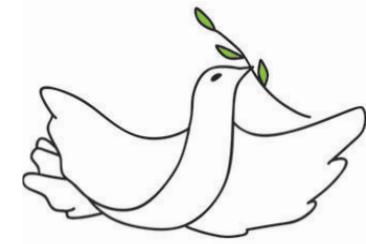


THE NEWPEOPLE

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



VOL. 50 No. 1
February 2020

PITTSBURGH REGION RESPONDS TO TRUMP ESCALATION OF WAR ON IRAN

Just days after President Trump's gang carried out the assassination of Iran's leading military official, General Qassem Suleimani, 200 people rallied in Pittsburgh on January 4, 2020 calling for "No war with Iran, U.S. troops out of Iraq!" as part of nationwide protests in over 90 cities and towns across US organized by ANSWER (Act Now to Stop War & End Racism) Coalition, Code Pink and other anti-war, peace and justice organizations.

Local groups participating in the Pittsburgh rally included Pittsburgh ANSWER Coalition and the Party for Socialism and Liberation, Pittsburgh Anti-Imperialist

BY CRAIG STEVENS
PHOTOS BY CRAIG STEVENS
AND ALAN HART



Schenley Plaza Anti-War Rally, January, 2020.

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POST-GAZETTE LABOR CONFLICTS HEAT UP

BY NEIL COSGROVE

The lengthy struggle to preserve a viable daily newspaper in the Pittsburgh region continues, with the paper's unions seeking fair contracts to replace and improve upon those that expired nearly three years ago.

Meanwhile the *Post-Gazette's* owners, Block Communications, would rather spend millions they could dedicate to those contracts on a union-busting law firm from Tennessee. It's not like King and Ballow are providing Block with legal victories. Most recently, an arbitrator handed down a "final and binding" ruling that the *Post-Gazette* must retroactively pay for editorial staff health insurance benefits mandated by the contract that expired March 31, 2017. The paper had refused to pay for premium increases that began in April, 2018.

Then, on January 9th, a federal district judge ordered a hearing for early March into whether the *Post-Gazette* is in contempt of court for refusing to comply with the judge's November order that Block reinstate laid-off circulation and delivery employees, and restore the health care for employees reduced to part-time status, as

their existing contract requires. King and Ballow's main strategy, it appears, is to stretch out for as long as possible their client's practice of violating labor laws, in the hopes that the unions representing *Post-Gazette* employees will collapse under the strain. But the struggles between owner and workers extend back to 2006, when the editorial staff last received a raise. The unions are still standing, and appear even more determined to save the paper, as well as their jobs.

There is no denying, nonetheless, how stressful the past several months have been, not just for the paper's employees but also for its customers and the region's civic life, which is heavily dependent on the functioning of a quality daily.

In April, the newspaper won a Pulitzer Prize for its coverage of the previous October's Tree of Life synagogue mass shooting. Such an honor, Ryan Deto of the *City Paper* reports, did not stop Executive Editor Keith Burris from holding a meeting the following month in which he told managers the Block family wanted to cut 70 positions in the next two years. Since

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DECOLONIZING AT YALUI VILLAGE

BY SYMONE SAUL



"Honor Esto'kgna/ Honor Ancestors"

Activists (L-R) Duck Longsoldier, Symone Saul, and Gabriel McMorland at Yalui Village.

Listen! Do you hear it?

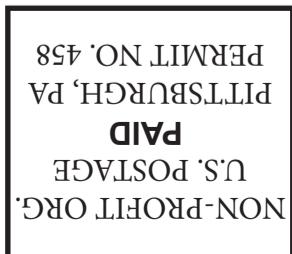
The gunshots ringing out like fireworks from Reynosa, across the Rio Grande to where you lie awake, nestled in scratchy blankets, mere inches of soft dirt separating yours from the bones of the ancestors.

Do you hear the unpredictable patterning of wind against nylon or the all-too-predictable whirring of helicopters and Border Patrol trucks creeping past the village?

Quietly focus on the sound of coyotes fervently yelping at the other dogs, or the bird calls of the human coyotes whistling their location to the migrants they're escorting through cover of night under a glaringly open sky.

Listening is an act of decolonization. Colonizers refuse to listen. They bring their facts, their language, and beliefs wherever they go and impose it in one direction. Dr. Curtiss Porter reminds us

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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 New People is distributed each month to 2,200 people who belong to diverse organizations, businesses and groups.

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Visit www.ThomasMertonCenter.org/submit. Deadline to submit is the 13th of every month.

To Submit an Event to the TMC Calendar: Email Calendar@ThomasMertonCenter.org

Advertising prices range from \$15 for a business card size to \$250 for a full page. There is a 10% discount when purchasing 6 months of ad space at a time, and a 20% discount when purchasing a year of ad space at a time. An additional 10% discount is available for non-profit organizations and faith-based groups.

For more information or to help distribute the paper: Call 412-361-3022 or email NewPeople@ThomasMertonCenter.org.

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TMC PROJECTS

Human Rights

Book 'Em: Books to Prisoners Project
BookEmPGH@gmail.com
www.bookEmPGH.org

Cities for CEDAW
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Fight for Lifers West
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FightForLifersWest.org

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www.PrisonerStories.blogspot.com

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www.SteelSmilingPGH.org
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Pittsburgh Darfur Emergency Coalition
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www.PittsburghDarfur.org

Environmental Justice

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World.350.org/Pittsburgh

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

Abolitionist Law Center
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Amnesty International
info@AmnestyPGH.org
www.AmnestyPGH.org

Association of Pittsburgh Priests
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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
Larry Blalock, evolve@atlanticbb.net

The Global Switchboard Pittsburgh
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North Hills Anti-Racism Coalition
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Poor People's Campiegn
Krystle@ThomasMertonCenter.org

PA United for Single-Payer Health Care
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Pittsburgh Cuba Coalition
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Pittsburgh BDS Coalition
bdspittsburgh@gmail.com

Pittsburgh North People for Peace
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Pittsburgh Palestine Solidarity Committee
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Religion and Labor Coalition
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SW PA Bread for the World
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rothermeljoyce@gmail.com

United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE)
412-471-8919 www.ueunion.org

Veterans for Peace of Western PA
vfp47wp@yahoo.com

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)
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granbell412@gmail.com

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412-621-9230
office@piin.org

Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty
Martha Conley 412-361-7872,
osterdm@earthlink.net

TMC supports these organizations' missions.

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MERTON CENTER NEWS

NEW MEMBERS BRING DIVERSE SKILLS, ACTIVISM TO MERTON BOARD

BY NEIL COSGROVE

The newly elected members of TMC's Board of Directors bring a wide variety of personal and professional skills to the Merton Center, along with broad and deep experiences as activists. They reflect what returning Board member Jonah McAllister-Erikson says is the Center's role as "one of few non-sectarian places where activists from diverse political backgrounds can come together to struggle for systematic changes to society."

Jonah McAllister-Erikson joined the Board when the Center was experiencing a financial crisis less than a decade ago, and assisted in establishing a Sustainer's Committee that has greatly contributed to the maintenance of our fiscal health up to the present day. Initially active on the Anti-War Committee, his current focus is on "public transit advocacy." He was a founding member of the TMC project Pittsburghers for Public Transit.

Matt Dean is the Environmental Justice Exchange Coordinator at New Voices Pittsburgh, focusing on ecological devastation and how that devastation can be halted and reversed. Other activism includes advocating for reproductive rights at New Voices Pittsburgh – a Black Femme-led and centered organization in Pittsburgh. Following our Board retreat, Dean is also committed to the Merton Center's work with the Poor People's Campaign. (1)

Caiolinn Ertel is an LGBTQ activist who supports the Black Lives Matter and Extinction Rebellion movements. A member of the Democratic Socialists of America, Ertel serves on the boards of the Steel City Stonewall Democrats and the Penn Hills Community

Development Commission. Prior to moving to western Pennsylvania, Ertel spent decades in Leesburg, VA while working as an air traffic controller and systems engineer. During her time in Virginia she volunteered for a food pantry and a women's shelter. (2)

Anais Hussian, a United Methodist deacon, works for persons with disabilities, the LGBTQIA+ community, victims of trauma, and people directly affected by our criminal justice system. As a volunteer with FOCUS, Pittsburgh's Trauma Response Team, she helps "provide community support in response to fatal shootings in and around the city of Pittsburgh." Hussian is currently the mentor coordinator for Foundation of HOPE, which "strives to empower inmates, re-entrants, and community members to advocate for change in their own lives and in our criminal justice system." Formerly chairperson of the Western Pennsylvania United Methodist Church Disability Concerns Committee, Hussian seeks to use "both education and bridge-building as tools for promoting peace and justice." (3)

Ayo Osibodu is a first-generation immigrant from the United Kingdom who served as deputy field director during Summer Lee's successful campaign for a seat in the Pennsylvania legislature. Bi-lingual, and of Ethiopian and Nigerian heritage, Osibodu has an MBA and will bring expertise in finance to the Merton Board. Currently, he works as a financial counselor with Bank of America. (4)

Nancy Gippert has long experience as a housing advocate. During the early 1980s she was chair of the Board of the Pittsburgh Women's

Center and Shelter, while working as a housing counselor for the Urban League of Pittsburgh and obtaining her law degree. She then worked as supervising housing attorney and Special Assistant to the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission in Harrisburg. Following her retirement and return to Pittsburgh five years ago, Gippert chairs the housing committee for Lawrenceville United and is proud of that organization's success in getting the city to enact inclusive zoning in Lawrenceville. She also volunteers for the Merton Center and Casa San Jose.

Her interest in the Merton Center, says Gippert, is based on a belief that "the best way to make change is to create a movement that joins together all those folks who are fighting to right all the various wrongs in this country." (5)

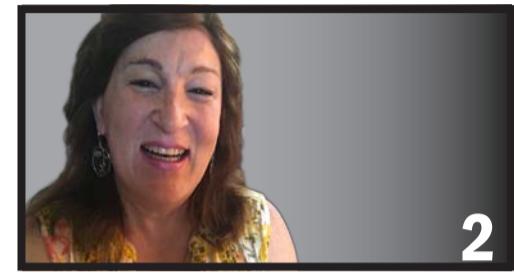
Bridget Ferris works at Light of Life Rescue Mission and volunteers with Book'Em. (6)

These Thomas Merton Center board members began their three-year terms in January, following their election. The Center welcomes this diverse, skilled and experienced cohort to its board.

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



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IN MEMORY OF THOMAS WEBB

Thomas Merton Center friend, supporter, and recent TMC guest speaker passed away in California in early December. Tom came to Pittsburgh to study spirituality at Duquesne University in the 1980's. He was active with the Tri-State Conference on the Impact of Steel during the years of decline of the mills in the Pittsburgh region. He lived at Amos House, a community house in Garfield at the time, sharing life with the progressive, faith-based, activist community of Pittsburgh and worked for a short time at the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank. He returned to California, where he was a Catholic High School teacher, served as a lay pastoral associate and a non-profit administrator. The last five years Tom spent at the Oakland Catholic Worker. Active with a local chapter of Pax Christi, he served on the national council of Pax Christi, USA.

When in Pittsburgh in 2019, Tom gave a presentation for the Merton Center on the situation in Honduras

and the impact of current US policy there, providing ways for us to advocate for justice in that country. He had served on three delegations to Honduras over the past few years.

One of the last project's Tom worked on was the production and dissemination of the following Prayer for Disarmament for Pax Christi Northern California. We print it here in his memory and in gratitude for his life.

Prayer for Disarmament

Breath of All that Is,
Preserve us from our own madness.
Direct us away from dealing destruction to others,
A path which leads to the ruin
Of our selves and our world.
Protect us. Help us to hear You.

Jesus Christ, Beloved,
Show us your precious face in all others,

You in us, and we in each other, from all places.

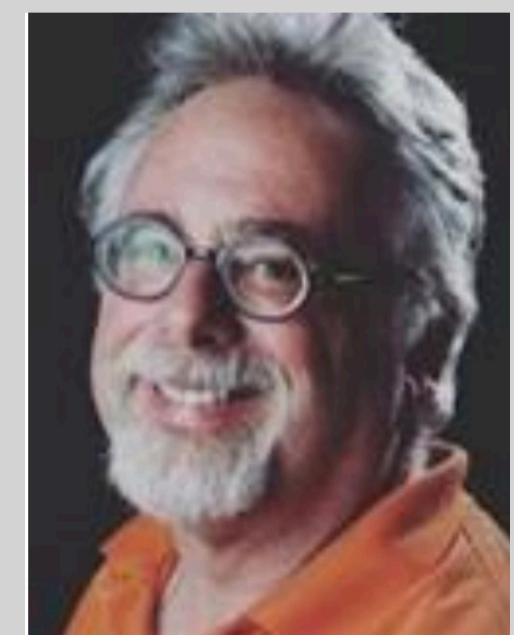
Teach us how to lower our defenses,
Feed us Love which transcends fear.
Heal us. Help us to let go of all fear.

Holy Spirit,
You Call us, in our minds, in our world,
And through each other. Speak to us. Speak through us.
When we worship power, control, money,
When we cannot forgive, or shove pain onto others,
Call us. Light the fire of Love.

We will not be afraid.
We will not be afraid.
Love transcends all fear.
You Are with us Always.

Amen.
(Prayer by Kim Vanderheiden)

A memorial service is being planned in Pittsburgh. Please contact Fr. Dorsey for details at 412-980-3937.



THOMAS WEBB

SHEDDING OUR DESTRUCTIVE SKIN

DECOLONIZING AT YALUI VILLAGE

that the sensate nature distinct to African tribal and global Indigenous peoples has been lost to those firmly affixed to the materialism of Western cultures. Donald Longsoldier of the Oglala Lakota Nation will patiently describe the difference between "hearing" and "listening" with your heart and mind in tandem, if you can make out his soft mantras over the crackling of logs in the sacred fire.

At Yalui Village in Somi Se'k, home of the Esto'k Gna, there is so much to hear, learn, and understand. While this is resistance-- a sustained encampment built by the Carrizo-Comecrudo Tribe of Texas along a cemetery where the proposed border wall construction had been planned-- this is so much more.

As many leftist white Americans run around panicking in this maelstrom of imperialism, border and immigration issues, the increasingly blatant government corruption, and total climate apocalypse, so few of those people are ready to fight for the causes we claim to support. Doing so requires a type of sacrifice most people of privilege aren't ready to

FROM PAGE 1

accept. Doing so requires something deeper than protest, slower than social media, and more valuable than the most generous philanthropy. The only solution to the devastating effect of white supremacy must address the poisonous roots influencing well-intentioned harmful behaviors, to prevent them from sprouting. It is not enough to only address the toxic consequences of generations of settler-colonial society. It requires a long hard look at the way we live every moment of our lives and how we move through them. It is time to decolonize.

The theme of this year's Pittsburgh Racial Justice Summit, held January 24-25, was 'Decolonize Our Histories to Reclaim Our Humanity.' This is what Juan Mancias, tribal chairman of the Carrizo-Comecrudo, has been doing for decades, through his writing and teachings of the prophecies of his people's pictographs; and now through the creation of encampments such as Yalui Village. While holding space on sacred land and protecting the gravesites and local ecology threatened by the border wall and LNG (Liquid Natural Gas)

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THE CRY OF THE EARTH; THE CRY OF THE POOR

As a child growing up in Pittsburgh, my father used to take my sister and I fishing on the lakes and rivers in Pennsylvania. No talking was allowed. It would scare away the fish, our father said. As I sat quietly in the boat, waiting for the fish to bite, I drank in the beauty of my surroundings and marveled at the wonder of creation. I believe that this was my first experience of contemplative prayer.

When I joined the Maryknoll Sisters in the early 60s, we said the Divine Office in common several times a day. The rhythm of the psalms and the beauty of Gregorian chant entranced me. These ancient prayers recited and chanted daily, like the silent vigil in a small boat gently rocking on the water in my youth, transported me into a deeper reality where God's presence was tangible.

My assignment to East Africa in the early 70s was a childhood dream come true. When I arrived on the shores of Lake Victoria in Tanzania to learn Swahili, I felt as if I had arrived home. The gentleness of the people and their joy in simple pleasures struck a chord with me. I had never felt comfortable with the materialism and consumerism in my native USA and was much more attuned to a life that relied only

on basic necessities. Most of all, I fell in love with the extravagant abundance of nature that is displayed on the wide-open plains of the African savannah, where elephants, giraffe, zebra, impala and wildebeest graze side by side on the shrubs and grass that cover the plains and nibble at the acacia trees that provide shade from the scorching sun. Surrounded by such beauty, I feel as if I have been transported to the Garden of Eden and give thanks to the Creator for bringing me to this earthly Paradise.

In this natural wonderland, the psalms have taken on added meaning for me, as they use vivid images from nature to describe the union between God and all creation.

"All the earth cries out to you with shouts of joy, O God,

Serving you with gladness; coming before you, singing for joy." (Psalm 100)

This verse from the psalms, and many more like it, mirrors the spirituality of the people with whom I have worked in East and Southern Africa, who view everything as gifts from God and pray accordingly. Prayers are offered for rain, for a good harvest, for the birth of a child, for the death of a family member or any important

HOW TO BE AN ANTIRACIST

BY BONNIE DICARLO

Ibram X. Kendi, author of *How To Be An Antiracist*, was the guest speaker at Carlow University in the Gailliot Theater last fall.

Ibram Kendi is a *New York Times* best-selling author and the founding director of the Antiracist Research and Policy Center at Washington University. He is a professor of history and international relations and a frequent public speaker. While answering questions from staff members and guests, Ibram Kendi talked about writing his third book while undergoing treatment for stage four colon cancer.

The book's title is the foundation for the discussion. The opposite of racism is not merely "not racist", but "antiracist". We must be antiracist to confront racist beliefs and actions. The book is "about the basic struggle we're all in, the struggle to be fully human and to see that others are fully human."

The author was asked a question about the disparity studies that continue to be made. The purpose of these studies should be to lead to solutions. After decades of studies, the findings are the same. So we ask the question: What is needed to change the outcomes? The answer: opportunity and resources. But those in power must be willing to want to change. It's not happening.

Kendi quoted Audre Lord: "We have all been programmed to respond to the human differences between us with fear and loathing and to han-

dle that difference in one of three ways: ignore it, copy it if we think it is dominant, or destroy it if we think it is subordinate. But we have no patterns for relating across our human differences as equals." The author concludes: To be an antiracist is a radical choice in the face of this history, requiring a radical reorientation of our consciousness.

Well, for me, a radical reorientation cannot be accomplished in a one hour discussion. I left the auditorium knowing one thing: doing nothing about racist policies is being racist. On a person to person level, I began to understand "racist" as a verb, not a noun - not identifying a person as racist, but seeing them as being racist about a certain issue or policy.

In our society, being white is a privileged position. Those of us who are white have an obligation to be antiracist. Will we, as a society, ever really identify and eliminate racist power and policy? Will it ever be that we respect each other for who we are, without preconceived biases? This book will help our thought process, but our actions will make the difference.

Bonnie DiCarlo, musician, financial planner and political strategist, is a long-time member of the Merton Center. Bonnie has served as a board member many times, a finance committee member, and liaison with Thrifty, where she is known for leading carols at the holiday luncheon.

BY SR. JANICE MC LAUGHLIN, MM

event and usually include rituals that involve water, fire, anointing with oil and blessing with milk or the blood of an animal. These services are held under trees or on hillsides and remind me of how Jesus went off to pray in the desert and in the hills around Galilee. As I join in these prayers with my neighbors, I feel a sense of belonging with the people and with their awareness of God's presence in their daily lives.

The traditional religion of the Shona people of Zimbabwe is especially attuned to nature and to God's presence in all creation. It forbids the killing of animals except for food and encourages the planting of trees and the protection of water sources. These traditions promote the common good in much the same way as do the social teachings of the Catholic Church. They have given me a deeper appreciation of the inter-connectedness of all things and have strengthened my commitment to protect and preserve the natural environment.

My mission experience has deepened my sense of the sacred permeating all that is. The forests have become my cathedrals; the lakes and rivers are my confessional; and the animals are my mentors and spiritual guides. I wrote a small book called *Ostriches, Dung Beetles and Other*

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THE CRY OF THE EARTH; THE CRY OF THE POOR

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Spiritual Masters (Orbis 2009) that describes the lessons we can learn from animals, insects, birds, trees and all creation. It is my ode to the African continent that has taught me so much about relationships, prayer and union with the Divine.

Pope Francis, in his magnificent encyclical letter on the environment, speaks of the "Gospel of Creation." "Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God," the Pope declares (*Laudato Si*, #84). This letter touches my heart as it asks me to hear both the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor. The two are intertwined and demand my wholehearted response.

As I look back on a life lived close to the earth, I resonate with the words of Pope Francis and with these on the wisdom of animals by Irish poet and author John O'Donohue (*Benedictus*, Bantam Press, 2004, "To Learn from Animal Being"):

Nearer to the earth's heart,
Deeper within its silence:
Animals know this world
In a way that we never will...

May we learn to walk
Upon the earth
With all their confidence
And clear-eyed stillness

So that our minds
Might be baptized
In the name of the wind
And the light and the rain.

Janice McLaughlin, MM is a Maryknoll Sister serving in Harare, Zimbabwe. She is a long time member and supporter of the Merton Center.

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150 PRACTICAL WAYS TO REDUCE YOUR ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT – PART I

BY JAMES MCCARVILLE

Editor's note: The NewPeople recognizes the value of these efforts, while also recognizing that readers may not have the level of affluence needed to carry many of them out. Given that reality, we believe those who can are even more obligated to make the efforts described below. Part II will cover what people can do working through organizations to reduce our collective ecological footprint.

If 2020 is the year America (supposedly) woke to the climate crisis, what can people do about it as a practical matter - while we await the results of the next election.

Using as a starting point, Pope Francis' letter 'Laudato Si', the Diocese of Atlanta prepared a practical guide for what people can do to make a change. With continued suggestions from friends, I have expanded the initial list for this publication. Part I is the list of what you can do as an individual right away. Next month, Part II will include the strategies on how to effectively talk to other people on the subject, how to build teams within your existing faith communities or social networks, and finally how to reach out in support of existing organizations in the work they do.

Below are about half of the practical and specific ways you can reduce your ecological footprint, organized in nine groups.

1. Understand your impact on the environment. Do an energy audit (free for income qualified people). Find your insulation level. Educate yourself on grants and programs available. Learn what your municipality recycles and what it does not.

2. Make home energy conservation second nature. Turn off unneeded lights. Swap out old light bulbs with new LED ones. Install ceiling fans, motion detectors on lights and programmable thermostats. Dress warm in winter and drop your thermostat a couple of degrees. Dress light in summer and raise your thermostat a couple of degrees. Check and seal window and door cracks and upgrade insulation if necessary.

3. In the longer run, replace older appliances with Energy Star efficient ones. Replace single pane windows with double or triple panes. Plant a tree or trees to shade the house in summer and soak up CO2 year-round. Consider solar panels for the roof.

4. Keep all household members informed of the progress/problems and key decisions so they all understand their part in the bigger picture.

5. Buy natural, recycled or recyclable products, paper, plates, cups and utensils. Carry

your own coffee mug with you. Refuse straws and plastic bags. Recycle bulbs, batteries and ink cartridges. Print on both sides of paper. Donate usable equipment to non-profits. Take old computers to recycle centers. Start a personal or community compost pile for banana peels, eggshells, coffee grounds, tea bags, apple cores, paper towels and waste foods.

6. Buy second-hand clothes. Donate your own clothes or toys. Repair what you can, even if it is more expensive.

7. Curtail your transportation. Carpool. For a business or organization of any kind, start a carpool database and carpool ministry. Install electronic vehicle charging stations and reserve priority parking. Offset jet transportation with public transportation and hybrid car rentals. Except in the coldest weather, don't warm up your car until you have put on your seat belt and turned on the radio, etc.

8. Save water. Turn off the water while brushing your teeth. Check and fix toilet leaks. Take showers instead of baths. Retrofit with dual flush toilets and low flow shower heads. Take shorter showers. Use lukewarm water (at least in the summer). Use dishwasher and washing machines only when full or with water saver devices. Minimize outdoor water use with water-wise landscaping.

9. When shopping, use recyclable, cloth shopping bags. Refuse plastic. When possible - buy local, natural or organic food. Choose items with less packaging. Buy in bulk and freeze small portions to reduce plastic wrapping. Don't overbuy. Store properly. Eat leftovers before spoiling. Turn aging fruits and vegetables into smoothies. Compost. Eat lower on the food chain - more fruits and vegetables, less meat. Fast during Lent, do Meatless Mondays or Fridays or both. Donate to a food pantry. Avoid bottled water or soft drinks. Join a food co-op or community food network, especially an organic one. Grow your own food garden. Donate unused foods.

These strategies are all part of a course offered from 10:00 am to 11:30 am, at Kearns Spirituality Center beginning Wednesday, February 5, 2020, and running for the four Wednesdays in February. To register call 312-66-1124 or email kearns@cdpsisters.org.

Jim McCarville teaches a mini-course on "Laudato Si" at the Kearns Spirituality Center on Wednesdays in Feb. He is the Vice President (Lay Member) of the Association of Pittsburgh Priests.

UNFORGETTABLE WOMEN

FOUR PITTSBURGH SUFFRAGETTES

BY MOLLY RUSH

The movement to gain the vote took decades, but it finally succeeded in 1920 with the passage of the 19th amendment.

The struggle for the right of women to vote took great courage in the face of fierce opposition. Several were jailed for picketing. While in jail, many refused to do required work and went on hunger strikes.

Four Pittsburgh women who are largely unknown played a major role in the struggle for the vote. They are Nellie Bly, MRS. J.O. Miller, Jane Grey Swisshelm and Edith Dennison Darlington Ammon.

Much of what follows has also been described in the Pittsburgh Magazine, in an article by Virginia Montanez.



Photo: Wiki Commons

JANE GREY SWISSELM

Jane Grey Swisshelm blazed a trail during her lifetime in the 19th century, including a harsh marriage in which her husband's expected subservience was the catalyst for her advocacy.

Her experience led to her devotion to women's rights, especially property rights. She was a staunch abolitionist who served as a frontline nurse for the Union during the Civil War.

She started her own abolitionist and women's-rights weekly, the *Pittsburgh Saturday Visitor*. She was the first woman ever in the Senate press gallery and she started two newspapers.

In St. Cloud, abolitionists threw her printing press into the river. At this she wrote, "Dying is not difficult, yielding is impossible," and then started a new newspaper.

Born in 1815, Jane was well ahead of her time. She was the first woman hired by Horace Greeley of the New York Tribune. She was a fiery journalist, publisher, abolitionist and women's rights advocate. She owned a series of newspapers. *The Spirit of Liberty*, in 1857, promoted an end to slavery and women's rights.

Swisshelm retired to the Pittsburgh country estate she won in court from her husband. This estate, named Swisshelm, is now Swissvale.



Photo: Wiki Commons

NELLIE BLY was the pen name of Elizabeth Cochran. In 1885, the twenty-year-old wrote a piece on equal pay for women and was hired by the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*. She was a pioneer in her field of investigative journalism.

Faking insanity, she was admitted to an insane asylum. She then wrote a first-hand account of the harsh treatment she received. She became an advocate for the poor and under-served.

"A girl was engaged to fill a position that had always been occupied by men, who, for the same work, received \$2.00 a day. Her employer stated that he had never had anyone in the same position that was as accurate, speedy, and gave the same satisfaction; however, as she was 'just a girl' he gave her \$5.00 a week."

An adventurer, inspired by Jules Verne's *Around the World in 80 Days*, she outdid Verne by making the trip in 72 days.



Photo courtesy of Cynthia Miller

MRS. JOHN O. MILLER

Because women almost always were referred to by their husband's first and last names, she was referred to in news stories as Mrs. John O. Miller or Mrs. J.O. Miller.

She chaired Pittsburgh's suffragist movement during the most crucial years of the right-to-vote fight. She spoke at many local functions in support of enfranchising women and was a regular at scheduled debates regarding the subject.

In 1915, four years before women would officially get the vote, she wrote an appeal to voters on behalf of the Woman Suffrage Party. She led the party in 1919 when the Pennsylvania Legislature voted to pass the Suffrage Act, the first state to do so.

After the historic vote, she presented the governor with an engraved memorial in gratitude. On it was her given name, recorded for posterity, with no indication of her marital name.



Photo from the Darlington Family Papers, University of Pittsburgh

EDITH DENNISON DARLINGTON AMMON

Edith Ammon led the fight to save the historic Fort Pitt Block House. As a leader of the Fort Pitt Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Edith and other members rose up in the face of powerful opposition, including Henry Clay Frick and the Pennsylvania Railroad.

Although women couldn't vote, Edith lobbied tirelessly in Harrisburg on behalf of the society to save the small slice of history. Fearlessly, she stood up to the powers that be.

Addressing a roomful of state senators regarding what had become known as "Mrs. Ammon's Bill," she scolded, "Have you no history? Have you no pride?"

While not an active Suffragist, she inspired many women who worked for the vote.

In 1911, she said, "Men... with but the thought of gain and gold were dreaming of tracks and trains, of massive walls and wreathing smoke from towering chimneys, while we dreamed ... of peaceful paths where once was strife, of space and breeze, of floating flags and trees, not smoke and noise. They planned for vandalism ... we for peaceful paths where once was strife..."

Molly Rush is a Co-founder of the Thomas Merton Center and a member NewPeople Editorial Collective.

IGNORANCE AND CONFUSION

NEVER-ENDING WARS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

BY MICHAEL DROHAN

Early on Friday Jan 3, 2020 President Trump ordered the assassination of Maj. General Qassim Suleimani of Iran near Baghdad Airport, Iraq. Suleimani was the head of the Quds Military Force in Iran and was the second most powerful figure in Iran. The recklessness and barbarity of this act is hard to overestimate. Comparisons have been made with the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand, the heir apparent of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1914, an act which ignited World War I.

For starters, assassinations are strictly forbidden by American law. Secondly, this act exacerbated the relationships between the US and Iran and has brought us ever so close to full scale war of a proportion we can only imagine and dread. Thirdly, it taught us that the Pentagon and the Trump administration have learned absolutely nothing from the 19 years of war in Iraq and Afghanistan. The semi-destruction of these countries, leaving them in ruins and permanent internal conflict, does not seem to have sunk in.

The reasons for the escalation of hostilities towards Iran are encased in lies and obfuscation. The first reason put forward by the Trump administration is that Suleimani was planning attacks on US assets and that these were imminent. But now Secretary of Defense Mike Esper maintains that he was not informed of any such threats. The timing of the assassination, coming right in the middle of the impeachment of President Trump, suggests that this

reckless act may have been to blow the impeachment process out of the water.

There are also several ironies associated with the assassination. The fact that Suleimani was in Iraq at all is a direct fall-out of the 17-year US war in Iraq. That war removed from power Saddam Hussein and the Sunni rulers, handing over power to the Shia opponents of Hussein. This gave entry to the Iranians in Iraq, who are Shia in majority. In addition, the Iranian presence in Iraq had contributed greatly to the defeat of ISIS in Iraq and Syria. Supposedly, the presence of the US in Iraq is to defeat ISIS. In essence, ignorance and confusion seemed to be the characteristics of this recklessness.

Rather than seeking consistency and logic in this act of savagery, we have to look further back at Trump's record in office. A consistent theme of his Presidency has been an unbounded antipathy towards his predecessor Barack Obama and a commitment to undoing any and all of the achievements of the latter's Presidency. Specifically, he has devoted his Presidency to nullifying the Affordable Care Act (ACA) of Obama and the nuclear deal with Iran and other world powers, called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), signed on November 24, 2015. Trump withdrew from the latter in 2018 on the basis of Iran violating its terms. He also imposed insufferable economic sanctions on Iran, which amounts in reality to war by other means. But the animus towards Iran for Trump seems to

be derived from Trump's racial animus, which has a long and sordid history. A second layer of the animosity to Iran is Trump's subservience to the interests of Israel and Saudi Arabia, both of whom are committed to the destruction of Iran.

The sequel to the assassination of Suleimani was the bombing of Iraqi bases housing US troops with ballistic missiles. It was a measured response involving no human fatalities. The Trumpian response, however, is even more egregious. He threatened to destroy 52 Iranian targets, including archaeological sites of ancient Persian empires, one for each hostage taken in 1979. Empires never forget their hurts and grievances. Forget the facts, such as that the revolution of 1979 was to overthrow the dictatorship that the US imposed on Iran in 1953, when they deposed the democratic leader Mohammed Mossadeq. Revenge for the hurts of empire run mighty deep. There

are in fact some things that Trump knows and remembers, the hurt of empires.

As this is being written (January 13), the US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo has announced another round of more harsh sanctions on Iran. In other words, make life for the people of Iran so unbearable that they will succumb to the wishes of their oppressor. Destroy them economically as a prelude to military destruction. The supposed rationale for all this is that they wish to bring "democracy" to Iran. In their total idiocy and ignorance, they do not realize that what they are doing will only strengthen the allegiance of the people of Iran to their religious zealot leaders.

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

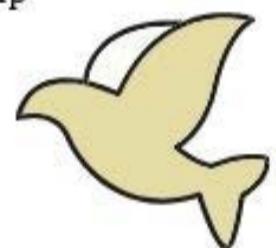
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STATEMENT OF THE ANTI-WAR COMMITTEE OF PITTSBURGH ON THE MILITARY DEVASTATION OF AFGHANISTAN

BY JOYCE ROTHERMEL

Editors Note: This statement was released in December 2019.

The United States, under the presidency of George W. Bush, together with the United Kingdom launched war on Afghanistan on October 7, 2001 under the title of "Operation Enduring Freedom" a mere month after the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The war still continues with the following war balance: 147,000 Afghans killed, of whom 38,000 were civilians; 1,892 American military personnel killed and 20,589 wounded; at least \$1 trillion spent already and said to go up to \$4 trillion with long-term expenses factored in; a country semi-destroyed and made one of the most dangerous places to live in.

The war began under a false pretense, as the then President,

George W. Bush, flailed around to identify a country that could be accused of responsibility for 9/11. The fact that 17 of the 19 hijackers were Saudis was swept under the carpet and Afghanistan, which harbored Osama Bin Laden, was identified as the fall guy, guilty or not. The then-President of Afghanistan, Mohammed Mullah Omar, was ordered to hand over Bin Laden. The Afghans responded that they would if the US could produce evidence that Bin Laden was the author of the crime. Without providing evidence, President Bush launched the fateful war that is still with us.

On December 8, 2019, the Washington Post published 2000 pages of interviews obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request. The report revealed that under three Presidents, namely Bush, Obama and Trump, the facts about the war were obfus-

cated to make it look like they knew what they were doing and that success was being achieved. In the report, a retired three-star Army General, Douglas Lute, is quoted saying, "We were devoid of a fundamental understanding of Afghanistan – we didn't understand what we were doing." The same General Lute told government reporters in 2015, "We didn't have the foggiest notion of what we were undertaking." As they supposedly trained the Afghani military to take over, the Pentagon put forward puerile strategies such as "clear, hold, build," purportedly to bring the war to an end.

At this moment in December 2019, the Taliban in Afghanistan is much stronger than it was on October 7, 2001 and they see the reigning government of Afghanistan as a puppet government of the US. It seems that the entire endeavor was little short of a

criminal enterprise about which three Presidents deceived the American people. The US Congress in this matter also has blood on its hands. Through its Authorization to Use Military Force (AUMF) in 2011, Congress handed over to the President complete authority to wage this war without apparent oversight. We, in the Anti-War Committee of Pittsburgh (a project of the Thomas Merton Center), are demanding that the three Presidents who prosecuted this war be brought to justice. If this war, executed under false pretenses and with a continuous flow of disinformation about its progress, does not rise to the level of "high crimes and misdemeanors" it is hard to know what does.

Joyce Rothermel belongs to the Anti-War Committee of Pittsburgh, a project of the Thomas Merton Center.

WEAPONIZING FOOD

CRUEL GOVERNMENT POLICY TO INCREASE FOOD INSECURITY

The truth about perpetual poverty in this country is buried beneath fear and lies. A shocking one in seven Americans are receiving food stamps, now known as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

Worse, they are often viewed as lazy scam artists living high on the hog of public assistance when some honest day's work would do. These shirking freeloaders should apparently "get a job" instead of stealing from America's coffers. There's scant awareness that the average food stamps allotment is a measly \$4/day, or that most SNAP recipients are seniors, children, and people with disabilities who, at least as of now, aren't expected to work for their daily bread.

Everyone else receiving food stamps is in fact subject to work requirements. Since 1996, federal policy has mandated a three-month time limit on receiving SNAP benefits in any three-year period. This applies to "able-bodied" adults under age 50 without dependents ("ABAWD's") unless they meet the 20 hour/week work or community service requirements, which they have to regularly, rigorously prove.

Red tape doesn't help the large majority of "able-bodied" people receiving food stamps who are already working or are between jobs. Workers who need food stamps to supplement their poverty-level income comprise the fastest growing segment of SNAP recipients. This is the real problem with food stamps: not how many SNAP recipients aren't working, but how many of

them are. The program was never meant to be a taxpayer-funded subsidy to low-wage employers, but that is what it's become. And the taxpayers include those same low-wage workers getting food stamps.

The time limit rule also regularly mis-categorizes people as ABAWD who have trouble proving they're not. These folks typically are not "able-bodied" but their physical or mental disability is undiagnosed or undocumented. Or they do have dependents but they don't live with them. Or they are working but are self-employed or at under-the-table jobs. Or they struggle with any of the common paperwork problems at the understaffed PA Department of Human Services. Routinely, advocates with Just Harvest, Pittsburgh-based anti-poverty organization, help people who are wrongly denied SNAP.

One of the saving graces of the federal rule on SNAP time limits is that states can waive them in times and places of high unemployment, as nearly all did during the recent recession and many still do in struggling geographic areas. But that's about to change. In early December, the U.S. Department of Agriculture finalized a rule change that would strictly curtail states' ability to respond compassionately to their local economies. This tightening of the time limits rule will immediately put the food assistance benefits of nearly 700,000 Americans at risk, including more than 90,000 Pennsylvanians and 1,900 people in Allegheny County.

Those 1,900 are a small portion

of SNAP recipients (about 1% of all those getting food stamps in Allegheny County now. The Trump Administration claims this is needed to get people out of their assistance hammock and back to work. But these folks face significant barriers to steady employment. Pushing them into hunger won't make them more employable.

SNAP time limits don't address the chronic barriers to regular employment that accompany a life in poverty: a lack of education or skills, low literacy, a prior criminal record, housing insecurity, and inadequate transportation. Tying food assistance to work requirements does nothing to help people trying to deal with domestic violence or get a degree. It does nothing to provide better employment opportunities to people stuck in less-than-part-time jobs.

A time limit on food stamps doesn't help people of color who experience disproportionately higher rates of unemployment due to racist hiring, promotion, and retention practices. It does nothing to help the geographic areas of higher than average unemployment they typically inhabit, burdened by chronic disinvestment – areas like Detroit, Philadelphia, and Allegheny County, that states, including Pennsylvania, must now subject to the time limits rule.

In addition to states' administrative costs for mandating SNAP time limits, the rule change will take \$15 billion in food stamps out of the economy. Just Harvest works with local retailers to car-

ry fresh produce in areas that lack access to supermarkets. For many of these retailers, SNAP dollars comprise 40% or more of their revenue. SNAP helps keep store doors open in neighborhoods that supermarkets find "not profitable enough" to serve.

President Trump should want to reduce the number of people who have to rely on SNAP to keep food on the table. But doing so by blocking access to the program is like reducing cancer diagnoses by making health care harder to afford. This rule change is just one of three such measures the Administration issued this past year.

The president should be promoting self-sufficiency and boosting the economy by calling for investments in the nation's workforce and low-income communities. His administration should be pushing to raise the minimum wage, increase funding for education and child care, expand tax credits for low-income workers, and restore the \$2 billion in employment and job training programs that Congress has cut since 2001. The SNAP rule change will go into effect on April 1 unless stopped by the courts. Just Harvest will continue to work with our allies to protect and strengthen SNAP wherever possible and to advance economic justice in public policy at all levels of government. We hope you'll join us. For more information, see: www.justharvest.org or call, 412-431-8960.

Emily Cleath is the Communications Coordinator of Just Harvest, a Center for Action Against Hunger.

"DINNERS WITH _____" FUNDRAISERS CONTINUE INTO 2020

In the fall of 2018, the "Dinners with _____" (special honored guests) began to raise funds and create opportunities for Merton Center members and friends to gather over a delicious gourmet vegetarian meal at the home of Howard and Christine Aikens-Wolfe. Participants gave donations of \$75 to the Merton Center and its work; others provide scholarships to the dinners

so more can participate.

We have enjoyed the company of many honored guests since that time: retired labor leader Rosemary Trump, movement lawyer Jules Lobel, newspaper columnist Tony Norman, Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto, political cartoonist Rob Rogers, actor Wali Jamal, PA Rep. Summer Lee, TMC co-founder Molly Rush,

Television host Chris Moore, and Parks Conservancy CEO Jayne Miller.

In February the dinners will continue. TMC supporters will enjoy "Dinner with historian Marcus Rediker" on Feb. 4 and on March 10 with Media Figure Lynn Cullen. If you are interested in participating in future dinners or would like to provide scholar-

ships for others to attend and would like to be put on the invitation list or have ideas for honored guests, please contact the Merton Center.

Joyce Rothermel is one of the "Dinners with _____" organizers. To learn more about upcoming Dinners, contact Jan McMannis at 412-886-7733.

PRESIDENTIAL WISHLIST

PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES COMING SOON – WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR IN THE NEXT PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES?

What are you looking for in our presidential candidates/president this election year? Here are some responses from our Thomas Merton Center members and friends. We hope to include more responses in the March and April issues. Please submit them to [NewPeople@ThomasMertonCenter.org](mailto>NewPeople@ThomasMertonCenter.org) by the 13th of the preceding month. Responses are opinions of the individual respondents.

"I am looking for a president who takes climate change very seriously and is committed to making the tough decisions required to meaningfully address it in a way that builds local community, reduces global inequality, and helps us rebuild the true "common wealth" inherent in clean air, clean water, abundant biodiversity, a stable climate, an educated and diverse population, and democratic governance. I will also give extra attention to candidates who support a federal ban on fracking, which I believe to be one of the best ways to eliminate the petrochemical hub expansion in SW PA, OH, and WV."

--**Mark Dixon** is a TMC Board Member and environmental activist.

"Qualities I want in a presidential candidate: honesty, clarity of explanations of what/why she/he wants to do, ability to attract talented co-workers in the government, energy, quick and capacious thinking."

--**Liane Norman**, TMC member, poet and author.

"I'm going to respond to the question with a story. During Obama's run for the White House, my family – including house guests and both my kids who were in middle school – did a phone bank to voters in Texas to support Barack in their upcoming primary. Obama built this incredible voter turnout machine that engaged people who wouldn't normally do such things in ways that were new and refreshing. We downloaded our lists from the internet and then used our cell phones, which seemed terribly avant garde at the time. LOL. His campaign was spectacularly successful in building a movement that changed the equation of who voted and it much better represented the changing face of America. And then.... he let it go to sleep. SIGH. His signature legislative suc-

cess – Obamacare – would have been much easier to pass and, I would argue, more progressive if he had doubled down on the care and feeding of that movement he built.

So, two things I want to see from the next Democratic candidate are:

1. Someone who understands the importance of building a movement – and actually does it – that better reflects the new face of America and uses it to drastically change the numbers and demographics of the people who vote. One concrete thing they could do to prove this to me is to lift up the incredibly important work that Stacy Abrams is doing with her Fair Fight.
2. Someone who will be committed to the care and feeding of that movement AFTER the election and will engage it in winning a real progressive agenda.

We already know that the electorate that usually votes is split just about right down the middle. The best hope for progressives is to 'change the equation'."

--**Tom Hoffman**, recently retired from the Sierra Club.

"The 2020 election is probably the most critical one of my voting life. The world scene appears on the edge of chaos. Fear, xenophobia and greed paralyze "first world" nations, including the United States; harsh dictators and poverty hamper "third world" nations; peace and justice sometimes feel like unrealizable hopes/dreams. Despite all of that, faith and optimism energize me to address these concerns.

We need to elect persons of integrity, committed to democratic principles and human rights, and willing to work collaboratively to achieve the common good. We need to elect persons who respect history, who have knowledge of the contemporary international scene, and who prefer dialogue and diplomacy to power and control in international relations. We need to elect persons who appreciate and respect the diversity of race, ethnicity and religion which enriches American culture.

The past three years have been a downward spiral in American political life: an inept and corrupt executive branch and a paralyzed and polarized legislature;

leadership in the international community greatly diminished by a pattern of hyper-nationalistic bluster; public confidence in the integrity and truthfulness of leaders seriously eroded. It is imperative that we reverse that course in 2020."

--**Sr. Patricia McCann** is a Sister of Mercy.

"First of all, I will support a candidate who exhibits emotional maturity, the ability to think strategically about social, economic, national, and international issues, fundamental morality and compassion. Secondly, my favored candidate will have detailed policy proposals and/or a history of addressing the following issues: climate change, white supremacy, misogyny, racism, Islamophobia, Anti-Semitism, and any 'othering' of human beings; income inequality, including health care and housing as human rights; promoting genuine democracy; militarism and endless, imperialistic wars; international human rights violations, including Israel's apartheid regime; and refugees fleeing all forms of violence and climate change."

--**Bob Mason** is a Member of the Battle of Homestead Foundation, Health Care 4 All PA, Izaak Walton League, Jewish Voice for Peace, and Thomas Merton Center.

"Recently I have reflected on what I consider to be the traits of a good President. My thinking on this subject has been shaped by my knowledge of Presidents throughout history who have created significant and positive change--i.e., Washington, Lincoln, Teddy (conservation) and Franklin (New Deal, Social Security) Roosevelt, and LBJ (voting and civil rights, war on poverty). America has been led by a number of Presidents who were particularly effective in spearheading significant positive changes. Looking back, Presidential historian Doris Kearns Goodwin, contends that there is a family of traits that these leaders had in common. Looking forward, the characteristics that resonate most for me are empathy, the ability to listen to diverse opinions and a talent for making genuine connections with people from all walks of life."

--**Lisa Scales** is a non-profit administrator.

"WE elected the current president. WE are the UNITED States of America - NOT!"

WE must be responsible for voting for a president who accepts people of color into our country; for healthcare for all; for recognizing the poverty that exists; for fighting the policies that perpetuate racism; for acknowledging the disparity between the rich and poor; for keeping our word in international actions; for acting to save our planet; for treating all persons with respect.

Today we do not know who the presidential candidates will be. I am hopeful that WE will vote for and elect a president who agrees with my view of the principles and policies necessary to continue our experiment in Democracy."

--**Bonnie DiCarlo** is a TMC Cornerstone Sustainer and member of the Finance Committee.

"Some years ago, Noam Chomsky was asked what he would do if he were elected President of the United States. If I remember correctly, he replied that the first thing he would do is ask the people of the United States to forgive him for the crimes he would commit as President. What he was saying here is that the United States is an empire, albeit an unacknowledged one, and the leader of that empire has to commit crimes to preserve it. That is a fact and all Presidents have committed crimes accordingly, some more egregious than others. If an elected President were not to abide by the laws of empire, make no doubt he would be impeached immediately, no ifs or buts. All the candidates know that and we had better know it, too. Given that situation, the best we can do is choose or elect a person whom we think can feign allegiance to the empire while covertly working to undermine it and work for peace and justice in the world. The candidate has to be crafty and resourceful, saluting the flag and all that but giving hints to where his/her heart lies. Are there any candidates who fulfill that bill?"

--**Michael Drohan** is a peace and social justice activist who believes that nuclear weapons and war are the greatest threats to America and the planet.

BOMBS AREN'T BANKABLE

"DON'T BANK ON THE BOMB"

Not long after the release of the report, "Don't Bank on the Bomb: A Global Report on the Financing of Nuclear Weapons Producers" by the international peace organization, PAX, in March 2018, people in the Pittsburgh area were inspired to begin our own U.S. campaign: PNC: Stop Banking the Bomb (SBTB). In the Pittsburgh area, PNC has the greatest amount of money "invested" (made available in loans) in nuclear weapons' manufacturers. The principal authors of the report from PAX, Maaike Beenes and Susi Snyder, noted the lack of official information available in the public domain about the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of nuclear weapons, along with information about investments in companies producing them.

The report was timely, following the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017 to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). With the issue receiving international attention, organizations that have been working on the abolition of nuclear weapons for decades were positioned to receive and act on the information from the PAX report.

Taken from the forward of the PAX report: "Around the world a tiny handful of governments are risking everything we hold dear. It's only nine countries, nine countries that would rather put the fate of humanity at risk than support their own populations. Nine countries, supported by another couple dozen, that think nuclear weapons are somehow a solution, somehow an answer to glob-

al problems. Only nine countries. And these nine countries are all right now modernizing their nuclear arsenals. They are developing new types of nuclear weapons, for new types of missions, making the use of nuclear weapons more likely. They are spending countless billions to make it easier to use nuclear weapons to wipe out entire cities. The governments of China, France, India, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States are committing tremendous resources to maintain objects designed to commit mass murder.

"Nuclear weapons are weapons created to cause catastrophic suffering. UN agencies, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent movements, and first responders the world over know that should nuclear weapons be used again, no help is coming. No relief for the burns, the blast, the fire."

But there is hope. A majority of the world's countries decided to reject nuclear weapons when they adopted the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear weapons in July 2017. Governments are now signing and ratifying the treaty and making the only rational choice in the face of increasing nuclear dangers. Even in countries that have not yet joined the treaty, academia, parliaments, civil society and industry are taking note: nuclear weapons, like other weapons of mass destruction, are now forbidden by international treaty.

"This report brings attention to how you can use this treaty to influence a pow-

erful actor in the fight against nuclear weapons - the financial institutions. By divesting from nuclear weapon producers, we can make it harder for those that profit from weapons of mass destruction and encourage them to cut the production of nuclear weapons from their business strategies. Producing, possessing and modernizing nuclear weapons is not something to be proud of and 'Don't Bank on the Bomb' names those that are still okay with trying to make a profit from producing nuclear weapons, our job is to shame them. When the world is closer to nuclear war than ever, we need to make sure that no one should profit from this terror." Beatrice Fihn, Executive Director, ICAN.

The SBTB Campaign has attracted many endorsing organizations, met with PNC officials, conducted pickets at the PNC headquarters in downtown Pittsburgh each month, and left leaflets at several PNC branches, sharing information about PNC's loans to companies making nuclear weapons amounting to over \$1 billion. The campaign also made public statements at the 2018 and 2019 PNC Shareholders' meetings.

Moving PNC to change its corporate policy is the goal. For those who oppose nuclear weapons and live in areas where PNC is present or who are PNC customers, this is our work. IF NOT US, WHO? The current administration has moved us closer to the use of nuclear weapons. It took us out of the Iran Nuclear Treaty. It has led us into greater investments of our national resources into the modernizing of our weapons and a reig-

nitng the nuclear arms race.

Please join the SBTB Campaign:

--Join us for our monthly pickets: Friday, Feb. 7 at 11:30 AM at PNC headquarters, Fifth and Wood Streets, Downtown Pittsburgh, and Sat., Feb. 15 at the PNC Branch in Mt. Washington, 236 Shiloh Street from 11 AM to noon.

--Become a PNC shareholder and plan to attend the annual PNC shareholders meeting in April (stock must be purchased by Feb. 17 for this year's shareholders' meeting).

--If you are a PNC customer, speak up: talk to your branch manager and/or consider changing financial institutions. Special thanks to all those who have already closed their accounts at PNC and putting their reasons in writing to PNC officials when they did.

--Google ICAN and download the full "Don't Bank on the Bomb" report. Share what you learn with your family, friends, and colleagues. For more information on PAX, see: paxforpeace.nl

To learn more about the local SBTB campaign, contact the Thomas Merton Center. They will connect you with the campaign organizers.

Joyce Rothermel serves on the Coordinating Committee of the PNC: Stop Banking the Bomb Campaign.

POST-GAZETTE LABOR CONFLICTS HEAT UP

then, adds Deto, twenty Newspaper Guild members have left the *Post-Gazette*, while "nine managers have either taken buyouts, been fired, or been forced out by management."

As of the end of the year, Deto notes, there were 139 Guild members and twelve non-Guild members remaining in the newsroom. At the end of September, the *Post-Gazette* cut back to three print editions a week—Thursdays, Fridays, and Sundays. One result was the expected cut of four pressmen positions, Chris Lang, president of the Graphic Communications Conference local (a Teamsters affiliate) told WESA-FM. Two dozen circulation and delivery employees were subsequently laid off, while other employees lost their health insurance when reduced to part-time, according to Teamsters' lawyer Joe Pass Sr.

WESA reports the union's con-

tract stipulates that the newspaper must provide a year of work as substitute drivers to those laid off, and "six months of health care and wages" to laid off circulation employees. The Blocks' cavalier disregard of that contract language has necessitated the Teamsters' federal suit.

Meanwhile, shifts in reporters' beats, reductions in enterprise reporting, the loss of trusted newsroom managers, and ongoing disagreements with Burris over news coverage, as reported by Deto of the *City Paper*, finally led to Newspaper Guild members voting "no confidence" in Burris, Publisher John Block, and Block Communications, Inc. on November 18. "They have now brought the battle into the newsroom and that has really solidified us," said Michael Fuoco, president of the Newspaper Guild local.

A "by-line strike" drew participation by 100% of the *Post-Gazette*'s

reporters, photographers and columnists and lasted from November 20 to December 17, with an average of 54 by-lines withheld daily. The strike drew sympathy and support from fellow journalists such as Margaret Sullivan of the *Washington Post*. The Guild's international president said the strike was an inspiration to journalists from around the country.

Those journalists know how drastic cuts and deliberate oppression of employees can severely damage the quality of news coverage provided by regional newspapers, with publications like the *Denver Post* and the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* providing stark examples. The monitoring of governments and business activity suffers, and citizens lack the information needed to fully participate in their communities.

The *Post-Gazette*'s customers are becoming increasingly dissatisfied. Even on days when print

FROM PAGE 1

editions are produced, there are reports of erratic delivery to both homes and news dealers. Access to the paper's electronic editions can be quirky as well, depending on the device used to download material and the performance of internet connections. One selling point of newspapers has always been product reliability and accessibility, but the Blocks seem determined to make their product as unappealing as possible.

On December 30th, sale of the old *Post-Gazette* building on the Boulevard of the Allies to DeCicco Development of Moon Twp. was announced. The paper vacated the building in 2015. While John Block will whine publicly about his paper losing \$22 million in 2018, he won't disclose the sale price, nor the tens of millions in profits his company earns annually.

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

PITTSBURGH REGION RESPONDS TO TRUMP ESCALATION OF WAR ON IRAN

FROM PAGE 1

League (PAIL), Allegheny County Green Party, United Electrical Union (UE), New Afrikan Independence Party, Veterans for Peace, Socialist Workers Party, the Raging Grannies and the Thomas Merton Center.

Organizing is already underway to rebuild the U.S. anti-war movement and forge alliances with progressive forces here in the U.S. and around the world, including the Global Day of Action against war with Iran held on January 25th. For information on continuing anti-war organizing in Pittsburgh, you can contact: the ANSWER Coalition: pittsburgh@answercoalition.org or the Thomas Merton Center's Anti-War Committee: awc@thomasmertoncenter.org

Excerpts from statements made at the January 4th Rally:

"While the assassination of Iran's top general is framed as a defensive measure by the US ruling class and its boot-licking mouthpiece corporate media, nothing can be further from the truth. The truth is this sinister attack is part of a deliberate and calculated act of war against Iran. The people of Iran or Iraq are not our enemies and as evidenced by today's rallies all over the US, the

people are not falling for the lies of the Trump administration and Pentagon and clearly saying no to another imperialist war of plunder for the benefit of the rich."

-Taylor Goel, Pittsburgh Coordinator of the Pittsburgh ANSWER Coalition

"How is it that US officials, the media, and the think tanks can be so morally deaf to Soleimani's assassination? The reason is simple: they all fail to recognize Iran and Iraq's sovereignty. They believe that the US has freedom of action in both countries since they both are or have been 'illegitimate.' That thinking is the basis for the reigning doctrine of regime change, wholly embraced since the demise of the Soviet Union and its place as a counter force."

-Greg Godels, Pittsburgh Anti-Imperialist League

"Like most empires, the US has lied about its justification for every foreign war it has been involved in. I clearly remember the lies to get us into Vietnam. We were able to end that war because there was a powerful anti-war movement at the time. And, the Vietnamese National Liberation Front defeated the US militarily. Today is a different world: the capitalists have gotten

better at conducting illegal and immoral wars, choosing weak enemies. And, the anti-war movement of today is very weak, to say the least. Ending current US wars will require a strong and sustainable anti-war movement. It is up to each of us to end these wars and save what is left of our democracy."

-David Hughes, Allegheny County Green Party.

"One of the major criticisms of Trump's action was about whether it was constitutional. It's not about the constitution; it's about morality! It's about what is right. We have to ask ourselves, what would you do if you were in that seat of power? Would you take the high-road or would you take the low road. Would you continue to push forward with this aggressive agenda of trying to control all peoples around the world or would you focus on a peace and prosperity agenda? Where we could share the world's natural resources, where we could share the world's wealth, where we could really work hard to eliminate poverty, racism, white supremacy, all forms of discrimination.... That's what we need to say to all those people running for office; to the people who carry out these aggressive policies around the world in our name. We have

to stand firmly with the people of Iran, we have to say, 'Down with Imperialism, no more war!'"
-Khalid Raheem, New Afrikan Independence Party

On a final but important note, several times during the rally, a group of rally supporters confronted a small group of people holding anti-Semitic signs blaming wealthy Jews for conflicts in the Middle East, calling them out as Nazis and tearing up their signs and forcing them across the street away from the rally.

Print newspapers reported that the anti-semitic group included Gregory Conte of Gaithersburg, Maryland, who was identified by the Southern Poverty Law Center as the director of operations for the National Policy Institute, a white-supremacist think tank founded by Richard Spencer. Spencer had informed contacts around the U.S. of the locations of the January 4th anti-war rallies. This incident dramatized our need to call out people using racist, anti-Semitic and other oppressive messages and make clear they are not a part of the movement for peace and justice for all.

Craig Stevens is a member of the New People Collective.



Khalid Raheem, New Afrikan Independence Party.

Emily DeFerrari, BDS Pittsburgh at Jan. 4, 2020 Anti War Rally.

CHALLENGING THE HIERARCHY

A PROGRESSIVE VOICE IN THE AMERICAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

BY BERNIE SURVIL

With an Adelante (Forward) former TMC organizer Art McDonald's pen signed my copy of his History of the APP (Association of Pittsburgh Priests) at the December 8, 2019 book signing party. At least half of the attendees were Thomas Merton Center regulars. With good reason. As Art points out "In the area of social justice there is nothing they have done that is more important over more than five decades of existence than their instrumental role in helping a start-up group, the Thomas Merton Center (TMC), a peace and justice organization...get off the ground..." Because "the Diocese of Pittsburgh did not see a need for Commission on Peace & Justice." Nor does the diocese have such a commission to this day. Thus, the APP and TMC have a parallel history as TMC approaches its 50th anniversary in 2022.

That "Adelante" expresses Art's guarded hope that the APP HAS a future, while he recounts its glories since its founding in 1966. Those glories were accomplished by the names of people we hope to spend eternity with: Molly Rush and Larry Kessler, with us to this day; Don McIlvane, Don Fisher, Neil McCauley, and Warren Metzler among those who preceded us. These were the "political priests" who seamlessly combined traditional pastoral work with public witness on issues of the latter 20th century: Anti-War, Anti-Nuke, Central American solidarity and a slew of economic justice matters all at the heart of the TMC agenda.

It was also APP members, which since 1993 includes any baptized Catholic, who rescued the TMC from the clutches of "The Anarchists" around the time of the G-20 gathering of world leaders in 2009. Not that the TMC remained a "Catholic entity" after its founding: Witness collaborators such as Jules Lobel, Pitt Law Prof. and Dan Fine, the finest of secular Jews and, more recently, Muslim Peace & Justice Seekers.

The reader must come to appreciate how the local Catholic Church needed and needs the likes of an organized loyal opposition. As the U.S. as a nation suffers the three ills described by MLK: Racism, Militarism, and Consumer-

ism, the U.S. Church's de facto values are often the same. Without an organized prophetic element, churches fall into line with society's values. If only the other 185 U.S. dioceses had their own "APP's" the U.S. Church would have a different face.

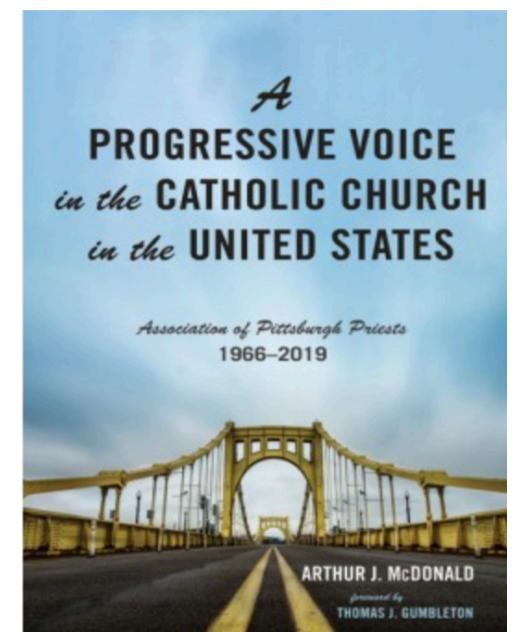
TMC readers who are not church-goers may not appreciate the other element of the APP's mission recorded by McDonald: CHURCH RENEWAL. Long before Pope Francis called the universal church to implement the changes called for by Vatican Council II, which concluded way back in 1965, the APP was poking its finger in the eye of the likes of Bishop Anthony Bevilacqua when he denied the washing of women's feet during the Holy Thursday liturgy. When the APP revised its requirement for membership to permit women and other "unworthies" to join, the several bishops since then have tried unsuccessfully to get the APP to change its name. "How can an organization that includes women (mefiez-vous des femmes) dare call itself an association of priests?" they asked. The APP-organized protest outside St. Paul's Cathedral, Oakland, against the shoddy treatment directed against the LCWR (Leadership Conference of Women Religious) from 2012-15 was de facto in solidarity with local congregations of women religious who were being reined in by a Vatican Investigation. (Women again!)

Similarly, it was an internal church matter when the APP had Bishop Gumbleton -- who writes the Forward to Art's History -- speak at St. Paul's Monastery on the upper South Side. Gumbleton addressed the relationship of the U.S. Church to gays, using his own gay brother as a case that sensitized him to the issue and the need for the Church to open its arms to its gay children / adults. Not a few Pittsburgh conservative Catholics have been scandalized by APP participation in annual pride parades.

It's been said that many national institutions have lost numbers and influence in recent times. That's true of the Catholic Church as well as the APP. Nonetheless, even if McDonald frets over the uncertain future the

APP is facing, since the last time it gained a "canonical-real priest" member was in 1979, the TMC would do well to keep in good repair its relationship with the APP. I say this because of what I experienced during my nine years working pastorally in Nicaragua, both during the Somoza dictatorship, then under the Sandinista regime. What a mistake the Sandinistas made when they proclaimed "With the Church; without the Church; against the Church" the revolution will go forward. Social change-oriented groups such as the TMC or revolutionary governments ignore at their own peril the religious sensibilities of their co-nationals. It will be Adelante for both if they respect each other's contributions.

Bernie Survil is a TMC member and Steering Committee member of the Association of Pittsburgh Priests.



A Progressive Voice in the Catholic Church in the United States: Association of Pittsburgh Priests, 1966-2019 WIPF & Stock, 2019. By: Arthur J. McDonald with forward by Thomas J. Gumbleton

VOTE Information provided by VoteAllegheny

2020 Elections Calendar

January: Tuesday 1/28/2020—1st day to circulate nomination petitions for major party candidates

February: Tuesday 2/18/20—Last day to circulate and file nomination petitions

Wednesday 2/19/20—1st day to circulate nomination papers for minor party and independent candidates

March: Wednesday 3/11/20—Verify your registration for primary <https://www.paVoterServices.state.pa.us/Pages/VoterRegistrationStatus.aspx>

April: Monday 4/13/20—Last day to postmark registration before primary <http://register.votespa.com>

Tuesday 4/14/20—Board of Elections meeting before primary

Wednesday 4/15/20—League of Women Voters publishes Voters Guide in New Pittsburgh Courier

Tuesday 4/28/20—Last day (8pm) for County to receive civilian absentee & mail-in ballots

Tuesday 4/28/20—PRIMARY ELECTION

Ballot include US Pres & VP, Congressional representatives, state Attorney General, Auditor General, Treasurer, State Senators in odd # districts, all Representatives in General Assembly, Delegates to National Conventions, Republican state & county committee persons

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 4pm, or visit us online at VoteAllegheny.org

POLITICAL CARTOON

BY RUSS FEDORKA



Poor People's Campaign

A NATIONAL CALL for MORAL REVIVAL

PENNSYLVANIA

We Must Do **MORE**
*Mobilizing, Organizing,
Registering, Educating*

NATIONAL TOUR

The Rev. Dr. William J. Barber, II
National Co-Chair,
Poor People's Campaign:
A National Call for Moral Revival
President, Repairers
of the Breach



Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis
National Co-Chair,
Poor People's Campaign:
A National Call for Moral Revival
Co-Director, Kairos Center



Leading
towards the
Mass Poor People's
Assembly &
Moral March
on Washington
June 20, 2020

*Registering people
for a movement
that votes!*

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday, April 25th • Pittsburgh, Pa

MEET UP & MARCH

Location TBD

MASS MEETING

Facebook.com/PennsylvaniaPPC



Interpretació
en español



Pennsylvania@PoorPeoplesCampaign.org

REPAIRERS
OF THE BREACH



DECOLONIZING AT YALUI VILLAGE

FROM PAGE 4

pipeline, while drawing the connection of the internment of migrants with the ongoing genocide of his people, Juan also reinforces the opportunity of the villages to bring his people back to their traditional ways. At the same time, non-Natives can decolonize by listening to these histories and learning to detach from their materialistic ways and helping others regain their sovereignty and natural strengths. Settler descendants can begin now to move gracefully into what will likely soon become an era of struggles for survival, where skills of the senses and spirit will be in much higher demand than the consumptive, competitive logic of capitalism. Every day at Yalui Village brings me more of these necessary skills and closer to remembering how to listen, feel and move with the earth in a sustainable and healing way. Eventually, the wind becomes more predictable, as it teaches me the patterns of its movements. Every day, the fears that I've wrongly carried with me from Babylon lessen – fears of insects and dangerous animals, fear of authority and surveillance, fears



of ghosts or vulnerability. I begin to make friends with the open sky, the finicky fire and the ancestors grounding my steps. Being part of the resistance, we find ourselves post-re-sistance, pre-colonial, returning finally to Yalui Village.

UNITED MARCH FOR A SECULAR INDIA

PHOTOS BY NEIL COSGROVE

Hosted by Indians Against CAA NRC in Schenley Plaza in Oakland on January 26, 2020. The CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act) was enacted into law on December 12, 2019 and proposes to enact a nationwide National Register of Citizens (NRC). It's believed that this registry makes it possible for Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Jains and Parsees who came to India from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh before Dec. 31, 2014, to obtain Indian citizenship. However, it potentially excludes Muslims from having the same option.

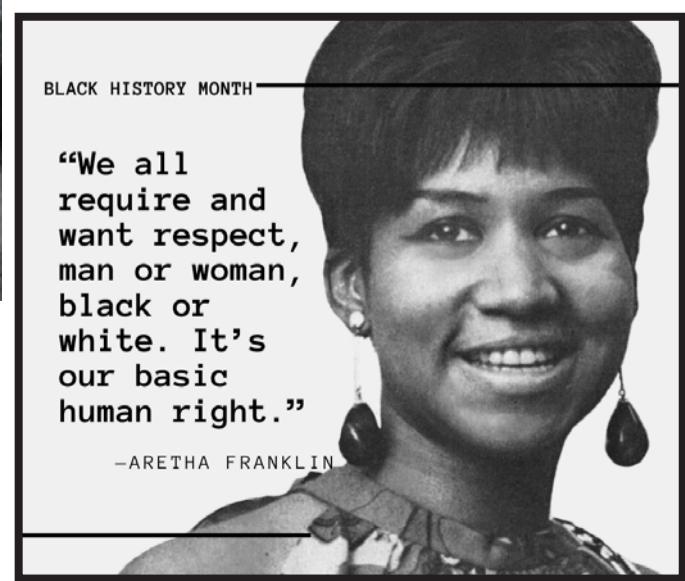


(1) Krystle Knight, Community Organizer, Thomas Merton Center; (2) Pitt Faculty member Uma Satyavolu; (3) Pitt student Abhishek Viswanathan; (4) Protest sign: "United for a Secular India;" (5) Crowd Chanting with Wasi Mohamed in foreground; ((6) Students Silpa Mukherjee and Sritama Chatterjee leading chants, with fountain in background; (7) A Warning from a German student; (8) Group Chanting, including Safdar Khwaja, Board President of CAIR;

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

"We all require and want respect, man or woman, black or white. It's our basic human right."

—ARETHA FRANKLIN



FEBRUARY 2020

EVENTS CALENDAR

1 FEB, FRI. 7-8p .Artist's Talk with D.S. Kinsel. City Books. 908 Galveston Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15233

1 FEB, FRI. Keystone Progress Summit (Day 1) 5-11:30pm. JATC Local Union, 5 Hot Metal St # 100, Pittsburgh

1 FEB, SAT. 12:45 – 3:15pm. Hijab: My Identity, My Right. 4100 Bigelow Blvd, Pittsburgh, PA 15213-1408

2 FEB, SUN. – Study Session - History of US Interventions in Iran. 5607 Baum Blvd, Pittsburgh, PA 15206-3701

4 FEB, TUES. Fair Fares NOW: a Policy Platform Launch on Transit Equity Day. 9-10am. South Ave & Hay St near MLK East Busway Wilkinsburg.

6 FEB, FRI. Stop Banking The Bomb. 11:30 am PNC headquarters, Fifth and Wood Streets, Downtown Pittsburgh.

8 FEB, SAT. 2 – 4pm. CSAW Solidarity Social (+potluck). William Pitt Union, University of Pittsburgh main campus

10 FEB, MON. 7:30 – 9pm. Tommy Orange, a Ten Evenings Author Presented by Pittsburgh Arts & Lectures. Carnegie Music Hall (Oakland). 4400 Forbes Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213

15 FEB, SAT. Stop Banking the Bonmb. 11 am PNC Branch in Mt. Washington, 236 Shiloh Street. Mr. Washington.

19 FEB, WED. 5:30 – 7:30pm. HCII Connect. Newell-Simon Hall. CMU Campus

25 FEB, TUE. 12:30 – 1:30pm. Rally for Fair Commutation Not Mass Incarceration. Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General-Consumer Protection. Strawberry Square, Harrisburg, PA 17120, USA

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 15216

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:
Green Party
First Tuesday of the month at Panera, Blvd of the Allies, Oakland, 7pm

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

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 Wednesday, 7:30-9:30 pm. Contact isopgh@gmail.com for location.

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 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

Anti-War and Anti-Drone Warfare Coalition
4rd Saturday at 11:00 am at TMC, 5129 Penn Ave., Garfield, PA 15224

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 a conversation around topics that affect communities and vulnerable groups both locally and globally. We encourage contributions from the public that will generate conversation and we invite perspectives that are not widely considered. Opinions that are expressed do not necessarily represent those of the Thomas Merton Center or its Editorial Collective.

BECOME A MEMBER

\$50 Individual Membership
 \$100 Family Membership
 \$500+ Cornerstone Sustainer Membership
 Donation \$ _____
 Monthly Donation – Become a TMC Peacemaker
\$ _____

Or Become an Organizational Member:

\$75 Organization (below 25 members)
 \$125 Organization (above 25 members)

I would like to receive the weekly activist Eblast
 I would like to receive The NewPeople newspaper mailed to my house
 I would like to receive The NewPeople newspaper via email

Please complete and return to TMC. Thank you!

Name(s): _____

Organization (if any): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Home Phone: _____

Mobile Phone: _____

Email: _____

Mail to TMC, 5129 Penn Ave. Pittsburgh, PA 15224
Call 412-361-3022 for more information, or visit:
www.ThomasMertonCenter.org

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 www.thomasmertoncenter.org/join-donate or fill out this form, cut out, and mail in.

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