



ارفع يد الاعمار لا سلاح التخریب  
المستقبل بين ايديكم



A billboard in  
Basra reads "Raise  
your hand for  
reconstruction,  
not a weapon for  
destruction."

# HOW TO END THE WAR

**EDITORS' NOTE:** *The following essay is adapted from remarks made at the National Teach-in on Iraq sponsored by the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C. The teach-in was held on March 24, the 40th anniversary of the first teach-in on the Vietnam War, which was held at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.*

**T**HE CENTRAL QUESTION WE NEED to answer is this: What were the real reasons for the Bush administration's invasion and occupation of Iraq?

When we identify why we really went to war—not the cover reasons or the re-branded reasons, freedom and democracy, but the real reasons—then we can become more effective anti-war activists. The most effective and strategic way to stop this occupation and prevent future wars is to deny the people who wage these wars their spoils—to make war unprofitable. And we can't do that unless we effectively identify the goals of war.

When I was in Iraq a year ago trying to answer that question, one of the most effective ways I found to do that was to follow the bulldozers and construction machinery. I was in Iraq to research the so-called reconstruction. And what struck me most was the absence of reconstruction machinery, of cranes and bulldozers, in downtown Baghdad. I expected to see reconstruction all over the place.

I saw bulldozers in military bases. I saw bulldozers in the Green Zone, where a huge amount of construction was going on, building up Bechtel's headquarters and getting the new U.S. embassy ready. There was also a ton of construction going on at all of the U.S. military bases. But, on the streets of Baghdad, the former ministry buildings are absolutely untouched. They hadn't even cleared away the rubble, let alone started the reconstruction process.

The one crane I saw in the streets of Baghdad was hoisting an advertising billboard. One of the surreal things about Baghdad is that the old city lies in ruins, yet there are these shiny new billboards advertising the glories of the global economy. And the message is: "Everything you were before isn't worth rebuilding." We're going to import a brand-new country. It is the Iraq version of the "Extreme Makeover."

It's not a coincidence that Americans were at home watching this explosion of extreme reality television shows where people's bodies were being surgically remade and their homes were being bulldozed and reconstituted. The message of these shows is: Everything you are now, everything you own, everything you do sucks. We're going to completely erase it and rebuild it with a team of experts. You just go limp and let the experts take over. That is exactly what "Extreme Makeover: Iraq" is.

There was no role for Iraqis in this process. It was all foreign companies modernizing the country. Iraqis with engineering Ph.D.s who built their electricity system and who built their telephone system had no place in the reconstruction process.

If we want to know what the goals of the war are, we have to look at what Paul Bremer did when he first arrived in Iraq. He

laid off 500,000 people, 400,000 of whom were soldiers. And he shredded Iraq's constitution and wrote a series of economic laws that the *The Economist* described as "the wish list of foreign investors."

Basically, Iraq has been turned into a laboratory for the radical free-market policies that the American Enterprise Institute and the Cato Institute dream about in Washington, D.C., but are only able to impose in relative slow motion here at home.

So we just have to examine the Bush administration's policies and actions. We don't have to wield secret documents or massive conspiracy theories. We have to look at the fact that they built enduring military bases and didn't rebuild the country. Their very first act was to protect the oil ministry leaving the the rest of the country to burn—to which Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld responded: "Stuff happens." Theirs was an almost apocalyptic glee in allowing Iraq to burn. They let the country be erased, leaving a blank slate that they could rebuild in their image. This was the goal of the war.



**A Baghdad family resorts to using an oil lamp during an all-too-common blackout.**



## The big lie

The administration says the war was about fighting for democracy. That was the big lie they resorted to when they were caught in the other lies. But it's a different kind of a lie in the sense that it's a useful lie. The lie that the United States invaded Iraq to bring freedom and democracy not just to Iraq but, as it turns out, to the whole world, is tremendously useful—because we can first expose it as a lie and then we can join with Iraqis to try to make it true. So it disturbs me that a lot of progressives are afraid to use the language of democracy now that George W. Bush is using it. We are somehow giving up on the most powerful emancipatory ideas ever created, of self-determination, liberation and democracy.

And it's absolutely crucial not to let Bush get away with stealing and defaming these ideas—they are too important.

In looking at democracy in Iraq, we first need to make the distinction between elections and democracy. The reality is the Bush administration has fought democracy in Iraq at every turn.

Why? Because if genuine democracy ever came to Iraq, the real goals of the war—control over oil, support for Israel, the construction of enduring military bases, the privatization of the entire economy—would all be lost. Why? Because Iraqis don't want them and they don't agree with them. They have said it over and over again—first in opinion polls, which is why the Bush administration broke its original promise

to have elections within months of the invasion. I believe Paul Wolfowitz genuinely thought that Iraqis would respond like the contestants on a reality TV show and say: "Oh my God. Thank you for my brand-new shiny country." They didn't. They protested that 500,000 people had lost their jobs. They protested the fact that they were being shut out of the reconstruction of their own country, and they made it clear they didn't want permanent U.S. bases.

That's when the administration broke its promise and appointed a CIA agent as the interim prime minister. In that period they locked in—basically shackled—Iraq's future governments to an International Monetary Fund program until 2008. This will make the humanitarian crisis in Iraq much, much deeper. Here's just one example: The IMF and the World Bank are demanding the elimination of Iraq's food ration program, upon which 60 percent of the population depends for nutrition, as a condition for debt relief and for the new loans that have been made in deals with an unelected government.

In these elections, Iraqis voted for the United Iraqi Alliance. In addition to demanding a timetable for the withdrawal of troops, this coalition party has promised that they would create 100 percent full employment in the public sector—i.e., a total rebuke of the neocons' privatization agenda. But now they can't do any of this because their democracy has been shackled. In other words, they have the vote, but no real power to govern.

## A pro-democracy movement

The future of the anti-war movement requires that it become a pro-democracy movement. Our marching orders have been given to us by the people of Iraq. It's important to understand that the most powerful movement against this war and this occupation is within Iraq itself. Our anti-war movement must not just be in verbal solidarity but in active and tangible solidarity with the overwhelming majority of Iraqis fighting to end the occupation of their country. We need to take our direction from them.

Iraqis are resisting in many ways—not just with armed resistance. They are organizing independent trade unions. They are opening critical newspapers, and then having those newspapers shut down. They are fighting privatization in state factories. They are forming new political coalitions in an attempt to force an end to the occupation.

So what is our role here? We need to support the people of Iraq and their clear demands for an end to both military and corporate occupation. That means being the resistance ourselves in our country, demanding that the troops come home, that U.S. corporations come home, that Iraqis be free of Saddam's debt and the IMF and World Bank agreements signed under occupation. It doesn't mean blindly cheerleading for "the resistance." Because there isn't just one resistance in Iraq. Some elements of the armed resistance are targeting Iraqi civilians as they pray in Shia mosques—barbaric acts that serve the interests of the Bush administration by feeding the perception that the country is on the brink of civil war and therefore U.S. forces must remain in Iraq. Not everyone fighting the U.S. occupation is fighting for the freedom of all Iraqis; some are fighting for their own elite power. That's why we need to stay focused on supporting the demands for self-determination, not cheering any setback for U.S. empire.

And we can't cede the language, the territory of democracy. Anybody who says Iraqis don't want democracy should be deeply ashamed of themselves. Iraqis are clamoring for democracy and had risked their lives for it long before this invasion—in the 1991 uprising against Saddam, for example, when they were left to be slaughtered. The elections in January took place only because of tremendous pressure from Iraqi Shia communities that insisted on getting the freedom they were promised.



A sign from a demonstration in Rome marking the second anniversary of the Iraq invasion.

## "The courage to be serious"

Many of us opposed this war because it was an imperial project. Now Iraqis are struggling for the tools that will make self-determination meaningful, not just for show elections or marketing opportunities for the Bush administration. That means it's time, as Susan Son-tag said, to have "the courage to be serious." The reason why the 58 percent of Americans against the war has not translated into the same millions of people on the streets that we saw before the war is because we haven't come forward with a serious policy agenda. We should not be afraid to be serious.

Part of that seriousness is to echo the poli-cy demands made by voters and demonstra-tors in the streets of Baghdad and Basra and bring those demands to Washington, where the decisions are being made.

But the core fight is over respect for interna-tional law, and whether there is any respect for it at all in the United States. Unless we're fight-ing a core battle against this administration's total disdain for the very idea of international law, then the specifics really don't matter.

We saw this very clearly in the U.S. presi-dential campaign, as John Kerry let Bush completely set the terms for the debate.

Recall the ridicule of Kerry's mention of a "global test," and the charge that it was cow-ardly and weak to allow for any international scrutiny of U.S. actions. Why didn't Kerry ever challenge this assumption? I blame the Kerry campaign as much as I blame the Bush administration. During the elections, he never said "Abu Ghraib." He never said "Guanta-namo Bay." He accepted the premise that to submit to some kind of "global test" was to be weak. Once they had done that, the Demo-crats couldn't expect to win a battle against Alberto Gonzales being appointed attorney general, when they had never talked about torture during the campaign.

And part of the war has to be a media war in this country. The problem is not that the anti-war voices aren't there—it's that the voic-es aren't amplified. We need a strategy to target the media in this country, making it a site of protest itself. We must demand that the me-dia let us hear the voices of anti-war critics, of enraged mothers who have lost their sons for a lie, of betrayed soldiers who fought in a war they didn't believe in. And we need to keep deepening the definition of democracy—to say that these show elections are not democ-racy, and that we don't have a democracy in

this country either.

Sadly, the Bush administration has done a better job of using the language of respon-sibility than we in the anti-war movement. The message that's getting across is that we are saying "just leave," while they are saying, "we can't just leave, we have to stay and fix the problem we started."

We can have a very detailed, responsible agenda and we shouldn't be afraid of it. We should be saying, "Let's pull the troops out but let's leave some hope behind." We can't be afraid to talk about reparations, to demand freedom from debt for Iraq, a total abandonment of Bremer's illegal economic laws, full Iraqi con-trol over the reconstruction budget—there are many more examples of concrete policy demands that we can and must put forth. When we articulate a more genuine definition of democracy than we are hearing from the Bush administration, we will bring some hope to Iraq. And we will bring closer to us many of the 58 percent who are opposed to the war but aren't marching with us yet because they are afraid of cutting and running. ■

**NAOMI KLEIN** is currently writing a book about extreme country makeovers and is writer/co-pro-ducer of the documentary film *The Take*.

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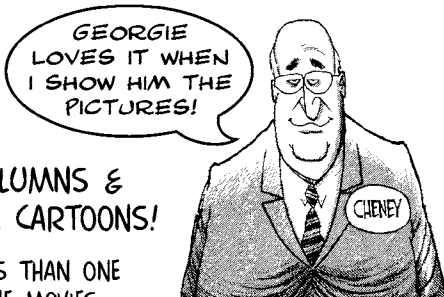
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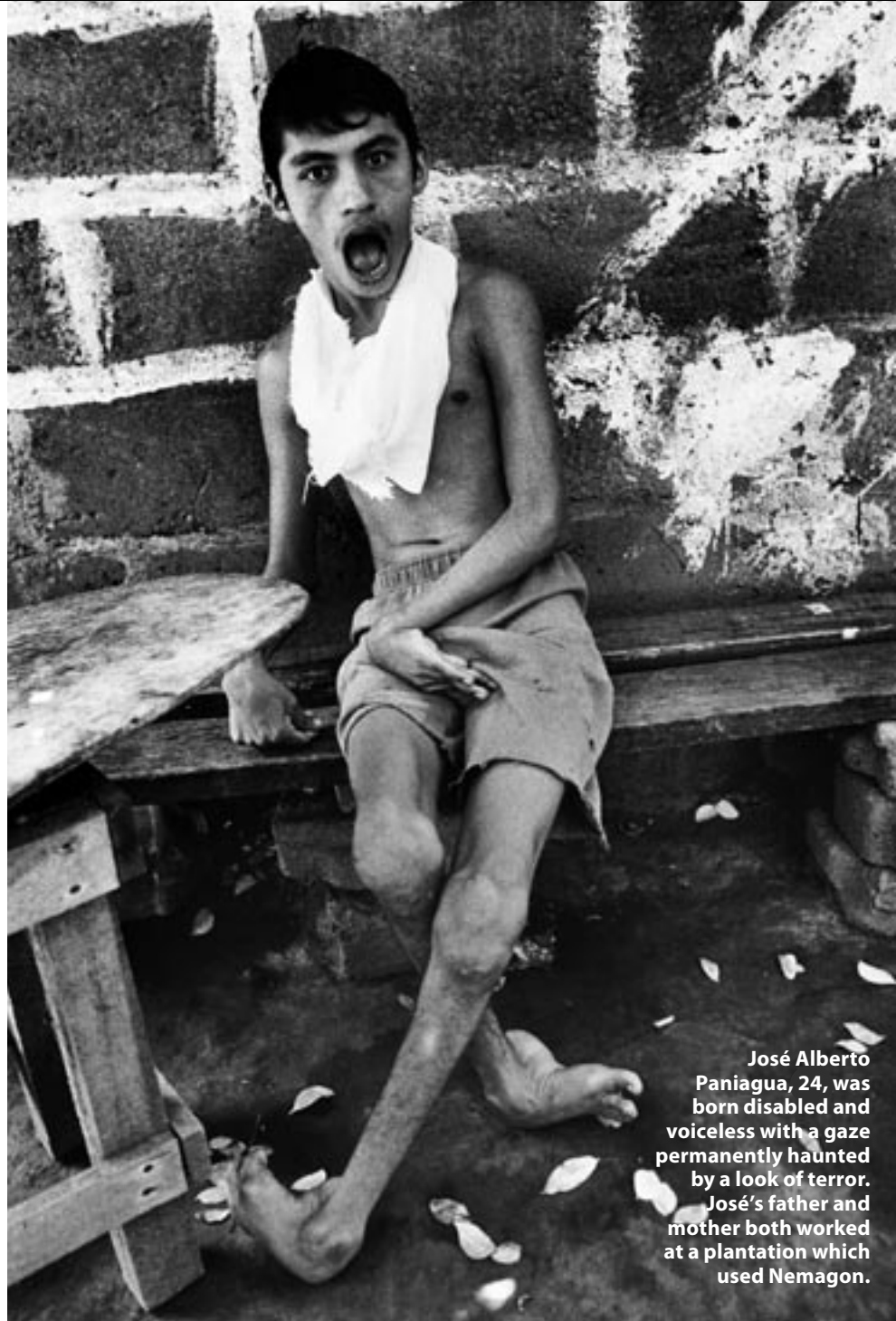
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BY NICOLAS BÉRUBÉ

# CHIQUITA'S CHILDREN

**In the '70s and '80s, the banana companies Dole, Del Monte and Chiquita used a carcinogenic pesticide, Nemagon, to protect their crops in Nicaragua. Today, the men and women who worked on those plantations suffer from incurable illnesses. Their children are deformed. The companies feign innocence.**



José Alberto Paniagua, 24, was born disabled and voiceless with a gaze permanently haunted by a look of terror. José's father and mother both worked at a plantation which used Nemagon.