



The

Agitator

"If there is no struggle, there is no progress..."
"Agitate, Agitate, Agitate..." Frederick Douglass



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Newsletter of the People's Organization For Progress (POP) P. O. Box 22505, Newark NJ 07101-2505 (973) 801-0001

PEOPLE'S PEACE CONFERENCE 2008 THE US WAR IN IRAQ AND OUR COMMUNITIES "THE GRASSROOTS SPEAK"

By Lawrence Hamm, Chairman
People's Organization for Progress

The immoral and illegal U.S. war in Iraq must be brought to an end; our government must begin to concentrate on solving the dire economic and social problems in the United States. From the beginning of the unjust and unnecessary U.S. invasion and occupation nearly Five Years ago, more than 4,000 U.S. troops have been killed, more than 50,000 have been wounded, 650,000 Iraqis or more have died, more than 2 million of them have had to flee their country, and more than 600 billion dollars has been spent, with no end to the spending in sight. In the U.S., the Bush administration has decreased domestic spending for education, health care, housing, employment, veteran's care, and other social programs. Our civil liberties, civil rights, human rights, and voting rights are being violated and taken away. The ranks of the poor and working poor continue to swell, millions remain unemployed, millions more are without health insurance, millions are losing their homes. Racism, racial inequality and police brutality are on the rise, working people are struggling paycheck to paycheck, many in the middle class are losing ground, the gap between the rich and the rest of us is wider than it has ever been, and our prison population is exploding.

It is time for a revolution of priorities. We must end this unjust war now and focus the energy and resources of our nation on solving our problems at home! Toward that end, people throughout New Jersey participated in The People's Peace Conference that took place Saturday, January 19, 2008 in Newark, New Jersey. The purpose of the conference was to provide an opportunity for grassroots people to speak out for an immediate end to the U.S. war in Iraq, and the realization of racial equality, social and economic justice in the United States. Goals of The People's Peace Conference are to demonstrate the profound opposition to the U.S. war in Iraq that exists at the grassroots level, bring pressure to bear upon the government to end the war now, educate people about the war and its impact upon our communities, and organize and mobilize people around a peace and justice agenda that will link the struggle against the war in Iraq to the struggles against injustice at home.

Now is the time to put the nation on a new course. If this war is to end and our social problems are to be seriously addressed, then all of us who want peace and justice must act now. We will develop strategies to bring an end to war abroad and an end to the war on our communities. We still demand an immediate end to the U.S. war in Iraq and the closing of our military bases there, the return home of all U.S. troops now, adequate care for the troops upon their return, the cutoff of funding for the war in Iraq and the redirection of those funds towards education, health care, housing, employment, Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, and other domestic programs. These demands have still not been met. We also demand an end to the war in Afghanistan and that no future pre-emptive wars be initiated against Iran and other countries.

We continue to demand an end to the use of torture, extraordinary renditions (secret abductions), secret prisons, indefinite detentions, secret trials, denial of the right of habeas corpus, racial profiling, use of banned weapons, and further violations of the Geneva Convention and international law. We continue to demand the closing of the Guantanamo Bay prison, the repeal of repressive measures in the Patriot, Homeland Security, and Military Commissions acts, and an end to unlawful expansion of presidential power. We also demand and struggle for peace in our streets and an end to the violence that pervades U.S. society.

On January 19th, met to demand jobs and economic justice. We demanded the creation of a massive living wage jobs program, an increase in the minimum wage, universal health care, and the passage of the national health insurance bill H.R. 676. We demanded affordable housing, environmental justice, and an end to poverty, unemployment, and homelessness. We demanded the reconstruction of the Gulf Coast and justice, housing, jobs, and the right of return for the victims of Hurricane Katrina. Those responsible for the disaster caused by the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq and the Hurricane Katrina catastrophe must be held accountable. We call for the impeachment of President Bush and Vice President Cheney for their handling of the Iraq war and Hurricane Katrina crisis. *Continued on page 3*



Preamble to the P.O.P. Constitution

We, the members of the People's Organization for Progress, have founded this association to work for the fundamental transformation of the society in which we live. It is our desire to build a more just social order. Our primary goal is **nothing less** than the complete elimination of poverty, all forms of social, racial and economic exploitation, oppression, degradation, human misery, suffering and injustice.

We shall unify and organize working, poor, and progressive people and strive to foster cooperation, self-reliance, and a militant fighting spirit among them. We shall build our organization so that it may become a viable political vehicle for the oppressed and a significant force for progressive politics. We shall work to unite the greater progressive community, increase its ranks, and build a broad mass movement at the local level which will be an integral part of the national and worldwide struggle for social and economic justice.

Our concern is not only for society as a whole but for the individual as well. We seek not only social transformation but the transformation of the individual through involvement in the struggle for human liberation. We believe that, in order for the struggle to transform society to succeed, it must be carried out and supported by people imbued with revolutionary values. We want to make the individual socially aware and concerned, more responsible and compassionate, committed and active in the struggle for social change.

We support and involve ourselves in advocacy, self-help and reform efforts to improve the conditions of the people; however, we believe that the major social, economic and political problems confronting working and poor people cannot be solved unless there is a radical redistribution of power and wealth in our society and a restructuring of our socio-economic system that will result in the empowerment of the masses over all institutions that affect their lives.

We vow to uphold the legacy of struggle we have inherited and not to rest until justice, equality, dignity and peace are a reality for all.

Core Demands of P.O.P.

1. We demand reparations for the descendants of Africans enslaved in America. We want full and just compensation to all African Americans for the centuries of brutalization and forced labor their ancestors were made to endure.
2. We demand an end to police brutality, and the establishment of elected civilian review and control boards with subpoena and prosecutorial powers over all police forces at all levels in the US.
3. We demand an immediate end to all racial inequality and racial discrimination in all areas of life in the US.
4. We demand the immediate creation of jobs programs that will eliminate unemployment and provide jobs at union wages for every person that is willing and able to work.
5. We demand a guaranteed minimum income for all people of working age that will allow them to adequately support themselves and their families and eliminate poverty and hunger in this country.
6. We demand the establishment of a system of universal free health care in the US which will enable all people to receive adequate and proper medical and dental care at all times.
7. We demand the establishment of a system of free higher education that will enable all students to attend colleges and universities free of charge.
8. We demand that the federal government fully subsidize all child care programs so that working parents will no longer have to pay for this service.
9. We demand the abolition of the death penalty in the US.
10. We demand adequate food, clothing, housing, employment, health care, education, legal representation, recreation and culture for every person in the US.

P.O.P. - Aims And Purposes

The People's Organization for Progress has been formed for the following purposes:

- ? To educate the people about relevant social, economic and political issues.
- ? To continuously organize and mobilize the grassroots community so that it can effectively solve its problems and fight for its needs.
- ? To improve the social and economic conditions in our community.
- ? To work for the total elimination of racism and sexism.
- ? To further develop and increase the political power of working and poor people.
- ? To strive for a more just and equitable distribution of wealth in our society.
- ? To serve as an advocate of human and civil rights.
- ? To support the struggles of people at home and abroad against oppression and exploitation.
- ? To promote world peace.
- ? To build unity with other organizations and individuals whose goals are similar to our own.

Speech at the Philadelphia Rally Observing the 10th Anniversary of the Million Woman March Greetings My Sisters:

My name is Debby Strong and I am Vice-Chairwoman of the People's Organization for Progress, which is a social justice organization based in Newark, NJ. We are both honored and proud to stand with you in solidarity on this day the 10th Anniversary of the Million Woman March. I want to thank the organizers of this special event. I also want to thank the Sistahood for all the work you put in to make this day a success. This is a day in which we celebrate our strength as women. A strength we get from each other and from within. A strength we proudly carry through every walk of life.

Who are we?

We are motivators. We must motivate the rest of the world in to the mindset of revolution. But before we can lead that revolution as women we must have a revolution within ourselves.

We are more than video vixens! We are: Workers, Organizers, Mentors, Entrepreneurs, Nurturers. Who are we?

Sisters, help me out?

We Are Women!!!

And to be black women is special in itself.

We define our role in this society. We gave birth to civilization.

Who Are We?

We Are Women!!!

Sisters, we must realize our full potential. In the spirit of our ancestors like Phyllis Wheatley – who at age 13 became the first published black poet in America.

Charlotte Hawkins-Brown – Established her own school for African Americans.

Ella Baker – Helped organize the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee among other things.

Shirley Chisholm – the first black woman to run for president whose slogan was “unbought and unbossed”.

Let us not forget our sister , Dr. Betty Shabazz!

We are fighters against injustices, racism, and discrimination of all kinds. We must continue to fight for our right to self-determination. We are unstoppable and must continue pushing until we prevail.

Who are we? We are women!!! Sisters, who are we? We are women.

We are ready to take back what's ours: Our self-respect, Our spirituality, Our children . What happened to our children? We must get their spirits whole again. It's up to us to instill in our children a set of core revolutionary values.

And finally, we must take back our womanhood. Who are we? We are women!!!

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Everyone who wants peace, equality, social and economic justice should participate in this struggle. We especially call upon historically oppressed communities including African Americans, Latinos, Asians, Native Americans, and other peoples of color who have been among those most opposed to this war to join us and make their opposition visible. The People's Peace Conference was sponsored by the Peace & Justice Coalition that is comprised of more than 100 diverse grassroots organizations.

The conference was held on January 19th to commemorate the birthday week of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the ideals for which he fought. Holding the conference in Newark also enables us to connect this event to the just past 40th anniversary commemoration of the 1967 Newark Rebellion, a major event in the struggle for racial justice. On January 19th, we met in the spirit of unity, determined to keep the pressure on until this unjust war in Iraq is ended and the dream of a more just society and peaceful world for all is finally realized.



Free the Jena 6! On September 19, two POP members traveled to Jena, LA, for the national demonstration in support of the Jena Six. Cliff Arrington, chair of the Bergen County Branch and James Carey, chair of the Elizabeth Branch, represented POP in Jena. POP signs calling for freedom for the Jena Six were pictured on many television reports and in numerous publications, and, in fact, traveled around the world. Later that month, a march and rally took place in Newark, and hundreds of local high school students poured out of their schools to participate.

From the POP Prison Committee.

The problems of racism, violence and official impunity, which we encounter in the streets, extend to the institutional strongholds which now imprison and control over 2 million people, mostly people of color. Our understanding of these connections translated into direct action, last Wednesday, at the very gateway to New Jersey State Prison, when POP supported the demonstration convened by the Women's Committee of the NJ Prison Justice Coalition and the ACLU.

But the problems of isolation, violence, bad health care, lack of rehabilitation, profiteering from the poor and pervasive injustice affect men in prison, as well as women. These problems affect the safety, health and well being of the people who live and work in the prisons, but also our families and our communities. So while the specific attention given to the transferred women will continue in the courts, and elsewhere, we must also pursue efforts towards fundamental prison change.

Right now, we face immediate life and death problems at the Essex County Jail and also the increased repression of the men MMat NJSP.

But we cannot simply run from one crisis to another. We must adopt a feasible strategy, priorities and policies for working with other organizations.

If you are interested in actively addressing these matters, please contact Jean Ross, Margaret White or George Tillman. Thank you, Margaret, George and Jean

Dave Cline, Veterans for Peace—In Memoriam

The people's movement for peace and justice had a major loss this past September with the death of former Veterans for Peace national president, David Cline. Dave's passing was also a loss of almost incalculable magnitude to me personally. He was, along with his close friend, fellow veteran and Vietnam Veterans Against the War member, the late Clarence Fitch, a major influence in my life. While both of these guys shaped my tactics as well as strategy in the anti-war movement, perhaps more importantly they helped me rededicate my efforts in the labor movement as well as my resolve to defeat racism and national oppression in the U.S. Jon Levine



Dave Cline, resident of Jersey City, died at his home in September, 2007. He was a former president of Veterans for Peace, a founding leader of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, and of the Vietnam Agent Orange Relief and Responsibility Campaign. Dave was also a key organizer of the Veterans and Survivors March for Peace and Justice from Mobile, Alabama to New Orleans in March 2006, Walkin' to New Orleans. Paraphrasing Rev Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's words, he created the motto: Every bomb dropped over Iraq explodes along the Gulf Coast of the U.S.

After a tour in Vietnam, Dave returned wounded to become an early member and leader of Vietnam Veterans Against the War. Through events like Winter Soldier hearings into the war crimes being committed in Vietnam, and Operation Dewey Canyon III, in which veterans threw their medals on the Capitol steps, that organization played a major role in finally ending the US aggression in Vietnam. The recent documentary, "Sir, No Sir!" features these struggles and Dave's role in them.

Dave continued his activism into the present time, as president of Veterans for Peace, in opposing the Iraq War and helped veterans and families of this new aggression to organize in opposition to it, working with Military Families Speak Out and Iraq Veterans Against the War. He inspired many leaders and participants throughout the new anti-war movement, and worked tirelessly to bring the war to an end, despite his personal struggle with physical illnesses. He will be greatly missed throughout the peace and justice movements in the US and internationally. (information excerpted from Fire on the Mountain)

Commemorating African American History Month in Montclair

- ? **On Monday, February 11, 2008, at 7:00 p.m.,** there will be a screening of Greg Palast's "**Big Easy to Big Empty: the Untold Story of the Drowning of New Orleans,**" a look at the people and the places affected by this catastrophe. Discussion will be facilitated by Vickie White, Chairwoman of the Central Jersey Branch of POP, who has taken delegations of New Jersey youth to New Orleans to assist in cleanup, and by Courtney Allen of the Montclair Unitarian Congregation.
- ? *** On Monday, February 25, at 7:00 p.m.,** there will be a screening of "**Slave Reparations: The Final Passage,**" produced by Arlene Corsano, of the Unitarian Congregation of the Palisades. Discussion will be facilitated by Donna Lamb, of Caucasians United for Reparations and Emancipation, and by Prof. Ingrid Hill, Chairwoman of the Reparations Committee of POP. Call 973. 801.0001 for information.

Bergen County Branch (Margaret White):

POP members participated in a vigil at the Bergen County Jail in Hackensack on December 2, 2007, organized by the Interfaith Coalition for the Rights of Immigrant Detainees and Their Families, calling for a "community accountability board" to provide meaningful oversight for safe and humane conditions in the detention facilities at the jail. POP is engaged in ongoing dialogue with the Bergen County Sheriff's office about concerns regarding health care, treatment of women, and other issues at the jail, including suicide of a detainee in February, 2007.

Bergen members also participated in a demonstration at New Jersey State Prison on December 12, convened by the Women's Committee of the NJ Prison Justice coalition and ACLU-NJ. On January 21, 2008, Bergen Chair Clifton Arrington spoke at a press conference in Teaneck at dedication of billboard installed by Bring the Troops Home Coalition (POP is a member). On that same day, Bergen member Margaret White was honored at the annual MLK, Jr, birthday celebration in Tenafly, where more than 600 people heard her speak about issues related to the Bergen Country Jail.

Montclair Branch (Bella August):

The 6th annual All You Can Eat dinner in November, 2007, was the largest and most successful yet. Once again, students from Montclair High School electrified the crowd with their poetry. Thank you Ms. Corporan, teacher, and poets Amanda Baraka, Aznar Walker, Storm Wyche, Kate Spidell, and Jade Wormley!

In December, Branch members traveled to Trenton for a demonstration in front of the State Prison, supporting human rights for the women prisoners who have been transferred there without programs or safety and health provisions. The rally, convened by the NJ Prison Justice Coalition and the ACLU, was heard by prisoners in the yard and within the walls.

The Branch is currently working with other Montclair groups to sponsor film showings for African American History Month: Monday, Feb. 11, at 7 p.m., Big Easy to Big Empty: The Untold Story of the Drowning of New Orleans. And on Monday, Feb. 25, Slave Reparations: The Final Passage. Both films will be followed by discussion, and are free. They will take place at the Unitarian Congregation in Montclair, 67 Church Street. Call for information: 973-801-0001. All are welcome!

Plainfield Branch (Steve Hatcher, Barbara Stewart):

A victory for free speech and assembly has been scored by the Branch, supported by POP members from around the state as well as other supporters and attorney, Bennett Zurofsky. On November 17, 2007, for the first time the Branch held a demonstration against police brutality and crimes that we do to one another. It was at a central location where we have had other demonstrations for more than 3 years. A police officer asked to see our permit, and ordered us to stop marching and chanting since we had no permit. Steve explained that we were in a park-like area and had only four people. As the four of us just stood around talking after the officer left, a reporter for the Courier News came by to speak with us. The police returned, stating that we had to leave, and began asking for name and address of one of our members. Steve stated that he thought we did have freedom of speech and assembly.

The officer suddenly grabbed our POP member and handcuffed him. Then Steve, who identified himself as chair of the Branch, was handcuffed. With four cars and a paddy wagon, the four POP members, Steve, Stuart, Jeff and Zachariah, were placed under arrest and taken to be charged with unlawful assembly.

POP chairman Hamm called for an immediate press conference the following day on the steps of City Hall. Plainfield members and supporters spoke out at Town Council meetings, and on December 15, a large rally in support of the Plainfield Four was held on the same spot where the arrests took place. The mayor of Plainfield came to announce that all charges would be dropped. Our attorney continues working on the legal challenges and ongoing negotiations are in place to modify ordinances that restrict freedom of assembly and freedom of speech. Through at all, we will stand strong and the marches will go on because there are generations of all our children we must fight for.



Inspired by drummer Nell Sanders, POP marched in Washington at the Troops Out Now Anti-War Protest, where Chairman Hamm was one of the speakers.

Invitamos a la comunidad Hispana
 Bienvenidos a la comunidad Hispana. Queremos invitarlos en esta oportunidad a nuestra organización de diferentes causas, por ejemplo, brutalidad policial, injusticias de discriminación y tópicos sociales que afectan nuestra comunidad. Por favor si tienes algunas preguntas o si quieres mas información acerca de nuestra organización llama al: 862-215-3269 ó pecanprican70@aol.com

P.O.P.
Meets Every Thursday
6:00 p.m.
Abyssinian Baptist Church
 224 West Kinney St.
 Newark, NJ
All are invited.

Poem to Sean Bell (December 2006)

By N. B. Imbrogno	And so his mother
	Takes a stand
In November, 2006	To very openly demand
Sean Bell died	That this injustice be addressed
In a hail of bullets	And in the way she thinks is best
With his friends at his side	Put "New York's Finest" to the test
On the morning of his wedding day	So Sean Bell peacefully can rest
Sean Bell was murdered	Grief so private can't be expressed
Blown away	But lest we think his case is over
Shot in execution style	Let's all remember Clifford Glover
With 50 bullets	Shot dead at 10
By cops gone wild	No chance to finish
He came from his bachelor party	Life
Where everyone had partied hearty	Such pain does not diminish
An American tradition	Though decades passed
Still I'm sure that he died wishin'	We find ourselves fighting
He could hold his mother's hand	The same old battle
We lost another fine young man	Hence my writing.

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CONTRIBUTORS: B. August, Editor, D. Graham, L. Hamm, S. Hatcher, N. Imbrogno, J. Levine, J. Ross, D. Strong, M. White

Stop the Violence Committee-Time to Get Involved!

By Darrell Graham, Chair

In this last year, there were over 100 killings in Newark alone. The whole community needs to get active—no one can just stand by any longer. Those family members who have experienced losses themselves need to find a way to be there for others. They can follow the example of POP's own Secretary General and Vice Chair, Mary Weaver, whose son, Randy, was killed by an East Orange policeman. They can join with people like Cynthia Johnson, who founded and who directs MOMSADD, to help mothers whose children fall because of violence in the community. They can join with Enough is Enough, founded by Mon. Ellis, who supports creative activities for youth, Gangs to Glory, as well as summer programs.

There are plenty of ways to become active, even by first teaching and working against violence in your own home, with your children and youth.

If there is a Block Watch in your neighborhood, you can join it. If not, you can help to start one. As an adult, you can help young people to get started in organizing themselves against violence in the community. From POP and the groups mentioned above, you can get help to get involved.

There is the STEP program, mentoring, as well as the New Black Panther Party, which holds education programs, clothing drives, provides school supplies for youth. Churches should be Safe Havens for young people—you can get your church to take action to provide programs and be open for kids. As concerned citizens, there is a lot you can do. Time to Get Involved! Precious Lives are Being Lost!



POP commemorated the 40th Anniversary of the Newark Rebellion, which it does every year to remember those killed and displaced from their homes by state police and National Guard Troops.