponsored by the National Veterans for Peace. Our chapter voted in April to donate to the Golden Rule. https://vfpgoldenruleproject.org

Nicole Llinas, Executive Director of Current Problems, gave an excellent presentation about this group that has been cleaning up rivers and waterways for the past thirty years. They are the only freshwater debris removal group in the southeast. 80% of the debris comes from upstream, so much of their work is aimed at preventing debris from entering the water, e.g., helping businesses set up trash and recycling. All cleanups are zero waste. Cypress Grove donates their bags. Artists repurpose much of the debris. They have 22,000 volunteers state-wide. They collected 55,000 pounds of trash last year, 30,000 of which came from Alachua County. They analyze their data collection to prevent returning to the same places year after year.

They educate in the schools and take children on kayak and canoe trips. If you are wondering about the connection between peace and the environment, the US military is the largest user of fossil fuels in the world and the environmental damage of war is catastrophic to a planet already teetering on the edge of collapse. This is the battle we all should be fighting.

We celebrated the winners of the Peace Poetry Contest and Peace Scholarships in a May ceremony at the Unitarian Fellowship with children reading peace poems, music, and a reception with delicious finger foods.

Also in May, it was reported that the VFP chapter in Wisconsin wants fellow chapters to sign a letter to Congress asking that Cuba be removed from the list of statesponsored terrorists. VFP Gainesville unanimously added our endorsement.

Over the summer, while VFP Chapter 14 took time off for good behavior, the remaining five members of the Gainesville 8, including our coordinator Scott Camil, returned to Gainesville where, according to the *Gainesville Sun*, "the five surviving defendants of the 1973 Gainesville Eight trial—one of several Nixon-era conspiracy trials aimed at suppressing anti-war activism—returned for another group photo on the courthouse steps."

Only this time, instead of facing bailiffs, FBI agents, or federal marshals, these now elderly men were welcomed back to Gainesville by Mayor Harvey Ward, who read a proclamation commending them for occupying a "special place in the history of our community and our nation."

From now on, Aug. 31, 2023, will be known as "Gainesville Eight Day" in the city that lent their trial its name." https://www.gainesville.com/story/news/local/2023/08/31/gainesville-eight-honored-50-years-after-nixon-era-conspiracy-trial/70726422007.

In October, the surviving members of Vets for Peace Chapter 14 reconvened as the wheel of the year turned to fall and began planning this concert.

Some of us attended an excellent memorial service for chapter member Steven Hunter, where Scott described how Stephen designed the guides that made the straight, orderly rows of tombstones that made up the Memorial Mile remembrance, now gone with Stephen and the 6000-plus service members who died in Iraq and Afghanistan along with uncounted civilians.

Yours truly spoke to the Democratic Women's Club in Melrose on how Peace and Justice cannot be separate issues but are forever intertwined.

Chapter 14's Bill Moran and Diane Clark joined the crews of the Golden Rule from Buffalo to Dunkirk, and members Jim and Christine Zimmerman visited on board in Maryland as it completed its great circle tour for peace and justice (see Pg. 81).

And so here we are celebrating the turning of the year to 2024. And may it be a good one!

2 37th Annual VFP Winter Solstice

# Tonight's Program:

(May include, but not limited to)



### PRE-SHOW WARM-UP

Cathy Dewitt \* Mark Billman

#### CHEROKEE PEACE CHANT

Georg Suzuki

### DRUMS OF PEACE

John Chambers \* Rob Rothschild \* Paige Allison \*
Bill Hutchinson \* Robert Clark \* David Beede \* Jared Boock

## JOHN CHAMBERS & FRIENDS

#### PEACE POETRY READERS

Skylar Scott Maddie Deigl

## BILL MORAN & RUCKER AND BEEDE

Janet Rucker \* David Beede

# **QUARTERMOON**

Carylee Pennington\* Japhy Pennington\* Tom Nelly Raven\* John Smith

Intermission

## **OTHER VOICES**

Michelle Ott \* Dan Tampas \* Fagan Arouh \* Alan Hill

# A CHOIR OF HEAVENLY SEMI-ANGELS

You Know Who You Are

Master of Ceremonies —Bob Treadwater

Signer for the Deaf—Diane Delage

Gainesville, FL | 2023

.....



by Scott Camil

recognized people whose service is integral to the work of VFP. This recognition is acknowledged with the presentation of the Peace Helmet Award. The award is a beautiful stained glass replica of the VFP symbol of the Dove of Peace on a military helmet. For the past 35 years, these stained-glass Peace Helmets have been created for us exclusively by McIntyre Stained Glass Studio. We are very grateful to Mary and Mike for their partnership with VFP. Mike and Mary have retired, we will miss this partnership and we wish them the best. We are happy to announce that Suzanne Bachus will be now be creating the stained glass Peace Helmets for us (see page 6). *Welcome Suzanne!* We started giving this award out publicly at the Solstice in 2008.

#### 2022 Peace Helmet Award Recipients:

- **Gary Edinger**—Gary is the great 1st Amendment attorney who protects our right to express ourselves.
- Casey Donley—Casey designs and prints our T-shirts. He had also opened up his shop to help us when we were putting tombstones on 8th Ave.
- **Dennis Shuman**—When our funds ran low because we were prevented by the coronavirus from doing our regular fundraising at the Solstice, Dennis made sure that we had the funds to complete all of our projects.

#### 2021 Peace Helmet Award Recipients:

- **Bob McPeek**—Bob had been entertaining us at the Solstice since the beginning (see articles about Bob).
- Harvey Ward—He is a great friend to Veterans For Peace. It was Harvey's idea to rename the portion of 8th Ave. that we use on Memorial Day Weekend Memorial Mile.
- Mike & Mary McIntyre—For 34 years Mike and Mary have created the stained glass Peace Helmets for us. They also sold half of the solstice tickets each year.
- Shawna Doran —Shawna was responsible for setting up the tombstones on Memorial Day Weekend for Afghanistan & Iraq 2009 and continuing on until we were done.
- Sara Harrison & John Meeks—Sara & John have been setting up tombstones on Memorial Day Weekend for Iraq 2004 since the beginning and then helped others who were setting up.
- Jarred Elrod—Jarred is a good friend. He lives in Italy, he puts together the Solstice Program for us.

#### 2020 Peace Helmet Award Recipients:

- Greg Mullaley—All around help, whatever I need
- **Pablo Ortiz**—Flies in from Washington State every year to help on Memorial Mile
- Lisa McGaughran—Photographs all of our events & volunteers for whatever we need

#### 2019 Peace Helmet Award Recipients:

- Janet Davies—Memorial Mile—Afghanistan 2001—2007
- Jack Eisenfeld—All around help, whatever I need
- David & Judy Gold—Keep track of visited tombstones and place a flag on each one on Memorial Mile
- James Ingle—Brings IBEW 1205 every year to help on Memorial Mile

#### 2018 Peace Helmet Award Recipients:

- John and Jane Bishop—Special needs
- Susan Hudgens—Great ideas, Memorial Mile & Solstice.
- Rob Rothschild—Solstice Music, setup and takedown

#### 2017 Peace Helmet Award Recipients:

- **Doug Bernal**—VFP Vice President, he is an integral part of all of our projects
- **Ken Cornell**—Memorial Mile, Winter Solstice + anything else that I need help with
- **Roberta Gastmeyer**—Memorial Mile, Winter Solstice, Sierra Club and anything else that I need help with.

#### 2016 Peace Helmet Award Recipient:

• Stefan Broadus—Memorial Mile 2016

#### 2015 Peace Helmet Award Recipients:

- Deborah Hendrix—Our videographer
- Dianne Delage—Our Solstice signer

#### 2014 Peace Helmet Award Recipients:

- Ruth Steiner—Memorial Mile
- Sidney Wade—Peace Poetry Contest

#### 2013 Peace Helmet Award Recipients:

- Doris Nabuis—VFP
- Gloria Summers—VFP
- Paul Ortiz—Samuel Proctor Oral History Program Richard
- Hudgens—VFP
- Nic Vera—VFP

#### 2012 Peace Helmet Award Recipients:

- Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Gainesville, Social Justice Council—Alice Primack
- David Pokorney—Website and Photography

#### 2011 Peace Helmet Award Recipients:

- Jessica Newman—Peace Poetry Contest, Penrod Award
- Anne and Phil Haisley—Book Inc—Book Lover's Cafe
   Virtual Peace Helmet to the Occupy Movement everywhere

#### 2010 Peace Helmet Award Recipients:

- Sheila Payne—Peace Poetry Contest, Penrod Award
- Charlie Scales—Hyde and Zyke

#### 2009 Peace Helmet Award Recipients:

- Kirk Anthony—MFSO
- Jacque Betz—Code Pink
- Sue Faulk—VFP
- Craig Nikolaus—VFP
- Peter Theoktisto—Everyman Sound—Solstice
- Bob Tomashevsky—VFP

#### 2008 Peace Helmet Award Recipients:

- Denny Bellesheim—VFP
- Dottie Burnham—VFP
- Louis Clark—Bio—Graphix
- Rob Hopkins—VFP
- Gil Marshall—VFP
- Ku Wang—VFP

#### Other Years:

- Mary Bahr—Web Master
- Norman Balabanian—VFP
- Pierce Butler—Databases
- Scott Camil—VFP
- John Chambers—VFP
- Joe Courter—Gainesville Iguana
- Jim Creaven—VFP
- John Fullerton—VFP
- Bill Gilbert—VFP
- John Hawkins—VFP
- Dave Henderson—VFP
- Stephen Hunter—VFP
- Bill Hutchinson—Solstice
- Marybeth Hyer—VFP
- Bobby Ing—VFP
- John Koch—VFP
- Julie Netzer—VFP
- Bill Salmon—VFP
- Sherry Steiner—VFP
- Bill Warrick—VFP
- Charles Willett—VFP

Peace Helmet Award Recipients over the last 36 years: (We did not have computer records in the beginning so we have done our best to remember all of the recipients. If you have received this award and are not listed, please let us know, we apologize.)







# Special Thanks to:

The Members & Supporters of Veterans for Peace • Sherry Steiner • Jarred Elrod
Bill Hutchinson • Rob Rothschild • Diane Delage • Peter Theoktisto • Jessica Newman
Ken Cornell • Deborah Hendrix • Linda Kemp • Pierce Butler • Roberta Gastmeyer
Mary Bahr • Paul Ortiz • Sheila Payne • Samuel Proctor Oral History Program
Jack Eisenfeld • Casey Donley • Rita Marion • East End Eatery • Jane & John Bishop
Dennis Shuman • Suzanne Bachus • Doug Bernal • Mike Byerly • Robert Llinas • WGOT
WUBA • Tuesday Afternoon Peace Picketers • Whistleblowers • Ericson Frank





Tuesday Afternoon Peace Picketers in Action



Theatre of Memory Museum - 1705 NW 6th Street



IMAGINE a place where the past comes alive as you hold history in the palm of your hand... and imagine a place where the present is made vivid and meaningful through the immediacy of live performing arts.

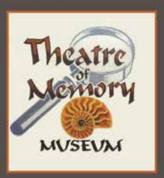


Photo by Randy Batista

Hours: 10:30–4:30, Wednesday–Sunday
And by appointment
www.TheatreofMemory.org

6 Gainesville, FL | 2023

# **2023 Alachua County Peace Poetry Contest**

**THIS WAS VETERANS FOR PEACE'S** thirteenth year organizing and holding a Peace (and Justice) Poetry contest. In January, all students K-12 living in Alachua County were invited to submit poems addressing what peace and social justice means to them.

We received over 200 poems this year. A team of community writers and poets judged the entries based on their message and creativity. We chose 26 students to read their lovely, heartfelt poems at the Peace Poetry Public Reading. All the students who submitted poems wrote with a powerful voice.

The Peace Poetry Reading/Reception was held in May at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, where we also honored the VFP Scholarship winners. Poets were presented with a certificate of achievement, a gift card to a local bookstore and copies of the bound poetry book.

We were thrilled that so many of the poets and their families and teachers were able to participate. This was a year where almost all the poets were able to come read their poems. Many teachers have told us that their students were so excited to be invited to read their poems





and many times these are students who have not excelled in other areas of school, such as sports or clubs. Many of the poets expressed how they had not ever performed in front of an audience before.

by Sheila Payne

Once again, there were many poems about school safety with students writing about their fears about someone coming into their school to shoot it up. There were many sophisticated poems about war and a general anxiety about world events including U.S. politics, Ukraine, refugees, and human meanness, bullying and intolerance. And, as always, there were poems about climate change and the beauty of the natural world. Veterans for Peace members believe that peace-making and hope for a peaceful world begins in our community, our homes, and schools. Though this contest holds no formal position on the current state of world affairs, we still want to honor the ideal of peace through the perspectives of young people. We believe that poetry is a prime and meaningful medium for creating a "culture of peace." Because of this, we believe the Peace Poetry contest provides a positive avenue for young people to share feelings and to craft their words creatively. It is especially important to remember that peace is not merely a goal but a human right. In that spirit of reflection, we are very pleased with the success of this year's contest.

You can find and download the 2023 Peace Poetry booklet at *https://vfpgainesville.org* and see photos of the poets reading their poems. You can also view a recording of the reading filmed by Deborah Hendrix of the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program. You can also view the poetry reading at *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmiJUmB7RIQ*.

We would like to thank the leading community judge, Melanie Dobson. We also thank Alivia Regan Hunter, who has played guitar and sang her own compositions of peace for the last few years.

We would especially like to thank the many teachers who encourage their students to participate every year, and to all the young poets who wrote such beautiful, moving poems.

We are always looking for volunteers to help with the Poetry contest. It takes months of outreach to publicize the contest to all the schools and community groups. If you would like to get involved, please email *vfppeacepoetrycontest@gmail.com* or call Sheila Payne at 831-334-0117.

# Shut the door on W A So it's not here any more

Shut the door on war so its not here anymore

War is for the weak

Communication is for the one at the top of the peak

Shut the door on war so its not here anymore

War can destroy all places

Even the ones with the most beautiful faces

Shut the door on war so its not here anymore

War can tear down city's

Wow, what a pity

Shut the door on war so its not here anymore

 $During\ war\ resources\ are\ scarce$ 

Even in people's nightmares

Shut the door on war so its not here anymore

People that are left in tears

They are full of fears

Shut the door on war so its not here anymore

Families are holding each other
During the war of thunder

Shut the door on war so its not here anymore

*Instead of going to school* 

Children are crying a frightened pool

Shut the door on war so its not here anymore

Children are traumatized

From the sound of war, hypnotized

Shut the door on war so its not here anymore

Children of my generation

Are now going to run the nation

Shut the door on war so its not here anymore

I am very aware

That war is out there

So open the door for peace

Maddie Deigl

Grade 5, Hidden Oak Elementary School



# Jewish Voice for Peace Starting up in Gainesville

by Jewish Voice for Peace members

**INSPIRED BY** the JVP actions nationwide calling for ceasefire in Gaza, a JVP pod is forming here in Gainesville.

#### What is IVP?

Jewish Voice for Peace is the largest progressive Jewish anti-Zionist organization in the world. We're organizing a grassroots, multiracial, cross-class, intergenerational movement of U.S. Jews into solidarity with the Palestinian freedom struggle, guided by a vision of justice, equality, and dignity for all people.

#### Our Vision

We envision a world where all people — from the U.S. to Palestine — live in freedom, justice, equality, and dignity. Like generations of Jewish leftists before us, we fight for the liberation of all people. We believe that through organizing, we can and will dismantle the institutions and structures that sustain injustice and grow something new, joyful, beautiful, and life-sustaining in their place.

We acknowledge great harm has been perpetrated on precious, innocent lives of both Israelis and Palestinians. We also recognize that this a deeply complex, deeply troubling and potentially divisive issue. Our mission in solidarity with Palestinian liberation is not to divide, but to bring justice and healing to a situation that has been corrupted by power struggles of the few that are resulting in a genocide that no ethical, compassionate person of any nation could support.

In its efforts to give voice to the protest of genocide and continued violence, and to support justice, healing, and peace, the national organization of Jewish Voices for Peace ( www.jewishvoicesforpeace.org ) provides organizing opportunities and structural resources for people who want to help. This means there are many local chapters and pods of leftist Jewish-identifed folks around the country willing

and able to advocate for the liberation of the Palestinian People and an end to the violence that is costing the lives of innocent civilians including children, both Palestinian and Israeli. The events of October this year have inspired a group of Gainesville Jewish-identified people to start a Jewish Voices for Peace GNV Pod to protest the violence and call for peace and justice and the liberation of Palestine.

The time is now for justice for all beings. The time is now to end the fabrication that Muslims and Jews are enemies when that division is a tool that serves hegemony. The time is now to hold the perpetrators of genocide to account for their heinous actions against the Palestinian people, and in this we name ourselves, local Jewish-identified Gainesvillains, as friends of the Palestinian people. We cry out in anguish and lament for their losses as the losses of our kin, our family. We cry out in anger against injustice and fight like hell for the living.

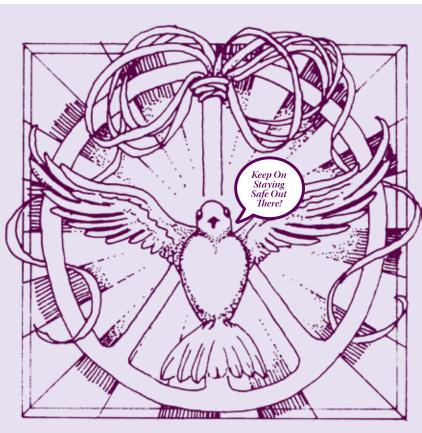
In Solidarity, the members of JVP GNV
For more info, please visit: jewishvoiceforpeace.org
Connect with the JVP GNV Pod: Instagram @jvp\_gnv or by
email at jvpgnvpod@gmail.com

World BEYOND War has launched a new online tool at worldbeyondwar.org/no-bases that allows the user to view a globe pock-marked with 867 U.S. military bases in countries other than the United States, and to zoom in for a satellite view of and detailed information on each base. The tool also allows filtering the map or list of bases by country, government type, opening date, number of personnel, or acres of land occupied.



**Season's Greetings**from VFP Chapter





Linda Kemp Illustration



37th Annual VFP Winter Solstice Gainesville, FL | 2023

# Report on Gaza

by Scott Camil

NOTE FROM SCOTT—This article on Gaza and Israel has been hard to do because there are daily updates and many moving parts. I have included many links that will be accessible when you access this article on the VFP website: https://vfpgainesville.org

MY EXPERIENCES in Vietnam led me to become an activist for peace. I came home and saw that the public was being lied to about the true nature and conduct of the war. I wondered, "If what I had been doing was good for our country, why was the government lying to the public about it?" I learned the quote, "In War Truth is the First Casualty"

As a peace activist, people said to me "Scott, you do good work for peace and justice, so how can you support Israel?" My response was that I was Jewish and I did not believe that Jews would do the things in Israel to Palestinians that I was hearing about.



# CELESTIAL WIND

Folk Harps & Carving John Chambers 352-481-5856 Gainesville, Florida I was offered an opportunity to travel to Israel and see for myself. In 1990, I went on a fact finding tour to the Middle East. You can see my report here:

• https://vfpgainesville.org/articles/documentation-scott-camil/

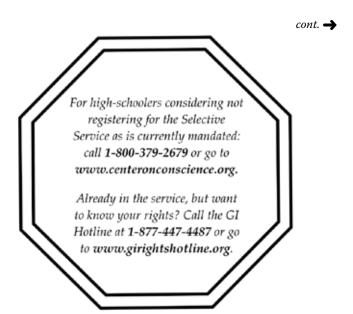
I have been to Gaza and I know of no one who would be willing for their families to live under these conditions. None of us chose our place of birth. If we would have been born in Gaza, we would now be suffering regardless of whether or not we had any ties to Hamas.

On October 7th, 2023, Hamas forces broke out of Israel's 17-year siege in Gaza and attacked Israel, killing 1,200 people. About 380 were Israeli soldiers and police, the rest were civilians. In retaliation, Israel has killed about 15,000 Palestinians, mostly civilians, including as of this writing 6,000 children (November 28th).

The West was quick to denounce all Palestinians and to endorse the eradication of the Palestinians. The attacks on Palestinians are reminiscent of the dehumanizing language that the Nazis used describing the Jews. US policy toward the Palestinians is reminiscent of the colonial policy toward Native Americans—coveting the land, ignoring the legitimacy of the residents, taking and occupying their land, continually killing and forcibly moving the inhabitants.

#### Personal costs:

In its war against criticism of the apartheid State of Israel, people who have shown support for a cease fire, support for the idea that Palestinians are humans and deserve to be treated humanely and support for the fact that the attack did





# JORDAN GLEN SCHOOL & SUMMER CAMP





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We are advocates of children and childhood. We want our children to enjoy their time spent away from home and feel that we exemplify our belief that the joy of living and love of learning need never be separated.

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12 Gainesville, FL | 2023 13

not happen in a vacuum are being fired from their jobs, kicked out of schools and terrorized by those in power in the west. Even in a majority of the western media, you cannot criticize Israel or its policies. The First Amendment no longer protects speech if it is critical of Israel or its conduct.

You can criticize the US government and/or its policies but anything negative towards Israel is deemed anti-Semitic. There exists a global suppression of pro-Palestinian advocacy, bad-faith accusations of antisemitism and more. In the US, the main organization pushing this agenda is AIPAC, the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee, known in progressive circles as the American Israeli Propaganda Action Cabal.

The special relationship between Israel and the US wasn't even damaged when on June 8th, 1967, Israel attacked the American naval ship, the USS Liberty. The Liberty was sailing in international waters in the Mediterranean Sea when it was ruthlessly attacked by Israeli air and naval forces. Out of the Liberty crew of 294 men, 34 were killed and 173 were wounded. The Forty Million (\$40,000,000) Dollar signals intelligence ship was so severely damaged, it was sold as scrap in 1970 for \$101,666.66.

During the attack the US Navy sent planes to rescue the Liberty but then called them back and did not help. The Navy then ordered the surviving crew not to speak about the attack. This special relationship includes the fact that the US has blocked at least 53 United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions critical of Israel, according to UN data. On October 18, the US blocked a resolution calling for "humanitarian pauses" in the fighting.

The House of Representatives has voted to censure Representative Rashida Tlaib of Michigan, the first woman of Palestinian descent, in Congress because she said, "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free", in a video she posted on social media. "I can't believe I have to say this, but Palestinian people are not disposable. We are human beings just like anyone else."

The resolution advanced 234-188, with the support of 212 Republicans and 22 Democrats; four Republicans and 184 Democrats voted against it. Of the 22 Democrats all but 1 are funded by AIPAC.

Longtime international human rights lawyer, Craig Mokhiber, who served as director of the New York Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, has resigned. In his resignation letter, he wrote there is a 'different set of rules' when it comes to Israel's violations of international law. "In Gaza, civilian homes, schools, churches, mosques, and medical institutions are wantonly attacked as thousands of civilians are massacred.

"None of us chose our place of birth. If we would have been born in Gaza, we would now be suffering regardless of whether or not we had any ties to Hamas."

In the West Bank, including occupied Jerusalem, homes are seized and reassigned based entirely on race, and violent settler pogroms are accompanied by Israeli military units. Across the land, Apartheid rules.

• https://www.democracynow.org/2023/11/1/craig\_mokhiber\_ un\_resignation\_israel\_gaza

On October 9, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant called for a "total siege" of Gaza. "No electricity, no food, no water, no gas — it's all closed," he said. The policies of collective punishment are outlawed by international law.

What preceded the October 7th Hamas attack? In September over 800 Israeli settlers stormed the Al-Aqsa Mosque with the protection of Israeli forces, assaulting Palestinian worshippers.

• https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/9/17/israeli-forces-attack-palestinian-worshippers-at-al-agsa-mosque

Unrestrained settler violence, which some call "the most successful land-grab strategy since 1967," has also negatively affected the Palestinians. Israeli settlers have been murdering Palestinians, destroying their homes, and stealing their property all under the watchful eye and protection of the Israeli military.

"Since 2007, Gazans have lived under siege, prohibited from leaving their open air prison by a high-security militarized wall and platoons of Israeli soldiers. For the last 16 years, starting long before the latest escalation, access to most goods was banned. Gazans couldn't even get construction materials to repair the homes, hospitals, water treatment facilities and places of worship that Israel bombed repeatedly — in 2008, 2012, 2014, 2018 and 2021."

• https://otherwords.org/we-need-an-immediate-ceasefire-in-gaza/?emci=bdd4c7a3-f678-ee11-b004-00224832eb73&emdi=8bcb7ec7-fb78-ee11-b004-00224832eb73&ceid=3964777

#### Financial Motivations:

Total oil and gas reserves were valued at a staggering \$524 billion in 2019.

- https://www.planetcritical.com/p/everybody-wants-gazasgas
- https://unctad.org/publication/economic-costs-israelioccupation-palestinian-people-unrealized-oil-and-naturalgas

"The Palestinian people have been denied the benefits of using this natural resource to finance socioeconomic development and meet their need for energy. The accumulated losses are estimated in the billions of dollars."

#### The Media:

Journalist casualties in the Israel-Gaza war:

• https://cpj.org/2023/11/journalist-casualties-in-the-israel-gaza-conflict/

At least 37 journalists and media workers were among an estimated 11,000 killed since the war began on October 7.

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For Peace
352.359.1133
www.angelgardens.com

cont. →



37th Annual VFP Winter Solstice Gainesville, FL | 2023

Palestinian Journalists' Union Says Western Media Is "Facilitating Genocide":

• https://truthout.org/articles/palestinian-journalists-unionsays-western-media-is-facilitating-genocide/

According to Palestinian journalists, "Western Media have parroted Israeli government talking points, failed to challenge or even attempt to verify blatant misinformation and propaganda, and adopted dehumanizing and violent language about the Palestinian people."

The killing of Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh:

• https://www.vox.com/2022/5/11/23067365/shireen-abu-akleh-palestinian-journalist-killed-israel

"For over two decades, journalist Shireen Abu Akleh covered human rights abuses in the occupied Palestinian territory. A generation grew up watching the Al Jazeera broadcaster break down some of the most difficult pieces of news to cover. On Wednesday morning May 11th, 2022, she was shot and killed while doing the same, reporting on a raid of the West Bank city of Jenin by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF)."

In an act of vengeance on October 27th, Israeli army bulldozers destroyed the memorial of late Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, located at the entrance to the Jenin refugee camp in the occupied West Bank. The Israeli troops then danced and celebrated. "Israeli forces stormed the city of Jenin and the outskirts of its camp, and a military bulldozer began razing Martyr Abu Akleh Street and her memorial," witnesses told Anadolu on Friday.

Israel's ambassador to the United Nations claimed in a televised interview Sunday that there is no humanitarian crisis in Gaza:

• https://www.commondreams.org/news/israel-denies-gaza-humanitarian-crisis?link\_id=26&can\_id=27d55
3e50300a7e7fe2e1fc4ef0d85ac&source=email-trump-teed-up-for-major-courtroom-showdown-today&email\_referrer=email\_2103770&email\_subject=trump-teed-up-for-major-courtroom-showdown-today

Hamas's military wing recently said it would hand over all remaining Israeli captives in exchange for Israel emptying its jails and prisons – "all Palestinian prisoners."

• https://truthout.org/articles/calls-grow-for-prisoner-hostage-exchange-as-israels-war-on-gaza-escalates/?utm\_source=Truthout&utm\_campaign=29bc213230-EMAIL\_CAMPAIGN\_3\_20\_2023\_13\_41\_COPY\_06&utm\_medium=email&utm\_term=0\_bbb541a1db-29bc213230-650179581&mc\_cid=29bc213230&mc\_eid=0f9e311da8



The River Phoenix Center for Peacebuilding is grateful for Vets for Peace and their constancy and dedication to growing peace in community, country and world.

www.centerforpeacebuilding.org

#### What is the US doing to ease the crisis?

In the US House, Republicans Introduce Bill to Expel Palestinians From the Country.

• https://newrepublic.com/post/176666/house-republicansbill-expel-palestinians-country?utm\_source=newsletter&utm\_ medium=email&utm\_campaign=tnr\_daily&mc\_ cid=372e867bab&mc\_eid=8b61958bcc

White House Requests "Unprecedented" Loophole That Would Obscure Arms Sales to Israel. The measure effectively gives Israel a check to purchase \$3.5 billion in arms in complete secrecy without notifying Congress.

• https://inthesetimes.com/article/white-house-request-waiver-arms-sales-gaza-israel?link\_id=3&can\_id=27d55
3e50300a7e7fe2e1fc4ef0d85ac&source=email-i-am-done-voting-for-the-lesser-of-two-evils-i-will-not-vote-for-joe-biden-in-2024-bernie-sanders-former-staffers-call-on-him-to-back-cease-fire-in-palestine-and-israel&email\_referrer=email\_2101713\_\_\_subject\_2625492&email\_subject=white-house-requests-unprecedented-loophole-that-would-obscure-arms-sales-to-israel

These things will not help end the crisis. We need to cut all aid to Israel. American weapons are being used to exterminate Palestinians.

All over the world there have been demonstrations against the Israeli genocide in Gaza, calling for a ceasefire where the death toll so far is well over 10,000 Palestinians of which about 4,000 are children.

- https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/live-blog/israel-hamas-war-liveupdatesrcna123761#:~:text=On%20the%20day%20Gaza%27s%20health,to%20raise%20fears%20of%20escalation.
- https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/thousands-march-incapitals-around-the-world-demanding-cease-fire-in-israelhamas-war

Harvard University student organizations targeted for opposition to Israeli war crimes in Gaza:

• https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2023/10/11/onfy-o11. html?pk campaign=newsletter&pk kwd=wsws

Here in Gainesville there was a demonstration calling for a ceasefire.

- https://www.alligator.org/article/2023/11/pro-pal-rally In Israel, anti-war activists are being arrested and charged with inciting terrorism.
- https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/19/israel-police-boss-threatens-to-send-anti-war-protesters-to-gaza-on-buses

Jewish Voice for Peace has called for a ceasefire and rightfully says that "The Root of Violence is Oppression"

• https://www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org/2023/10/07/ statement23-10-07/?sourceid=1002365&emci=ae655383-3665-ee11-9937-00224832eb73&emdi=2f6f6283-5365-ee11-9937-00224832eb73&ceid=28951

If Israelis want empathy, they must show empathy to the Palestinians.

# Gainesville Quaker Meeting

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where together we seek to live lives committed to peace and justice.

Meeting Info: 352-372-1070 www.gainesvillequakers.org 702 NW 38th St. Worship each Sunday @ 11 a.m.



# Mayor Harvey Ward Supports the outstanding work of Vets for Peace

J. K. "Jess" Irby
Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller



352-374-3636



#### Other relevant links:

#### **Israel Announces Total Blockade of Gaza Strip:**

• https://truthout.org/articles/israelannounces-total-blockade-of-gaza-strip/?utm\_ source=Truthout&utm\_campaign=9f996a7b80-EMAIL\_CAMPAIGN\_3\_20\_2023\_13\_41\_COPY\_05&utm\_ medium=email&utm\_term=0\_bbb541a1db-9f996a7b80-650179581&mc\_cid=9f996a7b80&mc\_eid=0f9e311da8

#### Palestinians Have a Legal Right to Armed Resistance Against Israeli Colonialism:

• https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JwO6cGnn-M8

International law clearly shows that the Palestinian people have a legal right to armed struggle against Israeli colonialism, just as South Africans did against apartheid. Gaza suffers under an illegal Israeli blockade that even a former British prime minister recognized to be a "prison camp".

#### **Israel Announces Total Blockade of Gaza Strip:**

• https://truthout.org/articles/israelannounces-total-blockade-of-gaza-strip/?utm\_ source=Truthout&utm\_campaign=9f996a7b80-EMAIL\_CAMPAIGN\_3\_20\_2023\_13\_41\_COPY\_05&utm\_ medium=email&utm\_term=0\_bbb541a1db-9f996a7b80-650179581&mc\_cid=9f996a7b80&mc\_eid=0f9e311da8

# Israeli Journalist Gideon Levy: Israel Should Lift Siege & Call Off Plans for Ground Invasion of Gaza:

https://www.democracynow.org/2023/10/11gideon\_levy\_ gaza\_war\_israel\_hamas

#### Papers that Ignore Causes of Violence Can't Help Prevent it:

 https://fair.org/home/papers-that-ignore-causes-of-violencecant-help-prevent-it/

# Israeli Apartheid Is at the Heart of the Brutality in Gaza

• https://inthesetimes.com/article/israel-gaza-palestine-apartheid-occupation-war-seige?link\_id=2&can\_id =27d553e50300a7e7fe2e1fc4ef0d85ac&source=ema il-the-case-for-child-welfare-abolition-uaw-scores-major-victory-gm-to-put-ev-battery-plants-in-national-contract&email\_referrer=email\_2077450\_\_\_ subject\_2599294&email\_subject=israeli-apartheid-is-at-the-heart-of-the-brutality-in-gaza-and-israe

# Source of dubious 'beheaded babies' claim is Israeli settler leader who incited riots to 'wipe out' Palestinian village:

• https://thegrayzone.com/2023/10/11/beheaded-israeli-babies-settler-wipe-out-palestinian/

# Custom Apparel Promotional Products Graphic Design Branding Illustration & Video Creative printingiscool.com

# What's the Israel-Palestine conflict about? A simple guide:

• https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/9/whats-theisrael-palestine-conflict-about-a-simple-guide

#### **Israel's Culture of Deceit:**

 https://chrishedges.substack.com/p/israels-cultureof-deceit?utm\_campaign=email-post&r=98gju&utm\_ source=substack&utm\_medium=email

# 13 House Democrats Call for Immediate Ceasefire in Gaza:

 https://theintercept.com/2023/10/16/gaza-ceasefire-housedemocrats/?utm\_medium=email&utm\_source=The%20 Intercept%20Newsletter

#### Mass Protests Erupt in US against Israel war crimes:

• https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2023/10/19/vjas-o19. html?pk\_campaign=newsletter&pk\_kwd=wsws

#### Watch: Palestinian Journalist Rips Western Media Narrative on Israel's Gaza Slaughter:

 https://informationclearinghouse.blog/2023/10/24/watchpalestinian-journalist-rips-western-media-narrative-onisraels-gaza-slaughter/

#### Un Chief Says Hamas Attacks Did Not Occur in Vacuum, Sparking Israeli Fury:

 https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog\_entry/un-chief-sayshamas-attacks-did-not-occur-in-vacuum-sparking-israelifury/

# Israel Calls for Resignation of Un Chief Over Remarks on Action in Gaza:

• https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/israelhamas-war-israel-calls-for-resignation-of-un-chief-over-remarks-on-action-in-gaza-101698167413112.html

# Freed Hamas hostage recounts ordeal, slams Israeli failures, speaks well of captors:

• https://www.timesofisrael.com/freed-hamas-hostagerecounts-ordeal-slams-israeli-failures-speaks-well-of-captors/

#### The Occupation of the American Mind:

https://www.occupationmovie.org

#### Billionaire Ceos Continue Campaign to Blacklist Students for Opposition to Israel's War Crimes:

• https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2023/10/18/bill-o18. html?pk\_campaign=newsletter&pk\_kwd=wsws

# A Photographer Captures Death, Destruction, and Grief in Gaza:

• https://time.com/6324754/gaza-photos-grief-death-destruction/?utm\_medium=email&utm\_source=sfmc&utm\_campaign=newsletter+brief+default+ac&utm\_content=+++20231018+++body&et\_rid=207305018&lctg=207305018

cont. 👈



# The day the power of love overrules the love of power, the world will know peace.

- Mahatma Gandhi

SEASON'S GREETINGS AND WISHES FOR PEACE AND HARMONY IN THE NEW YEAR!

Paul and Marihelen Wheeler The Gestalt Center

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#### The Families of Israelis Held Hostage by Hamas Speak Out: "Their descendants' defiant presence in blockaded Gaza (where 2.2 million people are ruled by Hamas), and on the West Bank (where 3 million chafe under Israeli military occupation)":

• https://time.com/6324741/israel-hostages/?utm medium=email&utm source=sfmc&utm campaign=newsletter+brief+default+ac&utm content=+++20231018+++body&et rid = 207305018 & lctg = 207305018

#### **Veterans For Peace Statement on Gaza:**

https://www.veteransforpeace.org/pressroom/ news/2023/10/24/veterans-peace-statement-gaza

#### Mass protests erupt in US against Israel war crimes:

• https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2023/10/19/vjas-o19. html?pk campaign=newsletter&pk kwd=wsws

#### Watch: Palestinian Journalist Rips Western Media Narrative on Israel's Gaza Slaughter:

• https://informationclearinghouse.blog/2023/10/24/watchpalestinian-journalist-rips-western-media-narrative-onisraels-gaza-slaughter/

#### Amid violence from Maine to the Middle East, 'peace' becomes a dangerous word:

https://www.inquirer.com/opinion/commentary/ israel-gaza-war-on-free-speech-20231029.html?utm source=newsletter&utm medium=email&utm campaign=will bunch alerts 10 29 2023&sfmc id=0031U000022rXUcQAM&sub source=will bunch newsletter&list name=DE15 Newsletter Will Bunch&int promo=newsletter&et\_rid=568901473

#### Israel's long war on Gaza w/Norman Finkelstein | The **Chris Hedges Report:**

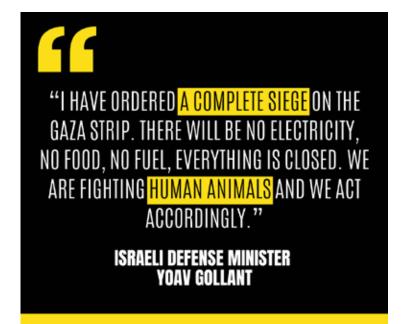
• https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0aemeCbRTk

#### Israeli-Us Ethnic Cleansing—Planto Salvage "New Middle East" Model:

 https://mailchi.mp/mintpressnews/robert-inlakesh-bidrescue-new-middle-east-vision-why-us-backing-israel*slaughter-gaza?e=ce39cff27e* 

#### ADDENDUM:

Since I wrote this article, there has been important movement. Israel and Hamas have had a cease-fire and have been exchanging prisoners. One can only hope that the exchange of prisoners and influx of aid continues.



# TAKE ACTION FOR GAZA NOW



# **Crimes Against Humanity in Gaza Call Your Legislators!**

by Anonymous

AT THIS MOMENT, we are witnessing crimes against humanity in Gaza. More than two million people are being denied food, water, electricity and their hospitals are being bombed and infrastructure destroyed, all with the express purpose of ethnic cleansing—to push the population of Gaza into the Sinai. Innocent Israeli lives were lost on October 7 and should be mourned. However, as Stefanie Fox, the director for Jewish Voices for Peace stated, "Reality is shaped by when you start the clock, you know, and while the Israeli government may have just declared war, its war on Palestine started 75 years ago."

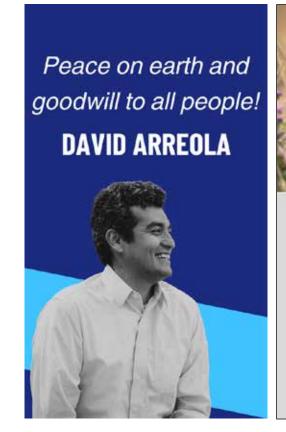
Just before the official creation of the state of Israel in May 1948, Zionist paramilitary groups murdered hundreds of Palestinians in Deir Yassin and terrified surrounding villagers enough that 750,000 Palestinians fled from their homes. They were never allowed to return. In 1967 Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza and subjected the population to an apartheid system with massive restrictions on movement, imprisonment without any charges (called administrative detention), destruction of homes, and torture. After the election of Hamas in Gaza in 2006, Israel completely sealed Gaza's borders and blockaded the travel of people and goods to and from Gaza, effectively rendering it an "open air prison."

There is no military solution for peace because there can be no peace in a settler colonial state. As the rabbinical council for Jewish Voices for Peace stated, "We look to a future of peace, justice, freedom and dignity. This means, among other things, that Israel ends the blockade of Gaza, ends the occupation of the West Bank, takes down the walls, and dismantles the apartheid system." Palestine, like Algeria, Angola, and Vietnam nations that have decolonized, is on the right side of history. South Africa became a democratic nation in 1994 without the expulsion of any population and so can Palestine and Israel.

Please call your local representatives in Congress and the Senate and ask them to stop supporting the genocide

From a faculty member at UF who wished to remain anonymous for fear of repercussions.

Veterans Speak Out For Peace on Memorial Day Remember: All Living Things Are Victims of War Veterans For Peace





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# FINAL FRIENDS – HELPING US WALK EACH OTHER HOME



Final Friends is a Gainesville-based volunteer organization helping families and friends have a "home funeral" – a meaningful, virtually no-cost, DIY caring for and transporting of the deceased, and completion of the necessary paperwork between the time of death and burial. A home funeral bypasses the need for expensive, often impersonal, commercial funeral home services that may be a financial burden on the survivors. This hands-on loving act by the community promotes acceptance and healing, can be transformative for those present, and potentially for the deceased as well.

As many of us are getting up there in years we're starting to think about our final destination. We are truly fortunate to have Prairie Creek Conservation Cemetery here in the Gainesville area where one can be laid to rest in a beautiful natural area, nurturing rather than poisoning the land, as our

final loving act for our planet. I've made my reservation at PCCC, solidifying my intention to be buried there. But, we may not have considered how we get there.

A home funeral includes caring for the deceased, preparing a State of Florida death certificate, and any transportation of the deceased, such as to PCCC. This is all relatively simple to accomplish if one knows how to do it in compliance with the State of Florida statutes and regulations. This is where Final Friends can help. With our expertise, resources, guidance, and support, having a legal home funeral is extremely easy to arrange, especially with some advanced planning. No background or experience is required. Final Friends has been doing this for our community for over 10 years as a free service, and there is no charge from the State of Florida for having a home funeral, as well. And yes, it is still possible to have a safe home funeral during this pandemic.

For more information, please visit our website www.finalfriends.org or call us at 352-374-4478.

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And stretch a hand to those in need

Embrace love not hate

Harvey Budd and Ilene Silverman



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If you or someone you know is interested in sharing an oral history for the Veteran's History Project, please call SPOHP at (352) 392-7168 or email us at spohp@clas.ufl.edu

37th Annual VFP Winter Solstice Gainesville, FL | 2023

# The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same

by Damian Niolet

we've clearly been going through an "emotional intelligence renaissance" over the past decade or so. You've probably heard of being "woke," but that's just one of many ways in which we've tapped into a higher level of consciousness and become more empathetic and accountable. At the same time, economically speaking, the pandemic propelled the gig economy years forward. "The great resignation," for instance, was made possible thanks to the increase in employment options presented by "gig apps" while most of us were staying at home.

These two shifts in our society—one cultural, the other economic—are exactly what many are citing, or blaming, when addressing the US military's "recruitment crisis." Sen. Tommy Tuberville, R-Ala, for instance, believes, "We're losing recruits right and left," apparently because we [allow current active duty service members to read] "poems on aircraft carriers over the loudspeakers." Others simply point to data showing civilian employers offer better compensation, not to mention, long-term professional development plans not involving a heightened risk of death.

Before celebrating the failures of the military's recruitment efforts as opponents of militarism, we should examine the historic practices and evaluate the future plans of our military leaders. Are we approaching the day we'll choose diplomacy over violence on a national scale? Believing that day will never arrive, perhaps out of a need for job security, recruitment strategists in the Army are simply shifting their focus towards early twenty-somethings with "some college," as opposed to the traditional target — high school youth — and the other branches are taking note.

Could the Army's plan work? To answer that question, it's necessary to surgically dissect the military's recruiting "funnel." Traditionally, the military has targeted youth between the ages of 17-24, but primarily high schoolers, because the "tried and true" tactic has been using a kind of passive-aggressive, reverse psychology, but face-to-face, so young people are that much more obliged to agree, "Military service is my best option." While today's youth are prone to question everything, they are still susceptible in a society where violence and heroism go hand-in-hand.

The Army finally realized, however, high schoolers (17 and 18 year olds) are only  $\sim$ 20% of the "recruitment pool." Common sense says, if you cast a wider net, you'll get more fish. So, when it comes to targeting, yes, this pivot is likely to prove effective, unfortunately. But will the in-person

"motivation" technique go over well with college students? It all depends on the depth of career programs offered by the college. The more robust the programs, the more difficulty a recruiter will have in suggesting a "doom and gloom" scenario.

Local workforce development boards, like Florida's CareerSource, have a number of "upskilling" programs, the quantity, quality, and availability of which is immense. And they don't only target college students. In fact, many of the grants (which trickle down from either the DoL or DoE) are utilized by high schools and employers to build career pathways. Apprenticeships, especially, are seeing a huge surge in popularity. Florida currently has 328 registered programs. So, in this regard, no, the Army's pivot is not likely to prove effective, fortunately.

That doesn't mean the downward trend in recruitment numbers will continue. Don't forget, the Marines did meet their goal last year, so we know our youth are still susceptible. And so do the branches, which are all actively tweaking their tactics. Taking a look at the funnel again, far and away the largest reason our youth won't join, is fear of trauma. I didn't put that in quotes because I didn't want to suggest that concern isn't legitimate. And neither does the military, which is why the messaging is always transposed into "benefits of serving." Note the quotation marks.

The next biggest reason why the military is in a recruitment bind can be described in two different ways, depending on who says it: 1) the eligibility requirements are too strict, or 2) today's youth are too problematic – physically, emotionally, criminally, etc. Either way, the military quickly learned the response isn't to lower their standards. Instead, the Army recently and successfully piloted a "Prep Course" for those eager to serve, but unable to meet the requirements. It's this type of programmatic maneuvering that will likely get the military out of its rut.

As Beth Asch, a senior economist who's studied military recruitment and retention at the Rand Corp. for over 40 years, said, "These types of recruiting challenges have happened before, and each time it's treated like an insurmountable crisis, but history shows it can be overcome." Unless we speak out in opposition, we will very likely see our military branches implementing more programs in our existing workforce apparatuses, regardless of any strides toward a higher level of consciousness favoring peace over violence locally, or even diplomacy over warfare globally.

"The more the world has changed, the more it has stayed the same." In other words, the world isn't getting worse; instead, it's getting more entrenched in its view—"violent conflict is part of human nature." Until our paradigm of the human experience acknowledges peace as, not only a viable option, but the best option in all circumstances (which will happen thanks in great part to organizations like Veterans for Peace), the military will always have both propaganda and incentive tools at its disposal to meet recruitment goals in the long run.

#### Damian Niolet

Owner and CEO of The Start Squad and The Start Squad Academy Vice President of Alachua County Emerging Leaders (ACEL) Member of United Way of North Central Florida's Community Investment Council

Greater Gainesville Chamber of Commerce Diplomat Veterans for Peace—Gainesville Chapter 14 Ambassador

# 10 SYMPTOMS OF THE WOKE MIND VIRUS:

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- 2. You embrace science.
- 3. You are willing to change your mind when new information becomes available.
- 4. You understand that most issues are not black and white.
- 5. You believe in true equality for all people.
- 6. You like to share.
- 7. You embrace cooperation.
- 8. You respect others' rights.
- 9. You believe culture and the arts has value.
- 10. You care for the planet and all of it's life.



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# **VETERANS FOR PEACE**

in pursuit of peace and justice.

We believe that an understanding point of view and acceptance of the views of others is paramount for the future.

# 2023 Gainesville Veterans for Peace Scholarship Recipients

by Paul Ortiz

**EACH YEAR,** Gainesville Veterans for Peace awards three college/vocational scholarships to student applicants from Alachua County who demonstrate academic excellence as well as a commitment to social justice and nonviolent social change. Due to generous community support of our chapter this past year, we were able to award four scholarships of \$1,500 each. Please consider donating to Gainesville Veterans for Peace to sustain our 10th annual Peace Scholarship program in 2024!

This year's recipients of Gainesville VFP's Peace Scholarships were inspiring. Each student maintained outstanding GPAs while engaging in activism and voluntarism for an array of important causes. These were the recipients of the 2023 Gainesville Veterans for Peace Scholarship:

#### Carmelos Brown

Carmelos Brown is a retired US Army veteran originally from Williston, Florida. He is a student at Santa Fe College, where he is majoring in Organizational Management. He is a member of the Justice Club, a First-Generation Counselor, a Veteran & Military Services Success Coordinator and a board member of Increasing African American Retention at Santa Fe College. Carmelos's passion for ensuring the success of first generation African American students at Santa Fe is reflected in his work with My Brother's Keeper, a support program at the college. Carmelos writes that his work with My Brothers Keeper "addresses the unique challenges Black men face as they pursue academic success. I share my life experiences to encourage them to set smart goals for themselves and to see those goals through to fruition."

## Laylani Gordon

Laylani Gordon is a student at Pace Center for Girls in Alachua County. Her faculty recommenders at Pace noted that Laylani has become a leader in encouraging her fellow students to become engaged in community activism. Leilani writes that "As a scholar at Pace Center for Girls, I've learned a lot about my past but most importantly, about my future and what I can do for others. Factors like age, disability, ethnicity, gender and religion play a huge role in discrimination and access to resources. This is one of the many reasons why I want to go to college for law school, in pursuit of social justice." Laylani plans to

attend Florida A&M University in the fall and to eventually matriculate to law school to help create a fairer criminal justice system in the United States.

#### Rahel Berelsman

Rahel Berelsman is a senior at P.K. Yonge Developmental Research School. She is also a full-time dual enrolled student at Santa Fe College and currently holds a weighted 4.2 GPA. One of her recommenders noted that Rahel is a "calming presence, a peace maker and a kind, generous spirit wherever she goes." In addition to working part time, Rahel volunteers to read at area schools. Rahel plans to attend the University of South Florida and to embark upon a career as a travel nurse. Rahel writes that "For my long-term goal, I would like to be working in medical missions and traveling to developing countries to be able to reinforce ways for communities to have better, affordable healthcare."

#### Adrian Price

Adrian Price is a Santa Fe College Honor Society student. He is the president of the Santa Fe Justice Club as well as a volunteer at the House of Hope Prison Transitional Ministry and Humanserve Organization. Adrian teamed up with a Humanities Professor at Santa Fe College to organize an initiative called "Education in and Out of Prison," which received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. In his own words, Adrian "has a passion for seeing those who come from incarceration succeed in their transition once released" using the arts and expressive culture. He will be entering the Radiography program at Santa Fe this fall semester. Adrian is the recipient of this year's Peace Scholarship named in honor of John A. Penrod, a veteran of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in the Spanish Republic and a lifelong social justice activist in Alachua County.

cont. 👈



30 — Gainesville, FL | 2023 — Gainesville, FL

Veterans for Peace 10th Annual College Scholarship Program for Alachua County Students—Deadline for Submitting Application, Friday, April 26, 2024

Gainesville Veterans for Peace Chapter 14 is excited to announce our 10th annual Peace Scholarship Program for the spring of 2023. Depending on the amount of funds we are able to raise for this effort, we will be awarding three or four college scholarships of \$1,500 each for high school seniors, college students or adults. Recipients must demonstrate commitment to one or more social justice activities which may include: peace and nonviolence, intersectional coalition building, Black Lives Matter, women's reproductive freedom, environmental sustainability, economic justice, education and social change.

Veterans for Peace created these scholarships to give financial support to students in Alachua County, Florida who are planning careers in pursuit of a world of social justice and equality.

The majority of Veterans for Peace scholarships awarded thus far have went to first-generation college students as well as to community college students. Students enrolled in vocational, apprenticeship and career training programs are eligible to apply.

Santa Fe College student Doug Bernal, a recipient of a 2016 Peace Scholarship, is an Iraq War veteran who explains the economic challenges facing student veterans: "Like many newly separated veterans, I struggled financially for quite some time after leaving the service. Unsure of where I wanted to go in life and lacking the confidence to pursue higher education, I found myself taking on more debt as time went on. When I finally decided to pursue school, it was difficult to purchase books and pay bills while waiting for my GI Bill benefits to come through. I didn't initially have the grades for financial aid, so the VFP scholarship was instrumental in getting me the books I so desperately needed and putting me on a path to a successful college experience."

Please help Gainesville Veterans for Peace spread the word about this scholarship program! To be eligible to apply for the Peace Scholarship, the applicant must be:

1) a resident of Alachua County; 2) either a high school senior planning to enroll in full-time undergraduate study at an accredited two- or four-year college, university or vocational-technical school or apprenticeship program in the United States for the 2023-2024 academic year. Or: 2) a student currently enrolled in one of these programs and in good standing; or: 3) an adult student enrolling in higher education who needs financial assistance.

Peace Scholarship applicants will also be asked to provide a brief personal statement and evidence of leadership and/or personal initiative in activities in an organization (including volunteer or paid work) relating to peace and social justice, community organizing and/or nonviolence. Applicants will also need to provide two letters of recommendation.

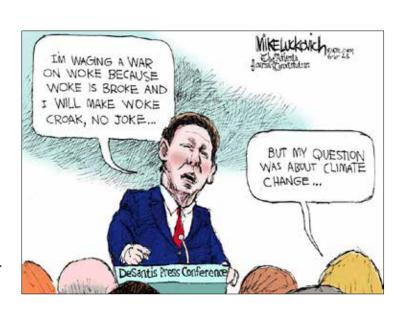
#### Peace Scholarship Application Deadline

The application (PDF file) must be downloaded from the Gainesville Veterans for Peace website. The completed application may be emailed or mailed to:

Paul Ortiz ortizprof@gmail.com, C/O Veterans for Peace Scholarship Program 2115 NW 7th Lane Gainesville, Florida 32603

The email and postmarked deadline for the scholarship application is *April 26, 2024*. Peace Scholarship recipients will be announced during the first week of May. For questions about the Peace Scholarship, contact Paul Ortiz at: *ortizprof@gmail.com* or *831-334-0131*. The full announcement and instructions for applying may be found on our web site, at *http://www.vfpgainesville.org*.







# Blessed are the peace makers!

LOVE, THE CORNELLS

# Why Fight

Why Fight

Why fight when we can write As a free bird in the wind i can fly

Soon the future may end.

Bombs ticking like pens clicking to send in the next move

Are all the lives of the men and women worth it

Why use war when we could use peace.

As the buzzing sound in the distance i ask why do we do this to are selves We are all human hurting each other Why let the man in the chair plan and bomb each other When the timer hits zero do they think of what harm they are doing

Why fight when we can write

Peace Peace Peace

The timer is low and i am tired so all i ask is

Why fight when we can write.

Brock Laplant

Grade 5, Hidden Oak Elementary School





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# BIGOTED BULLIES BAN BOOKS Veterans For Peace Chapter 14, Gainesville, FL - VFPGainesville.org

# **Banning Books**

by Janet Davies

I INITIALLY THOUGHT that writing about Florida's and America's book banning issue would be about making sure students could get access to books, but I was naïve. It's about a bigger, insidious issue with the levers being pulled by a few people who steer book banning, or "restrictions" as they prefer to call it, over a large amount of the country.

My sixth-grade teacher had me read George Orwell's *Animal Farm* although I really didn't understand its implications until we studied it in tenth grade. I learned about the shameful history of the Canadian internment of its Japanese citizens when we studied *Obasan* by Joy Kogawa in high school as well—books studied in depth with skilled teachers.

So when did all of this book banning begin? In 2020, the American Library Association says there were 223 titles that were challenged by citizens, whereas in 2022, that number was 2,571. The ALA says its mandate is to "highlight the value of free and open expression". They also say that 'surveys indicate 82.97% of book challenges remain unreported and receive no media." Humanist.org reports that it's "not just LGBTQ+ titles that are being challenged but accurate depictions of our nation's history".

In Florida, Gov. Ron DeSantis enacted a series of laws that made it easier for parents to challenge books in school libraries and he proudly touts a series of measures he has pushed that have led to an upswing in banned or restricted books. One school in Miami-Dade put the poem "The Hill We Climb" by Amanda Gorman on a restricted list. The reasons for the objection to the poem read during Pres. Biden's inauguration were not clear. The number of attempts to restrict or ban books, as reported by the ALA, across the US last year, were the highest in over twenty years.

Other states are following DeSantis's lead, as there are currently 121 different proposals in state legislatures targeting libraries according to EveryLibrary, a national political action committee that tracks these measures. They also report that 39% of those proposals would allow for criminal prosecutions.

These concerted efforts to challenge books on face value appear to begin locally with no obvious connections to a wider effort, but they nearly all share a common thread, and it starts in Florida. Nearly all the submitted book review material has not been written by individual parents, but taken word for word from a website called BookLooks.org. Launched in 2022 by Emily and Jonathan Maikisch, a West Melbourne couple, it is "fast becoming the preeminent resource for people making the case to remove books from school libraries," says Tasslyn Magnussen, a consultant for

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cont. →

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United Faculty of Florida at the University of Florida is the professional association for faculty and professional staff.

UF faculty have protected their rights through collective bargaining since the union was first certified in 1976. We are affiliated with the Florida Education Association (FEA), the National Education Association (NEA), the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), and the AFL-CIO.

# "Solidarity Forever"





PEN America who researches censorship attempts in schools. Emily Maikisch was a Moms For Liberty member but left the group to start BookLooks. She claims they have no relationship to the group but MFL uses the website almost exclusively to promote banning books. While Moms for Liberty says they do not support banning books, BookLooks is their go-to site and nearly all reviews connected to MFL are word-for-word from there. Across at least a dozen states, *USA Today* found hundreds of attempts to remove book titles that directly cited BookLooks reviews as their source. Nearly 1900 titles appear on their reviews and in Virginia, one school district adopted the site as an official reference tool for vetting its library books.

Maikisch says they never intended to be a source for book banning but want to provide a resource for families to make the best decision for themselves, although their website is clearly being used to make the decision for thousands of families who currently seem to have no say in the matter as a result. The claim of MFL and BookLooks that they are not connected is a sham as their collaboration and the nationwide implications are clear and disturbing.

The American Federation of Teachers found that in 250 races across the country, candidates in different types of races are endorsed by MFL, though they lost 80% of the time. In Iowa, MFL endorsed 13 candidates in school board races though only one won and it was in a small district of only three schools. In Minnesota, 44 candidates

# "What to do? Get books in the hands of anyone that wants them and needs them, of course."

in 20 districts endorsed by MFL ran but all of them lost. Newsweek reported on Nov 9th, 2023, "MFL Annihilated in School Board elections" and that "every single candidate endorsed by MFL in Minnesota, Kansas, North Carolina and Washington lost their race". In Virginia, one of six won, in Ohio, five of 25 won and while 19 candidates ran in New Jersey, only four endorsed by MFL won their races.

DeSantis said on his Flgov.com website on March 8, 2023, "Exposing the book ban hoax is important because it reveals that some are attempting to use our schools for indoctrination". Not exactly a denial but rather talking out of two sides of his mouth. Tiffany Justice, the Florida based co-founder of Moms For Liberty says this of DeSantis, "He really is blazing a trail", unfortunately one that leaves an inferno of free expression that denies access to books. She adds, "What Ron DeSantis does, that I think is effective, is he uses all the levers of power to make long term change





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38 — Gainesville, FL | 2023 — 39

happen." What MFL does is use BookLooks to continue to fight access to books for all students in nearly every school across America. Three people, Gov. Ron DeSantis, Tiffany Justice and Emily Maikisch are responsible for removing thousands of books from every school and public library in the country, under the guise of local interventions but orchestrated by the few.

The Daily Beast reported that banned books are more popular due to this attempt to ban them. Researchers at Carnegie Mellon University and George Mason University have found a 12% increase in the sale of banned books being sold. "Our study highlights the pitfalls of politically motivated censorship on conscious consumption behavior." Uttara M. Ananthakrishnan, a study co-author says that it's "an unintended consequence" of book banning, adding that "Book bans have become a part of the national conversation and cultural debates, fueled by increasing concern about parental rights."

What to do? Get books in the hands of anyone that wants them and needs them, of course. Organizations such as Veterans for Peace, the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Gainesville and the Civic Media Center are doing just that. The New York Library will give a membership card to anyone who wants one so they can gain access to books unavailable where they are. The musician Pink has collaborated in support of PEN America and she plans to distribute 2000 titles of banned books at her

Florida concerts. But most importantly, find out who is orchestrating the book bans in your community. You will likely find such bans are orchestrated by Moms for Liberty and BookLooks with the support of presidential candidate Governor Ron DeSantis. Then, exercise your rights and vote for candidates who support the basic freedom to read.





Now More Than Ever,
Peace and Justice are Essential

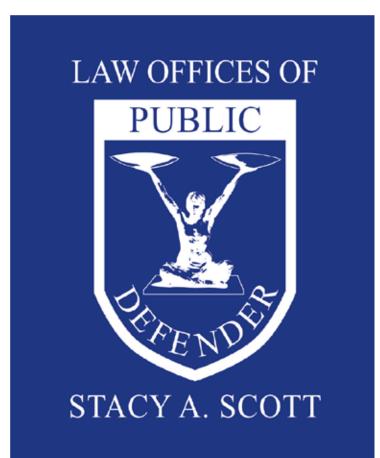
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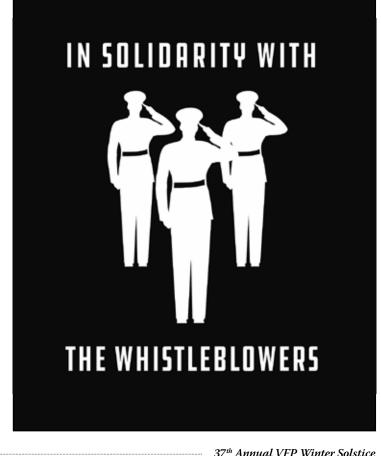
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info@florida4peace.org

10665 SW 89th Ave, Hampton, FL 32044





# **FCPJ Rising**

by Kate Ellison

#### THE FLORIDA COALITION FOR PEACE AND

JUSTICE (FCPJ) has been growing this year. Today people are gathering to play and to organize, and we are better positioned to host them. Our board added new members with new ideas, and we are even sponsoring a Flying Pig Parade in Gainesville because, why not? As always, we are committed to building the peace and justice movement in Florida through teaching a culture of peace and supporting a place where all peace and justice groups can meet.

Like many farms, we had an abundant crop of pecans this year from our aging, majestic pecan grove. A little later in the spring we also had abundant seedling pecan trees, which we are nurturing for upcoming sales. Always the maintenance and repairs require our attention, and the mowing all summer long.

This winter we hosted a concert with a dinner served. For several months we offered a Friday dinner and conversation, while an excellent cook was residing with us.

We developed a tent-camping area with water and electric available. We have high speed Internet and it is available at the RVs, the resident houses, as well as the Peace Education Center and tenting area. Residents also installed screen around the majority of the wrap-around porch, making a large outside, mosquito-free area available for meetings or just hanging out.

Our proximity to the Florida Trail has brought us many interesting hikers during the cool season. Last spring we enriched the experience of scouts and then in the summer we welcomed a group of college-bound kids from the Hope CommUnity. Many other groups rented space for their gatherings as well.

The cost of everything is going up, especially land and insurance. Money has been tight, and dreams have been dashed. We are harboring a hope, though, that we may be able to collaborate and receive federal conservation funding to be able to expand the acreage under protection from development in our area. We have gopher tortoises, deer, turkeys, and our bee hives, and a new discovery of pitcher plants, all of which need pristine woodlands, wetlands and fields. If you would like to be in touch with us, call 352-603-3680 or check out our website, florida4peace.org. As a 501(c)3, we gladly accept your donations to keep us going.

# Happy Every Season! Mark Billman

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# For Our Survival We Must Awaken to Our True Self!

by Bill Gilbe

**MANY PEOPLE ARE RECOGNIZING** the habitual ways of thinking and doing must change or we risk catastrophic outcomes. Having the technology and the intelligence, we lack the compassion to solve our problems.

We have a false sense of the definition of "self." The present common and narrow view of "self" is that we are separate, sinful, competitive, beings. This forms our world view or the overall way the world is perceived by us, and our place in it. This dualistic view is our true adversary. It threatens our survival as a species. If this view is continued while possessing horrific atomic, biological, chemical weapons of mass destruction we will certainly destroy the biosphere that sustains our species.

Orthodox religion has failed us by not responding to the human concerns on earth. Carl Jung talked of society's need for an affective bond. He warned: "Where love stops; power begins, including hatred, violence, and terror." According to Mark Twain, "Man is the only religious animal . . . In the task of smoothing his brother's path to the happiness of heaven, he has turned the globe into a graveyard." Human history

has witnessed more than enough violence spawned by the rigidity and bigotry of religious dogmas within Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. Witness throughout the world the numerous persecutions, inquisitions, enslavements, sexual abuse, slaughter of heretics, and religious wars. From the Renaissance to WWII there have been over 400 wars fought by Christian nations. . . Look at the Middle East now. Moral exhortation does not work. "We cannot expect either the economic or the ecological transformations we need to succeed without personal transformation as well. . . The emergent universe must be experienced as the Great Self." —Thomas Berry, Catholic Priest, grandfather of the 'deep ecology movement,' 'The Great Work,' 1999.

"Humankind is seen as the living proof of cosmic intelligence; in us, the universe repeats over and over again its ability to produce forms through which it becomes consciously aware of itself." —Carl Sagan, astronomer.

"We have capacities within ourselves that are phenomenal, if we only knew how to release them" —David Bohm, physicist. Use proven human values: honesty, compassion, cooperation, forgiveness, and democracy. Joanna Macy, author of 'The Greening of the Self,' suggests "The emergence of the 'ecological self,' at this point in our history, is required precisely because moral exhortation does not work . . . Ultimately, deep ecological awareness is spiritual or religious awareness. Ecology is the study of our environment—our home." Let us realize, "The entire cosmos is a cooperative. The sun, the moon, and the stars live together as a cooperative. The same is true for humans and animals, trees, and soil. Our bodily parts function as a cooperative. When we realize that the world is a mutual, interdependent, cooperative enterprise, that human beings are all mutual friends in the process of birth, old age, suffering and death, then we can build a noble, even heavenly environment. If our lives are not based in this truth, then we shall all perish."—Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, 'The Quest for a New Society, edited by Sulak Sivaraksa.

"An act is 'positive' [Good] if it leads to the fulfillment of one's being individually and in relation to the environment now and in the future. If it stimulates growth and opens further opportunities, if it enhances appreciation of living, if it negates entropy and preserves or increases the order of one's being and of the environment, if it benefits the human species and if it is in harmony with the fundamental laws of growth and change which pervade the universe.

Something is 'right' when it tends to preserve the integrity, beauty, stability, and function of the biotic community. [True causes of calmness of mind, joy, and happiness.]

"An act is 'negative' [Evil] if it damages one's essential nature, if it limits future choices, if it diminishes the capacity for appreciative awareness, if it betrays confidence or disrupts interaction in relationships, if it exploits people, if it squanders the natural heritage of humanity, if it increases disorder, and if it violates the laws of being" —John R. Clark, 'The Great Living System,'UUA,1977. We live in such a web of interconnections and dependencies that no action is without moral consequences for good or evil.

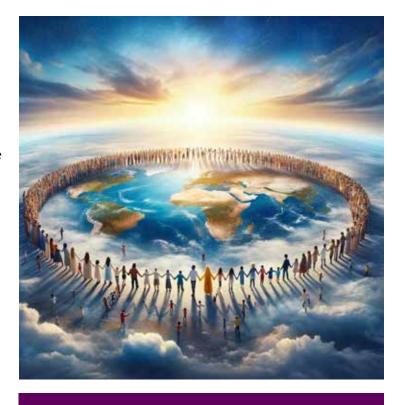
An inclusive approach to secular ethics requires recognition of only two basic principles. "The first principle ... is the recognition of our shared humanity and our shared aspiration to happiness or equanimity and the avoidance of suffering. The second principle ... is the understanding of our interdependence as a key feature of human reality. We owe our being to countless other beings, animate and inanimate, near and far"— Dalai Lama.

Awaken to our True Self! "There is no duality, no separation between Nature and Us, Heaven and Earth, and

"Having the technology and the intelligence, we lack the compassion to solve our problems."

God and Humanity." —Philip Kapleau. A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise." —Aldo Leopold. We are One! Compassion for all!

Bill Gilbert, member Veterans For Peace, Orange Creek Basin, Ocklawaha River Watershed, Alachua County, Florida 30 October 2023



"Resist with Compassion"

— FRANCES CROWE

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# Come and Get Your Love

-Pat and Lolly Vegas

Hey (hey) What's the matter with your head? yeah
Hey (hey) What's the matter with your mind
and your sign?
And-a ooh-ohh
Hey (hey) Nothin's a matter with your head,
baby, find it
Come on and find it
Hell, with it, baby, 'cause you're fine and
you're mine

Come and get your love Come and get your love Come and get your love Come and get your love

And you look so divine

Hey (hey) What's the matter with your feel right?
Don't you feel right, baby?
Hey, oh, yeah, get it from the main line, alright
I said-a find it, find it, darling, love it
If you like it, yeah-eh
Hey (hey) It's your business if you want some
Take some, get it together, baby

Come and get your love Come and get your love Come and get your love Come and get your love

Come and get your love, come and get your love Come and get your love, now Come and get your love, come and get your love Come and get your love, come and get your love Come and get your love, now
Come and get your love, come and get your love

Hey (hey) What's the matter with your feel right? Don't you feel right, baby? Hey, oh, yeah, get it from the main vine, alright

La,la,la,la,la,la, (come and get your love)
La,la,la,la,la,la, (come and get your love)
La,la,la,la,la,la, (come and get your love)
La,la,la,la,la,la,la,la,la (come and get your love)
La,la.la,la,la,la,la,la,la (come and get your love)
La,la.la,la,la,la,la,la,la (come and get your love)
La,la.la,la,la,la,la,la,la,la (come and get your love)
La,la.la,la,la,la,la,la,la,la,la (come and get your love)





# Let the Sunshine In

-Galt McDermot, Rado and Ragni

We starve, look at one another, short of breath Walking proudly in our winter coats
Wearing smells from laboratories
Facing a dying nation of moving paper fantasy
Listening for the new-told lie
With supreme visions of lonely tunes
Somewhere, inside something; there is a rush of greatness

Who knows what stands in front of our lives
I fashion my future on films in space
Silence tells me secretly everything, everything
[Refrain]

Let the sunshine, let the sunshine in, the sunshine in





# Forever Young

-Bob Dylan

May God bless and keep you always
May your wishes all come true
May you always do for others
And let others do for you
May you build a ladder to the stars
And climb on every rung
May you stay forever young
Forever young, forever young
May you stay forever young

May you grow up to be righteous
May you grow up to be true
May you always know the truth
And see the lights surrounding you
May you always be courageous
Stand upright and be strong
May you stay forever young
Forever young, forever young
May you stay forever young

May your hands always be busy
May your feet always be swift
May you have a strong foundation
When the winds of changes shift
May your heart always be joyful
May your song always be sung
May you stay forever young
Forever young, forever young
May you stay forever young











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# Peace Cannot Come in Pieces

A 13-year-old black boy was shot And I thought I was desensitized to violence But he smiled just like my little brother Was dark just like my little brother Was vulnerable—just like my little brother

5 girls were arrested in Iran
Because they had the audacity to dance in public
I danced to music only I could hear
In a stadium full of people
I don't know As a prayer to them

In 2021

A school burned down in Afghanistan
Because the girls that studied there
Were in danger from the Taliban
And I think about them as I write my university applications

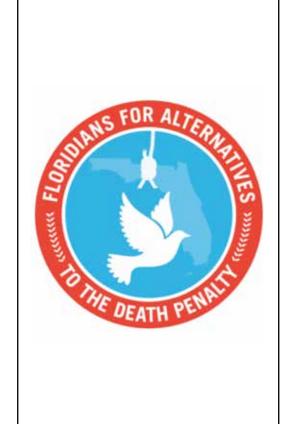
The dwindling numbers of Indigenous Americans
Are our strongest fighters
Against climate change and oil pipelines
That strip them of their autonomy
And I can't go out to support them without filling my car with
the oil that's killing them

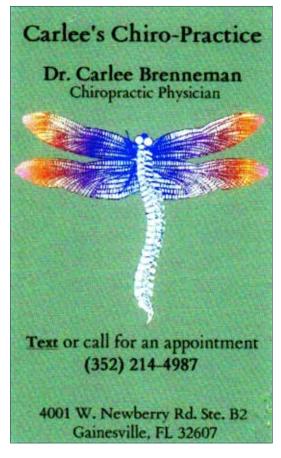
My governor wants to kill me
I'm not in charge of myself
Going to school is the leading cause of death for minors in the US
But even if I had no worries in the world
I still would not be at ease

I may not hear them
I may not see them
I may not be standing by their side
But I have no peace while they are still screaming

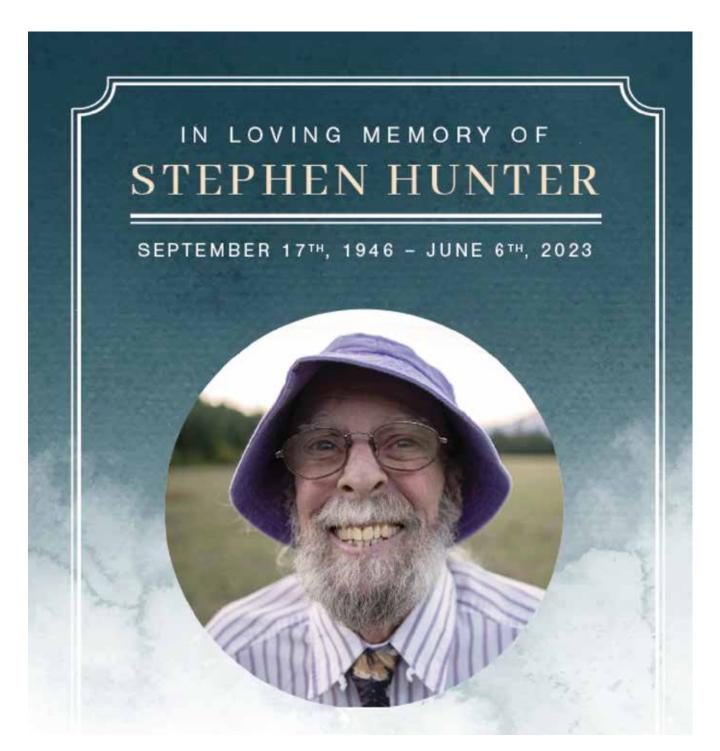
Skylar Scott

Grade 12, P. K. Yonge Developmental Research School





46 Gainesville, FL | 2023



Stephen Hunter passed away on June  $6^{th}$ , 2023. Stephen was a long-time member of VFP and was the person I went to when we needed something crafted.

Stephen created the measuring tools that we used to make the lines of tombstones straight on Memorial Day weekend. Stephen also cut and shaped our 4'X8' sheets of plastic into more than 7,000 tombstones.

He was a recipient of the Peace Helmet Award for Meritorious Service. Stephen will be missed.

Presente, Stephen Hunter

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# **Veterans for Peace**

by Armín Fardis, PhD

# "Freedom is not nurtured by nations preparing for war."

— William Appleman Williams

THE FOG OF WAR has once again arisen, belching forth from the insatiable martial appetite of a lost Empire looking to eat the earth. Iran, among other nations and populations, is in the crosshairs yet again. To truly comprehend how we got here would require a multi-volume book, but a quick glance at a few critical historical events can help us understand why Western powers seem hellbent on a war with Iran.

The answers begin in the early 20th Century with British petroleum-mining ventures in southwestern Iran and a subsequent CIA-led overthrow of a democratically

elected prime minister responding to mass calls for the nationalization of Iranian oil. Mohammad Mosaddegh was elected as prime minister of Iran in 1953 as a liberalnationalist who looked to nationalize the country's oil and implement social security and land reforms. Such nationalist policies not only resonated deeply with Iran's strong labor movement in the oil fields of Abadan but indeed arose out of indigenous worker's demands for economic and political self-determination. Iranian oil plant workers had been organizing for decades to take back Iranian resources from the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. Mosaddegh's fate and the fate of the workers movement which buoyed him into power, much like Congo's Patrice Lumumba nearly a decade later, were sealed before he took office. As the eminent Iranian historian Ervand Abrahamian demonstrated in his unparalleled text on the topic: "For Iran, nationalization meant loss of Western control—something deemed unacceptable in the early 1950s."

For those puzzled as to why the US and many of the former colonial powers of Europe were so preemptively

hostile to national liberation movements in what is often referred to as the "Third World" it is important to remember this keyword: "anticommunism." After World War I as communists took power in Russia and as anticolonial movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America sought decolonization from their former colonial overlords, the US and Western European powers were desperate to stop the "Red Tide" of communism. Even though Mosaddeqh was not a communist, his party's nationalist policies, for the CIA and MI6 (British Intelligence) were merely steppingstones on the road to a Soviet-led communist future. Not to mention the more brute fact: untrammeled access to cheap oil.

Mosaddegh was only in power from 1951-53 and his nationalist and anti-imperialist position finally led to a decisive clandestine intervention by US and the UK intelligence agencies. The British government quite easily convinced US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles that Iran was under Soviet control. Dulles ordered the CIA, headed then by his younger brother Allen Dulles, to initiate the overthrow of Mosaddeqh earmarking \$1 million to be used in the coup operation which was directed by CIA's station in Tehran. This counterinsurgency operation was codenamed "Operation Ajax." Mosaddeqh's overthrow

was the first CIA-backed coup d'état and led to the rise of the fascistic, foreign investment-friendly, dynastic ruler, Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi commonly referred to simple as "the Shah." This coup was not only to change the course of Iranian history but also the history of western empire, as Abrahamian reminds us: "The 1953 coup in Iran had far-reaching consequences in other parts of the world. It induced American policy makers to conclude that troublesome governments elsewhere could be easily overthrown."

The Shah's tenure was heralded by its proponents as an era of "modernization" but in fact was marked by extreme authoritarianism. Between the 1953 coup and overthrow of the Shah in 1979, the masses of the Iranian population outside the metropolitan upper and middle-classes experienced increased poverty, discrimination and vicious state violence in any attempt at collective organization, especially against the Iranian communist party: the Tudeh. The legacy of Mosaddeqh's overthrow and the role of the CIA and MI6 in its planning and implementation was never forgotten and ultimately fueled the political turmoil that ushered in the Islamic Revolution.

cont. →

In Celebration of all Veterans of the United States Armed Forces for your selfless service to this Country, I send you a heartfelt



Charles S. "Chuck" Chestnut, IV





On the occasion of the 2023 Solstice, with thanks to Veterans For Peace for all that you do for our community and world. All of us are better for what you do. Let no one ever forget what you have done individually in the past and what you do collectively now.





William P. Cervone State Attorney (Retired)

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In closing, it is vital for all those who are peace-minded, seeking an end to endless wars to remember that calls for war with Iran have nothing to do with women's rights or religious fundamentalism. Rather, the cheerleaders of war are continuing a longstanding tradition of ensuring that no nation or peoples residing outside "the West" have control over their land, resources and human labor.

—Armín Fardis, PhD is a scholar and educator researching transnational histories of colonialism & mass incarceration

#### FURTHER READING:

Ervand Abrahamian, The Coup: The CIA and the Roots of Modern US-Iran Relations, 2013: The New Press

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# Chaos in the U.S. **House of Representatives**

by Scott Camil

THE SUPREME COURT RULING in 2010 that said corporations are people and money is speech opened up the door which now allows corporations and the super rich to control our government. The Chaos in the US House of Representatives is a direct result of this ruling.

We all know that corporations are not people. When people commit crimes, they get sent to prison. You cannot send a corporation to prison.

We all know that money is not speech. The ruling that money is speech means that corporations and the wealthy have more speech rights than regular citizens.

The truth has no defense against a fool determined to believe a lie.



-Mark Twain



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# Weelaunee Forest vs. Cop City

Atlanta's South River, has been building steadily for several years, mainly in the form of a popular plan to preserve and connect 3,500 acres of urban greenspace and wildlands. Frustration with local officials mounted when they released a plan to build a massive police-training facility in the heart of the forest. As community protest of the plan fell on deaf ears, activists erected Earth First!-style treesits, road blockades and free state camps.

National attention exploded after a series of police raids on protest camps in December 2022 and January 2023. It was the latter raid that left 26-year-old Manny Paez Terán, aka Tortuguita, a Floridian of Venezuelan descent, dead from over 50 shots by multiple officers. Initial reports claimed there was gunfire exchanged, but an independent autopsy found no gun-powder residue evidence of a gun being fired by Manny.

The news of this young activist from Florida being killed by police at a forest-defense camp hit me hard. Living in the Southeast and having grown up in an environmental direct-action movement, I immediately pictured myself in Manny's shoes. I've been in numerous protest blockades where I was threatened, assaulted or arrested, in some cases with police guns drawn on me. But I experienced these confrontations before the 2020 national groundswell of uprisings against the police. Most occurred in remote, rural areas of environmental conflicts out West—a much different scenario than treesitting an urban forest in the Deep South, in the city where police recently killed Rayshard Brooks for sleeping in his car, and in the state where vigilante ex-cops executed Ahmaud Arbery for jogging.

Since hearing the news of Manny's death, I've been imagining what it would have been like for a person to make that phone call to my family and try explaining to them—across oceans both physical and ideological—that I loved the earth enough to put myself in that sort of danger, hoping the person on the other end of the line could understand on some level.

Alongside this tragedy has also come a wave of repression against the movement. Protests surrounding Cop City and the killing of a protestor have resulted in numerous arrests and trumped-up charges accusing over 40 activists of domestic terrorism and RICO violations for actions including fundraising, marching, and circulating posters. Civil liberties groups nationwide have opposed this blatant repression against the movement. But Manny's death has not been in vain.

The movement to stop Cop City in Atlanta has since grown beyond the protest camps at its inception.

An environmental lawsuit over construction's illegal degradation of the adjacent waterway is currently pending. And this summer, local organizers gathered enough formal petitions from city residents to place a referendum on the ballot for rescinding the city's approval of the project. This means it should be put on the ballot for a vote by the public—but local officials are trying to stop that from happening.

by Panagioti Tsolkas

In response to this disregard for the environmental lawsuit and the obstruction of the referendum, support from across the country has been rallying to renew direct action protest to stop the construction, with mass civil disobedience plans underway as I write.

In recent weeks, Cop City opponents have also extended their message to oppose the Palestinian genocide in Gaza, highlighting the Atlanta Police Department's participation in the Georgia International Law Enforcement Exchange. GILEE is a project of Georgia State University's Andrew Young School of Policy Studies, which sends police officials to Israel for "counterterrorism" training and brings Israeli police to Georgia to receive training from local police departments, which would be expanded if Cop City is completed.

#### Get updates at BlockCopCity.org





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Nature and Grandma Gaia, which are hidden in plain sight and we are just too "smart" to see.

Time to get dirty, time to learn, time to heal, time to questions and the second second second second second second second sec

Time to get dirty, time to learn, time to heal, time to quit listening to those who label us to divide us, time to discuss and not debate, time to share, laugh and live. We are all in this together, we are all part of this beautiful dirt ball called earth, we are all one.

by Avery Owen

Peace



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a common bond is formed.

Plans and friendships were made and the teaching garden sprang to life. The blessing of Grow Gainesville and it's beautiful membership makes it more than a teaching garden. That wonderment of nature; to watch tiny seeds transform into amazing plants, to feel earth that is alive, to bask in the sun, to sweat. And just maybe, the observation that with good nutrition, clean water, proper rest, the right amount of sunlight and fresh air, the elimination of "pollutants" and the symbiotic relationship of "variety"; we too can grow and thrive. Those magical teachings of Mother

**SOMETIMES** the hardest wounds to heal are the ones you

can't see. You can try to treat yourself with the standards of

alcohol and/or pharmaceuticals, but they just mask the pain

drugs and loss their way, always looking for the next "magic

pill". And with the practice of "profit over people", there is no

incentive to cure in order to have constant income from your

We were sitting in the office at the Veterans of Foreign

comrade and friend Paul had just finished reading an article

scary. Too many unknowns; a bunch of civilians with garden

implements, who view you and your service with distain and contempt; visions of those stories of being spat upon came to

One idea was to build a "teaching garden" at the VFW,

to instruct veterans on different techniques and methods of

gardening. Somewhere they feel safe with peers that share

their experiences and with the meeting of fellow veterans interested in gardening, forming the bonds we need to heal.

15 minutes later the phone rang. It was Grow

Gainesville looking for a place to host their 3rd Monday

meetings; the gods were eavesdropping. So we started

a partnership, with some trepidation on the VFW side (no hippies at my post) and I suspect some on the Grow

Gainesville side (we're meeting where?). We scheduled

a presentation at our monthly post meeting and were

introduced to Grow Gainesville, Judith, Tom and that wonderful sage, Steven Hunter. What I most remember

of the first GG meeting was the observation that when the conversation is on gardening, all those pesky labels disappear,

on PTSD and gardening. We began discussing the merits of the concept. But with both of us "struggling" with this burden, we agreed that the normal "community garden" is

and obscure the truth. Western medicine got hooked on

pain. We need to rediscover what was gifted to us by our

Wars, Post 2811 on Waldo Rd in Gainesville and my

mind. "I ain't comin' out of my hole for a bunch of

"creators"; this dirt ball called Earth.

granola heads."

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"In every respect, the Court today exceeds its proper, limited role in our Nation's governance."

—Justice Elena Kagan, dissenting opinion.

## Pennis Shuman:

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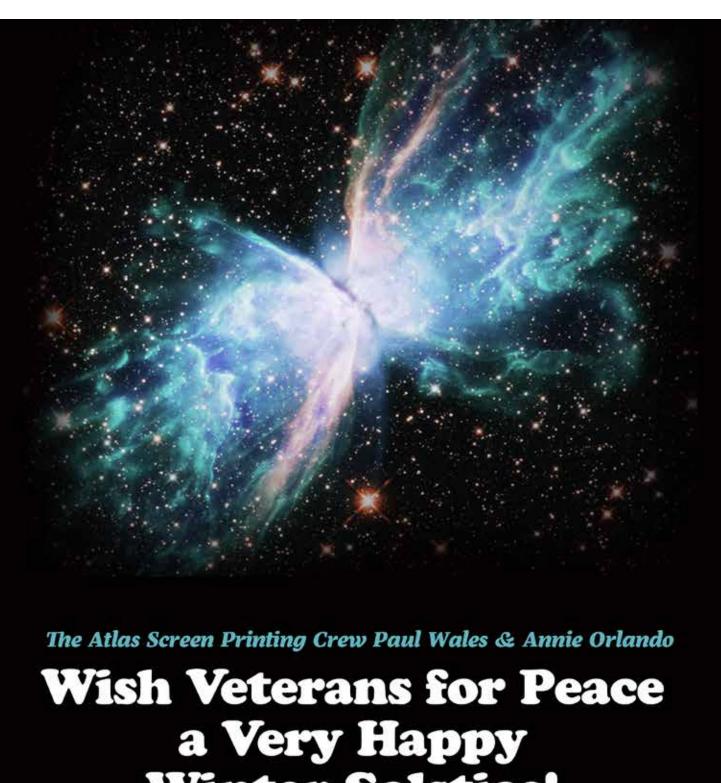
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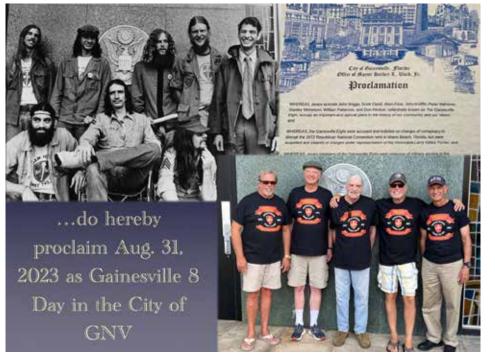
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# What Difference a Half Century?

by Ron Cunningham



"I guess that the government was trying to intimidate us. Vietnam veterans were not the kind of guys you could easily intimidate."

—Scott Camil: 50 years later

It's official. August 31 is Gainesville 8 Day in GNV

**THEY WERE SOLDIERS ONCE.** Yes, and young. Scott Camil, Peter Mahoney, Stanley Michelsen, Don Perdue, Alton Foss, John Kniffen, William Patterson.

Collectively they served a total of 111 months in-country 'nam. Between them they earned 57 medals and citations. Gutting it out in the heat and the jungle. Through all of the mud and the blood. Then they returned home, tossed their medals and threw themselves into a campaign to stop a bloody war built on lies.

For which sin their government tried to imprison them for the remainder of their young years. Along with non-veteran John Briggs, the so-called Gainesville 8 defendants went on trial in the GNV federal courthouse in 1973. On trumped up charges of conspiring to disrupt the 1972 Republican National Convention.



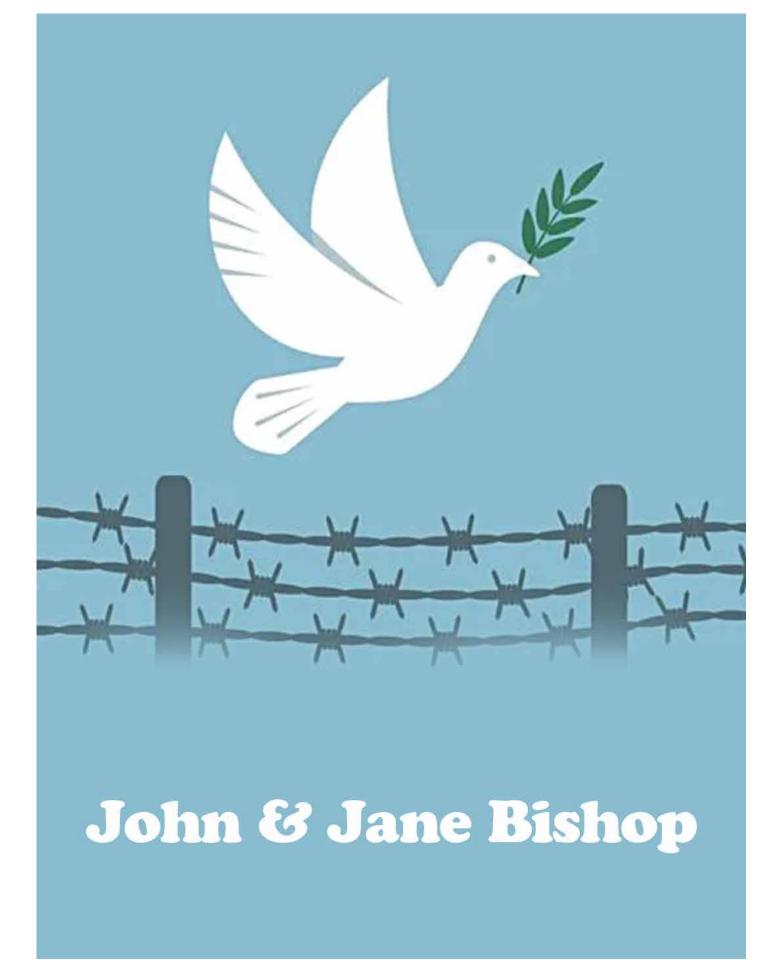
It was a circus of a trial, with Justice Department prosecutors—for lack of any real evidence—trotting out informers, inferences and half-baked conspiracy theories to make their case. But a GNV jury did not buy what Richard Nixon's Justice Department was so clumsily trying to force feed them.

Larry Turner, a young, UF-trained lawyer from Marianna, was a junior member of the defense team. He recalled a lunch break, late in the trial, in which two Black jurors happened to pass G8 lawyers walking in the opposite direction on the other side of University Avenue.

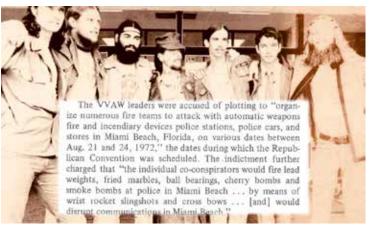
The two jurors raised clenched fists in solidarity. "I knew then that we got this," Turner recalled. It took a jury just four hours to exonerate, followed by a hug fest between defendants and jurors (while prosecutors ducked out a side door to avoid reporters).

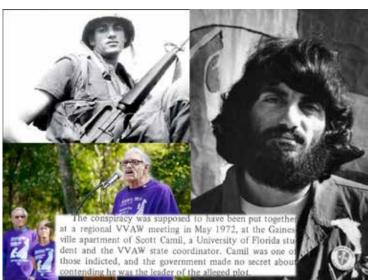
"We came home from Vietnam," Scott Camil would later say, "and saw that the government was not telling the truth about the war. We exercised the Constitutional rights that we fought to protect and tried to educate the public to the truth. The government came after us with a vengeance, trampling on our rights in an effort to silence and intimidate us. We stood up to the government and prevailed." What difference a half century makes?

cont.



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This weekend, the five surviving G8 defendants – Camil, Mahoney, Michelsen, Perdue and Briggs – reunited at Camil's home for a 50-year celebration of their GNV exoneration. It was a time for fellowship. A time to renew old acquaintances. And a time to remember their fellow defendants who have passed: Alton Foss, John Kniffen and William Patterson.

Then those survivors caravanned downtown to pose for a group photo in front of the federal courthouse. Just as they had done so many, many years ago. Older, certainly. Wiser, perhaps. But resolved still that, at the critical hour, they had stood by their convictions...even on pain of imprisonment.

And at the federal courthouse – where they had last gathered to learn that a GNV jury had set them free – they found GNV Mayor Harvey Ward bearing a proclamation to...well, yes...thank them for their service in the cause of peacemaking. "We are glad you are here," Ward told them.

"The Gainesville Eight occupy an important and special place in the history of our community and our nation," the proclamation stated. Freed of the threat of imprisonment, these defendants went on to become salesmen, emergency response workers, jacks of all trades and entrepreneurs. They became husbands and fathers. They divorced and remarried. They lived in the suburbs and, by nearly all such measures, bought into the American Dream.





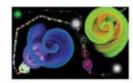
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# HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

-from

# Mike, Camille, Romy & ChickLit

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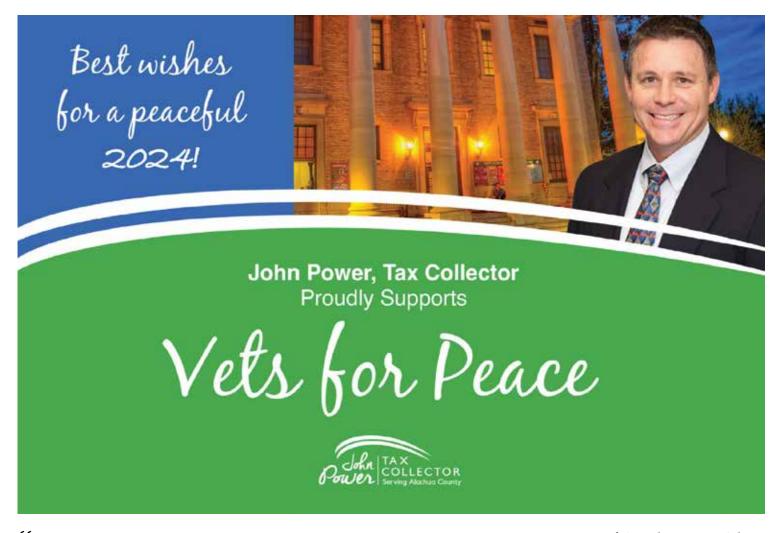
Mayor Harvey Ward presents a proclamation declaring Aug. 31 Gainesville 8 Day in GNV.

They grew older, certainly. Wiser perhaps. But to this day they have not outlived their skepticism of a government that sent them to a far off land to fight and kill and bleed.... ultimately for all of the wrong reasons.



From left to right, the surviving members of the Gainesville 8: John Briggs, Peter Mahoney, Scott Camil, Stanley Michelsen, Don Purdue.

Because they had once been soldiers. And young.

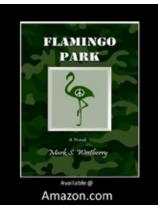


# Why the Electoral College Should be Abolished

by James Zimmerman

MY FIRST SERIOUS INVESTIGATION of the Electoral College as a means to choose the President and Vice-President of the United States came in 1966. Fresh out of the United States Army and a new student at Penn State University, my Speech 101 class required me to deliver a speech to persuade the class that my opinion on an issue of my choosing was valid.

Using the 1960 election where John Kennedy defeated Richard Nixon in a very close race, I demonstrated with several maps and charts how, with a very small change in the popular vote in a few states, the Electoral College could have made Nixon President with Kennedy still winning



On August 21, 1972, the Republican National Convention was held on Miami Beach during protest and dissent. The continuing war in Vietnam was the trigger that set the spark for violent confrontation between the U.S. government and anti-war activists. A seismic shift in public attitudes toward a seemingly unending "conflict" had created a wave of discontent. As a stark reminder of the futility of the government's position, eight indictments were handed out in the government's desperate measure at silencing the "truth tellers."

the popular vote. I was happy to see with a show of hands that my classmates agreed the Electoral College was an anachronism and should be abolished in favor of the popular vote to determine our leaders.

The Electoral College was founded in 1788 as part of Article 2 of the Constitution, which established the executive branch of our government. It was a compromise between those who wanted Congress to choose the President and those who wanted the President to be elected by the popular vote. Because the Electoral College is a part of the Constitution, it would take a constitutional amendment to abolish it. That is, two-thirds of Congress would have to vote to abolish and then three-fourths of the states would need to approve.

When we vote for President, we are actually voting for electors who are chosen by the political parties in each state. At the present time, there are 538 electors in the Electoral College. Each state has two electors based on their two United States Senators and other electors are added based on the number of U.S. Representatives in Congress. Two examples of this are Wyoming with only three electors and California with 54 electors, the most of any state. The District of Columbia also has three electors.





Leanetta McNealy, Ph.D.

# Peace on Earth!



The electors meet at the beginning of December to cast their ballots for President and Vice-President. Thus, the candidate who wins the popular vote in each state, even if only by one vote, will win all the electors from his/her political party in that state. This is true in every state except Nebraska and Maine, where electors are proportionally chosen based on the popular vote.

There have been three elections in U.S. history where the winner of the popular vote did not win the Electoral College. In 1888, Grover Cleveland won the popular vote but Benjamin Harrison won the Electoral College vote and the Presidency. The other two examples are much more recent. In 2000, Al Gore won the popular vote by over 500,000 but lost the Electoral Vote 271-266 to President George Bush. Then, in 2016, Hillary Clinton won the popular vote by close to 3 million but lost the electoral vote 304-227 to President Donald Trump.

In Gallup polls, 61% of the American people want to abolish the Electoral College. It is no surprise that only 23% of Republicans favor abolition while 89% of Democrats favor it. After all, Republicans George Bush and Donald Trump lost the popular vote but were elected President.

There are many criticisms of the Electoral College: First and foremost, it can negate the will of the people expressed by the popular vote. Since individual votes in less populous states are weighted more heavily, the Electoral College is a contradiction to the principle of "one man, one vote."

Third political parties are heavily disadvantaged by the Electoral College. In 1992, Ross Perot won 19% of the popular vote but garnered zero electoral votes.

The Electoral College encourages candidates to focus on so-called "swing" states and ignore others. If a state with a good number of electoral votes is considered a toss-up, this state will receive the most attention from the two major candidates. "When you talk about the Electoral College shaping the election, it shapes the election all the time because it puts the focus on certain states and not others," said Alexander Keyssar, a professor of history and social policy at Harvard University.

Elections in this country – local, state, Congressional —except the offices of President and Vice-President determine the winner by popular vote. Other countries in the world elect their leaders by popular vote. It is indeed

cont. 👈



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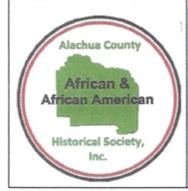
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68 — Gainesville, FL | 2023 — 69



time that we look at the Electoral College with a critical eye and consider its abolition. Allowing 538 political party hacks to choose our highest official strikes me as very undemocratic.

James Zimmerman Veterans for Peace Chapter 14, Gainesville Florida September 2023

P.S. Visit nationalpopularvote.org to access the National Popular Vote compact, a program where states can pass laws requiring that their electoral votes go to the winner of the national popular vote. 270 electoral votes are needed and 205 (16 states and the District of Columbia) are on board so far.

People of character do the right thing not because they think it will change the world, but because they refuse to be changed by the world. —Michael Josephson

Warmest regards from my family to yours in this holiday season and coming new year. We have much work to do and I am looking forward to facing our challenges together.

Marihelen Wheeler

"There is no political inconvenience exception to the United States constitution."

-SENATOR ELIZABETH WARREN

# Selena's Story

by Gladys Lane

**IN 2002,** nineteen-year old Selena came to Florida on a student visa, seeking a degree in Early Childhood Education.

Years later, her dreams in shambles, she found herself incarcerated at Baker Detention Center in Macclenny, FL. The immigration system and the judicial system both failed her, as she pleaded for legal assistance to right so many wrongs. Life at Baker was a series of unmet needs, inedible food, and lack of medical care. Women did not receive the feminine products they needed. Selena did not have access to the medical care her body required. The detainees, who officially are not prisoners, had no hot water to bathe, contended with mold and worms in the showers, and were given stained and dirty clothing to wear.

How did this bright, motivated young woman end up at Baker? Selena met a young man named Asa who seemed to be kind and helpful. In December of 2005, her daughter was born but by now Asa was no longer kind. In spite of a restraining order, in 2006 Asa broke into the home and stabbed Selena as she tried to protect the child. Police found Selena covered in blood, her intestines outside of her body. She was airlifted to a hospital and remained in a coma for a month. Asa was sent to prison for attempted murder.

Selena later met Gary and together they had three children. As a continued to vow revenge. From prison he arranged to have Gary murdered "over a cigarette," according to his brother.

Selena found a job and continued to attend school. She searched for child care and accepted an offer from a friendly neighbor whom she trusted as a citizen of her home country. When others reported that the oldest girl was being abused, Selena was charged with child neglect—the neighbor finally admitted in writing that Asa had paid him in order to put Selena in jail.

All four children were placed in foster care. At age 12 the oldest girl was pregnant, and her social worker arranged for an abortion. At court hearings, Asa smiled and winked at the social worker and continued to seek revenge against Selena. When Selena was released from prison in May 2022, she was immediately picked up by ICE. Although she sought legal assistance, she was deported in July 2023, still with no contact with her American citizen children.

Our legal system took a bright, enthusiastic young woman who would have been an asset to our society, destroyed her life and sent her back to her country.



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# "Most wars, after all, present themselves as humanitarian endeavors to help people."

- HOWARD ZINN

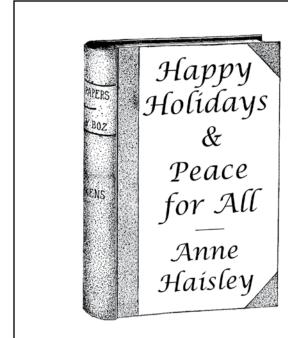


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Alachua County Commissioner Anna Prizzia wishes you a peaceful holiday season!

# **Climate Change Risks**

by M.L. McGaughran

**EVERY** month the past few years, we learned of catastrophic, record increases in global temperatures, droughts, decreases in polar cap ice levels, and wild swings in extreme weather. These include winter storms blasting icy weather in areas whose infrastructure had not been previously weatherized. Melting polar caps stream cold water places it wasn't before, upsetting past weather equilibriums. Risks of flooding in cities at sea level in South Florida from global sea level rise has led some to consider moving.

Although South Floridians have stronger building codes than some other places in Florida, the whole state is at risk of stronger hurricanes during climate change. In 2018, Hurricane Michael wrecked part of the Panhandle; in Mexico Beach the storm destroyed all but one house specially built to survive big storms.

Other flooding risks nationally during this climate change era have been cited include inland storms related to climate change heating the oceans more than before, resulting in much more moisture evaporating into atmosphere. Some rainstorms in the current era dump huge amounts of rain water on the ground, which in some locales has been dried out from increased evaporation worldwide, leading to disastrous flooding and mudslides.

Human-caused global warming is called "anthropogenic global warming." One author, Dr. Warren Hern, has recently taken to calling the human species "Homo ecophagus: man who devours the ecosystem" instead of Homo sapiens.

Carbon dioxide is responsible for a third of total greenhouse gas warming of earth's climate, according to NASA. Methane, nitrous oxide, and other greenhouse gases stay in the atmosphere much longer than CO2 and amplify heating. A NASA website describes water vapor as intensifying greenhouse warming effects in a positive feedback loop.

Lowering the amount of greenhouses gases like CO2 that we emit into the atmosphere is needed to lessen the risk of water vapor feedback loops intensifying the heat further. As global average temperatures keep steadily rising, our ability to survive as a species is threatened by impacts on crops, animals, sea life, and life forms producing oxygen; increased temperatures impact our ability to survive heat exposure without quickly moving inside to air conditioning.

We have increased our global average surface temperature by about  $2^{\circ}F$  (1.1°C) since pre-industrial days. In December 2015, many world leaders signed the Paris

Agreement, a treaty adopted by 196 parties to try to keep the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C and make efforts "to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels." Participant nations try to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions to reach these goals.

The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has indicated that "crossing the 1.5°C threshold risks unleashing far more severe climate change impacts, including more frequent and severe droughts, heatwaves and rainfall." For that reason, many leaders have spoken of trying to limit global warming to that level by the end of the century.

A new paper just published in the journal *Nature Climate Change* estimates there are fewer than 250 metric gigatons of CO2 left in the global carbon budget, so that if emissions stay at 2022 levels of 40 metric gigatons a year, global emissions will exceed 1.5°C by 2030, which increases risks of the world experiencing the worst effects of climate change.

One author of the study, Robin D. Lamboll, has said, "we're not doing nearly enough to keep warming below 1.5°C." It is urgent that the world leaders and scientists speed up the timetable for actions to keep the planet livable.

Low-carbon and zero-carbon solutions are being used and further developed as cities and nations establish carbon neutrality targets. Investment to develop new carbon-free technologies through universities and private companies is important. Space and air travel industries need to develop new low carbon transportation technologies as well.

Meanwhile, the US military referenced climate change as an existential threat in 2021. The military has concerns about international discord and war risks from populations disrupted by climate change. They are aware that unstable regions may experience mass migration and refugee crises. Yet the US military, according to a *Common Dreams* article, is the world's single greatest institutional consumer of fossil fuels. *The Conversation* news/research outlet has cited the US military as being "a bigger polluter than 140 countries." Besides powering war machines with fossil fuels, the military adds to carbon emissions by funding and launching missiles in warfare, which worsen pollution problems and climate change impacts.

The Brown University Watson Institute for International & Public Affairs has hosted a "Costs of War" project of researching scholars who have described the US Defense Department as the "world's single largest consumer of oil—and as a result, one of the world's top emitters." This

Watson Institute Costs of War project hosts an hour-long video of a 2019 "Costs and Consequences of US Post-9/11 Wars: Focus on Climate Change" event worth watching at their website and on *YouTube*.

A Feb. 2022 US Army climate strategy plan intends to cut carbon emissions in half by 2030, including electrifying all non-combat vehicles by 2035 and developing electric combat vehicles by 2050, "training new officers to prepare for a hotter, more chaotic world," according to a *Washington Post* article from Feb. 10, 2022, by Michael Birnbaum and Tik Root.

Despite this apparent awareness of climate change urgency, the US government was said by the *Washington Post* this past June to have learned months in advance that its ally, the Ukraine military, "had planned a covert attack" on the Nord Stream pipeline. Veteran US independent journalist Seymour Hersh named the US military as the source of the explosion, but in either case the US military has been reported to be aware of the detonation plans in advance.

On Oct. 4, 2022, NPR said that Nord Stream explosions caused record-breaking methane leaks. Methane is "initially more than 80 times better than carbon dioxide at trapping heat, although that effect tapers off over time," according to NPR's report.

In November of 2023, the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* published "The Climate Blind Spot in Nuclear Weapons Policy," by Cameron Vega. The article discussed nuclear weapons ethics, considering climatic impacts of nuclear weapons, including nuclear winter from atmospheric soot from nuclear explosions blotting out the sun. The *BAS* article linked to a nuclear winter study in *Journal of Geophysical Research (JGR): Atmospheres*.

The JGR: Atmospheres study's model from a nuclear war between the US and Russia simulated a "150-Tg black carbon injection in the upper atmosphere," with "black carbon aerosols blocking sunlight and causing surface

"Although South Floridians have stronger building codes than some other places in Florida, the whole state is at risk of stronger hurricanes during climate change. In 2018, Hurricane Michael wrecked part of the Panhandle; in Mexico Beach the storm destroyed all but one house specially built to survive big storms."

temperatures to plummet" to extreme freezing levels.

"Nuclear winter, with below freezing temperatures over much of the Northern Hemisphere during summer," the study said, "occurs because of a reduction of surface solar radiation due to smoke lofted into the stratosphere."

Growing crops in the US and Russia becomes impossible for several years from the extreme cold.

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74 37th Annual VFP Winter Solstice Gainesville, FL | 2023 55

A nuclear disarmament specialist with a popular podcast has said before that no one would want to survive such a war. The catastrophic environmental costs to using nuclear weapons and the high environmental cost to produce them make nuclear weapons a no-go in common sense about human survival, national security, and ethics. Yet we persist in including "nuclear deterrents" in our strategic policies instead of working to rid the world of nuclear weapons. Though with common sense, it should be unthinkable, our risk of a nuclear exchange with other countries has been said even by President Biden to be higher now than at any time since the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Working for peace and developing a foreign policy that emphasizes diplomacy instead of military means to resolve conflict are essential for future survival of humanity and other species on earth. We rarely use diplomacy anymore and have in recent years at times passed up requests by other nations to engage in negotiations.

Diplomats and peace workers urgently need to be valued more than conflict in our nation's capital for the survival of humanity. By employing diplomacy first instead of military solutions to conflict, the major world powers and other nations can put their resources together cooperatively to find climate solutions that lessen carbon emissions, as a national and global security issue.

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"We've been taught the history of a country that does not exist."

-NIKOLE HANNAH-JONES

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# "Strongman" Politicians Are Dangerous

by Gene Iones

**VIOLENT AUTHORITARIANS** sometimes succeed in overthrowing democratic governments with military coups. Other authoritarians win at the ballot box and then hijack democracy. They give false hope that only they, as the "strongman," can relieve citizens' angst and solve society's problems. They mislead with disinformation and propaganda in order to conceal their intentions. Often their actual goal is to grab power as a means to plunder the economy to benefit themselves and their cronies.

Two historical models are Germany and Italy. In both countries, fascists came to power by winning elections. Many believe that America is immune from power grabs like these historical precedents, but America can falter as well. If we allow them, MAGA politicians will lead us into an authoritarian dead end.

The Governor of Florida is an exemplar of a "strongman" type leader. His record confirms a weak commitment to democratic norms and rules. His behavior and beliefs represent an authoritarian mindset.

DeSantis has never repudiated the January 6 coup attempt and refuses to blame the former president for initiating the insurrection. In fact, he excuses or blames the press for it. As he said in an interview with ABC News on July 21, 2023, "Now, it devolved into a riot, but the idea that this was a plan to somehow overthrow the government of the United States is not true, and it's something that the media had spun up to try to basically get as much mileage out of it and use it for partisan and political aims."

Instead of standing up for America, DeSantis stands up for MAGA, an authoritarian movement that is bonded to a leader who seeks to destroy American democracy.

DeSantis's record in Florida evidences little respect for democratic norms.

- He fires prosecutors without legal justification.
- He gerrymanders political districts to deny citizens an equal vote.
- He signs legislation to limit a woman's right to manage her own body.
- He signs legislation to limit free speech and the right to protest.

Some of his actions and laws have been found unconstitutional. Others are under challenge in the courts and will likely be overturned as well.

DeSantis brags about being antagonistic to the press although an independent media is critical for democratic government. He refuses access to journalists who

criticize him. He undermines Florida's "Government in the Sunshine" tradition. As for free speech, DeSantis's lawyer in open court admitted that the state is trying to prevent private employers from talking to their employees about certain subjects like systemic racism and gender inequality.

DeSantis is a Christian nationalist who believes America's true path is rooted in religion. He believes he wears the full armor of God that gives him the "Divine Right" to discriminate against minority groups and to impose his morality on others.

In truth, his beliefs evidence a perverse view of American history. We the people established a secular government. Our rights are not dependent on declarations from God as DeSantis asserts. Our founders rejected theology in our Constitution.

Nevertheless, Christian nationalists like DeSantis seek to impose their theocratic beliefs on all Americans. DeSantis has signed legislation to kill what he calls "woke" with a "Don't Say Gay" bill. He has limited free inquiry in schools. He has attacked Disney corporation for opposing his views. God did not mandate these laws; the legislature passed them, and DeSantis signed them.

He knows that his discriminatory laws are likely unconstitutional as he has budgeted sixteen million taxpayer dollars to try and defend them. Until these laws are all set aside, they will stifle discussion on issues like gender identity and black history. To Florida's shame, it leads the nation in books banned.

His Christian nationalist views are not only inconsistent with our government's founding principles, they're dangerous. His radical language that secular evil must be combated may stimulate violence from lone-wolf actors or groups inclined to spiritual warfare. Swastika waving extremists carry signs supporting DeSantis.

DeSantis is an authoritarian threat. His priority is not what's best for America. If elected president, he will advance an ideology like he's done in Florida. Recent history confirms his intentions. Behind the scenes, he supported the radicals who tried to shut down our government in September 2023. He told them, "I've got your back, keep fighting." What is he fighting for?

Gene Iones, President, Florida Veterans for Common Sense

37th Annual VFP Winter Solstice Gainesville, FL | 2023 77

# GRU, Inc.

by Wes Wheeler

ON OCTOBER 1, 2023, the Gainesville Regional Utilities Authority took over the management, personnel, operations, rates, service levels, finances, debt, and liability of the City's utilities from the Gainesville City Commission. This takeover was founded on HB 1645, a poorly written bill, now law, that violates the US and Florida constitutions, ignores statutory process requirements, and is now being ignored in its implementation.

In response, five separate lawsuits have been filed against multiple defendants to protect the citizens, residents, and GRU customers of Alachua County. Gainesville Residents United, Inc. is directly involved in two of the suits and closely tracks progress on the other three.

These challenges are a legal solution to a political problem; we need a political solution. New legislation to amend HB 1645 would be a quicker fix IF the 2024 Legislature acts immediately. If not, then the wait until May 2025 (when the following legislature adjourns) will take longer than our lawsuits, that likely will be heard and decided in 2024.

Unfortunately, our local legislative delegation has shown little willingness to consider constructive input from local citizens or from people who understand how municipal utilities work. Gainesville Residents United, Inc., and several of our members and supporters as individuals, have in the past suggested amendments and have offered to negotiate solutions to no avail. The City Commission has done the same. Perhaps the Utility Authority members can convince the Legislature to fix the mess they now preside over.

Everybody involved cares passionately about our community – but finding common ground beyond that simple statement is hard when there are so many social, political, and ideological issues to consider. Doing nothing, however, about the current unworkable situation is not an option for practical, ethical, financial, and legal reasons. So, in defense of our community, we filed suit. Following are brief summaries for the five separate lawsuits that involve the Utility Authority. Initial filings and related documents are at: www.GRUnited.org.

# Case 1: Gainesville Residents United, Inc., et al v. Gov. Ron DeSantis et al, filed 7/3/23 in U.S. District Court.

This comprehensive federal case contains twelve counts alleging that House Bill 1645 violates Federal and State constitutional rights, and Florida statutes.

Case 2: City of Gainesville vs. Gov Ron DeSantis, et al, filed 7/21/23 in Leon County Circuit Court.

The City of Gainesville's case contains ten counts alleging violations of the Florida Constitution and various Florida Statutes. On September 29, Judge Angela Dempsey dismissed the case.

# Case 3: Nath Doughtie vs. Gov Ron DeSantis, et al, filed on 8/18/23 in U.S. District Court.

Nath Doughtie, a former Circuit Judge from Alachua County, is the sole plaintiff in this Federal case. His lawsuit alleges that HB-1645 violates the 1st and 14th amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

Case 4: Writ of Quo Warranto by Petitioners Robert Hutchinson and Jeffrey Shapiro against Respondent Gov Ron DeSantis, filed on 10/2/23 in Leon County Circuit Court.

"Quo Warranto" means "by what authority". This lawsuit questions how the Governor can ignore statutory requirements for soliciting Utility Authority Member nominations? It also challenges the appointment of members who do not meet the residency requirements in the law.

Case 5: Writ of Quo Warranto by Petitioners Kristen Young and David Hammer against Respondents Mayor Harvey Ward and Chair Craig Carter, filed on 10/16/23 in Alachua County Circuit Court.

This lawsuit questions how can the mayor swear in members of the Utility Authority without a published Public Notice soliciting nominations as required by the law?



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# On Board With The Golden Rule—Peace Ship

by Bill Moran

#### FOUR GAINESVILLE VETERANS FOR PEACE

members had the opportunity to be a part of the "Great Loop Tour" of the historic peace ship, the Golden Rule. Its mission was to inform the public of the threat of nuclear weapons. Jim Zimmerman, Christine Zimmerman, Diane Clark, and I had a chance to represent our chapter as the ship was on a tour. Diane and I were able to visit the ship and assist with activities in six different ports; Jacksonville, FL, Havre de Grace, MD, Rochester, Buffalo and Dunkirk, NY, and Erie, PA.

We had the privilege to meet and mingle with other VFP members as well as Quakers, peace activists, war resisters, government officials, and a curious public. In Buffalo, Diane and myself boarded and sailed to Dunkirk, NY, a seven hour voyage. Friends and officials greeted us in Dunkirk (our home port) and we received an anti-nuclear weapons proclamation from the mayor.

Here is a brief history of the ship and its mission. In 1958 Quaker peace activists attempted to sail into the American Nuclear Testing Zone in the Marshal Islands in the Pacific as a form of protest. From 1945 to 1958 the Marshall Islands were used 67 times as a nuclear testing site, leaving some islands poisoned and a trail of cancer. When the Golden Rule crew arrived in Hawaii, they were arrested and jailed for sixty days. The arrests captured global attention, inspiring activism focused on ending atmospheric testing and eliminating nuclear weapons. The health impact of atmospheric testing had drawn special concern by scientists and public health experts who warned that radioactive fallout would spread cancer far from testing sites. The rising public awareness of the dangers of radiation led to world-wide demands to stop nuclear testing. In 1963 President Kennedy, the USSR, and the United Kingdom signed the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

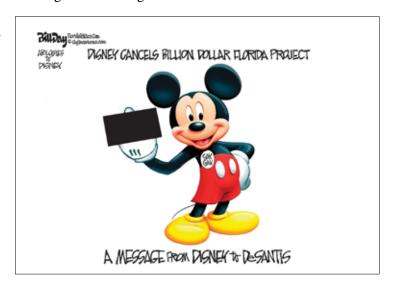
Years later, in 2010 the ship sank in a gale in California. For the next five years dozens of VFP members, Quakers, and other volunteers restored her to sail again! From 2015-2018 the Golden Rule sailed up and down the west coast, giving over one hundred educational presentations. In 2019 the ship sailed to Hawaii, Guam, and Okinawa. Due to Covid-19, Japan closed its border, preventing the ship from being there on the 75th anniversary of the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Golden Rule sailed back to California to prepare for the recently completed, "Great Loop Tour" of thirteen months, 11,000 miles, and one hundred plus cities. In the fall of 2022 she started in Minneapolis, went down the Mississippi River, and along the west coast of Florida with a stop in Cuba. Continuing on



Photo credit: Aj Jaeger

up the east coast, she sailed to Maine, New York, through the Erie Canal and into the Great Lakes, ending in Chicago in September of this year. The ship was trucked back to California with her crew and is taking a well deserved rest.

It was an honor to be a part of this worthy experience. Here are two actions you may wish to take. Ask your representative to support H.Res 77 ("Back from the Brink" bill) and HR-2775 to direct the US to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and convert the nuclear weapons industry, resources, and personnel to purposes relating to addressing the climate crisis.



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"Let us be those creative dissenters who will call our beloved nation to a higher destiny, to a new plateau of compassion, to a more noble expression of humaneness." -Martin Luther King Jr.

Bill Gilbert, member: Alachua County Labor Coalition and Veterans For Peace. Resident of Orange Creek Basin, Ocklawaha River Watershed, Alachua County, Fl. Posted: 6 November 2021

# PROTEST PICKETS FOR PEACE

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83 37th Annual VFP Winter Solstice Gainesville, FL | 2023

# **VFP Financial Report 2023**

**GAINESVILLEVETERANS FOR PEACE** (VFP) believes that part of our responsibility is to support and mentor other groups who share our goals. In that capacity, we make donations of time, materials and funding to other Peace and Justice organizations.

The Winter Solstice Celebration is the primary event from which we derive our operating funds. Last year, we raised \$14,000 from the Solstice and over the year, we have donated \$7,950 of that money to groups we support.

We include this financial report each year so that we have full transparency with you, the people whose support makes our work possible. *We Thank You*.

#### Our donation list for 2023:

- \$750 to the Alachua County Labor Coalition to help their efforts to get fair housing, and Freedom of Speech at UF www.floridalaborparty.org/alachua
- \$750 to the Civic Media Center, an alternative library and space for progressive speakers, groups and events— *civicmediacenter.org*
- \$750 to The Gainesville Iguana, Gainesville's progressive calendar and newsletter—*gainesvilleiguana.org*
- \$1,000 to the Samuel Proctor Oral History Project oral.history.ufl.edu
- \$500 to Courage to Resist—couragetoresist.org
- \$500 to Project Renew—landmines.org.vn
- \$750 to the Florida Coalition for Peace and Justice (FCPJ)— *florida4peace.org*
- \$200 to Rose Garden Angels—RoseGardenAngels.org
- \$200 to Deer Hart lodge—www.deerhart.org
- \$200 to Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Council uufg.org/justice

\$500 to Theatre Of Memory—theatreofmemory.org \$200 to UUFG Banned Books program—uufg.org \$200 to Jewish Voice For Peace—jewishvoiceforpeace.org \$100 to Helping Hands Clinic—hhclinicgnv.org \$500 to About Face—aboutfaceveterans.org \$600 to National VFP—veteransforpeace.org \$250 to Golden Rule Project—vfpgoldenruleproject.org

-Total Donations = \$7,950

#### VFP Projects

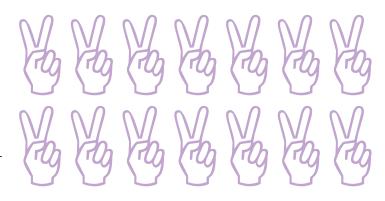
- Winter Solstice Concert: \$4,500
- Peace Poetry Contest—\$1,018. (see article)
- The Peace Scholarship Award—\$6,000 (see article)
- Total cost of VFP Projects = \$11,518

#### Other:

- Peace & Planet news—\$62.62
- Accountant—\$155
- Other Costs: Total—\$217.62
- —*Total spent for 2023 = \$19,685.62*

#### Income:

- Solstice 2022—\$14,000
- Donations—\$1950
- T-Shirts & Books—\$385
- -Total income for 2023 = \$16,335
- —Current Balance = -\$ 3,350.62 (this was covered by money we had in our account from before)

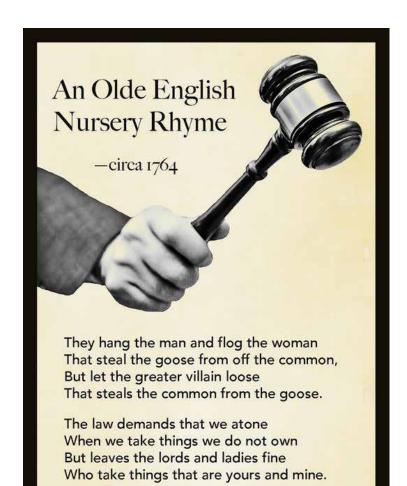


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# PEACE

Meg & Hutch

# VFP Statement of Purpose:

We, having dutifully served our nation, do hereby affirm our greater responsibility to serve the cause of world peace. To this end we will work with others:

- 1) Toward increasing public awareness of the costs of war;
- 2) To restrain our government from intervening overtly or covertly in the internal affairs of other nations;
- 3) To end the arms race and to reduce and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons; and
- 4) To abolish war as an instrument of international policy.

To achieve these goals, members of VFP pledge to use non-violent means to maintain an organization that is both democratic and open with the understanding that all members are trusted to act in the best interests of the group for the larger purpose of world peace.



# EMILY FRANCK HOON PhD

Licensed Clinical Psychologist

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# Support the People Who Support Veterans for Peace!

We've lost several sponsors in the last few years—not because they've given up on working for peace, but as a result of our kleptocratic war economy that preys on all of the 99%. So, please buy local whenever possible, and remember the good people and organizations who help out with the life-and-death issues that matter to us all. Wear your VFP t-shirt, button, or cap while doing business with:

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36	Jonesville Tennis Center
13	Jordan Glen School
11	Keep Alachua County Beautiful
11	Linda Kemp
55	The Kramer Family
69	Warren Lane
<i>0</i> 9	League of Women Voters
82	Sandy Malone
53	Matheson History Museum
67	Leanetta McNealy, Ph.D.
42	Midwives Cooperative
60	New Technology
66	John Power
82	Peace Picketers
23	Prairie Creek Conservation
	Cemetery
59	Pride Community Center of
	North Central Florida

73..... Anna Prizzia

17...... Quaker Meeting

27...... The Samuel Proctor Oral

History Program

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# Happy Holidays and a Peaceful New Year TRASK







Chapter 14

Veterans from all services and all nations (including those on active duty or in training programs) and veterans' family members are invited to join Veterans for Peace.

To learn more, call Scott Camil at 352-375-2563, visit <a href="www.vfpgainesville.org">www.vfpgainesville.org</a>, email <a href="gvlvfp@earthlink.net">gvlvfp@earthlink.net</a>, write to PO Box 142562, Gainesville, FL 32614, or come to our regular meetings (7 PM, on the first Wednesday of almost every month —whenever the coronavirus situation permits) at Scott & Sherry's house —call 352-375-2563 for directions.



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