

THE AUDACITY OF HOPE ?

By Joan Cavanagh
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After all the U.S. wars members of the Connecticut Peace Coalition/New Haven have protested, perhaps we've heard every throwaway line ever coined by passersby who objected to our message. But the cry of the young African American man who, on a recent Sunday, drove by our vigil and shouted, "You all should have done this when Bush was in office!" was different.

He obviously isn't a frequent traveler through New Haven, or he would have known that we've been at that particular location every Sunday since the *Clinton* administration. Did he think that we were picking on the nation's first African American President, who had merely inherited his predecessors' policies?

The man didn't stop to talk. We could have then perhaps had a conversation, beginning with the fact that the President doesn't make U.S. foreign policy. He (thus far) merely puts the particular face on it that is needed by the war-makers and war profiteers at a given point and for a given war.

President Obama's decision to escalate the war in Afghanistan is no surprise. As a candidate, he said that was what he would do. Many seasoned activists held a tiny flicker of hope that he was just saying it to be elected and would display the stunning moral courage to refuse to do it when the time came. The disappointment that followed—for us—was as small as the hope had been.

But what of the young people, African American and of all ethnicities—born or raised in the Bush era—who believed wholeheartedly in this candidate, who took from him a sincere message of hope against all-pervasive violence and dreamed that he would act on the ideals he articulated?

Instead of a Quixotic attempt to end the long entrenched current wars, what these young folks got was Obama's appalling Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, in which they were told, among other things, that war would never be eradicated in their lifetimes. The defeatism and the cynicism of such a statement from an articulate leader, the nation's first African American President, are not lost on these young people, who live with the audacity—and scarcity—of hope.

Please join our ongoing vigil for peace and justice at Broadway, Park and Elm Streets, in New Haven, 12-1 p.m., every Sunday. We need you! More importantly, so do they.

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