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Anti-War Movement Wakes Up From Obama-Induced Slumber

By Kevin Gosztola

12/12/2009

Americans may think that after Obama's speech at West Point Academy to call for 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan and after Obama's Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, which laid out clear guidelines for waging a just war and how those guidelines will be followed during the oncoming surge in Afghanistan, there is no reason for Americans to voice their disapproval of the war.

However, a coalition of antiwar organizers, peace and justice advocates, and citizens of conscience disagree and are not willing to accept Obama's efforts to deflect criticism and tamp down outrage toward the Afghanistan War. Hundreds if not thousands of people will be in Lafayette Square nearby the White House in Washington, D.C. today at 11 am ET.

Rally organizers have put together a roster of speakers that include consumer advocate Ralph Nader, Rep. Dennis J. Kucinich, former Rep. Cynthia McKinney, former Sen. Mike Gravel, Kathy Kelly, Chris Hedges, David Swanson, Gael Murphy, Debra Sweet, and others opposed to current U.S. war policies in the Middle East.

The rally will directly call for vigorous opposition to the military escalation in Afghanistan and a rejection of defeatist thinking and futile rationales, which have been hampering the anti-war movement in America.

Laurie Dobson, a lead organizer of the rally believes it is the peace community's responsibility to focus on peace and justice for the world's people and for our people. And the reason she and others are taking action is because the peace movement must be the consciences for our leaders especially when they choose expansion of war rather than a phased withdrawal of war.

Speakers will directly challenge Obama's bizarre justifications for continuing the war in Afghanistan especially the idea that expanding a war is the best way to prepare for a withdrawal.

For example, Ralph Nader recently wrote in his In the Public Interest column, To say as Obama inferred in his Oslo speech that the greater plunge into Afghanistan is self-defense, with proportional force and sparing civilians from violence is a scale of self-delusion or political cowardliness that is dejecting his liberal base.

There is no real way to gauge right now how disenchanted liberals and progressives might become with Obama but if he stays the course, this surge could create a trap for Democrats in this country.

Cynthia McKinney says in Congress Republicans may be willing to support Obama and vote for his war legislation now but come 2012 they will put up their own candidate. She suspects that voters will remember Obama's actions on U.S. wars and Obama could be in trouble.

Elaine Brower, who is with Military Families Speak Out (MFSO) and who will be speaking at the rally, thinks many didn't expect Obama to do this because his rhetoric suggested he would act differently when elected president.

Brower suggests people of this country look past his rhetoric and see the politician. She says Obama is trying to sell the American people a war that isn't really a war because we aren't really fighting anybody; we are really just waging a massive occupation that is resulting an enormous loss of human lives.

Those participating in the rally see this as a way of reigniting the fire within a movement that unfortunately chose to temper their opposition during Obama's presidential campaign and now his first year in office.

For those wondering why they should be participating in any actions that allow people to show they oppose the Afghanistan War, Matthis Chiroux, a member of Iraq Veterans Against the War who will be speaking at the rally, thinks the Nobel Peace prize speech Obama gave should give people reason to oppose this war.

Chiroux hopes all would resist this war because Americans did not elect Obama to wage war but to wage peace instead.

Kathy Kelly, a peace advocate who has visited and witnessed firsthand the impact of conflict in Iraq, Lebanon, Gaza and Sarajevo is convinced that if the U.S. public can recognize the folly of the war in Iraq, followed by the folly of the war in Afghanistan, and then recognize the folly of maintaining 700-900 bases around the world then we will be able to stop these wars.

She hopes people that are retired and still have a lot of energy will use their twilight years to ensure that there will be an inhabitable world for those grandchildren. And she hopes parents who love their children will begin to recognize the choices ahead, engage in the community, change their lifestyle, and let the elected leaders know Americans won't accommodate their ruthless warmongering behavior anymore.

Chris Hedges, Truthdig.com columnist and author whose most recent book is *The Empire of Illusion*, will also be a speaker at the rally and suggests that, A lot of this is about doing something rather than doing nothing and attempting to influence events because it's clear the Democratic Party has betrayed us.

Hedges understands no antiwar organizer or leader can promise it will work but if we do nothing, we're guaranteeing that the imperial wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will go on for years.

It's all we have left, says Hedges. Unless people get out in the street and actively build grassroots opposition against the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, there's going to be never-ending war.