

Stirrings



A Basilian Peace & Justice Newsletter

Winter 2014

Clifford Harper

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Shabbat Shalom: Not

Israeli Settlers Intrude Weekly into the Old City of Hebron

By Maurice Restivo CSB

Every Saturday afternoon there is a “settler tour” in the Old City of Hebron. Each week the scenario is more or less the same: anywhere from 20 to around 150 Jewish settlers, surrounded by at least 30 Israeli soldiers, border police, and bomb squad personnel, with a number of Palestinian Hebronites and internationals on the fringes, to observe. Some of the settlers are residents in Hebron; others come from other Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, and still others may be internationals visiting Israel.

The tour has one purpose: to claim Jewish presence in the Old City, by pointing out places where Jews once lived or had businesses (before the British government expelled them after the 1929 massacre). Occasionally, settlers perform acts of violence or vandalism, such as when one or two sweep the bottles of sand art to the ground at Mohammed’s shop in the market, breaking them. Even when there is no overt violence, the tour itself is an act of violence. Palestinian residents and shopkeepers are unable to continue their normal lives. They are kept from walking through the market, or leaving their houses. Many close their shops to avoid vandalism.

Among those who regularly accompany the tour are members of the Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), and the International Solidarity Movement (ISM). Current military policy requires observers to stay at least four meters away from the group.

This can be changed arbitrarily; sometimes the soldiers say ten meters. On one tour I was right next to a soldier, who was friendly and chatty; he asked about CPT and our mission. On the tour of



December 28, 2013, soldiers had a new strategy. Three soldiers holding rifles kept observers at the end of the tour back at least 20-30 meters from the approximately 120 settlers. Since most of the tour is conducted in

the narrow streets of the Old City, this meant that much of the time we were unable to see or hear what was happening in the tour.

As the tour progressed, I found myself getting more and more angry. By the time it finished (around an hour), I was furious. I felt revulsion towards the soldiers, the settlers – the entire situation of occupation and settlements. At one point I found myself almost at the point of trying to walk past the soldiers, daring them, in a sense, to shoot.

Since that occurrence, my thoughts and feelings of that day have been on my mind, and have been the source of much reflection. As a committed Christian, and member of CPT, I claim to have embraced nonviolence as a way of life. I meditate; I say that I am a pacifist. Yet in this situation I found myself wanting to strike out at the soldiers and at the system of injustice – all because, on one occasion, I was prevented from standing as close as I wanted to observe the event.

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Stirring: (adjective) exciting, arousing, awakening, animating, quickening



Kerry's Gamble

John Kerry, as Secretary of State for the Obama Administration, has made at least 10 trips to Israel/Palestine to advance the “peace” process. He has discovered that he has indeed entered into the political Monopoly Game where Israel gets to set/change the rules.

He no longer talks of achieving “peace” but only of developing a “framework agreement.” And here’s what Kerry’s framework looks like so far: Palestinians recognize Israel as a Jewish state, forfeit the right of return, give up Jerusalem, live surrounded by the Wall and ever-expanding settlements, with Israeli soldiers stationed in the Jordan Valley.

The Palestinian Authority does not trust John Kerry as an honest “broker” of a just peace because the United States has consistently vetoed every action proposed by the United Nations to confront Israel’s violation of International Law by its military occupation, ethnic cleansing, land confiscation and colonization of the Palestinian territories.

Due to facts on the ground Israel and Palestine are already one state – an apartheid state. Hopefully the BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) movement, which is growing in strength daily in Europe and North America, can bring about a South Africa style nonviolent revolution leading to one bi-cultural democratic state with equal rights for all. There are Palestinian Mandelas in Israeli prisons now. But where is the Israeli de Klerk?

Bob Holmes CSB

Stirrings

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Palestinian Monopoly

The game where the rules always change!

In September 2013 the Swiss RTS show L'Agence broadcast a video sketch called "Hurry up and wait: Palestinian Monopoly" Below is the translation of the dialogue:

Player 1: Hey, you want to play a game?

Player 2: Sure, what is it?

Player 1: It's called Palestinian Monopoly!

Player 2: I don't know it.

Player 1: It's easy, I'll teach you. First we divide the territory cards equitably: 15 for me and 2 for you.

Player 2: But I don't feel like playing...

Player 1: But you have no choice. [rolls dice] Eight! I'm going to build on this land in East Jerusalem.

Player 2: But you don't have the right to build, it's not your land!

Player 1: Ah yes, sorry, well, it's too late. I already built.

Player 2: Ok, well my turn [rolls dice] Three! Take a “Chance” card: “The United Nations passes a resolution giving you back one territory and you get to draw another card.” [pulls card] Bad luck. It says “The United States vetoes the resolution. Give back 8 more territories.”

Player 1: My turn! [rolls dice] Double 6! I buy the electricity company and now I can annoy Gaza by constantly turning the power on and off.

Player 2: Ok, my turn [rolls] – a two – Nablus. I buy and build a little village.

Player 1: My turn! Twelve!

Player 2: But you didn't even roll the dice!

Player 1: No need! I bulldoze your village and build a colony of 17 houses.

Player 2: But you don't have the right! It's in the rules!

Player 1: But who cares about the rules? I roll a seven, pass Go and collect four million dollars.

Player 2: But it's normally just two thousand shekels.

Player 1: Yeah, for you.

Player 2: Ok, my turn [rolls]. Seven [begins moving piece] ... one .. two... what the? What's this wall?

Player 1: You can't go any further.

Player 2: I have no chance. When does this game finish?

Player 1: Never!

To view the original video in French go to [electronicintifada.net / Blogs / alBassaleh](http://electronicintifada.net/Blogs/alBassaleh).

Settler Tour: Anger and Nonviolence

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If I had that reaction because of one instance, I realize that I cannot even begin to understand what the Palestinians must feel, living under occupation. What must it be like to have to pass multiple military checkpoints to get to school or work or the market? What must it be like to be forbidden to walk on certain streets, or to visit people? What must it be like to have your ID taken, having to wait for minutes or hours before

being able to proceed? What must it be like to be an eight-year-old and have your backpack searched when you're trying to get to school? What must it be like to have to live with teargas and sound bombs as regular occurrences? Although I do not condone violence, I am beginning to understand how a teenager, out of frustration, will throw rocks at the soldiers, who represent the occupation the disruption

of their lives. I can understand how people can organize for violent resistance to the occupation.

I also am gaining even more respect for those who organize non-violently, who practice nonviolence as a way of life, and who do not resort to violence, even when it puts their own lives at risk. It can be Jesus, or Gandhi, or Martin Luther King, or

the Palestinian movements of today. So often, the basic human reaction is to lash out in violence when one is injured, whether that injury be physical or emotional. I

am thankful for those who show us that another way is possible. Indeed, it is more than possible: it is the only thing that breaks the cycle of violence.



Treaty Cards for the Settlers in Canada?

Poking fun at the idea of a "status" card for Canada's aboriginal populations, a new ad campaign is advocating a "settler treaty card" to help the rest of Canada know their status. The move is a dig at the Indian Act and the federal requirement that Canada's first nations hold status cards in order to receive the benefits of the treaties signed generations ago. William Wolfe-Wylie

By Tyler McCreary
Briarpatch Magazine

"With your Settler Treaty Card, you get access to countless privileges that your ancestors' representatives signed on for in perpetuity — privileges like settler self-government and access to the land," reads the poster. It adds: "Membership has its privileges — and privilege has its responsibilities."

The small print at the bottom of the poster drives the campaign home:

Settler Treaty membership entitles the cardholder to: share this territory (except reserves) with First Nations people and move freely throughout it; freedom of religion; freedom to engage in economic activities and to use the land for the purposes of agriculture; the right to self-government (including trade and taxation, determination of citizenship, social services such as child welfare, health and education); and peace and goodwill.

Card holders are required to recognize the reciprocal treaty rights of First Nations, including: freedom of movement throughout this shared land as well as those territories reserved for the exclusive use of First Nations; freedom



of religion; freedom to engage in economic activities and assurance to a right to a livelihood as well as assistance in times of need; self-government (including trade and taxation, determination of citizenship, and social services); and peace and goodwill. All rights of both settlers and First Nations are further delimited by our shared responsibilities to maintain good relations and to be good stewards of the land.

Some restrictions apply. The Settler Treaty Card is not valid in most areas of British Columbia. Treaties entitle settlers to use the land for agricultural purposes to the depth of a plow. The underlying title to subsurface resources, forests, and waters remains with First Nations. The information presented here is based upon an oral understanding of the settler/First Nations relationships defined through the numbered treaties of the Prairies, and some local variance in the treaty relationship may apply. Settlers and settler-descendants are advised to consult with local First Nations treaty elders regarding the oral understanding of treaties in your area, as well as any unresolved land claims requiring restitution.

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Neil Young

Honouring the Treaties and Ruffling Kanata*

By Jamaias DaCosta
(posted 17 January 2014)

Ironically it was not the National Chief, but Neil Young who got the PMO to respond to these issues.

This past weekend in Toronto, Neil Young ignited a firestorm of national attention, debate, celebration, and anger at the “Honour the Treaties” concert to raise funds for the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nations (ACFN) legal defense fund in opposition to large-scale tar sands extraction in Alberta.

“Canada is trading integrity for money. We made a deal with these people. We are breaking our promise. We are killing these people. The blood of these people will be on modern Canada’s hands.”

Neil Young’s solidarity with First Nations and taking a stand against the tar sands seems to have ruffled the feathers of the usually nonplussed prime minister, and his office responded immediately with equivocation about economics, thousands of job opportunities and improving quality of life for First Nations. Young was quick to rebuke point by point the PMO’s arguments with moral ethical challenges regarding the environmental costs and the breaking of treaties.

Since the Idle No More Movement (INM) peaked a year ago First Nations have continued to assert their Aboriginal and treaty rights through continued opposition to large-scale development projects such as the Keystone Pipeline, shale gas exploration at Elsipogtog,

and through the ongoing demand to the government of Canada to implement its duty to consult First Nations when contemplating actions that may adversely impact Aboriginal or treaty rights. While the movement appears on the surface to have lost some of its steam, perhaps it takes a Canadian icon to bring these issues back into the national spotlight. Ironically it was not the National Chief, but Neil Young who got the PMO to respond to these issues.



Idle No More Toronto was in full force outside Massey Hall on Sunday night celebrating the concert, reminding concert patrons standing in line to think beyond the music at an individual level, and to join in a round dance of solidarity around shared environmental and social issues so much larger than a Neil Young concert. Before the concert, Toronto based Indigenous grassroots activists gifted Young with an eagle feather, honouring the over 600 missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Canada.

At the press conference Young pointed out that Canadian place names such as: Saskatchewan, Winnipeg, Quebec, and Canada itself, are in fact Indigenous names and that Canadians should recognize Indigenous history and the rights that come with it.

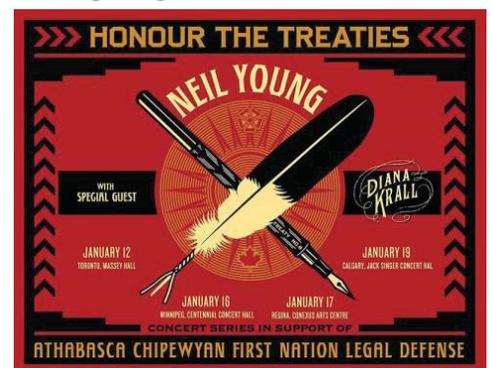
Indigenous based science has been observing all kinds of environmental effects related to tar sands, leading to multiple joint review panel hearings that measure impacts such as loss of traditional territory for the Mikisew Cree and Athabasca Chipewyan First Nations (ACFN) at 80%, and woodland caribou decreases of 70% since 1996, all of which decrease the quality of life and health for First Nations in

the region. Eriel Deranger, spokesperson for ACFN says the loss of hunting, gathering and fishing grounds equates directly with the loss of culture when there are no hides to tan for drums, moccasins, and regalia, and no berries or medicines to gather.

Environment Canada scientists recently reported findings of a 7,300 sq mile ring of mercury around the tar sands region, along with highly toxic methylmercury in snow banks, which will melt and go directly into local water tables, streams, rivers, and be consumed by animals and humans alike.

The Canadian government rationalizes resource extraction with rhetoric about the economy and improving quality of life for First Nations. However, many First Nations contend that improved quality of life would be to have unobstructed access to clean water, traditional gathering and hunting grounds, and fresh air to breath. And, as Neil Young stated last Sunday in Toronto, “I want my grandchildren to grow up and look up and see a blue sky and have dreams that their grandchildren are going to do great things. I don’t see that today in Canada. I see a government completely out of control. Money is number one and integrity isn’t even on the map.”

** The name Canada comes from the Iroquoian [Haudenosaunee] word kanata, meaning ‘village.’*



Jamaias DaCosta is an artist, writer, deejay and activist journalist. She is the Producer of Indigenous Waves - a celebration of Indigenous cultures heard every Monday from 4 pm to 5 pm on CIUT 89.5 fm in Toronto.

Would I choose Canada today?’

By Bonnie Sherr Kleinon

on receiving the Order of Canada in perilous times

September 1967. We are holding our breath. We have to get into Canada immediately or Michael, my new husband, will be jailed. At the advice of the Montreal Committee to Aid War Resisters, we have arrived at Dorval Airport after midnight, when mostly sympathetic French-Canadian immigration officers are on duty. Michael has a hastily-offered letter of employment from Montreal Children’s Hospital. Twenty minutes later, we are relieved to be welcomed as landed immigrants! We are among the wave of over 200,000 Vietnam-era women and men who became an integral part of the Canadian mosaic. . .

Exuberance was in the air

Arriving during Canada’s Centennial year, we made Expo 67 our first stop. This exuberant celebration marked Canada’s proud place in the world. We spent our first summer in an intensive French immersion course.

Soon I found the iconic National Film Board and lucked out on a job in “Challenge for Change,” a bold program whose mandate was to provide grassroots feedback to the federal government on how its own programs were working – or not.

In 1970, after three exhilarating and productive years in Canada, we returned to the U.S. for medical training not yet available in Canada. We left reluctantly, with two young new Canadians, our children Seth and Naomi. After five years in the U.S., we chose to immigrate to Canada a second time. In the interval, Canada had initiated universal Medicare. The NFB had created Studio D, the first and only government-sponsored feminist filmmaking unit in the world. Most important to us, Canada had the values and spirit, different from those in the U.S., in which we wanted to raise our children. As far as we knew, Canada had stayed

out of wars and coups in foreign countries; it chose to be a peace-maker. We were not naive about this “kinder and gentler place”: Canada had its share of violence, racism and sexism, but also had the motivation and institutions to address its problems. Here we have remained and thrived, Canadian citizens by choice, the best choice we



Bonnie Sherr Klein was invested as an Officer of the Order of Canada on May 3, 2013 by Governor General David Johnston.

ever made.

I feel enormously thrilled and grateful to be recognized by my adopted country for the Order of Canada. And more than a little surprised. Yet this great honour comes at a moment when I am beginning not to recognize this same country.

The fight to restore Canada

Today’s Canada is not the nation that we chose in either 1967 or 1975. It is no longer proud of its difference from the U.S. Instead, the government of Canada seems to aim to emulate its southern neighbour as much as possible, even to grovel for its favour at the cost of this country’s independence and uniqueness.

We are following in the footsteps of the U.S, into countries in which we have no business. We loudly support Israel’s occupation and expansion into Palestinian territories. Our country is closing its doors to immigrants and

refugees, including political refugees, except those who can invest large sums in our economy or contribute cheap labour as temporary foreign workers.

We are compromising our historic public support for the arts and communication by starving and threatening our cultural institutions with cutbacks and commercialization. We have allowed our treasured Medicare system to atrophy rather than improve and fund it appropriately; this has made private medical care look much more attractive than it is.

Rather than protect our precious resources – our land, water, air and our own health – from climate disaster, we are shaming dissenting individuals and groups by labeling them “naive” or “subversive.” We are allowing partisan interests to silence our scientists and civil servants. We are silent about the continued abuse and neglect of our native peoples, especially women and girls, at the same time as we condemn discrimination elsewhere. We are choosing militarization over taking care of each other and our precious planet.

‘Proud and invigorated’

Would I make the same choice today? I am proud and invigorated by young and old people who are raising urgent concerns about our country’s basic values. I am inspired by the Idle No More movement, the Occupiers, those who have chosen to ally themselves with the 99-per-cent, and join with them in sometimes disorderly nonviolent activism.

On the occasion of my investiture as an Officer of the Order of Canada, I am a fierce Canadian, vigilant to preserve the best potential of the Canada we chose – twice. We all “desire a better country.” (Order of Canada motto).

Bonnie Sherr Klein’s award-winning films include the series Organizing For Change: The Alinsky Approach and Not a Love Story: A Film about Pornography.

Band of Burglars

The infamous Media, Pa., FBI break-in paved the way for the Church Committee. Can it inspire intelligence reform in our own time?

By Beverly Gage

On Tuesday [7 January, 2014] one of the biggest unsolved cases in FBI history burst wide open. In a new book, investigative journalist Betty Medsger revealed the identities of the anti-war activists who broke into the FBI's office in Media, Pa., in March 1971 and made off with the agency's secret files. They were, it turns out, ordinary middle-class people: "a religion professor, a daycare center worker, a graduate student in a health profession, another professor, a social worker, and two people who had dropped out of college to work nearly full-time on building opposition to the war," Medsger writes. On March 8, 1971, they pried open the FBI office door with a crowbar, stole hundreds of files, and shook the intelligence establishment to its jackboots.

News coverage of the book has focused, understandably, on their astonishing personal story: how the burglars planned and carried out the break-in and why they felt they had to act as they did. The parallels with Edward Snowden are obvious. Here, too, are people who risked their freedom to expose government secrets they believed to be damaging American democracy.

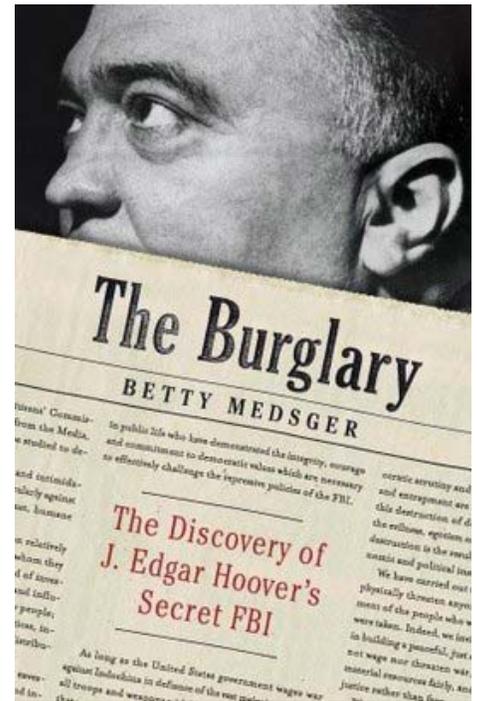
The idea that one brave whistleblower can make a difference is compelling, and it's true as far as it goes in the Media case: The burglars did take serious risks, and they did expose important secrets about FBI civil liberties abuses. But it's what happened after the burglary that really made the Media theft matter – and provides a model for anyone hoping to see genuine intelligence reform today.

It's because of Media that we first learned about COINTELPRO,

the FBI's secret counterintelligence program aimed at domestic dissenters. The Media theft also fueled calls for reform that led to the creation of the Church Committee in 1975 and the restraining of the intelligence establishment that followed. The revelations went well beyond anything the activists had imagined. The FBI was, indeed, spying on the anti-war movement, just as it was spying on a vast range of civil rights, New Left, and student groups. But it was also seeking, in the words of one stolen document, to "enhance the paranoia" of anti-war activists through repeated interviews and harassment. It is worth noting that many of these efforts were far more intrusive than the passive National Security Agency surveillance recently documented by Snowden; the FBI was planting rumors, intimidating activists, and using agents provocateurs.

The last act of the Media burglars was to photocopy the documents and mail them off to a handful of carefully selected recipients, including Sen. George McGovern, who had just announced his bid for the Democratic presidential nomination, and Medsger herself, then a reporter at the Washington Post. With that, the burglary team dispersed, agreeing never to contact one another or to speak of the events again.

It was reporters, rather than politicians, who took up the cause during these early weeks – most notably, Medsger herself at the Washington Post. In that sense, the Media burglary foreshadowed not only the Pentagon Papers but also the Watergate scandal. In Watergate, as in Media, early press reports kept the story alive and



revealed enough sordid details to push congressional committees to take up the issue.

In the end, the Church Committee delivered a searing multivolume report, still one of the most critical government documents ever published on the subject of U.S. intelligence. From that outcry came many of the institutions that govern espionage and surveillance today. But as recent events have shown, they had real weaknesses and limitations.

Today, we are once again facing a legitimacy crisis within the intelligence establishment, arguably the greatest such crisis since the 1970s. As in the 1970s, this is also a moment ripe with possibilities for reform. President Obama has called key lawmakers to the White House for a private conference to discuss what to do next about the NSA. This discussion would not be happening without the evidence provided by whistle-blowers like Snowden. But as the Media burglary suggests, whistle-blowers can only do so much. What happens next is up to the rest of us.

Beverly Gage, a Yale history professor, is the author of The Day Wall Street Exploded.

American Jihad 2014

by Tom Engelhardt

I wonder just what lessons might be offered to a Martian crash-landing in Washington as 2014 begins. You know, our tripartite government, checks and balances, miraculous set of rights, and vibrant democracy. Since my childhood, in fact, that tripartite government has grown a fourth part, a national security state that is remarkably unchecked and unbalanced. In recent times, that labyrinthine structure of intelligence agencies morphing into war-fighting outfits, the U.S. military (with its own secret military, the special operations forces, gestating inside it), and the Department of Homeland Security, a monster conglomeration of agencies that is an actual “defense department,” as well as a vast contingent of weapons makers, contractors, and profiteers bolstered by an army of lobbyists, has never stopped growing. It has won the undying fealty of Congress, embraced the power of the presidency, made itself into a jobs program for the American people, and been largely free to do as it pleased with almost unlimited taxpayer dollars.

Perhaps reimagining what has developed in these last decades as a faith-based system – a new national religion – would help. This, at least, is the way I would explain the new Washington to that wayward Martian.

Holy Warriors

Imagine what we call “national security” as, at heart, a proselytizing warrior religion. It has its holy orders. It has its sacred texts (classified). It has its dogma and its warrior priests. It has its sanctified promised land, known as “the homeland.” It has its seminaries, which we call think tanks. It is a monotheistic faith in that it broaches no alternatives to itself. It is Manichaeic in its view of the world. As with so many religions, its god is an eye in the sky, an all-seeing Being

who knows your secrets.

Edward Snowden, the man who in 2013 pulled back the curtain on part of this system, revealing its true nature to anyone who cared to look, is an apostate, never to be forgiven by those in its holy orders. He is a Judas to be hunted down, returned to the U.S., put on trial as a “traitor.”

Al-Qaeda is, of course, the system’s Devil, whose evil seed is known to land and breed anywhere on the planet from Sana’a, Yemen, to Boston, Massachusetts, if we are not eternally and ever more on guard. In the name of the epic global struggle against it and the need to protect the homeland, nothing is too much, no step taken a point too far.

The leaders of this faith-based system are, not surprisingly, fundamen-



talist true believers. They issue the equivalent of fatwas against those they proclaim to be their enemies. It’s no mistake that the weapons fired by their fleet of drone aircraft are called Hellfire missiles, since it is indeed hellfire and brimstone that they believe they are delivering to the politically sinful of the world.

While they have a powerful urge to maintain the faith the American public has in them, they also believe deeply that they know best, that their knowledge is the Washington equivalent of God-given, and that the deepest mysteries and secrets of their faith

should be held close indeed.

Put all this together and what you have is a description of a militant organization whose purpose is to carry out a Washington version of global jihad, a perpetual war in the name of the true faith.

A Faith-Based Success Story A Practical Failure

Looked at another way, the national security state is also a humongous humbug, a gigantic fraud of a belief system that only delivers because its followers never choose to look at the world through Martian eyes.

After all, if the twenty-first century has taught us anything, it’s that the most expensive and over-equipped military on the planet can’t win a war. Its two multi-trillion-dollar attempts since 9/11, in Iraq and Afghanistan, both against lightly armed minority insurgencies, proved disasters. Years of a drone campaign against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula has strengthened that organization; an air intervention in Libya led to chaos, and a growing al-Qaeda movement in northern Africa – and so it repetitively goes.

In other words, in bang-for-the-buck practical terms, Washington’s national security state should be viewed as a remarkable failure. And yet, in faith-based terms, it couldn’t be a greater success. Its false gods are largely accepted by acclamation and regularly worshiped in Washington and beyond. As the funding continues to pour in, the NSS has transformed itself into something like a shadow government in that city, while precluding from all serious discussion the possibility of its own future dismantlement or of what could replace it. It has pumped fear into the American soul. It is a religion of state power.

Tom Engelhardt created and runs the TomDispatch.com website. He is a Teaching Fellow at the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California, Berkeley. For 15 years, he was Senior Editor at Pantheon Books. For the complete article go to TomDispatch.com for Monday, January 6, 2014.

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Poverty & Profligate Prodigality in the Movies

by Neil Hibberd CSB

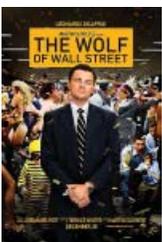


The Book Thief

Too poor to buy books in Nazi Germany, an adopted girl, befriended by the ‘Lady’ of local, rich gentry, steals them from their library; she witnesses Nazi book-burning bonfire; mean, adoptive mother reveals her soft side; the family hides a young, Jewish man who reads to the girl; books help raise up the poor and are good – Nazis are bad. Formulaic mediocrity. Cute. A bargain.

Blue Jasmine

Writer/Director Woody Allen’s rich Manhattan socialite, brilliantly portrayed by Cate Blanchett, falls into destitute poverty & homelessness; the perils of pennilessness grow and swirl around betrayed relationships, swindle, suicide, affairs & desperation, ending finally with Jasmine sitting alone, talking to herself on a park bench. Real poverty has many faces. Oscar for Blanchett. Rich.



Wolf of Wall Street

DiCaprio must owe Scorsese to keep showing up in his over-the-top movies, a supposed satire again. Leonardo’s talent grows richer even in this flawed, extravagant exposure of what sleazy, big-time cheats do with their ill-won dough (surprise!) – cocaine, savagely pathetic, swamy sex, and big, shiny everything. It’s enough to move a sane person to immediately abandon any pursuit of filthy lucre. Morally vacant grasps exploit gullible, greedy twits in the old “Pump & Dump” investing scheme. Shallow. Don’t trust the extravagant publicity on this one. Close to moral junk; poor.

Captain Phillips

Poverty-stricken Somali pirates seize a rich ship transporting a wealth of goodies; scene of their extremely poor town & inhabitants impels one to cheer for the pirates; most over-rated actor, Captain T. Hanks, once again illustrates that mindless popularity trumps a dearth of talent. Somali actors are loaded with it. Guess who comes out best? Go, you Somali pirates! Action. Fun.



Inside Llewyn Davis

Showcase for mediocrity in which a mildly gifted folk singer, ready to die for “art,” tries to survive on nothing. Cohen brothers’ deep bank balance of prior success is bankrupt in this dull, boring snoozer – not a remotely likable character in sight; on every critics’ best list, it has little coinage; a dumb audience is meant to buy into an empty, flat satire; a few okay songs. Don’t be taken in by its prodigal publicity; a paucity of art; poverty of value. Zero.



Philomena

Young, pregnant, extremely poor, Irish girl falls into the hands of dry, anti-carnal, starchy nuns, who enslave her in laundry labour; she signs away her baby son who is sold to Americans for \$2,000. Fifty years later she searches for him, with the help of a recently fired journalist. Past & present religious secrecy, legalism and mean-spiritedness keep her from discovering any leads, for a while.

It’s worth seeing to enjoy a certain rich burgeoning of sentiment that develops.



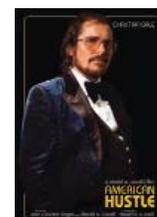
Gravity

Trillions and trillions of dollars of space junk and debris crash into astronauts servicing the Hubble telescope, causing a chain reaction & casting two into space on tethered lines. How to survive & get to the Space Station is the story - clever, suspenseful, ingenious, with brilliant cinematography. Sandra Bullock is fine, George Clooney is standard. Rich entertainment. Forget about the trillions and trillions of dollars of space junk, and also the hungry children.



Dallas Buyers’ Club

Drug-addicted, careless-sex-involved, homophobic, rodeo cowboy is diagnosed with AIDS. A skinny Matthew McConaughey, near death from U.S. Government-regulated AZT drugs, finds alternative, anti-viral medications from all over the world which save his life. He creates the Dallas Buyers’ Club, smuggling in these medications for other AIDS sufferers. The poverty is in the legalism; the richness in his dedication to help. Worthy. Rich.



American Hustle

Go to see the hair styles and decolletage alone; C. Bale’s comb-over is magnificent This is the best movie of the year – clever, funny, craftily-acted, well-paced, exposé of bribery-based political chicanery and convoluted relationships; a delight, even considering its low, low tone. It surpasses both of the so-called “satires” noted above. Morally-bankrupt, conniving con-artists in a plush, velvety sheen of deceit, with convoluted, tricky relationships. Leave moral judgments at the box-office. Enjoy. Worth the price.

Stirring: (noun) the act of moving or putting into motion, activity