

PEACE NOTES

A PUBLICATION OF THE PEACE EDUCATION CENTER

FALL 2020

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VOTE

By Terry Link

We want everyone who is eligible to vote in the coming election; it's not too late to register if you haven't already. But it is equally important to be an informed voter. We are bombarded with why or why not to vote for presidential and senate candidates, although TV advertisements and social media marketing are hardly dispassionate or reliable sources of information. Other ballot choices are usually well below the radar. So how do we make the best choices that align with our values and the common good?



No doubt some folks rely simply on the party identification of a candidate. But besides the slickly produced campaign flyers attached to our doors or stuffed in our mailbox, perhaps the most reliable way to begin is to look at the League of Women Voters' VOTE411 website <http://vote411.org>. This longtime nonpartisan organization has been doing voter registration and education for 100 years. The VOTE411 website allows you to simply put in your address to see what races and proposals are on your ballot as well as background information on each candidate (including all the minor party candidates) and the ballot proposals. The information is provided by the candidate and includes answers to a few basic policy questions for each race so you can see the positions the candidates are taking. A candidate's failure to respond to the questionnaire is also informative.

I recently had a yard sign for a local candidate I supported simply based on his party. But after doing some digging and then hearing from folks that work with the person, I decided that I could not support him. His sign is gone and so is my vote.

While each of us has our own hierarchy of values, we need to contemplate not just how the candidate's stances on issues will affect us directly but how they will make the community, state, or nation more just and fair for all or further distance us from each other. If we continue down the road of us versus them, however we define "them", the world we leave our children will be poorer in many ways. A good citizen therefore does his/her homework before filling out the ballot. These tools can help.

Go Vote!!!



VOTE SMART
FACTS MATTER

There are other nonpartisan sites you can use. Project Vote Smart <http://justfacts.votesmart.org> was begun by former presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter. It includes some of the same information but also reports on their voting records, speeches, and ratings by interest groups and funders.



[Fivethirtyeight.com](https://fivethirtyeight.com)

— the brainchild of former East Lansing resident Nate Silver - is a number-crunching national data treasure chest. The data it provides on candidates includes how often each member of Congress voted with the president as well as recent polling results.

Dr. Nikolai Vitti, Superintendent, Detroit Public Schools Community District

Upcoming Events (cont:)

Wed., Oct. 21 at 7:00 pm, “Detention of Palestinian Children” Edgewood ZOOM discussion, with Stephen Gasteyer (MSU Sociology faculty member) and Lucas Al-Zoughbi (MSU psychology PhD candidate). Resource list available. Zoom Meeting ID: 834 6164 7431 Passcode: 48823

Sat., Oct. 24, 1:00 – 3:00 pm, “My Name is the People of Palestine” live concert from Jerusalem with Aswat Ensemble and featured singers and poets. Sponsors: Zawaya, Middle East Children’s Alliance, and Palestinian Youth Movement.

Register: <https://bit.ly/3d2dLcJ>

Sun., Oct. 25, 3:00 pm, 75th Anniversary of the United Nations! Lansing-Detroit-Michigan UN Day Event.

Registration: <https://gluna.us18.list-manage.com/track/lick?u=5d5bc1f51be113ce3241ec933&id=6bc03ecc71&e=3b1b0c940c>

Tues., Oct. 27, 7:00 pm, Meta Peace Team Webinar: Nonviolent Tools for Everyday People to De-Escalate Tensions. Presenter: Julie Thomas-Beckett. Registration: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_DIhnZYJASGO_IZq_oS5NNQ

Tues., Oct. 27, 6:30 pm, Cybersecurity 101 Training <https://www.facebook.com/events/342216327106497/>

You can’t stop people from yelling at you on Twitter, but you can prevent harassment from escalating into hacking. In this 1 hour workshop, we will go through basic cybersecurity steps that you can take to protect yourself from account takeovers, mob harassment, doxing, swatting, impersonation, and hacking - all through a compassionate, trauma-informed lens. Facilitated by Brooke Noonan, former Advocacy Committee member and current Engineer/Client Relationship Manager, this training is specifically for survivors and/or BIPOC people.

Register at <https://bit.ly/33AvWTP>

Wed., Oct. 28, at 7:00 pm, “Solidarity with the Palestinian Struggle” Edgewood ZOOM discussion about perspectives from Black Americans, Christians, and Jewish Voice for Peace. Resource list available. Resource person to be announced. Zoom Meeting ID: 834 6164 7431 Passcode: 48823

Wed., Nov. 11, at 7:00 pm, “Strategies to Support the Palestinian Struggle” Edgewood ZOOM discussion w/ Stephen Gasteyer, Chris Root (with perspective from the anti-apartheid movement), and a representative of MSU’s Students United for Palestinian Rights (SUPR). Zoom Meeting ID: 834 6164 7431 Passcode: 48823

Tues., Nov. 17, 7:00 pm, People’s Law School - Your Right to Protest <https://www.facebook.com/events/2734729853453201/>

People’s Law School - a free, multi-week virtual educational series. In this session, Cynthia Heenan of Constitutional Litigation Associates, P.C. discusses a person’s right to protest

Wed., Nov. 18, 3:00 pm - 4:30pm ET, Transforming National Security: Nuclear Policy for A New Era.

Confirmed Speakers: Rep. Adam Smith and Rep. Pramila Jayapal.

Zoom Registration: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_3umOA1qHQpCb_o1TWkuW3Q

Peace Notes October 2020

By Terry Link, PEC Co-chair

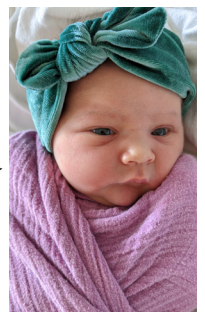
We are sending this newsletter out two weeks before the election and of course don’t know the outcome, no one does. What we are certain of is that regardless of the electoral winners we who are committed to peace and justice must push policy changes that move us towards peace and away from perpetual war and violence. We hold no faith that even if the more liberal Biden or Peters win their seats, they will roll back military spending nor seriously address climate change or any of the other pressing issues without a strong push from active citizens.

PEC will continue our best efforts to keep that pressure up. In that spirit just this week we signed on to support a letter to possible president Biden to reduce military spending by taking seventeen specific actions in his first 100 days to reduce spending and corruption at the Pentagon. This letter comes from Center for International Policy, National Priorities Project, Public Citizen, Win Without War, Peace Action, and Project on Government Oversight.

You will also see in this issue a number of pieces authored by sister organizations that are leading efforts on other issues of peace and social justice. We are developing closer relationships with the Metro Lansing Poor People’s Campaign, No More Detention Centers, Sunrise Movement, and the Good Shepherd Society as we know we can’t address all the challenges we face alone. We appreciate the work of these and many other organizations some of whom we more closely affiliate. We are in this struggle for justice and peace together and we welcome your involvement, support, and commitment.

New Arrival Announcement

We’d like to happily announce the arrival to the world, in late September, of PEC Board Member Nola Warner’s new baby and second child, Lobelia “Loey” May Warner. Mother and baby are both healthy and well. Welcome, Loey! Congrats, Nola, Scott, Flora!



Biden V. Trump: On Climate

By The Sunrise Movement

BIDEN V. TRUMP: CLIMATE SCIENCE

Joe Biden believes in science:

Has repeatedly referred to climate change as an “existential threat” and has called for a universal acknowledgement of scientific data, information, tools, and training on climate change.

Donald Trump denies science:

Has repeatedly called climate change a “hoax” and said “science doesn’t know” about climate change.

Source: climatepower2020.org

BIDEN V. TRUMP: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Biden plans to fight for environmental justice:

Biden has plans to focus on Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act by overhauling the current EPA External Civil Rights Compliance Office and will make sure justice is brought to frontline communities that experience the worst impacts of climate change and fenceline communities that are located adjacent to pollution sources.

Trump has stripped protections for environmental justice:

The Trump administration has rolled back more than 100 environmental safeguards and has repeatedly attempted to defund the EPA.

Source: climatepower2020.org, NPR, [JoeBiden.com](https://joebiden.com), The Guardian

BIDEN V. TRUMP: PUBLIC LANDS

Bidens plans to protect public lands:

Biden’s climate plan “supports conserving 30% of America’s lands and waters by 2030, and would create good-paying union jobs conserving our public lands through a Civilian Climate Corps.”

Trump has sold off our land for profit:

Donald Trump has opened 24M acres of land to oil and gas mining and drilling. In early September 2020, the Trump administration revised regulations governing oil and gas drilling across more than 190 million acres of U.S. forest land in a bid to increase the nation’s energy production.

Source: climatepower2020.org, federalregister.gov/2020-1851

BIDEN V. TRUMP: NATURAL DISASTERS

Biden recognizes natural disasters:

Biden acknowledged that climate change is worsening, and it’s making wildfires and other natural disasters ever more dangerous during a speech in September.

“I don’t think science knows, actually”

In 2018, Trump suggested that California should rake their forest floors to prevent wildfires; a mere two years later, he returned to the state during wildfire season and expressed skepticism that climate change was to blame for the fires.

Source: AP News, ABC News

BIDEN V. TRUMP: CARBON POLLUTION

Biden plans to reduce carbon pollution:

One of the largest goals of Biden’s climate plan is to eradicate carbon pollution from the power sector by 2035 and to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

Trump has rolled back restrictions on carbon pollution:

He repealed the Obama-era Clean Power Plan and replaced it with the Affordable Clean Energy rule, which allows coal power plants to continue to pollute the air.

Source: climatepower2020.org, [JoeBiden.com](https://joebiden.com), epa.gov

BIDEN V. TRUMP: CLEAN ENERGY JOBS

Biden’s plan will create 10M clean energy jobs:

Biden’s plan to build a sustainable infrastructure towards a clean energy future for the country would bring with it 10,000,000 good-paying, clean energy jobs.

Trump has killed clean energy jobs:

At least 620,000 clean energy jobs were lost because of Trump’s mishandling of the coronavirus pandemic. These job losses represent more than double the past 3 years of industry-wide clean energy employment growth.

Source: climatepower2020.org, E2.org, LA Times

BIDEN V. TRUMP: WATER POLLUTION

Biden has pledged to protect water:

Biden’s climate plan pledges to ensure all communities have safe drinking water and to prevent pollution of water in vulnerable communities. (Biden also co-sponsored the Ocean-Dumping Ban Act of 1988, which prohibited dumping sewage, sludge and industrial waste.)

Trump has rolled back water protections:

In January 2020, Trump removed Obama-era clean water protections intended to protect rivers, streams, wetlands, and other bodies of water from pollution and runoff from industrial facilities and agriculture. These rollbacks threaten drinking water sources for 117 million Americans.

Source: ABC News, EarthJustice.org, NPR, New York Times

BIDEN’S CLIMATE PLAN IS EVEN MORE PROGRESSIVE THAN BERNIE’S 2016 PLAN.

Thanks to the push from a task force comprised of Sunrise Movement’s Varshini Prakash, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and John Kerry, Joe Biden’s climate plan is the most progressive plan ever put forth by a candidate.

A few highlights that Biden’s plan calls for:

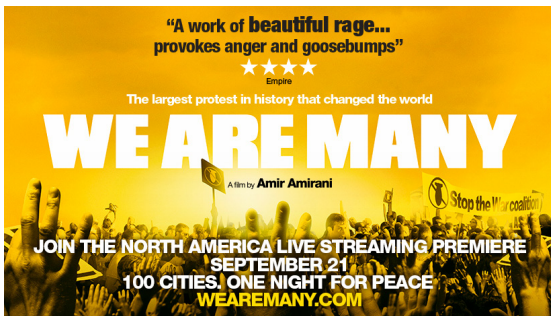
- A 100% clean energy economy and net-zero emissions by 2050
 - Required, decisive action from every country around the world
 - Aggressive methane pollution limits for oil and gas operations
 - A drive towards 100% clean energy and zero-emissions vehicles
 - Implementing aggressive appliance & building efficiency standards
- (Biden also pledged to refuse campaign contributions from oil, gas, and coal corporations or executives.)

Source: The Correspondent, [JoeBiden.com](https://joebiden.com)

Good Movies... Movies for Good

By Becky Payne

At our last board meeting, we discussed several good movies just out that speak to peace and justice concerns that you can watch at home. We thought we'd share the word.

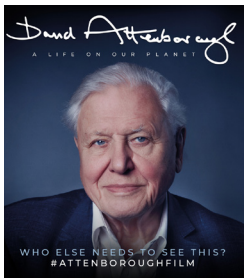


We are Many – a documentary of the 2001 worldwide peace marches that were organized to prevent then President G.W. Bush from following through on his threat to militarily invade Iraq after the bombing of the World Trade Centers. Starting from single small marches, the movement grew to cover the world and has had repercussions since as people in cities and countries came together and learned how to effectively organize. Bonus: If you purchase tickets through our website, a portion of the proceeds go to the PEC.

The Social Dilemma – Interviews with the ethicist for Facebook along with other social media professionals who are alarmed at the tricks and techniques that social media uses to keep you focused on their platforms. Very easily and cleverly examines the way sites such as Facebook, Twitter and others attempt to influence our thoughts and interactions to keep us online, by learning our habits and likes and then filtering the materials we see.

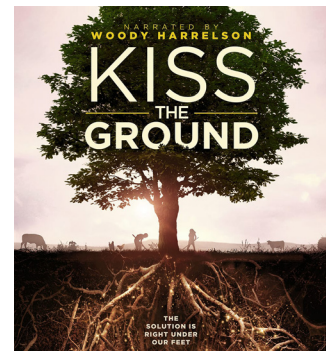
The Man Who Saved the World – Explores the action of Stanislav Petrov, the Soviet lieutenant colonel who did not fire nuclear missiles at the U.S. after he was notified that the US had fired at Russia. The notification was later found to be a false alarm, but Petrov did not know that at the time. His judgement saved the planet from a massive nuclear holocaust.

David Attenborough: A Life On Our Planet



The famous environmentalist broadcaster recounts his life, and the evolutionary history of life on Earth, to grieve the loss of wild places and offer a vision for the future. To counter his grim witness statement, he calls for the world to “re-wild” the Earth and restore the balance keeping bio-diversity.

Kiss the Ground – This movie explores the value of our soil, full of active bioorganisms which not only help keep us healthy but help contain carbon to reduce the effects of carbon release in furthering climate change. Narrated by Woody Harrelson. Uplifting and helpful.



The Need to Grow – Another movie about dirt, this movie bills itself as a story of solutions, and a story of resilience. Explores the state of our topsoil with people and movements to save and protect it from chemical farming. Learn how professionals are regenerating exhausted topsoil. Narrated by Rosario Dawson.

Not quite as recent, but just as important:

As we delve deeper into a clearer understanding of our country's troubling treatment of people of color, there is an abundance of movies to consider. It's hard to pick from so many great films; here are a few, some recent, some classic. Each offers another view on people's struggles within the U.S. to be treated without prejudice.

On Black Issues:

When they See Us (Recent miniseries. Powerful portrayal of the conviction of five innocent youths for the noted Central Park rape in 1989.), **13th**, **Fruitvale Station**, **Moonlight**, **Just Mercy**, **I am Not Your Negro**, **Detroit**, **Do the Right Thing**, **Black Wall Street**.

On Other Racial/Ethnic Groups:

Native American: **Wind River**, **Thunderheart**, **Windtalkers**, **Smoke Signals**.
Orthodox Jewish: **Disobedience** (recent).
Arab American: **Towelhead**, **American Arab**, **Amreeka**.

On LGBTQ+ Themes:

Boy Erased, **The Crying Game**, **Paris is Burning**, **Bessie**.

On Disabilities:

Crip Camp (recent – very inspiring!), **What's Eating Gilbert Grape**, **The Sessions**, **My Left Foot**.

On Border/Immigration:

Icebox, **Which Way Home**.

Metro Lansing Poor People's Campaign

By Derrick Knox, Jr.

Metro Lansing Poor People's Campaign (MLPPC) has a non-profit housing organization that provides affordable housing options for individuals and families that represent historically marginalized populations.

Our housing plan encourages a variety of housing throughout the community so all of its citizens can live in safe, good quality, and affordable housing. The plan focuses on evenly dispersing affordable housing throughout the community to promote healthy mixed-income neighborhoods. We continue to work on housing acquisition and rehabilitation of Lansing properties.



Our housing program mission is based on the reality that there are many gaps when looking at the housing challenges in these marginalized populations. Gaps in employment, mental health, healthcare, education, community, food systems, housing, and more. MLPPC believes one of the keys to a healthy community is the ability to house its citizens in good quality, affordable housing.

The following statements are the principles that embody the values of our affordable housing program. All of the strategies, action plans, and objectives in this plan were created with the following principles in mind:

- Affordable housing supports economic development, ensures racial equity, which in turn builds community.
- Affordable housing is ultimately someone's home; it should be safe (structurally and environmentally), attractive, and livable.
- Affordable housing options should be available throughout the city, not concentrated in one area.
- Affordable housing must include options for special needs and underserved populations.
- Affordable housing supports a stable workforce at all wage levels, but ours prioritizes low-income, poverty-wage levels.
- Public and private collaboration is crucial to the success of our affordable housing plan.
- Successful solutions for affordable housing require community-wide investment, support, and leadership innovation.

To create a healthier community, MLPPC actively pursues policies to ensure that historically marginalized individuals can find an affordable, quality place to live.

MLPPC housing also incorporates construction apprentices for all of its projects. The apprentices do the majority of the work, and we use fully licensed contractors to oversee the work. This helps apprentices to receive on the job training and the hours needed to finish their journeyman's license, and lowered labor cost because the majority of it is being done by apprentices.

MLPPC also operates a collaborative farming cooperative. Were we bring together various community urban farmers and urban farming organizations with a central goal(s) in mind. The local Michigan collective consists of urban farmers, urban farming organizations, grassroots organizations, and aspiring individuals/organizations.

Metro Lansing Poor People's Campaign (cont.)

The collective main goal is “food sovereignty” or “food justice” for the poor, marginalized, and disenfranchised. Sizable areas of land are acquired and then plots or acres of the land are dispersed amongst the groups. Our farming organization is an innovative collaborative farming cooperative that aims to have a strong social and environmental impact while balancing a viable financial model. Our work is centered around local food and community.

The vision is to continue to build a food system that demands that the policies and mechanisms involved in production, distribution, and consumption of food focus on creating ecologically sustainable systems and healthy lives for people. A food system that is owned and managed by the BIPOC communities that historically have not had equal or equitable access to such resources, as land, easily assessable healthy foods, organic crops, farming subsidies, and capital to build such a system.

We are also embarking on a community center that will be a safe facility; available for meetings, families, fun activities, sports, a learning center for children and their parents, a vocational education training center for different careers including building trades apprentices, technological certification training, and urban farming. The center will work with a wide range of local educational institutions to provide these opportunities.

The center will also serve as an incubator for businesses and nonprofit organizations. It will work in partnership with local and regional governmental agencies, social and economic organizations to offer a wide range of support services and programs for the community including:

- homeownership and home maintenance assistance and classes
- medical, mental health, and other needed social services
- support for people facing evictions
- a safe latch key facility (tutoring, kids fitness training, etc.)
- daycare services
- establishment of an urban farm collective and community gardens to provide fresh, organic vegetables, fruits, and meat for residents in the surrounding neighborhood living in an area that can be considered today as a food desert
- food assistance
- vocational training (construction, cosmetology, chiropractic, reflexology, etc.)



MLPPC is also working on several criminal justice initiatives like an immediate end to over policing, including areas where it affects people financially: traffic tickets - cracked windows, window tints, random insurance check(s), and air freshener. No more pre-textual stops, an immediate end to cash bail, expungement for all marijuana convictions, marijuana release of all current inmates, funding for halfway housing, an end to late-night jail release and provide safe transportation home, the right to vote for the currently incarcerated, and more.

If you would like to sign up for the Metro Lansing Poor People's Campaign, you can do so at <http://mippc.org>. If you would like to donate you can CashApp at \$MLPPC or PayPal at Metro Lansing Poor People Campaign.

North Lake: A Year of Resistance

J. R. Martin from No Detention Centers - Michigan

Though it may feel like much longer, it's now been one year since October 1st, 2019, when in spite of community opposition the GEO Group reopened the North Lake Correctional Facility in Baldwin, Michigan as a federal immigrant-only prison. In the year since its reopening, reports from inside have confirmed and exceeded the fears of people in Baldwin and of immigrant advocates around the region and the country: this facility is a terrible threat to the life and safety of everyone inside and near it, exhibiting conditions that are, in the words of one prisoner <https://nodetentioncentersmi.org/2020/04/12/direct-testimony-hunger-strike-at-the-north-lake-correctional-facility/>, “unbelievable to humankind.” It needs to be shut down. But we are also inspired by the action and organizing undertaken by people incarcerated at North Lake over the last year.



North Lake Correctional Facility, a privately owned prison located in Baldwin, Mich., in 2010.
Photo: Jeffrey Wickett/North Light Photography/Alamy

The GEO Group and the Federal Bureau of Prisons have both shown themselves to be utterly negligent and mercenary in their mishandling of the COVID-19 crisis. In the early days of the pandemic, when they had a chance to save lives by committing to a serious mass release plan, the BOP instead neglected to follow their own stated policies and transferred hundreds of people across state lines to a packed facility that could never safely hold them <https://theintercept.com/2020/06/21/coronavirus-criminal-alien-requirement-prisons/>, allowing infections to multiply unchecked. For months people incarcerated at North Lake struggled to obtain facts regarding the virus and the threat it posed, as prison staff ignored their requests, gave them false information and even mocked their concern for safety. <https://nodetentioncentersmi.org/2020/04/26/they-thought-it-was-a-joke-the-outbreak-at-north-lake/>

Family members and loved ones searched for answers on a website with a national prison map where North Lake at first didn't even show up. More than a hundred incarcerated people and twenty staff members are confirmed to have gotten sick, and two incarcerated people are confirmed to have died, with prison staff shown to have lied about the circumstances of one death <https://theintercept.com/2020/08/14/coronavirus-immigrant-prison-taft-north-lake-death/>. Those are just the cases we know of, and there's reason to believe the numbers could be much higher. The BOP's online records for North Lake haven't changed in months and show signs of simply no longer being updated.



Félix Repilado Martinez
Photo Courtesy of Elaine

This has also been a year of determined resistance and courageous inside organizing. To our knowledge, 2020 alone has seen six hunger strikes take place at North Lake—one of them in the general population <https://nodetentioncentersmi.org/2020/05/09/press-release-5/> in response to medical neglect, and the other five in the Restricted Housing Unit, where a group of primarily Black men were cruelly and arbitrarily confined from early spring to mid-autumn. Their strikes were met with pepper spray, denial of necessary sanitary supplies, and vindictive restrictions on access to clean water in the middle of a pandemic, but strikers didn't back down. <https://nodetentioncentersmi.org/2020/08/24/an-account-of-the-geo-groups-use-of-pepper-spray-to-end-a-hunger-strike-at-north-lake/> <https://nodetentioncentersmi.org/2020/06/23/press-release-7/> <https://nodetentioncentersmi.org/2020/04/14/press-release-3/>

Their organizing has won conditional but nevertheless important victories. Donald Emerson, the original warden since last October, who showed an especially callous disregard for the safety of people held in the RHU and throughout the facility, has been fired and replaced. And the men held in the RHU have started to be transferred out to other facilities in the BOP system, as they had demanded since March. None of this would have happened without their persistent and brave efforts.

This shadow prison should never have reopened, but as we reflect on the last year we are committed to maintaining support for those held inside North Lake and working toward the closure of this facility and the abolition of immigrant detention and incarceration in Michigan and throughout the region.

African Concerns and Connections: Impact of Covid-19

By John Metzler

Throughout the Covid 19 pandemic, Africa has been largely absent or under-reported in the U.S. mainstream media. The sparsity of news coverage is not surprising given that Africa for decades has been largely invisible in the American media with the noticeable exceptions of attention paid to conflict (currently: the war on terrorism in the continent) or health crises when the US is perceived as being potentially impacted as was the case with the devastating Ebola outbreak in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, 2014-15. As a consequence the seemingly paradoxical impact of the pandemic in Africa has largely been unnoticed in the U.S. outside the growing Africa advocacy communities.

In February, when it became evident that the pandemic would be globally devastating in its human, social and economic impact, it was projected that Africa was in great danger. This projection was not without merit; after all, Africa the second largest continent in size (land mass) and population (est. 1.3 billion) is also the poorest continent (consequence of five centuries of global exploitation) in terms of GDP per capita (est. \$1,930 compared to \$49,000 in North America) and the percentage of population that exists on less than \$2 a day, est. (41%). One important way in which the largely externally imposed underdevelopment (important to emphasize that the historical evidence is overwhelming that the average African lived at the equivalent standard of living as their European counterparts in the 15th century CE, prior to massive European intervention at the dawn of the Global Era resulting in European economic dominance) is evidenced in the severe lack of health infrastructure across the continent.

What has been the reality “on the ground” in Africa? Paradoxically, Africa, with all its economic and infrastructural disadvantages has so far been the least impacted continent in terms of morbidity and mortality. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), verified by the continent-wide CDC, as of the beginning of September Africa had experienced just under 5% of the total global infections and 3% of the global deaths attributable to the pandemic. Data from the first week in September shows that Asia had an average daily infection rate of just over 100,000, Europe of 50,000, North America of 47,000, Latin America nearly 60,000, while continent wide, Africa reported less than 10,000 news cases per day. Afro-pessimist commentators are quick to point out that given the lack of health and communication infrastructure the Africa data is likely to be significantly under-reported. While there is certainly some under-reporting the over-whelming evidence on the ground as reported by respected epidemiologists and global health experts, supports the reports that Africa has done much better in terms of human morbidity and mortality than was projected or believed possible six months ago at the beginning of the pandemic.

The explanations provided by health experts for the lower than expected morbidity and mortality across the continent in spite of poor infrastructure are worth briefly mentioning. First, there has been wide-spread adoption across the continent of recommended preventative behaviors including mask wearing, social distancing and personal hygiene (in spite of scarcity of water in many locations). In a recent BBC broadcast their correspondents across the continent report widespread wearing of masks even within the poorest residential communities. Second, epidemiologists point out that many African countries have a well-developed public health communication infrastructure based on social media, radio (broadcasting in local languages), and cell-phones which are widely used in many African countries, including rural areas. These public health media have been successfully employed to combat Ebola and in malaria prevention. Importantly, epidemiologists also highlight the community-focused orientation of African cultures. Consequently, even where there is distrust and lack of confidence in government, there is a near universal acceptance of an individual's responsibility to the larger community; mask wearing is not viewed as a nuisance or an imposition on individual liberty but as a social obligation.

African Concerns and Connections (cont.)

African countries have also been assisted by some in the global community. In addition to the invaluable work of the WHO and other UN agencies, China, India, and the European Union have been providing testing kits, PPE and therapeutics. Sadly, the U.S. has not been as generous as lesser resourced nations. Indeed, the current administration's decision to withdraw funding from the WHO has significantly reduced its capacity to share much needed resources with African countries, and other regions in great need.

A central component of what I have termed the Covid-19 paradox in Africa, is that while infection and death rates have been low, the social and economic impacts of the pandemic have been devastating on Africa. Almost all social and economic indices for the continent indicate a dire decline in social and economic activity and well-being. Food insecurity has increased significantly in every region of the continent resulting in hunger and malnutrition and an increase in maternal and child mortality. Employment in the formal sector has declined as economic production has deteriorated significantly. This social and economic devastation is the result of numerous factors, some of which are not unique to Africa. In an attempt to reduce the spread of the pandemic, governments across the continent initiated nation-wide or regional (often urban areas) policies which resulted in many losing their incomes without any compensatory income support from the government. It is also important to recognize the external impact of the reduction in global economic trade/activity. To a much greater extent than other regions of the world, including Asia and Latin America, African economies are closely tied to the global economy. Consequently, a decline in global economic activity has had a very significant impact on the national economies of countries across the African continent.

There are two additional externalities that have exacerbated the negative impact of Covid-19 on the African continent that deserve a brief mention here and more in-depth analysis in future newsletters. First, is the ongoing and significant increase in the negative impacts of climate change. For the past decades the negative impact of climate change across the Global South (unquestionably caused by fossil fuel consumption in the Global North) has resulted in significant increases in food insecurity and reduced economic opportunities that have fueled conflict (including extremist groups) and significant migration internally, within regions and to Europe.

A second external factor that hindered the ability of African countries to respond to the pandemic has been the “global war on terrorism” that has dominated international engagement in Africa, particularly in the past decade. This is particularly true of the U.S. engagement in Africa. In recent years, U.S. military engagement through the Africa Command, has dwarfed the social and economic aid and support provided by U.S. Recent reports by the UNHCR and the Watson Institute at Brown University unambiguously demonstrate the human displacement, socio-economic devastation and stress on under-capacitated political systems caused by U.S. initiated and supported “wars on terrorism” across the Global South (including Africa) since 9/11.

To conclude on a positive note. The response to the Covid-19 crisis in Africa and other regions of the Global South by U.S. based NGOs, CBOs and community and faith-based advocacy groups has been significant. The support has been in much needed material but also in the arena of policy advocacy. It is important to note the role played by faith and community advocacy groups in the successful lobbying in late summer that resulted in the U.S. House of Representatives passing a bill to fund the IMF to significantly increase the Special Drawing Rights (SDR) funds so desperately needed by debt and cash strapped countries in Africa and across the Global South and needed to more adequately address the human, social and economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, this bill is currently languishing in the U.S. Senate.

Radical Israeli settlers injure 4, fields set on fire in Huwara | 10.7.2020

Cody O'Rourke, Good Shepherd Society

On October 7, 2020 two core members of the Good Shepherd Collective headed to the Huwara area of Nablus in the West Bank with members of the South Hebron-based organization Youth of Sumud in order to support the launch of the Faz3a campaign. This campaign highlights the importance of Palestinian unity by drawing on a long history of intercommunity support during challenging periods, including the olive harvest which consists of long, hot, tedious days of work.

Activists and organizers from across the West Bank and Israel gathered in support of private landowners in the Huwara area such as Mahmoud Abu Ehab, harvesting olives in two locations. The first harvest location and our work there was met with relative quiet, and eventually, we moved to the second location in an area called Lihif Huwara, close to the Itzar outpost high up on the hilltop. Minutes after beginning to harvest the olives, settlers, and hilltop youth appeared, threatening the landowner and activists there to provide a protective presence. When Palestinians persisted in the work of harvesting the olives from their own trees, verbally expressing their intentions and disinterest in provoking the settlers, the hilltop youth responded with violence, hurling large stones downhill at activists and targeting older Palestinian men and women.

Ultimately, at least four activists were harmed either by direct hits from the large stones or other forms of physical violence from the settlers. At least one activist ended up in the hospital for his injuries. Once soldiers arrived, they did very little to stop the settlers' stone-throwing, instead of setting off stun grenades in the direction of activists that ultimately started large fires on swaths of the land and forcing the Palestinians and accompanying activists back down the hill.

The behavior of the soldiers and settlers, as captured in our videos, make several things clear. First and foremost, Palestinian attempts to reclaim their land and fulfill their economic needs will be met with violence—unhinged, potentially fatal acts of violence carried by these organized bands of young men who brag to their followers about their “success,” as we saw only weeks ago.

<https://www.facebook.com/goodshepherdcollective/posts/715879399000019>

Furthermore, the military and border police coordinate in order to protect the settler population, never preventing violence against Palestinian civilians but rather deescalating tensions until things like closed military orders can be brought forth, forcing Palestinians to make a choice between further violence—beatings, arrests, and who knows what else—and leaving their land once again.

Then again, it is these moments—tense, yet quiet moments when the soldiers and settlers are on one side and Palestinians and allies on the other, that much of the work gets done. As soldiers awaited the papers to confirm that the area could be closed to civilians, one of the Palestinian elders led by continuing to pick olives, dumping them into a bucket as she patiently explained to a young Israeli soldier that this was privately owned land which never belonged to the local settlers, and that we should be able to carry out our work. Reminding us of the quiet steadfastness with which we continue to move forward despite seemingly endless obstacles, she embodied what we do in these quiet moments in which we reject settler-colonial timelines and roles, refuse to be sucked into anxiety or scared out of action, and simply keep going with what must be done.

As we continue to do the work to move us closer to justice, we know that connecting Palestinians across space and arbitrary legal differences is some of the most important work we can do. It is an honor to stand in solidarity with our partners in the struggle, Palestinian, Israeli, and international alike.

You can learn more about the Faz3a campaign here.

<https://www.firefund.net/defendharvest>

October Surprises

By Terry Link

There has been a growing concern among those who watch foreign affairs that we might be ripe for another “October Surprise”. Trita Parsi, from the Quincy Institute raised this last month in a piece showing the actions against Iran were increasing to the point of trying to provoke an Iranian response that would give cover to an actual attack by the U.S. In the midst of reading Eric Alterman’s newest book, built upon the subject of his dissertation decades ago, “Lying in State: Why Presidents Lie and Why Trump is Worse” only heightens my concern. Even the mild mannered Friends Committee on National Legislation has raised real concerns, especially as Trump’s electoral challenges seem to grow more dire with each passing day.

PEC encourages our supporters to contact the offices of both of our senators (Peters: 1-202-224-6221) and (Stabenow: 1-202-224-4822) and share your concerns. For more background see Parsi’s article here:

<https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2020/09/16/is-mike-pompeo-preparing-an-october-surprise/>

FCNL action sheet <https://www.fcnl.org/documents/96>

Phyllis Bennis just this week <https://www.commondreams.org/views/2020/10/12/trump-aims-fresh-us-aggression-iran-how-many-surprises-can-october-hold>

Michael Klare looks at Iran and other potential “October Surprises” <https://www.thenation.com/article/world/trump-military-conflict-election/>



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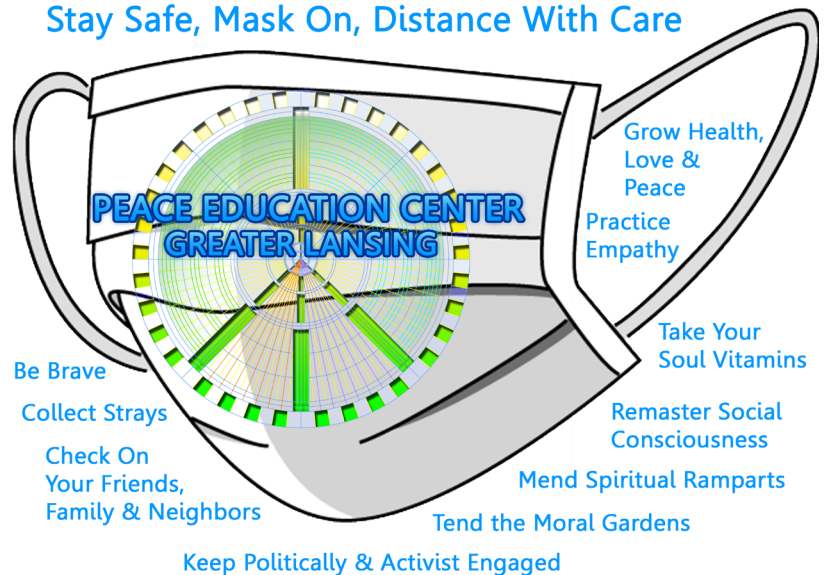
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