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OPINION

War-Budget Could Buy a Lot

If only our 'leaders' would end ideological crusades

BY JIM HIGHTOWER

President George W. Bush has now submitted his budget to Congress, and it can be summed up by this lopsided score: Domestic needs, zero. The Pentagon, \$515 billion.

The budget slashes health care programs from Medicare to the medical needs of 9-11 rescue workers. It also makes drastic cuts



ture. Counting such deferred costs as interest on the war debt and long-term care for the wounded, the tab is \$720 million per day.

The American Friends Service Committee has analyzed what else besides this misbegotten war America could buy with only one day's worth of the money we're spending there.

For \$720 million we could provide health coverage for 424,000 children; build 84 brand new schools; buy school lunches for 1.2 million needy kids; provide 6,482 units of affordable housing; pay for renewable-energy electricity in

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in such other crucial efforts as the centers for disease control, low-income energy assistance, and family literacy. But it piles half-a-trillion bucks in the Pentagon's vaults - and that does not include the money thrown down the hellhole of Iraq.

Under Mr. Bush's accounting rules, war costs are off-budget, charged to the credit card of our children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and beyond.

Joseph Stiglitz, a Nobel Prize-winning economist, has calculated the total cost of just the first four years of the Iraq misadven-

1.3 million homes; pay the annual salaries of 12,500 new classroom teachers; and put 35,000 students through a four-year state college.

Any of these could be had for just one day of war funding. This great country has the money to do what needs to be done - if only our "leaders" stop frittering it away on their ideological crusades.

For more information on Jim Hightower's work - and to subscribe to his monthly newsletter, *The Hightower Lowdown*, visit jimhightower.com.

BEHIND IN THE POLLS, HILLARY CLINTON STILL OFFERS OBAMA THE VICE PRESIDENTIAL POST.



Cheaper to Educate than Incarcerate

War on drugs misplaced

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS



The United States imprisons more people than any other country in the world. The majority of these people - 80 percent - are locked away for drug-related crimes; many of whom are low-level drug offenders.

The country's increased prison population has led to weakened communities, particular in urban areas, and a generation of young men, and now women, who are released from

prison without the skills they need to thrive. Yet, America continues to imprison drug offenders, despite evidence that this method is ineffective, not to mention expensive. Study after study shows that it is far cheaper to educate and rehabilitate than it is to incarcerate. It is time for

dealers. The passing of mandatory minimum laws were one of the main weapons used. These laws required judges to hand down mandatory sentences for drug offenses, regardless of the circumstances surrounding the crime.

The laws also required longer sentences for crack cocaine offenses, an

lem at its root, would have sought to understand why young people would risk their lives and endanger their communities to engage in drug related activities.

It is no secret that U.S. foreign policies at the time allowed foreign military groups to smuggle and sell drugs in this country to fund weapons purchases. Though many deny the claims, there is substantial research on file to support them.

In the 20 or so years since the war on drugs began, the only thing that has changed is the number of people in prison for drug related crimes and the amount of money this country spends on incarcerating people who can be rehabilitated. A new strategy is clearly needed.

The government can begin anti-drug counseling in schools. And not those 'just say no' campaigns. Young people need access to counseling that will help them address the root issues of drug abuse.

Judge Greg Mathis is national vice president of Rainbow PUSH and a national board member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

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Though the American government has long waged a war against the drug of its day - alcohol in the 1920s and 30s - the contemporary war on drugs began in the 1980s, when crack cocaine began to devastate urban areas. The war was more of an attack, targeting poor people of color.

Instead of focusing on anti-drug education and rehabilitation of addicts, the war mainly centered on arresting and imprisoning users and

urban drug, than powder cocaine, a drug long associated with whites and money.

Though the country is now taking steps to move away from mandatory minimums, the damage has been done.

Young men, and women, have spent years in jail, many for nonviolent drug offenses, and are uneducated and unable to properly provide for themselves or their families, weakening the core of urban communities.

An authentic war on drugs, one that was designed to solve the prob-

In Defense of Reverend Wright

Speak truth to power

BY SHERWOOD ROSS

The language used by Rev. Jeremiah Wright to denounce his country is certainly "inflammatory" and has brought him wide vilification. Yet, the words of this otherwise gentle man of peace are nowhere as damnable as the actions of the man of war in the White House responsible for killing more than a million human beings in Iraq.

Yet the president's uncounted lies have never been subjected to the intense scrutiny on TV that the networks are now devoting to Rev. Wright's comments! And why is that?

Bush and his neocon allies have loosed the dogs of war on the fiery Chicago preacher not because he represents a danger to anyone. That's absurd. Wright, we are told, has been making remarks such as "god damn America" for years. It's only since Sen. Barack Obama has become a front-runner that Obama's opponents elected to use Rev. Wright. It's their way of attempting to tear down the only one of the three presidential candidates that opposed Bush's war. It's Bush that deserves censure, not the minister.

And may we have the temerity to inquire what Rev. Wright is so angry about? The answer in part is that he is ticked off at America's imperialist foreign policy, its violations of international law, and its role as a disturber of the peace. Indeed, Wright is part of a long and honorable tradition of Americans who told their government off when their government was, in fact, dead wrong, as it

has been on many occasions.

Such men and women loved their country enough to expect better of it. Psychologist William James, the Harvard philosopher, for example, used the same epithet as Wright in 1898 when he declared: "God damn the U.S. for its vile conduct in the Philippine Isles."

Was James wrong? In his "A People's History of the United States," Howard Zinn quotes Mark Twain saying this about the U.S. takeover of the Philippines: "We have pacified some thousands of the islanders and buried them; destroyed their fields; burned their villages, and turned their widows and orphans out-of-doors."

Indeed, the Manila correspondent for the Philadelphia Ledger wrote home, "Our men have been relentless, have killed to exterminate men, women, children, prisoners and captives...and suspected people from lads of ten up... Our soldiers have pumped salt water in them (captives) to make them talk..." Were those damnable acts or not? How many people reading these words think it's okay to invade a foreign country and kill women and children?

Rev. Wright, shortly after 9/11 he declared, "We bombed Hiroshima, we bombed Nagasaki, and we nuked far more than the thousands in New York and the Pentagon never batted an eye." Once again, we find the minister speaking truth to power, referring to the commission of two of the most horrific war crimes in history. He might have added, also, between them the U.S. and British air forces killed perhaps 800,000 Ger-

man civilians in World War II and the U.S. incinerated the better part of 66 Japanese cities, massacring with napalm over 100,000 one night in Tokyo alone, and maybe 1-million Japanese civilians in all.

I don't know if the Trinity United Church of Christ minister ever got around to damning America's treatment of the Native Americans or the two-million civilians USA exterminated in Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia, or the tens of thousands that died when President Nixon and Henry Kissinger funded the CIA's overthrow of the elected Allende government in Chile, etc., etc., but these are established facts. Just as the tortures and murders in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay today are facts.

We've heard a lot about "two Americas" in this campaign, comparing the rich and the poor. But there are two other "two Americas" that need urgently to be discussed: the America of righteousness, generosity, and peace and the America of criminality, greed and war; the America that helped create the United Nations and the America of George Bush that seeks plunder, and I don't blame the Rev. Wright that he is incensed at the latter. So am I. While I do not believe he has his facts right concerning all his charges, and while I think it is wrong to call on god to damn any individual, and particularly to damn an entire nation, my sympathy is with him for his preference for diplomacy over military solutions, and for peace over war.

Sherwood Ross is a Miami-based public relations consultant and reporter who has worked in the civil rights movement.

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Preliminary concepts for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard Gateway and Heritage Markers are on display at Reflections Coffee House, 446 NE Killingsworth, until Friday, April 11, 2008. You're encouraged to stop by, review the plans and provide comments.



For information on the Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. Gateway Heritage Markers project, visit: www.pdc.us/heritagemarker, or call Irene Bowers, PDC senior project coordinator, at 503.823.2419 or e-mail bowersi@pdc.us.



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