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Using video as a tool for social change

A project of Peace and Justice Works

February, 2025

Examining the Meaning of Juneteenth

Juneteenth was declared a national holiday by Joe Biden in 2021, but does this mean anything to Americans? In June, 2024 Flying Focus Field Coordinator PC Peri set out to find out. In "Is Juneteenth Meaningful?" (VB #133.3&4), he interviewed three Portlanders -- jazz singer Lorna Baxter, city equity specialist Judith Mowry, and visionary consultant/author Shariff Abdullah-- over the course of 10 days at separate locations. Their answers are surprisingly deep and meaningful... and contain answers to what ails our country today. This show was produced by FFVC member Barb Greene and can be seen online at flyingfocus.org/Juneteenth24_streamingpage.html.



Portland musician Lorna Baxter

An Iraqi American's Story of Sanctions and War

Noor Ghazi, an Iraqi-American activist based in the United States, appeared on a livestream presentation for Portland audiences on June 25, 2024, organized by Peace and Justice Works Iraq Affinity Group. Flying Focus turned the 90 minute event into a two-part show titled "Noor Ghazi: An Iraqi American Peace Activist's Story" (VB #132.6&7). Noor's story is deeply personal, and also reflects the experiences of thousands, perhaps millions of Iraqis who lived under sanctions and war. Many of them fled the country after the 2003 US invasion-- or, like Noor's family, when the "civil war" erupted in 2006. It's a story of surviving war and trauma, a story of adjusting to being a refugee in America, and a story of hope.

Ms. Ghazi, who serves as Director of the University Sponsorship Program at Guilford College with Every Campus A Refuge (ECAR), has recently been returning to Iraq every year and produced two documentaries about Mosul, where the younger generation gives her hope for a better future for her country of origin.

The event was hosted by KBOO's Lisa Loving. The original

video was created on Zoom with technical direction by FFVC member Moss Drake. The Flying Focus show was produced and edited by Dan Handelman. This show is available online at flyingfocus.org/NoorGhazi_streamingpage.html

Environmental Icon Bill McKibben

In 1989, Bill McKibben wrote *The End of Nature*, which is considered the first book on climate change for a general audience. He works in Environmental Studies at Middlebury College and with the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. McKibben helped found *350.org*, the first global grassroots climate campaign, which has organized climate protests on every continent, including Antarctica. He played a leading role in the opposition to big oil pipelines and in the fossil fuel divestment campaign which resulted in endowments of more than \$40 trillion moving away from oil, gas and coal. In 2021, he founded Third Act, organizing people over the age of 60 for action on climate and justice.

"Bill McKibben: We Must Work Together!" (VB #132.10&11) covers his July 5, 2024 address at the First Unitarian Church in Portland, a venue without air conditioning, on a day when the temperature neared 100 degrees. Organized by Third Act Portland with the help of over 30 supporting organizations, the event reached over 1000 people in person, on line, or in watch parties around the state. He talked earnestly and frankly about the climate crisis, while emphasizing there is still time to act if we all work together.

After McKibben spoke, he participated in a Q&A session with youth climate activists from around Oregon. He paid homage to their efforts and called on elders in their third act (of life) to use their wisdom, skills, and resources to join the struggle.

Is Juneteenth Meaningful?

"[People were still] keeping the slaves and they knew they were going to be forced to release them. They made their own laws designed to keep [enslaved] people from advancing in any way shape or form. It was called Black Code and that kept slaves, mulattos and Indians from being able to freely live like everybody else." -- Lorna Baxter, Portland musician

"Equity's goal is to eliminate the disparity between whites and people of color. But [some] whites aren't doing that well. We need to do better for everybody. Then you have targeted strategies to bring everybody up to a to an outcome that's really about thriving." -- Judith Mowry, city equity specialist

"Once we can address our own consciousness and come together with each other to address our consciousness then we'll stop supporting the things that are creating war, are creating conflict, creating the desire for wealth beyond our our imaginations." -- Shariff Abdullah, visionary consultant / author

Remembering Barbara Ehrenreich

Our show *"The Wit and Wisdom of Barbara Ehrenreich"* (VB #133.11&12) was produced in 2024 to pay tribute to renowned author Barbara Ehrenreich, who died in September 2022 at the age of 81.

Activist Ehrenreich is best known for her book *Nickel and Dimed* when she worked minimum wage jobs to prove those do not provide a living wage. Other books include *Blood Rites: Origins and History of the Passions of War* and *This Land is Their Land*, highlighted in this show. On a speaking tour for that 2008 book, Ehrenreich appeared at Powell's City of Books in Portland, and her talk was recorded by William Singer of pdxjustice Media Productions.

Flying Focus also created three shows with Ehrenreich in the 1990s where she was an instructor at the Z [Magazine] Media Institute. The last 15 minutes of the new show feature clips from those programs: *Trash and Other Media Trends* (1994), *War and Society* (also 1994), and *The Armed Functions of Government* (1995).

Portland 2024 Hiroshima / Nagasaki Event: Music, Poetry, Dancing and Memories

On August 6, 2024, seventy-nine years after US bombs fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki killing hundreds of thousands of people, Portlanders gathered at the waterfront to remember and say "Never Again!" The event was organized by the Japanese American Museum of Oregon, Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility, and other groups. Host Jeff Selby, interim Director of Portland's Office of Equity and Human Rights, set a somber tone with a dash of humor. Other presenters include Veteran for Peace Dan Shea sharing remarks he made in Hiroshima several years ago, PSR board chair Regna Merritt talking about a 1985 project in which her mother and thousands of others wrapped the Pentagon with peace banners, and Hibakusha (atomic bomb survivor) Michiko Kornhauser telling the story of her childhood.

Performers include Portland Taiko, who contribute drumming at the start and end, Barbara Stafford Wilson and former Oregon poet laureate Kim Stafford reading poetry from their family, the Tsubaki Kai Dancers, the Ikoi-no-kai Singing Group and slam poet Ty.Brack. Our show *"End Nuclear Madness: Hiroshima / Nagasaki 2024"* (VB #132.13/133.1) was recorded and produced by Dan Handelman with additional footage from Dan Shea and Samantha Paladini. This show is available online at flyingfocus.org/Hirosh2024_streamingpage.html.

Celebrate 33 Years with Flying Focus!

The latest retrospective of Flying Focus' weekly show *using video as a tool for social change* features the twelve programs made up of 24 episodes that aired from December 2023 to October 2024. Those include three shows about the US-funded Israeli war on Gaza, plus foreign affairs in Iraq and SE Asia; two shows on nuclear issues; two on the environment; and one each on Juneteenth, remembering activist Barry Sutton and how governments take land away from people.

Join Field Coordinator PC Peri and producers Dan Handelman and Barb Greene as they introduce short clips from each of the



FFVC member Dan Handelman in the *"Thirty-Third Busiversary"*

shows and give context to their meaning. Part one includes clips of anti-Zionist Jewish-American Mark Braverman, a 2006 interview with journalist Jonathan Cook in Israel, and a KBOO-FM forum about Israel/Palestine. Also in part one are author Tariq Khan connecting historic land-grabs to current US policies and both the 2023 and 2024 Hiroshima/Nagasaki memorials in Portland.

Part 2 begins with clips of Iraqi American peace activist Noor Ghazi, a show about Extinction Rebellion PDX protesting poor media coverage of climate change, and pioneering environmentalist Bill McKibben. The latter part of the show has a presentation about the legacy of the US' secret wars in Laos and Cambodia, that memorial for Barry (who lived on the streets or Portland for 50 years), and the show about Juneteenth with three interviews asking whether the holiday is meaningful.

The introductions were directed by Moss Drake, and the show was produced by Dan. This show is available online at flyingfocus.org/ThirtyThirdBusivStream.html.

It's Always the Time to Support Alternative Media. Now is a Critical Time

Flying Focus has been around through six presidencies (and now entering a seventh), constantly bringing information to the public that they probably did not see anywhere else. As the world braces for another unpredictable four years, we'll need your help to keep our programs rolling out on a regular basis. Though our budget has remained relatively the same for most of our 34 years as a group (about \$5000 a year!), expenses continue to rise. If you can donate, we hope that you consider adding 20% to your usual donation-- in other words, if you usually give \$20, please give \$25 if possible. You can also donate to put a current or older show up online, as was done for four of the six shows in this newsletter. We ask for a \$35 donation from individuals or \$50 from larger organizations to support the effort it takes to post the shows on our YouTube pages and on our website.

Remember that Flying Focus is all-volunteer! And although we are part of Peace and Justice Works (coming up on three years soon), we need to raise all the money for our own project group without relying on PJW's donors to carry us through. For those of you who are on both lists, thank you for continuing to support FFVC as well as PJW. We appreciate monetary donations as well as items on our wish list (flyingfocus.org/wishlist.html), and those who donate their time, including folks from PJW whose contributions are many and crucial.