

November



PASI NEWS

Newsletter of Peace Action of Staten Island, www.peacesi.org 718-989-2881

Calendar:

- SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 5:45 – 8 PM, “Vets Reflect on the 1914 Christmas Truce.” Peace Action Meeting. Unitarian Fellowship Hall, 312 Fillmore St.
- TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16, New York University, Grand Hall, 5th Floor, Global Center for Academic and Spiritual Life, 238 Thompson Street.
- SATURDAY, JANUARY 10, 5:45 - 8 PM, Peace Action Meeting.
- SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 5:45 - 8 PM, Peace Action Meeting.
- SATURDAY, MAY 9, 5:45 - 8 PM, Peace Action Meeting.
- SATURDAY, JUNE 13, 5:45 - 8 PM, Peace Action Meeting.

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Vets Reflect on 1914 Christmas Truce

Saturday, Nov. 8, 5:45 to 8 pm

**Unitarian Fellowship Hall,
312 Fillmore St.**



Bill Gilson of the NYC Chapter of Veterans for Peace and Iraq War veteran Ghanim Khalil will be speakers at the next Peace Action meeting on Saturday, November 8th. They will be reflecting on the 100th anniversary of the 1914 Christmas Truce.

World War I, which began on July 1914 and ended on November 11, 1918, caused the death of 9 million combatants and 7 million civilians. The horrors of this war were triggered by the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, by Gavrilo Princip, a Yugoslav nationalist. A web of international alliances caught up all the major powers in the throes of global war, including Japan, the United States, and the Ottoman Empire.

That first Christmas of the war along the western front, a series of widespread, unofficial ceasefires took place. The truce is often seen as a symbolic moment of peace and humanity amidst one of the most violent events of human history but it was short-lived and followed by years of slaughter.

There are lessons to be learned from World War I and the failures of diplomacy in our current world. Wars are often caused by the neglect of diplomacy and the lust for war among certain groups in each country. The utter uselessness of World War I ruined the lives of an entire generation and sowed the seeds for World War II that began only two decades later.

Can we imagine a world where war is abolished or is it too imbedded in the human psyche? This is a conversation that is just as relevant today as it was 100 years ago when the “war to end all wars” began.

Meetings are free and open to the public. Light refreshments will be served.

“There Is No Military Solution” But Obama Launches a New U.S. War in Syria

In response to the U.S. bombing in Syria, Phyllis Bennis, Fellow of the Institute for Policy Studies and of the Transnational Institute, made the following points:

- President Obama’s decision to bomb Syria stands in stark violation of international law, the UN Charter, and the requirements of the U.S. Constitution.
- The U.S. bombing can’t bomb extremism out of existence. It will give Islamic State and its allies a new basis for recruitment, it will strengthen the repressive Syrian government, it will undermine Syria’s struggling non-violent opposition movement, and it will further tighten the links between the Islamic State supporters in Syria and in Iraq.

For more from Phyllis Bennis, go to <http://www.ips-dc.org/military-solution-obama-launches-new-u-s-war-syria/>. And if you have questions about this new U.S. war in Syria, join Peace Action and start asking questions.

Health Care, Peace, and Ebola *by Eileen Bardel*

Why should New and Improved Medicare for All, single-payer, Universal Healthcare for All, or whatever term you choose to use, be a top priority with peace activists?

Assembly Standing Committee on Health will hold public hearings on "New York Health" bill to create state single payer health coverage. In New York City, the public hearing will take place on **Tuesday, December 16, 10 am at New York University**, Grand Hall, 5th Floor, Global Center for Academic and Spiritual Life, 238 Thompson Street. You can call [212-312-1492](tel:212-312-1492) for more information.

This series of public hearings around the state will review the effects and costs of the current health coverage system on patients, health care providers, employers, labor, taxpayers and health and health care. It will review how the single-payer system would work in New York. The bill, A.5389-A/S.2078-A, was introduced by Assembly Health Committee Chair Richard N. Gottfried and Senator Bill Perkins.

Would the response to the Ebola virus be different if we had a different healthcare system? The Ebola crisis is not only life-threatening but the chaos it is leaving in its wake in West Africa leaves that region vulnerable to social, economic and political upheaval. Ebola, a deadly hemorrhagic fever, was first discovered in 1976. Yet no drug has been approved to treat the disease. ZMapp which is manufactured by Mapp Biopharmaceuticals has been used in only two instances. The drug is still in the experimental stage which means it has not yet been tested in humans for safety and effectiveness.

Why is that? Health care and the pharmaceutical industries are driven by profit. Since Ebola is not considered a "predictable disease," there was a lack of interest in producing a drug that would not bring financial gain. When drug companies are deciding where to direct their research and development money, they assess the potential market. The best target population is customers who can afford the drug and will use it on a regular basis. On the other hand, people in undeveloped countries don't fit the criteria of a good target market for selling pharmaceutical drugs that could save their lives. There is a lack of incentive to examine diseases that will not bring a large financial return.

Our current healthcare system and the Ebola virus intersect in the case of Thomas Eric Duncan, the Liberian man who died of Ebola. Mr. Duncan was finally admitted on his second visit to the Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital in Dallas. He was a poor man with no medical coverage. Did this affect the care he received? The hospital says no. It is estimated that medical treatment of Ebola can cost up to \$5,000 to \$25,000 dollars per day. A doctor from Physicians for a National Health Plan told me that emergency rooms are the worst place for treatment for a serious malady. Standard procedure is having emergency room personnel tell you to contact your primary physician as soon as possible for further treatment. What happens, as in the case of Mr. Duncan, when you don't have a doctor to contact? You return to the emergency room when you don't get better and hope someone will help you.

Demanding the same quality and affordable health care for everyone in this country might seem like an impossible goal to accomplish. It is possible -- but it will *not* happen as long as the insurance and pharmaceutical companies are in charge. One way to change the health care system in this country is to get behind legislation for state provided healthcare for all. At the state level, we can support the New York Health bill. At the federal level, the John Conyers bill H.R. 676, Expanded and Improved Medicare For All, deserves our attention and backing as well. Get on the phone to our legislators, find out more about the national and state bills and come on out on December 16th to the hearing on New York Health.

Peace demands action!

Reference: August 25, 2014 Financial Page of The New Yorker



Citizenfour

Judging from A.O. Scott's review (*NY Times*, October 23, 2014), *Citizenfour* (2014), the new documentary by Laura Poitras about Edward Snowden is an exceptional film that brings home the terrifying nature of the surveillance age. In Manhattan, it opened for limited screenings at IFC CENTER, 323 6th Ave. at W 3rd Street and the Lincoln Plaza Cinema. As we go to press, we do not know if it will still be playing, but try to catch it if you can.



On the Importance of Being There: The Story of Oran Brown

by Janice Bocchicchio

(as presented at the Make Food Not War Dinner on Oct. 18, 2015)

Oran Brown will tell you "I was just a soldier, not a leader" and that is true. And *that* is why we honor him today. Not for being a leader, but for being a good soldier who understood the importance of being there. And he showed up many, many times over the years.

Oran was born in Minneapolis on August 13, 1917. He came to live in New York City at the age of four. He graduated from the University of North Carolina and was drafted into the Army in 1940. Oran met his wife Jean at the Riverside Church Guild and they were married December 12, 1948. They bought a home on Staten Island in 1962 and raised two kids, Larry and Liz. He was employed by the Department of Social Services from 1949 - until his retirement in 1980.

But his work was not over. I am providing just *some* of the highlights of his second career as an activist -- and not necessarily in chronological order. Oran and Jean became very active in church and social causes. They protested Contra aid to Nicaragua, demonstrated for the elimination of nuclear weapons and against nuclear weapons at the Staten Island Home Port. They demonstrated against apartheid in South Africa.

When Oran and Jean moved to Staten Island, they joined the Wesleyan Methodist Church and with the pastor became involved with the Staten Island Church and Synagogue Fair Housing Council which helped to raise awareness about housing segregation on Staten Island. In August of 1963, Oran went on his first march on Washington and heard Martin Luther King give his "I have a dream" speech. He participated in *many* marches on Washington after that protesting *against* injustice and *for* equal rights. Jean joined him when she could.

In 1971, they demonstrated against Governor Rockefeller's handling of the Attica Prison riot. They protested Nestle Corporation for persuading women in Africa to buy expensive formula instead of breast feeding. He volunteered at Bayley Seaton Hospital, Project Hospitality, and the Methodist Federation for Social Action. He worked on Mary Codd's mayoral election campaign. Oran and I first met at a fund raiser at Mary's Lighthouse Hill home. He volunteered his time for many other political campaigns. He has been a long time member of the Staten Island Democratic Association. He supported the opening of Daytop Village Rehabilitation Center when it was *very* unpopular to do so. He participated in the protest to prevent I.T.T. from getting the public school food service contract because they provided the US Army Air Force with the Norden Bombsite used to drop bombs accurately in many wars and responsible for many deaths.

In 1980, Oran joined the Staten Island Chapter of the National Organization for Women. One Saturday, and for 15 months of Saturdays thereafter, he joined my chapter and other pro-choice citizens in protecting the women's clinic on Victory Blvd from anti-choice fanatics who constantly threatened him but he *never* backed down.

During the 80's, Oran and Jean visited Nicaragua, El Salvador and Cuba to witness the destructive nature of U.S. foreign policy. In 1984, Oran and NOW President Hope Blumenthal marched in the New York City gay rights parade. In 1989, a Salvadoran refugee family of three, Ana, who was pregnant, her husband Francisco, and their 4 year old son, walked from El Salvador to California. When Oran's group, the Staten Island Religious Task Force on Central America, heard about their unhealthy living conditions, they sent airfare to bring them east and took turns housing the family. When it was Oran's and Jean's turn, Ana went into labor. He can tell you the rest of *that* story. The family stayed with the Browns for six months. They keep in touch to this day.

As a member of the Protectors of Pine Oak Woods he worked on the campaign to save the Greenbelt on Staten Island. I know I haven't mentioned all Oran was involved with, but, whatever was left unsaid you can be sure was in the interest of justice and the common good.

Sadly, Jean passed away on May 23, 2009. Their children, Liz and Larry, have given him four grandchildren to love: Dan, Julie, Jessie and Jack.

In the 1984 *Staten Island Advance* article about his active retirement, Oran is quoted as saying, "I just thought that I might as well spend my time doing something worthwhile." And that you did, Oran. And for *this* Peace Action of Staten Island wants to show you its appreciation for all that you have done.

Thank you, Oran.

Peace Action of Staten Island

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Vets Reflect on 1914 Christmas Truce

Bill Gilson

NYC Vets for Peace

Ghanim Khalil

Iraq War era Veteran

Saturday

Nov 8, 2014 5:45 PM

PASI Meeting
Unitarian Fellowship Hall
312 Fillmore St.
Staten Island, NY

Scenes from the Make Food Not War Dinner



Peace Action of Staten Island honored Peacemakers Oran Brown, Ira and Joyce Malerba Goldstein, Mike May (pictured above with MC Michael Santangelo), and Beryl Thurman on October 18, 2014 at the Olivet Presbyterian Hall.