



PEACE

A PUBLICATION OF THE PEACE EDUCATION CENTER

NOTES

SUMMER 2022

PEC Board of Directors

Becky Payne · CO-CHAIR
Nelson Brown · CO-CHAIR
Jim Detjen · SECRETARY
John Masterson · TREASURER

PEC Board

Terry Link
Paul Brun Del Re
Petra Daher
Nate Jemison
Thasin Sardar
John Metzler
Shantel Rodriguez
Samantha Dillon
Codie Drake

PEC Office Coordinator

Samantha Dillon

PEC Work Groups

Media Activism
Research and Study Group

Sponsoring Organizations

Edgewood United Church of Christ
Spirit of Peace Church of the Brethren
Red Cedar Friends Meeting
University United Methodist Church
Islamic Center of Greater Lansing
Mennonite Fellowship

Affiliated Organizations

Greater Lansing Network Against
War & Injustice
Meta Peace Team
Greater Lansing United Nations
Association
Michigan Coalition to Prevent
Gun Violence

Peace Notes

Editorial Board:

Tom Oswald, Review
Terry Link, Review
Becky Payne, Review
Samantha Dillon, Review
Nate Jemison, Designer
Petra Daher, Photography

*Peace Notes is a publication of the
Peace Education Center. The views
expressed are not necessarily
those of the Board.*

Freedom is Dead

By Becky Payne (PEC Co-chair)

This is a chilling time in American history. Though we proudly proclaim freedom and justice for all, the overturning of Roe v Wade renders that meaningless. This Supreme Court decision does so much more than end legal abortions, it puts major cracks in the entire foundation of this country. It erodes our freedom over our bodies, our private medical decisions, our speech, travel, and purchases of legal goods.

The three Supreme Court justices who dissented this decision state: The constitutional regime we enter today erases the woman's interest and recognizes only the State's (or the Federal Government's).

If a woman is subject to the control of the State from the moment of conception, then the State can potentially stop her from doing anything that might harm that "independent person" inside her body. Can she be charged with reckless endangerment by, say, swimming without a lifeguard present? Driving over the speed limit? Will the long arm of the State pull the wineglass out of her hand at dinner? Chilling.

This affects us all, whether we have a uterus or not. Like the camel's nose inside the tent, a decision that a person's freedoms can be abridged for one reason opens the door for similar intrusions for other reasons as well. If we think this change just applies to pregnant women, just wait. If the State can monitor one's internet searches for abortion pills, then who's to say it will stop there?



Regarding this court's failure to follow stare decisis, the long-held doctrine of courts to rely on precedent, the dissent continues: Weakening stare decisis creates profound legal instability. ... It makes the Court appear not restrained but aggressive, not modest but grasping. In all those ways, today's decision takes aim, we fear, at the rule of law. This Supreme Court just gave itself a blank check to undo other settled law.

Here's another freedom that we seem to have lost. The Second Amendment states: A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed. The vociferous proponents of this amendment are concerned with their right to keep a closet full of guns, but completely ignore the necessity of guaranteeing the security of a free state. If not now, when is our militia going to fight for our freedoms? (Is this a good time to quote T. S. Eliot's The Hollow Men? This is the way the world ends / Not with a bang, but a whimper.)

The United Nations includes forced pregnancy as a crime against humanity, but the US only adheres to the UN and treaties and other human rights conventions when it chooses.

Freedom is Dead (cont.)

The US has long been more warlike than most of the rest of the world. Our military budget – that large portion of our annual budget that is designated for killing, maiming and terrorizing other peoples – exceeds the military budgets of the next largest military budgets combined. Both Democrat and Republican leaders have stubbornly refused to sign the Ottawa Treaty banning land mines, even though 164 countries have signed. We use drones as weapons for assassinations, outside of war zones, killing not just the “target” but many innocents as well. Within our borders we allow capital punishment for citizens, and we have the highest incarceration rate in the world. We allow solitary confinement to continue for years, even though it drives people insane.

Yet in our stubborn belief that we are the land of the free and the brave, we scoff at authoritarian countries like China and North Korea for intruding so heavily into citizen’s lives, but we are going very quickly down that same road.

An amendment to guarantee abortion rights within the Michigan constitution will be on the ballot. Though there are plenty of ways to get involved, this is one important step. Make your voices heard. Demonstrate. Contact your representative. Vote.

PEACE ACTIVISTS AND PROGRESSIVES NEED TO SUPPORT A DIPLOMATIC SOLUTION TO THE WAR IN UKRAINE BEFORE ITS DANGER ESCALATES

By Nelson Brown

The Ukrainian War has now lasted for about four months, but given the current no-diplomatic-settlement posture adopted for by the United States, NATO and Ukraine, it could go on for months or years – sort of another endless war, but now as a U.S. war by proxy. The challenge that peace activists confront when pushing for a diplomatic settlement is that the foreign and domestic forces pushing to escalate and expand this war are more powerful, at least for now, than those urging a diplomatic settlement before escalation, miscalculation or the world-wide economic and social turmoil this war has generated produce greater dangers than those already upon us.

One disappointment that peace activists now confront is that previously antiwar Democrats like Reps. Ayanna Pressley, Jim McGovern, Barbara Lee, Pramila Jayapal, Ilhan Omar, and Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez, and Senators Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren and Ed Markey – as well as Michigan’s Rep. Elissa Slotkin and Sens. Debbie Stabenow and Gary Peters too -- have uncritically embraced President Biden’s escalating proxy war against Russia.

All these representatives have supported Biden’s \$54 billion-and-counting military and humanitarian spending packages. Peace activists have to win over our usual allies and others to diplomatic solution as the only reasonable path to end the war. Most of the opposition to providing military aid has so far come from conservative Republicans.

The reason why many of our traditional progressive allies’ first response to the Russian invasion was anger and disgust is not hard to understand: a powerful authoritarian Russia had attacked a weaker emerging democracy. Both in our foreign policy and at home, Progressives want to support democratic governance where possible. So naturally, the first reaction to the invasion was to support sending military and other aid Ukraine, but if Putin’s initial war aim was to overthrow the democratic government, Ukraine heroically defeated this attempt. Now the war has morphed into a border struggle in Eastern and Southern Ukraine, and for Crimea. There is no existential threat to Ukraine’s survival.

So as the war enters this new phase, it is time for progressives and peace activists to recognize that a protracted-and-escalated war poses dangers to the world that go beyond the fact that Russia is authoritarian and Ukraine is an emerging democracy. At this stage of the struggle, the time has come to seek out a diplomatic settlement before the dangers of continuing this war escalate into greater harm.

Unfortunately, the Biden administration has chosen not to push for a diplomatic settlement, but instead to flood Ukraine with advanced weapons to support a protracted war either to bleed Russia white (and Ukraine too) or to drive it out of all territory it has occupied since 2014. But in all likelihood, Ukraine, even with U.S. weapons, cannot defeat Russia completely. So, a protracted war means more death and destruction on both sides without a likely prospect that one side will completely prevail over the other. On a smaller scale, this looks like the stalemated bloodletting of World War I. Moreover, the longer the war continues, the more economic, social and political harm the world -- including the United States, Europe, Russia, poorer countries and Ukraine -- will suffer. And there is still a risk – not likely but still there -- that nuclear weapons may be used.

The Peace Education Center has sent an open letter to Rep. Elissa Slotkin and to Senators Gary Peters and Debbie Stabenow urging them to support a diplomatic settlement before the harm this war is causing escalates. A copy of that letter can be found at PEC’s website. The Peace Education Center urges people to contact their representatives urging them to support a diplomatic settlement.

A Decade After Supreme Court Ruling, Future of Michigan Juvenile Lifers Hangs in Balance

by Efrén Paredes, Jr.

On June 25, 2012, the U.S. Supreme Court decided the *Miller v. Alabama* case which banned mandatory life without parole (LWOP) sentences for justice-impacted children convicted of a homicide offense before age 18. The landmark ruling ordered the resentencing of 2,500 people impacted by the decision nationwide.

The high court gave trial court judges discretion to begin imposing term-of-year or LWOP sentences for minors after considering a number of factors. They made it abundantly clear, however, that only children who it can be established will forever be incapable of change and rehabilitation are candidates to receive a LWOP sentence.

Of the 363 people who previously received the sentence in Michigan when they were Children, nearly one-third have yet to be resentenced and continue serving a LWOP sentence. Six people have died either awaiting a resentencing hearing or release.

Senate Bills 848-851 were introduced earlier this year that seek to end the imposition of LWOP sentences on justice-impacted Michigan children. A set of bills identical to the Senate bills have also been introduced in the House of Representatives for consideration (i.e., H.B. 5941-5944).

Thirty-four states have abandoned the imposition of LWOP sentences for children or have no one in their state serving the sentence who was convicted as a minor.

It's time Michigan joins the majority of the country that has replaced its archaic retributive model of incarceration for minors with a rehabilitative and healing model that respects their inherent dignity and acknowledges the concept of redemption.

Prison cells should not be penal tombs for people convicted of crimes when they were children.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

People can help support passage of the pending sensible and forward-looking Senate bills by doing either/both of the following.

CONTACT THE SENATE JUDICIARY AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

You can email committee members to express support for the bills by sending them a version of the following three-paragraph message in your own words:

Dear Distinguished Members of the Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee:

I would like to go on the record to express support for passage of Senate Bills 848, 849, 850 and 851 which would end the imposition of life without parole sentences for Michigan justice-impacted children.

Instead, the bills would afford them a meaningful opportunity for release consideration later in their adult life based upon demonstrated change and rehabilitation. Children would still be held fully accountable for their actions, however, they would not be condemned to die in prison for a tragic mistake they made when they were still mentally and emotionally underdeveloped.

Please support holding a committee hearing to consider the bills and vote to support passage of the bills so they can proceed to the full Senate for a vote.

Email addresses for members of the Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee are:

Sen. Roger Victory - SenRVictory@senate.michigan.gov

Sen. Curt VanderWall - SenCVanderWall@senate.michigan.gov

Sen. Jeff Irwin - SenJIrwin@senate.michigan.gov

Sen. Stephanie Chang - SenSChang@senate.michigan.gov

Sen. Tom Barrett - SenTBarrett@senate.michigan.gov

Sen. Ruth Johnson - SenRJohnson@senate.michigan.gov

Sen. Jim Runestad - SenJRunestad@senate.michigan.gov

Sen. Douglas Wozniak - SenDWozniak@senate.michigan.gov

SIGN ONLINE PETITION

People can also support passage of the bills by signing an online petition which can be accessed at <http://Bit.ly/END-MI-JLWOP>. Each time the petition is signed the platform sends an email message to their respective Michigan lawmaker asking them to support passage of the bills into law. You are encouraged to share the link in your email and social media network and invite others to do the same.

(Efrén Paredes, Jr. is a social justice changemaker and Co-Chair of the Michigan Poor Peoples Campaign who works at the intersection of decarceration, racial injustice, and conflict resolution. His writings and interviews are featured at <http://fb.com/Free.Efren>.)

Military spending out of control

By Terry Link

As I write this in late June, the military contractors are rolling in cash with grins bigger than the Cheshire cat over Congress's eagerness to again throw more money at the Pentagon than they requested this year. President Biden and the Pentagon put forward a budget request in late March for \$813 billion for the military's 2023 budget year that begins October 2022. That hefty price tag is \$30 billion more than last year.

To add some perspective, the State Department budget (diplomacy and US AID) is a mere \$60 billion. Diplomacy and foreign aid got a few extra crumbs from the table - \$1.9 billion more than last year. This might be why we hear little talk of diplomacy being supported by the U.S. in Ukraine, Myanmar, Congo, etc. We simply don't fund it anywhere near like we fund war.

Of course, the Senate Armed Services Committee voted last week on a top-line budget for the military. They had no problem finding an extra \$44 billion to offer up to the arms industry on top of the Pentagon's request. The vote was private, but it was reported as something like 23-3 in favor. I therefore assume Sen. Gary Peters voted to co-sign the check for an extra \$44 billion to further militarize the world. To say I am disheartened by this is an understatement. But I am not giving up hope that the senator and maybe a colleague or two can reconsider this vote when it comes up again in the full Senate or as it goes through consolidation efforts with whatever passes the House. But they will have to hear from us.

The House Armed Services Committee (including Rep. Elissa Slotkin-D) will be having their own discussion and vote about a top-line number this week with a vote tentatively scheduled for Wednesday (June 22). In private conversations, Rep. Slotkin has noted that there is waste to be reduced in the military, so maybe with some constituent support she can push to restrain the military spending juggernaut.

Why won't they stand up and offer \$44 billion for Medicare for all, or even a tiny portion for global vaccines, food security or other human or environmental protection? Only the military budget gets this kind of treatment. The stranglehold of militarization on our Congress is mind-boggling. Even recent polls of the electorate show that more than 60 percent believe no more additional funding for military excursions is necessary. Yet the weapons industry is rolling in cash and using a good chunk of that to lobby those same congressional members and support their political campaigns. Failure to genuflect before the military-industrial-congressional complex gets you labeled as unpatriotic and/or wimpy.

The canard that inflation is the cause has been deconstructed by a recent Brown University Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs' "Costs of War" report.

"As Costs of War research has shown, half of DoD spending goes to contractors. As mentioned by Sen. Elizabeth Warren in the April 7 testimony, many large companies, including military contractors, have used rising inflation levels to justify raising their prices even higher. Furthermore, various sources have shown that at least 30 percent of contract spending is lost to waste, fraud and abuse. Rather than increasing budgets and payments to contractors by using a higher inflation rate in its budgetary estimates, DoD could instead save money by cracking down on the tens or hundreds of billions of dollars lost in contracting every year."

The Watson Institute study this spring lacerates such thinking with eight facts they overlook:

- 1) Military spending has never moved with inflation.**
- 2) Current military spending already factors in inflation.**
- 3) Department of Defense does not measure or experience inflation in the same way as the broader economy.**
- 4) Inflation impacts different portions of military spending differently.**
- 5) Volatile energy costs do not affect the entire defense budget and can be managed by decreasing operations or abandoning outdated platforms.**
- 6) Energy prices are sure to keep fluctuating and need not be the basis of a defense budget increase.**
- 7) Building inflation expectations into the defense budget means preparing for long-term outcomes, not basing the entire budget on what is happening currently.**
- 8) Defense contractors benefit most from increased defense budgets and use inflation as an excuse to price-gouge.**

A new book, *Militarization and the American Century* by David Fitzgerald (Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), paints an enlightening picture of how militarization has grown to capture American culture as former general and President Dwight Eisenhower warned. I wish our elected leaders, especially those on Armed Service committees, would read it, reflect on it, and determine if they will continue to escalate the militarization of our society. Not only does this escalation continue to rob current and future generations of their prospects for true human and planetary security, it feeds the myth that more weapons make us safer.

Calendar

GL-UNA UN Day Dinner

Sunday, October 23, 4:30pm
Kellogg Center, 219 S Harrison Rd,
East Lansing, MI 48824

ALTERNATIVE HOLIDAY SALE

Friday, Nov. 18, 5pm - 9pm
Saturday, Nov. 19, 9am - 5pm
Edgewood United Church
469 Hagadorn Road, East Lansing

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, 6 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

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

For calendar updates:

Check the PEC website:

<http://www.peaceedcenter.org/>

Visit us on twitter and facebook:

<https://twitter.com/PeaceEdCenter>

<https://www.facebook.com/peaceedcenter/>

Military spending out of control (cont.)

Fitzgerald uses deep scholarship in 240 pages with more than 800 references to make his case. I recognize that congressional members find little time to read any books from cover to cover. As I read the equivalent of one nonfiction work every two weeks over the past decade, I recognize the dedication it takes to pour through literature to make solid and defensible arguments. I am concerned that those making the decisions to deploy weapons and personnel to kill others, destroy communities, and ravish our planet's ecological balance do not realize what kind of future they are shaping.

We need to put the brakes on this escalation of war and militarism.

Caution! Look closely at the petitions you sign

As is the case every two years, a large number of petitions are now being circulated in the Lansing area and throughout the state, trying to get various initiatives on the statewide ballot.

Several of these petitions address voting access and, unfortunately, restrictions. When asked to sign a petition, please look closely at it to make sure you're doing your part to promote easier access to voting.

Below is a handy guide, supplied to us by



Indivisible Michigan 7 (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Indivisible8th>).

✓ Please Sign!	⊗ Do NOT Sign!
<input type="checkbox"/> Raise the Wage	✗ Secure MI Vote
<input type="checkbox"/> Reproductive Freedom for All	✗ Unlock MI II
<input type="checkbox"/> MI United (Good Time)	✗ Let MI Learn
<input type="checkbox"/> MI Right to Vote- A & B	✗ Audit MI
<input type="checkbox"/> Promote the Vote	

Blockbuster movie promotes U.S. militarism

By Nelson Brown

If you are looking for summer movie to boost the military/industrial/war hawk caucus, the best movie hands down is Tom Cruise in "Top Gun: Maverick."

Even as a peace activist, you could not help but get caught up in this fast-moving, supersonic-airplane, dangerous-mission thriller. Cruise and his elite Top-Gun buddies are on a risky mission to destroy some unspecified country's nuclear-weapons program.

There are rivalries within the group, old grudges that need healing, and breathtaking aerial combat scenes followed by a successful mission, then apparent disaster and finally a remarkable unreal comeback, ending in celebration and reconciliation on the aircraft carrier.

Of course, no one questions whether the United States should be attacking another country's nuclear program or what the real-world consequences of such an attack would be.

Basically, the movie accepts America's right to take whatever military action American exceptionalism requires and glories in America's military prowess.

War hawks and military contractors especially will love this movie, but unfortunately, so will much of the public.

The LGBTQ Kakuma Refugee Project

By Christina Reuther

The LGBTQ refugee project's intent is to bring awareness to the LGBTQ community members fleeing their home countries escaping genocide in east Africa. The refugees are coming from Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and even Yemen. They are seeking asylum in the Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya. Kenya, being a hostile host country, is unable to provide protection to the LGBTQ refugees. Kenya also has criminalized LGBTQ persons.



In the camp, the refugees are experiencing several human rights violations and discrimination on every front. They are being violently attacked, murdered, sexually assaulted, slashed with machetes, and robbed. Because of homophobic discrimination, they are not allowed to attend churches, mosques, or work programs. Children are not allowed to attend school. They are being attacked and harassed because their parents are LGBTQ. They are being violently attacked throughout the camp and in their homes.

The refugees live in extreme poverty because they are not allowed to work. Their basic needs are not met. The food rations are inadequate. They are being prevented from obtaining water at the wells. They are attacked at the wells when they go for water. Medical care is poor. Refugees must purchase their own medications. Sometimes they are refused treatment because the doctors don't want to touch them. They have inadequate clothing and housing. Because of homophobic violence, many of the refugees' homes have been firebombed, and they are forced to sleep outside. There are no counseling services available to them to provide psychological and emotional support in dealing with trauma.

Most of the LGBTQ refugees do not have Refugee Status Determination (RSD) for resettlement. Asylum means protection. Because the state of Kenya is unable to provide protection for this at-risk, vulnerable social group, they do not have true asylum. The Danish Refugee Council, that works with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)-Kenya in the refugee camp, encourages the refugees to self-protect by not being visibly LGBTQ. This is a violation of their human rights. The criterion for asylum is that if you cannot visibly be who you are in your country of origin without persecution, then you qualify for asylum.

The UNHCR did an empirical study regarding if it's possible to protect LGBTQ refugees in a refugee camp in a hostile host country. The study concluded they cannot. Essentially, what the Danish Refugee Council is saying is that the state of Kenya is unwilling to, and cannot, protect LGBTQ community refugees. In encouraging them to not be visible is not only unrealistic, but is another way of saying, "Don't be LGBTQ and we won't have to protect you, because we can't anyway." It is the responsibility of the state of Kenya to provide protection for all refugees. If they fail to do so, then it is the responsibility of the United Nations (the UNHCR) to report all human rights violations to the top officials in Geneva.

Instead of accurately reporting the human rights violations and discrimination the LGBTQ refugees are suffering, the UNHCR-Kenya is falsely reporting that the refugees are safe and not being discriminated against. The UNHCR all the way to Geneva, supports this false claim. The violent attacks and life-threatening situation the LGBTQ refugees are in has been confirmed by the Organization for Refuge, Asylum & Migration (ORAM) report from the Rainbow Railroad NGO. In addition, the European Parliament has issued a resolution condemning these acts of violence and holding the state of Kenya responsible to provide protection for the refugees. The LGBTQ refugees, as an at-risk social group due to this life-threatening situation, qualify for prioritized emergency resettlement. Yet the UNHCR has taken no action.

The LGBTQ Kakuma Refugee Project (cont.)



There is a very large distinction between a great humanitarian effort and protecting human rights to preserve humanity. Again, asylum means protection. When a state of the United Nations offers asylum to a vulnerable social group escaping genocide, they must protect them. This is the responsibility of the states of the United Nations and the responsibility of the UNHCR to hold the states accountable. The United Nations was founded on the ashes of Auschwitz...on the ashes of the innocents. That is sacred. It is our moral obligation to fight to maintain the preservation of human rights and human dignity for everyone everywhere on this planet.

I am not demonizing the United Nations. I am holding them accountable. There is a big difference. I am holding them to a higher standard because I believe we can do better than this. The UNHCR has an opportunity to be the great balancer for preserving humanity, human rights, and dignity throughout the world. If we do not hold the great institution of the United Nations accountable, and to a higher standard of expectations to fight harder to preserve humanity and expose human rights violations as they occur, then we are at great risk of losing our humanity altogether. We must do better, and we can do better. Let us remain united in our pursuit for global peace and justice, and fight to continue to preserve the principles of humanity.

In response to the misrepresentation of human rights violations by the UNHCR-Kenya, the LGBTQ refugees have started their own human rights movements and social media campaigns. Their goal is to bring awareness to the human rights violations and life-threatening circumstances they are experiencing on a daily basis. In addition to the Block 13 Movement, we have created another human rights campaign called The Unifying Movement. The activists have been jailed, tortured, and silenced for their participation in social media campaigns crying out to the world for help. Amnesty International in Kenya has made a public statement confirming this to be true. Most of the funding to provide basic needs to help the LGBTQ refugees has been blocked by some NGOs working with the Kenyan government to facilitate a propaganda campaign to silence and discredit these human rights movements.

In spite of all the adversity, lack of resources, and suffering the LGBTQ refugees are enduring, they remain strong in their resolution for freedom and their fight for human dignity. They are committed to not let their oppressors break their spirits. And in spite of the fact they are surrounded by 150,000 other refugees, who are homophobic and potentially violent, they remain peaceful in their pursuit for justice, freedom, and human rights - fighting for their lives every day. They are the epitome of peaceful resistance.

(Christina Reuther is an international human rights defender advocating for LGBTQIA community members from Eastern Africa escaping LGBTQIA genocide. She works directly with LGBTQIA asylum seekers in the Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya. The above was presented by Christina at the Peace Education Center's annual meeting May 21.)



Add Highland Park to the List and Think About the Costs We Seldom See

By Chris Smith

Highland Park. Yet another place name that will be tragically associated with horrific gun violence. Uvalde. Buffalo. Oxford. And those are only the most recent mass shooting locations to gain—at least temporarily—national news media attention.

One of the most striking aspects of the Highland Park shooting was how quickly and thoroughly it wiped away news media attention to the shooting of six police officers in Allen, Kentucky, an event that occurred just a few days earlier. What does this mean? Too many mass shootings for us to analyze and remember as each new event diverts attention from the previous one? A society in which such horrific events are “normal,” thus making us accustomed to and less affected by each one?

The Gun Violence Archive reports that there have been 320 mass shootings in the United States in 2022, including 11 on the Fourth of July alone. It is little wonder that our minds cannot focus on individual events—too many, too traumatic, too inevitable that tomorrow will bring even more. And that does not even include each day’s tally of individual shootings, firearms accidents, and suicides.

Another notable aspect of the Highland Park shooting was the ages of the deceased victims. Among the seven deaths reported thus far, two were in their 60s, one in his 70s, and one in his 80s. In academic literature on crime victimization, there is usually attention to “life-style exposure models” and the increased victimization of people who place themselves in higher risk settings, such as bars and parties late at night. The deaths of senior citizens at a Fourth of July parade, much like the recent deaths of seniors shopping at the grocery store in Buffalo, remind us that “safe” activities can still place us involuntarily at risk. The risk may be small, but there is risk nonetheless.



No one is immune or invulnerable, even among those who wholeheartedly agree with Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito’s argument that carrying firearms in public provides a measure of protection for armed people. A firearm may help a person with self-defense in particular circumstances. But in other situations, the firearm is either utterly worthless or creates grave risks for bystanders.

The lesson from Highland Park is the same lesson delivered to us by each incident, like a line of music lyrics repeated over and over: guns are too easily available, including weapons of war that can do unimaginable harm in a matter of seconds. Once again we must ask: Why should civilians be able to purchase weapons of war? They are not for hunting or for personal self-defense. They are offensive killing machines designed to extinguish many human lives as quickly as possible.

Once again we must ask: Do we have proper controls in place to keep firearms out of the hands of people at risk of doing harm to themselves and others? We need to have universal background checks based on record-keeping systems that will alert us to unacceptable risks posed by specific individuals. Should we consider including more data on individuals’ contacts with police, reports of threats from family members, and specific mental health interventions? Should we consider how to design extreme risk protection order (“red flag”) laws so that law enforcement and court officials can consider past behavior involving other weapons, such as the knives previously seized from the alleged Highland Park shooter’s home, as well as online expressions of violent intentions or mass shooting fantasies? There is slow progress on having any extreme risk protection order laws in the three dozen states, including Michigan, that lack such options. The Highland Park shooting reminds us that we need to accelerate attention to the design and implementation of such laws. It is not enough to merely have “a law” on the books.

An additional lesson from the Highland Park shooting is one that receives too little attention from the news media and the public. More than three dozen people were shot at the Highland Park parade. Most survived, but we pay too little attention to what the future holds for them. A recent study compared consequences for shooting survivors with the lives of similar individuals who were not gun-violence victims. Not surprisingly, gunfire victims bear substantial costs, as does society when medical and other costs are spread to taxpayers and insurance policy customers.

For example, in the year after a nonfatal gunshot injury, “direct spending on survivors increased \$2,495 a month compared with demographically and clinically matched controls. Survivors also experienced a 40 percent increase in pain diagnoses, a 51 percent increase in psychiatric disorders, and an 85 percent increase in substance use disorders compared to uninjured peers. At the same time, their family members suffered a 12 percent increase in psychiatric disorders compared to matched controls” (Shaw, 2022).

Add Highland Park to the List (cont.)

Individual shooting events may not remain in the forefront of our minds, but we must be aware that the lingering wounds, both physical and psychological, do not disappear. Our society pays a steep price for failing to treat the issue of gun violence as a top policy priority. That price includes steep financial costs.

Yet, gun violence also takes a toll on our sense of security, our daily confrontations with risk and fear, and our knowledge that the next horrific mass shooting is not merely right around the corner—it will happen somewhere in the United States today, tomorrow, and the next day. What more reason do we need to push our legislators to act—and to prioritize the issue of gun violence when we cast our votes in the 2022 elections?

Jonathan Shaw, “Research: Gun Violence,” Harvard Magazine (online edition), April 4, 2022 ([harvardmagazine.com](https://www.harvardmagazine.com))



(Chris Smith is president of the Michigan Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence Board of Directors.)

Eid al-Adha, a Muslim celebration instilling charitable giving and sacrifice

By Thasin Sardar

Eid-al-Adha is a celebration marked by sacrifice as a way to draw close to God. In the Islamic tradition, it is believed that God commanded Prophet Abraham in his dream to sacrifice his son. As he prepared to follow the command without questioning it, God sent archangel Gabriel to replace his son with a ram.

Muslims commemorate this test of sacrifice that the Prophet Abraham was subject to by partaking in sacrifice annually on the tenth day of the last month of the lunar calendar known as Dhul Hijjah. This year, it will be observed on Saturday, July 9.

The Michigan Muslim Community Council, an umbrella organization representing Muslim communities from all across Michigan, performs sacrifice on behalf of Muslims who choose to donate their entire sacrifice in the form of charity. This is then distributed to the less privileged all across Michigan, including in Greater Lansing. By sharing the sacrifice with the less fortunate, the practice instills a habit of charitable giving and serving others in the wider community.

The concept of sacrifice to God is shared across the Abrahamic traditions. In the Torah, similar to the Quran, God tests Abraham to make the ultimate sacrifice. And in the Gospels, Jesus is referred to as the Lamb of God who will take away the sins we commit in this world.

By honoring God's command to sacrifice, Muslims express their obedience to God — reaffirming a fundamental tenet of the faith of believing in the oneness of God. A requirement of offering the sacrifice is to share it with the less fortunate. This enables those who don't have the means to celebrate to partake in the festivities. In some parts of the world where economic hardship is pervasive, such a gift of meat to some families is perhaps the only time in the entire year they are able to consume it.



The pilgrimage to Mecca, in Saudi Arabia, is also known as Hajj — a pillar of faith in Islam. Those who are financially capable are encouraged to make this pilgrimage in this lunar month of Dhul Hijjah. The ninth day of this month is known as the day of Arafah, and is the core of the Hajj pilgrimage.

Pilgrims gather on Mount Arafat, making supplications to God and repenting for their sins and shortcomings by expressing sincere regrets to God, seeking his forgiveness and hoping to renew their lives with a clean slate.

Muslims who are unable to perform the Hajj pilgrimage fast and pray on the day of Arafah, symbolically joining the millions of Muslims who are assembled in the valley worshiping and supplicating under the open skies.

Increased remembrance of God, charitable acts and good deeds are encouraged in the first 10 days of this lunar month. Traditionally, Muslims gather to perform a prayer in congregation and exchange greetings and gifts with their family, friends and loved ones. This is typically followed by friends and families indulging in feasts together, sharing dishes and desserts that are popular in their cultures or ethnicities.

Thasin Sardar is chair of the Islamic Society of Greater Lansing Board of Trustees.

Ingham County prosecutor refuses to prosecute under antiquated abortion law

Peace Education Center is proud to have given a Peacemaker of the Year Award to Carol Siemon, Ingham County Prosecutor, for her refusal to prosecute people under Michigan's 1931 antiabortion law.

The biggest confusion centers around the 1931 abortion ban. A federal judge issued an injunction against the Attorney General prosecuting under it. But some prosecutors are arguing that such an order doesn't apply to them, since they weren't parties to the suit.

And they may be right. Prosecutors in places like Kent, Jackson and Macomb have suggested they might prosecute. That won't happen in Michigan because we've got Carol Siemon.



In a recent article published in the Lansing City Pulse, Siemon said, **"I have said, unilaterally, during my entire legal career I will not prosecute a medical provider for providing an abortion."**

"I've been very clear where I stand on reproductive rights during both of my campaigns," she added. "Voters know what I stand for. If they don't like it, they can vote me out of office."

To read the full story, please visit <https://www.lansingcitypulse.com/stories/michigan-prosecutors-fall-in-line-politically-on-abortion,21668>.

Siemon also has appeared in national media discussing post-Roe, including MSNBC's Ari Melber's show, "The Beat."

Give peace a chance: PeaceQuest 2022 set for September

By Tom Oswald

With war waging in Ukraine, reproductive rights being threatened, and efforts to restrict voting ramping up, you might think it's hard to give peace a chance these days.

The good news is you'll get your opportunity this fall, when PeaceQuest Greater Lansing, the Lansing-area's annual celebration of peace and justice, takes place in September.

PeaceQuest (PQ) is a community-wide celebration that happens every September. Its mission: To celebrate the United Nations' International Day of Peace, which was declared by the UN General Assembly with a resolution passed unanimously on Sept. 21, 1981.

The events are sponsored by many local organizations that promote peace and justice, including the Peace Education Center, the Greater Lansing United Nations Association, and many others. For a complete list of PeaceQuest organizers, please visit <https://peacequestgreaterlansing.org/sponsors/>.

The list of PQ22 events is long and varied. And it's not too late for you or your organization to sponsor and plan an event.

If you have an idea for a peace-themed event, please visit the PQ website at <https://peacequestgreaterlansing.org/>.

The event can be anything from the showing of a film, a lecture or panel discussion, a concert, or a poetry reading.



PeaceQuest Greater Lansing began in 2015 as a half-day event designed to recognize the United Nations' International Day of Peace. Since then, PQ has grown to a month-long celebration involving diverse ages, interests and organizations.

The International Day of Peace was established in 1981 by the United Nations General Assembly, setting aside a day devoted to strengthening the ideals of peace, both within and among all nations and peoples.

"We are devoted to creating a safer world with fewer conflicts, less violence, more tolerance and greater social, economic and environmental justice," said Lynn Bartley of the Greater Lansing United Nations Association who also chairs the PQ22 planning committee. "Please consider joining us and/or planning an event."

Peacemakers honored at PEC annual meeting

By Tom Oswald

Peace activists from all around mid-Michigan gathered May 21 for the Peace Education Center's annual meeting, a meeting that honored seven individuals, including Ingham County Prosecutor Carol Siemon and two St. Johns High School students, for their efforts to promote peace and justice.



Peacemaker of the Year Awards

Each year the PEC selects one or more area residents for the Peacemaker of the Year Award. This year the center also honored 2021 awardees, as last year's meeting was canceled due to COVID.



Jerry & Shannon Norris, & PEC Nate Jemison

Jerry and Shannon Norris were selected as Peacemakers of the Year for 2021. They are the creators of the Fledge Foundation, which is dedicated to eradicating hunger and violence in the Greater Lansing area and beyond. At its eastside Lansing location, the foundation hosts food and supply pantries, as well as a meeting space for a wide variety of community groups. For information visit <https://thefledge.com>.



Carol Siemon was selected as Peacemaker of the Year for 2022.

Elected in 2016, Siemon is the first woman to serve as Ingham County prosecutor. She was honored by the PEC for her dedication to managing the Ingham County prosecutorial system with fairness and compassion.

Lifetime Peacemaker Awards

The lifetime achievement award for 2021 was given to **Lynn Bartley** of East Lansing. For many years Bartley has incorporated calls for commitment to international peace with justice to students and colleagues as she served as a special education teacher, resource teacher, and associate principal. She worked to expand global perspectives of students and their understanding of the importance of being active, responsible citizens of the world. She is past president of the Greater Lansing United Nations Association and has been active in the annual PeaceQuest event.



Efren Paredes Jr.'s family, & PEC John Masterson.

The lifetime achievement award for 2022 was given to **Efren Paredes Jr.** Presently incarcerated in a Michigan prison, he was honored for his many years of activities supporting peace, cooperation and justice in prisons. He has organized campaigns to reform the unjust and inhumane structures within Michigan prisons. He also serves as vice-chair of the Michigan Poor Peoples' Campaign.

Tom Schneider Peacemaker Awards

This scholarship is for graduating high school seniors from Ingham, Eaton or Clinton counties who apply or are nominated. Recipients are chosen based on their passion and commitment toward building a more peaceful and just world. This year's awardees are:

Lauren Beck of St. Johns High School. Lauren earned the award for her commitment to leading a culture of social justice awareness, understanding and tolerance at her school.

Also earning the award is **Jake Lasceski** of St. Johns High School. He earned the award for his exemplary actions organizing St. Johns High School students to commemorate and honor the victims of gun violence in schools.

Awardees pictured left: (from left to right) Jake Lasceski, Lynn Bartley, and Lauren Beck

Seek diplomatic solutions to Ukraine war

The following is an open letter from the Peace Education Center sent to Rep. Elissa Slotkin, Sen. Gary Peters and Sen. Debbie Stabenow.

It was written by Nelson Brown, PEC co-chair.

While the Greater Lansing Area Peace Education Center (PEC) has supported your positions on most domestic political, social and economic issues, the PEC Board regrets you are now supporting President Biden's ill-conceived dangerous escalation of American war aims in the Ukraine/Russia War. When Russia invaded Ukraine, President Biden wisely adopted a calibrated defensive strategy to provide Ukraine with defensive weapons but to avoid any direct confrontation between Russia, and the United States and NATO. After this policy helped Ukraine drive Russia from Kyiv and moved the front lines to the east, both sides showed some willingness to consider a compromise diplomatic solution. No more.

The PEC supports America's strengthening of Ukraine's ability to defend itself and condemns Russian aggression and atrocities, but it also supports a diplomatic settlement, not an escalated-and-protracted war. The United States, however, has now abandoned the search for such a diplomatic settlement: U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin wants "Russia weakened to the degree that it can't do the kinds of things that it has done in invading Ukraine." Under this more aggressive policy, the United States will arm Ukraine to the teeth with "weapons, weapons, weapons" in the belief that Ukraine can win a decisive victory in a protracted war in Eastern Ukraine. The United States and Ukraine now have no diplomatic negotiating strategy, except maybe to accept Russia's unconditional surrender, an unlikely prospect.

The dangers and consequences of this American escalated-and-protracted proxy war with Russia are too dangerous to risk. This expanded war, moreover, remains unnecessary if the object is to weaken Russia because this war has already shown that, apart from its civilization-destroying nuclear arsenal, its military and domestic resources remain too weak to pose a serious conventional military threat to the United States and NATO. After considering the risks, dangers and consequences of protracted war, the PEC asks that you back away from these escalated war aims and support a compromise diplomatic negotiating strategy. The PEC respectfully asks that you consider the risks and likely Western and world consequences of an escalated-and-protracted war.



Graphic Designed by Freepik_Starline

A Stalemate Is More Likely Than Decisive Victory

First, the expectation Russia's military remains so debilitated that with American advanced weapons Ukraine can decisively defeat Russia in a protracted war to the point it will be forced to capitulate to Western terms stands as very risky and unlikely. While Russia overreached by attacking Kyiv, it has now concentrated its superior military forces in Eastern Ukraine – a position from which its military can be both more offensive and defensive. If necessary, Putin has the ability to mobilize its full military resources in the face of possible defeat. Moreover, while Putin might eventually accept a stalemate-based diplomatic settlement, he will unlikely face a clear humiliating defeat without dangerously escalating his military response, possibly even using tactical nuclear weapons. We would urge you to consider the May 14th opinion piece entitled "There Are Two Endgames in Ukraine. Both Carry Big Risks," by New York Times writer Ross Douthat who discusses the dangers of a protracted war. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/14/opinion/ukraine-russia-putin-biden.html>

Associated with support for an expanded war is the dangerous revival of geopolitical overreach by much of America's foreign-policy elite implicitly using Ukraine to evoke a rejuvenated belief in American Exceptionalism – the notion that America's values, political system and strategic goals are especially virtuous in world affairs. No doubt many hawkish leaders who are still smarting after America's disastrous wars in Vietnam and Iraq, and its humiliating twenty-year defeat in Afghanistan see Ukraine as an opportunity to get America's righteous victorious groove back, even if it is paid for by Ukrainian lives and property. America's war aims in Ukraine should be more limited and pragmatic, not grandiose and triumphant. In the war's early stages when it looked like Russia might conquer Ukraine, heroic rhetoric like "democracy versus authoritarianism" may have resonated, but with Russia reduced to holding on to slivers of land in Eastern Ukraine, the war has effectively been downgraded to bloody border disputes between two sovereign nations. Our country does not need more geopolitical overreach; we need a pragmatic diplomatic settlement as quickly as possible.

Seek diplomatic solutions to Ukraine war (cont.)

Protracted War Means More Unnecessary Death, Displacement and Destruction

Second, the costs in lives, economic disruption and destruction of property from a protracted war will be extensive. Currently, it is estimated that a staggering 28 percent of Ukraine's population has reportedly been displaced, either internally or abroad. About one-third of Ukraine's basic infrastructure – roads, rail lines, bridges -- has been damaged or destroyed. Numerous cities have already been reduced to rubble. The cost in Ukrainian civilian lives has been great. The cost of Ukrainian military casualties has not been released – only claims of many Russian casualties – but Ukrainian casualties are certainly not insignificant. Further, most of the industrial production and structures in Eastern Ukraine have been decimated. A longer war means more of the same for property untouched so far.

Even if the war ended tomorrow, rebuilding and returning to pre-war production levels and the replacement of damaged property will already require years and hundreds of billions of dollars. President Zelensky has said that initially Ukraine will need \$150 billion to rebuild and about \$5 billion a month to continue the war. Who is going to pay for this massive expenditure? The American taxpayer? Some hawks may think that, like Germans after the disastrous Treaty of Versailles ended World War I, the Russian people will have to be squeezed for reparations. As the war continues, the casualties, population disruptions and property destruction will only expand. Who is going to pay for this?

The World's Economy and Food Supplies Will Be Hit Hard

Third, the disruption of Europe's, America's and much of the world's economy has already struck, and it will only get worse the longer the war continues. While the world already faces economic turmoil over the Covid Pandemic, the war and sanctions imposed on Russia are adding to the disruption. Last year, Russia was the largest exporter of natural gas, the second-largest exporter of crude oil and the third-largest exporter of coal. These sanctions will undoubtedly add to the world's economic woes, especially in Europe, but also for the United States. Gas prices in the United States are going through the roof, which will likely force war-supporting Democrats to pay higher prices at the midterms.

But it's not just economic disruption alone that a protracted war will inflict on people. Russia and Ukraine together supply 30 percent of the wheat, 20 percent of the corn, 75 percent of the sunflower oil and 33 percent of the barley to global markets, according to the U.N. World Food Program. Russia also is a key producer of products that go into the world's fertilizer. These disruptions will raise the costs and availability of food, especially in poorer countries leading to famine conditions. According to the U.N. Food and Agricultural Organization, 14 African nations depend on Russia and Ukraine for 50 percent of their wheat, with Eritrea (100 percent), Somalia (90 percent) and Egypt (75 percent). With a food crisis can easily come political turmoil in these and other countries. America does not need this turmoil with possible regime changes; we need a diplomatic settlement in this war.

The United States Cannot Afford Endless Wars

Fourth, the United States cannot afford the expanded costs of a long proxy war with Russia; we have pressing needs at home. The U.S. military budget is already consuming too much of our resources. Invoking heroic World War II rhetoric about the "arsenal of democracy," Congress has already passed the "Ukraine Democracy Lend-Lease Act," by a near unanimous vote. Realistically, billions of dollars' worth of war material "leased" or "lent" will never be returned and will need to be replaced at great costs.

Congress has also passed a \$40 billion military and humanitarian aid package. When the costs of all the humanitarian and mostly military aid are tallied so far, Ukraine is already receiving over \$54 billion in acknowledged aid, an amount that may jump as high as \$100 billion in a longer war. The official war budget for Afghanistan was \$46 billion a year. Biden's entire proposed military budget for 2023 was \$813 billion. We don't need more military spending; a diplomatic settlement will be much cheaper.

The U.S. Needs to Focus on More Important Challenges

Fifth, by focusing so much time and energy on "weakening" Russia – a nation already shown to be no serious non-nuclear military threat to NATO – the United States has fewer resources to deal with more serious threats to our national security. Our country faces challenges from the pandemic and global contagion, climate change, economic problems at home, the danger of nuclear weapons and threats to our democracy from our own internal authoritarian forces. The battle cry of "democracy versus authoritarianism" now needs to rouse us here at home more than in Europe.

Moreover, Russia represents no economic challenge to the United States or to the democratic political values that this country can represent when it truly acts closer to our professed democratic and humanitarian values on the world stage instead of being a hegemon proffering idealistic excuses for military dominance. The serious challenges confronting democratic governing principles on the world stage and confronting our domestic and world economic position come from a rising authoritarian China, not from a declining Russia. By focusing so much attention on a sideshow in Russia, Europe and Ukraine, the United States has weakened itself in preparing for the main events it faces.

Seek diplomatic solutions to Ukraine war (cont.)

Conclusion

The United States, Ukraine, Russia, Europe and the rest of the world do not need an escalated-and-protracted American proxy war with Russia – a war that most likely will look like a stalemate after months of death, destruction and displacement. We do not need to run the risk that a cornered Russia might escalate the military forces engaged in the fighting, even possibly using nuclear weapons. We do not need the domestic and world economic, social and political disruptions a protracted war will bring. We do not need a Cold War II where a nuclear-armed permanently pariah Russia remains seething with grievances outside of some integrated European political, economic and military architecture.

America needs a negotiated diplomatic settlement for this war – one that starts to reintegrate Russia into world systems -- as quickly as possible, even if it does not please everyone. The Peace Education Center respectfully asks that you abandon any escalated-and-protracted war without any serious diplomatic negotiation strategy to end it. Instead, the Peace Education Center urges you to support a diplomatic negotiating strategy to end this war as quickly as possible.

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



More pictures from the PEC 2022 Annual Meeting

