



Review Ed. Cynthia McKinney, *How the US Creates "Sh*thole" Countries*, Clarity, 2018.

Bravo to Cynthia McKinney, former US Congresswoman and Green Party nominee for president, for taking this offhand remark by Trump and running with it.

The Forward is by Senator Mike Gravel, an unsung hero of American democracy, whose life is colourful to say the least. McKinney's book is worth it to rediscover some of the hopeful signs for change, with Gravel in first place.

He was able to overcome dyslexia through inspired teachers, enlisted in 1951 and worked as a Special Agent in the Counterintelligence Corps until 1954 (spying on French communists in Europe), earning a degree in economics in 1956 from the Columbia University School of General Studies. Then became Democratic senator from Alaska from 1969 to 1981 and a candidate in the 2008 US presidential election, when he switched to Libertarian. In 2013, Gravel attended the International Conference on Hollywoodism in Iran, one of Trump's sh*thole countries, and learned a lot about how Hollywood crafts their image.

He will be remembered for reading into the Congressional Record all 4,100 pages of the Pentagon Papers in 1971 to make sure they stayed public. He will also be remembered as an advocate of direct democracy, national referenda, and wrote *The Kingmakers*, a critique of mass media, calling for participatory journalism, predicting that blogs, chat rooms, virtual worlds and Internet contributions have empowered ordinary citizens to change the course of American history.

Review: McKinney, 'How the US Creates "Sh*thole" Countries'

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Sunday, 28 October 2018 11:08

Other contributions which touched me were recollections by Vietnam vets. Like Gravel, Chuck Searcy enlisted in the army from 1966 to 1969 and served as an intelligence analyst. In 1995 when he moved to Vietnam as representative of the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation, became representative of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, and helped launch Project RENEW in Quang Tri Province, to clean up unexploded ordnance and provide medical assistance, rehabilitation, and income generation for UXO (unexploded ordnance) victims. Searcy is co-chair of the NGO Agent Orange Working Group in Vietnam and vice president of Chapter 160 of Veterans For Peace, based in Viet Nam. In 2003 Searcy was awarded Vietnam's National Friendship Medal.

Serving in the US military and realizing what it does compelled both Gravel and Searcy, otherwise ordinary Americans, to brave hostility and censure to fight for peace. Searcy is proud that USAID has joined his battle against the continued fallout from Agent Orange, insisting that "there are times when the US does the right thing... We can embrace, finally, the kind of old-fashioned morality that can make us a better people, and a better nation." It is only once brave souls like Searcy devote themselves that this 'right thing' is acknowledged, and the sh*tholes can throw off their sad state.

A darker article, by Christopher Black, made the provocative assertion that US-NATO are "neo-feudal overlords who promise protection in return for national servitude," who need to depict the world as "a dangerous place, that the danger is omnipresent, eternal, and omnidirectional." This brings to mind such popular TV shows as Game of Thrones and the rash of movies celebrating medieval Europe as a glorious age of simple truths and brave warriors. Such fantasies are what fill the minds of the masses, blissfully unaware of the real torment that the US inflicts on innocent peons. All we see are the heroic knights and pretty damsels. The sh*thole countries are only a footnote here.