



PEACE

A PUBLICATION OF THE PEACE EDUCATION CENTER

NOTES

WINTER 2022

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Peace Notes

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AMERICAN DEMOCRACY IS UNDER ATTACK AND NEEDS YOUR HELP TO PREVAIL

By Nelson Brown (PEC Co-chair)

"These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman." So said Thomas Paine in 1776 as he rallied supporters to continue the struggle at a perilous moment in the American Revolution. As we remember the one-year anniversary of the violent January 6th Insurrection that manifested Donald Trump's attempt to overturn the legitimate election of President Joe Biden, inspiring words like these should now stir Americans to preserve our democracy.

Unless you are living in a right-wing media cocoon, it should be obvious that an increasingly right-wing, authoritarian Republican Party under the thrall of Donald Trump threatens our democracy. It does this not only by enacting state-level legislation that hinders the right of people – especially of minorities and the poor – to vote and to have all votes counted honestly, but also by legitimizing the use of violence against governmental institutions and political opponents to gain or to retain political power. Opposing this authoritarian thrust becomes especially critical to preventing an electoral-college-voting steal in presidential elections, but applies to the functioning of representative governments at all levels. This degradation of our nation's democratic political process poses new challenges for the Peace Education Center and other similar groups.

For the last fifty years, the Peace Education Center has been dedicated to resolving both international and domestic disputes peacefully. While much of the PEC's efforts have focused on opposing a militaristic foreign policy and reducing American military expansion to carry out this interventionist foreign policy, the PEC has supported using peaceful, non-violent measures and working through the democratic political process and institutions to achieve these goals. For example, the Center has protested the suppression of human rights in South Africa, Palestine, Myanmar, etc. Not only has the PEC supported human rights internationally, but it has also adopted these measures when supporting human rights domestically, such as opposing racism and other forms of discrimination and prejudice.

The challenge that the PEC and other groups seeking peace and justice domestically and internationally confronts is a self-perpetuating right-wing authoritarian political movement that opposes the progressive values the PEC works for -- and one that condones violence to achieve its aims, endangering our ability to use the democratic process to achieve the more just world we seek. Such an entrenched authoritarian political movement that opposes the values of peace and justice, hinders PEC's ability to utilize peaceful petitions and non-violent actions for relief and to shift political leaders' positions on issues important to the PEC. Moreover, and more importantly, this authoritarian movement will disenfranchise disadvantaged groups such as low-income workers and minorities, especially African-Americans and Hispanics.

AMERICAN DEMOCRACY IS UNDER ATTACK (cont.)

Groups like the PEC cannot function well in a reactionary authoritarian government whose supporters consider the use of violence an acceptable part of a political process. Therefore, part of the PEC's mission must include opposing this authoritarian drift endangering our democracy. We should work for the following measures to defend our democracy: protecting and expanding voting rights for all Americans; challenging partisan gerrymandering; opposing efforts to rig vote counting; and resisting partisan election officials' attempts to falsify election results. **Above all, we must work to prevent violence from becoming an acceptable political tactic.**

The PEC will work to educate people on these authoritarian movements and on how to oppose them through the resources it has at its disposal. We urge people to educate themselves and oppose an authoritarian movement that threatens our democracy. We have a tough struggle ahead. We have a lot at stake if we lose.

PEC Sparks Statewide Peace Alliance

By Terry Link

Our four-part speaker series on militarism last fall has given birth to an exciting new cooperative force for peace in Michigan. That speaker series which is viewable from our web page featured national leaders including Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis, co-chair of the Poor Peoples' Campaign; Lindsay Koshgarian, Executive Director of the National Priorities Project; William Hartung, now a Senior Fellow with the Quincy Institute; and Elizabeth Beavers, consultant with the People Over Pentagon Campaign. In pulling that series together the Peace Education Center gathered 40 organizations to co-sponsor, including 9 national organizations.

To keep that cooperative energy alive, PEC has initiated the development of a new statewide peace network – the Michigan Peace Alliance. The mission statement points the way forward - **The Michigan Peace Alliance connects Michigan based organizations dedicated to peace, to share knowledge, resources, actions, and calendars to build a more peaceful, just, and nonviolent society.**

Formal affiliations are now being built with individual organizations with Peace Education Center and the Lansing FCNL Advocacy Team being the first organizations to formally join. Other organizations involved in bringing this alive include – Peace Action of Michigan, Citizens for Peace, Edgewood United Justice and Peace Team, Michigan Peace Council, Institute for Global Education, Greater Lansing United Nations Association (GLUNA), Veterans for Peace, Pax Christi, Kalamazoo Nonviolent Opponents to War, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), Meta Peace Team, and Grey Panthers. Our first action was establishing a Facebook presence and now beginning work on developing a website to help share programs, actions and resources and to drive statewide action toward peace through justice. Once the website is up, we will share with you so you can broaden your awareness of all the good work being generated by our fellow Michiganders to build the peaceful future we believe in. Your support makes this effort possible!

<https://www.facebook.com/Michigan-Peace-Alliance-Page-100512129175722/>



Image Copyright: Kathie Kuhn
From her upcoming book project,
'The Truth For A Change :
A Collection of Poetry and Song'

Keeping PEC Going for the Long Haul

By Terry Link

One way for all of us to be a part of ending war, militarism, and violence is to keep the doors of the Peace Education Center open and staffed with committed peaceniks. Our center has been blessed in recent years with a couple of generous bequests that allow us to keep an office and do the things we are able to do.

It's no big secret that many of our board members and supporters are past retirement age. While we wish each and everyone of you a long and fulfilling life we should also prepare for the end.

In my early 70s now and hoping to see 80 without any major problems, I, for one, need to consider making a bequest to support future generations who will continue to work toward eliminating weapons, supporting nonviolent conflict resolution and bringing the human family in harmony with the community of life we share.

Please consider making even a small bequest to PEC in your will. We can only continue this work because of the kindness and support we receive. Thank you for your part in keeping the hope alive for those who follow us.

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.peacecenter.org/> for calendar updates

Upcoming Events:

Thurs, Feb. 3, @ 5:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Dr. Yusef Salaam -

2022 Slavery to Freedom Lecture

Register at <http://spr.ly/6189K6C6T>

Host: MSU College of Osteopathic Medicine

Sunday, Feb. 6, @ 2:00 pm

The UN and SDG's at Work Around the World

Join Greater Lansing United Nations Association online or in person for a bird's eye view of UN and SDG work. <https://gluna.org/event/the-un-and-sdgs-at-work-around-world/>

Mon Feb 7 @ 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm EST

Nuclear Power – Myth, Lure, Danger and Reality. A Climate Solution or a Dangerous Detour

A webinar to learn more about and discuss the major issues concerning nuclear power:

[LEARN MORE](#)

Wednesday, February 9, @ 7:00 pm

Spike Lee's Malcolm X film

at the East Lansing Public Library

<https://bookings.lib.msu.edu/event/8656845>

Sat Feb. 12 @ 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm EST

Towards Nuclear Disarmament – US Nuclear Posture Review by Veterans For Peace

[LEARN MORE](#)

Mon Feb 14 @ 7:00pm - 8:00pm EST

International Relations and Militarism Today

[LEARN MORE](#)

Tues, Feb. 22, @ 7:00 pm

Join PEC for a screening of

UNMANNED:

America's Drone Wars

See flyer published later in newsletter. REGISTER TODAY!

<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/tZltc-Crpj0vGNwS9Z5LZ0A6j3JEGOf0PsAL>

Wed Feb 23, @ 7:00pm - 8:00pm EST
Ray McGovern on the US/Russia/Ukraine Conflict

[LEARN MORE](#)

Print Note: For accessing hyperlinks of unreasonably excessive length, not shown in full here, please visit us online at peacecenter.org.

Sunday, Feb. 6, @ 12:30 pm – 1:30 pm

Woldumar Nature Walk

Join Sue Quinn for a walk at Woldumar Nature Center on the first Sunday of every month at 12:30pm.

Contact Sue Quinn: (517) 862-1586 |

Suzi54love@gmail.com

Sponsor: Fellowship For Today

Sunday, Feb. 6, @ 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

OPERATION END HOMELESSNESS:

Monthly Task Force Meetings

401 W Holmes Rd, Lansing, MI 48910-4477, United States

Join us every first Sunday to learn efforts to combat Homelessness in the Lansing area.

Hosts: Jubilee - [https://www.](https://www.facebook.com/L-Town-jubilee-100285148803887/)

[facebook.com/L-Town-](https://www.facebook.com/L-Town-jubilee-100285148803887/)

[jubilee-100285148803887/](https://www.facebook.com/L-Town-jubilee-100285148803887/)

Mon., Feb. 7 @ 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm EST
Solutions to the Afghanistan Crisis:

A Webinar With Dr. Shah Mehrabi

[LEARN MORE](#)

Wed, Feb. 9 @ 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm EST
Missile defense: a forgotten program that is fomenting a global nuclear arms race

[LEARN MORE](#)

Mon, February 14 @ 12:00 pm EST
To Afghanistan with Love on Valentines Day: Public Witness to Prevent Famine

[LEARN MORE](#)

Tue Feb 15, @ 8:00 pm - 9:00 pm EST
Resisting Attacks on Palestinian Human Rights Activists

Join CODEPINK Congress & Massachusetts Peace Action for the second event in our SPECIAL SERIES ON FOREIGN POLICY!

[LEARN MORE](#)

Thurs/Fri, Feb. 24-25, 9:00am-4:00pm

15th Annual Muslim Studies

Program Conference:

“‘Belong Nowhere’: States of Statelessness in the Muslim World” (hybrid format). Registration links:

<https://muslimstudies.isp.msu.edu/about/reg-links/>

The Media Activism Work Group - Using technology and storytelling to make an impact

By Petra Daher

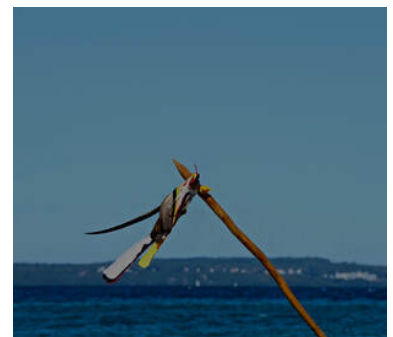


The Media Activism Work Group is a subcommittee of the Peace Education Center (PEC), and our goal is to use the power of digital storytelling to encourage peace and justice. Digital storytelling is a vast medium, and our projects include documentary filmmaking, podcasting, media education workshops, programming on the PEC YouTube channel, community art projects, and social networking.

In 2021 the board voted to act as a fiduciary for fundraising for The LGBTQIA Kakuma Refugee Project. This project is being supervised by Michigan-based activist, and writer Christina Reuter and, she is fundraising and working with me to make a short film showing documented human rights violations and abuse the LGBTQIA refugees are suffering in the Kakuma refugee camp. This documented visual evidence is needed to show what is happening to this vulnerable group. Christina also plans to create a website to bring awareness to the issues the LGBTQIA community is experiencing in hopes to gain global support from the public to call for the immediate evacuation and resettlement of these refugees in safe countries that are not criminalizing the LGBTQIA community.

[see article “The LGBTQIA Kakuma Refugee Project” later in this newsletter]

And in 2022, we are expanding in several directions and, new members are joining. We will be fundraising, seeking sponsorship, and writing grants to support the final stages of production, and distribution for the documentary series I have been working on for six years about community activism and water issues concerning the Great Lakes region.



Great Lakes Water Warriors (GLWW) is a series of video documentaries about the Great Lakes Water Protectors who are working to safeguard water and enforce healthy water policies. The stories are told through a series of interviews featuring the women who are leading the movement. This series provides insight on many critical issues impacting the Great Lakes Region. Upon completion it will screen on the Reel Women's Network and be available for screenings worldwide.

The Media Activism Work Group (cont.)



In May of 2021, I traveled to Mackinaw City to film the Decommissioning of Line 5. May 12th was the date cited by Governor Gretchen Whitmer for Line 5 to cease operating. The next day hundreds of Water Protectors and environmental and tribal activists placed a symbolic “eviction notice” at McGulpin Point pumping station. The event also included traditional songs, prayers, and dances by local tribes and an outdoor music festival featuring music and speakers with expertise in water, including Winona LaDuke. I filmed LaDuke’s talk and was able to ask her a question that will be in the documentary.



As of today, Enbridge is ignoring the decommissioning of Line 5. Gov. Whitmer, the Department of Natural Resources Director, and the Michigan Attorney General are working to protect the Great Lakes from Line 5 and Enbridge. On November 24, 2021, Enbridge announced that it had filed a federal complaint in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Michigan requesting an injunction to stop the State of Michigan from preventing the operation of Line 5. The U.S. District Court dismissed Michigan’s motion to have the case sent back to the state. Michiganders opposed to Line 5 are hoping for support from President Biden, who could make the decision that the Great Lakes are more important than a 68-year-old Canadian oil company with a history of deceit and causing harm to the environment.



The Media Activism Work Group (cont.)



The plan for 2022 also includes the creation of a PEC Podcast with a focus on peacemakers in Michigan. Shantel Rodriguez will serve on the board representing the Media Activism Work Group. Her interests include restorative justice and podcasting. She will manage the podcast and work with Petra and the board to oversee the creation of a Peace Education podcast. The “Peace Education Podcast” will profile the work of Michigan peacemakers and, our first season will feature conversations with members of the PEC board.

If you would like to support the work of the Media Activism Work Group, please donate through the PEC website and make sure to write “Media Activism” and the project you want to support in the description. If you are interested in volunteering to work on a Media Activism project email the PEC with details and contact information. We can use volunteers for Online Fundraiser, Grant Writer, Technical Support for the Podcast, PR, and original instrumental music for the Podcast and film.



The United States should pursue a compromise diplomatic solution to the Ukraine conflict that reconciles both Russia's and the Ukraine's national interests

By PEC Board

The single most volatile conflict in world affairs right now is the rising tensions over a possible war in the Ukraine. Russia has amassed troops on Ukraine's border raising the possibility that Putin may intervene there soon. While there have been negotiations between the United States and Russia, so far no progress appears to have been made. This conflict challenges those in the Peace Activist community to involve ourselves in identifying its sources and proposing solutions that can offer a way out of war, or at least to lower tensions. This will require a review of American post-Cold War policies in Eastern Europe, especially the expansion of NATO towards and onto the borders of the old USSR: today's Russia. While we all recognize that Putin is a dictator, that does not mean that every concern he might have over an anti-Russian nuclear-armed NATO reaching its borders represents a plot for Russian aggression. This fear represents a legitimate concern on Russia's part quite apart from Putin's character, especially since no one can seriously argue that Russian troops and tanks might descend on Western Europe, like feared during Cold War paranoia. As far as fear of hostile forces on a border goes, some of us remember the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis when we almost had a nuclear war because the sovereign state of Cuba decided to accept Russian missiles, effectively on our border. Peace Activists need to advocate for diplomatic solutions that can satisfy Russian national interests, especially about NATO without making Ukraine a Russian vassal. The Quincy Institute is formulating policy approaches that that can lead to such a solution. Peace Activists need to advocate reasonable diplomatic solution to this conflict.

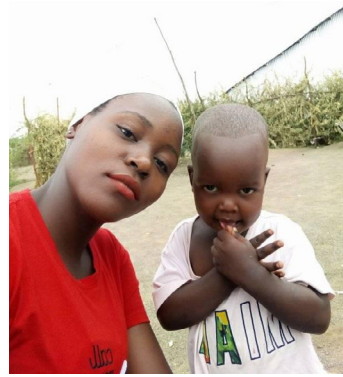
The LGBTQIA Kakuma Refugee Project

By Christina Reuther

Many LGBTQIA people from Eastern Africa have fled their native countries to escape life threatening homophobic violence and the criminalization of their status. Having also been ostracized by their families and communities, many have been living in hiding. It is illegal for them to work so they are also living in extreme poverty. Their survival is precarious at best.

Those who have fled to The Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya are an extremely at-risk population. They have applied for refugee status and protection through the UNHCR-Kenya with the hope of being resettled in a safe country. Unfortunately, the UNHCR-Kenya has failed to protect them because of the homophobia that also exists in Kenya, both societally and within the police. UNHCR-Kenya, denying evidence of discrimination and violence, have released several public statements that asylum seekers and refugees are safe, except for a small number of individuals in one block who are self-injuring for resettlement.

Many of the other 200,000 refugees in the camp are homophobic because of cultural or religious norms in their native countries. Hence, the fewer than 1,000 LGBTQIA community members are not safe from violent attacks and ongoing harassment anywhere in the camp. Some have been murdered, burned alive, sexually assaulted, slashed with machetes or viciously attacked by groups of homophobic men. Their lives are in grave danger with little chance of obtaining refugee status for resettlement.



Those who have released a mountain of evidence showing the violence are being silenced. They are being arrested and tortured by the Kenyan police or forced to sign NDA forms (non-disclosure agreements) promising not to speak out about the ongoing pervasive violence in the camp in order to obtain RSD status and resettlement.

There have also been reports that some LGBTQIA asylum seekers have even been offered bribes by human rights organizations to provide false reports supporting the false narrative of the UNHCR- Kenya.

This vulnerable group is in grave danger. They are starting to lose hope.

The LGBTQIA Kakuma Refugee Project was started to bring awareness and to advocate for the human rights and freedom for these people. It is also fundraising to provide basic food support and medical treatment for these desperate people.

As a global human rights defender, I am part of a team of activists working tirelessly to bring to light these injustices through investigative research and documentation.

Please join us and support the LGBTQIA Kakuma refugees. I am both humbled and honored to walk beside this group who, despite their oppression, remain non-violent and courageous.

You can help by sending donations to the Peace Education Center directed to the Kakuma Refugee Project. You can also contact Christina Reuther at Creuth1@yahoo.com for more information on how to help.

LGBTQIA Kakuma refugees' lives and futures are depending on our involvement to request immediate evacuation from the camp, group asylum, or group resettlement based on their dire situation.

Contact your Representatives

Senator Debbie Stabenow

202-224 4822

Hart Senate Office Building, Suite 731,
Washington, DC 20510-2204

www.stabenow.senate.gov/?p=contact

Senator Gary Peters

202-224-6221

Hart Senate Office Building, Suite
724, Washington, DC 20510

<https://www.peters.senate.gov/contact/email-gary>

Rep. John Moolenaar

202-225-3561

117 Cannon House Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20515

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

Representative Tim Walberg

202-225-6276

2266 Rayburn House Office Bldg, Washington,
DC 20515

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

Rep. Elissa Slotkin

202-225-4872

1531 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

www.slotkin.house.gov/contact

End U.S. Complicity in the Yemen War and Blockade

By Melany Mack

The Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), a national, nonpartisan Quaker organization lobbying Congress and the administration to advance peace, justice, and environmental stewardship, will focus its lobbying efforts in 2022 on ending US complicity in the devastating war and blockade in Yemen.

Seven years of war and a crippling blockade has led to the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, with 21 million people—more than 70% of the population-- in need of humanitarian assistance, including more than 11 million children. According to the United Nations, 5 million Yemenis are on the brink of starvation and one out of every two people do not have access to safe water. The lack of potable water has led to the largest cholera outbreak ever recorded with 2.5 million suspected cases and about 4,000 deaths since 2016.

Although President Biden announced an end to U.S. support for the Saudi-led coalition's offensive operations in Yemen in February 2021, we continue to provide maintenance support and transfer spare parts for Saudi aircraft—support that is essential for Saudi Arabia to continue its war and the blockade causing so much harm to civilians. This support makes the US complicit in the devastation and suffering in Yemen.

This year the FCNL's 120 teams of grassroots advocates in 42 states, including the Lansing Area Advocacy Team, will lobby their members of Congress to introduce a Yemen War Powers Resolution to cut off all military aid, including intelligence sharing, logistical support, and the spare parts and maintenance that is propping up the Saudi coalition's war and blockade.

The Saudis will be unable to continue the war without US support. You can help! Urge your representative to support the introduction and passage of a Yemen War Powers Resolution! Please contact your representative through [FCNL](https://fcnl.quorum.us/campaign/37146/) (<https://fcnl.quorum.us/campaign/37146/>) and add your support to this vital initiative.

The Year in ... Review or Preview?

By Chris Smith, Board Chairperson, Michigan Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence

This is the moment each year when non-profit organizations look back at developments and accomplishments over the past 12 months. In Michigan, the tragic school shooting in Oxford is fresh in our minds and makes it painful to look back four weeks, let alone twelve months. Even if we push our gaze farther into the past, there is little to see that should make us feel satisfied. It is true that some communities are taking a closer look at funding and implementing violence-intervention programs. However, those programs do not address many important issues in the realm of gun violence, such as suicides, children's access to firearms, and the connection between firearms and homicides in the context of domestic violence.

What predominates when we look in the rearview mirror? A record-setting pace of gun purchases. An increase in shootings. An expansion of untraceable firearms assembled with parts purchased on the internet. And no movement in our state – or in Congress – toward even the most modest and sensible gun regulations. We need to remember the past year because it defines our current situation. At this moment, however, it makes more sense to focus on the future.

The biggest event in recent weeks is the announcement of the newly defined legislative districts that will shape competition for seats in our state's House of Representatives and Senate as well as in Congress. Because Michigan's new districts were drawn by a citizens' commission rather than by one political party, commentators expect competitive races for many seats, as well as a new sense of uncertainty about which party will win control of the state legislature. These developments are important because they may – just maybe – set the stage for breaking free from the blockade that currently prevents sensible proposals from moving beyond the initial presentation stage to actual consideration by the legislature.

For inspiration, we need to look to the Virginia elections in November 2019 that brought both chambers of the legislature into alignment with a governor who supported sensible gun laws. As a result of that alignment, Virginia enacted a list of laws in 2020 intended to increase gun safety while respecting the legal definition of Second Amendment rights.

The Year in ... Review or Preview? (cont.)

These laws included:

- A requirement that **gun owners must report that a firearm has been lost or stolen.**
- Authority for cities and counties to **ban guns from government buildings, public parks, and outdoor events.**
- **Universal background checks**, including private sales or sales at gun shows that are currently outside federal background check requirements.
- **Extreme risk protection orders** that authorize judges to temporarily remove someone's firearms if law enforcement officers provide evidence that the individual poses a danger to themselves or others.
- **Penalties for gun owners who recklessly leave loaded firearms accessible to children.**

Are these the laws that Michigan needs? We cannot know for sure unless and until we have a legislature that is willing to discuss different policies, examine research evidence about gun violence, and evaluate the experiences of other states that have implemented laws different than our own. The November 2022 elections create an entirely new opportunity to elect legislators who take seriously the risks and harms of gun violence across all dimensions of this tragic problem.

Individuals throughout the state are currently making decisions about whether they will run for the state legislature or Congress in 2022. Very soon we will know the identities of the announced candidates in each of the newly drawn districts. It is incumbent upon members of the public to ask these candidates where they stand on policies intended to reduce the risks and harms of gun violence.

Voters must also make known the policies that they would like to see. Moreover, if we are to move out of our current rut of inaction on gun violence at the very moment that the problem grows all around us, voters must make candidates aware that attention to gun violence will be an important factor in deciding whom to elect to office. We need policy action at both the state and federal level.

What about the role of the Michigan Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence?

We want to be a source of reliable, evidence-based information about policies that have been shown to reduce risk and harm. We need your support to enable us to produce informative publications that can educate the public, as well as those who are running for elective office. Without research-based information, discussions of gun policy are too often based on ideology, beliefs, and misperceptions. 2022 presents our opportunity to make a difference in ways that can reduce injuries, suicides, accidental shootings, and homicides. Please play your role as an engaged citizen. And please give us any support that you can as we seek to be a source of important information that can generate discussion and encourage action by policy makers.

For information on the coalition, please visit <https://michigancoalitiontopreventgunviolence.org/>.

(The above was recently distributed by the MCPGV and is re-printed with its approval. MCPVG is an affiliate of PEC.)

PEC Annual Meeting

The Peace Education Center will hold our Annual Meeting on **Saturday, April 23rd from 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.** at the University United Methodist Church. This usually annual Spring gathering was postponed last year because of COVID-19. Please put this on your calendars and join us as we celebrate the efforts of peacemakers in our community with announcement of Peacemaker(s) of the Year, Lifetime Peacemaker Awardee(s) and Tom Schneider Peacemaker Awardees. We will also review our past efforts and share our plans for the coming year. This is a **potluck** affair. PEC will provide beverages, plates, cups, and utensils. More details as they develop in the coming months!!

Tom Schneider Award

April first is the deadline for nominations and applications for the Tom Schneider Peacemaker Awards given annually (except last year) to recognize peace and justice work of graduating high school seniors from area high schools. The award is in memory of late PEC board member Tom Schneider, who walked the walk of peacemaking, literally around the world. We invite you to nominate a potential awardee or to share this announcement with any who may know a potential nominee. Besides the recognition at their high school honors convocation, awardees receive a \$500 stipend in recognition of their demonstrated commitment to peace and justice and as an encouragement to continue their dedication to peace.

For more information see:

<https://www.peaceedcenter.org/schneider-award/>

Myanmar 2022 Update

By Codie Drake

Eleven years sentence with hard labor was the sentence Michigan native-born journalist Danny Fenster was given. In May, Fenster was boarding a flight intended for the U.S when arrested by the Myanmar junta. Arbitrarily arrested, Fenster had no charges brought against him for several months. Eventually, the Myanmar government claimed he was continuously working for banned free media outlet Myanmar Now. Though Fenster worked there before the coup, he received a new editor position at Frontier Myanmar. Three charges eventually were brought against him. The following charges: incitements to spread false information (505(a) of the Penal Code amended when the Military coup took place); unlawful association; and the added charge of immigration visa violations. Convicted on all three charges, Fenster faced max sentencing. The Myanmar Courts made its decision on 12 November 2021 after a closed trial and several trial postponements. Two more serious charges later were pressed against him, giving him a new additional trial date, intended for 15 November 2021. The new charges would have potentially added 30 years to Fenster's sentencing stemming from anti-terrorism laws. His convictions are a devastating attack on journalists and a reminder of the grave situation in Myanmar.

Instead of attending another trial on 15 November, he left Insein prison and boarded a flight home. Diplomat and former New Mexico's Governor, Bill Richardson negotiated his release with the junta military leader. It is wonderful that Fenster gets to return to his family and the safety of his citizenship, yet there is no way to escape his privilege. The reality is, since the coup, 7,291 individuals are still under detention and this number is constantly growing, 10,000 individuals overall arrested since 1 February. Those arrested, unnamed by the media, will not get a magical release, but will face additional challenges in the prison system, then just the military take over.

The prison system in Myanmar does not meet international standards. Daily arrests by the junta take place, targeting anti-coup protesters, journalists, and advocates. The convicted individuals will not be as lucky as Fenster to walk away free, but will face the reality of the Myanmar prison system. The harsh prison realities reported in 2016 by Assistance Association for Political Prisoners Burma include overcrowding, lack of health care, mistreatment, torture, solitary confinement, forced hard labor, lack of visitation rights, etc. Some of the torturous techniques the detained Burmese people have endured include violent abuse, sensory deprivation, sleep deprivation, harassment, stress positions, and tick-tock torture. These concerns are not just a reality from 2016. The Associated Press released a gruesome and detailed article in October 2021 addressing the increased and ever-present use of systematic torture in Myanmar since the coup. The report stated, "a majority of torture techniques described by prisoners were similar to those of the past, including deprivation of sleep, food and water; electric shocks; being forced to hop like frogs, and relentless beatings with cement-filled bamboo sticks, batons, fists, and the prisoners' shoes". The reality of the situation is our advocacy for Myanmar is not over. The 7,000+ individuals detained deserve to be treated in line with the international standards, and or released.

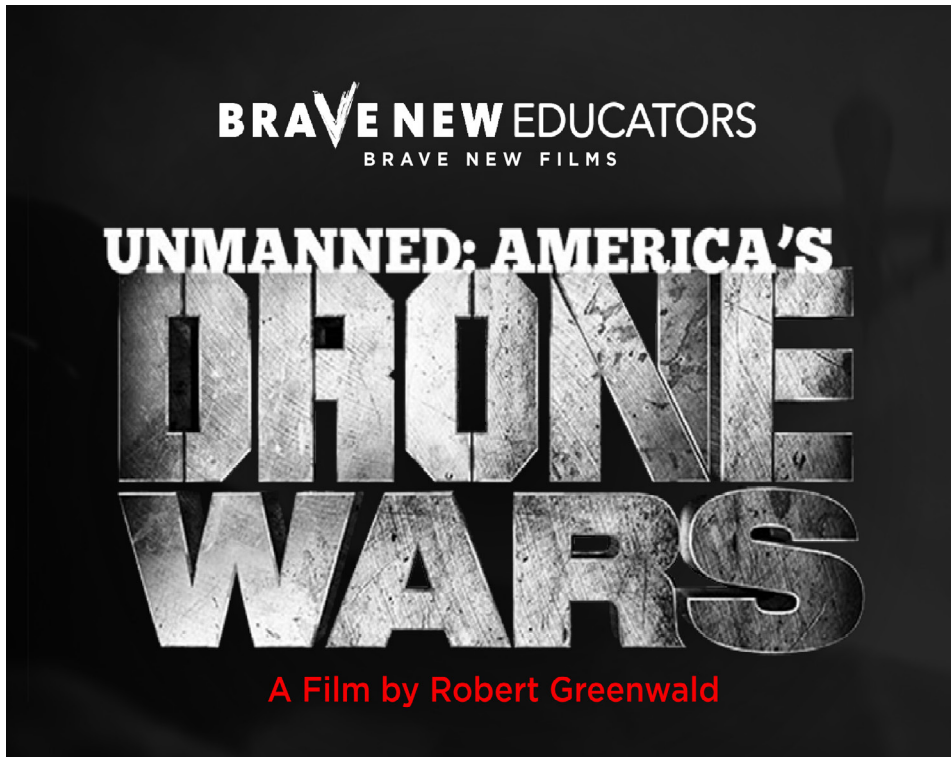
Though the release of Danny Fenster does provide a warm and fuzzy feeling for those who followed the case, the people in Myanmar are the ones who will endure the harshest punishments. The reality is, standing up to the junta has grave consequences for an individual. Due to the diminished democratic standing in Myanmar, individuals face a dilemma, speak up for their rights, face the risk of years in prison with terrible prison conditions, or live a life with broken political sphere and lack of fundamental freedoms. Though the release of Danny Fenster is a good step forward, the further advocacy for the release of political prisoners in Myanmar is needed by the international world.

If you are interested in learning more about the historical imprisonment of political activists in Myanmar visit Assistance Association for Political Prisoners interactive museum:
<https://aappb.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/AAPPVirtualMuseumTour2017March19.html>

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Susan Waltz is Professor emerita at the Ford School of Public Policy at University of Michigan, where she taught courses on human rights and international relations for many years. She currently heads a coordination group on military, security and police transfers for Amnesty International-USA.



Kathy Kelly, a peace activist and author, made over two dozen trips to Afghanistan from 2010 – 2019, living with young Afghan Peace Volunteers in a working class neighborhood in Kabul. She learned about conditions in Afghanistan through encounters with mothers and children, many of whom were directly affected by war. Kathy and her companions in various peace team delegations have often said: "Where you stand determines what you see."

They also lived with parents and children in Baghdad, in a small family-owned hotel, throughout the 2003 Shock and Awe invasion and during the first weeks of the U.S. occupation. Kathy is now campaigning for an international treaty to ban weaponized drones (www.bankillerdrones.org) and co-coordinator of Voices for Creative Nonviolence.

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