

THE NEW PEOPLE



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

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March 2020

RESPONDING TO BORDER CRUELTY

BY SYMONE SAUL
PHOTOS BY SYMONE SAUL

There is a breakdown in communication when everyone is shouting, not listening, just adding to the noise. No one can hear me over their dissonance.

Maybe if they heard what I heard: the laughter of a dozen children bickering playfully, shouting “¡Guantes!” as they snap latex gloves high above their wrists. They stretch open a trash bag like a parachute in gym class as I shovel in garbage and human waste from the riverbank of the Rio Grande. They giggle, ignoring my pleas for them not to help; too many of them are crowded around and it's too dangerous for their fragile immune systems. They should be in school, but instead they're so bored that



Vigils held daily on the U.S. side of the border call for an end to the “Remain In Mexico” policy.

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A VALUED LEGACY: THE 1968 POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN

BY NEIL COSGROVE

As the present-day Poor People's Campaign (PPC) continues to gather steam, much can be learned and applied from examining the similar circumstances that gave birth to the original 1968 campaign, organized by Martin Luther King, Jr. and his Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

In 1968, just as today, the federal government had significantly reduced its support for the poor, and more generally for those victimized by the vagaries of an economic system much too dependent on exploitation. The 1967 federal budget had cut back on spending on education, job training, and social services, with a corresponding shift of funds to a military embroiled in the Vietnam War.

The origins of poverty, and the ways it was experienced, were also changing. The formerly rural poor, who at least as tenant farmers could grow their own food, had moved into inner cities, into low-paying jobs and substandard housing. In 2020 we have the downward movement of a shrinking middle class, beset by automation, weakened unions, and uncon-

trolled medical costs, working multiple low-paying jobs while confronted with rising housing costs people can ill afford.

Along with its immediate economic benefits, President Johnson's “war on poverty” also had the effect of encouraging people to identify less by race and region, and more as poor or low-income. King and his fellow civil-rights leaders decided the time had come to expand their mission to systemic economic change, a change that would lift up all of the downtrodden and enlist the middle class in their project. Today's Poor People's Campaign is motivated by that same inclusiveness.

Sometimes we mistakenly believe that the Trump administration's open hostility to immigrants and to empowered women, and its slightly more disguised racial divisiveness, is something new that progressives must now confront. The Johnson administration, and the legislative majorities it commanded, is historically viewed as much more sympathetic to the plight of poor Americans. But by early 1968 Johnson had turned on King and other civil rights leaders, hurt by their

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THRIFTY GIVES OUT \$10,000 OF VOUCHERS IN 2019

BY GABRIEL MCMORLAND
PHOTOS BY SHERYLAND NEAL



Shawna Hammond helps a customer at the East End Community Thrift Store.

The Thomas Merton Center congratulates Shawna Hammond and all the Thrifty volunteers on another year of helping community members by giving away more than \$10,000 in clothing and household items through their free voucher program for customers in need. At Thrifty's low prices, \$10,000 adds up to a generous mountain of winter coats, back to school backpacks, kitchen supplies, and stylish clothing choices. The voucher program helps meet community needs while giving customers the decision about what they actually want from the store. Thanks for another year of connections and dedication.

Since 1993, Thrifty has distributed thousands of free shopping vouchers through local shelters and social service agencies. More than \$8000 in vouchers were redeemed annually in 2017 and 2018.

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THRIFTY

The East End Community Thrift (Thrifty) is an all volun-
teer-run thrift shop which provides quality, low-cost, used
clothing and household goods to the surrounding communi-
ty. Thrifty needs volunteers and shoppers! Please contact
us at (412) 361-6010 and ask for Shirley or Shawna, or stop
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We are mission driven volunteers who look to build love and
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TMC supports these organizations’
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MERTON CENTER NEWS

THRIFTY GIVES OUT \$10,000 OF VOUCHERS IN 2019

FROM PAGE 1

Agencies that wish to sponsor vouchers can contact Thrifty manager Shawna Hammond at ShawnaPGH@aol.com to find out more about participating in the program.

Shawna Hammond describes the voucher program as integral to the store and says, "It's heartwarming for the volunteers and myself to interact with the customers and give them encouragement when they share their hardships with us."

Gabriel McMorland is director of the Thomas Merton Center and a longtime Thrifty customer.



1. LORRAINE YASHIN, SHAWNA HAMMOND, AND JANNET MYLES AT THE CHECK OUT COUNTER; 2. JANNET MILES DISPLAYS JEWELRY ON SALE; 3. LORRAINE YASHIN SORTS THROUGH SALE CLOTHING; 4. MANAGER SHAWNA HAMMOND KEEPING THE BOOKS; 5. VALENTINES DAY INSPIRED WINDOW DISPLAY; 6. VOLUNTEER SORTS MERCHANDISE BEFORE IT GOES TO THE SALES FLOOR; 7. THRIFTY STORE FRONT FROM PENN AVE.



DOOMSDAY CLOCK: 100 SECONDS TO MIDNIGHT

BY MOLLY RUSH

The *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists'* Doomsday Clock annually predicts the likelihood of nuclear war. This year the clock has been moved to an unprecedented 100 seconds to midnight. Here is their statement:

"Humanity faces two simultaneous existential disasters--nuclear war and climate change--that are compounded by a threat of a multiplier, cyber-enabled information warfare, that undercuts society's ability to respond.

"The international security situation is dire, not just because these threats exist, but because world leaders have allowed the international political infrastructure for managing them to erode.

"In the nuclear realm, national leaders have ended or undermined several major arms control treaties and negotiations during the last year, creating an environment conducive to a renewed arms race, to the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and to lowered barriers to nuclear war.

Political conflicts regarding nuclear programs in Iran and North Korea remain unresolved and are, if anything,

worsening. US-Russia cooperation in arms control and disarmament is all but nonexistent."

They go on to say that countries of the world should publicly rededicate themselves to the Paris Climate Agreement temperature goal, which is restricting warming "well below" 2 degrees Celsius.

International leaders, including members of The Elders (a group of independent global leaders working together for peace and human rights, founded in 2007 by Nelson Mandela) have joined in support, stating, "We ask world leaders to join us in 2020 to pull humanity back from the brink".

They also call for norms that would discourage and penalize the misuse of science. And they point to the need to focus attention on cyber warfare as a threat to the common good.

Deception undermines public trust in government and the media: campaigns and leaders who blur the line between fact, such as climate change, and politically motivated fantasy threaten effective democracies.

One can only conclude that President

Trump is the prime example of this kind of destructive behavior.

He not only walked away from the Iran and Paris agreements. His impulsive action in the assassination of Suleimane in Iran without consulting his national security advisors, to their consternation, stokes a widespread fear of war. He's denied the reality of climate change, ignoring the near-total consensus of scientists.

He spoke cavalierly about using nuclear bombs. Now he is calling for the development of "small" nuclear weapons, smaller than those dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in World War II. They destroyed those cities and killed hundreds of thousands of civilians, injuring and irradiating many thousands more.

In the 1970s, two victims of the Hiroshima bombing were on a peace tour and visited the Merton Center. They still carried scars of the burns they received. They described their horrific experience. Then, they presented us with origami paper peace cranes.

It was an unforgettable experience. I

still treasure a replica made by our good Quaker friend Eliza Critchlow.

The Doomsday Clock is a call to action to oppose Trump's small, more "usable" bombs and his proposed bloated military budget. (Pentagon bookkeepers have already "lost" \$ \$2 trillion.)

"We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount."

- General Omar Bradley.

"Every gun that is made, every warship launched and every rocket fired, is in the final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed."

- Dwight D. Eisenhower

Molly Rush is the of the Thomas Merton Center and member of the Editorial Collective.

WHEN A CRIMINAL RUNS THE NATION

BY MICHAEL DROHAN

In a recent interview with the online magazine *Truthout*, Noam Chomsky was interviewed by C.J. Polychroniou. In this interview, Chomsky said that in his personal view Donald Trump "is the most dangerous criminal in human history".

Outlining the reason for his conviction in this regard, Chomsky continues "Hitler had been perhaps the leading candidate for this honor. His goal was to rid the German-run world of Jews, Roma, homosexuals and other 'deviants', along with tens of millions of Slav 'Untermenschen'. But Hitler was not dedicated with fervor to destroying the prospects of organized human life on Earth in the not-distant future (along with millions of other species)."

Chomsky goes on to describe the details of the climate catastrophe which is endangering all kinds of life on planet earth, not just human, while President Trump tries to eliminate all regulations and efforts to alleviate the pending disaster and untold suffering for most of the inhabitants of the earth. His withdrawal of the US from the very modest effort of the Paris Accords to mitigate the effects of the burning of fossil fuels on the global environment was but one of his acts to ruin the planet.

The second most dangerous behavior that demonstrates Trump's criminal agenda are attempts to remove all constraints on the build-up of weapons of mass destruction, aka nuclear weapons. On January 23, 2020, *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* reset the Doomsday Clock to 100 seconds to midnight, the nearest it has been to midnight since 1947, at the height of the Cold War.

Nearly all of the reasons for advancing the Doomsday Clock are attributable to Trump. Just last year, on August 2, 2019, he withdrew the US from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF). This Treaty had been in force since 1987 when it was signed by Mikael Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan. Mike Pompeo, Secretary of State, alleged that Russia was in non-compliance, ostensibly citing this as the reason for US withdrawal. No evidence was provided.

Shortly after this development, the Trump administration announced that it was weaponizing the Trident submarines with nuclear warheads. Then on December 20, 2019, Trump announced the formation of a 6th branch of the US army, "Space Force." Despite the fact that weaponizing space is outlawed by international law, the Trump administration is brushing the law aside and has allocated several billion dollars for its development in the 2021 budget proposal. It is hard to exaggerate the danger that all these developments present to human survival and even the survival of life in any form on the earth.

Maintaining his course in full disregard of US and International law, President Trump ordered and executed the assassination of General Qassim Suleimani at the Baghdad Airport in Iraq on January 3, 2020. Suleimani was the head of the Quds Military Force in Iran and reputedly the second highest in command in that country. To put this in perspective, his assassination would be equivalent to assassinating the Chief of Staff of the US Joint Forces by an enemy power. This brazen and barbarous act has

been compared to the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914, an act that initiated World War I. This act puts Presidential actions back to pre-1215 and the Magna Carta. This act by the lords of Great Britain outlawed sovereigns from acting as judge, jury and, executioner and gave every citizen the right to be judged by a jury of their peers.

The crimes of the Trump administration described above are only the tip of the iceberg of crimes committed by this regime against humanity. The crimes committed against poor immigrants are beyond number, what with the separation of children from their mothers and their widespread incarceration. There is no recognition that this flow of the poor of the world towards US borders is the result of US intervention in many countries of the planet, overthrowing democracies and instituting brutal dictatorships. On the home front, the assaults on assistance programs to poor people are almost daily. The latest budget proposal institutes further cuts while beefing up the already bloated military budget.

In the recent impeachment trial of President Trump, the allegations were that he had illegally withheld funds from Ukraine until they would provide dirt on his presumed presidential opponent and that he had obstructed Congress. One could well argue that compared with the crimes listed above, these are mere peccadilloes. In addition, the impeachment trial was marred by an obsession of the Democrats with "Russian aggression" and the Russian threat.


It seems that the Democrats are still stuck in the Cold War mentality,

not recognizing that the Russian Federation is a much weaker entity than the Soviet Empire and that it is a full-blown capitalist state. In conclusion, the impression is given that the other branches of government, Congress and the Courts, have not as yet acknowledged the state of lawlessness and criminality that the Executive branch has espoused.

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

Missing Person

TONEE TURNER



Age:22
Height: 5'2"
Weight: 132 lbs
Hair: Black, curly, chin-length

Ms. Turner was last seen around 6 p.m. at Dobra Tea in Squirrel Hill December 30 around 6:00 p.m.

Anyone with information regarding her whereabouts or sees her is asked to call Pittsburgh Police Missing Persons detectives at 412-232-7141.

CREATING “GREEN TEAMS”

150 PRACTICAL WAYS TO REDUCE YOUR ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT PART 2

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. This is the second in a series of three articles about practical ways to reduce your ecological footprint.

In February 2020, the *NewPeople* started to explore recommendations from the Diocese of Atlanta in response to Pope Francis’ “Laudato Si”. The Diocese put forth a list of about 150 ways to reduce your ecological footprint. The proposed methods often come with start-up costs that would eventually pay for themselves, but while they are things individuals can do, costs are prohibitive to action for low-income earners. Here is where businesses and the financially privileged can step in and make an impact. This article suggests ways to motivate your faith communities, businesses, and social networks to take a more active role to reduce our ecological footprint at an organizational level.

You may have to start alone, but it is better if you can identify a few like-minded partners to form a “Green Team.” It is best if you can get buy-in from some decision-makers at the start.

While some organizations will be highly centralized, others are not. Some have budgets only for necessities; others might be able to realize longer term paybacks. Sometimes actual sacrifice will be called for. There will be hard choices. A one size strategy will not fit all organizations.

Unless you are very fortunate, expect a challenge. Most people in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic traditions have heard some form of the creation story that talks about “dominion” over the earth. Pope Francis says we have historically distorted that phrase to mean “domination” instead of “care.” Worse, he says, we have expropriated the mantra of domination to lord it over human beings in the form of slavery, sexual abuse, sex trafficking, war and extreme inequality. It will take a long time to live that painful legacy down.

Don’t expect changing a mindset to be easy. Many people of faith will automatically hear anything environmental as “political.” Faith-leaders who may not be well equipped to explain the issue, will fear “dividing the flock,” especially when it calls for sacrifice. (Ironically, offering sacrifices is actually in many of their job descriptions. Just don’t expect them to do this on their own without a push.)

Start simple; something people can quickly

grasp, like replacing Styrofoam cups with paper or conventionally grown and processed coffee with “Fair Trade” coffee. Find out who is in charge of purchasing these items or whatever items you choose to start with. If they have already made the switch, you have probably found a great ally. Ask what went into the decision to switch. What was the opposition, if any? If they have not made the switch, ask if they have considered it and what it might take to switch. Is there a barrier to taking action?

Don’t forget to engage the prayer leaders. Ask them to draw on their longstanding practices and rich traditions of homilies and liturgies, and technology to produce bulletins and blogs - tools to help members understand their faith responsibility and duty both toward those who suffer climate catastrophes as well as to their responsibility to care for creation itself.

If your community owns buildings, bring in expert guest speakers to illustrate our role as caretakers of this earth. Implement practical energy use strategies: Reduce the temperature in summer and in the evening if people aren’t in the building, install ceiling fans instead of air conditioning. Learn about energy audits and have your facilities assessed. Switch to LED (Light-Emitting Diode) and automated lighting systems and upgrade building insulation if necessary. Recycle if you don’t already, or review your group’s practices and make resources available if needed to encourage participation. Buy recycled paper and paper products if you don’t already. And as always, turn off lights if they aren’t in use.

If your community is fortunate enough to own land, you have even more opportunity. Learn about permaculture and landscaping, plant pollinators, shade trees, and native trees. Make landscape changes to protect against erosion and parking lot runoff. Provide habitats for lightning bugs, bats, butterflies, squirrels and birds. Identify and remove non-native plant species and plant native species to control pests, attract beneficial insects, and encourage biodiversity. Use sun-balanced planting procedures. Reduce lawn size and watering needs. Leave freshwater for birdbaths. Create a community composting program, vegetable garden or a meditation garden.

Teach First Aid, and how to recognize native plants. Learn what recycling your municipality accepts and what they do with it. Spread the word and be of service to others. Within your own community, know who are the most vulnerable to extreme weather. Make sure they have access to cool, warm or dry places and share knowledge about available social services and workable evacuation strategies. Consider organizational fund raisers for A/C

BY JAMES MCCARVILLE

units or space heaters for these community members. Develop a phone or visitation list for group members to check-in on the vulnerable. Be willing to assist with your own boots on the ground, but work to build a back-up system as well that can be called on when needed. Communicate with municipal or social services agencies so they know who is vulnerable. Encourage those eligible to enroll in Low Income Home Energy Assistance Programs (LIHEAP). Carpool to events, and create a carpool tree for easy reference when transportation needs arise.

It’s vital to reach out beyond your own community to know which parts of your broader community are most vulnerable to flooding and storm damage. Partner with organizations in those areas to create emergency-partner programs. Open your churches or schools as refuges in emergency or crisis situations. Collaborate with government disaster preparedness agencies, and invite them to get to know your group and explore how they can support these goals together.

Check out the Unitarian Green Sanctuary effort at www.CreateClimateJustice.net, or the Catholic Climate Covenant program at <https://bit.ly/2wLe0I3>

Jim McCarville is the Vice President (lay member) of the Association of Pittsburgh Priests.

Distributors Wanted

Volunteers are needed to help distribute the NewPeople Newspaper to neighborhoods and businesses near you!

How this works: You look for businesses and organizations in areas that you already hang out, ask them if they mind if you left a small bundle of newspapers, and (if they say its cool) deliver a bundle or two once a month when they arrive from the printers. Thats it!

Interested? Shoot an email to Info@ThomasMertonCenter.org!

And, Thanks!

THE FATALITY OF FORCE

OUR TRUE ENEMY IS ENDLESS WAR

BY MEL PACKER

Editor's Note: 40 years ago, the Iranian hostage crisis gripped the world, with details unfolding nightly on television. But one story remains untold. Desperate to get their message out, the hostage takers invited 50 ordinary Americans to visit Iran. For the Americans, this high-risk trip held the possibility of securing the release of hostages. What transpired was a journey quite unlike any of them had planned. Using an archive of the visit, interviews with former Iranian hostage takers in Iran and their American visitors, including Mel Packer, we hear about their hopes and misgivings at the time and their reflections 40 years on. Previously published by Vox Populi, with permission from the author.

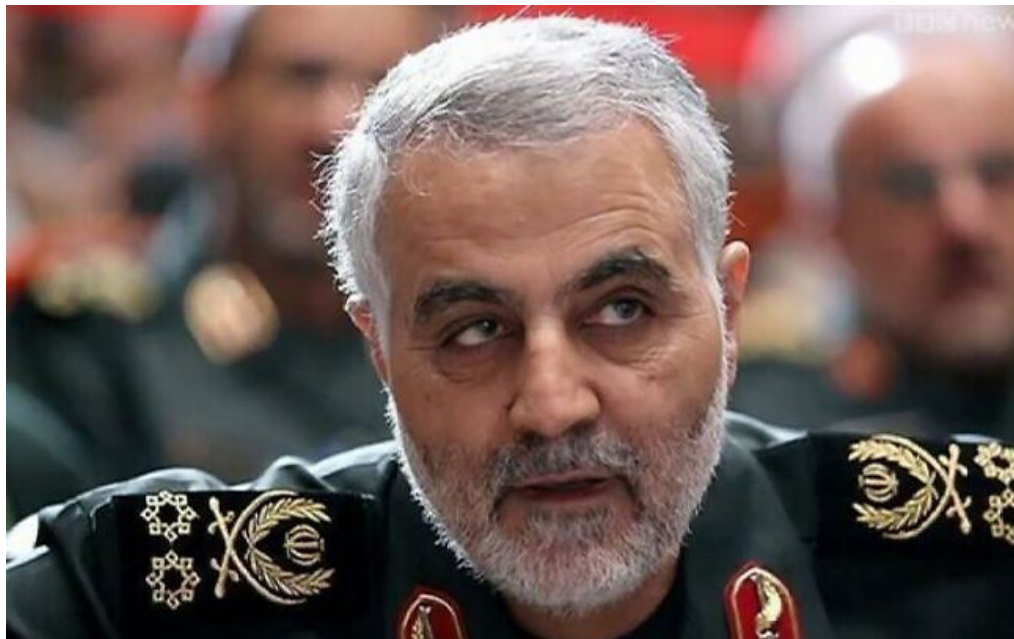
From the overthrow of Mossadegh in 1953 to the assassination of Soleimani in 2020, US policy in Iran has been one disaster after another. In this essay, we hear a first-hand account from Mel Packer who was one of the Americans, who visited Iran during the hostage crisis of 1980.

On Feb 8, 1980, in my 35th year, I stepped from a plane onto the tarmac of the airport in Tehran, Iran, and into the Iranian Revolution and the simmering Iran Hostage Crisis.

Just a few days before, I had loaded 20+ tons of steel coils onto my 40-foot flatbed trailer at the Irvin Works and then parked the rig in front of my home on the then-cobblestoned Hazelwood Ave, taking a nap before the usual all-night drive to deliver the load to some distant point.

It felt like fantasy, unreal. There I was in Tehran having never crossed an ocean before, defying my own government's travel ban to spend 10 days dialoguing with the students holding hostage 52 US Embassy staffers. Their demand? Return the Shah of Iran to stand trial for his crimes.

Did I know what I was hoping to accomplish? Hell no, and I suspect most of the other 49 Americans in the delegation weren't too sure, either. But all of us knew that we didn't want a war with Iran and hoped that some peaceful dialogue might help prevent that looming disaster.



Qasem Soleimani (1957 – 2020) was an Iranian major general in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and commander of the division primarily responsible for extraterritorial military and clandestine operations. He was assassinated by a US drone on January 3, 2020.

We were a pretty diverse group, industrial workers, clergy, college professors, all with some history of involvement in labor and/or social justice campaigns. We were all aware of our government's bloody history in Iran. In 1953, our CIA boastfully sponsored the violent overthrow of the democratically elected Iranian Prime Minister, Muhammed Mossadegh, because he was demanding that Iranian oil profits be shared with the Iranian people and not stolen by British and US oil companies. In his place, the CIA installed Mohammed Reza Pahlavi who took the title of Shah, (King of Kings).

Once the Shah assumed power, Iranian oil remained under control of western oil companies and the Shah received tens of millions of dollars in U.S. "foreign aid," which he used to finance a decades-long reign of terror that imprisoned, tortured, and murdered tens of



The CIA assisted in the overthrow of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh, who was trying to nationalize Iran's oil industry, in 1953.

thousands of Iranian oppositionists. His brutal dictatorship ruled until his overthrow in 1979 by a predominantly Islamist revolution with support from some secular forces.

For some in our group, it was a surprise that our visible presence on the streets of Tehran did not elicit hostile responses. In fact, we learned from conversations with Iranians that the ever present and often chanted "Death to America" slogan simply referred to US policy and not US citizens. The Iranians understood that we had little influence over our own foreign policy. Unfortunately, with the recent US drone assassination of Qasim Soleimani, perhaps the top military leader of Iran, we've learned that this remains true. Our foreign policy is controlled by those who think that diplomacy comes from the barrel of a gun.

Now, almost 40 years later, Soleimani's recent assassination makes me once again fear that those who profit from conflict, the manipulators of our disgraced, failing, and outdated foreign policy, will take us into another war that cannot be won, unless one defines winning as bombing every perceived enemy, civilian and military alike, into dust. We invaded the Middle East in the name of fighting terror and building democracy, but the physical destruction and hundreds of thousands killed in doing so accomplished neither, and the cost of this has affected us here in the U.S. as well.

We have spent much of our children's futures on fighting endless wars while public education fails, millions are denied health

care, environmental disasters loom daily, life-spans continue to decrease, millions lack affordable housing, income inequality rivals that of civilizations marked by slavery, white nationalism becomes almost mainstream, and our infrastructure disintegrates like sand castles in the surf. All this in the alleged "richest" nation on earth, a nation some call the "poorest rich nation on earth."

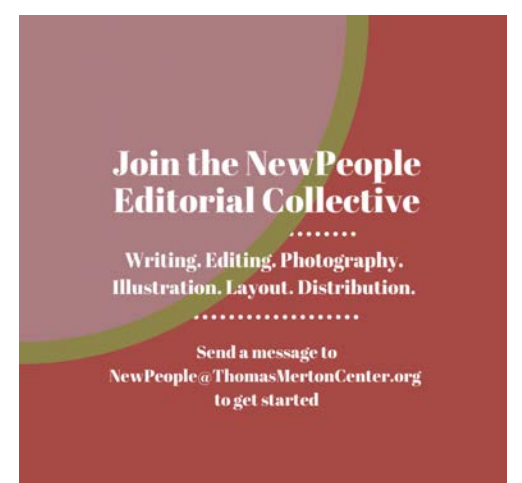
Is this the victory that was promised to us and those we invaded? Yes, I suppose, but only if you are a military contractor whose profits have soared from the over six trillion dollars given them, or a member of either party in Congress who take the bribes we call campaign contributions.

Despite what the war-makers tell us, this must and can stop. The people of Iraq, Afghanistan, and even Iran are not our enemies. I learned that 40 years ago on the streets of Tehran and it remains so today.

Power taken by the force of our bombs and drones is a fleeting power certain to be eventually defeated and cannot be maintained by continuing to kill the residents of nations we call the enemy. It is an illusory power, that taken by guns. Like a schoolyard bully, our diplomacy by weaponry may win a battle, but will lose the war.

Whether we count from the overthrow of Mossadegh in 1953, or the assassination of Soleimani in 2020, the first shots in what most call our "Endless War" have already been fired. And If we cannot rein in the masters of war, too many of us, Iranians and Americans alike, may not be around to hear the last shots.

Mel Packer is an activist in the peace and justice movement in Pittsburgh.



CONNECTING ROOTS TO SOCIAL AND POLITICAL JUSTICE

BY NORTON GUSKY

Art, music, film, or theater have always portrayed social and political injustice. In today's highly charged world there are artists who are keeping the tradition alive. Gina Chavez is a bilingual, award-winning singer/songwriter who is using her music to tell stories about social and political injustice. She is a featured guest in the Calliope folk music series with a performance on Saturday, March 7 at 7:30 pm.

In 2014 she published *Up.Rooted* as a tribute to her Latin roots. According to Chavez: "It is a bilingual album and that was intentional. I think it allows people to kind of come along with me for the journey instead of going to a concert where they understand nothing of what's being sung, you know. And so, on some level, your body can get into it and then your mind and your heart can also get into it because of the lyrics. But it also is very much about my own personal roots as a Latina and connecting with those roots."

One of the most penetrating songs on the album is called "Maiz." On the surface it's the story of a Mexican corn farmer, but Chavez makes the song into a social and political commentary. According to Chavez: "I wrote the song 'Maiz' after meeting someone actually whose home had been uprooted because they were Mexican corn farmers. And when the North American Free Trade Agreement was passed in 1994, one of the effects was that North American corn farmers... were able to undersell and undercut

Mexican corn farmers. And I guess, you know, that - it just completely - it infuriated me, you know. So the song was born out of that anger. And at the same time, it ended up turning into more of a lament for sure. But ultimately, it's the song about hope."

With the help of Suzanne Powell here's a translation of the song:

Corn, sweet corn: for centuries you sustained our lives.

Then '94 arrived and you took off running.

Root, sweet root: pulled from the ground and left to die,

You still live on in my veins and in my song.

Fertilized: that we might cultivate the earth.

Farmed: that we might regain our strength.

Dignity, ah my sweet dignity! I left you on the banks of the Rio Bravo,

And now it is slavery to work here without you.

Fertilized: that we might cultivate the earth.

Farmed: that we might regain our strength.

It wasn't we who crossed the border to the other side,

But the border who crossed us, my son. Corn, sweet corn.



Artist, musician, and political activist Gina Chavez.

Chavez gained international recognition for a project in El Salvador. While living in El Salvador in 2009, Chavez and her partner Jodi, who also acts as her booking agent, spent eight months educating teenage girls who were surrounded by poverty in gang-dominated barrios. Chavez highly promoted her single Siete-D, which takes a stand against gang violence in Central America. The song went on to win a number of awards, further cementing her image as a storyteller who addresses social issues.

According to Chavez here's the meaning behind the song: "The first weekend in El Salvador, the volunteers we were replacing showed us the ropes. One of the volunteers offered to take us to the bus to get to the nice part of town in case we wanted to go see a movie or something. In El Salvador, there are no bus stops. You literally stand on the street and they pick you

up. So, the volunteer tells us we're going to take the Seven D (Siete D) because it's the best one and it'll take you pretty much anywhere you want to go. We stand there and wait for the Seven D and it doesn't come. If you're waiting for longer than three minutes for a bus in El Salvador, something's wrong. The next day we read in the newspaper that the owners were so angry at the gangs for killing their bus drivers that they shut the route down for a day. Talk about a reality check. So, I think from that moment, the Seven D route had a special place in my heart. This song is a look at El Salvador, a mini scrapbook of our travels and experiences from a seat on the Siete D bus."

Today Chavez often produces benefit concerts to help the young girls in El Salvador that she befriended. Chavez's music remains rooted to social and political injustice. For tickets and more about the concert at the Carnegie Lecture Hall go to the Calliope website. <https://sforce.co/2HUBDQB>

The purchase of a ticket includes a free workshop from the stage starting at 6:30 with Gina Chavez prior to the evening's concert. Gina will talk about her music and songs. The concert will begin at 7:30.

Norton Gusky has a mission to to empower kids, educators and communities.

SYSTEMIC RACISM NEGATES FREE MARKET MYTHOLOGY IN TAYLOR'S BOOK

BY NEIL COSGROVE

In the winter of 1978 my wife and I sought to buy our first house, and offered to purchase a home in Buffalo's University District for \$25,000.

The largest commercial bank in the city turned down our application for a \$20,000 mortgage, claiming the home's value was below the agreed-upon purchase price. (Never mind that nine years later we sold the place for more than twice our offered price.) Several people told us at the time that the real reason for the rejection was a "changing" neighborhood.

"Changing" in this context was a common euphemism indicating a neighborhood had integrated, with African-American families purchasing homes on our block and others nearby. In truth, despite Congress having outlawed the practice during the Johnson administration, "redlining" still happened under another name.

I vividly recalled this episode while reading Merton awardee Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor's

recently published book *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership*. Dr. Taylor clearly delineates the circular thinking that supported the racism rife within the American housing market—Black people, by their very presence, supposedly lowered property values in a neighborhood even though they found themselves in that neighborhood in the first place because most Black families could only afford housing already low in cost, and unlikely to increase in value any time soon.

Dr. Taylor's book carefully explains what happened in a six-year period from enactment of the Housing and Urban Development Act in August, 1968 to the moment in 1974 when the federal government publicly stepped back from implementing a significant portion of that law. Her history directly challenges one part of the mythology about housing markets—that valuations are based on some kind of hard and fast, mathematically and observably sound method for producing such

valuations. Instead, the valuations are often emotional in nature, and a significant contributor to the inner life of the white Americans producing those valuations is their racial attitudes.

Despite the Nixon administration's retreat from enforcing much of the 1968 HUD Act, that law still strongly influences our current housing market. Not only was "redlining" made illegal, but the law also privatized Fannie Mae and introduced "mortgage-backed securities" as an instrument to ensure a continuous flow of capital into the urban housing market. Readers may recall the out-sized role those securities played in the 2008-09 financial crisis.

But those provisions weren't the law's most politically troublesome elements. The federal government hoped to counter the social unrest roiling American cities during the mid-to-late sixties by expanding home-ownership. Owning one's own home, the theory went, would give African-Americans a previously denied sense of belonging to

American society.

The law called for the construction of 26 million new housing units in ten years, including six million units subsidized by the federal government. The government never came close to meeting those projections, stymied not just by space limitations in inner-cities but also by the resistance of what Taylor calls "white suburban enclaves" employing means such as zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations to prevent the building of "homes affordable to low-income and working-class Black families." The federal government had the power to challenge those barriers, but the Nixon administration knew such "forced integration" would create displeasure among much of the coalition that elected it.

When such lower-cost housing was constructed, it was largely in working-class white suburbs with genuine concerns about the influx of large numbers of children into school districts that had no

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ENABLING SAFE CHOICES

HARM REDUCTION: TREATING ALL PEOPLE WITH DIGNITY

Harm reduction is a concept gaining attention in recent times, but that has existed for all of human history. The key principle of harm reduction is acknowledgment that certain behaviors that carry inherent risks or danger are a constant in society, and those at greatest risk for harm should be given resources to make better choices that will reduce the risk of harm or death when it is not possible to abstain from these behaviors. One nearly universal example in the US are seatbelt laws. In order to reduce the risk of death, seat-belts are required for use in personal automobiles. Air bags, proximity sensors, rear cameras, and anti-lock brakes are all examples of measures that have been implemented to make driving a safer experience despite the risk of injury or death in an accident.

In the 1980s, the notion of harm reduction emerged as a strategy to mitigate the spread of the HIV virus among intravenous (IV) drug users and sex workers. These perceived vices were among risk factors for contracting the virus, yet admonition and insistence that people simply abstain proved ineffective in reducing the spread of HIV in these populations.

In response, a new tactic was employed: acknowledge the futility of expecting behavior to cease, and empower at-risk populations to make safer choices when they did participate in IV drug use or sex work. IV drug users were encouraged to not share needles, and needle exchange drives were sponsored to provide clean equipment and resources for medical care and addiction treatment to those who

were ready to seek it. For sex workers, condoms were distributed by community volunteers, and facilities for sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing and treatment were founded. These efforts continue today, and some communities have gone further. Some counties in Nevada have legalized sex work and provide safe spaces for workers to engage with clients, contraceptives, physical security, and STI monitoring. Other localities have explored providing safe injection sites for IV drug users to use in a controlled environment, with monitoring and medical attention available in case of an overdose.

Today we see overdose awareness campaigns and Naloxone (Narcan TM) becoming available at little or no cost to help stop an overdose. (It is important to note that the effects of Naloxone do wear off after a short while, and emergency medical attention is still required to prevent a second overdose event.) Pharmacies and community advocacy groups like Prevention Point Pittsburgh, even the Allegheny County Health Department, periodically offer Naloxone kits and training to interested individuals and organizations. Anyone who uses, or loves someone who uses opioids in any capacity - including prescription - should have Naloxone on hand! You also never know, especially in communities with high opioid use, when you might come across someone experiencing an overdose.

Information about Naloxone training and needle exchange services can be found online at

Prevention Point Pittsburgh's website, pppgh.org, or by phone: 412-247-3404. Call your local pharmacy ahead of time to learn what they provide, though you may need to use your health insurance to cover the cost. Narcan is sold at most pharmacies in Pennsylvania without a prescription. Prevention Point Pittsburgh also offers free Narcan supplies and training to individuals.

Efforts to address violence against sex workers, without penalty of criminal charges for the workers themselves, are gaining popularity in some major cities, while legislation like Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act and Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act (SESTA and FOSTA, respectively) have actually made sex workers more vulnerable by forcing many back on to the streets and rendered unable to thoroughly screen potential clients before agreeing to engage with them, by restricting the online resources they had come to rely on.

The controversy over the merits of abstinence vs. safe indulgence in human vices is often morally polarizing. What we are seeing, though, is that when people are empowered, supported, and have the basic necessities and resources we all need for life, the need to fill the emptiness within with a temporary euphoria subsides and often disappears.

Sex work will always be a part of our world, whether we acknowledge it or not, and it serves a purpose regardless of our collective approval. Sex workers are no less deserving of safety, dignity, and

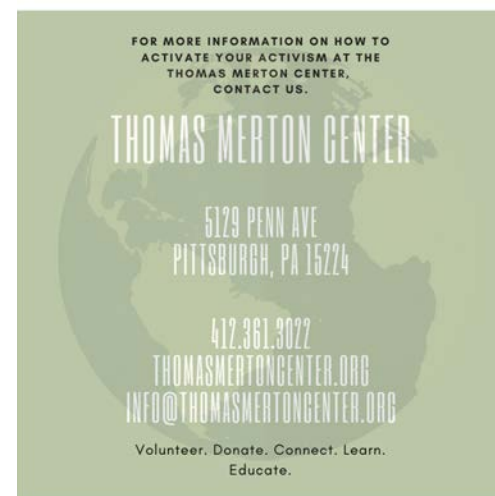
BY CHERYL BAUER

protection from violence than any other person who needs to earn a living.

IV drug users are no less deserving of a chance to heal than any other person fighting a disease, mental or physical.

Allowing people to reclaim dignity where there has for so long been shame, ridicule, and cruel expectations helps everyone to see others as whole humans living out a chapter of life. I hope that rather than judge these chapters, we can walk each other through them to safety and comfort. The concept of harm reduction can be applied to so many other facets of life, as individuals and as a collective, and we should never stop seeking to provide these supports.

Cheryl Bauer is a member of the Merton Canter and the NewPeople editorial collective.



SYSTEMIC RACISM NEGATES FREE MARKET MYTHOLOGY IN TAYLOR'S BOOK

FROM PAGE 7

guarantee of receiving federal dollars to support that expansion. White liberals may excoriate places that now hold many Trump voters, forgetting that looking kindly on diversity comes easier when your own property values, and tax rates, aren't threatened.

Stymied in the suburbs, HUD under Secretary George Romney turned to another section of the law, Section 235, thinking that encouraging low-income people to buy inner-city properties would bring the desired results without unduly stepping on any white toes. Low down payments and interest

rates, with mortgages guaranteed by the government, would supposedly unleash the dynamics of private markets, without the feds spending large amounts on new public housing.

Problems quickly arose, however, apart from the inherent racist thinking described above. Unscrupulous real-estate agents, property assessors, and mortgage lenders worked to sell sub-standard housing to people without the resources to renovate and maintain that housing. All that guaranteed federal money was hard to resist, and without risk the alleged virtues

of a "free" market were absent.

The 1968 HUD law's ambitious agenda failed spectacularly. Even today, Taylor notes, African-Americans do not enjoy, anywhere near the same extent as whites, the economic benefits of the single most valuable asset most American possess: "70 percent of whites own a home, compared with 43 percent of African Americans." And because of persistent racial attitudes about neighborhood property valuations, the diminished value of Black-owned property aggravates that inequality.

Many white Americans still blame

that inequality on the incompetence of poor people, particularly poor African-Americans. Such blaming diverts attention from their own lack of self-knowledge, and from the often destructive results of "enlightened self-interest."

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

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR IN THE NEXT PRESIDENT?

Editors Note: What are you looking for in our presidential candidates/ president this election year? Several of our New People readers responded in our February issue. What follows are a few more opinions. If you would like to add your own for the April issue, please submit them to NewPeople@ThomasMertonCenter.org by the 13th of March. The responses are the opinions of individual respondents, not of the New People or the Thomas Merton Center.

“There have been times in the history of our country when citizens who espoused different views on critical issues came together and worked to overcome adversity at times like 9/11, WWII, Hurricane Katrina and wildfires in California, etc. These were all significant disasters. Today, there are significant disasters of a different ilk pounding at our society. Each of us should have reflected on my five most important issues. Mine include climate change, inequality, violence, white supremacists, and migrants.

With these in mind, I am looking for candidates who have successful experiences of bringing persons with different realities and

perspectives together to solve society’s problems in ways that improve life for all. Today, is one of these times when those who feel strongly about issues of significance to society – local, national and international, are willing to work together to create a better world and are willing to find common ground. The candidate who has the trust of such individuals and groups and has proven experience in helping others accept worthy solutions regardless of party affiliation, constituent bias, or any other distractions from the common good is the candidate I desire, search for and support.”

–Sr. Georgine Scarpino, RSM, past TMC board member and treasurer

“I am looking for a candidate who cares a whole lot more about people and the planet than a system of competition and profit, who is against war and violence as a solution to conflicts, who respects and celebrates the dignity of all people and has a strong track record of struggling with and for the poor and marginalized. I am looking for a candidate who is able to say openly that the economic system currently in place in our country is not just broken—it is the wrong system. I am

looking for a candidate who deeply understands that beauty and empathy will save the world, not better policies or bigger armies.”

– Rev. Fr. Paul Dordal, Christian Alliance for Peace, organizer for Stop Banking the Bomb Campaign

“Two issues are paramount ---stopping forever war and ever-increasing military budgets and advocating that issue and stopping forever profits of Wall Street being the determinative factor in every economic choice, and addressing the glaring increasing inequality with progressive taxation, including a wealth and Wall Street transaction tax. Medicare for All is a sine qua non.”

–Ed Cloonan, anti-war activist

“Someone who talks sensibly about issues that matter, rather than attacking persons. A person who would be able to unite the two parties for the good of the country, not personalities. One question: would the nation elect a woman as president? I can.”

–Fr. Vince Stegman, CSSp., TMC member and Steering Committee member of the

COMPILED BY JOYCE ROTHERMEL

Association of Pittsburgh Priests

“Lately I have been recounting the issues we have worked on over the last 20 years. We’ve always known that whoever won elections we would still be addressing oppression here and elsewhere. The Jubilee 2000 followed by Jubilee USA movements clearly addressed all the things left undone: justice, peace, and the integrity of Creation. Yet, here we are, witnessing the greatest assault to ourselves, others, and Earth. We have seen politicians promise much and change little. I wish for leaders willing to call for an end to fossil fuels here and address those who are profiting from fossil fuels worldwide. Leaders willing to invest in healthcare here and address the conditions of people in other countries who have been impacted by our use of fossil fuels. We have callously turned away from the wars, poverty, homelessness and racism that exists here and in so much of the world. We need leaders who ask us to remember who we are and what we can become.”

–Wanda Guthrie, climate justice advocate and past TMC board member

SCIENCE RESEARCH UNDER SIEGE

BY MOLLY RUSH

Focused on tweets and impeachment, the media has largely ignored the lasting damage being done by the Trump Administration in undermining the essential work of our government. Think Secretaries of Education, Labor, EPA, etc. chosen to carry in wrecking balls to their agencies.

The New York Times published a blistering article on December 28th, “Science Under Attack: How Trump Is Sidelining Researchers and Their Work”. It details how in just three years the role of science in government has been on the path toward destruction: research projects undermined, misused, or de-funded; scientific committees disbanded. Those affected include studies of the effects of chemicals on children and pregnant women, defense against invasive insects, crop science and the economics of farming.

Professor Wendy E. Wagner commented, “When we decapitate the

government’s ability to use science in a professional way, that the risk is that we start making bad decisions, that we start missing new public health risks.”

Shutting down research programs, challenging findings, and cutting staff has been a consistent policy that has given industry the upper hand in the important and urgent efforts to protect our health, safety and the environment. Regardless of consequences, the Trump Administration has moved ahead determinedly toward its goal of destroying the role of science, seeing it as a threat to corporate profits.

Hundreds of scientists have resigned in dismay over work undone. These include studies on the environmental effects on health and food safety, of coal and oil extraction, of lowering air pollution and much more. EPA staffing is at its lowest level in ten years, despite the frightening effects of climate change already

affecting the lives of millions of humans, animals and plant life. Two hundred and fifty scientists are gone, their work in disarray or unfinished.

Michael Gerard, Director of the Sabin Center for Climate Change Law at Columbia University tracked over 200 reports of administration efforts to restrict or misuse science since 2017. “It’s pervasive.”

A White House statement says it all: “Businesses are finally being freed of Washington’s overreach, and the American economy is flourishing as a result.”

What is most dismaying is the fact that “It will take five to ten years to rebuild,” according to a former official of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. No surprise, given that many top government positions are in the hands of former lobbyists, including at the EPA and Interior.

Presidential and Congressional candidates and the media need to be pressed to discuss how they plan to turn all this around. We can find ways to get this information to the public, to legislators, to educators, the medical profession and advocacy groups.

Begin by searching the Times for the article, read it and weep for the helpless infants and children as well as the planet. All will suffer from these heedless actions. Then find ways to respond. Share this information with family and friends. Write a letter to the editor. Join with others to meet with your representative. Approach an advocacy group, such as those involved with health care, justice, the environment, education, justice and peace. All are being affected.

Molly Rush is a co-founder of the Merton Center and a member of the New People Editorial Collective.

A VALUED LEGACY: THE 1968 POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN

FROM PAGE 1

criticism of the war, and wary of their insistence on systemic economic change.

"On the whole," historian Gerald McKnight has written, "the Johnson administration reacted as though the campaigners were an invading horde from a strange land intent on the violent disruption of the government rather than fellow Americans, most of whom were underprivileged and powerless nonwhite citizens."

This inchoate fear was effectively fueled by J. Edgar Hoover's FBI, which pointed to the violence that had broken out during King's March action in support of the Memphis sanitation workers, while conveniently hiding that the FBI and local police, as Thomas F. Jackson argues, had planted agent provocateurs in the crowd to encourage that violence. Hoover himself saw the Poor People's Campaign as another left-wing challenge to an American system he favored, and that obviously favored him, a challenge similar in character to the post-World War I social unrest during which he had come of bureaucratic age.

By March, 1968 the FBI had compiled a list of the organizations that had endorsed the Poor People's Campaign. By May the Defense Department was planning the deployment of 20,000 troops who would defend the Capital against the marchers. The Campaign set up a shan-

ty-town—Resurrection City--on the National Mall in May with a population that fluctuated between 1,500 and 3,000 over the next six weeks. Following a rally on the 19th that drew over 50,000 participants, Resurrection City was cleared by police on June 24th and bulldozed immediately afterwards.

"Eight additional demonstrations, some with mass arrests, took place after June 24," testifies a history published by the Kairos Center, "but the energy and resources for the Campaign were quickly depleted."

Today's PPC recognizes the value of what initially motivated the 1968 Campaign—the need

to break down racial barriers among the nation's poor and to enlist our threatened middle class in systemic change. It has also sought to correct what it perceives as the weaknesses of that past effort.

First of all, the Campaign had given itself too little time to organize such a massive effort—from December, 1967 to May, 1968. Under the sponsorship of the Kairos Center, based at Union Theological Seminary, and Repairers of the Breach, connected to Rev. William Barber's Moral Mondays movement, participants have been hard at work planning and developing the current PPC for close to a decade.

Secondly, the 1968 Campaign was too centralized in its leadership and organization, and consequently the assassinations of King and Robert F. Kennedy drained some of the energy from the movement. PPC aims to have "many Martins." "The campaign is not an organization," asserts Nijme Dzurinko, co-chair of the Pennsylvania PPC, "the campaign is the place where organizations can come together."

The Thomas Merton Center is one of those organizations that have joined the current PPC.

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

UNDERSTANDING SOCIALISM AND THE 2020 ELECTIONS

BY WENDY Z. GOLDMAN AND GINNY HILDEBRAND

Editor's note: What follows is a transcript of a conversation between long-time activist and TMC member Ginny Hildebrand (GH) and Wendy Z. Goldman (WZG) is a social and political historian of Russia at Carnegie Mellon University. This is the first of two-part interview.

GH: How would you explain the current burgeoning interest in socialism here?

WZG: I think it's the result of forty years of reaction and lost ground that began with Ronald Reagan's election. Millions have seen the ef-

fects of unrestrained capital: the boom and bust cycles, the loss of jobs to countries that pay lower wages, environmental depredation, the destruction of our small towns and businesses, and unchecked income inequality, not to mention horrific wars for control of the oil rich Middle East. The inability of capitalism to address systemic racism is another major issue: African Americans have historically been consigned to "a reserve pool of the unemployed." They are often the last to be hired and the first fired. Like immigrants, they are demonized for many problems that are not of their making. Many people recognize that solutions to these

problems involve constraints on unbridled capital, either by seeing a job as a human right, regulating predatory lending practices, forcing companies to pay a living wage and their fair share of taxes, investing in infrastructure, and getting insurance companies and the pharmaceutical industries out of health care. Young people, people of color, and others are interested in whether it's possible to replace the drive for profits – the guiding principle of capitalism – with humanistic values. This is the very basis of socialism.

GH: Are the programs advocated by Bernie Sanders and Alexandria

Ocasio-Cortez (AOC) representative of what a socialist USA would look like?

WZG: It's difficult to know what a socialist USA would look like and there are many different versions of socialism. But Sanders and AOC have opened up realistic possibilities and plans that challenge the dull rhetoric peddled for years by Democrats and Republicans. I think many Americans would support their proposals for placing controls on capital, putting the environment before profit, and ensuring a living wage, universal free

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BUILDING ON SMALL CONTRIBUTIONS

RESPONDING TO BORDER CRUELTY

FROM PAGE 1

they beg me to let them don these oversized medical gloves and help us gringos pick up mounds of dirty diapers and other trash. The toxic garbage slides down the marshy hillside into the river water, from which the children are often sent to collect buckets of downstream.

Thomas Merton Center Director Gabriel McMorland and I have traveled from Pittsburgh to volunteer for the grassroots Resource Center for Asylum-Seekers in Matamoros, Mexico. They coordinate the needs of this refugee camp; which grew in a single year from 40 people sleeping on the U.S./Mexican border bridge to what has now stretched into several blocks of an estimated 2000 people living without homes. The sudden increase is due to a new U.S. policy forcing persons seeking asylum to 'Remain in Mexico' for months while awaiting their hearings.

We're on trash duty because the Resource Center has built hand-washing stations to accompany new port-a-potties, and has run water-filtration facilities so campers no longer have to use the contaminated river water or the dug-out latrines lining the riverbank. Trash pick-up and an informational campaign will provide an alternative to discarding waste only a few yards from their tents and prevent any

outbreak of disease.

As we clean, my ears ring with glee at the squealing of my new young friends who find joy in disposable gloves, despite the looming threat of illness, rape, kidnapping and exploitation. Meanwhile, my stomach twists remembering that same laughter of kids on the soccer field, hidden behind barbed wire fences at the Tornillo Detention Center. I shudder knowing if my tiny friends, all under the age of 11, survive this camp, their future still likely entails crossing the border only to be shoveled into what they call "Las Hieleras" (Iceboxes)- the freezing American concentration camps that most people requesting asylum will endure through filthy and dehumanizing conditions. There, the guards wear face masks while prisoners wear close to nothing, susceptible to whatever diseases the government is hoping they catch.

No matter how hard the inspiring team at the Resource Center works to reinforce humanity, dignity and safety at the refugee camp, there is still a much larger force of intentional cruelty weaving this imminent net of chaos around them.

There is a breakdown in resolution- in solutions and in resolve. Democratic politicians shouting for immigration 'reform' involving

border security are still invoking anti-immigrant hysteria instead of firmly defending the human rights of people forced from their homes. The only reason borders are dangerous is simply because they exist! Anything short of resolute legislation to resettle those caught in the devastating whirlwind of global migration only furthers our complicity in this crisis.

As Australia is burning and Iranians are panicking, I'm weighed down by ankle-deep toxic sludge and the knowledge that I can only have a tiny impact in this sea of cruelty. I know the solution to ALL of these problems: Dismantle weapons, decolonize, divest from capitalism, do less, share more.

Yet there is a breakdown in connection because we're shouting over each other instead of listening to the children, who don't need to share your language to find ways to laugh with you and who have many reasons to cry.

The Resource Center for Asylum-Seekers in Mexico makes these connections and amplifies the voices of those being ignored. The small but powerful operation is mainly comprised of two people, Gaby Zavala and Brendon Tucker, who started as Team Brownsville and grew with the needs of the community. When I met Gaby a year ago as we served food on

the international bridge, she was scouting out locations for a Center, resolved to provide a safe space. Through her individual determination, the Resource Center now provides a diverse range of volunteer roles, occasional employment for asylum-seekers and facilitation of the contributions of major international aid organizations. Gaby and Tucker's work comes from real connection and leading by example. They empowered us to wade through this muddy water to fill this ocean of need, bottle by bottle, knowing that each small contribution speaks louder than words.

Symone Saul and Gabriel McMorland, executive director for the Thomas Merton Center, volunteered with the Resource Center in December & January. To support this work, visit resourcecentermatamoros.org



Brendon Tucker picks up trash at the asylum-seeker camp.



Tents sprawl across several blocks of the border town, starting at the international bridge.

A LONG STRUGGLE

TRUMP'S "DEAL OF THE CENTURY": AN INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR MOHAMMED BAMYEH

BY KATE DAHER

In several Arab countries including Lebanon, Tunisia and Morocco, thousands of demonstrators took to the streets under the banner "Palestine is not for sale" to protest Trump's Mideast Initiative, which was released on January 28th and hailed as the "Deal of the Century."

In Gaza City, protesters burned pictures of Trump and Israel Prime Minister Netanyahu, and raised a banner reading "Palestine is not for sale."

Thousands of Palestinians in the occupied city of Ramallah demonstrated against Trump's plan and, according to polls, at least ninety-four percent of the population outright rejects the initiative, which is severely biased towards Israel. The foreign ministers of the 22-member Arab League unanimously rejected the plan, and in a statement said, "It does not satisfy the minimum of the rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people." In Pittsburgh, several organizations joined the University of Pittsburgh campus organization, Students for Justice in Palestine, in a protest against the plan with signs that read Palestine is Not for Sale, Jerusalem is the capital of Palestine, and Boycott Israel/Free Palestine.

Following is an interview with University of Pittsburgh professor Mohammed Bamyeh, chair of the Dept. of Sociology and president of the Arab Council for the Social Sciences (ACSS). He spoke recently on campus about the plan.

Q: Is the Trump/Kushner/Netanyahu Mideast Plan different from earlier attempts at a settlement between Israel and Palestine?

A: The plan is not substantially different from the one offered to Yasser Arafat by Ehud Barak in Camp David nearly 20 years ago. A dismembered Palestinian state with no direct connection to the outside world, except through Israel, was proposed then as well. Jerusalem and the refugees were treated then the same way as in this plan. What is new here are two things: first, an independent Palestinian entity is mentioned

as a possible eventuality, not as a guarantee. Second, there is a heavy emphasis on economic development, which is a way of saying to the Palestinian that you may get prosperity, in exchange for giving up your political and citizenship rights for good. The other completely new feature of this plan is that it emerged entirely out of US-Israeli talks, into which no Palestinians were invited. Both the US under Trump and Israel under Netanyahu wanted to send a clear statement to the Palestinians that their opinion no longer mattered.

Q: How do you respond to President Trump's declaration that the plan is a "vision for peace and prosperity and a brighter future?"

A: The only future I see is continuing the occupation and an entrenched systemic apartheid. I am not sure how you are going to get prosperity and a bright future if you have millions of people under your thumb, who reject your plan and whose priority is to be free.

Q: With all the talk over the years about peace for Palestinians in the Middle East, what do you consider to be the major obstacles to reaching an accord?

A: The major obstacle is the uneven balance of power: Israel has the best equipped military in the region and the undivided support of a superpower, and has the Palestinian populations dismembered and encircled. It has no incentive at the moment to give the most basic concessions that would be needed to achieve peace. That is why the role of the international community becomes important, especially activists who are incensed by apartheid conditions.

Q: On both U.S. national and state levels, anti-Boycott, Divestment and Sanction (BDS) laws have been threatened or passed. What do you say to the critics of this movement?

A: I would say that BDS is a humane, non-violent, citizen and civil society-driven movement. It is committed to the equality of all peoples, it is driven by opposi-

tion to racism in all of its forms, including anti-Semitism. It is opposed not to Jews as a people, but to the oppressive practices of a colonial state and to its racist ideology.

Q: What do you say to the charge that individuals or organizations critical of Israel and Zionism, or who support the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement are anti-Semitic?

A: The charge is simply an attempt to silence a conversation about injustice. All states, including Israel, are criticizable if they do something wrong. All ideologies, including especially nationalist ideologies like Zionism, are likewise criticizable if they involve discrimination and denial of rights. We are not attacking Jews, many of whom are likewise critical of Israel or Zionism, and are supporters of BDS.

Q: Is there a role for the international community in helping to end the U.S. backed Israeli government war against the Pales-

tinian people?

A: The role of the international community is crucial. The Palestinians do need allies. But while most states have expressed sympathy to the plight of the Palestinians, few have been willing to invest the kind of political capital that would make a difference. This is not the case with global civil society, which has seen lots of activism around this issue, most recently in the form of the BDS movement. Due to colonial, religious and other reasons, Palestine has always been a global cause, and will continue to be such. We are in for a long struggle.

Kate Daher is a former history teacher in the Pittsburgh Public Schools and has been active in Palestine solidarity work for many years. She has traveled to Palestine on several occasions and her photographs and articles have been featured in the Washington Report on Middle East Affairs.



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

LIVING CONTEMPLATIVELY IN THE WORLD: A RETREAT FOR ACTIVISTS

BY JOYCE ROTHERMEL

Thomas Merton, TMC namesake, was a contemplative monk, yet he wrote to us about how we too can be contemplatives outside monastery walls and still live activist lives. One of Merton's contemporaries whom he taught at the Abbey of Gethsemani was James Finley. Finley, himself an author, now gives retreats that build on Merton's writings.

Via Skype, Finley will join Cheryl Rose, HM in leading a retreat at Villa Maria Conference Center in Villa Maria, PA, beginning at 7 pm Friday, May 1 and ending noon on Sunday, May 3, entitled: "Exploring the Foundations of Contemplative Living in the Midst of the World."

At the retreat, Finley will be present at three live-streamed video sessions assisted on site by Sr. Cheryl. Together they will help participants explore ways to live

a more contemplative way of life in the midst of today's world. The retreat will begin by paying close attention to fleeting moments of contemplatively resting in God's presence in the midst of nature, in marital love, in solitary silence and other realms of human experience. Retreatants will see how fidelity to prayer and meditation can help them to live in more daily abiding awareness of the depths so fleetingly glimpsed, and how this awareness spills over into more compassionate and loving ways to be with others day by day. Time will be given for shared sessions of silent meditation and discussion of the themes presented.

James Finley, Ph.D. lived as a monk at the cloistered Trappist monastery of the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky, where the world-renowned monk and author, Thomas Merton, was his spiritual director. Dr. Finley

leads retreats and workshops throughout the United States and Canada, attracting men and women from all religious traditions who seek to live a contemplative way of life in the midst of today's busy world. He is also a clinical psychologist in private practice with his wife in Santa Monica, California. James Finley is the author of: *Merton's Palace of Nowhere*, *The Contemplative Heart* and *Christian Meditation: Experiencing the Presence of God*.

Cheryl Rose, HM has always been drawn to the mystery of the human encounter with God, engaging in ministry in the area of spirituality and personal growth all along, even as a high school teacher of chemistry and physics. She has taught courses on prayer and the spiritual journey, directed retreats for youth, school staffs, non-profits, and parishes. She has been doing spiritual direction and retreat work for

many years. As a trained spiritual director and certified Enneagram teacher, Sr. Cheryl offers a variety of workshops for groups in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and elsewhere.

Cost for the weekend is \$215. The fee includes the Retreat, Lodging, and Meals from Light Supper on Friday to Lunch on Sunday. For more information and to register, call 724-964-8886 to speak with a conference center staff member. The conference center is located at 2067 Evergreen Road, Villa Maria, PA 16155. If interested in carpooling from the Pittsburgh area to the retreat, please call Joyce Rothermel at 412-780-5118.

Joyce Rothermel is a long time follower of Thomas Merton and member of the Thomas Merton Center.

HUNGER ADVOCACY WORKSHOP TO HOST NATIONAL SPEAKER, JOHN CARR

BY JOYCE ROTHERMEL

Bread for the World is a collective Christian voice urging our nation's decision makers to end hunger at home and abroad. By changing policies, programs, and conditions that allow hunger and poverty to persist, we provide help and opportunity far beyond the communities where we live. We can end hunger in our time. Everyone, including our government, must do their part. With the stroke of a pen, policies are made that redirect millions of dollars and affect millions of lives. By making our voices heard in Congress, we make our nation's laws fairer and more compassionate to people in need.

Bread for the World members write personal letters and emails and meet with our members of Congress. Working through our churches, campuses, and other organizations, we engage more people in advocacy. Each year, Bread for the World invites churches across the country to take up a nationwide Offering of Letters to Congress on an issue that is important to hungry and poor people. As a non-profit, Bread for the World works in a

bipartisan way. Our network of thousands of individual members, churches, and denominations ensures Bread's presence in all U.S. congressional districts. Together, we build the political commitment needed to overcome hunger and poverty.

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

This year's advocacy workshop will be held on Sunday, April 19 from 2 – 5 PM in the John Knox Room of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 616 N. Highland Avenue in East Liberty. Keynoting this year's event will be John Carr, the founder and director

of the Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life of Georgetown University. Carr, who has worked for the US Catholic Bishops Conference, now serves as President of the Board of Bread for the World.

Carr will introduce the focus of the 2020 Offering of Letters for Bread for the World: seeking to pass binding legislation that will strengthen our government's leadership on global nutrition, increase funding for those programs and seek an increase in funding from Congress for domestic nutrition programs.

Three workshop sessions will follow:

- 1) Advocating by Effective Congressional Office Visits by Linda Ambroso, Government Relations Professional
- 2) Reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act by Ann Sanders, Just Harvest
- 3) Pittsburgh Food Policy Council's Strategic Plan by Sarah Buranskas, Pittsburgh Food Policy Council

Participants in the workshop will have the opportunity to address letters to U.S. Congressional leaders on this year's topics and learn how they and members of their churches can get involved in offering of letters and Congressional office visits regionally and in Washington, DC on Bread's Annual Lobby Day, June 9.

The workshop is free and open to the public. Our efforts this year are more important than ever, as the current administration's policies are weakening food security programs domestically. To register, go to <https://bread2020.eventbrite.com> For more information, contact Myra Mann at 412-882-6252, mannm36@hotmail.com or Joyce Rothermel at 412-780-5118, rothermeljoyce@gmail.com.

Joyce Rothermel serves as co-chair of the SW PA Bread for the World Team and has recently been elected to Bread's national board of directors.

NO COUNTRY FOR MUSLIMS: THE CASE OF THE CITIZENSHIP ACT IN INDIA

BY SRITAMA CHATTERJEE
AND RAHUL KUMAR

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA, hereafter) finally came into being this year and has led to a massive wave of protests all over India and also in various parts of the world. To an outsider it might seem like a sudden occurrence but the CAA was in the pipeline for at least three decades. The surge of militant Hindutva nationalism during the 1980s and its manifestation in the demolition of a centuries-old mosque and subsequent communal riots was a clear indication that India was looking forward to a majoritarian Hindu nationalist government in power. The current regime of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi draws its ideology from the fascist regimes under Hitler and Mussolini and is not even discreet about it. The BJP became the preeminent champion of neoliberal economic policies and Modi became the preferred candidate of corporate capital.

This deadly combination of fascism and neoliberalism has led to the worst socio-political-economic crisis since India achieved independence in 1947. Unemployment is at an all-time high and GDP has been

spiraling downwards. Social benefit schemes for the poor have been abrogated and the income gap between the rich and the poor has become huge. Public universities are under attack and the rights of students and faculty to dissent have been curbed to an extent that they are beaten up brutally inside their own campuses.

It is also unfortunate that a large section of the media has sold out to the government, resulting in fabricated news and biased reporting. The failure of the government at multifarious levels has been complemented by a social crisis where a mobocracy sponsored by the government itself is engaging in the murder of Muslims in the name of cow protection. This crisis is but an extension of the murderous ideology of the BJP which was evident during the state sponsored genocide of Muslims in Gujarat, 2002 when Narendra Modi was the Chief Minister of the state.

The CAA that the Constitutional Assembly of India passed last December was the culmination of these anti-Muslim sentiments that have been on the rise for many years. According to the act, "...any person

belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi or Christian community from Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Pakistan, who entered into India on or before the 31st day of December, 2014 ...shall not be treated as illegal migrant for the purposes of this Act." Given the singular, aggressive and hyper-masculine Hindu Nation that the current BJP government is bent on creating, it does not come as a surprise that the religion which is categorically excluded from this act is that of Islam, thereby reinforcing that the people who belong to the Muslim community do not have the right to citizenship.

This Act is further complicated by the enforcement of NRC (National Register of Citizens), especially in the state of Assam, by which even current citizens need to furnish documents to show their countries of origin in order to prove their citizenship. Imagine a scenario in which a person is not able to show documents because such documents probably do not exist or a Muslim identifies as originally belonging to any of the countries mentioned above. By virtue of the fact that a person is just a Muslim (and the CAA specifically excludes Muslims), the person is

deemed ineligible for citizenship in India.

India has long upheld a spirit of secularism and the introduction of the CAA compromises the ideas embodied in the constitution of India. What is most frightening about the current situation is that the BJP government is currently building detention centers in several states in India and deaths in those centers have already come into the lime-light.

However, India is not a unique case that has seen this surging tide of anti-Muslim sentiments that is now legitimized by law, if one considers Trump's Muslim Ban. As minorities continue to inhabit such positions of precarity, a transnational and global movement building up resistance and solidarity is the need of the hour because connecting our struggles is what will help us fight effectively against oppressive regimes.

Sritama Chatterjee and Rahul Kumar are PhD students at the University of Pittsburgh.

CUBA: LA LUCHA CONTINUA

I just returned from a profoundly restorative week in Cuba. I have been going to Cuba since 1971, watching the Cuban experiment's determination to create a better world. Today, Cuba has radically changed. Yet the inspiration, determination and resilience of its people to defend their hard-won independence and national sovereignty through all adversities has not.

Cuba has withstood over 60 years of never-ending efforts to restore Cuba to US subjugation. It is impossible to condense into 800 words the horrific human consequences and sacrifices experienced daily by over three million people still enduring the longest, harshest, tsunami of sanctions ever placed by one nation against another.

Still the Cuban people retain a living connection to their history, a sense of obligation to the future. They know if Cuba falters, aspiring peoples in the entire world will lose hope they, too, can resist foreign interventionism, a commitment perhaps similar to what many felt in the struggle against Fascism. Failure is not an option.

You and I, the progressive peoples in the US, are also beacons of hope for the world. Hope that our collective efforts will prevail to end these interventionist policies as part of our own domestic struggles.

As for Cuba, all Obama's rapprochement policies have been eradicated.

The US Embassy is open, but gutted like every other institution (even here) that Trump has been able to decimate. His determination to force any nation, especially Cuba, to 'bend the knee' to the global empire of US domination, has escalated, reaching unprecedented, almost unimaginable extremes.

Cuba under Trump is a different type of a 'hot' war zone. Tactics being employed are the tools of technology invisible because computers carry them out; manipulation of the dollar and international commerce cutting off ALL banking transactions from any country to Cuba - death by a thousand cuts.

It is hard to imagine or react when all financial and commercial transactions are being orchestrated in cyberspace. As an island, Cuba must import the majority of its consumer goods: basic food, industrial and building components, vehicles, toilet paper, soap, fuel, and other necessities. That is where the US blockade is focused, using the invisible hand of international banking to stop all commerce to Cuba.

The US does not allow any bank from any country to make payments to Cuba on behalf of any business, without US approval. Under Trump there is none. Thus even countries that want to do business with Cuba cannot because of the international control of capital by the US.

Trump has stopped cruise lines

worldwide from going to Cuba. He cut off all air traffic to Cuba except planes going to Havana, making tourism and family reunification visits nearly impossible, while isolating the rest of the country from goods and services.

Regardless of personal politics, no one escapes the hardships - man, woman, child, even animals. Every person can innumerate how their life, their family is impacted. It is a nation united by universal hardship, resisting being starved into submission by a foreign imperial power.

The majority of people I spoke with anticipated Trump shutting off all air travel to Cuba, creating the loss of thousands of jobs both here and in Cuba, especially among Cuba's young emerging private business class that mostly depended on services to the tourist industry. With other global partners also under siege, Cubans are anticipating suffering the extreme shortages like they endured when the Soviet Union collapsed.

Despite everything, Cuba has prioritized and achieved free universal health care. While US students drown in student debt, Cubans enjoy free universal education, with the highest literacy rate in North America. Cubans now live on average ten years longer than Americans. While the US government seeks to destroy the Affordable Health Care Act and privatize healthcare for profit, Cuba has now developed medicine that

BY LISA VALANTI

makes diabetic foot ulcers curable, and a new lung cancer vaccine; the Chinese think an antiviral medication developed by Cuba may prove to be the best for use on the new virus. And did I say all healthcare is free?!

What We Can Do:

1. Join the Pittsburgh-Matanzas Sister Cities Partnership, an umbrella organization that promotes many diverse initiatives with Cuba.
 2. Attend the Pastors for Peace Friendship Caravan event on Friday, March 27th to hear John Waller from the Pastors, Lisa Valanti, and other recent travelers to Cuba speak on efforts here in Pittsburgh where we can help. (Time and Place to be announced - call Lisa 412-303-1247)
 3. Call your congressional representatives to support legislation to change Cuba policy (Representative Doyle already does but could always use a thank-you). Congressional Switchboard: 202-224-3121
 4. Ask us about upcoming travel to Cuba; we have lots of connections!
 5. Attend an International Conference for the Normalization of US-CUBA Relations in NYC March 21-22 2020 (917) 887-8710
- For further information email or call me: LisaCubaSi@aol.com 412-303-1247.

Lisa Valanti is Vice President of the Pittsburgh-Matanzas Sister Cities Partnership, the Pittsburgh CUBA Coalition

SOCIAL JUSTICE CONCERNS RAISED BY SPRING APP SPEAKERS

BY JOYCE ROTHERMEL

Editors Note: Megan McKenna PhD to Speak in Pittsburgh: “A Lenten Journey: Repairing One’s Soul, Repairing the World,” on Monday, March 23, 2020 at 7 PM at Kearns Spirituality Center

On Monday, March 23, 2020 Dr. Megan McKenna, renowned theologian, storyteller, and prolific author, will bring her breadth of vision and world-wide experiences with Indigenous peoples to bear on the topic of Tikkum Olam, a Jewish concept which involves repairing one’s soul, as well as repairing the world.

Drawing upon her recent work with First Nations in Northwestern Canada, Manitoba and in the Arctic Circle, Dr. McKenna will extend the concept of Tikkum Olam to include restorative justice, atonement, forgiveness, and reconciliation, and thereby convey to us “what it looks like to undo harm done and move towards resurrection life now.”

As Daniel Berrigan, S.J. once put it when praising Dr. McKenna’s book *And Morning Came*: “Shall we proclaim Resurrection, even as creation is threatened with going under? Yes! ...birth, rebirth

wins out over death. Thank you, Megan.”

Come out on Monday, March 23, as Dr. McKenna challenges us, in her clear and fiery manner, to listen more deeply to Scripture, our own experiences, and God’s messages from one another.

Megan McKenna, Ph.D., is a renowned Catholic theologian, internationally recognized storyteller, and author of more than 50 books, one of which – *This Will Be Remembered of Her: Stories of Women Reshaping the World* – won a Catholic Press Award. She was named Ambassador for Peace for Pax Christi in 2002. Dr. McKenna resides in Albuquerque, where she works with Indigenous groups.

Mark your calendars now for the second in this year’s Spring Speakers’ Series of the Association of Pittsburgh Priests for Monday, April 20th at 7:00 pm, also at the Kearns Spirituality Center, to hear John Carr speak on “Salt and Light for a Wounded Church and a Divided Nation: Directions and Dangers for Catholic Leaders.”

What does it mean for believers

to be “salt, light, and leaven” in a divided nation and wounded Church? John Carr, the founder and director of the Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life of Georgetown University, will explore the mission and message of Pope Francis and Catholic Social Teaching. He will outline the political and ecclesial context we face and the assets we bring in these tough times. He will conclude by suggesting both directions and dangers for American Catholics in an election year, for our nation and at a time of crisis for our Church. Carr, who has worked for the US Catholic Bishops Conference, will also offer principles for reflection, criteria for action and examples of faith making a difference.

John Carr has been a leader at the intersection of faith and politics for three decades in Washington. He has served as Director of Justice, Peace and Human Development for the US Catholic Bishops and as a residential fellow at the Harvard Institute of Politics.

He is a sought-after commentator on PBS News Hour, CNN, ABC, CBS, NBC, as well as a frequent contributor to the *Washington*

Post, *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times* et al. Mr. Carr currently chairs the Board of Bread for the World and is also founder of the Circle of Protection, which advocates for low-income families.

Donations for each of the talks is \$20 and can be paid at the door. For information and to register in advance (not necessary), contact Fr. John Oesterle at 412-232-7512. Kearns Spirituality Center is located at 9000 Babcock Blvd. in Allison Park (beside LaRoche College and behind the Motherhouse of the Sisters of Divine Providence).

The Association of Pittsburgh Priests is a diocesan-wide organization of ordained and non-ordained women and men who act on our baptismal call to be priests and prophets. Its mission, rooted in the Gospel and the Spirit of Vatican II, is to carry out a ministry of justice and renewal in ourselves, the Church and the world.

Joyce Rothermel is on the board of the Association of Pittsburgh Priests and serves on its Church Renewal Committee.

UNDERSTANDING SOCIALISM AND THE 2020 ELECTIONS

FROM PAGE 10

college or technical education, and healthcare for all. Yet any elected official will be heavily constrained by an already existing system, including a Congress and Judicial system that are generally hostile to fundamental reforms. The supporters of these socialist elected officials and candidates imagine a society in which our guiding principles are shaped by basic welfare of people, and the people are democratically in control of policies to that end. That’s socialism.

However, elected officials, even in the highest offices, cannot substantially subvert the fundamental principles of capitalism and the free market. Capital will fight tooth and nail to retain its privileges and its right to profit at any cost. If real change is going to come, it must emerge from movements from below. We have seen movements for civil and reproductive rights, and others, like “Oc-

cupy Wall Street,” “Black Lives Matter,” and “#Metoo,” fundamentally change the conversation in the United States and push elected officials to the left.

GH: Well then, is there any country, like in Scandinavia, where socialism works?

WZG: It is more useful to think of countries on a continuum rather than either side of a strict divide. Sweden, Britain, France and Canada all have more socialist features than the United States. For example, child care systems are widely developed and accessible to all, the wealthy pay a larger percentage of tax, and health care is not tied to employment (an absurd idea when you think of the numbers of unemployed and partially employed people in our country) but available to all at a nominal fee. However, private enterprise, both large and small, still flourishes. Yet in

these countries, too, these programs, which working people won, are under fierce attack. Margaret Thatcher saw her larger mission as the systematic dismantling of the welfare state. In France today, the pension system is under attack and workers went on strike to protect it.

I witnessed some very positive aspects of socialism when I was working in the Soviet Union on my Ph.D. dissertation in 1984-85. The constitutional right to a job created a society in which unemployment and homelessness did not exist, relative income equality created a basic level of respect for all citizens, free education (through the university level) and free health care were unquestionable benefits, and the basic values of society were not based on acquisition and unending competition. Soviet cities were far safer than ours, and the country was less divided. I still

think it possible to emulate some of those features and at the same time, pair them with a robust democracy.

GH: But isn’t the historic repression of political rights, dictatorship, and now the return of private property and profit to Russia some of the reasons why there is so much hostility here for the idea of the USA moving toward socialism?

WZG: The issue of Stalinism and its effect on the movement for socialism is very complex.

Wendy Z. Goldman is a social and political historian of Russia at Carnegie Mellon University. Her many books include, Women at the Gates: Gender and Industry in Stalin’s Russia, and Inventing the Enemy: Denunciation and Terror in Stalin’s Russia. Ginny Hildebrand is a longtime activist, socialist and TMC member.

MARCH 2020

EVENTS CALENDAR

Friday, March 6. 11:30 AM, PNC Stop Banking the Bomb Picket, 5th and Wood, downtown.

Wednesday, March 11. 6:30 – 9pm. Just Films: I am the Revolution. Eddy Theatre, Woodland Rd, Pittsburgh, PA 15232, USA

Saturday, March 14. An-My Lê: On Contested Terrain. Carnegie Museum of Art. 4400 Forbes Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Sunday, March 15. 1 – 3pm. EMPTY BOWLS fundraiser. Rodef Shalom Congregation

Saturday, March 21. 11 AM, PNC Stop Banking the Bomb Picket, at the PNC in the Strip, 2031 Penn Avenue

Monday, March 23. Megan McKenna speaks at Kearns Spirituality Center, at 7 PM (Details on page 15)

Monday March 23. All day. 2020 Rally to End Gerrymandering. Pennsylvania State Capitol Building. 501 North 3rd Street, Harrisburg, PA 17120

Saturday March 28. 1 – 4pm. Community Forum on Human Rights and Habitat. 1 Smithfield Street, Downtown Pittsburgh (Liberty Room)

Correction: VOL. 50 No. 1 of the NewPeople states that the Thomas Merton Center was a part of the organizing committee for the Jan 5. March for Peace Against the Iran War. We weren't.

REGULAR MEETINGS

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

Vote Allegheny
Every Sunday 4 PM. Mineo's Pizza 2128 Murray Ave, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15217. Contact RBandes@c9n.com

Mondays:
SW Healthcare 4 All PA
First Mondays, 7:00. Crazy Mocha, 2100 Murray Ave, Squirrel Hill 15217. 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, 7:00–9:00 PM. Thomas Merton Center, 5129 Penn Ave., Garfield 15224

Amnesty International #39
2nd Wednesday, 7—9 pm. First Unitarian Church, Morewood Ave. 15213

Tuesdays:
Green Party
1st Tuesdays, 6 pm. Panera Bread, 3401 Blvd of the Allies, Oakland 15213. Contact: info@alleghenygreens.org; 412-532-9194

Coalition Against Violence/BPEP
Third Tuesdays, Noon. BPEP Office, Freedom Unlimited. 2201 Wylie Ave, Hill District 15219 412-212-8775; cav.pgh@gmail.com

Weekly Positive Initiative to Reinforce Change (PIRC) Support Group
For re-entrants and their supporters. All are welcome, no need to RSVP. Tuesdays, 7:00–8:00 pm. New Hope/ UM Church, 112 W North Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15212

Wednesdays:
Amnesty International #39
2nd Wednesdays, 7—9 pm
First Unitarian Church, 605 Morewood Ave, Shadyside, 15212.

Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty
1st Wednesdays, 7-8 pm. First Unitarian church, Ellsworth & Morewood Avenues, Shadyside

Pittsburghers for Public Transit
Second Wednesday. Social hour 6 pm to 7 pm, meeting 7 pm to 8:30 pm. 1 Smithfield St pittsburgh PA 15222

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

Black Political Empowerment Project
Planning Council Meeting. 2nd Thursdays, 6 pm B-PEP Office, Freedom Unlimited. 2201 Wylie Ave, Hill District 15219. 412-212-8775; bpepweb@gmail.com

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. 5119 Penn Ave, Pittsburgh, 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.

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