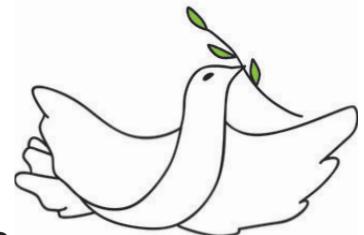


THE NEW PEOPLE

PITTSBURGH'S PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE NEWSPAPER OF THE THOMAS MERTON CENTER



VOL.49 No. 10
December 2019/
January 2020

'WE ARE NOT AFRAID'— STATEMENT AT HEARING FOR ARRESTED PITTSBURGH ACTIVISTS

BY TAMMY HEPPS



EDITORS NOTE: ON OCTOBER 23, THIRTEEN JEWS AND ALLIES WERE ARRESTED WHILE BLOCKING ACCESS TO A TRUMP RALLY IN PITTSBURGH, IN PROTEST OF HIS RETURN TO THE CITY ONE YEAR AFTER THE SHOOTING AT THE TREE OF LIFE SYNAGOGUE AND TO PROTEST HIS CONTINUED INCITEMENT OF VIOLENCE AGAINST JEWS, IMMIGRANTS, AND ALL COMMUNITIES TARGETED BY HIS WHITE NATIONALIST RHETORIC AND POLICIES.

THIS STATEMENT WAS PREPARED FOR A COURT HEARING BY ONE OF THE ARRESTED ACTIVISTS, TO ADDRESS THE JUDGE.

Your honor, I am Tammy Hepps, and I address you today on behalf of the thirteen of us, Jews and allies, who were arrested at a protest the morning of Trump's visit to Pittsburgh just days before the one-year commemoration of the synagogue shooting that murdered eleven of our friends and neighbors. We were part of a much larger group that gathered that morning

TAMMY HEPPS (CENTER FRONT), STANDS WITH FELLOW PROTESTERS. SCREENSHOT FROM THE BEND THE ARC WEBSITE. BEND THE ARC'S POLITICAL ADVOCACY ARM HARNESSES THE COLLECTIVE POWER OF PROGRESSIVE AMERICAN JEWS TO CHANGE POLICY AND BUILD A MORE JUST AND EQUAL NATION.

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PITTSBURGH'S RACIAL JUSTICE SUMMIT

BY JOYCE ROTHERMEL



--Ignorance, prejudice, bigotry, and discrimination are all aspects of racism.

--Racism was used as a means to commit genocide against indigenous populations and to enslave Africans for economic gain.

--Whiteness was created and is maintained through laws and policies that advantage white people and negatively affect non-white people.

--The ideology of white supremacy has shaped cultural behaviors and beliefs which produce cumulative and chronic adverse harm for non-white people.

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The Racial Justice Summit, formerly known as the Summit Against Racism, is a flagship event for Pittsburgh organizers. The Summit creates opportunities for attendees to learn, connect, and act on behalf of racial justice. Its founder, the Black and White Reunion, began in 1998 with the mission to bring together organizations and individuals intent on eliminating racism and becoming allies in the struggle for human equality.

The 22nd Pittsburgh Racial Justice Summit will be on Jan.

24-25, 2020 at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 616 N.

Highland Avenue in East Liberty. It will be preceded with

a Town Hall on Tuesday, December 10. This year's theme

is: "1619 Decolonize Our Histories; 2020 To Reclaim Our

Humanity." The opening ceremony will be held on Friday,

Jan. 24, with the Summit following all day Saturday, Jan.

25.

The organizers of the Summit state firmly: "If you don't like the world you're living in, change it. Starting from you. Allow what you want to radiate out from you. To not do this is to forfeit your capacity for love. We have an amazing ability to create a new world that radiates from each of us."

Together they proclaim:

--We, the Pittsburgh Racial Justice Summit, believe that racism is a tool of white supremacy that operates on individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural levels.

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MERTON AWARDEE SAYS HOUSING CRISIS IS "FREE MARKET" FAILURE

BY NEIL COSGROVE
PHOTOS BY SHERYLAND NEAL
AND STEVE CAPRI



THE 2019 THOMAS MERTON AWARD EVENT WAS HELD ON NOVEMBER 22, 2019 AT THE AUGUST WILSON AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER.

"There is no greater evidence of the failure of the free market than housing," Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor reminded the hundreds who had gathered at the August Wilson Center November 22 to see her receive the 2019 Thomas Merton Award.

That statement opened Dr. Taylor's address, which drew heavily from the research behind her recently published book *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership*. She closed with a second reminder, that "housing is a human right," a right that cannot be granted as long as a home is exclusively regarded as a "commodity."

The distance between profit motive and a human right available to all, including the most downtrodden and exploited, was the theme Dr. Taylor deftly illustrated

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Office Phone: 412-361-3022
Fax: 412-361-0540
Website: ThomasMertonCenter.org

The NewPeople Editorial Collective
Cheryl Bauer, Neil Cosgrove, Michael Drohan, Russ Fedorka, Tim Kulina, Joyce Rothermel, Molly Rush, Sheryland Neal, Symone Saul, Jackie Souza, Craig Stevens and Joel Preston Smith.

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The East End Community Thrift (Thrifty) is an all volunteer-run thrift shop which provides quality, low-cost, used clothing and household goods to the surrounding community. Thrifty 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.

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The NewPeople distributes over 2,200 copies each month to diverse people, organizations, businesses, and groups.

Submit events to ThomasMertonCenter.org/calendar.
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Deadline to submit is the 13th of every month.

For information or to help distribute the paper, 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
pgh4CEDAW@gmail.com

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

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412-361-3022
hildebrew@aol.com

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awc@thomasmertoncenter.org

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jumphook@gmail.com; www.pittsburghdarfur.org

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350pittsburgh@gmail.com
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lfpochet@verizon.net

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AbolitionistLawCenter.org

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AmnestyPGH.org

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Tim Stevens 412-758-7898

CeaseFire PA
CeaseFirePA.org
Info@ceaseFirePA.org

Citizens for Social Responsibility
of Greater Johnstown
Larry Blalock, Evolve@Atlanticbb.net

The Global Switchboard Pittsburgh
412-471-7852
Admin@GlobalSwitchboard.org
TheGlobalSwitchboard.org

North Hills Anti-Racism Coalition
412-369-3961
Info@arc.northpgh.org
Arc.northPGH.org

Pennsylvania Poor People's Campiegn
Krystle@ThomasMertonCenter.org

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Healthcare4allPA.org
PUSH-HC4allPa.blogspot.com
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412-761-4319

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412-303-1247
LisaCubasi@aol.com

Pittsburgh BDS Coalition
BDSPittsburgh@gmail.com

Pittsburgh North People for Peace
412-760-9390 Info@pnpp.northpgh.org
Pnpp.northPGH.org

Pittsburgh Palestine Solidarity Committee
Info@pittsburgh-psc.org
Pittsburgh-psc.org

Raging Grannies
412-963-7163
Eva.havlicek@gmail.com
PittsburghRagingGrannies.homestead.com

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412-361-4793 ojomal@aol.com

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Joyce Rothermel 412-780-5118
RothermelJoyce@gmail.com

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412-471-8919 Ueunion.org

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vfpwpa47@gmail.com

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Peace and Freedom (WILPF)
Edith Bell 412-661-7149
GranBell412@gmail.com

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Office@piin.org

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'WE ARE NOT AFRAID'— STATEMENT AT HEARING FOR ARRESTED PITTSBURGH ACTIVISTS

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to remind our fellow Americans that the synagogue shooting in our city was the direct culmination of Trump's influence, and to remind our fellow Americans that in the past year Trump's continued lies and ugly rhetoric have incited increasing white nationalist violence.

Two evenings ago, I spoke with a Jewish friend who had watched the live-stream of our protest with his children. Like many of the Jewish children in our city and country, his kids have been terribly scarred by what happened a year ago. My friend wanted me to know what it meant for him to show his children that we Jews are not afraid and that we Jews, with the support of our neighbors, can still stand up for ourselves in a way we could not during the persecutions of the past. Your honor, if our conduct two weeks ago led to these charges, please understand that it was for the sake of the generations that came before us and the generations that will come after us.

We protested because we are not afraid to stand up for our own lives.

We protested because we are not afraid to stand up for the lives of other minorities.

We protested because our non-Jewish allies are not afraid to stand up with us.

At the point in our protest when it became clear that my arrest was imminent, I couldn't help but reflect on what it meant that I, the descendant of immigrants

who fled state-sponsored violence and the relative of those who were murdered because they could not flee, had made a choice, as a proud American and a proud Jew, that led to my being surrounded by dozens of police in full riot gear.

My ancestors came to this country so that their descendants could live without fear. As Donald Trump and his white nationalist followers now try to strip my community of its safety and frighten away our allies, we are mustering all our courage and all our privilege to fight, literally, to preserve our right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in our home. We stand before you accused of misdemeanors, but for us the stakes could not be more extreme.

But we also recognize that we are not the only minority group targeted by white nationalism. We stood up two weeks ago because we have internalized the lessons of our own tragic history: as Jews, we will not be bystanders to the suffering of others as others were to ours. We honor the security our ancestors earned for us by using it to fight for others. As Jews we are obligated, and as Americans we have the means.

Your honor, we stand before you at a time when our democracy is under incredible strain. In your role as judge you have the power to act to preserve our democratic institutions. As you now consider the facts in our case, I would like to conclude by reading to you from the Prayer for Our Country, which we as Jews recite in synagogue every Sabbath, which our friends and neighbors at Tree of Life, New Light, and Dor

Hadash congregations would have read on October 27, 2018, had they not been murdered within the first minutes of their Sabbath morning prayers:

"Our God and God of our ancestors: We ask Your blessings for our country, for its government, for its leaders and advisers, and for all who exercise just and rightful authority. Teach them insights of Your [Scripture] that they may administer all affairs of state fairly, that peace and security, happiness and prosperity, justice and freedom may forever abide in our midst.

Creator of all flesh, bless all the inhabitants of our country with Your spirit. May citizens of all races and creeds forge a common bond in true harmony, to banish hatred and bigotry and to safeguard the ideals and free institutions that are the pride and glory of our country..." (Translation: Siddur Sim Shalom)

Your honor, we pray that you exercise just and rightful authority, so that we, your Jewish neighbors, may continue to enjoy the unprecedented peace and security, happiness and prosperity, justice and freedom of our American Jewish community; and that together we, citizens and leaders alike, can continue the sacred work of extending those values equally to all America's residents.

Tammy Hepps is an activist with Bend the Arc.

STATEMENT FROM BEND THE ARC: PITTSBURGH LEADERS

BY TAMMY HEPPS
PHOTOS BY JEIMY IBARRA

President Trump, we dream of a Pittsburgh that is truly diverse, inclusive, and compassionate, a place where we all belong. That's why last year, after a white nationalist murdered eleven members of our Pittsburgh Jewish community, thousands of us marched in Squirrel Hill. Because we recognized that this violence was a direct culmination of your influence, we told you to stay out of our city until you fully denounced antisemitism and White Nationalism and stopped attacking immigrants.

You have had a year to change your ways. Instead, you doubled down on the lies and rhetoric that incited the violence in our city.

And now you plan to come back just days before the commemoration of the synagogue shooting in our community? Let us be clear: You are not welcome in Pittsburgh.

You have spent a year emboldening white nationalists with your rants about invasions, loyalty, and savagery. You have spent a year claiming that immigrants and people of color are a threat, encouraging the conspiracy theory that Jewish people intend to "replace" white people through immigration. You have spent a year putting children in cages and tearing families apart. And you have spent a year accusing Black and brown people of antisemitism, when you are the one sowing fear amongst all of us for your own personal gain.

Is it any wonder that the murders in our neighborhood were followed by more white nationalist murders in Poway, El Paso, and far beyond?

President Trump, we are done waiting. We see exactly who you are. You refuse to build a country where we all belong. But we will.

Understand this: we refuse to accept the trajectory you have set our country on. We refuse to allow you to pit us against each other. We refuse to fear one another.

No matter our color, our religion, or how long we've been here, we know the only way forward is to show up for each other. We will not be bystanders to each other's struggles. In the wake of the shooting last year, Muslim neighbors in Pittsburgh and around the country raised money to support our Pittsburgh Jewish community. In the face of violence at the

border, Pittsburgh's Jewish community joined Jews around the country in demanding fair and safe immigration processes. And we're just getting started.

President Trump, we are here for all of us. And there is no place for your hatred and division in this community we are building together.

Tammy Hepps is an activist with Bend the Arc.



BEYOND GENTRIFICATION

PITTSBURGH NEEDS A NEW HOUSING VISION

Bad housing policy, like many problems, is one that shouldn't exist. We have all the tools and resources to solve the problem, but developers and government enjoy profiting off of other's basic needs too much to do what's right. Housing cannot become a human right while it exists in a supply and demand-based world. Over time, we have created a series of contradictions that we've become used to living under without ever giving our consent. We have a surplus of roofs but a shortage of homes. We have "house-less" people and empty buildings. We sell public lands owned by the collective to private entities owned by only a few. We throw tax money at developers to chase large investments and refuse to give "handouts" to renters. We have abandoned housing as a human right and instead treat housing as an asset, a mechanism for retirement, a tool to "flip" for more money, a shield against police harassment, and a device to segregate people.

When I work on housing problems in Pittsburgh, I feel all of these contradictions. I witness these problems daily and they are very difficult to unsee once you witness them. They evolve over time at a glacial pace but those caught on the wrong side are crushed by the system. LG Realty decided four years ago that a Whole Foods would make them more money than the Penn Plaza apartments in East Liberty. Since then, the victims of LG Realty's greed, the Penn Plaza refugees, have suffered ailments, second or third displacements, food insecurities, and death. As more and more victims of gentrification are swept up by the tidal wave fueled by capitalism and racism, I offer a reset button. A second chance for renters. A vision. At S. Beatty St. in East Liberty, there is a parking lot located behind the Ace Hotel owned by the City of Pittsburgh. This parking lot was supposed to be a new home for displaced Penn Plaza residents, as promised by Councilman Burgess and Mayor Peduto. When the news broke, we believed something incredible could happen because this parking lot is publicly owned.

We envisioned a process that looked something like this:

- Create a team to locate displaced Penn Plaza residents. Invite them to community meetings to ask whether they would like to move back to East Liberty and what housing support they need. Have the folks who want to return self-select someone to represent them at stakeholder meetings.

- Solicit the opinions of housing activists on ways



PUBLIC MEETING AT EASTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN, MARCH 21, 2018. PHOTO BY PENN PLAZA SUPPORT AND ACTION.

BY DANIEL SUN

housing can be more affordable in Pittsburgh. Find ways to leverage existing tax credits to make rent as low as possible.

- Build a cooperative, where the tenants can collectively buy the building at the end of 30 years. Offer displaced Penn Plaza residents first dibs on living there. Plan and construct the building to last 100 years.
- Incorporate pre-gentrified East Liberty culture on the inside and outside of the building.
- Host multiple community meetings on the subject, focusing on the concept, the planning, and the execution. Invite everyday people to these meetings. Make the process as democratic as possible. Involve people before the request-for-proposal is released.
- End the practice of selling public lands to private developers. We should have as many owners as possible.

I can tell you that none of these things happened. The Urban Redevelopment Authority decided to sell the parking lot to private developers without seeking community input and decided to award the parking lot to Walnut Capital, a developer with one of the worst reputations in the city of Pittsburgh.

This outcome does not surprise me. The city historically and at present continues to be an uninspired institution, doing the collective bidding of developers. However, the people are filled with brilliant ideas, passion, resilience, inspiration, and motivation. I write this in part because I want more people to understand the crisis but also because I want to share the ideas that Penn Plaza Support and Action and I have come up with to move us into a new generation of housing. I ask the reader to push for a new vision in their own life and in the city of Pittsburgh. Seek out those contradictions and work to resolve them. There are a bunch of ways to break the mold. You can co-own a home. You can join a cooperative or community land trust. If you're a landlord, you can give your renters the option to buy the home.

Lastly, keep the city accountable. It is unacceptable that Councilman Burgess can still win an election in 2019.

Daniel Sun is a board member of the TMC and an organizer with Penn Plaza Support and Action.

PITTSBURGH'S RACIAL JUSTICE SUMMIT

FROM PAGE 1

--Because it is passed on through our culture, racism shows up in personal interactions, even among those who are well-intentioned, often without awareness.

--Racism damages relationships and causes psychological harm to both the oppressors and the oppressed.

--The Pittsburgh Racial Justice Summit organizes from a western-oriented position and acknowledges the shifting nature of white supremacy worldwide.

To find out more about the 2020 Racial Justice Summit, to volunteer and to register, visit www.pittsburghracialjusticesummit.org

Joyce Rothermel is a member of the Editorial Collective of the Thomas Merton Center.

REDEVELOPED!

POEM BY CORRINE JASMIN
PHOTO SHERYLAND NEAL



Gentrification! Gentrification!
Are you listening?
Why is East Liberty starting to look like the city off
The Jetsons?
Where will you be when reality sets in?
Does it not bother you that there are children being
kicked out of their playpens...

...for a new Starbucks and a loft with a balcony!
Only available to Google workers
In the distance somebody's young mother's crying
She's gotta send her son to school with stains on his
shirt

Her washer don't work
Access card snapped in half and she's running out
of tape
On the phone with work because again she's
running late
When she comes back home she'll be even more
hurt
She's gonna see that bright pink letter that'll kick
em to the dirt, kick em to the dirt

Eviction! Eviction!
Do these words ring louder?
Mother booted out of her home so she turns to the
powder
Loses her power!
Loses her dignity!
Runs back to her mother!
Covers her son in her baby covers she used to sleep
with

Sparks up that square that she bummed
From that bum
...outside bakery square!
All the buildings look nice...
But is it all fair?
They say life's not fair!
So we do we turn the other cheek?

I heard somebody call it Redeveloped East Liberty!
I see no kids playing in the streets...
I often walk by that torn down building over by
Capri
I wonder what that'll be

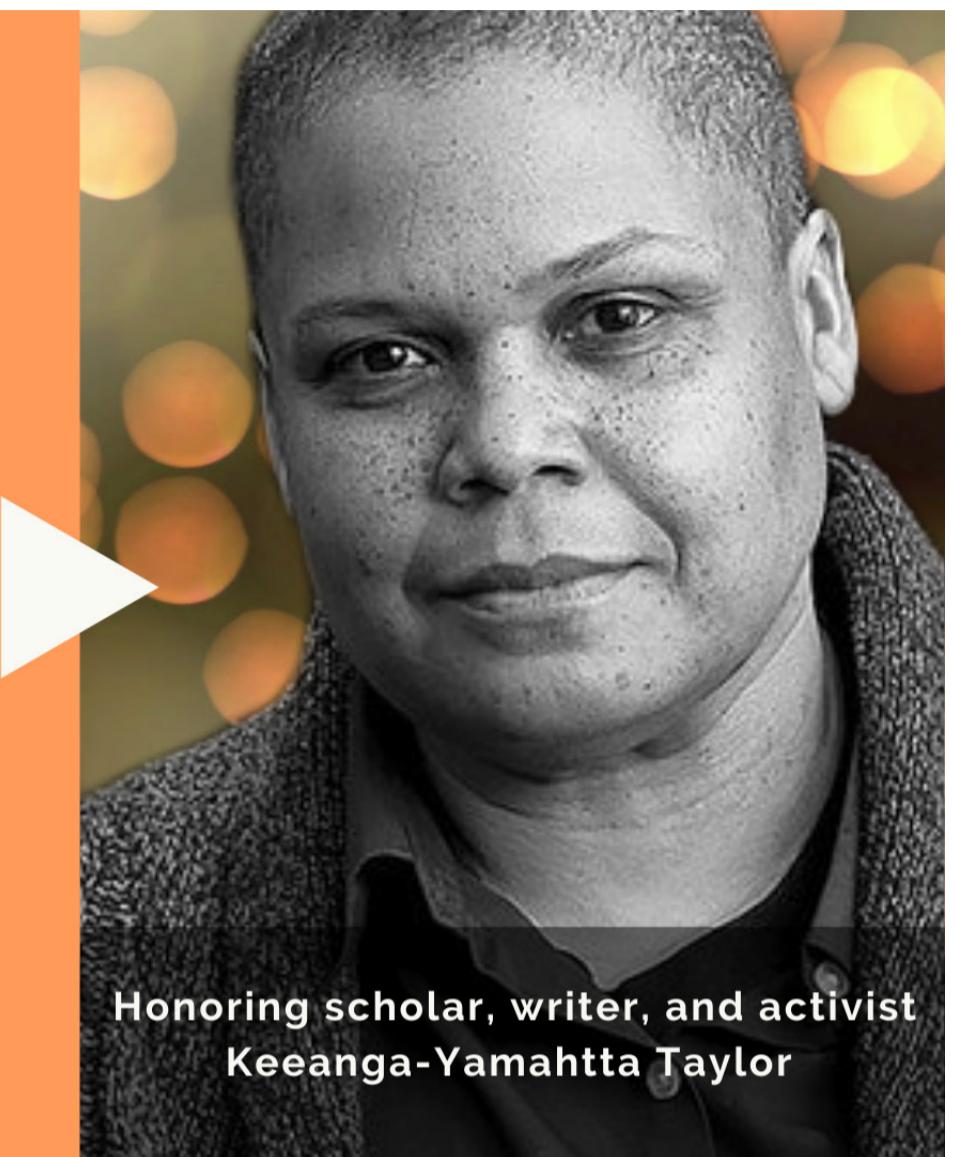
Nationwide...beyond state lines...
If those in poverty can't even have affordable
homes
Where are they to sleep?
Or do they all become Black Sheep?
Or does she become the bum outside Bakery
Square begging for squares
Or is that not something that should concern you
and me?

Corrine Jasmin is a writer, artist, and filmmaker currently based in Pittsburgh, PA performing and making work in reaction to the world around her no matter how chaotic. She read this poem at the 2019 Thomas Merton Award.

THOMAS MERTON AWARDS

The Thomas Merton Center

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Honoring scholar, writer, and activist
Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor



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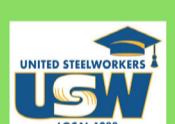
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TOTAL MOBILIZATION: THE DEMANDS OF OVERCOMING CLIMATE CRISIS

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese bombed the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. Eight ships were hit, four were sunk, and 2335 were killed. On December 8th, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt declared war on Japan. In response, on December 11th, Germany declared war on the United States. The two most powerful military forces in the world were at war with the US. Roosevelt acted by initiating total mobilization of the American population. Thousands volunteered to join the military, and thousands more were drafted.

WHAT DID TOTAL MOBILIZATION MEAN?

In the year 1942, the federal government reassigned most manufacturing in cities across the country to produce equipment for the military. Civilian automobile production was halted, and factories instead began to produce military warplanes, tanks, and transport vehicles. African-Americans and women throughout the country were hired to replace the men who had left to serve in the military.

Restrictions were imposed on all consumer goods and commodities that were needed to supply the soldiers overseas. The first priority for agriculture was to feed the troops. The government laid claim to food; especially sugar, oils, and meat, which were put into c-rations. Ingredients that Americans had grown accustomed to using were not readily available to them for years, and people made do with inferior ingredients. Citizens were issued ration cards. Many people began to grow "Victory Gardens," and raise chickens and rabbits, to meet the demand for food.

During this time people adopted frugal habits on the home front, to the point that people would save scrap metal and donate their pots, pans, and rubber goods to be recycled for the military. Fabric and leather was devoted to making uniforms and boots for the soldiers. People kept the same clothes for many years or shopped secondhand. Nylon stockings disappeared, as the material was used in making parachutes. Even fashion changed to promote the

use of less fabric in clothing. Citizens accepted high taxes and heavy regulations from the government regarding their consumption. Many bought and sold war bonds to help fund the war effort.

OBSTACLES AND SUCCESSES

President Roosevelt's task to mobilize the country for war was difficult for a number of reasons. At the time, there was no guarantee that the war would be brief. The Japanese and the German military forces were the most powerful in the world. There was no expectation that the US would be able to hold its own on the world stage.

The US was in a weakened position, after a decade of rampant unemployment during the Great Depression. One third of men were found to be unfit for military service because of malnutrition.

Before 1941, the loyalties in America were divided. In 1939, the German American Bund had organized a fascist rally in Madison Square Garden in New York City, with an attendance of 20,000. The Nazi flag was flown beside the American flag, as the Pledge of Allegiance was recited in celebration of George Washington's birthday. Prominent people, such as Charles Lindbergh, admired Hitler, and spoke against US intervention. Many German and Italian-Americans were sympathetic with the Fascist cause. After Pearl Harbor, although Japanese-Americans had never expressed sympathy with Japan's foreign policy, they were forced into internment camps, many for the duration of the war.

But despite these complicating factors, when war was declared between the US and the Axis Powers, ethnic loyalties were set aside as able-bodied men enlisted into the military: German, Italian and Japanese-Americans.

The total mobilization of the public and the rapid change from production of consumer goods to military and other goods to support the war

effort were astounding. The American people suffered under the radical change in lifestyle, but nonetheless complied and acted according to the gravity of the situation. Since World War II, there has been no comparable upheaval in our comfortable, prosperous way of life.

TOTAL MOBILIZATION NEEDED TO OVERCOME CLIMATE CRISIS

Since the 1970s, mainstream economic/political policies have shifted toward the privatization of government services. Taxes and government regulations have been demonized by anti-government politicians such as Grover Norquist of Americans for Tax Reform, who has stated so clearly: "The goal is to starve the federal government until it is weak enough to drown in the bathtub."

With the long-term media conditioning we have received, many of us may be unable to even consider the solution of total mobilization that was necessary for victory in the Second World War.

Fortunately, the current millennial population, along with many people of all ages, are eager to embrace bold effective measures to do whatever it takes to halt climate crisis damages. Thousands of organizations and businesses are gearing up to make a fossil free world a reality. Talk of a Green New Deal is one example. Cities and states are committing to cut CO2.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON WORLD WAR II, TOTAL MOBILIZATION, SEE:

A CALL TO ARMS: MOBILIZING FOR WORLD WAR II, by Maury Klein.

Carlana Rhoten is a longtime indy media producer in Pittsburgh, and creator of the Progressive Notebook on PCTV. Sasha McConnell-Edwards is a contributing writer for the NewPeople Newspaper.

LOOKING AHEAD: MERTON CENTER TURNS 50. LET'S CELEBRATE!

BY MOLLY RUSH

Once dismissed as, "that little storefront on Southside whose goal, no less, is peace and justice in the world," nearly 50 years later that continues to be our mission. The goal, of course, remains the same, the challenge continues, so that's where you come in.

In 1970, the war in Vietnam, despite years of protests, raged on. The battle for civil rights was at the forefront, and world hunger was acute.

Three groups, the Association of Pittsburgh Priests, Catholic Interracial Council (CIC), and the Religious Education Forum formed CEASE, Catholics for an End to Asian Slaughter and Exploitation. CEASE organized protests, educational activities and public prayer vigils.

It soon became evident that what we needed was a full-time organization with an office and staff.

A big undertaking, but we went ahead, fundraising (40 priests pledged \$20 a month). Larry Kessler, President of CIC, took on the task of making our dream come true. We rented an office at 1111 East Carson St., Southside. The meeting room in the basement was busy. Soon, nicely furnished, we opened in the spring of 1972.

Larry was Director and three nuns – Janet Brink, Stella Smetanka, and Betty Sundry – and I came on as staff with monthly stipends of \$150. The Urban League provided a receptionist to welcome visitors. The Giving Tree shop sold Third World handcrafts.

The *NewPeople* monthly newsletter, 8-1/2" by 11", was typed, cut and pasted together.

From the start, everyone seeking justice was welcome. This was and is our main strength. Member support has allowed the freedom to take on the powers that be.

2020 marks 50 years since CEASE led the way. And in 2022 we will celebrate our 50 years of struggle and community. Don't you think both are causes for celebration? Not simply as an exercise in nostalgia, although it is important to share our amazing history and the thousands of members who are part of that history.

Mainly it's a real opportunity to inspire, invite and encourage others to find their voice, envision change, proclaim and act on the belief that the struggle for peace and justice enriches lives, builds friendships, and makes change possible despite the odds.

I also see it as a chance to get our story out more broadly, inspire others to bring their vision and energy to the task of building a new world. (And, by the way, help pay the bills.)

I have seen changes come about through patient struggle. Our first year we were approached by Dignity, a gay Catholic group who needed a place to meet and pray. Of course we said "welcome!" Today gay marriage is legal; unheard of then.

In the 1970s we campaigned nonviolently against Rockwell, contractor for the B1 bomber. And in the 1980s, the River City Campaign held weekly vigils for 10 years at Westinghouse, going to jail many times at both headquarters. We met with top executives. Westinghouse sold their defense electronics business in 1995. Rockwell moved to Milwaukee. Today, the PNC: Stop Banking the Bomb protests continue the struggle.

Local, national and international issues continue to be a focus, from the environment to housing to migration to racism and more. Always, it's activism; that is the core of our being. It's the initiatives of our members and collaborators that keep us going.

We have a story to tell and the 50th is an opportunity to shout it from the housetops. And have a good time. Please contribute with your ideas, memories, energy and enthusiasm. We'll need your help to shine some light on the Center and look to the future. Join us.

Molly Rush is the co-founder of the Thomas Merton Center, a current member, and a contributor to the NewPeople Editorial Collective.

GLOBAL AND LOCAL

STOP BANKING THE BOMB CAMPAIGN SEEKS CITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION

BY JOYCE ROTHERMEL

The Stop Banking the Bomb Campaign (SBTB) continues its work in Pittsburgh and beyond to pressure PNC to end their \$1.154 billion in loans to nuclear weapons manufacturers. The next pickets will be on Sat., Dec. 21 from 11 AM to noon at the PNC branch in Squirrel Hill, 5810 Forbes Avenue, Friday, Jan. 3 at 11:30 AM at PNC headquarters, Fifth and Wood downtown, and Sat., Jan. 18 at 11 AM in Mt. Washington, 236 Shiloh St. You are invited to join us and take a stand opposing PNC's investments and helping to inform others about their practice.

While the Stop Banking the Bomb pickets continue twice a month, the first Friday of the month at the PNC headquarters at Wood and Fifth Avenue downtown from 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM and the third Saturday at 11 AM at a local branch, we have taken on another initiative. We are seeking a resolution from City Council that will support our goals.

Proposed Resolution

WHEREAS: The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, a not for profit association founded in 1945 by Manhattan Project scientists to engage the public on the implications of scientific advancement, has advanced its Doomsday Clock at two minutes to midnight;

WHEREAS: The US has withdrawn from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action that constrained Iran's nuclear program; an agreement that included several European partners;

WHEREAS: The US has announced its intention to withdraw from the INF Treaty, the 1988 agreement which called for the elimination of medium range nuclear weapons (300-3400) miles, and a factor in European stability for more than thirty years;

WHEREAS: The current administration has added to the 1.2 trillion-dollar upgrade to its nuclear arsenal it inherited from the prior administration, an action the Russians have announced their intention to match, thus ushering in a new era of unregulated nuclear arms production;

WHEREAS: Current US nuclear technology relies on artificial intelligence to determine when and where to launch nuclear weapons;

WHEREAS: We have known since 1983 that a nuclear attack precipitating nuclear winter and famine will render all life forms extinct;

WHEREAS: Daniel Ellsberg has revealed in his book, *The Doomsday Machine*, the US has been planning for a nuclear attack since at least 1960 on what was the Soviet Union, now Russia, and China, targeting cities with a population over 25,000;

WHEREAS: Investing in companies involved in the production of nuclear weapons supports misuse of our tax dollars and increases the risk of nuclear accident and / or war;

WHEREAS: Continuing to invest billions of dollars of dollars in weapons of mass destruction as critical human needs in our communities go unmet insults our humanity;

WHEREAS: The City of Pittsburgh is already on record recognizing the need to accelerate the reduction of nuclear weapons;

WHEREAS: The current President has threatened the use of nuclear weapons via tweet:

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: City Council go on record opposing the investment of funds in any entities involved in the production of nuclear weapons, as well as the upgrade of nuclear weapons from the city's retirement funds, or any other city related funds.;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: City projects include language in all contractual agreements with public or private concerns that urge said concerns to either refrain from investing in, or to divest from nuclear weapons manufacturers;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: City Council publicize and circulate this resolution widely, as the resolve of council.

If you live in the city and support this effort, please let us know. Or better yet, discuss the issue with your City Council member, expressing your concern and urging them to endorse the resolution. You can reach us through the Thomas Merton Center, 412-361-3022.

The Stop Banking the Bomb (SBTB) campaign is a grassroots effort consisting of committed activists in the Pittsburgh region and beyond who believe investments in the manufacture of nuclear weapons represent a significant threat to our shared humanity. The SSBT campaign demands that PNC divest of these financial commitments and adopt a corporate policy to not loan money to corporations involved in the manufacture or sale of nuclear weapons.

Joyce Rothermel is on the coordinating committee of the Stop Banking the Bomb Campaign.

VOICES FROM THE AMAZON REGION OF SOUTH AMERICA

BY JOYCE ROTHERMEL

In October, the Synod of Catholic Bishops met in Rome. Two historic votes passed: one recommended that Pope Francis allow the ordination of married men in the Amazon region, to work in the most remote areas. Celibacy is currently a requirement for priesthood in the Roman Catholic tradition. They also voted to put the church strongly on the side of protecting the Amazon rainforest and the indigenous people who live there.

The Synod was made up mostly of bishops from Amazonia and was called by Pope Francis to deal with issues facing the church in their region. It has no decision-making authority; it is Pope Francis' decision to approve or disregard their recommendations. Although the Pope didn't immediately respond to the recommendations, he indicated he would make a decision by year's end. He is likely to consult with bishops' conferences in other parts of the world.

If Pope Francis acts on the first recommendation, he would reverse the condition of celibacy for ordination that has existed for over 1000 years in the Roman Catholic tradition. From the foundation of the early Church, most priests married, including St. Peter, the first Pope. The practice of celibacy became the universal law of the Roman church in 1123. Some churches, such as the Eastern/Orthodox, never had this condition for ordination. The Protestant churches rejected celibacy at the time of the Reformation.

While the practice of celibacy is church law, it isn't doctrine; it can change. Most American Catholics favor allowing married priests. While the need for additional clergy is great in regions of the Amazon, it isn't the only place in the world facing such shortages. Even here in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, several churches are now being consolidated and the number of Masses being offered cut due to, among other factors, a shortage of ordained priests.

Catholics believe the sacrament of the Eucharist (Holy Communion) is essential to the life of a

Catholic Community, yet thousands of Catholics have tremendous difficulties in accessing it. In some places in the world, it takes not just months, but even years before a priest can return to a community to celebrate the Eucharist and offer the other sacraments, such as reconciliation or anointing the sick. The Synod's recommendation calls for married priests to live with and serve these communities.

It is believed that the first to be ordained in the Amazon region would likely be married deacons who have already received training and have pastoral experience. Members of the Synod also noted that in consultations in preparation for the Synod the permanent diaconate for women was recommended.

The second notable recommendation from the Synod came from the Bishops' compassion for the rain forest and its people. "The Amazon today is a wounded and deformed beauty, a place of suffering and violence. Attacks on nature have consequences on the lives of peoples," the Bishops wrote.

The Bishops see the following threats to life:
--Appropriation and privatization of natural goods, such as water;
--Predatory hunting and fishing;
--Pollution caused by the extractive industry and city garbage dumps;
--Unsustainable mega-projects (hydroelectric and forest concessions, massive logging, roads, monocultures, waterways, mining and oil projects, and railways); and
--Climate change.

The indigenous peoples have suffered loss of ancestral lands and loss of lives and cultures as many were killed or made to migrate to cities, where they were often exploited and, in some cases, trafficked.

The Bishops from the Amazon region said they will continue to speak out prophetically against the destruction of the environment and exploitation of

the native peoples. They want their governments to do more to protect the region and its inhabitants.

"We denounce the violation of human rights and extractive destruction," they said. "We make our own and support campaigns to disinvest in extractive companies responsible for the socio-ecological damage of the Amazon, starting with our own church institutions themselves."

The Bishops also understand that unless those of us in developed countries change our lifestyles, there is not much that can be done to stop the economic interests supporting those lifestyles: our appetite for meat, precious metals, and lumber is killing the rainforests and its people. We are also contributing to global warming that could kill the Amazon's rainforest.

In reporting on these matters, Fr. Thomas Reese, a columnist for Religious News Service, said, "In recent years, Catholics have been embarrassed by the crimes and sins of their church. While these issues continue to need the church's attention, Catholics can be proud that their church is also confronting critical global issues like the environment, climate change and the rights of indigenous peoples."

It is our hope that the Bishops, under the leadership of Pope Francis, have once again found their prophetic voice and are using it, in this case, in the Amazon, and that people everywhere will take action for justice and human rights in the church and in the broader world community.

(Information for this article was drawn from Fr. Thomas Reese, a columnist for Religious News Service.)

Joyce Rothermel serves as Chair of the Church Renewal Committee of the Association of Pittsburgh Priests.

LIGHT-UP SOCIAL JUSTICE

MERTON AWARDEE SAYS HOUSING CRISIS IS “FREE MARKET” FAILURE

FROM PAGE 1

throughout her talk. She described how the good intentions of the 1968 Housing and Urban Development Act were corrupted by the greed and racism of real estate agents, property appraisers, and mortgage companies, who embarked on a path of what Dr. Taylor called “predatory inclusion.”

The new law was supposed to provide home ownership to even the impoverished by requiring only a rock-bottom down payment of \$200, and a federally guaranteed mortgage not to exceed 20% of a buyer’s income. What wasn’t taken into account is that the bi-partisan emphasis on “free enterprise” also gave license to brokers to direct potential buyers to clearly sub-standard properties, and to mortgage providers to use appraisers to inflate those properties’ values. After all, no matter what subsequently happened to the buyer and the home, the agent was guaranteed a commission and the lender the full value of the loan.

Such tactics resulted in HUD taking possession of 78,000 foreclosed homes by May, 1974, which in turn provided ammunition for President Reagan’s arguments that free markets would provide better housing than government programs. We’ve seen how that has turned out—huge shortages of urban affordable housing, millions committing the majority of their incomes to securing a place to live, and a “sub-prime lending” binge that led to the loss of more than 240,000 Black homes during the 2008-

09 financial crisis.

Even more corrosive was reinforcement of the racist assumption that these failures, as Dr. Taylor put it, resulted from “the poor homemaking skills of the Black owners.” To counteract this stereotype, Dr. Taylor told the story of Janice Johnson, a single Black mother rushed into a 1970 home purchase when the apartment she was living in was condemned by the city of Philadelphia. Within days of moving in, the sewer line broke. Electricity was “sporadic” and holes in the house’s foundation functioned as rats’ nests.

Prior to her address, Dr. Taylor was praised for her use of scholarship and powerful writing as one means to bring about significant social change. Merton Board Vice-President Shernell Smith said the Center “couldn’t have thought of a better award winner,” in part because “reading and scholarship are an important part of creating revolution.” Briann Moye, an environmental justice organizer with One Pennsylvania, discussed Dr. Taylor’s “heavy influence” on her activism. Earlier in the program, singer-songwriter INEZ performed a song from her newly released CD “Voicemails and Conversations,” as well as the Simon and Garfunkel classic “Bridge Over Troubled Water.” Corrinne Jasmin read four poems from her book *Threads*, while local activist and organizer Brittani Murray filled the role of Master of Ceremonies.

The 47th Annual Thomas Merton Award program was a departure from the traditional sit-down dinner followed by speeches that had characterized earlier events. A big part of that change was the venue itself, as the August Wilson Center provided guests with access to its galleries of curated African-American art, and to a comfortable auditorium that greatly expanded program possibilities. The five-hour-long event began with a reception fueled by the catered delicacies of Chef Claudy Pierre, founder of Eminent Hospitality Solutions, and an open cash bar. Entertainment was provided by Deejay Aesthetics, operated by multidisciplinary artist Tresa Murphy Green.

While the auditorium program, and particularly the presentation of the award followed by Dr. Taylor’s speech, were the highlights of the evening, guests were seen to be socializing and enjoying the facilities right up until the closing time of 10 p.m. November 22nd was Light-Up Night in downtown Pittsburgh, with all its holiday-related and commercially driven spectacle, but the Merton Center Award event was, to all of us at the Center, a far more meaningful and purposeful happening.

Neil Cosgrove is a member of the NewPeople editorial collective and the Merton Center board.



1. TMA HONOREE KEEANGA-YAMATTAH TAYLOR SPEAKS; 2. ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ORGANIZER BRIANN MOYE, KEEANGA-YAMATTAH TAYLOR, AND TMC BOARD MEMBER M. SHERNELL SMITH PRESENT THE THOMAS MERTON AWARD; 3. TMC STAFF AND BOARD; 4 SINGER INEZ PERFORMS; 5. TMC STAFF MEMBER KRYSTLE KNIGHT WITH FOUNDER OF TRANS YOUNITING, DENA STANLEY; 6. TMA EVENT VOLUNTEERS; 7. TMA EVENT HOST, BRITTANI D. MURRAY.

PROTECTING EVERYONE'S RIGHTS

STORY OF G

EDITORS NOTE: G RESPECTFULLY ASKS THAT HIS NAME AND LIKENESS NOT BE REVEALED.

What the camera would show you is a person who stands just inches over five feet.

But this is not a boy. This is a man. If you could look more closely, you would see ropes of muscles running down his arms to veined hands. His jaw is strong and set. If the camera could zoom in on G's face, it would capture eyes that have seen hard things. These are the eyes of a man who appears to have lived longer than 35 years.

But they are not hard eyes. They seem wise.

At this particular moment, G's eyes shift to a flashing red light in the rearview mirror. He remains calm. He's done nothing wrong. G's foreman has entrusted him to take the truck and pick up lunch for his construction crew working in Beaver. It's October 17, 2018. The ACLU will later consider taking up G's case as potential racial profiling, because he was stopped for no other reason than the color of his skin. G has no documents. He is placed in the squad car and taken to the police station where his shoes and phone are removed. He will spend three hours in jail. He is ticketed \$800 and allowed to leave because he takes care of his 17-year-old nephew, who is enrolled in high school. G walks miles back to work. His boss promises to fight the ticket, an indication of how much he values the work G does. The person he is.

It's October 19, 2018. Two days later. Six in the morning. Seven ICE agents wait outside a modest home. Into their hands walk two unsuspecting Guatemalan brothers, 24 and 26, who are leaving

for work as they do every morning. When asked where G is, they open the door and let ICE into their home. ICE's haul will include the two brothers, their 17-year-old nephew, who is getting ready for school, and G, who is getting ready for work. G's nephew has already left for school.

They are taken to a van waiting in the parking lot of a funeral home next to the McDonald's on Liberty Avenue. This morning has been an elaborately planned collaboration between Beaver Police and ICE. It seems more suited for those who have committed serious crimes. The van transports the group to the ICE office where their hands and feet are cuffed, their fingerprints are taken and they are put through seven hours of processing.

The brothers will be sent to detention at Cambria and ultimately deported. Their nephew will be sent to a shelter in Virginia. G will be fitted with an ankle bracelet and required to report back to ICE every two weeks. He is spared because he is responsible for his own nephew. And yet his friends and their nephew are sent away. There is no consistency to how people seeking a better life here are treated. Rules and regulations change without rhyme or reason. Or compassion.

There are no rules in Chajul, Guatemala, where G grew up.

He is the youngest of seven. He does not know his mother, who died when he was six months old. His father never told him how. G began helping his father in the fields at the age of six. He dreamed of wearing the uniform of a soldier. At 19, he joined the military and witnessed corruption at the top. At 25, he joined the police and saw the same.

BY ROB SCHAPIRO

Because he refused to look the other way, he was attacked by gang members. He wears the scar on the back of his head as a reminder. At 26, he married an 18-year-old friend of the family and they had a son. Gangs and poverty continued to threaten them.

G felt the only way to provide for his family was from thousands of miles away. The price would be thousands of dollars to pay coyotes for his journey to Pittsburgh, where he knew people who might help with work. He hoped to earn that and more in America.

After eight years in Pittsburgh, G has become a drywall specialist. He works six days a week, seven when he can. He is the head of a household that now includes not just his nephew, but two brothers-in-law, one of their sons, their cousin and her two daughters.

G speaks often with his wife and 9-year-old son, who still live with his father in Chajul.

He sends them money every month so his son can go to a private school where he can get a better education and be safe from gangs. G says he is content here when he is working. He hopes he will be permitted to stay. And he prays for a time when his wife and son can join him. He does not know when that could be. But someday maybe the camera will show a new portrait. A family portrait. Of G, together with his wife and his son.

Rob Schapiro is a marketing professional living in Pittsburgh.

PA CONSIDERS CONSTITUTIONALITY OF MARSY'S LAW

BY CHERYL BAUER

On November 5th, Pa voters were presented a ballot measure that would alter the state constitution to adapt a set of victim's rights collectively known as Marsy's Law. You may recall the question:

"Shall the Pennsylvania Constitution be amended to grant certain rights to crime victims, including to be treated with fairness, respect and dignity; considering their safety in bail proceedings; timely notice and opportunity to take part in public proceedings; reasonable protection from the accused; right to refuse discovery requests made by the accused; restitution and return of property; proceedings free from delay; and to be informed of these rights, so they can enforce them?"

You may have also heard that the votes for this ballot question won't be certified until the PA Supreme Court returns a judgment on the constitutionality of the proposed measure.

The ballot question seems simple enough; however, that in itself is part of the problem cited by lawyers working with the ACLU: the amendment as proposed would include 15 separate enforceable rights that would affect multiple sections of the PA State Constitution. The language is not only in violation of Article XI of the PA State Constitution, which states, "When two or more amendments shall be submitted they shall be voted upon separately," but it is a vague and incomplete representation of the constitutional amendment proposed. This is the basis of a constitutional challenge filed against Acting Secretary of State Kathy Boockvar by the ACLU on behalf of the League of Women Voters of PA and Lorraine Haw of Philadelphia.

A preliminary injunction was issued on October 30

which directed Acting Secretary Boockvar to delay certification of the votes cast on November 5th until the lawsuit was decided. Judge Ellen Cisisler, who is presiding over the case, wrote the following statement regarding whether or not Marsy's Law constitutes multiple amendments:

"This Court concludes that Petitioners have raised substantial questions as to the constitutionality of the Proposed Amendment in terms of both a violation of Article XI, Section 1's separate vote requirement, and its facial impact on other articles and sections of the Constitution. ...The Proposed Amendment addresses a wide range of subject matters including bail, discovery, due process, restitution, the right to privacy, and evidence control, all under the auspices of connecting them to victims' rights (www.shorturl.at/lvILZ)."

Marsy's Laws have been passed in 12 states as of 2018, with PA's vote pending, and Wisconsin to vote next in 2020. Montana and Kentucky, which passed Marsy's Laws in 2016 and 2018 respectively, have both since overturned the laws. Montana's decision to overturn was founded on the same question the PA Supreme Court was asked to consider.

Meanwhile, Marsy's Law for All and affiliate groups in every state yet to pass Marsy's Law have spent millions lobbying for these constitutional amendments. Henry Nicholas III, the billionaire brother of the law's namesake, Marsalee "Marsy" Nicholas, founded the movement under the guise of equitable treatment of victims and their families under the law, but seems to find existing state laws, such as the 1998 Crime Victims' Act, which endows most of the rights Marsy's Law would seek to provide, inadequate. His foundation has been wildly successful, gaining

rapid momentum across the nation by appealing to Americans' compassion and sympathies, as well as our obsession with retributive justice.

Is it noteworthy that Nicholas himself was arrested in Las Vegas in the fall of 2018 on drug trafficking charges? Hopefully, in that position he took some time to reflect on the reason defendants' rights are emphasized and protected with such vigor: when facing the state in court, the state has the power to deprive an individual of their life, liberties, and freedom. In addition, and perhaps of even greater importance, we are granted the right to be presumed innocent unless and until conviction in a court of law, following due process. Marsy's Laws disregard these founding principles of our nation, and will likely prove to be easily misused.

Cheryl Bauer is a member of the NewPeople editorial collective.



CRUEL CONSEQUENCES

WE'RE ONLY ACCEPTING CHRISTIANS TODAY

BY JOEL PRESTON SMITH

They're easy prey, because they don't look like locals. For one, their shoes have no laces. Then there's the plastic sleeves in their hands, stuffed with immigration documents, or sometimes a small bag slung over a shoulder, like a cheap carry-on, stamped DHS—Department of Homeland Security. And so, when they're deported, ordered south on foot across the Americas International Bridge from Laredo, Texas, across the invisible border bisecting the Rio Grande, on to Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, it's as if each asylum seeker had been handed a bullseye to hold over her heart.

What Donald M. Kerwin Jr. calls the "incompetent and cruel practice" of placing asylum seekers at elevated risk of kidnapping and murder is, in part, the subject of a U.S. Senate report released Nov. 7: "Shattered Refuge: A U.S. Senate Investigation into the Trump's Administration's Gutting of Asylum."

Kerwin, executive director of the Center for Migration Studies in New York City, argues that the Trump's attacks on Dreamers, his travel bans targeting Muslims, his blanket characterization of Mexican immigrants as "rapists," gang members and drug smugglers, his expanded detention camps and other anti-immigrant programs and pogroms are intended "to act as a deterrent to all immigration, to make the system so harsh and so cruel that people won't come here."

The Senate report, released Nov. 14, echoes Kerwin's concerns. Also called *The Merkley Report* after its principal author, Oregon Senator Jeff Merkley, the document notes that the Trump administration has undertaken "extensive efforts" since January 2017 "to deter and prevent asylum seekers from legally claiming asylum." It goes on to argue that Trump's immigration policies have: attempted to "choke off access to the asylum system;" violated U.S. law by purposefully endangering the lives of applicants; intentionally inflicted trauma on asylum seekers; used family separation as a fear tactic to discourage immigration; operated detention facilities beyond 500 percent of their maximum capacity, leading to further trauma to applicants, leading to "medical breakdowns" within those facilities, which "likely contributed" to the deaths of seven children; medicated a woman in labor in order to stop her contractions so she could be deported to Mexico; and is holding more than 4,000 children with no identified sponsors, who may, consequently, be confined in detention camps "for years on end" while their cases wend through the U.S. legal system. At least one U.S. official has been fired for "applying asylum law as written," rather than bending or breaking laws to meet Trump's political objectives.

Maureen Meyer, director for Mexico and Migrant Rights for the Washington Office on Latin America, a Washington, D.C. think tank, says it's particularly egregious for immigration officials to deport asylum seekers to towns such as Nuevo Laredo and Matamoros, after the U.S. State Department issued travel advisories ranking those Mexican cities as "level 4" areas, where "violent crime, such as murder, armed robbery, carjacking, kidnapping, extortion, and sexual assault, is common." The State Department goes on to define these two deportation sites as cities where significant "gang activity, including gun battles and blockades, is widespread" and, "armed criminal groups target public and private passenger buses as well as private automobiles traveling through Tamaulipas, often taking passengers hostage and demanding ransom payments."

The State Department considers the two cities so dangerous that it imposes a curfew from midnight to 6 a.m. for U.S. government employees traveling between Nuevo Laredo and Matamoros (directly

across the border from Brownsville, Texas), and forbids such employees from "using interior Mexican highways" at any time.

Meyer notes, "Anyone that's not Mexican, but speaks Spanish is sent back through a port of entry, across a bridge into those towns." Each is infamous territory for drug cartels. When Matamoros and Nuevo Laredo head up the rankings of notable Mexican destinations, it's usually for their high kidnapping and murder rates. Once they've crossed the Rio Grande, asylum seekers are taken into custody by Mexican police, and eventually released to await a court appearance in the U.S. While waiting for an asylum hearing, Meyers says, would-be immigrants sleep on the streets or in random 'tent cities,' where it's "easy for persecutors to find them."

Under Title 8 of U.S. Federal Code, "Any alien who is physically present in the United States or who arrives in the United States (whether or not at a designated port of arrival)" has a legal right to apply for asylum. The code provides for several exceptions, allowing the U.S. attorney general to bar applications from asylum seekers (no particular grounds are given), and return the applicant to her or his country of origin or last residence, but the attorney general may only do so if the "alien's life or freedom would not be threatened on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion ..." The Code also prohibits the U.S. from deporting applicants to the country from which they seek asylum.

Trump and immigration officials have violated Title 8 through two consistent practices, critics argue, by preventing asylum seekers from even attempting to apply for refuge, and by deporting migrants to extremely dangerous areas where they fall prey to kidnappers and other opportunists working with drug cartels.

Emily Green, a reporter for *This American Life*, recently interviewed a man she calls 'David' less than half a day before he was kidnapped with his son in Nuevo Laredo. In her story, called "The Long Way Home," Green says kidnapping in Mexico "is a volume business" and has been for quite some time. "What's different now," she explains, "is that the U.S. is making it especially easy for the cartels to identify and snatch victims. They're sending asylum seekers back in big groups, all at once, same time of day."

But, Kerwin notes, U.S. officials began constructing barriers for asylum seekers long before deporting them in violation of Title 8—intentionally or not—into the hands of kidnappers. "You could almost go back to even before he [Trump] was elected, and look at the rhetoric and see that for him it's been nothing but decimation of these [immigration] programs." Kerwin says he's heard anecdotal reports of border agents blocking asylum seekers from crossing into legal ports of entry, telling them, "The U.S. is full," or 'We're only accepting Christians today.' I'm not saying there's a systematic script these people are reading from. It's just a way of deterring people from applying."

The Merkley report also documents the administration's efforts to replace trained asylum officers—particularly those who conduct 'credible fear' interviews designed to weed out fraudulent asylum claims—with untrained Border Patrol agents in an "apparent strategy to cut the number of asylum applicants who pass the credible fear screening ..." Immigration officials, the report states, terminated standardized training in August for new asylum agents. "Without standardized trainings," according to the report, "new asylum officers are likely to be trained by politically-installed leaders and more

vulnerable to pressure from supervisors to deny as many asylum claims as possible."

Despite a litany of offenses and abrogations of law documented in the report, it does offer a series of remedies, including (among others):

- Establishing "a \$10,000 civil claim against the U.S. government for delaying or preventing asylum seekers from crossing the U.S. border
- Prohibiting Border Patrol officers from acting as asylum officials
- Providing the right to counsel for all unaccompanied children
- Requiring daily monitoring of all immigration detention facilities.

Kerwin describes the Trump Administration's conduct toward asylum seekers as "the most hostile to humanitarian programs any of us have witnessed in our lifetimes, or our careers." A "reasonable, sane" remedy, he concludes, "would be to at least provide asylum seekers with access to the system. They're doing nothing illegal. All the administration's really done so far is to demonstrate how totally inept they've been with border control."

Most efforts to rectify the current prohibitive and predatory actions of the administration, he argues, would be unnecessary if the U.S. simply "followed the law, and the spirit of the law."

Joel Preston Smith is a writer, editor and artist. He's the author of "Night of a Thousand Stars & Other Portraits of Iraq" (Nazraeli Press, 2006).



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HOMAGE FOR THE HELPERS

WE REMEMBER TWO EXEMPLARY PITTSBURGH WOMEN: LEADERS WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE

On November 14 and 15, Sr. Liguori Rossner and Ann Mason, respectively, passed from us. Each a courageous witness for justice, their legacies will remain with us through the organizations and people they inspired.

SR. LIGUORI ROSSNER, co-founder and life time Executive Director of the Jubilee Association, had a long- time association with the Thomas Merton Center, drawing from her faith and commitment to peace and social justice.

Though broad in her interests and talents, Sr. Liguori chose to give her life in the day to day efforts of ministering to many of Pittsburgh's most vulnerable people who made their way to the Jubilee Kitchen, 2005 Jumonville Avenue in the Soho section of Pittsburgh, to the Heinz children's educational center next door, or to the pantry in Polish Hill.

Most came in need of the services offered there (a meal, clothing, job counseling, a place to get mail, and other basic human needs). Thousands volunteered over Jubilee's now 40-year history (commemorated only 5 days after Sister's passing) to help in whatever way they were needed.

With her capable and effective leadership, the Jubilee attracted the time, talent and treasure of volunteers, staff and donors. Many were young people inspired by the mission and Sr. Liguori's witness.

Living with the realities and limitations of chronic illness, Sr. Liguori's journey was single-minded: a life of tireless, loving service and unwavering faithfulness to that calling. Many will remember the help they received, others will recall Sr. Liguori's wit and great sense of humor, and others her persistent determination in the midst of adversity.

Officiating at the Mass of Christian Burial for Sr. Liguori, Bishop David Zubik remembered the friendship and prayerful support they offered to one another over the years and expressed the gratitude of the Pittsburgh community to Sr. Liguori for her life of selfless giving.

"She can never die. Her body might die, but her memory lives on. As long as there's Jubilee Kitchen,

there will always be Sister Liguori," -- David Betts, long time employee of Jubilee Kitchen

ANN MASON began a life of public service as a member of the Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) program (the domestic Peace Corps



SR. LIGUORI ROSSNER

BY JOYCE ROTHERMEL

Stevens, Black Political Empowerment Project.

"Ann, you represented strength, perseverance, wisdom, caring, God's love, grace and mercy. You touched so many lives in ways they will always



ANN MASON

remember...my life is one of them. Both before and after my stroke, you were there with a listening ear, an encouraging word, a friendly smile and a warm hug. I will shed no tears because I know you are with our Lord and Savior celebrating your return home. Your work on earth has come to an end. As it is written in Matthew 25:21, "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'" Grace and Peace." --Audra V. Walker, President Greater Pittsburgh Business and Professional Women.

Joyce Rothermel was a long time friend of Sr. Liguori Rossner and Ann Mason a colleague in the work to eliminate hunger in Allegheny County.

KUDOS TO HOWARD AIKENS, CHRISTINE AIKENS-WOLFE, AND ROSEMARY TRUMP

For more than a year, Howard and Christine have hosted and prepared fundraising dinners at their home to benefit the Thomas Merton Center. Participants have enjoyed the company of special guests (most recently Jayne Miller from the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy in November and Chris Moore, Emmy-award-winning documentary producer in December) and the delightful gourmet vegetarian cuisine of Howard's kitchen; participants have supported the Merton Center at the same time. The wine for all the meals has been selected and provided by Rosemary Trump.

The Merton Center is grateful to Howard, Christine, and Rosemary as well as our distinguished guests and all the dinner participants. What a wonderful way to support the important mission of the TMC! Future dinners are planned for January, February, and March. Call 412-780-5118 for details.

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD FILM SCREENING



THE PANEL FOR THE FILM AND DISCUSSION ON PITTSBURGH'S UNDERGROUND RAILROAD. FROM L TO R: JAY RUFF BONE WHITE, CARL REDWOOD, SARAH (JAMAELA) MARTIN, KIMBERLY C. ELLIS, PH. D., BOMANI M. HOWZE, AND SAMUEL W. BLACK.

EVENTS CALENDAR

18 DEC, 9am – 5pm. Call Governor Wolf to End Immigrant Family Detention. Governor Tom Wolf (717-787-2500), Lt. Gov. Fetterman (717) 787-3300, PA DHS Secretary Miller (717-787-2600)

14 JAN, 7 – 9pm. David Harris, Local Author on Criminal Justice Presented by Pittsburgh Arts & Lectures. Carnegie Library Lecture Hall

18 JAN, 7 – 10:30pm. Ramy Essam. Carnegie Lecture Hall, Oakland. 4400 Forbes Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15213, USA

24 JAN, 22nd Pittsburgh Racial Justice Summit. Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. 616 N. Highland Ave.

"Peace demands the most heroic labor and the most difficult sacrifice. It demands greater heroism than war. It demands greater fidelity to the truth and a much more perfect purity of conscience."

-Thomas Merton

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.

The NewPeople is invested in fostering conversation around topics that affect communities and vulnerable groups both locally and globally. We encourage contributions for each issue from the public that will generate conversation and we invite perspectives that are not widely considered. Opinions expressed in the published articles do not necessarily represent those of the Thomas Merton Center or its Editorial Collective.

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 Center, 81 South 13th St.,
Southside, Pittsburgh, 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. 15213

Tuesdays:
Black Political Empowerment Project
Second Tuesday of the Month, Hill House Association,
2nd Floor, 1835 Centre Ave. 6pm.

Green Party of Allegheny County
1st Tuesday, 6-8pm
Panera, 3401 Blvd of the Allies, Oakland
412-532-9194 alleghenycountyglobals@gmail.com

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:
Global Pittsburgh Happy Hour
1st Thursday, 5:30 to 8 pm, Roland's Seafood Grill, 1904 Penn Ave, Strip District

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 Thursday, 6pm - 8pm, Hill House Conference Room 2

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, TMC Annex

BECOME A MEMBER

Subscribe to The NewPeople by becoming a member of the Thomas Merton Center today!

As a member, The NewPeople newspaper will be mailed to your home or sent to your email account. You will also receive weekly e-blasts focusing on peace and justice events in Pittsburgh, and special invitations to membership activities. Now is the time to stand for peace and justice!

Join online at ThomasMertonCenter.org/membership-and-donation or fill out this form, cut out, and mail in.

Select your membership level:
 \$15 Low Income Membership
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\$ _____

Or Become an Organizational Member:

\$75 Organization (below 25 members)
 \$125 Organization (above 25 members)
 I would like to receive the weekly activist Eblast
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