



Thomas Merton Center
Pittsburgh's Peace and
Social Justice Center

PITTSBURGH'S PEACE & JUSTICE NEWSPAPER

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Pittsburgh and TMC's History of Immigrant Sanctuary

By Joyce Rothermel

Sanctuary cities and sanctuary churches are coming into our conversations as immigrants and refugees in communities across the U.S. are facing arrest and deportation, often due to cruel and unwarranted public policy coming from the White House. Cities and faith communities are standing with their immigrant residents, many discussing what it means to offer sanctuary.

Here in Pittsburgh, providing sanctuary has some history. I interviewed Art McDonald, Unitarian Universalist pastor in Essex, MA., about his experience as a staff member of the Merton Center in the 1980's when people were fleeing El Salvador's civil war, and how the faith community of Pittsburgh responded. This is what I learned. Some *NewPeople* readers will recall parts of this history as a part of their own.

Art remembers that the faith-based movement to help Salvadoran refugees began in Tucson, AZ in the early 1980's with Rev. John Fife of a Presbyterian Church and Jim Corbet, an active Quaker. Rev. Bernie Survil, a Merton Center member and former missionary in Guatemala, was also involved in Tucson at the time. Art had joined the Merton Center staff around the same time. He had been to Latin America, had worked in the Bronx and was fluent in Spanish. When the Center began writing about the civil war in El Salvador, the board wanted TMC to get involved.

TMC joined the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), a national, secular-based effort, and wanted to do more. Art took on the assignment and helped form the Religious Task Force on Central America.

When refugees were arriving and receiving sanctuary in Tucson, they needed to keep moving. Sanctuary Churches were asked to receive and assist them in their next steps. The Religious Task Force members took the question of sanctuary to their respective congregations. Fr. Don Fisher spoke

with his Catholic congregation at Our Lady of the Most Blessed Sacrament (later merged to form St. Charles Lwanga). They voted it down. The Mennonites, with the leadership of Rev. Harold Wenger, decided by consensus to become a sanctuary church. While others considered it, the Mennonites, then in North Point Breeze, were the only congregation to offer sanctuary. They contacted the refugee network and a couple, Gabriel and Maria, made their way safely to Ohio, where Art picked them up and took them to the Mennonite Church.

Gabriel and Maria lived in the basement of the church. The Task Force took on broader support: raising money, grocery shopping, helping to identify employment. Gabriel delivered papers. Maria cleaned houses.

Art got a call at the Merton Center from the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) telling him to turn in the refugees. Art and others from the Task Force went to meet a local INS officer. When they learned that Gabriel and Maria would likely be deported, they refused to turn them over. They told the officer that it was a serious moral issue and believed the U.S. policy at the time was immoral. While churches providing sanctuary had no legal standing, INS didn't go into churches. It is a medieval concept that churches can be sanctuaries. INS respected the ancient practice. INS did not follow up and there were no negative consequences to sanctuary churches.

Gabriel and Maria had left their eight children with grandparents in El Salvador, and after some time, the parents wanted to bring the children here. Money was raised to pay the coyotes, who operated the "underground railroad," and Gabriel set out. He brought all but one of his children back to the U.S., leaving the oldest with the grandmother. When it was determined that Pittsburgh couldn't handle the large family, they were driven to Lansing, Michigan (next

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Monica Ruiz, of Casa San Jose, along with constituents, call out five Democratic state legislators from Allegheny County to reverse their past records of supporting anti-immigrant legislation in PA (SB 10, HB 14, and HB 459). on March 13, 2017. To read more about the Sanctuary Movement and local ways to get involved, continue reading on page 6. More photos on page 15. Photo by Christina Castillo.

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What a Single Payer System Could Do

By Neil Cosgrove

Advocates for a "single-payer" or "Medicare for All" approach to healthcare characterize the Affordable Care Act (ACA) as an "important first step," but ultimately inadequate to achieving the goal of universal health care for all Americans. The details we provide below are derived from two different single-payer proposals, the Pennsylvania Health Care Plan (PHCP) recently reintroduced to the state legislature by Representative Pamela DeLissio of Montgomery County and the "Medicare for All" national plan presented by Senator Bernie Sanders during last year's presidential campaign. The PHCP is based on a provision in the ACA that gives states the option to develop their

own health care plan if "the proposed plan is more economical and efficient," states Rep. DeLissio.

Both the DeLissio and the Sanders plans would insure every Pennsylvania or American citizen for all the care currently covered by private companies' policies, and would add not commonly covered vision and dental care. Both plans would also eliminate deductibles and co-pays. The Pennsylvania plan would pay for coverage via a trust fund accumulated through a 10% employer tax on payroll and a 3% individual income tax. Sanders' national plan would get the bulk of its revenue from a 6.2% income-based employer tax and a 2.2% income-based individual tax, but also by creating more pro-

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The Thomas Merton Center works to build a consciousness of values and to raise the moral questions involved in the issues of war, poverty, racism, classism, economic justice, oppression and environmental justice.

TMC engages people of diverse philosophies and faiths who find common ground in the nonviolent struggle to bring about a more peaceful and just world.

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Saturday: Noon to 4 pm

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The East End Community Thrift (Thrift) is an all volunteer-run thrift shop which provides quality, low-cost, used clothing and household goods to the surrounding community. Thrift needs volunteers and shoppers! Please contact us at (412) 361-6010 and ask for Shirley or Shawna, or stop in at 5123 Penn Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15224. Email shawnapgh@aol.com.



We are mission driven volunteers who look to build love and community by serving others in times of need.

Publish in *The NewPeople*

The New People is distributed each month to 3,000 people who belong to diverse organizations, businesses and groups. The deadline for all submissions is the 13th of the month for the following month's issue.

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For more information: Call 412-361-3022 or email newpeople@thomasmertoncenter.org.

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Book‘Em: Books to Prisoners Project
bookempgh@gmail.com
www.bookempgh.org

Cities for CEDAW

Fight for Lifers West
fightforliferswest@gmail.com
412-607-1804
Fightforliferswest.org

Greater Pittsburgh Interfaith Coalition
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Human Rights Coalition / Fed Up
(prisoner support and advocacy)
412-802-8575, hrcfedup@gmail.com
www.prisonerstories.blogspot.com

Pittsburgh Campaign for Democracy NOW!
412-422-5377, sleator@cs.cmu.edu
www.pcdn.org

Pittsburghers for Public Transit
412-216-9659
info@pittsburghforpublictransit.org

Steel Smiling
info@steelsmilingpgh.org

Stop Sexual Assault in the Military
412-361-3022
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Western PA Student Organizing Network (WPSON)
andrew.woomer@gmail.com

TMC Affiliates

(Affiliates are independent partner organizations who support the nonviolent peace and justice mission of TMC. - Articles may not necessarily represent the views of Affiliates)

Abolitionist Law Center
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Amnesty International
info@amnestypgh.org - www.amnestypgh.org

Association of Pittsburgh Priests
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www.associationofpittsburghpriests.com

Battle of Homestead Foundation
412-848-3079

The Big Idea Bookstore
412-OUR-HEAD
www.thebigideapgh.org

The Black Political Empowerment Project
Tim Stevens 412-758-7898

CeaseFire PA
www.ceasefirepa.org—info@ceasefirepa.org

Citizens for Social Responsibility of Greater Johnstown
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Global Solutions Pittsburgh
412-471-7852 dan@globalsolutionspgh.org
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North Hills Anti-Racism Coalition
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email: info@arc.northpgh.org
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PA United for Single-Payer Health Care
www.healthcare4allPA.org
www.PUSH-HC4allPa.blogspot.com
412-421-4242

(TMC projects follow TMC guidelines and receive financial and ongoing resources and support from the Thomas Merton Center.)

Anti-War/Anti-Imperialism

Anti-War Committee
awc@thomasmertoncenter.org

Pittsburgh Darfur Emergency Coalition
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School of the Americas Watch W. PA
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rothermeljoyce@gmail.com

Environmental Justice

Marcellus Shale Protest Group
melpacker@aol.com 412-243-4545
marcellusprotest.org

Pittsburgh 350
350pittsburgh@gmail.com
World.350.org/Pittsburgh

Shalefield Stories (Friends of the Harmed)
412-422-0272
brigetshields@gmail.com

Westmoreland Marcellus Citizens Group
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Economic Justice

Harambee Ujima/Diversity Footprint
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Pittsburgh Anti-Sweatshop Community Alliance
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Pittsburgh Area Pax Christi
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Pittsburgh Cuba Coalition
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United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE)
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Veterans for Peace
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Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)
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TMC is a Member of

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Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty
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TMC supports these organizations' missions.

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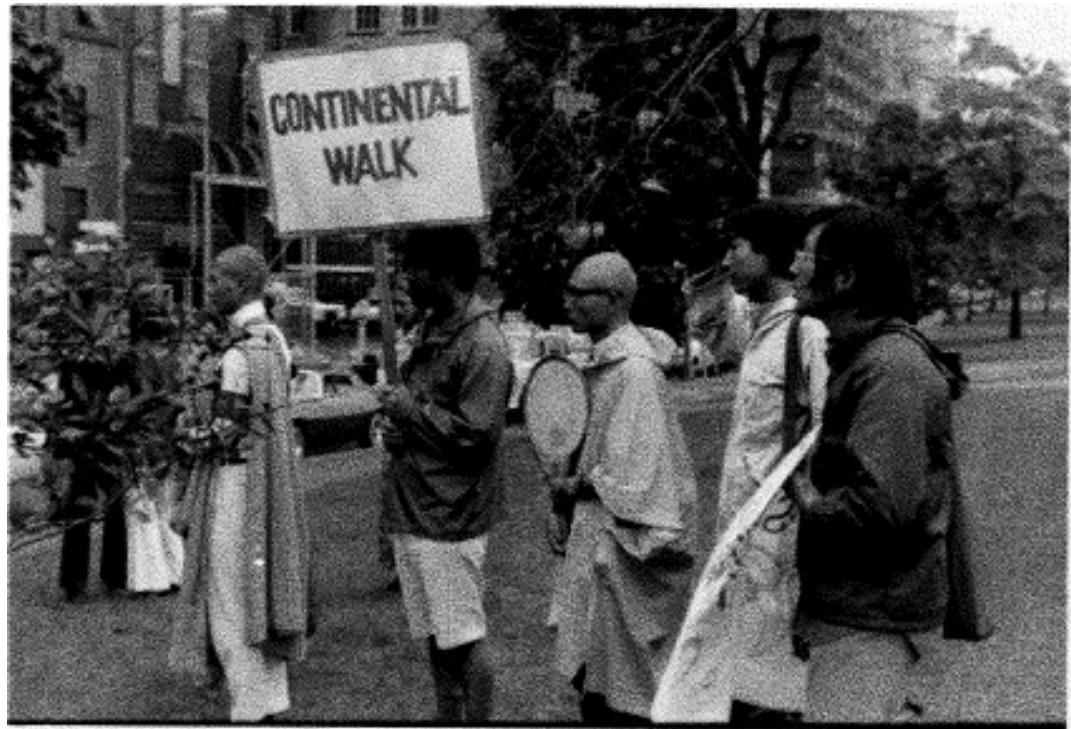
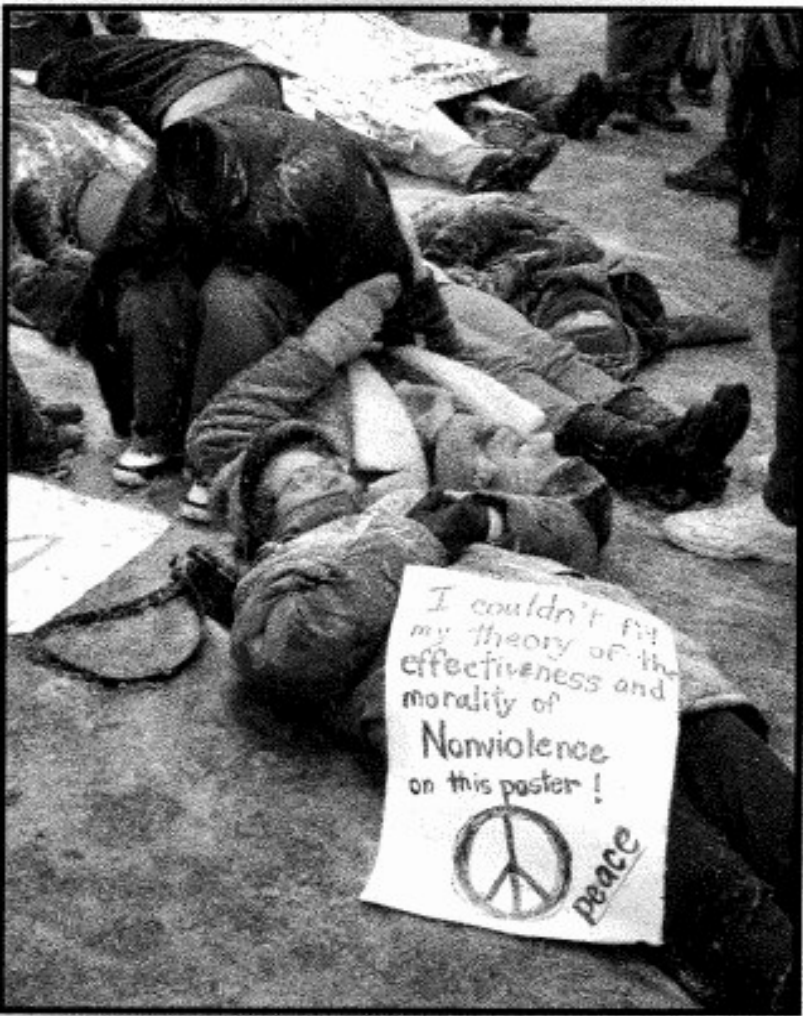
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45 Years of TMC Activism

Look For More Photos in Coming Issues



Top Left: The March Against the Yugoslav War from the Vietnam War Memorial to the Pentagon on June 5, 1994 drew 10,000 participants, including a contingent from the Merton Center.
Bottom: In 1976, The Merton Center took part in the Continental Walk for Disarmament
Right: Co-founder Molly Rush and others in the snow protesting in January 2003 against the soon-to-happen Iraq War.

Photos courtesy of Molly Rush

Thomas Merton Center is Hiring New Executive Director!

Position Summary: The Thomas Merton Center Executive Director position requires the ability to work effectively with the board, supervise staff, and oversee project relationships with the Center. Expertise and demonstrated commitment to the Thomas Merton Center is also required. Additionally, in this position there is responsibility related to assisting in finances and operations, including maintenance, contracts, insurance and liability, and working effectively with volunteers, interns, and community and project leaders.

How to Apply: Candidates should submit a cover letter that includes a statement of interest and an assessment of your qualifications for the position, and your resume. Please send by e-mail to employment@thomasmertoncenter.org or by mail to TMC Executive Search, 5129 Penn Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15224.
Deadline for applications is April 14, 2017, with interviews to take place in May and hiring by early June.

Thomasmertoncenter.org/edsearch

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Peace and Prohpets

Revitalizing The Pittsburgh Peace Movement

By Paul Dordal

The Anti-War Committee (AWC) of the Thomas Merton Center has been working diligently to revive the peace movement in Pittsburgh. With the recent creation of The Pittsburgh Peace Roundtable we are engaging with various justice groups and progressive organizations to join in the effort to end all US wars and imperialism around the world.

Nevertheless, a revitalized anti-war movement cannot be limited to ending war solely on moral grounds. There are many intersectional justice issues that imperialistic wars create: gender and race discrimination, environmental destruction, classism, and economic oppression. There is also the direct correlation that our endless wars produce a culture of violence in our local communities here in the US. War and the costs of war negatively impact almost every aspect of our lives.

This is why the AWC has been increasingly involved in and sponsored nonviolent direct actions, pickets, and anti-war protests in recent months. Our committee also realizes that our communities need to be educated and informed about the moral and practical issues surrounding the US's penchant to engage in senseless wars. To create a sustained anti-war movement will necessitate continually educating the public to the true costs of war.

On April 21st and 22nd the AWC is proud to be co-sponsoring an important speaker's event with Beaver County Peace Links and Veterans For Peace (Western PA Chapter, 47). We have invited Michael McPhearson, the national Executive Director of Veterans For Peace, and Kevin Martin, the national

President of Peace Action, to come to Pittsburgh and Beaver County to help us revitalize our area's peace movement. These two men have a large vision for peace in our time that is both comprehensive and inclusive. Peace Action is the country's largest peace and disarmament organization, with approximately 200,000 supporters nationwide. Veterans For Peace is an international organization made up of over 120 chapters across the United States and abroad, with a permanent representative to the United Nations.

To date more than 20 regional peace and justice groups have endorsed this inspiring educational event. Though the exact nature of the talks has not been set, primarily because of the fluid nature of our current political situation, certainly the issues of nuclear disarmament, increased militarism by the Trump regime, and the worsening situation in the Middle East will be high on the list.

The events, entitled "Prospects for War...The Need for Peace" will be held in two locations: The Pittsburgh event will be on Friday, April 21, at 7:00 pm at the University of Pittsburgh Law School (Barco Building), 3900 Forbes Ave., Room 109/ The Beaver County event will be in Monaca, PA on Saturday, April 22, 1:00 pm at the Community College of Beaver County, 1 Campus Dr., Health Science Center, Poplar Ave., Room 6010. Please sign up to attend one or both of these events by visiting the VFP Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/PghVFP/> or the Beaver County Peace Links Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/>



Kevin Martin, President of Peace Action. Photo taken from organization's website.

[BeaverCountyPeaceLinks/](#).

If you would like more information or would like to have your organization listed as an endorser, please email pauldordal@gmail.com.

Paul Dordal is a member of the Thomas Merton Center and Vice-President of Veterans For Peace, Chapter 47.

The Message of America's Prophets

By Neil Cosgrove

The seven Americans profiled in Albert J. Raboteau's recently published *American Prophets* are deeply devout people who, nevertheless, should greatly trouble the consciences of those whose religious faith commonly manifests itself in a rigid sexual morality and a fervent devotion to the mythic capitalism of "free markets." The prophets to which Raboteau refers, in the order of the chapters devoted to each, are Abraham Joshua Heschel, A.J. Muste, Dorothy Day, Howard Thurman, Thomas Merton, Martin Luther King Jr., and Fannie Lou Hamer, or, as the subtitle puts it, *Seven Religious Radicals & Their Struggle for Social and Political Justice*.

Just how radical is clear from the book's opening pages, which feature an extended discussion of Rabbi Heschel's signature statement that "God is in need of human beings," that the relationship between God and man is, in Raboteau's words, a "mutual partnership." Raboteau connects this concept to Merton's "guilty bystander," the person who is indifferent to human suffering and blind to the mutual humanity of all peoples, no matter how culturally and physically strange each may seem to the other. "Few are guilty but all are responsible," Heschel wrote.

People who experience and live out religious faith with such a consciousness, Raboteau's narratives make apparent, have a much better chance of connecting to those of different faith communities, and indeed to the thoroughly secularized, than do those who insist on a supreme being starkly distinct from themselves, a being whose aspect and nature can be known to the rest of us only through the intermediation of a chosen (usually self-appointed) few. Heschel and Merton sought intimate knowledge of an impulse that seems as universal in humans as just about anything beyond the need to perform the functions necessary for existence and pro-creation—that is, a longing to feel part of a larger whole, to belong to some time-spanning forward movement of cosmic proportions. This longing pushes humans to consistently and perpetually conceive of some transcendental instrument (whether that instrument be god, or multiple gods, or something else), regardless of an individual's position in time, space or culture.

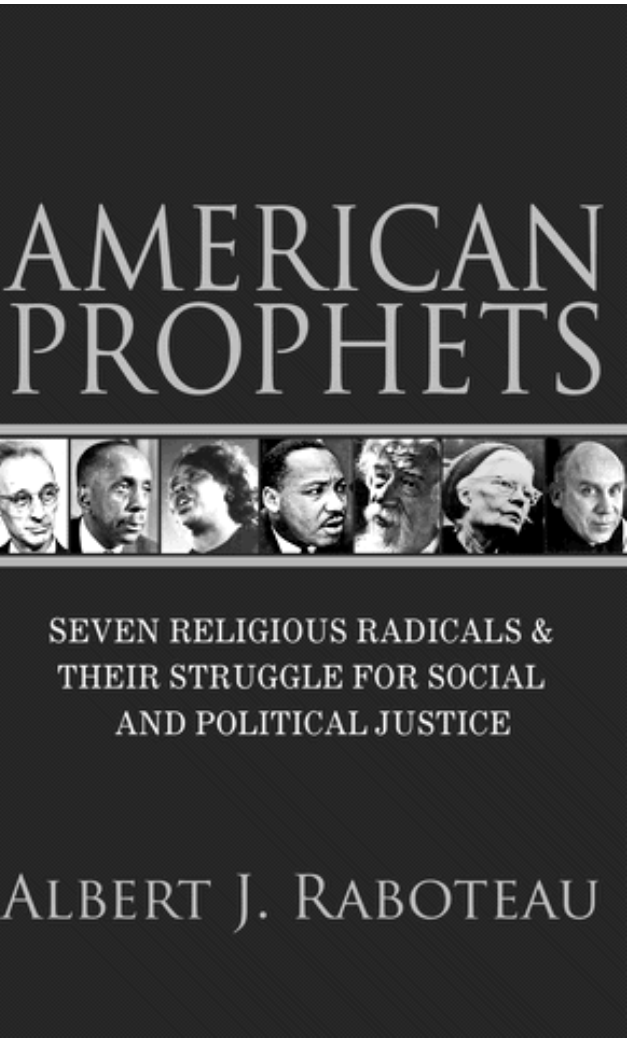
Longing for an outward-looking validation, to

Raboteau's seven radicals, becomes equated with, indeed becomes the same as, the universal yearning for love and justice. Moreover, the object of religious faith cannot exist apart from that human yearning. A god whose primary function is to elect the chosen is a mere creation of the individual human ego.

For example, Howard Thurman discovered, through his ministry as an African-American Baptist preacher, the ability to connect with the deepest religious impulses of people from very different faith traditions, such as Buddhists or Hindus. Answering a challenge from a young Indian lawyer about the injury "Christians" had inflicted on African-Americans, Thurman distinguished "between Christianity and the religion of Jesus... the churches and all the so-called Christian institutions are built ... upon the assumption that the strong man is superior to the weak man and [has] the sound right to exploit the weak and be served by him." Instead, for Thurman the value of any religion rests in how it shares "God with men who are the disinherited, the outsiders, the fringe dwellers."

In short, what value is any faith that is not inclusive, that does not see in every human what it sees in its supposed "elect?" And in these arguments, Raboteau establishes for the reader what ties together all the subjects of the book—Muste's commitment to pacifism and to labor, Day's to the poor, no matter how difficult or troubling, King's to an America falling far short of its promise of equality and justice for all. Hamer, as the final chapter, serves as the very personification of both the disinherited and the faith-propelled leader.

Born into a sharecropping family, a cotton field laborer from the age of six, Hamer demonstrated both industry and intellectual acumen, but not much of a political consciousness until she was in her '40s and encountered civil rights activists in her rural corner of Mississippi. As she worked through struggles to gain the vote and to seat the Mississippi Freedom Party at the 1964 Democratic Convention (while suffering both incarceration and torture at the hands of local police), Hamer also developed a unique and gripping speaking style that wove her deep knowledge of Biblical texts into her forceful argu-



ments for equality and dignity for all.

Raboteau ends his book by asking if the people depicted in his book could serve as "exemplary figures" for today, as he considers the Charleston, SC church murders by white supremacist Dylan Roof. The answer, for him, appears to be that new prophets are always necessary, people who trouble "the consciences of their fellow citizens, shaming them out of the slumber of contentment and apathy of ease to act."

Neil Cosgrove is a member of the Editorial Collective and the Merton Center board.

Addressing Budget Insanity

Off our Rockers and Into the Streets

By Bette McDevitt

That would be us out there....the Pittsburgh Raging Grannies. You may have seen us at a rally or two, wearing outdated hats and Mardi Gras beads, clambering up to a makeshift stage, or standing on a street corner, singing one of our old melodies with customized lyrics. It might be "Haliburton" to the tune of "Hava Nagila," with a little shuffle in our feet, or "Corporate Farm" to the tune of "Old McDonald," no cows, just pigs, and a "tax scam here, a tax scam there."

We've been at this since 2003. After a rally at Market Square, just as the Iraq War was getting under way, Edith Bell, Tim Vining, the Merton Center director at the time, and I decided we needed a Raging Grannies Chapter here. I had seen the Vancourver Grannies at the Nevada Nuclear Weapons Test Site, and both Edith and Tim had seen other Grannies groups. They are everywhere.

Within a few weeks, there were eight or nine

of us rehearsing songs in various church basements, singing on church steps, street corners, rallies and marches. Our first big gig was the Merton Center dinner in November of that year. We were a bit raggedy, but now we actually come in on the same beat, and sometimes we harmonize.

We've grown since then, to about a dozen, and we do welcome new members. "But I can't carry a tune" is a common response, when we invite people to join the group. Being a coloratura is not a requirement, but being a bit of a ham and wanting to have some fun make for a good Granny. The commitment to peace and justice is a given. Being nice counts for a lot; we often find ourselves in unusual situations that call for respect and relative calm.

We do write the lyrics to the old tunes, but Grannies all over the country are sitting up at night in flannel robes, writing the most amaz-

ing songs, and they are available to us all. One of our current favorites is The Refugee Song, written by Mel Packer, to the tune of "When Johnny Comes Marching Home." He didn't write it for us- he sometimes sings it himself- but he allows us to sing it.

If you'd like to join us, contact the Merton Center, and they will put you in touch with us. And by the way, you don't have to be a grandmother, We just wear those funny hats to catch people's attention. We meet every second Wednesday, to sing, enjoy each other's company and plan for the time when peace prevails.

Bette McDevitt is a member of the Editorial Collective and a Raging Granny

Tax Day Tuesday April 18

By Edith Bell & Susan Smith

Where do your tax dollars go? How would you like them to be spent? For the past 10 years, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) have distributed pie charts of the Federal budget on the last day to pay taxes. On April 18, they will again be at the corner of Murray and Darlington in Squirrel Hill. Through a penny poll, you can show how you would like to allocate your taxes by dividing 10 cents into jars labeled military, veterans, food, healthcare, education, housing. (Pennies are provided.) The Raging Grannies will accompany your deliberations.

Most people agree that there has to be a source of revenue to create a well-functioning society; they don't mind contributing their share.

They disagree, however, on what their fair share is and on how it is allocated.

What are the needs we have to pay for? Education, healthcare, roads and bridges to get around, protection of our environment, a safety net for people in need, a government, including police to make everything all happen and run smoothly. Add to that defense from people or other countries who want to harm us.

Our Federal Budget is heavily tilted toward defense. The United States has oceans to the east and west, Canada to the north and Mexico to the south, both peaceful neighbors. Yet more than half of the Federal Budget's discretionary funding has gone for military spending in recent years; it is not just to defend our country, but to influence the world.

Look at some evidence: on one day alone (3-17-17) the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette* reports from Raqqa, Syria, "American-backed militia fighters.. had seized the main route;" from Yemen, "U.S. air campaign in Yemen kills former Guantanamo detainee;" from the Strait of Hormuz; "Swift moving Iranian vessels came dangerously close to a U.S. Navy surveillance ship." Further, the US is fighting wars in Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Sudan, Iraq, and Afghanistan. US surveillance and battle ships are off the coast of Iran, in the Black Sea, and in the South China Sea. US anti-missile systems are in South Korea and in eastern Europe, and the US has troops and bases around the world.

The United States spends more on the military than the next 7 countries combined. President Trump plans to add another \$54 billion, part of it at the expense of funding for diplomacy. But it is only through diplomacy that the US can pull back from around

the world and reduce violence.

Still, corporations like Lockheed Martin, Boeing, and others make huge profits from wars. Since the Supreme Court decision of Citizens United made money equivalent to free speech, corporations have financed Congress and fueled the war machine. Less money for the destruction of the world would mean less spent for weapons and rebuilding, but more funding for human needs, creating fewer refugees and eliminating the need for walls. We would also have more resources available to use at home.

There are alternatives; according to National Priorities Project, the past \$528.48 billion military budget could have paid for:

- 653,893 Elementary school teachers for 1 year, or
- 713,461 Clean energy jobs created for 1 year, or
- 5.93 million Head Start slots for children for 1 Year, or
- 2.27 million Students receiving Pell Grants of \$5,815 for 4 Years, or
- 22.29 million Children receiving low-income healthcare for 1 Year, or
- 36.77 million Households with solar electricity for 1 Year.

What are the consequences of so much military spending for us? The City of Pittsburgh Home Rule Charter, Article II, Section 204, Subsection (i), part 4 states, "The mayor shall present an annual report on the tax monies paid per capita [by] the citizens of the City of Pittsburgh to the federal government that is allocated to military spending. The report shall include an analysis of the impact of the military budget on the City's economy in relation to jobs and social services. The mayor shall advertise this analysis in two prominent daily newspapers in the City." This information has not been published for a while. A request was sent to Mayor Peduto to comply with this rule. We want to see how military spending effects our city.

Unfortunately, these last 10 years have brought little positive change in the ways our taxes are spent.

Join us. Allocate YOUR pennies. Make your voice heard and interact with people in the street to hear their views!

These authors are members of the Pittsburgh branch of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.



The Raging Grannies opened the People's Inauguration at Freedom Corner with song. Photo by Neil Cosgrove

A musical 'fun-raiser' celebrating 31 years of the Black Political Empowerment Project serving the Metropolitan Pittsburgh Community

TWELFTH ANNUAL B-PEP JAZZ Easter Monday 2017

A six hour JAZZ MARATHON featuring over 70 of Pittsburgh's Best Musicians and Vocalists, 11 Guest Celebrity Emcees, with host bands, Roger Humphries and the RH Factor, and the Tim Stevens Project.

**Wyndham Pittsburgh University Center
starting at 5:30,
the Monday after Easter, April 17, 2017**

**Order your tickets now, just \$35
\$30 for students and senior citizens
www.b-pepjazz.org**

**For ANYONE and EVERYONE who loves
Jazz!**



Sanctuaries Past and Present

New Sanctuary Movement Pittsburgh

By Pastor Linda Theophilus

New Sanctuary Movement Pittsburgh is getting started. Communities of all faiths, immigrants and individual allies are all invited to work together so that we create safe spaces for immigrants.

Our immediate goal is “to establish sanctuary congregations and provide a network of support for the Pittsburgh immigrant community.”

Following the model of New Sanctuary Movement organizations in other cities, the Pittsburgh movement will evolve to meet local needs as identified by immigrants themselves.

During the recent campaign to support Martin Esquivel-Hernandez, it became clear that members of our community may need or want a safe place to stay in order to delay or prevent deportation.

On December 6, members of local communities of faith and interested individuals met for a Conversation about Sanctuary. At the end of the evening, we concluded that Pittsburgh needs a Sanctuary organization and that we would get started.

Since then, a growing number of faith communities and individuals have begun to organize the New Sanctuary Movement Pittsburgh. This is a work in progress as we build relationships with immigrants, learn about needs and develop our structure. We anticipate a broad range of ways to partner as immigrants and allies. This is not just about protective housing.

What does participation look like?

Here are some answers we are learning as we pay attention to needs in Pittsburgh and benefit from the experience of the New Sanctuary Movement Philadelphia and New Sanctuary Movement New York:

- Listening, prayer, emotional support
- Emergency housing
- Accompanying immigrants going to ICE appointments
- Transportation to and from work
- Food
- Friendship
- Financial contributions
- Leadership development for immigrants and allies
- Advocacy
- Housing in congregational space as long as necessary
- Ongoing education within congregations
- Collaboration with other service and advocacy organizations
- Know your rights training
- Prayer walks around ICE offices

If you would like to learn more or get involved (or get your faith community involved), the contact person for New Sanctuary Movement Pittsburgh is Rev. Linda Theophilus. Her contact information is 412-401-5742, revtheophilus@live.com.

The concept of Sanctuary as a safe space, a place of protection from danger, comes from instructions in Numbers 35 in the sacred Scriptures of Jews and Christians. The twelve tribes of Israel were instructed to establish cities of refuge. Whenever someone was accused of violating a law – whether innocent, accidental or guilty – that

person could flee to the city of refuge and take shelter in the place of worship. This was intended to provide time for fair process, to prevent unjust punishment and protection from revenge. The principle was adopted in Christian Europe and continues to be respected by law enforcement in the United States. During the Sanctuary movement of the 1980s, enforcement officers of the Immigration and Naturalization Services did not enter churches to take anyone into custody. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) adopted a policy of “sensitive” places (which is on the ice.gov website as of this writing). ICE officers avoid places of worship, schools, hospitals and medical facilities and rallies/marches/public events for taking people into custody.

During the last ten years, some immigrants facing deportation have taken sanctuary in church buildings. Chicago, Portland, New York, Phoenix, New Jersey and Philadelphia churches have provided living space. Like the Central American immigrants from the 1980s, some have needed time to present a case for asylum or other relief from deportation. Others, with many allies, have chosen a time of sanctuary to have time with family before an inevitable deportation. This is a powerful way of highlighting what is wrong with immigration laws and the way they are enforced.

The number of congregations participating in the Sanctuary movement now is very similar to the number in the 1980s. The Rev. Alexia Salvaterra, who participated in the earlier sanctuary movement as a young Lutheran in Berkeley, California and is now a leader in the New Sanctuary Movement, says that the earlier movement involved more than 500 churches over a ten year period, sheltering about 500,000 refugees. Approximately 500 congregations have identified as sanctuary churches now and the number is growing.

Are there any immigrants in sanctuary housing in Pittsburgh? So far, no. But there is definitely a need for safe spaces, friendship and accompaniment that meets needs in these days.

Pastor Linda Theophilus is a long standing immigrant rights activist.



“Not One More Deportation, Ni una Mas!” banner outside of Dom Costas office on May 13th, calling on Allegheny County Democrats to oppose anti-immigrant legislation. Photo By Christina Castillo

Pittsburgh and TMC’s History of Immigrant Sanctuary Cont’d

By Joyce Rothermel

stop on this “underground railroad”) to a Catholic Church there. They eventually went to Canada, which had a more open refugee policy, and settled in Toronto.

When asked about the motivation for offering sanctuary at the time, Art said that it was a work of charity done with compassion. Gabriel and Maria often went to churches to tell their stories, so people would know that they were refugees who could be picked up and deported. The more challenging part for the Task Force was to protest and alter U.S. immigration policy. At a press conference organized by the Task Force, Gabriel and Maria wore masks. The event served to publicize that the refugees were in Pittsburgh, and that US policy needed to change.

Finally, at the end of the

1980’s, following the murders of the six Jesuit priests, their house keeper and her daughter, the U.S. cut off aid to El Salvador. The civil war soon ended.

Now, Art is involved in the sanctuary movement in Salem, Massachusetts, where he lives. Congregations are discussing sanctuary. The mayor favors an ordinance to become a sanctuary city. Their city council will vote soon. We are grateful to those organizing the New Sanctuary Movement in Pittsburgh and saddened that sanctuary is needed once again.

Joyce Rothermel is a TMC board member and a member of the New-People Editorial Collective.

“19:33 Offering” Initiative to Support Immigrants and Refugees

By Jim Ruck

In ongoing response to the needs of immigrants and refugees in many parts of the world, the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Cross in Indiana undertook a new initiative called the “19:33 Offering.” The name of the initiative was inspired by the Bible’s Book of Leviticus: When foreigners live with you in your land, do not mistreat them. You shall treat the foreigner who lives with you no differently than the citizens born among you; you shall love them as yourself; for you too were once foreigners in the land of Egypt. I, the Lord, am your God.” –Leviticus 19:33

“In Leviticus 19:33, God commands us to love the stranger as we love ourselves, and to treat the stranger no differently than we treat the citizens born among us,” said Sister Sharlet Ann

Wagner, CSC, a member of the General Council of the Sisters of the Holy Cross, who, with others on the leadership team, developed the 19:33 Offering initiative. She noted that the number 1933 has historical significance in the fight against religious-based persecution, as it was in that year that the first anti-Jewish laws were passed in Germany.

The Sisters of the Holy Cross have donated \$1,933 to

each of six organizations that serve immigrants and refugees, either through direct service to these vulnerable groups, or through pursuing legal challenges to unjust laws and practices. We can join them.

At St. James in Wilksburg, the Social Justice and Peace Committee has taken on the Initiative and begun collecting donations from parishioners representing their stand for justice and in support of Pittsburgh’s immigrants who shudder in fear. We have asked for donations of \$1.93, \$19.33, \$193.30 or another amount in cash or check to “Casa San Jose” in Brookline. Casa San Jose works for immigrant rights in Pittsburgh and have lawyers to aide individuals and families in this time of crisis. Contributions will be sent to Casa San Jose, c/o Sister Janice Vanderneck, CSJ, 933 Brookline Blvd, Pittsburgh, PA 15226. To find out more about them, call (412) 343-3111 or visit www.casasanjose.org.

Other congregations and organizations are encouraged to take up the 19:33 Offering Initiative. Your support is needed now more than ever as Casa San Jose responds to the current challenges within the Hispanic community here in Pittsburgh.

Jim Ruck is a member of St. James Social Justice and Peace Committee in Wilksburg.

Coverage in the media of the provisions in the Affordable Care Act and Republican proposals to replace it has been intense but fragmented since Republicans gained control of both the executive and legislative branches of the federal government this past November. Discussion of other possible proposals for improving Americans' health care, such as a single-payer system, has been practically non-existent. To help our readers understand each of the above three approaches, and to determine their impact on citizens, the *NewPeople* is providing succinct summaries of what each approach offers.

What the Affordable Care Act Does

By Neil Cosgrove

The Affordable Care Act was passed by Congress and signed by the president in 2010, and fully implemented in 2014. Its overall intent is to create universal coverage through regulation of a marketplace in which private “non-profit” and for-profit health insurance companies offer policies to citizens, and by expansion of coverage through the government-sponsored Medicaid program. The law seeks universal coverage through the following provisions:

- Requiring individuals and families to have health insurance, with the federal government assisting in the payment of premiums by those below certain income levels through subsidies. The intent of this mandate is to lower insurance costs and the premiums of those most likely to need medical care by pulling younger, healthier people into the marketplace, who can then share the costs of such care. To help pay for the credits and expanded Medicaid, the law charged a 3.8% investment tax on the wealthy and a 0.9% surcharge on wages over \$250,000.

- Expanding Medicaid coverage by increasing eligibility for such coverage to include all those individuals and families with income not exceeding 138 percent of the federally determined poverty level. The law originally stipulated that every state

would be required to participate in Medicaid expansion, but the Supreme Court eventually ruled that states could choose to participate or not, with 31 states currently enrolled, and receiving expanded funding from the federal government that covers over 90% of the increased costs.

- Requiring that insurance companies provide coverage to individuals with “pre-existing conditions” without charging those individuals exorbitant premiums. Through governance provided by the law, the differences in premiums for individuals 50 to 64 and younger, usually healthier individuals cannot exceed 3-to-1. In addition, young adults up to 26 years of age could remain covered by the family policies held by their parents.

- Lowering the costs of insurance by lowering overall costs for care, through an emphasis on preventive care, on pressure to meet “set costs” for particular kinds of care, and on tying payments to outcomes, rather than the amount of care delivered. The law also established minimum standards of care for insurance policies companies could offer.

The law has succeeded in lowering the number of uninsured Americans from 16% in 2010 to 8.8% in 2016, with 20.4 million more people now cov-

ered, according to the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. In addition, significant drops in bad debt and in spending on charity care have benefited hospitals.

What the law has failed to do so far is create universal coverage, as seen from the figures above. Insurance companies that underestimated payments they would have to make over the first few years of the law have either dropped out of the marketplace or increased premiums significantly, while customers often settle for plans with high deductibles and co-pays. Many people would rather risk paying penalties than obtain coverage.

David Leonhardt of the *New York Times* argues that neither the penalties nor the subsidies are high enough to lessen the number of hold-outs, while *Politico* says enforcement has been spotty, with poor oversight of special enrollment periods allowing people to jump in and out of coverage, depending on their health situation. A lack of knowledge of the law's benefits may also have kept some people out of the marketplace.

Neil Cosgrove is a member of the Editorial Collective and the Merton Center board.

What the Failed Republican Health Care Plan Would Have Done

By Neil Cosgrove

Early in March, the Republican House leadership made public their proposed bill for replacing the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Much later in March that same leadership failed to gather the votes that would have moved the bill to the Senate. It is impossible to know what the final form of a bill that can pass both the House and Senate would look like, or whether any bill will ultimately become law. Given internal divisions within the Republican caucus, it appears less and less likely that Republicans will succeed anytime soon in repealing the ACA and replacing it. The House bill sought to replace “Obamacare” while ensuring that the number of uninsured does not return to 2010 levels, through the following provisions:

- Removing the individual and employer mandates requiring health insurance, including the penalties for not having insurance. The bill retained the so-called “Cadillac tax” on high-priced plans. People would be encouraged to purchase policies through refundable tax credits, which means that even if the tax due is less than their designated credit, filers will receive a refund for the difference. The bill's tax credits would be determined solely by age, whereas the Affordable Care Act also took income and geographic area into account, and range from \$2,000 for those 30 and under to \$4,000 for people 60 and over.

- Phasing out the ACA's Medicaid expansion, with states allowed to enroll more people in Medi-

caid until 2020, when there would be a freeze on enrollment. At that point states would have to begin choosing which people should be eligible for Medicaid and which are not, since expansion of whom is covered would not be possible. Federal Medicaid support to the states would then take the form of block grants based on number enrolled.

- Changing the requirement that insurance companies must cover people with “pre-existing conditions,” into a “continuous coverage” requirement. People with lapsed coverage must be offered insurance but, beginning in 2019, if they had gone 63 or more continuous days without coverage a 30% penalty would be placed on their premiums. In addition, a 64-year-old could, under this bill, be charged five times what a 21-year-old might pay in premiums, thus eliminating the 3-to-1 ratio set by the ACA.

- Eliminating the 10 essential benefits the ACA said must be included in health insurance policies. Insurance companies would be free to offer policies with maximum allowable payments, with higher deductibles and co-pays, and with excluded procedures and therapies at whatever premium levels they believed the market would bear. This set of required standards proved to be a main point of negotiations between the Republican House Leadership and their highly conservative Freedom Caucus members. The leadership agreed, in the bill they subsequently pulled on March 24th, to drop the standards, in re-

turn for keeping the taxes on wealthy wage-earners until 2024. All told, the states would have a pile of money (\$115 billion) to finance “high-risk pools” and help cover “mental health issues, maternity care, infant care, and substance abuse issues,” according to the GOP chair of the Ways and Means Committee Kevin Brady. Without the ACA standards, insurers would likely drop such coverage from their offered policies.

Republican governors from states who have participated in Medicaid expansion were generally opposed to the “phase out” of that expansion. (In Pennsylvania alone, nearly 700,000 more people have received insurance through that expansion.) Several Republican senators and some less conservative Republican House members were clearly spooked by the Congressional Budget Office's analysis that the House bill would result in 24 million people losing their health insurance over the next 10 years.

Democrats want to keep “Obamacare,” and improve it somehow, while broader criticisms of the Republican bill were neatly summed up by the *Money* web site: “The bill drastically cuts tax credits for the oldest and poorest Americans, while giving the upper class a major tax break.” Polls published just before the bill was pulled indicated that only 17% of Americans supported it.

What a Single Payer System Could Do Cont'd

By Neil Cosgrove

gressive income tax rates, taxing investment income at the same rate as wages, and an estate tax. Both plans claim their approach will actually result in significant savings for both employers and individuals, given current spending on premiums, deductibles, and co-pays.

- As for current government-administered plans, Medicare would still exist and under the PHCP seniors would still pay their Part B premiums but would no longer need supplemental policies to cover drugs and other expenditures. The need for Medicaid would no longer be necessary. The plans insist they are not “socialized medicine” because doctors and other medical workers would remain private, and

not government employees.

- Under the Pennsylvania plan, Quality of Care Panels will ensure that various health professionals, institutions, and suppliers will meet necessary standards.

While these proposals simply eliminate the current system of private health insurance, it must be noted that such insurance does still exist in countries with universal, government-sponsored health care systems. Ever rising costs have sometimes troubled such systems. The Sanders' plan estimated annual cost at \$1.38 trillion a year for the entire country, while a 2014 estimate of expenditures for the Pennsylvania plan was \$49 billion.

The biggest obstacles to these plans, so rationally and instinctively appealing, are the deeply ingrained ideological and cultural assumptions that exist in this country regarding such a radical change in the way we manage healthcare. With Republicans, commonly opposed to even much smaller government programs, in charge of so many legislatures, including the U.S. Congress, the near-future of single payer plans is not promising. The plans' advocates, nevertheless, continue to work to break down resistance to “single payer” and to ultimately witness the triumph of an idea they believe is long past due.

Remembering Don Fisher

We Remember...

Fr. Don Fisher, long time peace and justice activist, passed away on February 25th while riding a Port Authority bus. In his 80's, Fr. Fisher had given up his car and was a frequent rider from his home in McKees Rocks.

His was a life time of prayer, service and activism. From parish ministry, to civil rights in Selma, to social service and organizing work at Focus on Renewal in McKees Rocks, to missionary service in Tanzania, Africa, to solidarity work with refugees from

Central America, to witness and arrest opposing war, militarism, and nuclear weapons, to supporting justice issues within the Catholic Church, including women's equality, married Priests, and ministry to the gay community.

During this past several months, Fr. Fisher came out in the streets supporting the release of Pittsburgh refugee Martin Hernandez Esquivel.

An active member of the Association of Pittsburgh Priests, Fr. Fisher supported the Merton Center and its work for the past 45 years. He showed us how to live out the values of our faith in actions of compassion, peace and justice.

Other TMC members remember Don Fisher and offer their reflections.

Patron of Refugees: Father Don Fisher

By Father Bernard Survil

As Father Carl Gentile prepares his homily to be delivered at the Mass for Fr. Donald Fisher at St. Germaine parish, Bethel Park on Friday, March 3, 2017, I offer an obit about Father Don's great gift of hospitality, which he provided me and the two refugees with whom I was traveling in the early 1980's.

One had been a student leader at the national university in San Salvador and therefore targeted by the regime for leading street protests against repression; the other came from a family of labor leaders who likewise were targeted by the Salvadoran military who had murdered the Four American Women in December of 1980, and who would kill the Jesuits of the Catholic University in November of 1989. And it's common knowledge that those Salvadoran officers, trained at the U.S. School of the Americas, were those who conspired against Blessed Oscar Romero in March of 1980.

At the time I had been asked by the Sanctuary Movement to accompany the two young Salvadoran men from their "safe-church" in Tucson, Arizona, but to do so as part of a very risky speaking tour which took us to such places as the Presbyterian Seminary in Louisville, the Ohio State Campus in Columbus, and then Pittsburgh. Father Fisher offered to put the three of us up at his rectory at Most Blessed Sacrament in the East End. Later that night, after we had retired, Fr. Fisher was heard talking to people at his front door. Shortly afterward he roused us from bed, telling us we had to find a more secure place since they were INS agents asking about "illegals" in the neighborhood. Fr. Fisher feigned ignorance of such people, after which the agents left. So later that night, he drove us to the Sisters of Mercy Mother House, and from there the next morning we fled east to the Philadelphia area, where we again had a very close call of being detained.

Blessed hospitality was what Fr. Fisher offered at risk of being indicted for "harboring the undocumented," which was a federal offense. But it's the same hospitality we are called to and which is reflected in the January 31, 2017 message by Bishop David Zubik, who is quoted saying: "We must now stand up...for immigrants and refugees who are looking to come to America....Some of them are quite literally fleeing for their lives."

Among many other virtues, let Fr. Fisher be known locally as "The Patron of Refugees."

Fr. Bernard Survil, Fr.Survil@EmbraceAllOfLife.us/
27 February, 2017

P.S. I'll be traveling to Guatemala and El Salvador in May "...to meet with Guatemalan and Salvadoran church specialist in migration matters to verify from them what's causing unaccompanied children to continue to flee to the USA," but who soon will face "a big, beautiful wall along the US-Mexican border," to quote The President.



Don Fisher taught pottery classes and was known potter, sculpting his clay using his hands rather than a wheel.

Father Don In His Own Words

By Bette McDevitt

Father Don Fisher, who was a pastor at Blessed Sacrament Parish in Homewood, Pa., made his Central American and nuclear arms actions at the Merton Center a part of his ministry. "It was in the early days of my new pastorate," Fisher said. "I welcomed those experiences as opportunities to preach and teach. I wanted to tell them what I was doing and why, saying, 'This is who I am.'"

Fisher thought he had a sense of balance about the issues, but at times he wondered. "I guess if you were a parishioner, you would be tired of hearing about it. There was an Irish lady who was hard of hearing, and she spoke very loudly. She sat in the fourth pew from the front. One Sunday, I started out on Nicaragua and she said, 'Oh Chr-r-rist, not Nicar-r-ragua again!' I heard her, and so did everyone else, so I stopped and said, 'Yes, Margaret, Nicaragua again.'"

Another memory caused Fisher to grow serious. "I remember a rally in Trinity Episcopal Church. There was a 'die-in' during the liturgy, to bring to mind the horrors of nuclear war. It was powerful and made me cry. When I had the opportunity to be part of a 'die-in' to mark the 40th anniversary of Hiroshima in August of 1985 at Rockwell [aerospace company], I did it.

"We got all dressed up in white faces and black outfits, and the police were marshaled in front of the door. It was during the week, and there were plenty of people there. Everybody was watching from the windows above. There was somber music, and people in ghostlike outfits dropped to the ground. We kept slithering toward the front door, and the police line kept moving back. We just kept coming. All I could see was shoes and legs. We were on the ground crawling around like snakes. We managed to get in the front door.

It was a powerful demonstration for which we were arrested and sentenced to five days in jail if we refused to pay the fine, and of course we refused. The time in jail was very liturgical and ritualistic in the broader sense," he said.

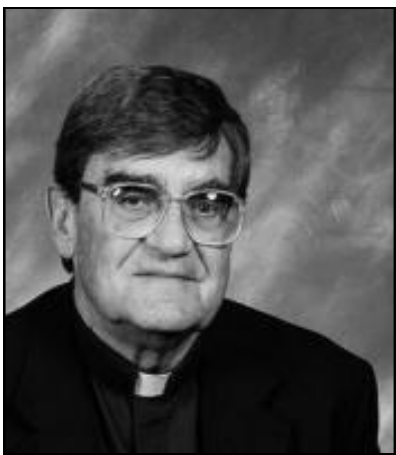
Pittsburgh's bishop at the time never said a word about these priests being carted off to jail. "I think down deep he had a sense of pride that we were involved, and what were they going to do anyway? Clearly, we were on the right side of history," Fisher said.

More Memories

Don Fisher, such a wonderful person in so many ways, will be remembered and missed, and will continue to inspire me and others to maintain a lifetime of activism.

In his honor, I'm going to purchase four memberships for Poochini's customers who have recently become active.

-Ginny H

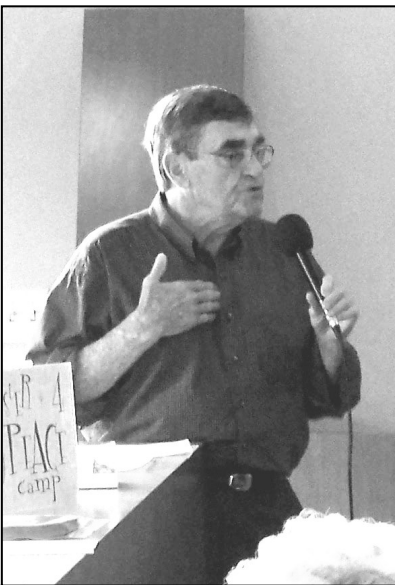
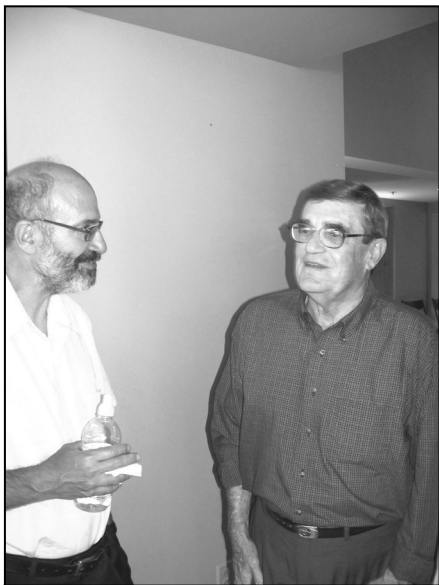


Beautiful. I treasure a bowl he made for the Just Harvest Empty Bowls fundraiser. Peace, Don.
-Molly Rush

Raku Dynamo

Early morning rain, biting gusts of wind, then brilliant blue sky all in one day as the pots are pulled from the white heat to orange, brown purple leaves faded from fall, dry, to set afire and flung into a barrel of cold water to explode.

On other days the neighborhood threatens and the pot meister must answer calls of pain. Wearing His multi-colored Afro-pill box on his head he Flings the pots from kiln, to leaves, to water In a dance of creation as the flames heighten.
-Liz Hughes



Left Photo: Father Don Fisher with TMC Member and Vice President of the Center for Constitutional Rights, Jules Lobel. Center Photo: Father Don Fisher with Sr. Carol Dougherty, also a TMC member . Right Photo: Father Don Fisher speak. Photos courtesy of Jim Ruck

My favorite Don Fisher memory relates around the directive that Pittsburgh bishop Anthony Bevilacqua sent out in 1985, ordering all diocesan priests to exclude women from the “washing of the feet” ritual that is held in Catholic Churches as part of the Good Friday ceremony. My wife and I were furious and, as Catholics, embarrassed. Then on Holy Thursday we put on the nightly news and, to our delight, saw a newsmen--I think it was Dan Rather, but after all these years I could be mistaken--interviewing a priest who refused to comply with the bishop's dictum because he thought it did not comply with the message of the gospels. You guessed it; the priest was our beloved Father Fisher. He will be missed!
-Ed Brett



Don donated his pottery for non profit fundraisers, most recently for the Merton Award dinner silent auction last fall. Courtesy of Catherine Raffaele.

Besides being an advocate for social justice, an inspiring homilist and a sensitive and compassionate listener, Don had an artist's soul, which I think kept him balanced and humble. I am very grateful that he passed on his love of clay to me and many other people. Our friendship was fired during many hours in my basement studio, glazing our creations and firing them in my primitive kiln, with the help of my engineer husband, Don. We would always take a break for lunch when we would discuss the state of the church and the world and of course have all kind of creative solutions to the problems of both. We have kept these discussions alive over the phone even though we now live in California. The Potter did great work when he/she shaped you, and blew life into you. That spirit will never die.

-Pat Rampolla

Good Friday Way of the Cross in Wilkinsburg

By Mimi Darragh

Come to Pittsburgh Theological Seminary for the annual Bread Workshop on Sunday, April 23 from 1 – 4 PM at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. Already, the proposed federal budget for 2018 looks like bad news both domestically and internationally for those who qualify for our country’s food and nutrition programs. We will learn first-hand from Bread Representative Sheena Rolle Bread’s focus for this year’s offering of letters to our U.S. Congressmen.

Meetings are now being scheduled in the local offices of Senators Casey and Toomey along with Representatives Doyle, Murphy and Rothfus. For more information on how you can register for the workshop and/or get involved, call Joyce Rothermel at 412-780-5118 or by email at rothermeljoyce@gmail.com

The Bread Team meets periodically at Christian Associates of SW PA who offices are located at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. They host an annual Bread for the World Workshop in the spring and promote the annual offering of letters in area Christian Churches and Congregations, meet with the US Senators and Representatives in their local offices, and attend the annual Bread for the World Lobby Day in early June.

Motivating Voters

Reseeding the Swamp

By Michael Drohan

During the presidential election campaign of 2016, one of the things that stuck in the craw of many people was how the Hillary Clinton candidacy could relate to the plight of poor and middle class Americans. At \$250,000 a pop for her talks to groups such as Goldman Sachs and the fortune amassed therefrom she seemed to belong to a different planet, that of the rarified 0.1%. However, compared with what we got, she is not really in the same league. What we have in Trump and the Trump Cabinet is a cabal of billionaires and multimillionaires fashioning a country in the interests of these billionaires and millionaires.

The new Commerce Secretary, Wilbur Ross, is estimated to have a net worth of \$2.5 billion. Betsy DeVos, the new Education Secretary, has a net worth of \$1.25 billion. The cumulative wealth of the Trump Cabinet is approaching \$10 billion. Then, apart from wealth, there is Goldman Sachs, the most renowned investment bank in the US, phenomenon. To date there are already six former employees of Goldman Sachs in the Cabinet. Stephen Bannon, Trump's chief political strategist, is a former employee of Goldman Sachs. Steve Mnuchin, the new Secretary of the Treasury, is a former employee of Goldman as well as a former hedge fund manager. Gary Cohn is a former President of Goldman Sachs and joins Trump as his National Economic advisor. Three other ex-Goldman Sachs employees in under-secretary positions are Jay Clayton, Dina Powell and

Anthony Scaramucci. The new Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, has just recently resigned as the CEO of Exxon Mobil, which dominates the global oil industry. But this is only the tip of the iceberg of the Trump team of finance capital and hedge fund gurus.

Some analysts suggest that this is nothing new. In the past, they point out we have had very wealthy men running the US government but they were still capable of reining in the ravages of corporate America and advancing the cause of working and poor people. One points to Teddy Roosevelt who, although wealthy, curbed the excesses and monopolies of corporate America. His namesake, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, it is pointed out, came out in solidarity with the working class and instituted all kinds of progressive reforms which are the foundation of the welfare state today, or what is left of it. So what is different one might ask with the Trump phenomenon? Maybe it is simply that the Trump administration is overt with what has been covert in the past, namely that the US government represents the interests of the billionaire and multi-millionaire class. End of story.

It can be pointed out, however, that since World War II and even going back to the FDR administration during WWII, there were many victories for minorities, women, poor and working class Americans. There was the victory of the Civil Rights Movement, the Environmental Movement and Workers Rights, to name a few. This new admin-

istration, however, has shown little but hostility to all these achievements, and promises to roll back all the regulatory apparatus that they put in place. It has all the appearance of an outright war on women rights, immigrants, civil rights, LGBTQ rights, and on Islam pure and simple.

It is more than ironic than the Trump team came to power with the slogan of "draining the swamp" of the Washington elite and beltway lobbyists corruption. A good sector of the population fell for this bit of rhetoric as they did for the promise to bring back industrial and mining jobs to the US. Identifying scapegoats for the problems created by the dynamics of the capitalist system itself and its ruling class proved to have mass appeal. The Chinese, through unfair undervaluing of their currency and unfair trade practices, supposedly stole our industries. Mexicans and other immigrants stole jobs from hard-working Americans. Crime and drugs ravaged our cities as a result of illegal immigrants. Scapegoats without end. While they try and partially succeed in drugging the public with these myths, the swamp is replenished with more lethal reptiles, it seems.

This author is a member of the Editorial Collective and a member of the Board of the Thomas Merton Center

Two Reasons to Register Before April 17 and Vote in the May Primary

By Kenneth Miller

The Black Political Empowerment Project (BPEP) is looking for PA Legislators to co-sponsor the Due Process Law, which will give investigative and prosecutorial power to the State's Attorney General for any cases involving death at the hands of police. Both new State's Attorney Josh Shapiro and Allegheny County District Attorney Zappala (who ran against Josh Shapiro last year) have reviewed the proposed law and agreed to speak on its behalf. Every state legislator has something they can do now to stand up against police brutality; they can co-sponsor the Due Process Law.

Pittsburgh is one of the few cities in the country where city government has responded to police violence over the past two decades. Our Consent Decree between the Department of Justice and the Pittsburgh Police Department was the first in the nation. There are nearly 20 such decrees now and Donald Trump's US Attorney General Jeff Sessions seems to be abandoning them all.

Our four Jonny Gammage ordinances are nationally unique, turning many of our Consent Decree's requirements into City law. B-PEP's mission is to give legislators something to do to fight police brutality and they have, through creation of the Due Process Law.

The Fraternal Order of Police will lead the opposition to the Due Process Law. They get their own preferred statutes passed all the time. Act 111,

which forces municipalities into binding arbitration, and laws protecting police dogs as though they were people, are examples. It is about time that the PA State Legislature did something to show support for Black Lives Matter.

You will not be able to vote for any state legislators on May 16, 2017... but they are watching to see who votes. So that is one reason to vote in the PA Primary Election on May 16. Here is another:

The Democratic Mayoral Primary is contested from the left by the Reverend John Welch, the City of Pittsburgh Police Chaplain, Dean at the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, and a Peduto appointee to the Sports and Exhibition Authority. He is running on the "Two Pittsburghs" theme. In national rankings Pittsburgh has been named the "Most Livable City," but for many long-term residents it is anything but.

Bill Peduto is probably the most progressive mayor Pittsburgh has had so far. Now he is the incumbent and some people think that makes him unbeatable. His supporters are mobilizing fast and early. They just marched in the Saint Patrick's parade.

Long-term City Councilwoman Darlene Harris has also thrown her hat into the ring. She has also served on the Sports and Exhibi-

tion Authority. All three candidates are experts on the "Civic Arena" Penguins' Development site. Each thinks they can get the deal with the most affordable housing.

If you are not going to be 18 before Election Day May 17 OR you are not a US Citizen, then you cannot vote. But you can help others register to vote and help get people to the polls. This year, more than ever, people who are voting need to hear your input. We don't have to vote like asses or elephants... we can vote in solidarity with one another. It is not easy, but reading the newspaper a few times a week will help.

Kenneth Miller is a frequent contributor to the New People. Many of his previous articles have been about police brutality and the School Board.

Want to help us put together the NewPeople?

We are looking for volunteers to join The Editorial Collective!

Writers, Editors, Photographers, and Web Editors all welcome!



Contact marnifritz@thomasmertoncenter.org for more details!



Information provided by VoteAllegheny

2017 Elections Calendar

- April:** Wed 4/1/17—Verify your voter registration for primary <https://www.paVoterServices.state.pa.us/Pages/VoterRegistrationStatus.aspx>
Monday 4/17/17—Last day to postmark voter registration before primary, or register online <http://register.votespa.com>
- May:** Tuesday 5/2/17—Board of Elections meeting before primary
Tuesday 5/9/17—Deadline to deliver civilian absentee ballot application
Friday 5/12/17—County must receive absentee ballots by 5:00pm
Monday 5/15/17—deadline to postmark military and overseas absentee ballots
Tuesday 5/16/17—PRIMARY ELECTION for Pgh Mayor, City & County council seats, some borough executives, judges, school boards, and election officials.
Polls open 7am–8pm. www.VotesPA.com for your polling place
- June:** Monday 6/5/17—Board of Elections certifies election results
- August:** Tuesday 8/1/17—Last day to circulate and file nomination papers nominating independent candidates or Minor Political Party candidates

VoteAllegheny is a group of volunteers committed to ensuring that citizens of Allegheny County have safe, reliable, accessible, recountable, voter-verifiable elections. Join us at our weekly meetings on Sundays at the Smallman Street Deli on Murray Ave at 4pm, or visit us online at VoteAllegheny.org

Obsessing with the “Russian Candidate”

By Michael Drohan

On September 11, 1973, the first 9/11, airplanes bombed the Presidential Palace in Santiago, Chile and the President, Salvador Allende, was killed. In the aftermath of the coup, 50,000 people were killed and 700,000 imprisoned, tortured and exiled. Dictator General Augusto Pinochet took over and ruled Chile with brutal repression for decades. The CIA in large part organized and orchestrated the coup and its aftermath.

The Chilean coup was one representation of the way the US has intervened in other countries’ elections and governance around the world since World War II. Italy in 1948, Iran/Persia in 1953, and Guatemala in 1954 all followed this style of intervention. Under George W. Bush, Iraq and Afghanistan received more brutal treatment and Libya and Honduras followed the same pattern under Obama. By comparison, the allegations that Russia and President Putin influenced the US elections in 2016 by hacking into the Democratic Party’s emails is hardly in the same league. And even at that, the allegations have a shaky foundation. Nevertheless, according to liberal pundits on the *New York Times* and *MSNBC*, and Democratic Party officials, the intervention was massive and handed victory to Donald Trump.

Even if the allegations of Russian meddling on behalf of Trump are true, it is highly unlikely that he won the election due to any Russian factor. Hillary Clinton lost the election most likely due to other factors. She was a highly tainted candidate, carrying much baggage and having little empathy with considerable swaths of the population who perceived themselves as hurting. Hillary’s most damning episode in the election was her description of Trump supporters as a “basket of deplorables.” More than

any other factor this remark led to her downfall.

The sad reality is that the Democratic Party had a very viable alternative to Hillary Clinton in Bernie Sanders. Against great odds and severe opposition from the Democratic National Council, Bernie almost won the Democratic primary race. Unlike Trump’s fake support for the hurting blue-collar working class, Sanders was their genuine defender. Sanders carried none of the baggage of either Clinton or Trump and had he got the support of his party, he could well have been the President at this point. In a word, the Democratic Party defeated themselves in the election.

In the post-mortem phase of the elections, the Democratic Party dirge is that Russia and Putin unlawfully and criminally intervened to elect Trump. Trump is the “Russian Candidate” who cooperates with the nefarious Russians. Russo-phobia has reached dangerous levels, to the extent of reenergizing Cold War animosities. Not only the Democratic Party, but also large swaths of the intelligence services of the US (CIA, NSA and DIA) and of the liberal press, fan the flames of hostility to Russia. Consequently, we are in an extremely dangerous situation. While on the one hand we have an incompetent president, with megalomaniac, xenophobic and misogynistic characteristics; on the other we have a Party that cannot admit that they lost the election due to their own choices and incompetence.

There is little consistency in the Trump agenda, although the vibes it sends out on immigrants, Muslims, women, minorities and the poor are alarming if not frightening. On climate change his policies are truly retrograde and spell disaster for the planet. On nuclear weapons he is frightening. On Russia, however, he seems to be conciliatory and to want to end

the long decades of animosity and hostility going back to the Russian Revolution of 1917. However, rather than rejoicing at this bright spot in his political platform, we see little more than fear-mongering among the opposition.

No doubt the reasons behind Trump’s rapprochement with the Russians do not emerge from any noble political convictions or leanings. There is much that we do not know about Trump’s wheeling and dealing with Russian oligarchs and billionaires. We do not know as yet to what extent these latter keep the Trump financial empire afloat. There is a likelihood that Trump’s affinity to Russia is thus based on pretty crass self-interest, having little to do with political strategizing or geopolitics. However, it is lamentable that this moment cannot be used to calm international tensions with Russia.

A fraction of the left advance the idea that there is an attempt to oust and delegitimize Trump by the “Deep State” of the national intelligence agencies, the military and corporate elites. They view his Presidency as illegitimate and the rightful winner should have been Hillary Clinton, a faithful believer in US “full spectrum dominance.” After all, she received the majority in the popular vote, they maintain. Still, according to the rules of the election game, no matter how bizarre, he is the legitimate President. That does not mean, however, that one has to support his revolting policies and positions on most issues. He is the alarming exponent of many troubling aspects of the American Zeitgeist which we have to work against tooth and nail in the years and months ahead.

Michael Drohan is a member of the Editorial Collective and the Board of the Merton Center

Ta-nehisi Coates: Talking Race in a “Post-Racial” Age

By Jacqueline Souza

“How do I live free in this black body? It is a profound question because America understands itself as God’s handiwork, but the black body is the clearest evidence that America is the work of men.”

Some authors choose to write about their disastrous love lives. Some write beach reads that are easily forgotten and dismissed. Others write about fictional places and people who do

not exist.

Ta-nehisi Coates is not one of these writers. I don’t say this to discredit other genres or authors, but more to suggest that Coates’s pieces have a certain urgency about them the audience simply can’t feel by reading a western, a biography, or a work of historical fiction.

Toni Morisson regards Coates as “the [writer] who filled [her] void after James Baldwin’s death,” and Michelle Alexander, author of *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, writes that “everything he has ever written leads [her] to believe that he has more to say.” Morisson and Alexander are right.

Coates has proven himself time and time again as a reliable narrator and a trustworthy source of information for his diverse audience.

His *Atlantic* article, “The Case for Reparations,” is a hard-hitting and persuasive piece regarding housing discrimination, violence, and black peoples’ compensation for our shameful and oppressive past. Another article, “My President Was Black,” interprets the significance of the Obama administration, and the cultural significance of electing the first black U.S. president. His second book, *Between the World and Me*, is a provocative and occasionally heartbreaking discourse for his son’s ears, where Coates eloquently informs him of the inherent dangers that come with being black in America, even after slavery and racism have “ended.”

But what sets Coates apart the many black writers who frequently

make headlines for shaking things up: Roxane Gay, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and Hilton Als, to name a few?

It may be the way in which Coates seamlessly blends narrative styles throughout his stories. In Coates’s second book, he intimately addresses his son as if it were a conversation between the two of them. Simultaneously, he implicitly hints at a larger, more general audience (perhaps America itself?), while effortlessly incorporating some lesser-known facts of black history: Fred Hampton’s murder by the FBI and Chicago P.D., Malcom X’s social and political impact, and the pre-emancipation Southern economy which- despite public rhetoric, not so long ago- rested upon the backs of black slaves. He discusses the murder of Michael Brown as if the public controversy doesn’t exist; as if it were agreed upon that his death was unjustified and tragic. He poses provocative questions to his readers which more often than not go unanswered; I’m not sure that he has any tangible solutions, but he prompts his audience to think.

At the end of March, I was fortunate enough to hear Coates speak in person at the University of Pittsburgh’s main campus in Oakland. His visit was highly anticipated and immensely crowded; somehow, I ended up in the main assembly room of the William Pitt Union where the event was being livestreamed. Coates read a touching excerpt from a piece he is currently working on, and spoke about the juxtaposition of white and black bodies that he presents in his book *Between the World and Me*. It is clear that Coates does not intend to stop working anytime soon; he will continue to create and fight in the name of racial awareness and equality for the rest of his career.

Jacqueline Souza is an intern for New People and also studies sociology and journalism at the University of Pittsburgh.

Reading My History a Different Way

By Liane Ellison Norman

I'm deep in a new book that's mind altering,
An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States.

We want to be the heroes of our story—
brave buccaneers, pioneers, inventors,

but live on stolen property, no way to make
real restitution. History has moved us along,

dug deep grooves of generation,
habit, laziness, sense of self in place,

the strong liquor that's intoxicated us
on tales of who we are, how we got here.

Knowing more of how we've wronged
the first inhabitants of this continent,

of needing to make restitution, tears
fierce wounds in my head, my heart.

Taking a Stand on State Issues

Taking a Stand: Pipelines

By Wanda Guthrie

"We must learn that to passively accept an unjust system is to cooperate with that system, and thereby to become a participant in its evil... The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands in times of challenge and controversy. The true neighbor will risk his position, his prestige, and even his life for the welfare of others." Martin Luther King Jr

Opposing the Atlantic Sunrise Pipeline in Lancaster, County is one place to stand.

"We're done waiting for the regulatory agencies to help us. We're done waiting for our cowardly elected officials to help us. We understand that the whole regulatory system is really designed to facilitate corporate exploitation of our land, our forests, our waters. We're going to physically put our bodies on the line and say to Williams, 'You're not welcome here, and we're going to keep you from building a pipeline through Lancaster County and through Pennsylvania.' That's our intention," says Mark

Clatterbuck, co-founder of Lancaster Against Pipeline.

The tents at the encampment are not going away. The group will continue to camp out to show their opposition to the pipeline.

Huntingdon County: Last year, Elise Gerhart of Huntingdon, and Alex Lotorto, were arrested on the Gerhart's family property. Elise was inhabiting a tree house and Alex was on the ground warning the crew not to cut her down. They were protesting the eminent domain decision issued by the Public Utilities Commission. Elise said she didn't know what else to do, so she established a home in the tree to keep the crews away from at least one tree.

"We've been forced to do this because the government isn't protecting us," Gerhart said, wearing a helmet and sitting on a platform wedged between branches of the tree, forty feet in the air. "These agencies aren't doing their job to protect the people and the environment."

This particular pipeline, the Sunoco Logistics' Mariner East 2 pipeline, has the same purpose as all others: to connect an estimated 4,600 miles of interstate pipes carrying natural gas liquids from Ohio, West Virginia and western Pennsylvania to Philadelphia for export. They will tunnel under Pennsylvania's farms, wetlands, waterways, and backyards.

The Gerharts are among dozens of property owners in Pennsylvania fighting with Sunoco over Mariner East 2. The \$2.5 billion pipeline travels through 2,700 properties in Ohio and Pennsylvania. The ethane would be exported from the Marcus Hook industrial complex in Philadelphia overseas but eventually could be "part of other petrochemical processing units."

It's a lucrative business, plastics. The

Royal Dutch Shell petrochemical plant proposed for Potter Township along the Ohio River and 30 miles from Pittsburgh in Monaca, across from Potter County, will be fed by the planned Falcon Pipeline. Supplied by Mark West Energy facilities.

Ethane processed at Mark West Energy facilities in the region will flow to the cracker plant. The new pipeline would carry approximately 107,000 barrels of ethane per day from Cadiz, Ohio, and Houston, PA. Construction will begin in 2018.

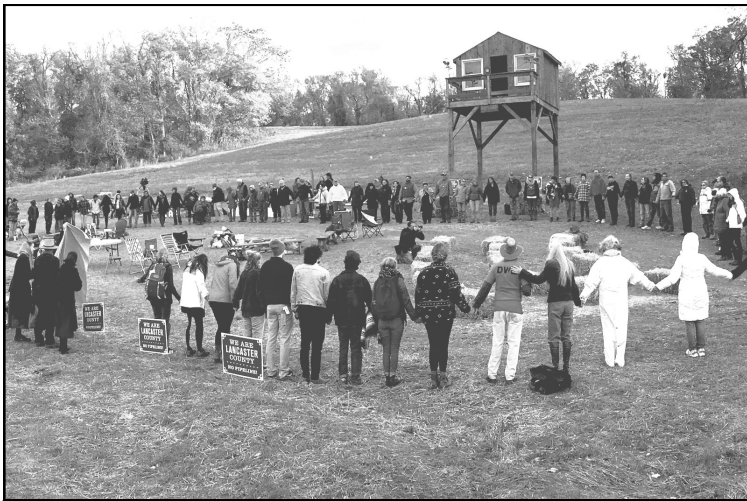
The Falcon project's map shows the pipeline running north from the Cadiz plant to a point near Scio. It will then pivot eastward to run through the northern portion of Jefferson County and then run under the Ohio River into Hancock County, where it will continue into Pennsylvania toward Monaca.

The Atlantic Sunrise Pipeline, Mariner East 2 and the Falcon project are only a few of the proposed and sanctioned pipelines across our State. There are seven projects approved by the Federal Environmental Regulatory Agency (FERC) across the north eastern region. In Pennsylvania, the Rover, Mariner East 1, Northern Access, and Orion projects are approved. More are being planned. There are 8,000 fracked and producing wells, all planning to process methane and get it to market quickly and efficiently.

With many projects having cleared regulatory hurdles, eminent domain proceedings are officially underway in four Pennsylvania counties. Opponents, having seen direct action and physical barriers mainstreamed and magnified in North Dakota, now see such tactics as increasingly unavoidable.

How might local communities come together and serve as the base or center of the resistance? Perhaps we have moved from being "observers" to being "witnesses," moved to stand with our neighbors and resist.

Wanda Guthrie is Convener of EcoJustice Working Group



Lancaster Against Pipeline Encampment. Photo courtesy of Wanda Guthrie

Seeking Food Security for All in PA

By Joyce Rothermel

Since 1983, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has funded a program to assist families who lack the resources to obtain the food they need: the State Food Purchase Program (SFPP). SFPP, which provides essential funding to all 67 counties to support the purchase and distribution of nutritious food and to provide enhanced access to surplus federal food commodities. In most counties, grants are given to their regional food banks to buy food at wholesale or better prices and then make that food available to local pantries and soup kitchens serving those in need in their neighborhood communities.

This year the food banks in Pennsylvania, including the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food

Bank, are seeking an appropriation of \$21 million in the 2017-18 state budget. This is an increase from the current year's funding level and more than Governor Wolf has recommended in the budget he sent to the Legislature.

Another program, begun and funded over the past year or two, is the PA Agricultural Surplus System. PASS helps charitable food providers secure a variety of surplus agricultural products produced in Pennsylvania, creating additional supply to feed those who are at risk of hunger, and providing an alternative market for many farmers in the commonwealth who currently have no outlet for safe, but lower-graded product.

legislation.

Finally, the Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP) tax credits provide a benefit to food banks in PA in accessing donations of grocery products and financial resources. They are threatened in this year's budget process.

NAP is a program of the PA Department of Community and Economic Development. The tax credits provide a powerful incentive for farmers, food retailers and other Pennsylvania corporations to donate food and funds to charitable food assistance providers such as our food bank. Last fiscal year, the tax credits provided to the Food Bank through the NAP Charitable Food Program leveraged the donation of 1.8 million pounds of grocery products and over \$477,000 in contributions. While these resources are greatly needed and much appreciated, the tax credits allocated to our food bank have diminished over the past several years, even as the demand for both our services and these credits has increased.

House Bill 64, introduced on February 28 by Representative Bernie O'Neill, increases the amount available for NAP tax credits from the current \$18 million to \$36 million.

The Food Bank's staff reached out to members of the PA House of Representatives from southwestern Pennsylvania to encourage them to sign on as co-sponsors. The following members of the House did become co-sponsors: Rep. Dave Reed (Majority Leader), Rep. Donna Oberlander (Caucus Secretary), Rep. Mark Mustio, Rep. Dom Costa, Rep. Anthony DeLuca, Rep. Ed Gainey (Appropriations Committee), Rep. Bill Kortz, Rep. Jim Marshall, Rep. Rob Matzie, Rep. Adam Ravenstahl, Rep. Harry Readshaw, and Rep. Chris Sainato. If your PA Representative is not listed, please reach out to him or her to become a co-sponsor of this legislation.

Public policy is the path to justice in food security. Donating to a food drive helps a few people. Working to improve public policy in Pennsylvania, touches hundreds of thousands!

Joyce Rothermel is the retired CEO of Gr. Pittsburgh Community Food Bank.

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Any questions? Call 412-736-4600

The food banks are seeking to obtain an appropriation of \$5 million for PASS in the 2017-18 state budget.

The food banks need our help. Now is the time to contact our State Representatives and Senators and let them know you support these two programs. You can send letters to your elected members at PA Senate and PA House, PA Capitol, Harrisburg, PA 17120. If you do not know your PA members, you can find them on this website; www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/findyourlegislator/ Once you have their contact information, you can put it in your phone contact information, and call them any time you want to give them your opinion or urge them to act on

Moving Beyond Symbolic Liberation

By Mollie March-Steinman

In the past few years, feminism has become a popular, trendy term. The concept of “girl power” has been commercialized by cosmetic companies like Pantene, and women everywhere are being encouraged to love their bodies by a fashion industry with more body diversity and less Photoshop. I see lots of ladies sporting shirts that say, “A woman’s place is in the House...and the Senate.” These women tend to be the same ones wearing “pink pussy hats” and making a woman’s right to choose their number one priority. Several of my loved ones represent this culture, and I am not demonizing or judging individual women who define their feminism in this way.

However, it is critical to note that the face of the mainstream feminist movement today is white and/or affluent, and tends to lack intersectionality.

We hear a lot, already, about white feminism. Problematic white feminists like Lena Dunham and Amy Schumer are called out for their offensive statements. Women of color are being celebrated and recognized more and more, with groundbreaking films like *Hidden Figures* having major box office successes. Beyonce and Solange Knowles, Janelle Monae, and Ava DuVernay are strongly influencing the entertainment industry and using their platforms to raise awareness about race and gender justice. A more racially inclusive entertainment industry is so important, and we should celebrate every victory.

Despite achieving greater representation in government and entertainment, however, many women have been left behind. While the wage gap isn’t so significant for most white and Asian women, Black, Latinx, and Native American women are at a significant disadvantage compared to white men, white women, and men of color. Symbolic liberation will not ease the pain of women who are denied housing and health care, who must raise their children single-handedly, who have trouble finding employment without adequate childcare, and who must cope with

environmentally unsafe conditions in their neighborhoods.

Hillary Clinton is an example of feminist symbolism without transformative change. She is considered a feminist icon because she is an intelligent former senator and Secretary of State, and faced more pushback and disrespect than a man in her position ever would have. However, I question the “feminist” intentions of a woman who openly labelled young Black men “super predators” and supported the 1994 Crime Bill, which doubled the prison population. Thousands of Black men were imprisoned for nonviolent offenses as a result of this bill, forcing thousands of Black women to raise their children alone, on a single income, worried that their children might experience racist violence any time they walked out of the door. Prison reform is a feminist issue, as is income inequality, clean water, police brutality, affordable education and healthcare. All of these issues hurt families and disproportionately affect low-income women of color. Women are frequently victims of economic, physical, or sexual violence, both worldwide and in every region of America. Yet wealthy, often white, feminists struggle to see anything beyond reproductive justice as a feminist concern.

Reproductive justice is an important issue, but it is not a core cause of inequality or oppression. It is rather a symptom—a means of disrespecting a person’s right to control their own body and of cementing their status as a second-class citizen. It is true that women experienced terrible violence when abortion was criminalized, when sexually assaulted and brutalized by illegitimate doctors who performed back alley abortions. It is true that women died from self-induced abortions. We should mourn those injustices, and work to ensure that they never happen again.

However, there is something troublesome about a sect of privileged women who choose reproductive

rights as their number-one priority. Many insist that they are not doing it for themselves, as low-income women would be disadvantaged the most by a loss of abortion rights. Meanwhile, the women they are advocating for are creating the Black Lives Matter and #NoDAPL movements, are asking us to #SayHerName and demanding that Latinx people, Muslims, refugees and immigrants have their human rights recognized. They are creating documentaries and writing books about mass incarceration, advocating against female genital mutilation and human trafficking, and creating small businesses to provide healthy food at a good price to their communities. Women have always had a critical role in labor movements globally, and are currently leaders in the Fight for \$15. In my view, these women should be the face of the movement. The feminist agenda should be determined by bus drivers, waitresses, certified nursing assistants (CNAs), fast food workers, cashiers, and housekeepers, not just privileged white women who have been insulated from injustice our whole lives.

The feminist movement must exist outside of the Hillary Clintons, Sheryl Sandbergs, and neoliberal calls for more female CEOs. Feminism must put aside corporate interests and resist the commercialization of women’s liberation. We can draw inspiration from radical women of the past and present, including Rosa Luxemburg, Angela Davis, Alice Walker, and Emma Goldman. The only way to defy the corporatization of feminism is through a radically inclusive foundation. Until our movement includes a critique of classism, and centers low-income and working-class women, it will not be truly intersectional.

Mollie March-Steinman is currently self-designing an Economic Justice major at Chatham University. Mollie is an intern with the NewPeople Editorial Collective.

Man, I Feel Like A Woman!

By Krithika Pennathur

What does it mean to be a woman?

This is a question many women ask themselves everyday. We are overwhelmed with photoshopped images which tell us to have unrealistic body standards and with overly sexualized images of women in film. We are supposed to be intelligent, but also to know our place in a professional setting. When a woman is assertive, she is branded a bitch. Women are criticized daily on their personalities, motherhood (or lack thereof), and professionalism. To simply put it, women are constantly under the scrutiny of others, and subject to the opinions of others. With these mixed standards being put on women, it can be overwhelming. However, I firmly believe that it is up to that individual woman to define themselves and their womanhood.

To return to my question- what does it mean to be a woman? The answer is this: If you identify as a woman, you are a woman. There is no hierarchy as to, “this woman is more of a woman than this person.” It doesn’t matter if you don’t have a vagina; you are a woman if you identify as one.

I consider there to be three aspects of gender: identity, expression, and attribution.

Identity. I have found that people often confuse gender and biological sex. Gender is inherently different than biological sex, and the two should not be referred to synonymously. As a friend once told me, “Gender is what’s between your ears and biological sex is what is between your legs.”

Expression. There is a set of rules that is attached with a performance of a certain gender. This set of rules develops into the idea of masculinity and femininity. If men aren’t considered as masculine and women aren’t considered as feminine, they can be subject to scrutiny.

Attribution: Based on a specific performance of gender and/or knowledge of biological sex, you may be perceived as one gender or another. Mis-attribution of gender is incredibly harmful.

It is a rather simple concept, I would think. I would think that some of the most eloquent feminists of our generation would think so too. But one weekend brought a painful reminder that some people just support their cis-sters (cisgender sisters), as

opposed to ALL of their sisters.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a Nigerian-American feminist and writer, gave a problematic interview on the subject. Apparently, she finds it difficult to equate the experiences of trans women with the experiences of women in general. She later explains that they had male privilege before switching their genders, which is why she ultimately believes that trans women aren’t really women.

One of Adichie’s famous TED talks stated that it is dangerous to believe a single story. However, Adichie is going against her TED talk and is now preaching a single story about trans experiences as a cisgender woman.

It is important to note that Adichie does not originally come from an American society. Sex-based oppression does not look the same as it does in American society. Coming from Nigeria, the women there have had to worry about issues such as Female Genital Mutilation and lack of an opportunity for a grade-school education. I, along with other US women, have had the privilege to sleep without worrying about these issues.

The problem goes beyond Adichie. The problem is with the ways in which cisgender people allow themselves to exclusively equate womanhood with cisgender women. This trans-exclusionary definition of womanhood is unacceptable. It is not Adichie’s place, as a cisgender woman, or even my place, as a cisgender woman, to tell transwoman how to live their lives. As cisgender women, it is our job to support transwomen by not speaking for them or over them.

As a person who identifies as a cisgender woman, I have a lot of privilege. I do not have to worry about gender dysphoria, which is the idea that I am being trapped in the wrong gender. I do not have to worry about using a bathroom that does not belong with my gender identity. I do not have to worry about backlash in the way I perform my gender and



Cartoon by Russ Fedorka, regular *NewPeople* cartoonist.

the wrong attribution of my gender.

To Adichie and all of those cisgender feminists who are trans-exclusionary, please check yourself and recognize your faults. You aren’t real allies and frankly, I’m not here for your exclusive feminism.

Krithika Pennathur is a sophomore English Writing (nonfiction track) and History major pursuing minors in Chemistry and Statistics and certificates in Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies & Public and Professional Writing at the University of Pittsburgh.

How Co-ops Can Cooperate

Making it Happen: Cooperation Between Cooperatives

By Jeff Jaeger and Ron Gaydos

The sixth principle is cooperation between co-operatives.

You don’t have to look very far to see that the working world is changing rapidly all around us. Technological innovation is overtaking workers while eliminating traditional skilled jobs. In the Pittsburgh region from 2000 to 2014, employer-based jobs declined 5%, while non-employee full-time equivalent employment went up 85%. That’s nine new “gig economy” jobs for every one employer-based payroll job lost during that period. More jobs, maybe, but aren’t Uber and Task Rabbit just race-to-the-bottom ways to pay people less?

Resilient and compassionate communities are already countering these intrusions with measures to reverse their effects. In the chaos, opportunities are emerging for new business models that give workers more autonomy, more room for creativity, more opportunities for voluntary participation, and more ap-

preciation and respect. Sound like cooperatives? That’s exactly what we’re talking about!

As Dr. Jessica Gordon Nembhart, a national authority on Black cooperative enterprise, observes, “African Americans started using cooperative economics from the moment they were forcibly brought to the Americas from Africa, at first for practical reasons. They realized that their survival depended on working together and sharing resources. They had collective traditions from the African nations and civilizations they came from, that they applied in the Americas when they could.”

Again, cooperativism has a long history in America and across the globe; but the “go-go” 1950’s and 60’s consumer economy distracted most from maintaining cooperative culture here in the U.S.

Here’s Charles Moore writing in the *Wall Street Journal* a few years ago, as income inequality came front and center in national news with the Occupy movement:

“The Victorians were more imaginative than we are about principles of mutuality: credit unions, building societies, the cooperative movement. Such organizations feel creakier in an age when people want larger sums, faster. But is it really beyond the skill of our great modern business brains to develop these concepts and adapt them to modernity?”

Technological disruption could work out well for us, if the right steps to take are recognized, if taking those positive steps is supported in communities, and the effort is inclusive. Marina Gorbis of the Institute of the Future suggests that new platforms will be developed that will facilitate more freedom and productivity for many workers. She paints a picture of a worker who can decide when and how they want to earn income, based on their skills, experiences, previous tasks, capabilities and interests. There would be options about where and when work is completed, maybe in a co-working space or another socially connected setting. All their benefits are included in earnings, and they’re transportable. They would accrue to the individual’s personal security account. It almost sounds like a more equitable version of gig economy businesses.

Why wait until the future? The Pittsburgh Chamber of Cooperative’s member-owned sales and service booking platform, Covivi (www.covivi.us), aims to be a one-stop shop among local businesses and freelancers, and cooperatives alike. Others around the world are building

cooperative platforms to make the scenario above equitable and sustainable.

Gar Alperovitz, who spoke and met with new economy leaders in Pittsburgh a few years ago, describes the nuts and bolts of cooperation among co-operatives thus: “some co-ops are beginning to buy from each other in order to widen and stabilize their markets. For instance, I’ve just been down to Texas, where there’s work being done to build a system of co-ops that buy from other co-ops, which in turn sell to regional public school systems. In general, as these co-op complexes group together, and get more sophisticated, they also become better able to withstand pressure from the market economy. . . . Some degree of competition is healthy. But community stability is important too.”

Cooperation among cooperatives is happening now! The Ujamaa Collective established its “Cooperation Not Competition” program to create a larger market for each of its members to do business in. Reciprocal discounts and member status among food cooperatives is a long-standing practice. PCOC members Work Hard Pittsburgh (www.workhardpgh.com) and the Fourth River Workers Guild (www.fourthriver.coop) are dedicated to cooperative education in the Pittsburgh area. The New Economy Coalition’s network of cooperatively collaborating businesses and movement leaders quickly finds common ground – even between competitors. All of these are about building and enhancing the cooperative economic and social ecosystem. It’s a culture of mutual support – not charity!

It’s also an infrastructure of Human Resources, business operations, joint purchasing, training, and finance. New York City is in the second year of its Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative, a \$2.2-million City Council-backed "Ecosystem Approach" venture involving 13 nonprofit partners – some cooperative, some not – to deliver services to New York’s 60 co-ops, from grocery stores to cleaners to home health care providers. This is an effort that the PCOC and many similar organizations around the country aspire to.

This kind of cooperation develops meaningful relationships among neighbors, colleagues, and community members. It empowers flexible solutions for critical problems and makes possible transformative opportunities we need, like participatory budgeting, neighborhood land trusts, commercial land trusts, community supported industry, more cooperative businesses, and public banks to finance it all.

Jeff Jaeger is a member of the Steel City Soils Co-operative and a graduate of Slippery Rock University’s Master of Sustainability program.

Ron Gaydos is a consultant in inclusive economic development, entrepreneurship, and organizational strategy, and a member of the Thomas Merton Center’s New Economy Campaign. Jeff and Ron are Co-Founders of the Pittsburgh Chamber of Cooperatives. (www.PittsburghChamber.coop)

Principles one through five are discussed in the New People online and at www.PittsburghChamber.coop/news.

In the Post-Truth World

By Mike Schneider

live the life
— brand slogan of American General Financial Group

the game of truth or consequences
has no consequence. What does it matter
if insurance agents quote Thoreau? The mass of men
still lead lives of quiet desperation. My best friend
still has pancreatic cancer. Guns are not
on sale at the mall. Meet 20 health insurance
billionaires is something no one
wants to do. The president is not a model
of personality disorder. Only I
am a narcissist in the post-truth world. Only I understand
tyrants as a kind of fruit that grows on trees, many of them
planted by intelligence. There is no
intelligence in the post-truth world. A small tyrant
lives inside me, planted by my fathers
& mothers. I feed it poetry. His throat ripped
by carcinoma as if human tissue
were an old T-shirt, my father hoped for one more summer
of golf. In the post-truth world, I have no cause
for outrage. Presidents don’t commit
sexual assault. All the flags are not in love
with their own flapping. To study physics
is to worship God
is the core belief
of every religion. Your money
is no good here
goes without saying. No one knows
when the train will arrive. In the post-truth
world, poems don’t draw you
into a sorrowful deep
well of feeling. No one’s country
has as president an orange rodent
in a bandit mask. He thinks
he’s cute. He’s part of you. He wants
everything you have.

Mike Schneider was former "Arts Editor" of THE NEW PEOPLE in 2000-2002. In February 2003, he organized a reading in Market Square, at which 27 poets opposed the Iraq war. His poems appear in many journals, including Notre Dame Review and Poetry.

Live the Life You Have Imagined

by Mike Schneider

One of the deep ironies of American corporate capitalism is the co-opting of themes from classic American Literature to sell products and services. When Henry David Thoreau took two years from his life to retreat into a routine of sustainable gardening, writing and self-reflection in a cabin he built near Walden Pond in Concord, Massachusetts, he wrote an account of his experience that concluded, "This at least I have learned from my two years in the woods, that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life that he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours."

Thoreau's experience and his book are driven by the theme that one must be willing to take risks with how one lives life if life is

to be meaningful. Thoreau famously spent a night in jail for refusing to pay taxes to support the Mexican War. It's deeply ironic, to say the least, when a multi-billion dollar insurance company, American General Financial, adopts an out of context quote from Thoreau — "to live the life" — as its brand slogan. One of various examples one can find in advertising of appropriating classic American literature and music to promote an economic point-of-view, great aggregation of wealth, entirely contrary to the heart, soul and spirit of Thoreau. Perhaps "the post-truth world" arrives in small and big steps over time, with the latest outrageous lies from Trump and his team only the most egregious in a long, corrupting evolution of public discourse.

Lessons In Activism



TMC in Action!

Top Three Photos: On Monday, March 13th constituents gathered outside the office of PA House Representative Dom Costa to ask five Democratic state legislators from Allegheny County to reverse their past records of supporting anti-immigrant legislation in PA. The representatives are Dom Costa, Joe Markosek, Tony Deluca, Harry Readshaw, and Bill Kortz. Current anti-immigrant bills in the PA legislature include SB 10, HB 14, and HB 459. Photos by Christina Castillo

Bottom Two: On March 9th, the Penn Plaza Support and Action Group and concerned community members moved furniture into the intersection of Penn and Centre saying “we can’t move into your empty promises,” protesting inequitable development in Pittsburgh and to stand with Penn Plaza residents. Photos by Christina Castillo

We Remember Stu Cohen

In February, Pittsburgh lost a great citizen, Stu Cohen. His life was celebrated at a memorial event in March.

Born in the Bronx NY, Stu came to Pittsburgh in 1961 to attend the University of Pittsburgh. He married his wife Jackie while they were students and they spent the next 51 years together here.

He had a passion for social and economic justice that drew him to his lifetime commitment to social advocacy and activism. Stu worked at the Community Health Advocacy Network, advocating for fair access to health care for under- and uninsured low income residents of Pittsburgh. While working at the Urban League of Pittsburgh he directed fair housing efforts that focused on documenting and reducing housing discrimination in Pittsburgh.

His long-lasting efforts were political, especially in ensuring voting rights. They began in the spring of 1965 when Stu joined other Pitt students who traveled to Montgomery, AL in support of local civil rights advocates seeking protections for the voting rights of African-Americans in southern states. During his lunch hours, he could be found registering voters at street corners and bus stops downtown, and after work he was a fixture at the Giant Eagle in East Liberty. He personally registered more than 40,000 voters over the years—most of them African-Americans, and he followed this up in get-out-the-vote efforts to encourage voter participation in elections.

He also recognized the structural impediments to fair representation of African American interests by elected officials. Before 1989 in Pittsburgh, the

citywide at-large election of all city council members virtually guaranteed that candidates from African American communities would be unlikely to achieve the necessary majority among voters citywide. Stu was an active participant in efforts to change from citywide to district elections of city council members. He also participated in drawing the new council district boundaries to assure African-American majorities in two of the nine districts, thereby increasing their likelihood of proportional representation in council. Stu Cohen has made a positive and enduring difference in our community.

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Videographer/Editor Rich Fishkin, You Tube richfishpgh
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LETTER TO THE EDITORS

The problem with the *NewPeople* ...

“It is not how a message is given that counts, it’s how it is received” – a modern proverb.

The *NewPeople* provides a valuable tool in alerting Pittsburgh to local peace and justice issues and in building up a sense of community, but everything can stand improvement.

People all too often might say “You know what your problem is...” then fill in the blank. It feels good to offer such advice, but it is seldom effective.

So too, even the *NewPeople* can reflect about *what* and *how* it offers advice.

I, for instance, am quite aware of the advantages I have by being male, white and bald. I, like any American consumer, benefit quietly by the unjust wars we protest, the resources we unsustainably exploit and the domestic and worldwide inequality that we tolerate to maintain our lifestyle. What leads me to reconsider my positions? It is not by rude or harsh criticism or by making demands.

So, how do we make our case?

Ike and Judith Lasater in their book, *Non-Violent Communications*, offer some suggestions I think are worth considering in expressing outrage. They include: let your audience know why you hurt; use “I messages,” not “you messages;” focus on your needs and not on your anger or fears; and make requests for changes rather than demands.

Sounds wussy? Maybe, but do we want satisfy our anger or effect change? Anger objectifies the *other*. And the other, in turn, becomes entitled to do the same to us. And that leads to.... Well, we all know what that leads to.

Even opponents deserve respect.

Jim McCarville is a member of the TMC Board of Directors and previously served on the Editorial Collective.

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Bread for the World Annual Workshop
Set for April 23


Come to Pittsburgh Theological Seminary for the annual Bread Workshop on Sunday, April 23 from 1 – 4 PM at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. Already, the proposed federal budget for 2018 looks like bad news both domestically and internationally for those who qualify for our country’s food and nutrition programs. We will learn first-hand from Bread Representative Sheena Rolle Bread’s focus for this year’s offering of letters to our U.S. Congressmen.

Meetings are now being scheduled in the local offices of Senators Casey and Toomey along with Representatives Doyle, Murphy and Rothfus. For more information on how you can register for the workshop and/or get involved, call Joyce Rothermel at [412-780-5118](tel:412-780-5118) or by email at rothermeljoyce@gmail.com

The Bread Team meets periodically at Christian Associates of SW PA who offices are located at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. They host an annual Bread for the World Workshop in the spring and promote the annual offering of letters in area Christian Churches and Congregations, meet with the US Senators and Representatives in their local offices, and attend the annual Bread for the World Lobby Day in early June.

<div>2</div> <div>Hope Through Creativity– 3:00-4:30 pm—August Wilson Center</div>	<div>3</div> <div>Silvia Federici author of Caliban and the Witch—4:30-6:00- Carnegie Mellon English Department Baker Hall 259</div> <div>EngageMINT: App Launch—6-8pm—Repair the World, 6022 Broad St</div> <div>An Invitation: Mobilizing God's People to Save the Earth- 7-9pm—Friends Meeting House, 4826 Ellsworth Ave</div>	<div>4</div> <div>Equitable Pay Rally– 11:00am– 1:00 om—Freedom Corner</div> <div>Economic Justice: End Systemic Racism and Poverty Wages—4:30-7:30 pm—Freedom Corner</div>	<div>5</div> <div>Inclusion & the Importance of Intersectionality– 12-1:30 pm—Global Switchboard, 305 34th Street</div> <div>TMC Monthly Meeting– 6:00-8:00– TMC Main 5129 Penn Ave</div>	<div>6</div> <div>Franktuary Happy Hour for Assemble!- 5-7pm—Franktuary, 3810 Butler St.</div>	<div>7</div> <div>CONTRABAN D: Art Show and Fundraiser for Prison Justice– 6-10 pm—BOOM Concepts 5139 Penn Ave</div> <div>Environmental Justice Write-A-Thon– 6:30-9:30 pm— TMC Main– 5129 Penn Ave</div> <div>What Does a Terrorist Look Like? 6:30-9:30– TMC Annex</div>	<div>8</div> <div>1000plus Spring Day of Service– 10:00am – 2:00pm—Constellation Coffee, 4059 Penn Ave</div> <div>Pittsburgh Healthcare Rally - Defend the ACA– 12-3pm– City Country Building</div>
<div>9</div> <div>Vladimir Putin: How Does He Rule Russia?; Where is He Taking It?- 3:00-5:00pm—Kearns Spirituality Center 9000 Babcock Blvd</div>	<div>10</div>	<div>11</div>	<div>12</div> <div>Racism and Resistance in Pittsburgh 1763-1870– 7:00-9:00 pm- 3900 Forbes Avenue Pitt Law School Room 111</div>	<div>13</div>	<div>14</div>	<div>15</div>
<div>16</div>	<div>17</div> <div>Last Day to Register to Vote in Primary</div> <div>B-PEP Jazz Marathon—5:30 pm—Wyndham University Center</div>	<div>18</div> <div>Tax Day Demonstration 12-2pm—Murray & Darlington, Squirrel Hill</div>	<div>19</div> <div>2015- Freddie Gray dies from injuries due to police brutality while in custody. #BlackLivesMatter</div>	<div>20</div> <div>Environmental Justice and Civic Conversation w/ Dr. John Francis– 5:30-7:00 pm—Green Building Alliance, 33 Terminal Way #331</div>	<div>21</div> <div>Need For Peace 7pm– Pitt Law School</div> <div>ART SHOW to benefit Planned Parenthood of Western PA– 5:30 – 9:30 pm– 933 Liberty Ave</div>	<div>22</div> <div>Go Green Earth Day Festival– 11 am– 5 pm- Clearview Mall 101 Clearview Circle Butler, PA 16001</div> <div>March For Science– 12 Noon, Bigelow Blvd Btw Forbes & Fifth Ave</div> <div>Need For Peace 1pm– CCBC Monaca, PA</div> <div>Sharing Women's Stories– 3-5pm– City of Asylum, 40 W North Ave</div>
<div>23</div> <div>Bread For the World Annual Workshop– 1-4 pm– Pittsburgh Theological Seminary</div>	<div>24</div>	<div>25</div> <div>1993– One million march in Washington, DC for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender rights.</div>	<div>26</div>	<div>27</div>	<div>28</div> <div>Millvale Canvassing Against Islamophobia– 4:00-5:30 pm– Millvale Community Library 213 Grant Ave</div>	<div>29</div> <div>PennFuture's Solar-Powered After Party- 9:00-11:00 pm- Old Millvale Moose Lodge 112 E. Sherman St</div>

<div>30</div> <div>Working for a Future We Believe In - Part II– 1:30– 3:30– Sullivan Hall, Mt Washington, 131 Bigham St</div> <div>Fifth Annual Luncheon and Forum on the Problems of Sudan and South Sudan– 2-5pm– East Liberty Presbyterian Church 116 S. Highland</div>	<div>1</div> <div>Save the Date! March for immigrant and worker rights! Contact Gabriel McMorland for more info Gabriel@thomasmertoncenter.org</div>	<div>The Battle of Homestead Foundation (BHF) will commemorate the 125th anniversary of the “Battle of Homestead” strike — considered by many historians to be one of the most important labor struggles in US history — with a series of performances, film screenings, and discussions from April through October. The program series is themed “Yesterday and Tomorrow: the Legacy of the 1892 Homestead Strike.” The event series will kick off on April 6 with a discussion focused on family history, Homestead’s Jewish community, and the interdependence of the town’s merchants and millworkers when BHF member Tammy Hepps will present the story of her grandfather and his role in the Jewish community of Homestead in the aftermath of the Homestead Strike. (April 6, 7:00 pm at the Bost Building, 623 E. 8th Ave., Homestead, PA 15210.) On April 22, BHF will examine the Battle’s legacy for the region with a film screening, “The Union Comes to Aliquippa,” on improvements won by organizing steelworkers during the mid-1930s Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) union drives. The film tells the dramatic story of the struggle at J & L Steel that led to the famous Supreme Court decision to uphold the constitutionality of the Wagner Act. The win at</div>
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Regular Meetings

Sundays:



Book’Em: Books to Prisoners Project
First three Sundays of the month at TMC, 4-6pm
Contact: bookempgh@gmail.com

Mondays:



SW Healthcare 4 All PA /PUSH Meeting
3rd Monday, 6:30 —8 pm
Squirrel Hill Library
Contact: bmason@gmail.com
Association of Pittsburgh Priests
2nd Monday, 7—9 pm,
Prince of Peace Rectory
162 South 15th, Southside, Pgh. PA 15203
Women’s International League for Peace & Freedom (WILP)
2nd Monday, 7:00 PM
Thomas Merton Center, 5129 Penn Ave
Amnesty International #39
2nd Wednesday, 7—9 pm
First Unitarian Church, Morewood Ave. 15219



Wednesdays:



Darfur Coalition Meeting
1st and 3rd Wednesdays, 5:30 – 7:00 pm,
Meeting Room C Carnegie Library, Squirrel Hill
412-784-0256
Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (PADP)
1st Wednesdays, 7-8pm, First Unitarian Church, Ellsworth & Morewood Avenues, Shadyside
Pittsburghers for Public Transit
2nd Wednesday, 7pm, 1 Smithfield St., lower level



Thursdays:



International Socialist Organization
Every Thursday, 7:30-9:30 pm at the Thomas Merton Center
Global Pittsburgh Happy Hour
1st Thursday, 5:30 to 8 pm, Roland's Seafood Grill, 1904 Penn Ave, Strip District
Green Party Meeting
1st Thursday, 7 to 9 pm, 2121 Murray, 2nd floor, Squirrel Hill
Black Political Empowerment Project
2nd Thursday, 6 pm: Planning Council Meeting, Hill House, Conference Room B



Fridays:



Unblurred Gallery Crawl
1st Friday after 6 pm, Penn Avenue Arts District, 4800-5500 Penn Ave., Friendship and Garfield 15224
Hill District Consensus Group
2nd Friday, 10 am — 12 pm, Elsie Hillman Auditorium, Kaufmann Center 1825 Centre Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15219
People of Prisoners in Need of Support
3rd Friday, 7:00pm New Hope Methodist Church, 114 W. North Ave, Pittsburgh 15212



Saturdays:



Project to End Human Trafficking
2nd Sat., Carlow University, Antonian Room #502
Fight for Lifers West
1st & 3rd Saturday, 1 pm, East Liberty Presbyterian Church
Anti-War and Anti-Drone Warfare Coalition
3rd Saturday at 11:00 am at TMC, 5129 Penn Ave., Garfield, PA 15224



Please note: If you were a financial contributor to the Thomas Merton Center in 2016, and you would like to claim your donation for tax purposes, please call (412) 361-3022 and let us know so that we can process an acknowledgement letter for you.