

[Drone Activist Responds to the NY Times OpEd on Drones](#)

On MARCH 16, 2017 the New York Times published an Editorial "[Preventing a Free-For-All With Drone Strikes](#)" where they express belated concerns about the US Drone program of Targeted Killing around the globe. Our organization has been educating people about the drones since 2010. We have engaged in a Gandhian Wave of civil resistance at Hancock Air National Guard Base, a domestic Reaper Drone hub, wherein many have been arrested many times, including Ed Kinane. Here is Ed's response to the NY Times.

"Preventing a Free-for-All With Drone Strikes"

Oh, so now that others are acquiring weaponized drone technology, it's become time for a re-think?

"For nearly a decade, drone strikes have been central to America's counterterrorism policy. Operated from remote locations,"

Or, more precisely, from U.S. military bases: both here and abroad.

"the small aircraft can hover over targets for long periods of time and kill extremists"

Allegedly kill alleged "extremists." Very slippery word. Who is "extreme" and who gets to define who they are. Funny thing, as far back as Republican Presidential hopeful Barry Goldwater, Republicans used to speak pretty highly of "extremism."

with precision without risking American casualties.

So, it's only U.S. casualties that matter? In fact, U.S. drones, violating due process, have assassinated and otherwise killed at least a handful of U.S. citizens. And, let's not forget that some U.S. drone operators, seeing the dirty work they're caught up in, suffer from PTSD. Seeing the aftermath of their drone strikes (demolished homes, incinerated bodies) can get old...and even deeply disturbing.

"President Barack Obama found drones so effective and useful that over two terms, he approved 542 strikes that killed 3,797 people"

3,797 "high value" targets? Using these Pseudos-tats in this way perpetuates the legend that weaponized drones are "precise" and that we somehow know how many and who are killed in drone strikes.

"in non-battlefield areas where American forces were not directly engaged, including Pakistan, Yemen and"

The NY Times is perpetuating the notion tht U.S. forces – JSOC for example – weren't operating on the ground in these target areas.

"But this seductive tool of modern warfare has a dark side. Seemingly bloodless"

Oh really?

"and distant, drone strikes can tempt presidents and military commanders to inflict grave damage without sufficient forethought, violating sovereign rights"

. . . .not to mention violating the U.N. Charter, other International Law and Article 6 of the U.S. Constitution –

which makes International Law the “Highest Law of our land”.

“and killing innocent civilians.”

. . . not to mention armed others who can be said to be resisting attacks on their land. Whether or not this is a fair characterization of their motives, it’s clear that they aren’t invading the U.S., and that they aren’t being killed in “self-defense”.

“Civilian deaths during Mr. Obama’s tenure undermined American counterterrorism operations”

Such operations are themselves – like aerial warfare generally – terrorism. The so-called “War on Terrorism” is a War of Terrorism.

“and became a recruiting tool for more extremists. Mr. Obama was persuaded to impose sensible constraints on the use of drone strikes between 2013 and 2016.”

It’s not clear that Mr. Obama had the power to “impose” on the war machine. It’s certainly not clear that during his administration drones were deployed with “sensible constraint”. At what point beyond “3797” do the killings begin to lack “constraint”? At what point beyond “3797” are killings no longer “sensible”? Does the NY Times realize the key role U.S. drones play in swelling the flood of refugees fleeing the killing fields?

“The White House would decide which individuals outside of the traditional”

To use “traditional” so blithely is to normalize illegality.

“war zones of Iraq and Afghanistan could be targeted, and there had to be

“near certainty” that no civilians would be killed.”

But apart from administration assertions, there’s no evidence of such “near certainty”.

In traditional war zones, military commanders make these decisions without interagency review, and the threshold for acceptable civilian casualties is less strict.

Now comes disturbing news: President Trump and his administration are moving to dilute or circumvent the Obama rules. This could have disastrous outcomes,

“Could have”???

not least because Mr. Trump seems even more enticed by drone warfare than Mr. Obama was. In the days since his inauguration, the tempo of airstrikes has increased significantly.

Yes.

“Mr. Trump has already granted a Pentagon request to declare parts of three provinces in Yemen, where Saudi Arabia is fighting Iranian-backed Houthis rebels, to be an “area of active hostilities.” This, The Times has reported, would enable more permissive battlefield rules to apply.

The president is also expected to soon approve a Pentagon proposal to do the same for parts of Somalia, where militants of the Shabab who are linked to Al Qaeda threaten regional stability.”

Could it be that the U.S. imperial presence in the region is what threatens “regional stability”?

“Both designations are supposed to be temporary, giving the administration time to decide whether to rescind or relax the Obama rules more broadly.

Military commanders often chafe at civilian oversight. But there is no evidence that the Obama rules have slowed counterterrorism efforts, and there are good reasons to keep them in place, including the fact that the legal basis for such strikes lacks credibility because Congress never updated the 2001 authorization for war in Afghanistan to take account of America’s expanded military action against terrorists in Syria, Yemen and Libya.”

So, if only the Congress attends to the bureaucratic detail of “updating” the rules, all will be Okay?

“Mr. Trump should heed the advice of national security experts who have urged the retention of strict standards”

As if under Mr. Obama, “strict standards” have been retained?! Have the NY times editors not read Jeremy Scahill’s “Dirty Wars”?

“for using force in non-battlefield areas and warned how even a small number of civilian deaths or injuries can “cause significant strategic setbacks” to American interests.”

“The mind-deadening phrase “American Interests,””

The mind-deadening phrase "American Interests," like "Terrorism," is seldom defined by pundits or main stream media. They seldom acknowledge, if ever, that "American Interests" = The Interests of U.S. corporations (i.e. not those of enlisted people or U.S. taxpayers).

He has already seen how a badly executed mission can have disastrous results: the raid in Yemen in January that resulted in the deaths of a member of the Navy's SEAL Team 6 and numerous civilians, including children.

And what were U.S. Seals doing there in the first place?! The U.S. is somehow entitled to send its warriors anywhere it wants?

"And as most experts agree, killing terrorists does not by itself solve the threat from extremists."

There's that slippery, normalizing NY Times language again.

"For that, Mr. Trump will need a comprehensive policy that also deals with improved governance"

Is the NY Times suggesting that Mr. Trump and those that put him in power should get to impose their notion of "improved governance"?!

"in the countries where terrorists thrive and with ways to counter their violent messages on social media."

Right.

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Weaponized Drones And The Endless “War on Terror”

Ed Kinane at Left Forum

Session 7, 3:40 to 5:40 p.m., Sunday, May 22, 2016

Room 1,127

John Jay College of Criminal Justice, NYC

Panel with Ed K., Nick Mottern, Debra Sweet, Shelby Sullivan-Bennis

Moderator: Amanda Bass

Like the phony “war on drugs,” the phony “war on terrorism” promotes economic interests, serves political agendas, entrenches militarism. Neither war reduces drug use or violence. Nor are they designed to.

Terrorism – past and present – pervades the U.S. psyche and economy. Terrorism, so-called, and the fear thereof, blunts our minds, shrinks our hearts. This contrived national obsession gives the Pentagon and NSA/Homeland Security their ever-expanding powers. It tightens their grip. It swells their coffers.

Their bloated budgets, like the Congress that funds them, march to corporate drummers. Since World War II, terrorism/militarism has been exceedingly profitable for the so-called “defense” industry (think, for example, Lockheed Martin). U.S. corporations thrive on the export of weapons and weapon systems. Peace kills the war economy. Why seek peace?

The high-tech war industry – the U.S. economy’s warped backbone – enriches the rich, deprives the poor. Military spending sucks the life out of civil society. That military spree, barely monitored, finances death-dealing projects;

these profit-intensive projects preempt job-intensive, life-serving ones.

Pentagon budgets assure grossly underfunded housing, schooling, health and infrastructure development. Along with the nuke industry – now in its eighth decade – the perpetuated terrorism/militarism nexus drives economic disparity, propping up this nation's class structure.

Patriots and propagandists endlessly invoke, but seldom define, "terrorism." Now, I'll do the unusual – I'll define "terrorism." Terrorism is the use, or threat, of violence against civilians for military, political or economic ends. This definition cuts to the chase, cuts through the layers of jingoism and obfuscation perpetrated by the patriots and propagandists.

The definition has four corollaries:

~ First. Contrary to U.S. mainstream media usage, terrorists aren't inevitably people of color. Nor are they primarily swarthy or sallow. Here in the U.S. the term "terrorism" somehow only applies to what they – non-whites – do, not to what whites or the U.S. does.

~ Second. In the 20th and 21st centuries, it's fascism and capitalism that have colonized the skies. Hence most terrorism has been aerial: V-2 rockets, Cruise missiles, Hellfire missiles, napalm, white phosphorus, cluster bombs, depleted uranium, weaponized drones....

~ Third. Most terrorism is wholesale, not retail; most is state terrorism. Most terrorism is perpetrated by uniformed military. In these centuries most war casualties – in their tens of millions are civilian.

~ Last. Since at least August 6, 1945 the Pentagon has been the world's most relentless single purveyor of terrorism.

Bottom line: the so-called “war on terror” is a racist war, a war for hegemony, a war for profit. It’s a war its perpetrators and its perpetuators have no desire to see end.

Terror is nothing new; it’s built into this nation’s DNA. Consider the continent-wide armed robbery of indigenous lands. Thanks to their higher tech weaponry, European invaders ethnically cleansed Native Americans – mostly non-combatants. Like our counterparts in Israel and other colonial settler states, U.S. Americans militarily occupy stolen land.

Yes, we are occupiers – and by a curious inversion or dialectic, now it is U.S. Americans who are finding ourselves occupied. The occupation is so incremental, so normalized, it’s barely visible to us.

If the U.S.-as-occupied-nation notion seems outlandish, consider the following:

- why was the interstate highway system built to military specification by a general,
- or why does the NSA so comprehensively monitor our phones and email,
- or why is every effort is made to keep the U.S. people distracted and dumbed down,
- or why does the judiciary neglect the First Amendment and why, despite Article Six of the Constitution, does the judiciary ignore International Law (*much as Southern judges ignored lynching*),
- or why are the police so heavily armed and drilled in military shoot-to-kill tactics,
- or why does the U.S. have such a vast prison system,
- or why do military bases, in all their redundancy, proliferate throughout the land,
- or – and this brings us directly back to today’s panel – why are surveillance and weaponized drones, so deadly overseas, increasingly flying over the U.S.?

Further, regarding our national DNA, consider the centuries-long wholesale abduction and displacement of Africans – robbing them of their labor, liberty, languages, dignity and their offspring. Ask: how did such a regime last so long? Without a whip at her back, a noose around his neck, no human endures such rape and servitude. See the film “12 Years a Slave.”

That terror regime in full force lives on today with mass incarceration and what author Michelle Alexander calls “The New Jim Crow.” Police assassinating young black men channel Ku Klux Klan castration. Both are seldom prosecuted. (Note the enduring intersection of impunity and racism.)

We’ve been conditioned to believe terrorism is violence perpetrated by the “other”– the non-white other. Blind to the origins of white supremacy and privilege, we are the legatees of our previous – and ongoing – terrorisms. Only when terrorism is defined do we see Manifest Destiny and slavery for what they were. Only when terrorism is defined do we see that today’s “War on Terrorism” for what it is: a war of, for and by terrorism.

Today’s so-called “War on Terrorism” – quotation marks are a must – features aerial bombing of tribal people and people of color who can barely shoot back: the Anglosphere globalizing its centuries-long terror track.

Since August 6, 1945 the world has been chilled by U.S. nuclear blackmail. Since the grotesquely one-sided air war on Viet Nam and since the 2003 “shock and awe” terror attacks on Baghdad, the world knows it resists the Imperium at its peril. The world knows the U.S. mostly and more readily targets people of color – whether Japanese, Southeast Asian, West Asian, or...American. The dark-skinned world waits, defiantly, wondering who will be next.

Aerial terror can’t neutralize, but it does provoke, non-state

resistance – a resistance sporadically erupting as terrorism. How convenient for the propagandists! The hunter/killer MQ9 Reaper drone and its cowardly ilk seem for now to be just the thing for taking out so-called “bad guys.” However, for each “bad guy” assassinated, many civilians are killed or maimed. More are recruited to resist. Not smart. While drones can be tactically clever, recruiting your enemy is strategically stupid...unless, of course, you profit from keeping the pot boiling.

Up our way in Central New York the local mainstream media normalizes the hunter/killer Reaper drone remotely piloted from Hancock Air Force Base on the outskirts of Syracuse. The Reaper, a former Hancock commandant boasts, operates over Afghanistan 24/7. These robots are deployed to kill with impunity. The media downplay, if not ignore, drone war illegality, its evasion of due process, its violating others' sovereignty, and the government lies surrounding its terror. The media sanitize Reaper transgression against human bodies and human rights. The media ignore Reaper indecency, Reaper cowardice.

The Syracuse Post-Standard ignores the back story behind any blowback – always called “terrorism” – of those avenging and resisting U.S. aggression. Further, perhaps sensing instinctively what a boon to business drones and arms races are, the Post ignores the deadly prospect of weaponized drone proliferation.

U.S. media has little to say about drone “collateral damage” incinerating and dismembering women and children and other noncombatants, whether within or beyond so-called “legal” war zones. But our local media surely typify U.S. mainstream media. So, let me ask: how many in this room heard much about the killing of 150 unknown human beings by U.S. drones and manned aircraft on a single day, March 7, 2016, in Somalia – Somalia, a desperately poor tribal nation the U.S. isn't even at war with? This massacre, noted in the New York Times,

didn't rate a blip in the Post-Standard.

The December 17 Post-Standard reported that the Reaper now is actually flying – not just being remotely controlled – out of Hancock Air Force Base and from Syracuse's civilian international airport. The page 1 story, festooned with color photos, is headlined "REAPER DRONE MAKES HISTORY IN SYRACUSE."

With no pretense to journalistic balance, such stories fail to note that since 2010 our grassroots group, Upstate Drone Action, has been continually protesting the Hancock Reaper and its operating unit, the 174th Attack Wing of the New York State National Guard. The increasingly militarized local police, at Hancock's bidding, arrest us as we block Hancock's main gate and exercise our First Amendment right to petition the government for redress of grievance. Maximum fines and multiple incarcerations ensue.

But the Post-Standard doesn't acknowledge such erosion of civil liberty. Nor does it investigate or even mention our allegations of Hancock war crime. Further, the Post has been eerily silent about the role that domestic drones are beginning to play in policing and intimidating dissidents and minorities.

Like the 1950s' "Atoms for Peace" hype masking the dark side of the then-emerging nuclear industry, mainstream media downplay the drone dark side. The Post, it seems, doesn't want to jinx upstate New York's becoming the Silicon Valley of an emerging domestic drone money machine. Over the next several years Governor Cuomo will be subsidizing that industry with tens of millions of taxpayer dollars.

What does domestic drone development and deployment have to do with terrorism? Plenty. Like the government-subsidized nuclear industry, the domestic drone industry (again think Lockheed Martin) will maintain the facilities, research, engineering expertise, skilled labor, and operators – i.e. the industrial

base – that the Pentagon draws on for its terror wars.

As long as perpetual war keeps yielding corporate profit, state terrorism will keep “making history.” If we let it. ###

[[drone terrorism remarks for 2016 left forum]]

MultiFaith Anti-Drone Conference

I attended the Multifaith Anti-Drone Warfare Conference at Stony Point Retreat Center in the lower Hudson Valley. It was a busy event with good food, good company and interesting discussions. The videos were made by Wilton Vought and can be found on [Other Voices Other Choices](#), along with a lot of other interesting materials including audio podcasts.

The panel Friday evening featured ex CIA officer, Ray McGovern, ex Airforce Intelligence Officer Christopher Aaron who served in Afghanistan, and Kambali Musavuli of the Friends of the Congo. Between them, they revealed the connections. . . between lethal drones flying over Africa and the ongoing theft of resources in Africa. . . between government service and service to one’s country. . . between telling the redacted truth to the rest of us and joining us on the street in active resistance. Both kinds of action are necessary for democracy to thrive, good information – right action.

Saturday morning, **Arun Kundnani**, Arun Kundnani is Adjunct Professor of Media, Culture and Communication at New York University and author of “The Muslims are Coming” and most recently, “Violence Always Comes Home: Terrorism, Empire and

Islamophobia” gave the first Keynote. He spoke about the misleading social and cultural distortion of our perceptions about Islam and terrorism.

Followed by **Medea Benjamin** of CodePink Women for Peace who spoke about US policies, including drone warfare, that disrespect the people in foreign lands, exacerbate misunderstandings and invite continued threats and violence.

In the afternoon, a panel of religious people discussed the place of activism in a religious context and the insight that our faith can give to the ongoing wars and terrorism that our country is engaged in.

Multifaith Perspectives on Drones, Islamophobia & Movement Building featuring Featuring: Muhammed Malik, Rabbi Michael Feinberg,
Imam Hamin Rashadah, Aaron Stauffer & Irene Siegel

Conference Sponsors:

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Code Pink, Veterans For Peace, Muslim Peace Fellowship, Westchester Coalition Against Islamophobia, Standing Together Against Racism and Islamophobia, WESPAC, United National Anti-War Coalition (UNAC), Muslims for Ferguson, Middle East Crisis Response, Veterans For Peace

Inside Drone Warfare Symposium

If, like me, you were not able to attend “Inside Drone Warfare”, the Whistle Blower Symposium organized by Nick Mottern and Ann Wright in Las Vegas this spring during Shut Down Creech!, you can still view the speakers in these YouTube videos. I watched them and was glad I took the time. Ann Wright moderates the event.

Part 1: Jesselyn Radack of Whisper Whistleblower and Resource Protection Program and Cian Westmoreland, former Drone Maintenance Technician

Part 2: Christopher Aaron, former Air Force Intelligence Officer with the Drone program in Afghanistan and Reverend Chris Otto, Unitarian Universalist Minister and former Chaplain with the US Army in Afghanistan

Part 3: Shelby Sullivan Dennis of Reprieve with Faisal Bin Ali Jaber

Part 4: Marjorie Cohn

Part 5: Brian Terrell, Catholic Worker Drone Activist, Q&A

Indian Springs, Creech Home

Video by *John Amidon* that reflects on the presence of Creech Airforce Base, a national center for Military Drone control, beside the town of Indian Springs.

Indian Springs has Fallen shows some of the affects of the USAF on Indian Springs, NV and invites you to join with VFP at Shut Down Creech!

Sentencing Memo Sent to Judge Gideon by Professor

I would like to take the occasion of this memorandum to continue the conversation we have had over the past five years on the nature of civil disobedience, particularly in the context of the Reaper drone control center at Hancock Air National Guard Base. I have benefited from those conversations and hope that, in some small way, you have as well. At the core of our discussions, I think, has been the question of what civil disobedience is and, specifically, how civil disobedience “works.”

I will begin by discussing the nature of civil disobedience, as defined by Gandhi and by John Rawls.

Gandhi distinguished two types of civil disobedience: “Aggressive, assertive or offensive civil disobedience is nonviolent, willful disobedience of laws of the State whose breach does not involve moral turpitude and which is undertaken as a symbol of revolt against the State. . . . Defensive civil disobedience , on the other hand, is the involuntary or reluctant non-violent disobedience of such laws as are in themselves bad and obedience to which would be inconsistent with one’s self-respect or human dignity.” ⁱ In

Gandhi's terms, our civil disobedience at Hancock involves the first type; disobeying a Jim Crow statute would have been of the second type.^{[i](#)} He also states: "civil disobedience is the inherent right of a citizen. . . . [T]o put down civil disobedience is to attempt to imprison conscience. . . . A civil resister never uses arms and hence he is harmless to a State that is at all willing to listen to the voice of public opinion."^{[iii](#)}

Rawls defines civil disobedience as "a public, nonviolent, conscientious yet political act contrary to law usually done with the aim of bringing about a change in the law or policies of the government. ... [I]t does not require that the civilly disobedient act breach the same law that is being protested." Later, he elaborates: "[T]he civilly disobedient act is indeed thought to be contrary to law, at least in the sense that those engaged in it are not simply presenting a test case for a constitutional decision; they are prepared to oppose the statute even if it should be upheld." Finally, he states: "The law is broken, but fidelity to law is expressed by the public and nonviolent nature of the act, by the willingness to accept the legal consequences of one's conduct. . . . To be completely open and nonviolent is to give bond of one's sincerity."^{[iv](#)} For Rawls, civil disobedience is a political act, and, while it involves breaking the law, it ultimately is faithful to the spirit of the law. Civil disobedience must be limited to "instances of substantial and clear injustice"^{[v](#)} and legal alternatives must have been tried before engaging in it.^{[vi](#)} I believe that the evidence we have produced of the harms, including harms to civilians and children, caused by weaponized drones satisfy the first condition and that my prior (and concurrent) legal attempts to address this issue satisfy the second. Rawls concludes: "Although this mode of action is strictly speaking contrary to law, it is nevertheless a morally correct way of maintaining a

constitutional regime.”^{[vii](#)}

I would submit that there are several ways that civil disobedience can operate, often simultaneously. First, as you argued in our first trial, civil disobedience can affect policy by the publicity it receives when the civilly disobedient person is arrested, convicted, and punished. Public outcry might lead executives or legislatures to change policy.

Second, civil disobedience can operate as symbolic action.^{[viii](#)} Civil disobedience actions are often attempts to juxtapose symbols in a way that sparks insight, that enables persons in the audience to see things in a new way, to break out of fixed worldviews. In this sense, it has been called parabolic action, using the same principle as the parables Jesus used to shock people out of their worldviews by juxtaposing images in new ways (e.g., the Good Samaritan, in which the despised enemy is the one who comes to the rescue). Such symbolic actions would include the burning of draft records during the Vietnam War, the Plowshares actions initiated in 1980, blood poured on the Pentagon, and the symbolic die-ins we have used at Hancock. The juxtaposition of images (e.g., blood on the Pentagon) can be startling enough to shock some observers into a change of worldview, a change of paradigm if you will, that may be impossible through simple logical discourse.^{[ix](#)} This approach is often related to the third approach to how civil disobedience “works.”

Third, from a spiritual or religious perspective, the practitioner of civil disobedience should be concerned with faithfulness rather than effectiveness. Catholic theologian Henri Nouwen put this distinction in terms of fruitfulness versus effectiveness. The responsibility of a person of faith is not to be effective but to be faithful (to the Gospel if one is Christian, as I hope I am). One must follow one’s conscience and bear the consequences, but the results will be

up to God. Our responsibility is to plant seeds, not to achieve results. In many ways, civil disobedience as symbolic action ties in to this way of thinking – the symbolic interaction is the planting of a seed which may or may not take root. This approach challenges the very notion of effectiveness as an offshoot of industrial civilization and harks back to a more agricultural way of seeing the world. A prime example of fruitfulness was Franz Jaggerstatter, an Austrian peasant who was executed for refusing to be conscripted into the Nazi's army. He accomplished nothing but leaving his wife and young children without a husband and father, and his story was almost forgotten. However, decades later, this story was uncovered by sociologist Gordon Zahn, who publicized it in his book *In Solitary Witness*. In 2007, Jaggerstatter was beatified by Pope Benedict XVI. His conscientious refusal now inspires Christians around the globe.

Finally, the impact of civil disobedience on policy can be mediated by the response of judges hearing civil disobedience cases. I believe that we need human beings acting as judges within the system (as opposed, to, say, artificial intelligences) precisely because, as John Rawls argues in his discussion of civil disobedience, no human legal system is perfect. Artificial intelligence may be able to apply the existing legal rules more accurately than a human judge; however, only a human judge can take into account the larger sense of justice which animates the law; only a human judge can identify a situation in which application of even a just law becomes injustice because the law is being used to uphold a larger injustice.

Judges who have become convinced that their obligation includes a wider view of justice have chosen a variety of ways to embody that

obligation.

One approach can involve the decision itself. In a 2012 lawsuit against New York City police for wrongful arrest, Federal Judge Jed S. Rakoff found for the plaintiffs and wrote:

“What a debt this nation owes to its ‘troublemakers.’ From Thomas Paine to Martin Luther King, Jr., they have forced us to focus on problems we would prefer to downplay or ignore. Yet it is often only with hindsight that we can distinguish these troublemakers who brought us to our senses from those who were simply . . . troublemakers. Prudence, and respect for the constitutional rights to free speech and free association, therefore dictate that the legal system cut all non-violent protestors a fair amount of slack. Let us hope that other judges hear this decision and that nonviolent civil disobedience can continue to hold its rightful place as a cornerstone of our liberty.” [x](#)

In my own civil disobedience career, I have sometimes been found not guilty. Two of these verdicts were, I think, attempts to address a larger justice. When I was put on trial in 1981 for civil disobedience at the Pentagon, charged with depredation of government property, for pouring blood on the Pentagon in protest of U.S. nuclear weapons, the Judge dismissed the charges because the prosecutor had not “provided me with any evidence that the government owns the Pentagon.” My mother believes that verdict was a direct result of her prayers; I believe it was an indirect attempt to address the larger issues of justice. When I was charged with trespass at the Rochester Federal Building in 2003 for protesting the impending invasion of Iraq, Rochester City Court Judge Anne Pfeiffer found us not guilty because we had been arrested before we had gone through the metal detectors. In rendering her verdict, she apologized to me (I suspect, tongue in cheek) for not addressing my international law argument that the U.S.

had no jurisdiction to charge anyone with trespass because they had just committed perhaps the largest act of trespass since World War II.

Brian Terrell, a Catholic Worker whom you may remember from the Hancock 38 case, along with four other demonstrators, was acquitted of trespass in Senator Charles Grassley's Des Moines office in a July 2007 jury trial after presiding judge Odell McGee allowed Brian to read the text of the First Amendment to the jury. Judge McGee further instructed the jury that the defendants "were not justified in remaining on the property if the State proved . . . that the defendant(s) did not have a constitutional right to remain on the property."^xi

Gandhi's standard procedure in civil disobedience was to plead guilty and ask for the harshest possible punishment. Yet, in doing, so, he still gave the judge a choice of whether to affirm the legal system or not. His first case of civil disobedience in India involved defying a government order not to enter the district of Champaran, where he proposed to conduct an inquiry into labor conditions. He appeared in court and pled guilty; however, before his sentencing date, the Lieutenant Governor ordered the case against him withdrawn, and he was allowed to pursue his investigation. Gandhi saw this conclusion as a victory for civil disobedience, despite the fact that he wasn't sent to jail: "The country thus had its first direct object-lesson in Civil Disobedience. The affair was freely discussed both locally and in the press, and my inquiry got unexpected publicity."^xii Thus, Gandhi himself felt that civil disobedience could be fruitful even without conviction and punishment.

Another approach is to address issues of broader justice at sentencing, in the sentence itself and/or in a sentencing statement. I have previously cited the case of Federal Judge Miles Lord, who in 1984, sentenced Barbara Katt and John Laforge to a six month conditional discharge and gave one of

the most powerful critiques of justice in America ever presented from that side of the bench. I cite a part of his sentencing statement:

“It is the allegation of these young people that they committed the acts here complained of as a desperate plea to the American people and its government to stop the military madness which they sincerely believe will destroy us all, friend and enemy alike.

They have made a plausible argument that international law prohibits what our country is doing by way of manufacturing mass weapons of destruction. Common sense should, in my own personal view, dictate that such manufacture be curtailed.

The anomaly of this situation is that I am here called upon to punish two individuals who were charged with having caused damage to the property of a corporation in the amount of \$33,000. It is this self-same corporation which only a few months ago was before me accused of having wrongfully embezzled from the U.S. Government the sum of \$3.6 million. . . .

“If there be an adverse reaction to this sentence, I will anxiously await the protestations of those who complain of my attempts to correct the imbalance that now exists in a system that operates in such manner as to provide one type of justice for the rich and a lesser type for the poor. One standard for the mighty and another for the meek. And a system which finds its humanness and objectivity is sublimated to military madness and the worship of the bomb.”[xiii](#)

In another case, it was the sentencing itself that was significant. On March 5, 1986, Scott Schaeffer-Duffy of the Worcester MA Catholic Worker and Carol Bellin were tried and found guilty of trespassing and disorderly conduct at an anti-war protest at the GTE plant in Westborough MA. The DA recommended sentences of thirty days for the trespass and

sixty days for the disorderly conduct, to be served consecutively. Judge Paul LeConto asked the defendants if they would pay a fine or do community service. Scott replied, "No, your honor. We could not pay a fine in good conscience, and we believe that our actions at GTE were a community service." The judge called for a recess, and, when he returned, said simply: "Guilty finding. You are free to go." [xiv](#)

Sometimes, judges have changed their mind and reversed their positions, even after sentencing.

As one example, in November, 1978, four protestors were arrested for nonviolent civil disobedience at the First Annual Military Electronics Exposition in Anaheim, California. After spending a night in jail, they were given one year probation. In October, 1979, two of the protestors, LA Catholic Workers Jeff Dietrich and Kent Hoffman, were again arrested at the exposition, two weeks before their probation ran out. Robert Fitzgerald, the same judge who had ordered the probation, gave them six month sentences in the county jail, double the recommendation of the DA. And yet, he ordered their release two months later. Kent met with Judge Fitzgerald not long after that, and, as Kent recounted:

"He spoke of the confusion he experienced, of the influence provided by receiving over 700 letters of concern on our behalf, of the movement from distrust to appreciation for our sincerity and tenacity of commitment. He had gone through a rare agony for one so solidly entrenched in power and the pride of power. He had chosen to admit openly and publicly the mistake he had made." [xv](#)

Kent told the judge of a dream he had had, of Judge Fitzgerald standing beside him serving Christmas dinner to the homeless guests at the LA Catholic Worker. Judge Fitzgerald told him of someone he loved who had died on Skid Row and said he would be honored to serve Christmas dinner at the Worker.

A second example is contained in a piece by Frank Cordaro, of the Des Moines Catholic Worker, from November 5, 2009. The day before, there had been a civil disobedience action at the "Space Weapons Bazaar" in Omaha, Nebraska. Four "out of state" demonstrators were held overnight in Douglas County Jail and appeared with a group of about 60 persons, mostly poor and black, before Judge Darryl Lowe the morning of the 5th. The court session went on, in assembly line fashion, for hours, and the four protestors were the last to come before the judge. Father Louie Vitale pled "no contest" and was sentenced to five days. The Judge added "If you had pled guilty it would have been three days. Next." Father Jim Murphy was up next. Upon pleading guilty, he was sentenced to three days. When the third protestor, Steve Clemens, approached the bench, Judge Low asked "What were you guys doing at the Qwest Center in the first place?" Steve replied, "Your honor, we were there to protest the Strategic Space Symposium. We were there to protest the selling of space weapons technology to STRATCom!" Frank, still awaiting his appearance, called to the judge "And you just sentenced two Catholic priests to jail!" As Cordaro recounts:

"Judge Lowe just assumed the four of us were arrested for intoxication. He just thought we were four old drunks. . . . 'Catholic priest! Protest!' exclaimed Judge Lowe ... 'Bring those two priests back before me. Give me their files.' The judge asks me to join them all at the bench. We explained to him what our nonviolent protest was all about. He congratulated us for our witness. He said he believed in nonviolent civil disobedience. He said more of it needed to be done. He told us his father was active in the civil rights movement."

Judge Lowe shook each of their hands, and they were all sentenced to time served. Judge Lowe concluded by saying "I hope you all come back again next year!"^{xvi}

Finally, in a more radical approach, judges can engage in civil disobedience themselves. The most powerful case I know of occurred in Germany. Although it occurred outside the United States, it may be of interest particularly because of your father's involvement in the Nuremberg Trials. On January 12, 1987, twenty German judges were arrested in the small town of Mutlangen for blocking the road to the base which housed Pershing II nuclear armed missiles. Their action was part of a nonviolent campaign in which over 1,000 persons had been arrested by that time. One of the twenty, Judge Ulf Panzer, stated:

"Fifty years ago, during the time of Nazi fascism, we judges and prosecutors allegedly 'did not know anything.' By closing our eyes and ears, our hearts and minds, we became a docile instrument of suppression, and many judges committed cruel crimes under the cloak of law. We have been guilty of complicity. Today we are on the way to becoming guilty again, to being abused again. By our passivity, but also by applying laws, we legitimize terror: nuclear terror. Today we do know. We know that it needs only the push of a button and all Germany, Europe, the whole world, will be a radiating desert without human life. It is because we know this that we have to act. Many of us judges have organized 'Judges and Prosecutors for Peace.' We have raised our voices in warning against nuclear death. We have worked with local peace groups, advertised against nuclear armaments, demonstrated and submitted resolutions to our parliament ... Our warnings have died away unheard. That is the reason why we today block the U.S. air base in Mutlangen. We hope that such an action will be heard more loudly than all our words before." [xvii](#)

There had been 1,096 guilty verdicts in the Schwabish-Gmund court for blocking the base. Four days after the action of the judges, there were seven acquittals, the first in the campaign.

In light of this memorandum, Judge Gideon, I make one request – that at my sentencing you make a statement that includes your conclusions about the morality and legality of using weaponized drones. For five years, you have heard evidence about weaponized drones such as those flown out of Hancock. You have heard arguments about international law as it affects drone killings. You have heard from people who have been in Afghanistan and Iraq talk about their encounters with people living under the drones. You have heard excerpts from the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan which document that drones have killed civilians, on a regular basis. You have heard that a classified report authored by Larry Lewis concluded that drones in Afghanistan were significantly more likely to kill civilians than were “manned” aircraft.

Judge Gideon, you are an intelligent, thoughtful person. You stated in your written opinion for the Hancock 38 that you have struggled with the issues we have raised. I would very much like to know your reactions to our evidence and arguments, whether those reactions be for or against the piloting of weaponized drones out of Hancock. I understand that such a statement would not be appropriate in the context of a trial or a verdict. However, I believe it can legitimately be done at sentencing and I hope you will consent to do that.

Thank you for your attention and engagement in this discussion. I look forward to seeing you on March 9th.

Sincerely,

Harry Murray

Professor of Sociology

[i](#)[□] M.K. Gandhi, *Non-Violent Resistance*, Bharatan Kumarappa (ed.). (1951: New York: Schocken), p. 175

[ii](#)[□] Gandhi, it seems, used the terms civil disobedience and civil resistance interchangeably. I will use the former in this memorandum.

[iii](#)[□] Ibid., p. 174

[iv](#)[□] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*. (1971: Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press), pp. 364-367

[v](#)[□] Ibid., p. 372.

[vi](#)[□] Ibid., p. 373.

[vii](#)[□] Ibid., p. 384.

[viii](#)[□] Murray Edelman, *Politics as Symbolic Action*. (1971: Chicago, Markham Publishing Company).

[ix](#)[□] See Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions: 50th Anniversary Edition* (2012: Chicago, University of Chicago Press) for a detailed analysis of how paradigm shifts work in science.

[x](#)[□] quoted in Rosalie G. Riegler, *Crossing the Line: Nonviolent Resisters Speak Out for Peace*, (2013: Eugene, OR: Cascade Books), p. xiii

[xi](#)[□] Brian Terrell, email to the author, March 2, 2007.

[xii](#)[□] Mohandas K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (1957: Boston, Beacon Press), p. 414

[xiii](#)[□] "The Statement of Judge Lord," reprinted in Peace Magazine,

<http://www.peacemagazine.org/archive/v02n5p40.htm>

[xiv](#)[□] Scott Schaeffer-Duffy, *Nothing is Impossible: Stories from the Life of a Catholic Worker*. (2016: Athol, MA: Haley's).

[xv](#)[□] Kent Hoffman, preface, in Jeff Dietrich, *Reluctant Resister: The Prison Letters of Jeff Dietrich*. (1983: Unicorn Press, North Carolina).

[xvi](#)[□] Frank Cordaro, "Douglas County Jail Court Report," Nov. 5, 2009, personal copy sent to me by Rosalie Riegle.

[xvii](#)[□] "Twenty German Judges Arrested at American Air Force Base in West Germany," January 12, 1987 and "In the Name of the :People: Away with Missiles!", personal copies, from Jonah House website.

[Bring Drone Warfare Out of the Shadows](#)

Guest Post by Beth Harris, 3/11/16

On Thursday evening, March 10, 2016, members of the Upstate New York Coalition to Ground the Drones and End the Wars from Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Corning, Enfield and Ithaca met at the DeWitt Town Courthouse to celebrate Mary Anne Grady Flores being released from jail on bond and to provide support to Professor Harry Murray as he faced sentencing for a trespass conviction. Mary Anne's and Harry's arrests occurred during protests at the Hancock Field Air National Guard Base in DeWitt, New York, where drone operators sit in computer rooms directing drone assassinations in Afghanistan, Pakistan

and possibly other countries.

Before Harry's sentencing, there was a [press conference](#), where Ed Kinane, Mary Anne, Harry and I spoke while other members of the Upstate Ground the Drone Coalition held signs with pictures of drone victims and messages protesting US drone warfare. Ed reminded us that the week had an ominous beginning with the news that US drone strikes had [killed 150 people in Somalia](#), where the US has not declared war. We had a moment of silence for these unnamed victims.

For President Obama, the global network of US drone bases and the targeted assassinations from unmanned aerial vehicles have created a foundation for maintaining and expanding the reach of US empire. In "[Garrisoning the Globe](#)," David Fine argues, "Although few Americans realize it, the United States likely has more bases in foreign lands than any other people, nation, or empire in history." The US government asserts its authority to police the world without any system of accountability within the US or internationally.

The February 2016 [report](#) from the bipartisan Stimson Task Force on US Drone Policy describes the scope of the US drone program:

Since June 26, 2014, lethal UAV strikes have been reported in Yemen, Pakistan, Libya, Afghanistan and Somalia, and against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. The use of such targeted strikes is expanding as demand for drones increases to support US military and counterterrorism operations around the world. At least twelve countries are believed to host US drones bases: Afghanistan, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kuwait, Niger, the Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

In addition there are now drone bases throughout the US, including the Hancock air base. In 2012, [Public Intelligence compiled a list](#) of 64 drone bases within US borders, including

12 with Reaper or Predator unmanned aerial vehicles that can be armed.

[Under Obama's watch US drone warfare has killed](#) approximately 5000 people, and due to the government's refusal to provide meaningful information about casualties, it is impossible to determine how many victims have been civilians, though researchers have estimated at least 1000. According to the leaked [Drone Papers](#), during a five-month period in Afghanistan 90% of those killed by drone attacks had not been targets.

A shroud of secrecy, based on claims of executive privilege and national security, has been central to US drone warfare. The grotesque use of "Orders of Protection" against nonviolent protesters intends to silence their opposition to drone warfare and witnesses to the victims of drone attacks. In Mary Anne's case, she had been issued an "order of protection" on behalf of the base commander after she participated in a protest at the Hancock air base in 2012. She was told that he wanted protesters away from his base. At a later protest, she was arrested for criminal contempt of this order of protection when she photographed demonstrators from the road in front of the Hancock air base. DeWitt Judge Gideon sentenced her to a year in prison for this terrible crime.

As we all know, secrecy about a government's kill policies provides the perfect foundation for a complete lack of accountability and threatens the fabric of the societies of both the killers and those killed. For activists committed to justice, conventional means of reform have been thwarted. Consequently, whistle blowers and protesters have become essential to bring the drone kill policies to the attention of the public, to expose the military infrastructure and personnel responsible for the killings, to stop the murders, and to pressure our politicians to create a system of accountability that adheres to national and international law.

On Tuesday the New York Times published an [op ed](#) calling on

President Obama to bring his drone warfare policy “out of the shadows to constrain the power he had unleashed before a new president takes power.” ACLU lawyers Jameel Jaffer and Brett Max Kaufman write that while government supplied data concerning drone strikes is inadequate, we do know that President Obama has approved of strikes far from combat zones and authorized the CIA to carry out “signature strikes,” which are aimed at people the agency does not know, but who are suspected of militant activities.

Jaffer and Kaufman warn, “President Obama has established a dangerous precedent, and consequently whoever prevails in November will inherit a sweeping power to use lethal force against suspected terrorists and militants, including Americans. The new president, whether a Democrat or a Republican, should also inherit policies that limit that power.”

Frontrunner Republican candidate Donald Trump brags that he is willing to carry out war crimes, such as [torture](#) and the killing of family members of those suspected to be terrorists. Furthermore, he is ready to fight and kill for [US access to oil extraction](#) in other countries. The establishment Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton has helped [to develop and defend Obama’s drone policies](#) and has been an avid supporter of [US military intervention](#) throughout her political career. Sanders supports drone warfare, used [in a selective way](#), which is consistent with Obama’s political rhetoric, and Sanders does not explain how the government can be held accountable to this notion of selectivity.

While the Obama administration releases some information to the public, it also continues to fight against FOIA requests for documents about the policies and impact of the drone program. The ACLU has called on the government to release the Presidential Policy Guidance, a document that has provided the legal and administrative framework for the drone campaign since 2013. The government has agreed to release sections of

this document, but until the key legal terms are defined clearly, it will be impossible to determine whether there are meaningful constraints to the government's kill policies. In addition, the ACLU argues that legal memos that justify drone strikes away from battlefields should be revealed. Finally, data about individual strikes, including dates, times, locations and casualties, should be public. Those strikes that kill "innocent civilians" should be investigated, and the results, including compensation for families, should be publicized. While compliance with the ACLU requests would not end drone warfare, it would provide information for the American public to understand the drone policies and create the possibility of informed public discussion about the legality, ethics and impact of US drone warfare.

Prior to Harry's January trial, a Hancock base lawyer argued to quash the subpoena, which Judge Gideon had signed, for the base commander to produce information about Hancock drone strikes. [Harry recounts](#),

"He told the judge that the information I had requested, including the number of children killed by drone strikes piloted out of Hancock, was classified and that Col. Semmel could be prosecuted if he answered any of those questions. If letting the people know how many children its military has killed threatens the security of our nation, what does that say about the US as a country and as a democracy?"

Judge Gideon decided not to send Harry to jail, but not for any ethical or legal reason. He likes the professor and appreciates his respect for the judicial process. Sadly the U.S. government's drone assassination policy was treated as irrelevant to Judge Gideon's reasoning. The judge made an appeal to the protesters in the courtroom to respect the institution of the judiciary while ironically he undermined the legitimacy of his own role by refusing to grapple with concerns about truth, justice or equal treatment under the law

in his explanation of his sentence.

It is alarming that shooting photos of protesters has become a criminal offense deserving incarceration while drone massacres are hidden from public view by our government. The US courts, Congress and mainstream media have normalized this impunity, paving the way to the continual expansion of US military threats throughout the globe. Ultimately the unchecked US role as global bully may undermine the possibility of security for anyone in the world.

Press Conference: Drone Resisters Speak

**Harry Murray to be sentenced at 8pm
Mary Anne Grady Flores released on
bail**

Press Conference:

DeWitt Town Court, E. Syracuse, N.Y.

March 10, 7:15pm

Syracuse, N.Y. The **Upstate Coalition to Ground the Drones and End the Wars** invites the press and public to hear from drone resisters Mary Anne Grady Flores, released on bail Monday night, and Prof. Harry Murray. Judge David Gideon will sentence Nazareth College Professor Murray in the DeWitt Town Court on Thursday at 8pm. Convicted of a trespass charge, Murray faces 15 days in Jamesville Correctional Facility. His conviction stems from the Hancock 31 action (April 28, 2013)

denouncing drone killings in Afghanistan and Pakistan, which are directed by drone operators sitting in computer rooms at Hancock Field Air National Guard Base on E. Molloy Rd. in DeWitt, NY.

After completing 49 days in the Jamesville jail, Mary Anne Grady Flores, grandmother of 3, was released on \$5,000 bail. She had been convicted of criminal contempt of an order of protection signed by a DeWitt judge on behalf of the Hancock base commander who claimed that he wanted the protesters away from his base. Grady Flores' attorney Lance Salisbury submitted an appeal of her conviction to the NYS Court of Appeals, the highest state court. He writes, *"There exists a split within the decisions of the Onondaga County Courts on the validity of the order of protection at issue in this case,"* and that the Court of Appeals must resolve this difference. Salisbury argues that the New York Criminal Code requires that orders of protection be issued only on behalf of a crime victim or witness, not for the protection of property, including a military base, as happened in the case of Grady Flores.

Hancock air base commanders have used orders of protection to silence First Amendment protected rights to protest the crimes committed by entire chain of command of the US drone program. These crimes include violation of sovereignty laws, extra-judicial killings, violation of due process rights, and the killing of innocent civilians. *"We know from leaked government documents, [the Drone Papers](#), during a five month period in Afghanistan, 90% of all drone victims were bystanders. If the American people knew the impact of the drone program, they would shut it down,"* said Grady Flores. [Four former drone operators](#) wrote President Obama,

"This administration and its predecessors have built a drone program that is one the most devastating driving forces for terrorism and destabilization around the world. When the guilt of our role in facilitating this systematic loss of

innocent life became too much, all of us succumbed to PTSD.”

Prior to Professor Murray’s January trial, a Hancock base lawyer argued to quash the subpoena, which Judge Gideon had signed, for the base commander to produce information about Hancock drone strikes. Professor Murray recounts,

“He told the judge that the information I had requested, including the number of children killed by drone strikes piloted out of Hancock, was classified and that Col. Semmel could be prosecuted if he answered any of those questions. If letting the people know how many children its military has killed threatens the security of our nation, what does that say about the US as a country and as a democracy?”

[Grandma Drone Protester’s Second Jail Letter](#)

Grandma Drone Protester’s Second Jail Letter:

>> [Talk Nation Radio with David Swanson: One-Hour Special: Mary Anne Grady Flores from Jail on Why She Protested Killer Drones](#)

On January 19, 2016 I was remanded after a county court decision upheld a lower court verdict that I was guilty of violating the terms of an order of protection while photographing 8 Catholic drone protestors at Hancock Air force Base. Orders of protection were originally created to protect domestic violence victims and witnesses who might be subject to intimidation.

A month later while in jail I realized that Friday, Feb. 19 was important to me for four reasons. *First*, it was the seventh anniversary of my brother-in-law Peter DeMott's sudden passing, leaving my widowed sister Ellen with four daughters to raise. Peter was a rock in our family and is sorely missed. We miss his energy, his wit, his deep bass radio voice, his random acts of kindness, his recitation of poetry, his mixing hot sauce with all his food. We miss his tireless efforts of putting his body at many gates, or climbing over fences or driving into military bases or witnessing at corporate military contractors' facilities like Lockheed Martin, to end the madness of the never ending racist colonial wars of the U.S. empire. I hold Ellen, the tireless organizer of anti-killer-drone actions at Hancock Airbase, and each of their gifted daughters in prayer and in love.

Second, on that Friday, our 88-year-old mom, Teresa Grady, was officially accepted into Hospice. This past December, mom broke her hip and has declined since then. My siblings and I have been blessed caring for her 24/7 in her home for almost two years. It's been a struggle since January 19, when I entered jail, especially as she nears her final days. My mother, along with my dad taught us that our faith meant we were supposed to stand up for human rights and justice. I learned that the jail might provide a death bed visit. First, they told me I had to prove that mom is my mother by getting my birth certificate. My counselor, Ms. Kash, has to handle a caseload of about 140 cases. Nevertheless, doing the best she could, she responded to my request to speak about mom's decline, coming to the busy hub of the Pod – the guard desk – instead of the counselor's office two feet away respecting confidentiality or sensitivity to the situation. The counselor asked me

“What's your mom's name and her doctor's name? “What's your mom's date of birth where is she? Who's caring for her? When I explained that Mon is being cared for at home by the family

she responded. "Oh, that's going to be a problem! It's a security risk. You can't have any family members with you while you're there." I said, "Mom can't be left alone. I'll be in shackles!"

Some other sergeants said it's highly unlikely they would let me go to the house. Whether I stole a band aid, murdered someone, or photographed non-violent drone protesters, my transport guards would treat me the same.

Within the jail, there are different security levels designated to us inmates, but it doesn't apply as we leave the prison walls.

This past Friday, Feb. 25, I was surprised by the jail authorities announcing they were taking me to see mom at home! I couldn't believe it! I couldn't tell anyone ahead of time. When the unmarked car pulled up by mom's house Clare, who was on duty for mom, noticed us and ran in to tell mom, who was in the living room in her hospital bed. When we entered the house Clare was jumping up and down with tears streaming down her cheeks. The two officers informed her that she couldn't call anyone or the half-hour visit would be over. I walked, shackled, wrists to waist and ankles, to be at mom's side, leaning over her to kiss her big smiling face. I told her over and over that I loved her, my tears wetting her soft cheeks. I asked if she was in any pain. "No, I'm not in pain. I'm o.k." She kept smiling and fell asleep. What a precious, blessed moment. Mom slept through the rest of the visit. We left Clare with mom and drove back to Jamesville in brilliant sunshine passing Lake Cayuga in gratitude, marveling at all of creation and in thanksgiving for mom's life.

This situation reminds me of when Peter was in federal prison in Brooklyn. Before the sentencing of the St. Patrick's Four, Peter and Ellen had been caring for his brother, Father Steve DeMott, who died two months after Peter's sentencing.

The prison officials wouldn't allow Peter to come 45 minutes north of New York City to the funeral in Maryknoll, New York. During this Lent we remember Uncle Steve's passing, on March 30, 2006, and all the loving care that fell on Ellen's shoulders till Steve passed.

A few weeks ago, the mother of one of the women in my pod, 19-year-old Clairrissa, died on a Wednesday of a heroin overdose. Clairrissa only learned on Saturday that her mom had died. While shackled and in an empty funeral home she was allowed to spend one half hour with her mom's body. She wasn't allowed to be at the funeral. The New York State Department of Correction rules and regulations state that inmates have the right to both a death bed visit and to be at the funeral dependent upon the discretion of the jail or prison officials.

And who is in prison? The poor! Disproportionately, people of color! Who isn't in jail? You don't see the bankers who pulled down our economy in 2008! You don't see the mortgage company swindlers who stole millions from poor and hardworking people. You don't see those committing war crimes – those who have killed with drones and Hellfire missiles sent from U.S. air bases, nor those who gave them their orders. You don't see the officials who poisoned the water in Flint, Michigan or the corporate executives who kill people with their unsafe products. You don't see the cops who murder unarmed black men, women, teenagers and children.

Thirdly, on Friday, February 19, my appeal was submitted to the New York State Court of Appeals, the highest court in the state by my attorney Lance Salisbury. Lance also submitted a request that I be released on bail pending the decision on whether the court will take my case. If the court decides in a month that it won't take the case, I return to Jamesville to finish my six months' sentence. I've witnessed many of the women anxiously awaiting court or jail administrators' decisions of whether or not, or when, they'd be released. Going in and out of prisons is not a simple matter. It takes a

tremendous amount of energy to get in and get acclimated each time.

The main points of my appeal challenge the validity of the orders of protection that have been given to 50 people, including myself. These orders of protection have been designed to block our First Amendment right; to ask our government to redress our grievance, specifically, to end the killer drone policy, which killed over 6,000 people in 2015 alone. As Colonel Evans, who requested the original 17 orders of protection, including mine, testified during my trial, he just wanted the protesters away from his base.

The appeal contends that you can't ask for an order of protection on behalf of a military base. The order must be given on behalf of a victim or a witness. A separate appeal was submitted by Attorney Kathy Manley on behalf of 13 of us (originally the Hancock 17) addressing the same issues of the improper application of the orders of protection.

And finally, the *fourth* reason, this day is special is the very good news for both drone resisters and fracktivists that attorney Jonathan Wallace, who has been successfully defending many of the Hancock resisters has now proposed legislation to limit the scope of these orders so they do not apply to peaceful protestors. This legislation would exempt military and corporate personnel in New York State from using the orders of protection to deprive people of their First Amendment rights. The proposed legislation is as follows:

“Nothing herein contained shall be construed to authorize issuance of a temporary order of protection or order of protection, designating as a “victim” or “witness” any federal, state or local government employee (including serving or reserve members of the military or members of any police force), or any corporate employee, against any individual arrested at a demonstration or protest against the employer of such victim or witness, in the absence of an actual or

threatened act of physical violence, or a true threat issued, by such individual against such victim or witness.”

We hope to have a New York State legislator to propose this change in the law and a statewide petition for you to sign and circulate encouraging our legislators to support the bill when it is ready for a vote.

Again, I'd like to thank all of you who've sent great letters and cards lifting my spirits each morning. Even the guards laugh at some of the jokes you've sent especially Scott Schaeffer Deffy. It is so wonderful to feel the waves of love through your letters, poems, art work, etc. I'm thrilled with great hope when I receive your letters telling me of actions you take for justice's sake combatting the triples of militarism, racism and economic exploitation. My friend Russell Rickford calls these the 3 w's – war, wealth inequality and white supremacy.

I'm especially moved by the love and motivation expressed by young people hearing of my jail witness, like my California friend Sequoia Cohen. Sequoia is a student at Sierra Nevada College in Lake Tahoe where she is organizing 3 events to raise awareness of drone warfare and its consequences. Two whistleblower drone pilots, Cian Westmoreland and Stephen Lewis, have accepted her invitation to speak. Soon after, students and community members will join the “Shut Down Creech Air Force Base” rally, at the base, outside of Las Vegas, Nevada. Since 2005 this facility has been the place from which remotely controlled drones take off on killing missions for Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq. Many of those killed are civilians.

Go Sequoia! This is a fine example of the 3 A's, awareness, acceptance, and action.

On March 30th at the University of Nevada there will be a symposium titled **“Inside Drone Warfare: Perspectives of**

Whistleblowers, Families of Drone Victims and Their Lawyers.”

The participants will also go to Creech Air Force base to join the protest there. For more information go to <http://www.knowdrones.com/>.

You are invited to be part of the Creech AFB protest, joining with peace activists from the Northeast, including a number from the Syracuse area.

I send you my greetings and thanks to you all and to the ever widening awareness and embracing of the beloved community.

Not by might

Nor by power

But by spirit

Mary Anne

To make a donation

–Checks are preferred. Please make them out to the Ithaca Catholic Worker, 514 North Plain Street, Ithaca, NY 14850. Put Mary Anne Grady Flores in the memo line.

–Donations will be accepted at the GoFundMe page: <https://www.gofundme.com/bjmk9gf8>. They take 5% of the donation.

To write to Mary Anne

–Put your return address in the body of your letter or in your card; envelopes are removed before Mary Anne receives correspondence.

–Please don't send cards with glitter or stick ons.

–Send letters to:

Mary Anne Grady Flores #12001966
Onondaga County Department of Correction
PO Box 143
Jamesville, NY 13078

Please Get Involved in the Resistance to Drones:

Grandma Drone Resister's Letter from Jail

**Ithaca Catholic Worker Mary Anne Grady Flores' first letter,
Feb.11, 2016**

Greetings, Dear Friends—

Joy swept through our cell block, Jamesville County Jail, Pod 4, Thursday, January 28.

That evening some of the fifty-nine women in our Pod rushed up and knocked on my cell door. They reported the six o'clock news had shown twelve drone resisters handcuffed, sitting on a roadside curb, waiting to be taken into custody.

I just started my six-month sentence on January 19, for photographing protesters of the drone warfare directed out of Hancock Air Base in nearby Syracuse, New York. These eight protesters, many of whom are Catholic Workers, were later acquitted. (See my January 19 press conference [statement](#).)

The resisters had fastened together thirty larger-than-life cut-out photos of the late Jerry Berrigan, standing bold in a blue scarf. This line of cut-outs of Jerry was held by the

twelve resisters, blockading the main gate at Hancock Air Base, where Jerry had protested for years on a bi-weekly basis.

Shortly before he died at 95 last year, Jerry was asked during a *Syracuse Post-Standard* news interview what he would have done differently. He said: "I would have resisted more and gotten arrested more."

"The Jerry Berrigan Memorial Drone Blockade" was done to honor Jerry's wishes. It was to protest the ongoing 24-7 drone assassinations initiated by drone operators at Hancock as part of the Obama administration's "kill chain."

Hancock is presently only one of twenty U.S. drone-warfare bases across the U.S., Germany and the U.K. The ["Drone Papers"](#)—leaked by an internal military whistleblower—confirm what whistle-blower drone pilots as well as drone victims have reported: The outrageous fact that 90% of all drone victims are bystanders, among them, many children.

That day my friend Carissa from Pod 4 returned excited from the downtown Syracuse "Justice" Center (Jail) because there she 'd met the four drone protester women—Beth Adams, Joan Pleune, Bev Rice, Joan Wages—who were among the twelve at the "Jerry" action.

Carissa learned that Joan and Bev had knowingly violated the same order of protection that fifty other drone protesters have. I had unintentionally violated it, landing me in jail for six months.

The "order of protection" has been issued on behalf of the commander of Hancock Air Base against drone protesters. Usually such orders are issued to protect people from physical violence and even death from their abusive domestic partners.

Currently "protected" by the order is the commander in charge of Hancock Air Base and its 2,000 personnel and armed

soldiers—making him the “victim” instead of the real victims, the many people killed by the base’s MQ9 Reaper drones, firing “Hellfire” missiles.

The base commander, testifying at my trial, said: “No, I don’t know Mary Anne Grady. No, I’ve never had a conversation with her. I’m not afraid of her. *That’s* just a piece of paper. I just want these protesters away from my base.”

Carissa told me: “You folks should be protesting in the courts for the misuse of the order of protection. I’d go with you to protest.” That sentiment has been echoed by others here in the pod.

In fact, a team of attorneys is finalizing the points of appeal of my case to the New York State Court of Appeals, to challenge the use of the order of protection. This is the highest court in New York State. The appeal decision will set a precedent for upcoming cases of anyone else charged with violating the order of protection.

Joan and Bev are willing to risk long jail sentences to fight the drones and expose the absurdity of this use of orders of protection. Joan has been part of resistance movements since the Freedom Rides challenged racist segregation during the Civil Rights era.

In a previous drone protest, [Catholic Worker](#) Mark Colville and two Yale Divinity students brought a bouquet of roses and the People’s Order of Protection on behalf of drone victims to the Hancock’s main entrance. The People’s Order reads in part: “Stop the terrorizing, menacing, maiming and killing of the children, women, and men of Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen.”

Raz Mohammad of Maidan Shahr, Afghanistan, and a friend of drone resisters locally, requested an order of protection on behalf of his village after his brother-in-law was killed by a drone. Raz wrote: “When my nephew was 5 years old, he asked

his mother "Where is father?" My sister replied, "He was killed by a computer." [Drones are piloted by people sitting at computers]. These negative effects persist on all of us to this day."

This is a critical moment in the six years of Hancock Resistance. Stopping killer drones is our #1 continued focus, no matter what tool is used to try to chill the movement. We must keep our focus on the [voices of the drone victims](#).

I don't ask for pardon, nor do my fellow drone resisters, because as people of conscience we must speak out, as Jerry did, to stop the death-dealing by our government and military. It is our first amendment right to stand at the gate of Hancock Air Base, asking our government for redress of our grievances, specifically, to end this killer-drone policy, which in 2015 alone killed over six thousand people.

Immediately after the Paris attacks, the [four whistleblower drone pilots](#), sent a letter of criticism to President Obama, defense secretary Ashton Carter and CIA chief John Brennan. In part, [their letter](#) said: "We came to the realization that the innocent civilians we were killing only fueled the feelings of hatred that ignited terrorism and groups like Isis, while also serving as a fundamental recruitment tool, similar to Guantánamo Bay. This administration and its predecessors have built a drone program that is one of the most devastating driving forces for terrorism and destabilization around the world."

I am filled with gratitude that the local resistance continues, joining drone resistance around the world, We here in Central New York have had 172 arrests since 2010 and over 1000 people have protested and vigiled at Hancock Air Base. I affirm the statement of "[The Jerry Berrigan Memorial Drone Blockade](#)."

From my jail cell, I invite us all to take a step beyond our

comfort zones into deeper solidarity with all those struggling for justice, including the Black Lives Matter movement, ending climate change, ending immigrant deportations and the Free Palestine movement. Keep in mind the drone killing is only one tool to keep the people here at home and around the world under U.S. control. We must reject the death dealings of empire, and are called to celebrate love, life and creativity, seeking to live nonviolently. As [Cornel West](#) says, "Justice is what love looks like in public."

Many thanks to all of you who have written to me in jail, sending poems, articles, artwork and jokes, bringing light and laughter to me and the women here. Thanks for your photos and reports of your anti drone witnesses! Thanks to all the vets old and young sending me letters of their peace witnesses. Thanks for the MLK quotes and others and your own as well. I'm a slow writer, so forgive me if I don't get back to you. Each of your letters (except the ones held back) are read and treasured.

Thanks to folks bringing meals to Mom. I know many of you have written to me at my home and I look forward to reading your cards when I return. Also thanks to folks who have generously donated towards my home and jail expenses and Mom's care. Thank you for those gifts. I'm feeling so much gratitude for all that you have showered upon me.

I am warm. I am fed. I have good people around me. I'm so grateful for all your prayers and thoughts. I feel so lifted by you and God's grace. I hold you in my thoughts and prayers.

I'll be sending more letters, please keep an eye out for them
In gratitude,
Mary Anne Grady Flores

Please Get Involved in the Resistance to Drones:

For information on how to get involved, please refer to upstatedroneaction.org and [knowdrones](http://knowdrones.com).

Watch the film [Unmanned: America's Drone Wars](#) and share it with your friends.

View a short video on [Drones of Upstate New York](#) (English, with Spanish subtitles)

March 30, 2016 Symposium in Nevada : [Inside Drone Warfare: Perspectives of Whistleblowers, Families of Drone Victims and Their Lawyers.](#) This will be videotaped and is part of [Shut Down Creech Air Force Base](#) (March 27-April 2)

Get involved with ongoing drone resistance at these following air bases:

- Beale (outside Marysville, California), [Occupy Beale](#)
- Creech (Indian Springs, Nevada), [Shut Down Creech!](#)
- Hancock (outside Syracuse, NY), [Syracuse Peace Council](#) and [Upstate Coalition to Ground the Drones and End the Wars](#)
- Horsham (Horsham, Pennsylvania), [Brandywine Peace Community](#)
- Niagara Falls (Niagara Falls, NY), [No Drones Niagara](#) and [Upstate Coalition to Ground the Drones and End the Wars](#)
- Volk (Camp Douglas, Wisconsin), [Wisconsin Coalition to Ground the Drones](#)

Start resisting drones at these following air bases:

–Arizona Air National Guard; Cannon (New Mexico); California ANG; Davis-Monthan (Arizona); Ellsworth (South Dakota); Grand Forks (North Dakota); Holloman (New Mexico); Nellis (Nevada); Ohio ANG; Hickam (Hawaii); Randolph (Texas); Tennessee ANG; Texas ANG; Whiteman (Missouri); also RAF Waddington (United Kingdom), and Ramstein (Germany); and—with plans for 110 new bases throughout the U.S.—more, coming to a neighborhood near

you.

Join a few friends, and come out to your town's busy corner holding signs like "Stop Killer Drones" or whatever message you want to end the wars. (Ithaca's route 13 bridge has 39,000 cars which pass daily. Our local vigil is Saturdays from 10-11am).

More suggestions will be included in upcoming letters.

For Jail Correspondence:

- Put your return address in the body of your letter or in your card; envelopes are removed before Mary Anne receives correspondence.
- Please don't send cards with glitter or stick ons.
- Send letters to:

Mary Anne Grady Flores #12001966
Onondaga County Department of Correction
PO Box 143
Jamesville, NY 13078

To make a donation:

- Checks are preferred. Please make them out to the Ithaca Catholic Worker, 514 North Plain Street, Ithaca, NY 14850. Put Mary Anne Grady Flores in the memo line.
- Donations will be accepted at the [Go Fund Me Page](#) (they take 5%)