



# Flying Focus Video Collective

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Using video as a tool for social change

A project of Peace and Justice Works

August, 2023

## Medea Benjamin Talks Ukraine War

Russia's brutal February 2022 invasion of Ukraine has attracted widespread condemnation across the West. Government and media circles present the conflict as a simple dichotomy between an evil empire and an innocent victim. In their book *Ukraine, Making Sense of a Senseless Conflict*, Medea Benjamin and Nicolas Davies tell us the picture is more complicated.

While Russia's aggression is abhorrent, the West's renegeing on promises to halt eastward expansion of NATO in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union played a major part in prompting Putin to act. So did the U.S. involvement in the 2014 Ukraine coup and Ukraine's failure to implement the Minsk peace agreements. The result is a conflict that is increasingly difficult to resolve, one that could conceivably escalate into all-out war between the United States and Russia-- the world's two leading nuclear powers.



Medea Benjamin speaking in Portland

On November 16, 2022, Benjamin, also a co-founder of Code Pink, spoke in Portland. In *"Medea Benjamin: Negotiate Peace in Ukraine Now"* (VB #126.2&3), Flying Focus covered her talk about the events leading up to the conflict, the risks of escalation and opportunities for peace. Watch this show if you want to get beneath the propagandized media coverage to understand a war with consequences that could prove cataclysmic for all of us.

Video was recorded by Field Coordinator PC Peri. This two-part program was produced by Barb Greene with editing assistance from Dan Handelman.

"It is clear to people who are familiar with the military that there is not going to be a military solution to this."-- from *"Medea Benjamin: Negotiate Peace in Ukraine Now"* (VB #126.2&3)

## Community Members Examine Racial Disparities in Police Use of Force

At their November 2022 meeting, the Training Advisory Council (TAC) heard from the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) reporting use of force data from the second quarter of 2022. Though the percentage of Black people subjected to force was at its lowest level since tracking began (19%), it was still much higher than the Black population of Portland, which is about 6%. A few community members on the TAC asked questions, prompting the Bureau's Force Inspector to state that "there is more criminality in some communities." On *"Police: Force, Race and Shootings 2023"* (VB #126.6&7), Dan Handelman of Flying Focus (and Portland Copwatch) examines the Bureau's data and claims. One claim: Black people are subjected to more force by the PPB because so many drive into Portland every day. How many people would have to drive into the city so that police use of force is applied equitably? You may be surprised.

There is also a discussion about shootings by officers, which at the time were under a cloak of secrecy. A clip from the Portland Committee on Community Engaged Policing's January meeting addresses the change in policy about releasing officers' names in a timely manner, specifically whether the police consulted the US Department of Justice before changing the policy. That footage was recorded by Open Signal/Portland Community Media; the screen capture of the TAC meeting and other video was provided by Handelman, who produced this show.

## History of and Ongoing Black Environmentalism

When you think of environmentalists, what image comes to mind? Long haired hippie tree huggers? White folks with trust funds? Well, think again. As Marissa Richerson, a Botanic Specialist from Portland's Urban Forestry, explains in *"Celebrating Black Environmentalism"* (VB #127.5&6), Black Oregonians have been working hard to protect our environment since long before the current climate crisis. The show features a Black History Month event held at the June Key Delta Community Center in February 2023.

Ms. Richerson details the history of environmental efforts such as community gardens and tells the stories of amazing Black women who helped make Oregon greener. Interviews with attendees include two young Black men expressing their enthusiasm for environmental organizing. An alumna of the Delta Sigma Theta Society talks about how they transformed a gas station in North Portland into the Center, an inspiring yet little known model of green building. This is an informative and uplifting program you won't want to miss.

The event was recorded by Field Coordinator PC Peri and produced by Barb Greene, who provided additional video and stills. Dan Handelman helped with editing.

## **Taking Action: Ways to Get Involved**

After watching many thousands of people filling the streets for months on end in support of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020, it's worth questioning why so little has changed, other than an increase in PTSD for folks who experienced horrific police brutality during the demonstrations.

One group, BLM Arbor Lodge, has not forgotten the message and the need for change. They are out and about every week educating folks about white supremacy and its effects on BIPOC communities. In *"Getting Involved"* (VB #126.10&11), PC Peri interviews participants about how their activism began and why they continue attending the group's rallies that take place at different locations in Portland. These are inspiring stories of people who have not forgotten the need for change.

This show also includes a protest about Portland City Council approving a permit for the Zenith Energy company to continue transporting oil dangerously through Portland.

## **Stop Privatizing the V.A. and More**



*Dan Shea of Veterans For Peace speaks at the forum*

We hear a lot these days about privatization as the cure for what ails us (and there's a LOT that ails us these days!). *"Labor and Veterans Fight Against Privatization"* (VB #127.13/128.1) features Suzanne Gordon and co-author Steve Early, who wrote *Our Veterans*, speaking alongside Portland area veterans and union workers in March 2023 to discuss the realities of privatization. Also featured is Dave Bump of the American Federation of Government Employees. The speakers enumerated the benefits of VA systems and the harms caused by privatizing health care and the post office. There is very little that progressives can point to and say "This is something that was working," and the VA's previous example of actually providing health care for all (veterans) is now being dismantled.

## **Rally to Support the Post Office**

On February 20, 2023, Presidents' Day holiday, postal workers and their allies rallied for "Good Jobs, Good Service, Good Contract" outside the East Portland Post Office. On the show *"Saving the People's Postal Service"* (VB #127.1&2), speakers describe how understaffing, cuts, delays, and price hikes by top postal management have made the essential work of letter carriers more difficult. Members of the American Postal Workers Union, Teamsters, Starbucks Workers United, Jobs with Justice and Multnomah County Commissioner Susheela Jayapal were among those rallying the supporters. In addition to the speeches, there are songs, signs and a cheer of "Dump DeJoy!" during a group photo. Video of the rally was recorded by PC Peri. The show was produced by Dan Handelman.

## **Yippie Author Returns to Portland**



Judy Gumbo was an original member of the Yippies (the Youth International Party), a 1960's counterculture and satirical anti-war group. Judy received her nickname "Gumbo" from Black Panther Party Leader Eldridge Cleaver. In March, 2023, Gumbo appeared at Portland State University to talk about her book *Yippie Girl: Exploits in Protest and Defeating the FBI*. On *"Judy Gumbo: Never Give Up"* (VB #127.9&10), she reads excerpts from her book, talks about the time she lived in Portland with her husband Stew Albert until his death in 2006, and takes audience questions. Gumbo wrote her memoir because most histories of that era were written by men. Gumbo's overall message: we must keep organizing to ensure a better world.

The event's co-sponsor, Veterans For Peace Chapter 72 Portland provided some footage; the rest was recorded by PC Peri. It was produced and edited by Dan Handelman.

## **32 Years of Documenting Portland's Progressive History**

It was July, 1991 when Flying Focus first became independent of the Coalition Against US Military Intervention in the Middle East, after producing 13 shows of our series "Peace Action Network." Now it's 32 years later and we've made over 1000 shows documenting activism in Portland, as well as Portland activists bringing information from different parts of the country and the globe. We're in talks to send our original 3/4" tapes (which we used to produce shows from 1991-2008) to Archive.org. They are offering to pay the shipping costs but are asking us to pitch in if we can. While we archived most of the tapes during our Digital Archiving Project, we're looking for a 3/4" deck that's fully functioning (ours all wore out during archiving!) before we send them off. Don't worry about the shows leaving Portland-- we have the copies on digital tape, and at this point we have over 170 shows available on DVD as well. This information is crucial for people to learn from sources other than mainstream media and educational institutions.

If you are able to donate money to support our work, including the ongoing effort to archive our shows, please send a donation via check/money order or donate online through the Peace and Justice Works Network for Good page -- be sure to "designate" the donation to Flying Focus. If you want to order any shows on DVD or USB Flash Drive, that has to be done by mail due to NFG rules about receiving anything in return. Either kind of donation can be used to sponsor a show for streaming, for which we're currently still asking \$75 from individuals and \$125 from larger institutions... but once it's streaming, it's up for anyone to watch at any time! As noted in the new catalog insert, there have been almost 56,500 views of our shows online. Thank you!