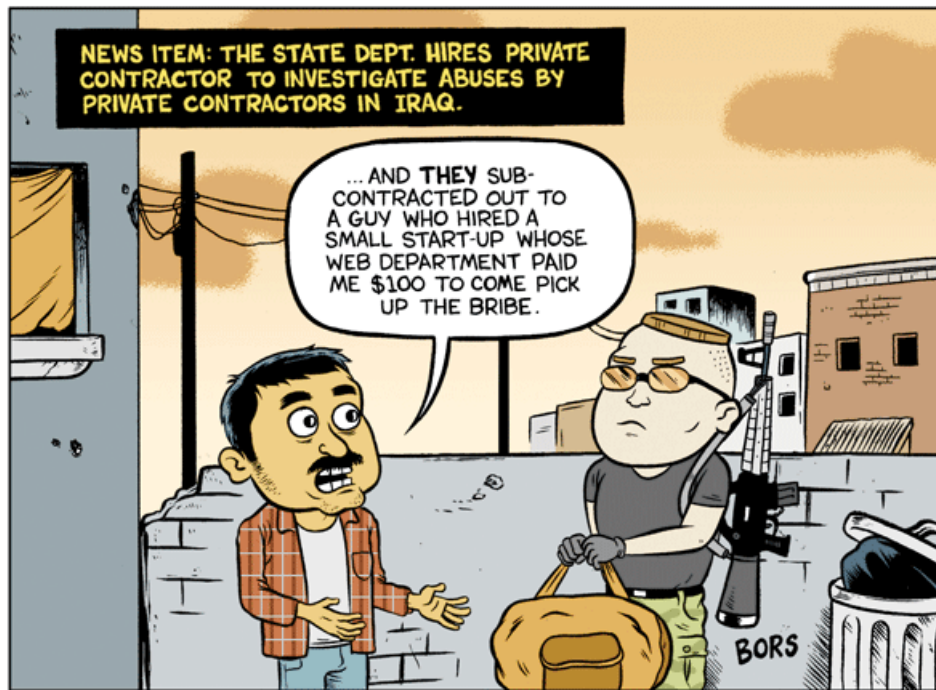


GI SPECIAL 6K11:



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“I Can’t Stand This Shit”

Happy Veteran’s Day:

“Veteran’s Day Is Now The Day I Will Remember Watching The Rear Gun Truck Of The Convoy In Front Of Us Run Over And Kill A Little Iraqi Girl”

“And 12 Hours Later In The Same Area, There’s An IED”

Age: 23
Gender: Male
Industry: Military
Occupation: Ice Cream Man
Location: An Nasiriyah, Scania, BIAP, TQ, Taji, Balad, Mosul, Baqubah: Iraq

Happy Veteran's Day:

It's two days late, but if you're serving, thanks for serving.

Veteran's Day is now the day I will remember watching the rear gun truck of the convoy in front of us run over and kill a little Iraqi girl.

This girl is outside an Iraqi Army checkpoint that we pass everyday entering or exiting a FOB we go to up north. She wears a white hoodie and red and pink polka dot pajama pants. She loves chemlights and blue gummi sharks from the PX.

The driver used the excuse that you never stop a convoy which is fucking bogus because 1) that's not our SOP, 2) he's at the rear of the convoy; he won't cause an accident beyond him if he breaks hard and 3) the M1151 humvee weighs 23,000lbs; it stops on a dime.

I hope that shithead gets hooked up, but I know he won't.

The Cav squadron we are attached to is pulling out in 2 weeks, leaving us to train the new guys and work alongside them until our parent battalion rotates out from up north.

12 hours later at an intersection along the MSR that we usually TCP (traffic control point) at to prevent civilian traffic from entering our convoy, we found the intersection without a single vehicle waiting to merge.

This has never happened before and immediately set off my spider senses.

After the convoy passed our TCP, we collapsed and moved past the trucks to retake our position as scout truck; as soon as we passed the pace truck we felt a concussion wave in the truck and our convoy commander (in the front pace truck) ordered us to halt.

He said that they felt a concussion wave in their truck, the first TCN truck was on fire with it's lights off and that he was getting off the radio to check it out.

As I suspected he might, Shitty TC froze under the stress and made an "uh" noise into the mic when I asked for a command.

This isn't my first IED, and it didn't hit us, so while my balls did suck up into my body, I assumed command and moved the truck into a blocking position in front of the convoy to prevent any civilian traffic from entering our convoy in case of a secondary IED.

I advised our rear truck to block the rear the same way.

I told Misfit to laser anyone who got too close and went off the radio to mark a crossover in the median for the civilian traffic to use so they didn't cluster up and box the convoy in.

Whoever set the IED missed our truck/the pace truck and hit the first white truck, blowing two of the tires on the trailer clean off the rims, and catching two others on fire.

Our convoy commander put the fire out with an extinguisher (we have them on the outside of our trucks mounted for such an occasion), and helped the guy change his tires with the other TCNs while his truck pulled security.

Once the truck was up, we moved out and called the IED up to the local landowner.

So an Army truck runs over a little girl and 12 hours later in the same area, there's an IED.

This is an area that hasn't seen an IED since the end of 2003.

All of our contact so far has been way further north; between Al Kut and Baghdad, around Taji and also of course, in Diyala Province.

Nice work Cav Troopers.

Our 2nd day on the road here almost a year ago, I watched one of these mouthbreathers open the hatch on the ASV and pop out to shoot a smoke grenade at a woman and her kids on the side of the road as we passed them going the opposite way. Shit like this is what made victory in 2003 impossible and is what will push away the day Americans can go home for good. For every guy doing the right thing in the Army, there's 5 retards doing the wrong one.

I can't stand this shit.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

OH-58 Kiowa Down In Mosul Two U.S. Soldier Killed

Nov 15, 2008 (Reuters)

Two U.S. soldiers were killed in a helicopter accident in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul on Saturday, a military spokeswoman said.

The helicopter involved was an OH-58 Kiowa Warrior, a small scout helicopter fitted with weapons. It hit overhead cables as it was attempting to land.

“There has been a helicopter incident in East Mosul. They’re classifying it now as a hard landing when it came in contact with wires,” Captain Charles Calio said earlier on Saturday.

Mosul has been the scene of some of the heaviest violence in Iraq in recent months.

Marine Killed By Anbar IED

Nov. 15, 2008 Multi National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE
No. 20081115-05

CAMP Ramadi, Iraq – A Multi National Force – West Marine died Nov. 14 as the result of wounds received when an improvised explosive device detonated in al Anbar province earlier in the day.

REALLY UNNECESSARY: ALL HOME NOW



U.S. soldiers patrol Baquba, in Diyala province, October 29, 2008. REUTERS/Goran Tomasevic

TROOP NEWS

Iraq Vets Against The War Well Received In Austin's Parade: "As In Houston, Response All Along The Route Was Overwhelmingly Positive"



Members of Iraq Veterans Against the War march in Austin's Veteran's Day parade.
Photo by Susan Van Haitsma, The Rag Blog.

November 12, 2008 Susan Van Haitsma, The Rag Blog

Veterans for Peace and Iraq Veterans Against the War groups marched in Veterans Day parades around the country yesterday (Nov. 11, 2008), although VFP and IVAW chapters were denied permission to march in some cities.

In Raleigh, North Carolina, for example, the parade overseer excluded the local VFP group from marching with their flag (which simply reads "Veterans for Peace" with the peace dove on helmet image) because the flag was deemed a "political statement." The parade organizer also made the confounding statement that the parade "has nothing to do with war."

I was pleased to read that the Houston VFP group marched along with several IVAW members and other supporters.

Here is a report posted at Houston Indymedia:

Members of Veterans for Peace, chapter #12 (Houston) marched in the Houston Veterans Day parade again this year on Nov. 11, joined by other peace activists. VFP invited other peace groups to march with them, and representatives of the Progressive

Action Alliance, Iraq Veterans Against the War, and the Harris Co. Green Party helped carry banners, signs, and flags.

Marchers were led by banners for IVAW, VFP, and a giant one saying "Stop the War On Iraq - Bring the Troops Home Now". Signs included slogans like "Fund Vet Benefits, Not the War", and "Support the Troops - Bring them Home Now". Marchers also carried both VFP and US flags.

Jim Rine, President of the Houston area VFP chapter, said, "We were in the parade to show that war is not the answer. We wanted to offer an alternative to the usual militaristic displays."

As I watched Austin's parade from the sidewalk along Congress Avenue yesterday, I also heard a lot of supportive hoots and applause when IVAW walked by, and a number of folks stopped to shake the vets' hands as we stood near the capitol afterward.

The guys said that, as in Houston, response all along the route was overwhelmingly positive. They noticed two men turn their backs on them -- the only negative reaction they encountered.

An older woman in uniform (a WAVE, I think) saw their banner and remarked, "You're against the war? Well, bless your hearts."

As IVAW passed the reviewing area at 7th and Congress, it was good to hear the announcer state the name of the group along with their mission statement: troops home from Iraq, full benefits for returning veterans and reparations for Iraq.



DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN THE MILITARY?

Forward GI Special along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the wars, inside the armed services and at home. Send email requests to address up top or write to: The Military Project, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657. Phone: 917.677.8057

“The Meaning Of ‘Support Our Troops’ Has Been Debated By Supporters And Critics Of The War” “But It Should At Least Mean: Don’t Step On Their Faces When They Are Trying To Exercise Free Speech”

November 12, 2008 By Bob Keeler, Newsday [Excerpts]

Among the many messes that confronted Nassau County Executive Tom Suozzi when he took office in 2002, there was the county’s approach to serving veterans.

Then, clients’ records were in shoe boxes, and the office manual was 11 years out of date. Now, the operation is computerized and efficient. Two counselors work full time in the social services building, making sure vets get helped.

Still, at a protest outside Nassau County District Court in Hempstead on Monday - the day before Veterans Day - one of the signs bore the familiar yellow ribbon saying “Support Our Troops,” plus this wry caveat: “Offer Not Good in Nassau County.”

Ouch.

That’s not the kind of image Suozzi would like for Nassau, after all the work his administration has done to help vets.

But the sign had nothing to do with services. It was about the arrest of 15 demonstrators - vets and others - on Hempstead Turnpike, outside the Oct. 15 presidential debate at Hofstra.

In the fray with mounted Nassau police officers, a vet named Nick Morgan suffered injuries to his face and eye.

At this week’s demonstration, before the 15 were arraigned and pleaded not guilty to disorderly conduct, another sign read: “Taliban and Al-Qaeda Couldn’t Do What the Nassau County Police Did to Nick Morgan.”

Double ouch.

Among those protesting at the courthouse on Monday was Elaine Brower, a member of Military Families Speak Out. Her son James, a New York City police officer, is serving his third tour in Iraq.

Morgan can't remember anything about the rendezvous with a horse that rendered him unconscious, but recalls clearly what brought him to Hofstra.

"I wasn't protesting anything," said Morgan, 24, who served with the 1st Cavalry Division in Iraq for a year, ending in February 2005. What he and other vets wanted was simply to get answers from the two candidates. They wanted to ask John McCain why he had such a poor voting record on vets' issues, and to find out what Barack Obama's attitude might be toward soldiers "who refused to fight in this illegal war," Morgan said.

One of those soldiers is also one of the defendants, Matthis Chiroux. He joined the Army in 2002, to get some money for college and to learn discipline. In 2007, after extensive overseas service, including Afghanistan, he left with an honorable discharge and entered the Individual Ready Reserve.

That status used to mean that you were done with military service. But not in this war, which is sending people back for multiple tours and reaching out to those who have already been discharged.

Earlier this year, while Chiroux was attending Brooklyn College, the Army notified him that they want him back, to go to Iraq. He refused.

As he awaited prosecution for that refusal, Chiroux joined those who wanted answers from the candidates - but they couldn't get assurances in advance that the questions would be asked. A few, including Chiroux, planned civil disobedience, but not Morgan.

At the time of his injury, other witnesses say, he was on the sidewalk, which was where mounted police were trying to move others, to get them out of the street.

Since the invasion of Iraq, the meaning of "Support Our Troops" has been debated by supporters and critics of the war.

But it should at least mean: Don't step on their faces when they are trying to exercise free speech.

"It doesn't matter how many times they step on us," Chiroux said. "We have a right to be heard."

Whatever the disposition of the disorderly conduct charges, Morgan plans to sue Nassau. It will take time for that suit to explore issues such as the proper use of horses in crowd control.

Even if they find they did nothing wrong, they should at least reach out to Iraq Veterans Against the War and express regret that a vet got hurt.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

“Let Them All Be United To Foil The Signing Of The Agreement That Wants To Sell Iraq To The Occupier”



Iraqis in Baghdad's Sadr City burn American flags as they demonstrate against the proposed security pact between Iraq and the U.S. that would allow American troops to stay for three more years. Iraq: Nov. 14, 2008. (AP Photo/Khalid Mohammed)

11.15.08 (CNN)

Iraqi cleric Muqtada al-Sadr called for a massive prayer service and a peaceful demonstration in Baghdad next week against the U.S.-led presence in Iraq.

“Let them all be united to foil the signing of the agreement that wants to sell Iraq to the occupier just like our holy lands in Palestine and other Arab and Islamic lands were sold before, and let that be next Friday hoping that we clear our conscience in front of God and his prophet and let everyone, after they finish the sacred ritual, gather for a peaceful demonstration to express their rejection of the agreement,” al-Sadr wrote in the letter.

Sheikh Hazem al-Araji, a senior member of the Sadrist movement, told CNN the letter was read in Baghdad, Kufa, Amara, Nasiriya and other Iraqi cities before thousands of worshippers who attended Friday prayer services.

**IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE
END THE OCCUPATIONS**

**OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION
ALL TROOPS HOME NOW!**

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh had I the ability, and could reach the nation's ear, I would, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke. For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake. Frederick Douglas, 1852

“What country can preserve its liberties if its rulers are not warned from time to time that their people preserve the spirit of resistance? Let them take arms.”
Thomas Jefferson to William Stephens Smith, 1787.

“The mighty are only mighty because we are on our knees. Let us rise!”
-- Camille Desmoulins

“When someone says my son died fighting for his country, I say, “No, the suicide bomber who killed my son died fighting for his country.”
-- Father of American Soldier Chase Beattie, KIA in Iraq

One day while I was in a bunker in Vietnam, a sniper round went over my head. The person who fired that weapon was not a terrorist, a rebel, an extremist, or a so-called insurgent. The Vietnamese individual who tried to kill me was a citizen of Vietnam, who did not want me in his country. This truth escapes millions.

Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic
Vietnam 1970-71
December 13, 2004

**The Empire's New Clothes:
“A Candidate Who Even Remotely
Questions Corporate And Imperial
Power Is Not Permitted To Make A
Strong Bid For The Presidency”**

“Barack Obama Is No Exception To The Rule”

“Anyone Who Thinks He Could Have Risen To Power Without Prior And Ongoing Ruling Class Approval Is Living In A Dream World”

[Thanks to New York City Labor Against The War]

The sooner seriously left agitators and activists can expose the corporate-imperial truth behind the progressive Obama façade to disenfranchised people at home and abroad, the quicker we can get to real social and democratic change beyond the ruling class’s latest quadrennial candidate-centered electoral extravaganza.

President Obama can be counted on to use their new faith in reactionary and imperial ways reflecting hidden allegiance to the timeworn elite principle that really big matters of politics and policy are for the rich and powerful - not ordinary citizens. At the end of the day Obama’s job is to keep the restless poor, working class, and global Many safely pacified while serving the needs of the wealthy and imperial Few.

12 November 2008 by Paul Street, Black Agenda Report [Excerpts]

Paul Street’s books include *Empire and Inequality: America and the World Since 9/11* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2004); *Racial Oppression in the Global Metropolis* (New York, 2007), and most recently *Barack Obama and the Future of American Politics* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, September 2008).

Unfortunately, “few if any of” Obama’s staunchest supporters “have bothered to read a single solitary word of Obama’s blatantly imperial, nationalist, and militarist foreign policy speeches and writings,” says the author. “And my sense is they never will.”

“This is bigger than life itself. When I was coming up, I always thought they put in who they wanted to put in. I didn’t think my vote mattered. But I don’t think that anymore.”

The speaker of these words is Deddrick Battle, a black janitor who grew up in St. Louis’s notorious Pruitt-Igoe housing projects during the 1950s and 1960s.

Battle was speaking about the presidential candidacy of Barack Obama. He was quoted on the front page of last Sunday’s New York Times in a story about the pride many

African Americans are naturally feeling in Obama's candidacy. The story contained numerous examples of American blacks who have been encouraged by the Obama phenomenon to think for the first time that "politics is for them, too" [1].

But, as The New York Times' editors certainly know, "they" still "put in who they want to put in" to no small extent.

The predominantly white U.S. business and political establishment still makes sure that nobody who questions dominant domestic and imperial hierarchies and doctrines can make a serious ("viable") run for higher office - the presidency, above all.

It does this by denying adequate campaign funding (absolutely essential to success in an age of super-expensive, media-driven campaigns) and favorable media treatment (without which a successful campaign is unimaginable at the current stage of corporate media consolidation and power) to candidates who step beyond the narrow boundaries of elite opinion.

Thanks to these critical electoral filters and to the legally mandated U.S. winner-take-all "two party" system [2], a candidate who even remotely questions corporate and imperial power is not permitted to make a strong bid for the presidency.

Barack Obama is no exception to the rule.

Anyone who thinks he could have risen to power without prior and ongoing ruling class approval is living in a dream world.

An Early And 'Quieter Audition' With The 'Moneyed Establishment.'

Conventional wisdom holds that Obama entered national politics with his instantly famous keynote address to the 2004 Democratic National Convention.

But, as Ken Silverstein noted in Harper's in the fall of 2006, "If the speech was his debut to the wider American public, he had already undergone an equally successful but much quieter audition with Democratic Party leaders and fund-raisers, without whose support he would surely never have been chosen for such a prominent role at the convention."

The favorable elite assessment of Obama began in October of 2003. That's when "Vernon Jordan, the well-known power broker and corporate board-member who chaired Bill Clinton's presidential transition team after the 1992 election, placed calls to roughly twenty of his friends and invited them to a fund-raiser at his home. That event," Silverstein noted, "marked his entry into a well-established Washington ritual-the gauntlet of fund-raising parties and meet-and-greets through which potential stars are vetted by fixers, donors, and lobbyists."

Drawing on his undoubted charm, wit, intelligence, and Harvard credentials, Obama passed this trial with shining colors.

At a series of social meetings with assorted big “players” from the financial, legal and lobbyist sectors, Obama impressed key establishment figures like Gregory Craig (a longtime leading attorney and former special counsel to the White House), Mike Williams (the legislative director of the Bond Market Association), Tom Quinn (a partner at the top corporate law firm Venable and a leading Democratic Party “power broker”), and Robert Harmala, another Venable partner and “a big player in Democratic circles.”

Craig liked the fact that Obama was not a racial “polarizer” on the model of past African-American leaders like Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton.

Williams was soothed by Obama’s reassurances that he was not “anti-business” and became “convinced...that the two could work together.”

“There’s a reasonableness about him,” Harmala told Silverstein. “I don’t see him as being on the liberal fringe.”

“Elite financial, legal, and lobbyists contributions came into Obama’s coffers at a rapid and accelerating pace.”

By Silverstein’s account, the good “word about Obama spread through Washington’s blue-chip law firms, lobby shops, and political offices, and this accelerated after his win in the March [2004] Democratic primary.” Elite financial, legal, and lobbyists contributions came into Obama’s coffers at a rapid and accelerating pace [3].

The “good news” for Washington and Wall Street insiders was that Obama’s “star quality” would not be directed against the elite segments of the business class.

The interesting black legislator from the South Side of Chicago was “someone the rich and powerful could work with.”

According to Obama biographer and Chicago Tribune reporter David Mendell, in late 2003 and early 2004:

“Word of Obama’s rising star was now spreading beyond Illinois, especially through influential Washington political circles like blue chip law firms, party insiders, lobbying houses. They were all hearing about this rare, exciting, charismatic, up-and-coming African American who unbelievably could win votes across color lines.....(his handlers and) influential Chicago supporters and fund-raisers all vigorously worked their D.C. contacts to help Obama make the rounds with the Democrats’ set of power brokers. ...Obama...spent a couple of days and nights shaking hands making small talk and delivering speeches to liberal groups, national union leaders, lobbyists, fund-raisers and well-heeled money donors.

In setting after setting, Obama’s Harvard Law resume and his reasonable tone impressed the elite crowd.”

According to Mendell, Obama now cultivated the support of the privileged few by “advocate(ing) fiscal restraint” and “calling for pay-as-you-go government” and “extol(ing) the merits of free trade and charter schools.”

He “moved beyond being an obscure good-government reformer to being a candidate more than palatable to the moneyed and political establishment.” [4].

“Reasonable tone” was code language with a useful translation for Obama’s new business-class backers: “friendly to capitalism and its opulent masters.”

“On condition of anonymity,” Silverstein reported two years ago, “one Washington lobbyist I spoke with was willing to point out the obvious: that big donors would not be helping out Obama if they didn’t see him as a ‘player.’”

“The lobbyist added: ‘What’s the dollar value of a starry-eyed idealist?’”

Obama’s ‘Dollar Value’

Since his election to the U.S. Senate and through the presidential campaign, the “deeply conservative” (according to New Yorker writer Larissa MacFarquhar) Obama has done nothing to undermine his “palatability” to concentrated economic and political power.

He has made his safety to the power elite evident on matters both domestic and global, from his support for bailing out parasitic Wall Street financial firms with hundreds of billions of taxpayer dollars (while claiming to be “a free market guy” and proclaiming “love” for “capitalism”) to his refusal to question the morality of U.S. colonial wars and his strident support for maintaining a globally unmatched “defense” (empire) budget that accounts for nearly half the world’s military spending.

As Edward S. Herman and David Peterson note in an important recent article, “in 2007-08, Obama has placated establishment circles on virtually every front imaginable, the candidate of ‘change we can believe in’ has visited interest group after interest group to promise them that they needn’t fear any change in the way they’re familiar with doing business” [5].

It’s all very consistent with Obama’s history stretching back to his days as the Republican-pleasing editor of the Harvard Law Review and his climb up the corporate-friendly politics of Chicago. As Ryan Lizza noted in The New Yorker last July, “Perhaps the greatest misconception about Barack Obama is that he is some sort of anti-establishment revolutionary. Rather, every stage of his political career has been marked by an eagerness to accommodate himself to existing institutions rather than tear them down or replace them” [6].

“Obama enjoyed a remarkable windfall of favorable corporate media coverage.”

Obama’s business-friendly centrism helped him garner an astonishing, record-setting stash of corporate cash. He received more than \$33 million from “FIRE,” the finance-real-estate and insurance sector.

His winnings include \$824,202 from the leading global investment firm Goldman Sachs [7]. He has been consistently backed by the biggest and most powerful Wall Street firms.

At the same time and by more than mere coincidence, Obama enjoyed a remarkable windfall of favorable corporate media coverage. That media treatment was the key to Obama's success in winning support and donations from the middle-class and from non-affluent people like Dedrick Battle.

'Holding Domestic Constituencies In Check'

At the same time, many in the establishment sensed (accurately) that Obama is particularly well-suited to the goal of wrapping corporate politics and the related American Empire Project in insurgent garb.

Their profit- and empire-based system and "leadership" has been behaving so badly that a major image makeover is required to keep the rabble (the citizenry) in line.

Once he was properly "vetted" and found to be "reasonable" - to be someone who would not fundamentally question dominant power structures and doctrines - Obama's multicultural background, race, youth, charisma, and even his early opposition to the Iraq War became useful to corporate and imperial elites.

His outwardly progressive "change" persona is perfectly calibrated to divert, capture, control, and contain coming popular rebellions.

He is uniquely qualified to simultaneously surf, de-fang, and "manage" the U.S. and world citizenry's hopes for radical and democratic transformation in the wake of the Bush-Cheney nightmare.

As John Pilger warned last May:

"What is Obama's attraction to big business? Precisely the same as Robert Kennedy's (in 1968). By offering a 'new,' young and apparently progressive face of Democratic Party - with the bonus of being a member of the black elite - he can blunt and divert real opposition.

"That was Colin Powell's role as Bush's secretary of state.

"An Obama victory will bring intense pressure on the US antiwar and social justice movements to accept a Democratic administration for all its faults." [8].

Obama's race is no small part of what makes him "uniquely qualified" to perform the key tasks of mass pacification for which he has been hired.

As Aurora Levins Morales noted in a Z Magazine essay written for left progressives last April:

“We’re far more potent as organizers and catalysts than as voters. Our ability to create a world we can thrive on does not depend on who wins this election, it depends on our ability to dismantle profit-based societies in which greed trumps ethics.

“This election is about finding a CEO capable of holding domestic constituencies in check as they are further disenfranchised and... make them feel that they have a stake in the military aggressiveness that the ruling class believes is necessary.

“Having a black man and a white woman run helps to obscure the fact that ...decline of empire is driving the political elite to the right. Both represent very reactionary politics... “ [9].

Imperial ‘Re-branding’

The logic works at the global as well as the domestic level. A considerable segment of the U.S. foreign policy establishment thinks that Obama’s race, name (technically Islamic), experience living (Muslim Indonesia, as a child) in and visiting (chiefly his father’s homeland Kenya) poor nations and his nominally anti-Iraq War history will help them repackage the U.S. imperial project (replete with more than 730 military bases located in nearly every nation on Earth) in softer and more politically correct cover [10].

John Kerry, who ran for the presidency four years earlier largely on the claim that he would be a more effective manager of empire (and the Iraq War) than George W. Bush [11], was certainly thinking of these critical imperial “soft power” assets when he praised Obama as someone who could “reinvent America’s image abroad” [11A].

So was Obama himself when he said the following to reporters aboard his campaign plane in the fall of 2007:

“If I am the face of American foreign policy and American power, as long as we are making prudent strategic decisions, handling emergencies, crises, and opportunities in the world in an intelligent and sober way....I think that if you can tell people, ‘We have a president in the White House who still has a grandmother living in a hut on the shores of Lake Victoria and has a sister who’s half-Indonesian, married to a Chinese-Canadian,’ then they’re going to think that he may have a better sense of what’s going on in our lives and country. And they’d be right” [12].

What Obama didn’t tell reporters was that his idea of “prudent” and “intelligent” foreign policy is strongly committed to U.S. global hyper-militarism and world supremacy, including unilateral action whenever “we” deem it necessary to “protect the American people and their vital interests” [13].

Obama’s distinctive biography is one of his great attractions to the mostly white U.S. foreign policy elite in a majority non-white world that has been deeply provoked and disgusted by U.S. behavior in the post-9/11 era (and truthfully before).

He is a perfect symbol of deceptive imperial “re-branding.”

According to the power-worshipping and unconsciously imperialist New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof three weeks ago, the election of a black president “could change global perceptions of the United States, redefining the American ‘brand’ to be less about Guantanamo and more about equality” [14].

Never mind that the U.S. remains the most unequal and wealth-top-heavy country in the industrialized world by far, strongly dedicated to maintaining steep socioeconomic and disparity within and between nations and scarred by a domestic racial wealth gap of seven black cents on the white dollar.

Call it “the identity politics of foreign policy.”

The Empire wants new clothes and Obama is just the man to wear them.

“If There’s Anyone Out There Who Still Questions The Power Of Our Democracy...”

The first public words out of Obama’s mouth on the evening of his election were richly consistent with his assignment of restoring legitimacy to the American System.

“If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible.....who still questions the power of our democracy,” Obama intoned, “tonight is your answer” [15].

Our supposed “left” President-Elect’s first statement was NOT a call for peace, justice, and equality. It wasn’t a call for America to confront the inseparably linked problems (what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called the “triple evils that are interrelated”) of economic exploitation, racism (deeply understood), and militarism-imperialism.

No, it was a Reagan-like declaration bolstering the American plutocracy’s ridiculous claim that the U.S. - the industrialized world’s most unequal and wealth-top-heavy society by far - is home to a great democracy and limitless opportunity for all.

And what’s with the word “still” (used twice) in Obama’s assertion?

It’s not exactly like the case for the U.S. being a great popular democracy has been made with special, self-evident strength in recent times!

The last three-and-a-half decades have brought the deepening top-down infliction of a sharply regressive corporate-neoliberal policies that are widely (but irrelevantly) repudiated by the majority of U.S. citizens [16].

In this century we’ve witnessed the execution of a monumentally criminal petro-imperialist Iraq Invasion sold to the U.S. populace by a spectacular state-media propaganda campaign (including preposterous claims of noble democratic intent Obama has embraced) that mocked and subverted the nation’s democratic ideals.

The “democracy disconnect” - the gap (chasm really) between majority public opinion (which supports things like national universal health care, significant reductions in military expenditure and imperial commitment, massive public works, reduced corporate power, etc.) and “public” policy - is a widely acknowledged problem in American political life [18].

**“If there is anyone out there who still questions the power of our democracy”?
Hello?**

How about: “Is there anybody who seriously thinks we really have a functioning democracy in the U.S.?”

‘Carefully Crafting The Obama Brand’

“Our campaign,” Obama announced last Tuesday night, “was not hatched in the halls of Washington” [22].

Yes it was.

“One evening in February 2005, in a four-hour meeting stoked by pepperoni pizza and great ambition,” the Chicago Tribune reported last year, “Senator Barack Obama and his senior advisors crafted a strategy to fit the Obama ‘brand.’” The meeting took place just weeks after Obama had been sworn into the upper representative chamber of the United States government.

According to the Tribune’s Washington Bureau reporters Mike Dorning and Christi Parsons, in an article titled “Carefully Crafting the Obama Brand”:

“The charismatic celebrity-politician had rocketed from the Illinois state legislature to the U.S. Senate, stirring national interest. The challenge was to maintain altitude despite the limited tools available to a freshman senator whose party was in a minority.”

“Yet even in those early days, Obama and his advisors were thinking ahead. Some called it the ‘2010-2012-2016’ plan: a potential bid for governor or re-election to the Senate in 2010, followed by a bid for the White House as soon as 2012, not 2016. The way to get there, they decided, was by carefully building a record that matched the brand identity: Obama as a unifier and consensus builder, and almost postpolitical leader.”

They were already scheming for the presidency less than a month into his Senate seat.

“For Obama and his team the Senate was largely a marketing platform for the Next Big Thing.”

The term “Obama brand” suggested the commodified nature of a political culture that tends to reduce elections to corporate-“crafted” marketing contests revolving around candidate images packaged and sold by corporate consultants and public relations experts.

Power Elite Cabinet Appointments

Those remaining bizarre individuals on the lunatic fringe who “still question the power of our democracy” are going to be entertained and/or nauseated by “Obama Inc.’s” cabinet appointments.

As the balmy populist warmth of Election Day (75 degrees and blue skies as I knocked doors in rural Iowa) gives way to the big chill (it was freezing in Iowa City by Friday) of corporate-imperial governance, Obama has already named the brass-knuckled power-elite enforcer Rahm Emmanuel as his chief of staff.

This is a slap in the face to leftish progressives who think the next president is one of them.

Emmanuel is a former leading member of the corporate-neoliberal Democratic Leadership Council (DLC).

Formed by business-oriented elites to increase the Democratic Party’s distance from labor, environmentalism, blacks, and Civil Rights, the DLC’s mission was to steer the party closer to the corporate, imperial, southern, suburban, and racially accommodationist center.

It’s goal was to advance post-partisan convergence between Democratic and Republican agendas and to impose economically and racially regressive policies underneath the cloak of “progressive” strategy and “pragmatic” “realism.”

Emmanuel was a leading Clinton administration agent of the corporate-globalizationist investors-rights bill called the “North American Free Trade Agreement.” He is a leading liaison between corporate funding sources and the Democratic Party.

The son of a wealthy Israeli doctor, he is a fierce defender of Israel’s apartheid regime and its illegal occupation of Palestine.

He played a critical role in favoring conservative and pro-war Democrats over progressive antiwar Democrats during the 2006 congressional primaries.

We will certainly get somebody from the neoliberal Wall-Street-Goldman Sachs-Harvard-University of Chicago-Hamilton Group crowd in Treasury - a seasoned state-capitalist apparatchik who understands the need to bail out the wealthy Few, not ordinary homeowners and workers.

Top Obama economic adviser Lawrence Summers could well be brought in, despite (a) his scandalous claim that females are genetically unfit for science; (b) his claim (as World Bank economist) that Africa was under-polluted since people don’t live very long there anyway; and (c) his critical role (along with Robert Rubin, another possibility at Treasury) in advancing the financial deregulation that helped create the recent meltdown of U.S. and global financial markets.

I could go on.

'I Can't Read That'

Are progressive people I used to like and take seriously really going to let themselves be turned into hopeless reactionaries and/or fools by the Obama phenomenon?

The progressive filmmaker Michael Moore says this on his Web site: "Never before in our history has an avowed anti-war candidate been elected president during a time of war" [25].

Obama is an "anti-war candidate?"

Yes, and Love is Hate.

An old friend used to be a very smart Marxist and was an early member of SDS - a real New Leftist. She refused to be given - yes, refused to be given - a copy of my very careful and respectful book on the Obama phenomenon. "I can't read that," she said.

Some of the names on the back of the book (Adolph Reed Jr., Noam Chomsky, and John Pilger) are former icons of hers (she introduced me to the writings of Adolph Reed, Jr in the mid-1990s.) but now she's in love with Obama. "It's the best thing that could happen," she says about his election.

She's repudiated her radical past and agrees with centrist American Enterprise Institute (AEI) "scholar" Norman Ornstein's recent ravings on how "the left" must not press Obama for very much right now (Ornstein's AEI-funded admonitions have recently been broadcast again and again across America's wonderful "public" broadcasting stations ("N"PR and "P"BS) because of, you know, "the economy" and all.

Paul Krugman in the New York Times (a left-liberal Obama critic during the primary campaign) says there's "something wrong with you" if you weren't "teary-eyed" about Obama's election [27].

Yes, numerous other radicals and I need to be put under psychiatric care because we didn't cry over the militantly bourgeois and openly imperialist Obama's presidential selection.

We have the increasingly unglued white anti-racist Tim Wise screaming "Screw You" to Obama's harshest radical critics [28] - this after recklessly charging racism against working-class whites [29] and Hillary Clinton supporters [30] who had any issues with (the racially conciliatory) Obama.

Half-progressive liberals I know in Iowa City (white-academic-Obamaist ground zero) ask my opinion of the election. I express the slightest hint of substantive, evidence-based left critique/concern and they turn away.

The local bookstore, run by progressives (left-liberal Edwards supporters during the Iowa Caucus), is willing to sell my book but "too scared" to have an author event.

Few if any of these people have bothered to read a single solitary word of Obama's blatantly imperial, nationalist, and militarist foreign policy speeches and writings.

And my sense is they never will.

They do not care about such primary sources in the ongoing history of the Obama phenomenon.

For the last two years talking to many liberals and avowed "progressives" I know about Obama - who I picked to be the next president in the fall of 2006 (I thought he was too simultaneously irresistible to both the power elite and the liberal base not to prevail) - has been like talking to Republicans about George W. Bush and the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and 2004: no room for messy and inconvenient facts.

Obama is an act of system-legitimizing brilliance - a tour de force for the ruling class.

He has been chosen to wear the Empire's new clothes.

He is the "managed democracy's" fake-progressive public relations makeover at home and abroad.

Meanwhile the real heartland white fascists - the ones Wise doesn't make up - are buying up assault weapons at a record pace.

Such is the dark authoritarian reality of U.S. political culture lurking behind the pride and excitement felt by Dedrick Battle and many other poor and black voters who have been inspired by the Obama phenomenon to think that "politics is for them too."

President Obama can be counted on to use their new faith in reactionary and imperial ways reflecting hidden allegiance to the timeworn elite principle that really big matters of politics and policy are for the rich and powerful - not ordinary citizens.

At the end of the day Obama's job is to keep the restless poor, working class, and global Many safely pacified while serving the needs of the wealthy and imperial Few.

It's a deadly juggling act that could have terrible consequences. How long he can maintain the illusion of serving the interests of the people and the elite at one and the same time is an open question.

The sooner seriously left agitators and activists can expose the corporate-imperial truth behind the progressive Obama façade to disenfranchised people at home and abroad, the quicker we can get to real social and democratic change beyond the ruling class's latest quadrennial candidate-centered electoral extravaganza.

NOTES

1. Susan Saulny, "Obama-Inspired Black Voters Find Politics is For Them Too," *New York Times*, November 2, 2008, sec.1, p. 1.
2. In deciding against "fusion" electoral options (which would allow a voter to select Obama [or McCain] in the name of the Green Party or any other non-mainstream party), the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that the nation has an interest in restricting the number of viable political parties to just two.
3. Ken Silverstein, "Barack Obama, Inc.: The Birth of a Washington Machine," Harper's (November 2006).
4. David Mendell, *Obama: From Promise to Power* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), pp. 248-49.
5. Edward S Herman and David Peterson, "Jeremiah Wright in the Propaganda System," *Monthly Review*, September 2008, pp. 3-4; Paul Street, *Barack Obama and the Future of American Politics* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2008). For Obama as "deeply conservative," see Larissa MacFarquhar, "The Conciliator: Where is Barack Obama Coming From?" *The New Yorker* (May 7, 2007). According to MacFarquhar, "In his view of history, in his respect for tradition, in his skepticism that the world can be changed any way but very, very slowly, Obama is deeply conservative."
6. Ryan Lizza, "Making It: How Chicago Shaped Obama," *The New Yorker*, (July 21, 2008).
7. Center for Responsive Politics, "Open Secrets," Barack Obama's Campaign Finance Profile, read at www.opensecrets.org (accessed on November 2, 2008).
8. John Pilger, "After Bobby Kennedy There Was Barack Obama," *Common Dreams*, May 31, 2008, read at www.commondreams.org/archive/2008/05/31/9327/.
9. Aurora Levins Morales, "Thinking Outside the Ballot Box," *Z Magazine* (April 2008).
10. James Traub, "Is (His) Biography (Our) Destiny?" *New York Times Magazine* (November 4, 2007). See also Liza Mundy, "A Series of Fortunate Events: Barack Obama Needed More Than Talent and Ambition to Rocket From Obscure State Senator to Presidential Contender in Three Years," *Washington Post Magazine* (August 12, 2007).
11. See Paul Street, "Bush, Kerry, and 'Body Language' v. 'Message': Notes on Race, Gender, Empire and Mass Infantilization," *ZNet Magazine* (October 12, 2004).
- 11A. John F. Kerry, "Truly Transformative," *Newsweek* (April 28, 2008): 34.
12. Quoted in Traub, "Is (His) Biography (Our) Destiny?"
13. For truly ugly details, please see the fourth chapter - titled "How 'Antiwar?' Obama, Iraq, and the Audacity of Empire" - in my book *Barack Obama and the Future of American Politics*.
14. Nicholas Kristof, "Rebranding the U.S. With Obama," *The New York Times*, October 23, 2008, p. A27.
15. Barack Obama, "Remarks on Election Night," Chicago, IL (November 4, 2008), read at http://www.barackobama.com/2008/11/04/remarks_of_presidenelect_bara.php
16. For one among many sources, see Jeff Faux, *The Global Class War: How America's Bipartisan Elite Lost Our Future and What It Will Take to Win it Back* (New York: Wiley, 2006).

18. For sources and details, see Paul Street, "Americans' Progressive Opinions vs. 'The Shadow Cast on Society by Big Business,'" ZNet Sustainer Commentary (May 15, 2008), read at <http://www.zmag.org/zspace/commentaries/3491>.

19. Obama, "Remarks on Election Night."

20. MacFarquhar, "The Conciliator."

21. Herman and Peterson, "Jeremiah Wright."

22. Obama, "Remarks."

23. Mike Dorning and Christi Parsons, "Carefully Crafting the Obama Brand," Chicago Tribune, 12 June, 2007, sec.1. p.1.

24. Ken Silverstein, "Obama, Inc.: The Birth of a Washington Machine," Harper's (November 2006); Center for Responsive Politics 2008, Mendell, Obama: From Promise to Power; Paul Street, Barack Obama and the Future of American Politics (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, September 2008), pp. xvii-72.

25. Michael Moore, "Pinch Me," ZNet (November 5, 2008), read at <http://www.zcommunications.org/znet/viewArticle/19359>. And what's with this "time of war" crap? Is Moore dodging IEDs and mortar shells on his way to and from his filming locations or home? Are they imposing nighttime blackouts and rationing scarce war materials in Moore's hometown of Flint or anywhere else in the U.S.?

The American Empire has undertaken two vicious and one-sided petro-colonial occupations in oil- and gas-rich Southwest Asia. It is not imposing anything like wartime rigors on the imperial homeland.

26. MacFarquhar, "The Conciliator."

27. Paul Krugman, "The Obama Agenda," New York Times, November 7, 2008.

28. Tim Wise, "Good and Now Back to Work," ZNet (November 6, 2008), read at <http://www.zcommunications.org/znet/viewArticle/19398>

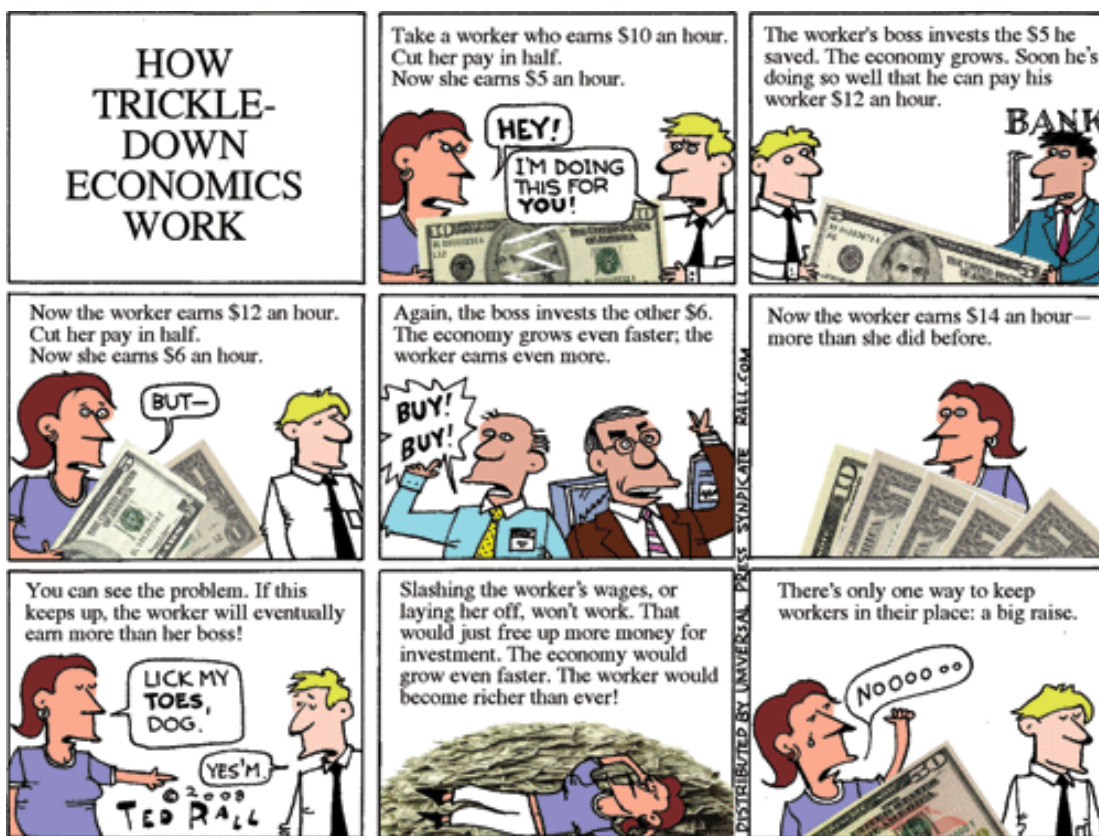
29. Tim Wise "This is How Fascism Comes," Red Room (October 11, 2008), read at <http://www.redroom.com/blog/tim-wise/this-how-fascism-comes-reflections-cost-silence>.

30. Tim Wise, "Your Whiteness is Showing," LIP Magazine (June 5, 2008), read at <http://www.lipmagazine.org/~timwise/WhitenessShowing.html>

**POLITICIANS CAN'T BE COUNTED ON TO HALT
THE BLOODSHED**

**THE TROOPS HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THE
WARS**

CLASS WAR REPORTS



**“Police Typically Ask ‘Where Are You Going, And Where Are You Coming From?’”
[WELCOME TO THE OCCUPIED USA]**

November 13, 2008 By Michael Chase, Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

PALO ALTO, Calif.--Some 200 people marched from East Palo Alto to the Palo Alto city hall to demand an end to racial profiling of African American and Latino men by police.

The East Palo Alto African American Leadership Summit and Coalition for Change organized the November 9 demonstration after Palo Alto Police Chief Lynne Johnson announced that African American men, particularly those wearing do-rags, would be stopped by police, in response to a series of burglaries in recent months.

Johnson's call for a policy of racial profiling caused such outrage that the political establishment of both Palo Alto and East Palo Alto have come out aggressively against the police chief.

For most of the marchers, however, racial profiling doesn't seem like a thing of the past.

On the contrary, it's a real and terrifying part of police conduct in these Bay Area communities.

Of course, such experiences aren't exclusive to Palo Alto. Some demonstrators came from neighboring cities, including San Jose, and have their own stories about encounters with their local police.

Rev. Anthony Darrington told the crowd that many in his congregation had been stopped multiple times.

During such encounters, police typically ask, "Where are you going, and where are you coming from?"

Rev. Darrington suggested that the appropriate response is, "It's none of your business if I'm not breaking the law."

East Palo Alto is predominantly African American and Latino, with a minority of Pacific Islanders and whites; it's a mostly working-class community. Palo Alto, on the other hand, is a predominantly white and affluent community, with a median household income of \$90,000.

It appears that the Palo Alto police department has assigned itself the job of defending Palo Alto's "demographics" from its less desirable neighbors.

In fact, Palo Alto police routinely post patrol cars at the border between the two cities, and track East Palo Alto residents who venture across the dividing line--their own twisted version of local border enforcement.

Aram James, an attorney associated with the San Jose branch of Copwatch, thinks that it may be worthwhile for antiracist activists to set up their own surveillance at the Palo Alto-East Palo Alto border--in order to monitor the conduct of Palo Alto officers.

This tactic is an echo of monitoring of police activities in Oakland, Calif., carried out by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, founders of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense in the 1960s in response to police brutality and harassment against African Americans.

Troops Invited:

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11.12.08 L.A. Times

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