Move the Money!
Annual Peace Conference Speaker Urges Cuts in Military Spending to Fund Domestic Needs

Peace Action Executive Director Kevin Martin was the featured speaker at the 2011 Annual Peace Conference this past October 15 in Lincoln. Martin, who has headed up Peace Action’s Washington, D.C.-based national office since 2001, made this visit to Nebraska in part to personally welcome NFP as an affiliate member to what is the largest peace organization in the U.S. with 100,000 members nationwide.

The following article, written by Martin specifically for the Nebraska Report, touches on the main points of his annual conference address, and Peace Action’s timely new campaign during the federal deficit debate to “Move the Money!”

Peace Action’s “Move the Money!” campaign aims to take advantage of the best chance we’ve had in a generation to seriously cut the military budget. The campaign, both at the local as well as the national level, is a concerted coalition- and alliance-building effort to create strong relationships with unions, human needs and economic and racial justice advocates, environmental and consumer groups, and local elected officials—all of which have had to deal with the harm our out-of-control military spending has wreaked on the national economy, state and local budgets and at-risk constituencies.

Veteran peace activist Tom Hayden has developed a very good analytical tool he calls the “Pillars of War” which looks at the role specific sectors of society have played in perpetuating this military spending binge over the last decade. The news media, general public opinion, Republicans, Democrats (which need to be further divided into the party elite, those in Congress, and the party’s base) and corporate interests are all key pillars for examination, particularly with regards to the ‘leverage’ the peace movement might be able to exert in moving them.

We’ve clearly made significant headway pushing on some of these pillars (certainly public opinion and the Democratic base are now solidly anti-war, and we’ve made progress with Congressional Democrats, and even the media to lesser degrees). The biggest obstacle to reversing this wasteful and deadly spending trend, however—corporate power (or the good old Military-Industrial-Congressional Complex)—remains firmly in place.

A recent example is the reaction of Lockheed Martin, the planet’s largest weapons contractor, to a proposed non-binding resolution in the Montgomery County, Maryland Council (just outside Washington, D.C., where Lockheed’s national office is located). The resolution, conclusion on page 3
Nebraska Report

The Nebraska Report is published nine times annually by Nebraskans for Peace. Opinions stated do not necessarily reflect the views of the directors or staff of Nebraskans for Peace.

Newspaper Committee: Tim Rinne, Editor; Mark Vasina, Peter Salter, Paul Olson
Typesetting and Layout: Michelle Ashley; Printing: Fremont Tribune
Website: Justin Kemerling

Letters, articles, photographs and graphics are welcomed. Deadline is the first of the month for publication in the following month’s issue. Submit to: Nebraska Report, c/o Nebraskans for Peace, 941 ‘O’ Street, Suite 1026, Lincoln, NE 68508.

Nebraskans for Peace

NFP is a statewide grassroots advocacy organization working nonviolently for peace with justice through community-building, education and political action.

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Move the Money, conclusion

pushed by our local Peace Action chapter, is simple: calling for an end to the wars and cutting military spending in order to fund jobs and human, community and environmental needs… A position, incidentally, supported by an overwhelming majority of the U.S. public.

Lockheed apparently felt so threatened by this non-binding county resolution that it called the governor, the district’s congressman (Rep. Chris Van Hollen, to whom it had contributed $10,000 in the last campaign cycle) and the county council president to scuttle the resolution. The trio succeeded in getting the resolution withdrawn (temporarily), but got a black-eye in the local media—including the usually reliably war-mongering Washington Post.

Truth be told, Lockheed did us a favor in exposing the lengths to which it will go to stifle the democratic process. (If the resolution had passed, we would have of course celebrated—but its adoption wouldn’t have gotten an iota of the media coverage Lockheed Martin’s strong-arm tactics generated.)

In this exciting year of the ‘Arab Spring,’ the Wisconsin and other state budget show-downs, and ‘Occupy Wall Street’ (and Omaha and Lincoln and Kansas City and Chicago and everywhere!), opportunities abound for peace activists to make common cause with allies demanding a more peaceful, just, democratic society.

In addition to the ongoing ‘Occupy Movement,’ there is still time before Congress’s self-imposed December 23 deficit-reduction deadline to demand that the House and Senate preserve Social Security, Medicare and human needs programs and find their budget savings in the gargantuan, $1.2 trillion per year national security budget. (Check out the Peace Action home page at http://www.peace-action.org/ for what you can do.)

Two other important opportunities to publicly make the case for ‘moving the money’ will be coming up next year. The first will be the joint ‘NATO/G-8 Summit’ in Chicago, where the international ‘military-industrial-political complex’ has already linked the issues of both militarism and the economy for us! Peace Action, along with local, national and international allies, will organize an educational conference and street actions demanding an end to NATO and U.S. war-making and a more just, equitable global economy.

Finally, next year’s election campaign will present us with a prime opportunity to press candidates for all levels of government to move the money from war and militarism to jobs, human and environmental needs. Our ‘Peace Voter’ campaign will help give activists the tools to make the most of this chance—from candidate briefings and endorsements and bird-dogging to voter guides, voter registration, education and Get out the Vote (GOTV) efforts. President Obama’s and the Democratic Party’s vulnerability (over 80 percent of registered Democrats want to end the wars) matches up very well with our strength in the peace movement’s grassroots base… Not that we are all Democrats—we certainly are not… for the majority of our country’s history?

But we have many connections with grassroots Democratic activists and structures.

Ending the wars, cutting military spending, abolishing nuclear weapons and creating a more just society are all central to Peace Action’s mission. But so is recognizing and framing a larger vision of the historic moment we inhabit—and the opportunities it provides. I like the framework Norwegian Peace Studies expert Johann Galtung uses: the Decline of the U.S. Empire, and the Flowering of the U.S. Republic.

All empires have ended. All of them. It’s our job to help end the U.S. Empire as quickly and nonviolently as possible, and to use the resources freed up (a ‘Peace Dividend’ if you will) to help empower people to create the flowering republic—peaceful, equitable, sustainable and just—that comes in the Empire’s demise.

A few years ago, a dinner table conversation with my children (now aged 17 and 13) revealed that they thought the United States is always at war. And why wouldn’t they think that, as it’s certainly been the case for nearly all their lives (and frankly

Kevin Martin

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Kevin Martin

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NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2011 NEBRASKA REPORT, P. 3
NFP Peacemakers of the Year

Honored at the October 15, 2011 Annual Peace Conference

Ruth Thone

I dare you to come on a journey through life with Ruth Thone.

If you are a woman, in her speeches and books, she urges you to chart your own path, to open your eyes and heart to what or whom men want you to be or to perform. Look within yourself. Know who you are and blaze your own trail.

If you see Nebraskans forgetting their heritage and scientists ignoring the tender parts of life, she invites you to join the ‘Friends of Loren Eiseley (which she organized) and fly over Nebraska, hover in the air, and be enfranchised. If you see Nebraskans without freedom, she invites you to join her in organizing a group that bombards with e-mail, demanding to be heard, and shouts: ‘Do what is right, America, and stop doing what we are doing!’

Ruth tells us that if you must live among the rich and politically powerful, keep asking the hard, disturbing questions, don’t compromise, state your stand even in awkward situations, like this: I THINK WE SHOULD DO WHAT IS RIGHT, DON’T YOU?

Are you willing to stand with Ruth on the sidewalk outside of a school building and pass out leaflets? To the students whose frontal part of their brain is not yet developed to see things differently, to see alternatives to war and understand that ‘to be all you can be’ does not mean killing people.

If you are one of those people who oppose killing people with the death penalty for killing people, but strive for restorative justice, then stand beside Ruth, speak up—leave your particular church if you have to if the church ignores the call for justice.

If the poor and disenfranchised are hungry, given only token recognition, come and be at ‘The Gathering Place,’ a place of hospitality. Feed people with no questions asked. Give the voiceless a voice. When Ruth returned from a trip of solidarity with the people of Nicaragua, she planted dozens of crosses, on the front lawn of The Gathering Place, each with a name of a person killed by warriors supported by America. She was surprised that people eating at The Gathering Place dropped to one-half within a week while her friends called her a ‘communist.’

With her beloved three daughters, Anna, Marie, Amy—ah, such care, warmth continually shared as each found her own journey in cities in America that can be harsh to those who don’t follow the rules. Love flowed among them while they journeyed together. With her own husband, Charlie, Ruth always supported him, even went to his political meetings.

So your own journey with Ruth still continues. She invites you to walk beside her, struggle for peace and justice together, be a good friend, and at times, fly with her, while striving to find the truth and live it. Ruth, you have redefined for us with your voice and life the meaning of being a good person, a peacemaker, thank you. We honor you.

—Don Tilley

Nobuko Tsukui

About 1960, when I was director of graduate studies in the UNL English Department, we received an application from a 20-some-year-old student at the Tsuda Women’s College named Nobuko Tsukui. The English Department was interested in extending the cultural reach of its graduate student body beyond the shores of Wahoo and Waverly, and so we chose a few students from overseas who applied to us, including Nobuko. She came to us in 1961, as I recall, and began working toward her Ph.D. Her English was rough at that time but her will was strong. She told me that often she spent over 20 hours in a day studying. When she passed her various courses and exams, she chose to work, for her dissertation, on Ezra Pound’s distortion of the Japanese Noh play in his translations of them, his leaving out most of their cultural and religious content—making nothing but imagist jewels reflecting his ideas. Pound was, at that time, the darling of America’s literati, but the dissertation was brilliant enough to show that America’s foremost poet was not only a Fascist with respect to Jews, but a chauvinist with respect to other cultures, despite his patina of multicultural interest. In short, he symbolized us.

Nobuko went on to teach at George Mason University in this country where she worked on, among other things, a course dedicated to exploring the nuclear issue and, later, taught at Chubu and other universities in Japan. She continued her exploration of intercultural relations between Japan and the United States by publishing on the great classic American authors in Japanese translations: Tengu Child with John Gard-
This year’s recipient of the inaugural “Leola Bullock & Lela Shanks Award for Civil Rights Leadership” is not only an excellent role model for her commitment to civil rights, but a dear friend of both Leola until her death and to Lela as well. What stands out are her virtues of perseverance and dedication. Her dedication has spanned over 60 years and continues undauntingly to this day. As most of you know, this year’s recipient is Nan Graf—formally she is Dr. Nanette Graf, Emeritus Professor of English at Nebraska Wesleyan University. But I know no one who knows Nan as such.

Nan has long dedicated herself to seeking justice for Mondo we Langa and Ed Poindexter, both victims of J. Edgar Hoover’s war on the Black Panthers. She joined Leola Bullock in this effort in 1974 and the two of them have worked longer, harder and more relentlessly than anyone for retrial, exoneration and a modicum of justice for Ed and Mondo. Nan remains active today with “Nebraskans for Justice” in organizing, researching, writing and lobbying for their freedom. She also arranges and prepares lunch for the meetings.

Nan often does the low-profile, unheralded work—the hard, tedious tasks that make progress possible. She told me of the time she copied thousands of FBI memos (seven copies each) to provide lawyers with evidence of FBI malicious malpractice. She said the memos themselves make the case against the FBI! Nan did and still does the work that helped the case stay alive and move forward.

Several years ago, Nan wrote an article for the *Nebraska Report* detailing the history of the case. I have closely followed the case from the beginning and thought I knew pretty much everything about it. But Nan’s article enlightened me and inspired me to rethink the entire matter. I was both informed and impressed. Thank you, Nan, for that.

In years past, she taught courses in the prison, often with Ed and Mondo in attendance, on subjects ranging from the literature of war and peace to yoga. A change in prison policy ultimately forced their discontinuance.

Nan has also been an equally strong advocate for the abolition of the death penalty—again for many, many years. As I said, Nan models the virtue of perseverance. She was active in seeking clemency for death row inmate Wili Otey. For 12 years, she maintained a weekly correspondence with Wili about literature up until his execution in 1994. Her relationship with inmates has been more than that of a one-dimensional advocate. She has also been a friend. And, in typical Nan fashion, she always stresses how much she learned and benefitted from these experiences.

She served on the board of Nebraskans Against the Death Penalty for 16 years (as well as the group that preceded it) and was on the ACLU-Nebraska ‘Prison Rights Committee.’

What many of you probably don’t know is that Dr. Graf graduated from high school in Ventura, California. She is one of those rare California transplants who has put down roots in Nebraska. She is a graduate of Stanford University with both B.A. and M.A. degrees. In the 1950s, she taught at UNL. From 1965-1993 she taught English at Nebraska Wesleyan. She organized and team-taught NWU’s first peace course. While teaching full time, she completed her Ph.D. at UNL in 1991. Paul Olson was her director. I think that may be one reason it took her so long. Paul is an awfully tough taskmaster!

Finally, Nan told me that she became a member of NFP because Betty Olson, Paul’s deceased wife and former NFP State Coordinator, simply invited her to attend an NFP event (a practice, by the way, that Nan encourages all of us duplicate). Betty also gave Nan an NFP T-shirt. After almost 40 years, however, Nan says the shirt is worn so thin, that, for the sake of modesty, she can’t wear it without an undergarment. So today, I’d like to present Nan with a new NFP T-shirt!

How about a loud round of applause for our friend Nan?

—John Krejci

If you don’t know the kind of person I am and I don’t know the kind of person you are a pattern that others made may prevail in the world and following the wrong god home we may miss our star.

For there is many a small betrayal in the mind, a shrug that lets the fragile sequence break sending with shouts the horrible errors of childhood a shrug that lets the fragile sequence break.

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Occupied Economics, Occupy the Economy

by Hank Van den Berg
UNL Professor of Economics

I am writing this column on the airplane while returning from a conference at the University of Massachusetts organized by the “International Coalition of Associations for Pluralism in Economics” (ACAPE). This is an idealistic organization that brings together economists from a wide variety of fields and perspectives in order to help the profession escape from the narrow cultural bias that currently dominates economic thinking. This organization is the polar opposite of the mainstream economics organizations which mostly propound the same failed ideas that led to the Great Depression, the 2008 Great Recession—and the next failure of our economic system. I found it stimulating to experience the defiant mood among these economists from the Marxist, libertarian, institutional, historical, structural and other heterodox schools of economic thought. Their defiance no doubt stems from the fact that many of them foresaw the current economic crisis and recession—are not afraid to point out that our economic system has failed.

While mainstream economists continue to ignore reality and ‘cautiously’ suggest that economic recovery is underway, dissenting economists—many of which accurately foresaw the current economic crisis and recession—are not afraid to point out that our economic system has failed.

The System We Have, and the Culture That Supports It

One economist, Jerry Ravetz, used the term “elite folk science” to describe how mainstream economics “can have functions in the role of government and establish private property as the basis of economic organization. The term ‘capitalism’ is usually used to describe the neoliberal’s preferred economic structure. Operating as a type of religious belief, the neoliberal paradigm represents the economy as a stable system of self-adjusting markets that, ‘like an invisible hand,’ translate self-centered individual behavior into socially optimal outcomes. Those quoted words were written by Adam Smith in 1776, and although he actually never emphasized the idea, today’s mainstream economists in government, business, finance, and academia take the invisible hand as their guiding principle.

Actually, it’s easy to see where the belief in the invisible hand appeals to those who care about human freedom. The capitalist free market system is depicted as one in which people are ‘free to choose’ under the guidance of the impersonal ‘market’ where everyone competes equally and without privilege. This neoliberal or capitalist religion has become so firmly embedded in our economic culture that few mainstream economists question it. So complete is this free market faith that they will argue that any failure of the system can only be attributed to the markets having been somehow prevented from operating freely. Accordingly, economists have pushed free-market policies, the privatization of the natural commons, and limits on collective action through government.

Things though have not worked out as advertised.

Instead of greater personal freedom with open competitive markets and an eternal capitalist expansion that trickles down benefits for everyone, free-market policies have saddled us with an oppressive and unequal economic system. Deregulation, the abandonment of anti-trust enforcement, the privatization of the commons, the withdrawal of the social safety net, and the abandonment of society’s commitment to providing common social and economic capital to guarantee fair and egalitarian outcomes have given us mercantilism. This is a system in which business and wealthy elites use the government to further their interests. Our current political/economic system of “one dollar, one vote” is nothing other than mercantilism.

Neoliberalism Supports Modern Mercantilism

Mercantilism goes back at least 500 years, when it manifested itself in colonialism, slavery, the theft of foreign resources, and the concentration of economic wealth—and, therefore, political power—in the hands of the few. Recall that colonialism was the joint effort of private business interests and a government’s military and bureaucratic forces to capture overseas territories. The common myth is that mercantilism disappeared with the rise of democracy and the dismantling of colonial empires. But the truth is that it is still with us, more powerful than ever. Corporate empires have replaced

Today, we have neither democracy nor capitalism. We have modern mercantilism—a system in which business and wealthy elites use the government to further their interests.

the traditional national empires. This has happened because most democracies have been completely taken over by business and financial interests.

Today, we have neither democracy nor capitalism; we have modern mercantilism. This neoliberal alliance of money and government has created a flawed system which has lately been generating multiple deficits. Government budget deficits

continued on page 8
Not in My Backyard, Not on My Planet

A friend, Professor Henry D’Souza (who is well-known around Nebraskans for Peace), told me that he had watched parts of the Unicameral hearings on the Keystone XL Pipeline. He remarked at how limited the focus of the hearings seemed to be, as if we are dealing mainly with a routing issue for the pipeline—not the larger issue, the introduction of a whole new (and very large) pool of fossil fuels, by way of Alberta’s tar sands.

While I agreed with Henry, of course, I said that the very nature of the inquiry limited it to a very large case of ‘not in my (our) backyard.’ The Statehouse deals with issues within the borders of Nebraska. Most of our influential politicians (Governor Dave Heineman and Senator Mike Johanns among them), have said that they favor the pipeline, but oppose routing it through the Sand Hills.

With all respect due the Sand Hills, however, routing is only a small part of the real issue. How many people are concerned with the fact that the oil-industrial complex is bringing on-line all sorts of new product at a time when the carbon-dioxide level in our shared atmosphere is reaching the levels of the Pliocene, 2 to 3 million years ago, when the Earth’s temperatures were perhaps 4 to 5 degrees F. higher, with very little glacial ice and sea levels about 200 feet higher than today? The lag effect of ‘thermal inertia’ (the time it takes for carbon dioxide to mature into a greenhouse gas—50 years in the atmosphere, about 150 to 200 years in the oceans) will temporarily shield us, but every pump of the gas pedal today is setting up a hellish Pliocene-like future.

Deck Chairs on the Titanic

As important as protecting the Ogallala Aquifer from an oil spill is, the larger planetary issue raised by the Keystone XL Pipeline is human dependence on fossil fuels—and the evil genius of the oil and coal industry to keep supplying us with enough new carbon fuel sources from many different (safe! secure! profitable!) places to fry the atmosphere.

While I am encouraged when some of our politicians take exception to the oil-industrial complex (this kind of independent thinking is a rare sight), in the big picture, our state’s politicians are merely re-arranging deck chairs on the Titanic. As the Alberta oil sands are being developed, oil companies are positively drooling over fossil-fuel deposits under the Arctic Ocean that used to be restricted by year-round ice.

Now that the ice cap is melting, we see hot times in the Northeast and Northwest passages, perversely hailed as a maritime merchant’s dream. They’re growing cabbage in Greenland—hurray! Oh, the ironies of global warming. Melt the ice, and open access to more fossil fuels that will contribute to acceleration of the problem. ExxonMobil has signed a deal to drill in the Russian sector of the Arctic Ocean.

Was it Karl Marx who said a capitalist will sell you the rope with which to hang yourself?

“It is paradoxical that new opportunities are opening for our nations at the same time we understand that the threat of carbon emissions have become imminent,” Iceland’s president, Olafur Ragnar Grimsson, said at a recent conference on Arctic Ocean shipping (he was quoted in the New York Times by Andrew E. Kramer, October 18, 2011). Alaska’s lieutenant governor, Mead Treadwell, was quoted by Kramer as saying that about $1 billion worth of goods passed through the Bering Strait last year. “The ships,” he said, “are coming.”

In addition to the Arctic’s new oil, as well as the whole new system of fossil-fuel supply from Canadian tar sands, new fossil fuels are coming out of Montana and North Dakota from ‘fracking.’ North Dakota is experiencing an economic boom in an otherwise dour economic climate as it produces 400,000 barrels of oil a day. Colombia is becoming a major player on the world oil market, and ExxonMobil has found a large new oil field in Argentina.

New Oil, Old Problem

We are being told that all these new sources of oil and other fossil fuels are good for us. They reduce our dependence on oil from the unstable, terrorist-ridden Middle East. No matter where our oil products come from, however, we are still slaves to fossil fuels, as the atmosphere’s carbon-dioxide level ticks upward year by year. This piper will be paid by coming generations. Was it Karl Marx who said a capitalist will sell you the rope with which to hang yourself?

We will have enough oil to power our SUVs until well past the time when coastal cities begin to become inundated by rising sea levels. With every press of the gas pedal we are ‘levying a cost on future generations.

Last summer, during July, we had a little foretaste of this. A month of nighttime temperatures above 80 degrees F. caused most of our garden to quit producing vegetables, including the tomatoes, which usually savor warm nights. Even tomatoes have limits, and for a time we reached them.

This is a taste of a future when the basics of every-day life will become hostage to a warming climate. Because of thermal inertia, this is becoming not a question of if, but when. At the same time, our government and industries act as if bringing new sources of fossil fuels to market without limit is a good thing. This state of affairs is not sustainable for more than a few more decades. Eventually, without sustainable non-polluting energy, life will become more difficult, no matter where the Keystone XL Pipeline is routed.

Bruce E. Johansen is Jacob J. Isaacson Professor at the UNO and author of The Encyclopedia of Global Warming Science and Technology (2009).
In addition to the traditional ‘Peacemaker of the Year Awards,’ the Nebraskans for Peace State Board unveiled a new accolade at this year’s Annual Peace Conference October 15. Established in honor of two of our most illustrious members, “The Leola Bullock and Lela Shanks Award for Civil Rights Leadership” recognizes those special individuals who, by their actions, have modeled the fearless and unrelenting commitment to justice of its namesakes.

Nan Graf, a close personal friend of both Leola and Lela, was selected as the first honoree for this prestigious award. In the following article, Nan reflects on the lives of these heroic women, who both passed away within a year of each other.

Both Leola Bullock and Lela Shanks are well known for supporting anyone down on their luck—true friends of the oppressed even after they themselves developed a good life with their own families.

Leola came to Lincoln in 1950 as the newly married wife of Hugh Bullock. She had finished a year of college and Hugh had served in the army during World War II. When they moved north from Mississippi to Nebraska, Hugh, as a veteran, was fortunate to qualify for a job with the U.S. Postal Service and easily passed the civil service exam. This lifetime job provided the family the financial security that enabled Leola to pursue her Civil Rights agenda with vigor. Although they’d left the South, she’d discovered segregated housingBAR

also existed here in Nebraska, in addition to other racial injustices, especially in education and employment.

In 1957, I attended a luncheon meeting of the NAACP at the Clyde Malone Community Center, where I first met the Bullocks who welcomed me kindly to a mainly African-American gathering. After that, Leola called me from time to time to work on a project with her. I myself was never a Civil Rights leader, but I willingly answered the leaders’ calls to Justice—learning that there is always a need for supportive workers as well as for leaders.

About 20 years ago, Leola and I started serving a Saturday lunch at Newman United Methodist Church about four times a year to the legal defense supporters of Ed Poindexter and Mondo we Langa. This group evolved into what is now the “Nebraskans for Justice” board of 20 people, with Omaha activist Tariq Al-Amin as president. I complained to Leola at one point that she was bringing too much food (ham, roast chicken, etc.) But she defended the leftovers by saying that she delivered the excess to several different people who were elderly and lived alone. Leola was an ongoing peacemaker as well as constant worker for justice: individuals as well as groups mattered to her.

When Lela Shanks and her husband Hughes came to Lincoln in 1965 with their four children, they bought a house on Randolph.
In the beginning was a woman
Hips to her heels … palms on her knees …
spine straight …
Shoulders back …
She breathed …
And considered the world around her
Silence … darkness … stillness … light …

In the beginning was a woman
and she declared …
I think I’ll make me a world
So she saluted the sun … and took in its rays
And that ball of fire bowed and kissed the palms of her hands

She took up her mat and walked and she walked and she walked
and the red oak greeted her
and the sycamore bowed
the ponderosa pine swiveled
and she walked around the bend to a pathway
of nature strewn with
Peace and jasmine
Fairness and prairie willow
Human Rights and silver sagebrush
And she called her journey Good!

And she swam and she swam and she swam to the other side
And she walked and walked and walked and stumbled on
A cry … Mamie Till? Is that you?
A moan … Fannie Lou?
A sigh … Rosa? Is that you?
Daisy, you marching? Already?
so she walked and walked and walked and tripped
Along a path of nature strewn with
tyranny
terrorism
persecution

and she breathed and breathed and breathed stumbling on …
A clearing … of women …
hummin’ and a singin’ and a
dancin’ and a meditatin’
on what?
We’re Makin’ our world …
With what?
Education … Revolution … Strength … Resolve …
caretaking of those whose memories can’t decide to stay or go …
So, Lela and Hughes
and Viola Liuzzo and Delores Huerta and
Wilma Mankiller and Leola and Hugh and
Daisy and Coretta and Rosa and
Septima and Fannie Lou
Took up their mats and walked and walked and walked
And they looked at each other and said, “This Journey is Good!”
And they reached the lands brimming with
Cotton
Tobacco
Sugar
Rice
From South Carolina to Florida to Georgia to Louisiana to Tennessee to Oklahoma
to Nebraska
For Coloreds Only … For Whites Only
These lines drawn in the land
So Lela picked them up and fashioned them into Spears … bows and arrows …
And the women walked and walked and walked …
In the beginning was a woman …
And Lela declared, “This is good!”

Lincoln civil rights legend and NFP State Board member Lela Shanks died October 24 after a long struggle with cancer. Dr. Kwakiutl L. Dreher, UNL Associate Professor of English and Ethnic Studies, delivered this poetic tribute to Lela’s memory at the 2011 Lincoln NAACP annual dinner November 11.
Leola Bullock &
Lela Shanks Award

Street and integrated their neighborhood. It was no easy task, but this peacemaking family treated everyone with respect and even shoveled snow from the sidewalks and driveways of neighbors who had rejected them (when in ill health these neighbors were in need of help).

I moved into their neighborhood and received from Lela the kindest welcome I could have wished for—homemade banana bread straight from the oven to eat as I was unpacking and getting settled. The Shankses were good neighbors on a daily basis, and that’s where peace begins: at home in our neighborhoods (as well as our hearts).

Lela and Hughes were graduates of Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri, where they met while rehearsing for a production of the ancient Euripides tragedy, Medea. Both top students there, they married, and Lela became a journalist while Hughes, a Purple Heart veteran of World War II, used the GI Bill to attend law school. After children arrived, Lela stayed home and Hughes went to work for the Social Security Administration. They took turns attending Civil Rights marches and protests so that one parent could be at home with the children.

After Hughes was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s Disease (AD), Lela chose to care for him at home, where he died 14 years after his diagnosis. Lela called me at 7:00 a.m., a few hours after Hughes died, and said: “My sweetheart died in my arms this morning.”

Not one to get bogged down in her own problems, she wrote a book to help others, Your Name is Hughes Hannibal Shanks: A Caregiver’s Guide to Alzheimer’s (University of Nebraska Press, 1996). In it, she applied her activist skills to the struggles and strengths of her family’s own experience with AD, and she traveled nationwide to communicate her strategies. Invited to speak at the prestigious Mayo Clinic, she gladly shared her ideas there with nurses, doctors and other health professionals.

It is no surprise that Leola and Lela became friends. Their families became ‘family’ for both women (and their husbands) and their treasured children and grandchildren—many of whom were included in marches or events to support Peace & Justice.

High-spirited women, Leola and Lela sometimes debated hotly the details of a particular issue at our Friday lunch group, but they’d hug and walk out together when the discussion ended. This is, to me, the sign of deep-rooted friendship.

These two powerhouse women contributed their wisdom and their work to improve our lives and our community. We are all the beneficiaries and shall forever be in their debt.

Occupy Economics, conclusion

2. Work less.
3. Engage in social activities that replace current energy-intensive individual consumption.
4. Abandon the myth of ‘rugged individualism’ and recognize that humans are socially dependent creatures.
5. Organize society so that all members enjoy status and a sense of participation.
6. Reduce income and wealth inequalities.

These goals mean that we will have to do more through our government collectively, such as providing universal education, healthcare and a social safety net to provide people with equal opportunities and social security. Without government, opportunity and social security depend on individual accumulation, which tends to lead people to overproduce, overuse resources, and overestimate their ability to cope with misfortune and disappointing outcomes. Collective solutions include public transportation, community internet, universal healthcare, and setting up the government as an employer of last resort. Emphasis must be on community resources, the egalitarian provision of social and cultural capital, and public ownership and management of the natural environment. With more equal access to the things we need to enjoy life, we can get by with much less energy-using individual material consumption.

We will also have to establish a more democratic process through which the public interest can be pursued. To create such a true democratic process, we will need things such as:

- More economic power for workers, including worker ownership of businesses, strong labor laws that protect labor organizations, living wages, full employment guaranteed by the government.
- Nationalization to reverse the earlier privatizations of nature and the commons.
- Education that is free at all levels and available to all.

If we hope to survive the coming economic and environmental collapse, we must completely change the way we work, live and behave.

- Education that provides people not only with specific work skills but also with a cultural understanding of their economic, social and political systems (democracy demands this!), and the general knowledge necessary to participate in broader cultural interactions.
- A 20-hour workweek that, with our current technology, would provide the material goods to sustain a comfortable lifestyle—say the one we enjoyed in 1956.
- Shorter workweeks mean people will have time for education, social interaction, voluntary activities, sports, games and intellectual pursuits that consume little or no carbon energy and greatly enhance human well-being.

This list is by no means complete. I only list these points because they illustrate that the needed changes are radical. They are unapologetically ‘socialistic’ and they most certainly increase the size of government. To pay for them we will need to tax the rich and take a good portion of their disproportionate accumulation of wealth. We will also have to tax everyone more as we replace individual consumption with collective activities and services. Of course, a more humane society will reduce the need for wasteful government expenditures on war, incarceration and surveillance.

Change Will Be Very Hard

The most difficult aspect of this survival strategy is that it will take collective action to accomplish these changes. Individual efforts alone will accomplish nothing if those actions do not spur collective action. We can only defeat the power of the wealthy few with large numbers; the wealthy have more money, and they have hired guns. Only with large numbers will we get to the point where the hired guns hesitate and refuse to follow orders to shoot at their fellow ‘99 percenters.’ And only when the hired guns defect will the elite finally be forced to concede some of their wealth and power. We need numbers, large numbers, acting in unison—not lone dissenters or a few quiet Prius drivers. A lot of people need to wake up, organize, get angry, and openly demonstrate their resistance.

This conclusion sounds harsh. We have all been brought up thinking each one of us can make a difference acting on our own. The vested elite would love to convince all potential activists to spend their time raising organic tomatoes or writing long letters to politicians. They know full well that only
Paul Olson, conclusion

No creator was prompted by a desire to serve his brothers, for his brothers rejected the gift he offered and that gift destroyed the slothful routine of their lives. His truth was his only motive. His own truth, and his own work to achieve it in his own way. A symphony, a book, an engine, a philosophy, an airplane or a building—that was his goal and his life. Not those who heard, read, operated, believed, flew or inhabited the thing he had created. The creation, not its users. The creation, not the benefits others derived from it. The creation which gave form to his truth. He held his truth above all things and against all men. His vision, his strength, his courage came from his own spirit. A man’s spirit, however, is his self. That entity which is his consciousness. To think, to feel, to judge, to act are functions of the ego. The creators were not selfless. It is the whole secret of their power—that it was self-sufficient, self-motivated, self-generated. A first cause, a fount of energy, a life force, a Prime Mover. The creator served nothing and no one. He lived for himself. And only by living for himself was he able to achieve the things which are the glory of mankind. Such is the nature of achievement.

Such is the adolescent bull (rather than the constitutional “promotion of the general welfare”) that now determines the fate of the nation. The bull is, first of all, false. I have spent my life studying the history of literature and creation from the Romans to the present. The great ones do not act alone and they do not claim to act for their own ‘aloneness.’ They act—even such giants as Picasso or Bach or Dante or Tolstoy—forwarding some sort of social vision for the common profit of humanity and they say so in so many words. The secret of their power is that they have a vision that goes beyond the self.

As a group, the contemporary Randists are a simple-minded and mean-spirited lot. But on one major point (where, ironically enough, we might make common cause), they part company with their mentor. Ayn Rand had no use for coercion, no use for ‘statism’ (which she thought bred war) and little use for military build-ups. The Randists in powerful positions, on the other hand, are mostly militarists. Paul Paul’s budget cut everything but the military. Reagan multiplied the military budget to starve social programs. Ron Paul is unique is calling for huge cuts in the military. With the congressional super-committee’s failure to reach an agreement on cutting the deficit, count on these same Republican Randists (Paul excepted) to now try to break the ‘sequestration’ agreement mandating $500 billion in automatic cuts to the military.

They’re cherry-picking what to practice from the prophet’s gospel. But in their refusal to raise taxes on billionaires, in their willingness to let the 20 percent who live in poverty continue to languish, you can see the hand of Ayn Rand.

Well, it’s time for those who think that they can be master builders by themselves to be taught that they can’t build alone—that the workers who put the brick and mortar in place can lay down their trowels. If we can fill Wall Street and the Mall with uncooperative people, we can also fill every corridor of power in America and bring the ship of state to a screeching halt. We can test how much the captains of industry are able to do when, left to their grandiose notions of the supreme ‘self,’ they have to row their boats by themselves.

an organized active movement of many people working together can topple their well-entrenched mercantilist system, which is why they work so hard to keep us fragmented.

Fortunately, the participants in the Occupy Wall Street movement understand this. It has been entertaining to listen to the mainstream corporate news media repeating the claim that the OWS movement seems to be disorganized and aimless. The truth is that the movement has correctly understood the need to start the difficult process of changing the system wholesale rather than making isolated, incremental demands that can then be endlessly argued about. There is little sense in arguing with the mercantilist interests about marginal adjustments to the economic and political systems they control. Let’s face it: the power of wealth has to be pushed out of the political system: it will not leave voluntarily. We need numbers, persistence and courage. And we should stop accepting half measures and promises. The work for wholesale change begins now—and we don’t dare stop till we get it.

Of course, we will all have to give up our SUVs, our 3,000-square-foot homes beyond the suburbs, weekend flights to Las Vegas and new clothes every season. We will have to ride the bus or train with other people, and we will have to walk a bit more. We will have to eat less meat, get along with more seasonal and local foods, and reduce the amount of pre-packaged prepared foods. We will have to learn to entertain ourselves more often as leisure time expands, and some of that extra time will have to be used to participate in democracy. We will have to inform ourselves about economics, politics, social issues and many other relevant topics. We will have to think more.

Yes, I know, this sounds like a lot of work. But we really don’t have any other option.

Time is running out for making the lifestyle changes that might enable humanity to survive the perfect storm of mercantilist and environmental collapse that’s rapidly bearing down upon us.
2011 will probably be the last year that tax-free distributions can be taken from conventional IRA accounts for those age 70-1/2 and older. No legislation has been proposed to extend this benefit for 2012.

So check with your tax advisor to see if this Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) can benefit you. The Nebraska Peace Foundation is a qualified charity under the IRS rules for this distribution. This could save you paying tax on your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD).

Understanding Washington would appear to require only understanding how money, bribery, political elites and pure meanness work. But understanding Washington, in these mean days, also requires understanding where people live and what they live for intellectually.

We have a little talk about religion and ideology in Washington—market economics, Keynesianism, the evangelical right, ‘Socialists,’ fundamentalists and on and on. But little about Randism.

To understand present-day Washington, one needs to understand Ayn Rand. Ronald Reagan admired Ms. Rand and the New York Times called her the Reagan Administration’s “novelist laureate.” Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas and his wife are Randists. Alan Greenspan, head of the Federal Reserve for an eternity, was labeled “my disciple” by Rand (there is very good evidence that, in most respects, he followed a Randist policy while driving the economy into the ditch by removing regulations).

Rand’s philosophy is not just a legacy. It is a force in present government. She is commonly featured on signs at Tea Party demonstrations. Ron Paul, a quite successful candidate for president to this point, is a Randist. The only budget for next year that has been passed is that constructed in the House Budget Committee chaired by Representative Paul Ryan (R-WI)—the budget that cut the heart out of the safety net for the poor and middle classes, relieved the rich of nearly all responsibility for our country, and left the military budget untouched. Mr. Ryan recently spoke at an event in Rand’s honor and said, “The reason I got involved in public service, by and large, if I had to credit one thinker, one person, it would be Ayn Rand.” Ryan requires that all of his staff read Rand’s works. Rand’s principles created Ryan’s budget.

Though the Grand Old Party is big on Christianity and attacks Obama for being a Muslim, a Marxist and everything in between, they are more Randists than apostles. The principles of Ms. Rand hardly sound like the “Sermon on the Mount” (in fact, Ms. Rand was a militant atheist which is no great concern, save that it is the militant Christian right that espouses her). She teaches that:

1. Selfishness is a virtue; to live only to and for ourselves is our only responsibility.
2. Capitalism is the only moral social system. It allows for complete selfishness and absolute individualism—a system absent compulsion, coercion or physical force. It “holds people completely responsible for their own success or failure” and eschews compassion. “When government helps the disadvantaged, it consequently punishes virtue and rewards sloth.”
3. The purpose of government is to protect the free exercise of selfishness from coercion and constraint by others.
4. Society is divided into producers and looters—the supermen who really make things and the rest of us who try to get protection from government for our businesses, live off welfare, and mooch our way through life.

Randism is a celebration of the ballooning ego, the religion of those with the maturity of a three-year-old and the same relish of untrammeled capacity to act. Rand says that the ‘robber barons’ were visionaries that created untold good for humankind in the 1880-1900 period. Taxes on the other hand are evil. In “Government Financing in a Free Society,” Rand writes:

“In a fully free society, taxation—or, to be exact, payment for governmental services—would be voluntary. Since the proper services of a government—the police, the armed forces, the law courts—are demonstrably needed by individual citizens and affect their interests directly, the citizens would (and should) be willing to pay for such services, as they pay for insurance.”

In Rand’s novel, The Fountainhead, the hero, Roark, is a modern architect fighting against ‘Philistinism’ who rapes the heroine of the book (Rand described it as “rape by invitation”), a man who follows his own vision of what his buildings should be like to the point of dynamiting one of them when his plans are modified. This final speech of Roark includes the sentiment that:

conclusion on page 11