

PM: Messages Made Manifest

By Polly Mann

In my article in the March/April issue of the WAMM newsletter I overlooked one category of reasons why women might join the military, and an important one at that – they may truly believe that they can help spread democracy and bring freedom to other nations. That’s because people are trained by the media to believe the misconception that democracy is the same thing as the American economic system, and one that should be adopted by the entire world.

Needing a broader perspective, for many years I've been a subscriber to the left-leaning British newspaper The Guardian Weekly, which carries information not often covered by US corporate media.

Here are a few examples: The Pentagon not only authorized, but set up methods used at Iraqi detention and torture centers to extract information from prisoners. US Army Colonel James Steele and retired Colonel James H. Coffman, who organized the centers, reported to General David Petraeus. Iraqi General Muntadher al-Samari said of the two, “They knew everything that was going on there... the torture, the most horrible kind of torture.” And, according to The Guardian Weekly, which published the information, “they were sometimes present where torture took place...”

On March 31, 2013 The Guardian reported that 19-year-old Israeli conscientious objector Natan Blanc has refused to join the Israeli military for the eighth time. In his statement he said, “It is clear that the Netanyahu Government, like that of his predecessor Olmert, is not interested in finding a solution to the existing situation, but rather in preserving it...”

I also subscribe to a periodical entitled The Other Israel, edited by Israeli Uri Avnery, a peace activist who publishes this quarterly supporting Palestinian rights. Earlier this year, he offered this judgment: “Israel actually has a free press and they air their dirty laundry every day. But that is not allowed in the US. The phonies in the media and academia, plus a numbed-out public, remain in a constant state of cowardice and numbness.”

As an underscore to this, at the National Conference for Media Reform in April, it was said that unless it’s in the New York Times or you hear it on one of the major networks, it doesn’t exist. Case in point—for the very first time (in my lifetime, that is), the New York Times carried a story about the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestine and it was actually sympathetic and moving. Entitled “The Resisters,” it begins, “In the West Bank village of Nabi Saleh, every Friday is the same march, the same unarmed demonstration, the same retreat from an overpowering Israeli military. Could this be a way to end the occupation?”

Another come-lately revelation by the paper of record: Of course we knew all along that the United States was sending arms into Syria, even though the Obama administration declared only “nonlethal” aid was being provided. However, in March 25, 2013, the New York Times reported that 160 planeloads of armaments have been furnished by the CIA to antigovernment armed units in Syria since 2012. The article stated that, authorized by the Obama administration, the CIA conducted a massive clandestine operation to pump guns, heavy military equipment, and money to fuel the war destroying Syria—and at the same time the administration has publicly urged “caution” in arming the rebels.



Self-described “bad boy” basketball star Dennis Rodman and Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un, a basketball fan, watch a game together in North Korea.

But there was no such confusion about the message when bad-boy basketball star Dennis Rodman visited Kim Jong-un who happens to be a basketball fan. Rodman returned to the US with a simple message for President Obama from North Korea’s Supreme Leader: “Call me.” The serious message, delivered as it was by the flamboyant celebrity, merely received derision from the US media and administration. Yet for all that, in its simplicity, it did reveal the ease with which the standoff between the US and North Korea could be broken.

Echoing this, Franklin Graham, the son of the late evangelical leader Billy Graham, who manages the humanitarian organization Samaritan’s Purse, which has operated in North Korea for more than 20 years, said, “I think it would be very wise for him [President Obama] to pick up the phone and call him and begin a dialog.” I agree with this message. How about you?

Polly Mann is a co-founder of Women Against Military Madness. She has continued as an active member since its founding and writes regularly for this newsletter.