



Previewing Peace: The Anti-War Movement Heads for Detroit

by Michael Reagan

The second U.S. Social Forum, to be held in Detroit June 22–26, offers a transitioning anti-war movement the chance for a much-needed revival. The situation is urgent. U.S. political crises, both foreign and domestic, are flooded with oil-soaked military adventures. But the anti-war movement is struggling to keep its head above water. Our collective capacity to reach large numbers has been reduced as the attention of many popular constituencies has largely turned to other issues. Many of our stalwart organizations face major financial problems.

Yet the array of peace, solidarity, and related workshops, People's Movement Assemblies (PMAs) and other events at the Social Forum indicate that a significant core of antiwar activists have the energy and ideas needed to turn things around. Sessions are planned about Gaza and Israel-Palestine, Afghanistan, cutting the military budget, the links between racism and militarism, GI resistance, labor antiwar organizing and more. Some deal with immediate crises and action plans, others focus on strategies for the long haul. Some are sponsored by well-known national antiwar groups, many feature the voices of activists rooted in day-in and day-out work.

What is especially exciting is that the Detroit program – and not just the antiwar sessions – offers an opportunity to root anti-militarist efforts deeply within today's most dynamic and grounded grassroots movements. Activists from those movements are heading to Detroit in large numbers, looking to expand their political thinking and make new connections and alliances. The potential is there to come out of Detroit with an antiwar movement that is re-energized and more connected than before to the communities hardest hit by all the horrors that flow from war and militarism.

A list of more than 45 peace, solidarity, anti-militarism and related sessions at the U.S. Social Forum can be found at: www.war-times.org/pdf/WT-USSF-PeaceWorkshops.pdf

You can also look at the full Social Forum program and find a complete list of workshops on all topics via: www.usmf2010.org/program

To provide a taste of the rich menu that's in store, below is a brief run-down of some of the highlights.

IMMEDIATE HOT-SPOTS: AFGHANISTAN & GAZA/ISRAEL-PALESTINE

The front page of *The New York Times* reported June 12 that Afghan President Hamid Karzai did not believe the U.S. could win in Afghanistan. Could there be a better time to drive the message home to this country's own President that this war is unwinnable, wrong and needs to be ended immediately?

People in Detroit wanting to talk about how to accomplish this will have several excellent opportunities. **Ending the Afghanistan War** (June 24, 1pm) will feature presentations by David Wildman, Phyllis Bennis, Paul Kawika Martin, Prasad Venugopal and Cole Harrison; it's *War Times – USSF / 1*

organized by United for Peace and Justice, the Institute for Policy Studies and other groups. **Challenging Robotic Empire** (June 24, 1pm) will target the Obama administration's increased use of drones and other new military technology; sponsors include the War Resisters League, Save Our Civil Liberties, CodePink and the Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space. The voices of Afghanis and Iraqis will be highlighted in **Eyewitness to War: Afghan and Iraqi Perspectives** (June 25, 1pm). It is sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee and will feature Raed Jarrar, Zaher Wahab, Ghulam Farooq, and Mary Zerkel.

Israel's attack on the Gaza aid flotilla has sparked worldwide condemnation, cast a spotlight on Tel Aviv's collective punishment of 1.5 million Gazans and once again highlighted the centrality of Palestine for antiwar and solidarity activism. Attention to Israel-Palestine in Detroit will begin even before the U.S. Social Forum begins: an unprecedented **Assembly of Jews Confronting Racism and Ending Apartheid** will convene the weekend before the USSF opening. For full information about the Assembly, go to <http://www.jewsconfrontapartheid.org/>

At the Social Forum itself, among the Israel-Palestine-related sessions are **International Law and Gaza: War Crimes, Accountability, and Solidarity** (June 24, 10am) sponsored by the U.S. Palestinian Community Network; **The Way Forward: Strategy, Tactics and Seeding BDS in the U.S.** (A Peoples Movement Assembly, June 25, 1pm) organized by the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions National Committee and other groups; and **Peacebuilder Delegations to Israel Palestine** (June 24, 3:30pm) sponsored by Interfaith Peace-Builders.

CUT THE MILITARY BUDGET: "MOVE THE MONEY"

Several sections of the antiwar movement are placing new emphasis on the demand to cut the military budget and "move the money" to fund human needs. This is seen as a key part of building a long-haul movement, one that can steadily reduce the U.S. empire's capacity to wage war abroad and make anti-militarism an integral component of the fights waged by working class, people of color, and other hard-hit sectors at home. Attention will focus on this in Detroit during several sessions, including:

- **End the War Economy! Develop an Economy for Peace!** (June 24, 1pm), sponsored by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the Raging Grannies.
- **The Struggle for New National Priorities** (June 24, 3:30pm) organized by Boston United for Justice with Peace, Peace Action Michigan, and others.
- **Building the Anti-War/Peace Movement to End Wars and Occupations: Redirect Tax Dollars to Meet Human Needs** (a Peoples Movement Assembly, June 24, 1pm), with panelists including Antonia Juhasz, Col. Ann Wright, Medea Benjamin and, Michael McPhearson, sponsored by the National Assembly to End the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars and Occupations, Code Pink, Progressive Democrats of America, War Resisters League and others.
- **Stopping War, Fighting for Our Jobs and Our Lives** (June 24, 10am) organized by the International Action Center, Michigan Emergency Committee Against War & Injustice in Detroit, BAYAN-Philippine Coalition and others.
- **Move the Money from War to Our Communities!** (June 25, 3:30 pm) sponsored by Veterans for Peace, Fund Our Communities-Cut Military Spending 25%, War Times/Tiempo de Guerras, UFPJ, Women for Genuine Security and others.

STRATEGIES AND THE LONG VIEW

A number of sessions will offer opportunities to step back and reflect on medium- and long-term strategies. Among them are:

- **Current Context/Common Visions: Building Antiwar Strategy in the Obama Era** (June 25, 10 am), a participatory dialogue about concrete steps to build effective organizing strategies and plug more people into antimilitarist organizing; sponsored by the War Resisters League, the Catalyst Project and the Civilian Soldier Alliance.
- **Who Decides About War? Who Should Decide?** (June 24, 1:00pm), will focus on creating a more democratic, comprehensive, and durable national foreign policy; sponsored by Veterans for Peace, After Downing Street, Iraq Veterans Against the War, Military Families Speak Out, Peace Action and others.
- **Transnational Feminist Organizing to Resist Militarism & Empire** (June 24, 3:30), sponsored by Women for Genuine Security, Esperanza Peace and Justice Center and other groups, will focus on women working long-term across borders to resist militarization and cultural genocide. Particular areas of focus will be Guahan (Guam), Colombia, and the U.S.-Mexico border.
- **Building a Movement to Combat Increased US Militarism** (A Peoples Movement Assembly, June 23, 1pm) is organized by the Alliance for Global Justice, Global Exchange, La Voz de los de Abajo and others groups. The session will be a chance for wide-ranging discussion about how to build a permanent anti-militarism movement that transcends "specific war" movements with emphasis on the global reach of the Pentagon.

UFPJ: Shaping, Building and Moving Beyond War to Meeting Human Needs and Aspirations (June 24, 10am) is designed to open a discussion of future directions for UFPJ, which recently transformed from a coalition into a network.

UFPJ is also hosting daily peace marches during the Forum. They will begin at noon at Cobo Hall and move to the Convention Center to Hart Plaza and the Food Vendors, ending back at Cobo.

VETERANS & GIs, COMMUNITIES OF COLOR, LABOR

Several USSF workshops will discuss how to build resistance within the armed services and in military communities, or how to prevent military recruitment altogether. **Stopping the Invasion of the Body Snatchers: An Introduction to Countering Military Recruitment** (June 23, 1pm) is sponsored by the War Resisters League and Peace Action Wisconsin; **Building a Military Resistance Movement: Veterans, Service Members & Allies Organizing Together** (June 24, 1pm) will be led by Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans and others who organize in military communities; sponsored by IVAW, Civilian Soldier Alliance, and Courage to Resist; Military Families Speak Out, IVAW and Veterans for Peace will also host **Veterans and Military Families: Impact of the Wars; Impact on Movements** (June 25, 1pm).

Mobilizing communities of color against war, and the inter-linked fights against militarism and racism, will be a thread running through most of the USSF sessions already highlighted as well as others. It will also be the specific main focus at a number of sessions including **United Against Racism and War: From Arizona to New Orleans to Palestine** (June 24, 1pm), sponsored by the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network, United States Palestinian Community Network; Malcolm X Grassroots Movement; and Left Turn; **Galvanizing Communities of Color Against War and U.S. Imperialism** (June 24, 3:30pm), organized by War Times/Tiempo de Guerras and Grassroots Global Justice; **The War on Terror and the War on People of Color** (June 25, 1pm), sponsored by Desis Rising Up and Moving, Arab American Action Network, and the South Asian Network and focusing on the links and parallels between U.S. wars abroad and policies of policing and social control aimed at communities of color within U.S. borders; and **Building an Anti-Racist Anti-War movement: From the Frontlines of Iraq and Afghanistan to the Unemployment Lines in the USA** (June 24, 10am) sponsored

by the ANSWER Coalition.

Building Solidarity with Working People and Unions in Iraq and Other U.S. War Zones (June 24, 1pm) and **Talking to Workers and Unions about War, Military Spending and U.S. Foreign Policy** (June 25, 10am) will focus on the key task of winning the labor movement to an antiwar perspective, stressing that war and peace are union issues and that labor's domestic agenda can't be achieved without addressing foreign policy, militarism and military spending. Both are organized by U.S. Labor Against the War.

FIGHTING U.S. MILITARISM IN LATIN AMERICA & BEYOND

Radicalism and grassroots social movements today hold more initiative in Latin America than on any other continent. So not surprisingly they face grave threats from U.S. militarism and intervention. Sessions focusing on this at USSF include **Building Cross-Continental Grassroots Resistance to U.S. Militarization – Strategy Session Connecting the USSF and the SOA Watch Encuentro in Venezuela** (June 24, 10am), organized by SOA watch and highlighting their Venezuelan Encuentro which is coincident with the Social Forum; and **Honduras: A New Kind of Military Coup – A New Kind of Resistance** (June 24, 1pm), organized by La Voz de los de Abajo and focusing on the work of Honduras' National Front of Popular Resistance.

Sanctions and the general U.S. campaign against Iran will be the focus of **Prevent Sanctions and War on Iran** (June 24, 1pm) organized by the American Iranian Friendship Committee.

U.S. militarism in Africa and AFRICOM will be discussed in **The New Africa Command and U.S. Military Involvement in Africa** (June 24, 3:30pm) organized by the African Security Research Project and the Institute for Policy Studies.

PREVIEWING USSF, PREVIEWING PEACE

The events noted above are just a taste of the extensive menu of discussions and action-planning sessions scheduled for Detroit. For the most complete list of antiwar, solidarity and anti-militarism sessions available, go to:

www.war-times.org/pdf/WT-USSF-PeaceWorkshops.pdf

It's a boost for a struggling antiwar movement even to see such a list, which reflects the breadth and diversity of peace organizing underway. The sessions in Detroit, on antiwar activism and all other topics, have the potential to provide an even bigger boost. Then we'll head back to our homes, workplaces, campuses and organizing groups, where we can take what we'll learn at USSF and turn it into more effective on-the-ground efforts, richer strategic thinking and expanded alliances. Let's turn USSF 2010 into a launching pad for a more creative, more durable and more powerful antiwar movement.

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