

## Through the Prism of Nonviolence

# Constructive Program or Corporatism

By John Heid

"The first person to greet our soldiers as they arrive in the Balkans and the last one to wave goodbye is one of our employees," a Halliburton spokesperson explained, making the company's staff sound more like cruise directors than army logistics coordinators. That was the Halliburton difference: Cheney saw no reason why war shouldn't be a thriving part of America's highly profitable service economy — invasion with a smile."

— Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise Of Disaster Capitalism*

"Nonviolent protest must now mature to a new level to correspond to heightened black impatience and stiffened white resistance. This higher level is mass civil disobedience. There must be more than a statement to the larger society; there must be a force that interrupts its functioning at some key point. ... It must be open and, above all, conducted by large masses, without violence. If the jails are filled to thwart it, its meaning will become even clearer. ..."

— Martin Luther King Jr., *The Trumpet of Conscience*

This time next year U.S. voters will once again proceed lock step to the polls. Last November many citizens performed a similar ritual. The outcome of the 2006 midterm elections was dubbed a "mandate" to end the occupation/war in Iraq. Today the bloody enterprise rages on. There is no end in sight and no insight to end it emanating from either inside the beltway or from the monotone presidential candidates.

In her most recent book, *The Shock Doctrine*, Naomi Klein writes, "Warfare is always partly a performance, always a form of mass communication..." The performance *du jour* has three distinct audiences: first and foremost, Iraqi citizens, secondly, those in the world community who might consider challenging U.S. hegemony, and finally, we the people who are funding it, in whose names this war is waged.

Often when I find my vertebrae pressed smack against a gelid cinder block wall of ideology, the insights of Martin Luther King Jr. and Gandhi come to mind.

The first step in Dr. King's nonviolent campaign for social change is investigation to determine if injustice exists. Strategic activism requires clarity about the nature of the dominant forces we seek to engage, challenge and transform.

With this King insight in mind, we as nonviolent activists need to familiarize ourselves with our "virtual fourth branch of government" — contractors — both on and off the battlefield. Contractors are not bipartisan. They are beyond partisan. They are exempt from the scrutiny of most checks and balances. They are not on any ballot and operate outside the geography of public debate and formal policy. Contractors are the inconspicuous foot soldiers of the nation state's latest behemoth, corporatism.

Klein notes, "A more accurate term for a system that erases boundaries between Big Government and Big Business is not liberal, conservative or capitalist but corporatist."

Our activism, whether it includes electoral politics or not, cannot ignore this corpse in the living room. The corporatist party will not have a single candidate on the ballot in 2008. It has all of them.

There is no immediate, simple or risk-free way out of the status quo of corporatism. We are up against a wall. Enter Gandhi. How would his social transformation program look in this fray? How could it be adapted to the 21st century systemic violence of corporatism? The three elements of his program were: 1) personal transformation 2) political action and 3) constructive program.

In "Creating a New Society in the Shell of the Old," Joanne Sheehan revisits Gandhi's "constructive program" (*WIN* magazine, Summer 2007). She encourages the creation of cooperative enterprises across social divides, reduction of consumption, serious anti-oppression work and dealing with the economic inequalities within our society. We need to get our houses in order even as we confront what Audre Lourde called "the master's house." We need to engage in a participatory process, that knows no borders, with a constructive vision rather than a disaster capitalist, i.e. corporatist agenda. Our failure to imagine is a greater deterrent to a revolution of values than any totalitarian regime.

Robert Burrowes, in his 1995 study *The Strategy of Nonviolent Defense: A Gandhian Approach*, points out that "a constructive program is a wholistic approach to the development of new social structures that foster political participation, cultural diversity, economic self-reliance and ecological resilience."

A constructive program is naturally interwoven with political action, Gandhi's second step. Even as we pursue cross-cultural relationships we can, for example, speak out on behalf of the human rights of immigrants, today's *persona non grata*. Corporations can cross borders at will, why not human beings?

Forty-seven banks support the manufacture of uranium weapons. Find out who they are ([bandepleteduranium.org/en/a/136.html](http://bandepleteduranium.org/en/a/136.html)) and publicly agitate for divestment. Support young people attempting to resist the poverty draft. Connect returning vets with young people who are considering the military as a career. Resist gates and walls anywhere as they are the architecture of oppression everywhere. In January all the presidential candidates will be within earshot of the public at caucuses in Iowa and New Hampshire: Take a trip and speak your truth to these corporate myrmidons ([info@vencv.org](mailto:info@vencv.org)).

"Negotiate with your hands." That expression comes out of the experience of Thai coast villagers who are doing direct action by reoccupying and rebuilding their communities following the 2004 tsunami and government prohibition to return home. In Klein's words, "... in what they called 'reinvasions' Thai villagers passed armed guards on the payroll of developers, tools in hand, and began marking off the sites where their old houses had been."

In the last year of his life, Martin Luther King Jr. ratcheted up his call for global nonviolent revolution against corporate wealth and military power. His urgent call for higher levels of mass civil disobedience, alongside Gandhi's constructive program, are significant antidotes to the malaise of our times and crimes.

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# NUKEWATCH

## QUARTERLY



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## Waste Trains Derail, Lucky This Time

By Bonnie Urfer

"Lucky this time!" is a mantra in the Nukewatch office when nuclear accidents cause only "allowable" radioactive releases. It's also the name of our website chronology of truck and train accidents that luckily didn't cause a radiation disaster. See: [nukewatch.com/wrecks/index.html](http://nukewatch.com/wrecks/index.html)

The Oct. 25 derailment of at least two train cars at the Shearon Harris nuclear reactor site, 25 miles from Raleigh, North Carolina, and the 2005 derailment of a military waste fuel cask in New York State are a pair of the "Lucky This Time" events.

At Shearon Harris, workers were moving a 150,000-pound canister filled with extremely radioactive waste reactor fuel or "spent nuclear fuel," that had arrived from the Brunswick reactor, 220 miles away near Wilmington and Southport.

Information about the accident has been strictly controlled by Progress Energy (PE), which operates the facility and owns it jointly with North Carolina Municipal Power. No photos of the incident have surfaced that could verify the company's claim that the waste canister did not go off the tracks. PE informed the press that only a caboose and a buffer car derailed.

Progress Energy and the Nuclear Regulator Commission (NRC) claim that federal law prohibits releasing more information. But the restrictions apply only to the scheduling, destination or origin of nuclear waste shipments, whereas the train accident took place entirely on PE company property.

According to PE, the accident was caused by yard workers who failed to communicate about the readiness of the tracks. The cars derailed while traveling 4 to 5 miles per hour, the company said. Workers had mistakenly sent the cars into the railyard's own "derailer," a device placed on railroad tracks to prevent out-of-control trains from ramming the reactor. The derailer diverts a railcar's wheels, putting the cars — in railroad lingo — "on the ground."

As usual, the NRC and PE repeated the industry chant, *No danger to the public*, in spite of the train's cargo being the second-most radioactive material on earth. (Only waste fuel from the Navy's shipboard propulsion reactors is more radioactive.)

Shearon Harris is a 900-megawatt Pressurized Water Reactor that's been in operation since 1987. Every year, PE ships about 12 heavily-guarded containers of waste reactor fuel to the 10,700-acre Shearon Harris site for storage in a 40-foot-deep cooling pool.

### A History of Scary Operations

The Shearon Harris reactor has been plagued with problems. In Dec. 1995, four of the eight wheels on an empty fuel shipping



An empty Department of Energy M-140 transport cask tipped over in the Buffalo, NY train yard Sept. 22, 2005

car were derailed because of rotten railroad ties. Around the same time, armed guards blew the whistle on lax security, reporting that vehicles weren't properly searched, doors to vital parts of the reactor didn't lock (employees were told not to pull so hard on the doors while checking them), weapons were improperly used in protected areas, logs were falsified, employee cheating on tests for state security certification was routine and encouraged, and security personnel were forced to stay on duty even while injuries hampered their effectiveness.

Other disturbing occurrences include a breach of security when a black flag was discovered near the top of a 100-foot communications tower, a security guard being shot at from nearby woods leading to a lockdown at the reactor, and the sabotage of the rail line leading into the reactor by someone who drove spikes



An upright DOE M-140 that carries waste shipboard reactor fuel to Idaho. This is the deadliest nuclear waste because it is left in Navy reactors far longer than fuel in commercial ones.

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