

THE AFGHANISTAN WAR: Who Suffered And Who Profited

By Antonio C. Cabral

The end of the 20-year-long human tragedy that people in the U.S. and Afghanistan have endured has revived the emotional debate of April 3, 1975, when the U.S. ended the Vietnam War. This time, the defenders of the military-industrial complex (MIC) will again condemn the end of this war recklessly disregarding the financial and human losses it has caused to both countries and the warning President Eisenhower gave in his farewell speech cautioning the country about allowing the MIC to dictate public policy. Today's debate must include all the levels of our civil society, particularly the U.S. working class impacted by the health, financial and economic crises caused by the deadly COVID 19 virus, the disastrous winter freeze and the debt of \$2.26 trillion cost of the Afghanistan war.

These tragedies have exposed the long-existing social and economic abandonment of our civil society and the disregard for working-class families. They also triggered what could become a transformative consciousness of the need to change how we are governed.

The pro-MIC camp condemn the war's end claiming to be worried that the Afghan families will suffer violence under the Taliban. These are the same families that suffered bombing and killings since President George W. Bush's Operation Enduring Freedom operation begun in 2001 and continued by Barack Obama and Donald Trump resulting in over 47,000 Afghan civilians and more than 66,000 Afghan soldiers and police killed plus thousands wounded according to Brown University's Cost of War Project (Watson.brown.edu/costofwar) and the United Nations' Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) (unama.unmissions.org).

The pro-war MIC supporters also claim to be terrified that Afghan girls will be prevented from attending school. The UNAMA's report dated February 2021 states that the war prevented girls from attending school due to "...the country-wide violence and insecurity..." The report cites several incidents when the Afghan National Army (ANA) invaded schools and destroyed classrooms, killing and injuring students and others. Several investigative reports, including one from National Public Radio dated August 20, 2021, exposed the myth that ANA soldiers were willing to fight the Taliban. Most had joined only because of the pay they received from

U.S. taxpayers.

So, the obvious question is why didn't Bush, Obama and Trump or the Congress tell the truth? Why did the corporate media keep parroting statements by the MIC and Congress? Even when official reports by government officials on the ground, including John Sopko, the special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction, exposed the fact that the ANA was corrupt and unwilling to fight, they were ignored and the lies continued. Even after more than 2,000 U.S. soldiers died in direct combat, 444 humanitarian aid workers and other U.S. civilians died, their misinformation and lies continued. They also failed to inform U.S. taxpayers that the war was costing over \$2 trillion in borrowed money and that by 2050 the debt cost of interest alone would reach \$6.5 trillion according to a Forbes Magazine report.

According to the Watson institute for International and Public Affairs at Brown University, that war cost does not include the future cost that "...the U.S. government is obligated to spend on lifetime care for American veterans of this war..."

While those trillions of our tax dollars were being spent, people in the U.S. have been facing serious infections and death by the COVID-19 virus and confronting the serious deficiencies in the U.S. medical service. Infected people were lined up in ER hallways, warehouses and parking lot tents waiting to die due to the lack of medical equipment, medicines, trained staff and hospital beds. Not one single governmental entity has taken responsibility for such tragic situation.

None was held responsible either when last winter's ice storm attacked leaving thousands of families living in unhealthy units due to broken water pipes, freezing temperatures with no heat and no water to drink or use bathrooms. The gas and oil tycoons are now billing

taxpayers, through the local service agencies, for the cost of equipment that they claimed to have before the storm.

All the above data plus much more clearly point to the fact that those who govern serve not only the MIC and corporate interests but also wealthy investors who expect their stock holdings to benefit from such tragedies. For example, only the wealthy investors in the giant manufacturers benefitted tremendously from the past 20 years of war. According to a CNBC business report, General



The end of the 20-year-long Afghanistan War in 2021 has left many questions unanswered that were pointed out in protests throughout the U.S. involvement in Afghanistan.

Continued on Page 10



Gregg Barrios

"Renaissance Man"

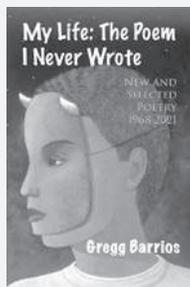


GREGG BARRIOS, a Vietnam veteran, born in Victoria, Tx was an award-winning playwright, poet and journalist. When he passed this summer, many of his exploits came to light on social media exposing him as “not only a literary giant but a renaissance man for all seasons” as Mary Ellen Riojas Clark noted. Barbará Renaud González underscored this with “He shoulda been in the movies, but then his life *was* a movie of secrets, spicy revelations, tissue-wrapped journals, photos, hidden closets and cabinets filled with famous and sometimes rubber-banded papers brimming with stories he said he wanted to write, and didn't.” Xaviera Flores remarked, “He had a way of telling stories that made you feel like you were on those same adventures with him: meeting Elvis Presley; hanging out with Andy Warhol; sitting on a film set with Jane Fonda; interviewing Selena Quintanilla, Juan Gabriel, and Tupac Shakur; standing with students at the Crystal City walkouts; or writing a space opera based on Ziggy Stardust, which would end up making its way back to David Bowie. This was, of course always over some food.”

When I last saw him, a week before his death, he was having breakfast at Taqueria Chapala alone, but busy and full of plans. As I left, he reminded me: “Saludame a Gra-



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Art by Liliana Wilson

ciela.” A week later, he was gone.

This prolific writer and cultural warrior, left a legacy of literature including plays like Rancho Pancho, I-DJ and A Ship of Fools. Among his many awards were: a CTG-Mark Taper Fellowship, a Ford Foundation Grant and an Artist Foundation Grant for his theater work. He was a 2013 USC Annenberg Getty Fellow and served on the board of the National Book Critics Circle. His work appeared in The New York Times, the Texas Monthly, the Film Quarterly and more. A former book editor of the San Antonio Express-News, he was inducted into the Texas Institute of Letters this year. A 2017 Harvard Fellow and a 2018 Yale NEH Fellow, he is the author of a new book, “My Life is the Poem I Never Wrote: Selected Poetry.”

Gregg Barrios' life was poetry and his contributions to the Chicano and LGBTQ communities will endure. Scheduled to be the grand honoree of Gemini Ink's 2021 Inkstravaganza, he will be celebrated posthumously on October 15 and 16 (bit.ly/honor-gregg). The Esperanza Peace and Justice Center staff, board and Buena Gente express our sympathies to his familia, friends and the artistic community.

Gregg Barrios, rest in peace and power!

The Afghanistan War

Continued from Page 10

Dynamics' one year profits in 2017 was \$31 billion from sales of its M1 Abrams tank for that war; Lockheed Martin, the world's top weapons manufacturer, made \$44.9 billion that same year. The list of manufacturers of war weapons who benefited can be summarized by looking at the Department of Defense budgets over the past 20 years of war: In 2001 it was \$305 billion and since the Afghanistan war, it was surged to \$704 billion. So, as the Intercept Report described it (theintercept.com), the Afghanistan War was “an extraordinary success” for U.S. war manufacturers.

That is the reality of the abandonment of U.S. working families by those who govern. The U.S. civil society know it and feel it and their conscience keeps reminding them of its cruelty. The open question is what is to be done to change this situation. Even more important: What will the poor and all the U.S. working class do to help in the much-needed transformation of the country from one of endless immoral wars to one of peace and respect towards all people of Mother Earth and for domestic justice and prosperity.

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La guerra de afganistán

Continued from Page 11

ses corporativos, sino también a los inversionistas ricos que esperan que sus acciones de inversiones aumenten de valor durante estas tragedias humanas. Por ejemplo, los inversionistas ricos en las corporaciones gigantes se beneficiaron enormemente de los últimos 20 años de guerra. Según un informe comercial de CNBC, las ganancias de un año de General Dynamics en 2017 fue \$31 billones de dólares de las ventas de su tanque M1 Abrams para esa guerra; Lockheed Martin, el principal fabricante de armas del mundo, tuvo \$44.9 billones de plusvalía ese mismo año. La lista de fabricantes de armas de guerra que se beneficiaron se puede resumir mirando los presupuestos del Departamento de Defensa en los últimos 20 años de guerra: En 2001 fue de \$305 mil millones y desde la guerra de Afganistán aumento a \$704 mil millones. Por lo tanto, como lo describió el Informe Intercept (theintercept.com), la Guerra de Afganistán fue “un éxito extraordinario” para los fabricantes de guerra Estadounidenses.

Esa es la realidad del abandono de las familias trabajadoras Estadounidenses por parte de quienes gobiernan. La sociedad civil Estadounidense lo sabe y lo siente y su conciencia les sigue recordando esa crueldad. La cuestión abierta es ¿Qué Hacer? ¿Cómo cambiar esta situación?. Aún más importante: ¿Qué harán los pobres y toda la clase trabajadora de Estados Unidos para ayudar en la tan necesaria transformación del país de uno de guerras inmorales interminables y transformarlo a un país de paz y respeto hacia todas las personas en la Madre Tierra y por la justicia y la prosperidad domésticas?

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