

Making Connections: From “Shock and Awe” in Iraq to the Plague of Wall Street Banking

By [Margaret Flowers](#) and [Kevin Zeese](#)
Global Research, March 21, 2013

Theme: [Global Economy](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

This week marks the tenth anniversary of the “Shock and Awe” US invasion of Iraq.

The ravages of that invasion continue at home and in Iraq, the US is still at war in Afghanistan (troops and contractors remain in Iraq) and unofficially waging war on countries like Pakistan and Yemen, is aggravating [aggression with North Korea](#) as part of an Asian pivot encircling China, is putting more military into Africa and [Obama is in Israel where he sings a duet for war with Netanyahu against Syria and Iran](#). Meanwhile, poverty, unemployment and homelessness continue to grow in the US with [threats of austerity](#) for everything except the national security state.

When we occupied Freedom Plaza in October, 2011, we made the [connection between US Empire and the corporate control of our political process](#), between unlimited military spending and cuts to necessary domestic programs. We understood the [misreporting in the corporate media](#) about the Iraq War. Kathy Kelly from Voices for Creative Nonviolence was in Baghdad during Shock and Awe. On this tenth anniversary, [she reminds us](#) of the horrible price of war and warns of never ending war as the [US seems to edge toward more war in the region](#). The need to understand those connections grows more important each day as we see [the costs of war affecting people](#) on every level.

And [this report](#) details the tremendous costs in loss of life, the US legacy of cancer in Iraq from poisons we brought there, the number of refugees, orphans, widows and people now living in poverty. Violence continues in Iraq including a series of attacks on the tenth anniversary that left 98 people dead and 240 wounded.

Iraq War veteran [Tomas Young is bringing increased attention](#) to the human costs at home as he prepares to die from his wounds. Over 130,000 Iraq vets have been diagnosed with PTSD. Over 250,000 are suffering from traumatic brain injuries. The ongoing costs of caring for veterans is expected to bring the total cost of the Iraq invasion alone to \$6 trillion. And, vets fight homelessness, sometimes with the aid of [Occupy activists who protest to save the homes of vets](#). Veterans are also experiencing unemployment and medical debt.

These are some of the costs of war, not to mention that the US Military is the greatest polluter on the planet.

As we join the national week of actions in solidarity with the [Strike Debt Rolling Jubilee](#) and the [coast-to-coast actions](#) in support of the [Tar Sands Blockade](#), let us remember that all of these issues are connected. As our allies at Veterans For Peace have been saying lately it is time to [Stop the War on Mother Earth](#). VFP [has been joining with groups](#) like Radical Action for Mountain People’s Survival and the Tar Sands Blockade to protect the planet.

The breadth of opposition to the extraction economy that undermines the ecology of the planet is shown by the people involved in the [Great Plains Tar Sands Resistance](#) and the "[Sacred Journey for Future Generations](#)," a march across Canada by hundreds in support of the Idle No More Movement. The fracking movement has also shown the kind of culture of resistance needed to [stop hydro-fracking](#) as [we saw in Watkins Glen, NY](#) this week.

Let us remember that there is strength in solidarity and all these issues are connected by policies that put corporate greed before human needs and protection of the Earth.

Solidarity has produced some real successes recently. In the UK, 21 climate activists were being sued by the energy giant EDF for shutting down an energy plant for 8 days. But when [64,000 customers signed a petition](#) in support for the "No Dash for Gas" activists; EDF dropped its civil suit. Criminal charges remain, so solidarity with the activists continues to be important. And in Cyprus, the EU tried to impose a tax on the population in exchange for assistance with their debt. Massive protests resulted in the Cypriot Parliament saying no to the tax.

The [plague of Wall Street banking](#) affects people across the globe. Wall Street was a key focus of Occupy. This week, [activists in Philadelphia explained their protest](#) against Wells Fargo which led to their arrest and acquittal, indeed being [thanked by the judge](#) for their actions. This was one of [five recent court victories](#) for Occupy. Now, people are standing up in New York with [a class action lawsuit](#) against the abusive stop and frisk searches which had been [protested by occupiers and others](#).

Single payer groups are [joining with Strike Debt to fight medical debt](#) and our debt-based society. [Chicago Teachers invited Occupy Wall Street](#) to teach them protest skills. And, the [Imokalee workers are walking across Florida](#) to protest low wages. In Maryland, Fund Our Communities is holding a day long "[Prosperity Not Austerity](#)" [Bus Tour](#) that links issues such as health care, education and food security with the cost of war. The [Strike Debt Resistor's Manual](#) provides a guide for communities to learn more about ways that debt affects them and what they can do about it. Perhaps you see opportunities for making connections around issues where you are?

It is through these connections that we can grow stronger and become more effective. And it is through these connections that we can have real conversations about the root causes of our shared situations, about the real needs that we have and how we can meet them together and build a unified movement that can say "No" to war at home and abroad. Let us not be afraid to talk about US imperialism and the effects of capitalism and a debt-based world. Let us look for the truth and not be lied into another war in Syria, Iran or North Korea. And let us all join together in the [urgent need for climate justice](#).

We can succeed too. As we make connections and build solidarity, we are preparing for the day when we will shift power to the people. An important issue that needs your attention, particularly next week, is the [hunger strike in Guantanamo](#). Don't let these prisoners die in vain. Witness Against Torture is calling for a [week of national solidarity actions](#) starting March 24th. Join them.

This article is based on our weekly newsletter from [October2011.org/OccupyWashington DC](#) which covers protest and resistance movements. To sign up for this free newsletter, [click here](#).

Kevin Zeese JD and Margaret Flowers MD co-host ClearingtheFOGRadio.org on We Act Radio 1480 AM Washington, DC and on [Economic Democracy Media](http://EconomicDemocracyMedia.com), co-direct [It's Our Economy](http://ItsOurEconomy.com) and were organizers of the [Occupation of Washington, DC](http://OccupationofWashingtonDC.com). Their twitters are @KBZeese and @MFlowers8.

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Articles by: [Margaret Flowers](#)
and [Kevin Zeese](#)

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