

**The
BLACK
C o m m e n t a t o r**
Commentary, analysis and investigations
on issues affecting African Americans
www.blackcommentator.com

June 19, 2008 - Issue 282

[Contents of Issue Menu](#)

[Click Here](#)

bc

**We are facing
the most serious
cash crunch in our
6 year history.**

[Click here to become a BC paid Subscriber](#)
or
[Make a contribution of any amount you choose.](#)

[Home](#)

**Arrests for War Resistance Increase Again
Justice Watch
By Bill Quigley
BlackCommentator.com Columnist**

Click on the back button of your browser to return to non printer friendly page of this article

[Click here](#) to get helpful hints for viewing and printing this printer friendly plain text page

"We can never forget that everything that Hitler did in Germany was 'legal,' and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did was 'illegal.' It was 'illegal' to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler's Germany, but I am sure that if I lived in Germany during that time I would have comforted my Jewish brothers even though it was illegal...we who engage in nonviolent direct action are not the creators of tension. We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive."

-Martin Luther King, Jr.

There have been over 15,000 arrests for resistance to war since 2002. There were large numbers right after the run up to and invasion of Iraq. Recently, arrests have begun climbing again. Though arrests are a small part of anti-war organizing, their rise is an indicator of increasing resistance.

The information comes from the NUCLEAR RESISTER, a newsletter that has been reporting detailed arrest information on peace activists and other social justice campaigns since 1980. Felice and Jack Cohen-Joppa, publishers of the NUCLEAR RESISTER, document arrests by name and date based on information collected from

newspapers across the country and from defense lawyers and peace activists.

Since 2002, the NUCLEAR RESISTER has documented anti-war arrests for protestors each year:

2002 - 1800 arrests
2003 - 6072 arrests
2004 - 2440 arrests
2005 - 975 arrests
2006 - 950 arrests
2007 - 2272 arrests
2008 - 810 as of May 1

"Arrests for resistance to war are far more widespread geographically than most people think," according to Cohen-Joppa of NUCLEAR RESISTER. "Yes, there are many arrests in DC and traditional big cities of anti-war activity – like San Francisco, NYC and Chicago, but there have also been anti-war arrests in Albany, Ann Arbor, Atlanta, Bangor, Bath, Bend, Brentwood, Burlington, Campbell, Cedar Rapids, Chapel Hill, Charlottesville, Chicopee, Colorado Springs, Denver, Des Moines, East Hampton, Erie, Eugene, Eureka, Fairbanks, Fairport, Fort Bragg, Fort Wayne, Grand Rapids, Great Dismal Swamp, Hammond, Huntsville, Joliet, Juneau, Kennebunkport, La Crosse, Los Angeles, Madison, Manchester, Memphis, Newark, Northbrook, Olympia, Omaha, Pittsburgh, Portland, Portsmouth, Providence, Richmond, Sacramento, San Diego, Santa Fe, Smithfield, Springfield, St. Louis, St. Paul, Staten Island, Superior, Syracuse, Tacoma, Toledo, Tucson, Tulsa, Vandenberg, Virginia Beach, Wausau, Wheaton and Wilmington just to name a few."

"In fact," notes Cohen-Joppa, "in 2007, anti-war arrests were reported during 250 distinct events in 105 cities in 35 states and the District of Columbia. So far in 2008, arrests have been reported at 65 events in 43 different cities in 19 states and D.C."

An example of the scope of resistance can be found in the Chicago-based Voices for Creative Nonviolence. They joined with other major peace groups like CODEPINK, Veterans for Peace, and the National Campaign for Nonviolent Resistance in early 2007 to launch The Occupation Project, a campaign of resistance aimed at ending the Iraq War. Theirs was a campaign of sustained nonviolent civil disobedience to end funding for the U.S. war in and occupation of Iraq. The Occupation Project resulted in over 320 arrests in spring of 2007 in the offices of 39 U.S. Representatives and Senators in 25 states.

"I am energized by the dedication of so many conscientious activists across the country willing to take the risks of peace and speak truth to power," says Max Obuszewski of the National Campaign for Nonviolent Resistance. "We have been unsuccessful so far in stopping this awful war and occupation of Iraq, but it is not for the lack of direct action. We are taking on the greatest empire in world history, but we will continue to act."

"There are large numbers of new people being arrested," notes Cohen-Joppa, "most typically saying, 'I have tried everything else from writing to voting, but I have to do more to stop this war.' The profile of people arrested includes high school teenagers to senior citizens, mostly people under 30 and over 50."

Anti-war arrests are significantly under-reported by mainstream media. For example, around the fifth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq in March 2008, most news stories wrote that there were 150 to 200 arrests nationwide. Cohen-Joppa and NUCLEAR

RESISTER report there were over double that number, well over 400, many outside the cities where regular media traditionally look.

Though arrests typically drop off in election years, as people's hopes are raised that a new President or Congress will make a difference and stop the war, this year looks like arrests are likely to continue to rise. In part, that will depend on the attitude of authorities in Denver and Minneapolis, where the political conventions are being held. In 2004, New York City authorities overreacted so much to protestors at the Republican convention that they arrested historic numbers of protestors – including hundreds who had no intention to risk arrest. If Senator McCain is elected, anti-war resistance activities are expected to rise much higher.

Why do people risk arrest in their resistance to war? Perhaps Daniel Berrigan, on trial for resistance to the Vietnam War, said it best:

"The time is past when good people may be silent
when obedience
can segregate us from public risk
when the poor can die without defense.
How many indeed must die
before our voices are heard
how many must be tortured dislocated
starved maddened?
How long must the world=s resources
be raped in the service of legalized murder?
When at what point will you say no to this war?
We have chosen to say
with the gift of our liberty
if necessary our lives:
the violence stops here.
The death stops here.
The suppression of truth stops here.
This war stops here."

Though war resistance activities and arrests have not stopped the war in Iraq, those struggling for peace remain committed. "None of us know what will happen if we continue to work for peace and human rights," says a handmade poster of one involved in the resistance, "But we all know what will happen if we don't."

BlackCommentator.com Columnist, Bill Quigley, is a human rights lawyer and law professor at [Loyola University, New Orleans](#). He has been an active public interest lawyer since 1977 and has served as counsel with a wide range of public interest organizations on issues including Katrina social justice issues, public housing, voting rights, death penalty, living wage, civil liberties, educational reform, constitutional rights and civil disobedience. He has litigated numerous cases with the [NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.](#), the [Advancement Project](#), and with the [ACLU of Louisiana](#), for which he served as General Counsel for over 15 years. Bill is one of the lawyers for displaced residents The NUCLEAR RESISTER is published 5 to 6 times a year. They can be contacted at nukeresister@igc.org. Click [here](#) to contact Mr. Quigley.

[Contents of Issue Menu](#)

[Click Here](#)

[Home](#)

[Click Here To](#)

[CONTRIBUTE TO !\[\]\(23d9fc146e83b5c3013cfa32c784f8d5_img.jpg\) NOW](#)

[Click Here To](#)

[CONTACT !\[\]\(ec9132f1d27c8919987d92907322654d_img.jpg\)](#)

Any BlackCommentator.com article may be re-printed so long as it is re-printed in its entirety and full credit given to the author and www.BlackCommentator.com. If the re-print is on the Internet we additionally request a link back to the original piece on our Website.

Your comments are always welcome.

eMail re-print notice

If you send us an eMail message we may publish all or part of it, unless you tell us it is not for publication. You may also request that we withhold your name.

Thank you very much for your readership.

Website Design and Hosting provided by



Copyright © 2002 - 2008
www.BlackCommentator.com
All Rights Reserved