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Meta Peace Team  
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*Peace Notes is a publication of the  
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those of the Board.*

# Doing your homework: Be ready for the mid-terms

By Terry Link

We don't have to remind you that elections have consequences and the upcoming one on Nov. 6th is a critical one for peace and justice.

PEC does not endorse candidates but we do try to direct our supporters to sources that can help you make up your own mind of who to support. At the national Congressional level we have the U.S. Senate seat currently held by Debbie Stabenow up for re-election, as well as each of the house seats where incumbents Mike Bishop, Tim Walberg, and John Moolenaar are being challenged. And there are three ballot proposals up for a vote.



There is no better place to start looking for candidate information than the League of Women Voters' VOTE 411 website <http://vote411.org>. Here you can simply type in your address and you will see not only your ballot but background on each candidate, including their answers to select questions. They also list information on upcoming candidate and issue forums.

In addition to the candidates, there will be three statewide proposals to vote on. Proposal 1 – legalization of marijuana; Proposal 2 – end gerrymandering (see article elsewhere in this issue); and Proposal 3 - protect the vote. Read up on those before casting your vote.



## Project Vote Smart

<http://votesmart.org> is a nonpartisan website that offers the basic candidate information, but is particularly strong in looking at incumbent voting ratings from many interest groups from both liberal and conservative organizations. They also link to speeches and funding sources for the candidates.



Another good nonpartisan look specifically at the proposals is the Citizens Research Council of Michigan's site <https://crcmich.org/ballot-issues/>



See also the [Users' Guide to Democracy](#) created recently by ProPublica and League of Women Voters for how to be more engaged in our democracy beyond voting.

Urge your family, neighbors and friends to vote and share these good sources with them.

# Calendar

## Regularly Scheduled Events:

**Every Friday, noon to 1 p.m.:**  
**Peace Vigil** in front of the State Capitol Bldg., Lansing

**1st Thursdays: Peace Education Center Board Meeting**, 7 p.m., at University United Methodist Church, 1120 Harrison Road, East Lansing

**1st Sundays: Islam 101, Islamic Center**, 920 S. Harrison Rd., East Lansing

**1st Wednesdays: Lansing Environmental Action Team Meeting**, 6 p.m., Working on reducing fossil fuel use and addressing climate change 1407 Rensen St., Lansing

**3rd Mondays: Greater Lansing Network Against War & Injustice (GLNAWI) planning meeting**, 7 p.m., at University United Methodist Church, 1120 Harrison Road, East Lansing

**2nd & 4th Thursdays, Cost of Militarism Education Team (Book Club)**, 7-9 p.m., at Everybody Reads Bookstore, 2019 E. Michigan Ave., Lansing

Check the PEC website:

<http://www.peaceedcenter.org/>  
for calendar updates

# Upcoming Events:

**Tue. Oct 23, 6:30-9 p.m.**, Michigan Job Guarantee Forum. To discuss the idea of a federal job guarantee for greater Lansing. With Sunrise, Abdul El-Sayed and area residents. MSU Union.

**Wed. Oct. 24 7 p.m.**, Highlighting Local Water Issues, Pat Lindeman, Ingham Co. Drain Commissioner, Community Forum, Haslett Public Library. LWVLA.

**Wed., Oct. 24, 7 p.m.**, Little Gandhi Film Screening, Q&A with film director Sam Kadi. MSU, B119 Wells Hall. Sponsored by the MSU Muslim Studies Program.

**Thu., Oct. 25, 5:30-9:30 p.m.**, Healing Justice. Reception and documentary dealing with impact of trauma, definition of justice, and reconciliation and healing within the criminal and juvenile justice systems. \$\$ WCC, 4800 E. Huron River Dr., Ann Arbor. Germaine Smith, smithger@washtenaw.org.

**Sun., Oct. 28, 4:30 - 7:30 p.m.**, UN Day Dinner and Celebration - "Human Rights, Close to Home," Kellogg Ctr., Big Ten Ballroom C. GLUNA - \$\$ - 517-281-9378.

**Thu., Nov. 1, 2018, All day**, ESPP Research Symposium "Balancing Act: Food, Water, Energy and Climate." Env. Science & Pub. Policy, Kellogg Center.

**Thurs., Nov. 1, 12 p.m.**, Introduction to Islamic Architecture, presented by Amr Abdel-Azim. MSU, 303 International Center. Sponsored by the MSU Muslim Studies Program.

**Thu., Nov. 8, 5:30-7:30 p.m.**, Analyzing the Election with Chris Christoff, former Bloomberg News and Detroit Free Press reporter. LWVLA. Henry's Place, Okemos.

**Thu., Nov. 15, 7-9 p.m.**, LWVLA Panel Discussion on Immigration, New Americans: Examining Immigration and Refugee Policies, at Faith Lutheran Church, Okemos.

**Fri., Nov. 16 – evening**, PEC's Alternative Holiday Sale and Ten Pound Fiddle concert by Sam Gleaves. Sale 5-9, concert starts at 7:30 p.m. Edgewood United Church, E.L.

**Sat., Nov. 17 – All day**, PEC's Annual Alternative Holiday Sale: 9-4. Edgewood United Church, E. L. (see article)

**Sat. Nov. 17, 9-5 p.m.**, Violence Reduction Skills Training, Interfaith Ctr. for Spiritual Growth, Ann Arbor, \$65, preregister at Meta Peace Team.

**Mon., Dec 17, 6:30-8:30 p.m.**, Write for Rights: GLNAWI's Annual event featuring letters to sign seeking release for political prisoners and persons wrongfully detained worldwide. Food, discussion and literature. UUMC, 1120 Harrison Rd. E.L. (check PEC website for updates).

# Proposal 1: Make recreational cannabis legal and revive the industrial hemp industry

By Nate Jemison

Currently nine states (including D.C.) have legalized recreational marijuana, and this November 6th, Michigan will be among twelve additional states posing the choice to legalize beyond just medicinal legalization. The ballot initiative will make marijuana legal for adults 21 and over. Personal possession would be limited to 2.5 ounces and households would be allowed up to 10 ounces and 12 plants. Consumers would pay a 10 percent tax that would fund schools, roads, and local governments.

The ballot initiative has been proposed by the Coalition to Regulate Marijuana like Alcohol. The coalition is comprised of several advocacy groups and stakeholders, including the Marijuana Policy Project, MI Legalize, Michigan NORML, the ACLU of Michigan, and the Drug Policy Alliance.

Interestingly, the ballot synopsis does not mention industrial hemp, which is a disservice to the importance of this proposal that would legalize it within the full text. The difference between marijuana and industrial hemp is, marijuana refers to the THC and CBD compounds produced in the flower of the plant, whereas industrial hemp is the fiber produced from the stalks. Also, the strains of industrial hemp that are better for producing fiber generally have next to nothing in THC content (the psycho-active ingredient of marijuana), even in their flowers.

Industrial hemp is the larger scope issue within the effort to legalize the entire marijuana and hemp family again. Industrial hemp can be a major player in addressing global climate change by providing a rapid carbon capturing crop that can be used to replace or offer alternatives to numerous industries that are harsh on the environment. Some of the industries and their products that would be influenced include:

- Plastics
- Fiber (paper, cotton, & synthetic)
- Construction materials (insulation, cement, some lumbers, flooring products, molded plastics, etc)
- Transportation (hemp fiberglass)
- Fuel
- Farming (animal bedding, soil amendment)
- Cosmetic and beauty (oils from Hemp seeds)
- Food (oils in food products)

Another fun fact about hemp; it used to be legal tender in colonial times, including payment of taxes, because of its necessity in the rope and maritime industry. Virginia even required hemp to be grown by law because of strong demand. Perhaps, one of the biggest uses of industrial hemp may be in hempcrete, which is the use of hemp hurds combined with homemade hydraulic lime binders. Hempcrete, while not intended for structural concrete purposes because of its lower density, is best suited for long lasting insulation. Affordable, sturdy, and environmentally friendly building insulation will help create homes that are more fire-resistant, flood resistant, storm resistant, pest resistant, and most crucially, ultra-energy-efficient. Having an environmentally friendly mass produced insulation material can be a game-changer for addressing climate change considering the built environment in the US consumes 48 percent of the energy footprint.

While restoring justice to those devastated by the last century of the US Government's failed war on drugs is crucially important; addressing climate change is the umbrella priority that affects all Earthlings and thus every socio-economic-political issue. Legalization of all parts of this useful plant is critical for the sake of justice, freedom, and environmental mass solutions to climate change. This proposal is a solid step in the correct direction, so please vote YES on Proposal 1, and then keep fighting for further legalization, hopefully on the national level. Canada and others are already leading the way.

For further information, Bridge magazine has covered this proposal too, with positions of each gubernatorial candidate on the ballot. <https://www.bridgemi.com/public-sector/michigan-ballot-issues-what-know-about-prop-1-recreational-pot>

## Proposal 2: Allowing voters to choose their politicians.

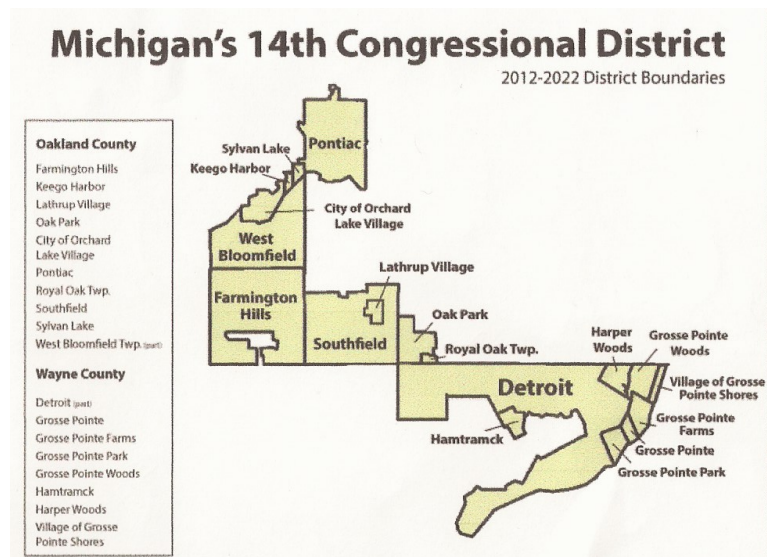
By John Masterson

Proposal 2 would amend the Michigan Constitution to create an Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission. It would operate every 10 years, after the census has been taken, and would have the task of drawing new lines for Congressional districts. The amendment would transfer the authority to draw Congressional and state legislative district lines from the legislature and governor to the independent commission.

The commission would consist of 13 Michigan citizens, randomly chosen from a pool of registered voters, with the selection process administered by the secretary of state. These 13 citizens would consist of four members who self-identify with each of the two major parties (currently Republican and Democrat) and five non-affiliated, independent members. Partisan office holders and candidates, their employees, certain relatives, and lobbyists would be prohibited from serving as commissioners.

This is a dramatic and much-needed move to restore democracy to this part of the election process. For years, the party in power has been gerrymandering the districts. This means they have been drawing the district lines into whatever contorted shapes are necessary to produce the constituencies they want. The politicians are essentially choosing their voters rather than voters choosing their politicians.

According to studies by the nonpartisan Brennan Center for Justice and Bridge Michigan, Michigan has some of the most gerrymandered districts in the country. An example of this is to the right.

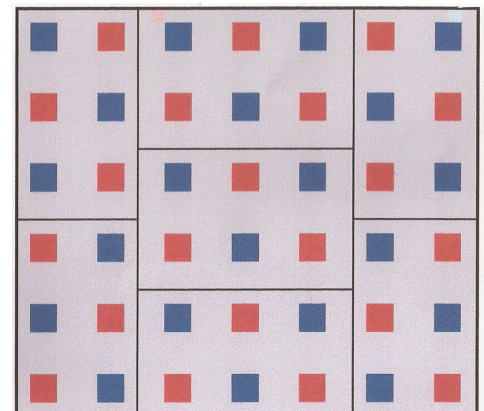


When the maps are re-drawn by the commission, they must take into account existing city, township and county boundaries, and be reasonably compact. At the same time, they must meet the population-size condition that assures virtually equal voter numbers in each of the districts, as well as the conditions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Every part of the process will be transparent. All meetings of the commission will be open to the public and well announced and in a central place. All data and devices used to come to the creation of a map will be published. There will be a series of hearings open to the public with dates, times and places published in such ways as to encourage citizen participation.

Gerrymandering voting districts is far more corrosive to the democratic process than might be realized. It frequently removes the elected official from any need to answer to the constituency.

On the right is an example of a hypothetical state in the nation before gerrymandering the districts. The parties are of equal populations in the state and equally spread out. It's quite ideal in that a vote in any of the seven legislative districts can easily go either way since each of the parties has relative equal support.

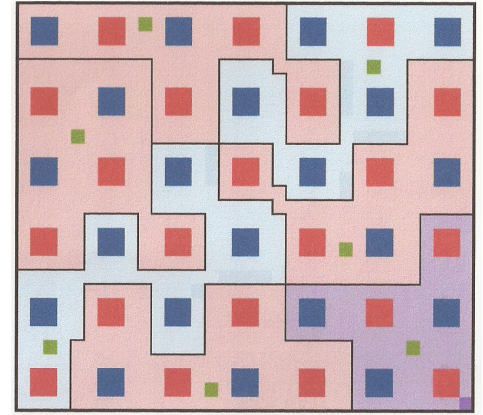




## Proposal 2 (continued)

The current redistricting process has none of the requirements built into Proposal 2. A redistricting need only adhere to the provisions of the Voting Rights Act, have each of its districts virtually equal in population, and have each district be “contiguous.” What this means is that you can get from any point in the district to any other point without going outside the district.

The adjacent picture represents a redistricting that is legal within the current, very loose set of regulations. It is the essence of what is meant by gerrymandering. Such districts are created with one thing in mind: that statistically gathered voter patterns predict that the candidate chosen by the party in power be easily elected by a wide margin.



In a state with an amazing amount of party balance, the Red Party has gathered for itself a probable outcome of 67 percent of the district population in four of the districts. Each of these four candidates is virtually assured of election and so the party can control the outcome of the state vote on all issues. If it wins the one balanced district by even one vote, it has five of the seven votes needed to pass its legislation.

That one party could control how a state votes by such manipulation is a serious devaluation of democracy. But there is another, even more serious, consideration. The Blue Party candidates have an even bigger margin of support in their two districts. In other words, six of the seven elected representatives are elected into a “safe” district by this process of manipulation.

More than 85 percent of the people in this state are being represented by someone who does not need to have any concern for what they think or what policies they want to see adopted. They are simply not being represented. With the large sums of money being funneled into the coffers of politicians by large corporations, our government of the people is moving toward a government of money and corporate power.

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## Proposal 3 goal: Make voting easier

By Terry Link

If our democracy is going to survive we need to make voting easier. That’s precisely the intent of Proposal 3, a constitutional amendment that will authorize automatic and Election Day voter registration, no-reason absentee voting and straight ticket voting.

The proposal will catch us up to other states that allow for easier registration and voting. All we need to add perhaps is making Election Day a holiday or move it to a weekend.

We encourage PEC supporters to support Proposal 3, which was brought forward by the League of Women Voters, ACLU and other organizations committed to a deeper democracy.

Absentee ballots are available, so voting has begun. But before you vote you might use a few nonpartisan tools to help you make your decisions.

The League of Women Voters VOTE 411 website <http://vote411.org> list all candidates and proposals and provides background on candidates and their positions on some key issues.

The Citizens Research Council of Michigan does an overview of the three statewide proposals at <https://crcmich.org/ballot-issues/>. Project Vote Smart <http://votesmart.org> has background on all the candidates including campaign finance data, as well as voting records and ratings of incumbents.

If you want to be a more active citizen than simply voting this election season, the League of Women Voters and ProPublica have created a how to Guide to Democracy <https://projects.propublica.org/graphics/users-guide-to-democracy>.

## Contact your Representatives

Senator Debbie Stabenow  
1-202-224-4822

731 Hart Senate Office Bldg \*

[www.stabenow.senate.gov/?p=contact](http://www.stabenow.senate.gov/?p=contact)

Representative Mike Bishop  
1-202-225-4872

428 Cannon House Office Bldg \*

<http://mikebishop.house.gov/contact>

Representative Tim Walberg  
1-202-225-6276

2436 Rayburn House Office Bldg \*

<http://walberg.house.gov/contact/>

Senator Gary Peters  
1-202-224-6221

724 Hart Senate Office Bldg \*

[www.peters.senate.gov/content/contact-gary](http://www.peters.senate.gov/content/contact-gary)

Representative John Moolenaar  
1-202-225-3561

117 Cannon House Office Bldg \*

<https://moolenaar.house.gov/contact/email>

\* Washington DC 20515

## PeaceQuest 2018: Peace Pole Pursuit

One of the more fun and creative events during this year's PeaceQuest was the Peace Pole Pursuit. Participants were urged to walk, drive or bike to find as many peace poles as they could, then take a selfie at each pole and share on the PeaceQuest Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/peacequestgreaterlansing/>. Participants also received a "Peace Pole Pursuit Pack" and a certificate of completion.





# Stand Up for Peace Rally

Rallying for peace

Nearly 100 people braved wind, cool temperatures and a brief but intense downpour to come together to issue a call for peace and justice.

The signature event of this year's PeaceQuest, a month-long celebration of peace, the "Stand up for Peace" rally took place Sept. 21 at the state Capitol.

Hosted by Peace Education Center co-chair Terry Link, the rally brought together an impressive list of speakers, representing peace organizations, religious communities, and many others.



Peace Education Center co-chair Terry Link served as host of the "Stand Up for Peace" rally, held Sept. 21 on the steps of the state Capitol. Photo by Jim Detjen.

Among them were Susan Waltz, an Amnesty International board member and professor at the University of Michigan; Fr. Peter Dougherty, Founder of Meta Peace Team, a grassroots, peace-promoting organization; Rabbi Michael Zimmerman of Kehillat Israel; and Lynn Bartley, Greater Lansing United Nations Association, president.

In addition, a proclamation from Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder declaring Sept. 21 as Peace Day in the state of Michigan was read. Music was provided by local folk singer Pat Madden.

The event also recognized Sept. 21 as not only the United Nations' 37th annual International Day of Peace, but the 70th anniversary of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights. PeaceQuest 2018 was sponsored by more than a dozen local non-profits. Other events included many speakers and workshops, poetry readings, and a Sept. 23 concert, "Concert Across America," which brought awareness of the plague of gun violence in our country.



A number of local organizations that work diligently for peace and justice had tables set up at the "Stand Up for Peace" rally, held Sept. 21 at the state Capitol. Photo by Jim Detjen.

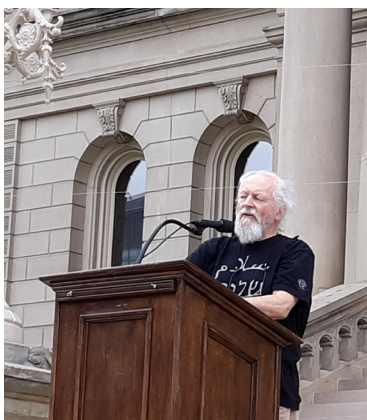


Photo by Tom Oswald.

Fr. Peter Dougherty was one of a number of speakers who addressed this year's "Stand Up for Peace" rally. Fr. Dougherty is founder of the Meta Peace Team, a grassroots, peace-promoting organization.



Photo by Tom Oswald.

Susan Waltz addresses the crowd at this year's "Stand Up for Peace" rally at the state Capitol. Waltz, a long-time friend of the Peace Education Center, is an Amnesty International board member and professor of public policy at the University of Michigan's Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy.



David Wiley addresses the "Stand up for Peace" rally. Wiley is the former director of the Michigan State University African Studies Center and long-time peace and justice activist.



# It's back! Alternative Holiday Sale Nov. 16-17



Photo by Jim Detjen

Holiday shopping can be challenging. But the Peace Education Center makes it easy.

The PEC's Alternative Holiday Sale provides the mid-Michigan area with a wonderful opportunity to shop in a way that makes spending money feel good and do good for the world.



Photo by Jim Detjen

It takes place Nov. 16-17 at the Edgewood United Church, 469 N. Hagadorn, East Lansing. Sale hours are Friday, Nov. 16, from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.; and Saturday, Nov. 17, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Vendors will include favorites such as Soulful Earth Herbals, Global Gifts, Earth Wisdom, Cat's Cradle and many more offering local artists' gorgeous creations and practical goods for home and body.

Supporting local vendors promotes the economic growth of our area, and also is a sustainable shopping option. Furthermore, some profits from the sale will go toward assisting the Peace Education Center in its yearly programming and organizing around peace and justice issues.



Photo by Jim Detjen



Photo by Jim Detjen



Photo by Jim Detjen

Like last year, the Friday evening sale will take place during the Ten Pound Fiddle concert, which features folksinger Sam Gleaves. For information on the concert, visit the Ten Pound Fiddle website at [www.tenpoundfiddle.org](http://www.tenpoundfiddle.org).

Entry to the sale is free, but tickets are necessary for the concert.



Photo by Becky Payne

In addition to all the sale items, dinner will be available on Friday, as well as lunch on Saturday.

For more information on the PEC, visit the website at <https://www.peacecenter.org/>



Photo by Becky Payne



# Trump's North Korea policy positive ... at least for now

By Nelson Brown

While most of us believe that Donald Trump is unraveling our democracy and pursuing a militarily aggressive policy toward countries he has designated as bad guys, like Iran, his policy toward North Korea appears to be an exception.

Only a few months ago, he was trumpeting a policy of “fire and fury,” berating Kim Jong-un as “little rocket man” and planning joint South Korean/U.S. military exercises. In return, Kim called Trump a “dotard” and fired off missile tests.

With this heated rhetoric and tit-for-tat provocations flying back and forth at Twitter speed, war on the Korean Peninsula seemed imminent. But then things seemed to change at Twitter speed leading to kind words and a Trump/Kim June Summit in Singapore. What happened and where do we go from here to avoid a return to “fire and fury?”

While fathoming the twists and turns of Trump's mind sometimes feels like a fool's errand, there is a reasonable explanation for this change in Trump's policy. Most likely, the move toward negotiations started with Kim's change in policy. Probably fearing that Trump's rhetoric was a prelude to his military action, Kim started a two-pronged diplomatic offensive: he began a peace and reconciliation outreach to South Korea and began speaking about “denuclearization” of the Korean Peninsula while softening his rhetoric about Trump.

In fact, Kim most likely deliberately began to appeal to Trump's ego with kinder words, suggesting that the two countries could resolve their differences and “denuclearize” the peninsula. Kim's moves both undercut Trump's initial effort to isolate North Korea on the world stage and appealed to that part of Trump's ego that believed he was a great dealmaker.

Probably against the advice of his minders, like Secretary of Defense James Mattis and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Trump agreed to the summit because he thought he could take Kim's ambiguous talk of denuclearization as a commitment to rid his regime of all nuclear weapons quickly.

While the Singapore Summit had great optics of two world leaders working together for peace and of complimenting each other for their leadership, the actual concrete results were few and the talk of what denuclearization meant remained vague. Trump seemed to believe Kim had committed to ridding North Korea of all nuclear weapons quickly. Kim probably had no such intention, as post-summit developments showed when North Korea criticized the United States after Secretary Pompeo presented Trump's demands to Kim several weeks ago. Since then, negotiations appear to be in limbo although, thankfully, Trump has not returned to a rhetoric of “fire and fury.” Now there is talk of another summit to move the peace process forward. So, what can peace activists hope for?

The biggest problem that the peace process will now face comes from Trump's hawkish advisers urging a return to “fire and fury.” But peace activists should be hopeful that the current subdued rhetoric from each side continues and that negotiations for some type of agreement on nuclear weapons are successful.

While the ideal solution would be a negotiated peace between North Korea, the United States and South Korea, followed by removing all nuclear weapons, both North Korean and American, from the peninsula, this remains an unrealistic possibility in the short term. After all, North Korea knows that the U.S. has hundreds of nuclear weapons on ships and submarines in the area.

What does seem realistic is to establish normal, peaceful diplomatic relationships between the U.S. and North Korea and to negotiate some immediate limit on North Korea's arsenal of nuclear weapons with further negotiations to ultimately eliminate them as mutual trust builds over time.

As strange as it may seem, Trump started a helpful process of negotiations with North Korea, probably out of his own inflated and flattered ego about his negotiating skills. Regardless of his motivation, peace activists should support efforts to negotiate a peaceful resolution of differences between North Korea and America.

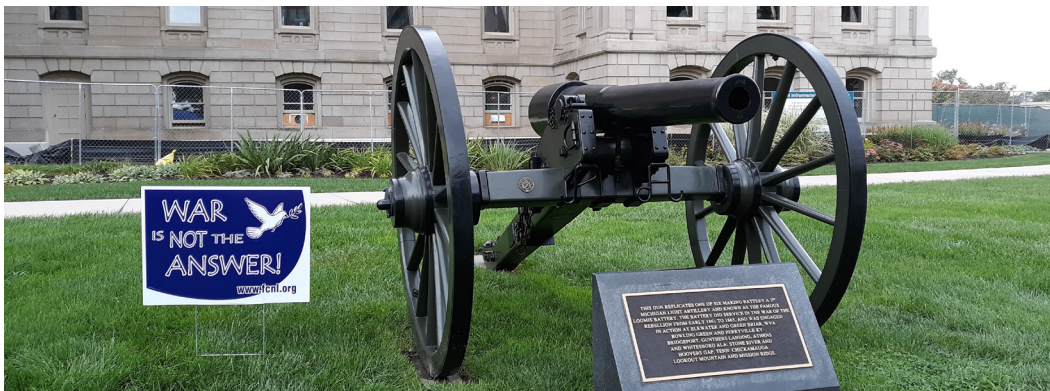
# Tell us about the time...

By Becky Payne

There have been some very interesting and powerful actions out of the Peace Education Center over the years. Did you help in the struggle to divest from South Africa? Were you there to speak out against the war in Vietnam? Iraq? Did you march with us in Washington... or Lansing? Do you remember the Peace Council?

As we move toward our 50th year as an organization, if we don't get our memories down on paper, we are bound to lose them. These stories aren't just fun to remember, they are a guide to how a small group of brave people stepped up against injustice, called attention to hidden issues, and changed the course of events for the better. So, before our history is lost, we are calling on all who have worked with or been influenced by the PEC to send us their stories. All eras, all experiences.

We hope to publish stories about Peace Center events and activities in a book next year. But we need you to write them for us! Can you help?



A bit of civil disobedience is displayed during the Sept. 21, 2018 "Stand up For Peace" rally. Photo by Jim Detjen.

**Stories:** What happened that needs to be remembered? What events did you help with or attend? How did you start learning about social justice, women's issues, war and militarism? When did you get involved? Who inspired you? Was there a moment or an event that you remember with satisfaction or humor – or rage? Stories can be from any time up to today.

**History/Background:** It helps to know the drumbeat of the times. Write a narrative that gives a sense of the times as various social justice issues came to the fore. Keep your focus on how events played out on a local or personal level.

**Photos – clippings – mementos:** We can copy and return the originals, or you can donate them. Let us know what you have.

Please write your memories – it doesn't have to be a scholarly tome, a simple recounting of an event is perfect! If you can't or don't want to write it yourself, we have several people available to listen and write up your tale. Style doesn't matter, it's the stories, passion, the rage against injustice that we want to capture. Our website has more information and some story ideas, but really, it's simple... pull out those memories of the time you were there and made a difference and send them to us. This is one time when it's okay to brag – we want to hear it!

Questions? Contact Becky Payne at (517) 862-5921, evenings, or [rapayne777@gmail.com](mailto:rapayne777@gmail.com), or Jim Detjen at [jamesdetjen@gmail.com](mailto:jamesdetjen@gmail.com).

Please submit stories, encounters, memories, photos, etc. to PEC at [peaceedcenter@gmail.com](mailto:peaceedcenter@gmail.com) or by mail to Peace Ed Center c/o UUMC, 1120 S. Harrison Rd., East Lansing, MI 48823.

# As the Syrian war nears conclusion, many questions remain

By Nelson Brown

At long last, the war in Syria may be nearing something that can be called a conclusion. This war has had disastrous consequences for the Syrian people and for the political climate in Europe. The central questions remaining include how to finish it, how to reach a tenable political settlement, how to have the United States disengage, how to help rebuild Syria, and how to return as many refugees as possible to Syria. But how did we arrive at this moment?

The immediate origin of this disaster in Syria begins with the Arab Spring in 2011 that spread rapidly across much of the Arab world. Many American foreign policy advisers hoped this might represent the beginning of a democratic Middle East replacing autocratic rule, including that of the Hafez al Assad government in Syria. But in Syria, the demonstrations quickly turned into armed conflict between Assad and various jihadi groups, including ISIS and the al Qaeda group, the al Nusra Front. Some of these groups were supported by the United States and its allies, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The United States tried to support secular groups, like the Free Syrian Army, but this proved a failure leaving only jihadi groups in the fight.

At the same time, ISIS in Iraq gained territory rapidly and declared a Caliphate in 2014. This led the United States to support Iraqi and Kurdish efforts to retake territory. After hard fighting, this effort resulted in ISIS's defeat by the beginning of 2018. At first, after 2011, it appeared Assad was losing, but with the help of Iran and Hizballah, and finally of Russia, the tide of battle started to turn in 2015, so that by 2018, the remaining jihadi groups were concentrated in the northern Syrian city of Idlib.

As things now stand, the political and military situations remain complicated. At some point, Assad and his allies will probably attack Idlib, although the Russians and the Turks have negotiated a ceasefire contingent on the jihadi groups' withdrawal. The fate of the Kurds also remains uncertain.

The U.S. still has several thousand troops stationed in Syria. Despite Trump's early talk about their withdrawal, it now appears they will stay as part of pressure to overthrow Assad and to oppose Iran. Ending this war completely requires the withdrawal of these troops and of ending any policy of overthrowing Assad. Otherwise the war and chaos will continue with the only alternative to Assad as an ISIS-like rule. In Iraq, we have seen what this means. There are no easy answers, only least-bad alternatives.

While fighting has continued in Syria, millions of Syrians have either become refugees in their own land or have fled for safety either to Turkey or Europe. The humanitarian and political disaster this diaspora has created will reverberate for years in Syria, Europe and the United States.

Europe has been flooded with refugees aggravating blood-and-soil, right-wing political movements there, especially in Hungary and Germany, but also to a lesser extent in the United States. Ending this flood of refugees and their return to Syria stand as critical to curbing right-wing assaults on liberal democratic values. This will be hard, but the alternatives are worse.

But now the situation in most of Syria has stabilized enough that peace activists should call for policies that provide aid to rebuild Syria and that encourage and support the return of refugees from Turkey and Europe. The Syrian government has started encouraging refugees to return.

While this policy of return will be difficult because of bitterness from the conflict, the U.S. should support this return and work with all countries and international organizations to make this return as free from retaliation and as humane as possible. Otherwise the political consequences in Europe, in the Middle East and in the U.S. will remain disastrous for a liberal democratic governance.



# What's with Israel/Palestine?

## Cody O'Rourke visit gave us a peek

By Becky Payne



Cody O'Rourke  
cody@holylandtrust.org

Cody O'Rourke, raised in a Mennonite community in Gladwin, Michigan, lives now in the West Bank of Palestine. In a recent visit he gave us an inside look at the Israel/Palestine tug of war over property.

Cody showed video of houses in the Palestinian village of Um al-Khair being bulldozed by Israeli forces. The houses were barely more than shacks, some with large families living inside. Why does Israel tear down houses where people are living in dire poverty – and in a land where building materials are embargoed?

The houses are “illegal,” say the Israelis; constructed without permits. Cody told us that almost all building permits are denied. So, people construct their shacks and wait for Israel to come and tear them down.

What is painfully clear is that Israel is doing everything it can (and has for many years) to make life difficult or impossible for the Palestinians. The country formerly known as Palestine has been divided up like Swiss cheese – formerly contiguous lands now have Israeli settlements plopped all throughout, with Israeli-only roads and Israeli-only electricity and water provided, while Palestinians go without. Palestinians watch helplessly as their land is taken.

Cody showed us a map of Um al-Khair. The map shows a tiny Palestinian village surrounded by mostly barren land where residents take goats to scrounge for food. But he then showed us a map of the plans for future Israeli development. Virtually all the surrounding area is slated for Israeli settlements. So, the tiny village stands to lose its grazing lands. You can see this and more at <https://actionnetwork.org/letters/save-um-al-khair-end-home-demolitions-now>.

Cody himself lives in a nearby Israeli-controlled town. He has been meeting in his apartment with Um al-Kahir elders to strategize plans for greenhouses and honey-production to support the town once their grazing lands are gone. But his landlord forbade Palestinians from the residence. So, Cody will be without a place to live when he returns; he refuses to live where his friends can't enter.

The United States gives Israel more than \$130 billion per year in aid. We have thrown small amounts of money to help the Palestinians, but recently the Trump administration pulled \$200 million in economic aid to Palestinians and has drastically cut its UN contribution to aid Palestinian refugees. These cuts will cause hospitals and schools to close, and are causing desperation in the land.

And interestingly enough, the U.S. cuts also will end the coexistence program geared toward helping Israelis and Palestinians resolve their conflicts. Where will this atrocity end?





# A new push to abolish nuclear weapons

By Terry Link

The Peace Education Center joined with GLUNA (Greater Lansing United Nations Association) to bring attention to the ongoing threat of nuclear weapons at a recent Java Café at East Lansing Public Library.

Terry Link, PEC co-chair, led the discussion by looking at recent data and global actions regarding disarmament. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres launched his “Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament” this summer. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) that is often the document pulled out by the United States and other nuclear powers to call out North Korea or Iran, also requires the nuclear nations to:

“pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.”

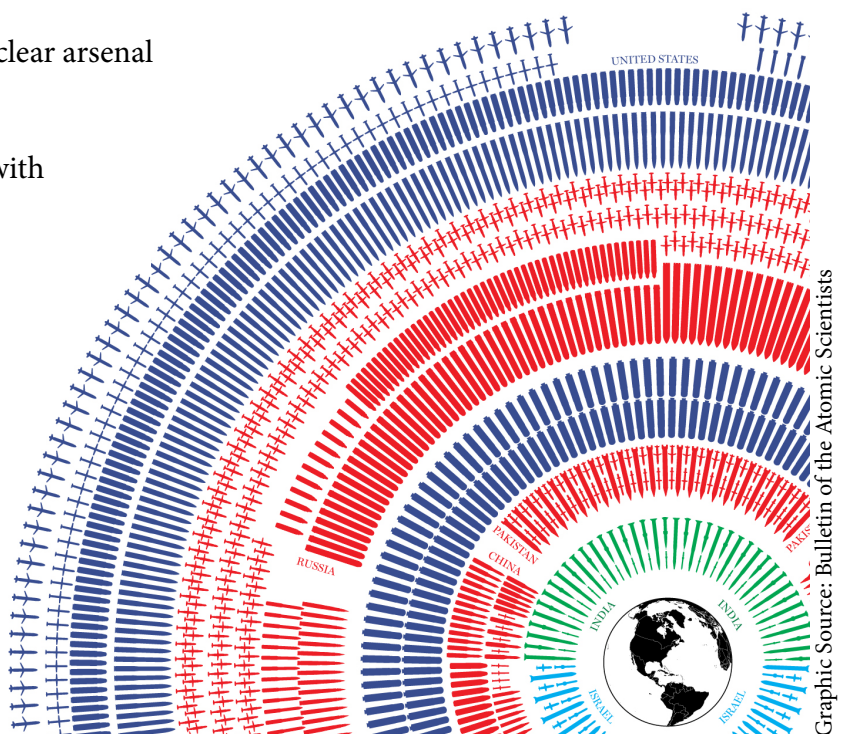
There has been almost no effort to meet this obligation during the Obama and Trump administrations. In fact, both Obama and Trump have recommended spending more than \$1 trillion to upgrade our nuclear arsenal. Meanwhile, 122 nations approved the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons just a year ago to reinforce and strengthen the call in the NPT to eliminate nuclear weapons. The U.S. was not one of them.

[Back from the Brink](#), a collaborative effort led by the Union of Concerned Scientists and Physicians for Social Responsibility and now joined by many organizations, including the United Church of Christ, has authored “A Call to Prevent Nuclear War” that calls for five common sense steps that the U.S. should take to change its nuclear policy.

1. Renouncing first use of nuclear weapons.
2. Ending the sole, unchecked authority of any U.S. president to launch a nuclear attack.
3. Take U.S. nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert.
4. Cancel the plan to replace the entire nuclear arsenal with enhanced weapons.
5. Actively pursue a verifiable agreement with nuclear-armed states to eliminate their nuclear arsenals.

PEC and GLUNA have collaborated to create a petition for our Washington representatives to support this call. We could not only use your signatures, but help in circulating the petition. Contact Dave Wiley [wiley@msu.edu](mailto:wiley@msu.edu) from GLUNA or Terry Link [link@msu.edu](mailto:link@msu.edu) if you want to help.

Access to the PowerPoint from the Java Café is also available by contacting Terry at [link@msu.edu](mailto:link@msu.edu)



The Peace Education Center's Annual

# Alternative Holiday Sale

*Celebrate an annual community tradition!*

Local Vendors & Artisans

Fair Trade Goods

Peace & Justice

Groups

Food & warm drinks available  
(dinner Friday night)



Friday night at 7:30

**The Ten Pound Fiddle**

presents in concert

extraordinary singer-songwriter:

**Sam Gleaves**

Ticket purchase information at [tenpoundfiddle.org](http://tenpoundfiddle.org)

**Friday, November 16**  
**5-9PM**

**Saturday, November 17**  
**9AM-5PM**

**in the Edgewood United Church Building**

*469 N Hagadorn Road in East Lansing  
(corner of Beech St. between Grand River & Burcham)*

for more information contact: [peacecenter@gmail.com](mailto:peacecenter@gmail.com)

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