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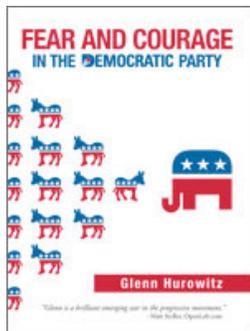
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War on Iraq

Iraq's Insurgents Are Ordinary People

By [Emily Wilson](#), [AlterNet](#). Posted **January 11, 2008**.

A new film delves inside Iraqis' reasons for getting involved in the violent resistance movement.

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Molly Bingham says the information most people in America are getting about the insurgents who oppose the U.S. backed occupation of Iraq is very different from what she found when she talked with those insurgents.

"There are two impressions we seem to have here," Bingham said. "The first one is the majority of violence is against civilians, and they are on the brink of a huge civil war, and the Sunnis and Shias hate each other, and the Americans are standing between these two groups that are just going to kill each other. The next one is that the people fighting against us are some radical fringe group who can be isolated and killed."

After 10 months of interviewing insurgents, Bingham, an American photojournalist, and Steve Connors, a British photojournalist and former soldier, found that these impressions aren't true. The insurgency is mostly ordinary Iraqis. Doing the interviews for their documentary *Meeting Resistance*, Bingham says they tried to approach the subject with no preconceptions.

"We've both been conflict journalists for our careers," she said. "We didn't go in with any sense of what we were going to find. If we'd found this is Al Qaeda and teenage thugs, that's what film would be about. We weren't trying to prove anything -- that's who they are."

What Connors and Bingham discovered has been corroborated by Department of Defense reports, which found that over 70 percent of the attacks in Iraq from 2004 to 2007 targeted U.S.-led coalition forces, and by BBC/ABC polls, which said all the Iraqis polled disapprove of attacks on civilians, but the majority approve of attacks on the U.S. troops.

"What the U.S. is facing in Iraq is highly nationalistic," Connors said. "It's not an issue of outside forces coming in to try and screw up an American project."

Bingham and Connors came up with the idea for *Meeting Resistance* while they were working in Baghdad as freelance photojournalists in 2003. There were some small-scale attacks against the coalition forces, and Bingham and Connors wanted to know who was behind them. Originally they planned to travel around the country for three weeks, interviewing Iraqis who were fighting against the Americans, and then spend three weeks interviewing people in the American

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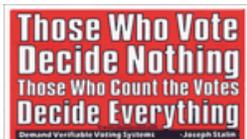
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military to find out who they thought was attacking them.

That plan changed when Bingham, while working on a story about the last place Saddam Hussein had been seen, got into a conversation with a man in his late 40s who told her translator he was in the resistance. When Connors and Bingham decided to make the movie, they went looking for him. That man, who agreed to be interviewed and tell his story, is identified in the film as "The Teacher." While talking with him, they met another character in the movie, "The Traveler." Meeting these two took them quickly inside the story of who the anti-Americans were and the filmmakers ended up spending 10 months, mostly in the Adhamiyah neighborhood of Baghdad, hanging out in tea shops and looking for people willing to talk.

Bingham and Connors interviewed 45 people over that time, six of them multiple times. There are eight people in the film, identified by generic titles ("The Wife," "The Iman," etc.). Their faces are obscured or are shown off camera so we only see their hands holding burning cigarettes, cups of tea or prayer beads. An exception is "The Professor," a lecturer in political science at Baghdad University, who is shown sitting at a desk in front of a map of the world, talking about resistance movements.

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Emily Wilson is a freelance writer and teaches basic skills at City College of San Francisco.

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And anyway, they're not

Posted by: [ankhet](#) on Jan 11, 2008 2:47 AM
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insurgents. That would mean they are engaged in an uprising against an established ruling class or ruler. What they are is resisters against an illegal war, a foreign occupation. Applying the term, insurgents, framed the beleaguered Iraki people as warmongering criminals, or at least as ungrateful for all the lovely things the invaders are doing for them.

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» **RE: And anyway, they're not-->yes they are** Posted by: El Hombre Malo

» **RE: And anyway, they're not --- Right on.** Posted by: symcokid

» **RE: And anyway, they're not** Posted by: carbon-based

» **RE: And anyway, they're not** Posted by: donl51

Lessons in History

Posted by: El Hombre Malo on Jan 11, 2008 2:58 AM

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Current rating: 4 [1 = poor; 5 = excellent]

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This year marks the 200th anniversary of Madrid uprising against napoleonic occupation troops. This revolt would latter be called the Independence War (Peninsular War for the british) and many scholars say spanish identity as a nation was very much defined by it. It was also the year the word *guerrilla* entered the english language.

The french represented modernity and separation of church and state. Many at that time, like Goya or Beethoven, embraced french ideals and saw Napoleon as the harbinger of a new age of enligement while Spain was stuck in a failed absolutist regime after the treaty of Utrecht roughly a centruy before. Spain had much to gain from french rule.

And still, Madrid population revolted, and the whole country followed soon. While the french stated their intention was to free the Spaniards from absolutism and ignorance, the populace's battle cry was "*iVivan las Cadenas!*" (Long live the chains). And as the french repression grew harder, so did the resolution of the insurgent to remain subjects of an absolutist rule.

In the end, the french were defeated and had to leave, but so did many spaniards whose only crime was to believe in modernity and liberty. The [spanish liberal constitution](#) was overturned as the "chains" came back in the form of Fernando VII, arguably the worst king in the history of Spain. Everything that looked like freedom was deemed by many as *afrancesado* ("french-ish"). This would lead to staunch, violent defenses of the *status quo* whenever any change was proposed. Spain's many civil wars and Franco's dictatorship were directly descendants of the aversion to liberalism the French occupation injected into part of the population. This created a momentum that the church used against change from then on. In some way, Spanish independence War really ended in 1978 with the promulgation of the present constitution, 170 years after Madrid revolted.

Every change, every step toward freedom, took longer and meant a much harder struggle than in other countries. And that because a foreign military power tried to impose those same changes.

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» **RE: Lessons in History** Posted by: VannaLaRoche

» **RE: Lessons in History the US refuses to learn** Posted by: fearn

» **RE: Lessons in History the US refuses to learn ----AMEN!** Posted by: symcokid

This is completely off-message! Didn't you get the memo?

Posted by: thoughtcriminal on Jan 11, 2008 10:08 AM

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Current rating: 5 [1 = poor; 5 = excellent]

Your rating: 4

No, no, no - You see, the Iraqis are actually very simple people, just out of the Stone Age, and really completely incapable of dealing with the modern world on their own.

Nefarious external forces have infected the minds of these simple people and have filled their heads with their evil, Islamofascist rhetoric.

However, brave Sunni Awakening warriors from within the Iraqi people themselves have risen up to cast out the evil foreign influences of Iran and Al Qaeda.

Once the insurgency is crushed, the pathway will open for massive foreign investment in Iraqi - which will benefit the Iraqi people just as it has benefited the people of Argentina and Russia and South Africa and Mexico and Indonesia.

The wise guiding hand of U.S. and British and French oil corporations will set the pace of Iraqi development - and that's better than the Russians or the Chinese being in control, isn't it? What do you mean, where are the permanent Chinese and Russian military bases in the region?

Look at the record of past successes: Nigeria, Chad, Ecuador, Colombia, Burma, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran - and now Iraq. Forget about "smoking the peace pipe" - now we put in "peace pipelines." OIL development always brings peace and prosperity to those lucky countries with big oil reserves.

Furthermore, Iraq desperately needs to earn foreign capital in order to pay off its debts and finance new infrastructure, which was largely destroyed during the invasion. The reconstruction contracts never seemed to work out too well - schools, electricity, water, health care, etc. - for various technical reasons

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However, the insurgency is stalling the flow of foreign investment capital into the country.

Getting back to the talking points, it's not an insurgency, it's the nefarious foreign influence of Iran and Al Qaeda.

It is never to be referred to as "armed local resistance to occupation by Western oil interests, private security forces, and the U.S military" - and never, ever mention the Iraqi oil and electricity unions, either, the way this story did back in June:

[Iraqis to U.S. Congress: Back off oil law 10 June 2007 \(UPI\)](#)

"Faleh Abood Umara, general secretary of the Iraq Federation of Oil Unions, and Hashmeya Muhsin Hussein, president of the Electrical Utility Workers Union, called the proposed [hydrocarbon] law a theft of Iraq's oil. . .

"We believe this is a new invasion of our economy and especially to take over our oil fields," Umara told Rep. Dennis Kucinich, D-Ohio, in a private meeting Thursday in the congressman's inner office. . .

. . . Umara was one of 10 union leaders for whom arrest warrants were issued earlier this week as Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki responded to a strike of oil workers, who are demanding improved working conditions and a seat at the oil law negotiating table. . .

. . . "Mr. Kucinich, we see you as a friend of the Iraqi people and that is the general belief over there," Umara said. "We would hope that your government could put pressure on our government to not pass the oil law."

Kucinich replied, "Unfortunately our government is putting pressure on your government to pass it."

That's all. And don't draw any connections between support for the insurgency, and attempts to privatize the oil or to keep permanent military bases in Iraq. Evil foreign influences are at fault, our intentions are purely charitable - we're giving the Iraqi the gift of a democratic free-market society, because we care. Okay?

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[» RE: This is completely off-message! Didn't you get the memo?](#) Posted by: symcokid

This is an excellent film

Posted by: dikjosef on Jan 11, 2008 11:26 AM

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Current rating: **5** [1 = poor; 5 = excellent]

Your rating: **5**

I saw it very early on at a "testing the waters" screening here in a college town in central missouri. It was excellent... very well made, with many risks that were taken on the part of the filmmakers to show a side of the story that virtually no one was seeing overseas. The filmmakers are very great people and fascinating to talk to, and have a lot to teach us. If you get a chance to meet them at a screening, be sure to chat it up, you will come away inspired. The film actually gave me the inspiration to do a project on how organized nonviolent resistance has been repressed and subverted by our government in both afghanistan and iraq, and how this leads people to take up arms as their family members suffer indignities, disappearance, and death.

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Established? or Legitimate?

Posted by: brianct on Jan 11, 2008 5:46 PM

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Current rating: **Not yet rated** [1 = poor; 5 = excellent]

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The problem with that definition 'established' is it is too vague. Remeber that Bush himself said that elections conducted in Lebanon while Syria was occupying the coubtry would noit be legitimate. 'One of Bush spokespersons declared "How fair an election can Lebanon hold if the troops are there to intimidate voters, people running for election, or people now in office?" ' <http://www.counterpunch.org/smith03232005.html>

So, no The iraqis are not an 'insurgency' as there is no legitimate govt, and there cant be while the country is under foreign occupation.

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Scot

Posted by: davy on Jan 12, 2008 12:59 AM

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Current rating: **Not yet rated** [1 = poor; 5 = excellent]

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Seems to me they are just defending their land against imperialism. As a Scot I can safely say that every "ordinary" man and woman here would be doing the same. Sure we got problems but we certainly don't need the soldiers for "big business" to "help" us out. "America, respect for you has been lost. Time

to oust the criminals and bring a bit of kindness, then we'll talk again.

" Oh would some god the giftie gie us, to see ourselves as others see us" This from Robbie Burns is what I wish for you.

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A difficult task, to keep the faith against horrendous odds

Posted by: chief of okeefe on Jan 12, 2008 5:24 PM

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To have to fight to liberate your country from occupation by the most powerful and technologically advanced military in all human history, that is a truly awesome task.

McCain said the occupation will go on 100 years. I think that gradually the resistance will be beat down under the overwhelming military might. And so the US soldiers can finally and freely settle down to the usual routine of subjugation and humiliation of the natives, turning their daughters into whores.

But the hearts of the people will never change. They will then patiently and peacefully wait on the day of deliverance, playing the old "step-n-fetchit" line for the white massa. Anything to avoid the destruction and killing and torture the overlords will visit on any natives that stick up their necks. Just as blacks had to wait 400 years under the white man's boot. And so, on that day in 2108, when the occupation troops leave, the peoples of Iraq can finally join together, no longer played off one against one another in a "civil war", and celebrate the common joy of finally getting their country back from bonds of the racist/fascist occupiers.

On that happy day, there will finally be the flowers in the streets that the monster Cheney had predicted. I just hope some US news cameras are rolling on that day. I guess that Fox will not be filming...

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