

Thousands of Hearts and Minds

by Ed Kinane

To work against militarism and for social justice is to struggle for hearts and minds. We “educate, agitate, and organize.” We reach out to the public to mobilize its conscience. But the public is large and we are few. Most ways to reach the public are costly. Or shaped by other agendas. So mostly we operate small scale. We could however make much greater use of a familiar and broad public forum: letters to the editor.

LTEs are a valuable tool. In writing them, we can transform ourselves, deepening our analysis and vision, making more public our witness, making steadfast our commitment. We’re standing up and out for what we stand for.

LTEs play varied roles:

- publicizing your upcoming events
- defining and clarifying issues
- expanding the bounds of discussion
- expressing community and planetary needs
- correcting misinformation and exposing disinformation
- speaking truth to power: describing the ‘emperor’s new clothes’
- expressing solidarity; advocating for the voiceless

(Back in the eighties, after I had spent some weeks in apartheid South Africa, I returned to Syracuse, my hometown. Over the following months I showered our local paper, the Post-Standard with LTEs about the ins and outs and the injustices of apartheid. This flurry of letters intrigued a certain woman – Ann. We eventually met and we’ve been partners ever since. Which might point to yet another role for LTEs: matchmaking.)

LTEs jar, prod, scold. They recall, they inspire, they appeal to conscience. Each letter to the editor can reach many thousands of readers. Very cheaply. It only takes a computer (or paper and pen), and, if you don't submit on-line, a postage stamp. And some engaging work. The *Post-Standard*, prints nearly a page of LTEs daily. It has a circulation of 70,000 (120,000 on Sunday) – with an estimated twice as many readers. Plus, lots get their news fix from their daily paper on-line, which includes LTEs.

LTEs are one of the most popular newspaper features. Let's say one in three readers – either in the print edition or on-line – reads LTEs. Those tens of thousands are more likely than average to vote and act politically. That's the audience we want to reach.

Often LTEs are a one-shot response to an issue or event. But for more impact one might write successive LTEs instructive to reader and editor alike. Each LTE would develop an aspect of a theme you might be particularly knowledgeable and passionate about. Such continuity and persistence is vital, especially for issues otherwise neglected or misrepresented in the media. Or by government officials. The one-shot letter is good; a series of letters on an issue is better. If you can't support a particular cause financially, consider pledging to write (say) one LTE a month on its behalf.

If you write a letter to a local, state or federal politico, copy your newspaper. Don't settle for it being read only by the politician's staff. That staff is much more likely to call your letter to their boss's attention if it also appears in print. They know thousands of voters are also reading it.

Many LTEs are written to a single periodical only. Yet a letter, without much effort, often can be adapted to others. The more widely a letter is published, the wider its influence. After some time and it hasn't appeared, you might contact the letter editor, re-sending the original. Ask if

your letter has been misplaced. With that prod, it may soon be published.

If it is framed as a response to a specific article recently appearing in the periodical, your letter's publication is more likely. Some – not all – editors won't print letters from outside their circulation area or more than one letter a month from the same author.

Three other factors affect whether a letter is published: space, ideology, and quality.

Space. In most periodicals, reader input is minimal. But many provide at least token space for LTEs. Typically, editors prefer short letters and may abridge or ignore longer ones. I work to keep LTEs to a single page.

Prestigious periodicals receive far more letters than they print. *The New York Times* receives oodles of LTEs. So your chances there are slim. But if the *Times* does print your letter, it will reach a particularly broad and influential readership.

"Op-eds" are long letters or short essays appearing opposite the editorial page. Where LTEs may be 200 words, an op-ed may be 600 or 800. To get that much space, you usually need expertise or distinctive background. Having spent time in some global hot spot like Central America or the Middle East can be a sufficient credential for an informed op-ed regarding that region.

Ideology. In the US we do have "freedom of the press"...up to a point. While mainstream media promote the public airing of (some) issues, they also set real – though elastic – limits on debate. After all, most media are big business with particular class and economic interests. Letters critical of such interests have rather less chance of being published. (Though

to appear “balanced,” editors may occasionally run opposing or unorthodox views.) In the US, as in any country, the print media are more open to some authors and some topics than to others.

LTE writers may assume that the more bland and “balanced” they sound, the more chance they have of being heard. Maybe yes, maybe no. But this self-censorship, besides promoting boredom, redundancy and irrelevance, can be a cop-out. True, a forthright (or “radical”) letter may turn off some editors or readers. But forthright perspectives may well hearten allies and raise the consciousness of the receptive. Also, such letters legitimate worthy, less pointed letters. Without the contrast, other’s tame letters may occupy the outer fringes of discourse.

Letter writers are like court jesters. We have license to speak more boldly than journalists and columnists. LTEs are do-it-ourselves journalism. Our letters can cite facts (e.g. about corporate corruption or US foreign policy) that many in the industry seem to avoid even thinking about. These pros have families to support, bosses to please, careers to make. *Often they’ve so internalized the constraints that they are no longer aware of their self-censorship.* Because the population at large are likewise afflicted, our letters are all the more essential.

LTEs are an opportunity. If we don’t exercise that opportunity, we’ve lost it. So we must not gag ourselves at the outset. We need to probe the limits of expression, mindfully. In doing so we may even expand those limits: “If you don’t push, it won’t budge.” Most papers print few challenging letters, not because they consciously censor, but perhaps because we are too tame (or too busy) to submit them.

Quality. The more concise and carefully written a letter, the more likely it will be printed...and have impact. Spare the editor the chore of condensing or cleaning up your letter.

Otherwise, even if your LTE gets published, the editorial scalpel may hamstring your continuity and coherence. To shorten a longish letter, an editor may remove parts she doesn't fancy. Careful, concise writing can keep your message intact.

To make the editor's job easier, type and double-space your letter. LTEs should be neat, timely, accurate, grammatical, non-rhetorical and free of unintended ambiguity. Your letter should cite up front a recent article or relate to a theme recently broached in the paper. For readability, favor short, familiar, concrete words, short sentences and short paragraphs. To provide context, include who/what/where/when facts. And to provide more impact, don't neglect the "why" factor.

Be careful to get your facts right; when citing facts an editor might doubt, supply a source footnote. The note won't be printed, but it aids fact-checking and boosts credibility. Also, if you have a relevant credential that gives your views heft, note it – either in your text or as a writer's ID at the beginning or end.

An effective letter takes sweat. You may be working to express ideas you've never before put to paper. I sometimes don't know quite what I think until I wrestle those thoughts onto the page. You may learn you have ideas you didn't know you had. Your LTE will need not only proofreading, but revising, probably repeated revising. To prevent gaffes, seek a second opinion. Especially when writing out of anger, have someone else check the tone. Sleep on it: I often see need for further revisions the next morning.

Sometimes an LTE can be dashed off quickly. But I can take several hours to craft an LTE. Five or six hours to reach tens of thousands of readers is well worth it. That's thousands of hearts and minds for every hour of work. What better way to educate, agitate and organize?

In 2003 Ed spent five months in Iraq with Voices in the Wilderness.

Billboards Opposing Drone Wars Are Going Up All Over Syracuse, NY

by *David Swanson*, originally published on [World Beyond War](#), Feb 21. 2018

World Beyond War has been raising funds for and renting billboards in opposition to war. We've run into censorship from numerous billboard companies but persevered, and more billboards are on their way.

First we put this message up here in Charlottesville, Va., and then in Baltimore, Md. (see explanation of the [3% calculation here](#)):



**3% of U.S. military
spending could end
starvation on earth.**

worldbeyondwar.org

Paid for by World Beyond War

Now we're putting these two images up on billboards in Syracuse, NY, where drone pilots participate in U.S. wars from Hancock Air Base:



For 8 hours a day for 16 days in March, these two images will be on either side of a billboard truck driving around downtown Syracuse and the University of Syracuse. Then, from April 2 to May 27 each image will be on two of the four stationary billboards located at 115 South Street, 700 East Washington Street, 1430 Erie Boulevard East, and 1201-1208 South Salina at Raynor Street. Then, from May 28 to July 22, one image will be on two and the other on one of three billboards at 700 East Washington Street, 909 East Genesee Street, and 1758 Erie Boulevard East.

Why Syracuse?

The Syracuse area hosts Hancock Air National Guard base where the Guard's 174th Attack Wing conducts drone assassination and target identification missions using MQ-9 Reaper drones in Afghanistan and probably elsewhere. It has been announced that the numbers of drone operators being trained at Hancock will be [doubled](#).

The billboard ads are being undertaken in the context of what amounts to a [whiteout of information](#) on drone and other air operations in Afghanistan. Pentagon reports on drone and other air attacks in other nations are inadequate at best, and these reports when they come have been inaccurate and have grossly under-reported casualties. The U.S. government has made no reports and taken no responsibility for the emotional devastation of drone attacks on children as well as adults, as documented by the Al Karama Foundation's "[Traumatizing Skies](#)."

Syracuse is home to a [creative and courageous group of](#)

[activists](#) who have done a great deal of public education already and who are continuing those efforts.

Overcoming Censorship

Some companies have refused to rent space for billboards opposing drone wars. No company has questioned the facts of the messages, apart from one company asking us to say that drone wars “may” make us less safe, adding the word “may.”

It is hardly disputable that drones make [orphans](#), or that they kill innocent [children](#). That drone wars make us less safe ought to be obvious after what the “successful” drone war has done to Yemen, following the April 23, 2013, [testimony](#) of Farea al-Muslimi before the U.S. Congress that drone strikes were building support for terrorists. But don’t take it from him or me, when a leaked CIA [document](#) admits that the drone program is “counterproductive,” and numerous recently retired top U.S. officials [agree](#).

For the most part companies have given no explanation for refusals to display these graphics. In some cases, they have said the graphics made them “uncomfortable,” or they’ve asked that we stick to “positive-oriented messaging.” Those companies that have written policies that I’ve seen for what they accept have in no case had a policy that explained their refusal, other than their declaration of their right to refuse for any reason whatsoever.

While some companies in Syracuse said no, and others yes, every company in Forth Smith, Arkansas has, thus far, said no, without any explanation. These include:

RAM Outdoor Advertising: 1-479-806-7735

Ashby Street Outdoor: 1-479-221-9827

Billboard Source: 1-940-383-3500

Feel free to ask them to explain. Remember that politeness is most effective. RAM Outdoor Advertising did say: “Thanks for

sharing your potential creative. I've shared it with the owners and they have decided that your creative will violate our lease agreements. We will have to decline your ads." I requested to see the "lease agreements" and received no reply.

Fort Smith is the home of the 188th Wing of the Arkansas Air National Guard at Ebbing Air National Guard base, which controls Reaper drones for assassination and target identification. It appears drone operations will [expand](#) there also.

Freedom of Speech

World Beyond War billboards are funded entirely by [contributions made](#) by supporters of ending war who want to help put up more billboards. We will continue to solicit such contributions and to work to overcome censorship.

One of the more common, if ludicrous, defenses of war making is that it somehow defends one's rights. Yet, freedom of speech and of press is routinely restricted in the name of protecting the war making.

Following the recent school shooting in Florida, we [pointed out](#) that [the shooter](#) had been trained by the U.S. military in a JROTC program funded by the NRA, and that this information was publicly available and not disputed. Major media outlets chose to avoid that story in order to focus, instead, on the undocumented (and, as it happens, false) claim that the shooter had worked with right-wing groups.

Google, Facebook, and other big forces on the internet are working hard to steer ever more traffic toward big corporate outlets and away from voices of dissent. Congress has eliminated net neutrality.

Whistleblowers are now up against the risk of prison time.

Protesters at inauguration parades face felony charges.

In my town in Virginia, Charlottesville, we are still forbidden to take down any war monuments, and still have no public peace monuments, but the local government *has* just made it a crime to hold a public demonstration without a permit obtained 30 days ahead.

In some airports and perhaps other locations, this story that you are reading will be blocked by internet services on the grounds that it constitutes “advocacy.”

Is this the “freedom” for which the wars endanger and impoverish and indebt us?

What you can do

1. Politely phone the companies above and ask them to explain their censorship.
2. Send us ideas for good locations for billboards.
3. Send us [donations](#) with which to put up more billboards.

David Swanson is an author, activist, journalist, and radio host. He is director of [WorldBeyondWar.org](#) and campaign coordinator for [RootsAction.org](#). Swanson’s books include [War Is A Lie](#) and [When the World Outlawed War](#). He blogs at [DavidSwanson.org](#) and [WarIsACrime.org](#). He hosts [Talk Nation Radio](#). He is a [2015, 2016, 2017 Nobel Peace Prize Nominee](#).

GETTING BEYOND WAR AND

MILITARISM: the “To-Do” List

Violence begets violence. War profits only the few, the rich, the powerful – the 1%. As moral beings and tax paying citizens we must vigorously oppose war. Especially those wars of aggression perpetrated by the United States and its allies and proxies. These mostly occur in or near the Islamic oil lands (Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen).

We must oppose resource war and wars of weapon demonstration (drones over Gaza). We must oppose war for corporate profit. War industry lobbying (Lockheed Martin) and election buying corrupts our Congress, our Executive Branch and any legitimate defense force. War dehumanizes the “other.” It dehumanizes and disempowers ourselves.

War diverts vast, unimaginable federal tax funds from their most worthy function: meeting human needs – feeding, housing, schooling, healthcare, infrastructure. And disaster relief – these days so criminally paltry (Puerto Rico).

War solves no legitimate problem; war spawns problems. War impoverishes, erodes democracy, undermines law. War targets civilians, creates refugees and triggers ethnic cleansing. War uses rape, maims bodies and minds (PTSD), cheapens life. War spurs ecological devastation (Viet Nam) and climate disaster. Nuclear war risks nuclear winter, i.e. the extinction of the human species.

Not only must we oppose war, we must oppose *militarism*: the incessant search for enemies, the incessant preparation for war, the saturation of our economy and culture with martial values and vested interests in war.

WHAT MUST BE DONE (personally and nationally)

1. *replace toxic with renewable energy.*

2. *avoid dependence on the war economy; divest from the corporate war profiteers.*
3. *expose the mainstream media's unholy alliance with militarism. The corporate-owned MSM reflexively align with military policy. The MSM generate fear, normalize violence, villainize rival powers, gloss over war crime.*
4. *"take a knee" against nationalism/exceptionalism – major enablers of war.*
5. *stamp out racism – also a major enabler of war (end the "new Jim Crow," de-militarize the police, abolish the prison/industrial complex).*
6. *resist the Islamophobia enabling invasions and genocide (Yemen).*
7. *end U.S. military aid and exports to any invading nation or entity (Saudi Arabia/Yemen, Israel/Palestine).*
8. *abolish nuclear weapons.*
9. *abolish weaponized drones.*
10. *stop deploying mercenaries.*
11. *negotiate in good faith with adversaries.*
12. *expose the phony "war on terrorism" – that war of terrorism (a.k.a. state terrorism) – cynically keeping the pot boiling. "Terrorism," though rarely defined, is the use – or threat – of violence against civilians for political or economic reasons.*
13. *withdraw U.S. and NATO forces from Iraq, Afghanistan and Eastern Europe.*
14. *withdraw clandestine U.S. special forces – 70,000 in about 80 countries – from the continents they infest (Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America).*
15. *dismantle U.S. military bases menacing rival economic systems (Venezuela, Russia, China, Iran, North Korea).*
16. *dismantle the myriad, redundant domestic military bases not necessary for defending our borders.*
17. *finance the reconstruction of those nations that U.S. bombs destroyed; compensate the victims (1950s North*

- Korea, Viet Nam north and south, Laos, Iraq, Libya).*
- 18. avoid lifestyle pitfalls (addictions, distractions, consumerism, co-optation, debt). These impede our capacity to speak out and further risk resistance.*
 - 19. build solidarity with kindred – and sometimes not so kindred – spirits. Get beyond our bubbles, our turfs, our siloes.*
 - 20. overcome obliviousness and compartmentalization. The compartmentalized mind is a colonized mind. People of goodwill here often bemoan the lack of federal funding for domestic needs. Yet many refuse to acknowledge – much less oppose – the elephantine impact U.S. military spending has at home. Such needs, if addressed, would provide more employment and security than high tech war industries do.*
 - 21. slash the Pentagon budget. Doing so will boost most of the foregoing initiatives. Doing so will impede the mounting decay and insolvency of this nation.*
 - 22. become a war tax resister.*

Our ultimate mission: “achieving a global just peace by abolishing war and militarism.” Okay, we’re unlikely to achieve that utopian goal. But work on these “can-do” campaigns has a huge payoff: reducing human suffering, plus empowering ourselves and others. We can’t do everything, but we can do something. Each of us needs to do what we can, with what we have, where we are.

Is there a more authentic way to spend our lives than that?

Standing Up to the National Anthem

by James Ricks of *Upstate Drone Action*, previously published on [United National Antiwar Coalition Blog](#) and [Ithaca Gazette](#)



This Nation's anthem was composed by Francis Scott Key, a racist, white supremacist, anti-abolitionist lawyer. He felt that black people, free or slave, were genetically inferior to white people. That perception was the foundation of his legal pursuits. When he was the District Attorney for the City of Washington, he defended slavery and prosecuted those in the abolitionist movement. He argued in court that the institution of slavery should be continued, continued ad infinitum, I suppose, as there is no known cure for "genetic inferiority" that I am aware of. Actually, I never heard anyone but my white brothers use that particular terminology.

But back to Francis, this anthem that he wrote, and this very demeaning obsession this nation has, that I, a black man, should stand respectfully and honor his musical creation. I suggest that anyone who takes umbrage at my statement, read the lyrics of the song, the whole song. Then dare ask a black person to stand for this anthem.

*"No refuge could save the hireling and slave/
From the terror of flight or the gloom of the grave/
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave/
O'er the land of the free and
the home of the brave."*

Would Jewish people be expected to stand reverently for an anthem written by Heinrich Himmler or Joseph Goebbels or the rest in that Nazi crew? Should anyone be expected to endure

the humiliation of honoring an anthem, authored by someone who felt they were less than human? Not in any just environment. Which also begs the question, exactly where are we?

Ridicule, anger, suspicion, and confrontation are what people face, should they choose not to demonstrate visible deference to this disingenuous (at best) piece of sheet music. To expect black people to stand and honor this anthem is troubling on so many levels that it boggles the mind. It's a shameful thing to stand for an anthem, which represents, in my opinion, a tacit acceptance of a clear insult or the pure ignorance – willful or otherwise – of its author, its history and tone.



Colin Kaepernick 'takes a knee' during the pre-game national anthem

I don't want to get into the psychological ramifications of showing respect to a personal insult, hurtful but at least a contained experience. Truthfully, I look at white people who stand for the national anthem at a sporting event and wonder what's on their minds. Are they following the crowd's inertia, thinking only to finally get on with the game? Are they thinking military thoughts, nationalistic thoughts? I don't know.

But to see black people standing and honoring

this anthem sadly brings back familiar feelings, feelings I had while reading *"The Invisible Man,"* a book written by Ralph Ellison. He wrote about the dynamics between the slave and the enslaver, in a fairly self-explanatory phenomenon called the *"Plantation Mentality."* Egregious or otherwise, the slave did what was pleasing to the master. If you need elaboration, read the book. It makes me sad and disappointed to see that this repugnant form of oppression is alive, slightly camouflaged and insidiously thriving.

We are Killing Terrorists and Attack We Will

*Those who slaughter innocent people will find no glory in this life or the next. They are nothing but thugs and criminals and predators, and that's right losers.
~President Donald Trump*

We are Killing Terrorists and Attack We Will, Trump's Most Vicious Racist Rants

by Brian Terrell, Originally Published in "[The Sower](#)", Dec. 17, 2017

On Monday, August 21, President Donald Trump delivered a prime-time speech almost shocking in its ordinariness. It was such an address as either of his immediate predecessors, George W. Bush or Barack Obama, could easily have given over the previous decade and a half. While hinting at nebulous new

strategies and ill-defined new metrics to measure success, President Trump announced that the sixteen year old war in Afghanistan will go on pretty much as it has. And the establishment breathed a sigh of relief.

Reviews were glowing. While acknowledging how low the bar had been set, on August 25, the Washington journal, *The Hill*, opined that even the most hardened members of the anti-Trump camp must admit that Monday's speech communicated a remarkable amount of humility and self-awareness, particularly for this president. The timing of the president's crowd pleasing speech was duly noted: Unfortunately, his very presidential announcement of the Afghanistan decision was bookended by Charlottesville and the president's rally in Phoenix on Tuesday night.

Ten days before, in Charlottesville, Virginia, torch bearing white supremacists had marched in a "*Unite the Right*" rally to protest the planned removal of a statue of the Confederate General Robert E. Lee. Replete with flags of both the Confederacy and the Nazi Third Reich and traditional fascist chants of blood and soil, the rally met with resistance from anti-racist activists, one of whom was murdered and others injured when one of the united right used his car as a weapon of terror, driving it into the crowd. There was outrage when Trump responded by condemning the violence on all sides and declaring that there are very fine people on both sides of the issue.



Afghan Peace Volunteers work for peace at their Border Free School in Kabul

In the next days, thousands marched in cities nationwide and the denunciations of racism and white supremacy resounded from many surprising quarters. Trump's tolerance of the use and celebration of overt symbols and slogans associated with hatred, slavery, anti-Semitism and genocide offended all but his most fanatical base. Members of his own party, many who had stood by Trump through other scandals, took steps to distance themselves from his statements, if not from Trump himself.

Five of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, representing the Navy, Marines, Army, Air Force and National Guard, came extraordinarily close to rebuking their commander in chief. While they did not address Trump by name, they posted messages on social media condemning neo-Nazis and hatred, citing the

events at Charlottesville.

"@USNavy for ever stands against intolerance and hatred."

"No place for racial hatred or extremism in @USMC."

"The Army does not tolerate racism, extremism or hatred in its ranks."

"We're always stronger together-it's who we are as #Airmen."

"I stand with my fellow Joint Chiefs in condemning racism, extremism & hatred. Our diversity is our strength #NationalGuard."

In his prime time address on the war, Trump called for the national unity that he had seemed in the days before and after to disdain- *"Loyalty to our nation demands loyalty to one another."* Saying that *"the young men and women we send to fight our wars abroad deserve to return to a country that is not at war with itself at home,"* Trump seemed even to shame his detractors for letting down those he calls the "special class of heroes whose selflessness, courage, and resolve is unmatched in human history." *"Let us make a simple promise to the men and women we ask to fight in our name: that when they return home from battle, they will find a country that has renewed the sacred bonds of love and loyalty that unite us together as one."*

The healing balm that should bring Americans together, Trump said to general applause, will be a continuing commitment to a seventeen year old war. When that war began in October of 2001, Vice-President Richard Cheney suggested that the US would eventually take it to forty to fifty other nations, an expanding war that he predicted "may never end" but would "become a permanent part of the way we live." Like Cheney before him, Trump urges Americans to set aside the issues that divide us and unite behind an endless war of aggression

against a people who never met us any harm.

It should be self evident that the war against Afghanistan and the broader war on terror, like every war that the US has engaged in since the end of World War II, is as much a war about race and white supremacy as was the Civil War. The fact that the war on terror was presided over for eight years by our first African American president (who in his last year in office dropped 26,171 bombs exclusively over populations of people of color) does not alter the fact that it is a racist war. If the war on terror does not divide our nation's people as severely as did our war against the people of Southeast Asia fifty years ago, it is only because fewer Americans are paying attention to it.

In 1967, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. noted *"Now, it should be incandescently clear that no one who has any concern for the integrity and life of America today can ignore the present war."* He said that for those working against racism in the US, silence on the war against Vietnam was nothing less than betrayal. Many questioned whether peace and civil rights mix and if by trying, King was hurting the cause of his people. *"Indeed,"* he said of these critics, *"their questions suggest that they do not know the world in which they live."* About that same time, Eldridge Cleaver said *"The black man's (sic) interest lies in seeing a free and independent Vietnam, a strong Vietnam which is not the puppet of international white supremacy. If the nations of Asia, Latin America and Africa are strong and free, the black man in America will be safe and secure and free to live in dignity and self respect."*

Last year, the Movement for Black Lives excited great controversy publishing its platform that draws these connections in the present context:

"...we know that patriarchy, exploitative capitalism, militarism, and white supremacy know no borders. We stand in solidarity with our international family against the ravages

of global capitalism and anti-Black racism, human-made climate change, war, and exploitation. We also stand with descendants of African people all over the world in an ongoing call and struggle for reparations for the historic and continuing harms of colonialism and slavery. We also recognize and honor the rights and struggle of our Indigenous family for land and self-determination."

The violence that we see in American streets is a direct and inevitable result of the violence of our country's wars. Since the war on terror began, police departments from large cities to rural counties have been plied by the Defense Department with an array of offensive weaponry from tanks to assault rifles, accompanied with training in counterinsurgency. Police department hiring preferences favor veterans who often bring with them skills honed in night raids of Iraqi and Afghanistan and the Afghan homes. Full scale Special Weapons and Assault Tactics (SWAT) teams then terrorize American families, disproportionately in communities of color and most often to serve simple warrants and summonses for nonviolent offenses.

The Obama administration's determinations that any male 14 years or older found dead in a drone strike zone is a "combatant" unless explicit intelligence posthumously proves him innocent and that "the condition that an operational leader present an 'imminent' threat of violent attack against the United States does not require the United States to have clear evidence that *"a specific attack on US persons and interests will will take place in the immediate future"*, have poisoned the culture of policing at home. The consequence of these policies is the summary killings of innocent young men because of who they are and where they live, in American cities as well as in places far away. The racial profiling that results in the killings of unarmed black citizens by American police is the domestic expression of surveillance by drones of the *"patterns of behavior"* that trigger the *"signature strike"* executions of countless people of color in

our wars abroad.

"A nation which continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death," Dr. King noted in 1967. There is no serious discussion of racism in the United States today, or of providing health care and education and basic human services that does not address the ever expanding cost of the present war.

Some of the outrage over Trump's responses to the events in Charlottesville and for his shameless affinity for hate and misogyny in general from his campaign until today may well actually be for his violation of a tacit *"gentlemen's"* agreement not to say such things aloud. None the less, it is a sign of social progress that language and symbols celebrating hate raise so much public indignation. The discredited institutions of slavery and Nazism need to stay discredited and those who forget that are rightly and necessarily called out. There are, however, manifestations of hatred and racism that continue to be tolerated and celebrated even in the most polite, progressive and politically correct venues and these need to be called out as well.

As grating and offensive as Trump's off-script train wreck persona is, it is when he is most *"very presidential,"* when he acts and speaks from the same teleprompter as those who preceded him, that he is at his most malicious and hateful. When he declares as he did on August 21 that *"we are killing terrorists"* and threatens *"attack we will"* and when he praises the civilian catastrophe that he called the *"liberation of Mosul in Iraq"* as a model for the future of the war in Afghanistan, Trump is on a racist rant. His speech on August 21 calling for more war is hate speech, pure and simple.

The generals of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who bravely spoke out against neo-Nazis, where are they now? Some of them apparently huddled with Trump to devise his hateful and racist

assault on the Afghan people and all of them, along with Defense Secretary General Mattis (whose advice to the troops is *"You just hold the line until our country gets back to understanding and respecting each other and showing it."*) and White House Chief of Staff General Kelly are busily working to implement it. If generals Lee and Jackson of the 19th century who served under Confederate President Jefferson Davis in the cause of slavery and white supremacy deserve the censure of history and the scorn of every person of good will, so much more these generals who serve the hateful and vile agenda of Trump and his predecessors. To give Trump his due, one truth that he told in his celebrated speech is that those *"who slaughter innocent people will find no glory in this life or the next. They are nothing but thugs and criminals and predators, and that's right -losers."*

Those thousands of good people who took to the streets to denounce the celebration of racism and hate in its archaic and discredited forms need to seek the courage get back out and demand an end to racism and hate in its present, most virulent form. Together we need to demand a US withdrawal from Afghanistan and reparations for all the nations that have suffered US aggression in the so-called war on terror.

Standing Up to the National Anthem



This Nation's anthem was composed by Francis Scott Key, a racist, white supremacist, anti-abolitionist lawyer. He felt that black people, free or slave, were genetically inferior to white people. That perception was the foundation of his legal pursuits. When he was the District Attorney for the City of Washington, he defended slavery and prosecuted those in the abolitionist movement. He argued in court that the institution of slavery should be continued, continued ad infinitum, I suppose, as there is no known cure for "genetic inferiority" that I am aware of. Actually, I never heard anyone but my white brothers use that particular terminology.

But back to Francis, this anthem that he wrote, and this very demeaning obsession this nation has, that I, a black man, should stand respectfully and honor his musical creation. I suggest that anyone who takes umbrage at my statement, read the lyrics of the song, the whole song. Then dare ask a black person to stand for this anthem.

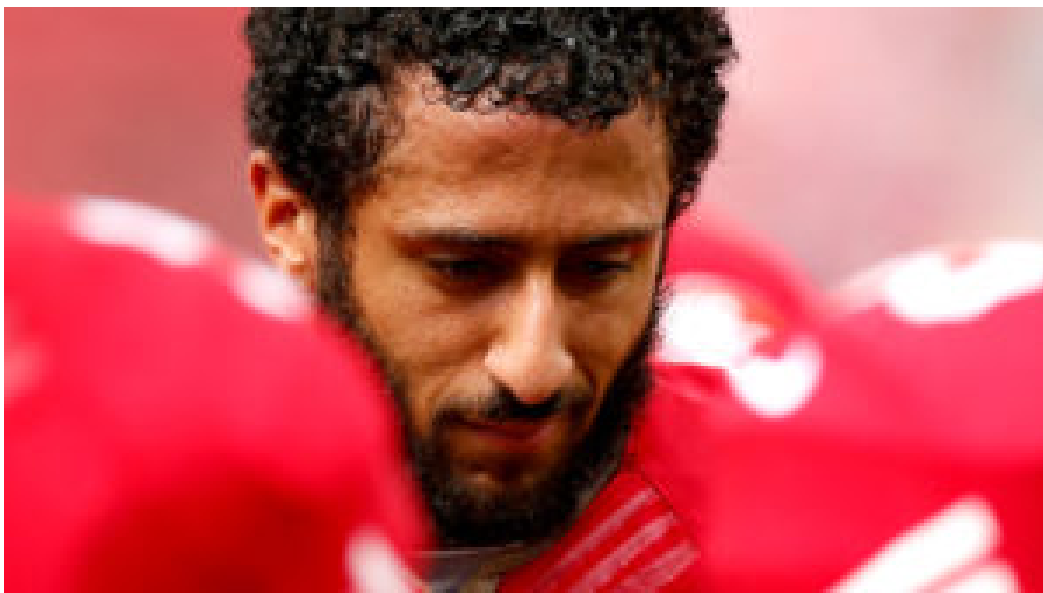
*"No refuge could save the hireling and slave/
From the terror of flight or the gloom of the grave/
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave/
O'er the land of the free and
the home of the brave."*

Would Jewish people be expected to stand reverently for an anthem written by Heinrich Himmler or Joseph Goebbels or the rest in that Nazi crew? Should anyone be expected to endure the humiliation of honoring an anthem, authored by someone who felt they were less than human? Not in any just environment. Which also begs the question, exactly where are we

Ridicule, anger, suspicion, and confrontation are what people face, should they choose not to demonstrate visible deference to this disingenuous (at best) piece of sheet music. To expect

black people to stand and honor this anthem is troubling on so many levels that it boggles the mind. It's a shameful thing to stand for an anthem, which represents, in my opinion, a tacit acceptance of a clear insult or the pure ignorance – willful or otherwise – of its author, its history and tone.

I don't want to get into the psychological ramifications of showing respect to a personal insult, hurtful but at least a contained experience. Truthfully, I look at white people who stand for the national anthem at a sporting event and wonder what's on their minds. Are they following the crowd's inertia, thinking only to finally get on with the game? Are they thinking military thoughts, nationalistic thoughts? I don't know.



But to see black people standing and honoring this anthem sadly brings back familiar feelings, feelings I had while reading "The Invisible Man," a book written by Ralph Ellison. He wrote about the dynamics between the slave and the enslaver, in a fairly self-explanatory phenomenon called the "Plantation Mentality." Egregious or otherwise, the slave did what was pleasing to the master. If you need elaboration, read the book. It makes me sad and disappointed to see that this repugnant form of oppression is alive, slightly camouflaged and insidiously thriving.

Protesters Speak Out at Hancock (Video)

Hancock is a Reaper Drone hub on the US mainland which is focused on training drone pilots and technicians, and flies deadly Reaper drone missions over Afghanistan and Pakistan. Hancock is scheduled to increase it's personnel by half over the coming year. Upstate Drone Action members have been engaging in civil resistance at Hancock since 2011.

On September 26th, activists delivered a People's Indictment to the base and stood in the inbound lane of the main entrance to Hancock with signs and images of the ongoing holocaust caused by drone killing. After about an hour the activists were arrested and charged with Trespass and Disorderly Conduct.

Heriberto Rodriguez filmed the following series of interviews with activists at the base shortly before their arrests.

People's Indictment (Update with video)

FOR WAR CRIMES PERPETRATED BY THE 174TH ATTACK WING
OF THE NEW YORK NATIONAL GUARD AT HANCOCK AIR FORCE BASE,

SYRACUSE, NY

Video recorded by Charley Bowman of Buffalo, NY. Speaking: Ed Kinane, Julianne Oldfield, Dan Burgevin.

Since 2010 the 174th Attack Wing, via satellite, has been remotely piloting weaponized MQ9 Reaper drones over Afghanistan – perhaps the poorest and most vulnerable nation in the world. U.S. weaponized drones are also known to target people in Pakistan, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Yemen and elsewhere in the Islamic oil lands. Those who participate in these operations may believe they are fighting “terrorism”; in fact they are unwitting cogs in a war – on behalf of corporate profiteers – whose main instrument is terrorism.

The Reaper maims and kills untold numbers of human beings and terrorizes whole communities. Reaper aggression generates both internal and external refugees; generates hatred toward the U.S. (bolstering recruitment for hostile groups); heightens global insecurity as other state and non-state powers join the weaponized drones arm race; and, by blatantly violating such law, undermines both U.S. and international law.

U.S. drone killing violates due process and national sovereignty. It involves intentional, premeditated extrajudicial murder and the massacre of civilians.

These crimes violate Article VI of the United States Constitution: ***“This Constitution, and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in Pursuance thereof; and all Treaties made, or which shall be made under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land; and the Judges of every State shall be bound thereby, anything in the Constitution or Laws of the U.S., including treaties made under authority of the U.S. shall be the supreme law of the Land.”***

One such treaty, since 1945 the supreme law of the United States, is the United Nations Charter. The Charter’s Preamble

states that its purpose is to ***“save future generations from the scourge of war “***. It further states that ***“all nations shall refrain from the use of force against another nation.”*** This Treaty applies to federal, state and local branches of U.S. government as well as to law enforcement and to U.S. Armed Forces personnel – all of whom are sworn to uphold the Constitution.

Since 2010 Upstate Drone Action – impelled by our conscience – has sought to expose Hancock AFB war crimes and to awaken Hancock AFB personnel and their chain of command to their role in perpetrating these crimes. Today, as on many former occasions, we come to Hancock to renew that wake-up call. **People of Hancock: we urge you – we implore you – to stop the killing.**

[UPSTATE DRONE ACTION](#)

Ed Kinane Talks to David Swanson

Ed Kinane was featured on David Swanson’s [Talk Nation Radio](#) show this week. It’s a great interview drawing on our local actions as well as Ed’s knowledge of the drone program and his compassion for the victims of US drone wars.

If you have half an hour to listen you can go to [David’s page](#) or if you would like just to listen here, use the player below:

Letter to German Bundestag, re: Military Drones

To the members of the German Bundestag:

I understand that there is a proposal before the Bundestag that will lead to the German government leasing from Israel unmanned aerial vehicles, commonly known as drones, which could be weaponized.

I understand further that Germany may use these drones in Afghanistan.

I am writing you as the Coordinator of the United States website and organizing center KnowDrones.com to urge the defeat of any measure that would authorize the German government to purchase, lease or develop drones that have the capability of carrying weapons of any kind, for the following reasons:

1) Drone stalking and assassination, as undertaken most widely in the world by the United States, violates international human rights law because these practices violate privacy and long-held principles of due process. While Germany might not initially decide to arm its drones, the possession of drones with the capability to be armed will expose Germany to international criticism for being willing to participate in drone killing and will almost inevitably lead to the arming of the drones given the likely pressure by the United States to join it in drone killing.

I say likely pressure because, as you know, the United States is having difficulty keeping drone operators and so is having a hard time meeting the demand for drone attacks in the

various theaters in which it has chosen to be at war, now covering at least seven nations.

Even if the German drones do not carry weapons Germany will be under suspicion of drone killing because it will be participating with the United States in drone activities, and the United States is notorious for its failure to tell the truth about its drone operations.

2) The United States first started drone killing in 2001 in Afghanistan. Afghanistan appears to have experienced more U.S. drone attacks than any other nation, according to statistics provided by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism. The Bureau reports that, as of the date of this letter, the minimum number of confirmed U.S. drone attacks there was 2,214 with a total death toll of up to 3,551.

This is a dramatic underestimate of U.S. drone killing in Afghanistan, however, since the Bureau only began keeping these statistics in January of 2015. The German television service ZDF estimated in their 2015 Webstory "Drohnen: Tod aus der Luft" that between 2001 and 2013 no less than 13,026 people were killed by drones in Afghanistan (based on data provided by U.S. Central Command, CENTCOM, and the book "Sudden Justice" by Chris Woods).

3) The United States is presumably conducting drone killings to suppress opposition to the government it has established in Afghanistan. However, judging from the announcement yesterday that the United States will be sending thousands of more troops to Afghanistan, it appears that the military effectiveness of the United States drone surveillance and killing campaign in Afghanistan must be reevaluated. Indeed, it is quite likely that the United States drone attacks have led to an increase in the size of the force opposing it, a concern expressed by the former commander of United States and NATO forces in Afghanistan, General Stanley McChrystal.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/784919/mcchrystal-opposes-drone-strikes>

Germany's use of drones of any kind in Afghanistan will expose it to charges that, rather than simply training Afghan police and troops, it is joining the new United States offensive.

Germany's use of drones, in and of itself, is likely to increase Afghan anger over German presence and increase risk to German soldiers.

4) The United States drone attack campaign, in which Germany will inevitably be seen as participating, is a particularly unsavory part of a larger military campaign to subdue an indigenous force comprised of extremely poor, Muslim people. I respectfully suggest that the German people may not want to increase their level of participation in this ignominious endeavor.

You will find supporting material for the points above at KnowDrones.com.

Thank you very much for considering this letter.

Sincerely,

Nick Mottern – Coordinator – KnowDrones.com

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