

A Counter-Narrative Challenges the Official 9/11 Story

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Theme: [Terrorism](#)

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When the whole media system is presenting an official narrative, as most were this past weekend in reporting on the official commemorations of the tenth anniversary of the tragic events of 9/11, it is almost impossible for alternative perspectives and critical ideas to be seen and heard.

The sheer weight of the events seemed to have mandated media memorialization and mourning to honor the dead and allow their families to feel the love and solidarity of the American people.

While this may be reassuring and reinforcing to those in pain, a predictable ceremonial approach and tribute keeps the society of deeper reflections and lessons that might help us avoid more attacks.

That an estimated 80 members of the US military came under attack in Afghanistan was a strong signal that the forces and wars set in motion after 9/11 are not over by a long shot. The Americans who grieved this weekend did not shed any tears for the victims of the drones and bombs that have taken so many lives in many countries—not just the ones we invaded.

Underreported, if barely noticed in the media this past weekend, were three events that I covered that offered oppositional voices.

To its credit, Pacifica Radio devoted hours of programming on Sunday night to a consideration of various conspiracy theories and dissenting views. The shows did not take sides; they featured debates about the details of claims of government complicity and suppressed information. There were actually serious discussions and rebuttals, the first such measured and calm presentation that I have heard to date in progressive media.

On Friday night, the survivors of the Attica prison Rebellion of September 9-13 1971 marked their 40 anniversary with survivors retelling their story of the uprising and the fight for justice for millions of Americans behind bars, many serving long sentences in oppressive environments. They packed the Riverside Church where Martin Luther King gave his famous speech condemning the War in Vietnam, a year and a day before he died.

Their September struggle raised important questions about the persistence of racism and the reality of human rights in America as well as charges of state terrorism against minorities and the poor under police state conditions.

TV anchor Amy Goodman reminded the audiences of other 911s that have been all but forgotten including the US backed coup against Allende on September 11, 1973, as well as the fatal beating of South African liberation leader Steve Biko who was tortured on September 11th 1977 by the US backed apartheid regime. He died on September 12th.

On Saturday night, I dropped in a Libertarian event called Liberty Fest at the Club Amnesia. It was crowded with supporters of Ron Paul. I was struck by speakers who angrily denounced the wars and spoke movingly of their opposition to the atrocities committed in our names.

These self-styled patriot-conservatives sounded like anti-war activists on the left, and offered a real counterpoint to the flag waving at Ground Zero.

On Sunday, while the cameras were all pointed at the President and the politicians at Ground Zero, up at the Library at Lincoln Center, an organization called Civ World sponsored a forum and event called Interdependence 2011: New York.

Led by Political philosopher and Demos Fellow Benjamin Barber they were crafting a 911-coujter narrative preaching the importance of cooperation, solidarity and interaction with the rest of the world as opposed to the Bush Doctrine stressing unilateralism and US exceptionally,

“The choice between terrorism and violence and anti-terrorism and violence is a false choice,” declared Barber in his opening remarks. “You will never deliver peace with war.”

I have covered and participated in several interdependence events in the past, in Paris, Rome and Morocco. All featured a high level of discourse by prominent public intellectuals, scholars and journalists. While many were covered in other countries, they were mostly ignored in the nation they most wanted to influence.

That was also true of Sundays panels that featured prominent speakers including Former Maryland Lt Governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, David Steiner former New York State Commissioner of Education, Howard Dean, Former Governor and Democratic Party official, Princeton Professor Cornell West, Khalil Gibran Muhammad, the new head off Harlem’s Library for Black Culture, TV personality Laura Flanders and TV host Tavis Smiley. Smiley recorded a live panel discussion at the event for NPR and interviewed Barber last week for his TV show.

The ideas were provocative and the analysis was deep calling for new ways of thinking, a new approach to foreign policy, bottom-up organizing in America and the pros and cons of Barack Obama’s leadership and lack of it.

Many of these were the ideas and issues that a more democratic media would highlight. If we lived in Europe, these events would have been covered. But here in the US of A, it was media business as usual—genuflecting the view of the powerful, sympathizing with the victims, but never debating how things might be different. Events like these were considered a sideshow unworthy of attention.

What these events stressed is that real change has to become the business of citizens and people’s organizations, not official bodies and antiseptic media.

If you are interested in taking part, there is another day of panel and events Monday at the 3LD Art and Technology Center at 80 Greenwich Street (Rector Street on the #1 train) near

Ground Zero,

There will be artists, informal discussions and panels with Tavis Smiley, Josh Fox, the newly Emmy Award Winning Director of Gasland, James Early and representatives from youth movements around the world.

For more information, visit, <http://www.interdependenceMovement.org>.

If you are as tired of the exploitation of 911 as I am, consider checking out this emerging interdependence movement online or in person. The future is still ours to shape, we must always hope.

As everyone knows action speaks louder than words, and I say that as professional wordsmith. Word!

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