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# OPINION

## Chemical Weapons Judged Against Our History

### Bombing for peace an oxymoron

BY JOHN LA FORGE



Highaltitude bombing and long-range missile attacks always bring nightmares of dead children and suicidal veterans. The president's plans for rocketing yet another Mid-east country without a UN mandate are being rationalized by pointing to bad actions by others — in this case Syria's overlords.

When bystanders and the elderly and women and children and illiterate peasants are blown to bits or maimed by U.S. missiles fired by U.S. jets, the unnumbered deaths and dismemberments will be called "accidents" or "unintended consequences." The endless failure of the peace movement means that the bodies of unidentified villains and countless innocents are to be sacrificed by U.S. pilots in their thoughtless obedience to illegal orders.

"Humanitarian war" joins "surgical strikes" in the lexicon of self-contradiction but with a ghastly, choking, throat full of smashed bones, broken teeth and burned

bodies that can only be dreamed of by Sen. John McCain.

He and other weapons dealers keen for bombing Syria should be required to identify the source of the chemical weapons that have been unleashed in the Damascus suburb of Ghouta. Without a positive ID of the weapons' derivation and the shooters, the UN will not sanction an attack.

Widening the proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia being waged

the pot calling the kettle black, it's napalm calling the depleted uranium a poison.

No country on earth is guiltier of using chemicals as weapons of war than the United States — even against its own people.

The National Cancer Institute disclosed in 1997 that 90 U.S. nuclear bomb tests spewed 150 million curies of iodine-131 mainly between 1952 and 1957.

The NCI found that all 160 million

acres of crops and today the Vietnamese Red Cross counts 150,000 children whose birth abnormalities were caused by their parents' exposure to Agent Orange alone.

Reportedly about 388,000 tons of our chemically gelled gasoline — napalm — was dropped on Southeast Asia between 1963 and 1973, compared to 32,357 tons used on Korea over three years, and 16,500 tons dropped on Japan in 1945.

pation of Iraq.

A report by the World Health Organization has found huge increases in birth abnormalities in southern Iraq where our DU was used extensively. Doctors at the Basra maternity hospital told the BBC this spring that they have seen a 60 percent rise in birth defects like spina bifida since 2003.

In 1994 and 1995, the Pentagon admits it fired about 10,800 DU rounds into Bosnia — close to three tons. More than 31,000 rounds, about 10 tons, were shot into Kosovo by the U.S. and NATO in 1999. DU has also contaminated large parts of Okinawa, Panama, Puerto Rico, Vieques, South Korea, New Mexico and other U.S. bases and firing ranges where target practice is conducted.

The memory of the hundreds of thousands of civilians killed or poisoned by the U.S. in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Bosnia, Kosovo, Somalia and Yemen should give pause to today's gung-ho warriors. But it seems they're only interested in selling weapons.

John LaForge is a co-director of Nukewatch, a nuclear watchdog and environmental justice group in Wisconsin and writes for PeaceVoice.

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in Syria will lead to catastrophe. Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff knows this and has expressed strong opposition to even limited intervention in Syria.

President Oh-bomb-ah will call his "precision strikes" a righteous punishment for the crime of chemical weapons use, but this will be richer than the Vatican. Worse than

people in the U.S. at the time were contaminated with the radio-iodine. The study said that between 25,000 and 75,000 thyroid cancers would result in the U.S. and that 10 percent of them would be fatal.

In Vietnam, from 1962 to 1969, the U.S. sprayed more than 100 million pounds of toxins like Agent Orange over four million acres. Our chemical warfare destroyed over 460,000

In 1991, more than 400 tons of "depleted" uranium (DU) munitions were fired into Iraq and Kuwait during the Gulf War. The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists reported that 940,000 Air Force 30-mm DU shells and 4,000 Army 120-mm DU anti-tank shells were fired. The "tank busters" alone contained 25 tons of uranium. Another 170 tons were used in the 2003 bombing and occu-

## We Have Come Far; Still Much Has Stayed the Same

### Rededicating ourselves to the fight

BY BENJAMIN TODD JEALOUS

I joined over 150,000 people at the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington. It was a powerful moment that showed us how Dr. King's dream is still alive, yet reminded us how far we still have to go to see it fulfilled.

The simple backdrop of last month's event reminded us how much has changed in 50 years.

We gathered half a mile from the White House, where an African-American president and African-American attorney general have held office for five years.

The media who attended represented the diverse races and ethnicities of the crowd, compared with the all-white media whose open bigotry toward Dr. King was on full display in the 1963 Meet the Press interview rebroadcast for the occasion. Finally, the crowd marched past the regal statue of Dr. King, prominently positioned beside DC's Tidal Basin.

We have indeed come far. Still, so much has stayed the same.

Fifty years ago we were moti-

vated by the killing of a young black man, Medgar Evers, and we came to the National Mall to mourn his death and ensure that he would not die in vain. This year we are motivated by the tragedy of Trayvon Martin, which has pushed many of us to rededicate ourselves to end racial profiling.

Fifty years ago we were fighting for everyone to have an equal right to vote. This year we are faced with a Supreme Court that has gutted the Voting Rights Act, and we are fight-

ing suppressive voter ID laws, cuts to voter registration and early voting.

Fifty years ago we were inspired by the idea of a fair minimum wage and economic justice. This year we have the same inspiration.

Let us celebrate our victories, and rededicate ourselves to the fight.

When they say No You Can't, we say Yes We Can!

When they say, No You Can't pass a real racial profiling ban with teeth, we say Yes We Can! Because yes we did, just two weeks ago in New York City.

When they say, No You Can't

pass the DREAM Act, No You Can't pass marriage equality, No You Can't abolish the death penalty, No You Can't expand voting rights in any state south of the Mason-Dixon Line, we say Yes We Can! Because yes, we did, in Maryland last year.

When they say, No You Can't restore the full force of the Voting Rights Act, No You Can't raise the minimum wage, not with this Congress, we say, Yes We Can, because, yes, we have, again and again.

So let us claim some victories

right now.

Let us say, Yes, we will pass Trayvon's law from coast to coast.

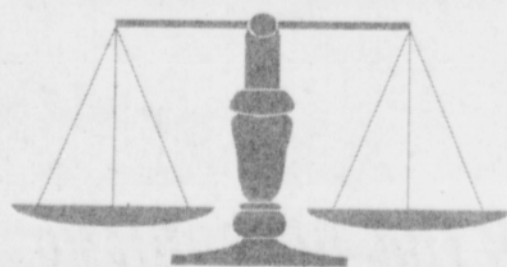
Let us say, Yes, we will protect the right to vote with all our might until we win the fight finally once and for all.

And let us say, Yes, we will raise the minimum wage because you cannot survive on \$7.25!

Yes, we will! Yes, we will! Yes, we will!

Ben Jealous is president and chief executive officer of the NAACP.

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