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Peace Action Fund of New York State

Peace Action Fund of New York State December 2011 Newsletter

2011 was a big year for the Peace Action Fund of New York State (PAFNYS) - we engaged in program work to abolish nuclear weapons, educate on the dangers of nuclear power, end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and move the money away from wars and the Pentagon and toward human needs and our communities. All of our chapters have been extremely active in their communities and with local Occupy Wall Street movements, and our new Student Organizing Coordinator Kathryn Rahill has been working with students on creating official Peace Action clubs on campuses state-wide.

Please help us continue our work by making a tax deductible contribution to the Peace Action Fund of New York State before the end of the year!
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In the following pages you will read about the **Cost of War Awareness Campaign, Ploughshares Fund grant and New Priorities work, Occupy Wall Street, the campaign to close Indian Point, our coordinated lobby day, coalition building, the William Sloane Coffin Award Gala, Peace Voter, the Doris Shaffer Memorial Lecture Series**, and much more.

Thank you for your past generous support and best wishes for the new year.

In peace,
Alicia Godsberg
Executive Director

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The New York Times

ARTHUR OCHS SULZBERGER JR., Publisher

Founded in 1851

ARONOWITZ
Publisher 1991-1992

ARTHUR OCHS SULZBERGER
Publisher 1993-1994

OWEN L. SIVYOK
Publisher 1995-1996

ARTHUR OCHS SULZBERGER
Publisher 1997-1998

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HARVEY GOTTLIEB, Editor, Global Editions

TO THE EDITOR:

The military budget needs to be cut, but your editorial takes aim at the wrong place. Instead of cuts in pay and benefits for our soldiers, cuts should come from the billions spent on nuclear weapons.



KELLY BLAIR

Debate in Washington dismisses almost \$700 billion in spending over 10 years on nuclear weapons. New nuclear-capable submarines have an estimated price tag of \$116 billion, and a new nuclear-capable bomber could cost \$3.7 billion.

Additionally, new nuclear weapon facilities at an estimated \$10 billion are on the way. And what for? Nuclear weapons are unable to protect Americans from today's threats, and President Obama has stated that the United States seeks the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.

The crisis in spending is a crisis of priorities. To cut the pay and benefits of our military would be shameful when wasteful spending on nuclear weapons needs to be cut instead.

ALICIA GODSBERG
Executive Director

Peace Action New York State
New York, Sept. 27, 2011

Cost of War Awareness Project

Americans are acutely aware of the affects of the current financial crisis – equity in homes has greatly diminished, real wages have stagnated while the cost of living has soared, and funding for public goods and services continues to be cut at all levels of government. Against this background somehow the U.S. is spending almost **\$10 billion every month in Afghanistan** and our troops are set to stay there until the end of 2014. After more than 10 years of war, **\$1 trillion spent**, and thousands of U.S., Iraqi, and Afghani soldiers and civilians killed or wounded, the American people are demanding a change in direction for our country. PAFNYS's **Cost of War Awareness Project** gives people the facts about how government spends their tax dollars, and what those tax dollars could be used for instead with different priorities.



Brooklyn for Peace Annual Peace Fair, May 7, 2011

As part of this Project, I presented papers at conferences in New York and Japan, spoke to high school and college students, published a letter to the editor in **The New York Times** (see page 2), and gave presentations to PANYS chapters across the state. Our state office and chapters have also been active in local **Occupy Wall Street** movements, connecting the call for economic and social justice to the need to **change federal spending priorities** away from wars and the military and toward our communities and human needs.

One of the tools of the Project is the **Cost of War Sign** – an electronic sign that can be programmed with messages about the cost of war and how it has affected the surrounding community. The sign is a powerful tool that we have used to bring our “**new priorities**” message to Brooklyn, Manhattan, Staten Island, Albany, and Rochester. The sign originated at our Broome County Peace Action chapter in Binghamton, where it hung on City Hall for two months. The sign has also been to state and local fairs, the streets of New York City, churches and peace centers, and even a Bradley Manning rally in Washington, D.C. We have been able to purchase a second sign that is easier to program and transport, greatly expanding our ability to use this educational tool. Next year our chapters in Buffalo and Dutchess County will be among the groups displaying the sign.

Another tool of the Project is our **online activist tool kit**, which includes information about using and programming the cost of war sign and flyers created by the national Peace Action office. We will be updating this tool kit in the future, including adding more information about federal spending on nuclear weapons and related programs. The tool kit can be found on our website, and it is a great resource for activists and anyone looking to become more educated about the cost of war and misplaced federal spending priorities.



Union Square Park, NYC April 29, 2011

Ploughshares Fund Grant

As part of our larger Cost of War Awareness Project, PAFNYS was awarded a **grant from the Ploughshares Fund** to continue grassroots organizing around **new priorities** for government spending, and specifically to **target wasteful and unnecessary federal spending on nuclear weapons and related projects**.



PAFNYS is proud to be part of a group of Ploughshares grantees working on preventing the appropriation of funds for nuclear weapons, delivery systems, and related infrastructure. This has been a very exciting project for PAFNYS and has provided us access to top research and strategy sessions with the larger team. On September 30, **The New York Times published a letter to the editor** I wrote about the misplaced spending priorities on nuclear weapons (see page 2), marking **the first time** our organization has made its pages and raising the profile of PAFNYS even further.

In 2012 I will be making another round of **visits to PANYS chapters** around the state to continue our new priorities work and tie it with this anti-nuclear funding campaign. I will be giving a presentation on the cost of war and the funding of the nuclear weapons complex, and relating those federal spending priorities to budget shortfalls and cuts to public services at the national and local levels.

Occupy Wall Street



Zuccotti Park, October 4, 2011

The global movement known as **Occupy Wall Street** that has changed the conversation about government spending priorities and the gap between rich and poor started a few blocks from our office, in Zuccotti Park in lower Manhattan. Peace Action has been supporting the occupiers around the country since the leaderless movement began in mid-September, and all our local NYC-area chapters have been involved with OWS by going to rallies, tabling at the park, handing out flyers, engaging young people in conversation about the **cost of war** and the need for **new spending priorities**, and taking part in the anti-war working group. This movement is truly an inspiration to our work!



OWS rally, October 5, 2011

Every chapter in New York State has its own relationship to its local OWS movement. I'm proud to say that PANYS activists have been standing in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in the peace, economic and social justice, and labor rights movements, who together collectively support the causes of OWS. PAFNYS supports just practices that ensure the wealthiest Americans and corporations pay their fair share of taxes, and we support ending moneyed influence over our democracy in all its forms.

Even though Zuccotti Park has been cleared, OWS is not going away. PAFNYS will remain actively involved and continue connecting the message of social and economic justice for the 99% to misplaced government spending priorities.

Shut Indian Point Campaign

Nuclear power is dangerous, dirty, and expensive. In New York State there are several nuclear power plants threatening the health and safety of their surrounding communities, including one facility just 35 miles north of New York City - the Indian Point Energy Center in Buchanan. PAFNYS has received a grant from an anonymous donor to start a grassroots campaign aimed at shutting this nuclear power station down.

In 2011 PAFNYS connected with other organizations working toward this same goal, including Shut Indian Point Down Now! and Riverkeeper. Next year, the **YES Men** have agreed to do a lab and collaborate with us on this campaign, which is very exciting!

In October a report came out from Synapse Energy Economics, Inc. called, "Indian Point Energy Center Nuclear Plan Retirement Analysis," that concluded the relicensing the almost 40-year old reactors would not be necessary to meet local power needs. PAFNYS will be using this report in our work to educate the public about the myths perpetuated by the nuclear power industry.



In November I spoke to our chapter in Syracuse about the danger of the nuclear power reactors in Oswego, two of which are of the same design as those that melted down in Fukushima. PAFNYS will continue helping our chapters to educate their communities on the potential health hazards and other dangers associated with nuclear power plants in their areas.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki Commemorative Events



Nagasaki Peace Walk and Rally, August 9, 2011

In an instant the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki killed a combined 100,000 people; tens of thousands more were injured and/or later killed by the effects of radioactive fallout. Today, more than twenty years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the U.S. and Russia still have over 20,000 nuclear weapons, thousands of which are ready to fire within minutes of an order. It is important that we keep the horrors of the effects of nuclear weapons in our collective consciousness, however awful they are to contemplate, so that these weapons of mass destruction and terror are never used again and are finally eliminated.

On March 11 the people of Japan suffered another nuclear tragedy, when an earthquake and tsunami hit the nuclear power reactors of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station, causing core meltdowns and radiation leaks that are still not under complete control. A few months later, **I was invited to speak as a representative of Peace Action about the dangers of nuclear power at the Gensuikin Conference Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki** on the anniversaries of the atomic bombings in those cities. The trip was an extremely moving experience, and was infused with the present danger of radiation caused by the Fukushima disaster. The end of the conference was held in Okinawa, where the topic changed to **U.S. militarism**. I met a number of Okinawan peace activists working to prevent the U.S. from destroying more land for the expansion of military bases on the island, and we agreed to work together on closing the unnecessary, expensive, and unwanted U.S. military bases there.

Other Events and Program Work



On October 28 PAFNYS presented the **William Sloane Coffin, Jr. Peacemaker Award** to **Congresswoman Barbara Lee** (D-CA) to honor her for her long-standing opposition to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and for her peace work in Congress. The award was presented by **Phil Donahue** and the evening was an elegant and successful fund raising event.

The **Doris Shaffer Memorial Lecture Series** took place on August 22 in the Berkshires. This year's lecture was called "**Winds of Change: the impact of the Arab Spring on Israel and Palestine,**" and featured Ori Nir (Israeli-born former *Haaretz* and Forward writer and spokesperson for Americans for Peace Now) and Dr. Riyad Mansour (Ambassador, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations). The event was moderated by Kathleen Peratis (lawyer, human rights activist) and a video of the event will be available on our youtube channel early next year.

In 2012 PAFNYS will be working with our membership organization on **Peace Voter**, which is Peace Action's guide to candidate voting records on our core issues: abolishing nuclear weapons, ending war and the culture of militarism, and changing spending priorities away from the military and war and toward human needs and our communities. This work is already underway, with bird dogging of candidates and our chapter members participating in town hall meetings throughout the state.

Another coordinated **state-wide lobby day** will take place in 2012 and will involve our new student organizing leaders!

We will also be taking these student leaders to a **student organizing summit** in Washington, D.C. in February to help hone their organizing skills. PAFNYS is proud to announce the **hiring of Kathryn Rahill**, who started as our part-time Student Organizing Coordinator and as of the end of November is now our **full-time Field Organizer and Program Assistant!** Through Kathryn's efforts, we have established connections at several colleges and universities in New York State, created a student organizing manual and tool kit, and have a few student Peace Action chapters starting the process of becoming officially recognized school clubs.

Thank you again for your past generous support of the Peace Action Fund of New York State. We hope you will continue to support our work in 2012 by returning the first page of this letter in the envelope in which it came along with a tax deductible check for the Peace Action Fund of New York State.

Your generosity as a major donor is appreciated every day and enables PAFNYS to continue working on your behalf to abolish nuclear weapons, end the wars and troop deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan, and change federal spending priorities away from wars and the military and toward our communities and human needs.



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