Resisting Repression

Executive Orders and Legislation Curtail Civil Liberties

CHIP BERLET AND PAM CHAMBERLAIN

Domestic political repression is so widespread since the terrorist attacks on 9/11/01 that it is hard to keep up with the latest horror story about such things as detentions and surveillance lists. The current attack on civil liberties is rooted in a long history of political repression against dissidents (see article on page three), and many of the new laws and regulations were on wish lists circulated by sectors of the political Right since the late 1970s. The attacks on 9/11 have been used as an excuse to push this pre-existing agenda.

Under the Radar

In early 2003, the Center for Public Integrity obtained a secret list of numerous legislative initiatives desired by the Justice Department. Dubbed "PATRIOT II," the draft proposals would further erode civil liberties and privacy rights in the name of fighting a "War on Terrorism." Packaged as the Domestic Security Enhancement Act of 2003, these proposals include: a) restrictions on our ability to use the Freedom of Information Act when "suspected terrorists" are in government custody; b) the creation of a DNA database on suspected terrorists or those in association with them; c) further loosening of restrictions on police spying and enhancement of the authority of police to act as immigration agents; d) granting the presumption to hold pre-trial suspected terrorists without bail; and e) allowing the "expatriation" of non-citizens, even those living in the United States lawfully (and the "expatriation" of American citizens) who allegedly are members of, or who offer material support to, "terrorist organizations."

Many of the proposals of the Domestic Security Enhancement Act overlap with other initiatives that are far less public and accountable. One troubling aspect of these developments is that they are frequently put in place through deceptive maneuvers that, while sometimes legal, often are not—and are accomplished under the radar of public scrutiny. They are inherently antidemocratic, in that the Executive branch can increase political repression in a number of ways without seeking Congressional approval or new legislation.

For example, in response to a request from the Department of Homeland Security, Attorney General John Ashcroft issued an opinion on April 25, 2003 which asserts that undocumented immigrants can be held without bond until immigration judges decide their cases if the government can show their cases involve national security concerns. Although Homeland Security now maintains authority over most of the regulatory functions of immigration, this opinion reflects Ashcroft’s insistence that his office retains “broad discretion” over immigrants’ status. The memo essentially implements one piece of Patriot II without any Congressional debate.

Law Agency Restructures for More Power

The creation of the Department of Homeland Security was designed to consolidate power in the Executive branch and break down communication barriers among federal departments; but it also weakened privacy protections. Federal agencies can sometimes shift their priorities internally without serious public input or notification. The FBI has devoted far more resources and publicity to capturing those associated—even remotely—with the events of 9/11, than it has to its traditional areas: federal crimes investigations and

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organized crime.

In the current political climate, a government agency or official can simply assert an authority—that is, they can stave off any claim to additional powers by merely making a public statement articulating a new interpretation of policy guidelines. For instance, on September 21, 2001, the Immigration and Naturalization Service Chief Judge Michael Creppy issued a secret memo to immigration judges authorizing certain immigration hearings, selected by the Attorney General, to be closed to families, the public and the press. In some cases the President or agency head just asserts this authority and waits for Congress or the public to object eventually through legal action through the court system.

First They Came for...

It is clear the majority of those who have suffered the most serious abuses of civil liberties have been the marginalized: mostly immigrants and people of color—especially (although not exclusively) Muslim males. Recently in Massachusetts, a young male Sri Lankan-American labor organizer was visited by the FBI acting on "a tip" from the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA is the state’s branch of the Federal Emergency Management Agency). The labor organizer, an American citizen, had contacted MEMA to ask whether the agency had a training program that would better equip him to work with refugees in his country of origin. The MEMA official he talked with found this request “suspicious” and alerted the FBI, leading to their knock on his door. This example, while certainly scary, is hardly the most egregious violation of civil liberties given the hundreds of Muslim men that continue to be detained incognito for an indefinite period.

While civil liberties groups have been trying to mount a constant series of challenges to the USA PATRIOT Act and other attempts at seizing power for repressive ends, the people who are most immediately affected often cannot speak out on their own behalf for fear of being targeted further.

An additional problem is the widely held belief among non-targeted groups that limitations on civil liberties are a price we must pay for security. As the legal scholars Owen Gross and David Cole have pointed out, exceptional emergency measures may be acceptable to members of the public if they believe those measures will not be used against them. This belief is ill-advised, since the separation between “us” and “them” can easily disappear. Selective profiling of terrorists coupled with the lack of public outcry is a classic example of a successful repressive system, and it is in place, here and now, in the United States.

On the state level, political repression against protestors staging demonstrations began to increase even before 9/11. Activists from Seattle, the District of Columbia, Philadelphia, Denver, and other cities were demonized as potential terrorists. Police

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**Partial List of Resources**

Many organizations are tracking the fast-breaking developments concerning political repression in the US. Updates first appear on the Internet. Below is a list of some of the many groups.

**Alternet**
http://www.alternet.org/

Special Section on “Rights & Liberties.” Sign-up for e-mail newsletter. Collection of popular education articles on political repression.

**American Civil Liberties Union**
125 Broad Street, 18th Floor, New York, NY 10004; http://aclu.org/


**Bill of Rights Defense Committee**
PO Box 60591, Florence, MA 01062; http://www.bordc.org/

Coordinator of the Civil Liberties Safe Zone Campaign, local efforts to resist the PATRIOT Acts. E-mail newsletter.

**Center for Constitutional Rights**
666 Broadway, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10012; www.ccr-ny.org

Reports and publications, legislative updates, calendar of events.

**Center for Democracy & Technology**
1634 Eye Street NW, Suite 1100, Washington, DC 20006; http://www.cdt.org/wiretap/

Resources to enhance free expression and privacy in global communications technologies. E-mail alerts regarding pending legislation and regulatory action.

**Progressive Magazine**
409 East Main Street, Madison, WI 53703; www.progressive.org

McCarthyism Watch website tracks violations of rights and actions against power abuse.

**The Public Eye: Political Research Associates**
1310 Broadway, Somerville, MA 02144; http://www.publiceye.org/liberty/

Provides background articles, security advice for activists, and links to numerous civil liberties websites. Analyzes right-wing ideology as seedbed for repression.

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For information and grant guidelines, write to: Resist, 259 Elm St., Suite 201 Somerville, MA 02144
www.resistinc.org/resistinc@gc.org

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began using pre-emptive arrests through raids on demonstration planning offices and warehouses. Police overreaction and abuse of power became commonplace.

Hopeful Developments
We do have some examples of victories in resisting domestic political repression. In April 2002 a coalition of civil liberties groups successfully blocked the implementation of the Terrorism Information Prevention System (TIPS) through the mobilization of a massive public outcry. The Homeland Security Act included a provision that specifically prohibits further planning for TIPS. Without this provision the program would have enlisted up to 4% of the American public as volunteers for FEMA, spying on their neighbors, families and colleagues. And the American Civil Liberties Union has filed several suits against a variety of unconstitutional measures in the “War against Terrorism.” In Washington, DC policy analysts from a wide range of groups are working in an ad-hoc manner to block further repression. The network includes leftists, liberals, libertarians, conservatives, ultra-conservatives, and even some from the Christian Right. This type of coalition is tricky, and requires great caution not to betray core progressive principles. On the other hand, it has the potential to curb the excesses of the Justice Department far more quickly than if progressives worked alone.

Government surveillance and detention programs threaten our civil liberties and offer no guarantee of curbing criminal violence. While our system of checks and balances is designed to curtail excesses of power, this concept means nothing until it is activated. When any branch exceeds its authority in eyes of the people, we must build and sustain coalitions and require the government to align itself with Constitutional protections. Anything short of this will sanction continued civil liberties abuses. Individuals can choose to support one or more of the many groups (some are listed on page two) that are challenging the resurgence of domestic political repression.

Pam Chamberlain and Chip Berlet acknowledge Nikhil Aziz for his assistance with this article. All three work at Political Research Associates: Pam and Nikhil also serve on RESIST’s Board of Directors. For more information, please see the resource box on page two.

Déjà Vu All Over Again
A Capsule History of Political Repression in the US

CHIP BERLET

Political repression periodically sweeps the United States—a country founded by settlers who launched a major campaign of repression against indigenous peoples. The colonial period was marked by bouts of religious repression resulting in the expulsion and death of dissenters, and public hysteria claiming witches were in league with Satan to subvert the ideal community. This idea of a subversive conspiracy generates calls for counter-subversive efforts by police agencies to protect the nation, which in turn unleashes political repression. Sometimes countersubversion is demanded by the citizenry, but often this demand is manipulated by a faction of the ruling elites who use propaganda to spread fears and anxieties about threats of subversive terrorist violence. Acts of terrorism—such as the attacks of 9/11—can be opportunistically used to advance a particular political agenda. It is not the first time that such an exploitation of events has occurred.

For example, in 1798 Congress passed the Alien and Sedition Acts based on inflated fears that Irish immigrants and French refugees were hatching subversive plots. At the time the British were briefly our ally, and it was to their advantage to spread the fear that their political enemies—the French and Irish dissidents—were a threat to American independence. Thereafter, counter-subversive efforts targeted suspected conspiracies by Freemasons, Catholics, Jews, labor union organizers, anarchists, Bolsheviks, immigrants, communists and terrorists.

The law enforcement agency that became the Federal Bureau of Investigation was formed in 1908, and soon was empowered in pursuing sedition among anarchist and communist immigrants from Italy and Russia, a campaign that led to the Palmer Raids in 1919-1920 where hundreds of suspected radicals were rounded up and deported. Reorganized into the FBI in 1935, the Bureau developed a loose and often back-door network with xenophobic state and municipal intelligence units sometimes called “Red Squads.”

In the early 1970s, activists and media investigations revealed the massive and illegal FBI Counter-Intelligence Program. Starting in 1956, COINTELPRO had spied on millions of Americans and disrupted the work of hundreds of protest groups, primarily on the political left. A series of lawsuits further exposed a national network of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies where covert government surveillance was traded back and forth, along with data from corporate security offices and private right-wing “watchdog” groups. This network spied on organizations supporting civil rights and opposing the war in Vietnam, among many other movements suspected of disloyalty. Congressional hearings generated further public pressure for safeguards against surveillance abuse.

President Jimmy Carter approved guidelines to rein in the FBI, but when Ronald Reagan took office in 1980 he began removing these protections. Both Democratic and Republican administrations have continued this retreat, including President William Clinton, whose “Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996,” increased the authority of the FBI to investigate First Amendment activity, such as donations to nonviolent political organizations deemed “terrorist” by the government.

By the late 1990s, collaborations between local police, state, and federal law enforcement, and private “watchdog” groups had renewed, and played a role in claims that demonstrations in several cities were part of a vast criminal conspiracy linked to terrorism.

Chip Berlet is the senior analyst at Political Research Associates. For more information, contact PRA, 1310 Broadway, Suite 201, Somerville, MA 02144; www.publiceye.org.
South Asian Activists Fight Back

Challenging Anti-Immigrant Policies in a Post 9/11 Era

BETTY SONG

On March 19, 2003, George W. Bush declared war on the people of Iraq. Three days later, on March 22, 2003, a national network of community organizations fighting against Southeast Asian deportation commemorated the one year mark of another destructive Bush administration decision that is destroying families within the Southeast Asian community: the “Memorandum of Understanding” (MOU) with Cambodia.

For more than a year, Asians and Pacific Islanders for Community Empowerment (API ForCE)—as part of the national Southeast Asian Freedom Network (SEA Freedom)—has been organizing a “Campaign Against Southeast Asian Deportation” to oppose the deportation of immigrants and refugees. A coalition of seven grassroots organizations nationwide (and a RESIST grantee), SEA Freedom formed out of an August 2002 gathering of activists who attended the Southeast Asian Freedom Training sponsored by the Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence which focused on the Cambodian repatriation agreement and its impact on the community. Since that time, the Network has organized two National Days of Actions, one that took place November 7-8 in 2002 and the second that took place on March 22, 2003, as a way to raise awareness around the issue and to highlight the devastating effects that deportations are having on families. Each group is actively involved in organizing their local communities while participating in the larger network.

Background

On March 22, 2002, the US and Cambodian governments signed a repatriation agreement in which the US government could now deport certain Cambodian American noncitizens convicted of “aggravated felonies.” Because of the Cold War political climate, the US did not have diplomatic relationships with several Southeast Asian countries, including Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos for the last 25 years. With no such “repatriation agreements,” Southeast Asian immigrant non citizens eligible for deportation were being held indefinitely in Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) custody because they had no country to be deported to.

Catalyzed by successful civil liberties lawsuits against such inhumane “indefinite detention” and renewed backlash against immigrants in the post 9/11 period, the US conducted secret negotiations with Cambodia and obtained this “Memorandum of Understanding” (MOU) with Cambodia. As a result, more than 1,500 Cambodian American non citizens have received deportation notices, and are in danger of being sent to Cambodia. Already, over 70 people have been deported to Cambodia as a result of this agreement.

Most Cambodian Americans facing deportation were on average two to 10 years old when they came to this country as refugees. They have lived here most of their lives, have little-to-no connection to Cambodia anymore, and have established lives here. Ironically, many Southeast Asian immigrants fled to this country as refugees as a result of US military intervention and aggression in Southeast Asia during the 1960s and 1970s.

1996 Immigration “Reform”

What is happening in the Cambodian community is not just a product of the repatriation agreement nor solely a product of the anti-immigrant sentiment of the post 9/11 period, but actually dates back to 1996. At that time, the Clinton administration passed harsh immigration legislation that expanded the parameters of non citizens who could be ordered removed from this country.

Even before the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 was passed, immigration law provided that non citizen immigrants were subject to mandatory deportation if they had been convicted of an “aggravated felony” such as murder and firearms trafficking. The 1996 Act expanded the definition of “aggravated felony” to include crimes carrying a prison sentence of one year or more (rather than time served) and ultimately includes even nonviolent crimes such as check fraud or shoplifting. To make matters worse, the Act is applicable retroactively.

We believe that deportation punishes noncitizens twice for the same crime. Many people with final orders of removal have already served their time for their criminal convictions. They are taken directly from prison to the immigration “prison” known as detention, and are ultimately deported. Due to the high poverty rate among the Southeast Asian community, many people who are being deported did not have access to adequate legal representation for their criminal case and were not advised as

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to how their criminal case would affect their immigration status.

The impact of deportation on families is devastating. The more than 70 Cambodian Americans who have been sent to Cambodia as a result of the repatriation agreement have had to leave behind mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, wives, partners and young children. Many of those deported, and those in danger of being deported, were the main income earners for their families. If you are deported due to an "aggravated felony" you are never allowed to legally enter the US again. Without sufficient funds, families have little chance of going to Cambodia to visit their loved ones. As a result, families are torn apart forever.

Organizing Efforts

API ForCE is currently working with families from Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos in the San Francisco Bay Area who have family members in the deportation process. We help people fight deportation orders by finding and working with volunteer attorneys and legal organizations who can assist with free or reduced fee legal services. Fighting the deportation order often means reopening the criminal case for which people did not receive adequate legal counsel.

We also organize workshop presentations around the issue of deportation for community organizations and schools, and do outreach at local community events in order to reach people who might need assistance.

Although our long-term objective is a moratorium on deportations, our immediate goal is to obtain a meeting with the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (formerly the INS) District Director in San Francisco to demand that they provide families with clearer guidelines and processes around deportation. We are currently working to bring families together to share their stories with local Congressional Representatives in order to garner their support in helping us to meet with the BCIS. Right now the biggest challenge is that people with orders and their families are being forced to live day-by-day, unable to plan for the future because they do not know when deportation will happen, and for those in detention, how long they will be denied their freedom.

Although our work is mainly with Cambodian families who are facing the direct impact of the repatriation agreement, we are committed to the broader struggle against deportation within the Southeast Asian community. The US is currently in negotiations with Vietnam and Laos for repatriation agreements, and such agreements could potentially put 9,000 Laotians and Vietnamese refugees in danger of deportation. Even without an agreement, the US government is claiming that such deportation to Laos and Vietnam in light of current negotiations is within the "foreseeable future" and is using this rationale to detain immigrants from these countries for an indefinite period of time.

Challenges in the Post 9/11 period

In this post 9/11 and "War on Terrorism" period, immigrant communities that were already facing backlash through harsh immigration and welfare "reform" laws in the mid 1990s are facing even graver circumstances in the form of round-ups, detentions, special registration and increased deportation. During these times, we are seeing even the most basic due process rights being taken away.

One of the most recent examples is the Supreme Court decision in *Demore v. Kim* earlier this month which served a devastating blow to immigrants in removal proceedings. Here the Supreme Court overruled a Ninth Circuit Court decision stating that detention without a bond hearing for lawful permanent residents in removal proceedings for certain crimes violates due process. The Supreme Court decision means that people who are currently out on bond based on the Ninth Circuit decision will be forced to return to detention.

Some of the people with final orders that we are working with are dealing with the direct impact of the Demore decision and are forced to live in constant fear that at any point they will be ordered back into detention, or will be taken away at their next immigration hearing. The Demore decision shows how the most basic civil rights, in this case the due process right to a bond hearing, can be easily taken away from someone because of their citizenship status. It is a clear indication of how in this current social and political climate of xenophobia, warmongering and hyper patriotism, immigrants and immigrants' rights advocates are forced to fight for freedom every step of the way.

Betty Song is an organizer with Asians and Pacific Islanders for Community Empowerment (API-ForCE), which received a grant from RESIST last year. For more information, contact API-ForCE, 522 Valencia Street, San Francisco, CA 94110; www.apiforce.org; seadep@apiforce.org.

RESIST Staff Changes

After two years of valuable work at RESIST, Becca Howes-Mischel is leaving to pursue her doctorate in medical anthropology at NYU. Although she leaves the staff, Becca will remain on the Board.

RESIST is pleased to welcome Yafreisy Mejia, who joins us after working at the Boston Women's Fund for the last seven years.
You Have the Right to Remain Silent

PEPI LEISTYNA

Miranda rights? No. Even they no longer apply to so many people arrested in the United States post 9/11 who are detained, interrogated, and often disappeared without the protection of the 700-year-old Habeas Corpus right to be held only under formal charges. Meanwhile, the Miranda right to council is also being thrown out the window for detainees assumed by the government to be “terrorists,” “enemy combatants,” or “material witnesses.”

On the other hand, we as citizens are offered the right to stay silent about what the current administration is doing as it dismantles civil liberties protected by the Bill of Rights with the enactment of the United States and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act—better known as the USA PATRIOT Act. And yet this existing legislation is child’s play compared to the second version that’s in the works that targets US citizens—the Domestic Security Enhancement Act.

It’s curious to note that the Bush administration is the same political force that ran its election campaign on the idea that big government is an assault on individual freedoms and that those in power can’t be trusted. This very same administration has drastically curtailed civil liberties while rendering itself virtually untouchable to public scrutiny. This White House has been making significant changes to our freedom of association, information and speech; our right to legal representation; our freedom from unreasonable searches; and the right to a speedy and public trial. It has also been making drastic changes to the laws that limit the government’s ability to spy on its own citizens. But these changes have been met with vocal and organized resistance.

Refusing to Remain Silent

There are a great many people who refuse to remain silent in the face of legislation like the USA PATRIOT Act. Groups at the grassroots level are organizing all over the country and fighting on many fronts in order to safeguard our civil liberties. Activist organizations such as the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, the ACLU’s Civil Liberties Task Force, The Amer Juran Defense Committee, the New England Immigrant & Detainee Response Network (NEIDRN), and the INS Watch in San Francisco have been effectively monitoring the Department of Homeland Security’s projects, with particular interest in its special registration program that targets Muslims, Arabs, and South Asians for detention and deportation.

The National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS) requires men over the age of 16 from 25 countries—all Muslim with the exception of North Korea—to report to immigration officials to show their papers, get photographed, fingerprinted, and interviewed. Many of the folks who enter the interview never come out. In response, groups such as the New Jersey Civil Rights Defense Committee and CAIR (Council on American Islamic Relations) have launched “Emergency Response Systems” that provide legal training with immigration and criminal attorneys in order to stop disappearances, monitor the FBI and DHS, set up emergency hotlines, rally attendance at court hearings of arrested activists and detainees, inform the public, and work to organize political campaigns against the government’s abuses of power. Activist organizations have effectively mobilized letter-writing and phone-in campaigns to the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (formerly the INS and now a bureau of the US Department of Homeland Security), and have motivated people to contact their local, state, and federal representatives to voice concern. Organizations such as DRUM: Deis Rising Up & Moving (a RESIST Grantee), the Coney Island Avenue Project, and the Rhode Island Detainee Response Network have been working to provide financial, material, and legal support to families of detainees.

There have been strong interfaith coalitions that have developed to combat the religious profiling and abuses of power sanctioned by the current administration. The American Friends Service Committee, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, along with the Center for Public Witness, the Muslim American Society Freedom Foundation, the New York Chapter of the Methodist Federation for Social Action, the Interfaith Center of New York, and the Community Church of Boston have played significant roles in such efforts.

Throwing the Book at the Feds

Librarians and booksellers across the country have taken a stand against the PATRIOT Act’s Section 215, which obligates them to turn over their records of clients to DHS if requested. The Act also prohibits them from informing the customer that such investigations are taking place. Like many libraries across the country, the local library board in Santa Cruz, California has asked libraries to put up signs to inform their borrowers that the government might be investigating their behaviors.

The American Library Association released its own resolution, one that protects the public’s library rights and the freedom to read; the group is also putting pressure on Congress to change the new law. The American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression has also played a significant role in this political struggle. Sensitive to public outcry, Representative Bernard Sanders of Vermont has introduced a bill called “Freedom to Read Protection Act” (HR 1157) that would protect libraries and bookstores.

Big Brother is Watching

There has also been a fierce battle being waged to combat the government’s ability to spy on its citizens. The Defense Advanced Research Project Agency (DARPA), which has been budgeted $53.7 million for the next three years, has been working diligently to develop ways to monitor the activities of the country’s entire population with programs such as Total Information Awareness (TIA)—a giant computer surveillance system to be used to track transactional data such as airline ticket purchases, visa applications, as well as financial, medical, educational and biometric records.

Other such homeland security surveillance programs that are either in the works include: the biometric passport and driver’s license system (complete with barcode, eye scan, and fingerprints); DNA profiling (the White House wants to spend $1 billion to upgrade this database over the next five years); LifeLog; continued on page seven
the Transportation Security Administration airline passenger profiling system called Computer-Assisted Passenger Pre-Screening System, or CAPPS II; and no-fly lists that keep certain individuals (generally activists that contest government programs and politics) from being able to fly around the country.

Many organizations have been putting pressure on the government because of its surveillance techniques, powers, and practices. For example, the Electronic Privacy Information Center is suing the Justice Department for information pertaining to its secretive anti-terrorism tactics. As a direct result of public protest over the invasion of privacy that the Total Information Awareness program invites, concerned members of Congress have drafted the Data-Mining Moratorium Act of 2003 (S. 188) and the Domestic Surveillance Oversight Bill (S. 436). Scrambling in an attempt to evade public scrutiny, DARPA has strategically changed the name of the Total Information Awareness program to Terrorist Information Awareness.

The first positive sign of the effects of social activism against such programs came when Attorney General John Ashcroft’s Terrorism Information and Prevention System, more popularly known as TIPS, failed to gain the necessary support of the Congress. TIPS was intended to gain access to private lives by having recruits from the public sector spy on people and report any “suspicious” activity. However, beware of the advent of C.A.T. Eyes, or the Community Anti-Terrorism Training Initiative. C.A.T. Eyes is a private anti-terrorist citizen informant program that many law enforcement agencies around the country are adopting which would allow interested private individuals to take a training course, snoop on their neighbors, and then report any “suspicious” activity to the FBI. The private organization that runs this program, conceived by two retired military personnel, hopes to get state and federal funding to reach its goal of having 100 million participants in the program.

Many organizations are investigating the government’s actions, including the ACLU, the American Immigration Lawyers Association, Lawyers Committee for Human Rights (LCHR), and the Center for Constitutional Rights. The National Lawyers Guild is offering “rights presentations” in the jails to help detainees understand their rights under the US Constitution. The American Bar Association voted to support the right of US citizens held as “enemy combatants” to have access to lawyers and judicial review. In fact, many groups around the nation too numerous to list here are combining forces and interests in order to fight against the government’s assault on the public.

Campus Activism

Campus activism and conferences have taken place around the country, including at MIT, Cornell, UC Berkeley, and the University of Massachusetts (Amherst and Boston), focusing on issues of racial profiling, detention, deportation and disappearing, government surveillance and secrecy, and political action to protect civil liberties.

As a result, some universities have refused to give information to the FBI, regardless of the type of demands written into the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System, or SEVIS, whereby schools and universities have to send the federal government reports on all of their international students. The American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers is working to inform schools that under privacy laws, a subpoena or court order must accompany any FBI request for information on students. With the support of the Human Rights Working Group of the University of Massachusetts Boston, a resolution to make the campus a safe zone is currently being drafted. Such resolutions need to be fought for on campuses throughout the nation.

Political cartoonists such as Mike Konopacki, Gary Huck, and Clay Bennett have also joined the forces against the assault on civil liberties. The USA Patriot Act Art Show, a collection of cartoons that are critical of the PATRIOT Act, is being exhibited around the country (see RESIST Newsletter, November 2002).

Some Successful Challenges

All of these efforts are bearing fruit. With public pressure, the State of Hawaii was the first state to pass a resolution to protect Constitutional rights. The Alaska Civil Liberties Union worked to secure the passage of House Joint Resolution 22 by the state legislature protecting the liberties of the citizens against the USA PATRIOT Act. Vermont has also decided to fight these civil rights abuses, and a critical response in New Mexico is in the works.

Arcata, California was the first city in the country to pass an ordinance that makes illegal voluntary compliance with the USA PATRIOT Act. In May 2003, Philadelphia became the largest city in the nation to pass a resolution that calls for the repeal of the USA PATRIOT Act, joining 115 other local cities and municipalities who have done so. Through local legislative actions, people across the country are prohibiting local and state agencies from participating in racial profiling, PATRIOT Act-style investigations and detentions, and from using local resources for federal efforts to detain immigrants and pry into the private lives of its citizens.

The bottom line is that if we want to feel safe and secure, we need to pay even greater attention to those fighting to protect our rights rather than silently support those who are working tirelessly to take them away. We all need to get informed and get active!

Pepi Leistyna is an Assistant Professor at the University of Massachusetts Boston in the Applied Linguistics Graduate Studies Program.
GRANTS

RESIST awards grants six times a year to groups throughout the United States engaged in activism for social and economic justice. In this issue of the Newsletter we list a few grant recipients from our June 2003 allocation cycle. For information, contact the groups at the addresses below.

Committee on Prison Accountability (COPA)
PO Box 80243, Albuquerque, NM 87198

COPA! New Mexico was formed in 1999 by families of inmates who came together to express their fear and outrage over the implementation of arbitrary and punitive policies by the newly appointed Secretary of Corrections and the governor. During this time, the Department of Corrections also began to send inmates, many with parole papers in hand, to the Wallens Ridge State Prison, a super-max facility located in Big Stone Gap, Virginia.

Since then, COPA! NM has fought against the growing number of for-profit prisons, has won the right for prisoners to regain their voting rights, and has worked to make the connections between the current administration’s attempts to curtail general civil liberties and punitive actions taken against the prison population. A RESIST grant of $3,000 will help strengthen the internal infrastructure of this organization.

Progressive South Asian Exchange Net (proXsa)
570 Fort Washington Avenue, #75A, New York, NY 10033; www.proxsa.org

The Progressive South Asian Exchange Net (proXsa) is an organization that is committed to promoting peace and justice in South Asian communities in the United States and in South Asia. Their goal is to work with dispersed South Asian youth and low-income communities in large urban areas in order to combat the growing domineering influence of the neo-fascist Hindu right-wing movement and to provide an alternative to the conservative South Asian voices which have dominated many political groups. ProXsa seeks to identify and oppose inter-related forms of discrimination and oppression within South Asian communities.

A RESIST grant of $3,000 will fund the Youth Solidarity Summer that educates and organizes South Asian youth to mobilize around issues of social inequality.

South Carolina Progressive Network
PO Box 8325, Columbia, SC 29202
www.scpronet.com

The South Carolina Progressive Network was started in 1995 in the aftermath of the Christian Coalition’s assumption of control of state government. The rollback in gains that took generations to secure prompted progressive-minded community leaders and grassroots activists to form a coalition that would support each other’s work and build a “new majority” in South Carolina. Since then the Network has grown to include 40 organizations and hundreds of individuals in its multi-issue people’s movement.

A RESIST grant of $3,000 will be used for general support by the Network’s multi-racial, multi-issue coalition.

Southeast Asian Freedom Network
c/o Khmer Girls in Action, 2338 East Anaheim Street, #210A, Long Beach CA 90804

The Southeast Asian Freedom Network is made up of seven grassroots organizations working within Southeast Asian communities to address the recent signing of the repatriation agreement between the Cambodian and US governments in March, 2002. This agreement has resulted in the forced deportation of Cambodian non-citizens convicted of “aggravated felonies” (which covers everything from violent crimes to prostitution, fraud, and burglary). Currently over 1,500 Cambodian refugees in the US have final orders for removal.

Through political education workshops, direct actions, coalition building and media outreach, SEAFN hopes to build a strong grassroots youth movement that advocates for the rights of immigrants and refugee communities. A $3,000 grant from RESIST will provide general support for this coalition.

Join the Resist Pledge Program!

We’d like you to consider becoming a Resist Pledge.

Pledges account for over 30% of our income.

By becoming a pledge, you help guarantee Resist a fixed and dependable source of income on which we can build our grant-making program. In return, we will send you a monthly pledge letter and reminder along with your newsletter. We will also keep you up-to-date on the groups we have funded and the other work being done at Resist.

So take the plunge and become a Resist Pledge! We count on you, and the groups we fund count on us.

☐ I’ll send you my pledge of $_____ every month/quarter/six months/year (please circle one).
☐ Enclosed is an initial pledge contribution of $_______.
☐ Please automatically deduct my pledge from my credit card (below).
☐ I can’t join the pledge program now, but here’s a contribution of $_______ to support your work.

Name ____________________________________________

Address __________________________________________

Phone Number (for confirmation only) ____________

Visa/Master Card # ____________ Expiration Date ________

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