

I. War and Discrimination Connections

Wars intensify racism in the US. Japanese-Americans were interned during WWII, Vietnamese were derided as “gooks,” and now Arabs and Arab-Americans are investigated as if their ethnicity alone makes them terrorist suspects. Dehumanization makes it much easier to fight and kill. On a deeper level, the relationship between race and class means that all minorities suffer during wartime. The US military is disproportionately black and Latino. Those at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder are most likely to be unemployed, and therefore more likely to “volunteer” to be put in harm’s way. As more funds are shifted from critical social needs to military adventures, unemployment rises, education suffers, and our quality of life degrades.

Sexism is also fueled by militarism. War means rape of innocent civilians and more violence against women at home. Murders of military wives by their recently returned husbands are just the most obvious brutal evidence of what war does to human beings.

See:
<http://www.cnn.com/2002/US/07/26/army.wives/index.html>

And women’s status is falling in Iraq as the previously secular society becomes more dominated by reactionary forces. Only peace can provide the opportunity to build a better society.

II. The Military Needs Poverty and Racism

Reasons for enlisting are varied and multifaceted, but according to the Rand Corporation, people usually join to enhance their employment prospects. While blacks comprise only 12% of the population, they represented 32% of the Army in Gulf War I, and not surprisingly only 2 of the 535 members of Congress had children on active duty.

See:
<http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR323/mr323.ch13.pdf>
<http://chicagoreporter.com>, “New Military Data,” Jan. 1991

What else does the military offer? A 90% likelihood of sexual harassment and 30% likelihood of rape for women soldiers, an anti-gay sanctuary for bigots, 50% of the front lines and a glass ceiling for blacks, and a sub-minimum wage for all at entry level. Veterans comprise 1/3 of the male homeless, and working veterans get significantly lower pay than non-veterans do. Over 70% of college-aged soldiers never see a dime of financial aid from the military. See *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* 43,3 (Mar. 2003): 262-73; also:

See:
<http://www.va.gov/homeless/page.cfm?pg=1>
<http://objector.org/before-you-enlist/reallyget.html>

III. The US Economy and Social Welfare

Unemployment, living wage, and affordable housing are all related to racism and war. People of color suffer the highest rates of poverty, and need the social services that are often cut when funds are shifted to the military.

The US unemployment rate was 5.8% in 2002. But the rate was 5.1% for whites, as opposed to 10.2% for blacks, and 7.5% for Hispanics. (See <http://stats.bls.gov/cps>). Working people of color get paid less than whites. The 2001 per capita income for whites was \$24,127, compared with \$14,953 for blacks and \$13,003 for Latinos. 34% of white children are low-income compared to 57% of black and 64% of Latino children.

The federal minimum wage is insufficient for the survival of many families. Urbana and many other cities have established their own “living wage” laws. We need similar laws in Champaign and the surrounding communities.

See:
<http://www.census.gov/hhes/income/histinc/ineperdet.html>
<http://www.chn.org>
<http://www.prairienet.org/helpbook>

IV. Discrimination of Arabs & Muslims

The “War on Terrorism” has relegitimized racial profiling. Significant progress through grassroots organizing before 9/11 has been overturned by the politics of fear. Several thousand Arabs and Muslims have been detained and hundreds have been deported for minor visa infractions. People from a list of 21 mainly Muslim countries have been forced to report for “Special Registration,” and many have been detained including Christian and secular Arabs. Some have fled to Canada to escape the possibility of indefinite detention without access to lawyers and contact with family and friends. Even US citizens have been detained without access to basic legal procedures. We do not know the names or totals of those detained, but we do know that this is not protecting us from further terrorist attacks. Local Muslims report increased discrimination, especially against women wearing headscarves. An undergraduate UIUC student was picked up and detained for weeks because of his Palestine solidarity work. AWARE has established a Mutual Aid Pact to help those targeted because of their ethnicity, religion, or political views under the War on Terrorism legislation and other regulations. (See <http://www.anti-war.net/MAP/>.)

V. Racist Crime Policies

American crime policies bear a striking resemblance to the “War on Terrorism.” These policies wrest control from a politically and economically weaker people under the guise of humanitarianism, bleed the respective communities of their resources and vitality, and prevent future empowerment. The domestic prison system disproportionately affects low-income people of color, while the most noted victims of current US wars are Arabs and Muslims.

The US population is 12% black, but the prison population is 45% black comprising mostly non-violent drug offenders. 74% of those sentenced to prison for drug offenses are black, but 72% of all illicit drug users are white. The mass media falsely characterizes drugs as a black problem. "Tough-on-crime" politicians point to black incarceration rates to show the effectiveness of their policies, perpetuating the misconception that blacks are more inclined to criminality. Current crime policies effectively silence the communities needing government aid and social change. Felony convictions have politically disenfranchised 13% of all adult black males leaving them unable to vote. Finally, we note that the US prison system is a \$32 billion-a-year industry, and it is becoming increasingly privatized. Corporations profit by leasing inmates out for extremely low wages.

See:

<http://www.sentencingproject.org/pdfs/1035.pdf>
<http://www.sentencingproject.org/pdfs/9070smv.pdf>
<http://www.sentencingproject.org/pdfs/9080.pdf>
<http://www.corpwatch.org/issues/PID.jsp?articleid=862>

VI. What You Can Do

Stop the Wars. Elect candidates who support peace and racial equality. Talk to your local and national candidates about these issues. Write to your current elected officials. Remember, they are supposed to work for you. Ask them to introduce or support legislation to make our society more peaceful and equitable.

Work with your local school boards and city councils to ensure peaceful and equitable practices. Support the creation of local police review boards. An Urbana board is currently under consideration. It would be comprised of community members who would advise the City Council and investigate complaints lodged against the police.

Form coalitions with other like-minded groups. Get involved in your community or increase your current involvement. Work for

passage of a living wages laws in the City of Champaign and in all the surrounding communities.

See:

<http://www.ilchamber.org/kc/hr/hr020914A.asp>

AWARE

Anti-War

Anti-Racism Effort

<http://www.anti-war.net>

Weekly meetings on Sundays
at 5 PM at the
Independent Media Center,
218 W. Main St.
in downtown Urbana

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The Connections Between War and Racism

If we want a more peaceful world that is free of the violence and destruction of war, we must also work to end racism. War and racism are linked in many ways, and typically people of color pay a higher price in human suffering when the US wages war.



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