



PEACE

A PUBLICATION OF THE PEACE EDUCATION CENTER

NOTES

SUMMER 2020

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Peace Notes

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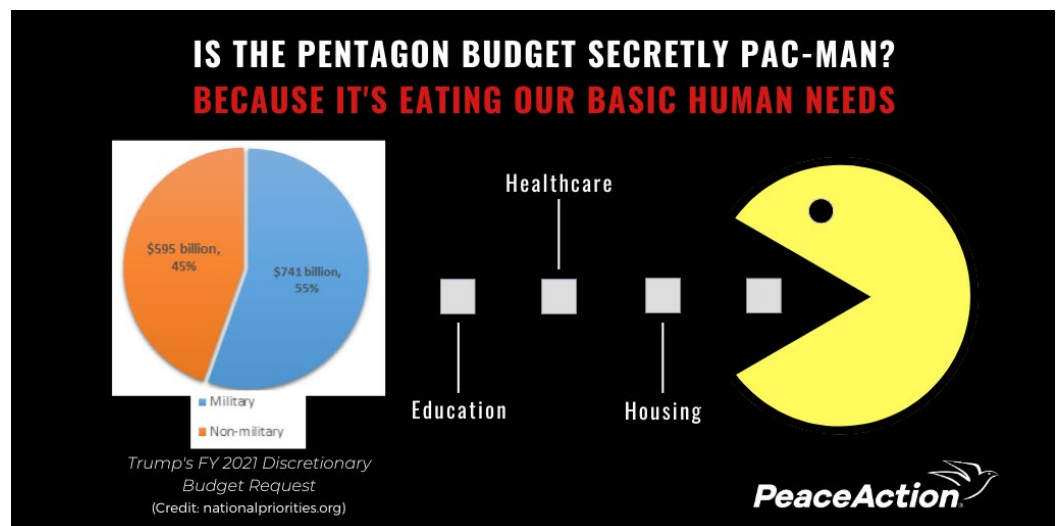
*Peace Notes is a publication of the
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expressed are not necessarily
those of the Board.*

Military Spending – The Beat Goes On

By Terry Link

Aren't there better places for us to be focusing vast amounts of money these days than on the military? Michigan's elected officials don't get that.

This year's military budget is \$740 billion – around 60 percent of our total federal budget! About half of that goes to Boeing, Lockheed Martin, and other bloated behemoths (National Priorities Project). When you add veterans' support, the nuclear weapons program, interest on the debt and Overseas Contingency funds, the total cost of military spending comes to over \$1 trillion a year (Cost of War Project at Brown University).



We had big hopes for change this year: there was an amendment offered by Representative Barbara Lee and Mark Pocan to redirect 10 percent of the military budget to support efforts to address issues stemming from the pandemic.

Rep. Slotkin voted against it. On the Senate side, both **Sen. Peters** and **Sen. Stabenow** voted to reject a similar amendment offered by Senators Markey, Warren and Sanders.

Final passage of the National Defense Authorization Act in each house this week saw similar voting patterns among our local politicians. Stabenow, Peters and Slotkin voted for the record-breaking bill. Other Michigan Democrats – Kildee, Dingell, Lawrence, Tlaib and Independent Justin Amash voted against it - and they all voted to support the 10 percent reduction sponsored by Rep. Lee. Our local Republican representatives, Moolenaar and Walberg voted with Slotkin on both. Rep. Slotkin was one of only two Democrats to vote against an amendment that would prohibit funding of nuclear weapons tests. The Senate version of the NDAA calls for \$10 million for new nuclear tests, and both our Senators approved.

Military Spending – The Beat Goes On (cont.)...and On

As was noted at the conference PEC hosted last September on military spending, there has been a renewed push to undo the stranglehold that the military industrial congressional complex has on our society. Groups as disparate as Public Citizen, Friends Committee on National Legislation, the Poor People's Campaign, and others have been challenging the dominant myth that endless military spending will create real and lasting security.

PEC has been in the thick of these efforts, meeting with key staff of our Washington legislators, sharing new studies and reports showing the bloat, waste, and ineffectiveness of massive expenditures on military spending. We have signed on to letters and urged our followers to push Congress to redirect funding to human needs as opposed to the ever-enriched defense contractors, more important than ever since the COVID outbreak.

The Congressional Progressive Caucus, Poor Peoples' Campaign, and the People Over Pentagon coalition are working to make military spending reductions part of everyday conversation. Before voting this fall, we need to ask the candidates where they stand on redirecting bloated military spending to human needs at home and abroad. As Sen. Markey noted after the Senate vote yesterday, "We should prioritize battling global-killer diseases, not developing new weapons designed to eradicate the human race. It is time we fund education, not annihilation. Medicaid, not missiles."

Until we constrain our war mentality, we will never have the resources to build the sustainable future our children and grandchildren deserve. We at the PEC are doing our part to make that happen. We could use your help!!!!

PEC Amidst COVID

The Peace Education Center has managed to stay engaged with the many issues before us despite the constraints of COVID-19. Like most, we are adapting to the uncertainties that have amplified since earlier in the year. Of course we canceled our Spring Annual Meeting and we have been meeting via Zoom most months (this month met in the church parking lot with lots of social distancing and masks, just so we could be with each other). Weather permitting we might do that again in August.

Sadly, we recently decided that we would also cancel our Annual Alternative Holiday Sale breaking a long tradition and a key fundraising activity for us. Likewise our newsletter is a digital only version this summer, but as you will quickly see, there are still plenty of issues we are tackling, and as always invite your energy and talents to join us.



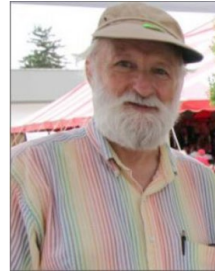
We announce the Tom Schneider Peacemaker Awards and share our work on police violence, guns at the Capitol, military spending, nuclear weapons, and note the passing of an old friend we lost this Spring. We encourage you to be active this election season, not simply voting, but engaging with the campaigns of the candidates and issues you support. For them to win they need support beyond voting.

And, as you will also note, we urge you to contact those in office today about your concerns, suggestions, and overall feedback. No system will change without feedback. As Sen. Markey noted last week when the vote on the new defense bill was passed and the attempt to cut military spending and redirect the funds to address COVID-19, "**We should prioritize battling global-killer diseases, not developing new weapons designed to eradicate the human race. It is time we fund education, not annihilation. Medicaid, not missiles.**" Thanks for your ongoing interest and support of the efforts of the Peace Education Center. For half a century this has been the home of those who choose to work for peace.

Area students earn Peace Education Center awards

Four Lansing area high school seniors were this year's recipients of the Peace Education Center of Greater Lansing's Tom Schneider Peacemaker Award. In addition to this annual award, two other students received Creative Peacemaking awards.

The awards are named in memory of Tom Schneider, a long-time Lansing-area peace and justice advocate, who embodied peace in justice in his everyday life.



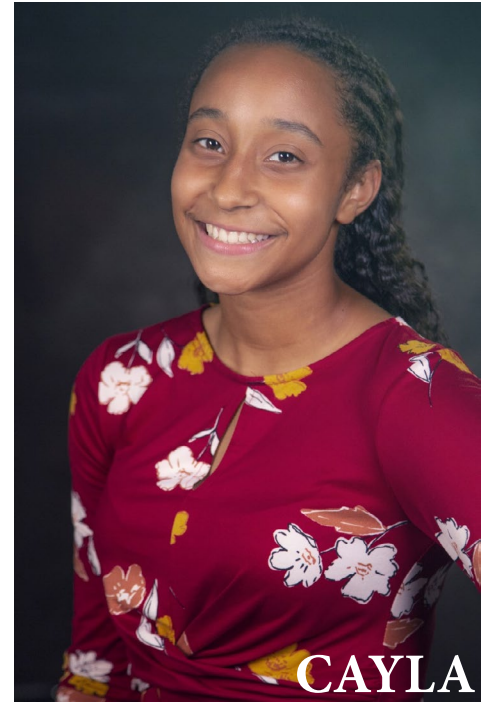
The \$500 award has been given annually since 2013 for graduating high school seniors from Ingham, Eaton or Clinton counties who apply or are nominated. Recipients are selected based on their passion and commitment toward building a more peaceful and just world.

This year's Tom Schneider Peacemaker Award winners were:



Claire Hipps, Lansing Eastern High School, who, as the Community Foundation's Youth Trustee, voiced student concerns to leaders within the community and who brought tutors and therapy dogs into Eastern to assist students with academics and mental health.

Cayla Ellis, Lansing Christian High School, help start a student Multicultural Club to address stereotypes and have students share their cultures, and help other students become culturally aware. A faculty member said she is "an example of who we aspire to be."



Renee Lince, Bath High School, who, besides her work with Amnesty International, organized a school walkout at Bath High School to protest gun violence and to urge legislators to address this critical issue.

Jada Palmer, St. Johns High School, has held leadership roles in community service clubs such as Goodwins, Youth Action Committee, and the Pantry. She developed the new St. Johns Chapter of the YAC which led to \$20,000 annually in grant money for local nonprofits.



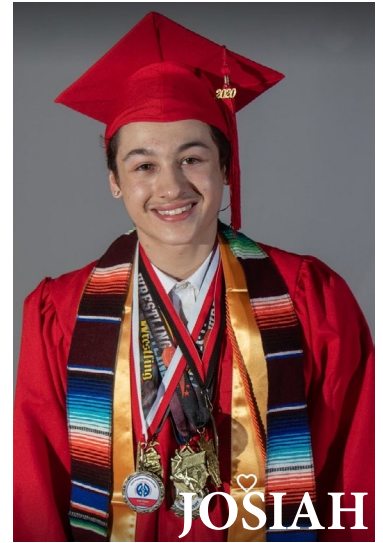
Area students earn Peace Education Center awards (cont.)

In addition, the Peace Education Center also recognized two students for their Creative Peacemaking efforts:



Ava Brewer,
Laingsburg High School, who produced videos to support six local non-profit organizations to better help them share their efforts with the community and another video for a school bonding issue.

Josiah Melendez,
Lansing Sexton High School. As president of the student body, he created a mentorship program to help unify students and cut down on bullying within the school.



PEC Revolving Door

We are sad to say farewell to board members Tom Oswald, Gabby Kindig and Cyn Brown who announced this summer that they could no longer dedicate the time they wished to give to PEC. Tom joined us after retiring from MSU and has used his writing and editing skills to edit our newsletter, write press releases and otherwise guide our communications. We miss him already as this is the first newsletter we've done without him in some time. Gabby came to us as a Tom Schneider Peacemaker Award winner a few years ago. She joined the board the following year as an MSU student. She has brought us fresh perspectives from the younger eyes we so need and has served on the selection committee for the Tom Schneider award since joining us. Gabby also brought us her friend Cyn Brown who attended many meetings before deciding to join our board last year. Both of them helped us look more deeply at the gender issues that are embedded in the dominant culture. We will miss them both and wish them well and will welcome them back when the space opens up in their lives for that. We also just learned that long-time board member Kathie Kuhn is stepping away for a few months as the COVID-19 pandemic has nudged her to relocate for a time and to engage in many issues that are near and dear to Kathie's huge heart. We look forward to her return.

Before Tom, Gabby, Cyn, and Kathie stepped away we welcomed Thasin Sardar and John Metzler to our board. Both have been supporters of PEC and we are pleased to have the breadth and depth of their experience to help guide us through these turbulent times.

Thasin Sardar already serves on the boards of the Islamic Society of Greater Lansing, GLUNA, and Michigan chapter of the Council of American Islamic Relations and as a member of the East Lansing Human Relations Commission and volunteers with many other organizations in our community. An IT specialist with Secure Solutions of Lansing, he and his wife and two children live in East Lansing. That he has found time to strengthen the work of the Peace Education Center is an amazing gift to us. But the attitude he brings to life is encapsulated in a recent comment: "There likely will not be a just, peaceful and perfect world in our lifetime. But we certainly can hope for it and work towards one."

John Metzler is no stranger to the Peace Education Center. John recently retired from MSU after 32 years with the African Studies Center where he directed outreach programming and the Center's study abroad initiatives. John and his spouse had the privilege of working in Zambia as high school teachers for six years in the 1970s. He has a deep interest in issues of international peace, justice and sustainable development with particular attention to the role of education in promoting these goals. John also serves on the boards of LATTICE (Linking All Types of Teachers in International and Cross-Cultural Education) and GLUNA. He served on the PEC board in the late 1990s and early 2000s representing the Mennonite Fellowship.

PEC remains active because of a dedicated volunteer board without staff. The revolving door has been spinning for 50+ yrs.

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, 2:30 p.m.

Islamic Center,

920 S. Harrison Rd., East Lansing

3rd Mondays: Greater Lansing Network Against War & Injustice (GLNAWI) planning meeting,

7 p.m., PEC office, University United Methodist Church, 1120 Harrison Road, East Lansing

1st and 3rd Tuesdays: Plant Justice, Grow Peace.

3:30-5:00 p.m., The Spirit of Peace Church of the Brethren's group is a faith-based study and action group for peace and justice now meeting via zoom. Contact Anne Seuss at whiteann@msu.edu to participate.

3rd Thursdays: Mid-Michigan Immigration Coalition (MMIC), 5:45-7:15 p.m. Unitarian

Universalist Church of Greater Lansing, 5509 S. Pennsylvania, Lansing. For information contact Judy Olson at olsonj@msu.edu.

2nd Tuesdays: Civil Rights for Immigrants (CRI) Task Force, 5:30-7 p.m. Cristo Rey Church, 201 W. Miller, Lansing. For information contact Oscar

Castaneda at oscar@actionofgreaterlansing.org

Check the PEC website:

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

Upcoming Events:

Mon.-Sun. Aug. 3-9, Youth Peace Week. The theme this year is Celebrating Diversity. For more information and to register your youth action, see Youth Peace Week <http://www.peace.net.nz/content/youth-peace-week-2020> or the Youth Peace Week facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/ThePeaceFoundationNZ> or contact the Youth Peace Week coordinator at peaceweek@peacefoundation.org.nz

Wed. Aug. 12, UN International Youth Day. Abolition 2000 also encourages those commemorating UN International Youth Day, to ensure that peace and nuclear disarmament are included as themes to your action or event.

Wed. Aug. 5, 11:30 a.m., Virtual Watershed Summit, Michigan Water Environment Association. Bath, Michigan. The purpose of this summit is to: Bring together as many of Michigan's watershed groups as possible. Provide an opportunity for speakers from other organizations to share information and updates. Give groups a chance to interact with and learn from each other. Facilitate discussion on current status, concerns and outlooks regarding Michigan's water environment. This 4th out of 4 part webinar series will feature speaker and topics from our original agenda! Agenda, Registration <https://www.viethconsulting.com/Calendar/moreinfo.php?eventid=58488>

Thurs. Aug. 6 at 8:15 a.m. - Sun. Aug. 9 at 11:02 a.m., Peace Wave, represents the time between nuclear bombs being detonated over Hiroshima, and then Nagasaki. Peace activists around the world will undertake individual and/or group actions as part of a 'Peace Wave' by doing small, creative, social media actions from home or interesting location, or joining an action in your community. For more information and to register your action, please visit Peace Wave 2020. http://www.antiatom.org/english/world_conference/peacewave.html

Tues., Aug. 11 at 7:00 p.m., Equal Protection Under the Plume? Join Citizens for Peace (Livonia, MI) for a Zoom meeting featuring Keith Gunter, co-founder of The Alliance to Halt Fermi-3, and former Co-chair of Peace Action of Michigan. Keith will mark the 75th anniversary of the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by speaking on "Equal Protection Under the Plume?: Potassium Iodide and Nuclear Emergency Preparedness." Please email Tada Gunter at Tadajoyful@gmail.com for an invitation link.

Tues. Aug. 18 at 6:30 - 8 p.m., History of Women's Suffrage in Michigan, Hosted by Portage District Library. Paula Manley from the League of Women Voters will discuss the history of women's suffrage in the state of Michigan during this 100th-year celebration. To register, please follow this link: <http://portagedistrictlibrary.evanced.info/signup/EventDetails?EventId=11872&backTo=Calendar&startDate=2020/08/01>

Tues. Aug. 18 at 6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m., Green Detroit: Sustainability and Land Use, Hosted by Detroit Experience Factory and The City Institute. We'll learn about sustainability and land use in Detroit from urban agriculture to solar farms to urban beekeeping. Free Virtual & interactive tour via Zoom link in your Eventbrite confirmation email, with a \$5-50 suggested donation to support our non-profit. Donations accepted on PayPal at hello@detroitexperiencefactory.org. Register at detroitexperiencefactory.org/public-tours

Thurs. Sept. 10 at 2:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m., The Opioid Addiction - Incarceration Pipeline, Hosted by North Central Regional Center for Rural Development. Online Event <http://ncrcrd.adobeconnect.com/ncrcrd1> <https://www.facebook.com/events/242272427209034/>

Mon.-Tues. Sept. 21-22, ICSD 2020 Conference Promoting Cross-Cutting Solutions for the Decade of Action. Registration is open and is completely free for all. <https://ic-sd.org/>

THE PEACE EDUCATION CENTER'S STATEMENT SUPPORTING BLACK LIVES MATTER AND OPPOSING THE USE OF THE U.S. MILITARY AND ANONYMOUS LAW ENFORCEMENT AGAINST PROTESTORS

By Nelson Brown

Approved: Board of the Peace Education Center

Date: June 8, 2020

The Peace Education Center of the Greater Lansing Area, along with thousands of Americans all over the country in cities large and small, are righteously and peacefully exercising their First Amendment right to protest against the police murder of George Floyd and to support Black Lives Matter and police reform. While most protesters have acted peacefully, a few have marred these protests by engaging in violence and in property destruction.

Under our country's system of federalism, the first-line responsibility to preserve social order and to protect the rights of First Amendment protestors normally falls upon the shoulders of local and state governments, not the federal government. But President Donald Trump has threatened to unilaterally exercise his presidential authority to introduce federal military forces into local and state jurisdictions to "dominate" although such a move remains unnecessary, unrequested by local and state authorities and unseemly as an attempt to bolster his reelection chances by pandering to a political base wanting law-and-order.

Moreover, in Washington DC, unexplained paramilitary forces without organizational insignia or individual name tags have appeared on the streets carrying weapons and other materials for crowd control, apparently an amalgam of personnel from different organizations under the control of Attorney General William Barr. The use of unidentified and unaccountable paramilitary forces represents a breach of federal government's fundamental duty to openly exercise its responsibilities and to be held accountable.

The Peace Education Center calls on all people of goodwill and public officials both to support reforms improving law enforcement conduct and to speak out in opposition to any effort by President Donald Trump to introduce active-duty United States military personnel to supersede or to assist local and state authorities in protecting the First Amendment rights of protestors or in maintaining public order. Further, Attorney General William Barr or other supervising authority should withdraw all unidentified paramilitary personnel in Washington DC from any responsibility to protect First Amendment protestors or to maintain public order.

PeaceQuest 2020

by Tom Oswald

Although it will wear a slightly different look, PeaceQuest 2020 is a go.

PeaceQuest is a community-wide, month-long celebration in the Greater Lansing area in September to celebrate the

United Nations' International Day of Peace, <http://internationaldayofpeace.org/%22%5Ct%22blank> which was declared by the UN General Assembly with a resolution passed unanimously in 1981. <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/36/a36r067.htm%22%5Ct%22blank>

Peace Education Center and Greater Lansing United Nations Association partner as primary coordinators of PeaceQuest, and many local organizations that promote peace and justice, sponsor and/or host events during the PeaceQuest month.



This year's events are still in the planning stages. But due to Covid-19, many if not all of the events will probably be virtual or remote in nature. As in past years, the PeaceQuest celebration will include events such as talks and roundtables, films, concerts and the popular Peace Pole Pursuit, which challenges peacemakers in the Lansing area to seek out peace poles and have their pictures taken with them.

PeaceQuest brings us ALL together for fun and interesting activities with friends, family, and community, while focusing on ways we can promote peace, resolve conflicts, learn about other faiths and cultures, and encourage mutual understanding.

As our nation and our world face myriad challenges, what better time to celebrate and promote peace and justice?

And it's not too late for you or your organization to join in the fun. You can still become a sponsor or plan and host an event. Email us at peacequestlansing@gmail.com

For more information, a list of sponsors, and updates on PeaceQuest activities, visit our website at <https://peacequestgreaterlansing.org/>. Or visit us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/peacequestgreaterlansing/>.

FROM THE PASTOR

By Rev. William Bills, Pastor UUMC

Crucifixion was death by asphyxiation. The wrists and heels of the condemned were nailed to a cross. The nails through the heels allowed the crucified to push themselves up in order to breathe. As the crucified grew tired lifting oneself up became harder. As the body sagged more and more the crucified was asphyxiated. Crucifixion was slow, painful torture. It was humiliating. It was intended to be a deterrent; the imperial means of enforcing law and order.

In his book *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (2011), the late James Cone draws a straight line from the crucifixion of Jesus to the lynching of African Americans in the United States. In the same way that crucifixion was meant to intimidate and threaten two millennia ago, lynching in the United States has been used to threaten and intimidate African Americans. According to Cone, white American Christians have failed to see the connection between the cross and the lynching tree. In the same way that an innocent Jesus was tortured and hung from a tree thousands of innocent African Americans have been tortured and hung from trees. White theologians, white clergy and white congregations remained silent in the face of lynching.

George Floyd was lynched. Not hung from a tree, but lynched nonetheless. Even as the Romans did in their time, George Floyd's death was a public spectacle. His suffering, humiliation and death was intended to be a deterrent, a threat, a warning to others. Step out of line and this might happen to you. Those who lynched George Floyd did so publicly because they expect to get away with it. Historically, they always have. Because too many good people remain silent.

Last night President Trump used the church and the Bible in a symbolic way to justify the lynching of George Floyd, and all those who have gone before him. The president declared war on anyone who will stand up for truth and justice. He threatened to use all the force of the American military to dominate the streets so we can get back to normal. Lynching African Americans is not normal. That much would seem self-evident. For people of faith a return to that normal is sin.

Some say Jesus died for sins. He certainly died because of sin. He confronted sin. He confronted injustice. He stood with the poor and the oppressed. He spoke truth to power on behalf of the powerless and power lynched him. Just like that. Power hung him on a tree. He died from asphyxiation. George Floyd was lynched. Not hung from a tree. We just don't do it that way anymore. He was crushed by the weight of law and order. Asphyxiated. He died because of sin. He exposed, called to our attention, sin. Our sin. America's original sin. The white Christian church's sin. Racism. The church must not be complicit in George Floyd's death. The church and its scripture cannot be used to justify lynching. By anyone. People of faith, especially white people, must confront and heal the sin of racism at every level of our society.

Greater Lansing United Nations Association

By Lynn Bartley, President of GLUNA

GL-UNA (Greater Lansing United Nations Association) one of PEC's partner organizations has been busy through the COVID19 period.

It held two "Java Cafe" Global Conversations" and two "UN75 Global Consultations" since mid-March. It has also held three meetings with our elected officials (Sen. Stabenow, Sen. Peters, Rep. Elissa Slotkin) to encourage support of the United Nations and the UN special agency World Health Organization (WHO.) All of these events were held via Zoom.

GL-UNA members, including members of PEC, teamed with UNA-Greater Detroit to meet with Foreign Affairs Senior Advisors of our US senators and representatives to ask them to ensure full payment of our UN dues as well as to give their public support the United Nations and WHO.

The UN and its special agencies constantly strive to bring greater peace in the world - by addressing the reasons that keep us from it, many of which are defined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's.)

The SDG's are being addressed around the world 2015 to 2030, having replaced the Millenium Goals 2000-2015.

<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

GL-UNA is partnering with PEC to focus on peace as they coordinate the month-long PeaceQuest celebration of the UN International Day of Peace (see related article.) Like PEC, GLUNA is an all volunteer organization. You can support by **becoming a member** for only \$25/yr. For more information about GL-UNA, see gluna.org.



75th anniversary of Hiroshima, Nagasaki

By Terry Link

As I write this piece on the 75th anniversary of the first successful atomic bomb test at the Alamogordo testing range in New Mexico, it seems incredible that we are still pursuing additional nuclear weapons. August 6th and 9th mark the 75th anniversary of their first use in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan. A use that, as historian Gar Alperovitz has clearly shown, was totally unnecessary and preventable. Since then we have seen a number of international treaties to constrain the spread and use of nuclear weapons, from the 1996 Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty to the 1968 Nonproliferation Treaty, and most recently the **2017 UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which has been ratified so far by 40 countries**; Botswana ratified just yesterday! **Only ten more countries need to ratify before the treaty enters force.**

Yet just weeks ago the Senate Armed Services Committee voted to add \$10 million for nuclear weapons testing to National Defense Authorization Act. This of course would have us break our commitment to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. We know the current administration has not only withdrawn from the Iran Nuclear Agreement, but is budgeting for more than \$1 TRILLION to be spent on upgrading our nuclear weapons, a figure first proposed by the Obama administration.

We need to break the silence on nuclear weapons. It is just another example of how bloated military spending robs the human family of true security.

The devastation of life, human and non-human, from even a single bomb, as we learned from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, is almost incalculable. The American Friends Service Committee hosted a webinar highlighting the connections between nuclear weapons and COVID-19 that was very enlightening. Alperovitz revisited the facts about the decision to use the weapons, and Rev. Liz Theoharris, co-chair of the Poor Peoples' Campaign spoke to the implications of nuclear weapons and the gross inequalities connected to militarism and nuclear weapons. You can watch the webinar here https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=759820474820059&ref=watch_permalink.

DOOMSDAY



The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists has recently moved their "Doomsday Clock" to 100 seconds to midnight, the closest it has been since its inception in 1945!!!

A succinct fact sheet, assembled by American Friends Service Committee, is available here <https://www.afsc.org/document/remembering-hiroshima-and-nagasaki-fact-sheet>

There will be two all-day global webinars on August 6th and 9th that you can watch to learn more about the legacy of Hiroshima/Nagasaki and efforts to ban the bomb <https://www.hiroshimanagasaki75.org/events>.

Key websites to stay updated on the effort to abolish nuclear weapons include:

Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists <https://thebulletin.org/>

International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons <https://www.icanw.org/>

Arms Control Association <https://www.armscontrol.org/>

Union of Concerned Scientists <https://ucsusa.org/nuclear-weapons>



Image Credit: www.abolition2000.org

Charles Taylor Tassinare



That gallant eccentric, Charlie Tassinare, passed into the ethereal realms on April 9, 2020 after 71 years with us. A man of unquestioned integrity, he was an activist for peace. He held strong views on righteous conduct and the truth, yet was self-effacing. He epitomized the best of the human character. He was kind and generous, humble and courteous, guileless and sincere. He was preceded in death by his immediate family. His family of friends remain to fondly remember him and the twinkle in his eye. Donations in his honor may be made to the Peace Education Center of Greater Lansing or to Sparrow Hospice Services.

To Plant Memorial Trees in memory, please visit our Sympathy Store.
Published in Lansing State Journal from Apr. 12 to Apr. 14, 2020.

Michigan Prosecutors, Juvenile Life Sentences and Efren Paredes Jr

By John Masterson

“One might think that judges are the most powerful, or even the police, but, in reality, the prosecutor holds the cards.” So states Michelle Alexander referring to the 30 year epidemic of mass incarceration in her prize winning book *The New Jim Crow*. The target population for this has been largely people of color. She came to see this, as she points out in the introduction to her book, “as a stunningly comprehensive and well disguised system of racialized control that functions in a manner strikingly similar to Jim Crow” Since the late 80s this has increased the prison population in the United States more than 500%, resulting in the largest rate of incarceration of any nation in the world. According to John F Pfaff in his book *Locked in: The True Causes of Mass Incarceration – and How to Achieve Real Reform*, “Prosecutors have been and remain the engines driving mass incarceration”.

Creeping into this movement has been a large tolerance for sentencing children as adults, with significant numbers of minority youth receiving long sentences for minor drug violations. A particular heinous form of this has been the sentencing of children to life in prison without parole (JLWOP for short), a practice condemned by the United Nations in 2007 with an almost unanimous vote of 193 to 1, the only negative vote being that of the United States.

A few years later, in 2012, a US Supreme Court decision, (*Miller v. Alabama*) declared that a JLWOP sentence violated the eighth amendment to the Constitution against cruel and unusual punishment. This ruling required that each person sentenced as a child to eventually die in prison receive a hearing to change the sentence to a term-of-years, admitting the years served and allowing for the eventual return to life outside prison. Most states moved, even if slowly, to obey this ruling and provide the mitigation hearing that would make the change in sentencing. Not so Michigan.

When the *Miller* ruling came down, Michigan had over 350 men and women serving JLWOP sentences; fourth highest among the 50 states. Eight years after that ruling, Michigan has 190 of these people still sentenced to Life Without Parole, making Michigan the Number One State in the nation violating the Supreme Court ruling.

To quote Efren Paredes writing from prison in his 31st year of a JLWOP sentence received at the age of 15, “Michigan prosecutors have sought LWOP sentences against the 190 juvenile lifers again, rather than term-of-years sentences. They have done so despite the US Supreme Court making it abundantly clear that only those “rare” individuals who are “irreparably corrupt” and are “incapable of change” are candidates for this extreme sentence.”

This sense of how the law must be followed was reiterated recently by Federal District Court Judge for the Eastern District of Michigan, Mark Goldsmith : “Because the U.S. Supreme Court has repeatedly emphasized that life without parole sentences are appropriate only in the rarest of juvenile cases, it may be compellingly inferred that the overwhelming majority of class members will be resentenced to a term of years and, consequently, are entitled to a meaningful opportunity for release.” (*Hill v. Witmer* 2020 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 96285, pp 12-13, Decided 6/2/20.)

The Attorney General in Michigan is the logical person to go to when state officials are abusing laws. In the early years after the *Miller v. Alabama* ruling came down, Bill Schuette was the AG and nothing was done nor was it expected. It came as a surprise to those of us who wrote letters recently to AG Dana Nessel that no response was given to letters or any response that was given did not deal with the issue. It was a polite blowoff.

The ACLU has filed suits to either force the prosecutors to obey the law or, if that fails, have the proper process of mitigation of the sentences of these 190 men and women be taken over by the Federal District Court. In meetings to arrive at some compromise, it is reported that AG has offered nothing at attempted compromise that might disturb the stubborn decision of prosecutors to violate the law of the land.

The prosecutors of three counties, Wayne, Genesee and Oakland, are responsible for delaying for years the resentencing of over two thirds of the 190 prisoners who remain unsentenced and are continuing with the illegal sentence of Life Without Parole. This year they are being challenged in the Democratic Party primary by candidates opposing the incumbent’s abuse of their powers. Governor Whitmer and AG Nessel have already endorsed Kym Worthy, the incumbent in Wayne County and one of the most strident of the prosecutors illegally protecting LWOP sentences and has, as Efren Paredes has put it, “abandoned reason and common sense, and replaced redemption with retribution”. So, as we can see, the fresh air of the new Michigan governor and her cabinet does not extend to prison issues. The failure to adequately address the COVID pandemic in prisons is another example of this. As with more than 30 years of racially based mass incarceration, both parties can share the shame of their policies.

Michigan Prosecutors, Juvenile Life Sentences and Efren Paredes Jr (cont.)

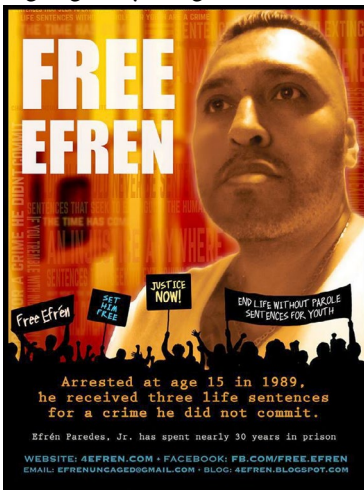
In conclusion, the tremendous power of prosecutors is not going to be disturbed by the political officials of either the Democratic or Republican Party. Like the power of police forces, accepted without question despite the similar racism, brutality, abuse of office and arrogance of their actions, this will only be addressed when the people choose to do that. This may have begun to happen with respect to police. But it was the visual shock of watching the deliberate murder of an unarmed man by a police officer. The all too frequent abuse of the law by prosecutors does not have such visual images. The organizing work to put an end to this needs to begin now.

It was a specific case, that of Efren Paredes Jr., that brought my attention to the issues in this article. He was sentenced at the age of 15 in 1989 to a life that was intended to end with his death in prison for the murder of a manager in a store where he worked during an attempted robbery. He has maintained consistently, and his parents so testified at his trial, that he was home at the time the crime was committed and not a part of any robbery attempt.

A noted investigator, Paul Ciolino, former chief investigative advisor to Northwestern University Law School's Center on Wrongful Convictions investigated Efren's case and stated the following:

"There is not one shred of credible evidence to suggest that Efren was involved in the murder. No weapon, no eyewitnesses, no physical evidence, no motive, no prior conduct to suggest that a 15-year-old student athlete, and honor roll student with zero criminal background, would have planned, participated in or committed this murder. The community and jury were sold a bill of goods based on the words of drug dealers and thieves."

There is a historical connection here to the early years of the epidemic of mass incarceration. Efren was being tried at the same time that the Central Park Five were being tried in New York City, five young black and latino men accused of the crime of a brutal rape of a woman in Manhattan's Central Park. They were tried in the press, referred to as a wolfpack and worse and served years in prison. But they were innocent. Most of them were already out of prison when the person who committed the rape confessed. Efren's jury would watch this on TV as his trial progressed. It was considered a significant element in his conviction, the wilding rage of young men of color.



Efren's prosecutor is one of those who has asked for continuing the LWOP sentence for all 10 of the people for whom he had obtained a JLWOP sentence before the second US Supreme court ruling, *Montgomery v. Louisiana*. It is he also who negotiated, 31 years ago, the plea bargain among the criminals who committed the robbery. They would then have not had to admit to one of their group being the murderer. By adding Efren to their gang and testifying that he was there and pulled the trigger, the prosecutor got what he wanted: a candidate for a Murder One conviction. With the help of the press that reported material evidence which was never entered into the trial since it was later found to be bogus, Efren was convicted on "the words of drug dealers and thieves" as Paul Ciolino put it.

This mention of the trial and conviction of Efren in 1989 has no bearing on what he and the rest of the 190 men and women, convicted as children and currently left to die in prison, deserve. Their guilt or innocence, the fairness of their trial or lack of it, are not an issue here. It is simply that those who have been elected to protect the law stop continuing to abuse it and grant what the US Supreme Court has ruled these human beings deserve.

I first got to know Efren a bit when I testified at a Parole Board hearing for a mitigation of his sentence twelve years ago. In recent years I began to visit him at the Lakeview Facility. With the pandemic defining contact, I now speak with Efren every week by phone and we email on a fairly regular basis.

I found him from the beginning a remarkable human being; all the education he would obtain being the result of his own determination to move ahead despite the constrictions of a prison environment. He somehow grew into an adult full of compassion, generosity, humor, integrity and brilliance and a capacity to care about other human beings both inside and outside prison.

I have looked for compassion, generosity and integrity in those who keep this system of mass incarceration, acceptance of warehousing human beings and little dedication to the redemption of those who have been imprisoned, functioning as one of the worst prison systems in what is called the civilized world. I have been amazed, among the police and prosecutor class especially how little respect some of them have for even the simple truth, how the rush to arrest and convict – anyone at all in many cases – destroys all integrity. It is an irony of no small proportion.

The dates for Efren's mitigation hearing have been set: October 6 - 8, 2020.

You can give him some support by going to bitly.com/freeefren and sign the petition or write a letter to the judge.

Why I Don't Want Things to Go Back to "Normal"

By Paul Brun Del Re

Everyone keeps asking about when they think things will get back to "normal". I for one hope that they never do. Yeah, I guess there is something abnormal about me to think this way. If getting back to normal means going back to the status quo, then I really don't want to go back to that way in time, thinking and being. When the president and some of our top leaders keep pushing us to want to go back there again, I say "NO". So, what does "normal" mean.

Normal means that black lives don't matter.

Normal means it's not okay to be queer, transgender or gender neutral. Only binary sexuality matters.

Normal means that the rich (mainly white men) get richer and the poor (people of color) get poorer.

Normal means that the environment is expendable to prosper economically.

Normal means that climate change doesn't exist.

Normal means that success is the same as being profitable or economically productive.

Normal means that we dominate the world through military might.

Normal means that human rights don't matter. Normal means that not everyone can have adequate health care.

Normal means that it's okay to build walls, separate families at the border and cage up young children.

Normal means that might makes right and only violence and dominative power can win.

Normal means that the ends justify the means.

Normal means ... you finish the sentence.

The world that we inherited and molded and created into its recent past image is not the world I want to go back to. Instead I look forward to a future that is more loving, just, peaceful, environmentally friendly and human.

If you are a person of color, undocumented, disabled, poor or marginalized in any way then going back to the status quo is not especially bright. Right now, it seems normal that Black Lives don't matter. And neither do brown, yellow, red or any other color.

Normal in America has meant being a rugged individual who is only concerned about HIS and HIS own. This is a common myth in our society that you need to pull yourself up by your own boot straps. Success is measured mainly in monetary terms.

This Covid-19 has taught us and reminded us that ultimately, we are not totally in control of our life and our fate. It's amazing to me that a tiny little virus could spread around the world in a matter of months and wreak so much havoc physically, psychologically, emotionally, socially, economically and politically.

Going back to normal means that we continue to ignore the environment and reality of climate change, and that we humans continue to engage in this uncontrolled experiment on our planet.

We need to redefine what it means to be human and how we are to be together on this beautiful blue orb. There are many individuals and groups who over the years have worked tirelessly to produce or give a different vision of what the future of the Earth holds. These are the folks that I cast my lot with. Many of them are people of faith and others not. They want to build the Beloved Community or the Reign of God or Kin(g)dom of God. Gandhi referred to it as Sarvodaya (the Welfare of All). This world can only be achieved through nonviolent change not violence or dominative power. The ends don't justify the means. As Gandhi said "The means are the ends in embryo." Just means produce just ends.

Unlimited and unrestricted economic growth are considered normal, but they are like a cancer growing on the planet. Things like the environment are considered externalities or risk factors by economists rather than the assets that they are. Financial decisions that only consider the single bottom line (profit) can cause environmental disruption and treat workers unfairly and disrupt social cohesion.

Our economy and investments need to be based on the triple bottom line that includes social environmental, and financial gain. These are the three Ps: people, profit and planet. Triple bottom line thinking holds that a company should combine standard metrics of financial success with those that measure environmental stewardship and sustainability and social justice.

Why I Don't Want Things to Go Back to "Normal" (cont.)

The US military is second to none in the world. Our over dependence on military and dominative means of solving problems has been a barrier to peace both directly and indirectly. Our military has wreaked havoc around the world supposedly fighting "terrorism", maintaining our security or protecting our economic interests. Indirectly our military spending has resulted in a massive waste of money and resources that could be used to spend on social programs such as health care, reducing income inequality and improving educational opportunities especially for the disadvantaged. These are the kinds of things that will bring true peace and security. Investing in diplomacy, development that alleviates poverty and safeguarding human rights is the way we need to bring peace about in the world, not military power.

We have borders that allow money and resources to flow over easily but not people. We build walls supposedly to keep out undesirables and protect our jobs and wealth. Our religious and spiritual heritages encourage us to build bridges and to welcome the stranger especially those that are in need.

If you're not working on solutions to these problems in your own way, then you are part of the problem. The reason we should work on them is because we love our children, our grandchildren and our friends and neighbors. This will be our legacy. This is what I consider to be "normal". What do you want our legacy to be? What do you consider to be "normal"?

THE PEACE EDUCATION CENTER OF THE GREATER LANSING AREA'S RESOLUTION URGING STATE LEGISLATORS TO BAR THE PRESENCE OF ALL FIREARMS ON STATE CAPITOL GROUNDS AND IN THE CAPITOL BUILDING

Whereas, the Peace Education Center of the Greater Lansing Area (Peace Education Center) has been working for social justice and for the non-violent and peaceful resolution of American domestic and foreign disputes for the last 50 years;

Whereas, in the last several weeks, Governor Gretchen Whitmer has issued executive orders requiring business closures and social-distancing practices as part of Michigan's effort to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus;

Whereas, some Michiganders seek to challenge Governor Whitmer's orders through protests on the state Capitol's grounds and in the Capitol itself;

Whereas, the Peace Education Center is committed to supporting the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment's guarantee to peacefully protest public actions whether it agrees or disagrees with the protesters;

Whereas, some of the angry protesters openly carried guns, including assault-type rifles, on the Capitol's grounds and then into the Capitol itself, attempting to barge onto the floor where Legislators meet;

Whereas, at least one state legislator felt so frightened about the possibility of physical violence from these gun-brandishing protesters that she wore a bulletproof vest ;

Whereas, the presence of firearms outside or inside public meetings where contentious issues may be debated or enacted can create a hostile atmosphere amounting to the physical intimidation of public officials performing their required duties;

Whereas, the Second Amendment does not require that individuals can use, possess and display firearms in all times, in any manner, and in all places where they wish;

Whereas, many local units of government in Michigan already have rules that prevent the general public from bringing firearms and knives into public buildings, including County Courthouses and other public facilities.

Be It Resolved, the Peace Education Center urges all state legislators whose jurisdictions cover all or part of the Greater Lansing Area to support banning the possession of all firearms on the state Capitol's grounds and in the Capitol building itself, except for duly authorized law enforcement officials.

Approved: Board of the Peace Education Center

Date: May 8, 2020

Peace Officers

By Terry Link

“Precision, accuracy, and clarity matter, as gestures of respect to those to whom you speak; toward the subject, whether it’s an individual or the earth itself; toward the historical record. It’s also a kind of self-respect; there are many old cultures in which you are, as the saying does, as good as your word.”

Call Them by Their True Names: American Crises (and Essays) (2018 Haymarket Press), Rebecca Solnit

I have been wondering for quite awhile what would happen to our society if we changed the words that we use to describe law enforcement. Just as we have increasingly militarized our community police forces with the products of the Military-Industrial-Complex, we have perhaps unwittingly weaponized their orientation to managing conflict. Note the distinctions in the definitions of these words from my copy of the American Heritage Dictionary.

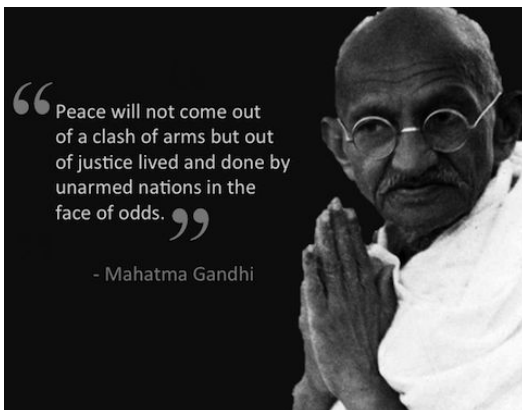
Police - *“the governmental department charged with the regulation and control of the affairs of a community, now chiefly the department established to maintain order, enforce the law, and prevent and detect crime.”*
American Heritage Dictionary, 4th edition, 2002 (p.1077)

Peace Officer - *“a law enforcement officer, such as a sheriff, who is responsible for maintaining civil peace”. AHD (p. 1024)*

In our current society, pundits, elected officials and citizens rarely use the word “peace” whether applied within communities or between nations. The bombardment of violence on television and in movies depicts as commonplace, murder, war, terrorism with courageous armed defenders who save the day. We are saturated with these visions, day in and day out. It seems most likely that the gun carrying vigilantes in our midst feast at this trough of fear and macho heroism.

We have a President who believes that bullying is the best way to manage people and affairs. Tracey Meares and Tom Tyler, directors of Yale Law School’s Justice Collaboratory, perhaps asked the right question recently in *The Atlantic* – **“The First Step is Figuring Out What Police Are For”**. Following the 50 year old Kerner Commission and Obama’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing as they suggest, may help us begin to answer that with real policy changes. But as Solnit and other great writers tell us, words matter. Imagine official vehicles in the community not emblazoned with POLICE, but instead replaced with PEACE OFFICER. How might that new moniker affect not only how police see themselves designated as PEACE OFFICERS but also how their community sees them if their work is redefined to align with the word “peace”.

The emblems of force that pervade typical policing – guns, sticks, pepper spray, handcuffs and more recently armored vehicles drones, acoustic grenades and other military hardware create their own fear and power of control. In the hands of a bully, these are weapons used to dominate the other. Distinguish that from individuals dressed in vests that exclaim “PEACE” who are inserting themselves between potential adversaries and using conflict resolution techniques to tone down potentially escalating conflicts. These “peace officers” first dictum is to prevent harm and then to resolve conflict peacefully. In a recent discussion with strong supporters of gun ownership, one of the fall back arguments shared was their belief that government shouldn’t be the only ones with weapons. If we demilitarize the police, could we then diminish open-carry citizens their rationale for publicly brandishing weapons?



We have tried increasing the availability of weapons as a way to reduce violence (fight fire with fire) and it hasn’t worked, certainly not in the long run. Nonviolence has better and longer lasting peace effects. That we don’t hear the word “peace” uttered much in the public sphere anymore is perhaps the fallout of the militarization of our society. Peace is not simply the absence of war. A sustainable peace, as noted by leading development economist Dr. Jeffrey Sachs, would offer all a sense of personal security, not just from violent actions, but access to the necessities of a life – food, shelter, energy, access to health care and education and the opportunity to develop the possibilities of a fulfilled life in a prospering and ecologically healthy society.

As the late peace leader A.J. Muste noted.

“There is no way to peace. Peace is the way.”

Contact your Representatives

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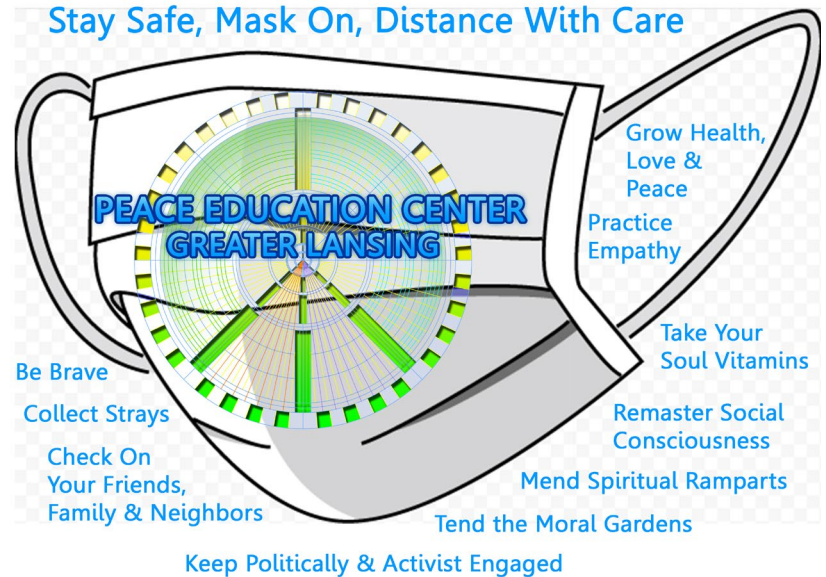
202-225-3561

117 Cannon House Office Bldg

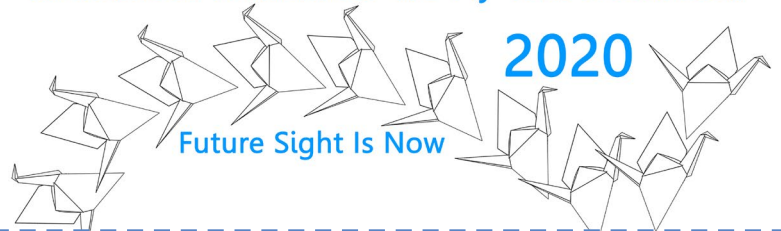
Washington, DC 20515

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

Stay Safe, Mask On, Distance With Care



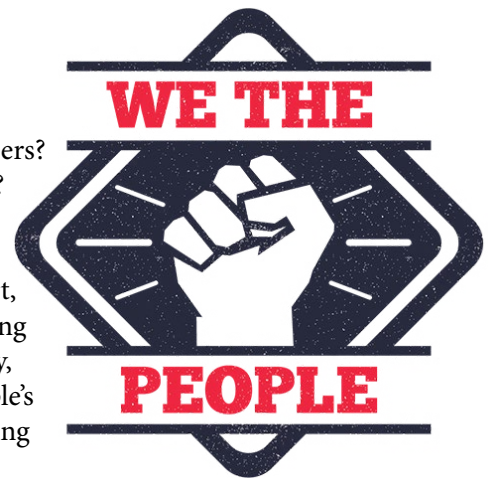
Get the Flappy Flock Out to Vote for Feather's Sake
even if you have to Storking Deliver it your Clerking Self
Remember Remember We Fly This November



Deep Canvassing for Anti-Racism

By Dinah Dewald

What if we truly spent time getting to know our neighbors and community members? What if we invested in local leaders who live in and care about their communities? What if we treated people like people instead of numbers? Deep Canvassing is a revolutionary way of talking to voters and community members that focuses on sharing personal stories. Unlike traditional campaigns that focus on getting a short, uniform message to as many voters as possible, Deep Canvassing focuses on making a genuine, unique connection with each voter using the tools of listening, curiosity, storytelling, and vulnerability. And unlike traditional campaigns that change people's minds for short periods of time if at all, studies of deep canvassing show long-lasting impact on prejudice and changes of opinion.



Leading up to the November 2020 election, We The People – Michigan is implementing a statewide deep canvassing program across 12 different counties in Michigan. We are having anti-racism conversations revolving around the criminal justice system, increasing BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) leadership in local politics, and reducing prejudice. Our whole program is remotely done and we are having conversations with voters over the phone. In Ingham County, conversations are revolving around the issues of police brutality and defunding/reinvestment in community services that have started getting much-needed attention in the past few months.

We have a unique opportunity right now to create the future we want to see. A future where every person has dignity and is treated fairly. A future where communities have power to decide what is best for them. A future where there is investment in all of Michigan year-round. A future where our democracy represents all, not just the wealthy and powerful. But it takes all of us taking the first step now so we can build for the future. If you're interested in learning more and getting involved, email dinah@wethepeoplemi.org or visit our Facebook group "Deep Canvassing with We the People."

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/wtpdeepcanvassing/>

This work is only possible if we are all doing it together.