



PEACENOTES

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"THE TIME HAS COME, THE TIME IS NOW"

By Tom Oswald

Mass shootings have become such a part of this American life that they almost seem unreal. At least that's how it was for me, until Feb. 13 when Michigan State University became another dot on the mass-shooting map. And then even more so when, not long after the shooting, I walked the campus.

"Spartan Strong" signs everywhere. Flowers outside of Berkey Hall and the MSU Union. And, of course, the Rock. Long the site that keeps an eye on the pulse of MSU, the Rock was at that time a memorial, not only to those we lost and almost lost, but to a way of life, a feeling of sense and security we always had about our university.

Even several weeks after the shooting, the campus seemed quiet, subdued. People I encountered on my walk made brief eye contact, sad smiles touching their lips. Things have changed.

Speaking of which, others things have changed recently too that could be a tiny glimmer of hope within this sadness. We are now at a point in our great state that changes can be made to our arcane, dare I say deadly, gun-violence laws.

"The time has come, the time is now"

The above quote, written by Dr. Seuss and aimed at one Marvin K. Mooney, has taken on a whole new meaning for me.

As you all are aware, Democrats have taken majorities in the state House and Senate, and they have wasted no time in bringing forth legislation that would not only fix some of those broken laws, but even save lives in the process.

Not long after the MSU shooting, committee hearings began on legislation that would create, among other things, universal background checks, extreme risk protection orders, and safe storage laws.

For years Democrats have introduced similar bills, only to be ignored by the Republican-led legislation. The time, as says Dr. Seuss, is now.

The anti-gun violence legislation is speeding through the Michigan Legislature, and that says something as these wheels tend to move slowly if at all. The package totals 11 bills and so far, all Democrats have voted for all of them. On the other hand, Republicans have voted against all of them, with the exception of a couple of minor bills that would do little good.

A FEW DETAILS:

Universal Background Checks are a common-sense and fundamental measure that can help prevent guns from getting into the wrong hands. Currently, background checks are only required for sales made by licensed firearms dealers and for handguns in Michigan. This has created a loophole for unregulated sales between private individuals on long guns. The **majority of Americans support** universal background checks.

Establishing **Extreme Risk Protection Orders** in Michigan is just common sense. Known as red flag laws, they allow law enforcement or family members to petition a court to temporarily remove firearms from someone who is a significant danger to themselves or others.

Lastly, this legislative package will also include a bill to require the **Safe Storage of Firearms**. Requiring guns to be safely stored will prevent accidental shootings and suicides, especially among children and young adults. In the United States **4.6 million minors** live in homes with at least one loaded, unlocked firearm.

Want to help? **Contact your legislator** and tell him or her to support the bills. Contact the governor's office and urge her to sign the bills into legislation.

The time is now.

ADDICTED TO WEAPONS

By Terry Link



The recent murder of three MSU students in the building where I used to teach brought back my experience with gun violence 50 years ago when I was a student at Wayne State in Detroit.

I had been drinking coffee in the union on a chilly November morning, and was heading across the mall when I heard gunshots. I saw a man fall and the shooter run away. Without thinking, I ran to the victim, a student, lying on his back, blood gurgling from his mouth and his eyes wide open in shock. I can see his eyes now as clearly as I did that day. I put my coat over him and held his head up to keep him from choking until police and medics came and moved me away.

I walked around in shock for a couple of weeks trying to find some balance in the world. I learned later that the young man died, the shooter was caught and, I assume, eventually convicted.

At that time, I had been involved in anti-war demonstrations and was leading a Free University course on the idea of "nonviolence." What is crystal clear both then and today, is that despite our growing arsenal of weapons, we feel no safer either on the global stage or on our city streets.

Addiction, as noted by system thinkers, means depending more on a quick fix and less on core solutions. Our culture is addicted to the idea of guns and weapons as the answer to our ills (been to a movie theatre recently?). We even use weapons-related language when addressing disease, climate change or inequality, i.e., "target," "war on," "attack."

But nowhere is this so dramatically visible as with both our militaristic mindset and our addiction to guns for personal security. How is it that to even suggest constraints on weapons is anathema to our sick culture? Congress has shown only tepid solutions, like child locks on guns, which they can't even agree on. Spending on weapons of war has no limit in the eyes of the vast majority of members of Congress, only on how much to increase this theft of the common wealth.

There is financial profit in the violence industries - even during the pandemic those merchants of death outperformed the stock market. In systems-thinking analysis we see the reinforcing loops abound. Congress gets oodles of campaign financing from these industries, which pour billions into professional lobbying, often by lobbyists who used to work in Congress or in the military (these are gold-plated revolving doors). More weapons mean more profits means more campaign financing... and so it goes.

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.

The military-industrial-congressional complex has cooked the system. To vote against the failed and troubled F-35 fighter jet boondoggle, which has components of it manufactured in over

400 of the 435 districts, is to court a litany of catcalls underwritten by the industry. This is the conundrum members of Congress face.

Breaking away from this weapons addiction will require a long-term commitment to redirect our attention and energies toward the real security threats that will affect all of us: the co-mingled crises of climate chaos, gross inequality, injustice, and ecological unraveling. That polycrisis is picking up steam much quicker than most had charted.

Lasting solutions require building trust, which simply can't be constructed overnight. Transparency is essential, as is verification. There is certainly a role for oversight, whether through an international body such as the UN, or at a local unit of government or citizen commission. If we redirected even 10 percent of the weapons budget towards these efforts our long-term possibilities for peace and security at home and abroad would improve.

Third parties are often helpful, perhaps even necessary to transition to a trusting relationship. It takes courage to build trust, to be vulnerable, especially with those we see as enemies. Let's work to build a world of true human security for all in communion with the web of life that we share.

We need the courage to tackle our addiction to weapons and build the trust that can allow us all to live secure and fruitful lives.



The Other Gun Problem | BY BECKY PAYNE

While we're in an epidemic of gun violence, is it a good time to talk about lead poisoning from gunshot wounds?

With so many school shootings, drive-by shootings, murder-suicides, road rage shootings... name your favorite type of shooting crime... we are leaving a multitude of humans carrying lead in their bodies. **Lead poisoning can cause problems like brain damage, kidney damage, and even death.** It can change a person's DNA, causing damage to unborn children. Lead may sit harmlessly in some parts of the body for years, but if it moves to where it can be absorbed,

poisoning will commence, even years later.

Not all gunshot wounds are fatal, so that leaves the survivors, who outnumber those who died, with lead residue beginning its slow poisoning process.

Did you know that gunshots have become the leading cause of childhood deaths?

Animal rights and nature organizations and even the Biden administration are seeking laws to remove lead from bullets, but mostly from hunting. A complete ban on lead in bullets is

a long way off. Nearly half of eagles and other prey birds have lead in their bodies from eating smaller animals that had been shot at one time. Hunters who eat animals that were shot with lead have higher rates of lead in their bodies.

This is not safe!

As we work for laws to limit the availability of guns, it only makes sense to call for eliminating lead in bullets. A bill has been introduced to limit the use of lead on U.S Fish and Wildlife Services lands. We eliminated it in gasoline and paint, against loud protests from those manufacturers, now we need to eliminate it from ammunition.

Mother's Day For Peace

Save the date for an exciting new PEC event & fundraiser!



While the concept of Mother's Day has devolved into a spectacle of cards, flowers and brunches, it's long forgotten that the original intent of that special day was to promote peace.

In fact, the original Mother's Day was initiated by [Julia Ward Howe](#) (she of Battle Hymn of the Republic fame) around 1870, hoping it would be a day for mothers to campaign for an end of war following the carnage of the American Civil War.

With that in mind, the Lansing Area Peace Education Center will hold a special Mother's Day event/fundraiser on Saturday, May 6.

To be held at 7 p.m. at the Allen Street Neighborhood Center, 1611 E Kalamazoo St., Lansing, the event will feature the popular local band Jackalope, and a special guest appearance by Julia Ward Howe herself.



Jackalope is a local, four-piece band made up of Charlie Richardson, Diana Farmer, David Stowe, and Mike Lawrence. A long-time supporter of the Peace Education Center, the band is best known for its western/swing style.

LEARN MORE ABOUT JACKALOPE!

This event remains in the planning stages.
Please stay tuned for further developments!

DID YOU KNOW?

May 9, 1914: President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day "as a public expression of love and reverence for the mothers of our country."

Here is some of the text from the 1870 Mother's Day proclamation:

From the bosom of the devastated earth a voice goes up with our own. It says: Disarm, Disarm! The sword of murder is not the balance of justice. Blood does not wipe out dishonor, nor violence vindicate possession. As men have often forsaken the plough and the anvil at the summons of war, let women now leave all that may be left of home for a great and earnest day of council.

More information can be found [HERE](#)

MOTHER'S DAY FOR PEACE DETAILS:

Saturday, May 6 @ 7 PM
Allen Neighborhood Center
1611 E Kalamazoo St, Lansing



Mayors For Peace

by John Metzler

“MFP is dedicated to the promotion of nuclear disarmament”

At the December 2022 board meeting of the Peace Education Center, it was decided that we would approach the cities of East Lansing and Lansing encouraging the respective city councils to join the international Mayors for Peace Initiative.

We prepared a one-page background document to share with the councils. PEC board member Thasin Sardar, who is also a member of the East Lansing Human Rights Commission, arranged for fellow PEC board member John Metzler, to address the Commission at their Feb. 13, 2023, monthly meeting.

At the end of John's presentation, Thasin introduced a motion that the Human Rights Commission forward a resolution that the East Lansing City Council submit an application to join the Mayors for Peace international organization. The PEC is waiting for the East Lansing City Council to take action on this resolution.

The Peace Education Center plans to make a formal request to the Lansing City Council that Lansing join the Mayors for Peace initiative.



Mayors for Peace, founded in 2001, is an international organization of cities dedicated to the promotion of nuclear disarmament. Its vision statement reads:

“The purposes of the ‘Mayors for Peace campaign are to contribute to the attainment of lasting world peace by arousing concern among citizens of the world for the total abolition of nuclear weapons through close solidarity among member cities as well as striving to solve vital problems of the human race such as food insecurity and poverty, the plight of refugees, human rights abuses, and environmental degradation.”

As of January 2023, Mayors for Peace counted 8,237 member cities in 166 countries and territories around the world including 228 cities across the U.S. with five member cities in Michigan (Ann Arbor, Benton Harbor, Detroit, Grand Rapids, Hamtramck). The Lansing Area Peace Education Center, based in East Lansing, strongly urges the city of East Lansing to become a member of Mayors for Peace.

For more information on the initiative, or for registration forms for membership, please visit the [MAYORS FOR PEACE](#) website.



PEC ANNUAL MEETING 2023

Save the date for this much anticipated event!

**Saturday, June 10 at
the University United
Methodist Church
1120 S. Hagadorn,
East Lansing**

Every spring the Lansing Area Peace Education Center opens its doors for a social gathering and potluck to assess where we have been and where we need to go in the coming year. This warm gathering of peace supporters - THAT'S YOU! - allows us to hear from our friends, share our concerns and hopes, and chart a way forward as an organization committed to moving our community and world away from violence toward peace and justice.

Join us on June 10 as we recognize peacemakers who have demonstrated remarkable efforts over the past year, or over a lifetime, and recognize young peacemakers with the Tom Schneider Peacemaker Award.

If you have an interest in serving on our all-volunteer board, please contact us in advance. We will also vote for at-large board members.

We hope you will put this date on your calendar to gather with friends, old and new, as we report on past accomplishments and plan future efforts.

All are welcome to join us on Saturday, June 10 at the University United Methodist Church 1120 S. Hagadorn, East Lansing. Time is yet to be determined. We will stay in touch.

Or please feel free to visit our [website](#) or our [Facebook page](#).



TERRY LINK- The Michigan Peace Alliance is now up to 23 peace-focused organizations from across the state. Just a year ago we started reaching out to other peace organizations in Michigan to share resources, events and knowledge, as each organization works on efforts to reduce war and militarism.

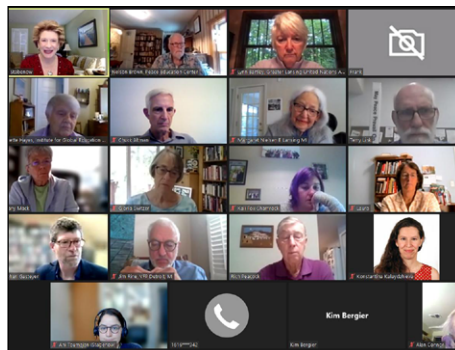
We collectively were able to arrange meetings over Zoom with both Sen. Stabenow and Sen. Peters and their staffs last fall. We've also supported programs and events other MPA member organizations have organized.

Veterans for Peace member, Dr. Jim Rine, a geology professor at Wayne State University, will be leading our upcoming program on "[Links Between Climate Crisis and Militarism](#)" on **Monday April 17**.

We hope these connections that are building across our state will leverage more voices to push for moving away from militarism toward diplomacy and the strengthening of international rule of law.

The PEC is the founder and facilitator to this effort, including managing the MPA website and social media. Your [support](#) makes this possible.

For more information on the Michigan Peace Alliance, including its recent collective statement on gun violence, visit the [MPA website](#).



LANSING AREA PEACE EDUCATION CENTER

LINKS BETWEEN CLIMATE CRISIS & U.S. MILITARISM

EARTH DAY PROGRAM WITH DR. JIM RINE



APRIL 17, 2023 @ 7 PM

1120 S HARRISON RD
EAST LANSING





Tour of the Former Otto School Building

By Becky Payne

Last November, several Peace Education Center board members toured the old Otto Middle School that has been purchased by the Advancement Corporation Community Center, an offshoot of the national Poor People's Campaign, which intends to use this building to support low-income residents. Pastor Derrick Knox, local leader of The Poor People's Campaign, is leading the project. He and Kris Wisniewski, outreach coordinator, led us on our tour.

We were awed at the massive size of the facility and grounds as well as the amount of money, labor and time that will be needed to keep it moving forward.

The building is three stories high and has 300,000 square feet. Each month's utilities alone cost \$20,000. Once we started walking through the building, we were equally awed at all the services that are being planned.

We first toured the future health center, being brought to life in partnership with the Michigan Public Health Institute (MPHI) to provide medical, dental, vision and mental health care, along with space to help people sign for Medicaid.

Next, we walked the main hallway with high ceilings and elaborately carved moldings. This is truly a grand old building, well worth restoring, but what a lot of work! Long rows of gray lockers were either being rehabbed or torn out to make recessed public art spaces. The entrance foyer and

some other areas have water damage from broken windows and disrepair from the years it sat abandoned. We peeked into classrooms, science labs and conference rooms in various stages of completion.

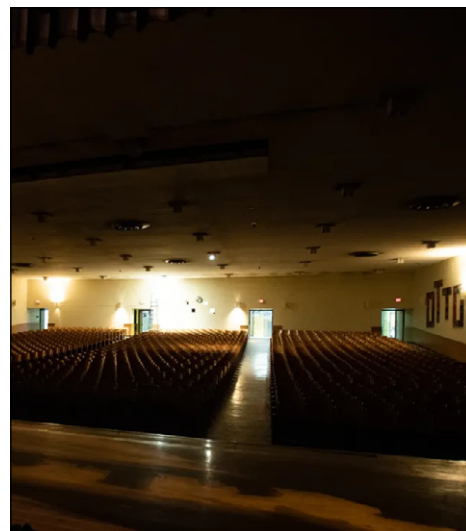
Eventually, the cafeteria will be rehabbed as an incubator kitchen and a food training facility for local youths. Tables and chairs are in stacks until they can be called into use.

The gymnasium, with beautifully refinished wooden floors, is currently being used as practice space for two local high schools with plans to bring in community volleyball and pickleball teams. The auditorium, with seating for 1,600, gave a feeling of grandeur with high ceilings, decorative moldings and row after row of seats sloping toward the stage.

A big part of Derrick's hopes for this building is to provide young people with marketable skills. To this end, many classrooms are being prepped for various types of trainings. Young carpenters had been making the sheds that were installed at Reuters Park for the holidays.

The carpentry crew wants to begin building tiny houses for the homeless people who lived in the vacant lot called the "Back 40" that was demolished by the city last year. The project has also purchased the former Teen Challenge building on West Willow Street and is converting it into apartments for young adults aging out of the foster care system.

With an outward air of calmness as he



talked about yet more of his plans for what this space could provide, Derrick quoted the old saying:

"The way to eat an elephant is one bite at a time." But he continued, "What we have here is a dinosaur!"

The building is located at 500 E. Thomas Street, Lansing.

If you'd like to help out; or in need of office space (classrooms can be rented for \$1 per square foot; conference room rental begins at \$30), contact Kris Wisniewski at zkw319@gmail.com.

Good Shepherd Collective Continues its Work for Human Rights in Palestine

By Paul Brun Del Re



Covid-19 and internal struggles over the past two years have made doing the work of the Good Shepherd Collective (GSC) more difficult, given the background of continued violence from the Israeli Defense Forces and Israeli settler groups. At the end of 2022, the state of Israel had seen the election of the most right-wing government in the history of Israel. This doesn't bode well, not only for liberal democracy in Israel, but for the fate of the Palestinian people who have been living in the occupied territories.

TODAY'S CONTEXT

Recent events in Israel/Palestine have seen much violence. The openly racist and homophobic Bezalel Smotrich, co-founder of Regavim and Israeli finance minister, is dedicated to the displacement and destruction of Palestinian communities. The Netanyahu Government has given him control over Israeli military agencies in the occupied West Bank. Since the beginning of this year Israeli forces and settlers have attacked Palestinians in Nablus, Jenin, Jericho, Jerusalem and many other communities in order to crush Palestinian resistance.

The data on demolitions of Palestinian homes and property so far this year as of March 13, 2023 include 270 demolitions, 401 people displaced, as well as 186 children displaced.

The two main projects/campaigns that the GSC has been engaged in are the Olive Tree Planting Project and the Defund Racism Campaign.

What is the Good Shepherd Collective (GSC)?

The Good Shepherd Collective is a group "of individuals and organizations seeking to change the structures that perpetuate violence in Palestine.

[They] understand violence to be rooted in the structures and laws that guide civil formation and order. As such, [they] reject the binary discourse of 'Israelis vs. Palestinians' and focus [their] energy on addressing settler- colonialism and other forms of violence by targeting the structures that facilitate these regimes.



OLIVE TREE PLANTING

For Palestinians, the olive tree carries a message of hope and sumud (steadfastness). The GSC is raising funds to purchase "a 4x4 truck to haul activists, tools, and olive trees to some of the most vulnerable and marginalized communities."

Between 80,000 and 100,000 families rely on olives and the production of olive oil for their primary or secondary source of income, and more than 15 percent of working women are employed in olive agriculture.

To support the planting of olive trees and/or the purchase of the truck, visit [their website](#).



DEFUND RACISM CAMPAIGN

Defund Racism supporters call on the officials in power to dismantle the Central Fund of Israel [which includes Regavim], the Israel Independence Fund, Friends of Ir David, Friends of Aterat Cohanim, the Hebron Fund. These "charities" break U.S. charitable law by acting as financial conduits for tax-deductible donations to fund an array of activities that directly contradict charitable regulations.

These org's goals and policies also support Israeli violations of international law and U.S. policy by propagating discriminatory housing and land policies including home demolitions, family displacement, and land dispossession. [Learn More](#).

OTHER WORK

In addition to these two major campaigns the GSC has been working on building websites for some local groups.

The purpose is to collect donations, promote their activities and connect groups to people and organizations through emails or encouraging visits to their community.

For more details on the work of the GSC and to give financial support for that work go to their [website](#).



Negotiated Settlement Only Way to End Ukraine War

By Nelson Brown

As the war in Ukraine passes its first-year anniversary, we should take stock of where the war stands, what are the most likely future developments in it and what are the prospects for ending it.

In other previous wars and interventions – like Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya – the United States had clearly started these disasters, whether under false premises or under questionable judgments about their necessity. But in Ukraine, it was not the United States that directly started the war. Because of this, it is understandable that the immediate emotional response of most people was to support Ukraine's resistance – especially with a charismatic leader like President Zelenskyy making emotional appeals for “weapons, weapons, weapons.”

But as the war grinds on with no immediate foreseeable Ukrainian total victory in sight, the initial emotional response must be examined critically.

Moreover, as each side tries to break the current stalemate with escalation matched by escalation, the danger of a direct war between the United States and Russia grows and the risk of a Russian use of tactical nuclear weapons increases.

What is at Stake?

Ending this war involves understanding the significance of the war for different parties: Ukrainians, Russians, NATO, the United States and the world. For the Ukrainians, the question becomes what the consequences are if it cannot regain all the territory it has lost to the Russians since 2014. The Ukrainians and its total-victory supporters argue that NATO, Ukraine and the United States must wage war against Russia until total victory or the negative consequences will be epic.

Others hold that a negotiated settlement that satisfies none of the parties' objectives represents the only realistic way to end a war that will likely be a bloody stalemate fighting over what Ukraine's future boundary with Russia will be. This approach has come under attack for basically saying the war has devolved into a “border dispute,” even if at an earlier stage more epic consequences were at stake. But border disputes are easier to settle than epic struggles for glorious causes. For a more objective perspective, a reasonable assessment of the war's outcome and consequences should be explored:

First, when Russia originally invaded Ukraine, it was reasonable to characterize the war as one to overthrow the Ukrainian government, either to replace it with a puppet regime or to intimidate the current government to bend it to Russian will: this was epic. Coming to its defense under these circumstances was something even many peace advocates could support. But this effort to destroy Ukrainian sovereignty failed miserably. The war in the East now represents Russia's attempt to salvage some success from strategic failure. What should be undisputed now is that whatever happens with the war in the Eastern region, Ukraine will emerge as a sovereign state with some level of NATO support no matter its final boundary with Russia.



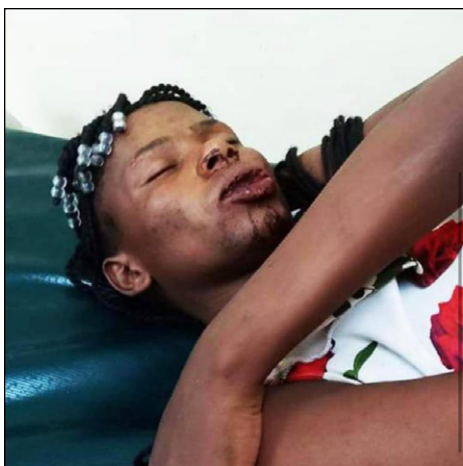
Second, what might be the consequences if the war ends in a negotiated settlement or a de facto armistice that leaves Russia in control of Crimea and some of the Eastern region? The total-victory advocates argue that anything short of driving it from all territory occupied since 2014 will encourage future Russian aggression. They make a faulty “Munich” analogy.

But ironically, using Doublethink, these advocates also argue that the war has revealed the weakness and incompetence of the Russian military, thus showing that it poses no non-nuclear military threat to a united NATO. If anything, this war will limit future Russian aggressive military moves because of the price it has paid so far.

Third, if the war does not or cannot end in a total victory, what are the consequences of continuing it? Given the war's current posture, the most likely forecast for the immediate future augurs a bloody stalemate with horrific casualties on both sides and with no significant changes in control of territory. This raises a moral question: what is the morality of continuing the war at full tilt forever with little or no chance either side will prevail completely from their current postures? This would be madness.

Conclusion

The best way to resolve this conflict is through a **diplomatic settlement that will probably require compromises on both sides.** This outcome will probably end with Russia retaining Crimea, which but the remaining conditions are probably subject to negotiations and must include security guarantees for Ukraine from any future Russian threats. A settlement of this type, as unsatisfactory as it is for many, offers the best hope of ending this war before it either escalates dangerously or continues in an endless bloody stalemate with continuing world-wide harm.



Kenya Progresses to Stage Four LGBTQ Genocide

By Christina Reuther

The Ugandan Anti-Homosexuality Bill recently passed in Parliament further criminalizes homosexuality. The law has increased the penalty to either life in prison or death for homosexual Ugandans. The passing of this bill has caused a wave of homophobic violence and murders in Uganda and throughout Eastern Africa.

The president of Kenya and many other Kenyan officials have recently made public statements condemning homosexuality, and asking for the removal of all LGBTQ+ from Kenya. These government officials also made statements directed at the European Union and the United States, stating they will never accept homosexuality into their culture and won't be pressured by these donor states to do so. This is not only institutionalized systemic homophobia, but the beginning of stage four genocide for vulnerable LGBTQ asylum seekers and refugees in Kenya.

This recent hate campaign has created a very dangerous incendiary situation for LGBTQIA throughout Kenya and the Kakuma Refugee Camp. Murders and homophobic violence and sexual assaults are on the rise. This entire region of Eastern Africa has launched a campaign resulting in mob violence and brutal murders, leaving this vulnerable community with no protection.

In the Kakuma Refugee Camp, the LGBTQIA asylum seekers are stateless. They are dependent on the Kenyan government for protection. The Kenyan Government offered the LGBTQIA community asylum in Kenya. It is well documented that the Kenyan government

has never protected LGBTQ in the Kakuma Refugee Camp.

We currently have five transgender people in the protection area who are being stoned and beaten every day. The Kenyan Police refuse to protect them. There are many holes in the fences and the gate is open so anyone can come in this "protection" area and attack them.

The United States and the European Union are the largest donors to the humanitarian effort in Kenya totaling over \$240 million. Clearly these multi-million-dollar protection and integration programs are ineffective. It's clear these donor states have no choice but to launch investigations.

In the last two years the LGBTQ human rights campaigns I have launched or been in support of in the Kakuma Refugee Camp, have documented widespread violent attacks and persecution. We have documented over one hundred times more human rights violations targeting this community of LGBTQ asylum seekers, than to date in the Ukrainian War.



Christina Reuther is an International Human Rights Defender, and Strategist and Consultant for LGBT +Africa.

PEC PODCAST: Listen to Christina's interview!

The LGBTQ Freedom and Resettlement Project Kakuma condemns the actions of the Kenyan Government. Among our demands:

- We are calling for a **full investigation of the Kenyan Government** for multiple human rights violations and crimes against humanity targeting stateless LGBTQ asylum seekers, by the United States government and the European Union.
- We are requesting the **LGBTQ are given prima facie status** for emergency group resettlement calling for immediate evacuation of all LGBTQIA out of Kenya.
- We ask the Parliament members in the European Union and U.S. Congress and members of the State Department to **prioritize opening immediate resettlement slots for this group**, and to work together in partnership in this large group resettlement process.
- We ask **RSD interviews to be conducted by the resettling state instead of Kenya**, as a remedied solution to the refusal by the homophobic Kenyan Authorities to grant refugee status interviews to vulnerable LGBTQ.

Without the intervention by global governments and the United Nations, LGBTQ genocide in Eastern Africa will continue to take the lives of innocent African LGBTQ people. **Help us to end LGBTQ genocide in East Africa and liberate this community of 1,000 asylum seekers.**



The Real Cost of Military Spending

By Terry Link

As we recognize the 20th anniversary of our failed and illegal invasion of Iraq, the same alliance of war hawks is ratcheting up calls for even more military spending, as if we haven't learned anything during those 20 years.

On March 9th, **President Biden released his budget proposal for 2023-24 with a whopping \$886 billion for defense spending.** This number includes funding for the Department of Defense, nuclear weapons programs at the Department of Energy, and other defense matters. This proposal represents a 9 percent (\$73 billion) increase from Biden's FY2023 proposal for defense.

We go through this circus every year, and every year Congress, which holds the purse strings, decides it's not enough. How much will our bipartisan hawks inflate the threats of the various current evil empire so they can bring home even more bacon for their districts and states to show they are "tough?" Last year they drained our treasury and treasures by an additional \$45 billion beyond the budget requested by the president and the Pentagon. When it comes to military spending, there is never enough in these eyes.

And just so you recognize it, more than half of that spending goes directly to military contractors, not the soldiers and employees of the government. As Lindsay Koshgarian, Program Director for the National Priorities Project reports, that translates into military contractors receiving 25 percent of the entire discretionary budget!

Ironical that our legislators don't see the threats of climate change, pandemics, growing inequality, increasing desperate refugee numbers, etc. through the same lens. Neither of our liberal senators nor the Lansing area's Congresswoman will likely vote in favor of Rep. Barbara Lee and Rep. Mark Pocan's "People Over Pentagon Act" that would cut military spending by \$100 billion, a figure a recent Congressional Budget Office study deemed would not harm our national security.

So, while we are distracted by the hawks' call for more guns as a solution to our security, they turn a blind eye to the recent release

of the International Panel on Climate Change's 6th Synthesis Assessment Report. Read only the Summary for Policymakers (38 pages) or listen to U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres' statement upon its release and you should be truly terrified for your children and grandchildren.

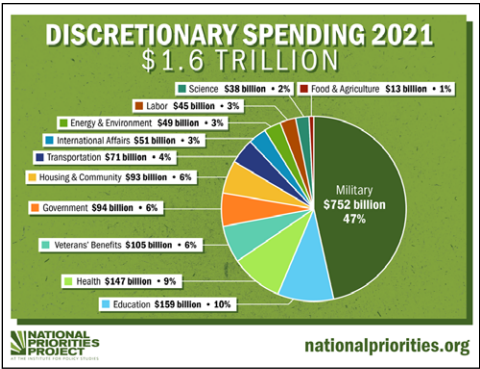
The IPCC is the best example of solid science we have, with representation from scientists around the world and from every major discipline. It is a CONSENSUS report. If anything, it tamps down the threats. The bottom line is a call for 50 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in less than seven years and then to continue to cut to stave off the potential end of civilization as we know it. Where are the hawks on this security threat?????

Every day we delay we rob the future generations of a chance at survival. 2022 saw an INCREASE in emissions, not even a slight reduction, let alone the 50 percent we need. Priorities need to shift immediately, and all delays increase the probability that we be unleashing more rapid climate destabilization by 2035, the report suggests.

More missiles and tanks and bullets and bombs will not address this global threat. In fact, it robs us of the ability to pursue

a global cooperative and sustainable future. The IPCC report says we need 3-6 times the amount of investment in reducing the greenhouse gas emissions than we are currently. And wealthy, developed nations who are responsible for the bulk of the emissions need to invest more.

Call your legislators. Demand they redirect bloated military spending towards addressing accelerating global threats here and abroad. We are all in this together whether we like it or not.



Expanding Our Democracy with Ranked Choice Voting

By Raoul Mitts, Rank MI Vote

As you know, the citizens of Michigan have opened up their democracy by establishing an independent redistricting commission for our state and expanding voting rights. [Rank MI Vote](#) wishes to build upon this momentum by establishing Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) as the preferred voting method for elections in our state.

Ranked Choice Voting allows you to rank candidates in your order of preference, so you get to vote your conscience and avoid the “spoiler” effect as well.

You can see how it all works [here](#).

	MY CHOICES		
	1st	2nd	3rd
Candidate A	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Candidate B	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Candidate C	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

Right now [Rank MI Vote](#) is conducting a petition drive to place a question on this November’s ballot to allow the citizens of East Lansing and Lansing to choose Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) as their preferred voting method for local elections, as the voters of [Ann Arbor did in 2021](#), and the voters of [Ferndale in 2004](#). Similar actions are also underway in Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids.

If this is of interest to you, volunteers are needed to circulate petitions and then, following a successful petition drive, to help with the campaign for the ballot measure to make it a success come election day.



SOME BACKGROUND

Ferndale has been wanting to use RCV since 2004. That’s worth repeating; **since 2004**. For 19 years now the Michigan Bureau of Elections and the State Legislature have refused to allow for the implementation of Ranked Choice Voting. Thus Rank MI Vote seeks to demonstrate that a significant percentage of the population wants to use RCV, hoping to build a critical mass and thereby bring about enough pressure that the state facilitates the use of RCV.

THE FUTURE

The plan is to make RCV a reality for statewide elections in the coming years. But right now, the local efforts are vital to this effort. Again, if supportive, please help with this petition drive.



GREATER LANSING UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION

EARTH DAY 2023

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gluna.org/event/earth-day

CLIMATE JUSTICE NOW!!



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Court Of Appeals Orders Resentencing in Efren Paredes Jr. Case

by Necalli Ollin, *a member of Paredes' defense team*

A Michigan Court of Appeals three-judge panel issued a ruling on March 16 vacating the 2021 **life without parole (LWOP)** sentence reimposed on Efrén Paredes Jr. by Berrien County Trial Court Judge Charles LaSata.

The appellate court held that LaSata abused his discretion and was operating in the wrong legal framework when he imposed the extreme sentence. In a 3-0 decision, the Court of Appeals remanded Paredes' case back to the trial court for resentencing, which must be completed within 56 days. It added that the proceedings "shall be given priority on remand until they are concluded."

The ruling came nine days after Paredes' lead attorney, Stuart Friedman, appeared before the court for oral arguments on his behalf and one day after Paredes reached the grim milestone of being behind bars a total of 34 years – or 12,411 days.

At age 15 Paredes was charged as an adult in St. Joseph, MI., for a 1989 homicide and robbery he has always maintained he did not commit. He was subsequently convicted by a jury and sentenced to mandatory LWOP.

In July 2022 the Michigan Supreme Court ruled that sentencing courts must now begin their analysis of juvenile lifer cases from the premise that the person before them, like most children, has engaged in criminality because of transient immaturity, not irreparable corruption.

LWOP sentences can only be imposed on minors who are irreparably corrupt or permanently incorrigible, meaning they must be incapable of change or rehabilitation for the remainder of their lives.

The Michigan Supreme Court added that when a prosecutor seeks to impose a LWOP sentence on a person for a crime committed when s/he was a minor, the prosecutor bears the burden to rebut a presumption that LWOP is a disproportionate sentence. The

Statement from the PEC demonstrating its commitment to justice for Efren

This decision by the Appeals Court represents the most significant step toward justice for Paredes since the PEC entered its support over 15 years ago, testifying as it did at a hearing of the Michigan Parole Board to commute his sentence, the longest such hearing that had ever occurred attended by the largest number of people.

It did not result in the governor's commutation.

The Court of Appeals has made it adequately clear that this re-sentencing must be completed with a term-of-years sentence in the next 56 days and they have maintained their jurisdiction over the case to see that this happens. This is an internal judicial process to which public opinion is not relevant.

However, when this is completed and Paredes can make his appeal to the Michigan Parole Board for release from prison, there is much we will be able to do to highlight the brilliant and productive work Paredes has done in prison for 34 years and support the strong case for his immediate release.

While we are aware that the manner in which the conviction was obtained 34 years ago is not relevant to any aspects of what will obtain his release, it is relevant to all of us to be aware that Paredes maintained his innocence at the time of the trial, that his parents testified that he was home at the time the murder was committed, having been driven home from the store by his store manager and friend who was later murdered in the store, and he has



Efrén Paredes Jr.

standard for the rebuttal is clear and convincing evidence.

"If the prosecutor cannot shoulder [the] burden [of proof that LWOP is a disproportionate sentence for a minor] by clear and convincing evidence, the trial court must sentence the defendant to a term of years." (People v. Taylor, Mich. Sup. Ct. No. 154994, Decided July 28, 2022, Slip Op. 20-21).

Paredes has demonstrated compelling anecdotal and documented evidence of his capacity for change and rehabilitation through the successful completion of numerous self-help and rehabilitative programs.

Evidence also exists of him demonstrating empathy, being a sound consequential thinker, and using his talents and skills to enrich the lives of others inside and outside of prison.



Tom Rico, ex-PEC Board Chair, Ruth Borgelt, ex-PEC Board member, Efrén Paredes, John Masterson, PEC Treasurer

maintained his innocence throughout these 34 years.

No information presented at the trial contradicts that this might well be the case.

Many of us know in our hearts, and in our time spent examining the trial, that it is indeed the case.

YOUR SUPPORT NEEDED, APPRECIATED



There is no denying that these are challenging times. War in Europe. Climate crises. Gun violence. Racial and LGBTQIA discrimination. The list goes on.

For more than 50 years the Peace Education Center has worked to reduce tensions by building bridges instead of walls. We have sought to bring people together rather than push them apart.

We have worked to help create a healthy planet where there truly is peace on earth.

Peace is out of fashion. Our elected leaders and representatives rarely utter

the word and the media doesn't discuss it. But a decade ago there was little talk of inequality and two decades ago there was little discussion of climate change. It has taken impassioned voices to make these issues visible.

With your support, we will continue to raise our voices to steer our nation's energies away from endless war and towards a truly sustainable society.

If you would like to assist us in our **volunteer campaigns**, we would welcome your time and energy.

Contact us at:
peaceedcenter@gmail.com.

Financial contributions are always welcome as well. Please consider a tax-deductible contribution to the Peace Education Center.

Thank you for your support in any way you can!

You can [DONATE ONLINE HERE](#)

or contributions can be sent to

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