



# TEXAS GOLD

## Diane Wilson's Dispatches From the White House

Dear All,

As most of you know, Diane Wilson launched an indefinite water-only fast on July 4th along with a group of Code Pink members and supporters. Here's a compilation of the 6 daily blogs she sent me plus an article she wrote on why she's fasting.

This email is copied to everyone who used to receive my updates during Diane's incarceration earlier this year, and supporters who wrote to her in jail. Please feel free to forward this to your contacts or send me their ids to add to the list.

For updates please check [www.troopshomefast.org](http://www.troopshomefast.org).  
For blogs of other members who are on the fast please check <http://www.troopshomefast.org/article.php?id=1068>

Thanks.  
Kinnu.

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### **Day 14**

Had a visit this morning from a little green forest ranger-- the forest in this case being Lafayette Park. She cautioned us. Again, again she said, that we had to sit within 3 feet of our cloth banners because otherwise its like luggage left unattended in an airport and is liable to blow sky high. So if we're within 3 feet of the explosive banner we will blow up too. Only right that the responsible party gets blown up. This is about the third time she's told us this and it's being listed on their terrorist list.

Normally, the cops are ok if you overlook the times they want to run us outa the park over the radiation/Bush's black sedan scare. It's a far cry from the 2002 vigil in Lafayette Park when we were hassled at least 8 times a day

on a regular basis. My participation in that 4 month vigil lasted exactly 18 days when I was arrested and thrown out of Washington DC. The judge cautioned me if I showed my face in the city I'd be arrested on the spot.

I wasn't that concerned about resurfacing knowing the turf battle that existed between the park police and the secret service and the city police. None of them liked to share their information, so if you got arrested by the secret service the first time, the second time you get arrested by the city police. Which I did. After 2 weeks of being banned from Washington DC, I showed up for a Codepink rally and got arrested by the city cops. Nice as pie. Handcuffs lightly applied. They had no idea I was banned.

On another track, this is day 14 into the hunger strike. I've ended two of the seven hunger strikes I started in Texas at 14 days because I got exactly what I wanted. A recent hunger strike supporting the demands of the Bhopal survivors in India ended after 5 days. Again, they got almost all of their 7 demands. One old Bhopali woman who had survived the 1984 pesticide leak by Union Carbide in India and who had walked, along with hundreds of others, 500 miles to the Prime Minister of India, said that they could carry her corpse home to Bhopal. She wasn't eating until the Prime Minister of India agreed to their demands. And in 5 days he did.

## **Day 12**

Let's talk about \*buffalo wings. Conversation came up the other day from Geoff Millard, an Iraqi War veteran who had been speaking out against the war. He was from Buffalo, New York and wanted to know why everybody called buffalo wings 'buffalo wings' while the folks from Buffalo call them 'chicken wings'? Well, I didn't know the wings were named after a city in New York. I thought it was named after, well...buffaloes. Maybe an old native American delicacy.

A hunger strike is just like in the movies about starving POW's sitting in a circle and reminiscing. Conversation goes straight to food and what they're going to eat when they get out or in our case, get off this strike. Yesterday I had a hankering for barbequed potato chips. Usually it's pizza or Mexican food. One fella that fasted for a week said he ate so much after getting off the fast that he made himself sick. Ate four meals in one day.

I have been cautioned about my lack of caution on how I end a hunger strike. Most authorities ( even Doc Gregory ) say start sloooooow on diluted juices for one week, then broth for a week, then|. Well, you get the picture. My first hunger strike I ended with a pizza, the second ended with Mexican food, the third with Pizza, fourth with Mexican food, etc., etc.

My only rule of thumb is alternate Mexican food with pizza. I have no idea why my stomach doesn't totally rebel, but I believe it has to do with my philosophy about sickness. Just ask my kids. We were shrimpers, scraping a living, and health insurance was not in our vocabulary. So every time one of the kids got sick , I said, You're not sick. "You're ok." And usually they were. Then too, there was all that poison ivy that wove a mat across the pasture and ditches and trees. Every time I got one little bubble of ivy trouble, I'd look at it and say, "Go away." And usually it did.

I recently saw a documentary on Link TV about a tribe in Africa that never experienced sickness and when they were asked how that was possible, the natives said they just said 'No' to sickness. That's kinda my attitude about the pizzas and the Mexican food, I just tell my stomach, "No!"

#### **\*Buffalo's chicken wings\***

Deep fry a batch of chicken wings. Nothing added. Just fry. Mix melted butter with Frank's red hot sauce and add to fried chicken wings. Eat 'till you're full.

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#### **Day 11**

Fast wise, this day isn't much different than yesterday. But im not fooled. Eleven days into a fast is the equivalent of 200 feet in a mile run. Best policy is to take it one day at a time. And interesting enough, one sure thing that a fast will automatically deliver to your door is a very calm spot where only the 'now' is present. Yesterday doesn't bother you, tomorrow doesn't bother you. Heck, even Fox News doesn't bother you.

I had the real unfortunate task of being on Fox News. Hannity and Colmes. What can I say? I had only seen them in passing by a TV set, but their reputation for rabid skunkness was everywhere. I sure didn't want to do it,

disliking talking as I do. But news stations always get these real nice guys to do the coaxing. They just wanted my comment on the Raging Grannies version of the star spangled banner and about the hunger strike. There was a choice of Medea Benjamin or myself, and I was pulling for Medea. After a long conversation in a car, everybody figured Fox goes for the emotional so I should go on.

Lucky for me, I was eight days into the hunger strike and hadn't had coffee in as long so I was calm to the point of falling off my Fox chair. The skunkness didn't come right off, it waited on the dark haired one who interrogated me on Cindy Sheehan and everytime I started to say something, Original Skunk yelled, "Answer the question! Answer the question! Yes or no! Yes or no!" After about 4 attempts to say something and being interrupted every time, I finally told Original Skunk to "shut up and let me talk." So im very appreciative of my newfound calmness. It helps when you go on Skunk News.

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## Day 9

Holding this water bottle pretty close. I try not to use a different plastic bottle every day and end up polluting the earth with more trash. We've got enough landfills. The car that has the water jugs is out at the capitol so ive got an empty water bottle. Oh well, so much for drinking water. Dick Gregory, the legendary faster and our official 'doctor' said drink at least a gallon of water a day and I certainly don't do that. Probably more like 2 pints. Maybe that's the reason my voice gets lower and lower; its gotta be a water issue there.

Dick said don't go to the doctors if you get sick because they don't know nothing about fasters. They're only interested in those that have been eating. Have no advice other than, "start eating!"

I find that pretty amazing especially as research with rats (or maybe its mice) have shown that starving them a little bit lengthens their life. So if this hunger strike doesn't kill me then im sure I'll live to a ripe old age. Another little amazing fact is that when you start fasting, the body burns the fat cells for energy and the fat cells is

where chemicals you have been exposed to are stored. So fasting releases those contaminants from your body and hopefully with all that water you're drinking, you get rid of a lot of bad stuff. Probably why you live so long.

'Doc' Gregory comes down to the park every day. Very well dressed man. I won't even guess at his age but he does discuss Babe Ruth and folks like that. Yesterday he was in sharp looking white suit and he looked like he just stepped off a model ramp. Fasting has certainly not harmed that man. He's on a juice fast and the last time he did a juice fast he was on it for 270 days. Gregory also said he used to weigh 300 pounds. Now he's about 125 pounds dripping wet.

I've done 7 hunger fasts so I've got a good idea of how it works. The first 4 days is usually the worst and then it starts getting better. You're not hungry anymore, although a woman yesterday in our evening circle said she was "hungry!!!". I know I've been on strikes before and at 20 days I feel that maybe I'm mistaken; maybe I'm not on a hunger strike at all. The 'Doc' says this is because the body's own morphin is cruising through your body. It's an automatic reaction to the fasting. 'Doc' says when you see all those starving kids in Africa with bloated bellies and tiny arms and legs and you wonder why they don't swat off all those flies, it's because they're high as a kite. That's what the 'Doc' says.

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#### **Day 4**

I started a letter on the first day but pooped out. Probably it was that 2 mile walk in the hot hot sun that did it. Dick Gregory, who's famous for his hunger strikes on the Viet Nam war, made a speech under the trees and said if you're on a fast it's real important to pace yourself, don't exercise, don't walk 50 blocks to a July 4 parade. But on the first day, even with seven hunger strikes under my belt, I walked all the way to the parade. Then the rest of the day I sat under a tree, red-faced and exhausted. Not a good start.

But here I am, fourth day into the strike or fast or whatever you want to call it. Feeling much better. Energy ain't bad. I'm a caffeine nut; drink coffee all day long and

I'll tell you a little secret, I've always felt my high energy came from all that coffee.. But I haven't had coffee in 4 days and still my energy comes. It sneaks upon me like a small green snake wiggling across the yard.

Some of the women felling weak and are having little fainting spells. Not actually fainting, but getting dizzy and nauseous. They get pass that stage, though. Day four is a breaking point. I don't get faint at all. Don't know why, maybe it's from being from Texas. Reason enough.

Out of the 4 days of fasting, we've been rained out twice and run out by the cops twice. For no apparent reason, here come the fellas yelling at everybody to get clean outa the park. Nobody allowed. First time that happened, a big dignitary was arriving at the White House. The next time it happened, the prime minister of Canada was coming and going at the White house and here come the cops. I'd like to describe them more than just "cops" but frankly Im not sure who's at the bottom of this. The secret service, the swap team, and the K-9's were involved so I'm a little unsure of who was really incharge. The second time the cops came, we just got close to the road between the White House and Lafayette Park with our banners to bring the troops home and refused to move. The cops came up and said we had to move. Get out. It was for our own security. We said, "Why?" and they said there's harmful emissions out there and the alarms are going off all over the place. We said what harmful emissions and they very dead faced and serious.

*"Radiation."*

Well why weren't the cops wearing masks? Why did they look so calm about the whole thing if radiation was running rampant? What about that poor president over there? Wouldn't the radiation affect the president? Did the EPA know about the radiation problem?

Well the cops didn't worry about the president because doctors would take care of George Bush, it was just our health they were worried about, so get outa the park. Eventually we stonewalled and asked enough questions that even the visitors that got ran out got tired and started coming back in. Then it was sure enough ruin for the evacuation. Now they just clear the road and leave the park to us. Victory comes in small doses.

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## **Day 2**

The first hunger strike I did on a shrimp boat in Texas is kinda like that tree in the forest illustration. You know, does it make a sound if nobody hears it. I was hunger fasting on a shrimp boat and that was 1991 and I was still ignorant of the uses of cell phones, So there I was on a shrimp boat and a lot of folks were putting me thru the ringer on it. My mom and sisters and two brothers included. The only folks that knew about the hunger strike was the Formosa Plastics, a petrochemical plant, that I was fighting. So every day, here came the corporate officers in their black suits and they'd tell me how stupid I looked. Didn't I realize how stupid I looked. Well, no I didn't so I stayed there until the captain of the shrimp boat showed up and told me to get off his dang boat or he'd throw me overboard.

Amazingly, after 14 days I won everything I wanted on that hunger strike.

Now here I am on my 8th hunger strike in Washington DC and a hot day in Washington is whole lot like Texas minus the humidity. I had spent my first night in Washington dc on a porch swing, the wind on my face, and not a single mosquito around. Nobody rushed me to get up, I had an automatic alarm clock-- old shrimping habits. Not counting the hunger strike, we have a pretty generous schedule. All us fasters and supporters were suppose to met at 10am under the trees across from the white house It is a lot more generous than the first codepink vigil back in 2003, pre Iraqi war, when we sat on stone cold benches in lafette park at 7am on very cold morning. Its not bad under the trees. We've got a bunch of Codepink banners left over from a hundred protests that we sit on and after a prayer and some singing, our day begins.

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## **WHY I AM DOING A HUNGER STRIKE**

When I did my first hunger strike on a shrimp boat in Texas in 1991, an environmentalist friend said it was the stupidest thing he had ever heard of. "Nobody does hunger strikes in Texas!" Still, I sat, not eating, until a local shrimper threatened to throw me overboard if I didn't get off his dang boat. I had never done a hunger strike before.

I was a woman shrimper. What the heck did I know about civil disobedience? I grew up in the '60s all right, but I wasn't a flower child. I was a solitary teen who loved hot Texas bays and spent half my time sitting in the tide.

But there comes a time when the orthodox route takes you to a place you're unwilling to go. In 1991 it was toward a gigantic petrochemical expansion by Formosa Plastics, a notorious polluter that was coming to Texas. The hunger strike was my last ditch attempt to save my home bay.

A hunger strike comes from the heart. It isn't a coincidence that Gandhi's hunger strikes were decided suddenly. The planning might take some time, but the decision doesn't. Gandhi called it soul power.,- I didn't call it nothing back in 1991, but I knew, intuitively, to NOT think long and hard about that hunger strike. So, while I had no resources - things like money and people to support me - I did have myself and a living, breathing bay and so I started a hunger strike nobody believed in. That first hunger strike succeeded beyond my wildest hopes, well, good enough that folks figured a bold man must be behind me somewhere.

Now, fifteen years and seven hunger strikes later, I'm fixing to start another hunger strike to save lives. Last May, I joined a CodePink Mother's Day vigil at the White House and walked in a silent march to a big green field where thousands of boots representing dead soldiers and dead Iraqi civilians lay. The most common sign was 'Out of Iraq, NOW. Peace, NOW.' Every speech boiled down to one message: 'Peace. Not tomorrow. Not in a year. NOW. Its pretty much what Martin Luther King said when he called for freedom from fear and oppression in the '70s. *WE WANT IT NOW.*'

Those words echo polls that show a majority of Americans don't want this war and want the troops to come home. Not because war is too tough or that some folks are lily livered and want to cut and run, but because this war is based on lies and a lot of tangled agendas clearly having to do with oil. The question that remains is: are those who want the killing to stop as committed to peace as those who are committed to war. The war machine will certainly commit the lives of our children and Iraqi children. But will we commit our own lives? Would we exchange our lives for those of the soldiers being shipped out or barricaded in the

Green Zone, - in Baghdad? Would we risk our lives so Iraqi children could live?

I grew up with a Pentecostal church nearly in my back yard, and I've retained one thing besides the gospel singing: we are our brothers' and our sisters' keepers. I find it baffling that with all the jostling over who's side God is on or who's the better 'born again' fella, nobody takes that peaceful phrase beyond the paper it is written on.

I was ten when John F Kennedy was inaugurated, and I remember something he said that puzzled me at the time. He said, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." Was he asking me to join the Peace Corps? I volunteered as an Army medic during the Viet Nam War, but I don't think he was talking about that. Forty-five years later, I know what Kennedy meant. He believed that the potential greatness of this country starts and ends with WE, THE PEOPLE. Not "We, the President." Not "We, the Congress." Not "We, the corporations." That is why I am beginning this hunger strike: to stop an insane war and bring the troops home, and also to keep this country from going where we seem to be heading.

I believe it is better that we put our lives on the line than that our children put their lives on the line. It is better that we put our lives on the line than that innocent Iraqi children give up their lives. If we can do this, maybe, maybe, we can create a safe space where peace can grow. I am not certain that this will happen, but I know that when we lose ourselves, we find ourselves.

And I'm willing to stake my life on it.

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