

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO OUR FEATURED SPEAKERS

In order of scheduled appearance

The Rainbow ReSisters radical cheerleading troupe hail from Carrboro and Durham, North Carolina. They are a group of energetic, progressive, loud, dancing women who use satire and spirit to engage crowds and bring attention to important social justice issues like ending the war on Iraq, stopping the war on Iran, free use of public space, queer rights, and protecting the environment. The ReSisters have cheered at peace and justice events in Carrboro, Chapel Hill, Durham, Raleigh, Fayetteville, Atlanta, and Washington DC. Now they bring their commitment to ending torture and rendition to Smithfield!

Hip-Hop Education, Inc. is a grass root; non-profit organization that “Empowers Youth Thru Music” ages 3 to 19 years. HHE was founded by a brother and sister team in June of 2004 and incorporated in December 2005. Ben and Sabrina Wiggins are dedicated to providing our youth with the necessary tools to reinforce their learning abilities to survive in this world by using music.

Linda S. Barnes is a founding member of NC Stop Torture Now. Beginning in the fall of 2005, she began lobbying for human rights issues for Amnesty International and became active with efforts in North Carolina to halt the government's practice of extraordinary renditions. Prior to the invasion of Iraq, Linda was not an activist or even very involved in political issues at all. Now, in addition to NCSTN, she is a member of Blackwater Watch, a board member for NC Peace Action, and a member of the Grassroots Impeachment Movement (GRIM). A twenty year resident of Wake County, Linda is also an active volunteer through membership in Altrusa International and participates in various community service projects. She holds masters degrees in Public Administration and Education, and currently teaches at Vance Granville Community College. Widowed since 1994, Linda is also an overly proud mother of two fantastic young people.

Jerry King is a member of the Center for Theology and Social Analysis, St. Louis, Mo., and a co-founder of the national group, Stop Torture Now! He is also a housing developer in St. Louis, married 40 years and father of 6. He feels deeply privileged to have known prophets and saints in the local peace and justice community, and to still be among them. King was instrumental in organizing the November 2005 protest at Aero Contractors, helped deliver the citizen's indictments to local government officials and played a key supporting role by bailing the activists out of jail.

Andrew Wimmer is a member of the Center for Theology and Social Analysis, St. Louis, Mo., and a co-founder of the national group, Stop Torture Now! He lives in a St. Louis neighborhood with his wife, Carol, and their two sons, David and Karl. At St. Louis University he is director of academic and research technology and also an adjunct in the department of theological studies. Wimmer was arrested during the November 2005 action at Aero Contractors.

Jerry Surh is a Member of NC Stop Torture Now, and was among the 14 protestors arrested delivering a citizen's indictment to Aero Contractors' headquarters in November 2005. Jerry was educated in the Los Angeles public schools and graduated from Columbus High, Columbus

Georgia. He earned his Master's and doctorate in Modern European History from University of California at Berkeley and has been a professor of history at NC State since 1982. He is also a member of the NC Green Party and has been involved with progressive and anti-war causes since 1965.

Moira O'Neill is 13 years old and in the 8th grade at Exploris Middle School in Raleigh and has been active in working for peace and justice all her life. She was arrested, along with her father, Patrick, and other NCSTN activists at the Johnston County Airport, April 9. Moira is a member of the Fr. Charlie Mulholland Catholic Worker House in Garner. She is actively involved in the peace and justice movement and most recently used her creative talents to help create a children's activity for the Peace Booth at the NC State Fair, where she works each year. She has also demonstrated against war at the Pentagon, the White House, the State Dept., the US Army School of the Americas, Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, and at the Fayetteville Peace Rallies, as well as against the death penalty at Central Prison in Raleigh. Moira works every year at the Peace Booth at the NC State Fair.

Ellen Biesack is a senior at Enloe High School and has been involved in activism throughout her life. She was among 9 activists, including one juvenile, arrested trying to deliver a citizens' arrest to Aero Contractors on April 9, 2007. She has attended the Pilgrimage for Peace and Justice, the School of the Americas protest and the Fayetteville Peace March and Rally several times and works to abolish the death penalty in North Carolina. This past summer, Ellen visited Nicaragua to learn about human rights abuses in Central America with Witness for Peace, and has shared what she learned through personal testimony and persuasive written accounts in local media.

Beth Brockman, from Durham, NC, is the mother of two children, ages 11 and 6. She participates in two church communities, both in Durham, First Presbyterian Church and Immaculate Conception Catholic Church. She is active in movements on various local and international human rights issues--including the abolition of the death penalty, nuclear weapons, war, and torture.

Azadeh Shahshahani currently serves with the ACLU of Georgia as Interim Legal Director. Previously, she was with the ACLU of North Carolina as Muslim/Middle Eastern Community Outreach Coordinator. In this capacity, she initiated a statewide campaign against racial profiling; coordinated a Continuing Legal Education seminar to train attorneys to represent Muslim and Middle Eastern clients facing civil liberties violations; and participated in a statewide campaign calling for the investigation of Aero Contractors.

Art Eccleston is a psychologist working in the Triangle area. As a member of the American Psychological Association, he has been an outspoken opponent of that organization's unconscionable support for psychologists' role in facilitating the interrogation of detainees using techniques the International Red Cross and other human rights groups have described as "tantamount to torture."

Other professions have rejected this evil alliance. The American Psychiatric Association and the American Medical Association have both prohibited their members from participating in these interrogations.

Shamefully, the American Psychological Association has thwarted members' urging a moratorium on psychologists' participation in such interrogations.

For more than a year, Art has been among a tight circle of dissidents insisting the American Psychological Association clean up its act. He and his colleagues have withheld their membership dues, and urged the organization to embrace its key ethical directive: "Do no harm."

Instead, the Association lowered the bar and effectively winks at those who wriggle over it – elevated to ugly transgressions by a pole bent in blind loyalty rather than thoughtful conscience.

In light of the Association's endorsement of situational professional ethics, Harper's magazine asked us Americans to consider how to “... cope with a profession ... beset with such severe moral rot.”

Art is not giving up. He and a dedicated cadre of colleagues are struggling to get their professional community to raise a voice against complicity and facilitation of torture.

Scott Bass, a native and lifelong resident of eastern North Carolina, lives in Raleigh with his wife, Roberta Mothershead. He and Roberta co-founded Nazareth House, a Catholic Worker-styled Christian community devoted to Jesus' teachings and example as a way of life based in Community, Hospitality, Prayer & Action, Simplicity, Nonviolence & Peacemaking. Scott has worked in a variety of settings as a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in private practice and as an ordained Baptist minister. He served two years as interim pastor for nearby Sharon Baptist Church in Smithfield. Scott participated in the nonviolent direct action at Aero Contractors in April.

Sgt. Jimmy Massey served in the US Marines for twelve years. He was trained as an infantryman and stationed at Parris Island as an infantry instructor for three years before he was transferred to work as a recruiter.

Later, Massey was deployed to Iraq as a Staff Sergeant in command of more than 35 men.

During his tour of duty in Iraq he and his troop killed approximately 30 unarmed civilians, including children. Staff Sergeant Massey was unable to reconcile his training, US rhetoric regarding the “liberation of Iraq,” and traditional American values with the orders he was given in Iraq. He refused to continue killing and asked to be seen by a psychologist who returned him immediately stateside for treatment, where he was diagnosed suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and, ultimately, granted an honorable discharge.

Massey was among the first US Marines to report widespread human rights abuses in Iraq. He was the first to talk about the deaths of civilians at checkpoints, the detention of uncharged, untried Iraqi civilians, and to voice concern over the conditions under which US soldiers were being forced to serve in Iraq. Jimmy Massey, a member of Iraq Veterans Against the War, is active in the pro-soldier, antiwar movement.