

# DELAWARE COUNTY PLEDGE OF RESISTANCE



P.O. Box 309 ~ Swarthmore, PA 19081 ~ phone & fax: 610-543-8427

Summer 2005

## Pledge Cinema Resistance

by Bob Small

The film committee of Delco Pledge of Resistance is now Brad Bradlee, Will Scull, and Bob Small. Bob Smith of Brandywine Peace Community also gives us recommendations.

During the first half of 2005, we viewed *Burn!* (1968), *The River* (1951), *Skyscraper Souls* (1932), and *Some Mother's Son* (1996). We plan to continue our 2005 season in September. All films were screened at The Media-Providence Friends School, 125 W. 3rd St., in Media. Admission is free, but we do accept donations.

Our format consists of an introduction, followed by the movie and a brief discussion period after the screening. Our attendance has varied although

two of the films each had over 40 in attendance.

Our philosophy has generally been to limit the series to feature films although we are considering an evening of short films this fall. We are trying to engage our audience to think and discuss issues rather than simply to agree with a stated objective. Because of this, we generally do not show documentaries, many of which insist on a certain conclusion.

The first four films of the 2005 season have been films that give space to various viewpoints although, obviously, each director has his or her vision and viewpoint. *The River*, for example, showed both the viewpoints of the colonial British and the colonized Indians. One key, we feel to understanding complex issues is to understand that there are often two or more viewpoints and to recognize them. Though most Pledge members would disagree, for instance, with the colonial viewpoint, it is imperative to understand it in order to engage in dialogue and reasonably disagree with it. We need to understand a viewpoint in order to organize against it.

We are one of a number of local political groups, including IAC and Point of Destination, that show films in various venues. But we are the only predominantly non-documentary series. We are in the process of contacting these other groups in order to broaden our collective outreach.

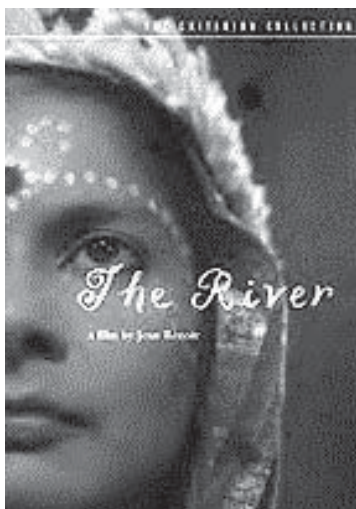
If anyone is interested in working



with us, please contact us at 610-543-8427 or by e-mail at [info@delcopledge.org](mailto:info@delcopledge.org).

## Visit the New Pledge Website

Check out our new website at <http://www.delcopledge.org>. Use the web to view current and past newsletters, identify links to other local activist organizations, get the latest schedule for Cinema Resistance and other Pledge projects. The web is a work-in-progress and suggestions are welcome! Also, if you would like to contact us, please e-mail us at [info@DelcoPledge.org](mailto:info@DelcoPledge.org).



# Haiti: The Need to Bear Witness

by Robert Boucher

*Robert Boucher has been a member of Delco Pledge for some 15 years. He is a physician who traveled to Haiti with his wife Karen Wisniewski and Johanna Berrigan, both nurses. Robert was observing Haiti as a U.S. citizen concerned about human rights abuses and U.S. government intervention that contributed to these abuses. However, he viewed these abuses with the additional sensibility of a physician and this gives his story an especially keen vision. Within the next few months you will receive more information on how you can help Bob, Karen, and Johanna respond to the current crises in Haiti. This will include a conference on Haiti and also a project to support a clinic they are establishing. The following article illustrates the difference between learning in the U.S. about the hardships of others and actually witnessing that experience on their soil.*

The man of indeterminate age lay on a gurney in the center of the overcrowded open ward in the emergency department of Port-au-Prince's busiest public hospital. His crisis had passed; he was dead. He lay alone, his resting place a soiled, decrepit, bare cart surrounded by others in like condition holding people, younger and older, with illnesses and injuries in varying states of distress. He appeared to have suffered a head injury and had probably died hours prior to our visit. The entire scene was heartbreakingly disquieting. If there was drama in the ward, it was subsumed into the dark surroundings occupied by the other patients and their families now inured to the realities of life in Haiti. Ironically, the only noise in the area was the clamor at the entrance gate where people were attempting to get in. Some were seeking care, others attempting to bring food to family members waiting for care.

With the assistance of our interpreter, we spoke to several people about their situation. Some had been in the same spot for days or even weeks. All were responsible for purchasing their own medical necessities: exam gloves,

dressings, IVs, x-rays. The public hospital receives little regular funding from the central government. In the triage area across from the ward was another man who had been struck by a car. He lay on the filthy floor, bleeding from his leg wound. He would receive care only if someone arrived who could pay for his treatment. It was by all accounts a typical day in this facility.

The following day our delegation visited a second hospital in Cite Soleil, the poorest urban neighborhood in the western hemisphere. The facility was all but empty; the eerie calm and quiet stood in stark contrast to the chaos of the general hospital the day before. This community hospital, with a busy maternity and pediatric service under the Aristide government, was forced to close due to the upsurge in gang violence in the fall of 2004 as well as a lack of funding by the post-coup interim government. A dilapidated, abandoned ambulance in the hospital's courtyard showed this graffiti: "Nou travay nou pa jwen sante" (We work but have no health care). We were escorted into the Cite Soleil neighborhood where we saw several residents either severely ill or wounded, living in huts alongside open sewers. Care had either not been available or the residents were afraid to travel elsewhere for treatment in fear of becoming targets of one of several armed groups, including pro-coup gangs, former members of the Haitian army or MINUSTAH (UN "peacekeepers"). One woman had a large, infected, non-healing chest wound. She had been caught in crossfire four months before and had not received treatment. We saw two other residents in separate huts suffering from undiagnosed and untreated wasting illnesses, probably TB and/or HIV.

At first glance, especially to a U.S.-trained physician, these scenes were surreal, almost incomprehensible. On closer scrutiny, they are not. They make perfect, albeit sad and tragic, sense given Haiti's current political instability. All of the clinical adversity that we witnessed—the dead man, the injured pedestrian, the woman with the chest wound, the others—is directly attributable to a core prob-

lem: the lack of basic human rights. The circumstances that have allowed for these deplorable situations are all direct or indirect violations of one or more tenets of the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The issues are chronic and institutionalized and include a lack of access to proper health care, poor nutrition, inadequate housing and sanitation, diminished educational and economic opportunity, and ineffective, if not malevolent, "public safety." Bringing medicines and bandages to Haiti will not affect the health of Haitians nearly as much as addressing the human rights abuses and political situation that are the root causes of the problem.

The current situation, according to every Haitian with whom we spoke, is decidedly worse than conditions were under the Aristide government. Twice elected by landslide margins (in 1990 and 2000), President Aristide disbanded the Haitian military (many former soldiers have been implicated in the violence and killings which have occurred since last year's coup), developed housing programs for the residents of Cite Soleil (now no longer funded by the coup government), and opened a medical school to give poor Haitians the opportunity to become physicians (the school is now closed). The U.S. has played a significant role in thwarting Haiti's efforts to help itself. The U.S.-sponsored embargo, called to express Washington's "displeasure" with Aristide, has had a profound negative effect on the country. The U.S. was instrumental in blocking an Inter-American Developmental Bank loan of \$500 million, \$22 million of which was earmarked to begin the process of decentralization and reorganization of the Haitian health care system.

The Bush administration has been the tip of the international spear attacking Haiti's pro-democracy movement. (France and Canada share the dubious distinction of partnering with the U.S. in this effort.) U.S. government officials have accused the Lavalas party and Aristide of wrongdoing ranging from election fraud to support of violent gangs seeking to take revenge on anti-Lavalas groups. The U.S.-lead embargo, the blocking of the IDB loan, and the tacit support of anti-Aristide groups in the U.S. and Haiti all contributed to the environment favoring

the coup of 2004. It is sadly ironic that the United States, whose president recently proclaimed that “democracy is on the march,” took such an active role in the overthrow of a democratically-elected leader in its own hemisphere. It is sadly ironic that the United States, which brought us Abu Graib, Guantanamo, and the rendering of detainees to third party nations, supported a coup to depose a democratically-elected government due to alleged human rights violations. It is just plain sad that progressive Americans, who once supported Jean-Bertrand Aristide, believe that the Haitian people, 70 percent of whom are unemployed and 40 percent of whom have no access to primary health care, are now better off than they were before the coup. Is it our right to insist on a perfect democracy in an impoverished place new to democratic ideals while we live in an absurdly affluent land where many of our citizens are, nonetheless, denied proper health care, housing, nutrition, education, public safety, and electoral irregularities are common?

The Haitian citizenry is decidedly pro-democracy. This has been amply demonstrated in the electoral process that first brought Aristide to power, democratically elected his successor, and returned Aristide to power in 2000. They all too well understand that the current coup government has permitted severe erosion of health and human rights over the last year. At this writing, public safety is almost nonexistent. It is not uncommon to hear gunfire and to see those who have been shot lying on the street. The Haitian police and former soldiers have been implicated as have Lavalas party loyalists who feel that they have been targeted for retribution by various pro-coup political and business interests long angered by Aristide’s popularity and actions. Our delegation met with scores of detainees at two jails in Port-au-Prince, many who had been in custody for weeks or months without having been charged, not only a violation of the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights but a violation of the Haitian constitution. Almost without exception, they lived in pro-democracy neighborhoods. The shootings and detentions have contributed to a climate of fear that has resulted in reduced travel and public gatherings, particularly those with pro-

democracy activities planned.

The coup government has politicized health care by withholding funding to hospitals and clinics in pro-democracy neighborhoods. A hospital administrator we met with confirmed this, saying that he had not received money from the Health Ministry to pay salaries to his employees for the prior six months.

Just as many Haitians have been inured to lives without economic opportunity, safety, and health care, it is easy for observers to become inured to the notion that “Haiti will always be like that.” This is a regrettable conclusion that permits some the luxury of retreat from a frustrating and daunting dilemma that is nonetheless far from hopeless. We must guard against thinking of Haiti and its problems abstractly and bear witness to the ongoing suffering of its people, like those our delegation encountered.

The Haitian people, like people everywhere, will respond when given the means and power to do so. Paul Farmer’s medical work in central Haiti is but one excellent example; the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti’s legal work is another. The major socioeconomic and health problems of Haiti are all ultimately human rights issues. The international aid embargo and the failure of the Inter-American Developmental Bank to honor its commitments to Haiti further contribute to the injustices that the poor of Haiti have been enduring.

Steadfastly bearing witness to the ongoing misery of Haiti is the most important and effective thing we can do to be of assistance. Being a witness means “seeing or knowing by personal presence.” Regrettably, we live in a country that has a history of bearing false witness to popular democracies in the Caribbean (and in Central and South America) deemed to be too threatening to U.S. interests.

Much good, effective work by individuals, church-sponsored groups/



*Haitian men demonstrating for the return of Aristide hold up a photo of the exiled president.*

projects and nongovernmental organizations is being done in Haiti. Every act, every gesture, every helping hand is important; the problems are better addressed by the coordinated efforts of many people doing small things rather than by a few doing large things.

The way forward must be systemic, democratic, and activist to be effective. Issues regarding health care, human rights, and social and economic justice must all be addressed and improved. We who feel compelled to be a part of this endeavor must recognize the political nature of the work and be willing to use the democratic machinery at home to shape a truly representative democracy in Haiti.

We must bear witness to the way in which democratic initiatives in developing countries are undermined by the powerful and prosperous who fear loss of profits and the idea of sharing power. We must educate ourselves regarding the shameful legacy of U.S. government policy towards Haiti and act to change it. We must bear witness individually and personally by going to Haiti and becoming involved in projects that work for socioeconomic and political justice, true democracy, and health and human rights.

If you are skeptical, go to Haiti and spend time with the poor and disenfranchised. Ask them about their fears, and yes, hopes. Do be skeptical of reports that appear in the mainstream media and make time to go yourself. Culturally it seems very far away, but in human terms it is very close to home.

# Reclaim Community and Environment

## Mobilize in Philadelphia for BioDemocracy

by Paula Bronstein

Fed up with genetically engineered trees, crops, food, future? Hungry for peace, global justice, and real grassroots democracy?

The world's largest convention of biotech and pharmaceutical executives is coming to Philly, June 2005. Join thousands to resist their closed-door corporate agenda of GE agriculture, health care for profit, and bio-weapons proliferation. Give voice to a different vision of fair trade, local food sovereignty, health

care for all, community power, biodiversity, and honest science. Why? Because disease and starvation will not be solved by corporations!

For the past several years, concerned people have converged in cities all over North America to raise a critical voice in opposition to the annual convention of the chief U.S. biotechnology lobby, the Biotechnology Industry Organization. Their conventions bring some 10,000 pharmaceutical and biotech executives to the host city each year where they often are able to dominate local media coverage for an entire week. Our counter-events, which have featured internationally renowned speakers such as Vandana Shiva, Ignacio

Chapela, Barry Commoner, David Suzuki, and many others, have provided a strong and articulate alternative voice to counter the biotech and pharmaceutical industries' high priced spin.

This year's BIO convention will be in Philadelphia beginning June 18, and organizers from across the country are once again developing plans for a strong grassroots response to this event. Groups such as the Student Environmental Action Coalition, Action Alliance for Senior Citizens, American Friends Service Committee, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and The Green Party of Pennsylvania are already among the local supporters. The themes of our counter-event are food sovereignty and resistance to genetic engineering in agriculture, democratizing health care, exposing the insidious relationship between pharmaceutical and biotech interests, and opposing the massive subsidies to biotech companies in the form of increased U.S. funding for bio-weapons and bio-warfare research.

There will be four days of teach-ins. The teach-ins include panels on Communities in Resistance to GMOs; Sustainable Agriculture; Religious Perspectives on Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering; Medical Biotech, Ethics, and the Pharmaceutical Industry; Bioweapons, U.S. Militarism and the Myth of "Biodefense"; and Biotechnology and the Corruption of Science. In addition, there will be workshops on GE Trees, Patents/GE Science, Farmer Lawsuits, Biofuels, GMO local Victories, Earth Rights Institutions, Merchants of Death, and Alternative Medicine. There will also be a festival on June 18 in Clark Park, 10 am to 2 pm, which includes the Green Circus, live music, farmer speak-out, seedling give-away, puppets, free food, games, art and sustainability exhibitions. In addition there will be parades, demonstrations, and direct action.

Updated schedule, time, and place information are available at [www.reclaimthecommons.net](http://www.reclaimthecommons.net) and [www.biodev.org](http://www.biodev.org). Or call Paula at 610-543-8427. Much of the information in this article was gathered from the writings of Brian Tokar.



## Great News from Philadelphia Committee to Defend Health Care

by Paula Bronstein

Philadelphia mayor John Street has signed the health care initiative developed by the joint efforts of the City Health Department, a Princeton graduate research class, and Philadelphia Area Committee to Defend Health Care (PACDHC). This is the result of the November 2003 health care referendum victory. This health care initiative pro-

vides for the creation of a partnership of major interests in health care in Philadelphia. The goals are to improve the coordination of health care delivery, assure better services for the uninsured, and seek more resources and better legislation in order to improve the current health care system. The complete text of this plan is available at <http://www.phila.gov/health>.

# Guatemala Update

by Marge Van Cleef

The Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), signed in May 2004, would eliminate tariffs and trade barriers between the United States, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and the Dominican Republic. It still must be ratified by the U.S. Senate. While the White House has recently stepped up its efforts to win approval for CAFTA, it faces hurdles in the Congress as it is several votes shy of approval with a vote expected in late May or early June 2005. As does the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), CAFTA will undoubtedly contribute to the abuse of human rights, labor, and environmental standards in Central America. The corporate special interests exploit the people of Central America while they evade taxes by moving their operations offshore.

Despite mass protests by popular movements throughout the country, the Guatemalan congress ratified CAFTA on March 10, 2005, by a vote of 126-12. Repression by military and police security forces resulted in the death of at least one protestor during demonstrations. Still, movement leaders have announced that resistance will continue until CAFTA is subjected to a national referendum.

A Gallup poll conducted in Guatemala in March found that when asked the question, "Do you think the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) will help or hurt the country?" 65 percent of those polled responded that CAFTA would hurt the country.

## Human Rights

According to an Amnesty International Memorandum, April 2005, the Guatemalan authorities must take concrete steps to improve respect for human rights in the country, including abuses in regard to the potential impact

of the free trade agreement, particularly in regard to the right to health.

By prohibiting the use of test data necessary to approve new medicines for five years and by extending the patent period, CAFTA may introduce restrictions to the production of generic medicines, according to Amnesty International. Many Guatemalans could see their access to essential medicines effectively restricted.

## What You Can Do

Call the Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121 and ask for Pa. Rep. Don Sherwood, Rep. Chaka Fattah, and Sen. Arlen Specter, all members of the Foreign Operations Sub-Committees. Ask them to vote *against* the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) which threatens workers, farmers, women, the environment, and democratic institutions in the U.S. and the region. U.S. trade policies must promote fair trade and sustainable development policies designed to reduce poverty in the U.S. and the region.

## Talking Points

- CAFTA will threaten the livelihoods of millions of small farmers in the countries affected while increasing domination by agricultural monopolies and hurting U.S. family farmers.



*Protesters clash with riot police during an anti-CAFTA protest, March 9, 2005. Hundreds of people took to the streets in protest when CAFTA was approved by the Guatemalan congress.*

- It threatens to prevent access to affordable life saving medicines in a region where half the population live in poverty.
- It will prohibit governments in the region from ensuring that foreign investment serves national development goals. It has a provision that would allow foreign corporations to sue governments that pass strong labor, public health, or environmental laws.
- It does *not* include adequate enforcement for violations of internationally recognized labor and environmental standards.
- It includes rules that promote privatization and deregulation of services including education, health care, postal service, construction, transportation, and water supply.
- It will pave the way for more trade agreements such as the Andean Free Trade Agreement and the Free Trade Area of the Americas, which would extend this flawed model to the whole Western Hemisphere.

Delaware County Pledge of Resistance  
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Address correction requested

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## Community Calendar

June 12, 4:30 pm—“Stopping Traffic: Putting the Brakes on Illegal Handgun Trafficking in Pennsylvania,” Brandywine Peace Community monthly potluck supper/program with Diane Edbril, executive director, CeaseFire Pa. and Bryan Miller, executive director, CeaseFire N.J., University Lutheran Church, 3637 Chestnut St., Phila., Pa. (bring main dish, salad, or dessert to share); program, 5:30 pm.

CeaseFire PA is a statewide, nonprofit organization dedicated to reducing gun violence. Diane Edbril attended law school in New York City and spent several years as an assistant district attorney in Brooklyn during which time she first came to understand the impact of guns and gun violence on our society. Bryan Miller, after a twenty-year career in international business in over sixty countries, left business to become an antigun violence organizer after his brother, an FBI agent, was gunned down in November 1994 at the Washington, D.C. police headquarters by a lone gunman wielding a concealed assault weapon.

June 18-21—Biodemocracy 2005, festival, parades, teach-in, direct action, Phila. For info: [www.reclaimthecommons.net](http://www.reclaimthecommons.net), [www.biodev.org](http://www.biodev.org).

July 1-4—American Friends Service Committee’s, “Eyes Wide Open,” audio visual display illustrating the mounting cost of the war in Iraq.

July 10—“Nuclear Weapons and the Imperial Design,” Brandywine Peace Community monthly potluck supper/program, speaker TBA, University Lutheran Church, 3637 Chestnut St., Phila., Pa. (bring main dish, salad, or dessert to share).

July 16, noon—60th anniversary of start of nuclear age, anniversary of the first atomic test blast, Main & Chester Aves., the center of Moorestown, N.J. (home to Lockheed Martin’s Aegis Warship and Naval Weapons Complex), vigil followed by walk to leaflet about town and 2:30 pm demonstration at main entrance to the Lockheed Martin weapons complex on Marne Highway near Bortons Landing Rd. Brandywine Peace Community.

August 6-9, “60 Years Since the Terror Began—Remembering Hiroshima, Resisting War and Lockheed Martin,” anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

August 6, noon—Hiroshima Day, Lockheed Martin, Mall & Goddard Blvds., Valley Forge, Pa. (behind the King of Prussia Mall), rally, speakers, music, ceremony of remembrance and desistance, “die-in” dramatization, joining hands in a human chain of peace-making in front of Lockheed Martin and acts of nonviolent civil disobedience. Those wishing to do nonviolent civil disobedience on August 6, please contact the Brandywine Peace Community by July 25 to find out time and place of civil disobedience preparation meeting. P.O. Box 81, Swarthmore, PA 19081, 610-544-1818, [brandywine@juno.com](mailto:brandywine@juno.com), [www.brandywinepeace.com](http://www.brandywinepeace.com).

August 9, 7:30 pm—Nagasaki Day, sundown candlelight ceremony in center city Philadelphia, (place: TBA, check website) in support of the mayor’s appeal for peace & nuclear disarmament, Brandywine Peace Community.