

• • • • • breaking the sound barrier
A shining light goes out in Africa

By Amy Goodman

The world has lost another journalist, one who was taking the necessary risks to get at the heart of the complex and often ignored story of Africa.

On May 5, Anthony Mitchell died in the crash of Kenyan Airways Flight 507, which killed all 114 people on board. Based in Nairobi, he was an Associated Press reporter who had recently broken a story on secret prisons in Ethiopia and the U.S. involvement in the detention and interrogation of prisoners there.

Most people in this country know of Somalia as the setting for the feature film *Black Hawk Down*. This film depicted the failed 1993 U.S. military assault on Mogadishu. Eighteen U.S. soldiers died. Less well-known, more than 1,000 Somalis also were killed. Somalia, which had been mostly ignored by the U.S. media, was briefly in the news as the U.S.-backed Ethiopian military overthrew the Islamic Courts Union, which had been controlling most of Somalia.

Mitchell's exposé detailed the fate of some of the hundreds of thousands of refugees. They were fleeing war, but to the United States, they were possible al-Qaeda operatives who had found a safe haven in Somalia. According to Mitchell, dozens of refugees were "transferred secretly and illegally in recent months from Kenya and Somalia to Ethiopia, where they are kept without charge or access to lawyers and families."

In his groundbreaking report, Mitchell wrote, "CIA and FBI agents hunting for al-Qaida militants in the Horn of Africa have been interrogating terrorism suspects from 19 countries held at secret prisons in Ethiopia, which is



Amy Goodman

notorious for torture and abuse."

The U.S. State Department documented Ethiopia's use of torture, and the FBI admitted to Mitchell that it was interrogating prisoners there.

Several prisoners have since been released, including 17-year-old Safia Benaouda, a Swedish citizen. She was the first to report that uniformed U.S. military personnel arrested her and directed the Kenyan soldiers who took her captive. Amir Mohamed Meshal is also being held there. The 24-year-old U.S. citizen is from Tinton Falls, NJ. His family's lawyer, Jonathan Hafetz, of the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University's School of Law, told me: "The U.S. admits that the FBI has interrogated him. The Red Cross and family have been denied access. We can't get a lawyer to see him because we don't know where he's being held. It has been over two months, with no charge. We are calling for congressional hearings."

Salim Lone, a columnist with the *Daily Nation* in Kenya, knows about terrorism. He was the UN spokesman in Iraq when the UN compound there was bombed in 2003. After the United States launched air strikes against So-

malia last January, Lone told me, "The world does want to help the [United States] end terror, but the way the [United States] repeatedly is doing it, from Iraq and Afghanistan to now in Somalia, this will increase the amount of terrorism that exists in the world."

Make no mistake about it, the Horn of Africa is in the cross hairs of the United States. There is oil in Sudan, Somalia, and Ethiopia. *The New York Times* reported that after the U.S.-backed Ethiopian invasion of Somalia, the United States allowed Ethiopia to buy arms from North Korea even though the United States had just won tough UN sanctions against North Korea.

The Pentagon recently announced the formation of Africom, the "new unified, combatant command" for Africa. Columnist Salim Lone's response? "It's the last thing Africa needs. It's going to militarize Africa; it's going to inflame conflict. There is so much anger against the United States, especially if it's in the Horn of Africa, which is primarily Muslim."

Marc Lacey covered Africa for *The New York Times* from 2001 to 2006. He said, "Africa correspondents spend a lot of time in the air, often on old planes. I think crashes are in the back of every reporter's mind. Anthony Mitchell was a fearless reporter. He understood the complexity of the continent and cared."

Our exchange with Africa must involve more than oil, guns, and secret prisons. Once people know, they care. Shining a light, journalists provide a bridge of understanding. We need more coverage of Africa, from African journalists and from reporters like Mitchell. ☹

Amy Goodman is the host of Democracy Now!, a daily international TV/radio news hour.

Plant Justice, Reap Peace!
 WOMANSWORK GLOVES, HATS, T-SHIRTS, BANDANAS, AND MORE!
 PLUS, SEEDS FROM RENEE'S GARDEN

peace justice store

Open Seven Days • 863-8326 • 21 Church Street, Burlington

CROW BOOKSHOP

"Books give not wisdom where none was before. But where some is, there reading makes it more."
 —John Harington (1561-1612)

14 CHURCH ST. BURLINGTON, VT

MAKE YOUR HOME MORE COMFORTABLE AND UP TO 30% MORE ENERGY EFFICIENT.

Efficiency Vermont promotes Home Performance with ENERGY STAR, a whole-house diagnostic testing service that can help Vermonters:

- Solve health and safety issues
- Increase comfort and durability of your home
- Improve indoor air quality
- Lower energy bills through quality installations

For a list of certified contractors or to become a certified contractor, visit our website: www.encyvermont.com.

HOME PERFORMANCE WITH ENERGY STAR

Efficiency Vermont

WHO WE ARE	HOW TO REACH US	miSCELLANY
<p>Editor & Publisher: Shay Totten Contributing Writer: Christian Avard Associate Editor: Dian Mueller Sales: Christian Avard, Paul Fleckenstein, Charmaine Kinton Calendar Editor: Dian Mueller</p> <p>Contributors: Doug Beekman, Berke Breathed, Peter Burns, Mary Fratini, Jen Gilbert, Bill Griffith, Sonja Hakala, John Howland, Jr., Albert Huebner, Ted Kooser, Alan Lewis, Joe Milliken, Mohammed Omer, Dan Perkins, Terri Schlichenmeyer, Joel Senesac, Norman Solomon, Rob Williams, Jerry Weinberg, Scott Wheeler</p> <p>Photographers: Jessica K. Kell, David Shaw Member: New England Press Association, Vermont Press Association, Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility</p> <p>www.vermontguardian.com</p>	<p>Northern Vermont P.O. Box 335 Winooski, VT 05404 Phone: (802) 861-4880 Fax: (802) 861-6388 Toll Free: (877) 231-5382</p> <p>Southern Vermont 139 Main Street, Suite 603 Brattleboro, VT 05301 Phone: (802) 246-5677 Fax: (802) 246-5676</p> <p>Advertising: sales@vermontguardian.com</p> <p>Calendar: listings@vermontguardian.com</p> <p>Classifieds: classifieds@vermontguardian.com</p> <p>Information: info@vermontguardian.com</p> <p>News: editorial@vermontguardian.com</p> <p>Subscriptions: subscribe@vermontguardian.com</p>	<p>Vermont Guardian is published daily online by Vermont Guardian Media at 130 West Canal Street, Suite 15, Winooski, VT 05404.</p> <p>Subscriptions 6-month online subscriptions are available for \$19.95. 1-year online subscriptions are available for \$34.95. Log onto www.vermontguardian.com with your VISA or MasterCard, or mail your check or money order to "Subscriptions" at P.O. Box 335, Winooski, VT 05404. For Classifieds/Personals or display advertising, please call 877-231-5382. <i>Vermont Guardian</i> shall not be held liable to any advertiser for any loss that results from the incorrect publication of its advertisement. If a mistake is ours, and the advertising purpose has been rendered valueless, <i>Vermont Guardian</i> may cancel the charges for the advertisement, or a portion thereof as deemed reasonable by the publisher. <i>Vermont Guardian</i> reserves the right to refuse any advertising, including inserts, at the discretion of the publishers.</p> <p>©Vermont Guardian Media, Inc. All rights reserved.</p>

On the media horizon: We invest, you decide

By Norman Solomon

Predictably, some critics have decried the current efforts by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. to buy the Dow Jones company, which publishes *The Wall Street Journal*. But let's imagine the dynamics that might emerge if Murdoch gains control of that newspaper.

Like viewers of his Fox News Channel, readers of *The Wall Street Journal* under Murdoch could look forward to jaw-dropping claims along the lines of "We invest, you decide."

The Wall Street Journal would need to make some changes in order to be in sync with Murdoch-brand journalism. The *Journal's* recent design makeover could provide a tidy framework for spreading the content of the editorial page to the rest of the newsprint pages.

But executives at News Corp. would swiftly face a dilemma. Investors and money managers — prime demographic targets of *The Wall Street Journal*

— are apt to be intolerant of financial news reporting that's unduly screened through an ideological mesh.

Slanted journalism may be fine for big commercial enterprises when news consumers largely base their outlooks on prevailing media biases. But investors and others who move large amounts of money are apt to be less forgiving when political agendas behind news reports might impede the quest to maximize profits.

Each day, investors seek accurate news as the basis for their money-related decisions. On Wall Street, they can recognize when an editorial page is spinning and grinding ideological axes. But investors will quickly stop relying on financial news pages if those pages are more dedicated to political maneuvers than well-founded portrayals of business reality.

In other words, if a newspaper is just distorting reality to the detriment of civic understanding and democratic discourse, the most powerful corporations may not mind at all. In fact, corporate elites are



Norman Solomon

likely to appreciate any storyline that helps them to consolidate power over the nation's political system.

But if a business-oriented newspaper claims to be reporting the financial news and keeps skewing that news to serve ideological agendas, many investors and business leaders are likely to turn away in disgust. It's one thing to bamboozle the U.S. public — but quite another to mislead high-end readers about how to get even richer.

Right now, the editorials of *The Wall Street Journal* are the rough equivalent of Sean Hannity and Rush Limbaugh


(with an occasional dose of Ann Coulter thrown in). The grasp of right-wing ideology is notable, but the grip on reality is loose to the point of routine slippage.

At times, we all find ourselves wishing that the world were different than it is. But on the job — at least in theory — reporters can't allow themselves the luxury of turning wishful delusions into straight-faced news accounts.

However, like those who call the shots at Fox News Channel, the Dow Jones employees in charge of the editorial page at the *Journal* have been unstinting in their fantasies: The Iraq War remains a noble enterprise. Global warming is a liberal fraud. There is no widening gap between the rich and poor in the United States. And so on, and so on, and scooby dooby-doo.

It's all well and good to mislead voters and cover up for an administration in Washington that is functioning more like a massive criminal enterprise than a legitimate executive branch. But if press ideologues

serving as apologists for Pres. George W. Bush try to blend their contempt for reality with purported financial news, the media result could prove less than satisfactory for the nation's upper-crust money movers.

If his current media properties are any indication, Murdoch would quickly turn *The Wall Street Journal* into a news operation engaged in a dizzying regimen of spin and distortion. For several decades, he has enjoyed notable success in marketing right-wing political fantasies to the general public. Whether the nation's financial elites would be such easy marks is another matter. 

Norman Solomon's book *War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death is out in paperback. A documentary film based on the book will premiere this month. For information, go to www.warmadee-asythemovie.org.*

Featured Non-Profit



Darfur
How to help stop the Genocide:
www.savedarfur.org
www.hrw.org
www.darfurgenocide.org



Brought to you by:



Trust Company of Vermont

www.tcvermont.com

We support the *Vermont Guardian* in its efforts to be independent, locally controlled and employee owned.



Don't be afraid of Old Man Winter!

Our natural balms and body butter heal & protect dry, cracked, weather-beaten, and sensitive skin on hands, face, body, and feet.

Great for the entire family and anyone you know who bandages their fingers and glues their cracks together!

Handmade in Craftsbury.
Available throughout Vermont.
For a store near you call: (802) 586-2482
or go to www.vermontbeebalm.com

Never Stings!

MAKE YOUR HOME MORE COMFORTABLE AND UP TO 30% MORE ENERGY EFFICIENT.



Efficiency Vermont promotes Home Performance with ENERGY STAR, a whole-house diagnostic testing service that can help Vermonters:

- Solve health and safety issues
- Increase comfort and durability of your home
- Improve indoor air quality
- Lower energy bills through quality installations

For a list of certified contractors or to become a certified contractor, visit our website: www.energystar.com



commentary

UVM livable wage figures misleading

By Angela DiGiulio and Martine Burtis

On April 27, twelve University of Vermont (UVM) students from the Student Labor Action Project (SLAP) ended a five-day hunger strike to urge the university to adopt livable wages for all workers on campus.

The information presented on current compensation packages as well as subsequent media coverage confused the message on whether UVM is paying a livable wage. Some of the media also incorrectly characterized our response to new wage calculations as “being confused” or “unaware” of current wages at UVM.

The reality at UVM is that a gap still exists between the lowest paid UVM workers and a livable wage. Also, other workers contracted by the university to work in our cafeterias or to construct new buildings on campus make less than a livable wage.

In the spring of 2006, a task force convened to study the livable wage issue and to examine the current compensation package at UVM compared to current livable wage figures published by the legislative Joint Fiscal Office (JFO). The task force issued a well-documented study that adjusted the livable wage to account for unique benefits offered by UVM. The task force found that the livable wage figure for UVM would be \$12.28 an hour.

Shortly thereafter, UVM Pres. Dan Fogel announced that a recent contract with service and maintenance workers set a base wage of \$10.60 an hour that was close enough to the livable wage figure. At that point, Fogel stopped being willing to talk with members of SLAP regarding the task force’s livable wage figure.

As a result, in April SLAP constructed a tent city in front of Royal Tyler Theater to bring more attention to the remaining wage gap at UVM. This was the second tent city in two years to raise awareness on about livable wage issues. With no movement from the administration, SLAP members began a hunger strike on April 23.

In response, the university called upon the JFO to calculate a livable wage adjusted for UVM’s benefits. Unfortunately, once we had time to review the calculations, we found that JFO

had deviated from the methodology mandated by the Legislature by deducting the value of benefits that are not included in the basic needs budget.

For example:
Tuition remission. UVM offers tuition remission for employees who wish to take courses as individuals or wish to send their children to UVM. However, there is no education expense included in the basic needs budget assumptions that UVM’s tuition remission program can offset. Thus, you cannot lower the livable wage figure based on this benefit. Moreover, while tuition is a major expense for some people, it does not help someone meet their basic needs. You cannot eat tuition!

Long-term disability insurance. Again, this is a valuable benefit for UVM workers, but

not addressed the issue of contracted workers — the poorly paid Sodexo workers (starting pay is around \$8 an hour or \$9 an hour) or wages of the numerous construction workers working on building projects on campus. Currently, there are no guidelines or standards for how the workers UVM contracts are treated. UVM has made the choice to contract out jobs, like food service workers, and they have been resisting setting any standards for how those workers are treated. UVM has established “green building” standards on all their new construction. We are asking them to adopt fair employment standards for every contractor they hire.

We call upon UVM to uphold their social justice mission and principles and make a good faith effort to reopen discussions on livable wages. To really ful-

We would like to clearly state that UVM still needs to address livable wage and workers’ rights issues on campus, some of which they have tried to ignore. UVM has also not addressed the issue of contracted workers.

the basic needs budget does not include any such cost in its assumptions.

Retirement and health care. The revised JFO livable wage figure also contained miscalculations when comparing UVM’s retirement and health care benefits to the basic needs budget.

The revised figures produced by JFO and presented to SLAP and the administration are not true to the approved methodology. We were not confused, especially upon reviewing the newest variation of the calculations, about our commitment to demanding that UVM adopt livable wages and close the wage gap once and for all.

We continue to support the findings and recommendations of the task force. Indeed, it is clear that a significant wage gap still remains at UVM. We would like to clearly state that UVM still needs to address livable wage and workers’ rights issues on campus, some of which they have tried to ignore. Perhaps most importantly, UVM also has

fill the claims that UVM is one of the “best employers in Vermont,” “committed to sustainability” and upholding social justice principles, it must look honestly at what is paid to all workers — contracted and non-contracted workers — and make sure people can meet their basic needs.

Based on partial data from the state, the *Vermont Guardian* reported in 2005 that 161 UVM workers received public assistance. Hundreds of contracted workers are forced to rely on public assistance because of the low wages paid by UVM’s contractors such as Sodexo. In the end, UVM can either pay their workers a livable wage or shift the cost to taxpayers. ☹

Angela DiGiulio and Martine Burtis are students at the University of Vermont (UVM) and are members of the UVM Student Labor Action Project.

By Philip Baruth
Vermont Daily Briefing (VDB)
Weekly Edition



Philip Baruth

I've been both a novelist and a political junkie for as long as I can remember. At least as early as 1976, at age 14, I was doing both simultaneously: writing a staggeringly bad book of fiction, and placing last-minute get-out-the-vote calls during the presidential campaign that put Jimmy Carter in the White House.

Now, at age 45, that schizoid rhythm marks the official structure of my life. By day, I write, read, and teach novels; at night, I live-blog debates and primaries, and read online newspapers into the small hours.

But of course the two worlds can't remain distinct. Far from it. As the years have accumulated, my fiction has been markedly colored by politics. And because of my day job as a fiction writer, I have evolved into a very particular kind of political junkie.

I like complex political characters, in short.

Take Pres. George W. Bush. Long story short, I don't like him.

But part of the reason I don't like him — the deepest reason of all maybe — is that he is badly drawn, as a human figure. The man is as nearly two-dimensional as it is possible for a living person to be. Of course, lacking a third dimension helped immensely post-9/11: It made Bush seem a character straight from the pages of DC comics, a superhero, a graphic creation defined at its most basic level by flatness. (At the risk of stating the obvious, Bush could never cut it in the Marvel universe, where heroes brood and wrestle inner demons.)

Once Iraq exploded, though, people in this country became nostalgic for depth.

But even then Bush's two-dimensionality came in surprisingly handy. When out of his depth at press conferences, Bush could always do the rhetorical equivalent of turning sideways — repeat five or six untethered phrases until reporters quit in disgust — allowing him to all but disappear.

You want a complex character? Bill Clinton was a complex character.

What Clinton and Dick Morris would eventually label "triangulation" was first and

foremost a strategic imprint of Clinton's own psyche. Here was a kid who had lost three fathers by the time he reached the age of 35, and for whom elections and polls would always supply an obsessive need for approval.

Again and again, this need for approval led Clinton to shuffle as close to the Republican Party as he could get without being physically repelled. Clinton explained with great patience that he was merely shoplifting as many GOP issues as he could fit into his pockets, as a way of winning reelection, which would give Democrats their first two-term president in decades. And these moves eventually secured Clinton approval from 60 percent of the U.S. public, just enough to see him through the trials of impeachment.

But it was more than strategy. The truth is that Clinton couldn't abide the thought of the remaining 40 percent, the followers of Newt Gingrich and Dick Armey, the millions who despised their president. And so he was constantly using one excuse after another — reelection, the budget standoffs, reaching across the aisle — to give Republicans what they wanted, without quite losing his loyal Democratic base.

Hence "Don't Ask Don't Tell." Hence "Mend It Don't End It," Clinton's patchwork on affirmative action. Predicting Clinton was a fool's game.

But it was fun to play, even so. Which brings us to Vermont's own complex political character: Peter Shumlin.

Shumlin began this legislative session with a move so bold it scrambled every political calculation instantaneously: He placed meaningful legislation on global warming at the top of his Senate to-do list.

Suddenly, everyone — Transportation, Natural Resources, Economic Development, House Speaker Gaye Symington, Gov. Jim Douglas, everyone — was forced to regroup.

And almost immediately thereafter, Shumlin staged a press conference with the governor during which he agreed with Douglas that the property tax conundrum could not be solved by raising new revenue. It was a spending problem, first and foremost.

In other words, only days into the session, Shumlin had placed everyone in the Statehouse in a very tight box, made up of walls sacred to the Left and to the Right. And most of the work attempted or accomplished this session occurred within the tight confines of that strategic box.

No one was more inconvenienced by Shumlin's pincer tactic than Shumlin, of course. The friction between global responsibility and local frugality was inevitable, and that heat occasionally forced Shumlin into damage control. After arguing that the tax burden on Vermonters was already punishingly heavy, for instance, Shumlin was forced retroactively to argue that he'd never meant to say he couldn't raise "small taxes to take care of pressing problems for Vermont."

Still, on balance, Shumlin's moves were bold enough, popular enough, and unpredictable enough to play havoc with the governor's center of gravity. And partially as a result, Douglas looked as unsteady this year as he has since coming into office.

Then came impeachment.

It began directly enough. In no uncertain terms, during a long interview in his office at the Statehouse, Shumlin told me that he supported impeachment, supported it eagerly: "I think it would be a great thing for Vermonters to move forward on the impeachment process."

Without rehearsing the minor variations of the rhetorical dance that followed, it's fair to say that Shumlin then reversed positions twice, vehemently in each case, finally coming 360 degrees back to the position he quitted for no apparent reason when it became clear that an impeachment resolution could originate in the Senate as well as the House.

Predicting Shumlin, then, was a fool's game.

But one interpretive frame works as well or better than any other: All of Shumlin's moves this session dovetail with a statewide run for governor, up to and including the final pirouette on

impeachment. Having double-crossed activists, only to then serve as their imperfect champion, Shumlin came as close to making the issue a wash as he was humanly able.

And not every mainstream Democratic politician has been or will be so lucky.

Still, the back and forth had the potential to make you a bit nauseous — or a bit nauseated, depending on your political persuasions. Watching Shumlin work was like watching Clinton work, which was always like watching an exotic dancer work: There was always something simultaneously artful and accomplished and undeniably seamy about it.

But the last, greatest miracle of Clinton was that just when you had all but given up on him, he would produce something truly fine in the way of public policy, or an appointment to the U.S. Supreme Court like Ruth Bader Ginsberg, something well worth the price of admission in and of itself.

Shumlin is no different. Here in the last weeks of the session, he has constructed one of the most masterful interlocking strategies in legislative history. His last best hope for meaningful global warming legislation

— an expansion of efficiency programs to target heating fuel savings in homes and buildings — Shumlin has now proposed to fund with a windfall profits tax on Vermont Yankee.

Given that Shumlin has also proposed moving Vermont Yankee nuclear waste to the state's most populous counties — as a way of fomenting opposition to the plant's relicensing in 2012 — the windfall profits tax seems like an elegant solution to two intractable problems. It will expand an energy efficiency program praised on both sides of the aisle; the newly expanded agency will help Vermonters lower their fuel costs; energy efficiency will significantly reduce Vermont's carbon signature; and the only people who will pay through the nose are those running an aging nuclear plant that should have been shuttered years ago anyway.

It's brilliant. Complicated, but brilliant.

And in the final analysis, that's all I've ever asked from any political character. ☺

For a daily dose of VDB, go to www.vermontdailybriefing.com.

Weekday Mornings 9 to noon
BRATTLEBORO'S MORNING TALK SHOW
with Steve West
streaming at www.1490wkvt.com
254-5286
1490 WKVT
LIVE & LOCAL