

GI SPECIAL 6K15:

“The Security Agreement Is Shame And Dishonor”

“The Protesters Sat In Rows Of 50 Stretching Back More Than Half A Mile”

“They Did Not Believe Assurances That The Americans Would Leave”



Iraqis arriving at Firdos Square in central Baghdad 11.21 to protest against a pact allowing U.S. troops to remain for three more years. (Kareem Raheem/Reuters)



Iraqis gather around al-Firdous square to in Baghdad November 21, 2008 to protest against a pact allowing U.S. troops to remain for three more years. REUTERS/Erik de Castro

**“The Iraqi Crowd Applauded The
Downfall Of Saddam’s Regime, And
Also Placed A Black Hood Over The
Effigy Of Bush”**

**“Demonstrators Hanged President
George W. Bush From The Plinth That
Once Supported The Statue Of Saddam
Hussein”**

November 21, 2008 By Stephen Farrell, The International Herald Tribune

More than 10,000 **[No shit. From the photos, more than 100,000 would be about right]** supporters of the radical anti-American Shiite cleric [translation: nationalist anti-Occupation politician] Moktada al-Sadr gathered in Baghdad’s Firdos Square on Friday

to protest the Iraqi government plan to sign a security agreement which would maintain American troops in the country for up to three years.

With powerful symbolism, demonstrators hanged an effigy of President George W. Bush from the plinth that once supported the statue of Saddam Hussein that was toppled after Baghdad fell to American troops on April 9, 2003.

Preachers and political leaders supporting Sadr [translation: opposed to continuing the Occupation], along with some Sunni opponents of the pact, erected their podium in the same colonnaded traffic circle.

The Iraqi crowd applauded the downfall of Saddam's regime, and also placed a black hood over the effigy of Bush. They put a whip in the effigy's right hand and, in its left, a briefcase on which were written the words "the security agreement is shame and dishonor."

Chanting "God is great" and "No, no to America; no, no to Israel," the protesters sat in rows of 50 stretching back more than half a mile.

Protesters arrived overnight to get in place in case Maliki's government blocked the central Baghdad square. A spokesman for Sadr in Baghdad said the demonstrators opposed the security agreement because they did not believe assurances that the Americans would leave.

"In this protest we want to show the Parliament that the popular resistance to this agreement is far bigger than that which has appeared in the last three or four days," he said.

"There is no guarantee that what has been written and the promises the prime minister has made will be practical -- for example, the withdrawal."



An Iraqi uses a slipper to hit the face of an effigy of Bush during a protest of a security accord that would allow US troops to remain in Iraq until 2011. Striking an enemy with a shoe is considered a deadly insult in Iraqi culture. (AFP/Ali al-Saadi)



Iraqis in disciplined ranks on Firdous Square in central Baghdad protesting continued U.S. occupation security pact, Nov. 21, 2008. (AP Photo/Hadi Mizban)



Demonstrators hang U.S. President George W. Bush during a rally at Firdous square where U.S. troops once tore down a statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad November 21, 2008 during a march against a pact letting U.S. forces stay in Iraq until 2011, REUTERS/Ceerwan Aziz

Behold, The Burning Bush



Demonstrators burn effigy of Bush during a rally at Firdos square where U.S. troops once tore down a statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad November 21, 2008 during a march against a pact letting U.S. forces stay in Iraq until 2011, REUTERS/Ceerwan Aziz

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

Troops Invited:

Comments, arguments, articles, and letters from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or send email contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Same address to unsubscribe. Phone: 917.677.8057

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Fallen Mansfield Soldier Was Transformed By War



Corey Shea, 21

November 15, 2008 By Milton J. Valencia, Boston Globe Staff [Excerpts]

MANSFIELD - He was good at football and hockey, was one heck of a poker player, and Corey Shea joined the Army because he knew he would be good as a soldier, too, his family said yesterday.

And he was, family members said.

"He was a hero," his mother, Denise Anderson, said yesterday. "He was my hero."

Shea, a 21-year-old who grew into a man in Iraq, died there Wednesday near the city of Mosul when he and other soldiers with his troop were shot at by a renegade Iraqi soldier

Army officials waited outside Anderson's home in Mansfield Wednesday night to tell her of her son's death, but by then she knew. She reacted the only way a mother who had just lost her son could, succumbing to emotions with the rest of her family.

She had spoken with him recently. Just weeks ago, he was home on leave from Iraq. And he was a different man, mature and smart, his mother said.

"He was a different person," Anderson said.

Shea, a specialist and cavalry scout with Killer Troop, Third Squadron, Third Armored Cavalry Regiment out of Fort Hood, Texas, had been in Iraq for a year and his tour of duty was set to expire in January. But already he had become the soldier he wanted to be, his mother said.

He joined the Army for the camaraderie, the sense of belonging. No one likes being in war, but he liked being a soldier, Anderson said. He drove Humvees and Bradley vehicles, and manned gun turrets.

"Anything they told him to do, he'd do in a heartbeat," his mother said. "He looked out for people, he looked out for me, too."

Shea is the first soldier from Mansfield known to have died in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, according to the Massachusetts Veterans Services' office.

He graduated from Mansfield High School in 2005 as a popular student who played football and hockey. He had close friends, and many girlfriends. He was handsome, his mother said.

Shea took some college classes but wanted to be a soldier and enlisted not long after high school, according to Anderson. He was stationed in Texas before he was deployed. But he returned to his school just weeks ago, during his leave, to see old teachers and show the person he had become.

"One of the teachers told him he could do what he wanted with his life, and he went back to show him," said his sister, Kristen Anderson, 17, who attends the school now. The school had a moment of silence in Shea's honor yesterday.

"They could never duplicate our Corey Shea, ever," said his stepfather, Jeff Margolin.

Shea had talked of attending classes at Texas A&M once his tour ended, his mother said. He planned to major in criminal justice, and wanted to be a police officer.

No funeral arrangements have been made. Denise Anderson said it could be a week before any plans are arranged. She asked anyone considering sending flowers to instead make a donation to an Iraq veterans support group.

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER

Telling the truth - about the occupations or the criminals running the government in Washington - is the first reason for Traveling Soldier. But we want to do more than tell the truth; we want to report on the resistance to Imperial wars inside the armed forces.

Our goal is for Traveling Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces.

If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers. <http://www.traveling-soldier.org/> And join with Iraq Veterans Against the War to end the occupations and bring all troops home now! (www.ivaw.org/)

U.S. OCCUPATION RECRUITING DRIVE IN HIGH GEAR; RECRUITING FOR THE ARMED RESISTANCE THAT IS



An Iraqi woman comforts her daughter as foreign occupation soldiers from the US Army search their house during an armed home invasion in Masariyah neighborhood, northwestern Mosul Nov. 20, 2008. (AP Photo/Petros Giannakouris)

[There's nothing quite like invading somebody else's country and busting into their houses by force to arouse an intense desire to kill you in the patriotic, self-respecting civilians who live there.

[But your commanders know that, don't they? Don't they?]

Iraqi citizens have no right to resist home invasions by occupation soldiers from the USA.

If they do, they may be arrested, wounded, or killed.

"In the States, if police burst into your house, kicking down doors and swearing at you, you would call your lawyer and file a lawsuit," said Wood, 42, from Iowa, who did not accompany Halladay's Charlie Company, from his battalion, on Thursday's raid.

"Here, there are no lawyers. Their resources are limited, so they plant IEDs (improvised explosive devices) instead."



English soldiers search an American settler's house (1770's)

Declared Bill Ehrhart, a marine in Vietnam:

In grade school we learned about the redcoats, the nasty British soldiers that tried to stifle our freedom. Subconsciously, but not very subconsciously, I began increasingly to have the feeling that I was a redcoat. I think it was one of the most staggering realizations of my life.

**THIS ENVIRONMENT IS HAZARDOUS TO YOUR
HEALTH;
ALL HOME, NOW**



U.S. soldiers patrol Baquba town, in Diyala province October 15, 2008.
REUTERS/Goran Tomasevic

TROOP NEWS

Just Received: Better Late Than Never



Garett Reppenhagen, Iraq Veterans Against The War, holds up IVAW banner during the Republican National Convention as John McCain speaks. 5.27.08: Gateway Pundit; Denver Post & Rocky. [Thanks to Elaine Brower, Military Project, who sent this in.]

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

“He’s Decided That He’s Not Going Back”

“After Two Deployments To Iraq, And An Honorable Discharge, Lewis, Now 23, Recently Learned That He Might Be Involuntarily Redeployed To The Region”



Benjamin Lewis: Photo, Casey Campbell, Gazette-Times

November 11, 2008 By THERESA HOGUE, Gazette-Times reporter

After two deployments, Marine doesn't want to go back, could face jail

When Benjamin Lewis was 17, he joined the Marine Corps' delayed entry program, looking for a new direction in his life. He had dropped out of school and was struggling. The military seemed like a good option.

After two deployments to Iraq, and an honorable discharge, Lewis, now 23, recently learned that he might be involuntarily redeployed to the region.

He's decided that he's not going back, even if it means facing imprisonment.

The road to that decision was a long one.

Back in California, Lewis's recruiter talked him into going back to school to get his diploma before heading to boot camp in San Diego. After three months of infantry training, he joined the Third Battalion Fourth Marines in 29 Palms, Calif. They deployed in 2004, where the battalion participated in the first assault against Fallujah, supporting front-line infantry.

After a crash course in Arabic, Lewis became a translator for his platoon on patrols. He spent a lot of time on foot patrols in Haditha, living for months with local policemen there, sometimes working long hours with almost no sleep.

“We were really just making a show of force, marching around the streets and making a show of our presence.”

After returning to the United States following their first tour, the battalion was redeployed to Iraq in 2005. They operated a vehicle checkpoint in Fallujah for seven months.

“It was a very long and stagnant tour,” he said.

He spent the last year of his service as an urban combat instructor in California for the Marine’s Mojave Viper operation, where he realized that teaching suited him. “That was almost like being deployed. It was 14-hour days. You’d get a couple days off every 20 days or so.”

In 2007, Lewis was honorably discharged from active duty.

He moved to Corvallis and enrolled at Linn-Benton Community College to pursue a dual degree in philosophy and English literature. He planned eventually to work with peace organizations.

But two months ago, Lewis learned he was being considered for involuntary reactivation under the military’s 2004 Individual Ready Reserves provision.

As a Marine, Lewis had made an eight-year commitment to the Marines, so although he was discharged, he was still eligible for redeployment. But in the year since Lewis had left the Marines, he’d realized that he did not agree with the Marine Corps’ actions in Iraq, or with the United States’ involvement in the region.

Last month, Lewis went to Kansas City, Mo., for muster, or formal military inspection. At that time, he and other Marines were told that they’d receive their formal orders within two months.

Lewis is now waiting to hear the final word, but said he has long since decided to refuse to reactivate.

Lewis has contacted groups such as Courage to Resist and Iraq Veterans Against the War. He’s consulted attorneys about what might happen if he refuses. He said he’s prepared for jail time, if that is the result, but until that time, he’s speaking out against the war.

“After being in the Marine Corps and joining up with the intention of helping people and hoping to execute those romantic ideals you see in the advertisement,” he said, “once you’re there you realize not only are you not capable of doing it, you’re in an organization that suppresses any individual will to do such things.”

Lewis started having these thoughts while training other Marines during his time with Mojave Viper. He said that having some distance from Iraq, and time to learn more about how the United States got into the war originally, gave him a new perspective.

“I was able to be more objective, and I was watching these mentalities,” he said. “They started to scare me, the convictions that people had over things that were complete fallacies.”

Later this month, Lewis plans to fly to Washington, D.C., to talk to activists there.

He is trying to start an Iraqi Veterans Against the War chapter in Portland with a satellite in Corvallis.

He's been writing about his experiences and his convictions. He's interested in talking to other Iraq war veterans who have served since Sept. 11, 2001, and he's asking them to contact him at corvallisivaw@gmail.com.

He's also awaiting his final orders, and he's dealing with the reality that his decisions could mean he'll face jail time.

"I made the resolve once I left 29 Palms that I would never go back into the Marine Corps."



IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Resistance Action



11.21.08: An Iraqi Army vehicle attacked by insurgents in Mosul. (AFP/Ali al-Saadi)

Nov 20 (Reuters) & Nov 21 (Reuters)

A bomb attached to a car belonging to presidential guards wounded three of the guards in central Baghdad's Karrada district, police said.

A roadside bomb wounded two Iraqi soldiers, when it exploded next to their patrol in Mansour district, western Baghdad, police said.

IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE END THE OCCUPATIONS

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.**

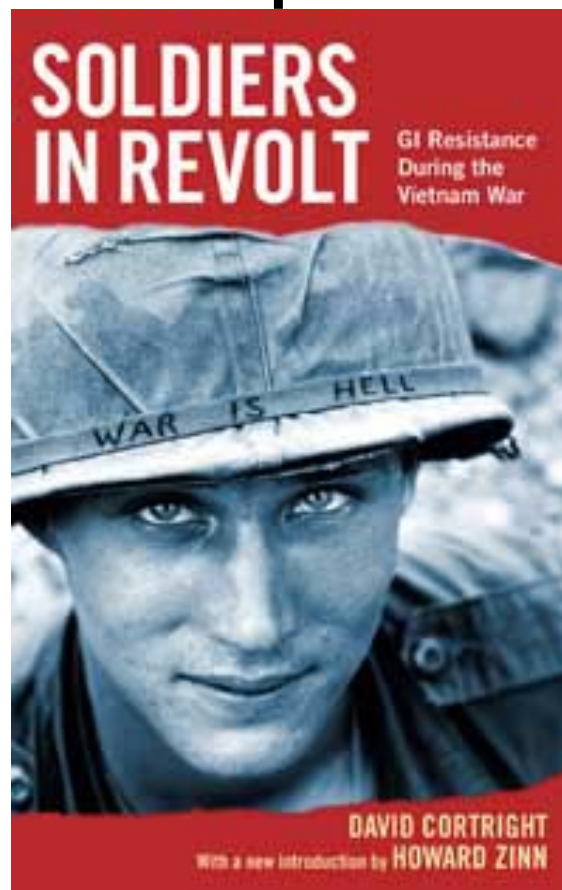
**"The mighty are only mighty because we are on our knees. Let us rise!"
-- Camille Desmoulins**

**"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**

“With The Growth Of Civilian Support And A Consequent Greater Degree Of Unity And Self-Awareness Among Base Projects, The GI Movement Displayed Increasing Strength And Political Sophistication”



From: SOLDIERS IN REVOLT: DAVID CORTRIGHT, Anchor Press/Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1975. Now available in paperback from Haymarket Books. [Excerpts]

Most major organizations experienced an occasional lull because of cadre turnover, repression, etc., but in nearly every instance new activists rose to sustain the struggle -- as I found in my own experience at Fort Bliss.

When I arrived in Texas, in July 1970, GIs for Peace was in a state of disarray, with the chairman and most of the active members discharged and no activities scheduled.

Meetings soon began, however, and within a few months a GI coffeehouse had been set up in downtown El Paso, Gigline was again circulating, and the core membership had increased to twenty-five soldiers.

On October 31, a major peace rally was held at the local University of Texas campus, with over four hundred GIs joining several hundred civilians to hear featured speaker Rennie Davis.

Several months later, on March 21, 1971; GIs for Peace engaged in another successful action, this time countering a pro-war "Honor POW Day" held in El Paso.

The POW Day sponsors (among them several officers at Fort Bliss) had expected a crowd of fifteen thousand people to kick off a massive "tell it to Hanoi" campaign.

Because of the vigorous publicity and educational drive mounted by local peace forces, however, only a few hundred people actually showed -- including approximately one hundred GIs for Peace members who had come to distribute anti-war literature.

An increasingly important element in sustaining, political activity at Fort Lewis, Fort Bliss, and elsewhere was, the growth of civilian support.

One result of this support was an increase in the number of civilians working directly with soldiers at the local level.

Recently discharged GIs, and in some cases outside civilian radicals, formed collectives and, often with the aid of USSF [United States Servicemen's Fund], provided legal counseling and other services to active-duty organizers.

A number of observers, most notably Fred Gardner, have been highly critical of such arrangements, claiming that civilians often exploit GIs for sectarian political purposes and stifle spontaneous dissent.

To a certain degree the criticism is valid, but it is also true that civilian workers impart needed stability and legal expertise to GI projects.

Indeed, in some cases their presence sparked substantial political activity among servicemen.

At Fort Ord, for example, a civilian collective in March 1971 started a new base paper, P.O.W.; within a few months, a new GI group emerged, the "United Soldiers Union."

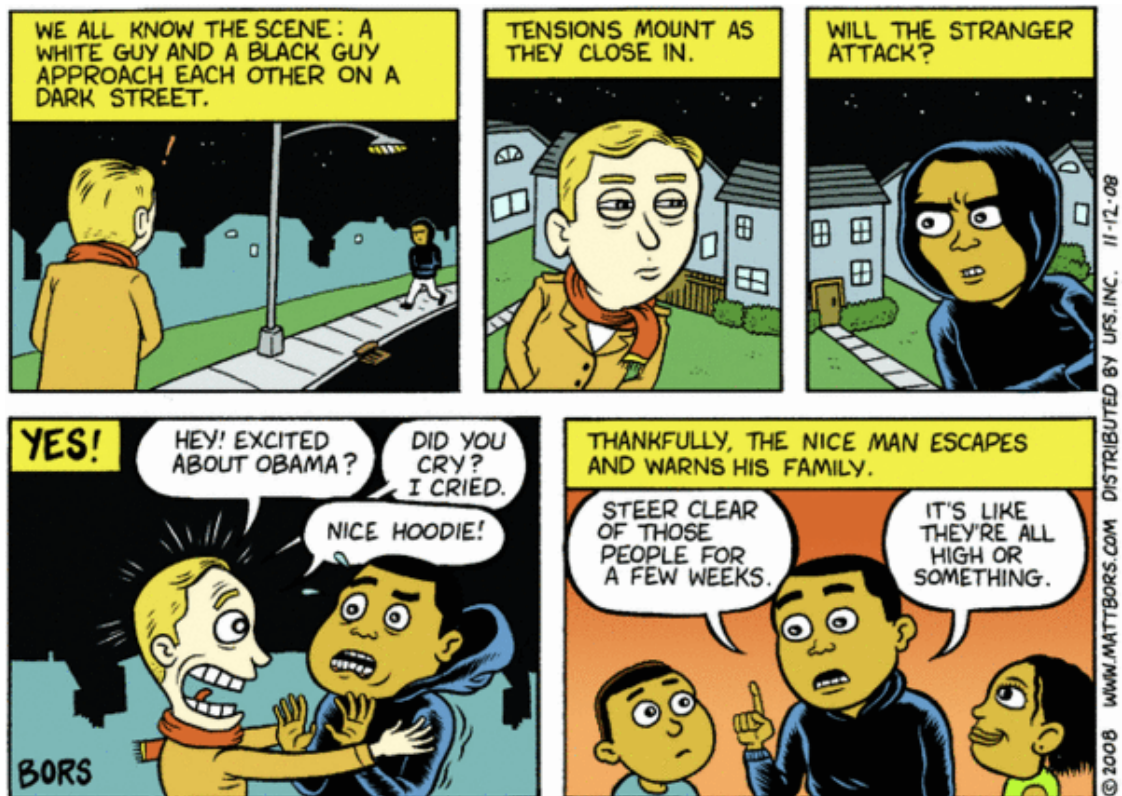
Similarly; civilians helped establish an important new organizing center and coffeehouse near Fort Campbell, in Clarksville, Tennessee.

The center, known as the "People's House," was immediately successful, attracting over two hundred soldiers in its first six weeks and publishing the newspaper People's Press.

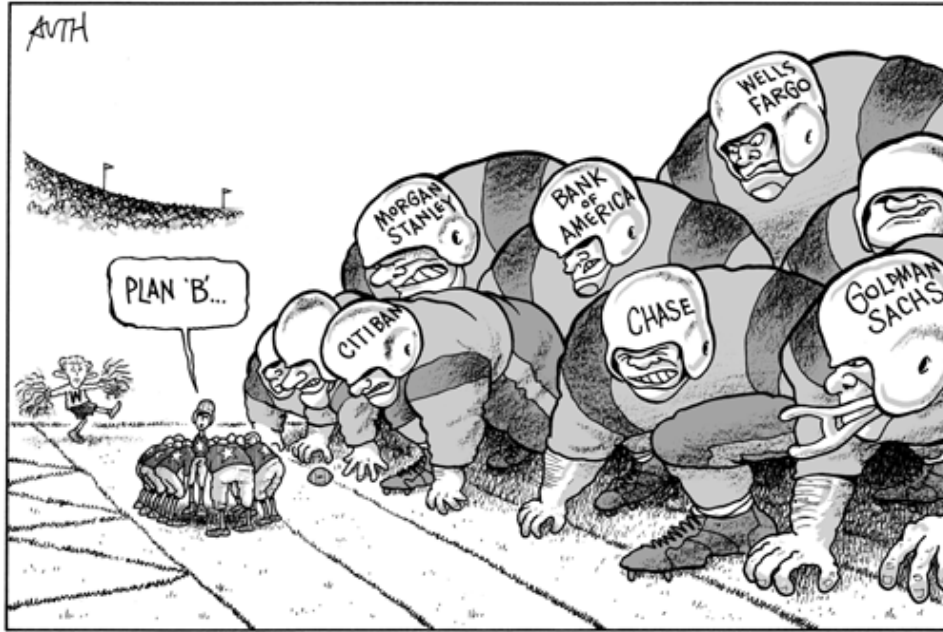
The group's first major action occurred on April 10, when approximately three hundred people, many of them active-duty, demonstrated at the Clarksville federal building against the jailing of Lieutenant William Calley.

The protesters demanded that the leaders responsible for the war, not low-ranking servicemen, be tried as war criminals.

With the growth of civilian support and a consequent greater degree of unity and self-awareness among base projects, the GI movement displayed increasing strength and political sophistication.



The Crisis:
Finance Capital Wants It All:
In Times Of Severe Economic Crisis,
Finance Capital And Manufacturing
Capital Confront Each Other As
Political Enemies;
Civil Wars Have Been Fought Over Less



Comment: T with assist on derivatives from Michael W, Veteran:

Capital, by K. Marx, contains two broad themes:

#1. How capitalism actually works.

#2. What to do about it.

Leaving aside for the moment #2, which is somewhat controversial (replace production for profit with production for human use), #1, describing the production of commodities and the circulation and distribution of capital, is accurate.

There is nothing a particular politician or any combination of them or all the “regulations” they can suck out of their thumbs can do about the fact that the system of economic relations called capitalism periodically experiences the accumulation of capital that cannot be invested at a profit for the owners of that capital.

So the money migrates to finance houses [banks, insurance companies, hedge funds, brokerage houses etc. etc. etc.] where it is employed not for production, but for the seeking of profits through the creation of fictitious capital leveraged on the mass of real, accumulated capital.

To maximize profit in the realm of fictitious capital, ever increasing quantities of leveraged capital are put in play.

When speculation is on the ascendency, huge paper profits are possible.

The wild speculative orgy, at some point, collapses.

For every dollar of ready money owned, some Wall St. finance houses leveraged the loans they made \$60 or more of loans per \$1 of their ready cash, carrying these loans

on their books as if they were money good assets. What they had were pieces of paper from some other party promising to pay them back, someday.

When the market turns, and increasing numbers of loans begin to be perceived as worth less than the money due in payment of them, as occurred first in the mortgage market, this leverage means for every \$1 of real money the finance house owns, the leveraged loss will be \$60.

That way lies complete ruination.

Suppose you had total cash capital of \$1000, borrowed \$60,000 on the \$1000, and then loaned out the \$60,000. If the value of the loan you made drops to \$50,000 on the market, oops you're bankrupt. You just lost \$9000 more than you had to begin with. And everybody on the face of the earth you owe any other money to for any reason is fucked. First are foremost, the finance house that loaned you the \$60,000.

And so it goes.

As the loans go bad, large amounts of other loans and whatever collateral there is supporting the loans are sold in a frantic effort to avoid tipping the balance sheet of the finance house into a negative capital position, commonly known as bankruptcy.

The increasing amounts of both real and fictitious collateral sold begets yet lower prices, which necessitates more selling of that collateral, triggering the general collapse.

Intensifying the collapse, in boom times finance houses have bought and sold trillions of dollars worth of trading "signs", known as derivatives; virtual entities which may have no connection to anything real or physical in the economy.

The derivatives, which appeared to be necessary in this vast, leveraged trading system in order to spread the risk, instead became decisive in exacerbating risk, bankrupting not only the financed houses trading them, but also bringing down companies producing real commodities, because in a credit panic, working capital becomes impossible to obtain in sufficient quantity to continue production.

Thus highly leveraged, fictitious capital is destroyed, and with it manufacturing capital also, through massive bankruptcies as the cycle money-commodity-money breaks down for want of ready money.

No amount of politicians stacked end to end can do anything to stop these violent crises from recurring, so long as the capitalism is the form of economic relations in place in a given society, as is the case today with every nation-state on the face of the earth.

As crisis unfolds, the finance houses, once so eager to loan both real and fictitious capital to everybody in sight, including the producers of commodities, now keep a miser's grip on every cent they can to save themselves.

Universal hoarding of capital by terrified finance houses, clinging to every dollar as if that particular dollar alone would save them from ruin, replaces the general circulation and use of capital for production of commodities to satisfy human wants.

Then begins a period when massive amounts of variable capital, labor, can find no employment, and massive amounts of fixed capital, productive facilities, are simultaneously idle, although physically capable of operating to supply the wants of labor, if set in motion.

In times of severe economic crisis, finance capital and manufacturing capital confront each other as political enemies.

So far, the whole show has been financial capital in DC, in control of the government, handing out the contents of the Treasury to each other.

Banks, brokerages, insurance, etc. etc., all finance capital, have gotten every cent, so far.

The auto industry is manufacturing capital, and can't pry loose a dime. Neither can other manufacturing interests.

Finance capital wants it all.

Civil wars have been fought over less.

This division provides an opening for the 95% of the population who are neither finance nor manufacturing capitalists, but who do perform society's useful labor, to demand that production for human needs replace the disaster that follows from a system of economic relations based on the accumulation of profit for the benefit of 5%.

The 5%, and the politicians they buy to operate the government in DC, are, as we see, obviously incompetent to manage production and accumulation of capital for any purpose at all, even their own greed.

Capitalism is unmanageable even by the class of capitalists themselves.

Initially, large sections of productive labor may side with manufacturing capital in a political fight to break the death grip of finance capital on the government's allocation of social resources.

As that fight proceeds, it will become clearer that it is impossible to continue in the old way, and that breaking the power of finance capital means breaking with capitalism as a system of economic relations that has outlived its usefulness and become a catastrophic impediment to human progress.

At some point, there will be general understanding that finance capital, the detonator for our current horrors, cannot exist without manufacturing capital to generate profits that end up supplying the finance houses with their underlying assets, and that manufacturing capital cannot exist without finance capital advancing the money to manufacturing necessary to set in motion the production of commodities.

At that point, with that understanding, productive labor, the huge majority of all of us, will become a social force fighting for ourselves, rather than for the interests of others.

November 22, 1909 **Heroic Anniversary:** **The First General Strike By Women In** **The U.S.**



Carl Bunin Peace History November 19-25

In New York City, the International Ladies Garment Workers Union went on strike against sweatshop conditions in what became known as the "Uprising of the 20,000" and the "Girl's Revolt."

The strikers won the support of other workers and the women's suffrage movement for their persistence and unity in the face of police brutality and biased courts.

A judge told arrested pickets: "You are on strike against God."

This was the first mass strike by women in the U.S.

**"I Am Tired Of Listening To Speakers Who Talk In
Generalities"**

**"I Offer A Resolution That A General Strike Be
Declared – Now!"**

Excerpt from *Forged in Freedom: Shaping the Jewish-American Experience*, by Norman H. Finkelstein. (JPS, 2002)

In September 1909, Clara and other women could no longer tolerate their harsh working conditions. They walked out of the Leiserson factory and went on strike.

Within a few days the strike spread to the workers at the nearby Triangle Shirtwaist Company. Day after day the young women strikers picketed the factories to let the public know they were on strike and to prevent replacement workers from entering the factories. They walked up and down the sidewalk in front of the buildings; some carried signs while others chanted and sang.

The factory owners hired gangs of tough men to frighten the pickets. As the mostly Jewish and Italian teenage girls peacefully walked the picket lines they were threatened and pushed by the ruffians. Women were beaten, punched and thrown to the ground. Many were badly hurt. The police did little to prevent the violence ... During one attack in mid-November Clara and two other young women were so badly beaten the police had to rush them to a hospital.

Eleven weeks after walking out of the Leiserson and Triangle companies, the women workers saw no end to the bloody strike. While they were on strike they earned no money, and the poor women faced a harsh, hungry and cold winter.

Union leaders realized that the only quick way to improve working conditions and wages was to shut down every shirtwaist factory in New York.

On November 22, 1909, thousands of shirtwaist workers gathered in the Cooper Union Auditorium. It was time to make a decision ...

The audience cheered a succession of speakers, finally focusing their attention on Samuel Gompers, the best-known speaker of the evening. He was the founder and president of America's most powerful union, the American Federation of Labor ...

After two hours of cautious speeches with no end in site, "a thin wisp of a girl" asked to speak.

As she stepped onto the platform, the crowd quieted. Everyone knew Clara Lemlich, the brave union worker who had just been released from the hospital. She still showed signs of the violent beating she received on the picket line. Her words, spoken in clear and passionate Yiddish, echoed through the hall.

It was a clarion call to action.

"I have listened to all the speakers, and I have no further patience for talk.

"I am a working girl, one of those striking against intolerable conditions.

"I am tired of listening to speakers who talk in generalities.

"What we are here for is to decide whether or not to strike.

“I offer a resolution that a general strike be declared – now!”

The audience erupted into wild applause. People jumped from their seats, cheered and waved handkerchiefs. This was the moment they had waited for ...

Within two days the entire shirtwaist industry in New York City was shut down.

No one had predicted the resolve of the strikers. Twenty thousand workers, mainly Jewish and Italian teenage girls and young women, marched in picket lines before factories throughout lower Manhattan ...

Newspapers widely reported on the brutality against the strikers. Other women, wealthy and educated, decided to prevent the brutality and unfair arrests. With great publicity, they joined the poorly dressed and ill-fed immigrant women workers on the picket lines

The brave struggle of Clara Lemlich and the other women workers is known as the “Uprising of the Twenty Thousand.”

By February 15, 1910, it was over. The strikers won a shorter workweek of fifty-two hours, higher wages and the end of unfair deductions for supplies, chairs and lockers.

CLASS WAR REPORTS

The America We Never Seem to Talk About (Photo Essay)

**“There Are No Bad Children; This Is
An Absurd Concept, And It Seemed
To Me Then As Now That The Very
System That Labels You Bad Is The
One That Can Make You Bad”**

**“I Met One Woman Who Had Been
Arrested And Jailed Because Her**

Teenage Daughter Became Pregnant While ‘Living Under Her Mother’s Roof’”



By Brenda Ann Kenneally

The Photos:

[http://www.alternet.org/story/105469/the_america_we_never_seem_to_talk_about_\(photo_essay\)/?page=entire](http://www.alternet.org/story/105469/the_america_we_never_seem_to_talk_about_(photo_essay)/?page=entire)

November 4, 2008 By Brenda Ann Kenneally and Nina Berman, AlterNet [Excerpts]

Photographer Brenda Ann Kenneally is the author of Money, Power, Respect.

Nina Berman is a photographer and author of Purple Hearts and Homeland.

Brenda Ann Kenneally captures the female working poor and culture of incarceration in Troy, N.Y., where the presidential race has little resonance.

As the U.S. economy falls further into recession, politicians continue to focus on the endangered middle class while the 40 million Americans living below the poverty line have disappeared from the discussion.

Photographer Brenda Ann Kenneally, author of Money, Power, Respect, documents the permanently poor in Troy, N.Y., once a proud industrial boomtown with a rich labor

history, now a city of female-headed households where big box stores and penitentiaries are the only sources of employment.

Nina Berman talks to Kenneally about her hometown of Troy, the mothers and daughters she photographs, the culture of incarceration in Troy and whether the presidential race has any resonance.

Nina Berman: You've been photographing poor, female-headed households in the mainly white, post-industrial town of Troy, New York. How is the presidential election playing out among these voters?

Ann Kenneally: I would say that the current elections are of little interest to the women that I know in Troy.

Most of them said they would not vote, and those with felony convictions can't vote.

NB: The title of your work is "Upstate Girls." Upstate, meaning it's north of New York City, but upstate has another connotation.

AK: Yes -- "Upstate" is a phrase that is well known in New York street culture, now also interchangeable with "Up North."

It is a staple in hip-hop lyrics and needs no clarification among families whose involvement with the legal system is all-pervasive. The phrase is, of course, demographically, relevant.

Well-heeled New Yorkers often keep vacation homes "upstate." I was clearly reminded of the two Americas a few years ago when one of my godsons from Bedford Stuyvesant was attending a function at my son's Manhattan school. He heard one of the parents talking about their summer getaway upstate, and later asked me who in that woman's family was "locked up."

NB: How was this "upstate" born?

AK: It came into being during the 1970s with the enactment of the Rockefeller drug laws, which created thousands of new convicts facing drug sentences of 10, 20, even 30 years for possession charges.

The result was a prison boom upstate, which became increasingly important in towns like Troy, as manufacturing jobs were lost to globalization.

So young male inmates with brown skin and low incomes were shipped from New York City to be counted as widgets in the state inventory where government money was awarded according to population numbers.

And the only population gain in upstate New York over the past 10 years has been from inmates and those connected to inmates.

Drug crimes have risen and the local police and sheriff have adopted a zero-tolerance policy, Giuliani-style, leading to more arrests and incarcerations, and the circle spins round and round. This has particularly impacted juveniles. There is now a special section in Albany County Jail for under 18 years old known as “baby jail.”

The policy of judicial intervention has become more widely acceptable, spreading to schools -- children who are seen as behavioral problems are required to take medication.

If parents do not comply, there have been cases where the parents have been charged with neglect through family court.

The medication is seen as a permanent solution to an often short-term problem and can turn into another form of warehousing already disadvantaged young people.

Many times the students have problems because they lack structure at home due to a working mother and an incarcerated father, so it is like they are criminalized at every turn.

I met one woman who had been arrested and jailed because her teenage daughter became pregnant while “living under her mother’s roof.”

It happened during a period when the woman was working at Wal-Mart and the daughter was home unsupervised. She was reported by a bitter ex-husband.

NB: You were in a group home when you were a teenager living in upstate New York. How does your experience from 30 years ago inform your photographs now, and what has changed since you were a teenager?

AK: I was in a group home in 1971 -- a result of a family court decision. My mother brought me before the judge asking for help in controlling me. She was divorced with three kids so she had to work.

I was 6 when my mother went to work. By the time I was 12, I had been taking care of myself and my younger brother and sister, so I was not about to be told what to do. At any rate, I was the oldest so I got the worst punishment.

When I went before the judge, she would not let me speak, and I remember feeling so angry -- I really had done nothing except not having any guidance. I had gotten a boyfriend that was much older than me, and I continued to see him even after my mother found out.

The judge was very strict and spoke harshly to me as if he knew my situation.

I refused to stay silent, somehow knowing that what I needed was a parent -- not a policeman. Anyway, I got into a lot of trouble, and I was called bad and incorrigible.

And ever since that time, I have been a fierce advocate for “the bad and incorrigible” people, especially children and women.

There are no bad children; this is an absurd concept, and it seemed to me then as now that the very system that labels you bad is the one that can make you bad.

Women of every age seem to bear this stereotype, and society only loves an obvious victim.

Nothing has changed since I was teenager in upstate New York. In some cases, even the decor adds to the claustrophobia.

I was different from my family and classmates -- I guess because I had older friends that I was told not to be with.

These people saved my life. They were in that '60s, early '70s mindset of questioning authority and taught me about social hypocrisy.

No one I knew thought like that, and it was liberating especially during a time when I was a prisoner, first of my family and then of the courts.

NB: Your photographs show three generations of poverty under one roof with no end to the cycle. Most of the men are in jail or have abandoned their partners and children. The women are battered in low-wage jobs, and the children, moved from apartment to shelter to youth homes, are traumatized, treated with prescription drugs for so-called learning disorders and depression. Through it all, more babies are being born. After spending five years photographing these families, what solutions can you imagine to stop the cycle?

AK: What saved me is this gift that came from the outside, almost like the big bang. I was lucky to meet some people who introduced me to radical thought.

In these young women's lives, there is no outside air getting in. You buckle down and accept hard work and drudgery, and you conform. The schools, rather than trying to open their minds, are trying to just get them to learn a trade at best. Their parents have not gone through any higher education, so the way would not be paved by them.

The force that should have empowered these women was the feminist movement, but this took place among women of education and privilege and rarely reached "downward" to the sisters who could have not only benefited from the movement, but strengthened and diversified it in a way that would be valuable today in the empowerment of this permanent underclass of working female heads of household.

This is the same problem that the youth movement of the '60s tried to address when the college-educated organizers tried to recruit the children of the proletariat.

It was not seen as valuable to working class youth. ... It is the educated class that learns and takes seriously their role in the larger world. This is the role of education -- to expand the worldview. It is not as simple as the working-class kids did not have time to think of philosophical matters like stopping the war or fighting hypocrisy; they just did not understand this kind of impractical thinking, nor were they groomed to feel a sense of duty to such causes.

Also, there was a resentment and suspicion for the educated class that still lingers today.

NB: Symbols of American popular culture are an obvious presence in many of your pictures and at times provide the strongest, most vibrant color in the frame. You see a child's face covered by a SpongeBob picture. You see a young girl wearing a Statue of Liberty crown. There is a poster of Britney Spears, and in one photo, a backpack with Bratz girls. To an outside viewer, these symbols feel ironic, almost mocking, like cruel jokes against the subjects of the photo. Describe the influence of popular and consumerist culture on the women and girls and also their relationship to obvious symbols of American pride and power -- the flag, the Statue of Liberty, etc.

AK: The items serve as emotional fixes and are marketed to imply an inclusion in American culture.

But the reality is that the cycle of earning and consumption is a kind of slavery and makes it nearly impossible to get ahead.

Consider what it does to young people on public assistance to be targeted by ad campaigns for \$100-plus sneakers -- or worse, marketing so-called wholesome popular culture, acceptance of which is seen as progress and success. It's an endless covert cycle targeting low-wage workers.



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

THE TROOPS HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THE WARS

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